

QUEEN MAB'S FAIRY REALM



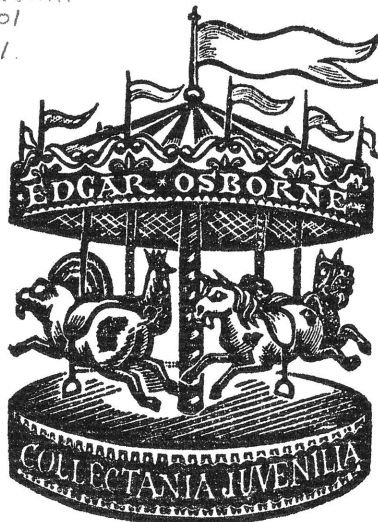


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QUEEN MAB'S FAIRY REALM

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QUEEN MAB'S
FAIRY
REALM

• ILLUSTRATED •
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	IX
THE GIANT KNARRATSCHKI AND THE PRINCESS TING- ALING	I
<i>From the German of CLEMENS BRENTANO</i>	
THE LANTERN IN THE CASTLE YARD	17
<i>From the German of BARON DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ</i>	
THE SUN PRINCESS	27
<i>A Breton Farm Labourer's Story, told at Plouaret to Fr. M. Luzel. Translated by MARGARET MITTLAND</i>	
THE STORY OF THE CALIPH STORK	55
<i>From the German of WILLIAM HAUFF. Translated by PERCIVAL C. PARR</i>	
THE SEVEN-BANDED AND SEVEN-LOCKED STEEL BOX	75
<i>By CHARLES SMITH CHELTNAM</i>	
THE STORY OF LITTLE MUCK	97
<i>From the German of WILLIAM HAUFF. Translated by PERCIVAL C. PARR</i>	
WHAT BECAME OF CINDERELLA'S SLIPPER	129
<i>Translated from the French by CHARLES SMITH CHELTNAM</i>	
THE FIELD OF TERROR	149
<i>From the German of BARON DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ</i>	

	PAGE
PRINCESS FORTUNIA	173
<i>Translated from the Spanish</i>	
A PENNILESS PRINCE	199
<i>By M. BOWLEY</i>	
THE SHIP THAT WORKED WITHOUT WIND OR SAIL	221
<i>By CHARLES SMITH CHELTNAM</i>	
THE PRINCESS WHO UNDERSTOOD MAGIC	245
<i>By M. BOWLEY</i>	
THE KING OF THE SWANS	265
<i>Translated from the German</i>	
THE CLAWS OF THE PECCALOUCHI	277
<i>By M. BOWLEY</i>	
BULFSTROLL THE DWARF'S REVENGE	291
<i>By CHARLES SMITH CHELTNAM</i>	

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Coloured Frontispiece and Title-Page. <i>By Reginald Savage</i>	PAGE 3
The Giant Knarratschki and the Princess Tingaling. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	6
Out flew two great eagles, and pecked and bit at Clickclack. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	9
So the Princess sang :— “ Snore, Knarratschki, snore ! ” <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	12
Paff ! went the arrow, and pierced right through the heart of Knarratschki. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	14
She hid her face on Trilltrall’s shoulder. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	19
There stood on a rocky height an old fortress. <i>By A. Garth Jones</i>	23
The Lantern-bearer stood before him. <i>By A. Garth Jones</i>	29
He saw in the pool a big eel which, to his amazement, spoke to him. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	35
They pulled him out of bed and played ball, with him for the ball. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	39
The day was hot and Ewen felt thirsty, so he ate the witch’s apple and, directly he did so, fell fast asleep, and rolled off his horse into the ditch. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	41
Looking displeased, she got into her coach. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	47
Clouds of birds came flying from every direction towards him. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	51
He kissed her left foot and, in exchange for the kiss, gave her the star-coloured handkerchief. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	

	PAGE
A paper with curious writing on it, which neither the Caliph nor Mansor could read. <i>By Reginald Savage</i>	59
They saw a stork looking for frogs. <i>By Reginald Savage</i>	63
A beautiful lady, splendidly clad, stood before them. <i>By Reginald Savage</i>	72
They put down the box and seated themselves one at either end of it. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	77
She held out to them a golden salver on which was luscious-looking fruit and sparkling wine. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	80
"You are nothing better than a contemptible impostor." <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	87
The sand within the space marked sank down. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	92
The box, with its seven steel bands and its seven steel locks, was borne in the midst of a splendid procession. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	94
The air resounded with our merriment. <i>By Herbert Cole</i>	105
The usual allowance was five-and-twenty strokes. <i>By Herbert Cole</i>	111
He whisked through the clouds with the speed of the wind. <i>By Herbert Cole</i>	117
The King employed him on his most secret missions. <i>By Herbert Cole</i>	121
He grasped his staff and pulled off his false beard. <i>By Herbert Cole</i>	127
Hovering about her bed, a dark and vaporous figure was seen. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	131
The slipper fitted it as perfectly as if it had been made for it. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	135
She found the shelves of her dresser laden with beautiful Delft-ware. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	137
She was taken to see all the chief cities of the world. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	141
At length came the reception-hour. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	143

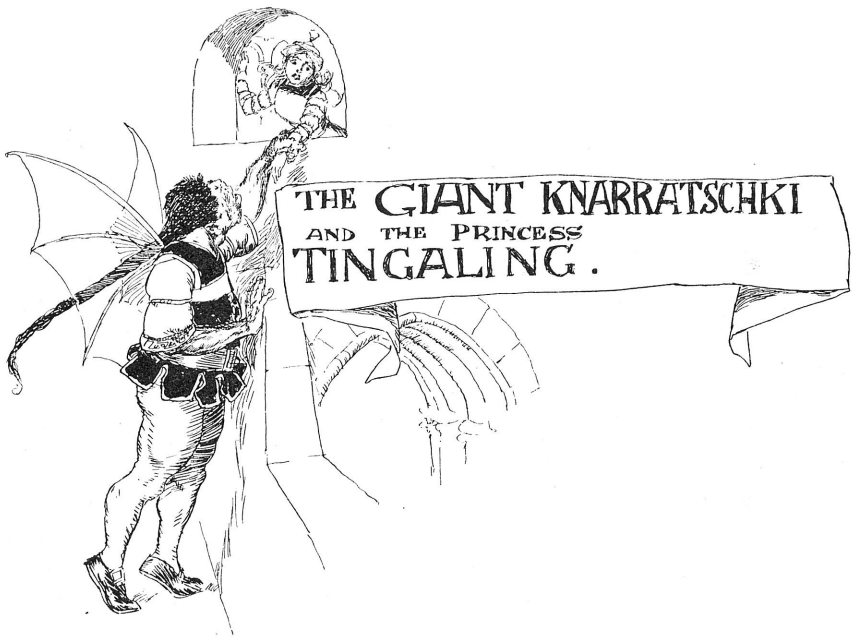
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

xi

	PAGE
She lay down in a magnificent bed. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	145
The field was overgrown with wild flowers and rank and luxurious shrubs. <i>By A. Garth Jones</i>	151
The allotment of the estate. <i>By A. Garth Jones</i>	153
“This haunted field will be a more productive bargain than covetous and envious relations intend it to be.” <i>By A. Garth Jones</i>	157
A sort of goblin-fellow, who mocks me with his tricks. <i>By A. Garth Jones</i>	161
Waldmann was wildly jumping about the room. <i>By A. Garth Jones</i>	168
They struggled for a considerable time. <i>By A. Garth Jones</i>	171
In the midst of the combat the Queen appeared before him and presented him with a beautiful baby Princess. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	175
She cared nothing whatever about any of them. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	179
“Look ! look at my lips !” <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	183
“When shall I see thy mistress again ?” <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	189
The Hermit. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	195
The Princess Fortunia, with maidenly modesty, kissed the cheek of the Emerald Prince. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	197
The Student and the Magician sat at the cave mouth. <i>By Reginald Savage</i>	205
“The whole cave is wrecked, and everything is broken.” <i>By Reginald Savage</i>	214
In his claws he carried a small fairy. <i>By Reginald Savage</i>	218
Just as the Griffins were turning a sharp cloud corner she took to lashing them cruelly. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	223
On this project being announced to her the heart of the Princess became very heavy indeed. <i>By H. R. Millar</i>	227

	PAGE
The Prince stooped and set the bright little beetle on his hairy legs again.	229
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
The Prince explored the ravine.	232
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
He attacked the creature with all his might.	235
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
“Who are you, and what do you want?”	237
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
“Trample on 'em—crush 'em! Come on, this way!”	243
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
The Princess sat in her bower with her books around her.	247
<i>By Arthur Rackham</i>	
The Seven Witches.	255
<i>By Arthur Rackham</i>	
The bird, no longer headless.	262
<i>By Arthur Rackham</i>	
Quite suddenly she saw a little man approaching among the trees.	267
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
She took several fine strawberries and handed them to the King.	273
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
He placed a costly crown upon her head.	275
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
He watched and peeped and spied.	281
<i>By Arthur Rackham</i>	
The grey wolf that skulked amongst the trees.	285
<i>By Arthur Rackham</i>	
Made him stagger, and see a thousand stars.	295
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
The Prince threw it with such accuracy as to strike the owl dead.	299
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
The Prince, rising in his saddle, shouted so loudly as to awake the monster.	303
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
The Prince instantly seized hold of his beard and cut it off with the keen- edged sword.	305
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	
Prince Constant touched her forehead with the dwarf's beard.	310
<i>By H. R. Millar</i>	

THE GIANT KNARRATSCHKI AND
THE PRINCESS TINGALING



THERE once lived a schoolmaster who had five sons, and they were called—the eldest, Pinkpank; the second, Clickclack; the third, Pitchpatch; the fourth, Piffpaff; and the youngest, Trilltrall. Now, the schoolmaster had given all of them a very good education, and each could do something better than any one else in the world.

Pinkpank had been apprenticed to an apothecary, and had learnt how to make a secret drug, which would bring any dead person to life again, if only the least pinch of it were put between his lips. When he was at

work in the apothecary's with the pestle and mortar it went pink-pank, pink-pank, and so he got the name of Pinkpank.

Now, the second son could climb up any cliff, however high, or scale any castle, however steep, just as easily as a cat climbs a garden wall. And he did this by means of two daggers, which he dug in between the stones; and as he stuck his daggers into the wall or cliff, one after the other, they went click-clack, click-clack, and so he got the name of Clickclack.

The third son could row a boat quicker than any one else; his oars went pitch-patch, pitch-patch, and the boat glided over the water like an arrow from the bow, quicker than the wind.

The fourth son was such a good shot with the bow that he could shoot the eye out of a flying swallow, and when his arrow went off it sounded like piff-paff, and so he was called Piffpaff.

The youngest son used to wander in the woods all day long, and he got to know the song of every bird in the forest. He used to practise whistling them regularly, so that he could at last imitate them perfectly. He knew what the birds were talking about and could speak back to them again, and because he was always whistling like a bird he was called Trilltrall.

Well, one day Trilltrall was out in the woods, hunting about for slugs and snails and caterpillars, for he used to eat just the same food as the birds, when a thrush flew by. He was just in the act of swallowing a lovely fat green caterpillar, so he quickly gulped it down, with-

out chewing it at all, and whistled out, "Good morning! Any news this morning?"

"Any news!" said the thrush. "Yes, I should think so. Have you not heard that the giant Knarratschki has run off with the Princess Tingaling, daughter of King Poompam of Gongoland? He has flown away with her to his castle, on a high rock in the middle of the sea, and here she has to sing to him all day long. The King has promised to give her in marriage to whosoever shall bring her back again, and half his kingdom as well. I'm sorry I can't stay to tell you any more; I'm in a hurry. Good-bye." And away he flew again.

When Trilltrall got home again, he told his brothers what the thrush had said, and added, "I'm going to set off and see if I can't rescue her, for she is the most beautiful Princess that ever was seen."

"Let us all go," said Pitchpatch.

"Yes," cried the others, "let us all go."

So the schoolmaster put on his black coat, took his cane in his hand, shut the door after him, and they all set off, Trilltrall leading the way.

"I will carry her off from Knarratschki," said Click-clack, "and you will see me climb up the rocks with my two daggers quicker than a cat."

"My ship will carry you over the sea quicker than the wind," said Pitchpatch.

"I will give him a taste of barbed arrow that he won't forget in a hurry," said Piffpaff.

"I will be ready with my drug, if any of you meet with an accident," said Pinkpank.

And the schoolmaster was quite beside himself with joy, and chattered volubly of what he would do when he got half the kingdom.

While they were talking thus, they came to the sea. Pitchpatch looked for his boat, and found it just where he had left it. "Jump in," he cried, and they all jumped in and Pitchpatch took the oars. With one stroke the boat went a mile out into the sea.

Soon they came to a steep rock right in the middle of the sea. They rowed close up to it, and Clickclack made ready to climb up. He bared his arms to the elbow and took his two daggers. He stuck the one in his right hand into a split in the rock, then the one in his left hand a little higher up; then he drew out the one in his right hand and

stuck it in higher up still, and so on until he came to



the top. His brothers were all very much astonished at the great skill and rapidity with which he did this. When he was half-way up he ran into terrible danger. He was hanging by his left arm, and was just about to stick the right dagger in, when out flew two great eagles whose nest was in a cleft of the rock. They pecked and bit at Clickclack so that he let the dagger fall out of his right hand. Alas! how perilous a situation he was now in. He had to hang by one hand and ward off the attacks of the eagles with the other; and the least slip might dash him on to the rocks below.

When the brothers saw this, Pitchpatch jumped into the water and sank down to the bottom of the sea to fetch the dagger. Piffpaff put an arrow into his bow, and shot the one eagle through the body, so that it fell dying into the boat. Trilltrall went up to it, and the eagle spoke to him in the eagle language, and said: "I have well deserved my death, for it is I who stole the royal diamond from the Princess Tingaling. My wife always wanted something better than other eagles' wives, and egged me on to steal it." Thus he spoke and died.

Now Pitchpatch came out of the water, bringing the second dagger. Piffpaff took it, laid it in his bow and shot it at the eagle which was still pecking away at Clickclack; and so skilfully did he shoot that he pierced it through and through and pinned it to the rock. Now Clickclack had his two daggers again, and continued his perilous journey until he got to the top.

Pinkpank pressed some of his drug on the lips of the dead eagle, and it soon became alive again. Trilltrall made it promise to go and fetch his wife, who had the Princess's

diamond. Soon the eagle returned with the diamond in its beak, and made excuses for his wife, who was now so ashamed of her great vanity that she wouldn't show her face. Then Pitchpatch gave him some pearls which he had picked up along with the dagger for a necklace for his wife, and the eagle thanked him and flew away.

When Clickclack arrived at the top of the rock he saw nothing but a great hut, from which he heard sounds of the Princess's song issuing, so he went up and listened. Now, Knarratschki had just recently lost his wife, Schnarrassel, and one of the reasons why he had stolen the Princess Tingaling was that he might have some one to make his porridge for him. So the Princess sang :—

“Snore, Knarratschki, snore,
Schnarrassel is no more.
Quiet she rests beneath the ground,
She neither breathes nor utters sound.
Snore, Knarratschki, snore.

Snore, Knarratschki, snore,
Schnarrassel's gone before.
Now no more your ineals she cooks,
Or curls your locks to improve your looks.
Snore, Knarratschki, snore.

Snore, Knarratschki, snore,
Schnarrassel I deplore.
She alive, I should not wring
My hands with grief, or have to sing.
Snore, Knarratschki, snore.

Snore, Knarratschki, snore,
There's some one at the door.
If a friend, sleep on in peace.
Ah ! if he would but bring release.
Snore, Knarratschki, snore.”

Meanwhile Clickclack had not been idle. He had gone round the hut and caught one or two bluebottle flies, some grasshoppers and crickets, and a bumble-bee. And now he opened the door very quietly, and whispered into the ear of the Princess, who was trembling all over: "Go



on singing and don't mind me." He took a good look at Knarratschki; he was large and fat, ugly and greasy looking, and as shaggy and untidy as an old bear. On his shoulders he had a pair of threadbare bat's wings, and at the back of his head a long pigtail, which he had bound round the arm of the Princess so that she shouldn't run away. His head lay on her lap, and he snored and blew

with his nose so that the sand and dust on the floor were blown up into the air. On the wall hung a large horn, so large that a man could sleep inside of it, and on the ground stood his club. Clickclack stopped up the horn and hid the club, so that he should not be able to make any noise when he awoke. Knarratschki had a pair of thick locks over his ears, so Clickclack put the grasshoppers and the crickets, the bluebottle flies and the bumble-bee, into his ears, and shut them in by tying the locks over them. The Princess was still singing away :—

“Snore, Knarratschki, snore,
My throat is getting sore.
If you are not now asleep,
Awake you will just have to keep.
Snore, Knarratschki, snore.”

Now she stopped, but the insects inside his ears buzzed and hummed so that he believed the Princess was still singing away to him. Clickclack unbound the pigtail from her wrist, and tied it to an old millstone with which Knarratschki used to grind his meal; then he fetched an old copper caldron, in which Tingaling had to make Knarratschki's porridge every morning, and, while the Princess got up very cautiously, he placed it under the giant's head. And Knarratschki snored away quite peacefully, believing he was still lying on Tingaling's lap. They quietly left the hut, and Clickclack, telling the Princess to hold tightly round his neck, quickly descended to the boat.

Ah! how glad the schoolmaster and the brothers were

when they saw him with the Princess! They had strained their necks watching for him. They all jumped into the boat, Pitchpatch gave a stroke with his oars, and away they flew from the rock.

But they had not gone very far before they got a terrible fright. Knarratschki had wakened soon after Clickclack had carried off the Princess. The insects which he had placed in his ears had all crept out; the bluebottles, the crickets, and the grasshoppers had all flown or hopped out at the door, but the bumble-bee had settled on his red nose. When they no longer hummed and buzzed in his ear, he thought that Tingaling had stopped singing, so he cried out, half-asleep: "Princess Tingaling, go on singing, or I'll give you a dig in the ribs." But as no Tingaling sang, and the bumble-bee began to sting him violently on the nose, because his snoring annoyed it so much, he became angry and let out with his clenched fist at Tingaling. Instead of hitting the Princess, however, he only skinned his knuckles against the porridge-pot, and gave vent to a terrible cry of pain. The caldron vibrated like a large gong, and he made to spring up in great anger; but his pigtail was tied to the millstone, and he tore his hair terribly. After a great deal of trouble he freed himself, and ran all over the rock, but no Tingaling could he find. He looked out to sea and, far away, a black speck on the ocean, he spied the little boat.

"Ha! ha!" he cried, "there you are, are you?" And he stretched out his hand to seize his club, but he could not find it anywhere. This made him terribly angry, and he gnashed his teeth. Then he wanted to blow his horn

and summon assistance, but found it stopped up, and nearly blew a hole in his cheeks. But he determined to be revenged, and, seizing the millstone, he stretched out his bat's wings and flew—flutter—flutter—flutter—out over the sea after the little boat.

"Oh, heavens!" cried out Tingaling, "there comes Knarratschki!" and she laid herself flat on the bottom of the boat so that he wouldn't see her. But Knarratschki came flying along like a black cloud, getting gradually

nearer and nearer. Pitchpatch rowed as hard as he could, but Piffpaff put an arrow in his bow, and said: "Pitchpatch, stop a moment." Then Pitchpatch stopped, and Knarratschki was right above the boat. Paff! went the arrow, and pierced right through the heart of Knarratschki so that he fell along with the millstone right on to the boat, covering it with his great bat's wings.

At first the brothers were all silent from fear and terror, because Knarratschki lay over them, but at last the schoolmaster



said: "My dear children, are you still alive?" All the brothers answered that they were alive, but very much bruised.

"Tingaling has not yet uttered a word," said Trilltrall; "perhaps she is dead. Let us be quick and heave Knarratschki overboard, so that we can find her."

Then they all got on their hands and feet and pressed with their backs against Knarratschki. "Oop! Heave ho!" and patch! he fell into the water and sank slowly down.

But what a miserable sight met their eyes! The millstone had knocked the Princess on the head and killed her stone dead. They all bewailed their loss, and tore their hair; but Pinkpank said, "I will soon set matters right." And he put a little of his wonderful drug between her rosy lips, and she sprang up, none the worse.

Then everything went merrily; pitch-patch went the oars, and they were very soon at land. Pitchpatch fitted four wheels to his boat, and Trilltrall called six bears out of the wood, and promised each of them a piece of gingerbread if they would allow themselves to be harnessed to the boat and would pull them to Gongoland. As they were very fond of gingerbread they assented, and the journey was soon accomplished.

Oh, how the people in Gongoland were astonished at the beautiful coach-and-six, harnessed with bears! The Princess's father, King Poompam, came out with all his Court to meet them. He embraced his daughter and the schoolmaster and the brothers. "And now," he said, "I must keep my word. I promised my daughter and half my kingdom to whoever brought her back, but it is rather

difficult to decide who is to have her, as there are a father and five sons."

"I fetched her from the rock," said Clickclack.



"I killed Knarratschki," said Piffpaff.

"I took you to the rock on my boat," said Pitchpatch.

"I brought her to life again with my drug," said Pinkpank.

"I love her very much, and it was I who told you where she was," said Trilltrall.

"I am the father of you all, and therefore she belongs to me," said the schoolmaster.

"Yes," said the sons, "you shall have her."

"I don't want her," said the schoolmaster. "I only wanted to test your obedience. The Princess shall say herself whom she will have." But the Princess didn't like to.

"Say at once, and don't be so silly," said the King.

Then she screwed up her mouth and said: "I should like to live in the forests with the bluebells, and with the birds, and with—Trilltrall!" and she hid her face on Trilltrall's shoulder, and all the brothers were content. Trilltrall gave her back the stolen diamond, at which she was overjoyed.

King Poompam then took a large knife and cut his kingdom into two halves, and said: "Which half will you take—the right or the left?"

"The right," said the schoolmaster. And Poompam gave him the right half, which the schoolmaster again divided into five equal pieces, one for each of his sons. And each built a mansion on his estate; and they lived very happily, paying each other visits very often.

THE LANTERN IN THE
CASTLE-YARD



The Lantern in the CASTLE-YARD.

IN a very wild and remote region of the Scottish Highlands there stood, on a rocky height, an old fortress.

One stormy evening in harvest, its lord looked from his window into the darkness, and over the well-guarded court of the castle towards the opposite hills, where the tops of the trees, still visible, rustled and waved in the dark blue heavens. The rivulet in the valley sent forth a wild and strange sound, and the crackling weathercocks clattered and bawled as if chiding the storm.

The scene and the hour were congenial to the mind of the lord of the castle. He was no longer the indulgent master. His only daughter had fled from the fortress with a handsome youth, far inferior to her in birth, but a sweeter singer and harp player than any inhabitant of the wild

Highlands; and soon after this flight, the lover was found dashed to pieces in the bottom of a rocky valley, into which, in the darkness of the night, he had fallen. Thereupon, the daughter, by an unknown pilgrim, sent a letter to her father, saying she had retired to a convent to do the most severe penance, and that her father would never see her more. From this event, the lord of the castle had become almost as obdurate as the surrounding rocks, and as unfeeling as the stony pavement of his old castle.

As he now looked from his window he saw in the castle-yard a lantern, moving backward and forward as if in the hands of some one, who with tottering steps stole across the area.

Angrily he called out "Who goes there?" for his domestics had strict orders to admit no one within the walls; and since the flight of the young lady, these commands had become so much more rigid that it seemed as if lifeless statues alone dwelt within.

To the lord of the castle there came a soft voice, "An old, old woman," it said, "begs some food, noble knight." But the humble demand was impetuously refused.

"Spy! vagrant! witch!" were the appellations showered upon the beggar; and because she did not immediately retire, but reiterated her petition, with a fervent though weak voice, the knight, in the wildness of his wrath, called on his bloodhounds to hunt the beggar woman away. Wildly did the ferocious dogs rush forth, but scarcely had they approached the old woman, when she touched the strongest and fiercest with a slender wand. The domestics, who had come out, expected that the raging dog would

tear her to pieces; but howling he returned, and the others laid themselves down whining before the beggar. Again the lord of the castle urged them on; but they howled, and moaned, and lay still. A strange shuddering seized him, which redoubled when the old woman raised her lantern on high, and her long white hair appeared waving in the storm, while, in a sad and threatening voice, she exclaimed, "Thou in the heavens who see'st and hearest."

Trembling the knight retired from the window, and ordered his people to give her what she demanded. The domestics, frightened at the apparition, placed some food without in a basket, and then secured the doors; all the while repeating prayers, until they heard the strange old woman carry away the food: and as she stepped out of the castle gates, the hounds moaned mysteriously after her.

From this time regularly, every third evening, the lantern was seen in the castle-yard; and no sooner did its strange twinkling begin to be visible through the darkness, and the light steps heard to totter softly over the pavement, than the lord of the castle hastened back from the window: the domestics put out the basket of food, and the hounds moaned sorrowfully till the apparition vanished.

One day—it was now the beginning of winter—the knight followed the chase in the wildest parts of the mountains. Suddenly his hounds darted up a height, and expecting a good capture, at the risk of imminent danger he forced his shuddering horse over the slippery stony ground. Before a cavern in the middle of the ascent, the

hounds stood still; but how felt the knight, when the figure of a woman stepped into the mouth of the abyss, and with a stick drove back the dogs! From the long silvery locks of the woman, as well as from the restless and low moaning of the hounds, and his own internal feelings, he soon perceived that in this drear spot the lantern-bearer stood before him.

Half frantic he turned his horse's head, buried his spurs in its side, and galloped down the steep, accompanied by the yelling hounds, towards the castle.

Soon after this strange occurrence the lantern was no longer seen in the court of the castle. They waited one day—several days—a whole week passed over: but the apparition was no longer seen. If its first appearance had alarmed the lord of the castle and his domestics, its disappearance occasioned them still more consternation. They believed the former indicated some dreadful event, which the latter betokened to be near. On the knight this anticipation had a most terrible effect; he became pale and haggard, and his countenance assumed such a disturbed appearance, that the inmates of the castle were of opinion that the apparition gave warning of death. It was not so.

One day, as was his custom, the knight rode to the chase; and in his present distraction of mind, he approached, unawares, that part of the country where the old woman with the white hair had appeared to him, and which place he from that time had carefully avoided.

Again the dogs sprang up the height, howling and looking fearfully into the cavern. The affrighted baron



THE LANTERN-BEARER STOOD BEFORE HIM

in vain called them back. They stood as if fascinated to the dreadful spot; but on this occasion no one appeared to chase them away. They then crept into the cavern, and from its dark bosom the knight still heard their moanings and cries. At last, summoning resolution, he sprang from his horse, and with a determined courage clambered up the steep height.

On stepping into the cavern, he beheld the hounds crouched round a wretched mossy couch, on which the dead body of a woman lay stretched out. On drawing near her, he recognised the white hair of the formidable lantern-bearer. The little horn lantern stood near her on the ground, and the features were those of his only child! More slowly than the faithful hounds who from the beginning had known their young mistress, did the unhappy knight become aware whom he saw before him: but to dissipate every doubt, there lay on the breast of the dead body a billet, on which her hand had traced the following words:—

“In three nights the wanderer’s hair became white, through grief for the loss of her lover. She saw it in the brook. Her hair he had often called the net in which his life was entangled. Net and life were by one stroke destroyed. She then thought of those holy ones of the Church, who in humility had lived unknown and despised under the parental roof; and as a penance she sought alms at her father’s castle and lived among the rocks from which her lover fell. But her penance draws near its end; the crimson stream fails. Ah, fath—”

She would have written “father,” but the source of her

thoughts was exhausted, and with unspeakable sorrow the knight perceived a deep wound on her left arm.

He was found by his servants near the corpse in silent prayer, his hounds moaning beside him.

He buried his daughter in the cavern, from which he never afterwards came out. The unhappy hermit forced every one from him—his faithful dogs alone he could not drive away, and mournfully they watched together by the grave of their young mistress, and beside their sorrowing lord; and when he also died, their sad howlings first made it known to the surrounding country.

THE SUN PRINCESS



THE SUN PRINCESS

“As I’ve heard tell, and perhaps you know, Hens had teeth a long time ago.”

AND in those days, when Ewen Kerepol, the miller of Keranborn, went one morning to open his flood-gate and let the water in to turn his mill wheel, he saw, in the pool, a big eel, which, to his amazement, spoke to him just as he was going to strike it with the heavy iron lever he carried in his hand.

“Ewen,” it said, “do not hurt me.”

“What,” cried Ewen, “you are but an eel, and yet you can talk! What does this mean?”

"It means," was the answer, "that I look like one thing and am another."

"And what are you, then, I should like to know?"

"I am a Princess—the Sun Princess. But for the last three hundred years a cruel magician has held me captive under the form you see."

"A hard case that," said Ewen, who had a kind heart. "Can no one do anything to help you?"

"Yes, Ewen. There is a way to help me—and the man who does it shall receive rich rewards."

"Just tell me then," cried Ewen; "just tell me what to do."

"Ah," said the eel, "it's no use telling. Many have tried, all have failed: Princes and brave knights as well as the rest."

"Never mind that," said Ewen, "tell me, all the same. I should like to have a try at it, too, and, who knows? by the help of God I may succeed where others have failed."

"Well, then," said the eel, "this is what you have to do. You must spend three whole nights in the deserted old castle on top of the hill, above the mill-pond; and if, at the end of the three nights, there's anything of you left alive, you will have set me free from the power of the spell, and I shall again be what I was before, a lovely Princess."

"All right, then," said Ewen. "Whether it turn out well or ill, I'll try it for all I am worth, and I hope I may succeed."

The castle was very old, and it was a very long time

since any one had lived in it; but people said that every night demons and wizards met there and kicked up an unearthly row, and so every one took good care never to go anywhere near the place after sunset. To go there, therefore, at night and alone showed that Ewen was a brave fellow. But the fact was that, in the long winter evenings, round the fire, he had often heard stories about things of this kind that had turned out very well when taken in hand by some sturdy fellow of his own humble class; so he made up his mind to try his luck in the matter.

Night came, and off he went, therefore, to the castle, telling no one where he was going, and taking with him only a jug of cider and some tobacco, not any arms or weapons. He lighted a fire on the hearth of the big old kitchen, sat himself down in an ancient carved wood chair, lighted his pipe, and sat and smoked. Not a sound did he hear; a dead silence reigned.

“Queer, this,” he said to himself; “perhaps there is to be no Sabbath to-night, because the witches don’t care for my company; and so much the better for me if I get off as cheap as this.”

About midnight, perhaps a little before, perhaps a little after, finding everything so quiet, and seeing a bed at the far end of the kitchen, he thought he would go and lie down on it; but hardly had he done this than he saw three giants come in, and down they all sat at the table and began playing cards. They were very rough and noisy over their game, and kept on abusing one another for cheating, which was nothing to Ewen. But that was

not all; for, at last, one of them jumped up and roared out:—

“I smell the smell of a Christian. Don't you fellows smell him, too? There's a Christian hidden somewhere or other here.”

And with that he marched straight up to the bed and found Ewen.

“I told you so,” he cried. “It's Ewen Kerepol, the miller of Keranborn; and he's come here, of course, to find out our secrets and hunt us out of the castle. Come, comrades, come and help me teach him to come here again to spy on us, if he dare.”

Then, dragging him out of bed, the giants threw him down on the paved floor, tore all the bedding and mattresses off the bed, made a pile of this on top of poor Ewen, jumped on the top of the pile, and set to work to dance there, singing and roaring with laughter at the joke all the time.

But not one word did Ewen utter, because the eel had warned him to hold his tongue, no matter what he heard or what was done to him.

At last a cock crowed, and, as that showed that dawn had come, the giants went away quite satisfied that they had smothered the miller.

Directly they disappeared the Sun Princess came, and so lovely was she and so radiant her beauty that, like the Sun himself, she shed a glory of light about her.

Stooping down she gently drew Ewen out from beneath the pile of bedding, and you may be sure she found him in a pitiful state. But there still was a little spark of life in him, and when she poured into his mouth a drop or

two of the wonderful elixir of life, which she had with her in a small bottle, he felt better at once than he ever had in all his life before.

“You have got off easily this time,” said the Princess, “but things will be harder for you to-morrow.”

“Never mind,” he answered, “I have made up my mind I won’t give in.”

“Courage then, friend,” she answered, “and remember to hold your tongue, happen what may.”

She disappeared when she had said this; and Ewen left the castle and went back to his mill, his head full of all he had seen and heard, though not a word about it did he speak to any one.

At nightfall back he went to the old castle, and laid himself down on the bed just as he had the night before, and set himself to wait.

Presently down the chimney came the three giants, and down they sat at the table and began their noisy, quarrelsome game of cards. As to Ewen, whom they no doubt supposed they had smothered under the bedding the night before, they did not seem to be giving him a thought. But just then a horrible goblin came down the chimney, too, with a fine row and clatter, and cried out angrily:—

“What! you play cards at your ease, and let the miller pry into all your secrets that he may come and drive you out of the castle and set the Princess free?”

“Don’t worry yourself about that,” they answered. “We have nothing to fear from the miller. Before we left last night we smothered him under the mattresses off the bed where he was hidden,”

"That's what you think, is it? Just tell me then, who's in the bed now?"

"In the bed? In the bed?" they cried. "Is there any one there?"

And with that they ran to it and screamed:—

"It's the miller, the miller again. How did he do it? But if he has escaped us once, we'll do for him this time."

Then they pulled him out of the bed and played ball, with him for the ball. They knocked him backwards and forwards, between one another, from one end of the room to the other, and every now and then they kicked him up to the ceiling and let him fall with a bang down again to the flagged pavement.

But in spite of all he suffered not one word did Ewen utter.

At last the cock crew, and they all disappeared, but, as they were leaving, the goblin gave Ewen a parting hurl that sent him against the wall with such violence that he stuck there, just as a roasted apple might.

No sooner were they gone than the Princess came, and, finding a little spark of life still left in Ewen, she first rubbed him well with an ointment she had made herself, then gave him some drops of the wonderful liquid, and after that he jumped up vigorous and full of life again.

"You have had a hard time of it, friend," said the Princess, "but you are still alive, at least, and there is only one more night, and, after that, the end of all your troubles and the rewards I have promised you. So courage, and trust me, and everything will end well."

“Well,” said Ewen, “to speak truly, I don’t find enchanted Princesses exactly easy to deliver. But never



mind, I am not going to give in, and, no matter what happens, I will see the thing through to the end.”

After that the Princess vanished, and Ewen went home to his mill.

The third night was the worst of all—the giants, angrier than ever, dashed poor Ewen against the walls, threw him on the pavement and then stamped on him, and tore him with their nails, and, last of all, finding that he still breathed when the cock crew, they put him on the spit and left him there to roast before an enormous fire and went away, quite certain that this time they had done for him.

The first thing the Princess did when she came was to move him away from the fire, although by that time he was half cooked. Then she looked anxiously for any trace of life, no matter how small, that might be left in him, for this time she was afraid he was dead. But, although she was afraid, still she rubbed him with her ointment, and besides that poured over him the whole contents of a bottle of spirits that she had with her. Little by little he came to himself; slowly at first, but at last she had the joy of seeing him as well and strong again as ever he had been in his life.

And seeing this she cried, "Victory! All your trials are ended, and, thanks to you, I am freed from the power of those wicked fiends, who can do me no more harm now."

Then she put her arms round his neck and kissed him; after which she said:—

"Follow me. The time has come to reward you."

She led the way to the cellar of the old castle, and there she showed him two huge hogsheads.

"These hogsheads," she said, "are filled, one with new gold pieces, the other with silver ones, and both I give to you. You now will be the wealthiest man in

the neighbourhood, and can choose for yourself the most beautiful and wealthy bride."

Ewen thanked her, but his thanks did not satisfy her, for he seemed almost sad instead of delighted as she expected.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked. "Is it not enough? Do you want more? Is that why you look sad?"

"Yes," he said; "my heart is sad."

"Why is it so?" asked the Princess. "Tell me the reason, and whatever you want I will give you, if I can."

"I did not think," said Ewen, "that after all I have suffered for your sake you would have paid me with gold and silver. I hoped you would give me your hand."

"I can refuse you nothing," she said, holding out her hand, "not even that. So from this moment you and I are engaged to one another, and the wedding shall take place in ten days—that is, if you remain faithful so long, and don't forget me. Our meeting-place will be at the town of Plouaret, ten days hence, and there the marriage will be celebrated. In the meantime I am going to visit my father, the King of Gascony, in his kingdom."

When the ten days were over Ewen set out for Plouaret, taking with him his man who helped in the mill, whom he had provided with a new coat, because he was to be groomsman and witness. On their way they had to pass Penanmenez, where, in a miserable hut by the road-side, dwelt an old hag, whose young and pretty daughter had fallen in love with Ewen, for he was a fine-looking fellow.

When, therefore, Ewen and his servant passed the hut the old hag stood at her door and called out:—

“How grand you are, my fine fellows! Where are you bound? One might think you were going to a wedding.”

“And perhaps they would be right,” said Ewen, but he did not stop.

“What a hurry you are in. Won't you stop a moment and tell me something about this marriage?”

“We can't stop now,” he answered. “We are afraid of being late.”

“Oh, very well, then. But, at least, take this lovely apple that grew in my garden.”

And with that she gave him a fine red apple. He took it and popped it into his pocket; then he and his man went on their way.

The weather was hot, and, presently, Ewen began to feel thirsty, so he ate the witch's apple, and, directly he did so, fell sound asleep—so sound, indeed, that he rolled off his horse into the ditch. Gabic came quickly to him, and did his best to rouse him and get him on his horse again; but all in vain—nothing woke him, and, not knowing what else to do, Gabic at last left him, with his horse beside him, and hurried on alone to Plouaret to meet the Princess.

Just at the stroke of ten she arrived in the town square, in her golden coach drawn by four dromedaries, and looking as beautiful and as radiant as the morning sun.

“Where is Ewen Kerepol?” she asked.

“Alas, my Princess,” replied Gabic, “he fell asleep by the way, and nothing I could do woke him.”

The Princess sighed, then, handing a handkerchief to Gabic, she said :—



“Take him this handkerchief, which is the same colour as the stars; and give it to him from me, and tell him to come here to-morrow at this hour; but to speak to

no one on the way, for, if he 'does, harm will happen to him as it has to-day."

Then, looking displeased, she got back into her coach, the dromedaries broke into a gallop, and away she went.

Gabic then returned to his master, whom he found just awake, and told him all the Princess had said and all that had happened, to all of which Ewen listened with a sad countenance, and then the two men returned silently and sadly to the mill.

Next day, at the right hour, they set out once more, and, just as had happened the day before, the witch was standing at her door when they passed her hovel, and again she called out to them:—

"Well, Ewen Kerepol, where are you going, dressed so fine? Is there a wedding to-day, too?"

"Mind your own business, you old hag," answered Ewen, very angrily.

"You seem a little put out this morning," she replied; "but just let me have a word or two with you. I have something to tell you." And without waiting for leave she sidled up to him and, before he knew it, dropped another apple into his pocket.

The day was hot again, and on the way, Ewen happening to put his hand into his waistcoat pocket and finding an apple there, ate it, not remembering what had happened the day before.

Again a heavy sleep overtook him, again he fell from his horse, again Gabic, unable to rouse him, left him and went alone to Plouaret to meet the Princess.

"Where is Ewen Kerepol?" she asked, directly she



LOOKING DISPLEASED, SHE GOT INTO HER COACH

arrived in her golden coach with the four dromedaries harnessed to it.

"Alas, Princess," said poor Gabic, looking very much ashamed. "Everything has happened that happened yesterday; and he fell so sound asleep that I could not wake him."

She sighed a great sigh and, handing him another handkerchief, said:—

"Take this handkerchief, which is the colour of the moon, and tell him to be here to-morrow morning at this hour, and advise him from me to be careful about himself, to speak to no one, and to accept nothing from any one on the way; because this is his last chance, and, if he fails this time to keep the appointment with me, he will never see me more."

Then, looking still more displeased than the day before, she got into her coach, and the four dromedaries galloped away with her.

Gabic then returned to his master, who, just awake, seemed again to be very sorry at not having kept his appointment with the Princess.

Next morning the miller and his man started again together for the third and last time. Again the old hag stood at the door of her hut, and again hailed them as they passed.

"Hie, my pretty lads," she called; "is it to go to a wedding again to-day that you wear such fine clothes?"

Ewen and Gabic answered not a word, and only urged on their horses, but the witch hobbled quickly after them, and, without Ewen's knowing it, poked another apple into

his pocket. And presently he ate this apple, just as he had eaten the others, and again a deep sleep fell upon him, and he rolled off his horse and was left in the ditch by Gabic, who went on to meet the Princess.

“Alone! alone again!” she cried. “Where, then, is your master?”

“Asleep,” said Gabic, much ashamed, “and I couldn’t wake him.”

“Ah, wretched man that he is,” cried the Princess, sighing more deeply than ever. “Take him this handkerchief, which is the colour of the sun, from me, and say to him that I am lost to him for ever, and that he will never see me again.”

This time her face was very stern and angry as she mounted into her coach and the dromedaries galloped away with her.

Gabic, as usual, went back to his master, to find him, as usual, just awakening, and when he gave him the Princess’s handkerchief and message he really seemed to be in despair. But, though he wept, he said:—

“Give her up I *never* will. I will set out this very minute, and will rest neither night nor day till I have found her.”

After that he went to the castle, thanks to him not now a haunted one, and filled his pockets with gold and silver before he started on his journey.

“He who gives with open hand
Friends he finds in every land;
Who shuts his fist and nothing gives
Is always friendless while he lives.”

So he gave freely wherever he went, and everywhere he found a hearty welcome and people glad to give him advice.

“Trudging to-day and trudging to-morrow,
That's how travellers shorten their sorrow.”

And on and on he went steadily, but without any fixed plans; only keeping up his courage and sticking like a man to his purpose.

At last, one day, in the midst of a dense forest, he came on a long avenue of oaks, and, seeing an old man standing at the entrance, he said to him:—

“Father, where does this avenue lead to?”

“A hundred years have I lived here,” answered the old man, “but never have I been to the other end of the avenue, and I can't tell you where it goes. I know only that it is very long.”

“No matter for that,” said Ewen; “the longest avenue must end somewhere, and the thing I want to know is where this one ends.”

And without more ado he plunged boldly into it. Then he walked and he walked, hearing round him, all the time, the wild beasts of the forest roaring and howling, and he said to himself:—

“I sha'n't get out of this alive.”

But, for all that, he kept resolutely on his way, and in two days and two nights found himself at the other end. But instead of the fine castle he had expected to see there, he saw only a mean hut built of clods of turf and roofed with branches. Inside this hut he found a very aged-looking man with a flowing white beard.

“Good-day, Father Hermit,” he said, addressing him.

“Good-day, my son. Of what use can I be to you?”

“I am seeking the Castle of the Sun Princess, Father; and if you can show me the way to it, you would be doing me a great service.”

“Fifty years have I dwelt here in solitude,” answered the hermit, “and with no company but that of the wolves and other wild beasts of the forest; for, till this day, no human being ever came here. I know not where the Castle of the Sun Princess may be, but all the animals in the forest are subject to me, and some of them wander far afield. I will summon the wolves, and they may be able to tell us what you want to know.”

Then he took up his horn, and went out and mounted on the top of a high rock and blew a sounding blast to the north, to the south, to the east, to the west; and the wolves came trooping in from all these quarters, little ones and big ones, old and young; and when all were there the hermit made them this little speech:—

“Wolves,” he said, “I have called you together to inquire of you whether any of you know where the Castle of the Sun Princess is to be found?”

But none of them knew; they had heard only that the Princess used to be a prisoner in the castle above the pond of Keranborn Mill.

So the hermit gave them leave to scatter again, and turning to Ewen he said:—

“I have a brother, a hermit like myself, who lives also in the forest, a day’s march from here. To him are subject all the birds of the air, great and small, and as birds go

farther and faster than four-footed creatures, it may be that he can do more for you than I can. I will give you a golden ball that will roll on and on in front of you, until it brings you to where you will find him. And when he sees the ball he will know you come from me, and will gladly give you all the help that lies in his power."

Then he gave a golden ball to Ewen, who, thanking him heartily and bidding him good-day, set out to follow it. And on and on rolled the ball until finally it rolled up against the brother hermit's door.

"Good-day to you, Brother's Ball," said the hermit. "What news of him do you come to bring me?"

"It is I who am all the news he brings you, Father Hermit," said Ewen. "I have been a long time travelling, seeking to find the Castle of the Sun Princess, and your brother told me that perhaps you could set me on the right road to go there."

"I know not, my son, where the Castle of the Sun Princess may be; but all the birds of the air, great and small, are subject to me, and one or other of them may perhaps be able to give us some news of it. I will now call them together."

Then he went outside the hut and mounted on top of a hill, and when he had sounded his beautiful silver whistle four times, clouds of birds came flying from every direction towards him.

"Are you all here?" asked the old man.

"Yes," replied an old raven, "all but the eagle."

"Whenever I call you together, it is always the eagle

who is late," said the hermit. "No doubt he is far away, but he too will come by-and-by. Do any of you know where the Castle of the Sun Princess is?"

There was no answer, but at last the raven spoke again:—

"I don't know where her castle may be; but I know she used to be a prisoner in the old castle above the pond of Keran-born Mill."

Just then the eagle came.

"Eagle," said the hermit, in a tone of displeasure, "whenever I call you all together you always come last. Where were you?"

"I was at the Castle of the Sun Princess, and I was very comfortable there; for everything is being made ready for her marriage with the son of the King of Portugal, and a great number of oxen, cows, calves, pigs, and sheep have been slaughtered, and I had my share of all of them."

"Yes, yes," said the hermit; "we all know that you are greedier than other birds. But, at any rate, you know, then, where the Castle of the Sun Princess is?"

"Yes, I know where it is,"



"Well, then, what you have to do now is to carry this man"—and he pointed at Ewen—"safe and sound on your back to the castle."

"All right," said the eagle, "on condition that I have as much as I like to eat, for it is a long way from here."

"You shall have all you want, glutton. And how much may that be?"

"I can't do it under twelve sheep," was the answer.

"And where are we to get twelve sheep from?" asked Ewen.

"There is a gentleman who lives not far from here who has plenty," said the hermit, "and I think you will be able to get them from him."

Then he took Ewen to see the gentleman, who was willing enough to sell his sheep because Ewen paid him just what he asked for them, and a good deal more too.

Next day all the sheep, piled on one another, with Ewen on the top of them, being laid on the eagle's back, he seemed to find some difficulty, at first, in raising his load from the ground. But he managed it somehow or other, and, once he got on his wings, nothing stopped him. He flew over forests and the highest mountains and widest rivers, over the White Sea, and the Black and the Red Seas too, until at last they reached the Castle of the Sun Princess.

Then he gently put Ewen on the ground, and in very good condition, too; for he had kept his promise exactly; and, before leaving him, he told him that if he required his services again at any time he would be glad to oblige him.

The first thing Ewen did was to hire a room at the best hotel in the town, which lay at the foot of the castle. Next he asked the landlord what news there was in the country-side. To which the landlord answered:—

“You must indeed have come a long way if you don’t know the news which is turning every one’s head with joy and setting the town upside down.”

“Yes,” said Ewen, “I have come a great distance. But what is this news, then?”

“Why,” said the landlord, “to-morrow the Sun Princess is to be married to the son of the King of Portugal.”

“That is all right,” said Ewen, “for I trade in precious things, and I have come just at the right moment, no doubt, to do a stroke of business.”

Next morning, therefore, he took his stand betimes near the church door. At ten o’clock the bridal procession arrived: first the King and Queen, then the bride and bridegroom, and after them all the Court. And as the procession passed him Ewen spread out his handkerchief that was the colour of the stars, and every one saw and admired it. The Princess saw it too, and knew it at once, as well as the face of him who held it in his hand; and she said to one of her ladies:—

“I must have that handkerchief before I enter the church. Go and buy it for me.”

“What is the price of your handkerchief, merchant?” asked the lady, speaking to Ewen.

“Neither gold nor silver will buy my handkerchief,” he answered.

"It is the Sun Princess who wants it," said the lady; "ask what you like, and she will pay it."

"I tell you once more," said Ewen, "that neither gold nor silver will buy it."

"What will, then?" asked the lady. "Tell me quickly."

"I ask nothing for it except to be allowed to kiss the left foot of the bride."

"Don't talk nonsense," answered the lady. "Tell me at once what your price is."

"I am in earnest," said Ewen, "and I have no other answer to send back to your mistress."

So all the lady could do was to carry this strange message back.

"What an extraordinary fancy!" said the Princess.

"Tell him," put in the King, "to come to me at the castle directly after the ceremony and I will settle with him."

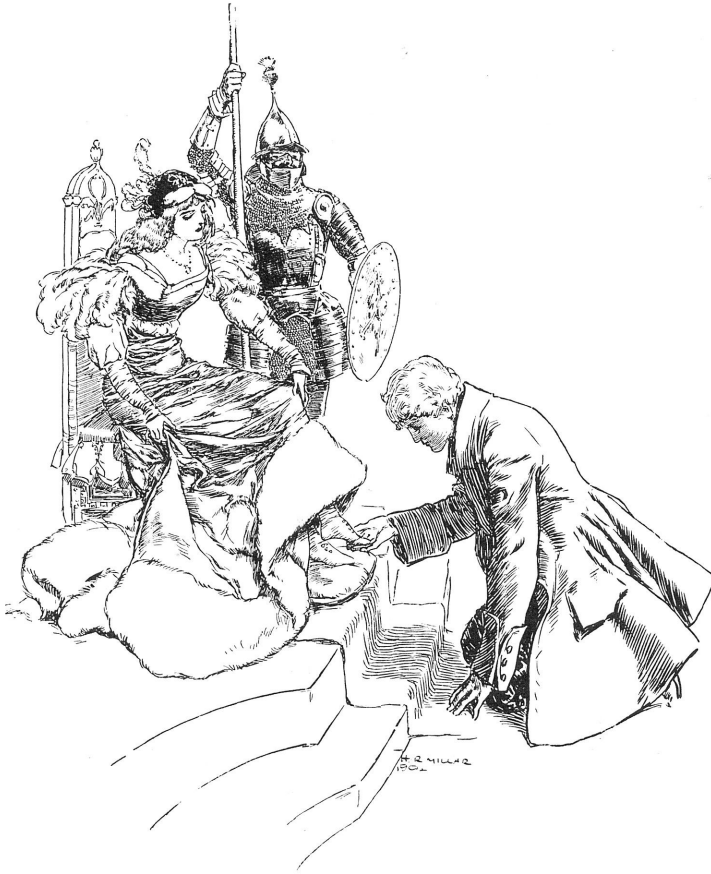
"No," said the Princess, "I won't go into the church until I have that handkerchief."

And as she stuck out for this, in spite of all her father and mother and the bridegroom could do or say, the marriage ceremony had to be put off till next day, and the procession went back to the castle. The merchant was then sent for and brought into the presence of the Princess, and he kissed her left foot and in exchange for the kiss, gave her the star-coloured handkerchief.

After that all the company sat down to a magnificent banquet at which every one ate, drank, laughed, and talked to his heart's content.

Next morning at ten o'clock, as on the day before,

the procession set out for the church, and again the merchant was there waiting for it, and again he spread



out a handkerchief, and this time it was the colour of the moon.

Again, too, the Princess saw the handkerchief and

wanted to have it, and sent one of her attendants to buy it; but everything happened just as it had the day before, except that it was her right foot the merchant asked to kiss this time. So, just as had happened the day before, so to-day the procession went back to the castle without entering the church, and the ceremony was put off another day. Then, also, the merchant was sent for and brought into the room of the Princess and kissed her right foot, and in exchange gave her the moon-coloured handkerchief.

Then the banquet followed, with eating and drinking and talking and laughter, that were kept up far into the night.

Next day the procession started for the third time; but at the church door there again stood the merchant, and this time the handkerchief he spread out, being the colour of the sun, shone so brightly that it made every one blink. Again the Princess insisted on having the handkerchief, and all happened as twice before, except that this time the merchant asked to kiss her hand.

The King was now very much put out by all these delays, and began to say it was high time to be done with such nonsense. But Ewen got his way, and kissed the hand of the Princess, and, moreover, she kept him this time to take part with the other guests in the banquet.

And when the banquet was nearly over, and every one was laughing and merry, and telling stories about all the adventures each had had (some of them very astonishing adventures indeed), the Princess made this little speech,

addressing it to the bridegroom's father, his Majesty the King of Portugal:—

“Sire, what rewards would you bestow upon one who three times had risked his life for you and who had either saved you from great dangers or freed you from captivity?”

“No rewards could exceed the merits of such a man,” answered the King. “I would give him anything he asked me for.”

“Well, your Majesty, you have before you a man who three times risked his life for me, and who delivered me from wicked monsters who held me in cruel captivity under the form of an eel, into which shape a wicked magician had turned me. Here,” she said, pointing to Ewen, “is the man—the man who shall be my husband instead of your son, who never has done anything for me.”

Great was the excitement and astonishment caused by this speech. The King of Portugal, his Queen, and their son, the Prince, confused and shame-struck, rose from their seats, left the banqueting-hall, and got into their coach and drove back to Portugal as fast as they could. And the very next day the marriage of the Sun Princess and Ewen Kerepol was celebrated with such pomp and magnificence that the festivities lasted a whole fortnight, since which time I have not heard any further news of them.

THE STORY OF
THE CALIPH STORK

THE STORY OF THE CALIPH STORK

ONE fine afternoon the Caliph Chasid of Bagdad was sitting comfortably on his sofa. He had had a little sleep—for it was a hot day—and looked all the better for his nap. He was smoking a long rosewood pipe, now and then sipping a little coffee which was poured out for him by a slave, and stroking his beard all the time in token of satisfaction. Any one could see in a moment that the Caliph was feeling on good terms with himself. This was the best time in the day to approach him, for he was then always in a good temper and affable; and therefore his Grand Vizier Mansor always chose this time every day for making his visit. This afternoon he came as usual, but, quite contrary to his custom, he was looking very serious. The Caliph took his pipe out of his mouth for a minute and said, “Why do you present so serious a countenance, my Grand Vizier?”

The Grand Vizier folded his arms across his breast, bowed low before his master, and answered, “Whether my countenance be serious or no I cannot tell, but down below there at the castle there is a pedlar with such beautiful wares that I am sorely vexed not to have much money to spare.”

Now the Caliph had been anxious for a long time to

show his Grand Vizier some mark of his favour, and so he despatched one of his black slaves to fetch the pedlar. The slave soon returned bringing the pedlar with him. He was a short, stout man with a swarthy skin and tattered garments. He carried a box in which he kept all kinds of wares—pearls, rings, richly inlaid pistols, goblets, and combs. The Caliph and his Vizier turned over the whole stock, and finally the Caliph bought a pair of fine pistols apiece for himself and the Vizier, and a comb for the Vizier's wife into the bargain. But just as the pedlar was going to close his box the Caliph espied a little drawer, and asked him whether he had not something put away there too. The pedlar pulled the drawer out, and displayed a snuff-box containing a blackish powder, and a paper with some curious writing on it which neither the Caliph nor Mansor could read. "I got these two things some time ago from a merchant who picked them up in the street at Mecca," said the pedlar. "I do not know the meaning of them, and you can have them for next to nothing, since I cannot make any use of them myself." The Caliph, who was fond of having old manuscripts in his library, even though he could not read a word of them, bought the writing and the snuff-box and dismissed the pedlar. At the same time he thought he should very much like to know what the writing meant, and so he asked the Vizier whether he knew any one who could decipher it. "Most gracious Lord and Master," replied the Vizier, "hard by the great Mosque there dwells a man, who goes by the name of Selim the learned. He knows all languages. Send for him, for perhaps he can read us these mysterious characters."

THE STORY OF THE CALIPH STORK 59

The learned Selim was speedily fetched. "Selim," said the Caliph to him—"Selim, they say that you are a very learned man. Just glance at this writing, and see whether you can read it. If you can, it means a new holiday



suit for you; if you cannot, it means twelve boxes on the ear and five-and-twenty strokes on the soles of the feet for having been called 'Selim the learned' for nothing." Selim bowed low and said, "Be it as thou wilt, O master." Then he contemplated the writing for a considerable time,

till at length he suddenly cried out, "This is Latin, O master, or may I be hanged." "Tell us what it contains, then," commanded the Caliph, "if it be Latin."

Selim began to translate. "Man, whoever thou mayest be, who findest this, praise Allah for his goodness. Whoever takes a pinch of the powder in this box and thereupon says the word 'Mutabor' can transform himself into any animal he pleases, and will also understand the language of animals. When he wishes once more to resume his human form let him bow three times towards the east and say the same word. But beware, when thou art transformed, that thou dost not laugh; for in that case the magic word will vanish completely from thy memory and thou wilt remain a beast."

When Selim the learned had thus read, the Caliph was beyond measure delighted. He made the sage swear to say nothing to a soul about the secret, presented him with a beautiful robe, and sent him away. Then to his Grand Vizier he said, "That's what I call getting a good bargain, Mansor; how I look forward to becoming a beast! Come to me to-morrow morning; we will then go together into the country, take a pinch from my box, and so overhear what is said in the air and in the water, in wood and field."

Scarcely had the Caliph Chasid breakfasted and dressed himself on the following morning before the Grand Vizier made his appearance, as he had been bidden, to accompany him upon his expedition. The Caliph placed the box with the magic powder in his girdle, and after commanding his suite to remain behind, set out quite alone with the Grand

Vizier. They went first through the Caliph's broad gardens, but searched in vain for any living thing on which to exercise their magic art. At length the Vizier proposed that they should go on further to a pond where he had often seen many creatures, especially storks, which by their solemn demeanour and continual chatter had never failed to rouse his curiosity.

The Caliph agreed to the Vizier's proposal, and proceeded with him to the pond. As soon as they had reached the place they saw a stork walking gravely backwards and forwards looking for frogs and now and then chattering to itself. Directly afterwards they perceived another stork hovering in the sky high up overhead.

"I will bet my beard, most gracious master," said the Grand Vizier, "that this pair of long-legs will soon have a grand confabulation. How would it be if we were to turn into storks?"

"A good suggestion," replied the Caliph. "But let us first make sure of the way to become men again. I have it! Bow three times toward the east and say 'Mutabor,' then I shall be Caliph and you Vizier as before. But, for heaven's sake, no laughing, or we are lost!"

While the Caliph was speaking, he observed the second stork hovering over their heads and letting itself drop slowly to the ground. Hastily he took the box from his girdle, took a good pinch, offered the box to the Grand Vizier, who did the same, and both cried, "Mutabor." Thereupon their legs began to shrivel up and became thin and red. The fine yellow shoes worn by the Caliph

and his companion turned into ugly storks' feet, and their arms into wings. Their necks shot up from their shoulders until they were a yard long, their beards disappeared, and soft feathers clothed their bodies.

"You have a fine bill, Grand Vizier," said the Caliph, after a long pause of astonishment. "By the beard of the Prophet, I have never seen anything like it in my life."

"My humblest acknowledgments," replied the Grand Vizier, bowing. "But if I might venture so far, I should assert that your Highness cuts almost a finer figure as Stork than as Caliph. But come, if it so please you, and surprise our comrades over there, and find out whether we really know Storkish."

Meanwhile the second stork had settled on the ground. It trimmed its feet with its bill, set its feathers straight, and went up to the first stork. The two new storks now hurried up to get into their neighbourhood, and to their surprise overheard the following conversation:—

"Good morning, Madam Longlegs, out on the meadow so early?"

"Much obliged to you, dear Chatterbill. I have been getting a little breakfast. Might I offer you a quarter of lizard, or a morsel of frog's leg?"

"Thank you kindly, but I really have no appetite to-day. Besides, I have come down to the meadow on quite other business. I have to dance to-day before my father's guests, and I want to have a little practice in private."

As she spoke the young stork began capering over the ground with the queerest contortions. The Caliph and



THEY SAW A STORK
LOOKING FOR FROGS

Mansor watched her with amazement. But when she posed in an artistic attitude on one foot and began to flap her wings, the pair could stand it no longer. An irrepressible burst of laughter broke from their bills, from which it took them a long time to recover. The Caliph was the first to regain his self-control. "That was a joke, and no mistake," he cried, "which could not be bought for money. What a pity that the stupid creatures should have let themselves be scared by our laughter! Why they would have begun to sing next!" But now it struck the Grand Vizier that during the period of their transformation laughing was forbidden. He communicated his anxiety on the point to the Caliph. "By Mecca and Medina it would be a sorry jest if I were obliged to remain a stork! Do try to remember the stupid word. I can't recall it the least."

"Three times we must bow ourselves towards the east, and then say, Mu—Mu—Mu—"

They took up their position towards the east, and kept on bowing, till their bills nearly touched the ground. But oh, horror! the magic word had escaped them; and no matter how often the Caliph bowed or how anxiously his Vizier cried Mu—Mu—, every trace of recollection had vanished, and poor Chasid and his Vizier were and remained storks.

Sadly the enchanted pair wandered through the fields. They had not a notion what steps to take in their unhappy plight. They could not rid themselves of their storks' plumage, nor could they go back into the city to make known who they were, for who would have believed a stork

if he said he were the Caliph? And besides if such a story were credited, was it likely that the inhabitants of Bagdad would be content with a stork for Caliph?

In this way they slunk about for several days, supporting a wretched existence upon the fruits of the field, which moreover they found some difficulty in eating because of the length of their bills. For lizards and frogs they had no appetite, being afraid of upsetting their digestions with dainties of that sort. Their solitary pleasure in their pitiful condition was that they could fly, and so they often flew onto the roofs of Bagdad to see what was going on there.

For the first few days they noticed much uneasiness and tribulation in the streets. But on the fourth day, or thereabouts, of their enchantment, as they were sitting on the Caliph's palace, they beheld a magnificent procession in the street below. To the sound of drums and fifes a man passed by in a robe of scarlet, embroidered with gold, seated on a splendidly caparisoned steed and surrounded by a glittering throng of servants. Half Bagdad ran after him, one and all crying, "Hail! Mizra, Ruler of Bagdad!" The two storks on the roof of the palace looked at one another, and the Caliph Chasid said, "Cannot you guess now why I was bewitched, Grand Vizier? This Mizra is the son of my mortal foe, the mighty magician Kuschnur, who in an evil hour swore to be revenged upon me. But I do not yet give up hope. Come with me, faithful companion in distress. We will betake ourselves to the grave of the Prophet. It may be that in the holy place the spell will be removed."

They rose from the roof of the palace and flew in the direction of Medina. But they did not get on very well with their flying, for the two storks had had but little practice. "O master," groaned the Vizier, after a few hours, "with your leave I cannot keep it up any longer. You fly altogether too fast! Besides, it is evening already, and we should do well to look for a lodging for the night."

Chasid yielded to his servant's entreaty; and as below them in the valley he observed some ruins which seemed to promise shelter, they flew down to them. The place where they had established themselves for the night seemed once upon a time to have been a castle. Beautiful pillars rose from among the ruins, and several chambers, still in a fair state of preservation, bore witness to the former splendour of the house. Chasid and his companion were wandering through the passages to find a dry corner, when suddenly the stork Mansor came to a stop. "Lord and master," he whispered softly, "of course it would be folly for a Grand Vizier, and still more so for a stork, to be afraid of ghosts; but I feel very uncomfortable, for there are quite unmistakable sounds of sighing and groaning close by." The Caliph now stood still in his turn, and heard quite distinctly a gentle moaning noise which seemed to issue from a human being rather than an animal. Full of concern he was for going in the direction from which the sounds of woe proceeded; but the Vizier caught him by the wing with his bill and besought him earnestly not to rush upon new and unknown dangers.

But it was all in vain! The Caliph, under whose stork's

THE STORY OF THE CALIPH STORK 67

wing there beat a courageous heart, wrenched himself free with the loss of a few feathers, and hurried down a gloomy passage. He soon reached a door which chanced to be standing ajar, and from behind it he could plainly hear sobs, broken by an occasional howl. He pushed the door open with his beak, and stopped dumbfounded on the threshold. In the dilapidated chamber, scantily lighted by a small lattice-window, he saw a great night-owl sitting on the ground. Big tears were rolling from her great round eyes, and in a hoarse voice she was pouring forth lamentations from her curved beak. But when she saw the Caliph and his Vizier, who had crept up in the interval, she uttered a loud cry of joy. Delicately she wiped the tears from her eyes with her brown speckled wings, and to the great astonishment of the pair cried in good human Arabic, "Welcome, ye storks! you are a good omen to me of my deliverance, for it was prophesied of me long ago that a great stroke of good fortune should befall me by the aid of storks."

As soon as the Caliph had recovered from his astonishment he bowed low with his long neck, brought his skinny feet into an elegant attitude, and said, "O night-owl, from your words I venture to think that in you I see a companion in misfortune. But, alas! your expectation that your deliverance will come through our means is vain. You will yourself recognise our powerlessness when you hear our story." The night-owl bade him explain, and the Caliph set to work and related what we know already.

When the Caliph had laid his story before the owl,

she thanked him and said, "Now listen to my story, and learn that I am no less unfortunate than you. My father is the King of India, and I, his only daughter, am called Lusa. The magician, Kuschnur, who bewitched you, has overwhelmed me too in misfortune. He came one day to my father and sought me in marriage for his son Mizra. But my father, who is a choleric man, had him thrown down-stairs. The wretch had wit enough to slink into my presence again in another shape, and one day, when I went into the garden to take some refreshment, disguised as a slave he brought me a draught which changed me into this hideous form. Paralysed with fear, he brought me to this place, and shouted these awful words in my ear, 'Here shalt thou bide, hideous and despised even by the brutes until thine end, or until some one of his own free will shall woo thee, in this very shape of horror, for his bride. Thus do I take my revenge upon thee and thy insolent father.' Since that time many months have sped by. Lonely and sad I live the life of a hermit in these ruined walls, scouted by the world, an abomination to the very brutes. The beauties of nature are a sealed book to me, for I am blind by day; and only when the moon sheds her pale light over this ruin does the intercepting veil drop from my eyes."

The owl had finished, and wiped her eyes again with her wing, for the narration of her griefs had caused her tears to flow afresh.

The Princess's narrative plunged the Caliph into profound thought. "If I am not entirely mistaken," said he, "there is a mysterious connection to be traced between

our misfortunes. But where am I to find the key to this riddle?"

The owl replied, "My lord, I too have the same presentiment. For it was prophesied of me once by a wise woman in my infancy that a stork would bring me a great piece of luck, and I might perhaps suggest how we could effect our deliverance."

The Caliph was greatly astonished and asked what means she had in view.

"The magician who has brought misfortune on us both," she answered, "comes once in every month to these ruins. Not far from this chamber is a hall, where it is his custom on these occasions to carouse with a number of companions. Often ere now I have spied upon them there. They exchange stories of their shameful exploits, and it may be that he will then pronounce the magic word which you have forgotten."

"Dearest Princess," exclaimed the Caliph, "only tell me when he comes, and where the hall is."

The owl kept silence for a moment and then said, "Do not think me ungracious, but only upon one condition can I comply with your request."

"Speak out! Speak out!" cried Chasid; "only give your orders, for my part I am content."

"Well, I should like to gain my own freedom at the same time. But this may only be if one of you will offer me his hand."

The storks seemed to be somewhat perplexed at this proposal, and the Caliph motioned to his servant to go outside with him for a little while,

"Grand Vizier," said the Caliph outside the door, "this is a stupid business. But you might very well take her."

"Indeed!" answered he; "that my wife might scratch my eyes out when I get home, I suppose. Besides, I am an old man and you are still young and unmarried, and might much more reasonably give your hand to a young and fair Princess."

"That is just it," sighed the Caliph, letting his wings droop despondently. "Who told you that she is young and fair? This is what is called buying a cat in a bag."

They argued the matter on both sides for some time longer, but at length when the Caliph saw that his Vizier would be content to remain a stork sooner than marry the owl, he resolved to fulfil the condition himself. The owl was highly delighted. She gave them to understand that they could not have arrived at a better time, since it was probable that the sorcerers would assemble that very night.

She left the room with the storks to lead them to the hall of which she had spoken. They groped their way for some time along a dark passage, until at last a bright ray of light flashed in their eyes from a half ruined wall. When they had reached the spot, the owl advised them to keep very still. From the gap at which they stood they commanded a view of a great hall. It was adorned all round with pillars, and splendidly decorated, while a number of coloured lamps supplied the place of daylight. In the middle of the hall stood a round table, furnished with a profusion of exquisite meats. Round the table ran

a sofa on which eight men were sitting. In one of these men the storks recognised the very same pedlar who had sold them the magic powder. His neighbour invited him to relate his most recent exploits, and among others he told the story of the Caliph and his Vizier.

“What kind of a word did you give them, then?” asked another magician.

“Oh, a downright difficult Latin word. It was ‘Mutabor.’”

When the storks heard this from their nook in the wall they were well nigh beside themselves with joy. They ran so fast on their long legs to the door of the ruins that the owl could hardly keep pace with them. There, with much emotion, the Caliph said to the owl, “Preserver of my life and of the life of my friend, as a mark of my undying gratitude for what you have done for us, I pray you to take me for your husband.” Then he turned himself towards the east. Three times the storks bowed their long necks towards the sun, which was just rising behind the mountains. “Mutabor,” they cried, and in a twinkling they were transformed, and in the ecstasy of their newly recovered life, master and servant fell laughing and weeping into each other’s arms. But who can describe their astonishment when they looked about them? A beautiful lady, splendidly clad, stood before them. Smilingly she gave her hand to the Caliph. “Do you no longer recognise your night-owl?” she said. For she it was, and the Caliph was so charmed with her grace and beauty that he exclaimed that the luckiest thing that ever happened to him was to have become a stork.

The three now journeyed together towards Bagdad. In his clothes, the Caliph found not only the box with



the magic powder but also his purse, and he was able therefore in the nearest village to buy all that was necessary for their journey. And so they came with-

out loss of time to the gates of Bagdad, where the arrival of the Caliph occasioned much surprise. He had been given up for dead, and the people were proportionately delighted to have their beloved sovereign back again.

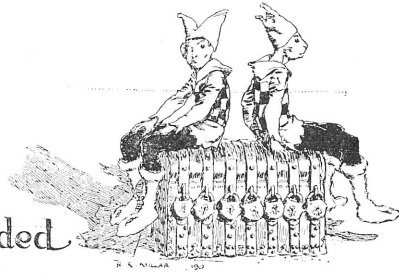
All the more fiercely was the flame of their resentment kindled against the impostor, Mizra. They crowded into the palace and took the old magician and his son captive. The old man the Caliph despatched to the very same chamber in the ruins which the Princess had inhabited when she was an owl, and there had him hanged. But the son, who was quite ignorant of his father's arts, was given the choice between death and taking a pinch of snuff. When he chose the latter alternative the Grand Vizier handed him the box—a good pinch and the magic word of the Caliph transformed him into a stork. Then the Caliph had him shut up in an iron cage and placed in his garden.

Long and happily lived Caliph Chasid with his wife, the Princess. His pleasantest hours were ever those in which the Grand Vizier paid his afternoon visit. On these occasions they would often talk over their stork adventures; and if the Caliph was in a genial mood, he would condescend so far as to imitate the appearance of the Grand Vizier when he was a stork. He would strut solemnly up and down the room with awkward gait, clap and flap his arms, using them like wings, and take off the Vizier bowing desperately towards the east, and crying Mu—Mu—all the time. To the Caliph's wife and her children this exhibition always afforded great amusement, but if the

Caliph went on flapping and bobbing and crying Mu—Mu— too long, then the Vizier would smilingly threaten to disclose to Madame, the Caliph's wife, the gist of the discussion that took place outside the Princess Night-Owl's door.

THE SEVEN-BANDED AND
SEVEN-LOCKED STEEL BOX

The Seven-Banded and Seven-Locked Steel Box.



TWO men could hardly carry it—for the reasons that they were very small men and the box they were bearing was very heavy. It was a steel box, bound with seven strong bands of steel, and locked with seven strong steel locks, which not even the most skilful locksmith in the world could have picked or in any way opened without using the seven golden keys belonging to them. Nobody could see it without feeling a burning desire to know what it contained and all about it—to whom it belonged, where the two little men had brought it from, where they were taking it, and why, of all places in the world, they had brought it to the middle of a desert, across which there was no pathway, seeming to have come from nowhere and to be on the way to nowhere else.

The rate of progress of the two little box-bearers grew less and less as they grew more and more tired, and at

last they put down their burden and seated themselves, one at either end of it, to rest themselves, one looking in one direction, the other towards the opposite side of the desert, which appeared to be boundless.

They were twin brothers, and nobody, from their looks, could have guessed their age. Somehow, they conveyed the idea that they could never have had a father or mother, but had been made by some modeller who, after shaping their feet and legs of the natural size, had found himself to be running short of materials. They were, now that they were full grown, about four feet in height. Their legs were half as long again as their bodies, which, with their arms, might have been imagined to have reached only half their natural development. Their heads were only a little larger than those of rabbits, to which they bore some resemblance, the ears excepted; for each had only a single ear, one having his on the right, the other his on the left side of his head; and it was the same with their eyes. As to their complexion, it is impossible to say exactly what it was, for it seemed to change with the state of their feelings—chameleon-like—being at one instant green, at another yellow, or grey, or black. Their names were Zbrill and Zbroll.

“One, two, three—this the spot must be!” said Zbrill.

“Four, five, six—here the sand grains mix!” said Zbroll.

“Twenty yellow, twenty red!” said Zbrill.

“Just as our good mistress said!” said Zbroll.

“Here she comes!” said Zbrill, looking across the desert with all the power of his one eye, which must have

been very great indeed, for, except to him, nothing moving was to be seen there.

"No, that is not our mistress's footfall!" said Zbroll, listening intently with his one ear.

Zbroll was right; it was not their mistress, the good Fairy Melusina, who was approaching them.

Presently the transparent air seemed to open, and, as if coming from an invisible door in it, a young and wonderfully beautiful woman, dressed in dazzlingly splendid clothes, came straight towards them, but stopped a few paces off.

"My poor little men, are you not very lonely, sitting there?" asked this radiant personage, who was a wicked fairy, in spite of her wonderful beauty and the tone of kindness in which she spoke.

"No, we are never lonely," replied Zbrill.

"Because we are always together," explained Zbroll.

"But at this desert spot you are far away from everywhere—are you not hungry and thirsty?"

As she spoke neither of the little men saw how she did it—she held out to them a golden salver on which there was a pile of luscious-looking fruit and a flagon of sparkling wine—deadly to whoever partook of either.

"No; we are neither of us hungry or thirsty," said Zbrill.

"We had a good meal before starting—good enough to last us for the rest of our lives," added Zbroll.

The fairy threw away her golden salver, with its tempting fruit and wine, all of which vanished into the sand of the desert at her feet.

"Are you fond of beautiful jewels?" she asked. "See!

I have brought you each a diamond ring of inestimable worth! Come to me and let me put them on your fingers."

"Complete your kindness by coming to us," said Zbrill.



"If we even thought of moving from our seats on this steel box it would spring upon us and crush us!" said Zbroll.

"Dolts!" cried the wicked fairy, enraged by the failure of her plans to draw the little men away from their charge, which was all she needed to enable her to get possession

of it for the magician Bhagon, whose commands she was compelled to obey.

"We can't help being what we are," said Zbrill.

"We did not make ourselves, you know," added Zbroll.

The defeated fairy turned the sand at her feet with so much rage as to send it up in a cloud so dense and high that, when it settled down, it buried the two little guardians of the steel box up to their waists and hid the box itself from view. When they dared to open their eyes again the fairy was gone.

"You know who *she* was, don't you?" Zbrill asked his brother.

"Oh yes!" answered Zbroll. "She is one of Bhagon's slaves, and would willingly change her beauty for our ugliness to get out of his power."

Suddenly, as they were speaking, the daylight changed to the darkish hue of night, and all about the little twin brothers the sand hissed as with the voices of a million angry serpents or the passage of a furious hurricane; but the air remained as still as if it had been struck motionless.

"Sit firm upon your end of the box!" cried Zbrill.

"I know that it is Bhagon, trying to frighten us away," said Zbroll; "but he will have his labour for his pains, great magician as he may be."

Then the two found themselves surrounded by flames from which spurted terrific flashes of lightning towards them, and the ear of each was nearly deafened by crashing peals of thunder following one another incessantly.

"You are not afraid, are you, brother Zbroll?" asked Zbrill.

"Not in the least," replied Zbroll.

In a moment the thunder and lightning ceased, and the whole of the atmosphere became as it were made of glittering particles of light, and—removed from them only by an interval of a few yards—the brave little guardians of the steel box beheld a monster of the dragon kind crawling towards them with wide-open jaws—jaws wide open enough to take in both of them, with the box they were sitting upon, at a snap.

"Do you tremble, pigmies?" roared the dragon-like monster.

"Our good mistress has deprived us of that infirmity," replied the little brothers.

"Call to her to come to your aid, that I may have but one mouthful to make of her and you!" cried the monster, clashing his jaws together.

"She comes when she likes," replied Zbrill.

"We never need call her," added Zbroll.

"If you will get off that box I will not hurt either of you," said the monster, in the most amiable tone of voice he could assume.

"We couldn't if we wished to," said Zbrill.

"What do you mean? Don't attempt to jest with me!" roared the monster.

"We are not jesting at all; we are glued to the box," said Zbrill.

"If you doubt it come and try to pull us off," said Zbroll.

The angry monster sprang forward a little way and then fell back, writhing like a wounded serpent in the agonies of death, uttering a screech that seemed to find ten thousand echoes in the desert. And then it vanished from the sight of the brave little men as completely as if it had melted into the invisible air surrounding them.

And now I am going to tell you how it was that Zbrill and Zbroll came to be guarding the box in the middle of the desert.

A thousand leagues away Bhagon, the great magician, who had sent the dragon which had been just foiled in his endeavours to drive the guardians of the steel box from their charge, was raging in his necromantic chamber. He was the sworn servant of King Malicon, who was the sworn enemy of Gracinda, one of the best as she was the youngest and most beautiful Queen on earth, because she would not consent to be his wife, holding him and his ways in utterest aversion.

No bad man ever made a good King, and Malicon was a bad Prince before ascending the throne of his father. That his people had not the least love for him was natural. The revenues of the State were used by him simply to minister to his pleasures. But little by little these revenues fell away, and his treasury could no longer be replenished, even though the hardest means were employed by him to wring taxes from his subjects. It was in this strait that he turned his eyes on Gracinda, whose kingdom was widely known to be one of the most prosperous on earth, its well-being and happiness being certain so long as it remained in possession of an amulet

or charm of wondrous power, which was kept in a steel box, deposited in an adamantine chamber built in the foundation of the royal palace, and guarded every minute of the day and night by a hundred officers, the bravest in the Queen's army.

Before his misdeeds had brought him so low King Malicon could have gathered an army together and overrun the kingdom of Queen Gracinda, and compelled her to hand over to him the amulet which would transfer her prosperity to him; but he could no longer count on the assistance of his army, which had ceased to trust him. His last resource he saw was to seek the aid of the magician Bhagon, who he knew would be ready and willing to do anything in his power to injure Queen Gracinda, who had banished him from her kingdom on account of his ill-doings.

The power of this magician was terrible. There was hardly any act of wickedness that he was not able to accomplish. He had even subjected several fairies to his mischievous will, and he took delight in the exercise of his evil skill. Therefore he at once fell in with the King's wishes to deprive Queen Gracinda of her amulet the moment they were made known to him, though he did not disguise from himself that the task was one of the most difficult he had ever undertaken, because the young Queen was protected by a fairy whose power he had already vainly tried to overcome.

Had he known, or even suspected, that this good fairy regarded with alarm the extent of his evil powers he would have thrilled with delight. It was not on her own

account, but on that of the young Queen over whom she watched affectionately, that she was afraid of what Bhagon might do; and her fears were greatly increased when she found that he was engaged by King Malicon to get possession of the Queen's amulet for him. She had herself made the adamantine safe in which it was secured; but she was haunted by a dread lest she might have overlooked some essential to its perfect security, and that this oversight might have been discovered by Bhagon: for if that were so she knew that he would be sure to find means to overcome the watchfulness of the hundred officers devoted to the guardianship of the treasure.

It was needless to alarm the Queen by revealing to her the danger; so she determined to act alone and to remove the amulet to a spot in the centre of a desert which she imagined was known only to herself, confiding its custody to two of her heart-and-soul devoted servants, Zbrill and Zbroll, whom she had found in the depths of a forest when they were newly-born infants, whose parents, terrified by the strange shape of their offspring, had put them out of sight. But she had not succeeded in eluding the watchfulness of Bhagon, and it was only the extreme power of the charm which she had cast about her two faithful little servants that had prevented him from carrying off the amulet in triumph.

Every hour King Malicon sent to him impatient messages, demanding to know what he was doing and how long it would be before he delivered the amulet. Bhagon put him off with as many excuses as he could

invent; but at last the King's impatience would no longer brook restraint, and he ordered the magician to be haled before him.

"You call yourself a great magician!" he cried; "but I begin to believe that you are nothing better than a contemptible impostor!"

"Your Majesty is unjust," said Bhagon, "as you would recognise if I could reveal to you the stupendousness of the difficulties I am overcoming in your service. Before I can lay hands on the amulet I have promised to secure for your Majesty I have got to overpower a fairy who has hardly her equal!"

"But you have told me that you have half-a-dozen to pit against her!"

"As yet I have not been able to bring their united strength to bear upon her."

"Do it, then, or—take good heed of what I now tell you—magician or no magician, if you fail to bring me that amulet before the sun goes down to-day, I'll have your head!"

Bhagon felt strongly inclined to retort, "I can a thousand times more easily have yours, if it were of any use to me," but he said nothing, and only bowed his way out of the angry King's presence.

When he got back to his home he found some one awaiting him in the darkest corner of his necromantic laboratory, where, keen as his eyes were, he could not make out the form of his visitor.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"Your obedient fairy servant, Azaleth," a voice



J. E. PHILLIPS
18...

“YOU ARE NOTHING BETTER THAN A CONTEMPTIBLE IMPOSTOR”

answered, which he at once recognised as that of the beautiful agent he had sent to tempt Zbrill and Zbroll to betray their fealty to their mistress.

“Why are you hiding yourself?” he asked suspiciously.

“So that, in consenting to do as I advise you, you may not think you are being biased by the sight of my beauty.”

“What would you have me do? You know that I have not a moment to spare from devising means for keeping the King from becoming desperate.”

“The means I would help you to is to get possession of the box with the amulet it contains,” said the voice.

“Why did you fail?” demanded the magician.

“The power of Melusina was too great for me to overcome; no one besides yourself is powerful enough to get the better of it. Now, after your failure, she thinks you will make no further attempt, and that gives you your best opportunity for triumphing over her.”

“Your suggestion is a good one!” cried the magician.

“Act upon it, then, without a moment's delay,” cried the voice. “The two poor little wretches who guard the treasure are weary with watching, and will not be able to resist your power for an instant.”

“My beautiful Azaeth!” cried the magician exultingly, “if your words turn out to be true I will give you your freedom the moment I set hands on that precious box—which, perhaps, I shall not make over to King Malicon after all.”

“You know the exact spot in the desert whither Melusina has had it carried?”

"I could find it in the dark if need be; it is just where the sand grains mix—twenty yellow and twenty red!"

"How I shall triumph over Melusina!" cried the voice out of the dark corner of the laboratory, following the words with a silvery laugh.

With an eagerness only known to malicious magicians Bhagon snatched up his wand, the prime source of his necromantic powers, and rushed from the room—seemed to vanish from it, indeed, so swift was his departure; and the thousand leagues that lay between him and the spot in the desert to which he was bound were passed over at a speed no less. It was midnight when he arrived there.

"Are you awake?" asked Zbrill of his brother, whom he could not see at the end of the steel box.

"Wide awake," replied Zbroll.

"This heap of sand about us makes nice warm bed-clothes——"

"And follows every movement you make without needing to be pulled!"

"I wonder whether we shall care for them much when we each get the extra eye and ear our mistress has promised us for taking care of this box?" mused Zbrill.

"Oh, she would not have promised them to us if she hadn't been quite sure that we should like them," said Zbroll.

"She *is* a good mistress," said Zbrill.

"I don't believe there's a better," said Zbroll.

"And I don't believe any mistress could have two better servants!" said a voice that seemed to come from

the lips of a person seated on the box between them ; though, when they each put out a hand to feel for the speaker, only their own two hands came together.

“Hush!” said the voice, which now seemed to have sunk into the heap of sand in which they were half buried.

The next moment they felt themselves nearly knocked off the box by the contact of somebody who had, apparently, rushed upon them out of the darkness full tilt, without being able to stop himself in his headlong course. The two little men could not see what had happened, but it seemed to them that, whoever the person was, the force of his concussion with the steel box and themselves had served to hurl him back several yards and prostrate him painfully on the sand, for they could hear him groaning.

“Fiends! Where has my wand flown out of my hand?” he cried. “If Melusina were not a thousand leagues away I should again fail in my errand!”

“Then your failure is perfectly assured!” answered a voice in the air directly over his head; “for Melusina is not only here, but holds you powerless by the magic of your own wand!”

At that moment the sky, which had been as dark as it ever can be at midnight, became lit with the rays of a myriad of stars, and in the silver light with which they filled the atmosphere Bhagon beheld his conqueror, resplendent in the joy of her triumph, while like a maimed reptile he lay at her mercy helplessly.

“Be merciful!” he gasped.

“It is my purpose to be so,” replied Melusina; “merciful to all who are or who would be in danger

from your wickedness, if I did not for ever end your power to injure them."

As she spoke she drew a line on the sand about his body with the point of the magic wand she held in her hand, and when the circle was completed the sand within the space it marked sank down, down, bearing the magician with it to the middle of the earth, while the sand from the edges of the gulf dashed grains by grains, twenty yellow and twenty red—following him, until nothing was left to mark his grave but a shallow hollow, which the first passing wind would obliterate.

Before the sun's rays fell upon the marble front of Queen Gracinda's palace the good fairy had restored the steel box with its precious contents to its adamantine place of security, so that the peace and prosperity of the Queen and her subjects were never for a moment checked in their happy course.

As for King Malicon, after passing a sleepless night, as soon as the first signs of dawn were visible he sent for Bhagon; but nobody at the magician's house knew what had become of him, nor did anybody ever afterwards know—excepting the good fairy Melusina and her trustworthy little servants, to whom she restored whatever of form and good looks Nature had for some inscrutable reason withheld from them.

When the news of Bhagon's unaccountable disappearance was communicated to King Malicon he fairly screamed with rage, and at last, in his fury, he dashed his head against the wall with so much force that he fractured his skull and killed himself on the spot: an ending of his evil career



THE SAND WITHIN THE SPACE MARKED SANK DOWN

which not one of his subjects—even amongst those who had passed for being his friends—pretended to regard as a national misfortune.

His throne passed to one of his nephews whom he had never seen, the young Prince Ernestus having been carefully reared and educated far from his uncle's disreputable Court. The people entered upon a new life, and in the course of a few years forgot, in the enjoyment of peace and growing prosperity, the bad experiences through which they had gone in the past. And a greater good was yet in store for them.

Between the Court of Queen Gracinda and that of King Ernestus an intimacy had speedily come about, for the young King was soon found to be everything that was estimable and desirable as a neighbour and something more by Queen Gracinda; and when it became known that she had consented to give her hand to him the joy of the peoples over whom they ruled was great beyond expression.

On their wedding day, and as a solemn conclusion to the magnificent ceremonial which accompanied it, the steel box with its seven strong steel bands, and locked with its seven strong steel locks, was borne in the midst of a splendid procession—headed by the fairy Melusina, whose train was borne by Zbrill and Zbroll, to whom she had given all the advantages of natural form and good looks denied to them at their birth—composed of all the representative orders in the kingdom, canopied by a cloud of gorgeous banners and passing through a music-laden air,

On the procession reaching the cathedral where the royal pair had been married, the box was carried to the



upper step of the grand entrance and placed upon a carpet of cloth-of-gold. And then the Queen's High Chamberlain produced from a golden casket, adorned with

priceless jewels, seven golden keys, and with these undid the seven strong steel locks, while the cathedral organ made the sunlight that fell on all without vibrate with heavenly music.

Not a sound escaped from the lips of any one of the countless thousands of onlookers, and every syllable of the words spoken by the venerable High Chancellor reached the farthest limits of the assemblage as he said:—

“In the name of our beloved Queen and of her beloved people!”

That said, he unlocked the steel box and raised the lid, and from the inside took a velvet-covered casket and opened it, displaying to the joyful multitude three linked golden hearts, each having on its side a word, traced in diamonds of dazzling brilliancy.

And the three words were: “Justice—Kindness—Energy”—forming together Queen Gracinda’s amulet—the guide and protector of her reign, and the source of her people’s prosperity and happiness.

THE STORY OF LITTLE MUCK

THE STORY OF LITTLE MUCK

IN my dear native town of Nicea, lived a man whom they called Little Muck. I can still remember him very well, though I was very young in those days; more especially because I was once thrashed nearly to death by my father on his account. This same Little Muck was quite an old fellow when I knew him, though he was not more than three or four feet high. Apart from that he presented an extraordinary appearance, since his body, for all it was so small and slender, must needs carry a head far larger and heavier than the heads of other folk. He lived all alone in a large house, and even did his own cooking; moreover, not a soul in the town would have known whether he were alive or dead—for he only went out once a month—if it had not been for the prodigious smoke that arose from his house at mid-day. But he was often to be seen in the evening walking to and fro on the roof of his house, though looking up from the street one might have thought that it was only his great head that was perambulating independently on the roof. I and my companions were bad boys, ready enough to tease and ridicule any one, and so it was always a great treat for us when Little Muck went out. On the appointed day

we would assemble in front of his house and wait till he appeared. As soon as the door opened and the big head with the still bigger turban peered round the corner, to be followed by the rest of the body clad in a shabby little cloak, wide trousers, and a broad girdle from which dangled a long dagger, so long that you could not tell whether the dagger was attached to Muck or Muck to the dagger—when Muck emerged like this, the air resounded with our merriment, we threw our caps into the air and danced about him like mad creatures. Little Muck, however, greeted us with a serious inclination of the head and went his way down the street with slow steps, shuffling as he went, for he wore large roomy slippers, such as I have never seen before or since.

We boys used to run after him, and keep on shouting, "Little Muck, Little Muck!" We had a mocking rhyme too, which we used to sing in his honour now and then. It ran like this:—

"Little Muck, Little Muck,
Of a mansion you can boast,
Leave it once a month at most ;
You're a mannikin of worth
Though your head has such a girth,
Only just turn round and look,
Try and catch us, Little Muck."

We had often played this kind of game on him, and to my shame I must confess that I was the worst of the lot, for I often used to pull him by the cloak, and once I went so far as to tread upon his great slippers from behind, so that he fell down. This seemed to me to be

the best joke in the world, but the joke lost its point when I saw Little Muck proceeding towards my father's house. He went straight in, and remained there for some time. I hid myself near the house door, and saw Muck come out again escorted by my father, who held him ceremoniously by the hand and parted from him at the door with many signs of respect. I did not feel at all comfortable, and remained for a long time in my place of concealment. But at last hunger, which I dreaded more than blows, drove me forth, and, dispirited and with hanging head, I entered my father's presence. "You have been insulting the good Muck, as I understand," said he very gravely. "I will tell you the story of this Muck and you will certainly never ridicule him again; but in any event you will first get the usual allowance." The usual allowance was five-and-twenty strokes, which he used to count up with great exactitude. Thereupon he took his long pipe stem, unscrewing the amber mouthpiece, and set about me more vigorously than ever before.

When the tale of five-and-twenty was complete, he bade me pay attention, and told me about Little Muck.

Little Muck's father, whose proper name was Mukrah, was a distinguished but poor man here in Nicea. He lived just the same kind of hermit life as his son. Muck, however, he could not abide, being ashamed of his stunted growth, and so he let him grow up absolutely without education. In his sixteenth year Little Muck was still a thoughtless child, and his father, a serious man,

was always finding fault with him for being so silly and foolish, when he ought long ago to have put off his baby-shoes.

But one day the old man had a bad fall, of which indeed he died, leaving Little Muck poor and ignorant. His hard-hearted relatives, to whom the dead man was more in debt than he could pay, drove the boy from the house, and told him to go out into the world and seek his fortune. Little Muck replied that he was quite ready to start, but begged before he went to be allowed to have his father's clothes, and his request was granted. His father had been a tall, powerfully built man, and so the clothes did not fit. But Muck soon found a way out of the difficulty. He cut off the extra length, and then put on the clothes; but he appears to have forgotten that he ought at the same time to have taken something off the width, and hence the extraordinary garb in which he is to be seen to this very day. The great turban, the broad girdle, the wide breeches, the little blue cloak, are all legacies from his father, which he has worn ever since. However, he stuck his father's long Damascus dagger into his belt, grasped his stick, and walked out of the house.

With a light heart he journeyed all day, for he had really set out to seek his fortune. Never a broken crock did he see glittering on the ground in the sun without putting it into his pocket, in the belief that it would turn into the purest diamond. If he saw the dome of a mosque glowing like fire, or a lake flashing like a mirror in the distance, he would hurry towards it full of

delight, thinking that he was coming to some enchanted country. But alas! these phantoms disappeared at his approach, and all too soon fatigue and a craving stomach reminded him that he was still in the land of mortal men. In this way he travelled for two days, in hunger and distress, despairing of finding his fortune. The fruits of the field were his only food, and the hard earth his lodging. On the morning of the third day from some rising ground he descried a large town. The Crescent was shining brightly on its battlements, and gay flags, which seemed to beckon Little Muck onwards, were floating on the roofs. Overcome with astonishment he stood and surveyed the town and its surroundings. "Yes, there Little Muck will find his fortune," he said to himself, and in spite of his fatigue he jumped for joy, "there or nowhere." Collecting all his energies, he set out for the town. But near as it seemed he did not reach it before mid-day; for his little legs well-nigh refused their office, and he was often obliged to sit down to rest under the shade of a palm. At length he arrived at the gate. He arranged his cloak, wound his turban more gracefully, spread his girdle wider, and stuck his long dagger at a sharper angle. Then he wiped the dust from his shoes, grasped his stick, and marched bravely in at the gate.

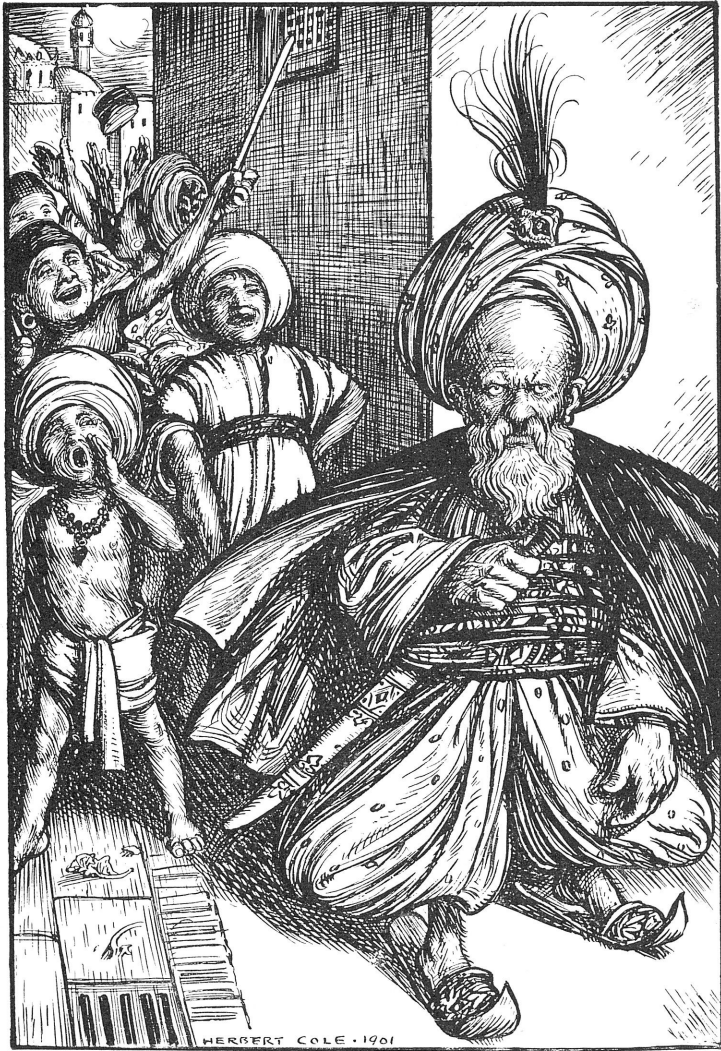
He had already traversed several streets, but nowhere was a door thrown open to him, nowhere did a voice call to him, as he had anticipated, "Little Muck, come in, eat and drink and rest your weary feet." He was looking up with longing eyes, not for the first time, at a large

and fine house, when a window opened, and an old woman looked out and called in a sing-song voice :—

“Come up, come up
And take your sup.
I've laid the cloth,
Just taste the broth !
Up, neighbours, up
And take your sup !”

The door of the house flew open, and Muck saw a number of dogs and cats enter. He stood for some moments in perplexity, unable to make up his mind to accept the invitation ; but at last he plucked up courage and went into the house. Before him there went in a pair of kittens, and he resolved to follow them, thinking that they might possibly know the way to the kitchen better than he.

When Muck had mounted the stairs he met the old woman who had been looking out of the window. She looked at him closely and demanded his business. “You were inviting everybody to partake of your broth,” responded Little Muck, “and as I am very hungry I have come in with the rest.” The old woman laughed and said, “Where do you come from then, my funny fellow ? The whole town knows that I cook for nobody except my dear cats, though now and then I invite some company for them from the neighbourhood, as you see.” Little Muck told the old woman how ill things had gone with him since his father's death, and begged her for that day to let him feed with her cats. The old woman, who was pleased by the little fellow's frank account of himself,



THE AIR RESOUNDED WITH OUR MERRIMENT

allowed him to be her guest and gave him plenty to eat and drink. When he had eaten his fill and felt stronger, the woman contemplated him for some time and said at length, "Little Muck, remain in my service; you will have little to do and be well treated." Little Muck, who had enjoyed his cats' broth, consented and became on the spot the servant of Madam Ahavzi. He had an easy but curious place. Madam Ahavzi had two male and four female cats, whose coats it was Little Muck's business to comb and rub with precious ointment every morning. When the woman was out he had to look after the cats, to place their bowls before them when they ate, and to lay them at night on silken pillows and wrap them in velvet coverlets. There were also a few little dogs in the house which he had to attend to, but not nearly so much fuss was made with them as with the cats, which Madam Ahavzi treated as though they were her own children. For the rest Muck led as solitary a life as he had done in his father's house, for except for the woman he did not see a creature all day but dogs and cats. Things went very well with Little Muck for some time; he always had enough to eat and little to do, and the woman seemed to be very well satisfied with him. But by degrees the cats became troublesome. When the old woman had gone out they raced round the room as though they were possessed, threw everything into confusion, and broke many valuable ornaments which stood in their way. But as soon as they heard the woman coming up the stairs they crept back on to their pillows and twitched their tails with pleasure, as though nothing

had happened. Madam Ahavzi would fall into a passion when she saw her room in such disorder, and laid all the blame on Muck. He might protest his innocence as much as he pleased; she had more confidence in her cats, who looked so innocent, than she had in her servant.

Little Muck was very unhappy not to have found his fortune even here, and made up his mind to leave Madam Ahavzi's service. But as he had had experience on his first journey of how badly one fares without money, he resolved somehow or other to get the wages which his mistress was always promising him, but had never paid. Now there existed in Madam Ahavzi's house a room which was always locked, and the inside of which he had never seen. But he had often heard the woman rummaging about in the room, and would have liked, for the life of him, to know what she had got stowed away there. So when he began to think about his travelling expenses, it occurred to him that perhaps the woman's hoard might be hidden there. But the door was always securely locked, and so he could not get at the treasure.

One morning, when Madam Ahavzi had gone out, one of the little dogs, which had always been treated by her in stepmotherly fashion, but whose favour he had completely won by all kinds of friendly attentions, came and plucked him by his wide trousers, behaving as though he wanted Muck to follow him. Muck, who was fond of playing with the little dog, went after him, and, lo! and behold! the dog led him into Madame Ahavzi's bedroom and to a little door there which he had never noticed before. The door was half open. The dog went on and

Muck followed him, and was surprised and delighted to find himself in the very chamber which had long been the goal of his desire. He looked carefully about to see if he could find any money, but could discover nothing but old clothes and quaintly shaped vessels scattered about in confusion. One of these vessels in particular attracted his attention. It was made of crystal and had beautiful figures engraved upon it. He took it up and held it in different positions. But, oh! horror! he had not noticed that it had a cover which was set but lightly on the top. The cover fell to the ground and broke into a thousand fragments.

For a while Little Muck stood paralysed with fear. Now his fate was decided. He must escape at once, or the old woman would beat him to death. No sooner was he determined upon flight than he set himself to look about him once more to see if there might not be something among the woman's effects that he could make use of on his journey. His eyes fell upon a prodigiously large pair of slippers. True, they were not beautiful, but his own were quite unfit to make the journey with him, and moreover these others rather attracted him on account of their size, for if he once had these upon his feet any one would see, it was to be hoped, that he had put off his baby-shoes. So he rapidly drew off his little slippers, and put on the big ones. It seemed a pity, too, that a walking-stick with a finely carved lion's head should be standing idle in the corner, so he took that with him as well and hurried from the chamber. Next he went rapidly to his room, put on his cloak, placed his father's turban upon his head, stuck

his dagger into his belt, and ran as fast as ever his feet would carry him out of the house and out of the town. Outside the town he kept on running farther and farther, for fear of the old woman, until he was well-nigh spent with fatigue. So fast he had never gone in all his life, indeed, he felt as though he were quite unable to stop by reason of some invisible force that was hurrying him along. At length he perceived that there must be something strange the matter with his slippers, for they kept shooting along and dragging him with them. He tried everything he could think of to stop, but to no purpose. Then as a last resource he called to himself as one calls to a horse, "Woa—woa! Stop—woa!" whereupon the slippers stopped, and Muck threw himself down exhausted upon the ground.

The slippers pleased him immensely. After all he had earned something by his service, which might help him along his way in the world to make his fortune. But in spite of his delight he slept for sheer fatigue; for Little Muck's small body, having so heavy a head to carry, could not hold out very long. In his dreams there appeared to him the little dog which had helped him to the slippers in Dame Ahavzi's house, who said to him, "My dear Muck, you do not seem to have grasped the proper use of the slippers. Know then that if while wearing them you turn round three times on your heel you can take flight in any direction you please. Moreover, by the help of the stick you can find treasure, for wherever gold is buried it will strike three times upon the ground, and for silver twice."

This was what Little Muck dreamt, and when he awoke

he pondered over the extraordinary dream, and determined to put it to the test as soon as he could. He put on the slippers, raised one foot, and began to revolve upon his heel. Now, any one who has ever tried to perform this feat three times in succession in a monstrously large slipper will not be surprised that Little Muck did not succeed at once, especially if one takes into account the fact that the weight of his head overbalanced him first on one side and then on the other.

Several times the poor little fellow fell slap on his nose, but he did not allow himself to be deterred from renewing the attempt, and at length he succeeded. He revolved on his heel wheel-fashion, wished himself into the nearest large town, and hey, presto! the slippers pointed their course up into the air, whisked through the clouds with the speed of the wind, and before Little Muck had time to think what was happening to him, he found himself in a great market-place where a number of stalls had been erected and countless men were running to and fro intent upon their business. He went about among the people, but judged it more prudent to betake himself to some of the less frequented streets, for in the market a man would stumble over his slippers and nearly throw him down, or he found himself prodding some one or other with his projecting dagger, with the result that he narrowly escaped a beating.

Little Muck now began to consider seriously what he could do to earn a little money. He had, it is true, a stick which could discover hidden treasure for him; but where on the spur of the moment was he likely to



THE USUAL ALLOWANCE WAS FIVE-AND-TWENTY STROKES

find a place where gold or silver was buried? In case of necessity he might perhaps have hired himself out for exhibition, but for that he was too proud. At last his swiftness of foot occurred to him as an idea. Perhaps, he thought, my slippers might earn me a livelihood, and he resolved to take service as an express messenger. Then he bethought him that the King of the town would probably pay the best price for this kind of work, and so he inquired his way to the palace. At the door of the palace stood a guard who asked him what business he had there. Upon his answering that he was in search of a place, he was directed to the overseer of the slaves, to whom he proffered his request, and begged him to find him a place among the royal messengers. The overseer took his measure in a glance from head to foot and said, "What! you with your tiny little feet want to be enrolled among the King's messengers? Take yourself off! I am not here to gossip with every fool." But Little Muck assured him that he was quite in earnest about his proposal, and that he was willing to back himself for a wager against the fastest of the lot. The whole thing seemed simply ludicrous to the overseer. He told him to hold himself in readiness to run off his wager in the evening, conducted him to the kitchen, and took care that he was properly supplied with meat and drink. Then he betook himself to the King, and told him of the little man and his offer. The King was a jolly soul, and was delighted that the overseer of the slaves had kept Little Muck to make sport. He told him to make his preparations on a large meadow behind the

castle, so that the race could be seen with comfort by the whole of his court, and moreover gave him instructions to take good care of the dwarf. The King explained to the Princes and Princesses the exhibition they were to expect in the evening, and they in turn passed on the message to their servants, so that as evening drew on great excitement prevailed, and everything on legs streamed out to the meadow where stands had been erected to get a good view of the swaggering dwarf's running.

As soon as the King and his sons and daughters had taken up their position on the platform, Little Muck stepped forward on to the meadow and made an extremely elegant bow to the high functionaries assembled. As the little man made his appearance a general shout of derision rent the air. Such a figure had never been seen there before. The stunted body with the prodigious head, the little cloak and the baggy breeches, the long dagger in the broad belt, the tiny feet in the wide slippers—no, it was altogether so droll a sight that no one could resist a hearty laugh. Little Muck, however, did not allow himself to be put out by the laughter. He bore himself proudly, resting on his stick, and awaited the arrival of his antagonist. The overseer of the slaves had, by Muck's express desire, chosen the fastest runner, who now came forward, placed himself at the little man's side, and both stood waiting for the signal. Thereupon the Princess, as had been arranged, made a motion with her veil, and like two arrows shot at the same mark the two runners dashed away across the meadow.

At the start Muck's opponent had a distinct advantage,

but Muck on his slipper-car followed close upon his heels, overtook him, and had been a long time at the goal before the other reached it panting for breath. For a few moments the spectators stood spell-bound with wonder and astonishment; but after the King had been the first to clap his hands the multitude raised a great shout, and every one cried, "Long life to Little Muck, the winner of the wager."

Meanwhile Little Muck had been led forward. He threw himself at the King's feet and said, "Most mighty Monarch, this is but a trifling proof of my skill that I have just given you. May it please you to allow me to be enrolled among your messengers." But the King replied, "No, you shall be my private courier and always be about my person, dear Muck; you shall have a salary of one hundred gold pieces a year, and shall take your meals at the table of my highest servants."

So Little Muck imagined that at last he had found the fortune he had so long been seeking, and felt proportionately elated. Moreover, he enjoyed the special favour of the King, who always employed him on his most urgent and secret missions, which Muck executed with the utmost accuracy and inconceivable despatch.

But the King's other servants were not well disposed towards him, because they did not at all like to see themselves supplanted in their master's favour by a dwarf who was no good at anything but running. They therefore contrived many plots to ruin him, all of which failed because of the great confidence which the King reposed in the Chief of his Personal Messengers—for to this dignity Muck had already risen in so short a time.

These intrigues to his prejudice did not escape Muck, but he had no idea of revenging himself. He had much too good a heart for that. On the contrary he cast about for some means of making himself indispensable and popular with his enemies. His thoughts turned at once to his little staff, which during his period of prosperity he had quite neglected. If he could find treasure, he thought, these gentlemen would certainly regard him more favourably.

Now he had often heard that the father of the present King had buried much of his treasure at a time when an enemy had invaded his country. It was said, moreover, that he had died without having been able to impart his secret to his son. Thereafter, Muck always carried his stick with him, in the hope some time or other of passing over the place where the old king's money was buried. One evening chance had led him to a remote part of the castle garden, which he rarely visited, when all of a sudden he felt the little stick tremble in his hand, and it struck thrice upon the ground. He knew well enough the meaning of the sign, so he drew his dagger, made some marks on the surrounding trees, and crept back to the castle. There he obtained a spade, and waited for nightfall to carry out his design.

The treasure digging caused Little Muck much more trouble than he had anticipated. His arms were altogether too weak, and his spade was big and heavy. He might have worked for a matter of two hours before he had dug down a couple of feet. At last, however, he struck upon something hard, which rang like iron. He went

on digging all the harder, and soon brought to light a big iron lid. He clambered down himself into the hole to find out what was covered by the lid, and found, sure enough, a large pot full of gold pieces. But his puny strength was not equal to the task of lifting the pot, so he put into his pockets and his belt as much gold as he could carry, and after filling his cloak as well, and covering up the rest again very carefully, he carried his haul away on his back. If he had not had the slippers on his feet he would certainly never have got away from the spot, so heavily was he weighted by his burden of gold; but he reached his room unobserved, and there hid the gold under the cushions of his sofa.

Finding himself in possession of all this gold, Little Muck thought that matters would take a turn for the better, and that he would gain many friends and adherents among his enemies at court; from which circumstance it is easy to see that the good Muck can have had no education to speak of, for otherwise he would never have expected to make true friends by the agency of gold. Alas! that he did not then and there put on his slippers and make himself scarce, cloak, gold, and all.

The gold which Little Muck thenceforward distributed with lavish hands, aroused the envy of the other court servants. The head cook, Ahuli, said, "He is a coiner." Achmet, the overseer of the slaves, said, "He has wheedled it out of the King." But Archaz, the treasurer, his bitterest enemy, who was himself not free from the suspicion of dipping now and then into the King's chest, said straight out, "He has stolen it." To make certain of their game, they con-



HE WHISKED THROUGH THE CLOUDS WITH THE SPEED OF THE WIND

certed a plan, and one day, Korchuz, the chief butler, presented himself with sad and downcast mien before the eyes of the King. So conspicuous was the melancholy of his demeanour that the King asked him what ailed him. "Ah!" was the reply, "I am sad, because I have lost the favour of my King." "What nonsense are you talking, friend Korchuz?" rejoined the King. "Since when have I withdrawn the sunshine of my favour from you?" The chief butler replied that the King loaded his chief messenger with gold, but had nothing to give his poor faithful servants.

At this intelligence the King was considerably surprised. He had the story of Little Muck's liberality related to him, and the conspirators had no difficulty in bringing him to the conclusion that Muck must somehow or other have stolen the money out of his treasury. This turn of affairs was very grateful to the treasurer, who might otherwise have had some difficulty in presenting his accounts. The King at once gave orders to have a strict watch kept upon all Little Muck's movements, in order, if possible, to catch him in the act. Now it so happened that on the very night following this unlucky day, Little Muck, finding that his generosity had well-nigh drained his purse, took his spade and crept off to the castle garden, to make a fresh draft upon his hidden treasure. He was followed at a distance by the guard, with Head Cook Ahuli and Treasurer Archaz at their head, and at the very moment when he was transferring the gold from the pot into his cloak they took him by surprise, bound him and carried him straight off to the King. The latter, who would in

any case have been very cross at the interruption of his slumbers, received his poor chief messenger very ungraciously, and put him at once upon his trial. Moreover, the pot had been dug up out of the ground and placed with the spade and the cloak full of gold at the King's feet; and the treasurer declared that he and the guard had surprised Muck in the act of burying the pot and the gold in the ground.

Hereupon, the King questioned the accused as to the truth of the story, and where he had got the gold from that he was burying. Conscious of his innocence Little Muck asseverated that he had found the pot in the garden, and that he was not going to bury it but to dig it up.

Every one present laughed heartily at this excuse, but the King, highly incensed at the little man's apparent effrontery, exclaimed: "How, wretch! after having robbed your King, are you going to impose upon him in this stupid and barefaced manner? Treasurer Archaz! I call upon you to say whether you identify this sum of gold with the amount that is missing from the treasury."

The treasurer replied that he had no doubt about the matter; so much and more beside had been missing for some time from the royal treasury, and he was prepared to swear that this was the stolen money.

Thereupon the King gave orders for Little Muck to be strictly confined in chains and taken to the tower: but the money he handed over to the treasurer, to be restored to the treasury. Delighted with the happy issue of the affair the treasurer withdrew to count the glittering gold coins at home; but the villain had omitted to point

out, that in the bottom of the pot lay a note which said "The enemy has overrun my country, and so I am hiding here a part of my treasure. Whoever may chance to find it, may his King's curse light upon him, if he do not immediately deliver it to my son—King Sadi."

In his prison Little Muck was a prey to gloomy reflections. He knew that theft of the King's property was punishable with death, and yet he did not wish to divulge to the King the secret of the staff for fear of being deprived both of it and of his slippers. His slippers, alas! could not be of any service to him, since being closely fastened by chains to the wall he was unable, despite his most strenuous exertions, to turn round on his heel. But when on the second day he was informed that the death penalty had been pronounced, bethinking him that it was better to live without the magic staff than to die with it in his possession, he begged for a private audience of the King and revealed to him his secret. At first the King gave no credit to his confession, but Little Muck promised to submit to a test, if the King would give him an assurance that his life should be spared. The King therefore pledged him his word to that effect, had some gold buried in the ground without Muck's knowledge, and bade him try to find it with the help of his staff. In a few moments he had found it, for the staff tapped thrice unmistakably upon the ground. Then the King perceived that his treasurer had deceived him, and sent him, after the manner of the East, a silken cord with which to strangle himself. But to Little Muck he said: "It is true that I have promised you your life,



THE KING EMPLOYED HIM ON HIS MOST SECRET MISSIONS

but it seems to me that this secret of the staff is not the only one of which you are possessed; and therefore you will remain in perpetual imprisonment unless you tell me how you manage to run so fast." Little Muck, whom one night in the tower had cured of all desire to prolong his incarceration, admitted that the whole of his art lay in the slippers; but he did not confide to the King the secret of turning round three times upon the heel. The King drew on the slippers himself to make the experiment, and raced round and round the garden like a madman. Very soon he wanted to stop, but he had no notion how to bring the slippers to a stand-still; and Little Muck, who could not deny himself this small revenge, let him go on running till he fell down in a faint.

When the King was restored to consciousness he was terribly annoyed with Little Muck for having made him run till he was so completely exhausted. "I have pledged my word," he said, "to present you with life and liberty; but if you have not left my country within twelve hours I will have you hanged." The slippers and the staff moreover he had put away in his treasure chamber.

As poor as ever Muck made his way out of the country, cursing the folly that had deluded him into thinking that he could cut a fine figure at court. The country from which he was being expelled was fortunately not large, and so at the end of eight hours he found himself at the frontier, notwithstanding that walking was a sore trial to him after being accustomed to his dear slippers.

When he had crossed the border he left the main road, intending to seek out the most impenetrable recesses of

the woods, and there take up his abode, since he was at odds with all mankind. In the depth of the forest he came upon a spot which seemed to suit admirably with the resolution he had formed. A clear stream, bordered with large and shady fig trees, and a stretch of soft turf, attracted him, and here he threw himself on the ground fully determined to take no more food, but to await the approach of death. His mind still occupied with the gloomy contemplation of death he fell asleep; but when he awoke and the pangs of hunger began to assail him, he reflected that death by starvation was a disagreeable business, and looked about him to see whether he could not find something to eat.

Ripe and delicious figs were hanging upon the tree under which he had slept. He got up to gather some, enjoyed them immensely, and then went down to the brook to quench his thirst. But imagine his horror when the water showed him the reflection of his head adorned with two enormous ears and a long coarse nose. He clutched at his ears in dismay, and sure enough they were over half a yard long.

"I deserve to have asses' ears," cried he, "for having trampled my fortune under foot, like an ass." He wandered about among the trees, and when he felt hungry again, he was obliged once more to have recourse to the fig trees, apart from which there was nothing eatable to be found. While he was engaged upon his second portion of figs, it occurred to him that perhaps he might be able to find room for his ears under his great turban, so as to look a little less ridiculous, and on making the experi-

ment he found that his ears had vanished. He ran back at once to the brook to reassure himself on the subject, and sure enough, so it was. His ears had resumed their former shape, and the long, hideous nose was gone. And now he understood how it had happened. From the first fig tree he had acquired the long nose and ears; the second had relieved him of them, and he recognised with glee that a kind fate was once more putting into his grasp the means to success. So he gathered as much fruit as he could carry from each tree, and returned to the country he had just left. At the first village he came to he disguised himself by changing his clothes, and then proceeded on his way to the town where the aforesaid king dwelt, arriving there in due course.

It was just the time of year when ripe fruit is rather scarce. So Little Muck stationed himself at the door of the palace, where previous experience had taught him that delicacies such as his were bought by the head cook for the royal table. Muck had not sat there long when he saw the head cook coming across the court. He sampled the stock of the different sellers who had presented themselves at the door of the palace, until finally his eye rested on Muck's little basket. "Ah!" said he, "a rare morsel which will mightily please his Majesty! How much do you want for the whole basket?" Little Muck named a moderate price, and they soon came to terms. The head cook handed the basket to a slave and passed on; but Little Muck made off, having a shrewd suspicion that when the calamity made its appearance on the heads of the court circle it was more than likely that

the salesman of the fruit would be sought out for punishment.

The King was in very gay mood at dinner, and complimented his head cook over and over again upon his good cooking and the care with which he always selected the rarest dainties for his table. But the cook, conscious of the choice morsel he had in reserve, merely wore a pleasant smile and answered oracularly, "It is not all over yet," or "All's well that ends well," so that the curiosity of the Princesses was aroused to know what surprise he had in store. But when he produced the beautiful and seductive figs a general exclamation of surprise burst from the lips of all present. "How ripe, how appetising," cried the King. "Master cook, you are a capital fellow, and deserving of our special favour." So speaking, the King, whose habit it was to be very sparing with such delicacies, distributed the figs with his own hand all round the table. Each Prince and each Princess got two, the ladies-in-waiting, the Viziers and Agas one apiece, while the remainder he reserved for himself and began to swallow them with evident enjoyment.

"But, good heavens! How is it that you look so odd, father," suddenly exclaimed Princess Amarza. They all looked at the King in amazement; monstrous ears were hanging from his head and a length of nose stretched down below his chin. In astonishment and horror they then turned to contemplate each other. One and all, they were attired in greater or less degree in the same head-dress.

Imagine the horror of the court! They sent in all

directions for all the physicians in the town, who came in crowds and prescribed pills and draughts. But the ears and the noses remained. One of the Princes was operated upon, but the ears grew again.

In the retreat to which he had withdrawn Muck had heard the whole story and recognised that it was now time to act. With the money he had got for the figs, he had already obtained an outfit, which enabled him to pass himself off as a man of science. A long beard of goat's hair completed the disguise. Taking a sack full of figs he strolled into the King's palace, and offered his services as a foreign physician. At first he was received with incredulity; but after Little Muck had given one of the Princes a fig to eat, and thereby restored his nose and ears to their original dimensions, every one was anxious to be cured by the strange doctor. But the King took him by the hand and conducted him in silence to his room, where he opened a door leading into his treasure-chamber and motioned to Muck to follow him. "Here are my treasures," said the King, "choose whatever you like, and it shall be given you, if you will only rid me of this shameful deformity." These words were sweet music to the ears of Little Muck. Immediately upon his entrance he had noticed the slippers standing on the ground, with the little staff lying close beside them. He made a tour of the room therefore, as though he was anxious to examine the King's treasure; but no sooner had he reached the slippers, than he drew them hastily on, grasped his staff, tore off his false beard, and displayed to the astonished King the well-known visage

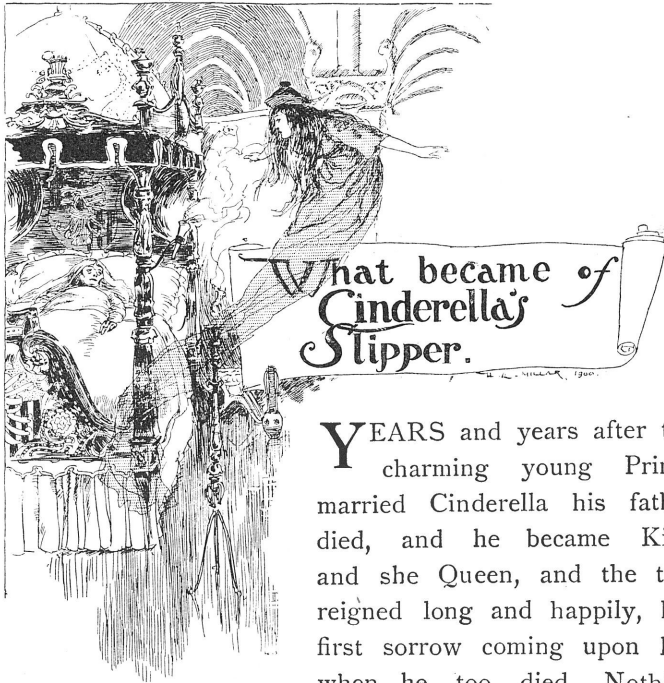


HE GRASPED HIS STAFF AND PULLED OFF HIS FALSE BEARD

of his discarded messenger. "Faithless monarch," he said, "who repay honest service with ingratitude, keep the hideous face you wear as a punishment you have thoroughly deserved. I leave the ears with you, that you may be daily reminded of Little Muck." So saying he turned round rapidly on his heel, wished himself far away, and before the King had time to call for help Little Muck was flown. He has been living here ever since in great affluence, but all alone, since he holds the human race in contempt. Experience has made a wise man of him, and though his exterior may be somewhat strange, he is more deserving of your admiration than of your ridicule.

Such was the story my father told me. I assured him of my regret for my rude behaviour to the good little man, and he let me off the second half of the punishment he had intended for me. Afterwards I narrated the little man's wonderful adventures to my companions, and we became so fond of him that none of us ever teased him again. On the contrary we held him in esteem as long as he lived, and saluted him with as much respect as we should the Cadi or Mufti.

WHAT BECAME OF CINDERELLA'S
SLIPPER



YEARS and years after the charming young Prince married Cinderella his father died, and he became King and she Queen, and the two reigned long and happily, her first sorrow coming upon her when he, too, died. Nothing could induce her to marry again, and she lived to be very, very old—so old that all who knew of her wonderful adventure with the little glass slipper had either become too old to remember it, or were no longer living. And then, at last, it came to be her turn to die.

Something occurred at the moment of her death which spread alarm through the palace. Hovering about her bed, a dark and vaporous figure was seen. Those who should have watched by her side through the night fled from the room in terror, to gather together in a remote

part of the building to talk of the phantom, as they conceived it to be, that was haunting the chamber of their departed mistress.

What they had seen was, in truth, the shadowy form of Orientalla, a fairy, who had taken under her protection the Queen who was to succeed Cinderella, and to whom she purposed giving the little glass slipper which had brought so much good fortune and happiness to her predecessor. As soon as the affrighted servants were all out of the room she opened a splendid coffer that stood near the bed, and soon found what she was seeking—the beautiful little fairy slipper of glass which Cinderella had dropped from her foot when escaping from the ball at which the charming young Prince had fallen in love with her, and by the aid of which he was enabled to recover her and make her his wife.

But, by some unaccountable lapse of memory, the fairy Orientalla had forgotten that the Princess she wished to favour had feet far too large to be contained in Cinderella's tiny slipper, and she was extremely vexed with herself for her oversight. She determined, however, that the trouble she had taken should not be fruitless, and at once set off to scour the world in search of somebody, Princess or peasant, whom the slipper would fit.

East, west, north, and south she journeyed during a whole year, exploring even China unsuccessfully, though there, as everybody knows, ladies' feet are made small, because a tiny foot is regarded as an essential to beauty.

At last she grew so tired of her vain search that she took her way back home. She was quite disheartened and

felt almost inclined to destroy the glass slipper as no longer of any use; in fact, she was only restrained from doing it by the reflection that such a proceeding would have been nothing else than an admission of her weakness as a fairy.

One day, as she was going to see the new Queen, whom, of course, she had no reason for neglecting, she noticed, on the side of a grassy hill, not very far from the palace, a small cottage, sheltered from the winter winds and rain by the wide-spreading boughs of some very aged oaks—the dwelling-place of a poor girl of fifteen, who had neither mother nor father and lived there quite alone. She was very pretty and modest, was this poor girl, and passed her time in spinning flax, which she cultivated and prepared with her own little brown hands—rising with the dawn and going to bed as soon as the evening star, after casting on her a friendly look, said “Good-night” to her through her rose-garlanded casement.

She associated very little with girls of her own age, rarely quitting her cottage—indeed, was hardly ever seen abroad, if it was not at the village fountain. It was not because she was ashamed to show her face that she led this retired life; for not a girl in all the country round was prettier than she, with her eyes the colour of the summer sky, and her hair in which the sun seemed to have lost some of his golden rays.

As Orientalla approached the cottage she was seized with intense thirst, for the day was hot and the hill steep from which she had descended. On the threshold of the little house she found its little mistress—“Susanne of the

Poppy-fields," as she had come to be called, because, in the season when the fields in front of her home were scarlet with the glowing hues of that gorgeous flower, she loved to be in the midst of them, clothed as it were in their splendour.

"Can you give me something to quench my thirst, my dear?" asked the fairy.

"I have no water that is quite fresh, for I have not yet been to fill my pails at the fountain, my good woman," replied Susanne; "but if you will come with me into my little fruit-garden I will pluck for you the most beautiful peach that ever grew on an espalier."

"Oh yes, I will come with you," said the fairy, resting on her little guide's arm—for she had made herself to appear quite like a very old and infirm woman that day. "Your fruit-garden is a very small one, my dear," she added, on reaching it.

"It's large enough for me, as there's nobody else here to eat the fruit that grows in it," Susanne said cheerfully.

"But you have only one peach hanging on your tree!"

"To that you are quite welcome," replied Susanne, plucking the juicy fruit and holding it to the fairy's mouth.

Never did lips taste a more delicious peach. The fairy ate it with delight, promising herself to pay for it with more than its weight in gold; but no thought of staying at the cottage to try on the glass slipper entered her mind until, with the passing of a light gust of wind, she suddenly caught sight of Susanne's foot—a foot of

ideal grace—the foot of a peri—the foot of a fairy: the foot of a second Cinderella!

Throwing herself on her knees on the grass, she produced the little glass slipper from her pocket with one hand and with the other placed the slipper on Susanne's tiny foot. The slipper fitted it as perfectly as if it had been made for it!

"My pretty maiden," she said, "keep this little shoe, and every year, on the return of this day, if you put it on, thinking of me, every wish of yours shall be gratified all through that day."

Saying that, the fairy kissed her on the forehead and disappeared, leaving her in doubt as to whether all she had heard and seen was more than a dream. But when she looked down at her feet and saw on one of them the beautiful little slipper she ceased to doubt, and walked



about her fruit-garden thinking—thinking of what she could desire to have.

“I know,” she said to herself at last. “I wish I had a pretty ribbon to tie up my hair.”

She had hardly done speaking ere a beautiful poppy-coloured ribbon fell upon her arm. Delighted, she hurried indoors and bound up her golden-hued hair with it; but when she had done this, and saw the effect it produced, she said sadly:—

“I look better with a rose from my garden or some poppies from the hillside. I should have done more wisely to have wished for something more useful—a cow, for instance, to stand in my empty stable.”

Turning her eyes to the window as she spoke, what was her astonishment at seeing the most beautiful cow imaginable, with silky coat and great soft velvet eyes, cropping the green sprays of the creepers that covered the front of her cottage! She hastened to receive her guest—the best cow in the world—and, talking kindly to it and caressing its shining neck, led it gently to its stall.

“But, dear me!” she meditated, “now that I have a cow, I ought to have a big field of clover for it to feed in.”

And the wished-for field of clover, all green and rose, lay stretched in the sunlight before her.

“Oh, it's enchantment!” she cried, clapping her hands with delight. “How happy I shall be when, little by little, with the sale of the milk of my beautiful cow, I am able to buy myself a shelf-full of pretty painted

plates and dishes, to ornament my dresser, and some nice linen, smelling of lavender, to fill my wardrobe, and frocks of many colours to go to church in on Sundays and to dance in of an evening at fair-time. And when my backyard is filled with fowls and ducks and pigeons I shall feel as proud—as much a Queen—as the farmer's wife of Bois-au-Loup! And when my friend Jacques, the schoolmaster's son, comes to see me in the midst of all this, shall I not be the happiest girl in the world?"

Wonder upon wonder! On going back into her cottage she found the shelves of her dresser laden with beautiful Delft-ware and dishes and plate of glittering pewter. Her wardrobe was filled with sweet-smelling linen and dresses of every sort for all times and seasons.

While she was examining her treasures she was attracted by unusual sounds at the back of her house—



to discover there a crowd of fowls of all kinds, clucking and quacking their astonishment at finding themselves so suddenly brought together! She called them about her with petting cries and scattered handfuls of barley amongst them.

At the same moment her friend Jacques, the school-master's son—who was making holiday—appeared, having come to enjoy a pleasant chat with her; that being his idea of spending his holiday in the most agreeable way possible. He was a very sensible as well as a learned youth—and one of the best-hearted in the world into the bargain; but all his learning, added to all his other good qualities, did not prevent him from being dumfounded by the sight that met his eyes. Wholly bewildered and just a little alarmed, he hesitatingly asked her the meaning of the great change that had come to her.

“All has come from the good fairy!” she cried, falling on her knees in gratitude.

And then she spent all the rest of that, to her, most precious day in relating to him the circumstances of the fairy's visit, and all that had come of it.

“Heavens!” she cried at last, on seeing the sun go down, “you have made me forget! One year must pass now before I can get anything more I may wish to have!”

“Well,” he said, after a moment's consideration, “I don't know what more you can want.”

On thinking over all that had come to her she clearly saw that she already had a hundred times more than she had ever, before that day, dreamed of possessing.

"Nothing is worth having that does not bring us happiness we have not, or that does not add to happiness we already possess," said her friend Jacques, who was wise beyond his years. "Contentment is better worth having than millions," he added, "and he who wishes for nothing more than he has got is as rich as a king."

The year passed delightfully for her, all her thoughts given to the smiling task of deserving the happiness promised by her friend Jacques.

When the anniversary of the good fairy's eventful visit came round, as soon as it was dawn she earnestly prayed to Heaven to inspire her, so that she might not express any but good wishes. Jacques who had read many, many books, had told her about wonderful countries that daring travellers had explored or discovered, and of amazing sights and adventures that had rewarded them. And sometimes, in the excitement which the recital of these things caused him, he had been prompted to exclaim—

"Ah! travellers have great advantages over us home-stayers!"

"Yes!" she cried, sharing his enthusiasm, "I should like to travel and see some of the wonderful sights about which you have told me—great cities thronged with people, mountains so high that they touch the sky, forests filled with birds that flash in the air like flowers with wings!"

Hardly were the words out of her lips than she was suddenly carried away into space by a multitude of tiny-winged fairies and laughing elves, who promised her a thousand joys only known to travellers and never thought

of by her. So sudden was her carrying off that she had not time to put on either her hat or cape. She even let her Cinderella slipper fall from her foot ; but her attendant elves picked it up and brought it to her, respectfully packed in a magnolia-blossom, which held it nicely.

First of all she was taken to see all the chief cities of the world, where, naturally, everything appeared marvellous to her inexperienced eyes ; but she speedily grew oppressed—and just a little frightened, perhaps—by the hurry and noise with which the life of the crowding populations was carried on, so different from the peaceful methods of living with which only she had till then been acquainted.

So she desired to be taken elsewhere ; and, in a breathing-space of time, her fairy attendants transported her to China, to India, to Africa, as she changed her wishes. But her impressions of these lands were not, upon the whole, delightful—the peoples she saw in them for the most part repelled and terrified her ; and, as the sun declined, she was overtaken by an unendurable dread of finding herself at night in some dark, fear-inspiring part of the world, and, with all her heart, wished herself safe back in her own secure cottage. In a moment she found herself there !

“Ah !” she said, “when this day which I have so stupidly wasted comes round again I shall know better than to wish to be taken so far from my pleasant little home.”

Jacques, as I have said, was wise beyond his years, but his experience of life did not go beyond that of the villagers amongst whom he had lived from the hour of his birth ;



SHE WAS TAKEN TO SEE ALL THE CHIEF CITIES OF THE WORLD

hence he was led, quite naturally, to accept the general belief that the expressions "Happy as a King," "Happy as a Queen," were perfectly correct; and Susanne believed it as much as he.

So, when the next day for wishing arrived, the wish she formed was to be made a Queen, with Jacques to be with her as King, though she hardly expected it to be realised.

Realised her wish was, however, and instantly she found herself with Jacques, both crowned monarchs, on a splendid double throne in the midst of a resplendent Court—crowned, not with fresh-gathered roses or daisies, but with heavy diadems of gold and glittering jewels that weighed oppressively upon their brows.

Susanne's first experience of Court life was the passing of two hours in being dressed by twenty ladies, who wrangled all the time over their rights to do this or that portion of the dressing, and all wanting to make out that she owed her beauty entirely to their taste and skill. Whether it was to make her look better, or to make her look less well, she could not discover—she was made to wear a trained dress that entirely hid her pretty feet and caused her infinite discomfort by squeezing her waist. Then her arms were so loaded with jewellery as to prevent her raising either of her hands to her head; while she who was used only to smell the scents of the fields—of wild thyme, sweetbrier, or lavender—was so drenched with perfumes as to make her almost faint.

When she asked to see her friend Jacques she was told that he was presiding at a council of Ministers, or giving



AT LENGTH CAME THE RECEPTION-HOUR

audience to foreign Ambassadors, or otherwise engaged in State affairs.

At length came the reception-hour. A crowd of her subjects of the highest rank, from all parts of the kingdom, were assembled to pay homage to her, and utterly bewildered her by their flattery—those who had nothing to do and nothing to say being the most wearisome: and to all she had to listen and smile graciously, for fear of giving them offence—making promises of advancement to some who had no need of any more than they already possessed, and doing nothing for others who needed all the assistance they could get.

It was past six o'clock before Jacques could come to see her—by which time she had been thrice dressed and redressed; but, even then, he had barely time to kiss the tips of her fingers before he, too, was hurried away, to be got into another suit of clothes to dine in.

At the gorgeous dinner-table there was a great crowd, but neither gaiety nor charm. Seated far apart, both Susanne and Jacques were obliged to say to their neighbours what they did not think, and listen to what they did not want to hear. It was a real punishment, and not the first or last they had to endure.

After dinner there was an official reception, at which the chief talk referred to rumours of war and rebellion—terrifying to both Susanne and Jacques. What was worse was that the rumours were well founded, and it was not long before Susanne learned that everybody in her kingdom was discontented—even the Queen.

“Ah,” she sighed, as she lay down in a magnificent bed,



SHE LAY DOWN IN A MAGNIFICENT BED

raised upon a dais of gold and hung with velvet curtains lined with satin, "why cannot I go to rest on my rustic bed of sweet-smelling broom twigs?"

But her sigh was uttered too late, and she could do nothing but resign herself to bear her troubles as well as she could during the year that was before her.

A terrible year for her it proved to be, every day of it filled with mortifications and disappointments—the crown she was compelled to wear, a veritable crown of thorns!

She had to witness with terror three or four rebellions of a starving people. She was forced to sell her jewels to pay the cost of a foreign war. She trembled every hour for the life of Jacques; for she had learned that, in a kingdom such as hers, there is always in the mind of the people an insane idea that when the King is assassinated or driven out of his country the people have nothing more to do than to cross their arms to earn their living.

Poor Susanne had to the full realised the vanity of human wishes, and that being "happy as a king" was nothing but the idle notion of poor, ignorant people, who think that if they were only richer everything in the world would be delightful to them. As to her golden crown, it so fretted her forehead that she would joyfully have given twenty such, had she had them, for one made of roses out of her own little garden, or for a circlet of the wild poppies that made the fields so gay on which her cottage window looked out in the bright summer time.

So she counted every day—every day—till the happy one arrived when she could break away from the oppressive grandeur of her queenly state, by once more wishing for

something she had not. At the first gleam of dawn she sprang from her great, unrestful bed, and raising her little glass slipper to her lips, kissed it with all her heart before putting it on her foot. And then she wished, with a longing more intense than she had ever felt before—

“Oh, that I were, once more, in my lovely cottage on the hillside with my friend Jacques to come and talk with me as often as he is able—and my beautiful cow—and my yardful of pretty fowls and ducks and pigeons—my gay field of sweet-smelling clover—my flowers and my fruits—my vine and my bubbling spring!—there only I wish to be a queen!”

In a moment her wish was realised, and she found herself in the midst of the only happiness which, she now knew, was worth having, her brow invisibly circled by the only diadem of abiding brightness in the world—contentment. Then Jacques, who had been transported home with her, said—

“What a fine school we’ve been in. Its teaching is a vast deal more instructive than any to be had at my father’s, though his is the best in all the country. I had always been wanting to see the world, as it is called, and I’ve seen it. A lot of things I didn’t know a year ago I now know better than I could have learned them from books—that grandeur is oftener pleasanter to see than to bear; that the cottage in which one is happy is better than the palace in which one is miserable. So, I am sure, I can ask for no greater good fortune than to be permitted to live quietly here in my village with you, my beautiful Susanne.”

"Oh, how happy I am to see you so wise," she cried, throwing her arms about his neck.

"I congratulate you, my dear children," said the fairy Orientalla, appearing to them at that moment. "You could not possibly have better used the power I gave you. Cinderella's slipper, for which you have now no further need, I take back for the use of others, who probably will not get so much good from it as you have derived."

In all the country round there was not a soul who did not rejoice in the happiness of Susanne and Jacques when their wedding-day came; telling plainly of the esteem in which they were held by all who knew them, including even the girl with the largest feet in the village.

THE FIELD OF TERROR



The Field & TERROR

DURING the latter part of the war, which terminated with the peace of Westphalia, there assembled at the foot of the Riesenberg, in a beautiful part of the country of Silesia, a number of persons who were the relations, and had lately succeeded to the property, of an opulent deceased farmer. This man had died without children, and had left several farms and fields scattered about that fertile country; and his heirs were now met together to divide the inheritance.

For this purpose they assembled in the principal inn of one of the villages; and they found no difficulty among themselves as to the allotment of every part of the estate except one particular piece of ground, which was known by the name of the "Haunted Field," or "Field of Terror," on account of the wonderful stories which were told concerning

it. This field was entirely overgrown with wild flowers, and an abundance of rank and luxuriant shrubs, which, while they bore ample testimony to the vigour and fertility of the soil, were equally indicative of the neglect and desolation to which it was abandoned. For a long series of years no ploughshare had penetrated its surface, and no seed had been cast upon its furrows; or if at intervals the attempt was made, the cattle had been invariably seized with frenzy, had wildly broken from the yoke, and the ploughman and his men had rushed from the spot in fright and alarm, affirming that it was haunted by the most terrific phantoms, who followed the labourer in his occupation with the most fearful familiarity, looking over his shoulder with such hideous aspects, that no one could venture to continue his work.

The question now arose, to whom this field should be allotted. As is the common course in the world, every one felt that this spot, which would be useless and of no value in his own case, might yet be extremely applicable, and even advantageous, to his neighbour; and thus the contest for its right appropriation continued till a late hour of the evening. At length one of the party proposed a remedy, which, though not directly benefiting any one present, seemed to promise a settlement of the dispute.

“By a codicil in the will,” said he, “we are enjoined to show some mark of kindness to a poor relation of the testator who lives hard by in the village. It is true, the girl is very distantly related to us; and there can be no doubt that, portionless as she is, she will yet procure a good husband, for she is virtuous and frugal, and goes by the

name of the pretty Sabine. Suppose we give up this 'Field of Terror' to her; we shall in this way discharge the injunctions of our lamented relative: and, to say the truth, it may yet prove a rich dowry for her, provided she can find a husband who will venture to cultivate it."



The others immediately consented to this proposal, and one of the relatives was despatched to communicate the intelligence of their bounty.

In the meantime, as the twilight drew on, somebody tapped at Sabine's cottage-window; and to her question of "Who's there?" a reply was given which had the instant

effect of withdrawing the rustic bolt of her little window. It was a voice long and anxiously expected—the voice of her brave Frederick; who, born poor as herself, had some years before set out for the wars in the hope of gaining some little subsistence to enable him to marry his beloved Sabine, whose heart, filled with the purest affection, was entirely devoted to him.

It was a delightful picture to see Sabine leaning out of her wired lattice, with tears of joy starting in her beautiful eyes, as the erect and youthful soldier gazed upon her in modest silent bliss, and extended towards her his faithful hand.

“Ah, Frederick!” she said, in a low and bashful voice, “God be praised, thou art returned safe; this has been my constant prayer morn and evening. And tell me, Frederick, have you made your fortune in the campaign?”

“Fortunes are not so soon won,” said Frederick, shaking his head and smiling; “and prizes do not fall to every one. However, I am better off than when I went away; and if you have but a courageous heart, I think we may marry, and get through the world pretty well.”

“Kind-hearted Frederick,” ejaculated Sabine, “to take a poor orphan for better and worse!”

“Come,” said Frederick, “give me but one friendly yes, and promise to be mine, and we shall be happy in each other, and thrive, and live like princes.”

“And have you got your discharge, and are you really no longer a soldier?”

Frederick, looking into his knapsack that held his treasures, brought out a silver medal, which he reached

to Sabine, and as she received it, the light of the little lamp in her chamber fell on the piece. There was a burst drum figured in an old-fashioned manner, and over it was written the words, "God be praised, the war is ended!"

"Perhaps," added Frederick, helping her to decipher the medal, "it is not yet peace, but it is thought we shall have no more fighting at present, and our colonel has therefore discharged his men."

At this intelligence Sabine held out her hand as a pledge of her affection to her lover, and invited him to come into her little dwelling, where he seated himself by her side, and related how he had won his gold and silver in honourable battle, and in the open field, from a foreign officer of rank whom he had made prisoner; having obtained the money as his ransom.

Sabine, as she turned her wheel, listened with deep attention to her lover's recital, bestowing, from time to time, a smile of fond approbation upon his conduct, and inwardly rejoicing that no reproach could hereafter be thrown upon their slender means, thus honourably acquired.

Their conversation was now interrupted by the appearance of the person who came to communicate the message entrusted to him. Sabine, with maidenly blushes, presented her intended husband to the stranger; and the latter replied, "This is well—I have arrived very opportunely; for if your betrothed has not brought back a fortune from the wars, the gift which I am directed to present to you in the name of your relations will be a welcome addition;

indeed, it was the will of the testator that you should be remembered in a handsome way."

Frederick was too much offended at the boasting manner in which this communication was made to testify any joy on the occasion. But the humble Sabine, ignorant of the mode in which her relatives had evinced their generosity, received the communication as an interposition of Providence, with her head modestly bent down, while a smile of heartfelt grateful joy shone on her countenance. But as soon as she heard that the "Field of Terror" was assigned to her as her portion and in liquidation of her just claims, the sordid behaviour of her relations pressed on her heart with a painful sickening coldness, and she felt it impossible to refrain from shedding tears of disappointed hope.

Her relation, with a smile of half-suppressed contempt, expressed his regret that she should have allowed herself to expect more than her friends had thought right to allot her. "And indeed," he observed, "this is a much larger proportion of the inheritance than you could fairly hope to receive as a matter of right."

With this speech he was about to retire, when Frederick interrupted him; and with that deliberate coolness which attends a mind conscious of its own superiority, he said, "Sir, I perceive that you and your fellows have been pleased to convert the benevolent intentions of the deceased into a mere piece of mockery, and that it is your joint determination to withhold every shilling of his property from my bride. But we will nevertheless accept your offer, in full confidence that, under the guidance of God, this haunted field, in the hands of an honest and



active soldier, will be a more productive bargain than a set of covetous, envious relations intend it to be."

The messenger, who felt rather uneasy at the tone and manner assumed by the young soldier, did not hazard a reply; and with an altered countenance hurried out of the cottage, and made the best of his way back.

Frederick now kissed away the tears from Sabine's cheeks, and hastened to the priest to fix an early day for their marriage.

After the lapse of a few weeks, Frederick and Sabine were married, and entered upon their slender housekeeping. The gold and silver pieces he had brought from the wars the young soldier chiefly expended in the purchase of a fine yoke of oxen; part was invested in seed and in the necessary implements of husbandry, and the articles of household furniture; the rest was reserved for daily expenditure, to be dealt out in the most frugal manner, till

the harvest of the succeeding year should replenish their stores. But as Frederick took his departure, with his cattle and plough, for the field of labour, he looked back and smiled to his good Sabine, saying, that he was now going to invest his gold, which another year would restore to him twofold. Sabine could only follow him with her anxious looks, and wish, in her heart, that he were once safely returned from the dreaded "Field of Terror."

And home, truly, he came, and that long before the vesper-bell had sounded; but far from being so cheerful, as, in the native confidence of his heart, he had promised himself in the morning when he went forth singing to his work. He dragged laboriously after him the fragments of his shattered plough; before him paced, with difficulty, one of his oxen sorely maimed, and marks of blood were seen on his own head and shoulder. But still his soldier-spirit did not fail him, and he bore up under his misfortunes with a courageous and even merry heart, consoling, at the same time, the grief of the weeping Sabine. "Come," said he smilingly, "get your pickling-tubs in order; for this goblin who reigns in the 'Field of Terror' has provided us with an abundance of beef. The beast I brought home with me has so injured himself in his frenzy, that he will not be fit for any further work; and as for the other, he ran off into the mountains, and there I saw him plunge from a steep rock into the torrent below, where I fancy he now lies, and from whence, I daresay, he will never again make his appearance."

"Oh, these relations! these wicked relations!" sobbed the disconsolate Sabine.

“My hurt is of no consequence,” said Frederick; “it was but the oxen that crushed me between them when they ran mad, and I endeavoured to stop them; but it matters not grieving, and in the morning I will start afresh.”

Sabine was now so terrified at what had happened, that she used every means in her power to dissuade her husband from any further attempt at cultivating the unlucky field; but he only replied by saying, “that so long as he could move an arm or a leg, the field should have no rest. Land which we cannot plough we must delve; and I am no timid beast of labour, but a good and steady soldier, over whom a goblin can have no power.”

He now slaughtered the wounded ox, and cut it up; and on the next morning, while Sabine was busied in preparing it for pickle, Frederick pursued his road to the haunted field with his pickaxe and spade, with almost as good a heart as on the day before, when he set out with his fine yoke of oxen and his handsome new plough.

This time he returned rather late in the evening somewhat pale and exhausted, but in high spirits, and ready to tranquillise his anxious wife.

“This is rather hard work,” said he, laughing; “for there comes a sort of goblin-fellow, who stands first on this side, then on that, sometimes in one form, sometimes in another, and mocks me with his foolish talk and tricks; but he seems to feel no small surprise that I give so little heed to his pranks; and from this I begin to take fresh courage. Besides, why should an honest man, who goes straight forward, and minds his work, care for such beings?”

The same kind of thing continued for many days together. The brave Frederick pursued without interruption his daily labour of digging, sowing, and destroying the weeds and useless plants which had overspread the field. It is true the slow process of the spade enabled him to cultivate only a small portion of the whole ground, but this served to make him all the more zealous and industrious in his labours; and he was at length rewarded by seeing a crop spring up, which promised, and eventually produced, a sufficient if not an abundant harvest. Even the toil of reaping and transporting it from the field to the barn was thrown entirely upon his own shoulders; for the labourers in the vicinity would not have engaged, for any consideration, to spend a day upon the dreaded "Field of Terror"; and he would, on no account, permit Sabine to lend her assistance, more particularly as he was expecting her soon to present him with an infant.

The child was born, and in three years two more; and so things went on without any remarkable occurrence. By hard striving and industry Frederick compelled the haunted field to yield him one crop after another; and thus, like an honest man, redeemed his word to Sabine, that he would find sufficient to support her.

It happened one evening in autumn, as the shades of night began to draw on, and Frederick was still busied with his spade, that a tall, robust man, of unusual size of limb, black and sooty as a charcoal-burner, and holding a huge furnace-iron in his hand, appeared suddenly before him, and said, "Are there no cattle to be had in this part of the country that you thus labour away with your two



A SORT OF GOBLIN-FELLOW, WHO MOCKS ME WITH HIS TRICKS

hands? One would suppose, by the extent of your landmarks, that you were a wealthy farmer."

Frederick was perfectly aware of who it was that addressed him, and treated him in the same cool way with which he usually received the goblin in the field. He held his tongue, endeavoured to withdraw his attention from the figure before him to his work, and to labour on with redoubled ardour. But his swarthy visitor, instead of disappearing, as is the usual practice of these goblins, to present himself again in a more frightful and hideous form, remained where he stood and in a friendly tone continued, "My good fellow, you are doing both yourself and me injustice by this conduct of yours. Give me now an honest and candid answer, and perhaps I may be able to find a remedy for your misfortunes."

"Well, then," rejoined Frederick, "in God's name be it so. If you are but cajoling me with these friendly words, the fault be at your door, and not at mine."

With this he began to relate the whole story of his adventures since he had taken possession of the field. He gave an undisguised recital of his first distress, a faithful representation of his just and honest indignation against the goblin who haunted his property, and detailed the difficulty he found, under such continual interruption and provocation, of supporting his family by the mere application of his hoe and spade.

The stranger gave an attentive ear to the narrative, seemed lost in thought for a few minutes, and then broke forth in the following address:—

"It would seem, friend, that you know who I am ;

and I look upon it as a proof of your frank and manly disposition that you have made no concealment, but that you have spoken out boldly of the displeasure you entertain towards me. To say the truth, you have certainly had sufficient cause; but in thus putting your courage to the test, I will make a proposal which will, I hope, indemnify you for a good deal of what is past. You must know, then, that I have had my fill of wild and fantastic tricks through wood, and field, and mountain, and I begin to fancy I should like to attach myself to some quiet family, that I may live for some half a year or so a peaceful orderly life. What do you say to taking me for six months as your servant?"

"It is not right of people of your sort," said Frederick, "thus to pass your jokes upon an honest man who reposes confidence in you."

"No, no!" replied the other, "there is no joke in it; I tell you it is my serious intention. You will find in me a sturdy, active servant; and as long as I live with you, not a single spirit or goblin will venture to show himself on the 'Field of Terror,' so that you may admit whole herds of cattle to browse upon it."

"I should like the thing well enough," rejoined Frederick, "if I were but sure that you would keep your word, and, moreover, that I were doing right in dealing with you at all."

"That must be your own affair," said the stranger; "but I have never broken my word since these Riesen-berg mountains have stood; and a mere creature of evil and malice I certainly am not. A little merry, and wild, and tricky sometimes, I own—but that is all!"

"Why, then," said Frederick, "I believe that you are the celebrated Rubezahl."

"Harkee!" cried the stranger, interrupting him, with a frown, "if that be your opinion, I would also have you to know that the mighty spirit of the mountains will not permit that name, and that he chooses to call himself the Monarch of the Hills."

"That would be an odd sort of a servant whom I must call the Monarch of the Hills," said Frederick, in a tone of raillery.

"You may call me Waldmann, then," rejoined his companion.

Frederick looked awhile towards the ground, pondering upon the course he should adopt, and at length exclaimed, "Well, so be it! I think I can hardly do amiss in accepting your services. I have often seen irrational animals drilled into domestic use—carrying parcels, turning spits, and other household duties—why not a goblin?"

His new servant burst into a hearty laugh at this observation, and said, "I must acknowledge such an estimate was never made of any of my kind before. But that I heed not—'tis my humour, and so 'tis a bargain, my honoured master!"

Frederick, however, made it a condition that his new servant should on no account whatever discover to Sabine or the children that he had lived in the Haunted Field, or in the old caverns of the Riesenbergr, nor at any time play any goblin tricks about the house or farm. Waldmann pledged his word to all this; so the matter was concluded, and home they both went together in a very friendly mood.

Sabine was not a little surprised at this addition to their household, and could scarcely look upon the swarthy, gigantic servant without fear. The children were at first so much alarmed that they would not venture out of doors when he was at work in the garden or in the yard; but his quiet, and good-natured, and friendly behaviour soon reconciled all the household to his presence; and if he now and then had a frolicsome fit, and chased the dog and the fowls, they thought it only sportiveness and good humour, and a single look from the master was at any time sufficient to bring him within proper bounds.

In full reliance upon the promises of the Mountain-lord, Frederick applied the slender savings of many years to the purchase of a fresh yoke of oxen; and with his newly-mended plough drove to the field in the highest glee. Sabine looked after him with an anxious, sorrowful countenance, and with an equally anxious mind awaited his return in the evening, fearing a renewal of the same disasters and the same disappointed hopes, or that his personal injuries this time might be more dangerous and alarming than before. But with the sound of the vesper-bell Frederick came home singing through the village, driving his sleek, well-fed oxen before him, kissed his wife and children in the fulness of his joy, and shook his servant cordially by the hand.

Waldmann now frequently went to the field alone, while his master remained behind engaged about the yard or garden. A considerable portion of the "Field of Terror" was cleared and cultivated; and to the great astonishment of the village neighbours, and the equal discontent and

envy of Sabine's selfish relations, everything assumed an air of prosperity and comfort. It is true, Frederick, when alone, often reflected that all this might be but of short duration; "and I know not how I shall manage with the harvest," he exclaimed, "for Waldmann's time will then be out, and the goblins of the field may choose to appear with redoubled power." But he considered that the gathering-in of the crop was a labour which of itself gave additional vigour to the workman's arm and heart; and it was possible that Waldmann, for old acquaintance' sake, might keep the land free from such guests—as in fact, at times of cheerful relaxation, he almost seemed to intimate.

In the course of time the needful labours of the field were completed. Winter arrived, and Frederick daily drove to the forest for a stock of fuel and wood. On one of these days it so chanced that Sabine was entreated to visit a poor widow in the village, who lay dangerously ill, and whom, as far as their increasing means admitted, Frederick and his wife had been accustomed to relieve. She was at a loss how to dispose of the children during her absence; but Waldmann offered his services, with whose stories the children were always delighted, and with whom they were ever pleased to remain; and she proceeded on her charitable errand without further hesitation.

About an hour after her departure Frederick returned from the forest; and having disposed of his waggon in the outhouse, and put up his cattle in the stall, he proceeded towards the house to revive his numbed and frozen limbs by the blaze of a cheerful fire. On approaching the door,

a cry of painful distress from his children met his ear. He rushed into the house, and on entering the room found the children creeping behind the stove and crying aloud for help, while Waldmann was wildly jumping about the room with shouts of violent laughter, making the most hideous faces, and with a crown of sparks and rays of flame playing about his head.

“What is all this?” said Frederick, in a tone of indignant anger; and the fiery decorations of Waldmann’s head disappeared, his fantastic merriment instantly ceased, and, standing in a humble posture, he began to excuse himself by saying that he was only trying to amuse the children. But the children ran towards their father, crying and complaining that Waldmann had first of all told them a number of most horrific stories, and that then he had assumed a variety of frightful disguises, sometimes appearing with the head of a ram, sometimes with that of a dog.

“Enough! enough!” exclaimed Frederick. “Away, sirrah! you and I no longer remain under the same roof.”

With this he seized Waldmann by the arm, and pushed him violently out of the house, desiring the children to remain quietly in the room, and to dismiss their fears, as their father was now *conte*, and they were quite safe.

Waldmann suffered all this without uttering a word of expostulation; but as soon as he found himself alone with Frederick in the open court, he said, with a smiling countenance—

“Hear, master; suppose we hush this matter up, and make a fresh bargain. I know I have done a very foolish thing; but, I assure you, it shall never happen again.



WALDMANN WAS WILDLY JUMPING ABOUT THE ROOM

Somehow or other my old humour came upon me, and I forgot myself for the time."

"For that very reason, because you can forget yourself," rejoined Frederick, "we part. You might terrify my children into a paroxysm of madness; and, as I have said, our contract is at an end."

"My half-year has not expired," said Waldmann, in a dogged tone; "I *will* go back into the house."

"Not a step farther, at your peril; you shall not again touch my threshold!" cried Frederick. "You have broken the agreement by your accursed goblin pranks, and all that I can do is to pay you your full wages. Here, take it and be off with you."

"My full wages?" said the Mountain-spirit, with a contemptuous sneer; "have you never seen my stores of gold in the caverns of yonder hills?"

"I do this more on my own account than yours," said Frederick; "no man shall call me his debtor." And with that he forced the money into Waldmann's pocket.

"And what is to be done with the 'Field of Terror'?" inquired Waldmann, in a grave but almost angry tone.

"Whatever God wills," rejoined Frederick. "Twenty fields of terror are of no importance to me in comparison with the safety of a single hair of my poor children's heads. Take yourself away, or I shall serve you in a way you may not like, or soon forget."

"Softly!" cried the Mountain-spirit, "softly, my friend. When such as I condescend to assume a human form, we choose one of rather stern materials. You might chance

to come by the worst in this fray, and then, God be merciful unto you!"

"That He has ever been," said Frederick, "and has also given me a good strength of arm, as thou shalt find. Back to your mountains, you odious being! I warn you for the last time."

Excited by this reproach to a pitch of violent fury, Waldmann sprang upon Frederick, and an obstinate fight ensued. They struggled about the yard for a considerable time, each using every means in his power to overthrow his adversary, without victory declaring itself on either side; till at length Frederick, by his superior skill in wrestling, managed to bring his opponent to the earth, and having placed his knee upon the chest of his fallen foe, began to beat him most lustily, exclaiming, "I will teach you to attack your master, my precious Lord of the Hills!"

The Lord of the Hills, however, laughed so heartily at this address, that Frederick, conceiving his manly efforts to be the subject of derision, only laid on with redoubled vigour, till at length the former exclaimed, "Mercy! enough! hold! I am not laughing at you, I am laughing at myself, and I humbly beg your pardon!"

"That is another affair," said Frederick, as he rose up and assisted his conquered adversary to regain his legs.

"I have now learnt what human life is, from the very foundation upwards," said the latter, still continuing his noisy laughter; "I doubt if any of my kindred have ever pursued the study so profoundly. But harkee, my good friend, you must admit that I carried on the war in an honourable way; for, as you will see yourself, I might



THEY STRUGGLED FOR A CONSIDERABLE TIME

with ease have called in half-a-dozen mountain-spirits to my assistance, though, amidst all this laughter, I know not how I should have set about it."

Frederick, with a serious air, now looked at the still laughing Rubezähl, and said, "You will, I suppose, entertain a grudge against me; and this will not only be repaid me at the 'Field of Terror,' but in many an evil chance elsewhere. Still I cannot repent of what I have done. I have only exercised my just authority in protecting my children; and were the thing to do over again, I should treat you just in the same way."

"No, no!" said Rubezähl, laughingly, "don't make yourself uneasy. I have had quite enough for once. Cultivate the 'Field of Terror' from year to year, at your own will and pleasure; and I here promise you that no fearful phantom shall be seen upon it from this day forwards, as long as the Riesenberg stands. And so farewell, my honest, strong-handed master!"

With this he gave a friendly nod, and disappeared; nor was he ever more seen by Frederick. But he kept his word to the full, and even more. An unheard-of degree of prosperity attended all the labours of his former master, and Frederick soon became the richest farmer in the village. And when his children were permitted to play in the "Field of Terror"—a spot which both they and Sabine now visited without the smallest fear—they would relate in the evening how Waldmann had appeared to them and told them humorous tales, and how they found choice confectionaries, or beautiful carved toys, or golden ducats, in their pockets on their return home.

PRINCESS FORTUNIA



THE KINGS
1901



ONCE upon a time long, long ago, there was a very powerful King, ardently loved by his vassals, and master of a vast empire far away in the East. This King possessed immense treasures and gave splendid *fêtes*. His army was numerous and brave. His ships sailed in triumph upon every ocean. But how shall I describe his palaces and the wondrous magnificence which they enclosed? That would be impossible, because their splendour was beyond the power of language to describe.

The vassals of this great King called him "King Fortunio." His life had been one long career of happiness, whose brilliancy was never obscured by a single

cloud or a painful shadow. The King had been married for seven years to an accomplished Princess, whom he adored, but he had no heir, which was deeply regretted by him and his people.

It happened that war broke out with the neighbouring country. The King went forth at the head of his troops, after taking an affectionate leave of the Queen.

One night, as he was sleeping in his tent, he had a dream. He dreamt that he was engaged in a battle, when in the midst of the combat the Queen appeared before him and, with a radiant smile, presented to him a beautiful baby Princess. The King adopted this vision as an omen. He was transported with joy, and his valour increased tenfold in consequence, so that in the real battle which shortly after followed he triumphed over his enemies, subdued the rebel cities, and returned to his capital laden with glory and booty.

All this had only occupied a few months. When the King returned, in the midst of the acclamations of his people, the bells rang joyously, for the general gladness had still another motive than the warlike triumphs of the King. What was the delight of his Majesty, on returning to his palace, to find that his dream had been realised, and that an heiress to the throne had been born! But, alas! the Queen, the Royal consort to whom he was so deeply attached, was dead, and could no longer return the tender caresses he was eager to lavish upon her.

Imagine the despair of the unhappy King, who threw himself on his knees at her bedside and gave way to

uncontrollable grief. But his tears and lamentations could not resuscitate the Queen, whose face, even in death, wore an angelic smile, and who seemed to have died with a prayer for the King upon her lips. It was thus, no doubt, that her soul had taken its flight, borne away to the unknown land on the wings of a sigh of love, and proud to have inspired an affection so deep and lasting as that felt by the King.

The King made a vow never again to marry, and kept his word. He confided to his chief poet the duty of composing a funeral ode, which is still regarded in that country as a masterpiece of the national literature. The Court mourning lasted for three years, and a superb mausoleum was erected in honour of the Queen.

But, as the song says, "there is no sorrow which lasts a century." At the end of a couple of years the King shook off his melancholy and turned his attention to the little Princess, who grew apace, and to whom had been given the name of Princess Fortunia.

When the Princess had reached her fifteenth year her beauty, intelligence, and gentle manners elicited the admiration of all who saw her and the astonishment of those who enjoyed the privilege of hearing her speak. The King caused her to be proclaimed heiress to the Throne, and then began to look about for a husband worthy of so bright a jewel.

More than five hundred Cabinet couriers and lords, mounted upon zebras of the purest race, left the capital of the kingdom at the same time, bearers of five hundred

despatches for as many foreign Courts. All the Princes of the world were invited to compete for the hand of the Princess, who would choose amongst them the one who pleased her the most.

The renown of her marvellous beauty had already reached every corner of the globe, so that hardly had the couriers arrived at the different capitals to which they were accredited when every Prince of high and low degree, powerful or feeble, decided to go to the capital of King Fortunio to take part in the jousts, tournaments, and competitions of wit, instituted as preliminaries to obtaining the hand of the Princess.

But it happened that the young lady, who, notwithstanding her modesty and her discretion, by no means possessed a gentle temper, overwhelmed all the Princes with her disdain, and gave them to understand, one and all, that she cared nothing whatever about any of them. And this was the state of affairs during all the *fêtes* of the Court, which day after day increased in splendour and brilliancy.

The Princes, seeing that they made no progress, despaired of any of their number being accepted by the wayward Princess. King Fortunio was enraged at the hesitation of his daughter, whilst she continued obstinately to refuse compliance with her father's wishes and to make a choice amongst her numerous suitors.

It happened that the Princess one lovely spring morning found herself in her boudoir. Her favourite Lady of Honour was combing her long and silky golden hair. The window leading to a balcony which looked upon the gardens had



SHE CARED NOTHING WHATEVER ABOUT ANY OF THEM

been opened to give access to the gentle breeze and the aroma of the flowers.

The attendant already held in her hand the ribbon with which she was about to bind the golden tresses of her mistress, when suddenly there fluttered into the apartment a precious bird whose plumage seemed to be composed of emeralds, and whose graceful evolutions filled with ecstasy the Princess and her Lady of Honour. The bird flew quickly to the latter, seized in its beak the ribbon in her hand, and making its exit from the balcony window flew away rapidly. All this occurred so quickly that the Princess had only just time to see the bird, but its beauty and its audacity gave her the most strange impression and regret at its sudden departure.

A few days afterwards the Princess Fortunia, to relieve her melancholy, was dancing with her Ladies of Honour in presence of the Princes. Whilst her tiny feet nimbly executed the most graceful steps she raised above her head, with a charming movement, a scarf of light gauze, and her youthful face, full of animation, was lovely to behold.

All the Princes gazed at her with unrestrained admiration, when suddenly the whirr of wings was heard, and with the rapidity of an arrow the emerald bird entered the room. Seizing in its ivory beak the scarf floating in the air, the bird snatched it from the hands of the affrighted Princess and instantly disappeared, carrying off its precious booty to the clouds.

The Princess uttered a cry and fell fainting into the arms of her attendants. Her father and all the candidates

for her hand hastened to her side. When she regained her senses the first words she uttered were : "Let search be made for the green bird, and bring it to me alive. Above all, let no harm be done to it. I must possess the green bird living."

But the five hundred Princes searched for it in vain. The green bird was nowhere to be found, living or dead. Her unfulfilled desire to possess it tormented the Princess greatly and increased her ill-humour. That night she was totally unable to close her eyelids ; so completely filled was her mind with the recollection of the beautiful bird that sleep was out of the question.

As soon as daylight appeared Princess Fortunia rose, and, dressed in a light morning gown, she directed her steps, accompanied by her favourite attendant, towards the thickest part of the wood in the neighbourhood of the palace, and in which stood the mausoleum of her mother. There she wept bitterly and bewailed her destiny. "Of what use to me are all my riches, my costly trinkets, and my jewels, if I am never to see again the beautiful green bird?"

As she spoke these words, and as if in search of a little consolation, she loosened the cord of her cloak and drew from her bosom a magnificent locket studded with diamonds and containing a lock of her mother's hair, which she kissed reverently. Wonderful to relate, at the very same instant the green bird flew towards her as swift as thought. He lightly touched with his ivory beak the lips of the Princess, and quickly seized the locket which she had during so many years jealously guarded.

Then the robber instantly flew away with the rapidity of an arrow, and, rising to a great height, was soon lost in the clouds.

This time the Princess did not faint; on the contrary, her face became scarlet, and she said to her attendant, "Look! Look at my lips! That insolent bird has wounded them, for I feel a burning sensation in them."

The attendant looked carefully several times, but could not perceive the smallest wound. Thereupon she came to the conclusion that the bird had inoculated the Princess with some subtle poison, for she grew weaker and weaker from that moment, until at last she became dangerously ill. She was seized with a strange fever, which none of the physicians of the Court could understand or cure. In her exaltation the only words the Princess uttered were, "Do not kill him! Bring him to me alive. The bird must be mine."

After long consultation the doctors came to the conclusion that the sole means of restoring the Princess to health was to find and bring to her the green bird. But where was its hiding-place? The most expert hunters sought for it fruitlessly, and the enormous sums offered to any one who would bring it to the palace were alike without avail.

At last King Fortunio gathered together a great congress of learned men, who, during forty days and forty nights, remained constantly in session. During their debates innumerable grave speeches were pronounced, and after the proceedings had terminated the wise assembly sent a unanimous message to the King, occupy-



“LOOK! LOOK AT MY LIPS!”

ing several sheets of parchment, but the gist of which was as follows: "We are unable to inform your Majesty what has become of the green bird."

During all this time Princess Fortunia grew worse and worse, and shed so many tears that every day she required more than fifty handkerchiefs. The laundresses of the palace were therefore overwhelmed with work, and spent their days and nights at the wash-tubs, which had to be constantly refilled from the neighbouring river. One of these laundry women, who had been at work from daylight till sunset, washing the tear-stained handkerchiefs of the Princess, feeling a little fatigued, strolled into the forest and sat down at the foot of a tree. She drew from her pocket an orange, and was about to eat it, when it escaped from her hands and rolled down the hillside with extraordinary rapidity.

The girl ran after her orange, but the more she ran the faster the orange rolled away from her. Out of breath, she stopped, and was stupefied to perceive that she was in a leafy wood and that night had fallen around her in pitchy darkness. The affrighted girl sobbed as if her heart would break. The darkness increased rapidly, and of course she was no longer able to see the fugitive orange or to retrace her footsteps. So she roamed about at haphazard, more alarmed than ever and nearly dead with hunger and fatigue, when all at once she perceived at a short distance a brilliant light. Supposing that it was the illumination of the city, she thanked Heaven and turned in the direction of the light. But what was her surprise to find herself at the gates of a sumptuous palace, which seemed to be of molten gold.

There were neither soldiers nor porters nor valets to prevent her from entering; so the young girl walked in boldly and, mounting a monumental staircase of polished jasper, passed through a suite of rooms the most magnificent that can be imagined, but still without meeting any living being. Nevertheless, every apartment was profusely illuminated by a thousand golden lamps, whose perfumed oil filled the air with the softest and most delightful odours.

Whilst admiring the marvellous objects of art which these extraordinary saloons contained, the laundress, attracted by the smell of the most delicate and succulent of dishes, reached the kitchen; but she found there neither cooks nor under-cooks nor scullery-maids. The place was completely deserted, like the rest of the palace. The great range was, nevertheless, lighted, as also were the ovens; and on the fire there was an enormous number of frying-pans, saucepans, and other cooking utensils. The venturesome girl raised the lid of a saucepan and saw it was filled with the most delicate soup. Encouraged by this first essay, she examined the contents of another and found them to consist of a boar's head stuffed with pheasant livers and truffles. In a word, she saw before her the most exquisite viands, that are only served on the tables of Kings and Emperors.

Enticed by what she saw and smelled, the young girl armed herself with a knife and fork and, without further ado, commenced cutting off a slice from the stuffed boar's head. But hardly had she touched it when she felt a smart blow upon her hand—doubtless inflicted by some powerful and invisible means—and she heard a voice exclaim, “No, you don't! That's for his Highness the Prince.”

The poor little disappointed laundress determined to try again, and made an attempt on four or five other choice dishes. But each time she received a rap upon the knuckles from an invisible hand, and the mysterious voice repeated the same warning words. At last, with much regret, she made up her mind to remain fasting, and left the kitchen, deeply chagrined.

She endeavoured to forget her hunger by going through the sumptuous apartments again and again, but found them still silent and deserted. At last she came to a very elegant bedchamber, where two or three lights were burning in alabaster vases, with a soft light conducive to repose. There was in this room a bed so convenient, soft, and inviting, that the laundress, who was very tired, could not resist the temptation to rest herself upon it for a few moments. She was on the point of putting her project into practice, had already seated herself on the side of the bed and was about to lie down, when she felt a painful pricking on her body, as if some one had thrust thousands of needles into her flesh, and again she heard the mysterious voice exclaim—

“No, you don't! That's for his Highness the Prince!”

Words are powerless to describe the mingled fright and disappointment of the poor laundress; but she resigned herself to go without sleep, just as she had given up the idea of assuaging her hunger. In order to direct her thoughts into another channel she commenced a minute examination of the various objects in the room, her curiosity even going to the extent of lifting up the hangings and curtains. Behind one of these latter our heroine discovered

a beautiful little secret door of sandal-wood incrustated with mother-of-pearl. She pushed it gently, and, entering, found herself upon a stately white marble staircase.

Boldly mounting, she at last reached a splendid conservatory, in the centre of which was a magnificent basin of immense dimensions, which seemed made of a single clear and limpid topaz. From the middle of the basin sprang a gigantic jet of water, which rose to a great height and fell in many-coloured spray, with an exquisite musical sound, and filling the air with the most delightful perfume.

The astonished girl was absorbed in the contemplation of these wonderful things when she heard a loud noise, and saw a window suddenly open. Hastily she concealed herself behind a mass of verdure, in order, if possible, to see without being seen by any one who might come.

No human being entered, but through the open window flew three rare and beautiful birds, one of which was covered with a plumage of green as brilliant as an emerald. In this dazzling bird the laundress thought she recognised the cause of the prolonged melancholy of the Princess Fortunia.

The two other birds were not nearly so marvellous, but still they were not wanting in beauty. All three entered swiftly and gracefully. They alighted upon the topaz fountain and plunged into the water. An instant afterwards, from the clear water of the fountain came forth three young men dressed in elegant costumes. The enchanted bath had caused this prodigy. One of them, the handsomest of the three, wore upon his head a diadem of emeralds, and was treated by the others with the respect due to a Sovereign.

The laundress managed to follow the three young men without being seen, and she was even able to hear some part of their conversation, from which she gathered that the handsomest of the trio was the Heir-Apparent to the Throne of the kingdom, and that the two others were his secretary and favourite equerry. Also that the three were victims of a sorcerer's enchantment during the day, and that they were able to resume their natural forms at night, thanks to the plunge in the magic waters of the fountain.

The inquisitive laundress also noticed that the Emerald Prince ate but little, notwithstanding the entreaties of his companions, and that he appeared absorbed in melancholy thought during their repast. At last the Emerald Prince, with an evident effort to break away from his reverie, turned to his secretary and said—

“Bring me the casket of my dreams.”

Accordingly his secretary brought the most precious casket ever seen by mortal eyes. The Prince opened it, and remained several moments in silent contemplation of its contents. He then plunged in his hand and brought forth a ribbon, which he kissed passionately, shedding tears of tenderness.

“Ah!” he cried, “little ribbon of my lost love, when shall I see thy mistress again?”

Then replacing the ribbon in the casket, he drew forth an elegant gauze scarf, which he also kissed and caressed and kissed again.

“Ah!” he murmured, “charming scarf of my lost love, when shall I see thy mistress again?”



“WHEN SHALL I SEE THY MISTRESS AGAIN?”

Finally he drew forth a locket studded with diamonds and, covering it with kisses, exclaimed—

“Ah! locket of my lost love, when shall I see thy mistress again?”

Soon afterwards the Prince and his companions withdrew to their rooms. The laundress, left alone in the dining-room, felt herself drawn by an irresistible force towards the table on which were still the remains of their repast. Notwithstanding the pangs of hunger, she would not have dared to touch any of the viands had not an invisible hand compelled her to sit down in the chair of the Prince himself. At the same time she heard the mysterious voice say—

“Now thou canst satisfy thy hunger.”

Thus encouraged, she commenced to eat with extraordinary appetite. And while tasting the marvellous viands spread before her she was suddenly plunged into a profound slumber. When she awoke it was broad daylight. She opened her eyes and found herself in the midst of the country, lying under the same tree where she had attempted to eat the orange. Near her was the linen she had brought with her, and, strange to relate, there also was the truant orange.

“I cannot bear to think it is all a dream,” said the laundress to herself. “What if I return to the place where I entered the fairy palace, just to assure myself that all the wonderful things I have seen were not the creations of my own fancy?”

As she spoke she threw the orange on the ground in order to see if it would again roll beyond her reach, so

that she might follow it. But the orange did nothing of the sort, and presently stopped in the most natural way in the world.

Hereupon the young girl, much disappointed, picked it up, tore off the peel, and found that inside it was exactly like other fruit of its kind. She ate it, and detected no difference in its taste from the flavour of other oranges.

No longer doubting that she had been dreaming, the young girl nevertheless made up her mind to go to the Princess and tell her of her adventure, leaving her Royal Highness to form her own opinion of the matter.

When the Princess Fortunia heard the story of the laundress she did not for a moment doubt that the beautiful green bird was in reality a handsome and amiable young man, transformed by a mysterious enchantment, and when the girl described the esteem, admiration, and affection he had shown towards her she nearly fainted with delight.

"Now indeed," said she, "I may justly be called the Princess Fortunia, for I am sure I have found the consort who is worthy to possess my heart. Nor can it be doubted that he is brave, generous, and loyal."

"Your Royal Highness," said the laundress, "I am convinced you have guessed the truth; but if you will permit me to offer an opinion, I should choose the equerry."

"Indeed," said the Princess; "in that case you shall marry him yourself, and my Lady-in-Waiting, if she likes, shall marry the secretary. But the first thing to be considered is to break the enchantment of the three young men turned into birds."

From this moment the Princess was transfigured, ceased to be sad and ill, and thought only of the means of breaking the fatal spell.

Now it happened that far away in Asia there lived a King to whom popular belief attributed the privileges usually accorded only to genii. He was known as the Khan of Tartary. To this potentate Princess Fortunia sent seven wise men laden with rich presents, their mission being to ascertain, if possible, if any means existed of dissolving the charm which weighed upon the Emerald Prince. They returned from their Embassy bearers of a sealed letter.

Trembling with emotion, the Princess broke the seal, but as soon as she had glanced at the parchment within she uttered an exclamation of disappointment; the letter was written in a language to which she was a total stranger. The linguists employed by the Government to translate foreign tongues were immediately sent for, but none of them could make head or tail of the contents of the mysterious letter. The members of the twelve Royal Academies were then charged with the difficult task, but were no more successful than their predecessors.

In despair the Princess adopted a desperate resolution, and the next day the King, her father, found her boudoir deserted, and on the table a letter in the following terms:—

“MY DEAR FATHER,—Do not seek for me, and do not attempt to find out whither I have gone, if you do not wish to see me die. Let it suffice you to know that

I am alive and well, but that no one shall see me again until I have deciphered the mysterious letter of the Khan, and delivered from enchantment my beloved Prince. Adieu.

“Your loving child,

“FORTUNIA.”

At a very short distance from the capital high mountains reared their snowy peaks. No one had ever dared to risk attempting to climb these forbidding crags. It was said that one single human being was there spending his miserable days, imposing upon himself the most severe penance, and living in an odour of sanctity. Some even pretended that he was immortal, for nobody in the country remembered at what period he had retreated to the mountains, where he was only seen at rare intervals.

It was this holy hermit that Princess Fortunia had resolved to seek and consult. Accompanied only by two faithful attendants she went away on foot. During seven days and seven nights they wandered among the inaccessible rocks and brushwood. By day they painfully forced their way through innumerable obstacles, and at night sheltered themselves in the caves formed by the rocks. They had no one to guide them, because none had ever before attempted to penetrate these solitudes, and also because every one feared the curse of the hermit, certain to be launched at any rash invader of his retreat, or who should interrupt his prayers. As may be guessed, the hermit so ready with his curses was a Pagan. Notwithstanding the natural kindness of his heart, his sombre

and terrible religion imposed upon him the duty of uttering execrations and anathemas.

At last on the evening of the seventh day, the exhausted travellers were about to rest in an enormous cavern, when, at its farther end, they perceived the hermit himself, engaged in prayer. A lamp illumined with an uncertain light this melancholy and mysterious retreat.

The hermit, whose beard was as white as the driven snow, whose skin was wrinkled like a raisin, and whose body resembled a skeleton, cast upon them a penetrating look from eyes which shone like coals of fire, and said, in a joyous and gentle voice—

“Thanks to the gods, you have come at last! I have been waiting for you for a hundred years. Often I have prayed for death, but I could not die before having fulfilled a duty imposed upon me by the King of the Genii. Behold in me the only *savant* who is able to speak the language of Babel before the confusion of tongues. Every noun in this incomparable language contains in its letters the essence of the thing named. All things when they hear themselves called by their true name obey those who call them. So great was the power of the human race when it possessed this language that it undertook to climb to Heaven, and these impious men might have succeeded in their ambitious purpose if the gods had not deprived them of their original language. There is in the world one person only who can decipher the letter of the Khan of Tartary—I am he! And it was expressly to render you this service that the King of the Genii has preserved my life during many centuries.”



THE HERMIT

Hearing this, Princess Fortunia presented to the hermit the mysterious letter, and he drew near the lamp in order to read it. During two hours he continued to read it aloud. At each word that he pronounced the globe trembled, the stars were covered with darkness, the moon quivered in the heavens as her reflection quivers in the waves of the ocean. The Princess and her two faithful attendants were obliged to close their eyes and to stop their ears to avoid seeing the spectres which were evoked, and in order to prevent hearing the terrible and prodigious sounds which came from the centre of Nature, as if agitated by an earthquake.

When the reading of the letter was finished the hermit said in a tranquil voice—

“The Emerald Prince is, by his virtues, talent, and beauty, the favourite of the King of the Genii, who has saved him a thousand times from the devices of the Khan of Tartary. This wicked sorcerer, finding it impossible to kill his victim, changed him into a bird, in order to render it impossible that he should ever reign over his subjects, and that the Khan himself might be able to usurp his throne. The King of the Genii ordained, however, that the enchantment should cease when a Princess of high rank should fall desperately in love with the green bird without having seen him more than three times.

“I have only two minutes more to live, and I shall employ them in imparting to you the secret means of liberating the Emerald Prince.

“I am about to transport all three of you to the palace of the Prince himself, near the topaz fountain.

You will see the birds bathing. You will witness the transformation which takes place daily; but you must not show yourselves until the Prince asks for the casket



of his dreams, draws forth and kisses the ribbon, and exclaims—

“Ah, little ribbon of my lost love, when shall I see thy mistress again?”

“At the same instant you are to come forth from

your hiding-place and kiss each of the three Princes on the left cheek."

Scarcely had the hermit pronounced these words than he made an extraordinary grimace, opened his mouth as if gasping for breath, stretched out his legs, and fell dead!

At the same instant the Princess and her companions found themselves in the shade of the foliage which overhung the topaz fountain, and thus so far had been accomplished the miraculous journey promised by the hermit.

The rest followed in due course, and when the Princess Fortunia, with maidenly modesty, kissed the cheek of the Emerald Prince, and her lady of honour had followed her mistress's example and embraced the secretary, whilst the laundress gave the equerry a similar token of her regard, the Khan of Tartary expired suddenly, and the Emerald Prince was at once placed in possession of his throne.

Never again did the three young men assume their green plumage. The three weddings were celebrated at the same time with great pomp and magnificence. The three couples were superlatively happy, the Emerald Prince and Princess Fortunia as Emperor and Empress; the secretary and the Lady of Honour as Grand Master and Grand Mistress of the Household; and the equerry and the laundress respectively as Lord Chamberlain and Lady of the Bedchamber.

A PENNILESS PRINCE

A PENNILESS PRINCE

THE little Prince was looking out of the window, leaning on the edge with both elbows, and a very sad little Prince he was.

He so much wanted to give Rhaenetta a present.

It would be her birthday the day after to-morrow, and he had no money, and no one would give him any.

The Prince was seven years old, and Rhaenetta was his cousin, and she was only five. She lived at the castle and was his constant companion, for her own father and mother were dead. She was the prettiest Princess in the world, he believed, with her face like a wild rose and her silky hair almost to her feet.

It did not matter to him how many other presents she had. If she had not one from him, she would wonder and think him unkind, he was sure. Truly, he had never given her one before, having no money; but then last year, and the year before that, when she first came to the castle, she had been so young. She never noticed all the cards and papers tied on the things saying who sent them.

But now the Princess could read, and would find out that there was no paper saying, "With best love from Hirandi." So he knelt in the great carved chair, and stared

dismally out at the sunset, and two big tears splashed on to the stone ledge.

And then, before any more could drop, a grand idea came to him, a plan by which he could get plenty of money, if only it could be carried out.

He must find a Leprechaun.

Now every one knows a Leprechaun is a Cobbler-fairy who makes the fairies' shoes.

These Cobbler-fairies always have stores of hidden treasures; and if any one can find and catch a Leprechaun, or watch one to his hiding-place, he is entitled to help himself to the good things he may find there. And the Leprechauns know this, so they take the greatest care never to be seen by mortal eyes; or, if by chance one should be so unwary that he be noticed by man or child, he glides away so quickly and silently that he nearly always escapes.

If he could only catch a Leprechaun, thought the Prince, there would be an end of the trouble. And if it were to be done at all it must be done now, there was no time to lose, and no one must be told, or they would prevent his going.

The heavy curtains hid him as he slipped through the window, and let himself down by the thick creeper that grew just below.

The room that the Prince had left was one which looked out on the side of the castle that was sheer over the edge of the precipice, and he knew that there would be hardly a ledge to stand upon when he reached the ground. There was nothing for it but to go down into the depths of the

ravine below. And that was just what he intended to do. He had been looking long into its mysterious gloom, and because it was so like a place where fairies would live the thought of the Leprechaun had occurred to him.

At last he reached the bottom, bruised, and torn, and dirty. No one would have recognised him for the velvet-clad Prince who had started from the castle window up in the clouds above.

It was almost dark now; he stumbled on, getting extremely tired and sleepy, and soon determined that as nothing could be done in the dark he would lie down and rest until the moon came up. So he groped about, and came upon a delightful little nest between two great stones, where the thick ferns and the mossy ground made it almost as soft as his bed at home. He crept in, curled up like a squirrel, and was fast asleep in two minutes.

The Magician had been up all night, studying the stars.

He and the Student who lived with him were sitting at the cave mouth. The Student was eating a good breakfast of wild berries, honey, and bread; and the Magician, with a great book still open on his knees, ate a mouthful now and then between his reading, and neither spoke a word.

The Student sighed. He would have drummed his heel on the ground, except for the presence of the Magician. He looked at the sky and then into the valley, for the cave was some little way up the side of the ravine, and then he sighed again.

But the sigh was arrested in the middle, and an exclamation of surprise made the Magician look up.

"Dear me, what manners you have," he said. "Shall I never teach you to control your emotions and cultivate a philosophic calm."

"There is a boy down below, master, a real boy."

The Magician turned. "True, so there is. A youth of enterprise, without doubt, though he is so young. Go down and invite him to partake of our hospitality."

The Student, a boy some years older than the Prince, ran down the rough steps so quickly as to be in danger of arriving at the bottom upon his head. However, no mishap occurred, and it was the Prince's turn to be astonished when he was confronted so unexpectedly.

"I say," said the Student, as he shook hands with the Prince energetically, "I'm delighted to see you. I have not seen a real boy for years. My master—that is the great Magician—invites you to breakfast with us. Do come."

The Prince needed no pressing, and they climbed the steps. The Magician examined the Prince critically from under his overhanging white brows, and Hirandi sat down with constraint, knowing the keen eyes were watching him. But he made a very good breakfast, he was so very hungry. Then the Magician spoke.

"What brings you here, my son, and from whence do you come?"

The Prince timidly answered that he came from the King's castle, and wanted a Leprechaun.

"A Leprechaun!" said the Magician. "You do not mean one of those midget creatures who sit hammering by the toadstools, and are always under one's feet?"



P. SAVAGE

THE STUDENT AND THE MAGICIAN SAT AT THE CAVE MOUTH

The Prince said it was what he meant. He was glad to hear they were so plentiful—near at hand, too.

And after more questions the Magician got at the facts. He seemed disappointed that the matter was so very trifling, hardly worth a thought from him. And the Prince felt very guilty in having troubled so great a man about so unimportant a matter.

“I really cannot say at the moment how you had better proceed,” said the Magician, after some consideration. “I have never given any attention to the matter of catching Leprechauns. But I will place at your disposal some valuable works on astrology, and after a few years’ study no doubt you will be able to proceed with confidence, to your satisfaction.”

Books on astrology! It sounded an alarming subject, worse than the exercises at the end of his Latin book, that he was always certain he would never be able to do. “A few years, too!” and Rhaenetta’s birthday was the day after to-morrow; no, only to-morrow, now.

The Prince’s heart sank into his shoes.

But he dared make no objection; he looked at the Student and saw that he was smiling, delighted at the thought at having a companion at last.

“Whatever shall I do?” whispered the Prince. The Magician had gone into a deep recess at the back of the cave to find the book he wanted.

“Oh, I’ll help you,” whispered the Student joyfully. “We shall get on famously. I shan’t mind staying here if there’s another boy too.”

No more could be said, for the Magician came back; and now the work of the day began.

He set the Student his lessons, and then turned to the Prince. He gave him a great brown book—the leaves were nearly as brown as the cover—and told him that, as he at present knew nothing, he (the Magician) had selected the simplest book for him to begin upon, and that he would no doubt find the study deeply interesting, apart from the “very trifling object of learning to catch Leprechauns.”

They all went into the cave, and the Student lit a lamp that hung from the roof. Each took a place at the stone table in the centre, the boys sitting on roughly-made wooden stools, and the Magician in a high-backed chair, with grinning heads carved on the arms and strange symbols in colours all over it.

The Prince was provided with tablets of thin horn, and a pencil to make notes; and a deep silence fell. Hour after hour passed, and the patch of sunlight on the floor crept round by degrees, and at last disappeared altogether. The Prince had opened his book at the first page, and dared not turn over very often, in case the Magician should notice, and think he was getting on too fast to be giving his studies proper attention. He wished he had known how long it was usual to take to learn a page or so in a book on astrology. For a time he had tried to read what was written, but found it impossible to understand a single line. He would have liked to look at the wonderful diagrams and pictures of stars and suns and moons that he could see were there when he stealthily turned up the corners of the leaves. But he could not

venture upon much of that either. So he copied sentences on to his tablets and pretended to be reading, wondering the while whatever would happen if the Magician should, later on, want to hear his lessons, and so find out he had not learnt a word. About noon a diversion occurred, and then it was not so dull.

The Magician remarked to the Student that he had better try some experiments, relating to the proposition he had been learning.

The Student jumped up eagerly, and as he passed behind the chair quite shocked the Prince by making grimaces at the Magician while he stretched his cramped arms and legs. Then going to the recess he brought out an assortment of strange instruments, and, explaining his intentions by vigorous signs, he considerably selected a corner where the Prince could see without turning, and he proceeded to make a fire on the ground.

First he placed sticks, which he had dipped into a liquid contained in a jar, and upon these he put lumps of dark red stuff that looked like clay, and the whole blazed into a small but fierce fire when he blew upon it.

"To what proposition does this refer?" asked the Magician.

"To number fifteen thousand and eight—how to turn a spider into a lizard, please, sir."

"Good. Have you provided a spider of suitable size and age?"

"Yes, sir; I caught one yesterday," said the Student, putting his hand into his pocket, and drawing out a box about four inches square.

The Magician turned again to his reading, and the Student put the box on the ground in a convenient place with a stone upon the top—the Prince was glad of that. He then scattered white powder from a twisted glass tube in a ring round the fire, and, about two inches distant, another ring outside the first.

Then, having for a moment referred to his book on the table, he went back to the fire, took up the box and lifted out a very large and very vigorous black spider.

Its long, hairy legs kicked in all directions, and the Prince hastily drew up his own legs and tucked them under him on the stool. The Student put it between the two rings of white powder round the fire, and when there the spider seemed unable to escape. It ran about, quickly at first and then more slowly, and then stopped altogether. The Student said some magic words, waved his hands over the fire three times, and lo, in place of the spider, some hideous object leaped from the fire and ran across the cave.

The Student looked at the Prince, who saw, by his expression, that something had gone wrong, and then he darted after it, and an exciting chase began.

“Foolish, careless boy, what have you done?” exclaimed the Magician, rising from his seat, while the Prince, forgetting his awe in his alarm, jumped upon the table.

The creature the Student had made, whatever else it might be, was nimble. He and the Magician, rushing to and fro, took some time in catching it.

When at last the Magician held it up, the Prince saw

a strange animal, shaped like a lizard, but with eight hairy legs like a spider.

"Disgraceful!" said the Magician, regarding it with disgust. "This child here, with a morning's study, could have done it better."

The Prince devoutly hoped he was not going to tell him to try; and only breathed freely again when the Magician had tossed the lizard out of the cave on to the grass, where it changed into a spider again, and lost no time in making its escape.

The Student stood, looking very much ashamed of himself, before the Magician, who frowned darkly, his deep eyes quite disappearing under his bushy brows.

"Do not stir from the cave to-day," he said. "Get book number thirteen and learn the whole of the seven rules for passing through dungeon walls in invisible form, and the ten rules for gathering gold dust scattered by the four winds. I am now going out, and I shall expect to see you perform these exercises correctly on my return at midnight."

With that he put his book back into its place, took down another, and went out with it under his arm. The Student stole to the cave mouth and looked after him for some time, and then he returned, sat down in the Magician's chair, leaned back, and put his feet upon the table.

"Shall you be able to learn all those dreadful things?" asked the Prince, in an awestruck voice.

"Don't know—I shall consider. It's very awkward living with a Magician. If you don't do what he tells

you, he may change you into a rat, or shut you up in a tree-trunk for a year—you never know. I hate it all. I told my father I did not want to be a Magician, but he would put me here."

"My father does not want me to be a Magician," said the Prince. "I shall be a King some day, so it would not be necessary. And I wanted to be home for Rhaenetta's birthday. I did not think I should have to learn astrology to find a Leprechaun."

"I know," cried the Student, springing to his feet. "There are plenty of ways of finding out things more quickly than by astrology, that may take you the rest of your life. I will do it, and you shall help."

"Can you, will you? That would do beautifully," said the Prince eagerly, then adding, "But what will the Magician say?"

"He will not know. This is my plan. I will work the charm. When we have found out what we want to know we will run away, catch the Leprechaun, and get the treasure. Then we will go home to your castle, and you can make me your page, or something of that sort, in return for my services. I *should* like to live at Court."

"Oh, yes, I certainly will," cried the Prince. "Let us begin at once."

"It will have to be a very strong charm and incantation," said the Student, as he began to busy himself with the necessary preparations. "We cannot afford to waste any time, as we must escape before midnight."

He picked up the instruments still lying about and put them away, taking out two wands, one of which he

gave the Prince and the other he kept for himself. He pulled a heavy copper tripod from near the wall, and they set it in an open space, where the Student drew a triangle round it with the end of his wand, which left a glowing green mark on the ground where he had touched it.

Then a fire was made in the bowl-shaped top of the tripod, in the same way as it had been in the spider experiment, and the flames leaped up and hissed, and the wood crackled.

“There is nothing more to be done,” said the Student, “until the fire dies down; when it does, smoke rings will begin to form, and you will hear voices talking. You need not be frightened, and you must not on any account speak a word. If you do, until the time I shall tell you of, you will break the charm. When the smoke grows thick I shall begin the incantation. A spirit will arise from the fire, then you must walk round the tripod, holding the wand in your left hand. At the fourteenth round—or is it the twenty-fourth?” he paused to consider for a moment—“no, at the fourteenth round, you must take the wand into your right hand, touch the spirit with it, and say ‘Awake, Kehani!’ Then the spirit will tell us what we want to know. Now we must wait and watch the fire.”

They brought their stools near and sat down. It was a long and weary waiting. The Prince was alarmed in case the Magician should return, and he grew nervous and excited about his own share in these strange doings. The fire burned brightly, but when at last it began to

fade, he did not know whether he was glad or sorry. As the Student had said, rings of smoke began to form over the fire, and whispering voices filled the cave. They could hear the words, "The Owl, the brown Owl!" but could distinguish nothing else. The voices murmured on, growing louder. Presently the smoke grew more dense. The Student got up, with a finger on his lips, and the Prince rose also. The Student approached the fire; he had an old parchment in his hand, and unrolled it.

Then he began the incantation, reading from the roll in a slow, monotonous tone.

Silently there arose a spirit from the fire, white and still. Flames played about him as he came up, but he neither moved nor spoke, standing like a statue, with folded hands and closed eyes.

The Prince was ready. His beating heart seemed to choke him; but he remembered what he was to do. He began his walk, counting carefully each time he passed the Student, who read quietly on.

At the fourteenth round he passed the wand into his right hand, and stopped before the statue. He reached up, for he was very small, and touched the Spirit on the shoulder, saying in a trembling voice: "Awake, Kehani!"

There was a clap of thunder that shook the ground like an earthquake, and a thousand voices screamed.

The Spirit opened his eyes, threw up his arms with a cry, and all was dark.

"Are you there?" whispered the Student presently, sitting up where he had fallen.

"Yes," answered the Prince's voice from the other side of the cave. He had been lying wondering if he were alive or dead. "What has happened?"

"It was your fault. It's all gone wrong—you woke the Spirit too soon."



"My fault!" shouted the Prince. "How dare you say so! I did it exactly as you told me."

"Oh, well, it does not matter now. We must go instantly. The whole cave is wrecked, and everything is broken."

The light began to steal in again, and the Prince saw that it was so. Broken glass and earthen pots were strewn upon the floor, among pools of different coloured liquids, which ran into each other, spluttering and steaming where they met. Books lay with their leaves crushed

and wet among the heaps, and the copper bowl of the tripod showed a gaping crack, while the remains of the fire smouldered among the curling sheets of the parchment upon which it had fallen.

The two boys looked at the ruin with dismay, and at each other. Then the Student took the Prince's hand, and they fled from the place.

They ran for an hour over the rough ground, hardly pausing for breath, stumbling over tree-roots and hurting their feet against the stones, until the Prince panted out that he could go no farther.

"We may as well rest," said the Student. "It will be safe here. He never comes so far," of course meaning the Magician.

They both lay down on the ground, and the Prince's eyes were closing when the Student caught him by the arm, and whispered, excitedly, "The Owl, the Owl!"

There sat a solemn brown owl on a stump quite near them, and without a word more the Student rapidly untwisted the scarf he wore round his waist, and crept up behind it. He threw the scarf deftly over the unsuspecting bird, and triumphantly returned with it, struggling and fighting in the folds.

"What do you want him for? What shall we do with him?" asked the Prince.

"I don't know yet," said the Student. "But it is safest to make sure of him. You remember the voices in the cave said 'the Owl.' He has something to do with the catching of a Leprechaun, you may be sure."

"I object," cried the Owl. "You have no right at all!

Who ever saw boys down here before? If I had not been off my guard, you never could have done it."

"But I have done it," said the Student. "And now I mean to keep you. You are wise, I know, and may be able to assist us; and then, if I approve of what you say I may let you go. I don't say I shall, but I may."

"It's abominable, it's outrageous! If you only want my advice, you could have had it without insulting me in this way."

"We are only wasting time," said the Student coolly. "I will put the case before you. We are in search of a Leprechaun. Can you tell us how to catch one?"

"Why, fly above, silently, and pounce down upon him before he can escape, as you would with a mouse. A bird just out of the egg could have told you that."

"No doubt it is very simple," said the Student; "but, you see, we cannot fly."

"I suppose you mean you want me to catch you one," said the Owl. "On condition that you immediately give me my liberty, I promise to bring one here to you within half-an-hour."

The Prince joyfully clapped his hands.

"That would suit us very well," said the Student. "There—you are free. It is dark enough for you to see now. We shall wait here for you."

The Owl rose and floated away rapidly, but as silently as a drifting leaf.

And now the most difficult part of the Prince's quest was over, for the Owl kept his promise to the letter.

Not half the appointed time had passed before he

came back. So quietly that, until they felt the wind from the movement of his large wings, they had not known he was near. In his claws he carried a small fairy—a veritable Leprechaun at last!

A wee creature, in pointed scarlet cap, and green coat, who fought and kicked and screamed.

He still held a tiny hammer in one hand and a shoe in the other. The Owl gave him into the hands of the Student and was gone.

Nothing could be done with the Leprechaun until they had succeeded in pacifying him, assuring him that they meant to do him no harm. The Prince took a top-string from his pocket, and this they tied securely round his waist, keeping hold of the end.

Then once more the Student and the Prince explained their plan.

The Leprechaun very naturally made great objection. But as he became convinced that there was nothing else to be done, he reluctantly started before them down the winding valley, and a troublesome night journey began.

The day was dawning before they reached a large cleft in the side of the rocks, and into it the Leprechaun led them. Soon they came to a passage, dark and narrow and low. The Leprechaun was the only one who could stand upright in it. Then they emerged into an open space, and stood at last among the Leprechaun's treasures.

Bags of gold and caskets of jewels, strings of pearls hanging on the walls, baskets of uncut stones, and silver loose in heaps. The whole lighted up by one great diamond, set on a shelf for a lamp.



P. SAVAGE

IN HIS CLAWS HE CARRIED A SMALL FAIRY

The Leprechaun alternately beamed with pride and joy and groaned in despair at his misfortune.

"How mean you must be," said the Prince, "to want to keep all this to yourself! I am sure I would give you some if it were mine."

"I should not so much mind a little," said the Leprechaun; "but you intend to have it all."

"No, indeed!" said the Prince hastily. "We should not on any account take it all. We will fill our pockets with gold, and I will take this ruby necklace for Rhaenetta, that is all."

"Well," said the Leprechaun, "I am extremely obliged to you." And he showed his gratitude by helping to fill their pockets, putting the ruby necklace in for the Prince with his own hands, though he had to stand on a heap of rough emeralds to reach.

Then the string by which they had held him was cut, but the Leprechaun delayed them as they turned to the passage. "I will do you a service I had not intended," he said. He led them to a sloping path on one side of his treasure-house, walking in front, with the diamond for a lamp, and presently they found themselves in a dark, open space again, dimly lit through an iron grating.

"Do you know where you are?" said the Leprechaun to the Prince.

He replied that he did not.

"You are in the cellars under your castle," said the Leprechaun. And without another word he disappeared, and was never seen afterwards.

Then a thought flashed into the Prince's mind, and

took away any remaining stings of conscience about appropriating the Leprechaun's treasures.

This passage from the castle cellars might account for many losses of valuables; jewels belonging to his mother, and the golden cups used by the King, losses which had never been accounted for. He looked back indignantly towards the Leprechaun's cave, and then they groped their way to the door.

The Student had no fault to find with his reception at Court. He was installed at once as gentleman-in-waiting when anything could be thought of but the rejoicings over the return of the lost Prince.

It was Rhaenetta's birthday, and she dried her tears because Hirandi had come home, and among all her lovely presents not one equalled his.

And years afterwards, when there was a grand wedding at Court for the Prince and the little Princess, who had grown tall and more beautiful than ever, the most admired of all the bride's gifts was a pair of the daintiest shoes in the world, gold woven, and encrusted with every costly jewel. They came in the night, no one saw how. But Prince Hirandi had not forgotten. He knew the little Cobbler was grateful that his treasures had never been touched again. And no more valuable things had mysteriously disappeared from the castle either since the time when he had gone in search of a Leprechaun.

THE SHIP THAT WORKED
WITHOUT WIND OR SAIL



I CANNOT tell how long ago it was—I can only say with certainty that it was long before almanacs were invented or thought of by anybody—when there lived a fairy named Grumstella, who was never so happy as when she was doing harm to somebody.

Now, before King Scoribon was born, one of the best friends of his mother, Queen Dulcetta, was the fairy Tendrilla, of whose company she was very fond, not only because it was so pleasant to her, but because it presented so great a contrast to that of Grumstella, who always contrived to make her visits disagreeable.

At the time when the Queen's little son—afterwards King Scorbion—was born, Grumstella was biding her time to do her an ill turn, in revenge for her liking of Tendrilla.

With whirlwind speed she set off for the palace, in order to get there before Tendrilla. The pair of griffins that were drawing her carriage at a break-neck pace through the air were not going fast enough for her impatience, and, just as they were turning a sharp cloud-corner, she took to lashing them both cruelly, with the result that both fell, and one damaged his legs and the other his wings.

Nobody can fully describe an ugly and wicked fairy's rage, so I can only say that no rage could be greater than Grumstella's, which, if that were possible, became greater still when, on arriving at the palace, she found that her detested rival had already been three minutes and a half with the Queen, and had endowed the baby Prince with good looks, kind-heartedness, and a clever mind.

"You've not left much for *me* to give him," she said, with an evil smile; "but I'll give him *something*."

"What will you give my son?" asked the Queen uneasily.

"Something that will serve to amuse him—which Tendrilla's gifts are not likely to do."

And as she spoke she opened the Prince's tiny right hand and put a little black spider into it.

The Queen uttered a cry of alarm and the fairy Tendrilla turned pale; and that delighted Grumstella, who left

the palace laughing so boisterously as to frighten a peacock who was spreading his tail on the roof of the palace, so that he fell into the courtyard below in a swoon, which will convey an idea of how shocking her laughter must have been to hear.

When the Prince grew up and became the King he had a daughter, about whom the fairies do not seem to have troubled themselves one way or another. She was called Vivanne, and was as good as she was beautiful, and that was as beautiful as a Princess could be. Of course, when she grew old enough to marry there were many young Princes who wanted to marry her; but she only cared for one of them, Prince Persevere, who was ready to do everything that a Prince could do to win her. But the King, her father, threw obstacles in his way.

King Scoribon had peculiar notions and did peculiar things. One of his peculiarities was a liking for spiders. He had a wing of the Royal palace fitted up as a museum, in which were specimens of spiders, collected from every part of the world; while adjoining it he had thousands of living spiders, whom it was his pleasure to feed and admire.

People thought this was merely a queer whim of his, not knowing that it was no whim at all, but the spiteful work of Grumstella, who, being a fairy, had foreseen that the King would never be happy so long as he had the idea that there was still one spider wanting to complete his collection, and that idea she had taken care to instil into his mind by conveying to him a report that there

was, hidden in some dim recess in some remote part of the globe, a spider differing from every other in the world.

The King was constantly thinking of how he could get possession of the coveted insect, to which he knew the name of Crucifix-spider had been given, owing to its being marked with a snow-white cross upon its ebony-black back. He offered tempting rewards for it, and adventurous travellers had gone to the most likely and most unlikely places in the world in search of it, but without success. More than once he had even thought of going himself in quest of it, but had been deterred from carrying out his purpose by considerations of State. At last, just as he was on the point of abandoning hope, a new and promising idea entered his mind: what if he tried the effect of a promised reward?—making it, this time, the hand of the Princess Vivanne. If *that* failed to bring him the Crucifix-spider, the quest was hopeless.

On this project being announced to her by a grim old lady-in-waiting the heart of the Princess became very heavy indeed and her beautiful, soft eyes very red with weeping. Prince Persevere said all he could think of to cheer her, and at last succeeded in making her believe that if the Crucifix-spider was anywhere to be found he would find it and come back with it in triumph.

When one does not know where one is going it does not matter in what direction one turns one's steps. The Princess kept back her tears, so that he might not go away thinking that she was less hopeful for his success than he said he was, and gave him a pretty gold locket



ON THIS PROJECT BEING ANNOUNCED TO HER THE HEART OF THE
PRINCESS BECAME VERY HEAVY INDEED

as a love-token for him to wear next his heart and to kiss when his spirits needed cheering. It was a gift from her mother, and contained the wing of a beautiful beetle called a scarab, on which were certain letters of a sentence written in some unknown language—a charm, perhaps; neither the Princess nor her mother knew their meaning.

The Prince often drew forth this token of the Princess's love and kissed it fondly. But though he did this so often, it chanced that he never discovered the locket's contents until one evening when he was resting in the shade of a giant oak tree. Just as he was raising the locket to his lips a big scarab flew blindly up against it and nearly knocked it out of his hand, falling half stunned at the Prince's feet.

"Why don't you mind where you're going?" said the Prince.

"Why don't you, if you come to that?" retorted the scarab, in a tiny, humming voice, while struggling to get upon its legs, for it had fallen on its back.

"I'm not going—I'm resting," said the Prince.

"Well, we won't bandy words over it now it's done," said the scarab; "only you might lend me a hand to get on my feet, will you, after having knocked me over, and if it won't trouble you too much?"

"I shouldn't mind if it did," replied the Prince, stooping and setting the bright little beetle on his hairy legs again.

"Thanks," said the scarab, "for it *was* my fault, after all. No, it wasn't!" it suddenly said, catching

sight of the locket which was hanging open upon the gold chain by which it hung about the Prince's neck ;
"I *had* to do it!"



"What do you mean by 'had to do it'?" asked the Prince in a puzzled tone.

"What—don't you know what's inside your locket?" asked the scarab in astonishment.

Then, for the first time, the Prince became aware of its contents, but without drawing any enlightenment from the discovery ; for, of course, he could make nothing

of the mysterious letters on the scarab's wing, though he felt sure they meant something—something of importance, he could not help thinking.

"I see you can't make out what you are looking at," said the scarab. "Well, as one good turn deserves another, I'll read it for you. It says: 'This is to command every scarab in the universe to go to the assistance of any possessor of this charm who has lost his way and to direct him to wherever he wants to go.—Signed, Scarab I., King of Scarabia.' I need not ask whether *you* have lost your way, because you wouldn't be here if you hadn't."

"Why not here as well as anywhere else?" queried the Prince; "as I was not going anywhere in particular, it was just as likely I should come in this direction as that I should have gone in another."

"Whichever way you went it would be with an object, I suppose?" argued the scarab.

"My object is to find a spider," replied the Prince.

"Well, you need not walk your legs off doing *that*—there's any number of the ugly brutes about you—one half-way up your left arm at this moment," said the scarab.

"But the one I want to find differs from all the rest," the Prince said; "it is as black as jet, and is marked with a white cross on its back. Do you happen ever to have seen such a one?"

"Never," replied the scarab, "and I think I have pried into every hole and corner in this country; but I can give you a hint: you are much more likely to hear news of the brute you want in Spideria."

"Can you direct me the way there?" asked the Prince eagerly.

"No, *I* can't, but I know a centipede who may be able to; he's a great traveller—that's why he has so many feet," replied the scarab. "Come on, and I'll introduce you to him."

The Prince thanked and followed his guide by a zig-zag path. Happily the centipede was at home, and received his visitors civilly, though as a rule he is not partial to the company of strangers.

"Look here, Centi!" said the scarab familiarly, "this friend of mine wants you to put him on the road to Spideria—can you do it to oblige me?"

"He won't like it when he gets there—if he ever does," suggested the centipede.

"I'll take my chance," said the Prince bravely.

"That's easily said, but how are you going to take it?" objected the centipede; "there's only one conveyance—the ship that goes without wind or sail—and you'll never get on board that. *I* only got on board by accident, through being laid up with a blister on one of my feet, in a crack in one of the timbers of which that ship is built."

"Only tell me where to find it," begged the Prince.

"Can't," said the centipede, "because the owner, when he isn't using it, hides it where nobody but himself can find it. But I tell you what I can do—I'll introduce you to his brother, and *he* may be able to help you."

The Prince, taking heart, lavished thanks on his new friend, and the three set off to find the brother of the owner

of the ship that went without wind or sail; but when they got to his house, which was at the entrance to a deep and dark ravine, it was, unfortunately, to find that he was out and nobody at home to tell them how soon he was expected to return.

"We can't do any more for you," said both the scarab and the centipede; "still, you needn't give it up, you know—you can hang about here till he turns up. So, good evening, and good luck to you."

On being left to his own devices the Prince thought that the best he could do to kill time was to explore the ravine near which his two obliging little friends had left him. He found it almost choked with tangled bushes and weeds, but through these he forced his way, urged, he could not tell why, by a wish to see what the farther end of it was like, and found it closed by a high wall of rock in which there were a number of wide fissures. That was all that met his eyes, and he was



just going to retrace his steps, thinking that his exploration was not worth the trouble it had cost him to make it, when the sound of a faint voice reached his ears, calling for help.

Turning instantly in the direction from which the appeal came he beheld, woven in one of the largest openings in the rocky wall, a gigantic spider's web, the central part of which retreated, in the form of a huge funnel, into the heart of the rock. Each thread of the web was of the thickness of bale-cord, and the whole web was big enough and strong enough to have served for a fishing-net for the capture of sharks, sword-fishes, octopuses, or, indeed, any monsters that swim. But what most shocked the Prince was to discover, bound and utterly helpless on one side of the web, a little, grey-bearded man, who had evidently been caught in its meshes.

Without hesitating for a moment, the Prince drew his sword and tore his way through the thorny bushes to release the unfortunate prisoner; but before he could strike a blow at the web an enormous spider of the tarantula species darted forward from its concealment in the rock and threw out one of its horrible clawed legs and endeavoured to seize him. Enormous in size—the bulk of its dusky brown and speckled body was equal to that of a full-grown man—it was terrific in appearance. In its dreadful head blazed two great red eyes. Its eight legs were nearly all 10 ft. in length and coated with bristles, each as long and as sharp as the quill of a porcupine; and every leg was armed with a claw bigger and sharper than that of an eagle.

Instinctively the Prince sprang back out of the monster's reach, at the same time striking off a great portion of the outstretched limb with his keen sword, causing the hideous insect to utter a hiss of pain and rage so loud and shrill as to be almost a scream. The Prince felt faint with loathing, but his own danger and the sight of the poor man imprisoned in the meshes of the monster's web nerved him, and he attacked the creature with all his might, and, after a long and sickening encounter, succeeded in hewing it to pieces and releasing its terrified prisoner, who owed his life to the fact that the monster had over-gorged himself earlier in the day—having breakfasted off a hare and a rabbit, and dined off a goat and a brace of eaglets; his human prey he was keeping for his supper.

Warm were the little man's expressions of gratitude for his release, and great was his satisfaction on learning from the Prince that it might be in his power to aid him in the quest he was making. While he and his brave preserver were supping he said—

“I know that my brother has the ship that goes without wind or sail; but unfortunately he and I are not such friends as brothers should be.”

“And you have never seen his ship?” asked the Prince.

“Never,” answered the little man, “nor have I ever had the least idea where he hides it. But I can direct you to his house, though I dare not venture there, and you may be able to learn from him—if you find him at home—more than I have succeeded in learning.”

Guided by the little grey man, the Prince lost no time



HE ATTACKED THE CREATURE WITH ALL HIS MIGHT

in going to the house of the owner of the ship that nobody besides himself appeared ever to have seen.

The mysterious traveller's house was built upon the seashore, in a desolate part of the country, where no one would think of going. No sign of the neighbourhood of any sea-going vessel, large or small, was visible. The Prince's heart sank as he took notice of this; but he knocked at the house door, which was opened after a while by a man whom he had no difficulty in at once recognising as the brother of his little grey friend.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" asked the man who stood in the doorway, gruffly and suspiciously, at once.

"My name is Prince Persevere. I am on my travels, and feel sure I could not apply to any one more able to give me some information of which I stand in need than to so great a traveller as yourself," said the Prince politely.

"Who told you that I am a great traveller?" asked the man he was addressing, sharply.

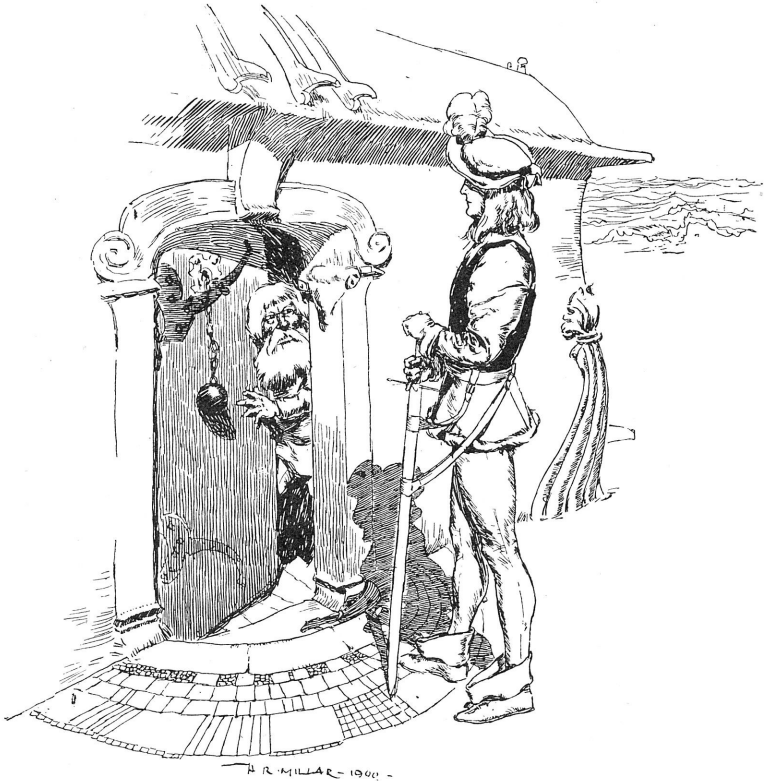
"Can you imagine that, after visiting so many countries as you have visited, you have left no reputation behind you?" asked the Prince, a little artfully.

The face of the man on the doorstep decidedly brightened under the influence of this well-timed piece of flattery.

"Have *you* been in many countries?" he asked.

"Not many," replied the Prince, adding: "The fact is, I am rather peculiar in my tastes. Of course, as a Prince on his travels, I can go anywhere where all other

Princes go when they want to see the world, but that does not satisfy me. *I* want to go to places where other



Princes have never been—places *you* only know of, and you only can reach. Am I not right?"

"Well," said the owner of the ship that went without wind or sail, "I won't say I haven't been to some out-of-

the-way places in my time. But come in, and when I've heard your plans, perhaps I may be able to give you a hint or two."

The Prince found the inside of the traveller's house filled with curios brought from distant countries, and all of strange character.

"What I should like to know," said his host, as soon as they were seated, "is this: Who advised you to come to me?"

"Oh!" replied the Prince, "a man in my position has only too many advisers; at the moment, I don't remember how I first came to hear about your travels. By the way," he went on, "an idea occurs to me: have you ever seen anything like this?" and he showed him the scarab's wing enclosed in his locket, and repeated the translation of the letters upon it he had learned from his friend, the obliging little scarab.

"Where did you pick that up—you've never been to Scarabia, I suppose?" said the traveller.

"It was a present to me," the Prince said, adding: "Do you know the way there if I should want to go to Scarabia?"

"No, I don't know the way, but I could find it all the same," the mysterious traveller replied in a tone so curious as almost to startle the Prince, who tried in vain to explain it to himself.

"But even if I should fancy going to Scarabia," the Prince went on, "there is another place I want to go to first of all. Have you ever been to Spideria?"

"Yes, I've been there," said the traveller, and as he

spoke the Prince thought—though he could not feel sure it was not merely fancy on his part—he saw a slight shudder pass through his host's sturdy frame. "Yes, I've been there, and that's more than anybody else can say, I suppose—and I don't fancy there's a queerer place on the face of the earth for anybody to go to! The King of it is a spider, the Queen of it is a spider, and all their subjects are spiders, and ugly ones, too! But the oddest thing of all there is that the King—though, at first sight, he looks like all the rest—is very much unlike any of the others, and that's why he is their King!"

"I know," cried the Prince eagerly; "he bears a mark—a wonderfully distinguishing mark on his jet-black back—a white cross!"

"I must, at some time, have let that out in my sleep," muttered the mysterious traveller hoarsely. "Well," he said, "that's the truth, however *you* came to know it."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the Prince exultingly. "I've set my heart on making the acquaintance of that King! Take me to him, and I'll make your fortune!"

"I've made one already," replied his mysterious host.

"What will tempt you to take me to Spideria?"

"Nothing that I can think of."

"Let me help you to an idea," said the Prince. "I have offered you a second fortune for the service I ask of you; suppose I now tell you that refusal will certainly cost you your life?"

"What do you want to get at that King for?"

"To capture him and bring him away."

The mysterious traveller reflected for a time and then replied, speaking as much to himself as to the Prince—

“It would be amusing to carry off their King, the poisonous little beasts!—for they'd never be able to find another with the right mark on his back; and then they'd break out into rebellion and perhaps kill each other, which I suppose nobody would much mind their doing.”

“Are you making up your mind?” asked the Prince.

“I was a minute ago, but I've got through the work now. I'll take you under to Spideria.”

“You mean over the sea to Spideria?”

“No, I don't,” the mysterious shipowner replied, with a short, dry laugh; “but I've first got to make a bargain with you. Before we go any further, will you pledge me your word as a Prince that, if I take you there and bring you back, you will not tell anybody how you got there and got back?”

“You have my promise,” cried the Prince joyously. “When can we start?”

“Now, if you like,” replied the mysterious traveller, rising.

“I'm ready!” cried the Prince exultantly, springing to his feet, at the same time pressing his locket to his lips and covering it with fervid kisses.

“Stay a moment, Prince, there is a little piece of ceremonial you will have to go through before leaving the house: you must let me blindfold you.”

"Do it, only make haste about it," cried the Prince.

The mysterious traveller made so much haste about it that when the Prince, at his suggestion, removed the bandage which had been tied over his eyes, he found himself in the well-furnished cabin of the ship that went without wind or sail, and was further sensible of being carried through water at an incalculably rapid rate.

Before he had quite got over his first feeling of surprise, another took possession of him: the cabin, which had been fairly well lighted, suddenly became pitch dark.

"What does this darkness mean?" asked the Prince.

"That we are under the island; we shall be under the middle of it presently."

"What island?"

"The one you want to visit—Spideria. Here we are."

As he spoke, the light returned to the cabin and the ship evidently came to a standstill.

"I'll trouble you to let me put that bandage over your eyes again," said the mysterious traveller, "then we'll land."

Of course the Prince made no objection to that, and when, at the end of a few minutes, he was permitted to take off the bandage and look about him, he was astonished to find himself on the upper ground of an island so tiny that in five minutes he could have walked over the edge of it in any direction.

"Now," said his mysterious guide, "do what you

want to do without losing a moment, if you value your life."

"Why, what dangers are there?" asked the Prince.

"Millions!—and all with raging appetites!" replied the mysterious traveller. "Look out!—they are coming at you already!"

Then the Prince saw that the whole ground was alive with myriads of spiders of all sorts and sizes, and shuddered at the thought of being covered and bitten to death by the greedy hosts.

"Where is their King likely to be?" he cried in terror.

"In the very middle of them! Make haste! Trample on 'em—crush 'em. Come on, this way!" shouted his guide.

It was a fearful trial of the Prince's courage, but he was determined to capture the Crucifix-spider if human energy could do it. His mysterious companion aided him manfully in battling with the swarming insects that opposed them at every step.

At last they came upon a rampart formed of millions of the most ferocious spiders in the world, and behind it they caught sight of the King, distinguished from all his defenders by the glittering white cross upon his back. The Prince, heedless of the peril he ran, sprang over the living wall of venomous insects, and in an instant had his prize securely imprisoned in a golden box which he had brought with him for the purpose. Then he fainted, and when he recovered his senses it was to find himself back in the house of the mysterious owner of the ship that went without wind or sail, who refused all offers of

reward for his services, and urged him to get back to Court without delay.

When he presented the Crucifix-spider to the King the monarch almost danced with joy, and made no



further objection to the Prince's marriage with his daughter, whom he thus made the happiest Princess in the world.

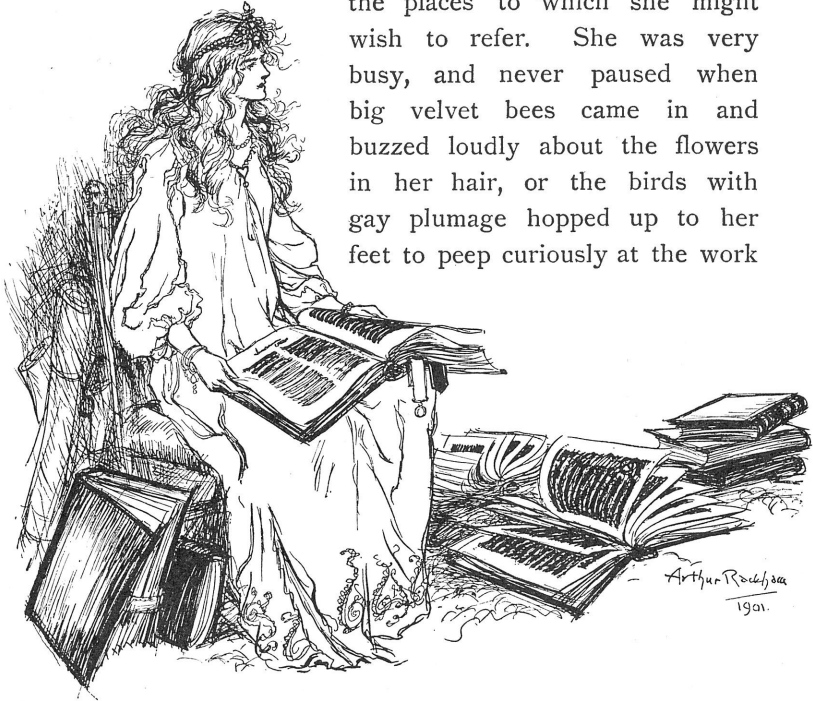
A long time after his marriage Prince Persevere felt a strong desire to learn what his friend, the mysterious traveller, was doing; so he went on a visit to him. But when he reached the spot on which his house had stood

there was no house to be seen, every trace of it having been removed. From which he inferred that the strange owner of the ship that went without wind or sail had gone away in it to some now unknown country with the intention of staying there, and had stayed accordingly.

THE PRINCESS WHO UNDERSTOOD
MAGIC

THE PRINCESS WHO UNDERSTOOD MAGIC

THE Princess who understood magic sat in her bower with her books around her. There were slips of different coloured ribbons hanging from them, marking the places to 'which she might wish to refer. She was very busy, and never paused when big velvet bees came in and buzzed loudly about the flowers in her hair, or the birds with gay plumage hopped up to her feet to peep curiously at the work



in progress. For months they had taken great interest in the Princess's operations, for she was making a bird, a very large bird, and a very strange one. It was the size of an ostrich to begin with, and it stood upon long scarlet legs. Now and then the Princess had to hold it tightly with one arm, while she put in the wing feathers one by one, and smoothed each down with a little brush. For the more nearly the bird was finished, the more impatient it grew of standing still.

The garden birds were never tired of watching, for the chief thing the Princess had not yet begun, and they were impatient to see it. At present the bird had no head. Its slender neck moved aimlessly to and fro like a blind white snake.

Now although the Princess understood magic, and took great interest in the subject, she was not a finished magician.

This bird was the first original piece of work she had done. So she had left the head for the last, because it was the most difficult and the most important part, thinking to gain practice on the rest of the bird before commencing it. Among the papers which lay scattered about were different designs marked "Head." One with a long, slender, sword-like beak, one with horns like an owl, another with the crest of a peacock. The Princess had almost decided upon the sword-beaked head, for it was important that the bird should be a fierce and able fighter. But this story will show how it happened that the bird never had a head of the Princess's making, and how he nearly ended his days without a head of any sort.

As the Princess worked, her golden hair fell about her face. She sang a little song while her quick white fingers moved, and the calm summer day seemed asleep; when suddenly there arose a great outcry. Shouts and cries of "The Giant! The Giant!" were heard, with the noise of running feet.

The Princess clasped her hands in despair! The Giant who wanted to marry her, and whom she detested! And her bird, the bird she had so carefully been making on purpose to drive out the Giant, was not ready.

It could not fight without a head. The sharp swords of flame that should have shot out of the eyes existed only in the Princess's mind. But a strong infusion of hatred towards giants had been worked in with every inch, and now the headless bird felt the meaning of the cries it could not hear—unless perhaps the nearness of the Giant alone was sufficient to rouse it.

It sprang from her before the Princess could stop it, and ran with all the speed she had given it, down the winding path from the bower, scrambled over all obstacles, for it could not yet properly fly, and disappeared into the woods in the distance.

The Princess did not pause. She could not go back towards the palace; there was no choice of hiding-place. She loved her bird, for it was the first thing she had made all by herself. So she pulled her long dress tightly round her, ran as fast as she could down the path too, unfastened the little gate, and sped across the fields to the woods after it.

The Giant soon came to the place where the Princess

had been, and there he found the books on magic and the drawings lying.

He looked over them with interest. Soon he quite understood the purpose for which the Princess was making the bird.

He saw it would be a formidable enemy if it were worked out as it had been planned. But the Giant chuckled a wicked chuckle, for he guessed the truth, that the bird was not finished. If it had been, the Princess would not have disappeared with it.

He paused at the opening of the bower, and looked about for some trace by which he might know which way she had gone. He saw one or two blue feathers on the path, and farther on a flower dropped. So he also made his way in the direction of the woods, finding as he went more indications here and there which satisfied him that the Princess had passed before him.

She in the meantime had run on and on, partly from fear of the Giant and partly in anxiety to catch her headless bird.

It knew itself to be quite helpless against an enemy, or it would not have run away, and her fear of any harm coming to it was as great as her dislike of the Giant. She looked everywhere as far as she dared in her haste, and she wept as she searched and ran. And so the afternoon passed, and evening came on. The thought of spending the night in the woods added to her anxieties, and it was with joy that she listened when the noise of distant voices and the crackling of branches told her that she was not alone. She went in the direction of the sounds

she had heard, and was quickly surrounded by a party of jovial huntsmen returning from the chase. They took off their caps, and behaved with great courtesy, when she had explained who she was and what had happened. They expressed their determination to protect her, promising to search for her bird when it should be daylight again. The chief huntsman lifted her on to his white horse and led it carefully, while the others formed a guard round her. And so they made their way towards the town on the other side. As the cavalcade clattered over the stones a few people came out, but as it was now quite dark, the Princess arrived at the house of the chief huntsman without attracting any attention. His wife hurried to the door when she heard of the distinguished visitor who had come. She hastened on the supper which was preparing, and got out all her best plates and dishes after she had taken the Princess to the guest-room.

That night the Princess slept well, in spite of everything, for she was unused to so much exertion as she had gone through the previous day. But she awoke with a cry. The house was in confusion, every one rushing up and down. Some one knocked violently at her door.

Once more she heard "The Giant! The Giant!" and she needed no telling what was the matter.

Kind as the huntsmen had been, she did not dare to risk waiting for the result of their encounter with the Giant. She had lain on her bed dressed as she was, but not before she had looked about and decided what was to be done in case of an emergency such as this. She opened the window—her room was high up in a

tower—and as she did so, to her joy she saw her headless bird, once more fleeing from the neighbourhood of the Giant over the hills and towards a distant clump of tall poplar trees. Hastily she climbed out and let herself down quite safely by the thick ivy which covered the tower. The Princess knew it could not hear her, but she called lovingly to the bird, which paused and allowed her to come up. She threw her arms round it, and pressed her pink cheek against its soft back. But there could be no rest yet. The chief huntsman had bravely kept his promise, but he had been taken by surprise, and he had not a chance.

One blow from the Giant's brawny arm had sent him reeling backwards down the stairs of his house. As he sat at the bottom ruefully rubbing his head, his wife came screaming to his side, while the Giant, having made sure the Princess was not in the house, took a glance at the surrounding country and strode off towards the poplar trees.

No sooner did the headless bird feel the vibration of the Giant's heavy tread than it spread its wings to fly up into a tree. The Princess sprang upon its back; she guided it, and it managed to reach the lower branches; then they climbed up. There they sat on the top of the tallest tree, and there stood the Giant at the bottom.

He was a rough wooer, and though in his way he loved the Princess, he was very angry at her treatment of him. Still, he had no intention of harming her, so he rejected his first thought of chopping down the tree; it might kill her. He fitted an arrow to his bow to shoot

the headless bird, but he gave up that idea too, for the Princess held her arms so closely about it he was afraid of shooting her instead. Then he sat down on the grass to think. The Princess peeped at him between the leaves, and thought if he would only go to sleep, how they might creep by and escape. But the Giant gave her no opportunity. Some hours passed in this way. Then he called to her to ask if she would come down and promise to marry him. The Princess called back, "No!"

This aroused his temper again. He jumped up and shook the tree furiously. The Princess held on, but to her dismay the headless bird fell out of the tree right on to the Giant below. By the time he had recovered his breath, for it had fallen upon his face as he looked up, it was running once more at the top of its speed across the country. The Giant sent an arrow whizzing after it, which would have pierced its head if it had had one. As it was the arrow passed just over the top of the long neck, and for once the Princess was glad her bird was not finished.

Then the Giant called up to her again to ask if she would come down and promise to marry him. But the Princess said "No!" more decidedly than before. She wondered what he intended to do next, as she watched him unwinding a strong rope from his waist. Soon she understood. The Giant, after some trouble, threw a loop he had made at one end of the rope over the top of the tree, and she saw that he intended to bend it down until he could reach her. She took a little jewelled dagger from her girdle, and waited. The tree creaked and groaned

as the Giant pulled. Lower and lower it bowed, then the Princess leaned over and sliced at the rope with her knife. The Giant pulled more hastily, the rope broke where it was cut, and the tree sprang back with a violent rebound. The Princess had not calculated the whole result. She was shot out of the tree like the Giant's arrow when it left the bow-string, and she went flying through the air so fast that her breath was quite taken away. She shut her eyes and gave herself up for lost. But she flew so far and so long, that she began to hope again. She glanced down, to find there was a wholly different landscape beneath her, and that she was gradually descending. She stopped at last with a thump, on something scrubby but soft, and when she had sufficiently collected her senses, she found she was on the thatched roof of a tiny cottage.

A very ugly old woman ran out and looked up. She made such an outcry, that a second old woman came out. Another and another followed until there were seven.

The Princess knew they must be the Seven Witches who lived in a country adjoining her own.

She explained to them that it was not her fault. If she had foreseen her visit, she would have let them know. Presently the old women were sufficiently pacified to bring out a little ladder and help the Princess to the ground. They stroked her beautiful dress with their dirty, claw-like hands, and rubbed their fingers on her hair to see whether the gold would come off.

They took the jewels from her neck, quarrelled over them, and at last they invited her into the cottage.



THE SEVEN WITCHES

There the Princess found all preparations for a feast going on. In return for their hospitality, though they were well paid in advance by the jewels they had taken, the Princess began to help them.

There was so much excitement and bustle she wondered what distinguished guest they could be expecting. She rolled up her sleeves, and soon her white arms were whiter still with flour, and her fingers were stained with picking over fruit. The Princess had not only learnt magic, she had learnt to cook, which at once brought her into great favour with the Seven Witches, for they were very greedy. They crowded round, joyfully clapping their skinny hands as they watched her making first one and then another delicate sweet or pudding, such as they had never tasted in their lives. They could not do enough for her, waiting upon her, running to and fro for anything she required, forgetting the dishes they had already begun. Though the cottage looked so poor, the Seven Witches had the cupboards full of dainties, so that the Princess found no lack of material with which to fill her pies and pasties, and the savour of cooking might have been noticed a mile off, if there had been any one to notice it in that lonely land where the Seven Witches lived.

As evening approached the Princess remarked the quietness outside. She asked where the neighbours came from, for whom they were preparing.

The Seven Witches laughed at the idea of allowing any one else to touch their good things. The feast was entirely for themselves, they said; except that, now the Princess had been so useful, her reward should be to

share it. This they regarded as a great favour to her. But, they went on to say, the chief dish was not yet commenced for which the feast had been arranged. So that the Princess might advise as to the best plan of cooking it, they would now show her something they had caught, which was to make the crowning feature of the entertainment.

The Princess's curiosity was aroused. She followed the Seven Witches out of the cottage, towards a wooden hut or barn. One of the Witches beckoned her to come near while the door was held ajar. The Princess crept quietly, peeped in, and saw——her headless bird!

She hardly stifled a cry of astonishment and indignation. But she pressed her hands to her mouth, and the Seven Witches thought it was in anticipation of the repast the great bird would make.

"It is a pity it has no head," said the Witch as she fastened the door. "But," she added with some relief, "the head is not of much use."

"Except for making soup," said another.

At the words the Princess knew what she would do.

"Ah, soup!" she cried. "We cannot have the feast without soup. I know of one you would like. No one but the Royal persons and the direct heirs to the throne have ever eaten of it. Out with all the herbs, while I remember the way it is done, and let no one interrupt me nor speak until I give leave."

The Witches danced with joy, but said not a word. They rushed into the cottage, cleared the table and put out all the things the Princess had asked for.

This time her hands trembled and her brows were puckered.

But she never paused. Night came on, and still she stirred the mixture she had prepared, bending over the pot regardless of the fire that burned her face and made her blue eyes smart.

As the clock struck twelve at midnight she cried, "There! it is done. Taste," she said, to the Witch nearest her. She held out a spoonful. The greedy Witch was only too pleased. She smacked her lips and danced again. The rest clamoured round. The Princess gave them a spoonful each. By the time the last had swallowed her share the first was fast asleep. She had sunk down where she stood, and before the others could notice her snores they were all asleep too: so fast that they would not wake for at least a week. That the Princess knew. She looked down at them scornfully. Then she went from the cottage, unfastened the door of the pen where the headless bird was confined, and led him out into the moonlight.

While all this was going on the Giant had not been losing time. He had watched the Princess's flight as she was flung from the top of the poplar tree; and he had immediately set off in the same direction. But he had a long way to go, and it was not until the middle of the next day that he came to the cottage of the Seven Witches. He knocked to inquire whether they had seen anything of the Princess, but getting no answer he pushed open the door and entered. There lay the Seven Witches, asleep; and there, spread all about, were the good things

for the feast. The Giant was extremely pleased, for he was very hungry. He at once ate up everything he could find. Last of all he came upon the soup, which still hung over the ashes of the now dead fire. He stooped and smelt it. He smacked his lips as the Witches had done, but so loudly that they all stirred uneasily.

He had no time for more, for as he tried to lift the pot from the hook to drink from it, his arms fell at his sides. He sat down on the hearth, leaned his great head against the wall, and in a moment he too was fast asleep.

In the meantime the Princess was walking on over the path among the mountains, one arm round her bird and the other holding up her long skirts. When the daylight came she saw that the path was leading down into a valley where houses of most curious shapes were scattered. Some were black, some white, green, or other colours. Great serpents clung about, and wonderful animals sat like sentinels on the roofs. The first person she met as she descended into the valley was an old man, who came to draw water from the well. The Princess sat on the edge of the well, and spoke of the unusual architecture of the town.

"It is because of our Prince," said the man; "he is a great wood-carver. Every house is built under his direction, and much of the carving has been done by his own hand."

The Princess inquired the way to the palace. The old man pointed to the other side of the valley, where a great building of white wood showed among the trees,

and the Princess then made her way towards it, soon followed by a crowd who had been attracted by the strange sight of the headless bird.

The Prince was just starting out on his daily occupation of superintending in person the buildings in progress about his domains, when the Princess requested an interview.

The Prince bowed low, and led her into the palace. All about lay carvings in every stage, from the rough blocks of wood to the most elaborate and exquisitely-finished objects.

The Princess explained how she was pursued by the Giant, who wished to marry her against her will. How, to drive him away, she had been making the bird, when she had been forced to flee because it was not completed in time, and all that had happened since then. When she had finished, the Prince stroked the bird, admiring its glossy feathers and its scarlet legs. He moved his seat nearer to the Princess; then he said—

“Would it suit you to marry me? If you were my wife the Giant could not have you. We might be married at once. Then we could design a head together for your bird, and it could help against the Giant if he should come after you.”

The Princess looked at the Prince, at his broad shoulders and his brown face tanned with his building work in the open air; then at his strong, skilful fingers, which made so many strange and beautiful things, and she liked him much better than the white-handed, pampered Princes she had met in her own land.

She answered, as she examined the carved edge of

the table, that if he thought this the best plan she was willing to be guided by his advice.

So the Prince kissed her hand as he took it in his, and led her out into the great hall.

He explained to his people that it was his wedding day, and ordered immediate preparations to be made.

The marriage took place that morning, and all was rejoicing in the valley.

Now, the Prince was just helping the Princess from the coach on the return from the church, when once more she heard the well-known cries of "The Giant! The Giant!"

If he had but tasted the soup all would have been well, for he would have slept for a week at least, and that would have given them time to prepare a handsome head for the bird. But unfortunately the Giant had only smelt it, so the effect did not last long enough.

The Princess ran up the broad steps into the palace, but the Prince kept by her side. Together they entered the room where the bird had been left. It was already trying to fly out of the window. The Princess threw her arms round it, while the Prince snatched up a piece of carving with which he had lately been engaged.

It was the head of a dragon.

He fitted the neck of the bird into the hollow space underneath, and bound it tightly on with strips of silk he tore from his cloak.

The Princess muttered magic words as he did so. She looked into the fierce eyes, and they moved and saw her; she breathed into the great jaws, and they opened and

shut. She whispered into the pointed ears, round which curled horns like a ram's, and they pricked up and listened to the confusion going on outside.

The Giant's footsteps came nearer.

The bird, no longer headless, struggled to be free. It sprang away, this time in the direction of the noise, and as the Giant threw back the curtain he was met with a terrific roar, which made the palace tremble. He was so much taken by surprise at the sight of the bird that he started back; then he turned and ran for his life. Down the steps at one jump, through the streets, and



up the other side of the valley, and all the while the bird bellowed behind him. Into the land of the Seven Witches they came, and on and on until they passed the poplar trees, through the city of the huntsmen, through the woods, and through the Princess's garden, until they came into his own land. Then the

dragon-headed bird stopped. It watched the Giant out of sight, and that was the last seen of him.

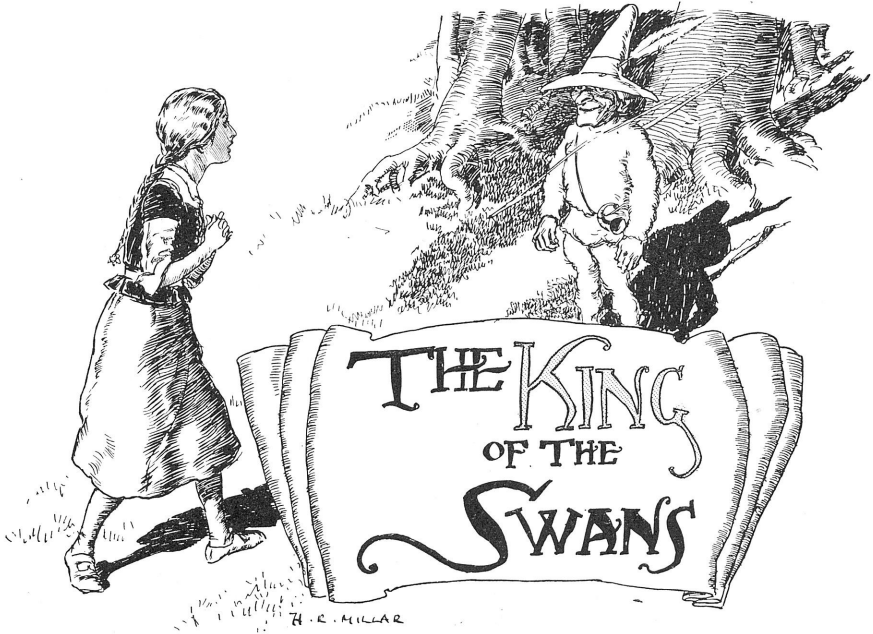
The bird turned and browsed quietly by the roadside to rest.

It made its way back in the direction it had come, creating confusion and dismay among all who saw it. In time it arrived again at the city of the wood-carvers. The people there were so well accustomed to the strange beasts of the Prince's making they were not afraid.

It entered the palace gates as if sure of a welcome, and the Prince and Princess rejoiced over it. Not only because of the service it had done them, but because it had been the means, in the first instance, of their meeting each other. They patted and admired its dragon head, with which the Princess was much better pleased than if she had designed it herself. For now her first work in magic was crowned by the Prince's share in it.

And so they lived happily ever afterwards; while the bird became not only a pet about the palace, but a valuable addition to the defences of the country against enemies.

THE KING OF THE SWANS



THERE was once a little girl, who was named Gretchen, so good and cheerful that she was a favourite with everybody. This girl had a friend called Hilda, who was also a very good child, and they greatly loved each other.

It was in winter, and the snow was lying deep upon the hills and fields, when Hilda fell sick, and her parents became very anxious on her account. She was quite unable to eat, and she was sometimes burning hot and at others shivering with cold; and though she had several doctors and much medicine, she did not get any better.

Whenever any of her young friends came to see her she would often say—

“Do give me some strawberries. Which of you will go and find me some nice strawberries, then I shall get well again?”

If her father and mother said: “Dear Hilda, it is now winter, and therefore there are no strawberries to be found,” Hilda would raise herself up in bed, and say—

“Far away over the high hills there is a green slope: there I can see plenty of strawberries. Who will go and fetch them for me?—only one of the nice red berries—only one!”

The children left the room, and then, talking to each other, said—

“What foolish things Hilda spoke of to-day.”

But Gretchen was much troubled that she could not help her dear sick friend. All at once she said—

“Who will come with me over the mountains to look for strawberries? It will be some comfort to poor Hilda if she sees us going over the hills and seeking for them.”

But not one of the children would agree to go, and all but Gretchen went straight home.

So Gretchen had to set out alone, and went through a forest. A small, trodden footpath led up the hill and down again on the other side through another wood of tall oaks and beeches.

She came to a place where three paths met; she stood still a moment, not knowing which to take, when, quite suddenly, she saw a little man approaching through the trees. He had a green hat upon his head, with a

feather as white as snow. His dress was made of the softest swansdown; he carried an ivory bow on his shoulder, and a small silver hunting-horn hung at his side. "What do you want here, my little girl?" he said, with a friendly voice.

"Ah!" said Gretchen, "I have a sick friend who longs for strawberries and says they will make her well again. I know very well that it is winter; but I think I shall be able to find some in spite of that, and do not intend to return home empty-handed."

"Come with me," said the little hunter. "I will show you a place where you will find what you are come in search of."

He went on before her and led her through many winding paths in the thicket, till at length the forest appeared lighter, and a warm, spring-like air met them, and at last they stood before a grated iron door. The little man unlocked it, saying—

"Now, if you go straight forward you will find what you seek."

Gretchen would have thanked the good-natured little man, but he had vanished instantly. She went on a few steps farther, and came to a green slope.

Here winter had disappeared. The sun shone warm in the cloudless blue sky; the birds sang merrily; yet a few steps farther, and she found the ground covered with the finest strawberries. How the good little maiden rejoiced! She quickly gathered a large bunch, and hastened back to take them to her dear sick friend.

But somehow it happened that in her haste she could not find her way back. She came to the iron palisades which surrounded the wood; but all her attempts to find the gate were useless. She ran in great anxiety this way and that; but no gate was to be seen. Then she heard the sound of a whistle at a distance.

"Thank God!" she said, "I hear a living sound; some one is probably there who will show me the way." She hastened through the thicket, and was much astonished at what she saw.

At the end of a beautiful green meadow there was a lake in which many stately swans, both black and white, were swimming gracefully. In the middle of the lake there was a small island, upon which was a fine castle, surrounded by flower-gardens and pleasure-grounds. As she approached the shore of the lake she saw a little man sitting, but with a less friendly aspect than the little hunter in the forest. He had a large head, with rough hair, and a grey beard so long that it reached his knees. In one hand he held a whistle and in the other a switch.

Gretchen felt rather afraid of speaking to him, and stood still at a little distance. She soon observed that his office was to take care of the swans and prevent them from going out of the water. When any did so he whistled to them, and if they did not obey him, then he employed his long switch, which had the property of stretching out or becoming shorter, just as he pleased. Except this swan-herd she saw no one, and there was no bridge over to the castle. So she took courage

and said to the greybeard, "Good friend, cannot you show me the gate which will lead me out of the forest?"

The greybeard looked at her in surprise, but did not speak; he merely made her understand by signs that she should sit down; which she did. Then he whistled, and presently came a large swan from the lake, which laid itself down before him. The little old man seated himself on the swan's back, threw one of his arms round its neck, and away the trusty bird swam with him across the lake; there he alighted, and went into the castle.

Gretchen waited some time, curious to see what would happen; but she did not feel afraid. At length she saw four black swans swim from a creek of the lake, harnessed to a beautiful little green boat adorned with silver. The covering of the boat was formed like a pair of wings, and shaded two small seats, of which the foremost ended in the shape of a long swan's neck.

There sat the greybeard, who looked much more agreeable than before. He gave Gretchen a sign to step in, which she complied with, and they sailed gently across the lake; and when they reached the shore they left the boat, and the old man led her into the palace.

In a light blue marble hall the King of the Swans sat upon his throne, a bright golden crown upon his head, and many richly dressed attendants surrounded him.

"What dost thou seek in my kingdom?" inquired the King.

"I have found what I sought," answered Gretchen; "but I pray you to let some one direct me in the way home, for I find that I have wandered in the wrong direction."

"Very well," said the King, "it shall be done; but it is the custom for all who enter this kingdom to give a present to the King of the Swans. What hast thou to offer?"

"Alas!" replied Gretchen, "I have nothing at all. If I had known I would have brought something with me from home."

"Thou hast strawberries," rejoined the King; "and I like strawberries above all things. Give me thy strawberries, and then one of my servants shall show thee the way home."

"Alas! I cannot give you all," continued Gretchen; "the strawberries are for my sick friend, who must die if she has no strawberries. But I will readily give you some of them."

With these words she took several fine strawberries, with the stem of leaves; tied them in a bunch with the ribbon which confined her hair, and handed them to the King.

"Thanks, my little daughter," said the King. "Now go—this man will attend thee; but do exactly what he bids thee."

The old swan-herd waited ready for her. When she had taken leave of the King, Gretchen was led into the

garden, upon an open lawn; a fine white handkerchief was tied over her eyes; the old man whistled and took



her by the arm. She heard a rustling of wings; she felt the wind blow in her face, and felt colder and colder; but she could not see anything.

At last the sound of wings ceased, and the old man set her upon the ground. "Now, my child, count twenty; then take off the bandage, but not before. Preserve it carefully; it will be required of thee at the proper time."

She counted twenty; and, when she had taken off the bandage, she found herself standing on the hill opposite the house of her friend Hilda, with frost and snow all around. She looked up at the sky, and there beheld a great bird, and the old man sitting upon it with his arms round its neck.

Then she hastened to her friend Hilda, who was still in bed repeating the words, "Who will bring me strawberries to make me well?"

"There they are," said Gretchen, and handed the bunch to Hilda. Every one was astonished and wanted to know where Gretchen had got them. But she had hardly begun to relate her wonderful adventures before Hilda had eaten all the strawberries. Then the colour returned to her face and strength to her limbs, and Hilda said, "Thank God! and, dear Gretchen, now I am quite well."

She rose up, and was really quite restored. Who can say how the parents thanked and blessed Gretchen? She was a truly good and brave girl, and when she grew up every one wished their children to be like her.

One day, as Gretchen was walking in the meadows with her mother, she looked up and saw a black speck in the sky, which became larger as it descended; and at last she saw that it was a prodigious black swan, far larger than our swans, and that it was flying down towards her. There was a tent with golden gauze curtains upon the



T. R. H. H. H.
1800.

HE PLACED A COSTLY CROWN UPON HER HEAD

swan's back; and when the swan had gently alighted on the ground there came out of the tent a little man with friendly eyes—it was the King of the Swans. "I have heard," said he, "that in a short time thou wilt celebrate a joyful festival, and, as thou gavest me a present when a child, and hast grown up so good and brave and pure a maiden, I will make thee a present in return."

Saying these words, he placed a costly crown upon her head. It was formed of gold, wrought in the form of strawberry leaves, and between the leaves there sparkled red rubies, diamonds, and pure amethysts, and the edge was a beautiful golden band.

Gretchen and her mother could hardly thank the King for astonishment. But he did not give them time. The swan rose majestically in the air and flew towards his home, and at last disappeared as a little spot in the clouds.

Many boys and girls have gone over the hills since that time to seek the land of the swans, and to find strawberries in winter, but have not found them. Perhaps they were more selfish than and not so good as Gretchen.

THE CLAWS OF THE
PECCALOUCHI

THE CLAWS OF THE PECCALOUCHI

THE young Peccalouchi had been frequently warned by his mother to avoid the wizard who lived in the cave down in the woods below.

But there was an irresistible attraction about going there. It was dangerous; the young Peccalouchi knew it very well. That was just the difficulty. He was thirsting for an adventure. There was nothing to be seen nor heard among the barren mountains where the Peccalouchis lived, and he was lonely. There was another younger Peccalouchi in the nest at home, who took all his mother's attention. So what could he do but wander down into the woods? With his fine crest flat on the top of his head he crept up behind the caves and listened, with little starts and tremors, to the voice of the wizard speaking now and then to his little niece Annetta, who lived there with him.

Now it happened one day that the young Peccalouchi made the acquaintance of the wizard's niece. The first time they met she was sitting on a tree-root crooning a lesson in magic, when her eyes, which were not fixed very attentively on her book, caught the bright scales of the Peccalouchi gleaming among the leaves near her.

She got up to see what it was, and he ran away. But

he came back again the next day. She was on the watch, and called coaxingly to him. He was tempted to risk any danger there might be. He remembered how much bigger he was than she, and how long and sharp his claws were; for, after all, she was the wizard's niece, though her voice was very soft and she looked so good and sweet. He allowed her to come close to him, and his heart was quite won when she said: "Well, you are a beautiful beastie! What is your name?"

The Peccalouchi could not speak the human language, but he frolicked round her, rubbed his head against her hand, and showed his pleasure in every way.

They had a delightful afternoon together. Annetta was happier than she had been for many a long day. She was very much afraid of her uncle, and, like the Peccalouchi's, her life was very dull. After that first meeting they had many games together. When she was obliged to go in at sunset, she always pressed a pair of white arms round his neck and kissed him. Then he would go to the nest in the mountains, tail and crest on end, with such a strut that his mother would reprove him, and say he would certainly come to harm if he gave himself such airs.

Whether the airs had anything to do with it or not, he did come to harm very soon afterwards, in this way.

Annetta was partly in fault, for she was late home, and her uncle the wizard was very cross, for his tea was not ready.

This was not the first time it had occurred, and he grew suspicious. He determined to find out what new



Arthur Rackham - 1901

HE WATCHED AND PEEPED AND SPIED

interest kept Annetta out so long and had brought such colour into her cheeks. He had of late even heard her singing now and then. The alteration in her made him jealous, instead of glad as he should have been.

He watched and peeped and spied, till he found out all about the Peccalouchi's daily visits, and then he waited his opportunity. It soon came. One day he appeared suddenly between them, when Annetta was chasing the Peccalouchi round a great tree. Both stopped in dismay, as well they might; for with a word to his niece and a motion of his hand he waved her aside, and with another word the Peccalouchi's fine claws sent out long roots into the ground, and he was fixed immovably to the spot where he stood.

So great were his surprise and alarm that he watched the wizard disappear with Annetta, in silence. Then he roared until the forest rang.

Night came and there he was still; and the next day; and night came again. By that time he had given up roaring, and was only whimpering dismally from hunger. No friendly person but one knew where he was, and there he might have remained until he starved to death if Annetta had not remembered him, and braved her cruel uncle's anger to keep him from such a fate. She had not dared to go out before, in case the wizard should suspect. For he had threatened her with dire penalties if she should ever go near him again. But she was a brave girl, and her heart ached for her big playfellow. So the second day she managed to slip a great part of her own meals into a bag, and when it was dark, and

her uncle was asleep, she crept out and ran through the forest to the place where she had last seen the Peccalouchi.

There he was, lying down. He rose hastily as he heard her approaching, and wagged his tail frantically to welcome her. He could do no more, for he was wise enough to make no noise.

She patted and stroked him while he ate the food she had brought him. Then she whispered of patience and hope, and ran home again.

This went on for a week or two, until Annetta grew so slender and pale the wizard again noticed her. He said nothing, but he watched her craftily. He soon discovered why she was so thin. She made a show of eating, but hardly ever ate. What became of the food it was not hard to guess.

The wizard was very angry, for he had supposed the Peccalouchi to be dead by this time, and he looked upon Annetta's conduct as a direct defiance of his authority. That night when she stole out he followed her.

The Peccalouchi waited and waited, but Annetta never came. He grew terribly hungry; and what would have become of him no one can tell, if it had not happened that on this very morning, towards dawn, the King and Queen passed that way, returning from a ball.

The Queen heard the crying of the Peccalouchi, and she insisted upon the coach being stopped.

The attendants, leaving the road, plunged into the thicket and quickly came upon him.

They hurried back, and described to the Royal pair the strange creature they had seen. The King had heard

of such animals, though he had never met with one. He handed the Queen from the coach. She wrapped her beautiful cloak closely about her to keep it from the thorns, and the whole party soon stood round the Peccalouchi.

He greeted them with wagging tail, and with every sign of pleasure in his power, but there he stood immovable.

No one would approach him very closely until the Queen said she was sure he was quite harmless. She too it was who first suggested the real reason of his curious stillness. "He has been bewitched," she declared. And shortly it was discovered what was the matter.

The King commanded the soldiers to free the Peccalouchi.

But this was no easy undertaking. They carefully loosened the earth with their swords, while the Peccalouchi wriggled vigorously to give all the help he could.

Then they fetched harness from the horses. This they fixed round him. The soldiers got up into all the trees near. The attendants below threw up the leathern thongs to them, and then with a great pull all together the Peccalouchi was hauled up by the roots and was free once more.

But not so free as he had been before he fell in with the wizard. For he was dreadfully hampered by the long, dragging roots.

He frequently fell, through their catching in everything within reach, while he capered madly about to express his gratitude.

The Queen laughed, and said, "We will take him home with us. He will so amuse dear Ferdinando."

Now Ferdinando was the young Prince, as the Peccalouchi knew, and he was still more pleased. He followed the Queen so closely that they saw there was no need to tie or lead him.

They all rode on, and no one so much as thought of danger, for they had often enough before travelled on the



path through the wood. Every one talked of the ball, or speculated as to the reason of the strange predicament in which they had found the Peccalouchi. It was only he who espied the grey wolf that skulked among the trees, hiding whenever the roughness of the road caused delay in the passing of the cavalcade, but always pressing on as near as possible.

The Peccalouchi determined to defend the Queen with his life. But now he felt the full force of the wizard's malice. What could he do without his claws? They

had been his best weapons. With his beak alone, and tangled in the hindering roots, how could he fight? The only thing to be done for the present was to watch, and not for a moment to lose sight of it.

Nevertheless, when they left the woods and got into the open there was no trace of the wolf, so the Peccalouchi hoped that was the end of it.

The young Prince Ferdinando was charmed with the present the King and Queen had brought him. He laughed more than he had ever been known to do before, at the strange appearance and antics of the Peccalouchi, with the long roots hanging from its paws.

Ferdinando was very much spoilt, as an only Prince is liable to be. He was very particular indeed not to allow himself to be easily pleased with anything. So the King and Queen were very much gratified. They gave orders that the Peccalouchi was to live in the palace, and to have every regard and care, as the Prince's pet.

His life was now everything he could have desired, if it had not been for several disquieting thoughts that troubled him.

What had become of Annetta? He had no means of finding out her fate. That she had deserted him and left him to starve was quite out of the question.

Then there was the wolf. He had seen it prowling about more than once when he had been out in the fields with the Prince. And worse even than that, he had caught the malignant face of the wizard peeping from among trees and round corners; it had quickly disappeared, but there could be no mistake that it was he.

Under these circumstances the Peccalouchi was far from satisfied; his devotion to the Prince was remarked by every one. He slept at the foot of his young master's bed, starting up suspiciously if the slightest sound disturbed them.

One day when they were playing together in the courtyard, the Prince ran down a flight of steep steps which evidently led to the cellars under the palace. It was very dark and damp. The Peccalouchi stumbled after him. He did not like their going into such places, for he was in continual anxiety about the Prince's safety. Only that very morning he felt sure he had seen the wizard again: this time looking in at a window.

All at once his heart stood still. There was a scream, and he dashed down, to see in the dim light of the cellar the tall figure of a man, while the gleaming eyes of the wolf flashed past from behind. It had followed them down the steps.

The Prince had screamed from alarm at the unexpected sight of the gaunt, white face there in a corner.

As the boy started back the wizard sprang towards him. The Peccalouchi flung himself in front of the Prince, and to his surprise even at that moment the wolf with a growl also bounded towards the wizard.

The Peccalouchi's leap threw his enemy backwards, and there the wicked magician lay dead, for he had struck his head violently against a stone buttress as he fell. Seeing that he did not move, the Peccalouchi wasted no time upon him, for there was the wolf to deal with. He turned to see, not the wolf, but Annetta!

He knew that the instant he had touched the wizard the roots had withered and dropped from his claws, but he had not seen that at the same moment more of the magician's work had been undone. The wolf had also touched him in its efforts to protect the Prince, and immediately Annetta was restored to her own form. Her uncle had changed her into this shape in the hope that the first hunter who saw her might shoot her. Thus he would be rid of her and revenged, without actually killing her himself.

But there she stood, safe and sound.

The Peccalouchi gambolled about her, wild with joy this time. Annetta petted and praised him, while she explained how she had followed them everywhere, because she knew her uncle was in the neighbourhood, and she had hoped to be able to give them some warning or protection.

The Prince gazed long at her, with one finger in his mouth. Then he took her hand and led her into the palace.

"Mother," he said, "I have found a sister I should like."

"Certainly, my precious boy," said the Queen. "Send for my chief maid-in-waiting, we will have some frocks made for her. Now take her to the nurseries and play. She is the Princess for the future."

And so she was.

You may be sure the Peccalouchi was well content now. He had had his adventure. It had not promised at the beginning to turn out so satisfactorily. But as you

have heard before, "All's well that ends well." And this had ended very well; for there were no three happier people in the kingdom than Prince Ferdinando, who had been discontented for no reason; Princess Annetta, who had often been sad with very good reason; and the Peccalouchi, who had belonged to nobody, and so had been lonely and dull, not without reason.

BULFSTROLL THE DWARF'S
REVENGE.

BULFSTROLL THE DWARF'S REVENGE

IN a very far-off country a very long time ago there was a King who had an incomparably beautiful daughter, to whom his people, in token of their boundless admiration of her charms and of the sweetness of her character, gave the name of Starbright, which suited her so well that nobody ever spoke of her by any other. Naturally, many charming Princes aspired to wed her, but, though she was gracious to all of them, she preferred Prince Constant, and, her father having freely given his consent to their marriage, she and her affianced, accompanied by a numerous and magnificent suite, took their way towards the church where their wedding was to be solemnised.

By that time several of the Princes whose suit had been unsuccessful had retired regretfully to their distant kingdoms, but one of them, a powerful Prince named Bulfstroll, a frightful dwarf in form, with a big hunch on his back and a beard seven feet long, who was a magician, and malignant beyond expression, stayed behind resolved to revenge himself for the slight put upon him.

To carry out this wicked purpose, just as the bridal procession reached the church door he changed himself into a whirlwind, and filled the air with blinding dust, from the midst of which he sprang upon Starbright and bore her away into the clouds, whence, after a while, he descended to his palace underground, where he laid her upon a sofa and left her insensible.

When, on her recovering from her fainting fit and casting her eyes about her, the Princess was able to realise what had happened to her, she found herself in a splendidly furnished room, forming one of a magnificent suite of apartments, as she discovered when she was able to rise and examine her surroundings.

Suddenly she became aware that, by some invisible means, a table had been spread with a profusion of gold and silver dishes containing food so appetising in appearance that, in spite of her distress of mind, she could not refrain from tasting some of it. Having once tasted, she continued to eat until her hunger was thoroughly appeased; after which she lay down and tried to go to sleep. But it was in vain that she attempted to close her eyes, which continued to wander from the door of the room to the brilliant lights burning upon the table with its sparkling furniture.

Presently the door opened and four armed negroes entered, bearing, upon a gold and jewelled throne, the dwarf with the big hunch upon his back and streaming from his chin the beard that was seven feet long.

Descending from his throne, Bulfstroll approached the

sofa and attempted to kiss the Princess ; but she repulsed him by the administration of so vigorous a box on the



ear as made him stagger and see a thousand stars whirling about him, and, at the same time, hear the ringing of as many bells. He was unable to repress the utterance of

a cry which made the palace tremble; but, as he wished the Princess not to see that he was angry with her, he turned to quit the room: in his hurry, however, his feet became entangled with his long, trailing beard, and in trying to recover his balance, he dropped the little cap which he was carrying in his hand, and which possessed the virtue of rendering him invisible whenever he wanted to be unseen. The negroes hastened to his assistance, and having replaced him on his throne, hurriedly bore him away.

As soon as the Princess saw that she was alone she sprang from the sofa, locked the door, picked up the little cap and hurried to a mirror, to see whether it would fit her head. What was her astonishment at not seeing anything of herself in the glass? She snatched off the cap and looked again: then she discovered the secret of her invisibility and, replacing the marvellous cap on her head, walked about the room delightedly.

A short time afterwards the door was violently thrown open, and the dwarf, who had now flung his incommensurable beard over his shoulders, entered the room furiously. Seeing neither the Princess nor the lost cap, and comprehending that she had appropriated it, he set to work to search in every corner, tapping all the furniture, and even peering under the carpet.

While he was thus fruitlessly engaged the Princess, rendered invisible, quitted the palace and fled into the garden, which was of vast extent and magnificence. There she lived in tranquillity, eating delicious fruits, drinking from a translucent spring, and enjoying the impotent fury of the dwarf in his unceasing search for

her. Sometimes she even went so far as to pelt him with plum-stones, or to show herself to him for a moment by taking off her cap, and then, instantly replacing it on her head, disappearing with a shout of laughter at his rage.

One day, when she was amusing herself in this manner, the magic cap caught on the thorny branch of a gooseberry bush as she sped past it. In an instant the dwarf saw what had happened, seized her, and was in the act of recovering the cap, when the air of the garden was pierced by the warlike blast of a trumpet.

Uttering a thousand maledictions and trembling with anger, he breathed upon Starbright, to send her to sleep, and, drawing his double-edged sword, shot up into the clouds, so as to be able to pounce upon his challenger and slay him with a single stroke of the magic weapon.

Meanwhile, when the storm of wind and dust threw the wedding procession into confusion and dispersed the cavalcade, a great tumult arose among the Princes and their suites. The father of the vanished Princess and Prince Constant, her betrothed, searched for her everywhere, calling her by name, until, at length, the King, driven to despair by the non-success of their endeavours, issued a proclamation, promising that whoever found her and brought her safely back should become his son-in-law and the possessor of half of his kingdom. Without a moment's loss of time the suitors took to horse and galloped away in all directions in search of her.

During three days and nights Prince Constant rode without eating, drinking, or sleeping, until, on the evening of the third day, worn with fatigue, he reined in his horse

in a meadow and dismounted with the intention of snatching a few moments' rest. But, as he did so, he heard plaintive cries, and perceived a poor little hare, on the back of which was an enormous owl, tearing it with its claws. The Prince instantly snatched up a large stone, as he thought, but which, in reality, was a skull, and threw it with such accuracy as to strike the owl dead. Delivered from its enemy, the hare ran to the Prince and caressed him for a moment, then skipped away. Whereupon the skull which the Prince had heedlessly flung at the owl thus addressed him—

“I thank you, Prince Constant, for the great service you have done me. I belong to an unfortunate man who has deprived himself of existence, and, for this crime of suicide, has been condemned to roll in the dust until it was made the means of saving the life of one of God's creatures. For seven hundred and seventy years I have lain miserably on the face of the earth without winning the least sign of compassion from any human being. You have released me from the penalty of my crime by using me to save the life of that poor hare. In gratitude for this service I will teach you how to call to you a marvellous horse which belonged to me in my lifetime, and which will render you a thousand services. When you want him you have but to go into the plain, without looking behind you, and call to him in these words:—

‘Wondrous steed with golden mane,
Hie to me across the plain,
Flying, like a wingéd bird,
Through the air with steps unheard!’

“Now, please, finish your work of charity by burying me here, so that I may repose in peace; then, go on your



way in good hope for the accomplishment of your enterprise.”

The Prince thereupon dug a grave at the foot of a spreading tree and piously, with prayers, buried the skull.

As he was casting the last clod of earth upon it he saw a tender blue flame ascend from the ground: it was the dead man's soul, happy in its release from its long-endured penalty, speeding heavenward.

His humane labour finished, the Prince went out into the plain, taking care not to look behind him, and—to test the efficacy of the invocation taught him by the skull—cried:—

“Wondrous steed with golden mane,
Hie to me across the plain,
Flying, like a wingéd bird,
Through the air with steps unheard !”

From the midst of lightnings, hissings, and the crash of thunder, there sped towards him a miracle in the form of a horse—light as the wind, with a dappled coat and golden mane, flames flashing from its eyes and nostrils, and clouds of vapour pouring from its mouth and ears! It stopped before the Prince and addressed him in a human voice—

“What are your commands, Prince Constant?”

“I am unhappy,” answered the Prince; “come to my assistance.” And he described the misfortune which had befallen him.

“Enter my left ear and pass out by the right,” said the magic horse.

The Prince did as directed, and came out of the horse's right ear completely and magnificently armed: his breast-plate was covered with ornaments wrought in gold and jewels, his casque was of glittering steel, and these, with his sword and mace, made of him a fully accoutred warrior.

Moreover, he felt himself animated by superhuman strength and bravery. Stamping upon the ground, he found that it trembled under him, a sound as of thunder shook the air, and the leaves fell from the trees as in the passing of a storm. He then said to his steed—

“Where must I go—what must I do?”

The magic horse replied—

“The Princess Starbright, your affianced bride, has been taken from you by a dwarf with a monstrous hunch upon his shoulders and a beard seven feet long. He is a powerful magician who lives far from here, and you must conquer him; but the only arm that can reach or wound him is the keen-edged sword possessed by his brother, the monster with the great head and basilisk eyes. It is with him that we must begin.”

Prince Constant sprang fearlessly upon the back of the dappled steed with the golden mane, which at once started on its wondrous course, leaping over mountains, bounding across rivers, piercing dark forests, without crushing a blade of grass or raising a particle of dust on the road. At length they came to a wide stretching plain, strewn everywhere with human bones, at the foot of a trembling mountain. Here the steed stopped and said—

“The moving mountain which you see before you, Prince, is the head of the monster with the basilisk eyes; so beware of meeting their glance, which is deadly, as all those whose bones you see lying about you have found. Fortunately, the heat of the noonday sun has sent the monster to sleep, with its keen-edged sword, which nothing

can resist, resting beside it. Conceal yourself by bending down behind my neck until we are close upon the sword, then stoop and snatch it from the ground. That done, have no further fear, for not only will the monster be unable to do you any harm, but its life will be at your mercy."

Noiselessly the horse approached the sleeping monster; the Prince stooped and dexterously snatched up the sword, then rising in his saddle shouted so loudly as to wake the monster. Raising its head with a start, it infected the air with a long-drawn angry snort and turned its burning eyes upon the Prince; but seeing the keen-edged sword in his hands, it restrained its rage and said—

"Have you determined on giving up your life that you have come here?"

"Speak less haughtily," replied the Prince, "for you are in my power; your basilisk eyes have lost their force, and you are going to perish by this sword. But first, I want to know who you are."

"It is true that I am in your power, Prince, but be generous, for I am worthy of your pity. I am a knight of the race of giants, and, but for the malevolence of my brother, should now be happy. He is Bulfstroll, the dwarf with the great hunch upon his back and the beard seven feet long. Jealous of the grace of my form, he seeks by all means to injure me. His strength, which is prodigious, he owes to his beard, and that can only be severed by the keen-edged sword which you hold in your hand. One day he came to me and said—

“Dear brother, help me, I beg, to discover the keen-edged blade which was buried in the earth by a magician,



one of our enemies, who, of all, is the only one who can destroy us both.'

“Fool that I was, I trusted what he said, and with a spade made of a great oak tree dug into the mountain

until I found the sword. Then a dispute arose between us as to which of us should have it. At last my brother said: 'Let us each put an ear to the ground, and let the sword be his who first hears the ringing of the nearest church bells.' I at once bent down to listen, and instantly my brother sprang upon me and, with one traitorous stroke of the sword, severed my head from my body, and left me unburied to become an enormous mountain covered with forests.

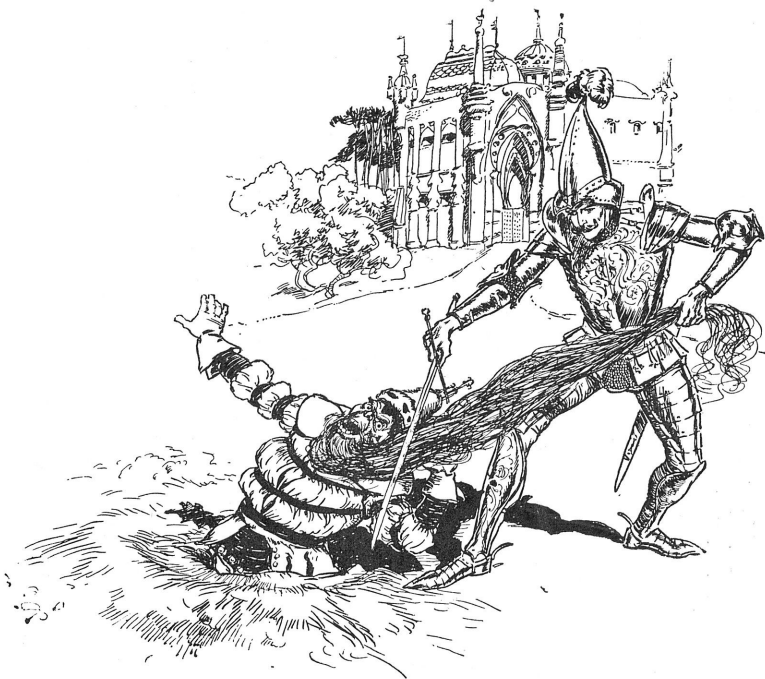
"As to my head—gifted with a vital force which nothing can overcome, it has ever since remained here to terrify to death all who have, before you, attempted to get possession of the keen-edged sword. Now, Prince, I beg of you to employ that magic weapon in cutting off my wicked brother's beard, which will at once destroy his malevolent power and avenge the terrible wrong he has inflicted upon me."

"Your desire shall speedily be accomplished, I promise you," replied the Prince.

Thereupon he commanded his dappled steed with the golden mane to bear him to Bulfstroll's palace. The words were scarcely spoken before they reached the garden-door, at the moment when the dwarf was pursuing the Princess Starbright. The sound of the warlike trumpet compelled him to desist; but, before quitting her, he took the precaution to replace the cap upon her head, so as to make her invisible.

The Prince was awaiting an answer to his challenge, when he heard a loud rumbling sound in the clouds above his head, caused by the dwarf, who, for the purpose of

descending with crushing force upon his enemy, had risen to a great height above him. But he took his measures so carelessly that, on reaching the ground, he plunged into



H. R. MILLER. 1900

it up to his waist at the mercy of the Prince, who instantly seized hold of his beard and cut it off with the keen-edged sword.

After having tied the magician's severed beard to his casque and bound the helpless dwarf to the saddle behind him, he entered the palace, where the servants threw

open all the doors the moment they saw that he was possessed of the beard which had so long held them in awe and bondage.

The Prince immediately began to search for the captive Princess ; but it was in vain that he examined every portion of the palace and gardens, the malicious dwarf refusing to give him any aid. At last, however, and when he had almost given himself up to despair, he had the good fortune to take hold of the magic cap, and then perceived his *fiancée* sleeping as the dwarf had left her. Being unable to awaken her, he put the magic cap in his pocket, and, taking her in his arms, mounted his dappled steed, and carried the dwarf to the head of his brother the monster, which, after uttering a roar of satisfaction, instantly swallowed him.

Having remounted his steed, Prince Constant presently arrived at a widespread plain, where his horse stopped and said—

“Prince, we must here part company. You are not far from your journey’s end ; your horse is near at hand awaiting you. Farewell ! But before I leave you, enter my right ear and come forth by the left.”

The Prince did as he was directed, and found himself dressed in his wedding suit of clothes, as he had been when Princess Starbright was carried off by the dwarf. The dappled steed with the golden mane then disappeared from his sight, and, in answer to his call, his own horse galloped to him from the opposite side of the plain.

Night having come by that time, he laid the still sleeping Princess on the ground, and, after carefully

covering her with his mantle to protect her against the cold, lay down himself and fell asleep.

By ill-chance, one of the unsuccessful suitors for the Princess's hand passed that way, and seeing Prince Constant sleeping, pierced him with his sword and rode away with the Princess to the palace of her father, to whom he said—

“Here is your daughter, whom I claim as my wife in accordance with your promise. She was carried off by a terrible sorcerer, against whom I had to contend during three days and three nights before I could conquer him.”

The restoration of his daughter filled the King with joy; but observing that all his caresses failed to awaken her, he inquired anxiously as to the meaning of her strange condition.

“I do not in the least know what it means,” answered the impostor. “You see her exactly in the same state as that in which I found her imprisoned in the sorcerer's brazen castle.”

While this was passing in the King's palace, Prince Constant, pierced by the sword of his treacherous rival, awoke with hardly sufficient strength left him to murmur:—

“Wondrous steed with golden mane,
Hie to me across the plain,
Flying, like a wingéd bird,
Through the air with steps unheard.”

A moment later, and from the midst of a luminous cloud the magic steed returned to him.

Knowing what had happened to the Prince, the magic steed sought at a bound the Fountain of Life, whence it returned with three kinds of water—the water that revives, the water that cures, and the water that gives strength—with which, in turn, he sprinkled the Prince's pale forehead.

At the first sprinkling life returned to his already cold body and the blood re-coursed through his veins; at the second his wound was cured; and at the third all his lost strength came back to him. Then he opened his eyes and cried—

“Oh, what a sound and refreshing sleep I have had!”

“The sleep you have enjoyed was the eternal sleep,” replied the dappled steed. “One of your rivals, finding you sleeping, murdered you, then carried the Princess Starbright to her father, representing himself to have been her preserver. But do not distress yourself, she is still sleeping and you alone can dispel her sleep by touching her with the dwarf's beard. Mount your horse and hasten on your way.”

In a swirl of light the magic steed once more disappeared. Prince Constant mounted his own horse and rode like the wind towards the home of his betrothed.

On nearing the capital he found it besieged by an army of enemies who had already captured part of the walls, and to whom the terrified inhabitants were on the point of appealing for mercy. Seeing this he put on the invisible cap and, with the keen-edged sword, fell

upon the besiegers with such irresistible energy that all who were not slain fled from the kingdom, only too glad to have escaped with their lives. This great feat achieved, he hastened—still remaining invisible—to the palace, where he heard the King expressing astonishment at the sudden and wholly unlooked-for flight of the enemy.

“Who can the valiant warrior be who has saved us?” asked the King wonderingly.

For a moment nobody answered. Then Prince Constant took off the magic cap and, kneeling at the King's feet, said—

“It is I, King and father, who have had the good fortune to overcome your enemies, and it is I who rescued the Princess, my betrothed, from the great peril she was in, and was bringing her back to your arms when my rival here traitorously assassinated me while I was sleeping, and next deceived you by passing himself off as her preserver. Take me to her, and I will awaken her.”

On hearing these words the impostor fled as quickly as he could get away, while Prince Constant, hastening to the sleeping Princess, touched her forehead with the dwarf's beard, whereupon she instantly opened her eyes and smiled, as if awaking from a pleasant dream.

Transported with joy, the King overwhelmed her with caresses, and, that same evening, married her to Prince Constant, himself leading her to the altar and making over to his son-in-law the promised half of his kingdom.

What can be said of the festivities which followed? Only that no eye ever saw, no ear ever heard tell of, greater magnificence than was displayed in their celebration.



H. A. MILLAR - 1901 -

PRINCE CONSTANT TOUCHED HER FOREHEAD WITH THE DWARF'S BEARD



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