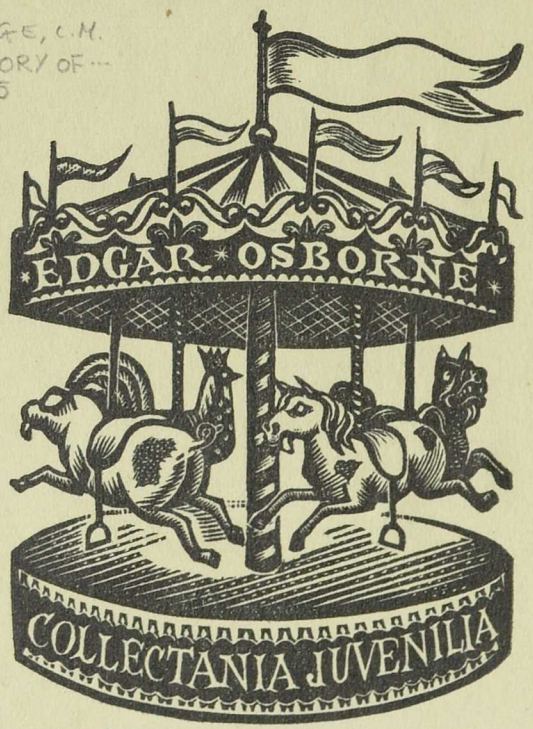
THE HISTORY OF

SIR THOMAS THUMB



Isabel Fortescue Seymour

from her Aunt & Godmother

J F Coleridge

On her Christening Day

Dec^r 28^th – 1862.

michael Leo Aaron

from Lis ann

Jane Fortescue Coleridge (née Seymour) was the wife of the 1st Lord Coleridge. The Coleridge family were connections of the Yonges.

THE HISTORY

OF THE

Life and Death of the Good Knight

SIR THOMAS THUMB,

WITH DIVERS OTHER MATTERS CONCERNING THE COURT OF GOOD KING ARTHUR OF BRITAIN.


JB

THE HISTORY

OF

SIR THOMAS THUMB,

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE HEIR OF REDCLIFFE;" "HEARTSEASE;"
"THE LITTLE DUKE," &c. &c.

ILLUSTRATED BY J. B.

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PREFACE.

On the proposal to draw up a Life of Tom Thumb, to accompany the graceful Illustrations of this little book, the attempt would have seemed a presumptuous interference with nursery classics, had it not appeared, on examination, that he, unlike his companions in fireside mythology, has never been the theme of any cultivated mind, but has been left to the unpoetical English tradition. His adventures, as usually narrated, are without variety, and, in general, disagreeable; and even the name of King Arthur cannot raise him, appearing only as the vulgarized Arthur of nursery rhymes.

Fielding's burlesque only added the evils of the literature of his age to the dull poverty of the old story, and thus the field appeared to be open to an endeavour to weave the traditional mishaps of the pigmy-knight into a tale that might be free from the former offences against good taste; to do, in fact, what Perrault did for Blue Beard, Puss in Boots, and the Sleeping Beauty, and the Comtesse d'Aulnoy for the White Cat, and Beauty and the Beast. Such success as theirs is not to be looked for in these days, nor by the present writer, but it is hoped that the tale here presented, may connect a few pleasant associations with the little favourite of nursery lore.

The view has been to adhere as closely as possible to the legitimate English fairy lore. Arbitrary fairies are very pretty additions to a tale of wonder; but they are not the beings that the popular mind regarded with a strange mixture of sportiveness, dread, and compassion; and as such, it has been my desire to represent them. If a strain of gravity have thus mingled with the tale, it should be remembered, that, as Mr. Ruskin has taught us, even the grotesque playfulness of our northern race has in it a shade of deeper signification, than appears on the sportive surface.

The Notes may perhaps be thought over numerous, but they were added with the desire of rendering accessible to children some of the choice passages of English fairy poetry, well known indeed to their elders, but to them out of reach, as well as to give a few sketches from the romances of King Arthur's Court, often a subject of much youthful curiosity, not easily gratified.

Thus originality is the last object aimed at, since the class of readers to whom Sir Thomas offers himself are those who least desire novelty. If any of those who are attracted to the book by the little Knight's capital portraits, should chance to feel aggrieved and incredulous at any new exploits being attributed to him, they are entreated to believe, that the Author is quite as unwilling as they can be to disturb a time-honoured tradition, and that no more has been altered than was necessary to render the story in any way worthy of its Illustrations.

INTRODUCTION.

Some say that Tom Thumb was in truth King Edgar's dwarf, but this does not seem so likely as that there should always have been a story told to German, Danish, French, and English children about a little man, no bigger than a thumb.

The Germans call this little man Thumbling, and some of his adventures were much the same as those in this story, especially his riding in the horse's ear, and being eaten by the cow. The French name for him was *le petit Poucet*, and in the year 1696, Monsieur Perrault published a story of him, which is the same as that we call Hop-o'-my-Thumb, (not Tom Thumb, I hope,) the little boy who was forsaken with his six brothers, by his cruel parents, in a wood, and who found his way home, the first time, by the little white pebbles he had strewn as he went; but, afterwards, using bread crumbs instead, they were eaten by the birds, and he fell into the ogre's cave, where he changed his own red cap and those of his brothers for the crowns of the six sleeping little ogresses, and so caused the ogre to devour his own seven daughters, instead of the seven wanderers.

This story must, I think, all but the name of Poucet, have

come from the South, for you will never find an ogre in a tale that arose in the North.

The Danish mannikin was called Svend Tomling, and married a lady three ells and a quarter long. It was she who probably sung the song of putting her little husband into a pint pot. The Scots called him Tomalin, or Tamlane, but though they sent him to Fairy-land, they do not seem to have believed him smaller than other people.

Our own Tom Thumb is different from all of these, and is made to say in an old history of Robin Goodfellow—

> "*My actions all, in volumes two are wrote,*
> *The least of which will never be forgot.*"

Poor Tom was not more prophetic than grammatical, for there is only one history of him extant, besides an old ballad, which is not very poetical. They both agree in taking him to King Arthur's court and into Fairy-land. Mr. Orchard Halliwell thinks that the subsequent part of the story is not so old as the rest, but added by some awkward imitator.

King Arthur was a favourite subject of all the romances that were written in England and France, and sometimes in Italy, and they made out that he and his knights were the very models of everything they thought noble and chivalrous.

As to the fairies, I have tried to shew them here, as our forefathers believed in them. It seems to have been thought that they were pretty, gay beings, long-lived and not subject to

the griefs and pains of mortals, but that they lived in a sort of middle state, without hopes of being saved like us men, and, therefore, unable to take any true joy or pleasure. They had power only by night, and could do no harm to those who placed themselves under the only true and holy protection ; but always took advantage of those who, by their own fault, were exposed to these spirits of the lower air.

These were the dancing fairies who traced the rings on the grass, and of whom Mab was Queen. The males of these were called elves, the females fairies or elf-women, and they were thought so beautiful that we find many of the old Saxons named after them,—Alfred, Elfrida, &c. There are many wonderful histories of them in German and Swedish popular legends.

Other fairies also spoken of, and more properly called fays, were generally women, enchantresses, called in Italian, charmed, *fatata* or *fata*, in French *fée*, and in English, fay. We often meet with them in old romances, and probably all the fairy god-mothers we hear of, are meant for these, but they are quite a distinct class from

"*The King of Elves, and little Fairy Queen.*"

I advise the little people who may read this book, not to settle that Notes must be dull, for they will find in these some of the prettiest verses about fairies that I have been able to bring together.

December 6th 1855.

The History

OF

Sir Thomas Thumb.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE WIZARD MERLIN CAME TO THE HOUSE OF OWEN.

ONG ago, when great King Arthur reigned in Britain,[1] a weary traveller in humble garments, came at nightfall to the borders of a forest, not far from the mountains of Wales.

He had come from far, and was in need of rest, so that he was rejoiced to see a light burning in a cottage window, beneath the shade of the trees. Soon he found himself in a comfortable farm-yard, where the horses and cows were resting for the night, in the straw, and nothing was astir except the fierce house-dog,

which at once began to bark, his voice echoing through the wood.

The stranger did but look at him, and the dog crouched down and was instantly still, his ears drooping back in terror. The traveller knocked, and the door-latch was lifted by a comely country woman.

"Good Dame," quoth he, "the hour is late, and I have travelled from far to-day. Will you spare to a wayfaring man a supper and lodging for a night?"

"And kindly welcome," said the good woman. "Come in, honest man. No one is here save Owen my husband, and gladly will we give you a share of our homely food."

The good farmer, Owen, spoke the like friendly words; he left his own carved oaken chair for the traveller, and they all sat down before the fire of blazing logs to eat their supper. It was a hearty meal, with plenty of everything, butter and cheese, bread and milk, eggs and bacon, and good fat ale to wash it down. The hungry stranger ate with relish, and the good host did his best to make him welcome. Never had he seen a pleasanter homestead, the kitchen so wide, the chimney so glowing, the oaken and walnut presses so bright and polished with rubbing; and when the good housewife went to make his bed, he saw piles of homespun linen, well bleached, stored away in the chests. He told his kind hosts that they seemed to him the happiest people on the earth, and that they could have neither want nor wish unfulfilled.

The good woman looked at her husband, sighed, and shook her head, as if they still had something to desire. This made the stranger curious, and he asked again if there were anything lacking to them. Such homely, sensible folk as they could not be longing for riches or state, and he could well assure them that might and learning caused more toil than bliss.

"Yea, truly, good stranger," said the housewife, "we are well content with what we have, and should indeed be quite happy if we had but any children to cheer up our old age, and hold our cottage after us. Had I but one child, were he no bigger than Owen's thumb, there would not be so blithe a woman in King Arthur's realm."[2]

The stranger gave a low laugh within himself, and bade his hosts good-night.

Owen and his wife would not have slept quite so soundly, had they known who was the wayfarer whom they had sheltered beneath their roof.

For it was no other than the great enchanter, Merlin, the most wonderful man in all Britain.[3] It was he who, when King Vortegirn could not build the tower of Mount Erir, because the earth each night devoured every stone laid by day,[4] discovered that far underground lay a deep pond, and beneath the pond, two hollow stones, wherein were two huge dragons, one white and one red, which, though they slept by day, by night so fought and struggled that the foundations of the tower were shaken down as fast as they were laid.

It was he who, by his magic power,[5] brought across the sea, from Ireland, the circle of stones which men now call Stonehenge, but which were then named the Giant's Dance, because the giants of old had brought them from Africa. He could make one knight wear the semblance of another ; he could tell what passed in every dwelling, and could fly through the air as swift as thought ; indeed there was nothing he could not work, by means of his wisdom and strange powers of dealing with elves and fairies.

However, he intended only kindness to the good farmer Owen and his housewife, and yet full oft it may be that what is eagerly wished, and compassed by doubtful means, may bring less joy than pain.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE WIZARD MERLIN VISITED MAB, THE QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES.

EARLY in the morning, even before dawn, Merlin was abroad, seeking in the meadows for the green cross, and for the golden rod. It is hard to find that golden rod, but he who treads it under foot, becomes able to understand the language of dogs, of wolves, and of all birds, from the chattering daw to the lordly eagle.[6] To these Merlin added a branch of mistletoe from an oak tree that grew near the fountain, and then he said some mystic words.

Presently he was in the fairies' palace, half way to the moon.[7] A wonderful place it is, resting in the air, supported on gossamer lines. The walls are made of spiders' legs, neatly wattled together, the roof covered with the leathery wings of bats, and the windows of the eyes of cats, beautiful to behold, some like emeralds, some purple, and, at night, beaming with their own flashing brightness. For well we know that fairies are not wont to tarry at home at night. Then they only need the glow-

worms' green lamps on the mossy banks to light them, and their glowing windows guide them home as the cock crows.[8]

King Oberon[9] and Queen Mab[10] abide here, with their tricksy knave, Puck, and the rest of their pigmy court. There had been a grand dance the night before, and all were resting after it: the sentry at the gate was nodding his head beneath his helmet stripped from the skull-cap seeds, and leaning on his lance, tipped with the sting of a bee, and loudly had he to blow on his gnat's horn before the Queen's pages awoke, and led Merlin into her withdrawing-room, all tapestried over with scarlet poppy-leaves by the clever bee, and softly spread with hawkweed down.

There Mab reposed on her couch, while two little maids of honour fanned her with a fan made from the plumes of peacock butterflies.

As Merlin put one knee to the ground, and kissed her elfin hand, she smiled graciously as she stroked the cheek of the great clumsy enchanter, as she called him, and inquired whether he supposed he was bringing her any news from Caerleon, for she needed none; she could even tell him what were Queen Guenever's dreams last night, how that fair dame dreamt of dragging after her an endless, endless train of purple velvet, that wound itself round and about the palace, wherever she went. "Velvet too," said Mab, "a rough rude garment, where my poor little elves lose their way, and are stifled to very sneezing. Ungainly monsters are you mortals at the best!"

"So, please your elfin grace," quoth Merlin, "I came hither to consult you whether a mortal might be born of stature like the elves."

Merlin thereupon related the story of Owen and his wife, and their desire to have a child were he no bigger than a thumb.

Mab was a merry Queen, and her sports on earth were generally kindly.[11] To be sure, she did sometimes dance over the cream till it turned sour, or cause the junkets to disappear, but that was only where the dairy was not clean and cool; and if here and there a maid were pinched or nipped, it was when the hearth was ill swept, and the grey ashes flew about the room; but if the house were clean and well ordered, there might a tester now and then be found lying in a shoe.[12]

Some folk complained of Queen Mab coming in at the key-hole, and making them dream unquietly;[13] but the truth is, that these have laid them down to rest without repenting them of their sins, or it may be, that they have been over-feasting at supper. Such as these Mab cannot endure, and she always pulls and pinches them hard, or sits on their chests till they cannot breathe, and call her a nightmare. But to thrifty, honest, sober folk, who go to rest after having duly said their prayers, Mab sends her elves to fan them into sound, sweet slumbers, and paint and freshen their cheeks with healthy red.

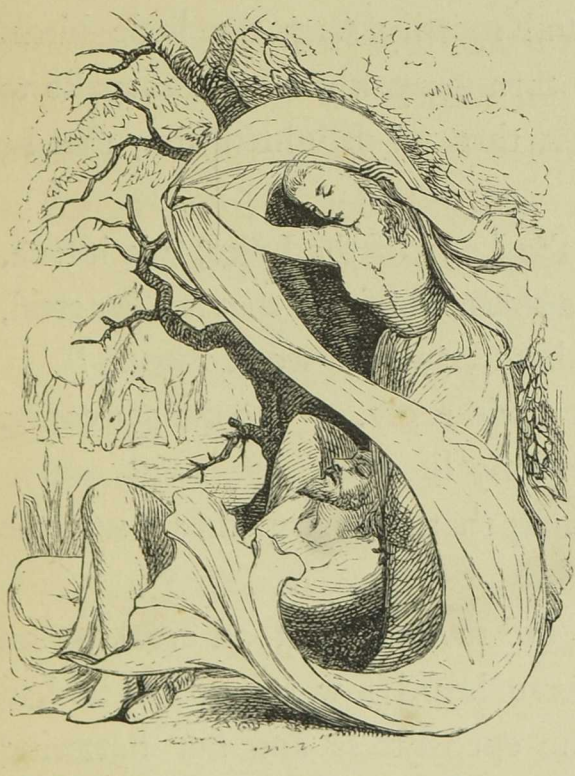
Owen's wife was well known to her, and the farm by the forest side had always been a favoured haunt of the good fairies, who hung the freshest dewdrops on its cowslips,[14] and drove away

the blighting palmer-worms on their cobweb ropes, and caught the winged seeds of groundsel and thistle, and wafted them back to cumber the fields of the more sluggish neighbours. Many a little turn was done about the house at night by the elves of Mab's following, who always found the hearth well swept, and the polished oak-table so smooth, that they could skate on it without fear of being overthrown in ravines scraped by rude nails, or drenched in pools of spilt ale. Every elf and every fay bore good-will to the honest farmer and his wife, and would fain see their wishes granted.

Perchance Merlin intended further to watch over the household by the forest, but he was hindered by the disaster that soon befell him, in spite of all his learned lore; for, verily, all wisdom that comes not from above, or is not hallowed from thence, is but folly, and worketh woe to the owner thereof.

CHAPTER III.

HOW MERLIN WAS OUTWITTED BY THE LADY VIVIANA.



O the Wizard Merlin bade farewell to Queen Mab and her fairy court, and proceeded to Brittany, there to woo the beauteous Viviana, Lady of the Lake.[15]

For though Merlin was so sage an enchanter, and so high in the councils of King Arthur, there was one thing he could not do, and that was to win the love of the Lady Viviana. In vain did he offer every gift that damsel could desire, in vain did he cause the skipping fawn, the gorgeous peacock, the gentle dove, and every rare or beauteous creature, to present themselves

as her playthings and companions, in vain did he send sweet minstrelsy to sound in her ears as she lay down to sleep. She recked not of his gifts, she hearkened not to his words, she only sought to free herself from him, for she too was an enchantress, though so much less mighty than he, that she feared that no spell of hers might prevail against those of her wizard lover.

She treated him then as if she had become more favourable to his suit. She accepted his gifts, she praised his spirit music, and when he asked of her to ride through the forest of Broceliande, she willingly consented. The day was fair, the sun shone cheerily through the boughs, and merrily sang the little birds. The Lady smiled and did not turn away when Merlin spake to her, but replied with soft words that so delighted him, that he scarcely knew what he said.

"And, prithee," thus asked the Lady of the Lake, "is it true, as men say, that thou dost bear a charmed life, so that neither steel, nor cord, nor drugged potion, hath power to work thee ill?"

"Even so, fair one," Merlin made reply. "No danger comes near me. Age itself cannot end my life."

"Then, verily, there is nothing that can harm thee," said the wily damsel.

If Merlin had hearkened to the raven that stood croaking on the thorn hard by, he might have heard a warning, but he had yielded all his senses up to the enchantress and her flattering speech, and his skill was of no avail. Smiling, he told her that one spell alone could bind his power.

"And what is that?" quoth Viviana. "May it never come nigh thee!"

"When a maiden's veil shall be nine times waved over me, and she shall nine times pace around me, repeating certain words, I shall be bound to the spot where I shall then be for evermore."

"The words must be strange if they have so mighty a force. I pray you let me hear them."

Merlin rehearsed the words so as to satisfy her, and she thanked him, and put more questions and yet more, respecting his magic.

By and by they came to a mossy bank, shaded by a hawthorn, its branches loaded with blossom like snow, close beside a clear spring of fresh water, glancing where the sunbeams peeped through the branches, and tipped its ripples with light.

Viviana declared that she was weary with riding, and Merlin lifted her down from the saddle, and seated her on the soft cushion of moss beneath the thorn. There she began to sing in a voice passing sweet, and as the melody went on, mingling with the notes of the thrushes and blackbirds, with the rippling of the stream, and the hum of the bees and gnats in the sunshine, a drowsiness fell upon Merlin, and he stretched himself on the bank to enjoy the gentle sounds, that lulled him more and more, until he fell into a sound slumber.

Viviana arose from the ground. Nine times she waved her veil, nine times she paced around the sleeping wizard, nine times she spoke the magic words. The spell was finished; she mounted her palfrey, and rode away to seek her own lake, and

plunge beneath its waters to the castle where she was sovereign lady.

Merlin remained a captive beneath the hawthorn.[16] His life was charmed and he could not die; but little did this avail him, and there he remained fixed without release, betrayed by his own weak yielding to the faithless damsel, whom he had taught to work his own woe. His body pined and dwindled till it disappeared, and nothing was left but his voice and his cunning skill, so useless to himself. But there these still abide, and when any man or woman desires an answer to some deep and strange question, let him seek the charmed well in the wood of Broceliande, and ask it boldly, hearkening in the woodland echoes for the voice of the Wizard Merlin.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW TOM THUMB WAS BORN.

THERE was much wonder and some joy. A son was born in the cottage by the wood side, but had ever man such a son? He was no larger than the green lip of the twayblade blossom, and though perfect in all his limbs, it was not possible to feel that a thing so light and soft rested on the hand; and his mother, as she laid him gently on the thistle-down with which she had filled an acorn cup, knew not whether she were glad or grieved that she had the wish fulfilled which she had spoken. Owen gently sighed, and thereby almost blew his son away; and his old aunt loudly spoke her mind, "See what comes of discontent!" said she. "See what you get by dealing with strangers, and saying any folly that crosses your brain! You are a mark for the country. You have an Elf child now! But I will be rid of the little wretch."

The mother gathered the acorn cradle within both her hands, and looked earnestly at her husband, and Owen said, "Nay, I

feel something that will not let me do any hurt to the poor little thing."

"Pooh!" said the old aunt, "I will soon show you what he is! Let me heat the poker in the fire, and I will put him to flight! Else you may bear the name of a harbourer of witches."[17]

"Here is the priest coming," said Owen.

"And see what he will say to your doings!" said the aunt, going to open the door; and as the good father entered, it was she that took the first word, and told how Owen and his wife had murmured for a child, and the unknown wizard stranger had come to them, and, without doubt, sent them this elvish imp in mockery. A fit punishment for them, she said; and she trusted the good father would back her in ridding them of the little wretch.

"Let me see him," said the priest; and so gently did he speak, that the mother scarcely feared to trust the acorn cup in his hand. He put on his spectacles, and gravely looked through them at the little infant. No mis-shapen limbs, no contorted features were there, but all was sweet and beautiful, the bright eyes like blue speedwell buds, and the delicate little frame fresh and fair as the young blossom on the sweet-briar bough. Long the good priest looked, so lovely was the sight, and then he signed the blessed rood* in the air. The aunt watched to see the babe twist and turn as though tortured, and Owen and the housewife almost feared to look; but no, the little creature lay

* Ever the test of witchery.

placid and still, and the priest thought he marked a smile on his face. Doubting no more, he blessed him, and hallowed him as a Christian; and the child still lay as though glad and peaceful, and his mother's heart leapt up, for she hoped that she might love him without fear.

"Ha!" sneered the old aunt, "Robin Goodfellow was christened, man; and did that save him from becoming the spiteful Hob-goblin?"[18]

"Even so," the priest made answer, "he followed unchecked the longings and promptings of his elvish nature, till he sported away the hallowing grace, and became an elf outright."

"And will it be thus with our babe?" asked Owen.

"Surely that depends on yourselves and on him," answered the old man. "To overcome the Imp and to draw forth the Christian, is the task of his life."

"Nor need we look on him as sent for our misdeed," said the mother, wistfully, as she fondled him more freely.

"The wish was not a sinful one," said the priest, "though you may have been over much set on it; and since it hath been granted, your aim must be that it may work good and not harm."

So the priest departed, and Owen and his wife rejoiced, though with fear as well as joy.

Much did the good housewife marvel how to clothe her tiny boy. Truly, for the first few days he grew fast, soon exchanged his acorn cup for a walnut shell, and outgrowing that again, had to sleep in the warm nest of the long-tailed titmouse, which

his father found in the thorn bush by the yard gate. But there his growth stopped, and though he could trot and run as fast as the nimble lady-bird, he never became higher than his father's thumb ; and as cold weather came on, his mother so feared that the frost would pinch him to death, that she never let him out of his bed till evening, when what freaks he would play ! climbing up his father from toe to head, where he sat peeping, as out of a forest, from the good farmer's thick black hair, or scrambling on the handle of his mug of ale, and laughing to see the bubbles rise and float.

Noble ladies, as well as country folks, came to see the wonderful child peep out of the round opening of his nest and make his bow, so that Owen used to call him his little Tom Tit, and by and by every one knew him as Tom Thumb. The grand ladies brought gifts of silver posset cups, scarlet mantles, and furred kirtles to his mother, and they would have given choice robes for the babe, but none could he wear ; his arms and legs went through the meshes of their finest lace, and their warm cloth stifled him, so that it was as if he had been dressed in fishing nets and door mats. Yet he longed to see the world, and would cry to be allowed one run out of doors, were it only along the window sill.

One evening, at sunset, his mother was trying to comfort him by promising to carry him in his nest round the farm-yard as soon as the frost was gone, when something even less than Tom Thumb himself was seen on the top of the nest.[19]

It was a chariot made of a hazel nut, covered in with grasshoppers' wings, and drawn by half a dozen midges, which were checked by a pull at the cobweb reins given by a grey-coated gnat, who sat on the coach-box. Within was seated a lady, richly robed in the royal purple of the pansy-flower, and with a sparkling crown of green and red light upon her head, while there followed a train of little elves and fays, in their rough-weather garments of bats' fur, with fairy-caps on their heads.[20]

Sorely frightened was the good housewife, for she knew it was no other than Mab herself, the Queen of the Fairies, and she feared that she could have come for no purpose but to steal away her precious boy. She caught him in her hand, and, crossing herself, fell down on her knees.

Queen Mab smiled graciously and nodded her head. "Fear not, good dame," she said; "your son is safe with you now, though we may yet claim him as one of us. Know that he is a special favourite with the fairies, and I am come to provide him with raiment, since you rude mortals know not how to make your fingers serve for fairy needs. Elves, produce my gifts!"[21]

Half a dozen elves flew forward, bearing between them such an urn as that wherein the poppy seed is nursed, and from it they drew a suit of clothes made by the workmen of the fairies. The shirt was spun by the gossamer spider, the doublet was woven of the down of the thistle, the hose were of apple rind; and while the mother was admiring them, she felt a prick

in each eye, and raised her hand to chase away the gnat, as she thought, but she heard, "Ha! ha! ho! ho!" in her ear, and before her flashed Puck. "Ho! ho! mistress, you took me for a midge! It was in your son's service. We forgot his garters, and I was providing him."

The housewife found that the elf had drawn out two of her eyelashes, and that the other fairies were tying up Tom's hose with them. They also gave him a pair of mouse-skin shoes, the hair turned inwards, a pair of slippers from the columbine flower, for his evening wear, and an oak-leaf hat.

When the fairies had finished robing him, they stood back that the Queen might see him, and Tom, doffing his hat, made so courtly a bow that Mab was highly pleased, and said that he should yet be her page.

"O your grace, your grace!" began the dame; but at that moment Owen's hand was on the latch, there was a gust of wind, and her sight and breath passed from her for a moment. When she looked up, all the fairies were gone!

She dreaded lest Tom was gone too, but something pinched her ear, and laughed. "Ho, ho! mother!" and Tom leaped down on the table, and tumbled head over heels.

She was a blithe woman to see him safe; she had feared that she was punished by losing him, for having once hearkened to the fairies and taken their gifts; and Mab's words had given her great disquiet for what was to come, lest the wearing fairy garments should bind him to fairy service. Eager as Tom was to show

himself in them, neither Owen nor his mother would consent to his doing so, till they knew from the priest that it might be lawfully and safely done. And as the little robes endured the holy sign, and neither shrank nor shrivelled when brought near the church, the holy man pronounced that they would bring no ill, and establish no claim upon Tom, provided they were worn on no evil errands.

Truly, nothing could look more fair than he did when thus clad. He had reached his full height, that of a thumb, and was well made in all his limbs, slender and straight as a grass stalk, while his tiny hands and fingers were slight and fair as the little feet of a dormouse. His cheeks were bright, and his hair, which he brushed daily with the foot of a fly, was in glossy curls of gold; and when he had washed his face in the morning's dew in a lily cup, or bathed in the scarlet lined fairy-bath, his mother might well say, he was the prettiest and sprucest lad in all the country-side.

CHAPTER V.

HOW TOM THUMB BECAME FROLICSOME AND TRICKSY.

WHEN Tom Thumb was thus arrayed he began to go forth for his pleasure, though his mother still had her fears, and when he went with her a milking, she tied him to a thistle with a piece of flax that he might not be blown away.[22]

Unluckily one of the cows, not knowing his oak-leaf hat from the green herbs around, swept him, thistle and all, into her mouth, where he had much ado to skip about so as to keep himself from being swallowed at once, calling loudly all the time, "Mother, mother!"

"Where are you, my darling?" cried she.

"Here, mother, in the red cow's mouth," he answered in a lamentable voice; whereupon his mother began to weep and bemoan herself, and the cow was so frightened at the outcry, that she let her strange mouthful fall on the grass, where his mother caught him up and safely carried him home.

Anon he fell into company with the other boys of the village, who at first thought it a mere joke that the little fellow should join their sports, but soon found him so quick and adroit as to be fairly a match for them. In those days, cherry stones served the country lads for marbles, and Tom much delighted in such games; but he was wont to play too shrewdly, for when he had lost his own stock of stones, he would creep into the other boys' bags and steal theirs; when, crawling forth again, he would offer to play another match, highly pleased with his own sharpness.

The poor boys were much vexed at the strange loss of their cherry stones, but their grief only diverted the young rogue,

until one, cleverer than the rest, marking him narrowly, espied him coming forth between the folds, a stone under each arm.[23]

"I've caught you!" he cried; "I have you at your tricks! I'll teach you to be a thief!" and before Tom could escape, he drew the strings of the bag so as to catch him round the neck, and then soundly shook the bag, so that all the stones came bumping against the poor little culprit, and bruised him sadly. He cried aloud for mercy; and the boy, who only sought to give him a lesson, released him on his promising never to do the like again. Much hurt, Tom hobbled home, but the pain did not vex him half so much as that, at sunset, he heard a voice laughing in his ear, "Ho! ho! ho! Tom Thumb thought himself another Puck!"

He came home, crying bitterly, and could not hide what had befallen him. His mother pitied him, but his father was greatly displeased, and took him to task for his thievery, so gravely, that Tom cried with sorrow, as well as with pain and shame.

"If once you learn to follow elvish tricks, and to seek after the spiteful Puck, you will be lost to us for ever," said his father, and Tom made many promises.

He was unwilling to play again with the village lads, lest they should remember his disgrace, and he stayed at home, and behaved very well for some days, except that now and then he would steal to the window at night, to look out and wonder what the fairies were doing. The more his mother dreaded

them, the more he had a strange longing after their revels and their tricks.

One day, his old aunt came to visit his mother. There was little love between her and Tom; she still called him a changeling, and disliked the very sight of him, and he never longed so much to play a sly turn to any one, as to that old woman.

His mother began to stir something in a bowl, and bade him sit still in an egg-shell, and peel off the inner skin to serve for sheets for his bed; but Tom suspected that this was only to keep him out of mischief, and became more restless and anxious to do some strange feat.

It came over him how he had heard that Puck would leap into a bowl of ale, in the likeness of a roasted crab apple, and full in the midst of the talk around the fire,[24] would bob against the lips of an old woman, and spill all her hoped for draught of good ale. He did not know that for this, even Puck had no power, unless she were backbiting her neighbours; fairies have no might to injure such as speak nothing but kindliness. And more and more did the fancy creep on him, of startling the grave old puckered face that was bent over the fire, and seeing how it would look when the ale was spilt on the stiff white muffler.

At last, he gave himself up to the desire, and while his mother's back was turned, he contrived to climb up to the edge of the bowl. But, behold! it was too slippery for him to keep his foothold, and down he plunged, not as he thought

into a sea of good stout ale, where he might swim and dive, but into a mere swamp of batter. Over head and ears he fell; the mixture filled his mouth and eyes, and he could not even scream, as down he sank to the bottom. The pot on the fire boiled over, his mother took up the bowl, poured out the batter, and set it over the fire. There was poor Tom in miserable plight, and he began to kick and plunge with all his might, making a marvellous whirling in the caldron.

Up sprang the aunt. "The pudding is bewitched!" she cried. "That is what it is to breed up a changeling imp!" and she seized hold of the pot, and ran outside the door with it. She would have thrown it into the running stream, but espying a tinker coming along the road, "Here, good man," said she, "here is an alms for you."

The tinker wondered, but the offer was too good to be refused; so he opened his wallet, she popped in the pudding, and as he trudged on, she laughed,[25] wished him good speed; and as she cast her eye round the kitchen, and saw no Tom, it may be that she had a shrewd notion that she had freed the house of the little elf.

Poor Tom! he had been caught in his own snare, and dreadfully frightened at finding himself being borne away from his own home, he knew not whither. He contrived at last to get to the side of the bag, where he could breathe a little air, and opening his mouth, he roared with his utmost strength. The tinker, who knew that honest puddings were not so freely given

away, suspected something amiss, and hearing these strange outcries, hastily laid hold of the pudding and threw it into the hedge, while he ran away at full speed.

Tom crept out in woful condition, and climbed up a ragged-robin to look for the way home, but as if from the flower itself came a voice and laugh, "Ho! ho! ha! ha! He fancied he was Robin Goodfellow himself!"

There was no use in hoping that Puck would help him in his need; so he set out, plucking up his courage as best he might, and, late at night, he found his way back to the cottage by the forest; but he was so weak and spent that he had no strength to climb the door-step, and there he lay in the dark, sobbing and vowing that he would never play elvish pranks again, and shutting his eyes lest he should see ghostly shapes.

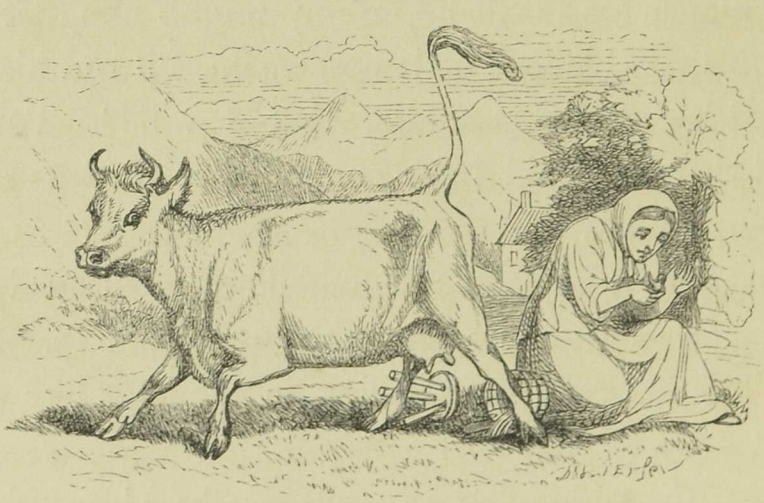
He heard his poor mother weeping, and his aunt scolding her, "Ay, and a happy riddance! Nothing but a changeling! Fie on you to mourn for a little hop-o'-my-thumb like that! If ever he shews his mischievous little nose again, I'll run him through with a red-hot knitting-needle, that I will!" Tom was so frightened that he would have run off, but his legs failed him, and he swooned away.

"He is gone like Robin Goodfellow," continued the aunt, "the instant you give him any wholesome chiding. So now I hope you like having a son dancing in the bogs like a Will-of-the-wisp."

Just then, the whinnying of a colt was heard outside, and the

old dame fancying her market-colt had got loose, started up in haste, and Owen opened the door.[26] One of Mab's fairies had placed a glow-worm close to Tom, and Owen saw his poor little boy, so pale in the green light that he feared he was dead. He picked him up, and brought him to his mother, and at the first sigh he gave, she was overjoyed; but as to the aunt, she had gone in pursuit of the horse that had strayed, as she thought, and presently she saw a light before her, which led her through brake and bramble, mire and wood, till in the morning she was found quite spent under the hedge, in the very place whence she started.

Tom, who was by this time very sorry for his misdeed, humbly asked her pardon; but she vowed it was all his fault, and that she would never enter Owen's house again while he remained there.



CHAPTER VI.

HOW TOM THUMB WENT TO SEEK HIS ADVENTURES.

Tom Thumb was the wiser for his mishaps, and began to see that though the elves might make all seem winning and full of pleasance for a time, they would only lead him into trouble when he followed their freaks, and could give him no real help in distress, even if they would, and far more often would only make a mock of him.

He thus became steady and trustworthy, and was very useful to his mother, running errands for her as fast as a fairy, and helping her as much as his little strength allowed, so that she was wont to call him the comfort of her life. He used even to drive the cattle to the field with a whip of barley-straw; and one day when Owen was going to fell wood in the forest, and began to wish he had a man to bring the cart after him, "O father," said Tom, "I will bring the cart, if my mother will only harness the horse."

"A fine carter! How is he to hold the bridle?" said Owen, laughing.

"Never you fear, father; I will sit in the horse's ear and tell him which way to go."

Owen consented, and his mother, not without her misgivings, put the horse into the shafts, when the sun had come to his full height, and little Tom climbed up into the broad ear, which made him as fine a shady bower as the cuckoo-pint's sheath, where he often sat in the heat of the day.

On went the cart straight for the forest, and as the horse was somewhat over quick on meeting with two travellers on the way, Tom called out "Steady, steady!"

"What means this?" said one of the travellers to the other. "Here comes a cart, and the driver is heard calling to the horse, but never a carter is to be seen."

"You dull oaf!" replied the other, "it is but a strayed horse that has gone on for want of some one to hold him. I will soon stop him."

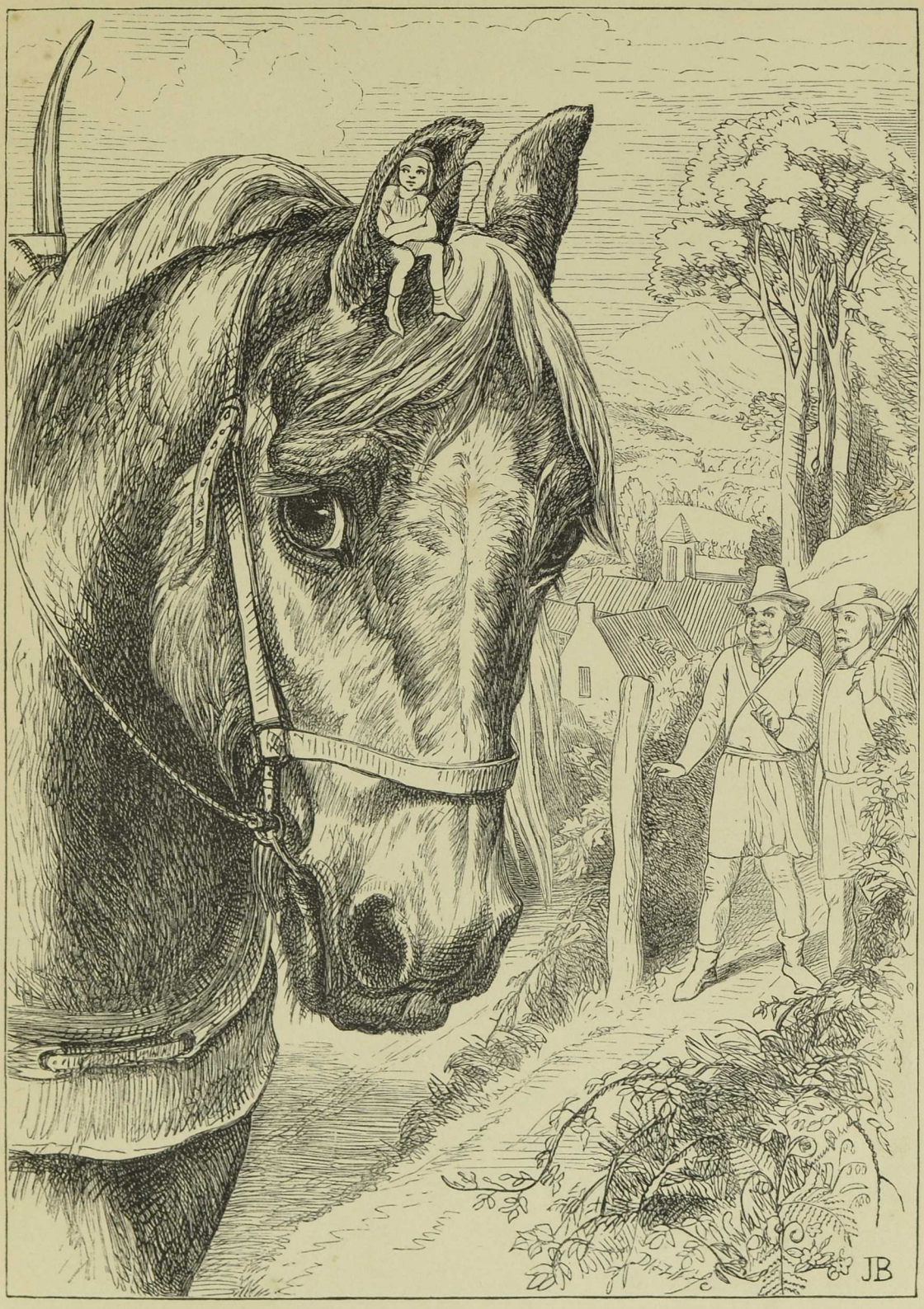
Just then Tom called out "Yeo ho!" and the good old horse hastened his pace, so that the men could not come up with him.

"There is some wonder in this," said the traveller. "Let us follow and see where the horse stops."

The horse and cart went deep into the forest where Owen was cutting wood.

"Here I am, father," cried Tom; "take me down."

"Well done, my brave lad!" said Owen, laying hold of the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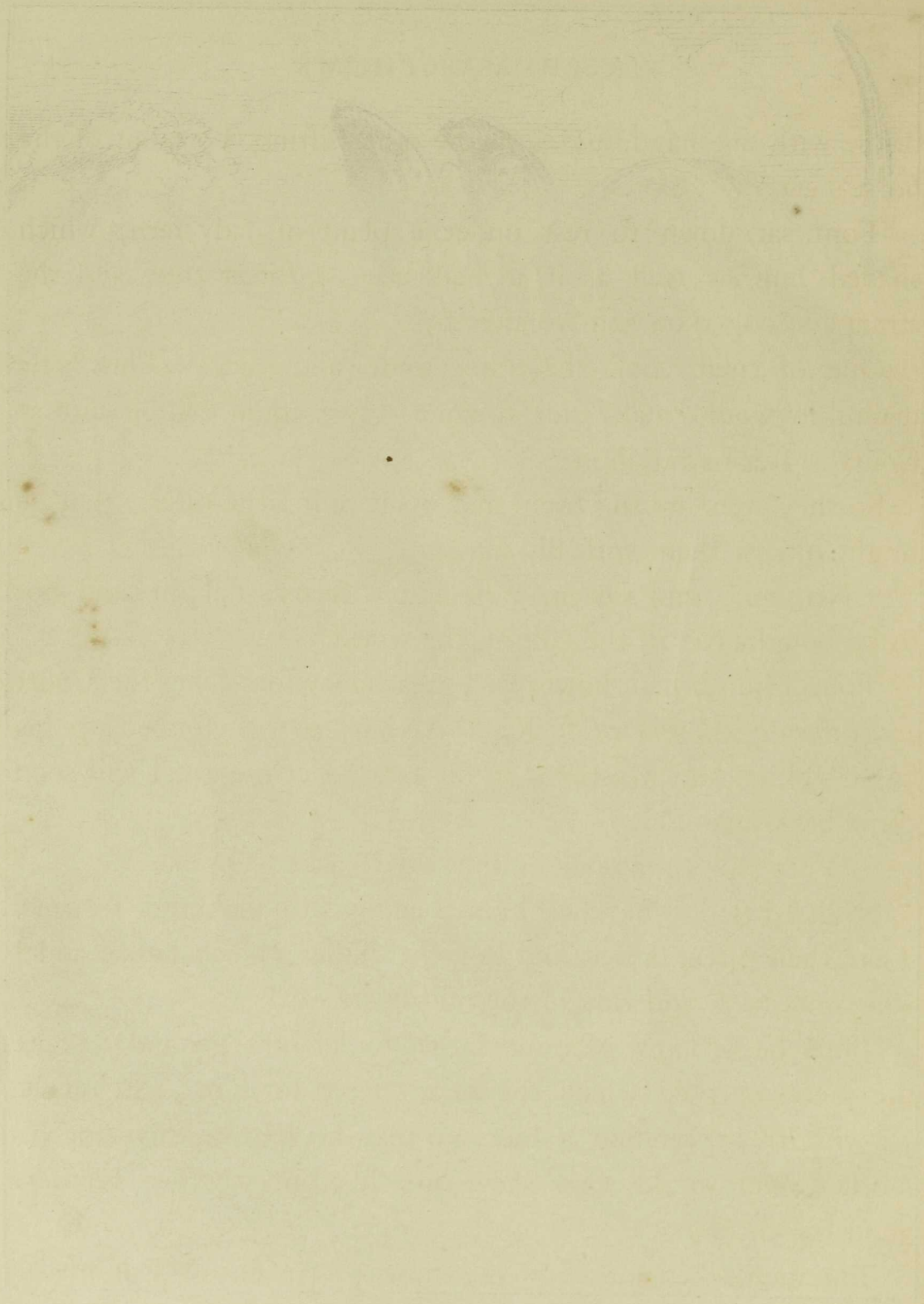


bridle with one hand, and with the other lifting Tom out of the horse's ear.

Tom sat down to rest under a plant of lady-fern, which shaded him as well as if it had been a forest tree, and the strangers looked on and wondered.

One of them took the other aside, and said, "This little mannikin would make our fortune if we could exhibit him at Court. Let us buy him."

So they went up to Owen, and made him large offers, that he might intrust them with his son.

"No, no," said Owen, "he is my heart's delight, and not to be bought for all the coin in the world."

Tom Thumb had, however, a great fancy for seeing the Court and offering his service to King Arthur, so he climbed up his father's skirt, and whispered in his ear, "Let me go, I will soon come back again."

"What will your poor mother say?" asked Owen.

"Oh! I will bring her money enough to make her fortune. Take their offer, father, and buy the miller's black horse, and I will come back and ride to the mill in its ear."

Thus he wrought with his father to let him go and to take the pieces of gold which the men offered for him. So off he set with them, sending a message that he left his love for his mother, and would soon shew his old aunt whether he were good for anything.

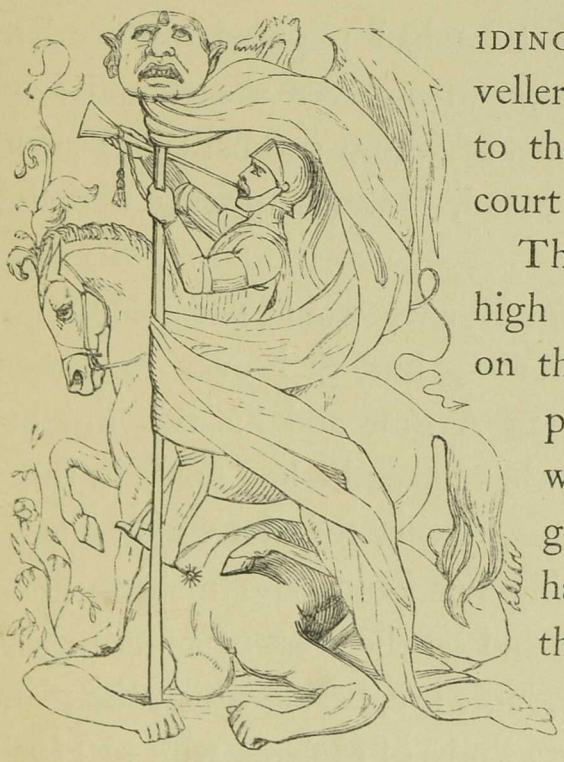
The men asked him how he chose to travel. "Put me on

the brim of your hat," he said, "there I can walk round and survey the country."[27]

Thus was Tom Thumb carried beyond the borders of his own forest; but what Owen said to his mother, or whether she were comforted by the purchase of the miller's black horse, I cannot tell.

CHAPTER VII.

OF TOM THUMB'S FIRST APPEARING BEFORE THE GOOD KING ARTHUR.



IDING on the hat of one of the travellers, Tom Thumb came at length to the famous city of Caerleon, the court of great King Arthur.[28]

There stood King Arthur's Castle high above the town, and knights on their steeds, and ladies on their palfreys were pricking thitherward from all parts, for it was a great day of joy.[29] King Arthur had newly returned from slaying the wicked giant Ryence, of North Wales, who had made himself a mantle, furred with nothing less than the beards of eleven kings, but the twelfth only was lacking, therefore he had sent to demand the beard of good King Arthur.[30]

"My beard is full young to make a purfle," quoth the good King Arthur; "we will see which will prove the best barber!"

Moreover, this deadly giant lived on the flesh of little children, and such numbers had he devoured, that scarce one babe was left in North Wales. King Arthur, therefore, with the good knights, Sir Kaye and Sir Bedivere, set forth to seek him out and slay him. Well armed was Arthur; he had his helmet with the dragon crest, his shield Pridwen, his lance Ron, and his good sword Excalibar,[31] that he had plighted his word to restore to the Lady of the Lake, whensoever she should send to ask it of him, and the virtue of whose scabbard was such, that he who wore it, lost no blood, however griesly were his wounds.

For all his boasting, the Giant Ryence would not abide King Arthur's coming, in North Wales, but fled over to Lesser Britain, and thither crossed King Arthur and his two knights seeking him, and ever hearing what havoc he had made in those parts. At length, nigh to the sea, Arthur found a widow sitting by a grave new made, wringing her hands and making great moan. She bade him look up, and on the crest of a high rock, nigh unto the land, he beheld a huge fire, beside which the giant sat at supper, gnawing the dainty limbs of Helena, wife to Hoel, Duke of that country, while three damsels were turning broaches before the fire, where were roasting twelve little children, spitted like young birds.

When King Arthur beheld that piteous sight, he had great compassion, and hailed the giant, saying, "Mayest thou have short life and shameful death! Why hast thou slain this Duchess and these little children?"

The Giant made at the King with his club; but the King had his good sword Excalibar, and after a sore fight, wherein they wrestled and grappled together, Ryence was smitten down close to the water's edge, and slain. Hard by was his den, full of treasure of gold, silver, and precious stones; but Arthur would have none of it, only his club and the mantle purfled of king's beards, whereof one only was lacking. The treasure he gave unto Sir Kaye and Sir Bedivere, and the head of the Giant he sent to Duke Hoel, counselling him to build a church on the rock; and this being done, it was thenceforth called Mount St. Michael.

So now, King Arthur being returned home after his exploit, high feasts and rejoicings were held, and the hall was full of banqueting. Sir Kaye,[32] that was grand sewer, clothed in ermine, carved the meats; and Sir Bedivere, the butler, served the wine, while Arthur and the rest of the knights sat at the Round Table, where one was no higher than the other, since all were equal in deeds of daring.[33] It was a goodly sight to see, since each noble knight wore his arms and dress of the same fashion.

There was Sir Lancelot du Lac, so called because Viviana, the Lady of the Lake, stole him when an infant from his father

and mother, and brought him up in her bower beneath the water. There was his brother, Sir Hector de Maris; there was Sir Tristrem of Lyonesse, the most deft knight of all at the chase; there was Sir Cradocke, Sir Bors, Sir Percival, Sir Gawain, Sir Guy,[34] and many more than I can tell; and there, too, was the Siege Perilous, where none might seat himself till he should come, who should achieve the perilous adventure.

Here, then, into the midst of the hall, did the travellers enter with Tom Thumb, and began to regale themselves with the scraps of broken meat that were thrown to the beggars at the door. They did not see that Tom slid softly away from them, and, by and by, when King Arthur would have taken some salt, he was aware of a little mannikin, in a white coat and green hose, lifting up a load thereof, and laying it on his royal trencher with a low bow.

"How now?" cried good King Arthur, "do we see elves by the noon-day sun?"

"No, please your grace," Tom Thumb made answer, nothing daunted; "I am the son of Owen the farmer, your grace's loyal subject."

Thereupon he told his whole story, and the King, having well rewarded the travellers with the gift of a golden cup, asked Tom Thumb if he would tarry with him and be his page.

To this Tom answered that he came with the very wish to offer his poor service to his King, but that he prayed first to return home, to take leave of his parents. To this the good

King freely consented, but he desired first to shew the little man to Queen Guenever and her ladies, who feasted apart; and Tom had the honour of riding to her chamber upon the King's own royal finger, the very finger that had grappled with the Giant Ryence.[35]

Queen Guenever was delighted, and dandled and smoothed Tom as though he had been a lap-dog. She said he should be her darling page, and that she would cause a house of ivory fitted up with gold to be made for him, if he would stay at once with her; but Tom thought of his mother, and begged and prayed hard to be allowed to go home.

So the King took him into the treasury, and bade him choose anything he could carry, to take home to his parents. Tom made choice of a silver threepenny piece, put it into his wallet, which he had stitched together of the honey-bags of the wild mountain bees, and laying it on his shoulders, set forth on his journey.[36]

It was heavy toil to drag home such a burthen; he was three days on the road, and had to rest at least five hundred times; but he kept up a good heart, for he was going home, and he knew a servant of King Arthur must not fail in patience, and thus he came at last to his own cottage door.

"Mother!" he weakly said; but feeble as his voice was, his mother heard it, and snatched him up, asking how he could ever have gone away from her.

He was so faint and exhausted that he could hardly speak,

but she placed him comfortably in his nest by the fire, and by and by, he was able to eat. He found himself so hungry that he devoured a whole hazel-nut in three days, whereas it ought to have lasted him a whole month, and thus he became so ill that he could not leave the fireside, although he was very anxious to begin his service; and his father told him that if he gave himself to the like excess, he could not be a knightly servant of the good King Arthur, since knights must bravely bear hardship, and not seek after fine eating and soft lying.

Indeed, he told him that he would be far less likely to be drawn aside by the elvish fancies that Puck whispered to him, if he were striving hard to do service to the King, than if he were sleeping in the Queen's ivory house, and merely doing frolicsome tricks for her sport; and as Tom listened, he vowed with all the force of his little heart, that if faithfulness could serve instead of strength, he would shew himself a man and not a bauble.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW TOM THUMB WAS PUT IN PRISON.

BEING fully recovered, Tom deemed it time to return to the Court to undertake his duties, but there had been so heavy a fall of rain, that though he proposed to carry a walnut-shell for a boat, and cross the pools of water with a pease-blossom for a sail, and grass stalks for oars, his mother thought the journey over perilous.

However, she was not the woman to hinder him from his service, so she fastened to his coat the wings of a dragon-fly, and blew hard in the direction of Caerleon, so that he safely floated through the air, until he was just above the palace court, when, as ill-luck would have it, a sparrow that had been stealing pease in the garden, took fright at the cook coming out of the kitchen with a bowl of furmity.[37] The thievish bird, fluttering up in haste, clashed against poor Tom, so that he fell down into the bowl. The scalding furmity was splashed over the cook's face, and in rage and terror, he threw down the bowl,

and seized upon Tom, who was writhing with the pain of the hot bath he had taken. He listened to none of his cries and entreaties, but bore him into the hall, declaring that he had detected a trick of the treacherous Saxons, who had sent this little imp to put wasp-stings into the furmity, and so to poison the good King Arthur, whom they could not overcome in fair fight.

King Arthur was at that moment busied in listening to an embassy from Lucius the Emperor, and could not hear the cook's cause. In vain did poor Tom plead, "I am the King's page; I am the son of a true man. Only send to Owen's cottage by the forest." His enemy would but laugh him to scorn, and at last placed him in prison in a mouse-trap.

There lay poor Tom, sad and lonely, thinking how unlike was this to the manner in which he had thought to appear before the King, and wondering whether it were that his gluttony had made him unworthy to appear as a true and loyal servant. By and by, it grew dark, and as night came on, he still lay forgotten there. Presently a voice was heard, "Tom! Tom Thumb, I say," and a droll, freakish face peeped in at him through the wires. "Come with me, Tom, I will slip you out through the bars, and you shall mount behind me on a barley-straw, and we will ride races up and down the chest of the burly cook! Ho! ho! ha! ha!"

But Tom retreated up to the farthest corner of his cage.

"No! no," said he, "I know you! I will have nothing to do with your pranks."

"Ho! ho!" laughed Puck. "We are the king's page, are we? Fine preferment, to be the sport of each idle knight and dame! What shall you get by it?"

"I shall do my duty," quoth Tom, manfully; but Robin Goodfellow's mocking laugh was the louder. "Little thanks will you gain, little credit! The little mannikin will be their game. Better make game of them!"

Tom began to think so, but he crouched together, and thought of certain words his mother had taught him to strengthen him against elvish sprites.

"What have you gained yet?" continued Puck. "The paltry threepenny? I'll give you hoards of fairy gold! And for toiling home half a mile in three days, I'll teach you to circle the earth in forty minutes.[38] A silver threepenny! Fine gains, forsooth."

"I gained my mother's welcome," said Tom, half crying. Puck answered with a sneering "Ho! ho!" but there was a sound like a shriek in it. Had he not fled from his mother? The sound died off, and Tom was left alone, sobbing and trembling in his corner, but still feeling that he would not part with his human heart for all Puck's powers.

Presently two glaring green lights shone on him, they came nearer and nearer, and a cat crept up to the trap, and began to thrust her claw through the bars to reach the poor captive.

Tom started to the other side, but she was before him; and above, Puck shouted, "She will have you! Now, shall I aid you?

Come with me,
Come with me,
And be free."

"Never in your freedom!" cried Tom.

"Ah! ah! we shall have you yet," cried Puck. "At him, Grey Malkin!—at him!" and every time poor Tom had to dart from one side to the other of his prison to avoid the cat's paws, he heard the same mocking shout of derision.

Quite spent, he was almost ready to give up, and fall into the clutches of the cat, when the sound of the first cock crow rang upon his ears, and with a parting "Ho! ho! ho!" Hobgoblin flew away to fairy land, while a mouse, running across the kitchen, caused the cat to forsake Tom for other prey.

He fell asleep from very weariness, and when he awoke, the sun was high up in the sky. He found that the cat had been his friend after all, for her paw had widened the space between the bars, so that he could creep through them, and thus he found his way into the garden.

Soon, however, he heard the voice of the cook saying, "The fairies have spirited away yonder little imp by night, but if ever I catch him,"—

Without more ado, Tom hid himself in an empty snail-shell that chanced to be near, and waited there till all was quiet, when

looking out, he saw a butterfly sunning herself on a piece of lady-grass. Quickly springing on her back, he thought to make her rise into the air, and bear him over the walls, so that he might return home; but the butterfly fluttered hither and thither, up and down, over trees and fields, till the sun began to set, and Tom feared that he should again be the sport of Puck.

Presently the lights were lit in the hall, when no sooner did the butterfly see them, than she flew in by the window, and made straight for the great wax candle, so that Tom thought soon to meet his death by the hot wax; but he threw himself off in time, while the foolish butterfly singed her own wings.

Queen Guenever was playing at chess with the Lady Bien-pensante,[39] wife to the Knight Cotte-Mal-Taillé, when Tom Thumb presented himself in the square of the King's pawn, and made his obeisance.

Guenever was enchanted to see him again, and so were all the ladies. They caused him to repose on a velvet pin-cushion, and made him declare all his adventures, applauding greatly his courage, after which the Queen promised to obtain his pardon from the King, and laid him to rest, for the night, in her ivory casket.

In the morning, Tom found the King and Queen breaking their fast together, and as he stood beside the King's tankard, he told his tale, and the Queen asked grace for him, which the good King readily granted.

"Now," said Queen Guenever, "my dainty page, you shall

never leave me more. You shall sleep on velvet, and eat minikin comfits, and carry my sweetest messages, and hearken when my pages and damsels gossip their secrets together. Will you not, my pretty pet?"

Tom coloured on his little cheeks, like the reddening May blossom. "Methought," he said, "I was to do service to my Lord the King."

"Where is your courtesy, master page?" said the King; "do you not service to me in waiting on my fair Queen?"

"I would fain do manful service," said Tom, drawing himself upright and straight; "I would not live in sloth and be an eavesdropper," he added, as the King and Queen both laughed so heartily, that he remembered how Puck had said scorn would be the reward of his pains, and his face burned till it was scarlet as a lady-bird.

"He is in the right of it," said King Arthur, when he had done laughing; "manfulness lies in the spirit, not the height, and my page he shall be so long as he is ready to do his best."

Thereupon Queen Guenever pouted, but Tom kissed the King's hand, and resolved that betide what might, he would be faithful.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW TOM THUMB RODE A-HUNTING.

THE night after Tom Thumb had been received into office, his former suit of clothes was taken away by unseen hands, and another laid in the place where it had been, such as might better befit a court-page.

The doublet was of butterflies' wings, and the boots of chicken's skin, for you must know that Tom needed boots.[40] It vexed him that, when King Arthur and his knights rode out hunting, or went to seek for deeds of high adventure, he must needs be left at home ; so after bethinking himself, he resolved to purvey himself of a charger. For this end he begged from the good Lady Bienpensante a long thread of her silk for broidery, wherewith he made a coil, and lay softly in wait near a mouse's hole. By and by, forth came the grey mouse-mother with her six long-whiskered sons and daughters, and what doth our brave page, but gallantly throw his noose over the head of the likeliest-looking of the brood, and vaulting on his back, sat

perched on his grey steed. Master mouse did in truth curvet and dash about wildly, but in vain did he seek to unseat his valiant little rider, who, after having let him weary himself with his antics, led him to a chess-castle, which served him for a watch-tower, and fastened him up at the entrance, with a crumb of cheese for provender.

Anon, when the knights held their jousts and games, and curbed their mettled steeds in the Castle court, forth rode Tom Thumb on his mouse, which he had named Sleekfoot; and though the knights and squires had much ado not to tread on him, so well did he rule him, with his whip made of Grey-malkin's whisker, that he taught him, in due time, to obey the rein, nor was he behind in the fairest feats of horsemanship, so that it was a marvel to all beholders.

It was a goodly sight, when King Arthur went to the chase, to see the knights and squires come forth in full array, and the little page, bravely equipped, with his hunting-spear made of a darning-needle, and his bow and arrows at his back, spring into his saddle and ride off with them, fearing no leap over any thistle, however tall. Often would his mother stand at her door to see the gallant train sweep by, with her own boy among them; and Tom often would turn his mouse's head towards her cottage, and what king so happy as he while he sat on her shoulder, and told her all his doings?

His game was usually the fierce dragon-fly, the well-armed stag-beetle, and dangerous hornet; and skilfully did he man-

œuvre to avoid the hard grip of the stag-beetle's jaws, and to pierce the hornet's body with his spear, before it could bring its sting to bear upon him. It was he who kept every wasp,

spider, or chafer, from entering the palace to torment such ladies of Queen Guenever as chanced to be troubled with fears; and as for gnats, and all their stinging race, not one had a chance of feasting on the fair cheeks of the dames and damsels of Caerleon, while Tom Thumb with his spear was on the watch.

He only grieved that the bounds of his service were so small, and that even King Arthur himself would sometimes smile somewhat mockingly, when he saw the little champion most earnest and courageous. He recked little of his own ebony chair, and of the chariot of a beauteous sea-shell drawn by six white mice, with which he drove after the Queen on days of state; he would have given these, and far more, to have heard the King say that he had done him true and loyal service.

One day, the chase led to that side of the forest where dwelt Tom Thumb's ancient aunt. The King had caused a hunting feast to be spread on the grass, and all the knights disported themselves on the turf in the heat of the day, till sleep began to fall on them; but Tom held himself alert, and ready to drive off all gnats and flies. Presently he heard a strange "Croak, croak!" and looking up, he beheld his aunt's magpie slyly hopping forwards, her head on one side, and her quick eye glancing round, as she sidled along, and presently had caught up in her thievish bill, a jewel that lay beside the sleeping Sir Cradocke.

Up with our valorous little page, boldly did he seize his lance and rush on the bird, which spread her wings and tail, and made at him with her sharp horny beak, as if with one thrust she would pierce him through. But Tom dexterously turned Sleekfoot aside, and putting his spear in the rest, dashed at her breast, and though her feathers were so close and firm that they had almost turned the spear aside, yet a drop of blood

stained her white plumes, and, dropping the jewel, she fluttered back in affright.

Tom was about to take up the jewel, which was almost more than he could lift, when a new enemy fell on him. His aunt's great black cat sprung from behind on poor Sleekfoot, before Tom was aware, and carried both him and his rider up into a tree, where she was beginning, after the fashion of cats, to torment the poor mouse, when Tom drew his sword, and made a bold thrust at her green eyes. But he was sorely bestead, for Mag had recovered from her fright, and was making at him with open beak, while the cat caught poor Sleekfoot in her teeth, and the little page had then and there surely met his end, had not Sir Tristrem's red, blue, and white hound, Petticrewe, begun to bark so loud as to awaken the whole company.[41]

The magpie flew away, and Tom, on a branch of the tree, seized his mouse's tail, and again waved his sword at the cat. She loosed her hold, and, hissing, climbed into the topmost branches, while Petticrewe and all the dogs clamoured round the tree, and Tom, holding on by an oak-leaf, looked disconsolately upon his poor wounded mouse, lying quaking beside him ; but Sir Tristrem coming beneath where he stood, called to him, "Never fear, little gem of pages! Here is my velvet cap. Leave hold! I will catch you in it safe and soft."

Tom let himself fall into the good knight's cap, and dragged down with him Sleekfoot, bleeding from the cat's teeth, but still not mortally hurt ; and when he had told his tale, good Sir

Cradocke thanked him with all his heart, and told him he had done him a good act of friendship, for that jewel was a token from his own dear lady, the best wife in all the Court, and he would not have lost it for all Strath Clwyd and Cornwall.

"And," said King Arthur, "our little page has shewn a temper as valiant as any knight of us all. A very dragon and lion hath he encountered, and turned them both to flight!"

"Nay," said Tom, blushing; "methought that it was the hound Petticrewe that discomfited them."

"He hath another knightly virtue, Sir King; he speaks the truth and boasts not," said Sir Percival.

"Yea, truly," said the King, "I see not but that he deserves the order of knighthood, as well as if his inches were feet."

Whereupon Tom smiled to think his crabbed aunt had done him a good office against her will.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE KNIGHTHOOD OF SIR THOMAS THUMB, AND HOW HE WENT WITH KING ARTHUR ON THE ADVENTURE OF THE LOATHLY LADY.

QUEEN Mab, who ever had speedy tidings from the Court of Caerleon, no sooner learnt that Tom Thumb was about to receive the order of Knighthood, than she caused her elfin armourers to prepare such a suit of harness as was worn by the captains of King Oberon's own guard, and it was placed complete beside Tom's bed the next morning.[42]

The armour of plate was from the diamond beetle, with a hawberk of the minnow's shining scales, the helmet came glowing from the head of a shrimp, and the shield, of the white lining of a cockle-shell, bore an axe, with the legend,

"*Small strokes fell great oaks.*"

The lance came from a blackthorn-bush, and was tipped with the sting of the bee, the dagger and sheath were supplied by the

gnat, and the points of the saffron-blossom had been hardened into golden spurs. But for his sword, that was of mortal mould, welded by Tom himself on the armourer's forge, from a needle wherewith Sir Cradocke's dame had broidered the hangings for the King's Chapel.

The armour was duly blest, and Tom took his watch in the Castle Chapel, where no Hobgoblin could reach him, though many elvish forms flitted about the moon-lit windows, and made becks and signs to him to join in their dances, or mopped and mowed at the little fellow, as he stood in his firm, steady attitude, as ready and composed as if he had been one of the full-grown esquires who watched around.

With morning, Tom was washed in a white clam-shell, and clothed in his gossamer dress, white as snow, came forth. King Arthur, holding Excalibar very lightly, touched him with the point, and bade him arise a Knight. Sir Cradocke's dame, and the Lady Bienpensante, would fain have done on his sword and spurs, but their hands were too large, and unseen fingers were busy, taking the office on themselves, till Sir Thomas Thumb stood in his full and glittering armour; arrayed, indeed, by fairies, but only with such weapons as could endure the blessing, and with the will to turn them to the use of his royal master.

He scattered largesse from the shepherd's purse that hung at his girdle, largesse of choice flower-seeds from Fairy-land; and he sat down to the banquet at the Round Table, pledging King Arthur in his own cup.

In the midst of the banquet, there entered a fair damsel, who, kneeling down, craved a boon of King Arthur.[43] She told how a dreadful giant, who dwelt in the Castle of Terne Wadling, had stolen away her own true knight, and would without doubt devour him, if he were not speedily rescued; wherefore she prayed King Arthur to afford him succour.

Up then started the good King, and took Excalibar in his hand, and Sir Thomas Thumb, not to be behind in proving himself a good knight, and true, mounted upon his mouse Sleekfoot, now fully recovered of the hurts which the cat had given to him. So they rode forth towards the Castle, the King first, and Sir Thomas speeding along close behind him, his heart swelling with the trust that he should shew that his chivalry was not to be despised.

But, behold! as they drew near the Castle, Sir Thomas felt his lance become so weighty, that he could scarcely bear it, his helmet bowed down his head under his plume of a wren's golden crest, and Sleekfoot drooped his whiskers, while his tail grew weak and limp, and his limbs failed. Sir Thomas thought to rest himself and his charger by mounting to the King's saddle; but it was no otherwise with Arthur himself, for the good King sat bending in his saddle, and his arms could no longer sustain the burden of the shield Pridwen, nor the lance Ron.

For the truth was, that the ground round about the Castle was enchanted, so that such knights as ventured thereon,

instantly lost their strength and prowess, and became weak as babes.

While they were in this case, a tread was heard that shook the ground, and there stood before the Castle gates a huge giant, with matted hair and fiery eyes, and a club that he dashed about right furiously.

"King Arthur," he cried, "I give thee three choices. Either must thou yield unto me, or fight with me, or lose thy lands, unless thou wilt take a solemn oath to return hither on New-Year's Day, and tell me for thy ransom, what of all others is the thing that women chiefly desire."

Good King Arthur had no power left in his arm, therefore, he might not fight, and could do no other than pledge himself to deliver up his realms, or to bring the answer that the giant required. He then turned his horse's head, and rode away, marvelling as he went, what was the thing that women most desire.

"I can tell," said a small voice; and King Arthur beheld Sir Thomas resting himself and Sleekfoot on the pommel of the saddle.

"Ha! what say you, my little Knight?" asked the King.

"It is," said Sir Thomas, "that their sons should be no bigger than I."

Whereat the good King laughed so heartily, that he had well-nigh forgotten his perplexity, and the little Knight glowed for shame, so that he hid himself under the mane of the horse,

and wished that his new honours had not uplifted him into speaking foolishly.

The King sought throughout Britain for the answer, putting the question to each person whom he met. Some told him riches, pomp, or state, some said gay raiment, others flattery, others kindness, but among so many replies the King knew not the right one, and could only write them down in letters, which he sealed with his own ring. There was great fear lest the kingdom might be delivered to the cruel giant, since the King must needs abide by his word given; and great was the woe and wailing, at the fear of having the brave Arthur driven out by the foul monster.

On the last night ere New-Year's Day, Arthur and his little Knight were riding across a moor. The King sighed deeply: "It is the last time I call my hills my own," said he; "I shall never look more on yonder rocks! Say, my little Knight, will you still follow a landless, banished King?"

"To death, I will follow you, my liege," began Sir Thomas; but suddenly the King's horse swerved aside, and Sleekfoot darted away, and his rider had much ado to draw tight his rein, and hinder him from rushing into a mouse-hole. When this was done, Sir Thomas, but for his knighthood, would have shared the mouse's fears, for between an oak and a holly tree, there sat, clad in a scarlet mantle, the most ill-favoured dame that he had ever beheld. Her nose was crooked, her chin awry, and her eyes where her mouth should have been, and

though she arose and made her courtesy to the King, he was too much amazed to make answer.

"Who art thou who wilt not speak to me?" said the Lady. "Sir, foul as I am, I may help thee in thy need."

"If thou canst aid me," answered Arthur, "thou hast only to say what thou wilt for thy guerdon, and it shall be thine."

"Swear that thou wilt keep thy word, Sir King, and I will tell thee the secret that shall be the ransom of thy realm."

So King Arthur did as she would, and when she had told

him the secret in his ear, she desired her reward, namely, that he should bring some fair young knight of his court, on whom to bestow her in marriage; and the King gave his promise, that thus he would do when he should have proved the secret on the Giant.

So he came on New-Year's Day to Terne Wadling, and forth came the griesly Giant to meet him. He gave first the letters with the many replies, but the Giant tossed them scornfully aside, and said, "Yield, yield thy lands, Arthur, this may not be thy ransom!"

"Hold thy hand," cried Arthur; "let me speak again. That which women most desire is this: *To have their will.*"

"It was my sister that told thee!" cried the Giant, dashing his club on the ground, so as to split to pieces a young oak that stood in his way.

Nevertheless, the good King rode home in much heaviness, and sadly told his knights how he had been forced to vow to bring a fair young knight to wed the loathly damsel on the moor.

"Cheer up, my gallant liege," quoth Sir Gawayne the Gentle, "I will be the bridegroom."

"Nay," said Arthur, "my good Gawayne, I cannot give thee, my sister's own son, to so grim and foul a dame!"

"Let her be foul as she may," said gentle Sir Gawayne, "since thou hast given thy oath, good uncle, I will set thee free."

So, on the next day, King Arthur with all the knights of the

Round Table, set forth to conduct Sir Gawayne to fetch home his bride. Sir Kaye, the steward, rode first of all; but when he beheld the loathly lady sitting between the oak and holly bush, he turned his horse, and said to the King, "Sir, of all this company, I know not who can be given to this fearsome damsel, save little Sir Thomas Thumb."

"I would offer myself willingly, were it for my liege's honour," said Sir Thomas, boldly.

"Well said, little brother-in-arms!" said Sir Gawayne. "But I fear me she would make but one mouthful of thee! However, we will both abide her choice, for if I be the biggest, thou art the fairest."

While the two knights were speaking, their company had grown less. Some loosed their hawks, and some their hounds, till, except these two, not one was left who had not his wedded dame at home; and thus the King and the rest came to the loathly lady, crouching on the moor. Sir Thomas trembled, but the damsel never even seemed to see him; and Sir Gawayne, who so dearly esteemed his uncle's honour, and his own, went valiantly up to the lady, took her brown hand, called her his bride, and lifted her, all crooked as she was, on the crupper of his steed. So he rode before her into Caerleon, wedded her with a ring, and took her to his own house; but all the time, the gentle knight shuddered at the very touch of her hand, and when he had brought her home, he hid his face in his hands, ere he could resolve to look up and bid her welcome.

At last he gathered courage, but as he raised his eyes, he saw a fair and lovely damsel standing before him, smiling sweetly. "Where is she?" he cried out in amaze. "This can never be my bride!"

"I am thy bride, my own dear Lord," said a voice like a silver bell, "the same who was wont to sit grim and lonely between the oak and holly tree. Know, gentle Sir Gawayne, that I am subject to a spell, and make thy choice, whether I shall be fair at home, and foul when I go abroad, or foul at home, and fair abroad."

"Fair at home, my sweetest love, fair when I am with thee," said Sir Gawayne.

"Be it so," said the lady; "but, alas! when other dames go forth with their lords, I must hide myself!"

"Nay," quoth the gentle knight, "that shall not be! To me thou wilt ever be goodly, be thy outward semblance what it may. Be fair then to other eyes, since inwardly thou art so to mine."

"Happy the day I first saw thee, sweet Gawayne," said the lady, "for now shall I ever be as thou seest me! My cruel stepmother laid my brother and me under a spell. He became the giant of Terne Wadling, living by foul cruelty; I was made loathly to view, and bound to live a dreary life on moor and moss, till such time as I should find a Knight who truly should love others better than himself. I deemed my hope vain, but thou hast broken the spell; I am a happy dame, and my brother a true and gallant Knight once more."

CHAPTER XI.

HOW SIR THOMAS THUMB GUARDED KING ARTHUR'S SIGNET-RING.

It would have been well if all King Arthur's nephews had been such as the gentle Sir Gawayne; but the son of his sister Anna, Sir Mordred by name, was of far different conditions, and secretly coveted the throne of his uncle.[44]

One night, as Sir Thomas Thumb was lying asleep in the palm of the King's gauntlet, he was awakened by the sound of the creaking of a door, and starting up, he caught hold of his spear, which he always kept in readiness to chase away any gnat that might disturb his liege's rest. Presently, he beheld by the moonlight Sir Mordred come forward, and feel gently about, as though searching for something.

Instantly the little knight's sharp wits were on the alert, and he recollected yestermorn to have heard Sir Mordred murmuring because the King would not promise to bequeath to him all his lands. Now Sir Thomas bethought him, that perchance Sir

Mordred might be come with intent to steal the King's signet-ring, and thus to cause all men to believe that he had been chosen for his heir. So what did the little knight, but as he found the ring lying close to the gauntlet, he drew his own head and arms through it, so that it fitted him round the waist like a girdle, and the great table-diamond, engraven with thirteen crowns, made a breastplate in front of his faithful little heart.[45]

By and by came Sir Mordred's finger feeling softly for the ring; but Sir Thomas, from his ambush in the gauntlet, thrust forth his lance tipped with the sting of a hornet, and so deeply pierced the treacherous finger, that Sir Mordred could hardly hinder himself from crying out with the pain, so as to awaken King Arthur and all the royal household, and he stole away as softly as he had come.

When morning rose, and King Arthur awoke, Tom Thumb sat on his pillow and told all that had happened in the night, assuring him that if he needed a token, he had only to desire to see the hand of Sir Mordred. And truly, when Sir Mordred sat in his place at the banquet, the forefinger of his right hand was so grievously swollen that he could scarcely use it.

But good King Arthur loved his nephew still, and would not openly accuse him nor bring him to shame, by banishing him from the Court. However, he gave due praise to the trusty little Sir Thomas, and told him that in consideration of his manful service, he committed to him for ever the keeping of his signet when he slept.

Wakefully and truly did the chosen champion fulfil his charge. Whenever the King lay down to sleep and drew off his ring, Sir Thomas made it his girdle, and sat fully armed and watching heedfully on every side, so that none should take him at unawares.

By and by, the traitor again came, and he now beheld who it was who kept watch over the King's seal. He began by commanding Sir Thomas to give it up to him that he might set it to a parchment; but Sir Thomas said he was as good a knight as the other, and took no commands save from the King his liege lord.

"A pretty knight," muttered Sir Mordred; "a plaything for a court pageant."

Sir Thomas shook his lance, as if to answer that Sir Mordred knew the powers thereof; and the traitor began to speak him fair, and own that his valour and faith did indeed make up for want of size and strength. Sir Mordred had that opinion of Sir Thomas Thumb's wisdom and promptitude, that when he should become King of Britain, he should certainly bestow on him the government of all Strath Clwyd, rather than give it to yonder great lubber knights, who seemed to think that manhood was only in the thewes and sinews.

"The cowardly traitor!" thought Sir Thomas; "does he think to talk me over in this manner?—I, a knight of tried faith!—I, who would not be disloyal if every one of these thirteen crowns were laid at my feet!—I know better!"

But while these boastful thoughts passed through his brain, Sir Thomas did not keep the same heedful watch, and, in an instant, Sir Mordred had put aside his guard, and griping him tightly between his finger and thumb, so that he had no breath to cry out, he forced the ring over his shoulders, and squeezing him till his ribs were cracking, and his sense was gone, he flung the small crushed body to the ground.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW SIR THOMAS THUMB WAS CARRIED TO FAIRY LAND.

Sir Thomas was not dead, he had but fallen into a death-like swoon, and it is at such hours, between life and death, that the fairies have power over mankind.[46]

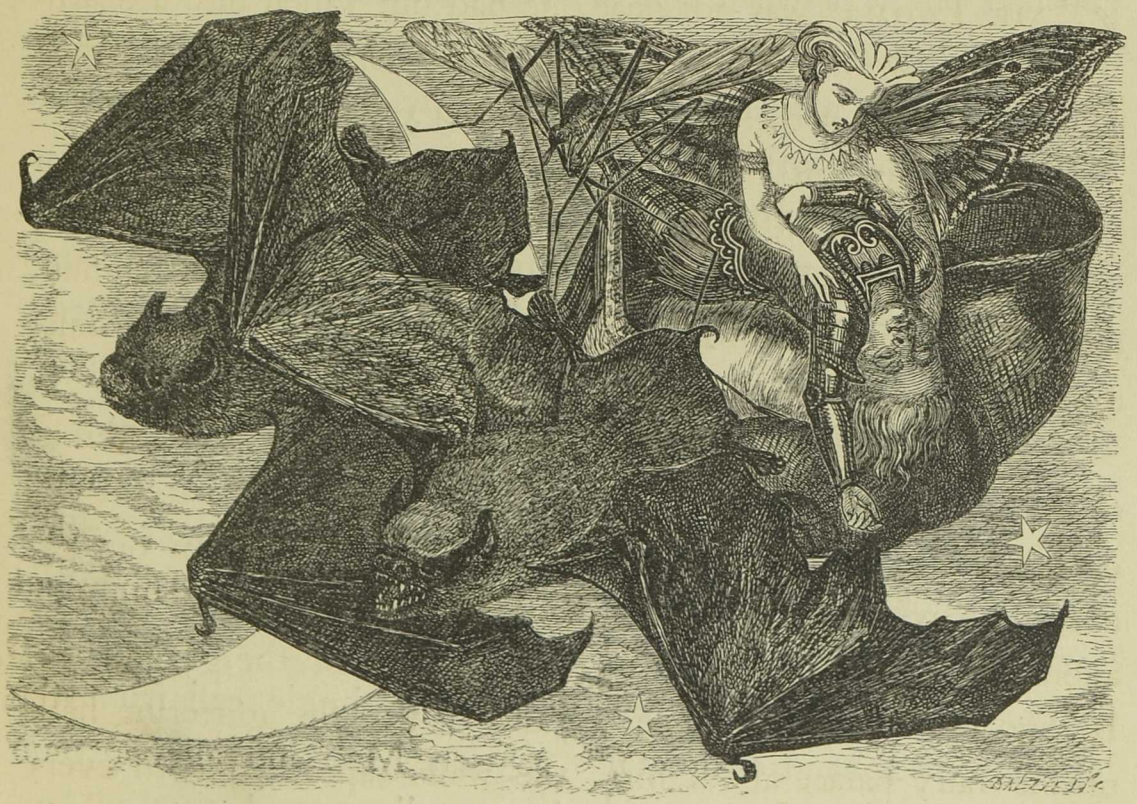
This was the time, as Queen Mab well knew, for obtaining the page on whom she had long cast her eyes, and speedily she mounted her state-coach, a snail-shell, drawn by bats, and bade Fly Cranion, her charioteer, make quickly for Caerleon.

The wounded knight was lifted up by the most dexterous of the elves, and placed in the coach, which, in the space of one cuckoo's cry, was in Fairy-land, where they laid him on soft cushions covered with the velvet of the purple fleur-de-lys, and anointed his bruises with the healing balm of the ground-ivy. By and by he opened his eyes, and beheld the glittering halls of the fairy palace above him, the walls tapestried with every rich hue from each flower that blows; while the heather-bell,

and lily-bell, and harebells rang out sweet chimes, and Queen Mab sat on her throne playing with a lady-bird, as Queen Guenever played with her lap-dog.[47]

The virtue of the fairy medicaments had at once healed Sir Thomas, and rising, he made his obeisance before the Fairy Queen, rendered her his thanks, but entreated to return to the King and to his office.

"Your thankless office on earth is past," said Mab; "from henceforth you are mine."



"Never!" said the little champion; "I am belted knight, I am Christian man! You have no power to hold me;" and he felt for the cross-handle of his sword; but while he had been boasting, he had let it slip from his side, otherwise the fairies had never borne him away.

Still, at the very word Christian, the bells rang slow and sadly like a knell, the lights flickered dim and blue, and the fairy faces waxed pale.

"Name not such names," said Queen Mab, hastily. "You owe us thanks, and somewhat more, for had it not been for us you had surely perished beneath yon traitor's gripe. For seven days you are ours; at the end of that space it will be free to you to choose, whether to become a joyous elf with us, or to return to human sorrows."

"And human hopes," said Sir Thomas; but thereupon the paleness again quivered over the fairy palace, and Queen Mab laid her finger to her lips, and bade her elves bring a refection of the purple grape, the dewberry, and the apricock with honey from the wild bees' nest.[48]

He was raising his hand to draw the sign of grace over the food, when again Mab prevented him; and when he saw that it would not abide the blessing, he motioned it from him, and sank back on his cushions, where he fell into a sleep.

He awoke an hour after sunset, at a bugle call from the clarions of a band of gnats.[49] Queen Mab and all her train were setting forth, each mounted on a gallant steed, that by day-

light was but a green polished rush, and a milk-white horse was saddled for Sir Thomas, in right of his knighthood, that he might ride at the right hand of the Queen.[50]

As he mounted, he gave one sigh to the thought of his own Sleekfoot, but so swift was the motion of these fairy-coursers, that ere his sigh was over, the company had alighted in the open glade of a beauteous forest of overarching trees, here parting so as to leave space for a mead of soft turf, in the midst of which grew a hawthorn bush in full flower, that looked snowy white in the moonlight, while a stream glided along beneath, the moonbeams here and there silvering the water.

A mushroom arose in the centre of the glade, and here was spread the fairy banquet, where the place of honour, a cushion of moss, was reserved for the knight of mortal frame. He had fasted long, and found himself not a little hungry, yet did he refuse to taste of the food, and anxiously did he gaze around for some landmark that might aid him in finding the way home, guided by Arthur's wain, which glittered palely in the moonlight sky.

"Ho! ho!" laughed Robin Goodfellow, perceiving his intent. "This is no forest of your own; you escape us not so easily. This is the wood of Broceliande, with seas between you and Caerleon. Ho! ho! what will King Arthur think? He will say that his trusty page has gone over to the enemy!"

"Torment him not, Hobgoblin, thou lubber," said Queen Mab; "rather let us call on him for some of the music of King Arthur's Court."

So Sir Thomas found himself constrained to pipe to the fairies, as they trode their measures lightly over the turf, where greener rings of grass traced their footsteps, though these did not bend even one stalk of quiver-grass.[51] Then Queen Mab called on him to take his share in the dance, and she herself became his partner, bounding and skipping higher than the trees, and footing it most gracefully; while the fairies all together chanted—

"*Monday and Tuesday,*
Monday and Tuesday,
Monday and Tuesday,"

till Sir Thomas wondered they went no farther in the days of the week, when suddenly a mortal voice called out—

"*Wednesday and Thursday,*
Wednesday and Thursday."

The fairies all started and stood still at the sound, and behold, beneath the thorn, there had been hidden a man of fair countenance enough, but with a huge hump on his shoulder.[52] He had been newly awakened, and stood marvelling at the sports of the fairies, not knowing whether he woke or slept, until, Mab making a sign, Puck led him into the midst.

"Mortal, how camest thou here?" asked Mab.

"I came," quoth the hunchback, still as one dreaming, "because there were some who told me that if I slept beneath Merlin's hawthorn, his voice would teach me how to please pretty Sybil, in spite of my hump."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Hobgoblin gave a peal of mocking laughter in his ear; but at that moment Mab touched him with her wand, and the hump rolled off, and fell into the stream, while he dropped again into a sound sleep, and the fairies resumed their ring, singing now—

"*Monday and Tuesday,*
Wednesday and Thursday."

But when Sir Thomas heard that this was the hawthorn where lay spell-bound the Wizard Merlin, he bethought him of what he had heard concerning his own birth.

"Surely," thought he, "this mighty enchanter will help me in my need," and watching his time, he stole apart, and coming near the hawthorn, said, "Great Merlin! is it thou? Teach me to free myself."

The voice answered from beneath the boughs—"I know thee well, son of Owen. Be not beguiled! Choose the true, not the false. Beware of fairy glitter. Die rather bravely as mortal man, than live vainly as weary elf. Guard thyself and be firm. Eat not, drink not, fairy food. The time of trial will soon be over, and thou shalt be restored to mortal life, and spared the dread doom of elf-land."

Merlin was silent, and Tom, cheered and resolved, found beneath his tree, a last year's haw, which, hard and bitter though it was, strengthened him, and appeased his hunger. He was not long left to himself, for the fairies were around him again, scoffing at his taste, since none of their viands were dainty enough for his palate, and he must needs devour withered haws.

But here the moon set behind the hill, the sky began to grow brighter, and the fairies mounting their steeds, all were in their own Elfinland again, before one thought could flash through his mind.

The next night, the fairies again resorted to Broceliande, and began their dance as before, with the song now lengthened into—

"*Monday and Tuesday,*
Wednesday and Thursday."

But, behold, this time again an outcry broke in—"Ay, and Friday, Saturday, Sunday, into the bargain!" Beneath the thorn, there sat another hunchback, but with a harsh, ill-tempered face, unlike the first.

"What will you give me?" he cried. "I have given you three days instead of two!"

"Give you?" cried Puck; "why, twice what the other had." And as the intruder sank to sleep, Puck brought out the hump he had taken off the night before, and clapped it on the top of the other, while every fairy broke into a shout of mirth.

The little knight laughed so heartily, that Puck said, "Ay! I see you care not for the vain triflings of the she-fairies! Come with me, and see what sport a bold elf can show you."

As better might not be, Tom mounted his steed, and flew after Puck. Presently they beheld a country-fellow staggering home, belated from the ale-house. Puck at once lighted his lantern, and danced over bog and brake, the silly oaf stumbling

after him, till at last he sank down near a horse-pond, where morning might find him asleep in the mire.

Next, a laughing sound was heard, and they saw some idle youths and maids loitering on their way home from a revel. Then Puck put on his ass's ears, and cut wondrous antics before them, so that each, with a loud shriek, fled away, and no more was seen but the streaks of light that glanced for one moment as they opened their cottage doors, and rushed in affrighted.

On other nights, the gentle fairies claimed Tom's company. They shewed him how they gave brighter tints to the flowers, and how they aided the butterfly struggling to be freed from its shell, how they would lure home children lost in the woods, and visit the houses of mortals at night, dance with the crickets on the hearth, and where all was neat and well-ordered, would drop a tester in the maiden's shoes.[53] Fair and joyous was their life, full of mirth, and free from pain. All that was beauteous was plenteously heaped around them, nor might care nor toil come nigh them ; and the little knight sported with them, and rejoiced in their delights, till he was quite transported with diversion at the tricksy pranks of Puck, and the lovely sights called up by the other fays. It was the land of pleasure, so fair and alluring that in the maze of delight he had almost forgotten Merlin's warning, and heeded not that not one of these joys went half so deep to his heart, as was his gladness when he had been wont to greet his mother at her cottage door, or his rejoicing when he had baffled the traitor, and saved King Arthur's signet-ring.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE BATTLE-FIELD OF CAMELFORD.

On the seventh day, King Oberon's Court was set, and the cup was filled, whereof one draught would render Thomas Thumb a fairy in nature and power, forgetful of home and kindred.

The hall was more brilliant than ever, and a seat covered with gossamer, sheen with rainbow sparkles, was made ready for the knightly stranger. Tom stood forth, and Mab offered him the cup. A strange weariness hung over him, yet it was to him as if it would be too hard to return to earth; for his love was growing feeble, and his spirit weakened, and he dared not face toil, mockery, care, and dulness, such as alone he bore in mind.

"Drink," said Queen Mab, "and be for ever gay and light-hearted. Forget all these earthly ties, forget thy dark home, and petty, gloomy Court. Be truly powerful, truly joyous!"

The cup was at Tom's lips, when a loud cry, a loud shock

of rattling steel rang even through the vaults of the fairy palace, and a bugle-note was winded loud and shrill.

Love and faith had but slept for a short space, and speedily awoke at that mighty summons. Tom exclaimed, "It is the King's bugle!—my King! my King Arthur!" and he dashed the cup from him.

"The mortals are at war!" said Oberon; "all is over with thy King and his realm. Well for thee that thou art here!"

"No," said Sir Thomas, who had once more taken courage; "I am no fairy. I will share the fate of my King, and keep my faith: I have left my duty too long; I return to the world."

"Silly little mortal!" said Queen Mab; "grief, toil, and pain, will be thy portion, and thy days will be short."

"Be it so," said Sir Thomas; "still will be my portion more precious than thine. Thou hast no power to hold me longer."

"Where then wouldst thou be?"

"Where my master, King Arthur, is."

"Much good may he do you!—Ho! ho! ha! ha!" The scornful laughs of the fairies became more and more faint and distant, and Sir Thomas wakened as from a swoon.

He found himself lying on a tuft of moss, and rising, gazed around. The light of the setting sun glanced flashing on a mass, dark yet bright. He deemed that it was armour, and longed for his sword; but all was still, no cry nor clash of arms, as he stepped forth. The grass was damp and dank, and looking

down, he knew that he was wading through a stream of blood, far unlike the dews where he had tripped with the fairies.

Once he thought how Merlin and Mab had alike hinted that his time would be brief, but his heart was set on his King, and he toiled undauntedly forwards. There lay, stretched towards him, a hand within a gauntlet, but the joints were relaxed in death, and the whole mailed form lay stiff and senseless; the breast was pierced by a spear, and the helmet was unclasped. Sir Thomas knew the face, changed though it was. It was his foe, Mordred the traitor.[54]

"My King has prevailed," quoth Sir Thomas to himself; "I am too late to give my small aid."

As he spoke, he beheld close to him on the ground, a rueful sight. It was the dragon crest that he had so often and lovingly brightened, —the left wing was shorn, the scales were blood-stained, and the helm was cleft as by an axe-stroke, and the hair hung to it. But it was white hair, and Sir Thomas had left his King's locks bright brown. Surely some other had worn King Arthur's helm. Alas! as Sir Thomas came from behind the corpse of the traitor, he beheld indeed his King, propped up in the arms of Sir Bedivere, the blood flowing fast from his head, and Sir Lukyn lying slain at his feet. Tom stood still as he heard the King speak.

"Sir Bedivere," said the King, "my time is short; therefore, take thou my good sword Excalibar, and go with it unto yonder water-side, and there, I charge thee, throw it into the water, and come and tell me what thou shalt see there."

Sir Bedivere promised to do as the King bade him; but when he saw the pommel and haft of Excalibar so richly bedight, it seemed to him harm and loss to part with the goodly weapon, so he hid it underneath a tree, and came back to the King.

"What sawest thou?" asked Arthur.

"Nothing, my liege, save winds and waves."

"That is untruly said of thee," said King Arthur. "As thou art to me life and dear, throw it in."

Sir Bedivere returned to the water, but still he thought it sin and shame to cast away that noble sword, so he threw in his own sword, and told the King he had done his command. Again the King asked what he had seen.

"Nothing but the lapping of the waves upon the bank," he said.

"Mark!" said Arthur, "twice hast thou dealt deceitfully. Whom can we trust when such a knight can use me thus treacherously? Go back, nor keep me lingering here in pain."

Sir Bedivere was thus shamed, and going to the water, he took the sword, and threw it in as far as he could; and there came a hand and arm above the water, and met it, and caught it, and so, shaking it thrice, vanished away with the sword into the water.

Then arose on the waters, a boat with three ladies in black robes, who lifted King Arthur into their boat, all wounded as he was, and so it pushed off from the water's edge, and was

quickly lost to sight; even while Sir Bedivere was returning back to the place where he had left the King.

When he saw that the King was gone, he stood dismayed for some little space, and Sir Thomas, who had seen all, came up, and climbing up to his side, began to speak.

"Ha!" cried he, "little pigmy, whence comest thou?"

"What has chanced?" asked the knight. "How befell this woful fight? I left all in peace but seven days since."

"Seven days! It is seven years since thou didst vanish. Where hast thou been?" [55]

"In Fairy-land," replied Sir Thomas, and he told his tale.

"Ha!" said Sir Bedivere, "some there were who would have it that thou hadst gone over to Sir Mordred; but when the King saw thy sword lying unsheathed where thou wast wont to keep watch, he said that thou hadst met with some foul play, and he and Queen Guenever made great moan for thee."

When the trusty champion heard that, his heart leaped as never had it done at any of the joys of Fairy-land.

Sir Bedivere further told him, how the traitor, Sir Mordred, had fled away with the signet-ring, levied an army, and made war on his uncle, and how the gentle Sir Gawayne had been slain and buried at Dover, and how the greater part of Britain had gone after the traitor, till, with a mighty host, he gave battle to the good King Arthur here at Camelford, and how the King and his nephew had fought hand to hand, so fiercely, that though King Arthur had pierced the traitor from side to side with his lance, Sir Mordred had at the same moment smitten through his uncle's skull.

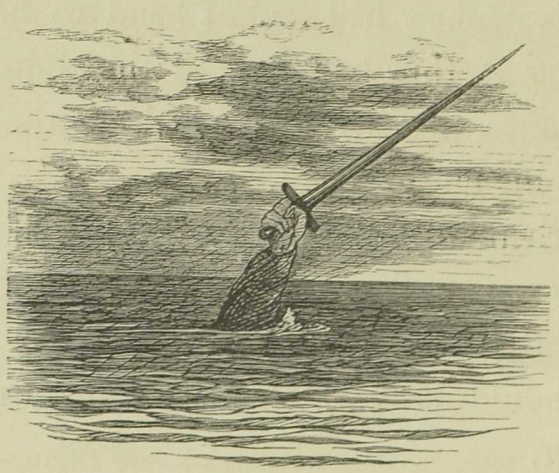
Sir Bedivere then dug a grave for the burial of Sir Lukyn; and, as night was now far spent, both he and Sir Thomas lay down to sleep, that they might consider with morning light, whether they should seek their master further, or return to Queen Guenever.

Still Sir Thomas could not sleep for sorrow, and as he lay awake, mourning over the ruin that had come upon the fair

realm of Britain, and for the loss of his lord, a hand touched him, and a damsel stood over him, beauteous to look upon.

"Gallant little champion," she said, "I am sent to bring thee comfort. Thy King beheld thy tears, and knows thy trustiness and loyalty. I am here to tell thee, that he is not dead, but Morgain his sister hath borne him away to her secret Isle of Avallon, where he rests in green meadows, beside glassy streams, till the hour shall come when he shall awaken, take Excalibar in his hand, and come to deliver Britain from all her woes.

So saying, the damsel vanished out of his sight, and he slept, sorrowful, yet more at peace than he had been in King Oberon's halls.



CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF THE GOOD KNIGHT SIR THOMAS THUMB.

At morning light, Sir Bedivere awoke, and Sir Thomas told him what had been his vision of the night, on hearing which, he was of opinion that it were better not to lose time in seeking for the King, but rather to return and bear the tidings to Caerleon to Queen Guenever.

So he took his little companion before him on his horse, and they rode through the whole day, coming at nightfall to Owen's hut, where Sir Thomas prayed the knight to rest until morning.

Great was the joy of good Owen to see his little son again; and as for his mother, she fondled him and rejoiced over him as in old times, and was still more glad when she heard how bravely he had resisted all the beguilements of the fairies. Poor Sleek-foot, too, came forth, for she had brought him home from Court, and had so fed and tended him, that he was far too plump to

curvet as formerly, though he waved his tail, and shewed all joy at seeing his little master again.

"And now," said his mother, "that your office towards the King is finished with honour, come home, my son, and cheer our hearts in our old age."

"I will, mother," said Tom; "but first must I pay my duty to Queen Guenever, and when she shall have dismissed me from her service, then will I gladly return home."

Owen said that he was in the right; and with morning the two knights again set forth, and came to Caerleon.

Queen Guenever wept full sore at their tidings, and vowed to become a nun in the Convent of Ambresbury.[56] She desired Sir Thomas to be one of those who should escort her thither, after which he should have free license to go wherever he would.

In the meantime, she shut herself into her own chamber to weep, while Tom Thumb ranged through the Castle. The halls were desolate and empty, feasting was no more, state at an end; the hounds were gone from their lairs, the horses from their stables, the hawks from their perches, the wind moaned through the open windows, and not a footstep was to be heard where once the mailed tread of the warrior had been answered by the light tripping of the lady. The sparrows flew boldly in and out, and sought vainly for crumbs where costly banquets had once been spread in profusion. One of the bold birds even alighted on the Round Table, and would have settled where the good King Arthur was wont to sit, but the spirit of the

little knight could not brook the sight, and climbing to his ancient post, he shouted to fray the bird away, and placed himself, dejected indeed, but steady of heart, to guard his master's place and the Round Table.

Other foes had thriven while the palace was deserted. The huge and noisome spiders, which had hitherto remained hidden in holes and crannies, had ventured abroad, and Sir Thomas beheld one of them weaving her treacherous nets on King Arthur's own chair.

Gallantly did the little champion rush to the encounter, lance in hand; but the spider was of giant size and cunning nature. She quickly darted round and round him, drawing out her white threads, then tightening them, till the poor little knight's arms and legs were closely bound down, and he could not use his weapons.[57]

As he lay thus fettered hand and foot, he heard a voice of derision that well he knew,—"Ha! my bold knight, here we are! This is what we get by our going back to mortality after boasting has undone us. Will you yet repent? Shall I break the spell ere the spider gripe you? The fairy cup yet waits."

"Away, tempter!" cried the little knight. "Better honourable death as a Christian than such life as thine."

The word Christian had caused the Goblin to contort himself and vanish. A snow-white form flitted before the eyes of the helpless champion, and "Faithful! found faithful to thine utmost!" was sung in his ears; but he heard no more, for the

venomous bite of the spider had shed poison into his veins; and when his father and mother came to Caerleon to seek for him, he lay stiff and lifeless on King Arthur's seat, having spent his last breath in his master's honour.

The smile that told of his vision of joy was on his fair little face, and Owen and his wife made no over-bitter moan. They were content to have it so, and that the granting of their too eager wishes had worked no ill, but rather, by the blessing called down on it, had borne fruit of honour and loyalty.

Only Sleekfoot was fondled as never mouse was caressed, and for ages after was preserved Tom Thumb's cradle-nest, and his columbine slippers.

Sir Thomas Thumb was buried in his full armour, beneath the shadow of the great mountain of Snowdon. All the knights of the Round Table who yet survived, came thither to pay the honour his loyalty deserved; and, though the fairies are too light and gay to shed tears, even they could not but do their part, for, around the grave of the true-hearted little champion, the grass is ever the most green; and there the scented thyme, the smiling eye-bright, the beloved forget-me-not, the glowing bird's-foot, and the tufted milk-wort grow, so as to trace in garland letters on the turf, the words,[58]

"*TRUE AND BOLD.*"

Some say that whenever good King Arthur shall return from Avallon to reign again over Britain, Sir Thomas Thumb will return also, and again sit by his side and guard his signet-ring.

May truth and honour guard the seal of every monarch! and may each one of us be found faithful in a little!

Appendix.

Note I. p. 9.

"When great King Arthur ruled the land,
He ruled it like a King."

So far the world agrees, but when this period was, is less authentic. Ritson fixes his birth at the latter part of the fifth century, and makes him begin to reign about the year 517. Be this as it may, his reign was assuredly the golden age of fairies, as we hear on the authority of Chaucer, in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*.

"In old days of King Arthur,
Of which that Breton's speken great honour,
All this land fulfilled of faërie,
The Elf Quene with her joly compagnie,
Danced full oft in many a grene mede."

Note II. p. 11.

So speaks the nursery tale, as likewise the legend of Thumbling in Grimm's Kinder und Häuser Mährchen.

"Ah!" said the wife, "if we had but only one, and were he no bigger than my thumb, I should still be content, and love him with all my heart!"

And the old Ballad in Evans' collection:

"His father was a ploughman plain,
His mother milked the cow."

And this couple were without children,

" Until such time the good old man
To learned Merlin goes,
And there to him his deep desires
In secret manner shows :

" How in his heart he wished to have
A child in time to come,
To be his heir, though it might be
No bigger than his thumb.

Note III. p. 11.

Who was Merlin ? is the first question that suggests itself. In the first place, taking it as a matter of history, there seem to have been two bards of the name of Merddyn : Merddyn Wyldt, or Merddyn the wild, and Merddyn Emrys, the Bard of Emrys Wledig, or Aurelius Ambrosius, the gallant British chief, who was the chief opponent of Cerdic. Merddyn Emrys, Merddyn Wyldt, and Taliessin, were the three principal Bards of Britain. Merddyn Emrys would seem to have been one of those Bards who would fain have returned to the ancient Druidical heathenism, as if Christianity had been imposed by the Roman Conqueror, and was to be shaken off at their departure, thus coupling pagan superstition with patriotism. Thus he strove to resume the ancient divinations, and tradition has handed him down as the great enchanter, who performs everything impossible in the whole cycle of the romance of the Round Table, and is famed far beyond his own two Keltic provinces of Wales and Bretagne, as the French and English Merlin, and the Italian and Spanish Merlino.

Note IV. p. 11.

On this feat, which was Merlin's first introduction to the British Court, all romantic authorities are unanimous. Vortegirn, after his expulsion from the Eastern parts of England, endeavoured to build a castle on what Geoffrey of Monmouth calls Mount Erir, and Nennius-Herenus, and what modern authorities believe to have been Snowdon. He was, however, always baffled, though he employed 15,000 workmen, the stones falling down or sinking into the earth at

night as fast as they were built up by day. His wise men informed him, that, in order to overcome this difficulty, he must find a certain child, kill him, and sprinkle the stones and mortar with his blood. Merlin, then seven years old, was brought to the court for the purpose, but having no desire to be sacrificed to form this new cement, he asked the Magicians whether they knew what was under ground, and on their standing confounded, he gave the King information which led him to set his 15,000 men to dig beneath the foundation, when two deep pools of water appeared, below which were two stones, and these being raised, two dragons appeared.

"That one dragon was red as fire,
With eyen bright as bason clear,
His tail was great, and nothing small,
His body was a rood withal.
The white dragon lay him by,
Stern of look and griesly,
His mouth and throat yawned wide,
The fire burst out on ilka side.
His tail was ragged as a fiend,
And upon his tail's end,
There was yshaped a griesly head,
To fight with the dragon red."

These two monsters slept by day, but at night their combats caused the earthquakes that prevented Vortegirn's tower from prospering. On being awakened, they began to hold "full hard batail," which lasted till "even-song gan ring," when the white dragon, who had at first been worsted, recovered himself, and finally blew out such a blast of flame, as

"Altogether brent the red,
That never of him was founden shred."

Merlin further declared, that the two dragons prefigured the fate of Britain, where, though the red dragon of the Saxons should for a time prevail, he should be ultimately consumed by the white dragon of Wales, a prediction in which Merlin does not seem to have shewn his usual sagacity, unless the Tudor reigns be taken as the victory of the griesly white.—*Geoffrey of Monmouth; Nennius; Ellis's Specimens; Dunlop's History of Fiction.*

Note V. p. 12.

According to the dubious testimony of our old historians, it was Vortegirn who first invited Henghist and the Saxons to Britain, and was won by the blandishments of Rowena to betray the cause of his countrymen. Afterwards finding resistance made to their encroachments by the British chiefs, Henghist invited all the most noted to a conference at Caer Caradoc, and there the Saxons, unsheathing their concealed weapons at the signal, "*Nehmed eure seaxes*," take your daggers, slew each one his man, till the whole party were cut off except Vortegirn, who was spared on account of his marriage with Rowena.

The Britons, however, considered that he was in league with their enemies, and raising to the throne Aurelius Ambrosius, his nephew, besieged him in a tower, and burnt him to death. Aurelius afterwards was successful in battles with the Saxons, made Henghist prisoner, and beheaded him. He was buried at the scene of his slaughter of the Saxons, and Aurelius proposed to honor the spot with some remarkable monument. "If you are desirous," said Merlin, "to honor the burying-place of these men with an everlasting monument, send for the Giant's Dance which is in Killaraus, a mountain in Ireland." Aurelius laughed. Merlin continued: "I entreat your Majesty to forbear vain laughter; for what I say is without vanity. They are mystical stones, and of a medicinal virtue." The giants of old brought them from the farthest coasts of Africa, in order to make baths in them when they should be taken with any illness. For their method was to wash the stones, and put their sick into the water, which infallibly cured them. There is not a stone there which hath not some healing virtue! When the Britons heard this, they resolved to send for the stones, and to make war upon the people of Ireland if they should offer to detain them. They made choice of Uther Pendragon as general, and put him in command of 15,000 men. Uther gained a victory over the Irish, and then marched to the mountain, but neither strength nor art could prevail to move the stones, till Merlin came, who, after laughing at their vain efforts, placed his engines, and with great ease took down the stones, and sent off the whole Giant's Dance to the ships.

Without giving full credit to good Geoffrey of Monmouth's history of the transport, it is remarkable that modern researches combine to fix the date of the erection of Stonehenge at a period subsequent to the departure of the Romans, probably raised in the attempt to restore Druidism. Their material is certainly

such as to prove that no Wiltshire hill furnished them, and tradition has explained their name as the Stones of Henghist, rather than the more modern derivation, the Hanging Stones. It is said that a geologist, on being shewn a fragment of one of these mysterious masses, guessed, that if British at all, it was brought from the Isle of Anglesea, but thought that more probably it had been found in Africa; a curious confirmation of the Welsh tradition.

Note VI. p. 13.

MERLIN THE PROPHET.

"Merlin, Merlin, where art thou so early sped
In the morning dawn, with thy jet black hound?
On the shore, I must seek for the egg so red,
The sea-snake's eggs that in rocks are found.

"In the mead, for green cresses and golden rod,
In the forest, I seek the mistletoe bough
That grows near the stream, on the oak branch broad."
"Merlin, Merlin, return on thy steps even now,

"Leave the mistletoe bough by the stream on the oak,
In the mead, leave the cresses and golden rod,
And the sea serpent's egg in the hole of the rock.
Merlin, Merlin, return, the sole prophet is God."

Such is a rough rendering of the French translation, given in Villemarque's *Barzaz-Breiz, ou Chants populaires de la Bretagne*, of a curious fragment of a ballad in the dialect of Cornouailles, which seems as if it might have been addressed to the would-be conjuror by some Christian priest, perhaps endeavouring to prevent him from resorting to Druidical divinations.

The sea-snake's egg, or adder's stone, otherwise called Glain Neidr, was said to have been formed, about midsummer, by a collection of snakes. A bubble formed on the head of one of them, was blown by the others down the whole length of its back, and then hardening, became a crystal ring. It was used as one of the insignia of the Archdruid, and was supposed to assist in augury.

The "golden rod" is a name given at a venture to what Villemarque calls *l'herbe d'or*, the Latin *Selago*, or hedge hyssop, which, in old Druidical times,

was gathered with the utmost veneration by a hand enveloped with a garment once worn by a sacred person, and the owner of the hand was arrayed in white, with bare feet, washed in pure water. In after times, it was thought to shine from a distance, like gold, and to give the power to those who trode on it, of understanding the language of dogs, wolves, and birds.

These, with the mistletoe, the favourite Druidical plant, the sorcerer is entreated to lay aside, to seek no more for vain enchantments, but to remember that he is a Christian.

Note VII. p. 13.

" This palace standeth in the air,
By necromancy placed there,
That it no tempests needs to fear,
Which way soe'er it blow it.
And somewhat southward, toward the moon,
Whence lies a way up to the moon,
And thence the fairy can as soon
Pass to the earth below it.

" The walls of spiders' legs are made,
Well morticed, and finely laid,
He was the master of his trade,
It curiously that builded.
The windows of the eyes of cats,
And for the roof, instead of slats,
Is covered with the skins of bats,
With moonshine that are gilded."

Drayton's Nymphidia, or Court of Fairy.

Note VIII. p. 14.

" And we fairies that do run
By the triple Hecat's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic."

Midsummer Night's Dream.

Note IX. p. 14.

Oberon is the King of English Faëry. He seems to have come to us from Germany, or rather to have been an inheritance of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers. He was originally one of the Dwergar or dwarfs, under the name of Elberich, which became in French, Auberon, and in English, Oberon.

As a Dwarf, he plays an active part in the German poem of Otni, as old as the 13th century; and in France, he was made the friend and assistant of Huon de Bourdeaux, in his expedition in search of the beard and teeth of the Saracen Emir. It is only in England that the fairies own Oberon the fair as their "bright master," and instead of being a mis-shapen dwarf, he bears "a stately presence," and is King of the beauteous little elves who take their sports by moonlight.

Note X. p. 14.

Mab's reign has been much longer and more undisputed than that of her fairy husband. Her name, Mr. Keightley, the great authority in fairy lore, cannot satisfactorily explain, but its brevity seems to shew it to be of genuine English growth, and it was only disturbed by Shakespeare, who, having carried his native fairies to Attica, would fain have given them an air of being Greek nymphs, by endowing Queen Mab with the name of Titania, one of the titles of Diana.

Note XI. p. 15.

"This is Mab, the mistress fairy,
That doth nightly rob the dairy,
And can hurt or help the churning
As she please, without discerning.
She that pinches country wenches,
If they rub not clean their benches,
And with sharper nail remembers,
When they rake not up their embers;
But if so they chance to feast her,
In their shoe she drops a tester."

Ben Jonson.

And in the evening delights of Allegro, the tale goes,

"How faery Mab the junkets eats."

Or in Mab's song, quoted in Percy's *Reliques* from an old black-letter copy.

" Come, follow, follow mee,
Ye fairye elves that bee;
Come, follow Mab your queene,
And trip it o'er the greene:
Hand in hand we'll dance around,
Because this place is fairye ground.

" When mortals are at rest,
And snoring in their nest,
Unheard and unespy'd,
Through key-holes do we glide.
Over tables, stools, and shelves,
We trip it with our fairye elves.

" And if the house be foull
With platter, dish, or bowl,
Upstairs we nimbly creep,
And find the sluts asleep,
Then we pinch their arms and thighes;
None us hears, nor none espies.

" But if the house be swept,
And from uncleanness kept,
We praise the household maid,
And duely she is paid;
Every night before we go,
We drop a tester in her shoe.

" Then, o'er a mushroom's head
Our table cloth we spread;
A grain of rye, or wheat,
The diet that we eat;
Pearly drops of dew we drink,
In acorn cups filled to the brink.

" The grasshopper, gnat, and fly,
Serve for our minstrelsy;

Grace said, we dance a while,
And so the time beguile:
And if the moon doth hide her head,
The glow-worm lights us home to bed.

"O'er tops of dewy grasse,
So nimbly do we passe;
The young and tender stalk
Ne'er bends when we do walk:
Yet in the morning may be seen,
Where we the night before have been."

Note XII. p. 15.

"Elves, list your names; silence, you airy toys!
Cricket, to Windsor chimneys shalt thou leap:
Where fires thou find'st unraked, and hearths unswept,
There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry:
Our radiant Queen hates sluts and sluttery.
Where's Pede? Go you, and where you find a maid,
That, ere she sleep, has thrice her prayers said,
Raise up the organs of her fantasy,
Sleep she as sound as careless infancy:
But those as sleep, and think not on their sins,
Pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides, and chins."

Merry Wives of Windsor.

Note XIII. p. 15.

"She comes
In shape no bigger than an agate stone,
On the fore-finger of an alderman;
Drawn with a team of little atomies,
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep;
Her waggon spokes made of long spinner's legs;
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers;
The traces, of the smallest spider's web;

The collars, of the moonshine's watery beams;
Her whip, of cricket's bone; the lash, of film:
Her waggoner a small grey-coated gnat;
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut,
Made by the joiner squirrel, or old grub,
Time out of mind the fairies' coach-makers.
And in this state, she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
On courtiers' knees, that dream on court'sies straight;
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees;
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream;
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues,
Because their breath with sweetmeats tainted are.
Sometimes she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit.
And sometimes comes she with a tithe pig's tail,
Tickling the parson's nose as lies asleep,
Then dreams he of another benefice.
Sometimes she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,
Of healths five fathom deep; and then anon,
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes."

Romeo and Juliet.

Note XIV. p. 15.

"Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough briar,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moone's sphere;
And I serve the fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green;

The cowslips tall her pensioners be ;
In their gold coats spots you see,
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours.
I must go and seek some dewdrops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear."

Midsummer Night's Dream.

Note XV. p. 17.

Viviana, though called *Vivienne la fée*, or *fayée*, is not one of the elfin race of Mab, but rather a nymph, *fatata*, or enchanted, a relic of the woodland and water nymphs of classic times, a sort of Circe, between the goddess and the mortal. It was Viviana who stole Sir Lancelot du Lac from his father, King Ban, and brought him up from infancy beneath the waters of her lake, whence he derived his surname ; and she it was, who was personated by the lady in watchet-coloured silk, that greeted Queen Elizabeth on her arrival at Kenilworth.

Note XVI. p. 20.

That the object that has led the affection astray, will cause us to work our own ruin, otherwise impossible, even to our worst foe, is a lesson taught in different forms of fact, of tale and of song, which seem again and again like copies of the history of the Israelite champion, deluded into betraying where lay the secret of his strength.

Perhaps, the true Merlin in turning back to heathen enchantments, and forgetting the warning who is the sole true Prophet, may actually have been the victim of treachery from a woman. Viviana is almost always marked out as the instrument of his misfortune. In the Roman de Merlin, printed at Paris in 1498, his career is terminated, as described in the text, although Viviana had not intended to confine him there for ever. She had only tried the spell by way of experiment, but found herself unable to undo it.

The story has been gracefully told in more modern language by Mr. Matthew Arnold.

" They came to where the brushwood ceased, and day
Peer'd 'twixt the stems ; and the ground broke away
In a sloped sward down to a brawling brook,
And up as high as where they stood to look
On the brook's further side was clear ; but then
The underwood and trees began again.
This open glen was studded thick with thorns,
Then white with blossom, and you saw the horns,
Through the green fern, of the shy fallow-deer,
Which come at noon down to the water here.
You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along
Under the thorns on the greensward ; and strong
The blackbird whistled from the dingles near,
And the light chipping of the woodpecker
Rang lonelily and sharp ; the sky was fair,
And a fresh breath of spring stirred everywhere.
Merlin and Vivian stopped on the slope's brow,
To gaze on the green sea of leaf and bough
Which glistering lay all round them, lone and mild,
As to itself the quiet forest smiled.
Upon the brow top grew a thorn, and here
The grass was dry and mossed, and you saw clear
Across the hollow : white anemones
Starred the cool turf, and clumps of primroses
Ran out from the dark underwood behind.
No fairer resting-place a man could find ;
' Here let us halt,' said Merlin then, and she
Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

" They sate them down together, and a sleep
Fell upon Merlin, more like death so deep.
Her fingers on her lips, then Vivian rose,
And from her brown-locked head the wimple throws,
And takes it in her hand, and waves it over
The blossomed thorn tree and her sleeping lover.

Nine times she waved the fluttering wimple round,
And made a little spot of magic ground :
And in that daisied circle as men say,
Is Merlin prisoner 'till the judgement day,
But she herself, whither she will can rove,
For she was passing weary of his love."

The forest of Broceliande is now called the wood of Paimpoul, in the Pays de Vannes in Brittany. There lay the vale of false lovers, and the boiling fountain of Baranton, where to draw up a draught in a golden bason, would bring on a tempest, and there, according to M. Emile Souvestre, the site of Merlin's hawthorn is still shewn.

Ariosto, instead of a hawthorn, confines him in a tomb.

" Questa è l'antica e memorabil grotta
Ch' edifico Merlino, il savio mago,
Che forse ricordare odi talotta,
Dove ingannollo la Donna del Lago.
Il sepolcro è qui giù, dove corrotta,
Giace la carne sua ; dov' egli vago
Di satisfare a lei che gliel' suase,
Vivo corcossi, e morto ci rimase.

Col corpo morto il vivo spirto alberga,
Sin ch' oda il suon dell' angelica tromba,
Che dal ciel lo bandisca o che ve l'erga,
Secondo che sarà corvo o colomba.
Vive la voce ; e come chiara emerga,
Udir potrai dalla marmorea tomba ;
Che le passate e le future cose,
A chi gli domandò sempre rispose."

Orlando Furioso.

" A little while
Before that Merlin dyde, he did intend,
A brasen wall in compas to compile
About Cairmardin, and did it commend
Unto these sprights to bring to perfect end.

During which work, the Ladie of the lake
Whom long he loved, for him in haste did send,
Who thereby forst his workmen to forsake,
Them bound, till his return, their labour not to slake.

" In the meane time, through that false ladie's traine,
He was surprised, and buried under beare,
Ne ever to his work returned again :
Nath'lesse those fiends may not their work forbeare,
So greatly his commandement they feare,
But these doe toyl and travell day and night,
Untill that brasen wall they up doe reare :
For Merlin had in magicke more insight,
Than ever him before, or after living wight."

Spenser.

Merlin's disappearance is differently accounted for by other stories. Southey follows the Welsh traditions, which say that Merlin went forth from Britain in a house of glass, accompanied by the nine Cylveirdd bards, put to sea in this new diving bell, and was never heard of more.

" In his crystal ark,
Whither sailed Merlin with his band of bards ?
Old Merlin, master of the mystic lore ! "

Breton legends declare, that in the battle of Arderiz, one of the three frivolous battles of the Isle of Britain, when 80,000 men were killed for a lark's nest, Merlin lost 89 out of the 147 apple trees in his orchard, and had besides the misfortune to kill his own nephew, whereupon he lost his reason, and was last seen running wild in the forest of Kelidon.

Probably this was Merddyn Wyldt, who would certainly thus merit his name.

Note XVII. p. 22.

The fairy propensity to carry away unchristened children is well known, and in old times it was considered a duty that a new-born babe should never be left

alone with its mother for a moment unwatched, lest the fairies should steal it, and substitute for it an elf of their own race. The cause of the famous dissension between Oberon and Titania in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, was, that the Fairy King begged

"A little changeling boy,
To be his henchman."

Lancelot du Lac was carried off by the Lady of the Lake; St. George, by the "Weird Lady of the Woods;" and, indeed, as Sir Walter Scott observes, it very seldom fell to the lot of any hero of romance to be left in the hands of his own parents. In these cases, however, there was no elvish substitute, a matter which was usual in the popular belief; so that, as Drayton says, if a child

"After prove an idiot,
When folk perceive it thriveth not,
The fault therein do smother.
Some silly, doating, brainless calf,
That understands things by the half,
Say that the Fairy left this Aulf,
And took away the other."

So in Gay's Fables, the nurse says,

"'Dear madam, think me not to blame,
Invisible the Fairy came.
Your precious babe is hence conveyed,
And in the place a changeling laid;
Where are the father's mouth and nose,
The mother's eyes as black as sloes?
See, here a shocking, awkward creature,
That speaks a fool in every feature.'

"'The woman's blind,' the mother cries,
'I see wit sparkle in his eyes.'"

Where the parents were less easily satisfied, their great effort was to induce the ill-thriven changeling to betray himself by speaking. In Ireland, according to Croker's delightful *Fairy Legends*, he is astonished beyond all control by his supposed mother proceeding to boil a number of egg-shells.

"I'm fifteen hunder years in this world, and yet I never saw a brewery of egg-shells!" quoth the elf; whereupon the mother, who has been secretly heating the poker at the fire, rushes to force it down his throat, but ere this can be effected, the changeling is snatched away, and her own child restored.

In Glamorganshire there is a like legend, though there, as in Brittany, the remedy is slightly different. We subjoin a prose translation of one of Villemarqué's collection of ballads, from the dialect of Cornouailles. According to the religious spirit which mixed in all the Breton popular legends, it is to the Blessed Virgin that the mother has recourse in her distress, with a supplication too touching and characteristic to be omitted.

"Mary is in deep distress; she has lost her dear little Louis; the Korrigan has taken him.

"'I left my Louis in his cradle, when I went to the well for water; when I came back he was far away.

"'In his place, I found this monster, brown as a toad; he says not a word, but he bites and scratches, and is always craving for food.

"'Holy Virgin! on thy throne of snow, with thy Son in thine arms, thou art happy, I am in sorrow.

"'Thou hast kept thy Holy Child, but I have lost mine. Mother of Mercy, have mercy upon me!'

"'My daughter, my dear daughter, be comforted, your Louis is not lost, your dear Louis shall be restored.

"'Whoever makes believe to prepare a meal for ten men in an egg-shell, forces the dwarf to speak.

"'When he has spoken, whip him, whip him well. When he has been whipped, he will cry; when he has cried, he will be heard and be carried off.'

"'Mother! what are you doing there?'

"'What am I doing? My son, I am preparing a dinner for ten men in an egg-shell.'

"'For ten men, mother, in an egg-shell? I have seen the egg, I have seen the white hen, I have seen the acorn, I have seen the sapling, I have seen the oak tree in the woods of Brezal, but I never saw such a sight as this!'

"'My son, you have seen too much! Click! click! Little old man, I have caught you!'

"'Do not hurt him, give him back! We have not hurt your child, he is a king in our country!'

"When Mary came back to the house, her own child was sleeping sweetly in his cradle.

"As she looked at him with delight, and was about to kiss him, he opened his eyes.

"He sat up, he stretched out his two little arms towards her.

"'Ah, mother, I have had a long sleep!'"

The same exchange takes place in one of Grimm's Collection of Legends, where the Elf is thrown off his guard in the same manner, and exclaims,—

"Though I am as old as the oldest tree,
Cooking in an egg-shell I never yet did see."

Whereupon the mother proceeds to violent measures, and the other elves come visibly, return the mortal infant, and carry him off. In the Notes to the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, Sir W. Scott quotes from Waldron's *Isle of Man*, an account of a changeling, who was unusually beautiful, though very small and speechless, only laughing to himself when left alone.

Note XVIII. p. 23.

Robin Goodfellow, according to the Ballad of his Mad Pranks and Merry Jests, reprinted by the Percy Society, from a black-letter copy of 1628, was the son of a mortal mother, and of the royal Oberon himself, who amply provided the christening feast with every kind of good cheer.

For some time he comported himself like ordinary children, but by and bye,

"He used much waggish tricks to men,
As they at him would rage,
Unto his mother they complained,
Which grieved her to heare,
And for these pranks she threatened him
He should have whipping cheare."

Whereupon,

"To prevent his punishment,
From her he run away,"

and became prentice to a taylour, on whom he played his tricks as usual. One was not a bad one. The taylour, in making a gown, had helped himself to a

large share of the cloth, and when the owner came for her apparel, he bade his apprentice fetch those remnants, meaning those of the supper; but Robin, choosing to misunderstand him, brought the remnants of the gown; whereat the woman was glad, and sent him for a pint of wine to make merry. But Robin, choosing to avoid his master's anger, ran away. Soon after, falling asleep to the sound of fairy music, he found on awakening, a scroll from King Oberon, instructing him how to assume any shape he chose.

"Wish what thou wilt, thou shalt it have;
And for to vex both fool and knave,
Thou hast the power to change thy shape,
To horse, to hog, to dog, to ape."

Thus he became the mischievous Hobgoblin, whose pranks are always droll, and as often spiteful as amiable. He is the favourite attendant of Oberon, and acted as the fairy crier, who proclaims the "O-yes" before the elves start on their different errands. In another more useful capacity,

". . . . the drudging goblin swet,
To earn his cream bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end;
Then lies him down the lubber fiend,
And stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And cropful, out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings."

L'Allegro.

A maid whom he favoured by doing her work for her, seeing him ragged and bare in clothes, laid out a waistcoat for him, but this displeased him, and he sang,—

"Because thou lay'st me himpen hampen,
I will neither bolt nor stampen;

'Tis not your garments new or old
That Robin loves. I feel no cold.
Had you left me milk or cream,
You should have had a pleasing dreame,
Because you left no drop or crum,
Robin never more will come."

In this capacity, he was nearly related to the Scottish Brownie and the German Kobolds, that attach themselves to different houses, especially Hoodekin, who inhabited the kitchen of the Bishop of Hildesheim, and performed many services there, though his friendship was rather questionable, since, when affronted, he squeezed toads over the dinner.

Shakespeare identified Robin Goodfellow with Puck, a word that has been floating about in all the northern languages for a spirit,—actually an evil spirit in some places, but in others, like the White Lady of Avenel—

"Something betwixt Heaven and Hell,
Something that neither stood nor fell,
Something that through thy wit or will,
May work thee good,—may work thee ill.
Neither substance quite, nor shadow,
Haunting lonely moon and meadow,
Dancing by the haunted spring,
Riding on the whirlwind's wing."

In the *Quarterly Review*, Vol. xxii., there is a curious Article on the derivation of the name, from the Teutonic *pæccan*, to deceive by false appearances, evidently a relation of the Latin *peccare*, to sin. Thence it traces *pickeln*, to play the fool, the origin of our word *pickle*, and in Saxon, *piga*, a boy, and in Danish, *piga*, a girl. While in the world of spirits, the German Pukke, the English *Puck*, *pouke*, or *pug*, the Irish *pooka*, and the Scottish *bogle*, are all of the same family, named from their tendency to malicious tricks. So also may be the Pixie, the fairy of the more Celtic parts of England, who has likewise been known to act as

the household sprite, till offended by a present of garments, which occasioned a farewell in this form—

"Pixie fine, Pixie gay,
Pixie now will go away."

Till Shakespeare's time, Robin Goodfellow was a demi-fairy; Puck, a species of demon; but as he united them in one and the same character, we must be content to have them so, and to believe Puck to have been Robin's fairy style.

NOTE XIX. p. 24.

"Her chariot ready straight is made;
Each thing therein is fitting laid,
That she by nothing might be stayed,
For naught must be her letting:
Four nimble gnats the horses were,
Their harnesses of gossamere,
Fly Cranion, her charioteer,
Upon the coach-box getting.

"Her Chariot of a snail's fine shell,
Which for the colours did excel,
The fair Queen Mab becoming well,
So lively was the limning.
The seat of soft wool of the bee,
The cover, gallantly to see,
The wing of a py'd butterflee,
I trow, 'twas simple trimming.

"The wheels composed of crickets' bones,
And daintily made for the nonce,
For fear of rattling on the stones,
With thistle-down they shod it."

As to her maids of honour,—

"Upon a grasshopper they got,
And what with amble and with trot,
For hedge nor ditch they spared not,
But after her they hie them.
A cobweb over them they throw,
To shield the wind if it should blow,
Themselves they wisely could bestow,
Lest any should espy them."

Nymphidia.

Note XX. p. 25.

As to the dress of her attendants, see Titania's commission,—

"To war with rere-mice, for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats."

Note XXI. p. 25.

"An oak-leaf hat he had for his crown,
His shirt, it was by spiders spun,
With doublet wove of thistle-down.
His trousers up with points were done.

"His stockings, of apple rind, they tie
With eye-lash plucked from his mother's eye;
His shoes were made of a mouse's skin,
Nicely tanned with hair within."

Note XXII. p. 28.

The travels of Thumbling, in Grimm's *Legends*, begin with his being swallowed by a cow, and in the ballad, we pity

"Poor Tom withal, that as a dock,
Was made the red cow's meat."

Thumbling, in another German version, gets into the cow's mouth less respectably. He had been engaged with some thieves in stealing from the parson, in whose hay he sought a retreat, but was actually swallowed by the cow. Afterwards, cow, Thumbling, and all, became the prey of a wolf, who in his turn died by the hand of the little hero's father, and his liberation was thus effected.

Note XXIII. p. 30.

This adventure is somewhat differently told in the ballad, and Tom's incomprehensible revenge is added,—

"Where he for counters, pins, and points,
And cherry stones did play,
Till he amongst those gamesters young,
Had lost his stock away.

"Yet could he soon renew the same,
When as most nimbly he
Would dive into their cherry-bags,
And there partaker be.

"Unseen or felt by any one,
Until a scholar shut
This nimble youth into a box,
Wherein his pins he put.

"Of whom to be revenged he took,
(In mirth and pleasant game,)
Black pots and glasses which he hung
Upon a bright sunbeam.

"The other boys to do the like,
In pieces broke them quite;
For which they were most soundly whipt,
Whereat he laught outright."

NOTE XXIV. p. 31.

" And sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab ;
And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
And on her withered dew-lap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometimes for three-foot stool mistaketh me,
Then slip I from her, down topples she,
And the whole quire hold their hips and loffe."

Midsummer Night's Dream.

Note XXV. p. 32.

The tinker and the pudding have always played their part in Tom Thumb's adventures, though in the ballad it is a black-pudding, and poor Tom is mixed in as a piece of minced fat.

Note XXVI. p. 34.

"Puck's nightly sport seems to be
Neighing in likeness of a silly foal.

"Sometimes he'd counterfeit a voyce,
And travellers call astray;
Sometimes a walking fire he'd be,
And lead them from their way."

In Drayton—

"This Puck seems but a dreaming dolt,
Still walking like a ragged colt,
And oft out of a bush doth bolt,
On purpose to deceive us;
And leading us, makes us to stray,
Long winter's nights, out of the way,
And when we stick in mire and clay,
He doth with laughter leave us."

And again—

"Thorough brake, thorough briar,
Thorough muck, thorough mire,
Thorough water, thorough fire.
And thus goes Puck about it."

Or in his threat in *Midsummer Night's Dream*:—

"I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier;
Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire:
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hog, bear, fire, at every turn."

So in the ballad in Percy's *Reliques*—

" Whene'er such wanderers I meete,
As from their night sportes they trudge home,
With counterfeiting voice I greete,
And call them on with me to roame,
Through woods, through lakes,
Through bogs, through brakes,
Or else unseene, with them I go,
All in the nicke
To play some tricke,
And frolicke it, with ho, ho, ho!

" Sometimes I meete them like a man,
Sometimes an ox, sometimes a hound;
And to a horse I turn me can,
To trip and trot about them round.
But if to ride
My back they stride,
More swift than wind away I go;
O'er hedge and lands,
Through pools and ponds,
I whirry, laughing, ho, ho, ho!"

In this capacity, as a " walking fire," Puck was supposed to be visible in the fleeting light, called Jack-a-Lantern and Will-of-the-Wisp; or in earlier times,—

" She was pinched and pulled she said,
And he by Friar's lantern led."

Friar Rush being another owner of the mysterious bright exhalation, that even in our own times, now and then, flits over bogs and morasses.

NOTE XXVII. p. 38.

We have had recourse to the German Thumbling to account for our little hero leaving home, following Grimm nearly word for word, until the narrative casts imputations on the little Briton, which we are sure he does not deserve,

namely, that he stole away from his purchasers in the evening, eluded their pursuit by creeping into a mouse-hole, and afterwards sleeping in a snail-shell, overheard two thieves plotting to steal the parson's gold and silver, when he offered to join them; and though he prevented them from effecting their purpose, he suffered for joining such discreditable company, as before narrated.

Nor do the English ballad nor nursery version find any better means of transit than these continual deglutitions. In these, a raven flew away with him and his barley-straw, and dropped him on the walls of the castle of the Giant Grumbo, who, for no assigned cause, swallowed him like a pill, and soon threw him up into the sea, where being again devoured by a fish, and the fish being caught, he emerged, when it was cut up, before King Arthur's Court. So much for the sake of accordance with traditionary lore, as well as of a theory which considers these adventures to be the remains of the Brahminical legends, distantly connected with Druidical superstitions. There is said to be a divinity in Indian mythology, in size, and in some other points, resembling Tom Thumb.

Note XXVIII. p. 39.

It is safest not to inquire too narrowly into the geography of King Arthur's time, which was not in the most settled state. Caerleon is the favourite capital in the old romances—

> "Where, as at Caerleon oft he kept the table round,
> Most famous for the sports at Pentecost so long,"

says Drayton, who fixes this as Caerleon on Uske; but Carlisle also puts in its claim to be the true Caerleon, and there are other almost equally noted capitals, such as Camelot, which old romances place at Winchester; though the Camelfords of Somersetshire and Cornwall, each with a River Camel, have both a better right to be supposed to have belonged to Arthur.

Note XXIX. p. 39.

Arthur, the son of Uther Pendragon and of the Lady Yguerna! Vain would it be to pause on the endless dissertations on his history, or on the romantic tales that describe his accession, when he proved his right to the throne by pulling out the sword that was so fixed in a certain huge stone that none but the rightful heir could draw it out. The simple truth would appear to be, that the veritable

Arthur was a gallant champion, who fought hard at the head of his Romanized Britons, to save their land from the Saxon invader, but that though often successful in pitched battles, he was gradually obliged to give way before the force of numbers, while the realm in which his power was exercised quickly diminished in spite of his most valiant efforts. The Arthur of romance is this same chieftain embellished by the fond memories and chivalrous minds of the middle ages, which made his Court and his "Table Round" the centre of the favourite legendary lore that sprang from Bretagne and Normandy.

Note XXX. p. 39.

Every one has heard of the calculation that put Sir Geoffrey Hudson happily to sleep in his durance in the Tower. We have the challenge on the authority of an old ballad in Percy's *Reliques*:—

"As it fell out on a Pentecost day,
King Arthur at Camelot kept his court royall,
With his fair Queene dame Guenever the gay;
And many bold barons sitting in hall;
With ladies attired in purple and pall;
And heraults in hewkes, hooting on high,
Cried '*Largesse, Largesse, chevaliers tres-hardie.*'

"A doughty dwarf to the uppermost deas,
Right pertlye gan pricke, kneeling on knee,
With steven fulle stoute amids all the preas,
Sayd, Now, Sir King Arthur, save thee, and see!
Sir Ryence of North-gales greeteth well thee,
And bids thee thy beard anon to him send,
Or else from thy jaws he will it off rend.

"For his robe of state is a rich scarlet mantle,
With eleven kings' beards bordered about,
And there is room lefte yet in a kantle,
For thine to stand, to make the twelfth out.
This must be done, be thou never so stout,
This must be done, I tell thee no fable,
Maugre the teethe of all thy round table.

" When this mortal message from his mouthe past,
Great was the noise both in hall and in bower :
The King fumed, the Queene screecht, ladies were aghast,
Princes puff'd, barons blustered, lords began lower,
Knights stormed, squires startled, like steeds in a stower,
Pages and yeomen yelled out in the hall,
Then in came Sir Kay, the king's seneschal.

" ' Silence, my soveraignes,' quoth this courteous knight,
And in that stound the stowre began still ;
Then the dwarfe's dinner full deerely was dight,
Of wine and wassell he had his wille ;
And when he had eaten and drank his fill,
An hundred pieces of fine coyned gold,
Were given this dwarf for his message bold.

" ' But say to Sir Ryence, thou dwarf,' quoth the King,
' That for his bold message I do him defye ;
And shortlye with basins and pans will him ring
Out of North-gales, where he and I,
With swords, and not razors, quickly shall trye,
Whether he or King Arthur will prove the best barber !'
And therewith he shook his good sword Excalabor."

The rest of the encounter we have told as nearly as possible according to Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Morte d'Arthur.

Note XXXI. p. 40.

The armour of a great chief always has a glory reflected from him. So Geoffrey of Monmouth describes Arthur's arms.

" Also, Arthur himself, having put on a coat of mail suitable to the grandeur of so powerful a king, placed a golden helmet upon his head, on which was engraven the figure of a dragon, and on his shoulders, his shield called Priwen ; upon which the picture of the Blessed Mary, mother of God, was painted, in order to put him frequently in mind of her. Then girding on his Caliburn, which was an excellent sword, made in the Isle of Avallon, he graced his right hand with his lance, named Ron, which was hard, broad, and fit for slaughter."

The finest description of his armour is in Spencer's *Faerie Quene* :—

" His glitterand armour shined farre away,
Like glanncing light of Phoebus' brightest ray ;
From top to toe no place appeared bare,
That deadly dint of steele endanger may :
Athwart his breast, a bauldrick brave he ware,
That shind, like twinkling stars, with stones most precious rare.

" And in the midst thereof one pretious stone,
Of wondrous worth, and eke of wondrous might,
Shapt like a ladies head, exceeding shone,
Like Hesperus amongst the lesser lights,
And strove for to amaze the weaker sights ;
Thereby his mortall blade full comely hong,
In yvory sheath, ycarv'd with curiouss lights ;
Whose hilts were burnisht gold, and handle strong,
Of mother pearle, and buckled with a golden tong.

" His haughtie helmet, horrid all with gold,
Both glorious brightness and great terrour bred ;
For all the crest a dragon did enfold,
With greedie pawes, and over all did spred,
His golden wings ; his dreadful hideous hed,
Close couched on the bever, seemd to throw
From flaming mouth bright sparkles fierie red,
Then suddeine horror to faint harts did showe ;
A scaly tayle was strecht adowne his back full low.

" Upon the top of all his loftie crest,
A bunch of haires discoloured diversly,
With sprincled pearle, and gold full richly drest
Did shake, and seemd to daunce for jollity ;
Like to an almond tree ymounted hye,
On top of green Selinis all alone,
With blossoms brave bedecked daintily,
Whose tender locks do tremble every one,
At every little breath, that under heaven is blowne.

" His warlike shield all closely covered was,
Ne might of mortall eye be ever scene,
Not made of steel, nor of enduring bras;
Such earthly mettals soone consumed beene;
But all of Diamond, perfect, pure, and cleane.
It framed was, one massie entire mould,
Hewen out of adamant rocke with engines keene,
That point of speare it never percen could,
Ne dint of direful sword divide the substance would."

For the manner in which Arthur acquired the renowned Excalibar or Caliburn, the Morte d'Arthur is the authority. The King had broken his own sword in two pieces, in a combat with Sir Pellinore of Wales, and had been saved by Merlin, who threw Sir Pellinore into an enchanted sleep.

" And so Merlin and Arthur departed, and as they rode along King Arthur said, 'I have no sword.' 'No force,' said Merlin; 'here by is a sword that shall be yours, and I may.' So they rode till they came to a lake, which was a fair water and a broad; and, in the midst of the lake, King Arthur was aware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in the hand. 'Lo,' said Merlin unto the King, 'yonder is the sword that I spoke of.' With that they saw a damsel going upon the lake. 'What damsel is that?' said the King. 'That is the Lady of the Lake,' said Merlin; 'and within that lake is a reach, and therein is as fair a place as any is on earth, and richly beseen; and this damsel will come to you anon, and then speak fair to her that she will give you that sword.' Therewith came the damsel to King Arthur and saluted him, and he her again. 'Damsel,' said the King, 'what sword is that which the arm holdeth yonder above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword.' 'Sir King,' said the damsel of the lake, 'that sword is mine, and if ye will give me a gift when I ask it you, ye shall have it.' 'By my faith,' said King Arthur, 'I will give you any gift that you will ask or desire.' 'Well,' said the damsel, 'go ye into yonder barge, and row yourself unto the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you; and I will ask my gift when I see my time.' So King Arthur and Merlin alighted, tied their horses to two trees, and so they went into the barge. And when they came to the sword that the hand held, King Arthur took it up by the handles, and took it with him, and the arm and the hand went

under water; and so came to the land and rode forth. King Arthur looked upon the sword, and liked it passing well. 'Whether liketh you better,' said Merlin, 'the sword or the scabbard?' 'Me liketh better the sword,' said King Arthur. 'Ye are more unwise,' said Merlin, 'for the scabbard is worth ten of the sword; for while ye have the scabbard upon you, ye shall lose no blood, be ye never so sore wounded, therefore keep well the scabbard alway with you.'"

Note XXXII. p. 41.

Sir Kaye, or as Geoffrey of Monmouth calls him, Caius, was the son of Sir Ector, who had educated King Arthur. Sir Tristrem is the subject of a greater number of romances than any other knight of the Round Table. Lyonesse, his territory, must have answered to Léon in Brittany, and is said to have been part of Cornwall, near St. Michael's Mount, but now submerged. Sir Perceval and Sir Bors were the best of all the knights excepting the admirable Galahad.

Note XXXIII. p. 41.

The belief that Arthur had a Round Table, and that it was the mark of the equality among his knights, seems to have existed from the earliest times of chivalry, though on what founded is not clear. Its existence is pre-supposed in all the romances and poems on his court, and the *Morte d'Arthur* relates that it had once belonged to his father, and that he obtained it again from his father-in-law, King Leodegrance, when he had only one hundred and twenty-eight knights to occupy the hundred and fifty sieges or seats, where the knights' names were engraven in letters of gold. There is a circle of rocks near Caerleon still called Arthur's Table. There is also—

"Grey Penrith's Table Round,
For feats of chivalry renowned."

And Camelot, or Winchester, owns an artificial round table, which is suspended in the county-hall, and where Arthur's portrait appears, while the knights' names are inscribed in their "sieges." It is believed to date from the time of Henry

of Winchester; it was mentioned in the journal of a Spaniard who accompanied Philip II., and it bears the marks of the bullets of Cromwell's troopers, so that it certainly can claim a respectable antiquity.

Note XXXIV. p. 42.

It would take too much space to dwell on the deeds of all the knights of the Round Table. The Siege Perilous was one left unoccupied, and covered with a cloth of silk, until the knight should come who should be worthy to accomplish the one great achievement that was set before them all, an adventure too solemn in its details for a light tale such as this.

Note XXXV. p. 43.

Guenever, called by Geoffrey of Monmouth Gunemara, was the daughter of King Leodegrance of Cameliard. Her history is exceedingly doubtful; indeed, there is reason to think that Arthur was thrice married; but she makes a great figure in every romance of the Round Table, without so much credit to her discretion as to her beauty.

Note XXXVI. p. 43.

The threepenny piece and hazel-nut figure in all his histories,—

"And so away goes lusty Tom
With three pence on his back,
A heavy burthen, which might make
His wearied limbs to crack.

"So travelling two days and nights
With labour and great pain,
He came into the house, whereat
His parents did remain.

"Which was but half a mile in space
From good King Arthur's court,
The which, in eight-and-forty hours,
He went in weary sort.

" But coming to his father's door,
He there such entrance had
As made his parents both rejoice,
And he thereat was glad.

" His mother in her apron took
Her gentle son in haste,
And by the fireside, within
A walnut shell, him placed.

" Whereas they feasted him three days
Upon a hazel nut,
Whereon he rioted so long,
He them to charges put.

" And thereupon grew wondrous sick
Through eating too much meat,
Which was sufficient for a month
For this great man to eat.

" But now his business called him forth
King Arthur's court to see,
Whereas no longer from the same
He could a stranger be.

" But yet a few small April drops,
Which settled in the way,
His long and weary journey forth
Did hinder and so stay,

" Until his careful father took
A birding trunk, in sport,
And with one blast blew this his son
Into King Arthur's court."

Note XXXVII. p. 45.

The nursery tale here makes poor Tom go through another course of being swallowed,—jumping down a miller's throat to escape the cook, and then, while five doctors are holding a consultation over the miller, jumping out as he yawns, when he is thrown into the river and eaten by a salmon, who is caught and brought to tke King's table, when the cook imprisons him in the mouse-trap.

Note XXXVIII. p. 47.

Puck.—" I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes."

Midsummer Night's Dream.

Note XXXIX. p. 49.

" There came into the court of King Arthur a young man, and a big made, and he was richly beseen, and he desired to be made knight of King Arthur; but his overgarments sat overthwartly, howbeit, it was good and rich cloth of gold. 'What is your name?' said King Arthur. 'Sir,' said the young man, 'my name is Brewnor le Noire; and within a short space, ye shall know that I come of good kin.' 'It may well be,' said Sir Kaye, the seneschal; 'but in mockage ye shall be called La Cote-Mal-Taille, that is as much as to say, the evil-shapen coat.' 'It is a great thing that thou askest,' said the King; 'and for what cause wearest thou that rich coat? tell me, for I can well think for some cause it is.' 'Sir,' said he, 'I had a father, a noble knight, and, upon a day, as he rode on hunting, it happened him for to lay him down to sleep, and there came a knight who had been long his enemy, and when he saw that he was fast on sleep, he all-to hewed him; and this same coat my father had on the same time, and that maketh this coat to fit so evil upon me; for the strokes be on it as I found it, and never shall be amended for me. Thus, to have my father's death in remembrance I wear this coat till I be revenged. And because ye are called the most noble king of the world, I came to you that ye would make me knight.' 'Sir,' said Sir Lamoracke and Sir Gaheris, 'It were well done to make him knight; for him beseemeth well of person and of countenance, that he shall prove a good man, and a good and mighty knight; for, Sir, as ye remembered, even such one was Sir

Launcelot du Lake, when he came first into this court, and full few of us knew from whence he came, and now he is proved the most man of worship that is in the world; and all your court and all your round table, is by Sir Launcelot worshipped and amended, more than by any knight now living.' 'That is truth,' said King Arthur; 'and to-morrow, at your request, I shall make him knight.'

"So, on the morrow there was a hart found, and thither rode King Arthur with a company of knights, to slay the hart. And this young man, that Sir Kaye named La Cote-Mal-Taille, was there left behind with Queen Guenever, and so, by sudden adventure, there was a mighty lion, kept in a strong tower of stone, and it happened that this lion, at that time, brake loose, and came hurtling after the Queen and her knights. And when the Queen saw the lion, she cried and fled, and prayed her knights to rescue her; and there was none of them all, but twelve that abode, and all the others fled. Then said La Cote-Mal-Taille, 'Now, I see well, that all coward Knights be not dead,' and, therewith, he drew out his sword, and dressed him before the lion; and that lion gaped wide, and came upon him ramping, to have slain him. And he smote him on the midst of the head such a mighty stroke, that he clave it in sunder, and so the lion fell down dead. Then was it told the Queen, how that the young man that Sir Kaye named La Cote-Mal-Taille had slain the lion. With that King Arthur came home, and when the Queen told him of that adventure, he was well pleased, and said, 'Upon pains of my life, he shall prove a noble man, and a faithful Knight, and true of his promise.' And then the King forthwith made him knight. 'Now, Sir,' said this young knight, 'I require you and all the knights of your Court, that ye call me by none other name but La Cote-Mal-Taille, insomuch as Sir Kaye hath named me so, and so I will be called.' 'I assent well thereto,' said the King.

"Then on the same day, there came a damsel into the King's Court, and she brought with her a great black shield, with a white hand in the midst, holding a sword; other picture was there none in that shield. When King Arthur saw her, he asked her from whence she came, and what she would have in his Court. 'Sir,' said the damsel, 'I have ridden long and many a day with this black shield, and many sundry ways, and for this cause I have come unto your Court, and he that ought this shield was a right good Knight, and this Knight had undertaken to achieve a great deed of arms; and so it misfortuned him, that another good Knight met with him by sudden adventure, and there they fought long, and

either wounded other passing sore, and they were so weary that they left that battle on even hand. So this knight which ought this shield saw that there was none other way but that he must die; and then he commanded me to bear this shield unto the Court of King Arthur, he requiring some good knight to take this shield, and that he would fulfil the quest that he was in.' 'Now, what say ye unto the quest?' said King Arthur; 'is there any of you here that will take upon him for to wield this black shield?' Then was there not one that would speak a word. Then Sir Kaye took the black shield in his hand. 'Sir Knight,' said the damsel, 'what is your name?' 'Wit ye well,' said he, 'my name is Sir Kaye, the seneschal, that well is known in many places.' 'Sir,' said the damsel, 'lay down that shield, for wit ye well, it faileth not you; for he must be a better knight than ye that shall wield this shield.' 'Damsel,' said Sir Kaye, 'wit ye well, I took this shield in my hands by your leave, for to behold it, not to that intent; but, go ye wheresoever ye will, for I will not go with you.' Then the damsel stood still a great while, and beheld many of those knights. Then spake the knight Sir La Cote-Mal-Taille, 'Fair damsel, I will take upon me that black shield, and that adventure, so that I may know whitherward my journey should be; for, because I was this day made knight, I would take this adventure upon me.' 'What is your name, fair young knight?' said the damsel. 'My name is,' said he, 'Sir La Cote-Mal-Taille.' 'Well may ye be called so,' said the damsel, 'the knight with the evil-shapen coat; but an thou be so hardy to take upon thee to bear that black shield, and to follow me, wit thou well, thy skin shall be as well hewn as thy coat.' 'As for that,' said Sir Cote-Mal-Taille, 'when I am so hewn, I will ask you no salve to heal me withal.' And therewith came into the Court two squires, and brought him a great horse, and his armour, with his spear; and anon he was armed, and took his leave. 'I would not, by my will,' said the King, 'that ye took upon you that hard adventure.' 'Sir,' said he, 'that adventure is mine, and the first that ever I took upon me, and that will I follow, whatsoever come to me.' Then the damsel departed, and Sir La Cote-Mal-Taille followed fast after, and within a while he overtook the damsel; and anon she missaid him in the foulest manner.

"By her constant abuse of the knight, she acquired the name of Maldisante, but by and by meeting with Sir Lancelot du Lac, he says, 'But damsel, upon this covenant, I will ride with you, so that ye will not rebuke this knight, Sir La Cote-Mal-Taille, no more; for he is a right good knight, and, I doubt not but he will

prove a noble knight, and for his sake, and pity that he should be destroyed, I follow him, for to succour him in his great need.' 'I thank you,' said the damsel, 'for now I will say to you and him both, I rebuked him never for no hate that I hated him, but for great love that I have unto him, for ever I supposed he had been too young and tender for to take upon him these adventures ; and, therefore, by my will I would have driven him away for the jealousy that I had of his life ; for it may be no young knight's deed that may achieve the adventure to the end.' 'Verily,' said Sir Lancelot, 'it is well said, whereas ye are called the damsel Maldisante, I will call thee damsel Bienpensante.'"

Morte d'Arthur.

NOTE XL. p. 51.

"His shirt was made of butterflies' wings,
His boots were made of chicken skins,
His coat and breeches were made with pride,
A tailor's needle hung by his side,
A mouse for a horse he used to ride."

Nursery Tale.

In the ballad, he actually fights a tournament with Sir Lancelot, and bears off all honours.

NOTE XLI. p. 55.

For the adventure of the Cat, see the Nursery Tale.

Petticrewe was a present to Sir Tristrem from Triamour, King of Wales

"The King a whelp he brought,
Before Tristrem the true,
What colour he was wrought,
Now I will you shewe.
Silk was not so soft,
He was red, green, and blue,
They that him seighen oft,
Of him had game and glewe,
I wis.
His name was Petticrewe,
Of him was mickle price."

Sir Tristrem.

NOTE XLII. p. 57.

For Fairy Armour, see Drayton's *Nymphidia*.

"He quickly arms him for the field,
A little cockle-shell his shield,
Which he could very bravely wield,
Yet could it not be pierced.
His spear a bent both stiff and strong,
And well near of three inches long,
The pile was of a horsefly's tongue,
Whose sharpness nought reversed.

"And puts him on a suit of mail,
Which was of a fish's scale,
That when his foe should him assail,
No point should be prevailing.
His rapier was a hornet's sting,
It was a very dangerous thing,
For if he chanced to hurt the King,
It would be long in healing.

"His helmet was a beetle's head,
Most horrible and full of dread,
That able was to strike one dead,
Yet it did well become him.
And for a plume, a horse's hair,
Which being tossed by the air,
Had force to strike his foe with fear,
And turn his weapon from him.

"Himself he on an earwig set,
Yet scarce he on his back could get,
So oft and high he did curvet,
Ere he himself could settle.
He made him turn, and stop, and bound,
To gallop and to trot the round,
He scarce could stand on any ground,
He was so full of mettle."

Note XLIII. p. 59.

Sir Gawayne's wedding with the Loathly Lady is the theme of the wife of Bathe's tale, though Chaucer does not give his name. He takes the opportunity of putting into the Wife's mouth many of his sarcasms on womankind, and most unjustly accuses the Queen of Midas, instead of his barber, of whispering to the reeds,—

> "Bewray me not, thou water, with thy soun,
> Quod she, to thee I tell it and no mo,
> My husband hath long asses eres two,
> Now is min herte all hole, now is out,
> I might no longer keep it out of doubt."

Whence she reasons that to be thought trusty is no object of woman's desire.

Terne Wadling was the name of a lake near Carlisle, where a castle once stood, which, according to tradition, was swallowed by the waters, and, under favourable circumstances, may be seen at the bottom. The lake is now called Armanthwaite. (Ritson.)

The story is scarcely altered from the ballad, as eked out by Bishop Percy.

Note XLIV. p. 66.

Medrawd, or Mordred, was a brother of Gawayne, and a son of King Lot. His treason is matter of universal consent, though the manner of it is utterly uncertain. Geoffrey of Monmouth makes him usurp the government while Arthur was invading Italy, the *Morte d'Arthur*, both prose and verse, send the King to Brittany to pursue Sir Lancelot, who had rebelled against the King.

Note XLV. p. 67.

> "The King his signet gave,
> Which Tom about the middle wore,
> Long time a girdle brave."
>
> *Ballad.*

King Arthur carried for his arms thirteen golden crowns, with the motto, *Moult de couronnes plus de vertus.*

NOTE XLVI. p. 70.

"It was between the night and day,
When the Fairy King has power,
That I sank down in a sinful fray,
And 'twixt life and death was snatch'd away,
To the joyless Elfin bower."

Lady of the Lake.

This verse well expresses the popular belief, that the fairy ranks were recruited by persons stolen from earth while in a trance. In the romance of *Orfeo and Heurodis, or Eurydice,* the lady, who appears as Queen of Winchester, is stolen by the fairies when asleep, and many of the inhabitants there have been stolen when swooning, or lying between life and death; and in a Scottish poem of the 16th century, a visitor to the Fairy-land finds there

"Neighbours six or seven,
That we believed had been in heaven."

NOTE XLVII. p. 71.

"Amid the land a castle he seighe,
Rich and royal, and wonder high,
All the utmost wall
Was clear, and shine of cristal.
. . . . .
Within there were wide wones,
All of precious stones,
. . . . . .
All the land was ever light,
For when it should be dark and night,
The rich stones light gonne,
Bright as doth at noon the sun."

Orfeo and Heurodis.

NOTE XLVIII. p. 72.

"Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries,

The honey bags steal from the humble bees,
And for night tapers, crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes."

Midsummer Night's Dream.

Note XLIX. p. 72.

"Where gnats do sing for her delight,
Some high, some low, some tenor strain,
Making a concert very plain."

Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle.

Note L. p. 73.

The Elf procession is taken from the ballad of Tamlane, where the hero appears to the Lady Janet, the companion of his childhood, and teaches her how to disenchant him.

"Randolph, Earl Murray was my sire,
Dunbar, Earl March is thine;
We loved when we were children small,
Which yet you well may mind.

"When I was a boy just turned of nine,
My uncle sent for me,
To hunt, and hawk, and ride with him,
And keep him companie.

"There came a wind out of the north,
A sharp wind, and a snell;
And a dead sleep came over me,
And frae my horse I fell.

"The queen of fairies keppit me,
In yon green hill to dwell;
And I'm a fairy lyth and limb;
Faire ladye, view me well.

"But we that live in fairy-land,
No sickness know, nor pain;

I quit my body when I will,
And take to it again.

"I quit my body when I please,
Or unto it repair;
We can inhabit, at our ease,
In either earth or air.

"Our shapes and size we can convert,
To either large or small;
An old nut-shell's the same to us,
As is the lofty hall.

"We sleep in rosebuds soft and sweet,
We revel in the stream,
We wanton lightly on the wind,
Or glide on the sunbeam.

"And all our wants are well supplied,
From every rich man's store,
Who thankless sins the gifts he gets,
And vainly grasps for more.

"Then would I never tire, Janet,
In elfish land to dwell;
But aye at every seven years,
They pay the tiend to hell;
And I am sae fat and fair of flesh,
I fear 'twill be mysel.

"This night is Hallowe'en, Janet,
The morn is Hallowday,
And, gin ye dare your true love win,
Ye hae no time to stay.

"The night, it is good Hallowe'en,
When fairy folks will ride;
And they that wad their true love win,
At Miles Cross they maun bide."

"But how shall I thee ken, Tamlane?
Or how shall I thee knaw,
Amang so many unearthly knights,
The like I never saw?"

"The first company that passes by,
Say na, and let them gae;
The next company that passes by,
Say na, and do right sae;
The third company that passes by,
That I'll be ane o' thae.

"First let pass the black, Janet,
And syne let pass the brown;
But grip ye to the milk-white steed,
And pu' the rider down.

"For I ride on the milk-white steed,
And ay nearest the town,
Because I was a christened knight,
They gave me that renown.

"My right hand will be gloved, Janet,
My left hand will be bare;
And these the tokens I give thee,
Nae doubt I will be there.

"They'll turn me in your arms, Janet,
An adder and a snake;
But had me fast, let me not pass,
Let not your spirit shake.

"They'll turn me in your arms, Janet,
An adder and an ask;
They'll turn me in your arms, Janet,
A bale that burns fast.

"They'll turn me in your arms, Janet,
A red-hot gad of airn,
But hold me fast, let me not pass,
For I'll do you no harm.

"And next they'll shape me in your arms
A toad but, and an eel,
But had me fast, nor let me gang,
As you do love me weel.

"They'll shape me in your arms, Janet,
A dove but, and a swan,
And last, they'll shape me in your arms,
Once more unto a man;
Cast your green mantle over me,
I'll be mysell again."

"Gloomy, gloomy was the night,
And eerie was the way,
As fair Janet, in her green mantle,
To Miles Cross she did gae.

"Betwixt the hours of twelve and one,
A north wind tore the bent,
And straight she heard strange elritch sounds,
Upon the wind which went.

"About the dead hour of the night,
She heard the bridles ring;
And Janet was as glad of that,
As any earthly thing.

"Their oaten pipes blew wondrous shrill,
The hemlock small blew clear,
And louder notes from hemlock large,
And bog-reed, struck the ear.
But solemn sounds or sober thoughts,
The fairies cannot bear.

" They sing, inspired with love and joy,
Like sky-larks in the air;
Of solid sense or thought that's grave,
You'll find no traces there.

" Fair Janet stood with mind unmoved,
The dreary heath upon;
And louder, louder waxed the sound,
As they came riding on.

" Will-o'-Wisp before them went,
Sent forth a twinkling light;
And soon she saw the fairy bands,
All riding in her sight.

" And first gaed by the black, black steed,
And then gaed by the brown;
But fast she gript the milk-white steed,
And pulled the rider down.

" She pulled him frae the milk-white steed,
And let the bridle fall;
And up there rose an erlish cry,
He's won among us all.

" They shaped him, in fair Janet's arms,
An adder and an eel,
She held him fast in every shape,
For she did love him weel.

" They shaped him, in her arms, at last,
Once more unto a man;
She wrapped him in her green mantle,
And so her true love wan.

" Up then spake the Queen of Fairies,
Out of a bush of rye,
'She has ta'en awa the bonniest knight
Of all my companie!' "

In the beautiful imitation in the ballad of *Alice Brand*, Urgan is delivered by his sister's boldness in three times crossing him.

That rush-beds serve for fairy stables, we learn from the Irish legends, where the magic words "Borram, borram!" convert a rush into a noble steed, capable of flying through the air.

Note LI. p. 74.

Robin Goodfellow being walking one night, heard the excellent musicke of Tom Thumb's brave bag-pipe; he, remembering the sound, (according to the command of King Oberon,) went towards them. They, for joy that he was come, did circle him in, and in a ring did dance round about him. Robin Goodfellow, seeing their love to him, danced in the midst of them, and sung them this song:—

"Round about, little ones, quick and nimble,
In and out, wheele about, run, hop, or amble.
Join your hands lovingly. Well done, musition.
Mirth keepeth man in health like a phisition.
Elves, urchins, goblins all, and little fairyes
That doe fillch, blacke, and pinch mayds of the dairyes,
Make a ring on the grasse with your quick measures;
Tom shall play, and I'll sing for all your pleasures.

"Pinch and Patch, Gull and Grim,
Go you together,
For you can change your shapes,
Like to the weather.
Sib and Tib, Licke and Lull,
You all have trickes too;
Little Tom that pipes,
Shall goe betwixt you.
Tom, tickle up thy pipes,
Till they be weary.

I will laugh, ho, ho, hoh!
And make me merry.
Make a ring on this grasse
With your quicke measures;
Tom shall play, I will sing,
For all your pleasures."

Note LII. p. 74.

The adventure of the hunchback still lives, both in Ireland and Brittany, and has been most amusingly told in Mr. Croker's Fairy Legends, as well as in Souvestre's *Foyers Bretons*.

Parnell's *Fairy Tale* is another version, probably of English growth. Edwin, the first comer, joins the revels, having satisfied the fairies by his honest dealing.

"Till one at last that Robin hight,
Renowned for pinching maids at night,
Has bent him up aloof,
And full against the beam he flung,
Where by the back the youth he hung,
To sprawl beneath the roof."

In the morning, his hump is gone, and his unfortunate imitator, from not equally confessing his true purpose, is likewise hung in the air; but in the morning,

"His seely back the bunch had got,
Which Edwin lost before."

This English version has probably lost the Keltic point of the story, which turns on the mention of the days of the week. Fairies were thought to dislike the mention of Friday, as reminding them of the grace in which they had no share; but the great offence was, that the addition should have been, "And so the week is ended," which would have finished the fairy penance.

Note LIII. p. 77.

For the aid of the fairies to good gardeners, there is no resisting the quoting of a pretty Pixie story from Mrs. Bray's *Letters on Devonshire*.

"Near a pixy field in this neighbourhood, there lived on a time an old woman who possessed a cottage and a very pretty garden, wherein she cultivated a most beautiful bed of tulips. The pixies so delighted in this spot, that they would carry their elfin babies thither, and sing them to rest. Often, at the dead hour of the night, a sweet lullaby was heard, and strains of the most melodious music would float in the air, that seemed to owe their origin to no other musicians than the beautiful tulips themselves; and whilst these delicate flowers waved their heads to the evening breeze, it sometimes seemed as if they were marking time to their own singing. As soon as the elfin babies were lulled asleep by such melodies, the pixies would return to the neighbouring field, and there commence dancing, making those rings on the green, which shewed even to mortal eyes what sort of gambols had occupied them during the night season. At the first dawn of light, the watchful pixies once more sought the tulips, and though still invisible, they could be heard kissing and caressing their babies. The tulips, thus favoured by a race of genii, retained their beauty much longer than any other flowers in the garden; whilst, though contrary to their nature, as the pixies breathed over them, they became as fragrant as roses; and so delighted at all this was the old woman who possessed the garden, that she never suffered a single tulip to be plucked from its stem. At length, however, she died, and the heir who succeeded her destroyed the enchanted flowers, and converted the spot into a parsley bed; a circumstance which so disappointed and offended the pixies, that they caused it to wither away, and, indeed, for many years, nothing would grow in the beds of the whole garden. But these sprites, though eager in resenting an injury, were, like most warm spirits, equally capable of returning a benefit; and, if they destroyed the product of the good old woman's garden when it had fallen into unworthy hands, they tended the bed that wrapped her clay with affectionate solicitude; for they were heard lamenting and singing sweet dirges around her grave; nor did they neglect to pay this mournful tribute to her memory every night before the moon was at the full; for then their high solemnity of dancing, singing, and rejoicing, took place, to hail the queen of the night on completing her silver circle in the skies. No human hand ever tended the grave of the poor old woman who had nurtured the tulip bed for the delight of these elfin creatures; but no rank weed was ever seen to grow upon it; the sod was ever green, and the prettiest flowers would spring up without sowing or planting, and so they continued to do till it was supposed the mortal body was reduced to its original dust."

The kind offices of the fairies are averred in the "*Fairies Farewell*," written by Bishop Corbet, and printed in 1648. It is chiefly a satire on Puritan habits, but the beginning is very pretty,—

"Farewell, rewards and fairies,
Good housewives now may say,
For now foule sluts in dairies,
Do fare as well as they.
And though they sweep their hearths no less
Than maids were wont to do,
Yet who of late for cleanliness,
Finds sixpence in her shoe?

. . . . . .

"When Tom came home from labour,
Or Cis to milking rose,
Then merrily went the tabor,
And nimbly went their toes.
Witness those rings and roundelays,
Of theirs which yet remain,
Were footed in Queen Marie's days,
On many a grassy plain."

It is a belief still existing in some parts of England, that the fairy and pixy race are asleep, and that the day is in store when their gambols will be resumed.

Note LIV. p. 80.

The battle of Camelford seems to be a certain fact, though the spot is disputed between the rivers Camel of Cornwall and Somerset, and the *Morte d'Arthur* is pleased to place it on Salisbury Plain. Mordred and Arthur, now said to be past eighty, fought hand to hand, and fell in the encounter, Mordred slain and Arthur mortally wounded. The beautiful ballad of King Arthur's death, and the *Morte d'Arthur*, followed in modern times by the poem of Tennyson, agree in the story of the sword, thrown into the stream according to the promise to the Lady of the Lake; but in the ballad it is Sir Lukyn, not Sir Bedivere, who performs this office for the King. It seems from the *Morte*, that the delay made by Sir Bedi-

vere caused King Arthur's death, by his wound in the head taking cold; for the next morning "Sir Bedivere found a chapel and a hermitage, where a hermit was grovelling on all fours, fast by a tomb newly graven."

"Sir," said Sir Bedivere, "what man is buried there that ye pray so fast for?"

"My fair son," said the hermit, "I wot not verily but by deeming, but this night, at midnight, here came a great number of ladies, which brought this dead corpse, and prayed me to bury him, and here they offered a hundred tapers, and gave me a hundred bezants."

"Alas!" said Sir Bedivere, "that was my Lord, King Arthur!" then Sir Bedivere swooned.

The Isle of Avallon is said to mean secret, and some of the ancient romances place it far out in the sea, while the Bretons believe it to be on their coast. The fairy Morgain, is a name meaning Lady of the Sea, and is related to the Fata Morgana, to whom Italians ascribe the beautiful reflected pictures seen in the waters of the Mediterranean. Romance made her the half-sister of Arthur, who bore him away to her own realm, and there renews his youth until the time for his return. Spanish legends, however, made him a crow, and it is averred in Don Quixote that for his sake no Englishman will kill a crow.

Avallon, in time, became identified with Glastonbury, whither he was conveyed, so said those who wished to give his story an air of sober truth, by his sister Morgain, and there died of his wounds, his death being concealed from his people.

Henry II., in the year 1191, caused search to be made in the Abbey, and Giraldus Cambrensis relates that between two pyramidal stones, hid very deep in the earth in a hollow oak, was found a leaden cross, engraved on the under side with the words,—"*Hic jacet sepultus inclytus Rex Arthurus cum Wennevereia Uxore sua secunda in Insula Avallonia.*—Here lies buried the unconquered King Arthur, with Guenever his second wife, in the Isle of Avallon." The upper part of the oak contained the bones of the husband, whose thigh bone was three inches longer than that of the tallest man present, and the skull was proportionate. It bore the marks of ten wounds, all healed excepting one supposed to be the last. A yellow lock of woman's hair was found complete, but on being touched it crumbled into dust.

Much doubt has been entertained whether this discovery were genuine, or arranged by Henry II. and the monks. The sword there found was given by

Richard I. to Tancred, King of Naples, on the betrothal of his daughter to the British Arthur, who was then heir of England; but that this sword was Excalibar, romance and reason alike forbid us to believe.

Arthur's name survives in many parts of England, and not only on earth, but the Great Bear has often been called Arthur's Wain, perhaps from his name being taken from Arth, a bear. It is called by St. Aldhelm, Arthur's war chariot, and by Lydgate, Arthur's plough. Lyra was called by the Welsh, Arthur's harp, and Gawain Douglas mentions,

> "Arthurys' hufe and Hyades, betokening rain,
> Syne Watling street, the horne, and the Charle-waine."

Note LV. p. 82.

Seven years was the time that fairies had power to keep those whom they had stolen.

Note LVI. p. 86.

"Queen Guenever," says the *Morte d'Arthur*, "went to Almesbury and there she let make herself a nun, and wore white clothes and black, and great penance she took, as ever did sinful lady in this land, and never creature could make her merry."

Sir Lancelot became a hermit, as did seven other knights, until they were warned by a dream of Guenever's death, when they went to Almesbury, and carried her corpse to Glastonbury, where they buried her beside her husband. Sir Lancelot soon after died penitent, and the other survivors of the Round Table lived as holy men.

Note LVII. p. 87.

The nursery tale causes Tom to return from Fairy-land in the reign of an otherwise unheard of monarch called Thumstone, by whose Queen he is persecuted, and it is at this time that his imprisonment in the trap, and his escape into a snail-shell, and then his ride on a butterfly, took place. The Queen afterwards exposed him in an empty room to the attacks of the spiders, when—

> "He fell dead on the ground where late he had stood,
> And the spider sucked up the last drop of his blood."

In the ballad, he sickens at Arthur's Court, and the doctor, looking at him in a magnifying glass, sees death stand ready to seize him. He is buried under a marble tomb with all honour.

Note LVIII. p. 89.

"And *Hony soit qui mal y pense* write
In emerald tufts, flowers purple, blue and white.
Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery
Buckled below fair knighthood's bending knee,
Fairies use flowers for their charactery."

Merry Wives of Windsor.

We have ventured to use the briefer epitaph in fairy charactery, rather than the old one, which is, however, so regularly the *finis* of Tom Thumb, that it must stand at the end of our Notes,—

"Here lies Tom Thumb, King Arthur's knight,
Who died by spider's cruel bite,
He was well known in Arthur's court,
Where he afforded gallant sport;
He rode at tilt and tournament,
And on a mouse a-hunting went.
Alive, he filled the court with mirth,
His death to sorrow soon gave birth.
Wipe, wipe your eyes, and shake your head,
And cry, 'Alas, Tom Thumb is dead!'"

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