

THE
**TREASURE
SHIP**



THE TREASURE SHIP





Ye Pirate Bold



Dread Terror of the Seven Seas
From Cadiz to the Carribbees.
A Pirate Bold, — you see him here
A Cut-throat, Bloodstained
Buccaneer.

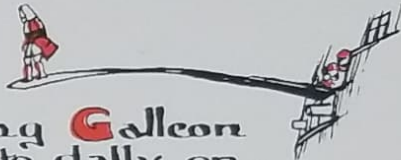
How can I in these artless rhymes
Recount the **HORROR** of his crimes?



Battles and Butcheries galore
When decks and scuppers dripped with
Gore.



How Peaceful Merchant Ships he sank,
And trembling Traders walked the plank.



The fate of lagging Galleon
Tis horrible to dally on.
Or half his pleasant little Games
When Treasure Towers went up in flames.



In short, a person to avoid
Nor aggravate when he's annoyed.
Enough — he daily did (for fun)
The things that simply **ARE NOT DONE!**



THE TREASURE SHIP



**A BOOK OF PROSE
AND VERSE EDITED
BY LADY CYNTHIA ASQUITH**
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The Two "Bob-Cats"

By JOHN GALSWORTHY.

The two "bob-cats" dwelled in a cage on the edge of a Canyon in America. They had been living there two years—in fact, since kittenhood. Their cage was large and airy and well-kept, it had a leafless tree-pole with branches, in the middle, and a little cave made out of stones in one corner, where they could go at night, or in daytime creep out of the sight of humans—for thousands came to see this celebrated Canyon, and the two "bob-cats" were one of its features. Surnamed Lynx, they were boy and girl—very fine specimens. Their coats were greyish fawn, with a dark mottle, like that in the fur of tabby cats. Their tails, white underneath, were short, with a little blunt turn-up at the end; they had three parallel dark lines like thin moustaches, across their muzzles, magnificent eyes, and the beginnings of tassels turning over at the tips of their ears. They looked very clean and healthy. The boy was much the larger and heavier, and more of a philosopher than the girl, who took, on the whole, more exercise. His favourite place was the top branch but one of the tree-pole. And half the time he would sit there balanced, with his paws tucked under him, and his face to the trunk, asleep or reflecting on life as he had known it. Indeed, except for sleeping, eating, and walking round the cage, he had not known it, for the two "bob-cats" did nothing for their living, their meals—of raw meat—being brought to them with the utmost regularity.

The wife of the new ranger (it was he who had the key of

THE TWO "BOB-CATS"

the cage), often went to look at them. She had the misfortune to be fond of animals, and they in turn were fond of her—horses she could do anything with. When she was watching the two "bob-cats" she used to listen to the tourists, and one thing always struck her. They always expressed their own feelings and not those of the two "bob-cats." They would say:



"SEE HOW HE STARES STRAIGHT OUT!"

"How'd you like to have 'em in the parlour, Mary?"

"I sure wouldn't care to meet one of *them* on a trail."

"Kind o' looks like a man that don't know what to do with himself, don't he?"

"See how he stares straight out. He won't look at me!"

The ranger's wife did look, and thought: 'How fortunate!
But mostly they said:

"Savage varmints—those wild-cats!" Or, "Look at those
two 'bob-cats!'"

After listening to them she sometimes went to the edge of the
Canyon and gazed down into it. It was one of the most wonderful
places in the world, full of marvellous shapes, and flooded with
light and colour that was continually changing—a mysterious,
vast place, so untamable that man could do nothing with it.
Indeed, some people who came to see it took the first train away
again, and others said: "So that's it! When do we eat?" It
was altogether too big a proposition.

The ranger's wife knew that the "bob-cats" had been caught
as kittens in a cave a little below the edge of it, when their parents
were out hunting in the forest. The Canyon had, in a way—she
used to think—belonged to their ancestors for thousands of years
before she and all these tourists came to live in America; down
there and in the pine forest all along its rim had been their happy
hunting grounds. And from the rim she would go back to the two
"bob-cats" who had never yet had a hunting ground. And she
would listen again to the tourists!

"My! I've never seen a 'bob-cat' before. He looks kind
o' bored."

"See the meat! *They* must have a good time!"

And she would think: "Do they?"

One day she stood and coaxed till the boy "bob-cat" let
her stroke its head through the wire, with her gloved hand. After
that, whenever she visited them it would come to her and thrust
its head against her fingers. When it did that she would get
quite angry with the tourists.

"I wouldn't like to do that; you can't tame them—wild-
cats!"

"She's a restless brute, isn't she?"

"They've gotten a fine place here."

THE TWO "BOB-CATS"

"See their tails? 'Bob-cats.'"

"Restless brute!" she would think. "So would you be, shut up there, if it were in your blood to be free as the wind in that forest and among those rocks."

"Kenneth!" she said one day to her husband, "it's a shame to keep those 'bob-cats' shut up."

"M'm, honey! But the trippers like to see them, you know."

"They just look at them for a minute, and say: 'My! Look at the two "bob-cats!"'"

"I agree with you, really," said the ranger; "but it's done to teach them what a 'bob-cat's' like."

"Well, I just can't bear to see the creatures going round and round and looking right out into the distance. Can't we let them go?"

"They don't belong to us, honey; they belong to the National Park. You'd better not think about them."

The ranger's wife tried hard to follow that advice. She didn't go near them for some time. But one afternoon, when she happened to be passing, a lady and her husband were standing by the cage and she noticed the angry look on their faces. She stopped, and heard the lady say:

"It's a shame, poor things! If I could get hold of the key of that padlock, I'd let them out."

The husband kicked the wire, and she heard him grunt. She went up, and the boy "bob-cat," who was walking to and fro, thrust his head against her hand.

"They know you?" said the lady. "That's some comfort. Such beauties! I just hate to see them shut up like this."

"So do I," said the ranger's wife.

"Who's responsible?" said the husband.

"The tourists; they like to see them."

"I'd like to see *them* shut up too."

"So would I," said the ranger's wife.

"Come along, Helen," said the husband; "it only makes

one wild!" They went away, and the ranger's wife stood fumbling the head of the boy "bob-cat." He put his paw up and clawed her arm playfully. "I wonder," she thought; "could I...?"

All the afternoon and evening she went on thinking that; and at night she lay awake. Then all of a sudden she sat up in bed. "I can," she thought; "I will! Softly as one of the "bob-cats" themselves she slipped out of bed. The ranger had been riding all day long, and was sleeping like a top. Very quietly she got her fur coat out of her clothes closet, put on her rubbered snow boots, and tiptoed down the stairs. She knew where the key of the padlock was; got it, and stood at the window, looking out. Two o'clock of a moonlit night; a thin wind whiffing in the pine trees, and their shadows spilled along the ground. 'Mustn't get caught,' she thought, 'or it'll get Kenneth into trouble. Now for it!'

She slipped out of the house. It was very cold. If she startled the "bob-cats" would they go for her? And she stood still. 'Must have a stick!' she thought. She pulled a long stake out of her little garden, and clasping her fox-skin coat close round her body, stole on quickly up towards the Canyon's edge. For a moment she stood looking down into it filled with the bluish moonlight—mysterious, old, unearthly, full of shapes and shadows, ghostly and wan and vast. And she thought: 'It looked just like that before there were any men on the earth at all; it'll look just like that when there aren't any men left; only "bob-cats" and other beasts.' And, turning her back on it with a shudder, she went to the door of the cage. It was empty; the tree-pole threw a sharp shadow right to her feet, where a plate with a half-eaten meal stood close to the door. The "bob-cats" were in their cave. 'If I free them, they'll be hungry for days,' she thought; 'they won't know how to catch anything at first.'

She looked round her this way and that. Not a light from the hotel, or the Indian houses, not a sound but the lonely whiffing

THE TWO "BOB-CATS"

of the wind! Then, putting the key into the padlock, she pulled the door wide open, and went into the cage. Suppose they flew at her when they came out! She started noiselessly towards the rocky lair, keeping along the wire, with the pointed stick held out in front of her; past the tree-pole she went, right up to the cave, and stopped. Couldn't she just leave the door wide open and slip back home? But then they mightn't come out till after someone was up—and anyone who saw the door open would shut it. If she could lock it again and put the key in its right place the escape would be a mystery, and her husband would report: "The two 'bob-cats' disappeared last night. Have no clue as to how." There was no snow on the ground, so that neither she nor the cats would leave tracks. She rustled the stake a little in the mouth of the cave, then pulled it back and imitated the hooting of an owl. Nothing happened. The "bob-cats" were used to owls at night, and the rustling seemed to them the wind, perhaps. No! She would have to thrust the stake right in and stir them up.

Drawing a scarf from the pocket of her coat, she bound it round her hand, took a deep breath, reached out and poked the stake into the depths of their lair. There came a spitting, growling noise. She felt the stake quiver as if something had hit it, and, dropping it, withdrew her hand just as the boy "bob-cat" sprang past her out into the cage and leaped for the tree-pole. There on his branch he sat, crouching and spitting at her in the moonlight. Grabbing the stake again she sidled back along the wire, away from the lair, keeping her eyes on him. She had hoped he would fly round the cage, and, finding the door open, rush out. But there he sat on the tree-pole, with his bob tail moving from side to side, glaring at her with his great eyes.

While she was there, the idea of the door being open would never occur to him—the door that had never been left open before. She must go out. Without ever taking her eyes off him she sidled along till she was in the open doorway, stood a minute looking at him, crouched dark against the moonlight; then slipped out.

Surely now he would make a dash for freedom, and his mate would follow! But he didn't seem to realize what freedom was, or else he feared a trap. What should she do? Go home and leave them? Her nerves were too strung up for that; she wanted it all over quickly, so that she could get back with the key. And suddenly rushing back into the cage she drove the stake up at him; and as she did so, crouched. He leaped—leaped right over her, into the open doorway. She twisted round. Gone—he was gone! And feeling quite weak suddenly, she ran out of the cage. On the far side she sat down to wait; surely the girl "bob-cat" would come out now! Minutes she waited, and nothing happened. "Must I go in again?" she thought; "and stir her up too?" And then a long drawn "bob-cat's" yowl rose among the trees. Ah! here she was, coming out of the lair, in answer to it, slinking close to the ground, graceful as a shadow! Again that yowl, like a lost spirit's, curdling the blood, and the shadow leaped—past the door, went leaping away among the trees. The ranger's wife caught her breath. It was done—it was done! They were free! And *she* felt free, as if wandering with them in the night. Where would they go in the moonlight, what do—with everything so strange? What queer first hours of freedom those would be, and what discovery of the world, of trees and rocks, and scrub, of gambolling, and their own limbs! What a trek in the moonlight! What a listening and a crouching! Free!

She closed the door and locked it; huddling in her fur, cold and excited, she stole back to her little wooden house. The door was open! Her husband stood there!

"Great Golly!" he said. "Where've you been, honey? I've been scared to death!"

Clutching the key tight, she said:

"I've been to see the moonlight in the Canyon!"

If only the "bob-cats" didn't betray her now—crying far off in the forest! But they were silent, as if they knew; silent, trailing, trailing!

THE TWO "BOB-CATS"

"Honey, you shouldn't! You gave me fits!"

"All right, dear; I won't do it again. Phoo! I'm cold. Come back to bed." And, secretly slipping the key into its proper place, she went. . . .

The ranger was a wise young man. When, next day, that ninth wonder, the "bob-cats'" disappearance was discovered, he seemed very much surprised. That evening he wrote to the chief ranger thus:

"Sir,—I have to report the mysterious disappearance of the two 'bob-cats' here. We are trying to find out how they got away, but at present without success. It is just as well, perhaps, that they are gone, for they sometimes kept the tourists awake at night. I do not recommend replacing them.

"Faithfully yours,

"_____"

And showing it to his wife, he grinned from ear to ear. The ranger's wife only laughed, and pulled them.

A Reproof of Gluttony

HILAIRE BELLOC

THE Elephant will eat of Hay
Some four and twenty tons a day,
And in his little eyes express
His unaffected thankfulness
That Providence should deign to find
Him food of this delicious kind.
While those who pay for all the Hay
Will frequently be heard to say
How highly privileged they feel
To help him make so large a meal.
The Boa Constrictor dotes on goats,
The Horse is quite content with oats,
Or will alternatively pass
A happy morning munching grass.
The great Ant-eater of Taluz
Consumes—or people say he does—
Not only what his name implies
But even ordinary flies;
And Marmosets and Chimpanzees
Are happy on the nuts of trees.
The lion from the burning slopes
Of Atlas lives on Antelopes,
And only adds the flesh of men
By way of relish now and then;

A REPROOF OF GLUTTONY

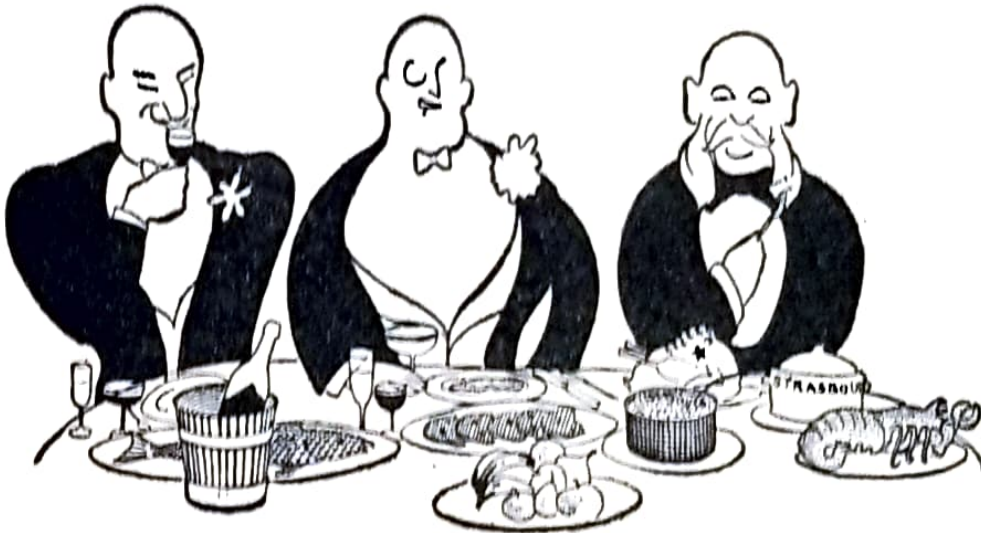
As Cheetahs—yes, and Tigers too,
And Jaguars of the Andes—do.
The Lobster, I have heard it said,
Eats nobody till he is dead;
And Cobras—though they have the sense
To poison you in self-defence—



Restrict their food to birds and hares:
—Which also may be true of Bears.
Indeed, wherever we survey
Our Humble Friends we find that they
Confine their appetites to what
May happen to be on the spot.
Simplicity and moderation
Distinguish all the Brute Creation . . .

HILAIRE BELLOC

But Man—Proud Man! (as Dryden sings)
Though wolfing quantities of things—
Smoked Salmon in transparent slices,
And Turbot *à la Reine*, and Ices,
And Truffled Pies, and Caviare
And Chinese Ginger from the Jar;
And Oysters; and a kind of stuff
Called Cassouletto (good enough!)



And Mutton duly steeped in claret,
(Or jumped with young shallot and carrot),
And Chicken Livers done with rice,
And Quails (which, I am told, are mice),
And Peaches from a sunny wall,
And—Lord! I don't know what and all—
Oh! Yes! And Sausages . . . Is not
Contented with his Prandial Lot.

Moral

The Moral is (I think, at least)
That Man is an UNGRATEFUL BEAST.

Round the Bird Shops

By PAMELA GREY

Would you like to go round the Bird Shops? Well, we will visit one. Come with me; but first get some water-cress to give the birds, for it is rude to take one's fill of gazing and to give nothing in return. Watercress, lettuce leaves, even bits of cabbage from the kitchen, will serve. You will see how the birds welcome the green food as you put it between the wires. Those along the line will crane their heads eagerly, standing high on their legs, making themselves quite narrow with expectation.

You will see canaries by the dozen; but let no one disparage canaries. They have lovely ways if they are given room enough in which to display them; and they are clever, too, if you give them opportunity. The green ones are said to be the most intelligent, being nearer to the species in its wild state. They certainly build the better nests. Yet the cleverest canary I have known was a yellow bird. Her name was Miss Pin. She not only had the freedom of the room, but when we were in the country I would open her cage door in the morning, and away she would fly, dipping and rising in true Finch flight, till she looked in the far distance like a seed pearl against the green hills of Peebleshire.

She always returned to her cage in the evening, and often at intervals throughout the morning, to drink and eat.

Like Pippa, the factory girl, she knew how to spend her day. She treasured every minute of it. You could watch her, being busy in active joy, whether searching for seeding grasses around

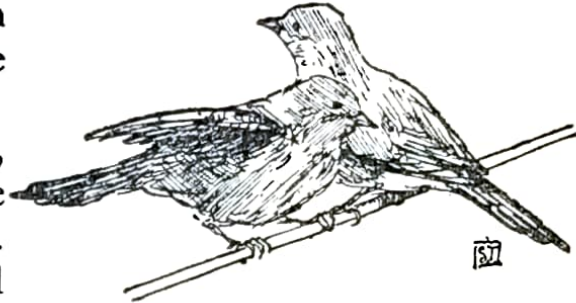
PAMELA GREY

the forcing frames in the garden, or sitting jargoning in a large beech tree on the lawn:

The least movement that she made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure—

Hen canaries have a song, and one prettier than that of the male bird, for it is not so forced. The cock canary's song is too loud for a room. It should be heard out of doors and from a little distance, in concert with many of his kind. Only those who have heard several singing in an aviary, away in the garden, sending their sheaves of crystal notes out upon the wintry air of a sunny day in January, can know how lovely the glittering sound can be. It greatly resembles the singing of skylarks.

Now we are in the warm, husk-smelling, rather close atmosphere of the Bird Shop. There is a suppressed sound of multiple movement, fretted wires, limited wings. The



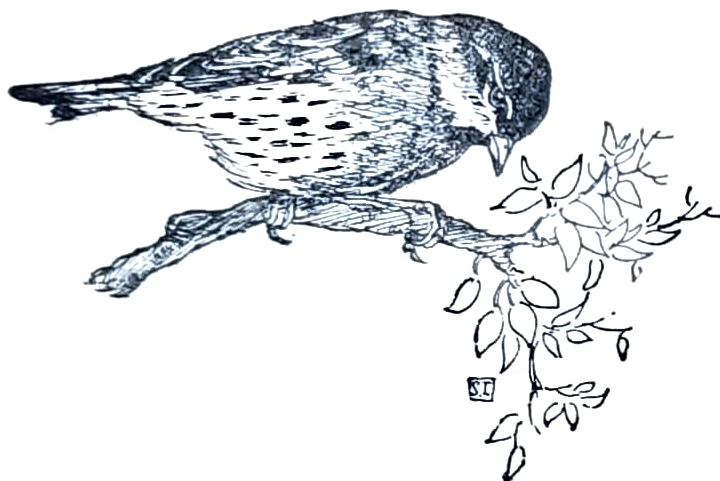
THE CORDON BLEUS
FROM WEST AFRICA

lower portion of the walls are composed of cages. But if the place we are visiting is the Live-Stock Department of one of the large stores the condition of the birds is tolerable. They have, at least, seed and clean water; their durance is—mitigatedly—vile. Yet what a mixed pleasure to see birds in these surroundings! How one longs to buy them all, that one might give the wild English finches their liberty, and enlarged cages to the foreign birds, with the chance of building. For this the Cordon Bleus will do in captivity, if they are given the materials they need.

I bought a pair from a man in the streets of Funchal, in Madeira. They were soon comfortably housed in one of those pretty cane cages that are made there. Bathing seemed at first their only activity. They took bath after bath. The second or

ROUND THE BIRD SHOPS

third day I noticed the little cock bird pick up a feather. Then he danced and sang. His dance was perfect in measure and rhythm, and he sang through the feather which he held in his beak while he danced—a tiny song of so inter-woven a measure that I was reminded of the slenderest strains of spun sugar by the notes. Then it was that they earned their name of “the Singing Needles.” This was a nuptial song and dance, so I went in search of nesting materials. I laid before him three different kinds. He chose palm fibre, which I had teased into a sort of tow. Then he



THE SISKIN. (CARDNELIS SPINUS)

proceeded to build a long bottle-shaped nest, with a hole rather high up at the side, and he took seventeen feathers from my fingers one day and twenty-three the next, when he had reached the stage of lining the nest. Three eggs were laid, the male bird chiefly doing the incubation, and one young bird was hatched.

Of all the foreign birds the Cordon Bleus are the best as caged birds, for they are naturally tame, and very intelligent, finding their way about a room and in and out of their cage by creeping and looking, keeping in touch with each other by their call note, which is like the little rattle of the Longtailed Tits.

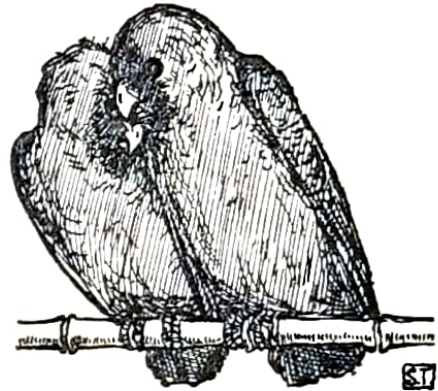
If you should buy any of the foreign finches you must provide them with mealworms, which are best kept in bran in a tin box with a perforated lid. The worms should have bits of raw carrot or sliced apple or turnip put among the bran. They need this; you will find they live much longer and keep in better condition. These foreign finches are delicate, and their health depends on

having moist grit and green food with occasional mealworms; and keeping them out of draughts.

Now, here are some Siskins, one of the best of English birds to own. I would buy a Siskin in preference to a Goldfinch or a Linnet, for it is an enthusiastically greedy bird, and among birds greed means contentment. Who can take pleasure in a bird that by ceaselessly hopping and fluttering is always reminding you that it is a prisoner? A Goldfinch is ever twisting its little head restlessly, looking for the sky; and a Linnet frets and yearns against the wires. But a Siskin sits contentedly to eat, while it ransacks its seed-trough with zeal. A Bullfinch, too, is a serious eater. But in the case of any bird, vary its food. The deadly monotony of caged life should have every alleviation; and buy a pair of birds if you can: it is better than to keep one in solitary confinement. Birds are tender lovers.

Now, here are Budgerigars and some of the lesser Parakeets. They sit closely together and will nibble each other's noses all day long. They deserve the name of Love-Birds, but only if they are truly mated. Do not trust them in the same cage with other birds. Beak-faced murderers they can show themselves to be. They will snap a canary's leg in two, and if allowed into an aviary they will fling the unfledged birds out of the nests.

The Budgerigars come from Australia; but Jou-Jou and Pistâche are West African birds. How lovely they are in their brilliant green and bright rose feathers! There is a patch of cerulean blue between the wings, seen only when they fly. They spread their tails when they alight, and then you see a fan design in warm, glowing colour. If you buy a pair of these you will



LOVE BIRDS, OR RED FACED
PARAKEETS
FROM WEST AFRICA

ROUND THE BIRD SHOPS



SEEDING GRASS
(COMMON POD)

find that, like other birds, they get to depend on their cage, so that after a time you can safely free them in the room, after closing the window. Get a light wooden frame-work made, two feet high by the breadth of the window, of light slats of deal with sparrow wire nailed on to it. You can close the window on to this frame and so keep the room fresh and the birds safe while they are having their outing. Let them find their own way out and in. Never take a bird out of its cage forcibly, for this destroys its confidence.

Another point of importance for cage birds is that they should have facilities for bathing. A bird's bath should be wide and shallow. For this reason always choose a cage that has a wide door. If a bird shows itself to be nervous of bathing, sprinkle water over it from a full tumbler, holding the palm of your hand over the top of it so that the water escapes only in little jets; but first remove the seed-trough and the sanded tray, because if these get sodden the bird's comfort is gone.

When you gather groundsel or seeding grass, pick it up by the roots and give it with the earth still on it. This keeps birds well, for they need grit for proper digestion, and they like the fresh soil better than the sand that is dry and dusty.

If you live in London you can find seeding grass in any of the Parks, but when you visit a Bird Shop you must supplement what

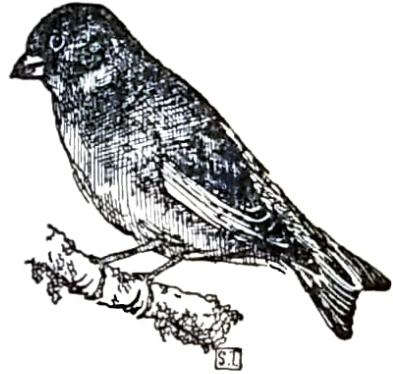


THE BULLFINCH
(PYRRHULA, PYRRHULA)

you pick by watercresses, because it is worse than bringing nothing to the birds, to disappoint some.

Here are Bullfinches; round, blunt-looking birds. "Baggage" was the name of my hen Bullfinch. Why? Because she was, in all her ways, what is understood as a Baggage. I bought her to free her from a cramping cage. I let her out into the garden, and she rewarded me, for she mated, nested, and reared a family, and then she brought them all into the house, to show them to me—I like to think. They would feed on the windowsill of my bedroom, in the very early hours of the summer days; sometimes they would fly into the drawing-room and be found there, busying themselves with the flowers on the piano; but they would quickly fly out of the window when anyone entered the room.

Baggage must have told them of her caged life and the hemp seed that may be found indoors. I feel sure that this was she, for never before had the wild Bullfinches behaved like this to me, though a tame Greenfinch I had once did the same. His name was Piripe. He was hatched in an August



THE GREENFINCH
(LIGURINUS CHLORIS)

nest, and grew up to be very headstrong and insolent. I was his charwoman, and he saw to it that I did the work, and very soon he showed me how Greenfinches ought to be kept, and I have applied his lessons to other caged birds.

Summed up, it comes to this: Trust your bird's intelligence. Give him freedom, but leave his cage in sight, with the door open, and this only after he has learnt to know it well, and to be sure that it is there that he will always find seed and water. Keep the cage out of any draught.

I had a Bullfinch for thirteen years, who would come out for a stroll in the garden with us, flying from tree to tree. He looked

ROUND THE BIRD SHOPS

upon his cage as a place of comfort and security, and went to it, after he had taken his exercise, as you or I might turn to an arm-chair. He was a great bird, was Chuffy; but his story is recorded elsewhere, and I must return to telling you about Piripe and his handsome tribe.

Greenfinches are dominant, robust birds, too forceful, perhaps, to deserve to be called "a brother to the dancing leaves," yet the rest of Wordsworth's poem is descriptive. Especially the line that tells of his peculiar gush of song, and of his "joy in voice and pinion":—

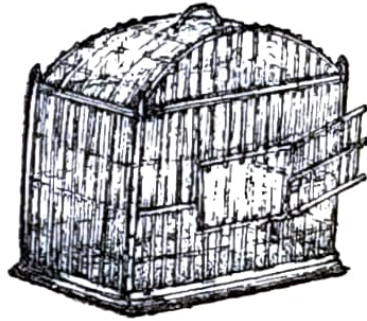
"Upon yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle in the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies,
Yet seeming still to hover;
There! where the flutter of his wings,
Upon his back and body flings,
Shadows, and sunny glimmerings,
That cover him all over.

This tame Greenfinch in time mated, but he only once brought his family into my sitting-room, when they were fully grown. I could tell him from his mate and five young ones, for when I came into the room they would burst about, flying violently, seeking exit; whereas Piripe went collectedly from one well-known perching place to another—the curtain rod, the writing table and the picture frame in succession, and never turned a feather. But after this, his wild life claimed him wholly. Having reared his family and visited his former haunts, he returned no more to his cage. And this was as it should be! He had fulfilled *The Three Debts* (after the teaching of the Blameless One)—"Build a house: Beget a son: Display Gratitude." I was glad that he should be free.

But enough of these reminiscences! We must leave the Bird Shop now.

PAMELA GREY

If I were to have a Totem (which is not a rare foreign bird, but a sign designate—something that tells the manner of person you are, an image of the tribe you belong to) I know my Totem would be the sign of a cage, with the door wide open.



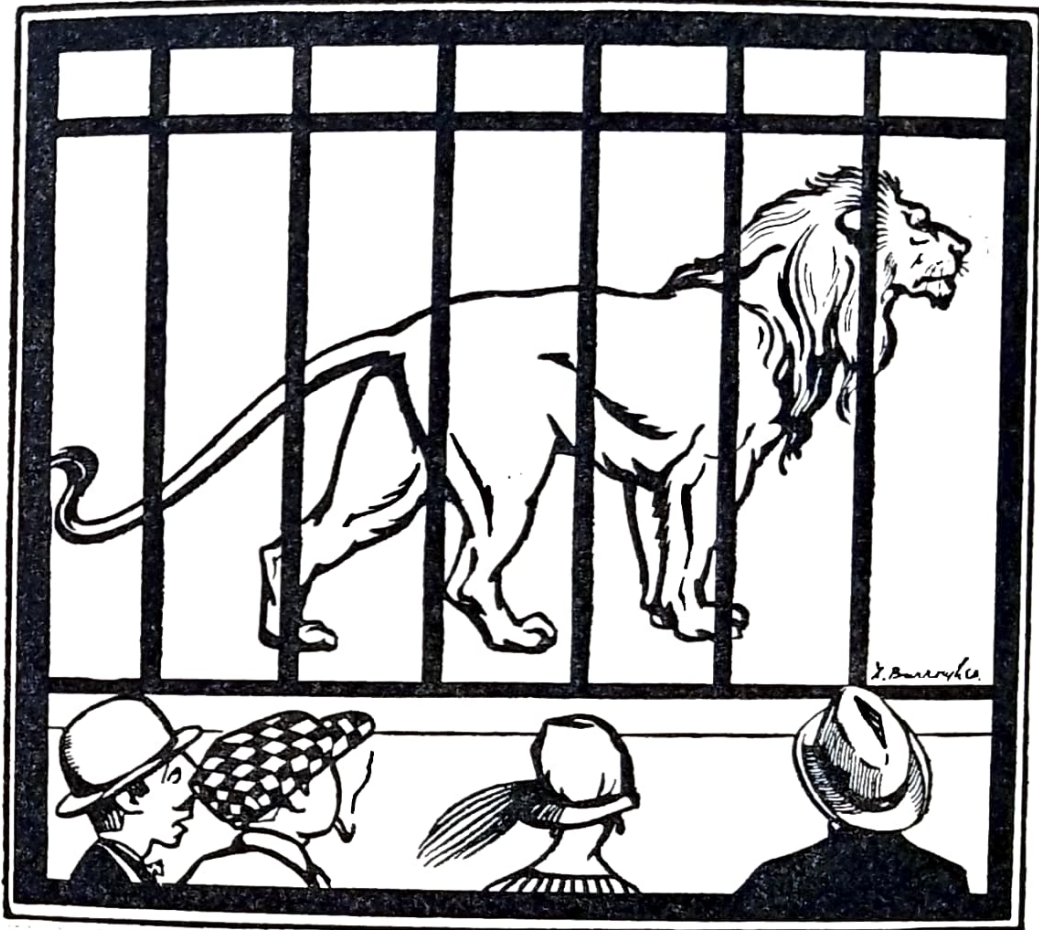
The Lion

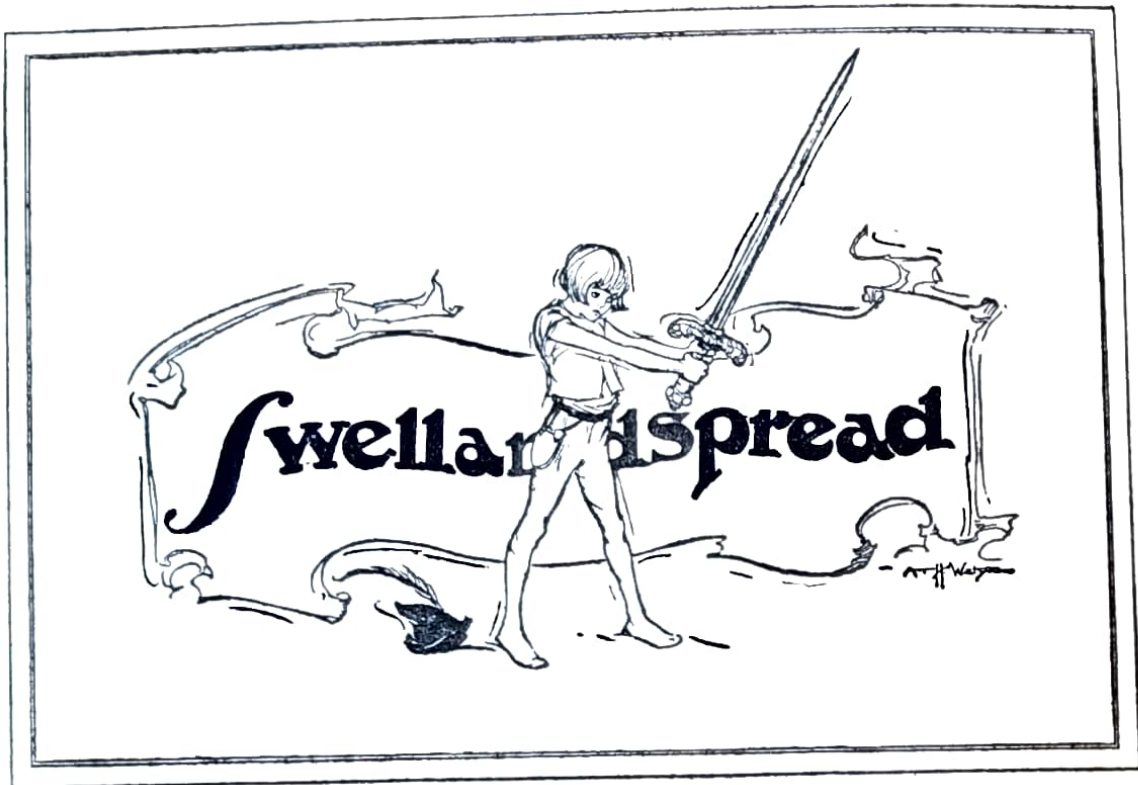
HERBERT ASQUITH

The lion walks behind his bars,
His tawny shoulders ebb and flow,
With swaying flank and lowered mane
He pads the asphalt, proud and slow.

If he could break his rusted cage,
How many eyes would open wide
To see him flaring through the gap,
A lion springing in his pride!

But now he walks with silent tread,
Swinging and turning in his den,
He yawns, and blinks his golden eyes
Above the prying sons of men.





CYNTHIA ASQUITH

IT was Otmar's sixth birthday.

"What are you going to do when you are a man?" asked his mother, twisting his barley sugar curls round her finger.

"I am going to kill Swell-and-spread!" said Otmar, clenching his dimpled fist and stamping a foot as light as a leaf.

Otmar's mother laughed at her son's ambition, for Swell-and-spread was a giant amongst giants. Between him and the next size in giants, there was far, far more difference than there is between you and an ordinary giant. To give you some idea as to how enormous he was, I will tell you a few facts about him. For one thing, instead of going out as you do to pick a bunch of flowers, Swell-and-spread would go out to pick a bunch of trees! A clump of beeches was his idea of a nice-sized button-hole. Whenever he walked, the earth trembled for miles around and his breath made all the trees curtsy and set all their leaves a-whispering. He could sneeze houses down and cough castles away, and if he shouted, anyone within a mile had

the drums of his ears broken and was never able to hear another sound.

As for his meals! A whole flock of sheep was no more to him than a plate of shrimps is to you, and when he had finished his food he always used the trunk of a poplar tree as a tooth-pick!

You know the uncomfortable way in which you sometimes get a fly in your eye, well, what do you think used to happen to poor Swell-and-spread? He used to get *birds in his eyes!* This was a very common trouble with him, especially when he was out picking trees.

"Is Swell-and-spread the biggest giant that ever gianted?" asked Otmar, as he munched his birthday cake.

"Yes," answered his mother, "much, much the biggest, and shall I tell you how it is that he has become so monstrously enormous?"

"Oh yes, *do,*" urged the little boy.

"Well, the reason is simply that he is swollen in every direction with pride. Just as a balloon is blown out with air, so he is puffed out with conceit."

"But wasn't he born big?" asked Otmar.

"Not particularly. When he was young, he was just an ordinary-sized giant, and thus he would have remained, only he took such a foolish pride in being larger than other boys. He thought there was credit in mere bigness—as though to be great in size were to be great in the grand sense of the word. Having longer legs and longer arms than other boys, naturally he could run faster and climb higher. It was no credit to him to win a race. It did not prove that he had more energy or spirit or power of concentration. No, it simply showed that he was made on a larger scale, and *that* anyone could see for themselves. But Swell-and-spread was so stupid that he did take great pride in his easy triumphs, and every time he did something other boys couldn't do, why then, he grew just a bit bigger."

"But why did being proud make him grow?" asked Otmar.
"I don't get any bigger when you praise me."

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

“Well, that’s the curious thing. You know when people are proud of something they’ve done they say, ‘I feel inches taller.’ With them it is just a way of speaking, but, for some odd reason, Swell-and-spread not only felt, but really and truly in fact *became* inches taller each time he felt pleased with himself. There are two other expressions you must have heard. Often one friend will say of another, ‘So-and-so is getting too big for his boots,’ or, ‘So-and-so is suffering from swelled head.’ These are just funny ways of saying, ‘So-and-so is getting stuck up.’ It doesn’t mean that any actual bodily change has taken place in So-and-so, but in the case of Swell-and-spread these figures of speech turned into facts.

“Every time he felt boastful he became inches taller and his head swelled, and as for his feet, they were always getting too big for his boots. He could hardly ever get up in the pair he had worn only the day before yesterday! This went on and on, and that is why he has become a giant amongst giants.”

“Does he like being so large, Mother?” asked the wondering child.

“Well, I suppose he likes the feeling of self-importance it gives him and glories in his supremacy, but I don’t see how he can get much fun out of his life. He must be very lonely. You see, no one can talk to him because—as you know—his voice deafens people. He can’t get any excitement out of fighting. No one has a chance against him. He is hated and feared by man, beast and bird. And thus he lives on in his lonely hugeness without love or fear or any of the things which make life exciting.”

“When I am big, I shall kill him,” said Otmar gently but firmly.

What Otmar’s mother had told him was quite true, and month after month Swell-and-spread grew bigger and bigger. You can imagine that his enormous presence was a terrible trouble to all the neighboring countries. He wasn’t kind, no, not in the very smallest degree. He didn’t care who, or what, suffered so

long as he could fill his tremendous stomach. In fact, cruelty was a sort of sauce to his food. Naturally, he had the most enormous appetite, and he had to walk miles and miles and miles to find sufficient food to nourish his vast frame. No single beast or bird was worth stooping for. If he wanted to eat beef, mutton, pork or bird, to make anything worthy of the name of a meal, he needed not one cow, one sheep, one pig or one goose, but a whole herd of cattle, a flock of sheep, a posse of pigs or a gaggle of geese.

As time passed and more and more of the earth was turned into Swell-and-spread's larder, he became the most terrible scourge that had ever inflicted the earth. Whole countries were laid waste by his appetite, and famine spread around him. When he stood up he darkened the land, and if he had a cold in his head he gave it to whole nations. Everyone in his neighborhood would have died of starvation had it not been for one fortunate fact. Swell-and-spread was so carnivorous that he had no use for any bloodless food, so all the people had to become vegetarians and live on the fruit of their labours as farmers, cutting their corn as soon as possible lest the giant should trample it underfoot. A sufficient supply of water was preserved by making the wells and reservoirs so small that Swell-and-spread could not even get his little finger inside them.

In gallant attempts to kill him, hundreds of youths sacrificed their happy lives.

If he had lived after the invention of cannon, the smallest man could have defeated him, but all this happened long before firearms were in use, and with ordinary weapons what could the bravest, cleverest, strongest men do against this mountain of a man in whose flesh sword-thrusts were less than so many pin-pricks? With finger and thumb he could hurl horses out of sight, and with one stamp of his foot he could kill a hundred men. In vain did kings offer the hands of their daughters and the halves of their kingdom in reward to anyone who should slay Swell-

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

and-spread. No one was clever enough to devise a means of destroying the monster.

It seemed that the only chance was to kill him in his sleep: and as often as the news went forth that he was unconscious and lying on his side, troops of warriors, armed to the teeth, would approach from the opposite direction and try to creep to the back of his head. Naturally no one could hope to walk against the gale that blew out of his nose and mouth at every breath he breathed.

But unfortunately he had got adenoids, so he nearly always slept with his mouth open and snored. Now, his snores were so much louder than any thunder that they deafened anyone who came within five miles.

Occasionally some brave men succeeded in approaching him on a night when he was not snoring. They knew it was impossible to pierce his incredibly thick skin and inflict a deadly wound without awakening him, so their plan was with their lances to pierce his eyes that were like great twin lakes of jelly. Once blinded, they felt that it would be possible to find some means of overcoming him.

But when they came within fifty yards of the heaving mountain of flesh, some evil chance always made the monster turn over in his sleep so that the air from his lungs rushed out in the direction of his assailants, and at the first breath, like so many balls of thistledown, they were blown over the hills and far away.

Once—only once—the Prime Minister had an idea. He poured tar over every tree in a large forest and then set them aflame hoping to burn Swell-and-spread. But the giant was woken by the pleasant warmth, and as soon as the heat became disagreeable he blew out the large conflagration just as you might blow out a candle.

This terrible state of affairs continued until Swell-and-spread reached the age of forty. Meanwhile, Otmar had grown to be a youth of eighteen. He was just as determined to kill the giant as he had been on his sixth birthday, but now he no longer spoke of his intention because it only made people laugh.

Otmar was small of stature but his heart was great and his spirit burned like a flame.

It was not the promise of Princess's hand which made his ambition glow, for he loved a fair shepherdess. But he longed to deliver his fellow creatures from the cruel scourge and to make the beautiful earth safe for his Love.

Though in every church and in every home prayers were still said for the destruction of the monster, hope was really dead. Despair lay heavy on the land.

Otmar screwed up his active brain trying to think of some fresh method of attack. If only he could invent some new weapon which could penetrate the thick skin and stop that great hammering engine—the giant's heart!

One day Otmar heard that the child of a neighbour had died from swallowing a pin. This sent an idea darting through his mind. He knew that to the giant a thrust from the longest lance would be less than the prick of a pin. So no wound inflicted on the outside of his body could be more than an annoyance. But since to an ordinary person an internal wound from a mere pin could be fatal, obviously the one chance was to get *inside* the giant and with sharp swords to stab again and again and again.

But how get inside him? How approach him without being blown out of the country and, even if that could be managed, how hope to escape the grinding of those ivory towers, his teeth, or else drowning inside his mouth?

With his knees drawn up to his chin, Otmar pondered far into the night.

Suddenly an inspiration came to him. Yes! There was one way which gave just a chance. But what a desperate venture! Even success seemed certain death, for once inside that great body how could he hope to get out? Otmar knew that when the giant woke up in the morning he was both hungry and lazy and liked to be able to eat a meal without having to go in search of it. Therefore, before falling asleep, he would fling a large net over some

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

herds of cows so that as soon as he woke, one languid hand could draw them up to be devoured.

"Being very hungry he probably swallows a good many of them whole," thought Otmar, "so I see what I must do; I must cling on to one of these doomed animals and pray to be swallowed and swallowed *whole*. I must get inside the monster as part of his breakfast."

Otmar told no one of his desperate plan. That evening after his father and mother had gone to bed, he crept out of the cottage and ran to a distant field, where he found what he had expected, a large herd of cattle caught like fishes in a great net. He crept through one of its large meshes and, catching hold of her curved horns, he climbed on to the back of a warm cow who was kneeling down and steadily munching the grass around her. "How funny to eat the floor or to sit on one's food," thought Otmar, not quite sure which it was that the cow was doing. Her back was very hard and knobbly—not at all a soft seat, but she was nice and warm. This was a good thing, for the air was bitterly cold. Not for one moment did Otmar fall asleep. Was it the cold that kept him awake or the excitement with which his heart was thudding?

The night seemed very long. To pass the anxious time, Otmar tried to count the shining stars, but he soon gave that up and just stared at their distant glitter. Gradually the darkness thinned: one by one the stars faded out of sight as a growing whiteness spread across the sky. The chill that comes just before dawn when the pulse of the world beats low, descended on poor Otmar. Dread of what lay before him clutched at his heart. He longed to see usual, homely things—his mother lighting the fire, bacon frizzling for breakfast, the patchwork rug in which he had burnt a hole. Was he never to see these comfortable sights again, never to look into the surprised eyes of Phœbe, his love? Tears filled his own eyes and the cold, thin, grey sky swam before him. Then it was as if the earth turned in her sleep. There was a rustle and a stir as though something had begun to breathe.

The whiteness of dawn now kindled into colour and soon warmth crept over Otmar, and by the time the birds were greeting the new day, his heart glowed with its accustomed courage.

Grasping two long sharp swords in each hand, Otmar waited and waited. Now the sun was quite high in the heavens. "Swell-and-spread sleeps late to-night," he thought.

At that moment a distant but mighty roaring sound stirred the air. "Ah!" cried Otmar in his excitement talking aloud to the cow. "It's come! It's come! The time is come! It's *now!* That was Swell-and-spread's first yawn." A moment's silence and the same sound was repeated more loudly. The suspense was dreadful. Otmar's heart hammered against his ribs! Now he felt a violent jerk! He clung fast to the horns of the startled cow. The net tightened round her horns and they were drawn swiftly through the long dew-drenched grass. The cow lowed protestingly and struggled to drive her hoofs into the ground, but relentlessly she and her burden and all the other cows were dragged along faster and faster across fields, over ditches and through hedges. It was desperately uncomfortable, but by holding tight to her horns, and laying his face against the cow's neck, Otmar remained unhurt save for some bruises and scratches. There was one last dreadful bump. Now they were leaving the ground and going up—up through the whistling air. Otmar felt breathless, giddy and sick. Everything became dark and stuffy. He knew that they were now being actually lifted in the giant's hand and that his fingers must be closing round his breakfast. He prayed as he had never prayed before. Now he was aware of a horrid sort of warmth that drew him towards an increasing heat. It was as though he were being drawn along, caught in a strong, hot draught. Too well he knew what it was—Swell-and-spread's hot breath sucking him in as his great mouth opened on his breakfast.

He was blown off the cow's back and rushed through jagged, uneven white gates. Thank goodness they didn't close on him! Had he passed through the portals of the giant's teeth?

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

Otmar now found himself in a huge, hot, damp cave. He could only just see the roof of it and he was lying on a horrible wet, soft redness, like a road made entirely of sea anemones. This redness was the great tongue of the giant who, fortunately, had just swallowed, or else Otmar would certainly have been drowned in a deep lake of spittle.

His fingers pressed tight into his ears for fear of deafening noises; breathlessly Otmar waited to be swallowed.

In another second he would have gone rushing down a gigantic red lane.

But something in his first mouthful of food tickled Swell-and-spread's throat, and instead of swallowing, he coughed, and on the mighty gust of that cough, little Otmar was shot out from between his teeth like a pea out of the mouth of a cannon.

He went hurtling through the air. There was a roaring, rushing, crackling sound in his ear, spangled thickening blackness before his eyes, and then complete darkness.

A twelve o'clock sun was shining strongly when Otmar returned to consciousness. He found himself lying on a large haystack on which, by the greatest good fortune, he had fallen at the end of his long flight. He lifted his aching head, and stretched his weary limbs.

Bitterly disappointed, weak and hungry, he climbed off the haystack. A few steps brought him to a cottage, at the door of which he knocked and asked to be directed home.

He was told he was a good twenty miles distant from the village in which he lived. Seeing how pale and trembling he looked, the woman, who had a kindly heart, gave him a bowl of warm milk and a bannock. Refreshed he started on his weary walk and arrived home at ten that night. He refused to explain his absence to his mother, knowing well that her anxious love would make her keep him under lock and key from further attempts.

Early the next day, he went to see Phæbe, the beautiful shepherdess to whom he was betrothed. At the sight of her loveliness



"HE COUGHED AND . . . OTMAR WAS SHOT OUT FROM BETWEEN HIS TEETH"

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

comfort and hope crept back into his heart, and well it might, for her hair was the colour of dead leaves that lie in the sun, and from her soft, flickering face shone great wide-apart eyes, deep grey eyes, flecked with purple. He told her of his attempt and failure, and the pride and fear in her face made him feel his failure had not been in vain.

With sweet words and caresses she comforted him until confidence and hope were rekindled in his heart.

"I shall do it again to-night," he blurted out. "Just the same thing; I must get back into his mouth!"

"No, no," cried Phœbe, "it was a gallant attempt and I am proud of you, but it is too perilous a plan. I cannot bear it. But do not be discouraged. Perhaps I can help. I have an idea, or at least," she added modestly, "a sort of tiny bud of an idea which might help you."

"An idea to overthrow Swell-and-spread? You, you lovely little one!" laughed Otmar incredulously.

"Listen first, Otmar, and then laugh," said the shepherdess. "You know that Swell-and-spread grows ever more huge through his pride. How often we have noticed that after each fresh triumph his shadow grows broader and longer?"

"Yes," grunted Otmar, "but what comfort can there be in that? The larger he gets the more difficult his conquest becomes."

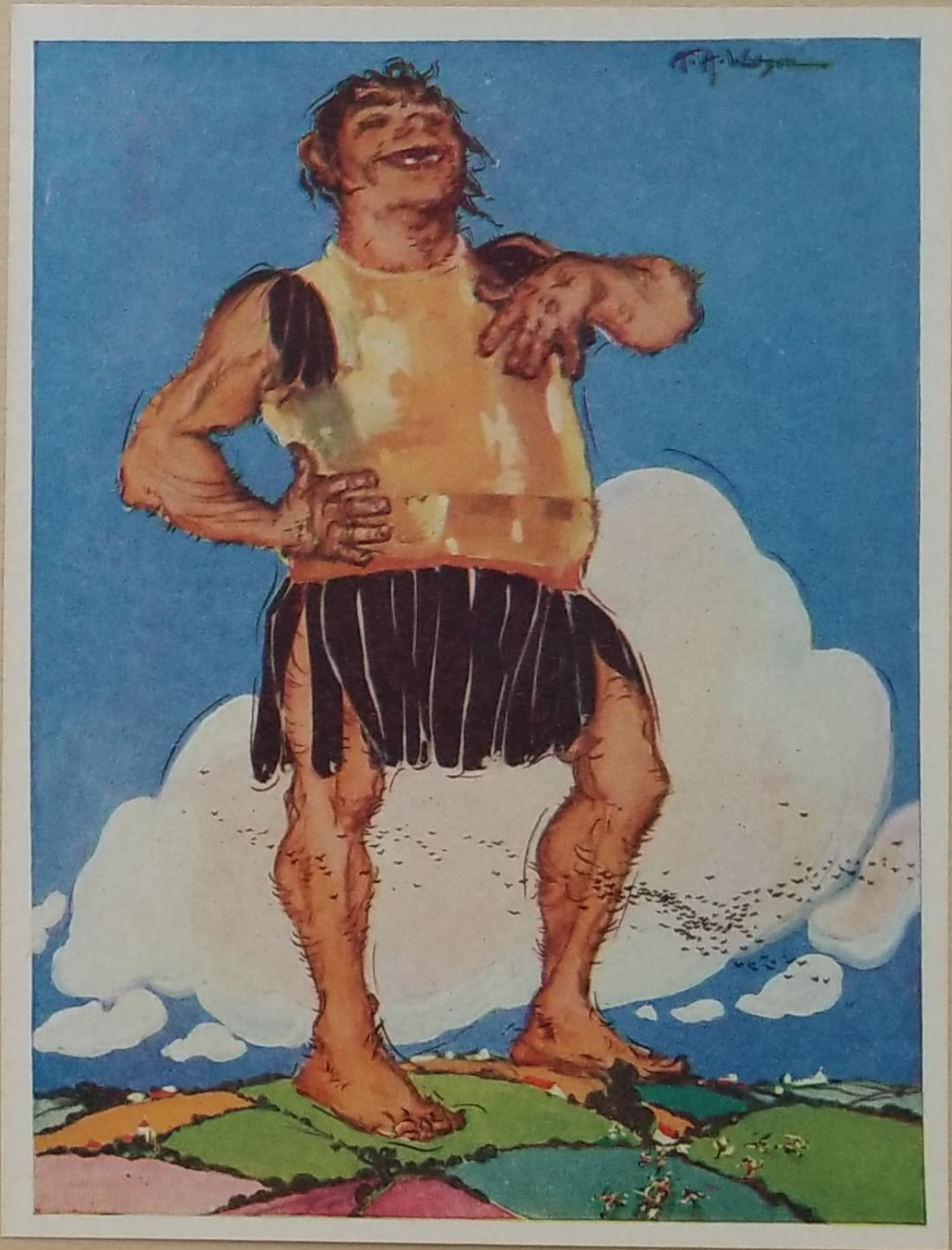
"In the way of ordinary battle, yes, but has it never struck you that the larger he grows the more he requires to eat?"

"Naturally! And the more likely are we and everyone else to be eaten."

"Yes, but, Otmar, suppose he grew so enormous that it became impossible for him to find sufficient food to nourish his huge body?"

"But," argued Otmar, "since the whole wretched world is his larder, surely he will always be able to find enough?"

"I wonder," said Phœbe. "Even now he has to go farther afield for his supplies than pleases him. I often hear a bellow of



“THE BIGGEST GIANT THAT EVER GIANTED.”

*Drawn for The Treasure Ship
by A. H. Watson.*

annoyance—an angry yawn of fatigue. My plan is, that he should, so to speak, get too big for himself, until it becomes impossible for him to satisfy his stomach.”

“Yes, but the bigger he gets, the longer grow his arms and legs. You see, his stride increases and his reach. He will only have to travel further to get more provisions.”

“But,” said Phœbe, “if we could make him so large that he would have to go hundreds of miles to get his daily food, then perhaps we could lame him, not much, but just enough to hamper him. You see, if he was constantly getting too big for his boots, he wouldn’t be able to get sufficient leather to make new shoes in time to start on his housekeeping expeditions. I know that to him a sword thrust is no more than a pin-prick is to us, but in sufficient numbers, even pin-pricks can cause great distress. Whilst he slept we could drive swords into the ground for miles around, so that their blades stuck out and even his longest stride could not overstep them. Then, too, he would get *such* a swollen head that he would not be able to keep himself supplied with hats, and as his head would always be growing closer to the scorching rays of the sun, this, too, would add to his exhaustion.”

“There is something in your idea,” admitted Otmar, “but how can we defeat him by his own size? What could so increase it?”

“Flattery,” replied Phœbe. “Swell-and-spread is as stupid as he is cruel. I’m sure that the direct homage of words of flattery whispered straight into his ear would fill him with fresh conceit. While he sleeps you must creep into the cave of his ear and when he wakes shout out eloquent words of praise and worship. They will be so sweet to him, that I am sure he will not slay you.”

“But,” demurred Otmar, “if he answers I am deaf.”

“I have thought of that. With beeswax I will seal up your ears so that their drums may be protected from the thunder of his voice.”

Resolution flared into Otmar’s face.

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

"I will try!" he exclaimed, and he kissed Phœbe seven times.

That same evening Phœbe sealed up Otmar's ears with beeswax, and soon after dark he crept out of his cottage and, dragging a long ladder, tried to approach the sleeping giant from behind the back of his head. It was a still, cold night. Otmar was taut with excitement.

After he had been walking for about an hour, he had a very narrow escape. In his sleep the giant suddenly flung one arm behind his head. Like a huge hammer, it smote the trembling earth and missed Otmar by only a few yards. Had it struck him, he would have been crushed as flat as his own shadow. Undismayed, Otmar crept on, dragging the heavy ladder behind him.

Now he is very, very near his goal. Otmar's heart pounds with excitement. Another five minutes' walk and he will be able to stand his ladder against one of the giant's fingers and begin his ascent. Alas! Alas! Swell-and-spread stirs in his sleep, turns over on his stomach, and the mighty blast of his breath, now blowing in Otmar's direction, lifts the brave boy up like a leaf in a gust of wind, and wafts him far, far away. Fortunately he dropped into a deep drift of dead leaves and was uninjured by his fall.

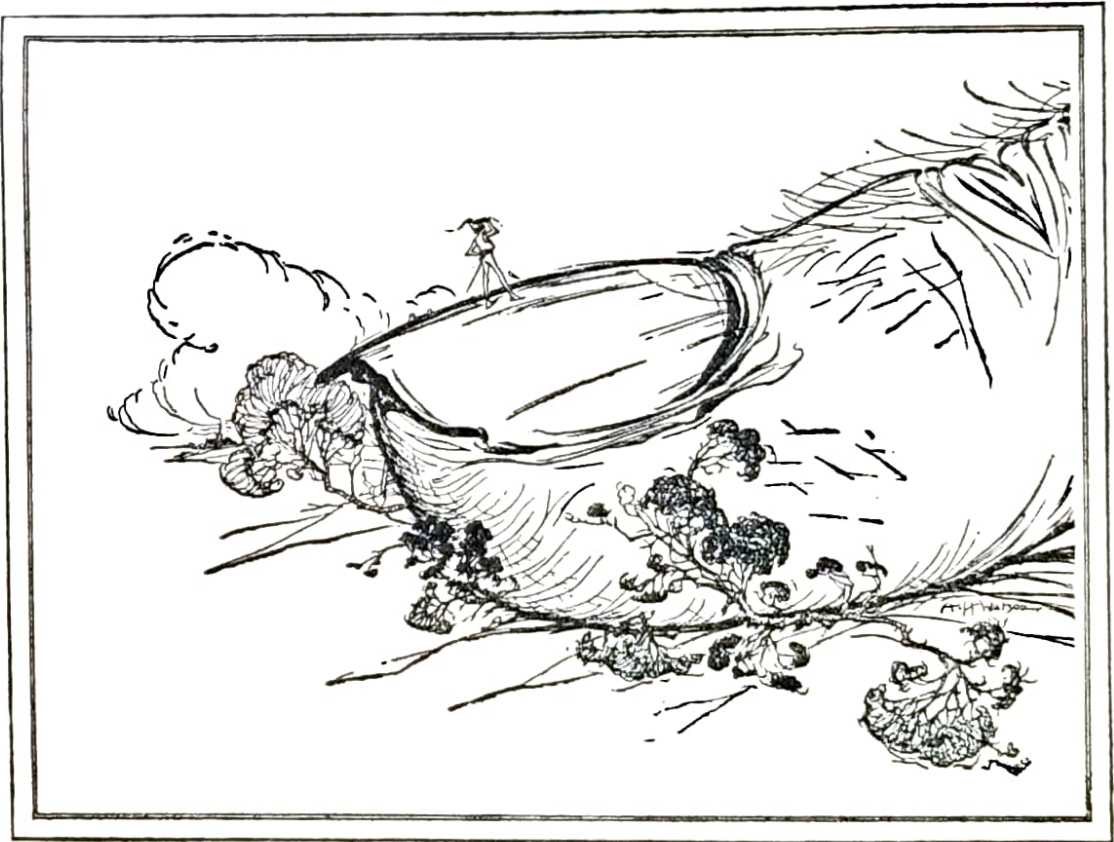
The next night he again set out, only to meet with the same mischance. This time he was blown on to a distant ploughed field and escaped with nothing worse than a few bruises.

The third evening he was too stiff and tired to make another attempt, but on the fourth evening he again ventured. This time the giant slept heavily and quietly and Otmar succeeded in reaching the field in which the great right hand was lying.

Fortunately the ladder was just long enough to reach to the top of the nail on Swell-and-spread's little finger. Otmar climbed up. His knees trembled with excitement! What an adventure! If only he could look into Phœbe's eyes just for one moment! He left the last rung of the ladder. Now he was actually standing on the giant's finger nail. It was very slippery, almost like being

on a sheet of ice. It took him a good many strides to get off the giant's nail and on the firm flesh of his finger. Then it was much easier going, and before very long he found himself on what he knew must be Swell-and-spread's wrist. There was an enormous watch—about as big as Big Ben—strapped on to it, and Otmar had great difficulty in overstepping this obstacle. Then he lay down and had a good rest before starting on the long, arduous walk up the mighty slope of the giant's arm.

It took him an hour to reach the turn of his shoulder. Fortunately Swell-and-spread's hair was very long; it hung down like great ropes, and by catching on to it, Otmar was able to pull himself up to the edge of the giant's ear. It was like looking down into a great pit. Triumphant but exhausted, Otmar sat down and waited



"NOW HE WAS ACTUALLY STANDING ON THE GIANT'S FINGER-NAIL"

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

Gradually the stars paled into extinction in the growing lightness. A lovely flush spread over the sky, and from every tree came sweet pipings as the birds turned in their soft nests.

Three hours after dawn, Otmar saw that the expanse of the giant's cheek which spread before him was no longer still but moving up and down. He guessed he was munching his breakfast.

"Now's my time," thought Otmar, and into the pit of the great ear he shouted.

"Oh, Wonder of the World, Miracle of Nature! All Hail! I bring you the homage of humble humanity. The salutations of the miserable creatures, thou in thy great mercy sufferest to survive."

Until he was hoarse, Otmar went on roaring out every sort of flattery he could think of.

His ears were stopped and he could hear nothing, so how was he to tell what impression his words were making?

"But," he thought, "surely if Swell-and-spread were annoyed I should long since have been squashed like the smallest of flies."

To finish up he shouted, "Most glorious Swell-and-spread, all we wretched, puny men have decided to implore thy Gloriousness to become our king in name as thou already art in fact. We propose to ransack the mines of the wide world till we find sufficient gold from which to make a crown large enough to encompass thy sublime head. We pray thee to accept this crown. If thy humble servant's words have found favour I pray thee keep thy beautiful arm still for the space of an hour so that I may return to the earth and hasten the preparations for thy coronation. I will return to-night."

The giant's great arm lay still as a rock while Otmar ran down its great slope. He hastened to Phœbe and told her of the success of his enterprise.

That evening he found his way back to where the giant's little finger lay and once more made the great ascent. He timed his walk. He found it took him exactly five minutes longer to reach

the ropes of hair, and when he reached the edge of the ear, the pit looked even larger. This filled his heart with joy. His treatment was already taking effect! The giant must have grown!

Again he poured forth words of fulsome flattery.

"Thy servants," he cried, "are toiling night and day, but sufficient gold has not yet been found to furnish a crown for thy head."

Night after night Otmar made the same expedition and each time the walk took him longer. Soon he had to tie two ladders together, for one could no longer reach to the summit of the finger nail.

"I bring you good news," he said to Phœbe. "Not only does my climb grow nightly longer, but I feel certain Swell-and-spread has grown much thinner. Walking on his arm used to be like treading on a well-stuffed cushion, soft and springy; but now the road is terribly hard. His bones are no longer well covered and they bruise the soles of my feet. It is as though I walked on stones. Another thing, the surface is getting ever so much colder. It used to be quite warm. But yesterday, I stumbled and fell and oh! it was so cold!"

"Bravo!" cried Phœbe. "I know your words are true. Longer and longer journeys in search of food are reported and often I hear great roars of rage."

"Yes," said Otmar, "and best of all, he has given up the attempt to keep himself in shoe leather. For this last week his feet have been bare."

"Then," exclaimed Phœbe, "it is surely time for our next move. A thousand swords must be driven into the ground. This very day I will seek an audience of the Prime Minister."

Phœbe hastened to the Prime Minister's Palace. She was so pretty that none of the big footmen had the heart to say their master never saw strangers, so she was admitted straight into his Thinking Room.

He was very surprised to see her, but her prettiness was so enchanting that he gave her a chair and stood still as a statue,

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

staring at her while she poured out the story of Otmar's great war against Swell-and-spread. He was so busy trying to make quite sure whether her eyes were blue-grey or grey-blue and watching the dimple that came and went as her mouth moved in speech, that he really didn't at all understand what she was talking about. In any case, he wasn't very quick at taking ideas from other people, but he was so anxious to please Phœbe that he told her she could have any sort of permission she wanted, and he handed her a piece of paper with a seal, and some writing on it, which gave her power to order the whole army about, just as though it were one tweeny-maid instead of a million men.

So for the next week all the soldiers were ever so busy, sharpening their swords and driving their hilts into the earth till thousands of blades stuck out like blades of grass.

Poor, poor, poor Swell-and-spread!

Oh, the roars of pain and rage that rent the air day after day. As you know, the poor silly monster was bare-footed now, and to add to his troubles, he was not very long-sighted, and lately he had grown so much taller that he could no longer see the ground. He couldn't think what was happening to his feet. They were always being pricked. It was like walking on a pin-cushion.

For miles around the earth was soaked with blood, and his bare head (he could find nothing to cover it) ached from the fierce rays of the sun. This went on for some time. Every night Otmar climbed the weary ascent and every morning shouted his praise.

One night as he stepped off the topmost rung of his ladder, the fleshy road on which he had set his foot struck him chill as ice. It was so cold, that he screamed with surprise.

"I must be on a chilblain," he thought. "The road will soon get warmer."

He hastened along the finger, in his excitement running until he was quite breathless. Wherever he trod it seemed colder and colder. It couldn't surely be all one chilblain? Now it was like

treading on ice. Now he was off the finger, tearing along the hard rocky back of Swell-and-spread's hand.

Colder and colder and colder. Oh, what a deadly chill crept up Otmar's legs! Now, he had climbed over the great wrist-watch and was on the arm. It, too, was colder than any stone.

Otmar had been trying to keep down the hope that was bubbling up in his heart. But now he could no longer doubt the glorious truth. Yes, Swell-and-spread lay cold in death. He was dead, for ever and ever—dead.

The world was freed from its monster!

As fast as feet could carry him, Otmar sped down the cold slope of the dead giant's arm and flew down the ladder that leant against the finger.

"Fear no more!" he cried, rushing to the market-place. "Swell-and-spread will trouble you no more. Pride has swollen him to death."

The joyous news spread like flames in dry heather. Soon bonfires were burning, bells ringing and legs dancing, from one end of the country to another.

Phœbe told the Prime Minister whom the nation had to thank for their deliverance, and Otmar was proclaimed the saviour of his country. He and Phœbe were married the next day. Every woman in the land brought Phœbe a bunch of flowers, so that she was able to walk for miles and miles on lovely blossoms.

Every king in the world sent Otmar a bag of gold, so he was able to buy anything that took his fancy, but Phœbe was never out of his sight and he was too happy to want to do much shopping.

As for Swell-and-spread, fortunately, it was a fiercely hard winter and he was frozen quite stiff and hard; so the Prime Minister didn't have to bother about any funeral arrangements. He became what is called "petrified," and there to this day he lies a great mountain of rock.

"Mount Warning" it is called, and within sight of its great frowning mass of rock, Otmar and Phœbe lived happily ever afterwards.



The Milkmaid's Song

(FROM A PLAY)

MARGARET SACKVILLE



OLD Crump she is a saucy cow and she
should take first prize;
She jumped so high one Summer's night,
she jumped into the skies!
Over the moon, and farther still, she
chewed the stars, and then
When she had had enough of *that* she just
jumped back again!



MARGARET SACKVILLE



She is the neatest cow alive—a wonder
for her age . . .
I churn her milk to butter pats as big
as a green-gage.
Oh! Milk and Cream and Syllabubs!—
It isn't every day
That you can milk a crumpled cow who's
chewed the Milky Way!





A. P. HERBERT

PROLOGUE

SPOKEN BY THE PRINCESS CARAWAY

Our author, who is as kind as he is accomplished, and is, besides, the best-dressed man in Hammersmith, took the unusual step of asking the actors what they would prefer his play to be about. This caused a little difference of opinion, for while one wanted the principal scene to take place in a Castle (with soldiers) another insisted that it must happen in a Post Office. On the other hand it was agreed by all that the principal characters must include a very Fat Man, a Thin Woman, a Fairy, and an Ordinary Person.

All these our author has provided, together with a Castle and Soldiers, though not, unfortunately, the Post Office; and he has thrown in a Highwayman as well, who counts, we suppose, as the Ordinary Person.

We also stipulated that the play should be "very comic," but, as to that, we are not so sure that he has come up to requirements. He wishes us, however, to make it quite clear that for the choice of the characters at least he bears no responsibility, though for the rest he craves your kind indulgence.

FAT KING MELON AND THE PRINCESS CARAWAY

A DRAMA IN FIVE SCENES

SCENE I. FAIRY MUMBO'S GROTTO.

[FAIRY MUMBO, *who is tall and beautiful, but unprincipled, is doing a heavy sort of dance and wears a malicious expression. She is assisted in the dance by FAIRY GURGLE, who is very small indeed.*

Fairy Mumbo.

[*Air "HUMPTY DUMPTY"*]

A fairy specialist you see;
All mortals come consulting me,
Whether they're ill, or whether they're well—
And which is which it's hard to tell.

Mumbo Jumbo is my name.
To one and all I say the same.
Mumbo Jumbo! Fiddle de dee!
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

[*The FAIRY MUMBO sighs heavily. So does the FAIRY GURGLE. A ring at the front-door of the Grotto.*

FAT KING MELON.

Fairy Mumbo.

Oh, dear, another ridiculous mortal in difficulties, I suppose. See who it is, Fairy Gurgle.

Fairy Gurgle [*gurgling.*]

Why?

Fairy Mumbo.

Why not?

[FAIRY GURGLE, *having nothing to say to this, gurgles and goes to the front-door, through which an enormously fat King is trying to squeeze his way, with great breathings and heavings.*]

Fairy Gurgle.

It's a very fat man.

Fairy Mumbo.

How fat?

[FAIRY GURGLE *describes large circles in the air with her hands.*]

Fairy Mumbo.

Then take away our fairy-chairs.

[FAIRY GURGLE *does so and disappears.*]

[*To KING MELON, who has now found a way in, and is approaching.*]

Good morning. I am afraid you will have to sit on the floor. All our chairs are at the upholsterers.

King Melon. [*sitting down on the floor.*]

Thank you. I am King Melon and I have come to ask your advice. You may have noticed, Fairy Mumbo, that I am quite unusually fat?

Fairy Mumbo. [*with a start of well-bred surprise.*]

Bless me, Your Majesty! What an idea! But stay—now you mention it, I do observe a certain tendency to adiposity—nothing more, I assure you.

The King. You are very kind. Now, I am about to pay a visit to the beautiful Princess Caraway, of Gardenia, whom I hope to make my wife.

Fairy Mumbo.

I congratulate you, Your Majesty.

King Melon. [*Holding up his hand in a deprecating manner.*]

Not yet, I beg. The Princess and I have never met, though we have been betrothed for many years; and I fear that when she sees me she may no longer be as anxious to marry me as she was ten years ago.

Fairy Mumbo. [*politely.*]

She is said to have excellent taste and judgment, Your Majesty.

King Melon. [*bitterly.*]

Exactly. Could any woman of taste and judgment endure to marry a creature so detestably fat as me? Especially a Princess—for Princesses, as you must have noticed, are invariably slender. Now, what do you advise?

Fairy Mumbo.

Let me see the tongue.

[KING MELON *obligingly puts out his tongue, which the FAIRY examines—with a slight frown.*]

Fairy Mumbo.

H'm. [*oracular*] You are suffering from Cotopaxia.

FAT KING MELON

The King. I beg your pardon?

Fairy Mumbo. Cotopaxia.

The King. Good Heavens! What is that?

Fairy Mumbo.

It is an obscure and terrible disease. [*The KING starts*] There is only one cure for it. [*The King leans forward anxiously*] You must become thin. To do that——

The King [*eagerly.*]
Yes?

Fairy Mumbo.

You must take more exercise and drink a glass of hot water night and morning.

The King [*aghast.*]

Exercise? Do you want to kill me?

Fairy Mumbo.

How far is it to the palace of the Princess Caraway?

The King. Fifty leagues.

Fairy Mumbo. And how, Your Majesty, do you propose to travel *thither*?

The King. Riding upon a horse.

Fairy Mumbo.

You will leave the horse behind. You will *walk* to the Palace of the Princess Caraway. And on the way you will pick a quarrel with every way-farer you meet, for fighting is the most healthy form of exercise, and one of the least expensive. You will arrive at the Palace as slender as a larch. [*She strikes a silver gong*]

[FAIRY GURGLE *appears.*]

Fairy Gurgle, show His Majesty out.

[*The King retiring.*]

Fairy Mumbo, I can never thank you enough.

Fairy Mumbo [*curtly.*]

I do not ask for thanks. Drop ten gold crowns in the box. Good morning.

[*The FAIRY GURGLE holds up a Gold Crown box, in which the KING drops his offering. He then inserts himself in the door-way, and, aided by the FAIRY GURGLE, who pushes behind, makes his way out. The FAIRY MUMBO yawns wearily.*]

[*A bell rings, and by another door there enters the PRINCESS CARAWAY, who is, indeed, extraordinarily slender and fashionable.*]

Fairy Mumbo.

Good morning.

The Princess.

Good morning. What a charming place you have!
[*GURGLE provides her with a chair and she sits down.*]
I am the Princess Caraway.

Fairy Mumbo.

One of the Gardenia Caraways, I think?

The Princess [*haughtily.*]

The Gardenia Caraway.

Fairy Mumbo.

And you have come to consult me about your approaching marriage with King Melon.

The Princess [*amazed.*]

Fairy Mumbo! But you are a magician indeed!
How did you guess?

Fairy Mumbo [*with a wise and satisfied smile.*]

It is my business to know everything.

FAT KING MELON

The Princess [*uncomfortably.*]

The truth is, Fairy, as you may have noticed, I am so terribly *skinny*.

Fairy Mumbo [*kindly.*]

Oh, come! A little anæmic, perhaps, nothing more.

The Princess [*sadly.*]

You are very kind. But I have heard that King Melon is unusually robust, and I am very much afraid that, when we meet, he may not like me. Now, what do you advise?

Fairy Mumbo. H'm! [*sharply*] Pat the top of the head with the right hand. [*The Princess does so.*] Now rub the chest with the left. [*The Princess attempts this awful feat, but ends in the usual muddle.*] H'm! You are suffering from Cotopaxia.

The Princess [*blanching.*]

Oh, what is that?

Fairy Mumbo.

It is an obscure and terrible disease. There is only one cure for it. You must put on flesh.

The Princess [*eagerly.*]

Oh, tell me how!

Fairy Mumbo.

You must take more exercise, and drink a glass of hot water night and morning.

The Princess [*horrified.*]

Exercise! But whoever heard of a Princess taking exercise?

Fairy Mumbo.

If necessary, you can dress up as a Prince, and then no one will think anything of it.

The Princess.

But what sort of exercise?

Fairy Mumbo.

Walking exercise. To-morrow you will walk back to the Palace.

The Princess.

But I have a coach-and-six!

Fairy Mumbo.

Exactly. It is high time you walked.

The Princess.

But it is fifty leagues!

Fairy Mumbo.

Exactly. On the way you will sing songs and eat nuts, and as far as possible not think of anything. Let your mind remain perfectly empty. You will arrive at the Palace as round and plump as a water-melon. Good morning. [*She beats the gong.*] Fairy Gurgle!

The Princess [*rising*].

Oh, Fairy, how can I ever thank you?

[FAIRY GURGLE *appears.*]

Fairy Mumbo.

Ten gold crowns is the usual thing, but in special cases we accept twenty. *Good morning.*

The Princess [*dropping her crowns into the box*].

Good-bye. You have done me *so* much good. Do you know, I feel fatter already? [*Exit*].

FAT KING MELON

The Fairy Mumbo.

[*Air*—"HUMPTY, DUMPTY"]

Mumbo Jumbo! Fiddle-de-dee!
Fairies all, be wise as me!
First invent a new disease,
Find a fool, and name your fees!

[*The two FAIRIES execute a triumphant dance.*]

(*Curtain*)

SCENE II

OUTSIDE THE GREAT GATE OF KING MELON'S CASTLE

[*KING MELON is conducting a review of his troops, two in number, but upstanding fellows and well-armed with swords and muskets. There is also a third troop, but so small as hardly to be noticed.*]

The King [*who is mounted on a horse*].

My gallant Army, we march immediately!

1st Troop [*sulkily*].

We shall march, Your Majesty, but you will ride.

The King [*annoyed*].

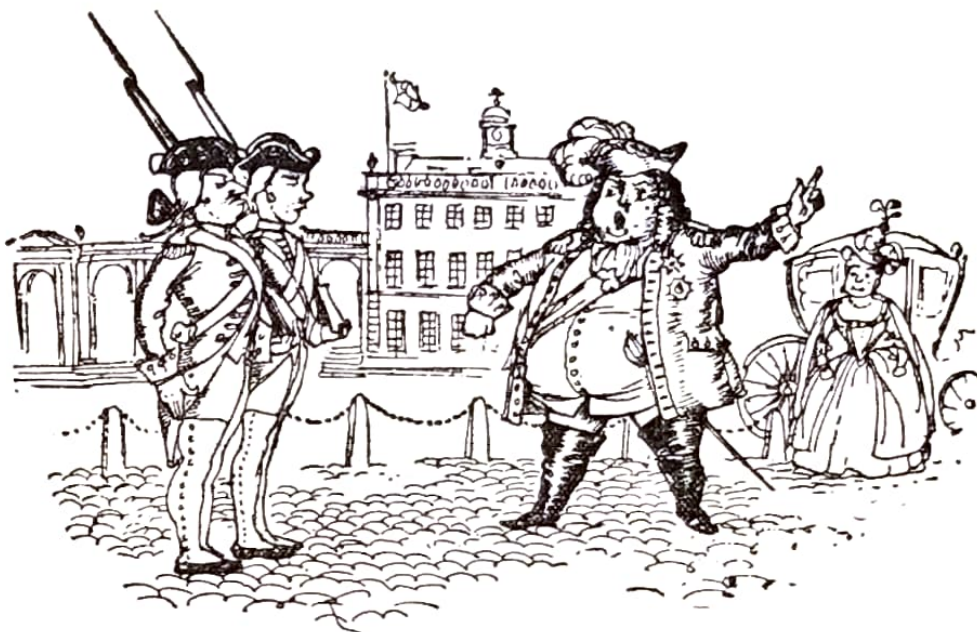
Fellow, I mean what I say. On this occasion your King has determined to march at your side, and share with you the rigours of the road. This horse and I part company as soon as we have left the Castle.

2nd Troop. Hooray!

The King [with a cautious glance at the castle].

But hush! my mother must not know of this, for it would break her heart to know that I was walking. Why, here she comes!—*Hup!*

[*The TROOPS, who are standing at ease, are apparently unfamiliar with this old-fashioned military command, and remain motionless.*]



“MY GALLANT ARMY, WE MARCH IMMEDIATELY”

The King [again].

I say—*Hup!*

[*The TROOPS shoulder arms with marvellous precision.*]

The King. Hap!

[*The TROOPS slope arms.*]

The King. General salute! Pre-sent-hip!

[*Entry of the KING'S MOTHER.*]

[*The TROOPS present arms, just as the KING'S MOTHER, majestically, emerges from the Great Gate. The KING'S*

FAT KING MELON

MOTHER *is, naturally, very large, and quite ridiculously attached to the FAT KING.* *The troops sing—*

[*Entry of the KING'S MOTHER.*]

Air—“BLOW THY HORN, HUNTER”

Sing a song, soldiers,
And loudly shout Hurrah!
The King is fat,
But look at that—
It is the King's Mamma!
Come, sing a song, soldiers,
It is—it *is* the King's Mamma!

The King's Mother [*throwing a single, but contemptuous, glance at the TROOPS*]. My dear Melon, I wish you would not exert yourself so much. You know how bad it is for you.

The King [*dutifully*].

Yes, Mother. But I do so like giving orders. And, after all, a great deal of that exertion was done by the troops.

The King's Mother.

I should think so! [*indulgently.*] Well, my dear Melon, I hope you will find the Princess in good health. I knew her when she was *so* high; and she was such a darling—as plump and as bonny as a red plum. And, Melon, if you *do* have to fight a battle promise me you'll fight it on horseback, because I'm sure it's safer, and you won't get out of breath.

The King [*shamefaced*].

Of course, mother. I have always despised the infantry.

The King's Mother [kissing him fondly].
Good-bye, my Round One.

The King.

Farewell, Mother!

[*The TROOPS march round and round and eventually off, to a martial strain, the KING bringing up the rear.*

[*The KING'S MOTHER waves a sad farewell with a large yellow scarf.*]

[*Air—"THE HATHERSAGE COCKING"*]

Away to the wars! in column of fours,
We march to meet our foes,
Brave boys,
'Twere strange if they won, for we have a gun,
But they have only bows,
Brave boys!

Form fours!—to the wars!
Left! Right!—to the fight,
We won't retreat till they advance,
Sing "Honi Soit Qui Malxy Panse."

(*Curtain*)

SCENE III

PART OF AN IMPENETRABLE FOREST : THE HIGH-WAY

[*The forest consists of enormous quantities of trees. It is very dark, the wind whistles, and in all probability it is raining. A highwayman lurks in a corner of the stage. He is on horse-back and wears a mask.*]

FAT KING MELON

The Highwayman.

[*Air*—"HARK! HARK! THE DOGS DO BARK!"]

My—dad's a burglar!
Though a highwayman is duller,
I ride a horse,
And so, of course,
I keep a healthy colour.
Your father may,
Be all you say,
But look at his complexion! *

The Highwayman [*soliloquising*].

Peste! The wind blows cold, and I am wet to the skin— But soft! Yonder comes a pursy citizen who shall furnish me with a dry coat. [*Slapping his mare's neck*] Quiet, Bess!

[*A very OLD LADY crosses the stage, accompanied by a very SMALL CHILD*].

The Highwayman [*spurring his horse, presents his pistol and cries*].

Stand and deliver!

The Old Lady [*who is deaf, walks straight on, saying calmly, in high, shrill tones*].

What does the gentleman say, Richard? I can't hear.

Richard [*shouting*].

He says "Stand and deliver," Mother!

The Old Lady.

Standard *what?*

* The words of this song are believed to be very old and, therefore, naturally, neither rhyme nor scan.

Richard [shouting].

Stand and deliver!

The Old Lady.

"Very bad weather"? Oh, to be sure—so it is.

[Patting the Highwayman's horse—as she passes it.]

It's a nice horse, sir. I wish I had a lump of sugar for him. Good night, sir.

[She passes on with Richard and disappears.]

The Highwayman [is left speechless, but he says, angrily].

This is very discourteous!—Come, Bess, we will lurk again.

[He lurks against a tree, closing his eyes.]

[Enter the PRINCESS CARAWAY, disguised as a man.]

The Princess [drooping].

Ah, me! I am weary. I have walked twenty leagues and I swear I am no fatter than I was before. And it is very lonely being a man. [The HIGHWAYMAN snores, and she starts.]

[Air—"WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO, MY PRETTY MAID?"]

Though I am dressed in masculine dress,

I am, in fact, a pretty Princess.

I see a man, and, I confess,

I confess, I confess,

I rather hope that man will guess.

The Princess [yawning—ostentatiously].

I will lie down and sleep in the wet grass.

The Highwayman [observing her—presenting his pistol].

Your money or your life!

The Princess [proffering a bank-note].

Can you give me change?

FAT KING MELON

The Highwayman [starting].

That voice! [Accusingly] You are the Princess Caraway!

The Princess [starting].

Betrayed! But how did you unravel the secret?

The Highwayman.

I have loved you since you were so high [simply]. There was a picture of the Royal Family in my nursery.

The Princess.

Will you swear not to betray me?

The Highwayman.

I swear it. May I kiss your hand?

The Princess.

Yes, if you kneel down.

[The HIGHWAYMAN kneels down and kisses her hand. While he is doing this KING MELON enters from the right, weary and dragging his feet. He looks already a shade thinner, and he has lost his crown.]

King Melon [talking to himself, or rather to the audience].

My Army has deserted me. I am worn out with marching. I have fought seventeen fights, and lost them all. And now I have lost my way. Yet, courage, Melon, you have lost flesh as well [slapping and examining his lower chest, with satisfaction]. Yes, Melon, there is no doubt of it, you are not altogether the man you were. [Noticing the other two for the first time.] Stay, what is this? Highwaymen! Conspirators! I will pick a quarrel and lose another ounce! Yield, caitiffs! [He presents his musket.]

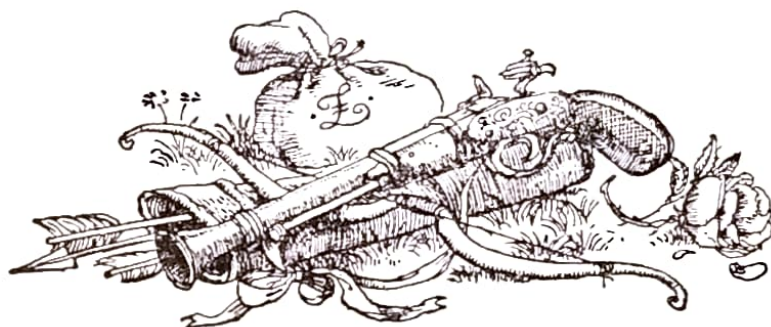
The Highwayman [*coolly—rising from his knees*].
Do you challenge me to single combat?

The King. I do. I challenge you both to single combat.

The Highwayman [*grimly*].
Very well. I will fight you first.

The Princess [*confident*].
And I will fight what is left of you.

The King [*grandly*].
There is no question of "first." I will fight the two of you together [*aside*] and lose two ounces at one blow.



The Highwayman.
But you cannot fight a duel with two of us at the same time.

The King [*with great scorn*].
Huh! Why, sir, have you never heard of a triangular duel?

The Highwayman [*loftily—not to be outdone*].
Of course! I have fought in dozens.

The King. Very well, then. What are your weapons.

The Highwayman [*presenting his pistol*].
Pistols!

FAT KING MELON.

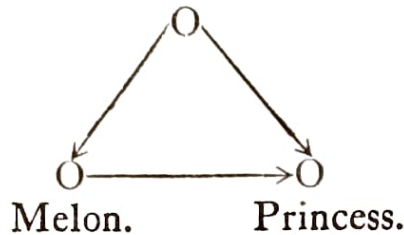
The Princess [presenting a bow and arrow which she had just found lying about]. Bows and arrows!

The King [presenting his musket].

Blunderbusses!

[They are standing thus—both the Princess and the Highwayman aiming at the King.]

Highwayman.



The Highwayman.

I shall say—"Are you ready—Fire!"—"Are you ready?—"

The King [lowering his musket, with which he was aiming at the Princess].

Pardon me, sir, but you should be aiming at *this* gentleman [the Highwayman] whose name I do not know.

The Princess.

But I have no quarrel with *him*.

The Highwayman.

Certainly not. My name is Orange-Peel.

The Princess.

My name is Pear. William Pear.

The King. Thank you. My name is Lemon. But you must see that I cannot shoot both of you with one blunderbuss. Besides, if Mr. Orange-Peel is to take part in a duel it seems unfair that nobody should shoot at him at all.

The Princess [reasonably].

There is something in that, Mr. Orange-Peel.

The Highwayman [warmly].

There is nothing in it, Mr. Pear.

The King [reasonably].

I shoot at Mr. Pear; Mr. Pear shoots at Mr. Orange-Peel; and Mr. Orange-Peel shoots at me. That's fair all round.

The Highwayman [hotly].

It's nothing of the sort. It's nonsense!

The King [haughtily].

You agreed to fight a triangular duel, and, as men of honour, you can scarcely now withdraw.

The Princess [impressed].

That's true. [Suddenly aiming her arrow at the Highwayman] Are you ready, Mr. Orange-Peel?

The Highwayman [very loudly].

NO!!! I don't like this kind of duel, Mr. Pear.

The Princess.

Be reasonable, Mr. Orange-Peel. You will only be shot with a bow and arrow, but I shall be shot with a blunderbuss.

The King. After all, Mr. Orange-Peel, anyone who fights a duel must expect to be shot with something.

The Highwayman.

I should enjoy being shot by you, Mr. Lemon, but I object to being shot by my own side. [Anxiously] But I suppose you're only pretending, Mr. Pear?

The Princess.

Certainly not! [Firmly] Are you ready?

The Highwayman.

If you are not careful, Mr. Pear, I shall tell Mr. Lemon you're a lady.

FAT KING MELON.

The Princess [infuriated].

Treachery! For the last time—Are you ready—*Fire!*

[*All three discharge their pieces with a loud "Pop" "Ping!" and "Bang!" respectively. All three duellists fall prostrate to the ground—and it is seen that an arrow is sticking in the heart of the HIGHWAYMAN.*]

[*SLOW MUSIC is played and it is realised that all three are seriously wounded, if not actually dead.*]

[*The FAIRY GURGLE, however, now appears, and after a contemptuous glance at the HIGHWAYMAN waves her wand over the KING and the PRINCESS, who sit up, all alive. The PRINCESS, forgetting herself, immediately produces a small mirror and does her hair.*]

The King [starting].

By thunder! A woman!

The Princess [starting].

Betrayed again!

The King [politely].

Madam, I am only a poor husbandman.

The Princess.

And I am only a poor sempstress.

The King. But shall we continue our journey together?

The Princess [coily].

By all means!

The Princess.

[*Air—"ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT"*]

Through the wood the night is creeping—

Please stay with me.

I'm afraid of lions leaping

Down from the tree.

All the wood is full of shadows,
Walking shadows, whispering shadows;
'Course, I'm not afraid of shadows—
 But please stay with me.

[*Exeunt arm in arm—leaving the unscrupulous
HIGHWAYMAN still dead.*]

(*Curtain*)

SCENE IV

[*The scene is a harbour, and the ship seen on the stage
is just about to put to sea. The sailors sing a rollicking
chorus as they heave on the anchor, and a good deal of
drinking goes on.*]

[*Air—“THE JOLLY FELLOW”*]

Heave ho! the mariner!
 Fill the flowing tankard!
Merry is the mariner,
 When the ship is anchored.
Merry is the mariner,
Merry is the mariner,
Merry is the mariner,
 When the ship is anchored.

I like the roving life
 While I'm in harbour,
But when the anchor's up
 I want to be a barber.
But when the anchor's up,
But when the anchor's up,
But when the anchor's up,
 I'd like to be a barber.

FAT KING MELON

[KING MELON and the PRINCESS stand at the gangway of the ship, parting. The rough sailors lean over the side and listen to the following romantic passage.]

The Princess [sadly].

Then we have come to the parting of the ways?
Will you not take ship with me and sail to Gardenia?

The King [sadly].

No. I have promised to walk to Gardenia.

The Princess.

Why?

The King [evasively].

It is a vow. I am a very religious man.

The Princess [admiringly].

You are very brave. I am afraid that if you walk to Gardenia you will be killed, for I have noticed that whenever you meet another man you fight him.

The King [modestly].

Yes. I do this to make people respect my religion.

The Princess [pensive].

I am not a very religious woman. You must teach me.

The King. You are very beautiful. [Deeply moved.] I should like to ask you to marry me, but unfortunately I am betrothed to another.

The Princess.

I should like to marry you, but I too am blighted to another.

The King. Farewell. I am afraid we shall never meet again.

The Princess.

It is very pathetic.

The King [nobly].

Duty, however, must always come before inclination.

The Princess.

Yes. Will you lend me your handkerchief? I think I am going to cry.

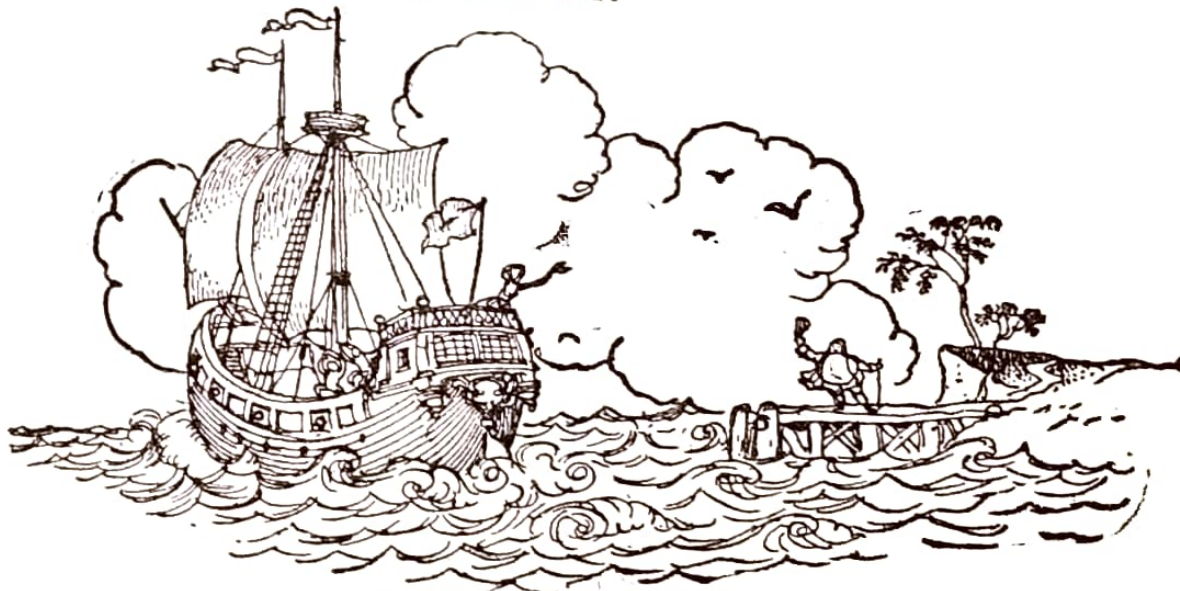
[*The KING hands her a purple handkerchief, and she does cry. So do all the sailors.*]

[*Duet.*]

[*Air—"CARE, THOU CANCKER OF OUR JOYS!"*]

The Princess.

Gladly would I wed you, dear,
But, alas, I am bespoken!
Give me, pray, some tiny token
For to be a souvenir.



THE PRINCESS SAILS AWAY

The King. Keep this pocket-handkerchee,
Purple silk, and rather pleasing,
And when e'er you fall a-sneezing,
Think, my darling, think of me.

The King [*falling on both knees*].

Farewell, dear sempstress! I could not love you better if you were a Princess.

FAT KING MELON

Farewell, dear Mr. Lemon! Though you are only a poor husbandman, you will always be the King of my heart.

[She rolls up the KING'S purple handkerchief and puts it in her pocket (or somewhere). She then turns and enters the ship, which immediately sails away. The Blue Peter is hauled up and hoisted down several times: and the sailors sing a sad sea-chanty.]

[*Air*—"MISSOURI"]

Oh, fare you well, you queen of mothers,
Away, my rolling river!
My heart is yours, but I'm another's.
Ah! Ah! we're bound away
'Cross the wide Missouri!

I love you best, my pride and beauty,
Away, my rolling river!
But what is love, compared with duty?
Ah! Ah! we're bound away,
'Cross the wide Missouri!

SCENE V

[A Room in the Palace of the Princess Caraway.]

[The PRINCESS is with her tiring-women, being tired. GREENGAGE, her principal tiring-woman, is even now adjusting the last hook and eye at the back, with difficulty, for the PRINCESS has now become enormously fat. She is circular, she bulges. At her side is a glass of hot water from which from time to time she sips.]

[Her tiring-women sing a fretful song—as they wrestle with the PRINCESS'S dress—]

[*Air*—"HARES ON THE MOUNTAINS"]

Oh, what can one do with these tiresome Princesses
Who eat too much fruit and grow out of their dresses?
Singing ri-fol-de'dee, cal-al-de-lay—ri-fol-i-dee.

We make her new frocks, but we don't like to charge
her,

For before they are finished she's two sizes larger.
Singing ri-fol-de'dee, cal-al-de-lay—ri-fol-i-dee.

The King calls this morning. We had to be drastic,
We've bought her a dress which is made of elastic.
Singing ri-fol-de'dee, cal-al-de-lay—ri-fol-i-dee.

The Princess [*doubtfully—surveying herself in the glass*].
Do you think the King will like me, Greengage?

Greengage [*obsequious*].
Your Highness, I presume he has eyes.

The Princess [*anxiously*].
You're sure I haven't overdone it?

Greengage. On the contrary, Your Highness, if report is correct,
you are still a little on the slight side to be a perfect
match for King Melon.

The Princess.
Oh dear! Give me the hot water.
[*They do so; and she sips assiduously.*]

The Princess.
And now leave me, for I am bored with you.

Greengage [*curtseying*].
Your Highness is very good.
[*Exit, with tiring-women.*]

FAT KING MELON.

[Left to herself the PRINCESS tip-toes guiltily to a secret drawer, from which she takes a large and familiar purple handkerchief.]

The Princess [*pressing the handkerchief to her lips*].
Ah, would that my dear fat husbandman were coming to see me, instead of this ridiculous King!
[*Sighing*] I will sing a sad song about Love.

[*Air*—"BARBARA ALLEN"]

Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!
Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, de-ar!
Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!
Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, de-ar!

[While she is again pressing the handkerchief to her lips, the door opens and Greengage announces.]

His Majesty King Melon!

[The KING is now in his crown and robes, but, doubtless as a result of his recent exertions, he has become extraordinarily thin.]

The King [*bowing low*].
Your Highness!

The Princess [*curtseying*].
Your Majesty!
[*Music—Stately Dance.*]

The King [*aside*].
Charming! But how horribly fat!

The Princess [*aside*].
Goodness! What a scarecrow! Won't you sit down?
[*They sit down, side by side*].

The King [*heavily*].

Your Highness, I have come to make a formal request for your hand in marriage [*surveying again the monstrous form beside him; with disgust, aside*]. Pouf! This is impossible! To think that I was once as fat myself!

The Princess [*with her woman's intuition—aside*].

The pig! He does not like me!

The King. But I am a kind man, and after all these years I should not wish you to feel bound to me by your blighted word, if you were not willing.

The Princess [*haughtily*].

It is evident that His Majesty no longer desires the marriage; in which case the Princess is very ready to release him.

The King [*anxiously*].

Pray do not misunderstand me [*at this point his features are suddenly contracted into a frightful expression of pain and apprehension—and after a moment he cries*]. I am going to sneeze. Quick! A handkerchief!

[*The PRINCESS, after a little fumbling, nobly produces and hands to him the romantic purple handkerchief. But the KING is so surprised to see this that he no longer wants to sneeze.*]

The King [*to himself—examining the handkerchief*].

Strange! Yes. These are the Royal Initials! [*To the Princess—laughing*]. It is a curious coincidence, Your Highness, but this is mine! Ha! Some mistake at the laundry, I dare say.

FAT KING MELON

[*The PRINCESS (startled) peers into his face, places her hands on her heart and remarks, aside*] Gracious! Can it be my husbandman? [*She takes another look*] It is! And he doesn't like me any more! [*She begins to cry and holds out her hand for the handkerchief.*]

The King [*embarrassed—rises*].

Pardon me, Your Highness, it has naturally given you pain to bring to an end our long and honourable betrothal. But, believe me, I bear you no ill-will for the decision you have made—none whatever. Consider yourself at liberty. And now I will take my leave. [*bowing*] Your Highness, good-day! [*He turns and walks with dignity away. At the door, however, a thought strikes him and he returns, stands by the weeping woman and holds out his hand. She stops weeping and looks up at him.*]

The King. Pardon me. I think you have my handkerchief.

The Princess [*sadly—giving it to him*].

Have you forgotten the little sempstress to whom you gave this token?

The King [*warmly*].

On the contrary—she is ever in my thoughts!

The Princess [*brokenly—fixing her eyes on his*].

You have forgotten her!

The King [*starting*].

What! Can it be——? But no! For she was as slender as a larch, and you, Princess, if you will forgive my saying so, are not. Alas, I shall never be happy with a fat woman again.



-King Melon & the Princess Caraway-

FAT KING MELON

The Princess [*doing something to her dress*].

I don't know if it will make any difference, Your Majesty, but, the truth is, I have got a pillow in my bozzom. [*And, sure enough, she extracts from her bosom a huge pillow and other padding, and immediately becomes thin again.*]

The King [*delighted and amazed—embraces her*].

My Queen! My Caraway!

The Princess.

You see, dear Melon, I wanted to be fat for your sake, but try as I would, I could not put on flesh. So I thought I would pretend.

The King. Ha! And I have well-nigh killed myself with trying to be thin for your sake. Well, well, this will be a lesson to both of us.

The Princess.

It will be a lesson to me not to consult that quack of a Fairy again—*Oo!*
[*Enter the FAIRY MUMBO.*]

The Fairy Mumbo [*sententiously*].

[*Air—"MY LADY WIND"*]

This lesson all around we see;
The rabbits wish they were not wee;
The elephants would like to be
As tiny as the elves;

But wishing never swelled a chest,
Don't think at all about the rest;
Whate'er you be, to be the best,
Be first of all yourselves.

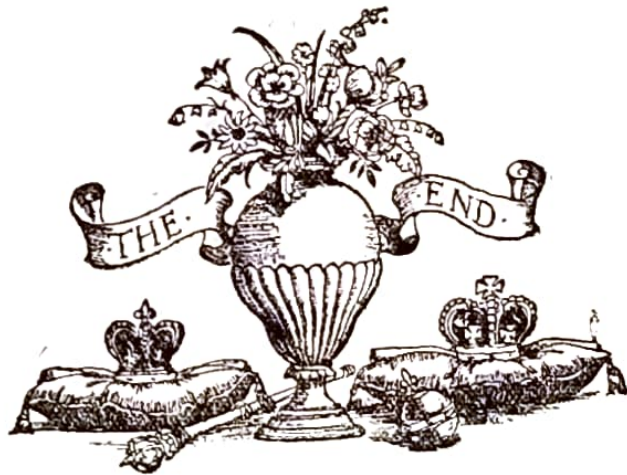
A. P. HERBERT.

[Exit the FAIRY MUMBO hurriedly, as she has to change her clothes.]

The King. Cease this offensive moralising, and let us have a dance! [Clapping his hands.] Ho, servitors!
[The entire Company pour on to the stage and execute a vigorous and attractive dance.]

[Air—"JOHNNY TO THE FAIR"]

(Curtain)





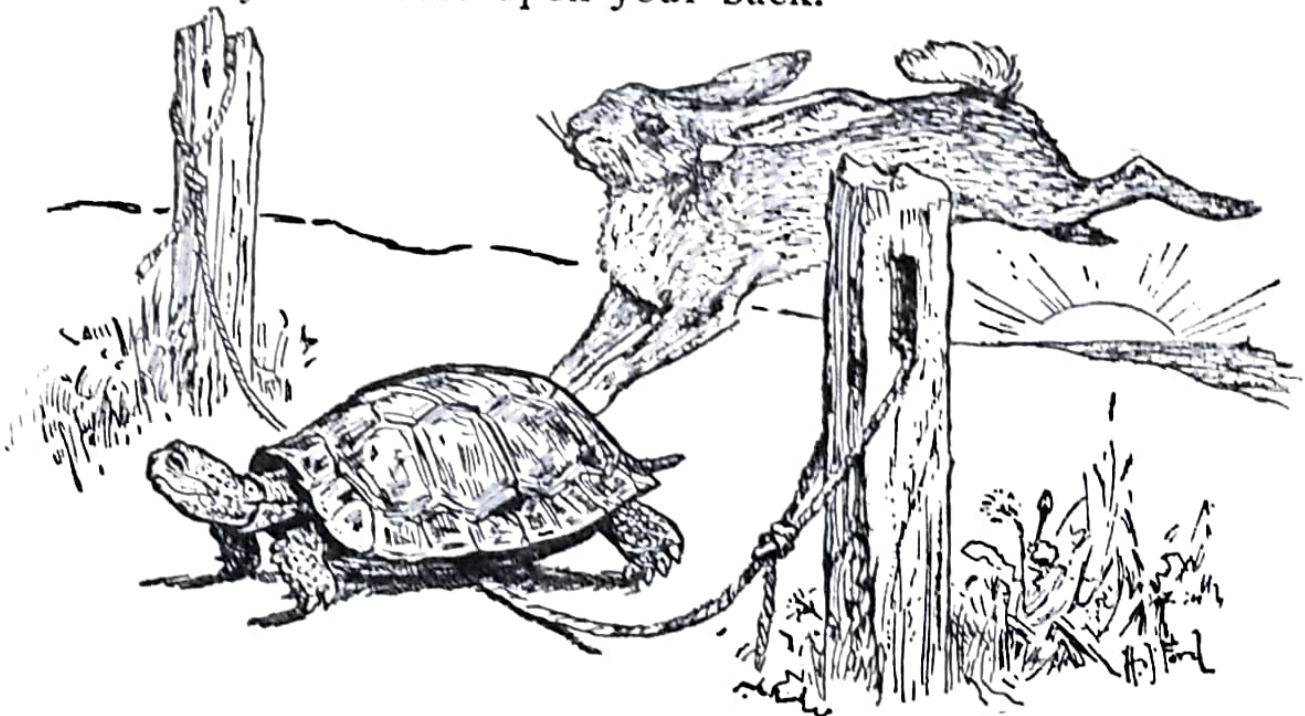
The Hare and the Tortoise

La Fontaine, Fables VI. 10

EDWARD MARSH

Running's no use, unless you start betimes.
The Tortoise and the Hare in these my rhymes
Shall prove the fact. "I wager," said the one,
"That if to yonder goal we run
I beat you." "Me!" jeered Lightfoot in a pet,
"Gossip, you're raving—take four grains
Of hellebore to clear your brains."
"Raving or no, I make the bet."
"Done." By the goal their stakes were set,
(Though what they were's all one to me,
Or who was asked to referee.)
To gain the post, four steps sufficed the Hare
(Those steps of his, when as the hounds draw near
He shoots into the middle of next year
And leaves them plodding in the rear;)

So, having ample time to spare
For a good browse, a nap or two,
Or listening whence the breezes blew,
He let the Tortoise start the race
At her own senatorial pace.
All out to win, away she went,
And, hasting slowly, onward strained:
While he, contemptuous of the cheap event,
And seeing no glory to be gained,
Thought it a point of honour to start late.
He therefore lounged along the straight,
Paused here to nibble, there to doze,
Letting his vagrant fancy rest
On everything except the test,
Till seeing his rival nearly at the post.
Swift as an arrow, off he goes—
But all in vain! The race was lost,
The Tortoise home. "I told you so," said she:
"Speed wins no prizes for the slack.
Me first! I wonder how t'would be
Had you a house upon your back."





The Blot on Peter Pan

J. M. BARRIE

I HAD been asked to keep them quiet for an hour, as it was a wet day. "Well, then, you four shrimps," says I, "once upon a time I was asked by some children to tell them what is the Blot on Peter Pan. Then once upon another time the children of those children asked me to tell them what is the Blot on Peter Pan. Is that clear? Then, this brings us to to-day; but still I don't see why I should tell you what is the Blot, when I have so long kept it secret."

"Because you love us," suggested Billy.

"No, no, Billy," said I, annoyed at being caught out, "there can be no love without respect. Jane, either put your shoe definitely on or take it definitely off. Lay down those matches, Sammy. Sara dear, get off my knee; surely you know by this time that I see through your cheap blandishments. I wish you children had not such leery faces, but I suppose it is your natural expression."

"Peter is rather a leery one," said Sammy.

"You have found that out, have you? Well, when I made him up he was the noble youth I should like you to be, though I have given up hoping. He would have scorned then to brag to that girl whom he took with him to his island, and he was always obedient, polite and good."

"What changed him?"

For further episodes in the life of Nell, see "The Flying Carpet"

"I did, Sara, because I had become a cynic."

"What is a sinsik?"

Here I got in the deadliest thing I have said for years. "A cynic," says I, "is a person who has dealings with children."

"What made you a sinsik?"

"It was a boy called Neil."

"I don't know any Neil," said Biliy.

"You could not have known this boy, he was born so long before you."

"I daresay I could have licked him," said Billy.

"Before you were born?"

"Well, if he had waited."

"You could not have licked him in any case," I said rather hotly. "No one of his age could have stood up to that boy. He was a wonder."

"So you were fond of him?"

"On the contrary, this story is to be the exposure of him."

"Funny way to begin," muttered Billy. "How old was he?"

"At the time he did for me he was seventeen hundred days old."

Sammy whistled.

"That may seem old to the more backward of you," I explained, "but those who have got out of beads into real counting should be able to discover his age with a pencil. If any of you has got out of pencil into ink you should be able to do it with a pen."

Jane was the quickest to work it out (with a pencil), and she found that Neil at that time was the same age as Sara is now, which made Sara simper.

"Before we come, however," I continued, "to the advanced age at which Neil laid me out, there is a reason why I should describe his christening, for if it had been a different kind of christening, P. Pan would be a different kind of boy. In the thirty days or so before you are christened it scarcely matters whether you are good or bad, because in the eyes of the law you are only a bundle without a name, or such name as you have is written thus— —

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

which is easy to write but more difficult to pronounce. A boy called Mr. Macaulay remembered the day he was born, but if you are only ordinarily nippy you get a pass by remembering your christening. Neil could not remember even raising his head at the christening to catch what his name was.

"I remember raising mine," said Billy.

"Neil, however, remembered something of far greater class," I said haughtily; "he remembered seeing the fairy godmothers sitting on the rim of the font."

At this there were exclamations, Billy's being the most offensive.

"I had his word for it," I said.

"But if you had only my word for it——" Billy began and stopped, so we shall never know what he was going to say.

"Did you see them?" asked Jane, speaking like a needle.

"I wasn't there."

"Weren't you invited?"

"Certainly I was invited; I was Neil's godfather. But when the time came round I could not remember what a godfather wears at christenings."

"I wouldn't have let that keep me away," said Sammy.

"You would have risked going into the wrong waistcoat!" I shrieked. "No, I consulted the best books of reference—fairy tales, of course—and I made the extraordinary discovery that all a godfather does at a christening is to stay away. Though these books are full of godmothers there is not a single godfather in them. I offer a shilling for every fairy godfather you can produce."

They made a brief search in the books (during which I had rather an anxious time), but not a godfather could they find.

"So I bit my lips," I told them, "and stayed away. Among the early arrivals at Neil's christening were the clergyman and the parents and— —himself; and then came the usual rabble of fairy godmothers, who took up their places in a circle on the rim of the font."

"So they were really there."

"So Neil did see them."

"Did the clergyman see them?"

"He is so used to them that if they behave he scarcely looks. If they misbehave he wipes them off the rim with his sleeve. But I don't blame you, Billy, for not having seen them at your christening. They cannot be seen clearly now-a-days because of a shocking thing that happens at their own christenings. An ogre who hates them and is called Science——"

"Why does Sams hate them?"

"Sams is a better name for him. He hates them because they prevent children from joining in the forward movement."

"Golly, what's that?"

"It is Progress. The fairies see to it that the newly-born of to-day are not a whit more advanced than their predecessors, and so the latest child is just as likely as the first one (dear little Cain), to ask a poser that has never been asked before. As a result Sams naturally hates the fairies, and he goes to their christenings and tries to rub them out. Don't cry, Sara, he doesn't entirely rub them out; he leaves quite a pretty blur. He also rubs away at their voices, which in consequence have become very faint. If Sara doesn't stop crying I shall stop the story.

"The christening seemed to those present to be quite uneventful. First the clergyman did his dipping and said, 'I name this child Neil, and if anyone objects let him for ever after hold his peace.' Then the fairy godmothers gave their gifts, qualities such as Beauty, each at the same time copying the clergyman (for they are very imitative) and letting fall one drop of water on Neil's face, always aiming (if I know anything about them) at the eye. The people then went home to rejoice with sandwiches, thinking all was well."

"And wasn't it?"

"Alas, as the years revolved (which they do because the earth is round) we discovered that the fairies had made a mess of things.

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

What do fairy godmothers usually do at a christening? You know the stories better than I do."

"All the godmothers are good," Jane said, "except one whom the parents forget to invite, so she comes in a rage and mischiefs the child."

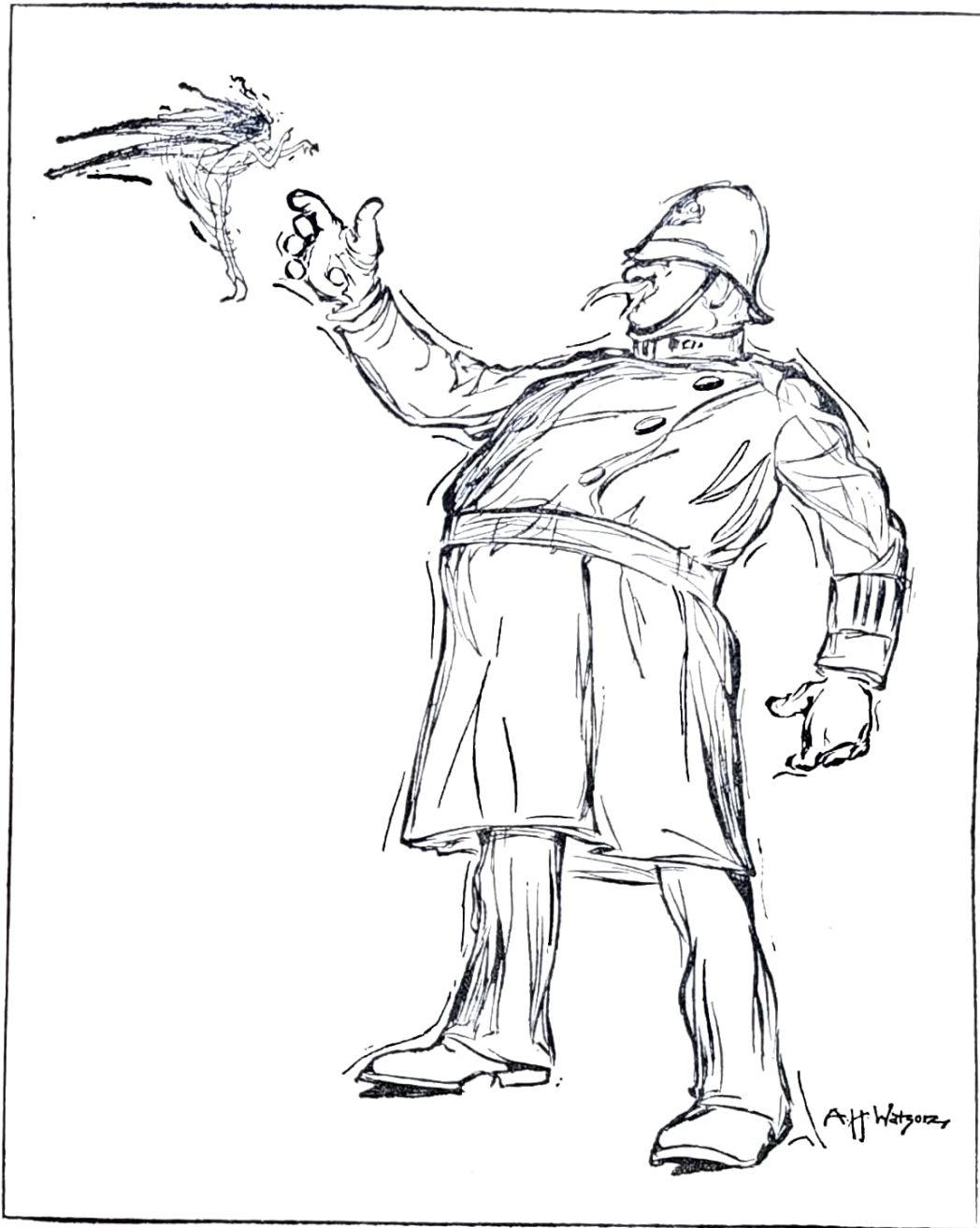
"Exactly, Jane. And it does seem rather dense of parents. One would think that there must have been here and there in the history of the ages a father and mother who learned from the wrecks around them to send an invitation to the bad fairy. Nevertheless, we must admit that she performs in her imperfect way a public function, for if you were entirely good there would be no story in you; and the fairies are so fond of stories that they call giving you one bad quality 'Putting in the story.'

"I daresay the good godmothers meant to do the right thing by Neil, but on their way to the church there was a block, and the bad one overtook them, and was so impertinent to the policeman that he put her in his pocket, meaning to report her later. This flustered the others, and they got separated. Some of them were not heard of again till they were quite old (they get old by night-time) and several swopped qualities with other godmothers and went to the wrong church and gave Neil's gifts to the wrong child. Oddly enough (not at all) his one valuable quality came from his bad-godmother, who had been released with a caution and arrived at the church in a chastened spirit.

"The qualities implanted in Neil by the godmothers who should have been good were:

The Quality of Beauty
The Quality of Showing Off
The Quality of Sharp Practice
The Quality of Copy Cat
The Quality of Dishing his Godfather.

Of course you are all wanting to know what was the bad godmother's gift; but wait, wait. As you will soon hear, P. Pan knows.



"WAS SO IMPERTINENT TO THE POLICEMAN"

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

"We quickly discovered that Beauty was one of Neil's gifts, but we never guessed at the others till he was seventeen hundred. Let us now blow ourselves out for a moment and compare the parents of past and present in relation to their offspring. The parents of long ago had a far easier time than the parents of to-day, for they could hear the godmothers announcing the child's future, and so knew for certain what he would grow into, and that nothing could possibly harm him until, say, he plucked a blue rose, when he would be neatly done for. They had no responsibilities, scarcely needed to send him to school——"

"By gum!" exclaimed Billy.

"——and could smile placidly when he swallowed father's watch or came out in spots. How different is the position of the parents of to-day, who cannot hear the fairies' words, and therefore can only guess at the gifts which have been given. They don't know what quality, good or bad, is to pop out of you presently, but they watch for it unceasingly, ready to water it or to grub it up. Thus children who were certainties in the old times have now become riddles. You, O Sara, though outwardly agreeable if somewhat too round, are still only a riddle to your mother. The one sure thing she knows about you is that there you are. Don't cry, Sara.

"Ah me, we guessed very wrongly about Neil. His parents did not extol him in public, but visitors who were equally reticent were not asked back. We thought his gifts were Sweetness, Modesty, Goodness and Blazing Intelligence. We even believed, Heaven help us, that he had Moral Grandeur. Not being able to find a bad godmother's handiwork in him we concluded that the noble little Neil had bitten it in the bud."

"Like I bit off that wart," volunteered Billy, much interested.

"Don't be nasty, Billy, at a time like this," said Jane, obviously his sister.

I thanked Jane and continued. "To be present at Neil's brushing of his teeth when in his fifteen hundreds was regarded as a treat; he looked at you over the brush as he did it to see whether



“THE USUAL RABBLE OF FAIRY GODMOTHERS.”

*Drawn for The Treasure Ship
by A. H. Watson.*

you were amazed, and you were. On his first day at school he returned home with a prize. He seemed to like me best. *Always to do the same what godfather does* was a motto he invented, and I little understood its fell significance. Is it any wonder that I was deceived? We now come to the fatal seventeen hundredth day, which was also the day of the production of Peter Pan."

A shiversome silence fell upon the room, and Sara was hanging on to my leg. "Give me air!" I cried hoarsely.

They were all very sorry for me. "What a beast of a fellow Neil must have been!" Billy shouted.

"None of that!" says I sternly.

"There you go, sticking up for him again."

"The next one who interrupts unnecessarily," I said, "I shall ask to spell 'unnecessarily.' The original performance of Peter Pan was not given in a theatre, but in a country house, and then only the first two acts, the acts that made so small an impression on you, Billy my boy."

This was a deserved sneer at Billy, who, on being asked in the theatre at the end of the second act how he was enjoying Peter Pan, had replied that what he liked best was tearing up the programme and dropping the bits on people's heads.

"Not so silly as Sara, at any rate," Billy growled, and then it was Sara's turn to look abashed. Before the performance I had taken her to a restaurant and discovered later that she thought the meal was Peter Pan. For such persons do great minds stoop to folly.

"The performers were incompetent little amateurs like yourselves, but owing to his youth and other infirmities Neil was not one of the company, to which indignity he was at first indifferent, but a change came over him when he discovered that acting was a way of showing off. He then demonstrated for a part with unmanly clamour, and one of the mistakes of my life was in not yielding to him. I let him, instead, sit beside me and watch my interesting way of conducting rehearsals. Soon he was betraying an unhealthy interest in the proceedings. He could not read nor write nor spell,

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

though he did know his letters, but after seeing a few rehearsals he could have taken my place as producer had I had the luck to fall ill and be put to bed with a gargle.

“At this time there were thunder and galloping horses and the sound of the sea in Peter Pan, though I cut them out after the performance in that house for reasons which will soon be obvious to the dullest of you. I am not sure which of you that is. As soon as Neil saw and heard those marvellous imitations they went straight to his temperature and his eyes glared and he had to be given a powder. Our thunder was made with a sheet of tin, and our galloping horses were two halves of a cocoa-nut rubbed together, and our sea was sago rolled up and down in a tray. Neil daily cut himself on the thunder, bleeding disgustingly, and every night the sago had to be plucked out of him like ticks. His nurse, whom I shall always suspect, despite her denials, of having been his red-handed accomplice in the affair of the seventeen hundredth day, told me that it was no longer an actor that he wanted to be but an author and producer, like his godfather.

“‘In his sleep,’ she said, ‘he writes plays in the air and calls out ‘Speak my words and not your own, dash you!’ just as you do, sir, at rehearsals, and I have to give him the dictionary to hug in bed instead of his golly-wog, because he saw you getting the words out of it. If that innocent could spell.’

“I admitted that spelling is the dramatist’s big difficulty, but could not see how Neil was to get round it.

“‘If he doesn’t it will be the first thing he hasn’t got round,’ she said darkly, so darkly that I should have taken heed.

“Well, ladies and gentlemen, the night of the performance came round. It wasn’t really night, but we helped night along by pulling down the blinds and turning up the lights. All the chairs and sofas and tables and even the mantelpiece were occupied by the public, who had first been filled to repletion with cakes and cyder so as to take away their faculties. I was not present myself.

I was walking up and down in the garden, listening for approving sounds and gnawing my moustache.

“Out there in the garden I could not hear the words, but I could hear the thunder and the galloping of the horses and the lonely lash of the sea; and, my dear Sara, I could hear the extraordinarily sweet music that is made by the ecstatic clapping of hands. I had not expected much enthusiasm so promptly, because, as you all have often pointed out, Peter Pan opens rather quietly.”

“I expect,” says Billy, meaning no offence, “they were cheering the cocoa-nuts. Was it really like horses?”

“Far more like than horses are. Well, the applause was so prodigious that I felt it would be churlish to delay any longer giving the audience a sight of me, so I slipped in among them. What I saw I wish to describe to you in the simplest words and with as little emotion as possible, for, after all, it happened many years ago. Still, hold my hand, Sara.

“The first thing I noticed was that the curtain was down though the play had been in progress for but a dozen minutes. Simultaneously I knew that the air was being rent with cries for ‘Author! Author!’ I must confess that for the moment I presumed my success to be so epoch-making that the prompter, bowing to the popular will, had taken the unusual step of deciding to present me to my kind friends in front in the middle of the first act.

“Speedily I was undeceived. ‘They can’t have come to the end of the first act yet,’ I whispered to a neighbour, who happily did not know me.

“‘It was all in one act,’ he explained, ‘and just lasted a few minutes, but they were glorious minutes. Author! Author!’

“‘Are you speaking about Peter Pan?’ I asked with the strangest sinking.

.. “‘No, no,’ he said, ‘we haven’t come to that yet. This is the curtain-raiser that astonishing little chap has written. Author, Author, Author, Author.’

“Then the curtain went up and Neil came forward in his kilt

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

and made his bow amid a hurricane of idolatry. Made his bow is indeed an inadequate way of expressing it. There was not about him a vestige of the affected modesty that at such a moment so well becomes an author. He carried a toy gun and strutted up and down the stage, leering shockingly and stopping occasionally to join in the applause. I scorn to tell the calls he got. When the audience's hands were benumbed he came on again and again without being called, and in the end he had to be carried off the stage kicking."

"But he hadn't really written it," my listeners exclaimed incredulously; "you said he could neither write nor spell."

"But I said he knew his letters, Billy. A miracle had happened. The boy who was unable to read, write or spell on Monday was a dab at them all by Tuesday. You may say 'Oh, rot!' but it is true. Give me the pencil and I'll show you."

MACCD
MNO
OSAR



"This was a problem in three lines and a glass bowl that I had given to some youthful onlookers at that luckless Monday's rehearsal, and it stumped them as it had stumped me when propounded to me once by a friend. I see it also stumps you, but debase yourselves sufficiently and you will find it reads:

Emma sees de Goldfish
'Em no goldfish,
Oh ess A are Goldfish.

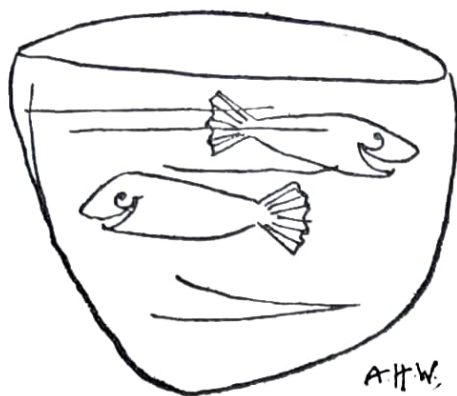
"You follow? I agree with you that 'tis but a tiny joke, and at once it passed out of all our minds save one. That mind was the awful mind of Neil. Though none was in the secret but his Nannie it was suddenly revealed to him how plays are written; quick as a lucky one may jump through a paper hoop and come out on the other side a clown, he had gained access through that friend of mine to a language which he could read, write and spell. With thrills that would have bitten through any thermometer, and bagging that bowl of goldfish, he evolved a powerful drama, and he wrote it in ink; he jumped, Sammy, over Beads and Pencil straight into Ink; indeed, for days, though I suspected naught, his right hand seemed to be encased in a torn black mitten. So far as I can recollect, this is an accurate reproduction of his MS., all of it out of his own noddle except the first three lines:

MACCD
MNO
OSAR
LMECD
LNINOC D
MAYUNOCD
MNO
R
OOOUiiiiI8D
OG
U8MUI
SSS
OUINTK8
YU8MUNT K8YYY
OLNUCIMT NICMNI8M4T
4RTL RDI
4IDINTFS



THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

LOLOLO
NTK88MLRDI
LOLOLO
LMEDI
B4UDISA99
9999
ICD
NICD
SNICD



“Can you stagger your way through it, Jane? Probably not, and yet the audience understood every word, the acting makes such a difference. I heard also that Neil was a superbly severe stage-manager, copying with relish all my ways, including my expletives. He did not act himself (because the other author did not act), but from the wings he worked the thunder and the sea and the horses. The scene was laid in the Peter Pan nursery, thus taking all the novelty out of it. As presented by some of his young friends this was how his play came to life:

[SCENE—a nursery with beds in it. Then a tremendous peal of thunder ending in a clatter as if someone had dropped the sheet of tin. Then the galloping of a horse. Then ENTER EMMA, the horse-woman, without her horse. She examines critically a glass bowl full of water. Then so much galloping that it seems as if the play can make no further progress. Then ENTER SUSAN, ELLEN and TOM. TOM is riding on a dog called Nana.]

Ellen. [Fondly expectant of a similar treat for herself.]
Emma sees de Goldfish.

Susan. [Sneering.] 'Em no Goldfish.

Ellen. Oh, ess A are Goldfish.

- Tom. [Riding forward] Lemme see de Goldfish.
- Emma. [Breaking it to them sadly] Ellen, I no see de Goldfish.
- Susan. [Fearing the worst] Emma, why you no see de Goldfish?
- Emma. [Indicating two breadcrumbs which are the sole occupants of the water] 'Em no Goldfish.
- Tom. [A defender of the weak] Are Goldfish.

[There is more thunder, a horse is heard approaching and AUNT KATE ENTERS with a guilty conscience. One glance around shows her that they are on her track. With bowed head, for she is not wholly bad, she makes her dreadful confession.]



- Aunt Kate. Oh, oh, oh, you four little ones, I ate de Goldfish.
[They draw away from her.]
- Tom. [Expressing the general feeling.] Oh, gee.
- Emma. [Gasping like a Goldfish] You ate 'em, you big one?

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

Aunt Kate. [Covering her face] Ess, ess, ess.

Susan. Oh, you bad one, Auntie Kate.

Ellen. [Giving her a last chance] Why you ate 'em, you Auntie Kate, why, why, why?

Aunt Kate. [Broken] Oh, Ellen, you see I empty 'n I see 'em'n I 'ate 'em for tea.



OH OH OH,
YOU FOUR LITTLE
ONES, I ATE DE
GOLD-FISH.

Aunt Kate. [Waiting patiently for these noises to cease] 'Fore I die 'ant to confess.

[At this dark moment a horse's hoofs are heard.
ENTER A DOCTOR.]

Tom. [With a withering cry]
For 'er tea.
[Sternly] Le
'er die.

[Terrific
thunder here
to intimate
that sentence
has been pro-
nounced, fol-
lowed by the
break of the
surf on some
lonely shore
to express the
helplessness
of the gold-
fish.]

- Doctor. [Taking in the situation at a glance] Hello, hello, hello.
Emma. [Coldly] Auntie Kate ate 'em. Le 'er die.
Doctor. [A man of few words] Hello, hello, hello.
Aunt Kate. [Getting into the papers at last] Lemme die.
Doctor. [Putting his stethoscope to the erring woman's mouth and pushing her head over the bowl] Before you die, say 99.
Aunt Kate. [Without much hope] 99, 99.
[A wondrous thing happens: the goldfish swim down the stethoscope into the bowl.]



- Emma. I see de goldfish
Ellen. 'n I see de goldfish.
Tom. Ess, 'n I see de goldfish.

[All are again riotously happy, but none perhaps quite so happy as the goldfish. The DOCTOR marries AUNT KATE. The curtain falls and rises, with an enlarged copy of NEIL'S MS. pinned to it. The audience spell it out and learn how the play was written. The enthusiasm is now louder than the thunder.]

"In the meantime, of course, Billy, my play had gone to pot."
"Didn't they act it?" he asked with cheerful brutality.

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

"Oh yes, they played it, and it was received with mild approval. What they seemed to admire far more, however, was Neil's cleverness in priggish so much from me. At every fresh proof of this they guffawed crudely."

"Did you wallop him?" asked Billy, whose thoughts frequently run in this direction.



"Ah me, I was deprived of that gratification, because, you see, Neil was unconscious of evil-doing, he had kept his play a secret from me in order to give me a lovely surprise, and he came running to me for praise. *Always to do the same what godfather does*, you remember. I was unfortunately his favourite, and he was so confident of my praise, whoever else might fail him. One may rob or kill, Billy my boy, and yet not be so hard-hearted as to destroy the confidence of a child."

"You don't mean to say you praised him?"

"I had to be civil to him."

"It looks to me as if instead of hating him you were just beastly fond of him."

"That's right, Billy," says I, "strike a man while he's down. No doubt I should have taken some of the stuffing out of Neil next day, but another misfortune happened then; mumps or measles, or some other trick of childhood jumped out of the box, and I had to rush him away from infection."

"Couldn't his father and mother have took him?" asked Jane, who has sometimes a tendency to pertness.

J. M. BARRIE

"You don't any of you understand the law about godfathers," I explained with infinite patience. "I took Neil to a country inn. Of course I would not have taken him if I hadn't thought I could trust to his honour."

"What was he up to this time?" enquired Billy, licking his lips.

"He was so fond," I said, "of his thunder and horses and hoary ocean that he would not be parted from them, and, to my horror, I found them in his box when I unpacked at the inn. I was in such a fury that I nearly threw them into the road."

"Why didn't you?"

"That foolish question just shows, Billy, how little thought you have given to the position of a gentleman left alone in a country inn, with a boy who refuses to undress without the accompaniment of thunder and the galloping of horses. I couldn't undress him; his garments were so unexpected. What was worse, nothing could lull him to sleep but the break of waves upon some desolate shore. I had to use a drawer from the wardrobe to roll the sago in, and a heavy drawer it was. Once at breakfast in the inn I heard a man at the next table telling a lady that, though we were so far inland, he had distinctly heard the sound of the sea from his bedroom. I was afraid there might be an inquiry, so of nights, when Neil was at last asleep, I spent æons of time searching the cracks in the drawer for sago, before I could get to work on Peter Pan."

"What were you doing to Peter?"

"In the burglarious silence I was altering him, making him more like Neil."

"Gosh."

"You may well use that terrible word, Billy; but it was evident that Neil was the kind of boy the public wants. I see that the weather has cleared, so I now release you, begging you to reflect at your leisure on the not untragic picture of an author who wanted to do better but had to give in to circumstances. To save the life

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

of my young hero I was compelled to abstract the humility from him and thus make room for the bad fairy's gift with which Neil had witched humanity. The boy who doesn't have it might as well be a man."

"Oh, do tell us what it is!" they cried, knowing quite well, but wondering whether an adult had found out.

"Of course it is Cockiness," I answered. "One must admit, Billy (however reluctantly), that there is to children a rapture in being cocky which is what keeps this old world smiling."

They leered.

"And is cockiness the Blot on Peter Pan?" asks Billy.

"Alas," said I.

"But you gave it to him. Hello, are you Peter's bad fairy?"

I hung my head. Sara at any rate felt for me.

"And when you were blotting Peter was Neil lying asleep in his bed?" she enquired.

"Sometimes in his bed, Sara, and sometimes in the drawer, dreaming children's plays that were far beyond my compass."

They thanked me primly for my story, as instructed by their wretched mothers, and then all scooted away into the open except Sara. Sara is the very last baggage I shall bother with.

"Is it all true?" she asked.

"No, it is not all true, Sara, but some of it, here and there."

"Do you love me?"

"Yes, Sara."

"But you love Neil more, don't you?"

"A hundred thousand million times more, Sara."

"Is he a man now?"

"No, he is not a man."

"Where is he?"

"Be off with you into the sunshine, Sara, and bring me some butter-cups at one o'clock. I bet you'll forget."

"I bet I won't."

She very nearly forgot, but she ran back for them.

The Lemon Sponge

DENIS MACKAIL

IF you ask most grown-up people about the Kingdom of Semolina, they will either say: "Rubbish! There's no such place," or else they will tell you to run upstairs and see if they left their handkerchief on the little table outside the bathroom—which comes to pretty much the same thing.

But if you ask me, you will get a different kind of answer altogether. "Certainly, my little dear," I shall reply (with a delightful smile). "Not only have I heard of the Kingdom of Semolina; not only do I know exactly where it was and precisely what it looked like; but I can also tell you the whole story of King Curius the Fourteenth and the Lemon Sponge."

You then sit down on the footstool in front of the fireplace, and—with another delightful smile—I go ahead.

The Kingdom of Semolina (I say) was in the very middle of the Great Desert. It was situated on a large, high rock with very steep sides; and while the Great Desert consisted of nothing but sand, wild animals, palm trees and savage tribes, Semolina itself was full of fine houses, beautiful gardens, birds of all colours and interesting works of art. In the Great Desert the savage tribes lived entirely on dry biscuits and soda-water—and had great difficulty in getting enough of even them; but the Semolinians had everything they wanted of every description, and it is an absolute

THE LEMON SPONGE

fact that the fountains in the square outside the Palace ran all day long with ginger-beer.

Naturally the savage tribes were full of envy for their fortunate neighbours; but though they marched round and round the bottom of the large rock, pulling the most dreadful faces, its sides were far too steep for them to climb. And though it is true that there were two narrow pathways leading down to the Great Desert, they each had a door at the top covered with rusty iron spikes; and inside each door was a sentry, who had only to push the first savage who came up the narrow pathway with the butt-end of his pike for the savage to fall all the way down to the bottom again—when he would be very lucky if he didn't break his neck.

So that all that the kings of Semolina had to do was to make certain that the sentries were well-paid and in good health; and they could then give themselves up to feasting and gaiety, to singing, dancing and Dumb Crambo, without the slightest fear that their savage foes would ever get any nearer than the doors covered with rusty iron spikes. You quite see that, don't you?

But the years went by, and the Semolinians became richer and more comfortable, and by the time that King Curius the Fourteenth came to the throne, I'm afraid he hardly thought about those devoted sentries at all. There were only six of them altogether, so that it would have been very little trouble to give them a few medals every now and then, or new uniforms. But King Curius did neither. He was always forgetting to pay them, too, and if the sentries hadn't dreaded the savage tribes quite as much as anyone else did, they might very well have deserted their posts. You can't expect soldiers to spend eight hours in a sentry-box for nothing. Can you?

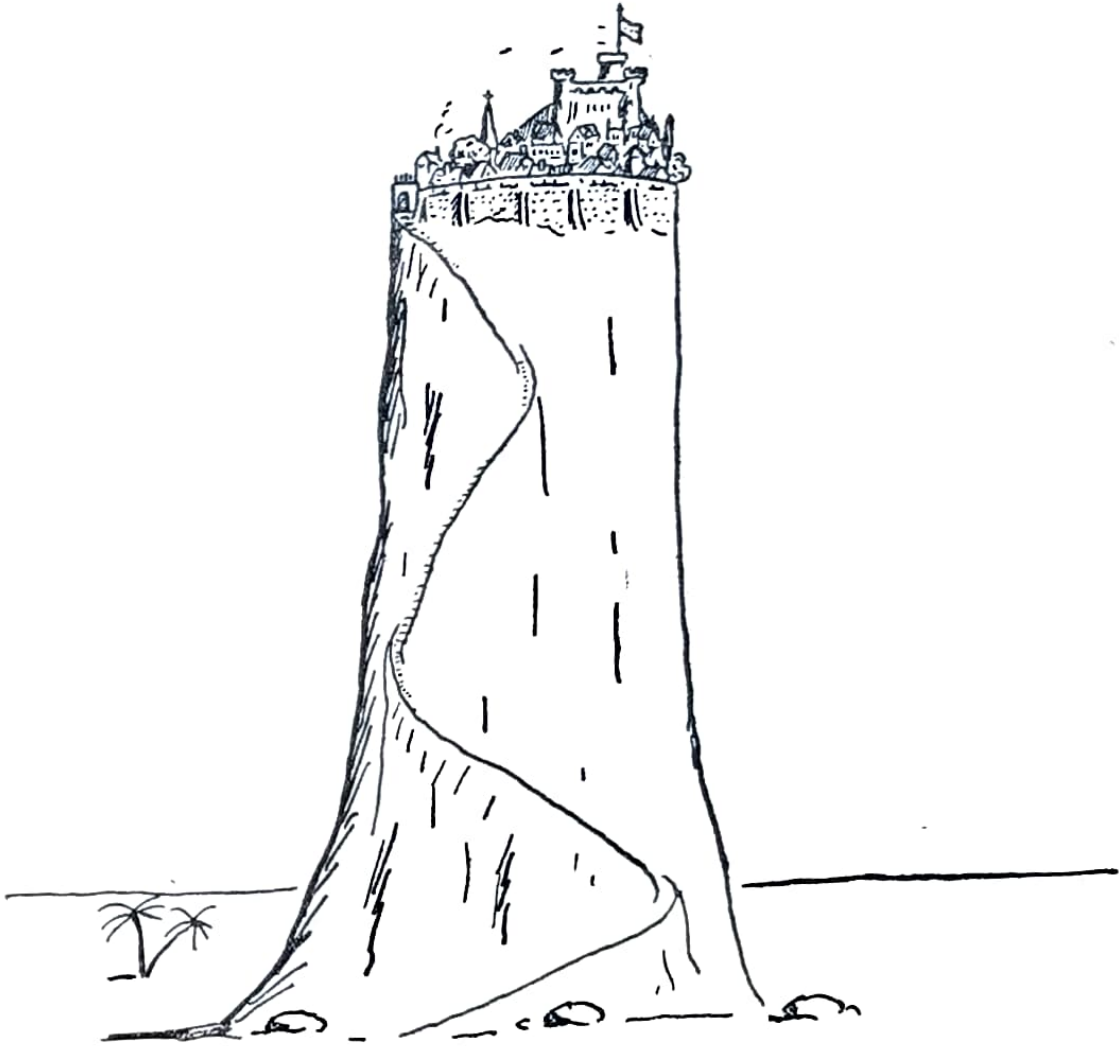
Well, one day the Queen of Semolina came into King Curius's study, where he was sitting with his feet up on the fender, reading an illustrated magazine, and he rolled his head round on the back of his big armchair, and he said: "Hullo!"

"A most annoying thing has happened," said the Queen.

"Has it?" said King Curius the Fourteenth.

"Yes," said the Queen. "The cook has given me notice."

"Again?" said King Curius the Fourteenth. "Why, that makes eleven since Christmas. Or is it twelve?"



"It's fifteen," said her Majesty. "And the fact is that your subjects are getting so rich and comfortable that they won't *be* cooks any longer. It's maddening," said her Majesty. "That's what it is."

THE LEMON SPONGE

"They're your subjects too," said King Curius the Fourteenth. And at that moment, and before the Queen could think of a good answer, somebody knocked on the outside of the study door.

"Come in!" shouted King Curius.

And in came one of the six sentries, whose name was Alfred Jagers, and saluted first the King and then the Queen.

"What's the matter, Jagers?" asked his Majesty.

"I've come for my pay, sire," said Jagers, saluting again.

"Can't you see I'm busy?" said his Majesty, looking displeased. "Here's the Queen worrying me because she can't find a cook, and now you start bothering me about your pay. Can't I have any peace at all?"

"Sire," said Alfred Jagers, continuing to salute, "my old mother is a good, plain cook. I think I could persuade her to go back into service, if only your Majesty would give me my last six weeks' pay."

King Curius didn't like the idea of bargaining with one of his soldiers, but the Queen was simply delighted.

"Here is your pay, Jagers," she said, taking a purse from her husband's pocket and handing it to the sentry. "Please ask your old mother to come and see me at once."

"Certainly, ma'am," said the honest Jagers. And going to the study window, he leant out, put two of his fingers into his mouth, and whistled in a piercing manner. In a couple of minutes there was another knock on the outside of the study door, and then the door opened, and in came a stout, elderly woman in a little black bonnet. She curtsied to the King and she curtsied to the Queen, and then her son told her what had been arranged, and she said that she was only a plain cook, but she was sure she'd do her best.

"Splendid!" said the Queen, graciously. "I will send the royal trolley round for your tin box at once, and then I'll show you your bedroom, and after that I hope you will cook the royal

luncheon. Come along, Mrs. Jagers," said the Queen. "This way."

So off they went together, and Alfred Jagers went back to the barracks, and King Curius the Fourteenth went on reading his illustrated magazine, and it really looked as if for once in a way everybody were going to be satisfied. Everybody, that is to say, except those savage tribes down below in the Great Desert.

Mrs. Jagers sent up the most excellent veal cutlets and castle puddings for the royal luncheon, and the King ate three of each and said that he had never enjoyed a meal more in his life. Yet when he came down to dinner that evening, and found that there were more veal cutlets and more castle puddings, somehow or other he didn't seem quite so much pleased. And when after three or four more days, Mrs. Jagers still continued to send up nothing but veal cutlets and castle puddings, he went so far as to complain to his royal partner.

"It isn't my fault," said the Queen. "I've written all sorts of other things down on the royal slate."

"It almost looks," said King Curius, "as though Mrs. Jagers were unable to read."

"I will speak to her in the morning," said the Queen. "I can't do more than that."

"Of course you can't," said King Curius the Fourteenth, putting his table-napkin back in its ring, and getting up from the royal dinner-table. "Only please understand that if I see veal cutlets and castle puddings again, it will probably be the end of my glorious reign."

So then the royal couple embraced each other, and went out to feed the parrots and peacocks in the Palace garden. And after they'd done this, they threw the empty paper-bags over the garden wall, so that they fell down into the Great Desert; and the savage tribes said: "Lo and behold, the Semolinians are throwing empty paper-bags at us, and it is a great deal more than we can stand."

THE LEMON SPONGE

And pulling more dreadful faces than ever, they performed a most terrible war-dance—which made them all feel very hot and tired, but didn't otherwise have any particular effect.

Well, the next day the Queen came into the King's study, where he was sitting with his foot up on the fender, reading an illustrated magazine, and he rolled his head round on the back of his big armchair, and he said: "Hullo!"

"A still more annoying thing has happened," said the Queen.

"Has it?" said King Curius the Fourteenth.

"Yes," said the Queen. "I've spoken to Mrs. Jagers, and she says that she has never learnt how to cook anything but veal cutlets and castle puddings, and she's afraid she never will."

"Rubbish!" said King Curius the Fourteenth. "What are the cookery books for?"

"Mrs. Jagers says she doesn't believe in cookery books," said the Queen.

"That's ridiculous," said his Majesty. And he went over to the shelf in the corner of his study and took down a volume called *A Thousand and One Tasty Dishes*, and he opened it, and he thumped the page with his royal hand.

"Look here," he said. "Here are full particulars for making a Lemon Sponge. Surely Mrs. Jagers ought to be able to manage a simple thing like that."

The Queen looked a bit doubtful.

"Very well," said his Majesty. "I'll go down to the kitchen myself, and I'll show this page to Mrs. Jagers, and you'll see what happens when a Man takes a little trouble."

So he went down to the kitchen, and he had a long talk with Mrs. Jagers, and finally she said that although she never believed in cookery books, she didn't mind obliging people when they spoke to her politely. And the King went back to the study, and told the Queen that he'd settled it all beautifully, and they embraced

each other, and went out to feed the ducks and drakes on the royal pond.

Well, this was about eleven o'clock in the morning, and at the same time Alfred Jagers was standing at his post just inside one of the two doors covered with rusty iron spikes. And as he stood there, it suddenly came into his mind that it was nearly a week since he had seen his old mother, and exactly the same period since he had last tasted his favourite meal of veal cutlets and castle puddings.

"Oh, why," said Alfred Jagers to himself, "did I ever allow my old mother to go back into service, when she gave me such delicious dinners at her humble home? How am I to go on living on the wretched fare of a common soldier? Oh, woe is me," said Alfred Jagers to himself, "and black was the day on which I was born."

And after he had gone on like this for some time, I am sorry to say that he worked himself up into such a state that he forgot all about his duty to Semolina, and all about the savage tribes, and he left his pike in the corner of his sentry-box, and he rushed off to the Palace, thinking of absolutely nothing at all but his old mother and veal cutlets and castle puddings.

He ran and he ran, and presently he ran into the royal kitchen, and there was Mrs. Jagers with her sleeves rolled up, surrounded by piles of lemons and masses of eggs, and doing everything in her power to make a Lemon Sponge. Half the kitchen-table was covered with horrid little sticky messes, which were all that she had succeeded in making so far, and Mrs. Jagers was very red in the face. And when she saw her son come running in like that, she flung down her egg-whisk and burst into tears.

"Oh, Alfred, Alfred," she said. "I've tried and I've tried, but I c-c-can't make this Lemon Sponge. Boo-hoo-hoo!"

"There, there," said Alfred Jagers, placing his rugged hand

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on her stout shoulder. "Don't worry, old lady; I've come to fetch you back to your humble home."

"No, no," said Mrs. Jagers. "I can't leave without giving notice, and I *must* make this Lemon Sponge."

"Then dry your eyes," said Alfred Jagers, giving her a loving pat that took all her breath away; "and I will help you."

So they began all over again, and Alfred Jagers read the directions, very slowly, out of the cookery book, and his old mother did everything that he said. And then she took the largest egg-whisk in the royal kitchen, and she whisked and she whisked and she whisked, and——

But wait a minute. What about those savage tribes down below in the Great Desert?

Alas, alas! They had slept off the effects of their terrible war-dance by now, they had woken up, they had armed themselves to the teeth, and they were creeping up one of the narrow pathways, with their socks outside their boots so that they shouldn't be heard; and one and all they were determined to make the Semolinians pay dearly for having thrown those empty paper-bags at them, or to perish in the attempt.

Up and up they crept, and presently the first savage reached the outside of the door covered with rusty iron spikes, and very slowly he climbed on the next one's shoulders and looked over the top.

And there he saw an empty sentry-box with a pike leaning up in the corner; and a dreadful smile spread over his horrible features.

"Wurra-wurra-gal!" he whispered to the men behind him, and one of them passed up a thick eiderdown quilt, and the first savage flung it over the rusty iron spikes, and so climbed over them without even being scratched. And he opened the door from the inside, and all the others came rushing in, uttering the most fiendish yells and waving their swords in the air and firing off their guns and singing their national anthem in different keys.

What could the unfortunate Semolinians do? They had no weapons, and their army consisted of but six men, of whom two were asleep in the barracks, two were walking with friends in the park, one was guarding the other door covered with rusty iron spikes, and the last—the honest but impulsive Alfred—was reading aloud out of a cookery book in the royal kitchen.

The entire population turned and ran. They ran like hares—including even the King and Queen and the two soldiers who had been asleep in the barracks—until they came to the second door covered with rusty iron spikes; and they wrenched it open, and they poured down the other narrow pathway, tripping and stumbling and falling head over heels; and as the last of them fled, the savages arrived hot on their heels, and slammed the door after them with a sound that could be heard miles and miles away.

“Bolla-bolla wong!” shouted the invaders, throwing their hats up in the air and dancing for joy. “No more dry biscuits and soda-water! Semolina is ours at last, and the proud King Curius the Fourteenth is conquered and disgraced. Hoki-poki hullabaloo!”

And with these frightful words they rushed off to sack the royal Palace.

Meanwhile, totally unaware of the disaster which had overwhelmed their native land, Alfred and Mrs. Jagers had remained in the royal kitchen; the former reading encouragingly from the book called *A Thousand and One Tasty Dishes*, and the latter whisking and whisking and whisking with the largest of the royal egg-whisks.

And as Mrs. Jagers continued to whisk, quite suddenly the sticky mess which she was whisking began to turn into a pale yellow froth.

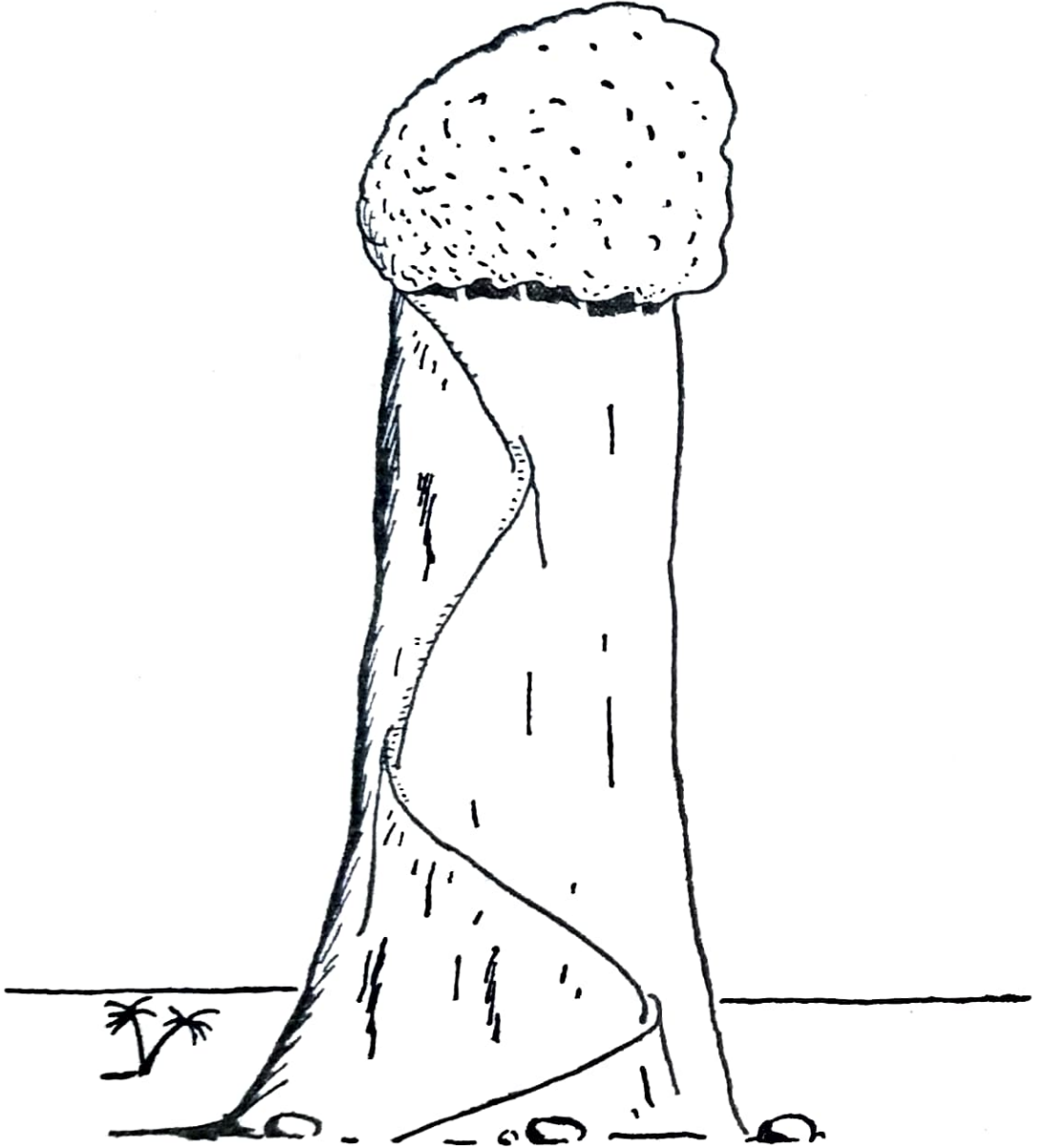
“Look!” she cried, in triumph. “It’s coming, Alfred! Look at my Lemon Sponge!”

“Go it!” shouted Alfred Jagers, excitedly. And seizing up

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a second egg-whisk, he also started whisking and whisking as hard as ever he could.

And whether it was that this was the first time in history that two people had ever whisked at one Lemon Sponge, or whether



it was that Mrs. Jagers had put in too many eggs, I cannot tell you. But I do know that quite suddenly the pale yellow froth started bubbling over the edge of the bowl; and then it started

bubbling over the edge of the table; and then it started bubbling over the floor; and it bubbled and it bubbled, and it rose and it rose, and Alfred and his old mother went on whisking and whisking; and presently it was up to their waists. And then it started bubbling out of the windows.

And so, as the savage warriors came screaming and yelling and whirling up towards the Palace, they were met by a torrent or stream of Lemon Sponge. They slashed at it with their swords and shot at it with their guns, but it just went on bubbling. They plunged into it, and came out again, coughing and spluttering and wiping their eyes. They ran round it, but wherever they ran, the Lemon Sponge had always got there first.

Back and back they were forced, pushing and struggling and hanging on to the lamp-posts until they were swept away; and finally their courage left them. They bolted down the narrow pathway up which they had just crept, with flakes of Lemon Sponge falling on them all the time; they jumped on to their camels; and they rode right over the horizon, and never stopped riding for forty days and forty nights, by which time they had ridden so far that they couldn't have found the way back again even if they had wanted to.

That was the last that was ever heard of them, and as for the Kingdom of Semolina it was just one vast mass of Lemon Sponge from end to end and from top to bottom, from east to west and from north to south. Just a wobbling, bubbling heap of pale yellow froth, without so much as a chimney-pot or a church steeple sticking out of it.

But presently it stopped bubbling, and King Curius the Fourteenth led his people up out of the Great Desert again, and they all set to and they dug and they dug, and they cut and they carved, and at the end of forty days and forty nights they had cleared all the Lemon Sponge away, and dropped it over the rock where it gradually melted in the heat of the sun. And there, in

THE LEMON SPONGE

the royal kitchen, they found Alfred and his old mother, who had scraped out a little cave for themselves, and were quite well and happy, and were living on veal cutlets and castle puddings.

And this wasn't all that happened. For after the anxiety that they had been through, and all the digging that they had done, King Curius the Fourteenth and his subjects turned over a new leaf. He quite gave up reading illustrated magazines before lunch, and they all became hard-working and virtuous again, and the Queen never had any more difficulty in finding a cook.

In fact, they all became so good that nothing really interesting ever happened in the Kingdom again. And that was why, when about twenty thousand years later another cook in another country invented the dullest milk-pudding that had ever been made, she instantly decided to call it "Semolina," by which name it is still known and detested.

And that, my little dear, is the end.

Ann's Aunt and the Bear

WALTER DE LA MARE

IT filled Ann's Aunt Maria with rage
To see a wild thing in a cage.
At sight of creature, winged or furred,
Confined by bars, by chains deterred
She'd groan for pity: in a word—
"Pore thing," she'd cry, "you pore, *pore* thing!"
At which the dainty dear would sing
A little soft sad song; or cheep;
Or turn a curious eye to peep
At her great face, and brow, and bonnet—
Like a cathedral perched upon it.
'Twas just her kindly, friendly humour.
She'd grieve as much o'er lion or puma,
And gloat upon their keepers when
They chanced their heads within its den.
"Pore thing," she'd mutter, not "Poor Men."

One afternoon her aunt and Ann
(Who'd gone to see a nursery-man
About a leaky watering-can)
As they were moving gently home
On a most horrid scene did come:
Two foreigners (with longish hair)
Were leading on a chain a Bear,

ANN'S AUNT AND THE BEAR

A bushy, bright-eyed, thirsty beast
Who had trudged a score of miles at least
In heat and dust—at least a score
And danced perhaps as many more:
Yes, danced—and growled—and danced again



Whene'er these long-haired foreign men
Should in their cruelty think proper
To try and earn an English copper,
Or tuppence, even, if any dunce
Should want the dance danced more than once.

Yes, there, beneath a Chestnut's shade,
This parched-up beast was being made
To caper and to growl a noise
To please a pack of errand boys;
It danced and gruffed, it breathed vast sighs,
Its half-bald head a maze of flies;
Its claws went tic-tac in the dust
And still it danced, for dance it must;
While the two Frogs in hope of gain
Stood grinning by and tweaked its chain.

When Ann, and Ann's aunt, Aunt Maria
Saw this, Ann's aunt's eyes flashed with fire;
Sharp tears in them the sight did bring:
She said, "Pore thing! you pore, pore thing!"
And then she raised a stout umbrella
And *turned* upon the nearest fellow.
French or Italian, Greek or Dutch,
She simply couldn't thwack too much,
Sound thumping thumps she laid full many on,
Then up and smote his dazed companion.

And there you see kind Aunt Mari',
Bugled cathedral all awry,
And plump cheek flushed with her exertions
Against these parasitic Persians:
While Ann, now lost in rapture, stands
Clapping her little mittened hands,
And butcher's, baker's, grocer's boy
Yell out their raucous, barbarous joy.

Alack, what evil chance we find!
Her wrath made Aunt Maria blind.
In compassing his tyrant's ruin
She didn't notice their poor Bruin,

ANN'S AUNT AND THE BEAR

Who, having wriggled off his muzzle,
Was shuffling in to join the tussle,
And, rather giddy in the head
In gratitude for what she had said
And done to that cruel Bruin-baster,
Went sidling up, and then—embraced her.

It's sad indeed to have to tell
What then this kind, kind soul befell,



Ann's Aunt Maria. So sharp B's squeeze
Ann hadn't time to whisper, "Please,
You're cuddling my dear aunt so close
You *must* be treading on her toes:
I cannot even see her nose!"
And when at length the Bear had shown
That gratitude goes to the bone,
Nothing the caitiffs then could do
Would bring his cold protectress to.

WALTER DE LA MARE

They could but rub their hands. They said,
"We 'ave ze fear, ze lady's dead!
She do not breathe nor any ting:
Pore zing, pore zing, ze pore, *pore* zing."

'Tis said, all clouds are silver-lined:
This one small fact, then, bear in mind,
Had quite, quite base been either man,
They might have fed the bear on Ann.



Life at St. Austin's was rendered somewhat hollow and burdensome for Pillingshot by the fact that he fagged for Scott. Not that Scott was the Beetle-Browed Bully in any way. Far from it. He showed a kindly interest in Pillingshot's welfare, and sometimes even did his Latin verses for him. But the noblest natures have flaws, and Scott's was no exception. He was by way of being a humorist, and Pillingshot, with his rather serious outlook on life, was puzzled and inconvenienced by this.

It was through this defect in Scott's character that Pillingshot first became a detective. He was toasting muffins at the study fire one evening, while Scott, seated on two chairs and five cushions, read *Sherlock Holmes*, when the Prefect laid down his book and fixed him with an earnest eye.

"Do you know, Pillingshot," he said, "you've got a bright, intelligent face. I shouldn't wonder if you weren't rather clever. Why do you hide your light under a bushel?"

Pillingshot grunted.

"We must find some way of advertising you. Why don't you go in for a Junior Scholarship?"

"Too old," said Pillingshot with satisfaction.

"Senior, then?"

"Too young."

"I believe by sitting up all night and swotting——"

"Here, I say!" said Pillingshot, alarmed.

"You've got no enterprise," said Scott sadly. "What are those? Muffins? Well, well, I suppose I had better try and peck a bit."

He ate four in rapid succession, and resumed his scrutiny of Pillingshot's countenance.

"The great thing," he said, "is to find out your special line. Till then we are working in the dark. Perhaps it's music? Singing? Sing me a bar or two."

Pillingshot wriggled uncomfortably.

"Left your music at home?" said Scott. "Never mind, then. Perhaps it's all for the best. What are those? Still muffins? Hand me another. After all, one must keep one's strength up. You can have one if you like."

Pillingshot's face brightened. He became more affable. He chatted.

"There's rather a row on downstairs," he said. "In the junior day-room."

"There always is," said Scott. "If it grows too loud I shall get in amongst them with a swagger-stick. I attribute half my success at bringing off late-cuts to the practice I have had in the junior day-room. It keeps the wrist supple."

"I don't mean that sort of row. It's about Evans."

"What about Evans?"

"He's lost a sovereign."

"Silly young ass."

Pillingshot furtively helped himself to another muffin.

"He thinks someone's taken it," he said.

"What! Stolen it?"

Pillingshot nodded.

"What makes him think that?"

"He doesn't see how else it could have gone."

PILLINGSHOT, DETECTIVE

"Oh, I don't—By Jove!"

Scott sat up with some excitement.

"I've got it," he said. "I knew we should hit on it sooner or later. Here's a field for your genius. You shall be a detective. Pillingshot, I hand this case over to you. I employ you."

Pillingshot gaped.

"I feel certain that's your line. I've often noticed you walking over to school, looking exactly like a blood-hound. Get to work. As a start you'd better fetch Evans up here and question him."

"But, look here——"

"Buck up, man! Buck up! Don't you know that every moment is precious."

Evans, a small, stout youth, was not disposed to be reticent. The gist of his rambling statement was as follows. Rich uncle. Impecunious nephew. Visit of former to latter. Handsome tip, one sovereign. Impecunious nephew pouches sovereign, and it vanishes.

"And I call it beastly rot," concluded Evans volubly. "And if I could find the cad who's pinched it, I'd jolly well——"

"Less of it," said Scott. "Now, then, Pillingshot, I'll begin this thing, just to start you off. What makes you think the quid has been stolen, Evans?"

"Because I jolly well know it has."

"What you jolly well know isn't evidence. We must thresh this thing out. To begin with, where did you last see it?"

"When I put it in my pocket."

"Good! Make a note of that, Pillingshot. Where's your note-book? Not got one? Here you are, then. You can tear out the first few pages, the ones I've written on. Ready? Carry on, Evans. When?"

"When what?"

"When did you put it in your pocket?"

"Yesterday afternoon."

"What time?"

"About five."

"Same pair of bags you're wearing now?"

"No, my cricket-bags. I was playing at the nets when my uncle came."

"Ah! Cricket bags. Put it down, Pillingshot. That's a clue. Work on it. Where are they?"

"They've gone to the wash."

"About time, too. I noticed them. How do you know the quid didn't go to the wash as well?"

"I turned both the pockets inside out."

"Any hole in the pocket?"

"No."

"Well, when did you take off the bags? Did you sleep in them?"

"I wore 'em till bedtime, and then shoved them on a chair by the side of the bed. It wasn't till next morning that I remembered the quid was in them——"

"But it wasn't," objected Scott.

"I thought it was. It ought to have been."

"He thought it was. That's a clue, young Pillingshot. Work on it. Well?"

"Well, when I went to take the quid out of my cricket-bags it wasn't there."

"What time was that?"

"Half-past seven this morning."

"What time did you go to bed?"

"Ten."

"Then the theft occurred between the hours of ten and seven-thirty. Mind you, I'm giving you a jolly good leg-up, young Pillingshot. But as it's your first case I don't mind. That'll be all from you, Evans. Pop off."

Evans disappeared. Scott turned to the detective.

PILLINGSHOT, DETECTIVE

"Well, young Pillingshot," he said, "what do you make of it?"

"I don't know."

"What steps do you propose to take?"

"I don't know."

"You're a lot of use, aren't you? As a start, you'd better examine the scene of the robbery, I should say."

Pillingshot reluctantly left the room.

"Well?" said Scott, when he returned. "Any clues?"

"No."

"You thoroughly examined the scene of the robbery?"

"I looked under the bed."

"Under the bed?" What's the good of that? Did you go over every inch of the strip of carpet leading to the chair with a magnifying glass?"

"Hadn't got a magnifying glass."

"Then you'd better buck up and get one, if you're going to be a detective. Do you think Sherlock Holmes ever moved a step without his? Not much. Well, anyhow. Did you find any foot-prints or tobacco-ash?"

"There was a jolly lot of dust about."

"Did you preserve a sample?"

"No."

"My word, you've a lot to learn. Now, weighing the evidence, does anything strike you?"

"No."

"You're a bright sort of sleuth-hound, aren't you! It seems to me I'm doing all the work on this case. I'll have to give you another leg-up. Considering the time when the quid disappeared, I should say that somebody in the dormitory must have collared it. How many fellows are there in Evans's dormitory?"

"I don't know."

"Cut along and find out."

The detective reluctantly trudged off once more.

"Well?" said Scott on his return.

"Seven," said Pillingshot. "Counting Evans."

"We needn't count Evans. If he's ass enough to steal his own quids, he deserves to lose them. Who are the other six?"

"There's Trent. He's prefect."

"The Napoleon of Crime. Watch his every move. Yes?"

"Simms."

"A dangerous man. Sinister to the core."

"And Green, Berkeley, Hanson, and Daubeny."

"Every one of them well known to the police. Why, the place is a perfect Thieves' Kitchen. Look here, we must act swiftly, young Pillingshot. This is a black business. We'll take them in alphabetical order. Run and fetch Berkeley."

Berkeley, interrupted in a game of Halma, came unwillingly.

"Now then, Pillingshot, put your questions," said Scott. "This is a black business, Berkeley. Young Evans has lost a sovereign——"

"If you think I've taken his beastly quid——!" said Berkeley warmly.

"Make a note of that—on being questioned, the man Berkeley exhibited suspicious emotion. Go on. Jam it down."

Pillingshot reluctantly entered the statement under Berkeley's indignant gaze.

"Now then, carry on."

"You know it's all rot," protested Pillingshot. "I never said Berkeley had anything to do with it."

"Never mind. Ask him what his movements were on the night of the—what was yesterday?—on the night of the sixteenth of July."

Pillingshot put the question nervously.

"I was in bed, of course, you silly ass!"

"Were you asleep?" inquired Scott.

"Of course I was."

"Then how do you know what you were doing?" Pillingshot,

PILLINGSHOT, DETECTIVE

make a note of the fact that the man Berkeley's statement was confused and contradictory. It's a clue. Work on it. Who's next? Daubeny. Berkeley, send Daubeny up here."

"All right, Pillingshot, you wait," was Berkeley's exit speech.

Daubeny, when examined, exhibited the same suspicious emotion that Berkeley had shown; and Hanson, Simms, and Green behaved in a precisely similar manner.



"ALL RIGHT, PILLINGSHOT,
YOU WAIT!"

"This," said Scott, "somewhat complicates the case. We must have further clues. You'd better pop off now, Pillingshot. I've got a Latin Prose to do. Bring me reports of your progress daily, and don't overlook the importance of trifles. Why, in 'Silver Blaze' it was a burnt match that first put Holmes on the scent."

Entering the junior day-room with some apprehension, the sleuth-hound found an excited gathering of suspects waiting to interview him. One sentiment animated the meeting. Each of the five wanted to know what Pillingshot meant by it.

"What's the row?" queried interested spectators, rallying round.

"That cad Pillingshot's been accusing us of bagging Evans's quid."

"What's Scott got to do with it?" inquired one of the spectators.

Pillingshot explained his position.

"All the same," said Daubeny, "you needn't have dragged us into it."

"I couldn't help it. He made me."

"Awful ass, Scott," admitted Green.

Pillingshot welcomed this sign that the focus of popular indignation was being shifted.

"Shoving himself into other people's business," grumbled Pillingshot.

"Trying to be funny," Berkeley summed up.

"Rotten at cricket, too."

"Can't play a yorker for nuts."

"See him drop that sitter on Saturday?"

So that was all right. As far as the junior day-room was concerned, Pillingshot felt himself vindicated.

But his employer was less easily satisfied. Pillingshot had hoped that by the next day he would have forgotten the subject. But, when he came into the study to get tea ready, up it came again.

"Any clues yet, Pillingshot?"

Pillingshot had to admit that there were none.

"Hullo, this won't do! You must bustle about. You must get your nose to the trail. Have you cross-examined Trent yet? No? Well, there you are, then. Nip off and do it now."

"But I say, Scott! He's a prefect!"

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"In the dictionary of crime," said Scott sententiously, "there is no such word as prefect. All are alike. Go and take down Trent's statement."

To tax a prefect with having stolen a sovereign was a task at



"HAVE YOU BAGGED A SOVEREIGN?" HE ASKED

which Pillingshot's imagination boggled. He went to Trent's study in a sort of dream.

A hoarse roar answered his feeble tap. There was no doubt about Trent being in. Inspection revealed the fact that the prefect was working and evidently ill-attuned to conversation. He wore a haggard look and his eye, as it caught that of the collector of statements, was dangerous.

"Well?" said Trent, scowling murderously.

Pillingshot's legs felt perfectly boneless.

"*Well?*" said Trent.

Pillingshot yammered.

"*Well?*"

The roar shook the window, and Pillingshot's presence of mind deserted him altogether.

"Have you bagged a sovereign?" he asked.

There was an awful silence, during which the detective, his limbs suddenly becoming active again, banged the door, and shot off down the passage.

He re-entered Scott's study at the double.

"Well?" said Scott. "What did he say?"

"Nothing."

"Get out your notebook, and put down under the heading 'Trent': 'Suspicious silence.' A very bad lot, Trent. Keep him under constant espionage. It's a clue. Work on it."

Pillingshot made a note of the silence, but later on, when he and the prefect met in the dormitory, felt inclined to erase it. For silent was the last epithet one would have applied to Trent on that occasion. As he crawled painfully into bed Pillingshot became more than ever convinced that the path of the amateur detective was a thorny one.

This conviction deepened next day.

Scott's help was evidently well-meant, but it was certainly inconvenient. His theories were of the brilliant, dashing order, and Pillingshot could never be certain who and in what rank of life the next suspect would be. He spent that afternoon shadowing the Greaser (the combination of boot-boy and butler who did the odd jobs about the school house), and in the evening seemed likely to be about to move in the very highest circles. This was when Scott remarked in a dreamy voice, "You know, I'm told the old man has been spending a good lot of money lately . . ."

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To which the burden of Pillingshot's reply was that he would do anything in reason, but he was blowed if he was going to cross-examine the head master.

"It seems to me," said Scott sadly, "that you don't *want* to find that sovereign. Don't you like Evans, or what is it?"

It was on the following morning, after breakfast, that the close observer might have noticed a change in the detective's demeanour. He no longer looked as if he were weighed down by a secret sorrow. His manner was even jaunty.

Scott noticed it.

"What's up?" he inquired. "Got a clue?"

Pillingshot nodded.

"What is it? Let's have a look."

"Sh-h-h!" said Pillingshot mysteriously.

Scott's interest was aroused. When his fag was making tea in the afternoon, he questioned him again.

"Out with it," he said. "What's the point of all this silent mystery business?"

"Sherlock Holmes never gave anything away."

"Out with it."

"Walls have ears," said Pillingshot.

"So have you," replied Scott crisply, "and I'll smite them in half a second."

Pillingshot sighed resignedly, and produced an envelope. From this he poured some dried mud.

"Here, steady on with my tablecloth," said Scott. "What's this?"

"Mud."

"What about it?"

"Where do you think it came from?"

"How should I know? Road, I suppose."

Pillingshot smiled faintly.

"Eighteen different kinds of mud about here," he said patronisingly. "This is flower-bed mud from the house front garden."

"Well, what about it?"

"Sh-h-h!" said Pillingshot, and glided out of the room.

"Well?" asked Scott next day. "Clues pouring in all right?"

"Rather."

"What! Got another?"

Pillingshot walked silently to the door and flung it open. He looked up and down the passage. Then he closed the door and returned to the table, where he took from his waistcoat pocket a used match.

Scott turned it over inquiringly.

"What's the idea of this?"

"A clue," said Pillingshot. "See anything queer about it? See that rummy brown stain on it?"

"Yes."

"Blood!" snorted Pillingshot.

"What's the good of blood? There's been no murder."

Pillingshot looked serious.

"I never thought of that."

"You must think of everything. The worst mistake a detective can make is to get switched off on to another track while he's working on a case. This match is a clue to something else. You can't work on it."

"I suppose not," said Pillingshot.

"Don't be discouraged. You're doing fine."

"I know," said Pillingshot. "I shall find that quid all right."

"Nothing like sticking to it."

Pillingshot shuffled, then rose to a point of order. "I've been reading those Sherlock Holmes stories," he said, "and Sherlock Holmes always got a fee if he brought a thing off. I think I ought to, too."

"Mercenary young brute!"

"It has been a beastly swot."

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"Done you good. Supplied you with a serious interest in life. Well, I expect Evans will give you something—a jewelled snuff-box or something—if you pull the thing off."

"I don't."

"Well, he'll buy you a tea or something."

"He won't. He's not going to break the quid. He's saving up for a camera."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

Pillingshot kicked the leg of the table.

"You put me on to the case," he said casually.

"What! If you think I'm going to squander——"

"I think you ought to let me off fagging for the rest of the term."

Scott reflected.

"There's something in that. All right."

"Thanks."

"Don't mention it. You haven't found the quid yet."

"I know where it is."

"Where?"

"Ah!"

"Fool!" said Scott.

After breakfast next day Scott was seated in his study when Pillingshot entered.

"Here you are," said Pillingshot.

He unclasped his right hand and exhibited a sovereign. Scott inspected it.

"Is this the one?" he said.

"Yes," said Pillingshot.

"How do you know?"

"It is. I've sifted all the evidence."

"Who bagged it?"

"I don't want to mention names."

"Oh, all right. As he didn't spend any of it, it doesn't much matter. Not that it's much catch having a thief roaming at large

about the house. Anyhow, what put you on to him? How did you get on the track? You're a jolly smart kid, young Pillingshot. How did you work it?"

"I have my methods," said Pillingshot with dignity.

"Buck up. I shall have to be going over to school in a second."

"I hardly like to tell you."

"Tell me! Dash it all, I put you on to the case. I'm your employer."

"You won't touch me up if I tell you?"

"I will if you don't."

"But not if I do?"

"No."

"And how about the fee?"

"That's all right. Go on."

"All right, then. Well, I thought the whole thing over, and I couldn't make anything out of it at first, because it didn't seem likely that Trent or any of the other fellows in the dormitory had taken it; and then suddenly something Evans told me the day before yesterday made it all clear."

"What was that?"

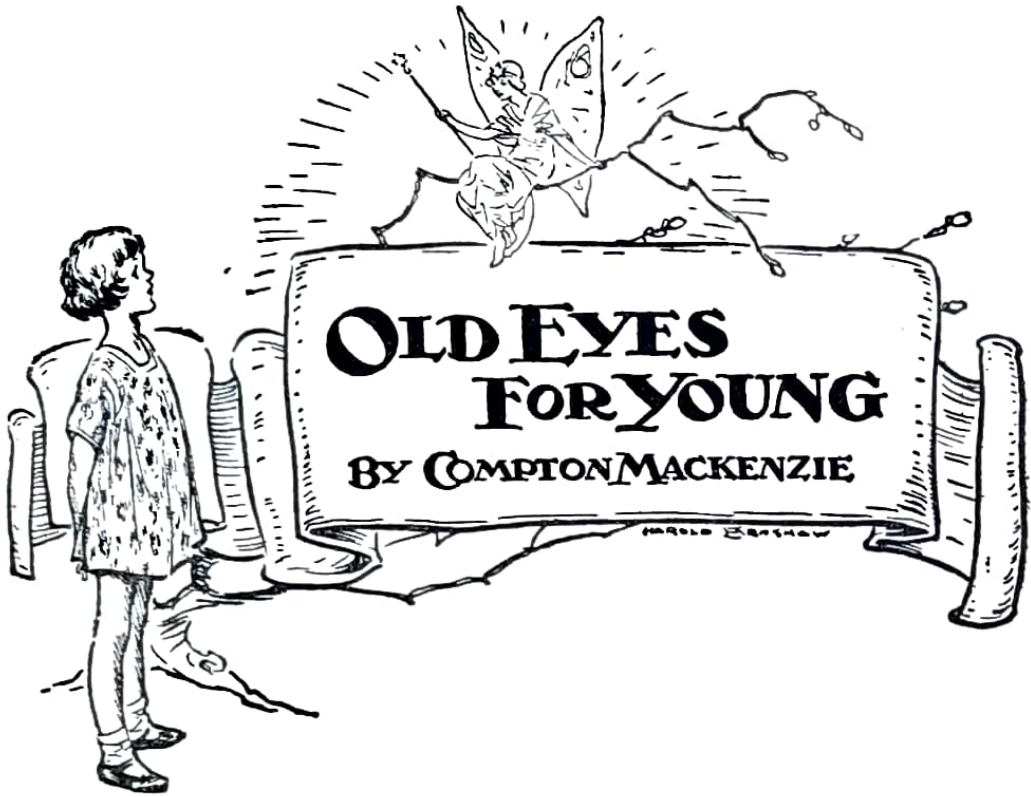
"He said that the matron had just given him back his quid, which one of the housemaids had found on the floor by his bed. It had dropped out of his pocket that first night."

Scott eyed him fixedly. Pillingshot coyly evaded his gaze.

"That was it, was it?" said Scott.

Pillingshot nodded.

"It was a clue," he said. "I worked on it."



ONCE upon a time—and not such a very long time ago, either—there was a little girl called Janie Smith, who was always discontented, though what she had to be discontented about badness only knows.

She was ten years old and lived with her father and mother at High Hall—a beautiful old house miles away from the railway-station, in a county where cowslips grew thick in the meadows. She had two sisters younger than herself and a brother who was only four, so that she was the eldest, which is always something. To be sure, she did have a governess called Miss Congleton-Crewe; but Miss Congleton-Crewe was an extremely nice governess, and as Janie never had to call her more than “Miss Crewe” she was no worse off than little girls who don’t have governesses with double-barrelled names. After all most little girls have governesses to put up with, and if they hadn’t governesses they would have school-mistresses. Janie grumbled about Miss Crewe as she did about everything, and, in fact, I’m really ashamed to tell you how discon-

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tented Janie was. However, she'll never read this story herself, and the reason why you'll find out before the story is done.

One of Janie's grumbles was that none of the adventures which happen to little girls in stories ever happened to her. And I've so little patience with Janie that I would not give her the pleasure of finding herself in a story. So, if by chance any of you happen to have met Janie Smith please don't tell her that she's in a story. She'd only put on airs about it, and she's got enough airs now to float a balloon. If there was strawberry jam for tea Janie wanted apricot jam; if there were muffins she wished they were crumpets. If the weather was fine she said it was too hot, and if the weather was wet she declared it rained morning, noon, and night. She did not want to live in the country, and was always sighing because her father and mother did not have a house in London, like an uncle and aunt with whom she once stayed.

But what made Janie most discontented of all was that she was still a little girl. Every night just before she fell asleep she used to sigh, "Oh dear, I wish I could wake up to-morrow morning and find that I was grown up!" and in the morning when she did wake she used to scowl at the jolly morning sun and sigh, "Oh dear, still nearly twenty-nine thousand days before I'll be grown up." Janie thought she was rather good at arithmetic, and one day just after her tenth birthday she had tried to find out how many days must go by before she was eighteen, which was the age she had decided would make her really grown up. Unfortunately she had made a mistake with her multiplication and got an extra nought into the result, so that she was actually giving herself till eighty before she was grown up. The silly little girl had been much too vain of her arithmetic to ask Miss Crewe to correct the sum, so the consequence was she was just ten times as discontented as she would have been if she had been better at multiplication.

Perhaps you think it's rather unfair to laugh at Janie's anxiety to be grown up. Perhaps some of you are longing

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as much as Janie herself to be grown up in spite of seeing Peter Pan last Christmas. And I'm afraid you're beginning to think that this is more like a sermon than a story. Well, I wouldn't mind a bit Janie's wanting to be grown up if she'd only had a good reason. But her reason was such a stupid one. Mere curiosity! She simply could not bear not being allowed to read this book or that newspaper. If she had wanted to be grown up in order not to have to go to bed so early I should never dream of laughing at her. I never liked going to bed early myself when I was a little boy, and I don't like going to bed early now. I think that sitting up late just makes it worth while being grown up. But you can take it from me that all the books and newspapers in the world, all the locked cupboards and drawers, all the grown up conversation after dinner, and even all the smoking you like (I mention tobacco in case any boy is condescending to read this story) are not worth growing up for.

However, Janie Smith thought they were—the books and newspapers and locked cupboards I mean, not the smoking. No doubt if her father, the Colonel, had smoked she would have wanted to smoke too. But Colonel Smith didn't smoke. He liked smoking, but his doctor said it wasn't good for him, and being a soldier he did as he was told. At least, I suppose that was the reason. I can't imagine anybody's giving up smoking for any other reason. Well, as I was saying, Janie Smith thought they were worth growing up for. And on the thirtieth of April at exactly half-past four o'clock in the afternoon Miss Congleton-Crewe—Janie's mother always referred to her as Miss Congleton-Crewe when her little daughter had been bad, so I think we'd better do the same—Miss Congleton-Crewe sent Janie to bed for exploring a cupboard in the bathroom which she had tried to explore once already, and for which she had been threatened with severe punishment if she ever dared do such a thing again. Now, this cupboard was high up on the wall and could only be reached by standing on the side of the bath. Every afternoon that Janie went upstairs to wash

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her hands before tea she used to long to make another desperate attempt on the secrets of this cupboard; but every time that she climbed up on the side of the bath and was tugging away at the rather stiff doors the gong for tea would sound and down Janie had to scramble as fast as she could. This afternoon, being as I said the thirtieth of April, the last April shower of the month drove Miss Congleton-Crewe and Janie indoors twenty minutes earlier than usual.

"Shall I go up and wash my hands now, Miss Crusie?"

When Janie wanted to ingratiate herself with Miss Congleton-Crewe she always called her by this pet name. I'm afraid the boys will rather snort at this, and of course it does sound silly, but you must remember that Janie was quite a kid, and I can't help her being a bit affected, can I?

"Yes, dear," said Miss Congleton-Crewe agreeably, "but don't be too long."

Janie turned away, gulping with excitement, because she was quite sure now that she should be able to solve the secret of that cupboard before the gong went for tea. She was so excited that she did not even wait to wash her hands before she clambered up and began to tug at the doors.

Crash! Clang!! Bonk!!!

"Good gracious!" Miss Congleton-Crewe exclaimed, hurrying out of her bedroom. "Is that the gong for tea already?"

But it wasn't the gong for tea. It was Janie falling backward into the empty bath with several medicine-bottles on top of her; and at exactly twenty-three minutes to five she was in bed. Moreover, when tea did arrive it arrived in the unpleasant shape of three slices of dry bread and a glass of milk.

"Pooh!" said Janie to Emily, the nursery-maid, "I'm not going to eat that beastly bread."

"Thatsallmisscrewesaidyouwastohavemissjanie," Emily explained in one breath.

Janie listened for a moment to know if her governess was

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anywhere within hearing. Then she picked up from her plate the thickest of the three slices and threw it with all her might and main at poor Emily.

"You see if I don't tell Miss Kew of what you done you naughty girl you," Emily breathed in a shocked voice.

"Tell-tale-tit!" retorted Janie, putting out her tongue.

"I'm sure I won't stay in the room with you another minute such disgusting manners as you've got it'd be ashamed for myself if I was you," Emily sniffed.

"Well, nobody asked you to stay in the room with me, did they?" said Janie in a tone of voice that an alligator might have hesitated to use.

Perhaps we had better pass over the rest of that afternoon and evening in silence. It would be most painful for me to write about, and I know it would be equally painful for you to read about. Just because Janie was determined to lie awake all night, by doing which she hoped to pay out Miss Congleton for her crewelty—I beg your pardon, I mean Miss Congleton-Kewe—oh bother! never mind, you know who I mean and what I mean—as I say, just because Janie wanted to lie awake all night she went and fell fast asleep before eight o'clock. The consequence was she woke up next morning very early indeed, earlier, in fact, than she had ever woken up since she could remember. And it was May Day morning. Janie wasn't going to be Queen of the May like the girl in the poem, who said, "You must wake and call me early, call me early, Mother dear," but nevertheless she was very glad to be awake.

"I'll just find out if it's true about getting up before sunrise and washing your face in the dew and being able to see the fairies," she decided. And jumping out of bed she managed to dress herself much more successfully than anybody who had heard Janie arguing with Emily about tapes would ever have thought she could.

For a moment, such a lovely morning it was, even Janie forgot to be discontented when she found herself standing all alone on the great lawn in front of High Hall—all alone with the trembling silver

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dew, and the pale green budding leaves, and the birdsong, and the freshness of the unfolding flowers and the faded blue sky of the morning. Janie wondered where would be the best place for her experiment, and finally settled to try in the small paddock on the other side of the orchard, where the grass was long and there was enough dew to bathe herself all over. There's no doubt whatever that Janie did not in the least expect to see any fairies, and, in fact, when she had dabbled her eyes thoroughly and looked round her for a moment or two without seeing anything unusual she said:

"Pooh! I thought it was all pretend!"

She had no sooner spoken these words than she heard a voice coming from the apple-tree under which she was standing.

"Good morning, Janie."

And when she looked up she saw sitting at the end of a twig that seemed almost too slim to hold a sparrow, a beautiful little creature dressed in pale green with a complexion like apple-blossom.

Janie was too much surprised to do anything except stare and look even more stupid than most mortals appear to fairies.

"Can I do anything for you?" inquired the fairy kindly.

For a moment Janie was inclined to ask if she could turn her into a fairy like herself. Then she changed her mind. After all, she knew very little about fairyland, and it might not be as amusing there as here. Besides, had not somebody told her that fairies were in the habit of going to sleep the whole winter through? Pretty dull, that would be.

Then Janie had an idea.

"Oh yes, please, if you wouldn't mind, I'd like to be grown up."

The fairy shook her dainty head.

"I'm afraid I'm not powerful enough to manage that for you."

Janie looked somewhat contemptuous.

"I thought fairies could do anything," she said.

"They can make old people young sometimes," the fairy replied. "But I'm afraid they can't make young people old."

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"Are you a good fairy or a bad fairy?" Janie asked bluntly.

"I'm a good fairy, and my name is Pomidora," said the fairy, tossing her lovely little head, which made the air sparkle as if with a thousand sunbeams.

"Well, could I be called Pomidora?" Janie suggested. She had always disliked her own name, and this seemed a good opportunity to get it changed. If it was changed by magic she wouldn't get into trouble about the change.

"Of course you couldn't be called Pomidora. Whatever next?" the fairy exclaimed.

"Well, I don't see much difference between fairies and ordinary people," Janie declared.

"I'm afraid you're making me feel very much inclined to give you a lesson," said Pomidora severely.

"Goodness!" Janie retorted. "I don't want to begin lessons at this time of day. Besides, it's still the Easter holidays."

"And so you'd like to be grown up?" said Pomidora, paying no attention to her rudeness. "Why?"

"Because I'm tired of being little," Janie replied.

"Oh, I can make you tall," said Pomidora hastily. "One of my jobs is to make the flowers grow."

Without waiting for Janie to reply she waved her wand and murmured a charm which sounded like the noise of summer rain.

"Here, stop, stop!" Janie shrieked. She was growing at a most terrible pace, and unfortunately her clothes were not growing with her, so that in a second her stockings had turned into babies' socks and her petticoats looked like a baby's bib round her neck, while her shoes were creaking under the strain and one toe was actually bursting through the leather.

Pomidora murmured another charm which sounded like the crackling of leaves in the August sun, and Janie shrank back to her own size, though the hole her toe had made in the shoe still remained and her clothes hung in ribbons where they had been overstretched by her rapid growth.

"It's no good making me grow if my clothes don't grow too," said Janie angrily.

"Rain makes the flowers grow," Pomidora explained. "But clothes often shrink in wet."

"Well, I think I'd better say good-bye," Janie decided, "and go back indoors." She was beginning to be anxious about the coming interview with her governess on the subject of the rents in her clothes. She did not feel quite sure that Miss Crewe would believe that a fairy had caused all the damage. "As you can't make me grow up properly," she added, "it's not much use staying here to talk to you."

"But I can't think why you want to be grown up," said Pomidora.

"Well, I want to read newspapers and novels and . . ." Janie stopped and decided not to add "look what's inside cupboards where I'm not allowed to look." After all, grown up people didn't seem to spend much of their time looking into cupboards. In fact, she had often heard them say, "Oh dear, what a nuisance! I *must* clear out that cupboard."

"But you can read newspapers now," Pomidora pointed out.

"Yes, you——" Janie was just going to say "You silly!" but she thought better of it, because even if she was not a very powerful fairy Pomidora had already proved that she had a good deal of magical power, and it might be wiser not to call her a silly. So Janie substituted "see" for "silly." "Yes, you see," she went on, "but I can't always understand them, and sometimes I ask a question about something and then the newspaper is taken away from me, and Father says, 'Good gracious, what on earth will the child ask next? What's she doing with my paper, anyway?'"

"And you want to understand the newspapers?" Pomidora went on in a sad voice.

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I could give you a pair of grown up eyes instead of

OLD EYES FOR YOUNG

your own. There's a dear old lady I know who longs to be young again, and I promised her to look round for a pair of young eyes. But before you agree to the exchange, I ought to warn you that you'll never see any more fairies. Indeed, you won't even be able to enjoy fairy books."

"I don't want to," said Janie defiantly. "I think fairy stories are awfully stupid. But how can this old lady see you?" she went on.

"She can't see me," said Pomidora. "That's what makes her so sad."

"Then how does she know you're there?"

"She knows I'm there, because though her eyes are old her heart is young. But your heart is already old, Janie. So if you have grown up eyes you'll have nothing left to understand fairies."

"Well, I don't much mind," said Janie candidly. "I'd much rather understand newspapers."

Pomidora sighed, and the sound of her sigh was like a gentle wind in the branches of the apple-tree.

"Very well. Since you want grown up eyes, you shall have grown up eyes."

"Will it hurt?" Janie asked, for the solemnity of the fairy's voice was a little bit alarming.

"Oh no. I shall put you under a spell while the change is being made."

"Will it be like when Miss Crewe had a tooth out with gas?"

Pomidora did not reply, and Janie felt the air round her full of strange flutterings and flowery scents. The trees and the grass and the chimneys of High Hall faded, and she thought that she was being carried along on a swift, rushing torrent which roared in her ears. She gasped and spluttered and tried to call out. But her voice wouldn't say anything, and then, just as she thought she should burst if her voice wouldn't say something, she came to herself. She looked up into the apple-tree, but the Fairy Pomidora had vanished.

COMPTON MACKENZIE

Janie felt her eyes, but they seemed just the same as usual and everything looked just the same—at least, perhaps not quite the same. The trees did not look so tall somehow, and High Hall itself looked smaller. The fat thrushes on the lawn were still speckled, but their breasts were not so much like ermine as they used to be. Janie was shocked too by the grubbiness of her hands and the rents in her frock, and as for the way her toe was coming through her shoe, it made her feel quite upset. She was not worrying any more what Miss Crewe would say about her clothes. It was she herself who did not like their untidiness now.

Janie walked back to the house, eager to know if what the fairy had promised her would come true. She was so eager to find out if she could understand the paper that she could hardly bear the idea of waiting two hours for the postman's arrival. However, the time went past much more quickly than usual. Two hours used to seem like two weeks to Janie; but now they seemed like two minutes. Her father was not down when she reached the breakfast-room, and without thinking that she was doing anything unusual she tore the wrapper off *The Times* just as she had often seen her mother do.

"Goodness!" Janie exclaimed. "I do wish the Government could grasp that the country will not stand for any more shilly-shallying with Socialism."

Just then Miss Crewe came in.

"My dear child, where have you been all this time? Did you ask my permission to go out before breakfast?" she inquired severely.

"Oh, Miss Crewe," Janie said, "I'm very much afraid that we shall *have* to have another election. *The Times* says: 'Unwilling as every elector will be to see the country once more engaged upon . . .'"

"Janie, how many times have I told you not to read the newspaper?"

"The franc has dropped another point, Miss Crewe," said Janie.

OLD EYES FOR YOUNG

"Did you hear what I said?"

"And there's a very interesting letter from Lord Loch Lomond on economy, Miss Crewe. He suggests that for the next five years every civil servant should be paid half his salary and work twelve hours a day. 'Only thus,' he says, 'can the country be saved from the bankruptcy with which . . .'"

"Janie!"

"Just let me read this article on the gold standard, Miss Crewe."



"THERE'S NEVER ANYTHING INTERESTING IN THE PAPERS"

Her father and mother came into the breakfast-room at that moment.

"Father," she asked, "are you an inflationist?"

The Colonel stared at his little daughter.

"Mother," Janie went on, "I think there's no doubt we ought to eat more vitamins."

COMPTON MACKENZIE

"What on earth's the matter with the child's eyes?" exclaimed the Colonel, staring at her.

Janie looked very frightened. She had carefully examined her eyes in the looking-glass when she came in from her May morning adventure, and she had not noticed anything different. Were they now going to find out that she had been given grown-up eyes by a fairy?

"I must take her to see an oculist," said Mrs. Smith in a worried voice.

And the oculist decided that Janie must wear spectacles.

But what is saddest of all, she read so many novels and newspapers, and understood so well what she was reading about, that she entirely ceased to believe that she had ever met a fairy and lost her own eyes. The consequence was she never tried to find Pomidora and beg her to take back the grown-up eyes. Moreover, she soon found newspapers very dull, and at this moment she is saying in a dreary voice:

"There's never anything interesting in the papers nowadays."

She understands all she reads, but she's not a bit less discontented. In fact, she's more discontented, because not only does she still want to be different herself, but she wants everybody else to be different as well.



“Sneezles”

A. A. MILNE

Christopher Robin
Had wheezles
And sneezles,
They bundled him
Into
His bed.
They gave him what goes
With a cold in the nose,
And some more for a cold
In the head.
They wondered
If wheezles
Could turn
Into measles,
If sneezles
Would turn into mumps;
They examined his chest
For a rash,





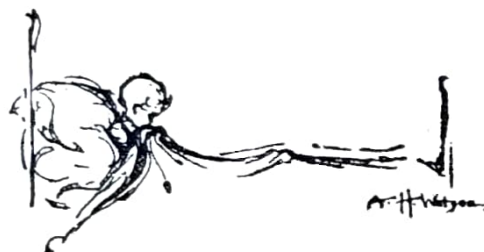
And the rest
Of his body for swelling and lumps.
They sent for some doctors
In sneezles
And wheezles;
To tell them what ought to be done.
All sorts and conditions
Of famous physicians
Came hurrying round
At a run.
They all made a note
Of the state of his throat,
They asked if he suffered from
thirst;
They asked if the sneezles
Came *after* the wheezles,
Or if the first sneezle
Came first.
They said, "If you teazle
A sneezle
Or wheezle,
A measle
May easily grow.
But humour or pleazle
The wheezle



"SNEEZLES"



Or sneeze,
The measle
Will certainly go."
They expounded the reazles
For sneezles
And wheezles
The appearance of measles
When new.
They said, "If he freezles
In draughts and in breezles
Then *Phtheezles*
May even ensue . . ."



Christopher Robin
Got up in the morning,
The sneezles had vanished away.
And the look in his eye
Seemed to say to the sky,
"Now how to amuse them to-
day?"

The Battle of Crécy

HILAIRE BELLOC

EVERYONE has heard of the battle of Crécy, which was won by a small army from England against the much larger army of the French King, rather less than 600 years ago. It is one of the most famous things in the history of England.

I will try to tell you what the times and the people and place were like and how the thing looked.

King Edward III of England had a very good claim to the Crown of France, for he was the last King's grandson. We must remember that England at that time (in 1346) was still French-speaking in the Court, and in most gentlemen's families, and in all the richer part, especially big shop-keepers and merchants of the towns, and lawyers and even bailiffs and the more important people of the country sides. They could all talk French, and French was understood right down to those just above the poorer people who worked with their hands—and even probably among a lot of those some French phrases used by their superiors could be understood after a fashion. It was rather like what you find in Wales to-day. English is spoken there by all well-to-do people and a great many of the people between them and the labourers. It gets less and less known as you go down towards the poorer people. Also we have to remember that the Kings of England were descended, and that not so long ago, from forefathers who were entirely French, and Edward the Third's own mother was the daughter of a King of France.

THE BATTLE OF CRÉCY

At any rate he had a very good claim, though modern writers have not made as much of it as they should. He went over to France with an army not very large, partly to fight for this claim, but more to bring pressure on the King of France in matters of trade: at least, that is the best explanation of why he went to war. He marched through Normandy right up to the walls of Paris, and then turned back towards the sea, wishing to get back to England with his men from one of the ports where the sea is narrowest; probably from one of the ports belonging to his friends in what is to-day Belgium.

But if you will look at the map you will see that right in a straight line between where he was, just north of Paris, and the Straits of Dover is the river Somme. Edward and his men had to cross that river before they could get to the narrow parts of the sea and make their way back to England after the raid.

Now, the armies of the King of France watched all the crossings of the river, and Edward tried now here, now there, farther and farther down the stream, but found every passage guarded.

At last he came to that place where the Somme spread out into a very broad valley up which the sea-tide swept twice a day; a river-mouth valley of the sort called an estuary. It is the broad valley below Abbeville. To-day it is all dry land because people have slowly reclaimed it from the sea with embankments, but in that day it was open water with the tide flowing up and down it like the mouth of the Thames, though not so wide.

At last Edward, thus seeking for a passage and finding none, heard of a ford which was artificially hardened, a sort of causeway by which men could cross at low tide. At high tide the water was far too deep for men to get across that way. The valley was here about half-a-mile broad, and because the King of France (who, remember, was Edward the First's cousin, and belonged to just the same society that he did, talking the same language and going on in the same way) thought it very unlikely that these lower difficult passages of the Somme would be attempted he left

them lightly guarded, and he had put to watch this particular ford (which was called Blanchetaque) only a small body of men under the command of a man called de Foy.

King Edward of England determined to force the passage. He had to do so or be caught in a trap, for if he stayed the wrong side of the river he would never get home.

Before we talk of his getting across we must understand what his following was like. The King himself, and the people all round him, and nearly all the gentlemen, and what to-day we should call officers, spoke French, as I have said. Some of the lesser ones probably could also give orders and make themselves understood in the various local Anglo-Saxon dialects spoken by the common soldiers. What corresponded to non-commissioned officers would know something of both the local dialects and the common French tongue of the governing people. There were also in the army a certain number of Welshmen who knew nothing but Welsh, though among these also the few richer men would have been able to understand the French of the officers with whom they mixed.

This army of Edward's, which was about twenty-five thousand fighting men altogether (though having a number of non-combatants with it, of course, for driving wagons and helping to load them and so on) was like any other army of the time. All the gentlemen were on horseback and armed, with iron covering their bodies and heads, some of it made of plates and some of it still of chain-work. The words "coat of *mail*" means "coat of links" (*maille* is French for a link) and refers to this old chain work armour. A good many of the lesser men were armed only with great knives, a large number of men—not gentlemen, but serving under gentlemen, yeomen and tenants and hired soldiers—were mounted like the gentry and fought with swords.

But the particular thing about Edward's army in which it was different from the enemy's, was the bowmen. The Welsh people had invented a great bow usually made of elm (sometimes of yew,

THE BATTLE OF CRÉCY

and as tall, or taller, than a man. It wanted special strength to pull it and special training. Only expert men could use it, and their services were very highly valued. But those who could use it had great superiority over any other weapon used in warfare at that time, for no one outside England had a weapon of this kind. The arrow from it could kill a man or a horse at two hundred yards, and it was very accurate. There had been bows, of course, for thousands of years before this time; and the most usual bow of the Continent was the cross-bow, a mechanical arrangement which had to be wound up. It shot a heavy bolt pretty far, but it was slow. It could deliver only one shot to six of the long bow which the Welsh had invented and which Edward's army was now using. Also, it was less accurate.

Now, it was these bowmen that won the victory.

Edward found out how the tide worked and heard that it was ebbing at the break of day; so if he began getting his army across in the early morning he might, supposing he broke the French defence on the other side, have them all safe on the farther side before the water rose so high on the flood tide as to make further passage impossible. So he started out to cross the ford.

The small body of horse went before, then came the archers and then the rest of the army, with the baggage at the end. The French and English horsemen met in the water and fought furiously, with the tide rising about their feet, but the English, or rather Welsh, archers decided the issue; and the farther bank was gained. The whole army was able to get across except its baggage, most of which was cut off by the tide.

You can see the place still quite clearly marked, though it is now dry land. If ever you go to Paris by the main line from London you will see, about a mile before you get to the little station called Port, a narrow lane going quite straight right across the flat valley, which in those days was an estuary filled with tidal water every six hours. This straight, narrow lane marks the line of the Ford of Blanchetaque.

When Edward and his army had thus got safely to the farther shore, all they had to do was to march as quickly as they could towards the Straits of Dover and the friendly Belgian ports and so get home. But they had, close at hand, the much larger gathering forces of the French King coming up from Amiens. If you will look at the map you will see why this was. People gathering at Amiens could strike right against the line of march of other people marching from the Somme below Abbeville towards Calais or Dunkerque.

Edward's army went through the big wood of Crécy (which still stands, the same size as it was then and with the same road going through it) and came out on the second day at the little town of Crécy on the other side.

By the time they had reached it they knew that the King of France with his big force was coming up from Amiens against them.

An army marching all stretched out along the roads cannot fight, and if it is caught in that condition by an enemy, can, of course, be destroyed. So when there is a danger of that, the armies stop marching in column—that is, one man behind another,—and turn round to meet their enemy in line—that is, shoulder to shoulder—and defeat him if they can. Otherwise they would be doomed.

Edward did this. With his much smaller army he turned round to face the advance of the French King coming up on the side of his march.

Crécy lies in a hollow. Just above it there is a ridge about a mile long with a shallow valley in front of it, and on the middle of the ridge there used to be a windmill. The windmill was pulled down about a lifetime ago, unfortunately, but one can still see the mound on which it stood. From this windmill Edward watched the ordering of his army along the ridge, and the distant landscape upon which the first troops of the King of France were already appearing. He sent his horses, and such wagons as he

THE BATTLE OF CRÉCY

had saved from the baggage, behind the ridge for safety, and he drew up on the slopes of the ridge facing the French, his horsemen and footmen and his archers who were to make all the difference. These archers were to be in the front line.

The whole army was drawn up in three groups, and in the one on the right was the little Prince of Wales, a boy only fourteen years old, but already armoured and given the chance of fighting. It was he who was later to be called "The Black Prince" and was to be so famous in war.

The French came on in a dense mass, all nobles and gentlemen armoured, riding on horseback and intending to break the smaller force of the King by their charge. They were followed by a disorganized mass of foot soldiers, many of whom were only rabble, armed haphazard, and with little discipline. But in front of these mounted gentlemen was a body of cross-bowmen, who probably came from Genoa (though some think they came from Geneva—we are not quite certain on that).

As the French coming down the opposing slope approached the immovable line of Edward the Third's army on the rising ground beyond, there was a violent thunderstorm. The cross-bowmen complained that this slackened the strings of their bows, but, anyhow, the discharge they made was useless, and the archers from the English side quite overwhelmed them with their fire. The cross-bowmen fell into confusion and the French gentry, armoured and on horseback, rode them down in their impatience and charged up the slope against the archers of the English King.

Now, here was seen for the first time the very great advantage of the new weapon. The arrows of Edward the Third's archers were discharged with an altogether new rapidity and at an unexpected range, and with unexpected accuracy and with quite unexpected driving power. The whole of that cavalry fell into a welter.

You must know that an arrow from one of these long bows could pierce four inches of hard oak at three hundred yards—so



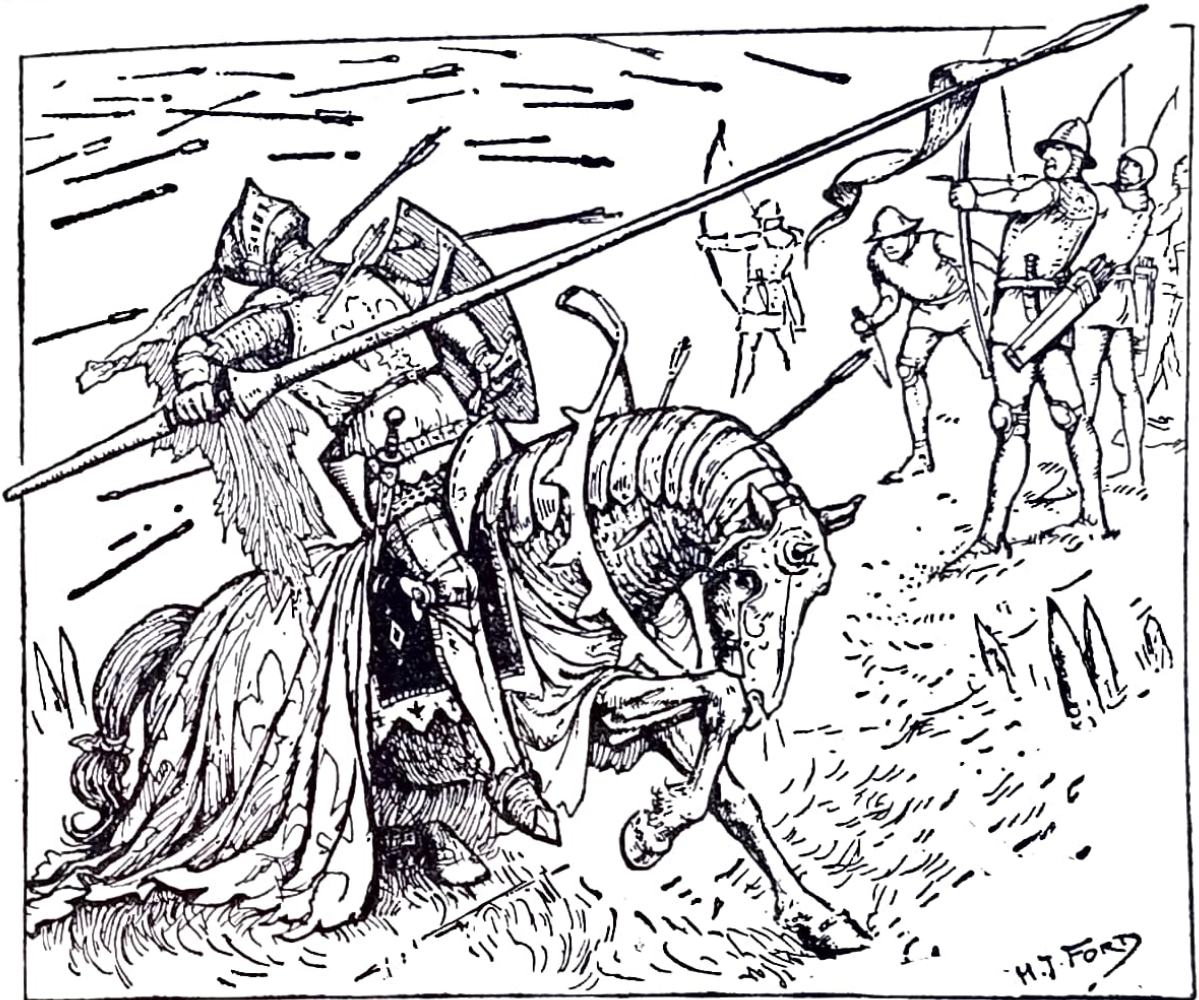
“QUE L'ENFANT GAIGNE SES ESPERONS!”

An incident in the Battle of Crecy, when the Prince of Wales, being hard pressed, Sir Thomas Norwich was sent to the King for help. The King refused to send help, so that the boy should get more glory.

*Drawn for The Treasure Ship
by H. J. Ford.*

you may imagine what it did, when in range, to unprotected horses, heavily laden with armoured riders, coming uphill over sodden ground.

The mounts fell in all directions and very heavy-armoured riders were helpless on the ground. There was only one place



FRENCH CHIVALRY GOES DOWN BEFORE ENGLISH ARCHERS

where the French Cavalry charge got home, and that was on the English right, where the young Prince of Wales was fighting. His guardian sent to his father to say that he was hard pressed; Edward asked whether he was still in the saddle, and hearing that he was, all he said was, "*Que l'enfant gagne ses esperons,*" which means in modern English, "Let the child win his spurs." He was

THE BATTLE OF CRÉCY

speaking of the custom of making a man a Knight by fastening spurs to his feet, and he meant, "Let the boy prove himself worthy of Knighthood, young as he is." It became a proverb, was translated into English, and we still use it.

Though the Cavalry charge of the gentry had got right in on this point it failed everywhere else all along the line, and the confusion of so many bodies of horse and of dismounted men lying helpless, prevented the reserves behind them from making good. Of course the rabble of footmen coming up behind the mounted gentry could do nothing in such a situation, and it was clear, as the arrows still continued to rain upon the French horsemen, that the battle could not be retrieved.

When it was thus lost, those who could still save themselves on the enemy side began riding away, and the English mounted men were launched in pursuit; while the footmen went about either despatching or ransoming the dismounted and wounded horsemen of the King of France. The pursuit and the search for bodies and for prisoners went on into the night. The French foot followers had long melted away, and the King of France himself, arriving back from the defeat, struck on the door of a house on his way to Amiens, and when they called from the windows who was there, cried, "The unfortunate King of France!"

It was a very great and striking victory, even to those who looked at it only as a spectacle; but it was of greater importance than they knew in the history of war, for it brought out for the first time the importance of the new weapon, the long bow, which for three or four lifetimes continued to have its effect upon the fields of Europe. It was not always victorious, because it wanted special circumstances for success, but when it had a full chance nothing could stand against it until portable firearms came in; and even they, at first, were less accurate and had a far shorter range than the English (or rather Welsh) long bow.

Crécy was also, perhaps, the first important battle in which cannon were used. The guns were as yet quite little things, and

there were very few of them. They fired stone bolts bigger than a man's fist, but not much bigger. They fired them only at long intervals and very inaccurately, and it was the noise much more than the missile that had any effect. Still it is interesting as the beginning of a new weapon. They were of German make, the German being then, after the Mohammedans, the best makers of such novel things. But it was a long time before artillery came to count seriously in war.

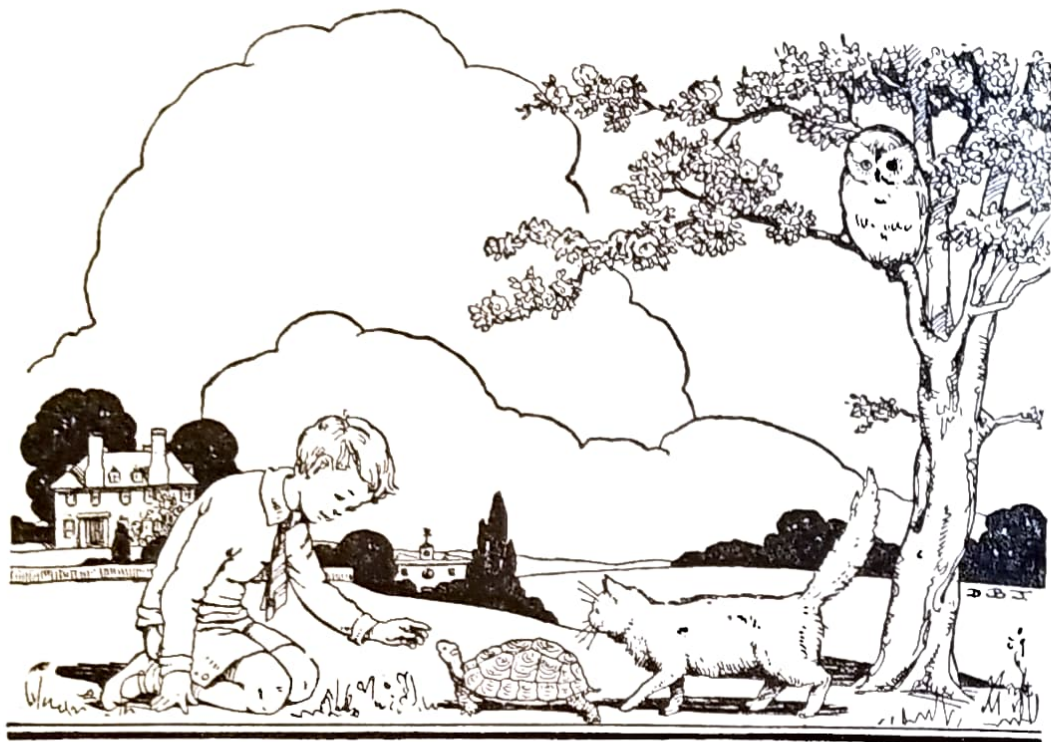
The main fruit of the battle was the capture of Calais.

The French army being now out of action, King Edward could take his way at his ease, towards the Straits of Dover. It being very important to have what soldiers call a "bridge-head" on the Continent—that is, a stronghold to defend the crossing of the narrow seas—he determined to take the town. He did so after a rather long siege of ten weeks, and Calais remained, with the country-side about it, a possession of the English Crown and a permanent place for crossing the sea in security and landing in France for the purpose of war during more than two hundred years.

It was not lost until the time of Mary Tudor, and even after her time English Governments kept on wanting something of the sort on the other side of the Channel even for another one hundred years; and for a short time they had Dunkerque.

There you have the battle of Crécy, the last battle fought under the old conditions in which England was governed by French-speaking men, the first great victory in which Englishmen used cannon and—much more important—the long bow abroad.

If ever you go to see the place to-day you will find it very little changed. Of course the town is now modern, and, as I have said, the mill has been pulled down. But there has been no building over the field of battle. The woods and the neighbouring villages are just of the same size as they were when Crécy was fought, and you can stand on the mound where the old mill was, look over the valley before you, and imagine the whole thing taking place in just the same landscape that you see before you to-day.



Toby's Birthday Presents

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

TOBY, aged nearly seven, had no parents, and lived with his Aunt and Uncle in the country. He loved them both, for they were very kind to him, yet they were not quite the same as the father and mother he could just remember. They had no children of their own. His Aunt Sophy was rather deaf. In his mind he always connected her with puddings, because of the way she said: "No, Toby, one helping is *quite* enough to-day. If you eat any more, you'll turn into a pudding yourself."

His Uncle was in the wholesale hat business and had an office and a big factory somewhere far away in London, where he went twice a week. He also hunted twice a week. On both occasions he wore a top-hat; and Toby longed for the day when he, too, could make hats and hunt, and so wear one of these tall, shiny

things on the top of his head. It puzzled him why the same kind of hat was used for chasing a fox and for going to an office, but his Uncle's explanation was not very clear. Once he put the hat on his own head; it came down over eyes and nose to his mouth and his voice sounded queer inside it. It was difficult to get off again. He hadn't improved its looks when he got it off. The only other times a top-hat was worn seemed to be a funeral or a wedding. But that had no interest for Toby. It was a queer business altogether. Hats, anyhow, brought in a lot of money. His real trouble, however, was that he had no brothers or sisters to play with. What he wanted even more than a top-hat was a playmate.

His seventh birthday was now near, and he knew his Uncle would snatch him up, set him on his knee with a jerk, and say in his loud, booming voice:

"Now, Toby, my little man, what d'you want for your birthday, eh?"

He hated being called a Little Man; otherwise the question was all right. Last year he had no answer ready. It seemed silly to say: "I want a top-hat," and his Uncle's suggestion of a cob—well, the only cob he knew had kicked, and he wasn't sure of staying on its back for very long. Besides, he couldn't *play* with a cob. This year, anyhow, he had his answer ready, and when the thing happened, and he found himself perched on his Uncle's knee, and heard the big voice asking the expected question, he answered promptly:

"A cat, please."

"What?" (In a loud voice.)

"And a tortoise."

"Eh?" (In a shout.)

"And a owl."

"You mean an owl," boomed his Uncle.

"A nowl, yes," repeated Toby.

The man roared out then: "Bless the boy! What's the matter with him? A cat, a tortoise and an owl, indeed! I hoped you

TOBY'S BIRTHDAY PRESENTS

were going to say a cob!" He jumped him about on his great knees.

Anybody else might have thought his Uncle was angry, but Toby knew better. The big voice didn't frighten him. It was loud from the habit of talking to his deaf wife. It meant nothing.

Toby explained then: The Brown children down the road had a pet owl in a cage, the White family up the hill had a beautiful Persian cat that was always having kittens, and the Green's boy across the lane had a tortoise. So why shouldn't Toby Black have them too! He explained at some length his point of view.

His Uncle, however, didn't approve of presents of this sort.

"Pets," he declared, "are nothing but a nuisance in the house. They're noisy and messy, and they're always getting lost. Besides, they're no use. My money comes from making *useful* things. Think of something else, my little man—something useful—and you shall have it."

"Promise?" asked Toby, earnestly.

"Yes. I told you once. If it's useful you shall have it."

"Thank you," said the boy, and shot off his Uncle's knee like a cannon-ball before any further conditions could be made.

There was less than a week now to his birthday, and he at once set about finding out what use a cat, a tortoise and an owl might be. None, it seemed! Nannie said there were no mice in the nursery; the gardener said a tortoise ate his yellow flowers and was always getting lost; and the stable-groom, who looked after the hunters, told him that owls weren't worth bothering about, as they only made a horrid noise at night and stared in the daytime. As for tortoises, he added, they were like some people he knew—he wondered why they had ever been made at all.

Cats, owls and tortoises were evidently not much use in the world to anybody.

Aunt Sophy, in this matter of presents, was different. She didn't ask what present he wanted; she just told him what she was going to give—then watched his face to see whether he looked

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

glum or happy. Last year it had been a football. "You want a football, Toby," she said. "That's what *you* want." But he didn't want a football, because he had no one to kick it to, Nannie being a bit too big to run. He got it just the same, though.

"A bicycle," announced his Aunt now, "is what you need." And as he did want a bicycle, he looked pleased at once, and that was easily settled. He clapped his hands and shouted "Thank you, Aunt Sophy." Later, when he got it, he would have to shout "Thank you, Aunt Sophy" all over again, but that didn't matter.

Then she inquired: "And what have you asked your Uncle for?"

The smiles left his face as he told her:

"A tortoise, a cat, and a nowl," he shouted.

"A porpoise, a top-hat, and a cow!" she exclaimed, not hearing clearly. She looked amazed. "What on earth do you want such odd things for?" she asked in bewilderment, and when Toby had repeated more distinctly, she shook her head. "I'm afraid you won't get them," she said. "Your Uncle dislikes pets in the house." Her expression was like cook's.

"He wants me to have a cob," began Toby.

"A dog would be better, yes," replied Aunt Sophy, just like the curate.

"A *cob*," the boy explained more loudly. He concealed his desire to laugh.

"Ah!" cried the other. "Yes, that would be a useful present indeed. We could use it in the pony-cart." He thought of bread-and-butter pudding.

"I suppose so," agreed Toby, his face falling. He sighed. Oh, dear, why weren't cats and nowls and tortoises useful, he wondered? And that night, on his knees beside the bed, after praying as usual that Aunt's deaf ears might be cured, he added another Special Request, but added it indirectly, because he had been told he was never to ask for things he wanted for himself. That was just begging.

TOBY'S BIRTHDAY PRESENTS

"And please make a tortoise, a cat, and a nowl useful," he prayed, with all the energy in his body, then went to sleep with a comfortable feeling that he had done his best—all he could, at any rate. He hadn't asked anything for himself, he decided; he certainly hadn't "begged." But next morning his heart sank, as he overheard his Uncle talking loudly in the hall, telling his wife that the Green's tortoise was lost again. He was in his top-hat, ready to go to London for his meeting at the Hat Office, and Aunt Sophy, whose ears had certainly not been cured yet, was seeing him into the motor to go to the station.

"Perhaps it's crawled into our garden," he shouted.

"What! Dorcas crawled into our larder!" exclaimed Aunt Sophy, holding her hands up in amazement. Dorcas was one of the hunters. "That's the third time this year," she said, when she understood. "It's always getting lost." She shook her head with annoyance, just like blanc-mange, thought Toby.

"Beastly little creatures!" complained her husband. "They're no use to anybody. Why, they can't even squeak!" He bustled off in the car, and Toby saw him through the window polishing his tall silk hat with his hand, as though it were an animal he loved and was stroking affectionately.

Yet, though upset a little by what he had heard, Toby had a queer feeling that somehow a tortoise could be useful, and that he would get one for a birthday present after all.

Now, that night, as he was lying in bed, supposed to be asleep, an odd thing happened. It was half-past seven. He was thinking about tortoises, cats and owls, when his wakeful ears caught a strange sentence in the hall below:

"Some use after all," his Uncle's voice boomed downstairs. "Useful little beast, I say . . ."

Toby sat up and listened. The talk echoed, went lost, came back again. He crept out of bed to hear better. Thank goodness, Aunt Sophy hadn't heard properly. His Uncle cried louder still:

"Some use, after all," he repeated, "the silly thing. Another minute and I'd have been smashed to smithereens, I tell you." He bawled the next words: "Anyhow, it saved my life!"

"Paid your wife!" Aunt Sophy echoed, still not catching the sentence.

"*Saved my life,*" his Uncle yelled across the hall. "*The tortoise did!*" And his jolly laugh rang out like a peal of bells.

By this time Toby, in his nightshirt, was standing in the passage, leaning across the banisters. He was listening to every word. He was shaking with excitement. He heard the whole story.

On the way back from the station the car reached the dangerous cross-roads, where high hedges hid anything coming the other way, and just at this point the head-lights revealed two boys on their knees in the middle of the road. The car was going fast, but the chauffeur stopped it with such a jerk that Uncle William's top-hat fell off. At first he was rather angry, but a moment later, he was rather pleased. For, almost a second after they stopped, an enormous trolley, driven at reckless speed and without sounding its horn, came thundering down the intersecting cross-road. But for the two boys in the road, the car must have been smashed to smithereens.

"And me with it," roared Uncle William.

"Gracious goodness!" cried Aunt Sophy, looking now like an apple dumpling.

"Yes, me with it?" shouted Uncle William. "Only that stupid tortoise saved me."

"What tortoise?" asked Aunt Sophy, hearing for once correctly.

"The tortoise in the road, my dear," bawled her husband. "The Green's tortoise. Those two boys found it there and were examining it. It saved my life, I tell you, that Green tortoise did! Lucky it got lost—eh?"

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Aunt Sophy, looking like a hot milk pudding, Toby thought, made queer noises under her breath. He couldn't hear exactly what she said.

"So I've got that tortoise to thank for my life," repeated Uncle William, now shouting like a man at the Circus Tent. "Useful little beast, eh? I've sent it over to the Greens," he added, as he leaned back in his chair and laughed out loud. Then his voice changed suddenly. "Little rascal!" he cried out—and came up the hall stairs three steps at a time!

Which made Toby so frightened that he simply couldn't move an inch. For when his Uncle leaned back in his chair to laugh, his eyes turned up. And as his eyes turned up, he saw a little boy in his white nightshirt leaning over the banisters and listening—listening to every word. And when he said "Little rascal!" he didn't mean the tortoise; he meant this figure in white who ought to have been in bed and asleep hours ago.

Two minutes later the white shivering figure had been bundled back into bed, and the big man, though in a much quieter voice, was telling him how naughty he was, while he poked him, smacked him, tickled him.

"You said it saved your life," the smaller figure gurgled, between its giggles and wriggles.

"I did, did I?" growled the man.

"I heard you," said the other, half beneath the sheets.

"Oh!" came the reply. "You've got sharp ears, haven't you?"

There was a pause.

"Is your life—useful?" asked the smaller voice.

"Very," answered the bigger one.

"Thank you very much," came a whisper from beneath the sheets.

And from the face by the door, as its owner put the light out, came a queer grimace that was not unlike a *wink*.

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When Toby was alone, he decided he would call his tortoise "Bill," because that was his Uncle's name. Would it lay eggs? Would it be strong enough for him to stand on? It would sleep all the winter, he had heard. It couldn't squeak, but it didn't mind if it rained. He was thinking of all these various things, when sleep caught him, and he slipped away into the land of dreams.

Things went rather quickly after that. It was the very next afternoon that he heard a curious scream, several screams, and felt sure that the cook was hurt, or the new calf was being naughty. It sounded like one or other, he thought. Nannie was just bringing him in from his dull afternoon walk, for they had tried to play Hide-and-Seek together, but Nannie was too big to hide in any ordinary bush, so the expedition had been without much interest.

They were near the house when the screams rang out.

"Come on!" cried Toby. "Something's up—something jolly!" He began to run, and Nannie ran heavily after him, warning him to be careful.

"Well, I do declare," she exclaimed a moment later, "if it's not your Aunt Sophy!" They had reached the drawing-room windows now.

"Then something's bitten her!" cried Toby. "Hurry up, Nannie!"

They ran headlong into the hall, but Toby was first to dash in at the drawing-room door, Nannie just behind him.

"She's bitten!" he cried.

Then he stopped, for he hardly knew what to do next. He saw his Aunt standing on a sofa, her skirts pulled high, her hair untidy, her glasses fallen off her nose, and her eyes starting out of her head. A tortoiseshell comb hung over one ear and a wisp of stray hair across one eye. This time it was not a pudding he thought of. What occurred to him was Guy Fawkes.

"It's up my dress," she was screaming at the top of her voice. "It'll bite me! I shall be poisoned! I can't find it! Oh! Oh!"

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While one hand held her skirts up, with the other she kept feeling all over her body, as if trying to catch something. She was dancing like a doll on wires.

"What is it, ma'am?" yelled Nannie, running to her rescue.

"A mouse, a mouse!" screamed Aunt Sophy. "A huge big mouse is up me! It's run up my skirts. Oh, catch it, catch it for me! Quick!" She danced and wriggled in her terror. Nannie instantly began prodding her all over, trying to feel the mouse inside her dress.

Then Toby had a brilliant idea.

"I'll get my butterfly net!" he shouted, and was off like a shot out of the room. He rushed upstairs. But on the way upstairs he remembered that a mouse-trap would be more use than a butterfly-net, and then that a mouse-trap without a bit of cheese was no good, so he dashed down to see the cook. But when he got into the kitchen, he found the cook sound asleep in a chair with a newspaper over her face. And when he waked her by yelling "A mouse is up Aunt Sophy's dress!" the cook only opened her eyes and said, "Why, bless the boy, my kitchen's full of mice, and that's because we haven't got a cat, of course,"—and at once spread the newspaper over her face again and composed herself to sleep as before.

This remark changed the whole current of Toby's thoughts. There *were* mice in the house after all! One had run up Aunt Sophy's legs and bitten her; and the kitchen was full of them, for the cook said so. Then a cat *would* be useful!

He tore back into the hall again, then into the drawing-room. His Aunt was in an arm-chair now, with her feet on a footstool, well off the ground; she was fanning herself, while Nannie stood beside her, half out of breath, and half laughing. Aunt Sophy, too, was panting, but half crying. No mouse was visible anywhere.

Toby went over and snuggled into the armchair beside his Aunt.



HE SAW HIS AUNT STANDING ON THE SOFA, HER SKIRTS
PULLED HIGH

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"Has it come down yet?" he asked, trying to comfort her. But she didn't hear him properly.

"Done brown," she said breathlessly, "I should think I am indeed!" And for once she forgot to correct his slang. "It got away," she added. "It's back in its hole by now, I suppose." She leaned back exhausted.

"Auntie," began Toby, as soothingly as he could, "you know, a cat would be rather useful, wouldn't it?"

Aunt Sophy nodded her head. He wasn't sure if she had heard or not. He repeated it. "Yes," she agreed, "it would."

"Will you tell Uncle?" asked Toby, quick as a flash.

"Yes," she agreed, "I will. I certainly will."

"A Persian," suggested Toby, "is best for mice." But Aunt Sophy thought he said something about her "pet aversion were mice," and this took a long time to explain and straighten out.

Nannie had to help, for Toby was now too excited to bother about long words like "aversion," which he didn't understand. He was wondering all the time what to call his pet when he got it. He felt sure now he *would* get it. In the end he decided he would call it "Sophy."

Things had gone pretty quickly before, but now, thought Toby, they went quicker still. His prayers to make a cat and a tortoise useful had been marvellously answered, but what about a owl? Having, as he believed, made sure of the first two, the third now seemed far more desirable and valuable than all three put together. But how on earth could an owl prove itself useful to anything or anybody?

Only two days were left till his birthday dawned. Nothing happened. He didn't know what to do. His Uncle was away most of the time. Once or twice they met in the hall or in the garden, but Toby knew better than to say anything. He believed in his Uncle as he believed in his prayers. He had made sure of his cat and tortoise. The less said now the better. His Uncle

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looked solemnly at him, and he looked solemnly back. Owls and nowls were not mentioned.

The last day came. It passed. Nothing had happened. Toby went to bed, feeling rather despondent. He curled up. Nannie lit the night-light and went out. He lay thinking, wondering, questioning. Corncrakes were calling in the distance. He heard the owls, too, hooting in the woods beyond the back lawn where the gypsies camped. He remembered that his Uncle disliked these gypsies, because they were what he called a "nuisance," but it was the owls he listened to now. Such wonderful, mysterious birds they were! He often heard them hooting in this way after sunset. He knew the screaming noise they made when they were on the hunt, and the other, quieter cry when mate called to mate as they sat in the ivy towers of the barn. Once he had seen one flying in the day-time, uncertain of its way. It made no sound. It was a beautiful, magnificent creature. Its beak and claws had no terror for him. Its feathers were soft, its great wings whirred marvellously. It travelled about the world in the darkness when everybody slept. Oh, to have one for his very own! To watch its great eyes blinking!

He lay in bed listening for a long time; then sleep came over him, and he dropped into dreamland, and the sound of wings and hooting seemed to follow him into his dreams. The hooting especially went on and on and on: "To whit, To whoo . . ." on and on and on, now louder, now softer, but always echoing through his dreams of mice and cats and tortoises and deaf aunts who looked like female Guy Fawkeses—on and on the soft sound of hooting came through the open window into his very room . . .

Then, suddenly, it became very loud indeed. Much closer it sounded. But it was no longer "To whit, To whoo," it was the other cry—the wild, hunting scream. Shrill and fierce, this high shriek went whistling past the open window. And Toby woke.

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He sat up in bed, rubbed his eyes, opened his ears, and listened. The room was dark, for the night-light had burnt out. But he did not feel frightened, as sometimes when he woke suddenly like this. He only wondered what had made him wake. A queer, shrill noise seemed still sounding in his ears. What was it? Also he wondered what time it was; and just at that moment, far away in the depths of the hall below, he heard the great clock strike.

“One . . . two . . .”

He counted the strokes. So it was two o'clock in the morning, and still many long hours from sunrise. Then, hardly had the echo of the strokes died away, than another sound broke the stillness of the night, as a wild, shrill cry, half scream, half yell, tore whistling through the air outside his open window. It made him start and pull the bed-clothes about him.

“A nowl!” he exclaimed under his breath, shaking with excitement. “That’s a nowl on the hunt! And that’s what made me wake too!”

Some little boys of Toby’s age, waking at two in the morning and hearing such strange noises, alone in their room, would have been frightened, and probably have screamed themselves. But Toby had his Uncle’s commonsense, and his father had been a soldier. Besides, he knew an owl’s cry when he heard it. It was no new sound to him. Also he knew that, as it could see in the dark, it would not dash into his room. But his main thought at this exciting moment, to tell the truth, had to do with another matter altogether. He thought of his birthday presents. This was undoubtedly a nowl. It might be a useful nowl. It might even be an answer to his prayer!

Into his brain, which may have been little but was certainly wide-awake, came a curious notion then. “Perhaps,” he thought, “if I show myself, it will do something useful! If it could *see* me, it might—” Well, he hardly knew what it could do to prove itself useful, but anyhow it might do *something*. So he crept

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out of bed and tiptoed over to the window. He pulled the cord and the green blind shot up with a loud rattle; then he opened the lower sash—the upper one was already open—and leaned out.

Nothing happened. The stars were shining brightly. It was very still. There was no wind to stir the bushes. The owl's cry was not repeated; it had caught its prey, probably, and was now gobbling it up in a tree. It could see his white figure standing by the open window, at any rate, for nowls, of course, could see everything in the dark, he knew. Below him lay the flower-beds, dark blotches on the lawn. The cold air crept inside his night-gown and made him shiver a little, but he was too excited to mind that.

"The nowl can see me," he thought. "If I wave my arms, it will see me better still."



HE WAVED HIS ARMS, TRYING TO ATTRACT ITS ATTENTION

He waved his white arms, trying to attract its attention; and he was just going to get a towel and wave that too, when he saw something that suddenly made his heart stand still. Two of the flower-beds were moving—moving slowly across the lawn!

Toby held his breath and stared. He couldn't believe his eyes. His heart was thumping now. He was frightened, too

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frightened to turn back into the room, or sink down and hide himself below the level of the window-sill. The flower-beds went on moving. Yet flower-beds, he knew, could not really move. It was impossible. And then the truth flashed into him. These dark blotches were not flower-beds at all. There were no flower-beds on the back lawn, but only on the front one. These dark blotches were living things. They were creatures. That's why they moved. They were very big too, as big as elephants. Bigger even than elephants! What in the world were they? He gasped. He began to shake all over.

Toby was terrified, too terrified to scream or move, almost too terrified to breathe. He just stood motionless and stared, clutching the window-sill with two cold hands. He tried to make himself as small as possible, so as not to be seen. He let his head sink down into his shoulders, but he was too big to hide. Indeed, he felt himself bigger than ever before. The whole night saw him easily. And, as he stared, all the fairy-tales he had ever heard swarmed into his mind—monsters, giants, ogres, goblins, with most of the animals from the Zoo into the bargain.

The big, dark things, meanwhile, kept moving slowly and quietly to and fro over the lawn. They made no noise. He believed they were watching him. The starlight was not bright enough for him to see exactly how they were shaped, but it was enough for him to see, a moment later, two smaller outlines that were now moving very swiftly towards the bigger ones. These two new shapes darted from side to side. They, too, made no noise. He had decided that the bigger ones were elephants or monsters. The two smaller ones, he knew at once, were human beings. They were men. And that very instant they began to speak. He heard one say in a very low voice to the other:

"The gate's open, Bill. Drive 'em out that way——"

The two men immediately ran swiftly towards the big, dark creatures, and a noise followed that seemed to shake the lawn and ought to have wakened the entire household. It was a regular

stampede. The big creatures moved suddenly at a tremendous speed, the two men after them.

But Toby saw no more. At this moment he just plopped down upon the floor in a heap and screamed and screamed and screamed at the top of his voice. It seemed to him that he screamed for a long time, but, actually, it was only a minute later when Nannie, who slept across the passage, came bouncing into the room with a lighted candle and found him there.

"There's elephants on the lawn!" he shrieked, "men and elephants trying to catch me!" while Nannie, greatly surprised and only just out of dreamland herself, popped him back into bed, shut the window with a bang, but without looking out, and did her best to soothe and calm his frightened little soul.

It was only after some time she began to grasp that it was not an ordinary nightmare that had frightened him, and that he had not merely been walking in his sleep. But the moment she did realise that he had seen something real, and that this "something" might possibly be burglars, she acted promptly. First putting Toby into a maid's room down the passage, she went forthwith to wake the butler, who went forthwith and woke the master, who went forthwith himself to wake the groom over the stables. So that, twenty minutes later, though Toby did not know this at the time, these three big men, armed with two shot guns and a pistol, and carrying a couple of hurricane lanterns, sallied forth to search the grounds for the two mysterious figures and strange big creatures, while the chauffeur raced away on his bicycle to get the local policeman from the village six miles off.

Long before the policeman, however, had dragged himself out of his warm sheets and squeezed himself into his blue uniform, Toby had fallen peacefully asleep again in Nannie's room, and the mystery of the moving flower-beds had been all explained. Someone had left the gate open into the back garden, and two of the horses belonging to the gypsies camped on the common beyond, had strayed in. Two of the gypsy men had come to drive them

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back again before the daylight came. It was this that Toby saw and heard. But the horses had made deep holes on the soft lawn, and on their way out had ruined vegetable beds in the kitchen garden, trampling down the asparagus, which Uncle William particularly loved.

Next day, to his great surprise, Toby found himself rather a hero; he had expected to be scolded, but instead he was patted on the back and praised. His Uncle disliked the gypsies, because they came at night to steal wood and water, they had fierce dogs tied up by their tents, they were dirty, and made what he called "a filthy mess of the whole Common." But he had never been able to get any real evidence against them to prove that they were a nuisance. Now, at last, he could prove it. Toby, rather, had proved it for him. Uncle William was delighted.

"But what in the world made you wake up at that hour?" he asked in his booming voice.

"A nowl," replied Toby quietly, feeling sure of his ground.

"What d'you mean, boy? How could an owl wake you?"

"Because it did," returned Toby. "I heard it, you see."

"But I don't see," roared his Uncle. "How could you hear it in your bedroom? Weren't you asleep at two o'clock in the morning? And if not, why not?"

"It woke me. It went hunting past the window. When it hunts, it shrieks, you know, Uncle, like—oh, like anything."

Uncle William caught him on to his knee. "Now, my little man, tell me all about it. Out with it. And no nonsense, mind!"

Toby was only too pleased. He told his whole story. He told more than Nannie ever knew, more than Aunt Sophy ever heard. He was not a scrap afraid of his roaring Uncle.

"Well, well, I never did!" was the man's exclamation when the tale was ended. "I never, never did!" He poked him in the ribs and gazed at him. "Plucky youngster," he added, and then poked him again.

Toby kept silent for a little time. Then he began to fidget. He drew a long, deep breath. He was preparing for something, evidently. At last, looking his Uncle straight in the eye, he said calmly:

"A useful bird, wasn't it, Uncle?"

"Eh? What d'you mean by that?" came the gruff question.

"The nowl, I mean, was useful. It woke me, you see."

His Uncle stared hard at him. Toby returned the stare. Then his Uncle began to fidget in his turn. He also drew a long, deep breath. After that, he spoke:

"You're as clever as a Cat," he said, "as plucky as a Tortoise, and as wise as—as a nowl. You've proved that all three are useful, and you shall have all three for your birthday—to-morrow. Because—I promised."

And next day, sure enough, Toby got them all three, though how his Uncle managed it he never knew. He called the cat Sophy, the tortoise Percy, and the owl Gypsy; and all three were what Uncle William called a "perfect nuisance about the place, and quite useless into the bargain." For Sophy spoilt all the best chairs with her claws and never caught a single mouse; and Percy got lost regularly once a week and had to be hunted for; and Gypsy did nothing but sit in its cage and blink its great eyes open and shut, and pretend to be so wise that—well, it never could have been half as wise as it pretended to be, and so it was just a humbug. But Toby loved them all three, in spite of their wickedness, and so their wickedness didn't really matter.

Within six months, however, he was tired of them all, deadly tired: of Percy, because he hardly ever saw him and he had no voice anyhow; of Sophy, because she wouldn't really play and never had any kittens, being actually a Tom; and of Gypsy, because he never hooted even once, and Toby grew tired of those great, wise eyes.

So it was that, the following year, when his birthday came round again, and Uncle William caught him up on to his knee and

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roared at him: "What d'you want, my little man?" he replied without a moment's hesitation:

"A top-hat and a cob, please, Uncle."

He got both. And from Aunt Sophy he got a fox terrier that really *would* play. And the best of it all was that he hadn't got to prove first of all that either of them was useful!



“A Marriage has been Arranged”

A FAIRY TALE

MARY WEBB

(MRS. H. B. L. WEBB)

THE King of Elfland was troubled. In fact, he was vexed. Exceedingly vexed. He told the Keeper of the Petals so, and he also told the Lord High Marshal of the Glow-worms, and Barley-Sugar-Stick-in-Waiting. He told them all a good many times. For when you are several thousand years old (by the Dandelion Clocks), and you have a Kingdom which is always disturbed by plots and riots or attacks from the Giants or the Gnomes or the Fairies (whose countries are close to Elfland), and when you have Royal Gout into the bargain, you are vexed fairly easily. (Royal Gout is the same as ordinary gout, only grander and worse.)

When the King came to the Queen's parlour, where she was topping and tailing gooseberries for the Sunday tart, and told her how vexed he was, she said:

“So am I vexed, my dear, indeed to goodness!”

For in Elfland all wives echo their husbands, whether they agree with them or not. To do anything else is bad form, not cricket, and taboo. Husbands, in Elfland, are always Heroic, Romantic, and Right. It is not easy, but being elves they are able to manage it. And though the King was now several thousand years old, and very stout, the Queen never swerved from the idea that he was Heroic and Romantic and Right. Nobody could deny

"A MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ARRANGED"

his stoutness. If he had not been both an elf and a King he might have been compared to the Fat Boy in the Pickwick Papers. And, being so fat, it was dangerous for him to be vexed. The King's



THE KING WAS NOW SEVERAL THOUSAND YEARS OLD

Doctor, who was as old as the hills and as thin as if he had been put through the mangle, said that for the King to let himself be

vexed was suicidal. But to-day the King did not seem to care whether it was suicidal or not. He went to the window of the Throne Room, which looked out on the lawn, and watched his Only Daughter playing *La Crosse*. At least, he watched her *not* playing *La Crosse*, for she was, to put it plainly, a dreadful duffer at games.

"Look at her!" cried the King. "She can't play at all. Duffer!"

"She can't sew either, dear," said the Queen. "She ought to sit among her maidens and embroider banners until a Prince comes to propose to her."

"A Prince!" said the King. "Why, of course, that's the whole trouble! How am I to make an Advantageous Alliance with a Foreign Potentate when my only family is a daughter like that? How can I possibly ask the Crown Prince of Faery to come here with an eye to matrimony when she's not only Plain, but Dreamy and Stupid as well?"

At the word Plain, the King's Doctor and the Apothecary both rushed forward, for they were afraid the King would have a stroke, and die. Elves do die, unless they can persuade someone to put them in a play or a book. That was why Titania, that evening when she saw Will Shakespeare stalking the deer in the forest of Arden, ran after him and laid a spell on him, and made him put her in a play, where you may see her to this day. And one or two elves have run after J. M. Barrie, and got into books. But the Elf King had not got into any book or play, and the whole Court was in terror that he would go off in a fit, and disappear like dew, in his great vexation at the tiresomeness of the Princess.

"She just wanders," said the Queen.

"Wanders!" shouted the King. "That's exactly it. Whenever I want her, she's somewhere else. I tell you, it's very tiresome!"

At this moment, the Princess caught her foot in her gown, which was longer on one side than on the other, because she had

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got up and gone out into the forest long before her Ladies-in-Waiting were awake, and she had fastened her gown with a safety pin because she was in such a hurry, and the diamond buttons took such a long time to do up.

"Careless, too," groaned the King. "Dreamy and Stupid and Plain and Careless." He frowned so darkly that the Court Weather Prophet said it was blowing up for tempest.

"Fetch me," said the King, "the Parchment on which are written the Ancient Laws of Elfland."

They fetched it. It took fifty of them to carry it, because the Kings of Elfland are allowed to make as many laws as they like, and as Elfland is so extremely old the laws take up enormous quantities of parchment, although they are crowded together on both sides of the page, and written as small as the very smallest writing on a yellow-hammer's egg.

"Add this," said the King. "It is decreed that our only daughter, Elfina, Princess of all the Petals, shall, on account of her tiresomeness, be called no more by the ancient and honourable name of Elfina, but shall be called, in derision, Wander. We will see if satire will cure her."

He said this through clenched teeth as people do in stories when they are really angry, and the Court watched him as admiringly as if he were doing a conjuring trick.

"But the name of *Wanda* isn't spelt *Wander*," said the Queen. Then she remembered that the King was Heroic and Romantic and Right, and apologised.

"I know it isn't," said the King. "'Wanda' is a pretty name, but 'Wander' simply recalls 'Goosey-goosey-gander, whither will you wander.' And that is what she is to be called. If that doesn't cure her, I shall immure her."

The Royal Bard darted forward and said, "That is poetry, your Majesty."

"Great occasions demand great utterances," said the King modestly.

"Don't let Elfina hear you speak of immuring her," cautioned the Queen, topping and tailing so fast in her anxiety, that the gooseberries seemed to slip through her fingers like a rosary; "if she does, she'll run away."

But Elfina had heard, for the King in his Just Wrath had spoken very loudly. So by the time she was sent for to hear the decree, she was in the heart of the forest.

"Follow her! Watch her! Bring her hither!" ordered his Majesty.

So a Regiment of Horse, mounted on small blue dragonflies, and a Regiment of Foot, and the Mayor and Corporation, and the Chief Constable with a truncheon made of a clove such as you see in bread sauce, and a Battalion of Police in helmets of blue Monkshood, and twelve Detectives with Police Dogs (in case Elfina was wicked), and the Royal Doctors (in case she was ill), and the most Terrific and Respected Master of Asylums (in case she was mad), and the Archbishops of Elfland (in case she needed Spiritual Consolation), and the Princess's Nurse—the Duchess of Petunia—for Propriety's sake, all started for the forest, very politely taking precedence of each other, so that they seemed to be dancing a Tango.

When this great company came into the green rides of the forest, which had been so quiet that you could have heard a moth preening her wings, there was a most terrific tumult. Birds flew up on every side. Jays screamed. Woodpeckers laughed. Pheasants crowed. Owls fell out of the holes where they had been fast asleep, and hooted in terror. Bats came awake long before the proper time, and blundered about, so that one got caught in the curled hair of the Master of Asylums, and he became demented. Bees, wasps and hornets rushed out of their nests and fell upon the procession, so that it became a regular riot. The Princess, who was sitting on a silver tree trunk among the hyacinths with a nice-looking Young Man, started up, pale and frightened, whispering:

"A MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ARRANGED"



ONE GOT CAUGHT IN THE CURLED
HAIR OF THE MASTER OF ASYLUMS

"It is the Court!"

"The Court!" said the Young Man. "I thought it was a travelling Circus."

"No, it is the Court," she said. "They have come to fetch me."

The Young Man gave a loud "Ha! Ha!" And indeed the company did look strange. The Master of Asylums without his dignity seemed nothing at all. The Detectives, having been singled out by the Hornets, were a sorry sight. The Police Dogs had bitten both the Archbishops. The Duchess of Petunia's wig had been torn off by a Bat, so that she looked like a Billiard Ball, and the whole of the Regiments of Horse and Foot were so convulsed with laughter that they could not hear the orders of their Colonels. The Doctors were shouting for Caustic, Washing Blue and Sedatives, but nobody took any notice.

"Save me!" cried the Princess.

"Of course!" said the Young Man.

So Elfina stopped crying, and when the Mayor and Aldermen, still taking precedence of each other, and fighting off the Bees as best they could, gave her the Royal Message, he said decisively,

"I will bring her. You are not in a fit state to take anybody anywhere."

"We have our orders," said the Chief Constable. And everybody else echoed him. Even the Duchess of Petunia, who was having hysterics, screamed out: "We have our orders!" in the midst of a burst of tears.

"I shall bring her myself," decided the Young Man, and he said it in the way that makes people feel as if there has been a Royal Decree.

"Go!" said the Young Man.



"GO!" SAID THE YOUNG MAN

"A MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ARRANGED"

They went, and the Owls, Bats, Bees, Wasps, and Hornets followed them to the edge of the forest.

"Now!" said the Young Man. He put his arm firmly round the Princess, and she was immediately Enchanted. And so they came to the King.

And when the King saw his Only Daughter with the arm of a Common Young Man round her, when she ought to have been in the arms of a Powerful Potentate, he was so absolutely dumfounded that the Apothecary said he could not answer for the consequences.

When the King could speak, he said, "It hasn't cured you, so I shall immure you."

"She's coming with me," said the Young Man.

"Execute him!" ordered the King.

But nobody seemed exactly able to take the first step. There was something about the Young Man—especially when he looked at you with a dark, dwelling gaze—which made people feel awkward at the idea of interfering with him.

"I like her," announced the Young Man. "In fact, I love her. And I'm going to take her."

The King was fighting for breath, and, as is usual at such times, everybody came crowding round to stifle him more than he was already stifled.

All that the King could do was to wave a limp hand to the Chief Constable and whisper:

"Kill!"

The Chief Constable drew his sword, made of a sharp green blade of grass. But at this the Young Man also drew his. And behold! it was all a-dazzle with silver, and on it was written in letters of gold:

"The Prince of Faery."

"Your Majesty!" cried the Lord High Diplomat, holding a burnt feather under the Royal Nose. "This is no common man! It is the Fairy Prince himself."

"We knew it, your Majesty," said the Detectives in chorus, "for we found this kerchief in the forest."

They held it up, and it was marked, "C. P. of F."

But until the Young Man drew his sword they had not had the *least idea* who he was.

When the King understood, he came to himself in a moment, and gave an Audience to the Prince of Faery. And, being a very honest King, he made a great effort, and said, "You know, I suppose, about the dreaminess and stupidity and carelessness?"

"That was only because she was thinking about me," said the Prince.

"And you have noticed—the plain-ness?"

"Plain - ness?" cried the Prince. "Why, she's perfectly Lovely!"

"So she is!" cried all the Court together, bass, tenor, alto, con-



SHE WAS LOVELY

"A MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ARRANGED"

tralto, soprano, falsetto, so that they sounded like a Dog Show.

And it was true that she *was* lovely, because the Prince had enchanted her.

Then the King said that Elfina was a good girl, and the Queen, who had been absent-mindedly eating green gooseberries, kissed her. And the Duchess of Petunia, in a new wig of a slightly different colour, was sent to the wardrobe to get ready for the Wedding, because the Prince said that it must be Here and Now, and as everybody felt a little awkward about what had happened in the forest, being afraid that the Prince would chaff them, they all worked with a will at the festive preparations.

The Archbishops were so much bandaged that they could not officiate, and it took all the Rural Deans, Canons and Archdeacons to make up. But make up they did, and when the Princess came in wearing a frock made of appleblossom and a primrose train and golden ladies' slippers, and a daisy chain which the Prince had just finished when they were interrupted, there was not an Elf with Dry Eyes.

Then the Rural Deans asked Elfina, in the usual way, whether she would promise to *say* always that her Husband was Heroic, Romantic and Right, whatever she *thought*. The Princess was quite annoyed at this question, and she said:

"He *is* Heroic and Romantic and Right. I know it. Isn't he my young man? Haven't we been walking-out ever since the crocuses flowered?"

And though, if Elfina had not been marrying the Prince, this would have been thought a very common way of talking, as she *was* marrying the Prince, everybody said:

"How Poetical!" "How Neat!"

At the Great Moment, when the Prince put on Elfina's finger the Ring in which was set the Fire Opal of Faery, the King was so happy that he completely lost his breath, and had to be given *sal volatile*.

Only the Lord High Diplomat was a little discontented, as he had wanted to make the match himself. But his wife said:

“You *did* make it, my dear! You put it into their heads by Telepathy!”

Then the Chief Diplomat was content, and so was everybody else, and they kept up a Feast for a Thousand Years, which Feast is probably going on still.

The Disappointing Dream

DAVID CECIL

I dreamt I had a purple cat,
With eyes of turquoise blue,
He played a tune upon the flute,
When other cats would mew.

He swam for seven nights and days,
From here to far Goree,
He brought a box back in his teeth,
And laid it on my knee,

With seven stately silver mice
Engraved upon the lid.
I opened it and found inside
Another box lay hid.

With feet like those of little birds
And feathered wings to fly,
I took the lid off and within
A parcel met my eye,

THE DISAPPOINTING DREAM

Wrapped in a speckled laurel leaf,
And tied with ribbons green.
I soon undid it, but inside
Another still was seen,

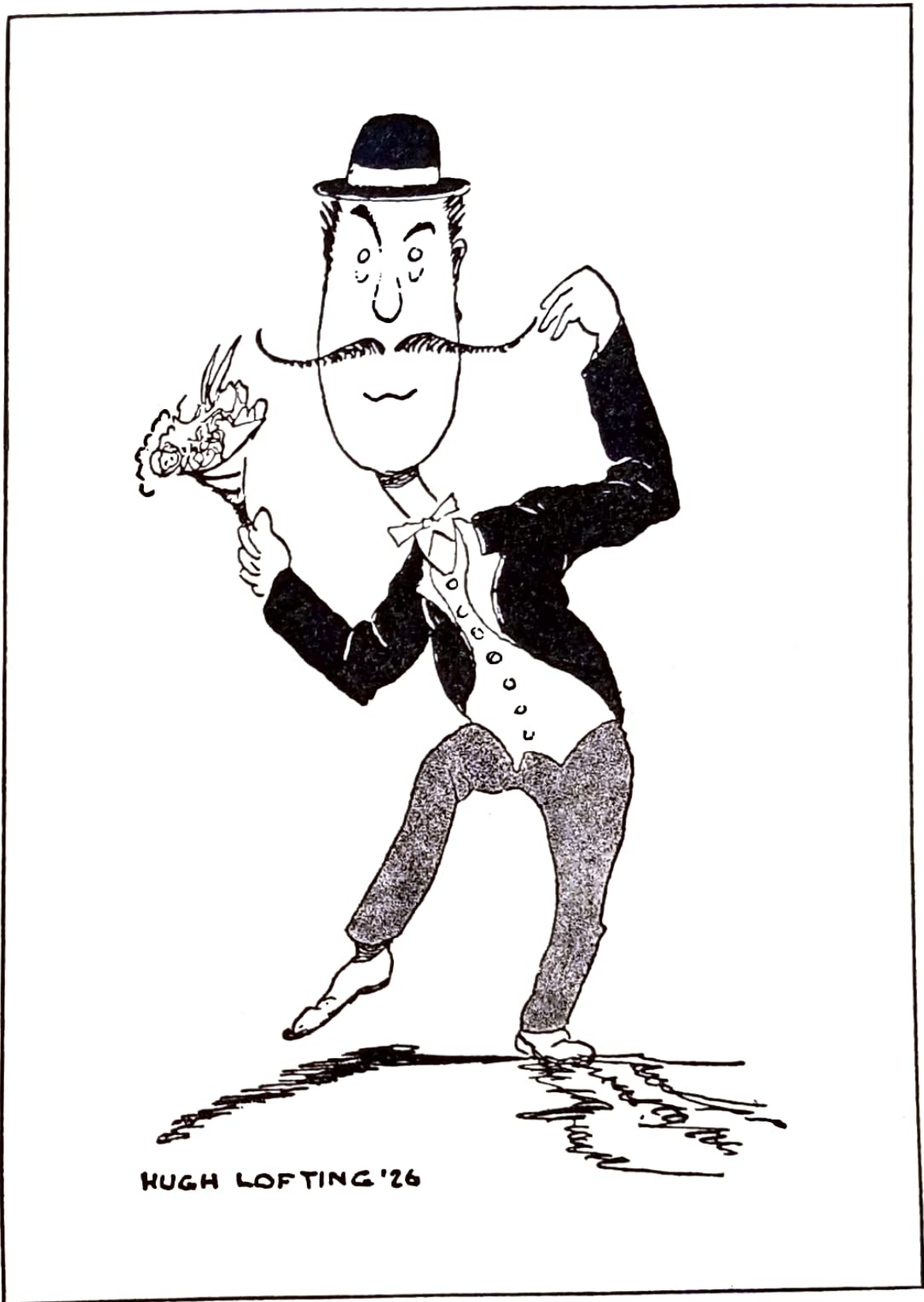


As smooth as a brown acorn
Within the acorn-cup.
In complicated cobwebs furled,
And in the folds this writing curled:
"The nicest present in the world."

DAVID CECIL

I tore it open—broke the string
When—Ting!—the front door bell went—Ting,
Ting, ting—and woke me up.





MR. TWINKLE

Kaspar and the Red Slippers

ADELAIDE PHILLPOTTS

KASPER was an only child of six years old. Because he had no playfellows, he played alone in the garden, and often he wished for another little boy, or at least a fairy, to play with. But he had never seen a fairy, and his mother knew nobody who had a little boy also.

When it rained, Kaspar amused himself indoors, and his favourite game was blowing bubbles. Nurse rolled up his sleeves, and gave him a clay pipe with soap in it, and he stood over a basin in the nursery, blowing bubbles, and watching them sail upward like green and golden worlds.

One day Kaspar blew a new sort of bubble—a purple and orange bubble, twice as big as an ordinary bubble—and inside was a fairy. For it may happen that good little children blow bubbles with fairies in them.

The fairy was whirling round inside the bubble, fluttering her wings, and crying:

“Let me out! Let me out! You’ve imprisoned me unlawfully, and I want to get out.”

Kaspar saw the bubble sailing to the ceiling, and he jumped up and poked his finger through it, and the bubble broke. Then out flew the fairy, delighted to be free, and settled on the tip of Kaspar’s ear. In her tiny hands she held a pair of red slippers, no bigger than daisy petals.

ADELAIDE PHILLPOTTS

"Where have you come from, you darling creature?" Kaspar cried.



INSIDE THE BUBBLE WAS A FAIRY

"From your pipe, of course, and I've brought you these," said she, throwing the slippers into his lap. "Try them on."

KASPAR AND THE RED SLIPPERS

"But they're too small. They won't fit!"

"Silly boy, you haven't tried."

So Kaspar picked up the slippers, and they began to grow, until they grew big enough to slip on his feet.

"They are fairy slippers," said the elf. "And if you're a good boy they'll take you to fairyland on moonlight nights! You just put them on and say: 'Run, little slippers, run!' and off they'll run to fairyland."

"Hurrah!" cried Kaspar. "I'm glad I blew you into the bubble. Hurrah!"

The fairy hopped off his ear, flew round the room twice, and then disappeared through the key-hole, and back to fairyland.

That very night the moon shone, and Kaspar put on the red slippers and said: "Run! Run, little slippers!" And they began to run, with his feet inside them, and ran with him downstairs, and out of the house, and into the garden, and through the shrubbery, and by the pond, and over the hedge, and down the mouse-hole into fairyland.

There he found himself, surrounded by crystal walls, with lights burning, and crowds of fairies hurrying to and fro, handing him honey cakes and primrose wine, and crowning him with buttercups. Brownies and elves and pidwidgeons and cobbolds and all the clans of the fairy people were there. And the red slippers began to dance, with Kaspar inside them, and all the fairies danced too. And they danced and ate cakes of honey until dawn, when the lights went out, and the slippers ran home with Kaspar, and jumped into bed. Then they sprang off his tired little feet, and leapt on to the floor, and arranged themselves neatly beside the chair where his clothes lay.

Kaspar went to fairyland three times in a week, and nobody but the fairies knew. Then one evening he was naughty. He stamped his foot at his nurse and screamed: "I won't have my bath! I won't have my bath to-night!" And he stooped, and

splashed a handful of water at her. So she smacked him, and he began to cry.

Then, when he was put to bed in disgrace, he thought: "I'll



THE RED SLIPPERS BEGAN TO DANCE

go to fairyland, where there are no wicked nurses and horrid baths."

He put on his fairy slippers, and said: "Run, little slippers, run fast!" But they did not move. They stayed where they

KASPAR AND THE RED SLIPPERS

were, the little red slippers, and began to pinch, and pinch, and pinch, tighter and tighter, until Kaspar cried: "Stop pinching, naughty little shoes, and take me to fairyland. Ow-ow-ow! Stop pinching my toes!" But the red slippers pinched like crabs.

So Kaspar crawled out of bed on his poor pinched feet, and went to his nurse and said: "I'm sorry I was naughty. I'm very sorry indeed." And his nurse kissed him, and carried him back to bed. Then the shoes expanded suddenly, and did not pinch any more. But perhaps they were tired, for they wouldn't take him back to fairyland for three nights. After that they ran with him down the mouse hole, and all the fairy people danced with him, and gave him sweets, and played fairy games.

Then came a day when Kaspar had a copy to do, and he thought: "I hate lessons. I'll go to fairyland instead. Why shouldn't I go in the sunshine as well as in the moonlight?"

And he said to the red slippers: "Run! Run to fairyland, little red shoes." And the shoes began to run, but they didn't run to fairyland. They ran out of doors, and round the garden, and along the shrubbery walk, and then upstairs again, and then round the nursery. And they went on running and running and running all over the house and the garden, with poor Kaspar quite out of breath, forced to keep up with them, and crying: "Stop! Stop, wicked red slippers! Stop running. I can't keep up any more. My legs ache. Oh, stop—stop—stop!"

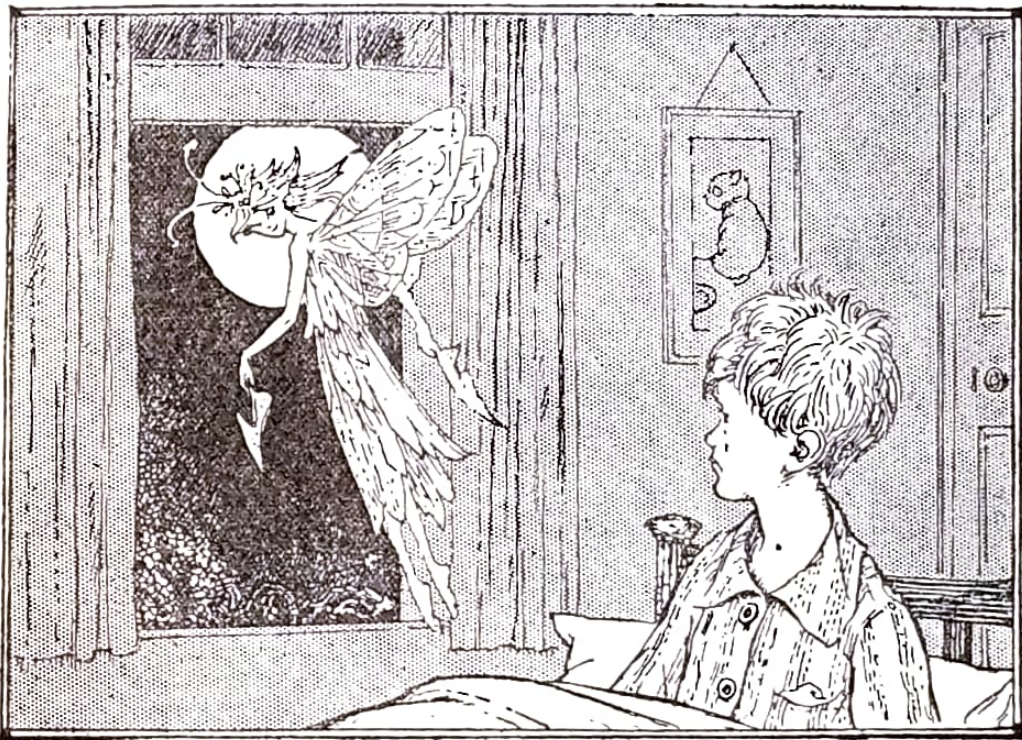
But the slippers ran on and on and on, and at last Kaspar gasped out:

"Run back to the schoolroom, and I'll do my copy. But *do* stop running, please!"

So the little red shoes ran back to the schoolroom, and stopped. And Kaspar did his copy, and never again tried to find fairyland in the sunshine.

Kaspar had many other adventures with the red slippers. Wonderful things happened to him in fairyland, and the red slippers were only unkind if he vexed the fairies. But one day they

did quite a new thing. Instead of taking him to fairyland, they ran right out of the garden gate, and down the road, and through the gate of another house, where he had never been before. And there they led him into the garden, where another little boy was playing at ball by himself. The two children were very surprised to meet like this. But they made friends, and the strange little boy, whose name was Dick, threw his ball to Kaspar, who caught it and threw it back. The ball must have been a fairy ball, for



THE FAIRY FLIES AWAY WITH THE RED SLIPPERS

it laughed every time it was tossed in the air, and Kaspar heard it laughing.

Kaspar's mother was terribly frightened when she found her little boy was lost, and everybody began to run about looking for him and calling his name. And Dick's mother heard them calling for him, and took him by the hand and led him home. Then the mothers also made friends, and arranged for their children to meet

KASPAR AND THE RED SLIPPERS

every day for lessons, and to play in the garden. This new playmate was even better than fairyland, thought Kaspar, so he didn't ask the red slippers to take him there for a whole week. And the little red shoes lay under the bed, forgotten.

Then one night the fairy of the bubble flew in again, and perched on Kaspar's pillow, and said:

"Now that you've found a friend, you won't want the fairy people any more, will you?"

"Yes, I do—I want them both," Kaspar replied.

"But to have both is forbidden," she declared. "Nobody can have both. And some people haven't got either."

"I want both! I want both!" poor Kaspar cried.

But the firm little fairy picked up the red slippers, which shrank again to the size of daisy petals, and flew away to give them to some other lonely child, who had not yet found a play-fellow.

And though Kaspar cried at first for his lost red slippers, he soon realised that Dick was better fun than fairyland; and he forgot all about them until he was grown up, and had a little boy of his own.



CHRISTMAS TREES

BY
KATHARINE TYNAN

The white trees for Christmas
They light the short day.
Pear-bloom and cherry-bloom,
White lilac and May,
In lace and frozen silver,
As fair as brides be,
The white bloom at Christmas
Makes many a Christmas tree.

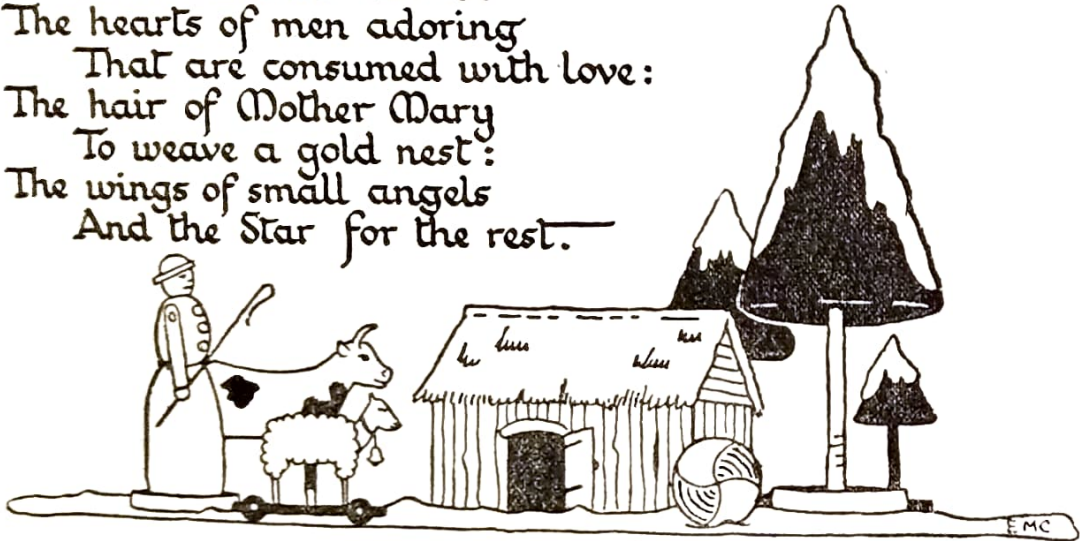
CHRISTMAS TREES

And what shall hang the branches
Of trees white as snow?
Strings of pearls and crystals
And diamonds arow.
And He will laugh to see them,
The Babe of little price,
Whose toys are moons and planets
On Trees of Paradise.



Here let us hang to please Him
The Gifts the Kings bring:
The nard, the gold, the silver,
And for a Baby Thing—
The gifts of simple Shepherds,
A ball, a pipe to blow
The pretty sheep and oxen,
The stable in the snow.

Light up with lamps all burning
Cold branches above,
The hearts of men adoring
That are consumed with love:
The hair of Mother Mary
To weave a gold nest:
The wings of small angels
And the Star for the rest.



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THE
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Ye Pirate Bold



Dread Terror of the Seven Seas
From Cadiz to the Carribbees.
A Pirate Bold, — you see him here
A Cut-throat, Bloodstained
Buccaneer.

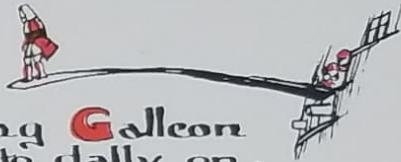
How can I in these artless rhymes
Recount the **HORROR** of his crimes?



Battles and Butcheries galore
When decks and scuppers dripped with
Gore.



How Peaceful Merchant Ships he sank,
And trembling Traders walked the plank.



The fate of lagging Galleon
Tis horrible to dally on.
Or half his pleasant little Games
When Treasure Towers went up in flames.



In short, a person to avoid
Nor aggravate when he's annoyed.
Enough — he daily did (for fun!)
The things that simply **ARE NOT DONE!**



THE TREASURE SHIP



**A BOOK OF PROSE
AND VERSE EDITED
BY LADY CYNTHIA ASQUITH**
Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

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The Two “Bob-Cats”

By JOHN GALSWORTHY.

The two “bob-cats” dwelled in a cage on the edge of a Canyon in America. They had been living there two years—in fact, since kittenhood. Their cage was large and airy and well-kept, it had a leafless tree-pole with branches, in the middle, and a little cave made out of stones in one corner, where they could go at night, or in daytime creep out of the sight of humans—for thousands came to see this celebrated Canyon, and the two “bob-cats” were one of its features. Surnamed Lynx, they were boy and girl—very fine specimens. Their coats were greyish fawn, with a dark mottle, like that in the fur of tabby cats. Their tails, white underneath, were short, with a little blunt turn-up at the end; they had three parallel dark lines like thin moustaches, across their muzzles, magnificent eyes, and the beginnings of tassels turning over at the tips of their ears. They looked very clean and healthy. The boy was much the larger and heavier, and more of a philosopher than the girl, who took, on the whole, more exercise. His favourite place was the top branch but one of the tree-pole. And half the time he would sit there balanced, with his paws tucked under him, and his face to the trunk, asleep or reflecting on life as he had known it. Indeed, except for sleeping, eating, and walking round the cage, he had not known it, for the two “bob-cats” did nothing for their living, their meals—of raw meat—being brought to them with the utmost regularity.

The wife of the new ranger (it was he who had the key of

THE TWO "BOB-CATS"

the cage), often went to look at them. She had the misfortune to be fond of animals, and they in turn were fond of her—horses she could do anything with. When she was watching the two "bob-cats" she used to listen to the tourists, and one thing always struck her. They always expressed their own feelings and not those of the two "bob-cats." They would say:



"SEE HOW HE STARES STRAIGHT OUT!"

"How'd you like to have 'em in the parlour, Mary?"

"I sure wouldn't care to meet one of *them* on a trail."

"Kind o' looks like a man that don't know what to do with himself, don't he?"

"See how he stares straight out. He won't look at me!"

The ranger's wife did look, and thought: 'How fortunate!
But mostly they said:

"Savage varmints—those wild-cats!" Or, "Look at those
two 'bob-cats!'"

After listening to them she sometimes went to the edge of the
Canyon and gazed down into it. It was one of the most wonderful
places in the world, full of marvellous shapes, and flooded with
light and colour that was continually changing—a mysterious,
vast place, so untamable that man could do nothing with it.
Indeed, some people who came to see it took the first train away
again, and others said: "So that's it! When do we eat?" It
was altogether too big a proposition.

The ranger's wife knew that the "bob-cats" had been caught
as kittens in a cave a little below the edge of it, when their parents
were out hunting in the forest. The Canyon had, in a way—she
used to think—belonged to their ancestors for thousands of years
before she and all these tourists came to live in America; down
there and in the pine forest all along its rim had been their happy
hunting grounds. And from the rim she would go back to the two
"bob-cats" who had never yet had a hunting ground. And she
would listen again to the tourists!

"My! I've never seen a 'bob-cat' before. He looks kind
o' bored."

"See the meat! *They* must have a good time!"

And she would think: "Do they?"

One day she stood and coaxed till the boy "bob-cat" let
her stroke its head through the wire, with her gloved hand. After
that, whenever she visited them it would come to her and thrust
its head against her fingers. When it did that she would get
quite angry with the tourists.

"I wouldn't like to do that; you can't tame them—wild-
cats!"

"She's a restless brute, isn't she?"

"They've gotten a fine place here."

THE TWO "BOB-CATS"

"See their tails? 'Bob-cats.'"

"Restless brute!" she would think. "So would you be, shut up there, if it were in your blood to be free as the wind in that forest and among those rocks."

"Kenneth!" she said one day to her husband, "it's a shame to keep those 'bob-cats' shut up."

"M'm, honey! But the trippers like to see them, you know."

"They just look at them for a minute, and say: 'My! Look at the two "bob-cats!"'"

"I agree with you, really," said the ranger; "but it's done to teach them what a 'bob-cat's' like."

"Well, I just can't bear to see the creatures going round and round and looking right out into the distance. Can't we let them go?"

"They don't belong to us, honey; they belong to the National Park. You'd better not think about them."

The ranger's wife tried hard to follow that advice. She didn't go near them for some time. But one afternoon, when she happened to be passing, a lady and her husband were standing by the cage and she noticed the angry look on their faces. She stopped, and heard the lady say:

"It's a shame, poor things! If I could get hold of the key of that padlock, I'd let them out."

The husband kicked the wire, and she heard him grunt. She went up, and the boy "bob-cat," who was walking to and fro, thrust his head against her hand.

"They know you?" said the lady. "That's some comfort. Such beauties! I just hate to see them shut up like this."

"So do I," said the ranger's wife.

"Who's responsible?" said the husband.

"The tourists; they like to see them."

"I'd like to see *them* shut up too."

"So would I," said the ranger's wife.

"Come along, Helen," said the husband; "it only makes

one wild!" They went away, and the ranger's wife stood fumbling the head of the boy "bob-cat." He put his paw up and clawed her arm playfully. "I wonder," she thought; "could I...?"

All the afternoon and evening she went on thinking that; and at night she lay awake. Then all of a sudden she sat up in bed. "I can," she thought; "I will! Softly as one of the "bob-cats" themselves she slipped out of bed. The ranger had been riding all day long, and was sleeping like a top. Very quietly she got her fur coat out of her clothes closet, put on her rubbered snow boots, and tiptoed down the stairs. She knew where the key of the padlock was; got it, and stood at the window, looking out. Two o'clock of a moonlit night; a thin wind whiffing in the pine trees, and their shadows spilled along the ground. 'Mustn't get caught,' she thought, 'or it'll get Kenneth into trouble. Now for it!'

She slipped out of the house. It was very cold. If she startled the "bob-cats" would they go for her? And she stood still. 'Must have a stick!' she thought. She pulled a long stake out of her little garden, and clasping her fox-skin coat close round her body, stole on quickly up towards the Canyon's edge. For a moment she stood looking down into it filled with the bluish moonlight—mysterious, old, unearthly, full of shapes and shadows, ghostly and wan and vast. And she thought: 'It looked just like that before there were any men on the earth at all; it'll look just like that when there aren't any men left; only "bob-cats" and other beasts.' And, turning her back on it with a shudder, she went to the door of the cage. It was empty; the tree-pole threw a sharp shadow right to her feet, where a plate with a half-eaten meal stood close to the door. The "bob-cats" were in their cave. 'If I free them, they'll be hungry for days,' she thought; 'they won't know how to catch anything at first.'

She looked round her this way and that. Not a light from the hotel, or the Indian houses, not a sound but the lonely whiffing

THE TWO "BOB-CATS"

of the wind! Then, putting the key into the padlock, she pulled the door wide open, and went into the cage. Suppose they flew at her when they came out! She started noiselessly towards the rocky lair, keeping along the wire, with the pointed stick held out in front of her; past the tree-pole she went, right up to the cave, and stopped. Couldn't she just leave the door wide open and slip back home? But then they mightn't come out till after someone was up—and anyone who saw the door open would shut it. If she could lock it again and put the key in its right place the escape would be a mystery, and her husband would report: "The two 'bob-cats' disappeared last night. Have no clue as to how." There was no snow on the ground, so that neither she nor the cats would leave tracks. She rustled the stake a little in the mouth of the cave, then pulled it back and imitated the hooting of an owl. Nothing happened. The "bob-cats" were used to owls at night, and the rustling seemed to them the wind, perhaps. No! She would have to thrust the stake right in and stir them up.

Drawing a scarf from the pocket of her coat, she bound it round her hand, took a deep breath, reached out and poked the stake into the depths of their lair. There came a spitting, growling noise. She felt the stake quiver as if something had hit it, and, dropping it, withdrew her hand just as the boy "bob-cat" sprang past her out into the cage and leaped for the tree-pole. There on his branch he sat, crouching and spitting at her in the moonlight. Grabbing the stake again she sidled back along the wire, away from the lair, keeping her eyes on him. She had hoped he would fly round the cage, and, finding the door open, rush out. But there he sat on the tree-pole, with his bob tail moving from side to side, glaring at her with his great eyes.

While she was there, the idea of the door being open would never occur to him—the door that had never been left open before. She must go out. Without ever taking her eyes off him she sidled along till she was in the open doorway, stood a minute looking at him, crouched dark against the moonlight; then slipped out.

Surely now he would make a dash for freedom, and his mate would follow! But he didn't seem to realize what freedom was, or else he feared a trap. What should she do? Go home and leave them? Her nerves were too strung up for that; she wanted it all over quickly, so that she could get back with the key. And suddenly rushing back into the cage she drove the stake up at him; and as she did so, crouched. He leaped—leaped right over her, into the open doorway. She twisted round. Gone—he was gone! And feeling quite weak suddenly, she ran out of the cage. On the far side she sat down to wait; surely the girl "bob-cat" would come out now! Minutes she waited, and nothing happened. "Must I go in again?" she thought; "and stir her up too?" And then a long drawn "bob-cat's" yowl rose among the trees. Ah! here she was, coming out of the lair, in answer to it, slinking close to the ground, graceful as a shadow! Again that yowl, like a lost spirit's, curdling the blood, and the shadow leaped—past the door, went leaping away among the trees. The ranger's wife caught her breath. It was done—it was done! They were free! And *she* felt free, as if wandering with them in the night. Where would they go in the moonlight, what do—with everything so strange? What queer first hours of freedom those would be, and what discovery of the world, of trees and rocks, and scrub, of gambolling, and their own limbs! What a trek in the moonlight! What a listening and a crouching! Free!

She closed the door and locked it; huddling in her fur, cold and excited, she stole back to her little wooden house. The door was open! Her husband stood there!

"Great Golly!" he said. "Where've you been, honey? I've been scared to death!"

Clutching the key tight, she said:

"I've been to see the moonlight in the Canyon!"

If only the "bob-cats" didn't betray her now—crying far off in the forest! But they were silent, as if they knew; silent, trailing, trailing!

THE TWO "BOB-CATS"

"Honey, you shouldn't! You gave me fits!"

"All right, dear; I won't do it again. Phoo! I'm cold. Come back to bed." And, secretly slipping the key into its proper place, she went. . . .

The ranger was a wise young man. When, next day, that ninth wonder, the "bob-cats'" disappearance was discovered, he seemed very much surprised. That evening he wrote to the chief ranger thus:

"Sir,—I have to report the mysterious disappearance of the two 'bob-cats' here. We are trying to find out how they got away, but at present without success. It is just as well, perhaps, that they are gone, for they sometimes kept the tourists awake at night. I do not recommend replacing them.

"Faithfully yours,

"_____"

And showing it to his wife, he grinned from ear to ear. The ranger's wife only laughed, and pulled them.

A Reproof of Gluttony

HILAIRE BELLOC

THE Elephant will eat of Hay
Some four and twenty tons a day,
And in his little eyes express
His unaffected thankfulness
That Providence should deign to find
Him food of this delicious kind.
While those who pay for all the Hay
Will frequently be heard to say
How highly privileged they feel
To help him make so large a meal.
The Boa Constrictor dotes on goats,
The Horse is quite content with oats,
Or will alternatively pass
A happy morning munching grass.
The great Ant-eater of Taluz
Consumes—or people say he does—
Not only what his name implies
But even ordinary flies;
And Marmosets and Chimpanzees
Are happy on the nuts of trees.
The lion from the burning slopes
Of Atlas lives on Antelopes,
And only adds the flesh of men
By way of relish now and then;

A REPROOF OF GLUTTONY

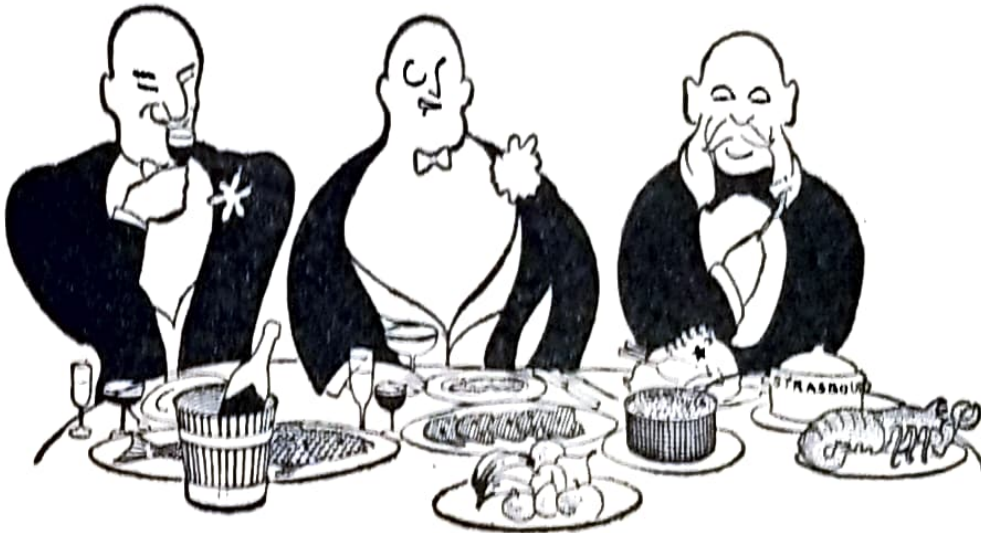
As Cheetahs—yes, and Tigers too,
And Jaguars of the Andes—do.
The Lobster, I have heard it said,
Eats nobody till he is dead;
And Cobras—though they have the sense
To poison you in self-defence—



Restrict their food to birds and hares:
—Which also may be true of Bears.
Indeed, wherever we survey
Our Humble Friends we find that they
Confine their appetites to what
May happen to be on the spot.
Simplicity and moderation
Distinguish all the Brute Creation . . .

HILAIRE BELLOC

But Man—Proud Man! (as Dryden sings)
Though wolfing quantities of things—
Smoked Salmon in transparent slices,
And Turbot *à la Reine*, and Ices,
And Truffled Pies, and Caviare
And Chinese Ginger from the Jar;
And Oysters; and a kind of stuff
Called Cassouletto (good enough!)



And Mutton duly steeped in claret,
(Or jumped with young shallot and carrot),
And Chicken Livers done with rice,
And Quails (which, I am told, are mice),
And Peaches from a sunny wall,
And—Lord! I don't know what and all—
Oh! Yes! And Sausages . . . Is not
Contented with his Prandial Lot.

Moral

The Moral is (I think, at least)
That Man is an UNGRATEFUL BEAST.

Round the Bird Shops

By PAMELA GREY

Would you like to go round the Bird Shops? Well, we will visit one. Come with me; but first get some water-cress to give the birds, for it is rude to take one's fill of gazing and to give nothing in return. Watercress, lettuce leaves, even bits of cabbage from the kitchen, will serve. You will see how the birds welcome the green food as you put it between the wires. Those along the line will crane their heads eagerly, standing high on their legs, making themselves quite narrow with expectation.

You will see canaries by the dozen; but let no one disparage canaries. They have lovely ways if they are given room enough in which to display them; and they are clever, too, if you give them opportunity. The green ones are said to be the most intelligent, being nearer to the species in its wild state. They certainly build the better nests. Yet the cleverest canary I have known was a yellow bird. Her name was Miss Pin. She not only had the freedom of the room, but when we were in the country I would open her cage door in the morning, and away she would fly, dipping and rising in true Finch flight, till she looked in the far distance like a seed pearl against the green hills of Peebleshire.

She always returned to her cage in the evening, and often at intervals throughout the morning, to drink and eat.

Like Pippa, the factory girl, she knew how to spend her day. She treasured every minute of it. You could watch her, being busy in active joy, whether searching for seeding grasses around

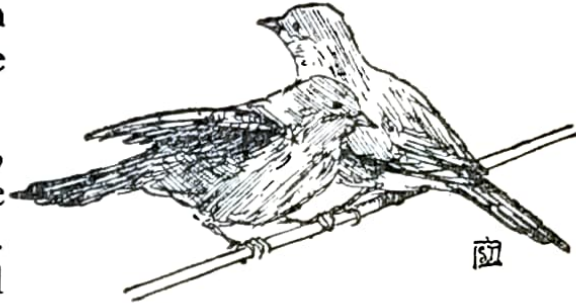
PAMELA GREY

the forcing frames in the garden, or sitting jargoning in a large beech tree on the lawn:

The least movement that she made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure—

Hen canaries have a song, and one prettier than that of the male bird, for it is not so forced. The cock canary's song is too loud for a room. It should be heard out of doors and from a little distance, in concert with many of his kind. Only those who have heard several singing in an aviary, away in the garden, sending their sheaves of crystal notes out upon the wintry air of a sunny day in January, can know how lovely the glittering sound can be. It greatly resembles the singing of skylarks.

Now we are in the warm, husk-smelling, rather close atmosphere of the Bird Shop. There is a suppressed sound of multiple movement, fretted wires, limited wings. The



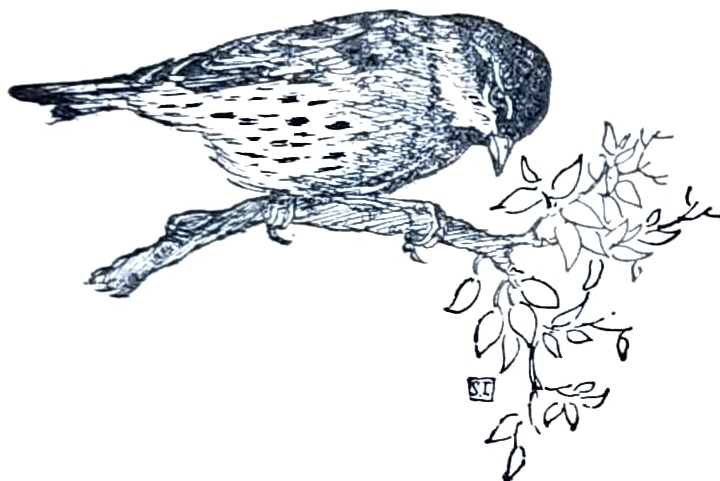
THE CORDON BLEUS
FROM WEST AFRICA

lower portion of the walls are composed of cages. But if the place we are visiting is the Live-Stock Department of one of the large stores the condition of the birds is tolerable. They have, at least, seed and clean water; their durance is—mitigatedly—vile. Yet what a mixed pleasure to see birds in these surroundings! How one longs to buy them all, that one might give the wild English finches their liberty, and enlarged cages to the foreign birds, with the chance of building. For this the Cordon Bleus will do in captivity, if they are given the materials they need.

I bought a pair from a man in the streets of Funchal, in Madeira. They were soon comfortably housed in one of those pretty cane cages that are made there. Bathing seemed at first their only activity. They took bath after bath. The second or

ROUND THE BIRD SHOPS

third day I noticed the little cock bird pick up a feather. Then he danced and sang. His dance was perfect in measure and rhythm, and he sang through the feather which he held in his beak while he danced—a tiny song of so inter-woven a measure that I was reminded of the slenderest strains of spun sugar by the notes. Then it was that they earned their name of “the Singing Needles.” This was a nuptial song and dance, so I went in search of nesting materials. I laid before him three different kinds. He chose palm fibre, which I had teased into a sort of tow. Then he



THE SISKIN. (CARDNELIS SPINUS)

proceeded to build a long bottle-shaped nest, with a hole rather high up at the side, and he took seventeen feathers from my fingers one day and twenty-three the next, when he had reached the stage of lining the nest. Three eggs were laid, the male bird chiefly doing the incubation, and one young bird was hatched.

Of all the foreign birds the Cordon Bleus are the best as caged birds, for they are naturally tame, and very intelligent, finding their way about a room and in and out of their cage by creeping and looking, keeping in touch with each other by their call note, which is like the little rattle of the Longtailed Tits.

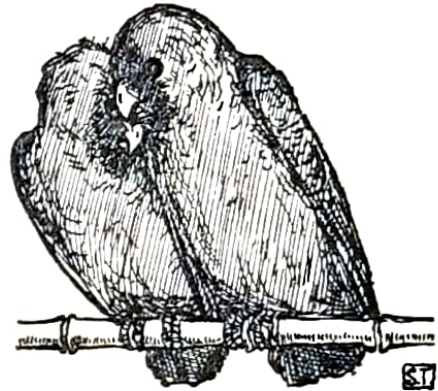
If you should buy any of the foreign finches you must provide them with mealworms, which are best kept in bran in a tin box with a perforated lid. The worms should have bits of raw carrot or sliced apple or turnip put among the bran. They need this; you will find they live much longer and keep in better condition. These foreign finches are delicate, and their health depends on

having moist grit and green food with occasional mealworms; and keeping them out of draughts.

Now, here are some Siskins, one of the best of English birds to own. I would buy a Siskin in preference to a Goldfinch or a Linnet, for it is an enthusiastically greedy bird, and among birds greed means contentment. Who can take pleasure in a bird that by ceaselessly hopping and fluttering is always reminding you that it is a prisoner? A Goldfinch is ever twisting its little head restlessly, looking for the sky; and a Linnet frets and yearns against the wires. But a Siskin sits contentedly to eat, while it ransacks its seed-trough with zeal. A Bullfinch, too, is a serious eater. But in the case of any bird, vary its food. The deadly monotony of caged life should have every alleviation; and buy a pair of birds if you can: it is better than to keep one in solitary confinement. Birds are tender lovers.

Now, here are Budgerigars and some of the lesser Parakeets. They sit closely together and will nibble each other's noses all day long. They deserve the name of Love-Birds, but only if they are truly mated. Do not trust them in the same cage with other birds. Beak-faced murderers they can show themselves to be. They will snap a canary's leg in two, and if allowed into an aviary they will fling the unfledged birds out of the nests.

The Budgerigars come from Australia; but Jou-Jou and Pistâche are West African birds. How lovely they are in their brilliant green and bright rose feathers! There is a patch of cerulean blue between the wings, seen only when they fly. They spread their tails when they alight, and then you see a fan design in warm, glowing colour. If you buy a pair of these you will



LOVE BIRDS, OR RED FACED
PARAKEETS

FROM WEST AFRICA

ROUND THE BIRD SHOPS



SEEDING GRASS
(COMMON POD)

find that, like other birds, they get to depend on their cage, so that after a time you can safely free them in the room, after closing the window. Get a light wooden frame-work made, two feet high by the breadth of the window, of light slats of deal with sparrow wire nailed on to it. You can close the window on to this frame and so keep the room fresh and the birds safe while they are having their outing. Let them find their own way out and in. Never take a bird out of its cage forcibly, for this destroys its confidence.

Another point of importance for cage birds is that they should have facilities for bathing. A bird's bath should be wide and shallow. For this reason always choose a cage that has a wide door. If a bird shows itself to be nervous of bathing, sprinkle water over it from a full tumbler, holding the palm of your hand over the top of it so that the water escapes only in little jets; but first remove the seed-trough and the sanded tray, because if these get sodden the bird's comfort is gone.

When you gather groundsel or seeding grass, pick it up by the roots and give it with the earth still on it. This keeps birds well, for they need grit for proper digestion, and they like the fresh soil better than the sand that is dry and dusty.

If you live in London you can find seeding grass in any of the Parks, but when you visit a Bird Shop you must supplement what

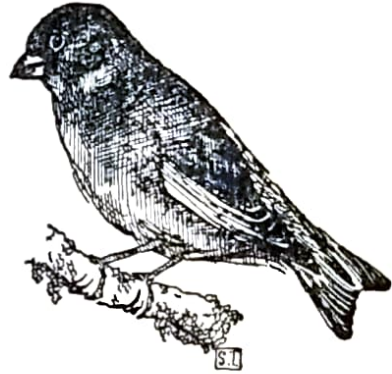


THE BULLFINCH
(PYRRHULA, PYRRHULA)

you pick by watercresses, because it is worse than bringing nothing to the birds, to disappoint some.

Here are Bullfinches; round, blunt-looking birds. "Baggage" was the name of my hen Bullfinch. Why? Because she was, in all her ways, what is understood as a Baggage. I bought her to free her from a cramping cage. I let her out into the garden, and she rewarded me, for she mated, nested, and reared a family, and then she brought them all into the house, to show them to me—I like to think. They would feed on the windowsill of my bedroom, in the very early hours of the summer days; sometimes they would fly into the drawing-room and be found there, busying themselves with the flowers on the piano; but they would quickly fly out of the window when anyone entered the room.

Baggage must have told them of her caged life and the hemp seed that may be found indoors. I feel sure that this was she, for never before had the wild Bullfinches behaved like this to me, though a tame Greenfinch I had once did the same. His name was Piripe. He was hatched in an August



THE GREENFINCH
(LIGURINUS CHLORIS)

nest, and grew up to be very headstrong and insolent. I was his charwoman, and he saw to it that I did the work, and very soon he showed me how Greenfinches ought to be kept, and I have applied his lessons to other caged birds.

Summed up, it comes to this: Trust your bird's intelligence. Give him freedom, but leave his cage in sight, with the door open, and this only after he has learnt to know it well, and to be sure that it is there that he will always find seed and water. Keep the cage out of any draught.

I had a Bullfinch for thirteen years, who would come out for a stroll in the garden with us, flying from tree to tree. He looked

ROUND THE BIRD SHOPS

upon his cage as a place of comfort and security, and went to it, after he had taken his exercise, as you or I might turn to an arm-chair. He was a great bird, was Chuffy; but his story is recorded elsewhere, and I must return to telling you about Piripe and his handsome tribe.

Greenfinches are dominant, robust birds, too forceful, perhaps, to deserve to be called "a brother to the dancing leaves," yet the rest of Wordsworth's poem is descriptive. Especially the line that tells of his peculiar gush of song, and of his "joy in voice and pinion":—

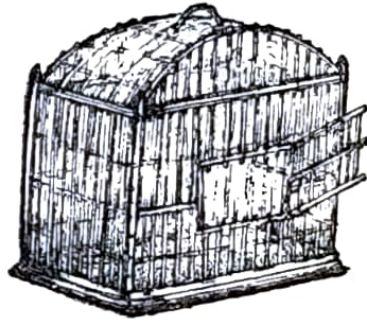
"Upon yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle in the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies,
Yet seeming still to hover;
There! where the flutter of his wings,
Upon his back and body flings,
Shadows, and sunny glimmerings,
That cover him all over.

This tame Greenfinch in time mated, but he only once brought his family into my sitting-room, when they were fully grown. I could tell him from his mate and five young ones, for when I came into the room they would burst about, flying violently, seeking exit; whereas Piripe went collectedly from one well-known perching place to another—the curtain rod, the writing table and the picture frame in succession, and never turned a feather. But after this, his wild life claimed him wholly. Having reared his family and visited his former haunts, he returned no more to his cage. And this was as it should be! He had fulfilled *The Three Debts* (after the teaching of the Blameless One)—"Build a house: Beget a son: Display Gratitude." I was glad that he should be free.

But enough of these reminiscences! We must leave the Bird Shop now.

PAMELA GREY

If I were to have a Totem (which is not a rare foreign bird, but a sign designate—something that tells the manner of person you are, an image of the tribe you belong to) I know my Totem would be the sign of a cage, with the door wide open.



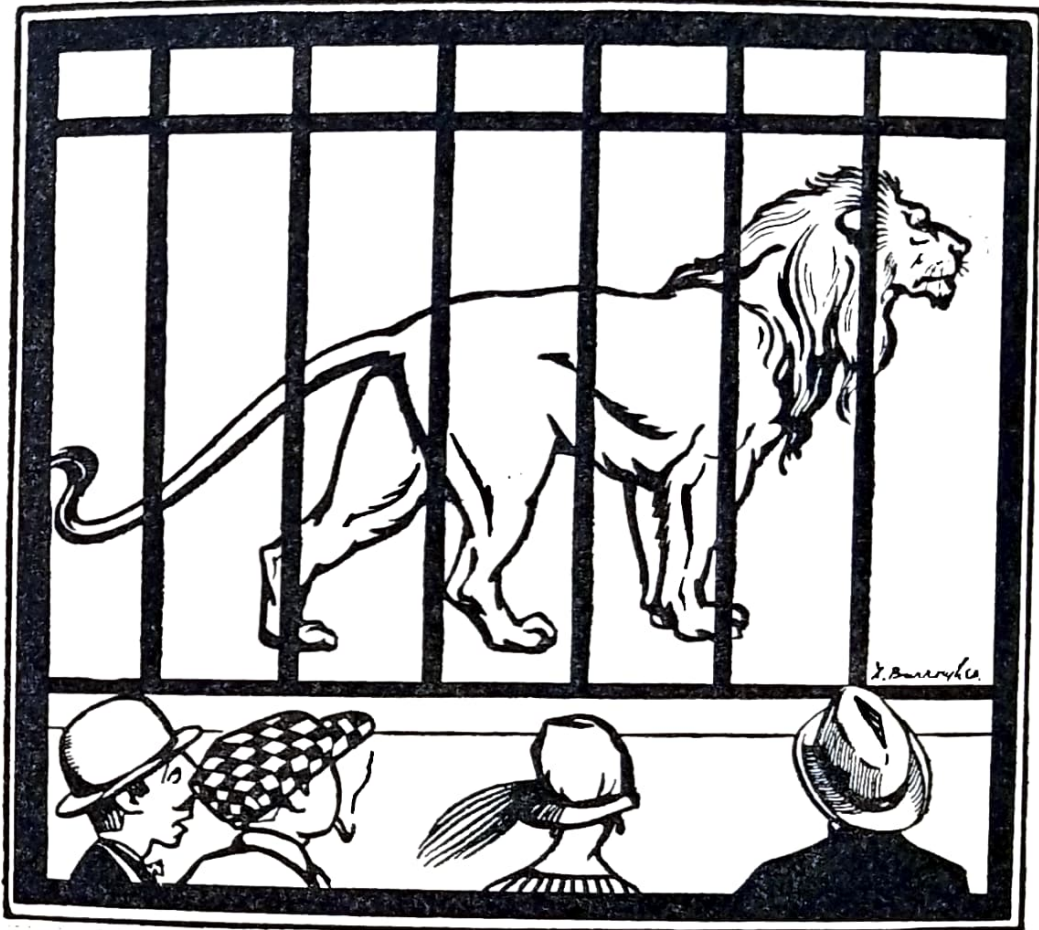
The Lion

HERBERT ASQUITH

The lion walks behind his bars,
His tawny shoulders ebb and flow,
With swaying flank and lowered mane
He pads the asphalt, proud and slow.

If he could break his rusted cage,
How many eyes would open wide
To see him flaring through the gap,
A lion springing in his pride!

But now he walks with silent tread,
Swinging and turning in his den,
He yawns, and blinks his golden eyes
Above the prying sons of men.





CYNTHIA ASQUITH

IT was Otmar's sixth birthday.

"What are you going to do when you are a man?" asked his mother, twisting his barley sugar curls round her finger.

"I am going to kill Swell-and-spread!" said Otmar, clenching his dimpled fist and stamping a foot as light as a leaf.

Otmar's mother laughed at her son's ambition, for Swell-and-spread was a giant amongst giants. Between him and the next size in giants, there was far, far more difference than there is between you and an ordinary giant. To give you some idea as to how enormous he was, I will tell you a few facts about him. For one thing, instead of going out as you do to pick a bunch of flowers, Swell-and-spread would go out to pick a bunch of trees! A clump of beeches was his idea of a nice-sized button-hole. Whenever he walked, the earth trembled for miles around and his breath made all the trees curtsy and set all their leaves a-whispering. He could sneeze houses down and cough castles away, and if he shouted, anyone within a mile had

the drums of his ears broken and was never able to hear another sound.

As for his meals! A whole flock of sheep was no more to him than a plate of shrimps is to you, and when he had finished his food he always used the trunk of a poplar tree as a tooth-pick!

You know the uncomfortable way in which you sometimes get a fly in your eye, well, what do you think used to happen to poor Swell-and-spread? He used to get *birds in his eyes!* This was a very common trouble with him, especially when he was out picking trees.

"Is Swell-and-spread the biggest giant that ever gianted?" asked Otmar, as he munched his birthday cake.

"Yes," answered his mother, "much, much the biggest, and shall I tell you how it is that he has become so monstrously enormous?"

"Oh yes, *do,*" urged the little boy.

"Well, the reason is simply that he is swollen in every direction with pride. Just as a balloon is blown out with air, so he is puffed out with conceit."

"But wasn't he born big?" asked Otmar.

"Not particularly. When he was young, he was just an ordinary-sized giant, and thus he would have remained, only he took such a foolish pride in being larger than other boys. He thought there was credit in mere bigness—as though to be great in size were to be great in the grand sense of the word. Having longer legs and longer arms than other boys, naturally he could run faster and climb higher. It was no credit to him to win a race. It did not prove that he had more energy or spirit or power of concentration. No, it simply showed that he was made on a larger scale, and *that* anyone could see for themselves. But Swell-and-spread was so stupid that he did take great pride in his easy triumphs, and every time he did something other boys couldn't do, why then, he grew just a bit bigger."

"But why did being proud make him grow?" asked Otmar.
"I don't get any bigger when you praise me."

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

“Well, that’s the curious thing. You know when people are proud of something they’ve done they say, ‘I feel inches taller.’ With them it is just a way of speaking, but, for some odd reason, Swell-and-spread not only felt, but really and truly in fact *became* inches taller each time he felt pleased with himself. There are two other expressions you must have heard. Often one friend will say of another, ‘So-and-so is getting too big for his boots,’ or, ‘So-and-so is suffering from swelled head.’ These are just funny ways of saying, ‘So-and-so is getting stuck up.’ It doesn’t mean that any actual bodily change has taken place in So-and-so, but in the case of Swell-and-spread these figures of speech turned into facts.

“Every time he felt boastful he became inches taller and his head swelled, and as for his feet, they were always getting too big for his boots. He could hardly ever get up in the pair he had worn only the day before yesterday! This went on and on, and that is why he has become a giant amongst giants.”

“Does he like being so large, Mother?” asked the wondering child.

“Well, I suppose he likes the feeling of self-importance it gives him and glories in his supremacy, but I don’t see how he can get much fun out of his life. He must be very lonely. You see, no one can talk to him because—as you know—his voice deafens people. He can’t get any excitement out of fighting. No one has a chance against him. He is hated and feared by man, beast and bird. And thus he lives on in his lonely hugeness without love or fear or any of the things which make life exciting.”

“When I am big, I shall kill him,” said Otmar gently but firmly.

What Otmar’s mother had told him was quite true, and month after month Swell-and-spread grew bigger and bigger. You can imagine that his enormous presence was a terrible trouble to all the neighboring countries. He wasn’t kind, no, not in the very smallest degree. He didn’t care who, or what, suffered so

long as he could fill his tremendous stomach. In fact, cruelty was a sort of sauce to his food. Naturally, he had the most enormous appetite, and he had to walk miles and miles and miles to find sufficient food to nourish his vast frame. No single beast or bird was worth stooping for. If he wanted to eat beef, mutton, pork or bird, to make anything worthy of the name of a meal, he needed not one cow, one sheep, one pig or one goose, but a whole herd of cattle, a flock of sheep, a posse of pigs or a gaggle of geese.

As time passed and more and more of the earth was turned into Swell-and-spread's larder, he became the most terrible scourge that had ever inflicted the earth. Whole countries were laid waste by his appetite, and famine spread around him. When he stood up he darkened the land, and if he had a cold in his head he gave it to whole nations. Everyone in his neighborhood would have died of starvation had it not been for one fortunate fact. Swell-and-spread was so carnivorous that he had no use for any bloodless food, so all the people had to become vegetarians and live on the fruit of their labours as farmers, cutting their corn as soon as possible lest the giant should trample it underfoot. A sufficient supply of water was preserved by making the wells and reservoirs so small that Swell-and-spread could not even get his little finger inside them.

In gallant attempts to kill him, hundreds of youths sacrificed their happy lives.

If he had lived after the invention of cannon, the smallest man could have defeated him, but all this happened long before firearms were in use, and with ordinary weapons what could the bravest, cleverest, strongest men do against this mountain of a man in whose flesh sword-thrusts were less than so many pin-pricks? With finger and thumb he could hurl horses out of sight, and with one stamp of his foot he could kill a hundred men. In vain did kings offer the hands of their daughters and the halves of their kingdom in reward to anyone who should slay Swell-

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

and-spread. No one was clever enough to devise a means of destroying the monster.

It seemed that the only chance was to kill him in his sleep: and as often as the news went forth that he was unconscious and lying on his side, troops of warriors, armed to the teeth, would approach from the opposite direction and try to creep to the back of his head. Naturally no one could hope to walk against the gale that blew out of his nose and mouth at every breath he breathed.

But unfortunately he had got adenoids, so he nearly always slept with his mouth open and snored. Now, his snores were so much louder than any thunder that they deafened anyone who came within five miles.

Occasionally some brave men succeeded in approaching him on a night when he was not snoring. They knew it was impossible to pierce his incredibly thick skin and inflict a deadly wound without awakening him, so their plan was with their lances to pierce his eyes that were like great twin lakes of jelly. Once blinded, they felt that it would be possible to find some means of overcoming him.

But when they came within fifty yards of the heaving mountain of flesh, some evil chance always made the monster turn over in his sleep so that the air from his lungs rushed out in the direction of his assailants, and at the first breath, like so many balls of thistledown, they were blown over the hills and far away.

Once—only once—the Prime Minister had an idea. He poured tar over every tree in a large forest and then set them aflame hoping to burn Swell-and-spread. But the giant was woken by the pleasant warmth, and as soon as the heat became disagreeable he blew out the large conflagration just as you might blow out a candle.

This terrible state of affairs continued until Swell-and-spread reached the age of forty. Meanwhile, Otmar had grown to be a youth of eighteen. He was just as determined to kill the giant as he had been on his sixth birthday, but now he no longer spoke of his intention because it only made people laugh.

Otmar was small of stature but his heart was great and his spirit burned like a flame.

It was not the promise of Princess's hand which made his ambition glow, for he loved a fair shepherdess. But he longed to deliver his fellow creatures from the cruel scourge and to make the beautiful earth safe for his Love.

Though in every church and in every home prayers were still said for the destruction of the monster, hope was really dead. Despair lay heavy on the land.

Otmar screwed up his active brain trying to think of some fresh method of attack. If only he could invent some new weapon which could penetrate the thick skin and stop that great hammering engine—the giant's heart!

One day Otmar heard that the child of a neighbour had died from swallowing a pin. This sent an idea darting through his mind. He knew that to the giant a thrust from the longest lance would be less than the prick of a pin. So no wound inflicted on the outside of his body could be more than an annoyance. But since to an ordinary person an internal wound from a mere pin could be fatal, obviously the one chance was to get *inside* the giant and with sharp swords to stab again and again and again.

But how get inside him? How approach him without being blown out of the country and, even if that could be managed, how hope to escape the grinding of those ivory towers, his teeth, or else drowning inside his mouth?

With his knees drawn up to his chin, Otmar pondered far into the night.

Suddenly an inspiration came to him. Yes! There was one way which gave just a chance. But what a desperate venture! Even success seemed certain death, for once inside that great body how could he hope to get out? Otmar knew that when the giant woke up in the morning he was both hungry and lazy and liked to be able to eat a meal without having to go in search of it. Therefore, before falling asleep, he would fling a large net over some

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

herds of cows so that as soon as he woke, one languid hand could draw them up to be devoured.

"Being very hungry he probably swallows a good many of them whole," thought Otmar, "so I see what I must do; I must cling on to one of these doomed animals and pray to be swallowed and swallowed *whole*. I must get inside the monster as part of his breakfast."

Otmar told no one of his desperate plan. That evening after his father and mother had gone to bed, he crept out of the cottage and ran to a distant field, where he found what he had expected, a large herd of cattle caught like fishes in a great net. He crept through one of its large meshes and, catching hold of her curved horns, he climbed on to the back of a warm cow who was kneeling down and steadily munching the grass around her. "How funny to eat the floor or to sit on one's food," thought Otmar, not quite sure which it was that the cow was doing. Her back was very hard and knobbly—not at all a soft seat, but she was nice and warm. This was a good thing, for the air was bitterly cold. Not for one moment did Otmar fall asleep. Was it the cold that kept him awake or the excitement with which his heart was thudding?

The night seemed very long. To pass the anxious time, Otmar tried to count the shining stars, but he soon gave that up and just stared at their distant glitter. Gradually the darkness thinned: one by one the stars faded out of sight as a growing whiteness spread across the sky. The chill that comes just before dawn when the pulse of the world beats low, descended on poor Otmar. Dread of what lay before him clutched at his heart. He longed to see usual, homely things—his mother lighting the fire, bacon frizzling for breakfast, the patchwork rug in which he had burnt a hole. Was he never to see these comfortable sights again, never to look into the surprised eyes of Phœbe, his love? Tears filled his own eyes and the cold, thin, grey sky swam before him. Then it was as if the earth turned in her sleep. There was a rustle and a stir as though something had begun to breathe.

The whiteness of dawn now kindled into colour and soon warmth crept over Otmar, and by the time the birds were greeting the new day, his heart glowed with its accustomed courage.

Grasping two long sharp swords in each hand, Otmar waited and waited. Now the sun was quite high in the heavens. "Swell-and-spread sleeps late to-night," he thought.

At that moment a distant but mighty roaring sound stirred the air. "Ah!" cried Otmar in his excitement talking aloud to the cow. "It's come! It's come! The time is come! It's *now!* That was Swell-and-spread's first yawn." A moment's silence and the same sound was repeated more loudly. The suspense was dreadful. Otmar's heart hammered against his ribs! Now he felt a violent jerk! He clung fast to the horns of the startled cow. The net tightened round her horns and they were drawn swiftly through the long dew-drenched grass. The cow lowed protestingly and struggled to drive her hoofs into the ground, but relentlessly she and her burden and all the other cows were dragged along faster and faster across fields, over ditches and through hedges. It was desperately uncomfortable, but by holding tight to her horns, and laying his face against the cow's neck, Otmar remained unhurt save for some bruises and scratches. There was one last dreadful bump. Now they were leaving the ground and going up—up through the whistling air. Otmar felt breathless, giddy and sick. Everything became dark and stuffy. He knew that they were now being actually lifted in the giant's hand and that his fingers must be closing round his breakfast. He prayed as he had never prayed before. Now he was aware of a horrid sort of warmth that drew him towards an increasing heat. It was as though he were being drawn along, caught in a strong, hot draught. Too well he knew what it was—Swell-and-spread's hot breath sucking him in as his great mouth opened on his breakfast.

He was blown off the cow's back and rushed through jagged, uneven white gates. Thank goodness they didn't close on him! Had he passed through the portals of the giant's teeth?

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

Otmar now found himself in a huge, hot, damp cave. He could only just see the roof of it and he was lying on a horrible wet, soft redness, like a road made entirely of sea anemones. This redness was the great tongue of the giant who, fortunately, had just swallowed, or else Otmar would certainly have been drowned in a deep lake of spittle.

His fingers pressed tight into his ears for fear of deafening noises; breathlessly Otmar waited to be swallowed.

In another second he would have gone rushing down a gigantic red lane.

But something in his first mouthful of food tickled Swell-and-spread's throat, and instead of swallowing, he coughed, and on the mighty gust of that cough, little Otmar was shot out from between his teeth like a pea out of the mouth of a cannon.

He went hurtling through the air. There was a roaring, rushing, crackling sound in his ear, spangled thickening blackness before his eyes, and then complete darkness.

A twelve o'clock sun was shining strongly when Otmar returned to consciousness. He found himself lying on a large haystack on which, by the greatest good fortune, he had fallen at the end of his long flight. He lifted his aching head, and stretched his weary limbs.

Bitterly disappointed, weak and hungry, he climbed off the haystack. A few steps brought him to a cottage, at the door of which he knocked and asked to be directed home.

He was told he was a good twenty miles distant from the village in which he lived. Seeing how pale and trembling he looked, the woman, who had a kindly heart, gave him a bowl of warm milk and a bannock. Refreshed he started on his weary walk and arrived home at ten that night. He refused to explain his absence to his mother, knowing well that her anxious love would make her keep him under lock and key from further attempts.

Early the next day, he went to see Phæbe, the beautiful shepherdess to whom he was betrothed. At the sight of her loveliness



"HE COUGHED AND . . . OTMAR WAS SHOT OUT FROM BETWEEN HIS TEETH"

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

comfort and hope crept back into his heart, and well it might, for her hair was the colour of dead leaves that lie in the sun, and from her soft, flickering face shone great wide-apart eyes, deep grey eyes, flecked with purple. He told her of his attempt and failure, and the pride and fear in her face made him feel his failure had not been in vain.

With sweet words and caresses she comforted him until confidence and hope were rekindled in his heart.

"I shall do it again to-night," he blurted out. "Just the same thing; I must get back into his mouth!"

"No, no," cried Phœbe, "it was a gallant attempt and I am proud of you, but it is too perilous a plan. I cannot bear it. But do not be discouraged. Perhaps I can help. I have an idea, or at least," she added modestly, "a sort of tiny bud of an idea which might help you."

"An idea to overthrow Swell-and-spread? You, you lovely little one!" laughed Otmar incredulously.

"Listen first, Otmar, and then laugh," said the shepherdess. "You know that Swell-and-spread grows ever more huge through his pride. How often we have noticed that after each fresh triumph his shadow grows broader and longer?"

"Yes," grunted Otmar, "but what comfort can there be in that? The larger he gets the more difficult his conquest becomes."

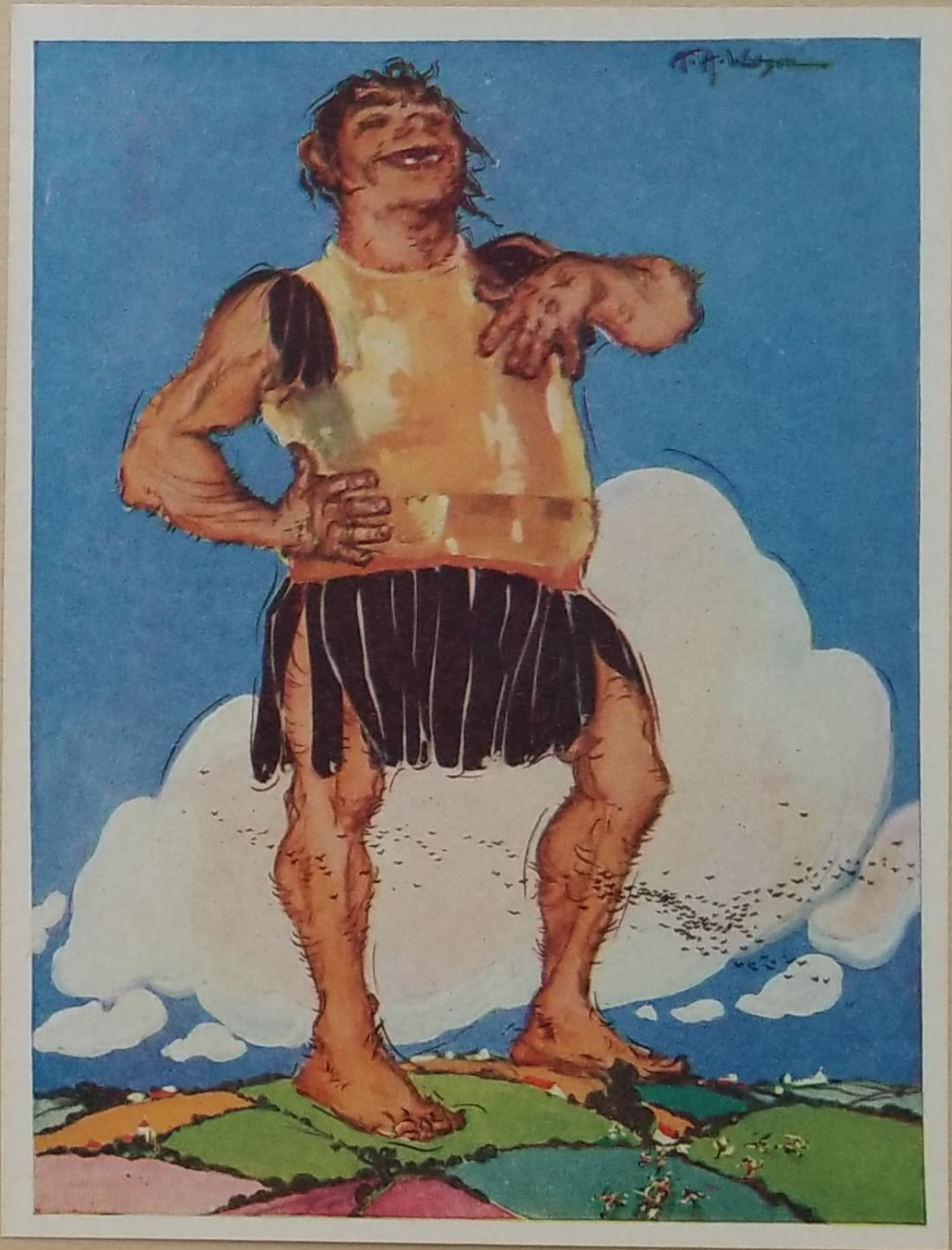
"In the way of ordinary battle, yes, but has it never struck you that the larger he grows the more he requires to eat?"

"Naturally! And the more likely are we and everyone else to be eaten."

"Yes, but, Otmar, suppose he grew so enormous that it became impossible for him to find sufficient food to nourish his huge body?"

"But," argued Otmar, "since the whole wretched world is his larder, surely he will always be able to find enough?"

"I wonder," said Phœbe. "Even now he has to go farther afield for his supplies than pleases him. I often hear a bellow of



"THE BIGGEST GIANT THAT EVER GIANTED."

*Drawn for The Treasure Ship
by A. H. Watson.*

annoyance—an angry yawn of fatigue. My plan is, that he should, so to speak, get too big for himself, until it becomes impossible for him to satisfy his stomach.”

“Yes, but the bigger he gets, the longer grow his arms and legs. You see, his stride increases and his reach. He will only have to travel further to get more provisions.”

“But,” said Phœbe, “if we could make him so large that he would have to go hundreds of miles to get his daily food, then perhaps we could lame him, not much, but just enough to hamper him. You see, if he was constantly getting too big for his boots, he wouldn’t be able to get sufficient leather to make new shoes in time to start on his housekeeping expeditions. I know that to him a sword thrust is no more than a pin-prick is to us, but in sufficient numbers, even pin-pricks can cause great distress. Whilst he slept we could drive swords into the ground for miles around, so that their blades stuck out and even his longest stride could not overstep them. Then, too, he would get *such* a swollen head that he would not be able to keep himself supplied with hats, and as his head would always be growing closer to the scorching rays of the sun, this, too, would add to his exhaustion.”

“There is something in your idea,” admitted Otmar, “but how can we defeat him by his own size? What could so increase it?”

“Flattery,” replied Phœbe. “Swell-and-spread is as stupid as he is cruel. I’m sure that the direct homage of words of flattery whispered straight into his ear would fill him with fresh conceit. While he sleeps you must creep into the cave of his ear and when he wakes shout out eloquent words of praise and worship. They will be so sweet to him, that I am sure he will not slay you.”

“But,” demurred Otmar, “if he answers I am deaf.”

“I have thought of that. With beeswax I will seal up your ears so that their drums may be protected from the thunder of his voice.”

Resolution flared into Otmar’s face.

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

"I will try!" he exclaimed, and he kissed Phœbe seven times.

That same evening Phœbe sealed up Otmar's ears with beeswax, and soon after dark he crept out of his cottage and, dragging a long ladder, tried to approach the sleeping giant from behind the back of his head. It was a still, cold night. Otmar was taut with excitement.

After he had been walking for about an hour, he had a very narrow escape. In his sleep the giant suddenly flung one arm behind his head. Like a huge hammer, it smote the trembling earth and missed Otmar by only a few yards. Had it struck him, he would have been crushed as flat as his own shadow. Undismayed, Otmar crept on, dragging the heavy ladder behind him.

Now he is very, very near his goal. Otmar's heart pounds with excitement. Another five minutes' walk and he will be able to stand his ladder against one of the giant's fingers and begin his ascent. Alas! Alas! Swell-and-spread stirs in his sleep, turns over on his stomach, and the mighty blast of his breath, now blowing in Otmar's direction, lifts the brave boy up like a leaf in a gust of wind, and wafts him far, far away. Fortunately he dropped into a deep drift of dead leaves and was uninjured by his fall.

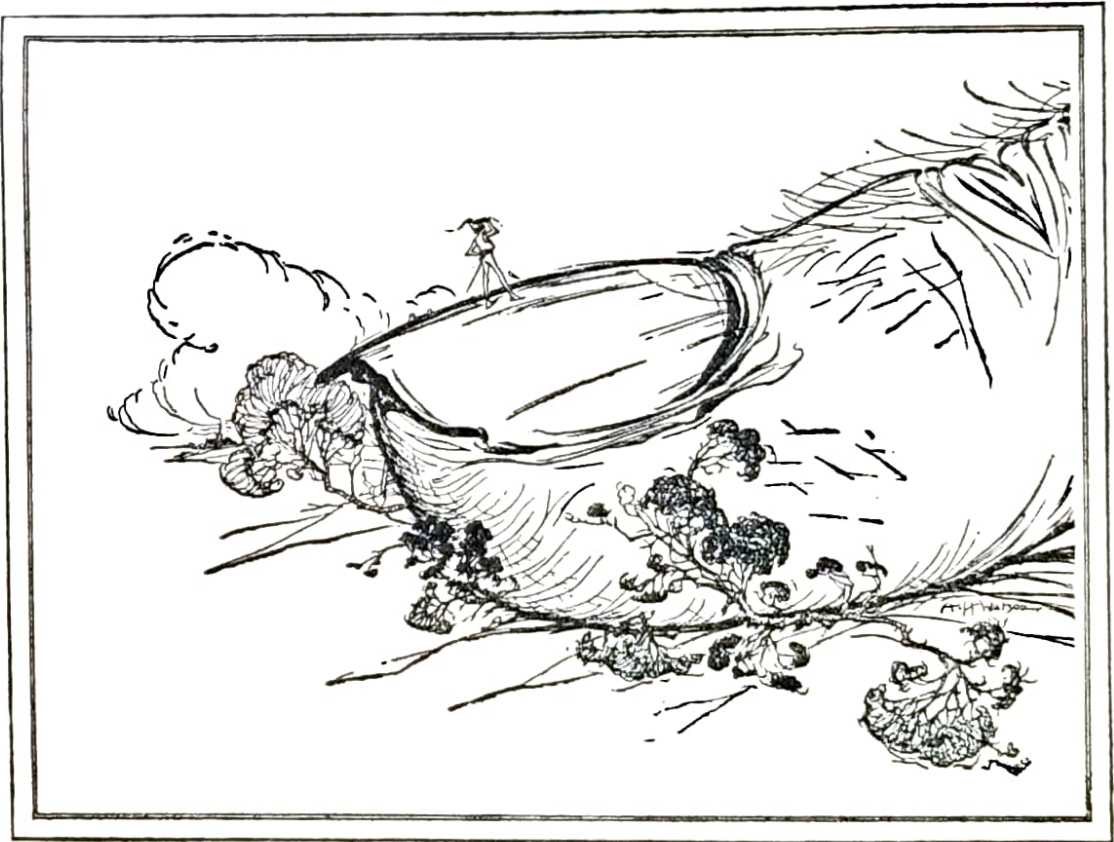
The next night he again set out, only to meet with the same mischance. This time he was blown on to a distant ploughed field and escaped with nothing worse than a few bruises.

The third evening he was too stiff and tired to make another attempt, but on the fourth evening he again ventured. This time the giant slept heavily and quietly and Otmar succeeded in reaching the field in which the great right hand was lying.

Fortunately the ladder was just long enough to reach to the top of the nail on Swell-and-spread's little finger. Otmar climbed up. His knees trembled with excitement! What an adventure! If only he could look into Phœbe's eyes just for one moment! He left the last rung of the ladder. Now he was actually standing on the giant's finger nail. It was very slippery, almost like being

on a sheet of ice. It took him a good many strides to get off the giant's nail and on the firm flesh of his finger. Then it was much easier going, and before very long he found himself on what he knew must be Swell-and-spread's wrist. There was an enormous watch—about as big as Big Ben—strapped on to it, and Otmar had great difficulty in overstepping this obstacle. Then he lay down and had a good rest before starting on the long, arduous walk up the mighty slope of the giant's arm.

It took him an hour to reach the turn of his shoulder. Fortunately Swell-and-spread's hair was very long; it hung down like great ropes, and by catching on to it, Otmar was able to pull himself up to the edge of the giant's ear. It was like looking down into a great pit. Triumphant but exhausted, Otmar sat down and waited



"NOW HE WAS ACTUALLY STANDING ON THE GIANT'S FINGER-NAIL"

SWELL-AND-SPREAD

Gradually the stars paled into extinction in the growing lightness. A lovely flush spread over the sky, and from every tree came sweet pipings as the birds turned in their soft nests.

Three hours after dawn, Otmar saw that the expanse of the giant's cheek which spread before him was no longer still but moving up and down. He guessed he was munching his breakfast.

"Now's my time," thought Otmar, and into the pit of the great ear he shouted.

"Oh, Wonder of the World, Miracle of Nature! All Hail! I bring you the homage of humble humanity. The salutations of the miserable creatures, thou in thy great mercy sufferest to survive."

Until he was hoarse, Otmar went on roaring out every sort of flattery he could think of.

His ears were stopped and he could hear nothing, so how was he to tell what impression his words were making?

"But," he thought, "surely if Swell-and-spread were annoyed I should long since have been squashed like the smallest of flies."

To finish up he shouted, "Most glorious Swell-and-spread, all we wretched, puny men have decided to implore thy Gloriousness to become our king in name as thou already art in fact. We propose to ransack the mines of the wide world till we find sufficient gold from which to make a crown large enough to encompass thy sublime head. We pray thee to accept this crown. If thy humble servant's words have found favour I pray thee keep thy beautiful arm still for the space of an hour so that I may return to the earth and hasten the preparations for thy coronation. I will return to-night."

The giant's great arm lay still as a rock while Otmar ran down its great slope. He hastened to Phœbe and told her of the success of his enterprise.

That evening he found his way back to where the giant's little finger lay and once more made the great ascent. He timed his walk. He found it took him exactly five minutes longer to reach

the ropes of hair, and when he reached the edge of the ear, the pit looked even larger. This filled his heart with joy. His treatment was already taking effect! The giant must have grown!

Again he poured forth words of fulsome flattery.

"Thy servants," he cried, "are toiling night and day, but sufficient gold has not yet been found to furnish a crown for thy head."

Night after night Otmar made the same expedition and each time the walk took him longer. Soon he had to tie two ladders together, for one could no longer reach to the summit of the finger nail.

"I bring you good news," he said to Phœbe. "Not only does my climb grow nightly longer, but I feel certain Swell-and-spread has grown much thinner. Walking on his arm used to be like treading on a well-stuffed cushion, soft and springy; but now the road is terribly hard. His bones are no longer well covered and they bruise the soles of my feet. It is as though I walked on stones. Another thing, the surface is getting ever so much colder. It used to be quite warm. But yesterday, I stumbled and fell and oh! it was so cold!"

"Bravo!" cried Phœbe. "I know your words are true. Longer and longer journeys in search of food are reported and often I hear great roars of rage."

"Yes," said Otmar, "and best of all, he has given up the attempt to keep himself in shoe leather. For this last week his feet have been bare."

"Then," exclaimed Phœbe, "it is surely time for our next move. A thousand swords must be driven into the ground. This very day I will seek an audience of the Prime Minister."

Phœbe hastened to the Prime Minister's Palace. She was so pretty that none of the big footmen had the heart to say their master never saw strangers, so she was admitted straight into his Thinking Room.

He was very surprised to see her, but her prettiness was so enchanting that he gave her a chair and stood still as a statue,

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staring at her while she poured out the story of Otmar's great war against Swell-and-spread. He was so busy trying to make quite sure whether her eyes were blue-grey or grey-blue and watching the dimple that came and went as her mouth moved in speech, that he really didn't at all understand what she was talking about. In any case, he wasn't very quick at taking ideas from other people, but he was so anxious to please Phœbe that he told her she could have any sort of permission she wanted, and he handed her a piece of paper with a seal, and some writing on it, which gave her power to order the whole army about, just as though it were one tweeny-maid instead of a million men.

So for the next week all the soldiers were ever so busy, sharpening their swords and driving their hilts into the earth till thousands of blades stuck out like blades of grass.

Poor, poor, poor Swell-and-spread!

Oh, the roars of pain and rage that rent the air day after day. As you know, the poor silly monster was bare-footed now, and to add to his troubles, he was not very long-sighted, and lately he had grown so much taller that he could no longer see the ground. He couldn't think what was happening to his feet. They were always being pricked. It was like walking on a pin-cushion.

For miles around the earth was soaked with blood, and his bare head (he could find nothing to cover it) ached from the fierce rays of the sun. This went on for some time. Every night Otmar climbed the weary ascent and every morning shouted his praise.

One night as he stepped off the topmost rung of his ladder, the fleshy road on which he had set his foot struck him chill as ice. It was so cold, that he screamed with surprise.

"I must be on a chilblain," he thought. "The road will soon get warmer."

He hastened along the finger, in his excitement running until he was quite breathless. Wherever he trod it seemed colder and colder. It couldn't surely be all one chilblain? Now it was like

treading on ice. Now he was off the finger, tearing along the hard rocky back of Swell-and-spread's hand.

Colder and colder and colder. Oh, what a deadly chill crept up Otmar's legs! Now, he had climbed over the great wrist-watch and was on the arm. It, too, was colder than any stone.

Otmar had been trying to keep down the hope that was bubbling up in his heart. But now he could no longer doubt the glorious truth. Yes, Swell-and-spread lay cold in death. He was dead, for ever and ever—dead.

The world was freed from its monster!

As fast as feet could carry him, Otmar sped down the cold slope of the dead giant's arm and flew down the ladder that leant against the finger.

"Fear no more!" he cried, rushing to the market-place. "Swell-and-spread will trouble you no more. Pride has swollen him to death."

The joyous news spread like flames in dry heather. Soon bonfires were burning, bells ringing and legs dancing, from one end of the country to another.

Phœbe told the Prime Minister whom the nation had to thank for their deliverance, and Otmar was proclaimed the saviour of his country. He and Phœbe were married the next day. Every woman in the land brought Phœbe a bunch of flowers, so that she was able to walk for miles and miles on lovely blossoms.

Every king in the world sent Otmar a bag of gold, so he was able to buy anything that took his fancy, but Phœbe was never out of his sight and he was too happy to want to do much shopping.

As for Swell-and-spread, fortunately, it was a fiercely hard winter and he was frozen quite stiff and hard; so the Prime Minister didn't have to bother about any funeral arrangements. He became what is called "petrified," and there to this day he lies a great mountain of rock.

"Mount Warning" it is called, and within sight of its great frowning mass of rock, Otmar and Phœbe lived happily ever afterwards.



The Milkmaid's Song

(FROM A PLAY)

MARGARET SACKVILLE



OLD Crump she is a saucy cow and she
should take first prize;
She jumped so high one Summer's night,
she jumped into the skies!
Over the moon, and farther still, she
chewed the stars, and then
When she had had enough of *that* she just
jumped back again!



MARGARET SACKVILLE



She is the neatest cow alive—a wonder
for her age . . .
I churn her milk to butter pats as big
as a green-gage.
Oh! Milk and Cream and Syllabubs!—
It isn't every day
That you can milk a crumpled cow who's
chewed the Milky Way!





A. P. HERBERT

PROLOGUE

SPOKEN BY THE PRINCESS CARAWAY

Our author, who is as kind as he is accomplished, and is, besides, the best-dressed man in Hammersmith, took the unusual step of asking the actors what they would prefer his play to be about. This caused a little difference of opinion, for while one wanted the principal scene to take place in a Castle (with soldiers) another insisted that it must happen in a Post Office. On the other hand it was agreed by all that the principal characters must include a very Fat Man, a Thin Woman, a Fairy, and an Ordinary Person.

All these our author has provided, together with a Castle and Soldiers, though not, unfortunately, the Post Office; and he has thrown in a Highwayman as well, who counts, we suppose, as the Ordinary Person.

We also stipulated that the play should be "very comic," but, as to that, we are not so sure that he has come up to requirements. He wishes us, however, to make it quite clear that for the choice of the characters at least he bears no responsibility, though for the rest he craves your kind indulgence.

FAT KING MELON AND THE PRINCESS CARAWAY

A DRAMA IN FIVE SCENES

SCENE I. FAIRY MUMBO'S GROTTTO.

[FAIRY MUMBO, *who is tall and beautiful, but unprincipled, is doing a heavy sort of dance and wears a malicious expression. She is assisted in the dance by FAIRY GURGLE, who is very small indeed.*

Fairy Mumbo.

[*Air "HUMPTY DUMPTY"*]

A fairy specialist you see;
All mortals come consulting me,
Whether they're ill, or whether they're well—
And which is which it's hard to tell.

Mumbo Jumbo is my name.
To one and all I say the same.
Mumbo Jumbo! Fiddle de dee!
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

[*The FAIRY MUMBO sighs heavily. So does the FAIRY GURGLE. A ring at the front-door of the Grotto.*

FAT KING MELON.

Fairy Mumbo.

Oh, dear, another ridiculous mortal in difficulties, I suppose. See who it is, Fairy Gurgle.

Fairy Gurgle [*gurgling.*]

Why?

Fairy Mumbo.

Why not?

[FAIRY GURGLE, *having nothing to say to this, gurgles and goes to the front-door, through which an enormously fat King is trying to squeeze his way, with great breathings and heavings.*]

Fairy Gurgle.

It's a very fat man.

Fairy Mumbo.

How fat?

[FAIRY GURGLE *describes large circles in the air with her hands.*]

Fairy Mumbo.

Then take away our fairy-chairs.

[FAIRY GURGLE *does so and disappears.*]

[*To KING MELON, who has now found a way in, and is approaching.*]

Good morning. I am afraid you will have to sit on the floor. All our chairs are at the upholsterers.

King Melon. [*sitting down on the floor.*]

Thank you. I am King Melon and I have come to ask your advice. You may have noticed, Fairy Mumbo, that I am quite unusually fat?

Fairy Mumbo. [*with a start of well-bred surprise.*]

Bless me, Your Majesty! What an idea! But stay—now you mention it, I do observe a certain tendency to adiposity—nothing more, I assure you.

The King. You are very kind. Now, I am about to pay a visit to the beautiful Princess Caraway, of Gardenia, whom I hope to make my wife.

Fairy Mumbo.

I congratulate you, Your Majesty.

King Melon. [*Holding up his hand in a deprecating manner.*]

Not yet, I beg. The Princess and I have never met, though we have been betrothed for many years; and I fear that when she sees me she may no longer be as anxious to marry me as she was ten years ago.

Fairy Mumbo. [*politely.*]

She is said to have excellent taste and judgment, Your Majesty.

King Melon. [*bitterly.*]

Exactly. Could any woman of taste and judgment endure to marry a creature so detestably fat as me? Especially a Princess—for Princesses, as you must have noticed, are invariably slender. Now, what do you advise?

Fairy Mumbo.

Let me see the tongue.

[KING MELON *obligingly puts out his tongue, which the FAIRY examines—with a slight frown.*]

Fairy Mumbo.

H'm. [*oracular*] You are suffering from Cotopaxia.

FAT KING MELON

The King. I beg your pardon?

Fairy Mumbo. Cotopaxia.

The King. Good Heavens! What is that?

Fairy Mumbo.

It is an obscure and terrible disease. [*The KING starts*] There is only one cure for it. [*The King leans forward anxiously*] You must become thin. To do that——

The King [*eagerly.*]
Yes?

Fairy Mumbo.

You must take more exercise and drink a glass of hot water night and morning.

The King [*aghast.*]

Exercise? Do you want to kill me?

Fairy Mumbo.

How far is it to the palace of the Princess Caraway?

The King. Fifty leagues.

Fairy Mumbo. And how, Your Majesty, do you propose to travel *thither*?

The King. Riding upon a horse.

Fairy Mumbo.

You will leave the horse behind. You will *walk* to the Palace of the Princess Caraway. And on the way you will pick a quarrel with every way-farer you meet, for fighting is the most healthy form of exercise, and one of the least expensive. You will arrive at the Palace as slender as a larch. [*She strikes a silver gong*]

[FAIRY GURGLE *appears.*]

Fairy Gurgle, show His Majesty out.

[*The King retiring.*]

Fairy Mumbo, I can never thank you enough.

Fairy Mumbo [*curtly.*]

I do not ask for thanks. Drop ten gold crowns in the box. Good morning.

[*The FAIRY GURGLE holds up a Gold Crown box, in which the KING drops his offering. He then inserts himself in the door-way, and, aided by the FAIRY GURGLE, who pushes behind, makes his way out. The FAIRY MUMBO yawns wearily.*]

[*A bell rings, and by another door there enters the PRINCESS CARAWAY, who is, indeed, extraordinarily slender and fashionable.*]

Fairy Mumbo.

Good morning.

The Princess.

Good morning. What a charming place you have!
[*GURGLE provides her with a chair and she sits down.*]
I am the Princess Caraway.

Fairy Mumbo.

One of the Gardenia Caraways, I think?

The Princess [*haughtily.*]

The Gardenia Caraway.

Fairy Mumbo.

And you have come to consult me about your approaching marriage with King Melon.

The Princess [*amazed.*]

Fairy Mumbo! But you are a magician indeed!
How did you guess?

Fairy Mumbo [*with a wise and satisfied smile.*]

It is my business to know everything.

FAT KING MELON

The Princess [*uncomfortably.*]

The truth is, Fairy, as you may have noticed, I am so terribly *skinny*.

Fairy Mumbo [*kindly.*]

Oh, come! A little anæmic, perhaps, nothing more.

The Princess [*sadly.*]

You are very kind. But I have heard that King Melon is unusually robust, and I am very much afraid that, when we meet, he may not like me. Now, what do you advise?

Fairy Mumbo. H'm! [*sharply*] Pat the top of the head with the right hand. [*The Princess does so.*] Now rub the chest with the left. [*The Princess attempts this awful feat, but ends in the usual muddle.*] H'm! You are suffering from Cotopaxia.

The Princess [*blanching.*]

Oh, what is that?

Fairy Mumbo.

It is an obscure and terrible disease. There is only one cure for it. You must put on flesh.

The Princess [*eagerly.*]

Oh, tell me how!

Fairy Mumbo.

You must take more exercise, and drink a glass of hot water night and morning.

The Princess [*horrified.*]

Exercise! But whoever heard of a Princess taking exercise?

Fairy Mumbo.

If necessary, you can dress up as a Prince, and then no one will think anything of it.

The Princess.

But what sort of exercise?

Fairy Mumbo.

Walking exercise. To-morrow you will walk back to the Palace.

The Princess.

But I have a coach-and-six!

Fairy Mumbo.

Exactly. It is high time you walked.

The Princess.

But it is fifty leagues!

Fairy Mumbo.

Exactly. On the way you will sing songs and eat nuts, and as far as possible not think of anything. Let your mind remain perfectly empty. You will arrive at the Palace as round and plump as a water-melon. Good morning. [*She beats the gong.*] Fairy Gurgle!

The Princess [*rising*].

Oh, Fairy, how can I ever thank you?

[FAIRY GURGLE *appears.*]

Fairy Mumbo.

Ten gold crowns is the usual thing, but in special cases we accept twenty. *Good morning.*

The Princess [*dropping her crowns into the box*].

Good-bye. You have done me *so* much good. Do you know, I feel fatter already? [*Exit*].

FAT KING MELON

The Fairy Mumbo.

[*Air*—"HUMPTY, DUMPTY"]

Mumbo Jumbo! Fiddle-de-dee!
Fairies all, be wise as me!
First invent a new disease,
Find a fool, and name your fees!

[*The two FAIRIES execute a triumphant dance.*]

(*Curtain*)

SCENE II

OUTSIDE THE GREAT GATE OF KING MELON'S CASTLE

[*KING MELON is conducting a review of his troops, two in number, but upstanding fellows and well-armed with swords and muskets. There is also a third troop, but so small as hardly to be noticed.*]

The King [*who is mounted on a horse*].

My gallant Army, we march immediately!

1st Troop [*sulkily*].

We shall march, Your Majesty, but you will ride.

The King [*annoyed*].

Fellow, I mean what I say. On this occasion your King has determined to march at your side, and share with you the rigours of the road. This horse and I part company as soon as we have left the Castle.

2nd Troop. Hooray!

The King [with a cautious glance at the castle].

But hush! my mother must not know of this, for it would break her heart to know that I was walking. Why, here she comes!—*Hup!*

[*The TROOPS, who are standing at ease, are apparently unfamiliar with this old-fashioned military command, and remain motionless.*]



“MY GALLANT ARMY, WE MARCH IMMEDIATELY”

The King [again].

I say—*Hup!*

[*The TROOPS shoulder arms with marvellous precision.*]

The King. Hap!

[*The TROOPS slope arms.*]

The King. General salute! Pre-sent-hip!

[*Entry of the KING'S MOTHER.*]

[*The TROOPS present arms, just as the KING'S MOTHER, majestically, emerges from the Great Gate. The KING'S*

FAT KING MELON

MOTHER *is, naturally, very large, and quite ridiculously attached to the FAT KING.* *The troops sing—*

[*Entry of the KING'S MOTHER.*]

Air—“BLOW THY HORN, HUNTER”

Sing a song, soldiers,
And loudly shout Hurrah!
The King is fat,
But look at that—
It is the King's Mamma!
Come, sing a song, soldiers,
It is—it *is* the King's Mamma!

The King's Mother [*throwing a single, but contemptuous, glance at the TROOPS*]. My dear Melon, I wish you would not exert yourself so much. You know how bad it is for you.

The King [*dutifully*].

Yes, Mother. But I do so like giving orders. And, after all, a great deal of that exertion was done by the troops.

The King's Mother.

I should think so! [*indulgently.*] Well, my dear Melon, I hope you will find the Princess in good health. I knew her when she was *so* high; and she was such a darling—as plump and as bonny as a red plum. And, Melon, if you *do* have to fight a battle promise me you'll fight it on horseback, because I'm sure it's safer, and you won't get out of breath.

The King [*shamefaced*].

Of course, mother. I have always despised the infantry.

The King's Mother [kissing him fondly].
Good-bye, my Round One.

The King.

Farewell, Mother!

[*The TROOPS march round and round and eventually off, to a martial strain, the KING bringing up the rear.*

[*The KING'S MOTHER waves a sad farewell with a large yellow scarf.*]

[*Air—"THE HATHERSAGE COCKING"*]

Away to the wars! in column of fours,
We march to meet our foes,
Brave boys,
'Twere strange if they won, for we have a gun,
But they have only bows,
Brave boys!

Form fours!—to the wars!
Left! Right!—to the fight,
We won't retreat till they advance,
Sing "Honi Soit Qui Malxy Panse."

(*Curtain*)

SCENE III

PART OF AN IMPENETRABLE FOREST : THE HIGH-WAY

[*The forest consists of enormous quantities of trees. It is very dark, the wind whistles, and in all probability it is raining. A highwayman lurks in a corner of the stage. He is on horse-back and wears a mask.*]

FAT KING MELON

The Highwayman.

[*Air*—"HARK! HARK! THE DOGS DO BARK!"]

My—dad's a burglar!
Though a highwayman is duller,
I ride a horse,
And so, of course,
I keep a healthy colour.
Your father may,
Be all you say,
But look at his complexion! *

The Highwayman [*soliloquising*].

Peste! The wind blows cold, and I am wet to the skin— But soft! Yonder comes a pousy citizen who shall furnish me with a dry coat. [*Slapping his mare's neck*] Quiet, Bess!

[*A very OLD LADY crosses the stage, accompanied by a very SMALL CHILD*].

The Highwayman [*spurring his horse, presents his pistol and cries*].

Stand and deliver!

The Old Lady [*who is deaf, walks straight on, saying calmly, in high, shrill tones*].

What does the gentleman say, Richard? I can't hear.

Richard [*shouting*].

He says "Stand and deliver," Mother!

The Old Lady.

Standard *what?*

* The words of this song are believed to be very old and, therefore, naturally, neither rhyme nor scan.

Richard [shouting].

Stand and deliver!

The Old Lady.

"Very bad weather"? Oh, to be sure—so it is.

[Patting the Highwayman's horse—as she passes it.]

It's a nice horse, sir. I wish I had a lump of sugar for him. Good night, sir.

[She passes on with Richard and disappears.]

The Highwayman [is left speechless, but he says, angrily].

This is very discourteous!—Come, Bess, we will lurk again.

[He lurks against a tree, closing his eyes.]

[Enter the PRINCESS CARAWAY, disguised as a man.]

The Princess [drooping].

Ah, me! I am weary. I have walked twenty leagues and I swear I am no fatter than I was before. And it is very lonely being a man. [The HIGHWAYMAN snores, and she starts.]

[Air—"WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO, MY PRETTY MAID?"]

Though I am dressed in masculine dress,

I am, in fact, a pretty Princess.

I see a man, and, I confess,

I confess, I confess,

I rather hope that man will guess.

The Princess [yawning—ostentatiously].

I will lie down and sleep in the wet grass.

The Highwayman [observing her—presenting his pistol].

Your money or your life!

The Princess [proffering a bank-note].

Can you give me change?

FAT KING MELON

The Highwayman [starting].

That voice! [Accusingly] You are the Princess Caraway!

The Princess [starting].

Betrayed! But how did you unravel the secret?

The Highwayman.

I have loved you since you were so high [simply]. There was a picture of the Royal Family in my nursery.

The Princess.

Will you swear not to betray me?

The Highwayman.

I swear it. May I kiss your hand?

The Princess.

Yes, if you kneel down.

[The HIGHWAYMAN kneels down and kisses her hand. While he is doing this KING MELON enters from the right, weary and dragging his feet. He looks already a shade thinner, and he has lost his crown.]

King Melon [talking to himself, or rather to the audience].

My Army has deserted me. I am worn out with marching. I have fought seventeen fights, and lost them all. And now I have lost my way. Yet, courage, Melon, you have lost flesh as well [slapping and examining his lower chest, with satisfaction]. Yes, Melon, there is no doubt of it, you are not altogether the man you were. [Noticing the other two for the first time.] Stay, what is this? Highwaymen! Conspirators! I will pick a quarrel and lose another ounce! Yield, caitiffs! [He presents his musket.]

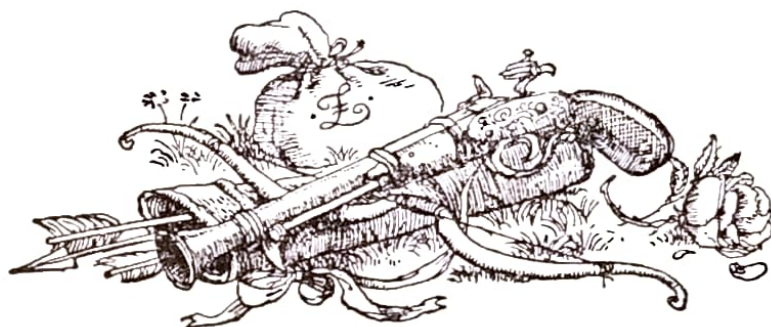
The Highwayman [*coolly—rising from his knees*].
Do you challenge me to single combat?

The King. I do. I challenge you both to single combat.

The Highwayman [*grimly*].
Very well. I will fight you first.

The Princess [*confident*].
And I will fight what is left of you.

The King [*grandly*].
There is no question of "first." I will fight the two of you together [*aside*] and lose two ounces at one blow.



The Highwayman.
But you cannot fight a duel with two of us at the same time.

The King [*with great scorn*].
Huh! Why, sir, have you never heard of a triangular duel?

The Highwayman [*loftily—not to be outdone*].
Of course! I have fought in dozens.

The King. Very well, then. What are your weapons.

The Highwayman [*presenting his pistol*].
Pistols!

FAT KING MELON.

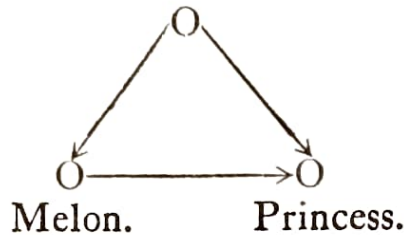
The Princess [presenting a bow and arrow which she had just found lying about]. Bows and arrows!

The King [presenting his musket].

Blunderbusses!

[They are standing thus—both the Princess and the Highwayman aiming at the King.]

Highwayman.



The Highwayman.

I shall say—"Are you ready—Fire!"—"Are you ready?—"

The King [lowering his musket, with which he was aiming at the Princess].

Pardon me, sir, but you should be aiming at *this* gentleman [the Highwayman] whose name I do not know.

The Princess.

But I have no quarrel with *him*.

The Highwayman.

Certainly not. My name is Orange-Peel.

The Princess.

My name is Pear. William Pear.

The King. Thank you. My name is Lemon. But you must see that I cannot shoot both of you with one blunderbuss. Besides, if Mr. Orange-Peel is to take part in a duel it seems unfair that nobody should shoot at him at all.

The Princess [reasonably].

There is something in that, Mr. Orange-Peel.

The Highwayman [warmly].

There is nothing in it, Mr. Pear.

The King [reasonably].

I shoot at Mr. Pear; Mr. Pear shoots at Mr. Orange-Peel; and Mr. Orange-Peel shoots at me. That's fair all round.

The Highwayman [hotly].

It's nothing of the sort. It's nonsense!

The King [haughtily].

You agreed to fight a triangular duel, and, as men of honour, you can scarcely now withdraw.

The Princess [impressed].

That's true. [Suddenly aiming her arrow at the Highwayman] Are you ready, Mr. Orange-Peel?

The Highwayman [very loudly].

NO!!! I don't like this kind of duel, Mr. Pear.

The Princess.

Be reasonable, Mr. Orange-Peel. You will only be shot with a bow and arrow, but I shall be shot with a blunderbuss.

The King.

After all, Mr. Orange-Peel, anyone who fights a duel must expect to be shot with something.

The Highwayman.

I should enjoy being shot by you, Mr. Lemon, but I object to being shot by my own side. [Anxiously] But I suppose you're only pretending, Mr. Pear?

The Princess.

Certainly not! [Firmly] Are you ready?

The Highwayman.

If you are not careful, Mr. Pear, I shall tell Mr. Lemon you're a lady.

FAT KING MELON.

The Princess [infuriated].

Treachery! For the last time—Are you ready—Fire!

[All three discharge their pieces with a loud "Pop" "Ping!" and "Bang!" respectively. All three duellists fall prostrate to the ground—and it is seen that an arrow is sticking in the heart of the HIGHWAYMAN.]

[SLOW MUSIC is played and it is realised that all three are seriously wounded, if not actually dead.]

[The FAIRY GURGLE, however, now appears, and after a contemptuous glance at the HIGHWAYMAN waves her wand over the KING and the PRINCESS, who sit up, all alive. The PRINCESS, forgetting herself, immediately produces a small mirror and does her hair.]

The King [starting].

By thunder! A woman!

The Princess [starting].

Betrayed again!

The King [politely].

Madam, I am only a poor husbandman.

The Princess.

And I am only a poor sempstress.

The King. But shall we continue our journey together?

The Princess [coily].

By all means!

The Princess.

[Air—"ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT"]

Through the wood the night is creeping—

Please stay with me.

I'm afraid of lions leaping

Down from the tree.

All the wood is full of shadows,
Walking shadows, whispering shadows;
'Course, I'm not afraid of shadows—
 But please stay with me.

[*Exeunt arm in arm—leaving the unscrupulous
HIGHWAYMAN still dead.*]

(*Curtain*)

SCENE IV

[*The scene is a harbour, and the ship seen on the stage
is just about to put to sea. The sailors sing a rollicking
chorus as they heave on the anchor, and a good deal of
drinking goes on.*]

[*Air—“THE JOLLY FELLOW”*]

Heave ho! the mariner!
 Fill the flowing tankard!
Merry is the mariner,
 When the ship is anchored.
Merry is the mariner,
Merry is the mariner,
Merry is the mariner,
 When the ship is anchored.

I like the roving life
 While I'm in harbour,
But when the anchor's up
 I want to be a barber.
But when the anchor's up,
But when the anchor's up,
But when the anchor's up,
 I'd like to be a barber.

FAT KING MELON

[KING MELON and the PRINCESS stand at the gangway of the ship, parting. The rough sailors lean over the side and listen to the following romantic passage.]

The Princess [sadly].

Then we have come to the parting of the ways?
Will you not take ship with me and sail to Gardenia?

The King [sadly].

No. I have promised to walk to Gardenia.

The Princess.

Why?

The King [evasively].

It is a vow. I am a very religious man.

The Princess [admiringly].

You are very brave. I am afraid that if you walk to Gardenia you will be killed, for I have noticed that whenever you meet another man you fight him.

The King [modestly].

Yes. I do this to make people respect my religion.

The Princess [pensive].

I am not a very religious woman. You must teach me.

The King. You are very beautiful. [*Deeply moved.*] I should like to ask you to marry me, but unfortunately I am betrothed to another.

The Princess.

I should like to marry you, but I too am blighted to another.

The King. Farewell. I am afraid we shall never meet again.

The Princess.

It is very pathetic.

The King [nobly].

Duty, however, must always come before inclination.

The Princess.

Yes. Will you lend me your handkerchief? I think I am going to cry.

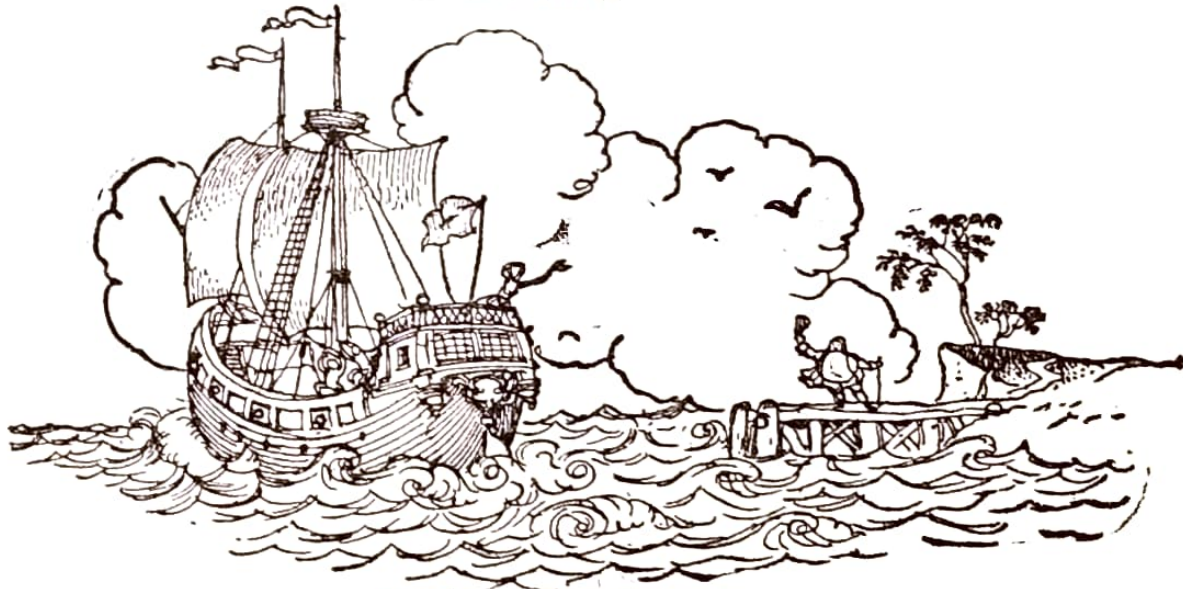
[*The KING hands her a purple handkerchief, and she does cry. So do all the sailors.*]

[*Duet.*]

[*Air—"CARE, THOU CANCKER OF OUR JOYS!"*]

The Princess.

Gladly would I wed you, dear,
But, alas, I am bespoken!
Give me, pray, some tiny token
For to be a souvenir.



THE PRINCESS SAILS AWAY

The King. Keep this pocket-handkerchee,
Purple silk, and rather pleasing,
And when e'er you fall a-sneezing,
Think, my darling, think of me.

The King [*falling on both knees*].

Farewell, dear sempstress! I could not love you better if you were a Princess.

FAT KING MELON

Farewell, dear Mr. Lemon! Though you are only a poor husbandman, you will always be the King of my heart.

[She rolls up the KING'S purple handkerchief and puts it in her pocket (or somewhere). She then turns and enters the ship, which immediately sails away. The Blue Peter is hauled up and hoisted down several times: and the sailors sing a sad sea-chanty.]

[*Air*—"MISSOURI"]

Oh, fare you well, you queen of mothers,
Away, my rolling river!
My heart is yours, but I'm another's.
Ah! Ah! we're bound away
'Cross the wide Missouri!

I love you best, my pride and beauty,
Away, my rolling river!
But what is love, compared with duty?
Ah! Ah! we're bound away,
'Cross the wide Missouri!

SCENE V

[A Room in the Palace of the Princess Caraway.]

[The PRINCESS is with her tiring-women, being tired. GREENGAGE, her principal tiring-woman, is even now adjusting the last hook and eye at the back, with difficulty, for the PRINCESS has now become enormously fat. She is circular, she bulges. At her side is a glass of hot water from which from time to time she sips.]

[Her tiring-women sing a fretful song—as they wrestle with the PRINCESS'S dress—]

[*Air*—"HARES ON THE MOUNTAINS"]

Oh, what can one do with these tiresome Princesses
Who eat too much fruit and grow out of their dresses?
Singing ri-fol-de'dee, cal-al-de-lay—ri-fol-i-dee.

We make her new frocks, but we don't like to charge
her,

For before they are finished she's two sizes larger.
Singing ri-fol-de'dee, cal-al-de-lay—ri-fol-i-dee.

The King calls this morning. We had to be drastic,
We've bought her a dress which is made of elastic.
Singing ri-fol-de'dee, cal-al-de-lay—ri-fol-i-dee.

The Princess [*doubtfully—surveying herself in the glass*].
Do you think the King will like me, Greengage?

Greengage [*obsequious*].
Your Highness, I presume he has eyes.

The Princess [*anxiously*].
You're sure I haven't overdone it?

Greengage. On the contrary, Your Highness, if report is correct,
you are still a little on the slight side to be a perfect
match for King Melon.

The Princess.
Oh dear! Give me the hot water.
[*They do so; and she sips assiduously.*]

The Princess.
And now leave me, for I am bored with you.

Greengage [*curtseying*].
Your Highness is very good.
[*Exit, with tiring-women.*]

FAT KING MELON.

[Left to herself the PRINCESS tip-toes guiltily to a secret drawer, from which she takes a large and familiar purple handkerchief.]

The Princess [*pressing the handkerchief to her lips*].
Ah, would that my dear fat husbandman were coming to see me, instead of this ridiculous King!
[*Sighing*] I will sing a sad song about Love.

[*Air*—"BARBARA ALLEN"]

Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!
Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, de-ar!
Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!
Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, de-ar!

[While she is again pressing the handkerchief to her lips, the door opens and Greengage announces.]

His Majesty King Melon!

[The KING is now in his crown and robes, but, doubtless as a result of his recent exertions, he has become extraordinarily thin.]

The King [*bowing low*].
Your Highness!

The Princess [*curtseying*].
Your Majesty!
[*Music—Stately Dance.*]

The King [*aside*].
Charming! But how horribly fat!

The Princess [*aside*].
Goodness! What a scarecrow! Won't you sit down?
[*They sit down, side by side.*]

The King [*heavily*].

Your Highness, I have come to make a formal request for your hand in marriage [*surveying again the monstrous form beside him; with disgust, aside*].
Pouf! This is impossible! To think that I was once as fat myself!

The Princess [*with her woman's intuition—aside*].

The pig! He does not like me!

The King. But I am a kind man, and after all these years I should not wish you to feel bound to me by your blighted word, if you were not willing.

The Princess [*haughtily*].

It is evident that His Majesty no longer desires the marriage; in which case the Princess is very ready to release him.

The King [*anxiously*].

Pray do not misunderstand me [*at this point his features are suddenly contracted into a frightful expression of pain and apprehension—and after a moment he cries*]. I am going to sneeze. Quick! A handkerchief!

[*The PRINCESS, after a little fumbling, nobly produces and hands to him the romantic purple handkerchief. But the KING is so surprised to see this that he no longer wants to sneeze.*]

The King [*to himself—examining the handkerchief*].

Strange! Yes. These are the Royal Initials! [*To the Princess—laughing*]. It is a curious coincidence, Your Highness, but this is mine! Ha! Some mistake at the laundry, I dare say.

FAT KING MELON

[*The PRINCESS (startled) peers into his face, places her hands on her heart and remarks, aside*] Gracious! Can it be my husbandman? [*She takes another look*] It is! And he doesn't like me any more! [*She begins to cry and holds out her hand for the handkerchief.*]

The King [*embarrassed—rises*].

Pardon me, Your Highness, it has naturally given you pain to bring to an end our long and honourable betrothal. But, believe me, I bear you no ill-will for the decision you have made—none whatever. Consider yourself at liberty. And now I will take my leave. [*bowing*] Your Highness, good-day! [*He turns and walks with dignity away. At the door, however, a thought strikes him and he returns, stands by the weeping woman and holds out his hand. She stops weeping and looks up at him.*]

The King. Pardon me. I think you have my handkerchief.

The Princess [*sadly—giving it to him*].

Have you forgotten the little sempstress to whom you gave this token?

The King [*warmly*].

On the contrary—she is ever in my thoughts!

The Princess [*brokenly—fixing her eyes on his*].

You have forgotten her!

The King [*starting*].

What! Can it be——? But no! For she was as slender as a larch, and you, Princess, if you will forgive my saying so, are not. Alas, I shall never be happy with a fat woman again.



-King Melon & the Princess Caraway-

FAT KING MELON

The Princess [*doing something to her dress*].

I don't know if it will make any difference, Your Majesty, but, the truth is, I have got a pillow in my bozzom. [*And, sure enough, she extracts from her bosom a huge pillow and other padding, and immediately becomes thin again.*]

The King [*delighted and amazed—embraces her*].

My Queen! My Caraway!

The Princess.

You see, dear Melon, I wanted to be fat for your sake, but try as I would, I could not put on flesh. So I thought I would pretend.

The King. Ha! And I have well-nigh killed myself with trying to be thin for your sake. Well, well, this will be a lesson to both of us.

The Princess.

It will be a lesson to me not to consult that quack of a Fairy again—*Oo!*

[*Enter the FAIRY MUMBO.*]

The Fairy Mumbo [*sententiously*].

[*Air—"MY LADY WIND"*]

This lesson all around we see;
The rabbits wish they were not wee;
The elephants would like to be
As tiny as the elves;

But wishing never swelled a chest,
Don't think at all about the rest;
Whate'er you be, to be the best,
Be first of all yourselves.

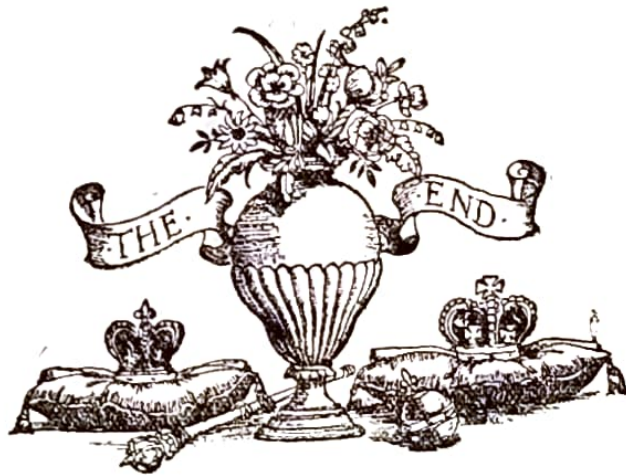
A. P. HERBERT.

[Exit the FAIRY MUMBO hurriedly, as she has to change her clothes.]

The King. Cease this offensive moralising, and let us have a dance! [Clapping his hands.] Ho, servitors!
[The entire Company pour on to the stage and execute a vigorous and attractive dance.]

[Air—"JOHNNY TO THE FAIR"]

(Curtain)





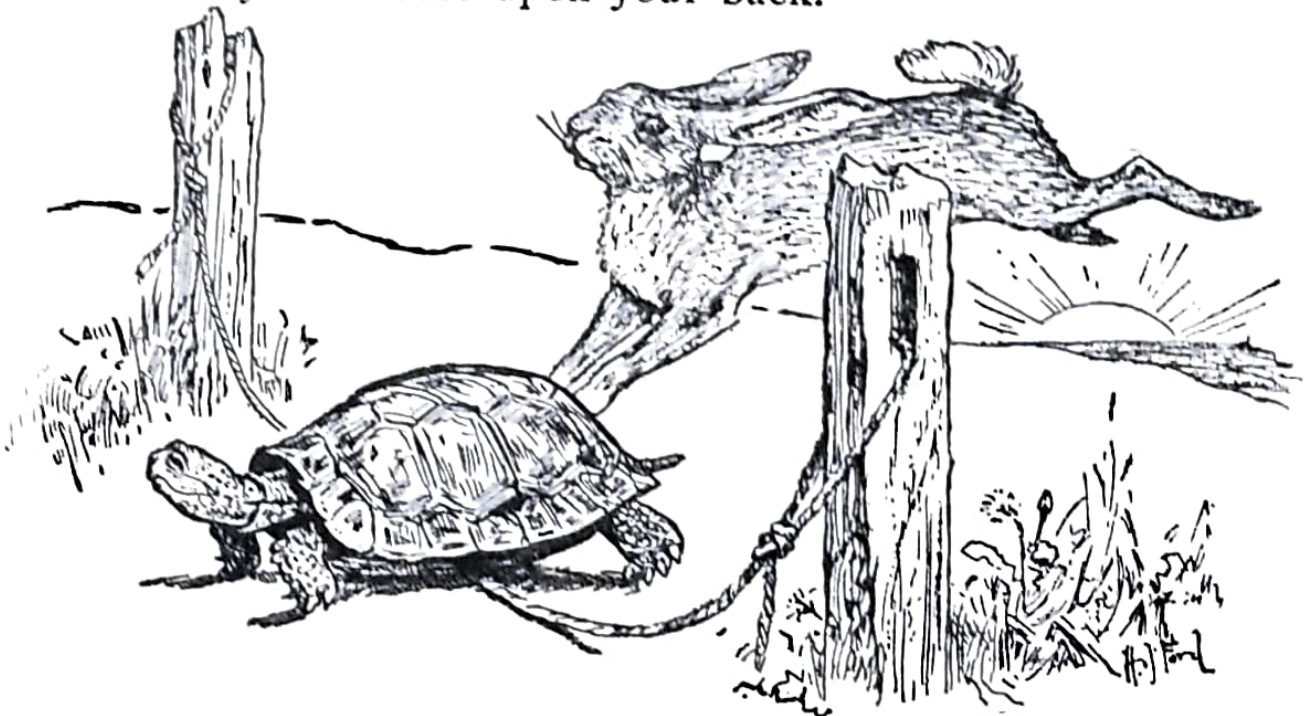
The Hare and the Tortoise

La Fontaine, Fables VI. 10

EDWARD MARSH

Running's no use, unless you start betimes.
The Tortoise and the Hare in these my rhymes
Shall prove the fact. "I wager," said the one,
"That if to yonder goal we run
I beat you." "Me!" jeered Lightfoot in a pet,
"Gossip, you're raving—take four grains
Of hellebore to clear your brains."
"Raving or no, I make the bet."
"Done." By the goal their stakes were set,
(Though what they were's all one to me,
Or who was asked to referee.)
To gain the post, four steps sufficed the Hare
(Those steps of his, when as the hounds draw near
He shoots into the middle of next year
And leaves them plodding in the rear;)

So, having ample time to spare
For a good browse, a nap or two,
Or listening whence the breezes blew,
He let the Tortoise start the race
At her own senatorial pace.
All out to win, away she went,
And, hasting slowly, onward strained:
While he, contemptuous of the cheap event,
And seeing no glory to be gained,
Thought it a point of honour to start late.
He therefore lounged along the straight,
Paused here to nibble, there to doze,
Letting his vagrant fancy rest
On everything except the test,
Till seeing his rival nearly at the post.
Swift as an arrow, off he goes—
But all in vain! The race was lost,
The Tortoise home. "I told you so," said she:
"Speed wins no prizes for the slack.
Me first! I wonder how t'would be
Had you a house upon your back."





The Blot on Peter Pan

J. M. BARRIE

I HAD been asked to keep them quiet for an hour, as it was a wet day. "Well, then, you four shrimps," says I, "once upon a time I was asked by some children to tell them what is the Blot on Peter Pan. Then once upon another time the children of those children asked me to tell them what is the Blot on Peter Pan. Is that clear? Then, this brings us to to-day; but still I don't see why I should tell you what is the Blot, when I have so long kept it secret."

"Because you love us," suggested Billy.

"No, no, Billy," said I, annoyed at being caught out, "there can be no love without respect. Jane, either put your shoe definitely on or take it definitely off. Lay down those matches, Sammy. Sara dear, get off my knee; surely you know by this time that I see through your cheap blandishments. I wish you children had not such leery faces, but I suppose it is your natural expression."

"Peter is rather a leery one," said Sammy.

"You have found that out, have you? Well, when I made him up he was the noble youth I should like you to be, though I have given up hoping. He would have scorned then to brag to that girl whom he took with him to his island, and he was always obedient, polite and good."

"What changed him?"

For further episodes in the life of Nell, see "The Flying Carpet"

"I did, Sara, because I had become a cynic."

"What is a sinsik?"

Here I got in the deadliest thing I have said for years. "A cynic," says I, "is a person who has dealings with children."

"What made you a sinsik?"

"It was a boy called Neil."

"I don't know any Neil," said Biliy.

"You could not have known this boy, he was born so long before you."

"I daresay I could have licked him," said Billy.

"Before you were born?"

"Well, if he had waited."

"You could not have licked him in any case," I said rather hotly. "No one of his age could have stood up to that boy. He was a wonder."

"So you were fond of him?"

"On the contrary, this story is to be the exposure of him."

"Funny way to begin," muttered Billy. "How old was he?"

"At the time he did for me he was seventeen hundred days old."

Sammy whistled.

"That may seem old to the more backward of you," I explained, "but those who have got out of beads into real counting should be able to discover his age with a pencil. If any of you has got out of pencil into ink you should be able to do it with a pen."

Jane was the quickest to work it out (with a pencil), and she found that Neil at that time was the same age as Sara is now, which made Sara simper.

"Before we come, however," I continued, "to the advanced age at which Neil laid me out, there is a reason why I should describe his christening, for if it had been a different kind of christening, P. Pan would be a different kind of boy. In the thirty days or so before you are christened it scarcely matters whether you are good or bad, because in the eyes of the law you are only a bundle without a name, or such name as you have is written thus— —

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

which is easy to write but more difficult to pronounce. A boy called Mr. Macaulay remembered the day he was born, but if you are only ordinarily nippy you get a pass by remembering your christening. Neil could not remember even raising his head at the christening to catch what his name was.

"I remember raising mine," said Billy.

"Neil, however, remembered something of far greater class," I said haughtily; "he remembered seeing the fairy godmothers sitting on the rim of the font."

At this there were exclamations, Billy's being the most offensive.

"I had his word for it," I said.

"But if you had only my word for it——" Billy began and stopped, so we shall never know what he was going to say.

"Did you see them?" asked Jane, speaking like a needle.

"I wasn't there."

"Weren't you invited?"

"Certainly I was invited; I was Neil's godfather. But when the time came round I could not remember what a godfather wears at christenings."

"I wouldn't have let that keep me away," said Sammy.

"You would have risked going into the wrong waistcoat!" I shrieked. "No, I consulted the best books of reference—fairy tales, of course—and I made the extraordinary discovery that all a godfather does at a christening is to stay away. Though these books are full of godmothers there is not a single godfather in them. I offer a shilling for every fairy godfather you can produce."

They made a brief search in the books (during which I had rather an anxious time), but not a godfather could they find.

"So I bit my lips," I told them, "and stayed away. Among the early arrivals at Neil's christening were the clergyman and the parents and— —himself; and then came the usual rabble of fairy godmothers, who took up their places in a circle on the rim of the font."

"So they were really there."

"So Neil did see them."

"Did the clergyman see them?"

"He is so used to them that if they behave he scarcely looks. If they misbehave he wipes them off the rim with his sleeve. But I don't blame you, Billy, for not having seen them at your christening. They cannot be seen clearly now-a-days because of a shocking thing that happens at their own christenings. An ogre who hates them and is called Science——"

"Why does Sams hate them?"

"Sams is a better name for him. He hates them because they prevent children from joining in the forward movement."

"Golly, what's that?"

"It is Progress. The fairies see to it that the newly-born of to-day are not a whit more advanced than their predecessors, and so the latest child is just as likely as the first one (dear little Cain), to ask a poser that has never been asked before. As a result Sams naturally hates the fairies, and he goes to their christenings and tries to rub them out. Don't cry, Sara, he doesn't entirely rub them out; he leaves quite a pretty blur. He also rubs away at their voices, which in consequence have become very faint. If Sara doesn't stop crying I shall stop the story.

"The christening seemed to those present to be quite uneventful. First the clergyman did his dipping and said, 'I name this child Neil, and if anyone objects let him for ever after hold his peace.' Then the fairy godmothers gave their gifts, qualities such as Beauty, each at the same time copying the clergyman (for they are very imitative) and letting fall one drop of water on Neil's face, always aiming (if I know anything about them) at the eye. The people then went home to rejoice with sandwiches, thinking all was well."

"And wasn't it?"

"Alas, as the years revolved (which they do because the earth is round) we discovered that the fairies had made a mess of things.

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

What do fairy godmothers usually do at a christening? You know the stories better than I do."

"All the godmothers are good," Jane said, "except one whom the parents forget to invite, so she comes in a rage and mischiefs the child."

"Exactly, Jane. And it does seem rather dense of parents. One would think that there must have been here and there in the history of the ages a father and mother who learned from the wrecks around them to send an invitation to the bad fairy. Nevertheless, we must admit that she performs in her imperfect way a public function, for if you were entirely good there would be no story in you; and the fairies are so fond of stories that they call giving you one bad quality 'Putting in the story.'

"I daresay the good godmothers meant to do the right thing by Neil, but on their way to the church there was a block, and the bad one overtook them, and was so impertinent to the policeman that he put her in his pocket, meaning to report her later. This flustered the others, and they got separated. Some of them were not heard of again till they were quite old (they get old by night-time) and several swopped qualities with other godmothers and went to the wrong church and gave Neil's gifts to the wrong child. Oddly enough (not at all) his one valuable quality came from his bad-godmother, who had been released with a caution and arrived at the church in a chastened spirit.

"The qualities implanted in Neil by the godmothers who should have been good were:

The Quality of Beauty
The Quality of Showing Off
The Quality of Sharp Practice
The Quality of Copy Cat
The Quality of Dishing his Godfather.

Of course you are all wanting to know what was the bad godmother's gift; but wait, wait. As you will soon hear, P. Pan knows.



"WAS SO IMPERTINENT TO THE POLICEMAN"

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

"We quickly discovered that Beauty was one of Neil's gifts, but we never guessed at the others till he was seventeen hundred. Let us now blow ourselves out for a moment and compare the parents of past and present in relation to their offspring. The parents of long ago had a far easier time than the parents of to-day, for they could hear the godmothers announcing the child's future, and so knew for certain what he would grow into, and that nothing could possibly harm him until, say, he plucked a blue rose, when he would be neatly done for. They had no responsibilities, scarcely needed to send him to school——"

"By gum!" exclaimed Billy.

"——and could smile placidly when he swallowed father's watch or came out in spots. How different is the position of the parents of to-day, who cannot hear the fairies' words, and therefore can only guess at the gifts which have been given. They don't know what quality, good or bad, is to pop out of you presently, but they watch for it unceasingly, ready to water it or to grub it up. Thus children who were certainties in the old times have now become riddles. You, O Sara, though outwardly agreeable if somewhat too round, are still only a riddle to your mother. The one sure thing she knows about you is that there you are. Don't cry, Sara.

"Ah me, we guessed very wrongly about Neil. His parents did not extol him in public, but visitors who were equally reticent were not asked back. We thought his gifts were Sweetness, Modesty, Goodness and Blazing Intelligence. We even believed, Heaven help us, that he had Moral Grandeur. Not being able to find a bad godmother's handiwork in him we concluded that the noble little Neil had bitten it in the bud."

"Like I bit off that wart," volunteered Billy, much interested.

"Don't be nasty, Billy, at a time like this," said Jane, obviously his sister.

I thanked Jane and continued. "To be present at Neil's brushing of his teeth when in his fifteen hundreds was regarded as a treat; he looked at you over the brush as he did it to see whether



“THE USUAL RABBLE OF FAIRY GODMOTHERS.”

*Drawn for The Treasure Ship
by A. H. Watson.*

you were amazed, and you were. On his first day at school he returned home with a prize. He seemed to like me best. *Always to do the same what godfather does* was a motto he invented, and I little understood its fell significance. Is it any wonder that I was deceived? We now come to the fatal seventeen hundredth day, which was also the day of the production of Peter Pan."

A shiversome silence fell upon the room, and Sara was hanging on to my leg. "Give me air!" I cried hoarsely.

They were all very sorry for me. "What a beast of a fellow Neil must have been!" Billy shouted.

"None of that!" says I sternly.

"There you go, sticking up for him again."

"The next one who interrupts unnecessarily," I said, "I shall ask to spell 'unnecessarily.' The original performance of Peter Pan was not given in a theatre, but in a country house, and then only the first two acts, the acts that made so small an impression on you, Billy my boy."

This was a deserved sneer at Billy, who, on being asked in the theatre at the end of the second act how he was enjoying Peter Pan, had replied that what he liked best was tearing up the programme and dropping the bits on people's heads.

"Not so silly as Sara, at any rate," Billy growled, and then it was Sara's turn to look abashed. Before the performance I had taken her to a restaurant and discovered later that she thought the meal was Peter Pan. For such persons do great minds stoop to folly.

"The performers were incompetent little amateurs like yourselves, but owing to his youth and other infirmities Neil was not one of the company, to which indignity he was at first indifferent, but a change came over him when he discovered that acting was a way of showing off. He then demonstrated for a part with unmanly clamour, and one of the mistakes of my life was in not yielding to him. I let him, instead, sit beside me and watch my interesting way of conducting rehearsals. Soon he was betraying an unhealthy interest in the proceedings. He could not read nor write nor spell,

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

though he did know his letters, but after seeing a few rehearsals he could have taken my place as producer had I had the luck to fall ill and be put to bed with a gargle.

“At this time there were thunder and galloping horses and the sound of the sea in *Peter Pan*, though I cut them out after the performance in that house for reasons which will soon be obvious to the dullest of you. I am not sure which of you that is. As soon as Neil saw and heard those marvellous imitations they went straight to his temperature and his eyes glared and he had to be given a powder. Our thunder was made with a sheet of tin, and our galloping horses were two halves of a cocoa-nut rubbed together, and our sea was sago rolled up and down in a tray. Neil daily cut himself on the thunder, bleeding disgustingly, and every night the sago had to be plucked out of him like ticks. His nurse, whom I shall always suspect, despite her denials, of having been his red-handed accomplice in the affair of the seventeen hundredth day, told me that it was no longer an actor that he wanted to be but an author and producer, like his godfather.

“‘In his sleep,’ she said, ‘he writes plays in the air and calls out ‘Speak my words and not your own, dash you!’ just as you do, sir, at rehearsals, and I have to give him the dictionary to hug in bed instead of his golly-wog, because he saw you getting the words out of it. If that innocent could spell.’

“I admitted that spelling is the dramatist’s big difficulty, but could not see how Neil was to get round it.

“‘If he doesn’t it will be the first thing he hasn’t got round,’ she said darkly, so darkly that I should have taken heed.

“Well, ladies and gentlemen, the night of the performance came round. It wasn’t really night, but we helped night along by pulling down the blinds and turning up the lights. All the chairs and sofas and tables and even the mantelpiece were occupied by the public, who had first been filled to repletion with cakes and cyder so as to take away their faculties. I was not present myself.

I was walking up and down in the garden, listening for approving sounds and gnawing my moustache.

“Out there in the garden I could not hear the words, but I could hear the thunder and the galloping of the horses and the lonely lash of the sea; and, my dear Sara, I could hear the extraordinarily sweet music that is made by the ecstatic clapping of hands. I had not expected much enthusiasm so promptly, because, as you all have often pointed out, Peter Pan opens rather quietly.”

“I expect,” says Billy, meaning no offence, “they were cheering the cocoa-nuts. Was it really like horses?”

“Far more like than horses are. Well, the applause was so prodigious that I felt it would be churlish to delay any longer giving the audience a sight of me, so I slipped in among them. What I saw I wish to describe to you in the simplest words and with as little emotion as possible, for, after all, it happened many years ago. Still, hold my hand, Sara.

“The first thing I noticed was that the curtain was down though the play had been in progress for but a dozen minutes. Simultaneously I knew that the air was being rent with cries for ‘Author! Author!’ I must confess that for the moment I presumed my success to be so epoch-making that the prompter, bowing to the popular will, had taken the unusual step of deciding to present me to my kind friends in front in the middle of the first act.

“Speedily I was undeceived. ‘They can’t have come to the end of the first act yet,’ I whispered to a neighbour, who happily did not know me.

“‘It was all in one act,’ he explained, ‘and just lasted a few minutes, but they were glorious minutes. Author! Author!’

“‘Are you speaking about Peter Pan?’ I asked with the strangest sinking.

.. “‘No, no,’ he said, ‘we haven’t come to that yet. This is the curtain-raiser that astonishing little chap has written. Author, Author, Author, Author.’

“Then the curtain went up and Neil came forward in his kilt

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

and made his bow amid a hurricane of idolatry. Made his bow is indeed an inadequate way of expressing it. There was not about him a vestige of the affected modesty that at such a moment so well becomes an author. He carried a toy gun and strutted up and down the stage, leering shockingly and stopping occasionally to join in the applause. I scorn to tell the calls he got. When the audience's hands were benumbed he came on again and again without being called, and in the end he had to be carried off the stage kicking."

"But he hadn't really written it," my listeners exclaimed incredulously; "you said he could neither write nor spell."

"But I said he knew his letters, Billy. A miracle had happened. The boy who was unable to read, write or spell on Monday was a dab at them all by Tuesday. You may say 'Oh, rot!' but it is true. Give me the pencil and I'll show you."

MACCD
MNO
OSAR



"This was a problem in three lines and a glass bowl that I had given to some youthful onlookers at that luckless Monday's rehearsal, and it stumped them as it had stumped me when propounded to me once by a friend. I see it also stumps you, but debase yourselves sufficiently and you will find it reads:

Emma sees de Goldfish
'Em no goldfish,
Oh ess A are Goldfish.

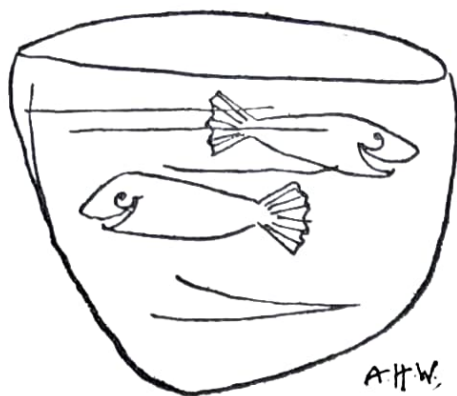
“You follow? I agree with you that ’tis but a tiny joke, and at once it passed out of all our minds save one. That mind was the awful mind of Neil. Though none was in the secret but his Nannie it was suddenly revealed to him how plays are written; quick as a lucky one may jump through a paper hoop and come out on the other side a clown, he had gained access through that friend of mine to a language which he could read, write and spell. With thrills that would have bitten through any thermometer, and bagging that bowl of goldfish, he evolved a powerful drama, and he wrote it in ink; he jumped, Sammy, over Beads and Pencil straight into Ink; indeed, for days, though I suspected naught, his right hand seemed to be encased in a torn black mitten. So far as I can recollect, this is an accurate reproduction of his MS., all of it out of his own noddle except the first three lines:

MACCD
MNO
OSAR
LMECD
LNINOC D
MAYUNOC D
MNO
R
OOOUiiiiI8D
OG
U8MUI
SSS
OUINTK8
YU8MUNTK8YYY
OLNUCIMTNICMNI8M4T
4RTL RDI
4IDINTFS



THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

LOLOLO
NTK88MLRDI
LOLOLO
LMEDI
B4UDISA99
9999
ICD
NICD
SNICD



“Can you stagger your way through it, Jane? Probably not, and yet the audience understood every word, the acting makes such a difference. I heard also that Neil was a superbly severe stage-manager, copying with relish all my ways, including my expletives. He did not act himself (because the other author did not act), but from the wings he worked the thunder and the sea and the horses. The scene was laid in the Peter Pan nursery, thus taking all the novelty out of it. As presented by some of his young friends this was how his play came to life:

[SCENE—a nursery with beds in it. Then a tremendous peal of thunder ending in a clatter as if someone had dropped the sheet of tin. Then the galloping of a horse. Then ENTER EMMA, the horse-woman, without her horse. She examines critically a glass bowl full of water. Then so much galloping that it seems as if the play can make no further progress. Then ENTER SUSAN, ELLEN and TOM. TOM is riding on a dog called Nana.]

Ellen. [Fondly expectant of a similar treat for herself.]
Emma sees de Goldfish.

Susan. [Sneering.] 'Em no Goldfish.

Ellen. Oh, ess A are Goldfish.

- Tom. [Riding forward] Lemme see de Goldfish.
- Emma. [Breaking it to them sadly] Ellen, I no see de Goldfish.
- Susan. [Fearing the worst] Emma, why you no see de Goldfish?
- Emma. [Indicating two breadcrumbs which are the sole occupants of the water] 'Em no Goldfish.
- Tom. [A defender of the weak] Are Goldfish.

[There is more thunder, a horse is heard approaching and AUNT KATE ENTERS with a guilty conscience. One glance around shows her that they are on her track. With bowed head, for she is not wholly bad, she makes her dreadful confession.]



- Aunt Kate. Oh, oh, oh, you four little ones, I ate de Goldfish.
[They draw away from her.]
- Tom. [Expressing the general feeling.] Oh, gee.
- Emma. [Gasping like a Goldfish] You ate 'em, you big one?

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

Aunt Kate. [Covering her face] Ess, ess, ess.

Susan. Oh, you bad one, Auntie Kate.

Ellen. [Giving her a last chance] Why you ate 'em, you Auntie Kate, why, why, why?

Aunt Kate. [Broken] Oh, Ellen, you see I empty 'n I see 'em'n I 'ate 'em for tea.



OH OH OH,
YOU FOUR LITTLE
ONES, I ATE DE
GOLD-FISH.

Aunt Kate. [Waiting patiently for these noises to cease] 'Fore I die 'ant to confess.

[At this dark moment a horse's hoofs are heard.
ENTER A DOCTOR.]

Tom. [With a withering cry]
For 'er tea.
[Sternly] Le
'er die.

[Terrific
thunder here
to intimate
that sentence
has been pro-
nounced, fol-
lowed by the
break of the
surf on some
lonely shore
to express the
helplessness
of the gold-
fish.]

- Doctor. [Taking in the situation at a glance] Hello, hello, hello.
Emma. [Coldly] Auntie Kate ate 'em. Le 'er die.
Doctor. [A man of few words] Hello, hello, hello.
Aunt Kate. [Getting into the papers at last] Lemme die.
Doctor. [Putting his stethoscope to the erring woman's mouth and pushing her head over the bowl] Before you die, say 99.
Aunt Kate. [Without much hope] 99, 99.
[A wondrous thing happens: the goldfish swim down the stethoscope into the bowl.]



- Emma. I see de goldfish
Ellen. 'n I see de goldfish.
Tom. Ess, 'n I see de goldfish.

[All are again riotously happy, but none perhaps quite so happy as the goldfish. The DOCTOR marries AUNT KATE. The curtain falls and rises, with an enlarged copy of NEIL'S MS. pinned to it. The audience spell it out and learn how the play was written. The enthusiasm is now louder than the thunder.]

"In the meantime, of course, Billy, my play had gone to pot."
"Didn't they act it?" he asked with cheerful brutality.

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

"Oh yes, they played it, and it was received with mild approval. What they seemed to admire far more, however, was Neil's cleverness in priggish so much from me. At every fresh proof of this they guffawed crudely."

"Did you wallop him?" asked Billy, whose thoughts frequently run in this direction.



"Ah me, I was deprived of that gratification, because, you see, Neil was unconscious of evil-doing, he had kept his play a secret from me in order to give me a lovely surprise, and he came running to me for praise. *Always to do the same what godfather does*, you remember. I was unfortunately his favourite, and he was so confident of my praise, whoever else might fail him. One may rob or kill, Billy my boy, and yet not be so hard-hearted as to destroy the confidence of a child."

"You don't mean to say you praised him?"

"I had to be civil to him."

"It looks to me as if instead of hating him you were just beastly fond of him."

"That's right, Billy," says I, "strike a man while he's down. No doubt I should have taken some of the stuffing out of Neil next day, but another misfortune happened then; mumps or measles, or some other trick of childhood jumped out of the box, and I had to rush him away from infection."

"Couldn't his father and mother have took him?" asked Jane, who has sometimes a tendency to pertness.

J. M. BARRIE

"You don't any of you understand the law about godfathers," I explained with infinite patience. "I took Neil to a country inn. Of course I would not have taken him if I hadn't thought I could trust to his honour."

"What was he up to this time?" enquired Billy, licking his lips.

"He was so fond," I said, "of his thunder and horses and hoary ocean that he would not be parted from them, and, to my horror, I found them in his box when I unpacked at the inn. I was in such a fury that I nearly threw them into the road."

"Why didn't you?"

"That foolish question just shows, Billy, how little thought you have given to the position of a gentleman left alone in a country inn, with a boy who refuses to undress without the accompaniment of thunder and the galloping of horses. I couldn't undress him; his garments were so unexpected. What was worse, nothing could lull him to sleep but the break of waves upon some desolate shore. I had to use a drawer from the wardrobe to roll the sago in, and a heavy drawer it was. Once at breakfast in the inn I heard a man at the next table telling a lady that, though we were so far inland, he had distinctly heard the sound of the sea from his bedroom. I was afraid there might be an inquiry, so of nights, when Neil was at last asleep, I spent æons of time searching the cracks in the drawer for sago, before I could get to work on Peter Pan."

"What were you doing to Peter?"

"In the burglarious silence I was altering him, making him more like Neil."

"Gosh."

"You may well use that terrible word, Billy; but it was evident that Neil was the kind of boy the public wants. I see that the weather has cleared, so I now release you, begging you to reflect at your leisure on the not untragic picture of an author who wanted to do better but had to give in to circumstances. To save the life

THE BLOT ON PETER PAN

of my young hero I was compelled to abstract the humility from him and thus make room for the bad fairy's gift with which Neil had witched humanity. The boy who doesn't have it might as well be a man."

"Oh, do tell us what it is!" they cried, knowing quite well, but wondering whether an adult had found out.

"Of course it is Cockiness," I answered. "One must admit, Billy (however reluctantly), that there is to children a rapture in being cocky which is what keeps this old world smiling."

They leered.

"And is cockiness the Blot on Peter Pan?" asks Billy.

"Alas," said I.

"But you gave it to him. Hello, are you Peter's bad fairy?"

I hung my head. Sara at any rate felt for me.

"And when you were blotting Peter was Neil lying asleep in his bed?" she enquired.

"Sometimes in his bed, Sara, and sometimes in the drawer, dreaming children's plays that were far beyond my compass."

They thanked me primly for my story, as instructed by their wretched mothers, and then all scooted away into the open except Sara. Sara is the very last baggage I shall bother with.

"Is it all true?" she asked.

"No, it is not all true, Sara, but some of it, here and there."

"Do you love me?"

"Yes, Sara."

"But you love Neil more, don't you?"

"A hundred thousand million times more, Sara."

"Is he a man now?"

"No, he is not a man."

"Where is he?"

"Be off with you into the sunshine, Sara, and bring me some butter-cups at one o'clock. I bet you'll forget."

"I bet I won't."

She very nearly forgot, but she ran back for them.

The Lemon Sponge

DENIS MACKAIL

IF you ask most grown-up people about the Kingdom of Semolina, they will either say: "Rubbish! There's no such place," or else they will tell you to run upstairs and see if they left their handkerchief on the little table outside the bathroom—which comes to pretty much the same thing.

But if you ask me, you will get a different kind of answer altogether. "Certainly, my little dear," I shall reply (with a delightful smile). "Not only have I heard of the Kingdom of Semolina; not only do I know exactly where it was and precisely what it looked like; but I can also tell you the whole story of King Curius the Fourteenth and the Lemon Sponge."

You then sit down on the footstool in front of the fireplace, and—with another delightful smile—I go ahead.

The Kingdom of Semolina (I say) was in the very middle of the Great Desert. It was situated on a large, high rock with very steep sides; and while the Great Desert consisted of nothing but sand, wild animals, palm trees and savage tribes, Semolina itself was full of fine houses, beautiful gardens, birds of all colours and interesting works of art. In the Great Desert the savage tribes lived entirely on dry biscuits and soda-water—and had great difficulty in getting enough of even them; but the Semolinians had everything they wanted of every description, and it is an absolute

THE LEMON SPONGE

fact that the fountains in the square outside the Palace ran all day long with ginger-beer.

Naturally the savage tribes were full of envy for their fortunate neighbours; but though they marched round and round the bottom of the large rock, pulling the most dreadful faces, its sides were far too steep for them to climb. And though it is true that there were two narrow pathways leading down to the Great Desert, they each had a door at the top covered with rusty iron spikes; and inside each door was a sentry, who had only to push the first savage who came up the narrow pathway with the butt-end of his pike for the savage to fall all the way down to the bottom again—when he would be very lucky if he didn't break his neck.

So that all that the kings of Semolina had to do was to make certain that the sentries were well-paid and in good health; and they could then give themselves up to feasting and gaiety, to singing, dancing and Dumb Crambo, without the slightest fear that their savage foes would ever get any nearer than the doors covered with rusty iron spikes. You quite see that, don't you?

But the years went by, and the Semolinians became richer and more comfortable, and by the time that King Curius the Fourteenth came to the throne, I'm afraid he hardly thought about those devoted sentries at all. There were only six of them altogether, so that it would have been very little trouble to give them a few medals every now and then, or new uniforms. But King Curius did neither. He was always forgetting to pay them, too, and if the sentries hadn't dreaded the savage tribes quite as much as anyone else did, they might very well have deserted their posts. You can't expect soldiers to spend eight hours in a sentry-box for nothing. Can you?

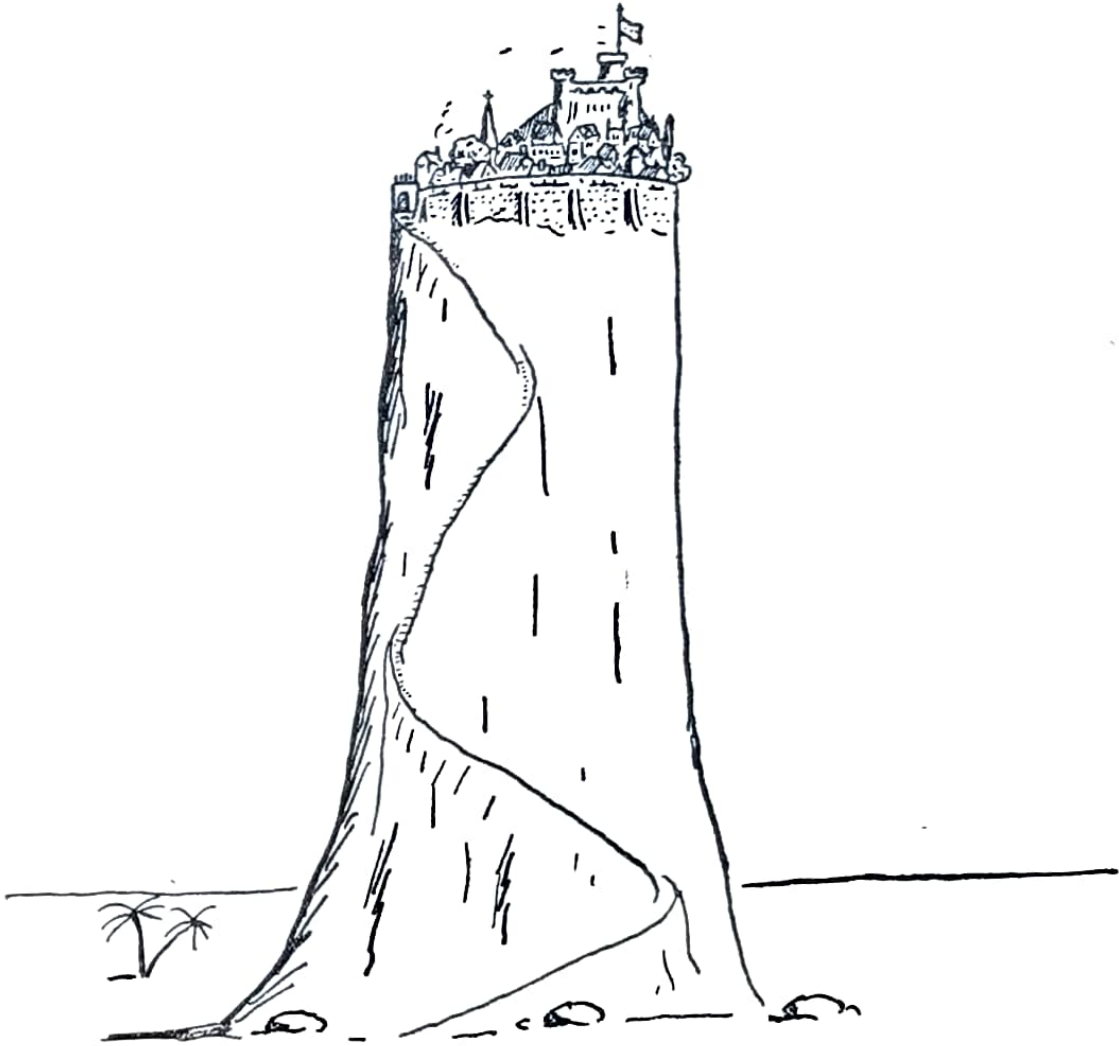
Well, one day the Queen of Semolina came into King Curius's study, where he was sitting with his feet up on the fender, reading an illustrated magazine, and he rolled his head round on the back of his big armchair, and he said: "Hullo!"

"A most annoying thing has happened," said the Queen.

"Has it?" said King Curius the Fourteenth.

"Yes," said the Queen. "The cook has given me notice."

"Again?" said King Curius the Fourteenth. "Why, that makes eleven since Christmas. Or is it twelve?"



"It's fifteen," said her Majesty. "And the fact is that your subjects are getting so rich and comfortable that they won't *be* cooks any longer. It's maddening," said her Majesty. "That's what it is."

THE LEMON SPONGE

"They're your subjects too," said King Curius the Fourteenth. And at that moment, and before the Queen could think of a good answer, somebody knocked on the outside of the study door.

"Come in!" shouted King Curius.

And in came one of the six sentries, whose name was Alfred Jagers, and saluted first the King and then the Queen.

"What's the matter, Jagers?" asked his Majesty.

"I've come for my pay, sire," said Jagers, saluting again.

"Can't you see I'm busy?" said his Majesty, looking displeased. "Here's the Queen worrying me because she can't find a cook, and now you start bothering me about your pay. Can't I have any peace at all?"

"Sire," said Alfred Jagers, continuing to salute, "my old mother is a good, plain cook. I think I could persuade her to go back into service, if only your Majesty would give me my last six weeks' pay."

King Curius didn't like the idea of bargaining with one of his soldiers, but the Queen was simply delighted.

"Here is your pay, Jagers," she said, taking a purse from her husband's pocket and handing it to the sentry. "Please ask your old mother to come and see me at once."

"Certainly, ma'am," said the honest Jagers. And going to the study window, he leant out, put two of his fingers into his mouth, and whistled in a piercing manner. In a couple of minutes there was another knock on the outside of the study door, and then the door opened, and in came a stout, elderly woman in a little black bonnet. She curtsied to the King and she curtsied to the Queen, and then her son told her what had been arranged, and she said that she was only a plain cook, but she was sure she'd do her best.

"Splendid!" said the Queen, graciously. "I will send the royal trolley round for your tin box at once, and then I'll show you your bedroom, and after that I hope you will cook the royal

luncheon. Come along, Mrs. Jagers," said the Queen. "This way."

So off they went together, and Alfred Jagers went back to the barracks, and King Curius the Fourteenth went on reading his illustrated magazine, and it really looked as if for once in a way everybody were going to be satisfied. Everybody, that is to say, except those savage tribes down below in the Great Desert.

Mrs. Jagers sent up the most excellent veal cutlets and castle puddings for the royal luncheon, and the King ate three of each and said that he had never enjoyed a meal more in his life. Yet when he came down to dinner that evening, and found that there were more veal cutlets and more castle puddings, somehow or other he didn't seem quite so much pleased. And when after three or four more days, Mrs. Jagers still continued to send up nothing but veal cutlets and castle puddings, he went so far as to complain to his royal partner.

"It isn't my fault," said the Queen. "I've written all sorts of other things down on the royal slate."

"It almost looks," said King Curius, "as though Mrs. Jagers were unable to read."

"I will speak to her in the morning," said the Queen. "I can't do more than that."

"Of course you can't," said King Curius the Fourteenth, putting his table-napkin back in its ring, and getting up from the royal dinner-table. "Only please understand that if I see veal cutlets and castle puddings again, it will probably be the end of my glorious reign."

So then the royal couple embraced each other, and went out to feed the parrots and peacocks in the Palace garden. And after they'd done this, they threw the empty paper-bags over the garden wall, so that they fell down into the Great Desert; and the savage tribes said: "Lo and behold, the Semolinians are throwing empty paper-bags at us, and it is a great deal more than we can stand."

THE LEMON SPONGE

And pulling more dreadful faces than ever, they performed a most terrible war-dance—which made them all feel very hot and tired, but didn't otherwise have any particular effect.

Well, the next day the Queen came into the King's study, where he was sitting with his foot up on the fender, reading an illustrated magazine, and he rolled his head round on the back of his big armchair, and he said: "Hullo!"

"A still more annoying thing has happened," said the Queen.

"Has it?" said King Curius the Fourteenth.

"Yes," said the Queen. "I've spoken to Mrs. Jagers, and she says that she has never learnt how to cook anything but veal cutlets and castle puddings, and she's afraid she never will."

"Rubbish!" said King Curius the Fourteenth. "What are the cookery books for?"

"Mrs. Jagers says she doesn't believe in cookery books," said the Queen.

"That's ridiculous," said his Majesty. And he went over to the shelf in the corner of his study and took down a volume called *A Thousand and One Tasty Dishes*, and he opened it, and he thumped the page with his royal hand.

"Look here," he said. "Here are full particulars for making a Lemon Sponge. Surely Mrs. Jagers ought to be able to manage a simple thing like that."

The Queen looked a bit doubtful.

"Very well," said his Majesty. "I'll go down to the kitchen myself, and I'll show this page to Mrs. Jagers, and you'll see what happens when a Man takes a little trouble."

So he went down to the kitchen, and he had a long talk with Mrs. Jagers, and finally she said that although she never believed in cookery books, she didn't mind obliging people when they spoke to her politely. And the King went back to the study, and told the Queen that he'd settled it all beautifully, and they embraced

each other, and went out to feed the ducks and drakes on the royal pond.

Well, this was about eleven o'clock in the morning, and at the same time Alfred Jagers was standing at his post just inside one of the two doors covered with rusty iron spikes. And as he stood there, it suddenly came into his mind that it was nearly a week since he had seen his old mother, and exactly the same period since he had last tasted his favourite meal of veal cutlets and castle puddings.

"Oh, why," said Alfred Jagers to himself, "did I ever allow my old mother to go back into service, when she gave me such delicious dinners at her humble home? How am I to go on living on the wretched fare of a common soldier? Oh, woe is me," said Alfred Jagers to himself, "and black was the day on which I was born."

And after he had gone on like this for some time, I am sorry to say that he worked himself up into such a state that he forgot all about his duty to Semolina, and all about the savage tribes, and he left his pike in the corner of his sentry-box, and he rushed off to the Palace, thinking of absolutely nothing at all but his old mother and veal cutlets and castle puddings.

He ran and he ran, and presently he ran into the royal kitchen, and there was Mrs. Jagers with her sleeves rolled up, surrounded by piles of lemons and masses of eggs, and doing everything in her power to make a Lemon Sponge. Half the kitchen-table was covered with horrid little sticky messes, which were all that she had succeeded in making so far, and Mrs. Jagers was very red in the face. And when she saw her son come running in like that, she flung down her egg-whisk and burst into tears.

"Oh, Alfred, Alfred," she said. "I've tried and I've tried, but I c-c-can't make this Lemon Sponge. Boo-hoo-hoo!"

"There, there," said Alfred Jagers, placing his rugged hand

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on her stout shoulder. "Don't worry, old lady; I've come to fetch you back to your humble home."

"No, no," said Mrs. Jagers. "I can't leave without giving notice, and I *must* make this Lemon Sponge."

"Then dry your eyes," said Alfred Jagers, giving her a loving pat that took all her breath away; "and I will help you."

So they began all over again, and Alfred Jagers read the directions, very slowly, out of the cookery book, and his old mother did everything that he said. And then she took the largest egg-whisk in the royal kitchen, and she whisked and she whisked and she whisked, and——

But wait a minute. What about those savage tribes down below in the Great Desert?

Alas, alas! They had slept off the effects of their terrible war-dance by now, they had woken up, they had armed themselves to the teeth, and they were creeping up one of the narrow pathways, with their socks outside their boots so that they shouldn't be heard; and one and all they were determined to make the Semolinians pay dearly for having thrown those empty paper-bags at them, or to perish in the attempt.

Up and up they crept, and presently the first savage reached the outside of the door covered with rusty iron spikes, and very slowly he climbed on the next one's shoulders and looked over the top.

And there he saw an empty sentry-box with a pike leaning up in the corner; and a dreadful smile spread over his horrible features.

"Wurra-wurra-gal!" he whispered to the men behind him, and one of them passed up a thick eiderdown quilt, and the first savage flung it over the rusty iron spikes, and so climbed over them without even being scratched. And he opened the door from the inside, and all the others came rushing in, uttering the most fiendish yells and waving their swords in the air and firing off their guns and singing their national anthem in different keys.

What could the unfortunate Semolinians do? They had no weapons, and their army consisted of but six men, of whom two were asleep in the barracks, two were walking with friends in the park, one was guarding the other door covered with rusty iron spikes, and the last—the honest but impulsive Alfred—was reading aloud out of a cookery book in the royal kitchen.

The entire population turned and ran. They ran like hares—including even the King and Queen and the two soldiers who had been asleep in the barracks—until they came to the second door covered with rusty iron spikes; and they wrenched it open, and they poured down the other narrow pathway, tripping and stumbling and falling head over heels; and as the last of them fled, the savages arrived hot on their heels, and slammed the door after them with a sound that could be heard miles and miles away.

“Bolla-bolla wong!” shouted the invaders, throwing their hats up in the air and dancing for joy. “No more dry biscuits and soda-water! Semolina is ours at last, and the proud King Curius the Fourteenth is conquered and disgraced. Hoki-poki hullabaloo!”

And with these frightful words they rushed off to sack the royal Palace.

Meanwhile, totally unaware of the disaster which had overwhelmed their native land, Alfred and Mrs. Jagers had remained in the royal kitchen; the former reading encouragingly from the book called *A Thousand and One Tasty Dishes*, and the latter whisking and whisking and whisking with the largest of the royal egg-whisks.

And as Mrs. Jagers continued to whisk, quite suddenly the sticky mess which she was whisking began to turn into a pale yellow froth.

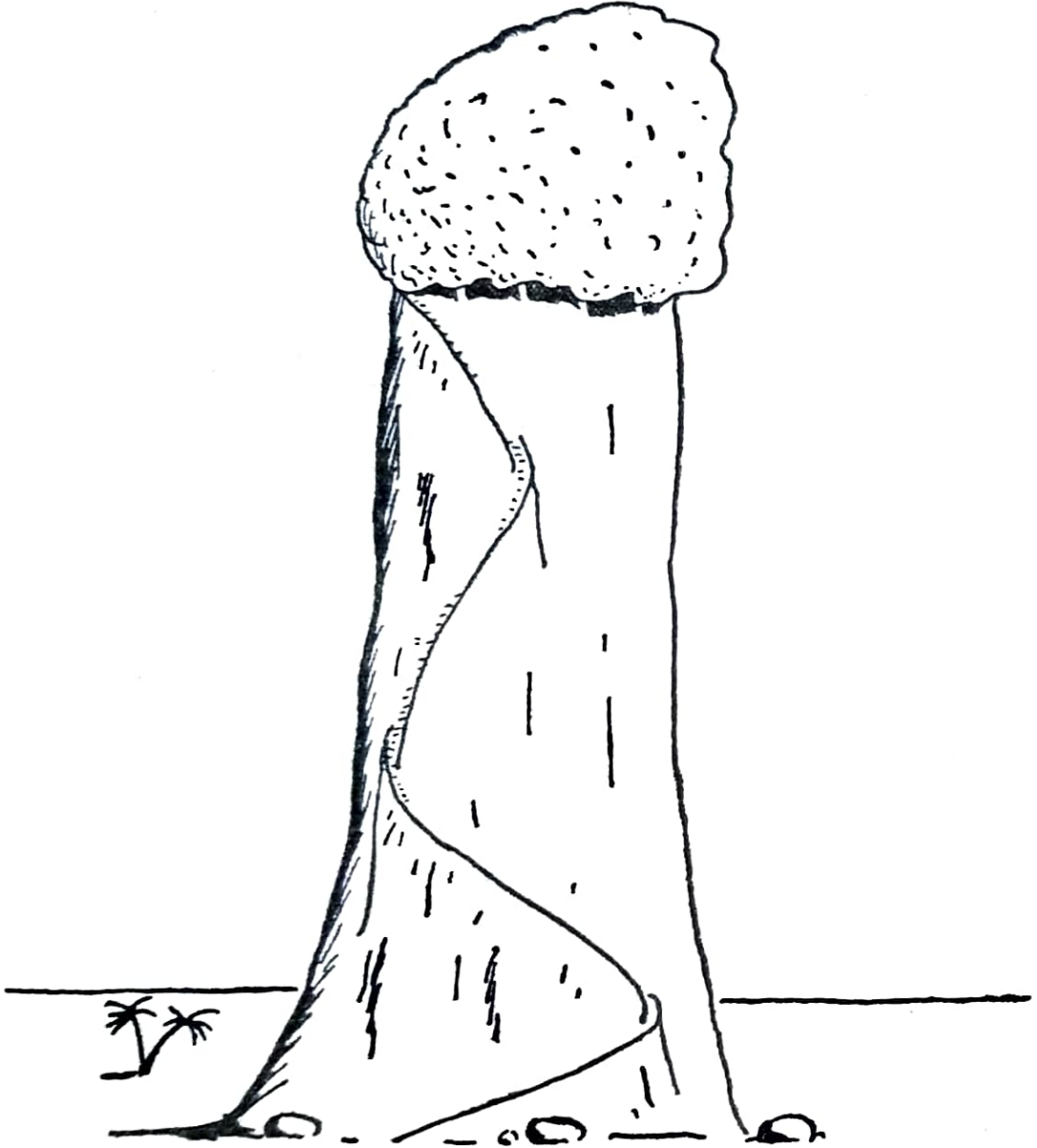
“Look!” she cried, in triumph. “It’s coming, Alfred! Look at my Lemon Sponge!”

“Go it!” shouted Alfred Jagers, excitedly. And seizing up

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a second egg-whisk, he also started whisking and whisking as hard as ever he could.

And whether it was that this was the first time in history that two people had ever whisked at one Lemon Sponge, or whether



it was that Mrs. Jagers had put in too many eggs, I cannot tell you. But I do know that quite suddenly the pale yellow froth started bubbling over the edge of the bowl; and then it started

bubbling over the edge of the table; and then it started bubbling over the floor; and it bubbled and it bubbled, and it rose and it rose, and Alfred and his old mother went on whisking and whisking; and presently it was up to their waists. And then it started bubbling out of the windows.

And so, as the savage warriors came screaming and yelling and whirling up towards the Palace, they were met by a torrent or stream of Lemon Sponge. They slashed at it with their swords and shot at it with their guns, but it just went on bubbling. They plunged into it, and came out again, coughing and spluttering and wiping their eyes. They ran round it, but wherever they ran, the Lemon Sponge had always got there first.

Back and back they were forced, pushing and struggling and hanging on to the lamp-posts until they were swept away; and finally their courage left them. They bolted down the narrow pathway up which they had just crept, with flakes of Lemon Sponge falling on them all the time; they jumped on to their camels; and they rode right over the horizon, and never stopped riding for forty days and forty nights, by which time they had ridden so far that they couldn't have found the way back again even if they had wanted to.

That was the last that was ever heard of them, and as for the Kingdom of Semolina it was just one vast mass of Lemon Sponge from end to end and from top to bottom, from east to west and from north to south. Just a wobbling, bubbling heap of pale yellow froth, without so much as a chimney-pot or a church steeple sticking out of it.

But presently it stopped bubbling, and King Curius the Fourteenth led his people up out of the Great Desert again, and they all set to and they dug and they dug, and they cut and they carved, and at the end of forty days and forty nights they had cleared all the Lemon Sponge away, and dropped it over the rock where it gradually melted in the heat of the sun. And there, in

THE LEMON SPONGE

the royal kitchen, they found Alfred and his old mother, who had scraped out a little cave for themselves, and were quite well and happy, and were living on veal cutlets and castle puddings.

And this wasn't all that happened. For after the anxiety that they had been through, and all the digging that they had done, King Curius the Fourteenth and his subjects turned over a new leaf. He quite gave up reading illustrated magazines before lunch, and they all became hard-working and virtuous again, and the Queen never had any more difficulty in finding a cook.

In fact, they all became so good that nothing really interesting ever happened in the Kingdom again. And that was why, when about twenty thousand years later another cook in another country invented the dullest milk-pudding that had ever been made, she instantly decided to call it "Semolina," by which name it is still known and detested.

And that, my little dear, is the end.

Ann's Aunt and the Bear

WALTER DE LA MARE

IT filled Ann's Aunt Maria with rage
To see a wild thing in a cage.
At sight of creature, winged or furred,
Confined by bars, by chains deterred
She'd groan for pity: in a word—
"Pore thing," she'd cry, "you pore, *pore* thing!"
At which the dainty dear would sing
A little soft sad song; or cheep;
Or turn a curious eye to peep
At her great face, and brow, and bonnet—
Like a cathedral perched upon it.
'Twas just her kindly, friendly humour.
She'd grieve as much o'er lion or puma,
And gloat upon their keepers when
They chanced their heads within its den.
"Pore thing," she'd mutter, not "Poor Men."

One afternoon her aunt and Ann
(Who'd gone to see a nursery-man
About a leaky watering-can)
As they were moving gently home
On a most horrid scene did come:
Two foreigners (with longish hair)
Were leading on a chain a Bear,

ANN'S AUNT AND THE BEAR

A bushy, bright-eyed, thirsty beast
Who had trudged a score of miles at least
In heat and dust—at least a score
And danced perhaps as many more:
Yes, danced—and growled—and danced again



Whene'er these long-haired foreign men
Should in their cruelty think proper
To try and earn an English copper,
Or tuppence, even, if any dunce
Should want the dance danced more than once.

Yes, there, beneath a Chestnut's shade,
This parched-up beast was being made
To caper and to growl a noise
To please a pack of errand boys;
It danced and gruffed, it breathed vast sighs,
Its half-bald head a maze of flies;
Its claws went tic-tac in the dust
And still it danced, for dance it must;
While the two Frogs in hope of gain
Stood grinning by and tweaked its chain.

When Ann, and Ann's aunt, Aunt Maria
Saw this, Ann's aunt's eyes flashed with fire;
Sharp tears in them the sight did bring:
She said, "Pore thing! you pore, pore thing!"
And then she raised a stout umbrella
And *turned* upon the nearest fellow.
French or Italian, Greek or Dutch,
She simply couldn't thwack too much,
Sound thumping thumps she laid full many on,
Then up and smote his dazed companion.

And there you see kind Aunt Mari',
Bugled cathedral all awry,
And plump cheek flushed with her exertions
Against these parasitic Persians:
While Ann, now lost in rapture, stands
Clapping her little mittened hands,
And butcher's, baker's, grocer's boy
Yell out their raucous, barbarous joy.

Alack, what evil chance we find!
Her wrath made Aunt Maria blind.
In compassing his tyrant's ruin
She didn't notice their poor Bruin,

ANN'S AUNT AND THE BEAR

Who, having wriggled off his muzzle,
Was shuffling in to join the tussle,
And, rather giddy in the head
In gratitude for what she had said
And done to that cruel Bruin-baster,
Went sidling up, and then—embraced her.

It's sad indeed to have to tell
What then this kind, kind soul befell,



Ann's Aunt Maria. So sharp B's squeeze
Ann hadn't time to whisper, "Please,
You're cuddling my dear aunt so close
You *must* be treading on her toes:
I cannot even see her nose!"
And when at length the Bear had shown
That gratitude goes to the bone,
Nothing the caitiffs then could do
Would bring his cold protectress to.

WALTER DE LA MARE

They could but rub their hands. They said,
"We 'ave ze fear, ze lady's dead!
She do not breathe nor any ting:
Pore zing, pore zing, ze pore, *pore* zing."

'Tis said, all clouds are silver-lined:
This one small fact, then, bear in mind,
Had quite, quite base been either man,
They might have fed the bear on Ann.



Life at St. Austin's was rendered somewhat hollow and burdensome for Pillingshot by the fact that he fagged for Scott. Not that Scott was the Beetle-Browed Bully in any way. Far from it. He showed a kindly interest in Pillingshot's welfare, and sometimes even did his Latin verses for him. But the noblest natures have flaws, and Scott's was no exception. He was by way of being a humorist, and Pillingshot, with his rather serious outlook on life, was puzzled and inconvenienced by this.

It was through this defect in Scott's character that Pillingshot first became a detective. He was toasting muffins at the study fire one evening, while Scott, seated on two chairs and five cushions, read *Sherlock Holmes*, when the Prefect laid down his book and fixed him with an earnest eye.

"Do you know, Pillingshot," he said, "you've got a bright, intelligent face. I shouldn't wonder if you weren't rather clever. Why do you hide your light under a bushel?"

Pillingshot grunted.

"We must find some way of advertising you. Why don't you go in for a Junior Scholarship?"

"Too old," said Pillingshot with satisfaction.

"Senior, then?"

"Too young."

"I believe by sitting up all night and swotting——"

"Here, I say!" said Pillingshot, alarmed.

"You've got no enterprise," said Scott sadly. "What are those? Muffins? Well, well, I suppose I had better try and peck a bit."

He ate four in rapid succession, and resumed his scrutiny of Pillingshot's countenance.

"The great thing," he said, "is to find out your special line. Till then we are working in the dark. Perhaps it's music? Singing? Sing me a bar or two."

Pillingshot wriggled uncomfortably.

"Left your music at home?" said Scott. "Never mind, then. Perhaps it's all for the best. What are those? Still muffins? Hand me another. After all, one must keep one's strength up. You can have one if you like."

Pillingshot's face brightened. He became more affable. He chatted.

"There's rather a row on downstairs," he said. "In the junior day-room."

"There always is," said Scott. "If it grows too loud I shall get in amongst them with a swagger-stick. I attribute half my success at bringing off late-cuts to the practice I have had in the junior day-room. It keeps the wrist supple."

"I don't mean that sort of row. It's about Evans."

"What about Evans?"

"He's lost a sovereign."

"Silly young ass."

Pillingshot furtively helped himself to another muffin.

"He thinks someone's taken it," he said.

"What! Stolen it?"

Pillingshot nodded.

"What makes him think that?"

"He doesn't see how else it could have gone."

PILLINGSHOT, DETECTIVE

"Oh, I don't—By Jove!"

Scott sat up with some excitement.

"I've got it," he said. "I knew we should hit on it sooner or later. Here's a field for your genius. You shall be a detective. Pillingshot, I hand this case over to you. I employ you."

Pillingshot gaped.

"I feel certain that's your line. I've often noticed you walking over to school, looking exactly like a blood-hound. Get to work. As a start you'd better fetch Evans up here and question him."

"But, look here——"

"Buck up, man! Buck up! Don't you know that every moment is precious."

Evans, a small, stout youth, was not disposed to be reticent. The gist of his rambling statement was as follows. Rich uncle. Impecunious nephew. Visit of former to latter. Handsome tip, one sovereign. Impecunious nephew pouches sovereign, and it vanishes.

"And I call it beastly rot," concluded Evans volubly. "And if I could find the cad who's pinched it, I'd jolly well——"

"Less of it," said Scott. "Now, then, Pillingshot, I'll begin this thing, just to start you off. What makes you think the quid has been stolen, Evans?"

"Because I jolly well know it has."

"What you jolly well know isn't evidence. We must thresh this thing out. To begin with, where did you last see it?"

"When I put it in my pocket."

"Good! Make a note of that, Pillingshot. Where's your note-book? Not got one? Here you are, then. You can tear out the first few pages, the ones I've written on. Ready? Carry on, Evans. When?"

"When what?"

"When did you put it in your pocket?"

"Yesterday afternoon."

"What time?"

"About five."

"Same pair of bags you're wearing now?"

"No, my cricket-bags. I was playing at the nets when my uncle came."

"Ah! Cricket bags. Put it down, Pillingshot. That's a clue. Work on it. Where are they?"

"They've gone to the wash."

"About time, too. I noticed them. How do you know the quid didn't go to the wash as well?"

"I turned both the pockets inside out."

"Any hole in the pocket?"

"No."

"Well, when did you take off the bags? Did you sleep in them?"

"I wore 'em till bedtime, and then shoved them on a chair by the side of the bed. It wasn't till next morning that I remembered the quid was in them——"

"But it wasn't," objected Scott.

"I thought it was. It ought to have been."

"He thought it was. That's a clue, young Pillingshot. Work on it. Well?"

"Well, when I went to take the quid out of my cricket-bags it wasn't there."

"What time was that?"

"Half-past seven this morning."

"What time did you go to bed?"

"Ten."

"Then the theft occurred between the hours of ten and seven-thirty. Mind you, I'm giving you a jolly good leg-up, young Pillingshot. But as it's your first case I don't mind. That'll be all from you, Evans. Pop off."

Evans disappeared. Scott turned to the detective.

PILLINGSHOT, DETECTIVE

"Well, young Pillingshot," he said, "what do you make of it?"

"I don't know."

"What steps do you propose to take?"

"I don't know."

"You're a lot of use, aren't you? As a start, you'd better examine the scene of the robbery, I should say."

Pillingshot reluctantly left the room.

"Well?" said Scott, when he returned. "Any clues?"

"No."

"You thoroughly examined the scene of the robbery?"

"I looked under the bed."

"Under the bed?" What's the good of that? Did you go over every inch of the strip of carpet leading to the chair with a magnifying glass?"

"Hadn't got a magnifying glass."

"Then you'd better buck up and get one, if you're going to be a detective. Do you think Sherlock Holmes ever moved a step without his? Not much. Well, anyhow. Did you find any foot-prints or tobacco-ash?"

"There was a jolly lot of dust about."

"Did you preserve a sample?"

"No."

"My word, you've a lot to learn. Now, weighing the evidence, does anything strike you?"

"No."

"You're a bright sort of sleuth-hound, aren't you! It seems to me I'm doing all the work on this case. I'll have to give you another leg-up. Considering the time when the quid disappeared, I should say that somebody in the dormitory must have collared it. How many fellows are there in Evans's dormitory?"

"I don't know."

"Cut along and find out."

The detective reluctantly trudged off once more.

"Well?" said Scott on his return.

"Seven," said Pillingshot. "Counting Evans."

"We needn't count Evans. If he's ass enough to steal his own quids, he deserves to lose them. Who are the other six?"

"There's Trent. He's prefect."

"The Napoleon of Crime. Watch his every move. Yes?"

"Simms."

"A dangerous man. Sinister to the core."

"And Green, Berkeley, Hanson, and Daubeny."

"Every one of them well known to the police. Why, the place is a perfect Thieves' Kitchen. Look here, we must act swiftly, young Pillingshot. This is a black business. We'll take them in alphabetical order. Run and fetch Berkeley."

Berkeley, interrupted in a game of Halma, came unwillingly.

"Now then, Pillingshot, put your questions," said Scott. "This is a black business, Berkeley. Young Evans has lost a sovereign——"

"If you think I've taken his beastly quid——!" said Berkeley warmly.

"Make a note of that—on being questioned, the man Berkeley exhibited suspicious emotion. Go on. Jam it down."

Pillingshot reluctantly entered the statement under Berkeley's indignant gaze.

"Now then, carry on."

"You know it's all rot," protested Pillingshot. "I never said Berkeley had anything to do with it."

"Never mind. Ask him what his movements were on the night of the—what was yesterday?—on the night of the sixteenth of July."

Pillingshot put the question nervously.

"I was in bed, of course, you silly ass!"

"Were you asleep?" inquired Scott.

"Of course I was."

"Then how do you know what you were doing?" Pillingshot,

PILLINGSHOT, DETECTIVE

make a note of the fact that the man Berkeley's statement was confused and contradictory. It's a clue. Work on it. Who's next? Daubeny. Berkeley, send Daubeny up here."

"All right, Pillingshot, you wait," was Berkeley's exit speech.

Daubeny, when examined, exhibited the same suspicious emotion that Berkeley had shown; and Hanson, Simms, and Green behaved in a precisely similar manner.



"ALL RIGHT, PILLINGSHOT,
YOU WAIT!"

"This," said Scott, "somewhat complicates the case. We must have further clues. You'd better pop off now, Pillingshot. I've got a Latin Prose to do. Bring me reports of your progress daily, and don't overlook the importance of trifles. Why, in 'Silver Blaze' it was a burnt match that first put Holmes on the scent."

Entering the junior day-room with some apprehension, the sleuth-hound found an excited gathering of suspects waiting to interview him. One sentiment animated the meeting. Each of the five wanted to know what Pillingshot meant by it.

"What's the row?" queried interested spectators, rallying round.

"That cad Pillingshot's been accusing us of bagging Evans's quid."

"What's Scott got to do with it?" inquired one of the spectators.

Pillingshot explained his position.

"All the same," said Daubeny, "you needn't have dragged us into it."

"I couldn't help it. He made me."

"Awful ass, Scott," admitted Green.

Pillingshot welcomed this sign that the focus of popular indignation was being shifted.

"Shoving himself into other people's business," grumbled Pillingshot.

"Trying to be funny," Berkeley summed up.

"Rotten at cricket, too."

"Can't play a yorker for nuts."

"See him drop that sitter on Saturday?"

So that was all right. As far as the junior day-room was concerned, Pillingshot felt himself vindicated.

But his employer was less easily satisfied. Pillingshot had hoped that by the next day he would have forgotten the subject. But, when he came into the study to get tea ready, up it came again.

"Any clues yet, Pillingshot?"

Pillingshot had to admit that there were none.

"Hullo, this won't do! You must bustle about. You must get your nose to the trail. Have you cross-examined Trent yet? No? Well, there you are, then. Nip off and do it now."

"But I say, Scott! He's a prefect!"

PILLINGSHOT, DETECTIVE

"In the dictionary of crime," said Scott sententiously, "there is no such word as prefect. All are alike. Go and take down Trent's statement."

To tax a prefect with having stolen a sovereign was a task at



"HAVE YOU BAGGED A SOVEREIGN?" HE ASKED

which Pillingshot's imagination boggled. He went to Trent's study in a sort of dream.

A hoarse roar answered his feeble tap. There was no doubt about Trent being in. Inspection revealed the fact that the prefect was working and evidently ill-attuned to conversation. He wore a haggard look and his eye, as it caught that of the collector of statements, was dangerous.

"Well?" said Trent, scowling murderously.

Pillingshot's legs felt perfectly boneless.

"*Well?*" said Trent.

Pillingshot yammered.

"*Well?*"

The roar shook the window, and Pillingshot's presence of mind deserted him altogether.

"Have you bagged a sovereign?" he asked.

There was an awful silence, during which the detective, his limbs suddenly becoming active again, banged the door, and shot off down the passage.

He re-entered Scott's study at the double.

"Well?" said Scott. "What did he say?"

"Nothing."

"Get out your notebook, and put down under the heading 'Trent': 'Suspicious silence.' A very bad lot, Trent. Keep him under constant espionage. It's a clue. Work on it."

Pillingshot made a note of the silence, but later on, when he and the prefect met in the dormitory, felt inclined to erase it. For silent was the last epithet one would have applied to Trent on that occasion. As he crawled painfully into bed Pillingshot became more than ever convinced that the path of the amateur detective was a thorny one.

This conviction deepened next day.

Scott's help was evidently well-meant, but it was certainly inconvenient. His theories were of the brilliant, dashing order, and Pillingshot could never be certain who and in what rank of life the next suspect would be. He spent that afternoon shadowing the Greaser (the combination of boot-boy and butler who did the odd jobs about the school house), and in the evening seemed likely to be about to move in the very highest circles. This was when Scott remarked in a dreamy voice, "You know, I'm told the old man has been spending a good lot of money lately . . ."

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To which the burden of Pillingshot's reply was that he would do anything in reason, but he was blowed if he was going to cross-examine the head master.

"It seems to me," said Scott sadly, "that you don't *want* to find that sovereign. Don't you like Evans, or what is it?"

It was on the following morning, after breakfast, that the close observer might have noticed a change in the detective's demeanour. He no longer looked as if he were weighed down by a secret sorrow. His manner was even jaunty.

Scott noticed it.

"What's up?" he inquired. "Got a clue?"

Pillingshot nodded.

"What is it? Let's have a look."

"Sh-h-h!" said Pillingshot mysteriously.

Scott's interest was aroused. When his fag was making tea in the afternoon, he questioned him again.

"Out with it," he said. "What's the point of all this silent mystery business?"

"Sherlock Holmes never gave anything away."

"Out with it."

"Walls have ears," said Pillingshot.

"So have you," replied Scott crisply, "and I'll smite them in half a second."

Pillingshot sighed resignedly, and produced an envelope. From this he poured some dried mud.

"Here, steady on with my tablecloth," said Scott. "What's this?"

"Mud."

"What about it?"

"Where do you think it came from?"

"How should I know? Road, I suppose."

Pillingshot smiled faintly.

"Eighteen different kinds of mud about here," he said patronisingly. "This is flower-bed mud from the house front garden."

"Well, what about it?"

"Sh-h-h!" said Pillingshot, and glided out of the room.

"Well?" asked Scott next day. "Clues pouring in all right?"

"Rather."

"What! Got another?"

Pillingshot walked silently to the door and flung it open. He looked up and down the passage. Then he closed the door and returned to the table, where he took from his waistcoat pocket a used match.

Scott turned it over inquiringly.

"What's the idea of this?"

"A clue," said Pillingshot. "See anything queer about it? See that rummy brown stain on it?"

"Yes."

"Blood!" snorted Pillingshot.

"What's the good of blood? There's been no murder."

Pillingshot looked serious.

"I never thought of that."

"You must think of everything. The worst mistake a detective can make is to get switched off on to another track while he's working on a case. This match is a clue to something else. You can't work on it."

"I suppose not," said Pillingshot.

"Don't be discouraged. You're doing fine."

"I know," said Pillingshot. "I shall find that quid all right."

"Nothing like sticking to it."

Pillingshot shuffled, then rose to a point of order. "I've been reading those Sherlock Holmes stories," he said, "and Sherlock Holmes always got a fee if he brought a thing off. I think I ought to, too."

"Mercenary young brute!"

"It has been a beastly swot."

PILLINGSHOT, DETECTIVE

"Done you good. Supplied you with a serious interest in life. Well, I expect Evans will give you something—a jewelled snuff-box or something—if you pull the thing off."

"I don't."

"Well, he'll buy you a tea or something."

"He won't. He's not going to break the quid. He's saving up for a camera."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

Pillingshot kicked the leg of the table.

"You put me on to the case," he said casually.

"What! If you think I'm going to squander——"

"I think you ought to let me off fagging for the rest of the term."

Scott reflected.

"There's something in that. All right."

"Thanks."

"Don't mention it. You haven't found the quid yet."

"I know where it is."

"Where?"

"Ah!"

"Fool!" said Scott.

After breakfast next day Scott was seated in his study when Pillingshot entered.

"Here you are," said Pillingshot.

He unclasped his right hand and exhibited a sovereign. Scott inspected it.

"Is this the one?" he said.

"Yes," said Pillingshot.

"How do you know?"

"It is. I've sifted all the evidence."

"Who bagged it?"

"I don't want to mention names."

"Oh, all right. As he didn't spend any of it, it doesn't much matter. Not that it's much catch having a thief roaming at large

about the house. Anyhow, what put you on to him? How did you get on the track? You're a jolly smart kid, young Pillingshot. How did you work it?"

"I have my methods," said Pillingshot with dignity.

"Buck up. I shall have to be going over to school in a second."

"I hardly like to tell you."

"Tell me! Dash it all, I put you on to the case. I'm your employer."

"You won't touch me up if I tell you?"

"I will if you don't."

"But not if I do?"

"No."

"And how about the fee?"

"That's all right. Go on."

"All right, then. Well, I thought the whole thing over, and I couldn't make anything out of it at first, because it didn't seem likely that Trent or any of the other fellows in the dormitory had taken it; and then suddenly something Evans told me the day before yesterday made it all clear."

"What was that?"

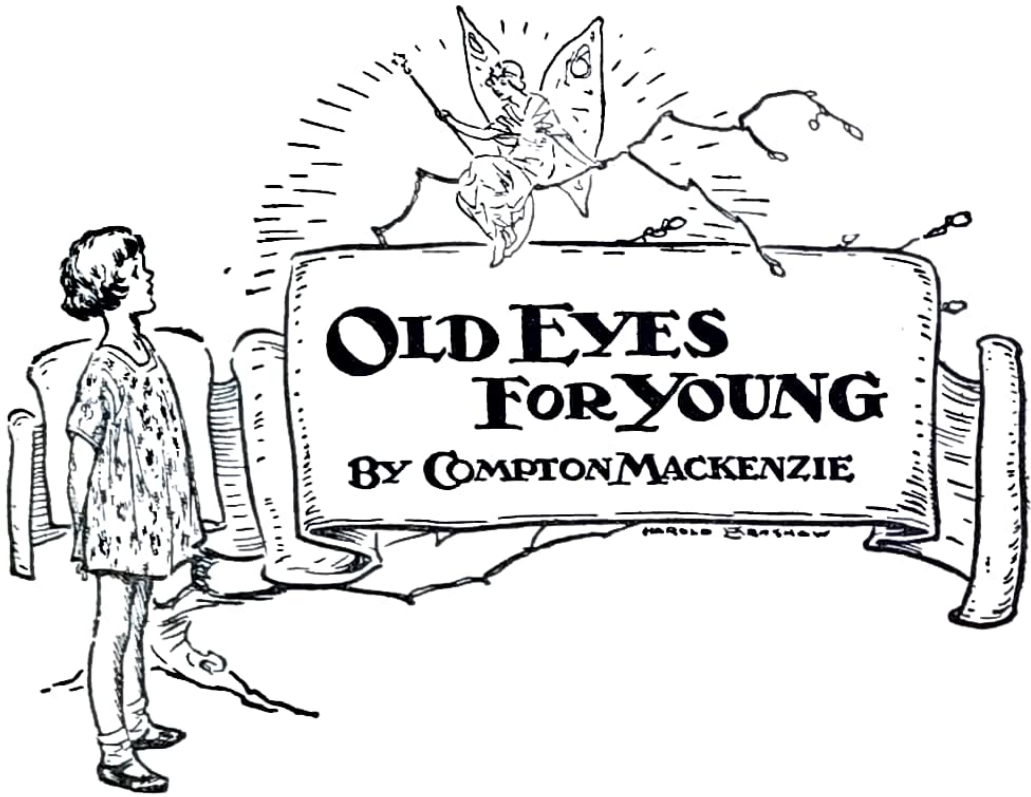
"He said that the matron had just given him back his quid, which one of the housemaids had found on the floor by his bed. It had dropped out of his pocket that first night."

Scott eyed him fixedly. Pillingshot coyly evaded his gaze.

"That was it, was it?" said Scott.

Pillingshot nodded.

"It was a clue," he said. "I worked on it."



ONCE upon a time—and not such a very long time ago, either—there was a little girl called Janie Smith, who was always discontented, though what she had to be discontented about badness only knows.

She was ten years old and lived with her father and mother at High Hall—a beautiful old house miles away from the railway-station, in a county where cowslips grew thick in the meadows. She had two sisters younger than herself and a brother who was only four, so that she was the eldest, which is always something. To be sure, she did have a governess called Miss Congleton-Crewe; but Miss Congleton-Crewe was an extremely nice governess, and as Janie never had to call her more than “Miss Crewe” she was no worse off than little girls who don’t have governesses with double-barrelled names. After all most little girls have governesses to put up with, and if they hadn’t governesses they would have school-mistresses. Janie grumbled about Miss Crewe as she did about everything, and, in fact, I’m really ashamed to tell you how discon-

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tented Janie was. However, she'll never read this story herself, and the reason why you'll find out before the story is done.

One of Janie's grumbles was that none of the adventures which happen to little girls in stories ever happened to her. And I've so little patience with Janie that I would not give her the pleasure of finding herself in a story. So, if by chance any of you happen to have met Janie Smith please don't tell her that she's in a story. She'd only put on airs about it, and she's got enough airs now to float a balloon. If there was strawberry jam for tea Janie wanted apricot jam; if there were muffins she wished they were crumpets. If the weather was fine she said it was too hot, and if the weather was wet she declared it rained morning, noon, and night. She did not want to live in the country, and was always sighing because her father and mother did not have a house in London, like an uncle and aunt with whom she once stayed.

But what made Janie most discontented of all was that she was still a little girl. Every night just before she fell asleep she used to sigh, "Oh dear, I wish I could wake up to-morrow morning and find that I was grown up!" and in the morning when she did wake she used to scowl at the jolly morning sun and sigh, "Oh dear, still nearly twenty-nine thousand days before I'll be grown up." Janie thought she was rather good at arithmetic, and one day just after her tenth birthday she had tried to find out how many days must go by before she was eighteen, which was the age she had decided would make her really grown up. Unfortunately she had made a mistake with her multiplication and got an extra nought into the result, so that she was actually giving herself till eighty before she was grown up. The silly little girl had been much too vain of her arithmetic to ask Miss Crewe to correct the sum, so the consequence was she was just ten times as discontented as she would have been if she had been better at multiplication.

Perhaps you think it's rather unfair to laugh at Janie's anxiety to be grown up. Perhaps some of you are longing

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as much as Janie herself to be grown up in spite of seeing Peter Pan last Christmas. And I'm afraid you're beginning to think that this is more like a sermon than a story. Well, I wouldn't mind a bit Janie's wanting to be grown up if she'd only had a good reason. But her reason was such a stupid one. Mere curiosity! She simply could not bear not being allowed to read this book or that newspaper. If she had wanted to be grown up in order not to have to go to bed so early I should never dream of laughing at her. I never liked going to bed early myself when I was a little boy, and I don't like going to bed early now. I think that sitting up late just makes it worth while being grown up. But you can take it from me that all the books and newspapers in the world, all the locked cupboards and drawers, all the grown up conversation after dinner, and even all the smoking you like (I mention tobacco in case any boy is condescending to read this story) are not worth growing up for.

However, Janie Smith thought they were—the books and newspapers and locked cupboards I mean, not the smoking. No doubt if her father, the Colonel, had smoked she would have wanted to smoke too. But Colonel Smith didn't smoke. He liked smoking, but his doctor said it wasn't good for him, and being a soldier he did as he was told. At least, I suppose that was the reason. I can't imagine anybody's giving up smoking for any other reason. Well, as I was saying, Janie Smith thought they were worth growing up for. And on the thirtieth of April at exactly half-past four o'clock in the afternoon Miss Congleton-Crewe—Janie's mother always referred to her as Miss Congleton-Crewe when her little daughter had been bad, so I think we'd better do the same—Miss Congleton-Crewe sent Janie to bed for exploring a cupboard in the bathroom which she had tried to explore once already, and for which she had been threatened with severe punishment if she ever dared do such a thing again. Now, this cupboard was high up on the wall and could only be reached by standing on the side of the bath. Every afternoon that Janie went upstairs to wash

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her hands before tea she used to long to make another desperate attempt on the secrets of this cupboard; but every time that she climbed up on the side of the bath and was tugging away at the rather stiff doors the gong for tea would sound and down Janie had to scramble as fast as she could. This afternoon, being as I said the thirtieth of April, the last April shower of the month drove Miss Congleton-Crewe and Janie indoors twenty minutes earlier than usual.

"Shall I go up and wash my hands now, Miss Crusie?"

When Janie wanted to ingratiate herself with Miss Congleton-Crewe she always called her by this pet name. I'm afraid the boys will rather snort at this, and of course it does sound silly, but you must remember that Janie was quite a kid, and I can't help her being a bit affected, can I?

"Yes, dear," said Miss Congleton-Crewe agreeably, "but don't be too long."

Janie turned away, gulping with excitement, because she was quite sure now that she should be able to solve the secret of that cupboard before the gong went for tea. She was so excited that she did not even wait to wash her hands before she clambered up and began to tug at the doors.

Crash! Clang!! Bonk!!!

"Good gracious!" Miss Congleton-Crewe exclaimed, hurrying out of her bedroom. "Is that the gong for tea already?"

But it wasn't the gong for tea. It was Janie falling backward into the empty bath with several medicine-bottles on top of her; and at exactly twenty-three minutes to five she was in bed. Moreover, when tea did arrive it arrived in the unpleasant shape of three slices of dry bread and a glass of milk.

"Pooh!" said Janie to Emily, the nursery-maid, "I'm not going to eat that beastly bread."

"Thatsallmisscrewesaidyouwastohavemissjanie," Emily explained in one breath.

Janie listened for a moment to know if her governess was

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anywhere within hearing. Then she picked up from her plate the thickest of the three slices and threw it with all her might and main at poor Emily.

"You see if I don't tell Miss Kew of what you done you naughty girl you," Emily breathed in a shocked voice.

"Tell-tale-tit!" retorted Janie, putting out her tongue.

"I'm sure I won't stay in the room with you another minute such disgusting manners as you've got it'd be ashamed for myself if I was you," Emily sniffed.

"Well, nobody asked you to stay in the room with me, did they?" said Janie in a tone of voice that an alligator might have hesitated to use.

Perhaps we had better pass over the rest of that afternoon and evening in silence. It would be most painful for me to write about, and I know it would be equally painful for you to read about. Just because Janie was determined to lie awake all night, by doing which she hoped to pay out Miss Congleton for her crewelty—I beg your pardon, I mean Miss Congleton-Kewe—oh bother! never mind, you know who I mean and what I mean—as I say, just because Janie wanted to lie awake all night she went and fell fast asleep before eight o'clock. The consequence was she woke up next morning very early indeed, earlier, in fact, than she had ever woken up since she could remember. And it was May Day morning. Janie wasn't going to be Queen of the May like the girl in the poem, who said, "You must wake and call me early, call me early, Mother dear," but nevertheless she was very glad to be awake.

"I'll just find out if it's true about getting up before sunrise and washing your face in the dew and being able to see the fairies," she decided. And jumping out of bed she managed to dress herself much more successfully than anybody who had heard Janie arguing with Emily about tapes would ever have thought she could.

For a moment, such a lovely morning it was, even Janie forgot to be discontented when she found herself standing all alone on the great lawn in front of High Hall—all alone with the trembling silver

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dew, and the pale green budding leaves, and the birdsong, and the freshness of the unfolding flowers and the faded blue sky of the morning. Janie wondered where would be the best place for her experiment, and finally settled to try in the small paddock on the other side of the orchard, where the grass was long and there was enough dew to bathe herself all over. There's no doubt whatever that Janie did not in the least expect to see any fairies, and, in fact, when she had dabbled her eyes thoroughly and looked round her for a moment or two without seeing anything unusual she said:

"Pooh! I thought it was all pretend!"

She had no sooner spoken these words than she heard a voice coming from the apple-tree under which she was standing.

"Good morning, Janie."

And when she looked up she saw sitting at the end of a twig that seemed almost too slim to hold a sparrow, a beautiful little creature dressed in pale green with a complexion like apple-blossom.

Janie was too much surprised to do anything except stare and look even more stupid than most mortals appear to fairies.

"Can I do anything for you?" inquired the fairy kindly.

For a moment Janie was inclined to ask if she could turn her into a fairy like herself. Then she changed her mind. After all, she knew very little about fairyland, and it might not be as amusing there as here. Besides, had not somebody told her that fairies were in the habit of going to sleep the whole winter through? Pretty dull, that would be.

Then Janie had an idea.

"Oh yes, please, if you wouldn't mind, I'd like to be grown up."

The fairy shook her dainty head.

"I'm afraid I'm not powerful enough to manage that for you."

Janie looked somewhat contemptuous.

"I thought fairies could do anything," she said.

"They can make old people young sometimes," the fairy replied. "But I'm afraid they can't make young people old."

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"Are you a good fairy or a bad fairy?" Janie asked bluntly.

"I'm a good fairy, and my name is Pomidora," said the fairy, tossing her lovely little head, which made the air sparkle as if with a thousand sunbeams.

"Well, could I be called Pomidora?" Janie suggested. She had always disliked her own name, and this seemed a good opportunity to get it changed. If it was changed by magic she wouldn't get into trouble about the change.

"Of course you couldn't be called Pomidora. Whatever next?" the fairy exclaimed.

"Well, I don't see much difference between fairies and ordinary people," Janie declared.

"I'm afraid you're making me feel very much inclined to give you a lesson," said Pomidora severely.

"Goodness!" Janie retorted. "I don't want to begin lessons at this time of day. Besides, it's still the Easter holidays."

"And so you'd like to be grown up?" said Pomidora, paying no attention to her rudeness. "Why?"

"Because I'm tired of being little," Janie replied.

"Oh, I can make you tall," said Pomidora hastily. "One of my jobs is to make the flowers grow."

Without waiting for Janie to reply she waved her wand and murmured a charm which sounded like the noise of summer rain.

"Here, stop, stop!" Janie shrieked. She was growing at a most terrible pace, and unfortunately her clothes were not growing with her, so that in a second her stockings had turned into babies' socks and her petticoats looked like a baby's bib round her neck, while her shoes were creaking under the strain and one toe was actually bursting through the leather.

Pomidora murmured another charm which sounded like the crackling of leaves in the August sun, and Janie shrank back to her own size, though the hole her toe had made in the shoe still remained and her clothes hung in ribbons where they had been overstretched by her rapid growth.

"It's no good making me grow if my clothes don't grow too," said Janie angrily.

"Rain makes the flowers grow," Pomidora explained. "But clothes often shrink in wet."

"Well, I think I'd better say good-bye," Janie decided, "and go back indoors." She was beginning to be anxious about the coming interview with her governess on the subject of the rents in her clothes. She did not feel quite sure that Miss Crewe would believe that a fairy had caused all the damage. "As you can't make me grow up properly," she added, "it's not much use staying here to talk to you."

"But I can't think why you want to be grown up," said Pomidora.

"Well, I want to read newspapers and novels and . . ." Janie stopped and decided not to add "look what's inside cupboards where I'm not allowed to look." After all, grown up people didn't seem to spend much of their time looking into cupboards. In fact, she had often heard them say, "Oh dear, what a nuisance! I *must* clear out that cupboard."

"But you can read newspapers now," Pomidora pointed out.

"Yes, you——" Janie was just going to say "You silly!" but she thought better of it, because even if she was not a very powerful fairy Pomidora had already proved that she had a good deal of magical power, and it might be wiser not to call her a silly. So Janie substituted "see" for "silly." "Yes, you see," she went on, "but I can't always understand them, and sometimes I ask a question about something and then the newspaper is taken away from me, and Father says, 'Good gracious, what on earth will the child ask next? What's she doing with my paper, anyway?'"

"And you want to understand the newspapers?" Pomidora went on in a sad voice.

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I could give you a pair of grown up eyes instead of

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your own. There's a dear old lady I know who longs to be young again, and I promised her to look round for a pair of young eyes. But before you agree to the exchange, I ought to warn you that you'll never see any more fairies. Indeed, you won't even be able to enjoy fairy books."

"I don't want to," said Janie defiantly. "I think fairy stories are awfully stupid. But how can this old lady see you?" she went on.

"She can't see me," said Pomidora. "That's what makes her so sad."

"Then how does she know you're there?"

"She knows I'm there, because though her eyes are old her heart is young. But your heart is already old, Janie. So if you have grown up eyes you'll have nothing left to understand fairies."

"Well, I don't much mind," said Janie candidly. "I'd much rather understand newspapers."

Pomidora sighed, and the sound of her sigh was like a gentle wind in the branches of the apple-tree.

"Very well. Since you want grown up eyes, you shall have grown up eyes."

"Will it hurt?" Janie asked, for the solemnity of the fairy's voice was a little bit alarming.

"Oh no. I shall put you under a spell while the change is being made."

"Will it be like when Miss Crewe had a tooth out with gas?"

Pomidora did not reply, and Janie felt the air round her full of strange flutterings and flowery scents. The trees and the grass and the chimneys of High Hall faded, and she thought that she was being carried along on a swift, rushing torrent which roared in her ears. She gasped and spluttered and tried to call out. But her voice wouldn't say anything, and then, just as she thought she should burst if her voice wouldn't say something, she came to herself. She looked up into the apple-tree, but the Fairy Pomidora had vanished.

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Janie felt her eyes, but they seemed just the same as usual and everything looked just the same—at least, perhaps not quite the same. The trees did not look so tall somehow, and High Hall itself looked smaller. The fat thrushes on the lawn were still speckled, but their breasts were not so much like ermine as they used to be. Janie was shocked too by the grubbiness of her hands and the rents in her frock, and as for the way her toe was coming through her shoe, it made her feel quite upset. She was not worrying any more what Miss Crewe would say about her clothes. It was she herself who did not like their untidiness now.

Janie walked back to the house, eager to know if what the fairy had promised her would come true. She was so eager to find out if she could understand the paper that she could hardly bear the idea of waiting two hours for the postman's arrival. However, the time went past much more quickly than usual. Two hours used to seem like two weeks to Janie; but now they seemed like two minutes. Her father was not down when she reached the breakfast-room, and without thinking that she was doing anything unusual she tore the wrapper off *The Times* just as she had often seen her mother do.

"Goodness!" Janie exclaimed. "I do wish the Government could grasp that the country will not stand for any more shilly-shallying with Socialism."

Just then Miss Crewe came in.

"My dear child, where have you been all this time? Did you ask my permission to go out before breakfast?" she inquired severely.

"Oh, Miss Crewe," Janie said, "I'm very much afraid that we shall *have* to have another election. *The Times* says: 'Unwilling as every elector will be to see the country once more engaged upon . . .'"

"Janie, how many times have I told you not to read the newspaper?"

"The franc has dropped another point, Miss Crewe," said Janie.

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"Did you hear what I said?"

"And there's a very interesting letter from Lord Loch Lomond on economy, Miss Crewe. He suggests that for the next five years every civil servant should be paid half his salary and work twelve hours a day. 'Only thus,' he says, 'can the country be saved from the bankruptcy with which . . .'"

"Janie!"

"Just let me read this article on the gold standard, Miss Crewe."



"THERE'S NEVER ANYTHING INTERESTING IN THE PAPERS"

Her father and mother came into the breakfast-room at that moment.

"Father," she asked, "are you an inflationist?"

The Colonel stared at his little daughter.

"Mother," Janie went on, "I think there's no doubt we ought to eat more vitamins."

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"What on earth's the matter with the child's eyes?" exclaimed the Colonel, staring at her.

Janie looked very frightened. She had carefully examined her eyes in the looking-glass when she came in from her May morning adventure, and she had not noticed anything different. Were they now going to find out that she had been given grown-up eyes by a fairy?

"I must take her to see an oculist," said Mrs. Smith in a worried voice.

And the oculist decided that Janie must wear spectacles.

But what is saddest of all, she read so many novels and newspapers, and understood so well what she was reading about, that she entirely ceased to believe that she had ever met a fairy and lost her own eyes. The consequence was she never tried to find Pomidora and beg her to take back the grown-up eyes. Moreover, she soon found newspapers very dull, and at this moment she is saying in a dreary voice:

"There's never anything interesting in the papers nowadays."

She understands all she reads, but she's not a bit less discontented. In fact, she's more discontented, because not only does she still want to be different herself, but she wants everybody else to be different as well.



“Sneezles”

A. A. MILNE

Christopher Robin
Had wheezles
And sneezles,
They bundled him
Into
His bed.
They gave him what goes
With a cold in the nose,
And some more for a cold
In the head.
They wondered
If wheezles
Could turn
Into measles,
If sneezles
Would turn into mumps;
They examined his chest
For a rash,





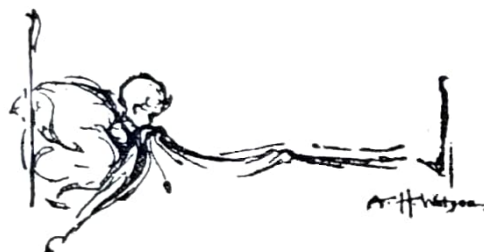
And the rest
Of his body for swelling and lumps.
They sent for some doctors
In sneezles
And wheezles;
To tell them what ought to be done.
All sorts and conditions
Of famous physicians
Came hurrying round
At a run.
They all made a note
Of the state of his throat,
They asked if he suffered from
thirst;
They asked if the sneezles
Came *after* the wheezles,
Or if the first sneeze
Came first.
They said, "If you teazle
A sneeze
Or wheeze,
A measle
May easily grow.
But humour or pleazle
The wheezele



"SNEEZLES"



Or sneeze,
The measle
Will certainly go."
They expounded the reazles
For sneezles
And wheezles
The appearance of measles
When new.
They said, "If he freezles
In draughts and in breezles
Then *Phtheezles*
May even ensue . . ."



Christopher Robin
Got up in the morning,
The sneezles had vanished away.
And the look in his eye
Seemed to say to the sky,
"Now how to amuse them to-
day?"

The Battle of Crécy

HILAIRE BELLOC

EVERYONE has heard of the battle of Crécy, which was won by a small army from England against the much larger army of the French King, rather less than 600 years ago. It is one of the most famous things in the history of England.

I will try to tell you what the times and the people and place were like and how the thing looked.

King Edward III of England had a very good claim to the Crown of France, for he was the last King's grandson. We must remember that England at that time (in 1346) was still French-speaking in the Court, and in most gentlemen's families, and in all the richer part, especially big shop-keepers and merchants of the towns, and lawyers and even bailiffs and the more important people of the country sides. They could all talk French, and French was understood right down to those just above the poorer people who worked with their hands—and even probably among a lot of those some French phrases used by their superiors could be understood after a fashion. It was rather like what you find in Wales to-day. English is spoken there by all well-to-do people and a great many of the people between them and the labourers. It gets less and less known as you go down towards the poorer people. Also we have to remember that the Kings of England were descended, and that not so long ago, from forefathers who were entirely French, and Edward the Third's own mother was the daughter of a King of France.

THE BATTLE OF CRÉCY

At any rate he had a very good claim, though modern writers have not made as much of it as they should. He went over to France with an army not very large, partly to fight for this claim, but more to bring pressure on the King of France in matters of trade: at least, that is the best explanation of why he went to war. He marched through Normandy right up to the walls of Paris, and then turned back towards the sea, wishing to get back to England with his men from one of the ports where the sea is narrowest; probably from one of the ports belonging to his friends in what is to-day Belgium.

But if you will look at the map you will see that right in a straight line between where he was, just north of Paris, and the Straits of Dover is the river Somme. Edward and his men had to cross that river before they could get to the narrow parts of the sea and make their way back to England after the raid.

Now, the armies of the King of France watched all the crossings of the river, and Edward tried now here, now there, farther and farther down the stream, but found every passage guarded.

At last he came to that place where the Somme spread out into a very broad valley up which the sea-tide swept twice a day; a river-mouth valley of the sort called an estuary. It is the broad valley below Abbeville. To-day it is all dry land because people have slowly reclaimed it from the sea with embankments, but in that day it was open water with the tide flowing up and down it like the mouth of the Thames, though not so wide.

At last Edward, thus seeking for a passage and finding none, heard of a ford which was artificially hardened, a sort of causeway by which men could cross at low tide. At high tide the water was far too deep for men to get across that way. The valley was here about half-a-mile broad, and because the King of France (who, remember, was Edward the First's cousin, and belonged to just the same society that he did, talking the same language and going on in the same way) thought it very unlikely that these lower difficult passages of the Somme would be attempted he left

them lightly guarded, and he had put to watch this particular ford (which was called Blanchetaque) only a small body of men under the command of a man called de Foy.

King Edward of England determined to force the passage. He had to do so or be caught in a trap, for if he stayed the wrong side of the river he would never get home.

Before we talk of his getting across we must understand what his following was like. The King himself, and the people all round him, and nearly all the gentlemen, and what to-day we should call officers, spoke French, as I have said. Some of the lesser ones probably could also give orders and make themselves understood in the various local Anglo-Saxon dialects spoken by the common soldiers. What corresponded to non-commissioned officers would know something of both the local dialects and the common French tongue of the governing people. There were also in the army a certain number of Welshmen who knew nothing but Welsh, though among these also the few richer men would have been able to understand the French of the officers with whom they mixed.

This army of Edward's, which was about twenty-five thousand fighting men altogether (though having a number of non-combatants with it, of course, for driving wagons and helping to load them and so on) was like any other army of the time. All the gentlemen were on horseback and armed, with iron covering their bodies and heads, some of it made of plates and some of it still of chain-work. The words "coat of *mail*" means "coat of links" (*maille* is French for a link) and refers to this old chain work armour. A good many of the lesser men were armed only with great knives, a large number of men—not gentlemen, but serving under gentlemen, yeomen and tenants and hired soldiers—were mounted like the gentry and fought with swords.

But the particular thing about Edward's army in which it was different from the enemy's, was the bowmen. The Welsh people had invented a great bow usually made of elm (sometimes of yew,

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and as tall, or taller, than a man. It wanted special strength to pull it and special training. Only expert men could use it, and their services were very highly valued. But those who could use it had great superiority over any other weapon used in warfare at that time, for no one outside England had a weapon of this kind. The arrow from it could kill a man or a horse at two hundred yards, and it was very accurate. There had been bows, of course, for thousands of years before this time; and the most usual bow of the Continent was the cross-bow, a mechanical arrangement which had to be wound up. It shot a heavy bolt pretty far, but it was slow. It could deliver only one shot to six of the long bow which the Welsh had invented and which Edward's army was now using. Also, it was less accurate.

Now, it was these bowmen that won the victory.

Edward found out how the tide worked and heard that it was ebbing at the break of day; so if he began getting his army across in the early morning he might, supposing he broke the French defence on the other side, have them all safe on the farther side before the water rose so high on the flood tide as to make further passage impossible. So he started out to cross the ford.

The small body of horse went before, then came the archers and then the rest of the army, with the baggage at the end. The French and English horsemen met in the water and fought furiously, with the tide rising about their feet, but the English, or rather Welsh, archers decided the issue; and the farther bank was gained. The whole army was able to get across except its baggage, most of which was cut off by the tide.

You can see the place still quite clearly marked, though it is now dry land. If ever you go to Paris by the main line from London you will see, about a mile before you get to the little station called Port, a narrow lane going quite straight right across the flat valley, which in those days was an estuary filled with tidal water every six hours. This straight, narrow lane marks the line of the Ford of Blanchetaque.

When Edward and his army had thus got safely to the farther shore, all they had to do was to march as quickly as they could towards the Straits of Dover and the friendly Belgian ports and so get home. But they had, close at hand, the much larger gathering forces of the French King coming up from Amiens. If you will look at the map you will see why this was. People gathering at Amiens could strike right against the line of march of other people marching from the Somme below Abbeville towards Calais or Dunkerque.

Edward's army went through the big wood of Crécy (which still stands, the same size as it was then and with the same road going through it) and came out on the second day at the little town of Crécy on the other side.

By the time they had reached it they knew that the King of France with his big force was coming up from Amiens against them.

An army marching all stretched out along the roads cannot fight, and if it is caught in that condition by an enemy, can, of course, be destroyed. So when there is a danger of that, the armies stop marching in column—that is, one man behind another,—and turn round to meet their enemy in line—that is, shoulder to shoulder—and defeat him if they can. Otherwise they would be doomed.

Edward did this. With his much smaller army he turned round to face the advance of the French King coming up on the side of his march.

Crécy lies in a hollow. Just above it there is a ridge about a mile long with a shallow valley in front of it, and on the middle of the ridge there used to be a windmill. The windmill was pulled down about a lifetime ago, unfortunately, but one can still see the mound on which it stood. From this windmill Edward watched the ordering of his army along the ridge, and the distant landscape upon which the first troops of the King of France were already appearing. He sent his horses, and such wagons as he

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had saved from the baggage, behind the ridge for safety, and he drew up on the slopes of the ridge facing the French, his horsemen and footmen and his archers who were to make all the difference. These archers were to be in the front line.

The whole army was drawn up in three groups, and in the one on the right was the little Prince of Wales, a boy only fourteen years old, but already armoured and given the chance of fighting. It was he who was later to be called "The Black Prince" and was to be so famous in war.

The French came on in a dense mass, all nobles and gentlemen armoured, riding on horseback and intending to break the smaller force of the King by their charge. They were followed by a disorganized mass of foot soldiers, many of whom were only rabble, armed haphazard, and with little discipline. But in front of these mounted gentlemen was a body of cross-bowmen, who probably came from Genoa (though some think they came from Geneva—we are not quite certain on that).

As the French coming down the opposing slope approached the immovable line of Edward the Third's army on the rising ground beyond, there was a violent thunderstorm. The cross-bowmen complained that this slackened the strings of their bows, but, anyhow, the discharge they made was useless, and the archers from the English side quite overwhelmed them with their fire. The cross-bowmen fell into confusion and the French gentry, armoured and on horseback, rode them down in their impatience and charged up the slope against the archers of the English King.

Now, here was seen for the first time the very great advantage of the new weapon. The arrows of Edward the Third's archers were discharged with an altogether new rapidity and at an unexpected range, and with unexpected accuracy and with quite unexpected driving power. The whole of that cavalry fell into a welter.

You must know that an arrow from one of these long bows could pierce four inches of hard oak at three hundred yards—so



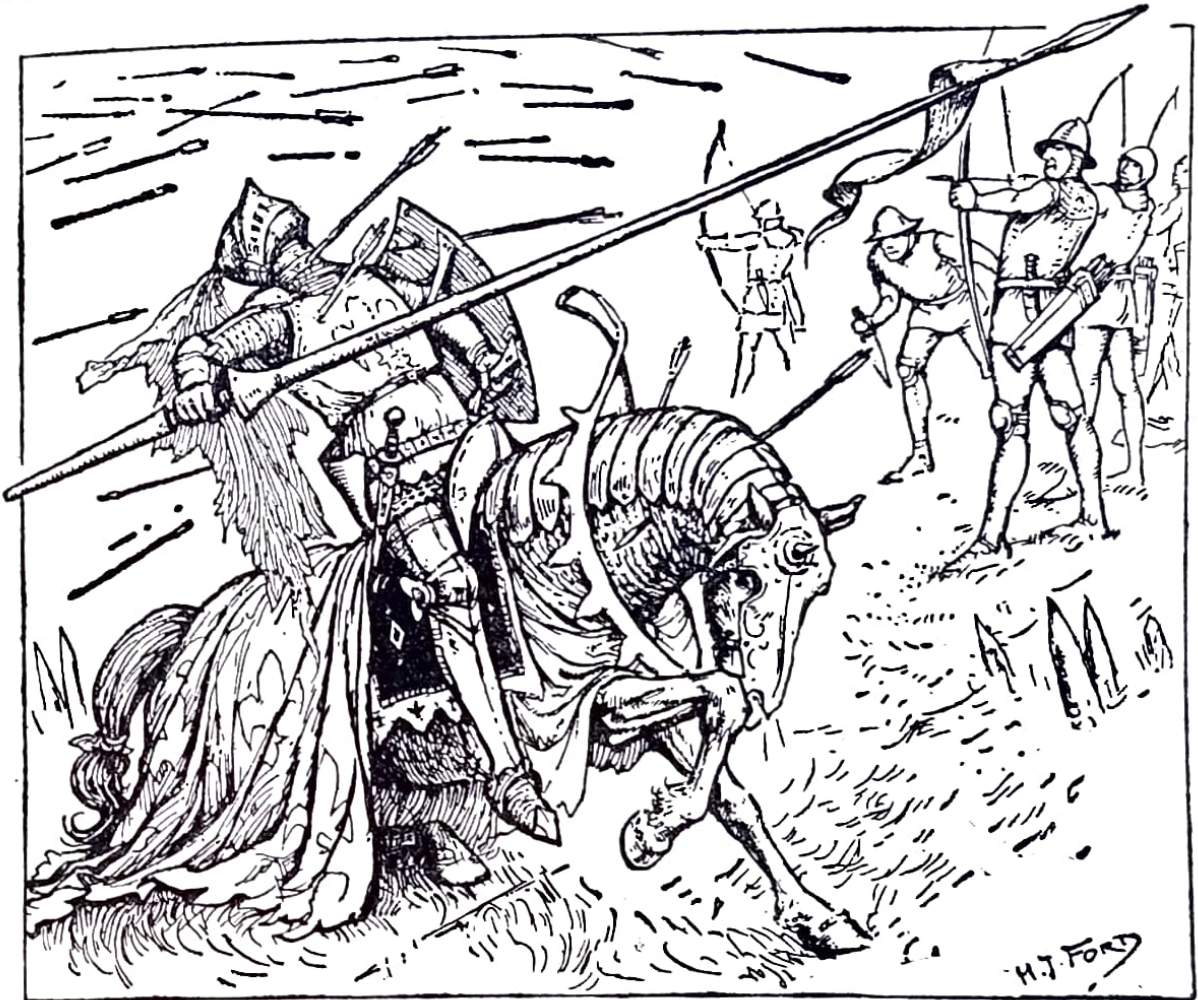
“QUE L'ENFANT GAIGNE SES ESPERONS!”

An incident in the Battle of Crecy, when the Prince of Wales, being hard pressed, Sir Thomas Norwich was sent to the King for help. The King refused to send help, so that the boy should get more glory.

*Drawn for The Treasure Ship
by H. J. Ford.*

you may imagine what it did, when in range, to unprotected horses, heavily laden with armoured riders, coming uphill over sodden ground.

The mounts fell in all directions and very heavy-armoured riders were helpless on the ground. There was only one place



FRENCH CHIVALRY GOES DOWN BEFORE ENGLISH ARCHERS

where the French Cavalry charge got home, and that was on the English right, where the young Prince of Wales was fighting. His guardian sent to his father to say that he was hard pressed; Edward asked whether he was still in the saddle, and hearing that he was, all he said was, "*Que l'enfant gagne ses esperons,*" which means in modern English, "Let the child win his spurs." He was

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speaking of the custom of making a man a Knight by fastening spurs to his feet, and he meant, "Let the boy prove himself worthy of Knighthood, young as he is." It became a proverb, was translated into English, and we still use it.

Though the Cavalry charge of the gentry had got right in on this point it failed everywhere else all along the line, and the confusion of so many bodies of horse and of dismounted men lying helpless, prevented the reserves behind them from making good. Of course the rabble of footmen coming up behind the mounted gentry could do nothing in such a situation, and it was clear, as the arrows still continued to rain upon the French horsemen, that the battle could not be retrieved.

When it was thus lost, those who could still save themselves on the enemy side began riding away, and the English mounted men were launched in pursuit; while the footmen went about either despatching or ransoming the dismounted and wounded horsemen of the King of France. The pursuit and the search for bodies and for prisoners went on into the night. The French foot followers had long melted away, and the King of France himself, arriving back from the defeat, struck on the door of a house on his way to Amiens, and when they called from the windows who was there, cried, "The unfortunate King of France!"

It was a very great and striking victory, even to those who looked at it only as a spectacle; but it was of greater importance than they knew in the history of war, for it brought out for the first time the importance of the new weapon, the long bow, which for three or four lifetimes continued to have its effect upon the fields of Europe. It was not always victorious, because it wanted special circumstances for success, but when it had a full chance nothing could stand against it until portable firearms came in; and even they, at first, were less accurate and had a far shorter range than the English (or rather Welsh) long bow.

Crécy was also, perhaps, the first important battle in which cannon were used. The guns were as yet quite little things, and

there were very few of them. They fired stone bolts bigger than a man's fist, but not much bigger. They fired them only at long intervals and very inaccurately, and it was the noise much more than the missile that had any effect. Still it is interesting as the beginning of a new weapon. They were of German make, the German being then, after the Mohammedans, the best makers of such novel things. But it was a long time before artillery came to count seriously in war.

The main fruit of the battle was the capture of Calais.

The French army being now out of action, King Edward could take his way at his ease, towards the Straits of Dover. It being very important to have what soldiers call a "bridge-head" on the Continent—that is, a stronghold to defend the crossing of the narrow seas—he determined to take the town. He did so after a rather long siege of ten weeks, and Calais remained, with the country-side about it, a possession of the English Crown and a permanent place for crossing the sea in security and landing in France for the purpose of war during more than two hundred years.

It was not lost until the time of Mary Tudor, and even after her time English Governments kept on wanting something of the sort on the other side of the Channel even for another one hundred years; and for a short time they had Dunkerque.

There you have the battle of Crécy, the last battle fought under the old conditions in which England was governed by French-speaking men, the first great victory in which Englishmen used cannon and—much more important—the long bow abroad.

If ever you go to see the place to-day you will find it very little changed. Of course the town is now modern, and, as I have said, the mill has been pulled down. But there has been no building over the field of battle. The woods and the neighbouring villages are just of the same size as they were when Crécy was fought, and you can stand on the mound where the old mill was, look over the valley before you, and imagine the whole thing taking place in just the same landscape that you see before you to-day.



Toby's Birthday Presents

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

TOBY, aged nearly seven, had no parents, and lived with his Aunt and Uncle in the country. He loved them both, for they were very kind to him, yet they were not quite the same as the father and mother he could just remember. They had no children of their own. His Aunt Sophy was rather deaf. In his mind he always connected her with puddings, because of the way she said: "No, Toby, one helping is *quite* enough to-day. If you eat any more, you'll turn into a pudding yourself."

His Uncle was in the wholesale hat business and had an office and a big factory somewhere far away in London, where he went twice a week. He also hunted twice a week. On both occasions he wore a top-hat; and Toby longed for the day when he, too, could make hats and hunt, and so wear one of these tall, shiny

things on the top of his head. It puzzled him why the same kind of hat was used for chasing a fox and for going to an office, but his Uncle's explanation was not very clear. Once he put the hat on his own head; it came down over eyes and nose to his mouth and his voice sounded queer inside it. It was difficult to get off again. He hadn't improved its looks when he got it off. The only other times a top-hat was worn seemed to be a funeral or a wedding. But that had no interest for Toby. It was a queer business altogether. Hats, anyhow, brought in a lot of money. His real trouble, however, was that he had no brothers or sisters to play with. What he wanted even more than a top-hat was a playmate.

His seventh birthday was now near, and he knew his Uncle would snatch him up, set him on his knee with a jerk, and say in his loud, booming voice:

"Now, Toby, my little man, what d'you want for your birthday, eh?"

He hated being called a Little Man; otherwise the question was all right. Last year he had no answer ready. It seemed silly to say: "I want a top-hat," and his Uncle's suggestion of a cob—well, the only cob he knew had kicked, and he wasn't sure of staying on its back for very long. Besides, he couldn't *play* with a cob. This year, anyhow, he had his answer ready, and when the thing happened, and he found himself perched on his Uncle's knee, and heard the big voice asking the expected question, he answered promptly:

"A cat, please."

"What?" (In a loud voice.)

"And a tortoise."

"Eh?" (In a shout.)

"And a owl."

"You mean an owl," boomed his Uncle.

"A nowl, yes," repeated Toby.

The man roared out then: "Bless the boy! What's the matter with him? A cat, a tortoise and an owl, indeed! I hoped you

TOBY'S BIRTHDAY PRESENTS

were going to say a cob!" He jumped him about on his great knees.

Anybody else might have thought his Uncle was angry, but Toby knew better. The big voice didn't frighten him. It was loud from the habit of talking to his deaf wife. It meant nothing.

Toby explained then: The Brown children down the road had a pet owl in a cage, the White family up the hill had a beautiful Persian cat that was always having kittens, and the Green's boy across the lane had a tortoise. So why shouldn't Toby Black have them too! He explained at some length his point of view.

His Uncle, however, didn't approve of presents of this sort.

"Pets," he declared, "are nothing but a nuisance in the house. They're noisy and messy, and they're always getting lost. Besides, they're no use. My money comes from making *useful* things. Think of something else, my little man—something useful—and you shall have it."

"Promise?" asked Toby, earnestly.

"Yes. I told you once. If it's useful you shall have it."

"Thank you," said the boy, and shot off his Uncle's knee like a cannon-ball before any further conditions could be made.

There was less than a week now to his birthday, and he at once set about finding out what use a cat, a tortoise and an owl might be. None, it seemed! Nannie said there were no mice in the nursery; the gardener said a tortoise ate his yellow flowers and was always getting lost; and the stable-groom, who looked after the hunters, told him that owls weren't worth bothering about, as they only made a horrid noise at night and stared in the daytime. As for tortoises, he added, they were like some people he knew—he wondered why they had ever been made at all.

Cats, owls and tortoises were evidently not much use in the world to anybody.

Aunt Sophy, in this matter of presents, was different. She didn't ask what present he wanted; she just told him what she was going to give—then watched his face to see whether he looked

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glum or happy. Last year it had been a football. "You want a football, Toby," she said. "That's what *you* want." But he didn't want a football, because he had no one to kick it to, Nannie being a bit too big to run. He got it just the same, though.

"A bicycle," announced his Aunt now, "is what you need." And as he did want a bicycle, he looked pleased at once, and that was easily settled. He clapped his hands and shouted "Thank you, Aunt Sophy." Later, when he got it, he would have to shout "Thank you, Aunt Sophy" all over again, but that didn't matter.

Then she inquired: "And what have you asked your Uncle for?"

The smiles left his face as he told her:

"A tortoise, a cat, and a nowl," he shouted.

"A porpoise, a top-hat, and a cow!" she exclaimed, not hearing clearly. She looked amazed. "What on earth do you want such odd things for?" she asked in bewilderment, and when Toby had repeated more distinctly, she shook her head. "I'm afraid you won't get them," she said. "Your Uncle dislikes pets in the house." Her expression was like cook's.

"He wants me to have a cob," began Toby.

"A dog would be better, yes," replied Aunt Sophy, just like the curate.

"A *cob*," the boy explained more loudly. He concealed his desire to laugh.

"Ah!" cried the other. "Yes, that would be a useful present indeed. We could use it in the pony-cart." He thought of bread-and-butter pudding.

"I suppose so," agreed Toby, his face falling. He sighed. Oh, dear, why weren't cats and nowls and tortoises useful, he wondered? And that night, on his knees beside the bed, after praying as usual that Aunt's deaf ears might be cured, he added another Special Request, but added it indirectly, because he had been told he was never to ask for things he wanted for himself. That was just begging.

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"And please make a tortoise, a cat, and a nowl useful," he prayed, with all the energy in his body, then went to sleep with a comfortable feeling that he had done his best—all he could, at any rate. He hadn't asked anything for himself, he decided; he certainly hadn't "begged." But next morning his heart sank, as he overheard his Uncle talking loudly in the hall, telling his wife that the Green's tortoise was lost again. He was in his top-hat, ready to go to London for his meeting at the Hat Office, and Aunt Sophy, whose ears had certainly not been cured yet, was seeing him into the motor to go to the station.

"Perhaps it's crawled into our garden," he shouted.

"What! Dorcas crawled into our larder!" exclaimed Aunt Sophy, holding her hands up in amazement. Dorcas was one of the hunters. "That's the third time this year," she said, when she understood. "It's always getting lost." She shook her head with annoyance, just like blanc-mange, thought Toby.

"Beastly little creatures!" complained her husband. "They're no use to anybody. Why, they can't even squeak!" He bustled off in the car, and Toby saw him through the window polishing his tall silk hat with his hand, as though it were an animal he loved and was stroking affectionately.

Yet, though upset a little by what he had heard, Toby had a queer feeling that somehow a tortoise could be useful, and that he would get one for a birthday present after all.

Now, that night, as he was lying in bed, supposed to be asleep, an odd thing happened. It was half-past seven. He was thinking about tortoises, cats and owls, when his wakeful ears caught a strange sentence in the hall below:

"Some use after all," his Uncle's voice boomed downstairs. "Useful little beast, I say . . ."

Toby sat up and listened. The talk echoed, went lost, came back again. He crept out of bed to hear better. Thank goodness, Aunt Sophy hadn't heard properly. His Uncle cried louder still:

"Some use, after all," he repeated, "the silly thing. Another minute and I'd have been smashed to smithereens, I tell you." He bawled the next words: "Anyhow, it saved my life!"

"Paid your wife!" Aunt Sophy echoed, still not catching the sentence.

"*Saved my life,*" his Uncle yelled across the hall. "*The tortoise did!*" And his jolly laugh rang out like a peal of bells.

By this time Toby, in his nightshirt, was standing in the passage, leaning across the banisters. He was listening to every word. He was shaking with excitement. He heard the whole story.

On the way back from the station the car reached the dangerous cross-roads, where high hedges hid anything coming the other way, and just at this point the head-lights revealed two boys on their knees in the middle of the road. The car was going fast, but the chauffeur stopped it with such a jerk that Uncle William's top-hat fell off. At first he was rather angry, but a moment later, he was rather pleased. For, almost a second after they stopped, an enormous trolley, driven at reckless speed and without sounding its horn, came thundering down the intersecting cross-road. But for the two boys in the road, the car must have been smashed to smithereens.

"And me with it," roared Uncle William.

"Gracious goodness!" cried Aunt Sophy, looking now like an apple dumpling.

"Yes, me with it?" shouted Uncle William. "Only that stupid tortoise saved me."

"What tortoise?" asked Aunt Sophy, hearing for once correctly.

"The tortoise in the road, my dear," bawled her husband. "The Green's tortoise. Those two boys found it there and were examining it. It saved my life, I tell you, that Green tortoise did! Lucky it got lost—eh?"

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Aunt Sophy, looking like a hot milk pudding, Toby thought, made queer noises under her breath. He couldn't hear exactly what she said.

"So I've got that tortoise to thank for my life," repeated Uncle William, now shouting like a man at the Circus Tent. "Useful little beast, eh? I've sent it over to the Greens," he added, as he leaned back in his chair and laughed out loud. Then his voice changed suddenly. "Little rascal!" he cried out—and came up the hall stairs three steps at a time!

Which made Toby so frightened that he simply couldn't move an inch. For when his Uncle leaned back in his chair to laugh, his eyes turned up. And as his eyes turned up, he saw a little boy in his white nightshirt leaning over the banisters and listening—listening to every word. And when he said "Little rascal!" he didn't mean the tortoise; he meant this figure in white who ought to have been in bed and asleep hours ago.

Two minutes later the white shivering figure had been bundled back into bed, and the big man, though in a much quieter voice, was telling him how naughty he was, while he poked him, smacked him, tickled him.

"You said it saved your life," the smaller figure gurgled, between its giggles and wriggles.

"I did, did I?" growled the man.

"I heard you," said the other, half beneath the sheets.

"Oh!" came the reply. "You've got sharp ears, haven't you?"

There was a pause.

"Is your life—useful?" asked the smaller voice.

"Very," answered the bigger one.

"Thank you very much," came a whisper from beneath the sheets.

And from the face by the door, as its owner put the light out, came a queer grimace that was not unlike a *wink*.

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When Toby was alone, he decided he would call his tortoise "Bill," because that was his Uncle's name. Would it lay eggs? Would it be strong enough for him to stand on? It would sleep all the winter, he had heard. It couldn't squeak, but it didn't mind if it rained. He was thinking of all these various things, when sleep caught him, and he slipped away into the land of dreams.

Things went rather quickly after that. It was the very next afternoon that he heard a curious scream, several screams, and felt sure that the cook was hurt, or the new calf was being naughty. It sounded like one or other, he thought. Nannie was just bringing him in from his dull afternoon walk, for they had tried to play Hide-and-Seek together, but Nannie was too big to hide in any ordinary bush, so the expedition had been without much interest.

They were near the house when the screams rang out.

"Come on!" cried Toby. "Something's up—something jolly!" He began to run, and Nannie ran heavily after him, warning him to be careful.

"Well, I do declare," she exclaimed a moment later, "if it's not your Aunt Sophy!" They had reached the drawing-room windows now.

"Then something's bitten her!" cried Toby. "Hurry up, Nannie!"

They ran headlong into the hall, but Toby was first to dash in at the drawing-room door, Nannie just behind him.

"She's bitten!" he cried.

Then he stopped, for he hardly knew what to do next. He saw his Aunt standing on a sofa, her skirts pulled high, her hair untidy, her glasses fallen off her nose, and her eyes starting out of her head. A tortoiseshell comb hung over one ear and a wisp of stray hair across one eye. This time it was not a pudding he thought of. What occurred to him was Guy Fawkes.

"It's up my dress," she was screaming at the top of her voice. "It'll bite me! I shall be poisoned! I can't find it! Oh! Oh!"

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While one hand held her skirts up, with the other she kept feeling all over her body, as if trying to catch something. She was dancing like a doll on wires.

"What is it, ma'am?" yelled Nannie, running to her rescue.

"A mouse, a mouse!" screamed Aunt Sophy. "A huge big mouse is up me! It's run up my skirts. Oh, catch it, catch it for me! Quick!" She danced and wriggled in her terror. Nannie instantly began prodding her all over, trying to feel the mouse inside her dress.

Then Toby had a brilliant idea.

"I'll get my butterfly net!" he shouted, and was off like a shot out of the room. He rushed upstairs. But on the way upstairs he remembered that a mouse-trap would be more use than a butterfly-net, and then that a mouse-trap without a bit of cheese was no good, so he dashed down to see the cook. But when he got into the kitchen, he found the cook sound asleep in a chair with a newspaper over her face. And when he waked her by yelling "A mouse is up Aunt Sophy's dress!" the cook only opened her eyes and said, "Why, bless the boy, my kitchen's full of mice, and that's because we haven't got a cat, of course,"—and at once spread the newspaper over her face again and composed herself to sleep as before.

This remark changed the whole current of Toby's thoughts. There *were* mice in the house after all! One had run up Aunt Sophy's legs and bitten her; and the kitchen was full of them, for the cook said so. Then a cat *would* be useful!

He tore back into the hall again, then into the drawing-room. His Aunt was in an arm-chair now, with her feet on a footstool, well off the ground; she was fanning herself, while Nannie stood beside her, half out of breath, and half laughing. Aunt Sophy, too, was panting, but half crying. No mouse was visible anywhere.

Toby went over and snuggled into the armchair beside his Aunt.



HE SAW HIS AUNT STANDING ON THE SOFA, HER SKIRTS
PULLED HIGH

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"Has it come down yet?" he asked, trying to comfort her. But she didn't hear him properly.

"Done brown," she said breathlessly, "I should think I am indeed!" And for once she forgot to correct his slang. "It got away," she added. "It's back in its hole by now, I suppose." She leaned back exhausted.

"Auntie," began Toby, as soothingly as he could, "you know, a cat would be rather useful, wouldn't it?"

Aunt Sophy nodded her head. He wasn't sure if she had heard or not. He repeated it. "Yes," she agreed, "it would."

"Will you tell Uncle?" asked Toby, quick as a flash.

"Yes," she agreed, "I will. I certainly will."

"A Persian," suggested Toby, "is best for mice." But Aunt Sophy thought he said something about her "pet aversion were mice," and this took a long time to explain and straighten out.

Nannie had to help, for Toby was now too excited to bother about long words like "aversion," which he didn't understand. He was wondering all the time what to call his pet when he got it. He felt sure now he *would* get it. In the end he decided he would call it "Sophy."

Things had gone pretty quickly before, but now, thought Toby, they went quicker still. His prayers to make a cat and a tortoise useful had been marvellously answered, but what about a owl? Having, as he believed, made sure of the first two, the third now seemed far more desirable and valuable than all three put together. But how on earth could an owl prove itself useful to anything or anybody?

Only two days were left till his birthday dawned. Nothing happened. He didn't know what to do. His Uncle was away most of the time. Once or twice they met in the hall or in the garden, but Toby knew better than to say anything. He believed in his Uncle as he believed in his prayers. He had made sure of his cat and tortoise. The less said now the better. His Uncle

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

looked solemnly at him, and he looked solemnly back. Owls and nowls were not mentioned.

The last day came. It passed. Nothing had happened. Toby went to bed, feeling rather despondent. He curled up. Nannie lit the night-light and went out. He lay thinking, wondering, questioning. Corncrakes were calling in the distance. He heard the owls, too, hooting in the woods beyond the back lawn where the gypsies camped. He remembered that his Uncle disliked these gypsies, because they were what he called a "nuisance," but it was the owls he listened to now. Such wonderful, mysterious birds they were! He often heard them hooting in this way after sunset. He knew the screaming noise they made when they were on the hunt, and the other, quieter cry when mate called to mate as they sat in the ivy towers of the barn. Once he had seen one flying in the day-time, uncertain of its way. It made no sound. It was a beautiful, magnificent creature. Its beak and claws had no terror for him. Its feathers were soft, its great wings whirred marvellously. It travelled about the world in the darkness when everybody slept. Oh, to have one for his very own! To watch its great eyes blinking!

He lay in bed listening for a long time; then sleep came over him, and he dropped into dreamland, and the sound of wings and hooting seemed to follow him into his dreams. The hooting especially went on and on and on: "To whit, To whoo . . ." on and on and on, now louder, now softer, but always echoing through his dreams of mice and cats and tortoises and deaf aunts who looked like female Guy Fawkeses—on and on the soft sound of hooting came through the open window into his very room . . .

Then, suddenly, it became very loud indeed. Much closer it sounded. But it was no longer "To whit, To whoo," it was the other cry—the wild, hunting scream. Shrill and fierce, this high shriek went whistling past the open window. And Toby woke.

TOBY'S BIRTHDAY PRESENTS

He sat up in bed, rubbed his eyes, opened his ears, and listened. The room was dark, for the night-light had burnt out. But he did not feel frightened, as sometimes when he woke suddenly like this. He only wondered what had made him wake. A queer, shrill noise seemed still sounding in his ears. What was it? Also he wondered what time it was; and just at that moment, far away in the depths of the hall below, he heard the great clock strike.

“One . . . two . . .”

He counted the strokes. So it was two o'clock in the morning, and still many long hours from sunrise. Then, hardly had the echo of the strokes died away, than another sound broke the stillness of the night, as a wild, shrill cry, half scream, half yell, tore whistling through the air outside his open window. It made him start and pull the bed-clothes about him.

“A nowl!” he exclaimed under his breath, shaking with excitement. “That’s a nowl on the hunt! And that’s what made me wake too!”

Some little boys of Toby’s age, waking at two in the morning and hearing such strange noises, alone in their room, would have been frightened, and probably have screamed themselves. But Toby had his Uncle’s commonsense, and his father had been a soldier. Besides, he knew an owl’s cry when he heard it. It was no new sound to him. Also he knew that, as it could see in the dark, it would not dash into his room. But his main thought at this exciting moment, to tell the truth, had to do with another matter altogether. He thought of his birthday presents. This was undoubtedly a nowl. It might be a useful nowl. It might even be an answer to his prayer!

Into his brain, which may have been little but was certainly wide-awake, came a curious notion then. “Perhaps,” he thought, “if I show myself, it will do something useful! If it could *see* me, it might—” Well, he hardly knew what it could do to prove itself useful, but anyhow it might do *something*. So he crept

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

out of bed and tiptoed over to the window. He pulled the cord and the green blind shot up with a loud rattle; then he opened the lower sash—the upper one was already open—and leaned out.

Nothing happened. The stars were shining brightly. It was very still. There was no wind to stir the bushes. The owl's cry was not repeated; it had caught its prey, probably, and was now gobbling it up in a tree. It could see his white figure standing by the open window, at any rate, for nowls, of course, could see everything in the dark, he knew. Below him lay the flower-beds, dark blotches on the lawn. The cold air crept inside his night-gown and made him shiver a little, but he was too excited to mind that.

"The nowl can see me," he thought. "If I wave my arms, it will see me better still."



HE WAVED HIS ARMS, TRYING TO ATTRACT ITS ATTENTION

He waved his white arms, trying to attract its attention; and he was just going to get a towel and wave that too, when he saw something that suddenly made his heart stand still. Two of the flower-beds were moving—moving slowly across the lawn!

Toby held his breath and stared. He couldn't believe his eyes. His heart was thumping now. He was frightened, too

TOBY'S BIRTHDAY PRESENTS

frightened to turn back into the room, or sink down and hide himself below the level of the window-sill. The flower-beds went on moving. Yet flower-beds, he knew, could not really move. It was impossible. And then the truth flashed into him. These dark blotches were not flower-beds at all. There were no flower-beds on the back lawn, but only on the front one. These dark blotches were living things. They were creatures. That's why they moved. They were very big too, as big as elephants. Bigger even than elephants! What in the world were they? He gasped. He began to shake all over.

Toby was terrified, too terrified to scream or move, almost too terrified to breathe. He just stood motionless and stared, clutching the window-sill with two cold hands. He tried to make himself as small as possible, so as not to be seen. He let his head sink down into his shoulders, but he was too big to hide. Indeed, he felt himself bigger than ever before. The whole night saw him easily. And, as he stared, all the fairy-tales he had ever heard swarmed into his mind—monsters, giants, ogres, goblins, with most of the animals from the Zoo into the bargain.

The big, dark things, meanwhile, kept moving slowly and quietly to and fro over the lawn. They made no noise. He believed they were watching him. The starlight was not bright enough for him to see exactly how they were shaped, but it was enough for him to see, a moment later, two smaller outlines that were now moving very swiftly towards the bigger ones. These two new shapes darted from side to side. They, too, made no noise. He had decided that the bigger ones were elephants or monsters. The two smaller ones, he knew at once, were human beings. They were men. And that very instant they began to speak. He heard one say in a very low voice to the other:

"The gate's open, Bill. Drive 'em out that way——"

The two men immediately ran swiftly towards the big, dark creatures, and a noise followed that seemed to shake the lawn and ought to have wakened the entire household. It was a regular

stampede. The big creatures moved suddenly at a tremendous speed, the two men after them.

But Toby saw no more. At this moment he just plopped down upon the floor in a heap and screamed and screamed and screamed at the top of his voice. It seemed to him that he screamed for a long time, but, actually, it was only a minute later when Nannie, who slept across the passage, came bouncing into the room with a lighted candle and found him there.

"There's elephants on the lawn!" he shrieked, "men and elephants trying to catch me!" while Nannie, greatly surprised and only just out of dreamland herself, popped him back into bed, shut the window with a bang, but without looking out, and did her best to soothe and calm his frightened little soul.

It was only after some time she began to grasp that it was not an ordinary nightmare that had frightened him, and that he had not merely been walking in his sleep. But the moment she did realise that he had seen something real, and that this "something" might possibly be burglars, she acted promptly. First putting Toby into a maid's room down the passage, she went forthwith to wake the butler, who went forthwith and woke the master, who went forthwith himself to wake the groom over the stables. So that, twenty minutes later, though Toby did not know this at the time, these three big men, armed with two shot guns and a pistol, and carrying a couple of hurricane lanterns, sallied forth to search the grounds for the two mysterious figures and strange big creatures, while the chauffeur raced away on his bicycle to get the local policeman from the village six miles off.

Long before the policeman, however, had dragged himself out of his warm sheets and squeezed himself into his blue uniform, Toby had fallen peacefully asleep again in Nannie's room, and the mystery of the moving flower-beds had been all explained. Someone had left the gate open into the back garden, and two of the horses belonging to the gypsies camped on the common beyond, had strayed in. Two of the gypsy men had come to drive them

TOBY'S BIRTHDAY PRESENTS

back again before the daylight came. It was this that Toby saw and heard. But the horses had made deep holes on the soft lawn, and on their way out had ruined vegetable beds in the kitchen garden, trampling down the asparagus, which Uncle William particularly loved.

Next day, to his great surprise, Toby found himself rather a hero; he had expected to be scolded, but instead he was patted on the back and praised. His Uncle disliked the gypsies, because they came at night to steal wood and water, they had fierce dogs tied up by their tents, they were dirty, and made what he called "a filthy mess of the whole Common." But he had never been able to get any real evidence against them to prove that they were a nuisance. Now, at last, he could prove it. Toby, rather, had proved it for him. Uncle William was delighted.

"But what in the world made you wake up at that hour?" he asked in his booming voice.

"A nowl," replied Toby quietly, feeling sure of his ground.

"What d'you mean, boy? How could an owl wake you?"

"Because it did," returned Toby. "I heard it, you see."

"But I don't see," roared his Uncle. "How could you hear it in your bedroom? Weren't you asleep at two o'clock in the morning? And if not, why not?"

"It woke me. It went hunting past the window. When it hunts, it shrieks, you know, Uncle, like—oh, like anything."

Uncle William caught him on to his knee. "Now, my little man, tell me all about it. Out with it. And no nonsense, mind!"

Toby was only too pleased. He told his whole story. He told more than Nannie ever knew, more than Aunt Sophy ever heard. He was not a scrap afraid of his roaring Uncle.

"Well, well, I never did!" was the man's exclamation when the tale was ended. "I never, never did!" He poked him in the ribs and gazed at him. "Plucky youngster," he added, and then poked him again.

Toby kept silent for a little time. Then he began to fidget. He drew a long, deep breath. He was preparing for something, evidently. At last, looking his Uncle straight in the eye, he said calmly:

"A useful bird, wasn't it, Uncle?"

"Eh? What d'you mean by that?" came the gruff question.

"The nowl, I mean, was useful. It woke me, you see."

His Uncle stared hard at him. Toby returned the stare. Then his Uncle began to fidget in his turn. He also drew a long, deep breath. After that, he spoke:

"You're as clever as a Cat," he said, "as plucky as a Tortoise, and as wise as—as a nowl. You've proved that all three are useful, and you shall have all three for your birthday—to-morrow. Because—I promised."

And next day, sure enough, Toby got them all three, though how his Uncle managed it he never knew. He called the cat Sophy, the tortoise Percy, and the owl Gypsy; and all three were what Uncle William called a "perfect nuisance about the place, and quite useless into the bargain." For Sophy spoilt all the best chairs with her claws and never caught a single mouse; and Percy got lost regularly once a week and had to be hunted for; and Gypsy did nothing but sit in its cage and blink its great eyes open and shut, and pretend to be so wise that—well, it never could have been half as wise as it pretended to be, and so it was just a humbug. But Toby loved them all three, in spite of their wickedness, and so their wickedness didn't really matter.

Within six months, however, he was tired of them all, deadly tired: of Percy, because he hardly ever saw him and he had no voice anyhow; of Sophy, because she wouldn't really play and never had any kittens, being actually a Tom; and of Gypsy, because he never hooted even once, and Toby grew tired of those great, wise eyes.

So it was that, the following year, when his birthday came round again, and Uncle William caught him up on to his knee and

TOBY'S BIRTHDAY PRESENTS

roared at him: "What d'you want, my little man?" he replied without a moment's hesitation:

"A top-hat and a cob, please, Uncle."

He got both. And from Aunt Sophy he got a fox terrier that really *would* play. And the best of it all was that he hadn't got to prove first of all that either of them was useful!



“A Marriage has been Arranged”

A FAIRY TALE

MARY WEBB

(MRS. H. B. L. WEBB)

THE King of Elfland was troubled. In fact, he was vexed. Exceedingly vexed. He told the Keeper of the Petals so, and he also told the Lord High Marshal of the Glow-worms, and Barley-Sugar-Stick-in-Waiting. He told them all a good many times. For when you are several thousand years old (by the Dandelion Clocks), and you have a Kingdom which is always disturbed by plots and riots or attacks from the Giants or the Gnomes or the Fairies (whose countries are close to Elfland), and when you have Royal Gout into the bargain, you are vexed fairly easily. (Royal Gout is the same as ordinary gout, only grander and worse.)

When the King came to the Queen's parlour, where she was topping and tailing gooseberries for the Sunday tart, and told her how vexed he was, she said:

“So am I vexed, my dear, indeed to goodness!”

For in Elfland all wives echo their husbands, whether they agree with them or not. To do anything else is bad form, not cricket, and taboo. Husbands, in Elfland, are always Heroic, Romantic, and Right. It is not easy, but being elves they are able to manage it. And though the King was now several thousand years old, and very stout, the Queen never swerved from the idea that he was Heroic and Romantic and Right. Nobody could deny

"A MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ARRANGED"

his stoutness. If he had not been both an elf and a King he might have been compared to the Fat Boy in the Pickwick Papers. And, being so fat, it was dangerous for him to be vexed. The King's



THE KING WAS NOW SEVERAL THOUSAND YEARS OLD

Doctor, who was as old as the hills and as thin as if he had been put through the mangle, said that for the King to let himself be

vexed was suicidal. But to-day the King did not seem to care whether it was suicidal or not. He went to the window of the Throne Room, which looked out on the lawn, and watched his Only Daughter playing *La Crosse*. At least, he watched her *not* playing *La Crosse*, for she was, to put it plainly, a dreadful duffer at games.

"Look at her!" cried the King. "She can't play at all. Duffer!"

"She can't sew either, dear," said the Queen. "She ought to sit among her maidens and embroider banners until a Prince comes to propose to her."

"A Prince!" said the King. "Why, of course, that's the whole trouble! How am I to make an Advantageous Alliance with a Foreign Potentate when my only family is a daughter like that? How can I possibly ask the Crown Prince of Faery to come here with an eye to matrimony when she's not only Plain, but Dreamy and Stupid as well?"

At the word Plain, the King's Doctor and the Apothecary both rushed forward, for they were afraid the King would have a stroke, and die. Elves do die, unless they can persuade someone to put them in a play or a book. That was why Titania, that evening when she saw Will Shakespeare stalking the deer in the forest of Arden, ran after him and laid a spell on him, and made him put her in a play, where you may see her to this day. And one or two elves have run after J. M. Barrie, and got into books. But the Elf King had not got into any book or play, and the whole Court was in terror that he would go off in a fit, and disappear like dew, in his great vexation at the tiresomeness of the Princess.

"She just wanders," said the Queen.

"Wanders!" shouted the King. "That's exactly it. Whenever I want her, she's somewhere else. I tell you, it's very tiresome!"

At this moment, the Princess caught her foot in her gown, which was longer on one side than on the other, because she had

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got up and gone out into the forest long before her Ladies-in-Waiting were awake, and she had fastened her gown with a safety pin because she was in such a hurry, and the diamond buttons took such a long time to do up.

"Careless, too," groaned the King. "Dreamy and Stupid and Plain and Careless." He frowned so darkly that the Court Weather Prophet said it was blowing up for tempest.

"Fetch me," said the King, "the Parchment on which are written the Ancient Laws of Elfland."

They fetched it. It took fifty of them to carry it, because the Kings of Elfland are allowed to make as many laws as they like, and as Elfland is so extremely old the laws take up enormous quantities of parchment, although they are crowded together on both sides of the page, and written as small as the very smallest writing on a yellow-hammer's egg.

"Add this," said the King. "It is decreed that our only daughter, Elfina, Princess of all the Petals, shall, on account of her tiresomeness, be called no more by the ancient and honourable name of Elfina, but shall be called, in derision, Wander. We will see if satire will cure her."

He said this through clenched teeth as people do in stories when they are really angry, and the Court watched him as admiringly as if he were doing a conjuring trick.

"But the name of *Wanda* isn't spelt *Wander*," said the Queen. Then she remembered that the King was Heroic and Romantic and Right, and apologised.

"I know it isn't," said the King. "'Wanda' is a pretty name, but 'Wander' simply recalls 'Goosey-goosey-gander, whither will you wander.' And that is what she is to be called. If that doesn't cure her, I shall immure her."

The Royal Bard darted forward and said, "That is poetry, your Majesty."

"Great occasions demand great utterances," said the King modestly.

“Don’t let Elfina hear you speak of immuring her,” cautioned the Queen, topping and tailing so fast in her anxiety, that the gooseberries seemed to slip through her fingers like a rosary; “if she does, she’ll run away.”

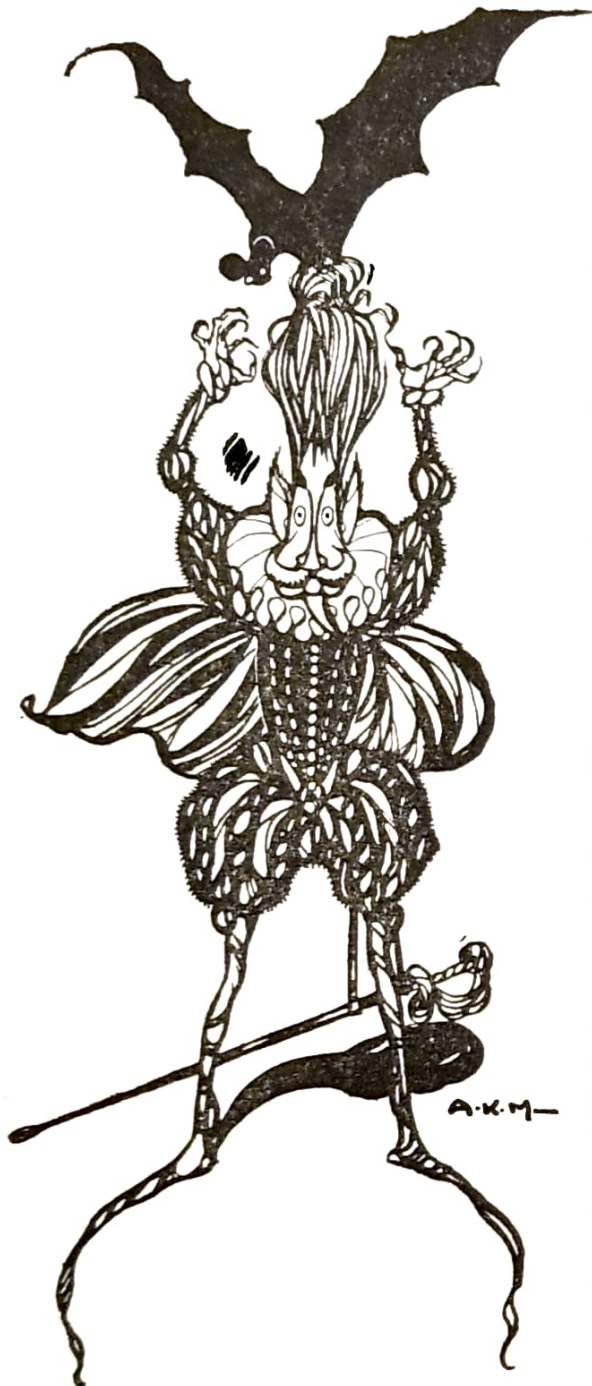
But Elfina had heard, for the King in his Just Wrath had spoken very loudly. So by the time she was sent for to hear the decree, she was in the heart of the forest.

“Follow her! Watch her! Bring her hither!” ordered his Majesty.

So a Regiment of Horse, mounted on small blue dragonflies, and a Regiment of Foot, and the Mayor and Corporation, and the Chief Constable with a truncheon made of a clove such as you see in bread sauce, and a Battalion of Police in helmets of blue Monkshood, and twelve Detectives with Police Dogs (in case Elfina was wicked), and the Royal Doctors (in case she was ill), and the most Terrific and Respected Master of Asylums (in case she was mad), and the Archbishops of Elfland (in case she needed Spiritual Consolation), and the Princess’s Nurse—the Duchess of Petunia—for Propriety’s sake, all started for the forest, very politely taking precedence of each other, so that they seemed to be dancing a Tango.

When this great company came into the green rides of the forest, which had been so quiet that you could have heard a moth preening her wings, there was a most terrific tumult. Birds flew up on every side. Jays screamed. Woodpeckers laughed. Pheasants crowed. Owls fell out of the holes where they had been fast asleep, and hooted in terror. Bats came awake long before the proper time, and blundered about, so that one got caught in the curled hair of the Master of Asylums, and he became demented. Bees, wasps and hornets rushed out of their nests and fell upon the procession, so that it became a regular riot. The Princess, who was sitting on a silver tree trunk among the hyacinths with a nice-looking Young Man, started up, pale and frightened, whispering:

"A MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ARRANGED"



ONE GOT CAUGHT IN THE CURLED
HAIR OF THE MASTER OF ASYLUMS

"It is the Court!"

"The Court!" said the Young Man. "I thought it was a travelling Circus."

"No, it is the Court," she said. "They have come to fetch me."

The Young Man gave a loud "Ha! Ha!" And indeed the company did look strange. The Master of Asylums without his dignity seemed nothing at all. The Detectives, having been singled out by the Hornets, were a sorry sight. The Police Dogs had bitten both the Archbishops. The Duchess of Petunia's wig had been torn off by a Bat, so that she looked like a Billiard Ball, and the whole of the Regiments of Horse and Foot were so convulsed with laughter that they could not hear the orders of their Colonels. The Doctors were shouting for Caustic, Washing Blue and Sedatives, but nobody took any notice.

"Save me!" cried the Princess.

"Of course!" said the Young Man.

So Elfina stopped crying, and when the Mayor and Aldermen, still taking precedence of each other, and fighting off the Bees as best they could, gave her the Royal Message, he said decisively,

"I will bring her. You are not in a fit state to take anybody anywhere."

"We have our orders," said the Chief Constable. And everybody else echoed him. Even the Duchess of Petunia, who was having hysterics, screamed out: "We have our orders!" in the midst of a burst of tears.

"I shall bring her myself," decided the Young Man, and he said it in the way that makes people feel as if there has been a Royal Decree.

"Go!" said the Young Man.



"GO!" SAID THE YOUNG MAN

"A MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ARRANGED"

They went, and the Owls, Bats, Bees, Wasps, and Hornets followed them to the edge of the forest.

"Now!" said the Young Man. He put his arm firmly round the Princess, and she was immediately Enchanted. And so they came to the King.

And when the King saw his Only Daughter with the arm of a Common Young Man round her, when she ought to have been in the arms of a Powerful Potentate, he was so absolutely dumfounded that the Apothecary said he could not answer for the consequences.

When the King could speak, he said, "It hasn't cured you, so I shall immure you."

"She's coming with me," said the Young Man.

"Execute him!" ordered the King.

But nobody seemed exactly able to take the first step. There was something about the Young Man—especially when he looked at you with a dark, dwelling gaze—which made people feel awkward at the idea of interfering with him.

"I like her," announced the Young Man. "In fact, I love her. And I'm going to take her."

The King was fighting for breath, and, as is usual at such times, everybody came crowding round to stifle him more than he was already stifled.

All that the King could do was to wave a limp hand to the Chief Constable and whisper:

"Kill!"

The Chief Constable drew his sword, made of a sharp green blade of grass. But at this the Young Man also drew his. And behold! it was all a-dazzle with silver, and on it was written in letters of gold:

"The Prince of Faery."

"Your Majesty!" cried the Lord High Diplomat, holding a burnt feather under the Royal Nose. "This is no common man! It is the Fairy Prince himself."

"We knew it, your Majesty," said the Detectives in chorus, "for we found this kerchief in the forest."

They held it up, and it was marked, "C. P. of F."

But until the Young Man drew his sword they had not had the *least idea* who he was.

When the King understood, he came to himself in a moment, and gave an Audience to the Prince of Faery. And, being a very honest King, he made a great effort, and said, "You know, I suppose, about the dreaminess and stupidity and carelessness?"

"That was only because she was thinking about me," said the Prince.

"And you have noticed—the plain-ness?"

"Plain - ness?" cried the Prince. "Why, she's perfectly Lovely!"

"So she is!" cried all the Court together, bass, tenor, alto, con-



SHE WAS LOVELY

"A MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ARRANGED"

tralto, soprano, falsetto, so that they sounded like a Dog Show.

And it was true that she *was* lovely, because the Prince had enchanted her.

Then the King said that Elfina was a good girl, and the Queen, who had been absent-mindedly eating green gooseberries, kissed her. And the Duchess of Petunia, in a new wig of a slightly different colour, was sent to the wardrobe to get ready for the Wedding, because the Prince said that it must be Here and Now, and as everybody felt a little awkward about what had happened in the forest, being afraid that the Prince would chaff them, they all worked with a will at the festive preparations.

The Archbishops were so much bandaged that they could not officiate, and it took all the Rural Deans, Canons and Archdeacons to make up. But make up they did, and when the Princess came in wearing a frock made of appleblossom and a primrose train and golden ladies' slippers, and a daisy chain which the Prince had just finished when they were interrupted, there was not an Elf with Dry Eyes.

Then the Rural Deans asked Elfina, in the usual way, whether she would promise to *say* always that her Husband was Heroic, Romantic and Right, whatever she *thought*. The Princess was quite annoyed at this question, and she said:

"He *is* Heroic and Romantic and Right. I know it. Isn't he my young man? Haven't we been walking-out ever since the crocuses flowered?"

And though, if Elfina had not been marrying the Prince, this would have been thought a very common way of talking, as she *was* marrying the Prince, everybody said:

"How Poetical!" "How Neat!"

At the Great Moment, when the Prince put on Elfina's finger the Ring in which was set the Fire Opal of Faery, the King was so happy that he completely lost his breath, and had to be given *sal volatile*.

Only the Lord High Diplomat was a little discontented, as he had wanted to make the match himself. But his wife said:

“You *did* make it, my dear! You put it into their heads by Telepathy!”

Then the Chief Diplomat was content, and so was everybody else, and they kept up a Feast for a Thousand Years, which Feast is probably going on still.

The Disappointing Dream

DAVID CECIL

I dreamt I had a purple cat,
With eyes of turquoise blue,
He played a tune upon the flute,
When other cats would mew.

He swam for seven nights and days,
From here to far Goree,
He brought a box back in his teeth,
And laid it on my knee,

With seven stately silver mice
Engraved upon the lid.
I opened it and found inside
Another box lay hid.

With feet like those of little birds
And feathered wings to fly,
I took the lid off and within
A parcel met my eye,

THE DISAPPOINTING DREAM

Wrapped in a speckled laurel leaf,
And tied with ribbons green.
I soon undid it, but inside
Another still was seen,

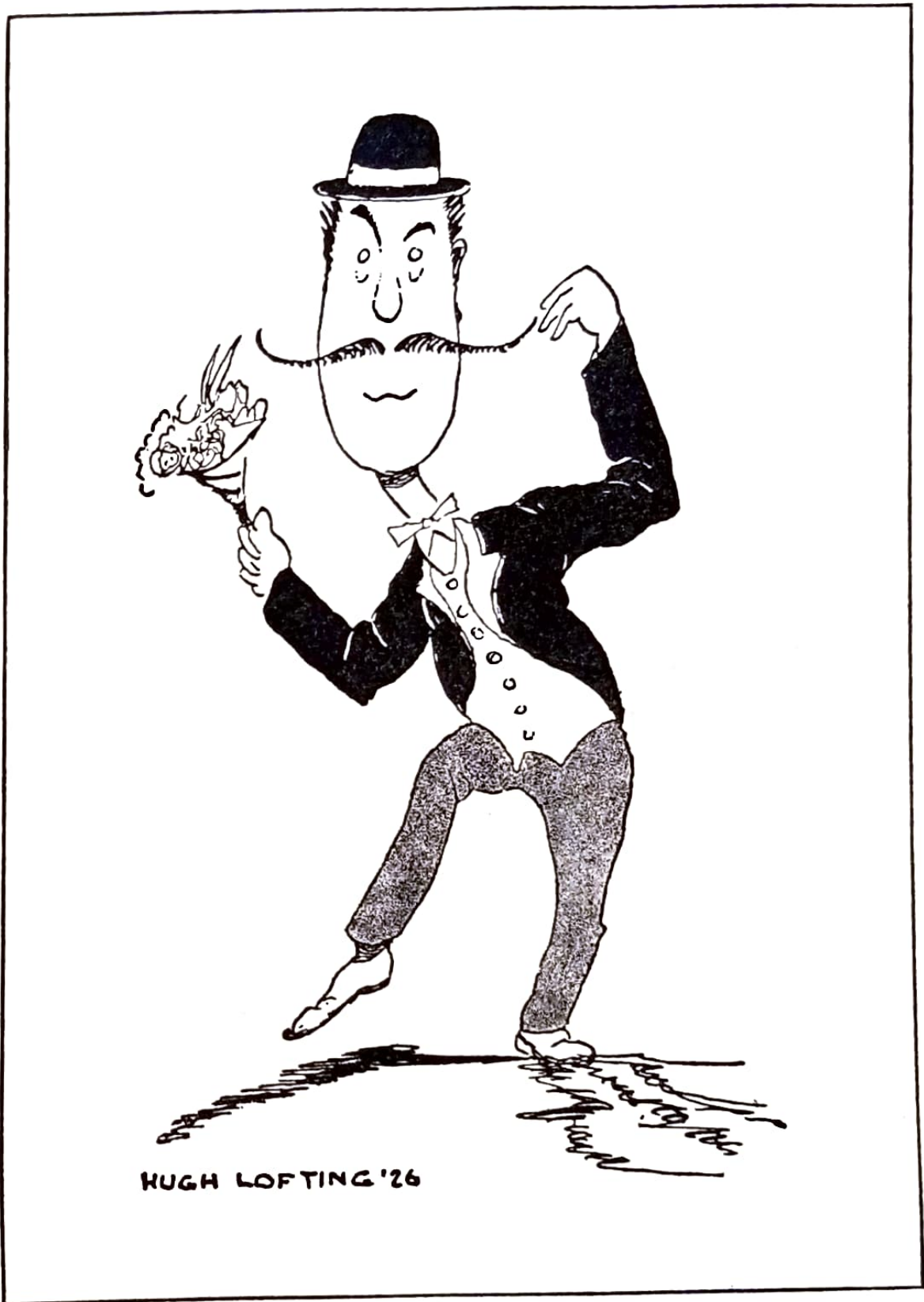


As smooth as a brown acorn
Within the acorn-cup.
In complicated cobwebs furled,
And in the folds this writing curled:
"The nicest present in the world."

DAVID CECIL

I tore it open—broke the string
When—Ting!—the front door bell went—Ting,
Ting, ting—and woke me up.





MR. TWINKLE

Kaspar and the Red Slippers

ADELAIDE PHILLPOTTS

KASPER was an only child of six years old. Because he had no playfellows, he played alone in the garden, and often he wished for another little boy, or at least a fairy, to play with. But he had never seen a fairy, and his mother knew nobody who had a little boy also.

When it rained, Kaspar amused himself indoors, and his favourite game was blowing bubbles. Nurse rolled up his sleeves, and gave him a clay pipe with soap in it, and he stood over a basin in the nursery, blowing bubbles, and watching them sail upward like green and golden worlds.

One day Kaspar blew a new sort of bubble—a purple and orange bubble, twice as big as an ordinary bubble—and inside was a fairy. For it may happen that good little children blow bubbles with fairies in them.

The fairy was whirling round inside the bubble, fluttering her wings, and crying:

“Let me out! Let me out! You’ve imprisoned me unlawfully, and I want to get out.”

Kaspar saw the bubble sailing to the ceiling, and he jumped up and poked his finger through it, and the bubble broke. Then out flew the fairy, delighted to be free, and settled on the tip of Kaspar’s ear. In her tiny hands she held a pair of red slippers, no bigger than daisy petals.

ADELAIDE PHILLPOTTS

"Where have you come from, you darling creature?" Kaspar cried.



INSIDE THE BUBBLE WAS A FAIRY

"From your pipe, of course, and I've brought you these," said she, throwing the slippers into his lap. "Try them on."

KASPAR AND THE RED SLIPPERS

"But they're too small. They won't fit!"

"Silly boy, you haven't tried."

So Kaspar picked up the slippers, and they began to grow, until they grew big enough to slip on his feet.

"They are fairy slippers," said the elf. "And if you're a good boy they'll take you to fairyland on moonlight nights! You just put them on and say: 'Run, little slippers, run!' and off they'll run to fairyland."

"Hurrah!" cried Kaspar. "I'm glad I blew you into the bubble. Hurrah!"

The fairy hopped off his ear, flew round the room twice, and then disappeared through the key-hole, and back to fairyland.

That very night the moon shone, and Kaspar put on the red slippers and said: "Run! Run, little slippers!" And they began to run, with his feet inside them, and ran with him downstairs, and out of the house, and into the garden, and through the shrubbery, and by the pond, and over the hedge, and down the mouse-hole into fairyland.

There he found himself, surrounded by crystal walls, with lights burning, and crowds of fairies hurrying to and fro, handing him honey cakes and primrose wine, and crowning him with buttercups. Brownies and elves and pidwidgeons and cobbolds and all the clans of the fairy people were there. And the red slippers began to dance, with Kaspar inside them, and all the fairies danced too. And they danced and ate cakes of honey until dawn, when the lights went out, and the slippers ran home with Kaspar, and jumped into bed. Then they sprang off his tired little feet, and leapt on to the floor, and arranged themselves neatly beside the chair where his clothes lay.

Kaspar went to fairyland three times in a week, and nobody but the fairies knew. Then one evening he was naughty. He stamped his foot at his nurse and screamed: "I won't have my bath! I won't have my bath to-night!" And he stooped, and

splashed a handful of water at her. So she smacked him, and he began to cry.

Then, when he was put to bed in disgrace, he thought: "I'll



THE RED SLIPPERS BEGAN TO DANCE

go to fairyland, where there are no wicked nurses and horrid baths."

He put on his fairy slippers, and said: "Run, little slippers, run fast!" But they did not move. They stayed where they

KASPAR AND THE RED SLIPPERS

were, the little red slippers, and began to pinch, and pinch, and pinch, tighter and tighter, until Kaspar cried: "Stop pinching, naughty little shoes, and take me to fairyland. Ow-ow-ow! Stop pinching my toes!" But the red slippers pinched like crabs.

So Kaspar crawled out of bed on his poor pinched feet, and went to his nurse and said: "I'm sorry I was naughty. I'm very sorry indeed." And his nurse kissed him, and carried him back to bed. Then the shoes expanded suddenly, and did not pinch any more. But perhaps they were tired, for they wouldn't take him back to fairyland for three nights. After that they ran with him down the mouse hole, and all the fairy people danced with him, and gave him sweets, and played fairy games.

Then came a day when Kaspar had a copy to do, and he thought: "I hate lessons. I'll go to fairyland instead. Why shouldn't I go in the sunshine as well as in the moonlight?"

And he said to the red slippers: "Run! Run to fairyland, little red shoes." And the shoes began to run, but they didn't run to fairyland. They ran out of doors, and round the garden, and along the shrubbery walk, and then upstairs again, and then round the nursery. And they went on running and running and running all over the house and the garden, with poor Kaspar quite out of breath, forced to keep up with them, and crying: "Stop! Stop, wicked red slippers! Stop running. I can't keep up any more. My legs ache. Oh, stop—stop—stop!"

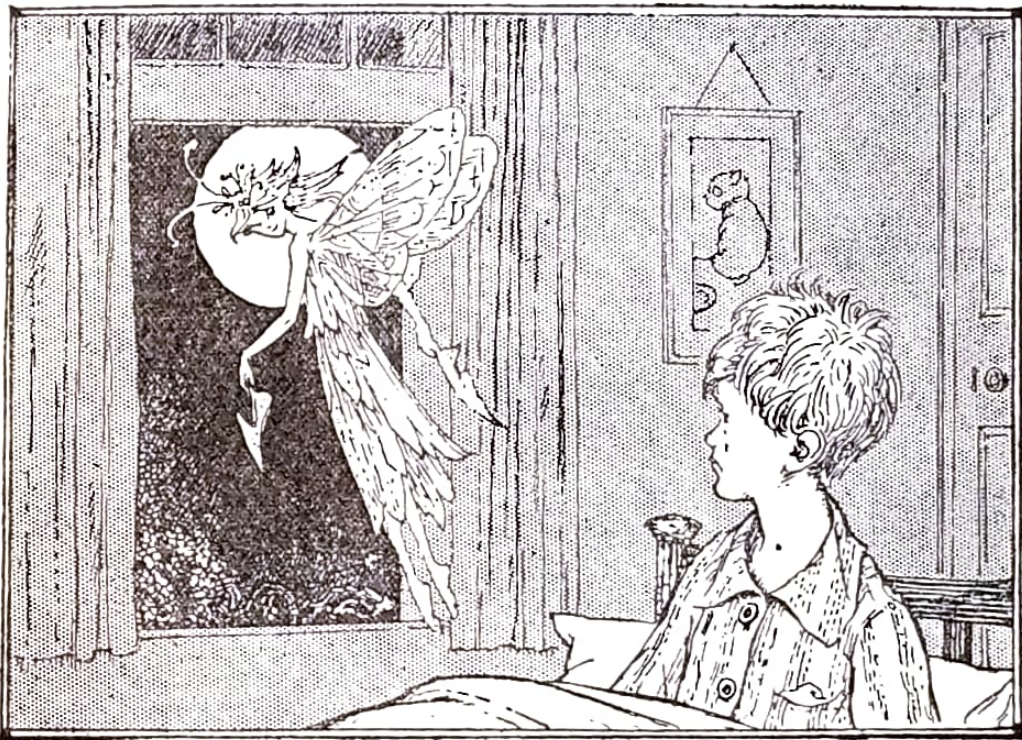
But the slippers ran on and on and on, and at last Kaspar gasped out:

"Run back to the schoolroom, and I'll do my copy. But *do* stop running, please!"

So the little red shoes ran back to the schoolroom, and stopped. And Kaspar did his copy, and never again tried to find fairyland in the sunshine.

Kaspar had many other adventures with the red slippers. Wonderful things happened to him in fairyland, and the red slippers were only unkind if he vexed the fairies. But one day they

did quite a new thing. Instead of taking him to fairyland, they ran right out of the garden gate, and down the road, and through the gate of another house, where he had never been before. And there they led him into the garden, where another little boy was playing at ball by himself. The two children were very surprised to meet like this. But they made friends, and the strange little boy, whose name was Dick, threw his ball to Kaspar, who caught it and threw it back. The ball must have been a fairy ball, for



THE FAIRY FLIES AWAY WITH THE RED SLIPPERS

it laughed every time it was tossed in the air, and Kaspar heard it laughing.

Kaspar's mother was terribly frightened when she found her little boy was lost, and everybody began to run about looking for him and calling his name. And Dick's mother heard them calling for him, and took him by the hand and led him home. Then the mothers also made friends, and arranged for their children to meet

KASPAR AND THE RED SLIPPERS

every day for lessons, and to play in the garden. This new playmate was even better than fairyland, thought Kaspar, so he didn't ask the red slippers to take him there for a whole week. And the little red shoes lay under the bed, forgotten.

Then one night the fairy of the bubble flew in again, and perched on Kaspar's pillow, and said:

"Now that you've found a friend, you won't want the fairy people any more, will you?"

"Yes, I do—I want them both," Kaspar replied.

"But to have both is forbidden," she declared. "Nobody can have both. And some people haven't got either."

"I want both! I want both!" poor Kaspar cried.

But the firm little fairy picked up the red slippers, which shrank again to the size of daisy petals, and flew away to give them to some other lonely child, who had not yet found a play-fellow.

And though Kaspar cried at first for his lost red slippers, he soon realised that Dick was better fun than fairyland; and he forgot all about them until he was grown up, and had a little boy of his own.



CHRISTMAS TREES

BY

KATHARINE TYNAN

The white trees for Christmas
They light the short day.
Pear-bloom and cherry-bloom,
White lilac and May,
In lace and frozen silver,
As fair as brides be,
The white bloom at Christmas
Makes many a Christmas tree.

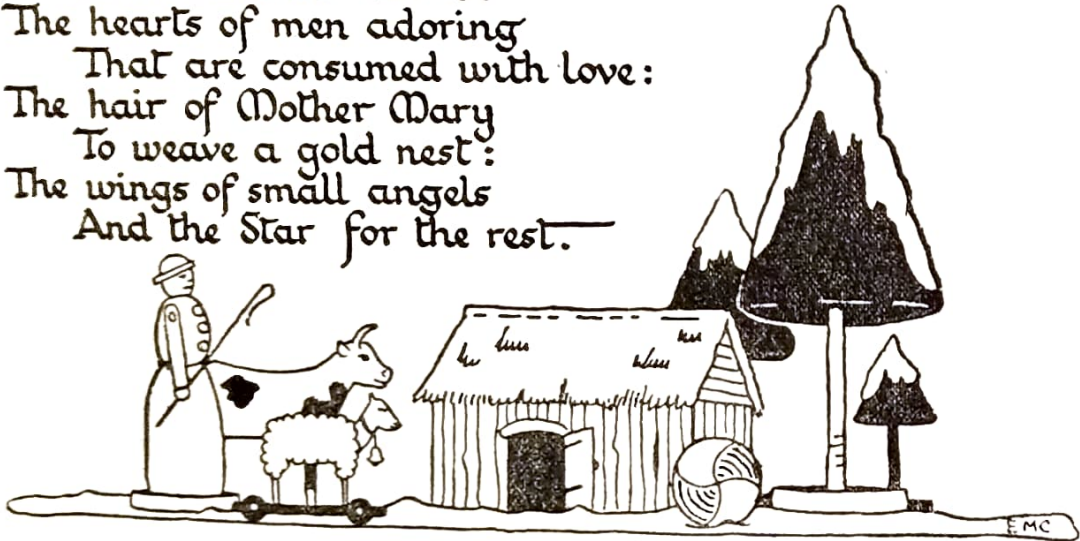
CHRISTMAS TREES

And what shall hang the branches
Of trees white as snow?
Strings of pearls and crystals
And diamonds arow.
And He will laugh to see them,
The Babe of little price,
Whose toys are moons and planets
On Trees of Paradise.



Here let us hang to please Him
The Gifts the Kings bring:
The nard, the gold, the silver,
And for a Baby Thing—
The gifts of simple Shepherds,
A ball, a pipe to blow
The pretty sheep and oxen,
The stable in the snow.

Light up with lamps all burning
Cold branches above,
The hearts of men adoring
That are consumed with love:
The hair of Mother Mary
To weave a gold nest:
The wings of small angels
And the Star for the rest.



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