

WHERE IS FAIRYLAND?

THE ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY PRESS.



By order of the Fairy Godmother.

Frontispiece.

See page 139.

WHERE IS FAIRYLAND?

STORIES OF EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE

BY

JOSEPH F. CHARLES

AUTHOR OF "MODERN THOUGHT AND MODERN THINKERS"

"The waies, through which my weary steps I guyde In this delightfull land of Faery, Are so exceeding spacious and wyde, And sprinkled with such sweet variety Of all that pleasant is to eare or eye, That I, nigh ravisht with rare thoughts delight, My tedious travell doe forget thereby; And, when I 'gin to feel decay of might, It strength to me supplies, and chears my dulled spright."

SPENSER.

LONDON SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, & COMPANY Limited

St. Dunstan's Bouse Fetter Lane, Fleet Street

1892

To H. K. C. AND

A. I. C.

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WHERE IS FAIRYLAND?

CHAPTER I.

THE GIPSIES' CAMP.

FRED and Dona were original children; of that there could be no doubt. Their nurse said so, and if any one had a right to speak upon the subject, it was she, for she had known them ever since they were born. In her opinion there never were such children, and it was well that she had so good an opinion of them, because they had very few friends. Their mother had died when Dona was a baby; and, as to their father, "Well," said nurse, "he didn't deserve to have such children". He was "a man who was wrapped up in a telescope," she declared, and this is what she meant. He was very fond of looking at the stars through a great telescope, which he kept in a room made (9) especially for it at the top of an old tower. He used to spend hours and hours at night looking out to see if he could find a new star, and when it was day-time he stayed close beside his telescope, adding up long rows of figures, "trying to count the stars," nurse "Bless the man," she added, "he met Master said. Fred and Miss Dona on the stairs one day, and didn't hardly know 'em. 'Whose children are these?' said he, patting their heads, and when I told him, 'Dear me,' he cried out, quite surprised, 'are they mine? What nice little things they seem. They do you great credit, nurse.' Much credit they do him, star-gazing up there all night, and sleeping all day, like a heathen idolater as he is." Now nurse was an excellent woman, but in this case she was wrong, for Mr. Maitland was not a heathen idolater at all, and it may even be doubted if she knew what a heathen idolater is; at least I, who am writing this story for good little boys and girls to read, have never yet heard of a heathen idolater who spent all his time in looking at the stars through a big telescope. No! Mr. Maitland was not a heathen idolater, but what he was his children never could quite make out. They were very much afraid of him; indeed, Fred, who once caught sight of him in a flowing dressing-gown, looking very wise and grave with his long, grey beard floating over

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his chest, whispered to Dona that father was a wizard, and that perhaps Merlin came and helped him to count the stars, and bring them down to earth to turn into gold; for Merlin was the only wizard of whom Fred had ever heard, and he thought that the only good the little, glittering, yellow stars could be was to be turned into useful gold pieces of money. But Dona knew that her father was not a wizard, because she had heard cook last night talking to the housemaid about him, and cook had said very earnestly: "He's an astrologer, Susan. You mark my words, he's an astrologer, that's what he is." And Susan was very much surprised, as well she might be, and had exclaimed : "You don't say so?" several times, till Dona was quite sure that it must be true. So now she tossed her head, when Fred called him a wizard, and said with a superior air: "No, Fred, he isn't, he's an astolager. I heard cook say so," which of course settled the matter for a long while to come; and the children were very proud of having an astrologer for their father, for as far as they knew there was not another astrologer in all the country round. "There's a clergyman I know," said Fred, "and a huntsman, and a magistrate, and a s'licetter, but I never heard of an astolager."

"Fred," said Dona suddenly, "do you think when

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father has turned the stars into gold that he'll give us any?"

"Depends," answered Fred sagely, "on how much he gets."

"Because," continued Dona, "there are *heaps* of things I want to do with money."

"I want to buy a top," declared Fred. "What do you want?"

"Well, first of all," said Dona slowly, "I should buy bread, and meat, and coals for the gipsies."

"What gipsies?"

"Why, haven't you heard, there's a whole camp of gipsies come on to the common, and nurse says that they eat—what do you think?"

" What ? "

"Nasty, prickly hedgehogs, because they can't afford to buy beef and mutton. And they burn sticks, because they can't afford coals; and they live in tents, because they haven't got any houses."

The children were in the garden in front of the house as they talked, and just at this minute they heard a voice crying: "Buy a broom, buy a broom". Then a gipsy woman came up coaxing them.

"Buy a broom, my little gentleman and lady. See what nice little brooms to brush the paths with."

They certainly were pretty little toy brooms, and

the children were much tempted, but Dona felt obliged to explain.

"I am afraid we can't buy one to-day, thank you, because we haven't any money."

"Oh! it isn't money I want, my Darling. Any old clothes or a nice plate of bread and meat to feed the hungry mouths at home. See what pretty brooms!"

"Are they very hungry?" inquired Fred in an awestruck tone.

"Eh! but they are. Not a morsel o' bread has crossed their lips since sunset yesterday."

"Poor things," exclaimed both the children. "Why, they'll die of starvation. Nurse, nurse," they shouted. "Nurse, here are some poor little children dying of hunger. Please come quickly and help them."

"Dying of fiddlesticks," cried nurse, coming to the window and looking very cross. "You tramp off there, double quick," she exclaimed to the gipsy woman who was holding out her hands to beg. "And if you come here again with a pack o' lies, I'll set the dogs at you. Get off, can't you?"

The children were scared, for nurse could punish when she was angry, and they had never seen her so angry as she was now. The fact is that she knew that they ought not to have been so long out of her

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sight, and she was angry with herself as well as with them, though this they did not know. The poor gipsy turned and slunk away down the drive, and the children were left alone.

"Dona," said Fred, "let's run after her."

It was an anxious moment. Nurse had not told them to stay in the garden, but they had never been out of it alone, and they knew that she would not like them to follow the gipsy woman. They looked up at the nursery window, but nurse was no longer there. Then they looked down the drive, and the gipsy woman was no longer in sight.

"Those poor little children," said Dona, with her eyes full of tears.

"We must feed them," declared Fred. "You wait here."

"He bounded off into the house, and soon came back carrying a tin of mixed biscuits.

"This is all I could find," he panted.

"But, Fred, they aren't ours."

"No, they aren't, I know, but then we haven't any food, and I don't think it can be wrong to take them to give to the poor gipsies. Why, nurse took a great mould of jelly yesterday to the sexton's wife who is ill in the village, and the jelly wasn't her's a bit more than the biscuits are ours. I tell

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you what, Dona," he added very solemnly, "I don't *like* to take the biscuits, but I think it's *right* to take them."

" I think we ought," said Dona, rather doubtfully.

"Well, then," cried Fred, "come along, or the children may be dead."

Away they scampered as fast as they could, right out of the drive and down the road, but when they came to the edge of the common, they began to go more slowly, because they had never been so far alone, and they were just the merest bit afraid.

"The fact is, Fred," said Dona under her breath, "I don't like the look of that cow."

"I don't mind her," answered Fred bravely, "but I think the gipsies live the other way."

Dona thought so too, and they skirted round the cow, keeping at a very respectful distance from her.

"There's no danger at all," declared Fred, when they had walked a good way on, "she wasn't a bull."

"No," said Dona, "but she cows are very savage sometimes. Cook's little brother was tossed by one that had lost her calf."

Fred glanced over his shoulder. "Did it hurt much?" he asked. "Oh! Dona," he added suddenly, "there's a whole herd of them."

It was too true. Twenty or thirty cows were quietly

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grazing right across their path. The children halted hand in hand.

"Do you think the little children are really starving?" asked Dona doubtfully.

Fred was a brave boy, and at once answered yes.

"Then we must go on," sighed Dona.

"Of course we must," said Fred, but neither of the children moved. Presently they sat down on the grass. They were a long way from home now, and there was no one in sight. There was no need to be afraid; but everything was new and strange, and they did not feel very happy.

"I wish there were no gipsies," said Dona, at last; but, Fred, the cows are coming nearer, aren't they?"

"Come along," he replied; "we'd better get out of their way." Dona sighed, but putting her hand in his, marched off beside him.

"We mustn't run," said Fred, "because nurse says that is the way to make them run after us. She says," he added doubtfully, "that cows are really more afraid of children than children are of cows, but they must be very stupid if they are."

"Yes," said Dona; "for they can hurt us if they like, and we couldn't hurt them if we wanted to. I think it would be safe to run now, Fred."

Fred looked back at the cows. They were feeding

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very quietly some distance away. "All right," he whispered, as though they would hear if he spoke out loud, and off the children scampered.

They did not pause till they were quite out of breath, and, by this time, they were out of sight of the cows. The common became wilder and wilder. Yellow furze grew here and there on the banks of the little ponds which filled some old gravel pits. Beautiful dragonflies fluttered over the water for a moment, and then darted away into the air and came whizzing back close to the ears of the children. Plop! something went into the water, and, to their great delight, they saw a rat swim across to a little island opposite to them. They forgot all about the cows, and ran up and down the mounds, and between the ponds, exploring all the corners, and finding treasures everywhere. Now a grasshopper jumped across their path, then they found the bones of a poor drowned dog; and at last they saw a sight which filled them with surprise,-for it was the camp of the gipsies.

Yes; but the gipsies were no longer there. The children could see circles of black ashes where their fires had been. Bits of bread and bundles of straw showed where the vans had stood.

"Dona," said Fred solemnly, "they must have found food after all." He picked up a piece of bread.

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"They couldn't have been starving any more or they would have eaten this."

It was quite clear; and, after thinking a minute or two, the children came to the conclusion that it would be better to go home.

Now this was a wise conclusion to have reached, but they would have been still wiser if they had gone back the right way. As it was, they walked in the wrong direction till they arrived at a pretty, low, white house on the edge of the common. They were tired by this time, and they settled to go in and ask the way; so Fred took Dona by the hand and knocked at the door.

CHAPTER II.

FALSE OGRES AND GIANTS.

"COME in, come in," shouted a rather cracked voice, in a rather cracked way. Fred pushed open the door, and entered the hall.

"This way, this way. Will you come into my parlour?" Fred thought of the spider who invited the fly into his parlour, and really the old gentleman who sat sprawling over the table was a little like a spider. He had long white hair, which made his shoulders dusty, and his nails, perhaps, had been cut by his nurse, when he was Fred's age. His table was covered with papers and instruments.

"Ah! my little dears," he said, with a smile, "I have been expecting you all the morning. You will be so nicely amused, la, and instructed too, la."

The children were now seriously frightened. To go into a strange house to ask the way, and to hear that an old gentleman, who looked like a spider, had been expecting them all the morning, was enough to have alarmed older children. They did not know that the old gentleman was an escaped pedagogue, or they would have run away straight.

"Sit down, sit down," he said; so they seated themselves on the very edge of two chairs close to the door, bolt upright. He then continued :---

"You know, my little dears, that there are many giants in the world. Some of them eat little children, and some of them do not. The former we may denominate ogres; the latter will retain the appellation of giants. Now, what are these ogres and these giants? They are the great forces of nature, some malignant, some beneficent. There is, for instance, the great giant Steam. He puffs, and screams, and whistles out of his chimneys till you think that he is a veritable ogre, while in reality he is a most genial giant; but, dear me, tut, tut, tut, what is this?"

The old gentleman was greatly surprised, for Dona had burst into a flood of tears. First of all he tried kindness with her, for that is the plan of all pedagogues.

"Chut, chut, chut," he said smiling, "why, what a silly little girl. Think of all the pretty things about which I am going to tell you."

He did not explain how she was to think of things of which she had never heard, but she was far too

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frightened to think of anything. So he tried severity next, as all pedagogues do.

"Little girl," he said sternly, "if you are not good at once, I shall send you home."

"Oh! *please* do," cried Fred and Dona both together. "We are lost, and we do so want to get back."

"Lost, are you?" said the pedagogue. "Then, perhaps you are not the children, or," he added thoughtfully, for he was not a bad old pedagogue at bottom, "perhaps, I am a trifle lost myself. Tell me, my boy, don't you want to hear little fairy stories about science?"

"Not to-day, thank you," said Fred politely. "I am afraid we haven't time."

"How very strange," said the old gentleman to himself. "I must send for Ellie."

He rang the bell, and a servant came. "Ask Miss Ellie to step this way," he said.

In a few minutes a tall lady entered.

"Why, Uncle Ben," she said, "what's the matter?" She took Dona on her knee, and petted her, while the pedagogue explained.

"You know, Ellie, that I have promised to give a course of lectures next Christmas in London, to keep children away from the pantomimes, and to impart a little wholesome instruction through the medium of entertaining tales. Here is a copy of the advertisement I shall issue."

He put on a large pair of spectacles, and read gravely aloud :----

"THE OGRES AND GIANTS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE. A course of Six Lectures to Children on Topics adapted to Christmas Time, by BENJAMIN DRYSTICK, Esq., G.C.M., L.C.M.; Ex-Professor of Hydrostatical Dynamics at Waterless College, Caffraria; Corresponding Member of La Société Internationale pour la Suppression des Enfants; and Author of 'The Allegory of the Bean-Stalk'; 'Jack and Jill, or, The

Law of Gravity in Nursery Rhymes, etc., etc.'.

"In the anticipation of a large attendance of little folk, I considered it well to have a kind of rehearsal of the lectures here, and so I asked the clergyman yesterday to send me round a few intelligent children on whom to practise. When, therefore, these young friends arrived unannounced, I naturally concluded that they were the chosen recipients of my little treat."

Just as he had finished speaking, the servant, with her handkerchief at her mouth, opened the door, and an odd scraping and shuffling of feet was heard. Half-adozen village boys in corduroy suits entered the room, and pulled their hair respectfully towards the pedagogue and Ellie.

"Whoever are you?" cried Ellie.

The biggest boy but one nudged the biggest to make him speak, but as he only grinned, a smaller one, evidently the cleverest of the party, replied :—

"We be coom from Parson's Soonday School, fur ter see and 'ear soomthin'".

"I think," said Ellie demurely, "that I will leave you to your class, Uncle; only please don't let them sit in a row with their heads against the wall. I will take these two children away, and I hope we shall become very good friends."

She led them into another room, and fetched them some milk to drink, and when she had heard their story, she ordered her pony chaise to drive them home.

"I shall come with you," she said, "and see your father, and ask if you may not come sometimes and spend the day with me; you poor little motherless bairns. You would like that, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," said both the children at once.

"I could play with you," continued Ellie, "and tell you stories."

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She stopped, for she noticed a shade fall on their faces at these last words.

"Why," she asked, "don't you like stories ?"

"Yes," said Fred; "very much, thank you; but they—they wouldn't be about science, would they?"

"No dear, they couldn't be, because I don't know any science; but I am afraid," she added, laughing, "that they may be rather instructive, because you see, after all, I am my uncle's niece, and one can't help one's nature, can one?"

"I s'pose not," said Fred, as gravely as if he had long been perplexed upon the point; but now the chaise was ready, and they drove off.

CHAPTER III.

THE ASTROLOGER'S TOWER.

WHEN the pony chaise drew up at the door of Mr. Maitland's house, nurse burst out with a rush, and hugged the children as though she had not seen them for a month.

"Is Mr. Maitland in?" asked Ellie, as soon as the first excitement was over.

"Oh! yes'm, he's in. *He* never goes out," replied nurse.

"Will you please, then, give him this card, and say that I should be glad to speak to him for a minute?"

"No'm; I dursn't do it. The housemaid, she had warning not two months ago, for clattering on the tower stairs when he was busy with his papers. Nobody can go near Mr. Maitland."

"How can I see him, then?" asked Ellie, halfamused and half-angry.

"Well'm, I don't know. I have lived here ever since Master Fred was born, and I don't know as I (25) ever recollect his seeing anybody, except them foreign gentlemen who come about the stars."

"But I must see him. Is there no other servant who can go up?"

"No'm. It would be as much as their place is worth."

"Then I must go by myself, or rather the children must take me."

"May we, nurse?" asked Fred doubtfully, for it was one of nurse's strictest rules that they must never go near the tower staircase.

"Oh! don't ask me nothing about it," replied nurse crossly. "If the lady likes to take you, it ain't no business of mine. I don't know nothing about it."

She rushed away in a pet, and slammed the door of the servants' hall behind her.

"She's a little cross," said Dona by way of apology, "but then," she added philosophically, "we've been rather naughty, you see."

"If nurses weren't cross," said Fred, "children wouldn't ever be good."

"Why, what little wretches they must be," laughed Ellie; "but come along. Which is the tower staircase?"

"This is," said Fred. "I'll go first if you'll hold my hand."

He drew Ellie's right hand over his shoulder, while Dona clung to the left one, and so they marched bravely up the stairs.

It was a very high, narrow, winding staircase, lighted only by slits in the thick stone walls.

"It used to be a church tower," Fred explained, and the monks had it, and then nobody had it till the astolager came."

"'Cept the owls," corrected Dona.

"Yes," said Fred, "when father first came to count the stars up here, there was a lovely owl's nest with little owls in it, but now there's only jackdaws."

"Monks and astrologers and owls," thought Ellie to herself. "I wonder what next."

Solemn organ music next, rolling down upon the rays of sunlight and the shadows of the stairs. Ellie made the children stand to listen.

Crashing and pealing down, it was a psalm of victory, of the conquest of the starry heavens by man. Then the triumph notes ceased to sound, and a plaintive, sorrowing strain told of a life no longer loved, alone in its thoughts above the world.

"I think that you are needed here, Children," said Ellie gravely. She turned the last corner of the staircase, and felt more sure that she was right. In a dark vaulted room, with his back to the open door, the

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father sat in his long dressing-gown playing soft music, and thinking of the days when he knew more of the earth and less of the heaven, when, perhaps, earth and heaven did not seem so far apart. Ellie paused, uncertain what to do. Dona, however, helped her. Dropping Ellie's hand, the child ran across the room and nestled under her father's arm.

"Father," she said.

He ceased to play; and seizing her, covered her face with kisses. She nestled in behind his beard.

"It's very cosy," she remarked. "We've come to pay you a visit, me and Fred and our new friend She's very nice, father."

"I hope that you will think so," said Ellie, coming forward. "I have taken a great liberty in coming up, but I wanted to see you about the children, whose acquaintance I made to-day, and I could not find any one by whom to send up my card."

"No," said Mr. Maitland, "the servants never come up here. When I first began to study, they brought me up every little bill or message that happened to come, and so I was obliged to forbid them ever to put foot upon the stairs, and the children have never cared to come."

"Nurse wouldn't let us," said Fred. His father raised his eyebrows. "Oh!" he said, "I never thought of that. I must speak to nurse. But," he added, turning to Ellie, "you have conferred a great obligation on me by your kindness. Pray take a chair, and tell me in what way I can serve you."

Ellie sat down and made the children tell their father all about the gipsy woman and the biscuits and the cows, and how they came to the pedagogue's house, and how she rescued them and brought them home. Mr. Maitland listened very gravely.

"Ah!" he said when the story was finished, "these children have reached an age when they need all care and sympathy. What can I do?" He looked appealingly at Ellie.

"Let me have them at my house as often as possible," she said.

"You are too kind," he replied; but in a few minutes it was arranged that they should spend the next day with her.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE STORY OF THE ROSE.

THE next morning was fine and warm, and so, as soon as the children arrived, Ellie took them out into the garden to play. She sat upon a seat under a great mulberry tree, and watched them at their games. Fred pretended to have a shop, and made all the flowers into things to sell. Dona was his customer. First she wanted a new paper for the nursery wall, and he showed her a huge red peony. " That pattern is too big," said Dona, so he offered her some pinks, which he thought would do nicely. Then she wanted groceries, and he sold her stocks and sweetwilliams, and when she wanted a new hat, he ran into the kitchen garden and came back with a big cabbage leaf, which she flattened down over her head. Next she asked for a dress, and, for a long time, nothing could be found to suit. At last, however, he fetched two long sprays of convolvulus, and twisted them (30)

round her. Then the children, quite breathless and tired, ran up to Ellie to show her what they had done.

"You little fairy," said she to Dona, "you look like the spirit of the garden. I wish that I had had a brother to play with, like Fred, when I was a child."

"Had you no little children?" askel Dona.

"No, dear," replied Ellie, "but I had my pets: Carlo, the old black dog; Oats, the shaggy Shetland pony; a tame squirrel, and a whole flock of pigeons. Besides I had the garden where you are playing now, but there was nobody to pretend that the flowers were things to sell."

"Didn't you pretend about them at all?" asked Dona.

"Oh! yes, I used to find far more things in the garden than you find to-day."

"What things?" asked Dona.

"Secrets, dear, for I used to talk to the flowers, and pretend that they talked to me. They used to tell me all about themselves and how they came to be there, till the whole garden seemed full of princes and princesses and dwarfs and fairies, and I forgot that I was all alone, and used to love to run about among these strange playfellows of my own. One day I asked the rose for its story, and, if you like, I will tell you what it seemed to say."

" Oh! please do," cried the children.

"Once upon a time," said Ellie, beginning in the way in which all good fairy stories have begun ever since there were fairy stories in the world. "Once upon a time the rose was a little girl, the daughter of the king of all the land, who was very, very fond of her. He gave her the most beautiful toys to play with, and when she grew up, he tried to find her a husband, but he vowed that only the best and handsomest prince in all the world should marry her, for she was the sweetest and loveliest of all the princesses. So he sent for his lord chamberlain, and put a golden trumpet in his hand, and set him on a beautiful white horse which had a bridle and reins of gold, and a cloth for a saddle with a long fringe of golden ends that almost swept the ground.

"'Go,' said the king to him, 'and blow your trumpet in every city in the world, and proclaim that, at six o'clock on next midsummer's morning, every prince who wants a wife may come into the garden here. The best and handsomest of them all shall be married to my daughter, and every other shall have one of her maids-of-honour for his wife. Then we

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"His face and mouth were like a frog's, with a cruel, empty grin upon them." [To face page 32.

will feast for six days in the palace, and, on the seventh day, the other princes and their wives shall go, laden with rich presents, to their homes across the sea, but my daughter and her husband shall stay with me, and rule in my stead when I am gone.'

"So the lord chamberlain rode away, and was abroad for many days, but, at last, he came home again, and brought word that, on midsummer's morning, sixteen handsome princes would come and ask the king's daughter in marriage.

"It was a beautiful, clear morning, when, at last, came midsummer's dawn. The dew lay thick upon the grass, where the princess sat upon a lofty seat, at the right hand of the king. All around were her friends, the maids-of-honour, and there they sat and waited, till the sun rose upon the garden, and made it joyful with warmth and light. Punctually at six o'clock they heard the flourish of many trumpets, and they all stood up to greet the sixteen princes as they rode in upon the grass. Slowly they rode past with bare heads, blushing, that the king might choose the best and handsomest of them all. He, who was never wrong in anything that concerned the happiness of his daughter, soon made his choice. All the princes then dismounted, and each gave his hand to her who

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was to be his wife, and began to lead her towards the palace, while a page boy bore her train.

"But, just at this moment, there entered, at the gate, a most strange and hideous procession. A hundred camels came slowly in, swinging, as they came, from side to side. Upon the back of each sat an ugly hunchbacked dwarf, but the ugliest and most wicked-looking of them all came first. He rode straight up to the king, and laughed aloud.

"'I come, Sir King,' he cried, 'to claim my wife. I will marry your daughter, and not this princeling here.'

"' Who are you ?' asked the king sternly.

"'I am the son,' he replied, 'of your old enemy, the King of the Land of Humps.'

"Then the king trembled, and kissed his daughter sorrowfully, and said that she must go, for the King of the Land of Humps had laid him under an enchantment long ago, to do all that he commanded him. So the hunchbacked prince laughed again, and made his camel kneel at the feet of the princess, and bade her mount beside him. But she started back, as he held out his hand to help her, for his little dwarfish hand was like the hand of a frog, and his face and mouth were like a frog's, with a cruel, empty grin upon them. And he grinned and grinned upon her as she stood shuddering there.

"' Oh ! if my godmother were here,' cried the poor princess, 'perhaps she could help me even now.'

"Just as she spoke, a tall woman entered the garden. She wore a broad straw hat and a long red cloak. She stooped as she walked, and, in her hand, she held a strong stick on which she leaned. The princess felt that she would now be safe, for this was her godmother, who was the Fairy Queen of all the World of Beauty, in whose presence no hideous thing had power to hurt.

"Straight she strode up to the hunchbacked prince, and looked at him, as he sat squinting there, with his great stern eyes that frighten the wicked, and make all good men rejoice. She spoke not a word, but pointed with her stick towards the gate, whereon all the dwarfs turned their camels round, and rode sullenly away. Then she turned towards the princess, and a gracious, loving light was in her eyes, as she said :---

"'Come, my child, with me, you and the good prince whom your father chose. If I left you here, the dwarfs would come again when I was gone, but in my garden you shall be safe, and blossom sweetly, giving joy to all who pass."

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"Then she touched the princess and the chosen prince with the point of her stick, and lo! they were changed to rose-trees in the garden here, where they live always joyful lives, filling the air with the sweetness of their bloom.

"This," Ellie continued, "was the story of the rose. When I had heard it, a great longing fell on me to see that fairy godmother, and perhaps to be changed by her, for a time, into a flower myself. Of all the flowers I would have liked best to be a lily, pure and white, with delicate scent, leading a sweet and lowly life.

"It chanced one day that, after I had been thinking thoughts like these, I fell asleep upon the lawn, and in my sleep I dreamed a dream.

"I saw myself lying still upon the grass, while the flowers bent their bright heads and whispered to each other all around me in the sunshine.

"' She is coming,' they said, ' the fairy godmother, to bless the little girl. Yes, she is coming, coming,' and their whispers died away upon the breeze.

"Presently she came and stood over me, the tall woman in the long red cloak leaning on her stick. I looked up in her face and noticed that it was old and wrinkled, and her hair was grey. Only her brown eyes shone out young and strong, with solemn lights in them from far away.

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"'So, my child,' she said in a voice that sounded deep and musical, like a peal of bells across the waters of a lake, 'so, my child, you want to be a lily, do you?'

"' Oh ! please,' I answered, my heart beating high with hope.

"' No, Ellie dear, you may be like a lily, but you must be also something better than any flower can be.'

"' ' What ?' I asked wonderingly.

"'A wise and tender woman,' said the fairy thoughtfully; 'and that, if you will be my godchild, I will help you to be.'

"There was no need for me to answer in words. I looked up in her face and smiled, and knew that all was well.

". Then you must come with me into Fairyland,' she said.

" I clapped my hands with joy.

" ' Oh ! where is it ? ' I cried. ' Let me go at once.'

"She answered with a smile which I thought was rather sad.

"' Fairyland, my child, is everywhere and nowhere in the world around you. There are better things, Ellie, in it than dwarfs and fairies. You shall learn its secrets day by day, the language of the birds and beasts and flowers, and understand the murmurs of the sea, the pealing of the thunder and the silence of the falling stars. Earth shall hide nothing from you: how it trembles in the earthquake, how it is beaten by the storms, and in the sunshine sends up green blades of grass and all trees that grow, and how, far down, it hides coal and iron and gold and silver, and lower still an everburning fire. More than this, Ellie, you shall know the hidden things which men and women carry in their hearts, and be able to help them with the help which I will give to you.'

"' ' How shall I learn?' I asked.

"Come here, dear, every day and think of what you know, and though you may not see me, I will be beside you, and lead you where it is best for you to go."

"Then she stooped and kissed me, and with her kiss I awoke, the happiest little girl in all the world, for only I knew that it was Fairyland."

"And did you go back the next day?" asked Dona.

"Yes, dear, and my godmother sent me a long, long journey, right away into the Kingdom of the Fire."

"Oh! tell us, please," cried both the children.

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"Not now, for I want to be busy, but if you like I will tell you all about it to-morrow."

The children kissed her and ran away to play till tea-time, but long before then they had settled to go back to Ellie the very first thing in the morning.

CHAPTER V.

THE KINGDOM OF HOT FIRE.

EARLY the next morning the children came again, and begged their friend to tell them at once about the fire. So she begun like this:—

"I went back the next day to the place where I had had my dream, and sat down to think. I heard the wind rustle gently in the leaves, and watched a great bee buzz about from flower to flower. I thought of how the world was itself a beautiful garden, and I longed to travel to the countries where birds of paradise fly among flowers that are lovelier than any that we have here.

"'Yet ours are so lovely,' I said to myself, 'that I could not bear to leave them behind.'

"'Child,' said a voice that came in the murmurs of the wind, 'what makes the whole world so full of beauty as it is?'

"'I don't know,' I answered, feeling sure that my dream godmother had come back this way to me.

"'Come with me,' said the voice, 'and you shall learn to-day.' A louder rustling of the wind seemed to sweep along among the trees, and to carry me away with it. I floated in the air, borne gently without effort of my own, across lands where I could see great cities with the ceaseless toil of men, and rich country sides where wild flowers laughed in the breeze which seemed to kiss them as it passed away. Across the blue sea I went, and watched it sparkle and ripple merrily in the sunlight, and the white sails of ships dip up and down. At last I felt myself rising higher and higher till I was landed gently on a mountain top. There I fancied that my godmother waited for me, and held my hand in her own lest I should be frightened by the strange sights and sounds around me. For this was no common mountain to which we had come, but one that groaned and trembled as if in pain. Ι stood at the edge of a deep, gloomy pit, which seemed to yawn far down to the mountain's foot, and in this pit I heard the sounds of movement, like the slow crushing of great rocks, mingled with the hissing and bubbling of boiling water. A cloud of smoke rose up above my head, and floated slowly away in the air. As I watched, the noise became louder, and a horrible smell of sulphur filled me with great fear. A tongue of flame leaped up from the depth of the black pit right

out of the mountain's top, and sank down again in darkness.

"'What is it?' I asked my godmother, who still held my hand firmly in her own.

"'It is the Fire Kingdom in the heart of the earth,' she answered. 'Watch, Ellie.'

"I looked, and saw a great stream of thick yellow stuff come pouring out of the pit, and it passed slowly down the side of the mountain, sweeping away the rocks and trees as it went.

"'Oh! how cruel,' I exclaimed, 'it will spoil all the beautiful country.'

"'Only for a time, dear,' said my godmother kindly. 'Some day all that yellow stuff will turn to rich soil, in which grapes will grow and ripen, making the country lovelier than before; for, Ellie, in the world's Fairyland all harm at last is turned to good.'

"'Is the world all fire inside?' I asked.

"'Yes,' she answered ; 'far down beneath our feet fire is always glowing.'

"'How strange!' I exclaimed.

"'Ah! it is a wonderful world, Ellie,' cried my godmother, 'this in which we live. Once upon a time, long ago, so learned people say, it was all a great ball of fire, hot and glowing, and hissing as it spun round and round in the air. No one could live on it, it was

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so hot, and no grass could grow, or trees, or anything green. But gradually, as it rushed round and round through the air, the wind bore away more and more of its heat, and so it began to get cooler, but very, very slowly, and only just the outside part of it. Then, when this had become really cool, the earth came gradually upon it, and the water, and on the earth there began to grow trees and bushes, and at last there came cows and horses and birds and men and women and children, and they all lived on the outside of this great, strange world of fire.'

"As soon as my godmother had finished speaking, we turned round, and there, far away across the sea, we saw the sun setting in the waves, and turning them all to deep crimson red.

"'Why!' I exclaimed, 'the sun, too, is a great ball of fire, isn't it?'

"'Yes, Dear,' said my godmother, 'a great, hot, glowing ball, and its heat still warms the cold outside of this our world. For, Ellie, if there were no warmth at all there, all living things would die. Some day I will take you to a part of the world which is almost outside the Fire Kingdom, and you shall see how gloomy and dark and desolate it is; but now let us stay and watch the sunset.'

"So we stayed upon the mountain top, and saw the

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fireglow slowly pass away from out of the waters of the sea, and the deep blue cloud of night rise slowly in the east. One by one the stars came out in the solemn depths of the sky, and at last the moon rose, shining with cold yet glorious light.

"'Ah! Ellie,' said my godmother softly, 'the moon shows signs of the great changes which go on slowly in all things around us. Once it, too, was part of the Fire Kingdom, but now it is cold and dead, and shines only with light reflected from the sun. See those black specks in it, dear. What are they, do you know?'

"' I don't know,' I answered. 'Tell me, please.'

"' They are deserts, Ellie, and near them are mountains.'

"' What!' I exclaimed, ' mountains like those I saw in Scotland last year, and like this great fire mountain that we are standing on?'

"'Yes,' replied my godmother. 'Once upon a time all those mountains in the moon were burning with fire like this one. Fire came out of the top of them and ran down their sides until it cooled away, and now the mountains are all cold and there is no more fire in them.'

"I wondered at hearing this, and for a while we both were silent. I gazed up into the far, deep blue of the heavens, and little girl as I was, I felt something of awe to think of all that had been there once, of all that now was there, and what would be long after I was dead. I thought of the changes which the Fire Kingdom had made in the world already, and I tried to fancy how dark and poor everything would have been without the fire to warm and lighten it, but, as I was thinking, kind arms raised me in the air and bore me back across the sea and laid me gently in the garden on the grass again."

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CHAPTER VI.

WHERE THE FIRE IS HIDDEN.

"ELLIE," said Dona, after she and Fred had been talking to each other about the Fire Kingdom, "if Fred and I were to dig a hole in the garden, should we get down to the fire if we dug deep enough?" They had really been trying to dig down to it, but Dona did not dare to say so.

"Well, Dear," said Ellie, smiling a little at the question, "two little children would not be able to dig deep enough. The fire is a long, long way down now. Why, between us and it is the whole of the land where the fire is hidden."

"Tell us about it, please," cried both the children.

"Ah!" said Ellie, "then we shall have to leave my godmother to-day, for she did not go with me when I paid a visit to that country."

"Did you really go?" asked Dona in an awestruck tone of voice.

"Yes, once when I was a very little girl. It hap-(46) pened in this way. A letter came one day asking me to go and stay with Mary Short, who was a few years older than I was. Her parents lived a long way off, and as I started in the train and saw the smoke come puffing out of the engine, I thought to myself that here too was a little bit of the Fire Kingdom. For, children, there could not be any engines or trains to run after them, could there, without fire to drive them along?

"It was dark when I arrived at my friend's house, and, as I was tired with the long journey, I very soon went to bed. Next morning, however, I was up early with Mary Short. She was a dear little girl, who seemed to know so many things that I felt as if I could never hope to know half so much myself.

"First of all she took me into the garden, and there I stared about me, full of surprise. For I had come into the strangest country that you can imagine. There was no bright, clear, sunny sky overhead, as there is here, but a great heavy cloud of smoke hung over everything, and the poor flowers did not grow well at all, but just hung their heads down, and drooped and looked miserable and dirty, as though they were ashamed of living all their lives in such a smoky place. You know how fond I am of flowers. Well, it made me so wretched to see the pretty things looking unhappy that I ran up to a rose-tree and began to try if I could not lift up some of the flowers and make them look better. Now what do you think? Directly I touched the leaves, my fingers became all black and sooty. I was horrified, and held up my hands for Mary to see, with such a woeful face that she burst out laughing at me.

"'You poor Ellie,' she cried, 'you did not know how dirty our smoke makes everything here; did you?"

"' Where does it all come from ?' I asked.

"'Oh! from papa's Fire Kingdom over there, as he calls it,' and she pointed to some great brick chimneys not far away, out of the top of which huge wreaths of black smoke were pouring.

"'Has your father a Fire Kingdom of his own?' I asked.

"'Yes,' said Mary, 'and after breakfast he will show it to us. Come along and let us get ready to go.'

"So we went indoors, and long before breakfast was over, I was waiting eagerly for Mr. Short to come and take us out.

"At last we heard his voice calling up the stairs: 'Who is coming to the Fire Kingdom with me?' We raced down, and Mary jumped up and kissed her father's face, and then he swung me up on his shoulder and off we started. Down the front court we went, and along a dirty street which was very badly paved,

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and had rows of ugly little houses on each side. They were built of stone, and had no gardens in front of them like the cottages about here, but they opened right on the street. On some of the doorsteps women were standing to do their knitting, or to talk to their neighbours, and I noticed that, instead of hats, they wore grey shawls over their heads, and they talked so funnily that I could hardly understand what they were saying. Presently we met one or two men who were going home. They carried lamps in their hands, and they had such black and grimy faces that I could not help asking Mr. Short: 'Do the people never wash here? Don't they feel uncomfortable always to be so dirty?'

"Mr. Short laughed, and then said: 'These are the servants of the Fire, and they live in the Fire Kingdom, and so they cannot go about like other people.'

"I began to wonder whether they could be real men, they looked so different from every one else, but I did not dare to say so. I was a very shy little girl, and I was afraid that Mr. Short would laugh again. So I became rather frightened, and caught tight hold of his arm, whenever we passed one of the blackfaced men, for I was beginning to think that they were some of the giants of whom my head was always full, and that very likely they were fond of having little roast girl for breakfast in the Fire Kingdom. Before long we came

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to the tall chimneys which I had seen when I was in the garden. They were in a yard, and great heaps of coal were lying about, and there was a little railway running down a hill.

"'Oh!' I exclaimed, 'this place *is* enchanted,' for I saw that on the railway lines there were trucks running up and down without any engine to pull them. Some of them were full of coal, and others were empty, but they never ceased to run up and down quite fast and busily. Mr. Short heard me speak, though I had not meant him to hear, but this time he did not laugh.

"'See, Ellie,' he said kindly, 'I can explain all about those trucks to you. Do you notice that all those which have coal in them are going one way, and the empty ones another?'

"'Yes,' I replied, ' the full ones are all going down hill, and the empty ones uphill.'

"' Look again,' he said, 'all the trucks are tied together by a rope, and here, at the top of the hill, is a wheel round which the rope is passed. When the trucks are full of coal, they are pushed off down the hill, and they are so heavy that they pull hard at the rope which is fastened round the wheel to the empty trucks on the other side. These empty trucks are quite light, and so they are easily pulled up by the heavy ones, as they run down the hill. So the heavy trucks have always to start at the top of the hill, and the light ones at the bottom, or they could never run at all.'

"' Where do the heavy ones go to?' I asked.

"• Only to where the light ones start up the hill again. They empty out their loads at the bottom and they themselves become light and are dragged up the line again.'

" Oh! I see,' I exclaimed. 'There are only a few trucks altogether, and when they come up empty, they go down full.'

"'Yes,' said Mr. Short, and just then a tall man, with black face and hands, came up and spoke to him.

". Will the little ladies be going down the pit?' he asked.

"• Oh ! no, no,' I cried, for I was sure that this great man was one of the giants who had come to carry me off to some dreadful place.

". Oh! Ellie, you must come,' said Mary, 'it is quite easy, and I often go with father. This is all you have to do,'—and she ran to a kind of great cage, and sat down in it.

"Mr. Short carried me gently, and set me down beside Mary. Then he entered the cage too, and the great black man followed him, and now the cage began to move. It went down and down, and I clung to it,

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as hard as I could, and the black man grinned at me, and showed two rows of white teeth, and frightened me more than ever. Down we went, and down. Everything looked black around us, though far up above our heads we still could see the sky. At last we felt a bump, and the cage stood still. I looked about, for there was still a little light. Mr. Short took me by the hand, and led me into a dark passage.

" ' Come along into the Fire Kingdom,' he cried.

"'Where is it?' I asked in bewilderment, for it grew darker and darker down the passage. 'I can't see the fire anywhere. Oh! I don't like it. It is so dark.'

"' Never mind,' said he. 'It is the Kingdom of Hidden Fire; see here is a light.' As he spoke, the man who came down with us gave him a lamp. By its light I could make out the walls of the passage along which we were going. From far away I could hear a noise, like that of pickaxes breaking stones.

"Mr. Short led me, until we suddenly turned a corner, and found ourselves in a broad lane between two thick walls of stone.

"Up and down little lights flashed and gleamed in the darkness, and I soon made out that they were all in lamps covered with wire netting, like that which Mr. Short had in his hand. "' 'What are all those men doing?' I asked.

"'They are at work,' said Mr. Short; 'some of them are hewing out great blocks of coal from the walls, and others are putting them in trucks. See! Stand back a moment!'

"Gee woa,' sounded from just behind us, and made us jump quickly out of the way, and stand with our backs to the wall. To my surprise, down here in the darkness, I saw a little truck coming towards us. It ran on lines, like those of a railway, and a boy was driving it, who, like every one else, carried a lamp. There was the prettiest shaggy pony harnessed to the truck, and, when it stopped at a word from Mr. Short, we began to pat it. It stood quite still, and would not even look round. This surprised me, because Oats, my pony at home, always turned and tried to put his nose into my hand when I was patting him. I was still wondering why this pony was so quiet, when I happened to glance at its eyes.

"'Why, I do believe it's blind!' I exclaimed, for, instead of having great, beautiful, brown eyes like Oats, the poor creature had only a dull, white film where the brown should have been.

"'Yes,' Mary said, 'it is a blind pony; but we don't think much of that, because some of the ponies down here are blind.'

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"I was going to ask more about this, when I was stopped by hearing Mr. Short speak to the boy who drove.

"' Where are you going?' he asked.

"'To stables,' he answered, speaking in the same strange way as the women in the village had spoken.

"'All right,' said Mr. Short, 'then we will go with you. Come along, Mary.' So saying, he made Mary jump on the truck, and then he put me on too, and he walked on beside us. Such a strange drive it was, children. There was no light at all except from the lamps which Mr. Short and the driver carried, and the road was very rough. In the darkness we could only see the great walls of coal around us, but every now and then, as we passed the entrance of another passage, we could glance down a long line of glittering lights, and see the workmen stooping over their work of hewing out the coal. The further we went the hotter it seemed to become, and I could not help wondering out loud why it was so hot down there while it was not at all hot up in the open air above.

"'Ah, Ellie,' said Mr. Short, 'we are getting more and more into the Fire Kingdom. In some mines, which are much deeper than this, the workmen have to work with hardly any clothes on their backs, because it is so very hot.' "'Yes,' said Mary, 'right down in the middle of the earth there is hot fire always burning, and sometimes it breaks out through the mountains, does it not, father?'

"I did not listen to what Mr. Short answered, because I began to think of what my godmother had told me about the earth and the moon, how they were both long ago balls of fire like the sun. But I did not think then, children, that I should ever know a little boy and a little girl who would try to dig down to the hidden fire, because I knew that it was much too far down."

Fred and Dona did not dare to look at each other when Ellie said this, but they both felt as if a little bit of the fire had caught their cheeks. They felt so very hot to think that Ellie should have seen them digging for the buried fire.

"Go on, please, Ellie," said Dona at last.

"We drove on and on, till at the end of our road we reached the stables. Just think of stables built far down under the ground. And they were not little stables like those at home for one or two horses, but here many ponies were kept.

"We stopped, and when he had lifted us out, Mr. Short said: 'Now, guess, Ellie, what is right over our heads there'.

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"I looked up, but of course I could see nothing but the great roof of black earth and coal through which a few drops of water trickled, and then fell with a heavy splash upon the ground.

"' ' I don't know,' I said.

"' Well, I will tell you. This part of the stable is built right underneath our own house, and we have been driving all this time almost straight below the road we came along through the village.'

"' What a wonderful place,' I said, feeling filled with a kind of fear to think that there was this whole world underground of which I had never known before.

"'Yes, almost all the houses about here have coal pits underneath them. Sometimes when coal is not very carefully taken out, the ground sinks under the houses, and then people have to move for fear their homes should tumble down over their heads.'

"'Last year,' Mary said, 'no one in the village could go to church for six weeks. The ground slipped under the church porch, and they had to build up another porch before it was safe to go in at all.'

" ' Did the porch drop right down into the Fire Kingdom ? ' I asked.

"' No, it was not so bad as that. The ground only moved a little bit, and that made the stones of which

the porch was built fall apart, until they all seemed ready to tumble down.'

"I thought that I should not much care to live in this part of the country, but I said nothing, because Mr. Short and Mary seemed to think nothing of living over a coal pit, and I did not want to seem to them to be a silly girl. I know now that they knew better than I could, why it was safe to have such deep holes beneath their feet."

"Why was it?" asked Dona.

"Because, dear, clever men called engineers make these pits in such a way that the earth above them cannot fall tumbling in. But I am sure that you want to hear all about the stables now."

"Yes, please," cried both the children.

"Well, we went in to where the ponies were. Such sleek creatures they looked; so well fed and groomed, and their stalls, too, seemed nice and cosy, with plenty of fresh straw for them to rest upon. Each one had a name of his own. One of the biggest was called 'Davy,' and the pony which was harnessed to our truck was named 'Tom,' and when he was unharnessed, instead of going straight to his manger and eating his corn, he began to try to poke his nose into the pocket of the boy who had driven him. The boy then pulled out an apple and gave it to him to eat, and

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when he had eaten it, he shook his shaggy mane and flung his heels up in the air, and then went, and rolled on the straw in his stall.

"'Do you always give him something when he comes in?' asked Mary.

"'Yes, miss, an apple, or a bit sugar, or something,' said the boy.

"We passed on, and as we went in and out of the stalls, Mr. Short told us that the miners are now very kind to their horses. Once they were cruel, but a kind lady came and gave a prize every Mayday for the best kept horse and the best kept pony. This made the men fond of their animals, when they saw what beautiful creatures they could be made to look: 'But the only pity is,' said Mr. Short, 'that some of them are blind'.

"• Why are they?' I asked, because it made me very sad to walk through the stables and see three or four beautiful ponies turn their great sightless eyes on me. I thought that they looked very sorrowful and very patient, and I wondered if no cure could be found for them.

"Mr. Short answered my question in a very curious way.

"'They are blind,' he said, 'from different causes, but it does not so much matter to them, because in this part of the Fire Kingdom the fire is hidden.' "I must have looked puzzled, for he went on to explain.

"'You see, Ellie, that the fire here is all hidden in The coal must be lighted and made to burn, the coal. before it will give out light, and it cannot be lighted, until it is taken out above the ground. So all here is in darkness, and the poor ponies which have not the use of their eyes, can be employed almost as well as those which see. If we were to plant a flower here, it would not grow to have green leaves, as it would on the ground, but it would be all pale and white. It would need the light as much as the eyes of a horse need it, and the best light comes from the sun, which is part of the Fire Kingdom. So you see, Ellie, that wherever we go, we find this same Fire Kingdom. Up in the world we are cheered, and made healthy and strong by the light and heat of the great ball of fire, the sun, and down here we come to fetch the fire which is hidden in the blocks of coal. We take it up into the world above, and then we can make our own fires to warm ourselves. I cannot tell you all the uses of this fire, how we sail in ships and travel in railways by it, how we melt iron and lead and make the ships and engines by it, and countless things besides. We could not cook our food without it, and without it we could not have pretty plates to eat

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our meals upon, or beautiful vases to gaze at. Depend upon it, Ellie, you will live all your life trying to find an end to the uses of this Fire Kingdom, but you will never do it.'

"I was puzzled, children, by what Mr. Short said, but I know now that he was right. All my life I have tried to learn how useful fire is to us, but every day I learn some fresh use of it still; every day I find that I am living in some fresh part of the Fire Kingdom, whether the fire be hidden or clearly to be seen. And I will tell you a secret, children—I should never learn all the uses of the fire, if I lived to be a hundred years old, and were wiser than the wisest man who has ever been born."

CHAPTER VII.

PICTURES IN THE WORLD OF CHANGE.

AFTER her account of the Kingdom of Hidden Fire, Ellie did not see the children for two or three days. When, at last, they were allowed to return to her, they could scarcely wait to kiss her, so eager were they to tell of all that they had discovered about this hidden fire.

"I found it in matches," cried Fred. "You would never guess it was there, would you, till you had struck it out?"

"Isn't the gas a part of the Fire Kingdom?" asked Dona.

"Yes, Dear," said Ellie. "It lies hidden in blocks of coal until men bring it out for use in the pipes in our houses. Oh! children, is it not strange to find fire changed everywhere into something unlike itself, but always ready to burst into flames at a touch? (61) Your finding it so altered in matches and in gas reminds me of the changes which go on, not in fire alone, around us. A few years after I had seen Mr. Short's Fire Kingdom, I went to stay with Mary again. It happened while I was there, that I lay one afternoon thinking in the garden. First I thought how different the grass looked to that on my lawn at home. Here it was all grimy, and the blades seemed sickly, as though they could hardly breathe the smoky air. I longed for the green, fresh grass of home, and its glorious spreading trees, for I, too, felt choked in the smoke, which hung in heavy clouds above the chimneys of some cotton works not far away, and seemed to fall like flakes of black snow upon every thing around me. But, as I lay there, feeling idle and homesick, a voice sounded in my ears :---

"'Ellie,' it seemed to say, 'it is better for you to be here.' I felt comforted at once, for I knew that my godmother had found me, so far from home as this.

"'Why is it better?' I asked.

"Because here,' she answered, 'you can better learn the changes of the world than you could at home.'

"'I don't want to learn,' I said, 'I am so sleepy

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after the long walk I have had to-day.' For I had been with Mary all the morning down the pit again.

"My godmother smiled kindly.

"'Is learning always a trouble then? No, Ellie; go to sleep, and in the Land of Dreams I will open your eyes to see the wonders you are too lazy to think of here.'

"She seemed to be still speaking, but I heard no more. Deep sleep fell upon my eyelids, and in a moment I was far away.

"' Not far away,' said a well-known voice, ' but long ago. Look, Ellie.'

"Yes, my godmother had come with me into the Land of Dreams, but what she meant I could not at first make out. For surely I was very far away. I was standing in a dense and pathless forest, such as I had never even dreamed of before. Huge beasts, unlike any that are found to-day, roamed beneath the trees, and long serpents glided, hissing, on the ground. Near me a river moved sluggishly along, half-choked with weeds and filled with eels and other fish. A cold, white mist rose from the waters and curled away like smoke among the trees. Hardly a sound fell upon my ear, but the murmuring of the river as it moved in tiny rills among its weeds, or the snapping of a tree as it fell, broken by some mammoth, a creature more vast than any elephant. I had come into the Kingdom of Silence, and the silence made me afraid.

"I looked up into the face of my godmother, who now stood visibly beside me.

"'Is it really an enchanted land?' I asked, 'and are the men and women all turned into snakes and beasts?'

"'Oh! Ellie, silly child,' she answered; 'how full your brain is of enchantments that never have been, and can never be. And all the while this great world, so much more wonderful than any enchantment, lies open like a book before you. See, I am showing you pictures of the changes that have been.'

"Even as she spoke, the first change began to take place. The great beasts died one by one, and the trees of the forest fell. How it all happened, I could not understand, but the forest was sinking into the ground, and the ground rising above the trees, till all were buried deep beneath the soil.

".' There the old world sleeps,' said my godmother very solemnly, 'till the toil of man shall wake it from its long rest of ages.'

"Then the truth flashed upon me.

"' That forest,' I exclaimed, ' will all be turned into coal. It will, I know it will.'

"'Yes,' said my godmother, 'that great Kingdom of Hidden Fire through which you walked this morning was once a forest of living trees upon the surface of the ground. Then men were nothing in it; now they keep their horses far down within its depths; but, Ellie, I want you to see pictures of men as they were, before they had power enough to do all this.'

"I looked and a new forest was springing up above the place where the old one had been at first. In the new one I saw no mammoths or other beasts that looked strange in England, but only creatures that I knew, oxen and deer, and wolves which preyed upon the deer. Now, too, I saw men walking about with bows and arrows to shoot the beasts, and in one place there were a number of little huts gathered together within a hedge, and I soon learned that the simple people of those times thought that this was a very fine, large town. Near the door of one of those huts a boy and a girl were sitting and talking in a language like that which the Welsh speak to-day. The boy had hardly any clothes on, but his body was stained with the blue juice of some flower. He was mending his arrows as he talked, and his sister, who was dressed in fox skins, was looking on.

"My godmother touched my lips and I could understand what they were talking about.

"'Oh! no,' said the boy, 'there is no danger at all. Look what a strong town we have. Why, even if the pirate people could come here, they would be afraid to attack us, and would have to run away again like cowards. Come, I have finished my arrows, let's go and catch some fish.'

"So saying he rose, and taking the girl by the hand, went down to the river. I saw him loose a little boat, of such a funny shape, it was almost round; and soon both the children were busily fishing in the stream.

"Presently, as I watched them pulling in some eels, I saw a sight which they did not notice. For shooting rapidly round a bend of the river, there came six long boats. Their front parts had a horrible dragon carved upon them, which seemed to twist and turn about as if seeking some enemy whom it might devour. On board the boats there was a yet more terrible sight. For chosen warriors sat there, men with helmets on their heads and long yellow hair floating on their shoulders. They held great battle-axes in their hands, and they looked so fierce and cruel that I trembled for the safety of my little fisher friends. Just then the boy caught sight of them.

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"'Ah! the pirates,' he cried, 'the pirates from across the sea;' and he began to paddle rapidly towards the shore. But the pirates were too quick for him. The rowers of the first vessel, at a word from their commander, doubled their strokes. I saw the children look up, white with fear and rage, as the cruel carved dragon rose above their tiny boat. Then a great crash came. The little boat sank at once, shattered into a hundred pieces, and the boy and his sister were struggling in the water.

"For a moment I feared that they would be drowned or crushed among the vessels of the pirates, but then I saw them caught up by one of the crews, and handed over, dripping with water, to the leader of the fleet.

"This man had on a helmet tipped with gold, and he was almost a giant in height and strength, being a head and shoulders taller than the tallest of his crew, who were all tall men.

"'Ho, Sir Boy!' he cried, with a cruel laugh which rang far and wide across the stream, 'and who may you be, and who is this pretty maid by your side?'

"I am the son of the king,' he answered proudly, 'and this is my sister. I warn you, Pirate, not to touch us, or the king, my father, will do you deadly harm. See, there he comes already.' "He pointed to the bank, where a host of men, with bodies stained blue like his own, were already gathering for the fight. The pirate giant laughed aloud again, and all his men laughed with him.

"'Aye!' he cried, 'we will go and meet him. You and your sister shall stay here meanwhile, and you shall be my slaves when I have conquered your land, for you two are my first prisoners! Shall that be their lot, my men?' Then the warriors shouted in reply, and the boy's heart rose rebelliously to hear that he, the son of a king, should be made a pirate's slave. But before he could speak, he and his sister were seized, tied hand and foot, and flung into the bottom of the vessel, which at once was run ashore. Quickly the pirates leaped on land, and even as they leaped, the natives charged down on them, till the noise of fighting was echoed in the woods around. Down the warriors swept from the village on the bank. Some rushed on foot, armed with axes or stakes of wood with sharpened ends, but the leaders drove in chariots, and galloped furiously among their foes, cutting them down with scythes, which seemed to grow out of the centre of their wheels.

"Bravely the natives fought and long; but at last they proved no match for the well-armed pirates. Their king's chariot was overthrown, and the king himself

was slain as he lay struggling on the ground. Then the pirates raised a great shout, and marched with songs of joy up to the village which the poor fisher boy had thought so strong. Outside its hedge they paused for a moment while two or three men struck Then they lighted torches, and hurled them fire. across the hedge. I turned away my eyes that I might not see the burning of so many humble but happy homes.

"' Look again, Ellie,' said my godmother; ' I will show you the place as it was a few years later.'

"I turned again, and now I saw a peaceful, happy sight. The evening sun streamed down on a large clearing in the woods and lighted the nearer trees almost to a golden hue. The river ran in the gathering shadows of the night and seemed to murmur happily of strife that was ended now and peace set in. A large village stood in the middle of the clearing, and its white smoke curled happily up into the air. Happiness seemed to reign there, where war had been before; and I was glad, though as yet I could not understand the reason of the change.

"Two figures sat upon the trunk of a fallen tree before one of the largest of the huts. Their frames were bowed as if with long lives of work, and their hair was silvery white; yet, as they sat, I was re-

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minded of the boy and girl, who had sat long years before, mending arrows in the village that was gone. I looked closer; yes; I could not be mistaken. They were that boy and girl now grown old in years of patient service. They were speaking, and I listened eagerly.

"'Yes,' the old man said; 'our lives have not been as, sixty years ago, we planned that they should be. Children of a king, we little dreamed that we should spend our lives in our own home as slaves in the hard service of a pirate conqueror!'

"'Yet,' replied the white-haired sister, 'how much better in all these years our owners have become. When first they landed here they were warriors only, and cruel heathen who longed to die upon the battlefield that they might pass away to the wicked place they called Valhalla, and fight there all day for ever, and drink, all night long, strong drink from the skulls of their dead enemies.'

"'Ah!' said the old man, 'but then they began to plant corn and cultivate the ground, and that made their hearts less bent on war; and now the new teachers have come, who have brought blessed news to masters and to slaves alike.'

"'Yes,' answered his sister; 'for, slaves as men call us, we are free indeed, no longer servants, or even chil-

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dren of an earthly king. We are now children of a heavenly King, and can look beyond our hard lives here to our royal home that is to come.'

"'And more than that,' said the old man again; 'this good news will make all masters kinder to their slaves, and we may be glad to think that others will not have to suffer as we have suffered all our days. But, hark!'

"A sound of solemn singing came borne from far away within the forest. Nearer it came and nearer, and the old man and his sister rose from their seat.

"'It is the evening benediction,' said the old man, reverently uncovering his head. 'The good teachers are returning from their journey.'

"As the music approached the entrance of the clearing, all the people of the village came down into the open space to listen. Louder it grew and louder, filling the hearts of all who heard, with joy. At last light flashed on something borne aloft and gleaming white among the trees. It was a silver cross carried at the head of a procession of forty black-robed monks. Slowly they passed out from the dark shadow of the wood into the brightness of the sunset. Then they halted on the grass, and they and all the villagers fell upon their knees chanting a hymn of thanksgiving for their return from a journey into a still heathen land.

"I watched them as they knelt singing there, and while I watched, the sunset crept away from the clearing up the long trunks of the trees, till only their tops still kept the golden gladness of the light."

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE WORLD OF WATER.

"WAS that all that your godmother showed you while you were asleep?" asked Dona, the next day.

"No," said Ellie, "she showed me many more changes through which the place on which I lay sleeping had passed before men came to hew out the coal beneath it, but one thing I longed to see which neither she nor any one else has ever been able to show."

"What was that?" asked the children.

"I wished," said Ellie, "to see the future, for the changes are not done yet, and never will be done while the world shall last. That country, blackened as it is with smoke, and inhabited by people like ourselves, will not always continue so, but what it will become as time goes on, time and only time will show. Children, there is not a spot of ground in all this world which has not passed through change upon change, and (73) every change has its own story to tell to ears which are not too deaf to hear. See how it rains. Even the water changes and always moves. The ——"

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Dona, interrupting Ellie. "What a poor little boy. How wet he is."

A boy with tattered shoes, and brown, sunburnt face, stopped in front of the window, pulled off his cap, making a deep bow, and smiled a bright, pleasant smile. He opened a box which he carried slung round his neck, and the children saw in it two brown animals something like rabbits, only with longer tails.

"What are they?" cried Fred.

"They are marmots," said Ellie. "They live on the mountains in Switzerland, and scamper away among the rocks directly they see any one coming in the distance. This boy must be a Swiss. Come in, little boy."

So saying, Ellie opened the window, and the boy entered smiling more than ever. He stood dripping with water, but looking as happy as a king.

"Would you like to go into the kitchen and dry your clothes?" asked Ellie.

He held his head on one side, and smiled again. Ellie repeated her question. Then he said :—

"Me no speak English very moch".

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"Come along, Children," said Ellie. "We must take him."

She led the way into the kitchen, made the boy stand before the fire, and gave him a plate of bread and meat, while she talked to him as well as she could—it was not very well—in German. She found out that he was hired to travel about and show his marmots, and that his master took all the money he earned. This made him very sad, because he longed to go back to Switzerland, and, if he had the power, he would save money for the journey. Ellie made him give her his master's address, and tried to persuade him to stay until the rain ceased, but this he would not do. His master would beat him, he declared, if he came home late, and he had a long way to go.

"Sank you, sank you," he said gratefully, and having slung his box of marmots over his shoulders, he smiled and bowed again, then marched out into the rain.

"He is the water's child," said Ellie. "My fairy godmother knows all about him."

The children, who had been very much awed at hearing Ellie talk to the boy in a strange language, looked interested, but said nothing.

" I will tell you a story about him," continued Ellie,

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"which I am sure is like the truth, though it is not perhaps exactly true. Shall I?"

" Please," said Fred and Dona.

"First of all," began Ellie, "I must tell you that his name is Caspar, and I must tell you where he was born. Far away in Switzerland there is a little valley, perched high up among the mountains, six thousand feet and more above the level of the sea. All round this valley are grim mountain peaks, black with rocks, and white with ice and snow. Here in the summer only a few men and women live who look after herds of cows on the lower slopes of the mountains. In winter no one can live there at all, for the giants of the storm make it their home, and it is full of gloom and enchantments."

Dona drew a long breath, and both she and Fred listened eagerly.

"Yes," said Ellie, "all the year round, all over the world, the bright sun draws up drops of water from land and rivers and sea, which no one but the fairies can see. Like the steam from a kettle, the drops rise into the air as vapour, travelling away towards the sun. Far away, up into the cold air, they travel, or until they reach the cold tops of the mountains. And there, in the cold, they gather together into great black clouds, which break and fall as snow or hail or rain

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upon the earth. In Caspar's valley the storm giants fling down the clouds in winter in great falls of snow. The brooks, which in summer come rushing down from the mountain peaks, are now frozen and still. Sometimes with the sound of winds moaning among the rocks, and tossing the snow about like the spray from countless waterfalls, sometimes stilly and softly the giants work, but all the time the snow comes down, until the valley is buried deep-feet deep-beneath a white and frozen mass. And then the storms are spent and cease, and the sun gleams out over the white robe of snow, and makes it dazzling-too bright for mortal eyes. At night the stars shine down upon it, and the moon makes black shadows beneath the rocks, or gleams blue in strange pinnacles and towers of ice. No man could live in such cold as this. Were you and I there, even with shoes to bear us over the snow, we could not walk far. We should sink down, sheltering ourselves beneath a rock, and then we should fall gently-very gently-asleep, and sleep the sleep which knows no waking more.

"All this Caspar knew, and often in winter, far below in the village where he went to school, he used to look up at the white peaks which towered above him, and wonder as he thought of the lonely world up there, where the storm giants were at work. And then

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when the spring came, with the hotter sun, the snow was loosened, and huge masses of it slid with a noise that echoed, like thunder, for miles around among the rocks, and rushed into the valleys, sweeping down everything, even houses, till it lay in piles on the level ground, to melt away day after day. And now the brooks were set free again, and leaped busily down the sides of the mountains, and carried with them more and more of the melted snow, which so lately had been black clouds and vapour. All the summer through there went on this melting of the snow, but in May or June the valley was clear enough for Caspar to go with his father and his mother and his sister to the hut in which they spent the few months of warmer weather. He used to rise at daybreak, and drive out some twenty or thirty cows to pasture. Such pretty cows they were, small and fawn-coloured, with kind eves. Each one wore round her neck a bell, and, whenever she moved, it tinkled, so that all day long the music of the bells was in Caspar's ears. In the morning the dew lay thick, and at first a white mist covered the ground. Soon, however, the sun came brightly out, and drove away the mist, and made the dewdrops glitter. Far away Caspar used to wander over the green grass, sometimes alone, and sometimes with his sister, who was a year younger than himself. When he reached

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the highest part of the grassy slopes, he used to pick little bunches of edelweiss, a curious flower, like bits of flannel cut into the shape of a star-fish, which his sister took down to the village to sell to foreign tourists. In the hut where they all lived, were ranged great jars of milk and cream, which Caspar's mother made into cheeses for his father to sell at the proper time.

"So year after year the boy's life went on, until one spring morning his father, who had been unwell all the winter, died. This was the beginning of sorrow for Caspar. Not only did he miss his father's help and long to hear the sound of his voice again, but he found that, without the work which his father used to do, it was impossible to get bread enough for himself and his mother and sister. One by one the cows were sold, and then when the last was gone, Casper felt that his work was also gone. He could not bear to be a burden on his mother, but he could think of nothing to do.

"At length, however, he was out far up on the mountain, picking edelweiss, as the sun began to set. He flung himself down on a rock on which he had often sat to watch his cows, and he felt very sad no longer to hear the music of their bells. And then he raised his eyes to the great peaks which

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towered, white with snow, above him, and then he lowered them, and saw the pine woods golden in the evening light, and he felt, as he had never felt before, how dear his mountain home was to him: but one thing was dearer to him than even the dear mountain home, and that was his duty to his mother and his sister. As he sat there in the calm and beauty of the evening, a voice seemed to come from out of the mountains and bid him bravely leave them to seek his livelihood else-So clear it sounded, and so strong in its where. bidding, that he was startled as though some one had really spoken to him. Yet, except for the whispering of the wind among the rocks, there was only the silence of the mountains; but the very silence seemed to speak. The sun, as it sank in the sky, flung crimson and blood-red lights upon the peaks of snow. The giants of the calm were speaking now to Caspar, as the storm giants had spoken in the winter. He listened, and obeyed."

Ellie glanced down. Fred's face was earnest and attentive, but Dona was watching a kitten that was playing in the room. Ellie smiled to herself, and began again.

"There was very little that Caspar could do, and his plans were soon made. He caught some marmots, and tamed them, and then early one morning he slung their cage round his neck, and started off into the world. The dew was shining on the grass, and as the sunlight fell upon it; he thought that perhaps it would be caught up into the air in vapour, changed by the giants of the storm into clouds, and blown away by the winds, to fall down upon him in some distant land. That was why he seemed so happy in the rain today."

"He must be a very clever boy," said Fred.

"But the story isn't true," said Dona.

Ellie then continued.

"He went on till he came to a little stream that rushed like a long waterfall right down the side of the mountain. He knew the place where it first came melting away from the great snow peak, and had often taken his cows to drink at a spot where it spread out into a pool among the rocks; but he had never seen whither it went below the village which was his home in winter. Now, however, he thought that if he could follow the course of the little stream, it would remind him of its home and his among the mountains. So he scrambled down beside it, through clusters of the sweet Alpine rose, a spray of which he picked and hid in his coat to remind him of the flowers of home when he should be far away.

"All that morning he went scrambling down, until

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at noon he came to a wide valley, in the middle of which a river ran. He sat upon the mountain's side, and saw his own little stream go dancing merrily away to lose itself in the larger river. The sunlight glanced on its waters as they rose and fell, and they looked so bright and glad that he too felt glad to be following them out into the world, where the mountains had taught him that it was best for him to be. He rested for a while, and ate a crust of bread which his mother had given him at parting. Then he plunged down into the valley, and followed the course of the river."

Ellie paused for a moment.

"Where did it go?" asked Fred.

"It went winding along the valley for a long way, and soon it passed through some large villages. Caspar showed his marmots to the people, but they did not care much to see them, because there were plenty of wild ones on the mountains close at hand; but, at one house, dinner was given to him, and at night he was allowed to sleep in a barn. It was sweet to lie on the straw and dream of his cows at home, but, very early in the morning, he started off again.

"All that day he trudged along, from one village to another, until at sunset he came upon a sight

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which filled him with wonder and joy. Far away, in front of him, there stretched a huge sheet of water like a sea, surrounded by great, snow-peaked mountains, and, in the distance, the sun was sinking like a ball of fire within the lake. Near at hand the bells in a church were ringing sweetly, and their sound came, borne like a welcome to the wanderer, across the waters. He rested there on the shore that night, and dreamed, no longer of his goats at home, but a sweet, new dream of change. He seemed to himself to be lying still asleep upon the shore, when whispered voices spoke above him, and wakened him to listen drowsily.

"'Hush! hush! hush!' they said, and then one of them went on :---

"'Speak low, Sisters, speak low that he may not be disturbed, but we need not leave off speaking altogether. Ripple, ripple, let us talk ripplingly, like the murmurs of the river.'

"'Splashing, foaming, dancing in the sunlight, so I come to him.' It was another voice now, and it reminded him strangely of his own stream upon the mountains.

".' Lapping slowly, moving in waves along, I bear him down the lake to the great city at the end.' It was a third speaker now, and then the first replied :--

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"'I meet him there, rippling, rippling always, and bring him down towards the sea."

"A scent as from salt waves seemed then to reach him with a gentle breeze, and a voice, which rose and sank like the quiet swell of some calm sea, took its turn to speak :—

"'Lay him softly, the waters' child, upon my lap, where the ships sail, and on my currents he shall move along, and learn the secrets of the sea, going where he will, or where we, who know better than he, shall choose that he shall go.'

"And I will be always near him, mingling drops from home in lake and river and sea,' so spoke the voice which had seemed like his mountain stream to Caspar. 'Raise him softly, Sisters, softly, and lay him in our enchanted boat.'

"They raised him gently in their arms and bore him to their boat. As they laid him on the cushions, still half asleep, he heard them whisper :---

"'Kiss him, kiss him, the boy who has left home, guided by the waters, at the bidding of the mountains, to spare his mother's poverty. Kiss him, Sisters, kiss the waters' child, before he moves away.'

"One by one they stooped and kissed him, and as they stooped, he opened his eyes, and saw their faces

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bending graciously above him, and smiling brightly as through a mist of watery vapour. So tender they looked, and beautiful, that, as they rose like silver mists and vanished in the night, he felt no fear to think that he was drifting outwards on the lake. It was all a dream, of course, but clear as reality to him. The waves lapped round him in the moonlight, and, in their murmurs, he could hear whispers from his own stream at home. It was wonderful to think that those drops of water which followed him had fallen first upon the mountain top as flakes of snow, and lain there, who can tell how long, till the sun shone on them with bright, warm rays, and melted them again For, before ever they were snow, they into water. had been little waterdrops, lurking in the hidden fountains, buried deep within the hills, then springing up to the surface of the ground and falling down in a stream which ran white and gurgling among the rocks, where moss clung rejoicing in the cool, damp air. Down, down the little drops sped on, till the stream flowed out into the sea, when they went wandering out across the waste of waters, beating one day, it may be, upon the coast of Spain or England, and on another, lurking far away in silent pools among the sunny Indian isles. There, or perhaps far away again in the open sea, the sun's rays caught them

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up, as vapour, to the sky, and the wind drifted them on, on, on, now to north, and now to south, at one time driving them straight along for miles, and, at another, hurrying them round and round, in whirling gusts, till they were blown against the snow peaks of Caspar's home, and hardened by the cold into flakes of snow themselves, to lie and wait until the sun called them into motion again, and sent them forth in restless course across the world of waters.

"All this Caspar dreamed, and when he awoke, and found himself on the shore with his marmots, he felt lonely, yet comforted to know that, wherever he might be, there would be whispers in the air, or on the water, from his home among the mountains. And so he wandered on past the city at the end of the lake, and along the great river which flowed from the lake to the sea, till he reached a trading port, where his present master hired him to come to England, and show his marmots. Ah ! children, was I not right to say, before he came, that I longed to see the future? Then I was thinking of the changes that will come upon the world in which we live. Now I only want to know if Caspar will spend his life in foreign lands, or if some day he will return to his mountain home, and find his mother and his

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sister, and live again the sweet, simple life of old among the cows."

"Do you think he will?" asked Fred anxiously; but Ellie only answered in the queer way she had when she wished to talk of something else.

"How can I tell? The past, my dear Boy, in this world, is only too apt to be past."

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CHAPTER IX.

THE LAND OF ICE.

THE next day was Ellie's birthday, and the children came early to see her, with their hands full of briar roses and other wild flowers, which they had gathered for her in the woods, before breakfast, for Ellie loved flowers which grew wild, more even than those of the garden. She thanked the children for their present, but at first she did not seem inclined to talk much. Her eyes looked far away into the distance, and Fred and Dona waited patiently till she was ready to tell them of what she was thinking.

"Ah! Children," she said at last, "you are wondering where my thoughts are. I was looking at the flowers which the sunlight brings out, and remembering how sunny my own birthdays have been, and yet how many there are to whom the sunlight does not seem to come."

"Are there?" said Fred. (88) "Yes, Dear," replied Ellie. "I will tell you something of what I mean. You remember that my godmother was to take me to a desolate country that was almost out of the Fire Kingdom. Well, how it came about I do not know, but I awoke in the night before my birthday ten years ago, and seemed to be very far away from home.

"The air on my face was bitterly cold, but the rest of my body was cosy and warm. I was wrapped in furs, which were thick and soft to the touch. As soon as I had found this, I lifted up my eyes, and, for a while, I forgot everything else in the beauty of the star-lit heaven. I cannot tell you how deep was the blue of the sky. You cannot imagine how bright were the stars in that keen, cold, frosty air. It seemed in the silence round me that I was moving amidst the most solemn secrets of all the world-strange, yes, I actually was moving. I was gliding onwards over a wide plain of ice and snow which glistened cold in the starlight. I sat in a chair fastened to a sledge. In front of me, I could see the creatures which drew it rapidly along. They were not horses, for they had high, branching horns. Were they? yes, they were reindeer.

"'Am I in Lapland?' I exclaimed, for I knew that people in Lapland drive reindeer in sledges.

I was startled to hear a voice close beside me reply:---

"' No, not in Lapland'.

"'Where am I then, and who are you?' I asked, turning round to look at the speaker. I had been a little frightened at first, but there was something in the tone of his rich, sweet voice, which told me that I might trust him safely, and when my eyes met his I had no more fear.

"'I am the Prince of the Ice Kingdom,' he said, 'and your fairy godmother has asked me to teach you its secrets. I am glad to do so, for I have many things to tell you about the cold world in which I hope that you will never live, although you must know about its gloom.'"

Ellie paused for a moment and then continued.

"Oh! Children, if I could only take you that long night drive with me! I wish that you could see down the deep cracks of the ice, and shudder at their black depths. The prince stopped the sledge once, and made me look over the side. The stars gave just light enough for me to see that we were on the edge of a long break in the ice, but I could not see how deep it was. The prince took a piece of frozen snow, and told me to drop it down the crack. ""Wait and listen,' he said, as I let it fall. It seemed a long, long time before I heard it rattle hundreds of feet below on the bottom of the hole. I shuddered to think of the danger of falling down a place like that, but I knew that, with the prince to guide me, I was safe.

"We drove on again as fast as before, and now we passed between two high mountains. The steep, black rocks rose above us on each side, and left only a narrow passage for our sledge. I could see long icicles clinging to them, and in one place the strangest sight. In the summer there had been a waterfall leaping down the side of the mountain, and now it was all frozen just as it had leaped. The ice went up and down in waves, which seemed still to toss; the very spray was frozen against the rocks, so suddenly had the frost come and bound the splashing waters as they rose and fell.

"As we passed away from the mountains, and out upon the open plain of ice and snow again, a change took place in the sky before us. For first it seemed to grow darker and darker, and then in the North a great light arose, unlike any light that I had seen before. A circle of yellow brightness broke through the black clouds, and from it there shot up many lines of light, which quivered like spears shaken in the hand

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of a giant. Some were in colour blue and some red, others pale green or yellow or blue like steel. The whole of the country around us was lightened by this strange glowing light, if that can be called country which was only a field of snow. I turned to my companion, and saw that his eyes were bent upon that distant light, and gleamed as if in answer to its signals.

"' What is it?' I asked.

". Those lights are called the Northern Lights,' he replied. 'For some months in the year they are the only lights that fall upon my kingdom.'

"' Have you no sun?' I asked in surprise.

"'No. We are almost out of the Fire Kingdom here. There are never any bright, warm, sunny days. When the sun visits us at all, it is with a sad, sickly light, as if all its joy were killed by the chilling frost."

"Poor sun!" murmured Dona to herself. Ellie heard her, and said with a smile :---

"I don't think that the sun can feel, Dear. The prince did not mean that. He only meant to say that, in the Ice Kingdom, the summer days are dark and cheerless, and that, in winter, they have no days at all."

"No days at all!" exclaimed the children.

"No, winter there is one long night. It has the

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stars, and the beautiful Northern Lights sometimes, but it is always more or less dark, and often very, very dark."

"But how do the people know when to get up?" asked Fred, who had a very business-like mind.

"I don't think that they want to sleep much more than we do, but they live in the strangest way."

"How?" inquired Fred.

"I will tell you, Dear. After we had driven a long way I could make out, under the gleaming of the Northern Lights, that we were coming to a number of lumps on the ice, which looked like great snowballs. The prince stopped in front of one of them, and I saw that it had a hole in the side through which something came towards us. When it had come outside it looked like some animal, for it was just a bundle of thick, soft fur. To my surprise, however, on a nearer view through the furs I could see a pair of eyes and a wrinkled face. It was a little old woman, and, I am sorry to say, a little old woman in a very bad temper.

"'Ugh, ugh,' she grumbled in the language of that country, which my godmother had given me the gift to understand. 'Ugh, ugh, I must get up again, I suppose, and do all the work of the house for those lazy boys.'

"I was surprised to hear this, because I could not

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see any house for her to do work in, but I listened as she went on to say :---

"'Ugh, ugh. Yes, it is time to get up because the light is high.' She meant the Northern Light. 'The boys want to go out a-hunting while the light is there, and I must get them their fish.'

"She went into what I thought was another snowball and came out carrying some dried fish like haddocks or herrings, and some fat shiny stuff which I did not know at all. She came back, grumbling all the time, to the first snowball, and stooped down and went in again. I could no longer see her, but I heard her voice, for she was speaking loudly and very crossly.

"'Ugh, ugh, lazy loons that ye are. Why do ye lie sleeping there when there's hardly a bit of food in the house? Your grandfather, he would have been out hours ago and on the hunt. But he's dead, poor chap, knocked down a hole in the ice by a big white bear, and now there's nobody to rout ye out but me, and what do ye care for a poor old miserable creature like me? A pack of lazy, idle, worthless boys that take no more notice of your old grandmother than if I were a seal. Ugh, ugh, ugh.' The rest of the poor old lady's speech was lost in a fit of coughing, and then I heard other sounds, deep voices like those of

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men, and once a sharp howl as though a dog had been kicked out of somebody's way.

"' Peep in at the door,' whispered the prince to me. "' But they'll see me,' I said.

"'No,' said he. 'Your godmother has made you invisible.'

"I was glad to hear this, because I had been rather frightened, but now I was ready to go into the snowball quite bravely. When I had passed through the hole I was surprised to find myself in a little hut, but the strangest kind of hut. The walls and the roof were of snow, but not of pure white snow. They were all yellow and dirty, and instead of feeling as cold as a snow-house ought to feel, the hut was quite hot and stuffy. And no wonder. For though it was very small there was a large family in it, who evidently made it their home. First there was the old grandmother; then there were her four grandsons, grown-up men, though she had called them boys, and a young woman who seemed to be the wife of one of the men : and last, but not least, to judge by their noise, were ten or twelve dogs. All were busy eating their breakfast, but it was the poorest breakfast I have ever seen. There was no bright fire to warm the room, and no hot tea or coffee. There was not even a table, but the people were sitting round the room tearing the fish

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with their fingers, and sucking lumps of the fat stuff which I had seen. I heard them call it blubber, and I know now that it is cut off the whales which are killed in the ice country. I felt quite ill when I saw how greedily they were swallowing the nasty raw stuff, and even worse when one of them seized a jar of oil and began to drink out of it."

"How horrid!" exclaimed Dona.

"Yes, Dear," said Ellie, "it seems very horrible, doesn't it? but in that dark, cold country where the warm light of the sun is never felt, foods like oil and fat are needed to keep the people warm and comfortable; and so it is not quite so bad as such a breakfast would be here."

"What did they do after breakfast?" asked Dona, who did not like this part of the story.

"The men dragged out a sledge from a corner of the room and put it outside on the ice. Then they fetched a great whip and some harness. I wondered where the horses or the reindeer were to be found for them to harness to the sledge, but a great howling of the dogs made me look round. There they were tumbling over each other and knocking each other down in their eagerness all to get out of the hole in the side of the hut at once. Such a clamour, too, they made when they all *were* out. They jumped and frisked round the

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sledge and then stood wagging their tails, with their tongues out, asking for something with their big, brown eyes.

"I soon found what they wanted. When one of the men picked up a collar with a line tied to it, they began to howl ten times as loudly as before and to leap up at him. I thought that he would be knocked down, but another man took the whip and sent its long lash flying about among the dogs, and turned their noise into short, sharp howls of pain. After this they were quiet, and, to my surprise, they were harnessed like horses to the sledge. The men jumped in, and with a great crack of the whip off they drove to hunt seals and bears on the ice in that strange, dark day beneath the gleam of the Northern Lights.

"When they were gone I turned to the prince.

"'You must soon go now, Ellie,' he said; and he looked so sad that I could not help exclaiming:----

""Oh! cannot you come too, away from all this darkness, to where there is sunshine and people are happy?"

"'You forget,' he said, 'that I am Prince of the Ice Kingdom, and in my kingdom I must stay.'

"'But what good,' I cried impatiently, 'is the Ice Kingdom to you or to any one else?'

"When I said that the prince was grieved, for it

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was a foolish and a wrong thing to say; and then, seeing how grieved he was, I was grieved too.

"'Ellie,' he said gently, 'do you not know yet that all things in the world are good, or may be turned into good by us? The Ice Kingdom helps to make the waters flow round the land upon the earth and the winds to sweep across the world. Without the Ice Kingdom there would be no spring, or autumn, or winter, but only summer everywhere; for, as you know, in your own home you have my ice and snow at times.'

"But I would love to have always summer,' I exclaimed, because what I wanted was to carry the prince away to a land where it was always bright and warm.

"'Ellie, Ellie,' he said, more sadly than ever, 'can you not learn? Summer is good in its own time, just as joy and laughter are good in their turn, but out of season it can be only evil. Cold and snow are needed in this strange world of ours to make it the true, and, on the whole, the happy fairyland. You must go back to light and gladness, and I must stay to do my own work here.'

"So saying he bent and kissed my forehead, and then the reindeer started off with me alone in the sledge. Looking round, I could see the prince stand gazing after me as I moved slowly away. Over his head the

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solemn lines of the great light shot upwards, quivered and glittered, and the cold ice gleamed blue around him. There I left him who might have come, but who chose to stay and do the work which was his to do. The darkness came between us, and I have seen his face again no more."

"Poor prince!" said Dona with a sigh; and then she ran off hand in hand with Fred to play in the sunshine till dinner-time.

IX.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAND OF HEAT.

WHEN the children went to see Ellie the next day, they were eager to have another story.

"Very well," she said, "I will tell you a true one to-day."

"Won't there be any fairies in it?" asked Dona anxiously.

"No, Dear, but there will be better things in it than fairies—there will be sailors, for instance."

"Are sailors better than fairies?" asked Dona, in rather an unbelieving tone.

"That depends, Dear, on what you think is good. The fairies are more beautiful than the sailors, but then the sailors are real, while the fairies are all makebelieve, and many very wise and dull gentlemen and ladies would tell you that to be beautiful a thing must be true. Only many equally wise and equally dull (100) gentlemen and ladies declare that the truth of the imagination is a higher truth than that of the prosaic every-day facts, because no fact is a fact at all except in the imagination of the person to whom it is a fact; and this is exceedingly kind of them, because they cannot be suspected of having the least idea of what imagination really is. Don't you think it is?"

"I s'pose so," said Fred.

"No, my dear boy, you don't 's'pose' anything of the sort, so don't say that you do, or we shall quarrel, for I like a boy to be truthful in all things. You haven't the least idea of what I meant just now, have you?"

"No," said Fred, hanging down his head.

"Of course not, Dear, because I was talking metaphysics, which is the unimaginative for nonsense, and no child has ever understood metaphysics, except perhaps Bruno, since Alice grew up, and Dinah and the White Rabbit, the Caterpillar, the Lizard, and the Dodo all went off together to Mother Carey's Peace Pool, about which there is a prettier story written than ever I shall tell, and so let us get to our own poor little story, shall we?"

" Please," cried both the children.

"Once upon a time, before you were born, I was young."

"Were you?" asked Fred politely, seeing that Ellie paused.

"Yes, Dear, I really was, and, as you know, having few playfellows, I was obliged to invent a fairy godmother for myself, but, as I grew older, she seemed to come less often into my mind. I began to read books, and one book told a story which interested me greatly, for it was an account of a voyage which Jack Brown, my father's cousin, had made when he was a big boy or a very young man.

"Captain Brown, Jack's father, owned a ship in which he used to sail across the sea to fetch sandalwood and ivory. When Jack was quite a baby, he cried one evening when his father told him that he was going away the next day, and perhaps would not be back for a year. Nothing could comfort the poor child, until a promise was made that he should go too when he was old enough. Every year after that time when his father was going to set out, Jack begged to know if he was not old enough now to go, but year after year went by and still he was too young. At last, to his great delight, his father told him that the time had come, and that, in a month, they would sail away and see some of the most beautiful and some of the strangest sights in the world.

"There was never a month that went so slowly, but it went at last. Jack kissed his sister Minnie, and hurried away into the carriage, in order not to see that her eyes were full of tears. His father jumped in after him, and in a cloud of dust they rolled away. Everything was new to Jack. There were no trains in those days, but the carriage carried him and his father to a coach, outside which they travelled all the way to the place where the ship lay at anchor. The country was green with the bright leaves of spring, which the sun and the wind had not darkened, and on which the dust had not had time to settle, and Jack thought that he had never seen anything so lovely. The guard blew his bugle, the horses dashed merrily along, and he sat dreaming of the world which lay before him, as though everything would be as beautiful and as fresh as the scene around him.

"The coach rattled through the narrow streets of a town, and then as they came near the harbour, a smell of tar and of salt water on a rising breeze told them that they were close to the sea. Their ship lay anchored not far from the shore, but rolling gently from side to side as the tide swept round it. Poor Jack, he had never been on a ship before, and though he thought little of the rolling at first, he soon began

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to wonder what it would be like presently. The wind rose steadily hour by hour, until it blew past him in great gusts, like the rushing of cannon balls through the air. The sailors were busy putting everything straight on board, for they were to start at nine o'clock.

"'' Twill be a wild night, Sir. Test your sea legs a bit,' said the mate, as he passed Jack, who was watching all the preparations with great interest.

"' ' I shan't be ill,' said Jack sturdily.

"' 'Oh ! won't you, sir?' said the mate.

"The evening began to darken. The wind still rose higher and higher, and came tearing past in fiercer gusts than ever. The lights came out one by one upon the shore, and upon the ships; and their reflections danced upon the water. Jack felt as if he could never grow tired of watching the bustle on the quay. Travellers with piles of luggage, and friends to see them start, porters, sailors, wagons, trucks, dogs, and children were all mixed up in one thronging crowd. At last nine o'clock came, and the ship moved slowly off. Jack stood in a sheltered corner, and saw the line of lights in the houses round the quay vanish slowly behind the vessel. They reached the narrow mouth of the harbour, and he was looking eagerly to see if he could make out the cliffs along the shore,

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when, with a slide and a fall and a leap of the ship, he felt that something had happened.

"At first he could not think what it could be, for he was giddy, as though the earth was reeling under his feet. Then the forepart of the ship sank again, and a magnificent wave burst over it in a cloud of foam. They were out upon the open sea, and the great ship was being tossed about, as though it were a toy. Then Jack felt, as he had never felt before, the mighty power of the ocean, and his own utter helplessness. He stayed for a moment, tossed backwards and forwards across the deck, unable even to stand upright; then scared, humbled, and ill, he crept down to his berth.

"For two days he lay there, sick and miserable, and then the storm was over. On the third morning he climbed up on to the deck, and lay in the bright sunlight with a warm breeze playing round him. The sea was still tumbling, and looked very beautiful with the light upon the white breakers that flashed out here and there upon the deep blue of the waves. Jack rested for a few hours, and then was as well and strong and fearless as any of the sailors.

"How he learned to love the sea! In the calm, when it lay smooth and glassy beneath a hot sun; in the evening, when it ran blue, restless, and cold; in the

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storm, when its majestic waves, rising high, showed valleys of green water beneath their crests; in the night, when the southern stars beamed down upon the dark waters, and he seemed alone between a boundless heaven and a trackless waste. He never could tell in which mood or at what time he loved it best. Only its beauty crept close to his heart, and he grew wiser and stronger and more tender for the lessons and the love of the sea.

"But he was not always alone. He went with his father or the mate and learned about the ropes and the sails, and how a ship is steered, and how the distance it has travelled is measured. He climbed up the rigging, and at night he listened to the stories which the sailors told around a fire in the forecastle, and to the songs which they sang. Then he would turn away from the ruddy glow of the flames, and look out over the dark, restless waves, and up into the bright, quiet heaven, and wonder at the beauty of the world in which men live, and of which the sailors seemed to think so little.

"In this way the ship sailed for week after week, and Jack saw many strange sights. Once he saw a great, cruel shark caught by the sailors. Then there came a number of flying fish, and some of them fell on the deck and lay panting, till Jack took pity on

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them and threw them back into the water. Porpoises too played round the ship, and far away whales spurted the water up in the air, so that it seemed like a fountain rising from the waves. In fact, it was never dull at sea, and, when there was nothing else to do, Jack would stand and watch the changing lights and shadows on the waters as the clouds swept across the sun. At such times he remembered how the shadows of the clouds fell upon the corn fields at home, and he thought of Minnie, who now would be watching them alone, unable to fancy how they looked at sea. Sometimes, too, he put food down on the deck for an albatross, which followed the ship for a long while. It was a great bird, with soft, grey wings like a gull, only many times as large. All the crew loved that albatross, for the sailors think that this bird brings good luck to a ship when it flies near, and never leaves it. Whether it was the albatross or not, that brought good luck to Jack's ship, he never knew, but it had a most smooth and easy passage, and before very long it was lying at anchor in the mouth of an African river, thousands of miles from home.

"Such a river it was, Children! It was nearly a mile across, and its waters rushed along between banks covered with deep, dense forests of huge trees,

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and bushes that were so thick that it seemed impossible to push through them without being torn to pieces by the thorns. At night-time, as Jack stood upon the deck, he could hear strange noises from far away within this forest. There was howling and roaring, and a noise as if two huge cats had met and were fighting like the cats of Kilkenny till nothing but their tails was left. Jack trembled when he heard these sounds, for he knew that in that dark forest the wild beasts had their home panthers and elephants, gorillas and lions, kings among the beasts.

"If Jack felt afraid, when he was right away from all the beasts on board the ship, you can imagine how much more frightened he was, when next day his father said that they must go on shore and march for two or three weeks through the forest to see a native chief with whom he had business. For the first few hours, while he was going, he felt his heart beat fast at every noise; but when he found that no lions came to eat him, he gradually became more brave. When the sun began to set, Captain Brown ordered the party to halt and make a camp. First they piled a huge stack of wood in an open place, and then after supper they lit it, and stretched themselves out in front of the fire. One man sat up to

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watch with a gun in his hand, and Jack was glad to see him sitting in the firelight, because everything was so new and strange. It was strange to sleep there among the great, black trees, which the glow of the fire made to look more huge and black than ever, and for a long while Jack lay awake gazing up at the stars, which were larger, and shone more brightly than any he had ever seen at home. Then, as it grew darker and still more black beneath the trees, the noises which he had heard the night before began again, and there, in the depth of the forest, they were terrible to hear. For a great lion was walking round the camp, attracted by the light of the fire, which he could not understand in a place where there had never been light before. Every now and then Jack heard him give an angry roar, and now it came from this side of the camp and now from that, and the sound of it seemed to roll like thunder through the forest. There were other noises, The trees creaked, and once a bough snapped too. and fell to the ground with a heavy thud, and then Jack heard the lowing of a wild bull and the trampling of a herd of cattle as they passed feeding along. Presently, however, he began to think about home, and to wonder how Minnie would feel if she could see him then; and so from thinking about home he

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passed into dreaming of it, and fell into a sound sleep.

"He was aroused an hour or two later by a hand on his shoulder. He started up, and saw his father bending over him.

"'Well,' cried Captain Brown, 'are you inclined for a moonlight walk?'

"Jack rubbed his eyes in amazement, for the darkness was all gone, and the beautiful, silvery light of the moon was making the forest look like a fairy world.

"' Where shall we go?' he asked.

"'We will go,' said Captain Brown, 'where we can get a good view of all the beasts that are about to-night. Two of the men will come with us, and we shall carry guns, so that there will be no risk in going.'

"They started at once, and soon became quite silent in the beauty of a scene, which was new to them all. For, in the day-time, the forest had seemed a different place. Then it was hot and stifling, and crowds of flies, each armed with a sting of its own, came buzzing round the travellers. Now all was cool, and there was a sense of rest in the silence of the moonlight night. Sweet scents came up from the ground, as though it were grateful

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for the cool dew after the long heat of the day. The trees rose black in the moonlight, and between them Jack could gaze down long lines of light and shadow till both became lost in a kind of golden mist.

"At last they began to go down hill, and the forest became thicker, so thick that they could only catch glimpses of the moonlight here and there through the leaves. Down and down they groped their way, until suddenly they found themselves at the bottom of the hill, and on the bank of a river.

"They halted in the shadow of the trees and looked up the stream. It ran in the form of a horseshoe between two sloping hills. Darkness covered the water and the cliffs above it, but far away where the forest spread over higher ground the moonlight fell gloriously. In the other direction, about a hundred yards from where they stood, the river broadened into a shallow pool, and here the water was dazzling amidst the surrounding blackness, for the light fell on it through a gap in the trees, and made it all golden to see.

"'Look,' said Captain Brown in a whisper, and Jack caught his breath at the sight, for this pool was the drinking-place of all the beasts, and a little gazelle was just stepping into it to take its nightly draught.

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The timid creature stood on the bank with its head in the moonlight and its body in the shadow, looking round to see if any enemy were near, then stooped and drank thirstily.

"Crash, crash, tramp, tramp, what were these sounds now on the further bank? The gazelle turned and fled just as four huge beasts came splashing into the water. They were elephants, all thirsty from a long day's march in the forest. First they filled their trunks with water and poured it down their throats, and then they began to splash and play in the stream. One of them lay down and rolled in it. Another, the largest of them all, sent up whole fountains of water from his trunk into the air so that it might fall over his back, and then two of them began to squirt water at each other, and so the play went on for half-an-hour or more, till they grew tired of it, and marched off up the cliffs again, trampling down the bushes, and snapping branches from the trees as they went. After they were gone, beast after beast came down to drink. An ugly, wicked-looking rhinoceros came first, all cased in thick folds of skin, and looking too heavy to move with ease. Then followed deer and buffaloes and many other creatures, and last of all the king of all the beasts. Jack's heart give a great bound when he saw a lion's head and shoulders come out of the

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darkness. The great beast paused on the brink of the water, looking up at the opposite bank, and when the golden moonlight fell on his head and shaggy neck, Jack thought that he had never seen so beautiful or so terrible a sight.

"What else did he see that night, and on his long journey through the Land of Heat? Ah! Children, he saw more strange things than you can imagine, or I can tell you, and some very sad things. For he saw large villages of black people drinking away the little sense they had in the stifling forest, with bad spirits which white men gave them to our shame. Black kings he saw, painted with paints, and with rings in their ears, and rings in their noses, and rings in their great thick lips; kings who sold their own people to be slaves, and made war, with poisoned arrows, on their neighbour kings. But what he did not see, was any place where men tilled the ground and reaped their crops and lived peaceable, sensible lives; for the hot sun beat down in the Land of Heat always, or the rain rushed down in heavier storms than you have ever known, and between the suffocating heat and the drenching rain the people were not tempted to watch the sweet, slow growth of corn and fruit in spring, or to work through summer days for winter No, Jack saw nothing in the Land of Heat rest.

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which could tempt him to linger in it, but perhaps he never felt how much better his own land was, until he was safely back again, and wandering with his sister among the orchards and harvest fields of home.

CHAPTER XI.

A BORROWED TALE.

ELLIE had a headache the next day. There was thunder in the air the gardener had said, and, as Fred remarked to Dona, it seemed as though they were in the Land of Heat.

"Then we can't have a story, can we?" said Dona, and her face was clouded with disappointment.

"Well," said Ellie, "I don't think that I can make a new story for you, but, if you like, I will read you one."

"Please do," cried the children.

"Let me see. Yesterday you heard all about the big beasts, the elephants and lions, and how they live. To-day I will take you into the Kingdom of the Little." She took down a book from a shelf, not a printed book, but one written in a neat, clear hand.

"See," she said, "it is called 'Stories for the (115) Kindergarten'. It was written by some one whom I know very well."

"Who is it?" asked Fred.

"Ah! that I must not tell you, because the writer's name is a secret, but some day perhaps you and all the world may hear it. Shall I begin?"

The children were quite ready, and so Ellie read as follows :---

"A STORY WITHOUT A TITLE.

"It was an old-fashioned house, a gabled house, which stood in an old-fashioned garden, by the side of which the river softly murmured and gurgled as it made its way to the sea. A grey stone house, with latticed windows, around which clustered roses, which in this month of June were in full bloom. The stretch of garden in front was long and narrow, and in the warm sunshine it looked like a bit of patchwork, as indeed it was, with its beds of various sizes, in which grew vegetables of all kinds, surrounded by roses, and sweet-william, and geranium, and marigold, and snapdragon, and nasturtium, and many flowers more. These beds were crossed by narrow gravel paths bordered with box, while a broader path ran round the whole, which was finally enclosed by a low, thick hedge. On the river side the hedge was broken

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by two little square arbours, where honeysuckle climbed, and sweetbriar was to be found—not to mention innumerable tiny living things of a creepycrawly nature, such as beetles, earwigs, and ants —and here from the bench you looked out on to the river and across to the Hermitage woods beyond.

"In the garden, on this summer afternoon, the only sounds to be heard were those of the ever-murmuring river, the cackling of the fowls in the yard at the back of the house, the twittering of birds in the eaves, the humming of the bees as they passed from flower to flower in search of honey, and an occasional far-away bleat of some little lost lamb that sought its mother sounds which increased the drowsy effect of the otherwise perfect stillness.

"A stranger, arriving at this moment, would have concluded that the house was deserted or its inhabitants asleep. He would soon have been undeceived, however, for suddenly there was a noise as of a door violently opened and shut, and a little girl, apparently about nine years old, rushed past the front of the house and into the first of the two little arbours described above. She flung herself down on the ground, buried her face in her hands, and burst into tears.

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"'It's mean,' she sobbed out; 'it's a shame—it's cru—el of mother to have taken Elsie and—and to have left me behind.'

"At the recollection of her wrongs—real or imaginary —the tears gushed out afresh.

"But I won't do the sums; I can't, and I won't; they're far too difficult, and I hate them,' she muttered as she dried ther eyes with her small pocket-handkerchief, already wet through.

"By-and-by she grew calmer, the great sobs ceased to shake the slight body, and worn out, her little head sank down on the bench, while the eyelids closed over the heavy eyes.

"'It's of no use trying to be good,' she murmured; 'it's of no use.'

"'It's of no use trying to be good! Dear me, what a very shocking sentiment; but it's just what one might expect from one of the human race.'

"These words were spoken in the tiniest of small voices; indeed, had it not been as clear as the tinkling of a silver bell, it could never have been "heard. But the little girl heard it, and wondered to whom it could belong, and to whom it was speaking, and she opened her eyes languidly, and looked round to see. As there was no one in sight, she turned, with a sigh of disgust at having "been disturbed in vain, and would have laid her head down on the bench, when again the voice spoke. This time it appeared to address her.

"'Human creature,' it said, 'Human Creature, I don't know to what sex you belong, but you seem to be in trouble. Tell me who you are.'

"At this the little girl looked much surprised, but having been told by nurse that she should speak when she was spoken to, she replied, as soon as she could summon up courage enough :—

" Please, I'm a little girl, and my name is Isabel. Who are you?'

"'You are a little girl,' answered the voice, 'a little girl; then I suppose you are a female. May I ask if you are a queen or only a worker?'

"But before Isabel could reply the voice continued: And who am I? Well, I should have thought you had only to look at me to know that."

"' But I can't see you,' interposed Isabel.

"' Can't see me,' repeated the voice in an offended tone. 'We all know,' it added, ' that there are none so blind as those who won't see. Why, I am standing right in front of you, but since you must have a more formal introduction allow me to present to you a member of the great family of the Formicæ—dwellers in the Kingdom of the Busy. But perhaps you do not

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know us under that name; you human creatures generally speak of us as "ants".'

"During this very long introduction, Isabel's attention had been attracted by a little brown ant, and she remembered having watched it creep up the support of the bench, and along the top, until it had come quite close to her.

"' Could this then be the same ant that had spoken to her?' she asked herself. It must be, for there was not another in sight, and the voice had distinctly said that it belonged to an ant. But this ant had never opened its mouth, so how could it have spoken? The only movement Isabel had seen it make was with its antennæ or feelers, as she called them. These, she had noticed, it had kept in perpetual motion, though they were still now. She determined to wait a moment or two and to watch. She had not to wait long before the voice spoke again. 'I think,' it said, 'that I asked you if you were a queen or only a worker?'

"This time Isabel was sure that it was the ant in front of her that was speaking. Certainly it did not open and shut its lips as she did when she spoke, but it kept constantly moving its feelers as it had done before.

"' ' Perhaps it talks with them,' she said to herself.

"' Why, whatever else did you imagine that I spoke with ?' asked the ant.

"At this unexpected reply poor Isabel blushed, and feeling that it was necessary for her to make some sort of apology, she stammered out: 'I'm sure, I'm sorry, I really didn't mean to be rude'.

" • Oh, don't apologise, don't apologise,' said the ant. • No harm done, only tell me *are* you a queen or only an ordinary worker? '

"' What a ridiculous question,' thought Isabel, though aloud she said: 'How can I be a queen? Queen Victoria is our queen of course.'

". Then you must be a worker,' replied the ant.

"' No, I'm not,' whimpered Isabel, 'and it's horrid of you to say that, when you know very well that I wasn't allowed to go with mother because I had been idle.'

"'Well, crying won't mend matters,' said the ant, 'it never did, and in our country we don't cry. We think it babyish. Why don't you begin to work now?'

"' ' I can't do the sums,' sobbed Isabel.

"'If you don't at first succeed, try, try, try again," replied the ant by way of encouragement.

" But it's of no use, I tell you,' said Isabel pettishly. It's of no use trying to be good.' "'You said that before,' said the ant, 'but what are sums? I never heard of them. What are they?'

"'Never heard of sums,' said Isabel in astonishment. 'Don't you even know your tables—twice one are two—and weights and measures—two gills one pint—and all that?'

"." Never once heard of any of them,' replied the ant. "We don't have sums in our country."

"'Then you needn't think yourself so conceited,' said Isabel, with a little toss of her head, though what she meant to say was: 'I think you needn't be so conceited'. 'If you haven't sums in your country,' she added, 'you don't know what it is to keep a lot of tables in your head to do them by. I can't remember them.'

"'But,' remonstrated the ant, 'you mustn't think that because we haven't sums in our country we have nothing to do, nothing to remember. We have heaps and heaps to remember.'

"'What?' inquired Isabel, in rather a contemptuous tone of voice.

"We've to remember in which flowers the best honey is to be found, for one thing,' said the ant.

"'Honey!' said Isabel. 'I thought the bees got all the honey.'

"'That shows how ignorant you are,' said the ant; 'and then,' it continued, 'we have the babies to feed and look after.'

" Babies,' ejaculated Isabel. 'Oh, how delightful. I love babies, and Nana never will let me nurse ours.'

" And then there are the cows -----'

"'You surely haven't cows,' interrupted Isabel. You couldn't, you know.'

"Come and see for yourself,' was all the reply the ant condescended to make her.

"'May I come?' she asked eagerly; 'but I'm afraid I mustn't,' she added regretfully, 'for nurse said that I was on no account to leave the garden.'

"'You needn't leave the garden to visit the Kingdom of the Busy,' said the ant.

"'Needn't I not?' asked Isabel, not altogether grammatically. 'But I must; this is my papa's garden, you know, and no one may live here but us.'

"" May they not?' inquired the ant scornfully. "I should just like to see what your papa's garden would be like if the Kingdom of the Busy was removed from it. Many of your plants couldn't get on at all without us; we look after them for him, almost as carefully as the gardener does."

"'I really can't believe that-quite,' said Isabel.

"'Well, come and see for yourself,' repeated the ant. 'Only follow me, and you shall see what you shall see.'

"When the ant had finished speaking, it turned round and began solemnly to creep down from the bench by the way it had come up. 'Are you ready?' it asked, when it had once more reached the ground.

"Without answering, Isabel stood up, and carefully smoothed the creases out of her dress, and returning her pocket-handkerchief to her pocket, prepared to follow.

"'This way,' said the ant, 'and be quick, for it is nearly tea-time, and it won't do to keep the queen waiting for the honey.'

"'Queen !' said Isabel. 'Oh, dear me, I'm afraid I'm not neat enough to meet the queen. You see, I have only my garden frock on, and my hands are not clean, are they?'

" The ant turned and looked at her.

"'Your dress will do,' it said. 'As for your hands, they certainly might be cleaner, but we'll wash them for you before you enter her majesty's presence. Now, come along.'

"As it spoke it began to run, and, to Isabel's dismay, right under the bench. "' I can never get under there,' she thought. 'I'm much too big.'

"Whether the ant knew what she was thinking about, I cannot say, but at that moment it called out:---

"' You never know what you can do till you try'.

"'I suppose I don't,' said Isabel meekly, and she bent down and, to her great surprise, slipped under quite easily, and when, still following the ant, she came to the thick hedge of privet which formed one side of the arbour, she ran through it as quickly and as comfortably as it had done.

"'Tired?' asked the ant, stopping for a minute to take breath. 'We shall soon be home now,' and then it set off to run again, Isabel by its side. They crossed the gravel path, and crept through the border of box which lay to the side of the house.

"' Here we are,' exclaimed the ant, ' and there you see is one of the babies being carried in.' Isabel looked and saw a little brown ant that was carrying a tiny white bundle.

"' ' Oh, are there twins?' asked she.

"The ant either did not hear this question, or purposely ignored it. 'Nurse,' it said, turning to the ant with the baby, 'are they all in now?'

" Nurse put down her burden, and moving her feelers

in the way Isabel had previously observed her friend to move its own, replied shortly :---

"' Yes, I've carried in a hundred of 'em '.

"'A hundred!' said Isabel, 'and all babies. What a very large family!' But she was too much occupied in examining the one that lay on the ground before her to be as surprised at this announcement as she might have been.

"It was not a bit like an ordinary baby—not a bit. It had no legs and no arms; indeed, Isabel was of the opinion that it was more like a very minute white caterpillar than anything else, and she was just going to see if a gentle poke from a twig that she carried in her hand would have any effect on it, when the nurse, who had finished speaking, pushed past her, and taking up the baby ran away with it towards an ant hill a few feet off, which Isabel now noticed for the first time. She and her guide followed as quickly as they could, but when the ant hill was reached, both nurse and baby had disappeared.

"I wonder if any of you little boys and girls who read this story have ever examined the surface of an ant hill, and if you have, whether you have seen the very curious sight which met Isabel's gaze as she drew near to this one.

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A BORROWED TALE.

"There, on the brow of the hill, were hosts of ants —so many that Isabel couldn't possibly have counted them, and they were (you may laugh as much as you please, those of you who have not used your powers of observation)—they were actually playing—yes, playing games and apparently going through a course of gymnastic exercises ! Isabel wouldn't have believed it had she not seen it with her own eyes, but there was no doubting their evidence. There the ants were, marshalled in order, and standing many of them upright on their hind legs, while they fenced together with their antennæ or feelers, as if they were engaged in mock combats, while others of them seemed to be playing at hide and seek.¹

"'What fun !' she exclaimed. 'Oh, do let us join them !'

"We haven't time,' answered the ant at her side. I told you before that we shall be late for tea, and the queen never waits for anybody.'

"Saying this they hurried on to the chief entrance of the ant hill, where they were met by a soldier on guard, who called out on seeing Isabel—' Halt!'

"A friend,' cried the ant by Isabel's side in answer, and without more ado they passed on.

¹ See Sir John Lubbock's Ants, Bees and Wasps, p. 28.

"It was so dark that at first Isabel could hardly see where she was going; but when her eyes had become accustomed to the dim light, she discovered that they were passing through what appeared to be a small entrance hall. As they went on, this grew narrower, and finally widened out again into a vestibule which led into a spacious main hall, the roof of which was supported by earthen pillars.

"Here a scene of much animation presented itself to Isabel's view. To her there appeared to be innumerable nurse-ants running about in all directions with innumerable babies, some of them like the baby she had seen, while others had heads, and feelers, and legs just as the grown-up ants had, only they were tucked up underneath their bodies and apparently fastened there. Then there were ants hard at work making roads and galleries that led to innumerable little rooms, and there were-there actually were -ants busy milking cows! Not cows such as you are accustomed to see. The cows the ants keep are tiny yellow insects with short bodies. When the ants want to milk them, they go up to them and stroke and caress them with their feelers, and the cows then give milk, which is sweet and more like honev.1

¹Ants, Bees and Wasps, p. 69.

"When Isabel saw these cows she felt rather uncomfortable, for she remembered that when her friend the ant had told her about them she had been very unbelieving. However, the ant did not seem to remember the incident, or if it did, was too polite to refer to it.

"'Your hands!' it exclaimed suddenly. 'Why, I had nearly forgotten them. What would her most gracious majesty have said had I presented You must have them washed at you in this plight? once.' Running away to a group of ants near, it quickly returned bringing three or four, and they all at once began vigorously to lick Isabel's hands. She didn't at all enjoy the operation, but, being a stranger and a visitor, she felt there was nothing for it but to submit with a good grace; and in a very few minutes her hands were just as clean as if nurse at home had washed them with soap and water.

"'Now, I think you'll do,' said her friend, surveying her critically. 'But don't forget when I present you to her majesty to make a very low curtesy, and be sure when you retire from the royal presence, that you walk backwards. It's possible that you may be invited to stay to tea; if you are, don't take two helpings of caterpillar, it is her majesty's favourite dish, and

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nothing annoys her more than to see her guests eat greedily of it.'

"'How filthy!' exclaimed Isabel, in answer to this final warning; 'how filthy! I am sure the queen may have it all for what I care. Caterpillar!' she said, turning up her little nose and curling her upper lip to express the utter loathing that filled her at the mere thought of partaking of such food, 'caterpillar!'

"'And why not caterpillar?' asked her friend in a somewhat injured tone of voice. 'Caterpillar is extremely good to eat, and I can assure you it is well for your garden that we do eat caterpillar—and many more insects too. If we didn't, your plants would suffer very considerably, as I told you before.' Poor Isabel looked very shamefaced at this reply, and felt very much rebuked. She was considering how she could best make amends for her rudeness, when a loud cry of 'The Queen! the Queen!' was heard; 'make room there for the Queen!'

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"Was it her friend the ant who took hold of her just at the critical moment, when she was going to make her very best and lowest curtesy to her Majesty the Queen?

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"Isabel opened her eyes and looked up. There was old nurse bending over her.

"'Miss Isabel,' she said, 'Miss Isabel, why, my Bairn, we thought that you were lost. Where have you been?'

"Where, indeed ?"

CHAPTER XII.

MAN AND BEAST.

THE children enjoyed Ellie's stories very much, but Fred more than Dona, because he was older. The little girl found it disappointing to have so many stories without "real fairies," as she called them.

"Well, but," said Fred, "there's the fairy godmother."

"Oh! I don't count her," replied Dona, "she's just a 'magination."

"All fairies are imagination," Fred declared.

"In proper fairy stories they are real," asserted Dona, and nothing would satisfy her but to have stories which were, as she explained to Ellie, "all nonsense".

"Well, Dear," said Ellie kindly, "next Thursday will be your birthday. We will have a long excursion, taking our dinner with us, and I will tell you all the fairy stories that I can remember, and there shall be real fairies, and enchantments, and everything (132) that a little girl can want in the nineteenth century to make her feel like the children of old, to whom the fairies were as real as the cows and the buttercups."

Dona was delighted, and began at once to count the days till Thursday. She was anxious lest it should prove a wet day, but when she slipped out of bed at five o'clock in the morning, the sun was shining as though there had never been a birthday before, and he must make the best of it.

Directly after breakfast, Ellie arrived in the pony carriage, with a great basket of provisions, and off they went.

They drove away through the lanes for a long way, until at last the road became very narrow, and passed into a large forest. When they had driven some two or three miles further, Ellie stopped the pony, told the groom to let him eat the grass by the wayside, and led the children under the trees.

It was a wonderful sight: a forest full of tall, straight fir trees. Their trunks were brown and bare, and high overhead the wind made music in the boughs. They stopped and listened. It was like the rolling of the waves upon the shore.

"Think, Children," said Ellie, "of how vast this earth of ours is. Think of the wind sweeping across its forests and its seas, where no one is near to listen. Hark ! "

A sharp tapping sound came from a tree close at hand. It was a woodpecker that made the noise, hard at work getting the insects out of the bark. Ellie showed him to the children, and they watched him running busily about. Then a rustling among the dead leaves upon the ground made her draw them back, and a beautiful little adder went wriggling across the path.

"Slow-worms and snakes and adders live on the ground," said Ellie, "and dormice, and —— Look there!"

A red flash over the ground was followed by a red flash up a tree, and there sat a squirrel nibbling a nut, with his tail curled gracefully over his back.

"I wish that I could climb up and get him," said Fred.

"Ah!" said Ellie, "you are not quick enough for that. Animals and birds are not so clever as boys and men. They cannot build cities and live in them, and grow wise and rich; but in their own homes they can do things which no man has ever been able to do. I often wish that I were a squirrel that I might know what it means to live among the green boughs. Think, children, of being where no man can ever come, of running about with other squirrels and playing hide-and-seek among the leaves in the warm sunlight. And then at night—would it not be cosy to cuddle into a warm nest in a hollow tree, and listen to the music—the strange wild music—of the wind, as it passed round our tree and across the forest, away to the wild sea, and on and on further across the world than the brain of any squirrel or of any man can follow it ? "

"Tell us a story, please," said Dona, who did not care to think so much.

"Well, let us sit down on the trunk of this tree." Ellie perched herself where her back could rest against the roots of a large tree that lay on the ground, and her feet could find a footstool on one of the boughs, and the children nestled in beside her. For a minute or two no one spoke, and years afterwards the children remembered the scent of the trees, and the music of the wind, and the strange feeling of awe which the loneliness of the place brought to them. All around they saw ants and spiders and flies busily at work in the warm sunshine, and the low hum of the flies was the only sound that broke the silence. Ellie watched the little creatures for a time and then she began her fairy story.

"In the old, old days when there were real fairies, and there were very few towns, and most of the country was covered with forest, a party of people whose home

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was in danger of an attack from their enemies, determined to go a long way off and build a new village where there was no one to hurt them. They packed all their goods into their carts and started off in a long procession. The children were put on a heap of straw in the last cart of all, and for a time they thought it fine fun. But, when they had been driving for some hours, they grew tired of sitting still, and a big boy, Tom, proposed that they should quietly slip out of the back of the cart, have a run in the wood, and jump in again before any one had noticed that they were gone. All the other children refused to have anything to do with such a naughty proposal, and this vexed Tom, and he said very rudely :—

"'Well you are a set of babies. I hate girls, but I'll take Flossie, because, though she's a girl, she has more sense than all the rest of you put together. Come, Floss.'

"Now, Flossie was a very little girl, only eight years old, and she was Tom's sister, and was very much afraid of him, because he used to pull her hair when she would not do what he wanted. 'Oh! Tom,' she pleaded. 'You come along,' he said roughly. 'Look sharp.' He swung himself out of the cart without waiting for it to stop, and, seizing Flossie's hand, pulled her out after him.

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"He dragged her into the wood. 'Hullo,' he shouted, 'there's a lovely butterfly. I must have it,' and away he plunged after it.

"Now, though Tom did not know it, the butterfly was really a fairy, and, I rather fancy, was sent by my fairy godmother to lead him astray. At any rate it fluttered before him for nearly a mile, till it led him splash into a deep bog, and then it fluttered up into the air and was soon out of sight. I will not tell you what Tom said, but soon he began to shout, for in trying to plunge out of the bog he plunged more deeply into it. It was horrible to be alone there fighting with the black mud. First it came up to his knees, and then it came up to his waist, and then it came up to his elbows, and at last it reached his chin ; and it was very cold and sticky and clammy, and his teeth chattered in his head.

"'Ho! ho! ho! Ho! ho! ho!' shouted many gruff voices all round him. A crowd of elves in peaked caps, standing with arms akimbo, were laughing at him with all their might. Tom hated to be laughed at, but now he was frightened.

"' Help me out,' he cried; 'please help me out,' but they laughed all the louder. How glad he was when a sweet voice came floating through the air to tell the elves to pull him out. It was my fairy godmother, whom they dared not disobey.

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"'Oh! we'll pull him; we'll pull him,' they cried with glee, and, splashing into the bog, they seized hold of his arms, his neck, and his hair, and pulled one in one direction and another in another, till poor Tom was nearly pulled to pieces.

"At last they brought him to land, and then they gave a final pull and left him. He stamped to get the muddy water a little out of his clothes, and then ran off after the carts.

"' I suppose,' he said to himself, ' that Flossie will have caught them up and told tales of me, the little sneak.' But Flossie was no sneak, and, poor child, she had had no chance of telling tales, for she was all alone in the wood, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"At last she sat down on the turf, and, tired out, ceased to sob. A sweet sleep stole gently over her, and she lay as quietly as if she were in her bed at home.

"When she woke, the sun was still streaming down, and everything looked so warm and bright and happy that she forgot to be frightened.

"'I am afraid that you will find it very hot out there,' said a voice; 'won't you come into my house and rest?'

"She looked round and saw a large fox, smiling politely between two rows of white, sharp teeth. "'Are you enchanted?' she asked, for somehow she was not at all frightened to be alone with a fox.

"'No,' he replied; 'but you are. Both enchanted and enchanting, I am sure,' he added with a very polite bow.

"' How do you know?' asked Flossie.

"'I know that you are enchanted,' he replied, 'because your fairy godmother came and enchanted you while you were asleep, and I know that you are enchanting because you have enchanted me.'

"Again he showed his white teeth and smiled. Flossie was not quite sure if she liked him. Somehow she doubted if he was altogether sincere, but she thought it better to accept his invitation.

"He led her into a hole in the bank.

"' You will find this a most comfortable seat,' he said.

"She sat down, but quickly jumped up again.

"'Why,' she exclaimed, 'I was sitting on a great bone!'

"'Yes,' he replied; 'it is the largest we have. It belonged to a little, woolly lamb—such a pretty, little, confiding lamb. I have watched it gambol in the fields many a time. At last it confided in me, and now I am sorry to say that it is dead. Ah! well, we can none of us live for ever. I think there's a picking left, if you are hungry.'

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"Flossie felt rather uncomfortable, for she did not quite understand this fox, who seemed so simple; but she changed the subject.

"'Do you know,' she said, 'that I never talked to a fox before?'

"'I suppose so,' he replied, 'but your godmother has given you the gift of understanding all the languages which we animals speak. If you listen, you will hear what that spider has to say for himself.'

"A great spider was busy building his web across the mouth of the fox's den.

"' I don't think,' said the fox sweetly, ' that he quite understands that I am at home.'

"'Do you mind?' asked Flossie. 'I'll move him if you like.'

"'Oh no, thank you,' returned the fox, 'I don't object at all. It's a little inconvenient, but it doesn't matter.'

"The spider by this time had finished his web, and sat looking out. Buzz, buzz, buzz, came a great bluebottle fly, right into the middle of the web. In a moment the spider was spinning a thick, white coat around him, and, before Flossie could interfere, he lay dead and the spider was making a meal of him.

"'Cruel, cruel beast,' murmured the fox. 'It is terrible to think how these creatures prey upon one another. They have no pity at all; literally no pity.'

"Flossie liked the fox much better, when he said this, but she thought that his eyes twinkled a little queerly. 'Why, there's my wife!' he exclaimed, and bounded up. He rushed through the spider's web, and Flossie was startled to notice how, with one quick dart of his tongue, he caught up the spider and swallowed it.

"'Keeps it out of mischief,' he explained, as he began to welcome his wife.

"'Why, what have you here?' he said. 'What? A pretty little partridge? Oh! Flossie *will* be glad to see this. Where *did* you get it? Put it down on the ground, pray, and let Flossie see it. Isn't it pretty, Flossie?'

"'Oh!' cried Flossie, 'I'm afraid it's hurt;' for it lay quivering and unable to move.

"'Let me see, let me see,' said the fox soothingly. 'So it is, so it is; poor little thing. Hurt in one of the nasty, cruel traps that men set, I daresay. They shouldn't be allowed to do it; they really shouldn't.'

"He was so much distressed that Flossie liked him better than before.

""What shall we do? what shall we do?" he went on. 'Let's see if we can bind it up. Run, Flossie,

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if you please, and fetch a plantain leaf from beside the brook.'

"Flossie jumped up, glad to be of any help, but she had hardly stepped outside the door, when she heard a sharp crunch, and, looking back, she was horrified to see the fox tearing the poor partridge to pieces.

"' What a horrid animal !' she exclaimed aloud.

"• Oh! isn't he?' answered a voice close at hand. She looked down and saw a grey rabbit sitting up on its hind legs and brushing its face with its paws.

" ' Don't you like foxes?' she asked.

"'Oh no, not at all,' he answered. 'I never can see the good of them. I am told that every animal is of some use in the world, but I have always failed to discover the use of a fox. I don't know,' he added, 'that a dog is much better, and once a cat ate my family.'

"'Why, it must be dreadful to be an animal,' said Flossie; 'you all seem to eat one another.'

"'Not rabbits,' returned the grey gentleman proudly. 'Rabbits, I assure you, are graminivorous.' He rolled out the last word as though he felt very grand at knowing one of such length. 'I mean,' he kindly explained, 'that rabbits only eat grass and herbs.' "' ' My rabbit at home,' said Flossie, ' ate her young ones.'

"'Ah!' remarked her new acquaintance, 'she was an unnatural rabbit. I never eat my young ones. I like to bring them out and see them play and nibble the grass all round me.'

"'How many young ones have you?' asked Flossie, who was much interested in this family picture.

"'Let me see,' said her friend, 'I never counted, but I should think, without reckoning the family that the cat ate, that I must have had somewhere between sixty-five and eighty children.'

"' Sixty-five children,' exclaimed Flossie in amazement. 'Where are they all?'

"' Mostly dead,' replied the rabbit, contentedly nibbling a bit of grass. 'A hawk carried off quite halfa-dozen when they were just beginning to run about. Your friend the fox has had nineteen meals out of them, three tumbled into the brook and were drowned, fifteen or so ate grass that poisoned them, fourteen were caught in vile traps—perhaps you ate some of them.'

"'Oh! no,' said Flossie earnestly; 'but what of those that are still alive? Are not they a comfort to you?'

"The rabbit gave a sort of sneeze. 'They are all very well,' he said, 'but really I hardly know which they are. There are so many rabbits, and they are so much alike, that I cannot be sure which are my parents or my children; but it doesn't matter, so long as I keep out of the way of the fox and the traps. The grass is very sweet, and what more can a rabbit want?'

"Flossie turned away from the selfish fellow.

"' I didn't think that animals were like that,' she said softly, and her eyes filled with tears.

"' Get yourself a nut; do get yourself a nut,' said a voice overhead. Flossie looked up and saw a young squirrel peering down curiously upon her. 'There are very good nuts about,' continued the little creature. 'You have lost your friends, haven't you?'

"'Yes,' sobbed poor Flossie, 'and I do want them so.'

"' I lost all my friends one day,' said the squirrel, ' and I ran about broken-hearted till I stumbled over a big nut, and then I found that the nuts hereabouts are better than the nuts in my old home; and so here I have stayed.'

" ' And your friends ? ' asked Flossie anxiously.

"'Oh! I have never seen them again, and I hope they won't come here, or we should quarrel over the

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nuts, and I might be hurt by my father, who is a very strong squirrel indeed, and so nasty tempered.'

"Flossie moved away, and then stood to cry. The wood around her was still unchanged, still the warm sunlight poured down among the trees, and the squirrels flashed among the branches, the woodpeckers tapped upon the bark, and the webs of the spiders waved like threads of silk in the air. The bees and the flies hummed on as busily as ever, and the wind made the same music in the boughs. Something, however, was gone, and Flossie felt that the place could never be the same again. Then a tall figure in a red cloak drew near, and my fairy godmother took her in her arms, and let her nestle against her shoulder, just as Dona is nestling against me.

" ' It is the world's fairyland, and not your fairyland,' she said.

" Oh ! the animals are all so selfish,' cried Flossie. ' They don't care a bit for one another. They only think about themselves.'

"The fairy godmother looked very tenderly at the little girl, then she said softly :---

"'You have learned a great secret, Flossie. The poor animals know no better, and you must not be disappointed if they seem selfish and stupid. Only men can hear the good news that we live, not for ourselves,

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but for one another; for only men have the brains and hearts to understand it. Come, let us go after your friends; and when you think of the day on which you spoke the language of the beasts, remember that you must teach Tom, and boys and girls as selfish as Tom, that they are not beasts but children of men.'"

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE POWER OF THE DWARF.

"I Do like a real fairy story," said Dona, when Ellie had finished speaking. Ellie smiled.

"Well, now, come a little further into the real fairyland," she said, "and see if you do not like that still better."

She jumped off the tree, and lifted Dona down, while Fred scrambled to the ground. Then they all three walked straight into the forest.

The trees grew thicker, and the sunlight in places could scarcely pierce through the dark shadows which they made. Once they saw a ray of light fall upon a spider's web which was hanging covered with dew, and the web glistened as though the dewdrops were the pearls, as Ellie said, from the necklace of a fairy princess.

"I know," she said, "what the fairy storytellers would tell you about such pearls. They would say (147) that once upon a time there lived a king and a queen, who were very happy, until they remembered that they had no children, and then they became so sorrowful, that every one around them became sorrowful too. There was nothing left undone that could be done. The king sent messengers out into all lands, asking the fairies to come into his castle on a certain day to see if they could not help him. But before this day came there tramped into the courtyard a little, ugly, 'misshapen' dwarf. The servants tried to turn him out, but he marched straight past them all to where the king sat groaning and the queen sat sighing upon two golden thrones at the end of the hall. He stood before them without removing his hat, and shouted, rather than spoke:—

"'I will give you a child, a lovely princess, and she shall live with you until she is grown up, and then she shall come to me when I choose to fetch her, and marry me, and be queen in my country, and forget all about you and your friends here, and you shall never see her more, unless you first find my country, and take away my soul, that I may die'.

"The king and queen were very angry when they heard this, and vowed—every one vows in proper fairy stories—that they would agree to no such proposal; and the dwarf was just about to start away in a huff,

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when the chief counsellor craved leave to speak. He was a very wise man, one hundred and one years old, who had the great gift of being able to make people see what they wanted to see.

"'I will ask the dwarf,' he said, 'two questions. First, Sir Dwarf, where is your country of which you speak?'

"The dwarf smiled scornfully, and replied :---

"'It is the ninety-ninth island in the Summer Sea'.

"' Secondly,' said the chief counsellor, 'where is your soul to be found?'

"The dwarf smiled again more scornfully than before.

"In the lake,' he answered, 'that only the invisible, who understand the language of the beasts, can approach, is a golden swan, which sits upon a golden nest. In the golden nest there is a golden egg, in which is my soul. And there it has been since the beginning of time, and there it will be until the end of time, for no man will ever be invisible, or learn the language of the beasts. Nor, if such an one could be found, could he reach the ninety-ninth island, for all the islands in the Summer Sea are in a circle, each like to each, and for a man to land on any but the right is to sleep the sleep of death. Haha! 'A

"Thus laughing loudly, the dwarf strode away to

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the door. There he paused, and shouted back across his shoulder:----

"'Look in the nursery, good Queen, at moonrise on the twenty-second day, and see what you will find'. Then he slammed the door, and was gone.

"Very slowly the days passed away. The queen put a twig of olive wood into her pocket, and every night cut a notch in it, that she might know when the twenty-second evening was at hand. At last came the twenty-second morning, and she and the king stared at each other, pale, with wide-opened eyes. At noon there came a cry: 'The bear, the bear,' and in the palace courtyard was seen a great brown bear, which walked slowly about, snuffing the ground. Round his neck he wore a necklace of pearls. Presently he found the open door, walked into the hall, and lay down at the queen's feet, with his head upon her lap.

"All that day the queen sat with the bear's head upon her knees, until the evening began to darken. No light was brought into the hall, that the king and queen might see the first rising of the moon. Then, at last, a cry rose from watchers all round the palace : 'The moon, the moon'. Slowly the bear rose up and stretched his limbs, and marched before the King and the Queen, and the Chief Counsellor, and the Lord Chamberlain, and the Lord High Almoner, and the

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Grand Master of the Ceremonies, and the Count of the Jeopardised Shore, up the great staircase to the door of the nursery. The king turned the handle, and all entered the room breathless with astonishment. The moonlight fell silvery and soft upon the floor, and there upon a heap of cushions lay a babe asleep.

"'Hush! Hush!' said the king, turning away his eyes, as the queen, with a glad cry of joy, fell on her knees beside the child. 'My Lords,' he said simply, 'rejoice with me, for she has found what we lacked.'

"Softly moaning, the bear passed round the cushions, and gently licked the face of the queen. Then the moonlight grew brighter and more soft, and in it there floated a figure with wide wings and eyes of gracious love. It was the queen of the fairies, and she stood above the earthly queen, and seemed to bless the sleeping child. She stooped, and took the necklace from the neck of the bear, and placed it upon the infant's neck.

"'It is a charm,' she whispered, 'which the bear will guard, and if it is lost, the child will be carried off by the dwarf; but while she wears it he can never do her harm.'

"Days and years passed away. The little girl grew old enough to play in the garden and the woods, but always the bear was with her. She would climb upon his back, and bury her face in his coat, or he would

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roll over and pat her with his paws. When good people came near her, he would rub his head against their hands and welcome them, but the wicked he frightened away, for at them he growled and showed his teeth. One playfellow she had of whom he was especially fond. This was the son of the king of the next country, and every one said that when the prince and the princess were grown up, they would be married and rule together over the largest country in the world. When they grew up, they thought themselves that this would be the best fortune that could befal The wedding-day was fixed, and drew near, them. and the wedding guests were all invited, and every one was as happy as the day was long, or even happier, when a strange thing happened. The prince and the princess were walking together in a wood, when they met an old gipsy who curtesied low, and offered to tell their fortunes. 'Every bead on that pretty necklace, my Lady,' she cried, 'is a separate Give it to me and I will tell you each one fortune. of them.'

"The princess, happy and excited, without a thought, took off her necklace and handed it to the woman. A great clap of thunder sounded overhead, the bear sprang, growling, upon the gipsy, but as his claws touched her, she vanished away.

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"'How do you do, my fair princess? How do you do?' inquired a mocking voice, and there was a wonderful sight. It was the dwarf, with a long cloak over his shoulder, and an ostrich feather curling over his hat, and behind him marched an army of ten thousand other dwarfs, each with a long cloak and an ostrich feather. He raised his hat and bowed to the princess.

"'It was not wise,' he said, 'from your point of view, to part so easily with your necklace. Perhaps, Sir Prince, I may trouble you to report at the palace that the princess has gone away with me to be my wife. Her parents would be so anxious if they did not know. Good-morning.'

"So saying, with a wicked smile, he led the poor girl away. The prince stood rooted to the ground, until the last of the host of dwarfs had gone, and then he turned away broken-hearted to tell the king and queen what had happened.

"There was sighing and there was sobbing in the palace all that day, but neither sighs nor sobs could bring the princess back again, or break the power of the dwarf. At last, at sunset, the prince, who was standing with the king and the queen upon the lawn, rose up very sadly and said :---

"'I have no hope that I shall be able to find and

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kill the dwarf, but I must go and try. Here I cannot stay.'

"He pressed the hands of the king and the queen in his own, and crossed the lawn out of the sunlight into the shadow of the woods, where he had wandered in the morning with his lost princess. A cold wind moved among the branches, and the trunks of the trees looked ghostly in the darkening light. The prince felt a shudder pass through his limbs, as he thought of the miles over which he would have to wander before he could hope—if he ever could hope—to reach his beloved again.

"'Alone in the world,' he murmured, as his eyes filled with tears. Something brushed against his hand. He looked down and saw the bear. 'Not quite alone,' he said, with a sad, sad smile. 'The bear instead of the princess. It's the way of the world I suppose.'

"How long he would have stayed to lament in this silly way I do not know, but the bear was a businesslike bear, who knew that if everything for which you care is lost, you must try to get it back again, and not stay crying out, like some foolish people, that no one ever had such a loss before, or could imagine what such a loss is like. No; this wise old bear put his nose to the ground, and ran about snuffing here

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and snuffing there till he found the track of the dwarf's army, and then he ran back to the prince and pulled him by the coat, and made him see that he must follow.

"Off they started in the path which the dwarfs had made, the bear in front and the prince behind. A11 that night they wandered, sometimes missing the scent, where the army had crossed a brook, and so losing time, but keeping on the whole in the right way. At dawn, they came below a cave in the side of a rocky hill, and here the bear ceased to follow the track. He lay down on the ground and began to The echoes on the hill sides caught up the roar. sounds, till one might have thought that a hundred bears were roaring all together. There was, however, only one person to hear, and he knew what the noise meant. This was the holy hermit of the hill, who lived by himself in the cave.

"' The fairies' bear,' he said to himself. ' I must go and see what he wants.'

"He came to the mouth of the cave, and the bear ran up to him, and licked his hands. He stooped and spoke to him in a low tone for some minutes, and then he advanced towards the prince, who stood still in astonishment, for such a man as this he had never seen.

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"The hermit was seven feet tall, and walked with a slight stoop, and screwed up his eyes as though he had short sight. He wore a long black robe bound round his waist with a girdle, and on his feet he had only sandals for shoes. He shook hands warmly with the prince, and said :—

"' ' The bear has told me your story '.

"' ' The bear !' exclaimed the prince.

"'Yes,' he replied, 'you want to learn the language of the beasts, and I alone of living men can teach you —but you must be hungry. Come in and have some breakfast.'

"He led the way into his cave, and brought down some dried roots.

"' I have no better food to offer,' he said.

" ' I need none,' said the prince politely, as he began his breakfast.

"When the meal was over, they sat down at the mouth of the cave, and the hermit began his story. This is what he said :---

"'Once upon a time, thirty-nine years ago, when I was a young man, I loved, like you, Prince, the daughter of a king, but the king her father was a very wicked man, and told me that I should never marry his daughter unless I did a wicked thing which he wanted done. Well, I did it, and might have married her at

once, but when I had done it I felt that I could not go back and face my beloved princess, who believed that I was as good, or even far better, than she was; so I roamed away into the woods, and thought within myself that I would live all alone, till there should be no more sin left in my heart, and that then I would go back, and confess all to the princess, and see if she could pardon and love me still. Year after year passed by, and still I found sin in my heart, and I pondered and pondered in my cave, until at last the thought came to me that it was because I had nothing to love, that I was still so wicked, for love casts out sin. I longed that men and women might come and let me love them, but the road stretches forty miles to the right and forty miles to the left, and I have never, until you came, seen a traveller in it. No, there were no people to love, but little by little as I sat here in the mouth of my cave, I found that there were other creatures whom I might love and help, if I could get the power. The sparrows came down to wash in the brook-see, there is one splashing his feathers now-and the rabbits came out to nibble the grass and play in the morning and in the evening. Once I saw a wild cat come limping with a broken leg, and I tried to catch her to bind it up, but she saw me and limped hurriedly away. Then I knew that men are so cruel to the animals that only one who

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understands their language, and can approach them without being seen, can really help them. So I tried to learn the language of the beasts and birds. I listened to all the sounds they made, but none had any meaning for me, and I despaired of ever being able to help a single creature. In my despair I chanced to wander at sunset one day-it was the eve of midsummer's day-across an open heath which is not very far from here. In the middle of the heath I saw a fern, tall and beautiful, unlike any fern that I have seen elsewhere. I stayed to look at it, and just at that moment the sun set. In an instant the fern changed all its colour, and shone like burnished gold in the gathering dusk. All around, it shed its golden seed, and I hastened and gathered some up and carried it away. That seed, Prince, has a strange power. It makes its owner invisible, and teaches him the language of the beasts and birds.'1

" The prince started.

" ' Can you let me have some?' he asked hurriedly.

"' No,' said the hermit, 'I have no more. You must wait until midsummer's eve and gather it for yourself. You can stay with me, if you will, meanwhile.'

¹ For a fuller account of this fern seed, see Mr. Frazer's *Golden* Bough, vol. ii. pp. 286-287, and for the external soul in folk-lore, pp. 296-326.

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"There were still three weeks to midsummer's day, but the prince felt that his wisest plan would be to wait. It would take too long, children, for me to tell you all that he learned from the hermit in that time, but among other things he learned to be patient, and to bear his trouble without murmuring, though he was more glad than I can say, when on midsummer's eve he went with his faithful bear at sunset to the heath. He found the fern, and plucked the seed, and in a moment could understand the language of the bear. He rushed back to the cave, made ready to start on his journey, and at moonrise walked with the hermit to the stepping-stones across the brook.

"'There lies your path,' said the hermit, pointing over the waters which ran white in the moonlight, to a dark alley between the trees high up on the further bank. 'Keep straight on till you come to the shore of the Summer Sea. The bear will help you there. But before you reach it, ask the birds where is the lake which only the invisible can approach.'

"The prince shook the hermit's hand, and strode lightly across the brook; yet, even he, eager to win back his princess from the dwarf, paused at the dark entrance to the wood, and looked back across the stream. There stood the hermit on the bank leaning on his staff, with the pure moonlight playing upon his dark robe

and lighting his pale face with glory. It might have been hard for him who had waited thirty and nine years in the hope of seeing his own beloved again, to watch the young prince speed away on his happy errand, but there was no thought of self in the hermit's heart. The prince saw that he prayed for him; and so he left the old man in the moonlight, where the angels seemed to him to fly and holy spirits to people all the silent air. The path was very dark beneath the trees. The pine scent rose strong in the dew of night, and overhead the branches kept up a whisper in the wind. It was very solemn for the prince to be alone in that great dark wood. The moonlight lay behind him out of sight, and occasionally he caught glimpses of golden light above the trees. He thought of the light that would break with morning on the Summer Sea, and he walked along grateful and glad.

"Slowly the darkness lifted, and the birds began to twitter. Soon they told him of the lake which only the invisible can approach, and to his delight he found that his path led straight past it. There he found the swan's nest, and the bear pretended to fight the swan, while he seized the golden egg. He broke it open with a stone, and there flew out of it a very transparent butterfly, which the prince saw at once must be the dwarf's soul. He knew then that the dwarf was dead.

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"'Now for the ninety-ninth island,' he cried gleefully; 'but what is that?' Something glittered on the bough of a tree not far from the path. It was the necklace of the princess. The prince took it carefully down.

"'It will be useless,' he said, 'now that the dwarf is dead, but she will always care to wear it in memory of the past.'

"He walked on glad at heart. The trees were becoming thinner now, and the path led steadily uphill. Overhead the clouds were rolling, red and purple in the glory of the sunrise. The prince reached the brow of the hill, when, suddenly, the sun burst out with all the beauty of fresh light upon the Summer Sea, which lay blue and calm below. The ninety-nine islands stretched in a ring before him, each, as the dwarf had said, 'like to each'.

"The prince was puzzled. For a man to land on any but the right one was to 'sleep the sleep of death'. He was just about to start and take the risk, when he saw the bear run down the cliff and plunge into the water. He watched him swim across to one of the islands, climb up the shore, and vanish among the trees. In a few minutes he came back, jumped into the sea again, and swam to the next island. He was evidently trying to find the princess. Six islands he visited in vain, but the seventh was the right one. He was longer lost to sight among the trees, and when he came back to the shore a crowd of dwarfs was with him. They loosed a beautiful little boat and eight of their number rowed it across the water, and begged the prince to enter it. He gladly took his seat, and as they put out again, a song of joy came wafted from the island across the waves.

"' They are singing a new song,' said one of the dwarfs who rowed him, ' because the wicked king who made us do evil is dead, and the gracious princess has taught us to lead lives like her own, pure and full of service to the world.'

"The prince bowed his head for gladness. The music grew louder and more joyful. The dwarfs thronged the shore singing the praises of his beloved. Then as the boat approached, they drew up in two long lanes, and down the middle came the princess, a smile of welcome on her lips. . . .

"Shall I tell you the meaning of the story, Children? I doubt if the prince and the princess ever heard it, though I think that they guessed what it is. The fairy who sent the bear with the necklace, told some one that the princess had proved too good to be the dwarf king's wife. He had tempted her in every way to be wicked, but had always failed, and so her XIII.

goodness had given her the victory, even when her charm was lost, and kept her for her lover, and delivered all the land of the dwarfs from the power of the tyrant. It is safer to trust to goodness, Children, than to any charm."

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CHAPTER XIV.

TEACHERS AND TRUTH.

THE children enjoyed their long day in the forest more than they had enjoyed any of the happy days which they had spent with Ellie. They did not know that it was one of the last days which they would be able to pass with her; although she knew this herself. A year or so before she became acquainted with them, she went with her uncle to attend an educational conference at a place where she heard all manner of strange devices proposed for concealing the fact that a great many ladies and gentlemen do not understand children. There were long speeches made, which were full of nonsense from one end to the other, and there were long excursions made, which were full of pleasure for Ellie. Among the company who went with her, was a young schoolmaster, who made no speeches, and who was as manly as he was modest. Very soon afterwards he was made head master of a great school in Australia, and before he went away, he asked Ellie to come after him, and be his wife. Ellie said yes, and the time was at hand when she would have to leave (164)

Fred and Dona and sail across the sea. She thought it wiser not to tell them about it long beforehand, but she told them at last, and they were very sorry, and made her promise to write to them.

"And," said Fred, "you will tell us one more story, won't you?"

"Yes, Dear," said she, " and it shall be a story that will please Dona as well as you. It will be quite new, and yet it will contain all that I have told you in my other stories." She sat down on the lawn and the children nestled in, Dona on her lap and Fred at her side. Then she began :---

I.

"Once upon a time in a country called Earthland there was a king named Prosper. When he became king it was spring-time, and old men said that they had never seen the gardens so gay with buds, or heard the birds sing so merrily as now. The bells chimed out from all the steeples, and people thought that there would never be any more sorrow in the land. All the summer the sun shone, and the farmers were astonished at their hay crops. In the autumn, when the fields were golden with ripe corn, the king married the Princess Mirabel, who was the loveliest princess in all the world, and as good as she was lovely. "For seven years Earthland was perfectly happy, and then, no one knew why, the king and the queen became restless, and there was a cloud upon their faces. Their courtiers consulted together, but none of them could find the reason why brightness had left the court.

"'I is unreasonable,' said an old lord; 'I have lived eighty years in the world, and I have never known people with so much to make them happy. What more can they want? They have two beautiful children, Eric and Hilda, who are the joy of us all. We must remonstrate with the king and the queen.'

"The courtiers all agreed, and they chose seven of the oldest and wisest lords to go and tell the king and the queen that they must not appear downcast and unhappy in a land which the fairies had made happier than any country had ever been before. So these old lords came and begged the king and the queen to tell them the reason of their sorrow.

"Then the king answered: 'My Lords, none feel more keenly than the queen and I, that we must appear ungrateful to the fairies for all that they have done for us. We are happy in our country and ourselves; perfectly, absolutely happy. Only our children distress us. Eric and Hilda care only for themselves, and we fear that when they grow up, they will make all Earthland miserable.' "The old lords withdrew wondering, for they thought that the children were too young for any one rightly to blame them; but day by day and year by year they watched, until it became plain that these children really cared only to please themselves. The king and the queen became more and more anxious, and tried every plan of which they could think; but Eric and Hilda only became more selfish every day. They seemed to think that no one had anything to do but to serve them.

"'Wanted, theoretical educationists. No practical teacher need apply.' The best tutors and schoolmasters had already been tried, and found wanting.

"For the next six months the palace was filled with dreadful men, and still more dreadful women.

"Venerable charlatans arrived, and attempted to draw out the good that was in Eric and Hilda, but it would not come. Psychologists with long hair, who had each a maggot in his brain, came and said that this was the wrong way. 'You must play first upon their imagination,' said they; but they only taught the children to tell falsehoods. At last a very young theorist arrived in hot haste, who had come all the way from the dark country

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up by the North Pole, which is called Sloyd, where it is always night, and he declared that the constructive faculty in their royal highnesses must be developed.

"' Let me,' said he, ' but teach them how to make six dozen wooden spoons and a washing tub, and you would hardly know them again.'

"'So I should think,' said the king drily. 'I must turn to the fairies.'

"'Just what Your Majesty ought to have done at first,' said a voice from up the chimney. 'Wait a bit, I'm coming down, but my bat's got stuck in the soot.' Flop, flop, something fell on the hearth. It was a perky fairy, about seven inches high, in a red, peaked cap, with a smut of soot on his right cheek, which made him look very knowing. He was riding a large bat, which went to sleep at once upon the hearthrug.

"'You really should keep your chimneys better swept,' said the fairy crossly. 'It is bad enough to have to come to a place that is full of psychologists, and bad carpenters run mad, without having to brush your flues by the way. Send some of your theoretical friends up there with a broom for half-an-hour or so, and see if they can't be of some practical use in the world; that's what I say.'

"'You should not have come down the chimney,' said the king, 'if you don't like soot.' "'It was the only way,' retorted the fairy. 'I tried to come on a sunbeam, when bang my bat went against a pane of your foolish plate glass. Fancy keeping sunlight out with plate glass! Ha! ha! ha! Why, I've been banging about out there for half-anhour. If the queen of the fairies hadn't sent me herself, I should have gone away long ago, and not let my bat grind me up against your glass. It will take the honey of half-a-dozen bees to spread over the bruises on my right leg alone.'

"'Dear me!' said the king. 'I am very sorry; but you have a message for me?'

"'No,' said the fairy, 'a letter.' He brought out of his pocket a tiny bit of papyrus leaf and handed it to the king with a bow. The king put on his eye-glasses, and turned it first up and then down.

"'I can make nothing of this,' he said at last. 'The writing is too small.'

"'Your eyes are too big,' replied the fairy. 'Here, I'll read it to you.' He snatched it away and read as follows :---

"'From the queen of the fairies to the king of Earthland, greeting. Having watched for many years your conduct in the realm which we have bestowed upon you, we perceive that you have been too happy, not for yourself, but for the good of your children, who must learn, through effort of their own, to enjoy those blessings with which Earthland is filled. Wherefore we summon you, your queen and your court, to come to us without delay; and to bid Eric and Hilda follow you as best they may. By your love for your children we urge you tarry not.'

"'Come along,' cried the fairy to his bat. 'Goodbye, Sir King,' he said, as he mounted. 'I'll say you are coming. Now, open that foolish window and let me out in a sensible way.'

"The king flung open the window, and the fairy and the bat flew out.

II.

"It was evening. The sun had set and left a deep red glow in the western sky. The king and the queen had been telling Eric and Hilda of what lay before them, and now they lingered on the terrace in front of the castle which had been their home so long. Before the morning, father and mother would be parted from their children, and they knew that if Eric and Hilda did not learn wisdom on their travels, they would never see them again. Over and over they urged Eric to be patient and gentle with Hilda, and they entreated the little girl to be very watchful over the mistakes which her brother might make. At last the king pointed to

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the evening star, which shone brightly out in the gathering dusk. 'Every night, children,' said he, 'when your day's journey is done, look up to that star, and remember that your father and mother will be looking at it, and thinking of you, and longing that you may win your way to them.'

"So saying, he kissed the children, and sent them indoors to bed. Two hours later, when they lay asleep in the moonlight, their mother stole into their room, and softly gave them her farewell kiss. She lingered long at the door watching their quiet sleep, and then she passed away with the king and the court.

III.

" It was very strange for the children to come down in the morning and find the castle empty. In the silence, the sound of their feet rang and re-echoed in the hall.

"They went into the breakfast-room, but there was no breakfast there.

"' 'What shall we do?' asked Hilda, more than half inclined to cry.

"' We,' said Eric slowly, 'we must help each other. At least, father said that we should never get to Fairyland if we didn't, and I—I mean to try.'

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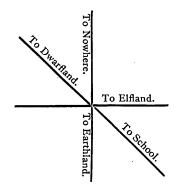
" ' Come along, then,' said Hilda, putting her hand in his.

"They went to the larder and made a good breakfast. Then each filled a basket with provisions, and they started, still hand in hand, for Fairyland.

"'I wish Rover was here,' said Hilda wistfully, as they passed the dog kennel. 'He would have been some company.'

"' People who get to Fairyland get there by themselves,' said Eric, ' that is what father said.'

"They crossed the drawbridge and went through the gate and down the sunny road. At last they came to a milestone, and over it was a fingerpost:—



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"They sat down on the stone and had what they called 'a think'.

"'You don't want to go to school, do you?' asked Hilda.

" Certainly not,' replied Eric. ' Besides,' he added, that would be worse than going back.'

". 'Then let's go to the left,' said Hilda.

" 'You little fool,' said Eric impatiently, 'don't you see that there's nothing written on that arm of the post?"

"'Yes,' said Hilda, with her eyes full of tears; 'but I thought—I thought that it must be the way to Fairyland, because the other roads aren't.'

"'You thought,' repeated Eric crossly. 'Don't you see if that was the road to Fairyland, they'd have written up Fairyland? We must go either to the right or to Dwarfland. I don't care which it is. Let's toss.' He pulled out a penny.

"'Oh! Eric, mother said, you know she did, that you were *never* to toss.'

"Eric laughed. He was out of temper. 'That was when I was a child like you,' he said. 'Here we go. Heads for dwarfs, and tails for elfs.'

"'Elves is the plurial of elf,' said Hilda, who was a very grammatical little girl.

"'All right, you go back to school. I'm off to Dwarfland,' and away he went.

"Hilda watched him for a minute.

"He's very cross,' she whispered to herself, 'and I'm sure he's wrong; but I'll go after him. Father said we had to keep together, and that I had to be watchful over his mistakes.'

"For a long way Eric kept in front. At last he stopped.

"'You'd better have come at once,' he said. 'You see, boys are always right when girls aren't.'

"'Is that so?' screamed a voice close at hand; 'dear me!'

"The children looked up. On the bough of a tree just above their heads sat a dwarf about eighteen inches tall, with a nasty, wicked smile lurking on his lips.

"'Oh!' said Hilda, catching hold of Eric's hand. 'It a dwarth'—she could not say dwarf.

"'That is very interesting,' said the dwarf. 'Boys are always right when girls aren't. So somebody must be right, and nobody can't be wrong. That is what you mean, isn't it.'

"'Yes,' said Eric proudly. He had not the least idea of what the dwarf meant, but he was pleased to be addressed as a grown-up man.

"'You are a very sensible person,' said the dwarf. 'Most people are when they agree with me. Now tell me, when aren't girls right?'

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"'She wasn't, when she said this wasn't the way to Fairyland.'

"'Oh! wasn't she?' said the dwarf. 'Thank you so much. Now good-bye. Keep straight on. They want a wise young gentleman like you at the town yonder.' He jerked with his thumb across his shoulder, made a hideous face, turned head over heels down the trunk of the tree, and disappeared.

"What a horrid dwarth,' cried Hilda with a shudder.

"Eric tossed his head. It was no good to argue with *her*. They marched on in the direction of the town.

"Presently they reached a few houses, then turning a corner, they came into the main street. A shout was instantly raised :---

"'A boy, a boy, a boy !' and a crowd rushed round them. Out of the houses, down the telegraph posts, up from the drains, out of the shops, from carts, carriages, omnibuses, and hearses there came hundreds and thousands of strange withered little dwarfs. The children clung to each other thoroughly frightened, for on all the faces there was the same look of irritation. Every dwarf scowled as though he had suffered years of disappointment, and meant to make them suffer too.

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"'These are-not-not-fairies,' sobbed poor Hilda.

"Fairies, no,' snarled one very horrid-looking dwarf. In Earthland we were all schoolmasters, and now we are turned into dwarfs, and we haven't had a boy to teach since we came here. Oh, we'll teach him!'

"'We'll teach him!' screamed all the crowd of dwarfs.

"They dragged Eric away from Hilda, and hustled and pushed and pulled him into a huge empty Board School.

"'What standard?' shouted half-a-dozen voices.

"'The highest standard and the biggest blackboard,' cried the youngest and ugliest dwarf. 'I'll examine him.'

"He took a piece of chalk, and climbing up a ladder, wrote in large clear figures :---

 $```x^2 + y^2 - 7 = 365 y'.$

"'Prove this by means of a diagram, and state what effect leap year has upon the answer.'

"They forced Eric into a seat, and gave him pen, ink, paper and compasses. A silence followed.

"'Disgraceful,' proclaimed the examiner. 'You are detained for three hours after school,' he said to Eric.

"'I'd cane him,' said another dwarf. 'Nothing

like physical force for driving the truths of Algebra home.'

"'What Classics do you know?' asked a third. He did not wait for an answer, but chalked up on the board :—

"' Pons asinorum puerorum est examen'.

"Now Eric really knew some Latin, so he brightened up and translated : 'The asses' bridge is a swarm of boys'.

"'I believe it is,' said the dwarf sarcastically, 'but it's not what the Latin means. Now look here, I'll evolve the translation out of you. What is the Pons Asinorum?'

"' It's in Euclid,' said Eric.

"Good,' said the dwarf. 'A little method, nothing like a little method for worming facts out of boys. Much better than corporal punishment. Well, then, how may we translate it? Would it be wrong to say: 'A proposition in Geometry'?

"'Yes,' said Eric.

"'Stay in half-an-hour after school to-morrow,' snarled the angry dwarf. 'Of course it's right. Now, come : "A proposition in Geometry,"—est?'

"' Is,' said Eric.

"' Examen ?' said the dwarf.

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"' A swarm,' said Eric.

"'Write me out, "examen = examination" 555 times to-night,' roared the dwarf. 'Now then: "A proposition in Geometry is the examination,"—puerorum?'

"' ' Of boys,' said Eric.

"'Very good,' said the dwarf. 'You knew that all the time. The fact is, you're sulky. I should be sorry to have to punish you severely, but I can't let such things go on. Now, you are detained for the Mathematical master. Go off to the detention room.'

"Eric went into a cold, gloomy room, the walls of which were covered with blackboards, and leaning his arms on the window-sill, sobbed bitterly. This was the effect of having his own way. If only he had followed Hilda's advice ! And where was Hilda ? He looked up into the darkening sky. The evening star shone solemnly out in the silent heavens. He remembered that his father and mother were thinking of him and Hilda, and he, by his selfish folly, had lost Hilda. What would father and mother think, if they knew how faithless he had been to his trust ? If only he could find the little girl again, how differently he would act, but he was in the prison of the dwarfs, and knew of no way out.

IV.

"What had happened to Hilda? When the dwarfs had hurried Eric away, she was left alone in the empty street. At first she was too much surprised to do anything, but soon she became composed enough to do what all little girls in her position would have done, that is, to cry. The first tears, however, had hardly fallen, when she heard a firm, masculine step behind her, and a tall lady came striding along the street, and swinging her arms as Hilda forgot to cry in her surprise; for she came. she had never seen this sort of lady before. 'Dear me,' thought she, being herself a very neat little girl, 'this is a very untidy person'; and so she was. One of her boots was unbuttoned, and flapped about her foot as she walked. Several buttons were torn off her gloves, and her bonnet was put awry over a tangled head of hair. Her face was pale and sad, and her eyes stared upwards, half in sentiment, and half because she did not know what else to do with them.

".' This is a dreadful place,' thought Hilda, with a shudder, ' and full of dreadful dwarfs and ladies.'

"The lady stood still when she reached the little girl, and said gruffly, but not unkindly :---

"'You had better come with me, and we will see

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if we can get your brother back. I saw the dwarfs drag him away.'

"'Thank you,' said Hilda gratefully, trying to slip her hand into the lady's, as they walked away. The lady, however, took no notice of this, and continued to swing her arms. Sometimes she muttered words to herself which Hilda could not understand, such as: 'Progress of intellect,' 'March of mind,' 'Van of civilisation'.

"'Are we going to drive in it?' asked Hilda timidly.

"' ' In what?' said the lady impatiently.

"" The-the-the van,' said Hilda.

"The lady snorted (it was her way of laughing contemptuously).

"' No,' she said. ' It's not for children.'

"Who is it for, please?" asked Hilda, after a few minutes' silence.

"' Intellect—Intellect,' replied the lady impatiently; ' don't interrupt, there's a good little girl! I want to think over my lecture on the emancipation of women.'

"After this, Hilda did not speak again until they reached a door in a huge red building, and the lady, pointing to a notice that was pasted upon it, asked her if she could read it. The words were rather long, but she managed to spell them out :--

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"School Mistresses' Home. "Entrance for Men.

"Only Curates and University Extension Lecturers admitted.

"'Some day,' said the lady, with pride, 'it will be only for lecturers. Now we are about equally divided.'

"They passed down a passage and went into a large sitting-room, 'in the gimcrack style,' as one of the lecturers had privately remarked to a curate, by which he meant that the furniture was chosen entirely by ladies, and consisted mainly of ornaments which were neither pretty nor useful, and of highly coloured wall papers, and languishing pictures painted by interesting young disciples of Mr. Burne-Jones and Mr. Walter Crane. Over the fireplace was a huge allegorical painting, all in the colour of a bay horse when he has been singed. It represented a huge serpent coiled round a palm tree and leering at a maiden who was pouring a libation on an altar. One of the great masters had designed it, and some people went so far as to say that he knew what it meant, while all agreed that it was symbolical of the higher education of women.

"In this beautiful room a number of ladies were sitting or standing in curious angular attitudes. Hilda wondered why they never brushed their hair, but she was afraid to ask. Her guide placed her on a chair of the imitation Chippendale kind in the middle of the room, and all the ladies crowded round her. One stood frowning with her arms folded. One knelt on the ground, and put her clasped hands on Hilda's knees. Two or three sat leaning forward on the edge of their seats, and all sighed every now and then. They asked her questions about herself and her brother —not about lessons, for, out of school, mistresses are like the elder sisters of their pupils. They deplored the capture of Eric by the dwarfs, for mistresses know that men cannot teach; but none of them suggested any plan for getting him away.

"Presently a door opened, and they ceased to speak. Hilda looked up, and saw a beautiful young lady cross the room with noiseless steps. Her hair was black and smooth, and neatly parted in the middle. Her cheeks were rosy, and her blue eyes beamed so kindly, that Hilda felt that she was both gentle to other people and happy in herself.

"'It's the head mistress,' whispered Hilda's friend. 'She knows Plato by heart, but she never lectures or writes, and she always goes to early service on Sundays.'

"Hilda jumped up and flung her arms round the

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lady's neck when she stooped to kiss her, and then burst into tears. The lady took her on her lap, and listened as she sobbed out all her story. Hilda told how Eric and she had been bidden to follow their parents to Fairyland; how Eric had tried to be good, and how he had failed. When she described the signpost, the lady became very thoughtful, and said: 'I see, I see'. And when she explained how the dwarfs had carried off Eric, the lady smiled.

"'Wait here a little while,' she said. 'I will send for the head master of the dwarfs.' She rang a bell, and sent a servant with a polite message, asking the head master to come at once to her study. She then quietly left the room.

"Astonishment fell on the mistresses, for no mistress had ever yet spoken *to* a dwarf, though they had frequently spoken *of* each of the dwarfs.

"'He won't come,' said one.

"'Yes, he will,' said another, ' but he will refuse to let the boy go.'

"'She'll manage him,' whispered Hilda's friend; 'she's so diplomatic.'

"Hilda did not know what this long word meant, but she felt somehow sure that the beautiful lady would persuade the dwarf.

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"Hilda was right. In less than half-an-hour the head mistress returned leading Eric by the hand.

"' Here is the captive,' she said merrily, but not one word did she say of the way in which she had persuaded the dwarf to let a live boy go. This shows how diplomatic she really was.

"' Now, children,' she said, 'come into the other room and have your supper. Then you shall go to bed, and to-morrow I will get our porter to see you safely out of the dwarf's country.'

"Eric was very much subdued, but he made a good supper. Hilda was almost too tired to eat, and after the meal was over, she nestled in on the lap of the head mistress, and fell fast asleep. Eric then asked about the road to Fairyland.

"'I don't know,' said the head mistress. 'I never was there. You must of course go back to the signpost and take the turning to Elfland, or to School, or to the place that has no name.'

"'Elfland must be Fairyland, mustn't it?' asked Eric, 'because, you know, elves are fairies.'

"The head mistress laughed. 'All the fairy stories,' she said, 'that I have ever read speak of elves and fairies, so that they must be different.' "' Well,' said Eric, ' the road to School can't be the road to Fairyland, can it ?'

"'No,' said the head mistress decidedly. 'It certainly can not. No, I should advise you to try the other road.'

"Eric thanked her, and very soon he and his sister went to bed.

VI.

"In the morning the porter led the children out of the dwarf's country, and left them by the sign-post. They sat down just as they had sat the day before, and had 'a think'; but this time Eric was not cross. Indeed he was so gentle and anxious to do the best for Hilda, that he went so far as to say:—

"' I tell you what. If you think the way to school is the right way, I'll go.'

"' Oh ! Eric,' exclaimed Hilda, 'you hate school so.'

" Who wouldn't ?' answered this strange little boy, but I'll go,' and he meant it.

"' I won't,' declared Hilda. 'Nothing shall 'duce me to go to a place that you hate.'

"' Then we must go to Elfland. Come along; the elves can't be worse than the dwarfs.'

"He took Hilda by the hand, and they trudged

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away together. They had not gone far before they saw in the distance a very sad sight, a little girl, only three or four years old, sitting on a bank by the road, and sobbing as if her heart would break.

"' Why,' said Eric as they came nearer, 'I do believe it's Effie.'

"Effie was the daughter of the king's forester, but how she happened to be alone so far from home the children could not tell. They ran up to her and asked.

"' Dunno, dunno,' was all that she could say, but she added : 'I'se lost, and I wants to go home. Wants to go home.'

"A painful silence followed. Eric glanced at Hilda, and Hilda glanced at Eric. The same thoughts were passing through both their minds. They ought to take Effie home to her cottage at the gates of their father's castle; but they were tired of their journey and all its hardships, and if they were at home again, they would have to start afresh, and much time would be lost.

"'I do want mother,' said Hilda, her eyes half filled with tears.

"' I know you do, dear,' said Eric gently, ' but we cannot leave this baby here.'

"' ' No,' said Hilda bravely. She had already learned

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that when a disagreeable thing must be done, it should be done with all one's heart, cheerfully. 'Come, Eric,' she cried, 'you take one hand, and I'll take the other. Now, Effie, we are going home.'

"Effie jumped up with glee, but, poor child, she had not thought of the long journey before her, and very soon her little feet began to drag, and she moved more and more slowly along. At last she stumbled over a stone, and cut her knee so that it bled. She shrieked and sobbed and stamped, and cried for her mother. The other children were tired too, and Eric now looked angry, until Hilda touched his arm. 'See,' she said, 'there is the finger-post again.'

"Then Eric remembered how angry he had been at the same place the day before, and how, by giving way to his temper, he had been led into the land of the dwarfs, and so he made a great effort, and spoke kindly to Effie, and sat down beside her by the post, while Hilda bound up the wounded knee. When they started again, he even tried to carry Effie, though she proved to be too heavy, and he soon was obliged to put her down.

"It was a troublesome journey, as slow, as slow could be. Every now and then Effie refused to go any further, and they had to coax her to move on. Once they were compelled to sit down in the shade, when

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she slept for an hour with her head on Eric's shoulder. Hilda picked some blackberries and placed them on a leaf, and when the child awoke, fretful and hungry, she fed her with them; and pretended that they were all having a great feast, till Effie's eyes danced with fun, and she was ready to go on again. At last they reached the forester's house, and found that her father had taken Effie out for a long drive and had left her to play in a field, while he went into a farmhouse to arrange some business. When he came out, he looked everywhere for her, but she had strayed away, or, as some people now think, had been led by the fairies into the paths of Eric and Hilda.

"The forester thanked the children warmly for their care of the little girl; but he did not know that they had not wished to return home, and did not ask them to stay in his house till the morning.

"'We cannot go any further to-night,' said Eric, as they left the cottage. 'We must sleep at home, and, I daresay, there will be still some food in the larder.'

"It was evening when they passed through the gates of the castle, and the setting sun glowed red in the west as they crossed the terrace where they had walked, two evenings before, with their father and their mother. They stood still, and the silence of the evening made them very serious.

"' Look,' whispered Eric, ' there is the evening star. Father and mother are thinking of us now.'

"Hilda did not answer, but uttered a quick, glad cry of joy.

"In a moment she and Eric were folded in the arms of their parents.

"But, father,' said Eric, when the first surprise of the meeting was over, 'how have you come back?'

"'Come back!' exclaimed the king. 'Why, I have never been far away.'

"'What?' cried Eric, 'haven't you been to Fairyland?'

"'Yes,' said the king; 'of course I have.'

"The children looked puzzled, and the queen said with a smile:—

"' 'Tell them how it is'.

"'Listen, children,' said the king. 'When the fairy queen sent for us to go to her kingdom, she only meant that we were to leave you for a while; for her kingdom is here.'

"Here,' cried the children, more puzzled than ever.

"'Yes, here. Your mother and I have long known that, and you will know it now; for I will tell you a secret. The ——.'

"What the secret was we shall never learn, because the queen interrupted her husband at this point.

"'The children are tired and hungry, and must have their supper now. They will not learn to-day or tomorrow the full meaning of the fairy kingdom, which is everywhere and nowhere around them; but day by day, all through their lives, it will become clearer to them.'

"She led them into the castle, but the king remained on the terrace, pacing thoughtfully up and down. The evening star shone out in all its beauty, and, as he looked away from Earthland into the depths of heaven, he was thankful for the lesson which his children had learned so young. To some it is never given to learn that our home here is a fairy home. Some learn the lesson late, and through pain. Only the happiest, like Eric and Hilda, find, as children, the meaning of the life on earth. May you, Dona, and you, Fred, be as happy as they were."

THE ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY PRESS.