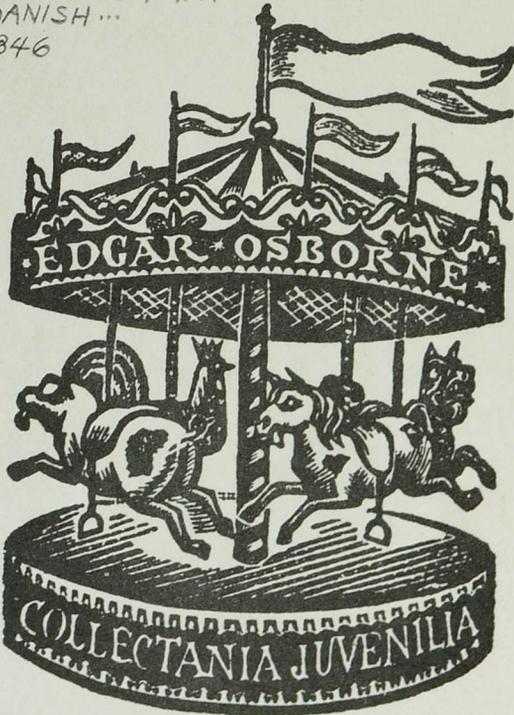


A
DANISH
STORY-BOOK
BY
ANDERSEN

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1846



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A

Danish Story-Book.

BY

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.



TRANSLATED BY CHARLES BONER.

WITH

NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE COUNT POCCHI.



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THE ANGEL.



Soon as a good child dies, one of God's angels descends upon the Earth, takes the dead child upon his arm, spreads out his large white wings, and flies over all the places that were dear to the child; and plucks a handful of flowers, which he then carries to Heaven, in order that they may bloom still more beautifully there than they did here on Earth. The loving God presseth all these flowers to His bosom; but the flower that He loveth best He kisseth; and

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then it receives a voice, and can sing and join in the universal bliss.

An Angel of God related this as he bore a dead Child to Heaven; and the Child heard as in a dream; and they flew over all the spots around the house where the little one had played, and they passed through gardens with the loveliest flowers. "Which one shall we take with us and plant in Heaven?" asked the Angel.

And a beautiful slender rose-tree was standing there; but a wanton hand had broken the stem, so that all the branches, full of large half-open rose-buds, hung down quite withered.

"The poor tree!" said the Child; "take it, so that it may bloom again on high with the loving God."

And the Angel took it, and kissed the Child; and the little one half-opened his eyes. They gathered some of the superb flowers; but they took the despised daisy and the wild pansy too.

"Now we have flowers," said the Child, and the Angel nodded; but they did not yet fly up to Heaven.

It was night: it was quite still. They stayed

THE ANGEL.

in the great city, they floated to and fro in one of the narrowest streets, where great heaps of straw, of ashes and rubbish, lay about: there had been a removal. There lay broken potsherds and plates, plaster figures, rags, the crowns of old hats; nothing but things that were displeasing to the sight.

And amidst the devastation the Angel pointed to the fragments of a flower-pot, and to a clod of earth that had fallen out of it, and which was only held together by the roots of a great withered wild flower; but it was good for nothing now, and was therefore thrown out into the street.

“We will take that one with us,” said the Angel, “and I will tell you about it while we are flying.”

And now they flew on; and the Angel related:

“Down yonder, in the narrow street, in the low cellar, lived once a poor sickly boy. He had been bedridden from his very infancy. When he was very well indeed, he could just go a few times up and down the little room on his crutches; that was all. Some days in summer the sunbeams fell

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for half an hour on the little cellar-window ; and then, when the boy sat there, and let the warm sun shine upon him, and saw the red blood through his small thin fingers, then it was said, ‘ Yes, he has been out to-day.’ All he knew of the wondrously beautiful spring-time, the green and beauty of the woods, was from the first bough of a beech-tree that a neighbour’s son once brought him ; and he held it over his head, and dreamed he was under the beeches, where the sun shone and the birds were singing.

“ One day in spring his neighbour’s son brought him some wild flowers also, and among them was by chance one with a root ; it was therefore planted in a flower-pot and placed in the window close by his bedside. And a fortunate hand had planted the flower ; it thrived, put forth new shoots, and every year had flowers. To the sick boy it was the most beautiful garden—his little treasure upon earth : he watered and tended it, and took care that it got every sunbeam, to the very last that glided by on the lowest pane. And the flower grew up in his very dreams, with its colours and its fragrance : to it he turned in dying, when the

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loving God called him to Himself. He has now been a year with God—a year has the flower stood in the window withered and forgotten, and now, at the removal, it has been thrown among the rubbish into the street. And that is the flower, the same poor faded flower, which we have taken into our nosegay; for this flower has caused more joy than the rarest flower in the garden of a queen.”

“But how do you know all this?” asked the Child which the Angel was carrying up to Heaven.

“I know it,” said the Angel; “I was myself the little sick boy that went on crutches; I must surely know my own flower again.”

And the Child opened his eyes and looked in the beautiful calm face of the Angel; and at the same moment they were in Heaven, where was only joy and blessedness.

And God pressed the dead Child to His bosom: thereon it became winged like the other Angel, and flew hand in hand with him; and God pressed all the flowers to His bosom, but the poor withered flower He kissed; and a voice was given to it, and it sang with all the angels that moved around God,

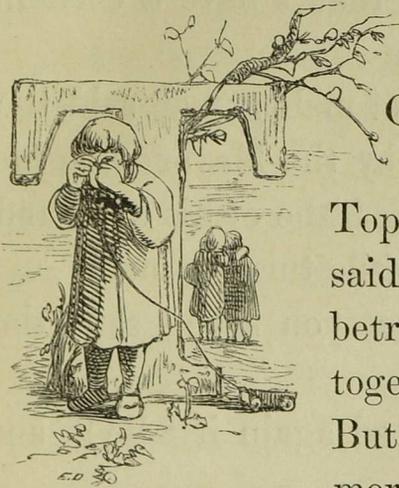
THE ANGEL.

some quite near, others round these in larger circles, always further away in immensity, but all equally blessed.

And they all sang, great and small; the good dear child and the poor field-flower that had lain withered among the sweepings in the narrow dingy street.



TOP AND BALL.



TOGETHER in the drawer, among other toys, lay a Top and a Ball; and the Top said to the Ball, "Let us be betrothed, as we are lying here together in the same drawer." But the Ball, that was made of morocco leather, and thought a great deal of herself, like a delicate young lady, would not hear any thing of the sort.

On the following day came the little boy to whom the toys belonged: he painted the Top red and yellow, and drove a brass nail right into the middle of it: it looked quite splendid when the Top spun round.

"Only look at me," said he to the Ball. "What do you say now? Let us be betrothed, we are so fitted for each other: you hop and I dance; happier than we two shall be, it would not be easy to find any body."

TOP AND BALL.

“Do you think so?” said the Ball. “You probably don’t know that my father and mother were morocco slippers, and that I have a cork in my body.”

“Yes, but I am made of mahogany,” said the Top; “and I was turned by the Mayor with his own hand. He has a turning-lathe of his own, and he was very much amused while turning me.”

“Can I depend on what you say?” said the Ball.

“May I never be whipped again if I lie!” answered the Top.

“What you say is not amiss,” said the Ball; “but yet I cannot, for I am as good as promised to a young Swallow: as often as I fly up in the air, he puts his head out of his nest and says, “Will you?” In my heart I have said Yes, and that is as good as being half-promised. But this I assure you, forget you is what I shall never do.”

“That will do me much good,” said the Top; and henceforth they did not speak to each other.

The following day the Ball was taken out, and the Top saw how it flew high up in the air like a bird; at last one could not see it any more: every

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time it came back again, but always it made a bound when it touched the earth, and that was occasioned either by love, or by the cork which it had in its body. The ninth time it stayed away, and did not come again: the boy searched and searched, but it was gone.

“I know very well where she is,” sighed the Top; “she is in the Swallow’s nest, celebrating her wedding.”

The more the Top thought about it, the lovelier seemed the Ball to him: that he could not have her, made his love but the hotter; that another should be preferred—it was that which he could not forget! And the Top danced and hummed; but he was always thinking of the dear Ball, that seemed to him lovelier and lovelier the more he thought of her. Thus passed many years; and so then it was an old love.

The Top was no longer young; but one day, all of a sudden, he was entirely gilded over; never had he looked so beautiful, he was now a golden Top, and frisked about till the whole place quite rattled. Yes, that was a sight! But all at once he jumped too high, and—he was gone! They

searched and searched, even in the cellar : he was no where to be found.—

Where was he ?

He had sprung into a butt, full of all sorts of rubbish, cabbage-stalks, dust and parings, and of what fell from the gutter under the roof.

“ A nice place this ! I shall soon lose all my fine gilding here ! and what beggarly company have I fallen among ! ” And saying this, he looked askance at a long cabbage-stalk that lay shockingly near, and at a strange-looking round thing, almost like an apple : but it was no apple—it was an old ball that had lain many years in the gutter, and was quite soaked with water.

“ Well ! thank Heaven ! at last one sees one’s equals,—some one with whom I can exchange a word,” said the Ball, and looked at the golden Top. “ In reality I am of morocco, sewn together by maiden’s hands, and have a cork in my body : though no one would imagine it from my present appearance. I was on the point of being married to a Swallow ; but I fell in the gutter, and have lain here five years, and got wet through. That’s a long time for a maiden lady, I can tell you ! ”

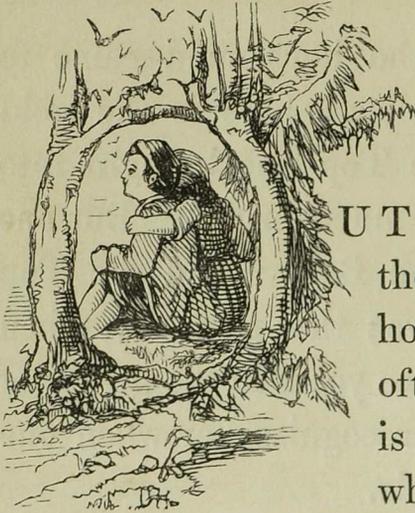
TOP AND BALL.

But the Top gave no reply. He thought of his old love ; and the more he heard, the more certain was he that it was she.

Just at this moment the housemaid came to clear out the butt. “Holloa ! here is the gold Top !” said she. And the Top was brought into the parlour again, and was much prized. But one heard nothing more of the Ball. And the Top never spoke of his former love : that passes by, when the affianced one has lain five years in the gutter of a roof ; yes, one does not recognise her when one meets her again in a dusthole.



THE DAISY.



NOW LISTEN!

UT in the country, close to the road-side, is a country-house. I am sure you have often seen it; in front there is a little flower-garden, and white palisades with the points painted green. Close by, in a ditch, amid the most beautiful grass, grew a little Daisy; the sun shone on it just as bright and warm as on the splendid flowers in the garden, and so each hour it grew in strength and beauty. One morning, there it stood full blown, with its tender white glistening leaves, which encircled the little yellow sun in the middle like rays. That in the grass it was seen by no one, it never thought about:—it was so contented! It turned towards the warm sun, gazed upon it, and listened to the lark that was singing in the air.

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The little Daisy was so happy! as happy as though it had been a great holyday; and yet it was only a Monday. The children were in school; and while they sat there on their forms and learned, the little flower sat on its green stem, and also learned, from the warm sun and from all around, how good God is; and it was just as if the lark uttered all this beautifully and distinctly, while the other felt it in silence. And the flower looked up with a sort of reverence to the happy bird that could sing and fly, but it was not dejected at being itself unable to do so. "Do I not see and hear?" thought she; "the sun shines on me, and the breeze kisses me,—oh, what rich gifts do I enjoy!"

Within the palisading stood many stiff stately flowers: the less fragrance they had, the higher they held their heads. The peonies puffed themselves up, in order to be larger than the roses; but it is not always the size that will avail any thing. The tulips were of the most beautiful colours; they knew that very well, and held themselves as straight as an arrow, so that they might be seen still better. They did not deign to cast a look on the little flower without; but the flower looked at

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them so much the more, and thought, "How rich and beautiful those are! Yes, the beautiful bird certainly flies down to them—they he surely visits! What happiness to have got a place so near, whence I can see all this splendour." And just as it was thinking so, "*quirrevet!*" there came the lark from on high; but it did not go to the peonies or tulips; no, but down in the grass to the poor Daisy, that for pure joy was so frightened that it did not even know what it should think.

The little bird hopped about in the grass and sang: "Well! how soft the grass is! and only look, what a sweet little flower with a golden heart and with a robe of silver!" The yellow spot in the Daisy looked really just like gold, and the little leaves around shone as white as silver.

How happy the little Daisy was! no one could believe it. The bird kissed her with his beak, sang to her, and then flew up in the blue air. It was certainly a whole quarter of an hour before the Daisy came to herself again. Half ashamed, and yet so glad at heart, she looked at the flowers over in the garden: they had beheld the honour and the happiness that had befallen her; they

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would surely comprehend her joy ; but there stood the tulips as stiff again as before, looking quite prim, and they were, too, quite red in the face ; for they were vexed. But the peonies looked so thick-headed ! ah ! it was a good thing they could not speak, otherwise the Daisy would have heard a fine speech. The poor little flower could see very well that they were not in a good humour, and she was heartily sorry for it. At this moment a maiden came into the garden with a knife, sharp and polished ; she went among the tulips, and cut off one after the other.

“ Ah ! ” sighed the little Daisy, “ this is really terrible ; now it is all over with them. ” Then the girl with the tulips went away. The Daisy was glad that it was standing out there in the grass, and was but a poor little flower ;—it was quite thankful : and when the sun set, it folded its leaves, went to sleep, and dreamed the whole night of the Sun and the beautiful bird.

On the following morning, when the flower, fresh and joyful, again stretched out its white leaves, like little arms, into the light and air, she recognised the voice of the bird ; but what he sung

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was so melancholy! Yes, the poor lark had good reason to be so: he had been taken prisoner, and was now sitting in a cage, close to an open window. He sang of the joy of being able to fly about in freedom, sang of the young green corn in the field, and of the beautiful journeyings on his wings high up in the free air. The poor bird was not cheerful: there he sat a prisoner in a narrow cage.

The little Daisy would so gladly have helped him; but how to begin, yes, that was the difficulty. It forgot entirely how beautiful all around was, how warm the sun shone, how beautifully white its leaves glistened:—oh! it could only think on the imprisoned bird, for whom it was incapable of doing any thing.

Then suddenly there came two little boys out of the garden, and one of them had a knife in his hand, large and sharp, like that with which the girl had cut the tulips. They came straight towards the little Daisy, who could not imagine what they wanted.

“Here we can cut a nice piece of turf for the lark,” said one of the boys, and began to cut out a square all round the daisy, so that the flower stood in the very middle of it.

THE DAISY.

“Pull up the flower,” said one boy; and the Daisy trembled for very fear; for to be pulled up, why that was to die, and it wished to live, as it was to be put with the turf into the cage of the imprisoned lark.

“No, let it stay,” said the other; “it looks so pretty.” And so it remained, and was put into the cage with the lark.

But the poor bird bewailed loudly his lost freedom, and fluttered against the iron wires of the cage. The little flower could not speak, could not say one consoling word to him, much as she wished to do so. Thus passed the whole forenoon.

“There is no water,” said the imprisoned lark; “they are all gone out, and have forgotten me. Not a drop of water to drink! my throat is dry and burning! within me is fire and ice, and the air is so heavy! Oh, I shall die; I must leave the warm sunshine, and the fresh verdure, and all the beauty that God has created!” And saying these words, he pressed his beak into the cool piece of turf to refresh himself a little; and his eye fell on the Daisy, and the bird nodded to it and kissed it, and said: “You must wither here, you poor

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little flower ; you and the green turf here have been given me instead of the whole world, which I had without ! Every little blade of grass must be to me as a green tree, every one of your white leaves a fragrant flower. Ah, you only tell me how much I have lost !”

“ What can I do to comfort him ?” thought the little flower ; but she could not move a leaf ; yet the fragrance which streamed from her delicate leaves was much stronger than is usual with this flower. The bird observed this ; and although he was dying of thirst, and crushed the green blade in his suffering, yet he did not even touch the little Daisy.

It was evening, and no one came as yet to bring the poor bird a drop of water : he stretched out his delicate wings, and fluttered convulsively ; his song was a complaining chirp. His little head bowed down towards the Daisy, and the heart of the bird broke for want and longing.

Then the flower was not able, as on the evening before, to fold its leaves together and sleep ; it bowed down ill and sorrowful to the earth.

It was not until the next morning that the boys

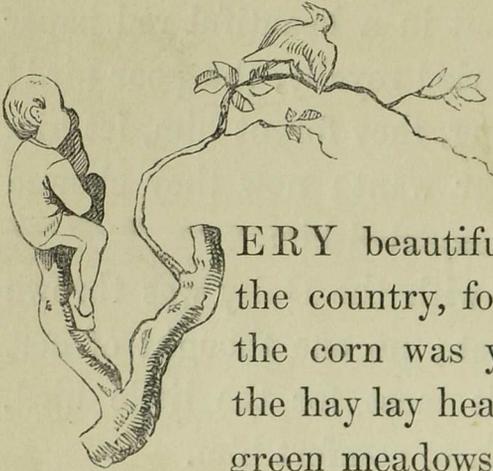
THE DAISY.

came back ; and when they saw that the bird was dead, they wept many tears, and dug a pretty grave, which they decked with flowers. The dead body of the bird was put in a beautiful red paper box ;—he was to be buried royally, the poor bird ! While he lived and sang, they forgot him, let him sit in a cage and suffer want ; now they shewed him great honour and lamented him.

But the bit of turf with the Daisy was thrown to the dust in the street ; no one thought of her, who, however, had felt most for the little bird, and had wished so much to comfort him.



THE UGLY DUCK.



VERY beautiful was the weather in the country, for it was summer-time; the corn was yellow, the oats green, the hay lay heaped up in cocks on the green meadows, and the stork walked about on his long red legs, and talked Egyptian, for he had learnt the language from his mother. All round the fields and meadows were great woods, and in the middle of the woods were deep lakes—yes, it was really most beautiful in the country! And there stood an old manor-house right in the sunshine, with deep moats all round it, and on the walls great burdock-leaves were growing, that hung down into the water; they were so high that little children could stand under the largest of them. All was in as wild confusion as in the thickest forest. And here sat a Duck on her nest;

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—she was to hatch her eggs and get a brood of ducklings; but it lasted so long, she was almost tired of it, and she had, besides, few visitors. The other ducks preferred swimming about in the moats, to sitting with her and chatting under the dock-leaves.

At last one egg cracked, and then another: “Pip! pip!” they cried; all the eggs had grown alive, and one head popped out after the other. “Pat, pat,” said she; and then the ducklings all broke open their shells as well as they were able, and peeped about under the green leaves. And their mother let them look as much as they liked; for green is good for the eyes.

“How immense the world is!” said the little ones; for the room they had now to move in was, to be sure, quite another thing to what it was when sitting in the egg-shell.

“Do you think that this is the whole world?” said their mother. “It extends far towards the other side of the garden, straight to the vicar’s field: but there I have never been. You surely are all here!” And now she rose. “No, I have not all! The largest egg is lying there still. How long

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is this to last! I am nearly tired of it." And then she sat on the nest again.

"Well, how d'ye do?" asked an old duck that came up to pay her visit.

"It lasts so long with one egg," said the other; "it will never open. But now you shall see the others. They are the nicest little ducklings that I have seen in all my life! They are all so like their father—the good-for-nothing fellow!—he has never been once to see me!"

"Let me look at the egg that will not open," said the old duck. "You may be sure it is a turkey's egg! I was deceived once in the same way myself: and I had plague and trouble enough with the young ones; for they are shy of water, let me tell you; I could not get them to go in. I called and scolded; but it was all of no good. Let me look at the egg. Ah, truly!—that's a turkey's egg! Let it lie; and teach the other little ones to swim."

"I'll sit on it a little longer," said the Duck; "I have sat so long, that I will still devote the harvest-time to it."

"You may do what you like, for me," said the old duck, as she waddled away.

THE UGLY DUCK.

At last the great egg burst. “Pip, pip,” said the little one, and tumbled out; but how large and ugly it was! The Duck looked at it: “That’s a tremendous great creature, however,” said she; “none of the others look like it. That can’t be a turkey-chick, surely! Well, we’ll soon find out. It shall go in the water, even if I am obliged to shove it in.”

The following day it was wonderfully fine weather, the sun shone so cheeringly on all the green leaves. So Mamma Duck went down to the moat with all her family, and plump she went into the water. “Quack! quack!” said she; and plump into the water went one duckling after the other. The water went over their heads; but they came up again directly, and swam in the prettiest way imaginable: their feet moved of themselves in the water, and all were there; even the hideous grey one swam too.

“No, that’s no turkey!” said the old Duck; “only look how prettily it uses its legs; how upright it holds itself!—that child is my own! In reality it’s quite pretty, if one looks at it well.—Quack! quack! now come with me, I will take you

THE UGLY DUCK.

into the world, and introduce you in the poultry-yard. But keep close to me, that no one may tread upon you; and take care of the cats."

And so they came in the poultry-yard. There was a horrid noise; for two families were quarrelling about the remains of an eel, which nobody but the cat got, after all.

"Behold, my children, such is the world," said Mamma Duck, and licked her bill; for she had a taste for fried eel too. "Only use your legs," said she; "pay attention, and bow to the old duck there yonder,—she is of higher rank than all the rest. She is of Spanish race; hence her noble manners—and, look! she has a red rag round her leg; that is something wonderfully beautiful, and the greatest distinction that a duck can have: it signifies that she is not to be given away, and that she may be known by men and animals. Turn out your toes! a well-bred duckling straddles his legs far apart, like his parents! Look—so! Now bend your neck, and say 'Quack!'"

And they did so; but the other ducks all round stared at them, and said quite loud, "Now look, we are to have this tribe too, as if there were

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not enough of us already! and only look, how ugly one is!—we wont suffer that one here.” And immediately a duck flew at it, and bit it in the neck.

“Let it alone,” said the mother; “it does no one any harm.”

Yes, but it is so large and strange-looking, and therefore it must be teased.

“Those are fine children that the mother has,” said the old duck with the rag round her leg. “All handsome, except one: it has not turned out well. I wish she could change it.”

“That can’t be done, your grace,” said the mother; “besides, if it be not exactly pretty, it is a sweet child, and swims as well as one of the others; yes, even a little better. I think, in growing it will improve, or perhaps in time get less plump: it was long in the egg, and that’s the reason it is a little awkward.” And saying these words, she scratched the duckling in the nape of neck, and with her bill stroked the whole little personage. “Besides it’s a drake,” added she; “and therefore it does not matter so much. I think it will be strong, though, and fight its way through the world.”

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“The others are nice little things!” said the old duck. “Now make yourself quite at home here; and should you find an eel’s head, why, you can bring it to me.”

And then they felt quite at home.

But the poor young duck, that had come last out of the shell and looked so ugly, was bitten, and pecked, and teased, by ducks and fowls. “It’s so large!” said they all; and the turkey-cock, that had spurs on when he came into the world, and therefore fancied himself an emperor, strutted about like a ship under full sail, went straight up to it, gobbled, and got quite red. The poor little duck hardly knew where to go, or where to stand: it was so sorrowful, because it was so ugly and was the ridicule of the whole poultry-yard.

Thus passed the first day, and afterwards it grew worse and worse. The poor duck was hunted about by every one; even its brothers and sisters were cross to it, and always said, “I wish the cat would get you, you frightful creature!” and its mother said, “Would you were far from here!” And the ducks bit it, and the hens pecked at it, and the girl that fed the poultry kicked it with

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her foot. So it ran and flew over the hedge; the little birds in the bushes started with affright. "That is because I am so ugly," thought the duck, and shut its eyes; but still ran on. At last it came to a great moor where wild ducks lived: here it lay the whole night, and was so tired and melancholy. In the morning up flew the wild ducks, and saw their new comrade: "Who are you?" asked they; and our little duck turned on every side, and bowed as well as it could.

"But you are tremendously ugly!" said the wild ducks. "However, that is of no consequence to us, if you don't marry into our family." The poor thing! It certainly never thought of marrying; it only wanted permission to lie among the reeds, and to drink the waters of the marsh.

So it lay there two whole days; on the third came a couple of wild geese, or rather ganders: it was not long since they had crept out of the egg, and that was the reason they were so pert.

"Hark ye, comrade," said they; "you are so ugly that we like you right well. Will you come with us, and be a bird of passage? Not far from here, on another moor, are some dear, sweet wild

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geese, as beautiful young ladies as ever said ‘Gick-gack.’ You might really make your fortune, you are so ugly!”

“Bang! bang!” was heard at the same moment, and both wild geese lay dead among the reeds, and the water was as red as blood: “bang! bang!” was heard again, and whole flocks of wild geese flew out of the rushes; and then the report was heard again.

There was a great shooting-excursion: the sportsmen lay all around the moor; indeed, some sat in the branches of the trees which spread over the heath; and the blue smoke floated like a cloud through the dark trees, and sank down to the very water; and the dogs spattered about in the marsh, —splash, splash! reeds and rushes were waving on all sides: it was a terrible fright for the poor duck! It turned its head to put it under its wing, when at the same moment a terribly large dog stood close beside it; his tongue hanging far out of his mouth, and his eyes sparkling horribly. He opened his jaws just opposite our duck, shewed his sharp teeth, and —splash! —away he went without touching it.

THE UGLY DUCK.

“ Well, Heaven be praised !” sighed the duck ;
“ I am so ugly that even a dog won’t eat me !”

And now it lay quite still, while the iron hail rattled among the rushes, and shot after shot was heard.

At last all was quiet ; but the poor little thing did not yet dare to lift its head : it waited many hours before it looked round, and then hastened away from the moor as quickly as possible. It ran over the fields and meadows, and there was such a wind that it could hardly get along.

Towards evening the duck reached a little hut ; it was so wretched a place that it could not determine on which side it should fall down, and therefore it remained standing. The wind blustered so about the poor little duck, that it was obliged to sit on its tail to be able to oppose it, and it grew worse and worse. Just then it observed that the door had fallen off one of its hinges, and hung so much on one side that it could squeeze itself into the room ; and this it did.

Here dwelt an old woman with her tom-cat and her hen ; and the cat, which she called her Mannikin, could put up his back and purr ; yes, he could

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even make a cracking noise, but then you must stroke his fur the reverse way. The hen had quite little short legs, and therefore it was called Chickabiddy Shortshanks: it laid good eggs, and the woman loved it as her own child.

In the morning they remarked directly the new guest; and the tom-cat began to mew, and the hen to cackle.

“What’s the matter?” asked the old woman; but she did not see well, and so she thought the young duckling was a fat duck that had lost its way.

“That’s something worth catching!” said she. “Now I can get duck’s eggs, if only it be no drake. We must try.”

And so the duck was taken on trial for three weeks; but no eggs appeared. And the tom-cat was master in the house, and the hen was mistress: and they always said, “WE AND THE WORLD;” for they thought that they were the half of the world, and by far the better half into the bargain. The duck thought it might be of another opinion; but that the hen would not allow.

“Can you lay eggs?” asked she.

THE UGLY DUCK.

“No.”

“Well, then, hold your tongue.”

And the tom-cat said, “Can you put up your back, and purr, and make a cracking noise?”

“No.”

“Well then, you ought to have no opinion of your own, where sensible people are speaking.”

And the duck sat in the corner, and was in a bad humour, when suddenly it took it into its head to think about the fresh air and the sunshine; and it had such an inordinate longing to swim on the water, that it could not help telling the hen of it.

“What next, I wonder!” said the hen; “you have nothing to do, and so you sit brooding over such fancies! Lay eggs, or purr, and you’ll forget them.”

“But it is so delightful to swim on the water!” said the duck; “so delightful when it dashes over one’s head, and one dives down to the very bottom!”

“Well, that must be a fine pleasure!” said the hen. “You are crazy, I think. Ask the cat, who is the cleverest man I know, if he would like to swim on the water, or perhaps to dive; to say

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nothing of myself. Ask our mistress the old lady, and there is no one in the world cleverer than she is ; do you think that she would much like to swim on the water, and for the water to dash over her head ?”

“ You don’t understand me,” said the duck.

“ Understand indeed ! If we don’t understand you, who should do so ? I suppose you won’t pretend to be cleverer than the tom-cat or our mistress, to say nothing of myself ? Don’t behave in that way, child ; but be thankful for all the kindness that has been shewn you. Have you not got into a warm room, and have you not the society of persons from whom something is to be learned ? But you are a blockhead, and it is tiresome to have to do with you. You may believe what I say, I am well disposed towards you ; I tell you what is disagreeable, and it is by that one recognises one’s true friends. Now, then, just take the trouble to learn to purr or to make a cracking noise.”

“ I think I will go into the wide world,” said the duckling.

“ Well, then, go !” answered the hen.

And so the duck went. It swam on the water, it

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dived down ; but was disregarded by every animal on account of its ugliness. The autumn now came on ; the leaves in the green woods grew yellow and brown, the wind laid hold of them and danced them about ; and it was cold up in the air,—the clouds, laden with hail and snow, hung down heavily, and the crows sat on the fence and cried, “Caw, caw,” from sheer cold ; yes, it was enough to make one freeze to think of it ;—and the poor duck was certainly badly off.

One evening—the sun was setting most magnificently—there came a whole flock of large beautiful birds out of the bushes ; never had the duck seen any thing so beautiful ! They were of a brilliant white, with long slender necks : they were swans. They uttered a strange note, spread their superb long wings, and flew away from the cold countries to warmer lands, to unfrozen lakes. They mounted so high, so very high ! the little ugly duck felt indescribably—it turned round in the water like a mill-wheel, stretched out its neck towards them, and uttered a cry so loud and strange that it was afraid even of itself. Oh, the beautiful birds ! the happy birds ! it could not

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forget them; and when it could see them no longer, it dived down to the very bottom of the water; and when it came up again, it was quite beside itself. The duckling did not know what the birds were called, nor whither they flew; yet it loved them as it had never yet loved any one. It did not envy them; it could not ever think of wishing such beauty for itself: why, it would have been quite contented if it had been but tolerated in the poultry-yard, the poor ugly animal!

And the winter was so cold! the duck was obliged to swim about on the water to prevent its freezing; but every night the opening in which it swam grew smaller and smaller. The coating of ice cracked with the frost; the duck was obliged to use its legs lustily to hinder the water from freezing entirely; but at last it was exhausted, lay still, and was frozen fast in the ice.

Early in the morning a peasant came, who saw the duck, broke the ice in pieces with his wooden shoes, and carried it home to his wife.

Here it revived. The children wanted to play with it; but our duckling thought they wished to torment it, and, in its fright, bounced right into

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the milk-pan,—so that the milk splashed about the room. The woman screamed and wrung her hands; and then it flew into the tub where the butter was, and then into the meal-tub, and out again—but how it looked now! The woman shrieked, and tried to strike it with the tongs; and the children hunted it about, one over the other, in order to catch it, and laughed and shouted. It was a good thing that the door was open, and out the duck rushed among the bushes in the freshly fallen snow:—there it lay as in a dream.

But it would be too sad to relate all the suffering and misery which it had to endure through the hard winter. It lay on the moor under the rushes. But when the sun began to shine again more warmly, when the larks sang, and the lovely spring was come, then, all at once, it spread out its wings and rose in the air. They made a rushing noise, louder than formerly, and bore it onwards more vigorously; and, before it was well aware of it, it found itself in a garden, where the apple-trees were in blossom, and where the syringas sent forth their fragrance, and their long green branches

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hung down in the meandering rivulets. It was so beautiful; the freshness of spring was there: and just then three beautiful white swans came out of the thicket. They rustled their feathers, and swam on the water so lightly, oh, so very lightly! The duckling knew the superb creatures, and was seized with a strange feeling of sadness.

“To them will I fly,” said it, “to the royal birds; they will kill me, because I, poor ugly creature, dare to approach them! But no matter! It is better to be killed by them than bitten by the ducks, pecked by the hens, kicked by the girl that feeds the chickens, and in winter to suffer so much.” And it flew into the water, and swam to the magnificent birds, that looked at, and, with rustling plumes, sailed towards it.

“Kill me,” said the poor creature, and bowed down its head to the water, and awaited death. But what did it see in the water! It saw beneath it its own likeness—but no longer that of an awkward grayish bird, ugly and displeasing—it was the figure of a swan!

It is of no consequence being born in a farm-yard, if only it is in a swan's egg.

THE UGLY DUCK.

The good creature felt quite elevated by all the cares and disappointments it had endured ; now it knew how to prize the splendour which began to shine around it. And the large swans swam beside it, and stroked it with their bills.

There were little children running about in the garden ; they threw bread into the water, and the youngest cried out :

“ There is a new one !” and the other children shouted too, “ Yes, a new one is come !”—and they clapped their hands and danced, and ran to tell their father and mother. And they threw bread and cake into the water, and every one said :

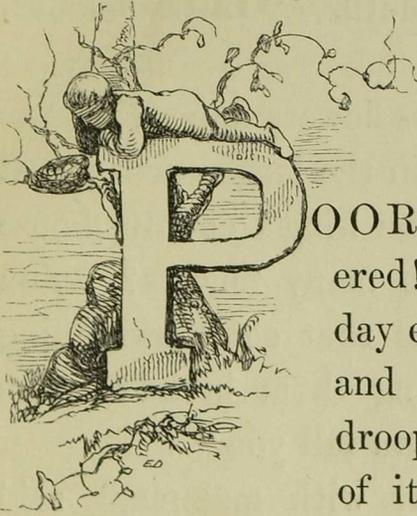
“ The new one is the best ! so young, and so beautiful !” And the old swans bowed their heads before it. Then the young one felt quite ashamed, and hid its head under its wing : it knew not what to do : it was too happy, but yet not proud, for a good heart is never proud. It remembered how it had been persecuted and derided, and now it heard all say that it was the most beautiful of all beautiful birds. And the syringas bent down their branches to it in the water, and the sun shone so lovely and so warm.

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Then it shook its plumes, the slender neck was lifted up, and, from its very heart, it cried rejoicingly, "Never dreamed I of such happiness when I was the little ugly duck!"



LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS.



“POOR flowers, you are all withered!” said little Ida. “Yesterday evening you were so pretty, and now all your leaves are drooping! What is the reason of it?” asked she of a youth sitting on the sofa, and whom she liked very much, because he told her fairy-tales, and cut out paste-board houses for her. “Why do these flowers look so faded?” asked she again, shewing him a withered nosegay.

“Don’t you know?” answered he; “your flowers have been all night at a ball, and that’s the reason they all hang their heads.”

“Flowers cannot dance!” continued little Ida.

“Certainly they can! When it is dark, and

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we are gone to rest, then they dance about right merrily. They have a ball almost every night!"

"May children go to the flowers' ball too?" asked little Ida.

"Yes," answered the youth. "Little daisies, and convolvuluses."

"Where do the prettiest flowers dance?"

"Have you never been in the large garden, just outside the gates, where the king's country-house is, and where there are so many flowers? You have surely seen the swans that come swimming towards you when you fling them bread? The flowers have balls there, I can tell you."

"I was there yesterday with mamma," said Ida; "but there were no leaves on the trees, and I did not see a single flower. Where were they, then? There were so many there in summer!"

"They are in the palace now," said the youth. "As soon as the king quits his summer-palace, and goes to town with his court, all the flowers run directly out of the garden into the palace, and make merry there. If you could but see it once! The two most beautiful roses seat themselves on the throne, and play at king and queen. Then the

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red cockscombs range themselves in rows on both sides, and make a low bow; these are the gentlemen of the bed-chamber. Then the nicest flowers enter, and the ball begins. The blue violets are midshipmen, and they dance with hyacinths and crocuses, which they call young ladies. The tulips and yellow lilies are old dowagers, who are to see that all is conducted with propriety."

"But," said little Ida, quite astonished, "may the flowers give a ball in the king's palace in that way?"

"No one knows anything about it," answered the youth. "It's true, sometimes the old inspector of the palace comes up stairs in the night with his great bunch of keys, to see if all is safe; but as soon as the flowers hear the rattling of his keys, they keep quite still, and hide behind the long silken window-curtains. 'I smell flowers here,' says the old inspector; but he cannot find out where they are."

"That's very droll," said little Ida, clapping her hands. "But could I not see the flowers?"

"Of course you can see them," answered the youth. "Only peep in at the window when you

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go again to the palace. I looked in to-day, and I saw a long pale white lily reclining on the sofa. That was a maid of honour."

"Can the flowers in the Botanical Garden go there too?" asked she. "Are they able to go all that way?"

"Certainly, for if the flowers choose, they can fly. The pretty red and yellow butterflies, that almost look like flowers, are in reality nothing else. They have jumped from their stem, they move their leaves as if they were wings, and so fly about; and as they always behave well, they are allowed to flutter hither and thither by day, instead of sitting quietly on their stems, till at last real wings grow out of their leaves. Why, you have seen it often enough yourself. However, it may be that the flowers in the Botanical Garden did not know that there was such merry-making in the king's palace of a night. But I'll tell you something: when you go there again, you have only to whisper it to one flower, that there is a ball at the palace; one will tell it to the other, and all the flowers are sure to fly there. Then when the Professor of Botany comes into the garden, and does not find

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any of his flowers, he will not be able to comprehend what is become of them."

"Ah!" said little Ida, somewhat angry at the strange story, "how should the flowers be able to tell each other what I say? Flowers cannot speak!"

"No, they cannot: there you are quite right," continued the youth; "but they make themselves understood by gestures. Have you not often seen how they bend to and fro when there is the gentlest breeze? To them this is as intelligible as words are to us."

"Does the Professor understand their gestures, then?" said little Ida.

"To be sure he does. One morning he came into the garden and remarked that a great stinging-nettle was on very intimate terms with the leaves of a pretty young pink. 'You are so beautiful,' said the nettle to the pink, 'and I love you so devotedly!' But the Professor would not suffer any thing of the sort, and tapped the nettle on his leaves—for those are his fingers; but he stung himself, and from that day forward he has never ventured to touch a stinging-nettle."

"Ha! ha! ha! that was good fun," said little Ida.

LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS.

“What’s the meaning of that,” said the Professor of Mathematics, who had just come to pay a visit, “to tell the child such nonsense!” He could not bear the young man, and always scolded when he saw him cutting out pasteboard figures—as, for example, a man on the gallows with a heart in his hand, which was meant for a stealer of hearts; or an old witch riding on a broomstick, carrying her husband on the tip of her nose. Then he used to say as he did now, “What’s the meaning of that—to teach the child such nonsense! That’s your stupid Imagination, I suppose!”

But little Ida thought it was very amusing, and could not forget what the youth had told her. No doubt her flowers did hang their heads because they really had been to the ball yesterday. She therefore carried them to the table where all sorts of toys were nicely arranged, and in the drawer were many pretty things besides. Her doll lay in a little bed, to go to sleep; but Ida said to her, “Really, Sophy, you must get up, and be satisfied with the drawer for to-night; for the poor flowers are ill, and must sleep in your bed. Then perhaps they may be well by to-morrow.” So she took the

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doll out of bed; but the good lady made a wry face at being obliged to leave her bed for the sake of the old flowers.

Ida laid the withered flowers in her doll's bed, covered them up with the counterpane, and told them to lie quite still, and in the meantime she would make some tea for them to drink, that they might be quite well by to-morrow. And she drew the curtains close all round the bed, so that the sun might not shine in the flowers' eyes.

The whole evening she kept on thinking of what she had heard, and just before going to bed she ran to the window where her mother's tulips and hyacinths were standing, to whisper to them, "I know very well that you are going to the ball to-night." But the flowers seemed as if they heard nothing, and moved not a leaf.

When she was in bed, she thought how nice it would be to see the flowers dancing at the king's palace. "Have my flowers really been there?" But before she could think about the answer, she had fallen asleep. She awoke again in the night; she had dreamed of the youth and the flowers, and of the Professor of Mathematics, who always said

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she believed every thing. It was quite still in the sleeping-room ; the night-lamp burnt on the table, and her father and mother were fast asleep.

“I wonder if my flowers are still in Sophy's bed!” said she. “I should like so much to know!” She sat up in her bed, looked towards the door, which was half open, and there lay the flowers and her playthings all as she had left them. She listened, and it seemed to her as if some one was playing on the piano in the room, but quite softly, and yet so beautifully that she thought she had never heard the like.

“Now, then, my flowers are all dancing for certain!” said she. “Oh, how I should like to see them!” But she dared not get up, for fear of awaking her father and mother. “If they would but come in here!” But the flowers did not come, and the piano sounded so sweetly. At last she could bear it no longer—see the dance she must ; so she crept noiselessly out of bed, and glided towards the door of the drawing-room. And what wonders did she behold !

The night-lamp burned no longer ; and yet it was quite light in the room, because the moon

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shone through the window and illumined the whole floor. All the hyacinths and tulips stood in two rows in the drawing-room, and before the windows was nothing but the empty flower-pots. The flowers danced figures, and held each other by the long leaves. At the piano sat a large yellow lily, that Ida thought she had seen before; for she remembered that the youth had once told her that this lily was like Miss Mary Smith, and that every body had laughed at him for saying so. Now, it seemed to her that the lily really was like the young lady, and that she had quite the same manners when she played; for now she bent her long sallow face first on one side and then on the other, and nodded with her head to keep time. Now a large blue crocus-rose leapt upon the table where Ida's toys were lying, went straight to the bed, and drew the curtains. There lay the sick flowers; but they got up directly and saluted the other flowers, who begged them to join the dance. The sick flowers really did get up, looked no longer ill, and danced merrily with the rest.

Suddenly a dull sound was heard, as if something had fallen from the table. Ida cast her eyes

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in that direction, and saw that it was the rod she had found lying on her bed one shrovetide morning, and which now wanted to be looked upon as a flower. It was indeed a charming rod ; for at the top a little wax figure was hidden, with a broad-brimmed hat on like the Professor ; and it was tied with red and blue ribands. So it hopped about among the flowers, and stamped away right merrily with its feet ; for it was the mazourka that it was dancing, and this the flowers could not dance, for they were much too light-footed.

All at once the wax figure in the rod became a tall and stout giant, and cried out with a loud voice, "What's the meaning of this—to teach the child such nonsense ! But this is your stupid Imagination, I suppose !" And now the doll grew just like the Professor, and looked as yellow and cross as he did : they were as like as two peas. But the paper flowers with which the rod was ornamented pinched his thin lanky legs, and then he shrunk together and was a doll again. Little Ida thought this scene so funny that she burst out a laughing, which, however, the company did not remark ; for the rod kept on stamping, till at last the Professor

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of Mathematics was obliged to dance too, whether he would or not ; and whether he made himself stout or thin, big or little, he was forced to keep on, till at last the flowers begged for him, and the rod then left him in peace.

A loud knocking was now heard in the drawer where the doll lay. It was Sophy, who, putting out her head, asked quite astonished : "Is there a ball? why was I not told of it?"

"Will you dance with me?" said the nutcrackers.

"A fine sort of person indeed to dance with!" said Sophy, turning her back on him. She seated herself on the drawer, and thought that one of the flowers would certainly come and fetch her to dance. But no one came. She coughed : "A-hem ! a-hem !" Still none came. Then the nutcrackers began dancing alone, and he did his steps by no means badly.

When Sophy saw that not one of the flowers came to offer himself as partner, she suddenly slipped down on the floor, so that there was a terrible fuss, and all the flowers came running to inquire if she had hurt or bruised herself. She was not hurt

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at all; but all the flowers were very complaisant, particularly those belonging to Ida, who took this opportunity to thank her for the nice bed in which they had slept so quietly; and then they took her by the hand, and led her to the dance, while all the other flowers stood round in a circle. Sophy was now quite happy, and begged Ida's flowers to make use of her bed after the ball, as she, for her part, did not at all mind sleeping one night in the drawer.

But the flowers said: "We are very much obliged to you indeed; but we shall not live so long, for to-morrow we shall be quite withered. Beg little Ida to bestow upon us a grave in her garden near her canary-bird; there we shall appear again next summer, and grow more beautiful than we were this year."

"No, you shall not die!" continued Sophy vehemently, kissing the flowers. Suddenly the door of the drawing-room opened, and a whole row of flowers came dancing in. Ida could not comprehend where these flowers came from, unless they were the flowers from the King's pleasure-grounds. In front danced two beautiful roses with golden

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crowns, and then followed stocks and pinks bowing on every side. They had too a band of music with them: large poppies and peonies blew upon pea-shells till they were red in the face, and lilies of the valley and blue-bells joined their tinkling sounds. Then came a crowd of the most various flowers, all dancing,—violets, daisies, convolvuluses, hyacinths; and they all moved and turned about so prettily, that it was quite a charming sight.

At last the happy flowers wished each other good night; and now little Ida slipped into bed again, and dreamed of all the splendid things she had just beheld. The following morning, as soon as she was up and dressed, she went to the table where her playthings were, to see if her flowers were still there. She drew the bed-curtains aside, and—yes! the flowers were there, but they were much more withered than yesterday. Sophy too was in the drawer, but she looked dreadfully sleepy.

“Can’t you remember what you had to say to me?” asked little Ida. Sophy, however, only looked very stupid, and did not answer a word.

“You are not at all good,” said Ida, “and yet all the flowers asked you to dance with them.”

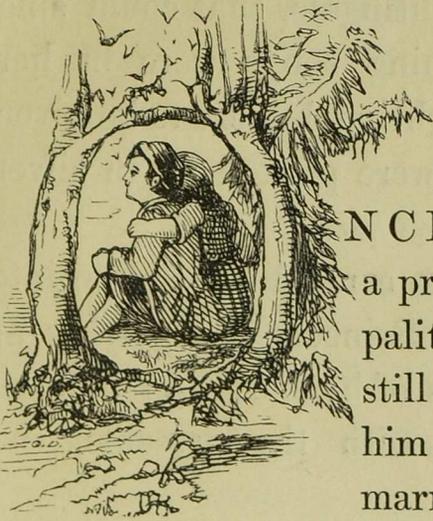
LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS.

Then she chose a little box of pasteboard from among her playthings; it was painted with birds, and in it she laid the withered flowers. "That shall be your coffin," she said; "and when my cousins from Norway come to see me, they shall go to your funeral in the garden; so that next summer you may bloom again, and grow more beautiful than you were this year."

The cousins from Norway were two merry boys, Jonas and Esben. Their father had just made each of them a present of a bow and arrows, which they brought with them to shew to Ida. She told them now about the poor flowers that were dead, and that she was going to bury in the garden. The two boys went before with the bows on their shoulders, and little Ida followed with the dead flowers in the pretty little box. A grave was dug in the garden. Ida kissed the flowers once more, put the box into the earth, and Jonas and Esben shot over the grave with their bows, for they had no guns or cannons.



THE SWINEHERD.



ONCE upon a time there lived a prince and he had a principality: it was very small, but still it was enough to enable him to maintain a wife, and so marry he would.

Now it was certainly rather bold of him to think of saying to the Emperor's daughter, "Will you have me?" but he did do so nevertheless; for his name was celebrated far and near, and there were hundreds of princesses who would have answered, "Oh yes, with pleasure!"—but we will see if this one said so.

Now only listen.

On the spot where the Prince's father was buried grew a rose-bush: but, oh! it was such a

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beautiful rose-bush, and it blossomed only once in five years, and then bore but a single flower. But what a flower! It smelt so sweetly that it made one forget all one's trouble and sorrows; and besides this, the prince had a nightingale, that could sing as if all the most charming songs were in her throat. Both rose and nightingale were to be given to the Princess; so they were packed up in silver cases and sent to her.

The Emperor had them carried before him into the great hall, where the Princess was playing at "visiting" with her maids of honour. As soon as she saw the large cases with the presents, she clapped her hands for joy.

"Oh, if it were but a little pussy-cat!" said she; but the rose-bush with the beautiful rose appeared.

"How nicely it is made!" said all the ladies.

"It is more than nicely made," said the Emperor; "it is charming."

But the Princess felt it, and almost burst into tears.

"O papa," said she, "it is not made at all—it is a real rose!"

THE SWINEHERD.

“Oh,” said the maids of honour, “it is a real rose!”

“But let us first see what is in the other case before we get angry,” said the Emperor. And then the nightingale appeared; she sang so sweetly that at first it was impossible to say any thing against her.

“*Superbe! Charmant!*” said the ladies; for every one of them spoke French, one worse than the other.

“How the bird reminds me of the musical-box of her Majesty the late Empress!” said an old courtier. “Oh, yes, it is the very same tone—the same execution.”

“Ah, yes!” said the Emperor, weeping like a little child.

“I hope it will not turn out to be a real bird after all,” said the Princess.

“Yes, it is a real bird,” said the people who had brought the presents.

“Well, then, let it fly,” said the Princess; and she could not be prevailed upon to give the Prince an audience.

He, however, was not to be frightened; he

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painted his face brown and black, pulled his cap low down over his ears, and knocked at the door.

“Good day, Sir Emperor!” said he; “pray, could I get a place here in the palace?”

“Oh yes,” said the Emperor: “I am just in want of some one to look after the pigs; for we have a good many of those animals here.”

And so the Prince got a place as imperial Swineherd. He had a nasty little room given him close to the pig-sty, where he was obliged to live; but the whole day he sat and worked, and by the evening had made a nice little pipkin. Little bells hung all round it, and as soon as the pipkin boiled, all the little bells began tinkling in the prettiest way imaginable, and played the old air—

“O dear, what can the matter be?”

O dear, what shall I do?”

But the cleverest of all was, that if a person held his finger in the steam of the pipkin when it boiled, he could immediately smell what was being dressed on every fire in the whole town;—a very different sort of thing that to the rose!

Now the Princess and her ladies came walking

THE SWINEHERD.

by the place where the Prince was ; and when she heard the air, she stopped and looked quite pleased ; for she too could play, “ O dear, what can the matter be ? ” It was the only piece she knew, but she played it with ONE finger.

“ Why, that is my piece ! ” said the Princess ; “ that is, no doubt, a very accomplished Swineherd ! Here, just go in and ask him what is the price of his instrument. ”

And one of the maids of honour was obliged to run in, but she put a pair of goloshes on first.

“ How much do you ask for your pipkin ? ” said the lady.

“ Ten kisses from the Princess is the price, ” said the Swineherd.

“ What are you thinking of ? ” said the lady.

“ I cannot take less, ” said the Swineherd.

“ He is an impudent fellow ! ” said the Princess, and went away ; but after she had gone a short distance the bells sounded so prettily :

“ O dear, what can the matter be ? ”

“ O dear, what shall I do ? ”

“ Hark ye, ” said the Princess ; “ ask him if he will take ten kisses from my maids of honour. ”

THE SWINEHERD.

“Very much obliged to you,” said the Swineherd: “ten kisses from the Princess, or else I keep my pipkin.”

“It is really unbearable,” said the Princess; “but then you must all stand round, so that no one sees me.”

And the ladies stood round her; and so the Swineherd got his ten kisses, and the Princess the pipkin.

What fun it was! The whole evening and the whole of the next day the pipkin was kept boiling. Not a single hearth or fire-place in the town but they knew what was being cooked there; whether it was a count’s or a cobbler’s, it was all the same. The maids of honour danced and clapped their hands for joy.

“Now we know who has fried potatoes and bacon; we know who has turbot and lobster-sauce! Oh, how interesting it is!”

“Yes, but mind you keep my secret; for remember I am the Emperor’s daughter.”

“Oh, of course!” said all the ladies.

The Swineherd—that is to say, the Prince, but they did not know that he was any thing but

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an ugly swineherd—let not a single day pass without having some work in hand; and one day he made a rattle, which, when one turned round, played all the waltzes and Scotch reels that have been heard since the world was created.

“Oh, that is superb!” said the Princess as she passed by. “I have never heard a more beautiful composition! Do just go in, and ask him what the instrument costs: but, mind, I will not give any kisses for it!”

“He asks a hundred kisses from the Princess,” said the lady who had gone in to make the inquiry.

“I think he is out of his mind,” said the Princess, going away; but after she had walked some distance, she stopped. “One must encourage art,” said she; “I am daughter of the Emperor. Tell him he shall have ten kisses from me, the same as yesterday, and my ladies shall give him the rest.”

“Oh —— but we should not like that at all!” said the maids of honour.

“Pooh, nonsense!” said the Princess. “If I can kiss him, you surely can do so too. Remember whose bread you eat,” and so the ladies were obliged to go in again.

THE SWINEHERD.

“A hundred kisses from the Princess,” said he, “or each one keeps one’s own.”

“Stand round!” said the Princess: and all the maids of honour stood round as before, and she paid the kisses.

“What’s the matter down there, near the pigsty?” said the Emperor, who just stepped out on the balcony. He rubbed his eyes, and put on his spectacles: “Why, those are the ladies of the court! I must go down to them and see!” So he pulled his slippers up at heel; for they were old shoes that he had trodden down in that manner.

As soon as he had come down in the court, he walked along as quietly as possible; and the ladies had so much to do with counting the kisses that there might be no cheating, that they did not observe the Emperor.

He stood on tiptoe.

“What the deuce is that?” said he, giving each of them a good box on the ear with his slipper, just as the Swineherd had got to the eighty-sixth kiss.

“Be off!” said the Emperor, for he was very angry; and both Princess and Swineherd were banished the kingdom.

THE SWINEHERD.

There she stood and wept, the Swineherd scolded, and the rain poured down in torrents.

“Oh, unhappy creature that I am!” said the Princess: “had I but taken the handsome Prince! oh, how unhappy I am!”

And the Swineherd went behind a tree, wiped the brown and black paint from off his face, threw away the miserable clothes, and appeared before the Princess in his own dress, and looking so handsome that she bowed before him.

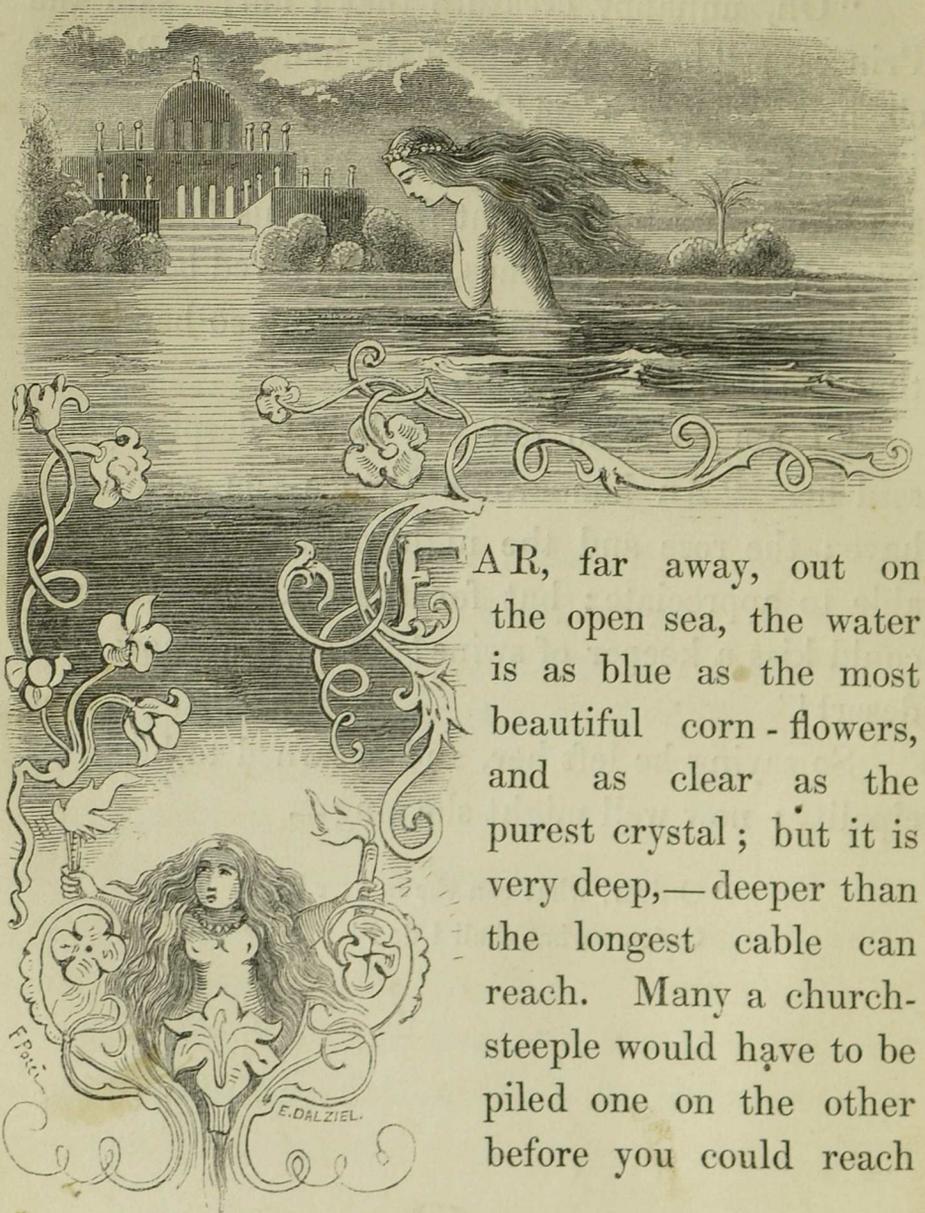
“I am come to tell you how I despise you,” said he. “An honourable Prince you would not have; the rose and the nightingale you were unable to appreciate: but for the sake of a toy you could kiss a keeper of swine! You have now your desert!”

So saying he left her, and returned to his principality: now well might she sing—

“O dear, what can the matter be?”

O dear, what shall I do?”

THE LITTLE MERMAID.



FAR, far away, out on the open sea, the water is as blue as the most beautiful corn-flowers, and as clear as the purest crystal; but it is very deep,—deeper than the longest cable can reach. Many a church-steeple would have to be piled one on the other before you could reach

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from the bottom of the sea to the surface ; and here, in these depths, dwell the Mermaids.

Now you must not fancy that there is nothing down there but white sand ; far from it. The most beautiful trees and plants grow there, whose stems and leaves are so pliable that they move to and fro at the slightest motion of the water, as though they were living creatures. Large and small sea-fishes glide through the branches, as the birds fly about in the air with us above. At the spot where the sea is deepest lies the palace of the Ocean-King. The walls of the palace are of coral, and the high pointed windows of amber, the roof is of sea-shells cunningly joined together, that open and shut with the swell of the waves, which has a charming effect ; for in every shell shining pearls are lying, one alone of which would be a costly jewel for the crown of an earthly monarch.

The Ocean-King, who lived in this palace, had been a widower many years ; but his old mother kept house for him. She was a clever woman, but she was very proud of her lineage, and bore therefore twelve oysters on her tail, while other Mermaids of rank could only have six. In everything

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besides she merited unreserved praise, particularly on account of the great affection she bore her grand-daughters, the little Ocean-Princesses. They were six particularly beautiful children ; the youngest Princess, however, was the loveliest of all the sisters. Her complexion was as fine and delicate as a rose-leaf, her eyes as blue as the deepest sea ; but, like all Mermaids, she had no feet ; her body ending in the tail of a fish.

The whole day long the children were allowed to play in the spacious halls of the palace, where all around flowers were growing from the walls. The large amber windows were then opened, and great fishes swam in ; just as the swallows fly in with us, when we leave the doors open. But the fishes were bolder than our swallows are ; they swam right in to the little Princesses, ate out of their hands, and allowed themselves to be caressed.

In front of the palace was a large garden with crimson and dark-blue trees, whose fruits sparkled with gold ; but the flowers of the garden were like a burning sun. The mould there was the finest sand, but of a violet colour, something like the flame of brimstone, and over the whole was spread

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a wondrous blue, so that one might have fancied oneself high up in the air, with the heavens above and below, instead of being at the very bottom of the sea. When the water was tranquil, one could see the sun, which looked then like a purple flower, out of whose chalice the light of the world was streaming.

Each of the little Princesses had her own flower-bed in the garden, in which she could plant and sow as she liked. One laid it out in the form of a whale, another liked that of a mermaid better; but the youngest made hers quite round, like the sun, and planted only flowers that were red, to resemble it in colour too. She was indeed an extraordinary child, reserved and reflective. While her sisters put up all sorts of things as ornaments, which they had got from a ship that had been wrecked, she asked for the beautiful white boy only, a marble figure which had been found in the vessel. She placed the statue in her garden, and planted a red weeping willow beside it, which grew right pleasantly; and its long branches hung down to the blue ground, on which the flitting shadows played

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in violet tints, as though the roots and the tops of the boughs played with and kissed each other.

Nothing delighted the little Princess so much as to hear of the world inhabited by man, that was up above the waters. Her old grandmother was obliged to tell all that she knew about ships and towns, men and land-animals; and she was particularly delighted to hear that the flowers on the earth had a sweet odour, which is not the case with the flowers of the ocean; to learn that the woods there were green, and that the fishes that fluttered about in their branches were beautiful, and sing aloud. It was the birds she meant; her grandmother called them fishes, because her granddaughters, who had never seen a bird, would otherwise not have understood her.

“When you have reached your fifteenth year,” continued the old lady, “you may rise up to the surface of the sea, sit on the rocks in the moonlight, and see the large ships sail by, and become acquainted with men and cities.” The following year the eldest sister attained this happy age; but as to her sisters, unfortunately one was always a year

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younger than the other, and the youngest therefore had to wait five whole years before the glad moment should come for her to rise to the surface of the ocean, and behold how the upper world did look. But each promised the other to tell what she had seen, and what she thought most beautiful, as soon as the first day of her coming of age should arrive ; for really their grandmother told them so very little, and there were so many things that they wanted to know about.

But none of the sisters felt so lively a longing for this day of liberation from infantile restraint as the youngest ; she who must wait longest, and who always moved about so quietly and absorbed in thought. Many a night did she stand at the open window, and look upwards through the clear blue water, when the fishes were splashing with their fins. She could see the sun and the moon, of course in dimmed brightness only ; but to her the orbs seemed larger than to the dwellers upon earth. If a cloud concealed them, then she knew that it was either a whale or a passing ship with human beings upon it, who certainly little thought that, far below them, a little ocean-maiden stretched her

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white hands upward towards the keel of their ship, with an ardent longing.

The day was now arrived when the eldest Princess had reached her fifteenth year, and was therefore to rise to the surface of the sea.

At her return she had a thousand things to relate; but yet her greatest enjoyment had been to sit on a sand-bank in the moonlight, and to see the large city lying on the coast, where lights like stars were shining, music sounding, and where the noise and hum of carriages and men might be heard afar. Then, too, to behold the high church-towers, and to hear the chime of the bells,—it was for these very things she longed most, just because they were beyond her reach.

How attentively her youngest sister listened to these words! And when she now stood by night at her open window, and looked upwards through the blue flood, she thought so intensely of the large noisy town, that she fancied she could hear the sound of the church-bells.

The following year the next sister was allowed to rise to the surface, and swim whither she pleased. She rose to the top of the water just as the sun was

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going down ; and this sight so delighted her, that she said, of all she had seen above the sea, this was the most magnificent. “The whole heaven was like gold,” said she, “and the beauty of the clouds it is out of my power to describe : now red, now violet, on they sailed above me ; but faster than they flew, a flock of white swans flew over the water at the very spot where the sun stood. I gazed, but the sun disappeared, and the rosy light gradually died away on the surface of the ocean, and on the edges of the clouds.”

It was now the third sister's turn to rise. She was the most beautiful of the three, and therefore she swam up a river that fell into the sea. Here she saw on the banks green hills with grapevines, castles and houses that rose up from among the woods ; she heard the host of birds singing ; and the sun shone so warm, that she was often obliged to dive beneath water to cool her burning countenance. In a small bay she found a whole company of little children—the children of mortals who dwell upon the earth—that jumped about naked and splashed in the water. She wished to join in their sport ; but the children fled frightened to the

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land, and a little black animal barked so dreadfully at her, that at last she grew afraid, and swam back again to the sea. But she could not forget the sight of the green woods, the leafy hills, and of the nice little children who swam about in the water although they had no fins.

The fourth sister was not so bold ; she remained in the open sea, and when she came back to her ocean-palace, related that there it was more beautiful than any where else, for one could see miles around one, while the sky, like a large bell, hung over the waves. She had seen ships too, but only so far off that they seemed to be sea-gulls ; while sprightly dolphins sported on the water, and whales spouted high jets into the air that looked like a thousand fountains.

The following year the fifth sister was fifteen. Her birthday was in winter ; and so she saw what the others had not seen when she went up for the first time. The sea had become green, and icebergs were swimming about. These looked like pearls, she said, but were higher than the church-towers on the land. She had seated herself on one of these swimming ice-pearls ; but every ship had

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quickly hoisted its sails, and had hastened frightened away. The same evening the sky was covered with clouds, and while the huge blocks of ice sank and rose again out of the sea, and shone in the red glare, the clouds sent forth lightning and thunder. Then on every ship the sails were furled, and fear and terror reigned on board. But she remained quietly seated on her icy rock, and watched the blue zig-zag of the lightning rushing into the sea.

The first time that each of these sisters rose from the sea, she was astonished and enchanted at the sight of the many new and beautiful objects which she had seen in the upper world. But when now, as grown-up maidens, they had permission to go up as often as they liked, it soon lost the charm of novelty, and it was not long before their own home seemed much more delightful than the upper world ; for here all seemed congenial.

Many an evening did the five sisters, arm-in-arm, rise to the surface of the sea. Their voices were much sweeter than that of any mortal ; and when a storm was approaching they swam before the ships and sang, oh, so beautifully ! of the joy it was to dwell at the bottom of the ocean, and begged the

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mariners not to be afraid to go there. But the sailors did not understand their words; they took the song for the whistling of the blast, and so lost the sight of the beauties of the deep; for when a ship went down, the men on board were drowned, and arrived dead at the palace of the Ocean-King.

When the sisters thus swam in the evening hours on the tops of the waves, the youngest stood quite alone in her father's palace, looking after them; and at such times she felt as though she should weep. But the Mermaids have no tears, and therefore suffer immeasurably more in their sorrow than men.

“Oh, were I but fifteen years old!” sighed she. “I know, for certain, that I should love the upper world, and the men that live upon it, very dearly!”

At length the much-desired fifteenth year was attained!

“Now, then, we are quit of you,” said the old grandmother. “Come here, that I may dress you like your other sisters.” So saying, she placed a wreath of white lilies in her hair, but each leaf of the flowers was the half of a pearl, and the old lady

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ordered eight large oysters to hang themselves to the tail of the Princess, as a sign of her high descent.

“But that hurts me so!” said the little Princess.

“Little discomforts are not to be minded, if we wish to look well,” answered the grandmother.

She would so gladly have cast aside all her finery, and taken off the heavy wreath, for her red flowers out of the little garden became her much better; but she dared not do so before the old lady. “Adieu,” said she, and rose out of the sea as light and as beautiful as an air-bubble in the water.

The sun had just left the horizon as she, for the first time in her life, appeared on the surface of the ocean; but the clouds still shone golden and rose-coloured, the evening star gleamed in the pale red sky, the air was mild and refreshing, and the sea as smooth as a mirror. A large ship lay on the tranquil waters; a single sail was hoisted, for not a breath of air was perceptible, and the sailors were sitting on the yards or in the rigging. Music and song sounded from on board; and when it was dark, hundreds of lamps suddenly glittered on the ship, and it looked as if the flags of every nation were

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fluttering in the air. The little Mermaid swam to the cabin-windows, where, each time the waves lifted her on high, she was able to see through the clear glass panes. Here she saw many gaily-dressed persons ; but the handsomest of all was the young Prince with the large dark eyes. He was certainly not more than sixteen. It was his birthday that was being kept, on which account were all these festivities. The seamen danced on the deck ; and when the young Prince appeared among them, hundreds of rockets flew into the air, turning the night into bright day, and frightening the little Mermaid so much that she dived for a moment or two. But she soon peeped out of the water again, and it now seemed as if all the stars of heaven were falling around her. Such a rain of fire had she never seen : of such arts, known but to men, she had never even dreamed. Large suns turned round, glowing fishes swam in the air, and the whole spectacle was reflected in the clear water. On the ship itself it was so light, that one could distinguish the smallest object, and see all the persons distinctly—oh, how handsome the young Prince was ! To many of the people he gave his hand, and joked and

laughed ; while the music sounded pleasantly in the silence of the night.

It was already late ; however, the little Princess could not tear herself away from the sight of the ship and the handsome Prince. But there was a hissing or roaring in the depths of the ocean, while the Princess still rose on the surface in order to see the Prince through the windows of the cabin. The ship began to move more quickly, the sails were hoisted, the waves tossed, black clouds gathered, and afar the thunder rolled. Already the huge vessel rocked on the heaving sea like a mere skiff, and the waves, towering on high like black mountains, broke over it ; but the good ship glided downwards in the hollow of the sea like a swan, and appeared again immediately riding on the crest of the waves. To the little Mermaid this appeared very amusing ; but not so to the sailors on board. The vessel creaked and groaned, and her thick ribs bent under the heavy blows of the waves against her side, while the water rushed in. For a moment the ship reeled ; the mainmast snapped as though it had been a reed : she capsized and filled. Now the little Mermaid comprehended that the people

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on board were in danger ; for she herself was obliged to take care of the spars and timbers that had been torn away from the ship, and were now floating about on the waves. But at this moment it became so dark that she could distinguish nothing : though when the dreadful lightning played, it was so light that she recognised everybody on the wreck. Her eyes sought the young Prince just at the moment when the ship went to pieces and sank. Then she felt so glad that the Prince would now come to her ; but she immediately recollected that men cannot live in the water, and that therefore the prince would only reach her palace as a corpse. Die ? no, that he should not ! So she swam through the pieces of wreck that were being driven about in all directions, forgetful of her own danger, dived and rose again, till at last she reached the spot where the Prince, almost exhausted, but just kept himself with difficulty above water. His eyes were already closing, and he would inevitably have been drowned if the little Mermaid had not been his preserver. But she seized hold of him, and, while she was driven along by the waves, bore him above the water.

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Towards morning the storm abated ; but not a trace of the ship was to be seen. The sun rose as red as fire from the sea. Its first rays seemed to colour the Prince's cheeks, but his eyes were still shut. The young Mermaid kissed his high forehead, and put back his hair from his face. While in this state he resembled the marble figure down in her garden : she kissed him once more, and wished sincerely that he might revive.

Now she beheld the firm land with its high mountains, on which the white snow was shining. A green wood stretched along the coast, and fronting it lay a chapel or a cloister ; she could not well distinguish which. Citrons and oranges displayed themselves in the garden, and before the gates stood two high palms. The sea formed here a small bay, in which the water was quite still, but very deep ; and only under the rocks on the shore the fine sand that had been washed up formed a firm ground. Hither the Mermaid swam with the seemingly dead Prince, laid him on the warm sand, and took care to place his head the higher, and to turn his face towards the sun.

In the large white building that stood before

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her, the bells began to sound, and many young maidens passed through the garden. The little Princess withdrew from the shore, hid herself behind some pieces of rock, covered her head and hair with the froth of the sea in order that her face might not be seen, and watched carefully to see who would approach the Prince.

It was not long before a young lady went towards him. She seemed quite terrified at the sight of the lifeless Prince ; but, soon recovering herself, ran back to fetch more of her sisters. The little Mermaid saw too that the Prince revived, and smiled kindly on all who surrounded him ; but on her he cast no look, for he did not know that it was to her he owed his preservation. And when the Prince was carried into the large building, she grew so sad, that she dived down and returned to her father's palace.

If she had been formerly pensive and still, she was henceforward still more so. Her sisters asked her what she had seen in the world above, on the first day of her majority ; but she gave no answer.

She often rose of an evening near the shore where she had left the prince ; she saw how the

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fruits of the garden ripened and were gathered ; she saw how the snow on the high mountains vanished ; but the Prince she could never see ; and she always, therefore, returned to her submarine dwelling melancholy and sad. Here it was her only consolation to sit in the little garden, and to embrace the little statue that resembled the handsome Prince ; but she tended her flowers no longer ; they grew up wild, covered the paths, and twined their long stalks and leaves in such rank luxuriance round the branches of the trees, that the whole garden was turned into a gloomy bower.

At last she could no longer bear her grief, and disclosed it to one of her sisters. The other sisters now learned the secret immediately ; but only they and some few of their friends. Among the latter was one who knew the Prince ; she, too, had been a witness of the festivities on board ; she knew also in what country he was to be found, and the name of his sovereign.

“Come, little sister !” said the other Princesses, and, twining their arms together, they rose in a line out of the sea before the castle of the Prince.

This castle was built of pale yellow shining

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stones, and furnished with a flight of steps of white marble, the last of which reached to the very margin of the sea. Over the roof was spread a magnificent gilded dome, and between the columns which surrounded the castle stood white figures resembling living men. Through the clear glass of the high windows one could see into the splendid halls, where the silken curtains were looped up in festoons, and all the walls decorated with the finest pictures; so that the sight of this gorgeous dwelling was a real delight for the little Mermaid. In the middle of one of the halls of state a jet of water made a splashing noise, sending up its stream to the glass cupola above; and through it the sun shone on the water, and on the sweet plants and flowers growing in the basin.

Now, then, the little Princess knew where her dear Prince lived; and from this hour she shewed herself nearly every evening, and many a night on the water. She often approached the land nearer than her sisters had ventured to do; she even swam up the whole length of the narrow canal that led below the marble balcony, whose long shadow was reflected in the water. Here, then, she tarried to

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gaze at the young Prince, who imagined himself alone in the clear moonlight.

She often saw him, too, on the waters in his splendid barge, where the many gay flags were flying. She listened from among the green rushes to hear his voice ; and if by chance a light breeze caught her silver veil, and the fluttering was observed by those in the Prince's boat, they thought it was only a swan stretching out its long white wings.

Many a night when the fishermen were at their occupation by torchlight, she heard them relating much good of the Prince. Then she rejoiced greatly at having saved his life, when, half-dead, he was drifting on the waves ; and she remembered how his head had rested on her shoulder, although he knew nothing of it, nor even dreamed of such a thing.

Dearer and dearer did the human race become to her, and more and more did she wish to belong to them. Their world seemed to her much larger than that of the dwellers in the sea ; for they could fly away in their ships over the ocean, climb to the summits of the highest mountains, that reached the

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clouds of heaven ; and their countries, bordered by woods and decked with pleasant fields, extended themselves much farther than the eye of a Mermaid could reach. There were so many things about which she would have gladly asked for information ; but her sisters could give her no satisfactory answers. So she was obliged to have recourse to the old Queen-mother, who was well acquainted with the upper-world, which she very aptly termed the countries above the sea.

“Does the human race live for ever if the people are not drowned?” asked she once of her grandmother. “Do they never die, like us who live at the bottom of the sea?”

“Yes,” replied the old lady, “they must die as well as we ; and besides, their lifetime is much shorter than ours. We can live to be three hundred years of age ; but then when we die we become but froth on the sea, and have not even a grave here below among those we love. We have no immortal soul, we do not live again, but are like reeds that, once cut, can never more grow green. But men, on the contrary, have a soul that still lives on when their bodies are turned to earth, and

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which soars upward to the shining stars in heaven. As we rise out of the water to see the countries of men, so do they rise to unknown fair abodes, which our eyes are not permitted to behold.”

“Why did we not have immortal souls?” asked the little Mermaid. “I would give all my three hundred years to be a human creature only for a day, and then to be allowed to dwell in the heavenly world.”

“You must not think of such a thing,” answered her old grandmother. “Why, we are much better off than men, and are far happier.”

“Then I must die, and be drifted about like foam upon the waves! I shall no longer hear the sweet murmur of the sea, nor behold the beautiful flowers, nor the red sun!—And is there nothing I can do, grandmother, to obtain an immortal soul?”

“No,” answered she. “When only a mortal loveth thee so much that thou art more to him than father and mother; when every thought and all his love is concentrated in thee, and he gives his hand to the priest to be laid in thine with the promise of everlasting constancy,—then only canst thou become immortal; for then would his soul dissolve in

thine, and thou wouldst be made a partaker of human happiness. But that can never happen! What in our eyes is the handsomest part of our bodies, the fish's tail is considered frightful by the inhabitants of earth, because, forsooth, they know no better. According to their notions, one must have two awkward props to one's body, 'legs,' as they call them, in order to look well!"

Then the little Mermaid sighed, and look sorrowfully at the scaly part of her otherwise beautiful body.

"Let us be happy!" continued the old lady. "We have three hundred years to skip and leap about, and that is, after all, a pretty good time for enjoyment; when it is over, I do not doubt but that our sleep will be a quiet one. To-night there is a ball at court."

And a splendour was there, such as one never sees on earth. The walls of the spacious ball-room were of the thickest, yet clearest crystal; many hundred colossal grass-green and rose-coloured shells stood in rows at the sides; and in these blue flames were burning, that not only illumined the whole hall, but, shining through the crystal walls, lighted

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up the sea far around. From the hall, therefore, could be seen the innumerable large and small fishes of the ocean, some with scales of gold and silver, and some quite red and purple. Through the middle of the large ball-room flowed a clear broad stream, and on it danced the Mermen and the Mermaids to the sound of their own sweet voices. The little Princess sang most beautifully of all; and the others applauded and clapped their hands. This pleased her very much, although she well knew that neither in the sea nor on the land was to be found a more charming voice than hers. But soon all her thoughts were occupied with the world above her: she could not forget the handsome Prince, and her grief at not possessing an immortal soul was very great. She therefore stole away from her father's house; and while all within was merriment and joy, she sat absorbed in thought in her little neglected garden. On a sudden she heard the sound of horns echoing from above through the water; and she thought, "He is about to depart for the chase,—he whom I love more than my father and mother, who occupies my thoughts incessantly, and in whose hand I would so gladly lay the hap-

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piness of my life! All, all, will I hazard to win him and an immortal soul! While my sisters are dancing in the palace, I will go to the Witch of the Sea, whom it is true I always dreaded, but who, after all, is perhaps the only one who can counsel and assist me."

The little Mermaid now left the garden, and went to the roaring Maelstrom, beyond which the sorceress dwelt. She had never been that way before: no flower grew here, no sea-weed, and nothing but the bare, grey, sandy ground extended itself to the Maelstrom, in which the water whirled like rushing mill-wheels, and hurled all that it seized on down into the abyss. She would have to pass through the middle of this crushing whirlpool, to arrive at the territory of the Ocean-Witch; and here, again, a long way led through boiling ooze, called by the sorceress her moor-ground. Behind this waste lay her house, in a wood of a peculiar sort. All the trees and bushes consisted of polypi, hundred-headed, and looking like serpents shooting up out of the earth. The branches were long shiny arms, with fingers of supple worms, that, from the roots to the very highest top, unceasingly stretched

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out in every direction. What they caught in this manner they held so tight that it could never get loose again. The little Mermaid stood quite horrified before this frightful wood; her heart palpitated with fear, and she had nearly turned back, her mission unaccomplished, when her thoughts fell on the Prince and the immortal soul, and inspired her with new strength. She therefore bound up her long flying hair, that the polypi might not seize it and drag her towards them, folded her arms crosswise over her bosom, and then, more swiftly than a fish darts through the water, she flew by the hideous polypi, who now in vain stretched out their greedy arms towards her. But she saw how each tree had seized a something, and a thousand little arms held it as fast as though it were enlocked by hands of iron. Mortals who had been lost at sea, and had sunk in the abyss, grinned as white skeletons from out the arms of these polypi; rudders, chests, skeletons of land-animals, were held fast in their embraces, and even a little Mermaid was there that they had dragged into their clutches and strangled, which, for the poor Princess, must have been a dreadful sight.

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After she had passed safely through the fearful wood, she reached a slimy place where large fat sea-snails were wallowing; and in the middle of this place stood a house built of the bones of human beings who had been lost at sea. Here sat the Witch, letting a toad suck at her mouth as one often sees persons feeding a canary with sugar. The disgusting fat snails she called her chickens, and allowed them to sit upon her spongy shoulders.

“I know well what you want,” said she to the little Princess; “your intention is foolish enough, but, nevertheless, your wish shall be fulfilled, my pretty maiden, though it will lead to misfortune. You would like to get rid of your tail, and to have in its place two stilts such as men use, that the young Prince may fall in love with you, and so you may get an immortal soul.” While the Witch of the Sea said this she laughed with all her might, and so frightfully, that the pet toad and the snails tumbled down and rolled about upon the ground. “You come just at the right time,” continued she. “If you had come to-morrow after the sun had risen, I should have been unable to help you until a year’s end. I will prepare you a potion, with



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which you must swim to the land; then seat yourself on the shore, and drink it. Your fish's tail will immediately fall off, and shrivel up into the things which men call 'legs;' but this transformation is very painful, and you will feel the while as if a sharp instrument were thrust through your whole body. All who then behold you will say you are the most beautiful mortal they have ever seen; you will retain your gliding gait, and no dancer, be she ever so light, will move with so elastic a step; but at every motion you will suffer intolerable pain; you will feel as though you were treading on pointed blades and your blood flowing from the wounds. If you will subject yourself to all these torments, I will grant your request."

"Yes, I will!" answered the little Princess, with trembling voice; for she thought of her beloved Prince, and of the acquirement of an immortal soul.

"But remember," said the Witch, "that you can never be a Mermaid again, when you have once taken upon yourself the human form; you will never be able to descend to your sisters and to your paternal dwelling; and should you not gain the

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Prince's love in such degree that, for your sake, he forgetteth father and mother, that all his thoughts and all his joy be centered in you, and a priest join your hands together that you become man and wife,—without this you will obtain no immortal soul. The morning after he is united to another will be the day of your death; your heart will then break for grief, and you will be like the foam on the wave."

"I still will venture!" continued the little Mermaid, pale and trembling like one on the point of death.

"But I must be paid too, and it is no trifle that I require of you for my trouble. You have the most charming voice of all the Mermaids, and on it you reckon to captivate the Prince; but this voice I must have as payment for my cure. The best of your possessions I demand for my miraculous potion; for I must give of my own blood to impart to the mixture the sharpness of a two-edged sword."

"But if you take my voice," said the Princess, "what have I left to captivate the Prince?"

"Your lovely form," answered the Witch; "your

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light aërial step, and your expressive eyes. These are surely enough to befool a poor human heart! Well, what do you say? Have you lost courage? Come, out with your tongue, that I may cut it off and take it in exchange for my spell.”

“Be it so!” answered the Princess; and now the Witch set her caldron on the fire, to seethe the charmed potion. “Cleanliness is a principal thing,” said she, taking a handful of toads and snails to scour her kettle with. She then scratched her bosom, and let the black blood drop into the vessel. The vapour that rose from the mixture took such horrid forms as to terrify the beholder. Every moment the Witch threw in new ingredients; and when the caldron boiled, sighs and lamentations rose from it resembling the wail of the crocodile. At last the mixture was ready, and was now become as clear and transparent as pure water.

“There it is,” said the hag to the Princess; and at the same moment she cut off her tongue. The little Mermaid was now dumb; she could neither speak nor sing.

“Should the polypi try to catch hold of you when you pass through my bower,” observed the

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Witch, “you need only sprinkle a drop of this potion upon them, and their arms will break in a thousand pieces.” But the Princess found this unnecessary; for the polypi drew back affrighted when they perceived the shining phial in her hand, that gleamed before her like a beaming star. In this way she soon passed the dreadful wood, crossed the heath of the sorceress, and the roaring Maelstrom.

She now perceived her father’s palace; the lamps in the ball-room were extinguished, and all her family were doubtless gone to rest. She would not enter, as she was unable to speak, and was, besides, on the point of leaving her home for ever. At the thought her heart was well-nigh broken; she glided into the garden, picked a flower from the bed of each sister as a remembrance, waved with her hand many a farewell towards the palace, and then rose through the dark blue waters to the upper world.

The sun had not yet risen when she reached the Prince’s dwelling, and ascended the well-known marble steps—the moon was in the sky. And now the little Mermaid emptied the phial with the subtly-piercing draught, which convulsed her whole

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frame like the thrust of a cutting sword, and affected her so violently that she sank lifeless on the ground. When the sun rose she awoke, and felt a burning pain in every limb; but before her stood the object of her fervent love, the handsome young Prince, who fixed his dark eyes upon her. She looked down ashamed when she saw that, in place of the fish's tail which she had had hitherto, the finest legs were grown which it was possible to have. But she was naked, and she covered herself therefore with her long hair. The Prince asked who she was, and whence she came; and, smiling sweetly, she looked at him with her bright blue eyes, for unfortunately she could speak no more. He then took her hand, and led her into his castle. At every step it was as the Witch had said,—as though she was treading on sharp-cutting blades; but she bore the pain willingly. She moved along beside the Prince like a zephyr; and all who saw her wondered at the charming grace and lightness of every movement.

In the palace, robes of muslin and of costly silks were handed to her, and she was the most lovely among the ladies of the court; but she could speak

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and sing no longer. Female slaves, prettily dressed in silk and gold brocade, now appeared, to sing before the Prince and his royal parents. One was particularly distinguished from the others by her beautiful clear voice; and the Prince testified his approbation by clapping his hands. This made the little Mermaid quite melancholy, for she could have sung much better than these slaves. "Oh," thought she in silence, "did he but know that for his sake I have sacrificed my voice for ever!"

The slaves now began to dance. Then the dainty little Mermaid stretched out her delicate white arms, and danced with such a step and air as none had ever done before. With every movement the lovely grace of her body seemed more apparent, and her looks appealed to the heart far more movingly than the songs of the female slaves.

All present were enchanted with her, but especially the young Prince, who called her his dear little foundling. And she danced again, and more beautifully still, although at every step she was obliged to bear the smart of cutting knives; and the Prince said she should always remain in his

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palace ; and an apartment was prepared for her, and a bed of velvet cushions.

And the Prince had a riding-dress made for her, that she might accompany him on horseback ; and they rode together through the fragrant woods, where the green boughs touched their shoulders, and the little birds rejoiced from behind the fresh leaves. With the Prince, too, she climbed the highest mountains ; and although her delicate feet bled as she went, so that the attendants remarked it, she only laughed, and still followed her dear Prince up on high, where she saw the clouds drifting below her like a flock of birds passing to other lands.

At night, when all in the palace were asleep, she descended the marble steps to cool her feet in the refreshing sea ; and she thought then of her own dear ones in the deep.

Once, while standing there in the night, her sisters came swimming by, arm-in-arm, and their singing was most melancholy. She beckoned to them, and her sisters recognised her, and told her how great had been the mourning for her in their father's house. Henceforward they visited their

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sister every night; and once brought with them their old grandmother, who for many years had not been in the upper world, and their father too, the Ocean-King, with the crown upon his head. But the two old persons did not venture so near the land as to be able to speak to her.

Each day the little Mermaid grew dearer to the Prince; he loved her like a good dear child; but to make her his wife never even entered his thoughts; and yet she must become his wife, before she could obtain an immortal soul, and not be driven like foam over the sea.

“But do you not care most for me?” her eyes seemed to say, when he pressed her in his arms and kissed her beautiful forehead.

“Yes,” then said the Prince, “you are dearer to me than all beside; for in goodness there is none like you. You are devoted to me; and, moreover, you resemble a maid that I once saw standing before me, but shall probably never behold again. I was on board a ship that was wrecked in a sudden storm; the waves threw me on the shore near a sacred temple, in which many virgins were performing the offices of their religion. The youngest

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found me on the shore, and saved my life. I saw her but once; yet her image is vivid before my eyes,—she is the only one I can ever love. But you are so like her!—yes, you almost drive her remembrance from my soul! She belongs to the holy temple, and my good fortune has therefore given me you as a consolation. Never, never will we part!”

“Oh, he does not know that it was I who saved his life!” thought the little Mermaid, with a sigh. “I bore him over the wild flood to the grove where the temple stands; I sat behind the rocks, and listened if mortals came; it was I who saw the beauteous maiden come whom he loves more than me.” And she sighed deeply at these words; for she could not weep.—“She belongs to the holy temple, he says; she never goes into the world; she will therefore never meet him again. But I am near him; I see him daily; I will tend him, and love him, and to him will I devote my whole life.”

“The Prince will soon wed the daughter of the King our neighbour,” said the people; “and that’s the reason why the stately ship is being got

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ready. 'Tis true, they say he is only going to travel through the country; but the real reason is to see the Princess. That is the cause of his taking such a large retinue with him." But the little Mermaid laughed at such reports; for she knew the Prince better than all the rest.

"I must make a journey," said he to her; "I must go and see the beautiful Princess. My parents require me to do so; but force me to marry her—to bring her back as my betrothed—that they will never do. Besides, it is impossible for me to love the Princess; for she cannot be as like the lovely maiden of the temple as you are; and if I am to choose, I would rather take thee, my dearest foundling, with expressive eyes!" And he kissed her, and hid her head on his heart; and then she dreamed of mortal happiness and of an immortal soul.

"You do not fear the water, my dumb child?" asked he tenderly, as she stood on the splendid ship that was to convey him to the territories of the neighbouring monarch. And then he told her of storms at sea, and of calms, of rare fish that inhabited the deep, and what divers had seen be-

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low. But she smiled at his words : she knew better than any mortal creature how it looked in the depths of the ocean.

In the moonlight night, when all on board slept except the man at the helm, she sat at the bow and looked over the ship's side into the sea. It seemed to her as though she could see her father's palace, and her old grandmother with her silver crown, as she gazed down into the parted waters. And then her sisters appeared upon the waves, looked at her fixedly and with sorrowful expression, and stretched out their arms towards her. She beckoned to them, smiled, and would have told them by signs that she was happy ; but just at that moment the cabin-boy approached, and the sisters dived down so suddenly that the boy thought the white appearance he saw upon the waters was only the foam of the sea.

The next morning the ship entered the harbour of the splendid capital of the neighbouring king. The bells rang a merry peal, and the clarions sounded from the high towers, while the soldiers in the streets paraded with waving colours and glittering arms. Each day brought with it

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some new festival. But the Princess had not yet arrived in the town: she had been educated in a convent far off, where she learned the exercise of all royal virtues. At last she came.

The little Mermaid was curious to see her beauty; and she was forced to acknowledge that she had never on earth beheld more noble features. The skin of the Princess was so fair and delicate that her veins were seen through it; and from behind her dark lashes smiled a pair of deep-brown eyes.

“Thou art she,” cried the Prince, on beholding her, “who saved my life when I lay senseless on the shore!” and he pressed his blushing affianced bride to his beating heart. “Oh, now I am more than happy!” said he to his little dumb foundling. “That which I never hoped to see fulfilled has happened. Thou wilt rejoice at my happiness; for thou lovest me more than all who surround me.”

Then the little Mermaid kissed his hand in her dumb sorrow, and she thought her heart would break; for his marriage-day was to bring her unavoidable death.

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And again the church-bells rang, and heralds rode through the streets of the capital and announced the approaching wedding of the Princess. Odorous flames burnt out of silver vases on every altar; the priests swung the censers, and bride and bridegroom gave each other the hand while the clergyman blessed the holy union. The little Mermaid, clad in silk and gold, stood behind the Princess and held the train of her bridal dress; but her ear heard not the solemn music, her eye saw nothing of the holy ceremony; she thought of her own death which that night was to bring, and of her irrevocable loss of this world. On the same evening the bride and bridegroom went on board the ship; the cannons thundered, flags waved, and in the middle of the deck stood a magnificent tent of gold cloth and purple, furnished with the most costly cushions for the princely pair. The sails swelled with a favourable wind, and the vessel glided lightly over the surface of the blue sea.

When it grew dusk, coloured lamps were hung up, and the ship's crew began dancing on deck. The little Mermaid was unconsciously reminded of the sight the ship presented at her first appear-

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ance in the upper world, before the wreck took place. A like magnificence was then displayed; and now she must skim along in the dance like a swallow that is pursued. All shouted applause; for never had she been seen to dance so enchantingly. It is true, her delicate feet suffered indescribably all the while; but she was now insensible to the pain, and her heart only had to endure its suffering. It was the last evening that she was to see him for whom she had left her home and all who were dear to her; for whom she had given up her charming voice, and daily endured the most violent pains, without his having even the slightest suspicion of the matter. It was the last night that she would breathe the same air in which he, the dearly loved one, lived; the last night in which she would enjoy the sight of the deep sea and of the starry sky; for an eternal night, without sense or dreaming, awaited her. And all was joy on board till long past midnight; and even she laughed like the rest, with the thoughts of death and everlasting annihilation in her bleeding heart. The Prince kissed his lovely bride, and arm-in-arm they went to rest in the beautiful tent.

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Now all was still and quiet on the ship; the helmsman only continued standing at the rudder. The little Mermaid laid her white arms upon the gallery, and looked towards the east for the coming dawn: the first sunbeam would be her death—that she knew. Then she saw her sisters rise from out the sea; their faces were deadly pale, and their long hair was no longer fluttering on their necks, for it had been cut off.

“We have given it to the Witch,” said they, “that she might lend her aid, and that thou mightest not perish this night. She has given us a knife; here it is; feel how sharp it is! Before the sunrise thou must plunge it in the heart of the Prince; and when his warm blood drops upon thy feet, they will again grow together and become the tail of a fish; thou wilt be again a Mermaid, and wilt live full three hundred years before thou art as the froth of the sea. Quick, then! for he must die, or thou, before the sun appear! Our old grandmother mourns so sadly for thee, that her silver hair has fallen off, as ours under the scissors of the Witch. Kill the Prince, and come to us! Haste—haste! dost thou not see a red streak in

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joy to all. When in this manner we have for three hundred years done all the good that lay in our power, we obtain eternal life, and share the immortal bliss of man. Poor little Mermaid! Thou, by the impulse of thy own heart, hast done the like; thou hast borne and suffered; and now, raised to the world of aërial spirits, thou mayest by good deeds earn for thyself an immortal soul at the end of three hundred years."

And the little Mermaid stretched her transparent arms upwards to the sun, and, for the first time, tears wetted her eyes.

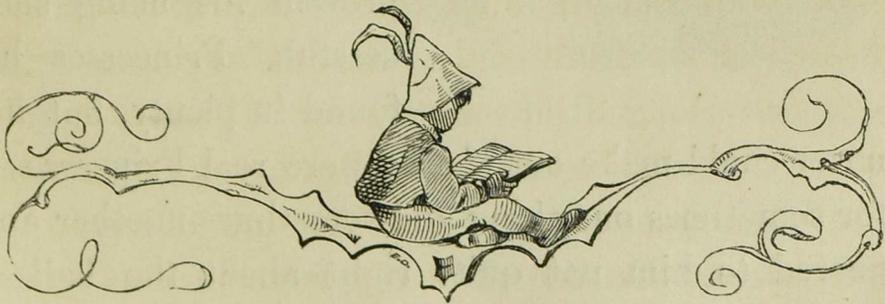
On the ship was now noise and rejoicing; she saw the Prince and his lovely bride, and watched how both sought after her. Sorrowfully they looked at the froth of the sea, as if they knew that she had plunged into the waves. Unobserved she kissed the bridegroom's forehead, smiled at him, and then rose with the other children of air on the rosy clouds that floated gently over the ship.

"So, after three hundred years, shall we be soaring in the kingdom of God!"

"But we may get there sooner!" whispered one of the sisters in her ear. "Unseen, we fly into

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the abodes of men where children are, and for each day in which we find a good child that is a joy to its parents and deserves their love, does God in his great mercy shorten the time of our probation: no child knoweth when we pass through his chamber; but our joy at the sight calls forth a smile, and one year is taken from the three hundred that we have to wait. But if we see a naughty or wicked child, we shed tears of sorrow, and every tear prolongs the time of our probation by a day.”



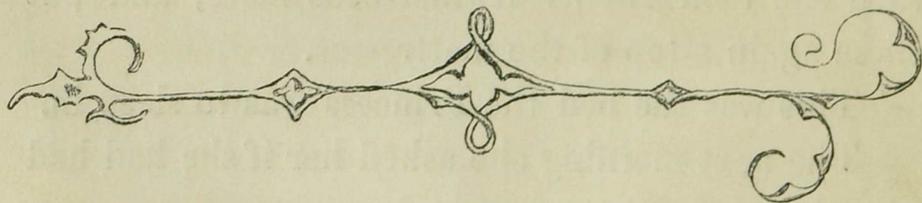
THE PRINCESS AND THE PEAS.

there was a something hard under me, and my whole body is black and blue with bruises ! I can't tell you what I've suffered !”

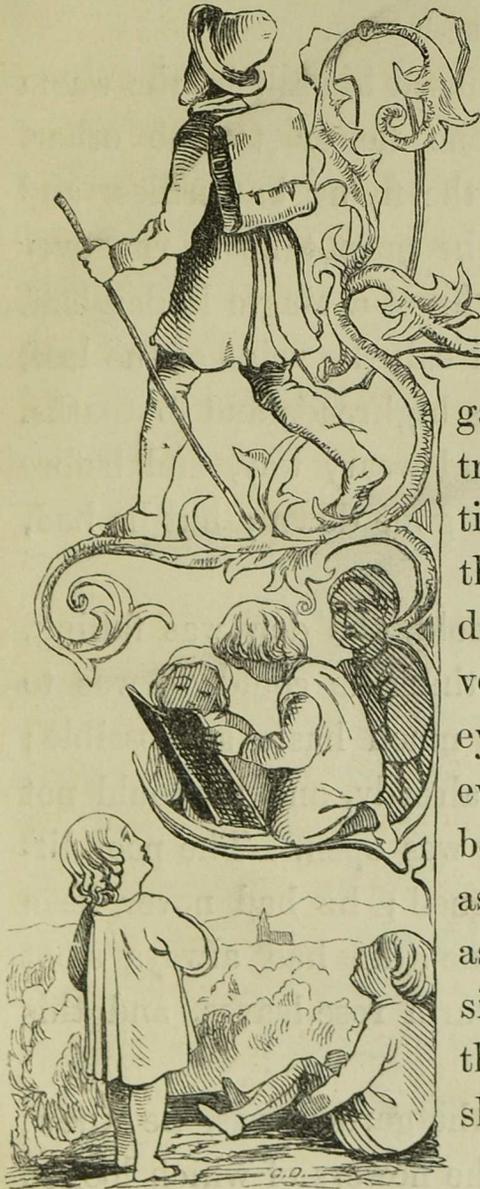
Then they knew that the lady they had lodged was a real Princess, since she had felt the three small peas through twenty mattresses and twenty feather-beds ; for it was quite impossible for any one but a true Princess to be so tender.

So the Prince married her ; for he was now convinced that he had a real Princess for his wife. The three peas were deposited in the Museum, where they are still to be seen ; that is to say, if they have not been lost.

Now was not that a lady of exquisite feeling ?



THE ELF OF THE ROSE.



LONG ago, in the middle of a garden, there stood a rose-tree, full of the most beautiful roses ; and in one of these, the loveliest of all, dwelt an Elf, who was so very tiny, that no human eye could see him. Behind every rose-leaf he had a bed-chamber ; and he was as slender and handsome as only a child can be ; besides which he had wings that reached from his shoulders to his feet.

Oh, how sweetly odo-

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rous were his chambers, and how beautiful and transparent were the walls! Those, you know, were the delicate pink rose-leaves.

The whole day he amused himself in the warm sunshine;—flew from one flower to the other, danced on the wings of the flying butterflies, and counted how many steps he must take to run over all the highways and paths of a single linden-leaf. That was what we should call the veins of the leaf, but he looked on them as highroads and footpaths. For him it was a long and weary way, and before he was ready the sun had gone down; but he had, it is true, begun too late.

It was growing very cold, the dew was falling, the wind blew; the best thing he could do was to go home, so he made as much haste as possible; but the rose was closed already, and he could not get it; not a single rose was open. The poor little Elf was sadly frightened; he had never been a single night from home; he had always slept so sweetly behind the warm rose-leaves, and this night would kill him.

At the other end of the garden was, he knew, a bower of honeysuckle, the flowers of which looked

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like large painted horns. In one of these would he creep, and sleep there till the next morning. He flew to the spot. Hush! There were two persons in the bower; a young and handsome man, and a most lovely maiden. They sat near each other, and wished never to be separated: they were more to each other than father or mother can ever be to the best of children.

“And yet we must part,” said the young man. “Thy brother looketh on us with an evil eye, and, therefore, sends me on a mission far hence, beyond the mountains, and across the sea! Farewell, my sweet one, my betrothed! for such thou art.”

And they kissed each other, and the young maiden wept, and gave him a rose; but before she did so, she pressed a kiss upon it, so fervent and burning that the rose opened. Instantly the little Elf flew in, and leant his head on the sweetly odorous walls; and he could hear quite well the words “Farewell! farewell!” and he felt that the rose was placed in the bosom of the young man; and oh, how the heart beat! the little Elf could not go to sleep, so violent was the knocking!

But the rose did not remain long in his bosom.

THE ELF OF THE ROSE.

The young man took it in his hand, and as he went alone through the dark wood, he kissed the flower so often, and pressed it so to his lips, that the poor Elf was almost crushed to death. He could feel through the leaves how the man's lips burned, and even the rose had opened as in the warmest noon-tide sun.

Then came another man, black-looking and angry. It was the wicked brother of the lovely maiden. He drew a long sharp knife, and while the other kissed the rose, the wicked man stabbed him, cut off his head, and buried it with the body in the soft earth beneath a linden.

“Now he is dead and forgotten!” thought the brother; “he will never return. On a distant journey beyond sea one may easily lose one's life; and so he has. He will not come back, and my sister dare not inquire about him of me!”

So with his feet he scraped the dead leaves over the heaped-up earth, and went home in the dark night: but he went not alone, as he thought he did. The little Elf went with him; he sat in a linden-leaf that was rolled together, which had fallen among the hair of the wicked man while digging

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the grave. His hat was on, and it was dark ; and the little Elf trembled with fright and rage at the horrid deed.

It was morning when the man came home. He took off his hat and went into his sister's sleeping-room. There lay the lovely blooming maiden, and dreamed of him she so dearly loved, and who she thought was crossing mountains, and passing through forests ; and the cruel brother bent over her, and laughed as none but a demon can do. Then the withered leaf fell from his hair on the bed-covering ; but he did not remark it, and went away to get a little sleep himself. And the Elf crept out of the withered leaf, went to the ear of the sleeping maiden, and related to her, as in a dream, the dreadful murder ; described the spot where her brother had killed her lover, and where the body lay ; told her of the blooming linden close by, and said, " Lest you should think what I tell you is a dream, you will find, on awaking, a withered leaf upon your bed." And she awoke and found the leaf. Oh, what bitter tears she wept ! But she dared tell no one of her grief. The window remained open the whole day, so that the little Elf could

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easily fly into the garden to the roses and the other flowers; but he had not the heart to leave the mourner. There was a monthly rose in the window, and in one of its flowers he seated himself, and observed the poor girl. Her brother came often into the room, and was so merry and spiteful; but she dared not say a word of her great affliction.

As soon as it was night she stole out of the house, went in the wood to the place where the linden stood, dashed away the leaves from the earth, dug into it, and found the murdered man immediately. Oh, how she wept, and implored God mercifully to let her soon die!

Gladly would she have taken the body home with her, but that she could not do; so she took the pallid head with its closed eyes, kissed the cold lips, and shook the earth from the long silky hair. "This will I keep!" said she; and, after she had covered the dead body with earth and leaves, she took the head home with her, as well as a small branch of jasmine, that blossomed in the wood where the grave was.

As soon as she was in her room, she fetched the largest flower-pot she could find, laid the head

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of the murdered man in it, covered it with earth, and planted the sprig of jasmine in the flower-pot.

“Farewell! farewell!” whispered the little Elf; for he could no longer endure to witness so much grief, and flew off to his rose in the garden. But its flowers were gone; a few faded leaves only hung still on the green bush.

“Alas, how soon is there an end of all that is beautiful and good!” sighed the Elf. At last, however, he found a rose; he alighted among its flagrant leaves, and made it his home. Every morning he flew to the window of the poor sorrowing maiden: there she always stood beside her flower-pot, and wept. The bitter tears fell upon the jasmine; and while she grew paler and paler from day to day, the little slip grew fresher and greener; one shoot put forth after the other, and the delicate buds unfolded themselves in flowers; and she kissed them. But the cruel brother scolded, and asked if she were gone mad? He said he could not comprehend why she always wept over the flower-pot, and would not have her do so.

He little knew what eyes were closed there, and what red lips were therein turned to dust! And

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she leaned her head against the flower-pot ; and while thus sleeping the little Elf discovered her. He mounted to her ear, told her of the evening passed in the bower, of the fragrance of the rose, and of the loves of the Elves ; and so she dreamed sweetly, and while she dreamed her life departed : she died a gentle death, and was in heaven with him she loved.

And the jasmīne opened its large white flowers, and shed around an odour of wondrous sweetness ; it was the only way in which it could deplore the departed !

But the wicked brother beheld the beautifully-blooming tree, took it for his own, and placed it in his sleeping-room beside his bed. The tree was lovely to behold ; and its fragrance sweet and grateful. The little Elf went with it, flew from one flower to the other, in each of which dwelt a little spirit ; and to these he told how the young man had been murdered, whose head was now mouldering beneath the earth ; and he told them of the cruel brother, and of his poor sister.

“ We know it ! ” said each spirit in the flower.
“ We know it ! Have we not grown up from out

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the eyes and the lips of the dead? We know it!" And then they nodded their heads in a strange manner.

The Elf of the Rose could not comprehend how they could be so calm; and he flew to the bees that gather honey, and told them the history of the wicked brother; and the bees told it to their queen, who ordered that on the following morning they should kill the murderer.

But the night before,—it was the first night after the sister's death, when the brother was sleeping close beside the jasmine,—the chalice of every flower opened, and unseen, but armed with a poisonous sting, every spirit of the flower came forth, and sat first at his ear, and told him shocking dreams, and then flew to his lips, and stung him in the tongue with their poisonous darts.

“Now we have revenged the dead!” said they; and flew back again into the bells of the white jasmine.

At daybreak, when the window of the sleeping-room was thrown open, in rushed the Elf of the Rose, with the queen, and the whole swarm of bees, to kill the murderer.

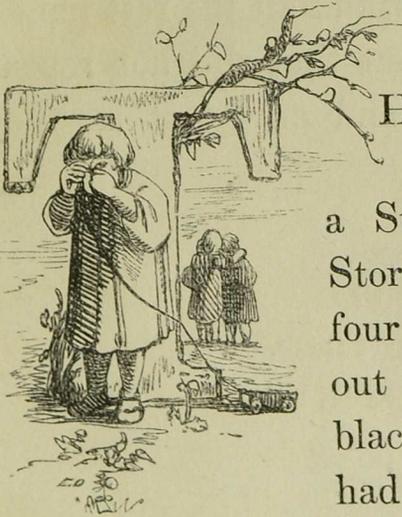
THE ELF OF THE ROSE.

But he was dead already! Around the bed people were standing, who said, "The odour of the jasmine has killed him!"

Then the Elf understood the vengeance of the flowers, and told it to the queen-bee; and she buzzed with her whole swarm around the flower-pot. It was impossible to drive the bees away. Then a man took the flower-pot; but one of the bees stung him in the hand, so that he let it fall, and it was broken in pieces.

Then they all saw the white skull, and knew that the dead man in the bed was a murderer. And the queen of the bees hummed about in the air, and sang of the vengeance of the flowers, of the Elf of the Rose; and that behind the very smallest leaf there dwelleth one who makes known every act of wickedness, and can avenge it.

THE STORKS.



HERE was on the top of the last house in a little town a Stork's nest. The Mamma Stork sat in the nest with her four little ones, who stretched out their heads with their little black beaks; for as yet they had not grown red. Not far off,

on the ridge of the roof, stood stiff and proud, the Papa Stork; one leg he had drawn up under his body, that he might really be a little tired with standing sentry. You would have thought he was carved out of wood, so still did he stand.

“It looks very consequential for my wife to have a sentry before the nest,” thought he to himself; “for the people, of course, don't know that I am her husband,—they think, no doubt, that I have

THE STORKS.

been ordered here. And it looks so very grand!" And so he continued standing on one leg.

In the street below a whole troop of children were playing; and when they observed the Storks, one of the wildest of the boys began to sing the old song about young Storks, and all the rest immediately joined in chorus; but they did not repeat the words very correctly, and only just as they could remember them:

“ Stork, Stork, long-legs,
What are you about?
Your wife is in her nest there,
Your young are peeping out.
One we'll hang,
Then burn his brother;
We'll stick the third upon a spear,
And then we'll shoot the other!”

“ Only hear what the boys are singing!” said the little Storks; “ they say we are to be burned and hanged!”

“ Don't care about what they say,” said the Mamma Stork. “ You need not to listen to them, and then they will do you no harm.”

But the boys kept on singing, and pointing at



THE STORKS.

the Storks ; one boy only, whose name was Peter, said it was wicked to make fun of animals, and would have nothing to do with the matter.

The mamma consoled her little ones, and said, "Don't care about it ; only look how quietly your father stands ; and that, too, upon one leg !"

"But we are so frightened !" said the young Storks ; and they drew their heads as far into the nest as they could.

The next day, when the children met again at play, they began the old song, as soon as they saw the Storks :

" One we'll hang,
And we'll burn his brother !"

" Shall we really be burned and hanged ?" asked the little ones.

" What nonsense !" said the mother. " You shall learn to fly, and I will drill you. Then we'll go into the meadows, and pay the frogs a visit. They bow to us in the water, and sing 'croak, croak ;' and then we eat them. Oh, it will be so amusing !"

" And what then ?" asked the little ones.

" Why, then all the Storks of the whole neigh-

THE STORKS.

bourhood assemble, and the autumn manœuvre begins. One must be able to fly well then ; for if one cannot, then comes the General and strikes it dead with his beak. So pay attention when the drill begins, in order that you may learn something.”

“ Oh, then, we shall really be stabbed, as the boys said ! Oh, do hear !—now they are singing it again !”

“ Listen to me, and not to them,” said the Mamma Stork. “ After the great manœuvre, we fly away to the warmer lands ; far, far from here, over the woods and the hills. We shall fly to Egypt, where the three-cornered stone houses are, whose tops reach the clouds. They are called Pyramids, and are older than any Stork can think. A river is there that overflows its banks, so that the whole country is like a morass. Then one goes into the morass and eats frogs.”

“ Oh !” said all the little ones.

“ Yes, then it is delightful ! The whole day one does nothing but eat ; and while we lead such a nice life, here in this country there is not a single green leaf on the trees. It is so cold here, that the

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clouds freeze, and crack, and fall down in little white rags." It was the snow she meant ; but she could not express herself more plainly.

" Do the little naughty boys freeze and crack too ?" asked the young Storks.

" No, they do not crack quite, but very nearly ; and they are obliged to stay in the dark room, and sit in the chimney-corner. You, on the other hand, can fly about in a foreign land, where there is warm sunshine, and where there are flowers."

Some time had now passed, and the young ones were so large that they could stand up in the nest and look around. And Papa Stork came every day with the very nicest little frogs, with snails, and all the titbits that Storks like, which he could find. Oh, it was so droll to see him shewing-off his tricks. He put his head back quite on his tail, and made a noise with his bill like a rattle ; and then he told some pretty stories ; all stories about the morass.

" Hark ye ! you must now learn to fly !" said the Mamma Stork one day. On which all four little ones were obliged to get out on the ridge of the roof. How they tottered ! how they balanced

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themselves with their wings! and yet they very nearly tumbled down.

“ Only look at me !” said their mother. “ You must hold your head so ! And put out your leg so ! Now, then ! One, two ! One, two ! That is what will help you on in the world !” And then off she flew a little way ; and the young Storks made a little awkward jump, when—plump!—there they lay ; for their bodies were so heavy.

“ I don’t want to fly,” said one, and crept back again into the nest. “ I do not care about seeing the warm countries.”

“ Will you, then, stay here and freeze to death when winter comes ? Shall the boys come and hang, and burn, and shoot you : just wait a minute till I go and call them !”

“ Oh, don’t !” said the little Stork, and began again to hop about the roof like the others. On the third day they really were able to fly a little ; and then they thought they could sit and rest in the air ; but—plump!—down they went, and were obliged to make use of their wings. Just then the boys went down the street, and sang the old song :

“ Stork, Stork, long-legs !”

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“ Shall we fly down and pick out their eyes?” said the young ones.

“ No, leave them alone,” said their mother. “ Listen to me, that is much more important! One, two, three! To the right about, face! One, two, three! To the left about, face! Round the chimney-pot! You see, that was very well! The last flap of your wings was so exact, and so nicely done, that I will allow you to go with me to-morrow to the marsh. Many highly-respectable Stork-families come there with their children; now let me have the satisfaction of hearing that mine are the nicest; and stand upright, your chest forwards! So!—that looks well, and gives a sort of dignity!”

“ But are we to have no revenge at all on the wicked boys?” asked the young Storks.

“ Let them bawl as much as they like! Why, you fly up to the clouds, don't you? you go to the land of the Pyramids; while they must freeze, and have neither a sweet apple nor a green leaf.”

“ But we will be revenged, though!” whispered they to each other; and then the drilling began again.

Of all the boys in the street, there was not one

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more naughty in singing jeering songs than he who was the beginner of it all; and that was a little shrimp of a fellow not more than six years old. The young Storks thought of course that he was a hundred years old, for he was much bigger than their father or mother; and what did they know how old a child might be, or grown-up people either? All their rage was to fall on this boy, who had begun and always kept on singing his old song. The young Storks were much excited; and the bigger they grew, the less could they put up with it; so that at last their mother was obliged to promise that they should have their revenge, but not before the last day of their stay in the land.

“We must first see, you know, how you go through the grand review. If you behave ill, so that the General sends his beak through your body, then the boys will be right in one sense, after all. Now let us see!”

“You shall see,” said the young Storks: and now, for the first time, they really took pains; they practised every day, and flew so lightly and prettily that it was quite a pleasure to see them.

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Autumn came at last, and all the Storks assembled to fly away to warmer lands while it is winter with us. That was a manœuvre! They stretched away over the fields and the woods, over towns and villages, only to see how well they could fly; for they had a long journey before them. The young Storks got on so capitally, that on their testimonials was put, not only "praiseworthy," but "snake-and-frogworthy" also. This was the best character they could have; and now they might eat snakes and frogs, and they did so too.

"Now we'll be revenged," said they.

"Yes," said their mother. "What I have fixed on is best. I know which is the pond where all the little babies lie till the Storks come and carry them to their parents. The nice little children sleep, and have such beautiful dreams as they never have again. Now every parent wishes to have such a little child, and all children wish for a brother or sister. We will fly to the pond, and for each of the children that did not sing the song nor laugh at the Storks, we will fetch one; but the children here shall have none."

"Yes; but what shall we do with the good-for-

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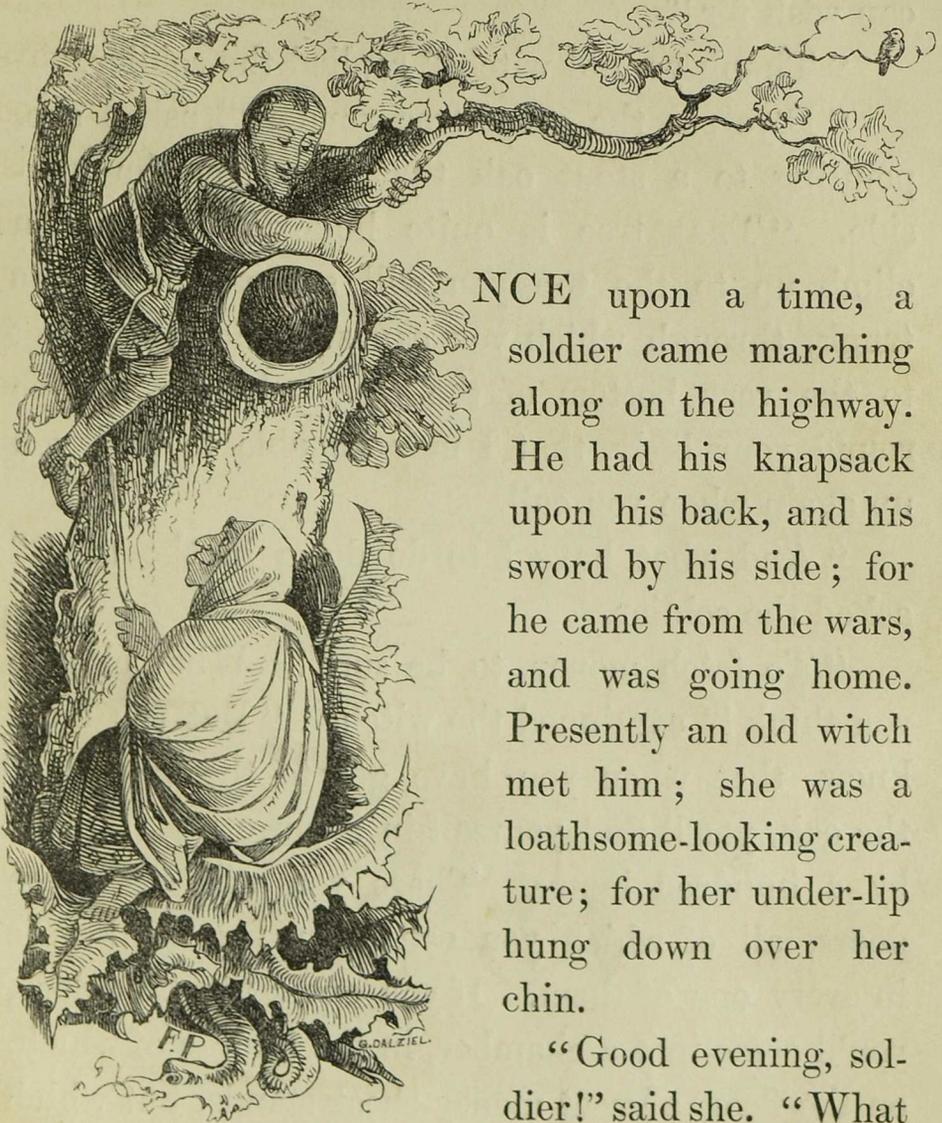
nothing boy who began to jeer at us ?” cried all the young Storks at once.

“Near the pond there lies a dead child, that dreamed itself to death. This one we will take for him ; and then he will cry because we have brought him a little dead brother ; but the good boy who said, ‘It is wicked to make fun of animals’—you have not forgotten him ?—to him we will bring a brother and sister ; and as his name is Peter, you shall all be called Peter too.”

And what she said happened ; and all the Storks were named Peter, and they are called so to this very day.



THE TINDER-BOX.



ONCE upon a time, a soldier came marching along on the highway. He had his knapsack upon his back, and his sword by his side; for he came from the wars, and was going home. Presently an old witch met him; she was a loathsome-looking creature; for her under-lip hung down over her chin.

“Good evening, soldier!” said she. “What

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a fine sword you've got, and what a large knapsack! You look truly like a brave soldier; and therefore you shall have as much money as you can wish for!"

"Thank ye, old witch!" replied the soldier.

"D'ye see the great tree yonder?" asked she, pointing to a stout oak that stood by the way-side. "That tree is quite hollow; and if you climb up to the top, you will see a hole in the trunk, through which you can slide down and get to the very bottom of the tree. I'll tie a rope round your body, that I may be able to pull you up again when you call.

"And what have I to do down in the tree?" asked the soldier.

"To fetch money, to be sure! What else do you think!" continued the witch. "But you must know, that when you have got to the bottom of the oak, you'll find yourself in a large hall, lighted by a hundred lamps. There you will see three doors, all of which you can open, for the key is in every one of them. If you enter the first door, you'll come into a chamber, in the middle of which, on the floor, a great money-chest stands, but which

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is guarded by a dog with eyes as large as tea-cups ; but that you need not mind. I'll give you my coloured apron ; you must spread it out on the floor, and then you may boldly lay hold of the dog and put him on it ; after which you can take out of the chest as many halfpence as you please. But if you want silver, you must go into the second chamber. However, here sits a dog upon the chest, with a pair of eyes as large as mill-wheels ; but that you need not mind : put the dog on the apron, and take as much silver as you please. But if you would rather have gold, you must go into the third chamber, and you can take as much as you can carry. But the dog that guards this money-chest has eyes as large as the Round Tower¹ at Copenhagen. That's a dog for you ! But you need not mind him : put him on my apron, and take as many gold pieces out of the chest as you please ; the dog won't do you any harm."

"That wouldn't be amiss!" said the soldier. "But what am I to give you, old beldame ? For 'tis not very likely you would send me down the hollow tree for nothing !"

¹ The Observatory ; so called on account of its round form.

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“No,” said the witch, “I don’t ask a farthing! You must only bring up with you the tinder-box that my grandmother forgot the last time she was down there.”

“Well, give me the rope,” said the soldier. “I’ll try!”

“Here it is,” said the witch; “and here too is my coloured apron.”

The soldier now climbed up to the top of the oak, slipped through the hole in the trunk, and stood suddenly in the great hall, which was lighted, exactly as the old witch had told him, by a hundred lamps.

As soon as he had looked round him a little, he found also the three doors, and immediately opened the first. There really sat the dog with eyes as large as tea-cups, and stared at him.

“Ho, ho, my dog!” said the soldier. “Good fellow!” And he spread the witch’s apron on the floor, and set the dog upon it. He now opened the money-chest, filled all his pockets with copper halfpence, shut it again, put the staring dog on the cover, and went, with his apron, into the second chamber. Good heavens! There sat the dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels.

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“ You should not look at me so fixedly,” said he to the dog that was keeping watch ; “ that weakens the eyes ! ” He then set the animal on the apron ; but when he saw the quantity of silver coin, he threw away the coppers and filled all his pockets and his knapsack with the bright silver. Afterwards he went to the third chamber. Well, that was enough to disgust anybody ! The dog really had eyes as large as the Round Tower, and they rolled in his head like turning-wheels.

“ Good evening,” said the soldier, putting his hand to his cap and saluting in true military style ; for such a monster he had never met before. However, after he had looked at him for some moments, he thought it was enough ; so he spread out the apron, lifted the enormous dog off the cover, and opened the money-chest.

What heaps of gold he saw ! He could have bought all Copenhagen, all the sugar-plums, all the games of soldiers, all the whips and rocking-horses in Europe, with the money ! At the first sight of such rich treasure, the soldier threw away all the silver with which he was laden, and stuffed his pockets, knapsack, cap, and boots, so full of gold

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pieces, that he could but just move with the weight. Now he had money in abundance. The tremendous dog was put on the cover again, the door of the chamber shut, and the soldier called up the tree.

“Hallo, old hag! Now, then, pull me up again!”

“Have you got the tinder-box?” said the witch in reply.

“I’ll be hanged, if I hadn’t nearly forgotten it!” said the soldier. He then put the tinder-box in his pocket; the witch drew him up out of the tree; and he soon was standing again on the highway with all his treasure.

“What do you want with the tinder-box?” asked the soldier.

“That’s nothing to you,” answered the old hag. “You’ve got money in plenty; so give me the tinder-box.”

“No!” said the soldier. “Tell me directly what you’ll do with the tinder-box, or I’ll cut your head off with my sword!”

“No,” cried the witch, “I won’t.”

And the soldier instantly drew his sword and chopped her head from her body; so there was an

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end of her! He then tied up his money in her apron, put the bundle over his shoulder and the tinder-box in his pocket, and trudged off to the next town.

It was a large city; and he went to the first hotel, asked for the best apartments, and ordered the most delicate things for dinner; for he was now a moneyed man.

The waiters, it is true, thought his boots rather strange-looking for so grand a gentleman; but they were of another opinion next morning, after he had been out shopping; for they now had the most elegant boots to clean, and the finest clothing to brush. The soldier had become quite a dandy; he talked of the curiosities of the town, and was told about the King and the beautiful Princess.

“How can I see her?” asked the soldier.

“She is not to be seen,” was the answer; “for she lives in a large brazen palace surrounded by many towers and high walls. Only the King visits his daughter; because it has been foretold that the Princess will marry a common soldier, and the King won't hear of such a thing.”

“I'd give the world to see the Princess!”

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thought the soldier to himself ; but as to getting a permission, it was of no use thinking of such a thing.

Meanwhile he led a merry life ; went often to the play, drove about in the royal park, and gave a good deal to the poor. It was praiseworthy of him to be charitable ; but he knew well enough by experience what a poor fellow feels who has not got a penny. He was, moreover, a rich man, had handsome clothes, and many friends, who told him every day that he was an excellent creature, a perfect gentleman ; and all this the soldier liked to hear. But as he was always taking from his money and never received any, he had at last but twopence-halfpenny left. So he was obliged to leave the handsome lodgings he had lived in till now, and to take a small garret, to clean his own boots, and darn and mend his clothes himself when they wanted it. None of his old friends visited him any more ; for they could not, of course, go up so many pair of stairs for his sake.

It was quite dark in his room, and he had not even money enough to buy a candle. Suddenly he remembered that, in the tinder-box which he fetched up from the bottom of the hollow oak, there were

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a few matches. He therefore took it, and began to strike a light ; but as soon as the sparks flew about, the door of his room was thrown open, and the dog with eyes as large as tea-cups walked in, and said, " What do you please to command ? "

" Well done ! " cried the soldier, astonished ; " that's a capital tinder-box, if I can get all I want with so little trouble ! Well, then, my friend, " said he to the dog with the staring eyes, " I am in want of money ; get me some ! " Crack ! the dog had vanished, and crack ! there he was again standing before the soldier, holding a purse filled with copper coin between his teeth.

Now he perfectly understood how to employ the tinder-box : if he struck with the flint and steel once, then the dog with the copper money appeared ; if twice, the one with the silver coin ; and if three times, then came the dog that guarded the chest of gold. After this discovery, he returned immediately to his former handsome lodgings ; his numerous kind friends came to him again, and testified their sincere affection and attachment.

" Well, " thought the soldier one day to himself, " 'tis very strange that no one may see the

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beautiful Princess ! They say she is a great beauty ; but what good will that do her, if she is always to stay shut up in the brazen castle with the numerous towers ! I wonder if it really be impossible to see her ! Where's my tinder-box ? I should like to know if it's only money that he can procure." He struck the flint, and the well-known dog with saucer-eyes stood before him.

"It is midnight, it is true," said he ; "but I should like so much to see the Princess only for a moment !"

In a moment the dog was out of the room, and before the soldier thought it possible, he saw him return with the Princess, who sat asleep on the dog's back, and was so indescribably beautiful that anybody who saw her would know directly she was a Princess. The soldier could not help it ; happen what might, he must give the Princess a kiss, and so he did.

Then the dog ran back again to the palace with the lovely Princess. The next morning at breakfast she told her parents of the curious dream she had had ; that she had been riding on a dog, and that a soldier had given her a kiss.

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“A very pretty affair indeed!” said the Queen. So now it was agreed that, next night, one of the ladies of the court should watch at the bedside of the Princess, to see into the matter of the dream.

That night the soldier felt a strange longing to see the beautiful Princess in the brazen castle. The dog was therefore despatched, who took her again on his back and ran off with her. But the cunning old lady quickly put on a pair of good walking-boots, and ran after the dog so fast, that she caught sight of him just as he was going into the house where the soldier lived. “Ah, ah!” thought she; “all’s right now! I know where he is gone to;” and she made a cross on the street-door with a piece of chalk. Then she went back to the palace, and lay down to sleep. The dog, too, came back with the Princess; and when he remarked that there was a cross on the house where the soldier lived, he made crosses on all the street-doors in the town; which was very clever of the animal, for now the lady would not be able to find the right door again.

Early next morning came the King and Queen, the old lady, and all the high officers of the crown,

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to ascertain where the Princess had gone to in the night.

“Here’s the house!” exclaimed the King, when he saw the first door that had a cross on it.

“No, it must be here, my dear,” said the Queen, perceiving the next house with a white cross.

“Here, there, and every where are white crosses!” cried all; for, look where they would, the street-doors had white crosses on them; and they now perceived it would be a vain attempt to try to find the right house.

The Queen, however, was an exceedingly clever woman. She knew something more than merely how to sit in a carriage with an air; and therefore she soon found out a way how to come on the traces of the dog. She took a whole piece of silk, cut it in two with a golden pair of scissors, and with the pieces made a bag. This bag she had filled with the most finely-sifted flour, and tied it with her own hands round the Princess’s neck. When this was done, she took her golden scissors and cut a small hole in the bag, just large enough to let the flour run slowly out when the Princess moved.

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The dog came again in the night, took the Princess on his back, and ran off with her to the soldier, who wanted so much only to look at her, and who would have given any thing to be a Prince, so that he might marry the Princess.

But the dog did not observe that his track from the palace to the soldier's house was marked with the flour that had run out of the bag. On the following morning, the King and the Queen now saw where their daughter had been; and had the soldier arrested and put into prison.

There sat the poor soldier, and it was so dark too in his cell; besides, the gaoler told him that he was to be hanged on the morrow. That was indeed no very pleasant news for the soldier; and, more unfortunate than all, he had left his tinder-box at the hotel. When day broke he could see out of his little prison-windows how the people were streaming from the town to see the execution; he heard the drums beat, and saw the soldiers marching to the spot where the scaffold was erected. Among the crowd was a little apprentice, who was in such a hurry that he lost one of his shoes just as he was running by the prison.

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“Hallo, my little man!” cried the soldier to the boy; “you need not be in such a hurry; for nothing can be done till I come! If you will run to the inn, at the sign of the Golden Angel, and fetch me a tinder-box that I left behind in my room, I’ll give you a groat for your trouble;—but you must make all the haste you can!”

The boy wanted very much to get the groat; so off he ran to the Golden Angel, found the tinder-box as described in the soldier’s room, and brought it to him to his grated window. Now let us see what happened.

Outside the town a high gallows had been erected, which was surrounded by a quantity of soldiers, and thousands of people occupied the large field. The King and Queen sat on a splendid throne that had been erected for them, opposite the judges and the councillors.

The soldier was already on the highest step of the ladder, and the executioner was just about to put the rope round his neck, when he implored that they would grant him, poor sinner that he was, one last wish. He had, he said, a great longing to smoke a pipe of tobacco, and as this was

the last act of grace he should ask for in this world, he hoped they would not refuse him.

But the King would not accede to it : so the soldier took out his flint and steel, and struck one, two, three times ; when presently all three enchanted dogs stood before him ; the one with the saucer-eyes, as well as the other two with eyes like a mill-wheel, or the Round Tower at Copenhagen.

“ Help me out of my difficulty ! ” called the soldier to the dogs. “ Don’t let them hang me ! ” Immediately the three frightful dogs fell on the judge and the councillors, seized one by the leg, another by the nose, and tossed them up in the air, so that in tumbling down they were dashed to pieces.

“ We are not graciously pleased —— ” cried the King ; but the dogs cared little for that, and took King and Queen, one after the other, and tossed them like the rest in the air. Then the soldiers grew frightened ; and the people called out, “ Good soldier, you shall be our King, and you shall have the beautiful Princess for a wife ! ”

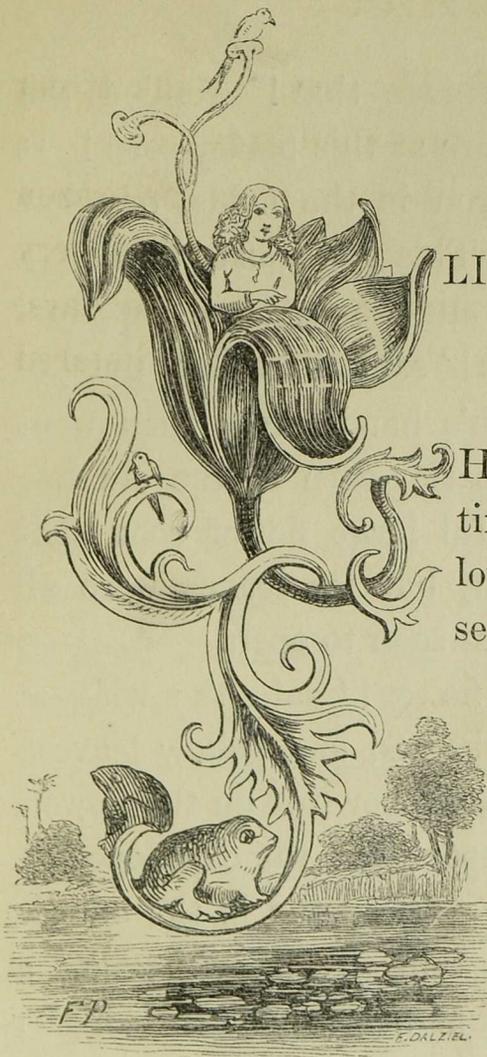
Then the soldier seated himself in the King’s carriage, and all three dogs danced in front of it,

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and shouted "Hurrah!" The boys in the street whistled, and the soldiers presented arms.

Now the Princess was liberated from the brazen castle, and was made Queen, which she liked very much. The wedding festivities lasted eight days, and the dogs seated themselves at table, and stared with their great eyes.





LITTLE ELLIE.*

HERE was once upon a time a young wife who longed exceedingly to possess a little child; but where to get one she did not know. So she went to an old witch, and said to her: "I would give anything to have a nice little child of my own: do but tell me how to accomplish my wish!"

* This tale is called "Ellise" in the original Swedish; a name given to the beautiful daughters of the fairy-people in the mythology of the North. As, however, to the English reader the word would not have conveyed the original idea of a diminutive being, I preferred giving the story the title I have done.—NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

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“ Oh ! we’ll soon manage that ! ” replied the old witch. “ Look ye here at this barley-corn ! It is not like those that grow in the fields, or what the fowls are fed with. This you must plant in a flower-pot, and then wait and see what will happen. ”

“ A thousand thanks ! ” said the other, putting some silver in the witch’s hand. She then went home and planted the barley-corn as the old hag had told her. A beautiful large flower soon shot up out of the flower-pot, but its leaves were all closed like buds that were soon to open.

“ What a beautiful flower ! ” said the wife, at the same time kissing the red and yellow leaves ; but scarcely had she pressed her lips on the flower, when there was a loud report, and the calix opened. She now saw that it was a tulip, and in the middle of the cup sat, on the still green seed-stalk, a charming little maiden that was only an inch high ; on which account she gave her the name of “ Ellie. ”

She made the baby a cradle out of a varnished walnut-shell, gave her blue violets as mattress, and a rose-leaf for counterpane. In this cradle little Ellie slept at night ; by day she played on the

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table. Here a plate full of water was placed, surrounded by a garland of flowers that dipped their stems in the water: in the middle, a large tulip-leaf was swimming, and on this Ellie was to sit, and to sail from one side of the plate to the other; and two white horse-hairs served as oars. All this looked exceedingly pretty; besides, Ellie could sing, and with so sweet a voice that the like was never heard.

One night, as she lay in bed, an ugly toad hopped in through the broken window-pane. The creature was large and ugly, and jumped right upon the table where Ellie lay asleep under the rose-leaf.

“Why, that would be a pretty wife for my son,” said the toad; then it seized with its mouth the nutshell in which Ellie was, and hopped with it through the window into the garden.

Here was a large piece of water, but the banks were marshy; and there the toad and her son lived. Faugh! how ugly the son was! just like his mother; and all he had to say when he saw the pretty little maiden in the nutshell was, “Croak! Cr-r-r-oa-oa-k! Cr-r-r-oak!”

“Don’t speak so loud,” said his mother: “if

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you do, she may wake up and escape, for she is lighter than down. We'll put her on the leaf of a water-lily: to her that will be a large island; and thence she cannot escape; and we, meanwhile, will build a festal hall below in the mud, for you both to dwell in."

Innumerable plants were growing in the water, all looking as though they floated on the stream. The one that grew farthest off was at the same time the largest, and thither the old toad swam, and set the walnut-shell with the little maiden upon it.

Poor little Ellie awoke early next morning; and when she saw where she was, that her new dwelling was surrounded with water, and that she could not get to land, she began to weep bitterly.

The old toad sat, meanwhile, in the marsh, and decorated the hall with reeds and the leaves of the water-lily, so that it might look nice for her future daughter-in-law; and then, in company with her frightful son, she swam to the island where Ellie was. They wanted to fetch her pretty little bed, to put it in the chamber before Ellie herself came there. The old toad bowed most politely to her in

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the water, at the same time that she introduced her son with the words—"Here you behold my son; he is to be your husband; and you both can live delightfully down below in the mud!"

"Cr-oa-oa-oa-k! Cr-oa-oa-oa-k!" was all the bridegroom had to say in reply.

On this they both took the charming little bed and swam away with it; but Ellie sat alone on the leaf and cried, for she could not bear to live with the ugly toad of a mamma, and still less to have her hideous son for a husband. The little fishes that swam below in the water had probably seen the toad, and heard what she said; for they put up their heads that they might have a look at the little maiden. As soon as they had seen her, they were touched by her beauty, and they were very sorry that such a charming little damsel should become the prey of a nasty toad. They therefore assembled round the green stem on which the leaf rested where Ellie was, and gnawed it in two with their teeth; and now leaf and Ellie floated down the stream, far away out of reach of the toad.

Thus the little maiden sailed along, past towns and villages; and when the birds on the trees

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perceived her, they sang aloud, "Oh, what a charming little maid!" The leaf floated further and further; Ellie was making quite a voyage upon it.

Then there came a small white butterfly, and after fluttering about a long time, settled at last on her leaf, because Ellie pleased him; she, too, was glad of the visit; for it would be impossible for the toad to overtake her now. The country she passed through was very beautiful; and the sun shone on the water, making it glitter like gold. It now entered her head to take off her girdle, and bind one end of it to the butterfly, and the other to the leaf; so that it went along much quicker, and she got more expeditiously through the world.

But at last a cockchafer flew by, who laid hold of her thin waist with his long nippers, and flew away with her up into a tree, while the leaf of the water-lily, that was obliged to follow the butterfly, floated on; for Ellie had bound him so firmly that he could not get loose.

Oh, how frightened was poor Ellie when the cockchafer flew with her into the tree! She was, too, so sorry for the little butterfly, who now would perish, unless he could liberate himself from the

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green leaf. But all this did not move the chafer ; he put her down on a large leaf, gave her honey to eat, which had been gathered from the flowers, and told her she was quite charming, although she was not at all like a chafer. Hereupon all the other cockchafers that lived in the tree made their appearance, and paid their respects to Ellie, stared at her from head to foot, and the young-lady chafers twisted their feelers and said, "She has but two legs ; and that looks very wretched. She has no feelers either," said they ; "and is, moreover, as small round the waist as a human being ! It's very ugly, I declare !" cried out all the young-lady chafers at once. And yet Ellie was really the most engaging little being imaginable. And so the cockchafer that had carried her off thought too ; but because all the lady chafers said she was ugly, he began at last to think so himself, and therefore would have nothing more to say to her ; she might go where she chose, he said, as he flew with her over the ground, and set her on a daisy. The poor thing wept, because she was so ugly that not even a cockchafer would have any thing to do with her. But, despite the opinion of the young-lady chafers, which was

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certainly a very important one, Ellie was the most lovely little creature in the world, as delicate and beautiful as a young rose-leaf.

The whole summer poor Ellie lived in the large forest, and wove herself a bed of fine grasses, which she then hung up under a burdock-leaf, that it might not be washed away by the rain. For food she gathered the sweetness of the flower-cups; and she drank the fresh dew that every morning fell upon the leaves. Thus passed the summer and autumn; but now came the cold long winter. All the birds that had sung so prettily to Ellie forsook her now; the trees lost their foliage, the flowers faded, and the large burdock-leaf, which hitherto had served her for shelter, shrunk together, till nothing but a mere yellow stalk was left. It began, too, to snow, and every flake that struck her was as much to her as a whole shovel-full would be for us, her whole body being only an inch long. To protect herself from the weather, she wrapped herself up in a dead leaf; but there was no warmth in it, and she trembled from head to foot with cold.

Close to the wood where Ellie lay was a large corn-field; but the corn had long been cut, and

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only the dried stubble now stood above the ground ; but to Ellie this was a wood, and hither she came. So she chanced to arrive at the house of a field-mouse, which consisted of a little hole under the corn-field. Here, warm and comfortable, dwelt the field-mouse ; she had her whole room stored full of corn for the winter ; and beside it a nice little kitchen and larder. Poor Ellie approached the door, and begged for a morsel of barley-corn ; for she had tasted nothing for two whole days.

“ Poor little thing ! ” said the field-mouse, who was very good-hearted ; “ come in to my warm room, and eat some of my bread. ” And as Ellie pleased her, she said, “ Perhaps you would like to pass the winter in my house ; but then you must keep my room clean, and tell me fairy tales ; for that is what I like more than any thing. ” Ellie did what the good mouse required, and in return had a very comfortable life.

“ We shall soon have visitors, ” said the field-mouse to her one day. “ My neighbour usually pays me a visit once a-week. He lives in much grander style than I ; for he has many splendid chambers, and wears costly fur. If you could get

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him for a husband, you were then well provided for; however, his sight is not very good. But you must not fail to tell him the prettiest stories that you know."

But Ellie would listen to nothing of the sort; for she could not bear the sight of their neighbour, because he was a mole. He really did come to pay the mouse a visit; and, true enough, had on fur as soft as velvet. He was very rich and very learned, the field-mouse said; and his house was more than twenty times larger than hers. As to his being learned, there was not a doubt about it; but he detested the sun and the gay flowers, and spoke of both with contempt, though he had never seen either. Ellie was obliged to sing to him; so she sang "Fly away, lady-bird, fly away home!" and her beautiful voice so pleased the mole, that he fell in love with her; but he took good care not to shew it; for he was a most sensible personage.

A short time before, he had made a long passage from his dwelling to that of his neighbour; and he now gave Ellie and the mouse permission to walk in it as often as they pleased. He begged them, at the same time, not to be frightened at the dead bird

that lay at the entrance. It was, no doubt, a bird that had just died; for it had all its feathers on, and seemed to have been buried at the spot where the mole had built his gallery.

Neighbour mole then took a bit of touch-wood in his mouth, and went before to light them through the dark passage; and when he came to the spot where the dead bird lay, he gave the earth a push with his snout, so that the mould rolled down and made a large opening, through which the daylight fell. Ellie could now see the dead bird; it was a swallow. Its pretty wings were pressed close to its body, and its feet and head drawn back under the feathers. "The poor bird is certainly frozen to death," said Ellie; and she was heartily sorry for the poor animal, for she loved birds dearly, because they had sung to her the whole summer long. But the mole gave it a push with his foot, and said, "There's an end of his singing now! It really must be a wretched existence to be a bird! Thank heaven, my children won't be birds. Why, such a poor feathery thing has nothing in the world except his 'chirp,' 'chirp;' and when winter comes he must starve."

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“Yes, indeed, you may well say that,” replied the mouse. “And with all his fine ‘chirp,’ ‘chirp,’ what has a bird got when winter is come? Starvation and cold, that’s all! But that I suppose is thought very grand.”

Ellie was silent; but when the others turned their backs, she put aside the feathers of the bird, and kissed its closed eyes, and said, “Perhaps it was you who sang me such pretty songs. How often have you delighted me, my pretty bird!”

The mole then stopped up the opening again through which the daylight had entered, and escorted the two ladies home. But Ellie could not sleep. She got up, platted a mat of hay, carried it to where the dead bird was, and covered him up on every side, that he might rest more warmly than on the cold earth. “Farewell, pretty little bird,” said she, “farewell! and many thanks for your friendly song last summer, when all the trees were green, and the sun shone down upon us all so warmly!” Then she laid her little head on the bosom of the bird, but she was sadly frightened; for it seemed to her as if something moved within. It was the heart of the bird, who was not dead, but only lay

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benumbed, and came to life again when penetrated by the warmth.

In autumn the swallows fly to warm countries, and when there is a weakling among them, he falls to the ground, is benumbed with the cold, and so lies in a torpid state till the chill snow covers him.

At first Ellie was frightened when the bird began to move, for compared to her he was a giant ; but she soon took courage, tucked in the covering all round the exhausted creature, and then fetched the mint leaf which had hitherto served her as a pillow, in order to put it over the poor bird's head.

The following night she again stole away to the swallow, whom she now found quite revived, but still so weak that he could only open his eyes a few times to look at Ellie, who held a bit of touchwood in her hand that she might see his face.

“A thousand thanks, you pretty little child,” said the sick swallow. “I am so warmed through, that I shall soon recover my strength, and be able to fly out in the sunshine.”

“Oh, it is still much too cold out of doors,” answered Ellie. “It snows and freezes still. Stay in your warm bed, and I will take care of you.”

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She now brought the bird some water in a leaf; and he told her how he had hurt his wings with some brambles so much that he was not able to fly away to the warm countries with his companions, but had fallen exhausted to the earth, and had lost all power of recollection.

The little swallow remained here the whole winter, and Ellie tended him and liked him better and better every day; but she told the mole and mouse nothing of the matter, for she knew very well that they could not bear the poor bird.

As soon as summer was come, and the genial rays of the sun penetrated the earth, the swallow bade Ellie farewell; for she had opened the hole in the ground through which the mole had let in the light. The sun shone so cheerily that the swallow asked his faithful nurse if she would not fly away with him. She might sit on his back, and then they would fly away together to the wood. But Ellie thought it would grieve the old field-mouse if she were to leave her in secret, and therefore declined the kind invitation of the swallow.

“Farewell, then, good little maiden,” said the swallow, and flew off into the pleasant sunshine.

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Ellie looked after him sorrowfully, and tears came into her eyes ; for she liked the friendly bird very much, and was sorry to part from him.

“ Chirrup! chirrup! chirrup!” sang the swallow, and flew away towards the wood.

Ellie was now very sad, for she never went out of the dark hole. The corn grew up above her, and formed quite a thick wood before the dwelling of the field-mouse.

“ You can employ the summer in getting your wedding-clothes ready, and what you will want in housekeeping,” said the mouse ; for her neighbour, the tiresome mole, had really proposed for Ellie. “ I will give you all you want, so that you may have a house full when you are the wife of the mole.”

So Ellie was obliged to spin at the bobbins, and the field-mouse hired four spiders that were forced to weave day and night. Every evening the mole came to pay a visit, and always spoke of his wish that summer would soon be over, that there might be an end of the heat ; and when winter should come, then was to be the wedding. But Ellie was not at all glad ; for she could not bear the sight of the ugly mole, though his fur was as soft as velvet.

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Morning and evening she stole to the door; and when the breeze blew the ears of corn apart, and she could see the blue sky, she thought it was so beautiful in the open air, and wished with all her heart to see the little swallow once again. But no swallow came; he was, no doubt, enjoying the warm sunshine in the woods.

As autumn approached, Ellie was ready with her wedding-things.

“In four weeks you will be married,” said the old field-mouse; but Ellie wept, and said she would not have the tiresome mole for a husband.

“Fiddle de dee!” answered the field-mouse. “Don’t be refractory, or I shall give you a bite with my sharp teeth; is not your future husband a very handsome man? Even the Queen has not such a beautiful velvet fur to shew as he has! His larder and cellar are full, and you may thank your stars that you are so well provided for.”

Now, then, was to be the wedding! The mole was already come to fetch Ellie, who in future was to live with him deep under the earth, where no sunbeam could ever penetrate. The poor thing was quite melancholy at the thought of taking leave

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of the dear sun, which, as long as she was with the field-mouse, she could at least see from the door.

“Farewell, beloved sun!” said she, raising her hands to the sky, and advancing some steps from the house; for the harvest was over, and the stubble again on the field. “Farewell! farewell!” repeated she, and twined her arms round a little flower that stood near her. “Remember me to the swallow, if you should chance to see him.”

“Chirrup! chirrup! chirrup!” resounded at the same moment; and when Ellie lifted up her eyes, she saw the very same well-known swallow fly by. As soon as the bird perceived Ellie, he instantly flew to his kind nurse, who told him how unwilling she was to take the ugly mole for her husband; and that she was to live with him under-ground, where the sun and moon would never shine. At these words she burst into tears.

“Winter will soon be here,” said the swallow, “and I shall fly away to warm countries. If you will travel with me, I will willingly take you on my back. You have only to bind yourself on firmly with your girdle, and off we will fly far away from the hateful mole and his dark chambers, over moun-

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tain and valley, to those beautiful lands where the sun shines much more warmly than here; where ceaseless summer reigns, and bright flowers are always blooming. Take courage, and fly with me, good little Ellie; you who saved my life when I lay frozen on the earth!"

"Yes, I will fly with you," exclaimed Ellie joyfully. She mounted on the back of the swallow, supported her feet on his wings, fastened herself by her girdle to a strong feather, and flew away with him high over woods and lakes, over valley and mountain. When they passed over icy or snowy glaciers, Ellie often felt cold; but then she crept under the feathers of the bird, and only put out her head to admire all the wonders below her.

At last they arrived in the warm countries. There the sun shone brighter than with us; the sky was as high again, and on walls and palings grew the finest blue and green grasses. Ripe oranges and citrons hung in the groves, and the fragrance of myrtles and of jasmine rose in the air, while lovely children played about with the most brilliantly painted butterflies. But the swallow flew further and further, and beneath them it

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grew always more and more beautiful. On the banks of a lake, amid magnificent acacias, stood a marble palace, built in long-past days. Vines twined themselves round its columns, on which, high above, many swallows' nests were hanging. Into one of these nests the swallow carried Ellie.

“Here is my house,” said he ; “but do you seek out one of the loveliest flowers that grow yonder for your dwelling ; and then I will carry you thither, and your every wish shall be fulfilled.”

“Oh, that will be delightful!” exclaimed Ellie, and clapped her hands with joy.

On the ground lay a large white marble pillar, that had fallen down, and was broken in three pieces ; but between each fragment the most beautiful white flowers grew luxuriantly. The swallow flew with Ellie to one of these flowers, and set her down on a broad leaf ; but how astonished was Ellie when she saw that in the flower a little manikin was sitting, as delicate and transparent as glass. He wore a small golden crown on his head, and had wings on his shoulders ; and was not a whit larger than Ellie herself. This was the sylph of the flower. In each flower dwelt such a little

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man and wife ; but this was the king of all the sylphs of the flowers.

“ Oh, how handsome this king is !” whispered Ellie in the swallow’s ear. The little prince started at the sudden arrival of the great bird ; but when he saw Ellie he became enamoured of her, for she was the most beautiful maiden he had ever seen. Then he took off his golden crown, set it on Ellie’s head, and asked her name, and if she would be his wife, and queen of all the flowers. Now that, to be sure, was a different sort of husband to the son of the ugly toad, or the tiresome mole with the costly fur ! So Ellie said “ Yes” to the little prince ; and then a lady appeared, and then a gentleman, out of all the other flowers, to bring Ellie presents. The best gift that was offered her was a pair of beautiful white wings, which were fastened on immediately ; and now she too could fly from flower to flower.

The joy was universal. The little swallow sat on high in his nest, and sang as well as he could, though he was very sad ; for he had a great affection for Ellie, and did not wish to part from her.

“ You shall not be called Ellie any longer,” said

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the sylph ; “ for that is not a pretty name, and you are so very beautiful. Henceforward we will call you Maja.”*

“ Farewell, farewell !” cried then the little swallow, and flew away again from the warm land, far, far away ; off to little Denmark, where he has his nest just over the window of the good man who can tell fairy tales, and there sings to him his “ Chirrup ! chirrup ! chirrup !” It was he who told us the whole of this wonderful story.

* Maria.



