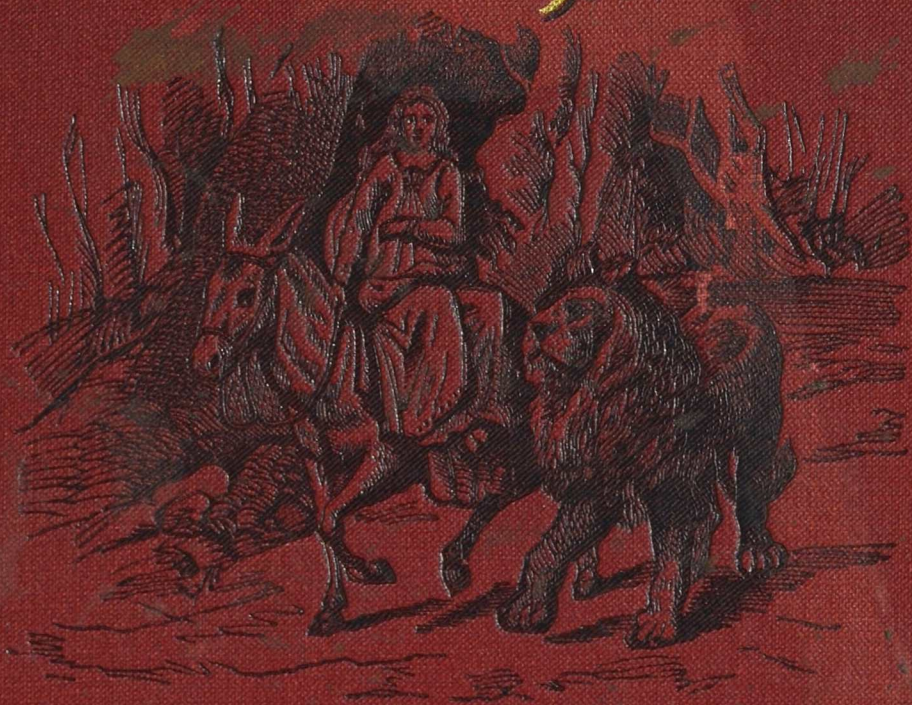


THE STORY OF
**THE RED CROSS
KNIGHT**



From Spenser's Fairy Queen



Ruth Larkin.



THE KNIGHT AND UNA IN THE FOREST.

The STORY of
THE RED CROSS KNIGHT.



UNA AND THE LION.

Page 40.

Thomas Nelson and Sons,
LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK.

THE STORY
OF THE
RED CROSS KNIGHT

FROM SPENSER'S FAIRY QUEEN.

BY

R. A. V.

“How many perils do enfold
The righteous man to make him daily fall,
Were not that heavenly grace doth him uphold,
And steadfast Truth acquit him out of all.”

SPENSER.

London:

T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW.
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1896

P R E F A C E.

THE intention of the writer in the following pages is to try to bring before children, clothed in simple language, the old story so beautifully narrated by Spenser.

While full of stirring incidents, and containing many noble lessons, the "Fairy Queen" is, perhaps, hardly known as widely as it deserves.

Feeling this, and being much interested in it herself, the writer has tried to do something towards making others acquainted with it.

In the earnest hope that it may help to inspire some with a love for the true and beautiful, and induce them to search for themselves the works of our great authors, this little book is offered to the writer's child friends, known and unknown.

R. A. Y.

Contents.



I. LISTENERS AND A STORY,	...	...	...	...	15
II. UNA IN DISTRESS,	...	...	...	...	39
III. THE HOUSE OF PRIDE,	...	...	...	...	54
IV. THE PICNIC,	...	...	...	...	78
V. THE RESCUE,	...	...	...	...	87
VI. THE HOUSE OF HOLINESS,	...	...	...	...	101
VII. THE COMBAT,	...	...	...	...	119
VIII. THE REWARD OF VICTORY,	...	...	...	...	130
IX. WHAT IS THE STORY?	...	...	...	...	138

List of Illustrations.



THE KNIGHT AND UNA IN THE FOREST,	...	...	<i>Frontispiece</i>
UNA AND THE LION, ...	...	...	<i>Vignette</i>
IN THE DEN OF ERROR,	...	...	23
THE KNIGHT'S SURPRISE,	...	...	31
THE COMBAT: UNA'S TERROR,	...	...	49
THE HOUSE OF PRIDE,	...	...	55
THE GOODLY KNIGHT'S VOW,	...	...	75
FOUND! ...	...	...	95
IN THE HOUSE OF CHARISSA, ...	...	...	109
IN VIEW OF "THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING,"	...	...	115
THE COMBAT WITH THE DRAGON,	...	...	121

Introductory Note.

THE grandest work of Spenser is his *Faerie Queene*. In a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, prefixed to the first three books of "The Faerie Queene," which were published in 1590, the poet himself tells us his object and his plan. His object was, following the example of Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, and Tasso, to write a book, coloured with an historical fiction, which should "fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline."

The original plan provided for twelve books, "fashioning XII. morall vertues." Of these twelve books we have only six. The old story of the six remaining books being finished in Ireland, and lost by a careless servant, or during the poet's voyage to England, is very improbable. Spenser had only time between 1596 and his death to write two cantos and a fragment of a third. Hallam justly says, "The short interval before the death of this great poet was

filled up by calamities sufficient to wither the fertility of any mind."

Prince Arthur, who is chosen as the hero of the poem, falls in love with the Faerie Queene, and, armed by Merlin, sets out to seek her in Faery Land. She is supposed to hold her annual feast for twelve days, during which twelve adventures are achieved by twelve knights, who represent, allegorically, certain virtues.

The Red-Crosse Knight, or Holiness, achieves the adventure of the first and finest book. In spite of the plots of the wizard Archimago (Hypocrisy) and the wiles of the witch Duessa (Falsehood), he slays the dragon that ravaged the kingdom of Una's father, and thus wins the hand of that fair princess (Truth). Sir Guyon, or Temperance, is the hero of the second adventure; Britomartis, or Chastity—a Lady-Knight—of the third; Cambel and Triamond, typifying Friendship, of the fourth; Artegall, or Justice, of the fifth; Sir Calidore, or Courtesy, of the sixth.

The six books form a descending scale of merit. The first two have the fresh bloom of genius upon them; the third contains some exquisite pictures of womanhood, coloured with the light of poetic fancy; but in the last three the divine fire is seen only in fitful and uncertain flashes. It was not that the poet had written himself out, but he had been tempted to aim at achieving too much. Not content

with giving us the most exquisite pictures of chivalrous life that have ever been limned in English words, and at the same time enforcing with some success lessons of true morality and virtue, he attempted to interweave with his bright allegories the history of his own day. Thus Gloriana the Faerie Queene, and Belphebe the huntress, represent Elizabeth; Artegall is Lord Grey; Envy is intended for poor Mary Stuart. — *From Collier's History of English Literature.*

THE FAIRY QUEEN.

CHAPTER I.

LISTENERS AND A STORY.

It had been a hot but lovely day in May—one of those days when everything seems happy. The sun had looked down on the fresh green trees, and had made them glorious with his beauty; the flowers had looked up into his face from the fields, or peeped at him from among the grasses and bushes in the woods, in quiet contentment.

The bees and insects buzzed and hummed as if never tired of expressing their delight. As to the birds, they had sung in the morning as if their little throats would crack; and though through the middle of the day they had been more quiet and sleepy, as the afternoon drew on they began again.

A party of children had been out since early morning

for a long ramble. They had walked a long way, through beautiful woods, across little rippling streams, picking the flowers as they went, and very much enjoying themselves.

Now they were coming back, and, having had tea, sat still a while to look about and rest. And it was a lovely view that met their eyes.

They were sitting on a grassy slope, with woods behind them, formed of various kinds of trees, especially beeches and firs: the former, a beautiful bright green tinged with red where the leaves were not fully opened; the latter, dark and sombre, contrasting well with the fresh tints.

It had been a balmy spring, and the ground at their feet was blue with wild hyacinths; other flowers adding their bright colours, and making a variegated carpet.

Below them, the ground sloped to a river, which wandered in the valley, flowing through fields of cool grass, which the cows seemed to enjoy to their hearts' content, as they nibbled it slowly or lay stretched at their ease. Beyond, the children could see the corn beginning to grow, and pretty little farm-houses and cottages dotted here and there; and further still, woods and hills seemed to melt away into the golden glow of the afternoon sun, which was nearing the west.

One by one the children became silent; even the

merriest felt as if he could not talk, the air was so still and the magic spell of nature's beauty so strong.

Suddenly a thrush piped up his evening song behind them; another answered him, and a blackbird joined in the chorus.

At last one of the girls remarked, "Would not this do for Fairyland? I am sure the queen of the fairies must often come here with her train. I expect we should see some hiding in those pretty bells if we looked carefully enough.—Aunt!" said she, suddenly turning to a sweet-faced lady who had been sitting silent like the rest, gazing far off into the clear sky with a look on her face the children could not understand, but which made them think she was one of the most beautiful persons they had ever known, "can you tell us a fairy story? It would suit exactly with this place."

"Oh no!" said Sydney; "what a girl's taste! Now if you asked for something sensible, like knights fighting, and taking care of ladies, and seeking adventures, it would be something like a tale."

"Besides, I like *true* stories," exclaimed Ruth. "Fairy tales are nice, but you don't know that they really happened."

"Perhaps," said Aunt Alice, "I can satisfy you all, if you try to find out what I want as I go along.—Daisy, you want a fairy tale; well, I will tell you one.—And

it shall be about knights and ladies, Sydney.—And what is better, Ruth, it has truth hidden in it.”

“Then please let us hear it, aunt,” and they settled themselves about her, while she began :—

A long time ago the beautiful Queen of Fairyland, whose name was Gloriana, kept a feast for twelve days, and on each day some strange adventure happened, which was entered upon by one of twelve knights.

The first was this :—When the feast had only just begun, a tall, awkward-looking young man entered, and asked the queen, who could not refuse anything during the feast, that if any one had need of an errant knight, he might be chosen. The queen promised to grant his request ; and then he lay down on the floor, feeling unfit for any other place, he looked so different from the rest of the lords and knights.

Not long afterwards a fair and beautiful lady came in, dignified and regal in bearing, so that none dared lightly approach her. She was dressed in mourning, and rode on a white ass, while a dwarf by her side led a fine war-horse, which carried the armour of a knight, the dwarf himself holding the spear.

When the lady reached the queen she fell down before her, saying that her father and mother, a king and queen of ancient family, had for a long time been kept in a brazen castle by a huge, terrible dragon, which harassed all the land.

She had travelled all this way—knowing the kindness of Gloriana—to ask her to send some good knight to deliver them.

Directly the young man saw and heard fair Una (for that was the lady's name), he started up and asked leave to go on this errand.

The Fairy Queen wondered that such a rude-looking person should wish to undertake it, and Una tried to persuade him not, saying that unless he was clothed in the armour she brought he could not succeed; but he only prayed more earnestly, till at last his request was granted. And having put on the armour, he looked the most handsome of all the knights there, and the lady herself liked him.

So being made a Knight of the Red Cross, he went forth, mounted on his splendid charger, which, however, he had to hold in well, and followed the lady and the dwarf.

As the knight rode along, you boys would have admired him, for his armour gleamed and flashed in the sunlight. He carried a silver shield which would quench many a dart of wicked foes, and preserve him from harm, and on which was blazoned a red cross, another being on his breast. His helmet shone in the burning rays, and had a beautiful crest pointing upward, as if to say, "Never despair."

Then his sword was of the best metal, and, if properly

used, was never known to fail. Victory depended on the hand that wielded it. If that was true and firm, nothing could resist the strokes of that wondrous sword.

The knight looked so strong and powerful that any foe would feel afraid to meet him. His one desire was to win the praise and favour of the great Gloriana, whom he respected so much.

Meanwhile the beautiful lady beside him seemed full of some secret sorrow, and rode silent and closely veiled, leading a pretty snow-white lamb by her side.

Thus for some time they journeyed on together, till they were overtaken by a sudden heavy shower of rain, from which they sought shelter in a dense forest. The lofty trees had wide-spreading branches, and were covered so thickly with leaves that no sky could be seen through them. Under these trees were many well-worn paths leading into the centre of the forest. This seemed a promising place, so they went further in.

As they passed on they were delighted with the sweet songs of the little birds, and praised the beauty of the various trees,—the pine; the tall, proud cedar; the elm and poplar; the oak, so good for building, king of all forests; the aspen, good for staves; the dark funereal cypress; the laurel, crown of victors and poets; the willow, type of grief; the supple, pliant yew, so good for bows; the birch, for arrows; and the warlike

beech ; the ash, useful for anything ; the fruitful olive ; and the plane and maple. Here the knight and lady, well pleased to be safe from the storm, wandered on for some time, till, wishing to leave the wood again, they could find no path out of it.

They tried many, but in vain, and at last determined to take one which seemed a beaten track. This led them to a cave, hidden in a dark part of the forest, which was called the "Den of Error."

Here the knight dismounted, and gave his spear to the dwarf, though warned not to disarm by Una, who said it was a dangerous place, and he knew not what hidden perils lurked there. Her words only fired his courage, and saying that it would be shameful to retreat because of hidden perils, and that Virtue could give herself light in darkness, he advanced to the entrance of the cave, and looking in, he saw an ugly monster, something like a serpent, lying on the ground. His armour, so bright and glistening, lighted up the darksome place, and terrified the creature, which glided towards him with threatening appearance. As soon, however, as it saw one clad in mail, it sought to turn back, for it hated light like poison ; and the valiant knight, perceiving this, forced it to stay facing the brightness which could pierce through the dense canopy, and gave it a good stroke with his sword.

On this the monster, lifting its tail, tried to strangle

him by coiling it round him. Now indeed he was in danger, for he could not move; and Una cried out, "Now, Sir Knight, show what thou really art. Do not give way in despair; add faith unto thy force, and be not faint; strangle Error, or she will surely strangle thee."

On hearing this, he managed with great effort to get one hand free, and grasping the monster with all his strength, forced it to uncoil itself. Then fearing the shame of being beaten, he gathered up his strength in one last attempt, and cut off its head, though faint and weak with the struggle.

How thankful he felt that he had conquered, for Una was looking on, and now came up to encourage him, saying he had indeed done bravely in his first trial.

Then having mounted again, the companions set forth, and this time, profiting by experience, they kept in a broad beaten path which led straight on, and did not turn aside to any by-ways, till at last it brought them out of the wood. After travelling some distance, they met an old man who looked like a hermit, of whom the knight inquired whether he knew of any adventures in those parts, or if there were any knights to fight with.

"Ah!" said this old man, "how should one who lives in a retired cell, spending his days in devotion, hear tidings of warfare? I only know of one man, who



IN THE DEN OF ERROR.

lives a long distance from here, all alone in a wilderness, and who daily sallies forth to work harm wherever he can."

The knight was beginning to ask the way to this place, when Una interrupted him, saying, "I am sure it is too late for thee to seek any more contests to-night, thou art too weary; rest a while, and thou wilt be fresher in the morning."

"Would you like," asked the hermit, "to come home with me? I live close by."

So saying, he led the way to a lowly hermitage in a dale on the outskirts of a forest. Hard by a little chapel had been built, where the old man used to pray, and in front of which ran a clear stream, making sweet music as it babbled over its stony bed.

Here they rested in content for the night, little dreaming that their host, who seemed such a kind man, was in reality a wicked enchanter, who hated them and wished to do them harm. When his guests were fairly asleep, the old magician went to his study, and, by aid of his numerous books and arts, sought charms to trouble the minds of the sleepers. Then calling to him many little sprites, which fluttered about his head like flies, he chose out two of the worst: one he kept by himself to be ready for whatever he might wish him to do, and to the other he gave a message.

This one hied away swiftly through air and through

water, right down below the surface of the earth, to the house of Morpheus.

Here no ray of sun or even dawning day can pierce, the moon hides her drooping head in silver dew, while sad night spreads over the place her black mantle.

Arrived here, the messenger found double gates fast locked—one framed of polished ivory, the other overlaid with silver. Wakeful dogs were lying in front, watching to banish their enemy, Care, who often troubles quiet sleep.

Passing by them quietly, the sprite reached Morpheus, who was nodding away in a drowsy fit, taking heed of nothing. And the whole place seemed fit for sleep: he was constantly lulled by the sound of a trickling stream tumbling from a high rock; the musical soft dropping of rain on the roof, mingled with a gentle, murmuring wind, made a noise like bees swarming.

No other sounds nor cries of people, such as distract the dwellers in towns, were heard there, but Quiet, free from care or foes, lay wrapped in eternal silence.

The messenger approaching, spoke to Morpheus, but quite in vain, so soundly was he sleeping. Then he tried pushing and pulling him about, on which the sleeper began to stretch; but being shaken again, at last he spoke in a drowsy, mumbling way, like one in a dream.

Then following up his advantage, the little sprite

woke him more fully, and lifting his heavy head, he asked half angrily what was wanted.

"Archimago has sent me," answered his tormentor, "and bids you deliver me a bad, false dream, that may deceive the sleeper."

Morpheus obeyed, and calling to him a dream, gave it to the messenger, and forthwith laid down his head again, and was off to sleep in a moment.

When the dream was brought to Archimago, he sent it by the hand of the bearer, and with him the other sprite to help, and all night long these two wicked little things tormented the poor knight.

At last he started up, and thought he saw his Una before him; for the enchanter had dressed one of these creatures just like her. She seemed weeping bitterly; but our knight could not understand what was the matter, and said, "Why, what has frightened thee, that hast always comforted me when afraid?"

"I cannot sleep," she seemed to say, "but waste the night in sorrow, while thou art sleeping in carelessness; but go on and rest."

So saying, she appeared to glide away, and her knight lay long wondering, till at last, from sheer weariness, he fell asleep again, only to be vexed afresh.

In the morning old Archimago came to the Red Cross Knight, and told him that the fair Una (who was as good as she was beautiful) was false and wicked; and

the knight, who was foolish enough to believe him, leaped on his horse and galloped off, without stopping to inquire further. And as he rode along, thinking very sorrowfully of his dear Una, there met him a fierce-looking knight, whose name was Sansfoy, or Infidelity, riding with a handsome lady dressed in scarlet and pearls, and reminding one of the "lady who rode a white horse,"—for the bridle of her horse was covered with bells and ornaments.

Directly she saw the Red Cross Knight she said to her companion, "Here comes an enemy; make haste and fight him, and be sure and conquer."

"I should think so, indeed!" replied Sansfoy. "Dost thou suppose he will make *me* yield? What dost thou imagine my strength to be?"

No sooner had he said this than he rushed at our good knight, and they met with such violence that the shock sent them far apart again, and they stood staring at each other with angry looks for some time. Then the Saracen took his sword, and they fought fiercely for a long while, cutting and wounding each other sadly. But Sansfoy could not prevail over the Red Cross Knight on account of the cross he wore on his shield and breast, and though he gave such a blow that he made a great gash in his foe's helmet, he was at length cut down and killed by the strong sword of the Christian knight.

On seeing this the companion of Sansfoy fled in terror; and the knight, telling the dwarf to take the shield of his fallen foe as a sign of his victory, followed her, telling her not to fear, for he would not harm her. She turned back on hearing him, and with sad and downcast looks began,—

“I am a king’s daughter, and am called Fidessa. I was betrothed to a brave knight who was slain; and as I wandered about seeking his body, which had been carried away, I fell in with this pagan knight, the eldest of three bad brothers, and am very glad to be rid of him.”

Now, as we shall see, this was all untrue; but she seemed so sad and lonely that the Red Cross Knight was moved with pity for her, and asked if she would go with him and ride under his protection. To this she joyfully consented, and they journeyed together, apparently well pleased with each other’s society.

Had the knight so soon forgotten his poor Una? We shall see.

At length the day became very hot, and looking about for some shade, they spied two large and spreading trees, under which they stopped and dismounted to rest a while; and the knight, looking at Fidessa, thought she was very beautiful, and plucked a bough to make a garland for her.

Imagine his surprise on hearing a mournful voice exclaim, "Oh! what hast thou done? Have pity, and tear not my aching flesh. Whoever thou art, flee from this place, lest a fate should overtake thee similar to that which happened to me and my dear lady by my side."

The knight stood spell-bound, as I daresay most of us would do at hearing a tree speak. At last he began,—

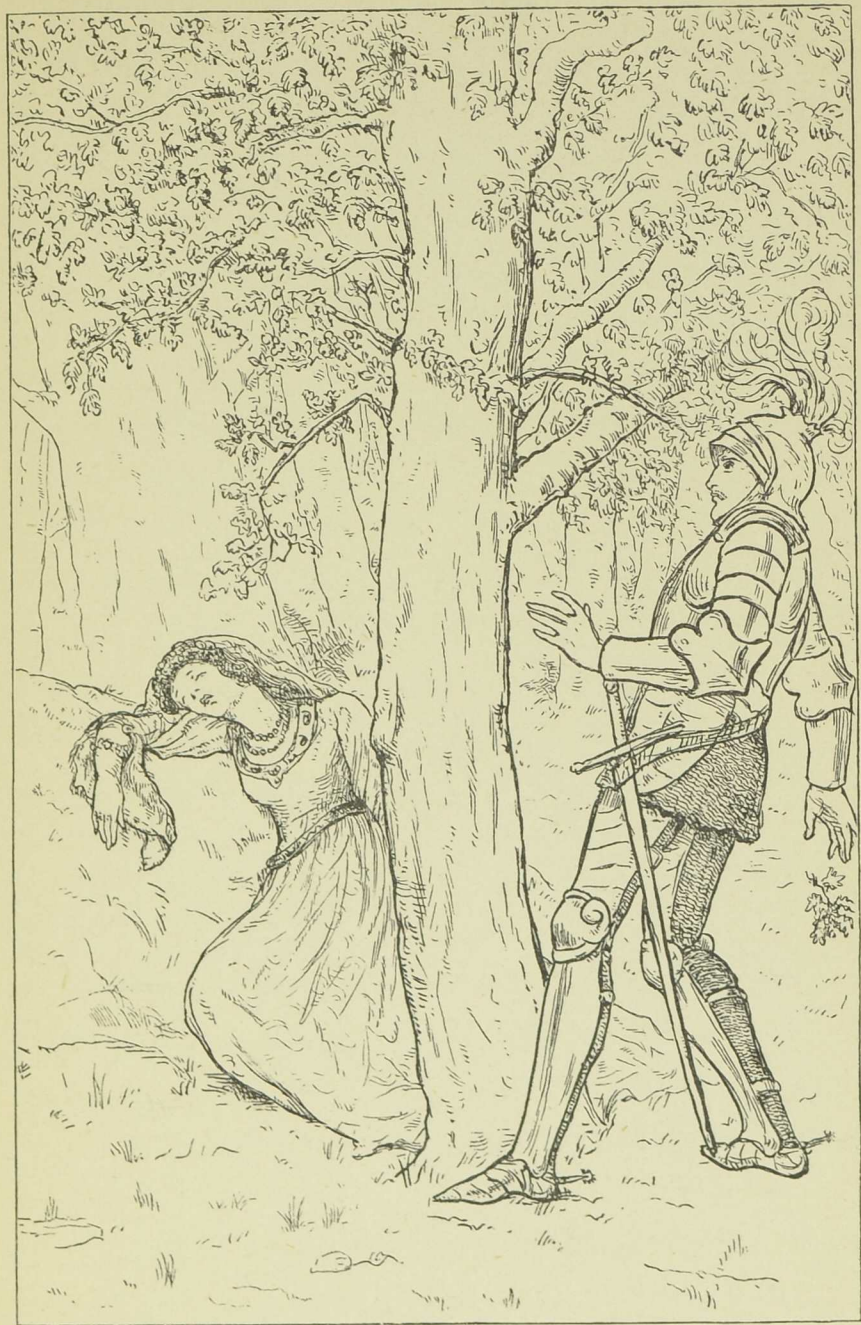
"Who art thou that askest me to spare guiltless blood? Art thou a spirit wandering about?"

"No, oh no," replied the voice; "I am no spirit—a man once called Fradubio. Now I am this tree, and was thus transformed by a cruel, wicked witch, by name Duessa, or Falsehood, who has brought many a good knight to ruin."

"Tell me about it," said the Knight of the Red Cross.

"It happened thus," continued Fradubio: "I was riding one day with the gentle lady who is now this seeming tree by my side, and we met a knight accompanied by an apparently beautiful lady, who was in reality the wicked Duessa. The knight began to praise his love, and I, of course, upheld mine as being the more beautiful. So from words we came to blows, and at length he fell, leaving his lady my prisoner.

"Now, when Duessa found I still loved Fræliissa, and that she could not make me care for her entirely,



THE KNIGHT'S SURPRISE.

in spite of her seeming beauty, she raised a horrid mist, which made Frælissa look old and ugly and deformed, and made me believe she was really so. Then she transformed her into this tree which you see.

“Ah, how foolish I was to be thus deceived! I took Duessa for my love, and thought she was fair, till one day I chanced to see her when she thought she was alone, and had taken off some of her ornaments, and who can tell my horror on perceiving that she was old and hideous, and had only been dressed up to *appear* beautiful. ‘Is it possible,’ I mused, ‘that I left my good and true Frælissa for such a wretch as this?’ Oh, how I wished I had never listened to this enchantress! But it was too late now. And when Duessa saw that I turned from her and despised her, she took vengeance on me by turning me also into a tree. At least I have the consolation of being near my Frælissa.”

“But is there nothing that can restore you?” asked the Red Cross Knight.

“Only our being bathed in a well of pure water.”

“How I wish I could find that well!”

“We must wait the appointed time,” said Fradubio. “Again, I repeat, take warning, and be not deceived as I was.”

On hearing this sad story the Red Cross Knight turned to his companion, and found she had fainted, as he thought, though she was only pretending, for she

was this same vile creature; and he, in his goodness and simplicity, tried to restore her, which having done at length, they set forth again.

"Well, Sydney, how do you like my knight?"

"O Aunt Alice, I think he is a real jolly fellow to beat that old dragon as he did. What did you say its name was?"

"Error, dear boy,—which can only be vanquished by such arms as this knight used.—George, what do *you* say to my fairy tale?"

"I like it very much; only I do think it was mean of the knight to leave Una. I wouldn't have done so."

"I hope you would not, George, and you will see how he suffered for it. But now we must not stay longer, for the sun is setting, and we shall be benighted, as our knight and lady were, if we do not make haste home."

"Oh, but I do want to hear more," said a chorus of voices; "it is not all the story, is it? You have told us nothing about poor Una and what she did when she found herself alone."

"I have thought of a plan," said Aunt Alice: "if you care to hear more you can come to me every afternoon; I will tell you the rest."

"Yes; that will be nice," cried the children.

"Only, you must all remember, it is not *only* a fairy story; there are beautiful meanings hidden in it which you can find out if you will."

"I should like to discover one now," said thoughtful Ruth. "What does the name Una mean? It is such a funny one."

"Is it, Ruth? I think it is a very pretty one. It means 'truth,' because truth is always single and straightforward. And then it is so beautiful in every one, whether old or young. But now, before we go, just look at that picture."

She pointed as she spoke to the sunset opposite, which was lighting up the whole landscape. As they gazed, it changed from gold to green, red, and purple, the colours all mingling and melting one into another, and lighting up the woods and fields with their glory, till at last all sank down into a calm deep blue and purple.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed the children, drawing a breath of satisfaction.

"Yes," said their aunt; "does it not remind you of a well-spent day, when, after having done all your work rightly, you feel the quiet content of 'something attempted, something done'? And it seems, too, like a picture of a Christian's life, ending in glory and peace. But now, scamper home before the fairies do come out and catch us."

Not long after, they reached the door of Aunt Alice's little house among the trees, and said good-night, with many thanks and desires for the morrow to come.

"Mother," cried two or three voices, as, after a little further walk, the children entered their home—"mother, mother, where are you?"

"I am coming in a minute," answered a cheery voice from the interior; and almost before the children had time to go in the direction from whence it came, Mrs. Ingoldsby met them.

"So here you are again. Have you had a nice day?"

"Jolly," replied Sydney. "We went to ask if Aunt Alice would go with us; but she had some letters to write first, so we waited in the garden till she was ready."

"And what did you do in the meantime?"

"The boys chased all the fowls in the yard, I do believe, mother," said Ruth; "and Daisy ran after to stop them, and caught her frock on a rose-bush, and tore a great slit in it. Of course she could not go like that, so I helped her to mend it."

"I expect you will say it is not neat, mother, for I cobbled it for fear it would not be done in time."

"O Daisy, what a child you are! I shall have to fine you every time you tear your things, and then perhaps you will be more careful. I wonder what Aunt Alice said to having her chickens run, boys!"

"We did not go on long, mother; but you know that old black cock Sambo, he is so tall and crooked, we could not resist making him hop, and of course

when he ran all the others went too. After that we went into the arbour and played at marbles."

"And what did you do all day? Did you have a nice time with your little friends?"

"Yes, very. We only meant to go for a walk; but when we reached the Grange, Maud and Edith were out, so Mrs. Bryant asked us to stay to dinner. First we went to the old castle; and after dinner, Aunt Alice stayed at home, and we fished in the river."

"What do you think?" said George. "Do you remember there are some large stones in the river by the bridge? We did not notice that Maud and Daisy had gone, as we were pulling out a big fish, when we heard a splash, and Sydney looked round saying, 'That's Maud.' He was off like a shot, and found Maud up to her waist in water; so he had very carefully to go on a large stone in the middle and pull her out. She and Daisy had been trying who could get across first. Daisy was safe, but Maud's foot slipped, and in she went. She was not hurt, though, and we took her home to be dried, and stayed to tea."

"It must have been exciting; but do not let me hear of such pranks again, Daisy. I do not want any drowned rats brought home to me."

"We have not told mother one of the best parts," said Daisy. "We were watching the sunset in Long Acre Field, when Aunt Alice began to tell us a lovely

story about a lady, and knight, and dragons, and ever so many things, and she will go on with it if we may go to her every afternoon."

"O children, Aunt Alice spoils you. I shall have to send her away, and tell her to get some one else to take care of."

"Then we should have to write to her very often, and that would take more time than going to see her: —wouldn't it, Ruth?" returned Daisy.

Just then Mr. Ingoldsby entered, and the story of their day's adventures had to be repeated, by which time most, if not all, were quite ready for bed, though protesting that they were not in the least tired.

CHAPTER II.

UNA IN DISTRESS.

"Now, aunt, I think we are all ready," said Daisy, as the merry faces looked up in expectation the next day.

"What are you going to tell us to-day?"

"I think this will be a chapter for the girls," answered her aunt; "but perhaps the boys will like it as well."

We must go back to poor forsaken Una. She, poor maid, wandered everywhere, vainly seeking her champion, fearing nothing, for she had no thought of ill.

One day, alighting from her gentle ass, she lay down in the shadow of a wood to rest. Taking off the band from her hair, and laying aside her black mantle, her golden tresses showered down around her, and

"Her angel's face,
As the great eye of heaven, shined bright,
And made a sunshine in the shady place,"—

when, lo! a lion rushed out of the thickest wood, and seeing her, ran up eagerly, thinking to devour her at once. But as he came near, what was her surprise to

see that he grew gentle ; and when he was close to her, instead of tearing her to pieces, he began to lick her hands and her feet, and fawned upon her, trying in every way he could to comfort her, and to show her that he would help her if he could.

“ Oh, thought she, weeping, “ this lion, so full of pride and hunger, yields to me in this submissive way ; how is it that my lion and dear lord has left me and hates me, who have ever loved him so truly ? ”

As she thought of this, her tears flowed faster, and the lion stood looking on in pity for her woes. At last the royal virgin arose, and mounting her white ass, again went forth to seek her knight. The lion would not leave her desolate, but guarded her by day and night as carefully as if he had been her servant, and used to watch her face to see what she wanted.

So the lady and her strange but faithful attendant travelled on together, without meeting any one of whom to ask after her champion ; till one day she found a girl with a pitcher on her shoulder, walking slowly in front of her, of whom the weary maiden inquired whether there was any place near at hand where she might rest for the night. The rude country girl had never seen so beautiful a lady as this before ; and perceiving the lion, she was terrified, and fled away without uttering a word. She rushed home to her blind old mother, and while she was telling her what a fright she had

had, Dame Una came up to the door, which was fast closed, and begged to be taken in for the night.

No one answered or opened; so the unruly page, leaping up, tore open the door with his claws to let his mistress in, who entering, saw the two women huddled in a corner, half dead with fear, to whom she spoke kind, loving words; and having somewhat cheered them, lay down herself, the lion crouching at her feet. Lay down, I said, but not to sleep; for ever her thoughts turned night and day to him who had left her.

But hark! what noise is that? Some one knocks at the door, and, when no one dares open it, bursts in. It is Kirk-Rapine, who daily robs churches and good men, and then brings home the spoil to Abessa and her old blind mother Corceca.

When the lion saw this new foe entering,

“ Encountering fierce, he sudden doth surprise,
And seizing cruel claws on trembling breast,
Under his lordly foot him proudly hath opprest.”

It was of no use for Kirk-Rapine to struggle. The lion fiercely tore him into a thousand pieces, while his terrified friends dared not say or do anything to help him, for fear of being killed themselves.

Now when day broke up rose Una, and sadly went forth again with her faithful friend, feeling weary and sick at heart. She had not gone far when she heard the two women with whom she had lodged calling after

her every shameful name they could think of, and wishing her all kinds of evil, for having allowed her lion to kill Kirk-Rapine. But finding that Una answered nothing, but went on her way, they returned, and in the way met a knight, who asked if they knew where Una was. This was in reality the wicked Archimago, who had put on armour like the Red Cross Knight's, to deceive poor Una. He soon overtook her, and on seeing the lion, dared not go too near, but waited on a little hill by the roadside, and showed his shield with the red cross on it. And Una, catching sight of it, joyfully went to him, saying,—

“Oh, my dear lord, why hast thou been so long out of my sight? I have been in sadness ever since thou hast left me; but now I am indeed joyful.”

“Dear Una,” said the seeming knight, “how couldst thou think I could leave thee alone without a good reason? I have been seeking adventures, and Archimago told me of a wicked knight who daily did some harm. I went to seek him, and after a fierce battle conquered; and now he can no more vex and harass good people as he did. Now be comforted.”

His words did indeed comfort Una, who, being true herself, had no idea she was being deceived; and they rode on together in joyous talk.

They had only gone a little way, however, when they saw a proud knight coming to meet them—a fierce and

cruel man called Sansloy, or Lawlessness. His horse looked as fierce as himself, and was chafing and foaming with the spurring his master gave him. This stern and cruel man, on seeing one in the armour, as he thought, of his great enemy the Knight of the Red Cross, spurred to meet him, and ran at him with such force that he bore him to the ground. Then in fierce joy he cried,—

“This is my revenge on thee for having slain my brother Sansfoy. Prepare to die, for die thou shalt this moment.” Saying which, he began to unlace the helmet of his fallen foe.

Una besought him with tears to have mercy, but in vain, and he persisted in undoing the helmet; when, think of his surprise at seeing, *not* the Red Cross Knight, but old Archimago, who was one of his great friends. He stared at him, and said wonderingly,—

“Archimago! how is it I see thee thus? What has brought thee into this strait?”

But his victim answered not a word, lying in a trance, completely stunned by his fall; and Sansloy, seeing this, turned to Una, and rudely tried to pluck her veil aside, to look at her face. Her faithful lion could not stand this; so he sprang up, and ramping on his shield, thought to have torn it down. In vain, for Sansloy was stronger; and, full of rage, he pulled out his sword, and pierced the lion to the heart!

Ah! now, what can poor Una do—her knight gone, her faithful servant killed, and no help near?

“How could I have mistaken this vile man,” she thought, “for my dear knight?”

While she mused thus, in sorrow and fear, Sansloy came up, and in spite of her tears and entreaties put her on his horse to carry her away as his prisoner and shut her up in his castle. Her gentle ass, seeing her thus borne away, followed her afar off, unwilling to leave her.

So the forlorn maiden was carried off in fear and dread of her cruel and proud captor, till, as they were passing through a thick wood, she could bear it no longer, and began to call loudly for help, though she saw none who could aid her. Her cries reached the furthest recesses of the forest, where many fauns and satyrs and nymphs were playing, who, hearing these unusual sounds, ran to find out what they were. When they came up, Sansloy in his turn was frightened; for these queer creatures, with men’s heads and goats’ feet and shaggy hair, stood and stared at him; and being, as most cruel people are, a great coward, he galloped off as hard as he could, leaving Una to her fate.

At first she was very frightened; but when these strange people saw this they tried to show by gentle looks and actions that they did not wish to harm her: wondering at her youth and beauty, they bowed low

before her, and kissed her feet, and showed that they would be her servants.

So she arose and went with them trustingly into the forest. Her strange companions accompanied her, singing, dancing round her, strewing her path with green boughs and crowning her with garlands.

All the woods echoed with their cries and the merry notes of their reeds; and old Sylvanus, the king of the forest, came out to learn the cause of these unwonted sounds. His people, coming near, presented Una to him, and then fell down again at her feet.

Sylvanus himself did not know what to make of her; he had never seen any one so fair before. At first he thought she must be Venus; then Diana, but he saw no bow and arrows in her hands. Then up came the wood-nymphs, and the light-footed naiads, and felt quite envious at her beauty. As for the satyrs, they cared for none but Una; and pleased with such fortune, she lived in the forest for some time, trying to teach them many things. But she found it very difficult; for she was so beautiful, they thought she must be a goddess, and began to worship her. And when she told them this was very wrong and foolish, they worshipped her ass instead.

As I said, she remained with them for some time, not knowing how to escape nor which way to go, till one day a noble, warlike knight came to the forest to

see his relations ; for he had been born and brought up here, though now he had won much fame, and filled many lands with the glory of his name.

And why ? Because he was simple, faithful, and true, the enemy of shame and wrong ; his great delight was to fight for distressed ladies, though he cared little for mere empty frays.

As a child he had roamed about the forest fearlessly. His father wished him to be brave, so he made him hunt wild beasts, putting his little hand upon the fierce lion or bear, telling him to take bear cubs from their mother, and making him tame and ride wild roaring bulls.

He ran so swiftly that he could overtake the roebuck, and every animal fled quaking from before him.

Even his father at last began to be alarmed, and begged him not to be rash, when he saw him putting together wild beasts in iron yoke—the panther, the boar with his great tusks, the swift leopard and cruel tiger, the antelope and wolf—making them all draw him.

His mother one day met him unawares, carrying the cubs of a lioness quite fearlessly, though their mother ran behind roaring with rage. Terrified at the sight, she cried out, “ Ah, Satyrane, my darling, leave off for my sake this dreadful play ; risk not death in this way ; find out other playfellows, my own sweet boy.”

In these and such like sports he delighted till he grew to riper years, and was so brave he feared noth-

ing. Then he wished to turn his arms against more worthy foes ; so he went abroad seeking adventures, in which he was so successful that his fame was proclaimed all through Fairyland.

But it was his custom, after long wanderings and labours, to retire for a while to his old home ; and now, having returned thither, he found the fair Una—strange sight there—teaching the satyrs, who sat round her drinking in her words.

Much wondered the knight at her heavenly wisdom, the like of which he had never seen in woman, and he grieved that she had passed through such troubles. He was constantly by her side, learning faith and truth from her.

But no solace or companion could make her forget her dear Red Cross Knight, and she thought over every possible way to escape, till at last she told Satyrane her story, and said how much she wished to go and seek her lost friend. He, glad to gain her favour, began to think how to manage it ; and one day, when the satyrs were absent on a visit to Sylvanus, he took her out of the wood and rode away with her.

Too late now it was for the satyrs to be told, or hope to bring her back again : he seeks for a thing in vain who, having it, cannot hold it. So swiftly did Satyrane carry away the forlorn maiden that they were soon past the woods and on the plain.

When they had travelled the greater part of the day, they spied an old pilgrim toiling along, who seemed to have come from distant countries, he looked so travel-stained and weary. The knight, riding up to him, inquired if he had heard of any wars or adventures. "None," replied he.

Then Una asked—as she always did—if he had heard any tidings of a Knight of the Red Cross.

"Ay me! dear lady," he answered; "I grieve to tell you I have seen that knight, both living and dead."

On hearing these terrible words she fell down fainting, and it was a long time before the kind knight could restore her. When she came to herself she said, "Go on, and tell me more of this sad story, now I know the worst." So the old man began:—

"I saw this day,—a sad day to me,—two knights fighting fiercely. I trembled at the sound of their weapons, and at the sight of their wounds. But I could do nothing to stop them; and oh, woe the day! at last one of them fell; and I saw a red cross graven on his shield."

"Where," said the knight Satyrane, "is that cruel foe, who has bereft him of life and us of joy?"

"I left him," returned the pilgrim, "washing his hands at a fountain hard by."

You may guess this pilgrim was no other than the



THE COMBAT: UNA'S TERROR.

Page 51.

deceiver Archimago, who led Satyrane to Sansloy, who was resting by the fountain.

"Come forth," said Satyrane to him, "and maintain your cause, or else die, for being guilty of the death of a good knight."

On this the two began to fight, for Sansloy said he had not seen the Red Cross Knight, but had once fought instead with Archimago. And Una, coming up slowly, found them thus tearing and wounding each other; and seeing who it was, she fled away, terrified lest again she should be captured by this tyrant. Archimago, who was enjoying this contest, seeing her go, followed her, to try and work her further woe.

"And now we must take leave of this poor distressed maiden to return to her knight, which will require another chapter; so we must stop for to-day, children."

"Thank you very much, aunt. Will you explain some of this to us?" cried the listeners.

"Whom does Archimago represent, for he keeps appearing in different characters?"

"Perhaps, Sydney, you could answer that question, if you think. Did he not always try to deceive? And so he may be taken to mean the spirit of evil which is abroad in the world, which men call 'lying' or 'deceit,' which is always at war with 'truth,' seeking to overcome it."

"What had the lion to do with Una? I think that is one of the prettiest parts," said Daisy. "How frightened she must have been when she saw him coming!"

"Yes, indeed," continued Ruth; "but she was not afraid afterward; and how sorry she must have felt when he was killed! If Una represents truth, what does the lion mean, Aunt Alice?"

"Do you always like to believe things you cannot understand, Ruth?"

"No, aunt."

"Well, *reason* is a very good servant when truth is its mistress; but even reason fails sometimes, when wicked lawlessness fights against truth and holiness. Not that lawlessness can really conquer in the end; but it seems sometimes as if it were going to carry everything before it. Think how many true and good men have suffered for truth even when reason was on their side, while truth itself has never been, and never will be, destroyed."

"I am so glad," exclaimed George, "that Una got free from wicked Sansloy. If I had been a knight I should like to have met her, and carried her away to some safe place."

"Do you know, George, you can do something quite as noble and beautiful? *Seek* truth for yourself, and when you have found her, always carry her about with

you, and guard her from being overcome, as far as lies in your power. You may have a long search, but if it is in earnest, you will indeed be rewarded; for she *never* deceives *any one*, as all who really love her can witness."

"O aunt, I will try." And George's eyes kindled as he made the resolve to be a good man, and win glory and honour for the truth.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUSE OF PRIDE.

ANOTHER afternoon, the children having assembled at the appointed time, their aunt continued :—

We left the Red Cross Knight caring for Duessa, whom he imagined to be the good Fidessa. When she was restored and able to set forth again, she led him to a splendid castle called the House of Pride. A broad road led up to it, and here crowds of people were travelling. It seemed a magnificent place afar off, made of red brick, cunningly laid without mortar, and painted all sorts of gorgeous colours ; towers, galleries, windows, all these were added to this imposing building. But on nearer view it was found to be situated on a sandy hill, and was so shaky that every wind threatened to blow it down.

Notwithstanding this, it was the dwelling-place of Queen Lucifera, who disdained all lowly things, and shone with as great magnificence as ever did kings of the East.



The road was worn bare by the great troops of people who went thither, both day and night, in every condition of life ; but few of them returned, having hardly escaped with beggary and disgrace, and these ever after lay along the hedges in miserable plight.

Arrived here, the knight and his companion passed in as if by right ; for all the gates stood wide open, only in charge of them was the porter Malvenu, who denied entrance to none (though his name meant it was a sad thing to enter), and from thence they passed to the hall, which was beautifully and richly furnished.

Here also were crowds of people waiting for the long-wished-for sight of the lady of this palace.

Past these gazers they went into the presence-chamber, so brilliant that no court of a living prince equalled it ; and here a number of lords and ladies were standing round, who by their presence helped to beautify the place.

At one end, raised above all, was placed a gorgeous throne covered with a rich cloth of state. On this there sat a maiden queen, who glittered with gold and precious stones, which were yet eclipsed by her bright beauty. So proud she looked with her head lifted up, as if earth were far beneath her notice, and underneath her scornful feet lay a great dragon. She held a mirror in her hand, in which she often looked at her face, for in this she took great delight.

Her great ambition was to be higher than any one else; and men might well call her proud, for she had made herself a crowned queen, though she had no rightful kingdom or inheritance; she had usurped the sceptre she held, and did not rule her kingdom with wise laws, but only as it pleased her whims, and by the advice of six old wizards who gave her bad counsel.

When the knight and his companion entered, they were ushered into the queen's presence by the steward Vanity; and all eyes were turned towards Duessa, for she was known of old, and was warmly welcomed by all.

Making humble obeisance on bended knee, the two friends gave as the cause of their coming the desire to see the queen's state, and prove if the reports of her were true.

With lofty eyes, that seemed unwilling to look down, Lucifera thanked them disdainfully; no other grace did she show, and scarcely bade them rise.

Meantime her courtiers all vied with each other as to who should make the best impression on the strangers: some set their curled hair to rights, others pulled out their ruffles, and others looked at their dresses; but all were envious of each other.

While Duessa was exchanging courtesies with her old acquaintances, the knight, looking round him, thought all this pretence of glory very vain, and the

princess herself most proud who had given so little welcome to a strange knight.

Just then, *Lucifera* was preparing to go for a ride. At once there was great stir. As the fair dawn comes out of the east and calls the day, so she went forth dazzling with her brightness the eyes of those who pushed and jostled each other, thronging into the hall to gaze at her. Her coach was adorned with gold and garlands, and was drawn by six animals, on which sat her six counsellors. And strange beasts they were to draw the chariot. An ass, a pig, a camel, a goat, a lion, and a wolf, harnessed together in pairs, formed a curious team!

First rode *Idleness*, the nurse of *Sin*, who guided all the rest, on the lazy ass. He was dressed in black, and carried a little book in his hand that was much worn but little read. He was so drowned in sleep he could hardly hold up his heavy head to see whether it were night or day. Surely the way was very wrongly shown when such a one guided the chariot, and knew not whether he went rightly or astray.

Beside him was placed the deformed creature *Gluttony*, on a dirty pig. He was always ready to gobble up food he did not want, and poor starving creatures would have been glad of. Every one detested the sight of him. He was so taken up with eating and drinking that he could think of nothing else, and certainly

was quite unfit for a royal counsellor, when he could not even tell friend from foe.

Then came Jealousy, dressed in green, riding on the goat, ugly indeed to look at. Greedy Avarice was his companion, who was mounted on a camel laden with gold. Two iron chests hung by his side full of precious metal, and besides these he counted over a heap of money in his lap. For he worshipped wealth, and whether he got it rightly or wrongly mattered nothing to him.

He looked almost ready to die; wearing a threadbare coat and cobbled shoes, hardly tasting good food all his life, for fear he should spend his precious money, which he loved to hoard, though he had no one to leave it to. What a wretched life he led, through daily anxiety to get and nightly fear to lose! Most miserable man, for whom nothing could suffice, whose greedy desire was wanting in the greatest store; whose wealth was want, whose plenty made him poor; who had enough, yet always wished for more. He was tormented in feet and hands with grievous gout, so that he could not comfortably touch, or go, or stand. Such was Avarice.

After him came wicked Envy on a hungry wolf. He was grinding his teeth at the sight of his neighbour's wealth; for he hated to see the good of others, though always he rejoiced when he heard of harm.

He wept often, though he had no cause to do so, and grudgingly coveted the happiness of Lucifera and his own company. Even his dress befitted him, made of discoloured thin stuff, painted all over with eyes.

Oh what a vile thing is Envy, that hates all virtuous deeds, and turns all good to bad!

Beside him rode fierce, avenging Wrath, seated on a lion unwilling to be led. In his hand he held a burning torch, which he brandished about his head. His eyes shot forth fiery looks, glaring sternly on all who beheld him; one hand was on his dagger, and he trembled with rage. His garments were torn by his own hands in his fits of frenzy, for he had no control over them, and cared not whom he slew, or even if he hurt himself. He would often repent his wild acts, but never could foresee what mischief would follow his hastiness. And indeed many sad things follow Anger,—bloodshed, tumultuous strife, unmanly murder, bitterness, grief, and many others. Who would not shun such a train as this, with Idleness to lead, and Wrath to bring up the rear, all servants of Pride?

All being ready, the procession set forth into the fields, passing crowds of admiring spectators on the way—Duessa going next to the chariot of the proud queen, as one of her dearest friends; while the knight, who did not like the appearance of Lucifera, preferred to remain at the castle.

When the princess and her train returned, they found a stranger knight just arrived, called Sansjoy, who, seeing his brother's shield in the dwarf's keeping, leaped upon him furiously, and snatched it away. On seeing this, the knight from Fairyland ran up and rescued the token of his late victory. Of course this led to a fight, and they would most likely have killed each other on the spot, but for the intervention of the queen, who commanded them to desist. Peace being restored, the two knights pleaded for a trial by combat, to prove which had right on his side. This was appointed for the next day; after which they all went to the banquet, and then retired to rest, the fairy knight thinking all night of how he could best achieve honour in the trial of the morrow, for he disdained his heathen foe.

Next morning the sun rose clear and bright, waking with his burning rays our hero. He immediately began to prepare for the combat, equipping himself in his splendid armour, which shone like the sun itself. Then he went forth into the hall, where all eyes were directed towards him in admiration.

Soon after came forth the bold Saracen, and glared fiercely at his foe, who returned his gaze steadily; for what had he to fear?

The lists were arranged on a grassy plain, and the haughty queen took her seat under a stately canopy, with Duessa opposite to her, over whose head hung the

shield of the dead Sansfoy, which, with Duessa, was to be the prize of the victor.

Everything being arranged, the trumpet was sounded, and the two knights began their contest.

For a long time the battle seemed undecided: the combatants fought bravely, the one for right and the other for wrong. And 'twas pity to see the grievous wounds they received, the armour dimmed and stained, and the fierce blows that rained on shields and helmets.

At last Sansjoy caught sight of his brother's shield, and in redoubled rage he cried, "Go, base knight, and join my brother, whom thou hast sent to the kingdom of Pluto, and tell him I have redeemed his shield." With that he gave the good knight such a blow on his crest that twice he reeled and nearly fell; and Duessa cried out, "Thine, Sansjoy, am I, and the shield and all."

Now when the fairy knight heard his lady speak, he roused himself out of his deadly faint, and moved with wrath and shame at the thought of being disgraced in the eyes of fair ladies, once more struck at his enemy, and forced him on to his knee, saying to him, "Go *thou*, proud man, and give thy message thyself to thy brother, and say thy foe bears thy shield with his."

Lifting up his sword, he prepared for the final stroke, when suddenly a mist fell and completely hid his opponent. He called aloud, and looked on all sides,

but nowhere could Sansjoy be found. Darkness shrouded him altogether.

Then Duessa ran to the Red Cross Knight, crying out, "Now, brave knight, cease from thy anger and vengeance; the servants of Pluto have hidden thy enemy. Be content, and take the rewards of thy victory and enjoy thy triumph."

The knight, finding it was useless to seek any longer for his fallen foe, went to pay his respects to the queen, and then retired, followed by the applause of all the spectators.

"What *had* become of Sansjoy?" interrupted Sydney. "What a disappointment to the good knight not to be able to find him!"

"You shall hear," said Aunt Alice.

While the Red Cross Knight was being tended and having his wounds dressed, Duessa, after weeping till evening, apparently in great sorrow, left the house and went hastily to the eastern boundary of the heavens, where dark-robed Night held sway. Here she stopped, and entering, saw the old dame preparing to take her journey through the sky. Duessa went up to her, praying her to take pity on her and listen to her tale, saying that she was the daughter of Deceit and Shame.

The old woman received her joyfully; and when she heard that Sansjoy had been wounded nearly to death, she entered her iron chariot, and taking Duessa with

her, drove to the place where Sansjoy had been carried, bereft of outward sense or feeling, and covered with the same dark cloud that had hidden him from his foe.

The two women took him up, and placing him in the chariot, drove with him to the dark domains of Pluto, passing Cerberus, the three-headed dog who kept the gates, and who tried to stop them; but he was pacified by old Night, and suffered them to enter.

Then continuing their way, they came at length to the cave of old Æsculapius, Apollo's son, who was famed on earth for his healing power. Here they stopped, and taking off the armour, and showing the wounds of Sansjoy, they asked Æsculapius to heal him. At first the sage refused, but on being pressed by Night, consented to cure her charge. So leaving Sansjoy in the physician's hands, the two friends returned to upper air.

On reaching at length the House of Pride, Duessa found to her dismay that the Red Cross Knight had left.

His faithful page had seen terrible things in that castle. Men and women who had given themselves into the care and service of the bad Lucifera were treated by her after a little time with great cruelty. Condemned to a dark and terrible dungeon, there to pine out their miserable days, were seen many whose names have come down to us in history. There was

the great king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, that wished all nations to adore him; till for his pride he was driven from men, and made to eat grass like an ox. There also were King Cræsus, whose heart was lifted up through the abundance of his wealth; and proud Antiochus, who dared to defy God, and despised his altars. Nimrod, Ninus king of Assyria, Romulus, proud Tarquin of Rome, Scipio, Hannibal, Sylla, Marius, great Cæsar and his noble foe Pompey, fierce Antonius, and many others, were there, together with proud, vain women, such as Semiramis and Cleopatra,—all of whom had thus brought themselves into this bondage to the wicked queen.

When our hero heard of these things, and knew that many knights and ladies were there who had once perhaps been as earnest and sincere as he was, he trembled lest he too should be overtaken by a like sad fate; so rising early, he with his page left this dreadful place, glad and thankful to be saved, and mourning over the wrecks of those he passed, who had surrendered themselves to the dominion of Pride.

When Duessa found that the knight had left, she went forth to seek him far and wide; for, as we know, she wanted to make him her prey. At length she found him seated by a fountain, reclining on the cool grass, having put off his armour, and bathing his aching brow in the clear water. She came up to him, saying,

“How is it thou hast left me, my lord and knight? how couldst thou so soon forget me?”

“Ah, dear lady, I did not forget thee; but I dared not stay longer in that fatal House of Pride.”

She answered with such loving words that she quite comforted him, and they passed some time in pleasant converse; and the knight, feeling thirsty, stooped down and drank some of the water by his side.

Ere long he felt his strength begin to fail; he shook all over as with an ague, and a deadly faintness seized on him, owing to that strange and charmed water: for this fountain had once been one of Diana's nymphs, who, getting weary in the chase, sat down to rest, and the goddess being angry, turned her into a fountain, with the command that whoever drank of her waters should grow faint and feeble as she was then.

While the knight thus lay in a half stupor, he heard a terrible sound in the distance. Starting up, he tried to put on his invincible armour, which he had foolishly cast aside. But before he could do so, a huge, terrible giant came stalking into sight. His head seemed to reach up to the sky, and he utterly scorned all those who were smaller and weaker than himself.

He was leaning as he walked upon a massive oak, which he had torn from the earth, and used as his mace.

No sooner did he perceive the knight than he advanced to him, brandishing his club, and looking

upon him with fury. Our poor hero, weak and faint, and helpless without his armour, addressed himself to the unequal fight.

His hand shook so that he could scarcely hold his sword, and before he had time to give one stroke, the giant thundered down such a heavy blow with his mace, that he would have been crushed to atoms but for heavenly grace which upheld him. Seeing the blow coming, he leaped aside, yet the wind caused by the mighty tree so stunned him that he sank to the earth as dead.

When the giant saw this, he lifted up his hand to crush him, and would have made an end of him, had not Duessa called out, "O great Orgoglio, stay thy hand for my sake and kill him not, but make him thy slave for ever."

Orgoglio, hearing her voice, drew back; and seeing who she was, joyfully accosted her. Taking up the senseless knight, he carried him to his castle near, where he threw him into a dungeon dark and deep, while he loaded Duessa with favours, treating her like a queen, and giving her gold and purple dresses and a splendid triple crown. And in order to make her more dreaded by men, he brought out of a gloomy cave a huge monster like a serpent, with seven heads and a long tail, which should carry her whenever she wished to ride forth abroad.

The woful dwarf, who saw his master's sad and terrible fall while he was guarding his grazing steed, sorrowfully took up his armour—that armour which had never been more needed than now: the mighty silver shield, the strong spear, the redoubted helmet and breastplate—and with these relics departed to tell his great distress. He had not travelled far before he met Una flying fast from that fierce Saracen whom Satyrane was hindering from following.

When she caught sight of these sad tokens of her missing lord, she fell senseless to the earth, and it was only the beating of her heart that gave sign of life.

The unhappy messenger would have liked to die too; yet striving to recover himself, he gave his attention to restoring his mistress, chafing her hands and head, and trying by every means in his power to bring her back to consciousness.

At last, opening her eyes, she thus spoke: "Oh, why do my eyes look longer on the light, or care to gaze on earthly things, now that the threads are severed which bound my life and love together? And thou, glad day, which lightest up all things beautiful, henceforth hide thy face from me and let me die, since my lord and love is no more!"

Thrice she sank down, and thrice the anxious dwarf restored her with earnest care; and at length she said,

"Say on whatever you have to tell, for now from the sight of these tokens I know the worst has happened, and I cannot hear anything more terrible; it may be the evil is less than I fear."

Then the dwarf began, and related to her his master's history from the time he had left her,—how he met Fidessa; the conquest of Sansfoy; the tale he had heard from Fradubio; how he had gone to the House of Pride, and had fought with Sansjoy. "And now," groaned he, "he is taken captive by a fierce, cruel giant, and whether he is dead or alive I know not."

Una heard this patiently to the end; but it almost rent her heart in twain, for never did lady love any one more strongly than she did the Red Cross Knight, for whose dear sake she had endured so many trials.

Presently, when her grief was somewhat abated, she rose up, determined to seek him till she found him, alive or dead, and wandered on in the way the dwarf pointed out, traversing many a wood and hill and valley in weariness and pain.

One day she chanced to meet a goodly knight, who, together with his squire, was arrayed in armour bright. It shone far off like the beams of the sun, and from top to toe no joint appeared bare. Across his breast a baldric brave he wore, studded with precious and rare stones that glittered like the twinkling stars. And in the midst was one jewel of rare beauty that almost

dazzled the sight, from which hung his wondrous sword in ivory sheath of curious workmanship. The hilt of this sword was of burnished gold and mother-of-pearl, and it was fastened to his girdle with a golden clasp. His towering helmet, bright with gold, was crested with the image of a dragon, made of the same precious metal. Upon the top of this lofty crest a bunch of hairs, covered with sprinkled pearls and gold, shook and danced as he moved.

But his shield was the most splendid of all, and was closely covered, that it might not be seen; for not of steel, or brass, or even silver was it made. Such metals were too base. But it was framed of one pure, perfect diamond, hewn out of the rock, and no point of spear or dint of sword could pierce it.

This shield, so clear and flaming, he never disclosed but when he wanted to strike terror into the hearts of his foes; for so brightly it shone that even the sun seemed less bright beside it. Nor was this all; for it was proof against all enchantment, and all that was not what it seemed faded and shrank before it; and when the knight wished, he could turn men to stones, and stones to dust, and dust to nothing, through the virtue of this weapon.

And well might this be, for Merlin the great magician had made this shield for the young prince when first he took to arms; and when he died the Fairy Queen

took it to Fairyland, where it may yet be seen if sought for.

Now when this glorious knight drew near to Una, he began to speak with kind and courteous words, but soon perceived that she had some great and secret trouble which he gently sought to discover. Then Una began,—

“What joy or comfort can I take in words of any living man? My heart grows cold when I think of my bitter lot. What good can it do to disclose my grief? It is better hidden, and my last comfort is to lament my fate.”

“Ah, dear lady,” quoth then the gentle knight, “well do I see that your grief is very great; yet, I beseech you, unfold to me your woe, for he never yet found help who did not disclose his trouble.”

“Oh, but,” replied she, “great grief can better be imagined than told.”

“True; but he that never *would* do anything never *could*, for *will* gives greatest help to power.”

“Yet grief,” she continued, “grows greater by being told. If it finds not help it brings despair.”

“There is no despair,” he answered, “where there is faith.”

“Yes; but no faith is so strong that trouble may not weaken it.”

“That is so, but reason may help to restore it.”

His gentle and wise speech overcame her, and she replied,—

“I, the forlorn maiden whom you see before you, am the only daughter of a king and queen whose sway extended far and wide, till their cruel enemy, a dragon huge and stern, wasted their kingdom on all sides, and forced them to take refuge in a strong brazen castle, in which they have been immured four years. Many strong, stout knights have ventured forth to subdue this monster; but all have failed, either from want of faith or through weakness from sinful heart, and the foe gets fiercer every day.

“At last I was led hither by report of the brave knights of Fairyland, and sped to the noble court of great Gloriana, queen of glory bright, there to seek one who might help and release my dear parents.

“I found there a young and unproved knight, whose hands were not dyed with guilty blood, and who had never had a combat; yet has he proved himself a worthy, doughty knight in many a cruel fight, as I can witness.

“I hoped strongly, and thought my hopes would be fulfilled, that he would overcome our foe, till one sad, heavy day a wicked enchanter deceived him, and made him believe me untrue—I, who would rather die than be that.

“Oh, how I loved him, and do love him still! So did I

think of him, and believe I thought aright. Thenceforth he left me desolate, to wander where I would, and took other ways himself, meeting with the bad Duessa, my great and only foe and dread, who has bewitched him, and led him in her ways, till she has betrayed him to a giant who has surprised him, and cast him into a fearful dungeon where he can get no help—he who never yet fell before any foe. This is my tale, and is there not cause enough for grief?”

The courteous knight answered, “Good cause hast thou, fair lady, to complain; but be of good cheer, for till I have released thy captive knight I will not forsake thee.”

His cheerful words began to revive her spirit, and they rode forth together, the dwarf leading them rightly to the knight’s place of imprisonment.

“Now,” said Aunt Alice, pausing in the tale, “we must stop, as it is already late, and we have no time to talk to-night. You must keep all your questions for another day. So run home, or mother will wonder where you are.”

“Aunt, do you know,” said Daisy, “mother has given us a holiday to-morrow because Uncle Will is coming, and we want you to come with us to Lyndhurst Tower, if it is a fine day, and then, if you like, we can have some more of the story there. So please do come if you can.”



THE GOODLY KNIGHT'S VOW.

“I will try what I can do, Daisy, for that is one of my favourite haunts.”

As she spoke, a merry good-night was uttered by all the four, and they scampered off home across the fields.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PICNIC.

THE following morning rose clear and beautiful. The sun seemed to know that he was desired to put on his best appearance, and he certainly tried to do so. Not a cloud covered the sky, as the four children, having put away lesson-books for a while, ran off to find their aunt.

What was their dismay on being told that she had suddenly been sent for that morning to Southampton to see a dear friend who was going abroad, and that she would not be back for some days. But there was no help for it, so they returned, a good deal more slowly than they had gone.

"Mother," said Sydney, "Aunt Alice has gone away, and will not be back for some days. What *are* we to do?"

"Keep a bright face, my boy, and wait patiently till she comes back."

"But she left off in such an interesting part of the story. I can't wait; I want to hear it directly."

"I daresay that poor knight thought he could not wait," remarked Ruth, "when he was put into the dungeon; but he had to. I wonder who this new knight is? I think he is some one nice; don't you?"

"I think he is, because his armour was so splendid; but who he is I cannot imagine."

"I can guess," interrupted Daisy, who rather prided herself on having read more than the others: "I believe we shall find it is King Arthur."

"Perhaps it was. Well, any way, he was a jolly fellow.—I say, George, should you not like to have met him and seen his shield? I think I could risk being blinded just to see its flashing rays."

Here Uncle Will broke in, "Whatever are you children talking about? It seems to me you have a pretty good time of it down at Aunt Alice's."

"I should think we have, uncle. You should just hear the way she tells stories. And this one is partly true, and so interesting. I wish you would come and hear it."

"Perhaps Aunt Alice might not like me for a listener. At any rate, I can only stay here a few days, so I may be gone by the time she returns. Now, I want to know whether you mean to take me to Lyndhurst Tower to-day or not."

"Oh yes, uncle, and then you can carry us over any rough places we come to. That will be nice," exclaimed the girls.

"Part of the way is so steep, it takes us a long time to get up."

"I have thought of a better plan than that," said Mrs. Ingoldsby. "Why not take old Neddy? He can carry the basket if you are going to take your dinner, and then any one who is tired can ride."

"Capital!" cried Uncle Will. "I propose we start as soon as we can."

So the kind mother packed up a large store of good things—white and brown bread and golden butter; meat-pies, cakes, fruit; I know not what beside; and, to crown all, a saucepan for potatoes was slung on, which greatly delighted the children, as they would have to make a fire for boiling the water.

When all was ready, they started off, Sydney and George leading the donkey, and the girls walking with their uncle, who amused them with all sorts of tales about foreign countries; for he was a captain, and had only just left his ship for a short time.

"Don't you think we have the nicest home you could find anywhere," said Ruth, "and the prettiest? Wherever you go you find something beautiful; and this walk we are taking to-day I like best of all."

They were going along a very pretty lane, on each side of which the banks were so high they seemed like walls; but very different from the walls you see in large cities, or even the houses, which are often just

alike. Here every step showed something different to a careful observer.

At the top, over-arching trees stood, and waved their boughs, making a cool shade from the fierce heat. Just under them the banks shelved, so that the roots stuck out in all kinds of curious, fantastic shapes. Then round about grew tufts of grasses and flowers; and turning to another corner, a lovely cluster of ferns might be seen—polypodium, lady-fern, spleenwort, and others. There was constant variety and ever-changing beauty.

“I like to imagine the flowers and insects are real people,” said Daisy, “and make up stories about them to myself. Look at this stellaria, with its lovely white flowers; is it not like Una, Ruth? And this poppy would do splendidly for Duessa.”

“Yes; only I think you are rather hard on the poppy, Daisy; for Duessa only *seemed* beautiful, and the poppy is *really* so. Look at its splendid scarlet and soft bloom.”

“Well, it does not smell nice, at any rate,” replied Daisy. “Oh, do look here! This must be a fairy haunt.” She pointed to a small hollow in the bank, which was almost overshadowed with grass and flowers. When these were pushed aside, a most exquisite nest of ferns was discovered, little ones growing among the larger fronds, and underneath them a cushion of soft

green moss. And just outside was a long tunnel made of some curious white-looking stuff, which would puzzle a London child. "Have you ever seen a nest like this before, uncle? Can you guess what it is?"

"Yes, Daisy; I have seen a great many, and also a very curious and beautiful one of the same kind abroad, which has a little door at the entrance fastened by a most perfect hinge, and which can be opened or closed at the will of the occupant."

"Now, I did want to puzzle you, uncle. Look here!" She tickled the entrance of the tunnel gently with a piece of grass, and up popped a spider, thinking, no doubt, that it was some careless fly, which had become entangled in the sticky web, and seeming very disappointed on finding out what was the real cause of the disturbance. "Do you see what a long way the tunnel runs into the bank? I think the spider is a very clever animal. And the web is so strong too. I do feel sorry, though, for the flies, poor things."

"Did you ever see a fly kill a spider, Daisy?"

"No, uncle; have you?"

"Yes, and a sore battle it was too. The combatants were about equally matched. The fly was a brilliant red and green one, with a long thin body, and very wiry. The spider jumped on him from behind, thinking to capture him easily; but the fly, being of a nimble disposition, hopped round and faced him. And

then began a fight in real earnest. The spider tried to get behind, and out of reach of the fly's bite, for he knew that was anything but pleasant; and the fly in his turn was just as determined to keep his face to the foe. He was not going to shirk fight. At it they went, first one and then another, till the fly did give the spider a bite which seemed to half paralyze him. He still endeavoured feebly to resist, but in vain; and the triumphant victor dragged him up to a hole in the wall, near which they had fought. But here a new difficulty presented itself. The fly, of course, went up backwards, dragging the spider. Just when he came near the hole, a piece of mortar or brick sticking out stopped his progress, and down fell the spider. This went on for some time, the fly going up and dropping the spider, and having to fetch him again, till at last he left his booty on the ground, ran up head foremost, searched carefully all round to find what had hindered him, and then for the last time took up the spider, and, though going backwards, went *round* the obstruction and into the hole."*

"What a clever fly! I should like to have seen that battle," said both the boys, who had heard the latter part of this anecdote, as they sat on the bank waiting for the others to come up.

"Come, children; if we stop talking here, we shall

* A fact, having been witnessed by a friend of the author's.

never get to Lyndhurst Tower to-day, so let us make the best of our way onward."

They continued their way without further interruption, the girls riding by turns as they began the ascent. The road passed across sandy heaths, after they left the woods and lanes; and then at the foot of the hill they entered another pine grove, with its dark cool shade and sweet scent; then out again on the side of a hill where the graceful bracken grew luxuriantly.

Here they stopped to rest for a few minutes, and dip their hands in a little stream that flowed down into the valley. Then up they went, following the windings of this little rill as it meandered about, sometimes almost hidden by the ferns and mosses and flowers that grew on its margin, till, as they nearly reached the top, not one but many streamlets branched off in different directions, yet all springing from the same grassy slope.

Who can forget, who has once known the delights of a country ramble, the utter enjoyment of such a time? The boys went here, there, and everywhere, chasing the bright blue butterflies, gathering sticks for the fire, etc., while the rest followed more leisurely.

Arrived at the top, they took out the cloth and spread the good things on it, lighted the fire, peeled the potatoes and popped them into the boiling water, feeling quite important at having so much intrusted to them. Surely never before did potatoes taste so nice.

After dinner, Uncle Will wished to enjoy himself, as he called it ; so he took out his pipe, chose a shady place where he had a good view, and stretched himself on the grass. It was a lovely panorama. As he lay there, he could look over on one side to the sea, as it glistened in the summer sun, so calm and blue. On the other he looked across the fertile valley to another range of hills which bounded the horizon. Not a house was visible for some distance ; he was on the highest point of the hill, which was crowned with the ruins of an old watch-tower, which had often proved of good service in time of war or invasion, and from which the hill took its name. Looking down, he could see how one after another the hills sloped away, and seemed to fit into one another, like bits of a puzzle ; while down in these valleys a few ponies, cows, and sheep were feeding. Indeed, some of them had paid them a visit during dinner. They came up and stared at these new-comers, as if they could not at all make out what kind of creatures they were.

Not a single person was in sight ; there was no sound except the nibbling of the animals, the chirping of grasshoppers, the humming of bees, as they went about their business, which could not stop even for a stranger. Truly it was a spot in which to give oneself up to enjoyment. The children scampered about, collecting objects for their museum, not noticing that they had

forgotten to tie up the donkey, who, after eating up all the thistles he could find near, marched off to look for some more.

Presently they had to think about returning; and packing up the basket, looked for Neddy, who was nowhere to be seen. Here was a pretty state of things! They hunted, shouted, whistled, all to no purpose, and at last had to descend without him.

"What will mother say," cried Sydney, "if we lose poor old Neddy? She is so fond of him, and he is so useful to her. I only hope he will find his way home."

They looked carefully in the fields and lanes through which they passed, but no Neddy appeared, till, as they were nearing home, they saw a girl driving some cows into a farmyard; and who should be walking beside her but this very donkey! She explained to them that she had found him among her cows, and seeing the bridle, thought he had not been turned out loose; so she was going to take him home, and inquire to whom he belonged.

Glad enough were the children to see their favourite, and at the end of another half-hour they arrived at home without further adventure, having had, they said, *a most delightful day.*

CHAPTER V.

THE RESCUE.

Two or three days passed by, during which the children were very busy, showing Uncle Will their favourite haunts, and making him quite a beast of burden oftentimes, all which he bore with the best possible good-humour; when one evening, just as they were sitting down to tea, who should walk in but Aunt Alice!

The children had not known of her return, as she had asked their mother not to tell them, in case she should not be able to come, and great therefore was their surprise and delight at seeing her.

Perhaps my young readers will wonder what made these little nephews and nieces so fond of her. I must whisper a little secret then.

Aunt Alice was one of those people who never seem to know what the word *self* means. Perhaps she had known it in days gone by, but it must have been a long time ago. And though there were some lines in her forehead, which spoke more of sorrow than of age,

and streaks of silver in her dark hair, these seemed only to add to the subtle charm of her face. She was not beautiful; yet there was an expression of calm, deep quiet and peace that was far more than beauty, and such as those only wear who walk with God.

Her little house was the refuge of half the village. If any one had an ache, or pain, or illness, they went up to Miss Graham. She was the first to see the new babies, and the last to watch by the pillow of the sick or dying, soothing their pain with her gentle hands, and giving sweet comfort from the beautiful words of God's book. All the village children knew and loved her; and many were the sweet nosegays or other small gifts she received as they trooped past her dwelling on their way to school.

No wonder the little Ingoldsbys loved her; for, next to their mother, she had been their constant companion, friend, and teacher; and many were the wise and loving words that had fallen from her as they walked in the wild, lovely country, or sat in the winter firelight.

Do we ever see such unselfish people? Yes, sometimes. And do we not long to be more like them, and follow their example?

"O Aunt Alice!" exclaimed Ruth, jumping up, and nearly upsetting the tea-cups in her haste to greet her aunt, "we thought you had quite forsaken us, and have been imagining all sorts of endings to the story,

none of which I expect are quite right. Will you come into the garden after tea, and tell us some more—that is,” she added, “if you are not too tired?”

“Yes, Ruth, willingly, if mother consents to have her quiet hour interrupted.”

“I think mother would like to join us,” said George; “won’t you, mother? Now do say yes; it will be ever so much nicer.”

The mother consented, and off they trooped in a little while to the harbour, where they enthroned their aunt in the chair of state and prepared to listen.

“You left off,” said Sydney, “just in an interesting part, where that grand, brave knight went up to the giant’s castle.”

Yes, Sydney, and when he came there his squire blew a blast on a wonderful horn he wore. This magic horn was proof against all enchantment, and made every gate or bar give way and open before it.

When it was sounded before the castle, the latter trembled as with the shock of an earthquake, and all the doors flew open of their own accord. In fear and rage the giant rushed out, followed by Duessa on her seven-headed beast.

Now when the knight saw this mighty foe, he placed his shield on his arm, and addressed himself to the fight.

“Was the shield uncovered?” interrupted Sydney.

Not yet; you will hear about that soon. The giant, raising his great club on high, brought it down with a noise like thunder, and the knight would most surely have been killed, but that he nimbly leaped aside; and while the giant was engaged in pulling his weapon out of the ground, where it had stuck fast with the weight of the blow, he made such a fierce cut at Orgoglio that he smote off his left arm.

When Duessa heard his fearful yells, and saw what had happened, she advanced on her hideous monster, whose heads seemed to shoot forth flames. The squire encountered her with his drawn sword, standing between her and his master. When Duessa saw this fresh affront, and found that her beast retreated, she urged him on again; but again without success, so brave and determined was this young squire. At last in fury she took a golden cup, wherein was magic liquid, and poured it over the squire, who became so feeble, he dropped down, and was nearly trampled to death by the monster.

When the watchful knight saw his loved servant in such danger, he left fighting with the giant, and came to his assistance; and striking with tremendous force, cleft one of the serpent's heads. On this the creature would have thrown off Duessa, but that the giant came up, and putting forth all his strength with his one arm, brought down again his heavy club, which, lighting on

the shield, made the knight stagger and fall on his knees.

But in falling, the oak tree tore off the covering of the shield, and all the light of that marvellous diamond flashed forth, dazzling the enemy so that his arm fell nerveless, and the beast became perfectly blind.

Duessa shrieked out, "Oh, help, Orgoglio, or else we all shall perish." And the giant hearing her, tried once more to succour her, but in vain. His strength failed him; for since that dazzling sight he had no power to hurt, as when the lightning falls it dims the eyes and daunts the senses.

When the knight saw this he drew his sword, and whirling it round his head, he brought it down against the giant's right leg with such force that he cut it off at the knee.

Down he fell, as an old tree growing on the top of a cliff, when it is cut at the roots, falls, and the huge trunk rolls down the rock; or as a castle round and high cannot stand if undermined at the foundations, but falls in ruins, and by its own heap helps on the victory of the besiegers: so the fall of this great giant seemed to shake the earth. Then coming up again lightly, the brave prince quickly put an end to his wretched life, and cut off his head.

When Duessa saw her champion fall, she fled away in terror; for how can darkness bear light? But the

swift-footed page, who had recovered himself by this time, quickly brought her back to his master as his lawful prisoner.

And now fair Una, who had seen this battle from afar, came up, and with great gladness thanked the knight and his squire for their toil on her behalf, and prayed them to take out her dear knight from that dreadful castle.

So the prince gave Duessa to the keeping of his page, while he himself entered into the open castle, where he could find no living creature. He called loudly through the house, but received no answer; a solemn silence reigned everywhere, and no one was to be seen.

At last an old, stupid-looking man, with a bunch of keys on his arm, came creeping along with slow pace. He was very aged, with beard white as snow, and leaned, as he walked, on a staff to support his feeble steps, and also to guide him, for his eyesight had failed a long time. His keys fitted every door inside; but they were covered with rust, as he never used them, only kept them by him.

But the most remarkable thing about him was that as he walked forwards his face was turned backwards, unlike other people, who usually go with feet and face pointing the same way. Such was the old keeper of the castle, and his name, Ignorance, rightly showed his nature.

His reverend and aged bearing the noble knight honoured as he was likely to do, and he gently asked where were all the people who should be in that place.

The old man answered softly, "I cannot tell."

Then said the prince, "Where is the knight kept whom Orgoglio by his dreadful power made his captive slave?"

"I cannot tell," returned the other.

"Which way can I enter?" then demanded Prince Arthur.

"I cannot tell," was the only reply.

Now the courteous knight grew really angry, and said, "Old sir, it seems thou hast not learned how ill it suits with that hoary head to mock vainly or to be mocked. But if thou really art, as thou seemest to be, grave with age, then tell me with all gravity what I ask."

Again he said, "I cannot tell;" and the prince, looking at him closely, and seeing his ignorance, took his keys and tried the doors for himself. He opened every one without hindrance, for there were no bars or enemies to stop him. He searched long in vain, passing through rooms where he saw tokens that showed many true souls had suffered tortures and had been put to death for their faith, till at last he came to an iron door with a little grating in it, and opening it, found a deep descent.

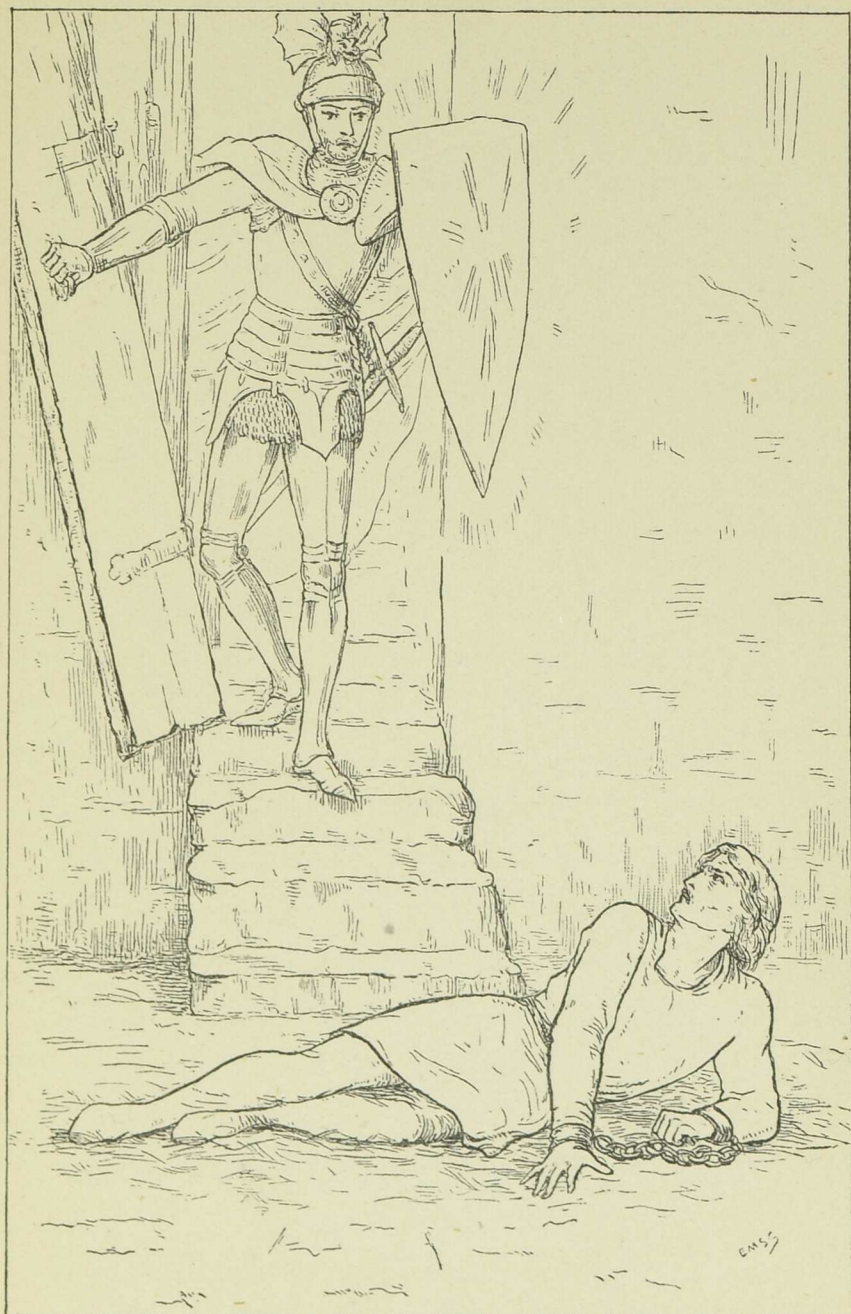
Here he stopped, and called to know if any were within. A hollow, feeble voice answered him, "Who is it speaks to me? I have lain three months in this doleful place, and am far more dead than alive!"

When the gentle knight heard this, he feared lest he should not restore the poor prisoner alive to his lady; but with great effort and courage he tore open the door, and succeeded in bringing him up out of that horrible filthy den into the light of heaven.

But how changed! Could this be the famous Knight of the Red Cross, with legs so thin and weak they could not support him, his eyes sunk in his head, and so weak they could not bear the light of heaven after being so long in darkness, his cheeks pale and hollow, his strong arms, that were wont to wield his mighty sword and spear, now shrunken and wasted? Ah! what a fate overtakes those who follow the wicked Duessa!

Who can describe the joy of Una on seeing at last her knight, whom she had sought so long? Yet her grief was almost as great on witnessing his wretched plight. Still, joy prevailed, and she hoped ere long to restore him again to health.

Meantime she wished to show him and the others what Duessa really was; so she ordered them to take off the splendid robe, the crown, and all the finery the witch wore; and then, to their horror, they saw an old



FOUNDI

Page 94.

and ugly hag—so ugly she cannot be described—the sight of whom filled the knights with scorn and loathing.

“Such,” said Una, “is the face of Falsehood when seen in her reality, and all the counterfeit is taken away.”

On being released, the wretched woman fled away to hide herself in the wilderness, and devise new means of revenge on Una; while the latter accompanied the knights to the deserted castle, where they found good store of food and luxuries.

Here they remained for a few days to allow the weary knight to rest and refresh himself; and Una prayed to know the name and race of her deliverer.

“That, fair lady, I cannot tell you,” said he. “I only know that I was taken when a babe and given to an old man called Timon, who brought me up in all martial exercises and feats of arms. Merlin, the great magician, often came to see what progress I was making, and when I asked him who my parents were, only answered that I was son and heir to a king, as time would show.”

[“There,” said Daisy triumphantly; “did I not tell you I thought this was King Arthur?”]

“Yes, but he was only Prince Arthur at this time, Daisy, and had not yet obtained possession of his father’s kingdom.”]

"But how is it," continued Una, "that you, most noble Arthur, the flower of chivalry, thus ride into Fairyland in quest of adventure?"

"Dear lady, that is hard to answer, for it brings fresh grief to my mind; still I will try and tell you. It is now some time since I, a youth full of glee and merriment, pursued my manly sports; and one day, ranging the wide forest on my swift courser, all nature seemed to smile on me. Wearied at length with my ride, I threw myself down on the cool grass, and was soon fast asleep, when in my dreams I saw a lovely royal maid before me. Such indeed she seemed, and spoke such sweet and tender words that I was quite overcome, and begged to know her name. She told me she was called the Fairy Queen.

"On this I awoke, and looking round saw no sign of her, only that the grass seemed imprinted with the touch of her feet. Was it then only a dream? From that day forth I loved that face so fair; and from that day I have sought her far and near, and have vowed not to give up the search till I find her. Yet until now I seek in vain."

"Oh! happy Queen of Fairies," said Una, "that hast found so worthy a knight as this, who may be thy guardian and destroy thy foes!"

"And," said the gentle Red Cross Knight, "thy place, dear Una, shall be next in honour to this great queen's,

since thou hast believed in me, and followed me through all my woes."

Thus in courteous converse passed the time till Arthur desired to resume his journey, and Una also.

But before they parted, the knights pledged faith to each other, and in sign thereof gave each a token of his affection. Arthur gave a diamond box containing a few drops of liquid, so pure that it would cure any evil of whatever kind; while the Red Cross Knight bestowed on his deliverer a book written with golden letters, which was able to save souls.

And thus they took leave of each other—Prince Arthur to seek his love, and Una and her knight to prepare for the contest with the great dragon.

"Now, mother, don't you think this is a nice story?"

"Yes, very, Sydney; and I used to like it as much as you do."

"But now tell us, aunt, about this noble Prince Arthur, what he is meant to represent, and the giant too."

"Arthur has always been held the type of true nobility; and he is represented here, in this splendid magnificence, to give the idea of a perfect man. Each knight or hero in these stories personates some one virtue, but Arthur gathers all the virtues into himself, and so is used here to portray a higher grace than man has. Just as the Red Cross Knight could not deliver himself, but was rescued by Arthur, so man cannot

fight alone, but needs a stronger arm than his to lean upon."

"But why did he seek the Fairy Queen?"

"Do you remember her name?"

"Oh yes,—Gloriana."

"O aunt, I think I see what you mean," cried Daisy. "Magnificence seeks Gloriana; and when a man is perfect, he truly seeks the glory of God."

"That is just it, Daisy; and it is a very beautiful thought, is it not? As to the giant, I think we may take him to mean any form of evil and hatred to good, especially the pagan persecutions. And we know that falsehood was joined to that system of cruelty."

"I am so glad Una showed Duessa in her real hideousness," said Ruth. "I should think the knight had a lesson he would never forget."

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed George. "I don't wonder he loved Una, if she was so true to him."

"Of course she was faithful, for was she not Truth herself?" returned Ruth.

Here their aunt interrupted them by saying that she had to leave, as she wanted to see old blind Matty on her way home; but she promised, all being well, to continue the tale as usual next day.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOUSE OF HOLINESS.

I TOLD you, began Aunt Alice next day, that our heroes set forth again on their travels; but Una seeing her knight was still very weak, would not go fast.

One day, as they were riding together, another adventure befell them. A knight came flying towards them, the steed appearing as if urged on by fear, while his rider looked ever behind him, as if in dread of being followed. His head was bare, and his hair standing up with fright, while a rope round his neck seemed to betoken some disgrace.

“What can be the matter?” said the Red Cross Knight; and riding up, he asked the stranger why he was so terrified. Three times he repeated the question, and the man answered nothing, but still stared behind, as if he had lost his senses.

At length, when the good knight, by dint of entreaties and encouragement, could get him to speak, he began,—

“And am I then indeed safe from him who tried to kill me? and can I tell my sad tale without fear?”

“Fear naught,” said our knight; “there is no danger nigh.”

So the other continued:—“I lately chanced to accompany a good knight called Sir Terwin, who was not altogether happy, for he loved a proud lady who did not return his affection. One day he had been to see her, and, on returning, was talking sadly to me as we went on together, when we met a wicked creature, from whom I am but just escaped, who calls himself Despair.

“He accosted us, and began to question us, and when he found that we were full of sorrow and heaviness, he began to persuade us to die, since life had no pleasure for us; and for this purpose he offered my companion a knife, and me this rope which you see.

“Sir Terwin, being in sad case, no sooner saw the instrument of death than he used it, and forthwith put an end to himself. But I, being more fearful, or more fortunate, fled fast away; and though assured of safety by you, fair sir, feel far from it. May you never hear the charmed speeches of this man.”

“I shall not rest,” replied then the brave knight, “till I have sought out this villain that would do such shame to knighthood. Will you show me where he dwells?”

“That will I; but I will not stay while you parley with him, for I dare not look on him again.”

So together the companions went to seek this treacherous foe, and ere long found his home. It was in a dark, dreary cave under a craggy cliff—most dreary and desolate. All round were the stocks and stumps of trees, which never bore fruit or leaves, and on which had been hung many a good knight. Truly the place would make one shudder.

At first the guide refused to go further, but the other encouraged him; and as they entered the cave they saw a dismal man sitting on the ground, whose appearance suited well with the look of the whole place. Beside him lay poor Sir Terwin, who, through the wicked words of this vile man, had killed himself.

When the gentle knight saw this sad spectacle, he began to accuse Despair as the author of the foul deed. Thereupon answered this man, “Should he not die who is not worthy to live? Besides, is it not far better to have peace and rest than weariness and strife? And think of yourself, how you have sinned of late. Remember that dungeon where you languished so long. Did you not leave your true love for the false Duessa? Why do you not follow the example of Sir Terwin? It would be much better for you.”

These cruel words brought his guilt to the knight's remembrance, and not knowing what to answer, he

hesitated; on which the miscreant gave him a dagger.

The poor knight seemed quite overcome, his mind being filled with dismay at the thought of all his sins; and he lifted his hand to strike a fatal blow, when Una, seeing this, snatched away the knife, though trembling herself with fear and horror, saying,—

“Come, come away, frail man; let not vain words dismay thy dauntless heart. In heavenly mercy hast not thou a part? Why shouldst thou then despair? If there is justice, is there not also great mercy? Arise, Sir Knight, and leave this dreadful place.”

So up he rose, obedient to her command, and rode away, again owing his life to this true friend.

Now when the wretched man saw him thus depart, he took a rope and hanged himself. But he could not thereby die, for he had done so many times before, and only thus could he vent his rage; for he cannot die until he does so eternally.

Ah! how this event showed that all the power the knight thought he had of his own was useless, and that only by heavenly grace could he conquer.

The watchful Una saw and understood that her knight had not yet recovered from his terrible imprisonment, and therefore conducted him to a house where she knew he would be helped and strengthened.

The mistress of this house, who was named Dame Cœlia, because men thought she had come from heaven, spent all the day in tending and helping others, and at night would pray for them.

Three fair daughters, called Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa, aided her in her works of love and mercy.

When the weary couple arrived and knocked at the door, it was opened by a grave and sober man called Humility. He led them in through a narrow passage in which they had to stoop; for each right thing is hardest to begin, and the way is narrow. But when they had passed through, they found themselves in a wide and spacious court, and were met by a good man named Zeal, who spoke kindly to them and led them to the hall.

Here a squire came forward, and, as befitted his title—Reverence—entertained them courteously, and after a while brought them into the presence of the wise matron of the house, his worthy mistress.

That aged lady welcomed fair Una with great kindness, for she was well known to her, and she had heard of her troubles and faithfulness to her knight; and embracing her, she asked how it was she had come to this house, bringing this stranger with her. For it was very unusual, added she, to see an errant knight in that place, so few loved the ways of virtue, most

people turning aside rather to the broad ways of pleasure.

“For myself,” replied Una, “I came hither to see thee, and rest my wearied limbs; and this good knight has come with me, led by the fame of thy deeds.”

Then Dame Cœlia turned to him, and greeted him courteously, saying she was very glad indeed to see him there.

While they were thus talking, two beautiful virgins entered arm in arm, full of modest grace and dignity. Fidelia, the eldest, was clothed in white, and held in her hand a book, in which were written many things hard to be understood. Her face was bright like an angel's, and lighted up with heavenly joy.

Her sister, Speranza, was dressed in blue, and seemed less cheerful than her sister, whether through timidity or sorrow it was hard to say. Upon her arm a silver anchor lay, and ever as she walked her eyes were uplifted to heaven.

When these two saw Una, they greatly rejoiced, and modestly and kindly welcomed the brave knight to their abode.

After some time had passed in pleasant converse, Dame Cœlia sent for her servant Obedience, who conducted the knight to his room, and took off his armour; and after showing him all kind attentions, left him to sleep in peace and quietness.

Next morning, when all were refreshed with their night's sweet rest, Una asked Fidelia to take the knight into her school, that he might "hear the wisdom of her words divine."

She readily granted the request, and taught him lessons out of her wondrous book, which none could read except by her help; so that day by day he learned more of this heavenly lore, till at length he began almost to hate life, seeing so great a contrast between the teachings of Fidelia and his own life, and being exceedingly grieved at the remembrance of his past wrong-doing. And then came sweet Speranza, and showed him how to lay hold on her silver anchor, lest in his fear and grief he should forget all that Fidelia taught him.

When Una saw his sad state of mind, she was much distressed on his account, and went to Coelia to ask her advice.

That wise and loving friend well knew these signs of a troubled conscience, and sent for two doctors, Patience and Repentance, who, after inquiring carefully into his state, applied wise remedies, often painful, but always healing, till at last, having passed through this bitter time, he was restored to health again.

Una, who had sympathized with him all this time, though she could not cure him, was overjoyed at seeing him thus, more noble and true than ever before. She

took him to Charissa, to ask her to complete the education which her sisters had begun.

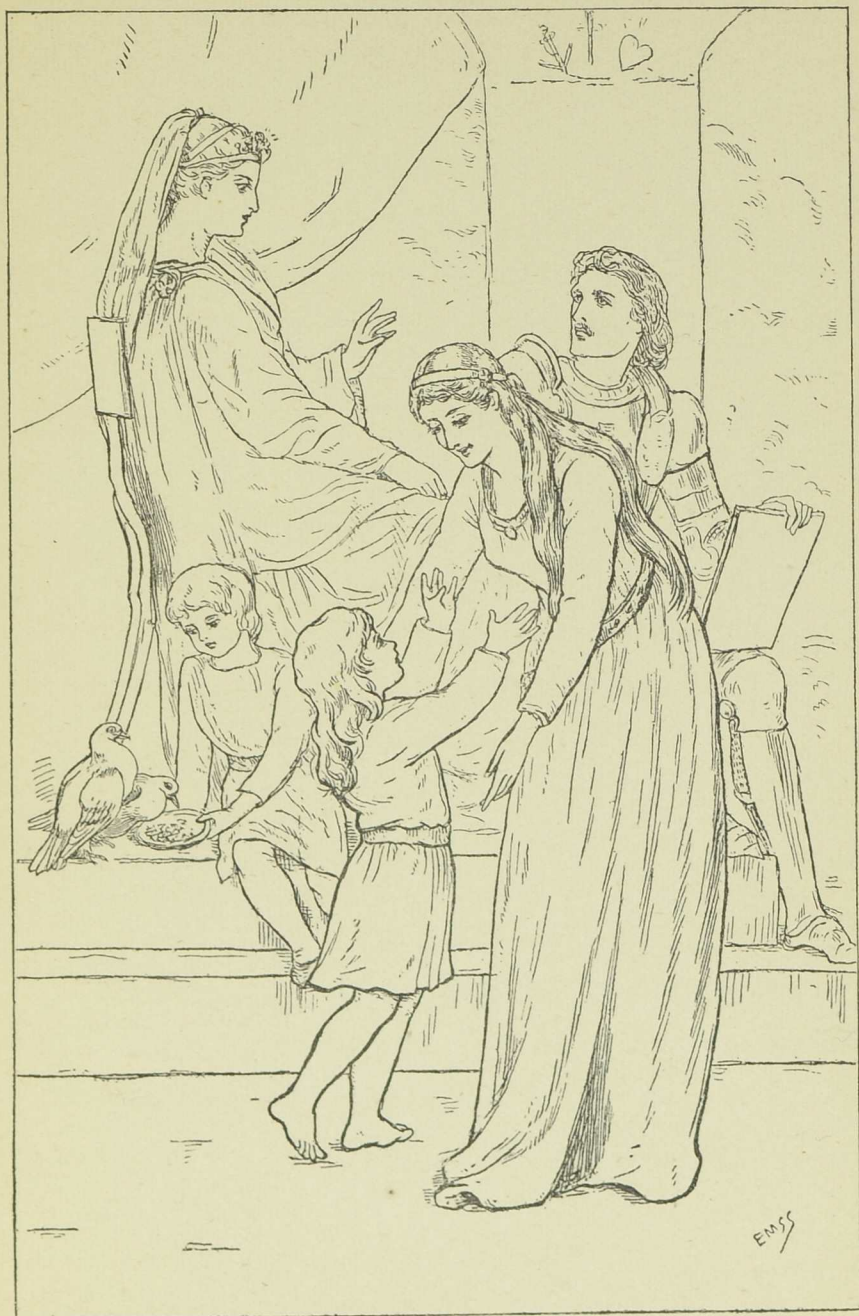
When the companions entered, Charissa was seated in an ivory chair, having a golden tiara adorned with jewels on her head. A number of lovely children were playing about her (for she was the only one of the sisters who was married), while a pair of turtle-doves sat cooing by her side.

It was a pretty picture, and the knight and his lady were well pleased to be admitted to such a happy circle.

The kind matron received them graciously, and they spent a long time in friendly conversation—Charissa warmly agreeing to do all in her power for the Red Cross Knight. So, taking him by the hand, she showed him the ways of love, and righteousness, and kindness, in giving himself up to the good of others, and how to shun wrath and hatred, and lead an upright life,—so pointing out to him the path to heaven.

In all this she had a willing helper in her friend Mercy, to whom she confided him, telling her to watch over him in all his ways.

Among other things, Mercy guided him along a narrow thorny path, where she constantly smoothed the way for him, to a holy house of entertainment in which seven good men always waited, spending their lives in doing good to all around.



IN THE HOUSE OF CHARISSA.

Their gates were always open, and one was ever at the porch, inviting all those who were needy to come in.

The first and eldest of the seven had charge of all the house, and his office was to give lodging to those who needed it, not to such as could repay him ; for his was a generous nature, which loved to do good to those who could not return favours.

The second used to feed the hungry. He never thought of wanting himself or of hoarding up for his descendants. Had he not enough for his present needs ? and surely it was enough to leave them a heritage of grace and the remembrance of his holy life. And however little he had, he would give away some to the poor.

The third had the oversight of the wardrobe, which contained not rich or gorgeous attire, but neat, clean, and comfortable, with which he daily clad poor creatures who had none ; and if he used up his stock, he would even cut up his own coat to bestow it on the naked.

The fourth brother was appointed to release poor prisoners who had been taken captive by Turks and Saracens ; for though they might have fallen through their own sin, yet, this good man argued, God forgives every hour far more than they had done.

The fifth used to spend his time in caring for the sick and the dying, and was well skilled in soothing

both their souls and bodies, however distressed they might be.

The sixth had charge of the dead, and used to deck them with sweet flowers and give them seemly burial, that to God

“ Both sweet and brave
They might appear, when he their souls shall save.
The wondrous workmanship of God’s own mould,
Whose face he made all beasts to fear, and gave
All in his hand, even dead we honour should.”

The seventh and last of this faithful band took care of widows and orphans, and would plead for their rights in the face of any living man: for no power or might of man did he dread, and never could he be bribed with gold to trample down their cause; and when they were in want, he would freely supply them with all things necessary.

Such was the character of the house and its inhabitants; and hither, as I said, the knight was led by Mercy.

When the chief of the seven saw her entering, he gave her all reverence and honour; for she was the patroness of their order, whilst Charissa had founded it. Here the knight remained for some time, being instructed in all these works of love and mercy, till he too became so perfect that he learned how to frame his life according to the principles of righteousness in all things.

After this, again, Mercy took him to the top of a

steep hill, where stood a little chapel, and close by, a hermitage, in which lived a godly old man called Contemplation. The seer was thin and wasted with long fasting, and his snowy hair hung down over his shoulders, so that he looked like an old oak spangled with hoar frost. His eyes were weak and dim with age. But these things only served to show more plainly his great power of mind; for he had glorious visions of heavenly things, and spent his time in searching out great truths.

When this good old man saw his visitors, he was at first almost angry at being disturbed; but as soon as he noticed Mercy, he altered his manner, and humbly asked why they had come up that toilsome ascent.

"Why shouldst *thou* ask such a question," replied Mercy, "when thou knowest that from here can be seen the way to that glorious city which shines like the sun, and glistens like the stars; and when thou hast the power to show this to those who seek it, since Fidelia has given thee the keys? She has sent us hither that thou mayest unfold these wondrous visions to this good knight with me."

"Oh, happy indeed is he," said then the sage, "who is led and guided by thee! Who can direct him in this path better than thyself, since thou wast born and brought up in heavenly courts, and daily dost present the prayers of righteous souls before the majesty of God?"

But since thou dost wish it, I will do what thou askest. Come with me, O son of earth, and see the way which never leads the traveller astray, but after toils and labours often sore and painful brings him to endless rest and peace."

Thus saying, he led them to the top of a still higher mount, from whence they had a vision of a little winding path that was steep and long, leading to a city adorned with gold and precious stones, so glorious that it baffles description: the name of it was "The City of the Great King," and in it eternal peace and happiness dwell.

The knight gazed with rapture on the scene, not being able to take his eyes from it, and as he looked he beheld troops of angels going back and forth, radiant with joy, and holding friendly converse one with another.

"What is this city, and who are these people?" said the knight wonderingly. To which his instructor answered,—

"This is the New Jerusalem, prepared by God for souls that are purged from sin and guilt, and made holy and fit to dwell with him. And those whom thou seest are the blessed inhabitants, who are precious in his sight."

"Till this moment," the knight exclaimed, "I thought Cleopolis the fairest city I have seen; for there dwells



IN VIEW OF "THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING."

the great Queen of Fairyland. But this does far surpass it."

"Most true," rejoined the other; "yet is that city the most splendid that is on the earth, and is well fitted for those noble knights who do the behests of their gracious queen. And thou thyself, O son of English race, art doing a worthy service in aiding this lonely, desolate maiden. But when thou hast performed her request—for war brings nothing but grief and pain—seek this path I have pointed out, and follow it to the end; for then thou shalt be the friend and patron of thy country, and shalt be called 'St. George of Merry England.'"

"And sayest thou this to me?" replied the knight. "How am I worthy of such an honour? Oh, let me not go back to the world again, but let me begin at once my pilgrimage."

"That may not be till thou hast delivered this royal maid from the deadly foe."

"Then will I do my best, and quickly return hither when I have performed my duty. But now tell me, father, why thou didst call me son of English race, when all account me a son of Fairyland."

"I can soon explain it to thee. Thou art descended from a noble race of Saxon kings who long have maintained their cause in England, and subdued their foes. Thou wert stolen when a babe by a fairy, who left her

son in thy place and brought thee to Fairyland, where, left in a furrow, thou wert found by a ploughman, who took care of thee and called thee George ; till, desirous of fame, thou didst go to Gloriana's court, and took on thee the championship of Una."

"O sir," at length returned the knight, "how shall I thank thee for telling me all this, and for showing me the way to this glorious city?"

As he spoke he looked down to earth again, as desirous to return ; but his eyes were so dazzled with the brightness he could see nothing. At last, when he began to recover himself, he thought of Una, who was waiting for him ; so with many thanks he took leave of that aged man, and returned to his lady, who received him joyfully, and after a short rest they bade farewell to the kind Dame Coelia and her daughters, and continued their journey.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMBAT.

AFTER a few more days, Una and her knight came in sight of the brazen castle in which the poor king and queen were imprisoned.

"There," said Una, "is the tower, and this is the place where that dreaded foe dwells; be watchful, that you may not be surprised when off your guard."

As she spoke, a roaring sound filled the air; and looking up, they saw a huge dragon stretched out on the side of a hill, looking like a mountain himself in size. He no sooner spied the shining armour of the Red Cross Knight than he lifted up his head and advanced, half running, half flying, in haste to begin the combat. When the knight saw this, he bade fair Una betake herself to a hill, where she would be in safety and could watch the battle, while he prepared to meet the enemy.

And what an enemy! His enormous body was covered with scales so thick and close together that

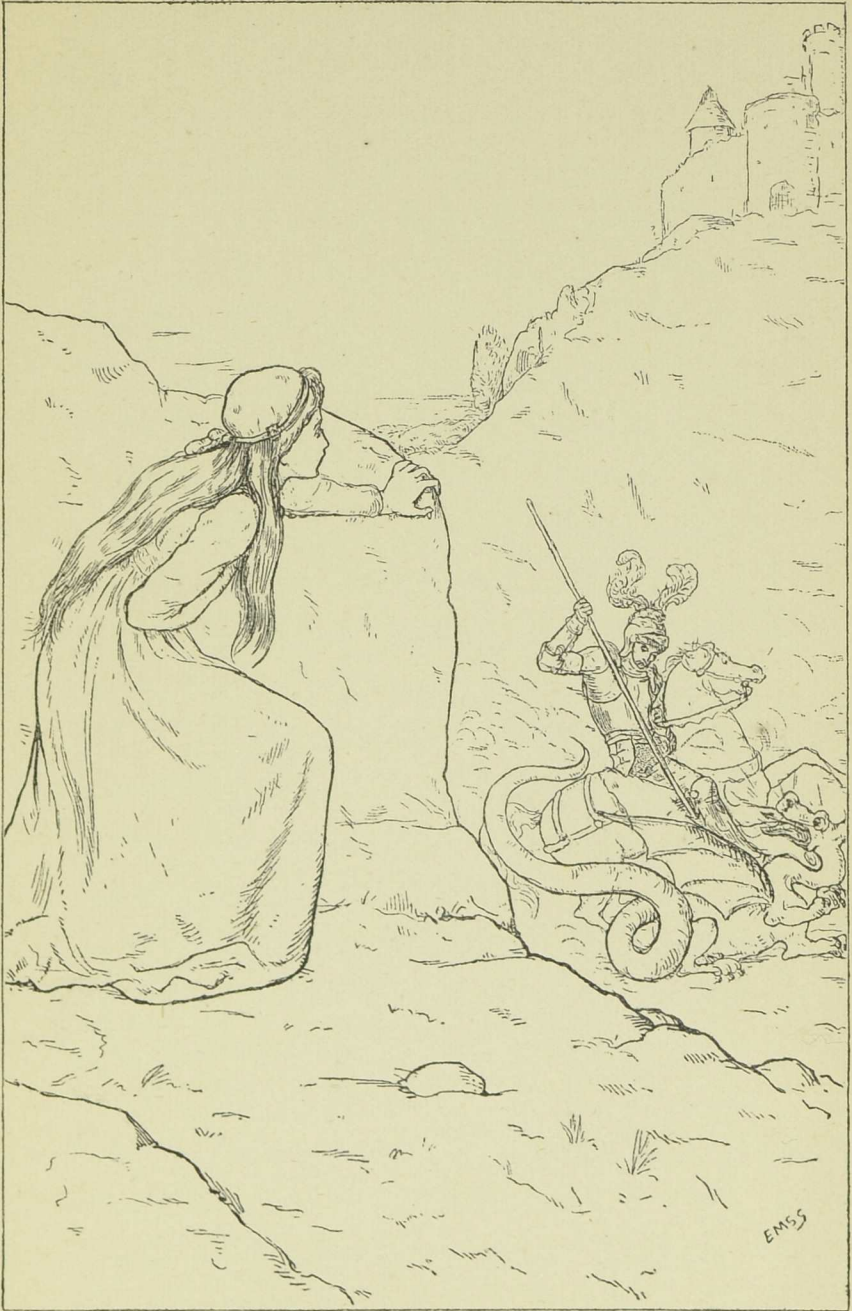
neither spear nor sword could get between them ; and they shook and clashed as he moved, like armour. His wings, when they were expanded, were like two immense sails ; and the pinions resembled the yard-arms of a ship for size and strength. When he flew, the very clouds were chased away, as if in dread. His huge tail, wound in many folds, was nearly three furlongs in length, and had two stings at the end, fearfully sharp, with which he could inflict grievous wounds. As to his claws, there was little hope of anything that once got within their reach being released, for they were sharper than any stings or steel. His mouth, which was deep and wide, armed with three rows of teeth, sent forth flames and smoke. Then his eyes burned like two fires ; while they were set so far in his head that the light from them seemed to cast a shade around.

The dragon advanced lifting up his speckled breast, and bounding along as if in joy to meet his new enemy.

Soon he raised his haughty crest, like the wild boar bristling with rage, and shook his scales ready for battle, as if bidding defiance to his opponent.

Well might the knight, stout and bold as he was, look with dread on a foe like this, for never had he met one so terrible before.

Yet he bravely couched his spear, and ran at him with all his might. The spear could not pierce the creature's mighty mail ; yet the thrust the knight gave



THE COMBAT WITH THE DRAGON.

so surprised and angered him that he swung round his tail, and drew both horse and man to the ground. They quickly rose up again, and a second time attacked him. Again without effect, except that of making him more furious than before; for never till now had this beast felt such powerful strokes, though he had met with many knights before. So, rising in the air, he swooped down like a falcon on its prey, and catching up horse and rider, lifted them from the earth! But their struggles made him drop them before he could get up as high as he wished. Whereupon the knight, seizing his advantage, thrust his spear, with the strength of three men put into the stroke, against the creature's scales. This time the weapon glanced aside and pierced him under the left wing, making a gaping wound. The hideous monster tore out the spear with his claws, and yelling with rage, wound his tail round the horse, forcing him to throw his rider. Up got our knight, however, and, feeling the disgrace of his fall, drew out his sword, and struck so hard on the dragon's crest, that though the weapon did not reach his skull he shunned another blow.

Again the knight pursued his advantage, and smote again harder than before; but the steel recoiled, leaving no mark. Then the monster sent forth fire which singed his opponent's face, and the heat of which made him feel his armour too much for him.

Faint and weary he desired death, to put an end to this dreadful strife; and then the foe, lashing his tail fiercely, brought him to the ground; and thinking he was conquered, lifted up his crest and flapped his iron wings as victor of the field.

"Oh, was the knight really conquered?" asked George. "I did so hope he would have won this battle that no one else could."

"Wait a bit and you shall hear."

The knight did not know that just behind him as he fought was a well called "the Well of Life," which possessed such virtue that it could cleanse from guilt, heal all kinds of sickness, and even restore the dead to life. Into this well he was cast, faint and almost dead, just as the sun was setting.

Poor Una saw his fall from afar, and was overcome with grief; for she thought this was the end of the battle. Yet she would not go to rest, but spent the night in praying that it might not be as she feared; and as soon as the next day began to dawn she arose, to look if he were alive.

Imagine her delight when she saw him start up from the well, as fresh and brave as if he had not had the terrible fight the day before! So strong did he feel, that he addressed himself to the battle again with something like joy.

When the dragon saw him, he wondered that the foe

he thought was killed should thus return. Was it he, or another knight come in his place? But he was not long left in doubt; for the Red Cross Knight, as if to prove his renewed strength, smote so sorely upon his crested head that a great wound was made, which quite dulled his senses. Whether it was that the sword was sharpened by that wondrous water, or that the knight's hand had received this great strength, I know not; but never till now had any one been able to wound this proud monster.

Inflamed with pain and fury, he flew at the knight, driving him to the earth, and infixing his cruel sting so deeply through his shield into his shoulder that our hero could by no means draw it out. The pain and smarting of the wound was almost unbearable. Yet, still more mindful of his honour, he tried again to free himself; but finding it was in vain, he lifted up his sword and struck off five joints of the tail, leaving only the stump. On this the beast, thinking to avenge himself once for all, raising himself from the ground, seized his enemy's shield in his claws, and held on to it so fiercely, that though three times the knight tried with all his strength to draw it away, he found it was impossible. So again taking his trusty sword, he laid about him well, till he forced the creature to unloose one foot to defend himself with. The other still retained its hold; and when the knight

saw this, with a valiant stroke he cut it off, and the shield fell to the earth, with the paw clinging to it.

Again, as on the day before, the enemy poured forth sulphurous vapours, which forced the knight to retire; and as he went backward, his foot slipped, and down he fell in the mire, much grieved and ashamed at so doing.

But close behind him as he fell there grew a goodly tree, laden with splendid fruit. It was called "the Tree of Life." There was nothing like it in all the world; for it only grew in this soil, where all good things sprang up, till the dread dragon overthrew them all. Near by there grew another tree, of which if any ate they had the knowledge of good and evil.

From the former tree flowed a precious healing balm, which trickling down overflowed the plain, and which, covering the knight as he lay half numbed with toil and pain, soothed him to rest and healed his wounds. For here the horrid foe could not approach: though he had often tried to get near this tree to destroy it, it was all in vain; he could not touch it.

By this time the shades of evening were again falling, the contest having lasted another day, as Una, trembling and sorrowful, saw her champion's second fall. Still she did not give up hope; for she saw that he was under this tree, where, if anywhere, he would

be healed. So she spent the night in watching and prayer, and was more glad than surprised when on the morrow, again eagerly looking forth, she saw her knight arise, quite healed and ready for battle.

And now the dragon began to tremble at seeing him thus, and feared lest he should be conquered in the end; yet with his wonted ferocity he came forth, and rushing at him with wide open mouth, thought to have swallowed him entirely. Not so, however; for the knight, watching his opportunity, ran his sword into his gaping jaws and pierced him to the heart.

Down he fell and breathed no more, making the very earth shake with the sound of his fall, so that the knight himself quaked for fear, and Una dared not approach for some time, till she saw that he did not stir. Then hastening to her friend and champion, she praised him for his noble deeds, thanking God, who had given him power to win so great a victory.

“What a splendid knight, not to give in the first day, or even the second. I don’t wonder Una was proud of him. And yet he was so kind and gentle.—And, George, he bore your name; I should think you feel honoured.”

“Well, yes, I do; only I don’t think I could have persevered as he did.—But don’t you think, aunt, that those who are the bravest and really fight the best are the most— What is the word I want?”

"Chivalrous? Yes, I quite agree with you, George. It is only those who are really true and noble to the weak that can fight for their rights. A mean, base man, is generally a coward at heart, even though he may put on a very brave appearance."

"I think this is one of the best parts of the story we have just heard," said Ruth, "it is so full of meaning. Does not the dragon mean the devil? because he was so hard to conquer, and he took the knight's shield too. Was that his faith?"

"It is beautiful, too, how the knight was restored and fitted for the conflict again by the water and tree of life," interrupted Daisy. "It reminds me of the Pilgrim's Progress."

"Yes; only this was written more than eighty years before that wonderful book."

"I like that part about the house of Coelia and her daughters very much too," continued Ruth.

"Yes," replied her aunt; "I think that is one of the most poetical as well as interesting parts in the whole book. May you, dear children, be thus led and taught by Faith, Hope, Love, and Mercy, that you may find the way to the heavenly city,—that way which, however crooked it may seem, if truly followed will lead right on to eternal joy."

When she ceased, a stillness fell on the little group, each one thinking over what he or she had heard; and

each, let us hope, desiring and determining to fight the good fight of faith, and conquer sin.

“Dear aunt,” said Daisy at last, “do you know of whom you remind me? Mercy herself; for she was the patroness of all those good works. How I wish I were more like you! Do teach me your secret.”

“It is a secret only God himself can teach you, dear child, and one which he will show you if you ask him. Learn to live for others, Daisy, forgetting yourself, and living in and for the happiness of those around you: and though sometimes clouds may come and darkness seem to cover you, there will always be light even in the darkest cloud; and you will know the truth, that ‘it is more,’ yes, *far* more ‘blessed to give than to receive.’—Now, good-night, my children, and don’t dream of dragons and battles.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REWARD OF VICTORY.

WE left the Red Cross Knight, continued Aunt Alice when the children assembled as usual, conqueror of the field, and his faithful Una rejoicing with him over his great victory. All this time she had not seen her parents, not being able to get in to them; but now a watchman on the castle wall thought he saw the dragon draw his last breath, and ran to tell the joyful news. At first no one would believe it, and it was only after looking a long time and seeing no sign of life that the old king ordered the gates to be opened—those gates which had been so long closed. Then trumpets began to sound, and a joyful company issued forth.

First a band of young men appeared—brave, goodly, well-armed, and able to wield their weapons well, holding laurel wreaths in their hands.

After them came a troop of maidens, with timbrels and dances; and around them a number of children, who played and gambolled in time to the music, which they accompanied with a joyous song.

Then followed the ancient king and queen, attended by grave and sober counsellors.

These all approached Una and her knight, and the youths bowing before him, saluted him as their lord and patron, throwing their laurel boughs at his feet; while the maidens bent to the ground before Una, and sang her praises, crowning her with a green garland, which suited her well, and made her seem, what she was, a beautiful maiden-queen.

And now the people flocked to see the immense carcass of their fallen foe, and gazed wonderingly at his huge size and terrible teeth and claws. Many, filled with fear, ran away after giving one look; others stayed and went cautiously up, fearing lest even yet some fire might remain in his eyes—some even saying they were sure his eyes moved!

One mother saw her little son playing with his claws, and said, trembling, to her neighbour, "How do I know but that even yet the creature might scratch my child?" Others, more bold, ventured to measure him, and see how much ground he covered.

While these various comments were being uttered, and the people were rejoicing over their deliverance, the hoary king came up with his train to the knight and treated him with great honour, thanking him a thousand times for what he had done, and giving him presents of gold and ivory.

Then perceiving his daughter, he welcomed her with great joy, and tenderly embraced her.

"Now," said he, "come with me, and take the rest and refreshment you have so well earned after your long wanderings and toil." So saying, he led the way to the castle, where was provided a royal feast and princely entertainment. The road was enlivened by the songs and shoutings of the people, who strewed their garments in the streets and played many musical instruments, all doing their utmost to express their joy and thankfulness.

After the banquet was over, the worthy king asked the knight to recount his adventures since the time that he met Una. With this request he at once complied, and gravely related his story from beginning to end.

His narration of what had befallen him gave much pleasure to the king and queen, which was mingled with great pity, and many of the listeners were moved to tears.

When he had finished, the king said, "Dear son, thou hast indeed passed through many perils and trials. I know not whether to praise or pity thee most, for surely never living man has been so tried as thou hast. But now that thou hast safely passed through them all, and hast performed thy mission, let us talk of peace and rest."

“Nay, my dear lord ; that may not be yet. I cannot think of peace and rest for a while to come ; for I vowed that if I performed this feat I would return to my gracious mistress, the Fairy Queen, and serve her for six years against a proud heathen king that does her harm. Ask thy daughter, for she knows I speak the truth.”

“Oh, sad fate,” cried the king, “that thou must leave us so soon : but since thou hast made this vow, I will not hinder thee ; for vows, if right, should surely be kept. But as soon as the six years have passed, thou must certainly return ; for I have proclaimed through the world that he who conquered this great foe should have my daughter for his bride, and be the heir to my kingdom. Therefore I bestow Una on thee, fair sir, together with all my dominions.”

Then he summoned his dear daughter, who came at his bidding, looking as fresh and bright as the morning star does when in the east it announces the approach of day.

Una had laid aside her sad-coloured robe and veil, that had hidden her heavenly beauty while she was on her journey, and now she wore a garment that was without spot or stain. It was all white, and seemed interwoven with silk and silver ; yet neither silk nor silver was really there. And this splendid robe suited well with the glorious brightness of her face, which

shone with joy ; and even her knight, who had seen her daily for so long a time, had never beheld her half so fair, and wondered at her beauty.

On entering, Una went up to her father, bowing low before him and giving him all reverence ; which only added further to her grace and dignity. The king opened his lips to speak ; but before he had time to begin, a messenger came running with great haste into the hall, bringing letters in his hand.

All wondered at him as he hurried past, for he would listen to none, but strode up to the king, and falling down before him, opened the letters, which he said told his message. The king, much wondering at being interrupted at such a time, listened to the following tidings :—

“To thee, most mighty King of Eden fair, the daughter of the Emperor of all the West sends greeting, and bids thee be advised ere thou link thy daughter in marriage with a renowned knight, thy unknown guest ; for he already has plighted his faith to another love and another land. He was betrothed long ago to me, sad maid ! and gave and received sacred pledges, and vowed eternal love. Therefore he is mine, whether bond or free, living or dead ; so beware, brave prince, of allying thyself with him. For Truth is strong, and will find friends, if so be she require them. So bids thee farewell thy neither friend nor foe, FIDESSA.”

When the king had heard this strange letter, he remained silent a long time, musing over it in astonishment; till at last he looked up, and fixing his eyes on the knight, said,—

“Good sir, I know not what this means. I know that I am true in what I say; but how can I tell whether thou art so or not? Is it true that thou art the lover of this Fidessa? Hide it not from me if it be so.”

To which the knight replied,—

“My lord and king, be not dismayed till thou knowest who and what woman this is that thus accuses me. It was my misfortune, as I strayed from my way, to meet with this dame who calls herself Fidessa, but who in reality is the falsest woman on earth—most false Duessa! She was decked in royal robes, to deceive; and her wicked arts, too strong for earthly knowledge, beguiled me, till at last she betrayed me to a cruel foe when I least feared harm.”

Then the royal maid arose, and, with humility and sober countenance, said to her father,—

“Pardon me, my liege, if I show thee the secret treasons which this same sorceress has wrought. It is she only who brought this gentle knight into such great distress that he nearly died. And now, it seems, she has bribed this same messenger to work new evil by trying to break the bond between my knight and

me; and I think, if I guess rightly, thou wilt find this man the false Archimago."

The king was greatly moved at her story, and bade his servants seize the messenger; who, being bound and loaded with chains in spite of his resistance, was thrown into a dungeon and watched day and night.

And now that the last obstacle was removed, the king continued the marriage ceremony which had been so rudely interrupted, and with sacred rites united the champion to his dear daughter; while all the time most sweet and heavenly music was heard, and exquisite perfumes scented the air. A feast was proclaimed to celebrate the day, and all that love could suggest was done to add joy on this happy occasion.

If others rejoiced, how much more did our knight at being thus at last united to his one and only love! How he delighted to gaze on her beautiful, true face, and listen to her wise and tender discourse. Surely it was worth all his pain and trouble thus to be in her presence constantly.

But such joy was not to last for ever; and so, remembering his vow, he shortly left his Una, to seek new errands of mercy in helping the distressed, and win new honours and rewards from his sovereign mistress. And while Una mourned over his departure,

she could not but rejoice that he who had been such a good true knight to her should thus seek to distinguish himself further ; and she looked forward to that happy day when she should meet him again, crowned with fresh laurels and honours.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT IS THE STORY ?

"Is that the end?" cried the children. "We have so much enjoyed the tale."

"I hope you will enjoy still more the poem itself, which is much more beautiful," replied their aunt.

"Is it a poem? I always thought poetry was stupid," said Sydney; "but this is not."

"Yes; but what I have told you is only a part of the work, and in the rest we hear of other knights and ladies, and some more of the brave deeds of our hero."

"Who wrote it, aunt?"

"Edmund Spenser, who lived in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and who was in high favour with his sovereign mistress. He dedicated this 'Faerie Queene' to her, and we can trace allusions to her in many of his most glowing passages; for he, like so many others, thought no praise too extravagant for her."

"I don't quite see what the Red Cross Knight means," said Daisy.

"Don't you, Daisy? He is a picture of the soul which, saved by the grace of God, and striving upward through all temptations and difficulties, being purified by the teachings and discipline in the house of Cœlia, is fitted to cope with the dragon. Is not this striving after Holiness which is at last united to Truth? You might call it the Legend of Holiness.

"You remember the knight was helpless without his armour; and are not we?—Who can tell me what a Christian's armour is?"

"I know, aunt," said George; "for we learned the sixth chapter of Ephesians the other day. The girdle of truth—breastplate of righteousness—helmet, the hope of salvation—shield of faith—sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

"Yes, George; and don't you remember how Error could not bear the light from this armour? And so, if we are thus clothed, and use this wondrous sword, all that is wrong will shrink away, and we shall walk safely by its clear light."

"Aunt Alice, who were Corceca and Abessa?" asked Ruth.

"O Ruth, I should not trouble about them. They were not worth thinking about," said Sydney.

"Why not? I should like to know what their names mean.—What do they, aunt?"

"Abessa means 'superstition,' which blindly fol-

lows wherever Corceca, or 'ignorance,' leads the way."

"And Una's lamb, too. We only hear of that in the beginning. I suppose that means something?"

"Yes; 'innocence,' which is the companion of 'truth.'"

"I did not know people wrote such nice tales so long ago," remarked George. "I think Spenser must have been a very clever man. Can't you tell us something about him?"

"I think you have had about enough for to-day; but I will just tell you that he was very clever, and wrote a great deal of beautiful poetry besides this. He was the first great poet after our famous old Chaucer, who lived in the reign of Edward III., and whom Spenser imitated.

"When you get older, I hope you will like to read all about the good and clever men who lived in Elizabeth's reign. One of the most renowned was William Shakespeare.

"One great friend of Spenser's was Sir Philip Sidney; such a good, brave, clever man, boys, who himself wrote good poetry, though a soldier. And Sir Walter Raleigh was another who helped Spenser, and brought him into the notice of the Queen, who received him and his poem very graciously, giving him £50 a-year. But he did not long enjoy this favour; for he had an estate in Ireland, which was then very disturbed, and

one day some rebels broke in, and set fire to his house, Kilcolman Castle, and he was obliged to flee for his life. One of his children, a baby, was overlooked, and perished in the flames. Poor Spenser came to London; but he was so grieved and broken-hearted by all his losses and troubles that he died a few months after, in 1599, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, close to his master, Chaucer. About twelve years before, Sidney had been wounded in battle at Zutphen, and died after suffering patiently for a month. He was one indeed to be remembered.

“You recollect the story about the wounded soldier to whom Sir Philip gave the water which had been brought for himself, saying, ‘Thy necessity is greater than mine’? I think that just shows what his life must have been. So good, and pure, and noble; a perfect gentleman, and a true Christian. He was only a little over thirty when he died; but all who knew him loved him.

“I like to think of the great friendship between him and Spenser; for Spenser must have been an earnest, good man, as we see from his works. These two must have loved each other very much, and helped each other in study and poetry, and all things good and beautiful.

“When Sidney died, Spenser wrote an exquisite little poem to his memory. There are many famous names

in Elizabeth's reign, but among them will always shine out brightly these three friends—Sidney, Spenser, and Raleigh."

"How much we have to learn that is interesting, aunt! I thought I knew a good deal of history, but there seems a great deal more for me to find out."

"Yes, Daisy; and the curious part is, that the more we learn, the more we find there is to know. When you learn one thing, it is like opening a door into some wonderful and spacious place, with ever so many beautiful things in it, and you look at these and think you know them, and then find that they open up other paths which lead on again without end; till you feel that instead of being very wise, as you may once have thought yourself, you are only just *beginning* to learn, and stand, as it were, on the shore of a great ocean, which you have not explored.

"And what a comfort it is to think that we can always be increasing our knowledge. We need never stop; and the more we study what is good and beautiful, and especially God's Word, and try to follow it, the more fitted we shall be for life and eternity.

"But we must have heart-knowledge, and not only head-knowledge, which will avail us little. If love to God and man is what we seek most to cultivate, all other things will follow; but if we are without that, however clever and learned we are, we shall not be blessed."

At this moment Mrs. Ingoldsby entered.

"Why, children, have you not gone home? You will have to go without your tea if you don't make haste. I have just been to see Betty Cranage," she continued. "Her son has returned from sea, and she cannot be content till she has seen you, Alice. I told her, as I was coming here, I would ask you to go as soon as you could. You know she has been in bed with her rheumatism for some days; but she says she must show you how her boy has grown. He has brought her so many things home, that her little room looks like a shop; and she can scarcely take her eyes off him."

"I will pay her a visit directly after tea," replied Miss Graham.

"O mother, Aunt Alice has just finished her tale, and we have been hearing about Spenser. He was such a nice man."

"I am glad you think so. I quite agree with you. But now you must not stay. I have something in this basket which a kind friend thought some little people would like."

"What is it? Do tell us."

"You shall see when you get home," replied their mother.

"Not till then?—I suppose we must say good-bye, and thank you very much, aunt. Do think of another story. Will you?"

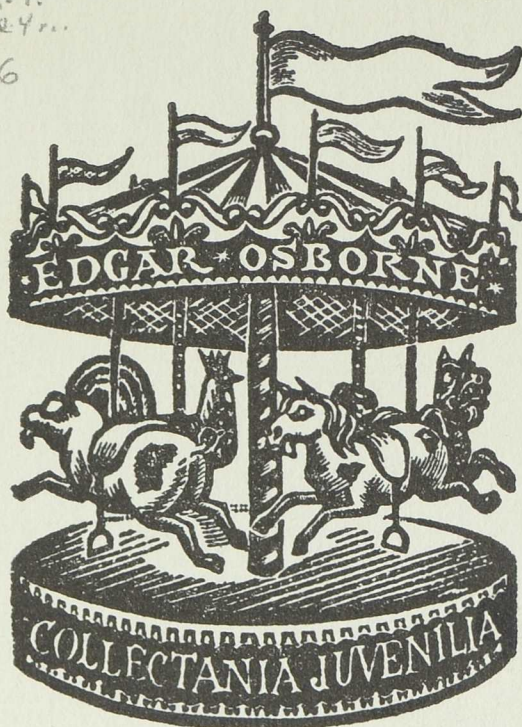
"I can't promise, Daisy.—Good-bye, dear children. I hope to come and see you to-morrow."

"Yes, do. We want to show you how nice our gardens look. You have not seen them for a long time," returned the children, as, kissing their hands to their aunt, who stood in the doorway watching them lovingly, they ran after their mother.

THE END.

M. ST. P. C.
R.A.Y. P.
STOR. Y. P.

1896



37131 039 919 030

TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

*Presented to the
Osborne Collection by*

Nancy Joy
in memory of
Helen Armstrong

