

BOOKS FOR THE BAIRNS.—No. 131

EDITED BY W. T. STEAD.

**THE
FLYING DUTCHMAN,**

THE

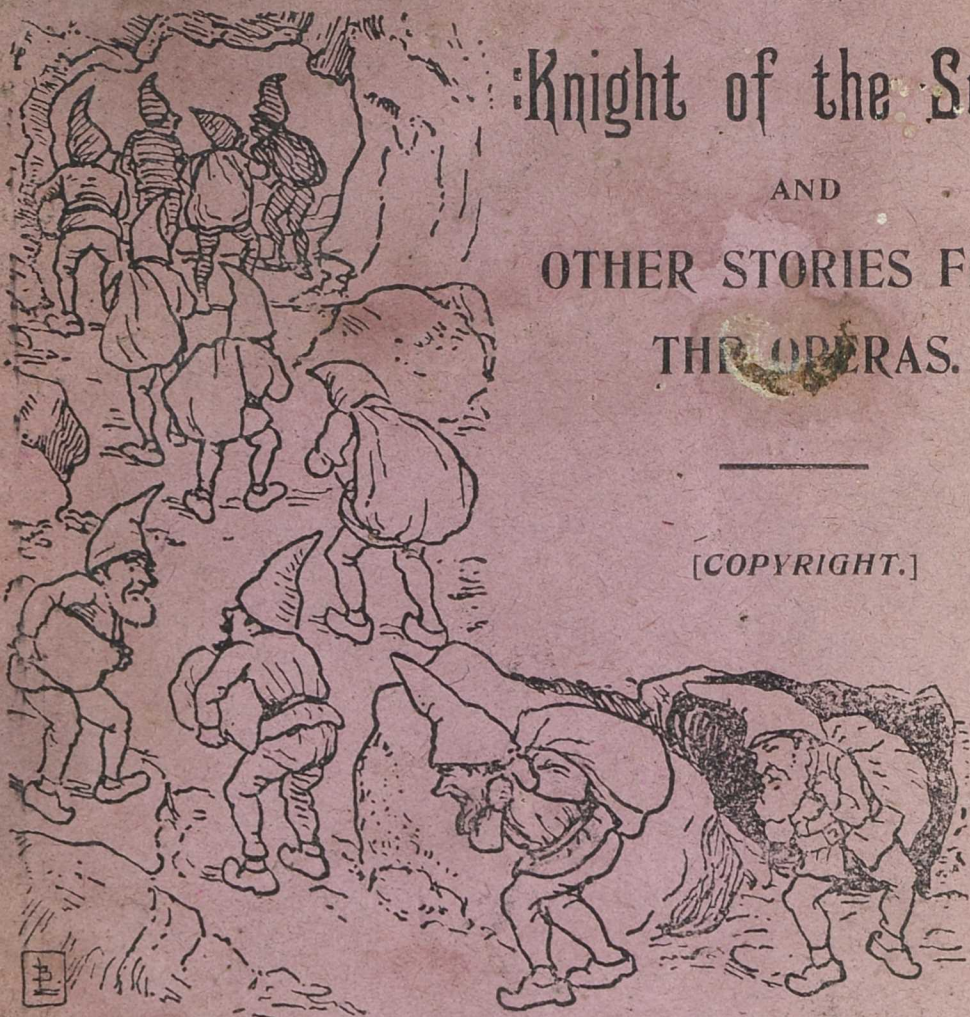
Knicht of the Swan,

AND

OTHER STORIES FROM

THE OPERAS.

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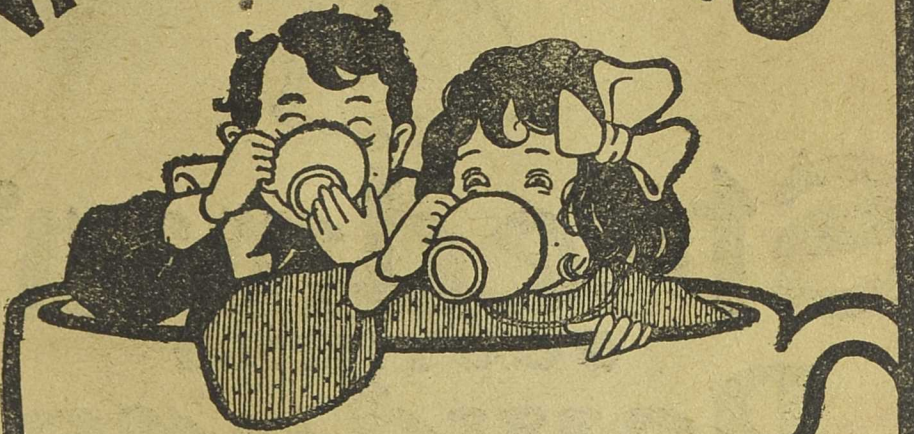
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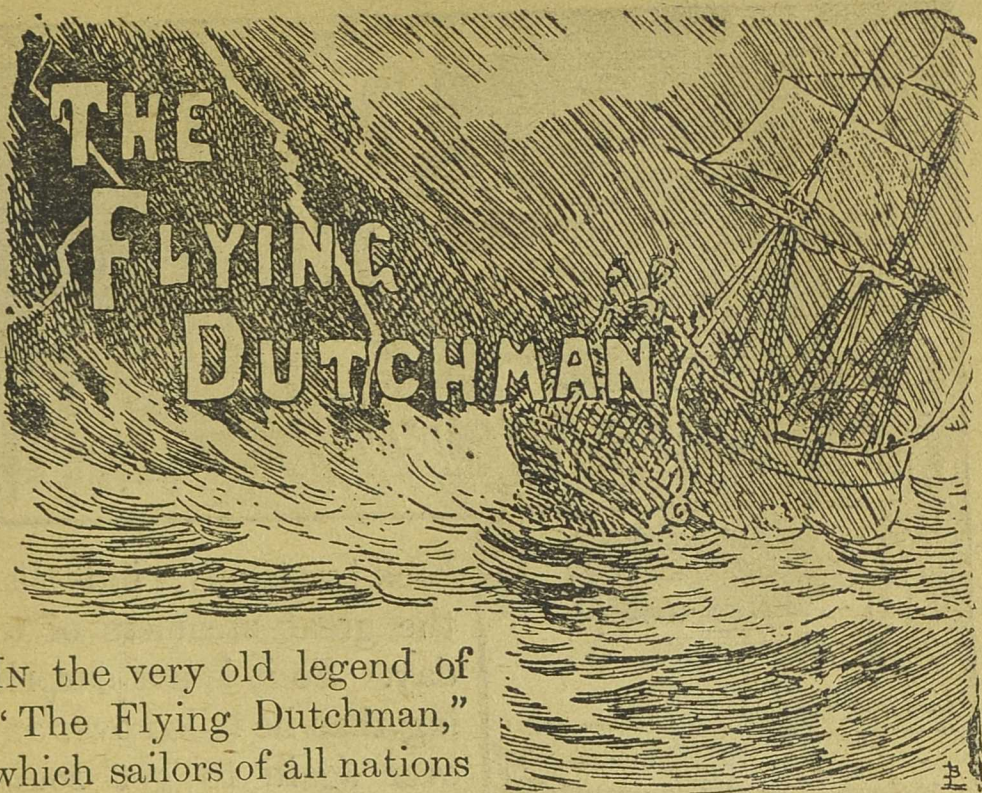
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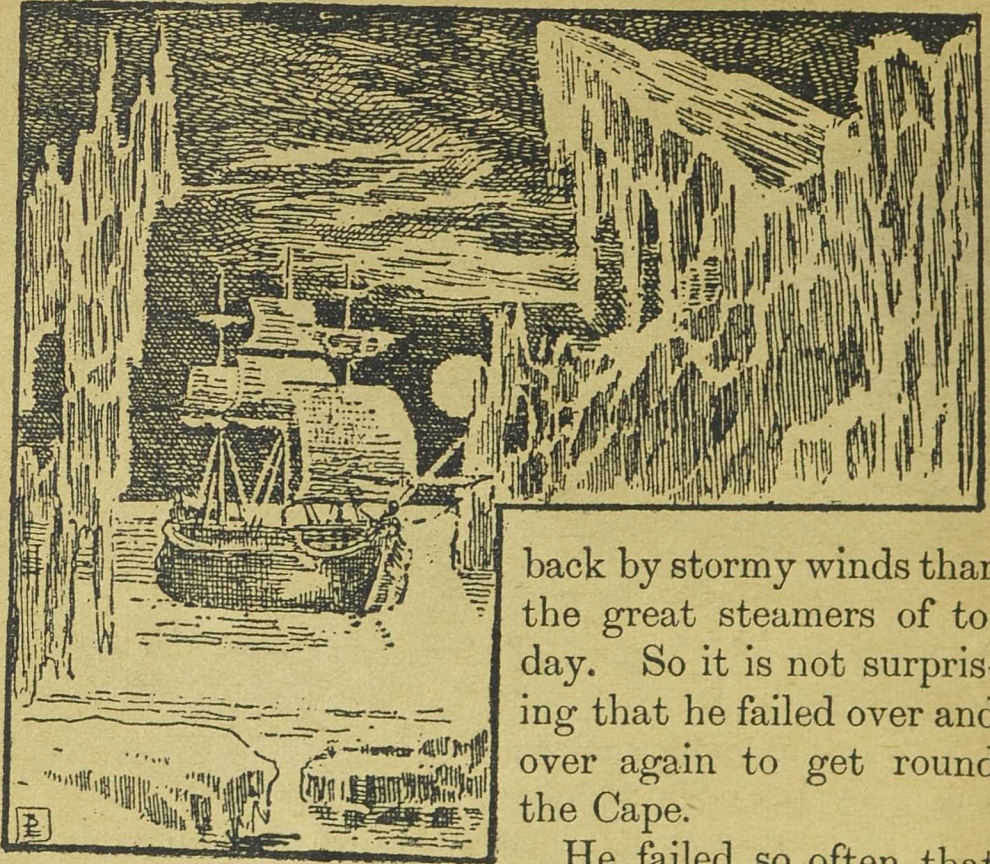
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IN the very old legend of "The Flying Dutchman," which sailors of all nations are said to have known from the fifteenth century, a ship's captain made up his mind that he would sail round the Cape of Storms, as the Cape of Good Hope was then called. Even now, if you ever go on a steamer to Cape Town, and then go on again across the vast Southern Ocean to Australia, you will be told to expect rough weather as soon as you leave the Cape, and it is very likely indeed that you will get it. There is often a strong and bitterly cold wind, and waves sometimes forty feet high.

Now this old sea captain, who lived these many centuries ago, could not have had very much of a ship, and it must have been a sailing ship, which would have been far more buffeted about and beaten



back by stormy winds than the great steamers of to-day. So it is not surprising that he failed over and over again to get round the Cape.

He failed so often that at last he lost patience, and swore a great oath that he would go on trying even though he should have to try for ever and ever. Unhappily the devil, we are told, overheard his oath and said: "Very well, you shall go on trying for ever and ever." And since then the captain (so says the legend) has always wandered over the seas, from Pole to Pole. He wandered all his life, and after he died his ghost on a phantom ship went on wandering still. To all who see the phantom ship, with its ghostly captain, it bodes nothing but ill, so that the sight of it is dreaded by all sailors.

After this little explanation, I will tell you the

story of the Flying Dutchman and his phantom ship.

One day, I cannot quite say how many years ago, but quite 500, and very likely 600, a Norwegian sea captain was trying to steer his ship into port, but so fearful a storm was raging, and Norway, as perhaps you know, has such a dangerous coast, with so many rocks, that his steersman said they had better take shelter in a little bay, and wait till the wind fell. So the captain gave orders to do this, though he was in great haste to be at home again to see his pretty daughter, Senta, whom he loved very much indeed, and all the more, because her mother was dead, and she had no brothers and sisters. But he was not far from home, and when there was a lull in the storm he knew he would soon be there. So he left the steersman on deck to keep watch—you know a ship is never, even now, left without men on watch—and went downstairs to his cabin to rest a little.

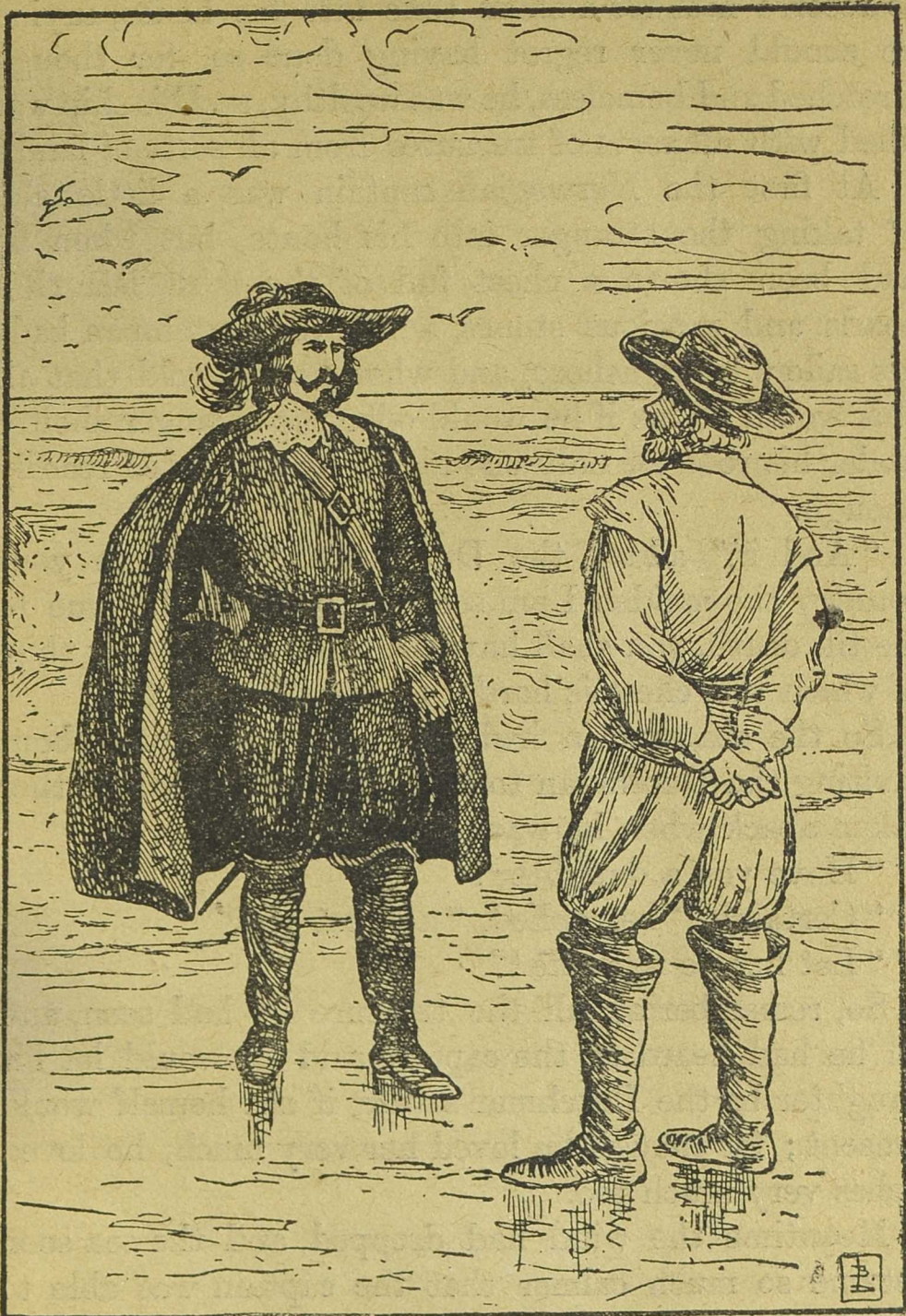
Now the steersman had been up all night, and was very sleepy, and though he tried to keep awake by singing songs about his wife and bairns and home, he could not manage to do so. While he was asleep, a strange ship came alongside, and cast anchor.

The captain of this ship was the Flying Dutchman, who had been roving the ocean from Pole to Pole for seven years, and who must, in a few days, begin roving it again for another seven years, unless he could find a maiden who would love him and be true to him till death. At the end of every seventh year the ocean drove his ship to land, and he was allowed

to go on shore and seek this maiden, but he had never found her yet. And the seven years had once more just come to an end ; but so many times had he already sought this maiden with the deathless love, and so many times had he thought he had found her, and so many times had she proved false and her love failed him, that he had now very little hope of ever finding her. Sometimes he landed in one country, sometimes in another, to seek for the one who alone could break the spell, and save him from being for ever condemned to roam the ocean ; and this time he went ashore in Norway, thinking, as he did so, how hard was his fate and how useless his quest.

After a time the Norwegian sea captain left his cabin and came on deck, and was much surprised to see a strange ship anchored near his own. He signalled to it, but the ship did not signal back, which, of course, surprised him very much. Then the captain saw some one walking on the shore, some one dressed in black, and feeling certain it must be the captain, he went ashore himself and accosted the stranger, who was very tall and pale, and had a look about him that was not like that of other men.

“ Who are you ? ” he asked. But the Flying Dutchman gave no name, simply saying he was “ a Dutchman. ” Then he told the Norwegian captain of his sad fate, adding that he could no longer count the years he had been roving the seas, nor the names of nearly all the countries he had visited in his fruitless search for a maiden who would be true to him till death, and save him from his torment. He begged the other captain



“WHO ARE YOU?” SAID THE NORWEGIAN CAPTAIN.

to receive him for a short time into his house, saying he should never regret having done so, for though wretched and homeless, he was wealthy, and his ship was filled with all sorts of treasures from all sorts of lands.

At first the Norwegian captain was a little shy of taking the stranger into his house, but when he had been shown a chest full of the most beautiful pearls and precious stones, which the Dutchman bade his sailors bring ashore, and when he was told that all this would be his if he would offer the stranger shelter under his roof for only one night, he consented readily enough.

“And if,” added the Dutchman, “I find in your country the maiden I am seeking, who will be true to me till death, you shall have all the wealth in my ship, of which this chest is hardly the smallest part.”

So the sea captain had no longer any doubt about inviting the Dutchman to his house, but he was rather taken aback when he was asked :

“Have you a daughter?”

“Certainly,” he replied, “a sweet girl.”

“Let her be my wife!”

So, remembering all the treasure he had seen, and all he had heard of, the captain said he would let his daughter be the Dutchman's wife, if she herself would consent; for though he loved her very much, he loved riches very much too.

Meantime the wind had dropped, and the sea soon became so much calmer that the captain was able to sail for home, the Dutchman promising to follow as soon as his men were a little more rested.

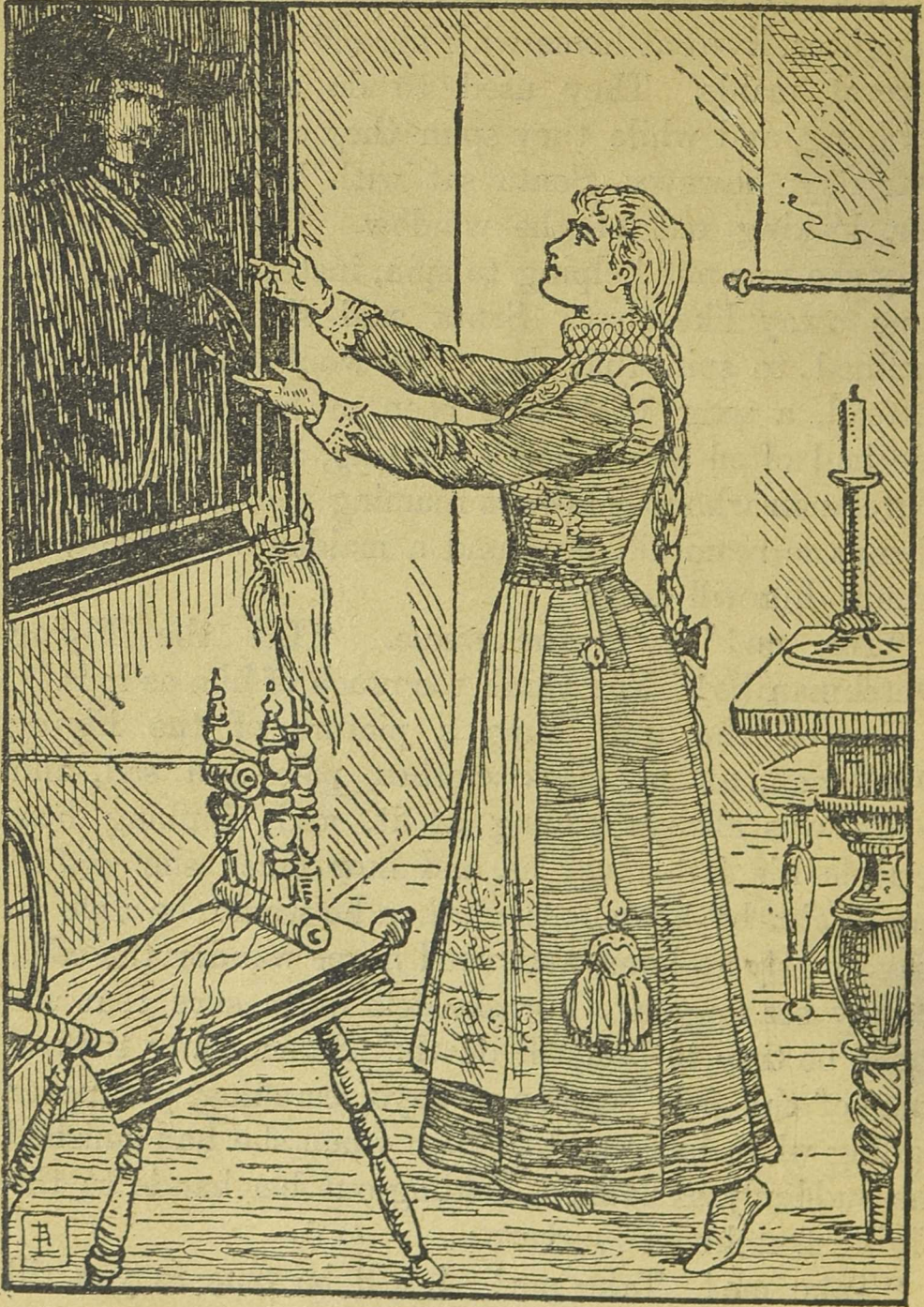
Now, while her father was away at sea, Senta, his daughter, lived at home with her old nurse, Mary, and several maids. They used to do a great deal of spinning, and while they spun they often sang songs. One day, however, Senta sat with her hands before her, looking out of the window. Her nurse asked why she was not helping to spin, instead of idling her time away like that. Senta said she did not feel inclined to spin that day; she would sing to them, instead, a song that had been in her mind, which she had often heard her nurse sing, about the Flying Dutchman who was always roaming the sea, and must always so roam till he found a maiden who would be true to him till death.

“No, no!” said the nurse. “Let the Flying Dutchman be! You think too much of him as it is.”

For on the wall hung a picture of the Flying Dutchman, all in black clothes, pale and sad, and Senta was always gazing at it, and thinking how terrible his fate must be, and how much she wished she might be his wife, and then he would be able to stay quietly at home and need never wander the cold, stormy seas again. For she felt quite sure that *she* could be true to him till death. So she sang the sad song of the pale seaman, always searching, yet never finding what he sought. Then when she had finished she suddenly exclaimed, holding out her hands to the Flying Dutchman's picture:

“Take me! Take me! I will be true to you till death, if only I may find you!”

Her nurse and the maidens thought she had gone



"TAKE ME! TAKE ME! I WILL BE TRUE TILL DEATH."

mad, and called for help, when a young hunter, named Eric, rushed in. He had been standing outside under the window, and heard what Senta so rashly vowed to do. Senta had almost promised to marry him, and he loved her greatly.

“Senta,” he said, “your father’s ship is coming in. It is quite close now.”

Then the nurse and the maids bustled away to get ready for their master, and Senta and Eric were left alone. Eric, who had feared for some time past that she did not love him, then told her of a dream he had had which made him more uneasy than ever. In this dream he saw two men on a strange ship, nearing the land. One was Senta’s father, and the other, as he knew from his black clothes and his pale, sad looks, must be the Flying Dutchman, for it was just like his picture. He dreamt that Senta came running to kiss her father, and then fell down at the stranger’s feet, clasping his knees. The stranger raised her, and she kissed him, and then he saw them sail away out of sight together.

Senta listened to him with delight. Then she cried out that already she felt the Flying Dutchman was seeking for her; she knew it. She must see him and perish with him.

“Then my dream spoke true,” said Eric.

Just then her father and the strange captain were seen coming up the path to the house.

“Senta, my child, what is it?” her father called to her. “Here I am at the door. Are you not going to kiss me?”

But Senta did not move. "Who is the stranger with you, father?" she asked breathlessly.

Then her father told her how he had found the Dutchman, who had a whole ship-load of the costliest treasures, and how he had asked him to be their guest for that night. He added that he hoped that Senta would be very friendly to him—indeed, love him if she could, and then she should marry him the very next day.

He left Senta alone with the Dutchman, and in a few minutes she had promised to be his bride, and to be true to him till death. Then he asked her whether it was not too hard for her? Could she bear so much pain? Could she really be true to him till death? Could she be strong where so many others had been weak?

To all these questions Senta gave the same answer, ever more and more steadfastly: "I will be true to you till death."

Now, in the harbour of the little town where Senta lived, her father's ship and the Dutchman's lay at anchor close together; but both the sailors and the townsfolk soon noticed that the Dutchman's ship was not like other ships. There was something strange about it. The Norwegian ship was brightly lit up, and a sound of feasting and merry-making came from it, for the sailors were glad to be in port again after such a storm. The Dutchman's ship was dark and silent as the grave. And when the Norwegian sailors' wives and sisters and lovers came to bring them wine and good cheer, they hailed the Dutchman's ship, and



BUT SENTA CLUNG TO HIM, BESEECHING HIM TO STAY.

offered some to the sailors on board it also. But the ship still remained silent and dark as ever, and the kindly Norwegian folk got no answer. Then the sailors called to the stranger ship, but still there was no answer, nor even a light anywhere to be seen. And the sailors, who had seen how old and pale the Dutchman's crew were, began to wonder whether they might not all be dead, while their wives and lovers began to be afraid, and said the ship must be manned with ghosts, for they neither drank, nor sang, nor spoke.

"Let dead men be!" said the Norwegian sailors at last, and they began to sing and think no more of their uncanny neighbours.

Suddenly the sea all around the Dutchman's ship became stormy and covered with white-crested waves, though everywhere else it was quite calm. A weird blue light from the phantom ship lit up the tossing sea, and the ghostly sailors began to sing, but such a wild and mournful song that the Norwegian sailors shivered with fright and rushed below, making the sign of the Cross as they went, at which the other sailors laughed loudly. Then the sea became quiet once more, and the strange ship was dark and silent as before.

Now Eric, feeling that Senta was slipping from him, and fearing more and more that she would sail away with the Dutchman and be lost to them all, was trying once more to persuade her to stay, but she would not listen to him. As they were talking, the Dutchman chanced to pass by and overhear them; but as he only heard part of what they said, he misunderstood it, and

thought Senta was allowing Eric to tell her how much he loved her, instead of sending him away, and that she was therefore no more true to him than any of the other maidens had been. He was terribly distressed.

“Lost! Lost!” he cried. “Once more the happiness I thought I had regained is lost! Senta, good-bye.”

And he turned towards the sea to go to his ship, and once more begin another seven years’ roaming from Pole to Pole over the lonely seas.

But Senta clung to him, beseeching him to stay.

“Set sail! Weigh anchor!” he called to his men. Then, turning to Senta, he said:

“Listen, from what I am saving you! I am condemned to the most pitiless of fates. To die ten times over would be easier. And only a maiden can save me from it, only a maiden who vows before God to be true to me till death. You have vowed to be true to me, but not yet before God. This saves you. And listen how terrible is the lot of those who make the vow and break it. Everlasting punishment is their fate, and numberless victims have already endured it because they made a vow to be true to me till death, but broke it. But you shall be saved. It is not yet too late.”

Yet Senta only clung to him the more, saying:

“It is I, I who will end your long pain—I who will save you through my faith—I who will be true to you till death.”

Then he reminded her that as yet she did not know



DEATH OF SENTA AND THE SINKING OF THE SHIP.

even who he was. "Ask the seas of every clime," he said. "Ask the seamen sailing them. They know my ship. It is the terror of all seas, and the terror of all that sail them. The Flying Dutchman is my name."

Then he entered his ship and at once set sail. But Senta rushed to the shore, toward a tall cliff jutting over the sea, and as the phantom ship sailed away, she stretched out her arms to it. Her father called to her, her lover, her friends, but she heeded them not. Once more she cried aloud that she would take the curse from the wandering ship and its captain; that she would be true to him till death; and then she threw herself into the sea.

Instantly the phantom ship sank; the sun shone out on the waters as they closed over it, and from its wreck the forms of Senta and her lover rose to heaven, and were never seen again.

At last the curse was taken from the Flying Dutchman, for he had found a maiden who was true to him till death. Never more should he roam the seas from Pole to Pole, and never since has his phantom ship with its ghostly sailors been seen upon the seas.



"I AM SURE SHE MUST HAVE MURDERED HIM."

THE KNIGHT OF THE SWAN.

LONG, long ago, so says the story, the good folk of Antwerp were much excited because they were to receive a visit from their King and Emperor, Henry, called "The Fowler." When he came, he was to sit in state under a mighty oak in a meadow near the tower, through which ran the broad river Scheldt. Here he had bidden his nobles and squires to meet him, that together they might hold a Court of Justice, and try to settle the squabbles that were always breaking out among the people of Brabant.

He was attended by a number of German nobles, and all the Brabant nobles were there too, with the townsfolk, to welcome him. When all was ready, the King's herald sounded his trumpet, and Henry rose and addressed the people. Among other things, he asked the men of Brabant why they were always quarrelling. Then Frederick von Telramund, Count of Brabant, stood forth, and said :

"King, when the old Duke of Brabant died, he asked me to take care of his two children, Elsa and Gottfried. Elsa he promised should be my bride when she was old enough. One day Elsa went with her little brother into the woods, and came back without him. She told us that she had lost him, but we could never find him, and now I am quite sure she must have murdered him. I gave up all right to marry her, and now I publicly accuse her of the murder of her own brother, and I have chosen another wife, Ortrud, and as next of kin we claim the Dukedom of Brabant."

Neither the King nor any of those present could believe that Elsa had done this shocking thing.

“Proud maid,” went on the angry Count, “she haughtily refused to marry me.” Which was not at all what he had said before. “She is a wicked, wicked woman !”

Then the King ordered Elsa to be brought before him, and he hung his shield upon the oak tree, saying never again should he wear it till he had meted out justice to Elsa. And all the men present unsheathed their swords, and drove them into the ground, saying never again should they be sheathed till judgment had been given.

When Elsa came in, dressed very simply in white, with a long train of women, also dressed in white, every one thought how beautiful and how innocent she looked. To the dreadful charge against her she answered hardly a word. At last she amazed every one by telling of a wonderful dream she had had of a knight in bright armour, with a golden horn at his hip, who had appeared to her and comforted her, promising to help her if ever she had need of him.

The King then asked Count Frederick whether he were quite sure of Elsa's guilt. He replied that he was, a trustworthy witness having sworn to it. This witness was Frederick's wife, Ortrud. Before his marriage, and when he still wished to marry Elsa, Ortrud, who was a witch, had stolen young Gottfried away and turned him into a swan. Then she told Frederick that she had seen Elsa drown her brother. Frederick believed her, and married her.



ELSA TOLD OF A WONDERFUL DREAM SHE HAD HAD.

Ortrud was the witness of whom Frederick spoke, but he thought it beneath his dignity as a noble to produce any proof of what he said. His word as a noble must suffice, and he would uphold his word with his sword. "Here I stand," said he. "Here is my sword. Who will fight with me for my honour?"

But none of the Brabant nobles would fight against him, and the King was sorely puzzled what to do, for Frederick had been a most faithful soldier and servant to him. "God alone shall be judge in this matter," said he.

Then the King asked Elsa whom she chose to be her champion to risk his life in her defence, and Elsa named the unknown knight in bright armour. The four trumpeters sounded the trumpet, and the herald said:

"Whoever will fight before God for Elsa of Brabant, let him stand forth!"

But though they waited long, none came.

Then Elsa begged the King that once more the trumpets might sound, and this was done. But though again they waited long, none came.

Then Elsa sank on her knees, praying that in her hour of need her knight might come to her; and suddenly in the distance a little boat appeared on the river, drawn by a white swan, and in the boat stood a knight. On his head was a shining silver helmet, and he carried a large silver shield, with no name nor inscription, but only a large white swan emblazoned on it. By his side hung a small golden horn, and he leaned on his sword. Every one took him to be a



“FAREWELL, DEAR SWAN.”

hero sent from heaven, and a great shout of joy went up when he stepped out of the boat.

"Farewell, dear Swan," said the Knight as he left the boat; and at once the Swan silently turned the boat round and sailed away up the river. The Knight stepped slowly forward and bowed to the King, and then turned to Elsa and asked her whether she would marry him should he conquer in the fight. Elsa replied that she would be his, body and soul.

"Elsa," then said the Knight, "if I am to be your husband, and never leave you again, you must promise me one thing: you must never ask me either whence I come, or what I am, or what is my name."

This Elsa promised never to do; but the Knight made her promise it twice before he stepped forth to the fight. The King and the nobles called on God to reward the right; the trumpeters blew a loud blast; the King beat thrice with his sword upon his shield; and the fight began. After a short, fierce contest, Count Frederick lay stretched on the ground and the Knight of the Swan had conquered.

"God has given me the victory," said he to Frederick, "and I give you your life. May you repent of your wickedness."

Then every one rejoiced greatly, except Frederick, whose honour was lost, and Ortrud, his wife, who raged to see her husband defeated. But no one took any notice of them, and every one shouted for joy, and made exceeding merry.

Count Frederick and Ortrud were now banished from Court, and no one would have anything to do



THE KNIGHT SPARES FREDERICK'S LIFE,

with them, so that the once proud noble and his haughty wife became little better than beggars. Instead of being bidden to the kingly feasts in the palace, they now had to wander about the streets.

One night they were sitting on the steps of the great cathedral, looking across the square at the palace, where music and dancing were going on. Count Frederick spoke very bitterly to his wife, accusing her of being the cause of all his disgrace. "And now," said he, "I have not even a sword to kill you with!"

But Ortrud called her husband a coward, and many other hard names, for sitting down and weeping so helplessly over his disgrace, instead of trying to revenge himself.

"Would you not like to know the name of the Knight of the Swan, and who he really is?" she asked. "I tell you, if once he is made to give up his secret, all his power will be gone; but only one person can make him do this, and that is Elsa. What we have to do is to make Elsa question him, and this I will undertake. I am sure the Knight of the Swan is an enchanted Knight, and every enchanted person has only to lose a limb, even a toe or finger, and he is as powerless as a common mortal. If you could just cut off one of his fingers, you would have him in your power, and this *you* must undertake."

As they were laying their wicked plans, Elsa appeared on a balcony of the palace. It was the eve of the day on which she was to marry the Knight. Ortrud softly called to her in a piteous voice, asking



COUNT FREDERICK AND ORTRUD ON THE STEPS OF THE CATHEDRAL.

whether she, who was so happy, had no pity for a poor outcast, the wife of a man guilty of a terrible crime, of which he now bitterly repented. And Ortrud appeared so humble, so forlorn and forsaken, that Elsa was quite deceived; and though the Knight had begged her never to have anything to do with Ortrud, she came down with her maids and let her into the palace.

Early on the wedding-day morning the King's herald announced that Frederick was in disgrace, and that the King had given the county and crown of Brabant to the God-sent Knight whom Elsa had chosen as her bridegroom.

Presently a long procession of richly dressed women came out of the palace and moved towards the cathedral. Among them was Ortrud, no longer in rags, but richly dressed, though every one held aloof from her, and looked at her askance. Soon Elsa herself appeared, in her beautiful bridal dress, and walked towards the cathedral; while the knights and young nobles, and, indeed, all the people, shouted for joy. But hardly had she set foot on the cathedral steps, when Ortrud, furiously angry, went up to her and stopped her, saying rudely, "Go back, Elsa! I have followed you long enough as if I were your servant. I will put up with it no longer. It is I who should go first, not you!"

"What does this mean? What has so changed you since last night?" asked Elsa.

"Shall I always grovel before you?" said Ortrud. "My husband may be unjustly banished, but at least



"GO BACK, ELSA!" SAID ORTRUD,

he was a man known and honoured throughout the land. But your husband—does any one know him? Can even you tell his name? Can you?" she repeated, the tide of her rage rising. "You do not even know that he is nobly born. No doubt he had his reasons for bidding you never ask him who he is."

Now Elsa, though she could not help being greatly troubled by what Ortrud said, yet spoke very severely to her, assuring her that nothing she could say, however wicked, could make any difference to her love for the Knight.

Ortrud was still taunting the bride about her bridegroom, when the cry arose, "Make way for the King!" and King Henry, with his nobles, all richly clad in furred robes, with gold chains about their necks, came out of the palace. The King and the Knight pressed forward to know the cause of so unseemly a dispute, and Elsa, throwing herself in her bridegroom's arms, appealed to him for protection against the woman whom she, out of pity, yet in spite of his warnings, had let into the palace.

Then Frederick, who had been all this time waiting his chance to make trouble, stepped forward and denounced the Knight as a deceiver, nameless and unknown. "He cannot be a true knight," said Frederick, "or he would not have come with only a wild swan for escort."

The Knight answered that even to the King he could not tell who he was, nor whence he came; to Elsa alone he could tell this, and he begged her never to ask him.



FREDERICK BURST INTO THE ROOM, BUT WAS STRUCK DOWN DEAD.

At last Frederick and Ortrud were bidden begone, and the great organ began to play a wedding march, and the bells to ring out merrily, and Elsa and the Knight stood before the altar.

When the wedding feast and all the festivities were over, and Elsa and the Knight were left alone, she forgot her promises to him never to ask him who he was, nor whence he came, nor what his name was; but at first she did not dare ask him directly. The Knight, however, knew that the fatal questions were hovering on her lips. At last she said:

“I cannot be happy unless I know—”

Then she stopped, and stared in front of her, for she thought she saw the white Swan gliding along the river again, drawing the little boat in which the Knight had come.

“I cannot be happy,” she went on. “Indeed, I would give my life to know who you are.”

“Elsa, think what you are doing.”

“Tell me your name?”

“Stop!” cried the Knight.

“Where did you come from?”

“Alas! alas!”

“What are you?”

“Alas! alas! What have you done?”

Suddenly Elsa saw through a half-open door Frederick and four nobles with drawn swords. She seized the Knight's sword and handed it to him, and when Frederick broke in, it was only to be struck down dead by one blow. The four nobles dropped their swords, and fell on their knees. Elsa sank down

in a faint, and there was a long silence. Then the Knight said, sorrowfully :

“ Alas ! alas ! We can never be happy now.”

The day was now breaking, and at the Knight's bidding the four nobles carried off Frederick's body, whilst four of Elsa's waiting-women dressed her in her richest robes and jewels and brought her before the King, where the Knight was waiting to answer her questions.

“ In a far off land,” said the Knight, “ there is a town called Monsalvat, and in the town a temple more beautiful than any other in the world, and in the temple is a sacred treasure, a blessed chalice, the Holy Grail, which a troop of angels brought there. Every year a dove flies down from heaven to renew its marvellous powers. Knights are chosen to guard the Holy Grail, and are endowed by it with more than earthly powers ; but if a Knight of the Grail comes among men, he can only remain there so long as he is unknown. If once it is found out that he is a Knight of the Grail, so holy is his service that he must return at once to the other knights guarding the sacred chalice. Now, Parsival [*i.e.*, Percival] is my father, and I am a Knight of the Holy Grail. By it I was sent here to help a distressed maiden, and my name is Lohengrin.”

With great awe did the King and his nobles and Elsa herself hear the Knight proclaim his birth and position. Well they knew the story of the Holy Grail, the sacred cup from which, so said the legend, Christ drank the wine at the Last Supper—how it



"I AM A KNIGHT OF THE HOLY GRAIL, AND LOHENGRIN IS MY NAME."

glowed and shone as if made of light ; how it could heal sick folk ; and how, so holy was it, that only the pure in heart could ever see it. Far away above all other earthly knights were the small band of men who were deemed worthy to defend the Holy Grail, and of these Lohengrin was almost the greatest. While they gazed at him in sad silence, the Knight turned to Elsa and tenderly bade her farewell. She clung to him, entreating to be saved from her fate ; but he answered that her sin could have but one punishment, and he must leave her for ever. The Holy Grail was calling him ; he was its Knight and must obey.

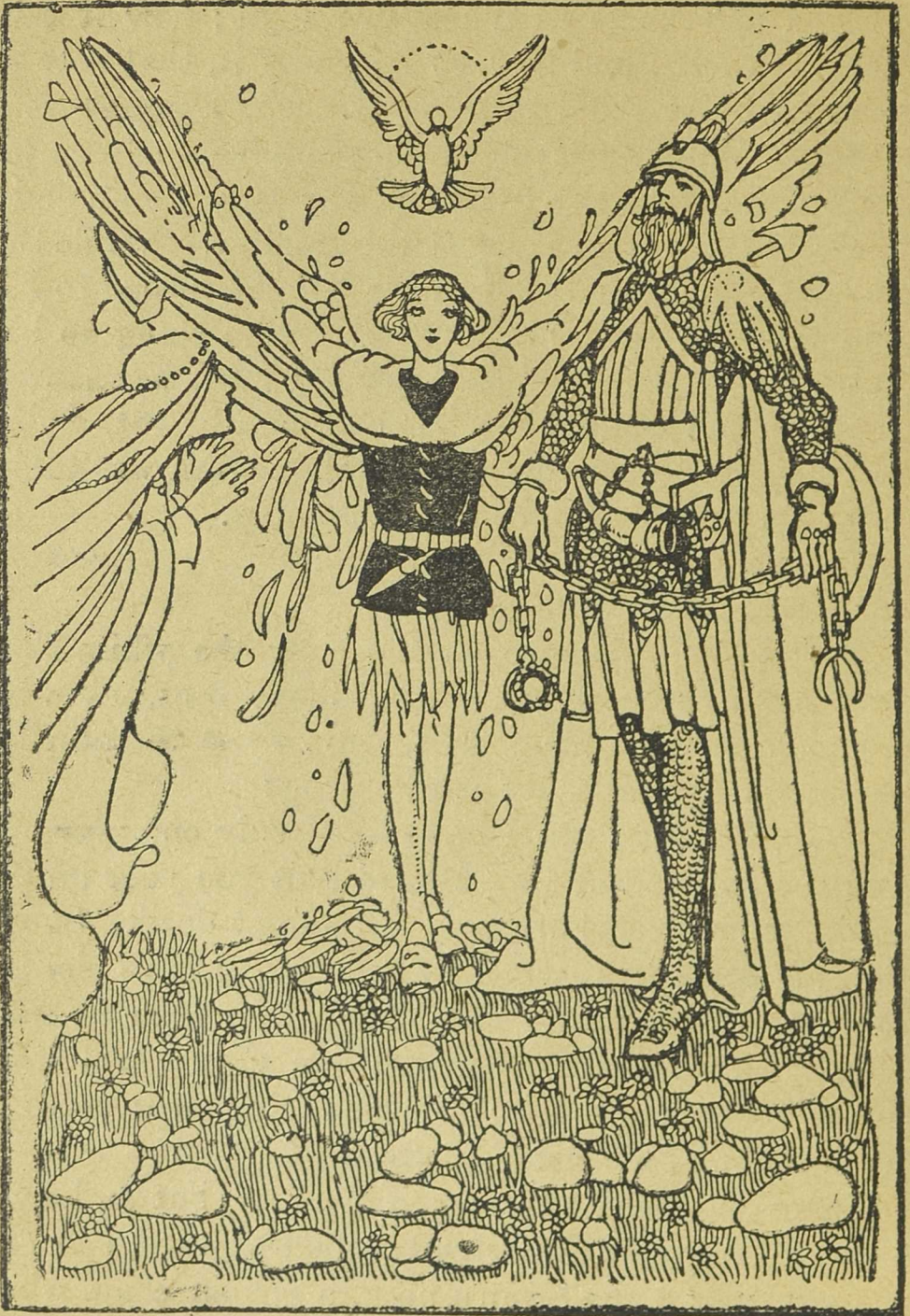
Even as he spoke the cry arose :

“The Swan ! The Swan !”

And in the distance on the river the white Swan was again seen drawing the little boat, as when Lohengrin first came. As it drew close to the shore Lohengrin looked sadly at it, saying :

“Oh, Elsa, if I could have lived only one year with you the Holy Grail would have sent you your brother again, your brother whom you thought dead. Should he ever come now, when I am far away, give him this horn, this sword, and this ring. The horn he must always blow when in danger ; the sword will bring him victory in battle ; and the ring will serve to remind him of his sister’s deliverer.”

Then the Knight turned to the boat, but as he was about to step into it, Ortrud rushed forward, and said she saw, round the Swan’s neck, a golden chain which she knew to be the very one with which she bewitched Elsa’s brother Gottfried, and turned him into a swan



THE SWAN WAS CHANGED INTO GOTTFRIED.

She rejoiced to think that Elsa's pain, great before, must now be doubled. But Lohengrin had heard Ortrud's words, and was seen to kneel down and pray silently. Then a white dove flew down towards the boat, and Lohengrin joyfully sprang up and loosed the chain about the Swan's neck, when at once the spell was removed, and the Swan was changed into Gottfried, Elsa's long-lost brother, whom Lohengrin presented to the people as the Duke of Brabant, who would be their leader in battle instead of him. When Ortrud saw that her power was being brought to naught and remembered that her husband was dead and that she had a fresh and powerful enemy in young Gottfried, she lost heart, and fell on her face, dead. Whilst Elsa was embracing her brother, and all the people were crowding round, the Knight of the Swan, unperceived, quietly and sadly entered his boat, and passed swiftly away up the river and out of sight.

Of course this is not a true tale, only a beautiful legend; but once upon a time there were many people who believed it, and there was a certain famous noble family of Germany who said they were descendants of Lohengrin, Knight of the Swan, and who always bore the device of the white Swan on their shields and coat of arms. This was the noble house of Cleves, and the fourth Queen of Henry VIII., Anne of Cleves, belonged to this family.

THE RHINE MAIDENS.

LONG, very long ago, when people believed that there were water-nymphs in every river, three beautiful maidens were said to live in the Rhine, the great river which is as important to the people of Germany as the Thames is to the people of England. Folks said that on sunny days they often played and swam and splashed about in the cool water; but their home

was down at the very bottom of the river-bed, where they had to take care of a vast treasure of gold. In those days it was also believed that there was treasure—silver, or gold, or precious stones—at the bottom of every river, and that the water-nymphs were always obliged to guard it. Otherwise they would not have had enough to do, and would have been certain to get into mischief.

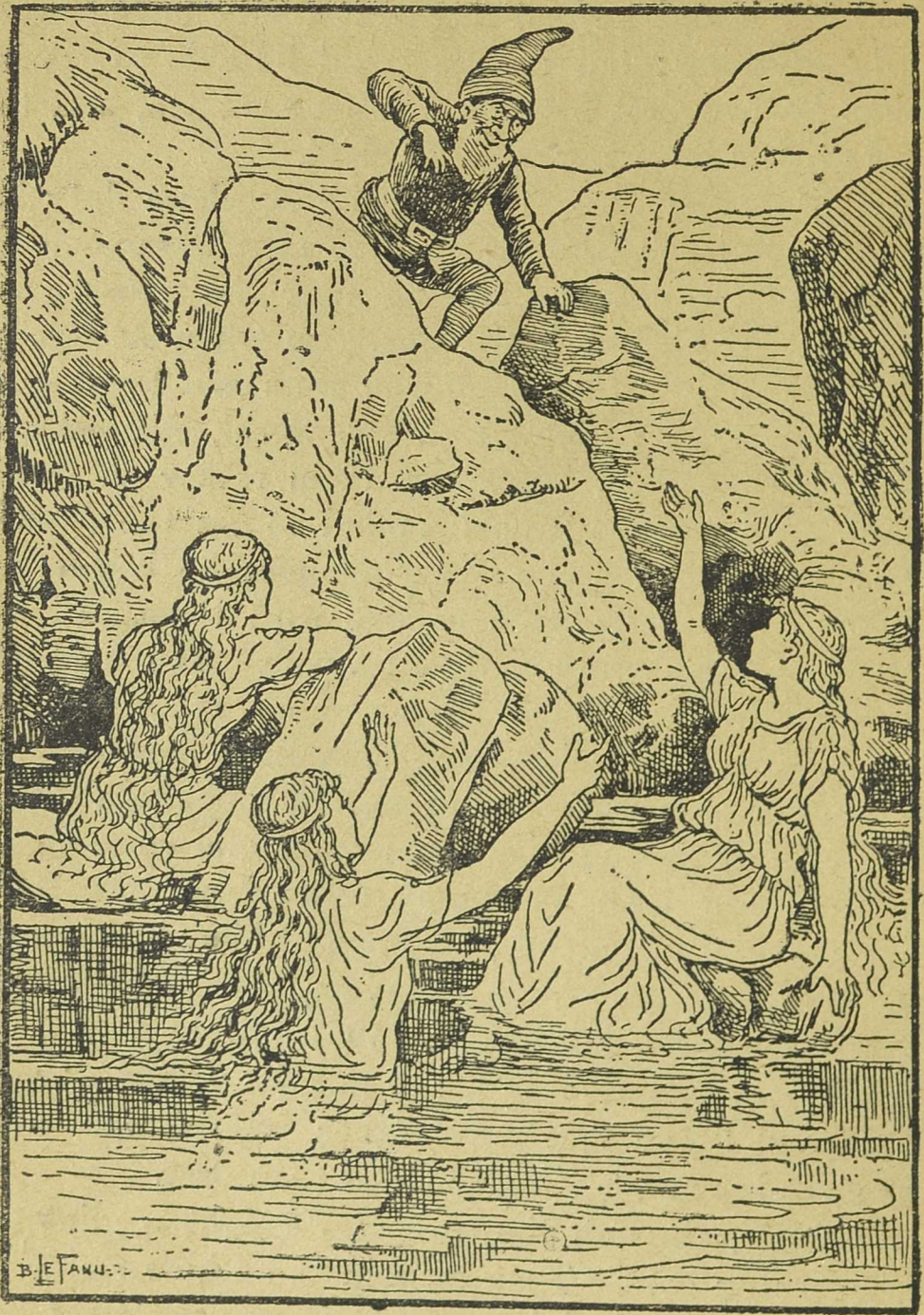
It was the Rhine maidens' father who had given them the gold to keep, telling them that whoever



could get it and make a ring of it would have power to do anything; but no one would be able to get it unless he had first sworn to love no woman, and to have neither home nor wife nor child.

One day, the three Rhine maidens, whose duty it was to guard the Rhine gold, were merrily swimming about, and certainly not looking after the treasure as well as they should have done. So when Alberich, one of the ugly little dwarfs who were said to live in the Land of Mist underneath the world, climbed up into the Rhine-bed, he caught them rather off their guard. He had made up his mind to get the Rhine gold; so to deceive the water-nymphs, he began to pretend to be very much in love with them, and to want one of them very badly for a wife. The maidens fell into the trap, though they were not at all pleased that such an ugly, misshapen, hairy little man should be wanting to marry one of them, and they made great game of him, teasing him and letting him come close to them, and then swimming away from him, and telling him how frightful they thought him; so that at last the dwarf grew very angry, for though he knew he was ugly, he did not like to think anyone else thought so too, and he began to call the nymphs "wet arms" and "wet face" and other rude names, and was more bent on getting the gold than ever.

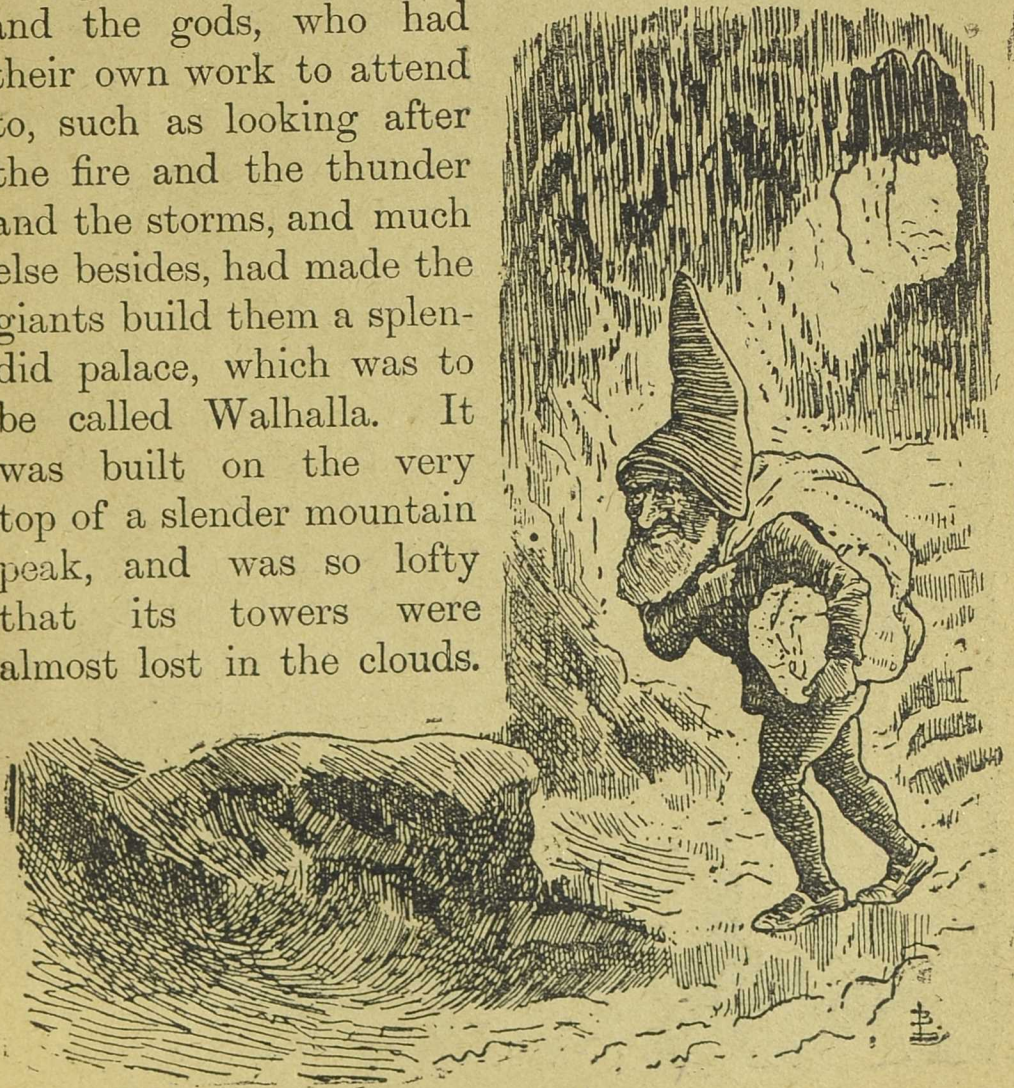
Suddenly, through the water he caught a glint of the gleaming gold. Then he told the Rhine maidens how foolish they had been; that it was not they he came for, it was their gold. And quickly he dived for the gold, while the water-nymphs fled in terror.



ALBERICH DECEIVES THE RHINE MAIDENS.

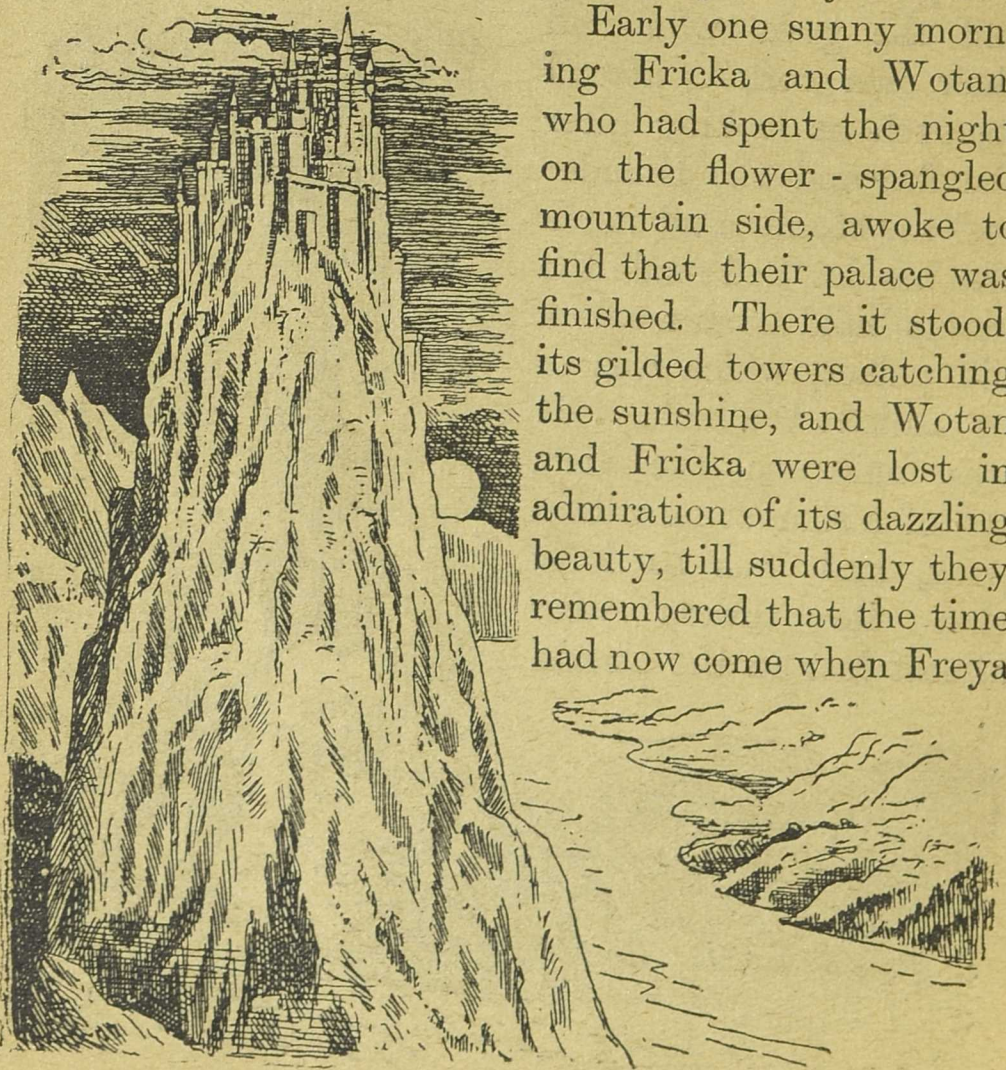
In a moment the dwarf had torn the gold from the rocks where it was kept, and disappeared down the way leading to the Land of Mist. The Rhine maidens ran after him, but the way to the under world was very dark; and though they could hear his shrill, mocking laughter out of the darkness, they could not follow him.

Now in those days people believed in strange gods and giants, as well as in water-nymphs and dwarfs; and the gods, who had their own work to attend to, such as looking after the fire and the thunder and the storms, and much else besides, had made the giants build them a splendid palace, which was to be called Walhalla. It was built on the very top of a slender mountain peak, and was so lofty that its towers were almost lost in the clouds.



Here Wotan, the chief of the gods, meant to live with Fricka his wife, who was the chief of the goddesses, and with them were to dwell for ever the souls of all the heroes slain in battle. But the giants were rather idle folk, and did not want the trouble of building a palace for the gods, so they said they must be well paid for their work, and they would only do it at all if in return the gods would give them Freya, Fricka's sister and the goddess of perpetual youth.

Early one sunny morning Fricka and Wotan, who had spent the night on the flower-spangled mountain side, awoke to find that their palace was finished. There it stood, its gilded towers catching the sunshine, and Wotan and Fricka were lost in admiration of its dazzling beauty, till suddenly they remembered that the time had now come when Freya



must be given up to the giants. Wotan comforted his wife, saying he had never really meant to give Freya up; but Fricka shook her head, for she knew the giants would not be cheated out of their bargain.

Then Freya herself came up, and begged them not to let the giants carry her off, as one of them had already threatened to do. Wotan suggested that they should find Loge, the Fire-god, who was a cunning, crafty fellow, and ask him to help them to get out of their bargain with the giants. Just then the giants came up, armed with great clubs, to carry off Freya. They asked whether they had not done their work well, saying they had toiled at it day and night, and had not closed their eyes till it was finished. Wotan asked how he should pay them, for he could not give them Freya; at which they grew very angry, and even insulting, saying that nothing but Freya would content them.

Now they wanted her not only because she was so sweet and young and lovely, and one of them thought she would make him a very good wife, but because she had a garden in which grew the golden apples of youth. Whoever ate this fruit never grew old; but Freya alone knew how to prune and tend the trees, and the giants knew that the gods kept young only because she often gave them these golden youth-apples, and if she did not tend the trees they would bear no more fruit, and then the gods would grow old and grey and wrinkled, like ordinary mortals. So they said again that Freya they must and would have.

Presently the Thunder-god and the Storm-god came



THE GIANTS ASK WOTAN FOR FREYA.

hurrying up, and then the Fire-god, who had been too busy to come before, for he had been running about all over the world trying to find something to offer to the giants instead of Freya—something better and more precious than a woman to love and care for; but he had found nothing better, nothing even so good. While he had been away, however, he had met the three Rhine maidens, who had told him how Alberich, the dwarf, had robbed them of their store of gold; whereupon the Fire-god promised that Wotan should punish the dwarf and restore the gold to the maidens. This, however, Wotan would not do.

Now the giants had heard the Fire-god's story, and thought perhaps they might take the Rhine gold instead of Freya, seeing which the Fire-god began to tell them what wonderful powers would belong to any one who could make a ring out of that gold: and in the end the giants agreed to take the gold. But Wotan was thinking how much he would like to have the magic ring that could be made out of it, so partly because he coveted the ring, and partly because he thought it beneath the dignity of the chief of the gods to steal, even from a thievish dwarf, he refused to get the gold for the giants, and they departed with Freya, to the great grief of the gods.

But no sooner had Freya, the Youth-goddess gone, than the gods, as the giants had hoped, began to grow old and pale and grey-haired and wrinkled; and the Fire-god, who was often impertinent as well as cunning, told them rudely that without Freya and her golden apples of youth they must become feebler



FREYA AND THE GOLDEN APPLES OF YOUTH.

and feebler, till at last the race of gods would die out.

Then Wotan suddenly arose, and bidding the Fire-god come with him, said they two would go down to the Land of Mist, and take the Rhine gold from the dwarf. So they went away down a cleft in the mountain side, out of which rose yellow sulphur smoke, which smelt horrible and nearly stifled the gods. The Thunder-god, the Storm-god, and Fricka called "good-bye" after them, feeling very anxious, and not knowing when they should see their chief, the Fire-god, again.

When Wotan and the Fire-god arrived in the Land of Mist, below the earth, where the dwarfs dwelt, they heard an unearthly howling and squealing, and, looking about, they found that all the noise came from one of the dwarfs, who was rolling and kicking about on the ground, evidently in great pain.

"Oh! Oh! Oh! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ow! Ow! Ow! Ee! Ee! Ee! Let me alone!" he yelled, as the Fire-god bent over him to see what the matter was. The poor dwarf, when he had got over his fright, said his name was Mime, that he was a smith, and that Alberich had ordered of him a peculiar kind of helmet. One day Alberich came and said he wanted this helmet, but Mime said it was not ready yet, whereupon Alberich dragged him about by the ear and beat and kicked and cuffed him till he had to give up the helmet, which Alberich seized and put on his head, when suddenly Mime saw him no more; there was only a pillar of cloud where Alberich had been.



GOING DOWN INTO THE LAND OF MIST.

"Where are you?" said Mime. "I can't see you."

"Then feel me," said Alberich. And he cuffed and thrashed him more unmercifully than ever.

And that was what Mime was howling about. Already, he said, Alberich was far too powerful, and lorded it over all the other dwarfs, because of the ring he had made out of the Rhine gold, one of the magic powers of which was that of instantly finding gold wherever there was any to be found.

Once upon a time the dwarfs had been very happy, making trinkets for their wives (for it seems they were nearly all goldsmiths, or smiths of one sort or another), but now Alberich kept them constantly digging and delving for the gold that he was for ever finding by means of his magic ring.

And now that Alberich had a helmet which made him invisible, things would be worse than ever for the other dwarfs. Mime said he had tried not to give it up, and even told a little fib when he said it was not ready; but all was in vain. Then he began rubbing his back, and howling again, as he remembered the beating he had had, and he looked so sorry for himself, and pulled such rueful faces, that Wotan and the Fire-god could not help laughing, but they told him that they would free him and all the other dwarfs from Alberich's heavy yoke.

Just then there was a great noise, and Alberich himself came in, driving some dwarfs before him with a long whip. His helmet was hanging from his waist-belt, so that he was no longer invisible. He ordered the dwarfs off to dig for more gold, whipped Mime



ALBERICH TURNS HIMSELF INTO A SNAKE.

till he went with them, and roughly asked Wotan and the Fire-god what business they had in the Land of Mist.

Wotan replied very politely that they had heard such tales of the wonders worked by Alberich that they had come hoping they might see something for themselves. Alberich then began to talk very boastfully of what he could do, till the Fire-god had to remind him how once he lay cowering in holes and caves till he—the Fire-god—was good enough to give him light and warmth, and he hinted that Alberich might not always get fire and light and warmth from him, and then where would he be?

But Alberich thought himself quite powerful enough to insult the Fire-god, who then began to flatter him, whereupon Alberich became still more boastful, and Wotan nearly lost his temper and was going to crush the insolent dwarf; but the cunning Fire-god made peace between them, and went on flattering Alberich more cleverly than ever, till at last he persuaded him to show them how he could change himself into any shape by means of the magic helmet of which he had been boasting. The wily Fire-god said he could hardly believe anything so wonderful could be made.

“Do you think I lie and brag, like Loge the Fire-god?” said Alberich; and, putting on the helmet, he at once changed himself into a huge snake, that reared itself from the ground, stretched out its long neck and put out its forked tongue at the gods in a very ugly way.

The Fire-god pretended to be half dead of fright.

Then suddenly the snake vanished, and Alberich the dwarf stood before them again.

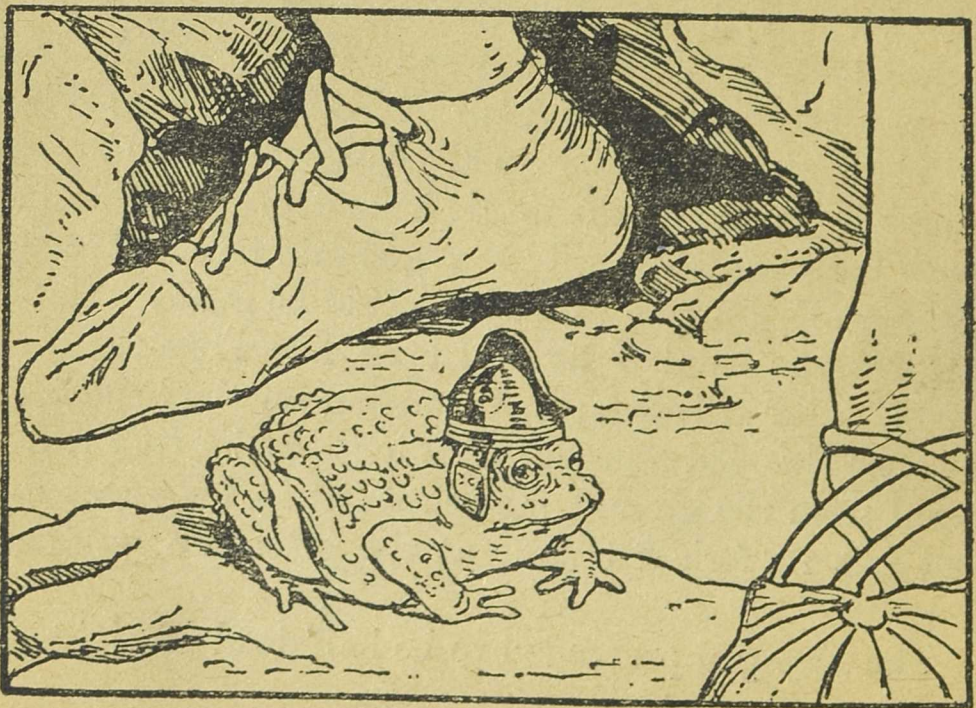
“He! he! he!” he tittered. “Now do you believe?”

The Fire-god said he did indeed; but could Alberich turn himself into something very small as well as something very big? To escape danger it seemed to him that it would be much better to be able to turn oneself into something very small. But perhaps, he added, that was too hard even for so clever a person as Alberich.

“Too hard, perhaps, for such a dolt as you!” said the dwarf. “How small shall I become?”

“Small enough to slip into the tiniest crevice, such as a toad would hide in,” said the Fire-god.

So Alberich again put on the helmet, and there in a crevice in the rocks, just in front of them, the gods saw a little grey toad hunched up in a ball.

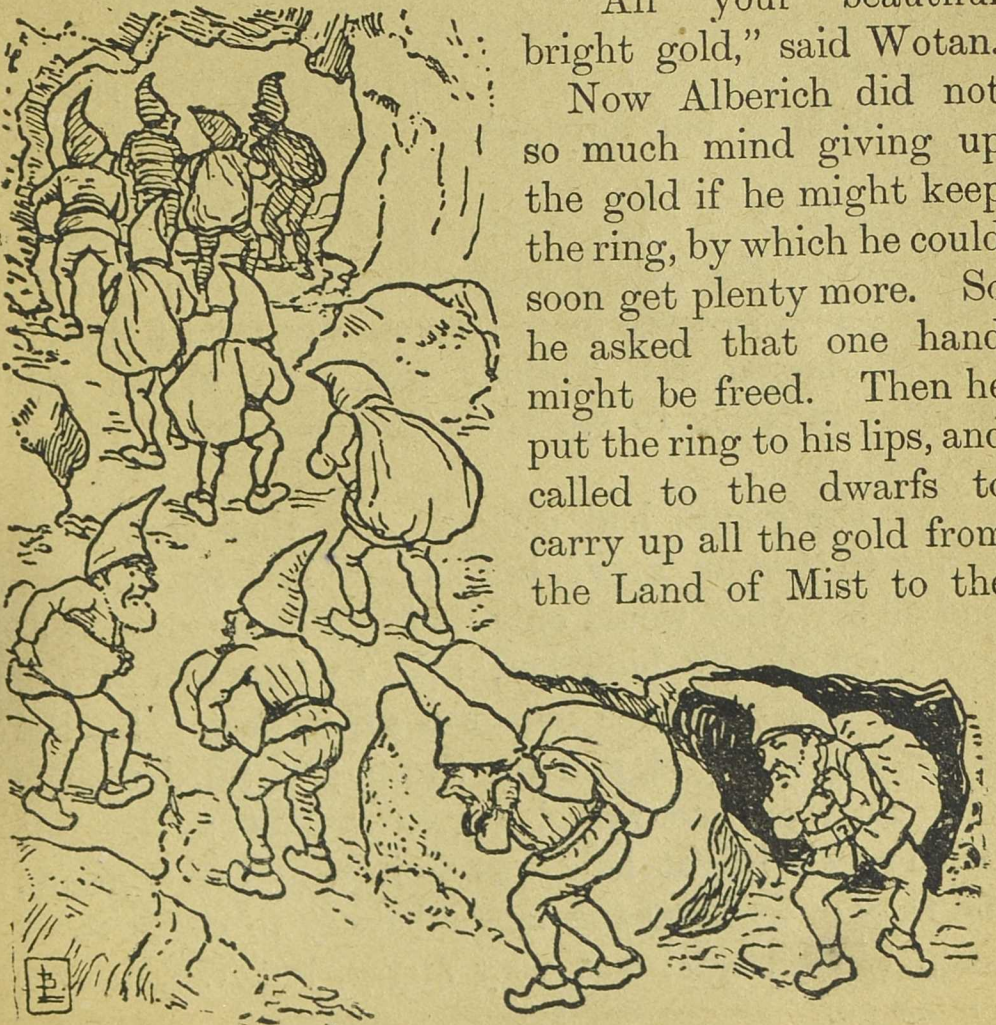


“Catch that toad, quick!” whispered the Fire-god to Wotan, and Wotan at once put his foot on it, while the Fire-god whipped the helmet off its head; and Alberich, now quite helpless, took his own shape again, and the Fire-god bound his arms and legs fast, and he and Wotan dragged him, raging and cursing, away with them into the upper world, to a beautiful, grassy, flowery mountain slope.

When the gods had Alberich in the upper world, he sulkily asked what they wanted from him?

“All your beautiful bright gold,” said Wotan.

Now Alberich did not so much mind giving up the gold if he might keep the ring, by which he could soon get plenty more. So he asked that one hand might be freed. Then he put the ring to his lips, and called to the dwarfs to carry up all the gold from the Land of Mist to the



upper world ; and presently troops of little men, laden with gold, were seen toiling up to the meadow. They stacked all their loads together and then disappeared into the world below again.

Then the Fire-god took the magic helmet and put it with the gold, and Wotan took the magic ring from the dwarf's finger and put it on his own, bidding the Fire-god set Alberich free.

So Alberich, before he went, left everything behind him for which he was asked, but he also left something for which he was not asked—a terrible curse, which he put on the gold and the ring, so that they should bring nothing but unhappiness to all who possessed them.

When he had done cursing, and had gone back to the Land of Mist, the Fire-god, looking down into the valley below, saw the giants approaching with Freya. The Storm-god, the Thunder-god, and Fricka also came in, rejoicing to see their chief and the Fire-god safe and sound.

Now the giants had come to say that they were willing to give up Freya, but as they had grown very fond of her, they would only do so for as much gold as would completely hide her, and as she was a tall maiden, this of course meant a great deal. So the giants, the Fire-god, and the Storm-god piled up the gold, till they had raised a great yellow wall. But still Freya's bright hair was visible, and the giants said they must have the magic helmet to cover it, at which the Fire-god was very angry, but Wotan said it must go.



THE GIANTS WERE APPROACHING WITH FREYA.

Then the other giant, who had been peering about to find chinks in the wall of gold, spied a tiny hole through which he could see one of Freya's bright eyes, and he cried out that this must be stopped up.

The Fire-god said the giants were really very greedy, and there was no more gold; for they had used it all. But the giants said there was still a little more, just enough to stop up the chink, and pointed to the magic ring on Wotan's finger.

Wotan was very unwilling to give up the ring, and a great dispute arose among the gods as to what should be done, and just as the giants were making ready to carry off Freya a second time, the Earth-goddess appeared, and told Wotan he had much better give up the gold, and in so doing avoid its curse. Then she disappeared into the dark cleft in the mountain-side whence she had come.

Now as Mother Earth was a very wise woman, Wotan did not like to go against her advice, so he threw the ring, much as he disliked doing so, on to the pile of gold, and the giants released Freya, whom the gods were all delighted to have among them again.

Then one of the giants spread out a huge sack, and began filling it with the gold, but his brother giant bade him stop, and not take it all for himself; and as they could not agree as to how much each should take, they asked the gods to decide for them.

"There's the ring: who's to have that?" said the Fire-god, who was always ready to add fuel to the flames of any dispute.

Whereupon the giants fell to quarrelling over the



THE EARTH-GODDESS APPEARS TO WOTAN.

ring, and they fought and fought till one of them was killed. His brother pulled the ring off his finger, stuffed it and all the rest of the gold hastily into the sack, and made off, while all the gods looked on in horror, thinking how quickly the curse had acted.

The Thunder-god then made a fearful noise, and he and the Storm-god together raised a storm and built a rainbow bridge across the meadow to the palace, over which all the gods passed. Only the Fire-god lingered behind. He knew that evil days were dawning for the gods, and as he bore them a grudge from the time they had caught and tamed him, he hoped that when they were destroyed he might be able to help do them to death with his flames.

Just as he, too, was about to cross the beautiful many-coloured bridge, the cry of the Rhine maidens came up from the valley lamenting their lost gold, but the gods only laughed at them, and then passed on into Walhalla.

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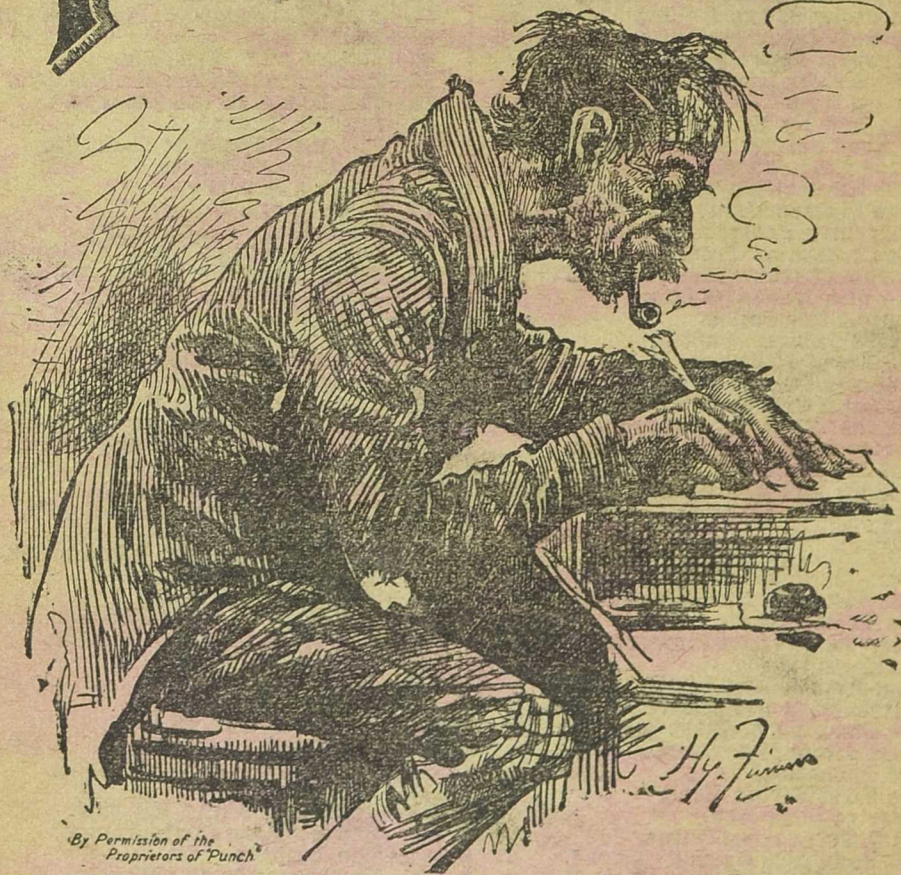
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