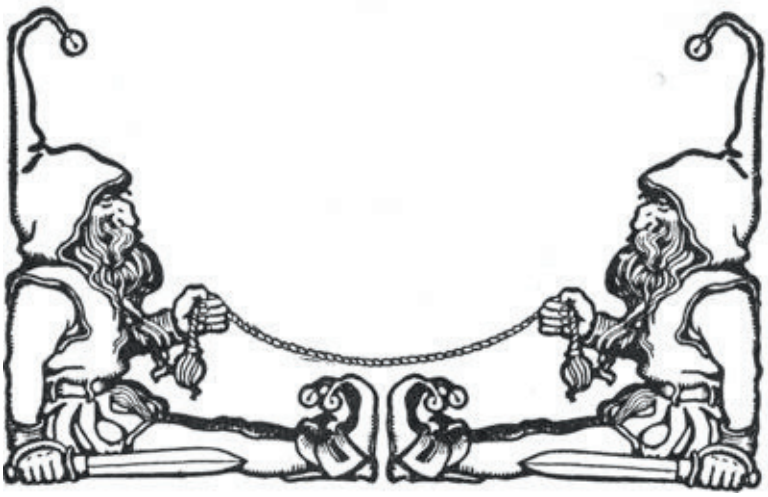
THE FIR-TREE FAIRY BOOK

FAVORITE FAIRY TALES

EDITED BY
CLIFTON JOHNSON
ILLUSTRATED BY
ALEXANDER POPINI

YOU SAW
these little men
on the cover guarding the
road that leads to Fairy Land.
Do you believe in Fairy Land?
If so, they will let you pass. If
not, they will make you
turn back the way you
came and will not let
you into



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BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, & COMPANY

1912

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

IN the volumes that make up this series of fairy books are to be found the favorite wonder tales of many nations in a version especially suited for the home fireside. The interest, the charm and all the sweetness of the stories have been retained, but savagery, distressing details and excessive pathos have been dropped, and the books can be read aloud or placed in the hands of children with entire confidence.

The reasons for such changes as I have made in the stories are perhaps self-evident. Surely, most parents and teachers will agree that our little people are better off without some of the sentiments of the barbaric past when the tales originated. We can well spare most of the spectacles of falsehood, gluttony, drunkenness, torture and gore that are found in the usual tellings, and we can get along without the cruel fathers and wicked stepmothers. Civilization and culture have advanced vastly since the time when the stories started. Our primal instincts are more controlled, and law, education and ethics mean vastly more. The necessity therefore seems clear for softening or changing the crude ideals and doubtful morals and coarseness that have so often survived in the old stories.

The tales are drawn from many sources, and usually are the result of a comparison of several versions, and a combination of the best features of these versions into a simple straightforward whole such as children will read with understanding and pleasure.

The plan I have indicated was begun with "The Oak-Tree Fairy Book," the initial volume of this tree named series, and has been consistently pursued in all the later volumes.

CLIFTON JOHNSON.

HADLEY, MASS.

THE PIED PIPER

THERE is a sleepy little town by the seashore, which for a time, long ago, was decidedly noisy. But the noise was not so much due to the number of people in the place, or the traffic on the streets, as it was to the fact that the town had been invaded by a horde of rats. Such an invasion had never been seen before nor ever will be seen again. The place was scarcely worth living in, so infested was it with these rats. The people found them in their breeches or petticoats when they put on their clothes in the morning, and it was nothing unusual to discover a rat's nest in one's shoes or pockets, or in one's Sunday hat or bonnet.

The rats were great black creatures that ran boldly through the streets in broad daylight, and swarmed all over the houses. There was not a barn, or a cornrick, or a storeroom, or a cupboard, but they gnawed their way into it.

They fought the dogs and killed the cats

And bit the babies in their cradles,

And ate the cheeses out of the vats

And licked the soup from the cook's own ladle.

Even the barrels of beer were not safe from them. They would gnaw a hole in the barrel head, and into this hole some master rat would thrust his tail, and when he withdrew it dripping with beer all his friends and relatives would crowd around and each would have a suck at the tail.

They were bad enough in the daytime, but they were still worse at night. Then they were busy everywhere—in the walls and ceilings, and also in the rooms from cellar to garret. There was such a chase and a rummage, and such a squeaking and squealing, and such a noise as of gimlets, pincers and saws that a deaf man could not have rested for one hour together. The people could hardly hear themselves think, and many a mother felt obliged to sit up and keep watch over her children lest some big ugly rat should run across their faces.

Cats and dogs, poison and traps were of no avail. Nor were prayers any more effective. Of course many of the rats were killed, yet others constantly came to take the place of the dead ones. The mayor and the town council were at their wits' end. They were sitting one

day in the town hall racking their brains, when a queer-looking stranger arrived in the place. As he tramped up the chief street he played the bagpipes, pausing in his playing now and then to sing this refrain:

"Who lives shall see

This is he,

The ratcatcher."

He was a tall, gawky fellow with swarthy skin, a crooked nose, a long moustache, and piercing eyes. His broad-brimmed felt hat had a scarlet cock's feather stuck into its band, and there was not a color of the rainbow that could not be found in his jacket and breeches. A leather belt girded his waist, and on his feet were sandals fastened by thongs passed round his legs. He stopped in the great market-place before the town hall and went on with his piping and singing. The town beadle heard the purport of the song, and asked the stranger if he could rid the town of the rats with which it was overrun.

"Yes," was the reply, "if you will make it worth my while."

Then the beadle hurried off to report the stranger's words to the council. As he approached their place of meeting the mayor was saying: "What to do, I know not. My poor head aches, I've scratched it so, and all in vain."

Just as he said this, what should hap

At the chamber door, but a gentle tap?

“Bless us!” cried the mayor, “what’s that?

Anything like the sound of a rat

Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!”

Then he said in a louder voice, “Come in,” and the beadle entered.

“Please, your honor,” said the beadle, “a very queer fellow has come to town who says he is a ratcatcher, and that he can clear the place of rats if we make it worth his while.”

“Then he is a sorcerer,” said the councilors with one voice. “We must beware of him.”

The mayor, who was considered clever, reassured them. “Sorcerer or not,” said he, “if this bagpiper speaks the truth, I doubt not it was he who sent us this horrible vermin in order to get money from us for inducing them to go away. Well, we must catch the evil-minded in their own snares. You leave it to me.”

“Leave it to the mayor,” said the councilors one to the other.

“Show him in,” said the mayor, and the beadle soon brought the ratcatcher before them.

“I am called the Pied Piper,” he said, “and ratcatching is my trade. What would you pay me to rid you of every rat in the town?”

Much as they disliked the rats they disliked parting with their money still more, and they fain would have higgled and haggled. But the Piper was not a man to stand nonsense, and the upshot of the matter was that they agreed to pay him at the rate of a penny a head as soon as there was not a rat left to squeak or scurry in the place.

The bagpiper announced that he would operate that very evening when the moon rose, and he requested that the inhabitants should leave the streets free, and content themselves with looking out of their windows while he was at his task.

When the townspeople heard of the bargain they exclaimed: “A penny a head! This will cost us a great deal of money!”

“Leave it to the mayor,” said the town councilors with a sly shrug of the shoulders.

Toward nine o’clock the Piper reappeared in the market-place, and as soon as the moon showed above the roofs he put his bagpipes to his lips and began a shrill, keen tune that penetrated to the remotest nooks and alleys of the town. Then a strange sight was seen. From every hole the rats came tumbling, and ran to the market-place, until it was so full of them that the pavement was hidden from sight. At length the piper faced about, and, still playing briskly, went down a street that led toward the harbor. At his heels followed the rats with eager feet and upturned noses. Every fifty yards he stopped and gave an extra flourish of the pipes while he waited for the toddling little rats and the less vigorous ones to catch up with those that were stronger. Meanwhile the townsfolk looked on from their windows, and many a blessing they called down on his head.

When he reached the harbor and had marched to the outer end of a wharf, he turned about and looked at the multitude of rats. “Hop, hop!” he cried, pointing with his finger toward the water.

Not far from the end of the wharf a big whirlpool had formed, and the rats, obedient to the Piper’s orders, began to leap from the wharf, and swim straight to the center of the whirlpool, where they disappeared. This continued till midnight, when only one rat was left—a big rat, white with age, who dragged himself along with difficulty. It was the king of the band.

“Are they all there, friend Whitey?” asked the Piper.

“They are all there,” replied Whitey.

“How many?” the Piper questioned.

“Nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine,” was the answer.

“Then go and join them, old sire,” said the Piper. “Good-by.”

So the old rat jumped into the water, swam to the whirlpool, and down he went out of sight.

The Piper walked back into the town and went to bed at an inn; and for the first time in three months the people slept quietly through the night. There was no noise to disturb them, and they slept the more serenely because now there was a prospect they would have a chance to enjoy food that the rats had not tasted before them. In the morning, so rejoiced were they over their delivery from the plague of vermin that they threw up their caps and hurrahed, and they rang the church bells till they rocked the steeples. But at nine o’clock, when the Piper went to the town hall to get his pay, the mayor and the council and the townsfolk generally began to hum and ha, and to shake their heads, for where was all that money to come from? Besides, it had been a very easy job that the Piper had done and had only taken him a little while.

“Sirs,” said the Piper, “all your rats took a jump into the harbor last night, and I guarantee that not one of them will come back. There were one million, and you can reckon how much is due me at a penny a head.”

“My good man,” said the mayor, “you must know that we are poor folk; surely you will not ask us to pay such a sum.”

“I only want you to do as you agreed to do,” responded the Piper.

“Ah,” said the mayor, “then let us reckon the heads. Have the kindness to bring them here that we may count them.”

The ratcatcher did not expect this treacherous stroke. He paled with anger, and his eyes flashed fire. “The heads!” he cried, “if you care about them, go and find them in the harbor.”

“So you refuse to hold to the terms of your bargain,” said the mayor. “We have good reason to refuse you all payment, but you have been of use to us, and we will be glad to recompense you to the extent of twenty pounds.”

“Keep your recompense to yourself,” retorted the ratcatcher proudly. “It would be better for you if you paid me quickly all that is my due. For I can pipe many kinds of tunes, as folk sometimes find to their cost. If you do not pay me I will be paid by your heirs.”

“Would you threaten us, you strolling vagabond?” shrieked the mayor. “Begone and do your worst now that the rats are drowned.”

“Very well,” said the Piper, and he pulled his hat down over his eyes, turned short on his heel, and left the hall.

The townspeople were much pleased over this outcome. They rubbed their hands gleefully, and laughed over the ratcatcher, who they said was caught in his own trap. Above all they laughed at his threat of getting himself paid by their heirs. “Ha, ha!”

But when the Piper reached the market-place, he again put his pipes to his lips. This time there came forth no shrill notes, but a tune that was joyous and resonant, full of happy laughter and merry play. At this call the children all ran forth to the Piper from schoolroom and playroom and nursery. Every little boy and girl in town hurried to the market-place, attracted by the magic music. Then the stranger began to walk up a street that led out of the town, and they followed him, dancing, laughing, and singing.

Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,

Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering.

On they went out of the town gate and into a forest that was near by, a forest full of old oaks and wide-spreading beeches. In among the trees went the Piper in his many-colored garments, and the laughter of the children gradually faded away as they went deeper and deeper into the cool green wood.

Hour after hour passed, and the children did not return. Then their parents went in search of them, but at nightfall came back desolate to the town. Nor was searching in future days any better rewarded. The mayor sent east, west, north, and south, to offer the Piper, if he could be found,

Silver and gold to his heart’s content,

If he’d only return the way he went,

And bring the children behind him.

But never were the hearts of the townspeople gladdened by the sight of the Piper and his following of singing, dancing children issuing from the ancient oaks of the forest. What became of the children is a mystery even to this day.

THE FIR-TREE

ON the borders of a forest a pretty little fir-tree once started to grow. The sun shone full on him, the breezes played freely around him, and in the neighborhood grew many companion fir-trees, both large and small. But the little fir-tree was not happy. He was always longing to be full grown. He thought not of the warm sun and the fresh air. He took no pleasure in the songs of birds, or in the clouds that sailed over him. He cared not for the merry, prattling peasant children who came to the forest to look for berries.

By and by it was winter, and the ground was covered with the glistening snow. Then the fir-tree often saw a hare scampering about, and sometimes the hare would jump right over the little fir-tree's head. The tree did not like that at all. However, when two winters had passed, the fir-tree was so tall the hare was obliged to run around him; for each year he sent upward a long green shoot, just as all fir-trees do, and you could tell how old he was by counting the number of joints on the main stem.

"Oh, that I was as tall as the big trees I see near me!" sighed the little tree. "Then I should spread out my branches so far, and I could look over the wide world around. The birds would build their nests among my branches, and when the wind blew I would bend my head so grandly just as all the big trees do. Yes, I want to become tall and old. That is the only thing worth living for."

Every autumn the woodcutters came and felled some of the largest trees. The young fir-tree shuddered when he saw the grand trees crash to the ground. He watched the men chop off all the boughs from the fallen trees, and how terribly naked and lanky and long they looked then. They could hardly be recognized. Finally they were loaded on wagons, and were drawn away from the forest. Where could they be going? What might be their fortunes?

When it was spring, and the swallows and the storks returned from the south, the tree called to them, and said: "Know you whither they have taken the great trees that have been cut? Have you met these friends of mine?"

The swallows knew nothing about the matter, but one of the storks looked thoughtful for a moment, nodded his head, and said: "Yes, I believe I have seen them. As I was flying from Egypt to this place I noticed several ships, and those ships had splendid masts. I have little doubt those masts were the trees of which you speak. They supported the sails so that the ships moved on gloriously."

"Oh that I too were tall enough to be a mast, and journey on the sea!" exclaimed the fir-tree.

"Rejoice in your youth," said the sunbeams. "Rejoice in the fresh life that is within you." And the sunbeams caressed the tree, and the wind kissed him, but he understood them not.

Christmas was drawing near, after the little fir-tree had lived and grown for several years, and many small trees were felled by the woodmen. Some were no taller than the restless young fir-tree who was always longing to be away. The branches were not cut off, but the trees were put on wagons, green boughs and all. When the wagons had gone, the fir-tree asked where his companions were being taken.

"We know, we know," twittered the sparrows. "They are on the way to the town. You cannot imagine what honor and glory they will receive. We have peeped through the house windows in years gone by, and we know. They will be planted in a warm room, and be decked with the most beautiful things—sweetmeats, playthings, and hundreds of bright candles."

"And what happens afterward?" asked the fir-tree, quivering with excitement in every bough.

"We saw no more," the sparrows replied, "but what we did see was beautiful beyond compare."

"That is far better than sailing over the sea," cried the fir-tree with delight. "How I wish such a glorious lot might be mine! And there must be something still better to follow, else why should any one take such trouble to decorate the trees."

"Rejoice in our love," said the air and the sunshine. "Rejoice in your freedom."

But rejoice he never would. Time went on and he grew more and more sturdy and full of dark green foliage, and when the next Christmas drew near he was the first tree that was cut. Then for a moment he forgot to think of his good fortune, and was sorry to be compelled to leave his home. He knew he should not see the other trees again, or the little bushes and flowers that had flourished under his shadow—perhaps not even the birds.

At last he found himself in the courtyard of a house in the town whither he had been carried with a load of his fellows, and a man picked him out from among the rest and said: "This is a beautiful one—the very thing we want."

Then two smartly dressed servants came and carried the fir-tree into a large and handsome parlor where he was planted in a stout tub filled with sand. A young lady, assisted by the servants, now began to adorn him. On some branches they hung little bags filled with candy. From others apples and walnuts were suspended, looking just as if they had grown there; and a great number of tiny wax tapers, red, white, and blue, were fastened to the boughs. Here and there were hung dolls and picture books and toys, and on the summit was fastened a large star of gold tinsel. This was indeed splendid!

"In the evening the tree will be lighted up," they said.

“Would that it were evening,” thought the tree. “Would that the candles were already lighted. What will happen then? Will the trees come out of the forest to see me? Will the sparrows look in at the windows? Shall I stand here adorned both winter and summer?”

At last evening came, and the candles were lighted. Oh, what radiance! The tree trembled in all his branches so that one of the lights set fire to a bough. “Heaven preserve us!” exclaimed the young ladies, and they sprang forward and extinguished the flame.

The tree dared not tremble again, though he felt greatly bewildered in the midst of all this glory and brightness. Suddenly, both the folding doors that communicated with the next room were flung open, and a troop of children rushed in. The older people followed more quietly. At first the children gathered about the tree soberly gazing and admiring. Then they began dancing and shouting and tearing off the presents.

“What are they doing?” thought the tree. “What will happen now?”

The candles burned down to the branches, and were blown out, and the children amused themselves with their beautiful playthings. No one thought any more of the tree except the old nurse, who came and peeped among the boughs, but it was only to see whether perchance an apple or a candy bag had been left among them.

Later in the evening the children tired of their play and begged their father to tell a story.

“Very well,” said he. “Would you like to hear about Chicken Licken, or about Thumpty Klump, who fell down stairs, but afterward won a princess and came to a throne?”

“Chicken Licken!” cried some.

“Thumpty Klump!” cried others, and there was a great uproar.

When they grew quieter the man told the story of Thumpty Klump, and, as soon as he had finished, the children clapped their hands and called for another story, but they did not get it.

The fir-tree stood meanwhile quite silent and thoughtful. “The birds in the forest never related anything like this,” said he. “Thumpty Klump fell down stairs, and yet won a princess and was raised to a throne. Yes, yes, strange things come to pass in the world. Who knows but I may fall down stairs and win a princess?”

He rejoiced in the expectation of being next day again decked out with candles and glittering ornaments and playthings. In the morning the maids came in. “Now begins my magnificence anew,” said the tree to himself.

But they dragged him out of the room, up the stairs, and into an attic, where they thrust him into a dark corner and left him. “What can be the meaning of this?” thought the tree. “What am I to do here?” And he leaned against the wall and thought and thought.

He had plenty of time to think as much as he pleased, for day after day and night after night passed, and yet no one entered the attic. “It is winter,” said the tree. “The ground is hard and covered with snow. They cannot plant me now. So I am to stay in shelter till spring. How kind they are! I only wish it was not so dark and so dreadfully lonesome.”

“Squeak! squeak!” cried a little mouse, just then gliding out of a hole in the wall.

Another followed. They snuffed at the fir-tree and slipped in and out among the branches. “It is horribly cold,” said the little mice. “Don’t you think so, you old fir-tree?”

“I am not old,” responded the fir-tree. “There are many trees much older than I am.”

“How came you here?” questioned the mice, “and what do you know? Tell us about the most delightful place on earth. Have you ever been there? Have you been into the storeroom where cheeses lie on the shelves, and bacon hangs from the ceiling, where one can dance over tallow-candles, where one goes in thin and comes out fat?”

“I know nothing about that,” the tree answered, “but I know the forest, where the sun shines and where the birds sing.”

Then he spoke of his youth and its pleasures. The little mice had never heard anything like it before. They listened with all their ears, and said: “Well, to be sure, how much you have seen! How happy you have been!”

“Happy!” repeated the fir-tree in surprise, and he thought a moment over all he had been saying. “Yes, on the whole, those were pleasant times.”

He then told about the Christmas Eve when he had been decked with toys and candles.

“Oh!” cried the little mice, “how happy you have been, you old fir-tree!”

“I am not old at all,” declared the tree, “and it is only this winter that I left the forest.”

“How well you can talk!” said the little mice, and the next night they came again and brought with them four other little mice who also wanted to hear the tree’s history.

The more the tree spoke of his youth in the forest the more vividly he remembered it. “Those were pleasant times,” he remarked in conclusion, “and they may come again. Thumpty Klump fell down stairs, and yet for all that he won the princess. Perhaps I, too, may win a princess;” and then the fir-tree thought of a pretty little birch-tree that grew in the forest. She was a very real and very lovely princess to him.

“Who is this Thumpty Klump?” the little mice inquired.

So he related the tale. He could remember every word of it perfectly, and the little mice were so pleased they jumped for joy. The night following, several more mice came, and on Sunday they returned and brought with them two rats. The rats, however, declared that the story was not at all amusing, and the little mice, after hearing the rats’ opinion, did not like it so well either.

“Do you know only that one story?” asked the rats.

“Only that one,” answered the tree. “I heard it on the happiest evening of my life, though I did not then know how happy I was.”

“It is a miserable story,” the rats declared. “Do you know none about pork and tallow? Don’t you know some storeroom story?”

“No,” said the tree.

“Well, then, we have heard enough,” said the rats, and they went their way.

They did not come again, nor did the little mice. As the lonely days passed, the tree sighed and said: “It was very pleasant when those lively little mice sat around me listening to my words. Now that, too, is all past. However, I still have the pleasure of remembering it.”

One morning people came and gave the attic a cleaning out. The tree was dragged from the corner and carried down stairs. Once more he beheld the outdoor daylight. “Life is about to begin again,” he thought.

He felt the fresh air and the warm sunbeams. He was out in the court, and the court adjoined a garden where everything was fresh and blooming. The roses clustered bright and fragrant round the trellis work, the apple-trees were in blossom, and the swallows flew backward and forward twittering, “Quirri-virri-vit, my beloved is come!” But it was not the fir-tree whom they meant.

The tree was filled with delightful hope. He tried to spread out his branches. Alas! they were all dry and stiff. He was thrown down on a heap of weeds and rubbish. The star that had been fastened on his top sparkled brightly in the sunshine. Some children were playing in the court. They were the same who at Christmas-time had danced round the tree in the parlor. The youngest perceived the gold star and ran to tear it off. “Look at it, still on the ugly old Christmas-tree,” cried he, trampling and breaking the boughs under his feet.

The tree looked at the flowers of the garden blooming in the freshness of their beauty, and he called to mind his happy forest life, the merry Christmas Eve, and the little mice who had listened so eagerly when he related the story of Thumpty Klump. “Past, all past,” sighed the poor tree.

Presently a servant came and set fire to the rubbish heap. The children all ran to the place and jumped about in front of the blaze, crying, “Hurrah, hurrah!”

The tree burned to ashes and the fire flickered out. Then the boys began to play about in the court as before, and on the breast of the youngest sparkled the gold star that the tree had worn on the happiest evening of his life. But now the tree has come to an end, and the story also has come to an end.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD

A GREAT many years ago there was a brave and kind gentleman who was held in high esteem by all who knew him. His wife was good and beautiful, and they loved each other most tenderly. They lived together happily for many years, but at last the gentleman fell sick, and day after day he grew worse. So grieved was his lady by his illness that she, too, sickened. No medicine or anything else gave them any relief, and they realized that soon they would die. It troubled them greatly to think that they would be taken away from their two children, one a fine boy three years old, and the other a pretty little girl not quite two. They talked together about the children's future, and decided to give their babes into the care of the gentleman's brother.

He was sent for, and when he came, the dying man said to him: "Ah! brother, you can plainly see that the time of both my wife and myself on earth is short. As for pain or death, we fear them not, but we are distressed to think of what our poor babes will do without their parents. Brother, they will have no one but you to be kind to them, and I commend them to your care."

"If you treat them well," said the mother, "God will reward you."

"Have no fear as to my taking good care of them," said the brother. "May God never prosper me or mine if I should do them wrong."

Not long afterward the gentleman and the lady died, and they were buried side by side in the same grave. It was found that the gentleman's will gave his son three hundred pounds a year after he came of age, and the girl was to be paid five hundred pounds in gold on the day that she married. But if they happened to die before the money was paid to them their property was all to go to their uncle.

He took them to his own home, and for a time made much of them and showed them great kindness. At length, however, he began to covet their wealth, and to wish that they were dead so he could possess it; but they continued sturdy and well. Finally he said to himself: "It would not be very difficult for me to have them killed in such a way that my neighbors would never suspicion that I was responsible for the deed. Then their property would be mine, and that would be an end of the matter."

With this thought in mind the cruel uncle soon determined how to dispose of the children. He hired two burly ruffians, who were used to doing desperate deeds, to take the little boy and girl into a thick, dark wood, some distance away, and slay them. To his wife he told an artful story of intending to send the children to London where they could be brought up by one of his friends. "Would you not like that, my pretty ones?" he said to

them. “You will see famous London Town; and you, my lad, can buy a fine wooden horse there, and ride on it all day long, and you can buy a whip to make him gallop, and you can buy a sword to wear by your side. As for your sister, she shall have pretty frocks, and she shall have dolls and other nice playthings.”

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

“Goody-good,” said the little girl, “and I will go, too.”

So he got them ready, as if for a long journey, and sent them off in a fine coach in charge of the two wretches. As they rode along the children prattled pleasantly to the men who intended to be their butchers. When they reached the borders of the dark, thick wood, the ruffians took their charges out of the coach and told them they might walk a little way and gather some flowers. While the children were running about, the men turned their backs on them and began to talk about what they had to do.

“Truly,” said one, “now that I have seen their sweet faces and heard their pretty talk, I have no heart to do the cruel deed.”

“Nor have I,” said the other, “but we have been paid so much to do this thing that I shall complete my part of the bargain.”

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

The victor now knew not what to do with the children, for he wanted to get away as quickly as possible lest he should be found there and made to suffer for the death of his companion. He thought the best thing he could do would be to leave them in the wood, and trust that they would be kindly treated by whoever passed that way and discovered them. So he went to where they had rambled in their flower-picking, and said, “Take my hands, and come with me.”

The babes in the wood

For two long miles he led them on, and then they began to complain that they were hungry. “Stay here,” quoth he, “and I will go and get you something to eat.”

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

“In a little while, I think,” responded the boy.

“I wish I had some cakes,” said she.

Then they stood up and looked all about as far as they could among the trees, and no one could they see. They listened, too, but heard no sound of approaching footsteps—nothing, only the wind fluttering in the foliage above their heads.

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

They found some blackberries, and stained their lips eating them. At last night came, and they sat down and cried themselves to sleep. When day dawned again they resumed their wandering, but they could not find their way out of the wood, nor were they any more successful in the days that followed, and as they could not live on blackberries, they died. There was no one to bury the pretty babes; but Robin Redbreast saw them lying in the woodland, and he covered them with leaves.

Meanwhile the wicked uncle supposed they had been killed according to his orders, and he let it be understood that they had died in London of the smallpox. He took their fortune to himself, and thought he had provided amply for his comfort and pleasure to the end of his days. But instead of happiness he experienced only misfortune. He had no peace of mind, because he had an evil conscience, and his thoughts dwelt on the death of the babes. Moreover, his barns burned, his harvests failed, his cattle died in the field, and his two sons, who had gone on a voyage to Portugal, were wrecked and drowned. In the end he was brought to want and misery. He pawned his jewels and mortgaged his land, and he was thrown into jail for debt, and there died.

About that time the ruffian who had left the children in the wood was captured, after committing some crime, and was sentenced to be hanged. When he knew that he must die, he sent for the keeper of the prison, where he had been shut up, and confessed all the wicked deeds he had done. Among other things he told of the two babes he and his companion had been hired to kill, and thus their sad fate was made known.

ALEXANDER JONES

"JEAN, move a wee bit east," requested the town clerk as he sat at one end of the high-backed bench before his fire on a chilly autumn evening. "You're taking too much room. You have more than your share of the seat."

But Jean, his wife, had just got her knitting into a tangle, and was not in the best of humor. So she declined to move an inch, or to attend to what her husband was saying.

"Jean," said he again, "move a wee bit east. It's not right to sit so selfish. I'm at the very end of the bench, and here you are with your elbows digging into me. Sit a bit east, do you hear?" And when she did not respond, the town clerk gave his wife a rude shove.

"What do you mean by pushing me like that?" she demanded; "and what do you mean by east? There's no such thing as east, and I can prove it."

"No such thing as east!" shouted the town clerk. "Will you not believe the sun?"

Then he affirmed in a loud voice that, as the sun went around the earth every day and was always rising every moment somewhere in the east, therefore, everywhere was the east all over the world. So he hoped his wife would not make a goose of herself and talk nonsense.

Jean now rose to her feet, and said he did not look at the matter in the right way at all. As for the sun, it was all the time setting somewhere in the west and doing it every moment. Therefore, everywhere was west, and she trusted her husband would not be so foolish as to mention east again.

He shook his head and was going to reply, when she began to run around the table to show how the sun went, at the same time crying loudly, "West, west, west!"

This made the town clerk very angry, and he got up and ran around the table in the opposite direction, yelling, "East, east, east!" to show how he thought the sun went.

Yet it only ended by their getting extremely giddy and banging their heads together, a thing which hurt very much, and did not improve their tempers, or help the solving of the difficulty, you may be sure.

Meanwhile Alexander Jones sat quiet in a corner and said nothing.

The town clerk and his wife agreed in one thing, which was that the question was of too deep importance to be left unsettled. So they went to the grocer, who had a good-sized house up the street, and Alexander Jones went with them. They told the grocer about their dispute; and the grocer, and the grocer's wife, and the grocer's maiden aunt, and the grocer's wife's youngest married sister, and the grocer's wife's youngest married sister's little girl were all much interested. But one took one view and another took another, and they all ran around the table, some this way, crying, "East!" and some the opposite way, crying, "West!" to show how the sun moved, in their opinion. It only ended in their getting

extremely giddy, and banging their heads together, a thing which hurt very much and did not improve their tempers or help to solve the difficulty.

Meanwhile Alexander Jones sat quiet in a corner and said nothing.

They all agreed in one thing, which was that the question was of too deep importance to be left unsettled. So the whole company, including Alexander Jones, went to the home of the mayor. It faced on the market-place, and was the largest house in the town. They told about the dispute with all the ins and outs of the matter; and the mayor and the mayor's wife, and the mayor's favorite uncle, and the mayor's oldest nephew, and the mayor's oldest nephew's little boy were all much interested, to say the least. But one took one view, and another took another view, and they ran around the table, some this way, shouting, "East!" and some the opposite way, shouting, "West!" to show how, in their opinion, the sun really moved. It only ended in their all getting very giddy and banging their heads together, a thing which hurt and did not improve their tempers or help to solve the difficulty.

Meanwhile Alexander Jones sat quiet in a corner and said nothing.

They all agreed in one thing, which was that the question was of too deep importance to be left unsettled. So the mayor called a meeting of the whole populace in the town hall. The people assembled, and Alexander Jones was there among the rest, and the only persons not there were Peter the watchman and his sister Jessica. Then the mayor told all about the dispute, and everyone was naturally much interested. But one took one view, and another took another view, and they all wanted to run around a table to show how each thought the sun moved. Here, however, a difficulty arose, for, alas! there was no table in the town hall to run around, and what were they to do? They were not going to be balked by a trifle like that, not they. So they requested the mayor to stand in the middle, and let them all run around him, each in the direction he or she pleased.

But the mayor objected strongly. He said it would make him dizzy to see some folks going one way around him, and some the other. "I would certainly be sick," he declared. "Therefore, I suggest that Alexander Jones be placed in the middle. Yes, why could we not run around him? Better make use of him, he is so stupid and says nothing. Besides, I want to run around with the rest of you myself, and why should I be cut out?"

"No, no, no!" cried the people, "Alexander Jones is too small, and we should tread on him. He would not do at all."

They insisted that the mayor must do as he had been asked. Hadn't they only the other day given him a gold badge to wear, and he must make them some return for it, or they would take it away. So the poor man had to give in, but he insisted on having his eyes bandaged, and also on having a chair to sit in. Otherwise, he knew he would be sick. Then they bandaged his eyes, seated him in a chair, and began to run around him, some this way, crying, "East!" and some the opposite way, crying, "West!" But they only got very giddy, and banged each other's heads, a thing which hurt and did not improve their tempers or help solve the difficulty. Worst of all, just at the end, when they could run no longer and were quite out of breath, Eliza MacFadden, the fat widow who kept the candy shop, fell plump against the mayor, and sent him and his chair tumbling to the floor.

Meanwhile Alexander Jones sat quiet in a corner and said nothing.

The mayor pulled the bandage off his eyes in a towering passion and declared that something must be settled there and then. He threatened, if they did not agree, he would put a tax on buttons, which was rather clever of him, for everyone, old and young, male and female, wore buttons, and would feel the tax. But he himself would be affected by it less than anyone else because he wore a robe, that instead of being buttoned was fastened by a buckle at his neck, and by a jeweled girdle around the waist.

Now the town clerk addressed the people, and said: "We must avoid this button tax at all hazards. Let us devise some way to solve for all time the terrible riddle which gives us so much concern. I propose that we call in from the street Peter the watchman, for he is up and about at all hours, late and early, and would know more than most about the sun's movements. Yet, if we ask him, we must also ask Peter's sister Jessica. She does the mayor's washing and is a person of importance in the town. Peter would certainly decline to come into the hall unless she came with him."

This was, indeed, most provoking for me, because there was no room left in the town hall for another person, and two would have to go out, in order to admit Peter the watchman and his sister Jessica. I was the first to be put out, for I was a stranger and only present in the hall out of courtesy. Next they turned out Alexander Jones, because he was so stupid and said nothing. Thus it happened that I never knew what was the decision of the meeting. But perhaps you wonder why Alexander Jones was so dull as to sit still in a corner and say nothing. Yet how on earth could he do anything else? Alexander Jones was the town clerk's

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

ONCE upon a time, long ago—so long, indeed, that even the very oldest people now alive cannot remember it—there dwelt a king and queen in a great, white, marble palace with splendid halls and high towers and a golden roof that flashed in the sunlight. All round the palace for miles and miles there were gardens and pleasure-grounds with terraces and green lawns and flowers and ancient trees. Peacocks walked about on the lawns, and deer loitered in the shady glades, and gold and silver fish swam in the ponds and fountains.

But in spite of all this beauty the king and queen were not happy, because they had no child. So when at last a little daughter was born to them they were very glad and there were great rejoicings all over the kingdom. Bonfires as big as hay stacks were kept burning all night, fat oxen were roasted whole in the market-place of every town, and the church bells were rung until the ringers were out of breath.

A few weeks later all was bustle and hurry in the palace to make ready for the christening feast, and the maids trimmed the halls and chambers with flowers, and sprinkled the floors with sweet-scented leaves and petals. Among the guests invited to the christening were seven powerful fairies, and the choicest foods were provided for them, and golden dishes from which to eat.

The feast was just going to begin when suddenly there was a clashing of brazen claws and a rushing of wings, and something like a black cloud seemed to pass before the tall windows and darken the room. Then the great doors burst open with a terrible bang, and an old fairy with her face almost hidden in a black hood jumped out of a chariot drawn by fierce griffins, and came into the hall. The king turned pale, and the queen nearly fainted, for this was the spiteful fairy Tormentilla, who lived alone an immense distance away from everywhere in a dismal black castle in the middle of a desert. The queen in her happiness had forgotten all about her, and so neglected to send her an invitation.

However, another chair was brought for Tormentilla, and she was given a place of honor at the table, and everyone tried to make up for the oversight—but all in vain. Nothing pleased her. She would neither eat nor drink, and sat scowling angrily about her until the feast was over.

Then she and the seven other fairies went to the chamber where the tiny princess lay sleeping in her cradle, and each stepped forward in turn to bestow a magic gift.

The first said, “She shall be as good as gold.”

The second said, “She shall be the cleverest princess in the world.”

The third said, “She shall be the most beautiful princess in the world.”

The fourth said, “She shall be the happiest princess in the world.”

The fifth said, “She shall have the sweetest voice that ever was heard.”

The sixth said, “She shall be loved by all who know her.”

Next the old cross fairy took her place beside the cradle, and shaking her cane at the king and queen, shouted, “And I say that before she reaches the age of twenty she shall prick her hand with a spindle and die of the wound.”

At this the queen fell on her knees and begged Tormentilla to recall her cruel words. But the wicked fairy, without replying, turned and left the hall. Then the eighth fairy went to the queen and said: “Do not cry, my dear lady; for though I cannot relieve the princess of this enchantment I can make it less severe. She shall not die, but instead shall fall asleep for a hundred years. When those are past, a prince shall come and awaken her with a kiss.”

So the king and queen were somewhat comforted, and the fairies returned to their homes. The greatest care was taken of the little princess, and in order to save her from her fate a law was made that every spindle in the kingdom should be burned, and no more made. Life moved along happily for the princess until she was eighteen years old. All that the first six fairies promised had come true, and she was the best and cleverest, the most beautiful and the happiest and the sweetest-voiced princess in all the world, and everybody loved her. Indeed, by this time Tormentilla’s spiteful words were nearly forgotten.

But one morning the king and queen went away to be gone till late in the afternoon, and the princess amused herself by wandering about into the out-of-the-way nooks and corners and attics of the great building. She found dusty furniture that was often so quaint it made her laugh, and there were many other curiosities. At last she climbed a narrow winding stair in an old tower. It led to a little door with a rusty key sticking out of the lock. She turned the key, opened the door, and there, in a low chamber, sat a white-capped old woman with a spinning-wheel before her on which she was spinning flax. This poor old woman had been allowed many years previous to make her home in the tower, and it happened that she had never heard the king’s command to destroy the spindles; for she was so deaf that if you shouted till you were hoarse she never would have been able to understand you.

The princess stood on the threshold watching the old woman curiously. This was the first time she had ever seen a spinning-wheel. “What pretty work you are doing,” she said presently; “and why does that wheel go whirr, whirr, whirr?”

But of course the old woman did not hear, and she neither answered nor lifted her eyes from her work. So the princess stepped into the room and laid her hand on the old woman’s shoulder. The spinner looked up and rubbed her eyes. “Deary, deary me!” cried she in a high, cracked voice, “and who may you be, my pretty darling?”

“I’m the princess,” screamed the maiden in her ear, but the spinner only shook her head—she could hear nothing.

Then the princess pointed to the spindle on which the flax was twirling into thread, and made the old woman understand that she wanted to try if she could work it. The spinner nodded and laughed and got up from her seat, and the princess sat down at the wheel, but she had hardly begun to spin when she pricked her finger with the spindle. Immediately a faintness seized her. She staggered to a bed close by, and as soon as her head touched the pillow she became unconscious.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

At the same moment there was a deep silence everywhere in the castle. The little bird that just before had been singing so sweetly on the windowsill hushed its song. The distant hum of voices from the courtyard beneath was stilled. Even the old woman, who had been standing beside her wheel telling the princess how to spin, stopped short and fell asleep. In the great hall, the king and queen, who had just returned, and were inquiring for their daughter, fell asleep before the lady-in-waiting could answer them, and the lady herself began to snore. The guards slumbered at their posts. The horses in their stalls became motionless, and so did the dogs in the yard, the pigeons on the roof, and the flies on the wall. The fire on the hearth stopped burning, and the meat on the spit ceased roasting. In short, sleep fell on the whole castle, and round about it there sprung up a thick and thorny magic wood which it seemed impossible for anyone to penetrate, and which hid the entire castle from view except a weather-vane on the roof.

Time went on until a hundred years had passed, and then one day a king's son happened to be hunting in the region. He became separated from his attendants in the excitement of the chase, and at length he came to a woodcutter's cottage and dismounted to ask the way. The old man who lived in the hut gave him the required directions, and then told the prince about a thick wood a little farther on in the direction he had been riding. "No one has ever been able to get through that wood," said the old man, "and my grandfather used to say it surrounded a castle in which was a beautiful princess condemned to sleep for a hundred years. He said some prince would come and awaken her with a kiss."

On hearing this, nothing would do but the prince must go and have a look at the wood. He found it, and dismounted and prepared to push his way through the thorny thicket. But no sooner did he start to penetrate the wood than the tangled briars of the undergrowth were changed into beautiful flowers which parted and bent aside to let him pass. When he reached the courtyard he saw the dogs lying asleep, and on the roof the pigeons were sitting with their heads under their wings. He went indoors, and there were the flies asleep on the wall, and there was the cook with his hand uplifted to strike the kitchen boy, and a maid sitting near by had a fowl on her lap ready to pluck. When the prince entered the great hall he found the whole court asleep, and the king and queen slumbering on their thrones. Everything was so still he could hear his own breathing.

As yet he saw no princess, and he continued looking about till he came to the old tower and ascended the narrow, winding stair. He went into the little room where the princess lay, and she looked so lovely in her sleep that he could not turn away his eyes, and presently he stooped and kissed her. At once she awoke and said: "O prince, are you here at last? I have had such pleasant dreams!"

She sat up laughing and rubbing her eyes, and after a few moments stood on her feet, and they went hand in hand out of the room. The old woman stared at them in amazement, and then, mumbling to herself, resumed her spinning. They descended the stairs and passed along the corridors until they came to the throne room. The king and queen and whole court had just waked up and were gazing at each other with wonderment. The long sleep was ended for the rest of the palace also. Roosters crowed, dogs barked, the cats began to

mew, the clocks struck the hours, the heralds blew their trumpets, the pigeons flew away from the roof to the fields, the kitchen fire blazed up, and the meat was again roasting, the cook gave the kitchen boy such a box on the ear that he roared lustily, and the maid began to pluck the fowl.

In short, everything went on as if there had been no enchantment at all. To be sure, the dress the princess was wearing was such as the prince's great-grandmother might have worn, but that gave them something to laugh at.

As soon as preparations could be made, the wedding of the prince and princess was celebrated with great splendor, and they lived happily ever after.

THE LOVE OF THE SNOW-WHITE FOX

ONCE upon a time there lived a young fox that was snow-white, and it was so gentle and intelligent that it was beloved by all the good people for miles around. If, in the evening, it knocked softly at their doors with its tail they were glad, and were quick to let it in. When it entered it would play with the children, eat of their humble fare, and then trot away. But there were hunters in the country who wanted to kill the beautiful white fox. Once or twice it nearly lost its life at the hands of these cruel men.

One summer afternoon, as it was frisking about in the woods with some young fox friends, two men caught sight of it. They were fleet of foot and had dogs with them. Away ran the white fox, and the men uttered an excited cry and gave chase. Instead of going deeper into the forest the fox ran across the open farm lands until it came to a holy temple. "There, surely, I will find a safe refuge from my pursuers," it thought.

In the temple there happened to be a young prince of noble family named Yashi, deep in meditation. The white fox, whose strength was nearly spent, came running in at the door and went directly to the prince and took refuge behind him. The poor creature trembled with fright, and Yashi took pity on it and did all he could to calm its fears. "I will protect you, little one," said he. "No one shall harm you."

The fox looked up at him and seemed to understand his words. It ceased to tremble. The prince went to the door of the great temple. Two men hastened up to him and asked if he had seen a snow-white fox. "It must have run into the temple," they declared.

But Yashi, faithful to his promise, answered, "I have been in the temple praying, but I can tell you nothing of the fox."

The men were about to go on when they caught a glimpse of the fox behind him. Fiercely they demanded that he should stand aside. The prince firmly refused. Then the men, intent on having their prey, attacked him, and he was obliged to draw his sword in self-defense. At this moment Yashi's father, a brave old man, came up. He rushed on the assailants of his son, but a deadly blow, which Yashi could not avert, struck the old man down. This made Yashi very wroth, and with two mighty strokes he felled his adversaries to the ground.

The loss of his father filled Yashi with grief, and as he stood looking down on the body his heart was very heavy. Just then a sweet song from within the sacred building greeted his ears. Who could the singer be? for there was no one inside when he came out. He reëntered the temple, and a beautiful maiden appeared before him. He saw from her look and manner

that she knew he was in deep trouble, and he told her of the snow-white fox and the cruel hunters, and of the death of his father. Then the maiden spoke to Yashi tender words of sympathy, and her voice was so kindly and gentle that even the sound of it brought comfort to him.

Presently he asked her who she was, and she replied that she was a homeless stranger. So he insisted that she should dwell with him. As the days passed she constantly became more attractive to him, until he loved her more than anyone else in the world and asked her to be his bride.

"I already love you," she replied. "I know that you are good and brave, and I would solace you for the loss of your father."

So they were married and lived happily together. Time passed swiftly, and Yashi ruled his people wisely. At length a son was born to the prince and princess, and they were more happy than ever. But one day Yashi noticed that the princess was sorely troubled. For hours she sat alone, and tears sprang to her eyes when Yashi asked her the cause of her sorrow.

She took his hand and said: "My life with you has been very delightful. But now that I have given you a son to be with you always, I must leave you. I am the snow-white fox whose life you saved."

Once again she looked into his eyes, and then without another word was gone. Yashi and his son lived long and were greatly beloved, but the snow-white fox was seen no more.

THE GRAZIER'S WIFE

IN a certain valley, long ago, there dwelt a grazier who had a wife named Barbara. The grazier was famous for his valor in encountering wolves, and there was not in all the valley a man who was his match in handling the quarter-staff. Moreover, so expert was he with a sling that he could hurl a stone a distance of a hundred yards and hit a deer between the eyes, and so kill it. With his knife he was equally skilful, and he was greatly feared in a quarrel. Yet in spite of all his prowess and courage he quailed before his wife Barbara.

She was no longer young, and her beauty was a thing of the past, but she was a woman who made herself respected. She never failed to produce a startling effect on her husband when she visited him as he was tending his herds on the mountain-sides, for no other woman ever had such a tongue. He often prayed to the saints for relief, but she continued to both plague him with her tongue and mark him with her nails.

At last he applied for advice to an old wizard who lived in a neighboring valley. He had begun telling of his troubles when the wizard interrupted him and said: "I see plainly that you are complaining bitterly, but I would have you know that I am deaf, and no matter how violently you shout and jump and gesture, what you say or do will have no effect on me. Nevertheless, let me tell you, that if you have some bright yellow gold to bestow on me, you will be heard and understood. Yes, I would hear and comprehend, even if you were dumb and had no voice whatever."

"I will hasten to the market," said the grazier, "and sell some of my finest beasts, and the money that I receive for them I will gladly give to you."

So away he went and sold some of his beasts and returned to the wizard and counted out the gold-pieces one by one. Then the wizard listened patiently to his story and sent him home with a promise of speedy relief.

That very night, after the grazier and his wife were in bed, and the latter was delivering a lengthy lecture on his lack of breeding in snoring when a lady was speaking, a white figure appeared at the bedside with a mirror in its hand.

"Barbara," said the specter, "your virtues are known to me, and as a reward you shall be restored to youth and beauty, which you shall yourself behold when you look into this mirror. But beware lest angry or vain words pass your lips, for such a lapse will be punished by hideous old age and infirmity."

So saying, the apparition vanished. Barbara lit a lamp and occupied herself in admiring her reflection in the magic mirror. Thus the grazier was enabled to enjoy an unbroken sleep till morning, a thing he had not done for years. He had peace also on the morrow and ever after, for Barbara never allowed the mirror to pass out of her possession, and it was a constant solace to her even to the day of her death.

THE MAGIC HORN

ONCE upon a time there was a poor farmer who had three sons, and the sons' names were Peter, Paul, and Philip. None of the three liked work very well, and instead of helping their father they spent most of their time sauntering about. At last Peter heard that the king wanted a keeper to watch his rabbits. So the youth told his father that he would go to the king's palace and apply for the position.

"I doubt if you are fitted for just that sort of work," said his father. "He who keeps the king's rabbits needs to be light and quick, and no lazy-bones. You could not loiter when the rabbits began to skip and frisk, for if you dawdled as you do at home you would be discharged."

But the father's advice had no effect. Peter was determined to go, and after filling a bag with something to eat and drink and a few other necessaries, he took the bag on his back and started. He had not traveled many miles when he heard a voice calling for help. On going in the direction of the sound he found an old woman in a pit from which she was unable to climb out. "Don't stand there staring," said she sharply. "Reach me your hand and pull me up. I have been in this pit a whole year, and in all that time I have not had a morsel of food."

"What!" exclaimed Peter, "a whole year, do you say? Then you must be a witch, or you could not fast so long, and I will have nothing to do with you."

So off he marched. At length he arrived at the king's palace and was engaged as the keeper of the rabbits. He was promised plenty of food and good pay and maybe the princess into the bargain, for the king had decreed that any keeper who took such good care of the rabbits that not one of them escaped should have the princess for his wife.

The next day Peter let the rabbits out to browse. As long as they were near the stables and in the adjacent open fields he kept them in one flock, but toward evening they got into a wood and began to scuttle about among the trees. Peter ran after them this way and that until he had no breath left for any more running. He could not get the rabbits together. They all disappeared, and he saw nothing more of them.

After resting a while he started to go back to the palace. As he went along he kept a sharp look-out, and he stopped to call his fugitive charges at every fence. But no rabbits came, and when he reached the palace there stood the king waiting for him. It was plain that Peter had failed, and for a punishment he was banished from the country.

The king presently got a new lot of rabbits, and then he let it be known that he wanted a keeper. Peter's brother Paul heard of this, and nothing would do but he must try for the

place. Away he went, and by and by he found the old woman in the pit just as Peter had, and he would not help her out. When he got to the palace he was promptly engaged as keeper of the rabbits, and the next day he let them out to feed. All went well until in the late afternoon they went from the fields into the woods. Then they skipped and hopped away, and though he rushed about and raced after them till he was ready to drop, they all escaped. So he returned to the palace without a rabbit, and the king ordered that he should leave the country.

More rabbits were obtained to replace those lost, and again word went forth that his Majesty wanted a keeper for them. Philip, the youngest of the three brothers, heard of this and concluded to apply for the job. "It will be just the right work for me," he said to his father. "I would like nothing better than to spend my days in the fields and woodlands watching the rabbit flock, and I would be sure to have plenty of time to nap on the sunny hillsides."

"I fear," said the old farmer, "that you will fare no better than your two brothers. The person who keeps the king's rabbits must not be like a fellow with leaden soles to his shoes, or like a fly in a tar-pot."

"Well," responded Philip, "however things may turn out, I shall get the job if I can. Surely it will be no harder than to take care of the calf and goat here at home."

So he packed his bag, lifted it to his shoulder, and started for the palace of the king. He trudged along until he heard a voice calling, and when he looked about he saw the old woman in the pit. "Good day, grandmother," said he, "what can I do for you?"

"Help me out of this hole," she said, "and give me something to eat. I will do you a good turn afterward, you may depend on it."

He was willing enough, and he pulled her out of the pit. Then he opened his bag and sat down to eat and drink with her. She had a keen appetite after her long fast, and naturally got the lion's share, but that did not trouble Philip any. As soon as they finished, she gave him a magic horn, and said: "If you blow into the small end of it, whatever you wish away will be scattered to the four winds; and if you blow into the large end the things you wish near will at once come about you. Should the horn ever be lost or taken from you, all you have to do is to wish for it, and it will return to you."

"Very good," responded Philip. "Such a horn is worth having."

So saying, he resumed his walk, and at length he came to the king's palace. He was hired to keep the rabbits, and he was much pleased, for he was certain of good food and generous wages, and if he were clever enough not to lose any of the rabbits he might win the princess, too. The next morning he began work, and at first he found the task an easy one. As long as the rabbits were in the lanes and fields they behaved very well, but while he was eating his noon lunch they wandered to the woodland, where they frisked about and scampered away into the underbrush.

"Ho, ho!" cried Philip, "you want to leave me, do you? Well, off with you then," and he blew into the small end of the magic horn.

Immediately they were all gone from view, and Philip found a mossy spot to his liking and lay down to sleep till eventide. The sun was low in the west when he awoke, and he took up his horn and blew into the large end of it. At once the rabbits came frolicking about him, and he led them like a flock of sheep to the king's palace. The king, the queen, and the princess, too, all came out on the porch and wondered how he contrived to manage the rabbits so well. Several times the king counted them to make sure they were all there and he had to acknowledge that not one was missing.

"That rabbit-keeper would be a fine lad," said the princess, "if only he was of noble birth."

The next day he took the rabbits out again, and when they roamed to the woodland he lay down in the shade at the edge of the wood close to the sunny slope where the wild strawberries grew and scented the air with their sweet odor.

The king was curious to learn how the youth contrived to control the rabbits so admirably, and he sent a servant to watch him. By and by the servant came peeping about among the trees and spied Philip asleep in the pleasant shade of the woodland. He hid in a thicket and waited. Toward evening he saw Philip rise to his feet and blow his horn, and immediately all the rabbits came scampering about him. The servant hastened home and told the king what he had observed, and the king told his wife and daughter.

"Unless we put a stop to his using that horn," said the princess, "I shall have to marry him, and he is only a common farmer's son. Tomorrow I shall go to the wood, and while he is asleep I will take his horn and bring it home to the palace."

She went to the wood just as she had planned, and she had little trouble in getting possession of the horn. When Philip awoke it was gone—and how was he to bring the rabbits together? But he remembered that the old woman had said he could get it back by wishing. So he wished for it; and the princess, who had nearly reached the palace, felt it suddenly slip through her fingers, and though she searched all about she could not find it. The horn had returned to the hands of Philip in the woodland, and he immediately blew it to fetch the rabbits together, and then he went with them to the palace.

Philip blows into the large end of his horn

The royal family saw that Philip had the horn, and the queen said she would go the next day and take it, and they might be sure *she* would bring it home. The morrow came, and in the early afternoon off she tramped to the wood. She secured the horn and hurried away with it, holding it very tight, but as she approached the palace it slipped from her grasp, and by and by the rabbit-keeper returned with his horn and flock as usual.

"I shall have to look into this matter myself," grumbled the king, "if we are going to get that wretched horn into our possession. You women plan all right, but it usually takes a man to carry a plan to a successful conclusion."

The following day, while Philip was having his nap in the wood, the king came to the spot where the youth lay and took the horn. To make doubly sure of it, the king put the horn in a bag he had brought along for the purpose. Back he went to the palace. His wife and daughter met him at the door, and he triumphantly opened the bag to show them the horn; but it was not there. He had not succeeded any better than the women folk. "Plague take the fellow!" he exclaimed. "There is some magic about the way that horn disappears. The lad gets the best of us every time, and I suppose he might as well marry into the family first as last."

Pretty soon Philip arrived with his flock of rabbits and put them in their night quarters.

Then he heard the king calling to him, and went to the palace porch, where he found all the royal family waiting for him. "What sort of a horn is that of yours?" asked the king. "It looks ordinary enough, but I am sure it has some strange power or you would not be able to take such excellent care of the rabbits and never lose a single one of them."

"It was given to me by an old woman," said Philip, "and if I blow in one end it does one thing, and if I blow in the other it does the opposite."

"Oh, bother your explanations!" cried the king. "Show us its power, and then we shall understand."

"But perhaps the showing would not please your Majesty," said Philip.

"Stuff and nonsense!" the king exclaimed. "I said, 'Show us.' Who is king here—you or me? It is my business to command, and it is yours to obey."

"Very well," responded Philip, "then I wish you to scatter;" and he blew a good strong blast into the little end of his horn.

At once the king, very much against his will, and kicking savagely, was hurried off north,

the queen flew east, and the princess west, and a little kitchen-maid, who had come up behind Philip and was looking on, was hustled off south in such sudden haste it seemed to her she would be scared out of a year's growth.

"Stop me, you rascal! Bring me back!" yelled the king as he vanished in the distance.

Philip turned the horn about and blew into the big end. In a few moments the king and the others were back on the porch; and the little maid, vastly astonished by her experiences, lost no time in escaping to the kitchen. "What do you mean by treating me in that fashion?" the king demanded. "You shall hang for it."

Philip raised the little end of the horn to his lips, and the king, fearful that he would have to repeat his wild race, called out: “Enough! enough! The fault was mine. You shall have my daughter and half the kingdom if only you won’t blow that horrible horn in my presence. I’m too old and stiff to be dashing about over the country as I did just now.”

So as soon as things could be made ready for a grand wedding, Philip married the princess, and they lived happily the rest of their days.

THE ENVIOUS NEIGHBOR

THERE was a poor man in a tropical country who for many long years dwelt in a city where he suffered great privations and often went hungry. At last he left the city and built a hut far out in the country on the edge of the wilderness and dug up a piece of ground for a garden. He depended on this garden to furnish him a living, and he planted some corn and melon seeds, which soon sent green sprouts up to the light. He took the best of care of the growing melons and corn, and they throve luxuriantly.

When the crops began to mature, the monkeys from the neighboring wilderness observed the good things that were ripening in the garden, and they came daily to eat of them. The man, thinking of his own past privations and sufferings, willingly shared the product of his labor with them; and they wondered greatly what manner of person he was that permitted them to eat unmolested of his corn and melons.

One day the man lay down in the garden and fell asleep. By and by he became aware of the arrival of a troop of monkeys, but he continued to lie there as if still sound asleep. They saw him and drew near and cried out with one accord: “He is dead! Our good friend is dead! Lo, these many days we have eaten of the things growing in his garden. Therefore it is only just that we should bury him in as choice a place as we can find.”

The man heard what they said, but he did not open his eyes or stir, for he was curious to find out what they would do. They lifted him and carried him till they came to a place where two ways met. Then one of the monkeys said, “Let us take him to the cave of silver.”

Another said, “No, the cave of gold would be better.”

“Go to the cave of gold,” commanded the head monkey.

There they carried him and left him. When he found himself alone, he arose, gathered all the gold he could carry, and returned to his home. This gold, thus easily gained, enabled him to build a beautiful house, and to live in great comfort.

“How did you, who came here so poor, gain all this wealth?” asked a neighbor; and the man freely told all that had befallen him.

“What you have done I can do, too,” said the neighbor, and he hastened home, planted a piece of ground with corn and melons, and waited for the monkeys to feast there.

Everything came to pass as he had hoped. When the corn and melons ripened, great numbers of monkeys visited the garden and feasted. One day they found the owner lying in the garden apparently dead. Their gratitude prompted them to give him a worthy burial, and they carried him to the place where the two roads met. Here they disputed as to whether they should place the man in the cave of silver or the cave of gold.

Meanwhile the man was thinking: “As soon as I am alone in the cave I will begin gathering up the gold, and I will make a basket of bamboo so I can carry home a much larger amount than my neighbor brought away.”

Presently the head monkey said, “Put him in the cave of silver.”

That was such a disappointment to the man that he forgot he was supposed to be dead, and he exclaimed, “No, put me in the cave of gold!”

At once the monkeys dropped him and fled in great fright, and the man, bruised and disappointed, crept sorrowfully home.

BLUEBEARD

ONCE upon a time there was a man who lived in a splendid house, and had dishes of gold and silver, chairs and sofas covered with flowered satin, and curtains of the richest silk. But alas! this man was so unlucky as to have a blue beard, which made him look so frightfully ugly that all the women and girls ran away from him.

His nearest neighbor was a lady of quality who had two beautiful daughters, and he wished to marry one of them. He was even willing to let the lady decide which of the two it should be. Neither of the daughters, however, would have him, and the lady sighed to think of her children's obstinacy in refusing to become the mistress of such a magnificent mansion. But they were not able to make up their minds to marry a man with a blue beard. Their aversion was increased by the fact that he had already had several wives, and no one knew surely what had become of them, though he made all sorts of excuses to account for their disappearance.

At length Bluebeard, in order to cure the dislike of the lady's daughters, invited them and their mother and some young friends to spend a whole week at his house. They came, and nothing was thought of but parties for hunting and fishing, feasting, dancing, and music. The guests were loaded with gifts of the most costly description and were so delightfully entertained that before many days had passed, Fatima, the youngest sister, began to imagine that the beard she had thought to be so ugly was not so *very* blue after all. By the end of the week the kindness and politeness of her host had made such an impression that she concluded it would be a pity to refuse to become his wife on account of the trifling circumstance of his having a blue beard.

So they were married shortly afterward, and at first everything went well. A month passed away, and one morning Bluebeard told Fatima that he must go on a journey which would take him six weeks at least. He kissed her affectionately, gave her the keys of the whole mansion, and bade her amuse herself in any way she pleased while he was gone.

"But," said he, "I would have you notice among the keys the small one of polished steel. It unlocks the little room at the end of the long corridor. Go where you will, and do what you choose, but remember I have forbidden you to enter that one room."

Fatima promised faithfully to obey his orders, and she watched him get into his carriage, and stood at the door of the mansion waving her hand to him as he drove away. Lest she should be lonesome during her husband's absence, she invited numerous guests to keep her company. Most of them had not dared to venture into the house while Bluebeard was there, and they came without any urging or delay, eager to see its splendors. They ran about upstairs and downstairs, peeping into the closets and wardrobes, admiring the

rooms, and exclaiming over the beauties of the tapestries, sofas, cabinets, and tables, and of the mirrors in which they could see themselves from head to foot. With one consent they praised what they saw, and envied the fortune of their friend, the mistress of all this magnificence. She went about unlocking the doors for their convenience until the only door that remained untouched was that of the obscure room at the end of the long corridor. She wondered why she had been forbidden to enter that room. What was there in it? Even if she did go in, her husband need never know she had done so. The more she thought about it the more curious she became. At last she left her guests and hurried along the dark, narrow corridor that led to the forbidden room. At the door she hesitated, recalling her husband's command, and fearful of his anger; but the temptation was too strong, and she tremblingly opened the door.

At first she could see nothing because the window-shutters were closed; but after a few moments she began to discern that on the floor lay the bodies of all the wives Bluebeard had married. She uttered a cry of horror, her strength left her, and she thought she would die from fear. The key of the room fell from her hand, but she picked it up, hastily retreated to the corridor, and locked the door. However, she could not forget what she had seen, and when she returned to her guests her mind was too disturbed for her to attend to their comfort or to attempt to entertain them. One by one they bade their hostess good-by and went home, until no one was left with her except her sister Anne.

Then Fatima noticed a spot of blood on the key of the fatal room. She tried to wipe it off, but the spot remained. Then she washed the key with soap and scoured it with sand, but her efforts were in vain, for it was a magic key, and only Bluebeard himself had the power to remove the stain. She decided not to put it with the other keys, but to hide it, hoping her husband would not miss it.

Bluebeard returned unexpectedly that very evening. He said a horseman had met him on the road and told him that the business which had taken him from home had been satisfactorily settled, so there was no need of his making the long journey.

Fatima tried to welcome her husband with every appearance of pleasure, but all the time she was dreading the moment when he should ask for the keys. This he did not do until the following morning, and then she gave them to him with such a blanched face and shaking hand that he easily guessed what had happened. "How is it that you have not brought me the key of the little room?" he asked sternly.

"I must have left it on my table upstairs," she faltered.

"Bring it to me at once," said Bluebeard, and she was forced to go and make a pretense of searching for it.

When she dared delay no longer she went to her husband and surrendered the key, and he immediately demanded the cause of the stain on it. She hesitated, at a loss what reply to make, and he shouted: "But why need I ask? I know the meaning of it right well. You have disobeyed my commands and have been into the room I ordered you not to enter. So you shall go in again, madam, but you will never return. You shall take your place among the ladies you saw there."

Fatima fell on her knees at his feet weeping and begging for mercy, but the cruel man had a heart like a stone, and he bade her prepare for death. “Since I must die,” said she, “at least grant me a little time to say my prayers.”

“I give you ten minutes,” said Bluebeard, “and not one moment more.”

Poor Fatima hastened to a little turret chamber whither her sister had fled in terror and grief. “Sister Anne,” she said, “go up to the top of the tower and see if our brothers are coming. They promised to visit me today; and if they should be in sight beckon them to come quickly.”

So the sister climbed the narrow staircase that led to the top of the tower, and no sooner was she there than Fatima called from below, “Anne, sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?”

Anne replied sadly, “I see nothing but the sun shining and the grass growing tall and green.”

Several times Fatima asked the same question and received the same answer.

Meanwhile Bluebeard was waiting with a mighty cimeter in one hand and his watch in the other. At length he shouted in a great voice, “Come down, or I shall go up and fetch you.”

“Anne, sister Anne,” Fatima called softly, “look again. Is there no one on the road?”

“I see a cloud of dust rising in the distance,” Anne answered.

“Perchance it is our brothers,” said Fatima.

“Alas! no, my dear sister,” responded Anne, “it is only a flock of sheep.”

“Fatima!” roared Bluebeard, “I command you to come down.”

“One moment—just one moment more,” sobbed the wretched wife.

Then she called, “Anne, sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?”

“I see two horsemen riding in this direction,” said Anne, “but they are a great way off.”

“Heaven be praised!” exclaimed Fatima. “They must be our brothers. Oh! sign to them to hasten.”

By this time the enraged Bluebeard was howling so loud for his wife to come down that his voice shook the whole castle. Fatima dared delay no longer, and she descended to the great hall, threw herself at her wicked husband’s feet, and once more begged him to spare her life.

“Silence!” cried Bluebeard. “Your entreaties are wasted. You shall die!”

He seized her hair and raised his cimeter to strike. At that moment a loud knocking was heard at the gates. Bluebeard paused with a look of alarm, and then the door of the hall was flung open and Fatima’s two brothers appeared with swords ready drawn in their hands. They rushed at Bluebeard, and one rescued his sister from her husband’s grasp, and the other gave the wretch a sword-thrust that put an end to his life.

So the wicked Bluebeard perished miserably, and Fatima became mistress of all his riches. Part of her wealth she bestowed on her sister Anne, and part on her two brothers. The rest she retained herself, and presently she married a man whose kind treatment helped her to forget her unfortunate experience with Bluebeard.

THE SPENDTHRIFT MERCHANT'S SON

THERE was once a merchant's son, who, when his father died, squandered all his inheritance. At last he had nothing to eat. So he took a spade, went to the market-place, and stood waiting to see if anyone would hire him for a laborer. By and by a rich noble drove into the market-place in his golden coach. As soon as the men who were waiting there for work saw him, all except the merchant's son scattered in every direction and hid. The gilded coach came to a stop before him, and the noble said, "Do you want work, young man?"

"It is for no other purpose than to get work that I stand here," replied the merchant's son.

"Then I will hire you," said the noble. "What wages do you require?"

"One hundred silver pieces a day," was the answer.

"That is a high price," said the noble.

"If you think it too much," said the merchant's son, "go and find a cheaper article. But I observe that you are not very popular as an employer. Crowds of laborers seeking work were here a few minutes ago, but you came, and away they all bolted."

"Well," said the noble, "I agree to pay your price. Meet me at the harbor tomorrow."

Early the next day the youth resorted to the harbor, where he found the noble awaiting him. They went on board a ship, which soon put out to sea, and sailed and sailed until it approached an island. On this island were high mountains, and by the shore was a splendid castle. The ship cast anchor, and the noble and the merchant's son were rowed to the castle, where they were met by the noble's wife and daughter. After the greetings were over they sat down at table and began to eat, drink, and be merry. "Today we'll feast," said the noble, "and tomorrow we'll work."

The noble's daughter was beautiful beyond anything that pen can tell, and the merchant's son fell in love with her. Nor could she help liking him, for he was lively, sturdy, and handsome. At length she found an opportunity to call him secretly into an adjacent room, and gave him a flint and steel. "Use these, if you should be in great danger," said she, "and they will bring you help."

Next day the noble mounted a handsome steed and had his laborer mount an old rackabones, and they set off for the mountains. They went up and up till there rose before them a smooth wall of rock near the summit of the loftiest peak, and they could go no farther. "I am thirsty after all this climbing," said the noble. "We will dismount and have something to drink."

He handed the merchant's son a flask that contained a sleeping potion, and the youth drank without any suspicion that he was being drugged. It made him very drowsy, and he sat down by a tree and was soon fast asleep. Then the noble killed the wretched nag on which the youth had ridden, removed its entrails, put the young man and his spade inside of the body, and sewed it up. That done, he went and hid in the bushes. In a little while there flew down a host of black, iron-beaked crows. They took up the carcass and carried it to the mountain-top, where they began to peck and eat it. Presently they had eaten their way in to where lay the merchant's son. Then he awoke, beat off the crows, looked hither and thither, and said, "Where am I?"

The noble at the foot of the precipice heard him and shouted: "You are on the golden mountain. Take your spade and dig gold and throw it down to me."

Then the youth saw that the whole mountain-top was composed of gold, and he dug and dug, and threw the gold down to the noble, who loaded it on to his horse. When the noble had all the horse could carry, he bawled out: "That'll do. Thanks for your labor. Good-by!"

"But what is to become of me?" the merchant's son shouted back.

"You will have to get along as best you can," replied the noble. "Ninety-nine of your sort have already perished on this mountain-top. You will just make up a hundred."

Thus spoke the noble and departed.

"What is to be done now?" thought the merchant's son. "To get down the steep, slippery sides of this mountain summit is impossible. I shall starve to death."

There he stood on the bleak height, and above him circled the iron-beaked crows, which evidently regarded him as their prey. He recalled the events that led to his being in his present plight, and it occurred to him how the lovely damsel had given him the flint and steel he had in his pocket. "She told me to use them if ever I was in great danger," said he. "I will try them now."

He took them out and struck a spark from the flint with the steel. Immediately there appeared before him two stout young men. "What do you want?" they asked.

"I will first fill my pockets with gold," said he, "and then I would like to go from this mountain to the seashore."

As soon as he was ready they lifted him and carried him away through the air to the seashore. Then they vanished. While he was walking about there he saw a ship not far distant sailing by the island. "Ho! good ship-folk!" he shouted, "take me with you."

"No, brother," they responded, "to stop would cause us to lose too much time."

The mariners went on, but soon contrary winds began to blow, and they were presently beset by a hurricane. "Alas!" said they, "the person who hailed us from that island was no ordinary man. He has brought this storm on us for a punishment, and we shall perish unless we return and take him on the ship."

So they went back and got him and conveyed him to his native town. The gold he had brought from the mountain supported him for a time, but when it was gone he again took a spade and went to the market-place to wait for some one to hire him. By and by the same noble who had hired him before came to the market-place in his gilded coach. The men waiting for employment all scattered in every direction and hid, except the merchant's son. The noble spoke to him and said, "Will you come and work for me?"

"Willingly," replied the youth, "if you will pay me two hundred pieces of silver a day."

"Isn't that rather dear, eh?" said the noble.

"If you find it dear," said the merchant's son, "go and hire some other man. But you saw how many people were waiting here for work when you came, and in what haste they all got out of the way."

"Very well," said the noble, "meet me tomorrow morning at the harbor."

Early next day they met at the harbor, went on board a ship, and sailed to the island. There they ate and drank and took their ease for one day, and on the following morning mounted horses and rode up into the mountains. They arrived at the steep wall of rock near the summit of the highest peak, and the noble said, "Now let us have a drink."

"But first," said the youth, "you who are chief must drink. Let me treat you with what I have brought in my own flask."

So the noble drank, but the merchant's son had betimes filled his flask with a sleeping potion that put his master into a sound sleep. Then he killed the lame old horse he rode, removed the entrails, thrust the noble and the spade into the body and sewed him up in there. Afterward he hid in the bushes. Soon the black, iron-beaked crows flew down, took up the carcass of the horse, carried it to the top of the cliff, and began pecking at it. When they had made an opening to where the noble lay, he awoke, crawled out, and looked around. "Where am I?" said he.

"You are on the golden mountain," bawled the merchant's son. "Take your spade and dig gold and throw it down to me."

The noble dug and dug, and threw down the gold, and the youth packed it on to the noble's horse until he had all the creature could carry. "That's enough," he called. "Thanks for your labor. Adieu!"

"But how am I to get off this mountain?" cried the noble.

"Why, get off as best you can," answered the youth. "Ninety-nine of your sort have perished on that golden summit. You can be the hundredth."

The merchant's son returned to the splendid castle beside the sea, married the lovely damsel, took possession of the noble's riches, and then went in a ship to his native city. There he dwelt in peace and plenty the rest of his life.

THE AMBITIOUS THRUSH

ONCE there was a thrush who lived in a tree on the borders of a field that a man sowed to cotton seed. The seed sprouted up through the ground and grew into bushes, and after a time the bushes had big, brown pods on them. Presently the pods burst open and the fluffy white cotton bulged out of them. "How nice and soft that cotton looks!" said the thrush.

She picked some of it and used it to line her nest. Never before had she slept with such ease as she did on that bed of cotton.

In her flights about the region she often passed the door of a man who made a business of carding cotton so it could be spun into thread. By carding it he disentangled the fibers, and then he formed it into small rolls and sold it to the spinners. The thrush often observed him at his work, and at length she concluded that she, also, would make some use of the cotton besides simply lining her nest with it. So again and again, every day, she would fly down among the cotton bushes, pluck out a fluff of cotton in her beak and fly away and hide it. She kept on doing this till she had quite a large heap. Then she flew to the house of the cotton-carder, and alighted in front of him. "Good day, man," said she.

"Good day, little bird," said the cotton-carder.

"Man," said the thrush, "I have a heap of beautiful cotton; and you shall have half of it if you will card the rest and make it into rolls for me."

"Very well," said the man, "I will do as you desire. Where is your cotton?"

"Come with me, and I will show you," said the thrush.

So she flew along ahead of the man and guided him to the place where she had hidden her hoard of cotton. The man took the cotton home and carded it and made it into rolls. Half of it he took for doing the work, and the rest he gave back to the thrush.

Not far from the carder lived a spinner, and the thrush went to him and said: "Mr. Spinner, I have some rolls of cotton all ready to spin into thread. If I give you half of them, will you spin the other half into thread for me?"

"That I will," said the spinner, and the thrush showed him the way to where she had put the rolls.

In a few days the spinner had spun all the rolls into the finest thread. Then he took a pair of scales and weighed the thread to make two equal parts. Half he kept for himself, and the other half he gave to the thrush.

The next thing the thrush did was to fly to the house of a weaver, to whom she said: “Sir, I have some cotton thread all ready to weave into cloth. If I give you half of the thread, will you weave the other half into cloth for me?”

“Certainly,” said the weaver, and the thrush guided him to where she had secreted the thread.

He carried it home and spun it into cloth, and half the cloth he kept, and half he gave to the thrush. She was an ambitious bird, eager to convey an impression of distinction, and she decided to have some garments made for herself out of the cloth. So she went to a tailor, and said, “I have a nice piece of cotton cloth, and I will give you half of it if you will make the rest into clothes for me.”

The tailor was glad to do this, and the bird guided him to where she had hidden the cloth. He took it home, and at once set to work. Half of it sufficed to make a beautiful dress for the thrush. There was a skirt, and there was a jacket with sleeves in the latest pattern. A little of the cloth was left over, and the tailor used it to make a pretty hat for the thrush to put on her head.

Then she was indeed delighted, and felt there was little more to desire in the world. She put on her skirt, and her jacket with fashionable sleeves, and the little hat, and looked at her image in a woodland pool. What she saw pleased her greatly. In fact, she became so vain that nothing would do but she must show herself to the king.

So she flew and flew and flew until she came to the king's palace. Right into the great hall she winged her way and perched on a peg that was high on the wall and began to sing. The king and the queen and all the courtiers were sitting down below. "Oh, look!" exclaimed the queen. "There is a thrush in a jacket and skirt and a pretty hat!"

Everybody looked at the thrush singing on her peg, and clapped their hands.

"Come here, little bird," said the king, "and show the queen your pretty clothes."

The thrush felt highly flattered, and flew down on the table, and took off her jacket to show the queen. After the queen had looked at it she folded it up and put it in her pocket.

"Give me my jacket," twittered the thrush. "I shall catch cold, and besides, it is not proper for a lady to go about without a jacket."

All the company laughed, and the king said, "You shall have your jacket, Mistress Thrush, if you will come nearer."

She approached the king close enough so he was able to make a sudden grab and catch her.

"Let me go," squeaked the thrush, struggling to get free. But the king would not release her.

"Greedy king!" cried the thrush, "you ought to be ashamed to covet my little jacket!"

That made the king angry, and he took a carving knife and chopped her to little bits. While he was doing so the thrush kept exclaiming, "The king snips and cuts like a tailor, but he is not so honest!"

When the king had finished chopping her up, he began to wash the pieces, and each piece as he washed it called out, "The king scours and scrubs like a washerwoman, but he is not so honest!"

As soon as the washing was done he put the pieces into a frying-pan and began to fry them, and all the time they cried out, "The king is doing the work of a cook, but he is not so honest!"

After the pieces were fried, the king ate them, but even that did not silence the wronged thrush. She continually shouted: "I am inside of the king. It is just like the inside of any other man, only not so honest!"

The king was like a walking musical box, and he did not like it, but it was his own fault. No matter where he went, everyone heard the cries of the thrush proclaiming that she was inside of the king, and that his inside was just like that of other men, only not so honest. This caused a good deal of gossip among the king's subjects and resulted in his being universally despised. At last he could stand it no longer. He sent for his doctor and said the talking bird must be removed.

"That cannot be done without causing your death," said the doctor.

"It will cause my death if it is not done," declared the king, "for I cannot endure being made a fool of."

So the doctor had to remove the thrush, and, strange to say, the pieces had united, and as soon as the bird was released she flew away. Her beautiful clothes were all gone, but she did not regret that. She was quite content in future to use cotton only to make a soft lining for her nest, and never again had a desire to ape the ways of mankind.

As for the king, he died; and it was a good riddance. His son reigned in his stead, and he remembered his father's miserable death and kept all his promises to men and beasts and birds.

THE BEWITCHED BOTTLES

IN the good old days, when the fairies were more frequently seen than in these unbelieving times, a farmer named Mick Purcell rented a few acres of barren ground in southern Ireland, about three miles from Mallow, and twelve from the city of Cork. Mick had a wife and children, and they helped him all they could. That, however, was very little; for none of the children were big enough to do much work, and his wife was kept busy taking care of them, and milking the cow, boiling the potatoes, and carrying the eggs to market. So, though Mick was never idle from morn till night, it was by no means easy for them to make a living. Yet by hook or by crook they contrived to get along until there came a bad year. The oats were all spoiled that season, the chickens died of the pip, and the pig got the measles so that when it was sold it brought almost nothing.

Mick was in despair. The rent had long been due, and he addressed his wife, saying, "Molly, what shall we do?"

"My dear," said she, "what can you do but take the cow to the fair at Cork and sell her? Saturday is fair day, and this is Thursday. You must start tomorrow, that the poor beast may have a night's rest there and be at her best when you show her at the fair."

"And what will we do when she's gone?" asked Mick sorrowfully.

"Never a know I know, Mick," she replied; "but sure I am that we will be taken care of. You remember how it was when little Billy was sick, and we had no medicine for him to take—that good doctor gentleman at Ballyshin came riding and asking for a drink of milk; and he gave us two shillings and sent things for Billy, and he gave me my breakfast when I went to his house to ask a question—so he did. He came to see Billy again and again, and never left off his goodness till the boy was quite well."

"Oh! you are always that way, Molly," said Mick; "and I believe you are right, after all. So I won't be sorry for selling the cow, and I'll take her to Cork tomorrow. But before I go you must put a needle and thread through my coat, for you know 'tis ripped under the arm."

Molly told him he should have everything right; and about twelve o'clock next day he started, while Molly stood in the doorway of their cabin and called after him not to sell the cow except at the highest price. Mick promised to do as she bid, and went his way along the road. As he drove his cow through the little stream that crosses the highway and runs on beside the old walls of Mourne Abbey he glanced toward the ruinous towers.

"I've often heard there is great treasure buried under you," said he. "Oh! if I only had that money, it isn't driving this cow I'd be now. What a pity such a treasure should be there

covered over with earth, and many a one wanting it besides me! Well, if it be God's will I'll have some money myself when I am coming back."

So saying, he moved on after his beast. It was a fine day, and the sun shone brightly on the walls of the old abbey, and all the country around looked green and pleasant. Six miles farther on he came to the top of a high hill, and just there a man overtook him and greeted him with a "Good morrow."

"Good morrow kindly," said Mick, looking at the stranger, who was such a little man that he might almost be called a dwarf. He had a wrinkled, yellow face, and a sharp nose, red eyes, and white hair; and he was muffled up in a big overcoat that came down to his heels. His eyes were never quiet, but looked at everything, and they made Mick feel quite cold when he met their glance. In truth, he did not much like the little man's company, and he drove his cow on faster, but the stranger kept up with him. It seemed to Mick that his fellow-traveler did not walk like other men, and that instead of putting one foot before the other he glided over the rough road like a shadow, without noise and without effort. Mick's heart trembled within him, and he said a prayer to himself, wishing he had not come that day, or that he did not have the cow to take care of, so he might run away from the mysterious stranger. In the midst of his fears he was again addressed by his companion, who asked him where he was going with his cow.

"To the fair at Cork," replied Mick, trembling at the shrill and piercing tones of the stranger's voice.

"Are you going to sell her?" inquired the little man.

"Why, for what else could I be taking her to the fair?" was Mick's response.

"Will you sell her to me?" said the stranger.

Mick started—he was afraid to have anything to do with the little man; and yet he was more afraid to say, "No." He hesitated, and then asked, "What will you give for her?"

"I'll give you this bottle," answered the little man, pulling a bottle from under his coat.

Mick looked at him and the bottle, and, in spite of his terror, could not help laughing.

"Laugh if you will," said the little man, "but I tell you this bottle is worth more to you than all the money you can get for your cow in Cork—aye, a thousand times over."

Mick laughed again. "Why," said he, "do you think I am such a fool as to give my good cow for a bottle—and an empty one, too? Indeed, I won't."

"You had better give me the cow and take the bottle," said the little man. "You'll be sorry if you don't."

"But what would Molly say?" muttered Mick. "I'd never hear the end of it; and how would I pay the rent, and what would we all do without a penny of money?"

"This bottle of mine is better to you than money," the little man affirmed. "Take it, and give me the cow. I ask you for the last time, Mick Purcell."

"How does he know my name?" thought Mick, with increased alarm.

“I have a regard for you, Mick Purcell,” the stranger continued. “Therefore do I warn you that unless you make the exchange I have proposed you will be sorry for it. How do you know but your cow may die before you get to Cork?”

“God forbid!” exclaimed Mick.

“And how do you know,” the little man went on, “but there will be so many cattle at the fair you will get a poor price? Or you might be robbed when you are coming home. But why need I talk more to you when you are determined to throw away your luck?”

“Oh, no! I would not throw away my luck, sir,” Mick affirmed hastily; “and if I was sure the bottle was as good as you say, though I never liked an empty bottle, I’d give you the cow for it.”

“I would not tell you a lie,” declared the stranger. “Here, take the bottle, and when you get home do what I direct, exactly.”

Mick hesitated.

“Well, then,” said the little man sharply, “good-by, I can stay no longer. Take the bottle and be rich; or refuse it, and beg for your living, and see your children in poverty and your wife dying of want. That is what will happen to you, Mick Purcell!” and the little man grinned maliciously.

“Maybe ’tis true,” said Mick, still hesitating. He did not know what to do; and yet he could hardly help believing the old man. The latter was turning to go when Mick in a fit of desperation seized the bottle. “Take the cow,” said he, “and if you are telling a lie, the curse of the poor will be on you.”

“I care neither for your curses, nor for your blessings,” retorted the little man. “I have spoken the truth, Mick Purcell, as you will surely know tonight after you reach home, if you do what I tell you.”

“And what’s that?” inquired Mick.

“When you go into the house,” said the little man, “never mind if your wife is angry over the bargain you have made. Be quiet yourself, and get her to sweep the room, and to clear off the table and spread a clean cloth over it. Then put the bottle on the floor, saying these words, ‘Bottle, do your duty,’ and you will see what will happen.”

“Is that all?” asked Mick.

“No more,” was the stranger’s answer. “Farewell, Mick Purcell. You are a rich man.”

“God grant it!” said Mick, as the stranger went off driving the cow.

Mick now started toward home, but he had gone only a few paces when he turned to have one more look at the purchaser of his cow. To his surprise neither the little man nor the cow were to be seen. “The Lord be between us and him!” exclaimed Mick. “That little man can’t belong to this earth;” and Mick continued on his way muttering prayers and holding fast the bottle.

“What would I do if it broke?” thought he; “but I’ll look out for that.”

So he put the bottle into his bosom and hurried on, anxious to prove the virtues of his treasure, and at the same time a good deal troubled over the reception he was likely to meet from his wife. He reached home in the evening, still much perturbed between his doubts and hopes, and surprised his wife sitting beside a turf fire burning in the big fireplace.

"Oh, Mick! are you come back?" she cried. "Sure, you haven't been all the way to Cork! What has happened to you? Where is the cow? Did you sell her? How much money did you get for her? What is the news?"

"Molly," said he, "if you'll give me time, I'll tell you all that's happened. But I can't tell you where the cow is."

"You sold her on the way, did you?" said Molly; "and where's the money? How is—"

"Arrah! stop a while, Molly," he interrupted, "and I'll tell you all about it."

"What bottle is that under your waistcoat?" she asked, spying the neck of it sticking out.

"Be easy, can't you!" begged Mick, and he put the bottle on the table and said, "That's what I got for the cow."

His wife was thunderstruck. "A bottle!" she ejaculated, "an empty bottle, and nothing more?"

"Just an empty bottle," Mick replied. "But—"

"And what good is it?" said Molly. "Oh, Mick! I never thought you were such a fool; and how will we pay the rent? and how—"

"Now, Molly," said Mick, "can't you stop a bit and hearken to reason? An old man overtook me on the big hill, half-way to Cork, and he made me sell him the cow, and said this bottle which he gave me in exchange would make me rich."

"Make you rich!" cried Molly. "We'll see what it will do for you," and she snatched it up from the table, intending to break it over his head.

But Mick caught it before it had time to descend, and, recalling the old man's advice to keep peaceable, he gently loosened his wife's grasp, and placed the bottle again in his bosom. Molly sat down and wept while Mick told her his story with many a crossing and blessing between him and harm. The marvel of it caused his wife's doubts to vanish, for she had as much faith in fairies as she had in the priest, who indeed never discouraged her belief in them—maybe he believed in them himself. She got up and began to sweep the earthen floor with a bunch of heath. That done, she tidied up everything, set out the long table, and spread a clean cloth on it. Mick then placed the bottle on the floor and said, "Bottle, do your duty."

"Look there! look there, mammy!" exclaimed the chubby eldest son, a boy about six years old; and he sprang to his mother's side and clung to her skirts in terror with his eyes on the bottle.

Two tiny men were climbing out of it, and in a few moments they had brought plates and other dishes, all of solid gold or silver, and put them on the table, and the dishes contained

a bountiful feast of the choicest food that ever was seen. As soon as this task was finished, the tiny men went into the bottle, which Mick then picked up and carefully set on the mantel. Where the little men had gone he could not tell, for the bottle seemed to be as empty as when he first received it.

Two tiny men climbed out of the bottle

For some time Mick and his wife stood and gazed at the table in silent bewilderment. They had never seen such dishes before and did not think they could ever admire them enough. In fact, the sight of all this splendor almost took away their appetites. But at length Molly said: "Come and sit down, Mick, and try to eat a bit. Sure, you ought to be hungry after such a good day's work."

"It's plain the little old man told no lie about the bottle," said Mick; and he helped the children into seats around the table. They all made a hearty meal, though they could not eat half the food that was before them.

"Now," said Molly, "I wonder if these fine things are ours to do as we please with them, or if those two good little gentlemen in the bottle will carry them away."

They waited to see what would happen, but the little men remained in the bottle, and at length Molly cleared the table and put away the dishes. "Ah, Mick," said she, "you'll be a rich man yet, as the stranger who took your cow foretold."

Before they went to sleep that night they decided that they would sell some of their fine tableware, and with the money it brought pay what they owed, and rent more land. So the next day Mick went to Cork laden with a number of the gold and silver dishes, which he sold for more money than he had ever had in his hands before. He did not return on foot, for he bought a horse and cart so that he was able to ride. In the weeks that followed he increased his wealth from time to time by calling forth the imps out of the bottle, and it was soon plain to everyone that Mick was prospering. He and his wife did all they could to keep the source of their good fortune a secret, but their landlord presently came to Mick and asked him where he got all his money, for he knew very well it was not from the farm.

Mick tried to put him off with excuses. This, however, would not do, and the landlord was so persistent that finally Mick told him about the bottle. The landlord offered Mick a great deal of money for it, but Mick continued to refuse until the landlord said that in addition to the money he would give him the farm he rented. Mick surrendered the bottle, feeling that he was now so rich he never would be in want again. But he was mistaken, for he and his family lived as if there was no end to their fortune. They earned little and spent much. Their wealth melted away, and at length they became so poor they had nothing left which they could sell but one cow.

So Mick prepared to drive the cow to Cork fair and dispose of her. It was hardly daybreak when he left home, and he walked on at a good pace till he reached the big hill midway in his journey. The mists were sleeping in the valleys and curling like smoke-wreaths on the brown heath around him. Just beside the road, as he was going along, a lark sprang from its grassy couch and ascended into the clear blue sky pouring forth its joyous matin-song. While Mick was watching it he was startled and rejoiced to hear the well-remembered voice of that same old man who had accosted him here once before. "Well, Mick Purcell," said the stranger, "I told you that you would be a rich man; and you found that I was right, did you not?"

“Indeed, sir, it was the truth you spoke, and no mistake,” replied Mick. “But it’s not rich I am now. Have you another bottle? I need it as much at present as when I first saw you. So, if you have one, sir, here is my cow for it.”

“And here is a bottle,” responded the little man, taking it from an inside pocket of his coat. “You know what to do with it.”

“Sure I do,” said Mick.

“Farewell,” said the strange old man as he turned to go.

“And good-by to you, sir,” said Mick. “May your shadow never grow less. Good-by, sir, good-by.”

Mick wasted no time looking back to see what became of the little man and the cow, but hastened homeward. As soon as he arrived he called out, “Molly, Molly! I have another bottle!”

“Have you?” said she, laughing joyfully. “Why, then, you’re a lucky man, Mick Purcell, that’s what you are.”

She quickly put everything in order and set forth the table with a clean spread on it. Then Mick placed the bottle on the floor, and said, with a tone of exultation in his voice, “Bottle, do your duty.”

In a twinkling, two big, stout men with heavy cudgels issued from the bottle (I do not know how there was room for them in it) and belabored Mick and Molly and the rest of the family, including the dog and the cat, till they sank bruised and faint to the floor. This result seemed to satisfy the two men, and they returned to the bottle. When Mick recovered sufficiently to get on his feet he stood and thought and thought. At length he helped up his wife and children. But he left them to get over their fright as best they could while he took the bottle under his coat and went off to call on his landlord.

The landlord’s mansion was full of company when he got there, and they were just sitting down to a magnificent feast provided by the imps of the bottle which Mick formerly owned. He sent in word by a servant that he wanted to speak with the master of the house on urgent business.

Pretty soon the landlord came out. “Well, what do you want now?” he asked roughly.

“Nothing, sir, only to tell you that I have another bottle,” Mick answered.

“Oho!” said the landlord, softening his manner and rubbing his hands together gleefully, “and is it as good as the first?”

“Yes, sir, and better,” declared Mick. “If you like, I will show it to you before all the ladies and gentlemen in your dining-hall.”

“Come along then,” was the landlord’s response, “and if I’m satisfied with what you show, I will pay a good round price for the bottle.”

He conducted his former tenant into the great hall, where Mick was interested to behold the other bottle standing high up on a shelf. “Now,” said the landlord, “let us see what your bottle can do.”

Mick set it on the floor and said, “Bottle, do your duty.”

Immediately out came the two stout men with their big clubs, and knocked the landlord off his feet. Then they assailed the ladies and gentlemen, his guests, and the servants, also, and there was running and sprawling and kicking and shrieking. Cups and plates and salvers were scattered about in all directions, and the landlord began to call out, “Mick Purcell, stop those two demons, or I’ll have you hanged!”

“No, no!” said Mick, “they never will be stopped by me till I get that bottle I used to own, which I see high up on the shelf there.”

“Give it to him, give it to him before we are all killed!” beseeched the battered ladies and gentlemen.

“Take it, and make haste,” cried the landlord.

So Mick climbed up and got the bottle that had been the source of his former good fortune. By this time the men with the cudgels had pounded the company to their satisfaction. They retired to their bottle, and off went Mick with both bottles in his bosom.

As the years passed he became richer and richer, and when, in his old age, his servants broke the bottles while fighting at a wake he was careful not to squander his riches as he had previously. So he and his wife lived happily to the end of their days.

A PEACE MEETING

ONCE upon a time there was a big pasture in which were kept many horses and cattle and pigs. The pigs were very greedy, and the horses and cattle were not on good terms with them. At last one of the horses said: "Let us have a peace meeting and invite to it all the animals that feed in this pasture. Perhaps it will enable us to settle our quarrels with the pigs, and establish more friendly relations with them."

"Yes," said a cow, "I wish we might have peace with those pigs. They are always taking our food, drinking our water, and rooting up our nice, green grass. But it is also true that our own calves and colts have hurt many of the young pigs. This trouble and fighting are not right, and we know that our master wishes us to dwell peaceably together."

So it was agreed that there should be a peace meeting, and a small and gentle cow was sent to invite the pigs to attend. As she approached the pigs' yard, the young pigs jumped up and grunted: "What are you coming here for? Do you want to fight?"

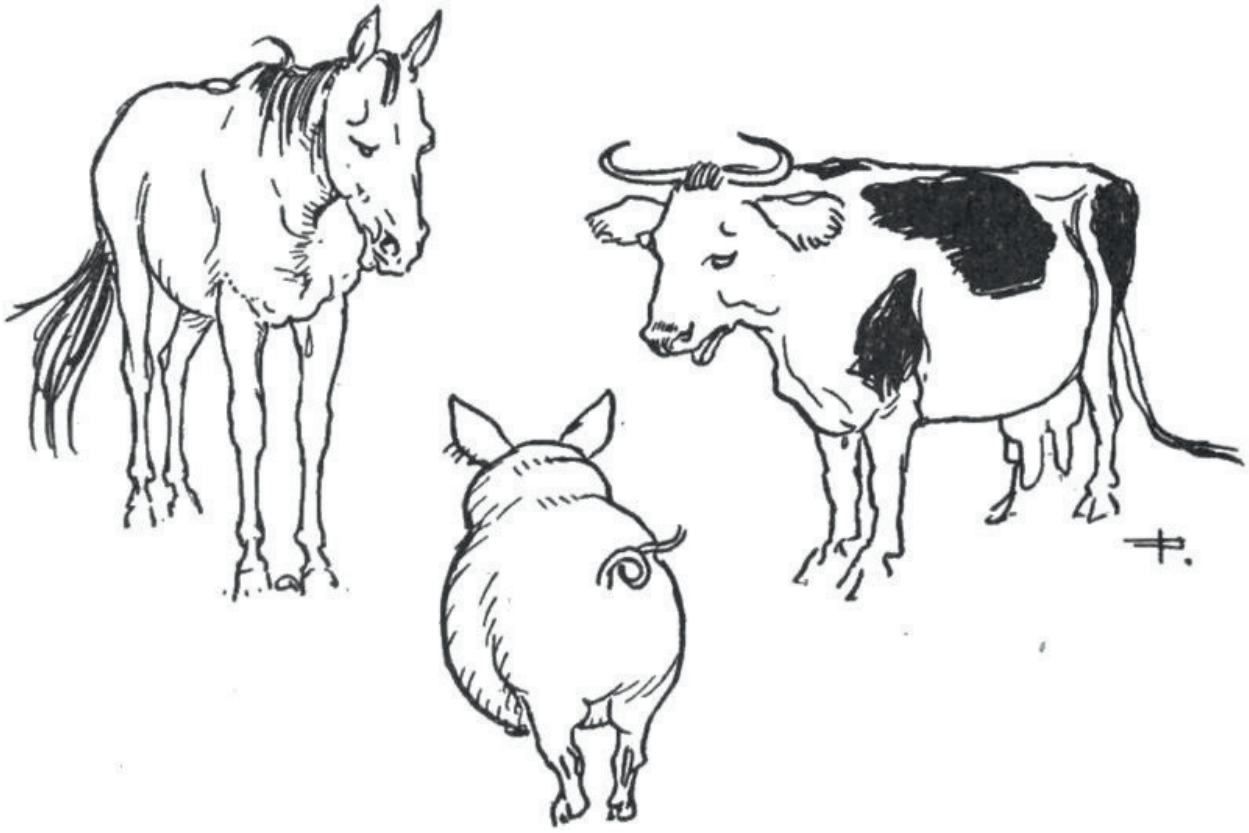
"No, I don't want to fight," responded the cow. "I was sent here to invite you to a peace meeting. Will you come?"

The pigs talked the matter over, and one of the old pigs said: "Maybe they will have some good things for us to eat at this meeting. I think we should go."

That decided them, and they told the cow they would be present at the meeting.

The day for the gathering came, and the pigs were among the first at the appointed place. Presently, when all was ready, the leader of the cows addressed the pigs, saying: "We think there should be no more quarrels in this pasture. Will you agree not to spoil our grass or eat our food? If so, we will promise that none of the horses and cows, old or young, shall hurt your children, and all the former enmity shall henceforth be forgotten."

Then a young pig stood up to reply. "This big pasture," said he, "belongs to our master, and not to you. We pigs cannot go outside of the fence to other places for food. Every day our master sends servants to feed us and to clean our pen. In the summer they fill a pond with fresh water for us to bathe in. We take your food only after you have finished. It would spoil on the ground if we did not. Do our people ever hurt your people? No, and yet each year some of our children are killed by bad horses and cows.



“Is it your belief that our master regards you more highly than us? Consider a moment how he treats our people, and how he treats you. He never makes us work as he does the horses and oxen. No, he gives us plenty of food and lets us play and take our ease day in and day out the whole year through. Surely that is because he likes us best. The horses and oxen are at work constantly. Some pull wagons, others plough the land, and they rarely are given any time to rest except at night.

“But our life is one of comfort and leisure. Observe how fat we are. You never see our bones. Look at the old horses and the old oxen, and notice how lean they are, and how their ribs show! And is it any wonder after twenty years of work and no rest? I tell you our master does not honor the horses and oxen as he does the pigs. That is all I have to say. Have I not spoken the truth?”

The leader of the cows shook her head sadly, and said, “Moo, moo!”

The tired old horses groaned, “Huh, huh!” but could think of no reply to the pig’s argument.

Then the cow leader said: “Why should we discuss things about which we know nothing? We do not seem to understand our master. The meeting is ended.”

On their way home the little pigs made a big noise, and each said gleefully, “Wee, wee! We won, we won!”

The old horses and oxen discussed the subject among themselves, but they arrived at no conclusion. “Certainly we are stronger, wiser, and more useful than the pigs,” they said. “Why does our master treat us so?”

THE SOLDIER AND THE DRAGON

THERE was once a young soldier who went far away from his home to fight in a war. When the war was over and he returned, his father and mother had died, and no one was left in the family but himself. His entire inheritance was a cow and two sheep, and these he decided to sell. "Then," said he, "I will seek my fortune somewhere else, instead of remaining here in poverty."

The cow and the sheep were sold, and the soldier set out on his travels. After walking for about a week, he one day found himself in a great forest, and toward night he came to an old castle with the woods all around it. The castle door was open, and he entered. Not a person was to be seen, but on a long table was food enough ready for eating to serve a score. The soldier stood a long time silently waiting in the hope that the dwellers in the castle would appear and invite him to eat with them. But he waited in vain. The castle seemed to be abandoned, and at last the soldier said: "Upon my word, it is a shame to neglect this food any longer. I may as well eat. Surely no one will greatly blame me for doing so."

He seated himself at the table, and though at first somewhat anxious, ate and drank with a good appetite. By the time he finished, his confidence was fully restored, and he went to look through the adjoining rooms. In one he found heaps of rich merchandise, in another were many bags and boxes of gold, silver, and jewels, while in a third the walls were half hidden by a great array of guns.

"This castle is a robbers' den," said the soldier when he saw all this, "and the robbers have gone off on some expedition. They will doubtless soon return; but since I am here I will take possession of this treasure and these guns, and drive the robbers away."

He began to prepare the castle as well as he could to stand a siege. After barricading the doors and windows, he loaded all the guns and sat down to wait. Presently he heard the robbers coming, and he took his place at a window that commanded the approach to the castle. Close at hand he had set a large number of guns ready loaded, and he immediately began to fire. The robbers were vastly astonished, and, though there were fully twenty of them, they dropped the booty with which they were laden and retired to shelter. But they reappeared shortly, and threw themselves against the heavy door, raging and swearing. The door, however, withstood their battering, and as the soldier killed or wounded one of them at every shot, they in a short time ran off, carrying the wounded with them, and were lost to sight in the forest.

"They will be back tomorrow, most likely, with reinforcements," said the soldier, and he strengthened his barricades and reloaded the guns he had discharged.

It happened as he expected. At dawn the next day the robbers again returned with a dozen others whom they had summoned to their aid. They yelled, and fired their guns, and threw stones, and pounded the door with heavy clubs. All the time the soldier was shooting from his window, and in the end every robber was killed. The soldier was now in complete possession of the castle and all the treasures it contained. He explored it from top to bottom, and concluded to make it his home. In the days that followed he often went forth into the forest to hunt, and the castle and the life he led suited him very well. Thus things went on until one day, when he was out with his gun, he took aim to shoot a fine rabbit. Greatly to his surprise the rabbit spoke, saying: "Do not kill me. I may perhaps be useful to you."

"Very well," said the soldier, "I will not harm you, and you can come with me and be my servant."

He went on followed by the rabbit, and in a little while he saw a bear. He took careful aim and was about to shoot, when the bear said, "Do not kill me, and I will make myself useful to you."

"All right," was the soldier's response. "Follow me, and we will see in what way you can serve me."

The soldier at length returned to the castle, and the rabbit and bear went with him. That evening, as they were in the great hall enjoying the heat of the fire in the fireplace, the bear said: "I heard this morning that the daughter of the king is about to be taken to a dragon which will devour her. Would it not be well for us to go and deliver her?"

"That would be a very perilous undertaking," said the soldier.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the bear, "it is not as dangerous as you think. I am ready to do my part."

"Yes," said the rabbit, "and I will do my part. All three of us ought to be more than a match for one dragon."

"Let us go then," said the soldier.

The next morning he armed himself with a stout sword, and they started. It was a long distance, and when the soldier tired of walking the bear carried him on its back. At last they met a procession carrying the princess to the dragon. Thousands of people were in the procession, and they were all weeping. The soldier and his comrades went along with the rest to the edge of a big, desolate plain. Then the people turned back and left the princess to go on alone. The cavern of the dragon was in the midst of the plain, and every month a maiden had to come to him to be devoured. Otherwise, he would have devastated the whole kingdom. The maidens were chosen by lot, and this time the lot had fallen on the daughter of the king. Abandoned by all the world, she went slowly on, wailing and shedding great tears.

Meanwhile the soldier was engaged in buying a handsome horse from one of the returning citizens. As soon as he had secured it, he galloped after the princess with the bear

and the rabbit following him. When he overtook her he said, “I pray you, dear lady, to mount behind me, and I will carry you whither you are going.”

“Alas!” she responded, “I shall get there only too soon. I do not wish to hasten to my death.”

“Confide in me,” said the soldier. “With the aid of my two companions, whom you see here, I will save you from the monster.”

“I will do whatever you say,” the princess agreed, “though I have little hope that you can save me.”

Then the soldier leaped to the ground, helped the princess on to the horse’s back,

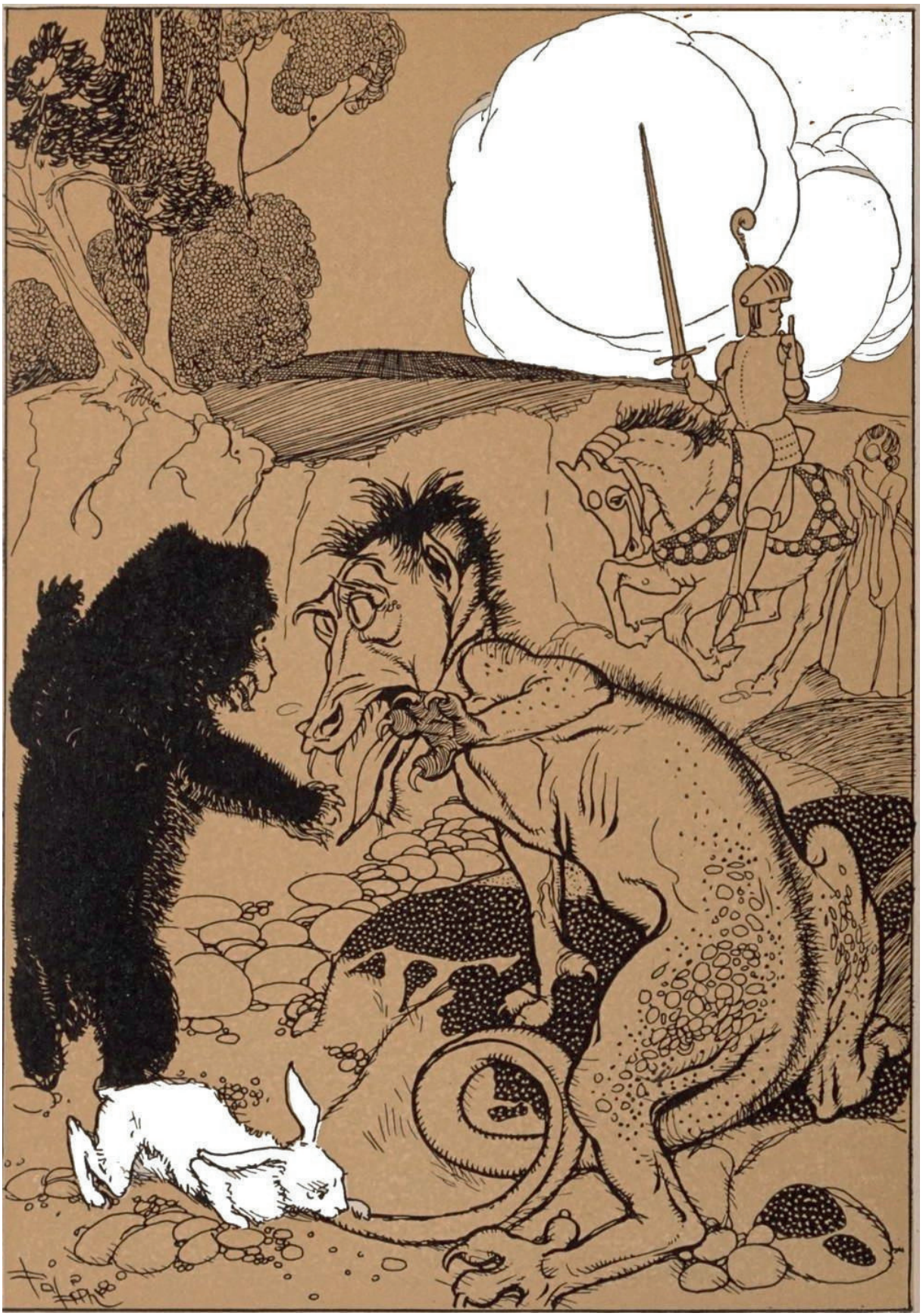
remounted himself, and rode on toward the abode of the dragon. The dragon heard them coming, and crawled out of its cave. “So you are here at last, princess!” it snorted. “But I see you have companions with you. The more the better, for I shall eat you and them, too.”

Next the dragon addressed the soldier, and said: “Young man, I am all ready. Throw me the princess.”

“If you want her, come and take her,” the soldier responded.

“Throw her to me,” ordered the dragon savagely, “or with my sharp teeth I will make sausage meat of you in no time.”

“I’m not afraid of you,” retorted the soldier.



THE BEAR AND RABBIT BEGIN THE ATTACK ON THE DRAGON

“Now we must all do our duty,” said the bear, in a low voice. “First, let the lady slip off the horse and stand out of harm’s way. Then I will clinch the monster from the front, and the rabbit shall run and nip its tail, and while we are thus taking its attention, our master must gallop forward and slash off its head.”

The princess alighted from the horse, and the bear dashed at the dreadful creature and grappled with it. At the same time the rabbit ran and worried it in the rear. Lastly, the soldier put spurs to his steed, and joined in the attack. The dragon was too much engaged with the bear and rabbit to defend itself from him, and with a tremendous blow of his sword he cut off the beast’s head.

“Victory, victory!” cried the soldier and the princess.

But the assailants did not escape without injuries. The bear and rabbit had their skins torn, and were much fatigued, and the soldier and the princess were nearly overcome with the dragon’s sulphurous breath. In order to have something to show to the king as a proof that the beast had been vanquished, the soldier cut out the dragon’s tongue and put it in a bag to carry along.

Evening was near, and they could journey no farther that day. Therefore, they looked around, seeking some place that would afford shelter for the night. The dragon’s cave was too foul, and it seemed necessary they should sleep on the open plain. But the bear rolled together several boulders in a half circle to keep off the wind, and in the protection of these they all gathered to await the morning, except the horse, which was tethered at a little remove. The rabbit served as a pillow for the princess, and the bear curled down at her feet to keep her warm. Before going to sleep they talked about the events of the day and their plans for the future. One thing they settled then and there to the satisfaction of all concerned, and this was that the soldier should marry the princess.

It happened that a charcoal-burner, whose curiosity was keener than his fear, ventured on to the plain in the late evening, hoping to learn the fate of the princess. As he was prowling about he discovered the dragon with its severed head, and presently he heard a sound of voices and approached the group where the soldier and his friends had established themselves. He hid behind a boulder and listened to the conversation and determined to profit by it. When they were all fast asleep he stole softly into the midst of the group, and cut off the soldier’s head. Then he carried away the princess to his hut on the borders of the plain. Afterward he returned and secured the head of the dragon.

In the morning he washed his hands and face, brushed his hair, put on his best clothes, and took the princess to her father the king and said he was the conqueror of the dragon. The king had promised his daughter should marry the man, whoever he might be, that should deliver her from the dreadful beast. So, after some consultation, the day following was appointed for the wedding. But the princess protested that the charcoal-burner was not her deliverer. However, as he had the head of the dragon to show, no one paid much attention to what she said.

When the bear and the rabbit awoke after a long night's sleep they were much astonished to see that the princess was gone, and that their master's head was cut off. "How is it, bear," said the rabbit, "that with such things happening you did not awake?"

"I was very weary," replied the bear, "and it seems you slept just as soundly."

"The first thing to be done," said the rabbit, "is to put our master's head on his shoulders and bring him to life. Then we will search for the princess. Luckily I know where to get some magic earth that will restore our master, and I will go after it at once."

The rabbit scurried off while the bear stood on guard. In time, the rabbit returned with the magic earth. The bear fitted the soldier's head to his body, and the rabbit rubbed the magic earth on the wound. Immediately the soldier was made whole, and he opened his eyes and sat up. "Ah," said he, "How well I have slept! I think from the look of the sun it must now be afternoon. But where is the princess?"

They told him all that had occurred, and he was very much troubled. "You need not worry," said the rabbit; "we will find the princess soon, I promise you."

Without delay they set off to go to the royal city, and by night they drew near the king's palace and stopped in a small wood. "You two remain here," said the rabbit, "and I will find out what is happening in the palace."

The rabbit went on and crept into the palace, where he discovered that a great feast was in progress celebrating the return of the princess. One thing only marred the pleasure of those who participated, and that was her persistence in saying that she did not want the charcoal-burner for a husband, and that he was not her deliverer. The rabbit entered the dining-hall. "Look, look! a rabbit!" cried the guests.

The servants hastened to pursue it, but it ran and dodged until it came near where the princess sat. Then it suddenly sprang into her lap and said in a low voice: "My master, who rescued you from the dragon, is not far away. He loves you always."

The princess was overjoyed. She caressed the rabbit, and was giving it sweetmeats when the charcoal-burner began to shout, "Drive away the ugly beast!"

"What harm has it done?" said the princess, protecting it with her arms.

"Drive it away quickly, I tell you," the charcoal-burner continued. "It is a sorcerer. Kill it!"

The servants approached armed with brooms and sticks, and the rabbit took to flight and leaped lightly through the window.

Next day the wedding guests assembled, but just when everything was ready for the ceremony the soldier, followed by the bear and the rabbit, entered the palace. The guests at this sight were about to stampede to safety, but the soldier raised his hand, and said, "Let no one attempt to leave the hall, or he will have to deal with my friend here."

So saying, he pulled the bear's ear, and the bear growled threateningly. Then the soldier turned to the king and asked: "Do you believe that it was this ugly charcoal-burner who rescued your daughter from the dragon? And are you willing to give him your daughter to be his wife?"

“I am a man of my word,” responded the king.

“Very well,” said the soldier, “but the charcoal-burner did not deliver the princess from the monster. It was I, though I must add that I had the help of these two friends, the bear and the rabbit.”

“But the charcoal-burner has given us proof we cannot doubt,” said the king. “He brought with him the dragon’s head.”

“Let the head be produced, and I will prove to you that he is a fraud,” said the soldier.

The king dispatched a servant to fetch the head, and when it had been brought the soldier said: “Now open the dragon’s mouth. See if it has a tongue.”

The servant opened the monster’s mouth. Sure enough, there was no tongue.

“Why, how does that happen?” asked the king.

“I cut out the tongue immediately after I killed the beast,” explained the soldier, “and here it is.”

From a bag he carried he shook the tongue out on a table.

“Yes,” cried the princess, “it is he who was my deliverer, and it is he who shall be my husband.”

The charcoal-burner saw that everything was going against him, and he slipped out of sight in the crowd and got away unobserved out of the palace. When search was made for him he was not to be found. “Well,” said the king, “I’m glad he is gone. It is a good riddance, and now let us have the wedding.”

So the soldier married the princess, and the event was celebrated with holidays and banquets throughout the kingdom.

THE FAIRIES OF MERLIN'S CRAG

IN Scotland, long, long ago, there were two brothers named Donald and John Gilray. They lived together in a little cottage and worked for a farmer whose house was about a mile distant. One day the farmer sent them to dig peat turf in a pasture near a wild, rocky bluff known as Merlin's Crag. After working for a considerable time, they saw coming toward them from the crag a little woman about eighteen inches in height, clad in a green gown, and wearing on her feet a pair of red shoes.

She waved a cane she carried at the astonished laborers, and said: "How would you like it if my husband was to come and take the roof off from your house as you are taking it off from ours? I command you to put back every turf exactly where you found it."

Then she left them, and the two men, with fear and trembling, replaced the turfs. That done, they went to their master, and told him what had happened. The farmer only laughed at them. "You must have fallen asleep up there on the moor when you ought to have been working," said he; "and you have had a bad dream to pay you for your neglect. Take a cart and fetch home the turfs you have dug immediately."

The men went back with much reluctance; but nothing unusual happened while they were in the pasture, and they loaded a cart and drove with it to the farm. After they finished their day's work and were passing Merlin's Crag on their way home in the dusk of evening, they saw streams of brilliant light shining forth from innumerable crevices in the black rocks. They stopped and gazed. "Come," said John, "let's go and find out what this is all about. Many's the time we've passed here, and we've never seen anything like that before."
"No," said Donald, "we're safer to keep to the highway."

But John would not be satisfied with that, and he moved toward the lighted crag, and Donald followed. As they drew near they were charmed by the most exquisite fiddling they had ever heard. By searching they found an opening in the rocks something like a rude window, and they looked in and saw a company of fairies engaged in a merry dance. Among the rest was the little old woman who had spoken to them on the peat bog. John was so overpowered by the enchanting jigs the fiddler was playing that he proposed they should go inside the crag and join in the fun.

"We should never be able to get away," declared Donald. "I am as fond of dancing as anyone, but nothing would tempt me to dance in that company."

However, John was more adventurous than his brother, and every new jig that was played, and every new reel that was danced inspired him with additional ardor. At last he could restrain himself no longer, and he leaped through the window into the midst of the dancers.

"Welcome!" cried the old fairy woman, and she held out her hands to him, and off they went in a mad whirl.

"He is there for no good," said Donald, who still stood at the window. "What can I do?"

After thinking the situation over he began to shout remonstrances to his brother and to beg him to come out. But neither the fairies nor John would pause in their reel, and they only waved their hands, beckoning him to join them. There Donald stayed shouting to his brother until he heard a cock crow at his master's farm. Immediately the lights flashed out, the music ceased and he was alone on the side of the wild crag.

He went back to the farm and told the melancholy tale of poor John's fate. This was soon the talk of all the countryside, and it was generally agreed that John was lost forever. But one old man who was very wise in fairy lore came to Donald and unfolded a plan for accomplishing his brother's rescue. "Make a little cross out of the wood of the rowan tree," said he, "and carry it in your pocket, and the fairies will have no power over you. Then be sure to pass Merlin's Crag every evening, and when you see it lighted, enter it boldly and claim your brother. If he refuses to go with you, seize him and carry him off by force. You need not be afraid, for as long as you have the rowan cross in your pocket the fairies will not dare to interfere with you."

Donald was not so sure about his safety as the old man was, but he was willing to risk much to effect his brother's rescue. So he agreed to try the experiment, whatever the result might be. He made the rowan cross and carried it in his pocket, and every evening he passed Merlin's Crag watching for the lights. But the crag was perfectly dark until just a

year after the day when the brothers first saw the fairies. That evening Donald saw the lights glimmering from the crevices of the rocks, and he at once left the road and climbed up till he found the very window that he had looked through a twelve-month previous.

There was the same scene within of merry dancers, and the music was just as stirring and delightful. In the midst of the dancers was John Gilray whirling about with the little old fairy, exactly as his brother had last seen him. Donald crept through the window and advanced with trembling footsteps. His courage returned as he went on, and presently he made a sudden dash in among the dancers and seized his brother by the collar.

"You must come with me," said he.

"Yes, yes," said John, "I'll come, and you need not handle me so roughly. But first let me finish this dance. What is your hurry anyhow? I haven't been here a half hour yet!"

"A half hour!" exclaimed Donald. "You have been here a whole year."

John refused to believe this, but Donald dragged him away and got him outside. The little old fairy woman looked forth at them through the window. "Good-by," she said, waving her hand to John. "We have had you here a whole year, a prisoner in our dance. That is your punishment for taking the roof off our house. But the grass has again grown green on the spot where you removed the turf, and the roof is nearly as good as ever. So you can go if you choose, but I warn you not to be digging your turf there again."

She waved her hand once more, and suddenly the lights were gone, and the rocks of Merlin's Crag were as black and solid as ever. It was now midnight, and the two brothers went home rejoicing.

THE LITTLE BOY AND THE BIG COW

ONCE upon a time there was a little boy who had a big cow, and he fed her and took good care of her and milked her twice a day. Everything went on very well until one morning he went out to milk her, and said:

"Hold still, my cow, my dearie,

And fill my bucket with milk,

And if you'll not be contrary

I'll give you a gown of silk."

But the cow wouldn't stand still. "Look at that, now!" said the little boy. "What am I to do with such a contrary cow?"

So off he went to his mother at the house. "Mother," said he, "the cow won't stand still, and I can't milk her."

"Well," said his mother, "go to the cow, and tell her there's a weary, weary lady with long yellow hair sits weeping for a sup of milk."

Back he ran to the cow and repeated to her his mother's words, but the cow wouldn't stand still. Then he went to the house again and told his mother.

"Well," said his mother, "tell the cow there's a fine, fine laddie from the wars beside the weary, weary lady with golden hair, who is weeping for a sup of milk."

Off he went and repeated to the cow his mother's words, but she wouldn't stand still, and he hurried to the house and told his mother.

"Well," said his mother, "tell the cow there's a sharp, sharp sword at the belt of the fine, fine laddie from the wars, who is beside the weary, weary lady with golden hair, who sits weeping for a sup of milk."

He told the cow, but she wouldn't stand still, and once more he came to the house to advise with his mother.

"Run quick," said she, "and tell the cow that her head is going to be cut off by the sharp, sharp sword in the hands of the fine, fine laddie from the wars, if she doesn't give the sup of milk for which the weary, weary lady weeps."

The little boy went and told the cow, and she concluded she had better stand still. So the little boy milked the big cow, and the weary, weary lady with the golden hair stopped her weeping and got her sup of milk, and the fine, fine laddie from the wars did not have to cut off the cow's head with his sharp, sharp sword. After that everything went well that didn't go ill.

A BOTTLE OF BRAINS

ONCE there was a simple-minded fellow who wanted to buy a bottle of brains, for he was always getting into scrapes through his foolishness, and being laughed at by every one. Folk told him he could get whatever he wanted from the wise woman, who lived at the top of the hill, and dealt in potions and herbs and magic spells, and could tell a person all that was going to happen to him. So the simple lad asked his mother if he could seek the wise woman and buy a bottle of brains.

"To be sure," said she, "for you are in sore need of them, my son; and if I should die, who would take care of a poor, simple fellow such as you are. But mind your manners, and speak fair to her, my lad. These wise folk are easily mispleased."

After he had eaten supper, off he went to the wise woman on the hill, and there he found her sitting in her kitchen by the fire stirring a big pot.

"Good evening, missis," said he, as he entered the door; "it's a fine night."

"Yes," said she, and went on stirring.

"But it will maybe rain," said he, fidgeting from one foot to the other.

"Maybe," said she.

"And perhaps it won't," said he, and looked out of the window.

"Perhaps not," said she.

He scratched his head and twisted his hat.

"Well," said he, "I can't think of anything else about the weather, but let me see—the crops are getting on fine."

"Yes," said she.

"And—and—the beasts are fattening," said he.

"They are," said she.

"And—and—" said he, and came to a stop. But after a few moments he remarked: "I reckon I've talked enough for politeness, and now we'll tackle business. Have you any brains to sell?"

"That depends on what you want," said she. "If you are after king's brains, or soldier's brains, or schoolmaster's brains, I do not keep them."

"Mercy, no!" he exclaimed, "I'm not after such as that, but just ordinary brains—fit for any simple fellow—the same as every one has about here—something plain and common-like, and only a bottle full."

"Very well," said the wise woman, "I might manage it if so be you'll help yourself."

"What would you have me do?" he asked.

She looked into the pot before replying, and then said, "Bring me the heart of the thing you like best, and I'll tell you where to get your bottle of brains."

"But how can I do that?" he questioned anxiously.

"That's not for me to say," she answered. "Find out for yourself, my lad, if you do not want to live to be a simpleton all your days. Now I must attend to other matters; so good evening to you," and she bowed him out and shut the door.

Off went the lad to his mother and told her what the wise woman had said; "and I reckon I'll have to kill our pig," he added, "for I like fat pork better than anything else."

"Then kill the pig," advised his mother, "for certainly it will be a strange and good thing for you if you can buy a bottle of brains and be able to take care of yourself."

So he killed the pig, and the next day he again visited the wise woman at her cottage on the hill. There she sat by the hearth, reading in a great book.

"Good evening, missis," said he, "I've brought you the heart of the thing I like best of all. It is the heart of our pig."

"Is that so?" said she, and looked at him through her spectacles. "Then tell me this—what runs without feet?"

He thought and thought and thought, but he could not tell.

"Go your way," said she. "You have not fetched me the right thing yet, and I have no brains for you today."

So saying, she clapped her book together, and turned her back, and the lad went to tell his mother.

As he drew near to the house, out ran some of the neighbors to inform him that his mother was dying. When he went in, she smiled at him feebly, and soon, without speaking a word, breathed her last. He left the room and sat down on a bench just outside of the house door, and the more he thought about his mother's death, the worse he felt. He remembered how she had taken care of him ever since he was a tiny child, helping him with his lessons, cooking his food, mending his clothes, and bearing with his foolishness.

"Oh, mother, mother!" he sighed, "who will take care of me? You have left me all alone, and what shall I do now to get that bottle of brains?"

After the funeral was over he went once more to consult the wise woman, and he told her of his mother's sudden death, and how he had now more need than ever of the bottle of brains.

"Well," said she, "I can do nothing for you yet, unless you can answer me one more riddle that I have to ask. What is it that is yellow and shining, but is not gold?"

He pondered on her question for a long time without being able to give any answer, and at last she shut the door in his face, and he walked sadly away. Pretty soon he sat down by the roadside and began to cry, and he fairly howled till the tears ran down into his mouth. While he was in the midst of his grief along came a lass who lived near by, and she stopped and looked at him. "What's troubling you?" she asked.

"Oh dear!" said he, "I've killed my pig and lost my mother, and I'm nothing but a simpleton."

"That's bad," said she; "and haven't you anybody to look after you?"

"No," said he, "and what is worst of all I don't know how to buy a bottle of brains."

"What are you talking about?" said she; and down she sat by him, and he told her all about the wise woman, and the pig, and his mother, and the riddles, and that he was alone in the world.

The lass stopped and looked at him

“Well,” said she, “I wouldn’t mind looking after you myself.”

“Could you do it?” said he, wiping away his tears and gazing at her hopefully.

“Oh, yes,” said she, “folk say that simpletons make good husbands, and I believe I’ll have you, if you are willing.”

“Can you cook?” said he.

“Yes,” said she.

“And scrub?” said he.

“Surely,” said she.

“And mend my clothes?” said he.

“I can,” said she.

“I reckon you’ll suit me as well as anybody,” said he, “but what shall I do about getting a bottle of brains from the wise woman?”

“Wait a bit,” said she, “and perhaps we can show her that it will not matter if you are a simpleton so long as you have me to look after you.”

“All right,” said he.

Then off they trudged and got married. Afterward they went to the house where the youth’s mother had lived, and his wife kept it so clean and neat, and cooked his food so nice that one evening he said to her, “Lass, I’m thinking I like you best of anything.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” said she.

“But,” said he, “have I got to kill you, do you think, and take your heart to the wise woman for that bottle of brains?”

“Law, no!” she exclaimed, looking scared, “I will not have that, but you might take me as I am, heart and all, and I’ll wager I can help you read her riddles.”

“Do you think so?” said he. “I’m afraid they are too hard for women folk.”

“Let us see,” said she. “What was the first?”

“What runs without feet?” said he.

“Why, water,” she said.

“So it does,” said he, and clapped his hands gleefully; “and what is yellow and shining but is not gold?”

“Why, the sun,” said she.

“Faith, it is!” said he. “Come, we’ll go to the wise woman at once,” and off they went.

When they climbed the hill they found the wise woman sitting in her cottage doorway. “Good evening, missis,” said the lad, “I reckon I’ve fetched you the right thing this time.”

The wise woman looked at them both and wiped her spectacles. Then she said, “Can you tell me what it is that has first no legs, and afterward two legs, and ends with four legs?”

The lad scratched his head, and thought and thought and thought, but he couldn’t tell.

At last the lass whispered in his ear, “It’s a tadpole.”

Then he turned to the wise woman and said, “Perhaps it might be a tadpole.”

The wise woman nodded her head. “That’s right,” said she, “and you’ve got your bottle of brains already.”

“Where?” asked he, looking about and feeling in his pockets.

“In your wife’s head,” she answered. “The only cure for a simpleton is a good wife to look after him, and that you’ve got. So good evening to you.”

She nodded to them, and got up and went into the house. Then they walked home together, and he never wanted to buy a bottle of brains again, for his wife had enough for both of them.

THE PEDDLER OF SWAFFHAM

IN the old days, when London Bridge was lined with shops from one end to the other, and salmon swam under the arches, there lived in the town of Swaffham, about a hundred miles northward from London, a poor peddler. He had much ado to make a living, trudging about with his pack on his back and his dog at his heels, and at the close of each day's labor he was only too glad to lie down and sleep.

It so happened one night that he dreamed a dream; and in the dream he saw the great bridge of London Town, and a voice seemed to tell him that if he went thither he would have joyful news. He made little account of the dream, but on the following night it came back to him, and likewise on the third night. Then he said within himself, "I must needs find out what truth there is in this matter."

So off he trudged to London Town. Long was the way, and right glad was he when he stood on the great bridge and saw the tall houses to the right and left of the roadway where the teams and the people went and came, and had glimpses of the river and of the boats and ships moving about on it. All day long he paced to and fro, but he heard nothing to yield him comfort. Again, on the morrow, he stood and he gazed, and he paced afresh the length of London Bridge, but naught did he hear in the way of glad news.

The third day came, and there he was again on the bridge. He was looking about when a shopkeeper, standing at the door of his shop close by, spoke to him, saying: "Friend, this is the third day I have seen you loitering about here. I wonder much what object you have in so doing. Have you wares to sell?"

"No," quoth the peddler.

"I have not observed you beg for alms," said the shopkeeper.

"I am not so poor that I would need to do that," responded the peddler, "and I shall never beg so long as I can provide for myself."

"Then what, I pray you, do you want here?" inquired the shopkeeper, "and what is your business?"

"Well, kind sir," responded the peddler, "to tell the truth, I dreamed that if I came thither I would have good news."

Right heartily did the shopkeeper laugh. "Ah!" said he, "you must be a fool to go on a journey with no better excuse than that. I must tell you, my poor, silly country fellow, that I also dream at night, and thrice recently have I dreamed that I was in Swaffham, a place I never have even been near in my life, and I thought I was in a field behind a peddler's house, and in the field was a great oak tree, and a voice seemed to tell me that if I dug beneath that tree I would find a rich treasure. But do you fancy I am so lacking in sense as to undertake a long and wearisome journey because of a foolish dream? No, my good fellow; and now I would have you take advice from a wiser man than yourself. Get you home and mind your business."

The peddler answered never a word, but was exceedingly glad in himself and returned home speedily. As soon as possible he dug under the great oak, and there he found a prodigious treasure. It made him very rich, but he did not forget his duty in the pride of his wealth; for he rebuilt the Swaffham church. When he died a statue of him was put in the church, all in stone, with his pack on his back, and his dog at his heels. There it stands to this day a witness to the truth of this story.

THE ORANGE FAIRY

IN the olden time there was once a sultan whose days were joyless because he had no son. Once he was out walking with his vizier, and they passed out of the city and went on and on until they came to a wild, craggy valley. In this valley they sat down to rest. Suddenly the ground was shaken as if by an earthquake, there was a clap of thunder, and a yellow-robed, yellow-slippered, white-bearded dervish stood before them. The emperor and the vizier were so frightened they could not stir, but when the dervish addressed them with the words, "Peace be unto you," they took heart and responded courteously, "Unto you be peace."

"What is your errand here, my lord sultan?" asked the dervish.

"If you know that I am a sultan, you must also know my errand," the emperor replied.

Then the dervish took from his bosom an apple, presented it to the sultan, and said, "Let the sultana eat half of this, and eat the other half yourself." So saying, he disappeared.

The sultan went home, and he and the sultana each ate half the apple, and within a year a little prince was born to them. So joyful was the sultan over this event, that he scattered gold coins among the poor, restored to freedom his slaves, and gave a magnificent banquet to his courtiers.

The years passed until the prince had reached the age of fourteen, and still his parents fondled him and treated him like a child. One day he said to his father, "I want you to make me a little marble palace, and let there be two fountains in it, one of which shall run with honey, and the other with butter."

So dearly did the sultan love his son, that he had the little marble palace made with the two fountains in it just as the lad had desired. When the sultan's son went into his completed palace and sat looking at the bubbling fountains of butter and honey, an old woman came with a pitcher in her hand and would have filled it at one of the fountains. But the sultan's son threw a stone at the old woman's pitcher and broke it in pieces. Then the old woman went away without saying a word.

Next day she was there again with a pitcher, which she was about to fill when the prince threw a stone and shattered it. Then the old woman silently departed. On the third day also she came to fill a pitcher, and the prince threw a stone that broke the pitcher to fragments. "O youth!" said she, "'tis the will of God that you shall fall in love with an orange fairy." With these words she quitted him.

From that time on the prince gradually became pale and thin. The sultan observed this and sent for the wise men and the doctors, but they could not cure the prince of his illness.

At last the youth said to his father: “My dear daddy, these wise men of yours labor in vain to help me. I am in love with an orange fairy, and I shall never be better till I find her.”

“You are the only child I have in the wide world,” groaned the sultan. “If you leave me to search for this fairy, perchance you would never return, and my happiness would be destroyed.”

Time went on and the prince continued to slowly wither away, and he became so listless that most of the time he lay with closed eyes as if in a heavy sleep. So his father saw it would be best for the youth to go and, if possible, find the orange fairy. As soon as he had the sultan’s permission, the prince went away over the mountains and through the valleys. After traveling for many days he came to a vast plain, and in the midst of it met a giantess as tall as a church spire. She was chewing gum, and the sound of her chewing could be heard a half-hour’s journey off.

“Good day, madam,” said the youth.

“Good day, little sonny,” she responded. “If you had not spoken so politely, I would have gobbled you up. Whither are you going?”

The youth heaved a sigh, and said, “I have fallen violently in love with an orange fairy, but I don’t know where to find her.”

“Neither do I know,” said the giantess. “But I have forty sons, and they go up and down the earth more than I do. Perhaps they can tell you something of the matter.”

So the giantess took the prince to her home, and toward evening, when it began to grow dusk, she gave him a tap on the head and turned him into a broom and placed him beside the door. Immediately afterward the forty sons arrived, and as they came in they said, “Mother, we smell man’s flesh.”

“Nonsense!” said the mother. “Sit down to supper.”

They were busy eating and drinking when she said to them, “If a man should come to our dwelling as my guest, how would you treat him?”

“Like a brother, of course,” they replied.

Then their mother tapped the broom, and there stood the sultan’s son. “This is my guest,” said she.

They greeted him cordially, inquired after his health, and asked him to sit down and eat with them. “But he does not care for your sort of food,” said the giantess. “He eats fowls, beef, mutton, and such things.”

So one of the sons jumped up and went out and slew a sheep, and brought it in and laid it before the prince. “That won’t do,” said the giantess. “Men do not eat mutton until it is cooked.”

They therefore skinned the sheep, roasted it, and again placed it before him. He ate enough to satisfy his hunger, and stopped, but the sons exclaimed, “Why, that’s nothing!” and urged him to eat more.

“No, my sons,” said their mother, “he has eaten all he needs.”

“Let me see what this roasted sheep-meat is like,” said one of the sons. So he took it up and devoured the whole of it in a couple of mouthfuls.

The prince stayed with the giants over night, and in the morning the giantess said to her sons: “Our guest is greatly troubled because he has fallen in love with an orange fairy and knows not where to find her. Can you show him the way?”

Then the youngest of the forty sons leaped up with a shout of joy and said, “I know where she is!”

“Very well,” said his mother, “take this youth to his fairy that his heart may be at rest.”

So the youngest of the giant brothers took charge of the prince, and they went merrily away together and traveled until at last the giant said: “We shall come presently to a large

garden in which there is a spring. Stand beside the spring and do as I tell you, and then lay hold of what you see in the water."

Soon they came to the garden, and the prince went and stood at the margin of the spring. "Shut your eyes and open your eyes," said the giant.

The prince obeyed, and then he saw an orange bobbing up and down on the surface of the water. He at once reached down and grasped it. "Now," said the giant, "take care not to cut open the orange in any place where there is no water, or things will go badly with you. That orange contains your fairy."

Then they parted, one to go to the right and the other to the left. The sultan's son went on and on and on, and in the course of time came to a clear spring beneath the wide-spreading branches of a big tree. He drank of the water and said to himself, "Here is a good place to cut open my orange."

Scarcely had he cut through the peel when out popped a lovely damsel. Not even the full moon could be more beautiful. She immediately called for water, and he gave her some from the spring. After talking together for a time he told her he would go to a town that was near and hire a carriage to take them to his father's palace.

He had not been gone long when she observed some one coming, and she climbed into the tree and concealed herself in the leafage on a branch directly over the spring. The person she saw approaching was a negro maidservant, who came to fill a jar with water. As this servant looked into the spring she saw the reflection of the damsel in the watery mirror. "Why!" said she in surprise, "I did not know I looked like that. I am much more beautiful than my mistress. She ought to fetch water for me, and not I for her."

So saying, she gave the jar a bang that broke it to bits, and then she went home. Her mistress asked where the jar of water was, and the servant replied, "I am much more beautiful than you, and you must do the water-fetching in future."

Her mistress picked up a mirror and held it before the maid. "Look in this," she said. "I think you must have taken leave of your senses."

The negress looked into the mirror and saw that she was as black as ever. Without another word she got a jar and went again to the spring. But there she saw the reflection of the face of the damsel who was in the tree, and again she fancied it was her own. "I was right after all," said she. "I am ever so much more beautiful than my mistress."

So she smashed the jar and went home. Her mistress asked her why she had not brought the water. "Because I am ever so much more beautiful than you," said the maid. "Therefore you must fetch the water for me."

"You are downright crazy," declared her mistress, and once more produced the mirror.

When the negress saw her face in it she took another jar and for the third time went to the spring. But there the damsel's face appeared, and the negress was about to break the jar when the fairy addressed her from the tree, saying: "It is my face you see in the water."

The negress looked up and saw the wondrously beautiful damsel. "Who are you and why are you there?" she asked.

“I am a fairy,” replied the damsel, “and I am waiting for a prince who has gone to the town near by after a carriage. When he returns we shall ride away to his father’s palace.”

The negress climbed up beside the maiden, and said: “Dear lady, you will get a cramp from crouching here. Rest your head against me.”

So the damsel rested her head on the shoulder of the negress, who took a needle from her dress and slyly pricked the damsel’s neck. Instantly the orange fairy became a bird, and pr-r-r! she was gone, leaving the negress alone in the tree.

By and by the prince came back with a fine coach. He looked up into the tree and saw the black face. “What has happened to you?” he asked.

“That is a nice question,” she retorted. “Why did you leave me here all day till the hot sun turned me black?”

The changed aspect of his fairy was very disconcerting to the prince, but he helped the black damsel descend from the tree and took her in the coach straight to his father’s palace. Every one was eager to see the fairy he had brought home, and when they saw the negress they were amazed that he could have lost his heart to what was apparently an ordinary black servant maid.

“But she is not what she seems,” declared the prince. “I had to leave her in a tree while I went to get a coach, and she was blackened there by the rays of the sun. She will soon grow white again, and then I will marry her.”

A fine garden adjoined the palace, and one day the orange-bird came to it, lit on a tree, and called down to the gardener.

“What do you want with me?” he asked.

“I wish you would tell me what the sultan’s son is doing,” said the bird.

“He is doing no harm that I know of,” replied the gardener.

“And what is the black damsel doing?” the bird asked.

“Oh, I suppose she is sitting with him as usual,” the gardener answered.

Then the bird sang these words:

“Though she sits by his side,
She’ll not long there abide.
She makes a false showing
And trouble is growing.
When I light on a tree The
tree dies, as you’ll see.”

The bird flew away, but the next day it came again and asked about the sultan's son and the black damsel, and repeated the song it sang before. In like manner it came the third day, and each time the tree it rested on withered and died. The afternoon of the third day the prince walked in the garden, and he observed the withered trees. "You ought to take better care of the trees," said he to the gardener. "Do you not see that they are withering away?"

"They were all right," said the gardener, "until a few days ago a little bird began coming here and asking about you and the damsel you brought home in the coach. It said that every tree it lit on should wither."

"Smear the trees with bird-lime," ordered the prince, "and if you catch the bird, bring it to me."

The gardener used the bird-lime, and the next day caught the bird. Then he put it in a cage, and carried it to the prince. The black damsel was with the prince, and as soon as she saw the bird she knew it was the orange fairy. Later in the day she pretended to be very ill, and she declared that she would never get well unless she could have such a bird as was in the gardener's cage to eat. The prince said she might do as she pleased with the caged bird. So she directed that it should be killed and cooked and brought to her, and that the feathers and whatever she did not eat should be burned.

All was done as she wished, except that one feather slipped unnoticed into a crack in the kitchen hearth. After the black damsel had eaten the flesh of the bird, she arose from her bed completely recovered from her illness.

A certain old woman who had a cottage in the vicinity sometimes came to the palace kitchen to see a daughter who worked there. One day she noticed a bright feather in a crack of the hearth. She poked it out with her knitting-needle, and carried it home and put it on a rafter. The next time she went to the palace, the bird's feather leaped down from the rafter, shivered a little, and then turned into a lovely damsel. This damsel tidied the room, cooked dinner and set it on the table, and afterward became a feather and leaped back to the rafter. When the old woman came home she was greatly astonished at what she saw, and she searched the house backward and forward to see if she could discover the person who had been helping her, but no one could she find.

It was the same the next time she went to the palace—the feather became a damsel and did all the household work. "I really must find out the secret of this," thought the old woman when she returned.

So the following morning she went out as if she were going away, but left the door ajar and hid where she could peep through a crack. Soon she perceived there was a damsel in the room putting things in order and cooking the dinner. Then in she dashed and seized hold of her. "Who are you?" she demanded, "and whence do you come?"

The damsel told her sad story, and the old woman said: "Distress yourself no more, my lass. I'll put your affairs to rights this very day."

Then off she went to the palace and invited the prince to call on her that evening. He was now so tired of the black damsel that he was glad of any excuse to get away from her, and the evening found him punctually at the old woman's. They sat down to supper, and

presently the damsel brought in the coffee. When the sultan's son saw her he nearly fainted. As soon as he recovered himself a little, and the maiden had left the room, he turned to the old woman and asked, "Who is that damsel?"

"She is the orange fairy," replied the old woman.

"I thought she could be no other!" he exclaimed, and he rose from the table and ran to where the damsel was and took her in his arms.

Presently they went to the palace together, and the instant the black slave girl caught sight of them she knew her perfidy had been discovered, and she fled from the palace, never to return. Not long afterward the prince married his beloved, and there was rejoicing throughout the realm. So they at last had the desire of their hearts, and may you have your desire also.

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE

ONCE upon a time there was a man who above all other things desired to accumulate wealth. Day and night he thought of nothing else. Fortune favored him, and as time went on he acquired more and more property until he became very rich. Now that he had so much to lose he thought it would be a terrible thing to die and leave all his possessions behind. So he made up his mind to seek a land where there was no death.

He got ready for the journey, took leave of his wife, and started. Whenever he came to a new country the first question he asked was whether people died in that land. If he was told that they did, he continued on his quest. However, he at last reached a country where they said the people did not even know the meaning of the word death. The traveler was delighted to hear this. "But surely," said he, "there must be great numbers of inhabitants in your land if no one ever dies."

"No more than in most lands," they responded; "for we would have you know that from time to time a voice is heard calling to this one or that, and whoever is called always goes away and never comes back."

The man was amazed that the people should be so stupid as to follow the voice when they knew that if they obeyed its summons they would never return. He journeyed back to his home, got all his possessions together, and went with his wealth and his wife and children to dwell in the country where the people did not die. To be sure they disappeared one after the other in response to the call of that mysterious voice; but he made up his mind that when he or any of his family heard the voice they would pay no heed to it, however loud its appeal.

After they were settled in their new home and had put everything in order, he warned his wife and children that they must on no account listen to or obey a strange voice they might some day hear calling them.

For several years everything went well with them and they lived happily in their new home. But one day when they were all sitting together around the dining-table the man's wife suddenly started up, exclaiming: "I am coming! I am coming!"

She looked around the room for her fur coat, and she had picked it up and was putting it on, when her husband took firm hold of her hand and restrained her, saying: "Don't you remember what I told you? If you have heard a voice calling to you, stay where you are unless you wish never to return."

"But I am merely going to see why I am wanted," she said. "I shall soon come back."

She struggled to get away and to go where the voice summoned, but he would not release her, and he ordered the servants to shut and bolt all the doors. Then she sank into a chair and said: “I see you will not let me go.”

So her husband thought she was resigned to staying, and that she had gotten over her mad impulse to obey the voice. But no sooner did he loose his hold on her hand and turn away than she sprang to her feet, made a sudden dash to a door, unbolted and opened it, and darted out. He followed her and contrived to grasp her fur coat. Thus he was able to restrain her while he implored her not to go, and told her she certainly would never return. She made no reply, but let her arms fall backward, and suddenly slipped out of the coat and left it in her husband’s hands. The poor man seemed turned to stone, without power to move, as he gazed after her hurrying away from him, and listened to her calling as she ran: “I am coming! I am coming!”

When she was quite out of sight he went into the house, saying: “If she is so foolish as to wish to leave us forever, I cannot help it. I warned and implored her to pay no heed to that voice, however loudly it might call.”

The rest of the family lived peacefully after this for a number of years. But at last the man was one day at the barber’s being shaved. The shop was full of people, and his chin had been covered with lather. Suddenly he started up from his chair and called out in a loud voice: “I won’t come! Do you hear? I won’t come!”

The barber and the other people in the shop listened to him with astonishment. Again he looked toward the door, and exclaimed, “I tell you once for all that I do not mean to come; so go away!”

A few minutes later he shouted: “Go away or it will be the worse for you. You may call as much as you like, but you will not get me to come.”

He grew as angry as if some one was actually standing at the door tormenting him.

Finally he got up and said to the barber: “Give me the razor you are using. I’ll teach that fellow to leave people alone for the future.”

He snatched the razor out of the barber’s hand and rushed forth from the shop as if he were running after some one. The barber did not wish to lose his razor, and he pursued the man to rescue it. They both continued at full speed out of the town until they came to the edge of a precipice. Down this the man plunged head foremost, and he never was seen again. So he, too, like the others, had been forced, against his will, to follow the voice that called him.

The barber went home congratulating himself that he had escaped the fate of the man he had pursued. He told what had happened, and it was noised abroad that the people who had gone away and never returned had all fallen down that precipice. Hitherto it had not been known where they went, when they heard the voice and obeyed its call. Crowds of people came to examine the fateful precipice where such numbers had disappeared. Yet they could discover no clue as to what had finally become of the missing ones, for they could see nothing beyond the declivity but a vast plain that looked as if it had been there from the beginning of the world.

JOHNNY GLOKE

JOHNNY GLOKE was a tailor by trade; but he was a man of too much spirit to continue to be a tailor all his days. In fact, he was fonder of basking idly in the sun than of plying the needle and scissors. As time went on he grew more and more discontented, and the desire to follow some other path that would lead to honor and fame finally induced him to swear that he would do tailoring no longer. From its resting-place on the wall of his workroom he took down a rusty old sword that had belonged to some of his ancestors, and set out in search of adventures.

After traveling a long way, he came to a country that was much troubled by two giants, whom no one was bold enough to encounter, or strong enough to overcome. He soon learned that the king had offered a great reward and the hand of his daughter in marriage to the man who should rid his kingdom of this scourge. Johnny's ardor was roused to attempt the deed, and he offered himself for the service.

The common haunt of the giants was a certain wood, and Johnny set out with his old sword to perform the task of vanquishing them. When he reached the wood, he lay down to think and contrive some plan of action by which he could gain an advantage over the giants, for he knew he was far too weak to combat them unless circumstances favored him. While he was still thinking, he saw them coming with a wagon to get wood for fuel, and the sight of them sent the cold shivers down his spine, they were so big and had such huge, shaggy heads and tusk-like teeth.

Johnny sought safety by hiding in a hollow tree. Presently he recovered sufficiently from his alarm to peep out and watch the two at work; and as he watched them a method of getting the better of them occurred to him. He picked up a pebble and threw it so it struck one of the giants a sharp blow on the forehead. The giant, smarting with the pain, turned on his companion, and in strong words blamed him for the blow. The other angrily denied that he had thrown the pebble.

Johnny kept quiet, but as soon as the giants, still grumbling at each other, resumed work, he let fly another pebble. It hit the same giant who had been hit before, and the fellow assailed his companion in fury, and they belabored each other till they were utterly tired out. Then they sat down on a log to breathe and rest themselves.

"Well," said one of them, "all the king's army has not been able to get the better of us hitherto, but I fancy that an old woman with a broom would be too much for us now."

"If that is so," shouted the former tailor, springing bold as a lion from his hiding-place, "what do you say to being attacked by Johnny Gloke with his old rusty sword?"

Before they could recover from the astonishment occasioned by his words and sudden appearance he had run to where they were, and in a twinkling he cut off their heads. That done, he went out of the wood and sought the king, who, as soon as he was satisfied that Johnny had killed the giants, gave him the princess in marriage.

For a time he lived in peace and happiness, and as he did not tell by what method he had overcome the giants, he was considered a man of great prowess and valor. At length a rebellion broke out among the subjects of his father-in-law, and such was Johnny's reputation that he was promptly chosen as the proper person to quell the uprising. His heart sank within him, but he could not refuse and so lose his great name. So he told the servants to fetch a horse for him to mount, and they brought the fiercest steed that ever saw the sun, and he set forth on his desperate task. He was not accustomed to ride on horseback, and he soon lost all control of the fiery creature he bestrode. Away it galloped at full speed in the direction of the rebel army.

In its wild career it passed under a gallows that stood by the wayside. The gallows was old and frail, and it had so rotted away at the base that it leaned over the road almost ready to fall. Johnny came into collision with it, and it broke off and lodged squarely on the horse's neck. On rushed the horse at furious speed, carrying both Johnny and the gallows toward the king's enemies. When the rebels saw the horse with its strange burden dashing toward them they were seized with terror, and cried one to another: "There comes Johnny

Gloke, who unaided killed two giants at the same time. Now he is going to assail us, and is bringing a gallows on his horse's neck to hang us all."

Then they scattered and fled in dismay, and never stopped till they reached their homes. Thus was Johnny Gloke a second time victorious. So when the old king died every one rejoiced to have Johnny become the ruler of the kingdom, and he reigned long and well.

HANS THE HEDGEHOG

ONCE there was a rich farmer who had an only son named Hans, and from his waist upward the boy was like a hedgehog. He was intelligent, and could talk like any other boy, but of course he could not be treated as if he was entirely human. For one thing, he was not allowed to sleep in a bed on account of his prickles. Instead, they shook down some straw for him behind the stove, and there he spent most of his time until he was eight years old. Then the farmer was one day going to a fair that was to be held in a neighboring town. He asked his wife what he should buy for her, and she said, "Some meat, and a couple of loaves of bread for the house."

Then he asked the servant maid what she wanted, and she replied, "A pair of slippers and some stockings."

Lastly he said, "Well, Hans my Hedgehog, and what shall I bring you?"

"Daddy," said Hans, "please bring me some bagpipes."

When the farmer returned home he gave his wife and the maid the things they had asked for, and then he went behind the stove and gave Hans the Hedgehog the bagpipes.

As soon as Hans received this gift he said: "Daddy, tomorrow morning I wish you would take our largest rooster to the harness-maker and have him fitted with a bridle. I want to use him for my horse."

So the next day the farmer had a harness made for the biggest rooster on the farm. Then Hans the Hedgehog mounted on the rooster's back and rode away to the forest. There he made the rooster fly up to the top of a lofty tree with him.

For several years he dwelt, there in the greenwood, and most of the time he stayed high among the branches of that tall tree. Meanwhile his father knew nothing of what had become of him.

As he sat on the rooster's back in the tree-top he played on his bagpipes and made beautiful music. Once a king who had lost his way in the forest came riding near enough to hear him. He was much surprised, and sent a servant to find out whence the music came. The man peered about, but saw only what seemed to be a rooster perched high in a tree with a hedgehog on his back, and this hedgehog was apparently playing some bagpipes.

The king told the servant to ask the strange creature why he sat there, and also to ask if he could direct him how to find the way back to his kingdom.

When the servant put these questions, Hans the Hedgehog came down from the tree and said he would show the way if the king would give him his written promise to let him have whatever his Royal Highness first met as he approached his castle on his return.

The king thought: “This hedgehog probably does not know one word from another. I can write what I please.”

So he took pen and ink, wrote something, and then Hans the Hedgehog showed him the road, and he got safely home. His daughter saw him coming while he was still at a distance, and she ran to meet him and threw her arms about him. Then he remembered Hans the Hedgehog, and told her what had happened in the forest, and how he had been required to give a written promise to bestow whatever he first met as he approached his palace to an extraordinary creature which had shown him the way. “The upper half of the creature was like a hedgehog,” said the king, “and he rode on a rooster just as if the rooster had been a horse, and he had bagpipes and made lovely music. But he certainly could not read, and I wrote that I would not give him anything at all.”

Hans rode away to the forest

Thereupon the princess was quite pleased. “You managed very cleverly,” said she, “for of course you could not have allowed me to be carried off by such a hobgoblin.”

Hans continued to dwell in the forest, and he was very merry sitting in his tree and blowing his bagpipes. Presently it happened that another king who was traveling through the forest with his servants and courtiers lost his way, for the forest was very large. He came near enough to the resort of Hans the Hedgehog to hear the music, and he said to one of his men, “Go at once and find out what that is.”

So the servant went under the tall tree, and he looked up and saw Hans the Hedgehog perched on the rooster, and asked what he was doing up there.

“I’m playing my bagpipes,” was the reply.

Then the servant told him that the king, his master, was not able to find the way out of the forest back to his kingdom. So Hans the Hedgehog descended from the tree with his rooster and went to the king and offered to show him the right way if he would solemnly promise to give him whatever he should meet first in front of his palace.

To this the king agreed, and he gave Hans a written promise to that effect. Then Hans rode on in front and showed him the way, and the king speedily arrived safely in his own kingdom. There was great rejoicing in the palace when he was seen returning, and his only daughter, who was very beautiful, ran to meet him, and she embraced and kissed him, full of delight that her father had come home. She inquired where he had been so long, and he told her how he had lost his way in the forest and might never have gotten back if he had not been helped by a strange creature, half man and half hedgehog, which rode on a rooster and when discovered was in a tree-top seated on the rooster’s back making music with some bagpipes. “My only trouble now,” said the king, “is that I had to promise to give the creature the first thing which met me in front of my palace. I feel very sad, because it is you who first met me.”

“Never mind,” said the princess. “Perhaps he will never come for me; but if he does, for your sake, I will go with him.”

After a time Hans decided to leave the forest and visit the two kings whom he helped to find their way back to their kingdoms. But the first king had given strict orders that if any one came into his domains riding on a rooster and carrying some bagpipes he should be chased away, and, if need be, shot, or hacked to pieces with swords. On no account was he to be allowed to enter the palace. When, therefore, Hans the Hedgehog drew near to the palace, the guards charged on him with their bayonets, but he put spurs to his rooster and flew up over the gate right to one of the king’s windows. He alighted on a balcony and called out that if he was not given what he had been promised, the king and his daughter should be punished for their treachery.

So the frightened king said everything should be done as Hans the Hedgehog wished. He ordered a carriage to be made ready drawn by six white horses, and attended by servants in gorgeous liveries. The princess stepped into it, and Hans the Hedgehog with his rooster and bagpipes took his place beside her. Then they drove away, but they had not gone far

out of the city when Hans pulled the princess's shawl off and pricked her with his quills, saying: "That is your reward for falsehood. Go back home. I will have nothing more to do with you."

Then the coach returned with her, and Hans the Hedgehog rode away on his rooster to the other kingdom. When he entered the royal city, the guards, in accord with the king's orders, presented arms, the people cheered, and he was conducted in triumph to the palace. At sight of Hans, the princess was a good deal startled, for he certainly was very peculiar looking, but he told her no harm would befall her and she need not be alarmed. So she made him welcome, and he sat next to her at the royal table, and they ate and drank together.

Late in the evening Hans had a big fire made in his chamber, and at his request four trusty men were ordered to stand on guard at his door. About eleven o'clock, when he went to his room, he said to the guards, "Never in my life have I slept in a bed, and before I get into the one prepared for me here I shall creep out of my hedgehog skin and leave it lying on the floor. Ten minutes from now you four men must come in and throw the skin into the fire, and stand by till it is entirely consumed."

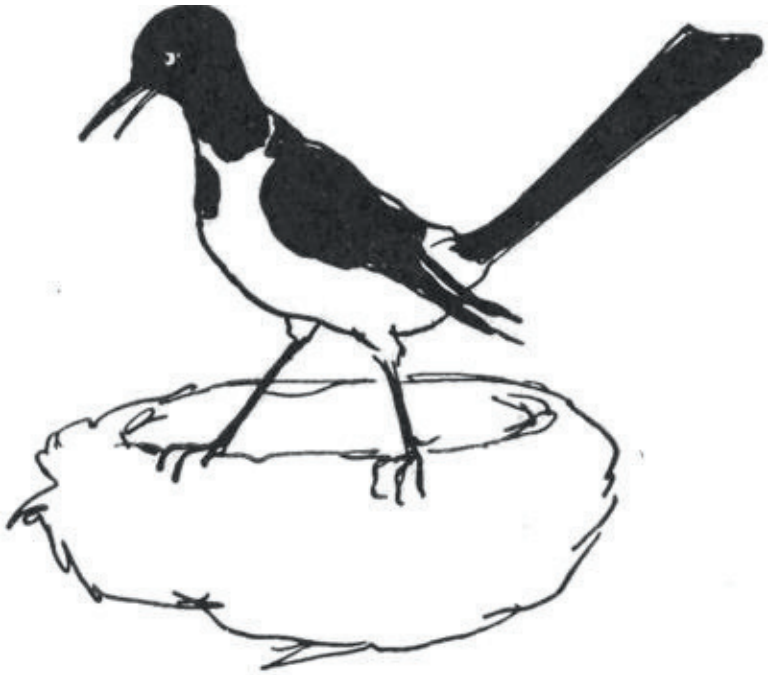
Hans entered the room, took off his hedgehog skin, and got into bed. Soon afterward the four men came in, threw the skin into the fire, and watched it burn till there was nothing left of it. Hans was now wholly human in his form, but the guards, when they looked at him, were dismayed to find that he was quite black, as though he had been severely scorched. They informed the king, and he at once summoned a physician. The latter, by the use of various salves and ointments, made Hans' skin white, and the youth became as handsome as he was clever. When the cure was complete the king's daughter was greatly pleased, and not long afterward they were married, and when the old king died Hans ruled the kingdom in his stead.

THE MAGPIE'S NEST

ONCE upon a time

When pigs spoke rhyme,

all the birds of the air came to the magpie and asked her to teach them how to build nests; for the magpie was very clever. So she had them gather around her and began to show them how to do it. First of all she took some mud and made a sort of a round cake with it.



"Oh, that's how it's done!" said the thrush, and away she flew, and the thrush has built her nests out of mud ever since.

Then the magpie took some twigs and arranged them around in the mud.

“Now I know all about it,” said the blackbird. So off she flew, and the blackbirds make their nests of mud and sticks to this very day.

Then the magpie put another layer of mud over the twigs.

“Oh, that’s quite plain!” said the owl, and away she flew, and owls have made their nests after that manner ever since.

Next the magpie took some twigs and twined them around the outside.

“The very thing!” exclaimed the sparrow, and off she went, and the sparrows to this day make rather slovenly nests.

Then Madge Magpie took some feathers and other bits of soft material and lined the nest very nicely with it.

“That suits me!” cried the starling, and away she flew, and ever since then the starlings have built very comfortable nests.

The magpie kept on with her work, but the birds were constantly leaving before she had finished, each thinking she knew all there was to know about nest-building. At last the only bird that remained was the turtle-dove. She now began to repeat her silly cry, “Take two, Taffy, take two-o-o!”

The magpie was just putting a twig across, and she said, “No, one is enough.”

But the turtle-dove kept on saying, “Take two, Taffy, take two-o-o!”

That made the magpie angry, and she exclaimed, “One’s enough, I tell you!”

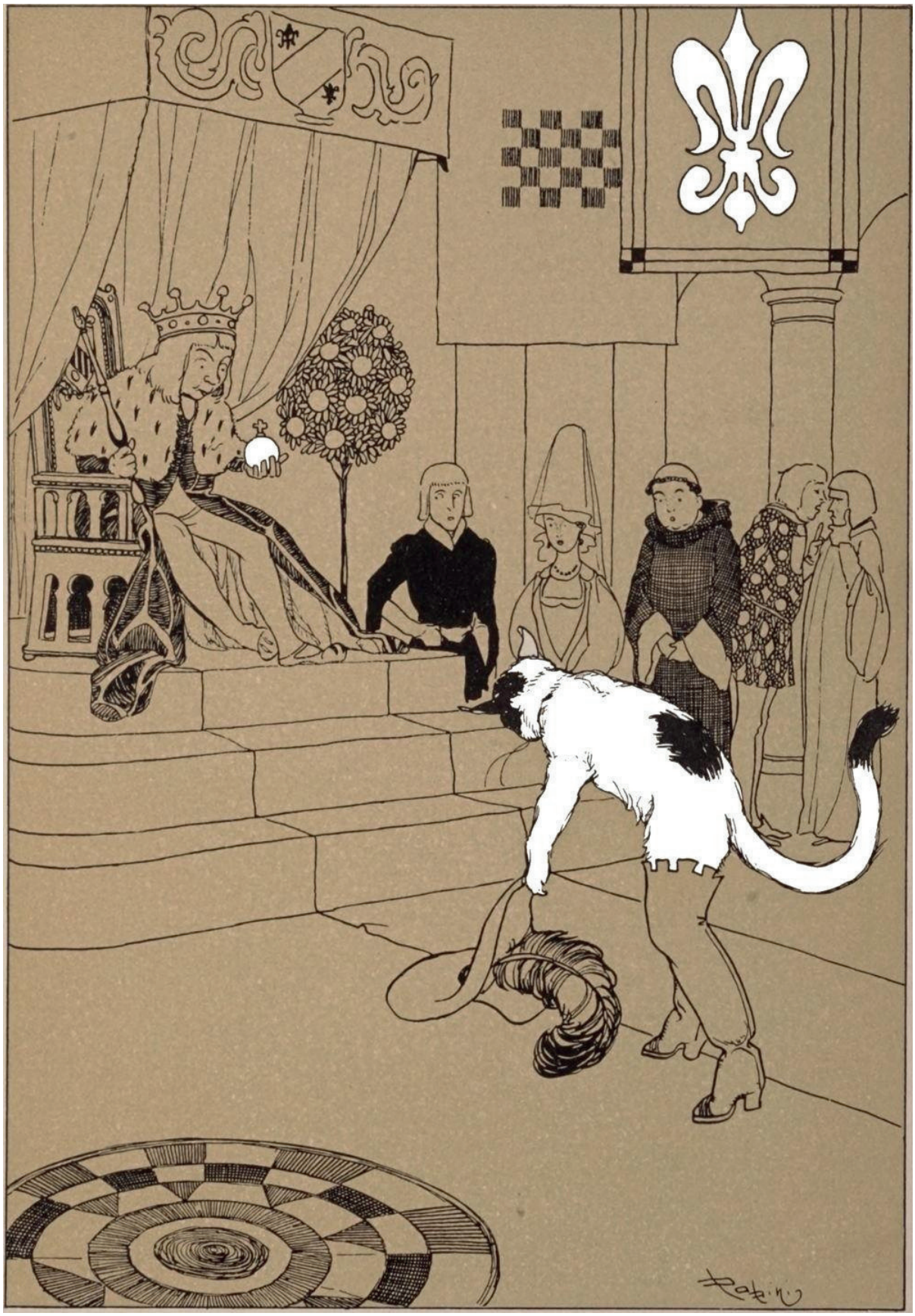
Still the turtle-dove cried, “Take two, Taffy, take two-o-o!”

At this the magpie became so disturbed that she flew away, and always afterward, when the birds asked her how to build their nests, she refused to tell them. That is why different birds build their nests differently.

PUSS IN BOOTS

ONCE upon a time there was a poor miller who had three sons, and when he died he had nothing to leave them except his mill, a donkey, and a cat. The division was quickly made without the help of either lawyer or judge. The eldest son took the mill, and the second took the donkey. So there was nothing left for the youngest but the cat, and the poor fellow could not help feeling that he had been treated shabbily. "My brothers will be able to earn a comfortable livelihood," he sighed, "but as for me, though Puss may feed himself by catching mice, he can't feed me, and I shall certainly die of hunger."

While he spoke, the cat was sitting near by and heard all he said. Immediately the creature jumped on his shoulder, rubbed gently against his cheek, and began to speak. "Dear master," said he, "do not grieve. I am not as useless as you think. Give me a bag, and buy me a pair of boots so I can scamper through the brush and brambles, and I will make your fortune for you."



PUSS IN BOOTS GREETS THE KING

The lad had very little money to spare, but he knew Puss was a faithful creature, and he had seen him play many cunning tricks to catch rats and mice, so that he did not altogether despair of his affording him some help. Therefore he bought him a smart pair of boots made of buff-colored leather, and gave him the bag for which he had asked.

Puss drew on the boots, and then he fitted slip-strings around the mouth of the bag, put some bran and parsley inside, and trotted off with it to a neighboring hillside where there was an abundance of rabbits. He laid the bag on the ground with the mouth of it propped open, and hid himself in the ferns and bushes and waited. Presently two foolish young rabbits came sniffing about and crept into the bag to get some of the bran and parsley. The clever cat at once drew the slip-strings close, and the rabbits were caught. He slung the bag over his shoulder, and away he went to the royal palace, where he asked to speak with the king. The guards ushered him into the king's presence, and Puss made a low bow, lifted the rabbits out of his bag, and said, "Sir, my noble lord, the Marquis of Carabas" (this was the title he chose to confer on his master) "has commanded me to present these rabbits to your Majesty, with his respects."

"Tell your master that I thank him," said the king, "and that he has given me great pleasure."

Then he dismissed Puss with many compliments and a purse of gold, and ordered his head cook to serve the rabbits for dinner so he and his daughter might enjoy them.

The next day Puss went and hid in a grain field with the bag baited and open near his hiding-place. A brace of partridges ran into it, and he drew the strings and caught them. These he took home to his master, and he went hunting every pleasant day. He kept his master so well supplied with game that they lived in plenty, and often he carried some game to the king. Whatever it was that he presented at the palace, it was always with the message, "From my lord, the Marquis of Carabas." So every one at court was talking of this strange nobleman, whom no one had ever seen, but who sent such generous gifts to his Majesty.

By and by Puss decided that it was time for his master to be introduced at court. He learned that on a certain day the king and his daughter, who was the most beautiful princess in the world, were to go out in their coach to drive along the riverside, and he said to his master: "If you will follow my advice your fortune is made. Go and wash yourself in the river at a spot which I will show you, and leave the rest to me."

The young man knew nothing of the why or wherefore of the cat's advice, but he went to the river, and the cat took charge of his clothes while he plunged into the water. He did not enjoy the experience, for the water was cold, and he soon stopped splashing around and stood shivering with the water up to his neck, wondering what was to happen next. Just then the king's carriage appeared in sight, and Puss at once began to shout: "Help! help! My lord, the Marquis of Carabas is drowning!"

The king put his head out of the coach window, and he recognized Puss as the cat who had so often brought him presents of game. Immediately he ordered his attendants to go to

the assistance of the marquis. While they were pulling the youth out of the river the cat came up to the coach and told the king that some rogues had gone off with his master's clothes, though in fact the cunning cat had hidden them under a big stone.

On hearing this story the king dispatched one of his grooms to fetch a handsome suit of purple and gold from the royal wardrobe. When the young man had been arrayed in this he looked so well that no one for a moment supposed but that he was some noble foreign lord. The king and his daughter were so pleased with his appearance that they invited him into their carriage. At first he felt a little shy about sitting next to a princess, but she smiled at him so sweetly, and was so kind and gentle that he soon forgot his fears. As for her, after he had cast two or three respectful and somewhat tender glances in her direction, she fell in love with him to distraction.

When the cat had seen his master seated in the royal carriage, he was overjoyed to think how well his project was succeeding. He ran on ahead as fast as he could trot until he came to a field of grain where the laborers were busy reaping. "Reapers," said he fiercely, "the king will soon pass this way. If he should ask you to whom this field belongs, remember that you are to say, 'To the Marquis of Carabas.' Don't dare to disobey me, or I will have you all chopped up as fine as mincemeat."

The reapers were so afraid the cat would do as he threatened that they promised to obey.

Puss then ran on and told all the other laborers whom he met to give the same answer, and declared they would be terribly punished if they did not.

The king was in a very good humor, for the day was fine, and he found the marquis a very pleasant companion. So he told the coachman to drive slowly, that he might admire the beautiful country. "What a fine field of wheat!" he said presently, and he had the coach stop while he asked the laborers to whom it belonged.

Then the men answered in accord with the cat's orders, "To our lord, the Marquis of Carabas."

"Sir," said the marquis, "this is a field that never fails to yield plentifully every year."

The coach went on until it encountered a herd of cattle. "To whom do these cattle belong?" the king asked the drovers.

"To the Marquis of Carabas," they replied.

It was the same all along the way. The king's inquiries as to the ownership of property received this uniform reply. The marquis listened with the greatest astonishment, and thought what a wonderful cat Puss was; and the king was delighted to find that his new friend was as wealthy as he was charming.

Meanwhile Puss, who was well in advance of the royal party, had arrived at a stately castle which belonged to a cruel ogre, the richest ever known. Indeed, he was the owner of all the land and crops and cattle the king had admired so much. The cat knocked at the door, and asked to see the ogre, who received him quite civilly. He had never before seen a cat in boots, and the sight amused him. So he and Puss were soon chatting together.

"I have been assured," said the cat, "that you possess the power to change yourself into any kind of animal you choose—a lion or an elephant, for instance."

"Well, so I can," responded the ogre briskly.

"Dear me!" said Puss, "how much I should like to see you do it now."

The ogre was only too glad to have a chance to show how clever he was, so he agreed to transform himself into any animal Puss might mention.

"Oh! I will leave the choice to you," said the cat politely.

Immediately there appeared, where the ogre had been seated, an enormous lion, roaring, and lashing with his tail, and looking as though he meant to gobble up the cat in a trice. Puss was really very much frightened, and he jumped out of the window and managed to scramble up on the roof, though not without abundance of trouble and danger because of his boots. There he clung, refusing to come down until the ogre resumed his natural form and laughingly called to him that he would do him no harm.

Then Puss ventured back into the room and began to compliment the ogre on his cleverness. "Of course," said he in conclusion, "what you did was very marvellous, but it would be more surprising still if you who are so big and fierce could transform yourself into some timid little creature such as a mouse. That, I suppose, would be impossible."

"Not at all," said the ogre. "One is quite as easy to me as the other, as I will show you."

A moment later the ogre had vanished, and a little brown mouse was frisking about the floor. "Now or never," said Puss, and with a sudden leap he seized the mouse and gobbled it up as fast as he could. Instantly all the gentlemen and ladies whom the wicked ogre had held in his castle under a spell were disenchanted, and they came to express their gratitude to their deliverer. They were ready to do anything to please him, and at his request they agreed to enter into the service of the Marquis of Carabas.

Now the cat had a splendid castle with much treasure stored in its vaults, and he ordered a magnificent feast to be prepared. Then he hurried forth to the highway and met the king's coach. His Majesty was looking toward the ogre's castle. "Whose is it?" he asked. "I have never seen a finer."

"It belongs to the noble Marquis of Carabas," said Puss, "and I beg you to honor my master by being his guest."

The king ordered the coachman to drive to the castle, and Puss went on ahead and threw open the gates. As the carriage was crossing the drawbridge he cried out, "Welcome to the castle of my lord, the Marquis of Carabas!"

Full of surprise, the king turned to the marquis and said, "Not even my own palace can surpass the beauty of your castle."

Puss helped his Majesty to alight and conducted him into a spacious hall, where a group of gentlemen and ladies were waiting to receive them. The marquis came into the hall with the princess, and they all sat down to a splendid banquet. Long and merrily they feasted, and when at length the guests rose to depart, the king embraced the marquis and said: "I

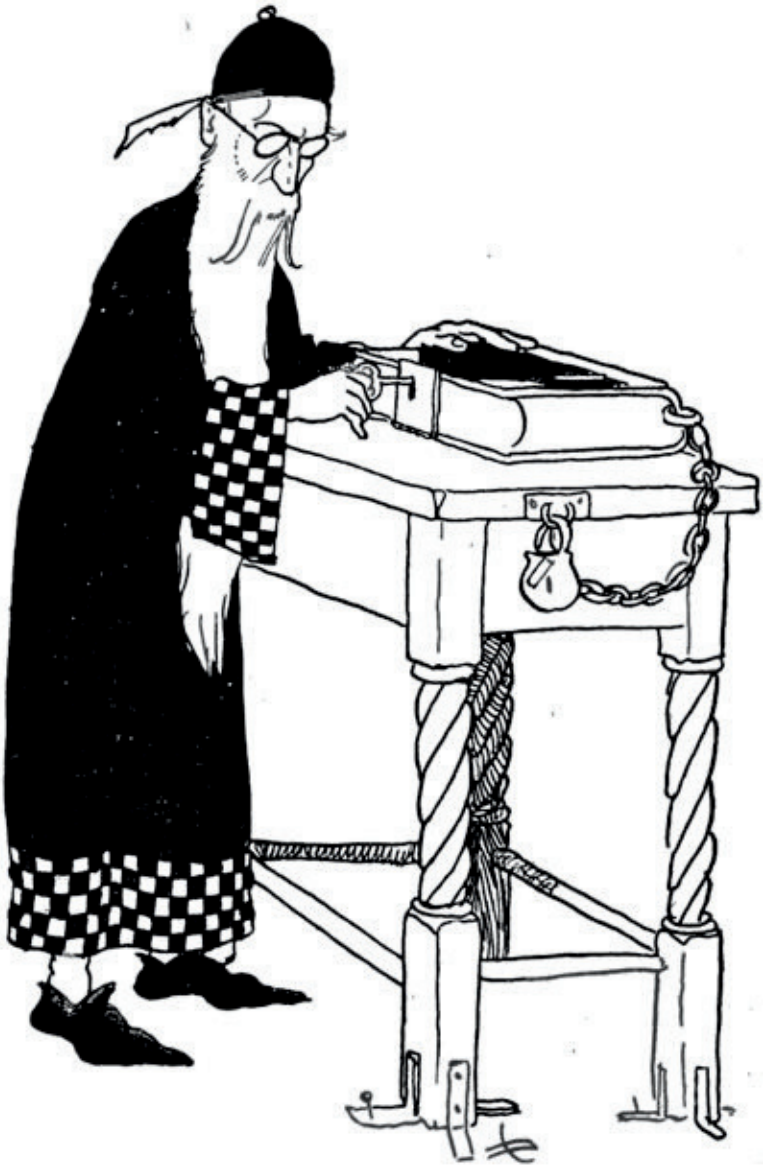
am charmed with your many excellent qualities, and am greatly impressed with the castle which is your home, and with the magnificence of your hospitality. It will be your own fault, my Lord Marquis, if you are not my son-in-law."

The marquis made several low bows, and thanked his Majesty for the honor he conferred on him. Not long afterward the miller's son married the princess, and there were rejoicings throughout the land. On the evening of the wedding day a great ball was given, to which princes and noblemen from near and far were invited. Puss opened the ball, wearing for the occasion a pair of boots made of the finest leather with gold tassels and scarlet heels. I wish you could have seen him.

When the old king died, the princess and her husband reigned in his stead. Their most honored and faithful friend at court was Puss in Boots, for his master never forgot to whom he owed all his good fortune. Puss lived on the daintiest meat and the most delicious cream, and was petted and made much of all the days of his life; and he never ran after rats and mice except for exercise and amusement.

THE MASTER AND HIS PUPIL

THERE was once a very learned man who knew all the languages under the sun, and who was acquainted with all the mysteries of creation. He had in his private room a big book bound in black leather and fitted with iron clasps, and it was chained to a table which was screwed fast to the floor. When he wanted to read in the book he unlocked the clasps with a brass key, and he never allowed any one else to read in it, for it contained many magician's secrets. Among other things it told the names of the demons, and what they did, and how they could be summoned and made to work for man.



A young lad lived with the magician and served him, but though he worked for the great master he was an ignorant youth who was scarcely allowed so much as to enter the learned man's private room. But one day, when his master was absent, he went in there, and satisfied his curiosity by looking around to his heart's content. Here was the wondrous apparatus for changing copper into gold, and lead into silver; and the mirror in which could be seen all that was passing in the world; and the shell which, when held to the ear, enabled one to hear any words being spoken by whatever person one desired to know about.

The lad tried in vain with the crucibles to turn copper into gold and lead into silver. Next he gazed long and vainly into the mirror, but clouds and smoke passed over the scenes within, and he could discern nothing clearly. Then he put the shell to his ear. That too disappointed him, for he could hear only indistinct murmurings like the breaking of waves on a distant shore.

"I can do nothing," he said, "because I do not know the right words to utter and make things go right. The words I need are locked from sight in yonder book."

Just then he noticed with surprise that the book lay open. The master had forgotten to lock it, and the lad ran eagerly to look at its secret-revealing pages. Some of the words were in black ink and some in red, and they seemed to be in a strange language. He could not see a single one that appeared familiar, and he sat down and put his finger on a line and spelled it through.

At once the room was darkened, and the house trembled, and there was a startling clap of thunder. Then the lad saw standing before him a horrible winged creature, breathing fire, and with eyes like burning lamps. It was the demon Beelzebub whom he had called up to serve him.

"Set me a task!" cried the demon with a voice like the roaring of an iron furnace.

The boy shivered with fright, and his hair stood on end. He knew not what to do or say.

"Set me a task or I shall strangle you," said the demon.

But the lad could not find voice to speak. The evil spirit stepped toward him and reached out his hands toward the boy's throat. The youth shrank from the demon's burning touch, while again the command was dinned in his ears. "Set me a task!"

"Water yon flower," said the boy in despair, pointing to a geranium which stood in a pot on the floor.

Instantly the demon left the room, but a moment later he returned with a barrel on his back and poured its contents over the flower. Again and again he went and came, and poured more and more water until the floor of the room was ankle-deep.

"Enough, enough!" gasped the lad.

But the demon heeded him not. The boy did not know the words that must be spoken in order to send the demon away, and the evil spirit continued to fetch water. It rose to the boy's knees, and yet more water was poured. It mounted to his waist, and still Beelzebub brought barrel after barrel full. It rose to the lad's armpits, and he scrambled to the table-top. Presently the water was half way up the window and washing against the glass, and it swirled around the lad's legs where he stood on the table. It kept on rising and reached his breast.

In vain he ordered and begged the demon to desist. The evil spirit refused to obey, and he would have been pouring water even to this day had not the master returned. He came in haste, for he had recollected that he had left his book unlocked, and he arrived just as the water had reached his pupil's chin. Without a moment's delay he shouted the proper words to make Beelzebub return to his fiery home, and the lad was saved.

THE WHITE TROUT

THERE was once a beautiful lady who lived beside a lake in the western part of Ireland, and she was to be the bride of a king's son. But just before the time set for the wedding he was murdered and thrown into the lake. So of course he couldn't keep his promise to the fair lady—more's the pity.

The lady was that tender-hearted she went out of her mind because of losing the king's son. She pined away, and one day disappeared, and it was thought that the fairies had taken her.

After a time a white trout was seen in a stream that flowed into the lake, and the people didn't know what to make of the creature, for such a thing as a white trout had never been known before. Years and years the trout was there, and no harm was ever done to it until some wicked sinners of soldiers came to those parts. They laughed at the people and gibed and jeered at them for never trying to catch the white trout. One of them, in particular, swore he would have the white trout for his dinner some fine day.

Sure enough, the blackguard caught the trout, and away he went home with it, pitched the pretty little thing into the frying-pan, and put the frying-pan over the fire. The trout squealed just like a Christian when it found itself thus cruelly treated, and the soldier laughed till he was like to split; for he was a hardened villain. When he thought one side was done, he turned the trout over to fry the other, but to his surprise saw not a sign of a burn on it anywhere. "This is a queer trout that can't be fried," said he. "But I'll give it another turn by and by."

As soon as the heathen thought that side was done he turned the trout again, and behold not a bit more broiled was it than when he began. "Bad luck to me," said the soldier, "but this beats the world. However, cunning as you think yourself, I'll try you again, my darling."

So saying, he turned the trout over and over, and he kept the fire blazing hot, but not a sign of a burn would show on the pretty creature. He might have known he was doing a wrong thing, seeing that his endeavors accomplished nothing, and yet he kept on as he had begun.

"Well, my jolly little trout," said he at last, "maybe you're fried enough, though you don't seem to be any more so than you were when I pulled you out of the stream. But perhaps you are better than you look, and a tit-bit after all."

Then he picked up his knife and fork to have a taste of the trout, but the moment he put his knife into the fish there was a piercing screech, and the trout flopped out of the frying-pan into the middle of the floor. Immediately, on the spot where it fell, stood a beautiful

lady—the loveliest creature that eyes had ever seen, dressed in white, and a band of gold in her hair, and her arm stained with blood.

"Look where you cut me, you villain," said she, and she held her arm out toward him. "Why couldn't you leave me cool and comfortable in the river, and not disturb me in my duty?"

The soldier, trembling with terror, stammered out some lame excuse, and begged for his life, asked her ladyship's pardon, and declared that he did not know she was on duty. "If I had known it," said he, "I am too good a soldier to have meddled with you."

"I *was* on duty," the lady affirmed. "I was watching for my true love, who is coming to me; and if he comes while I am away, so that I miss him, I'll turn you into the little fish that is called a pinkeen, and I'll hunt you up and down for evermore, while grass grows or water runs."

The soldier nearly fainted away at the thought of being turned into a pinkeen. He begged for mercy harder than ever, and the lady said: "Renounce your evil ways, or you'll repent too late. Be a good man for the future and go regularly to church; and now take me and put me back in the river where you found me."

"Oh, my lady!" exclaimed the soldier, "how could I have the heart to drown a beautiful lady like you?"

Before he could say another word the lady had vanished, and he saw the little trout on the floor. So he put it on a clean plate, and away he ran to the river as fast as he could go, fearful that her lover would come while she was away. He ran and he ran until he came to the edge of the stream and then he threw the trout into the water.

From that day the soldier was an altered man. He reformed his ways, went to church regularly, and fasted three times a week, though he would not eat fish even on fasting days, for after the fright he got, fish would never rest on his stomach. At length he left the army and turned hermit, and every day he prayed for the soul of the white trout.

THE FORTY-NINE DRAGONS

ONCE upon a time there were two brothers, the older of whom was rich and had four children, while the younger was poor and had seven children. At last the family of the poor brother was in such want that the mother went to the rich man and said: "I am very wretched, for I am unable to provide my children with enough to eat. I take a little meal and mix it with a great deal of bran, and so manage to make bread. It is well nigh a year since my children have had any meat. They get nothing but the meal and bran bread."

"And yet," said he, "your children are strong, while mine, in spite of plentiful and rich food, and other comforts, are always ailing."

"Yes," said the woman, "though our lot is one of poverty and hunger, yet, thanks be to Heaven, our children are hale and hearty. But I fear for the future, and I have come to implore you, if you need to hire any work done, that you do not send for any one but me; and may God bless you and give health to your children."

As she spoke these words the tears ran from her eyes, and the man called his wife and said to her: "Here is our sister-in-law wanting work. Have we something for her to do so she may not sit idle?"

"Yes," answered his wife, "let her come twice a week and knead bread for us."

When the poor woman heard these words she was glad, for she thought that when she kneaded the fine white bread they would give her some of it, and her children would eat and rejoice. She rose to go away, and they said to her, "Good-by, and remember to come tomorrow morning."

They let her depart without relieving her want by giving her a scrap of anything. As she set off toward home she said to herself: "Would that I were rich and could go to my cupboard and bring out a bit of cheese, or a piece of bread, or a little rice, or other household store to gladden the hearts of the poor!"

Her children were eagerly awaiting her at home, but alas! she came with empty hands.

The next day she went early to the rich man's house to knead bread, and when she finished her task they bade her farewell and told her to be sure to come next time, but they gave her nothing whatever.

As soon as she returned home the children said, "Have you brought us some food, mother?"

"No," she replied, "but maybe they will send us a bit of bread when the baking is done."

However, she waited in vain. Two or three days later she got word that they wanted her to come and knead again. So she went to the rich man's house and began her work. As she was kneading, the thought came into her head not to wash her hands until she reached home. Then she could give to the children the water in which she washed off the dough and flour. She hurried home as soon as she had done kneading, and said to her children, "I am going to give you a little milk soup."

Then she washed her hands thoroughly, and divided the water among them, and they liked it so much they said, "Mother, whenever you go to knead, be sure to bring us some of that broth to drink."

Twice a week she went to the rich man's house to knead bread, and her children had never been more hearty and vigorous. One day the rich man was passing by his younger brother's house, and he put his head in at the door and said, "How do you do here?"

He looked at the children and was amazed to see how fat they were. That put him in a great rage, and he went home and called to his wife: "Come at once, and tell me what you give to my sister-in-law, who does the kneading for us."

She was frightened by the way he shouted at her. "I never give her anything," she declared, "because I am so afraid of giving her too much and then getting a scolding from you."

"You must have given her something," he persisted, "for her children are so fat they look as if they would burst."

"Well," said his wife, "she takes nothing away with her but her unwashed hands, and after she gets home she gives the water in which she washes her hands to the children to drink."

"Then you must put a stop to that," he ordered.

So the next time, when the woman had finished kneading, the rich man's wife said to her, "Wash your hands and then go."

The poor woman obeyed with a sad heart, and quailed to think of returning home without being able to give her children even the milk soup wash to which they had become accustomed. As soon as she reached her house the children gathered about her, clamoring that she should make haste and give them their usual treat; but she said, "I washed my hands before I came away this time."

All the children began to weep and to say, "How could you so forget us as not to bring us that beautiful broth?"

In the midst of the lamentations the father entered the house, and asked, "What ails the children that they cry so noisily?"

She told him all that had happened, and he was much grieved. "Perhaps I can find a little food on the mountain-side," said he. "I will take a bag and try to get some herbs and edible roots."

So away he went, and he wandered a long distance. At last he found himself on the top of a high crag and saw, not far away, a great castle. “I wonder to whom that castle belongs,” said he.

He went nearer and climbed into a tree to get a better view of it. While he was looking, behold, a number of dragons came out. He counted them, and there were forty-nine. They left the door open and went away out of sight. So he climbed down from the tree and went to the castle, where he walked about from room to room and saw that it contained a vast amount of treasure. Into his bag he put as much gold as he could carry and hurried away with it, fearful that the dragons would catch him.

When they came back they perceived that some of their money was gone, and henceforth they determined that one of them should stay behind in the castle when the others went out.

The man returned home and said to his wife: “God has taken pity on us. See, here we have enough gold to make us rich,” and he opened his bag and showed her the golden money he had brought.

On the following day he purchased a house and moved his family into it. “But let us continue to live simply,” said he to his wife. “We will buy what we need and avoid extravagance.”

“Yes,” said she, “that is best. I do not forget how recently I have been glad to give the children milk soup to drink to save them from starving.”

For two months they lived happily, and had plenty to eat, and gave generously to the poor. Then the wife of the older brother came to visit them, for she had heard that they were well off now. Her own family, on the contrary, had begun to suffer misfortune. Their sheep had died, their crops had failed, and unseasonable frosts had ruined their fruit trees.

The wife of the younger brother did not feel any ill will toward her visitor because of the way she had been treated in the days of her misery, and she welcomed her heartily, and gave her the best seat, and set before her the choicest food in the house. This was very different from the treatment that had been accorded her, for the older brother’s wife used to receive her in the kitchen and never asked her to sit down.

After some time the visitor said: “Sister, pray tell me where your husband has found work, that my husband may if possible get work there also. We have been unfortunate of late and are in great want.”

“My husband has not got any employment,” responded the other. “You remember when I was last at your house and you made me wash my hands. That day he went to the mountains and found a castle where he got a lot of gold.”

“Would he take my husband to that castle?” asked the former rich woman. “Perhaps we too may thus gain relief.”

“He will do what he can for you, I am sure,” said the other. “If your husband will bring a bag tomorrow he will show him the way. He does not wish to get any more treasure for himself because he thinks we already have enough.”

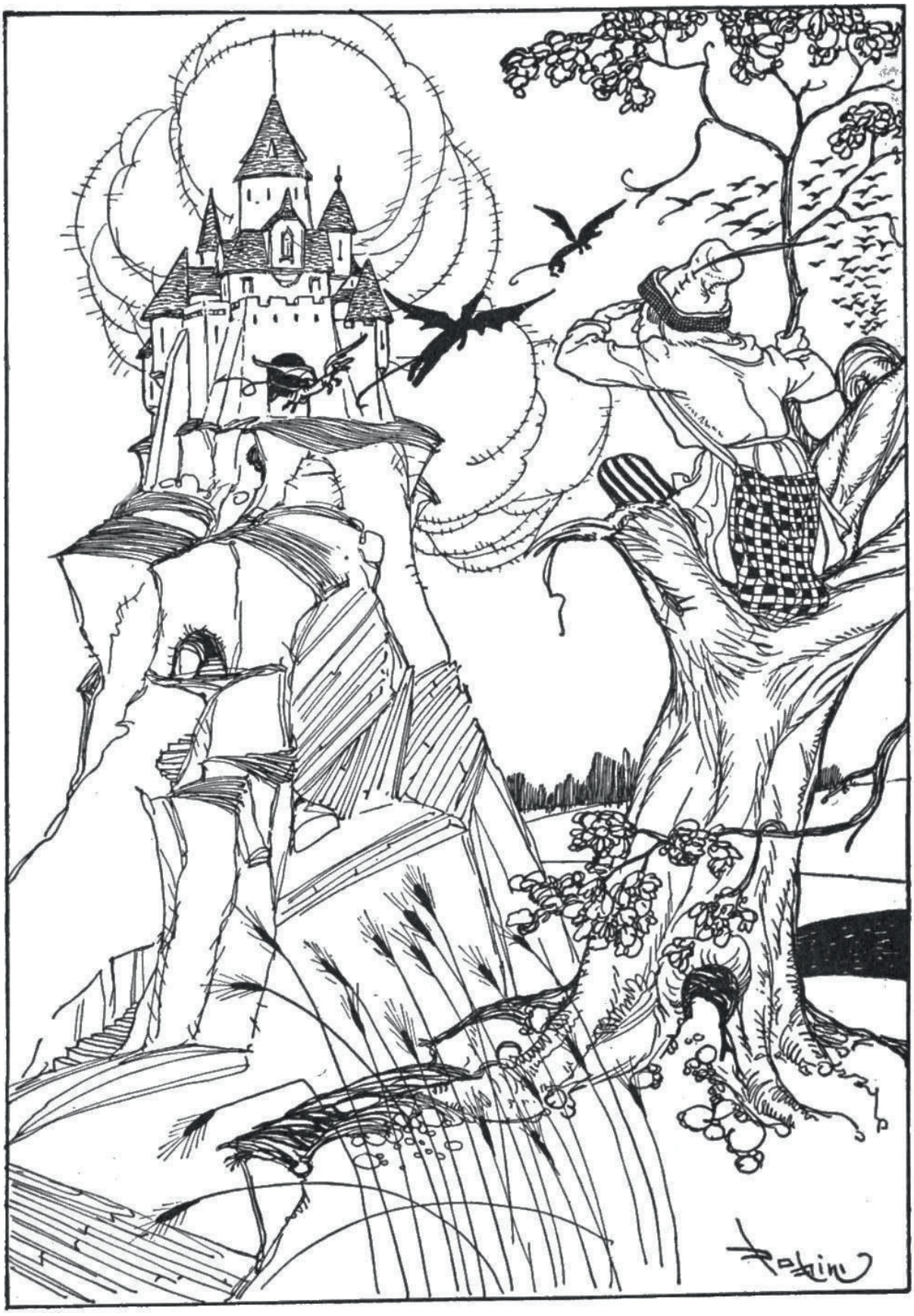
The next morning the older brother came with a bag under his arm and said: “Good morrow, brother, how do you do? I hope you are well.”

Hitherto, if he saw his brother, he looked the other way, or turned aside, lest he should be asked for help. But the former poor man welcomed him and said: “It gives me joy to have you enter my house, for I have very seldom had the pleasure of seeing you.”

“Things have gone badly with me,” said the older brother, “and now I know not what to do.”

“Well,” said the other, “we will go to the mountains, and very likely you will have the luck to get as rich as ever.”

So they started off together, and when they came to where they could see the castle the younger brother showed his companion the tree from which he had watched the castle. “Climb up among the branches,” said he, “and wait till the dragons that dwell in the castle come out. Count them. If forty-nine come forth you can descend and enter the castle free from fear. But unless the entire forty-nine leave, do not go in.”



While he was looking a number of dragons came out

With these words he turned his steps toward home. His brother watched eagerly from the tree, and by and by he saw the dragons coming forth, and he counted them. But he counted wrong, and instead of saying forty-eight he said forty-nine. Then he scrambled down from the tree, hurried to the castle, and looked about, seeking the treasure, that he might fill his bag. Suddenly he heard a voice say, "So you are the thief and have come back to steal more of our gold!"

He found himself confronted by a dragon that had come out of a near-by room where it had been staying on guard. Immediately it bit off his head, and took both the body and the head and hung them at the entrance to the castle. When the other dragons came home he said to them: "There is no need to keep watch any longer. I have killed the thief and hung him up where he will serve as a warning to all other thieves that may approach our castle." After that none of the dragons stayed at home, but each day they went out together.

Two days passed, and the wife of the former rich man got uneasy because her husband did not return. She went to the house of her brother-in-law, and when she told him that her husband had not come back he said he would go and seek him. Off he went, and as soon as he drew near to the castle he climbed the tree and looked and saw his brother's body hanging at the entrance. Then he waited till the dragons came out. He counted them with great care, and there were forty-nine. After they had gone from sight he went and got his brother's body and put it in a bag that lay near the entrance. It was the very bag his brother had brought to contain the gold he hoped to get.

The younger brother carried his burden home and sent for his sister-in-law. When she came and saw her dead husband she wept and would not be comforted. At last she said: "We must get a tailor to sew him together. I cannot bury him like that, in two pieces." So the man went out and got a tailor, who sewed the head on to the body, and afterward the burial took place. Then the younger brother gave his sister-in-law some money, and said, "Go and provide for yourself and your children, and if you are in want again, do not hesitate to come and ask me for what you need."

Meanwhile the dragons had returned to their castle and found the dead man gone. "So the thief had an accomplice!" they exclaimed. "We must destroy him also."

The chief dragon was a powerful magician, and the next day he assumed the form of a man, and went to the town to try to discover who had come to their castle and removed the body with its severed head. While he was loitering about, uncertain how to get the desired information, he concluded he would go to a tailor and have a suit of clothes made. The tailor took his measure, and the dragon said: "Now mind you sew the seams well so the stitches won't come out. You must do a careful job, or I will not pay you. It's not often I have a nice suit made, and I am particular. Use good strong thread and—"

"Stop!" cried the tailor with rising anger. "There is no need for you to make such a fuss. Why, yesterday I had to sew together a dead man whose head had been separated from his body. His relations were entirely satisfied with the way I did the difficult task. If I can do a job like that so well, in spite of the fact that it was out of my line, you can be assured I have

the skill to make you a satisfactory suit. So have done with your advising, or you will drive me crazy."

"Do you know the person who hired you to sew the dead man?" asked the dragon.

"Of course I do," answered the tailor. "He lives near by. If you like, I will point out his house, and you can go in and ask him whether the body was well sewed or not."

So he took the dragon a little way along the street and showed him where the brother of the dead man dwelt. But instead of going into the house, the dragon went to a carpenter's shop and ordered forty-eight chests, each just big enough to contain one of the dragons. When the chests were finished he had them sent to a lonely spot outside of the town, and thither he summoned his dragons. They got into the chests, and he hired wagons to bring the chests to the house of the dead man's brother. He himself went on ahead, and toward evening he found the former poor man seated in his doorway. "Sir," said he, "I have had forty-eight chests sent to me. You can see them coming down the street on those wagons. Would you be so kind as to let me leave them in your yard for the night?"

"You are welcome to leave them there for the night," said the man, "and as much longer as suits your convenience."

After the wagons had been unloaded and the dragon chief had gone, the man's children began climbing about and jumping on the chests. The dragons who were inside groaned from time to time, and said, "Ah, would it were dark that we might eat them all."

Presently the children took notice of the groanings and the words, and they ran to their father and said: "Those chests are bewitched. They are talking."

The man thought a moment and said, "Forty-eight, and the one that brought them makes forty-nine!"

Then he went to the chests and put his ear to one of the keyholes. He heard the direful words and the groaning, and he said to himself, "Now that I have you monsters in my power I'll make sure of you."

So off he went and bought some iron rods, heated them red hot in his kitchen fire, and one by one thrust them into the chests until he had killed all the forty-eight dragons. That done, he called his servant, opened one of the chests, and said: "My man, look here. Some one has played us a trick and put a dragon in this chest. If I had not killed the creature it would have devoured us all. Take it and throw it into the sea."

The servant lifted it on his back, went to the seashore, which was not far away, and threw the creature down where the rising tide would soon carry it away. Then he went home, but while he was gone his master had opened another chest. The man had his servant look in, and said: "Here is the dragon. Surely you did not throw it far enough out into the sea, else how would it have returned?"

Again the servant carried a dragon to the shore, and once more returned to find what was apparently the same dead dragon. His master kept him going nearly all night, and when he made the trip with the forty-eighth dragon he was so exasperated that he waded

right into the sea and cast it out as far as he could. When he returned home, he said, “Master, is it back?”

“No,” the man answered, “it has not come back. You must have thrown it in very deep.”

Next morning the chief dragon came, and he was a good deal perturbed, because he had expected his dragons would destroy the family of the former poor man, and then join their chief before daylight at an appointed spot outside of the town. “I find that one of your chests is open and empty,” the man informed the dragon.

He led the way to the yard, and when the dragon bent over to look into the chest the man seized him and pushed him inside, slammed down the cover, and locked it. Then he ran for a red-hot iron, and soon the last of the dragons had perished.

The castle among the mountains was now without an owner, and the man took possession of it and lived there as happy as a prince—and may whoever reads this story, or hears it read, live happier still.

THE FOUR CLEVER BROTHERS

THERE was once a poor man who had four sons, and when they were grown up, he said to them: "Dear children, you must go out into the world now, for I have nothing to give you. It is my wish that you should each learn a trade by which you can gain a comfortable livelihood, if not wealth."

So the four brothers took their walking-staffs in their hands, bid their father good-by, and tramped away down the street and passed out of the town gate. After they had traveled some distance, they came to where four roads branched away from the one they were tramping. "Here we must part," said the eldest brother, "but four years from this day we will meet here again, and tell each other what we have accomplished."

Then each went his own way, and the eldest presently met a man, who asked him where he was going and what he intended to do.

"I want to learn a trade," the youth answered.

"Then come with me and learn to be a thief," said the man.

"No," responded the youth, "that is no longer considered an honorable employment; and in the end I should swing as the clapper in the field bell."

"Oh, you need not fear the gallows!" said the man. "I will only teach you how to take things that no one else wants or knows how to get hold of, and I will make you so expert that nobody can find you out."

So the youth allowed himself to be persuaded, and he became, under the man's instruction, such a clever thief that nothing was safe from him which he had once made up his mind to have.

Meanwhile the second brother had met a man who put the same question to him as to whither he was going and what he intended to do.

"I don't know yet," answered the youth.

"Then come with me and be a star-gazer," the man advised. "It is the grandest trade in the world, for you gain the power to see everything."

The youth was pleased with the idea, and he became such an expert star-gazer that, when he finished his apprenticeship, his master gave him a telescope, and said, "With this you can see all that happens in the sky and on the earth, and nothing can remain hidden from you."

The third brother was taken in hand by a huntsman, and received such instruction in the art of shooting that he became a first-rate marksman. When he had learned all there was to learn and was ready to depart, his master presented him with a gun, and said, “Whatever you aim at with this gun you will hit without fail.”

The youngest brother met a man who asked him if he would like to be a tailor.

“I don’t know about that,” said the youth. “I haven’t much fancy for sitting cross-legged from morning till night, and everlastingly pulling a needle in and out.”

“There, there!” said the man, “you don’t know what you are talking about. You will find that tailoring as I teach it is easy. It will be pleasant to you and win you honor.”

The youth allowed himself to be persuaded, and went with the man, who taught him tailoring very thoroughly. At length the time came for him to depart, and his master gave him a needle and said, “With that you will be able to stitch anything, even a thing as tender as an egg-shell, or one as hard as steel, and no seam will be visible after you are through.”

On the very day that the four years agreed on came to an end the four brothers met at the place where they had parted, and after embracing each other they hurried home to their father.

“Well,” said he, quite pleased to see them, “so the wind has blown you back to me.”

They sat under a big tree in the yard and told him all that had happened to them. When they finished, their father said, “Now I will put your accomplishments to the test, and see what you can do.”

He looked up into the tree and said to his second son: “There is a chaffinch’s nest up there on the topmost branch. Tell me how many eggs there are in it.”

The star-gazer took his telescope, looked through it, and said, “There are five.”

“Fetch the eggs down,” said the father to his eldest son, “and be careful not to disturb the mother bird, who is sitting on them.”

The cunning thief climbed the tree, and removed the five eggs from underneath the bird so deftly that she never noticed what he had done, and he brought them down to his father. The father took them and put one on each corner of a table, and the fifth in the middle, and said to the huntsman, “You must cut all those eggs in half at one shot.”

The huntsman aimed and divided each egg in half at one shot, as his father desired. He certainly must have had some of the powder that shoots round a corner. The eggs had little birds in them, and the neck of each had been severed by the bullet.

“Now it is your turn,” said the father to the fourth son. “I expect you to sew the birds and the shells together so they will be none the worse for that shot.”

The tailor produced his needle, and stitched away as his father had desired. When he finished the task, the thief climbed the tree with the eggs, and put them back under the bird without her perceiving him. The bird continued to sit on the eggs, and a few days later the fledgelings crept out of the shells. Each had a red streak round its neck where the tailor had sewn them together, but were none the worse otherwise.

“I can certainly praise your skill,” said the father to his sons. “You have used your time well while you have been away, and you have all acquired very useful knowledge.”

Not long after this a great lamentation was made in the country because the king’s daughter had been carried away by a dragon. The king was overcome by grief and sorrowed for her day and night, and he had it proclaimed that whoever rescued the princess should have her for his wife.

The four brothers said to one another, “This will be an opportunity for us to show what we can do;” and they agreed to sally forth together to deliver the princess.

“I will soon discover where she is,” said the star-gazer.

He looked through his telescope, and said: “I see her already. She is a long way from here, sitting on a rock in the middle of the sea, and the dragon is there watching her.”

Then they went to the king, who, at their request, furnished them with a ship, in which they sailed away over the sea till they approached the rock. The princess was sitting there, and the dragon was asleep with his head on her lap.

“I dare not shoot,” said the hunter, “for fear I should kill the princess as well as the dragon.”

“Then I will try my luck,” said the thief, and he rowed a boat to the rock and took the princess away so lightly and stealthily that the monster continued to sleep and snore.

The thief got the princess safely on board the ship, and, full of joy, the brothers spread the sails to the wind, and steered for the open sea. But the dragon soon awoke, and when he realized that the princess was gone, he started in pursuit of the ship, flapping through the air at his best speed, snapping his tail savagely, and foaming at the mouth with rage. Just as he was hovering over the ship about to plunge down on it, the huntsman took aim with his unerring gun and shot the dragon through the heart. The monster was killed instantly, but his huge body fell on the ship and smashed it to pieces.

The brothers and the princess managed each to grasp a plank and thus kept themselves afloat. They were in great straits, but the tailor was equal to the emergency. With his wonderful needle he sewed together the planks on which he and his companions were sustaining themselves, and then they paddled about and collected all the other floating fragments of the ship. The tailor stitched them together so cleverly that in a short time the ship was seaworthy once more, and they sailed happily home.

When the king saw his dear daughter again, he was very glad, and said to the four brothers, “One of you shall marry her, but you must settle among yourselves which one that shall be.”

They discussed the matter with a good deal of warmth, for each pressed his own claims. The star-gazer said: “Had I not discovered the princess all your doings would have been in vain. Therefore, she is mine.”

The thief said: “What would have been the good of discovering her if I had not stolen her away from the dragon? So she is mine.”

The huntsman said: “But you all would have been destroyed by the monster had not my ball reached his heart. So she must be mine.”

“That is all very fine,” said the tailor, “but if it had not been for my sewing the wreck together, you would all have been miserably drowned. Therefore the princess is mine.”

When they had all voiced their claims to the princess, the king said: “Each of you is equally entitled to her, but since you cannot all have her, none of you shall have her. Instead, I will reward you each with half a province.”

The brothers were quite satisfied with this decision, and said, “It is better so than that we should quarrel.”

So each of them received half a province, and they lived happily in the home of their father the rest of their days.

THE YOUTH WITHOUT FEAR

THERE was once a father who had two sons. One was ambitious, and sensible, and clever enough to do almost anything. But the younger one was so stupid he made no progress at all. When people saw how useless he was, they said, "His father will have plenty of trouble with him."

If there was any task that needed doing, it fell to the lot of the elder son, who never failed to do his work faithfully and well, unless his father asked him to fetch something in the evening after dark. Then, if the errand would compel him to pass through the churchyard or along a dismal stretch of roadway, he would say: "Oh no, father, I cannot go! I am afraid. It would make me shiver and shake."

Occasionally when the household gathered around the fire after supper, with very likely the company of a neighbor or two, some one would tell a ghost story which would cause the listeners' flesh to creep, and they would exclaim, "How you make me shiver!"

The youngest son, however, as he sat in the corner and heard these exclamations, could not imagine what was meant. "There's something queer about it," said he. "They say: 'It makes me shiver! It makes me shiver!' But it doesn't make me shiver a bit. Shivering is an accomplishment I don't understand."

One day his father said to him, "Listen, you lad in the corner there, you are growing big and strong. You must learn some trade by which to get a living. See how your brother works, but you are not worth your salt."

"Well, father," he responded, "I am quite ready to learn something. With what shall I begin? I would very much like to learn how to shiver and shake, for about that I know nothing."

The elder son laughed when he heard him speak thus. "Good heavens!" he thought, "what a simpleton my brother is! He will never be good for anything as long as he lives."

His father sighed and said, "What shivering means you may learn easily enough, but such knowledge will not help you any in getting your bread."

Soon afterward the sexton called at the house, and the father confided to him his anxiety about his younger son. "It is quite evident," said he, "that the lad will never be any credit to us. Would you believe that when I asked him how he was going to earn his living, he said he would like to learn to shiver and shake?"

"If that's what he wants to learn," said the sexton, "we can easily gratify him. I can teach him that myself. Just let him serve me for a while and I'll put the polish on him."

The father was pleased, for he thought, “Anyhow the lad will gain something by the experience.”

So the sexton took the youth home with him, and he had to ring the church bells. A few days passed, and the sexton woke him at midnight and told him to get up and go to the church tower to ring the bells. “You shall soon be taught how to shiver and shake,” thought the sexton as he hastened to the belfry ahead of the lad, and crept stealthily up the stairs.

The youth arrived a few minutes later and stumbled along up the stairway in the darkness. He was about to grasp the bell rope when he observed a white figure standing at the head of the stairs. “Who is there?” he called out, but the figure neither stirred nor spoke.

“Answer!” cried the lad, “or get out of the way. You have no business here in the night.”

But the sexton wanted the boy to think he was a ghost, and he did not stir.

The lad called out a second time: “What do you want here? Speak, if you are an honest fellow, or I’ll throw you down the stairs.”

“He never would dare undertake such a thing,” thought the sexton. So he made no sound and stood as still as if he were made of stone.

Once more the lad threatened the shrouded figure, and as he got no answer he sprang forward and threw the ghost down the stairs. The apparition bumped along down the steps and lay motionless in a corner. Then the lad rang the bells, walked home, and without saying a word to anybody went to bed. Soon he was fast asleep.

The sexton’s wife waited a long time for her husband, but he did not come, and at last she became anxious and woke up the lad. “Do you know what has become of my husband?” she asked. “He went up into the church tower in front of you.”

“No,” answered the lad; “but there was somebody standing at the head of the stairs in the belfry, and as he would neither reply nor go away, I thought he was a rogue and I threw him downstairs. Go and see if he was your husband. I should be sorry if he was.”

The woman hurried away and found the sexton moaning with a broken leg. She carried him home, and the first thing in the morning hastened with loud cries to the lad’s father. “Your son has brought a great misfortune on us,” she said. “He has thrown my husband downstairs and broken his leg. Take the good-for-nothing wretch away out of our house.”

The father was horrified. He went back with her and gave the lad a good scolding. “What is the meaning of this inhuman prank?” he said. “The evil one must have put it into your head.”

“Father,” responded the lad, “I am quite innocent. He stood there in the dark like a man with some wicked purpose. I did not know who he was, and I warned him three times to speak or to go away.”

“Alas!” said his father, “you bring me nothing but disaster. Get out of my sight. I will have nothing more to do with you.”

“To travel elsewhere is just what I wish,” said the lad, “for I hope that will lead to my learning how to shiver and shake. I want at least to have that accomplishment to my credit.”

“Learn what you like,” said his father. “It’s all the same to me. Here are fifty silver pieces for you. Go out into the world, but tell no one whence you come, or who your father is, for you would only bring me to shame.”

“Just as you please, father,” said the lad. “If that is all you want I can easily fulfil your desire.”

So the lad put his fifty silver pieces into his pocket and betook himself to the highroad. As he tramped along he said over and over, “Oh that I could learn to shiver! Oh that I could learn to shake!”

A man overtook him and heard the words he was saying. They went on together till they came to a gallows whereon seven men were hanging. “Sit down here,” said the man, “and when night comes you will learn to shiver and shake.”

“If nothing more than that is needed,” said the lad, “I shall be well pleased; and I promise you, in case I learn to shiver so speedily, that you shall have the fifty silver pieces now in my pocket. Come back to me early tomorrow morning.”

Then the lad sat down beside the gallows. It grew cold after sundown, and a sharp wind blew and made the bodies on the gallows swing back and forth with a dismal creaking of the ropes by which they were suspended. “Poor fellows!” said the lad, “I am none too warm down here in a sheltered nook on the ground, and you must have a chilly time of it up aloft there.”

Then he curled up and went to sleep. Next morning the man who had been his companion on the day before came and said, “Well, I suppose you know now what shivering means.”

“No,” said the lad, “how could I learn it? Those fellows on the gallows never opened their mouths.”

The man saw that he would get no silver pieces, and he went away, saying, “Never before in my life did I meet such a person as that.”

Soon afterward the lad resumed his travels, and again began saying to himself: “Oh that I could learn to shiver! Oh that I could learn to shake!”

A carter, who chanced to be on the road, heard his plaint, and asked, “Who are you?”

“I don’t know,” said the youth.

“Who is your father?” the carter questioned.

“That I must not say,” was the lad’s response.

“What is it you are grumbling about to yourself as you walk along?” the carter inquired.

“Ah,” said the youth, “I wish to learn what shivering is, but no one can teach me.”

"Nonsense!" said the carter. "Just you come with me and I'll see that your desire is gratified."

So the youth went with the carter, and in the evening they reached an inn and arranged to stay there for the night. "Oh that I could learn to shiver! Oh that I could learn to shake!" sighed the youth as he sat down to wait for supper.

The landlord laughed, and said, "If that's what you want, you can have plenty of opportunity for learning here."

"Hold your tongue," said the landlady. "Many an imprudent fellow has paid the penalty for his curiosity with his life already. It would be a sin and a shame not to have this stranger's bright eyes see the light of day again."

But the youth said: "However difficult it may be to learn what shivering is, the lesson is one I am eager to learn. I left my home to seek such knowledge."

He would not be put off with evasions, and at last the landlord told him that not far distant stood an enchanted castle, and that any one who stayed there over night would surely learn to shiver. Moreover, the king had promised his daughter in marriage to the man who would spend three nights in the castle, and every one said she was the most beautiful young lady the sun ever shone on. Such a vigil would break the spell that was on the castle, and he who accomplished this would become master of a great treasure hidden there and guarded by evil spirits. But many, aspiring to win the princess and the treasure and the renown, had gone into the castle, and not one had ever come out.

The next morning the youth went to the king, and said, "By your leave, I would like to pass three nights in the enchanted castle."

His request was granted, though with some reluctance, for the king took a fancy to the lad, and was sorry to think of his probable fate.

When night came, the youth went to the castle, made a bright fire in one of the rooms, and sat down beside it. "Oh, if I could only shiver!" said he, "but I doubt if I can learn how even here."

At midnight he got up from where he was sitting and freshened the fire. Suddenly some creatures in a corner of the room began to shriek, "Mew, mew! how cold we are!"

"Simpletons!" he exclaimed, "what are you screeching for? If you are cold, come and warm yourselves by the fire."

Immediately two big black cats sprang forth from the gloomy corner and sat down one on each side of him. They stared at him with wild, fiery eyes until they had warmed themselves, and then said, "Comrade, shall we have a game of cards?"

"Certainly," he replied, "but show me your paws first."

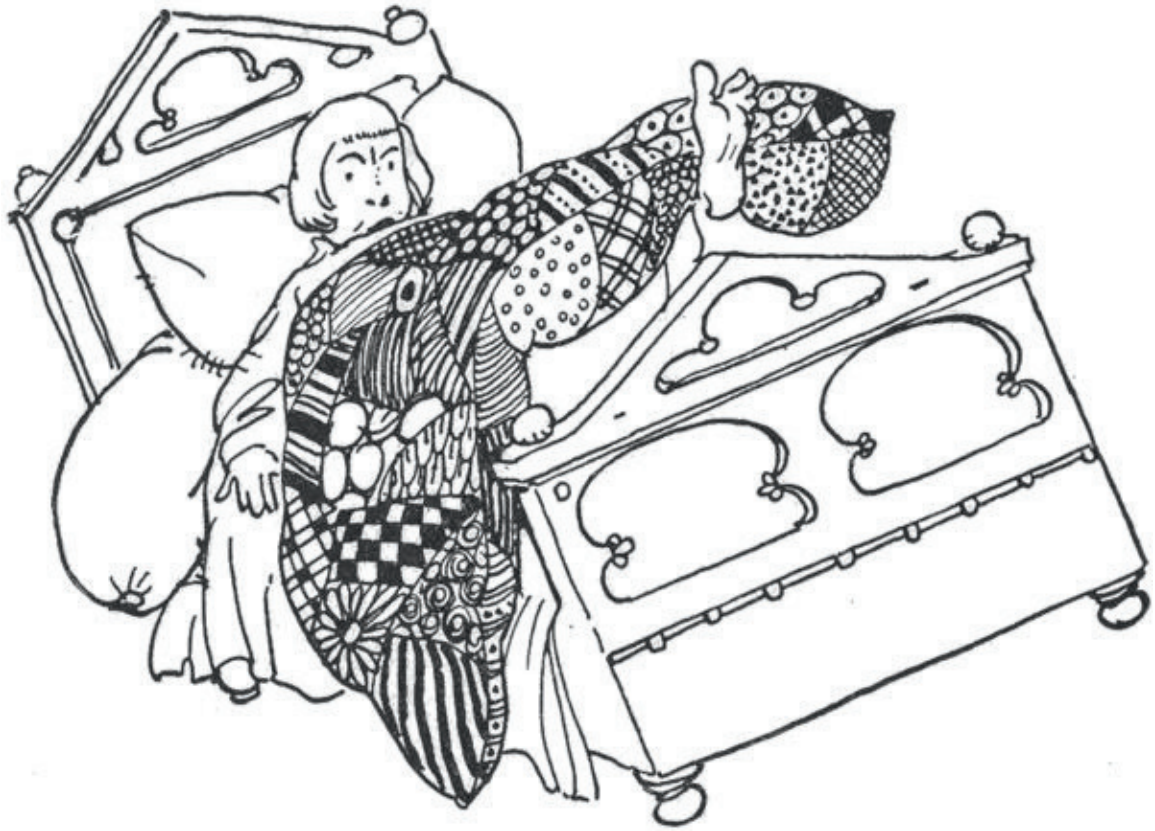
They each lifted a front foot and stretched out their claws.

"Why," said he, "what long nails you've got! Wait a bit. I must cut them for you."

He picked up a sword he had brought with him, but instead of cutting their nails he seized each cat in turn by the scruff of the neck and killed it by thrusting his sword through its body. That done, he dragged them to a window and heaved them out. But no sooner had he got rid of these cats and was about to sit down by his fire again than crowds of dogs, all jet black, swarmed out of every nook and corner of the room. They howled horribly and trampled on his fire, and tried to put it out.

For a time he looked quietly on, but at last he got angry, took up his sword, and cried, "You rascally pack, away with you!" and he let fly among them right and left. Some of them escaped, and the rest he struck dead and threw out of the window.

When he finished, he returned to the fire, scraped the embers together, and set it to blazing. At the far side of the room was a big bed, and he went and lay down on it, intending to sleep the remainder of the night. But just as he was closing his eyes the bed began to move. It crossed the room, went out at a door, and soon was tearing round and round the castle. "Very good," he said, "the faster the better!"



The bed careered along as if it were drawn by six horses. Sometimes it was in the castle, sometimes outside, and the way it jolted over the thresholds and jigged up and down the stairs was very surprising, to say the least. Suddenly it went hop, hop, hop, with more violence than ever, and turned topsy-turvy so that it lay on the lad like a mountain. But he

pitched the pillows and blankets into the air, and soon he had disencumbered himself and got on his feet. “Now some one else may ride,” said he, and he made his way back to his fire and lay down on the hearth and went to sleep.

In the morning the king came to the castle and found the youth stretched out on the floor. He thought the ghosts had killed him, and he said, “It is a pity that such a vigorous, handsome fellow should thus perish.”

But the youth heard him and sat up, saying, “It has not come to that yet.”

The king was much surprised, and asked him how he had fared.

“Very well,” he answered. “One night is gone, and I expect to get safely through the others.”

Presently he returned to the inn. The landlord opened his eyes when he saw him, and said: “I never thought to behold you alive again. Have you learned how to shiver yet?”

“No,” replied the lad, “it’s all in vain.”

The second night he went again to the castle, started a fire, and sat down by it and began his old song, “Oh if I could only learn to shiver!”

At midnight he commenced to hear a ringing, rattling noise, first soft, but increasing till there was a great uproar. Then there was a sudden silence. At last, with a loud scream, half a man’s body came tumbling down the chimney and rolled out on the floor in front of the lad. “Hello!” he said, “here is only half a man. This is not enough.”

The rattling and ringing were renewed, and soon, amidst shrieks and howls, the other half fell down.

“Wait a moment,” said the youth, “and I’ll poke up the fire.”

When this was done, and he looked around, the two halves had joined themselves together, and a hideous man sat on the bench. “We didn’t bargain for that,” said the lad. “The bench is mine.”

He went to sit down, and the man tried to push him out of the way. Then the youth became angry and flung the man aside and sat down in his usual seat. Presently more men fell down the chimney, one after the other, and they fetched with them nine thigh bones and two skulls, and began to play skittles. The youth felt inclined to join in the sport, and he called out, “I say, can I play too?”

“Certainly,” said they.

“Then here goes!” he cried. “The more, the merrier!”

He played with them till ten o’clock, when they disappeared. So he lay down, and soon was fast asleep.

Next morning the king again came to see him, and said, “Well, how did you get on this time?”

“I have been playing skittles,” he answered.

“Didn’t you learn to shiver?” the king asked.

“Not I,” he responded. “I only made merry.”

On the third night he once more was in the enchanted castle sitting on his bench by the fire. “Oh, if I could only learn to shiver!” he said, in great vexation.

When it grew late, six tall men came in carrying a coffin. “Hello there!” said he, “set down your burden and make yourselves comfortable.”

They put the coffin on the floor and he went to it and removed the lid. Inside lay a man.

He felt of the man’s hands and face. They were as cold as ice. “I will soon see whether there is any life left in you,” said he, and he picked up the man and sat down with him close by the fire and rubbed his arms to make the blood circulate.

After a time the man grew warm and began to move. “There,” said the youth, “you see I have got you warmed at last.”

But the man rose up and cried, “Now I will strangle you!”

“What!” exclaimed the youth, “is that all the thanks I get? Back you go into your coffin then.”

So saying, he grasped him, threw him in, and fastened down the lid. Then the six men carried the coffin away. “Oh, deary me!” sighed the youth, “I shall never learn to shiver if I stop here all my life.”

Just then a huge man entered the room. He was frightful to look at, very old, with a long white beard. “You miserable wretch!” he cried, “now you shall learn what shivering is, for you shall die.”

“Not so fast,” said the youth. “If I am to die, some one must kill me.”

“I will make short work of you,” declared the old monster.

“Softly, softly!” said the lad. “Don’t boast. Very likely I am stronger than you are.”

“We shall see about that,” said the old man. “Come with me.”

Then he led the way through numberless dark passages to a smithy, took a sledge hammer, and with one blow struck an anvil down into the earth so it was nearly buried out of sight.

“I can better that,” affirmed the youth, and he went to another anvil, took an ax, and with one blow split the anvil half in two.

The old man had come so near to watch that his beard had dropped down on the anvil, and it was wedged into the crevice by the blow of the ax. “Now I have you,” said the youth, “and you will be the one to die.”

Then he seized an iron rod and belabored the old man till the sufferer shrieked for mercy and promised him great riches if he would stop. So the lad pulled out the ax, and the released captive led the way back into the castle and showed the youth three chests of gold in the cellar. “One is for the poor,” he said, “one is for the king, and one is for you.”

The clock struck twelve just as the old man finished speaking, and he disappeared and left the youth alone in the dense darkness of the cellar. “I must manage to get out somehow,” said the lad, and he groped about till he found his way back to the room where he had his fire. There he lay down and went to sleep.

Next morning the king came and said, “Surely you have now learned to shiver.”

“No,” said the youth, “a coffin was brought to me containing a man who was nearly frozen, and when I revived him he wanted to strangle me. Afterward, an old man came who wanted to kill me, but I got the better of him, and he showed me a lot of gold. However, no one can show me what shivering means.”

Then the king said, “You have broken the spell on the castle, and you shall be made a prince and marry my daughter.”

“That is all very fine,” said the youth, “but still I don’t know what shivering is.”

The gold was brought out from the castle cellar, and the marriage was celebrated; but happy as the youth now was, and much as he loved his bride, there yet remained one cause for discontent, and he was always saying: “Oh that I could learn to shiver! Oh that I could learn to shake!”

This became quite a source of vexation to his wife as time went on, and at last her waiting-woman said, “I will help you to teach him the meaning of shivering.”

She went out to a brook that ran through the garden, and got a pail of cold water full of little fishes. At night, when the prince was asleep, his wife took off the coverings and poured the cold water over him. The little fishes flopped all about him. Then he woke up and cried, “Oh, how I am shivering, dear wife, how I am shivering! Now I know what shivering is!”

THE WONDERFUL TURNIP

THERE were once two brothers who were soldiers, and one had become an officer and grown rich. The other remained a common soldier and was poor. At last the poor one, with the hope to improve his fortune, took off his soldiering coat and became a farmer. He ploughed a small field and sowed turnip seed. The seed came up, and the farmer soon observed that one turnip was growing much faster than any of the others. It grew till he thought it would never get done growing, and at the end of the season, when he uprooted it, that one turnip filled a cart and required two oxen to draw it. Truly it was the queen of turnips, and its like had never been seen before, nor ever will be again. The farmer knew not what to do with it, and was uncertain whether it would bring good fortune or bad.

"If I sold it I should not get much money for it," said he. "As for eating it, the ordinary turnips would do as well for that. I think I will take it to the king."

So away he went, with oxen dragging the cart that contained the turnip, and in due time he arrived at court and presented the turnip to the king.

“What an extraordinary object!” the king exclaimed. “I have seen many marvels, but never anything so remarkable as this. You must be a child of good luck, whether you raised this turnip from seed or found it full grown.”

“Oh no!” said the farmer, “lucky I certainly am not. For many years I was a poor soldier, but recently I hung my uniform on a nail, and now I till the earth. I have a brother who is rich and well known to you, my lord king; but I, because I have nothing, am forgotten by all the world.”

Thereupon the king pitied him and said, “You shall be poor no longer;” and he presented him with gold, land, flocks, and herds that made him richer than his brother.

When the brother heard what had happened he was envious and pondered how he might gain a like treasure for himself. Presently he took jewels and swift horses and gave them to the king. “If my brother got so much for a single turnip,” thought he, “what will I not get for these beautiful things?”

The king received the present very graciously and told the soldier he could give him in return nothing rarer or better than the magnificent turnip.

So the wealthy soldier was obliged to hire a cart, and have the turnip taken to his home. He arrived there full of wrath and bitterness. The more he thought on the matter the worse he felt, and at length he formed the evil design of having his brother killed. He hired two ruffians, who waylaid the former poor soldier as he was passing through a wood. They seized and bound him and prepared to hang him on a tree. But before they had accomplished their purpose they heard an approaching clatter of hoofs and the sound of singing. That frightened them so much that they thrust their prisoner head first into a sack, attached a rope to it, threw the end of the rope over a branch of an oak and hauled him well up into the tree. Then they took to flight.

The prisoner soon contrived to work a hole in the sack, and stuck his head out. Then he perceived that the noise which had saved him was made by a student, a young fellow who was riding through the wood singing snatches of song as he went along. Just as the student was passing the tree, the man called out: "Good day. You come in the nick of time."

The youth stopped his horse and looked all round, but could not make out where the voice came from. At last he said, "Who calls?"

"Raise your eyes," said the man. "I am sitting up here in the Sack of Knowledge, and in a short time I have learned so much that the wisdom of the schools is as air compared to mine. Soon I shall have learned everything, and I shall come down and be the wisest of mankind. I understand astronomy and the blowing of the winds and the art of healing the sick, and I know every herb and all the birds and stones. If you were here in my place you would feel what splendor flows from the Sack of Knowledge."

All this greatly astonished and impressed the student, in which he said: "Blessed be the hour in which I met you! Let me get into the sack for a little while."

"Well," said the other with apparent reluctance, "that you may do if you will wait for a short time till I am ready. There is one piece of learning which I have not yet fully mastered."

So the student waited, but he soon became impatient and entreated to be allowed to get into the sack at once and satisfy his great thirst for knowledge. Then the man pretended to take pity on him and told him to lower the sack to the ground and open the mouth of it. That done, the farmer got out, and the student started to get in, feet first, saying, "I want you to make haste and pull me up as fast as possible."

"Stop, stop!" cried the man. "That won't do."

Then he laid hold of the student by the shoulders and thrust him into the sack head downward, tied it up, and swung the disciple of wisdom up on the bough of the tree. When the student was dangling up aloft in the air, the man said: "How do you feel now, my dear fellow? Do you find that wisdom comes with experience? Stay there quietly till you become wiser."

Thereupon he mounted the student's horse and rode off; but an hour later he sent some one to release the prisoner in the sack.

THE ENCHANTED DOVE

A POOR maidservant was once traveling with her master's family in a coach through a great wood. When they were in the very middle of the wood, a band of robbers sprang out of a thicket and killed every one of the travelers that they could lay their hands on. Only the maidservant escaped. She, in her fright, jumped out of the coach and hid behind a tree.

When the robbers had made off with their booty she came from her place of concealment and wept as she saw what had happened. "Alas!" she cried, "here I am left alone in this wild forest. I can never find my way out, and not a human creature lives in it, so that I shall certainly die of hunger."

She wandered about for some time looking for a pathway, but could not find one.

Evening came, and she sat down under a tree and made up her mind to spend the night there, no matter what might happen. But soon a little white dove came flying to her with a small golden key in its beak. It put the key in the girl's hand, and said: "Examine closely the bark of the tree-trunk you are leaning against, and you will find a lock which this key will fit. Turn the key in that lock, and a door will open and reveal a cupboard in which is food and drink. Take all you need."

The girl examined the tree, found the lock, and opened the door, and inside was a basin of milk, and some white bread to eat with it. So she made a good meal. When she finished, she said to herself: "At home the hens are going to roost now. Oh, that I had some shelter for the night!"

Then the little dove again came flying to her with another golden key in its beak, and it said, "This will open a door in yonder tree, within which you will find a nice bed."

She opened the door and found a soft, clean bed inside, and she lay down in it and went to sleep. Next morning the dove came a third time and brought her a key. This opened a door in another large tree near by, and there she found many beautiful garments embroidered with gold and silver, and ornamented with precious stones. No princess could have desired anything finer.

For a long time the maid dwelt there in the forest, and the dove visited her every day and supplied all her wants. Her life was peaceful and happy. One day the dove came to her and said, "Will you do something for my sake?"

“With all my heart,” replied the maiden.

Then the dove said: “I will take you to a little house, which you must enter. By the hearth you will see an old woman sitting. She will bid you good day, but on no account speak a word to her, whatever she may say or do. Walk right past her, and at the far side of the fireplace you will see a door. Open it and go into the room beyond. There, on a table, you will find a heap of rings of every description. Many of them are very beautiful and glitter with precious stones, but take none of those. Instead, search for a small plain one, which is somewhere in the room. After you secure it, bring it to me as quickly as you can.”

So the dove guided the maiden to the little house, and she opened the door and saw the old woman, who stared and said, “Good day, my child.”

The maiden did not answer, but went on toward the inner door. “Whither are you going?” cried the old woman, seizing her by the skirt. “This is my house, and no one shall pass through that door without my permission.”

But the girl said never a word. She loosened her skirt from the woman’s grasp and went into the room beyond the fireplace. On a table lay a glittering heap of jeweled rings. She searched among them for the plain one, but could not find it. While she continued her search, the old woman slipped into the room and took up a bird cage, with which she started to slyly creep away. Her actions aroused the suspicions of the maiden, who ran after her and wrenched the cage out of her hands.

Then the girl saw that the bird inside held the plain ring in its beak. She took the ring and ran joyfully out of the house, thinking she would find the dove close at hand waiting for her, but no dove appeared. Anxious and fearful, she leaned against a tree, watching for the coming of the bird. As she stood there it seemed to her that the tree became soft and supple and bent its branches downward. Then two of the branches twined themselves around her, and behold, when she tried to free herself, they were not branches at all, but two strong arms. She looked up, and the tree was gone, and in its stead was a fine handsome man with his arms clasped about her.

“You have released me from the power of the old woman, who is an evil witch,” said he.

“She changed me into a tree a long time ago, but every day I became a white dove for a couple of hours. So long as she possessed the ring I could not regain my human form. I am a king’s son, and I came hither accompanied by servants and horses, who were likewise changed into trees. But now you see them around me in their natural forms, and you must come with us to my father’s kingdom.”

When they reached their journey’s end the prince and the maiden married, and they lived happily ever after.

THE THREE WISHES

ONCE upon a time there lived a poor woodman in a great forest, and every morning his wife filled a basket with food and a bottle with drink for his lunch, and, laden with this lunch and his ax, he went off to be gone till evening cutting timber. One day he was about to fell a huge oak which he thought would furnish many a good plank. He had his ax raised for the first blow when he heard a pitiful entreating, and there stood before him a little fairy, who beseeched him to spare the tree.

So dazed was he with wonder that for a while he could not open his mouth to speak a word, but at last he said, "Well, I'll do as you ask."

"That tree is my home," explained the fairy, "and you will not lose as much as you think by letting it stand, for it is hollow at the heart. Besides, to show you that I am not ungrateful, I will grant you and your wife the first three wishes you and she wish after you get home, let them be what they may."

Then the fairy opened a little door at the base of the tree, which he had not seen before, and disappeared.

"Well," said the woodman, "if my wife and I can have three wishes, our fortune is as good as made. It is nearly evening, and I may as well go home at once. I shall never need to cut any more trees."

He put his ax over his shoulder, picked up his basket and bottle, and off he went. When he arrived at his cottage he sat down by the fireside to rest and told his wife about the fairy.

"Well," said she, when she had heard him through, "If it is left to my choice, I know very well what I would wish for. I think nothing is so good as to be handsome, and rich, and aristocratic."

"And yet," said the husband, "even with such wishes realized, one might be sick and fretful and die young. It would be much wiser to wish for health, cheerfulness, and a long life."

"The fairy should have promised a dozen wishes," said the wife, "for there are at least that many things I want very much."

"Yes," agreed the man, "a dozen wishes would have been better, but as we have only three we must make those three do all that is possible. Let us consider the matter carefully until tomorrow before wishing, that we may decide wisely what three things are most necessary for us."

"I'll think the whole night through," said she.

"After all," remarked the man, "it may be the fairy's promise was only a trick. Who can tell?"

The evening was chilly, and the wife took the tongs and poked the fire into brighter blazing. For a time the man sat in silence, and then he happened to think that he was hungry. "Why isn't the supper ready?" he asked.

"You forget that you are home early," she replied. "It won't be supper time for two hours."

"Ah!" sighed he, "two hours is a long wait after working in the woods all day. I wish I had some nice sausages this minute."

No sooner had he said this than—rustle, rustle—what should come down the chimney but a dish containing a string of as fine sausages as ever were seen. The dish came down on the hearth with a slight clatter, and the woodman and his wife stared in astonishment. "What's all this?" said she.

He answered not a word, and she glowered and glowered. "Oh, you silly man!" she cried, "there's one wish gone already, and only two are left. What a fool you have been! I wish the sausages were fast to the tip of your nose."

A noble string of sausages hung from his nose

Before you could wink, there the goodman sat with his nose the longer for a noble string of sausages. He tried to pull them off, but they stuck. Then his wife gave them a pull, but still they stuck. They refused to come off even when the two pulled together.

"Ouch, ouch!" exclaimed the man, "we must stop this pulling, or we shall pull my nose off. But I can't have these things staying on my nose. What shall we do?"

"They are not so very unsightly," said she, "and we had better wish for vast riches. Then we shall be able to live in comfort the rest of our lives, and if you object to the looks of the sausages we can have a golden case made to hide them."

"I couldn't endure them, case or no case," declared the man. Then, lest the goodwife should wish for riches in spite of his protest, he hastily wished that the sausages might come off.

There they lay in the dish as before, and if the husband and wife did not ride in a golden coach and dress in silk and satin, why they at least had as fine a mess of sausages for their supper as the heart of man could desire.

THE OLD HORSE

THERE was once a farmer who had a horse which served him faithfully till it had grown old and could do its work no longer. So its master grudged it food, and said: "I have no further use for you, and yet I still feel kindly toward you. Therefore, if you will show yourself strong enough to bring home a lion, I will take care of you to the end of your days. But away with you now and out of my stable."

Then the farmer drove the poor horse out, and it went sadly away with drooping head to the forest to get a little shelter from the wind and weather. There it met a fox, who said, "Why do you hang your head and look so downcast, and wander about in this solitary fashion?"

"Alas!" said the horse, "avarice and fidelity cannot dwell together. My master has forgotten all the service I have rendered him these many years, and because I can no longer plough he will not give me any fodder, and he has driven me out of my stable."

"Did he give you no hope that you might return?" asked the fox.

"Very little," replied the horse. "He told me that if I could manage to bring home a lion he would take care of me, but he knows well enough that such a thing is impossible."

"Perhaps not," said the fox. "I will help you. Just you lie down here and stretch out your legs as if you were dead."

The horse did as he was bid, and the fox went to a lion whose den was not far off, and said: "Near by lies a dead horse. Come along with me, and you can have a capital meal."

The lion went with the fox, and when they got to the horse, the fox said: "Hist! hearken to my advice. You can't eat the creature in comfort here. I will tie it to you, and you can drag it away to your den, and enjoy it at your leisure."

The plan pleased the lion, and he stood quite still, close to the horse, while the fox knotted the horse's tail fast to him. He did not realize that the fox was cunningly tying his legs together and twisting and knotting the hairs of the tail till it was impossible for him to get free with all his strength. As soon as the work was done, the fox patted the horse on the shoulder, and said: "Pull, old Gray! Pull!"

At once the horse jumped up and started for home, dragging the lion behind it. In his rage the lion roared so that all the birds in the forest flew away in terror. But the horse let him roar, and never stopped until it reached its master's door.

When the farmer saw what the horse had done he was delighted, and he repented of his former resolution to let the creature shift for itself. “You shall remain with me in future and live at your ease,” said he.

So the faithful horse had plenty to eat and comfortable shelter till it died.

THE DONKEY CABBAGES

THERE was once a young huntsman who went to the forest in search of game. He was light-hearted and merry, and he whistled a gay tune as he went along. By and by he met an ugly old woman, who said: "Good morning, huntsman. You are well fed and happy, while I am hungry and sad. Give me an alms, I pray you."

The huntsman pitied the poor old woman, and he put his hand in his pocket and gave her what he could afford. Then he started to go on, but the old woman stopped him, and said: "Hark you, dear huntsman, I will make you a present because of your good heart. Go on your way, and you will soon come to a tree on which sit nine birds quarreling over a cloak. Take aim with your gun, and shoot into the midst of them. They will drop the cloak, and one of the birds will fall down dead. Take the cloak with you. It is a wishing-cloak. When you throw it round your shoulders, you have only to wish yourself at a place to be there at once. Cut open the dead bird, and you will find a ring inside. Wear it on your finger, and each morning there will be a gold piece under your pillow."

The huntsman thanked the old woman, and thought, "She promises fine things, and I hope it will all turn out as she says."

When he had gone about a hundred paces, he heard above him, in the branches of a tree, a great chattering and screaming. He looked up and saw a group of birds pulling at a cloak with their beaks and claws. It was evident from the snatching and tugging that each bird wanted the garment for itself.

"Well," said the huntsman, "this is extraordinary, and it is just what the old woman said I would see."

He put his gun to his shoulder, took aim, and fired. Away went the birds with a great noise and scattering of feathers—all except one, which fell down dead, and at the same time the cloak dropped at the huntsman's feet. He cut open the bird and found a ring inside and put it on his finger. Then he took the cloak and went home.

When he awoke the next morning he remembered the old woman's promise and looked under his pillow. Sure enough, there lay a shining gold coin, and on the morning following he found another, and thus it was every morning. Gradually, he collected quite a heap of gold, and at last he said to himself: "What is the good of all this gold to me if I stay at home? I will go and look about in the world."

So he took leave of his parents, shouldered his gun, and set out on his travels. One day a turn in the road brought into view a magnificent castle. An old woman and a beautiful girl were looking out from an upper window. The old woman was a witch, and the maiden was

her daughter. “Here comes some one,” said she, “who has a magic ring on his finger. We must try to get it, my darling. It is better suited to us than to him. Whoever wears that ring finds a gold coin every morning under the pillow. You must get it from him or it will be the worse for you.”

She then withdrew, but the maiden remained looking out of the window. When the huntsman got nearer he saw her, and said to himself: “I am weary with traveling. I will stop at this fine castle and rest.” But he would not have felt such an urgent need of stopping if he had not seen the maiden.

He was kindly received and hospitably entertained, and he was soon so in love with the daughter of the witch that she was constantly in his thoughts, and he cared for nothing but pleasing her.

At length the witch decided on a plan for getting the ring. She concocted a drink that would make the huntsman insensible, put it in a goblet, and said to her daughter: “Carry this to the youth, and get his ring. He will not miss it.”

The maiden went to the huntsman, and said, “My dearest, here is a pleasant drink we have prepared for you.”

He took the goblet and drank what was in it, and soon it overpowered him and she secured the magic ring. After that the huntsman found no more gold under his pillow; but the maiden wore the ring every night, and the coin was under her pillow instead, and each morning the old woman used to come and get it. However, he did not trouble himself about the matter, and was content to enjoy the maiden’s company.

One day the old woman said to her daughter: “We have got the ring, but we must have his wishing-cloak, too.”

“Let us leave him that,” said the maiden. “Have we not done enough in taking away his means of getting riches?”

That made the old woman very angry, and she said, “The cloak is so rare and wonderful a thing that I am determined to have it, and I shall punish you unless you get it for me.”

The maiden seated herself at a window and looked sadly out at a distant blue mountain. Soon the huntsman joined her and asked, “Why are you so sad?”

“Alas! my sweetheart,” said she, “over there is the granite mountain, on which are great quantities of precious stones. I long for those precious stones so much that I grow melancholy whenever I think of them. But who can ever get them, except perhaps the birds, for the mountain-sides are too steep to climb.”

“If that is all your trouble,” said the huntsman, “I have a remedy for it.”

Then he drew her under his cloak and wished to be on the granite mountain, and they were there almost instantly. Precious stones glittered all around them and rejoiced their sight, and they eagerly gathered some of the largest and finest. But the witch had cast a spell on the huntsman, and a great drowsiness began to come over him. He said to the maiden, “We will sit down and rest a while, for I am so tired I can hardly stand.”

They sat down, and he laid his head on her lap, and went to sleep. Then the maiden slipped the cloak off his shoulders and put it on her own, loaded herself with the precious stones, and wished herself at home.

By and by the huntsman awoke and realized that his beloved had betrayed him and left him alone on the wild mountain. “Oh, what treachery there is in the world!” he exclaimed, and he sat there overwhelmed with grief and knew not what to do.

The mountain belonged to some savage and mighty giants, and before long he saw three of them striding toward him. He hastily lay down and pretended to be fast asleep. The first one, when he came to where the huntsman was, kicked him, and said, “What kind of an earthworm is this?”

“Tread on him and kill him,” said the second.

But the third said contemptuously: “That is not worth while. Let him alone. He will soon die here, or if he climbs higher up the mountain the clouds will carry him away.”

Then they went off, and the huntsman got up and climbed to the top of the mountain. After he had sat there for a time, a cloud came sweeping by, and it caught him up and floated away through the air with him. At last, in the dusk of evening, it made a gentle descent and deposited him in a large walled garden. He looked around and said: “I wish I had something to eat. After traveling so far I am very hungry. But here I see not a single apple or berry, or any other fruit—nothing, only cabbages, some of them green and some pink. As there is no other food to be had I will try one of the cabbages, and I think it may refresh me, even if I don’t like the taste of it.”

TO HIS HORROR HE PERCEIVED THAT HE HAD BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A DONKEY

So he selected a tender head of green cabbage and started to eat. But he had scarcely taken a couple of bites when he felt a wondrous change come over him. His head grew big and shaggy, and his ears long and hairy, and his arms became legs, and he had hoofs instead of hands and feet. To his horror he perceived that he had been transformed into a donkey. Soon he resumed eating, for his appetite had not been appeased, and the juicy cabbages were now much to his liking. Presently he tried one of the pink cabbages. Immediately he felt a new change taking place, and soon found he had resumed his human form.

Now he lay down and slept off his fatigue. When he awoke it was morning, and he broke off a head of the green cabbage and a head of the pink cabbage, and thought: "I will take these along. They may be of use to me."

Then he clambered over the wall and went off in search of the witch's castle. After wandering about for a few days he was fortunate enough to find it. But before he showed himself he stained his face and disguised himself as a countryman. Even his own mother would not have known him. That done, he went to the castle and begged for a night's lodging.

"Who are you?" asked the witch, "and what is your business?"

"I am a messenger from the king," he replied. "His Majesty sent me to seek the most delicate cabbages that grow on earth. I have been successful in securing two heads, but the sun shines so warm I am afraid the tender leaves will wither and that I would waste my efforts to go any farther with them."

When the old witch heard about these precious cabbages she was anxious to eat of them herself, and she became very agreeable in her manner toward the wanderer, and said, "Good countryman, let me taste the wonderful cabbages."

"By all means," said he. "You shall have one of them," and he handed her the green cabbage.

She took it to the kitchen, and with her own hands prepared a salad for her household. But when it was ready for the table she could wait no longer, and put some of it in her mouth and began eating. Immediately the charm worked, and she became an old, gray donkey and ran out into the courtyard.

Presently the servant maid entered the kitchen. She saw the cabbage salad on the table and took it up to carry it to the dining-hall. But on the way, in accord with her usual habit, she tasted of it. At once she turned into a donkey, dropped the dish, and ran out to join the other donkey.

In the meantime, the disguised huntsman sat with the beautiful maiden. She asked him about the wonderful cabbage, and expressed an eager desire to eat some of it.

"I will go to the kitchen and see if it is ready," said he.

But on the way thither he found the salad on the floor with scattered fragments of the dish that had contained it. Then he looked out of a window and saw the two donkeys

running about in the courtyard. “Very good,” said he, and he put the salad in a fresh dish and carried it to the maiden.

“I have brought you this precious salad myself,” said he, “so that you will not have to wait any longer.”

Thereupon she ate some, and lost her human form, and ran out to the courtyard. The huntsman washed the stain from his face, and went out and addressed the donkeys. “Now,” said he, “you see plainly who I am, and I would have you know that I am going to punish you for your treachery.”

He tied them together with a rope, and drove them along the highway until he came to a mill. There he stopped and tapped on a window. The miller put his head out and asked what he wanted.

“I have three bad animals here,” said he, “and I want to get rid of them. If you will take them and feed and treat them as I wish, I will pay you whatever you say is fair for your trouble.”

“All right,” said the miller. “How shall I treat them?”

The huntsman said he would have the old donkey, which was the witch, well beaten three times a day and fed once. Then he pointed out the one which was the servant lass, and said, “Beat that one once and feed it three times; and this other you are not to beat at all. It is to receive good care and plenty to eat;” for he could not make up his mind to cause the fair maiden pain.

He returned to the castle and made himself very comfortable there. A few days later the miller came and told him the old gray donkey was dead. On learning this the huntsman took pity on the two other beasts, and had the miller bring them back to him. As soon as they came he gave them some of the pink cabbage to eat, and one promptly became the servant maid, and the other the beautiful daughter of the witch, just as they were before they ate of the green cabbage.

The beautiful maiden fell on her knees at the feet of the huntsman, and said: “Oh, my beloved, forgive all the wrong I have done you. My mother compelled me to do it against my will, for I love you with my whole heart. Your wishing-cloak hangs in one of the closets, and I will get your ring for you, too.”

“Keep the ring,” said he. “I intend to make you my bride, and we will enjoy our riches together.”

Soon afterward they were married, and they lived happily to the end of their lives.

SWEET PORRIDGE

YEARS ago there was a little girl who lived with her mother in a small house on the edge of a forest. They were very poor, and at length there came a time when they had nothing left to eat. One day the little girl went into the forest to get a few sticks with which to make a fire, and there she met an old woman who gave her a small pot, and said: "This pot will supply you with food, and you need never be hungry again. You have only to say, 'Boil, little pot, boil!' and it will cook you as much nice, sweet porridge as you can wish for. Just watch it, and when the porridge inside has increased to the amount you want, say, 'Stop, little pot,' and the boiling will immediately cease."

The little girl thanked the old woman, and carried the pot home to her mother. After that they had plenty to eat, for the pot supplied them with sweet porridge as often as they pleased.

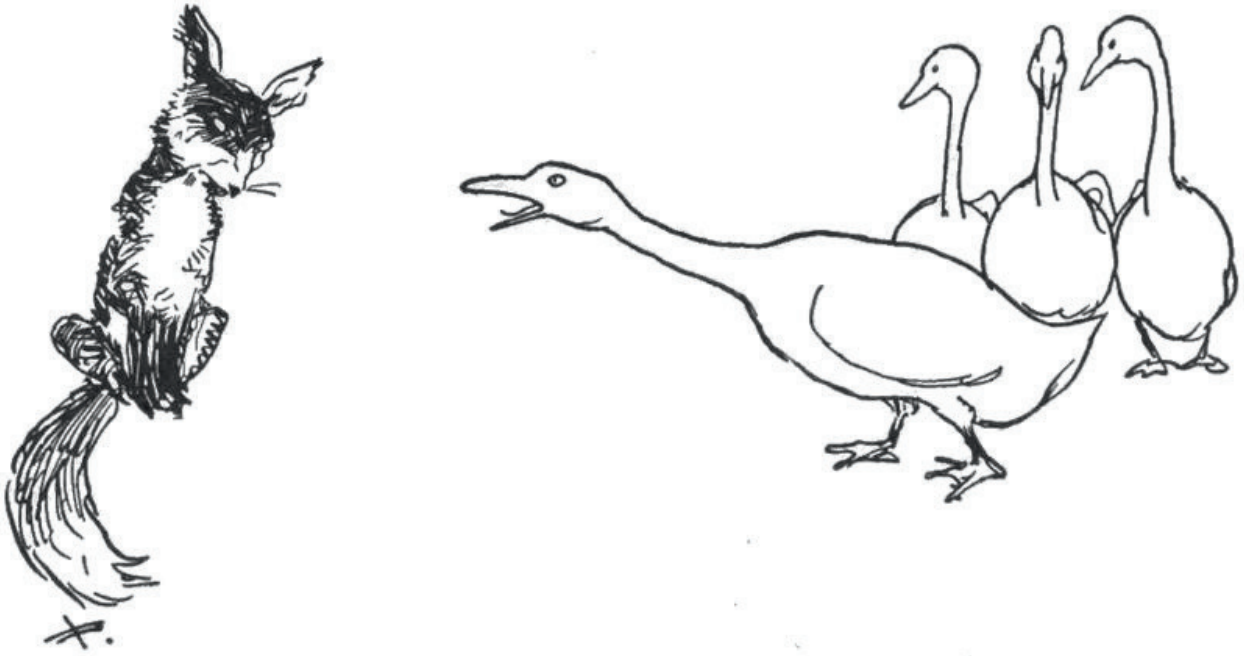
Everything prospered with them until one afternoon the little girl went for a walk in the fields outside of the village. She was gone so long that her mother became hungry, and said to the pot, "Boil, little pot, boil."

At once the cooking began, but when the porridge in the pot had increased to enough for a meal, she could not think of the magic words to stop the boiling process. So the pot soon began to overflow, and it continued to boil and boil till the porridge filled the kitchen. In a little while the entire house was filled, and still the pot boiled. The porridge now commenced to stream out at the doors and windows and chimney. It filled the yard and the garden, it engulfed the next house, and the next, and soon the street was filled. The people fled before it, and it covered the whole village out of sight. It seemed likely to furnish food for all the world, and there is no knowing what might have happened if the little girl had not returned and called to the pot to stop.

Then it left off cooking; but for many a long day the people who wished to get into the village had to eat their way through a great mass of sweet porridge.

THE PRAYING GEESE

A FOX once came to a meadow where a flock of fine fat geese were feeding. "My dears," said he, "I have come without ceremony, just as if I had been invited. You are very charming, and I desire nothing better than to keep you company and eat you one after another at my leisure."



The geese cackled for terror and began to beg pitifully for their lives. But their appeals had no effect on the fox. His only response was: "I shall show you no mercy. You must die."

Then one of them said: "If we poor geese must lose our lives, at least grant us one single grace. Permit us to say our prayers, that we may not die in our sins. After we finish praying we will all stand in a row, and you can pick out the fattest one to begin on, and feast as you please."

"Well," said the fox, "that is a just and pious request. Pray away, and I will wait for you."

So they all commenced praying: "Honk, honk, honk! Honk, honk, honk!"

When they have finished praying, this tale shall be continued; but meanwhile you can be very sure that they are praying still.

THE DARNING NEEDLE

THERE was once a darning needle which thought itself so fine that it imagined it was a sewing needle. "Be careful to hold me tightly," it said to the fingers as they took it up. "Do not drop me, for if I fall I doubt if I should be found again, I am so fine."

"That's what you say," remarked the fingers and began sewing.

"Look, I have a train," the darning needle said, and dragged a long thread after it.

The fingers belonged to a cook, and they applied the needle to a slipper, the upper leather of which had torn and needed mending. "This is degrading work," said the darning needle. "I shall never get through such coarse leather. I shall break, I shall break!"

And really it did break. "Did I not tell you so?" the needle sighed. "I am too fine."

"Now it is good for nothing," said the fingers; but still they held it while the cook with the fingers of her other hand dropped some melted sealing-wax on the broken end. When the wax cooled, she fastened her neckerchief with the needle.

"I have become a scarf-pin," said the needle. "I knew very well that I should come to honor. When one is worthy one is sure to get on in the world."

Then it laughed to itself and sat there as proudly as if it was in its own carriage, and it looked about in all directions. "May I take the liberty to ask if you are of gold?" it inquired of a pin that was its neighbor. "Your outward appearance is splendid, and I see you have a head, too, although it is very small. You must endeavor to have it grow, for it is not every one who can receive a sealing-wax head of just the proper size."

So saying, the darning needle raised itself so proudly that it fell out of the neckerchief into the sink which the cook was rinsing. "Now I am going to travel," the needle said. "I hope I shall not be lost."

The cook did not observe it, and down it went through the drain and out into a street gutter. "I am too fine for this world," it said as it lay there in the mud beneath a shallow flow of water. "However, I know my own worth, and there is always a satisfaction in that."

So the darning needle kept its proud bearing and retained its cheerful temper. All sorts of things floated past over it—chips, straws, and bits of newspaper. "How they sail along!" the needle said, "and they little know what is lying here under them. There goes a chip, thinking of nothing in the world but itself—a chip! Now a piece of straw floats past. How it twists and twirls about! It ought not to think only of itself, for unless it is careful it will most likely run against a stone. There swims a piece of old newspaper. What is printed on it has

long been forgotten, and yet see what airs it gives itself. As for me, here I sit patiently and quietly. I know what I am, and that I shall remain."

One day something glittering lay close by its side, and the darning needle thought this glittering object was a diamond. Really it was only a piece of a broken bottle. But because it was so bright, the darning needle spoke to it and introduced itself as a scarf-pin. "You are a diamond, I suppose," said the needle.

"Yes, I am something of that sort," responded the piece of glass.

So each thought the other something very choice, and they gossiped together about the arrogance and pride of the world.

"I have lived in a box that belonged to a young lady," explained the darning needle. "The young lady was a cook, she had five fingers on each hand. I was only intimate with those on her right hand, and never have I seen anything else so conceited as were those five fingers. Yet they were made simply to take me out of the box and put me back again."

"Were they very distinguished?" asked the piece of glass.

"Distinguished!" said the darning needle. "No, but they were conceited and haughty. They were five brothers and were always together one by the side of the other, though they were of different lengths. The first was Mr. Thumb. He was short and thick, and had only one joint in his back, so he could only make one bend when he bowed. Foreman, the second, dived into all the foods, both sweet and sour, to test them, pointed to the sun and moon, and pressed on the pen in writing. Middleman, the third, looked right over the heads of all the others. Ringman, the fourth, wore a golden girdle round his waist. Littleman, the fifth, did nothing at all and was proud of it. The whole five were constantly bragging and boasting, and therefore I left them."

"And now we lie here and shine," said the piece of glass.

Just then there was a rush of water in the gutter that carried the piece of glass away. "She has risen in the world," said the darning needle, "but I remain here. I am too fine. However, that is my pride, and I have good reason for it."

So there it proudly lay and had many great thoughts. "I am almost inclined to believe I am the child of a sunbeam, I am so fine," it said. "Indeed, it seems to me as if the sun was always looking for me here under the water. But I am so fine that my own mother cannot find me. If I only had my eye, which broke off, I think I should cry; but that I shall not do—it is not considered well-bred to cry."

One day some boys were rummaging around in the gutter hunting for half-pence, old nails, and such-like treasures. It was dirty work, but it gave them great pleasure. One of them pricked himself with the darning needle. "Oh!" he cried, and took up the needle and showed it to his comrades, saying, "Look at this fellow."

"I am no fellow at all, but a young lady," the needle said; but no one heard it.

The sealing-wax had come off, and the needle had turned black, but that made it look thinner, and therefore it thought itself finer than ever.

“Here comes an egg-shell sailing along,” said the boys, and they put the needle into it.

“White walls, and I myself black,” said the darning needle. “That is very becoming, and people cannot help seeing me now. I hope I shall not be seasick.”

On it drifted in the egg-shell boat, and the voyage proved very enjoyable. “There is no protection against seasickness like having a steel stomach, and the constant thought of one’s worthiness,” it said. “The finer one is the more one can bear.”

Crash! went the egg-shell as a wagon passed over it. “Good heavens!” exclaimed the darning needle, “how that wheel presses on me! I shall be seasick after all. I am breaking!”

But it did not break, although the heavy wagon wheel passed over it. There it lay full length, and there it may stay.

THE RABBIT AND THE GREEDY MONKEY

ONCE upon a time there lived in the mountains a rabbit and a monkey who were great friends. As they sat by the road side one day hobnobbing together, they saw a man approaching with a bamboo pole over his shoulder, and at each end of the pole was a bundle hung by a string. There were bananas in one bundle and sugar in the other.

"Friend of my heart," said the monkey to the rabbit, "do as I tell you. Go and sit in the road in front of that man, and as soon as he sees you, run. He will be sure to drop his load and follow. Then I will pick up his bundles and hide them, and when you come back we will share the contents between us."

So the rabbit went and sat in the road, and when the man saw him, away the rabbit ran, and the man dropped his burden and gave chase. The monkey, who had been concealed in the tall wayside grass, pounced on the man's bundles, climbed a tall tree with them, and began to gobble up the bananas and sugar they contained.

By and by the man came back, hot and empty-handed. When he saw that his goods, as well as the rabbit, were gone, he cursed loudly and went home to be scolded by his wife.

The rabbit returned soon after the man left, and hunted about for his friend the monkey. He searched the vicinity thoroughly, but not a trace of his friend could he find, till he happened to look up aloft, and behold, there was Mr. Monkey in a tree munching away with every sign of enjoyment.

“Hello, comrade!” said the rabbit, “come down out of that.”

“I’m very comfortable here, thank you,” said the monkey.

“But where is my share of our plunder?” the rabbit asked indignantly.

“All gone, all gone,” mumbled the monkey, and pelted the rabbit with banana peels and wads of paper made out of the wrappings of the sugar. “Where have you been all this time? I got hungry and couldn’t wait any longer.”

The rabbit would not believe that the things in the bundles were all gone. He thought his friend was joking. But the truth of the matter was that the greedy creature had not left a scrap of either sugar or bananas.

“Do you really mean it?” said the poor rabbit at last.

“If you don’t believe me, come and see,” said the monkey, and he descended the tree-trunk nearly to the ground, seized the rabbit by his long ears, and hauled him up into the tree. After mocking him and making great sport he left him there and went away.

The rabbit was afraid to jump down from such a height. So he remained up in the tree for a long time. Many animals passed under the tree, but not one took pity on the rabbit until

an old and foolish rhinoceros came along and stopped to rub his wrinkled hide against the tree-trunk.

“Kind rhinoceros,” said the rabbit, “let me jump down on your back.”

The rhinoceros agreed, and down came the rabbit with such a thump that the creature’s back was broken, and he died. But the rabbit was not hurt, and he ran and he ran until he came to the king’s palace. There he hid under the king’s golden throne. By and by in came the king with his courtiers. All the grandees were standing around the throne in their gorgeous robes glittering with rubies and diamonds when they were startled by a sudden sneeze.

“God bless you!” exclaimed the courtiers.

“Who has the bad manners to sneeze in my royal presence?” cried the king.

Each man looked at his neighbor and wondered who did it. “Off with his head!” shouted the king.

Another sneeze came. This time every one was alert and on the watch, and they noticed that the sound came from beneath the king’s golden throne. So they reached under and dragged out the rabbit, who was so scared he looked more dead than alive.

“All right,” said the king, “off with his head!”

The executioner ran to get his sword. But the rabbit, in spite of his fright, had his wits about him, and he sat up on his hind legs, put his two forepaws together, and said respectfully: “O great king, first hear what I have to say. If you will spare my life I will give you a dead rhinoceros. Let twenty men go with me to bring the body to your palace.”

The king and his courtiers laughed loud and long. However, just to see what would come of it, the king ordered twenty men to go with the rabbit. They were guided by the rabbit to the spot where the rhinoceros lay dead, and with great exertion they dragged the body to the palace. Every one was very glad, because the horn of a rhinoceros is good for curing many diseases. The court physician ground the horn into powder, and made out of it a most wonderful medicine, and the king was so pleased that he gave the rabbit a horse to ride on and a handsome new coat.

The rabbit put on his new coat, mounted the horse, and rode off. Presently, who should he meet but his friend, the monkey. “Hello!” said the monkey, “where did you get all that finery?”

“This horse and this coat were given to me by the king,” replied the rabbit.

“And why should the king make such a present to a simpleton like you?” the monkey asked.

“I, whom you call a simpleton,” said the rabbit, “got this horse and this elegant coat by sneezing under the king’s golden throne.” Then he rode away.

The monkey fell a-thinking how nice it would be if he could get a fine coat and a horse. “I can sneeze,” said he. “Why shouldn’t I try my luck?”

Off he scampered to the king's palace, and hid beneath the king's golden throne. Soon the king and his courtiers came in, all richly arrayed, and the monkey sneezed in the most auspicious manner he could contrive.

"Who is that?" thundered the king, glaring about him. "Who has the bad manners to sneeze in the king's presence?"

They searched till they found the monkey hidden under the throne, and hauled him out.

"Wily tree-climber," said the king, "have you any gift for me that might cause me not to bid the executioner to cut off your head?"

The monkey pondered a few moments in fear and trembling, and then stammered, "O king, I have some banana peels and pellets of paper."

This reply only increased the king's wrath, and the unfortunate monkey was led away to be executed.

THE NIGHTINGALE

IN China, you know, the emperor is a Chinaman, and all the people around him are Chinamen, too. The emperor's palace, at the time of this story, was more magnificent than any other in the world, for it was made entirely of the finest porcelain. In the garden bloomed the rarest flowers, and to the most beautiful ones were tied little silver bells which tinkled perpetually, so that no one could pass the flowers without looking at and admiring them. Every feature of the garden had been carefully planned, and it was so large that the gardener himself did not know where it ended. If, however, one walked straight on, one came at last to a forest of lofty trees, and beyond the forest was the sea, deep and blue. Close to the shore, amid the foliage of the trees, lived a nightingale, and it sang so sweetly that even the poor fishermen would stop and listen, when they were out at night drawing in their nets. "Heavens! how beautiful that is!" they would say.

But they could not listen long, for they had to attend to their work; yet if they came that way the next night they would again exclaim, "How beautifully that bird sings!"

Travelers came from all the countries in the world to the city of the emperor; and they admired everything very much, especially the palace and the garden. But when they heard the nightingale they would say, "That is best of all!"

After they got home they told of their experiences, and the learned ones wrote books about the things they had seen and heard in the domains of the Chinese emperor, and they never failed to praise the nightingale. Those who were poets wrote very beautiful verses about the nightingale in the wood by the deep, blue sea.

At length some of the books came into the hands of the emperor. He sat in his golden chair and read them, and he nodded his head, well pleased by the appreciative descriptions of his city and palace and garden. Then he came to the words, "But the nightingale is best of all."

"What is this?" said he. "The nightingale—why, I know nothing about it. Can there be such a bird in my realm, yes, and in my own garden, which I have never seen or heard? Fancy my having to discover this from a book!"

He called his chamberlain, who was so grand that when any one of lower rank dared to speak to him or ask him a question, he would only answer, "Pooh!" which means nothing at all.

"Chamberlain," said the emperor, "these books tell of a very wonderful bird called a nightingale in the palace garden. They declare it is the finest thing in my great empire. Why have I never been informed about it?"

"This is the first time I have heard it mentioned," said the chamberlain. "It has never been presented at court."

"My orders are that it shall appear in the palace this evening to sing to me," said the emperor. "The whole world knows what I possess, while I myself do not."

"I have never heard it mentioned before," said the chamberlain; "but I will seek it, and I will find it."

Yet where was it to be found? The chamberlain ran upstairs and downstairs, and in and out of all the rooms and corridors, but not one person among those he met had heard of the nightingale. So he ran back to the emperor and said the bird must be a myth invented by the people who wrote the books. "Your Imperial Majesty ought not to believe everything that books contain," said he. "They are often mere fiction, and what we call the black art."

"But the books in which I have been reading about the nightingale," said the monarch, "were sent to me by the high and mighty Emperor of Japan; so there cannot be anything untrue in them. I will hear the nightingale, and I insist that it must sing to me tonight. It shall have my gracious protection, and if you fail to have it here the whole court shall be trampled on after supper."

"Tsing-pe!" said the chamberlain, and away he ran again up and down the stairs and in and out of all the rooms and corridors. Half the court ran with him, for they none of them wished to be trampled on, and there was a great inquiry after the wonderful nightingale which was known to all the outside world, but to no one at court.

At last they found a poor little maid in the kitchen, who said: "Dear me, I know the nightingale very well, and it certainly can sing! Every evening I have permission to take home to my sick mother some of the scraps from the table. She lives by the seashore, and on my way back, when I am tired, I sit down to rest a while in the wood, and then I hear the nightingale. Its song makes the tears come into my eyes, and I feel as if my mother were kissing me!"

"Little maid," said the chamberlain, "I will procure you a permanent position in the kitchen, and permission to see the emperor dining, if you will take us to the nightingale, for it must appear at the court this evening."

Then they all went out into the wood where the nightingale sang. As they were going along at their best pace a cow began to bellow. "Oh," said the courtiers, "that is it! What a wonderful power there is in the song for such a small creature! And we certainly have heard it before."

"That is a cow bellowing," said the little maid. "We are a long way yet from the place where the nightingale sings."

Presently some frogs began to croak in a marsh. "Beautiful!" said the Chinese court chamberlain. "Now I hear it. The sound is just like the tinkling of tiny church bells."

"Those are frogs," said the little maid. "But I think we shall soon hear the nightingale now."

Then the nightingale began to sing. “That’s it,” said the little maid. “Listen, listen; and look—there it sits!” She pointed to a little gray bird up among the branches.

“Is it possible?” said the chamberlain. “I should never have thought the nightingale was like that. How common it looks! I suppose it has lost its color through a faintness caused by the unexpected sight of so many grand people.”

“Little nightingale,” said the kitchen-maid, “our gracious emperor wishes you to sing to him.”

“I will do so with the greatest pleasure,” said the nightingale, and it warbled a song in the most delightful fashion.

“Its singing sounds just like crystal bells,” said the chamberlain. “See how it works its little throat. I wonder that we have never heard it before. It will be a great success at court.”

“Shall I sing again to the emperor?” asked the nightingale, who thought the monarch was present.

“My excellent little nightingale,” said the chamberlain, “I have the honor to invite your attendance at a court festival tonight, when you will charm his Imperial Majesty with your fascinating singing.”

“My singing sounds best among the trees,” said the nightingale, but it went with them willingly when it understood that the emperor wanted it to come.

The palace had been splendidly decorated for the occasion. The porcelain walls and floors reflected the light of many thousands of golden lamps; the most beautiful flowers, all of the tinkling kind, were arranged in the corridors; and there was such a running to and fro as kept the bells in constant motion and filled one’s ears full of the tinkling.

In the center of the great hall, where the emperor sat, a golden perch had been fixed for the nightingale. The whole court was present, and the little kitchen-maid was permitted to stand behind the door, for she had been promoted to be a real palace cook. All were dressed in their very best, and all had their eyes on the little gray bird, to whom the emperor nodded.

The nightingale sang so beautifully that tears came into the emperor’s eyes and ran down his cheeks. Indeed, the song touched the heart of every one who heard it. The emperor was so charmed that he said the nightingale should have his golden garter to wear around its neck. But the nightingale declined with thanks, saying that it had already received sufficient reward; “for I have seen tears in the emperor’s eyes,” it added, “and I could ask for nothing more.”

Then again it sang its heavenly song. “That is the sweetest possible sort of coquetry,” said the ladies; and they took some water into their mouths to try to make the same gurgling when any one spoke to them.

Everybody expressed satisfaction—even the footmen and chamber-maids, and that is saying a great deal, for they are always the most difficult people to please. In short, the nightingale was a great success.

It was now to remain at court and live in a cage. Twice a day and once at night it had liberty to go out, but whenever it left its cage it was accompanied by twelve servants, each holding a silken string attached to its leg. There was not much pleasure in an outing of that sort.

The whole city talked about the wonderful bird, and if two acquaintances met, one would say, by way of greeting, “Nightin,” and the other would say, “gale;” and then they sighed, and perfectly understood each other. Eleven tradesmen’s children were named after the bird, though not one of them grew up with the least ability to sing.

One day the emperor received a large parcel on which was written, “The Nightingale.”

“Here we have a new book about our celebrated bird,” said he.

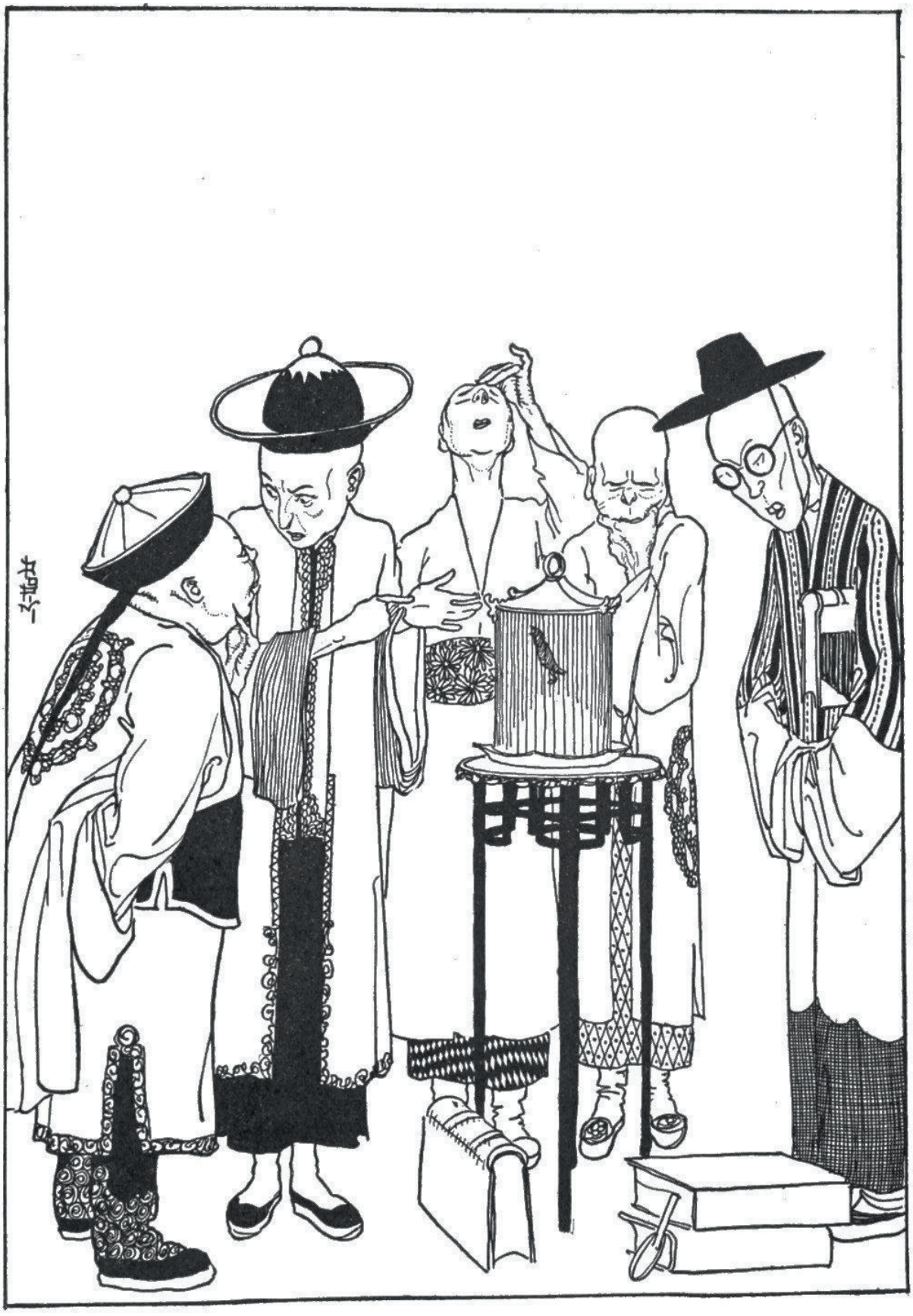
It was no book, however, but a box that contained an artificial nightingale made much like the living one in size and shape, but covered all over with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. When the imitation bird was wound up, it could sing one of the songs the real bird sang, and then it wagged its tail all glittering with silver and gold. Round its neck was tied a ribbon, on which was written, “The Emperor of Japan’s nightingale is poor compared with that of the Emperor of China.”

Everybody said, “Oh, how beautiful!” and he who had brought the artificial bird immediately received the title of Imperial Nightingale-Carrier-in-Chief.

“Now the two birds must sing together,” said the courtiers. “What a lovely duet that will be!”

So they had to sing together, but they did not get on very well, for the real bird sang its own way, and did not keep time with the mechanical bird.

“The discords are not the new one’s fault,” said the music-master, “for it sings in perfect time and in every way is entirely correct.”



The nightingale at court

Afterward the imitation bird was made to sing alone. Singing thus, it was just as great a success as the real bird; and of course it was much prettier to look at, for it glittered like bracelets and breastpins. Thirty-three times it sang the same tune over, and still it was not tired. The courtiers would willingly have heard it from the beginning again, but the emperor said that the live nightingale must have a turn now. Where was it? No one had noticed that it had flown out of the open window back to its own green woods.

"What is the meaning of this?" said the emperor.

The courtiers all blamed the nightingale, and thought it a most ungrateful creature. "Anyway, we have the best bird," they said.

Then the imitation bird had to sing again, which made the thirty-fourth time they had heard the same tune. But they did not know the tune thoroughly, even then, it was so difficult. The music-master praised the bird exceedingly, and insisted that it was much better than a live nightingale, not only as regarded its outside with all the diamonds, but the inside, too. "Because," said he, "we never know what song is coming next from the real nightingale, but with the artificial one everything is decided beforehand. So it is, and so it must remain; it can't be otherwise. You can open the bird, you can explain it, and show the ingenuity of it, how the wheels go, and how one note follows another."

"Those are exactly my opinions," they all said; and the music-master received permission to show the bird to the people on the following Sunday.

So the people saw the imitation nightingale and heard it sing, and they were all very enthusiastic over it, and they all said, "Oh!" and stuck their forefingers up into the air and nodded their heads.

But the poor fishermen who had heard the real bird said: "The song of this bird is very nice, and it is much like that of the live bird, but there is something wanting—we don't know what."

The real nightingale was banished from the empire, while the artificial bird was given a place on a silk cushion close to the emperor's bed. All the presents which it had received lay around it, and the title of Chief Imperial Singer of the Bedchamber on the Left Side was conferred on it. The emperor considered the left side, where the heart is, the more important, for even an emperor has his heart on the left side just like other people.

A treatise in twenty-five volumes was written by the music-master about the artificial bird, and this treatise was so learned and long, and so full of the most difficult Chinese words, that all the people said they had read and understood it, for otherwise they would have been thought stupid.

A year passed, and the emperor and his court and all the other Chinamen knew every little gurgle in the song of the artificial bird. That was why it pleased them. They could sing with it, and often did so. Even the street boys sang: "Tsee, tsee, tsee! Cluck, cluck, cluck!" and the emperor did just the same. It really was most enjoyable.

But one evening, when the bird was singing its best, and the emperor was lying in bed listening to it, something inside of the bird gave way with a sudden snap. Then whir-r-r went all the wheels, and the music stopped.

The emperor jumped out of bed and sent for his private physicians, but what good could they do? They had a watchmaker come, and after a good deal of talking and examining and tinkering he got the works to go again somehow. But he said the bird must be used sparingly, for the works were much worn, and he could not renew them so as to be sure that the music would go right. This caused great sorrow. The imitation bird could only be allowed to sing once a year. Each time the music-master made a little speech full of difficult words, and affirmed that the singing was just as good as ever. After being thus reassured the court listened to the bird with all their former pleasure.

At the end of five years a great grief came on the nation. The Chinese were all very fond of their emperor, and now he was ill, and it was reported that he had not long to live. A new emperor had been selected, and would be proclaimed ruler of the empire as soon as the old emperor was dead. Cloth had been laid down in all the rooms and corridors to deaden the sound of footsteps, and the palace was very, very quiet. Outside, about the entrance, many people had gathered, and they asked the chamberlain how their emperor was getting on.

"Pooh!" he said, and shook his head.

Pale and motionless lay the emperor in his great splendid bed, and presently the courtiers thought he was dead. So they all went away to pay their respects to the new emperor. The pages ran out to gossip about it, and the chambermaids had a grand teaparty.

But the emperor was not dead yet. There he lay on the gorgeous bed with its velvet hangings and heavy gold tassels. A window stood open, and the moon shone in on him and the artificial bird. He could hardly breathe, and he felt burdened by a weight on his chest. He opened his eyes and saw that Death was sitting on his chest and wore the emperor's golden crown on his head. In one hand he held the emperor's golden sword, and in the other the emperor's imperial banner. Round about, from among the folds of the velvet hangings peered many strange faces, some hideous, and others gentle and pleasant. These were all the emperor's bad and good deeds staring at him now that Death was sitting on his heart.

"Do you remember this?" they whispered one after the other. "Do you recollect this?" And they told him so many things that the perspiration ran down from his brow.

"Say no more," begged the emperor, and then shouted: "Music, music! Sound the great drum so that I may not hear what these faces are saying."

But they went on questioning him, and Death sat nodding his approval to all that they said.

"Music, music!" shrieked the emperor. "You precious little golden bird, sing, sing! I have given you costly jewels, and I have hung my golden garter round your neck. Sing, I tell you, sing!"

But the bird was silent. It could not sing without being wound up, and there was no one at hand to do that. Death continued to gaze at the emperor with the great empty sockets of his eyes, and all was still—terribly still.

Suddenly, through the open window, there came the sound of sweetest singing. The living nightingale was perched on a bough outside. It had heard of the emperor's illness, and had come to bring comfort and hope to him by its singing. As it sang, the ghostly faces around became fainter and fainter, and the blood coursed with fresh vigor through the emperor's veins, and strengthened his feeble limbs. Even Death listened and said, "Go on, little nightingale, go on!"

"Yes," said the nightingale, "I will go on if you will give me the emperor's beautiful golden sword and imperial banner and jeweled crown."

"I will relinquish each of the three treasures in exchange for a song," said Death.

So the nightingale sang three songs, and the last was about the quiet churchyard where the roses bloom, and the flowers of the elder scent the air, and where the grass is ever moistened by the tears of the mourners. This song made Death desire to be in his own garden, and like a cold gray mist he floated out through the window.

"Thanks, thanks!" said the emperor. "You heavenly little bird, I know you well. I banished you from my empire, and yet you have charmed the evil visions away from my bed by your song, and removed Death from my heart. How can I reward you?"

"You have rewarded me," said the nightingale, "by the tears I brought to your eyes the very first time I sang to you. Those are the jewels which gladden the heart of a singer, and I shall never forget them. But sleep now, that you may get well and strong."

Again the nightingale sang, and the emperor fell into a refreshing slumber. When he awoke, the sun was shining in on him through the window, and he found himself vigorous and well. None of his attendants had yet come back to him, for they thought he was dead, but the nightingale still sat singing.

"You must always stay with me," said the emperor, "and I will smash the imitation bird into a thousand pieces."

"Don't do that," said the nightingale. "It did the best it could. Keep it as before. As for me, I cannot build my nest and live in the palace. Let me come when I like, and I will sit on this bough in the evening and sing to you. I will sing to cheer you and to make you think. I will sing of those who are happy and of those who suffer. I will sing of what is good and what is evil around you. The little singing bird flies far and wide—to the poor fishermen, to the peasants in their humble cottages, and to many others who are distant from you and your court. I love your heart more than your crown, and I will come and sing to you, but you must grant me one request."

"That I will do, whatever it may be," said the emperor, who had now risen from his bed and put on his imperial robes.

"I only ask," said the nightingale, "that you let no one know that you have a little bird which tells you everything. It will be better so."

Then the nightingale flew away. Immediately afterward the attendants came in to look after their dead emperor. They stood aghast at sight of him, and the emperor said, “Good morning!”

THE PRINCESS AND THE GIANT

THERE once lived a king and queen who ought to have been as happy as the day is long, for they had a large and prosperous kingdom in which the people were contented and industrious, and they had a splendid palace and plenty of horses and carriages; and their treasure-room was filled with gold, silver, and precious stones. Yet notwithstanding all this they were sad and sorrowful, because they had no children to inherit the good things they possessed.

One bright winter morning the queen went out into the palace garden. The snow covered the ground and clung to the trees and bushes, and it sparkled in the sunshine just as if all the jewels in the king's treasury had been scattered about on it. The queen seated herself on a stone bench beneath a huge oaktree. She had not been there long when an old man came down a garden path and stood before her. He was a wicked magician named Surtur, who lived in a cave not far away.

"O queen!" he said, "you have long wished for a child. Your wish shall be granted, and a daughter will be born to you; but I warn you that she will cause you great unhappiness. She is destined to marry a terrible giant, and she will burn your palace; and the king, her father, will perish in the flames."

So saying, he laughed spitefully and went away. The queen was greatly troubled, for she knew that Surtur was her enemy and that he was powerful; but as time went on she got over her anxiety and seldom thought of the old magician's threat. At length the little daughter was born, and all the court agreed that she was the most beautiful child ever seen. More important still, she grew up as good as she was beautiful.

Things went as well with her as could be desired year after year until there came a time when the queen told her daughter about the prophecy of the magician. From that day a change came over the princess. She no longer laughed and danced, but walked about the rooms alone, often weeping. Finally, at her request, the king built her a house in which she lived with her own attendants, and there she stayed continually, fearful that if she went to the palace she would bring disaster on her father, and that if she walked around outdoors the giant might kidnap her.

Once, when she was sitting in her room, with her work that used to give her such pleasure lying idly on her lap, she heard some one knocking at the door. She opened it, and there stood a funny little old woman with a high, peaked hat on her head. The little old woman asked if she might come in and rest.

"Yes," replied the princess listlessly.

So the little old woman came in, and they sat down, and the visitor began telling some wonderful stories. At last the princess got so interested that she looked quite bright and happy, like her old self.

Presently the old woman said: "Now I want you to come into the woods with me. It is a lovely day, and you will enjoy walking there in the shade of the trees."

At first the princess declared she did not care to go, but after a while she allowed herself to be persuaded, and they went forth to wander on the mossy paths among the tall, straight-stemmed firs and graceful beeches and feathery birches. The princess forgot her sorrow, and she laughed and ran about in great enjoyment. When they were tired they sat down on a green bank, and the old woman said, "Tell me, my dear princess, why of late you have been so sad."

Her companion looked so kind and gentle that the princess could not refuse to answer, and she told of the prophecy that she would marry a terrible giant, and cause her father's death by burning his palace. "And oh," she cried, "I love my father dearly! He has always been very good to me. Now I must hasten back to my house. I ought not to have left it, and I never will again. If I stay in it all the time I cannot possibly harm my father or marry that horrible giant."

"Wait a bit," said the little old woman. "I am your godmother, and I think we can find some way to avert the evils you fear. You are persecuted by the wicked magician, Surtur. He wanted to marry your mother, and when she would not have him, and married your father, he vowed he would never rest till the king was dead and she was punished. But his power has its limits. The king's palace I cannot save, but neither your father nor mother shall be hurt. Nor need you fear the giant, if you will do exactly as I bid you. We will act at once. First see your father and persuade him to go out riding in the forest with all his attendants."

Greatly relieved by her godmother's cheery words, the princess hastened to do as she had been bidden. "Dear father," said she, as she came into his presence, "the day is so fine, will you not go for a ride in the woods and take the courtiers with you?"

The king, pleased to see her so bright and interested, at once said he would go; and with all his courtiers in attendance started off for a great excursion in the forest.

As soon as they were well out of sight, the little old woman joined the princess and had her send the servants away on various errands, and the queen was induced to go and stay for a time in the house built for the princess. When every one was gone, the little old dame helped the princess carry out and secrete all the treasure and other valuables, and afterward she told the princess to take down a can of oil from the kitchen mantel-shelf. In doing this the girl's foot slipped, and the oil spilled on the hearth and into the fire, and at once flashed into flames. The princess and her godmother had to run for their lives, and the fire spread rapidly through the palace.

They paused at a safe distance and looked back, and the old woman said: "Thus one part of the magician's prophecy has been fulfilled without harm to any one. I could not prevent what has happened, but it might have been worse. Surtur has other evil designs. We will see what we can do to thwart them. Here is a little silver ball. Throw it on the ground and

follow it as it rolls along. It will guide you to a hut in the forest, the owner of which will be away. Go in and await his return, and whatever you do, remember that you must see him before he sees you. Remain at the hut till I summon you. When you hear me calling you, do not lose an instant, but hasten to where your father's palace stood. Your mother will need you."

The princess took the ball, threw it down, and followed it as it rolled along into the forest. At last it stopped before what seemed to be a woodman's hut, and she picked up the ball and put it in her pocket. Then she went into the hut and hid behind the half-closed door. She peeped out through a crack and presently saw a huge giant coming carrying on his shoulders a bear he had killed in his hunting. He pushed open the door, and as he threw down the burden he beheld the princess.

The giant looked very fierce, but his voice was soft and kind, and he told her he wanted her to live in the hut with him and cook the food and sweep the floor and make the beds. All this the princess promised to do. He then showed her a little inner chamber, and said, "Here you can sleep, and no matter what noises you hear in my part of the hut during the night, don't come out of your room."

Three days passed. Early each morning the giant went forth from the hut and did not return until sunset. The princess cooked the food, made the beds, and kept the hut tidy and clean. At night she heard frightful noises in the outer room, the walls of the hut shook, and the earth trembled, and she lay in her bed hardly daring to stir, with the clothes pulled over her ears to deaden the terrible sounds. Whenever she fell asleep she dreamed that a handsome young prince, instead of the giant, was her fellow-dweller in the hut.

On the third evening she retired early, and was scarcely in bed when she heard, faint and far away, the voice of the little old woman calling her. Then she knew her mother needed

her, and immediately she jumped out of bed, dressed, and cautiously opened her door. No one was in the next room, and she ran as quickly as she could to where her father's palace had stood. There, before the ruins, she saw her mother tied to a wooden stake that had been driven into the ground, and the servants were piling up fagots of wood around her. She had been condemned to death for having set the palace on fire during the king's absence, and for stealing his treasure. In vain she had pleaded her innocence.

The princess pushed her way through the crowd and threw herself on her knees before her father. "Oh, stop, stop!" she cried eagerly. "Dear father, my mother is not to blame. It was I who burned your palace. I was forced to do so in order to save your life, which was threatened by the wicked magician, Surtur. Neither did my mother steal your treasure. That and much else was taken out of the palace to a place of safety."

On hearing this, the king ordered the queen to be released, and she embraced her daughter with many words of affection.

As soon as possible the princess hurried back to the hut of the giant in the forest. When she approached it she heard the sounds of a terrific combat. She looked in and saw the giant engaged in a struggle for mastery with the magician. From her pocket she hastily took the silver ball the little old woman had given to her and hurled it at the wicked Surtur. Her aim was true, and the moment the ball hit him he changed to a hawk, and with a rapid flutter of wings darted out of the door and disappeared.

The giant picked up the ball, and to the surprise of the princess he was transformed into the handsome young prince she had seen in her dreams. They went back together to the king and queen, and before long there was a great marriage-feast, and the princess became the wife of the prince she had delivered from his enchantment. After the death of the king the prince became the ruler of the kingdom, and he and his queen lived happily all the days of their life.

The End