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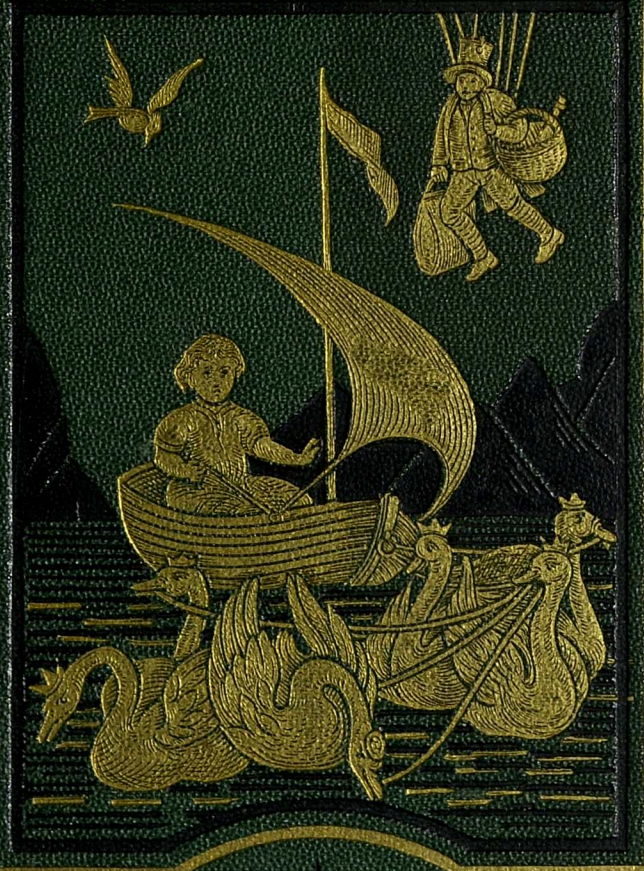

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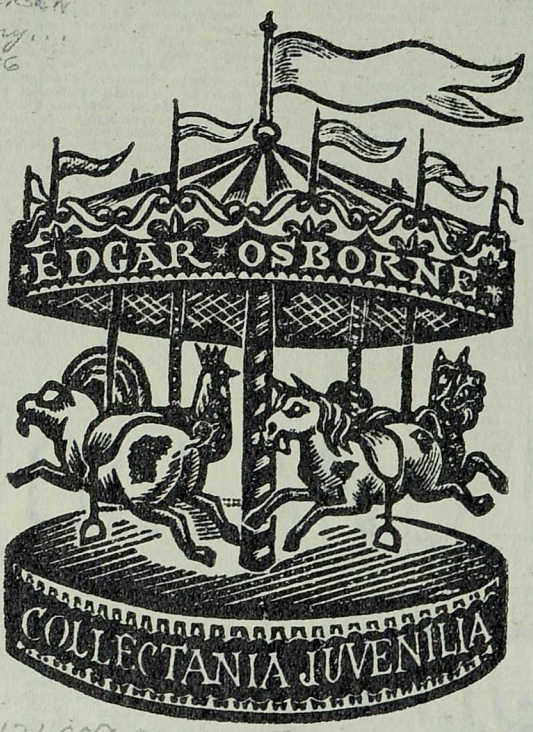

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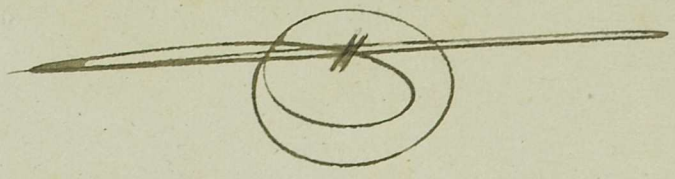

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THE LIFE

OF

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN is one of those men who, from their earliest youth, have had to keep up a warfare with circumstances; a man, like Burns and Hogg, who seemed destined by Fate to end their lives unnoticed in a village, and yet through an instinctive sense of their destined pre-eminence in the beautiful regions of art and literature, and sustained by an irrepressible will, have made themselves a part of the great world.

During my residence in Copenhagen, says Marmier, in the year 1837, one day a tall young man entered my room. His timid and embarrassed, and somewhat awkward, manner might, perhaps, have displeased a fine lady, yet at the same time his friendly behaviour, and his open, honest countenance, at the first meeting, must have awakened sympathy and confidence. This was Andersen. At that very moment a volume of his works was lying on my table; an acquaintance was thus soon made. Poetry is a sort of freemasonry; they who render homage to it are related, although they may come from the opposite ends of the world; they speak a word, make a sign, and immediately they know that they are brethren. They who live together impart to each other mutually the emotions of their hearts; they who meet on foreign ground relate to each other, like pious pilgrims, by what paths they have wandered thither and through what cities they have come. Thus, then, it happened that Andersen, after we had passed a few hours together in conversation on poetry, which, more than anything else, has the peculiarity of unlocking the heart and calling forth mutual confidence, told me of the adverse circumstances through which he had passed, and, at my request that he would make me acquainted with the history of his life, communicated to me the following details:—

Andersen's grandparents were, at one time, well-to-do in the world, and even possessed of a farm in the country. All kind of misfortunes, however, befell them; the worst of which was, that the husband lost his reason. The poor wife then removed to Odensee, and placed there her only son as apprentice with a shoemaker. The boy, full of activity, found the beginning of his life happier than his later years; he

employed his hours of leisure in reading Holberg, in making toys, and in composing music.

When he was scarcely twenty, in the spring of 1804, he married a young girl who was quite as poor as himself; and so great, indeed, was their poverty, that, in going to housekeeping, the young bridegroom could not afford to buy a bedstead, and contrived to obtain one in this manner:—A count was dead somewhere in the neighbourhood, and while he lay in state his coffin was supported on a wooden frame made for the purpose, and this, being sold after the funeral, was purchased by the husband-elect, who prepared it for future family use; and yet he could not have made very great alteration in it, for many years afterwards it might still be seen covered with its black cloth.

Upon this frame, on which had rested the corpse of the noble count in his last splendour, lay, on the 2nd of April, 1805, poor, but living, the first-born of his humble parents, Hans Christian Andersen.

When the new-born child was taken to the church to be baptized, it cried resoundingly, which greatly displeased the ill-tempered pastor, who declared, in his passion, that "the thing cried like a cat;" at which his mother was bitterly annoyed. One of the godparents, however, consoled her by the assurance that the louder the child cried, the sweeter he would sing some day, and that pacified her.

The father of Andersen was not without education; the mother was all heart. The married couple lived on the best terms with each other, and yet the husband did not feel himself happy; he had no intercourse with his neighbours, but preferred keeping himself at home, where he read Holberg's "Comedies," "The Thousand-and-One Tales of the Arabian Nights," and worked at a puppet-theatre for his little son, whom on Sundays he often took with him to the neighbouring woods, where the two commonly spent the whole day in quiet solitude with each other.

The grandmother also, who was an amiable old lady, and who bore the misfortunes of her family with Christian patience, had great influence on the mind of the boy. She had been very handsome, was kind to everybody, and, besides that, was scrupulously clean in her poor clothing. With a feeling of deep melancholy, she would often tell how her grandmother had been the daughter of a rich gentleman of family in Germany, who lived in the city of Cassel; that the daughter had fallen in love with a comic actor, had left her parents secretly to marry him, and after that had sunk into poverty.

"And now all her posterity must do penance for her sin!" sighed she.

Young Andersen was extremely attached to this good grandmother. She had to take care of a garden at the lunatic hospital, and here, among its sunny flowers, he spent most of the afternoons of his early childhood. The annual festival in the garden, when the fallen leaves were burnt, had for him an especial charm, although the presence of the insane ladies, a few of whom were allowed to wander about, terrified him greatly. Frequently one of the old nurses would fetch him into the house and take him into the spinning-room, where all the old ladies would praise him for his eloquence, and would recompense him for it with tales and ghost stories, which they related with wondrous effect,

so that certainly no child of his years ever heard more of such-like histories, neither could any child be more superstitious than he was.

Among the earliest recollections of Andersen is that of the residence of the Spaniards in Fyen, in the years 1808 and 1809. A soldier of an Asturian regiment one day took him in his arms and danced with him along the street, shedding tears of joy, no doubt called forth by some tender home remembrance, whilst he pressed the image of the Madonna to his lips, which occasioned great trouble to the child's pious mother.

In Odensee, at that time, many old festivities were still in use, which made a deep impression upon the excitable temper of the boy; the corporation went in procession, with their escutcheons, through the city; the sailors also marched round in Lent, and the people made pilgrimages to the miracle-performing well of the holy Regisse.

So passed on the first years of the youth of our poet. His father, in the mean time, read industriously in his Bible, but one day shut it with the words, "Christ became a man like to us, but a very uncommon man!" Upon which his wife burst into tears, at what she called the blasphemy of her husband, which made such a deep impression upon the son that he prayed in solitude for the soul of his father. "There is no other devil," said he, afterwards, "but that which a man bears in his own breast!" After which, finding his arm scratched one morning when he awoke, probably by a nail, his wife told him that this was a punishment of the devil, who, at least, would show him of his real existence.

The unhappy temper of the father, however, increased from day to day: he longed to go forth into the world. At that time war was raging in Germany; Napoleon was his hero; and, as Denmark had now allied itself to France, he entered himself as a private soldier in a recruiting regiment, hoping that some time or other he should return as a lieutenant. The neighbours, however, thought that it was folly to let himself be shot to death for nothing at all. But the corps in which he served went no further than Holstein; the peace succeeded, and before long the voluntary soldier sat down again in the concealment of his citizen-dwelling in Odensee. Meanwhile his health had suffered. He awoke one morning delirious, and talked about campaigns and Napoleon.

Young Andersen was at that time nine years old, and his mother sent him to the next village to ask counsel from a wise woman.

"Will my poor father die?" inquired he, anxiously.

"If thy father will die," replied the sibyl, "thou wilt meet his ghost on thy way home."

It is easy to imagine what an impression this oracle would make upon the boy, who was timid enough without that; it was, in fact, his only consolation, on his homeward way, that his father certainly knew how such an apparition would terrify his little son, and therefore he would not show himself. He reached home without any unfortunate adventure, without seeing the ghost of his father; and on the third day after that the sick man died.

From this time young Andersen was left to himself; the whole

instruction which he received was in a charity school, and consisted of reading, writing, and arithmetic, the two last very imperfectly.

The poor boy, at this time, gained an entrance into the house of a widow of the Pastor Bunkeflod, of Odensee, who died in the year 1805, and whose name, on account of some lyrical productions, is known in Danish literature. He was engaged to read aloud to the widow and her sister-in-law; and here, for the first time, he heard the appellation poet, and saw with what love the faculty which made the dead a poet was regarded. This sunk deeply into his mind. He read some tragedies, and then determined to write a comedy, and to become also a poet, as the deceased pastor had been.

And now, actually, he wrote a true tragedy, for all the characters lost their lives in it; and the dialogue was interlarded with many passages of Scripture. His two first auditors received this first work of the young poet with unmingled applause; and, before long, the report of it ran through the whole street, and everybody wished to hear the tragedy of the witty Hans Christian. But here the applause was by no means unmingled; most people laughed right heartily at it, whilst others ridiculed him. This wounded the poor boy so much that he passed the whole night in weeping, and was only silenced by his mother's serious admonition, that if he did not leave off such folly she would give him a good beating into the bargain. Spite of the ill success of his first attempt, however, he now, unknown to any one, set about a new piece, in which a prince and a princess were introduced. But these lofty characters threw him into great perplexity, for he did not at all know how such noble people as these conversed, imagining, of course, that it must be impossible for them to talk as other people did. At length it occurred to him to interweave German and French words into their conversation, so that the dignified language of these princely personages became a perfect gibberish, which, however, according to the opinion of the young author, had in it a something very uncommon and sublime.

This masterpiece also was introduced to the knowledge of the neighbourhood, the result of which was, that not many days elapsed before he was derided by the wild boys in the streets, who shouted, as he went by, "Look! look! there goes the comedy-writer!"

But it was not alone the rude boys, but the schoolmaster also, who entirely mistook the genius which clearly betrayed itself, even in such-like productions; for, one day, when young Andersen presented to him, as a birth-day present, a garland, with which he had twisted up a little poem of his own writing, he blamed him for it; and the only reward which the poor poet had for his first poetical attempt consisted of trouble and tears.

In the mean time the worldly affairs of the mother grew worse and worse; and as the son of a neighbour earned money in some kind of manufactory, it was determined also that the good Hans Christian should be sent there. The old grandmother conducted him to the master of the manufactory, and wept right bitter tears that the lot of her grandson should be so early that of care and sorrow.

German workmen were principally employed in the manufactory, and to them the children used often to sing their Danish songs. The

new-comer, Andersen, was desired to do so, and that he did willingly, because he knew that he could produce great effect with his singing: the neighbours had always listened when at home he sung in the garden; and once, indeed, a whole party, who were assembled in the garden of the rich neighbour, had admired his beautiful voice and loudly applauded him. Similar applause fell to his share in the manufactory.

"I can also act comedy!" said poor Andersen one day, encouraged by their approbation, and forthwith recited whole scenes from Holberg's comedies. All went well for a time, and the other boys were compelled to do his work whilst he amused the workmen; but presently persecutions began, and he found himself so roughly handled, even by his former admirers, that he left the place and flew back weeping to his mother, praying that he might never be sent there again.

His prayer was granted, because, said his mother, he was not sent there for the sake of what he would get, but that he might be well cared for while she went out to work.

"The boy must go to the theatre!" many of her neighbours had said to her; but, as she knew of no other theatre than that of strolling players, she shook her head thoughtfully, and determined rather to put her son as apprentice with a tailor.

Andersen was now twelve years old, was altogether quite at a loose end at home, and devoured the contents of every book which fell in his way. His favourite reading was, however, an old prose translation of Shakspeare. From this, with little figures which he made out of pasteboard, he performed the whole of "King Lear," and the "Merchant of Venice." He very rarely went to the playhouse, but as he was in favour with the man who carried out the bills, he obtained a copy of each of these from him, and then, seating himself in the evening before the stove, studied the names of the various actors, and thus supplied to every piece which was performed an imaginary text.

Andersen's passion for reading, and his beautiful voice, had, in the mean time, drawn upon him the attention of several of the higher families of the city, who introduced him to their houses. The simple, childlike behaviour of the boy, his wonderful memory, and his sweet voice, gave to him, in fact, a something quite peculiar; people spoke of it, and several houses were very soon open to him. But still the first family which had noticed him and had received him with so much sympathy, nay, indeed, who had even introduced him to Prince Christian, remained his favourites. This family was that of Colonel Höegh Guldborg, a man whose great accomplishments equalled his goodness of heart, and the brother of the well-known poet of the same name.

About this time his mother married a second time, and, as the step-father would not at all interest himself about the education of the son, our young Andersen had still more liberty than hitherto. He had no play-fellows, and often wandered by himself to the neighbouring woods, or, seating himself at home in a corner of the house, dressed up little dolls for his theatre, his mother thinking the while that, as he was destined to be a tailor, it was a good thing that he should practice sewing; and the poor lad consoled himself by thinking that, if he really must be a

tailor, he should find many beautiful pieces of cloth from which he could, on Sundays, make new dresses for his theatrical wardrobe.

At length the time for his confirmation drew nigh, for which occasion he obtained the first pair of boots he ever had in his life; and, in order that people might see them, he pulled them up over his trousers. Nor was this all his finery: an old sempstress was employed to make him a confirmation dress out of his deceased father's great-coat; and with this his festal attire was complete. Never before had Andersen been possessed of such beautiful clothes; his joy over which was so great that the thoughts of them even disturbed his devotion on the day of consecration, and caused him afterwards such reproaches of conscience that he besought of God to forgive him such worldly thoughts; and yet, at that very moment, he could not help thinking about the beautiful creaking boots.

After the conclusion of the confirmation festival, it had been determined that Andersen was to begin his tailor-apprenticeship; but he continually besought of his mother that she would permit him to go to Copenhagen and visit the royal theatre there. He read to her the lives of celebrated men who had been quite as poor as himself, and assured her that he also would some day be a celebrated man. Already for several years had he hoarded up in a little save-all his spare money, and this had now grown into what seemed to him the inexhaustible sum of about thirty shillings of English money. The sight of this unexpectedly large sum of money softened also the maternal heart, and she began to incline towards the wishes of her son; but yet, before she fully consented, she thought it best to consult a wise woman on his future prospects. The sibyl was accordingly fetched to the house, and after she had read the cards, and studied the coffee-grounds, the oracle spoke these memorable words:—

"*Your son will become a great man. The city of Odensee will be illuminated in his honour!*"

So good a prophecy of course removed the last impediment out of the way.

"Go, then, in God's name!" said his mother.

When, however, her neighbours represented to her how foolish it was to let the boy of fourteen years old set off to the great city in which he did not know a single soul, she replied that he let her have no rest, and that she was convinced he would soon come back again when he saw the great water which he would have to cross.

Some one had mentioned to young Andersen a certain female dancer at the royal theatre, as being a person of very great influence; he obtained, therefore, from a man universally esteemed in Odensee a letter of recommendation to this lady; and, provided with this important paper and his thirteen rix-dollars, he commenced the journey on which depended his whole fate. His mother accompanied him to the gate of the city, and here he found waiting for him the good old grandmother, whose still beautiful hair had become grey within a few weeks. She kissed, with many tears, her beloved grandson; her grief had no words; and within a very short time the cold grave covered all her troubles.

Andersen travelled as gratis passenger by the mail as far as Nyborg,

and not until he was sailing across the Great Belt did he feel how forlorn he was in the world. The discomfort of a sea-voyage, even though short, would make him feel this if nothing else did. As soon as he came on shore in Zealand, he stepped to a spot that lay apart, and, falling on his knees, besought of God for help in his forlorn condition.

He rose up comforted, and went on now uninterruptedly for a day and a night through cities and villages until, on Monday morning, the 5th of September, 1819, he saw the towers of Copenhagen. He had travelled, as before, free of cost, through the good-nature or compassion of the drivers of the mail, and now before he reached the gate of the city was obliged, of course, to dismount, and, with his little bundle under his arm, entered the great city.

The well-known Jews' quarrel, which at that time extended from the south to the north of Europe, had broken out here the very evening before, and all was in commotion.

His journey cost him three rix-dollars, and, with the remaining ten in his pocket, the young adventurer took up his lodgings in a public-house. His first ramble into the city was to the theatre, and with astonishment he surveyed the magnificent building, walked round it, and prayed fervently that it might soon open itself to him, and that he might become a skilful actor therein. At that time certainly he had no presentiment that ten years afterwards his dramatic work would be received with applause, and that he would address the public for the first time.

On the following day, dressed in his confirmation suit, he betook himself, with his letter of introduction in his hand, to the house of the all-potential dancer. The lady let him wait a long time on the steps; and when at length he was permitted to enter her presence, his awkward and *naïf* behaviour displeased her so much that she regarded him as insane, more especially as she knew nothing of the gentleman who had addressed the letter to her.

After this unsatisfactory attempt Andersen turned his steps towards the director of the theatre, requesting from him some appointment; but here also his efforts were unsuccessful.

"You are too thin for the theatre," was the answer which he obtained.

"Oh," replied Andersen, "if you will ensure me one hundred dollars I will soon become fat!"

But the director would not enter into arrangements on these terms, and dismissed the poor supplicant with the information that they were not in the habit of engaging any but people of education.

The poor lad went his way truly dejected in spirits: he knew no creature who could give him counsel or comfort, no human being on whose breast he could weep. He thought on death, and the terror of this thought drove him back to God.

"When everything," said he, "goes quite unfortunately, then God will help me; it is written so in every book that I ever read—and in God I will put my trust!"

He then went out and bought a ticket for the gallery for "Paul and Virginia." The scene in the second act, where the lovers part, affected

him so much that he burst into loud sobs, which drew upon him the attention of those who sat near to him. They spoke kindly to him, and inquired who he was. Their friendly sympathy unlocked his whole heart, and he told all that related to himself—who he was, and whence he came, and that his love to the theatre was not less than *Paul's* love to *Virginia*, and that he certainly should become as unhappy as Paul if he did not obtain some little post in the theatre. They all looked at him in amazement.

The next day brought no more cheering prospects, and his money had before long all melted away to one single dollar. What was he to do? Either he must work back his passage in a vessel to his native city, and be laughed at there for his pains when he arrived, or else he must put himself here to some handicraft trade, which would be his fate if he returned to Odensee.

A joiner at that moment wanted an apprentice, and to him Andersen introduced himself, but here again it did not succeed: after a short time poor Andersen was persecuted by the journeymen, who found him an object of sport, and the end was like the working in the manufactory at Odensee; and, with tears in his eyes, he parted from his master.

As now with a heavy heart he was walking through the streets crowded by his fellow-beings, yet without the consciousness of having one friend among them, it occurred to him that nobody as yet had heard his fine voice. Full of this thought, he hastened to the house of Professor Siboni, the director of the Royal Conservatorium, where a large party was that day at dinner, among whom were Baggesen, the poet, and the celebrated composer, Professor Weyse. He knocked at the door, which was opened by a very lively young housemaid, and to her he related quite open-heartedly how forlorn and friendless he was, and how great was his desire to be engaged at the theatre, which the good-natured young serving-woman immediately retailed again to the company, who became curious to see the little adventurer, as Baggesen called him. He was now ordered in, and was desired to sing before the company and to declaim scenes from Holberg. Whilst he was so doing he came to apass age which brought to his remembrance his own melancholy circumstances, and he burst into tears. The company applauded him.

"I prophesy," said Baggesen, "that he will turn out something some day; only don't become vain when the public applauds thee!" said he to him.

On this, Professor Siboni promised that he would cultivate Andersen's voice, in order that he might make his *début* at the Theatre Royal, and, highly delighted, the poor lad left that happy house.

The next day he was ordered to go to Professor Weyse's, who entered with the kindest sympathy into the forlorn condition of the poor youth, and who most nobly made a collection for him, which amounted to seventy dollars. After this Professor Siboni took him to his house, and half a year was spent in elementary instruction. But Andersen's voice was in its transition state; and, by the end of this time, seemed entirely gone. Siboni, therefore, counselled him to return home and put himself to some handicraft trade. And once more poor Andersen stood in the world as hopeless as at first. Yet, even in his apparent

misfortune, there lay the seed of a better progress. He recalled to his memory, at this dark moment of need, that there lived in Copenhagen a poet named Guldborg, the brother of the kind colonel in Odensee. To him Andersen bent his steps, and was kindly received by him. When Guldborg saw that the young native of Odensee could scarcely write a word correctly, he offered to give him instruction in the Danish and German tongues, and made him a present of the profits arising from a little work which he had just published. The noble-minded Weyse, Kuhlau, and other respectable men, also extended to him a helping hand.

Andersen now hired a lodging for himself in the city: he lived with a widow, who seemed reasonable in her charges; and yet, after all, she was a hard, unfeeling woman, who was not ashamed to fleece the poor lad of twenty dollars for his month's charges, although she allotted to him only a disused store-closet for his accommodation. He gave her, however, the required sum, and received from her now and then a few half-pence when he did errands for her in the city. Yet nobody could feel themselves happier than the young Andersen in his present condition, for Professor Guldborg had engaged the actor Lindgren to instruct him, whilst one of the solo-dancers had taken it into his head to make a dancer out of him. Thus he went daily to the dancing-school, made his appearance in one or two ballets, and, as his voice also was beginning to recover itself, he had to sing in chorus too.

Thus then actually he had become one of the theatrical corps, and nothing was now wanting but his *début* and the acquisition of the fixed salary belonging to it. Always, however, the slave of superstition, he determined with himself that, if now, on this New Year's Day, when he came to the theatre, he were able there to declaim a piece, he would hold it to be a certain token that in the course of the following year he should be advanced to the dignity of an actor. But, alas! when he reached the house he found that, on this day, it was closed, and only by accident a small side-door was open. Through this he crept, trembling as if he had something evil in his mind; onward he went to the dark stage, where not a creature was to be seen, and, falling down upon his knees on the lamp-stage, uttered the Lord's Prayer, the only thing, and the best thing, which then offered itself to his mind, and, after that, returned home comforted.

He always kept hoping that, by degrees, his fine voice would wholly return to him; yet that was scarcely to be expected, because the poor youth, through want of money, was almost always obliged to go with torn boots and wet feet; neither had he any warm winter clothing. He was now already sixteen years old, yet he was quite a child; so much so, that he spent the whole evening alone in his chamber busied in making dolls for his little theatre, which he dressed from the patterns which he was in the habit of begging from the shops.

In this manner wore away his best years for learning; and many a sorrowful day had he yet to spend before a milder period arrived. Guldborg practised him in the Danish style, and, before long, he produced a rhymed tragedy, which, from the facility and freedom of its language, won the attention of Ohlenschläger, Ingemann, and others. But no *début* was permitted to him in the theatre; they excused him

from any further attendance at the dancing-school, or from singing in chorus, as it was wished, they said, that he should dedicate his time to scientific studies; yet nobody did anything for him in this respect, and it was as much as the poor lad could do to obtain enough to keep body and soul together. In his great need he wrote a new dramatic piece, in the hope that it would be accepted; but the hope was disappointed; notwithstanding he persevered in a second and a third attempt.

Just at this time the distinguished Conference-councillor Collin, no less distinguished as an officer than universally esteemed for the goodness of his heart, became director of the theatre, and this wise and clear-sighted man soon perceived what slumbered in the young poet. It is true that he thought but little of his dramatic works; but he went immediately to the king, and obtained permission from him that young Andersen should be sent at government charges to one of the learned schools in the provinces, and became from this moment a father to him in the noblest sense of the word.

Andersen now went from dancing-lessons, romances, and dolls, to mathematics, Latin, and Greek; and the youth of seventeen had to place himself among boys of ten years old to learn the first elements of these things. The school-rector in the mean time treated him with great severity, pronounced him to be devoid of all intellectual ability, and so greatly forgot himself, and mistook so entirely the duty of a public instructor, as to make the poor youth the object of ridicule among his schoolfellows, which produced in him such a state of mental suffering as within a short time must have been the death of him, had he not been rescued from this misery. Two years had thus been spent here, when one of the teachers went to Copenhagen and informed the Conference-councillor Collin how unkindly and negligently poor Andersen was treated by the rector. No sooner was the good man made acquainted with this than he took Andersen immediately from the school, and placed him in the hands of a private tutor. A year after this, in 1828, Andersen was academical citizen of Copenhagen.

Within af ew months from this time appeared his first literary work in print, under the title of "A Journey on Foot to Amack" (a small island on which a part of Copenhagen is built), a humorous piece, which met with such great success that within a very few days a second edition was called for, and after that a third. The young poet was now received everywhere with the most flattering attention. The Danish translator of Shakspeare, Commander Wulff, and the celebrated naturalist, Orsted, received him at once a sa friend; whilst he found quite a paternal home with the Collin family.

The "Journey to Amack" was succeeded by a dramatic work, an heroic vaudeville, entitled, "Love on the Nicholas Tower," which was brought on the stage and reviewed by Professor David. After this Andersen passed his second academical examination, in which he obtained the highest honours.

A short time afterwards he published his first collection of grave and humorous poems, which met with great favour from the public. At school Andersen had been so often accused of weakness, that afterwards he was frequently ashamed of his best feelings; and not seldom,

when he had written a poem from the full, noble emotions of his soul, he would, as a sort of excuse for himself, write a parody upon it; hence in this volume there are frequent instances of this kind, which displeased many, who saw that a mind thus directed would be injurious to itself as well as others.

In the summer of 1830 Andersen made a journey through the Danish provinces, and, after his return, published a new collection of lyrical poems, under the title of "Fancies and Sketches," which showed that a great change had taken place in him; and, as if he would avenge himself for his former self-ridicule, these poems all bore the impression of a quiet melancholy. Many poems in this volume were translated into German; and one poem in particular, "The Dying Child," is said to be possessed of such extraordinary pathos and beauty that it has been translated into German, French, English, Swedish, and Greenlandish. The poor Greenlanders, indeed, sing it when out on their desolate seas in their fishing excursions; and it is to be found printed in their song-books.

This poem I have never met with; indeed, I regret not being possessed of this volume of Andersen's poems; however, I will subjoin here a translation of one which Chamisso has rendered into German, and which is so full of tenderness and beauty, that I am sure the reader will thank me for it:—

"THE MILLER'S JOURNEYMAN.

"In this mill I was a servant, even when I was a boy;
And here have fled for ever my days of youthful joy.
The miller's gentle daughter was kind and full of grace
One seem'd to read her gentle heart whilst looking in her face.

"In the evening oft so trustfully she sat down by my side;
We talk'd so much together, I could nothing from her hide:
She shared with me my trouble, in my pleasure she had part;
One only thing conceal'd I—the love within my heart.

"I think she might have seen it; if she had loved she would;
For there needs no word, no word at all, to make love understood!
I spoke unto my foolish heart—'Forego it, and be still!
For thee, poor youth, such joy comes not—comes not, and never will!'

"And whilst I thus was grieving, she said, with tenderest tone,
'Ah, why art thou so alter'd, and why so pale hast grown?
Thou must again be joyful; thy sorrow gives me pain!'
And thus, because I loved so much, did I my love restrain.

"One day, beside the rocky wall, she took by me her stand,
Her eyes flash'd clearer light, and she laid on mine her hand,
'Now must thou wish me joy,' she said, 'must greet me as a bride,
And thou, thou art the first to whom I would my joy confide!'

"The while I kiss'd her hand I conceal'd from her my face;
I could not speak a single word, my tears flow'd down apace;
It seem'd as if had perish'd, in that same hour of woe,
My thoughts and all my hopes in the deepest depths below!

"That eve was the betrothal, and even I was there;
They set me in the chiefest place, beside the happy pair;
They clink'd their merry glasses, they sung their songs of glee;
I made myself seem happy, lest all the truth should see.

"Upon the following morning, my head spun round and round;
How stupid and perplex'd was I where all were happy found!
What wanted I? one only thing! 'Twas wonderful, yet true,
And they all loved me—she herself, and he, the lover, too!

"They were so kind unto me, but my woe they could not guess!
And as I saw them love and talk, so full of happiness,
The wish to wander far and wide took hold upon my heart;
So I made my bundle ready—'twas right I should depart!

"Said I, 'Now let me see the world, and by its joy be bless'd!'
But I only meant, forget the world that lies within my breast.
She look'd at me, and said, 'Oh, Heavens! what's come to thee!
We love thee here so kindly, where canst thou better be?'

"Then flow'd forth fast my tears, this time it was but right,
'One always weeps at parting!' said she, that parting night.
They went with me for company some distance on my track—
Now sick—sick unto death—they again have brought me back.

"With gentlest love and kindest care they tend me in the mill,
And she with her beloved comes to me when she will.
In July is the wedding; and ever doth she say,
That I shall have a home with them, and soon again be gay.

"How dreamily I listen to the frothing waterwheel,
And think beneath it I might find the peace I cannot feel!
There know no longer sorrow, from every pain be free!—
They wish me to be happy, and thus then let it be!"

But let us now return to his life.

Andersen's health was not strong, and, in 1831, he made a journey into the Saxon Switzerland, of which he published an account the same year. Neither were his pecuniary circumstances flourishing: like most authors, he had many anxieties; and, at this time, to add to his other perplexities, he furnished opera-text to the music of Bredahl, from Sir Walter Scott's "Bride of Lammermoor;" and for his old benefactor, Professor Weyse, "Kenilworth," from the same author. For these works the critics handled him severely. Yet, in the meantime, Andersen proved how true a lyrical poet he was, by his "Vignettes to the Danish Poets," and his "Twelve Months of the Year." About this time, however, there appeared "Letters of a Wandering Ghost," a satirical work, in which Andersen was held up to ridicule, among other things, for his imperfect orthography. The poet's heart was wounded, his health was indifferent, his circumstances unprosperous, and the public laugh was against him, rather on account of his misfortunes than his faults. But, as had always been the case through his life, light broke in when the darkness seemed deepest, and at the very moment when he was smarting under the lash of these jeering letters, he received a royal stipend to enable him to travel through Germany, France, and Italy. This stipend was granted to him on the recommendation of Ohlenschläger, Ingemann, Heiberg, Orsted, and

Thiele; and it is very remarkable that all these gentlemen had recommended the poet, each for a peculiar qualification; the one for his deep feeling, another for his wit, and a third for his humour. This mark of favour excited still more the envy of the baser class of minds, and many anonymous attacks were made upon him, which wounded him so deeply, that, despairing of himself and his own powers, he set out on the journey, which was to be to him the noblest school.

He went immediately to Paris; and it is singular that the first letter which he received from his native land was merely a blank envelope containing a newspaper, in which was a satirical poem on himself.

Andersen made the acquaintance of the first literary men in Paris; thence he went to Switzerland, where he was invited by a family with whom he was acquainted, and who were living in the valley of the Jura Mountains, to pay them a visit. This invitation he accepted, and under their roof, amid the deep solitudes of nature, he completed a dramatic poem, entitled "Agnes and the Waterman," which he had begun in Paris. In this poem he poured out his whole soul, and hoped that his fellow-countrymen, when, through it, they became better acquainted with him, would not begrudge him the favour of his king.

On the anniversary of the day on which Andersen, fourteen years before, a stranger and friendless, had entered the gate of Copenhagen, he wandered over the Simplon into that beautiful land which was to open to him a new spiritual world, and call forth the noblest characteristics of his soul. He went through Milan, Genoa, and Florence, on to Rome, where Thorwaldsen and all his countrymen there received him with the greatest affection.

His residence in Rome began like a sunshiny summer day; but while it yet was morning, clouds arose; the poem which he had sent to Copenhagen, and which he hoped would warm the hearts of his countrymen towards him, was quite overlooked—a new young poet had just arisen, who was the star of the moment. His friends wrote to him of all these things, and candidly told him that they, like every one else, thought he was past his best. Another letter brought him the sad intelligence of the death of his mother, the last of his family connections. Andersen felt her death severely, and many poems which he wrote at that time express the dejection of his mind. Spite, however, of sadness and untoward events, the glorious treasures of art around him, and the fine country within which he was a sojourner, with its bright southern life, operated beneficially on his spirit. With that intense love for Italy, which is peculiar to the most spiritual-minded inhabitants of the cold north, and, in some cases, has amounted to a passion like the attachment of the Swiss to their mountains, Andersen entered into the spirit of the life of the people, and has reflected all back with the most beautiful colouring in his "Improvisatore."

Thorwaldsen gratified the poet by the warmest admiration of his unfortunate production, "Agnes and the Waterman," and from the great sculptor he received the utmost kindness. Thorwaldsen told him how poor he also had been, how, in his early artist-career, he had had to contend against envy, and how he also had been misunderstood.

At this moment Andersen's bitterest enemy, Herz, the author of the "Letters of the Wandering Ghost," arrived in Rome; and, as might

often be the case, would literary enemies only condescend to a personal knowledge of each other, no sooner did these two men meet than they became fast friends. This was a bright event to the warm heart of Andersen. They travelled together to Naples, and ascended Vesuvius during a splendid eruption. They visited Pæstum and the Grotto Azurra together; of all of which we have such an exquisite reflex in "The Improvisatore."

In the following year Andersen returned home through Venice, Vienna, and Munich, making in the two last cities the acquaintance of the first German poets and artists. Immediately after his return he published his novel, "The Improvisatore," which was received with universal applause—which was read and re-read, and which the public never tired of reading. That a work of such singular originality and beauty was universally admired was not at all remarkable; but an extraordinary effect was produced which, it seems to me, tells greatly to the honour of the Danish heart. Not only did Andersen's friends, and the public generally, acknowledge the merit of his work, but they who had treated the poet with severity came now forward and offered him the hand of congratulation; among these was the rector of the school, the hard-hearted teacher of the poor youth, who had taken all possible means to crush into the dust the talent which God had given him. He now came forward, acknowledged his fault, and deplored it, which touched the good heart of Andersen not a little. This, however, is but one of the many instances of generous enthusiasm which was excited by this beautiful work towards its author.

From this moment the tide began to turn; sharp criticism and personal attacks wounded, from time to time, the keen susceptibilities of the poet; but the day was gone by when it could be seriously discussed among literary men whether or no Andersen had mistaken his vocation. "I turned," said the delighted author, in speaking of the acknowledgment of his success, "like a sick man towards the sunshine." The "Improvisatore" was followed by another novel, entitled "O. T.," and considered by some critics to be the best of Andersen's novels; the author did not himself share their opinion, and the English press, when the translation of the story first appeared, spoke of it as being on the whole inferior to the former one, though full of charming and tender pictures of Northern life.

A few years later another novel, "The Old Fiddler," was brought out. Andersen speaks of it as a novel with a purpose: "I wished," he says, "to show that talent is not genius." Some time afterwards he heard, to his great delight, that a wealthy lady in Saxony, having read his story, was so impressed by it as to exclaim, in the hearing of a celebrated musician, that if ever she happened to meet with a child of musical talents, unable from stress of circumstances to have them cultivated and developed, she would defray the cost of his or her education, lest another genius should perish for lack of aid, as the unfortunate hero of Andersen's tale had done. The musician took her at her word, and shortly after brought to her house two boys, of whose gifts he spoke warmly, and who claimed her promise. The children were sent by their patroness to the Conservatoire, and when the kindly poet heard them play, he felt that his talent had borne just the kind of fruit most acceptable to his generous, unselfish nature.

"The same thing might have happened," he exclaimed, modestly, "if my book had never been written; but, as it is, my story forms a link in the chain of their happiness."

The genial, hero-worshipping nature of the man was now to find abundant material for its exercise in the number of valuable and close friendships which he was privileged to form. The latter part of his life is rich in such ties; hardly a name famous in any department of art or literature was merely a name, and nothing more, to the rising author. The mixture of pride, shyness, and self-consciousness which makes it so difficult for an Englishman to initiate or respond gracefully to sudden enthusiastic friendships, was utterly unknown to the Danish poet. He sought, as a matter of course, the personal friendship of every one whose gifts, whether in art, science, or letters, had won his admiration, and there was such an irresistible charm in his direct simplicity that his advances were never misunderstood and the friendship sought so frankly never withheld.

It is pleasant to see how nature the most opposite from his own yielded unconsciously to his sweetness and honesty; even the gifted, but most unhappy Heine, whose bitter pen was at once the terror and the admiration of his countrymen, showed to the author of the "Fairy Tales" a side of his nature undreamt of by any other of his contemporaries. As for Andersen, he knew Heine to be a poet, a word which for him always meant a worshipper of all that was highest and noblest, and he could see in him neither malignity nor irreverence. "He was so friendly and so natural to me," he says, "that I felt no timidity in showing myself to him as I really was." As usual, the fearless trust of the poet met its reward; Heine was a gentler and better man in his presence, listened with pleasure to the charming story of the "Steadfast Tin Soldier," and the visit passed off pleasantly, with "children playing about in the room."

The pressure of pecuniary anxiety which had for so long fettered and cramped Andersen's powers was now removed. A moderate pension was granted to him, sufficient to supply all his modest requirements.

It may excite surprise that this should have been necessary in the case of an author of Andersen's position and standing; but although the Danish public was upon the whole infinitely more favourable towards him than were the critics, as is proved by the ready sale of works which had been rather severely handled in the reviews, yet the reading world of Denmark is, or rather was, extremely circumscribed, and, in spite of Andersen's rising fame and the consequent advance in the price he received for his works, it was not until the pension was assured to him that he writes "I am no longer *forced* to write in order to live; a constant sunshine has entered my heart; I feel within myself repose and certainty."

It may be added that Andersen was by no means the only literary man in Denmark who enjoyed a similar grant from the royal bounty. "All our most important poets," he writes, "have a share in this assistance—Oehlenschlager, Winther, Ingemann," &c. Singularly enough his former critic and subsequent friend, Hertz, received a pension at about the same time.

Andersen's next efforts were directed to the drama. The old ineradicable love of the stage which had led the lonely child to find the

delight of his life in the mimic joys and sorrows of his marionettes, and drawn the half confident, half despairing youth to wander round the closed theatre of Copenhagen as round the paradise which attracted him by a magnetic, irresistible force, now made him attempt to win within it as author the place which he had failed to gain as actor or opera singer. It cannot be said that he was wholly successful "The Mulatto" was his first important play; the plot was taken from Madame Reybaud's story, "*Les Epaves*," and the drama was written in rhyme. After some favourable and some adverse criticism the work was accepted and the parts given out; considerable excitement prevailed in the city on the day fixed for the first representation, and Andersen was rejoiced to see expectant crowds besieging the theatre doors, when the sudden boom of the minute-guns proclaimed the death of King Frederick and delayed for a while the author's failure or success.

Two months later the theatre was re-opened and the new play brought out. It was received with great applause and ran for many nights. The success was not confined to Copenhagen: a translation of the play appeared in Stockholm and was received with equal warmth. Andersen himself was at the time staying with some friends in Sweden, and was gratified by receiving there the first public recognition of his talents which had been granted to him in a foreign country. It came to him in a form at once novel and picturesque: some students at the University of Lund invited him to a public dinner, and, after many flattering toasts and speeches, welcomed the distinguished stranger with a serenade. Andersen's affectionate heart and keen imagination were touched to the quick. "As the troop, with their blue caps, approached the house arm-in-arm," he says, "and suddenly uncovered their heads as I appeared upon the balcony, I had need of all my thoughts to avoid bursting into tears."

The poet did not meet with such kindly treatment in his own town, and he resented the attacks of the reviewers with too much bitterness. His great sensitiveness to praise and blame was, perhaps, an inevitable accompaniment of the delicacy of perception, keen insight, and deeply affectionate feeling which made him what he was, both as a writer and a man; but in a character of less simplicity and unselfishness it would have been a serious blemish. As it was, his English critics have sometimes charged him with a want of dignity and self-respect. "When a poet has written his best," says the writer who reviewed some of his earlier works in *Blackwood*, "he has no other answer to oppose to the attacks of criticism, and silence is his sole resource."

But Andersen had little or none of our English reticence, and he did not even attempt to conceal his mortification. He was unfortunate, too, in his intercourse with the actors and actresses for whom his plays were written; a quarrel or misunderstanding arose between the author and Heiberg, an actor for whom Andersen always professed the highest esteem. A second play, the "Moorish Maiden," was prefaced by a prologue written under the inspiration of deeply-wounded feeling, and added to the existing irritation. In the summer of 1839 a sparkling vaudeville, entitled "The Invisible One on Sprogo," was brought out, and its success surpassed all the expectations of the author and his friends, in spite of its having been put on the stage with the

scenery belonging to another piece which had proved a failure. But neither this success nor the banquet given to the writer by Oehlenschlager and the students of Copenhagen was sufficient to atone for the irritation under which he was suffering. He prepared for another journey in search of the health and rest he so greatly needed, and in the autumn of 1840 he "quitted his country in distress."

A glimpse of the direction in which his true strength lay had already dawned upon him, for in the midst of his theatrical troubles he dashed off the "Picture Book without Pictures," better known in England as "What the Moon Saw." This work was at once translated into Swedish and German, and was soon to be followed by what all allow to be the masterpiece of the Danish writer, the "Fairy Tales for Children."

This journey led the poet once more to Rome, and afterwards to Greece and Constantinople. His reminiscences of the scenes through which he passed are preserved in a poem entitled "The Poet's Bazaar." But amid all the beauties of the South his heart remained deeply impressed with the wild and lovely scenery of Sweden. The place and people seemed to be only second in his love to those of his native land; Stockholm always remained associated in his mind with the kindly welcome and recognition of its inhabitants; and perhaps gratitude and personal affection have a little influenced the poet when he asserts so strongly the claims of certain parts of Sweden to greater beauty than anything which he had seen in Switzerland or Italy.

While on his travels Andersen formed the acquaintance of Cornelius and Schelling, and spent some happy hours among the art-life of Munich. At Rome he found only cold weather and incessant rains; the Tiber overflowed its banks and infectious fever was raging in the city. The poet had no strength or elasticity to oppose to these depressing influences, and the letters he received from home were not cheering. His play, "The Moorish Maiden," had been withdrawn from the stage, and his old antagonist, Heiberg, had written a successful poem in which Andersen was held up to ridicule.

The good-natured friends who thought it necessary to keep the poet acquainted with all these unpleasant circumstances wrote only in general terms of Heiberg's satire, and Andersen's keen imagination fancied the attack far worse than it really was. When the book fell into his hands the reality was a relief in comparison to the imaginary slight which he had conjured up. Such as it was, however, it was sufficient to embitter his stay in Rome, and, after wandering restlessly through Naples, "where the sun would not shine properly," he left it, with "fever in the blood," and embarked on a French steamer for Greece.

Here new scenes, with all their store of historic associations, succeeded in chasing away the memory of past annoyances. The literary result of his stay in Athens is to be found in a poem entitled "Ahasuerus," and founded on the world-known legend of the "Wandering Jew." After celebrating his thirty-sixth birthday in the Acropolis he sailed to Smyrna, and had the good fortune to see Constantinople illuminated in honour of Mahomet's birthday. "The sight," he writes, "completely transported me into the 'Thousand-and-One Nights.'"

Returning homeward up the Danube, Andersen reached Copen-

hagen in the August of 1841. He brought back with him grateful recollections of the kindness shown to him by Liszt and Thalberg; and he needed them to console him under the adverse criticism of the Copenhagen press, which dealt severely with his "Poet's Bazaar." "A whole 'Fool's Chronicle,'" says Andersen, "might be written of the shameless things which I have been compelled to bear."

In spite, however, of the press and its critics, Andersen found himself now admitted into a brilliant circle of distinguished friends. The theatre, he writes, was his club. A seat in the court stalls was assigned to him, where he spent many a happy evening with his friends, Oehlenschlager and Thorwaldsen, one on each side. Andersen had made the acquaintance of the famous sculptor in his first visit to Rome, and wrote for him several of his most beautiful tales. The one entitled "Ole Luk Oie," or "Old Shut Eye," was an especial favourite with the sculptor; and often, on summer nights, the whole family would assemble in the garden to listen to "The Ugly Duckling" or some other of the "Fairy Tales."

The friendship was only ended by Thorwaldsen's sudden death in Copenhagen. The two friends had just been planning a summer tour in Italy, and Andersen had left to go to his own residence, when he was recalled to the sculptor's house, too late to see him alive. A slight dramatic sketch, entitled the "Bird in the Pear Tree," was brought out in 1842; but, in spite of the favourable reports of the rehearsal, it was hissed on the first representation and withdrawn from the stage. Shortly after this disappointment Andersen set out once more on his travels, and reached Paris in the winter of 1843.

Here the whole world of literature was open to him; and, in spite of his imperfect French, he derived great pleasure from the society of the distinguished men who were ready to welcome him. Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Dumas, Rachel, Balzac, Alfred de Vigny, and other well-known names, were added to the long list of his valued friends. Of all these, Lamartine seems to have impressed him with the keenest admiration; his sympathy with Northern literature and politics, and his extraordinary knowledge of names and places in Denmark, formed a close bond of union between the two writers. When they parted he wrote a little poem, which the enthusiastic Dane preserved as a costly relic.

A greater contrast between the dreamy, polished author of "Jocelyn" and "Les Confidences" and the irrepressible Alexander Dumas can scarcely be imagined. Andersen found the great novelist in bed, with pen, ink, and paper, although it was long past mid-day. "Sit down," he cried, nodding to his visitor; "I have just received a visit from my muse," and not until that fertile goddess had taken her departure did he spring out of bed and greet the stranger.

It was he who introduced Andersen to Rachel, then a young girl, but in the height of her fame. In spite of Andersen's prejudice against the French classical tragedy, he owns himself conquered by the wonderful impersonations of the great actress. "She is, indeed, the tragic muse," he writes; "but the others are only poor human beings." Rachel received Andersen with great kindness, and invited him to her receptions. He was delighted to find in her rooms the works of his favourite authors, Goethe, Schiller, Calderon, and Shakespeare.

It was well for Andersen that, among the manifold interests and occupations of his busy life, he had not neglected the study of languages. A genial, social disposition like his own would have found itself at a sad disadvantage if it had been otherwise. As it was, he records, when noting down the memories of this pleasant visit to Paris, that, although he did not speak French well, he was still able to interchange ideas with all the celebrities to whom he was introduced, and his ready wit seems at times to have more than compensated for his grammatical deficiencies. In alluding to his nervousness about speaking French to Rachel, who, as he does not forget, "spoke the most beautiful French in all France," he relates that, in reply to his apologies, the great *artiste* said to him, "When you say such polite things as you have just been saying to me, no Frenchwoman will admit that you speak bad French."

But neither kindness nor compliments could make the Northern stranger lay aside his free judgment and clear-sighted criticism on the French schools of literature and acting. A genuine "romancist," as became his Danish birth, Andersen never could be brought to admit that the French classical drama, or its exponents on the stage, could claim a comparison with the great German and English writers. He candidly excepts Rachel, placing her above all criticism; but he looks on her always as "the young girl who chisels living statues out of Racine's and Corneille's blocks of marble," and even her wonderful impersonations cannot win his favour for the traditions of the school in which she was trained.

It was at this time that Andersen made the acquaintance of David, the famous sculptor, who won his heart at once by a fancied resemblance of manner to his lost friend, Thorwaldsen, and also by offering to take his portrait in a marble bust. Kalkbrenner, the well-known pianist and composer, stood high on the list of friends made by Andersen in this journey; and it is noticeable that music in every form seems always to have possessed an irresistible attraction for the Danish poet. On reading the records of the enthusiasm which a beautiful voice or a well-played solo awoke within him, it is easy to see how much he must have suffered when his hopes of a musical career were blighted by the loss of his voice. Traces of his passionate love for the art appear not only in his autobiography and letters, but in almost all his novels and smaller works; fame, literary success, and freedom from money troubles seem scarcely to have had the power of consoling him for his early disappointment at Copenhagen, and all through his life he turns, as if to seek compensation for his failure, to the society of every great name in musical art, and is never so happy as when, by the ready response to his advances, he finds himself admitted into musical circles and treated as one of the initiated. His friendships with literary men are broken or clouded now and then by misunderstandings, coldness, or adverse criticism, but no cloud seems ever to have rested on the intercourse which existed between him and the great artists of his day.

Before leaving Paris Andersen found himself, one evening, in company with an old lady who seemed, by her *spirituelle* and kindly manners, to be the centre of attraction to an animated group. To his great delight he found that she was no other than Madame Rey-

baud, whose novel had furnished him with the materials for his play of "The Mulatto." He was presented to her, and she listened with much interest to his account of his past struggles and of the success of his play. From that time the lady "took him under her special protection," showing her kindness, among other ways, by correcting his faulty French.

The Northern stranger was pleasantly reminded of the ill-omened reception which befell him on his first visit to Paris in 1833, when he found the anonymous letter containing a malicious criticism of his works awaiting him. This time the unexpected letter arrived from Germany, and contained a pressing invitation from a cultivated family to spend some weeks with them on his return home.

His route led him down the Rhine, and, true to his kindly instincts, he could not pass the home of Freiligrath without trying to discover the house where the poet lived and thanking him for the pleasure he had derived from his works. Accordingly he made inquiries at St. Goar, and was directed to Freiligrath's house. The poet was sitting at his writing-table, busily engaged with some literary work, and did not seem particularly pleased with the interruption, as Andersen had entered the room unannounced. He looked up as if to ask for an explanation. "We have one friend in common," said Andersen, "Chamisso." "Ah! then you are Andersen," exclaimed Freiligrath, throwing his arms, in true German fashion, round the neck of his unexpected guest. And then occurred another of those stories which seem to have delighted Andersen more than any amount of mere fame or pecuniary success—a story of the happiness which his works had unconsciously bestowed on the lives of those unknown to him.

"You have many friends here in St. Goar," exclaimed Freiligrath, "and one of them you must see now." On this he fetched in his wife to introduce to their distinguished visitor, and told Andersen how his novel, "Only a Fiddler," had caused them to interchange letters, and then led to an acquaintance between them which ended in a happy marriage. Such a beginning naturally led Andersen to consider himself before long as an old and tried friend of the poet and his wife.

During his stay in Germany Andersen wrote several of his most exquisite "Fairy Tales," among others, "The Little Mermaid" and the "Swineherd," and on his return to Copenhagen he formed what was, without question, the closest and noblest friendship of his life. It was in the autumn of 1843 that he met, for the second time, Madame Goldschmidt, then Jenny Lind. A short interview which he had had with her three years earlier had left but little impression upon him; and it was not until he had listened to her marvellous rendering of Meyerbeer's "Alice" that he began to yield to the charm of her incomparable singing. From this time Andersen had many opportunities of paying homage, not only to the wonderful gifts of the Swedish artist, but to her beautiful character and high intellectual attainments.

He is never tired of telling stories of her kindly deeds, or of quoting the ready testimony of artists to her powers as a singer and an actress. Frederika Bremer writes to him that, "high as she stands in the world of art, no one who knows her merely as an artist can understand her full greatness;" and the poor tailor-poet of Berlin relates to his sympathizing listener how he dressed himself as a Roman soldier, and,

disguised in helmet and long sword, stood on the stage to hear her sing in "Norma," and how, being a poet and not a mere stage super, he wept aloud and was hurried off the stage in dire disgrace, to his immense and unfeigned astonishment. "They were angry with me and would not let me go on again, for no one must weep on the stage," he confided to Andersen, with delicious *naïveté*.

The following year Andersen again visited North Germany, and renewed his acquaintanceship with the Mendelssohns; one of his greatest pleasures was to listen to the exquisite playing of the author of "Elijah" and "Lieder ohne Worte," and to hear his verdict on the young singer who was Andersen's ideal as artist and woman. "There will not be born in a whole century," Mendelssohn said to him, "another being so gifted as she."

Only once in the course of a happy artist-life does Andersen seem to have drawn back in timidity and distrust from personal intercourse with the great writers of the time, and that once proved to be an opportunity lost for ever. In 1831 Andersen found himself not far from Weimar, where the great Goethe was still living. The young writer, then comparatively unknown, feared to present himself to the notice of the veteran poet, and determined to wait until he had written some work which should make his name known in Germany. That day was now come, translations of his novels and tales were to be found in every German town—but Wolfgang Goethe was dead.

All that remained for Andersen was to pay a visit, or rather to go on a pilgrimage to Weimar, the city associated with the names of Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, and Herder. He was most cordially received: the Grand Duke sent him a flattering invitation to be present at his birthday festivities at Ettersburg, and showed him the tree in whose bark the three great poets had cut their names. Every house was open to the Danish stranger, and for the first time Andersen ventured to read aloud in German, in the presence of a distinguished literary circle, his story of "The Steadfast Tin Soldier."

Then came a happy evening spent in Leipzig in company with Robert and Clara Schumann, and the hours passed away only too quickly in music and literary conversation. More than one gifted countryman came forward and made themselves known to the traveller. Dahl, the landscape painter; Retsch, the clever illustrator of Goethe and Shakespeare; the Countess Hahn-Hahn, and other distinguished artists and writers. In Berlin he paid a mournful visit to the family of his late friend, Chamisso. The little lads who used to rush up to greet him from their childish play in the garden, now came forward as stalwart young officers, wearing the Prussian uniform. Goethe's child-friend, Bettina, was added to the long roll of his friends, and delighted him by showing him her clever drawings, of which he had heard Thorwaldsen speak in terms of the highest praise.

The trio, Cornelius, Tieck, and Schelling called upon him, and from Tieck he learned that his novel, "Only a Fiddler," had created great interest at court. A flattering recall to Copenhagen cut short this pleasant visit; a gracious invitation from the King and Queen of Denmark to join their circle at Föhr, an island in the North Sea, not far from Schleswig.

Times had indeed changed since the lonely lad, penniless and well-

nigh heart-broken, stood alone in the streets of Copenhagen; twenty-five years had passed by, and Andersen, recognized on all sides as one of the illustrious names of Denmark, saw himself a guest at the royal table, honoured and welcomed by the highest and noblest in the land. The visit seems to have passed away like one of his own fantastic fairy tales, with sudden changes from balls in the summer palace, or on the deck of the royal steamer as she sailed through the northern islands in all the splendid glow of a summer sunset, from court concerts and promenades by moonlight along the shores of the wild North Sea, to visits to the Halligs, whose desolate, poetic beauty seems to have left a profound impression upon the delighted guest.

"The Halligs," he writes, "are only low islets covered with a dark turf, on which a few flocks graze; when the sea rises flocks and human beings alike are driven to the garrets of the houses, while the sea rolls and tumbles between them and the shore. The houses are built upon a platform, and nestle close together, as if driven by sore need and fear to seek each other's help. The windows are small, like those in the cabin of a ship, and there the wife and daughter sit and spin, and listen to some of their favourite books. Meanwhile the sea rises round the house till it lies like a wrecked ship in mid ocean; and sometimes a misguided ship, deceived by the lights within the windows, drives down to her ruin and is stranded.

"Terrible disasters hang over the desolate spot, and yet the islanders are passionately attached to their home, and pine away with home-sickness if they are detained on the mainland. In 1825 a tide washed away men and houses together. The wretched people clung to the roofs for days, but no help could reach them either from the mainland or from Föhr, and at last the roofs and their living freight disappeared for ever. The churchyard is half washed away; the storms frequently lay bare the coffins and the dead who lie within them; but nothing can weaken the love that binds the people to their home."

Andersen describes the island maidens as showing traces of their Greek descent in their beauty and in the half-Eastern style of their dress. They wear the Greek fez, and twist their hair round it in long plaits. When the royal party visited Oland they found only one man in the island. The girls and women had erected triumphal arches with flowers, which they had fetched from Föhr; their one solitary rose-bush, a mere stunted shrub, they had cut down to strew before the Queen.

Between Amrom and Föhr extend the sweep of desolate sand-hills, bleached white by the burning sun, and mined and twisted by the restless waves; no more desolate scene can possibly be imagined.

On his return from these interesting expeditions Andersen would be summoned to the royal presence and begged to read or recite one of his "Fairy Tales." At the end of his visit King Christian spoke kindly to the poet of his circumstances, and asked him if he had a settled yearly income. Andersen reminded him of the pension, and the king answered, "That is not much." "But I make something by my writings," was the reply.

The poet's friends were not slow to upbraid him for his want of worldly wisdom in not begging for an increase of his pension; but, in the following year, the king, of his own free bounty, increased the

stipend to a sum which not only relieved Andersen from care, but assured him an honourable livelihood.

Another drama, "The Flower of Fortune," once more brought him into collision with Professor Heiberg, who pronounced it to be unsuited for the stage. Some correspondence followed between the author and the critic and ended in a personal interview between them, which created a better understanding of each other's merits, and during which Heiberg candidly admitted that he had not read all the works on which he so recklessly passed judgment.

It may be that these perpetually recurring annoyances, slight though they were, had something to do with Andersen's enthusiastic love of foreign travel, "the Medea draught which always makes one young again." In the autumn of 1845 he again left Copenhagen, and passed a few hours in his native town of Odensee, where he says he felt himself more of a stranger than in the great cities of Germany. About this time he wrote the story of "The Little Match Girl," and made the acquaintance of Otto Speckter, the artist who illustrated the Danish edition of his works.

Arrived at Oldenburg, the poet was kindly welcomed by Mosen, whom he describes as a German edition of Alexander Dumas, and whose little boy was so attached to the genial visitor that he wept bitterly on parting from him and made him a present of one of his two tin soldiers. The Grand Duke followed the example set by the child, so far, at least, as the present was concerned, for, when Andersen's visit drew to an end, he presented him with a valuable ring.

The poet's next resting-place was in Berlin, where he had been, on a previous visit, rather disconcerted by finding that his name was unknown by Grimm; now the two brothers welcomed him as an old friend, and among his new acquaintances Andersen reckoned Rauch, Alexander von Humboldt, Prince Radizmil, and many other persons of distinction. He was almost overwhelmed with invitations, and yet, strangely enough, he found himself on Christmas Eve alone in his room at the hotel where he was staying. Every one had taken for granted that he was invited somewhere, and the kind-hearted poet complains that he "felt solitude in its most oppressive form."

His sadness was, however, soon dispelled; Jenny Lind happened to be in Berlin at the time, and, as soon as she heard of the lonely evening which he had passed, she bought and decorated a little Christmas-tree for his sole amusement, and on New Year's Eve he found himself the only guest of the great singer. She, her attendant, and Andersen—"three children of the north," as the poet says in describing the scene—sat together round the Christmas-tree, with its bright lights and beautiful presents, and the lonely hours of Christmas Eve were entirely forgotten.

It was during this visit that Andersen was invited to dine with the King of Prussia, the present Emperor of Germany, and once more Andersen was begged to read a selection of his "Fairy Tales." At the expiration of his visit he received the order of the Red Eagle.

Passing through Weimar to Leipzig, Andersen made arrangements with a publishing firm in that city for a complete edition of his works; and there, too, he met with Auerbach, whose village stories had just

brought him into notice as a writer of power and originality. Mendelssohn, also, was ready to welcome him as only he could do, enchanting him by his wonderful playing and chatting with him about the success of the "Fairy Tales."

At Dresden Andersen found himself again the guest of royalty; one of the little princesses appointed him at once to the office of her special "Fairy Tale Prince," and confided to him that on the very last Christmas she, too, had a fir tree. From Dresden through Bohemia to Vienna, where the writer of fairy tales listened to the improvisation of Liszt, who draws his fantastic and lovely stories from the ivory keys, and to the violin-playing of Ernst, "who," says the enraptured listener, "seized his violin and sang in tears the secret of a human heart."

At Dresden Andersen had received from the Queen letters of introduction to the Austrian Court, where the Archduchess Sophia and the Empress Dowager listened to his reading of the "Fairy Tales."

In the spring of 1846 Andersen once more reached Rome, and, amid all the raptures which the sight of the Eternal City drew from him, he found time to regret the changes which thirteen years had made. "Everything," he exclaims, "is modernized." Driven reluctantly from Rome by the sirocco, Andersen wandered to Naples, where the beauty of all around him drew forth from his pen many an eloquent passage. An English reviewer, in speaking of his pictures of Italian life and scenery, places him on a level with the great masters who have handled the same subject, and links his name with those of Shakespeare and Otway, of Schiller, Byron, and Radcliffe, regretting, as Andersen himself has done, that the inevitable change and progress of modern society is bringing about such an alteration in the habits and manners of Italian life that, although the great features of natural scenery and architecture remain unchanged, yet many a scene of national life and character, described by these great writers, will never be witnessed again.

Failing health drove Andersen once more to seek for change of air and scene, and soon afterwards he found himself at Marseilles, enjoying the society of his friend, Ole Bull, the well-known violinist.

By this time, translations of Andersen's works had appeared in French, German, Dutch, Frieslandish, and English, and everywhere it was the fairy tales which were pronounced to be the author's masterpiece. Their great success in England was a source of much pleasure to Andersen, who, although he spoke our language very imperfectly, was well versed in our literature; Scott was, perhaps, his favourite author, and next to him, Dickens. It was then like the realization of a long-cherished dream when Andersen received an invitation to Gadshill, and the meeting between the two writers was fraught with interest to both. A greater contrast than that presented by the Dane and the Englishman can scarcely be imagined. Andersen looked up to his host with boundless admiration; but his was scarcely the nature to understand a man like Dickens. The versatility, keen perception, and quick sense of the ridiculous, so pre-eminent in the English novelist, were utterly wanting in his guest; and there seem to have been only two things which they held in common. One of these, the taste and facility for modern languages, led them to a pleasant rivalry in giving

each other instruction ; the one speaking quickly in Danish, the other in English, and, in nine cases out of ten, finding that the similarity between the two languages led them to hit on a tolerably correct translation.

The second link which bound the two men together was their great success in reading their own works. Andersen's stories have not that varied range of power and passion which gave such scope to Dickens's magnificent powers as an actor and a reader ; but within their limited range the success was equal. All that was left to Andersen of his musical studies was a rich and musical voice, and to that he joined a graceful, unconscious play of hands and features which gave telling effect to his readings.

Indeed, it was only in his readings that the word graceful could be applied to him ; in personal appearance, dress, and manners, the children's poet was uncouth in the extreme.

Tall, and slouching in figure, with large, ill-made hands and feet, and plain features, Andersen swathed in a shawl wrapped round his shoulders, and with the dreamy gaze, so quick to see a hidden story in tree or flower, so slow to understand the current *persiflage* and gossip of ordinary society, looked like one of his own characters just stepped out of a fairy tale and wandering on, untouched by care, through his life's *Wanderjahre*.

He never married ; and yet never was childless man less lonely. A recent number of the *Spectator* relates an amusing story of his narrow escape from matrimony. A young peasant girl had made up her mind that it would be a desirable thing for her and for the poet if they were to marry, and she accordingly wrote him a love-letter, took it to him herself, and calmly awaited the result. "I would be so good to you," she added, as a verbal postscript.

"But, my good girl, I do not want to marry," said the bewildered poet ; and it is to be hoped that he succeeded at last in convincing the enterprising young person of his right to be consulted in the matter.

Any one who reads the story of his life from first to last will be struck by the slight effect produced upon him by outward circumstances. Few men have passed from extreme poverty to comparative wealth, from utter loneliness to the society of the most brilliant men of the day, from scanty means of education to more than a fair acquaintance with modern European literature, without bearing some trace of the influences of other minds, or of their own experiences. But Andersen was from first to last a child, with all a child's faults and excellences. Vain to a degree impossible to exaggerate, but so artlessly grateful for praise, that it was almost a cruelty to withhold it ; utterly careless of money, trustful, loving, and exacting, one looks in vain in his character for the manly virtues of self-restraint and endurance. The paper above-mentioned says that one day Andersen had the misfortune to run a thorn into his finger, upon which he not only cried, rolled on the floor and screamed aloud, but after its extraction refused to eat his dinner, and took it so completely for granted that no one else could eat any that no dinner was served. He sat holding the thorn between his finger and thumb, rolling it about and demanding sympathy from every visitor, not one of whom was spared a recital of his sufferings. In the midst of his harrowing story he suddenly

missed the thorn, and was seized with the idea that he had swallowed it. "Will it be as painful here as there?" he exclaimed, with tears in his eyes, pointing first to his stomach and then to his finger.

A few words may not be out of place as to the tales which have made his name so famous. Before their originality, delicacy, and humour, criticism lays down its pen. Some of them have become household words among us. "The Ugly Duckling," "The Little Mermaid," and the exquisite story of "The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweeper," will suggest themselves at once, not only as the delight of the children for whom they were written, but of all who have ever—and who has not?—taken up the book.

On the second of last April Andersen completed his seventieth year, and his birthday was celebrated in Copenhagen as a national festival. The aged poet received a second decoration from the hands of his sovereign, and was also gratified by the delicate compliment of having a new edition of his works struck off in no less than fifteen languages.

A few months later the telegraph flashed across the continent the news of his peaceful death, at a friend's house, near Copenhagen. The day of his funeral was observed in that city with every sign of heartfelt sorrow, alike by the noblest and the poorest. The King and the Crown Prince of Denmark attended the funeral, and the Queen herself placed upon the coffin a wreath of laurel and lilies, which was soon hidden beneath a pile of the most beautiful flowers. The theatres and all the places of business were closed until the sad ceremony was over, and the highest civil and military authorities of the land followed the "children's poet" to his grave.

When the news reached England, a gloom fell not only on many hearts who had lost in Andersen a personal friend, but also on thousands of unknown strangers who had followed him willingly into the quaint, fantastic wonder-land of his creation, and the kindly memories and loving sorrow of his numberless friends and readers linger round his grave, and form a fitting sequel to his happy and beautiful life.

No better close to the present story of the poet's life and death can be found than the reminding our readers of the graceful lines addressed to Andersen by Mrs. Barrett Browning, a short time before her own death. The two writers had become acquainted with each other in Rome, and the lines were a parting gift from the poetess, and were repeated again and again by Andersen in his imperfect English.

"'And oh! for a seer to discern the same!'
Sighed the South to the North;
'For a poet's tongue of baptismal flame,
To call the tree or the flower by its name,'
Sighed the South to the North.

"The North sent therefore a man of men,
As a grace to the South;
And thus to Rome came Andersen.
'Alas! but you must take him again!'
Said the South to the North."

October, 1875.

The Fir Tree.

IN a lovely forest nook, warmed by the sun and fanned by the soft air, stood a dainty little fir tree; taller and older play-fellows grew round it, pines as well as firs. One thought filled its whole heart; the eager longing to grow taller: it took no heed of the pleasant sunshine and fresh air, nor of the little peasant children playing and prattling round it when they came out to look for wild strawberries and raspberries. Very often they gathered a whole basketful, and then they would sit down to thread strawberries on a straw, and say, "What a dear little tiny tree this one is!" and that made the fir tree very angry. The next year it was taller by one ring, and the year after that it reached another ring, for you can always tell by the number of rings on a fir tree how many years it has lived.

"Oh! if I were only a tall tree like the others," sighed the little fir tree; "then I could spread out my branches far and wide, and look out from my crest into the wide world. The birds would build their

nests in my branches, and when the wind blew I could bow as grandly as the others yonder!"

It found no pleasure in the sunshine, or the birds, or the rosy clouds that sailed above it at dawn or sunset. Often, when the winter came, and the snow lay white and glittering all around, a hare would come leaping by and spring right over the little tree, to its great vexation. But two winters passed away, and in the third the tree was so tall that the hare was obliged to run round it. "Oh! to grow, and grow, and be old and tall! That is the one thing worth caring for in this world," thought the fir tree. In the autumn woodcutters came and felled some of the tallest trees. This happened every year, and the young fir tree, which was quite grown up now, shuddered to see the tall, stately trees fall crashing to the ground; their branches were stripped off, and they looked meagre, wan, and bare, you could scarcely know them again. After that, they were placed on wagons and drawn by horses out of the wood. Whither were they going? What fate lay before them? In the spring, when the swallows and storks came, the fir tree asked them, "Don't you know whither they have been taken? Have you not met them?"

The swallows knew nothing at all, but the stork considered awhile, nodded his head, and said, "I believe I have. As I was flying home from Egypt I met many new ships, and on the ships were stately masts; I think those were they; they smelt like fir trees."

"Oh, if I were only tall enough to sail across the sea! By the way, what sort of a thing *is* the sea? What does it look like?" "That would take much too long to explain," said the stork; and with that he flew away. "Rejoice in your youth!" said the sunbeams; "rejoice in your fresh growth, and the young life within you."

And the wind kissed the tree, and the dew wept tears over it; but the fir tree could not understand all that. When it drew near Christmas, quite young trees were felled; trees not even as tall or as old as this fir tree, who knew no rest nor peace, but was always longing to be away. These young trees, and they were the very finest ones, kept on all their branches; they too were placed on wagons and drawn by horses out of the wood.

"Where do they go to?" asked the fir tree. "They are no taller than I; indeed one of them was much smaller! Why do they keep on all their branches? Whither are they led away?"

"We know, we know," twittered the sparrows; "we have looked in at the windows of the town down yonder. We know where they go to. Oh! they attain to the greatest honour and splendour you can imagine! We have looked through the windows, and seen them planted in the middle of the warm room and decked out with the loveliest things: gilt apples, sweet cakes, playthings, and hundreds of lighted tapers."

"And then?" asked the fir tree, trembling in all its branches; "and then? What happens then?"

"We did not see any more. It was beyond compare!"

"Suppose I too am destined to tread this glorious path!" exulted the fir tree. "That is even better than crossing the sea. I ache with very longing! If it were only Christmas! If I were only in the

wagon—or in the warm room with all the pomp and splendour! And then——? Why, then comes something better and higher still, or else why do they decorate us so richly? It must be something greater and more splendid—but what? Ah, I long, and pine! I cannot tell how I feel."

"Be happy with us," said the air and sunshine; "rejoice in your fresh youth, under the free heaven."

But the fir tree would not rejoice; it grew, and grew; winter and summer through it stood there dark-green, tall, and stately; the people who saw it said, "That is a fine tree." And at Christmas-time it was the very first to be felled. The axe struck deep through bark and pith, the tree fell with a sigh to the earth; it felt a sharp pain and faintness; it could not think about splendour; it was sad at having to leave its home, and the spot where it had grown up; it knew very well that it would never see its dear old companions again, nor the little bushes and flowers; perhaps not even the birds. The parting was by no means joyous. The tree did not recover itself till it was unloaded in a yard with several others, and heard a man say, "This is a splendid one! We shall not want any others."

Then came up two servants in smart liveries and carried the tree into a large and beautiful drawing-room. Pictures were hung round the walls, and near the stove stood two large Chinese vases, with lions on the lids: there were rocking-chairs, and silk-covered sofas near large tables covered with picture-books and playthings worth a hundred times a hundred dollars, at least that was what the children said. The fir tree was placed in a large tub filled with sand; but no one could tell that it was a tub, because it was covered with fine green cloth, and stood on a rich, bright-coloured carpet. Oh! how the tree trembled! What would happen next? The servants and the young ladies helped to decorate it. Along its branches they hung little nets cut out of coloured paper and filled with sugar-plums; gilded apples and nuts hung down as if they were growing; and hundreds of red, and blue, and white tapers were fastened firmly to the branches. Dolls, that looked like real men and women—the fir tree had never seen such things before—swung among the leaves, and high above, on the top of the tree, was placed a golden star. It was splendid! indescribably splendid!

"To-night," they said, "to-night it will be lighted up."

"Oh," thought the tree, "if it were only night! If the tapers were but lighted! And what will happen then? I wonder whether the trees will come out of the wood to look at me? or the sparrows fly against the window-panes? Or shall I stand here in splendour winter and summer through?"

It did not guess badly, but it had a downright bark-ache from sheer longing; and bark-ache for a tree is just as bad as headache is for us. Now the tapers were lighted. What a glitter, and a blaze! The tree trembled so in all its branches that one of the tapers caught a green twig, and it was actually singed. "Mercy on us!" cried the young ladies, and put it out directly. After that the tree dared not even shiver. It gave it such a fright! It was afraid of losing any of its finery, and was quite dazzled by the glitter. And now two folding-doors were thrown open, and a crowd of children rushed in as if they wanted to upset the whole affair; the elder folk followed more deliberately. The

children stood quite silent; but only for one moment, then they shouted with delight till the room rang again; they danced round the tree, and one present after another was plucked off.

"What are they doing?" thought the tree. "What is going to happen?" The tapers burned down to the branches, and as each one burned down it was put out. Then the children had permission to strip the tree. Now they rushed upon it till it creaked in every branch! If it had not been fastened by the gold star to the ceiling it must have been knocked down. The children danced about with their beautiful playthings. Nobody looked at the tree except the old nurse, who came and peered among the branches, but that was only to see if a fig or an apple had been forgotten.

"A story! a story!" cried the children, and they drew a plump little man towards the tree; he sat down right under the branches. "Now we are out in the greenwood!" he said; "and the tree may have the privilege of listening. But I shall only tell one tale. Shall it be Ivede-Avede, or Humpty-Dumpty who fell down-stairs, and yet came to honour and glory and married the Princess?"

"Ivede-Avede!" shouted some of the children; "Humpty-Dumpty!" cried the others, and there was a fine racket. The fir tree stood perfectly still. "Am not I to be in it?" it thought; "shall not I have something to do in it?" But it *had* been in it, and played out all the part set down for it.

The man told about Humpty-Dumpty who fell down-stairs, and yet came to honour and glory and married the Princess. The children clapped their hands and cried, "Go on, go on!" They wanted the story of Ivede-Avede as well; but they only got Humpty-Dumpty. The fir tree kept very silent; never had the birds in the wood told such a tale as that. "Humpty-Dumpty fell down-stairs, and yet he married the Princess. Yes; that's the way things go on in the world," thought the fir tree; and it was sure it must be true, because it was such a respectable man who told it. "Yes! who can tell? Perhaps I shall fall down-stairs and marry a Princess." And it looked forward with delight to being adorned again the next day with lights and playthings, gold and fruits.

"I will not tremble to-morrow," it thought. "I will thoroughly enjoy all my splendour. I shall hear again the tale of Humpty-Dumpty, and perhaps Ivede-Avede as well." And the tree stood silent and thoughtful the whole night through. In the morning the servant men came in with the housemaid.

"Now they are going to dress me up again," thought the tree. But they dragged it out of the room and up the stairs to the garret, and there they put it in a dark corner where no ray of daylight fell.

"What is the meaning of this?" thought the tree. "Whatever am I to do here? What can I possibly hear now?" It leaned against the wall and thought. And it had plenty of time for thinking, for days and nights passed by. Nobody came upstairs, and when some one did come at last, it was only to put some large boxes in the corner. The tree was now completely hidden; it was enough to made one think it was quite forgotten. "It is winter out of doors now," thought the tree; "the ground is hard and I cannot be planted yet. Perhaps I am kept safe

here to wait for the spring. How considerate that is! How kind people are to me! If it were only not quite so dark and lonely up here. Not even a little hare! How pretty it was out yonder in the wood, when the snow lay round and the hare leapt by; yes, even when it leapt over me—though I could not bear it then. It certainly is dreadfully dull up here."

"Piep! piep!" squeaked a little mouse stealing out; and then came another little one. They sniffed round the fir-tree and slipped in among the branches.

"Its fearfully cold," said the little mouse, "or else it would be rather comfortable here. Don't you think so, you old fir-tree?"

"I am not at all old," said the fir-tree; "there are many firs much older than I."

"Where do you come from?" asked the mice; "and what can you tell us?" They were dreadfully inquisitive. "Can you tell us about the most beautiful place in the world? Have you ever been there? Have you been in the pantry, where the cheeses lie on the shelves, and hams hang from the ceiling? Where one dances on tallow candles, where one goes in lean and comes out fat?"

"I don't know that place," said the tree. "But I know the wood where the sun shines and the birds sing." And then it told them all about its youth, and the little mice had never heard anything like it before. They listened eagerly, and said, "Dear me! What a number of things you have seen! How fortunate you must have been!"

"*I?*" said the fir-tree, and it began to think over what it had just been telling them. "Well—yes; it was, on the whole, a happy time. But then it told them about the Christmas-eve when it had been dressed out with cakes and lighted tapers."

"Oh!" cried the little mice, "what a happy life you have had, you old fir-tree!"

"I'm not at all old," said the fir-tree. "I only came out of the wood this winter. I'm a little backward in my growth, perhaps."

"How nicely you tell tales!" said the little mice. And the next night they came with four other mice, to hear what the fir-tree had to say. The more it told them, the more clearly everything came back to it. "Yes," it thought, "they were happy days, after all! But they may come again. Humpty-Dumpty fell down stairs, and yet he married the princess; perhaps I shall marry a princess, too!" And it thought of a lovely little birch-tree out in the woods, for the birch-tree was a real and beautiful princess in the eyes of the fir-tree.

"Who is Humpty-Dumpty?" asked the mice. And then the fir-tree told them the whole story; it could recollect every word of it, and the little mice were ready to jump up to the top of the tree for joy. The following night a great many more mice came, and on Sunday two rats were present, but they did not think the story at all pretty, and that vexed the little mice, and they cared less about listening than they had done before.

"Do you only know one story?" asked the rats. "Only that one," said the fir-tree; "I heard that on the happiest evening of my life. I never thought then how happy I was."

"It is a most contemptible story. Don't you know any about bacon

or tallow candles? No store-room story?" "No," said the tree. "Then we have had enough, thank you," said the rats, and they went back to their own friends.

The little mice, too, stayed away at last; and the tree sighed. "It was really very nice when they sat round me, those lively little mice, and listened while I told them tales. But that is over now! Well, I must look forward to the pleasure I shall have when I am fetched away from here." Now, when did that happen? Why, it was one morning, when the people came up-stairs to set the garret to rights; they moved away the boxes, and drew out the fir-tree, which they threw rather roughly to the ground. A servant came up, then, and dragged it to the stair-case, where it was all clear daylight. "Now my life will begin again!" thought the tree. It felt the soft air, and the first sunbeams, and now it was out of doors in a court-yard. All this happened so quickly, that the tree had no time to think of itself; besides, there was so much to look at all round it. The yard was close to a garden, where everything was in full bloom; roses hung fresh and fragrant over the trellis, the lime trees were in blossom, and the swallows were flying about and saying, "Qui-viet-qui-viet! my husband is come home!" but they did not mean the fir-tree. "Now I begin to breathe again!" thought the tree, and spread out its branches far and wide; but, alas! they were all dry and yellow, and it was lying in a corner among weeds and nettles. The gold-tinsel star was still on the topmost bough, and it glittered in the sunshine.

In the yard some children were playing merrily; some of those very children who had danced round the tree on Christmas eve, and thought it so beautiful. One of the youngest ran up to it and tore off the gold star. "Look what was left on the ugly old fir-tree?" he cried, and trod upon the branches till they cracked again under his boots. And the tree looked at all the freshness and beauty of the flower garden, and then looked at itself, and wished it were back again in the dark garret. It thought of its joyous youth, of the brilliant Christmas night, and of the little mice who had listened so eagerly to the story of Humpty-Dumpty.

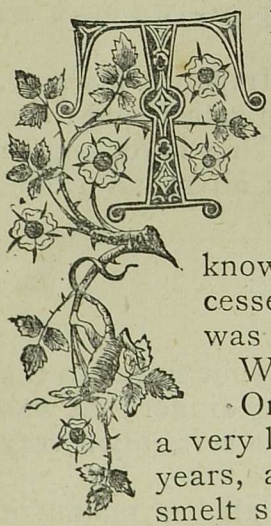
"Too late! too late!" said the old tree. "If I had only been happy while I could! Too late! too late!"

Then the servant came and chopped the tree into little pieces, there was a whole bundle of them, and they flamed out brightly under the large copper in the brewhouse; the branches sighed deeply, and every sigh rang out like a shot, so that the children left their play and came to sit down before the fire, looking into it, and crying out "Puff! puff!" But at every crack, which was a deep sigh, the tree thought of a summer's day in the woods, or of a winter night when the stars were shining; it thought of the Christmas-eve, and the story of Humpty-Dumpty, the only one it had heard, or could tell again—and by that time the tree was burned away.

The children played on in the garden, and the youngest wore on his breast the gold star which the tree had worn on the happiest evening of its life. Now that had passed away—and the tree had passed away—and the story was ended—ended and gone—and that's the way with all stories.

THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS.

The Swineherd.



THERE was once a poor prince; he had a kingdom, but it was a very little one. Still it was large enough for him to marry upon, and married he was determined to be.

Now perhaps it was rather bold of him to venture to say to the emperor's daughter, "Will you have me?" But he did venture, for his name was known far and wide, and there were hundreds of princesses who would gladly have said "yes;" the question was what would *she* say?

Well, we shall see.

On the grave of the prince's father grew a rose-tree—a very lovely rose-tree. It only bloomed once in every five years, and then it bore only one rose—but what a rose! It smelt so sweet that any one who smelt it forgot all his care and sorrow. And the prince had a nightingale who could sing as if all the beautiful melodies in the world were hidden in her little throat. The princess was to have the rose and the nightingale, so they were both packed in silver cases and sent to her.

The emperor had them brought before him into the throne room, where the princess was playing at paying visits with her maids of honour; and as soon as she saw the cases with the presents she clapped her hands for joy.

"If it is only a little pussy cat!" she said; but they brought out the rose-tree with its glorious rose.

"Oh, how prettily it is made!" cried the maids of honour.

"It is more than pretty, it is charming," said the emperor.

But the princess felt it and was ready to cry.

"Fie! papa," she cried; "why it is not artificial at all—it is a natural one!"

"Fie!" cried the court ladies; "it is a natural one!"

"Let us see what is in the other case before we lose our tempers," said the emperor, and out came the nightingale who sang so sweetly that for a moment no one could think of anything to say against it.

"Superbe charmant!" said the court ladies, for they all spoke French, one worse than the other.

"How the bird reminds me of the snuff box of Her Imperial Highness the late lamented empress!" said an old nobleman; "the same tone—the same phrasing!"

"Yes!" said the emperor, and began to cry like a child.

"Now I do hope *that's* not a natural one!" said the princess.

"Yes, it is," said the messenger who had brought it.

"Then let it fly!" said the princess, and she would not hear of the prince's coming.

He, however, was not to be frightened; he stained his face a deep brown, pulled his cap over his eyes, and knocked at the door. "Good

morning, emperor," he said. "Can I be taken on in your employment at the palace?"

"Perhaps," said the emperor; "but there are so many who come to me for a place, that I do not know if I can manage it. Stay! it just occurs to me that I want some one to keep the pigs—we have an immense number of pigs here."

So the prince was appointed swineherd to His Imperial Majesty. He was given a wretched little room close to the pigsties, and there he had to stay; all day long, however, he was working hard, and by nightfall he had made a pretty little pot with bells all round it, and when the pot boiled the bells rang out the old tune—

"Ah! my dearest Augustine,
All is gone by."

But the great beauty of it was, that when you held your finger in the steam from the pot, you could smell in a moment every dinner that was being cooked in every house in the town. That was certainly a very different thing from the rose.

Now the princess came walking by one day, with all her maids of honour, and when she heard the tune she stood still and looked quite delighted; for she could play "Dearest Augustine" herself; it was the only tune she knew, but she could play that with one finger.

"Why that is the air I play!" she cried. "He must be a gentlemanly swineherd! Listen: you go down to him and ask him what the instrument costs."

And one of the court ladies was obliged to go down, but first she put on wooden clogs.

"What do you want for that pot?" said the maid of honour.

"I want ten kisses from the princess," answered the swineherd.

"Goodness gracious!" said the maid of honour.

"And I won't take less," said the swineherd.

"Well, what did he say?" asked the princess.

"I really dare not tell you," said the maid of honour.

"You can whisper it in my ear. He is very rude," exclaimed the princess, and she walked on.

But when she had gone a little way farther the bells rang out so sweetly—

"Ah! my dearest Augustine,
All is gone by—gone by—gone by."

"Now, listen," said the princess, "ask him if he will take ten kisses from my maids of honour."

"No, thank you," said the swineherd; "ten kisses from the princess, or I keep my pot."

"How tiresome it is!" said the princess. "Well, you must all stand round me, so that no one can see."

The court ladies made a circle round them, spreading out their dresses, and then the swineherd got his ten kisses and the princess got her pot.

And highly delighted she was with it! All that night, and all the

next day, the pot was kept boiling; there was not a single house in the whole town where they did not know what was being cooked for dinner, from the Lord Chamberlain's down to the shoemaker's. The court ladies danced for joy, and clapped their hands.

"We know who is going to have soup and pancakes, and who is going to have porridge and cutlets. Is not it interesting?"

"Oh very!" exclaimed the first lady-in-waiting.

"Yes, but keep quiet about it, for I am the emperor's daughter."

"Certainly, certainly; of course we shall."

The swineherd, that is to say, the prince—though, for all they knew, he was nothing but a swineherd—let no day go by without making something, and once he made a rattle, which, when it was sprung, played all the waltzes, jigs, and polkas that have been heard since the creation.

"Really that is *superbe!*" said the princess. "I never heard a finer composition. Listen: you go down to him and ask what the instrument costs. Mind, I shall not kiss him again."

"He wants a hundred kisses from the princess," said the maid of honour, who had gone to inquire.

"I think he is out of his mind," said the princess, and she walked on. But when she had gone a little way farther she stood still. "One must encourage the fine arts," she said; "I am the emperor's daughter. Tell him he shall have ten kisses, as before; he can take the rest from my maids of honour."

"Oh! but we would rather not," said the court ladies.

"Nonsense!" cried the princess. "If I can kiss him, surely you can. Remember I find you board and wages." And they were obliged to go down to him again. "One hundred kisses from the princess," he said, "or each keeps his own."

"Stand round us, then," said the princess. So the maids of honour stood round them, and the swineherd kissed the princess.

"What is all that uproar down by the pigsties?" said the emperor, who was standing on the balcony. He rubbed his eyes, and put on his spectacles. "Why, I declare, it is the maids of honour at their tricks. I shall certainly have to go down to them." He slipped off his house shoes—they were really shoes, but he had trodden them down at heel, and made them into slippers.

Fire and fury! what a hurry he was in!

As soon as he reached the yard he walked very softly; and the maids of honour were so busy counting the kisses and seeing fair play that they never noticed the emperor. He raised himself on tiptoe.

"What is that?" he cried, when he saw the kissing, and he let fly one of his slippers on their heads, just as the swineherd was having the eighty-sixth kiss.

"Be off!" said the emperor, for he was angry. And the princess and the swineherd were both driven out of his kingdom.

There she stood and cried, and the rain streamed down, and the swineherd scolded. "Oh! miserable me!" cried the princess, "if I had only accepted the handsome prince! Ah! how unhappy I am!"

The swineherd stepped behind a tree, wiped off the brown stain from his face, cast away his mean clothing, and stepped forward in his royal

robes, so handsome that the princess was fain to curtsey low before him. "I have got to this point," he said. "I despise you. You refused an honourable prince; you were not capable of understanding the rose or the nightingale; but you could kiss a swineherd for a toy, and this is what you get by it." Then he went into his kingdom, and shut the door in her face. So she was left standing outside to sing—

"Ah! my dearest Augustine,
All is gone by."

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The Elf of the Roses.

IN the midst of a garden stood a rose-bush covered with roses, and in one of the roses, the most beautiful of all, there lived an Elf. He was so very tiny that no mortal eye could see him, and he had a sleeping-room behind every rose leaf. He was as beautifully made, and as fair as only a fairy can be, and his wings fell down from his shoulders to his feet. Ah! what fragrance breathed from his home; how soft and sweet were the walls! They were all built of pale pink rose leaves. All the day long he basked in the warm sunshine; flew from flower to flower, or danced on the wings of flying butterflies. He measured how many steps he must take to walk over all the roads and by-ways on a single leaf on the linden tree. For what we call the leaf's veins, he

took for high roads and winding paths, and very long he found them. Before he had finished his journey the sun set; he had begun a little too late.

It grew very cold; the dew fell, and the wind was rising: the best thing left for him to do was to hasten homeward. He made all the haste he could, but his roses had closed for the night; not a single flower was open. The poor little Elf was terribly frightened; he had never been out by night before, but had always slept sweetly among the soft, warm rose leaves. Certainly this night would be the death of him! At the other end of the garden he knew there was an arbour overgrown with beautiful honeysuckles, the flowers looked just like great painted horns, and he made up his mind to alight on one of them and sleep till morning. He flew towards them. Hush! in the arbour were two mortals, a handsome young man and a lovely girl. They were sitting close together, and wishing they need never part. They loved each other, ah! far better than the best child can love its father and mother.

"Yet we must part!" said the young man. "Your brother hates us, and that is why he is sending me on this business across seas and over mountains. Farewell, my sweet betrothed, for so in very truth you are."

Then they kissed each other and the young girl gave him a rose. But before she gave it, she kissed it so passionately that the flower opened its petals, and in flew the little Elf, and leaned his weary head against the fragrant walls. He heard how from the quivering leaves was still re-echoing "farewell! farewell!" And then he felt that the rose was laid against the young man's heart. Ah! how the heart was beating. The little Elf could not sleep for its wild throbbing. But the rose was not left there undisturbed. The youth took it from its resting place, and as he wandered alone through the dark, dark forest, he kissed it so often and so passionately that the tiny Elf was half stifled. He could feel the hot lips through the trembling leaves, and the rose opened wide, as if under the burning noonday sun. Then came up another man, sullen and evil of heart; it was the fair girl's wicked brother. He drew out a sharp knife, and, while the lover kissed the rose, he stabbed him to the heart, cut off his head, and buried head and body in the soft earth under the linden tree.

"Now he is made away with," thought the wicked brother. "He can never return, and he will be forgotten. He was to take a long journey over sea and mountain where lives are easily lost, and he has lost *his* life. He can never return, and my sister dares not ask questions of me." Then he scraped with his feet the withered leaves over the loose earth, and went home again through the gloomy night. But he did not go alone, as he thought, for the Elf was his companion. The little creature sat in a dry, rolled-up leaf that had fallen from the linden tree into the murderer's hair as he dug the grave. His hat was over the leaf so that all was dark, and the Elf trembled with rage and horror at the evil deed.

In the early dawn the wicked man reached his home; he took off his hat and went into his sister's bedroom. There lay the lovely, blooming maiden, dreaming of him whom she loved with all her heart, and who, as she thought, was wandering far away over seas and mountains.

The wicked brother leaned over her and laughed an evil laugh, like the laugh of a fiend. Then the withered leaf fell from his hair on to the coverlet, but he did not notice it, and went out to sleep a little before the sun rose. The Elf stole out of the fallen leaf, placed himself in the maiden's ear, and told her in a dream of the terrible murder, describing the place where her lover lay slain by her brother's hand, and whispering of the blossoming linden over-head. "Lest you should think it is all a dream," he said, "you will find upon your bed a withered leaf." And when she woke there lay the leaf!

Oh! what bitter tears she shed. Her window stood open all day long. The Elf could easily have flown to his roses and the other flowers in the garden, but he could not find it in his heart to leave the grief-stricken maiden. In the window stood a little tree of monthly roses; the Elf seated himself in one of them and watched the heart-broken girl. Her brother often came into her room, and in spite of his evil deed looked bold and gay; but she dared not say a word of her sorrow.

As soon as night came on, she stole out of the house, went through the forest to the place where the linden tree stood; swept away the leaves, removed the earth, and found the body of the murdered youth. Oh! how she wept, and prayed to God that she too might die soon. She would gladly have carried the body home, but that she could not do; so she took the pale head, with its closed eyes, kissed the cold lips, and shook the earth out of the beautiful hair. "I will keep this," she said. And when she had replaced the earth and leaves over the body, she took the head, and a little spray of jasmine that was growing close by, and carried them to her home. When she reached her own room, she took the largest flower-pot she could find, placed within it the beloved head, covered it with earth, and planted above it the jasmine spray.

"Farewell, farewell!" whispered the little Elf, for he could not bear the sight of all this sorrow. He flew back to his roses in the garden, but they were all faded, and only pale, dead leaves hung on the green haws. "Oh, how quickly the good and beautiful pass away!" sighed the Elf. At last he found another rose, which he chose for his home, and in its delicate, fragrant leaves he could abide and dwell.

Every morning he flew to the poor girl's window; she was always standing weeping by the flower-pot. Her bitter tears fell on the slip of jasmine, and while she grew paler and paler day by day, the plant grew fresher and greener; one shoot after another sprang forth; tiny white buds came out and blossomed, and she kissed them all. But the wicked brother spoke harshly to her, asking her if she had lost her senses; he could not bear to see her, nor could he understand why she was for ever weeping by the flower-pot. He knew not of the closed eyes slumbering there, nor of the red lips which had mingled with the dust. One day the maiden bowed her head upon the flower-pot, and the Elf of the roses found her sleeping. He stole softly into her ear to whisper stories of the twilight in the grove, of the fragrance of the roses, and of the loves of the elves. And she dreamed a strange, sweet dream, and as she dreamed her spirit passed away—fading in peaceful death, to meet him whom she loved in heaven. Then the

jasmine spray opened its great white bells, and poured out streams of wondrous fragrance; it was its only way of weeping for the dead. But the wicked brother saw the lovely, blossoming plant, and claimed it for his own possession. He placed it in his chamber, close to his bed, for it was beautiful to look upon, and its fragrance was rich and sweet. The Elf of the roses followed it and flew from flower to flower, in each of which dwelt a tiny soul; he told them the story of the murdered youth whose head was now dust with their dust, and of the wicked brother and the heart-broken maiden.

"We know it, we know it!" cried the souls of the flowers. "Have we not sprung from his eyes and lips? We know it all!" And they waved their heads in strange, mysterious fashion. The Elf of the roses could not understand how they could be so calm; he flew out to the honey-bees and told them all the story. The bees told it to their queen, and she commanded that on the next day the murderer should be slain. But on that very night—it was the first night after the young girl's death—as the brother lay sleeping in his bed, close to the jasmine tree, the blossoms unfolded, and unseen, but armed with poisonous stings, out streamed the souls of the flowers, placed themselves in his ear, telling him fearful dreams, flew across his lips and stung his tongue with their poison-darts.

"Now we have avenged the dead!" they cried, and flew back to the white bells of the jasmine. When the morning came, and the window was opened wide, in flew the Elf of the roses, the queen bee and her swarm of warriors to slay the murderer. But he was already dead. Round his bed stood frightened servants, and said, "The scent of the jasmine has killed him."

Then the Elf of the roses understood the vengeance of the flowers, and told it to the queen bee, who buzzed with all her swarm round the flower-pot. No one could drive the bees away. One of the men took up the flower-pot to carry it out, and a bee stung his hand, so that he let fall the pot, and it broke to pieces. Then they saw the whitened skull, and knew that the dead man on the bed was a murderer.

The queen bee buzzed through the air, and sang of the vengeance of the flowers and of the Elf of the roses; and how behind the smallest petal lives one who can reveal and avenge all evil.

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The Emperor's New Clothes.

MANY years ago there lived an emperor, who thought so much of new clothes, that he spent all his money on magnificent costumes. He cared nothing at all about his army or the theatre; his only pleasure was walking out to show his new clothes. He had a coat for every day in the year, and just as one says of a king, "he is in the council," so one always said of this emperor, "he is in his toilette chamber."

The great town where he lived was very lively; foreigners used to arrive there every day. One day there came two swindlers, who gave themselves out for weavers, and said that they could weave the most beautiful cloth that could be imagined. It was not only that the colours and patterns were so unusually beautiful, but that the clothes which were made out of the material possessed the singular quality of being invisible to any one who was either stupid or unfit for his office.

"Those would indeed be valuable clothes," thought the emperor. "If I had them on I should be able to get at the truth as to which men in my kingdom are unfit for the office which they hold. I could distinguish wise men from fools. Yes, the cloth must be woven for me at once." And he gave the swindlers a great deal of money in advance that they might set about their work. So they put up two looms, and made as if they were weaving, but they had nothing whatever on the looms. They then demanded the finest silk and the richest gold, all which they put in their own pockets, and worked away at the empty looms till late in the night. "I should very much like to know how they are getting on with the cloth," thought the emperor; but he felt positively nervous when he reflected that no one would be able to see it, who was either stupid or unfit for his office. Now he certainly took it for granted that he had nothing to fear for himself, but still he preferred to send some one else first just to see how it was getting on. All the townsfolk knew of the singular power of the cloth, and every body was anxious to see how worthless and stupid his neighbours were.

"I will send my worthy old minister to the weavers first," thought the emperor. "He can decide best how the cloth looks, for he has plenty of brains, and no one could be better fitted for his post than he is."

Well, the good old minister entered the room where the two swindlers sat working at their empty looms. "Heaven preserve us!" thought the old man, "I can't see a mortal thing!" But he did not say so. The swindlers begged him to be so kind as to step nearer, and asked him if it were not a beautiful design and colour.

"Great heavens!" he thought to himself. "Can I be stupid? I have never found it out, and no one else must either. Am I unfit for my office? Oh, it will never do for me to say I can't see the cloth!"

"Have you nothing to say to it?" asked one of the weavers.

"Very nice, very charming," answered the old minister, looking hard through his spectacles. "The pattern and the colours are equally wonderful. Yes, I shall tell the emperor that I am very pleased with it."

"We are glad of that," said the weavers; and then they mentioned the names of the colours and explained the singular pattern. The old minister paid great attention, so that he might repeat it all to the emperor, which he did as soon as he got back. The swindlers then demanded more money, more silk, and more gold, all of which they pretended to use in the weaving. They pocketed all they received; not a thread came on the looms, but they went on as before, working busily at nothing.

Soon afterwards the emperor sent another honourable statesman to

see how the weaving was going on, and whether the cloth would soon be ready, and he fared no better than the first. He looked, and looked, but since there was nothing there but the empty looms, nothing could he see.

"Is it not a splendid piece of cloth?" asked the two swindlers, pointing out the beauties of the pattern which was not there at all.

"I am not stupid," thought the statesman; "it must be my good office that I am not fit for. It is rather absurd, but I must keep my own counsel," and so he praised the cloth which he did not see, and expressed his delight at the beautiful colours and tasteful pattern.

"Yes, it is quite charming," he said to the emperor. All the town was talking about the beautiful cloth. The emperor thought that he should like to see it himself while it was still on the loom. Accompanied by a suite of distinguished men, among whom were the two eminent statesmen who had been there before, he went to the two cunning weavers, who were weaving away with might and main, but without either fabric or thread.

"Is it not magnificent?" cried the two old statesmen who had been there before. "Let your majesty deign to remark the pattern, the colours," and they pointed to the empty loom, for they thought that all the others could see the cloth.

"What!" thought the emperor. "I see nothing at all! Oh, that is dreadful! Am I a fool? Am not I fit to be emperor? That would be the most shocking thing that has ever happened to me. Yes, it is very pretty," he said; "it has my imperial approval." And he nodded in a condescending manner, and looked at the empty looms, for he would not say that he could see nothing. The whole suite who were with him looked, and looked, and could make no more of it than the others, but they said after the emperor, "Yes, it is very pretty." They advised him to wear the magnificent dress for the first time in the great procession which was about to take place. "Charming, elegant, exquisite!" was passed from mouth to mouth; every one seemed immensely delighted, and the emperor granted the swindlers the title of "weavers to the imperial court."

The whole night through, before the day when the procession was to take place, the two swindlers were up and stirring. They had lighted sixteen candles, and all the townspeople could see how hard they were working to finish the emperor's new clothes. They pretended to take the cloth down from the looms, they cut with great scissors in the air, they sewed with needles which had no thread in them, and at last they said "The clothes are ready." The emperor came himself with his most distinguished nobles; and the swindlers lifted up one arm high in the air as if they were holding something, and said, "Look! here are the trousers, here is the coat, here is the mantle!" and so on. "It is as light and fine as cobweb, one would think one had nothing on, but that is just the beauty of it!" "Yes," said the noblemen; but they could not see anything, because there was nothing to be seen. "May it please your imperial majesty graciously to take off your clothes," said the swindlers, "and we will put on your new ones here before the large mirror."

The emperor took off all his clothes, and the swindlers pretended to put

on each separate article of the newly-finished suit, while the emperor twisted and twirled about before the mirror.

"How beautifully they sit!" exclaimed everybody. "What a splendid fit! What a pattern, and what colours. It is an exquisite costume!"

"They are waiting outside with the canopy which is to be held over your majesty in the procession," announced the master of the ceremonies.

"Look, I am ready!" said the emperor; "Doesn't it fit well?" and then he turned once more to the looking-glass, as if he were carefully examining his new costume. The chamberlains who were to bear his train pretended to lift up something from the floor, and walked just as if they were holding a train in the air; they dared not let it appear that they could see nothing.

So the emperor walked in procession under the splendid canopy, and all the crowd, in the street and at the windows, exclaimed, "Look how incomparably beautiful the emperor's new clothes are! What a train he has! and how extremely well they fit." No one would allow it for a moment that he could see nothing at all, for then he must either be considered stupid or unfit for his office. None of the emperor's clothes had been such a success as these. "But he has nothing on!" cried a little child at last. "Just listen to this little innocent," said its father; and one whispered to another what the child had said. "But he has nothing on!" shouted all the people at last. That struck the emperor, for it appeared to him that they were right; but he thought to himself, "I must go through with the procession now." And the chamberlains walked more stiffly than ever, and held up the train which was not there at all.

The Storks.

IN the last house in a little village was a stork's nest. The mother-stork sat in it with her four young ones, who all stretched out their pointed black beaks which had not had time to turn red yet. A little way off, on the top of the pointed roof, stood the father-stork, erect and stiff as could be. He had drawn up one leg under him, so as not to be entirely idle while he stood on guard. You would have thought he was cut out of wood, so still he stood. "It looks highly genteel for my wife to have a sentinel near her nest," he thought; "no one can tell that I am her husband. People are sure to think that I have been ordered to stand here. That looks so aristocratic!" And he went on standing on one leg.

Down in the street below, a troop of children were playing, and as soon as they saw the storks, one of the boldest began, and all the rest

joined in after him, to sing the old song about the storks. But they only sang it as they could remember it :—

"Stork, stork! fly home, I beg,
Leave off standing on one leg;
Your wife is sitting in the nest,
Rocking the little ones to rest :—
But the first shall be hanged,
And the second stabbed instead,
And the third shall be roasted,
And the fourth shot dead!"

"Just listen to what those boys are singing!" cried the young storks; "they say we shall be hanged and roasted." "Never you trouble about that," said the mother stork; "don't listen to it, and then it wont hurt you."

But the boys went on singing, and they snapped their fingers at the storks; one boy, however, whose name was Peter, said that it was wicked to mock at dumb creatures, and would not play with them. The

mother-stork comforted the young ones. "Don't pay any attention to them," she said; "just look at your father how quietly he stands, and that on one leg!" "We are very frightened," said the young storks, and they drew down their heads deep into the nest.

The next day, no sooner did the children come out to play again and see the storks, than they began their song—

"The first shall be hanged,
And the second stabbed instead."

"Shall we be hanged and stabbed?" said the young storks. "Certainly not," said the mother; "you shall learn to fly; I shall drill you nicely. Then we will fly out to the meadow and pay the frogs a visit.

They will bow to us in the water and sing, 'Ko-ax, ko-ax!' and then we shall eat them up; it will be such fun." "And what then?" asked the young storks. "Then all the storks in this country will meet together, and the grand autumn review will begin; everybody must fly well; it is of the highest importance, for whoever cannot do it is stabbed to death by the general's beak. So mind you try and learn something when we begin our practice." "Then we shall be stabbed after all, as the boys said, and just listen, they are singing it again now."

"Listen to me and not to them," said the mother-stork. "After the grand review, we shall fly to warm countries far from here, over mountains and forests. We shall fly to Egypt, where there are three cornered stone houses that run to a point, high above the clouds. They are called pyramids, and are older than any stork can imagine. There is a river, too, which overflows its banks, and turns the whole country to mud. One walks about in the mud, and eats frogs."

"Oh-h!" cried the young storks. "Yes, it is most delightful. One does nothing but eat all day long; and while we are enjoying ourselves so much, there is not a green leaf on the trees in this country; it is so cold that the clouds freeze in pieces and fall down in little white rags." It was the snow she meant, but she could not describe it any better.

"Do the naughty boys freeze in pieces?" asked the young storks. "No, they don't freeze quite in pieces, but they do very nearly. They are obliged to sit and shiver in a dark room, while you are flying about in foreign countries, where there are flowers and warm sunshine."

Time passed on, and the young storks grew so tall that they could stand upright in their nests, and look about far and wide. The father-stork came every day with beautiful frogs and young snakes, and every kind of stork dainties that he could find. And it was most amusing when he showed them all his wonderful feats. He could lay his head right on to his tail, and clap with his beak as if it were a little clapper; and he told them stories all about the marshes. "Now you must learn to fly," said the mother-stork one day, and the four young ones were obliged to go out on to the top of the roof. How they waddled about, and balanced themselves with their wings, and after all were near tumbling off ever so many times.

"Just look at me!" said the mother. "This is the way to hold your head; this is the way to place your feet. One, two; one, two; that's the way to get on in the world." Then she flew a short distance, and the young ones gave a little helpless jump. Bump! down they came, for their bodies were so top-heavy.

"I won't fly," said one of the young ones, creeping back into the nest; "I don't care about going to warm countries."

"Do you want to freeze here, then, when the winter comes? Do you want the boys to come and hang you, and burn you, and roast you? Shall I call them now?" "No, no!" cried the young stork, and hopped out again on to the roof after the others. On the third day they could fly a little way, and they thought they could hover motionless in the air. They tried it; and bump, down they came, and

had to flutter their wings quickly. Then the boys came into the street below, and sang—

"Stork, stork, fly home, I beg."

"Shall we not fly down and pick out their eyes?" asked the young ones.

"No; leave them alone," said the mother. "Listen to me, that is of much greater consequence. One, two, three! now fly to the right: one, two, three! now fly to the left round the chimney. That was very well. That last stroke with the feet was so graceful and true, that I shall give you leave to fly with me to the marsh to-morrow. We shall meet several nice stork families with their children; let them see that mine are the best bred, and that you can strut about nicely. It looks well, and inspires respect."

"But may we not revenge ourselves on those naughty boys?" asked the young storks.

"Let them shout till they are tired. You will fly up to the clouds, and go to the country of the pyramids, while they are being frozen and have not even a green leaf or a sweet apple."

"But we will have our revenge," they whispered one to another, and then they were drilled again. Now, of all the boys in the street none was fonder of singing the mocking song than the very one who had begun it, and he was a little fellow, perhaps not more than six years old. The young storks, however, thought he was a hundred, because he was so much taller than their father and mother, and what did they know about the ages of children and grown-up people? Their whole vengeance was meant for this boy; he had begun it first, and he was the one to keep it up. The young storks were furious, and as they grew bigger they were less inclined to put up with it. The mother was obliged to promise them at last that they should be revenged, but not till the last day of their stay.

"First, we must see how you behave at the grand review. If you come off badly so that the general stabs you through the breast with his beak, why the boys will be in the right, at least in one sense. Now, let us see."

"Yes, that you shall," cried the young storks, and from that time they practised every day, and took such pains, that at last they flew so gracefully and easily that it was a pleasure to see them. Autumn came on; all the storks began to flock together and pass over into warm countries during our winter. It was something like a review. Over forests and villages they went, just to show how well they could fly; for it was a long voyage that lay before them. The young storks got through so capitally that they received the certificate "Highly commended," with frogs and mice. It was the first-class certificate, and they might eat the frogs and mice. And so they did. "Now we will revenge ourselves," they said. "Yes, certainly," said the mother-stork. "I have thought of just the very thing. I know where the pond is where all the little children lie till the stork brings them to their parents. The pretty little things sleep and dream more sweetly than they will ever dream again. Every father and mother would like to have such a child, and every child longs for a little brother or sister

Let us fly down to the pond and fetch one for every child who would not sing the wicked song, nor mock at the storks."

"But the one who began it—the wicked, ugly boy," screamed the young storks, "what shall we do to him?"

"In the pond there lies a little dead baby, who has dreamed itself to death—we will take that for him, and he will cry because we have brought him a little dead brother. But the good boy—you have not forgotten him, I hope?—the one that said it was wicked to mock at dumb creatures, we will bring him a brother and a sister as well. And since the boy was named Peter, you shall all be named Peter, too."

And everything was done as she said; all the storks were called Peter, and are called so to this day.

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Two Lovers.

A HUMMING-TOP and a ball were lying together in a box among many other playthings, and the top said to the ball, "Shall we not be engaged to each other, you and I, since we are thrown together in the same box?" But the ball, which was covered with morocco, and thought as much of herself as any fine lady could do, would not even listen to such a thing.

The next day came the little boy who owned the playthings; he painted the top red and yellow, and drove a brass nail into the middle of it. It looked most brilliant when it spun round. "Look at me," said the top to the ball; "shan't we be engaged? We suit each other so exactly; you can leap and I can dance. No one could possibly be happier than we should be." "Indeed! That is your opinion," said the ball. "You are probably not aware that my papa and mamma were morocco slippers, and that I have a Spanish cork in my body." "Well, I'm made of mahogany," said the top. "The mayor himself turned me; he has a lathe of his own, and he turned me just for his amusement." "May I depend upon that?" asked the ball. "May I never be whipped if it's false!" replied the top. "You know how to plead your cause well," said the ball; "but indeed I cannot, I am as good as engaged to a swallow. Every time I fly up in the air he puts his head out of his nest and says 'Will you?' And I have said yes in my own mind, so that is as good as a half engagement. But I shall never forget you." "Much good that will do," said the top. And they did not speak to each other again.

The next day the ball was taken out by the little boy. The top watched it flying high into the air like a bird, till it flew right out of sight. It came back again after a while, but it gave a great bounce every time it touched the earth; and that occurred either because of its upward longings, or because it had a Spanish cork in its body. The

ninth time, however, the ball stayed away, and did not come down again; the little boy looked and looked for it, but off it was. "I know very well where she is," sighed the top, "She is in the swallow's nest; she has married the swallow."

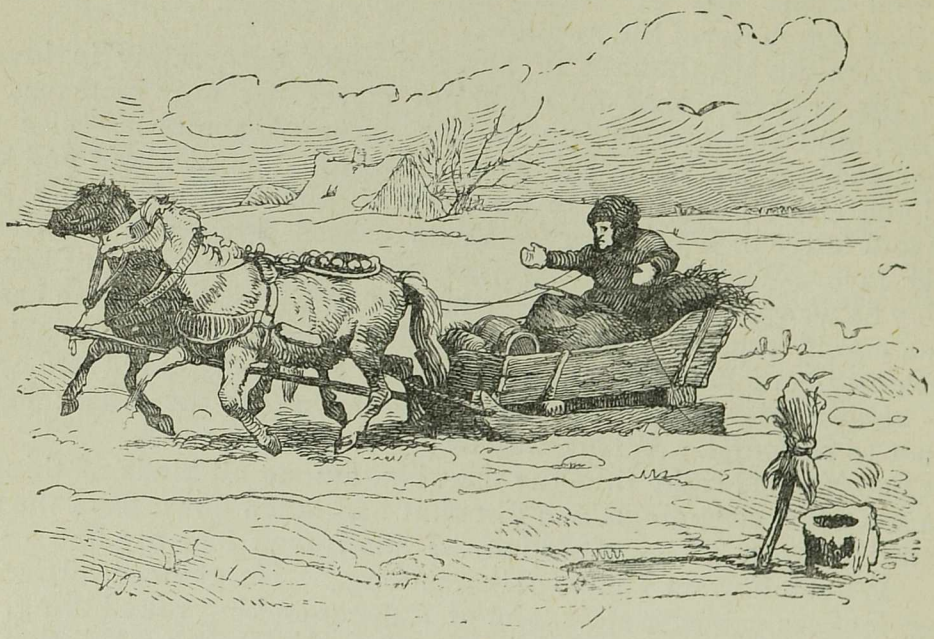
The more the top thought of her, the more desperately in love he grew; the very fact that he could not marry her only increased his affection, and the fact of her having accepted somebody else was another peculiar feature in the case. The top danced about and spun round, but his thoughts were always with the ball, who daily grew fairer and fairer in his memory. Years passed away, and now it was an old love. The top himself was no longer young. But behold! one day he was gilt all over—never had he looked so handsome before; he was a gold top now, and spun till he hummed again. That was something like. But all at once he sprang up too high, and off he was. They sought and sought for him, even down into the cellar; but he was not to be found. Where was he?

He had jumped right into the dust-bin, among all kinds of things—cabbage-stalks, sweepings, and dirt that had fallen down from the roof. "Well, this is a pretty situation. I shall soon lose my fine gilding here. What a low set I have fallen among." He glanced furtively at a long, leafless cabbage-stalk, and at a queer-looking round thing, that he took for an old apple. But it was no apple; it was a ball that had lain for years in the roof-gutter, and been soaked through and through.

"Thank goodness, here comes one of my own class, to whom I can speak," said the ball, looking at the gilt top. "I am really made of morocco, sewn by the hands of ladies; and I have a Spanish cork in my body, though no one would think so to look at me now. I was once on the point of marrying a swallow, but I fell into the roof-gutter, where I lay for five years, and was quite soaked through. Believe me, that is a long time for a young ball."

But the top did not say a word; he thought of his old love, and the more he heard the more certain he was that it was she. The servant-girl came up just then to turn out the dust-bin. "Hallo! why here is the gold top," she cried.

And the top came once more to honour and distinction, but nothing was ever heard of the ball. The top never spoke again of his old flame; it dies out you see; when the beloved one has lain for five years in the roof-gutter and been soaked through—one does not even speak when one meets her in the dust-bin.



The Year's Story.

IT was far on in January, a fearful snow-storm was raging. The snow whirled through streets and lanes, clung to the window panes, and fell in heaps from the roofs. Everybody seemed in a hurry; they ran, and flew, and rushed into each other's arms, where they held on tight and were safe, at least for a while. Carriages and horses were powdered over as if with fine white sugar, the footmen stood with their backs close against the carriage, and drove with faces turned from the wind; the foot-passengers kept in the shelter of the carriages, which moved slowly through the deep snow, and when the storm was lulled at last, and a narrow footpath had been shovelled away in front of the houses, people would stand still on it when they met any one. No one liked to take the first step, and tread aside in the deep snow, to let the other pass by. There they stood, motionless, until, as if by a sudden, tacit agreement, each gave up one leg for lost, and plunged it into the heap of snow.

Towards evening the wind had fallen, the sky looked as if it had been newly swept, and made higher and more transparent; the stars seemed brand-new, and some of them were wondrously bright and clear. Everything froze till it cracked again, the topmost layer of snow was so hard before morning, that it could bear the sparrows; they hopped up and down the snow heaps, but they could not find much to eat, and they were terribly cold.

"Tweet!" said one to the other, "call this a new year? Why, it's

worse than the old one. We might just as well have kept the last. I am dissatisfied, and I have a right to be so."

"Yes; and yet men are running about firing of shots in honour of the new year," said a little frozen-out sparrow. "They throw missiles against the doors, and seem beside themselves for joy because the old year is gone away. I was glad of it myself, for I hoped we should have warm weather; but nothing of the kind, it is worse than ever. The people must have made a mistake in their calculation of the time."

"So they have," said a third, who was old and white-tailed. "They have what they call an almanack, entirely their own invention, and everything has to take the time from that; but it is all wrong. The year begins when the spring comes; that's the course of nature, and that's the way I reckon."

"But when does the spring come?" asked the others. "It comes when the stork returns, but that is very uncertain. In the town no one knows anything definite about it; they know more in the country. Shall we fly out there and wait? We shall certainly be nearer the spring there, than we are here."

"That is all very well," said one of the sparrows, who had been chirping and hopping about for a long time without saying anything; "but I have found one or two comforts in the town that I should be afraid of missing out there. Up a court near here there lives a family of people who have had the sensible idea of putting three or four flower-pots outside the window, with the round holes in the bottom of the pots turned outward to the street. Now these holes are just large enough for me to fly in and out. I and my husband have our nest inside, and all our young ones have been brought up from the same place. Of course the people arranged the whole affair, so that they might have the pleasure of seeing us, or else they would never have thought of it. And for their own amusement they throw out bread crumbs, so that we get our meals regularly, and are quite provided for. I think, therefore, that I and my husband will stay, although we are very dissatisfied, still we shall stay." "And we shall fly off to the country," said the others, "to see if the spring is not coming!" So off they flew.

Out in the country the winter was sharp indeed. It froze many degrees harder than in the town; the keen wind swept across the snow covered plains; the peasant sat in his sleigh with great driving gloves on, and beat his arms smartly across his chest, to keep the cold out; the whip lay on his knees; the lean horses ran till they smoked again; the snow crackled; the sparrows hopped about in the wheel ruts and shivered. "Tweet! when will the spring come? It is a long while coming." "Very long!" sounded from the nearest snow covered hill across the field. It might have been an echo, or the voice of the strange old man who sat there on the piled up snow, out in the wind and weather. He was all in white, like a peasant in a coarse smock frock, with white hair, pale face, and great clear eyes.

"Who is the old man yonder?" asked the sparrows.

"I know," said an old raven, who was sitting on the finger-post, and was condescending enough to acknowledge that they were all little

birds in the sight of God, and therefore deigned to talk and explain things to the sparrows: "It is winter, the old man of last year; he is not dead as the almanack says, but he is guardian to the little spring who is coming. Yes, winter still rules the year. Ugh! aren't you cold, you little things?"

"Now, is it not just as I said?" exclaimed the youngest; "the almanack is a mere human invention, and not at all according to nature. They ought to have left that to us who are more delicately constituted."

One week, two weeks, passed away. The frozen lake lay stark and looked like molten lead, and there came damp, ice-cold mists that hung over the earth; the great black crows flew off in long, silent files. It was as if all was sleeping. Then a sunbeam darted across the lake, which glittered like burnished silver. The snow upon the fields no longer sparkled, but the white figure, winter himself, sat still there, his eyes turned fixedly southwards; he did not see how the snow-carpet sank suddenly into the earth, and here and there a green spot came to light. All at once the air was filled with sparrows. "Tweet, tweet! is the spring coming now?"

"The spring!" re-echoed over field and plain, and through the dark brown woods where the moss glittered bright green on the tree-stems; up from the south came the first storks flying through the air, on the back of each sat a lovely little child, a boy and girl. The children kissed the earth as if in greeting, and wherever they set their feet, there sprang up white flowers through the snow. Hand in hand they came to the old ice-man, winter, and nestled in tender greeting close to his breast, when in a moment all three, and the whole landscape with them, were shrouded in thick, damp vapour, veiling all around. Gradually the wind rose—rose to a roar, and with wild fury drove away the mist. The sun shone warm; the winter had vanished, and spring's fair children sat upon the New Year's throne.

"*This* I do call a new year!" said the sparrows. "Now we shall doubtless obtain our due, and get some compensation for the hard winter."

Wherever the two children turned, there broke forth green buds on bush and tree; the grass shot up, the seed grew greener in the fields. The little girl strewed flowers all around; they lay piled up in her dress, and though she threw them out in showers, the dress was always full, till in her eagerness she scattered a perfect snow-storm of blossoms on the apple and peach-trees so that they stood out in full glory, even before they had put forth their green leaves. Then she clapped her hands, and so did the little boy, on which flocks of birds came flying up, no one knew from whence, and all of them twittered and sang, "The spring is come!"

It was beautiful to see! Many a poor old woman crept out of her cottage door into the sunshine, to stretch herself comfortably, and cast a look on the yellow flowers that bloomed so proudly in the fields. All around her looked as it used to do in her own young days long ago; the world itself looked young again. "It is a blessed day out of doors, to-day," she said. The woodroffe was already there, fresh and fragrant; violets in abundance, primulas and anemones were coming up, and

every blade of grass was full of life and sap; it was a royal carpet on which one felt obliged to sit and rest. There, too, sat the children of the spring, hand in hand; sang, laughed, and grew taller day by day.

A soft rain fell upon them, but they did not feel it; rain drops and joyous tears were mingled in one. Bride and bridegroom, they kissed each other, and at their kiss the forest trees burst into leaf. When the sun rose it found the woodlands green.

Hand in hand walked the bridal pair under the fresh green roof of leaves, where only the play of light and shadow brought out the ever-varying colours. What virgin purity, what refreshing fragrance breathed from the delicate leaves! Clear and sparkling rippled brook and streamlet between the velvet sedge, over the coloured pebbles. All nature breathed of eternal peace and plenty. The cuckoo sang, and

the lark trilled; it was a glorious spring; but the willows would wear woollen gloves over their blossoms, they are so very prudent; it is quite tiresome of them.

Days—weeks passed away; the warmth came steadily downwards; waves of hot air surged through the corn, which grew more golden day by day. The white water-lily, the lotus of the north, spread out its wide green leaves upon the mirror of the woodland lakes, and the fishes sought its cool shadow. On the sheltered side of the wood, where the sun caught the walls of the peasants' houses and warmed the unfolded roses, and the cherry-trees which were loaded with black, juicy, sun-filled fruit, there sat the wife, she whom we have seen as child and bride; her glance rested on the dark, soaring clouds, which, violet-tinged, heavy and shaped like mountain crests, rose higher and higher. They came from three sides, ever-increasing like a petrified, inverted sea; they sank down towards the woods, where all lay hushed as in a trance. Not a breath of air was stirring, the birds were silent, awe and expectation thrilled the landscape; but along the roads and by-ways carriage, horse, and foot-passengers hurried along to seek for shelter. Then suddenly it flamed out as if the sun had blazed from the sky—blinding, dazzling, devouring—and the darkness closed in again with a roar and a crash. The water poured down in streams; light followed dark, and thunder chased the silence.

The young, brown, feathery reeds on the moor rose and fell in steady waves; the tree-sprays in the forest were veiled in rainy mist; darkness came; light broke in; silence and tumult followed each other. The grass and corn lay as if trodden down, and washed away never to rise again. Suddenly the rain dwindled to solitary drops; the sun shone out, and on blade and leaf the raindrops sparkled like pearls. The birds sang, fishes darted to and fro across the surface of the water. Swarms of gnats danced in the air, and far out on a rock in the salt, lashing waters of the sea, sat the summer himself—the stately man with stalwart limbs and wet, dripping hair—made young again by his fresh bath, he sat there in the warm sunshine. All nature had won back her youth; all around was lovely, strong, luxuriant. It was summer—bright, glorious summer!

Pleasant and sweet rose the fragrance from the swelling clover-fields; the bees were humming round the ruined temple of the old gods; blackberry tendrils wound round the stone altar, newly washed by the rain, and glittering in the sun; thither flew the queen bee with her swarm, and made ready wax and honey. None saw it but the summer and his queenly wife; for them was the altar-table spread, and decked with nature's offering.

The sunset sky burned like gold; no cathedral dome sparkles with such lustre, and the moon shone from dusk to sunrise—it was summer!

Days passed—weeks passed away. The bare scythes of the reapers gleamed in the corn-fields; the heavy boughs of the apple trees bent low under the red and yellow fruit; the hops breathed fragrance from their hanging clusters, and underneath the hazel bushes where the nuts hung in rich bunches, man and wife were resting—the Summer with his thoughtful wife.

"What lavish wealth!" she said, "all round the blessing has spread; everywhere it is sweet and homelike, and yet—I know not why—I long for rest, for peace; I cannot find the word. See, they are ploughing again in yonder field. Men are always trying to gain more and more. At a little distance behind the plough come flocks of storks, the birds of Egypt, who carried us hither through the air. Do you remember how we children came up to the northern land? We brought with us flowers, and pleasant sunshine, and green woodlands. The wind has dealt hardly with them; they darken and turn brown like the trees of the south, but unlike them they bear no golden fruits."

"Do you wish to see the golden fruit?" cried the Summer; "rejoice then!" He raised his hand and the woodland leaves turned red and golden; a glory of colour fell on every forest; the hedges flamed out with scarlet hips and haws; the elder trees hung heavy with dark rich clusters; wild chestnuts burst from their green shells, and in the woods the violets bloomed a second time.

But the queen of the year grew paler and more silent. "It blows cold," she said; "the night brings chill mists. I long for the home of my childhood." She watched the storks each and all as they flew away, and stretched out her hands after them. She looked up to the nests which were standing empty; in one of them grew the long stemmed cornflower, in another the yellow rapeseed, as if the nest was only there for their comfort and shelter, and the sparrows flew into the storks' nests. "Tweet! Where are the good people of the house? I dare say they cannot bear the cold, and so have left the country. A pleasant journey to them!"

The forest leaves grew yellower, and one after another fell to the earth; the autumn wind blew stormily; the season was far advanced; at the fall of the yellow leaf the queen of the year stood gazing with soft eyes at the shining stars; her husband by her side. A gust of wind whirled through the leaves, they fell in showers, but the queen had vanished, and only one white butterfly, the last of the year, flew through the chilly air.

Damp mists came, the icy wind blew, and the long, dark nights drew on. The ruler of the year stood there with snow white locks; he knew it not; he thought it was the snow flakes falling from the clouds, for a thin covering lay over the green field. And the church bells rang out for Christmas-tide.

"The bells of the nativity are ringing," said the king of the year, "soon will the new royal pair be born, and I shall rest with my queen, rest in the shining stars."

And in the dark green fir woods, where the snow lay, came the Christmas angel to bless the young trees which were to adorn the festival.

"Joy in the home and under the green boughs," said the ruler of the year; in a few weeks he had changed into an old, old white haired man. "My time of rest is at hand, the young children will take the crown and sceptre."

"The power is still thine," said the Christmas angel; "the power, but not the rest. Let the snow lie warmly over the young seed; learn to see another receive homage while yet the rule is thine. Learn to be

forgotten and yet to live. The hour of thy freedom comes when the spring appears."

"When will the spring come?" asked the Winter.

"It will come when the stork returns."

And the Winter sat with snow white hair and beard; ice-cold, and aged, and bent; but strong with ice and storm—high on the snow drift of the hill, and looked southwards—as he had sat and looked before. The ice cracked, and the snow crackled, the sledges circled on the shining lakes; ravens and crows stood out sharply from the white ground, no wind breath stirred. In the frost-bound air the winter clenched his hands, and the ice lay fathom thick between land and land.

Then the sparrows came again from the town and asked, "Who is the old man yonder?" And the raven sat there again, or his son, which is the same thing, answered them and said, "It is the Winter; the old man of last year. He is not dead, as the almanacks say, but he is the guardian of the coming spring."

"When will the spring come?" asked the sparrows. "Then we shall be well off and have better food. The old year wasn't worth much."

And in silent thought the Winter nodded towards the black, leafless woods where every bough showed its graceful form and tracery against the sky. During the winter sleep, damp vapours floated slowly from the clouds; the old man dreamed of his youth and manhood, and towards daybreak the whole wood stood glorious in shining hoar frost; that was the winter's summer dream; the sunshine scattered rime upon the boughs.

"When will the spring come?" asked the sparrows.

"Spring!" sounded like an echo from the hills where the snow lay. The sun seemed warmer, the snow melted, the birds sang, "Spring is coming!"

And high through the air came the first stork, the second following; each carried a lovely child, who bent down on the open field and kissed the earth; they kissed, too, the silent old man, and like Moses on the mount he vanished, borne away by the encircling cloud.

The Year's Story was ended.

"That is very accurate," said the sparrows, "and very beautiful too; but it is not according to the almanack, and so it is all wrong together."

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The Elfin Hill.

ONE or two great lizards were running to and fro in the clefts of an old tree; they understood each other perfectly, because they both spoke the lizard tongue. "What a racket and to-do there is in the old elfin hill!" said the one lizard. "I have not been able to close an eye these two nights for the noise. I might just as well have had the toothache, for then I could not sleep.

"Something is going on inside," said the other lizard. "They have the whole hill raised on four stakes till the cockcrowing; it is thoroughly ventilated, and the elfin daughters have learned new dances. Something is certainly in the wind!"

"Yes, I have been speaking to an earthworm of my acquaintance," said the third lizard; "he came straight out of the hill where he had been groping day and night in the earth, and had overheard a good deal; he can't see, the miserable creature, but he is very clever at groping about and listening. They are expecting friends in the elfin hill, distinguished friends, but who they were the earthworm either could not or would not say. All the will-o'-the-wisps are engaged to form a torch light procession, as they call it; and the silver and gold, they have plenty of that in the hill, is being rubbed up and set out in the moonshine."

"Who can the guests be?" cried all the lizards. "Whatever can be going on? Listen what a disturbance! just listen what a noise!"

At that moment the elf hill opened, and an old elf-maid, hollow at the back, came tripping out; she was the elf-king's housekeeper, a distant connection of the family, and wore an amber heart on her forehead. Her legs moved so nimbly, trot, trot; gracious, how she did trot along, right down to the sea to find the night raven.*

"You are invited to the elfin hill this very night," she said; "but will you first do us a great favour and go round with the invitations? You ought to do something of the kind, since you have no house of your own. We expect a few very distinguished friends, magicians who have something to say for themselves, and so the elf-king wants to make a display."

"Who is to be invited?" asked the night raven.

"Anybody may come to the great ball—even men if they walk in their sleep or do anything else in our line. But the first festival is to be very select; we shall only have the most distinguished company. I have had a dispute with the elf-king, for I thought we ought not even to admit ghosts. The merman and his daughter are to be invited first; they won't perhaps altogether like to come on dry land, but they shall have a wet stone or perhaps something better to sit on, and then I think they will not refuse. All the old demons of the first class, with tails, the witch queen, and the kobolds we must have, and I think we should not forget the grave pig, the death horse,† and the church dwarf. Certainly they belong to the clergy, but that is only as far as their office is concerned; they are close connections of ours, and quite on visiting terms."

"Croak," said the night raven, and off he flew to give out the invitations.

The elfin maidens were dancing already on the hill; they danced

* Formerly, when a ghost appeared, the priest cast it out into the earth. When this was done a stake was driven into the place. At midnight the cry "Let go" was heard, the stake was withdrawn, and the exorcised spirit flew away in the shape of a raven with a hole in the left wing. This bird was called the night raven.

† It is a popular superstition in Denmark that a living horse, and in some cases a living pig, should be buried under the foundation of every church. The ghosts of these animals are called the death horse, or the grave pig. The death horse hobbles nightly on three legs to the door of those about to die.

with shawls woven out of mist and moonshine, and that looks very nice for any one who likes that sort of thing. The great hall in the midst of the elfin hill was beautifully decorated; the floor was washed with moonbeams, and the walls were rubbed with witch ointment till they glittered in the light like tulip leaves. In the kitchen there were plenty of frogs on the spit, snails' skins with children's fingers inside, salad of mushroom spawn, cold mouse, muzzles, hemlock, beer brewed by the marsh queen, and sparkling saltpetre wine from the churchyard vaults. Everything was solid and good; rusty nails and church-window glass were among the sweet-meats. The old elf king had his gold crown polished with powdered slate-pencil; it was first form pencil, which is very difficult for an elf king to get. In the bed-rooms curtains were hung and fastened with snail-slime. There was a pretty hurry and bustle!

"Now, I must have this perfumed with burnt horse-hair and pig's bristles, and then, I think, I shall have done my part," said the elf maid.

"Father, dear," said the youngest daughter; "now, may I know who our grand visitors are to be?"

"Well, yes," he said, "I may as well tell you. Two of my daughters must be prepared for their weddings; for married two of them will certainly be. The old Kobold, from Norway, who lives in the Dovre Mountains, and owns so many castles of rock crystal, and a gold mine, which is better than people think—the old Kobold is coming down here with his two sons, who are both looking out for wives. The father is a downright genuine old Norwegian, jovial and straightforward; I know him of old, for we have drunk brotherhood together. He came down here to fetch his wife; she is dead now; she was a daughter of the king of the chalk cliffs of Moen. He took his wife from the chalk, as folks say. I do long to see that old Norwegian Kobold again! The sons, they say, are rather ill-bred, forward young fellows, but I dare say they have had injustice done them; at any rate they will be all right as they grow older. Let me see that they are shown what good breeding is."

"And when are they coming?" said his daughter.

"That depends on wind and weather," said the erl king. They travel very economically. They generally come with a passenger ship. I wanted them to come round by Sweden, but the old man would not hear of trying that way; he does not keep up with the times. That's the only thing I don't like about him."

Two will-o'-the-wisps now came leaping up, one faster than the other, so that was why one got there first.

"They're coming! they're coming!" they cried.

"Give me my crown, and let me stand in the moonlight," said the elf king.

The daughters held the shawls aloft, and curtseyed to the ground. There stood the old Kobold from Norway, with his crown of sparkling ice and polished fir cones; he wore a bear-skin and high, warm boots; his sons on the contrary were bare-necked, and wore trousers without braces, for they were stalwart fellows.

"Is *that* a hill?" asked the younger of the boys, pointing to the elfin hill.

"In Norway we should call it a hole!"

"Boys!" said the old man: "holes go in, and hills stand out—have you no eyes in your head?"

The only wonderful thing about the place, they said, was that they could understand the language at once. "Don't disgrace yourselves!" said the old Kobold: "people will think you are not half baked."

Then they went into the elfin hill where the really select company was already assembled, and that so quickly that it seemed as if they had been blown together. But there was elegant and suitable accommodation for all. The seafolk sat up to table in great tubs and made themselves quite at home. Every one observed the strictest rules of etiquette; except indeed the two young Norwegian Kobolds, who put their feet right on to the table and seemed to think that everything became them. "Feet off the table!" cried the old Kobold, and they obeyed, but not at once. They tickled the ladies who sat next them with fir cones that they had brought in their pockets, and then they pulled off their boots to make themselves more comfortable, and gave them to the ladies to hold for them. But their father, the old Kobold was very different; he spoke so beautifully about the stately northern rocks, the waterfalls that crashed foaming down with the sound of organs and the roll of thunder, the salmon that leap high out of the foaming water when the Reck plays on his golden harp; about brilliant winter nights when the sleigh bells ring out, and the young men run with burning torches over the ice—ice so transparent, that they can see the fishes start with fright beneath their feet. Yes; he could describe so that you saw the very scene before you; it was as if the saw-mills were set working, and the lads and lasses sang and danced the old Norwegian dance—hurrah! all at once the Kobold gave the old elf maid a sounding kiss—something like a kiss—and yet they were no relations whatever!

Then the elfin maidens danced—singly, and with stamped cadence; they did it beautifully; and then came the figure and solo dances. Goodness! how they could stretch out their legs, you could hardly tell where they began and where they ended, or which were arms and which legs, everything spun round like shavings from a saw mill, and then they twirled and twisted till the death horse and the grave pig felt ill, and had to be led from the table.

"Prrrr!" cried the old Kobold: "that's one way of managing one's legs! But what else can they do, besides dance, and stretch out their legs and raise a whirlwind?"

"You shall soon see that," said the erl king. He called forward the youngest daughter. She was as light and clear as moonlight; the most delicate of all the sisters. She put a white shaving in her mouth and away she was—quite out of sight. That was *her* trick. But the old Kobold said he shouldn't like his wife to have that trick, and he did not think his sons cared about it either. The other daughter could walk by her own side just as if she had a shadow, a thing no Kobolds have.

The third was quite different; she had studied cookery with the marsh elf, and she knew how to stuff alder tree buds with glow worms.

"She will make a good housewife," said the old Kobold; and he

drank to her with his eyes, for he did not wish to drink too deeply.

Then came the fourth and brought her harp: when she struck the first chord every one lifted their left leg, for the Kobolds are all left footed; and when she struck the second chord every one was obliged to do whatever she wished.

"She is a dangerous woman," said the old Kobold; but the two sons went out of the hill, for they had had enough of it.

"And what can the next do?" said the old Kobold.

"I have learned to love all that is Norwegian," she said; "and I will never marry unless I can go to Norway." But the youngest whispered to the Kobold, "That's only because she has heard a Norwegian song that says how when the world sinks away the northern cliffs will be left for monuments; that's why she wants to go up there. She is so dreadfully afraid of sinking down."

"Ho! ho!" cried the old Kobold, "is that the meaning of it? Well, what can the seventh and last do?"

"The sixth comes before the seventh," said the elf king, for he could count; but the sixth would not come forward.

"I can only tell people the truth," she said; "nobody cares about me, and I have enough to do to sew my shroud." Then came the seventh and last; and what could she do? Why she could tell fairy tales, as many as she chose.

"Here are my five fingers," said the old Kobold; "tell me one for each."

She took hold of him by the wrist, and he laughed till he chuckled again. When she came to the ring finger—it had a gold ring on then, just as if it knew there was a betrothal about to happen—the old man cried out, "Hold on to that; the whole hand is yours. I shall take you to wife myself."

"The tale for the ring finger and the little finger are wanting yet," said the elfin maiden.

"We will hear them in the winter," said the Kobold; "and about the birch tree, and the spectre gifts, and the ringing frost. You shall tell them, for no one else knows how up there. We will sit in the stone halls where the pine fire burns, and drink mead out of the golden horns of the old Norwegian kings; the Reck has given me a pair of them. While we sit there Nix will visit us, and sing us songs of the shepherdesses on the mountains. That will be capital. The salmon will leap in the waterfall and beat against the stone wall, but it cannot come through. Yes, it is pleasant in dear old Norway. But where are my lads?"

Ah! where are they? Why running all over the fields, blowing out the will-o'-the-wisps, who were kindly coming up with their torchlight procession.

"What's all the romping?" cried the old Kobold. "I have chosen a mother for you—now you may choose out two of your aunts."

But the youngsters said they would rather make speeches and drink brotherhood; they did not care about marrying. So they made speeches, and drank brotherhood, hanging up their empty horns to show that not a drop was left. Then they took off their coats and

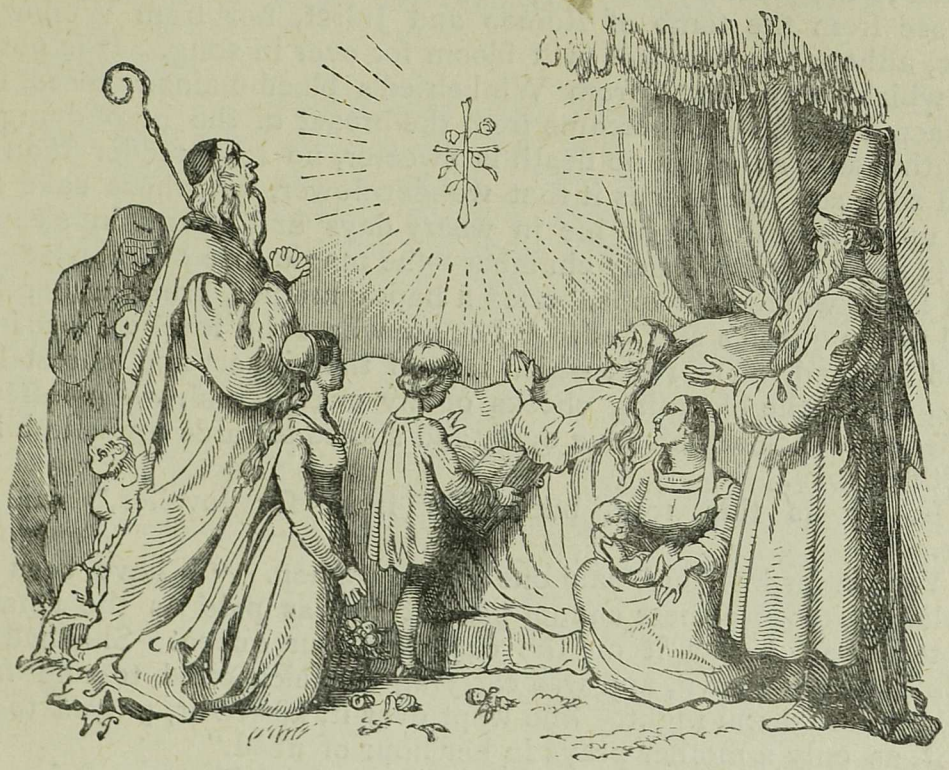
went to sleep on the table, for they did not stand on any ceremony. But the old Kobold danced about the room with his young wife, and exchanged boots with her, which is much more genteel than exchanging rings.

"The cock crows!" said the old elf maid, who saw to the housekeeping; "we must close the shutters or the sun will burn us up."

And the hill was closed.

But outside the lizards ran to and fro in the cloven tree, and one said to the other, "Well, I do like that old Norwegian Kobold!"

"I like the lads the best," said the earthworm. But then he could not see, poor creature.



The Loveliest Rose in the World.

THERE was once a queen, in whose garden bloomed the most beautiful flowers all the year round, and from every quarter of the world. She loved the roses best, and she had every kind, from the wild hedge rose, with the apple-scented green leaves, to the rarest Provençal rose. They grew up the castle wall, twined round columns and window frames, crept along the corridors and the ceilings of the palace chambers, and each had its own fragrance, shape, and colour.

But within the palace reigned care and sorrow; the queen lay on

her sick bed, and the doctors said that she must die. "There is one thing that can save her," said the wisest of them. "Bring her the loveliest rose in the world; the one that tells of the highest and purest love. Let her eyes rest on that before they close for ever, and she is saved."

Young and old brought their roses from far and near; each chose the loveliest in his garden, but none was the right one. The rose must be brought from the garden of love—but which of all the roses there told of the highest, purest love?

The poets sang of the loveliest rose in the world; each named his own. Messages were sent through all the realm to every heart that beat for love; messages to every class and every age. "As yet, no one has named the flower," said the wise physician. "No one has pointed to the place whence it sprang forth in all its glory. It is not the rose from the tomb of Romeo and Juliet, nor from Walburga's grave, although these roses will bloom for ever in song. It is not the rose which sprang forth from Winkelried's blood-stained lances, from the sacred blood which streams from the breast of the hero dying for his fatherland, although no death is sweeter, no rose redder than the blood so shed. Neither is it that wonder-flower, for whose sake men offer up their fresh, bright life in weary days and years, in sleepless nights spent in their lonely chamber—the magic rose of knowledge."

"I know where it blooms," cried a happy mother, bringing her little child to the queen's sick bed. "I know where the loveliest rose in the world is found. The rose, which tells of the highest and purest love, springs from the blooming cheeks of my sweet child, when refreshed by sleep he uncloses his blue eyes, and smiles towards me with all his wealth of love."

"Lovely is this rose, but there is a far lovelier," said the sage.

"Yes; a far lovelier," said one of the women. "I have seen it—a holier, purer rose there cannot be, but it was pale as the petals of the tea-rose. I saw it on the cheeks of our queen. She had laid aside her royal crown, and was carrying her sick child to and fro in the long, sorrowful night. She wept over it, kissed it, prayed to God for it, as only a mother prays in her hour of need."

"Holy, and wonderful in its strength, is the white rose of sorrow, but it is not the rose we seek."

"No; the loveliest rose is found before the altar of the Lord," said the good old bishop. "I saw it bloom as if an angel's countenance were shining forth. The young maidens came near to the table of the Lord to renew their baptismal vows, and the rose reddened and paled on their fair cheeks. One young girl stood there and gazed towards heaven with all the purity and love of her whole soul. That was the rose that told of the highest, purest love."

"Blessings rest on her!" said the sage; "but, as yet, no one has named the loveliest rose in the world."

A little child stole into the room—the queen's own son; tears were in his eyes and on his cheeks; he held in his arms a large open book, bound in velvet with great silver clasps. "Mother," cried the little one, "oh, listen to what I have just been reading!" He laid the

book upon the bed, and read out of it the story of Him who gave Himself up to the death of the cross for us men and for our salvation.

"Greater love hath no man than this!"

A rose-light crossed the pale cheeks of the queen, and her eyes brightened, for she saw that out of the leaves of the book there sprang forth the loveliest rose in the world—the rose that springs from the blood of Christ on the tree of the cross.

"I see it!" she cried; "and he who sees this loveliest rose on earth shall never die."

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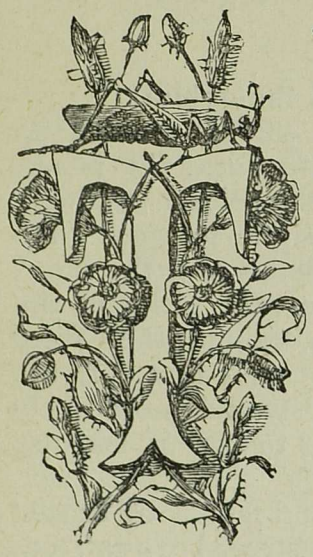


The Steadfast Tin Soldier.

HERE were once five-and-twenty tin soldiers, all brothers, for they were all born out of the same old tin spoon. They stood, musket on shoulder, looking straight before them, and their uniform was red and blue. The first words they heard in this world, when the lid was taken off the box in which they lay, was the cry, "Tin soldiers!" It was said by a little boy, who was clapping his hands for joy. He had just received them as a birthday present, and he set them up on the table. One soldier was exactly like another, except, indeed, the youngest. He had been cast last of all, when the tin was running short, so that there was only enough for one leg; but he stood as firmly on his one leg as the others did on their two, and he is the only one who became remarkable.

On the table where they were set up were many other playthings. The most striking of all was a prettily-made paper castle. You could see through the tiny windows right into the rooms, and in front of the entrance stood green trees, round a little mirror which looked like a clear lake. Waxen swans swam upon it, and were reflected within it. That was very pretty, but the prettiest of all was a little lady who stood in the open doorway. She, too, was cut out of paper, but she wore a dress of transparent cambric, with a narrow blue ribbon across her shoulders like a scarf, fastened in front with a sparkling tinsel rose as large as her face. The little lady stretched out both her arms for she was a dancer, and then she lifted up one leg so high that the tin soldier could not see it, and thought she had but one, like himself.

"That would be the wife for me," he thought, "but she is so aristocratic, she lives in a castle. I have only a box, and there are five-and-twenty of us in that—it is no place for her. But I must make her acquaintance!" He placed himself behind a snuff-box, which stood on the table; he could see the little lady clearly from that position. There she was, always on one leg, and never losing her balance.

When the night came on, all the other tin soldiers were put in the box, and the people of the house went to bed. Then the playthings began to play—they played at war, and paying visits, and giving balls. The tin soldiers rattled in their box, for they wanted to join in, but they could not lift up the lid. The nut-cracker turned somersaults, and the slate pencil amused itself on the table; they made such a noise that the canary woke up and began to talk, in poetry, too. The only two who never moved from their places were the tin soldier and the dancer. She stood still on the very points of her toes, with both arms outspread, and he was just as steadfast on his one leg, with his eyes never moving from her face. The clock struck twelve—and crash! up flew the lid of the snuff-box, but there was no snuff in it, only an old hobgoblin—it was a toy. "Tin soldier," said the goblin, "don't keep staring at what doesn't concern you."

But the tin soldier pretended not to hear him.

"Very well! you just wait till to-morrow!" said the goblin.

The next day when the children got up the tin soldier was set up in the window, and whether it was the goblin or the draught is not known, but the window suddenly blew open, and the soldier fell head over heels down from the third story. It was a terrible journey. He kept his leg stiffly in the air, and stuck with his shako and the point of his bayonet between two paving stones. The servant girl and the little boy ran down directly to look for him, but although they were almost near enough to tread on him, they could not find him. If the tin soldier had only cried out, "Here I am!" they would most likely have found him, but he did not consider it becoming to cry out, because he was in uniform.

Soon it began to rain; the drops came thicker and faster, till at last it was a perfect deluge. When it was over, two street boys ran up. "I say, look here!" cried one of them—"here is a tin soldier; let's have him out, and put him to sail our boat."

They made a boat out of a piece of newspaper, placed the soldier in the middle and launched it on the gutter: the two lads ran along by the side and clapped their hands. Heaven preserve us! how high the waves ran in the gutter, and what a current there was—for it had been a regular downpour. The paper boat rocked up and down, spinning round every now and then till the tin soldier was giddy. He, however, remained steadfast, moved not a muscle, but looked straight before him, shouldering his musket. All at once the boat darted into a long drain; it was just as dark as if he had been in his box.

"Where can I be going to now?" he thought. "It is all the goblin's doing. Ah! if only the little lady were in my boat, it might be twice as dark for all I should care."

Suddenly up came a great water-rat who lived in the drain. "Have you a passport?" said the rat: "out with your passport!" But the tin soldier did not speak, he only held his musket more firmly.

The boat darted on and the rat followed it. Ugh! how he gnashed his teeth and called out to the bits of straw and stick, "Stop him—stop him! he has paid no toll! he hasn't shown his passport!"

The current grew stronger and stronger; the tin soldier could see the daylight at the end of the drain, but at the same time he heard a

roar and a rush that might have frightened the bravest man. Only think, just where the tunnel ended, the drain emptied itself into a great canal! It was as dangerous for him as it would be for us to be carried down a mighty waterfall. He was so near it now that there was no chance of stopping. The boat rushed through, the poor tin soldier stood as firm as ever he could; no one should say of him that he moved an eyelash. Three times—four times, the boat spun round; it was filled to the very edge with water—it must go down now. The tin soldier stood up to his neck in water; the deeper the boat sank the more the paper gave way, till the water closed above the soldier's head. He thought of the sweet little dancer whom he would never see again, and the song sounded in his ears—

"Farewell, farewell, thou warrior bold,
March on to death and glory!"

The paper split in two, the soldier sank down and was immediately swallowed up by a large fish.

How dark it was inside the fish! darker than in the tunnel, and much narrower too. But the tin soldier remained steadfast, and lay at full length, shouldering his musket.

The fish darted to and fro—making the most alarming movements; when at last he was quite still. A ray of light shot through him: it grew clearer, and a voice cried out "The tin soldier!" The fish had been caught, taken to market, sold, and brought into the kitchen where the cook cut it open with a large knife. She seized the soldier with two fingers round the waist, and carried him into the parlour, for every one to see the distinguished man who had travelled about the world in the inside of a fish. But the tin soldier was not proud. They set him up on the table—and—well! how strangely things do turn out in this world!—there he was in the same room where he had lived before; there were the same children, the same playthings on the table, the lovely castle with the pretty little dancer! She was still standing on one leg, holding the other high in the air; she too was steadfast. That touched the tin soldier—he could have wept tin tears, only that would not have been becoming. He looked at her, but she said nothing.

Then one of the little boys took up the tin soldier and threw him in the fire; he gave no reason whatever for doing so—it must have been the fault of the goblin in the snuff-box.

The tin soldier stood there, lighted up by the flame; he felt a great heat, but whether it came from the fire or from his love he did not know. He had lost all his bright colour, perhaps on the journey, perhaps from sorrow, nobody could be sure. He looked at the little dancer, she looked at him; he felt that he was melting, but he remained steadfast, shouldering his musket. Suddenly the door burst open, the wind caught the dancer, and she flew like a sylph straight to the tin soldier, flashed out into a flame—and vanished. Thereupon the tin soldier melted away, and the next morning when the housemaid raked out the ashes, she found him in the shape of a little heart. Nothing was left of the dancer but the tinsel rose, and that was burnt as black as a coal.

The Buckwheat.

VERY often when one passes by a field of buckwheat after a storm one finds it blackened, scorched, and dead, as if a flame of fire had swept over it. "That comes from the lightning," the farmer says, but this is what the sparrows told me. The sparrows heard the story from an old willow which grows by a field of buckwheat, a wide-spreading stately willow, but bent with age and cloven asunder in the midst. Out of the cleft grow grasses and flowering brambles; the tree leans forward so that the branches touch the earth, and hang like long green hair.

Corn grows in all the neighbouring fields, barley, and rye, and graceful oats, which, when they are ripe, look like a flock of little canary birds on a bough. The corn was rich and blessed; the fuller the ears the lowlier they bent in thankful humility.

Right in front of the willow was a field of buckwheat. The buckwheat never bent like the other corn, but stood erect and haughty on its stem.

"I am certainly as rich as the corn!" it cried, "and far more beautiful. My flowers are as lovely as the apple blossom; it is a pleasure to look on me and mine. Do you know anything more beautiful than me, you old willow?"

The willow nodded as much as to say "That I do!" But the buckwheat shook itself out for very pride, and said, "Stupid tree! It is so old that the grass grows out of its body."

Storm came on—the field flowers folded their leaves and bowed their little heads, as it rushed by, but the buckwheat stood erect and defiant.

"Bow your head, as we do," said the flowers.

"I do not see why I should," said the buckwheat.

"Bow your head, as we do," cried the corn. "The angel of the storm is coming. His pinions reach from the clouds to the earth, and he will smite you down before you can beg for mercy."

"I will not bow," said the buckwheat.

"Close your flowers and fold your leaves," said the old willow tree; "do not look at the lightning when the cloud opens: even men dare not do that—for through the lightning one can see into heaven itself, and that sight strikes even human beings blind: what then would become of us—poor growth of the earth—if we ventured it—we who are of so much less worth than they?"

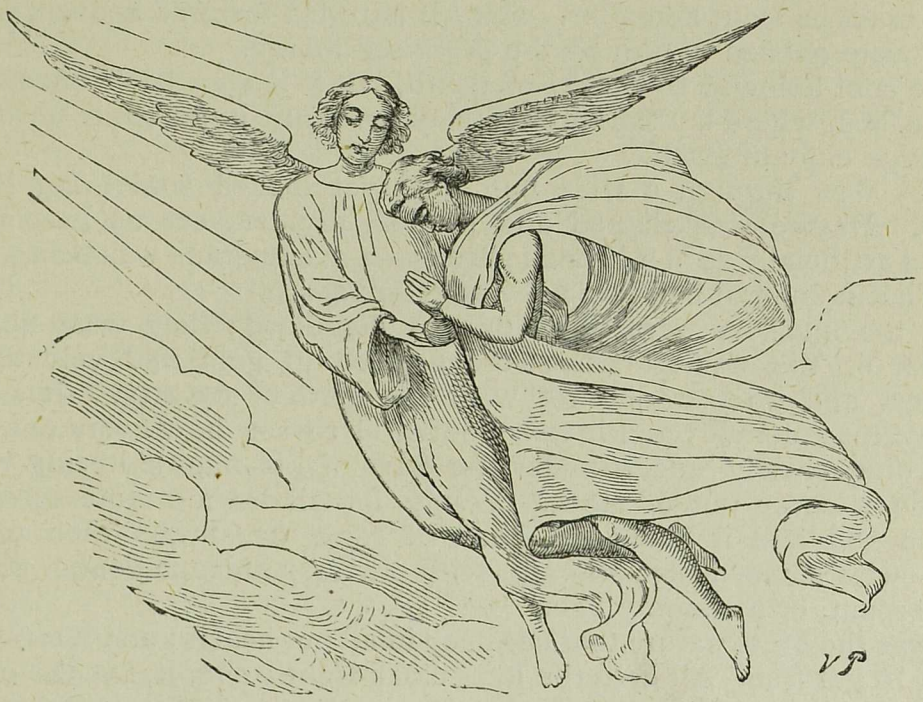
"Of less worth?" said the buckwheat. "I will look straight into heaven itself," and so it did in its pride and scorn. The lightning came; it was as if the whole world stood in flames.

When the storm was over, the flowers and corn stood in the fresh pure air, revived by the rain; but the buckwheat was burnt black by the lightning, and lay like a dead weed on the earth.

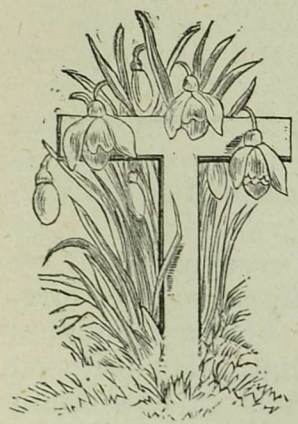
The old willow waved its branches in the air and wept; great drops fell from the green leaves. "Why do you weep?" asked the sparrows. "It is so pleasant here! see how the sun shines and the clouds sail by. Can you not breathe the fragrance from flower and tree? Why do you weep?"

Then the willow told them of the pride of the buckwheat, and of the fall that followed on its pride.

I, who am writing, heard it all from the sparrows, one night when I begged them to tell me a story.



At the Last Day.



THE greatest day of all days for us is the day of our death—the sacred, awful day of the great change. Have you ever seriously thought over this sure, inevitable, last hour of death? There was once a man—an orthodox believer, men called him—a defender of the Word which to him was law—a zealous servant of a jealous God. Death stood by his bedside—death with stern, pale face. "Follow me—the hour is come," he said; and touched with icy finger the man's feet: they froze and stiffened: touched his forehead; then his heart, which ceased to beat, and the soul followed the death-angel.

In the few seconds that elapsed between this consecration of his

feet and heart, all that had filled his past life rose before the dying man like the great waves of a black, sullen sea. His glance shrunk back in terror from the immeasurable depth; round him the myriads of stars, worlds, and heavenly orbs whirled dizzily by in endless space.

At such a moment the sinner shudders, for there is nothing to which he can cling. But the good man lays down his head in quiet trust, saying the childlike prayer—"Thy will be done!" This dying man had never known the childlike heart: he felt himself a man: he did not shrink as a sinner, for he trusted in his creed. Every ordinance of religion had been observed by him in all its strictness; millions of souls, he knew, would tread the broad way of destruction, nay, he would willingly have slain their bodies with fire and sword as their souls must be slain hereafter. But *his* path led towards heaven, whose gates were opened to him by the promised mercy.

The soul followed the angel of death, but it looked back once more on the bed, where lay the form of clay, wrapped in its white shroud—a strange copy of itself.

They flew through a wide hall, that yet looked something like a forest. Nature was clipped and pruned, divided, set up in classes, treated artificially as in a French garden—a masquerade was being held.

"That is human life," said the angel of death.

All the maskers were more or less disguised; they were not the highest or the noblest who were dressed in gold and velvet; the meanest and poorest did not wear the garb of poverty. It was a strange masquerade; and it was wonderful to see how every one held something closely hidden under the folds of his mantle, trying vainly to hide it away out of sight. Vainly, for all he met tore open the mantle and laid it bare: the head of some beast was then clearly seen—with some, a mocking ape, with others, a hideous goat, a poisonous serpent, or a clammy fish.

It was the brute nature that lies deep in all our hearts; and it struggled wildly to get free. All held the long cloak tightly over it, but the others tore it asunder and cried, "Look! this is the one—this is the one!" each laying bare the other's misery.

"What beast was hidden in me?" asked the soul; the angel pointed to a haughty form in front; a glory of coloured rays shone round his head, but the claw of a peacock grasped his heart, and the glory was but the bird's outspread tail.

As they passed along, large birds screamed harshly from the branches of the trees, with human voices. "Wanderer of death, do you remember me?" They were the evil thoughts and passions of his lifetime, crying aloud, "Do you remember me?"

For a moment the soul shuddered: it knew well every voice, every dark thought and base desire that rose up thus in witness against him.

"No good thing dwells in our sinful flesh," he cried; "but my thoughts never came to deeds; the world never saw their evil fruit." He hastened on to escape the hideous cries; but the great black birds flew round him and screeched aloud for all the world to hear. He ran like the hunted Indian, and at every step he struck against sharp-edged stones, which cut and tore his feet. "What stones are these?" he cried; "they cover the earth like fallen leaves."

"They are the sharp words you have let fall; they wounded the heart of your fellow-men more deeply than they wound your feet now."

"I did not think of it," cried the soul.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged," resounded through the air.

"We are all sinners," said the soul. "I have kept the law and the Gospel: I have done what I could: I am not as other men."

They stood at the gate of heaven, and the angel of the gateway asked, "What art thou? Declare thy faith, and show it me by thy works."

"I have kept the Commandments. I have humbled myself in the eyes of the world. I have hated and punished sin and sinners!"

"Thou art, then, a follower of Mohammed?" said the angel.

"I?—heaven forbid!"

"He who takes the sword shall perish by the sword," says the Scripture; "that is not thy faith. Art thou one of the children of Israel, who say, with Moses, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth?' who hold that God is God alone for them?"

"I am a Christian."

"I cannot see it by thy works: the teaching of Christ is, pardon, love, mercy."

"Mercy!" re-echoed through the courts of heaven: the portals opened wide, and the soul swept in towards the unveiled glory.

But the blaze of light was so keen and penetrating that it shrunk back as from an unsheathed sword: melody softer and more thrilling than earth may know resounded on every side. The soul trembled and shrank farther and farther, but the heavenly light pierced it through and through, and, for the first time, it felt the heavy, intolerable burden of its pride, and harshness, and sin. The light had conquered.

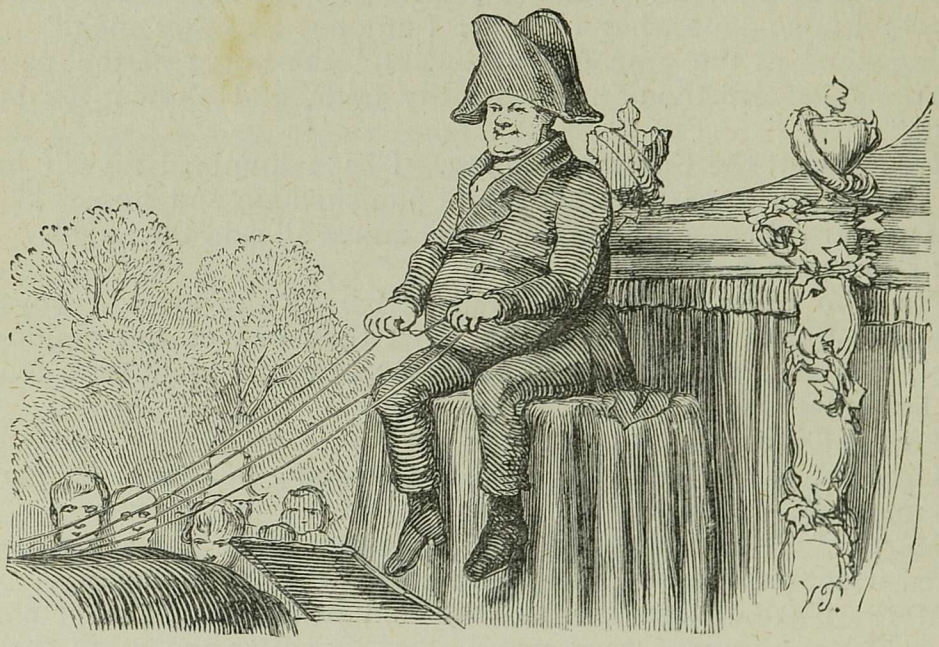
"The good I did on earth, I did because I could not help it," cried the soul; "the evil was my very own."

Blinded by the pure, dazzling light, the soul fell fainting, crushed by its shame, unfit for heaven, trembling at the thought of God's righteousness, helpless to stammer a prayer for mercy.

But mercy, unlooked-for mercy, came to its help. God's heaven revealed itself, God's love received it into its inexhaustible fulness.

"Holy, glorious, loving, and immortal, shalt thou be, soul of man!" was sung around him.

We, too, at the last day, shall shrink, as this soul did, from the glory and splendour of heaven—we shall sink down abashed, with humility and shame. God grant that, supported by love and mercy, glorified, ennobled, and fitted for His kingdom, we may tread the paths of the new life and enter into the eternal light!



Good Temper.

MY father left me the best inheritance, namely—a good temper. Who was my father? That has nothing to do with good temper; he was, however, plump and lively, and round made; in looks and disposition the very reverse of his trade. What was his trade? what was his position in the social scale? Why, if I had let it be written and printed at the beginning of this story, you would have shut up the book and said—"What an unpleasant title I don't like that kind of thing." And yet my father was neither a knacker, nor an executioner; quite the contrary, his position placed him before the highest people in the land, with no presumption on his part, he only kept his proper place: he took precedence of the bishop, the prince of the blood—everybody. He was a hearse-driver.

There, now it's out! and I must say that when one saw my father sit perched high up on the chariot of death, dressed in his long black cloak and crape-trimmed, three-cornered hat, and then looked at his round, red, jubilant face, beaming like the sun itself, it was impossible to think of death and mourning; the face said so plainly "Never mind! never mind! it will turn out a great deal better than people think!"

Well, I got my good temper from him, and my habit of going a walk in the churchyard; a very amusing place when you go there in a good temper; moreover I take in the *Daily Intelligencer* as he did.

I am not young. I have neither wife nor child, nor library: but as I said before, the *Intelligencer* is enough for me. It is my favourite newspaper, and so it was my father's; it is very instructive, and contains all that a man need care to know: who preaches in the churches, and in the new books; all the charities; numbers of harmless poems, matrimonial advertisements and appointments, all simple and straightforward. One can really live and die very comfortably and happily when one takes in the *Intelligencer;* besides having at the end of one's life paper enough to be buried on, if one does not like to lie on deal shavings.

The *Intelligencer* and the churchyard! Those are my two daily paths for improving my mind: my seaside-watering places for restoring my good temper.

Any one can glance through the *Intelligencer* for himself; but come with me to the churchyard: we will go when the sun is shining and the trees are green, and walk among the graves.

Each is like a book with the back turned uppermost, so that we can read the title of what the book contains, but nothing further; but I can see beyond that, and so could my father. I dot it all down in what I call my grave book, and a very instructive and amusing book it is: the graves are all entered in it and a few more besides.

Here we are in the churchyard.

Here—behind this white railing, where a rose tree used to grow—it is gone now, but a little spray of evergreen from the next grave stretches out its green finger as if to make a little show—here rests a most unhappy man, and yet while he lived he stood well as people say. He had plenty to live upon, and more besides; but the world of art was too much for him. When he went to the theatre and meant to enjoy himself thoroughly, the machinist had only to turn on too strong a light on one side of the moon, or the aërial effects to fall from above the scenes instead of behind them, or a palm tree to crop up in the Berlin Zoological Garden, or a cactus in the Tyrol, or a beech tree in Norway, and he was furious. As if it signified! Whoever would fret about a thing like that? and in a play, too, where one goes to be amused! Sometimes the audience clapped too much for his liking, sometimes too little. "A bundle of wet wood!" he used to say; "it *won't* light to night?" Then he would turn round to see what sort of people they were; and if they laughed at the wrong time, he fumed and fretted, and made himself really ill. He was a most unhappy man, and now he rests in his grave.

Here lies a very fortunate man; a man, that is, of distinguished position and high birth—a lucky thing for him, for he had nothing else to recommend him; but everything is so wisely ordered in this world that it is a pleasure to reflect upon it. He walked through life, all stars, orders, and embroidery; just like the beautifully-worked pearl-studded bell-pulls in fine drawing-rooms, which have a good thick rope behind them to do all their work. He, too, had his good thick rope

at his back, a substitute who did all his work for him, and does it still behind another new, embroidered, gold-starred bell-pull. All things are so providentially ordered that it keeps one in a good temper.

Here lies—ah! but this is really very sad! here lies a man, who was trying for sixty-seven years to get a good idea; he only lived for the hope of one day saying a good thing: at last, according to his own estimation, he got his idea—but the rush of joy was too much for him and he died—died of joy before a single creature was the better for it, or had even heard it. I sometimes think his idea won't let him rest in his grave; for suppose it was a joke that could be only brought out at breakfast to have any effect, while he, as a dead man, cannot, according to universal belief, show himself at any other time but midnight, the time is past, then the joke falls flat—no one laughs and the poor man may get into his grave again, idea and all!

It is a melancholy thought!

Here rests a very miserly woman: during her lifetime she used to get up in the night and mew, so that the neighbours might think she kept cats; she was as miserly as that.

Here is a young lady of good family, who sang at every ball and party; "*Mi manca la voce*"* she used to sing, and that was the truest thing she ever sang in her life.

Here lies a maiden of another class. When the voices of the heart begin to sing, reason puts her fingers in her ears! The pretty maid was on the point of being married, when—it is an every-day story—and there is a pretty saying, "Let the dead rest."

Here rests a widow who carried honey on her lips and bitter gall in her heart; and who used to go from house to house hunting up the faults of her neighbours as a sportsman hunts down the game.

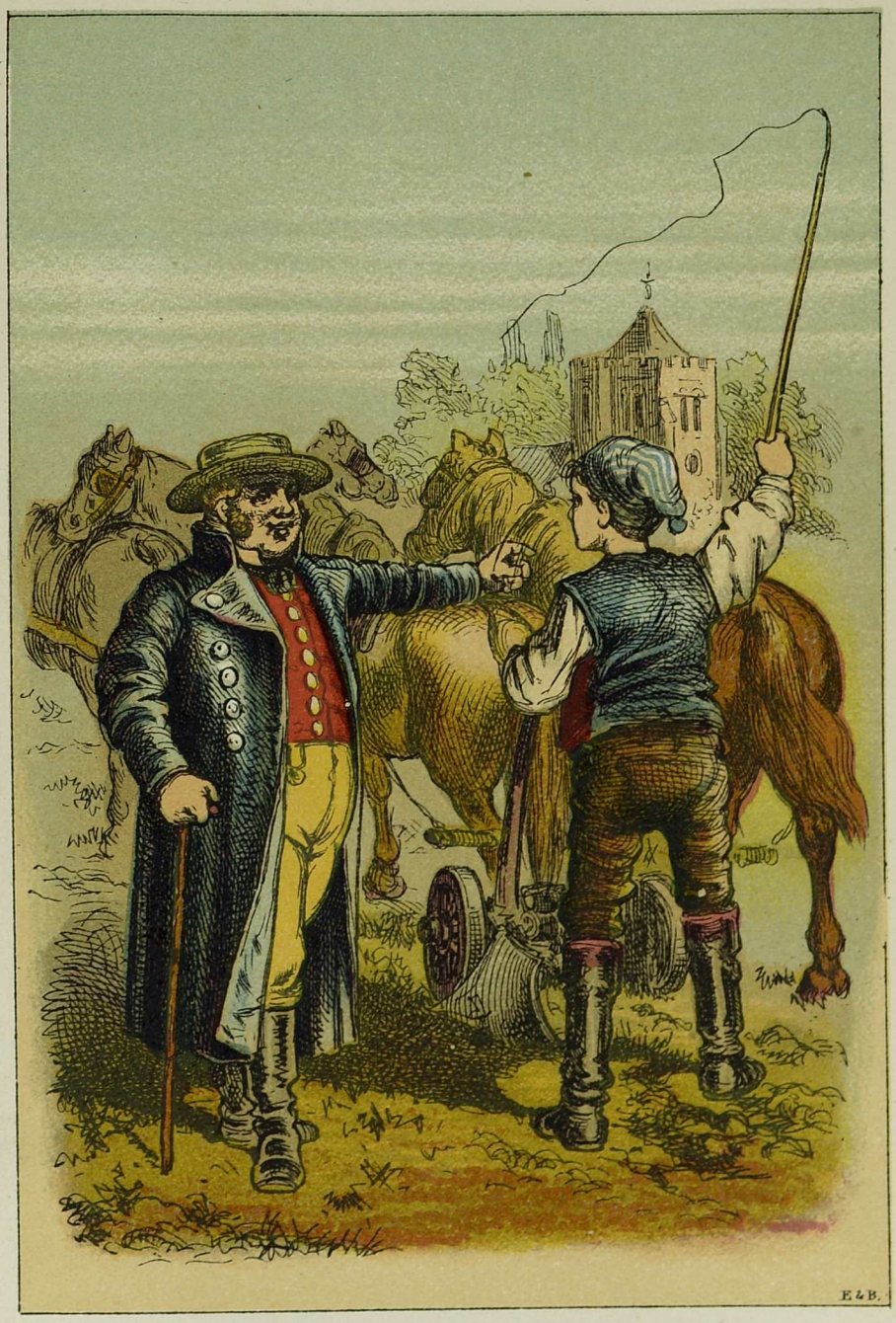
This is a family vault: and every member of this family held so firmly together, that if the whole world and the newspaper into the bargain said one thing, and the youngest boy came home from school and said another, they would believe him against the whole set, because he belonged to the family. And certain it is, that if the family cock crowed at midnight, it was morning for them, if every clock and watchman in the town cried midnight all together.

The great Goethe wrote under the last line of his Faust, "It may be continued," and so, too, may our wanderings in the churchyard. I often go there myself: whenever any of my friends or enemies is a little too much for me, I go there and choose out a grave for them and bury him, her, or them right off.

There they lie helpless and dead, till they come back better men.

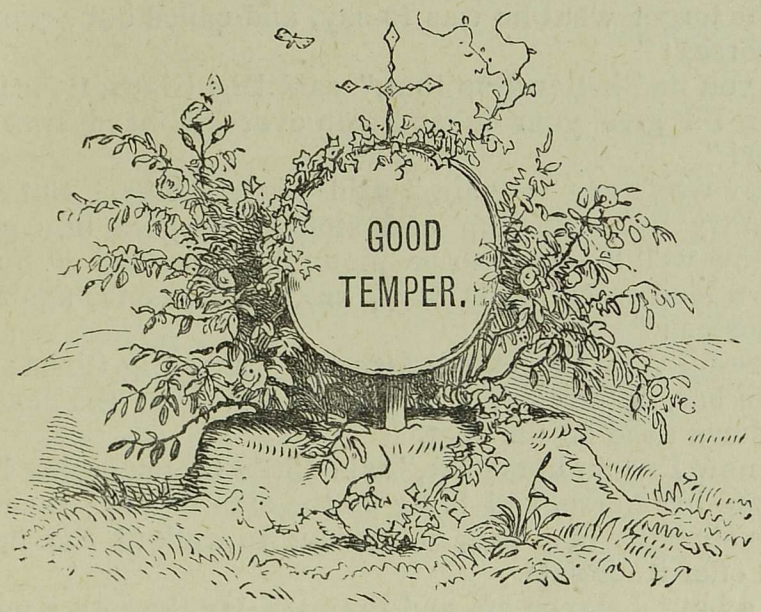
I write down their life and deeds as they appear to me, in my grave book, and that is what every sensible person ought to do. It is no use getting into a passion when any one drives you wild; bury him, bury him at once, keep your temper, and take in the *Intelligencer*, that excellent paper, written by the people "*with a guided hand.*"

* "My voice fails me."



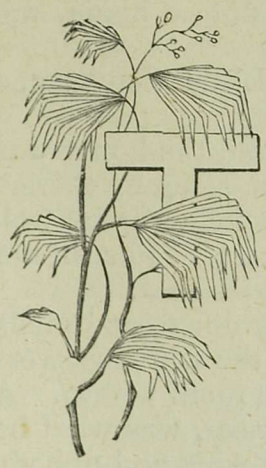
GREAT CLAUS AND LITTLE CLAUS.

When the time comes for me and my life's story to be bound up in the grave, let there be written above me the epitaph—



That is my story.

—o—



Big Claus and Little Claus.

THERE lived once in the same village two men of the name of Claus; one of them owned four horses, and the other had but one. The villagers used to call the man with four horses "Big Claus," and the man with one horse "Little Claus," in order to know them apart. Now let us hear what happened to each of them, for this is a true story.

The whole week through, Little Claus used to plough for Big Claus and lend him his one horse, in return for which Big Claus let him use all his team, but only once a week, and that was on Sundays. Yoicks! how Little Claus smacked his whip over the five horses! they were as good as his own for that one day. The sun was shining, all the bells in the belfry were ringing, the village folk dressed in their Sunday best and carrying their hymn book in their hand, went walking by to church, to listen to the preacher. On their way they stopped to look at Little Claus, who was ploughing away with the five horses,

smacking his whip, and crying out in the joy of his heart, "Gee-up, my five horses!"

"You must not say that," cried Big Claus; "only one of them belongs to you." But the very next time any one passed by Little Claus quite forgot what he was to say, and called out again, "Gee-up, my five horses!"

"Now you had better drop that," said Big Claus, "for if you say it once again I'll give your horse a rap over his head that will about finish him!"

"I really won't say it again," said Little Claus. But when some more country folk came up and stopped to give him good-day, he thought how well it looked to be ploughing his field with five horses, and, with a loud crack of his whip, he cried out once again, "Gee-up, my five horses!"

"I'll gee-up your five horses for you!" said Big Claus; and, taking up an iron bar, he struck Little Claus's horse on the head so that it dropped down dead on the spot.

"Oh! now I've no horse left," said Little Claus, crying bitterly.

He flayed his horse, and hung up the skin to dry; then, slinging it across his shoulder in a bag, he set out to walk to the neighbouring town and offer it for sale.

It was a long distance off, and the path lay through a wide, gloomy forest; storm came on, Little Claus lost his way, and before he could find it again he wandered so far from the town that it was impossible for him either to get there or to reach home again before nightfall.

By the roadside he saw a large farmyard; all the shutters were up at the house windows, but the light shone through the cracks. "Perhaps I shall get leave to stay the night here," thought Little Claus, so he went on boldly and knocked at the door.

The farmer's wife opened it, but when she heard what he wanted she told him to go about his business; her husband was not at home, and she could not let in any strangers.

"Well, then, I must stay out in the cold," said Little Claus; and the farmer's wife shut the door in his face.

Not far off stood a large haystack, and between it and the house was a little outhouse with a flat roof of thatch. "I can sleep up there," thought Little Claus, looking at the roof; "it will make a capital bed, if only the stork won't fly down and peck at my legs!" For on the house roof over-head stood a live stork by the side of its nest.

Little Claus climbed up on to the outhouse, lay down, and made himself comfortable. The wooden shutters outside the windows were not quite closed, so that he could see right into the room within. A large table, covered with wine and fish and roast meat, was what he saw. At the table sat the sexton and the farmer's wife, and nobody else; she filled up his glass, and he stuck his fork into the fish, which was his favourite dainty.

"Ah, if one could only get at a little of all that!" thought Claus, stretching his head nearer toward the window. Heavens! what a pile of rich cakes he saw lying ready! It was something like a feast!

At the same moment he heard some one come riding along the turnpike-road to the house; it was the farmer himself, on his way home.

He was a good sort of man, but he had one very singular quality—he could not bear the sight of a sexton; it made him positively furious. That was why the sexton always went to pay his respects to the farmer's wife when he knew that her husband was away from home; and that was why the good woman sat before him the best she had in the house. Now, when the farmer's wife heard her husband coming, she was terribly frightened, and she begged the sexton to get into a large, empty chest. He consented at once, because he knew very well that the poor farmer could not endure the sight of a sexton. Then the wife made haste to hide away all the supper in the large oven, for if her husband had seen it he would have been sure to ask what it all meant.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Little Claus, from his outhouse, as he saw all the good things disappear.

"Hallo! Who is up there?" cried the farmer, looking round. "What are you lying there for?" he said to Little Claus. "Get down and come in the house with me."

So Little Claus explained how he had lost his way, and begged that he might spend the night there.

"Surely!" said the farmer; "but first we must have something to eat."

The mistress received them very pleasantly, laid the cloth, and set before them a large dish of porridge. The farmer was very hungry and began to eat with a good appetite, but Little Claus could not help thinking of the nice roast meat and fish and cakes which he knew were in the oven. He had thrown down the sack, with the skin he was going to take to market, under the table at his feet; and, as he did not like the porridge, he trod upon the sack, so that the dry skin squeaked aloud.

"Hush!" cried Little Claus to the sack; but he trod on it again at the same time, till it squeaked louder than before.

"Whatever have you got in your sack?" cried the farmer.

"Oh, it's only a conjuror," said Little Claus. "He says we are not to eat any more porridge, for he has conjured the oven full of roast meat and fish and cakes."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the farmer, making haste to open the oven-door. There, sure enough, were all the dainty dishes which his wife had hidden, but which, he believed, the conjuror had brought there.

His wife dared not say a word; she set out all the dishes on the table, and the two men ate up the fish and meat and cakes. Little Claus trod again on the sack till the skin squeaked. "What does he say now?" said the farmer.

"He says he has conjured us up three bottles of wine. They are in the corner behind the stove."

The woman was obliged to fetch out the hidden wine, and the farmer drank and grew very merry.

He would have liked to have such a conjuror as Little Claus kept in his sack. "Can he raise the devil?" asked the farmer. "I should like to see him now, I feel so merry."

"Yes," said Little Claus; "my conjuror can do anything I ask of him—can't you?" he cried, and he trod on the sack to make it squeak.

"There! did you hear that? He says he can; but it is an ugly sight. We had better let it alone."

"Oh, I am not at all frightened. What does it look like?"

"Just like a live sexton," said little Claus.

"Ugh! that is frightful. Do you know, I cannot abide the sight of a sexton! But, never mind; I shall know what it is, and so I shall be able to bear it. Now I am ready. Only don't let him come too near me."

"Well, I'll ask my conjuror," said Little Claus, treading on the sack, and bending down his ear.

"What does he say?"

"Why, he says if you open that chest in the corner yonder, you will see him cowering down inside; but you must hold the lid tight, lest he should slip out."

"Will you help me to hold it?" said the farmer; and they went up to the chest where the farmer's wife had hidden the sexton, who lay there frightened to death.

The farmer opened the lid a little way, looked in, and jumped back with a loud cry. "I've seen him!" he said; "he is the very image of our sexton. That was a frightful sight!"

They were obliged to drink some more after that; and they drank till far into the night.

"You must sell me your conjuror," said the farmer; "ask anything you like for him. I will give you a bushelful of money, down."

"Oh, I can't," said Little Claus; "just consider what I can get by this conjuror."

"I must have him!" said the farmer; and he went on begging.

"Well," said Little Claus, at last, "since you have done me a kindness to-night, and given me shelter under your roof, it shall be as you wish. You shall have the conjuror for a bushelful of money; but I must have good measure."

"So you shall," said the farmer, "only you must take that chest away with you; I won't have it left in the house for one moment. Who knows, but that he may be in there now?"

Little Claus then made over to the farmer his sack with the dried skin, and received in exchange a bushelful of money, good measure. The farmer also made him a present of a hand-cart, to wheel away his money and the chest.

"Good-bye!" said Little Claus; and drove off with his money and the chest that held the sexton.

On the other side of the forest was a broad, deep river; the water flowed so fast that it was hardly possible to swim against the stream. A fine new bridge had been thrown across it, and in the middle of this Little Claus stopped, saying, loud enough for the sexton in the chest to hear, "Now, what had I better do with this stupid chest? It is as heavy as if it were full of stones; if I go on wheeling it along, I shall only tire myself out. I'll just throw it in the river; if it swims home after me, well and good; and if not, it doesn't much signify."

He lifted up the chest with one hand, and made as though he were going to throw it into the water. "Put it down!" cried the sexton from within; "let me out first."

"Oh!" cried Little Claus, pretending to be afraid, "he's in there still! I had better throw him over at once and let him drown."

"No, no!" said the sexton; "I'll give you a whole bushelful of money if you will let me out."

"That alters the case," said Little Claus, opening the chest. The sexton hurried out and kicked the chest into the river. He then went home, and Little Claus received his bushelful of money; he had had one already from the farmer, so his cart was quite full.

"I've sold my horse pretty well," he said to himself, as he turned out all his money into a great heap on the floor of his room. "Big Claus will be in a passion when he finds out how rich I have become with my one horse; however, I need not tell him all the particulars."

The next day he sent across a boy to borrow a bushel measure from Big Claus. "Now, what can he want with that?" thought Big Claus, and he smeared a little tar at the bottom of the measure, so that part of whatever was put into it might stick. It turned out as he wished, for the measure came back with three large silver crowns at the bottom.

"What is the meaning of this?" thought Big Claus. He went straight to Little Claus and asked him where he had got his money from.

"Oh, I got it for my horse's skin. I sold it yesterday evening."

"That's a good price to get," cried Big Claus. He hurried home, took down an axe, killed all his four horses, skinned them, and drove off to the town. "Skins! skins! who will buy?" he cried along the streets. The shoemakers and tanners came running out to know what he wanted for them. "A bushelful of money for every one," said Big Claus.

"Are you mad?" they cried out all together; "do you think we have money by the bushelful?"

"Skins! skins! who will buy?" he cried again; and every one who asked him the price got his answer, "a bushelful of money apiece." "He's making game of us," they cried at last; and the shoemakers took up their straps, and the tanners their leathern aprons, and they gave Big Claus a thorough beating.

"Skins! skins!" they called after him, jeeringly; "yes, we'll mark your skin for you; you shall smart for this," and Big Claus had to run for his life; he had never had such a beating since he was born.

"Ah!" he cried, when he got home, "Little Claus shall pay for this. I'll be the death of him, yet."

Now Little Claus's old grandmother lay dead in the house; she had certainly been a very harsh, cruel woman to him, but still he grieved for her loss, and he had laid her in his warm bed to see if that would bring her back to life: there she lay the whole night through while he slept on a chair in the chimney corner as he had done many a time before. As he was sitting there, the door opened and Big Claus came in with his sharp axe; he knew exactly where the bed stood, and he crept up to it and gave the old grandmother a blow on the head with his axe, thinking all the while it was Little Claus.

"Take that!" he cried, "You will never make game of me any more." And he went back to his home.

"Why! he's a downright villain!" said Little Claus. "He actually meant to kill me. It was lucky for my grandmother that she was dead already, for he would have put an end to her life. He dressed his dead grandmother in her Sunday best, borrowed a horse from his neighbour, harnessed it to the trap, placed his grandmother on the back seat, so that she could not fall out, and drove away with her through the wood. By sunrise, they had reached a large inn, where Little Claus pulled up and went in to get something to drink.

The landlord was a good-natured man, and very rich; but he was a perfect pepper box for hot temper. "Good morning!" he said to Little Claus; "you're early astir to-day."

"Yes," said Little Claus. "I'm going into the town with my old grandmother; she's sitting outside in the trap; I can't bring her into the room. Will you be so good as to take her a glass of mead from me? You must speak up, for she is rather hard of hearing."

"Here is a glass of mead from your son," shouted the landlord; but the dead woman did not speak a word, and sat quite still.

"Don't you hear?" called the landlord as loud as he could; "here is a glass of mead from your son." He repeated it once more; and then again; and at last, as she never turned or moved, he lost his temper and flung the glass of mead in her face. The old woman fell backward into the cart, for she was only set upright, and had not been tied in her place.

"Hallo!" cried Little Claus, rushing out, and seizing the landlord by the throat, "why you have killed my grandmother! Look, there is a great hole in her forehead!"

"Oh! what a dreadful accident!" cried the landlord, wringing his hands: "that comes from my hot temper. Dear Little Claus! if you will only keep the matter quiet, I will pay you a bushelful of gold, and bury your poor grandmother as if she were my own; but if you make it known I shall lose my head, and that *will* be so unpleasant."

So Little Claus received his bushelful of gold, and the landlord buried the old grandmother as if she had been his own. As soon as Claus got home with all his money, he sent his boy across to Big Claus to borrow a bushel measure.

"What's the meaning of that?" cried Big Claus. "Haven't I killed him? I must see into this myself." So he went himself with the bushel to Little Claus. "Well! wherever did you get all this money from?" he said, staring with open eyes at the pile of gold.

"You killed my grandmother instead of me," said Little Claus, "and I have sold her for a bushelful of gold."

"And a good price, too!" said Big Claus. He hurried home, took down an axe and killed his grandmother on the spot. Then he put her in the cart, drove off to the apothecary in the town and asked him if he wanted to buy a dead body.

"Who is it? and how did you come by it?" asked the apothecary.

"It is my grandmother. I've just killed her to get a bushelful of gold for her."

"Heaven preserve us!" cried the apothecary, "you must be raving, don't say such things as that; you'll lose your head for it. And then

he tried to explain to him in detail what an awful crime he had committed, and what a wicked man he was, and how he was certain to be punished: all of which frightened Big Claus to that degree that he rushed out of the shop, jumped into the cart, flogged his horse, and galloped home. The apothecary and all the people thought he was out of his mind, so they let him go.

"You shall pay for this," said Big Claus, when he found himself on the turnpike road—"you shall pay for this—Little Claus!" As soon as he reached home he went over to Little Claus and said, "This is the second time you have deceived me. First you made me kill my four horses, and then my grandmother. It is all your fault; but you shall never take me in again."

Thereupon he seized Little Claus round the body, put him in the sack, lifted the sack on his back, and said "now I'm going straight off to drown you."

He had a long way to go before he reached the river, and Little Claus was not very light to carry. The path lay close to the church where the organ was playing and the choir singing sweetly. Big Claus set down the sack and propped it up against the church door: it would do him no harm he thought to go in and listen to a psalm before he continued his journey. Little Claus could not get out, and every one else was in church; so in he went.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" cried Little Claus in the sack; he turned and twisted about, but it was no use, he could not open it. Meanwhile a poor old drover came by, a very feeble, white-haired man, with a great stick in his hand: he was driving his herd of cows and oxen before him, when one of them ran against the sack where Little Claus lay and overturned it.

"Oh dear!" sighed Little Claus; "I am so young, and yet I must go to heaven at once!"

"And I, poor creature," said the drover, "I am so old, and yet I cannot get there."

"Open the sack, and get into my place" said Little Claus; "and you will soon be there."

"With all my heart" said the old man, untying the sack, out of which Little Claus struggled nimbly. "You will look after the cattle, won't you?" said the old man, as he crept into the sack. Little Claus tied it up firmly and walked away with the herd of cows.

Big Claus came out soon afterwards and shouldered his sack again; he fancied it was not quite so heavy; for the old drover was not half the weight of Little Claus. "I can carry it quite easily now," he thought to himself; "that's because I went in and listened to a psalm." So he went to the river which was broad and deep, threw in the sack with the old drover inside, and called out after him, for he made sure he was speaking to Little Claus, "Now stop where you are; you shall never play off any more tricks on me." He walked homewards, but when he came to the place where the cross roads met, there he saw Little Claus driving his herd of cattle.

"Why what is the meaning of this?" cried Big Claus. "Haven't I drowned you?" "You threw me into the river, about half an hour ago," replied Little Claus.

"Then wherever did you find these splendid cows and oxen?" asked Big Claus.

"They are sea-cattle," said Little Claus. "I will tell you the whole story; I have great cause to be thankful to you, for now that I am on dry land again, I am quite a rich man. I was dreadfully frightened when you put me in the sack, and when the wind whistled through my ears as you threw me off the bridge into the cold water. I sank straight to the bottom at once, but I did not hurt myself, for I fell on the soft rich grass which grows down there. The sack was immediately opened by a beautiful maiden dressed all in white, with a green wreath on her wet hair. She took me by the hand and said, 'Is that you, Little Claus? Here are some cattle for you to begin with: and a mile farther down the road there is a whole flock that I will give you as a present.' I began to see then that the river was as good as a turnpike road to the sea folk. They walk and drive along its bed from the sea to the hill where the river rises far away in the heart of the land. It is a beautiful place down there, full of flowers; the grass is very rich, and the fish swim above you in the water just like the birds in the air. The people were very fine-looking, and oh! what famous cattle there were grazing on the hills and in the valleys."

"But why were you in such a hurry to come up here again?" said Big Claus. "*I* shouldn't have been, if every thing is so beautiful down there."

"Well," said Little Claus, "it was good policy in my case. You heard what I told you about the sea maiden's saying that I should find a herd of sea cattle a mile farther down the road—now by the road she meant the river, for its only road she can take. But I knew how the river bends and turns, first one way then another, so that it makes it a good piece farther; while by coming up to the land again, and just walking across the fields back to the river, I save almost half the distance and get to my cattle so much the more quickly."

"You *are* a lucky fellow," said Big Claus. "Do you think I should get any sea cattle if I went down to the bottom of the river?"

"I think so," said Little Claus; "but I can't carry you in a sack to the river, you're too heavy for me. If you like to walk there yourself, and then get into the sack, I will throw you in with the greatest pleasure."

"Thank you," said Big Claus. "But if I don't have any cattle when I get down there, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life; you may depend upon that."

"No, no! don't be so violent!" said Little Claus. They walked on to the river, and as soon as the thirsty cattle saw the water they ran forward to reach its banks.

"See how eager they are," said Little Claus, "they're in a hurry to get home."

"Yes; but help me first, if you don't want your thrashing," said Big Claus. He then crept into the large sack which was laid across the back of an ox. "Put a stone in," he cried; "I'm afraid of not sinking down fast enough."

"Oh, no danger," said Little Claus; but still he did put a large stone

in, tied the sack up tightly, and gave it a great push. Splash! went Big Claus into the river, where he sank down like lead.

"I scarcely think he will find his cattle," said Little Claus as he turned homewards with his herd.

—o—

The Naughty Boy.

THERE was once an old poet—such a dear, good old poet. One night, he was sitting at home, while the storm raged out of doors, and the heavy rain came pouring down. He sat comfortably by his fireside, the flame leaped merrily, and the rosy apples hissed in the dish, as they lay roasting before the fire.

"The poor creatures out of doors in all this rain will not have a dry thread on them!" he said.

"Oh! let me in; I am cold and wet through," cried a child's voice from without—the voice of a child who stood crying and knocking at the door, while the rain poured down and the windows rattled in the wind.

"Poor little thing!" said the poet, and he got up to open the door. There stood a little boy; he was naked, and the rain streamed from his long fair hair. He was trembling with cold, and would certainly have died in the storm if he had not been let in.

"Poor little thing!" cried the old poet, taking him by the hand. "Come here to me, I will soon warm you. You shall have some wine and a roasted apple, for you are a lovely little fellow."

He certainly was. His eyes shone like two clear stars, and although the water was falling from his yellow hair, yet it hung in rich soft curls. He looked like a little angel; but he was white with cold, and trembling from head to foot. In his hand he held a beautiful bow, quite spoiled by the rain; the bright colours on the painted arrows had all run together.

The old man sat down by the fire and lifted the little child on his knee. He pressed the water out of his fair curls, warmed his little hands between his own, and made him some hot spiced wine. Soon the rich colour came back to the pale cheeks; the little one sprang to the ground, and danced round the old man.

"You are merry, little lad," said the poet; "what is your name?"

"My name is Cupid," he answered. "Don't you know me? Here is my bow. I know how to shoot with it, I can tell you. Look! the storm is over now: the moon is shining."

"But your bow is spoilt!" said the old poet.

"That would be a pity," said the little lad, taking it up and looking at it. "No, it is quite dry now; it has taken no harm: the string is tight: I will try it." He bent the bow, took up an arrow, aimed, and

shot the good old poet through the heart. "Now you know whether or no my bow is spoilt," he cried, with a laugh, and off he ran.

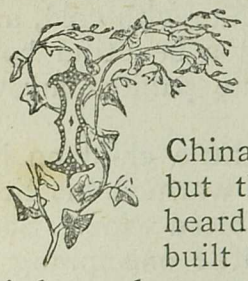
The naughty boy, to shoot at the good old poet who had taken him into his warm room and been so kind to him, giving him hot wine and the best apple!

The old poet lay on the floor and wept; he was really shot through the heart. "Fie!" he cried, "what a naughty boy that Cupid is! I shall tell all good children about him, that they may take care never to play with him, for he will certainly do them some mischief."

All the good children, girls and boys, to whom the poet told this, kept on their guard against Cupid, but it was not of much use; he was so very cunning. When the students come out of the lecture room, he runs among them with a college cap on and a book under his arm; they cannot possibly recognize him. So they take his arm thinking he is a student, and he darts the arrow into their heart. He joins the young maidens when they come from their confirmation class; he runs after everybody. In the theatre he sits in the great chandelier and shines so bright that the people take him for a lamp, but they find out their mistake afterwards. He wanders through the public gardens and the promenades—and once he shot your own father and mother through the heart! You just ask them, and hear what they will say. Oh! he is a very naughty boy, this Cupid! you must never have anything to do with him. He leaves no one in peace. Why, only think, he even shot an arrow at your old grandmother! It is long ago: the wound is quite healed now; but she will never forget it. Fie! naughty Cupid! But you have heard all about him now, and know what a naughty boy he is.

—o—

The Nightingale.



DARESAY you know that in China the Emperor is a Chinaman, and all the people round him are Chinamen too. Now this happened many years ago—but that is the more reason that the story should be heard before it is forgotten. The Emperor's Palace was built entirely of the finest porcelain, very costly, but so brittle, and so easily cracked, that one had to be careful how one touched it. The garden was rich in wonderful flowers, and round the most beautiful were wreaths of silver bells, which kept ringing lest any one should pass by and forget to look at them. The same admirable study of effect was to be found everywhere, and the garden was so large that even the gardener did not know where it ended. If one did get beyond it, one came out into a beautiful forest with deep lakes and lofty trees. The forest stretched downwards to the sea, which sparkled blue and clear; tall ships could sail up right under the branches of the trees,

"There she is," said the little girl; "listen!"

and among these branches there lived a nightingale. It sang so gloriously that even the poor, hardworked fisherman held his breath to listen when he sailed out by night to lower his nets into the sea. "How beautiful it is!" he thought; and then he was obliged to attend to his work, and forgot all about the bird. But when he came again the next night and the bird sang, he stopped again and said, "how beautiful it is."

Travellers came from every country in the world to admire the Emperor's city, palace, and gardens; but when they heard the nightingale they said, "That is the best of all!"

They spoke of the bird when they returned to their homes, and learned men wrote a great many books about the city and the garden, not forgetting the nightingale, which they placed first of all. And those who could write poetry, wrote the most beautiful verses about the ni ghtingale in the woods by the deep sea.

The books were scattered all over the world, and one day some of them fell into the hands of the Emperor. He sat on his golden throne and read, and read, nodding approval at every page, for he liked reading the glowing descriptions of the city, the garden, and the palace. "But the nightingale is the best of all!" he read out of the book.

"The nightingale!" said the Emperor, "I know of no nightingale. Is there such a bird in my empire, in my Imperial garden indeed? and I never to have heard it! To learn it for the first time out of a book!"

Thereupon he sent for his first lord. This nobleman was so grand, that when any one of lower rank than his own ventured to speak to him, or ask him a question, he merely answered "P," which has no meaning whatever.

"There is said to be a highly remarkable bird here, called the nightingale," said the Emperor. "It is spoken of as the best thing in all my empire. How is it that I have never been told of it?"

"I have never even heard it mentioned," said the nobleman; "it has never been presented at court."

"Let it be brought to sing before me this evening," said the Emperor—"all the world knows better what I possess than I do myself."

"I never even heard it mentioned before," said the nobleman. "I will look for it and find it."

But where was it to be found! The first lord ran up and down the stairs, through the halls and corridors, but not one of all the people he met had ever heard of the nightingale. The nobleman went back to the Emperor and said that it must certainly be a falsehood on the part of those who wrote the books. "Your Imperial Majesty cannot believe all that is written. The greater part of it is inventions—something that may be termed the black art."

"But the book out of which I read this," said the Emperor, "was sent me by my Imperial brother, the Emperor of Japan, and therefore it cannot be false. I will hear the nightingale. Let it be brought here to-night. It has my most gracious favour, and if it is not here, I will have the whole Court trampled under foot immediately after supper."

"Tsing Pe!" cried the first lord, and off he ran again, upstairs and

downstairs, and through the halls, and corridors, and half the court ran with him, for nobody wished to be trampled under foot. So there was every one asking about this wonderful nightingale who was known to the whole town, except to those who lived at Court. At last they ran as far as the kitchen, and there they met a poor little scullery-maid who said, "The Nightingale? why I know it quite well! oh, how sweetly it sings. Every evening I get leave to carry what is left from the dinner-table to my poor, sick mother; she lives down by the sea, and when I come back tired out, and sit down to rest in the wood, I often hear the nightingale. The tears come into my eyes at her song I feel as if my mother kissed me."

"Little scullery maid," said the first lord, "I will promote you to a better place in the kitchen, and I will obtain permission for you to look on when the Emperor dines if you can lead us to the nightingale, for she is invited to the palace this evening." They set out together to the wood where the nightingale sang; half the court followed them, and when they were fairly on their way, a cow began to low.

"Now we've found her," cried one of the court pages; "what wonderful power for such a little animal! I fancy I have heard her before."

"No, no! those are cows lowing," said the little scullery maid, "we are a long way off the place yet."

Some frogs croaked in the marsh. "Beautiful!" cried the court-chaplain, "I hear her distinctly: it sounds like little silver bells."

"Those are frogs," said the little scullery maid, "but I think we shall soon hear her now."

The Nightingale began to sing. "There she is!" cried the little girl: "listen! listen! yonder she sits." And she pointed to a small grey bird in the branches overhead.

"Is it possible?" said the first lord; "I never imagined her like that. How very plain she looks: she must have changed colour on seeing so many people of quality."

"Little Nightingale," cried the scullery maid aloud, "our lord the Emperor wishes you to sing before him."

"With all my heart," said the little Nightingale, and sang so that it was a joy to hear her.

"It sounds just like little glass bells," said the first lord. "How her little throat works! It is most extraordinary that we have never heard her before. She will be an immense success at Court."

"Shall I sing again for the Emperor?" said the little nightingale, who thought the Emperor was one of the group.

"My adorable little Nightingale," said the first lord, "I have the great pleasure of inviting you to the Court festival this evening, where you may enchant His Imperial Highness with your charming song."

"I sing better out in the woods," said the Nightingale, but she came at once when she heard the Emperor wished it.

The palace was splendidly decorated, the porcelain walls and floors glittered in the light of myriad golden lamps; splendid flowers with their chimes of silver bells were placed in the corridors. There was such a hurry and draught, and ringing of bells, that one could scarcely hear one's own voice.

In the midst of the great hall where the Emperor sat on his throne was a golden perch set up for the nightingale.

The whole Court was there, and the little scullery maid had leave to stand behind the door, since she had been granted the title of Cook to the Imperial Court. All were in full dress and every eye was turned towards the little grey bird. The Emperor nodded, and the nightingale began her song. She sang so gloriously that tears rose in the Emperor's eyes and rolled down his cheeks ; then she sang more sweetly still, and her voice thrilled every heart. The Emperor was so delighted that he said the nightingale should wear his golden slipper round her neck ; but she thanked him, and said she was already sufficiently rewarded.

"I have seen tears in my Emperor's eyes, and that is my great reward. An Emperor's tears have special power. Heaven knows I am repaid." And she sang once more with her sweet, lovely voice.

"That is the most charming flattery I have ever heard," said the ladies standing round ; and they all held water in their mouths that they might gurgle when they spoke to any one. They thought they were nightingales then. Nay ; even the lacqueys and ladies' maids gave out that they were satisfied, and that is saying a great deal, for they are the hardest of all to please. In short, the Nightingale was a decided success.

She was obliged to live at court now ; she had her own cage and the privilege of walking out twice a day and once at night. Twelve servants attended her, and each of them held a silk ribbon which was fastened round her leg. There was not much pleasure in such flying about as that.

The whole town was talking of the wonderful bird, and when two people met one of them was sure to say "Night——" and the other to answer "ingale."* And then they would sigh and understand each other. And eleven pedler's children were named after her, but not one of them had a good note in his voice.

One day the Emperor received a large parcel, on which was written —"The Nightingale." "This must be a new book about our famous bird," said the Emperor. But it was not a book ; it was a little mechanical toy in a box, an artificial nightingale, made like the living bird but set with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. When it was wound up it sang one of the very songs which the real nightingale sung, moving its tail up and down in time to the music, and sparkling with gold and silver. Round its neck was a ribbon with the inscription, "The Emperor of Japan's Nightingale is nothing compared to the the Emperor of China's.

"How exquisite !" cried all the court ; and the messenger who had brought the bird received at once the title of "Imperial Chief Nightingale Bringer."

"Now they shall sing together : what a duet that will be !" So they were set to sing together, but it was not a success, for the real nightingale sang in her own way, and the artificial one knew nothing

* There is a play upon words here, in the original Danish, the last syllable of nightingale meaning *mad*.

but waltzes. "This one is not in fault," said the conductor; "it keeps excellent time, quite according to my own method." Then the artificial bird was made to sing alone. It was just as great a success as the real one; besides being much prettier to look at, for it sparkled like bracelets and diamond brooches.

Thirty-three times it sang all through the same piece, and was not tired then. The audience would have liked to hear it again, but the Emperor said it was the real nightingale's turn now. But where was she? No one had noticed that she had flown away through the open window to her own green woods.

"Why, how is that?" cried the Emperor, and all the courtiers blamed her severely, and called her a most ungrateful bird. "However, the best is left," they said, and then they made the artificial bird sing again: that was the thirty-fourth time they heard the same song. They did not know it by heart yet, for all that—it was so very difficult. The conductor praised the bird most highly; he maintained that it was better than a real nightingale, not only on account of its golden plumage and valuable jewels, but of its musical talent. "For consider your Imperial Majesty and your Excellencies, with the real bird one never knows what is coming next, while with this one all is according to rule. It can be explained, opened, and shown to all men how the waltzes are arranged, and which comes after the other."

"That is just what we think," said the courtiers, and the conductor obtained permission to exhibit the bird to the people on the following Sunday. The Emperor gave orders that they should hear it sing; they did so, and were so enraptured with it, that they felt as if they were intoxicated with tea-drinking according to the Chinese fashion. "Oh—h!" they all cried, holding up their forefingers and nodding to the tunes. But the poor fisherman who had heard the real nightingale, said, "it sounds very pretty, and the tunes are like too: but there is something wanting; I don't know exactly what it is."

The real nightingale was banished from the Imperial realm.

The artificial bird was given a place on the silken cushions by the Emperor's bedside; all the presents of gold and jewels which it received lay round it, and it held the title of "Chief Singer of the Imperial Bedchamber—class one, on the left side," for the Emperor considered that the most honourable side where the heart was; and even an Emperor has his heart on the left side. The conductor wrote a work in twenty-five volumes about the artificial nightingale; the book was so long, so learned, so full of the hardest Chinese words, that every one said he had read it and understood it, lest he should be considered stupid, and perhaps trampled under foot.

A year passed away. The Emperor, the courtiers, and all the people knew every trill in the nightingale's song by heart. They liked it all the better for that, because now they could sing with it. The very street boys sang, "*Zoo—zoo—zoo*! gluk—gluk—gluk!" and so did the Emperor himself. It was delightful.

But one night when the nightingale was singing its best, and the Emperor lay in bed listening to it, something inside the bird went snap; there was another catch. Whir-r-r-r-r-r it went! The wheels ran down; the music stopped.

The Emperor sprang out of bed, and summoned his physician-in-ordinary, but what could *he* do ? Then they sent for the clockmaker, and after a great deal of consulting and examination, he set the bird to rights for a time. But he said it must be used very carefully. The stops were almost worn out, and it would be impossible to put in new ones without spoiling the music. There was great consternation at Court. The bird was only allowed to be heard once a year, and sometimes that seemed almost too much for it. The conductor would then make a short speech full of high flown words, to prove that it was just as good as before : and so of course it was just as good as before.

Five years passed away and a great trouble fell on the land.

The Chinamen were really attached to their Emperor, and now he lay ill, and was, so people said, at the point of death. A new Emperor was already chosen, and the crowd stood out in the street asking the first lord how the sick Emperor was.

"P ! P !" he exclaimed, and shook his head.

Cold and pale lay the Emperor in his large state bed ; the courtiers thought that he was dead, and every one hastened away to greet the new sovereign. The servants ran out to talk over the news, and the ladies'-maids had a great tea-party downstairs. Cloth was laid down in all the passages, so as to muffle every footfall, and the silence was unbroken. The Emperor was not dead ; he lay stiff and white on the bed, with the heavy velvet curtains and the golden tassels ; before him, through the open window, the moon shone down upon his face and upon the golden bird.

He could scarcely breathe ; he felt as if something were sitting on his chest. He opened his eyes, and found that it was Death who sat there, wearing his royal crown, and holding in one hand the Emperor's sabre, in the other his embroidered banner. All around ghostly faces looked out from the folds of the velvet curtains ; some were hideous, some mild and kindly. These were the Emperor's good and evil deeds which looked him in the face, while death sat heavy on his heart.

"Do you remember me ?" "do you remember me ?" they asked, one after the other ; and as they spoke the cold perspiration stood on the Emperor's brow.

"I never knew it !" he cried ; "Music ! music ! sound the drums and gongs to drown their voices !"

But they went on speaking, and Death nodded grimly at every word.

"Music ! music !" cried the Emperor ; "you little golden bird sing to me now ! I have loaded you with jewels and presents ; I have hung my golden slipper round your neck. Sing to me now !"

But the bird was silent. There was no one there to wind it up ; it could not sing without that ; and Death kept staring at the Emperor with his hollow eyes through the dreadful stillness.

Suddenly a burst of song trilled from the open window—it was the living nightingale who sat outside on the branch of a tree. She had heard of the Emperor's need, and was come to sing of hope and consolation ; as she sang the spectre faces faded ; the blood ran more freely through the sick man's feeble limbs, and Death himself listened, and said, "Sing on, little Nightingale ! sing on !"

"Will you give me that beautiful sabre, and the silken banner, and the Emperor's crown?"

Death gave up each one in exchange for a song, and the nightingale still went on singing. She sang of the quiet churchyard, where the white roses grow, where the elder-flowers blossom, and the grass is wet with mourners' tears. A longing for his peaceful garden stole over Death as she sang, and he floated away out of the open window like a cold white mist.

"Thanks!" cried the Emperor; "you bird of heaven! I know you now. I drove you from my land, and you have driven evil visions from my bed, and death from my heart. How can I repay you?"

"I am repaid," said the nightingale. "I drew tears from your eyes when I first sang to you. I shall never forget it; those are the jewels that rejoice a singer's heart. But sleep now, and grow strong and well; I will sing you a lullaby."

She sang, and the Emperor fell into a deep sleep, mild and refreshing. The sun was shining through his windows as he woke, strengthened and restored: none of his servants had returned, for they believed him dead; but the nightingale was still singing.

"Do not leave me again," said the Emperor; "you shall only sing when you please, and I will break the golden bird in a thousand pieces."

"Not so," said the nightingale; "it served you as long as it could: keep it here still. I cannot build my nest here in the palace. Let me come and go as I will. In the evenings I will sit in this spray, and sing to you till you are glad and thoughtful all in one. I will sing of the happy and the suffering, of the good and evil, that lie hidden around you. The little singing-bird flies far and wide, away from the palace, to the hut of the poor fisherman, and the peasant's cottage. I love your heart more than your crown, though the crown has a glory and sacredness of its own. I will come and sing to you; but you must promise me one thing."

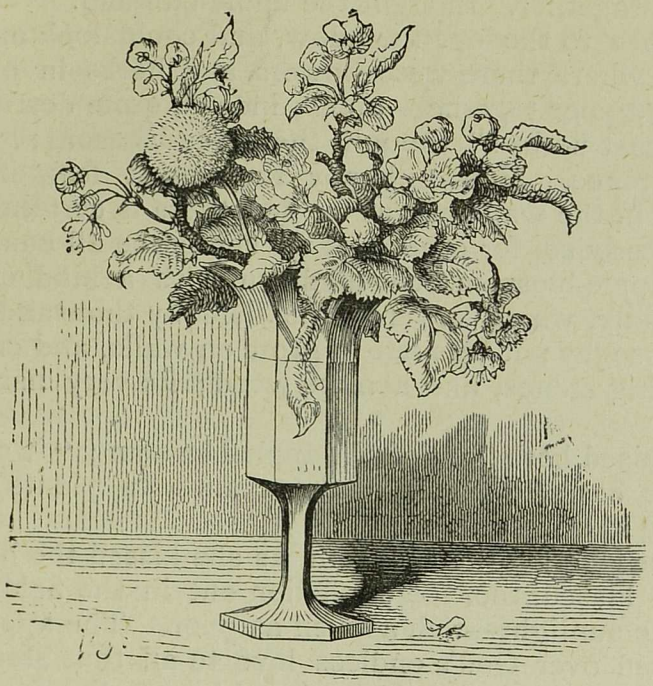
"Everything!" cried the Emperor. He stood dressed now in his imperial robes, with the heavy golden sword at his side.

"Only one thing. Let no one know you have a little bird who tells you everything: it will be much better not."

The nightingale flew away.

In came the servants to look on their dead Emperor. They stood still in amazement.

The Emperor said "Good morning!"



"There is a Difference!"

IT was the month of May. A cold wind blew; but every tree and shrub, field and woodland, said, "The spring is here!" Flowers in myriads bloomed in the quickset hedgerows: the Spring himself was busy among them, breathing down from a little apple-tree, where one lovely branch, heavy with rosy buds, was on the point of bursting into blossom. It knew well how lovely it was, for that knowledge comes soon, to heart and leaf alike; so it was not very much surprised when a splendid carriage drew up before it, and the young Countess said that an apple-blossom was the loveliest thing in all the world—the sweetest revelation of the springtide! The branch was broken off, and the Countess held it in her delicate hand, and shaded it with her silken parasol. Away rolled the carriage to the Castle, and the apple-blossom was carried through splendid halls and lofty rooms, where white curtains draped the windows, and rare transparent vases stood filled with lovely flowers. Into a vase that looked as if it had been carved out of new-fallen snow, they placed the branch of apple-blossom; it was a pleasure only to see it.

Then it grew proud, and that is human, too.

Different kinds of people passed through the chamber, and each expressed his admiration according to his rank. Some said nothing, some said too much, and the apple-tree began to understand that there is a difference among plants and among people.

"Some are born for show, and some for use, and some could be dispensed with altogether," thought the apple-blossom.

It stood close to the open window, and could look out over garden and meadow where there were flowers and herbs in plenty to think about, rich and poor together—some, indeed, quite destitute.

"Poor outcast herbs!" thought the apple-blossom; "there is certainly a difference. How unhappy they must feel, if, indeed, that class *can* feel in the way such as we do: there is certainly a difference, and very properly so, for otherwise we should be all equal."

And the apple-blossom looked down with a kind of pity on one flower especially, which covered the field by thousands. No ribbon tied it in a nosegay; it was left to grow on walls, and crop up through the very paving-stones, like a mere weed; its very name was ugly—Dandelion!

"Poor despised herb!" cried the apple-blossom; "it cannot help the ugly name it bears. But it is the same with plants as with men; there must be a difference."

"Difference!" cried the sunbeam, as she kissed the blooming apple-blossom, and kissed, too, the dandelion out in the field, kissed all the children of the sunlight—rich as well as poor. The apple-blossom had never pondered over God's endless love to all that breathes and lives in Him, or thought how much good and beauty lies around hidden but not forgotten—and that was human too.

The sunbeam, child of light, knew better.

"You cannot see far or clearly. Which is the despised herb you are pitying?"

"The dandelion," said the apple-blossom; "it is never tied in a nosegay, it is trodden under foot; there are too many of them, and when they run to seed they are scattered all over the ground like bits of wool, and stick to people's clothes. It is a weed, and it is meant to be so; I am truly thankful that I am not one of them."

A troop of children came running over the field—one a mere baby, carried by the others in turn. As soon as it saw the yellow flowers in the valley, it crowed for joy, plunged with its little legs, picked off the blossoms, and kissed them in its sweet innocence. The bigger children plucked them more carefully, and twisted them into chains—one for the neck, one to throw over the shoulders, one for the waist, one for the head, and one more to keep them all in place—till there was a perfect blaze of yellow and green. But the eldest children chose the ripened flowers, with their feathery crown—the beautiful silvery ball of trembling wool, a masterpiece carved in down. This they held to their young lips, and whoever could blow it all away at one breath would have a new dress that same year—grandmother said so!

The despised flower was a prophet, then?

"Do you see?" whispered the sunbeam; "do you see its beauty and its power?"

"Yes—for children," answered the apple-blossom.

An old woman came into the field. She dug up the roots of the plant with her blunt old knife, and pulled them out: some she wanted for herb-tea, and the rest she meant to sell to the apothecary.

"But beauty is higher still," said the apple-blossom; "only the

elect enter the kingdom of beauty. There is a difference among plants as there is among people."

The sunbeam spoke of God's eternal love revealed in creation, and of the even distribution of all things in time and in eternity.

"Yes; that is your opinion," said the apple-blossom.

The door opened; the young Countess, followed by her friends, came into the room; she held in her hands something that might be a beautiful flower, but it was covered by three or four large leaves, lest a breath of wind should injure it, and it was carried much more carefully than the apple-blossom had been.

Slowly the great leaves were removed, and behold there stood the delicate feathery seed-crown of the despised dandelion! That was it which she had gathered and carried so tenderly lest one of the little feather arrows should blow away from its vapoury ball. She held it up lovingly, and praised its perfect form, its airy lightness, its graceful movement.

"Look, how beautiful God has made it!" she cried; "I will paint it in a group with that lovely apple-blossom; different as they are, they are both children in the kingdom of the beautiful."

The sunbeam kissed the poor flower, and the radiant apple-blossom, which blushed all over its delicate buds.

—o—

The Garden of Paradise.

THERE was once a king's son who had more books than any one else in the world. He could read in them about all that had ever taken place since the creation, and there were beautiful copper-plate engravings. There was not a place, or a nation about which they had not something to tell him—only they did not say a single word about the Garden of Paradise, and that was the very thing the prince cared for more than all.

His grandmother had told him when he was quite little, and was just going to be sent to school, that every flower in the Garden of Paradise was made of sweet cakes, and their stamens filled with delicious wine; on one flower was written history, on another geography, or tables—you had only to eat your cake and you knew your lesson—the more cake you ate, the more history, geography, and tables you knew.

He believed it all then; but as he grew bigger and wiser, and knew more, he understood that the glory of the Garden of Paradise must be a very different thing from that.

"Oh, why did Eve take the fruit of the tree of knowledge? Why did Adam eat the forbidden fruit? Had I been there it would not have happened—sin would have never entered the world."

That was what he used to say; and he said it now that he was

seventeen years old. The Garden of Paradise filled all his thoughts. One day he was walking alone through the wood; it was his greatest pleasure.

Evening came on, and the clouds threatened tempest. The rain poured down as if the floodgates of heaven were opened; it was as dark as in the deepest well by blackest night. The prince slipped on the wet grass, and over the smooth stones that lay in the rocky valley. Everything was dripping with water, there was not a dry thread left on him. He climbed over the great blocks of stone, pressing the water out of the wet moss; he felt faint and giddy. Suddenly he heard a strange sighing sound, and he saw before him a large hollow cavern. In the midst of the cave was a fire large enough to roast a stag, and a stag was actually roasting on a spit before it, its splendid antlers turning slowly round between two mighty pine stems. An elderly woman, tall, and broad-shouldered, looking like a man in disguise, sat by the fireside, and threw one log after another on to the blazing pile.

"Come in," she cried; "sit down by the fire and dry your clothes."

"The fire draws well," said the prince, as he sat down on the ground.

"It will draw better soon when my sons come home," said the woman. "You are in the cavern of the four winds, and my sons are the four winds. Can you make it out?"

"Where are your sons?" asked the prince.

"It is a difficult thing to answer a stupid question," said the woman. "My sons act for themselves; they are playing at battledoor and shuttlecock with the clouds up yonder in the king's hall." And she pointed to the sky.

"Oh, indeed!" said the prince. "You speak rather roughly, and do not seem quite so gentle as the ladies I am accustomed to meet."

"I daresay they've nothing else to do. I'm obliged to be rough, if I want to keep my sons in order. I manage it though, headstrong as they are. Do you see this sack hanging up by the wall? They are as afraid of that sack as you used to be of the birch-rod behind the door. I can manage them I promise you. I clap them into the sack without more ado, and there they are, and can't get out again until I think fit. But here comes one of them."

It was the north wind, who came in bringing an icy chill, great hailstones rattled to the ground, and snowflakes floated round him. He was dressed in bearskin coat and trousers; a sealskin cap was drawn over his ears; long icicles hung from his beard, and one hailstone after another fell from the collar of his coat.

"Don't go too near the fire," cried the prince, "your face and hands might be frozen."

"Frozen!" said the north wind, with a loud laugh; "cold is my greatest enjoyment; why, what dapper little fellow are you? How did you come into the Cavern of the Winds?"

"He is my guest," said the old woman; "and if that explanation doesn't satisfy you, you can go in the sack, do you hear that?"

That took effect; and the north wind began to talk of all the places where he had been in the last month. "I'm come from the Polar seas," he said; "I've been staying on Bear's Island with the Russian walrus

THE PRINCE IN THE GARDEN.

hunters ; I sat and slept at the helm when they sailed from the North Cape; and whenever I woke up, the stormy petrel flew round my feet. He's a comical little bird! He gives one good stroke with his wings, then holds them spread wide and motionless, and off he flies."

"Keep to the point," said the mother of the winds. "You were on Bear's Island."

"It's a nice place, that is. There's a floor to dance on, flat as a plate! Half-thawed snow, a little moss, sharp stones, and skeletons of walrus, and polar bears lie strewn about, like gigantic arms and legs green with decay. You would think the sun never shone there. I blew away a little of the mist so that they could see the little hut that had been built out of a wreck and covered with walrus skin, the fleshy side turned upwards ; on the roof was a polar bear, growling savagely. Then I flew down to the shore to look after the bird's nest. I saw the unfledged young ones chirping and opening their bills, so I blew down all their thousand throats and taught them to keep their mouths shut. Out at sea tumbled and rolled the walrus like gigantic worms, with pigs' heads, and teeth a yard long."

"You describe prettily, my lad," said his mother; "my mouth waters while I listen."

"The hunting began then. The harpoon was plunged into the walrus, and the hot blood-stream shot up high in the air, and stained the snow. Then I thought of my own sport. I blew away my fleet of towering icebergs, and they closed round the Russian whaler. How they whistled and shouted—but I whistled loudest. Chests, and tackle, and the dead walrus were thrown overboard on to the ice ; I showered down snowflakes over them, and let the ice-bound vessel and its spoil drift southward, to taste salt water. They will come no more to Bear's Island!"

"Then you have done harm!" said the mother of the winds.

"Other folk may tell the good I do," he answered. "But here comes my brother from the west; I love him best, for he smells of the sea and brings a fresh breeze with him."

"Is that the gentle Zephyr?" asked the prince.

"It certainly is the Zephyr ; but he is no longer gentle. Years ago he was a pretty boy, but he has lost his good looks."

He looked a wild fellow enough ; he wore a slouched hat to shade his face, and carried a heavy mahogany club cut from the American forests. It was no trifle to carry.

"Where do you come from?" said his mother.

"From the back woods," he answered, "from the swamps where the water snake lies in the wet grass, and there is no need of human beings."

"What have you been doing there?"

"I watched the mighty river fall from the rocks in clouds of spray and fly towards the clouds to meet the rainbow. I saw the wild buffalo struggling in the waves but the current bore him on—he followed the flight of the wild ducks in the sky above—both made for the cataract. The buffalo was whirled over ; that pleased me, and I raised a storm that splintered the lofty trees to shavings."

"And is that all you have done?" said the old woman.

"I have turned somersaults in the savannahs; stroked the wild horses, and shaken down the cocoanuts. Yes: yes. I could tell plenty of tales—but one must not tell all one knows. You know that yourself, old mother!" And he kissed her so roughly that she was almost knocked over. He was a dreadfully wild fellow.

Then came in the south wind, wearing a turban and a flowing burnous.

"It's very cold here," he said, throwing more wood on to the fire; "it's easy to see that the north wind reached home first."

"It's hot enough to roast a polar bear," said the north wind.

"You're a polar bear yourself!" said his brother.

"Do you want to go into the sack?" said the old woman. "Sit down on that stone and give an account of yourself."

"I've been in Africa, mother," he answered. "I've been lion hunting with the Hottentots in Caffre land. The grass grows green as olives in the valleys. The ostrich raced me but I outstripped him easily. Then I reached the desert—a plain of yellow sand like the bed of the sea. I met a caravan: they had killed the last camel to find water, and had found scarcely any: the sun was burning over head on the sand below. The desert stretched out endless as the sea. Then I stirred up the dry loose sand in whirling columns. That was a rare dance! You should have seen how helpless the dromedary stood, how the merchant hid his face in the folds of his caftan, and prostrated himself before me, as before Allah his god. They are buried now; a pyramid of sand stands over them. If ever I blow it away, the sun will bleach the white bones, and travellers will see that men have been there before them: or else they would never believe that in the desert.

"You have done nothing but mischief, then," said his mother—"into the sack with you," and before he had time to move she seized him round his body and pushed him in the sack. He rolled about on the floor, but she sat down upon it, and he was obliged to be still.

"They are a lively set of boys," said the prince.

"That they are," she answered: "but I can keep them in order. Here comes the fourth."

That was the east wind, who came in dressed like a Chinaman. "Oh! you come from over there do you?" said his mother: "I thought you had been to the Garden of Paradise."

"I don't go there till to-morrow," said the east wind—"to-morrow it will be a hundred years since I was there before. I am come straight from China where I've been dancing on the porcelain steeples till the bells rang again. The government officials were all bastinadoed in the streets, the bamboo cane was broken over their shoulders: and yet they were people of the first to the ninth grade. They all cried, 'Thanks! oh fatherly benefactor!' but it did not seem to come from their heart, and I set all my bells going 'ring-a-ting-ting-a-ting-ting.'"

"You are growing obstreperous," said his mother: "it's a good thing you're going to the Garden of Paradise to-morrow; that always helps to form your manners. Drink deep of the fount of wisdom and bring me a bottle full home."

"I will," said the east wind; "but why have you put my brother

from the south in the sack? Let him out. He must tell me about the phœnix; the princess in the Garden of Paradise is always anxious to hear about him when I pay her my visit once in a hundred years. Open the sack, mother darling! I've brought you two bags of tea, as fresh and green as when I gathered it from the place where it grew."

"Well! for the tea's sake, and because you were always my favourite boy, I will open the sack." She did so, and the south wind crept out; but he was very crestfallen because the prince had seen it all.

"Here is a palm leaf for the princess," said the south wind: "it was given me by the phœnix himself. He has written on it with his beak his whole life story—the story of a hundred years. She can read it for herself how he set fire to his nest, and sat in it as it burnt away—like the widow of a Hindoo prince. How the dry twigs crackled, and the smoke rose up! At last all broke out into flames; the old phœnix burnt to ashes, but his egg lay glowing red in the blaze; it burst with a loud crack, and out flew the young bird—the king of all the birds—the only phœnix in the world. Look! he has bitten this hole in the leaf—it is his greeting to the princess."

"Let us have some supper now," said the mother of the winds. All sat down to partake of the roast venison; the prince sat by the east wind, and they soon made friends with each other. "Tell me," said the prince, "what kind of a princess is the one you talk so much about? and where is the Garden of Paradise?"

"Oh ho!" said the east wind, "do you want to go there? Come with me to-morrow. But I must tell you that no human being has ever been there since the days of Adam and Eve. You know your Scripture History, I suppose?"

"Of course," said the prince.

"When they were driven out, the Garden of Paradise sunk in the earth, with all its pleasant sunshine, soft air, and loveliness. The fairy queen lives there, and there lie the Fortunate Isles where death cannot come. It is beautiful there. Get on my back to-morrow, and I will take you with me: I think it can be managed. But don't say another word now, for I am sleepy."

And all of them lay down to sleep.

Towards early dawn the prince awoke and was not a little surprised to find himself high above the clouds. He was sitting on the back of the east wind, who held him tight; and they were so high in the air that the earth, with its woods and plains, rivers and seas, lay below them like a map. "Good morning," said the east wind; "you can sleep a little longer if you like, for there is not much to be seen about here, unless you care to count the churches: they look like chalk dots on a green board." By the green board he meant fields and meadows.

"It was not polite to leave your mother and your brothers without saying good-bye," said the prince.

"One is excused all that when one is asleep," answered the east wind. On they flew, faster still; you could hear it in the tops of the trees as they rushed by, you could hear it on the seas, for the waves ran higher and the tall ships bent down to meet the water like stately swans.

The great towns looked beautiful beneath their feet when the night drew on; lights flashed out here and there as the sparks brighten and die out in lighted paper. The prince clapped his hands, but the east wind begged him not to do that again, and to hold tighter if he did not wish to fall off and be found hanging to some church steeple.

The eagle flies fast through the dark forests, but the east wind flew faster still; the Cossack scours the plain on his little horse, but the prince rode more swiftly than he.

"Now you can see the Himalayas—the highest mountains in Asia: we shall soon reach the Garden of Paradise: they turned southward; the scent of spices and flowers rose to meet them, figs and pomegranates grew wild, purple and deep red grapes hung on the vine branches. Here they rested awhile on the rich grass; the flowers bowed before the wind as if in welcome.

"Now are we in the Garden of Paradise?" asked the prince.

"Nothing like it," replied the east wind; "but we shall soon be there."

"Do you see that wall of rock over there, and the cavern mouth where the wild vine hangs like a green curtain? That is the way we must take. Draw your mantle round you: it is burning hot here, but a step farther and it will be cold as ice. The bird who flies by the cave feels one wing warm as summer and the other cold as winter."

"So that is the way to the Garden of Paradise?" said the prince. They entered the cave. It was icy cold, but not for long. The east wind spread out his wings, and they shone like living flame. What a cave it was! Great blocks of stone, from which the water trickled down, hung over them in fantastic shapes. Now it was so narrow that they were forced to crawl along on their hands and knees, and then it would widen out broad as the sky. It looked like a chapel for the dead, with its silent organ frozen into stone.

"We pass, then, through the gate of death to the Garden of Paradise?" said the prince. The east wind did not answer: he pointed onward to a lovely blue gleam which shone before them. The granite blocks softened to mist and looked at last like a white cloud in the moonlight. The air was fresh and mild, bracing as on the mountain height, and soft as among the roses in the valley. A river clear as the air itself flowed by: in it were gold and silver fish, purple eels that shot out sparks of blue fire, and the leaves of great water-lilies glanced with every colour of the rainbow: the flower itself was a brilliant orange, fed by the water as oil feeds a lamp. A bridge of marble, solid, but so finely carved that it looked like a dream of lace and crystal, crossed from the river to the Fortunate Isles and the Garden of Paradise.

The east wind carried the prince over in his arms. The flowers and leaves were singing the loveliest songs of his childhood, but more sweetly than any human voice can sing them.

Were they palm trees or gigantic water plants that grew round them? The prince had never seen such tall and stately trees, wonderful climbing plants hung down in graceful garlands, such as one sees painted in gold and colours on the margin, and clinging round the initial letters of old missals. Strange combinations of tendrils, flowers, and birds. On the turf near, was a flock of peacocks with glittering out-

spread tails, but when the prince touched them he found that they were plants not birds—great fairy clover blossoms that glittered like a peacock's tail. Lions and tigers sprang nimbly as cats over the green hedgerows, fragrant as the flowers of the olive tree, and both lions and tigers were quite tame. The wild wood-pigeon fluttered her soft wings on the lion's mane, and the timid antelope stood by and nodded its head as if it wanted to join in the play.

Then came up the fairy of the garden: her dress glittered like the sun, and her face was bright as the face of a happy mother proud of her child. She was young and beautiful; and twelve fair maidens followed her, each wearing a shining star in her hair. The east wind gave the palm leaf from the phœnix to the princess, and her eyes sparkled with joy. She took the prince by the hand, and led him into her palace, where the walls glowed with the colours of a tulip leaf when one holds it up against the sunlight. The ceiling was one great flower, and the longer one looked at it the deeper its cup seemed to be. The prince went to the window and looked through one of the panes: he saw before him the tree of knowledge and the serpent, Adam and Eve were standing by. "Are they not driven away?" he cried. The fairy laughed and told him that time had painted a picture on every pane; not such as one generally sees, but living pictures where the leaves of the trees moved, and people went and came, as if one looked into a mirror. He looked through another pane, and there was Jacob's dream, the ladder set up to heaven from earth, and angels with great white wings passing up and down. All that had happened in the world, lived and moved on the glass window panes. Those are the pictures time can paint.

The fairy smiled, and led him into a large high chamber with transparent walls. Here were millions of portraits, each face lovelier than the last; happy faces that smiled and sang a sweet melody; the highest were as small as tiny rosebuds painted on paper as a mere dot. In the midst of the chamber was a tall tree with luxuriant hanging branches, golden apples, bright as oranges, hung between the green leaves. It was the tree of knowledge from which Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit. From every leaf there fell a drop of dew—bright, red, and sparkling. It was as if the tree wept tears of blood.

"Let us go in the boat," said the fairy, "and refresh ourselves on the clear water. The boat rocks, but it does not leave the spot; the countries of the world pass before us as we sit. And it was wonderful to see how the whole coast moved round. First came the high snow covered alps, with clouds and dusky pine woods; the horn sounded plaintively, and the shepherd's *jödeln* were heard below in the valley. Then tall bananas waved their drooping branches over the boat, black swans swam on the water, and strange beasts and flowers appeared on the shore. That was New Holland, the fifth continent which glided by, giving a distant view of the blue mountains. The wild song of the priests arose, and the war dance of the savages was seen, led by the sound of drums and the clang of the bone trumpets. The pyramids of Egypt, towering to the clouds amid fallen columns and sphynxes half buried in the sand, sailed slowly by. The northern lights flamed high above the burnt out volcanoes of the north: a firework such as

is seen no where else. The prince was happier than he had ever been before: he saw a hundred times more than we can tell here.

"May I always stay here?" he asked.

"It depends upon yourself," said the fairy. "If you are not enticed to do what is forbidden, as Adam was, you may."

"I will not touch the fruits of the tree of knowledge," said the prince. "There are thousands of fruits here as fair as that."

"Prove yourself: and if you are afraid, go back with the East-wind who brought you hither. He is about to fly home now, and will not be seen here again for a hundred years; the time will seem to you like a hundred hours, but it is a long time to be tempted. Every evening when I leave you I must say to you 'Come with me.' I must beckon with my hand; but do not follow, for with every step your longing will grow stronger. You will come into the room where the tree of knowledge stands; I sleep under its sweet-scented branches—you will bend over me, and I must smile: but if you press a kiss upon my lips the Garden of Paradise will sink into the earth and be lost to you for ever. The keen wind of the desert will whistle round you, and cold rain will fall upon your head; care and sorrow will be your lot."

"I will stay," said the prince.

The East-wind kissed him on the forehead, and said, "Be strong! in a hundred years we meet again. Farewell!" And he spread out his broad wings that shone like summer lightning at harvest time, or the Northern lights in winter.

Farewell, farewell! re-echoed from flower and tree. Files of storks and pelicans accompanied him to the boundary of the garden.

"Now we begin our dances," said the fairy. "When I dance the last dance with you at sunset, you will see me beckon you and hear me say come with me, but do not listen. I must do this every night through the hundred years; every time you resist you will gain fresh strength, and at last you will not even heed me. To-night is the first time and I have warned you."

The fairy led him into a hall of white, transparent lilies; the stamens in each cup formed a little golden harp that rang out in flute-like tones. The loveliest maidens, graceful and slender, their fair forms half veiled in flowing drapery circled in the dance, and sang of the bliss of life, and that the Garden of Paradise would bloom for ever. The sun set, the whole heaven turned to gold, and lent to the lilies the loveliest roselight. The prince drank the sparkling wine which the maidens offered him, and felt a happiness which he had never known before. He saw how the background of the room opened and showed him the tree of knowledge standing in a blinding glory; songs were heard, soft and loving as his mother's voice, when she called him her dear, dearest child.

Then the fairy beckoned him tenderly, "Come with me," she cried.

The prince rushed towards her, forgot his promise, forgot it even this first night, and the fairy smiled and beckoned. The rich fragrance round grew stronger, the harps rang out more sweetly; it seemed as if the myriad faces round the tree of knowledge cried out, "Man must know all things—man is the lord of the world!" And now he saw no blood-red tears, but only sparkling, rose-lit stars falling from the

glittering leaves. "Come with me," pleaded the thrilling tones. At every step his cheeks burnt more hotly and his blood rushed faster through his veins. "I must go," he cried : "it is not—cannot be a sin. Why may I not follow joy and beauty ? I will look on her as she sleeps. Nothing is lost if only I do not kiss her lips. And I will not. My will is firm and strong."

The fairy laid aside her gleaming robe and vanished under the hanging boughs.

"I have not sinned yet," said the prince. "I will not sin." He parted the branches ; she was already sleeping ; beautiful with all the beauty of Paradise. She smiled in her dream : he bent over her and on her silken lashes he saw a tear.

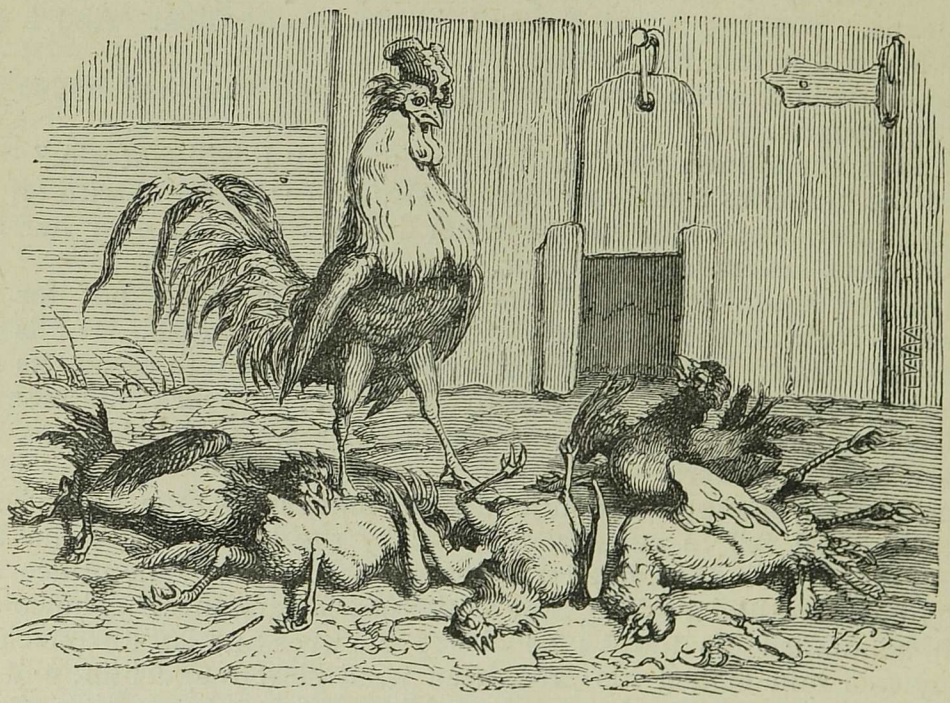
"Do you weep for me ?" he whispered. "Weep not for me beloved. Now for the first time I feel the joy of Paradise. It fills my blood—my heart. I feel in my earthly body the strength of angels and the power of eternal life. Let it be night for me for ever : one moment like this is joy enough." And he kissed the tears from her eyes, and pressed his lips to hers.

Then came a clap of thunder, louder and more awful than can be heard on earth. All fell in ruins round him by the lovely fairy ; the fair, sweet garden sank deep, deep into the gloomy night. The prince saw it sinking down like a falling star to the far, far distance. The cold of death benumbed his limbs ; he closed his eyes and lay unconscious. An icy cold rain lashed his face, keen wind blew round him, and his senses returned. "What have I done ?" he cried. "I, too, have sinned as Adam sinned—and Paradise is lost. He opened his eyes ; a star that shone like his lost Paradise was yet before him in the heavens. It was the morning-star.

He rose and found himself in the forest close to the Cavern of the Winds ; the mother of the Winds sat by him ; she looked angry and raised her arm in the air.

"The very first night!" she cried, "I thought as much ! If you were my son you would go in the sack."

"And so he will," said Death ; the tall old man with great black wings, a scythe in his right hand. "Into the sack he shall go—but not yet. My mark is on him. Let him wander awhile in the world, and repent of his sin, and learn to grow better. When he least expects it, I shall come ; put him in the black coffin and fly with him to yonder star. There too, he will find the Garden of Paradise, and if he is worthy he may enter in ; but if his thoughts are evil, and his heart full of sin, he will sink in his coffin deeper than Paradise has sunk, and I shall only fetch him back once in a thousand years, that he may sink deeper still, or reach at last the golden star above."



It is Quite True.

"IT'S a dreadful story!" said a hen; she did not live in that quarter of the town where the affair had happened. "Such a terrible scandal in the henroost! I dare not sleep by myself to-night. It's a good thing there are so many of us on one perch," and then she began to tell what had happened, till the feathers of the other hens stood on end, and the cock's comb fell down flat. It's quite true.

But we will begin at the beginning, and we shall find that in another henroost, in a different part of the town, the sun was setting, and the hens were going to roost, when a white hen, a short-legged, motherly, highly respectable hen, who laid her eggs regularly, gave herself a little peck as she flew up on to the perch, and a small white feather fell out.

"There it goes!" she said, merrily, for she was always full of fun; "the more I peck myself, the handsomer I grow." She liked a joke, though, as we said before, she was eminently respectable; and then she went to sleep.

It grew dark; hen sat by hen; but the one who sat next to the white hen could not sleep; she listened, and heard nothing, as one ought to do if one wishes for a quiet life in the world. But no; she

must repeat it all to her next neighbour. "Did you hear what was said just now?" she whispered. "There is a hen here, who pecks herself to improve her appearance! If I were a cock, I should despise her."

Just above the hens, the owl sat with the father owl and the children; the whole family have sharp ears, and they heard every word the hen said. They turned up their eyes and fluttered their wings, and the mother said, "Don't listen to such things. But I dare-say you heard what was said? I heard it with my own ears, and they have to hear a great deal before they are done with. One of those hens down there forgets so entirely what is becoming to a hen, that she pulls out all her feathers for the cock to see."

"*Prenez garde aux enfants!*" said the father owl; "that's not a fit story for children."

"I will just tell it to the owl next door, though; there is no owl more looked up to in the neighbourhood."

"Tu-whoo! tu-whoo!" screeched the two owls, close to the neighbour's dove-cot. "Did you hear that? Tu-whoo! There is a hen yonder who has pulled out all her feathers to please the cock; she will certainly freeze to death, if she isn't frozen already. Tu-whoo!"

"Where? where?" cooed the pigeons.

"In the farmyard close by. I have as good as seen it myself. It is scarcely a fit story to tell, but it is quite true."

"You may believe it—every single word of it," cooed the pigeons, and off they flew, down to their own poultry-yard. "There is a hen up there, some people say there are two, and they have pulled out all their feathers to make themselves look different from the rest, and attract the attention of the cock. It is rather a dangerous game, and very likely to bring on cold and fever; indeed, so it has done; both the hens are dead!"

"Wake up! wake up!" crowed the cock, flying up on to his plank; his eyes were drowsy with sleep, but he crowed all the same. "Three hens have died of love for one cock. They had pulled out all their feathers. It's a horrible story; I can't keep it to myself, so it may go farther."

"Pass it on," hissed the bats, "pass it on." The hens clucked, and the cock crowed, the story flew from henroost to henroost, till it came back to the one whence it first started.

"Five hens," the story ran, "have plucked out all their feathers, to show which of them had grown the thinnest out of love for the cock; and then they had all fallen upon and pecked each other to death, to the shame and disgrace of their families, and the serious loss of their owner."

The white hen who had dropped the little feather naturally did not recognize her own story; and as she was a very respectable hen, she said, "I despise such hens; but there are many like them. A story like that ought not to be hushed up. I shall do my best to get it into the newspapers, it will then be spread all over the country. The hens richly deserve it, and so do their families."

It got into the newspapers, was printed, and—it is quite true—one little feather can grow into five hens!

The Daisy.

NOW listen. Out in the country, close to the road-side, stood a pretty house; you must have seen it yourself. There was a small garden in front with a green palisading, and close to the neighbouring hedgerow grew a little daisy. She grew in the soft, green grass; the sunshine fell on her as brightly as on the tall, beautiful flowers in the garden. Day by day she grew taller, and one morning she stood with her crown of dazzlingly white petals unfolded, making a wreath of light round the yellow sun in the centre.

She did not fret because no one could see her in the grass, or because she was a poor, despised flower; no, she was full of thankfulness, and turned herself towards the warm sun, looked up to the sky, and listened to the lark singing in the air. The little daisy was as happy as if it were a holiday; and yet it was only Monday. The children were all in school sitting on forms and learning their lessons. She, too, sat up on her tiny green stem, and learnt her lesson; learnt from the warm sunshine, and from all around, how good God is; she was very glad that the little lark could sing out so clearly all that she felt in silence. The daisy looked up admiringly at the happy bird who could sing and fly; but she was not angry because she could do neither. "I can see and hear him," she thought; "the sun shines on me, and the wind kisses me. How happy and well-cared for I am!"

Inside the palisading stood many grand, stiff flowers; the less scent they had, the more airs they gave themselves. The peonies spread themselves out, to make themselves look larger than the roses; but size is not everything. The tulips had the loveliest colours; and very well they knew it, holding themselves as stiffly as possible that every one might see them. They never glanced at the little daisy outside; but she looked at them, and thought to herself, "How rich and beautiful they are! The loveliest birds must fly down to them and visit them. How I thank God that I grow so near, and can see all their beauty!" As she thought this, "Tra-la!" the lark came flying down; but not to the peonies and tulips, no, right down to the little daisy in the green grass. She trembled so with joy that she hardly knew what had happened.

The little bird hopped round her and sang, "How soft the grass is! and look, what a sweet little flower, with a silver dress and a golden heart!" For the daisy's leaves were bright as silver, and the yellow centre glowed like gold. How happy she felt, no one can ever tell! The lark kissed her with his beak, sang to her, and then flew away through the warm, blue air. It was a quarter of an hour before the daisy could recover herself. Half in delight, half shyly, she glanced at the other flowers in the garden; they had seen the honour and

the joy that had befallen her, surely they must understand her joy and happiness!

But the tulips held themselves as stiffly as ever, and were quite red in the face, for they were very angry. The peonies were slow and stupid; it was a good thing they could not speak; if they could have done so, the daisy would have had a thorough scolding. The poor little flower could see that they were out of temper, and she felt very grieved. Just then a servant maid came into the garden with a bright, sharp knife, with which she cut down the tulips one after another.

"Oh!" sighed the daisy, "that is dreadful—it is all over with them now."

The girl went away with them into the house; and the daisy rejoiced, and gave thanks that she was only a poor little flower growing wild among the grass. When the sun went down, she folded her leaves and fell asleep, to dream the whole night through of the sunshine and the lark.

The next day, when the happy flower opened her white leaves, stretching them wide like out-spread arms to the light and air, she heard the lark's voice, but the tones were very sad. The poor bird had cause enough for sorrow; he was a prisoner now, and sat in a cage by the open window. He sang of his free and happy wanderings, of the young corn in the field, and of his glorious flight through the air to greet the sun. The poor lark was sad and downcast as he sat a prisoner in its cage.

The little daisy longed to help him. But how could she? There seemed no way. She forgot everything around her, the warm sunshine, and the beauty of her own white leaves. She could think of nothing but of the caged bird whom she was unable to help.

At that moment up ran two little boys out of the garden; one of them held a sharp knife in his hand, like the one the servant had used to cut down the tulips; they came straight up to the daisy, who could not think what they wanted.

"Here's a nice piece of turf for the lark," said one of them, and he began to cut a square piece round where the daisy grew, so that she was left in the middle of the square.

"Pull that daisy up," said the other boy; and the flower trembled with fear, for that meant death to her, and she wanted to live now, that she might go with the piece of turf into the cage of the captive lark.

"No, let it be," said the other; "it makes it look pretty." So she was left standing and put into the cage.

The lark mourned piteously over his lost freedom; and beat his wings against the side of the cage. The little daisy could not speak to him, much as she longed to say some word of comfort. The morning passed away. "There is no water," said the imprisoned lark. "They have all gone out and have forgotten to leave me anything to eat or drink. My throat is dry and burning; it feels like fire and ice, and the air is heavy. Ah! I must die, and leave the warm sunshine, the fresh grass, and all the beautiful things which God has made;" he thrust his beak into the cool turf to allay his thirst, and as he did so his glance fell on the little daisy. He nodded to the flower

and kissed her. "So you, too, are brought here to fade and die, poor little thing!" he said. "They have brought me you and your tiny bit of turf for the whole world which I had outside. Every blade of grass is to be a tree for me, and every one of your white leaves a fragrant flower. Alas! you only make me think how much I have lost!"

"If I could only comfort him!" thought the daisy. She could not speak, but the fragrance from her leaves was richer than it had ever been before; the lark noticed it too, and though he was fainting with thirst, and tore up the blades of grass in his agony, he never touched the daisy.

Evening drew on. No one came to bring the poor lark a drop of water; he stretched out his pretty wings and fluttered them convulsively, his song died away to a faint chirping, his little head sank down beneath the flower; he died heart-broken with want and sorrow.

The daisy could not fold her leaves, and sleep as she had done last night; she drooped down sadly towards the earth.

The boys did not come by till the next morning. When they saw the dead bird they cried bitterly, and dug him a neat little grave strewn with flowers. His body was laid in a fine red box, he was to be buried like a prince, poor bird! While he lived and sang they forgot him, and left him to die of want in his cage, but now that he was dead, he had flowers strewn over him and many tears.

But the bit of turf with the daisy on it was thrown out on to the dusty roadside; no one thought of her who had felt the most for the little bird, and tried so hard to comfort him.

—o—

The Galoshes of Fortune.

I. A Beginning.

IN a house in Copenhagen, not far from the king's new market, a large party was assembled, doubtless with the idea of giving and receiving fresh invitations. One half of the company was settled at the card-tables; the other half was waiting the result of the hostess's question. "Well, what shall we do next?" They had got to that point, and the evening's entertainment was fairly beginning. The conversation fell, among other topics, on the middle ages; some of the guests considered that a much more interesting time than our own day; Councillor Knap supported this view so warmly, that the lady of the house was gained over to his side, and both were very hot against Oerstedt's article on ancient and modern times, in the last magazine, in which the preference was given to the present day.

The Councillor considered that the reign of the Danish King Hans* was the noblest and happiest time to have lived in.

While this discussion formed the subject of conversation, only interrupted by the arrival of a newspaper, which contained nothing worth reading, we will go out into the cloak-room, where all the shawls, walkingsticks, and goloshes were kept. Two women, one young and the other old, were sitting there; at the first glance it seemed as if they were waiting to walk home with their mistresses; but on looking closer one saw at once that they were no ordinary servants; their faces were too delicate and noble, and their dress too fantastic and costly.

They were two fairies. The younger one was not Happiness herself; she was the waiting-maid of fortune, who is the waiting-maid of Happiness, and who distributes her smaller gifts. The elder one was Care; she always attends to her business in her own person, for she says that if you want a thing well done, you must do it yourself.

They were telling each other where they had been that day; the messenger of Fortune had only been sent on a few trifling errands, such as saving a new bonnet from a shower of rain, getting an honest man a gracious bow from a rich nullity, &c., but what she had still to do was more interesting. "I must tell you that this is my birthday," she said; "and in honour of the day I have been entrusted with a pair of goloshes which I am to present to mankind. These goloshes have the power of transporting instantly, any one who puts them on, to any place and time he chooses. Every wish relating to time, place, or existence, is immediately granted, so men have a chance at last of being happy here below."

"Believe me," said Care, "your goloshes will make everybody utterly miserable, and ready to bless the day when he gets rid of them."

"How can you think so?" said the other. "Look, I will put them by the door; somebody will take them for his own and be the happy man."

Now that proved to be the Councillor.

II. What Happened to the Councillor.

It was growing late. Councillor Knap, full of the reign of King Hans, was preparing to go home; as fate would have it, he put on the goloshes of fortune instead of his own, and stepped into the street. The magic power of the goloshes had taken him back to his favourite reign, so he set his foot straight into the miry swamp of the street, for of course there were no paving-stones at that time.

"It is shamefully dirty about here," said the Councillor; "why the pavement is taken up, and the street lamps are out."

The moon was not very bright, and there was a slight fog, so that

* Married Christina, daughter of the Elector Ernest of Saxony. Died 1513.

all the objects round looked confused and blurred. At the nearest corner a lamp swung before a picture of the Madonna; the light was so bad that the Councillor did not see it till he was quite close under it; and then his eyes fell on the painting of the child and His mother.

"That must be an old curiosity dealer's," he thought; "they have forgotten to take in the sign." A group of men, in the costume of the period, passed by. "How odd they look! they must be coming home from a masquerade," thought the bewildered Councillor.

Suddenly the sound of drums was heard, and the red gleam of torches came nearer; the Councillor drew back, and saw the strangest procession pass by. First came the drummers beating their drums lustily; they were followed by men-at-arms carrying cross bows and long bows. The most distinguished person in the procession, seemed to be a clerical dignitary. Lost in astonishment, the Councillor asked what it all meant, and who that man was?

"That is the Bishop of Zealand."

"Good gracious! what has come to the Bishop?" exclaimed the Councillor. "Oh nonsense! it can't be the Bishop." Trying to puzzle it out, and looking neither to the right nor the left, he went along the street and across the place where the high bridge crosses to the Castle square. But no bridge was to be seen. He stood on the marshy shore of a piece of water, where he lighted at last on two men in a boat.

"Shall we ferry the gentleman across to the Holm?" they asked.

"Ferry me across to the Holm?" exclaimed the Councillor, who did not know of course what year he was living in. "I want to go to Christian's Haven, in Little Turf-street."

The men stared at him. "Just tell me where the bridge is?" he said. "It is shameful that the lamps are not lighted here; it is as dirty as a marsh." But the longer he talked to the boatmen, the less he could make of them.

"I can't understand your Bornholm jargon," he said, angrily, as he turned away. He could not find the bridge; there was not even a handrail. "This place is a disgrace to the town," he cried. He never thought worse of the century he lived in than he did at that moment. "I shall have to call a cab," he said to himself, but there was none to be seen. "I must go straight back to the cabstand in the New market, or else I shall never reach Christian's Haven this night."

He went towards East-street, and had almost reached it, when the moon shone forth. "Heavens! what's all this scaffolding put up for?" he cried, as he came in sight of the East-gate, which stood there in the reign of King Hans. He found one of the doors open and passed through into the New market. But there was nothing before him but a great meadow, with a lonely bush here and there, and a broad stream flowing through. A few wretched wooden huts for the Dutch sailors stood on the opposite side. "Either I am the sport of *fata morgana*, or I am intoxicated!" said the unhappy Councillor. "What can it be? What *can* it be?"

He turned away in the firm conviction that he was very ill. As he walked back along the streets, he looked more closely at the houses, and found that the greater part of them had only straw roofs. "No;

I am not at all well," he said to himself; "and yet I had only one glass of punch. But it always disagrees with me. I must have been out of my mind to drink punch with hot salmon; and so I shall tell our hostess. Shall I go back there and say how very unwell I feel? Oh, but that would look quite ridiculous, besides, it's a question whether I shall find them up now."

He looked for the house, but could not find it anywhere. "This is dreadful! I don't know the street, I can't see one shop, nothing but miserable tumbledown houses like those in Roeskilde and Ringstedt. I am very ill, it's no use being too scrupulous. But where in the world is my friend the agent's house? This is not it, but at any rate the people are up; oh! I'm very ill."

He passed through the half-open door through which the light was shining into a rough kind of beer-house. The room looked like a Dutch wine-shop; a number of people, sailors, citizens of Copenhagen, and a few students, sat talking over their wine-cups, and scarcely glanced at the new comer.

"Excuse me," said the Councillor to the landlady. "I don't feel well, will you kindly fetch me a cab? I want to go to Christian's Haven."

The woman stared at him, shook her head, and after a pause spoke to him in German. The Councillor thought from that that she did not understand Danish, and repeated his request in German, which, together with his costume, convinced the woman that he was a foreigner. She soon made out that he was feeling ill and brought him a pitcher of water; it tasted strongly of sea water, though it was drawn from the well outside. The Councillor leaned his head upon his hand, drew a deep sigh, and puzzled over the strange things around him.

"Is that a number of to-night's *Day?*"* he asked mechanically of the landlady as he saw her lay aside a large sheet of paper. She could not understand him, but she handed him the paper. It was a wood-cut representing a meteor which had been seen in Cologne.

"This is very old," said the Councillor; the antiquity of the thing quite revived him. "How did you come by this very valuable paper? It is most interesting. Though, of course, the whole thing is fabulous. These meteors are known to be the Northern lights, they are most likely caused by electricity."

The men who sat next him and heard him speak looked at him in amazement; one of them lifted his hat respectfully, and said gravely, "You are doubtless a very learned man, sir?"

"I!" said the Councillor, "not at all. I can say a few words about things that all the world knows."

"*Modestia* is a great virtue," said the man. "And I can certainly say to your remark *mihi secus videtur*, but there I must suspend my *judicum*.

"May I ask to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?" inquired the Councillor.

* An evening paper in Copenhagen.

"I am a bachelor of divinity," was the reply. The answer completely satisfied the Councillor. The title and dress were in accord.

"He is certainly some old village schoolmaster," he thought, "an old original, such as one sometimes meets up in Zutland."

"This is by no means a *locus docendi*," said the man, "and yet I beg you to continue your discourse. You are doubtless well read in the ancients." "Pretty well," replied the Councillor. "I like useful books, ancient and modern too, except, indeed, every day stories."

"Every day stories!" repeated the divinity student.

"I mean the new novels they write now-a-days."

"Oh!" said the student, smiling, "but they are very witty, and much read at Court; the King is especially fond of the Romance written by Messieurs Iffven and Gaudian about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. He has laughed over it with his great lords."

"I certainly have not read that," said the Councillor; "it must be quite a new book, published by Herberg, I suppose?"

"No," answered his companion; "not Herberg, Godfrey of Gehmen* published it." "Oh, is he the publisher? That is a very old name. Why that was the name of the very first printer in Denmark."

"Well, he *is* the first printer in Denmark," said the student.

They have got on very well so far—but now one of the people in the room began to talk of the dreadful plague that had been raging a few years back. They meant the plague of 1484, but the Councillor thought they were talking of the cholera, so they managed to understand each other tolerably well. The Freebooters' War of 1480 was so recent, that of course that was touched upon: the English pirates, the men said, had carried off the ships from the very harbours: the Councillor, who was well up in the events of 1801, joined heartily in the abuse of the English. But afterwards the conversation did not go on so pleasantly. Every moment some one flatly contradicted some one else: the good student seemed profoundly ignorant, and received the most commonplace remarks of the Councillor with the wildest astonishment. One looked at another, and when things were at the worst, the divinity student spoke Latin in the hope of throwing some light on the confusion, but it was no use. "How do you feel now?" said the landlady, pulling the Councillor by the sleeve. This brought him to his senses. In the heat of conversation he had forgotten all that had previously occurred.

"Heaven above! Where am I?" he cried, and he turned positively giddy as he thought of it all.

"Bring claret, mead, and brewer beer!" cried one of the guests. "You shall drink with us."

Two girls came in; one wore a cap of two colours. They filled the cups and curtseyed, and the Councillor felt a cold shiver run all down his back.

What is the meaning of this? what *is* the meaning of it?" he cried. But he was forced to drink with them; they simply took possession of the good man, and when somebody said he was tipsy, he did not

* The first printer and publisher in Denmark: contemporary with King Hans.

doubt them for a moment, and merely begged and entreated that they would fetch him a cab. They thought he was talking Muscovite.

Never had he been in such a rough, vulgar set. "Why, the land must have fallen back into heathenism," he thought. "This is the most dreadful moment of my life." The desperate idea occurred to him of trying to escape by slipping under the table and reaching the open door; he had almost succeeded, when his companions saw his attempt and seized him by the legs. There was a struggle, the goloshes came off—and the enchantment was at an end!

The Councillor saw before him the friendly gleam of a street-lamp; behind that was a large building; everything looked stately and familiar. It was the East Street of to-day; he was lying with his feet on a doorstep; exactly opposite him sat the watchman, asleep.

"Merciful powers!" he cried; "here have I been lying dreaming in the street. Yes, it *is* East Street. How bright and gay it looks! It is really shocking to think that one glass of punch could have had such an effect on me!"

Two minutes later he was in a cab driving to Christian's Haven. He thought of the horrid night he had just passed through; and blessed from his heart the happy waking to our present day, which, with all its faults, is a vast deal better than the time which he had left behind him.

III. The Watchman's Adventure.

"Upon my word, there are a pair of goloshes!" cried the watchman, waking up; "they must belong to the lieutenant who lives up yonder; they have been dropped close to the door."

The honest man would have rung the bell and given them to the servant, but it was not light yet, so he let it be.

"These must be nice warm things to have on," he said "how soft the leather is!" He tried them on, and they fitted exactly. "It's a queer world!" he thought. "The lieutenant might get into his warm bed if he chose, but not he! There he goes, pacing up and down the room. He's a lucky fellow! neither wife nor child, and out at a party every night! Oh, I wish I were he! I should be a happy man then."

As he uttered the wish the goloshes worked their spell, and there he was in the opposite house—the lieutenant! Up and down the room he paced, holding in his hand a small rose-tinted paper, on which was a poem, written by no less a person than the lieutenant himself.

For who has not had once in his life an inspired moment when, if one writes one's thoughts, they will persist in coming out in verse?

This was what was written on the rose-tinted paper—

"Oh, were I rich!"—such was my childish prayer,
When few of Life's brief summers had passed o'er me;
And, bright with promised hope and fortune rare,
The world lay new and beautiful before me.

"Oh, were I rich !—I'd be a soldier bold,
With sword, and epaulettes of burnished gold."
The swift years gave me half my wish secure:
They brought the epaulettes—but left me poor!

One evening as I played, a laughing boy,
My little playmate kissed me in her joy,
For I was passing rich in fairy lore,
And her sweet, childish fancy asked no more.
I poured out all the store my brain inspired,
The little maiden listened, never tired;
And as the happy, careless days flew by,
Who were so rich—so poor, as she and I ?

My manhood echoes back my childish prayer—
The child is now a maiden, tall and fair,
So good, so sweet, so wise, and true of heart,
That it is life to greet her, death to part.
Her dear voice thrills me in the morning's light,
And haunts my troubled dreams in weary night;
But lack of gold my trembling lips has sealed—
My heart's true fairy tale lies unrevealed.

Oh, were I rich! were life all peace and light,
My sorrow should not fill this idle lay:
Take it, beloved—canst thou read aright
The story of our childhood far away ?
The happy story, ended long ago,
Untouched by life's harsh legacy of woe ?
Ah, no ! this tale is sad—thou wilt but see
Gloom from the hopeless future yet to be.

Yes, that is the sort of poetry one writes when one is in love; but no sensible man would think of having it printed. Lieutenant, love and poverty make three sides of a triangle, or, if you will, half of the broken die of fortune. The lieutenant felt that keenly: he leaned his head against the window-pane and sighed aloud: "The poor watchman in the street is far happier than I. He does not know what poverty means to me. He has a home, and wife and children, who mourn when he is sad, and rejoice with him in his happiness. Oh, I should be far happier if I could change places with him, and go through life with his wants and his hopes. Yes, he is happier than I."

That very moment the watchman was a watchman again: we saw how the goloshes of fortune turned him into the lieutenant, but, as we know, he felt less contented than ever, and preferred what he had despised before. So the watchman was a watchman once more.

"That was a horrid dream," he cried; "but comical too: I thought I was the lieutenant up there, and I didn't like it at all. I wanted my wife and the lads, who will be ready to smother me with kisses."

He sat down again and nodded, for he could not quite lose the impressions of his dream. The goloshes were still on his feet, when a shooting star flashed across the sky.

"Off she goes!" he cried. "But there are plenty left behind. I should like to see those things closer, more especially the moon; for

that doesn't melt away in one's hands. The student that my wife washes for says that when we are dead we shall fly about from one star to another. That is a lie, but it would be nice to. If I could give a little jump up there, I should like to leave my body behind me on this doorstep."

Now there are certain things that ought not to be lightly spoken, especially when one has on the goloshes of fortune. Just listen what happened to the watchman.

As far as we are concerned, we all of us know the speed of steam, for we have tried it, either on the railway or in a steamer; but it is like the movement of a sloth or a snail, compared to the speed of light. That moves nineteen million times more quickly.

Death is an electric shock which we receive in our hearts, and the soul, set free, flies forth on the wings of electricity. It takes the sunbeam eight minutes and a few seconds to accomplish a journey of more than ninety-five million miles; but the soul, in its electric speed, outstrips the light. The space between two heavenly bodies is no more to her than the distance between two houses in the same neighbourhood is to us. Meanwhile this electric shock to the heart costs us our bodies; unless indeed we happen, like the watchman, to be wearing the goloshes of fortune.

In a few seconds the watchman had passed through the 260,000 miles between the earth and the moon, which, as everybody knows, is made of much softer material than our world—as soft indeed as new-fallen snow.

He found himself on one of the innumerable mountain ranges, which we may see marked on Dr. Mädler's map of the moon. In the centre was a circular basin, the sides of which were two miles deep; at the bottom of this hollow lay a town looking something like the white of an egg turned out into a glass of water; there he saw towers, and cupolas, and climbing terraces, cloudlike, transparent, floating in the air. Our earth hung above his head like a large dark-red ball.

He saw a number of figures that were certainly what we should call men, and yet they were quite different from ourselves. A wilder fancy than Herschel's had called them into life. If they had been set up in a row, and painted, one would have said, "Oh, what a lovely arabesque!" They had a language of their own, but surely no one would expect the watchman's soul to understand that. Nevertheless, it did understand it, for the soul has greater capabilities than we think for. Are you never surprised at the strange dramatic talent you put forth in your dreams? Every acquaintance is perfectly represented, speech, face, and character all personated to the life; we could never imitate so well in our waking hours. How we recall people we have not seen or thought of for years, with every feature and gesture true and lifelike in their smallest details. There is something fearful in this soul-memory; it can bring back every sin, every evil thought; it must depend on ourselves whether we can meet the reckoning for every idle word of our lips, every dark thought of our hearts.

The soul of the watchman, then, understood the language of the moon's inhabitants very well. They were disputing about our earth; doubting whether it were inhabited. The air was so heavy up there,

they thought, that no reasonable moon-creature could live in it. They maintained that the moon alone was inhabited ; the only heavenly body where the old-world inhabitants lived. They spoke, too, of politics ; but we are wanted down in East Street, to see what happened to the body of the watchman.

It lay there lifeless on the doorsteps ; the staff had slipped out of its hand, and its eyes were turned upwards to the moon, where its honest soul was wandering.

"What o'clock is it, watchman ?" cried a passer-by. But he got no answer from the watchman. The man stooped to tweak his nose, when the body fell back at full length and lay there—dead. His comrades were very much alarmed. Dead he was, and dead he remained ; his death was made known, talked over, and in the early morning his body was carried to the hospital.

That promised to be a pretty thing for the soul when she came back and went, as in all probability she would go, to look for her body where she had left it, in East Street. Most likely she would go first to the police-court, and then to the advertising office, to make inquiry for the missing article ; last of all to the hospital. But we may take comfort in the thought that the soul is cleverest when she is acting on her own account ; it is only the body which makes her stupid.

As we said before, the watchman's body was taken to the hospital, and was laid in a room to be washed ; and of course the first thing to be done was to take off the goloshes. Back came the soul to the body with lightning speed, and in a few seconds the man was alive again. He declared that it had been the most horrible night he had ever spent in his life, he would not go through it again for five shillings. But it was over now.

He was dismissed from the hospital the same day, but the goloshes were forgotten and left behind.

IV. An Eventful Moment—A Strange Journey.

Every one in Copenhagen knows the entrance to the Frederick's Hospital ; but it is possible that some who will read this story have not seen Copenhagen, and therefore a short description is necessary.

The hospital is separated from the street by a rather high iron palisading, and the strong iron rails stand so far apart, that it is said that one or two very slim students have managed to squeeze through, to pay their little visits out of doors. The great difficulty was to get one's head through ; there, as elsewhere, the people with the least heads were the best off. That is the introduction to our story.

One of the young students, of whom it could be said, in one sense, that he had a great head, was on duty that evening at the hospital ; the rain was pouring down ; but in spite of these two obstacles he wanted to go out—only for a quarter of an hour ; it was not worth while to trouble the porter, he thought, when he might slip through the railings. There lay the goloshes which the watchman had left

behind him ; it did not occur to him for an instant that they were the goloshes of fortune ; they would be very useful in this bad weather, and he put them on. Now the question was whether he would be able to squeeze through ; he had never tried before. "I wish to heaven I had my head through!" he cried ; and in a moment, in spite of its size and thickness, it slipped through quite easily. The goloshes knew their business ; but now the body had to follow, and that was another matter. "I am too stout!" he cried. "I thought the head was the worst part. I can't get through."

He tried to draw his head back, but he could not do that either. He could bend his neck, and that was all. The first thing he did was to fly into a passion, and the next to feel very low-spirited. The goloshes of fortune had brought him into this terrible position, and unfortunately he never thought of wishing to be free. The rain streamed down, not a soul was to be seen in the street; he could not reach the bell; however could he get loose? He saw very well that he would have to stay there till the morning; and then they would be obliged to send for a blacksmith that he might saw through the iron bar. But that cannot be done in a hurry ; the whole charity-school would be out before then, and all the sailors from their quarters near would crowd to see him in his pillory. "I shall have a rush of blood to the head," he cried. "I shall certainly go mad! Oh, if I were only out again!"

Now, why couldn't he have said that before? The moment the wish was uttered he was set free, and rushed back into the hospital, quite dizzy with the fright which the goloshes of fortune had given him.

But do not think for an instant that that was the end of it ; no, there was worse to come.

The night passed by, and the following day—and no one came for the goloshes. In the evening there was to be a performance at the amateur theatre, in a street some distance off. The house was crowded ; and among the audience was the hospital student, who seemed to have forgotten his adventure of the previous night. He still wore the goloshes, for they had not been fetched away, and the streets were very muddy. A new poem, "My Aunt's Spectacles," was recited; it was about a pair of spectacles which, when you looked through them, made all the people look like packs of cards, so that you could foretell from them what was going to happen next year.

The idea struck him, he would have liked to possess such a pair of spectacles ; rightly used, they would help the wearer to look into the hearts of all whom he saw. "That," thought the student, "would be much more interesting than foretelling what will happen next year ; because if one lives long enough one will know that for oneself, but one can never see into another's heart.

"I can just imagine looking through the hearts of the ladies and gentlemen in the first row—it would be like walking through different shops. I should like my eyes open. In that lady's heart I should most certainly find a milliner's shop ; the shop next door would be empty, but all the better for a good cleaning. I daresay there would be some very good shops, though, among them. Indeed I know of one ; but there is some one in possession there already—that is the only

thing I have against it. From every shop I should hear, 'Please to walk in'—ah, I wish I could glide through the hearts like a tiny little thought!"

That was the cue for the goloshes. The student shrank into nothing, and began his strange journey through the hearts of the people in the front row. The first heart he entered was a lady's, but he thought for a moment he must be in an orthopœdic hospital—in the room where the walls are hung with plaster-casts of deformed limbs. The only difference was, that in the hospital they were taken when the patient came in, and here they were made up after the patient had left. They were all casts of the lady's friends, whose bodily and mental defects she carefully preserved.

He passed quickly into another heart—a woman's this time also. This one seemed to him like a consecrated church; the white dove of innocence hovered above the high altar: he would fain have knelt, but he was hurried on. Sounds as of an organ followed him, he seemed to leave the place another and a better man. He felt not unworthy to enter the next heart: it was a poor place; a garret where a sick mother lay, but through the window streamed God's blessed sunshine, lovely roses hung downwards from the roof, two sky-blue birds sang of the joy of childhood, and the sick mother prayed for a blessing on her child. Then he crept on his hands and feet through an over-full slaughter-house: meat—meat—nothing but meat filled every corner. This was the heart of a highly-respectable man whose address is certain to be found in the directory. Next came the heart of the man's wife—it was an old, ruined dovecot: above the door stood the portrait of her husband on a weather-cock, and, according as this turned, the door opened and shut.

Then he came into a room lined with mirrors, such as one sees in the Rosenburg Castle: the mirrors magnified to an incredible degree. In the middle of the carpet, like the Grand Dame of Thibet, sat the very magnificent self who owned the heart, and gazed astonished at his own greatness. After this, the student thought he must be in a box full of sharp needles, and he said to himself, "This is certainly the heart of some spiteful old maid." But no: the heart belonged to a young officer, who wore several medals, and was said to be a man of taste and feeling.

Quite bewildered, the poor student came out of the heart of the last person in the front row: he could not collect his thoughts; it seemed as if his imagination had quite run away with him.

"Heavens!" he cried, "it is enough to drive one mad. How terribly hot it is here! I shall certainly have a rush of blood to the head." That reminded him of what had happened the night before, and how his head had stuck fast between the iron railings of the hospital. "That's what has done it," he thought. "I must take it in time. A Turkish bath would be the very thing. I wish I were lying on the highest shelf now."

There he lay, on the topmost shelf of a vapour-bath; but he had on all his clothes, boots and goloshes as well. The hot water from the ceiling fell on his face.

"Ugh!" he cried, and rushed down to take a plunging bath. The

attendant uttered a loud cry as he caught sight of the new-comer with all his clothes on.

The student had just enough presence of mind left to whisper to him, "It's only a wager." But the first thing that he did as soon as ever he reached his own room, was to put one blister on his neck and another on his back, in the hope that they would set him right.

The next day the skin was off his back—and that was all he got by the goloshes of fortune.

V. The Transformations of a Copying Clerk.

The watchman—you have not forgotten the watchman, I hope ?—thought now and then of the goloshes he had left at the hospital. He fetched them away, but as neither the lieutenant nor any one else in East Street would own them, they were given up to the police. "They look like my own goloshes," said one of the clerks in the office. He examined the unclaimed property and placed them by his own. "It wants the eye of a cleverer shoemaker than I am to tell the difference between them," he said.

"For the copying-clerk," said a boy, coming in and laying down a bundle of papers. The clerk turned round, and when he had spoken to the boy he returned to the goloshes ; but could not for the life of him remember whether it was the pair to the right or that to the left which belonged to him.

"These must be mine, they are rather damp," he said. But he was wrong, as it happened ; they were the goloshes of fortune—even a clerk can make a mistake sometimes. He put them on, pocketed the bundle of papers, and took some manuscripts under his arm, that he might go over them and write his summary at home. It was a Sunday morning and the weather was fine. "A walk to Friedricksburg would do me no harm," he thought, and he wended his way thither.

There was not a quieter, steadier young man in Copenhagen than our worthy clerk ; and certainly no one could grudge him his little walk, or doubt that it would do him good. At first he walked along, passively vegetating ; the goloshes had not a chance of showing their magic power.

In the avenue he met an acquaintance, a young poet of our day, who told him that he was going to set out on his summer tour the next morning.

"Going off again ?" said the copying clerk. "What a fortunate fellow you are ! Free to come and go wherever you like, instead of being chained by the leg as we are."

"But the chain is fastened to the bread-fruit tree," said the poet ; "you need take no care for the morrow, and when you are old you receive a pension."

"You are the best off, notwithstanding," said the clerk; "writing poetry is a pleasure in itself. Every one has something pleasant to say to you, and you are your own master. You should only try sitting stooping over the dry stuff we have to scribble down."

The poet shook his head, and so did the clerk. Each held to his own opinion, but they parted in good temper.

"They are a peculiar set, these poets," thought the clerk. "I should like to try for myself what it feels like to be a poet. If I were one, I am sure I should not write such doleful ditties as the rest of them—and this a perfect spring day for a poet! The air is so crystal clear, the clouds so beautiful, and the grass so cool and fragrant. Never have I felt for years as I feel now!"

You observe already that the clerk is a poet. The Germans would consider it bad taste to point this out; for they say that it is a popular delusion to imagine that a poet is, in any way, different from other men; indeed, there are many more poetical natures in the world than those possess who are acknowledged poets. The only difference is, that the professed poet has a better memory: he can hold fast his thought or sentiment till he has embodied it clearly in verse, and the others cannot. Be that as it may, the transition from a common-place to an imaginative nature is a sensible one, and it cannot help striking one in the clerk's case.

"This delicious fragrance!" he exclaimed; "how it reminds me of Aunt Lora's violets. That was long ago, when I was a child, but I never thought of it till now. Dear old auntie! She lived by the water side, and she would always have a flower or a slip of green growing, even in the depth of winter. Her violets bloomed when I used to hold hot pennies against the frost-covered window-panes to make round peep-holes. It was a pretty vista. The frost-bound ships stood in the canal, abandoned by the crews, a solitary crow, the only living thing, in charge. When the spring breezes blew, the scene became more lively: the ice broke up amid cheers and hurrahs; the ships were tarred and newly rigged, and sailed proudly away to distant lands. I stayed behind, as I always must stay, to sit at my desk and write out passports for other people who can go abroad. That is my lot!" He sighed deeply, and then paused abruptly. "Heavens! what has come over me? I never felt or thought like this before. It must be the air of spring—it is as pleasant as it is alarming." He put his hand in his pocket for the packet of papers. "They will give me something else to think about," he said. His eyes fell on the first page—"Lady Sigbrith, an original tragedy in five acts," was what he read. "What is this? My own handwriting, too! Have I written a tragedy? 'Shrove Tuesday; or the intrigue at the Carnival, a comedy.' Wherever did I get them from? They must have been put into my pocket! Here is a letter from the manager of the theatre—the pieces declined, with thanks—and the letter not too politely worded!"

The clerk sat down upon a bench; his thoughts were unsettled, his heart was soft. Involuntarily he plucked the nearest flower; it was a common daisy. All that the botanist tells us in many lectures the flower revealed in a moment. She told the story of her birth, the power of the sunshine that opened her delicate leaves, and drew out her fragrance. And he thought of the battle of life, which draws out the strength and sweetness of our hearts. Air and light are the flower's suitors, but light is the favoured one. Towards him she turns, and when he fades away, she folds her leaves, and sleeps in the embrace

THE BOYS AND THE DOVE.

of the air. "Light makes me beautiful," cries the flower. "But air gives you life," whispered the poet's voice.

Near at hand was a boy, striking the marshy swamp with his cane; the drops of water flew high in the air, and the clerk thought of the myriad living atoms in each drop, to whom such a flight would be as wonderful as it would be to us to be whirled high above the clouds. He thought, too, of the change within himself, and smiled. "I am dreaming," he cried; "it is wonderful how vividly one can dream, and yet know all the while that one is dreaming! I hope I shall be able to remember it when I wake to-morrow. I seem to be strangely excited. What a clear insight I have into all around, and how free I feel! But I am sure that when I remember it in the morning it will be stupid stuff. That has happened to me before. The wonderful and lovely things one sees and hears in dreams are all like fairy gold—solid and splendid by night, but in the daylight nothing but stones and withered leaves. Ah," he cried, mournfully, as he watched the song birds fly from bough to bough, "they are the best off. How glorious it must be to fly! Happy the man who is born with wings! If I could change with any one, I would choose to be a lark!"

As he framed the wish, his sleeves and coat tails shrank up into wings, his clothes became feathers, his goloshes claws. He saw it all with a smile. "That proves I am dreaming," he said, "but I never dreamed so vividly before!" He sang as he flew from bough to bough, but there was no poetry in his song: the poetic nature had disappeared. The goloshes, like every one else who does his work thoroughly, could only do one thing at a time. He wished to be a poet, and he was one. Now he wanted to be a little bird, and his former gift had vanished. "This is charming," he thought. "All day long I sit over my desk, busy among the most common place documents, and at night I fly about the Friedricksburg Gardens like a lark! It is as good as a play."

He flew down among the grass, and whetted his beak on its pliant blades. In proportion to his present size, they seemed tall as the palm trees of North Africa.

He only stayed there a moment: it grew dark around him. What seemed to him a monstrous object was thrown over him; it was a sailor's hat, thrown by a lad. A hand was put under, and seized the clerk by the wing. In his first start of terror, he cried out, "You impudent rascal! I'm a clerk at the police office!" But it only sounded to the boy like, "Tweet, tweet!" He tapped the bird on the beak, and walked off with it.

In the avenue he met two school boys of the upper classes, socially speaking, that is—for, morally speaking, they were in the lowest class of the school; they bought the bird for a few pence, and thus the clerk returned to Copenhagen.

"It is a good thing," said the clerk, "that I am only dreaming—if I were not, I should be really angry. First, I was a poet—now I am a lark. It was my poetical nature that transformed me into this little animal. But it is a wretched business to fall into the clutches of a street boy. I shall be glad to know what will be the end of it all."

The boys brought him into a richly furnished drawing-room, where

a stout, smiling lady received them. She was not very pleased at the sight of the common field bird, as she called the lark, but she consented to look it over for once. "It may go into that empty cage," she said—"the one by the window. Perhaps it will amuse my pretty Polly." She looked fondly across at a large green parrot who swung proudly to and fro in his ring inside a fine gilded cage. "It is pretty Polly's birthday," said the lady; "the little field bird can pay his respects."

Polly vouchsafed no answer, and swung to and fro in silence; but a beautiful little canary who had been brought the year before from his bright, sunny home, broke out into a burst of song.

"Noisy creature!" cried the lady, throwing a white handkerchief over the cage.

"Tweet—tweet," sighed the canary; "what a terrible snowstorm!" and he was silent.

The clerk, or, as the lady called him, the field bird, was put into a little cage close to the canary and not far off the parrot. The only words Polly could say, and those often came out comically enough, were "Now let us be men!" All the rest was as unintelligible as the song of the canary; but not to the copying clerk, because he was a bird and could understand his companions very well.

"I flew under the green palms and the blossoming almond trees," sang the canary. "I flew with my brothers and sisters over the lovely flowers, and the clear lake where the water lilies rocked. I saw, too, many beautiful parrots who told the merriest tales."

"Those were wild birds," said the parrot—"entirely without education. Now let us be men! Why don't you laugh? If the lady and her friends can laugh at it, surely you can do so. It is a great defect to be unable to appreciate wit. Now let us be men!"

"Do you remember the lovely maidens who danced in the tents outspread beneath the leafy trees? do you remember the sweet fruits and the cool juices of the spicy plants?"

"Oh, yes," said the parrot; "but I am better off here. I have good food, and am paid every attention. I know my abilities, and I desire no more. Let us be men! You have a poetic nature, as they call it. I have solid acquirements and wit. You have genius, but no tact. You break out in your high-flown natural tones and are immediately covered up. That is never my case. I have cost too much. I impose with my beak, and charm with my wit. Now let us be men!"

"Ah, my sweet blooming fatherland," said the canary; "I will sing of thy dark green trees and silent bays, where the branches kiss the calm waves. I will sing of the joy of my bright-hued brothers and sisters, where the palms rise by the desert springs."

"Pray lay aside those doleful strains," said the parrot; "sing something to make one laugh. Laughter is the sign of the highest mental development. You never see a dog or a horse laugh? They can cry—but man alone can laugh. Ho, ho, ho!" laughed the parrot, and finished off with her one joke, "Now let us be men!"

"You little grey northern bird," sang the canary, "you are a prisoner too. It is cold in your gloomy woods—but freedom dwells

there. Fly away! They have forgotten to shut your cage. The window is open—fly away!"

Instinctively the copying clerk obeyed and hopped out of the cage: at the same moment the half-open door of the adjoining room creaked on its hinges; softly, with green, glittering eyes the cat sprung towards him. The canary fluttered in her cage; the parrot flapped her wings and shrieked "Now let us be men!" The copying clerk felt a deathlike terror and flew through the window away over the streets and houses till he was forced to rest.

The opposite house seemed familiar to him; a window was open: he flew in. It was his own room and he alighted on the table.

"Now let us be men!" he exclaimed involuntarily after the parrot, and in a moment he was a copying clerk again—but he was sitting on the table.

"Heaven above!" he cried; "how did I get up here? What a place to fall asleep on! and what an uneasy dream I have had. Stupid stuff it was altogether!"

VI. The Best Thing the Goloshes Did.

The next morning, very early, while the copying clerk was still in bed, some one knocked at his door. It was a fellow lodger on the same story, a young divinity student. "Lend me your goloshes," he said, coming in; "it is very damp in the garden, but the sun shines so gloriously that I should like to go and smoke a pipe out of doors."

He put on the goloshes and hastened into the garden, which contained only one apple, and one plum tree, but inside a large town even such a small garden as that is highly valued.

The student paced up and down the garden; it was just six o'clock and a post horn was heard in the street outside. "Oh! the joy of travelling!" he exclaimed, "it is the highest good the world can offer! the dearest wish of my heart. When will my longings be set at rest? I want to travel far—far away: to see beautiful Switzerland—Italy, and"——It was a good thing that the goloshes took effect at once, or he would have gone too far for himself and for us too.

He was travelling. He was in Switzerland—tightly packed with eight other travellers inside a diligence. His head was aching, his neck stiff, his feet cramped, swollen, and tortured by his boots. Between waking and sleeping, he was conscious that his letters of credit were in the right hand, and his passport the left hand pocket of his coat; while his slenderly filled purse was sewn into a little breast pocket above. In every dream he fell into, he lost one or another of these treasures, and on awaking, he would start convulsively and describe a hasty triangle with his hand from right to left and up to the breast pocket, to feel that all was safe. Umbrellas, alpen-stocks and hats swung in the carriage nets above, and considerably interfered with the beautiful scenery. He took, however, flying glances here and

there, and his heart sang, as at least one poet has sung before him in Switzerland—though he has never had the lines printed yet—

"High towers Mont Blanc o'er wood and dell,
A fairer vision saw I never;
Here could I gladly dream, and dwell,
If but my cash would last for ever."

Nature was grand, and dark, and solemn all around him. The fir woods showed like velvet moss on the sides of the lofty, cloud-veiled mountain peaks. It began to snow, and the wind blew cold.

"Ugh!" he cried; "I wish we were on the other side of the Alps; we should have summer then, and I should have turned my letters of credit into money. The anxiety I feel about them prevents me thoroughly enjoying Switzerland. I wish we were on the other side."

And there he was on the other side, between Florence and Rome; the Thrasimenian lake shone beneath the sunset sky like flaming gold between the dark blue mountains. Here, where Hannibal overthrew Flaminius, vine tendrils clasped each other with their green fingers; lovely, half naked children tended a herd of black swine under a grove of fragrant laurel trees. If we could only paint the scene as it was, every one would cry aloud "Bella Italia!" But the student and his fellow-travellers in the *vetturino* said nothing of the sort.

Venomous flies and gnats swarmed round them by thousands; vainly they tried to defend themselves with a myrtle bough; the flies stung on. There was not one of the travellers whose face was not swollen and disfigured by their attacks. The poor horses suffered dreadfully; the flies settled on them in crowds, and it was only a momentary relief when the driver got down and brushed them all away. The sun set: a brief but icy chill swept through the whole scene, like the cold air of a vault after a burning summer day; the clouds and mountains all around were bathed in that strange green light which we see in old pictures, and which, if we have not witnessed the play of light and colour in the south, we call unnatural. It was a glorious sight—but every stomach was empty, every frame exhausted, every heart's longing limited to the longing for a lodging for the night. And what kind of a lodging would that prove? The thoughts of the traveller dwelt more anxiously on that than on the beautiful prospect.

The path to the lonely inn lay through an olive grove; it was as if one drove at home through gnarled willows. A dozen cripples were encamped before the inn; the best of them looked, as Captain Marryat says, "Like the eldest son of hunger who has just attained his majority." Others were blind, or crept along on their hands, painfully dragging after them their paralyzed legs, others again showed withered, fingerless hands. It was a spectacle of abject misery.

"*Eccellenza—miserabili!*" they whined, pointing to their stricken limbs. The hostess herself, barefooted, with untidy hair and dirty dress, received the guests. The doors were fastened with string, the floors were but half laid down with brick; bats flew across the ceiling, and the smell in the room——!

"Lay the cloth in the stables!" cried one of the travellers. "There at least one knows what one is breathing."

The windows were opened to admit a little fresh air—but more quickly than the air came in the crippled limbs of the beggars, and the ceaseless whine, *miserabili—eccellenza!* On the walls were several inscriptions ; half of them out cries against *la bella Italia*.

Supper was brought in. First came a watery soup seasoned with pepper and rancid oil ; this latter ingredient was the principal part of the salad ; stale eggs and roast cocks' combs were the most eatable things to be had. Even the wine had an after taste ; it was a horrible mixture.

At night the luggage was piled up against the door, one of the travellers keeping watch while the others slept : it was the student's turn to watch ; oh how sultry and close it was ! The heat was oppressive, the gnats buzzed and stung, the *miserabili* outside whined in their dreams. "Travelling would be all very well," said the student, "if one had no body ; or if one could rest, while the spirit wandered about. Wherever I come I feel a want which saddens my heart—a longing for something better than the moment brings—better, nay, the best : but what and where is it ? In my own heart I know what it is I mean—would reach a happy—the happiest goal."

As he spoke the word, he was at home again. White curtains fell from the windows, and in the middle of the chamber stood the black coffin where he lay in the sleep of death. His wish was fulfilled ; his body rested, his spirit wandered ! "Count no man happy till he is in his grave !" said Solon—here the truth was proved anew.

Every corpse is a sphynx of immortality ; and the sphynx here answered us in the words which the living man had written down only a few days before.

Oh, mighty Death, thy silence wakes my fear ;
The only track thou leav'st us—churchyard grasses !
When shall thy Jacob's ladder re-appear,
Where our beloved, 'mid white-robed angels, passes ?

The world knew little of his heart's deep care,
Silently suffered, bravely, deeply hid ;
Stern duty's cross weighed daily heavier there
Than weighs the earth upon his coffin lid.

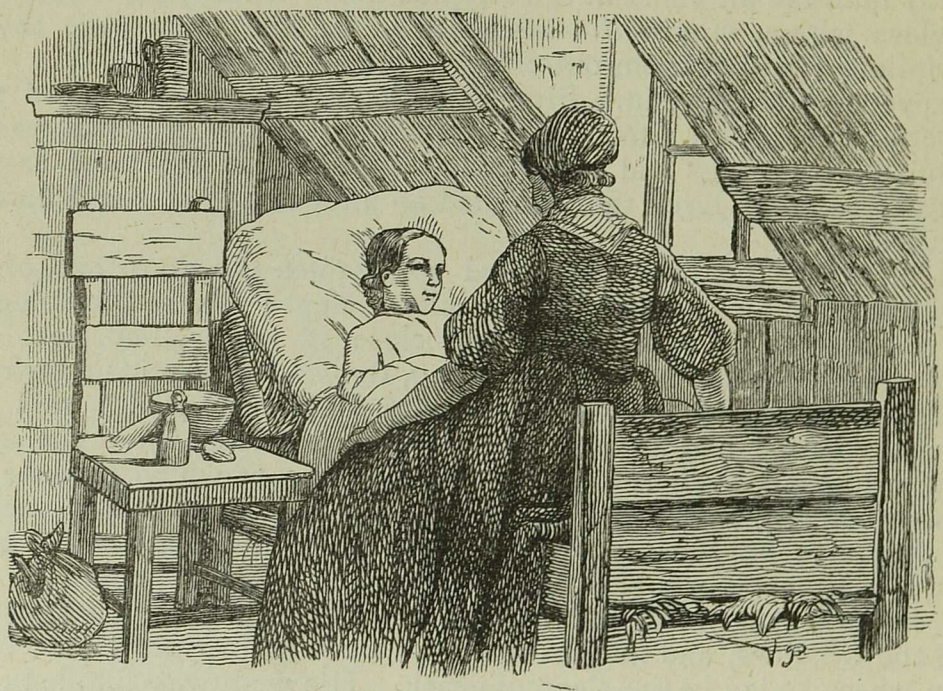
Two figures moved noiselessly about the room. We have seen them both before ; it was Care and the messenger of Fortune. They bent over the lifeless form.

"Do you see this ?" said Care. "What happiness have your goloshes brought to men ?"

"To him who is sleeping here, they have brought lasting happiness," was the reply.

"Not so," said Care. "He went of his own will. He was not called to die. His mind is not yet strong enough to grasp the treasures which, according to his destiny, he must yet grasp. *I* will bestow a gift on him."

She drew the goloshes from his feet : the death sleep ended—the student woke. Care vanished, and with her the goloshes vanished too. She doubtless looks upon them as her own property.



Five in One Shell.

THERE were once five peas in one shell; they and the shell were green, so they thought the whole world was green too—which was very natural. The shell grew, and the peas grew; they arranged themselves according to circumstances, and sat all in a row. The sun shone from without, and warmed the shell; the rain made it clear and transparent; it was soft and genial, light by day, and dark by night, just as it should be. The peas, as they sat inside, grew bigger and more thoughtful, for they must find something to do.

"Are we to stay here for ever?" said one of them; "we shall get quite stiff with sitting so long. I feel as if there were something outside. I seem to have an instinct that there must be."

Weeks passed away; the peas turned yellow, the shells turned yellow, also. "The world has turned yellow," they said. It was quite natural they should say so.

Suddenly they felt a pull at the shell; it was gathered, and fell into a pair of hands, whence it slipped into a jacket pocket, together with some more full pods. "We shall open soon," they cried: it was what they were all longing for.

"I should like to know which of us will get on the best in the world," cried the first pea. "It will soon be known."

"Let what will happen, that is best," said the second pea.

Crack ! the shell burst open, and the five peas rolled out into the clear sunshine. They were lying in the hand of a child—a little boy, who held them fast, saying that they would be just the thing for his popgun.

He put one in, and let off his gun. "Now, I am flying out into the wide world," said the pea ; "catch me who can !" and away she flew.

"I," said the second, "shall fly straight up into the sun ; that is the shell for me. I like something to look at." Off she went.

"We will go to sleep just where we fall," said the two next ; "we shall manage to get on all the same." They were clever enough to fall on the ground even before they were put into the popgun, but they had to go in after all. "We shall get on the best in the world," they said. "Let what *will* happen, I am content," said the last, as it was shot out of the gun. It flew into a crack in an old board, under a garret window. The crack was filled with moss and loose earth, and

the moss closed softly over the new comer. It lay still, a captive, but not forgotten by its Creator.

"Let what will happen," it said, "I am content."

In the garret chamber, there lived a poor woman, who went out daily to clean grates, chop wood small, and suchlike work. She was active and hard-working, but very poor. At home, in the garret, lay her only daughter, a delicate, sickly girl, who had been bedridden for a year, and seemed as if she could neither live nor die.

"She will follow her little sister," said the mother. "I had but the two children, and it was hard work to provide for them both ; but the dear Lord helped me, and took one to Himself. I pray that I may keep the other, but it seems as if He will not have them parted, and my poor girl will go to her sister in Heaven."

But the sick girl lingered on, lying silent and patient all the long day through, while her mother was out working. It was spring time,

and early one morning, as the poor woman was setting out for her day's work, the sun broke out warm and clear behind the little window, and cast its rays across the floor. The sick girl turned her eyes towards the window. "What is that little green thing, mother," she said, "that is peeping in through the window pane?"

Her mother went to the window, and opened it. "Why," she said, in surprise, "it is a little pea which has taken root, and is putting out green leaves. However could it have got into that crack? It will be quite a little garden for you to amuse yourself with."

The sick girl's bed was drawn close to the window, so that she could see the growing pea, and the mother went away to her work.

"Mother, I think I shall get well again," the child said that night. "The sun has been shining on me so warmly all day long. The little pea thrives famously, and I feel that I shall thrive, too, and get well, and go out into the warm sunshine."

"God grant it!" said the mother; she did not think it was possible. She put a bit of stick by the little green shoot, which had given her child the thought of life and strength; she tied a piece of string from the window sill to the top of the sash, so that the plant might find something to cling to if it lived and grew.

And it did live; they could see it taller every day. "Look!" cried the mother, "it is putting out a blossom;" and, for the first time, the hope and trust that her child would recover rose in her heart. She reflected that the girl had spoken more cheerfully of late, and that for several mornings past she had raised herself in bed to eat her food, and looked, with radiant eyes at her little garden, which had all sprung up from one tiny pea plant. In another week she sat up a whole hour for the first time since her illness; her chair was drawn up in the warm sunshine, close to the open window, and the child's face wore a happy smile as she saw outside, on the climbing green, a pink and white pea blossom. She bent down to kiss the delicate leaves, and the day seemed like a festival.

"Our Heavenly Father Himself has planted and blessed it," said the mother, "for your joy and comfort, and for mine, too," and the flower bloomed out bright and radiant as one of God's angels.

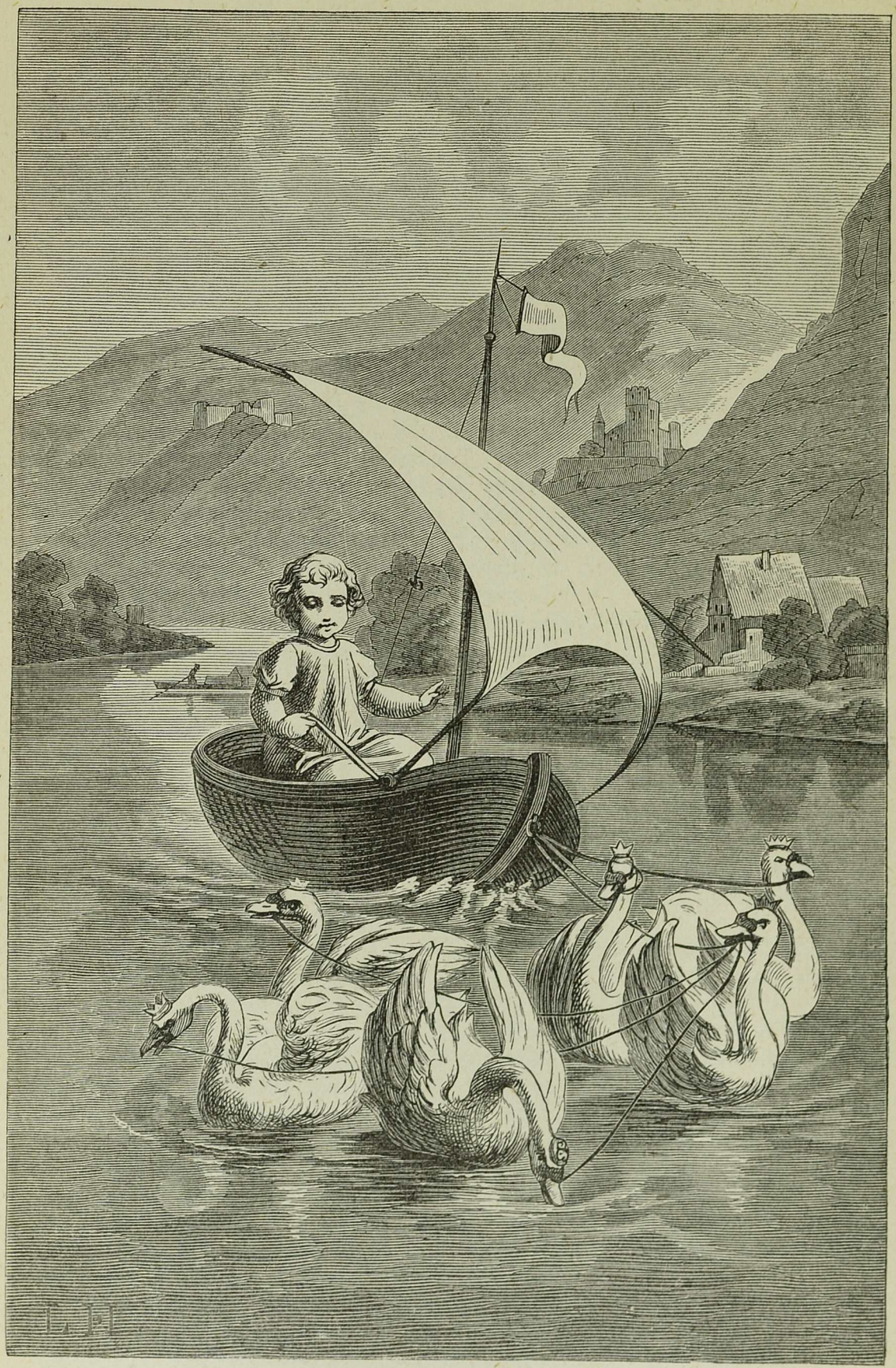
But what of the other peas? Well, the one who flew out into the wide world, and cried out, "Catch me who can," fell into the spouting of the roof, and was eaten up by a pigeon, so that it was obliged to keep quiet for a while. The two idle ones met with the same fate, and certainly it was making themselves of use in a practical manner.

The fourth, who said she would fly up to the sun, fell in the gutter, and lay for weeks in the dirty water, swelling bigger and bigger.

"I am growing beautifully stout," it cried. "If I go on, I shall burst, and no pea in the world ever has done, or ever will do more than that." And the gutter agreed with her.

But the young girl stood at the garret window, with happy eyes, and cheeks bright with the rosy light of health. She folded her hands above the pea blossom, and thanked God for it.

"For my part," said the gutter, "I stand up for *my* pea."



"Six swans with golden crowns, ferried him across."

Ole Luk Oie.

NO one in the world knows so many stories as Ole Luk Oie; *he* is the one to tell tales.

Towards evening, when the children are sitting quiet and good round the table, or on their little chairs, in comes Ole Luk Oie. He comes in very quietly, for he wears socks instead of shoes; he opens the door gently, and, puff! he blows a tiny handful of fine dust in the children's eyes. The very least bit in the world, just enough to make them shut their eyes, so that they cannot see him. He steals behind them, and blows softly on their necks; that makes their heads feel heavy. He does not hurt them at all, for Ole Luk Oie is very fond of children; he only wants them to be quiet, and they never are quiet till they are put to bed; they must be still, or how can he tell his stories?

As soon as ever they are asleep Ole Luk Oie seats himself on their bed. He is richly dressed; his robe is of silk, but no one can tell what colour it is, for it shines scarlet and green and blue, just as he turns round. Under each arm he holds an umbrella; one is covered with pictures, and he opens that over the good children, so that they dream about the most beautiful things all night long. The other has no pictures at all, and he puts that up over naughty children, and they sleep all night without seeing anything, and in the morning they have nothing to tell.

Now let us hear how Ole Luk Oie came every night one week to a little boy named Hjalmar, and what he told him. There are seven tales, because there are seven days in the week.

Monday.

"Now look at me," said Ole Luk Oie, one evening when he had put Hjalmar to bed; "I am going to decorate the room." He touched the flowers in the flower-pots, and they grew into tall trees that stretched their branches across the ceiling and round the walls, till the room looked like a beautiful conservatory. Every branch was full of flowers; all the flowers were lovelier than roses, fragrant, and as sweet to eat as preserve. The fruits shone like gold, and the cakes were bursting with raisins. It was lovely beyond description.

At the same time there arose a piteous cry from the table drawer where Hjalmar's school-books were kept. "What is all that about?" said Ole Luk Oie.

He went to the table and opened the drawer. It was the slate that was writhing and twisting about; there was a figure wrong in the sum, and the slate was ready to crack in two. The pencil leaped and tugged at the end of its string like a little dog: it wanted to help with the sum, but it could not. Then there came a moan from Hjalmar's copy-book; it was dreadful to hear it.

At the beginning of every line on the page stood a capital letter with a small one by it ; that was the copy, and by these stood some more letters that thought they looked just the same. Hjalmar had written them, and they lay about as if they had tumbled in between the lines where they ought to have been standing sloping like this, with a graceful curve.

"Look, this is the way you should hold yourselves," said the copy.

"Don't we wish we could?" said Hjalmar's letters : "but we cannot, we are too weak."

"Then you must take some physic," said Ole Luk Oie.

"No—no!" they cried, and stood up so prettily it was a pleasure to see them.

"We cannot tell any tales to-night," said Ole Luk Oie ; "I must drill them. One, two : one, two ;" and he drilled the letters till they stood up as gracefully as the copy.

But when Ole Luk Oie went away, and Hjalmar looked at them the next morning, they were all as crooked and ill-shaped as ever.

Tuesday.

As soon as Hjalmar was gone to bed, Ole Luk Oie sprinkled all the furniture in the room with his magic dust, and they all began to talk at once, and every one talked about himself. Above the chest of drawers hung a large picture in a gilt frame ; it was a landscape, with tall, old trees, flowers growing in the grass, and a broad river that flowed by a dark wood and past stately castles, till it reached the sea.

Ole Luk Oie touched the picture, and the birds began to sing, the trees waved to and fro, the clouds sailed by, throwing long shadows over the grass below. Then Ole Luk Oie lifted little Hjalmar into the frame ; the child's feet sank in the soft grass, and there he stood. The sun shone down upon him, through the trees ; he ran to the water's edge, and stepped into a little boat, which lay there waiting. It was painted red and white, the sails shone like silver, and six swans, with golden crowns on their heads, and a bright, blue star on their foreheads, ferried the boat across to the green forest, where all the trees were telling stories of robbers and witches, and the flowers were whispering about the pretty little elves, and what the butterflies had said to them.

Beautiful fishes, with scales like gold and silver, swam after the boat, and leaped up from time to time in the foaming water ; two long files of birds, red and blue, small and great, flew overhead, and the gnats danced, and the cockchafers sang buzz ! buzz ! All of them wanted to follow Hjalmar, and all had a story to tell.

It was a splendid pleasure trip. Sometimes the woods were close and thick ; sometimes they opened into beautiful gardens, sunlit and full of flowers. There Hjalmar saw lofty castles, built of glass and marble ; on the balconies stood princesses—they were all little girls that he knew very well ; he had played with them many a time. Each of them held out her hand, and offered him the nicest sugar heart that could be bought out of a cake shop. Hjalmar took hold of it as he sailed by, and the princess held her half tightly, so that it broke in two,

and each kept half; Hjalmar had the larger and the princess the smaller piece. At every castle gate a prince stood sentry; all of them shouldered little gold muskets, and rained down showers of raisins and toy soldiers. You could see in a moment that they were real princes.

Sometimes Hjalmar sailed through woods, sometimes through lofty halls, or busy towns; on his way he came to the place where his nurse lived, who was so kind to him when he was a baby boy. She nodded to him, and sang the pretty song she had written herself and sent to Hjalmar.

"I think of thee by night and day,
My little lad—my darling child.
I kissed thee when I went away,
On thy sweet eyes—thy lips that smiled.
I heard thee lisp thy baby lore—
Thou wouldst not learn the word farewell.
God's angels guard thee evermore,
Till in His Heaven we meet and dwell!"

All the birds joined in, the flowers danced on their stems, and the tall trees nodded as if Ole Luk Oie were telling them also some of his stories.

Wednesday.

How the rain poured down! Hjalmar could hear it in his sleep. When Ole Luk Oie opened the window, the water had risen up to the sill; out of doors, it looked like a great lake, and a stately ship was moored close to the house.

"If you like to come and have a sail with me, little Hjalmar," said Ole Luk Oie, "you can go to foreign lands to-night, and be back here again before morning."

Hjalmar found himself suddenly standing in the ship, dressed in his Sunday clothes. The weather was fine directly, and away they sailed through the streets, by the church, on a wide, rolling lake. On they went till there was no land in sight; they saw a flight of storks on their way to warmer countries, one stork behind another; it seemed an endless procession. The last stork was so tired that his wings could scarcely carry him; he was left further and further behind the others. At last he sank down with outspread wings, made a few faint, despairing strokes, but all in vain; lower he sank, till his feet touched the rigging of the ship; he slipped down from the sail, and, crash! there he lay on the deck.

There the cabin boy caught him, and put him in the fowl pen among their hens, ducks, and turkeys. The poor stork stood quite bewildered in the midst of them.

"Look at this fellow," said the hens.

And the turkey cock puffed himself out, and asked the stork who he was, and the ducks waddled backwards, crying, "Quack, quack!"

The stork told them about Africa and the pyramids, about the ostrich that runs like a racer through the desert; but the ducks could not understand what he was talking about, and they quacked to each other,

"We are all of the same opinion doubtless—we think he is utterly stupid!"

"Yes, certainly, he is stupid," said the turkey cock.

The stork was silent, and thought of Africa.

"You have a famous pair of lanky legs," said the turkey cock; "what do they cost a yard?"

"Quack, quack, quack," giggled all the ducks; but the stork pretended not to hear.

"You might certainly laugh, I think," said the turkey cock; "that was rather a clever speech of mine. But perhaps it was too deep for you. He is not a genius, is he? But we can be amusing among ourselves." And then he crowed, and the ducks cried, "Quack, quack!" It was wonderful how they enjoyed the joke.

But Hjalmar went to the fowl pen, opened the door, and called to the stork to come out to him on the deck. The bird felt rested now, and he nodded to Hjalmar, as if to thank him; then he spread his wings, and flew away to warmer lands; but the hens clucked, the ducks quacked, and the turkey cock turned red with anger.

"I'll have you made into soup to-morrow morning," said Hjalmar, and then he woke up and found himself lying in his little white bed.

It was a wonderful voyage that Ole Luk Oie had taken him in the night.

Thursday.

"Do you know what?" said Ole Luk Oie—"don't be frightened—I am going to show you a little mouse."

He held out his hand, where there sat an elegant little mouse. "She is come to invite you to the wedding," said Ole Luk Oie. "Two young mice are going to enter the holy state of matrimony this very night. They live under the floor of your mother's store room. It is a beautiful house for them."

"But how shall I get through the little mouse-hole in the floor?" said Hjalmar.

"Let me manage all that," answered Ole Luk Oie. "I'll make you nice and tiny." He touched Hjalmar with his magic powder, and the child grew less and less till he was not an inch long. "Now, you can borrow the tin soldier's clothes; they will fit you nicely, I think, and it looks well to wear a uniform when one goes out to a party."

"Yes, indeed!" said Hjalmar, and in a moment he was dressed like the smartest of tin soldiers. "Will you be so kind as to sit down in your mother's thimble?" said the little mouse; "I shall then have the honour of pulling you along."

"Is it possible that your ladyship will take so much trouble yourself?" said Hjalmar, and they drove off to the mouse's wedding.

First of all they went under the floor, and entered a long passage, just high enough for the thimble to stand upright; the whole passage was lighted with phosphor.

"Is it not beautiful here?" said the mouse, as she drew him forward. "The passage has been smeared with bacon rind. Nothing can be more delightful."

They then entered the bridal hall. All the lady-mice stood on the right hand, whispering and giggling as if they were turning each other into ridicule; on the left stood the gentlemen-mice, stroking their moustachios with their paws; and in the middle of the hall stood the bridal pair, in the hollow rind of a cheese. They kissed each other in a perfectly dreadful way before all the company, for it was their betrothal, and they were to be married immediately.

More and more visitors arrived; one mouse trod upon another, and the bridal pair had placed themselves in the doorway, so that one could neither get in nor out. The room, as well as the passage, had been smeared with bacon rind; that was the whole entertainment; but a pea was brought out for dessert, in which a mouse of the bride's family had nibbled the name of the bridal pair—the initials, that is. It was something quite out of the common way. All the mice said that it was a very pretty wedding, and that they had spent a very pleasant evening.

Hjalmar drove home again; he had certainly been in very good society. On the other hand, he had been obliged to be made very small, and creep through a mouse-hole, and borrow his tin soldier's uniform.

Friday.

"It is incredible how many elderly people there are who would be glad to see me," said Ole Luk Oie, "especially those who have done any wicked action. 'Dear, good Ole!' they cry, 'we cannot close an eye all night; all our evil deeds sit on the bed, like little imps, and sprinkle us with boiling water. Do come and drive them away, and give us a good night's rest. We will pay for it willingly; the money is all ready by the window.' But I don't come for money," said Ole Luk Oie.

"What shall we do to-night?" said Hjalmar.

"I don't know whether you would care to go to another wedding—it is a different kind of a wedding from the one we saw last night. Your sister's doll, Hermann, the one that is dressed like a man, is going to marry the other doll, Bertha. It is Bertha's birthday into the bargain, so that they will receive an immense number of presents."

"Oh, I know that of old," said Hjalmar. "Whenever the dolls want new clothes, my sister lets them be married, or keep their birthday. They have done that a hundred times."

"Yes, but to-night is the hundred and first wedding, and when the hundred and first is over, it is all finished. So this will be extremely grand. Only look!"

Hjalmar looked at the table. The dolls' house was lighted up from top to bottom, the tin soldiers were drawn up in front and presented arms. The bridal pair were sitting on the floor, leaning against the table leg. They looked very thoughtful, as well they might.

When the wedding was over, all the furniture in the room joined in the following song. It had been written by the lead pencil, and went to the tune of the drummers' tattoo—

"Ring out the song into the air,
Ring out, 'Hurrah, the bridal pair!'
The bridegroom bold, the bride so fair,
Are made of kid, fine, soft, and rare.
Lift high your voices, banish care,
And sing, 'Hurrah, the bridal pair!'"

The presents were then brought out; the young couple had begged that no eatables might be given to them, because they had enough in each other's love.

"Shall we buy a country house, or shall we travel abroad?" said the bridegroom.

The swallow who had travelled a great deal, and the old brood hen who had brought up five hatches of chickens, were consulted on the point. The swallow spoke of the beautiful, warm countries where the rich grapes hung heavy on the vine, the air was mild and pure, and the mountains glowed with colours unknown to us.

"But they have no red cabbage," said the hen. "I once spent a summer in the country with my chickens; there was a sand-heap where we could scratch and pick, and we had permission to walk in a cabbage garden. Oh, how delicious it was! Nothing could be more lovely."

"But one cabbage stalk is just like another," said the swallow; "and then it is such bad weather here."

"One gets used to that," said the hen.

"But it is cold, and winter brings the frost."

"That is good for the cabbage," said the hen; "and then it is warm sometimes. Four years ago the summer lasted for four weeks; it was so hot one could not breathe. Besides, we have no venomous insects as they have over there, and no robbers either. The man must be a villain who does not think our country the best: he does not deserve to live in it." Then the hen wept, and continued, "I, too, have travelled. I once rode more than twelve miles in a coop. Believe me, there is no pleasure whatever in travelling."

"The hen is a sensible person," said Bertha. "I do not think much of mountains myself; it is only going up and then coming down again. No, let us settle on the sand-heap before the door, and walk about in the cabbage garden."

Saturday.

"Now, shall I hear any tales?" said little Hjalmar, when Ole Luk Oie had put him to sleep.

"We shall have no time for tales to-night," said Ole Luk Oie, opening his large umbrella. "Just look at these little Chinamen!" And the umbrella looked like a China dish, with blue trees, and pointed bridges with little Chinamen on, who stood and nodded their heads.

"We must have the whole world tidied and smartened up for to-morrow," said Ole Luk Oie; "it is Sunday, you know—I must go to all the church steeples and see if the little goblins have polished the bells nicely to make them ring out clear and sweet. Then I must hurry off to the fields and see whether the wind has blown the dust off the

leaves and blades of grass ; then—and that is the hardest piece of work of all—I have to take down all the stars and rub them up well. I put them in my apron, but first they have to be numbered, and so have the little holes in the sky where they are fixed ; for, if they are not put back into the right holes, they would not fit, but would come tumbling down again, and we should have too many shooting stars."

"Now, I'll tell you what, Mr. Ole Luk Oie," said an old portrait which was hanging on one of the walls in Hjalmar's bed-room ; "I am Hjalmar's great-great-grandfather. I am much obliged to you for telling the child tales, but you really must not confuse his ideas. The stars cannot tumble down. They are worlds, heavenly bodies like our earth ; that is the only good of them."

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Great-great-grandfather," said Ole Luk Oie—"extremely obliged. Certainly you are the head of the family, the very founder of it ; but I am older than you. I am a world-old pagan ; the Greeks and Romans called me the God of Dreams. I have had, and I shall always have, access to the dwellings of the noblest, and the lowliest, and I can meet on an equal footing with both. Now, you may finish the tale yourself!" And away went Ole Luk Oie, umbrella and all.

"Well I never! One may not even express one's opinion now-a-days," said the old portrait.

Then Hjalmar awoke.

Sunday.

"Good evening," said Ole Luk Oie. Hjalmar nodded, and ran to turn the portrait of his great-great-grandfather's face to the wall, so that it might not interrupt, as it had done the night before. "Now you must tell me some tales," he said, "about the five peas that lived in a shell ; and about the cock's foot that paid court to the hen's foot ; and the darning-needle that gave herself such airs that she fancied herself a sewing-needle."

"It is possible to have too much of a good thing," said Ole Luk Oie. "You know that I like showing you things best. I will show you my brother. His name is Ole Luk Oie, like mine ; but he never comes to any one more than once. When he comes to you he will take you on his horse and tell you a story ; he only knows two : one is so beautiful that no one in the world has ever imagined anything half so lovely, and the other is so awful and terrible that it cannot be described by any one else."

Ole Luk Oie lifted Hjalmar up to the window, and told him to look out. "Now you can see my brother!" he said. "His name is Death. Look, he is not half so ugly as they paint him in the picture-books. What they take for a bony skeleton is only the silver embroidery on his beautiful hussar's uniform ; his long black velvet mantle flies behind his horse. See how fast he gallops!"

Hjalmar looked out, and saw how the second Ole Luk Oie sped by, and how he took up young and old on to his horse. He placed some before him and some behind, but he asked them all first, "How does it stand with your mark-book?"

"Very well," they all cried with one voice. "Let me look for myself," he said; and every one was obliged to hand up his book. Those which had "excellent," or "first-class" written in them, were lifted up in front of the rider and heard the beautiful story; but those with "middling," or "pretty good" were sent to the back, and heard the horrible story. They cried and trembled, and tried to jump down from the horse; but they could not stir, for they were all spell-bound in their places.

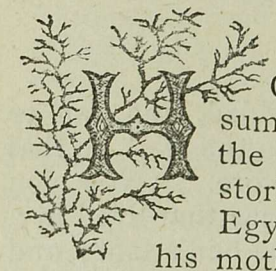
"Why, Death is the finest Ole Luk Oie of the two!" cried little Hjalmar; "I am not one bit afraid of him!"

"No more you need be," said Ole Luk Oie, "if you will take care to keep a good mark-book."

"Yes, now, that is improving," said the great-great-grandfather's portrait; "it is of some use after all to express one's opinion." And he was quite contented. There, that is the story of Ole Luk Oie; and I hope he will tell you some more himself this very night.

—o—

The Ugly Duckling.



OW gloriously beautiful the country was! It was summer time; the corn was yellow, the oats were green, the hay was stacked up in the fragrant meadows; the stork walked proudly about on his long red legs, talking Egyptian to himself, the language he had learned from his mother. Great woods stood round the corn-fields and meadow lands; and hidden in the woods were still, deep lakes. Yes, it was very lovely out in the country.

An old farm house stood there, bathed in the pleasant sunshine; a deep moat ran round it, and over the wall great burdock leaves hung, and grew down to the water's edge. The leaves were so large that a little child could stand upright under some of them. The whole place was as wild as the heart of a great forest. This was the spot in which a duck had chosen to place her nest; she sat faithfully on her eggs all day long, but she was beginning to feel rather tired of waiting; no one came to pay her a visit; the other ducks preferred swimming about the moat to sitting down and gossiping with her under the burdock leaves.

At last one egg after another chipped and opened, and out came a little head from every shell. "Peep! peep!" they cried.

"Quack! quack!" said the mother, and they quacked as well as they could, turning their bright eyes eagerly from side to side of the green leaves. The mother let them look about as much as they liked, for green is good for the eyes.

"How large the world is!" they cried, for they had a great deal more room now than they had in the egg.

"Do you think this is the whole world?" said the mother; "the

THE LITTLE DUCKLINGS.

world reaches beyond the other side of the garden, right into the parson's field, but I have never been there myself. Have I got you all together now?" she continued, standing up—"no; not quite all. The largest egg is still left: how much longer is it going to be, I wonder? I declare I am quite tired of it," and down she sat again.

"Well, how are you getting on?" said an old duck, who had come to pay her a visit.

"I'm waiting for this one egg," said the duck; "it will not chip. But just look at the others: are they not the very prettiest little ducklings that ever were seen? They are all extremely like their father—by the way, the naughty creature never comes to see me."

"Let me look at the egg that won't chip," said the old duck. "Take my word for it, it is a turkey's egg. I was once taken in in the very same way myself, and was in endless trouble about the little creature. It was frightened at the sight of the water; I could not get it in; I clucked and quacked, but it was all of no use. Let me see the egg. Oh, yes, that's a turkey's egg. Let it alone, an d begin to teach the other children how to swim."

"I will sit upon it a little bit longer," said the duck; "as I have sat so long, I may as well sit a few days more."

"As you please," said the old duck, and away she swam.

At last the large egg chipped and opened. "Peep! peep!" cried the little bird, and crept out of the shell. It was very big and very ugly. The mother looked at it. "It is certainly an enormous duckling," she said; "none of the others looked like that. I wonder if it *is* a young turkey! I shall very soon find out, however, when we come to the water. It shall 'go in if I have to push it in myself.'"

The next day was warm and lovely; the sun shone bright and golden on the green burdock leaves; the mother duck and her brood of little ones went down to the water's edge. Splash! she jumped into the water: "Quack! quack!" she called, and one after another the ducklings tumbled in. The water closed above their heads, but they rose to the surface again, and swam about splendidly; their little legs moved of themselves. The grey, ugly duckling swam with them.

"No, that's no turkey-poult," said the duck; "look how nicely it uses its legs; how upright it sits! It is my own child. It is pretty after all when you look at it closely. Quack! quack! follow me. I am going to take you out into the world, and introduce you to the duck-yard. Keep close to me, so that no one may tread on you, and keep out of the way of the cats."

They entered the duck-yard. A great quarrel was going on at the moment, for two families were fighting over an eel's head, which the cat finally carried off.

"See, that's the way of the world," said the mother duck, and whetted her beak, for she, too, would have liked the eel s head. "Now use your legs, and see that you quack nicely, and be sure that you bow your heads to that old duck yonder. She is the most aristocratic person here. She is of Spanish descent, that is why she is so fat; and look at that piece of red rag round her leg. That is most beautiful: it is the highest distinction to which any duck can attain. It means that her owners do not wish to lose her, and that she is to be

known at once, both by men and animals. Now remember. Don't turn your feet in—a well-bred duckling always turns its feet outwards, like its father and mother;—look, this way! Now bow your heads, and say quack."

The ducklings did as they were bid, but the other ducks turned round and looked at them. "Look there!" they said aloud; "now we have got another set of new comers, as if there were not enough of us already! And, oh! look at that one! No; we really will not have *him* here." And one of them flew straight up to the ugly duckling, and bit its neck.

"Let it alone," said the mother; "it isn't doing any harm."

"But it is too big, and too odd-looking," said the duck, "and it must be well pecked."

"They are pretty children that the mother has brought," said the old duck with the rag round her leg; "all nice-looking, except that one. That is certainly not a success. I wish she could finish it off a little better."

"Impossible, your ladyship!" said the mother duck; "it is not pretty, but it has a good disposition, and swims as well as any of the others; indeed, I may say it swims better. I think it will grow up pretty, and get rather smaller in time. It has lain too long in the egg, and so it is not very well shaped." She pecked at its neck a little, and smoothed down its feathers—"And then it is a drake," she continued, "so that looks are not of so much consequence; it will get on pretty well."

"The other ducklings are pretty," said the old Spanish duck. "Well now, young ones, make yourselves at home; and if you find an eel's head, you may bring it to me."

And so they felt themselves at home. But the poor duckling which had been the last to come out of the shell, and looked so ugly, was bitten and pushed, and made game of by ducks and fowls alike. "It is too big," they all said, and the turkey, who had been born with spurs on, and fancied he was an emperor, puffed himself out like a ship in full sail, and bore down on the poor little creature, gabbling with fury, and turning red in the face. The ugly duckling did not know where to run to; it was wretched because of its ugliness, and because it was laughed at by all the poultry-yard.

Days passed on, and its life grew harder to bear. Everybody chased and drove it away; even its brothers and sisters used to say, "Oh, you ugly creature, I wish the cat had you!" And the mother cried, "I wish you were out of the way!" The ducks bit it, the fowls pecked it, and the farm servants kicked at it as they passed by.

It ran away at last and flew over the hedge; the little birds in the bushes flew away in terror. "That is because I am so ugly," thought the duckling: it closed its eyes and ran blindly on till it came to the wide moorland where the wild ducks live. Here it lay all night long, weary and sorrowful.

Towards morning the wild ducks flew round and looked at their new companion. "Whatever sort of a duck are you?" they cried; and the ugly duckling got up and bowed to them all round as politely as he could.

"You are extremely ugly," said the wild ducks; "but that does not signify to us, so long as you do not wish to marry into our family." Poor little thing! Marrying was far enough from its thoughts: all it hoped for was to get leave to lie on the sedge and drink a little of the marsh water.

Two days long it lay and rested; the next day there came up two wild geese, or rather goslings, for they had not been very long out of their shell, and they were very saucy.

"I say, comrade," they cried, "you are so downright ugly, that we are rather taken with you. What do you say to joining us and being a rover? Over yonder in the next moor, there are some sweetly pretty wild geese, all of them unmarried, and all of them can cackle. You are in a fair way to make your fortune, ugly as you are."

"Piff! paff!" sounded in the air above them. The two wild geese fell dead among the reeds, and a blood-red stain tinged the quiet water. "Piff! paff!" it rang out again, and flocks of wild geese rose in terror from the sedge. A great chase was going forward. The sportsmen had closed in round the moor, some had even climbed the branches of the trees which stretched across the rushes. The blue smoke rose in thin clouds among the leaves, and spread far over the water: up ran the dogs, splash, splash, among the bending reeds and rushes. The poor duckling cowered down in terror; it tried to hide its head under its wing; but at the same moment a large, savage-looking dog stood over it: his hot tongue was stretched out, his eyes gleamed with cruel eagerness, he sniffed round the duckling, showed his sharp, glittering teeth, and, splash, splash, on he went, without doing it any harm.

"Thank God!" cried the little duckling. "I am so ugly that even the dog will not bite me!" and it lay still while the shots whizzed through the sedge, and gun after gun was fired.

It was dusk before the place was quiet again: the duckling was afraid to stir, and waited many hours before it looked round, and hastened away from the moor as fast as it could run. It ran through fields and meadows, where such a storm was raging that it could hardly keep its footing.

Towards night it reached a wretched looking little hut, so old and tumbledown that it did not know on which side to fall first, and that was the only thing that kept it standing. The storm howled and raged round the duckling; it was obliged to lie close to the ground, for it could not stand against the tempest. Suddenly it noticed that the door had come off one of its hinges, and hung so awry that it could creep through into the room; and so it did. In the hut lived a woman, with her cat and her hen. And the cat, whom she called her little son, could set up his little back, and purr; he could even send out sparks if you stroked his fur the wrong way. The hen had neat little legs, and was named "Henny Shortlegs:" she laid good eggs, and the woman loved her as much as if she were her daughter.

In the morning they found the ugly duckling; the cat began to purr, and the hen clucked loudly.

"What is that?" said the woman, looking round. She could not see very well, and she thought it was a fat duck which had lost its

way. "That's a good find," she cried. "I shall get some duck's eggs now. I hope it is not a drake. We must try it."

So the ugly duckling was taken in on trial for three weeks, but no eggs were to be seen. The cat was master of the house, and the hen was mistress. She always said "We and the world," for she thought they two were half the world, and the best half, too. The duckling thought there might be another opinion on that matter, but the hen would not hear of it.

"Can you lay eggs?" she said.

"No."

"*Then* you will have the goodness to hold your tongue." And the cat said, "Can you set up your back and send out sparks?"

"No."

"Then you should not allow yourself to have an opinion when sensible people are speaking."

The duckling sat in the corner, sad and lonely. The fresh sweet air and the golden sunshine stole in, and a great longing rose within it to see the water again. At last it ventured to say so to the hen.

"What can you be thinking of?" she answered. "You have nothing to do, and that is why you take up such whims and fancies. Lay eggs, or purr, and they will all go away."

"But it is so beautiful to swim on the water," said the duckling; "so glorious to let it close over your head, and to dive down in the depth."

"It sounds like a nice amusement," said the hen. "I should think you are out of your mind. Just ask the cat—he's the cleverest animal I know—whether he likes swimming about on the water, and diving down in the depth. I will not speak of myself. Ask the mistress—no one in the world is wiser than she is; do you think *she* has any desire to swim about on the water and let it close above her head?"

"You do not understand me," said the duckling.

"Not understand you! Then pray who *does* understand you? I suppose you do not imagine yourself cleverer than the cat and the mistress? I will not speak of myself. Don't fill your head with such nonsense, child. Thank heaven for all the blessings round you. Haven't you a warm room, and companions from whom you can learn a great deal? But you are a chatterbox, and there is no pleasure to be had in your society. I tell you unpleasant truths, like the sincere friend that I am. Give your mind to laying eggs or purring, or sending out sparks."

"I think I shall go out into the wide world," said the duckling.

"Pray do," said the hen.

The duckling went out, ran down to the water and dived under; every living thing looked down upon it for its ugliness.

Autumn came on. The woodland leaves turned brown and yellow; the wind seized them and tossed them to and fro, and overhead the air was keen and cold. The clouds hung heavy with hail and snow; on the sign-post, stood a raven, and he croaked hoarsely from the cold: it was enough to make one freeze to think of it. The poor little duckling was miserably off. One evening—the sun had just set gloriously—a

flock of tall, stately birds came slowly out from among the bushes; the duckling had never seen anything so beautiful; they were all dazzlingly white, with arched necks; it was a flock of swans. A strange mysterious cry broke from them; slowly they spread out their splendid wings, rose high in air and flew away from the cold moorland to warmer shores and sunny seas. Higher and higher they rose; the outcast, ugly duckling was thrilled with a nameless longing, unfelt before. It spun round in the water like a wheel, stretched its neck high into the air after the flying birds, and uttered such a loud wild cry that the sound made it shiver.

It could not forget the happy, beautiful birds: when they were out of sight, it dived deep down in the water, and when it rose again it seemed beside itself. It did not know the name of the birds, or whither they were flying; but it loved them as it had never loved any one before. It had no thought of envy. How could it ever dream of wishing such loveliness for itself? It would have been glad if even the ducks would have let it stay with them, poor ugly creature.

The winter was very, very cold; the duckling was obliged to keep swimming about to prevent itself from being frozen; but every night the hole in which it swam grew smaller and smaller. The ice cracked and split with the frost; the duckling had to move its legs nimbly lest the ice should close round it. At last it grew weary, lay quite still, and was frozen fast in the ice-bound pool.

Early in the morning a peasant saw the frozen bird, ran on the pool, broke up the ice with his wooden shoe, and carried the duckling home to his wife.

The bird came to itself again, and the children wanted to play with it. But the duckling thought they were going to hurt it, and in its terror it flew straight into the milk-can, sending the milk in showers on to the floor. The woman clapped her hands and the duckling flew on to the butter-jar, and then into the flour-bag, and then out of doors. What a fright it looked to be sure! The woman screamed and threw the tongs after it; the children ran, shouting and laughing, about to catch it. Luckily for it, it fell among the shrubs into the new-fallen snow, and lay there worn out and broken-hearted.

But this would be too sad a story if I were to tell all that the poor duckling had to suffer in the bitter winter. The spring-time came at last, and found it lying in the reeds upon the moor. The sun shone out warm and golden, the larks sang; it was a lovely spring.

Then the duckling spread out its wings; they seemed broader and stronger than before, and bore him swiftly on, till, almost before it knew what had happened, it found itself in a large garden, where the elder trees were in blossom and hung down their long branches to the water's edge. How beautiful it was—how bright with spring! and see, slowly out of the coppice sailed three splendid swans, rustling their feathers and resting lightly on the rippling water! The duckling knew the beautiful birds again, and a strange sorrow and gladness rose together in its heart.

"I will fly to meet them—the royal birds. They will kill me because I dare to approach them, ugly as I am. But let it be so. Better to be killed by them than bitten by the ducks, pecked at by the

fowls, driven away by the servant maid, and tortured with cold and hunger in the long, long winter." And it ran down to the water and sailed out to meet the swans. They saw it now, and bore swiftly down upon it with rustling wings. "Kill me, if you will," said the poor bird. It bent its head towards the lake and waited for the death-stroke. But what did it see beneath it in the clear blue lake? It saw the image of itself—no longer the clumsy, hideous bird, grey and misshapen, but a stately, snow-white swan!

It matters little that one is born in a duck-yard when one has come out of a swan's egg.

It felt lifted above all the care and sorrow that it had borne; and knew for the first time its own happiness by the splendour around it. And the tall swans swam round it and caressed it with their bills.

Some little children came running into the garden, and threw crumbs of bread and corn into the water. "See, there is a new one!" cried the youngest child. "Yes, there is a new one!" answered the others joyously. They clapped their hands, danced about, and ran to fetch their father and mother to see the beautiful new bird. Bread and cake were thrown out to it in the water; and every one said, "The new one is the most beautiful." "It is so young and stately." And the three swans bowed before it.

Then the young swan was shy and ashamed. It hid its head under its white wing and felt too happy—but had no thought of pride. It remembered how it had been mocked and persecuted, and now every one said it was lovelier than all besides. The elder tree waved her boughs to it, and the warm sun caressed it with its golden light. Then it lifted up its beautiful neck, fluttered its wings, and said from the fulness of its heart, "Oh, I never even dreamed of such happiness when I was an ugly duckling!"

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Under the Willow-Tree.

THE little town of Kjöge, in ealand, lies close to the sea: it is a bleak and barren place; open fields stretch round it, and the green forest is far away. The sea is always beautiful, but even the sea might be more beautiful than it is here; and yet, when one calls a place home, there is always something about it which has power to waken loving, regretful longing, even among the most beautiful scenery in the world. And it must be allowed that it is rather pretty in the summer-time on the outskirts of the little town: a few poor gardens line the margin of the leaping brook that hurries on to pour itself into the sea. The two little children who were fighting bravely through the hedge of gooseberry bushes to reach

each other, thought it was a beautiful place; especially under the old willow-tree. There was an elder-tree in one of their gardens, and a willow-tree in the other; they loved the willow best, though it grew so near the waterside, and they might easily have fallen in. But God's eyes watch over the little ones, or else it would be a poor look-out for them. They were, however, very careful; indeed, the boy was so frightened at water, that no one could ever persuade him to go near the sea—not even in the summer, when all the other children were paddling among the waves. He was finely teased about it, and he had to bear that patiently. One day, Joanna, the neighbour's little girl, dreamed that she was sailing in a boat, and that Kanute waded out to her; so deep, that the water rose up to his neck, up to his hair, and then closed over him. From the moment when little Kanute

heard this dream, he never let the other boys tease him any more; he dare go in the water, for had not Joanna dreamed it? He never really did go in, but the dream was the pride of his life.

The children's parents often met, and the children played together in the gardens, and in the avenue of willows that ran round the ramparts; the willows were not much to look at, with their wind-beaten, stunted boughs, but then they were planted for use and not for show. The old willow-tree in the garden was really lovely; and that was where the two children sat. In the town itself is a large market-place, and at the fair it was filled with booths and stalls, decked out with gay ribbons, boots, toys, and everything one can wish for. There was always a great crowd, and generally it rained heavily, so that the steam from the farmers' grey-frieze coats rose up in clouds and mixed with the delicious smell from the cakes and gingerbread-stalls. The

best of all was, that the man who sold the cakes used to lodge at Kanute's father's while the fair lasted; sometimes he would give the little lad a stray gingerbread or two, and then Joanna always got her share.

Better even than that—the old man could tell tales about everything under the sun, even about his own gingerbread; and one night he told the children a tale which made such a deep impression on them, that

they never forgot it. Perhaps it will be as well that you should know it too, especially as it is short.

"On the counter of my shop," said the old man, "there lay two gingerbread-cakes; one was in the shape of a man with a hat on his head, and the other was a young lady with no hat. They lay face upward, because that is the proper way to look at them—no one would think of looking at the wrong side of a gingerbread-cake. The man

had a bitter almond on his left side—that was his heart; but the young lady was made of nothing but honey. They lay on the counter for samples, and they laid there so long that they fell in love with each other, but neither of them said so, and yet it is absolutely necessary to say so if anything is to come of it.

"'He is a man—he must speak first,' she said; 'I ask no more than to know that my love is returned.'

"His thoughts were much bolder; that is always the way with men. He dreamed that he was a real street-boy with his pocket full of coppers, and that he bought the young lady and ate her up.

"Days and weeks passed by; they lay there silent on the counter; the young lady's thoughts grew softer and tenderer still. 'It is enough for me,' she sighed, 'that I have lain on the same counter.' And with that she broke right in two.

"'If she had only known of my love she would have held out a little longer,' he thought.

"That is the tale," said the old man; "and here they are, both of them. They are remarkable because of their life-story, and because of their silent love that never came to anything. Here—you may have them." He gave Joanna the young man, who was quite whole, and Kanute had the broken pieces of the young lady.

The children were so touched by the story that they could not find it in their hearts to eat the two lovers. The next day they went into the churchyard and sat down on the low stone wall, which is all overgrown with luxuriant ivy, winter and summer through. They set up the cakes in the sunshine among the green leaves, and told the story to a group of children—told about the silent love that was no good to any one. All the children praised the story; but as they gazed at the gingerbread couple, a big boy made a dart at the young lady—quite on purpose—and ate her up. Kanute and Joanna cried bitterly, and then—most likely, so that the poor sweetheart should not be left all alone in the world—then they ate *him* up; but they never forgot the story.

The children were always together; sometimes under the elder tree, sometimes under the willow tree; and the little girl sang the prettiest songs, in a voice as clear as a bell. Kanute had not a note in his voice, but he knew the words, and that is something. The people in Kjöge, even the well-to-do woman who kept the fancy shop, used to stop and listen when Joanna sang. "The little maid has a pretty voice of her own," they used to say.

Those were happy days, but they could not last for ever. The neighbours had to separate; Joanna's mother died, and her father made up his mind to marry again. A good situation, as light porter, was offered to him in Kopenhagen, and the day came for them all to part. Tears were shed all round; indeed, the children cried as if their hearts were breaking; but the old people promised to write to each other at least once a year.

Kanute was bound apprentice to a shoemaker. He was a big boy now, and could not be allowed to be idle any longer. Then came his Confirmation day. Oh! how he longed to be in Kopenhagen with

little Joanna! but he was obliged to stay in Kjöge. He had never been to Kopenhagen in his life, though it was only a few miles distant. When the sky was clear, he could see the church steeples quite plainly; and on his Confirmation day he saw the golden cross on S. Mary's spire glitter in the sunshine. Oh! how often he thought of Joanna! Did she ever think of him, he wondered? Yes! Towards Christmas there came a letter for his parents from Joanna's father. They were getting on very well in Kopenhagen, and all their good fortune came from Joanna's wonderful voice. She had an engagement at the theatre, where all the plays were sung, the letter said; and she earned a salary already. The dollar enclosed was for her old friends in Kjöge, as a Christmas box. They were to drink to her health. This last sentence, Joanna had written with her own hand, and underneath came a postscript, "Remember me to Kanute." The whole family cried over it: there was nothing certainly to cry for, but their tears were tears of joy.

Joanna had been in Kanute's thoughts all day long, and now he knew she thought of him; the nearer he was to being out of his time, the more clearly he saw that he loved her dearly, and that she must be his wife. Then a smile would cross his lips; his thread flew faster, and his foot pressed firmly against the knee strap; the awl would prick his finger till the blood came, but what did that signify? He was not going to play the tongue-tied lover; the gingerbread cake had been a lesson to him.

His 'prentice days were over now, and his knapsack filled. Now, for the first time in his life, he was to go to Kopenhagen, for he had found a place there. How surprised and overjoyed Joanna would be! She was seventeen now, and he was nineteen.

He thought of buying a golden ring for her in Kjöge, but he remembered that he could get such things much better in Kopenhagen; so he bade his mother and father good-bye, and late on a rainy autumn afternoon he turned his back on his native village, and set off towards the great town. The leaves were falling from the trees; he was wet through by the time he reached his new master's. The next Sunday he went out to visit Joanna's father. He put on his new hat and suit of clothes; they fitted him very well, and he had never worn a hat before. He found the house, and went up one pair of stairs after another; it was enough to turn any one giddy to see how the people lived, one room over another, high in the air.

It was a comfortable room, and Joanna's father received him very kindly; his wife was a stranger, but she held out her hand, and asked him to stay tea with them.

"Joanna will be glad to see you," said the father. "You have grown quite a fine young man. Now you shall see her—ah! she is the joy of my life. She has a room of her own, for which she pays us herself."

The man knocked at Joanna's door, just as if he were a stranger, and then they all went in. How elegant everything was! There certainly was no room like it in Kjöge: the queen herself could not have a pleasanter one, Kanute thought. There were window curtains down to the very ground, and a carpet and a velvet chair; not to

speak of flowers and pictures, and a great mirror as large as a door; one felt almost afraid to enter. Kanute saw all this with one glance, and yet he seemed to see nothing but Joanna. She was grown up now, and very different from what Kanute remembered her. There was no maiden in Kjöge half so beautiful; how ladylike she was, and how distantly she looked at Kanute!—only for a moment though, for then she rushed towards him as if she were going to embrace him. She did not do so, but it was very near it.

Yes, she was glad to see the friend of her childhood, and yet the tears came into her eyes: there was so much to hear and to tell; she asked after Kanute's father and mother, and after the elder and the willow tree. "Mother elder" and "Father willow," she called them, as if they were alive, and they were almost as good. She remembered the gingerbread cakes too, and their silent love, and how they lay on the counter till they broke in two. She laughed heartily as she recalled the story, but the blood flamed high in Kanute's cheeks, and

his heart beat loud and fast. No, she was not proud! It was she herself—Kanute noticed that—who prompted her parents to ask him to stay; she poured out his tea, and handed him his cup.

After tea she read something aloud out of a book, and it seemed to Kanute that all she read spoke of his love; it chimed in so fully with his secret thoughts. Then she sang a simple song, but when she sang it, it sounded like a story over which she poured out all her heart. Oh, yes! she loved Kanute. Tears rolled down his cheeks; he could not help it; he could not find a single word to say. It seemed as if he were spell bound, and yet she pressed his hand, and said, "You have a good heart, Kanute—stay always as you are now."

That was a night apart—it was impossible to sleep after it, and so Kanute found.

"I hope you won't quite forget us," said Joanna's father as he wished the young man good night. "Don't let the winter go by without coming to see us." Kanute thought that was as much as to say come next Sunday, so he went. But every night after working hours—and he worked by candle-light—Kanute went into the town, walked through the street where Joanna lived, and looked up at her windows. They were almost always lighted up; once he saw her shadow cross the blind; that was a happy evening. His master's wife was not too well pleased at his going out every night, gadding about, as she called it, but the master only smiled. "Let him be—he is but a youngster," he said.

"We shall meet on Sunday," thought Kanute, "and I will tell her then how dearly I love her, and that she must be my own dear wife. I know I am only a poor shoemaker's lad, but I shall work and strive, and rise to be a master shoemaker: yes, I must tell her all that: there's no good in silent love, I have learnt that from the gingerbread cakes."

Sunday came, and Kanute paid his visit; but unluckily they were all going out to spend the evening, and they were obliged to tell him so. Joanna pressed his hand and said: "Have you been to the theatre yet? You *must* go. I shall sing next Wednesday, and if you are at liberty on that day I will send you a ticket; my father knows where your master lives."

How amiable it was of her! And on Wednesday morning Kanute received a sealed envelope, without a word of writing, but enclosing the ticket, and at night he found himself for the first time in his life in the theatre. What did he see? He saw Joanna; how lovely and graceful she looked! To be sure she was married to a stranger, but that was only the play; nothing but acting, Kanute knew that, for if it were true how could she have had the heart to send him a ticket just to look on at it? Every one clapped his hands, and even Kanute cried "Bravo!"

The king himself smiled on Joanna as if he enjoyed her beautiful voice; ah, how insignificant Kanute felt! but yet he loved her truly, and she loved him too; but it is for the man to speak first, as the gingerbread young lady thought: there was really a great deal in that story.

When Sunday came round he went again; Joanna was alone, and received him: nothing could be more fortunate.

"It is a good thing you are come," she said; "I was going to send my father to you; but I had a presentiment that you would come to-night: for I must tell you that I am going to France next Friday. I must go, if I am ever to make anything of my voice."

It seemed to Kanute that the whole room turned round; his eyes were hot and dry, but he felt as if his heart were breaking. It was impossible to hide his sorrow. "You good, kind heart!" said Joanna; and then his tongue was loosened, and he told her how dearly he loved her, and begged her to be his wife. As he spoke he saw her colour change from red to white; she dropped his hand, and answered gravely and sadly. "Do not make yourself and me unhappy, Kanute. I shall always be a good sister to you, on whom you may depend—but never anything more!" She passed her soft hand over his hot brow; "God gives us strength to bear all, if we only know how to will ourselves."

At that moment her stepmother came in. "Kanute is wretched, because I am going away," she cried. "Come, be a man!" and she laid her hand upon his shoulder: it seemed as though she had spoken of the journey, and of nothing else. "You are a child," she said; "be good and reasonable as you used to be under the willow tree, when we were little."

But to Kanute it seemed as if the whole world were moved out of its course; his thoughts were like loose threads, fluttering at the mercy of the wind. He stayed on, not knowing whether he had been asked to stay; but they were kind and friendly. Joanna poured out his tea, and sung to him—not the old song, but one so ineffably beautiful, sweet even to heart-breaking, and then they parted. Kanute did not hold out his hand, but she took it in hers, and said, "Will you not give your sister your hand at parting, dear old playfellow?" She smiled through the tears that fell down her cheeks, and whispered again the word "brother." That was a poor consolation! And so they parted.

Joanna sailed for France; Kanute plodded along the muddy streets of Kopenhagen. His comrades in the workshop asked him why he was so dull and down-hearted, and told him to amuse himself while he was young. They went together to the dancing-rooms; many pretty girls were there, but none like Joanna: and here, where he thought of forgetting her, she rose brighter and more distinctly before his memory. "God gives us strength to bear all things if we only know how to will," she had said. A prayer rose in his heart,—the violins broke out, and the young girls danced gaily by; Kanute started, it seemed as if he had brought Joanna somewhere where she ought not to be, for she was surely with him in his heart. He went out of the room, and walked to the house where she used to live: it was all dark and silent—empty and lonely. The world went on its way, and left Kanute alone.

Winter settled down; the water in the harbour was frozen, it was silent as a funeral.

But when spring came back and the first steamer left the port,

Kanute shouldered his knapsack; a longing seized him to wander out into the world—anywhere except to France.

He wandered far into Germany, changing restlessly from town to town; it was not till he came to Nuremberg that he could make up his mind to stay.

Nuremberg is a wonderful old city; just as if it had been cut out of a picture book. The streets twist about as they will, the houses do not stand in stiff rows and squares; gable windows with little pinnacles, columns, and carved leaf work stand out above the footpaths. Down from the curious pointed roofs waterspouts, shaped like dragons or dogs with hanging tongues, reach to the very middle of the streets. Kanute stood alone in the market place: he was leaning against one of the old fountains covered with beautiful carvings of stories out of the Bible, or the history of the city. Between the grey sculptured stone two sparkling jets of water rise up in the sunlight; a pretty servant maid gave Kanute to drink; her hand was full of roses, and she offered him a flower. That was a good omen, he thought.

From the neighbouring church stole out the deep tones of an organ; it sounded so homelike that Kanute thought of the dear old church at Kjöge; he entered the great cathedral, the sunlight fell through the painted windows between the tall slender pillars; he knelt in prayer, and a quiet peace stole into his heart.

He found a good master in Nuremberg, and stayed with him. The old ramparts round the town are used for little kitchen gardens now, but the strong walls with the heavy turrets are standing yet. There the ropemaker has his ropewalk within the walls; and there, out of every rift and cranny, grow the elder branches, overhanging the low-roofed houses far below. In one of these houses lived Kanute's master, and over the tiny attic where Kanute sat and worked, fell the shadow of the elder-tree.

Here he lived a summer and a winter; he learned the German language well; but when the spring came he could bear it no longer, the scent of the elder-blossom conjured up the old garden at Kjöge; Kanute left his master, and wandered to another town where there was no elder-tree.

His workshop stood over an old stone bridge which crossed a rushing mill-stream; far away hurried the foaming waters closed in on either side with old houses, whose crumbling gable windows seemed as if they must shake down into the stream. There was no elder here—not even a flower-pot with a slip of green—but just opposite the workshop was a large willow-tree that clung desperately to the house, so that it should not be torn away by the mill-stream, its branches drooped into the water as the branches of the old willow-tree at Kjöge drooped long ago.

Yes, certainly he had gone from the elder to the willow—and the tree, especially on moonlight nights, had something about it that went to his heart—it was not the moonlight, it was the tree itself.

And yet he could not bear it. Why not? Ask the elder-blossom, ask the willow-tree. He bade farewell to his master and wandered farther.

He never spoke of Joanna; he kept silence about his sorrow; but

he put a deep meaning into the story of the gingerbread cakes. He saw now why the man had a bitter almond for his heart—he felt the bitter taste of it himself—Joanna, who was always so sweet and friendly—she was all honey. He felt as if the strap of his knapsack pressed him so that he could scarcely breathe; he loosened it, but it was no better: it was only half the world he saw around him, the other half he bore within his heart—that was the way he felt.

Not till he saw the high snow mountains did the world seem lighter; his thoughts were turned outwards then, tears rose in his eyes.

The Alps seemed to him to be the world's great white wings, folded as if in prayer. What, if they unfolded, and spread wide their mighty pinions with their changeful pictures of pine woods, cataracts, blue-cloud, and dazzling snow? At the last day the earth would rise on her strong wings and soar aloft towards heaven to burst, like a soap-bubble, in the blaze of God's glory. "Oh, that the day were come!" he sighed.

Silently he wandered through the land that stretched before him like a grassy orchard; from the wooden balconies before the houses, maidens making lace nodded a kindly greeting, the mountain peaks glowed in the evening sunshine, and when he saw the green lakes gleam between the dark pine-trees, he thought of the broken coast of Kjöge, and his heart was stirred with sadness that was scarcely pain.

Yonder, where the Rhine flows away like one large wave, breaks into cloud, and is changed into snow-white vapoury mist as if there were the very workshop of the clouds—a rainbow flutters over it like an untied ribbon—there he thought of the old mill at Kjöge, where the water leaps and roars.

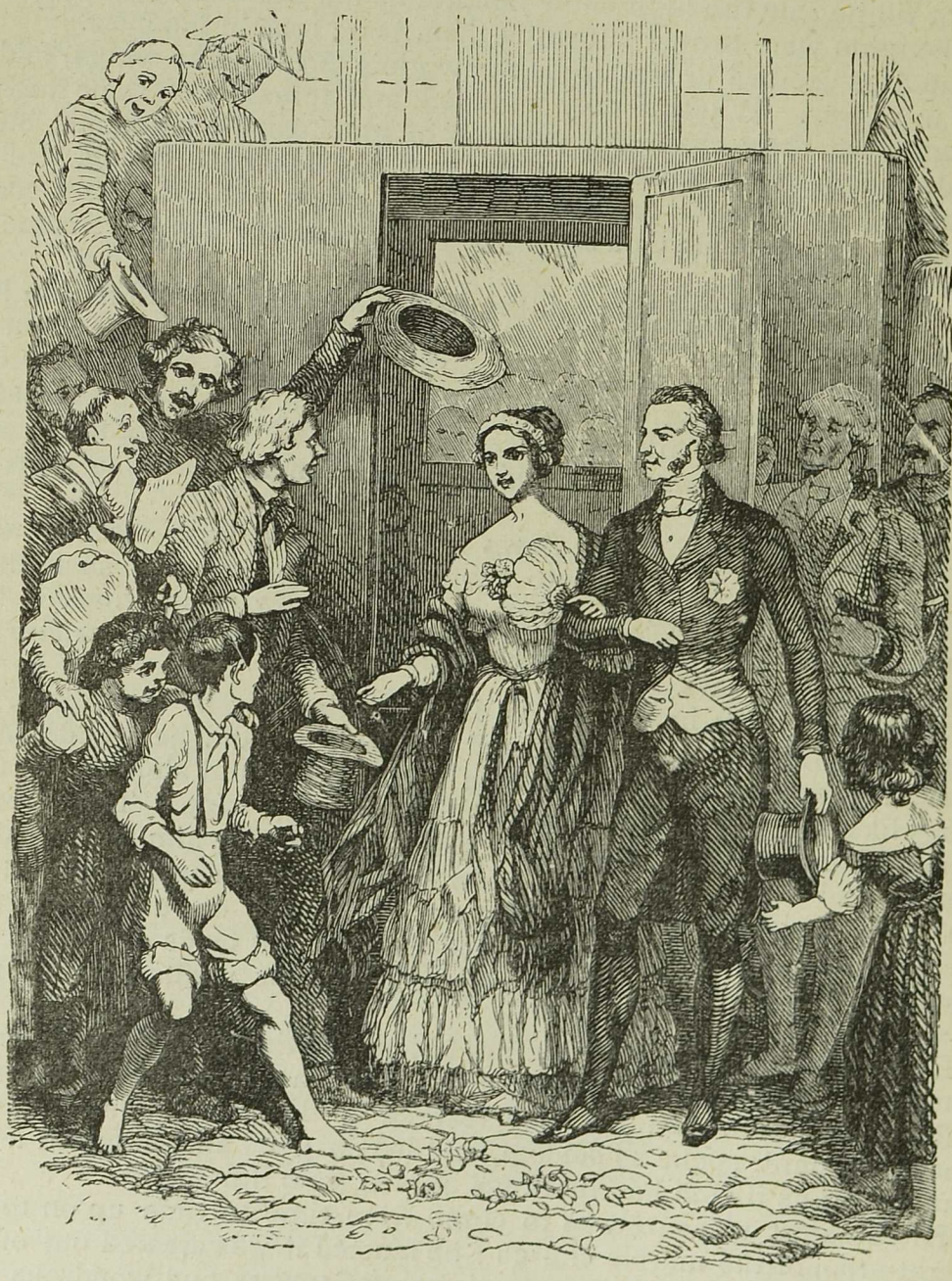
He would gladly have lingered in the quiet city by the Rhine, but there were far too many elder and willow trees, and he wandered on across the giant mountains, through wild ravines, and along paths that hung like swallows' nests against the mountain side. The torrents plunged into the depths below, the clouds sailed over him, he trod amid thistles and alpine roses, and snow in the warm summer sunshine. He bade farewell to the north, and wandered on under fragrant chestnut-trees, among blooming vine gardens and fields of maize; the mountain stood like a wall between him and his memories, and that was well.

Before him lay the splendid city of Milan, and there he found a German master who took him into his service; it was a pious, quiet household, and the old man and his wife learned to love the silent lad, who worked so hard, spoke so seldom, and led so good and innocent a life. Kanute felt as if God had lifted his burden from him.

His greatest pleasure was to climb from time to time up on to the mighty roof of the marble church; he fancied it was created out of his native snows, piled up into fantastic pointed towers, and wondrous fret-work, and wide vaulted halls; from every nook and corner the lovely slender columns shone out in their dazzling whiteness. Above him was the pure blue sky of Lombardy, below lay the city and the wide green plain stretching northwards to the solemn peaks crowned with eternal snow. At the sight his heart wandered on to Kjöge, with its red walls over-

hung with ivy; he longed to be within them, he hoped to find his grave there, far beyond the mountains.

One year he stayed in Milan; he had now been three years away from his home. His master, who was kind to the silent stranger, took him one night to the great opera-house of La Scala. Kanute gazed in wonder on the splendid scene; tier above tier rose the stalls draped



with silk and lace, and filled with the beautiful Italian ladies ablaze with diamonds, their white hands filled with rare flowers. The men were in evening dress: rich uniforms glittering with gold and silver braid were seen on every side. It was as light as in the brightest noonday, glorious music thrilled through the vast hall, it was far more

beautiful than the theatre in Kopenhagen; but Joanna was there—— Ah! what magic was at work? The curtain rose, and there stood Joanna in robes of silk with ornaments and crown of gold! She sang like one of the angels in heaven, she smiled as only she herself could smile, she looked straight up into Kanute's face. The poor lad seized his master's hand, and cried aloud, "Joanna!" No one else heard it; the music drowned the cry; but the old man nodded and said, "Yes; that is her name—Joanna." He pushed a printed paper into Kanute's hand, where the name was printed—her whole name in large letters.

It was no dream. Flowers and wreaths fell in a fragrant rain at her feet; when she left the stage she was called back, and came again and again.

In the street, men had taken the horses from her carriage that they might draw it along: Kanute was among them, shouting wildly with the rest. As the carriage stopped before a brilliantly-lighted house, he stood close to the carriage door; it opened, and she stepped out, with the light falling full on her sweet face; she smiled and thanked them all with gentle graciousness. Kanute looked her in the face, she met his gaze calmly—she did not even know him. A man, on whose breast glittered a star, offered her his arm: he was her promised husband, so the people said.

Kanute went home and strapped up his knapsack. In one minute one can live through a whole life: the old resistless longing was strong upon him, drawing him back to the elder—to the willow tree—ah! if he were only there!

The kindly old people urged him to stay: vainly they warned him of the winter, and told him that the mountain paths were already white with snow. No words could hold him back; surely, he thought, he could follow with his stout alpen stock in the track of the heavy carriage.

He climbed the mountain and began the long descent—down—ever downwards. Wearily he looked for some hut, some friendly village, but there was none. The stars sparkled above him, his feet tripped and stumbled, his head swam; far below his feet the stars were sparkling, as if the sky had fallen. It was the lights of a little town shining through grey mist. Wearied out, he reached a poverty-stricken inn, where he stayed the night.

A night and a day he lingered there to gain strength; the thaw had set in, and it was raining in the valley; but early the next morning a wandering harper came by and played one of the old Danish tunes, which Kanute had heard a thousand times in Kjöge. He had no strength to stand against it, and once more hastened northwards, hurrying as if he must reach his home before all he loved were dead. He spoke to no one of his feverish longing; hiding it, as he had always hidden his heart's sorrow. A settled grief is out of place in this world—even friends do not find it entertaining. A stranger, he wandered northwards through strange lands.

Evening drew on. He was walking along the open road. The frost was keen and bitter; the country flat, with fields and meadow lands; on the roadside stood a willow tree—it was quite home-like. Kanute

seated himself under the tree: he was very weary: his head was heavy, his eyes stiff with drowsiness. He felt how the tree stretched its arms over him; to his tired fancy it seemed a tall man; the "Willow-father" himself come to lift his tired son in his strong arms and carry him back to Kjöge to the old garden. It was the very same old willow, who had wandered out into the world to find him; now he had found him and carried him back to the brook side; and there stood Joanna in her splendid dress and golden crown, just as he had seen her last: and she called aloud to him, "Welcome home!"

Before him stood two quaint figures that looked much more life-like than they used to do in his childhood; they were altered, but he knew them again; it was the two gingerbread cakes, they were turned right side forward, and looked very nice. "A thousand thanks!" they said

to Kanute. "You have loosened our tongues, so that we have spoken out our thoughts, and something is come of it at last. We are engaged!"

They walked prettily hand in hand along the streets of Kjöge; they did not look amiss, even on the wrong side; there was really no fault to find with them. They walked straight to the church, and Kanute and Joanna followed. They also walked hand in hand: the church stood open; the ivy hung as ever over its red walls; the organ pealed out, and they stepped up the broad path to the porch. "Let the master and mistress go first," said the gingerbread people, making room for Kanute and Joanna. They knelt before the altar, Joanna bent over him, and tears, icy cold, fell from her eyes upon his burning cheeks. It was the ice round her heart, melted at last by his true love, and——he woke. He was sitting under the leafless willow tree, in a

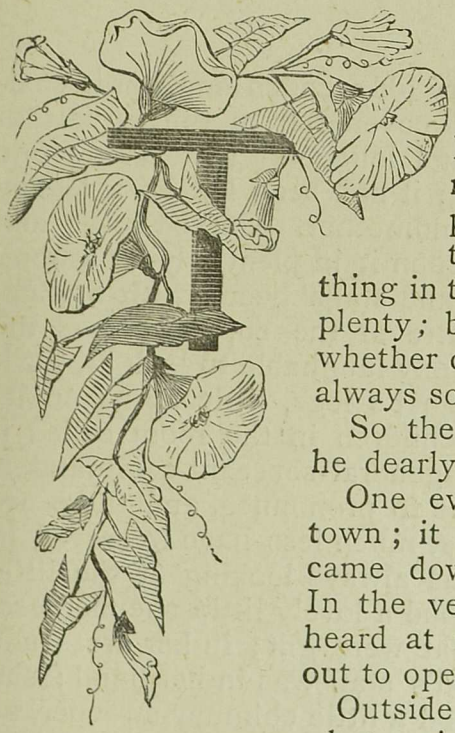
foreign land, upon a winter's night; from the heavy clouds, sharp hailstones fell and lashed his face.

"That was the happiest hour of my life," he said, "and—it was a dream. Ah! let me dream again!"

He closed his eyes once more;—he slept, and dreamed. Towards morning the snow fell silently. It flew before the wind, and drifted over him: he slept. The villagers on their way to church saw a wandering 'prentice lad lying on the road side. He was dead—frozen under the willow tree!

—o—

The Princess and the Pea.



THERE was once a prince who wanted to marry a princess; but she must be a real princess. He travelled all over the world to find one, but there was always something in the way. Princesses were to be had in plenty; but it was another thing to be certain whether or no they were real ones. There was always something not quite as it should be.

So the prince came home quite dispirited, for he dearly longed to marry a real princess.

One evening a fearful storm broke over the town; it thundered and lightened, and the rain came down in streams; it was terrible to see. In the very fiercest of the storm, a knock was heard at the town gate, and the old king went out to open it.

Outside the gate stood a princess. But oh! what a sight she was from the rain and storm! The water was streaming down from her hair and clothes; it ran in at the toes of her shoes and out again at the heels. And yet she said she was a real princess.

"Oh yes!" thought the old queen, "we shall very soon find that out." But she said nothing; she went up into the bed-room and pulled off all the beds; then she put a pea on the bedstead; over that she laid twenty mattresses, and over the twenty mattresses twenty eider-down beds.

That was the bed in which the princess was to pass the night. In the morning they asked her how she had slept.

"Very badly indeed," said the princess; "I have not closed an eye all night. Goodness knows whatever was in the bed! I have been

lying on something dreadfully hard, for I am black and blue all over. It is really frightful."

Now then they all saw that she was a real princess, because she had found out the pea through all the twenty mattresses, and twenty eider-down beds. No one but a real princess could possibly be so sensitive.

So the prince married her, for he knew that he had in her a real princess for a wife; and the pea was placed in the royal museum, where it is still to be seen, unless any one has stolen it.

Now this is a true story.

The Shepherdess and the Chimney-Sweeper.

DID you ever see a very old wooden cupboard, coal-black with age, and covered from top to bottom with carved scrolls and foliage? Just such a one stood once in a parlour; it had been left as a legacy by some great-great-grandmother. Carved roses and tulips were to be found upon it in plenty, lying among curious twirls, flourishes, and stags' heads with branching antlers. In the centre of the cupboard was the carved figure of a man; it was really laughable to look at, for it grinned from ear to ear; it had goat's legs, little horns on its head, and a long beard. The children in the room called it "Billy-goat's-legs Head-and-tail-general-sergeant-commander-in-chief!" That was a hard name to pronounce, and there are not many people who receive such a title, much less have it carved in wood. Well, there he was; and he was always looking at the little table under the mirror, where there stood a lovely little shepherdess, made of porcelain. Her shoes and hat were gilt; in her dress she wore a crimson rose, and her shepherd's staff was in her hand; she was very lovely. Close beside her stood a little chimney-sweeper, as black as a coal. He, too, was made of porcelain, and was as dainty and elegant as could be; as to his being a chimney-sweeper, that was only his make-believe. The china worker could just as well have made him into a prince if he had chosen.

He stood there with his little ladder; his face was as pink and white as a girl's, and that was, properly speaking, a mistake, for it ought to have been rather blacked. He stood very close to the shepherdess; they had both been placed just where they were, and since they *were* placed there, they had fallen in love. They suited each other exactly; both were young people, both made of the same porcelain, and both equally brittle.

Near to them stood a figure, three times their size. It was an old Chinaman, who could nod his head. He was made of porcelain too,

and he said that he was the little shepherdess's grandfather, but I doubt whether he could prove it. He declared that he had authority over her, and therefore he had nodded his head when "Billy-goat's-legs Head-and-tail-general-sergeant-commander-in-chief" asked him for her hand.

"That is the husband for you," said the old Chinaman; "a man who is, I believe, real mahogany. He can make you Lady Billy-goat's-legs Head-and-tail-general-sergeant-commander-in-chief. He has the whole cupboard full of silver plate that he keeps locked up in secret drawers."

"I won't go into the dark cupboard," said the little shepherdess; "I have been told that he has eleven porcelain wives in there already."

"Then you shall be the twelfth," said the Chinaman. "This very night, as soon as ever the old cupboard creaks, you shall be married, as true as I'm a Chinaman." And he nodded his head, and went to sleep.

The little shepherdess cried, and looked at her true love, the little chimney-sweeper. "I must ask you," she said, "to go with me out into the wide world, for we cannot possibly remain here."

"I will do all you wish," said the chimney-sweeper. "Let us go at once; I think I shall be able to support you with my—profession."

"If we were but safely off the table!" she said. "I shall know no peace till I am out in the wide world."

Her lover soothed her, and showed her how to place her little foot in the carved edges and gilt leaf work of the table leg. He set up his ladder to help her, and very soon they were safely on the floor. But when they looked across at the old cupboard, they saw that it was all astir, the stags' heads were arching their necks, and pricking up their antlers, the wooden Commander-in-chief was jumping up and down, and calling out to the old Chinaman, "They are running away; they are running away!"

That frightened them dreadfully, and they jumped into an open drawer under the window sill.

In the drawer were three packs of cards, but none of them quite perfect. There was also a dolls' theatre, which had been set up as well as circumstances allowed; a play was going on at that moment.

All the queens, diamonds, hearts, clubs, and spades were sitting in the front row, fanning themselves with their tulips; the knaves stood behind them, showing clearly that they had heads above and below, as is often the case with playing cards. The play was all about two lovers who were parted for ever, and the shepherdess wept, for was not that her own story? "I cannot bear it," she said. "Take me out of this drawer." But when they reached the floor, the old Chinaman woke up and shook all over his body, which was made in one piece.

"Now the old Chinaman is coming," said the little shepherdess, sinking on one knee in terror.

"I have an idea," said the chimney-sweeper. "Let us get into the large pot-pourri jar in the corner yonder. There we can rest on rose leaves and lavender, and if he comes after us, we can throw salt in his eyes."

"That will never do," she answered. "Many years ago the old

Chinaman was engaged to that jar, and there is always a certain tenderness left between people who have stood in that relationship to each other. No, nothing is left for us but to go out into the wide world."

"Have you really courage to go with me out into the wide world?" said the chimney-sweeper. "Have you thought how large it is, and that we can never come back again?"

"I have!" she said.

The chimney-sweeper looked at her earnestly, and said, "My path lies through the chimney! Have you really courage to go with me into the stove, through the fire-box, and up the pipes? That will lead us into the chimney, and then I shall know how to manage. We shall climb so high that no one can overtake us, and at the very top there is a hole that leads out into the wide world."

He led her to the door of the stove.

"It looks dark," she said, but she followed him through the fire-box, and up the pipe, where all was black as night.

"Now we are in the chimney," he said. "Look up yonder, a glorious star is shining." And it really was a star in the sky that was shining down on them, as if to show them the way. They climbed and crept; it seemed a fearful path, high, steep, and endless; but he lifted her, and held her, and showed her where to set her little foot, until they reached the very top of the chimney, where they sat down quite tired out, as well they might be.

The sky with all its stars was high above them; the town with its twinkling lights lay far below.

They could see all round them—far, far out into the wide world. The poor little shepherdess had *never* fancied it like that; she leant her weary head on the shoulder of her faithful chimney-sweeper and cried till the gold was washed off her sash.

"This is too much!" she cried. "I cannot bear it. The world is far too large. Oh, were I only back on the table under the mirror! I shall know no peace till I am there again. I *have* followed you out into the wide world—now take me back again, if you really love me."

The chimney-sweeper tried to reason with her; he reminded her of the old Chinaman, and the terrible Commander-in-chief; but she only sobbed and kissed her little chimney-sweeper, so that he could do nothing else but yield to her, though it was rather foolish.

So they climbed with endless trouble back again down the chimney, down the pipe, through the fire-box, into the stove—it was anything but pleasant. They lingered for a moment in the oven and listened behind the door, just to find out what was going on in the room. All was silent—they looked in—mercy on us! there lay the old Chinaman in the middle of the floor broken into three pieces! He had jumped off the table after them, his back had come off in one piece, and his head had rolled into a corner. The Commander-in-chief was standing where he had always stood, pondering deeply.

"Oh, this is terrible!" cried the little shepherdess. "My old grandfather is broken in pieces, and it is all our doing! I shall never survive it!" And she wrung her little hands.

"He can be riveted," said the chimney-sweeper; "dear me! he can

THE SOLDIER AND HIS GUN.

be riveted. Don't excite yourself so dreadfully. If they cement his back, and put a good rivet in his neck, he will be as good as new, and able to give us many a sharp word yet."

"Do you think so?" she said. And then they crept up on to the table where they had stood before.

"Much the forwarder we are!" said the chimney-sweeper. "We might have spared ourselves some trouble."

"If my dear grandfather were but riveted!" said the little shepherdess. "I wonder if it costs much."

And riveted he was. The family had his back cemented, and a good rivet put in his neck, and he was as good as new, only he could not nod his head.

"We have grown consequential since we were broken to pieces!" said the Commander-in-chief. "I really don't see why you should give yourself such airs. Am I to have her, or am I not?"

The chimney-sweeper and the shepherdess looked imploringly at the old Chinaman; they were terribly afraid lest he should nod. But that was just what he could not do; and it would have been extremely mortifying for him to have to keep telling every one that he had a rivet in his back.

So the little porcelain folk were left together, and they blessed their grandfather's rivet, and loved each other dearly till they broke.

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The Tinder-Box.

A SOLDIER went marching by along the road. "Left, right, left, right!" He had his knapsack on his back, and a sabre at his side, for he was coming home from the war.

On the high road he met an old witch; she was very repulsive to look at: her under lip hung down over her chin. "Good evening, soldier," she said. "What a fine sabre you have got! and what a large knapsack! You are something like a soldier, and you shall have as much money as ever you like."

"Thank you, old witch," said the soldier.

"Do you see that tall tree yonder?" said the witch. "It is hollow inside. Climb up to the top and you will see a hole through which you can let yourself down right into the tree. I will tie a rope round you so that I can pull you up again when you call to me."

"What am I to do when I am down in the tree?" asked the soldier.

"Fetch up money," said the witch. "Below the roots of the tree you will find a large hall, lighted up with more than three hundred lamps. Then you will see three doors; open them all, the key is in

each lock. In the first room you will see a large chest in the middle of the floor, and on the chest a dog with eyes as big as saucers. Don't mind him in the least. Here is my blue-checked apron; spread that out on the floor and put the dog upon it, then open the chest and take out as much copper as you like. If you prefer silver you must go on into the next room. But *there* is a dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels —you need not fear him, however. Put him on my apron and take out the money. If you want gold, you can have it, as much as ever you can carry, by going into the third room; but the dog on the chest of gold has eyes as big as steeples—he is a savage brute, you may take my word for it. Never fear him, however; put him on my apron, he won't hurt you, and you can take as much gold as you will."

"That doesn't sound amiss," said the soldier. "But what am I to give you for it, old witch? for I don't suppose you mean to do it for nothing."

"I do," said the witch. "I won't take a penny. All I ask is that you shall bring me up an old tinder-box that my grandmother left behind her the last time she was there."

"Well, then," said the soldier, "tie the rope round my waist."

"Here it is," said the witch, "and here is my blue-checked apron."

The soldier climbed up the tree, let himself down, and stood, as the witch had said, in a great hall where hundreds of lamps were burning. He opened the first door. Ugh! there sat the dog with eyes as big as saucers, glaring at him. "You're a nice fellow!" said the soldier, lifting him on to the witch's apron.

Then he filled his pockets with copper, shut the chest, and went into the next room. Right enough, there sat the dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels.

"You had better not stare so," said the soldier; "your eyes might come out of your head altogether." He lifted the dog on to the witch's apron, and at the sight of all the silver in the chest, he emptied his pockets again, and filled them and his knapsack too with silver. Then he went into the third room. That really was awful! The dog had eyes every inch as big as steeples, and they both spun round like wheels.

"I hope you are well," said the soldier, saluting, for he had never seen a dog like that before. But when he had looked at him long enough he thought, "Well, I must be quick," lifted him on to the apron and opened the chest. "Heavens! what a heap of gold! enough to buy up all the town: with all the barley sugar, tin soldiers, whips and rocking-horses in the whole world. The soldier soon threw away all the silver, and filled his pockets, knapsack, cap, and even his boots with gold. He could hardly walk, but he had the money. He put back the dog on the chest, shut the door and called up the tree. "Now pull me up, old witch."

"Have you got the tinder-box?" asked the witch.

"Heart alive!" said the soldier, "I quite forgot that." He went back and fetched it; the witch pulled him up, and there he stood on the high road, with his pockets, knapsack, cap, and boots brimful of gold.

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

"That's no business of yours," said the witch; "you have your money; give me the box."

"What's that you say?" cried the soldier. "Tell me this very minute what you want it for, or I'll draw my sword and cut off your head."

"I won't!" said the witch.

The soldier immediately cut off her head. There she lay. He tied up all his money in her apron; slung it like a bundle over his shoulder, put the tinder-box in his pocket, and walked on towards the town.

It was a splendid town. The soldier went into one of the best hotels, engaged the largest room, and ordered everything he liked best for supper. He was rich now, because he had so much money.

The man who blacked his boots thought it was strange that such a rich gentleman should wear such very old boots, but the next day the soldier bought new ones, and a new suit of clothes. He was not a soldier now, but a fine gentleman; and the people spoke to him of all the remarkable things in the town, of the king, and the beautiful young princess, his daughter.

"Where can one see her?" asked the soldier.

"You cannot see her," was the reply; "she lives in a large brazen castle, surrounded by walls and turrets. No one but the king may enter, because it was once prophesied that she would marry a common soldier."

"I should like to look at her," said the soldier; but it was quite impossible for him to obtain permission.

From this time he lived a merry life, going to theatres, and driving about in the royal parks and gardens. He gave away a great deal to the poor, and that was right of him: he knew of old what it is not to have a shilling in one's pocket. Now he was rich, wore fine clothes, and had numbers of friends, who all said he was an excellent fellow, and a perfect gentleman. The soldier was pleased at that. But unluckily, as he went on spending money every day, and never earning any more, he found himself at last with scarcely any left, and was obliged to leave his beautiful rooms for a little garret under the roof, where he had to black his own boots, and mend them with a packing-needle. None of his friends came to see him now—there were too many steps to climb.

It was a dark night, and he could not even buy himself a candle; but it suddenly occurred to him that there was a piece of candle left in the tinder-box which he had fetched up for the old witch, out of the hollow tree. He struck a light, and the moment it flashed up, the door opened, and in came the dog with eyes as big as saucers. "What does my lord require?" said the dog.

"What is this?" said the soldier. "This is a lively sort of a tinder-box if I can get whatever I like out of it! Get me some money," he said to the dog, and *whish!* off he was—*whish!* there he was back again with a bag full of copper in his mouth.

Then the soldier began to see what a famous box it was. You struck it once, and up came the dog with eyes as big as saucers; you struck it twice, and up came the one that sat on the chest of silver; three times, and up came the one that kept guard over the gold. The

soldier went downstairs again into his beautiful rooms, and bought some more fine clothes. Then all his friends knew him again directly, and thought a great deal of him.

One day he began to think what a singular thing it was that nobody could get to see the princess. Every one said she was very beautiful, but what was the good of that if she had to live in a brazen castle surrounded by high walls. "Can't I manage to see her?" he thought. "Where is my tinder-box?" He struck a light, and up came the dog with eyes as big as saucers. "I know it is the middle of the night," said the soldier; "but I should like to look at the princess for a minute or so."

The dog was out of the house in a second, and before the soldier could draw breath, *whish!* there he was again, with the princess on his back. She lay there fast asleep; so beautiful that every one could see she was a princess. The soldier could not help kissing her once, soldier-like.

Then the dog ran back with the princess. But the next morning when the king and queen were at breakfast, the princess said that she had had a very strange dream in the night; she had ridden along on a dog's back, and been kissed by a soldier.

"That's a pretty story!" said the queen.

The next night one of the old ladies-in-waiting was ordered to watch by the princess's bed, and see whether it was really a dream, or what was the meaning of it.

The soldier felt a great longing to see the princess again, so the dog was sent to fetch her, and ran for her as quickly as before. But the maid of honour was awake; she put on goloshes and ran behind them, and when she saw the dog disappear in a large house, she put a cross on the door with a piece of chalk. Then she went home and got into bed, and the dog came back with the princess. But when he saw a cross on the house where the soldier lived, *he* took a piece of chalk and put a cross on every house in the town. That was rather clever on his part, because now the maid of honour could not possibly tell which was the door.

Early the next morning, down came the king and queen, with the maid of honour and all the army, to see where the princess had been.

"There it is!" cried the king, as soon as he saw the first cross on a door.

"No, there it is, my dear husband," said the queen, looking at the second cross.

"But *there's* one and *there's* one!" cried everybody at once; for wherever they looked nothing was to be seen but crosses. Then they began to understand that it was of no use looking any farther.

Now the queen was a very clever woman, who could do more than ride in a carriage. She took out her golden scissors, cut up a piece of silk, and made it into a pretty little bag. She then filled it with flour, and tied it round the princess's waist, so that the flour might be strewn all along the way she went.

That night the dog came again, and carried off the princess; the soldier had now fallen deeply in love with her, and would gladly have married her.

The dog never noticed the flour as it fell all along the road from the castle to the soldier's room. The next morning the king and queen saw clearly where their daughter had been, and the soldier was immediately arrested, and put in prison.

There he had to stop. It was dull and gloomy enough, and all they said to him was, "You will be hanged to-morrow!" *That* was not exactly cheering, and his tinder-box was left behind in his lodgings. The next morning, as he looked through the iron bars of his window, he saw the crowds of people hurrying into the town to see him hanged. He heard the drums beating, and saw the soldiers marching by. Everybody was out, even a shoemaker's lad, in his apron and slippers, who was running so fast that one of his slippers fell off, and flew right up against the window where the soldier stood.

"Hallo! my lad," cried the soldier; "you need not be in such a tremendous hurry; they won't begin without me. If you would like to earn some money, just run to my lodgings, and fetch me my tinder-box; you shall have a shilling for your trouble, but you must be quick about it."

The lad thought he should like to earn the shilling, so he fetched the tinder-box, gave it to the soldier, and——well, now we shall hear.

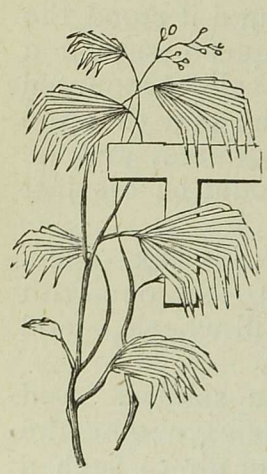
The gallows was set up outside the town, and round it stood the soldiers and thousands of people. The king and queen sat on a splendid throne, opposite the judges and council. The soldier mounted the ladder, the rope was placed round his neck, when he said that the last harmless wish of a poor wretch was always granted, and he begged permission to smoke a pipe of tobacco—it would be his last pipe in this world.

The king granted his request, and the soldier struck his box—once, twice, thrice! In a moment, up sprang the three dogs—the one with eyes as big as saucers,—the one with eyes as big as mill-wheels,—and the one with eyes as big as steeples.

"Help me, so that I shall not be hanged," said the soldier. And the dogs flew at the judges and at all the council, seizing one by the leg and one by the nose, and tossing them up in the air to such a height that they fell down, and broke all to bits.

"I won't be tossed!" said the king, but up he went, and the queen after him. That frightened the soldiers and the people to such a degree, that they cried out, "Noble soldier! you shall be our king, and marry the princess."

Then they handed the soldier into the king's carriage, and the three dogs ran by the side and cried, "Hurrah!" The street boys whistled through their fingers, and the soldiers presented arms. The princess was set free from the brazen castle, and became queen, which pleased her exceedingly. The wedding festivities lasted eight days, and the dogs sat up to table and stared with all their might.



A Heart-felt Sorrow.

THERE are, properly speaking, two parts to this story; the first part could very well be left out, only it gives us some explanations which may be useful.

We were staying once in a country house; the master and mistress were away on a visit, and during their absence a good lady arrived from the neighbouring town, bringing with her a pug-dog, and some shares in a tan-yard which belonged to her. The shares were for sale, and we advised her to put them in an envelope and address it to the master of the house, "General of the commissariat-department, knight, &c., &c."

She listened with great attention, took the pen, paused, and begged us to say it again very slowly. We did so, and then she began to write, but in the middle of "General of the commi——" she stopped, sighed deeply, and said, "I am but a woman!" As she wrote, the pug curled himself up on the floor and growled; he too was travelling for his health and amusement, and they might have offered him something better than the floor to lie on. As far as his looks went, he was a mixture of snub-nose and beer-barrel.

"He won't bite any one," said the lady; "he has no teeth. He is quite one of the family—faithful, but crusty. That, however, is because my grandchildren tease him; they are fond of playing at weddings, and they will make him act the bridesmaid. It is such a trouble to him, poor little doggie."

She sent off her papers, and lifted the pug into her arms.—That is the first part that could have been left out.

"The children mounted the stick, and it became alive to them."

PART THE SECOND.

The pug died.

It was about a week later; we arrived at the town, and took rooms in the inn. Our windows looked into a courtyard, which was divided into two parts by a wooden wall. In one part there hung all manner of hides and skins, dressed and undressed: it was the widow's tan-yard. Her pug had died that very morning, and was buried in the yard; and the grandchildren of the widow—I mean the tanner's widow, for the pug had never been married—were closing in the grave; such a well-made grave, that it must have been a pleasure to lie in it.

Sand was strewn over it, and a neat row of flower pots placed all round; on the top was a broken beer bottle, with the neck uppermost; it was not at all allegorical.

The children danced round the grave, and the eldest of them, a practical youngster of seven years old, proposed that they should exhibit the grave to all the children in the alley at the back, the admittance fee to be one trouser-button for each person. Every boy would be sure to have a trouser-button, and could give one to a little girl. The proposal was agreed to by all.

All the children from the alley—nay, even out of the little side street, came crowding in, and every one brought a button, so that the town was full of boys going about with only one brace to their trousers; but then they had seen the pug's grave, and the sight was worth far more than that.

Outside in the street, before the tan-yard gates, stood a little ragged girl, with a pretty face, blue eyes, and curling hair. She did not cry or speak to any one, but every time the gates were opened, she cast a long, wistful glance into the space beyond. She knew she could not go in, for she had no button, so she waited sorrowfully till the gates were shut, and every one had gone away, and then she sat down, with her face hidden in her little brown hands, and cried as if her heart would break. She was the only one who had not seen the pug's grave. It was a sorrow as deep as the sorrows of grown men and women.

We saw all this from above—and seen from above, it—like so many troubles of our own and other people's—can call forth a smile.

That is the story, and whoever does not understand it, had better take some shares in the widow's tan-yard.

—o—

Elder-Tree Mother.

THERE was once a little boy who had caught cold; he had been out and got his feet wet; how he managed it no one could think, for it was fine, dry weather. His mother undressed him, put him to bed, and brought in the tea-pot to make some elder-tea, for that is the best possible thing for a cold. At the same moment, in came the kind old man, who lived all by himself in the top story; he had neither wife nor

child of his own, but he was very fond of children, and used to tell them numbers of beautiful stories and fairy tales.

"Drink your tea, and then perhaps you will hear a story," said the mother.

"Only I don't know any new ones," said the old man, nodding good-humouredly; "but how did the child get his feet wet?"

"Ah! that is just what no one can understand," said the mother.

"Shall I hear a tale?" said the little boy.

"Yes, if you can tell me—for I must know that first—the exact depth of the gutter that runs down the street before your school-house?"

"It comes just half way up to my knee, if I stand in the very deepest part," said the child.

"Ah! that's where we get our wet feet from," said the old man. "Now, then, I owe you a tale, but I really do not know one."

"You can make one up," said the little boy. "Mother says that everything you look at turns into a fairy tale, and that you can make a story out of everything you touch."

"Yes, but that kind of story is not worth much. The best ones come of themselves; they tap at my forehead, and say 'Here we are.'"

"Won't they soon tap?" said the little boy. His mother laughed, put the elder-tea in the pot, and poured boiling water over it. "Tell me one—tell me one."

"I would if one would come of itself, but they give themselves such airs; they only come just when they like. Wait!" he cried, suddenly. "Here is one—look, there is one in the teapot."

The child looked at the teapot; the lid raised itself higher and higher, and out of it rose the elder blossoms as white as snow; long branches spread abroad from the lid and spout as well; farther and farther they stretched, pushing aside the bed curtains, and filling the whole room with a glory of green leaves and fragrant blossom. In the midst of the tree sat an old woman,—her dress was green as the leaves of the elder-tree, and covered with white flowers; it was hard to tell whether it was woven stuff or living leaves and flowers.

"What is her name?" said the little boy.

"Why the Romans and Greeks used to call her a Dryad," said the old man; "but we do not understand that, and the sailors have found a much better name for her. They call her elder-tree mother, and it is to her that you must listen now."

"In the corner of a small, poverty-stricken court stands just such a tall, beautiful elder-tree as this one, and under its branches one sunny afternoon sat two old people. It was an old sailor and his wife; they were great-grandparents, and were going to keep their golden wedding, only they were not quite clear as to the exact date. The elder-tree mother sat above them in the tree, and looked as pleased as she does now. 'I know when the golden wedding is,' she said; but they did not hear her, for they were talking of old times.

"'Do you remember,' said the old sailor, 'when we were quite little and used to run and play together in this very yard where we are sitting now? We planted some slips and made a garden.'

"'I remember,' said the old woman, 'one of the slips was an elder,

and it took root, and shot up into this fine old tree that waves over us now.'

"'Surely,' he said; 'and yonder in the corner was a water-butt, where I sailed my boat that I had made myself. How it sailed! To be sure I have seen a different kind of sailing since then.'

"'Yes; but first we went to school and got our learning,' she said, 'and then we were confirmed. Both of us cried; but in the afternoon we walked hand in hand round the ramparts, and looked over the country round Kopenhagen and across the sea; and then we went to Friedrichsburg, where the king and queen sail about in their beautiful boat.'

"'But I was obliged to go and sail about in very different quarters, and stay away for years at a time.'

"'Yes; I often used to cry over it. I thought you were dead, and rocked to sleep by the waves. Many a night I got up to see if the weathercock had turned round; and it often turned, but you did not come. I remember so well how the rain came down one day; I was going to fetch the sweepings to put in the dust-cart; the man had just come round with his cart to the house where I was servant; I stood near the dustbin, and looking at the rain, when up came the postman and gave me a letter from you. My word! how it had wandered about! I tore it open and read it, crying and laughing in a breath, I was so glad. It said you were in the warm countries where the coffee grows. What a lovely place it must be. You had so much to tell, and I was reading it all, while the rain poured down, and the man stood there with his cart. Then some one came and seized me round the waist, and——'

"'And you gave him a sounding box on the ear, till it tingled again.'

"'I did not know it was you. You had come as quickly as your letter. And how handsome you were! indeed so you are now. You wore a shiny hat, and had a large yellow silk handkerchief in your pocket. How well you looked, and what a storm it was, and what a plight the street was in!'

"'Then we got married, do you remember?' he said, 'and then our first little lad was born, and after him came Marie, and Niels, and Peter, and Hans, and Christian.'

"'All grown up now, and all good children, such as no one can say a word against.'

"'And now their children have little ones of their own. It is a hardy race. If I remember right, it was about this time of year that we married.'

"'Yes; to-day is the golden wedding,' said the elder-tree mother, bending down her head to the old people. They thought it was a neighbour speaking to them, and they looked each into the other's face and clasped hands. The children and grandchildren soon came round them; they knew well enough that it was the golden wedding-day, and they had congratulated the old people that very morning; but the dear old folk had forgotten it already, though they could remember so well all that had happened long years ago. The elder-tree poured forth its fragrance, and the setting sun shone straight into the two old faces,

lending them its glow and brightness; while the youngest grandchild danced round them, shouting with delight, and saying that they were all going to have a feast to-night—a feast, and roasted potatoes! The elder-tree mother nodded from the branches and cried 'Hurrah!' with the rest."

"But that was not a fairy tale," said the little boy, who had been listening all the while.

"You must understand it first," said the old man; "let us ask the elder-tree mother about it."

"That was not a fairy tale," said the elder-tree mother, "but this is going to be one. The strangest fairy tales grow out of realities, or else my beautiful tree could not grow out of the teapot. You must allow that." She lifted the little boy out of bed, and laid him in her lap: the branches closed over them with all their flowers; it was as if they were sitting in a leafy arbour, which flew away with them through the air. It was beautiful to see. The elder-tree mother had changed into a lovely little girl, but the dress was the same, and in her bodice she wore a spray of real elder flowers. Her great blue eyes were glorious to look upon, and a wreath of elder blossom crowned her soft yellow curls. She and the little boy kissed each other, for they were of the same age, and both were as happy as they could be.

Hand in hand they walked out of the arbour into a beautiful flower garden; near the velvet lawn the father's walking stick was tied up; the children mounted the stick, and it became alive to them; the silver knob changed to the head of a fiery, neighing steed, a long black mane tossed in the wind; four strong, slender legs appeared; the horse was wild and spirited, and galloped with them round the grass-plot. "Hurrah!" cried the lad; "we are riding miles away; we are riding to the old castle, where we went last year." Round the lawn they rode, and the little girl, who, as we know, was no other than the elder-tree mother herself, cried, "Now we are in the country; do you see the old farmhouse with the oven built out of the wall, like a gigantic egg? The elder-tree waves over it; the cock goes and scratches for the hens; see, how he struts about! Now we are at the church on the steep hill where the two oak trees grow; look, one of them is quite withered. Now we are at the forge. The fire flames up, the half naked men swing the hammers till the sparks fly far and wide. Away to the splendid castle." And everything the little girl spoke of, as she sat behind him on the stick, flew past them as they went; the boy saw it all, and yet they only went round the lawn. Then they played about in the garden paths, and made a little garden bed; the girl took the elder flowers from her hair, and planted them; and they grew up into a large tree, like the one the two old people planted when they were little, as the old man had told the little boy. They walked hand in hand, just as the two old people had done; only instead of going to the ramparts, or the Friedrichsburg gardens, the little girl clasped the boy round the waist, and they flew all over the country. It was spring, and then summer, then autumn, and then winter. Thousands of pictures passed before the boy's eyes, and rested in his heart; and the little girl said, "You will never forget that." And through all their flight, the scent of the elder-tree rose up strong and fragrant; the child could certainly

smell the roses and the fresh beech-trees too, but the elder-tree was the sweetest of all, for its flowers lay on the little girl's heart, and there it was that the boy rested his head.

"It is lovely here in spring," said the little girl, as they stood among the fresh green of the beech-woods; the wild thyme blossomed at their feet, and the pale pink anemones looked their loveliest among the tender leaves. "Oh, if it were always spring-time in the beautiful beech-woods."

"It is splendid here in summer!" she said; and they flew by ancient castles, where the high walls and pointed gables were mirrored in the moat below, on which the swans sailed and looked up the cool, green avenues. In the fields the corn waved like a sea; red and yellow flowers grew in the trenches, wild hops and flowering bindweed filled the hedges; in the evening the moon rose large and round; the haystacks in the meadows breathed out all their fragrance. Such scenes cannot be forgotten.

"It was beautiful here in autumn," said the little girl. "The air was twice as high and blue; the forest put on all its richest colours—scarlet, gold, and green. The hounds dashed by in the chase; flocks of wild birds flew screaming over the Huns' graves, where the flowering brambles twined round the ancient stones. The sea was deep blue, covered with white sailed ships; old women sat in the barns; girls and children gathered hops into the large vats; the lads sang merry songs, but the old people told tales of gnomes and sorcerers. It could never be better anywhere.

"It is lovely here in winter," said the little girl. "The trees were covered with rime frost so that they looked like silver coral. The snow cracked under foot as if one always had new boots on; one after another the stars shot through the sky. The Christmas tree was lighted in the room, songs and merriment resounded; in the peasant's cottage one heard the violin, they were playing games with apples; even the poorest child said, 'It is beautiful here in winter.'"

Yes, it was beautiful. And the little girl told the boy everything; the elder-tree blossomed, merrily waved the red flag with the white cross, the flag under which the old seaman sailed. The boy grew to manhood; he went out into the wide world, into warm countries where the coffee grows. But at parting, the little girl took an elder-flower from her breast and gave it to him to keep for her sake. He put it in his prayer-book, and in foreign lands, whenever he opened the book, it opened at the place where the flower was laid, and the more he looked at it the fresher it grew, so that he breathed again the fragrance of his native woods, he saw again the little maiden looking out from out the leaves with her clear blue eyes, and she whispered, "Here it is beautiful in spring, and summer, in autumn, and in winter," and hundreds of pictures passed through his mind.

Years passed away, and now he was an old man, and sat with his old wife under the blossoming elder-tree: their hands were clasped together as the hands of the old people had been, and the children spoke as they had done of old days and the golden wedding. The little girl sat in the tree overhead and nodded to the pair, saying, "To-day is the golden wedding-day!" Then she plucked off two

flowers from her wreath, and kissed them; they shone first like silver, and then like gold, and when she let them fall on the heads of the old people, each flower became a golden crown.

There they sat like a king and queen under the fragrant elder-tree, and he told his wife the story of the elder-tree mother as it had been told to him when he was a little boy. Both of them thought that there was a good deal in the story that was like their own; and that was the part they liked the best.

"Yes; so it is," said the little maiden in the tree. "Some call me Elder-tree mother, and some Dryad, but my real name is Memory. I dwell in the tree that grows and grows for ever; I can look back, I can tell tales. Let me see if you have your flower still."

The old man opened his prayer-book, and there lay the flower as fresh as if it had been just laid in. Memory nodded, and the two old people with the golden crowns sat in the red glow of the sunset: they closed their eyes, and—and—that was all the story.

The little boy was lying in bed; he did not know whether he had been dreaming, or whether any one had told him the story. The tea-pot stood still on the table, but there was no elder-tree growing out of it; and the old man who had told the story was just going out at the door.

"How beautiful it was!" said the little boy. "Mother, I have been in warm countries."

"I daresay you have," said his elder-tree mother, "when one drinks two cups of warm elder-tea one may well go to warm countries." And she covered him up warmly lest he should take cold. "You have had a nice sleep," she said, "while we were disputing as to whether it was a fairy tale or not."

"Where is the elder-tree mother?" asked the boy.

"In the teapot," said his mother; "and there she may stay."

—o—

The Swan's Nest.

BETWEEN the Baltic and the North Sea lies an old swan's nest; there have been, and shall be, born swans who never die.

Long ago a flock of swans flew across the Alps, and lighted on the green Italian plains, where life was beautiful. That flight of swans was called Lombards.

Another flight, with bright plumage and faithful eyes, flew to Byzantium, settled down on the imperial throne, and spread out their strong wings to shelter him. They called these swans the Varangian guard.

Along the coast of France arose a cry of anguish and terror at sight of the wild flight of swans, who swooped down from the north, with firebrands for wings, and wildly rose the Litany, "From the fury of the Normans, good Lord deliver us."

On the green English coast stood the Danish swan, wearing the triple crown ; his golden sceptre stretched far and wide over the land.

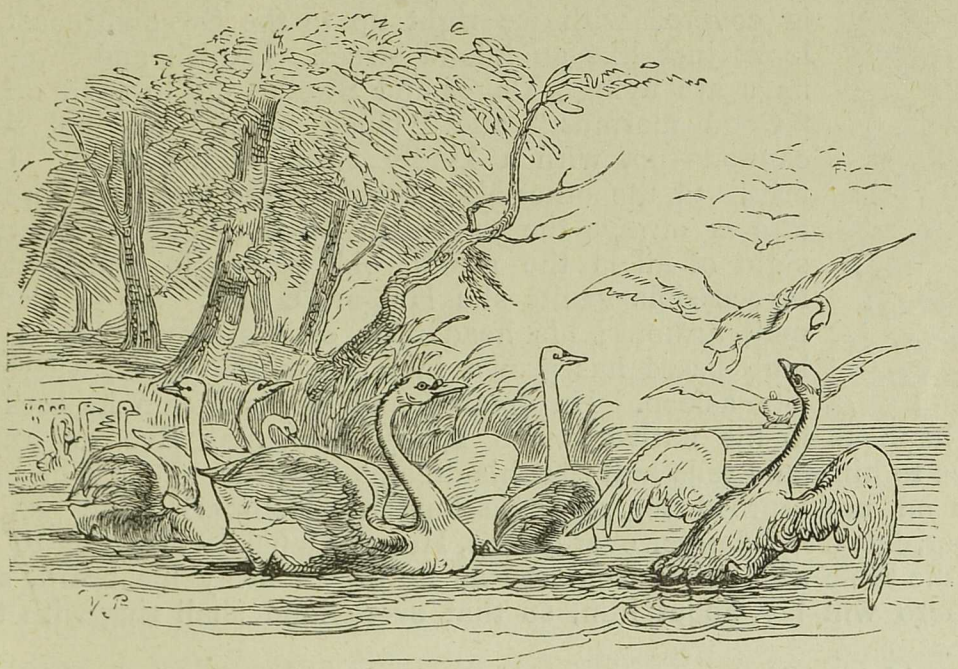
On Pomeranian soil the heathen bowed the knee, as the Danish swan sailed up under the banner of the cross, with drawn swords flashing.

"That was long ago," you say.

But in later days, mighty swans have risen from the nest. A light shone out high in air, over the countries of the world ; with the strokes of his mighty pinions, a swan clove asunder the dim vapours of the twilight ; the starry heaven flashed into sight as if it were drawn nearer to the earth. That swan was Tycho Brahe.

"Yes—*then*," you say. "But in our own days——"

We saw swan after swan rise in glorious flight ; one let his wings sweep the strings of a golden harp ; a burst of music echoed through the north, and the Norwegian cliffs resounded to the songs of old,



heroic days ; the pines and birches swayed to the melody ; gods, heroes, and noble women rose before the dark background of the forests.

A swan smote with his wings the block of marble till it burst asunder, and set free the forms of beauty held prisoned in the stone ; forth they wandered into the clear sunshine, and in all lands men rose to gaze upon, and welcome them.

A third swan spun the magic wire that girdles the earth itself, drawing country near to country, and lending to human speech the speed of lightning.

God loves the old swan's nest between the Baltic and North Sea. And if mighty birds of prey drew near to work it harm, the very fledgings would close in a circle round the beloved nest, offering their hearts' best blood, fighting with beak and claw !

Centuries will pass away, and many a noble swan will leave the nest to wing its glorious flight round the world, before the day comes when one can truly say, "That is the last swan—the last song from the old swan's nest."

—o—

Holger Danske.

KRONENBURG Castle stands in Denmark, close to the Oere Sound, through which tall ships sail by in hundreds, English, Russian, and Prussian. They all greet the old fortress with their cannon, "Boom!" And the Castle answers, "Boom!" That is the way the cannons say "Good morning" and "Good evening." In the winter, when no ships sail by, and the Sound is covered with ice right up to the Swedish coast, it looks just like an inland street. Danish and Swedish flags are flying; Danes and Swedes cry to each other, "Good morning" and "Good night," but not with cannon—no, with a kindly clasp of the hand. One brings to the other biscuits and white bread, for foreign fare is always the sweetest. But the most beautiful sight of all is the grand, old castle, in whose deep inaccessible vaults sits Holger Danske. He is clad in mail armour; his head rests on his strong arms; his long beard has grown into the marble table, where he sits asleep. He dreams, and in his dream he sees all that happens in his native land. Every Christmas Eve an angel comes to him, and tells him that his dreams are true, but that he may sleep on undisturbed for a while longer. Denmark is not yet in danger, but if the danger ever comes, Holger Danske will spring to his feet, the table will shiver to pieces as he draws away his beard, and the hero will lay about him, so that every land shall ring with the story.

An old grandfather sat one evening telling his little grandson all this tale of Holger Danske, and the child knew well that what his grandfather said was true. As the old man spoke, he finished off a large wooden figure of Holger Danske which was to ornament the prow of a ship, for the grandfather was a carver in wood, and had carved many a figure-head from which a good ship was to take her name. Now he had just carved Holger Danske, standing proudly with his long beard; in one hand he held his flashing sword; in the other the Danish shield.

The old man spoke of so many noble Danish men and women that at last the child thought he must know as much as Holger Danske himself, especially as *he* only dreamed it all; and when the child went to bed, he thought so much about it that he pressed his little chin against the coverlet, and thought that he too had a beard, which was grown fast to the place.

But the old grandfather stopped to finish his carving, and put the

last touches to the Danish shield. When he had finished, he looked earnestly at his work, and thought over all that he had heard and read, and what he had been telling the child that very evening. He nodded, wiped his spectacles, put them on again, and said, "He may not come in my time, perhaps; but the lad in bed yonder may live to see him and stand by him when the work begins in earnest." The old man nodded, and the longer he looked at his Holger Danske the more clearly he saw that he had turned out a beautiful piece of work. The colours seemed to brighten, the armour glowed like wrought steel, the hearts on the Danish shield grew redder, and the lions with their gold crowns leaped and sprung.

"It is the finest national arms in the world," said the old man. "Lions and hearts—emblems of strength and love!" He looked at the topmost lion and thought of King Canute, who chained England fast to Denmark's throne; he looked at the second lion and thought of Waldemar, who gave peace to Denmark, and subdued the Vandal's lands; he looked at the third lion and thought of Margaret, who united into one Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. But as he looked at the hearts they burned and brightened into flames; each stirred in its place, and by its side stood a spirit.

The first flame led him into a dark and narrow prison-cell; there sat a fair and queenly woman, Eleanor Ulfeld,* daughter of Christian IV.; the flame lighted on her heart—and blended with it like a glowing rose—the purest, noblest heart that ever beat in the breast of one of Denmark's daughters.

"That is one heart in Denmark's shield," said the old grandfather.

The second flame beckoned him on to the open sea where the cannon thundered and the ships lay veiled in smoke; the flame spread like a military badge of honour on Haitfeld's breast, as he blew up his ship and crew to save the Danish fleet.†

The third flame led him to the squalid huts of Greenland, where Hans Egede‡ the pastor, ministered with love, in deed and word; the flame traced a star upon his heart—another heart on Denmark's shield.

This time the old man's fancy outran the flame, for he knew well whither it would lead him. In the peasant's lowly cottage stood Frederick VI., and wrote his name with chalk along the beam; § the flame leapt and quivered on his breast, and in the peasant's home his heart became a heart on the Danish shield. The old grandfather dried his eyes, for he had known and served King Frederick, with the silver

* This royal lady, whose only crime was her love to her husband, Corfitz Ulfeld, who was charged with high treason, was imprisoned for twenty-two years by her bitter enemy, Queen Sophia Amelia.

† In the naval engagement near Kjoge, between the Danes and Swedes, Haitfeld's ship, *Danebrog*, caught fire, and as it was drifting dangerously near the Danish fleet and city, he ordered it to be blown up.

‡ Hans Egede laboured fifteen years as a Christian teacher in Greenland, in the face of terrible difficulties and privations.

§ On his journey along the western coast of Jutland, King Frederick entered the cottage of a poor woman, who begged him to write his name on one of the beams of her cottage, as a token of his visit. He did much towards improving the condition of his poorer subjects, and his coffin was carried by Danish peasants to his grave at Roeskilde.

hair and kind blue eyes; he folded his hands and gazed still before him. Then his young daughter-in-law came up and told him it was late—supper was ready, and it was time for him to rest.

"Why, what a beautiful figure you have carved, grandfather!" she cried. "Holger Danske, and our old shield. It seems to me as if I have seen that face before."

"No; you cannot have seen it," said the old man; "but I have seen it, and I have tried to carve it in the wood just as I see it in my memory. It was long ago, when the English were lying in the harbour, on the second of April,* when we showed them we were still the old Danish sea-king. As I was fighting on board the *Denmark*, in Steen Bille's squadron, a man stood by my side, and the balls seemed to fear him. Merrily he sang out old sea-songs and fought like some one more than man. I remember his face now; but where he came from, or whither he went, neither I nor any other of us knew. I have often thought it might have been Holger Danske, who had swum out from Kronenburg to help us in our hour of need. That was what I thought, and this is his likeness."

The figure threw long shadows over the wall and ceiling; it seemed as if the real Holger Danske stood behind it, for the shadow rose and fell; but perhaps it was only because the light flickered on the table. The young woman kissed the old grandfather, and led him to his arm-chair by the table, while she and her husband, who was the father of the little child asleep in the bed, sat down to eat their supper. The old man spoke of the Danish lion and the Danish hearts—of strength and gentleness: he said that there was a strength other than that which lay in the sword, and pointed to the bookshelves where stood Holberg's Comedies, which one reads again and again, and fancies one recognizes in them all the characters of bygone days.

"He, too, knew how to strike," said the old grandfather; "how to slash the follies and eccentricities of men." And looking across to the calendar, with the picture of the Round Tower,† which hung by the looking-glass. "He was another," continued the old man; "Tycho Brahe wielded the sword, not to smite flesh and blood, but to strike out a clearer path up to the stars of heaven. And he, too, who sprang from my old father's class, the wood carver's son, he whom we have seen ourselves, whose white hair and strong, broad shoulders, are known in all lands—he was a sculptor; I am but a carver! Yes; Holger Danske can come in many forms; so that through all the world one sees the might of Denmark. Shall we drink to Bertel's‡ health?"

But the little child in bed saw clearly the old Kronenburg towering above the Oere Sound; he saw the real Holger Dauske, sitting alone in the deep vault, his beard grown fast to the marble table, dreaming of all that happened overhead. Holger Danske dreamed too of all that went on in the little room; he heard every word, and nodded in his dreams.

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* The naval combat between the Danes and the English, under Parker and Nelson

† The observatory in Kopenhagen.

‡ Bertel Thorwaldsen.

"Yes," he cried, "keep me in your hearts and in your memory, ye Danish folk. In the hour of danger, I shall be at hand."

And the clear daylight fell over Kronenburg; the wind bore along the sound of the hunting horns from the country round; the ships sailed by with their greeting "Boom! Boom!" And Kronenburg answered "Boom! Boom!" But Holger Danske woke not, let them thunder as loud as they might, for they only meant "Good morning!" "Good evening!"

They must thunder in a different fashion before he wakes; but he *will* wake, for there is life in Holger Danske.

—o—

In Years to Come.

YES, in years to come we shall fly on the wings of steam high in the air, over the mighty ocean. The young inhabitants of America will visit the old Continent of Europe. They will come to admire the ancient monuments and ruined cities, just as we make pilgrimages to the fallen glories of Southern Asia.

In years to come they will certainly visit us.

The Thames, the Rhine, and the Danube will roll on as ever; Mont

Blanc will still stand with its summit veiled in snow; the northern lights will play over the ice and snow. One generation after another will have mingled with the dust; numbers of the great ones of to-day are forgotten; forgotten as entirely as those who lie under the hill on which the rich huckster, to whom the land belongs, has set up a bench where he can sit and look out over his waving cornfields.

The air-ship comes: it is crowded with passengers, for the journey is quicker than by sea; the submarine electro-magnetic wire has already telegraphed the number of the passengers. Already Europe is in sight, it is the Irish coast that lies beneath them; but the passengers sleep on, they do not wish to be waked till they are exactly over England. There they will tread the country of Shakespeare, as the intellectual ones of the party have it—the home of politics and machinery, as others say.

Here they stay for a whole day: they are a busy race but they can yet afford so much time for England and Scotland.

On they go, through the tunnel under the Channel to France. They speak of Charlemagne, Napoleon, and Molière; the scholars among them have much to say of the ancient classic school; healths are drunk to the memory of heroes, poets, and scientific men unknown to us, but who are said to have been born in Paris—the crater of Europe.

The air-ship flies over the land which sent out Columbus, where Cortez was born, and Calderan sang in rhythmic verse; enchanting, black-eyed donnas still live in the sunny valleys, and the songs tell of the Alhambra and the Cid.

Through the air, over the sea, to Italy, to the Eternal City. It has disappeared; the Campagna is desolate; a few vestiges are shown of St. Peter's Church, but their genuineness is doubted.

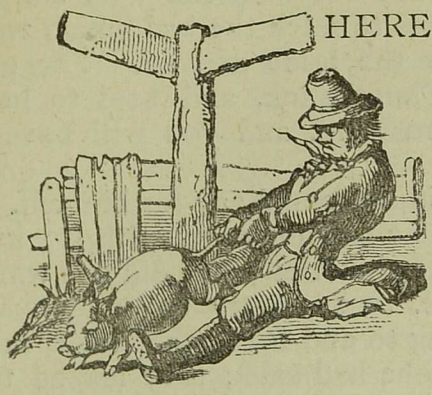
Away to Greece to sleep for a night in the splendid hotel on the summit of Olympus; then *that* is done; on to the Bosphorus, to rest an hour or two and see the place where once Byzantium stood—there, where the Sagas speak of Turkish harems, a few poor fishermen are spreading out their nets. Above, the ruins of mighty towns on the rushing Danube; towns unknown to our day; here and there the air-ship descends, and the travellers linger to inspect the monuments left among them. Again they wing their rapid flight.

Germany lies below them; once a network of railway and canals. The land where Luther spoke, Goethe sang, and Mozart wielded the sceptre of harmony. Great names shine out in science and in art, but we know them not. One whole day is given to Germany and one to the north—the birthplace of Oerstedt and Linnæus—to Norway, home of the ancient heroes and of the Normans. Iceland is taken on the return journey: the Geyser foams no longer, Hecla is extinguished; but an eternal stone table of the Saga still holds fast the island rock in the midst of the stormy seas.

"There is a great deal to be seen in Europe," say the young Americans; "and we have seen it all in eight days. It can be easily done by following the directions of the great traveller"—here they mention one of their contemporaries—"in his famous work 'Through Europe in Eight Days.'"

"She took off her sash, and tied it round the butterfly."

Thumbelina.



THERE was once a woman who dearly longed to have a little child; but she did not know where to find one. She went to an old witch, and said to her, "I do so wish for a little child; can you not tell me where I may obtain one?"

"Nothing is easier," said the witch. "Here is a barley corn; but it is not one of those which the farmer sows in his field, or that the fowls eat. Put it into a flower pot, and you will soon see something."

"Thank you," said the woman, and she gave the witch twelve shillings, for that was the price of it. Then she went home and planted the barley corn; a beautiful flower grew out of it, it looked like a tulip, only the leaves were as tightly closed as the leaves of a bud.

"That is a lovely flower," said the woman, and she kissed the red and yellow petals. At her kiss the flower opened with a loud crack. It was a real tulip, such as one can see anywhere; but in the centre of the flower, seated on one of the green velvet stamina, was a tiny girl—a beautiful, delicate little creature, no taller than half one's thumb, so that when she saw her the woman named her Thumbelina.

A polished walnut shell was made into a cradle for her, and there Thumbelina slept soundly on a bed of violets, with a large rose leaf for a coverlet. In the day time she lived on a tulip leaf which floated across a plate of water; the mother placed a pretty wreath of flowers round the edge, and gave Thumbelina two strong white horsehairs so that she could row her little raft all round the plate. It was a pretty sight to see her; and prettier still to hear her sing in a sweet little voice as clear as a silver bell.

As she lay in bed one night, an old toad came in through a broken window pane; a great, ugly, wet toad. She hopped on to the table, and saw Thumbelina asleep under her rose leaf.

"She would be a nice wife for my son," said the toad, and taking up the walnut shell where Thumbelina lay asleep, she hopped back again through the window and out into the garden. Near the garden ran a wide brook with marshy banks, and that was where the old toad and her son lived. Ugh! he was an ugly, frightful creature, the very image of his mother. "Koax, koax, brekerekex!" that was all he could say when he saw the pretty little thing in her cradle.

"Don't speak so loud, you will wake her," said the old toad; "she is as light as a feather and could easily get away. We will put her on one of the large water-lily leaves in the brook; it will seem like an island to her, tiny as she is. She will not be able to escape from it, and we shall have plenty of time to get ready the state-room under the marsh, where you can begin housekeeping."

Early in the morning poor little Thumbelina awoke, and when she saw where she was, she cried bitterly, for the water closed round the leaf on every side, and it was impossible to reach the land.

The old toad was very busy down in the swamp, decking out her room with sedge and yellow rushes to make it all quite comfortable for her new daughter-in-law. Then she swam out with her ugly son to the leaf where Thumbelina sat; they came to fetch the bed which was to be put in the bridal chamber before the bride arrived. The old toad bowed low in the water before Thumbelina, and said to her, "This is my son. He is to be your husband, and you will have a beautiful house down in the swamp."

"Koax, koax, brekerekex!" was all the son could say for himself.

Then they took the pretty little cradle, and swam away with it; but Thumbelina sat alone on the green leaf and cried; she did not want to go and live with the frightful old toad, or to marry the ugly son. Now, the little fishes who were swimming to and fro in the water, had seen the old toad, and heard every word she had said; they leaped up to look at the little girl, and directly they saw her they all thought her so pretty that they felt quite sorry to think of her going to live with the old toad. And what is more, they determined that it should never happen; so they swam up to the stem of the lily leaf, and bit it through. Away sailed the leaf down the brook, and bore Thumbelina swiftly with it—far away, where the toad could never reach her.

Thumbelina sailed by one town after another; the birds on the bushes saw her, and sang, "Oh, what a sweet little girl!" On floated the leaf, and took her at last right out of the country. A pretty, white butterfly fluttered round her head, and settled at last on the leaf where she lived. Thumbelina was glad of his friendship; it was so lovely now where she was sailing; the toad could not reach her; the sun shone on the water till it sparkled like liquid silver. She took off her sash, and tied one end of it round the butterfly, and the other end to the leaf, so that now it went faster than ever with the butterfly for a sail.

Suddenly up flew a large cockchafer; he saw Thumbelina, and pounced upon her in a moment, seizing her round the waist, and flying away with her to the top of a tree—the green leaf went sailing on, and the poor butterfly with it, for he was tied fast, and could not get away.

Oh! how frightened poor Thumbelina was when the great cockchafer flew away with her up to the tree. She grieved most of all for the poor white butterfly whom she had tied to the leaf, for if he could not get away, he would certainly die of hunger. But the cockchafer did not trouble himself about that. He sat down by her on one of the leaves of the tree, gave her some honey to eat, and told her she was very pretty, although she was not at all like a cockchafer. In a short time, the other cockchafers who lived in the tree came to call upon them. They looked at Thumbelina, and said, "Why, she has only two legs; that looks dreadful!" "She has no feelers," said another. "How slender she is round the waist! fie, she looks like a human being! How extremely ugly she is!" That was what the lady cockchafers said, but in reality Thumbelina was lovely, and the cockchafer who had carried her off owned it. But when all the others said she was ugly, he began to think it must be true, so he told her he would not have her, she could go where she liked. They flew down with

her, and placed her on a daisy. There she sat and cried, because she was so ugly that even the cockchafers would not have her; and yet she was as beautiful as any one can imagine; as delicate and tender as a rose leaf.

All the summer through poor Thumbelina lived alone in the forest. She plaited herself a bed of blades of grass, and hung it up under a clover leaf, so that she was sheltered from the rain; she ate honey, and drank the dew from the flowers, which lay fresh on the leaves every morning. Summer and autumn passed away; but then came the long, long winter. All the birds who had sung to her so sweetly had flown away; the flowers and trees lost their leaves; the great clover leaf, under which she stood, shrivelled up and left nothing but a bare stem; her dress was torn, and she was nearly frozen with cold, for she was such a delicate little beauty—poor Thumbelina! It began to snow, and every snow flake was like a large shovelful to her, for we are tall, but she was a very tiny little thing. She rolled herself up in a dried leaf, but it cracked in two, and had no warmth in it. The child shivered with cold.

Close to the wood where she stayed was a large cornfield, but the corn had been cut long ago, and only hard, dry stubble stood up out of the frozen ground. It was like another forest to Thumbelina, and oh, how cold it was! At last she reached the door of a field mouse who lived in a hole under the stubble: it was a warm, comfortable house, and the mouse had a room full of corn, a splendid kitchen, and store-room. Poor little Thumbelina stood in the doorway like a beggar girl, and begged for a little barley corn, for she had not eaten anything for two days.

"Poor little creature," said the old mouse, who was at heart very good natured, "come into my warm room and dine with me." Afterwards, as Thumbelina pleased her, she said, "You can spend the winter with me, as far as I am concerned; you will have to keep my room tidy and tell me stories; I am very fond of hearing them."

Thumbelina did all the good old mouse required, and was very kindly treated in return for her services.

"We shall have a visitor soon," said the old mouse. "My neighbour always visits me once a week. He is much better off than I am, and owns large halls, and a fine black velvet fur. If you could only have him for a husband, you would be well provided for. But he cannot see. You must tell him the prettiest story you know."

But Thumbelina did not mean to trouble herself about any such thing, for she knew who the neighbour was—he was only a mole.

He came and paid a visit in his rich black velvet coat. The old mouse said he was very learned and very rich, his house was twenty times as large as hers. Learned he might be, but he could not bear the sight of the sun or the beautiful flowers, and, never having seen them, he spoke of them slightingly.

Thumbelina was obliged to sing, and she sang "Fly away Cockchafer" and "When the priest walks over the field." The mole immediately fell in love with her, because of her beautiful voice; but he said nothing, for he was a prudent man.

A short time before this visit, he had burrowed a long passage in the

earth between the two houses; and he gave leave to the field mouse and to Thumbelina to walk in it whenever they liked. He also begged them not to be frightened at the dead bird which lay in the passage; "It was a perfect bird," he said, "with beak and feathers all complete; it must have died just lately, and been buried where he had made the passage."

The mole then took a piece of decayed wood in his mouth; it shone like fire in the darkness as he went before them along the gloomy passage. When they came to the dead bird the mole pushed his broad nose through the earth above so as to make a hole. The daylight fell through and shone on the body of a dead swallow; the pretty wings were closely folded, the head and claws hidden under the feathers, the poor bird had doubtless died of cold. Thumbelina's little heart ached with pity; she dearly loved all singing birds, for had they not warbled and trilled to please her all the summer through? but the mole pushed the bird aside with his crooked legs and said, "He will not chirp again. It must be a pitiable lot to be born a bird. Heaven be praised that that will not befall any of my children; a bird like this has nothing in the world but his tweet, tweet! and so he has to die of hunger in the winter."

"Yes, indeed, that is spoken like a sensible man," said the field-mouse. "What does tweet, tweet do for him when the winter comes? Leaves him to die of hunger, and to perish with cold. And yet it is considered genteel!"

Thumbelina did not speak, but when the others had turned their backs on the dead bird, she stooped down, parted the feathers on the head, and kissed the closed eyes.

"Perhaps it was he who sang so sweetly to me in summer," she said; "how happy he made me, the poor beautiful bird!"

The mole then stopped up the hole that let in the daylight, and escorted the ladies home. But at night Thumbelina could not sleep: she got out of bed and plaited a beautiful large rug of soft hay; when it was finished she took it with some fine flower stamina, as warm and light as cotton, which she had found in the field mouse's sitting room, and ran out to the dead swallow. She laid the stamina carefully round him, spread the coverlet over him so that he might lie warm on the earth.

"Farewell, kind, beautiful bird!" she said. "Farewell, and many thanks for your sweet singing in the summer time, when the trees were green, and the warm sun shone down upon us." She leaned her head against the bird's heart. Now the swallow was not dead, but only numb with cold, and when the warmth stole over him again, his life came back.

For in the autumn the swallows fly away to warmer lands, and if one is late and left behind, the cold seizes it, and it falls down as if it were dead, and lies helpless while the cold snow buries it alive.

Thumbelina trembled with fright, for the bird was very large in comparison with a little thing an inch long like herself; but she was a brave little maiden, and she folded the warm wraps closer round the bird, and ran to fetch a balsam leaf, which she had used as a coverlet for herself, and that she laid over the bird's head.

The next night she stole out to him again; he was alive, but very weak; he could only just open his eyes and look for a moment at Thumbelina, as she stood over him with a piece of decayed wood—her only lantern—in her hand.

"Thank you, my pretty little maiden," whispered the poor swallow; "I am so beautifully warm now. I shall soon get back my strength, and be able to fly away to the warm sunshine."

"Ah, not yet," she answered; "it is too cold; it snows and freezes. Stay in your warm bed; I will nurse you gladly."

She brought him some water in a leaf, and when he had drunk he told her how he had torn his wing on a thorn bush, and could not keep up with the others; how they flew away without him, and how he fell senseless to the earth. After that he could not remember any more; he did not even know how he had come where he lay then.

The swallow stayed there all the winter through, and Thumbelina fed him and waited on him, without saying a word to the mole or the field mouse, because they could not endure birds.

When the spring came, and the sun had warmed the earth, the swallow said good-bye to Thumbelina. She opened the hole which the mole had made. The sunlight poured in gloriously, and the swallow asked her if she would not come with him. He said she might sit on his back, and they could fly into the green wood. But Thumbelina knew it would vex the old field mouse if she were to leave her in that way. "No, I cannot come," she said.

"Farewell, farewell, you good, dear little maiden," said the swallow. He flew away into the warm sunshine. Thumbelina watched him go, and the tears rose in her eyes, for she dearly loved the poor lost bird.

"Tweet, tweet!" sang the swallow, as he flew towards the green-wood. Thumbelina was very sad; she could never get leave to go out into the sunshine; the corn which had been sown in the field above her mistress's house shot up, and looked like a lofty, pathless forest to the little maiden of an inch long.

"You are going to be married now, Thumbelina," said the old mouse. "My neighbour has proposed for you. What a piece of luck it is for a poor girl like you! You must set about making your wedding trousseau now, woollen and linen as well; for nothing must be lacking in the outfit of a mole's bride."

Thumbelina was obliged to sit down to the distaff, and the field-mouse hired four spiders to weave for her day and night. The mole came to pay a visit every evening, and he always said that when the summer was over the sun would not be so hot; as it was, it burned up the ground as hard as a stone. When the summer was over, the mole and Thumbelina were to be married. But she was not at all happy, for she could not bear the tiresome mole. Every morning when the sun rose, and every evening when it set, she went to the door, and when the wind parted the ears of corn, so that she could see the blue sky, she thought how beautiful it was in the light, and longed to see the swallow once again. But he never came again; he must have flown far away in the greenwood.

When autumn came, Thumbelina's outfit was quite finished. "You

shall be married in a month," said the field mouse. But Thumbelina cried, and said she would not marry the tiresome mole.

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the mouse. "Don't be perverse, or else I shall bite you with my white teeth. He will make you a very handsome husband. The queen herself has not such a black velvet coat. He has kitchen and cellar full; you ought to feel most thankful."

The wedding day arrived. The mole came to fetch Thumbelina; she was to go and live with him deep under the earth, and never come out to see the warm sun, for the mole would not allow that. The poor little thing was very sorrowful; she had obtained leave from the field-mouse to go out, and say good-bye to the beautiful sunlight.

"Farewell, dear golden sun!" she cried, stretching out her arms. She walked a little way through the corn; it had been reaped now, and there was nothing left but the dry stubble. "Farewell, farewell!" she cried. She threw her arms round a little scarlet flower that blossomed near. "Give my love to the swallow if ever you see him," she cried.

"Tweet, tweet!" It sounded high overhead. She looked up; there was the little swallow just flying by. As soon as he saw Thumbelina he was delighted, and she began to tell him how much she dreaded marrying the stupid mole, and living deep under the earth, where the sun never shone. She could not help crying.

"The cold winter is coming now," said the swallow. "I am going to fly away to warmer countries. Will you come with me? You can sit on my back, and we will fly far away from the ugly mole and his gloomy room; over the mountains to warm lands, where the sun shines brighter than it does here, where there are lovely flowers, and it is always summer. Fly away with me, you sweet little Thumbelina, who saved my life when I lay frozen in the dark vault yonder."

"Yes, I will come," said Thumbelina. She sat down on the bird's back, with her feet resting on his outspread wing; and when she had tied her sash firmly round one of the strongest feathers, the swallow rose high into the air, and flew fast over wood and lake, and over the high mountains crowned with snow. Thumbelina shivered in the cold air, and crept under the bird's warm feathers, peeping out from time to time to look at the beautiful scenery below.

At last they came to warmer lands. There the sun shone twice as brightly as it shines here; the sky was twice as high; in the valleys and on the hedgerows grew the most beautiful green and purple grapes; in the woods hung pale lemons and golden oranges; the scent of balsam and myrtle filled the air, and along the highways ran lovely children, playing with large, bright hued butterflies. The swallow flew on and on, and it grew lovelier and lovelier. Under the tall, stately trees, by the purple lake, stood an ancient castle of pure, white marble. Vine leaves twined round the stainless columns; among these were many swallows' nests, and in one of the nests lived the swallow who carried Thumbelina.

"Here is my house," said the swallow. "But it is not fit that you should live there; my arrangements will not permit of your being satisfied with it. Choose out one of the most beautiful flowers that grow

down yonder; I will fly with you to it, and you can live as happy as the day is long."

"That will be glorious," she said, clapping her little hands.

Down below lay a great white marble column which had fallen to the earth, and was broken in three pieces: among the ruins grew the loveliest white flowers. The swallow flew down with Thumbelina, and placed her on one of the broad leaves. But what a surprise awaited her! In the midst of the flower sat a little elf as white and transparent as glass; on his head was a golden crown, brilliant wings fell from his shoulders, and he was scarcely taller than Thumbelina. He was the elf of the flower: there was one in every blossom, an elf man or an elf maid, but he was the elfin king.

"Oh, how handsome he is!" cried Thumbelina to the swallow.

The elfin prince was terribly frightened at the swallow, for it was a giant bird in comparison with him; but when he saw Thumbelina he was enraptured; she was the prettiest girl he had ever seen. He took off his golden crown and placed it on her hair, asked her her name, and begged her to become his bride. If she would consent he told her that she should be queen of all the flowers. Now this was certainly a very different kind of husband from the toad's son, and the mole with the black velvet fur; and Thumbelina said yes to the handsome prince. And out of every flower came the elfin men and maidens; all delicate and beautiful to look upon. All of them brought Thumbelina a present, but the best of all was a pair of lovely white wings, which were fastened on her shoulders, so that she could fly from flower to flower. Then there were great rejoicings: the little swallow sat overhead in his nest, and had to sing the wedding song. He sang it as well as ever he could, but he was sad at heart, for he loved Thumbelina, and had hoped never to part from her.

"Farewell, farewell!" sang the swallow, with a sorrowful voice, as he left the warm countries and flew away to Denmark. He has a nest there, outside the window of a man who can tell fairy tales: to him he sang "Tweet, tweet," and that is how we learned the whole story.

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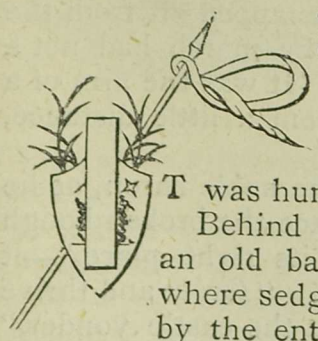
Everything in its Right Place.



T was hundreds of years ago.

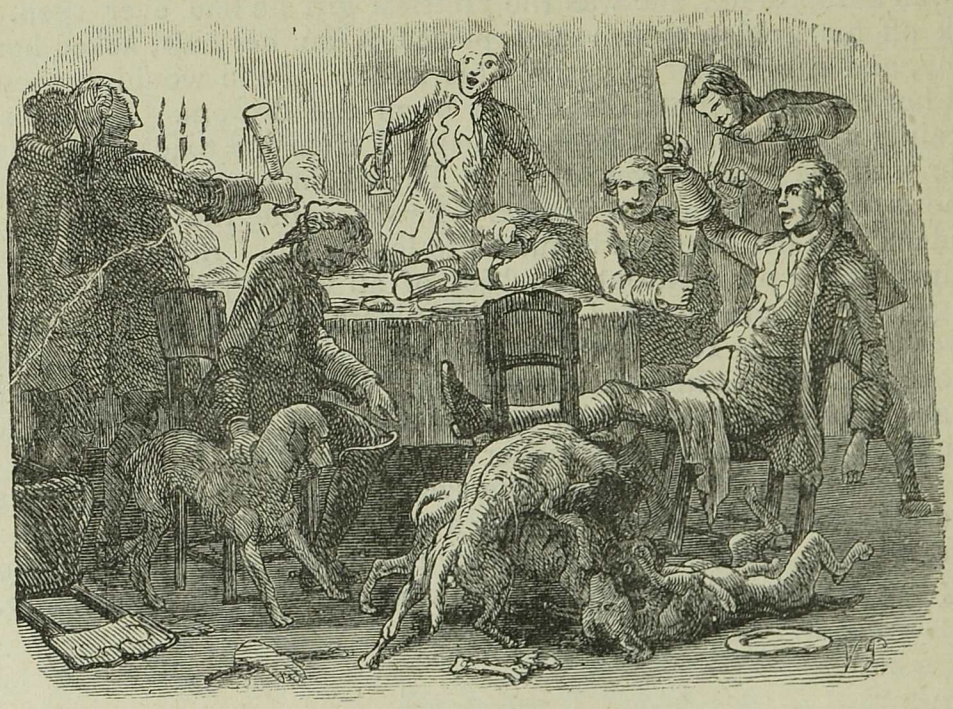
Behind the wood, on the shores of the wide lake, stood an old baronial hall, and all around it ran a deep moat where sedge and reeds grew rank. Close to the drawbridge by the entrance gate was an old willow that bent above the sedge.

The tramp of horse and sound of horns rose from the pass below, and the little maid who minded the geese hurriedly drove her flock

from the bridge as the hunt galloped up; it was so near at hand that she had only just time to spring on to the high parapet of the bridge to prevent herself from being ridden over. Scarcely more than a child as yet, she had a slender, girlish figure, a sweet true-hearted look in her face, and clear, lovely eyes; but the baron saw in her neither charm nor grace. As he galloped by he lowered his hunting-whip and, thrusting the butt end of it against her breast, he pushed her backwards from the bridge.

"Everything in its right place," he cried, in his brutal merriment; "into the swamp with you." That was his notion of wit, and all his followers joined in his loud laughter, the huntsmen shouted and swore, the hounds bayed in chorus.

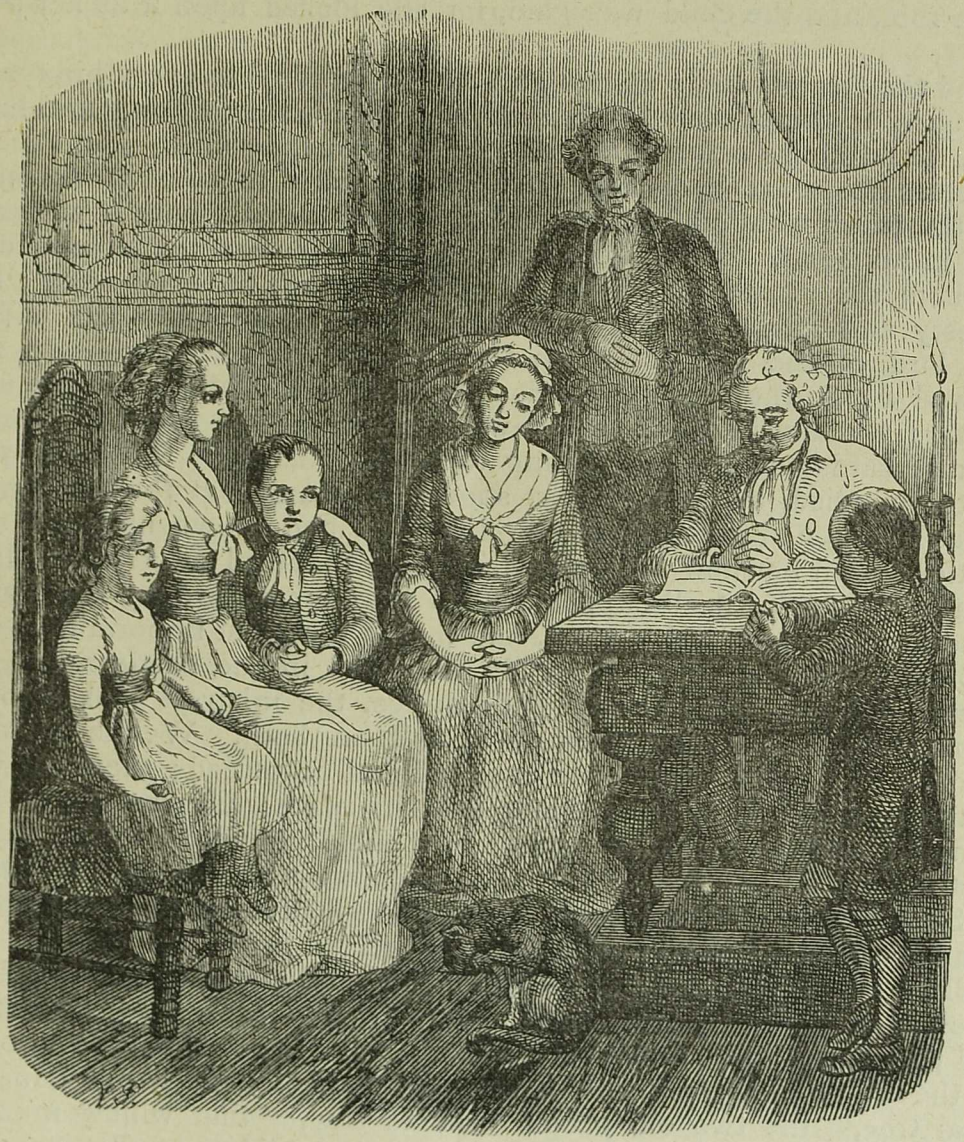
The poor child caught at a branch of the old willow-tree to stay her fall, and for awhile she managed to support herself above the swamp;



when the huntsmen and the dogs had disappeared through the castle gates she tried to lift herself up, but the branch snapped off from the tree, and she would have fallen helplessly into the marsh had not a strong arm from above seized and rescued her. It was the arm of a wandering pedler who had watched the scene from a little distance, and hurried to the rescue.

"Everything in its right place," he said after the noble baron, as he drew the girl safely to the land. He tried to replace the broken bough where it had stood before, but—"everything in its right place"—it would not fit, so he planted it in the moist earth. "Grow and thrive if you can, and bring forth a flute for the people at the castle yonder," he said, for he would gladly have played the Rogue's March to His Excellency the baron and to all his noble kith and kin. Then he went on his way to the castle—not into the great hall of course, he was of

too low degree for that—but into the servants' hall, and the maids and valets looked over his wares and chaffered with him. From the dining-room above, came the sound of frantic revelry; the guests were supposed to be singing, and they certainly did their best. Loud laughter, blended with the baying of the hounds, came through the open window: all was riot and drunkenness; wine and strong ale foamed in the horns and goblets; the dogs shared the repast, and every now



and then some roistering squire would stoop to caress the four-footed favourites.

The pedler was sent for, but only that he might serve as their laughing stock. The wine had got into every head and driven out every gleamof sense and reason; the guests poured ale into a stocking for the pedler to drink quickly; that was considered sparkling wit, and brought forth ready laughter; herds of cattle, serfs, and tenant farms were staked on a throw of the dice and gambled away.

"Everything in its right place," repeated the pedler, as he escaped

safe at last from the new Sodom and Gomorrha, as he called the place; "Here, on the open highway, is *my* place—I was certainly out of place up there." The little girl who kept the geese nodded to him smiling, as he went on his way.

Days and weeks passed by, and it was seen that the broken willow branch which the pedler had planted by the castle moat, was still fresh and green; nay, that it even put out two fresh shoots: the little girl stopped to look at it as she drove her geese; it had evidently taken root, and the child was glad, for she looked upon it as her own tree.

And the tree certainly throve and shot upward; but everything else belonging to the castle was brought steadily down by rioting and high play, for no house can stand secure on those foundations.

Before six years were past, the castle was sold to a rich tradesman, and the baron wandered out from his ancestral halls with a beggar's staff in his hand. The tradesman was no other than the poor pedler to whom the master of the house had given ale in a stocking; but honesty and industry bring wealth and honour, and now the pedler was lord of the castle. From that day a pack of cards was not allowed within the walls. "Cards are the devil's books," said the new master; "when the devil first saw the Bible he set about making a pack of cards to have something to set against it." The new proprietor married, and whom else should he marry but the little maid whose life he had saved on the bridge; she had grown up pious and gentle, and in her new dress she looked as beautiful as a young lady of rank. How did it all happen? Oh! but that is too long a story for these busy days; it *did* happen, and that is the most important.

Everything was ordered wisely and well in the castle now; the master watched over the out-door duties, the mistress looked to all within, and a blessing seemed to fall on both. Wealth attracts wealth; and the old castle was repaired and beautified; the moat was cleared out and fruit trees planted in its place; all was bright and homelike, and as clean as a pink. In the long winter evenings the mistress sat among her maids at the spinning-wheel in the great hall, on Sundays the Bible was read aloud by the justice himself—the pedler in his old age had been made a magistrate.

Children and grandchildren were born and grew up; all of them received a good education, but all were by no means equally clever—and that is the case in many families. Meanwhile the broken bough by the bridge had grown into a splendid tree. "*That* is our genealogical tree," the two old people used to say; "that willow must be honoured and preserved," they said to the children, and those who had not any brains to spare heard them.

A hundred years passed by.

We are come now to our own day: the lake has changed into a moor; the ancient castle has disappeared; a pool of water by a few crumbling stones is all that remains of the bridge; and by them there stands a stately old tree with hanging branches—it was the genealogical tree; and it stands still, and shows how beautiful a willow can be when it is left to itself. The trunk was cleft asunder from the root to the branches; the storms had bent it a little, but it still stood there,

and out of every crack and rift where the wind had carried a sprinkling of earth grew flowers and waving grasses, while overhead between the branches was a perfect hanging garden of flowering bramble and wild raspberry; nay, even a tiny mistletoe had taken root in it, and stood out bright and clear against the knotty trunk; and the old tree mirrored itself in the water whenever the wind drove the duckweed into a far corner of the pond. A field path led close by the tree.

On the wooded height with the beautiful view stood the modern manor house, large and stately, with such clear glass panes that it seemed as if no glass were there at all. The terraced steps which led to the entrance were framed with roses and exotics. The lawn was as soft and velvety as if each separate blade of grass were trimmed night and morning. In the rooms were priceless pictures, velvet and brocaded sofas and fauteuils, marble tables, numberless books bound in rare bindings; everything bespoke the dwelling place of wealthy people, for this was the seat of the baron and his family.

The place corresponded with the people. Everything in its right place, was the motto of the house; and therefore all the old paintings, which had been looked upon with reverence in the former castle, were now hung in the corridor that led to the servants' rooms, and considered mere lumber; especially two portraits—one of a man, in a claret-coloured coat and tie wig, and the other of a lady, with powdered hair, and holding a rose in her hand; both of them surrounded with a wreath of willow. These two portraits showed many a rent and tear, because the baron's little son used to set them up for a target for his arrows: they were the likenesses of the justice and his wife, the founders of the family.

"But they do not really belong to our family," said the children: "he was a pedler, and she kept geese. They were not like papa and mamma."

The son of the village pastor was tutor at the castle; and one day he went out walking with the two boys and their elder sister, who had lately been confirmed. Their path lay close to the old willow by the bridge, and as they walked the sister plaited wreaths of field flowers; everything in its right place, so that the wreath made one beautiful whole. Meanwhile she could hear quite well all that was said; and she liked to hear the pastor's son speak of the powers of nature, or relate the story of heroic men and women: she was herself a fine character, noble in thought and will, and with a heart that beat with love towards everything that God has created. They lingered by the old willow, for the youngest of the children insisted on having a flute cut for him out of the old willow-tree—he had had them cut out of other willows, and the tutor broke off a small branch.

"Oh, do not do that!" said the young lady; but she spoke too late. "That is our famous old tree, and I love it dearly. They laugh at me at home about it, but I do not mind that. There is a legend belonging to this willow-tree."

And then she related what we know already: the story of the tree, of the old castle, of the pedler, and the girl who kept the geese: how they met each other for the first time at the bridge, and afterwards became the founders of the present family.

"They would never accept any patent of nobility, the dear old people," she said. "Their motto was, 'Everything in its place,' and they thought that would not be the case if they purchased a title with money. My grandfather, who afterwards took the title of baron, was their son. They say he was a very scholarly man, and well received by princes and princesses at the Court festivals. He is the favourite at home; but I do not know how it is, there seems to me something about that old couple which draws my heart to them. How homelike, how patriarchal, it must have been at the old house, when the mistress sat at the spinning wheel among her maids, and the master read aloud out of the Bible!"

"They must have been delightful and sensible people," said the tutor; and then the conversation turned, almost of itself, on titled and untitled folk. To hear the pastor's son speak of nobility, one would scarcely have thought he belonged to an inferior class.

"It is a happiness to belong to a family which has distinguished itself, and so to receive a spur and impulse towards all that is noble. It is a happiness to possess a family name which serves as a card of introduction into the best circles. Nobility means nobleness: it is a gold coin stamped with the impress of its own worth. The present tone of thought—a tone which many poets echo instinctively—is that everything belonging to high rank is mean and base; while the lower one descends in the social scale the more lofty and exalted one finds everything. But that is not my opinion, for it is false. In the higher classes one finds many touchingly beautiful traits; I could mention several, but this is one my mother told me. She was visiting at the house of a person of rank in the town: my grandmother had, I believe, acted as foster mother to the dowager countess. My mother and the noble lord were alone in the room, when the latter saw in the court-yard below a poor cripple who used to come every Sunday on her crutches to receive a weekly gift. 'There is that poor old woman,' said the nobleman; 'walking is so painful for her,' and before my mother had time to take in the sense of his words he had rushed out of the room and run downstairs to save the old woman the trouble of coming to fetch the customary bounty. It was but a slight action, but like the gift of the poor widow in the Bible, it strikes a chord that re-echoes in the depth of every human heart; and it is to that depth that the poet ought to appeal, especially in our own days, where what is wanted is to soften and to appease. But when a sprig of humanity, because he is of noble birth and possesses a genealogical tree, rears and neighs in the street like an Arab steed, or says of a house where commoners are received, 'One meets there people out of the gutter'—then one sees nobility in its corruption and decay—worn as a mask such as Thespis made of old, and the world makes merry when the wearer is pierced through with the shafts of ridicule."

That was what the tutor said; it was rather a long speech, but meanwhile the flute was cut out.

The castle was filled with visitors; guests from the country, and from the capital; ladies dressed with or without taste; the large reception-rooms were crowded. The neighbouring pastors stood in a deferential group in one corner; it looked rather like a funeral, but

it was really an entertainment, only the amusement had scarcely begun yet.

There was to be an amateur concert, and the baron's youngest child brought in his flute cut out of the old willow-tree; but as neither he nor his father could bring a note out of it, it was not of much use. However, there was plenty of music and singing, chiefly of the kind that is liked best by the performers, but in other respects charming.

"You are a virtuoso," said a baronet—the son of his father—to the tutor. "You can make a flute and then play on it; that is true genius, and deserves all homage. One is obliged now to advance with the times. You will delight us by an air on your little instrument—will you not?" With these words he presented the pastor's son with the flute that was cut out of the old willow by the pool, and announced loudly that the tutor was going to play a solo on the flute.

It was easy to see that it was done to bring him into ridicule, and the tutor refused to play, although he was a fine player; but every one pressed and urged him so vehemently that at last he raised the flute to his lips.

It was a wonderful flute. One tone—shriller and louder than the whistle of a steam-engine—sounded far and wide over courtyard, garden, and woodlands; far into the country round for miles away; with it came a storm wind that roared aloud, "Everything in its right place,"—and away flew His Excellency the baron on the wings of the wind into the hut of a poor shepherd, and the shepherd flew—not into the hall, he could not get so far as that, but into the lobby among the smart serving men who strutted up and down in their fine liveries; and were paralysed at the mere thought of such a person's sitting down to table with them. But within the hall, the young baroness flew to the seat of honour at the head of the table, and the pastor's son sat by her; they looked like a bridal pair. An old count, a scion of one of the oldest families in the land, remained untouched in his place of honour, for the flute was just, and so one ought to be. The amiable and witty baronet who had set the flute going, and who was the son of his father, flew head over heels into the hencoop, but not alone.

The flute was heard miles away, and the most singular things occurred: a rich banker's family who kept a carriage and four was blown out of the carriage, and could not even find room behind: two rich farmers who have shot up above their own corn-field in our own day, were dashed down into the ditch. It was a dangerous flute; luckily it split in two at the first note, and that was a good thing; for it was immediately put in the player's pocket—"Everything in its right place."

The following day not a word was said about what had happened; and that is what people mean by pocketing the flute. Everything had resumed its original position; only that the two old portraits of the pedler and the poor girl were left hanging on the wall of the great hall whither the flute had blown them; and since a connoisseur declared that they were painted by a master's hand, they were cleaned and restored. Everything in its right place—yes, and it will get there too. Eternity is long—longer than this story.

The Red Shoes.

THERE was once a pretty, delicate-looking little girl, who was so poor that all the summer through she was obliged to go barefoot, and even in the winter she had nothing but a pair of thick, wooden shoes, that made her little ankles red and painful.

In the same village there lived an old shoemaker's wife, and she cut out a pair of shoes from a piece of old, red cloth. These she sewed together, and sent as a present to Karen—that was the little girl's name. They were clumsy shoes, but the gift was kindly meant.

Now the red shoes reached Karen on the very day that her mother died, and she put them on then for the first time. They certainly did not look much like mourning, but she wore them all the same, and walked in them behind the poor, mean coffin.

Just at the moment a large, old-fashioned carriage rolled by, and the kind old lady who was sitting inside felt sorry for the poor little orphan, and said to the clergyman, "If you will give that little girl to me, I will take charge of her, and bring her up."

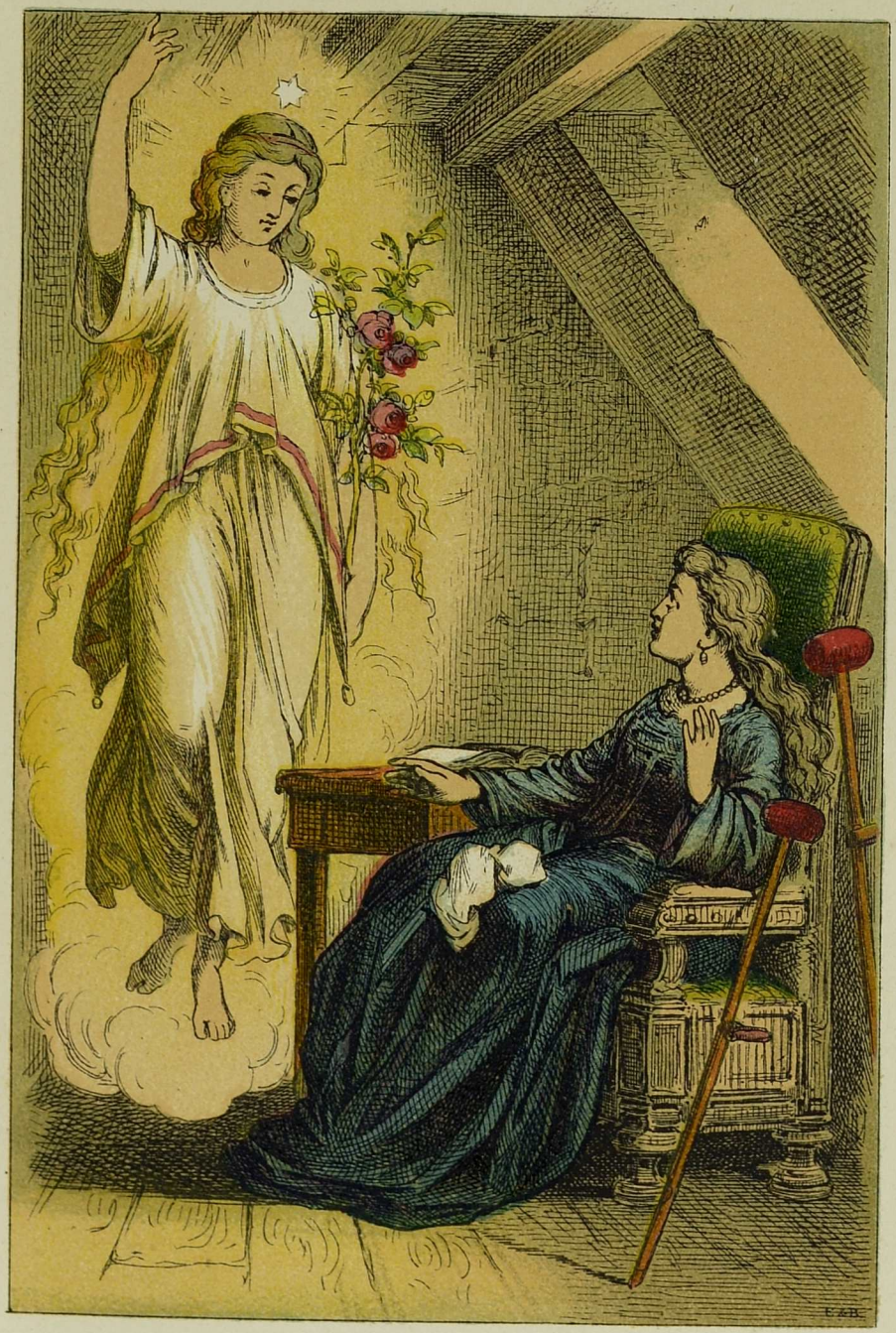
Now Karen fancied that her good fortune was entirely owing to the red shoes, while in reality the old lady thought they were such ugly things that she had them burnt. But Karen herself was neatly and simply dressed; she learned to read and to sew, and people said she was nice-looking, but the looking-glass said, "You are beautiful."

One summer the queen of the country passed through the town where Karen lived, and brought with her the young princess, her daughter. All the people went in crowds to see them, and Karen was among the crowd; the little princess was brought to the window to be looked at. She wore a simple white dress, with neither train nor golden crown; but she had on a pair of beautiful red morocco slippers, much prettier than those which the old cobbler's wife had made for Karen. Nothing in the world can be compared with red shoes.

The time came soon for Karen to be confirmed. A new dress was made for her, and she was to have new shoes. The first shoemaker in the town took the measure of her little foot; he measured it in his own room, where there stood large glass cases of elegant slippers and polished boots. They looked charming, but the old lady, who had not very good sight, did not notice them much. Among the slippers was a pair of red morocco ones, like those which the princess had worn; the shoemaker said they had been ordered for a count's daughter, but they did not fit.

"Those are patent leather, are they not?" said the old lady; "they shine so."

"Yes, they do shine," said Karen. They fitted exactly, and were



RED SHOE AND THE ANGEL.

bought, but the old lady had no idea that they were red, or she would never have allowed Karen to wear them at her confirmation. But she did wear them.

Every one looked at her feet. When she entered the churchyard, the stone figures on the tombstones, and the portraits of the pastors and their wives, with stiff ruffles or long, black gowns, looked frowningly at her red shoes. Karen thought of nothing else, not when she knelt before God's altar; not when the priest spoke of her baptism vows; not when the hands of the bishop were laid upon her head in blessing. The organ pealed out solemnly, the lovely children's voices soared aloft, as the precentor led their chant, but Karen thought of nothing but the red shoes.

The next day the old lady was told by every one that Karen had worn red shoes, and she said it was a wicked thing to have done, and that in future Karen should never wear any but black shoes in church, even when she was grown up.

On the following Sunday Karen was to make her first Communion; she looked at the black shoes, then at the red, and, after a moment's pause, put on the red ones.

It was a glorious summer day; Karen and the old lady walked down the footpath, through the cornfields, where it was rather dusty. By the church door stood an old soldier, leaning on his crutch; his beard was of a strange reddish colour, and he bowed almost to the ground as the old lady approached. "Shall I dust your shoes?" he said. Karen held out her slender little foot. "What beautiful dancing shoes," cried the old soldier. "Sit fast when you dance," he added, striking them smartly on the soles. The old lady gave the soldier some money, and went with Karen into the church.

Once more all the congregation looked at Karen's shoes; and, alas! the thought of them haunted the child's heart all the service through, so that she could not sing one psalm, nor utter one prayer.

The people came out of church, and the old lady got into her carriage. Karen lifted up her foot to follow, when the old soldier cried out, "Oh, what beautiful dancing shoes!" She could not help making a few dancing steps, and when once she had begun, her feet went on of themselves; she could not stop them; it seemed as if the shoes had gained the mastery over her. She danced on round the churchyard. The coachman was obliged to run after her, seize her, and lift her into the carriage, and even then her feet kept on dancing, so that the old lady received many a kick. At last they pulled her shoes off, and then her feet could rest. The shoes were put up in a drawer, but Karen could not help going to look at them.

After a while the old lady was stricken down with illness, and it was said that she would never recover. She required constant care and attention, and who should have shown them to her if not Karen? But there was a grand ball to be held in the town that night, and Karen was invited. She looked at the red shoes, and thought it would be no harm,—she put them on—who was there to blame her?—and then she went to the ball, and began to dance. But when she wanted to go to the right, the shoes danced to the left; and when she tried to dance forward, the shoes carried her backward, on to the door, down the

stairs, along the street, through the town gates, out into the dark wood.

A red light shone through the trees; she thought it was the moon, but it was the old soldier with his red beard. He nodded to her, and cried out, "Oh, what beautiful dancing shoes!"

Then she was frightened, and tried to take off the red shoes, but they stuck fast to her feet. She tore down her stockings, but it was all in vain. She was forced on, dancing merrily over meadow and field, in rain and sunshine, by day and night—oh, in the nights it was the most terrible.

She danced across the open churchyard, but the dead do not dance; they have something better to do. She tried to rest a moment on the pauper's grave, where the coarse ferns grew, but there was no rest for her. And as she danced by the church porch, she saw an angel standing there in a long, white robe; white wings fell from his shoulders to his feet, his face was stern and awful, and in his hand he held a gleaming sword.

"Dance on," he cried—"dance with thy red shoes till thou art cold in death; till thy flesh has shrunk to a bare skeleton. Dance on from door to door, and where the children are vain and insolent, knock at their door that they may fear. Dance on till——"

"Mercy!" cried Karen, but she could not hear the angel's answer, for the shoes carried her across the plain, over stick and stone, dancing, dancing on.

One day she danced by the door of a house which she knew well; the sounds of a funeral psalm came from within, a coffin strewn with flowers was carried out; it was the coffin of her old mistress, and at the sight Karen felt that she was indeed forsaken of men, and condemned by God's angel.

On she danced into the gloomy night; the shoes forced her through brier and marsh; her feet were torn and bleeding as they crossed the desolate heath, and neared a lonely hut. It was the dwelling of the public executioner, and Karen tapped at the window panes.

"Come out; come out," she cried. "I cannot come in, for I must dance."

"You do not know who I am," answered the executioner. "It is I who strike off the heads of wicked men, and I see my axe is quivering now."

"Come out," cried Karen; "do not strike off my head, or I cannot repent me of my sin; but strike off my feet with the red shoes."

Then she confessed all her sin, and the executioner struck off her feet with the red shoes—on they danced, the little feet, over the heath, and into the dark wood. The man made her a pair of wooden feet with crutches, and taught her the psalm which the penitents sing; and Karen kissed the hand that held the axe and limped away over the heath.

"Now I have suffered enough," she said, "I will go into the church that the people may see me;" but as she hurried to the church door, the red shoes danced in front of her and frightened her away.

All the week through she wept and was sorrowful, but on Sunday

she said, "Now I have striven and suffered enough. I think I am as good as many of the people who sit so proudly in their pews." And she went boldly forward, but she could get no farther than the churchyard gate, for there were the red shoes and she shrank back in horror, and confessed her sin from her heart.

She went to the parsonage house and begged to be taken on as a servant; she promised to be diligent and to do all she could; she asked for no wages, but only for a quiet home among people who would help her to be good. They had compassion on her and let her come; she was now a silent, hardworking girl; she listened attentively when the clergyman read the Bible of an evening; the children were all very fond of her, but when they spoke of beauty, and dress, and finery, she shook her head.

The next Sunday they went to church and asked Karen if she would come too, but she pointed to her crutches with tears in her eyes. So all the others went out to hear God's word, but she was left alone in her little room, which was only just large enough to hold a bed and a chair. There she knelt down and opened her prayer-book, and as she read with an earnest heart the wind brought in the sound of the organ from the church, and Karen lifted up her tearful face and said, "God help me!"

Then before her in the brilliant sunshine stood God's angel; the same who had stood at the church door in his long white robes. This time he bore no gleaming sword, but a spray of roses, and when he touched the ceiling with the flowers it rose high out of sight, and in its place shone a golden star. He touched the walls; they widened into space, and Karen saw the pealing organ, and the pictures on the church walls, and the people singing psalms before the altar. The church itself had come to the poor girl, or she had gone to it. She was sitting in the clergyman's pew, and at the end of the psalm the children looked up and whispered, "It was right for you to come, Karen."

"It was mercy," she said.

The organ sounded, and the children's voices in the choir rose clear and sweet. The sunlight poured through the window on to the place where Karen sat, and her heart grew so full of sunlight, peace, and joy that it broke; her soul flew on the golden rays to heaven; and there was no one there who asked about the red shoes.

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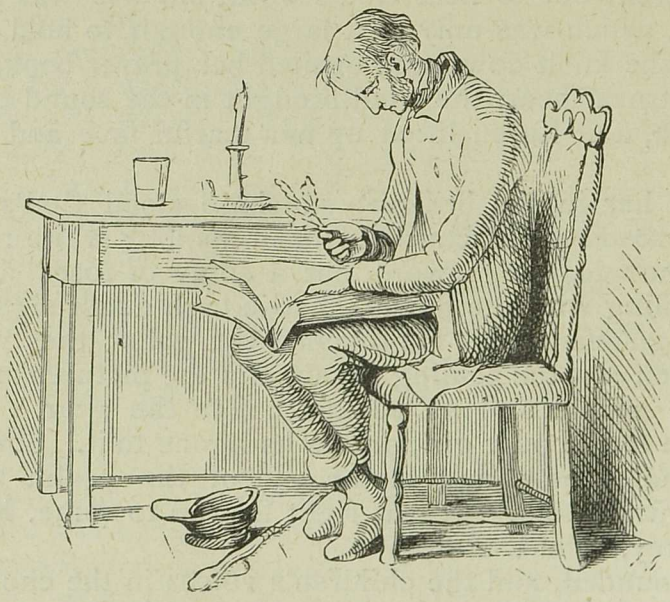
The Silent Book.

CLOSE by the forest-path stood a lonely farm-house; the road ran right through the farm-yard. Every window in the house was open; within all was bustle and confusion; without, the sun shone full on an open coffin, which had been carried out into the yard and placed under the deep shadow

of a flowering elder tree. The dead man in the coffin was to be buried that very morning; no one shed a tear for him; his head, covered by a white cloth, rested on a large thick book, in which every leaf was made of blotting paper, and between each lay a withered flower; the book was a herbal, filled with specimens collected from different places, and it was to go down into the grave with its master. A chapter of the dead man's life was opened by each flower, and he had begged not to be separated from the book which held them.

"Who is the dead man?" we asked. "The old student," was the answer. "He was a smart lad once, they say: could read ancient tongues, sing, and write verses of his own making; but all on a sudden something made him turn all his thoughts to drinking brandy, and when his health was quite broken down, he came here into the country, and



a friend paid for his board and lodging. He was as quiet as a child when he was not out of his sober senses; but when the savage mood came over him, he was really dangerous, and would run out into the forest like a madman. When we caught him and brought him here, we managed to put this old book in his way, and he would open it, and sit for days together looking first at one plant and then at another, while the tears rolled slowly down his cheeks. Heaven only knows what he was thinking of, but he begged to have the book laid in his coffin, and now there he lies, and in a few minutes the lid will be screwed down, and he will rest quietly in his grave."

They lifted the cerecloth, and a sunbeam fell across the quiet face; a swallow darted under the leaves of the elder tree, paused, and circled round the dead man's head.

How sad and strange it is—we all know the feeling—to look through old letters, written or received long years ago! A new life rises up before us again with all its hopes and fears. How many people who

THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL.

were then so much to us are dead to us now! They are alive still, but we have not thought of them for years, though once we fancied we should cling to them for ever, and share with them all joy and sorrow.

The withered oak-leaf in the book recalls the friend of school and college days; he placed it in the student's cap as they stood under the forest boughs, and swore a life-long friendship. Where is he now? The leaf is preserved, but the friendship lost for ever. Here is a foreign exotic, too fragile for this northern clime: the leaves still hold a ghost-like fragrance. *She* gave him that—the high-born girl in the castle gardens. Here is a rose he gathered himself, and wetted with salt tears. And here lies a nettle—what can that have to say? What were the man's thoughts as he gathered it? what as he preserved it? There is a spray of may from the forest solitudes; here an evergreen from the flower pot of the tap-room window sill, and here a bare grass blade.

The blooming elder bends slowly and tenderly over the dead man's face; the swallow circles round him—"Tweet, tweet!"

Now come the men with nails and hammer; the lid is placed upon the coffin; the head rests peacefully upon the silent book; the life story is closed for this world.

The Little Match-girl.

NEW Year's eve was come, with bitter cold grey dusk and falling snow. Through the gathering darkness a little child, bare-headed and poorly clad, pattered down the frozen streets with naked feet. When she left home she had on a pair of shoes, but they were of no use to her, for they were so large that her mother had worn them, and the child could not keep them on her feet. She had lost them as she ran across the street in terror, to escape being run over by the carriages rolling quickly over the noiseless snow. One shoe was lost in the snow, the other was picked up by a street boy, who ran off with it. The child went on with naked feet, red and aching with the bitter cold. Her apron was filled with lucifer-matches, and she held a bundle of them in one hand; but no one had bought any the whole day through; not even a pennyworth.

Shivering with cold and hunger, the poor little thing looked the picture of misery.

Snowflakes hung on her long fair hair, but she did not heed them; bright lights shone from the windows, and from every house came the smell of roast goose, for it was New Year's Eve. That was what she was thinking of.

In an angle formed by two houses, one of which stood rather in

front of the other, she cowered down on the frozen ground; she drew her little feet under her, but it was freezing hard. Home she dared not go, for she had not sold a single match, and her father would beat her cruelly; besides, it was as cold at home: there was only the roof over them, and the keen wind whistled through even when the largest holes were stuffed with straw and rags.

Her little hands were almost frozen. Ah! perhaps a match would warm her just a little, if she took one from the bundle, struck it against the wall, and tried to warm her fingers! She drew one out. P-r-r-r-r-r-r! how it fizzed and flamed. It was a bright warm light, like a little candle, as she held her hands over it: a wonderful light. It seemed to the child as if she were sitting in front of a bright fire, with polished brass fender and fire-irons: how the fire blazed and crackled—how the warmth came out towards her! She stretched out her little feet to warm them also, but in a second the match was out—the fire had vanished, and only the blackened end of the match was left in her hand.

She struck a second macth against the wall; it flamed out and the wall grew as transparent as a veil. The child looked into the room and saw a table splendidly laid: rare porcelain dishes stood on the snow-white cloth, and a large roast goose smoked at the head of the table, with apple-sauce near it, and dried fruits. And what was better still, the goose hopped off the dish and came waddling along the floor to the little girl, with a knife and fork stuck right in its breast. It had almost reached her when the match went out, and left only the bare, damp wall behind. She lit another match;—and lo! she was sitting under a brilliant Christmas-tree, taller and more beautiful than the one she had seen through the glass doors of the rich merchant's house. Myriads of tapers shone from the green branches, and bright pictures, such as she had seen in the shop windows, looked down upon her. The child stretched out her hands—but the match went out. The tapers rose higher and higher through the frozen air; at last they glimmered overhead like stars in the sky, and one fell, leaving as it went a long streak of fire.

"Some one is dying now," said the child, for her old grandmother, the only one who had ever been fond of her, and who was now dead herself, had told her that whenever a star shoots, a soul flies up to God.

The child struck another match, and in its light she saw her dead grandmother, glorious and radiant to look upon, and smiling tenderly in the child's upturned face.

"Grandmother!" cried the little one, "oh! take me with you. I know you will vanish when the match goes out; you will go away like the bright fire, and the goose, and the beautiful Christmas-tree!" She struck her whole bundle of matches quickly, for she wanted to hold her grandmother fast. And the matches burned with such a brilliant flame that all around grew clear as day; her grandmother had never before looked so tall and beautiful: she lifted the child into her arms and both of them flew away radiant with happiness, far above the earth, higher and higher to the land where there is neither hunger, cold, nor sorrow—to the presence of God.

In the chill early dawn the little girl was found, cowering against the wall, frozen to death, on the happy New Year's Eve. A bright sunlight shone down on her face, tinged her pale cheeks with red, and kissed her smiling lips. Motionless she sat there holding her matches; one bundle of them was burnt away. "She must have tried to warm herself," they said. No one dreamed of all the beautiful things she had seen, or in what glorious light her grandmother had come to carry her away to her New Year's peace and joy.

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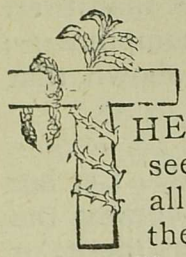
The Jumpers.



THE flea, the grasshopper, and the skipjack wanted to see which of them could jump the farthest. They invited all the world and anybody else who liked to come and see the contest. They were all three first-rate jumpers.

"I will give my daughter to the one who jumps the highest," said the king, "for it would be very mean to let them jump for nothing."

The flea came first. He had very pretty manners, and bowed to every one present. He had noble blood in his veins, and was accustomed to have to do with human beings, and that always tells.

The grasshopper came next. He was certainly of heavier build, but he had a good figure, and wore the green uniform which he had received at his birth. Besides it was said that he was connected with a very high family in Egypt, and was well thought of in that country. He had come in from the fields, and been put into a house of cards, three stories high, and built entirely of court cards with the faces turned inwards; the mansion had both door and windows, all cut out of the Queen of Hearts.

"I have such a voice," said the grasshopper, "that sixteen native crickets who have sung from their infancy, and yet have never attained to a house of cards, fretted themselves thinner than they were before, from jealousy, when they heard me sing."

Both the flea and the grasshopper made known who they were, and maintained that they were worthy to obtain the princess.

The skipjack said not a word; it was supposed that he thought the more; but as he was only artificial, being made of a piece of bone with a little wax at one end, it was scarcely likely that he should be a great talker. The house dog sniffed round him, and found out in a moment that he was of good family, and made out of the breast bone of a genuine goose. The old Prime Minister, who had received three medals for silence, declared that the skipjack was endowed with the gift of prophecy, and that you could tell by his bones whether we were going to have a mild or a sharp winter; and that is more than you can do even from the breast bone of the man who wrote the almanack.

"I will say nothing at present," said the old king; "I take things easily, and hope for the best."

Then the jumping began. The flea jumped so high that no one could see him, and they declared that he had never jumped at all! That was very mean.

The grasshopper jumped only half as high, but he jumped right into the king's face, and the king said that was impertinent.

The skipjack stood perfectly still, and considered; at last, people began to think he was not going to jump at all.

"I hope he does not feel ill," said the dog, and poked him gently with his muzzle. Hop! off he was, and, with a little sideway spring, he lighted on the lap of the princess, who was sitting on a low golden stool.

Then the king said, "No one could possibly aim higher than that. The spring on to my daughter's lap was a very delicate compliment; that kind of thing requires brains, and the skipjack has shown that he has them."

So he received the princess in marriage.

"But I sprang the highest," said the flea. "Never mind! Let her have her morsel of goose bone and cobbler's wax. I sprang the highest, but in this world one must have a body as well as merit, or one cannot be seen."

Thereupon the flea enlisted in foreign service, and died abroad, so people say.

The grasshopper sat down by the ditch out of doors, and thought over the way in which things are managed here below. "Body—that's what's wanted! Body—that's what's wanted!" he remarked. And then he went on with his own melancholy song, and, listening to him, we learned the story,—but it may be all pure invention, even though you see it in print.

The Flying Trunk.

THERE was once a merchant who was so rich that he could have paved the whole street with silver, and perhaps a little alley into the bargain. He did not do so, however, because he had other ways of spending his money. He was such a good trader that if he spent a shilling, he always managed to get back a crown piece instead—till he died.

All this money came to his son, who led a merry life for a while. He went to a ball every night, made paper kites out of bank notes, and played at ducks and drakes with gold sovereigns instead of stones.

In such ways it is very easy for one's money to come to an end, and his money did. At last he had nothing left but four shillings, a pair

of slippers, and an old dressing-gown. His friends cared nothing for him now; they could not even walk down the street in his company; but one of them, who was rather good-natured, sent him a large trunk with the words, "Pack up!" That was all very well, but he had nothing *to* pack up, so he got into the trunk himself.

Now this was a very remarkable trunk, for, as soon as the lock was pressed, it could fly. The young man closed the lock, and he was up the chimney, over the hills, and far away. He was terribly frightened at first whenever the trunk creaked, for if it had broken he would have had to turn a most prodigious somersault—only think of it! He flew on, however, till he reached the country where the Turks live. There he hid the trunk under heaps of dry leaves in a forest, and went into the city. There was no objection to his doing so, because all the Turks walk about in dressing-gown and slippers, just as he did. In the streets he met a nurse carrying a little child. "I say! you Turkish nurse," he said, "what is that great castle yonder, close to the town, where the windows are placed so high?"

"The sultan's daughter lives there," said the nurse; "it has been prophesied that she will be very unhappy in her choice of a lover, so that no one is allowed to see her, except when the sultan and sultana are present."

"Thank you," said the merchant's son. Then he walked back to the wood, got inside the trunk, flew on to the roof of the castle, and crept through the window into the princess's room.

She was lying asleep on the sofa, and she looked so pretty that the merchant's son was obliged to kiss her. The princess woke immediately and was terribly frightened, till her visitor told her that he was the god of the Turks who had flown down through the air to come to her; and then, of course, she was highly delighted.

They sat down side by side, and he told her stories about her eyes, calling them dark, lovely lakes in which the thoughts swam to and fro like mermaids; and then he spoke of her forehead, and said it was a mountain of snow, white and radiant. He told very pretty stories; and then he proposed to the princess, who said yes in a moment.

"You must be sure and come on Saturday, when the sultan and sultana drink tea with me," she said. "They will be very proud of my marriage with the god of the Turks. Mind you have a pretty story ready to tell them. My mother likes something with a moral, and rather high-flown; but my father likes something that makes him laugh."

"Very well: I shall bring no other dowry than a story," he said; and so they parted. The princess gave him a sabre studded with precious stones, and that was of great use to him, for he flew away and bought a new dressing-gown at once; after which he sat down in the wood to prepare the story: it was to be ready by Saturday, and that was no easy matter.

When it was finished, it *was* Saturday.

The sultan, the sultana, and the whole court were at tea with the princess, and received him very graciously.

"Will you relate a story?" said the sultana; "something instructive and profound."

"But amusing and laughable," said the sultan.

"Oh, certainly," he replied, and began at once. Now pay attention.

There was once a bundle of lucifer-matches who were very fond of their high origin. The founder of their family, the famous old pine tree of which each of them was a little chip, had stood for years in a mighty forest. The matches were lying between a tinder-box and an old iron pot, and were telling stories of their young days. "Yes, when we were under the greenwood tree," they cried—"and we really *were* under the greenwood tree—then we used to have diamond tea, or dew, as people call it, every morning and every evening. We had sunshine all day long when the sun shone; and the little birds were obliged to tell us stories. It was easy to see that we were extremely rich, because while the great majority of trees only dressed in summer, we always could afford to wear green all the year round. But when the wood-cutter—the great revolution that is—came, our family was broken up. Our ancestor received a position as mainmast on a magnificent ship which could sail all round the world if it chose to do so; the other branches were dispersed about, and we have the task of enlightening the vulgar crowd. That is the reason that people of our class are found in the kitchen."

"My fate was differently ordered," said the iron pot. "From the moment I came into the world I have been busy with scouring and cooking. I am thoroughly practical, and have been longest in the house. My sole relaxation is to join in rational conversation with my companions, when I have been scoured bright and clean and put in my place on the shelf after dinner. For—if I except the market-basket, who occasionally goes out into the world—we all live retired between these four walls. The market-basket is our only news-bringer; and he speaks in a most alarming manner of the Government and the people; indeed, I knew an aged pot who, as she was listening to him the other day, fell down in a fright and broke to pieces. He is a radical, I can tell you that much."

"You are talking too fast," said the tinder-box; and the steel struck the flint so that the sparks flew out. "Now, shall we not try and pass a pleasant evening together?"

"Yes; let us decide who is the grandest," said the matches.

"No; I do not like talking about myself," replied the pot. "Let us arrange an evening's entertainment. I will begin by telling a story founded on fact; such a one as we have all experienced: then we can easily throw ourselves into it, and receive a great deal of enjoyment from it. On the Baltic, by the Danish shore——"What a pretty beginning!" cried all the plates, "that is the kind of story we like."

"Yes—there my youth was passed in a quiet family. The furniture was polished, the floors scoured, and clean curtains were put up every fortnight."

"How charmingly you relate the story!" said the broom. "One can tell in a moment that one is listening to a man who has been much in female society: there is such a pure tone throughout."

"Yes, one feels that deeply," exclaimed the bucket, with a little leap of joy, which made the water splash on to the floor.

The pot continued, and the end was just as good as the beginning.

The plates rattled for joy, and the broom took up some green parsley out of the dust-hole and crowned the pot, for she knew it would vex the others. "If I crown him to-day, he will crown me to-morrow," she thought.

"Now I will dance," cried the tongs. Mercy on us! how she did stand on one leg! The old chair-cover in the corner split at the sight. "Shall I be crowned?" asked the tongs: and crowned she was.

"These are all common people!" said the matches.

The tea-urn was then asked to sing; but she said she had a slight cold and could not sing unless she boiled. That, however, was mere affectation; the truth was, she would not sing unless she was in the drawing-room with the master and mistress.

In the window lay an old quill pen with which the servant used to write; there was nothing remarkable about her, except that she had been dipped too deeply in the ink, but that was just what she was proud of.

"If the urn won't sing," she cried, "she can leave it alone. There is a nightingale in a cage outside who can sing: she has never learned, it is true, but we will excuse that for this evening."

"I consider it extremely improper," said the tea-kettle—he was a kitchen singer, and half-brother to the urn—"that such a foreign bird should be heard. Is that patriotic? Let the market-basket decide!"

"I am extremely annoyed," said the market-basket. "I am more annoyed in my own mind than I can express! Is this a fitting way to spend the evening? Would it not be far more sensible to set the house to rights, and put every one in his proper place? Come! I will lead the game, and that will be quite another thing."

"Yes, let us act charades," they all cried. The door opened, and in came the servant girl. Not a single thing moved. All were still. But there was not a pot among them who did not feel what he could have done and how grand he was. "Yes, if I had chosen," they all thought, "we should have spent a very pleasant evening."

The servant took up the matches and began to light the fire with them. Heavens! how they fizzed and blazed!

"Any one can see now that we are the grandest," they cried. "What brilliance we shed around! What lustre!" And with that they were burnt out.

"That was a delightful story," cried the sultana. "I feel myself quite carried away into the kitchen among the matches. Yes! you shall marry our daughter."

"So you shall; you shall marry her on Monday," exclaimed the sultan; and from that time they treated the young man as one of the family.

The night before the wedding the whole city was illuminated. Gingerbread and biscuits were thrown among the people; the street-boys stood on tiptoe, cried hurrah! and whistled through their fingers. It was extremely splendid!

"Now, I suppose I must give them some kind of a treat," said the merchant's son. Whereupon he bought a quantity of rockets, crackers,

and every imaginable sort of fireworks, placed them in his trunk, and flew up in the air.

P-r-r-r-r-r! how they whirred, and fizzed, and blazed out on all sides!

The Turks jumped up in the air till their slippers flew past their ears; they had never seen such a glitter and show before. Now they understood clearly that their princess was going to marry a god.

As soon as the merchant's son had finished his display of fireworks, he alighted in the wood, hid the trunk, and went into the town to hear how the exhibition had gone off; it was quite natural that he should wish to know.

What things the people said to be sure! Every one whom he questioned had seen something different from his neighbours, but they all agreed it had been a very beautiful sight.

"I saw the bridegroom myself!" said one of them; "his eyes were like golden stars, and his beard like foaming water."

"He flew away in a mantle of fire," cried another; "lovely angel-faces gleamed forth from its folds."

In short, he heard wonderful things; and the next day was his wedding day.

He hastened back to the wood to get inside the trunk—but where *was* the trunk? It was burnt up. A spark from the fireworks was left behind, the trunk had caught fire and was burnt to ashes! He could not fly any more—he could never reach his bride!

She stood waiting on the roof all day long; most likely she is waiting there now. He, meanwhile, is wandering about the world telling stories; but none of them are so amusing as the one he told about the matches.

A Story.

ALL the apple trees in the garden were in full bloom; they had made haste to cover themselves with blossom, even before the green leaves came. The ducklings waddled to and fro in the farmyard, the cat sat basking in the warmth and licked the sunshine from her paws. If you looked across the fields you saw the standing corn in its tender, delicate green; the birds were twittering and warbling overhead, as if they knew it was a festival.

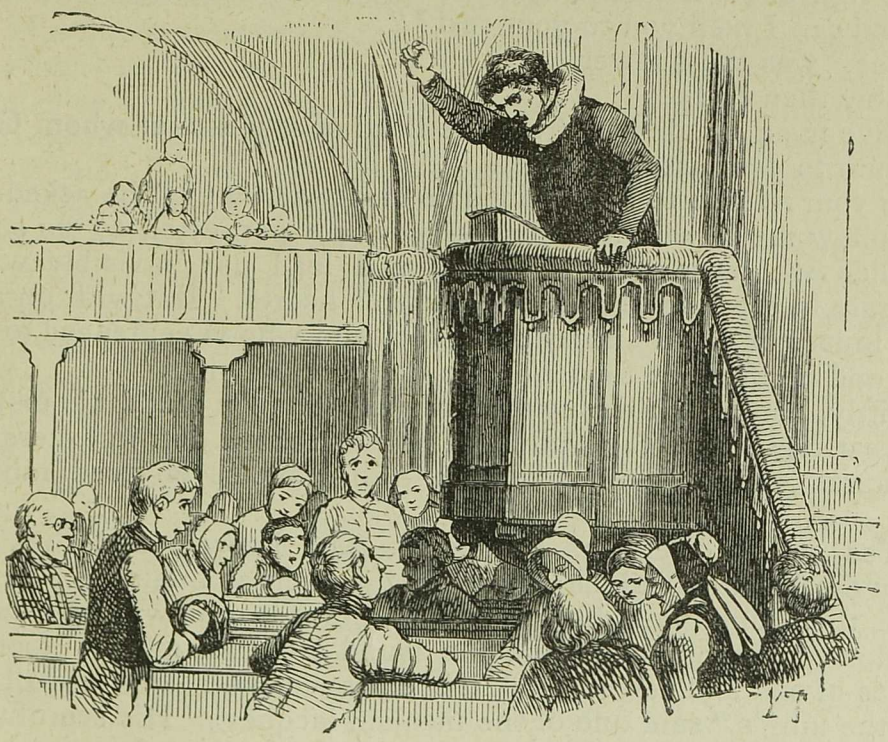
It was Sunday morning: the church bells were ringing, and the country folk, dressed in their best, wended their way to church with happy faces. Everything looked its best and brightest; it was a day so warm and blessed that one felt moved to say our Father loves to dwell among His children.

But inside the church the preacher stood in the pulpit and spoke

with harsh and angry voice. He said that all men were godless, and that therefore God would punish them : that after death the wicked would burn in hell-fire for ever.

It was terrible to hear, and he spoke of it with firm conviction : he described hell as a pestilential cavern into which flows all the corruption of the world—where there is no air to breathe but sulphurous fumes, where the wicked sink deeper and ever deeper in eternal silence. It was indeed frightful to hear him, and the people in the church were pale with horror. Outside the birds were singing joyously, the sun shone bright and warm, and every flower seemed to say, "Oh, God, Thou art good!"

Out of doors, it did not look like the preacher's sermon.



On going to rest that night the Pastor looked at his wife's sad, thoughtful face. "What ails thee?" he said to her.

"Ah, what ails me?" she cried. "I cannot collect my thoughts; I cannot grasp what you told us in church to-day, that there are so many godless men, and that they must burn in hell for ever. For ever? ah, how long that is! I am but a human being—a poor sinner in the sight of God, and yet I could not find it in my heart to let even the most hardened wretch suffer for ever. How, then, can He, who is infinite love, and who knows how evil attacks us from within and from without? I cannot believe it, even though you say it."

Autumn came; the trees lost their leaves; the harsh, stern preacher sat by his wife's deathbed and watched the humble, contrite soul pass away.

"If any child of man can find rest in death and mercy before her

God, thou canst," said the preacher. He folded her hands, and read the psalms for the dead.

They bore her to her grave: a few tears rolled slowly down her husband's sunken cheeks; in the parsonage house all was silence and desolation; the light of the house was quenched—gone to the everlasting home.

It was the dead of night: a cold wind stirred the preacher's hair; he opened his eyes, and it seemed to him as if the moonlight filled his room, but the moon was not shining. A radiant form stood beside him—the spirit of his dead wife; she looked at him sorrowfully, and seemed as if she wished to speak to him.

The preacher rose up in his bed and stretched out his arms—"No rest even for thee?" he cried; "the best and humblest!"

The figure laid her hand upon her heart and shook her head.

"And can I help you to your rest?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"How then?"

"Give me a single hair from the head of any sinner whom God will condemn to everlasting torment."

"Is your release to be obtained so easily as that?" he asked.

"Follow me!" said the spirit—"you are permitted to do so. Our way lies wherever your thoughts will lead us: invisibly we shall penetrate in the inmost recesses of men's hearts. But with unfaltering voice must you pronounce the name of him who is sentenced to eternal pain, and he must be found before the cock crowing."

Swiftly, borne by their winged thoughts, they found themselves in the great city; from the walls and houses flamed out, in letters of fire, the names of the seven deadly sins—the whole seven-hued rainbow of evil.

"Yes, within there, as I thought—as I knew," said the Pastor; "they dwell who shall be a prey to the eternal flame." They stood before the brilliantly-lighted mansion; the staircase was half hidden by rare flowers, from above came the sound of dance music; footmen in liveries of silk and velvet lined the entrance hall. "Our ball can vie with the king's," said one of the insolent lacqueys. His scornful glance fell on the gaping crowd in the street, and his thoughts were printed on his face. "What is this ragged crowd, in comparison to me, but dregs and scum?"

"Pride!" said the spirit; "do you not see?"

"See him?" replied the preacher. "He is but a poor ignorant fool: the eternal fires are not for him."

"Only a fool," resounded through the house of pride—it was the sentence passed on all within.

They passed on to the miser's four bare walls. Worn to a skeleton, hungry, shivering with cold, the old man cleaves, with heart and soul, to his treasure. They saw him start in feverish haste from his bed, take a loose stone out of the wall, where lay an old stocking heavy with gold; saw him feel his ragged coat where the gold coins had been sewn in, and marked how his damp fingers shook. "He is ill," cried the preacher. "His sin is madness—a joyless madness girt round with anguish and evil dreams."

They passed on to the cells of the criminals; who lay in long rows, sleeping side by side. Like a wild beast, one of them started from his sleep with a terrible cry—he struck out wildly at his companion, who turned in sleepy anger. "Hold your peace, monster," he cried, "every night it is the same."

"Every night!" shrieked the other; "every night he comes to torment me. In my passion I have done this and that. Born with base and evil tendencies, I have sinned, and I suffer. One thing I have not yet confessed. When I left this place, the last time, and passed by my former master's house I thought of old wrongs till my passion flamed up within me. I struck a lucifer-match against the wall; it may have been too near the thatch. Everything was burned down. The heat scorched me—scorches me now. I myself helped to save the cattle and furniture. No living thing was burned, except a flock of pigeons who flew into the flame, and the yard dog. I had forgotten him. His howls were heard through the flame, and I hear them every night when I try to sleep; and if I do sleep, he comes to me in my dreams, flies at me, howls, tears and torments me. Listen, fellow, while I speak! You can snore the whole night through—there is no sleep for me!" and, with bloodshot eyes, he clenched his fist and struck his comrade in the face.

"The madman has broken out again," cried a dozen voices; savagely the others set upon him, struck and wrestled with him, and at last secured him with thongs, tied so tightly that they drew blood.

"You are killing the unhappy creature!" exclaimed the preacher, stretching out his hand in protection over the tortured criminal, who was suffering the penalty of his sin. At the pitying gesture the scene changed. They passed swiftly through luxurious halls and wretched hovels; envy, self-worship, every mortal sin passed by them. An angel of judgment read their accusation and their defence. The defence was but a poor one, but it was read to Him who knows all—all the temptations from within and from without—Him, who is very Love. The preacher's hand trembled; he dared not stretch it out: he ventured not to pluck a hair from the head of any. Tears rushed from his eyes, like streams of pity and mercy, whose cooling waters quench the fires of hell.

The cock crowed.

"Merciful God!" cried the preacher, "give *Thou* peace to her spirit. I cannot set her free."

"Peace is granted to me now," said a gentle voice. "It was thy harsh words, thy despair of human kind, thy gloomy thoughts of God and His creation that brought me to thee. Learn to know thy fellow-men, and to see even in the worst of them a trace of that divine Spirit Who quenches and conquers hell."

The preacher felt a kiss upon his lips; a light shone round him; God's golden sunshine poured into the room; and his wife, living, gentle, and loving, woke him from a dream which had been sent to him by God.

The Old Street Lamp.

HAVE you ever heard the story of the old street lamp? It is not particularly amusing; but it can be listened to for all that.

There was once an honest old street lamp who had been engaged in the public service for many years, and was now about to be pensioned off. She was burning for the last time at the top of her post, and lighting up the whole street. It seemed to her that she was like an elderly ballet-dancer, dancing for the last time, and on the morrow destined to sit forgotten in her garret. That *to-morrow* woke many an anxious thought in the old lamp; for, first of all, she would have to appear for the first time at the town hall and be inspected by the mayor and corporation, that they might see whether or no she was fit for further service.

It would then be decided whether she should be transferred to a suburb to enlighten the folk who lived there, or be sent to a factory, or despatched without more delay to an iron foundry to be recast. In the latter case she might be made into a thousand things, but the doubt as to whether she should lose all memory of ever having been a street lamp troubled her dreadfully. Whatever might befall her, one thing seemed certain, and that was that she would be separated from the night watchman and his wife, whom she had always considered as belonging to her own family. When the lamp was first lighted in the street, the watchman had been just appointed to his office; he was an active young man then. Yes! that was many years ago since he became a watchman and she a street lamp. His wife was rather high at first, she would not vouchsafe to cast a glance on the lamp except at night—never in the daytime! But latterly, when they were all three growing old together, she had attended to the lamp herself, rubbing and polishing and pouring in the oil. The two old people were thoroughly honest: they had never cheated the lamp out of a drop of her oil.

This was her last evening in the street, and to-morrow she was to appear at the town hall. These were two gloomy thoughts. No wonder that she did not shine very bright. Many other thoughts, too, passed through her mind. She had lent her light to many people, and seen many things; perhaps she had seen as much as the mayor and corporation. But she did not say this aloud, for she was a well-disposed, good sort of a lamp, and would not say a disparaging word against any one—certainly not against the Government. She was full of thoughts, and her flame flickered uneasily. At such moments she imagined that she could not be quite forgotten. For instance,

there was that handsome young man—a long time ago that was, certainly—he held in his hand a note written on pink paper with gilt edges; the writing was written in a delicate lady's hand. He read it twice, kissed it, and looked up to the lamp with eyes that plainly said, "I am the happiest man in the world!" Only he and the lamp knew what was written in this first letter from his lady-love. Yes; and the lamp remembered another pair of eyes. It is really wonderful how one's thoughts dart from one thing to another! A funeral was passing down the street, a beautiful young face was resting on the flower-bestrewn bier; rows of lighted tapers made the lamp's flame look dim. Crowds of people formed in procession on the pavement and slowly followed the coffin: but when the shine of the torches had passed away from the dazzled lamp, one man was left behind, leaning against the post, bitterly weeping. These, and such-like memories haunted the old lamp as she shone for the last time.

The sentry relieved from duty knows at least who his successor will be, and can whisper to him a few words of useful information: the old street lamp knew nothing of hers, and yet she could have given him most valuable hints as to the fog and rain, telling him, for instance, how far the moonlight came along the pavement, which side the wind generally blew from, and similar particulars.

Meanwhile three persons who were lying in the gutter were each wishing to represent the old lamp, who, as they knew, would soon be obliged to retire. The first was a herring's head which could shine in the darkness, after a fashion; and thought it would be a great saving of oil if he were placed on the lamp-post. Number two was a piece of rotten wood, which could also shine a little, and considered itself to be descended from one of the monarchs of the forest. Number three was a glow-worm; the lamp could not make out how it had got there, but there it was, and it too could shine. The rotten wood and the herring's head swore, by all that was holy, that it could only shine at certain times, and therefore was quite out of the running.

The old lamp said that neither of them gave sufficient light to fill the office of street-lamp: but they did not believe her. As soon as they understood that the situation was not in the gift of the lamp herself, they thought that explained all; she was too infirm to be entrusted with the appointment.

Just at that moment the wind came up round the street corner and blew through the ventilators of the old lamp. "What do I hear?" it cried. "You are going away to-morrow? This is the last time we shall meet? Then I must give you a parting gift. I will blow into the chambers of your brain so that you shall not only retain the memory of past words and scenes, but that all shall be so clear within you that you shall be able to see all you hear read or talked of in your presence."

"Oh, that is a splendid gift!" cried the old lamp. "I thank you from my heart. So that I am not recast, I do not mind. Shall I retain my memory even in that case?"

"My dear old lamp, be reasonable," said the wind, with a puff.

As he spoke the moon appeared from behind a cloud. "What are you going to give to the lamp?" said the wind.

"Nothing," said the moon; "I am on the wane, and the street lamps have never enlightened me—quite the contrary." And with these words the moon disappeared again immediately, so as to be relieved from further importunities.

Suddenly a drop fell on the lamp from the grey cloud overhead. "The cloud has sent me as a present," said the drop; "perhaps you will one day think me the most valuable of all. I shall penetrate your whole frame, so that at any moment when you wish it you may be eaten up with rust, and fall into ashes."

The lamp did not think that was a nice present, and the wind was of her opinion too. "Will no one give anything else?" he blew as loud as he could.

A shooting-star dashed past them, leaving behind a momentary line of fire.

"What was that?" cried the herring's head. "Was it not a shooting-star? I verily believe it shot right into the lamp! Certainly, if people of such a position as that care to apply for the place, we may as well say good-night and go home."

So they all three went home. But the old lamp shed round a beautiful golden light. "That was a glorious present," she said. "The dear, lovely stars, who have always been my greatest joy, and who shine as I can never shine, though I strive and try after it always, have thought of the old lamp, and sent a present which gives me the power of bringing before me all that I have seen, or that I hear, but of being seen by all I love. And that is true happiness, for what is joy which one cannot share with others?"

"The remark does honour to your disposition," cried the wind. "But for that, wax tapers are necessary. If wax tapers are not lighted within you, your rare gifts will not profit other people. The stars never thought of that; they take you and every kind of light for wax tapers. But I will go down now." And he went down.

"Wax tapers, indeed!" cried the old lamp. "Never have I had such things, and I fear I never shall have as long as I live——If only I can escape being recast!"

The next day—well, we had better pass over the next day! The next night the street lamp rested in an old high-backed arm-chair. And guess where? Why, at the old night watchman's! He had begged, as a favour from the Corporation, that, in consideration of his long and faithful services, they would allow him to keep the lamp which he had put up four-and-twenty years ago, on his first day of office as a watchman. He looked upon it as his child; he had no other; and the lamp was made over to him.

There she lay in the old chair by the stove; it seemed as if she had grown bigger, for she filled up the whole chair.

The old couple sat at supper, and cast many a kindly glance at the street lamp; they would not have grudged her a place at table.

Their room was certainly an underground one; you were obliged to go down some stone steps to reach it, but when once you were inside everything looked warm and comfortable. Bands of list were nailed on the door to keep out the draught; everything was clean and neat; white curtains hung round the bed and before the window. On the

window sill stood two curious flower-pots which neighbour Christian, the sailor, had brought from the East or West Indies. They were made of clay, and were in the shape of elephants, only they had no backs, so that they could be filled with earth. One was planted with garlic, that was the kitchen garden; out of the other grew a pretty geranium tree, that was the flower garden. Against the wall hung a coloured print of the Congress of Vienna. There you had all the emperors and kings together. Near to that a clock, with heavy leaden weights, went "tic-tac," and it was always fast; that was much better, the old people used to say, than if it had been slow. They sat eating their supper; and the old lamp lay as I have already mentioned, in the arm chair close to the stove. It seemed to her that the whole world was upside down. But when the old watchman looked at her, and talked over all they had gone through together in rain and mist, in clear, short summer nights, and in the long winter darkness, amid the whirling snow, so that one longed for the warm room—then the old lamp felt as if the world had come right again. She saw it all as clearly as if it were happening at the moment: the wind had given her a famous light.

The two old folks were very active and industrious; not an hour was wasted. On Sunday afternoons, a book of some kind, generally a book of travels, was brought out, and the old man would read aloud. He read of the vast African forests, where the wild elephants wander at will: his wife listened eagerly and cast furtive glances at the two elephants which did duty for flower pots. "I can almost picture it to myself," said the old woman: and the street-lamp wished with all her heart that they would put a wax taper within her, for then the old woman would have been able to see it all, even the very smallest details, as the lamp herself saw it:—the tall trees, with their interlacing branches, the naked savages on horseback, and the troops of elephants treading down the jungle with their broad, heavy feet.

"What is the use of all my powers without a wax light?" cried the street-lamp; "there is only oil and tallow here, and they are of no use."

One day a whole heap of wax-taper ends made their way into the little room; the larger pieces were burnt, and the smaller were used by the old woman to wind her thread upon. So there were wax lights in plenty, but it never occurred to any one to put a piece in the old lamp.

"Here I am with my rare gifts," said the street-lamp. "I see it all in my own mind, and yet I can impart nothing to others; they know not that I can transform the white walls into rich tapestries, or mighty forests, or anything else that they can desire. The lamp was always kept neat and clean, and set up in a corner where all the world could see her. Strangers said it was nothing but old lumber; but the old folk did not mind about that, they liked the old lamp.

One day—it was the watchman's birthday—the old woman stood over the lamp smiling softly to herself. "I shall light up in honour of my old man to-night," she said. And the lamp rattled her lead-rimmed squares, for she said, "Now at last I shall have a light!" But it was only oil after all—no wax-light was even thought of. She burned the

whole evening through, but she saw only too well that the gift of the shooting-star would be useless for this life. Then she had a dream; now it was nothing wonderful for one of her capabilities to be able to dream. It seemed to her that the two old people were dead, and that she herself had been sent to the iron-foundry to be recast. She was just as frightened and uneasy as when she stood before the Mayor and Corporation in the Town Hall. But although she had the power of crumbling into ashes, she did not use it. She was thrown into the smelting furnace, and recast as a candelabra, as beautiful as one could imagine, and made just on purpose to hold wax-tapers. It was in the shape of an angel, holding a bouquet, and the wax-lights stood in the centre of the bouquet. The candelabra was placed on a green writing table; the room was very beautiful, books lay all around, the walls were hung with splendid pictures, it was the room of a poet. Everything of which he wrote was imaged around him; the scene changed into gloomy woods, or sunny meadows where the stork wandered to and fro; to the deck of a ship on the restless sea, or the clear heavens with its myriad stars.

"What capacities lie hidden within me," cried the old street-lamp, as she awoke. "I could almost wish to be recast! But no; that must not happen so long as the old folks are living: they love me for myself as I am; they have kept me clean and filled with oil. I am as well cared for as the whole congress yonder, and they are fond of that, too."

From that time the good old lamp enjoyed more inward peace, as she richly deserved to do.

The Metal Pig.

IN the city of Florence, not far from the Piazza del Granduca, is a little by-lane called, I think, Porta Rosa. There, before a kind of vegetable market, stands an artistically formed metal pig. Fresh, clean water flows from its mouth; it has become of a greenish-black colour from sheer old age, but the snout still shines as if it were polished daily, as indeed it is by hundreds of children and lazzaroni, who seize it with their hands, and place their mouths close to the metal, so that they can drink from it. It is a perfect picture to see the animal bestridden by a handsome half-naked lad, who lays his fresh lips close to the brazen snout.

Any one who visits Florence can easily find the place; he has but to ask the first beggar he meets for the metal pig.

It was late on a winter's night; the mountains were covered with

snow, but the moon was shining : and the Italian moonlight gives as bright a light as the light of our dim northern winter day—nay, better —for the air cheers and revives us, while in the north the cold, grey, leaden clouds press us down to earth, to the cold, wet earth which soon shall press down our coffin-lid.

In the grand duke's castle gardens, under an arched roof of pines, where a thousand roses blossom all the winter through, a little, ragged boy had been sitting the whole day long ; a boy who might have sat for a picture of Italy herself—fair, smiling, and yet suffering.

He was hungry and thirsty, but no one gave him either food or drink ; and when the hour came for closing the gardens, the gate-keeper drove him out. He stood for a long while, dreaming idly on the bridge, and watching the golden stars which glimmered in the Arno beneath, as it flowed on towards the splendid marble bridge Della Trinità.

He wended his way to the metal pig, knelt down, wound his arms

round the rugged neck, placed his lips to the polished snout, and drank the water in long draughts. Close at hand lay a few lettuce leaves, and one or two chestnuts, and that was the child's supper. No one else was in the street, it belonged to him alone, and he climbed on to the back of the pig, bent forward till his curly head rested on the creature's neck, and before he was conscious of fatigue, he was sound asleep.

At midnight the metal pig stirred ; he heard it say distinctly, " Hold fast, little boy, I am going to run ; " and off it went with him, a wonderful ride. First of all they made for the Piazza del Granduca, and the bronze horse, which carries the duke's statue, neighed aloud, the painted coat of arms on the court of justice shone like living pictures, Michael Angelo's David swung his deadly sling, a strange life stirred on every side. The groups of Perseus, and the Sabines started to sudden consciousness, a cry of anguish broke from the women's lips and echoed far and wide across the square.

In the Colonnade before the Palazzo degli Uffizzi, where the nobles keep high carnival, the metal pig stood still.

"Hold fast," said the pig, "hold fast. I am going upstairs now." The child did not speak, he was trembling, half in terror, half in joy.

They passed through a long gallery; the boy had often been here before; the walls were hidden by splendid paintings; statues and busts stood all around, and the light was as clear as in the brightest noon-day. It was most beautiful of all when a side door opened; the child remembered that also, but now all the beauty was seen in its fairest light. Here stood a lovely, marble woman, beautiful as only the great master of marble could mould: her fair limbs moved, dolphins flocked to her feet, immortality shone from her clear eyes. The world knows her as the Medicean Venus. By her side stood marble figures, where the soul has thrilled through the stone—handsome, naked men, one of whom is whetting his sword, gladiators wrestling in deadly combat; the sword was whetted, the battle fought for the goddess of beauty.

The child was dazzled by the splendour; the walls glowed with colour, all was life and movement. The statue of Venus seemed doubled—the earthly Venus rose, yielding and passionate as when Titian clasped her to his heart; it was wonderful to see. They were two fair women, their lovely, unveiled limbs were stretched on soft cushions, their breasts heaved, their heads moved so that the heavy masses of hair fell over their low shoulders, while their dark eyes spoke out the thoughts of their beating hearts. None of the pictures dared to come quite out of the frames; the goddess of beauty herself, the gladiators and the sword-whetter remained in their places; for the glory which streamed down from the pictures of the Virgin and the saints held them spell-bound.

What lustre and beauty met them in every room! The child saw it all: the metal pig walked slowly through the ever-changing loveliness. One sight drove out another; but at last came a picture which printed itself deeply in the child's heart, and chiefly because of the happy children's faces on it. He had seen it once by daylight—many pass it heedlessly by, and yet it contains a whole treasure of poesy. It is the descent of Christ into hell—they are not the condemned who throng around him, but groups of heathen. The Florentine Angelo Bronzino has painted the picture. The loveliest thing in the picture is the expression of the children's faces; the full confidence that they shall be taken to heaven. Two of them embrace each other already—one little lad stretches out his hand to another and points to himself, as if to say, "I am going to heaven!" The elder folk stand in uncertain hope, or bow themselves in humble adoration before the Lord Jesus. The glance of the child rested longest of all on this picture, the metal pig stood still before it; a faint sigh was heard, did it come from the animal or from the canvas? The lad stretched out his arms to the smiling children, but the pig ran away with him through the open doorway. "Thanks to thee, dear, kind pig!" said the child, as they hastily ran down the staircase.

"And thanks to thee, as well," answered the metal pig; "we have helped each other, for it is only when I have an innocent child on my back that I receive the power of running. See! I may even pass under

the light that falls from the lamp below the picture of the Virgin—but I may not enter the church. When you are on my back, indeed, I may look in from without. Do not get off, or I shall lie dead as you see me in the Porta Rosa."

"I will stay with you," said the little one; and on they hurried through the streets of Florence till they came to the square before the Church of Santa Croce.

The doors opened wide, lights gleamed from the altar through the church and streamed across the lonely piazza.

A wondrous radiance gleamed from a grave in the left aisle; thousands of glancing stars shone round it like a glory. A coat-of-arms glows on the stone—a ladder on a blue ground that burns like fire—it is Galileo's grave. The monument is simple, but the burning ladder on the blue ground is full of meaning. It speaks of art, which raises its glowing ladder to the heavens, so that its prophets are caught up, like Elijah, to the skies.

In the right aisle the columns of the rich sarcophagus seem instinct with life. Here stood Michael Angelo, yonder Dante, wearing his laurel crown, Alfieri, Macchiavelli—the great men who form the pride and boast of Italy.* It is a splendid church, smaller, but far lovelier than the marble cathedral.

It seemed as if the marble drapery stirred, the noble figures raised their heads and looked towards the glittering altar, where, amid soaring bursts of music, white-robed boys swung their golden censers—the heavy fragrance streamed from the church out into the open square.

The boy stretched out his hand towards the glory, and in a moment the metal pig hurried him away; he was obliged to hold firmly to its neck, the wind whistled past his ears, the church doors creaked on their hinges as they swung to, for a moment the child seemed to lose consciousness, he felt an icy chill, and opened his eyes.

It was daylight; he sat, half falling from the back of the pig, which stood, where it had ever stood, in the street of Porta Rosa.

Fear and dread filled the child's heart at the thought of her whom he called his mother. She had sent him out yesterday to beg, and he had received nothing; he was hungry and thirsty. Once more he embraced the metal pig, kissed it, and nodded to it a farewell. Then, wending his way along a narrow lane, hardly wide enough to admit a donkey carrying its pack saddle, he came to an iron-bound door. A dirty staircase, with a rope for banisters, led him to an open corridor hung with rags; another staircase led him down into a courtyard, where, from a well in the centre, iron pipes were carried up to the houses, and one bucket hung by another; the chains creaked, the buckets rose and fell, the water splashed in the courtyard. Another crumbling staircase led upwards. Two Russian sailors came clattering

* Michael Angelo's tomb stands opposite Galileo's. On the monument three figures are grouped round his bust: Sculpture, Painting, and Architecture. Dante's monument is next to this, though the poet's body lies at Ravenna; on his monument Italy, as Poesy, weeps for her lost poet. A few steps farther is the tomb of Alfieri, on which are carved laurel, lyre, and masks, with Italy weeping above the coffin. The line of distinguished men is closed by Macchiavelli.

down the steps at such a headlong rate that they almost overturned the poor lad. They were returning from their nightly bacchanal; a black-haired woman, not young, but handsome, followed them. "What have you brought?" she cried out to the child.

"Don't be angry," he pleaded—"they gave me nothing, nothing at all;" and he seized his mother's dress as if to kiss it. They entered the squalid room; I will not describe it, further than to say that in it one saw the inevitable *marito*, or chafing dish with handles, which the Italians carry about with them, to warm themselves at its charcoal embers. The woman took up the *marito*, thrust aside the boy with her elbow and said, "Come, you have brought some money."

The lad began to cry: she kicked him roughly, and he sobbed aloud.

"Be still, or I will break your noisy head!" she cried, swinging the chafing dish; the child threw himself on the ground, with a shrill cry of fear. His voice brought one of the neighbours into the room, a woman, holding her *marito* in her hands.

"What are you doing to the boy, Felicita?" she cried.

"The child is mine," answered Felicita. "I can murder him if I like, and you into the bargain, Giannina." She lifted her *marito*, Giannina raised hers too, in self-defence; the two clay dishes swung together so violently that they broke to pieces, and a shower of glowing embers, ashes, and fiery dust filled the room. In the confusion the child escaped from the room: he ran through the courtyard and out into the street, until he could not breathe. Before him stood the great church whose doors had opened to him on the previous night; he went in, and, kneeling on the first grave he came to—it was Michael Angelo's—he sobbed aloud. The church was gloriously beautiful: mass was being sung—people went and came, and no one noticed the child. Only one elderly man paused for a moment, glanced at him, and then went away like the others.

The child was faint from hunger: he crept into a corner between the marble monuments and fell asleep. Towards evening he was awoke by a pull at his garments, he started up, and the same old man was standing before him.

"Are you ill? Where do you live? Have you been here all day?" asked the old man. The child answered the string of questions, and the old man took him to his little house, which was in a side street near at hand. They entered into a glove-maker's workshop, where a woman sat busily sewing; a little white poodle, shorn so closely that one could see the pink colour of his skin, was leaping about on the table and sat up before the child in greeting.

"Innocent creatures find each other out," said the woman, caressing both dog and child.

They gave the boy food and drink, and told him he might spend the night with them, and that on the next day Guiseppe, the old glove-maker, would speak with his mother. They gave him a little bed, poor and mean indeed—but for him who had slept so often on hard, cold steps, it was royally splendid: he slept sweetly, dreaming of the lovely pictures and the metal pig.

Guiseppe went out the next morning; the child was sad to see him go, for he knew that the result would be that he would be taken back

to his mother. He kissed the merry little dog, and nodded to them both.

What news did old Guiseppe bring back with him? He spoke for a long while with his wife, who nodded and stroked the child. "He is a lovely boy," she said; "he will make as famous a 'prentice as you did. See how pliant and delicate his fingers are! Madonna has surely destined him to be a glove-maker."

The child stayed on in the house, and the woman taught him to sew; he ate well, slept well, learned how to play, and began to tease *Bellissima*, the little dog. Then the woman would scold and threaten him, and the child would take it to heart and sit sorrowfully in his lonely chamber. The room looked on the street where skins were hung out to dry; thick iron bars protected every window; the boy could not sleep, the metal pig was always in his thoughts, and suddenly he heard

outside the house "Pit-pat." It was certainly the pig—he sprang to the window, but it had gone by.

"Help the gentleman to carry his colour-box," said Madame to the child, one morning, as the young painter, their neighbour, stepped by with a large roll of canvas under his arm. The boy picked up the box and followed the painter; they set out towards the gallery, and went up the stairs which were so familiar to him now, ever since his ride on the metal pig. He recognized the groups of statues, the marble Venus and her who lived in colour, he saw once more the Virgin, and Saint John.

They paused once more before Bronzino's picture; the lovely children smiled in expectation of heaven, and the poor lad smiled back at them, for this was *his* heaven.

"Go home now," said the painter, when the boy had stood motionless while the easel was set up.

"May I see you paint?" asked the boy. "May I look on while you put the picture on your white canvas?"

"I am not going to paint yet," answered the man, taking up his black crayon. His hand moved quickly, his eye measured the great picture; and, although only a few fine strokes were visible, there stood the Christ on the canvas as He stands in the coloured picture.

"Now, go home with you," said the painter; and the boy walked silently homeward, sat himself down at the table and learned to sew gloves.

But all day long his thoughts were in the picture gallery; he pricked his fingers, worked clumsily, but did not tease Bellissima. When the evening closed in, and the house-door stood wide open, he stole out.

It was cold, but starlight, bright, and pleasant. He wandered through the desolate streets till he stood again before the metal pig; he kissed it and got on to its back. "Oh, you dear pig, how I have longed for you!" he cried; "we must have a ride together to-night!"

The metal pig stood motionless, with the clear spring flowing from its snout. The child bestrode him, and something pulled gently at his dress: he looked down, it was Bellissima, the little half-shorn Bellissima, barking as much as to say, "Look! I am here, too. What are you sitting there for?" No fiery dragon could have frightened the lad more than Bellissima did in that place, and at that hour. Bellissima in the open street without her wraps! not *dressed*, as her mistress used to say! What would become of him? The little dog never came out in the winter without wearing a little jacket of lambskin, cut out and made expressly for her. The jacket was prettily trimmed with bows and tiny bells, and tied on with scarlet ribbon. The dog looked like a little kid when it was allowed to trot along in this costume by its mistress's side. Bellissima out of doors and not dressed! What would not happen? All dreams and fancies were come to an end; the boy kissed the metal pig and took Bellissima under his arm; the dog was trembling with cold, so the boy ran as fast as he could.

"What are you running off with?" cried two policemen, at whom Bellissima barked. "Where have you stolen that little dog?" and they took it from him.

"Oh, give it me back!" implored the child.

"If you have not stolen it, you can tell them at home to send for it to the police-station," and away they went with Bellissima.

There was a calamity! The little one did not know whether to go and jump into the Arno or to go home and confess everything. "They will certainly kill me," he thought. "But I will gladly be killed—I can but die, and then I shall go to the Madonna;" and he went home principally that he might be killed.

The door was shut; he could not reach the knocker; no one was in the street, but a stone lay there, and with that he thundered against the door. "Who is there?" came a voice from within.

"It is I," he said; "Bellissima is gone—let me in, and then kill me."

Terror seized Madame's soul; she glanced at the wall, the little lambskin jacket was hanging there.

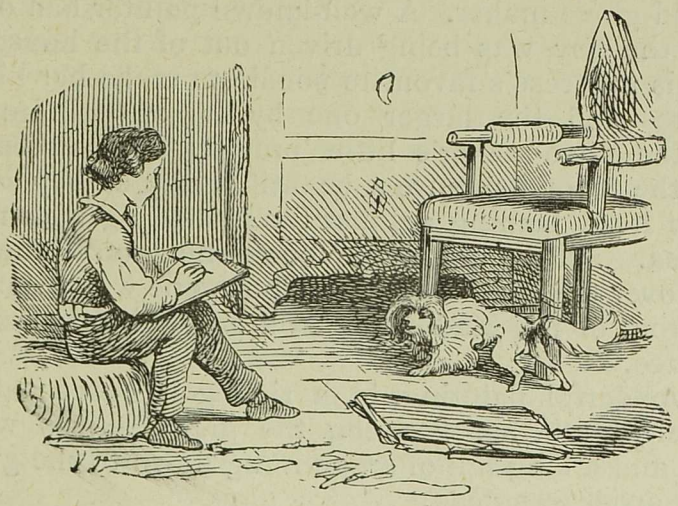
"Bellissima at the police-station!" she cried. "You wicked boy!

how did you entice her out? She will be frozen! That poor little creature all among those rough men!"

The old man was sent out in search at once—the woman bewailed herself—the boy cried. All the neighbours came in, and among them was the painter; he took the boy between his knees, questioned him, and by degrees drew from him the whole story of the metal pig and the picture gallery—and it was rather a puzzling story at the best. The painter soothed the child, and tried to pacify the woman, but she utterly refused to be comforted till her husband came back with Bellissima, rescued from the police-station. Then there was an outburst of joy! The painter caressed the little lad and gave him a handful of drawings.

Such comical heads—such splendid sketches! And if the metal pig itself was not among them! Nothing could be more delightful. Only a few strokes, and there it was on the paper; and even the house behind it was there, too!

Why, any one who can paint can summon up the whole world round him in his home!



At earliest dawn on the next day the boy took up a lead pencil and tried to copy the metal pig on the back of one of the drawings. He managed it—it was rather on one side, perhaps, rather up and down, one leg thick and one thin, but every one could recognize it; the lad himself was rejoiced at it.

He saw well that the pencil would not go as straight as it ought; the next day another metal pig appeared on another drawing; that was a hundred times better; the third was so good that every one owned it.

But the glove-making fared badly, and errands in the city fared still worse: the metal pig had taught the lad that all pictures can be put on paper; and the whole city of Florence is a picture-book, if one will but turn over the leaves. In the Piazza della Trinita is a slender column, and on the column stands Justice, with bandaged eyes, holding her balance. She too came on the white paper, and it was the glove-maker's little 'prentice who had placed her there. The picture-gallery increased, but as yet it contained nothing but studies of still life; when one day up came Bellissima frolicking round the child.

"Stand still," he cried, "and then you shall come into my gallery." But Bellissima would not stand still, and was obliged to be tied by her head and her tail.

She leaped and struggled till the string was pulled quite tight; and at her barks up came her mistress. "You wicked, wicked boy! my poor dog!" was all that she could articulate: she thrust the boy from her, drove him from the house as an ungrateful vagabond and hardened lad, and turned back to lament over the half-strangled Bellissima.

Just at the moment the painter was coming up the staircase, and—this is the crisis of the whole story.

In the year 1834 there was an exhibition of paintings in the Academia delle Arti. Two pictures, hung side by side, attracted a crowd of spectators. The smaller one represented a merry little lad drawing. His model was an oddly-shorn white poodle, which had evidently refused to sit still, and consequently had been tied up by its head and tail: there was a vividness and truth in the little painting that spoke to every heart. The painter—so people said—was a poor, self-taught Florentine, who had been taken out of the streets when quite a little child by an old glove-maker. A well-known painter had discovered his talent just as the boy was being driven out of the house, because he had tied up his mistress's favourite poodle to make her his model.

The picture—and the larger one by its side still more clearly—showed that the glove-maker's little 'prentice-boy had become a great painter. In the second picture a beautiful, ragged boy sat sleeping in the street, his head leaning against the metal pig which stands near the Porta Rosa. All the spectators knew the spot. The child's arms were thrown over the pig's neck; the little one was sound asleep, and the lamp in front of the Madonna cast a bright light across the child's pale, lovely face.

It was a wonderful painting, in a rich gold frame; at each corner hung a laurel wreath, but between the green leaves was twisted a black ribbon, and a long fall of crape hung down to the ground.

The young artist was dead.

The Neighbours.

ANY one would have thought that something important was going on in the duck-pond; but nothing at all was happening. All the ducks who were resting quietly on the water—or standing on their heads in it, and they can do that—swam all at once to the shore; you could see their footmarks in the wet earth and hear their quacking far and wide. The pond—smooth as a mirror a moment ago—was ruffled all at once with a great commotion. A few minutes back it mirrored every tree and bush in the neighbourhood—the old farm-house with the holes in the thatch, and the swallows' nests, and, above all, the great rose-bush all ablaze with

roses; it covered the whole wall, and hung down towards the water, where everything was seen as in a picture, only that all the objects stood upon their heads as it were; now that the water was so deeply stirred, one thing flowed into another, and there was an end of the picture. Two feathers, which some of the ducks had let fall, rocked to and fro; suddenly they darted forwards as if the wind had come, but it never came, so they had to stay where they were; and the water gradually grew smooth again. The roses mirrored themselves once more; they were wondrously lovely, but they knew it not, for no one had ever told them. The sun shone through their delicate green leaves, all breathed out sweetest fragrance, all felt as we feel when we are penetrated with the consciousness of our happiness.

"How beautiful it is to live!" cried the roses. "Only one thing I wish, and that is to kiss the sun; it is so warm and mild. And I should like to kiss our sister roses in the pond below; and the pretty little birds in the nest. There are some overhead, too; they put out their heads and twitter faintly; they have no feathers like their father and mother. They are good neighbours—those above and those below. How beautiful it is to live!"

The young birds above and below—those below, indeed, were only the reflection of the others in the pond—were sparrows: their parents were sparrows, too; they had taken possession of the empty swallow's nest, and lived in it as if it belonged to them.

"Are those ducks' children swimming about down there?" said the young sparrows, pointing to the feathers on the water.

"If you want to ask a question, *do* ask something sensible," said the mother. "Don't you see that they are feathers, living clothes, such as I wear myself, and such as you will wear? Only ours are finer. All the same, I wish we had them up here; they would help keep the nest warm. I am curious to know what the ducks were so frightened at: it couldn't be at us, though I certainly said 'Tweet' rather loudly. Those stupid roses ought to know, but they never know anything; they only look at themselves, and send out fragrance. I am heartily sick of such neighbours."

"Listen to those dear little birds up there," said the roses; "they are beginning to try and sing, but they hardly can manage it yet. They will soon learn; and what a pleasure that must be! It is nice to have such merry neighbours."

Suddenly two horses came galloping up to be watered; a peasant lad was riding on one of them; he had laid aside most of his clothes, but he wore his large, black, broad-brimmed hat. He rode boldly to the deepest part, whistling like a bird, and as he passed the rose-bush he gathered one of the roses, stuck it in his hat, and so rode off gaily adorned. The other roses looked after their sister, and said, "Whither is she going?" But no one knew.

"I should like to go out into the world," said one of them; "and yet it is beautiful here at home. All day long the sun shines warm and bright; and at night the heaven is lovelier still; we can see that through all the little holes." It was the stars she meant, but she knew no better.

"We make it lively for the old house," said the sparrows; "and

the swallow's nest brings luck, folks say, so that the people may well be proud of us. But what neighbours! A rose tree like that against the wall creates damp; I should think it will be got rid of and corn sown in its place. The roses are good for nothing but to look at, and to smell, or, at the most, to stick in one's hat. Every year—I know that from my mother—they fall off. The farmer's wife stores them up and strews salt between them; then they receive a French name, which I neither can nor will pronounce, and they have to be sprinkled on fire if they are to smell sweet. That is their path in life: they only exist for the eye and the nose; and now you know."

When the evening closed in and the gnats danced in the warm air under the rosy clouds, the nightingale flew up to sing to the roses. She sang that the beautiful fades like the sunlight in this world—and that the beautiful lives for ever! The roses thought that the nightingale was singing of himself, and one might well think so; but they never imagined that the song was meant for them alone. They were very happy in listening, however, and wondered whether all the young sparrows would grow up into nightingales. "I could understand that bird perfectly," said the young sparrows; "all but one word, that is—what *is* the beautiful?" "Nothing at all," said the mother sparrow; "at least, something purely for outside show. Up yonder, in the courtyard of the castle, where the pigeons have a house of their own, and corn and peas served out to them every day—I have dined with them myself, and so shall you, in time; for, tell me your friends, and I will tell who you are—up yonder, at the castle, there are two birds with green necks and a crest on their heads; they can spread out their tails like a great wheel; it is painted with every colour and dazzles one's eyes quite painfully. These birds are called peacocks, and *that* is the beautiful. If they were only plucked a little they would look no better than we do. I would have plucked them already if they had not been so big."

"I will pluck them," chirped the youngest sparrow, who had, as yet, no feathers of his own.

In the farm-house lived two young married people, who loved each other dearly, and were cheerful and industrious. Everything round them looked bright and pretty. On Sunday mornings the young wife came out and gathered a handful of the loveliest roses, which she placed in a glass of water on the sideboard.

"Now I know that it is Sunday," said the young farmer. He kissed his little wife, and they sat down and read together out of the prayer-book, hand in hand; the sunlight fell across the roses and rested on the youthful pair.

"That sight is quite too tedious," said the mother sparrow, who could see into the room from her nest; "quite too tedious." And she flew away.

The same thing happened on next Sunday, for every week fresh roses were put into the glass, and yet the rose-bush was covered with roses. The young sparrows had their feathers now, and would have liked to fly with their mother, but she would not allow them to do so, so they had to stay at home. She flew off alone, and, however it may

have happened I cannot tell, but there she was, caught in a snare which some boys had set in the hedge. The horse-hair held her leg so tightly that she thought it was being cut through, and trembled with pain and terror. The boys rushed up and seized the bird by no means gently.

"It's only a sparrow," they said; but they held her fast, and whenever she cried out they struck her on the beak.

In the farm-house lived an old man, a merry, wandering pedler, who knew how to cut out curious balls and figures of toilet soap. When he saw the boys, and heard them say they could do nothing with the bird, he said, "Shall we smarten it up a little?" The mother sparrow felt a deadly chill of fear. Out of his colour-box the old man took some bright gold, and sent the lads to fetch some white of an egg; the bird's feathers were covered first with the egg and then with the gold, till she was gilt all over. The glitter and finery only made her tremble in every limb. Then the old man tore away a piece of the red lining of his coat, cut it into vandykes till it looked like a cock's comb, and gummed it on the bird's head.

"Now you shall see Mr. Goldcoat fly," said the old man, letting the sparrow loose. She flew away in mortal terror, ablaze with the radiant sunlight. How she glittered! All the sparrows—nay, even an old crow, though he was a *very* old bird—were startled at the sight, and flew after her to find out what she was.

Driven onwards by dread and horror, the sparrow made for her nest: she was ready to sink helpless to the earth. The number of the pursuing birds increased, and some of them already tried to peck her.

"Look at him! Just look at him!" they all cried. "Look at him! Just look at him!" cried the young sparrows, as she reached her nest. "It must be a young peacock; he is dressed in all colours; he dazzles one's eyes, just as as our mother said. Tweet! That is the beautiful." And they pecked at the sparrow with their beaks so that she could not get in the nest; the poor bird was so hemmed in that she could not even say "Tweet!" much less "I am your mother!" And now the whole cruel flock set upon her and pulled out feather after feather, till she fell faint and bleeding into the rose-bush.

"Poor little thing!" cried all the roses. "Do not fear. We will hide you; lean your head on us."

But the sparrow opened her wings wide, drew them close to her side, and fell dead by the side of her neighbours, the fair, sweet roses.

"Tweet!" echoed from the nest above. "Where can mother be staying? It is quite incomprehensible! We don't hear even a chirp from her. Can it mean that we are to shift for ourselves? She has left us the nest as our inheritance. Now, to which of us must it belong when we are all married?"

"Yes; I can't have you staying with me when I set up housekeeping, with a wife and children," said the youngest.

"Indeed! I shall most likely have more wives and children than you," said the second.

"But I am the eldest," cried the third. Then they all grew hot over it, flapped their wings, and pecked with their beaks, till, flop! one

after the other fell out of the nest on to the ground. There they lay, their heads on one side, their eyes blinking furiously—in a terrible temper. That was their stupid way of behaving.

They could fly a little, and practice improved them. At last they all hit upon a signal by which they would be able to recognize each other if they afterwards met in the world. The signal was "Tweet" and three scrapes with the left foot.

The sparrow who was left in possession of the nest made himself as big as he could, for he was now sole proprietor. But his grandeur did not last long, for that very night the roof caught fire, the whole house was burned down, and the sparrow with it; the young master and mistress, however, escaped unhurt. When the sun rose, and all around looked as if it had just awoke from a refreshing sleep, nothing was left of the farm-house but a few old blackened beams by the chimney, who was now his own master. Smoke was still rising in clouds from the ruins; but outside the rose-bush bloomed unharmed, fresh and beautiful as ever; every flower and spray was mirrored in the clear water.

"See how lovely the roses look by that blackened house!" cried a passer-by. "No one could imagine anything more picturesque! I must jot it down."

And the speaker took out a little book with white leaves; he was a painter, and with his rapid pencil he sketched the smoking house, the blackened beams, the falling chimney, which seemed tottering more and more: but in the foreground was the lovely rose-bush which had suggested the whole picture.

Later in the day two of the sparrows came back; "Where is the house?" they cried. "Where is the nest? Tweet! Everything is burned down, and our brother into the bargain! That's what *he* has got by keeping our nest. The roses have got off well. There they stand, with their pink cheeks; they are not the people to fret about other folk's troubles. I have no wish to accost them, and it is very ugly here in my opinion." And they flew away.

On a clear, sunny, autumn day—a day that looked like the middle of summer—flocks of pigeons, black, white, and coloured, hopped to and fro in the courtyard of the castle. How they glittered in the sunshine! The mother pigeon said to her young ones, "Place yourselves in groups! Place yourselves in groups! That looks much better."

"What are those little grey creatures hopping after us?" asked an old pigeon, with red and green eyes. "Little greycoats! Little greycoats!" she cried.

"They are sparrows—good sort of folk. We have always kept up our reputation for piety and charity, so we had better allow them to pick up the grain. They don't address us, and they bow and scrape very properly."

So they did; three times with the right foot, three times with the left foot, and then they said "Tweet!" On which they recognized each other at once as the sparrows belonging to the old nest.

"Very good living here," said the sparrows. The pigeons puffed themselves out, strutted proudly about, and had their own opinion

about everything. "Do you see that pouter pigeon?" said one of them. "Just look how she gobbles up the peas! She eats too much, and picks out all the best! Cur-roo! Cur-roo! How she sets up her crest—the ugly, spiteful thing! Cur-roo! Cur-roo!"

Every eye sparkled with malice. "Place yourselves in groups! Place yourselves in groups! Little greycoats! Little greycoats!" so the chatter went on—and so it may go on for thousands of years.

The sparrows ate with a will: they listened attentively to all that was said, and even tried to place themselves in groups, but it was not becoming to them. They had eaten enough now, so they left the pigeons, and talked them over freely among themselves; then they slipped under the garden pallisading, and, as the house door was open, one of them who had eaten so much that he felt quite courageous, hopped on to the threshold. "Tweet!" he cried, "I can venture so far!"

"Tweet!" said another, "so dare I, and a little farther too!" And he hopped into the room. No one was there; and the third, who had noticed that, flew still farther in, crying, "Neck or nothing! This is a queer-looking human nest; and what have they got there? Now, what is that?"

Right before the sparrows bloomed the roses, and mirrored themselves in the water by the blackened beams and falling chimney. "Now, what can that be? However did it get here in the castle?"

The sparrows tried to fly over the rose-bush and round the chimney, but they only flew against a dead wall. It was a large, beautiful painting, which the painter had made from his little sketch.

"Tweet!" cried the sparrows, "it is nothing! It only looks like something. Tweet! that is the beautiful! Can you make anything of it? *I* can't." And they flew away, for some people came into the room.

Days and years passed away: the pigeons had often cooed and quarrelled, the spiteful birds. The sparrows had frozen in winter, and in summer had lived in clover; they were all betrothed or married, or whatever they call it. All had young families; and each bird thought his own the cleverest and best looking; one flew this way, and one that, and whenever they met they recognized each other by their "Tweet!" and scrape with the left foot. The eldest had remained a spinster, with neither nest nor young ones; it was her great fancy to see large cities, so she flew to Copenhagen.

There she saw a large, bright-looking house, close to the castle and the canal, where myriad little boats, laden with apples and crockery, sailed to and fro. The windows were broader below than above, and when the sparrow peeped through them the rooms looked to her like tulips, so gay and rich in colour. In the tulips stood figures of white marble, and some of gypsum, but that was all one to the sparrow. On the roof was a metal chariot drawn by metal horses, and driven by the Goddess of Victory. It was Thorwaldsen's Museum.

"What a glitter! What a show!" said the sparrow. "That must be the beautiful! Tweet! But it is larger than a peacock." She recalled what her mother had told her about the beautiful in the days of her youth. She flew down into the court; all around her was grand

and splendid; palm branches were painted on the walls, and in the centre of the court a rose-tree in full bloom drooped its rich blossoms over a grave.

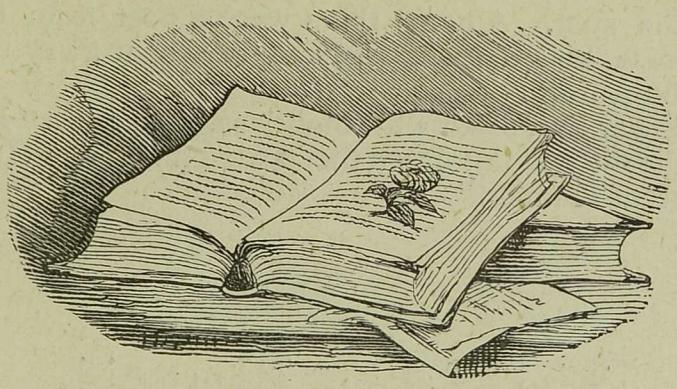
The sparrow flew towards it, for she saw several other birds of her own kind. "Tweet!" and three scrapes with her left foot; how often had she given the signal through the past year, and no one had answered, for people once parted do not meet every day; the greeting had grown into a habit with her.

But on this occasion three old sparrows and one young one answered with "Tweet!" and three scrapes of the left foot. "Dear me; good morning! and so we meet here. It is a fine place, but there is very little to eat. That is the beautiful! Tweet!"

Several people came out of the corridors where the lovely statues stood; they approached the grave of the master whose hand had created the marble forms. All of them stood with reverent faces round Thorwaldsen's grave; and some of them picked up a few of the fallen rose-leaves. They had come from afar; from sea-girt England, from Germany, from France. The fairest lady gathered a rose and placed it on her bosom. The sparrows began to think that the roses were monarchs here, and that the whole place had been built for them. It certainly seemed very absurd to them; but as every one was showing love and honour to the roses, the sparrows did not wish to be left behind. "Tweet!" they cried, sweeping the ground with their tails, and blinking at the roses. They had not looked at them long before they felt certain that they were their old neighbours from the farm-yard; and they were right. The painter who painted the picture had received permission to dig them up, and had given the whole tree to the architect, for no one had ever seen more beautiful roses. The architect had the tree planted over Thorwaldsen's grave, to bloom there for ever, as a symbol of the beautiful, and to offer up its fair pink leaves, that they might be carried away as memorials into many a distant land.

"Are you settled in this place?" asked the sparrows.

The roses nodded; they recognized their old neighbours, and were glad to see them again. "How beautiful it is to live and blossom!" they cried; "to see old friends and happy faces every day!" "Tweet!" cried the sparrows. "Yes; they are the very same. We remember the duck-pond they sprung from. Tweet! And now what a position they have gained! Well, luck comes to some folk in their sleep! Look! there is a withered leaf—I can see it quite plainly." And they pecked and pecked at it till the leaf fell off. But the rose-bush stood there fresher and fairer than ever; the flowers gave out their fragrance in the sunshine, and shared the glory of the sculptor's immortal name.



A Rose from the Grave of Homer.

EVERY Eastern song tells of the nightingale's love for the rose; and how in the silent starlit nights the feathered songster greets his beloved with a serenade.

Not far from Smyrna, under the tall plantain trees where the merchant drives his laden camels, who raise their heads and tread proudly on the sacred ground, I saw a blooming rose tree: wood pigeons flew among the branches of the trees, and their wings gleamed in the sunshine like mother-of-pearl.

The rose tree bore one flower more beautiful than all the rest, and to that one the nightingale poured out his love tale; a dew-drop shone like a tear of pity on her petals, and the spray which bore her drooped above a few great stones.

"Here rests the world's greatest singer," cried the rose; "my breath shall perfume his grave, my leaves shall rest upon it when the wind strips them from me. The singer of Troy became the dust from which I spring. I, a rose from the grave of Homer, am too sacred a thing to blossom for a poor nightingale!"

The nightingale sang himself to death. The camel driver came up with his laden beasts and black slaves; his little son found the dead bird, and buried the sweet singer in Homer's grave: the rose trembled in the wind.

Evening came on; the rose folded her petals closer, slept and dreamed. It was a lovely summer's day: a group of foreigners approached, they were making a pilgrimage to Homer's grave. Among the strangers was a singer from the north, from the home of the white mist and the Aurora: he gathered the rose, pressed it in a book, and carried it away to another continent, to his distant fatherland. The rose faded from grief and died in the narrow book, which the stranger opened in his home, and said, "Here is a rose from the grave of Homer!"

This was what the flower dreamed; and she awoke and trembled in the wind: a dew-drop fell from her petals on the singer's grave. The sun rose, the rose glowed fairer than ever; the sun was shining bright, she was still in her own Asia. Footsteps were heard, and

foreigners from Europe, such as the rose had seen in her dream, approached the spot. Among them was a poet from the north; he broke off the rose, kissed its leaves, and carried it away to the land of mist and of the Aurora.

The dead flower lies, dried and colourless, within his "Iliad," and, as in a dream, she hears him open the book and say, "Here is a rose from the grave of Homer!"

—o—

The Little Mermaid.

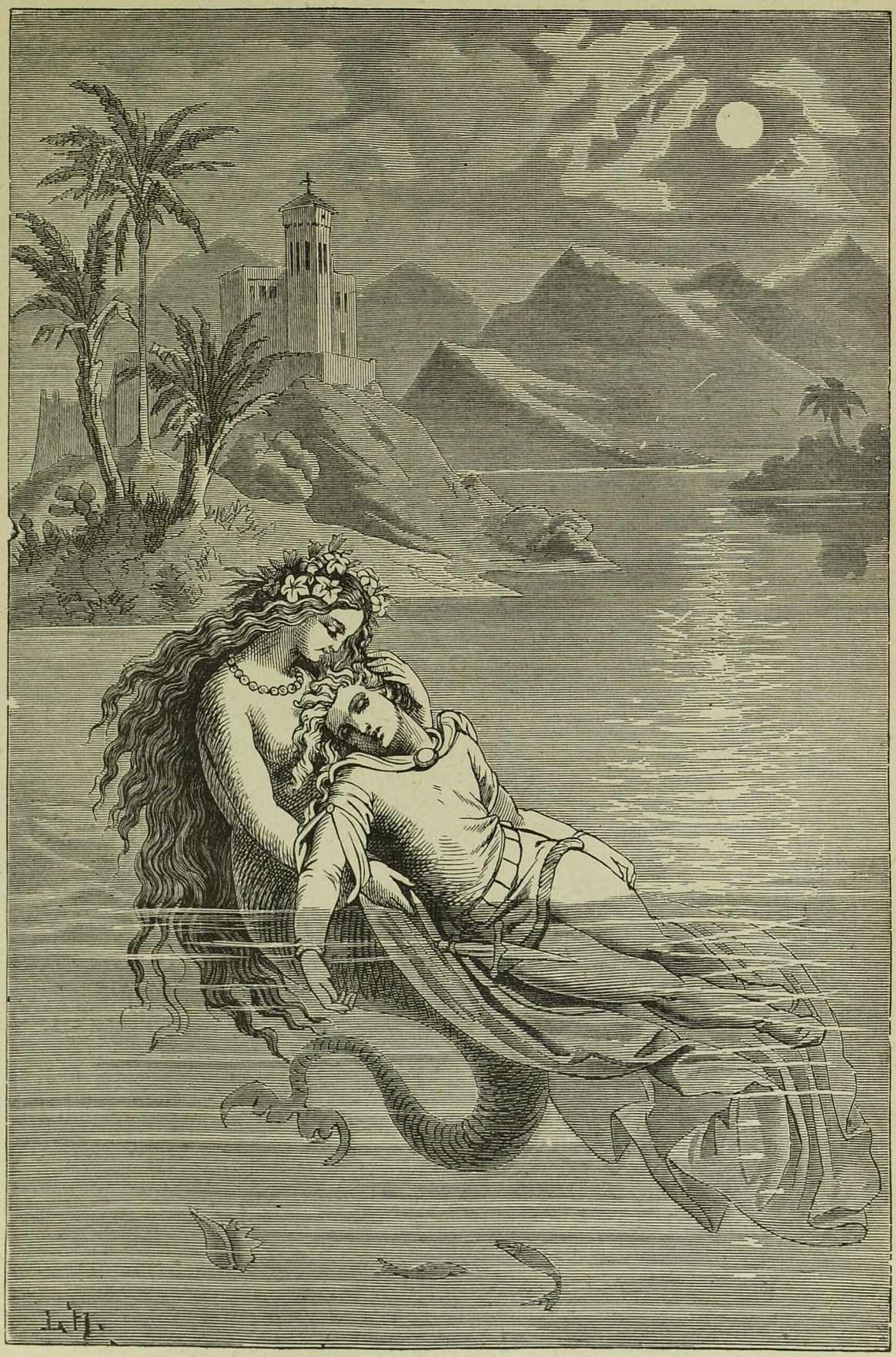
FAR out in the sea the water is as blue as the petals of the corn-flower, and as clear as the purest glass. But it is deep; deeper than any cable can reach, it would take many a steeple, piled one on the other, to reach the ground. That is where the seafolk live.

But do not fancy that the floor is only of bare, white sand: no, the most fantastic flowers and trees grow there; plants whose stems and leaves are so pliable that they yield to the slightest motion of the water, as if they were alive. Small and large fish glide through the branches, just as the birds do in the trees overhead. In the deepest part stands the sea-king's palace; the walls are of coral, and the narrow, pointed windows of the clearest amber; while the roof is formed of shells which open and shut as the water ebbs and flows. It is a lovely roof, for in every shell lies a gleaming pearl; a single one would lend lustre and value to a queen's crown.

The sea-king had been a widower for many years; and his mother kept house for him. She was a clever woman; very proud of her rank, and she always wore twelve oyster-shells on her tail; six being the utmost number which any other noble lady dared to put on. On the whole she deserved great praise, especially for her treatment of her grandchildren, the little sea-princesses. They were six beautiful children, but the youngest was the most beautiful of all; her skin was as fair and delicate as a rose-leaf, her eyes as blue as the deepest sea; but neither she nor the others had feet, their bodies ended in a fish's tail.

All day long they played in the sea-king's palace, where living flowers grew out of the walls and along the corridors. The amber windows were wide open; and the fish swam in to them, as the swallows fly in to us when we open the windows; but the fish would swim close up to the princesses, eat out of their hands, and let themselves be stroked.

Outside the palace was a large garden filled with burning red and deep blue flowers; the fruit glowed like gold, and the flowers sparkled like living flame as they swayed their leaves and tendrils to and fro.



"She kept his head above water."

The soil was the finest sand, but blue as the flame of sulphur; indeed, a strange blue glimmer lay on all around; it looked more as if one were standing in the air with the blue heaven above and below, than as if one were at the bottom of the sea. In deep calms the sun was visible; it looked like a great purple flower showering down light from its calyx.

Each one of the little princesses had a small garden of her own, where she might sow and plant at will. One of them made her garden in the shape of a whale; another preferred to imitate the form of a mermaid, but the youngest made hers round like the sun, and planted it with red flowers. She was a strange child, quiet and thoughtful, and when the other sisters used to adorn themselves with the curious and beautiful things they found in wrecked vessels, she would never accept anything but the flowers that were red like the sun, and one beautiful marble statue. It was the statue of a youth, carved in pure white marble, and had sunk from a stranded ship to the bottom of the sea. She planted a rose red weeping-willow by the statue; the tree grew tall and drooped its beautiful branches over the marble towards the deep blue sand, so that the shadows deepened to violet, and when the branches stirred it seemed as if roots and crown were mingling in embraces.

The little mermaid's greatest delight was to listen to stories about the earth and human beings: her old grandmother was coaxed to tell her all she knew of ships and cities, men and animals; the child seemed to think it so wonderfully beautiful that the flowers which grew on the earth smelt so sweet, for under the water they have no smell. She loved to think and wonder that the trees were green, and that the little fishes in the trees sang so sweetly that it was a pleasure to hear them. The grandmother was obliged to call the birds fishes, or the little princess would not have known what she meant, because she had never seen a bird.

"When you are fifteen years old," said her grandmother, "you will have leave to rise to the surface of the sea. Then you can sit on the cliffs by moonlight and watch the ships sail by—you will see forests and cities." The next year the eldest sister was fifteen; but as there was a whole year between each sister the youngest would have five long years to wait before she could rise to the surface of the sea and see what things look like in our world. But each one promised the others to tell them all she saw, and what she thought was the most beautiful; for their grandmother did not tell them half enough, there was so much they wanted to have explained to them.

No one was more eager than the youngest; the very one who had so long to wait, and who was always so silent and thoughtful. Many a night she stood at the open window looking up through the dark blue water and watching the fishes moving their tails and fins as they darted by. She saw the moon and stars; they looked paler and larger through the water than they do through the air. Sometimes something like a black cloud would pass between her and the stars, (now it was a large whale and now a great ship crowded with men) but no one ever thought that a dear little mermaiden stood below stretching out her white hands towards the keel.

At last the eldest princess was fifteen, and obtained leave to rise to the surface of the sea.

When she came home again she had a hundred things to tell; but the most beautiful of all, she said, was to lie on a sand-bank by moonlight above the quiet sea, and to watch the great city on the neighbouring coast, to see the lights gleam like a myriad stars, to hear the music, and noise, and roll of carriages, to see the forest of steeples, and hear the church bells ring.

How the youngest princess listened! and later in the evening she stood at the open window and looked up through the dark blue water, thinking of the large city with its noise and din, and fancying she heard the church bells chiming through the water.

The next year the second sister obtained leave to rise to the surface, and swim whither she would. She rose up just at sunset, and she thought nothing could be more beautiful than the sunset sky. The whole sky shone like clear gold, and she had no words to describe the beauty of the clouds. Rose-coloured and violet, they sailed above her, and, more swiftly still, like a white veil unbound, came a flock of wild swans across the water under the setting sun. She swam to meet them, but the sun went down, and the rose-light died away on sea and sky.

The following year the third sister was allowed to go; she was the boldest of all, and ventured to swim inland, up a mighty river which flowed into the sea. Beautiful vine-grown hills rose on either side, castles and forts were seen through gloomy forests; the birds were singing sweetly, and the sun shone so warm, that from time to time it dipped beneath the water to cool its burning face. In a little bend of the river she came upon a group of naked children, playing about in the water; she tried to play with them, but they ran away in terror, and a little black animal—it was a dog—but she had never seen a dog before—barked so furiously that the sea-maiden hurried away to reach the open sea. But she never forgot the green woods, the vine-clad hills, and the pretty little children who could swim although they had no fish's tail.

The fourth sister was not so daring; she stayed in the open sea, and said nothing could be more beautiful than that. One could look round for miles, and overhead the boundless heavens hung like a glass bell. She had seen ships, but only from a great distance; they looked like seagulls; the merry dolphins had gambolled round her, and the great whales had sent up jets of water as if a thousand fountains had begun to play.

Now it was the fifth sister's turn: her birthday happened in winter, so what she saw was quite different. The sea was one brilliant green, and the icebergs were swimming to and fro; each one looked like a pearl, the princess said, but larger than the steeples which men build upon the earth. They were of the strangest shapes, and glittered like diamonds. She had sat upon one of them, and the sailing ships passed by in terror, as they saw her there, the wind playing with her golden hair. Towards night the sky was dark with cloud, the thunder rolled, the icebergs rose and fell on the black waves, red lightnings darted across their spectral forms. Every ship reefed her sails, an

anxious dread filled every heart. But the young mermaiden sat quietly on her floating iceberg and watched the blue lightning strike the sea in zig-zag darts.

The first time each one of the sisters rose to the surface she was delighted with the new and beautiful things she saw; but when they were grown up and were allowed to leave their home as often as they pleased, they did not care about it. They longed to be at home again; and at the end of a month, they said it was prettier down below, and that home was the best after all.

Many an evening the five sisters rose to the surface arm in arm; they had lovely voices, more beautiful than we ever have; and whenever a storm was coming on, and they were afraid that some grand, beautiful ship would perish, they swam round the ships and sang to the sailors, bidding them have no fear, and telling them how beautiful it was down below. But the seamen could not understand, and thought it was the voice of the storm; they never saw the glory and beauty of the sea-world, for when the ship sank they died, and only reached the sea-king's palace as pale corpses.

When the five sisters rose thus, evening by evening, high through the water, the youngest was left alone, looking after them, and it seemed to her as if she must weep, but the mermaids have no tears, and for that very reason they suffer all the more.

"If I were only fifteen!" she cried. "I know that I shall dearly love the world above, and those who live upon it."

And at last the little mermaid was fifteen years old.

"Well, now you are grown up," said her grandmother, the late king's widow; "come, now, let me dress you like your other sisters." She placed a wreath of white lilies on her hair; but every leaf in the flower was half a pearl, and the old queen had eight great oyster shells arranged on the princess's tail to show her high rank.

"But they hurt me," said the little mermaid.

"Pride must bear a pinch," said the old queen.

Oh, how gladly the princess would have laid aside all this finery and taken off the heavy wreath! the scarlet flowers in her garden suited her better, but she could not change them now. "Farewell!" she cried, and rose light and clear as a foam bubble to the surface of the water.

The sun had just gone down as she lifted her head above the water; but the clouds were brilliant in purple and gold, and through the pale, rose-tinged air the evening star shone clear and bright: the air was warm and mild, the sea at rest. A great ship with three masts lay close by, one only sail unfurled, for there was no breath of air, and the sailors sat aloft in the rigging or leaned lazily over the bulwarks. Music and singing filled the air, and as the sky darkened hundreds of Chinese lanterns were lighted; it seemed as if the flags of every nation were hung out. The little mermaid swam up to the cabin window, and every time she rose upon the waves she could see through the clear glass that the room was full of brilliantly dressed people. Handsomest of all was the young prince with the great dark eyes: he could not be more than sixteen years old, and this was his birthday. All this gaiety was in honour of him; the sailors danced upon the deck; and when the young prince came out a myriad of rockets flew high in air,

with a glitter like the brightest noontide, and the little mermaid was so frightened that she dived deep down under the water. She soon rose up again, however, and it seemed as if all the stars of heaven were falling round her in golden showers. Never had she seen such fireworks; great, glittering suns wheeled by her, fiery fishes darted through the blue air, and all was reflected back from the quiet sea. The ship was lighted up so that one could see the smallest rope; how handsome the young prince looked! He shook hands with everybody and smiled as the music rang out into the glorious night.

It grew late, but the little mermaid could not turn away her eyes from the ship and the handsome prince. The coloured lanterns were put out, no rocket rose in the air, no cannon boomed from the portholes; but deep below there was a surging and a murmuring. The mermaid sat still, cradled by the waves, so that she could look in at the cabin window; but now the ship began to make more way; one sail after another was unfurled, the waves rose higher, clouds gathered in the sky, and there was a distant flash of lightning. The storm came nearer. All the sails were taken in, and the ship rocked giddily as she flew over the foaming billows; the waves rose mountain high, as if they would swallow up the very mast, but the good ship dived like a swan into the deep black trough and rose bravely to the foaming crest. The little mermaid thought it was a merry journey, but the sailors were of a different opinion. The ship strained and creaked, the timbers shivered as the thunder-strokes of the waves fell fast, heavy seas swept the decks, the mainmast snapped like a reed, and the ship lurched heavily, while the water rushed into her hold. Then the young princess began to understand the danger, and she herself was often threatened by the falling masts, yards, and spars. One moment it was so dark that she could see nothing, but when the lightning flamed out the ship was bright as day. She sought for the young prince, and saw him sinking down through the water as the ship parted. The sight pleased her, for she knew he must sink down to her home; but suddenly she remembered that men cannot live in the water, and that he would only reach her father's palace a lifeless corpse. No; he must not die! She swam to and fro among the drifting spars, forgetting that they might crush her with their weight; she dived and rose again, and reached the prince just when he felt that he could swim no longer in the stormy sea. His arms were beginning to fail him, his beautiful eyes were closed, in another moment he must have sunk, had not the little mermaid come to his aid. She kept his head above water, and let the waves carry them whither they would.

The next day the storm was over; not a spar of the ship was left in sight; the sun rose red and glowing from the waves, and seemed to pour down new life upon the prince, though his eyes remained closed. The little mermaid kissed his fair white forehead and stroked back his wet hair; he was like the marble statue in her little garden, she thought; she kissed him again, and prayed that he might live.

Suddenly the dry land came in sight before her, high blue mountains, on whose peaks the snow lay white, as if a flock of swans had settled there. On the coast below were lovely green woods, and close on

shore a building of some kind, the mermaid did not know whether it was church or cloister. Citrons and orange trees grew in the garden, and before the porch were stately palm trees. The sea ran in here and formed a quiet bay, unruffled, but very deep; the little mermaid swam with the prince to the white sandy shore, laid him on the warm sand, and took care that his head was left where the sun shone warmest.

Bells began to chime and ring through all the great building, and several young girls entered the garden; the little mermaid swam farther out, behind a tiny cliff that rose above the waves; she showered sea-foam on her hair that no one might see its golden glory, and then she waited patiently to see if any one would come to the help of the young prince.

Before long a young girl came by; she gave a start of terror and ran back to call for assistance; several people came to her aid, and after a while the little mermaid saw the prince recover his consciousness, and smile upon the group around him. But he had no smile for her; he did not even know that she had saved him. Her heart sank, and when she had seen him carried into the large building, she dived sorrowfully down to her father's palace.

She had always been a silent, thoughtful child, and now the silence seemed to grow upon her; her sisters asked her what she had seen on her first visit to the earth, but she had nothing to tell them.

Many an evening and morning she rose to the place where she had left the prince. She watched the fruits in the garden ripen and fall; she saw the snow melt from the high mountains, but the prince she never saw, and she came home sadder than ever. Her one consolation was to sit in her little garden, with her arms clasped round the marble statue, which was like the prince; her flowers were neglected, and grew wild in a luxuriant tangle of stem and blossom, which reached the branches of the willow-tree, and made the whole place dark and dim.

At last she could bear it no longer, and she told one of her sisters: the other sisters learned the story then, but they told it to no one but a few other mermaids, who told it to their intimate friends. One of these friends knew who the prince was: she had seen the feast on board his ship, and told the princess where he came from and where his kingdom lay.

"Come, little sister," said the princesses; and wreathing their arms each round another's waist they rose to the place where the prince's palace stood.

The palace was built of polished stone of a beautiful pale yellow tinge, and from the entrance splendid marble steps led down to the very water's edge. Gilded cupolas rose above the roof, and in the marble colonnades which surrounded the building were rare statues glowing with life. Through the clear windows, the mermaid said, one saw the stately rooms with their costly hangings, rich tapestries, and beautiful paintings, so that it was a pleasure only to look at them. In the centre of the outer hall played a silvery fountain, that rose up to its cupola of glass, and fell back with a pleasant plash and ripple to the basin, where rare water plants were growing.

Now she knew where he lived, and many a night she spent there,

floating on the water; she ventured nearer to the land than any of her sisters had done; she even swam up the narrow lagoon under the carved marble balcony which cast its deep shadow over the water, and there she sat and watched the young prince when he thought himself alone in the moonlight.

Many an evening she followed him as he sailed along in his little boat, with music on board and banners flying; she peeped out of the green sedge, and if the wind lifted her white sail, people thought they saw a swan spreading her wings.

Many a night she listened to the fishermen as they cast out their nets by torchlight in the sea: they spoke often in praise of the young prince; and the little mermaid was glad that she had saved his life when he was drifting half lifeless across the seas. She remembered how his head had rested on her breast, and how she had kissed his brow; but he would never know, and could not even dream of her.

She began to love human beings more and more, to long to dwell among them: their world seemed larger and fairer than her own. They could sail across the sea in ships; climb the high mountains till they reached the clouds; and their countries, beautiful with fields and woodland, stretched far away beyond her sight. There was so much she wished to learn; her sisters could not answer her questions, so she asked her old grandmother, who knew a great deal about the world, or the lands above the sea, as she properly called it.

"If men are not drowned, do they live for ever?" asked the little mermaid. "Do they not die as we do under the sea?" "Yes," said her grandmother, "they die, and their term of life is shorter than ours. We may live three hundred years, and when we cease to be, we have not even a grave among our dear ones, but are changed to foam bells which float upon the crest of the waves. We have no immortal souls; we cannot live again; we are like the green sedge, if it is cut away it blooms no more. But men have a soul that lives for ever, even when the body has crumbled into dust; it rises through the air to the clear stars. Just as we rise to the surface that we may see the earth, they rise to an unknown, glorious world, which we may never see."

"Why have *we* no immortal soul?" asked the little mermaid, sadly. "I would give up all the years I have to live to be a human being only for one day, that I might share their heavenly home."

"You may not think of such a wish," said the old queen: "we are far happier and better than they are in the world."

"Then must I die, and drift like foam upon the waves? Shall I never hear the music of the waves, or see the lovely flowers, and golden sun. Can I do nothing to win an immortal soul?"

"Nothing!" said the queen. "Unless, indeed, a man loved you so dearly that you were more to him than father and mother; so dearly that he led you before the priest and laid his right hand in yours with the vow to be true to you for all eternity. Then, indeed, his soul would pass into your body; he would give you a soul and yet retain his own. But that can never be. Your fish's tail, which we think beautiful in the sea, would be looked upon with disgust on earth. They know no better: they think that in order to be beau-

tiful it is necessary to move about on two heavy supports which they call legs."

The little mermaid glanced down at her fish's tail with a sigh.

"Let us be merry," said her grandmother; "let us dance and play for the three hundred years we have to live; it is quite long enough to make one glad of rest. We will give a court ball to-night."

Never had such a splendid festival been seen! The walls and ceiling of the ball-room were of glass, thick but transparent. Myriads of opal-tinted pearl shells, pink and green, hung in rows round the room, and gave out a fairy-like blue lustre, which lit up the whole room and the sea outside, so that one could see the fishes as they darted by the walls, some with violet scales, some gleaming in silver and gold. Through the centre of the hall flowed a crystal stream, along which danced the mermen and mermaidens to the music of their own lovely voices. Such voices are never heard on earth. The little mermaid sang more sweetly than any: the whole court applauded with hands and tails, and for a moment a thrill of pleasure filled her heart as she thought that hers was the loveliest voice on land or sea. But the world above soon filled her heart again: she could not forget the handsome prince, or her sorrow that she had no immortal soul. She stole out of her father's palace, where all was mirth and gladness, and sat sad and solitary in her little garden. She heard the sound of the horn echoing faintly through the water. "Now he is sailing above me," she thought: "he who fills my heart: in whose hands I would gladly place my life's happiness. I will risk all for his sake, and to win an immortal soul. While my sisters are dancing in the palace, I will go to the old sea-witch. I fear her, but she may be able to help and counsel me now."

The little mermaid left her garden, and swam towards the roaring whirlpool, behind which the old witch lived. She had never visited the place before; no flowers or seaweed grew round her path; only desolate reaches of grey sand marked the way to the spot where the seething water spun round like mill-wheels and sucked in everything that approached it. The young princess had to pass through the cruel, giddy whirlpool to enter into the witch's kingdom; and when she had passed through, there lay before her no other path but a long stretch of warm bubbling slime, that the witch called her turf moor. The house stood in the centre of a ghastly wood; the trees were polypi, half plant, half animal; they looked like hundred-headed snakes rising out of the earth; the branches were long slimy arms, with fingers like pliant worms; and the whole tree was never still from root to crest. Everything that they could clutch they held fast and never loosed their hold again. At sight of them the young princess paused in deadly terror; her heart beat; she almost resolved to turn back, but at the thought of the young prince and her immortal soul, her courage returned. She wound her long, floating hair closely round her head, lest the polypi should seize it; she crossed her hands over her breast, and darted as only a fish can dart, through the ugly polypi, who stretched out their cruel, greedy fingers after her. She saw how everything within their reach was clutched tight by myriad tiny arms. Men, drowned at sea, showed their bleached white skeletons in

the deadly clutch: rudders and chests they clung to, skeletons of land animals, and, most horrible of all, a poor little mermaid, whom they had caught prisoner and strangled.

She came next to a large marshy swamp in the wood, where great fat water-snakes crawled about and showed their ugly yellow bodies. In the middle of the swamp stood a house, built of the bones of ship-wrecked men; there sat the sea-witch, letting a toad eat out of her mouth, as a canary-bird pecks sugar from its mistress's lips. She called the horrible, fat, water-snakes her little chicks, and let them twine around her breast.

"I know your wish, and a foolish one it is," cried the sea-witch: "but you shall have your way, for it will plunge you into misery, my pretty princess. You want to get rid of your fish's tail, and to have two legs like human beings, so that the handsome prince may fall in love with you, and give you an immortal soul." And the witch broke out into a savage, sneering laugh, so that the toad and the snakes fell to the earth, and lay there grovelling. "You are come at the right time," said the witch. "To-morrow, after sunrise, I should not be able to help you till a year was past. I will prepare you a potion, with which you must swim to the land before sunrise: when you reach the shore, sit down and drink it off, but it will cause you pain. Your fish's tail will disappear and shrivel up into two beautifully formed legs; every one who beholds you will say you are lovelier than any child of man. You will keep your graceful walk; no dancer will equal you in lightness, and yet every step will cause you as much pain as if you trod on sharp knives that must draw blood. If you care to suffer all this I will help you."

"I do," said the little mermaid, with a trembling voice, as she thought of the prince and her immortal soul.

"Remember!" said the witch, "when you have once assumed a human form you can never again be a mermaid—never return to your home, or to your sisters more; and, should you fail to win the prince's love so that he leaves father and mother for your sake, and lays his hand in yours as you stand man and wife before the priest, an immortal soul will never be granted you. On the same day that he marries another, your heart will break, and you will drift as sea foam on the water."

"So let it be," said the little mermaid, turning pale as death.

"But you will have to pay me also," said the witch; "and it is not a little that I ask. Yours is the loveliest voice in the world, and you trust to that, I dare say, to charm your love; but you must give it to me. I claim the best thing you possess for my costly drink. I shall have to give you my own blood, so that the draught may be sharp as a two-edged sword."

"But if you take my voice from me, what have I left?" said the little mermaid, piteously.

"Your loveliness, your graceful movements, your speaking eyes: those are enough to win a man's heart. Well, is your courage gone? Stretch out your little tongue that I may cut it off for payment, and you shall have the magic potion."

"I consent," said the little mermaid. The witch set a cauldron on

the fire to boil the draught. "Cleanliness is a fine thing," she said, wiping out the cauldron with a bundle of snakes tied into a knot. She then gashed her breast and let her blood flow into the cauldron, the steam arising from it twisted and writhed in fantastic shapes that filled the heart with ghastly horror. Every moment the witch threw something fresh into the draught, and when it boiled it sounded like a crocodile weeping. At length the potion was ready: it looked like clear water.

"There you have it," said the witch, but the little mermaid could not answer her: she was dumb, and would never speak or sing again.

"If the polypi catch hold of you as you go through my wood," said the witch, "throw one drop of the potion on them, and their arms and fingers will shiver into a thousand pieces." But the little princess had no need to do so; for the polypi shrank back in terror at sight of the glittering potion which shone in her hand like a glorious star, and the princess passed quickly through the wood and the swamp and the roaring whirlpool.

She could see her father's palace; the lights were extinguished in the ball-room: all within were doubtless sleeping: she could not call them out to her now that she was dumb and about to leave them for ever. It seemed as if her heart were breaking; she gathered a flower from each of her sister's gardens, kissed her hand to the palace, and rose slowly through the dark-blue water.

The sun was not yet risen when she came in sight of the prince's palace. The moon was shining silver clear as the little mermaid drank the magic potion; a sharp pain thrilled through her delicate body, and she fell fainting to the earth. When the sun stood high over the sea, she awoke and felt a keen pain; but before her stood the handsome prince; his dark eyes rested on hers, till they fell before his glance; she saw then that the fish's tail had disappeared, and that she lay there in human form, veiled from head to foot by her golden hair. The prince asked her who she was and whence she came, and she raised her soft blue eyes to his face in sorrowful silence. He led her into the palace, and, as the witch had warned her, each step pained her as if she trod on sharp edged knives; but she bore it gladly, and, holding the prince's hand, passed light and graceful as a foam flake into the palace.

Rich dresses of muslin and silk were given to her, and she was pronounced to be lovelier than all besides; but she was dumb, and could neither sing nor speak. Slave girls in dresses of silk and gold stepped forward and sang before the prince and his royal parents; one of them sang better than all the rest, and the prince clapped his hands and smiled at her. Then the little mermaid felt what she had lost. She knew that she could have sung infinitely better, and she thought, "Oh! could he but know that for his sake I have sacrificed my voice to all eternity!"

Then the slave girls began their graceful dance to the sound of music; and when they had ended, the little mermaid raised her fair, white arms, hovered for a moment on the point of her toes, and rose in the air in a dance so graceful that none had ever seen its equal; every

movement revealed her unearthly loveliness, and her eyes said more to the soul than the songs of the slave girls.

Every one was enraptured with her, especially the prince, who called her his little foundling; she danced on, though every time that her feet touched the earth, it was as if she trod on sharp knives. The prince said that she must stay with him always; and she obtained permission to sleep on a velvet cushion outside his door.

He ordered that a suit of boy's clothes should be made for her, so that she might accompany him when he rode out on horseback. They rode through the fresh scented woods, where the branches stooped to touch their shoulders, and the birds sang from among the leaves. She climbed the high mountains at the prince's side, and though her tender feet were quivering with pain, she laughed at her suffering, and followed him till they saw the clouds sail beneath their feet like a flock of birds flying to distant lands.

At home, in the prince's palace, when all were sleeping, she would wander down the marble staircase and cool her burning feet in the sea water, while she thought of her dear ones in the depths below.

One night her five sisters rose up arm-in-arm, singing sadly as they floated on the waves: the little mermaid beckoned to them; they recognized her, and told her how they had mourned her loss. From that time she stole down to see them every night, and once she saw, far out at sea, her old grandmother, who had not risen to the surface for years, and the sea king, her father, with the crown on his royal head. They stretched out their hands in greeting, but dared not come so near the land as her sisters had done.

Day by day she grew dearer to the prince; but he loved her as one loves a good and beautiful child; the thought of making her his queen never once crossed his mind, and yet, unless she became his wife, she could never win an immortal soul, and must be changed on his wedding morning into cold sea-foam.

"Do you not love me best of all?" the eyes of the little mermaid seemed to ask, when he took her in his arms and kissed her fair, white brow.

"Best of all," answered the prince, "for you have a truer heart than all the rest, and love me more sincerely than they. And you remind me of a young girl whom I saw once, but may never see again. I was on a ship which was lost, and the waves threw me upon the shore close to the gate of a sacred temple, where several young maidens carry on the holy service. The youngest of them found me on the shore and saved my life: I only saw her twice, and yet I know that I shall never love another—unless, indeed, you drive her image from my heart, for you are very like her. Besides, she is dedicated to the temple service; I think that my good fairy has sent you to me in her stead, so we will never part."

"Alas! he knows not that it was I who saved his life. I bore him above the waves to the shore where the temple stands, and waited to watch whether any one would come to save him. I, too, saw the beautiful girl whom he loves more than me!" The young princess sighed deeply; she could not weep. "The maiden belongs to the holy temple," he says; "she will never come out into the world; they can-

not meet again; but I am with him every day. I will watch over him, love him, and sacrifice my life for him."

The time came for the prince to marry; people said that he would choose the fair daughter of the king of a neighbouring country to be his wife. A stately ship was fitted out; it was announced that the prince was about to travel, but every one knew the object of the journey. A retinue of courtiers followed him. The little mermaid shook her head and smiled; she knew better than any one what was in the prince's heart. "I must take the journey," he had said to her; "I must see the princess, as my parents wish it: but they will never force me to bring her home as my bride. I cannot love her, for she will not resemble the beautiful girl in the temple. If I must take a bride, I would rather it were you, my silent foundling, with the lovely, speaking eyes." He kissed her rosy lips, played with her fair hair, and leaned his head upon her heart, which beat high with dreams of earthly joy and an immortal soul.

"You do not fear the sea, child?" he said to her, as they stood together on the splendid ship that was bearing them away to the home of the royal maiden. He spoke to her of storms and calms, of strange creatures in the deep, and of what the divers had seen below: the little mermaid smiled at his words; who should know better than she what happens down beneath the waves?

In the moonlight nights, when all were sleeping, even to the helmsman at his post, she sat on the bulwarks looking down through the clear water: she fancied she could see her father's palace: there stood her grandmother, wearing her silver crown and looking up to the keel through the foaming track left by the vessel. Her sisters rose out of the water, looked at her sorrowfully and wrung their white hands. She waved her hand to them and smiled, that they might know that she was happy; but the cabin-boy came up, and the sisters dived beneath the waves, so that the lad thought he had seen nothing but white foam.

The next morning the ship sailed into the harbour. It was a splendid city; the church-bells were ringing, trumpets were sounding from the high fortress towers, soldiers with banners and glittering bayonets were drawn up to receive the prince. Every day was a holiday. Balls and festivals succeeded each other, but the princess had not yet arrived from the holy temple where she had been brought up and instructed in all royal virtues. At last she came.

The little mermaid was eager to see her beauty, and she was forced to own it. Never had she seen a lovelier face; the skin was fair and delicate, and from beneath the long lashes looked out a pair of deep blue, trustful eyes.

"It is she!" cried the prince, as he clasped the blushing maiden in his arms. "She who saved me when I lay lifeless on the shore. This is too much happiness!" he cried to the little mermaid; "the highest hope I ever dared to cherish is fulfilled! You will rejoice with me I know, for you loved me best of all."

The little mermaid kissed his hand, and thought her heart was breaking—now it was all over: on his wedding morning she would die and be changed to foam upon the waves.

The church-bells rang, heralds rode through the streets announcing the betrothal: on every balcony fragrant oils burned in silver lamps. The priests swung their censers, and the bride and bridegroom stood hand in hand to receive the blessing of the bishop. The little mermaid was dressed in silk and gold; she held up the bride's train, but her ears heard nothing of the joyous music, her eyes saw nothing of the sacred rites—she was thinking of her coming death, and of all that she had lost for ever.

On the same evening the bride and bridegroom went on board; cannon thundered, banners waved, and on deck a splendid tent of purple and gold, fitted with soft silken cushions, was set up for the bridal chamber.

The sails swelled in the wind, and the ship glided smoothly across the quiet water.

As the evening closed in coloured lamps were lighted, and the sailors danced merrily on deck; the little mermaid thought of the first night she rose above the waves, and saw the same festal splendour. She too joined in the dance, hovering as swallows hover when they are pursued; applause broke out on all sides, for she had never danced so beautifully before. The sharp pains darted sword-like through her tiny feet, but she could not feel them for the keener pain at her heart. She knew that she was looking for the last time on him for whom she had forsaken friends and home, sacrificed her lovely voice, and suffered daily anguish—while he never dreamed of her devotion. It was the last night that she should breathe the same air with him, or look upon the sea and the starry sky. An eternal night, stirred by no thought or dream, awaited her, for she could never win an immortal soul. All around her spoke of joy and happiness; midnight was passed, and still she danced on, with death at her heart.

At length the ship grew silent; only the helmsman stood by his wheel; the little mermaid crossed her arms upon the bulwarks and looked eastward: the first ray of light, she knew, would flash out her death warrant. Suddenly her sisters rose from out the waves; they too were pale, and their long, fair hair was cut off!

"We have given it to the witch, that she might send us to your aid and save your life. She sends you this knife: see how sharp it is! Before the sun rises you must pierce the prince to the heart, and when the blood flows, sprinkle it on your feet. Then you shall regain your former shape, and come back to live out your three hundred years before you die and float like foam upon the waves. Hasten! for he or you must die before the sunrise. Our grandmother mourns so deeply that her white hair has fallen, like ours, beneath the witch's shears. Kill the prince and return. Do you see that red streak in the sky? In a few minutes the sun will rise and you must die!" And, sighing deeply, they sank beneath the waves.

The little mermaid drew aside the purple covering of the tent and saw the fair bride's head resting upon the prince's breast: she stooped down to kiss his brow, looked at the eastern sky, which brightened every moment, at the sharp knife, and at the prince, who murmured in his sleep the name of his new made bride. She alone filled all his thoughts. The knife trembled in the mermaid's hand—with a shudder

she threw it far into the sea; the water glowed red where it fell, it looked as if blood-drops sprang up from the waves. Once more the little mermaid looked upon the prince with eyes that were already growing dim—she sprang over the ship's side, and felt herself dissolving into foam.

The sun rose from the sea, and its rays fell so warm and bright upon the waves that as yet the little mermaid felt nothing of death. She could see the sun, and between herself and it floated myriads of beautiful forms, and through them she saw the ship's white sails and the rosy clouds above. A new language fell upon her ear, sweet, but so faint that no human ear could catch the tone, just as no human eye could see the fair forms that hovered—by no aid of wings, upheld by their own lightness alone—in the morning air. The little mermaid saw that she had a body like them, and was rising gradually from the foam.

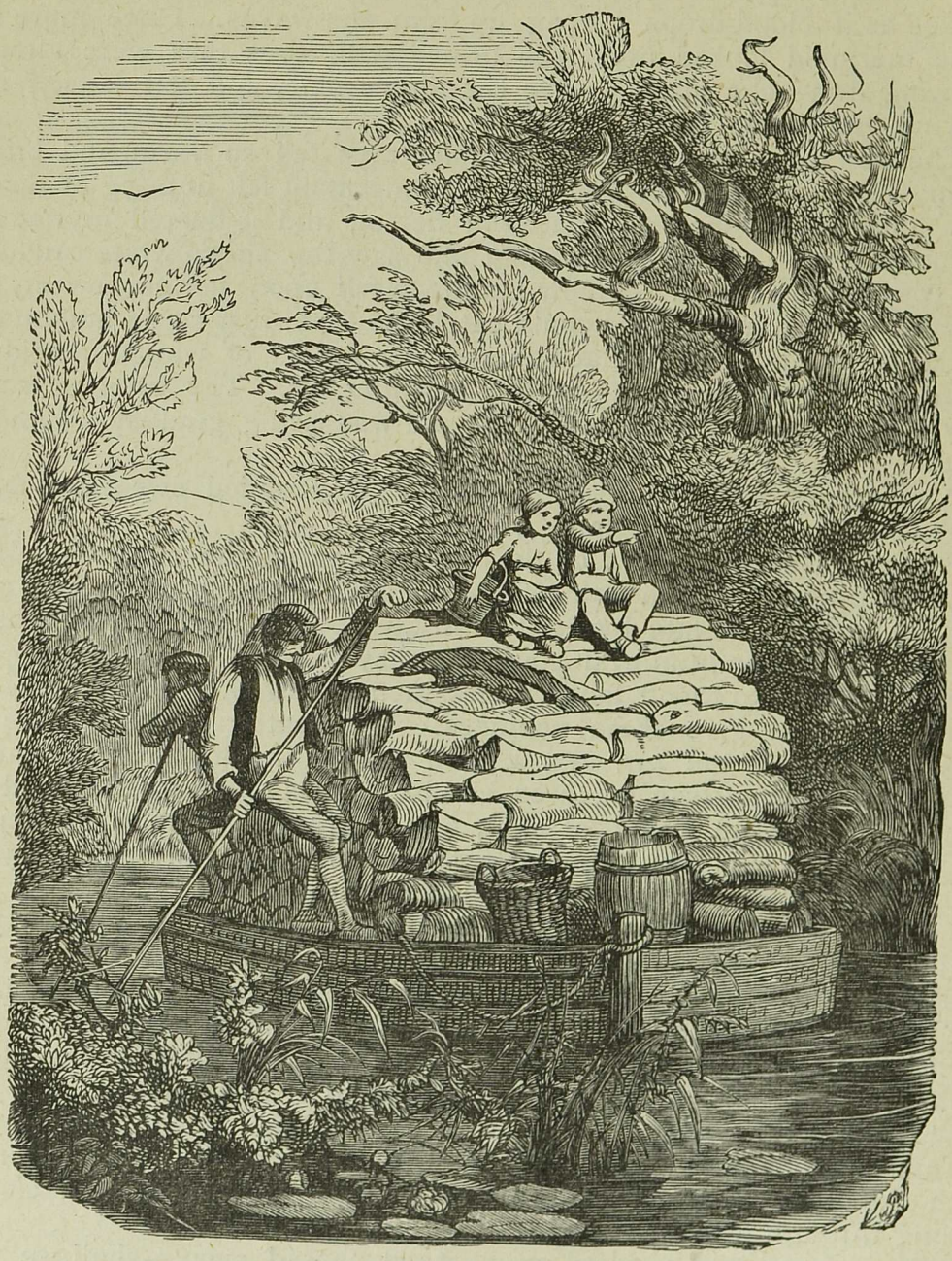
"Where am I?" she cried, and her voice sounded sweet and faint, such as no earthly music can give back.

"Among the daughters of the air," answered the others. "Mermaids can never win an immortal soul unless they gain the love of a human being; their fate does not lie in their own hand. The daughters of the air have no immortal soul, but they can win one by their good deeds. We fly to torrid lands where men are stricken down by heavy pestilence, and give them coolness. We scatter the fragrance of flowers through the air, and spread abroad health and freshness. When we have striven for three hundred years to do all the good we can, we receive an immortal soul, and share with human beings in the heavenly joy. You, poor little sea-maiden, have striven with your whole heart as we strive; you have suffered and sacrificed—now you are raised to the world of the air, and, after three hundred years, you will receive an immortal soul."

The little mermaid lifted her eyes to heaven, and for the first time felt them full of tears. The ship was once more full of life and movement; she saw the prince and his young bride seeking for her; they looked down sadly at the pearly foam, as if they knew that she had plunged into the waves.

Invisible, she kissed the bride, fanned the prince's brow, and rose with the other children of the air up to the gold and crimson clouds sailing through the clear sky.

"So—when three hundred years have passed away—shall we rise into God's kingdom," whispered one of her companions. "Unseen, we enter into the houses of men; and every day we see a good child, who loves his parents and fills their lives with joy, our time of probation is shortened by a year. The child dreams not of it as we pass by; but if his goodness wins a happy smile from us, a year is taken from our trial: while every tear we shed at the sight of a naughty, bad-hearted child keeps us back one day longer from our rest in heaven."



Ib and Christina.

NOT far from the silver river Gudenau, in North Jutland, in the forest which stretches far inland from the river bank, rises a ridge of land, and runs through the wood like a fortress wall. To the west of this mound stands a farm-house surrounded by poor land, where the sandy soil showed through the thin crops of rye and barley. A few years ago, the people who lived here worked the farm, and had besides, three sheep, a pig, and two oxen. In a word, they had plenty to eat and enough to live on, if one takes life as it comes; indeed, they

could have afforded to keep two horses, but they said, as the other farmers of the district did, that a horse eats himself up—wastes as much as he gets. Jeppe-Jans worked in his field in summer, and in winter he made wooden shoes. He had a man to help him in this latter trade; one who, like himself, could make the shoes strong, light, and shapely: they carved wooden spoons as well, and that brought in money. It would have been doing the Jeppe-Jansens wrong to say that they were poor folk.

Little seven-year old Ib, the only son, used to sit watching them at their work, and cutting away at a stick or, as it sometimes happened, at his own finger; but one day he made such progress that his bit of stick was cut into something that looked like tiny wooden shoes, and then Ib said that he would give them to Christina. Who was Christina? She was the boatman's little daughter, as fair and delicate as the child of a duke: if she had only had better clothes no one could have thought that her home was that little hovel on the heath. Her father was a widower, and earned his living by taking boat-loads of fuel from the forest to the eel-pond and the eel-weir at Silkeborg; sometimes he even went as far as the little town of Randers.

There was no one to look after Christina while he was away, so that the little girl was generally with him in the boat, or in the forest among the ferns and brambles; once his business took him as far as the little town, and that was it which brought Christina across the heath to Jeppe-Jansen's.

She was a year younger than Ib, and they agreed together in everything; they shared each other's bread and blackberries when they were hungry, they grubbed together in the sand, they ran and crawled and played about together everywhere. One day they walked by themselves along the ridge of the mound, and far into the forest; one day they found some snipe's eggs—that was a great event.

Ib had never been on the heath where Christina's father lived, and had never been on the river; but both these pieces of good luck befell him, for Christina's father invited him, and took him to the lonely hut on the heath.

It was evening when Ib arrived, and the next morning he and Christina sat perched upon the logs of timber in the boat, eating bread and blackberries, while the father and his man pushed the boat forward by the aid of their long poles: the current was with them, and they made good way. Sometimes the river opened into lakes, sometimes it seemed closed in by wood, and reeds, and sedge; but still the boat moved onward, even though the great trees bent down to meet the water, and the peeled oak branches stretched towards them, as if they had turned up their shirt-sleeves on purpose to show their gnarled and naked arms. Old willow trees, washed loose from the shore by the swift current, clung convulsively to the soil with their roots, and formed tiny islands; water-lilies rose and fell on the stream: it was a lovely voyage! And at last they came to the great eel-weir, where the water rushed madly through the flood-gates; that *was* beautiful, thought Ib and Christina.

At that time there was neither factory nor town, nothing but the old building with its poor farm land; few people and few cattle were

to be seen; the roar of the water through the sluices, and the cry of the wild duck were almost the only signs of life at Silkeborg. When the boat was unloaded, Christina's father bought a bundle of eels and a sucking pig, which were neatly packed in a basket and placed at the stern of the boat.

Then they set out on their return, against the stream this time, but the wind was favourable, and when they hoisted their sail, they sped along as if they had been drawn by two horses.

When they reached the place where the boatman's companion lived, at a little distance inland, the boat was moored. The two men stepped ashore, having told the children to sit still. But that was just what the children could not do, at least for long together; they must needs peep into the basket where the eels and the sucking pig lay; then they must feel the sucking pig and have it in their hands, and since they both wanted to do so at the same time, they managed to let it fall into the water, and away went the pig down the current. There was a fearful business!

Ib sprang to the land and ran off a little way from the boat. "Take me with you," cried Christina, leaping after him. In a few minutes they were closed in by the thicket, and could neither see the boat nor the shore; they ran a little way farther, and then Christina fell down and began to cry.

Ib lifted her up. "Follow me," he said, "our house is up there." But the house was not up there. They wandered on across the dry, rattling leaves of last year, and the rotten branches that cracked under their little feet: suddenly they heard a piercing cry, and stood still to listen—it was the scream of an eagle echoing through the wood, and a horrible sound the children thought it. Before them in the forest large purple blackberries grew in plenty; they could not help stopping to gather some, and they ate the sweet, ripe fruit till their mouths and cheeks were blue. And then they heard the scream again.

"There'll be a pretty to-do about that pig," said Christina. "Come, we will go to our house," said Ib; "it is somewhere here in the wood." They went on farther till they came to a little path, but the path did not lead them home. Darkness came on, and the children were afraid; the strange stillness that reigned around them was broken only by the harsh screech of the horned owl, or of some other night bird; at last the children lay down under a bush; Ib cried, and Christina cried, and when they had cried for a long time, they stretched themselves out on the withered leaves and went to sleep.

The sun stood high in the sky when the children woke: they were cold, but they saw the sunbeams falling warm and bright on to a hill near their sleeping place. Ib thought if they climbed up there, they would be able to see his father's house; but they had wandered far away from the house, into quite a different part of the forest. They climbed the hill, and found themselves looking down into a clear, transparent lake; the fish lay basking in the sunshine; all that the children saw was as new as it was unexpected: but close to them grew a large hazel-nut bush, loaded with the finest nuts. The children gathered them by handfuls and ate the sweet young kernels that were only just formed. The next surprise that befell them was mixed with terror.

Out of the bushes stepped a tall old woman with coal black hair, and eyes where the white gleamed out as in the eyes of a Moor. She was a gipsy, and carried a bundle on her back, and a knotted stick in her hand. The children could not always understand what she said; she drew three large nuts out of her pocket, and said that inside these nuts lay the most beautiful things in the world—they were wishing nuts she said.

She spoke so kindly that Ib plucked up his courage and asked her if she would give him the nuts. She gave them to him, and gathered a pocketful more from the bush.

Ib and Christina stared at the wishing nuts with open eyes.

"Is there a carriage and pair in this nut?" said Ib, doubtfully.

"Yes, yes," said the woman; "golden carriage and golden horses."

"Then give me that nut," said Christina. Ib gave it her, and the old woman tied it safely in her handkerchief.

"And is there a little handkerchief, like Christina's, in this nut?" said Ib.

"There are ten handkerchiefs," said the old woman; "fine clothes, stockings, hat, and veil."

"Then I shall have that," said Christina, and Ib gave her the second nut; the third was a little black-looking thing. "You can keep that," said Christina; "that is a nice one, too."

"What is inside it?" asked Ib.

"The very best of all for you," answered the gipsy.

Ib held his nut tight. The woman promised to put the children into the right path, and they walked on farther; certainly she led them in the very opposite road from the one they should have taken, but do not let any one accuse the old gipsy of wishing to steal the children.

In the heart of the wood they met the forest ranger; he knew Ib, and by his help the two children reached home again. Everybody had been in great distress about them, and all was forgiven and forgotten, although they certainly deserved a scolding at the very least; first, because they had dropped the pig into the water; and secondly, because they had run away.

Christina went home to her father's on the heath, and Ib lived on at the farm on the outskirts of the forest by the old mound. The first thing Ib did on his return was to take out the little black nut from his pocket—the nut which held the very best of all—place it carefully between the door and the hinge, and shut the door to with all his force. The nut cracked readily enough, but there was not much kernel to be seen, only black, moist earth, that looked like snuff; it was hollow or worm-eaten, as one says.

"I thought as much," said Ib. "How could there be room inside for the best of all? Christina will get no more out of her two nuts; neither fine clothes nor a golden carriage."

The winter came on, and the New Year, and several years passed by. At last Ib's confirmation day drew near, and the boy went all the winter through to be prepared by the pastor of the next village. About this time the boatman paid a visit to Ib's father, and brought the news

that Christina was gone to service, and that it was a perfect godsend for her, that she had fallen into such good hands. Only think! she was going to the rich innkeeper's at Herning; wealthy, respectable people; they lived miles away to the westward, far from Ib and the forest. She would have to help the barmaid; and after awhile, when she was old enough to be confirmed, the master and mistress would take to her altogether, if she had behaved herself well.

So Ib and Christina bade each other good-bye. "The little sweethearts," people called them: Christina showed him at parting that she still had the two nuts which he had given her when they were straying in the wood; and she said, too, that she had put safely in her trunk the little pair of wooden shoes which he had carved for her. And then they parted.

Ib was confirmed; but he stayed on in his mother's home, for his father had died years ago. The young man was clever at his trade, and in the summer his mother had no need to keep a man, Ib could manage the farm alone.

He seldom heard of Christina. Sometimes a chance postillion or eel-seller would bring news of her. She was going on very well in her prosperous home; and when she was confirmed she wrote a letter to her father, and sent a message to Ib and his mother. In the letter she said that her mistress had given her some new under-clothing, and a beautiful dress. That was certainly a piece of good news.

The following spring there was a knock at Ib's door, and who should it be but Christina and her father, who had come to spend the day! A conveyance had been running from Herning to the neighbouring parish, and Christina had availed herself of the opportunity to come and see her friends. She was as beautiful as a fine lady, and dressed very prettily, in clothes that had been made on purpose for her. There she stood all dressed in her best, while Ib had on his work-day clothes. He could not speak a word, he could only hold her hand fast between his own, but his lips had nothing to say. Christina had, however; and she chattered on without a stop, and kissed Ib at meeting, without ceremony.

"Did you know me again directly, Ib?" she said; but even when they two were left alone together, and he stood, still holding her hand in his, he could only say, "You have grown into a fine lady—and I look such a rough fellow! Oh, how I have thought of you, Christina, and of the dear old times!"

Arm and arm they wandered along the mound and gazed across the river to the heath and the hills overgrown with yellow broom; but Ib said nothing, and yet by the time they parted, it had grown clear to him that Christina must be his wife. Had they not been called sweethearts from their babyhood? It seemed to him that they were already a betrothed pair, although neither of them had spoken.

They had only a few hours to spend together; Christina was obliged to go back to the neighbouring village, because the coach to Herning started so early in the morning. Ib and her father walked with her as far as the village: it was a lovely moonlight night, and when they reached the village Ib could not loose Christina's hand, his eyes brightened, and the words which came so slowly from his lips rose from

the very depths of his heart. "If you have not grown too proud, Christina," he said, "and if you can make yourself happy in my mother's cottage as my wedded wife—we two will marry—but we can afford to wait a little."

"Yes, indeed; we can afford to wait a long time, Ib," she said, pressing his hand as he kissed her at parting. "I can trust you I know; and I think I am fond of you, but I must sleep upon it."

They parted, and as Ib walked homewards with the boatman he told him that he and Christina were as good as engaged; and the boatman said he had expected as much. He went home with Ib, and spent the night at the farm. Not another word was said about the engagement.

A year went by, during which time two letters were exchanged between Ib and Christina. "True till death," was written at the end. One day the boatman arrived with a message from Christina, which he seemed to find a difficulty in delivering: but the burden of it was that Christina was going on very well—famously indeed; she had grown into a very pretty girl, with plenty of admirers and suitors—her master's son was staying in the house, he had a good situation at some office in Copenhagen, and he was very fond of Christina. She was not averse to him either, and his parents made no objection. But Christina felt uneasy about Ib; she was afraid he thought too much of her, and so she was almost resolved to give up her good prospects, the boatman said.

At first Ib did not speak, but he turned as pale as death; he shook his head, and said at last, "Christina must not give up anything for me."

"Well, then, write as much to her—just a few lines," said the boatman.

And Ib sat down to write, but the words would not come at his call; he crossed them out, and tore up sheet after sheet, and on the following morning his letter was ready. This is what he wrote:—

"I have read the letter you sent to your father, and I see from what you say that you are doing very well, and may do better. Ask your own heart, Christina; weigh well what lies before you if you take me for your husband; I have not much to offer you. Do not think of me, or my condition, but of your own eternal welfare. You are bound to me by no promise; and if you have bound yourself in your own heart, I set you free. May every happiness fall to your lot, Christina! God will know how to comfort me.

"Ever, your true friend,
"IB."

The letter was despatched, and Christina duly received it.

In the middle of November the banns were put up for her in the little church on the heath, and in Constantinople, where the bridegroom lived; and she went with her mother-in-law to Copenhagen to be married, for her lover could not leave his business for a second long journey into Jutland. On her way Christina took leave of her father; very little was said on the subject to Ib, and he asked no questions.

He had grown very silent and thoughtful, his old mother said, and

perhaps that was why he often thought of the three nuts which he had received from the old gipsy. Christina had chosen the two which contained fine clothes, and a golden carriage ; that had all come true—she would find all that in the capital—her wishes would be fulfilled. To Ib the nut had promised nothing but black earth—"the best of all for him," as the gipsy said—yes ; true enough, that would be fulfilled also. Now he understood what the woman meant. In the black churchyard mould, in the silent grave, it would be best of all for him to lie.

Years passed away; not so very many, but very, very long, Ib thought. The old folk at the inn were dead, and their son inherited the whole property : many thousand dollars, people said. Now Christina would have her golden carriage and fine clothes in plenty.

In the two following years there came no news of Christina, and when at last her father received a letter, it did not seem to have been written in joy and prosperity. Poor Christina ! Neither she nor her husband knew how to make a good use of their wealth ; the money did not prosper—no blessing rested on it—none had been sought for.

The heath was bright with bloom, yellow with dying fern, and white with snow ; the spring sun shone across the ridge where Ib lived and worked. He was driving his plough across the field, when suddenly the ploughshare came in contact with something—a flint, Ib thought. He stooped down to see, and a gleam of shining metal was seen in the furrow.

It was a heavy golden bracelet, which had lain there since the days when the Huns fought together, and filled the land with their graves.

Ib showed it to the pastor, who explained to him its value, and sent Ib and his treasure to the magistrate. The magistrate spoke of it to the President of the Museum, and at length Ib was advised to betake himself and his bracelet to Copenhagen.

"You have reaped from the earth the best that it could give you," said the President.

"The best of all," thought Ib ; "if this is the best, the gipsy was still right in what she said."

Ib went by the ferry from Aarhus to Copenhagen ; to him who had never been further than across his own river, it was like taking a voyage across the ocean.

In Copenhagen he received the value of the treasure ; it was a large sum, six hundred dollars ! Ib of the heath wandered to and fro in the great city.

The evening before his return home, he lost himself in the narrow lanes of the suburb of Christianshafen. He was alone in the street. At last a little child ran out of one of the wretched houses, and Ib asked her to tell him the way to the street where he lodged ; but the little creature only looked at him timidly through her tears. He asked her what was the matter, but he could not understand her answer. As they walked along together the light from a street lamp fell on the

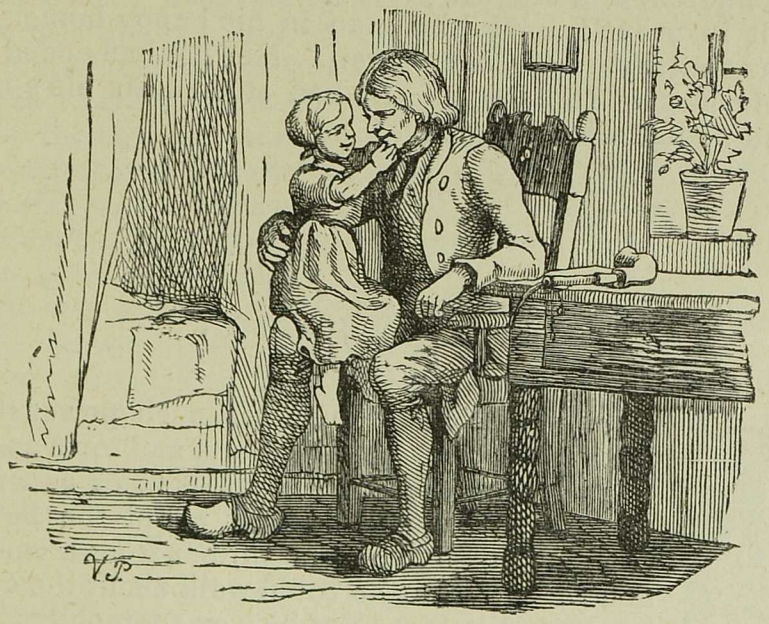
child's face, and Ib started—for it was Christina herself, just as he remembered her in his childhood, who stood before him.

He followed the little girl into a poverty-stricken house; ascended the crumbling staircase to a little garret, close under the roof. The air was close and stifling; there was no light, but in a corner of the room some one was breathing heavily. Ib struck a match, and saw that the child's mother lay dying on the wretched bed.

"Can I be of any use to you?" said Ib. "The little girl has brought me here. I am a stranger in the town, but is there no neighbour—no one whom I can call?" He raised the dying woman's head and smoothed her pillow.

It was Christina of the heath!

He had not mentioned her name for many years: he did not care to wake up old sorrows. What report said of her was not good; the money which her husband had inherited had done him harm; he had



thrown up his situation, travelled in foreign countries for months together, and on his return had lived in great style and got into debt.

His summer friends and acquaintances said of him that he had squandered his money like a madman. One morning his body was found in the canal.

Christina herself felt the touch of death at her heart; her youngest child, born in misery, lay in its grave; and now the mother was waiting for death in the squalid garret. In her childhood she might have lived through the sorrow; but since then she had been accustomed to luxury and splendour. It was her eldest child, her little Christina, suffering from cold and hunger, who had led Ib to the bedside.

"My trouble is that I am leaving this poor child," she gasped. "When I am dead, what will become of her?" She could say no more.

Ib struck another match, and lighted the piece of rushlight on the table; the flame lit up the wretched chamber.

He looked at the little girl, and thought of Christina in her youth; for her sake he could learn to love the child. The dying woman looked at him, and her eyes dilated. Did she know him? He could not tell, for no word crossed her lips.

In the forest, by the river Gudenau and the heath, the air was heavy and damp; the heather had lost its glory of colour; autumnal storms whirled the yellow leaves into the river and across the heath to the hut where the boatman once lived. Strangers lived there now; but by the mound, sheltered by lofty trees, stood the farm-house, newly painted and restored. A bright turf fire burned on the hearth, and within the pleasant room was the sunshine of two childish eyes, the bird-like music of red, childish lips. Life and joy filled the house; Christina was there at last; she sat on Ib's knee; he was to her father and mother all in one, for her own parents had vanished out of her life as dreams will vanish from the hearts of children, and of older people too.

Ib dwelt in peace; a wealthy man in his happy home. Christina slept in the churchyard at Copenhagen. Her life had ended in poverty and wretchedness. Ib had gold; he had steered his life's-boat safe to port;—and he had Christina too.

The Shadow.

IN hot countries the sun has such power that it burns the inhabitants till their skin is as brown as mahogany: and in the hottest land of all, as black as a negro's. In this story you will only hear about the hot countries. A learned man had gone thither from a colder climate, and thought that he could walk about the city just as if he were at home. But he was soon obliged to alter his opinion: he found that he, and all sensible people must content themselves with staying indoors, with closed blinds and shutters, so that all the houses looked as if they were shut up and deserted by their owners. The narrow street in which he lived, was so built that the sun shone down on it morning and evening too; it was really intolerable! The stranger from the northern clime was a clever young man: but he felt now as if he were penned inside a glowing oven: his health failed; he grew thin, his very shadow dwindled and became smaller than it used to be. At last the sun took it away from him altogether, and kept it till after sunset. It was a pleasure to see it then; as soon as a light was brought into the room the shadow stretched itself along the wall and up to the very ceiling, as if it were trying to get back a little life into its weakened limbs. The learned man stepped out on to the balcony to stretch himself too; and when the stars rose in the clear lovely sky he seemed to live again. In these countries every house has its balcony, and at this hour every balcony

was filled with people thirsting for the cool air, for one must breathe, even if one is used to being burnt as brown as mahogany. There was life enough then in street and balcony. In the street, tailors and cobblers, by which we mean all kinds of people, brought out tables, chairs, and wax lights, and settled themselves down to their nightly songs and gossip. Gay carriages rolled swiftly by; mules, tinkling their merry bells, trotted nimbly along—"ring-a-ting-a-ting!" Church bells chimed in every direction—the dead themselves were borne to their graves amid chanting and music—yes: the streets were busy enough in the evening. And yet the house which stood opposite to the learned man's balcony was always silent. It was evident that some one lived there, for flowers stood on the balcony in the bright sunshine, and where there are flowers, there must be some one to attend to them. So that some one must live there. Towards evening the door would be slightly opened, but not until it was too dark to see into the room. Strange, mysterious music sounded faintly from the house; the learned man thought it extremely beautiful; but then he admired everything he saw in the hot countries, and wished for no change, except for a little less sun. The stranger's landlord said he had no idea who had taken the opposite house; and as to the music, he himself thought it exceedingly poor. "It sounded," he said, "just as if some one were continually practising the same piece, and never was able to get through with it. 'I shall manage it yet,' the player seemed to fancy; but for all that, he never did manage it, let him play as long as he would!"

One night the stranger suddenly awoke: he always slept with his door open; the wind blew aside the curtain, and it seemed to him that the opposite balcony was filled with a strange and wonderful radiance. The flowers glowed like flames of fire, and among them moved a tall, beautiful maiden: the light fell around and over her so that she, too, dazzled the stranger's eyes; for they were scarcely open yet from their first sleep. With one leap he sprang from his bed on to the balcony, but the maiden and the glorious light had vanished, the flowers glowed no longer, though they stood there lovely and fragrant as ever. The sweet, weird music rang out clearly from within, and steeped the listener in longing dreams. It was like some sorcery: who could live there? And which was the entrance? Towards the street, and towards the narrow lane at the back, the house stood closed in on each side by shops; the owners could not always slip through unperceived.

One evening the learned man was sitting on his balcony: a light was burning close behind him, so that his shadow fell naturally upon the opposite house. There it lay among the flowers on the balcony, and when the stranger moved, the shadow moved also.

"I think my shadow seems the only living thing about the place," said the learned man. "See how it coils itself among the flowers! The door is not quite closed; the shadow ought to be able to glide in and look round; then he could come back and tell me what he has seen. Yes; that would be making yourself useful," he said to the shadow, half in jest. "Be so good as to go in yonder. Well, are you going?" And he nodded to the shadow, who nodded back in return.

"Come, go along, but don't stay away altogether." The stranger rose, and the shadow rose also; the stranger turned away, and if any one had been there to see, he would have seen that the shadow slipped through the half-open door of the house just at the moment when the stranger re-entered his room and let the curtain fall behind him.

The next morning the learned man went out to get his cup of coffee and read the papers. "What is the meaning of this?" he cried, as he stepped into the sunshine. "Why, I have no shadow! Then he really did go away last night, and has not come back again. How exceedingly vexatious!"

He was extremely annoyed: not so much on account of the shadow, as because he knew that there was a story about a man who lost his shadow: everybody knows the story, and now, if the learned man were to mention his own case to any one, people would say that he was an imitation; and he did not care that they should say such a thing of him. He, therefore, kept the whole affair quiet, which did credit to his good sense.

In the evening he went out into the balcony and placed a light behind him, for he knew that every shadow likes to have his master in front of him as a shelter, but he could not entice him out. He made himself short, he made himself long, but no shadow was there, and none came out. He cried, "H'm! h'm!" but all in vain.

It was very tiresome; but everything grows so fast in hot climates, that in the course of a week the learned man saw, as he stepped into the sunshine, that a new shadow was beginning to grow out of his heels, so that the roots must have been left in. In three weeks he had a tolerable shadow, and when he was about to set out on his return to the north, his shadow was so long, that he could easily have given half of it away.

When the learned man returned home he wrote books on all that is good, and true, and beautiful in the world. Meanwhile the years flew by.

One evening he heard a faint knock at his study-door. "Come in," he said; but no one entered. He opened the door. Before him stood a man, so extraordinarily thin that he started in surprise. The unknown was elegantly dressed, and was evidently a distinguished person.

"With whom have I the honour of speaking?" said the learned man.

"Exactly as I thought!" exclaimed the stranger. "I felt sure you would not know me, I have become so substantial. I look just like a man. You, doubtless, never thought of seeing me in this position? Do you not recognize your old shadow? I daresay you made up your mind that I should never return. I have been getting on extremely well since I was with you; indeed, I have prospered in everything, and if I choose to purchase my freedom from service, I have the means of doing so."

He played with a handful of costly trinkets hanging from his watch-chain, and fingered the heavy gold chain he wore round his neck; diamond rings glittered on every finger. And all were genuine!

"Well! I cannot recover myself," said the learned man. "What does it all mean?"

"No ordinary thing," answered the shadow. "But you are not an ordinary person yourself; and what I am you know well, since I have followed in your steps since my childhood. As soon as you found that I was sufficiently formed to go out into the world on my own account, I took my own path, and I am now in a really brilliant position. But I felt a kind of wish to see you again before you die, and to revisit this neighbourhood. One is always attached to one's native land. I know you have taken another shadow; now, have I anything to pay to him, or to you? Just let me know."

"Is it really you?" exclaimed the learned man. "It is too astonishing. I would not have believed that a person could one day meet his old shadow as a man."

"Pray let me know what I owe you," said the shadow. "I should not like to remain in any one's debt."

"Why do you speak so?" said the learned man. "What debt can there be between us? You are as free as air for me, and I am rejoiced at your good fortune. Sit down, old friend, and tell me how it has all come to pass, and what you have seen in the hot countries—and in the opposite house."

"Certainly, I will tell you," said the shadow, seating himself; "but you must promise me that you will never mention to any one, wherever you may meet me in the town, that I was once your shadow. I am thinking of marrying; I have more than enough to support a family."

"Never fear," said the learned man. "I will tell no one who you are. Here is my hand—a word is enough between man and man."

"Between man and shadow," answered the shadow, in spite of himself.

But it really was wonderful to see how much of a man he had become! He was dressed in black, with polished boots, and a crush hat which could be pressed together till no one could tell which was brim and which was crown; not to speak of what we already know—trinkets, and chains, and diamond rings. Yes; the shadow was very well dressed, and perhaps that was what made a man of him.

"Now I will tell you," said the shadow, setting down his polished boot as firmly as he could on the shadow of the learned man which lay like a poodle at his feet. He did this either from insolence or in the hope that the shadow would cleave to his heels. But the shadow lay still and listened intently. He was very anxious to hear how to get free and raise himself to his master's level.

"Do you know who lived in the opposite house?" said the shadow. "It was Poesy—the most beautiful maiden in the world. I stayed there three weeks, and that is as much as if one lived three thousand years and read all the fine things that have ever been written and sung. For I can say with truth that I have seen and that I know everything."

"Poesy!" cried the learned man. "Yes, she is often found haunting great cities. Poesy! I saw her for one short moment, but my eyes were dulled with sleep: she stood upon the balcony radiant as

Aurora: her flowers were living flame. Oh! tell me more—you were on her balcony—you went through the door—and then——"

"Then I found myself in the antechamber," said the shadow. "You kept looking across from your room. There was no light, I was in a kind of half twilight; but another door was open leading to a suite of rooms. Beyond them it was dazzlingly bright: the glitter would have killed me if I had pressed forward at once to the maiden. But I was cautious, and took time: it is always the wisest course."

"And what didst thou see then?" said the learned man.

"I saw it all—and I will describe it. But first—it is really not from pride on my part—as a free man, possessing the gifts which I do—not to speak of my high position and ample means—I really wish you would not say *thou* to me."

"I beg your pardon," said the learned man. "It is an old habit, and difficult to break through. But you are quite right, and I will remember it. But now tell me what you saw."

"All that was to be seen," said the shadow. "I saw it clearly, I know it all."

"What was it like inside the sacred rooms? Was it like a consecrated temple—or like the silent groves? Was the place like the starry night overshadowing the watcher on a lonely mountain peak?"

"It was all there," said the shadow. "I did not go to the inmost recess; I stood where I was in the dusk—but I appreciated and felt it all perfectly. I have dwelt in the home of Poesy!"

"What, what *did* you see? The gods and heroes of old time? Lovely angel-children telling their dreams?"

"I tell you that I was there—and consequently you must naturally understand that I saw all there was to be seen. If you had been there you would not have remained a man, but I became one. I learned my inner being, my innate gifts, the relationship in which I stand to Poesy. Formerly, when I was with you, I did not think of these things; but, if you remember, I was often extremely tall at sunset and sunrise; while by moonlight I was more perceptible than yourself. I did not understand it all then; but in the antechamber it was revealed to me—and I became a man. I came forth perfect: but you were no longer in the hot countries. I felt ashamed to appear as a man in the condition in which I then was; I wanted good boots, clothes—in a word, the whole varnish by which one recognizes a man; and I hid myself—I know I can entrust this to you, you will not print it in a book—I hid myself under the cookmaid's petticoat; the woman little thought whom she was sheltering. It was night when I went out; I ran along the street by moonlight, I stretched myself out on the top of the wall, and that tickled my back agreeably; I ran up and down, looked in through the highest windows, and through the roof where no one else could creep, and I saw what no one ever saw or ought to see. It is a wicked world. I should never have wished to become a man, if I had not seen that it confers a kind of power and dignity. I saw the most incredible scenes between parents, husbands and wives, and the 'sweet innocent children.' I saw what no other man could see, and yet what they all long to know—their neighbours' misdoings. If I had started a newspaper, it would have found readers; but I

wrote straight to the man himself, and a perfect panic of terror spread through every city where I came. They were extremely frightened at me, and extremely fond of me. The professor made me a professor; the tailor made me a suit of clothes and keeps me well provided; the overseer of the mint struck coins for me; the women called me good-looking—and thus I became the man I now am; and now good-bye. Here is my card, I live on the sunny side of the street, and am always at home in rainy weather." And the shadow took his leave.

"That was a queer thing," said the learned man.

Years passed by, and the shadow came again.

"How are you going on?" he asked.

"Alas!" said the learned man. "I write of the good, the true, and the beautiful; but no one cares to read of them. I am losing heart; it preys upon my mind and spirits."

"Don't let it do that," said the shadow. "I am growing stout and portly, and that is what one should aim at. You don't understand the world, and you are making yourself ill—you should travel. I am going a tour this summer; will you come with me? I want a travelling companion; will you come with me in the capacity of shadow? It will be quite a pleasure to me, and I will pay all travelling expenses."

"Are you going to make a long journey?" asked the learned man.

"As it happens," said the shadow. "A journey will set you up. Will you be my shadow? you shall have all expenses paid."

"But really that is too outrageous," said the learned man.

"It's the way of the world," said the shadow, "and so it always will be." And he took his leave.

Things turned out ill with the learned man. Sorrow and care pursued him, and all that he wrote of the good and beautiful was to the majority of men as pearls thrown before swine.

At last he fell ill. "You really look like a shadow," people said to him; and the learned man shivered from head to foot, for he had his own thoughts about that.

"You must travel to some watering-place," said the shadow, who again paid him a visit. "There is nothing else left for you. I will take you with me for old acquaintance' sake. I will pay travelling expenses, and you shall describe the journey, and amuse me on the road. I am going myself to a place of the kind; my beard does not grow as I could wish, that is a kind of disease, and I must have a beard. Come, be reasonable; accept my offer, and let us start like old comrades."

And they started on their journey. The shadow was master now; and the master shadow. They drove, rode, and walked together—before, behind, and beside each other, just as the sun happened to fall. The shadow always managed to secure the place of honour; but the learned man did not find it out, for he had an unselfish heart, and was of a kind and simple disposition. One day the master said to the shadow, "Since we are become travelling companions and have grown up together, shall we not drink brotherhood together and call each other *thou*? It sounds more cordial."

"What you have just said," replied the shadow, who was now in point of fact the master, "was kindly spoken and well meant; I will

answer it just as straightforwardly. You, as a learned man, know how wonderful nature is. There are men who cannot endure the smell of brown paper; it makes them ill. Others feel a thrill through their very marrow if they hear the scraping of a nail against a pane of glass. Now I have a similar feeling when I hear you address me as *thou;* I feel as if I were crushed to the earth, as I was in my first situation with you. You see it is just a feeling—not pride. I cannot allow you to say *thou* to me, but I will willingly say *thou* to you; so you will have half your wish granted."

So from that time the shadow called his former master *thou*. "It's rather cool," thought the learned man, but he had to put up with it.

They arrived at a fashionable watering-place, and found many foreigners there; among them was a king's daughter. She was very beautiful, but suffering from extreme sharpness of sight, a most tiresome disorder.

She found out in a moment that the new arrival was quite a different person from all the rest. "They say he is come here to cultivate his beard," she said; "but I know the real reason. He cannot cast a shadow."

Her curiosity led her to enter into conversation with the new-comer on the promenade. As she was a king's daughter she was not obliged to stand on ceremony, so she said right out, "Your disease is this; you cannot cast a shadow.

"Your royal highness must be rapidly regaining health," said the shadow. "I know that you suffer from too keen a sight, but this time your perception has failed you. I have an extraordinary shadow. Do you see that person who always accompanies me? Other men have ordinary shadows, but I do not like commonplace things. It is very usual to have one's servants better dressed than one's self, and I have had the fancy to dress my shadow up as man. You see I have even given him a shadow. It costs a great deal, but I like something out of the common way."

"What?" cried the princess, "can it be that I am recovered? This is the best watering-place in existence, I know; the waters have wonderful properties. But I am not going away just now, as it is beginning to be amusing; this foreign prince—for a prince he must be—pleases me extremely. I hope his beard will not grow, or else he will be away again directly."

At night in the large ball-room the shadow danced with the princess. She was light, but he was lighter still; she had never had such a partner before. She told him where she came from, and he knew the place well: he had been there once when the princess was from home; and he had looked through the palace windows on the lower and upper storeys too. He had learnt many wonderful things, so that he could let fall hints which surprised the princess beyond measure. She thought he must really be the cleverest man in the world; and she felt a great respect for his knowledge; and when she danced with him the second time she fell in love with him, as the shadow soon found out, for she looked him through and through. The next time she danced with him she was very near telling him so; but she was cautious, and thought of her kingdom and her future subjects. "He is a clever man, which

is one good thing; and an excellent dancer, which is another good thing; but has he solid information? That is just as important. He must be examined." She immediately asked him a difficult question which she could not possibly have answered herself, and the shadow made a wry face.

"You cannot answer me," said the princess.

"I learned all that when I was a child," said the shadow; "I believe that even my shadow by the door yonder would be able to answer you."

"Your shadow?" said the king's daughter; "that would be very remarkable."

"I do not say decidedly that he can," said the shadow; "but I almost believe so. He has followed me for so many years and learned so much from me. Yes, I believe he could answer it. But will your royal highness allow me to mention that he is so ridiculously desirous of being taken for a man, that if he is to be kept in good temper—and he will not answer unless he is—he must be treated just as if he were a man."

"I like that," said the king's daughter.

She went up to the learned man as he leant against the door, and talked with him of the sun and moon, of the green woods, of men near home and far away. The learned man answered cleverly and well.

"What a man he must be to have such a shadow!" thought the princess. "It would indeed be a blessing to my land and people if I chose him. And I will."

They soon arranged matters—the shadow and the king's daughter, but no one was to know of the engagement till she returned home.

"No one; not even my shadow," said the shadow; and he had his special reasons for that.

They travelled on to the country over which the princess reigned.

"Listen to me, friend," said the shadow to the learned man. "I am now as happy and prosperous as any one can be, and I should like to do something for you. You shall live with me at the palace, drive out with me in the royal carriage, and have a hundred thousand dollars yearly; but you must allow yourself to be treated by me and every one else as a shadow, and never say to any one that you have been a man, and once a year, when I sit in the sun on the balcony, you must lie at my feet as a shadow should. For I may as well tell you that I am going to marry the princess, and to-night is the wedding."

"No! that is going too far," said the learned man. "I will not—cannot do it. That would be deceiving the whole country and the princess herself! I shall tell her all; that I am a man, and that you are a shadow, only that you wear men's clothes."

"No one will believe you," said the shadow; "be reasonable, or I will call in the guard."

"I am going straightway to the princess," said the learned man.

"But I am going first," said the shadow, "and you are going to be put under arrest." And so indeed he was, for the guards believed the one whom they knew the princess was going to marry.

"You are trembling," said the princess, as the shadow entered her room. "Has anything happened? You are not going to be ill on our wedding day?"

"I have just passed through the most fearful experience which can happen to a man. Only think—ah! a poor, weak shadow's brain cannot bear much—only think, my shadow has gone mad: he thinks he is a man, and that I—just imagine it!—am his shadow."

"That is dreadful," said the princess. "He is locked up, of course?"

"Of course. I fear he will never recover."

"Poor shadow!" cried the princess. "He is very unhappy. It would be a real kindness to release him out of his misery; and really, when I consider how eager the masses are in our day to take up the cause of the weak against the strong, it seems to me requisite that he should be put quietly out of the way."

"That seems harsh," said the shadow, trying to sigh—"he was a faithful servant."

"You are a noble character," said the princess, and she bowed before him.

That night the whole city was illuminated, and the cannon thundered out "Boom! boom!" The soldiers presented arms. It was something like a wedding. The princess and the shadow went out on the balcony to show themselves to the people and receive another Hurrah!

The learned man heard nothing of all this splendour, for he had been already put to death.

The Band of Friendship.

WE have just taken a little journey, and we are pining already for a longer one. Whither? To Sparta, to Mycene, to Delphi! There are hundreds of such names which stir the heart with a thrill of longing. One rides up the narrow mountain pass, through thicket and tangled brushwood; the solitary traveller looks like a whole caravan. Beside him rides his dragoman; a horse carries on his pack-saddle portmanteau, tent, and provisions; a couple of armed officials follow as escort and defence. No hotel, with soft down beds, awaits him after his fatiguing journey; the tent is his only roof amid the savage beauty of the scenery round him; the dragoman cooks the pillau for the evening meal; swarms of stinging gnats surround the tent; it is a wretched night, and the morrow will lead him over the swollen river. Sit firm to the saddle, or you will be washed away.

And what is the reward for all these hardships? The greatest of all rewards, for Nature reveals herself in all her grandeur; every spot is rich in historic memories. The poet finds his theme, the painter his inspiration, but neither can reproduce the charm of reality which thrills the lonely traveller's heart.

I have tried in a few short sketches to present a tiny spot in Athens to my readers; and yet how colourless is the picture I have traced! How faintly it images the spirit of beauty and sorrow which breathes from the fair Hellenic land, and which the traveller can never forget!

The lonely shepherd on yonder rock could probably give with greater clearness the charm of his native Greece, by telling one of his simple tales, than I by all my sketches and descriptions.

So let it be. We will be silent while the shepherd speaks and takes a simple, kindly custom for his theme.

The Shepherd's Story of the Bond of Friendship.

"Our home was built of clay, but its door posts were columns of polished marble, which had been found close to the spot where it was built. The roof reached nearly to the ground. It is discoloured and ugly now; but when it was first built it was overgrown with laurel and oleander brought from beyond the mountains. The narrow rocky pass, by which the house was closed in, rose on either side towards the sky and caught the floating clouds upon its jagged peaks. I never heard the voice of a singing bird, or saw the peasants dance to the sound of the pipe. The place was sacred as of old, its name recalls the past. Delphi! The gloomy mountains were veiled in snow. Parnassus, highest of all, glowed the longest in the rose tints of the setting sun. The brook beside our house rises in the mountain; it too was sacred once; but now the ass disturbs its clearness with his feet, though the stream shakes itself free and wins back its purity. How well I remember every spot of its deep, sacred solitude! Fire burned within the hut and bread lay baking in the glowing embers. When the snow lay piled up so high before our door that we could scarcely force it open, my mother would be gayer than her wont; she would draw me to her knee, kiss my forehead, and sing the songs which our Turkish masters had forbidden to be heard. She sang—

"'On the peak of Olympus, in the gloomy pinewood, was an old stag; his eyes were heavy with tears; red, green, and pale blue tears. A roebuck passed by. "What ails thee that thou weepest red, green, and pale blue tears?" "The Turk is come into our city; he has blood-hounds for the chase—a goodly pack." "I will drive them over the islands," said the roebuck, "over the islands into the deep sea." But before sunset the roebuck was slain, and the stag was hunted to his death.'

"A tear lay on my mother's long lashes as she sang, but she bent down over the bread in the ashes. Then I clenched my fist and cried, 'I will slay the Turks.' And my mother sang in answer, 'I will drive them over the islands into the deep sea. But before sunset the roebuck was slain and the stag was hunted to his death.'

"Days and nights passed by, and we lived solitary in our hut; then came my father, and I knew that he would bring me shells from the Gulf of Lepanto, or perhaps a knife, keen and polished. This time he brought us a little child, a little naked girl wrapped up in a sheepskin, which was all the little one possessed in the world, except three silver coins which gleamed from her black hair. As she lay in my mother's

arms my father told us that the Turks had slain the child's parents; he told us tales that filled our hearts with dreams the whole night through. My father himself was wounded, my mother bound up his arm; the wound was deep, and the sheepskin stiff with blood. The little girl was to be my sister; was not that happiness? My mother's eyes were not softer than hers. Anastasia—that was her name—was to be my sister; for my father and hers were bound together by an old tie which is common among us. In their youth they had sworn brotherhood, and the fairest and most virtuous maiden of the country had hallowed their bond. I had often heard of the strange, beautiful custom.

"The little one was now my sister; I carried her in my arms; I brought her flowers and wild bird's feathers; we drank together of the streams which flowed from Parnassus, and her head rested against mine under the laurel-grown roof while my mother sang, many a night, of the red, green, and pale blue tears. But as yet I did not understand that the sorrows of my own people were mirrored in these tears.

"One day there came to us three Frankish strangers; their dress was not like ours: their beds and tents were packed on horses, and more than twenty Turks accompanied them. They were friends of the Pacha, and had received letters of credit from him. They were only come to see our mountains; to climb Parnassus in storm and sunshine, and to scale the heights round our hut.

"We had no room for them within; and, indeed, they would not have endured the smoke which curled along the ceiling and forced a passage through the low doorway. Their tents were set up near to our hut, and there they roasted lambs and birds, and poured out sweet, strong wine, of which the Turks dared not partake.

"When the travellers continued their journey I went with them for a little distance, carrying Anastasia, wrapped up in a goat's skin, on my shoulder. One of the strangers placed me against the rock and made a picture of us just as we stood. It was like life, and we looked like one figure. I had never thought of that before—but we really were one. Anastasia was always in my arms or on my shoulder, and whenever I dreamed, it was she who came to me in my dreams.

"Two nights later there arrived other strangers; rough men armed to the teeth with knives and muskets, Albanians, my mother called them. They only stayed a short time; little Anastasia sat on the knee of one of them. When they were gone away she had only two silver coins in her hair instead of three. They rolled up tobacco in strips of paper and smoked it, while they disputed about the road they ought to take.

"At last they were agreed, and my father went with them a little way. Soon afterwards we heard the sound of musket shots; soldiers forced their way into the hut and took my mother, Anastasia, and myself prisoners. We had harboured brigands, they said; my father was with them as their guide, we must come to be tried. Outside our hut we saw the corpses of the robbers, and we saw my father lying dead. I cried till I fell asleep, and when I awoke we were in prison, but the place was no worse than our own hut; they gave us onions and musty wine from an old tarred cask: we fared no better at home.

"I do not know how long we stayed in prison, but many days and

nights passed by. When we were set free, it was the time of the Easter festival, my mother was weak and ill, and we wandered slowly on, for she could not walk fast. I carried Anastasia on my shoulder, and thus by slow degrees we made our way towards the Gulf of Lepanto. When we reached the town we entered a church hung with beautiful pictures painted on a background of gold. They were pictures of angels, and very lovely, but none of them were lovelier in my eyes than our little Anastasia. In the centre of the church lay a coffin filled with roses. 'See, there lies the true Rose of Sharon, the Lord Jesus," said my mother, and the priest cried from the altar, 'Christ is risen!' Then all the people greeted each other joyously; lighted tapers were given to all the worshippers; Anastasia had one, and I had one also. Outside the church, groups of men were dancing to the sound of the pipe, while the women busied themselves with roasting the Paschal lamb. One of them invited us to the feast; I sat down by the fire, and a dark-eyed boy, older than myself, threw his arm round my neck, and kissed me, with the greeting, 'Christ is risen!' Then for the first time I saw Aphtanides.

"My mother was clever at making nets for the fishermen, and, as they were in great request, we earned plenty of money, and stayed a long time by the sea—the beautiful sea that tastes like tears, like the tears which the stag wept, red, green, and pale blue.

"Aphtanides could manage a boat well; I and Anastasia sailed with him many a time; the boat glided over the water as a cloud sails across the sky. When the sun went down the hills were bathed in violet mist; they rose, one above another, and highest of all stood Parnassus, white with snow. In the sunlight the peak glowed like molten gold; the light seemed to come from itself; and long after the sun had set it gleamed through the blue, vaporous air; sea-birds flapped the waves with their white wings, but for them, it would have been as silent as our rocky pass in Delphi.

"Anastasia and I lay in the boat looking at the stars which shone above us clearer than the tapers in the church. They were the same stars that shone over our little hut at Delphi. Sometimes it seemed to me that I was at home again. Suddenly a splash was heard, the boat gave a lurch, and, with a shrill cry, I saw that Anastasia had fallen overboard. Quick as thought, Aphtanides sprang in after her and held her up to me: we wrung the water out of her clothes, and remained out in the sunlight till they were dry, for we did not wish any one else to know of the fright she had given us. From this time Aphtanides could claim a part in the life of our little foster-sister.

"The summer came and burnt up the leaves upon the trees; I pined for our fresh mountain air, and for the rippling streams; my mother too felt homesick, and we at length set out on our return. What stillness —what solitude! We walked through the flowering thyme, the sun had scorched its blossoms, but had not taken away their fragrance. Not a shepherd, not a hut met our sight; and only the sudden flight of a shooting star showed that there was yet life in the sky. I do not know whether the clear blue air glowed with a light of its own, or whether it was the starlight, but we could trace clearly the outline of every peak. My mother lighted a fire and roasted some onions for our

supper; and then we slept out among the scented thyme, and feared neither the terrible Smidraki* nor the wolves and jackals. My mother was with us, and that seemed enough to ward off any danger.

"We reached our home at last: the hut was a heap of ruins. Some women helped my mother to build another; and in a few days the walls rose from the earth and were covered with a roof of olive branches. My mother worked at a kind of basket work; weaving cases of bark and leather to hold the wine flasks, and I tended sheep for the peasant priests.† Anastasia and some little turtles were my playfellows.

"One day we received a visit from our beloved Aphtanides; he had been longing to see us, and he stayed with us two whole days.

"In a month's time he came again to bid us good-bye: he was going in a vessel to Corfu and Patras, and he presented my mother with a large fish. He had a great deal to talk about; not only of the fishermen by the Gulf of Lepanto, but of the ancient kings and heroes who once reigned over Greece as the Turks do now.

"I had often seen a rose-bush put forth a tiny bud which grew larger day by day, until suddenly, before one thought of it, it opened into a lovely rose, crimson and glowing. So it befell with my sister Anastasia. She had bloomed into a lovely maiden; I, too, had grown a strong, tall lad; the wolf, whose skin lay upon my mother's bed, was slain by my own hand.

"Years passed away. One evening Aphtanides came in, tall, slender as a reed, strong and sunburnt; he kissed us all, and told us tales of the great sea, of the fortifications at Malta, and of the Egyptian pyramids. His stories sounded like the legends of the priests. I listened to him with wonder and reverence.

"'How much you know!' I exclaimed to him. 'What tales you have to tell!'

"'None so beautiful as the one you told me,' he answered. 'You told me once about the beautiful old custom of the bond of friendship. Brother, let us observe it also; let us go to the church and swear brotherhood, as your and Anastasia's father swore it. Your sister is the best and fairest maiden in the land; she shall consecrate us. No nation has such grand old customs as we Greeks.'

"Anastasia blushed like a rosebud, and my mother kissed Aphtanides.

"The little church stood about a mile from our house, where a few trees lend their shadow to the rocky soil; a silver lamp burned perpetually before the altar.

"I was dressed in my best clothes; my scarlet jacket fitted close to my figure, and the white tunic fell in graceful folds. The tassel on my fez was of silver, and in my girdle gleamed knives and pistols. Aphtanides wore the blue dress of a Greek sailor, a silver medal of the Virgin hung round his neck, his embroidered scarf was as costly as a noble's. All the world could see that we were prepared for a festival.

The Greeks believe in a monster called Smidraki, which is born from the unopened entrails of a slaughtered sheep.

† A peasant who can read is often consecrated priest. The other peasants address him as "most holy sir," and kiss the ground on which he walks.

We entered the lonely church, where the sunset fell upon the burning lamp and the pictures on their golden grounds. We knelt upon the altar steps, and Anastasia stepped before us. A long white robe was clasped round her beautiful waist; round her fair neck was a necklace formed of silver coins, row above row. Her dark hair was wreathed round her head, and partly hidden by a small net of gold and silver, which had been found within the temple. No Grecian maiden ever wore a lovelier ornament; her face glowed, her eyes shone like twin stars.

"All three of us knelt in silent prayer; and then the maiden spoke. 'Will you be friends in life and death?' she asked us.

"'We will,' was our reply.

"'Will you remember, whatever happens, that your brother is a part of yourself—your secret, your happiness is his also? Constancy, self-sacrifice, all within you belongs to him as well as to yourself?'

"'We will,' answered Aphtanides and myself.

"She joined our hands together and kissed us on our foreheads. We knelt once more in prayer. Then the priest stepped forward from behind the altar and pronounced a blessing over us, and the song of the choir rose up and filled the church. The bond of friendship was tied. When we rose from our knees we saw our mother passionately weeping in the church porch.

"How happy we were in our little hut, and by the Delphic mountain

torrents! The day before Aphtanides' departure he and I sat together, silent and thoughtful, on the rocky slope. His arm was round me; we spoke of our unhappy country, and of the patriots whom we could trust. The thoughts of our souls lay clear before us. I took his hand in mine. 'One thing you must hear from me: as yet it has been secret between myself and God. My heart is filled with love; a love stronger than my love to my mother and to thee.'

"'Whom do you love?' said Aphtanides, faintly, and his face and neck grew red as fire.

"'I love Anastasia,' I replied. His hand trembled in mine, and his face turned pale as death I saw and understood it all. I think my hands were trembling too as I bent forward and kissed his brow. 'I have said no word to her,' I whispered; 'she may not love me. Think, my brother; I have seen her daily, she has grown up at my side, one with my life.'

"'And she shall be thine,' he cried. 'Thine—I cannot and will not lie to you. I also love her; but to-morrow I go away, and next year, when we meet again, she will be your wife. Is it not so? I have money, and it shall be her dowry; nay, I will have it so.' We rose and descended the path in silence; it was late at night when we reached the hut.

"Anastasia held the lamp toward us as we entered; my mother was absent. She looked sorrowfully at Aphtanides. 'To-morrow you will leave us,' she cried; 'and my heart is sad.'

"'Sad?' he cried; and his voice shook with a grief as deep as my own. I could not speak, but he seized her hand and said, 'Our brother loves you—and he is dear to your heart. See! his silence reveals his love.'

"Anastasia trembled and burst into tears; I saw and thought of no one but herself: I threw my arms round her and said, 'Yes, I love you.'

"She pressed her lips to mine and clasped her hands round my neck; the lamp fell to the ground: darkness closed round us, and round the heart of Aphtanides.

"Before daybreak he left us. He had given my mother all his gold for us. Anastasia became my betrothed, and a few days later saw her my wife."

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The Old House.

DOWN yonder in the street there once stood a very old house. On its wooden frontal was carved the date of the year when it was built, and round the date was a carved wreath of tulips and hop-tendrils. The date showed that the house was three hundred years old; over every window was a motto written in curious old text, and faces, carved in wood, grinned oddly at the passers-by. The upper storey projected far beyond the lower; under the roof was a leaden gutter, ending in a dragon's

head. The rain-water ought to have run out of the dragon's mouth, but as there was a hole in the spouting, it ran out of his body.

All the other houses in the street were new and fresh-looking, with large window panes and smooth walls. It was clear that they wished to have nothing in common with the old house. They probably thought, "How long is that tumble-down place to be left standing, to the disgrace of the whole street? The parapet projects so far that it blocks up the view from our windows; we cannot see anything that is going on on the other side of the street. The staircase is as broad as the staircase of a castle, and as high as if it were going to lead up to a steeple. The iron palisading looks exactly like the railing round a family vault, and there are brass knobs upon it. It is really too absurd."

A row of new houses stood opposite the old house, and they thought exactly as the others did; but at the nursery window of one of them sat a rosy-cheeked little lad, with merry blue eyes, and he was very fond of the old house. He liked it by moonlight, and in the day time also; and when he sat looking at it, he used to fancy how the street must have looked three hundred years ago when all the houses had gable roofs, open staircases, and gutters that twisted and coiled like dragons and sea snakes.

It was a house that seemed made to be looked at, and its master was an old man who walked about in leathern knee-breeches and a coat with large brass buttons. He wore a wig; any one could tell in a moment that it was a real wig. Every morning an old man went to set the house to rights and receive orders; but, with that exception, the old man in the leathern knee-breeches lived alone in the house. Sometimes he came to stand at the window, and then the little boy nodded to him. The old man nodded back, and so they made acquaintance and became great friends, although they had never spoken to each other. But that is not at all necessary.

The little boy heard his parents say, "The old man over yonder is very well off, but he is quite alone."

On the following Sunday the little boy wrapped up something in a piece of paper, went up to the door of the old house, and said to the servant who waited on the old man—

"I say! will you give this to the old man from me? I have two tin soldiers, and I have brought him one, for I hear that he is all alone."

The old porter smiled, nodded, and carried the tin soldier into the house. A message was sent across soon afterwards to know whether the little boy would like to come over and pay the old man a visit. His parents gave him leave, and so he went to pay a call at the old house.

The brass knobs on the balustrade shone bright as gold; any one would have thought that they had been polished up on purpose to receive the visitor. And it seemed as if the wooden trumpeters—for on the door there were carved wooden trumpeters standing up inside tulips—were blowing away with all their might. Their cheeks looked rounder than ever. "Tra-ra! tra-ra!" they blew; "the little boy is coming—tra-ra! tra-ra!" And then the door opened. The hall was

hung round with old portraits of knights in armour and ladies in silken dresses; the armour clanged, and the silks rustled. Then came a staircase which went a good way up, and then a little way down, and then one found ones self on an old tottering balcony. Through the myriad holes and rifts the long grass grew green; courtyard and walls were all overgrown with moss and grasses; the place looked like a garden, but it was only a balcony. Within it stood curious old flower-pots, with asses' ears and faces; the flowers grew just as it pleased them. One pot was filled with pinks; with the green leaves, that is; one shoot crowding the other, and saying, quite clearly, "The air has fanned me, the sun has kissed me and promised me a little flower by next Sunday—by the very next Sunday."

Then they came into a room where the walls were hung with leather inwrought with gold flowers.

"The leather will stay
When the gilding's away,"

said the walls. And there were tall chairs with narrow, carved backs and arms.

"Sit down," they cried. "Oh dear! how I creak! I shall have a fit of the gout like the old cupboard. Gout in my back! oh dear!"

Then the little boy came to the room where the old man sat. "Thank you for the tin soldier, my little friend," he said; "and thank you for coming to see me."

"Thanks—thanks," or "Creak—creak," said all the pieces of furniture.

There were so many of them that they almost got in one another's way to see the little boy.

On the wall there hung the picture of a beautiful lady, young and bright-looking, but dressed in the fashion of years gone by, with powdered hair and stiff brocade. She said neither "Thanks" nor "Creak," but she smiled down with her sweet eyes on the little boy, who immediately said to the old man, "Where did you get that from?"

"From the old curiosity dealer's over yonder," said the old man. "He has a great many pictures. No one took any notice of this one, for all her friends are dead and buried. But I knew her years ago; she has been dead now nearly half a century."

Under a glass shade, below the portrait, was a nosegay of withered flowers; they were certainly half a century old, at any rate they looked it. The pendulum of the great clock swung to and fro, the hands turned round, and everything in the room grew older every minute, but no one noticed it.

"They say at home that you are always alone," said the little boy.

"Oh!" said the old man; "old memories and all that they bring with them come and visit me, and now you are come, too. I get on very well."

He reached down a book of pictures from the bookshelves; there were pictures of processions, and old carriages, such as one never sees now-a-days; soldiers, like knaves of clubs, and townsfolk with waving banners. The tailor had a banner on which were two lions holding up

a pair of shears ; on the shoe-maker's banner there were no boots, but a two-headed eagle ; everything must be arranged in twos at a shoe-maker's, so that one can say, " That is a pair." Yes, it was something like a picture-book.

The old man went into the next room to fetch out apples, nuts, and preserves. It was glorious to be in the old house.

" I cannot bear it," said the tin soldier, who was standing on the mantelpiece ; " it is really too lonely and dull here. When one is accustomed to family life, it is impossible to get used to this place. I cannot bear it. The days are long enough, but the nights are still worse. It is quite different from your house over the way ; where your father and mother were always in cheerful conversation, and the children laughed and romped all day long. You don't know how lonely it is ! Do you think the old man ever gets any kisses, or Christmas trees? He will get nothing but a grave. I cannot bear it ! "

" You should not look at the dark side of everything," said the little boy. " I think everything is very beautiful here ; and then the old memories and all that they bring with them come and pay visits."

" Yes ; but I never see them. I should not know them if I did," said the tin soldier. " I cannot bear it."

" But you must," said the little boy.

Then the old man came back, with a pleasant face, and brought the most delicious preserve and fruits, so that the little boy forgot all about the tin soldier.

The little boy went home delighted with his visit. Days and weeks passed by ; a great deal of nodding was carried on between the two houses, and at last the little boy came over for a second visit.

The carved trumpeters blew, " Tra-ra ! tra-ra ! the little boy is coming ! " The swords and armour clinked, the silks rustled, the gilt leather recited its verse, the old chairs had the gout in their backs. It was just like the first time, for one day was just like another in the old house.

" I cannot bear it," said the tin soldier ; " I have wept tears of tin. It is too dismal to be borne. I would rather go to the war and lose my arms and legs. That would be a change at least. I cannot bear it. Now I know what you mean by old memories and all that they bring with them. I have had a visit from mine, and I shall not mind if I never have another. I was ready to throw myself down from the mantelpiece. I saw you all as clearly as possible in your house across the street. It was a Sunday morning : you children stood round the table singing your morning hymn. You were standing reverently with folded hands, and your father and mother were as devout as ever. Just then the door burst open and in came your little baby-sister, Maria ; she is not two years old yet, I know ; and she always begins to dance when she hears music of any kind. So she began to dance, but she could not keep time any way, the notes were so slow. She stood first on one leg and then on the other ; and bent down her head, but it was all of no use. You all stood very serious, though it was hard work not to laugh ; but I laughed till I fell off the table and raised a lump which I carry about with me now, for I certainly had no business to laugh. Well,

all this, and everything else that I have experienced, comes back to haunt me now; and those are the old memories and all that they bring with them. Tell me—do you sing still on Sundays? Tell me something about little Maria. And how is my comrade, the other tin soldier? He is a happy fellow! I can *not* bear it."

"You are given away," said the little boy, "and you must stay. I wonder you don't see that."

The old man came in and brought a casket in which there were several things to look at; rouge pots, and scent-boxes, old cards, large and gilt-edged, such as one never sees now. Several caskets were opened; and so was the piano. Inside the lid there were landscapes painted; it sounded faint and shrill when the old man played upon it. He nodded to the picture which he had bought at the curiosity shop, and his eyes brightened.

"I want to go to the war! I will go to the war," cried the tin soldier as loud as he could; and he threw himself down from the mantelpiece.

Now where was he? The old man searched, and the little boy searched—but he was really gone. "I shall find him," said the old man; but he never did find him. The floor was full of cracks and holes, and the tin soldier had fallen into one of them, where he lay as in an open grave.

The day wore away, and the little boy went home. Weeks passed by; the windows were frozen over, and he was obliged to breathe on the panes and make a peep-hole whenever he wanted to look at the old house. The snow lay white in all the scrolls and carved work, it covered the doorsteps as if no one were at home. And no one was at home. The old man was dead.

That evening a hearse stopped before the door, and the old man was placed inside it in his coffin; he was to be buried in his family vault out in the country. No one followed him to the grave, for all his friends were dead; the little boy kissed his hand to the coffin as the hearse drove away.

A few days later there was an auction held in the old house; and the little boy, as he sat at his nursery window, saw how the old knights, the ladies, the flower-pots with the asses' ears, the chairs, and the old cupboard were carried away. One went one way, and one another. *Her* portrait, which had been bought at the old curiosity shop, went back to its old place, and there it remained, for no one cared anything about the old picture.

In the spring the house itself was pulled down.

You could see from the street right into the room with the leathern hangings; they were all hanging in strips by this time. The grass had grown wild over the crumbling balcony and rotten beams.

"A good riddance," said the neighbours.

A beautiful house was built further back, with large windows and white stone walls, and in front, where the old house itself had stood, was a pretty garden. The walls were overgrown with climbing plants, and in the front was an iron palisading, with a handsome gate. It looked very grand, and the passers-by used to stand at the gate and peep through. The sparrows settled by dozens on the wall, and

chirped and twittered together, but they did not chatter about the old house, because they did not remember it. Many years had passed since then—so many, that the little boy had grown into a man, a good and clever man, who filled his parents' hearts with joy. He had just married, and moved into the new house with the pretty garden. He and his wife were walking in the garden; he stood by her side while she bent down to plant a little field flower which she thought was very pretty. She planted it with her little white hand, and pressed down the earth with her fingers. "Oh! what was that?" Something pricked her finger; something that stood up sharp above the soft earth. It was—now just think—it was the tin soldier; the very one which was lost at the old man's, and which had fallen down through dust and rubbish and lain buried for years in the earth.

The young wife wiped the soldier clean with a green leaf, and then with her white handkerchief; and the strong, fragrant scent on the handkerchief made the soldier feel as if he were recovering from a fainting fit.

"Let me see him," said the young man, laughing. He shook his head. "No, it can scarcely be the same; but he reminds me of something that happened to a tin soldier which I had when I was a boy." And then he told his wife the story of the old house and its master; and of the tin soldier which he had given him because he was all alone. Tears stood in the young wife's eyes as she thought of the lonely old man.

"I feel sure it is the same tin soldier," she said. "I shall keep it, and think of what you have just told me. You must show me the old man's grave."

"I do not know where it is," he answered; "nor does any one else. All his friends were dead: no one attended to the grave, and I was a little boy."

"How lonely he must have been!" she cried.

"Lonely indeed!" said the tin soldier; "but it is delightful to find that one is not forgotten."

"Delightful!" said a voice close at hand. No one but the tin soldier saw that the voice came from a rag of the old leathern tapestry which had now lost all its gilding. It looked like nothing but moist earth, but it still had its own opinion of itself, and let it be known too—

"The leather will stay
When the gold's gone away."

But the tin soldier did not agree with that.

———o———

The Jewish Maiden.

IN the charity school there sat among the other children a little Jewish maiden; she was a good, intelligent little girl, clever at her lessons, and generally at the head of her class. But from one class she was shut out altogether. She might not join in the religious instruction, for the school was a Christian school.

While the class was going on she read, learned her geography

lesson, or worked her sum; but that was soon done, and when she knew her lesson off by heart she let the book lie open before her, while she listened to the teacher's words—listened more earnestly than any of the other children.

The teacher became aware of her attention. "Read your book, Sarah," he said, gently, but her dark eyes were fixed upon his face; and once when he asked a question she was the only one who answered. She had listened, understood, and pondered in her heart all that he had taught.

Her father, a poor, honest man, had made it a condition when he sent his daughter to the school that she should be excluded from all lessons on the Christian faith. But as it would have caused a confusion, or perhaps made the other children jealous, if she had had a holiday while the lesson was being given, she had always remained in the room. Now that could not be allowed any longer.

The teacher went to her father and begged him either to take his daughter away or to let her become a Christian. "I can no longer remain an idle spectator of the child's earnest face, of her longings to learn the words of our holy gospel," he said.

The father burst into tears. "I am not learned in our law," he said, "but Sarah's mother was firm in her faith as a daughter of Israel, and I promised her on her dying bed that the child should never be a Christian. I must keep my oath—it binds me as if it were a vow to my God."

And the little Jewish child was taken from the Christian school.

Years passed away.

In a humble family, in a small provincial town, there lived as servant a poor girl of the Hebrew faith. Her hair was black as ebony, her eyes were dark as night, but soft with the liquid lustre one sees in the dwellers in Eastern climes. It was Sarah. The expression in the face of the maiden was the same as in the face of the child when she sat upon the form at school and listened thoughtfully to the words of the Christian teacher.

Every Sunday the organ sounded from the church, and she heard the echoing hymns; they floated across the street to the house where the Jewess moved diligent and faithful among her daily work.

"Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day," sounded in her heart the voice of her law; but her Sabbath was passed in hard work for her Christian mistress. "Does God indeed reckon by days and hours?" she asked herself; and as the thought grew clearer in her soul, it became a pleasure to her to have an hour for prayer on the Christian Sunday. For while the others were at church she sat alone, and the solemn sounds of praise and prayer which penetrated to her poor kitchen hallowed even that lowly room. Then she took out her Old Testament, the guide and treasure of her people. All that her father and her teacher had said to her when she left the school was fresh in her mind; the vow made to her dying mother, that she would never forsake the faith of her people or receive Christian baptism, was still sacred to her. The New Testament must always be a sealed book to her, and yet she had learned so much from it—echoes of gospel teaching mingled with the distant memories of her childhood.

One day she sat in the corner of the sitting-room ; her master was reading aloud; and she could listen with a clear conscience, for it was not the New Testament from which he read. It was an old history book, and he had chosen the story of a Hungarian knight taken prisoner by a Turkish pacha, who yoked him with his oxen to a plough and drove him on, with mocking words and cruel blows of the whip, till he was brought near to death. The knight's true wife sold all her jewellery and mortgaged castle and land; his friends raised large sums of money, for the ransom was enormously high. At length, however, it was procured, and the knight was rescued from slavery and disgrace. Weak and fainting he reached his home. Before long there rang out a fresh call to arms against the enemy of Christendom. The wounded knight heard the summons, and it left him neither rest nor peace. He caused himself to be lifted on to his war-horse, his cheeks won back their old colour, his strength seemed

to be renewed, and he rode forth to battle and to victory. And the very pacha who had driven him, harnessed to his plough, now stood his prisoner in his castle dungeon. Before an hour had passed away the knight stood before the captive pacha.

"What fate, think you, awaits you now?" he asked him.

"I know well," replied the pacha; "retribution."

"Yes," said the knight, "the retribution of a Christian. The law of Christ teaches us to forgive our enemies and to love our neighbours, for God is love. Go hence in peace: return to your home. I give you back to your dear ones. Henceforth be merciful to those who suffer."

The captive burst into tears. "How could I dream of the possibility of such forgiveness?" he cried. "Shame and torture seemed to be my inevitable doom, and to escape them I have taken poison. In a few

hours I must die. There is no way of deliverance. Let me die in the faith of Christ." His prayer was granted.

This was the legend which the Jewess heard out of the old history book; all the household listened with sympathy and interest; but she —the silent Jewish maid—felt her heart beat and her eyes fill with tears. Once more she felt as she had done when she was a little child at school. The loveliness of the Christian faith filled her heart; tears rolled down her cheeks.

But the words of her dying mother rose in her heart. "Do not let my child become a Christian," and with them blended the voice of her sacred law, "Honour thy father and mother."

"I am not received into the Christian communion," she said. "They mock at me, and call me 'Jew girl.' The neighbours did so last Sunday as I stood before the open church door, and watched the flame of the tapers on the altar, and listened to the singing

of the people. Yes, I have felt the power of Christianity ever since I sat as a child on the form at school—a power like the sunbeam's—and, though I shut my eyes to the light, I cannot shut my heart. But I will not grieve my mother in her grave; I will not read the Christian Bible. I have still my father's God, and I will cleave to Him."

Years passed away.

The master died. His widow fell into poor circumstances; the servant was to be turned away. But Sarah would not leave the house; she was their support in time of need. She kept the home together, working early and late to earn their daily bread. No friend or relation came to their aid; the widow lost her health, and was at length unable to leave her bed. Sarah worked, and nursed the sick woman by day and night; she was mild and gentle as an angel from Heaven in the sorrowful house.

"There is the Bible on the table yonder," said the sick woman; "read to me a little, for the nights are so long, and I thirst to hear God's Word."

Sarah took the book, opened it, and read aloud; tears filled her eyes, but they glowed as she read, and a light rose in her heart.

"Mother," she cried, "your child may not receive the Christian baptism. You have so willed it, and I obey your will. In this world we are united, but beyond this world our union shall be in God. He leads us through death into the life beyond. He stoops to earth and to suffering, that we may rise to heaven and to His joy. I understand it now. I do not know how I have learned, but it is through Him—through Christ!"

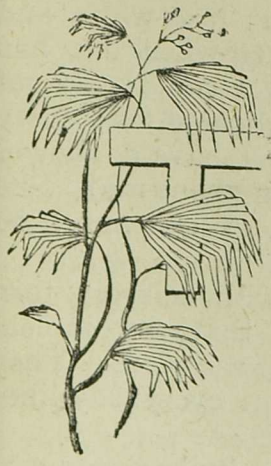
She started as she spoke the blessed name. A thrill as of a fiery baptism shook her whole frame. Her limbs trembled, and she sank fainting to the ground, weaker than the sufferer on the bed.

"Poor Sarah!" cried the neighbours; "she is quite worn out with work and sitting up at night."

They sent her to the hospital, and there she died. From the hospital she was carried to her grave: not to the Christian resting place, *there* was no welcome for the Jewish maid—but to a lonely grave outside the wall.

But God's dear sunlight, as it streams upon the Christian burial-ground, falls also on the Jewish grave, and when the church re-echoes to the Christian hymn, the tones float above the outcast maiden: and for her, too, shall sound one day the resurrection call in the name of Christ her Saviour. For did He not say to His disciples, "John indeed baptized you with water, but I will baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire?"

The Flax.



THE flax was in full bloom. Its pretty little blue flowers were more delicate than the wings of a moth. The sun shone down upon them and the rain sprinkled them; and that was just as good for the flax as it is for little children to be washed and then kissed by their mother. They look all the prettier for it, and so did the flax.

"They say I have come on extremely well," said the flax; "I am grown very tall; I shall make up into a famous piece of linen. How happy I am! I am certainly happier than anyone else; I am so kindly treated; the sun cheers me, and the soft, cool rain makes me grow. And now something useful is to be made of me. I am almost too happy!"

"Yes, yes," said the finger-post; "wait a little. You don't know

the world; but I do, for I am extremely knotty." And it began to sing, in a plaintive voice—

"Snip-snap Snurre,
Basse Lurre,
The song is ended."

"No, it is not ended," said the flax. "The sun will shine to-morrow, or the rain will fall. I feel that I am growing. I feel that I am in blossom. And I am happy."

But one day some people came up to the flax and pulled it up by the roots, which hurt it a good deal. Then it was thrown into some water, as if it were going to be drowned; and then placed over a fire, as if it were going to be roasted; and all that was really alarming.

"One can't have things always to their liking," said the flax. "One must expect to go through some trouble if one is to learn anything."

And there was trouble enough in store for the flax. It was soaked, and roasted, and broken, and combed; it hardly knew at last what was being done to it, till it found itself on the spinning-wheel. Whirr! whirr! It was impossible to keep one's thoughts steady.

"I have had a very happy life," said the flax. "One must be contented with the pleasure one has enjoyed in the past. Contented!" And "contented" was all it said when it came on to the weaver's loom, and was made into a beautiful piece of linen. All the flax, to the very last stalk, was used up in this one piece.

"Well, this is wonderful! I never would have believed it! What luck I have to be sure! The finger-post was altogether wrong, with his—

'Snip-snap Snurre,
Basse Lurre.'

"The song is by no means ended. It is very likely only just beginning. I certainly have had something to suffer, but then see what I have become. How strong and fine I am; how white and long! This is much better than being a plant, even when one has blue blossoms. No one attended to me then, and I could only get water when it rained. But now I am waited on, and cared for; every morning the maid turns me over, and every evening I have a shower bath; indeed the clergyman's wife preached a sermon about me! She said I was the best piece of linen in the parish. I can never be happier than I am now."

The linen was then brought into the house, cut with scissors, torn into pieces, and pricked all over with needles. All that was unpleasant, but twelve beautiful garments were made out of the piece. They were of that kind which no one cares to mention, but everybody likes to wear. And there was a dozen of them.

"Now, just see!" cried the flax. "Now I am really beginning to be of importance. This, then, was my destination! To be a blessing to all! Now I shall be of use in the world, and that is the truest pleasure. There are twelve of us, and we are yet all one and the same. A complete dozen. What an extraordinary piece of good fortune!"

Years passed by; and they were worn out, they could hardly hold together.

"There must be an end sometime," said the flax. "I should have liked to hold out a little longer, but it is of no use wishing for impossibilities."

It was then torn into small rags and shreds, and thought that all was over; for it was beaten to a pulp, steeped in water, dried, and a great deal more besides—and then it was made into beautiful white paper.

"Well, this is a surprise—a splendid surprise!" cried the paper. "I am finer than ever; and now I shall be written upon. That will be true happiness."

And the most beautiful stories and verses were written on the paper; and there was only one blot. That was really a very rare blessing. And people too listened to the words written; they were wise and good, and helped men to become wise and good also. A blessing lay hidden in the words upon the white paper.

"This is beyond all I ever dreamed when I was a little flower in the fields. How could I think that I should ever bring pleasure and wisdom to men? I cannot understand it, and yet it is really the case. God knows that I have done nothing myself, except using what little powers I had for my self-preservation, and yet He leads me on from one blessing to another. Every time when I think to myself, 'The song is ended,' a new and higher life opens before me. Now I shall certainly travel about the world, so that every one may read me. It must be so. It is the only thing at all likely. I have beautiful thoughts now instead of my blue flowers. I am happier than any one in the world."

But the paper did not travel; it was sent to the printer's, and all that was written upon it was printed in a book; or rather, in hundreds of books, which could be sent all over the world, and read by every one. That was much better than if the paper had gone itself, and been worn out before it had got half way.

"Yes, this is certainly the most sensible thing to do," said the paper. "It never occurred to me. I shall stay at home and be held in honour like an old grandfather—and, indeed, I am a grandfather to all those books. Now, something can be made of them. I could never have gone about in that way myself. But the man who wrote the words looked on me as he wrote: every word came straight from his pen to me. I am the happiest of all."

Then the paper was tied up in a bundle and thrown into a tub in the wash-house.

"After a busy life it is good to rest," said the paper. "It is good to collect one's thoughts and think over one's inner life. Now for the first time I begin to see what is within me, and to know ones self is the true road to progress. What will become of me now? It will be a step forward. I have learned that. It is always a step forward."

One day all the paper was taken out and thrown on to the fire; it was to be burnt, for it could not be sold to the grocer to wrap up sugar and butter, because it was written upon. The children of the house stood round the fire to see the paper burn, it flamed up beautifully, and then its ashes were sprinkled over with golden sparks that ran to

and fro and in and out. One after another died out. The children said the sparks were schoolboys coming out of school, and the last was the school master: they thought over and over again that the schoolmaster was gone out—but there always came another, and then they said again, "There goes the schoolmaster." So they were always right. They ought to have known where the sparks all went to—we shall know just now—but the children did not know. The whole bundle of paper was thrown on the fire, and it soon burned away. "Ah!" it cried, and broke out into clear flame. It was not exactly pleasant; but the golden flames rose higher and higher—higher than the flax could ever have lifted its little blue flowers; brighter than the whitest linen could ever be bleached.

All the words and letters glowed red, and the thoughts rose up in flames. "Now I am going up to meet the sun," cried a voice from the flames; it seemed as if a thousand voices spake in unison. The flames rose through the chimney, and, finer than the flames, invisible to human eyes, myriad tiny elves hovered above the flames, as many as the blue blossoms in the field of flax. They were lighter than the flame from which they sprang, and when that had died away, and nothing was left of the paper but cold black ashes, they danced above it, and wherever their feet fell there arose a tiny spark.

"The children are coming out of school, and the schoolmaster comes the last!" What a pretty sight it was! The children sang round the dead, cold ashes—

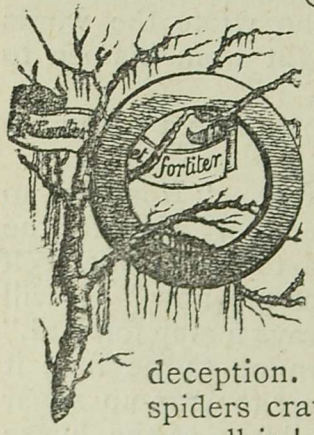
"Snip-snap Snurre,
Basse Lurre,
The song is ended."

But the tiny unseen elves said, "The song is never ended. That is the beauty of it. We know it, and that is why we are so happy!"

But the children could neither hear nor understand what they said: and a good thing too, for children ought not to know everything.

—o—

A Drop of Water.



OF course you all know what a microscope is? A round piece of glass that makes everything look a hundred times larger than it really is. If you hold it before your eyes and look through it at a drop of water taken out of the pond, you perceive thousands of wonderful animals in the water which you never could have seen without the glass. But there they are; it is no deception. The water looks just like a large plateful of sea-spiders crawling and leaping about. And what a fury they are all in! They tear off each other's arms and legs, and heads and tails, and seem to enjoy themselves thoroughly.

There was once an old man whom people called Kribble-Krabble,

because that was his name. He always tried to get the best of everything; and when he could not get it by fair means, he had recourse to the black art.

One day he sat in his room holding his microscope before his eyes and looking at a little drop of water taken out of the gutter. Heavens! how it kribbled and krabbled in the water! Thousands of little creatures were hopping and jumping about; biting, tearing, and destroying each other.

"It is downright horrible!" said old Kribble-Krabble; "why can't they be persuaded to live in peace and quietness? Why can't every one mind his own business?" He thought and thought, but he could not do what he wanted, so he tried magic, as usual. "I'll colour them so that they can be more plainly seen," he said; and he poured in something that looked like a drop of wine, but it was witch's blood, of the finest quality, at nine-pence a drop. And now all the curious animals turned pink and looked like savage, naked men.

"What have you got there?" asked another old conjuror. He had no name at all; that was his special distinction.

"If you can guess what it is I will give it to you," said Kribble-Krabble; "but it is not easy to find out, if you don't know beforehand."

The conjuror with no name looked through the magnifying glass and thought he saw a city full of men running wildly to and fro. It was a horrible sight! One rushed at another; they fought, hacked, struggled, bit, and tore. Those below tried to get to the top, and those at the top were thrust down below. "Look! his leg is longer than mine! Off with it! There is one with a hump—but it hurts him—off it shall come!" And they hacked and thrust him to death because of his hump. One of them sat as still as a girl, and only wished for rest and peace. But they pulled her out, tore her to pieces, and swallowed her.

"That's funny," said the conjuror.

"Yes; but what do you suppose it is?" asked Kribble-Krabble. "Can you make it out?"

"Anybody can do that," said the other. "It is Paris, or some other large city—they are all alike. It is a great city."

"It is a drop of water," answered Kribble-Krabble.

Two Maids.

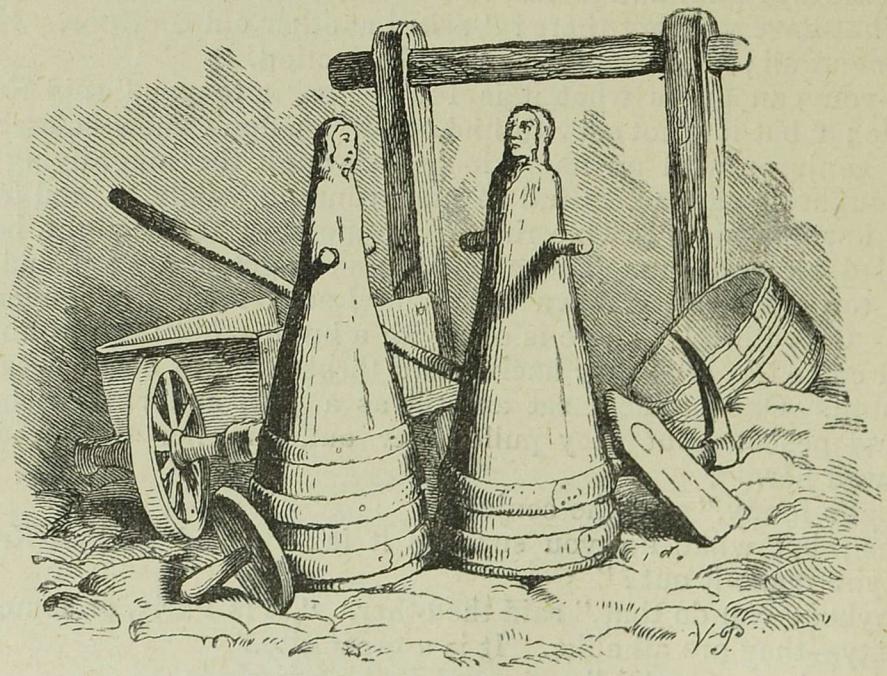
HAVE you ever seen a maid? I mean what the stone-masons call a maid; a thing with which they stamp down the pavement smooth and firm. That kind of maid is made of wood, and stands on a broad foot with iron vice-pins or ferrules. Its head is narrow, and through its waist is a stout stick which serves for its arms. Now you may look at the picture.

Two maids of that kind were standing in the warehouse-yard,

among wheelbarrows, handcarts, wood-measures, and spades; a rumour had reached the whole community that the maids were never to be called maids any more. Hand-rammers was the new name invented in the stonemason's language for that which in the good old times everybody called maid.

Now there are, we know, independent women in the world; nurses, teachers, milliners, and dancers who can stand on one leg; and the two maids considered themselves to belong to this society; they were maids—and they were by no means willing to give up their time-honoured name and allow themselves to be spoken of as hand-rammers.

"Maid is the name of a human being," they said; "but a hand-rammer is a thing, and we will not be addressed as 'Thing'—it is too insulting!"



"My betrothed would be quite capable of withdrawing from his engagement," said the younger. She was engaged to a rammer-log; a machine which drives great stakes into the earth; thus doing on a large scale what the maid does on a small. "He is ready to marry me as a maid, but whether he would do so as a hand-rammer is at the least doubtful, and I do not choose to be rebaptized."

"And I," said the elder, "would sooner have my two arms chopped off!"

The wheelbarrow was of a different opinion; he had a right to speak, for he considered himself a quarter of a carriage, because he went about on one wheel. "I must call your attention," he said, "to the fact that 'maid' is rather common; it is not nearly so select as 'hand-rammer,' or even 'stamper,' whichhas also been proposed. Now, 'stamper' will raise you at once to the rank of seal—and only think of

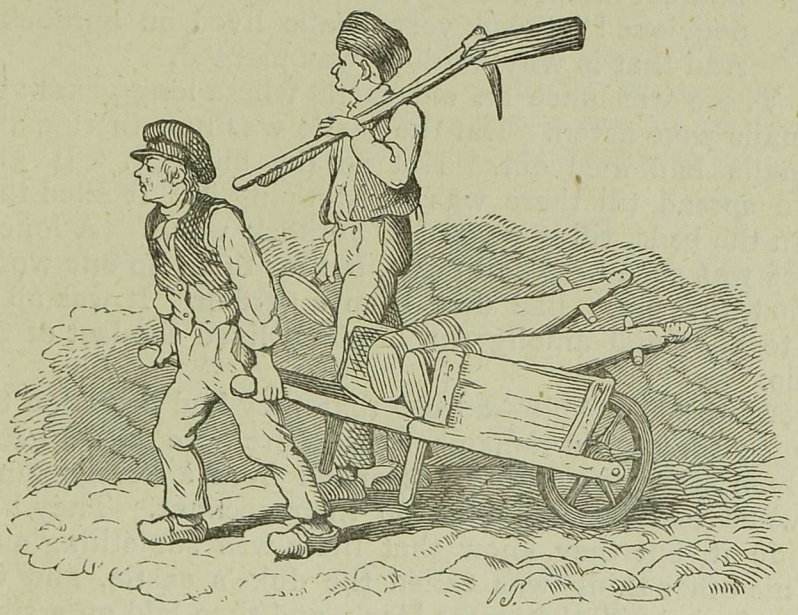
the great seal of royalty which gives a law all its force!—in your place I would certainly give up 'maid.'"

"Never—never!" cried the elder. "I am too old to change."

"You have perhaps never heard of what is called the European necessity," interposed the worthy wood-measure. "One must learn to yield one's private inclinations to the exigencies of the times; and if the law has been passed that maids are to be called hand-rammers, why hand-rammers they must be, and it is of no use pouting. Everything has its measure."

"Never! If I must change, I would rather be called Miss—that is a little like maid, at any rate."

"But *I* would rather be chopped to pieces," said the elder.



At last the workmen came up; the maids were driven to work in the wheelbarrow; that was humane treatment, but they were called hand-rammers all the same. "Ma—!" they gasped, as they were stamped on the pavement. "Ma—!" they very nearly got the whole word out that time, but not quite, and they thought it beneath their dignity to appeal.

But they always called each other "maid," and spoke of the good old times when things were called by their right names, and if one was a maid one was addressed as maid; and maids they remained, for the rammer-log went back from his engagement as had been anticipated. He had set his heart on a maid.

The Happy Family.

THE largest leaf in the whole country is the burdock leaf. If you hold it in front of you it makes a very good apron; and if you hold it over your head it does just as well as an umbrella, it is so very large. A burdock plant never grows alone; where you find one, you find thousands; it is a splendid sight. And this splendour is board and lodging too for the snails. The great white snails—those which grand people used to have served up in a *fricassée* in old times, and eat them, and say, when they had eaten them, "How delicious!" those very snails lived on burdock leaves. And that is why burdock was planted.

There was once an old castle where long years ago white snails were eaten. But the castle was now in ruins, and the snails had died out. Not so the burdock. It grew and throve, and spread till there was no stopping it. It filled the paths, and overran the beds, till it formed a burdock wood. A lonely apple or plum tree was seen here and there, but for them no one would have believed that the place had ever been a garden. It was all burdock from end to end, and among the burdock lived the last of the great white snails.

They were an old couple—so old that they had forgotten their real age long ago; they could remember that there were once a great many more of them, that they were descended from a foreign family, and that the wood had been planted on their account. They had never been outside it, but they knew that there was something else in the world. This other thing was called the duke's castle, and within it snails were boiled till they were black, and then laid on a silver dish. They did not know what happened after that. Neither could they imagine very clearly what it would feel like to be boiled and laid on a silver dish, but it sounded very grand and aristocratic. They often questioned the cockchafer and the toad and the earthworm on the subject, but they could get no information, for no member of those families had ever been boiled or laid on a silver dish.

The old white snails were the grandest people in the world: so much was certain. The wood stood there for them alone, and the duke's castle had been built simply that they might have a place in which to be cooked and laid on a silver dish.

They lived very quiet and retired; and as they were childless they had adopted a common black snail, and brought him up as their son. But the little fellow would not grow, for he was only a common snail; the old people, however, especially the mother, fancied that he did. When the father snail doubted it, his wife used to beg him to feel the child's shell. He felt it, and owned that she was quite right.

One day it rained in torrents.

"Listen how the rain beats on the burdock leaves," said the father snail; "rum, tum, tum!"

"This is something like a shower," answered his wife. "I can see the water running down the stems. We shall have it very wet here directly. I feel very glad that we have such good houses, and the child has his too. Certainly more has been done for us than for any other creature; it is easy to see that we are the lords of the world. We have houses from our birth, and the burdock wood was planted on our account. I should like to know how far it extends, and what lies beyond it."

"There can be nothing better than this," said the father snail. "I have nothing left to wish for."

"But I have," said his wife. "I should like to be taken to the duke's castle and boiled, and then laid on a silver dish. Our forefathers have always gone there, and I have no doubt it is something quite unique."

"The castle is most likely in ruins," answered the husband, "or the burdock leaves have grown over it so that no one can come out. And there is, after all, no hurry. But you and the boy are so impatient. Didn't he crawl up to the very top of that stalk in three days? It made me quite giddy to look up to him."

"You must not scold him," said the mother; "he is not reckless. He will live to be the very joy of our lives, and what else have we old folk to live for? Have you ever thought how we shall find a wife for him? Do you think it possible that any of our family are still living farther on in the wood?"

"There are very likely plenty of black snails," said her husband; "black snails with no houses; but they are so very common. We can speak to the ants on the subject: they run to and fro as if they had a great deal of business to do. I daresay they know of a wife for the boy."

"I know of the most beautiful in the world," said the ant; "but I hardly think it could be managed, for she is a queen."

"That does not signify," said the snails. "Has she a house?"

"She has a palace," said the ant. "The most splendid ant palace, with seven hundred corridors."

"Thank you," said the mother snail; "our son shall not go to an ant hill. If you know nothing better than that, we will give the commission to the white gnats; they fly about in rain and sunshine, and know the burdock wood from end to end."

"We know of a wife for him," said the white gnats. "A hundred man's steps from here there is a young lady snail who lives alone on a gooseberry bush. She has a nice house and is old enough to be married. It is not far from here."

"Let her come to him," said the old snails; "he has a wood, she has only a bush."

The young lady snail took eight days for the journey, and that showed her high breeding and that she was of distinguished family.

The wedding was then celebrated. Six glow-worms lighted up the feast as well as they could; but it was a quiet wedding, for the old people could not bear much excitement. The mother snail made a most beautiful speech at the breakfast, but the father could not speak a word, he was too much overcome. Then they bestowed the whole

wood on the newly-married couple, and said, as they had always said, that it was the best thing the world contained, and that if they lived honourable and respectable lives, they and their children would one day attain to the honour of being taken to the duke's castle, boiled, and laid on a silver dish. After the speeches were over the old people crept back into their shells and never came out any more: they slept. The young snails now ruled in the burdock wood and had a very large family. None of them were ever taken to the castle and boiled, so that they concluded that the castle had crumbled into dust, and that all the people in the world were dead. And since no one ever contradicted them, of course they were right. The rain beat on the burdock leaves for their amusement, the sun shone to light up the burdock leaves for their benefit, and they were happy: all the family was happy—inexpressibly happy.

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The Story of a Mother.

A MOTHER sat by the bedside of her little child; she was very sad, for she feared the child would die. Its eyes were closed; its baby face was white and thin. It drew its breath in deep sighs, and the mother's heart sank as she gazed on the little creature.

Some one knocked at the door, and an old man came into the room; he was dressed in a kind of horse-cloth, for it was winter, and he looked very cold. Out of doors everything was covered with ice and snow, and the keen wind blew sharply across one's face. The old man was trembling with cold, and as the child seemed as if it were asleep, the mother went to warm some beer for him. He sat down and rocked himself to and fro; the mother sat near him, looked at her child who lay drawing deep, painful breaths, and seized its little hand.

"I shall keep him, shall I not?" she said to the old man. "God, will never take him from me."

The old man—it was Death himself—nodded in a strange fashion which might mean either yes or no. The mother closed her eyes, and the tears ran down her cheeks. Her head was hot and heavy; she had not closed her eyes for three days and three nights, and now she slept. It was only for one minute though; she felt an icy chill, and started up shivering. What was that? She looked round on all sides, but the old man was gone, and her little child was gone: he had taken it with him. The old clock in the corner yonder began to give warning, the chains rattled and whirred, the leaden weight fell to the ground with a heavy thud—the clock stood still.

THE OLD MOTHER'S STORY.

The mother rushed from the house, calling for her child.

In the snowy street sat a woman draped in long black garments. "Death has been in your room," she said. "I saw him hurry away with your little child; he flies more quickly than the wind, and he never brings back what he has taken."

"Tell me the way he went," cried the mother. "Only tell me the way, and I will find him."

"I know the way," said the woman; "but before I tell you, you must sing to me all the songs you used to sing to your child. I am Night. I liked the songs; I have heard them before. I saw your tears when you sang them."

"I will sing them all," said the mother, "but not now. Do not hold me back. Let me overtake him and bring back my child."

But the Night sat mute and still. The mother wrung her hands, and sang the songs. There were many songs, and still more tears. Then the Night said, "Go to the right in the pine wood yonder. I saw him enter it with the little child."

In the heart of the forest two roads met, and the mother did not know which to take. Close beside her stood a blackthorn bush, with neither leaves nor blossom. It was winter time, and long icicles hung on the branches.

"Have you seen Death pass by with my little child?"

"Yes," said the thorn; "but I will not tell you which way he went till you have warmed me against your breast. I am freezing to death. I am turning to a mass of ice."

She pressed the thorn bush to her breast to make it thaw. The thorns tore her flesh, but the bush put forth green leaves and buds in the cold winter night, for a mother's heart is warm. Then the thorn bush told her the way.

She hurried on till she came to a great lake on which there was neither boat nor raft. It was not frozen sufficiently hard for her to walk upon, and it was too deep to wade through. She laid herself upon the ground to try and drink it dry. Any one else would have thought it impossible, but the mother hoped for a miracle.

"No, that will not do," said the lake; "let us see if we cannot come to terms. I like collecting pearls, and your eyes are the clearest I have ever seen. If you will cry them out into my depths, I will carry you over to the great hot-house, where Death lives and tends his trees and flowers, every one of which is a human soul."

"What would I not give to win back my child?" said the poor mother. She wept till her eyes sank like two costly pearls to the bottom of the lake. Then the lake lifted her up and bore her across its waves to the opposite shore. Before her stood a wonderful house, miles long; whether it was a mountain with woods and caves, or a castle full of rooms, no one could tell. But the mother could see nothing, for her eyes were wept away.

"Where shall I find Death, who took away my little child?" she cried.

"He is not come back yet," said an old grey-haired woman, who was watching over the plants in Death's absence.

"How did you get here? Who has helped you?"

"God has helped me. He is merciful, and you will be merciful, too. Where shall I find my little child?"

"I do not know the child, and you cannot see it. Many flowers and trees have died in the night, and Death will soon come to transplant them. You know that every human being has a life tree or flower; they look like other trees and flowers, but their hearts beat. Children's hearts beat also. Take that for your guide; perhaps you can tell the heart-beats of your child. But what will you give me if I tell you what more you must do?"

"I have nothing to give you," said the mother in despair; "but I will go to the end of the world for you."

"I have nothing to do with the end of the world," said the old woman; "but you can give me your long black hair; you know it is beautiful, and it pleases me. You shall have mine in exchange; it is better than nothing."

"Is that all you ask?" she said. "Take it with pleasure." And she gave her her beautiful hair, and received the old woman's snow-white hair in return.

Then they went into the great hothouse where the flowers and trees grew side by side. Delicate hyacinths grew among glass bells and splendid peonies. Water plants grew there also, some fresh and healthy, and others sickly. Water snakes and crabs clung to them and twined round their stems. Mighty oak trees, palms, and plantains grew among parsley and sweet wild thyme. Every tree and flower had its name; each was a human life. The men and women were still alive, some in China, some in Greenland, scattered all over the world. There were strong trees crushed and dwarfed in narrow pots, and sickly little flowers in rich soil, fenced round with moss. But the mother bent over the little plants and heard their hearts beat; and from among a thousand she recognized the heart-beat of her child.

"This is it," she cried, bending over a little crocus which drooped over the side of its flower-pot.

"Do not touch the flower," said the old woman, "but place yourself here. When Death comes—and I expect him every moment—do not let him pull up the flower; threaten him that if he does you will pull up some of the others, and he will be afraid. He has to answer to God for every one; none may be pulled up till leave has been granted."

An ice-cold breath sighed through the place, and the blind mother felt that Death was come.

"How did you find this place?" he cried. "How have you been able to reach here before me?"

"I am a mother," she cried.

Death stretched out his long thin hands towards the little flower, but she held it tightly clasped, tightly but tenderly, lest she should bruise the delicate leaves. Death breathed upon her hands, and they sank down powerless and benumbed, for his breath was colder than the icy wind.

"You cannot prevail against me," he cried.

"But God can," she answered.

"I only do His will," he answered. "I am His gardener; I take up all the flowers, and transplant them in the garden of Paradise in the

"The angel pointed downwards, through all the confusion."

unknown land. But how they thrive there, and where the land is, I cannot tell you."

"Give me my child back," said the mother, weeping and imploring. Suddenly she seized two pretty flowers, and cried aloud, "I will uproot all your flowers, for I am in despair."

"Touch them not," said Death. "You say you are unhappy, and you would make another mother as unhappy as yourself!"

"Another mother," said the woman, loosing her hold of the flowers.

"Here are your eyes," said Death. "I saw them shining in the lake and fished them up. Take them back, they are clearer now than they were, and look deep into this well. I will tell you the names of the two flowers you were about to pull up, and you will see what you had nearly done."

She looked into the deep well, and saw the life of one who was a blessing to the world, and spread around him joy and happiness. The other life was filled with pain and care, misery and suffering.

"Both are God's will," said Death.

"Which is the unhappy, and which the blessed one?" she asked.

"I cannot tell you that," said Death, "but one of them is the life of your own child. It was his fate, his future, which you have seen."

The mother gave a cry of terror. "Which is my child's life? Tell me that. Save my innocent child from all this misery. Rather carry it away. Take it to God. Forgive my tears and threats and all that I have done."

"I do not understand you," said Death. "Do you wish me to give you your child back, or to take it away to the unknown land?"

The mother wrung her hands, fell on her knees, and prayed aloud to God: "Hear me not when I pray against Thy will! Thy will is always best. Oh, hear me not."

She let her head sink on her breast; and Death carried her child to the unknown land.

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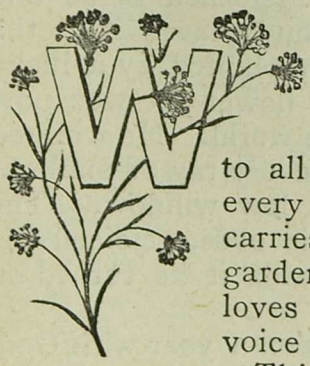
The Angel.



WHENEVER a good child dies, one of God's angels flies down to earth, takes the dead child in his arms, spreads out his great white wings, and flies to all the places which the child used to love. From every place he gathers a handful of flowers, and then he carries that up to heaven to plant in the heavenly garden. God welcomes all the flowers, but the one He loves best He touches, and at His touch it receives a voice and joins in the songs of the angels.

This is what an angel was telling a dead child whom he was carrying up to heaven; the child heard it all as in a dream.

while they flew swiftly over the houses in the town below, and over gardens filled with lovely flowers.

"Which shall we gather and take with us to heaven?" said the angel.

A tall rose-bush stood near covered with beautiful pink roses; but a rough hand had broken the main stem, and the branches, with all their half opened buds, hung down helpless and dying to the earth.

"The poor rose-bush!" said the child. "Let us take it, so that it may bloom in heaven."

The angel took the rose-bush and kissed the child, who half opened its closed eyes. They gathered some more flowers; some of them were rich garden flowers; but they did not leave the despised buttercup or the wild pansies behind.

"Now we have gathered enough," said the child. The angel nodded, but he did not fly straight to heaven. It was night, and all was silent. The angel lingered on in the large town, and hovered over one of the narrow alleys, where heaps of straw, ashes, and sweepings were lying on the ground. There were pieces of broken crockery, rags, old hats, and brick ends; it was an ugly place.

The angel pointed downwards through all the confusion, to a broken flower-pot, out of which a clod of earth had fallen. The clod was held together by the roots of a withered field flower. It was quite dead, and so it had been thrown out into the street as worthless.

"We will take this one," said the angel; "I will tell you why, while we fly up to heaven.

"In the dark underground yonder, in the narrow alley, there lived a poor, sickly boy. He had been bedridden ever since he could remember; and at the best of times he could only get across the room on crutches—that was all. Sometimes in the summer the sunbeams would steal in half way across the floor, and when the poor boy could sit where the light fell, and be shone upon, he would hold up his thin fingers before his face and let the warmth quicken the blood within them. 'I have been out to-day,' he said then to himself. He knew nothing of the great forest with its beautiful springtide greenery, except that the neighbour's son brought him the first bough of the hawthorn. The boy would hold it over his head and dream that he was wandering among the trees, while the sun shone and the birds were singing. One spring morning the neighbour's son brought him some wild flowers, and among them there happened to be one with a root: so they planted it in a flower-pot and placed it in the window close to the bed. The flower had been planted by a lucky hand; it grew, and blossomed every year. The flower-pot was now the poor boy's garden, his greatest treasure in the world. He watered and tended it, and took care that it should catch every ray of sunlight down to the very last which stole through the low window. The flower grew on in his dreams; it gladdened his eyes, rejoiced his heart, and refreshed him with its fragrance: towards it he turned on his death-bed when God was calling him.

"That was a year ago, the poor boy has now been a year with God, and the flower has stood for a year forgotten by the window: it also is dead now, and lies out in the street among the sweepings.

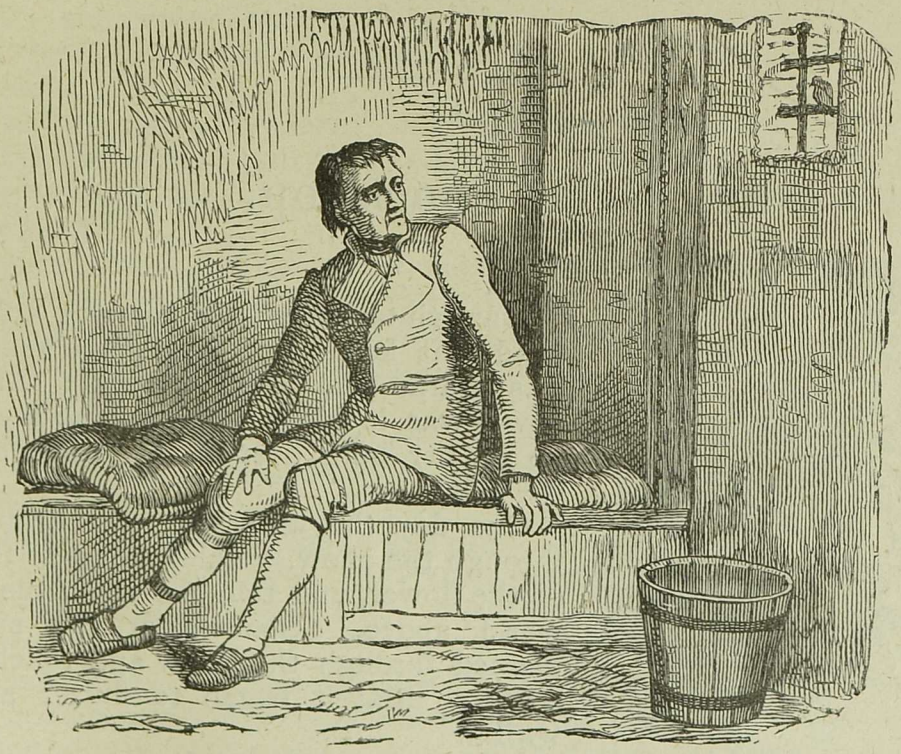
"And this is the flower which we will take with our garland; for it has given more joy than the richest blossom in the garden of a queen."

"How do you know all that?" said the child.

"I know it well," said the angel; "for I was the sick boy who could only move about on crutches—and this is my flower."

Then the child opened his eyes wide, and looked up into the angel's beautiful, radiant face, and in the same moment they found themselves in heaven, where all is joy and peace. God pressed the dead child to His heart; and gave him wings so that he could fly hand-in-hand with the other angels. And God welcomed all the flowers, but He touched the poor withered field flower, and it received a voice and sang with all the angels. They hovered round the throne in great circles, some near, some farther away to endless space—but all equally happy.

And all sang the angels' song; small and great, the good, happy child, and the poor dead flower which had lain among the sweepings in the squalid, narrow street



A Picture from the Fortress Wall.

IT is autumn. We stand upon the ramparts and look across the quiet sea. Beneath us the ships sail by, and the Swedish coast across the Sound towers high above the waves in the evening sunshine. Behind us the wood stands out clear against the sky; lofty trees surround us, the yellow leaves flutter down from the branches. Below, close

to the rampart walls, is a gloomy building closed in by an iron railing. The whole place looks cramped and dismal; but it is still gloomier behind the iron barred walls, for there are the cells of the convicts.

A ray from the setting sun falls into one of the cells; for the sun shines on the evil and on the good. The hardened criminal casts a sullen glance on the cold sunbeam. A little bird flies on to the barred window, for the birds sing to the just and to the unjust. It only chirped a short "Tweet! tweet!" but it stayed upon the iron bar, fluttered its wings, pecked out a feather, and plumed, and smoothed the tiny feathers of its neck and breast. The captive watched him, and a gentler look stole over his face. A thought rose within his heart; he could not fully explain it even to himself; but he knew that it had something to do with the sunbeam, and the scent of the spring violets underneath the fortress wall.

The hunter's horn was heard, sweet and clear, and the bird flew away in terror. The sunlight slowly faded and it was dark once more in the prison cell, and in the sinner's heart. But yet, for an instant, the sun had shone. The bird had sung there.

Sound on, clear, lovely notes of the horn! Sound on, the air is mild, the sea rocks gently as the cradle of a sleeping child.

The Snowdrop.

T was winter time; the air was cold; the wind was keen; but inside one's home it was warm and cosy enough. And the flower was inside her home; she lay curled up in her bulb deep in the earth beneath the snow.

One day the rain fell; the drops sank through the snow, trickled down to the bulb of the flower, and told her about the sunny world above. Soon after the sunbeam pierced through the snow and touched the bulb, so that it began to flutter and stir within.

"Come in," said the flower.

"I can't," answered the sunbeam. "I am not strong enough yet to open the door. When the summer comes I shall be strong."

"When will the summer come?" said the flower every time the sunbeam reached her. But the summer was still a long way off; the snow lay on the ground, and the water froze at night.

"What a time it is!" said the flower. "What a weary time it is! I must stretch myself; I must crack and split; I must shoot up and say good morning to the summer—that will be a happy time!"

And the flower stretched itself, and pressed against the bulb which the water had already softened, the snow and earth warmed, and the sunshine stirred with life. She shot out under the snow; a green and white blossom on a slender stem, guarded by close thick leaves. The snow was cold, but the light shone through it so that it was easy to break through, and then the sunbeams had more power than they have down below.

"Welcome! welcome!" sang the sunbeams, as the flower rose higher and higher out of the earth. The beams stroked her and kissed her till she opened wide—a flower as white as snow with pale green stripes. She hung her head in humble joy. "Lovely little flower," sang the sunbeams. "How fresh and delicate you are! You are the very first—the only one! You are our first love. You speak of summer—beautiful summer over all the world. The snow will melt. The cold wind will be chased away. We shall reign; and then you shall have friends in plenty; syringas, laburnums and roses—but you are the first and tenderest."

There was a joy for the snowdrop! It seemed as if the air was full of singing; as if the light thrilled through every leaf and stem. There stood the flower in all her beauty, with her white dress and green ribbons—speaking of summer.

But the summer was still far off; clouds covered the sky; the keen wind blew.

"You have come too soon," cried the wind and storm. "The power is still in our hands, and you shall feel it. You ought to have stayed quietly at home, and not come and make all this display before the proper time."

How bitterly cold it was! The days passed by without one sunbeam. It was weather to make a poor little flower freeze in two. But the snowdrop was stronger than she looked; she was strong in her happiness and in her faith in the coming summer. Had she not believed in it long ago by the very beatings of her own heart? and had not the sunbeam confirmed all her hopes? She stood there trustfully in the snow, in her white dress, bending low as the flakes fell thick and the icy wind rattled by.

"Break!" it cried—"break and die! What did you want out of doors in the storm? Why did you let yourself be enticed? The sunbeams have made a fool of you. Now you reap the consequences—*Summer-fool!*" *

"*Summer-fool!*" they repeated in the cold grey dawn. "Summer-fool," cried a troop of merry children in the garden; "here is one! how pretty, how pretty it is! It is the first, the only one!"

The kind words warmed the flower as if they had been sunbeams. In her joy she did not feel that she was broken off; she lay in a child's warm hand, was kissed by childish lips, and carried into the pleasant room. There soft eyes gazed upon her, she was placed in cool, refreshing water. The flower thought that she had suddenly come to the middle of summer.

* Summer fool is a metaphorical name given to snowdrops, on account of their rashness in blossoming so early.

The eldest daughter of the house, a pretty little maiden, was just confirmed; and her best friend, who was studying hard to pass his examination, was confirmed also. "This shall be my summer-fool," she cried, taking up the little flower out of the glass. She folded it up in some scented paper, on which were written verses all about the flower, with its promise of summer. The paper was folded and sealed like a letter and sent through the post; inside it was as dark as the bulb; and the flower had to take a journey in the mail bag, and be stamped and squeezed. It was not pleasant, but it did not last for ever.

The journey was over. The young student read the letter, kissed the flower, and placed it with the letter in a casket; there it lay among many more letters; but it was the only flower, "the first—the only one," as the sunbeam used to say. It was a pleasure to reflect on that.

She had plenty of time to think of it all. The summer passed by, and the winter too, and it was spring once more when she came again to the light. But the young student was no longer pleased to see her; he seized the letters roughly and threw them on the fire; the flower fell to the ground. Certainly she was flat and dry, but why should she be thrown on to the floor? It was better, of course, than being thrown into the fire, where the verses and letters were blazing away. What had happened? Something that happens often enough; the flower and the young lady had made a summer fool of the student; in the spring the maiden had chosen another friend.

The next day the sun shone down on the flattened snowdrop, which looked as if it were painted on the floor. When the housemaid came in to sweep the room she thought it must have fallen out of a book, and she placed it inside one of the books on the table. Once more the snowdrop found itself among verses, printed ones too, which are much grander than written ones—at least a great deal more money is spent upon them.

The book was left for years upon the shelf; at last some one took it up and began to read. It was a good book; a book of verses written by the fine old Danish poet, Ambrose Stub, and well worth reading. The man who had taken it from the shelf turned over the leaf; "There is a flower," he cried, "a snowdrop—a summer fool! It must have been put here on purpose. Poor Ambrose! He too was a summer fool, and wrote before the world was ready for him. He too was forced to suffer from the cold wind, to be imprisoned in the houses of his patrons, to stand like a flower in cold water, and to fade in rhymed verses. A summer fool! and yet the first, the only, the ever-fresh poet of his day! Lie there as a symbol, you little snowdrop—you have been placed there on purpose."

The snowdrop was put back in her place. She felt proud and glad that she lay in the beautiful book as an emblem of him who had written it. The flower understood it all after her fashion, just as we understand things after ours.

That is the tale of the snowdrop.

Thick-headed Jack.

IN the heart of the country stood an old manor-house; and in it lived a country squire who had two sons. The sons were both so clever that they had more brains than they knew what to do with; and they both wished to marry the king's daughter. She had given notice publicly that she would marry the man who knew best how to give a ready answer and to phrase his words properly.

The two brothers had spent a whole week in preparing themselves for the wooing; that was the longest time allowed to them, and it was of course sufficient, for they were very well grounded, and every one knows how useful that is. The eldest knew by heart the whole Latin dictionary, and every column of the local daily paper for the last three years. He could say them right off, and did not mind at which end he began. The youngest had studied the laws of the corporation and knew them by heart; so that he thought his wit would be able to season any debate on State affairs. And he could embroider braces very nicely with flowers and flourishes, for he had taste and knew how to use his fingers.

"I shall get the princess," they cried both together; and their old father gave each of them a beautiful horse. The one who knew his Latin dictionary and the daily paper received a black, and the other received a white horse; and then they oiled the corners of their mouths that they might speak the more fluently. All the servants came out to see them mount in the courtyard, and as it happened the youngest brother came up at the same moment. For you must know that the

old squire had three sons, but the third was never reckoned in with the others, because he was not clever. Indeed he went by the name of thick-headed Jack.

"Hallo!" cried thick-headed Jack; "where are you off to? Why, you are all in your Sunday best!"

"To the king's palace, to talk over the king's daughter. Don't you know what all the world knows?" and they told him the whole story.

"My gracious! I shall come too," cried thick-headed Jack. The brothers laughed scornfully and rode away.

"Daddy," cried thick-headed Jack, "I must have a horse. If you only knew what a hurry I'm in to get married! If she takes me I'll take her; and if she don't take me I'll take her all the same. Have her I will!"

"Hold your foolish tongue!" cried his father. "You shall have no horse. *You* can't phrase your words properly. You and your brothers are different beings."

"Well," cried thick-headed Jack, "if I can't have a horse I'll take the old goat. It belongs to me in one way or another, and it shall carry me too." So said, so done. He mounted the old goat, dug his heels into its flanks, and off he was down the turnpike road like a storm wind. Hoppity-hop! what a gallop it was! "Here I come," bawled thick-headed Jack, and shouted till the place rang again.

His brothers were riding slowly forwards; neither spoke, lest he should forget the fine things he had learned to say to the princess, for nothing must be left to chance.

"Hallo!" cried thick-headed Jack, "I'm coming. Just look what I've found on the road!" and he showed them a dead crow.

"Blockhead!" cried his brothers. "What are you going to do with that?"

"This crow? Going to give it to the princess."

"You had better!" said his brothers, riding away.

"Hoppity-hop! Here I come! Look what I have found now; it is not everybody who could pick this up from the turnpike road."

The brothers turned to see what he had got now. "Blockhead!" they cried; "it is nothing but an old wooden shoe with the top part broken off. Are you going to give that to the princess?"

"Perhaps I may," said thick-headed Jack. The brothers laughed and rode on; they were now a long way in advance. "Hoppity-hop! Here I come!" cried thick-headed Jack. "Look here, better and better! Come, this is splendid!"

"What have you got now?" asked the brothers.

"Oh, I could not tell you," cried thick-headed Jack, "it is *too* grand! Won't she just be pleased—the king's daughter?"

"Oh, fie!" cried the brothers; "why, that is mud, nothing but mud out of the gutter!"

"So it is," cried thick-headed Jack; "the very finest sort, it slips through one's fingers;" and he filled his pocket with the mud.

The brothers galloped away till the sparks flew right and left; they reached the town-gate a whole half-hour earlier than thick-headed Jack. At the gate, all the suitors were numbered according to the time

of their arrival, and were placed in rank and file, six in a row. They were so close together that they could not move their arms; and that was done on purpose, for they would very likely have begun to tear each other to pieces just because one was placed before the other.

All the people of the land stood in crowds round the palace windows to see the princess receive her suitors. As soon as any of them entered the hall where she was, his speech went out like a candle.

"He is no good," cried the king's daughter; "out with him!"

At last it came to the turn of the brother who knew the Latin dictionary, but he had forgotten every word in the rank and file; the floor creaked and the ceiling was made of brilliant looking-glass, so that he saw himself standing on his head, and in every window were three reporters and one editor, and all of them were writing down every word that was said, in order that it might come out immediately in the paper and be sold in the streets for a penny. It was fearful! and, besides that, the princess had had the fire made up till the room was as hot as a baker's oven.

"It is awfully hot here," said the lover.

"Yes, indeed; but my father is roasting some chickens to-day," said the king's daughter.

"Ahem! ahem!" There he stood like a simpleton. He had never expected such a conversation as this; and he had not a word to say. He would have liked to say something very witty—"Ahem!"

"He is no good," said the king's daughter. "Out with him." And out he had to go. The other brother came in.

"It is awfully hot here!" he said.

"Yes, indeed: we are roasting chickens," she answered.

"How do—how——?" he began; and the reporters wrote away, "How do—how——?"

"He is no good," said the king's daughter; "send him away." Then came thick-headed Jack, galloping, goat and all, straight into the room. "Puff! it's murdering hot," he cried.

"Yes, indeed; but I am roasting chickens," said the king's daughter.

"Oh, that's nice! then I can roast my crow," said thick-headed Jack.

"With pleasure," said the princess. "But have you anything to roast it in? I have neither pot nor pan."

"I have, though!" said thick-headed Jack. "Here is a cooking utensil with a tin handle complete." He took out the old wooden shoe and put the crow inside it.

"That is a regular meal," said the princess; "but where shall we get our soup from?"

"I've got that in my pocket," said thick-headed Jack. "I've got enough and to spare," and he threw some mud on the floor.

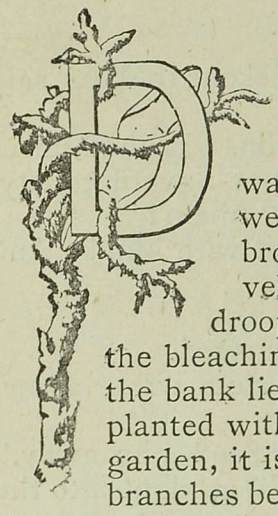
"Now, I like that," said the princess. "You have an answer ready, and you can speak. I choose you for my husband! But do you know that every word we speak and have spoken is written down, and will come out in the papers to-morrow? In every window you see there are three reporters and an editor. That old editor there is the worst, for he cannot understand anything." She only said that to put thick-headed Jack out of countenance; and the reporters tittered, and dropped a shower of ink-spots on the floor.

"Oh, indeed! So that is the quality," said thick-headed Jack. "Well, then, the old editor shall have the best;" and he turned out his pocket and threw the mud right in his face.

"That was neatly done," said the princess. "I could not have done that, but I shall learn in time."

Thick-headed Jack was made king. He won a wife and a crown, and sat on a throne. We have this quite wet from press in the daily papers, on the faith of the reporters and editors—and they are not to be believed for a moment.

The Bell's Hole.



DING, dong! ding, dong!" it sounds from the Bell's Hole in the Odensee brook. Every child in the old town on the island of Funen knows the brook that waters the gardens round the town and flows from the weir to the water-mill by the wooden bridge. In the brook you find yellow water-lilies, brown reeds, and tall, velvety bulrushes; old willow-trees, mossy and gnarled, droop over the brook towards the Monk's meadow and the bleaching ground on the opposite shore. The gardens on the bank lie side by side, trim and orderly as a doll's house, and planted with cabbage and other vegetables. When you see no garden, it is because some great elder-tree hangs its spreading branches between you and the shore. The current is swift, and in some places is deeper than any oar can reach. The deepest place is called the Bell's Hole; it is opposite the old nunnery, and in its depths the Nix, or river spirit, sleeps the whole day through, and rises up in the clear, starlit nights. He is very old. Grandmother says she heard of him from her grandmother; he leads a lonely life, and has no one to speak to except the old church bell. Long ago the bell hung in the belfry of St. Alban's; but now there is no trace left either of bell, belfry, or church.

"Ding, dong! ding, dong!" the bell rang out when the church was still standing: and one evening at sunset, when the bell was ringing its loudest, it swung itself free and flew out into the air, the white metal shining bright in the red sunlight.

"Ding, dong! ding, dong! Now I will sink to rest!" sang the bell; and it flew straight down into the Odensee brook where it runs deepest. But it found no rest nor peace. It chimes and rings down below for the Nix; you can hear it through the water, and they say its sound is a sign that some one is about to die. But that is not true; no, it rings and chimes for the old Nix, so that he may not feel so lonely.

What does the bell sing? It is very old—it stood in the belfry long

before the grandmother's grandmother was born, and yet it is but a child in comparison to the Nix. He is a singular old man, silent and eccentric, with breeches of eel-skin and scaly jacket buttoned with yellow flowers. He wears a wreath of sedge on his hair, and duckweed in his beard—but he looks very well. It would take years to tell all that the bell says; she tells tales from year's end to year's end; sometimes tells the old ones over again, some long, some short, just as she pleases. She tells of past times—dark, cruel days they were.

"In St. Alban's church the monk climbed up the belfry tower; he was young and handsome, but more silent than all the rest. He gazed out of the loophole yonder across the Odensee brook—the bed was broad then and the Monk's meadow was a lake—he looked over the green hill up to the nunnery, where the light streamed down from the windows of the nun's cell. He knew the nun well; he remembered her, and his heart beat wildly. Ding, dong! ding, dong!"

That was what the bell sang.

"In the belfry sat the bishop's crazy servant; and when I, hard metal as I was, rang and swung, I could have knocked his brains out. He sat close under me and played with two pieces of stick as if they had been a lyre; he sang, 'Now I may sing aloud what I dare not whisper elsewhere; now I may sing of what is hidden behind bolt and bar. Down below it is cold and damp, and the rats prey on living men. No one knows of it—no one hears their cry! No, not when the bell rings out Ding, dong! ding, dong!'"

"A king lived then—they called him Kanute; he bowed low before bishop and monk, but when he ground down the peasants with heavy taxes and cruel laws, they took up staves and weapons and hunted him like a wild beast. He fled for sanctuary to the church, and closed gate and door behind him. The furious crowd closed round the church; I heard of it, for the crows, and rooks, and ravens, scared by the noise, flew in and out of the belfry, looked in at the church windows, and screeched aloud all that they saw. King Kanute lay praying before the altar; his brothers Eric and Benedict stood guarding him with drawn swords. But the traitor Blake betrayed his lord, the crowd outside knew where the king lay, and one of them dashed a stone through the window pane, and the king lay dead. Cries and shrieks from the mad crowd and the flying birds filled the air, and I joined in. Ding, dong! ding, dong!"

"The church bell hangs high and looks out far and wide; it sees the birds and understands their speech; the wind surges past it, and the wind knows everything. It sighs through every hole, and rift, and cranny; it hears all from the air, for the air encloses every living thing, and enters the lungs of men. All things that are spoken, by word or sigh, the air hears and tells the wind, the wind whispers the story to the bell, and the bell rings it aloud to the whole world. Ding, dong! ding, dong!"

"But I was weary of hearing and knowing all the heavy secrets; I grew faint, and so heavy that the beam broke, and I flew out into the sunlit air, down where the brook is deepest and the Nix lives all alone. Here I tell over all I know from year's end to year's end. Ding, dong! ding, dong!"

That is what the bell rings out from the Bell's Hole; the grandmother says so.

But the schoolmaster says there is no bell ringing down in the brook, because a bell cannot ring under water. And there is no Nix in the Bell's Hole, because there are no such things as Nixies. And when the church bells are ringing beautifully, he says bells cannot ring at all—it is the air which vibrates and conveys the sound, and, if you remember, the grandmother said that the bell said that too. So they are agreed in one thing, and so much is certain. "Take heed, take heed, and watch thy heart!" Both of them say that.

The air knows all things. It is round us and in us; it speaks of our thoughts and deeds; its voice echoes longer than the bell's in the Odensee brook where the Nix lives. It sounds far out into the courts of heaven for ever and for ever, till the heavenly bells ring out, "Ding, dong! ding, dong!"

The Pigs.

THE blessed St. Anthony has taken the pigs under his protection; and in later days Charles Dickens has written of a pig, so that we feel in good spirits even if we only hear one grunt. Close to the turnpike-road stood a peasant's pigsty, a pigsty such as one does not often see. It was made out of an old family carriage; the seats had been taken out, the wheels removed, and four pigs had been shut up inside. I wonder if they were the first that had ever been there? However that may be, it was a regular family carriage, the rag of morocco leather proved that as it dangled from the roof. Everything spoke of better days. "Grunt! grunt!" said the pigs, and the carriage sighed and creaked. It was a sad end to come to! "The beautiful is fled!" it sighed—or at least it might have done.

It was autumn. The coach was empty; the pigs were wandering about the forest like gentlemen at ease. The leaves had fallen from the trees, for the wind and rain gave them no rest or breathing time till they were hunted to the ground. The birds of passage were gone—"The beautiful is fled! Where is the lovely greenwood, the sunshine, and the song of birds?" That was the sigh which came from the leafless trees and the heart of the wild-rose bush. It was the king of the roses who sighed. Do you know him? He is all beard; the finest red-green beard; you can easily find him. Go to the wild-rose hedge in the autumn when all the flowers have died and nothing is

left but the scarlet hips; among them you will see a red-green, mossy flower, that is the king of the roses; a little green leaf rises out of his skull, that is his plume; he is the only man of his kind on the whole rose hedge, and he it was who sighed.

"The beautiful is fled! The roses are over—the leaves fall fast. It is wet and cold! The birds are silent; the pigs wander alone in search of acorns—they are the masters of the wood."

The nights were cold and the days sunless, but the raven sat on the post and cawed. Ravens and crows have large families; they all cawed merrily, and the crowd is always right.

Under the tall trees in the dip of the forest path is a large puddle, and there lay the pigs, large and small together. They thought the place was inexpressibly beautiful. "*Oui!*" they cried—it was all the French they knew, but still it was something. They were so clean and so fat.

The old ones lay still and thought deeply; the young ones, on the contrary, never lost a moment. One little sucking-pig had a curly tail, and that tail was the pride of his mother's heart. She thought every one was looking at it; but she was mistaken, they were all thinking of themselves and of all the profit which they could get out of the wood. They had always heard that the acorns which they ate grew at the roots of the trees, and so they rooted up the earth to find them; but up came a young pig—it is always the young ones who make discoveries—and he maintained that the acorns fell from the branches, he said one had fallen on his own head, and that had first suggested the idea to him; since then he had watched, and he was now sure of his case. The old pigs laid their heads together and grunted, "The best is gone. It went with the birds' twitter. We want some fruits. Whatever can be eaten is good, and we eat it."

"*Oui, oui, oui!*" they all cried.

But the mother looked at her little sucking-pig with the curly tail. "One must not forget the beautiful," she said.

"Caw! caw!" said the crow, and flew down from the tree to be appointed nightingale. There must be a nightingale, and she was immediately appointed.

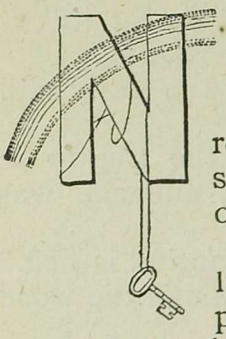
"Fled! fled!" cried the king of the roses. "The beautiful is fled." It was rough, and cold, and stormy; the rain dashed through the wood and over the field in grey, cloudy lines.

"Where is the bird who sang there? where are the field flowers, and the sweet berries in the wood? Lost! lost!"

A light gleamed out starlike from the forester's hut; its long ray darted through the trees. A hymn sounded from within, little children stood round their grandfather's chair. The old man sat with his Bible on his knee, and read to them of God, and His eternal Life, of the springtide and the resurrection, the trees that would bloom again, the roses which would return with the nightingales, of the beautiful which should be lord once more.

But the king of the roses did not hear; he sat out in the wind and rain and sighed, "Lost! lost!" The pigs were lords of the forest, and the mother looked at her little pig with its curly tail, and said, "There is still some one left who has an eye for the beautiful!"

At the Almshouse Window.



NEAR to the grass-grown rampart walls which run round Copenhagen stands a large red house. Balsams and musk are seen growing behind all the long rows of windows; the house looks rather poverty-stricken, and the people who live there are all of them old and poor. It is the Warton Almshouse.

At the window stands an old maid, picking the faded leaves from her balsam plant, and watching the children playing on the grassy ramparts. Of what is she thinking? A whole life drama unrolls itself before her eyes. How happy the children are! How they sport and gambol! What rosy cheeks and merry blue eyes they have! but there is a lack of shoes and stockings. They are dancing over the very spot where, as the saga tells, the earth sank down hundreds of years ago, and an innocent child was enticed by playthings, flowers, and sweetmeats into the open grave, which was then filled up above the happy, laughing, trustful little one. From that time the earth has never sunk again, it stands firm and high, and the grass and flowers grow over it. The children at their play know nothing of the story, or they would hear the murdered child sobbing beneath their feet, and see her tears in the dew upon the grass. They know nothing either of the Danish king, who here, in the presence of the besiegers, swore to his trembling courtiers that he would abide with his burghers and die in his own

nest; nothing of the brave men, or of the women who poured down boiling water on the enemy.

Play on, little maiden—the years speed by—the happy years! The newly-confirmed walk hand-in-hand upon the rampart walls. You wear a white dress; it is made out of an old one, but it has cost your mother many a sigh: and if your scarlet shawl hangs down too low, so much the better, one can see how beautiful it is! You are thinking of God's goodness and of your new dress: yes, it is beautiful on the rampart wall!

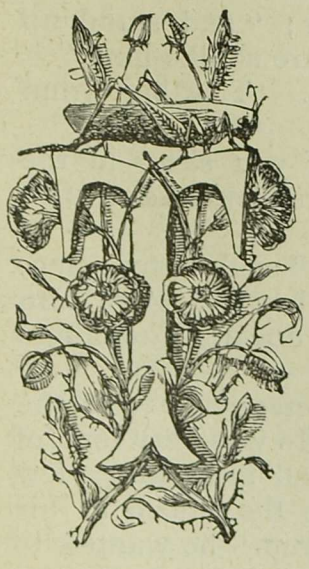
The years pass on and bring sad and sunny days. Your youthful heart has led you to a friend, you know not how. How many times he and you wander along the grassy slopes! In the early springtide, on fast and festival days, when the church bells ring out an *Ave* to the coming spring.

The first violets are scarcely out yet, but yonder on the ramparts, just opposite Rosenberg Castle, grows a tree with its new tender buds.

Yearly it puts forth its green leaves—but the human heart blooms only once. Dark clouds like those in the dim northern sky hover above the heart of man. Poor child! your lover's wedding chamber was his coffin, and you—the old maid—look out from behind the balsam plant in the almshouse window to the merry children at their play, and see your own story repeated as in a dream.

That is the life drama which the old woman sees from the window, as she looks at the rosy-cheeked children, shoeless and stockingless, but free and happy as the birds of the air.

—o—



The Golden Treasure.

THE drummer's wife went into the church; she looked at the new altar with its painted picture and carved angels; they were equally beautiful, those on the canvas and those carved in wood and then painted and gilded. Their hair shone like sunshine, but God's sunshine was the loveliest; it shone clearer and more golden still when the sun went down behind the trees.

She looked up to the sun, and thought of the little baby which the stork was going to bring her soon; she was very happy, and she looked and looked, and wished that the child might catch some of the sunshine, or at least might look as beautiful as the angels on the altar.

And when she really held the child in her arms and lifted it up to

its father, it looked like one of the angels in the church, its hair shone like gold, it had caught the glory of the setting sun.

"My treasure, my sunshine!" cried the mother. She kissed the bright curls, and the drummer's room was filled with joy and life and gladness. The drummer beat a roll of triumph. The drum beat—the big drum beat, "Red hair! The baby has red hair! Believe the drumskin and not what your mother says. Rat-a-plan! rat-a-plan!" And the town repeated what the big drum said.

The boy was taken to church and baptized. There is not much to be said about his name: it was Peter. The whole town and the drum named him Peter, the drummer's boy with red hair; but his mother kissed his red hair and called him her sunshine, her golden treasure.

In the soft clay walls of the narrow pass near the drummer's house many of the villagers used to write their names as a token. "Fame and glory—there's something in that!" cried the drummer, and he cut his name and his little son's among the rest.

The swallows came home. In their long wanderings they had seen more lasting inscriptions on the cliffs, and on the temple walls in Hindostan; great deeds of mighty queens, immortal names, so very old that no one could read them.

Fame! Glory!

The swallows built in the narrow pass: they bored holes in the walls, the rain crumbled and washed away the names, even those of the drummer and his little son.

"Peter's name will perhaps stay there for a year and a half," said his father.

"Fool!" thought the big drum; but it only said, "Rub-a-dub-dub!"

He grew to be a merry boy, full of life and spirit, this drummer's boy with the red hair. He had a sweet, clear voice, and could sing like the birds in the wood. It was no tune and yet all tune.

"He must go into the choir," said his mother; "and stand up in the church among the bright-haired angels who are so like him!"

"Carrots!" shouted the street boys after him. The big drum heard that from the neighbours.

"Don't go home, Peter," cried the boys; "if you sleep in the garret the thatch will take fire, and then the big drum will have to be beat."

"You keep out of the way of the drum-sticks," said Peter; and, little as he was, he ran boldly up to the nearest boy and gave him such a blow that his heels flew up and his head fell down. The others took themselves off as fast as they could.

The organist of the place was a very grand person: he was the son of the silver cleaner to the imperial court. He was very fond of Peter, and from time to time he took him home and gave him a few lessons on the violin. The boy seemed to have the music at his finger's ends; he wanted to play more than the drum—he wanted to be an organist.

"I shall be a soldier," said Peter; for he was quite a little lad, and it seemed to him the finest thing in the world to march about with a

gun on one's shoulder, "Right, left! Right, left!" and to wear a uniform and have a sword.

"Learn to love the sound of the drumskin; rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub!" said the drum.

"Yes; if he can march on till he becomes a general," said his father; "but if he is to do that, we must have a war."

"God forbid!" cried his mother.

"We have nothing to lose," said the drummer.

"We have the lad," she answered.

"But if he comes back to us a general?" said the father.

"With no arms and legs," said the mother. "No, I would rather keep my golden treasure whole and safe."

"Rat-a-plan, rat-a-plan!" went the big drum, and all the drums throughout the land.

The war had come. The soldiers marched off and the drummer-boy followed them. His mother wept; his father dreamed of him crowned with glory; the organist said he ought to have stayed at home and learned music.

"Carrots!" cried the soldiers; and Peter laughed. But some of them said, "Red fox," and then he bit his lips and looked straight before him—the hard words could not hurt him.

The boy was smart and ready, and good-humoured too. "Good-humour is the best brandy-flask," said the old veterans.

For many a night in rain and storm the boy lay wet to the skin under the open sky; but his pluck never left him. "Rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub! Forward, march!" he beat upon his drum. He was certainly born to be a drummer.

The day of battle came. It was early dawn, the sun had not yet risen; the air was cold, the battle hot. There was more powder-smoke than mist in the morning air. Balls and shells whizzed over and through the soldiers' heads, but on they went. One after another sank down, with blood-stained forehead and face as white as chalk. The little drummer-boy kept his rosy cheeks, and took no harm; he smiled at the dog of the regiment, as he sprang round him, and snapped at the balls as if they only came to play with him.

"March, forward, march!" That was the word of command for the drum; and the words did not mean "go back;" but people must go back sometimes, if they have common sense, and now the word was given, "Retreat." But the little drummer-boy beat, "March, forward, march!" That was the way he understood the command; and the soldiers followed the drum. That was a famous rappel, and it led the faltering troops to victory.

Life and limb was trampled down on the battlefield. Shells tore the quivering flesh and kindled into flame the thatched roofs under which the wounded had sought shelter—to lie forgotten perhaps for an hour, perhaps for ever.

It is of no use to think of it, but one does think of it all the same, even far away in the peaceful town. The drummer and his wife thought of it, for Peter was in the war.

"I am getting tired of all this grumbling," said the big drum.

Another day of battle came; in the early morning this time also;

the father and mother lay asleep, they had been talking of their son, they spoke of him every night, and said he was in God's hand. The father dreamed that the war was over, and that Peter had come home with a silver cross on his breast. The mother dreamed that she was in church, looking at the painted pictures and the carved angels with their golden hair, and that her own dear boy, her golden treasure, was standing among the angels, robed in white and singing as only angels can sing. He smiled at her and rose up with the angels through the sunshine.

"My golden treasure!" she cried, as she woke; "the Lord has taken him to Himself!" She wrung her hands, buried her head in the pillow and wept.

"Where does he rest? In the great, common grave, among his comrades, or under the waters of the marsh? No one knows his grave, no holy words have been read over it."

The "Our Father" fell dumbly from her lips; she was tired and heart-broken; and she fell asleep.

Days passed on, in life as in dreams.

It was evening; a rainbow spanned the sky, it touched the forest and the deep marsh.

They say, and the people believe it too, that wherever the rainbow touches the earth a treasure lies buried—and a golden treasure lay buried there. No one thought of him but his mother, and so she dreamed of him all the more.

The days passed on, in life as in dreams.

Not a hair of his head was hurt, not a golden hair.

"Rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub, here he comes!" That was what the drum ought to have beat; and his mother would have sung it if she had dreamed it.

Crowned with victory and shouting "Hurrah!" came the soldiers homeward. The war was over; peace was signed.

The dog of the regiment sprang and leaped round the men, to make the way three times as long as it was.

Weeks passed away, and Peter walked into his mother's room. He was as brown as an Indian, his eyes were bright, his face radiant. His mother held him in her arms, she kissed his lips, his eyes, his red hair. She had her boy again; there was no silver cross on his breast as his father had dreamed, but he had all his limbs, which his mother had *not* dreamed.

How happy they were! They laughed and cried; and Peter hugged the big drum.

"There stands the old mawkin!" he cried.

And his father beat a tattoo of ecstasy.

"It seems like a conflagration," said the big drum; "clear daylight, warm hearts, golden treasure—rub-a-dub!"

And then? Yes, what then? Ask the organist.

"Peter is outgrowing the drum," he said; "he will be cleverer than his master." And yet the organist was the son of the silver cleaner to the imperial court; but what had taken him half a lifetime to learn Peter learned in six months.

There was something in the boy so bright and so true-hearted. His eyes shone, and his hair shone too, there was no denying that.

"He ought to dye his hair," said the young women; "the inspector's daughter dyed hers beautifully—and then she was very soon engaged."

"And afterwards it went as green as duckweed, and wants dyeing every month!"

"She manages it though, and so could Peter. He is received in the best houses; even in the mayor's family; he gives Miss Lotty music lessons."

How he did play! The loveliest pieces, which had never been noted down on paper. He played in clear nights and starless nights as well. "It was intolerable," said the next-door neighbour and the big drum.

He played till his thoughts rose up and made pictures of the future. Fame! Glory!

Miss Lotty sat at the piano; her delicate fingers wandered over the keys and the notes echoed deep in Peter's heart. It seemed to be too much for him to bear; and that was not once, but many times. At last he seized the fair white hand, kissed it, and looked into the girl's brown eyes. Heaven alone knows for certain what he said to her, but we are allowed to guess. Lotty coloured all over her neck and shoulders, but did not say a word; visitors came into the room, and among them was the councillor's son; he had a high white forehead and carried his head thrown back proudly. Peter sat at Lotty's side, and she looked at him with gentle eyes.

At home that night he spoke about the great world, and the golden treasure hidden for him in his violin.

Glory! Fame!

"Rub-a-dub! rub-a-dub!" cried the big drum. "Peter is gone mad. I believe the house is on fire."

The next day his mother went to market.

"Do you know the news, Peter?" she said, when she came home; "a fine piece of news. Miss Lotty is engaged to the councillor's son. It happened last night."

"No!" said Peter, springing from his chair. But his mother said "yes." She had heard it from the barber's wife, and the barber had heard it from the mayor himself.

Peter turned as white as a corpse and sat down.

"What is it?" cried his mother in terror.

"Nothing! Leave me in peace," he cried; and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"My darling—my golden treasure!" cried his mother, weeping too. But the big drum said—

"Lotty is dead! Lotty is dead! The song is ended."

But the song was not ended: there were many verses yet to come, and those were the best of all—the golden treasure of a life.

"She makes herself quite ridiculous," cried the neighbours. "Everybody must read the letters she receives from her 'golden treasure,' and listen to what the newspapers say of him and his fiddle. I daresay she finds the money he sends her useful, now she is a widow."

"He plays before emperors and kings," said the organist. "Such a fate has not been granted to me; but he does not forget his old master."

"His poor father dreamed that he came home with a silver cross on his breast. He has won his knight's cross now, and in a more difficult way. If his father had only lived to see it!"

"Fame!" cried the big drum; and his native town said so too. "The little drummer's boy, red-haired Peter, who used to run about with wooden shoes and play for the village dances, is become famous."

"He played for us before he played to the queen," said the mayor's wife. "He was mad about our Lotty at that time: he always looked too high; he was a dreamy, conceited young man; my husband laughed heartily when he heard of the affair. Lotty is now the wife of a councillor."

But there was a golden treasure buried in the heart of the bright-haired child, who when he was a lad had rallied the wavering troops to victory with his "March—forward—march!" The golden treasure of harmony lay in his violin, it swelled out like an organ, it quivered as if all the midsummer fairies were dancing on the strings; one heard the clear song of the thrush and the passionate human voice of men; rapture thrilled all hearts, and Peter's fame filled all the land. It was a conflagration—with flames of enthusiasm.

"He is very handsome," cried all the young ladies, and the old ones too: the very oldest of all bought an album to receive the locks of hair of distinguished people; she bought it on purpose that she might beg a lock of Peter's thick, golden curls.

He came into the drummer's lowly room as radiant as a prince, happier than a king. His eyes and face were like the sunshine. He held his mother in his arms; she kissed him and wept for joy, while he nodded a greeting to every well-known object round him. There was the old cupboard with the tea-cups and glasses, and the settle by the fire where he had so often slept as a child. As to the big drum, he brought it out into the middle of the room and said to his mother, "My poor father would have beat a tattoo to-day. I must do it now!"

And he thundered down upon the drum in a perfect hurricane: and the drum was so elated by the honour that it split.

"He has a pretty touch," said the drum; "and he has given me something to remember him by. I shall wait now till his mother bursts, too, with pride in her golden treasure."

That is the story of the Golden Treasure.

The Windmill.

A WINDMILL stood on the hill; it looked proud, and it was proud.

"I am not at all proud," it said; "but I am enlightened, both from without and from within. Outside, I have the sun and moon, and within myself I have tapers, oil-lamps, and tallow candles. I may fairly call myself enlightened; I am a thought-

ful being, and exquisitely well balanced. I have a good rattle in my throat, and four fingers on my head just under my hat. Birds have only two wings, and those are placed on their back. I am a Dutchman by birth; any one can see that by my figure—a flying Dutchman, and flying Dutchmen are reckoned among supernatural beings, and yet I am perfectly natural. I have a gallery and dwelling rooms below, where my thoughts dwell. My first and clearest thought is called by the rest, 'The Man in the Mill.' He knows his own mind; he is set over all the flour and bran; his companion calls herself 'mother;' she does not move about awkwardly or at random; she, too, knows her own mind and what she can do; she is gentle as a zephyr and strong as the storm; she knows how to take things quietly and yet to get her own way—she is my heart and her husband is my brain. They are two and yet but one, for they call each other 'my better half.' These two have little children: thoughts which can grow. The children keep everything in order. A short time ago when I, in my deep thought, and allowed the father to see what was the matter with the rattle in my throat—something was out of order, and self-examination is necessary for us all—the little ones set up a fearful noise. That does not sound well when one is placed high on a hill as I am—one has to remember that one is always before the public—and public opinion is enlightenment too. But what was I going to say? The children made a shocking noise, and the youngest rushed up to the top of my head and tickled me in his delight. I have remarked that those little thoughts grow; and out in the world there come other thoughts, even in houses without wings, where there is no rattle to listen to. These thoughts come and blend with my thoughts—marry them, if you like to say so. It is very wonderful, and there are many wonderful things in the world. It came over me or from within me, that something in my works is altered. The father—my brain—seems to grow wiser and gentler with the passing years; his wife to become milder and sweeter as time goes on. The bitterness is forgotten and all things are brighter.

"The days come and go, and come again with light and joy; that has often been said: but a day will come when all shall be over with me—not quite over, though. I must be pulled down in order to be rebuilt; cease to be, that I may live on. To become another, and yet remain the same! It is hard for me to understand, in spite of all the enlightenment I get from sun and moon, tapers, lamps, and tallow candles. My old brickwork and masonry will rise from their ruins.

"I hope I shall keep my old thoughts—the man in the mill, the mother, the children, big and little—one, and yet so many. The whole circle of thought, as I call them.

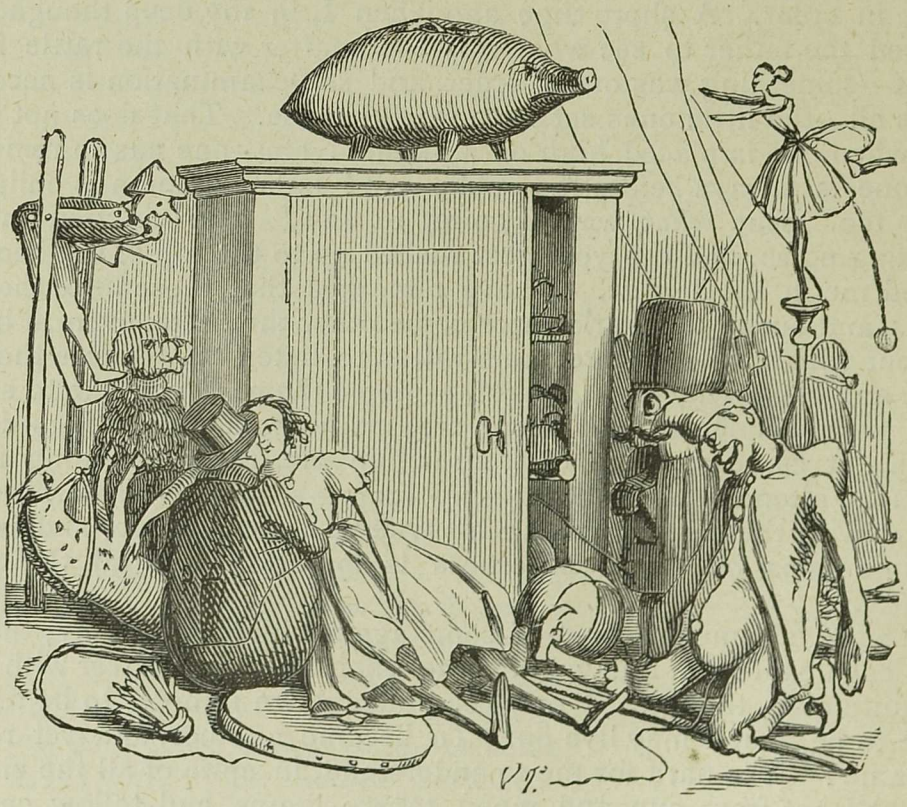
"And I must remain myself, too, with the rattle in my throat, the wings on my head, and the gallery in my body, or else I should not know myself, and others would not know me, and could not say, 'This is the old windmill on the hill—proud to look at, but not at all proud in reality.'"

That was what the mill said; it said a great deal more besides, but that is the most important. The days went and came, and the Judgment Day was the last.

The mill broke out in flames, and the flames rushed in and out and burned up sails, and boards, and beams. The mill fell to the earth, and only a heap of ashes remained behind. The smoke rose from the place, and the wind carried it away. But all that had been living in the mill lived still—and what it became, and what it won, does not belong to this part of the story.

—o—

The Money Box.



ALL the playthings were lying about in the nursery, and the money box stood on the chest of drawers. It was made of delf, in the shape of a pig, and had been bought at the china shop. There was a slit in its back large enough to hold shillings and half-crowns, and there were one or two half-crowns inside it, besides a whole heap of coppers. Indeed, the money pig was so choke-full, that it could not rattle, and that is the highest point of perfection to which a money pig can attain. There it stood, high and mighty on the chest of drawers, and looked down on everything else in the room. It knew very well that there was enough

inside it to buy up the whole lot—and that is what is meant by having a consciousness of one's own worth.

The other playthings thought as it did; but they did not mention it, there were so many other things to talk about.

One of the drawers stood open, and in it sat a large doll; she was beautiful, but rather old, you saw that by the patch on her neck.

"Let us play at men and women," she said; "that is the best game." Immediately everything began to be astir, even the framed pictures on the walls turned round and showed that they had a wrong side, not that they meant to object to the game in the least.

It was late at night; the moon shone in at the windows, so the playthings got their light cheap. The game was agreed upon, and every one was asked to take a part, even the children's go-cart, though that was reckoned among the very commonest playthings.

"Every one has his own place," said the cart; "we cannot all be noblemen, there must be some to do the work, as people say."

The money pig was the only one who received a written invitation; it was taken for granted that he would not come without. As it was, he did not send an answer, or say whether or no he would come; and he did *not* come; he said that if he was to take any part in it, he must be able to see everything from his own house, and they could arrange accordingly.

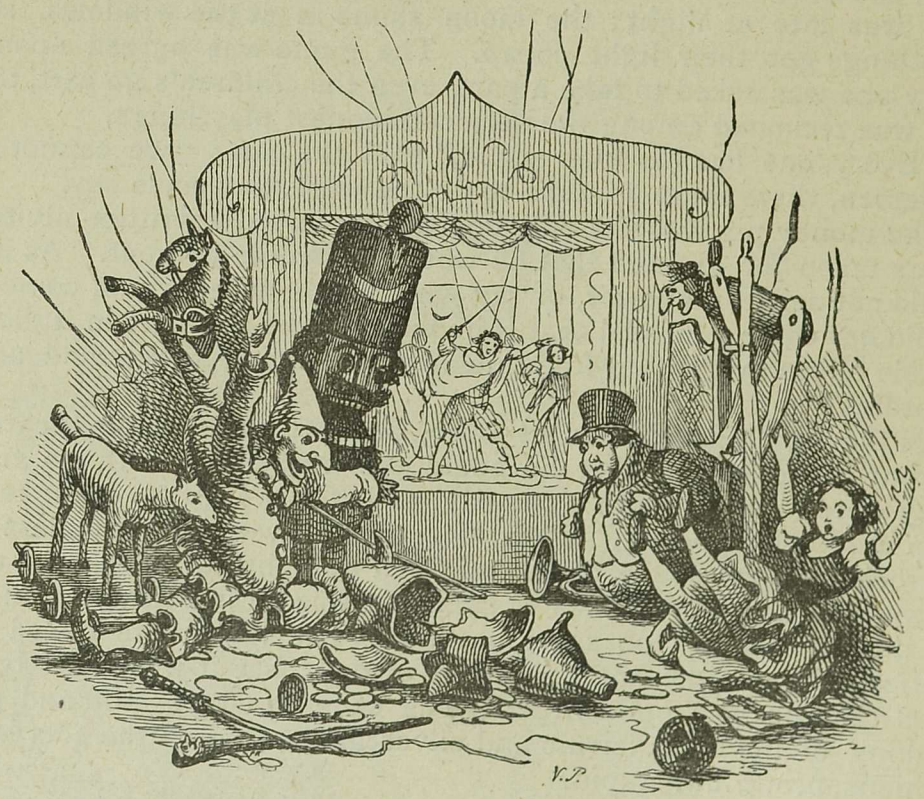
All the playthings agreed at once, and set up the doll's theatre just in front of the pig, so that he could see everything with no trouble. They were to begin with a comedy, and afterwards to drink tea and open a debating society. They began, however, with the last first: the rocking-horse spoke of training and pure breeding; the go-cart of railways and the properties of steam, it was all in their line, and they had a right to speak on such matters. The time-piece talked about politics—tic, tac—he knew the time of day; but it was secretly whispered that he was not correct. The cane stood up stiff and proud, thinking of his brass ferrule and silver knob; and on the sofa lay two cushions, pretty but stupid.

Now the play began. Every one sat and looked on, and they were asked to crack and clap and stamp when they were pleased. The riding-whip said he certainly should not crack for old people, but only for young ladies. "I will crack for everybody," said the pop-gun. The play was not very good, but it was capitally played. All the actors turned their painted side to the public, for they were never meant to be seen from the wrong side. They acted famously, right out in front of the footlights, for their wires were rather too long, but then they could be seen all the better for that.

The patched doll was so completely carried away that the place in her neck broke out again from sheer excitement; and the money pig was so pleased that he made up his mind to do something for one of the artists; and he decided on mentioning one of them in his will and leaving him permission to be buried in the pig's family vault—when the proper time came.

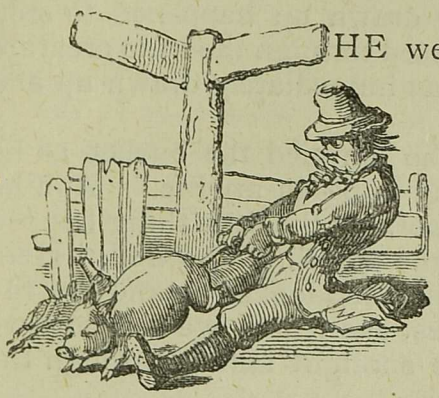
It was a very good thing that they had given up the tea-party and held the debating society instead: that was really just like men and women; and there was no harm in it, for they were only playing, and

every one was thinking either of himself or of what the money pig was thinking about. The money pig thought the longest, for it was thinking of its will and of its funeral. And when did that come to pass? why, a great deal sooner than any one expected. Bang! down it fell from the chest of drawers on to the floor and broke all to pieces; the coppers hopped and danced about till it was a pleasure to see them; the smallest spun round like a top, and the large ones rolled all over the room, especially one half-crown who had always wanted to go out into the world.



And it did go out into the world, and so did they all. The pieces of the money pig were thrown into the sweepings and a new pig stood on the chest of drawers. It had not a farthing inside it yet, so that it could not rattle; and in that respect it was like the other, which was a good beginning for it—and it shall be an ending for us.

The Toad.



THE well was deep, so the rope was long. The windlass moved heavily when one drew up the full bucket to the surface. Clear as the water was, the sun could never see its face reflected in it; for it could not reach so far. However far it went it saw only stones with wet green moss between them.

Down in the well lived a family of toads; the old mother, who was still alive, had in the first instance tumbled down head-over-heels into the well. The green frogs who had lived there a long while acknowledged their relationship to the new-comers, and called them excursionists to the watering-place. But the excursionists seemed inclined to stay; they lived very comfortably on the dry land, as they called the wet stones.

The mother toad had travelled in her youth. She had lain in the bucket when it was drawn up; but it was too light for her; luckily she managed to get out, and she fell back with a frightful splash into the water, and lay for three days in bed with a pain in her back. She could not tell very much about the world above, but she knew one thing—they all knew that—that the well was not the whole world. The mother toad might indeed have told all manner of stories, but she never answered when she was questioned, so they left off questioning her.

"She is squat, fat, and ugly," said the young green frogs; "and her young ones will be just as ugly too."

"That may be," said the mother toad; "but one of them will have a jewel in its head, as I have one."

The green frogs listened and croaked; they did not like that, so they made grimaces and dived under water. But the young toads stretched out their hind-legs for very pride; each of them thought he had the jewel and held his head very still. At last they asked their mother what they were all so proud about, and what a jewel was.

"It is something so glorious and splendid that I cannot describe it," said the mother toad. "It is something which one carries about to one's own delight and to the mortification of everybody else. But ask no questions, for I never answer them."

"I have not got the jewel," said the youngest toad. She was as ugly as a toad could be. "Why should I have such a beautiful thing? And if it vexes everybody else, I should not like it. No; all I wish is, that I could get up to the top of the well and look about. It must be beautiful up there."

"Better stay where you are," said her mother. "Here you know the place, and what belongs to you. Beware of the bucket; it might squeeze you flat; and even if you got safe inside, you would very likely

fall out, and it is not every one who can fall as luckily as I did, with whole limbs, and not an egg broken."

"Croak!" said the little toad; it was just as if we said "alas!"

She wanted very much to get up to the top of the well and look out; she felt a longing for the sunlight and the greenery; and when, the next morning, the bucket as it was being drawn up happened to stop for a moment before her stone, a thrill passed through the little creature and she sprang into the bucket, which was immediately drawn up and emptied.

"Pah! look at that," said the boy who emptied the bucket, as he saw the toad. "I never saw such an ugly thing in my life." And he tried to crush the toad under his heavy boot, but the little thing hopped in among the nettles which grew round the mouth of the well. Here she saw stem stand close to stem, and when she looked up and saw the sun shine on the green, transparent leaves, she felt as we do when we suddenly enter a lofty wood and see the sunlight falling through the leaves.

"It is much prettier here than in the well," said the young toad. "I could gladly stay here all my life." And she really did stay there nearly two hours. "I wonder what is outside! Now I am come so far I must try to go farther." She moved as quickly as she could into the turnpike road, where the sun shone on her and the dust sprinkled her with powder. "One is certainly on dry land here," said the young toad. "It is almost too much of a good thing. It fidgets me."

She reached the ditch where the forget-me-nots grew under a hedge of white hawthorn. An elder tree stood close to, and there was bind-weed and some pink flowers. A butterfly flew by the hedge; the toad thought it was a flower which had got loose so that it could look about the world better. "It is only natural," thought the toad.

"If I could but fly like that!" said the toad. "Croak! Ah, what beautiful things!"

She stayed for a week in the ditch and had plenty to eat and drink. On the next day she said to herself, "Come, march! forward!" And yet what could she find better or prettier? Perhaps a little toad or a green frog: she had felt last night as if some friends were near.

"How beautiful it is to live! To come out of the well to the green nettles, and to crawl over the dusty road! But, forward! let me try to find a little toad or a frog, for it is not good to be always alone. Nature is not sufficient."

And she continued her wanderings.

She came to a large pond in a field; the sedge grew all round it and the toad splashed into the water.

"It will most likely be too wet for you here," said the frogs; "but you are very welcome. Are you a he or a she? Not that it matters. You are welcome all the same."

In the evening she was invited to the family concert—great enthusiasm and weak voices—we all know that. For refreshments there was the whole pond to drink.

"I'm going on farther now," said the little toad; she felt impelled to seek for something better.

She saw the stars shine bright and clear, saw the new moon come out, and the sun rise higher and higher.

"I am still in the well," she cried; "it is larger, but it is a well. I must rise higher. I feel a restless longing."

And when the moon was round and full she said to herself, "I wonder whether that is the bucket which is let down, and into which I must spring if I am ever to attain to anything higher? Or is the sun the great bucket? How large it is! How it shines! It could hold us all. I must take care not to lose my opportunity. Oh, how something gleams in my head! The jewel itself could not shine brighter. But I have no jewel, and I don't fret for the loss of it. No; I would rise higher: I feel confident, and yet afraid. It is hard work, but it must be done. Come, forward! Keep straight on!"

She crawled along as fast as a toad can, and came to a road-side by some houses; here were both flower and kitchen gardens. She rested for awhile in the kitchen garden. "How many different kinds of things there are of which I never heard!" she cried. "How large and beautiful the world is! But one must not sit still in one place," and she hopped in among the cabbages. "How green it is here! how beautiful!"

"I know that already," said the caterpillar on the leaf. "My leaf is the largest here. It covers the whole world. But I can live without it."

"Cluck! cluck! cluck!" In came the fowls running all over the garden. The hen who led the way was very far-sighted; she saw the caterpillar and pecked at it so that it fell to the ground and lay there twisting and twirling about. The hen looked at it first with one eye and then with the other; she did not know what to make of the twisting and twirling.

"She means no good by it," said the hen, and darted forward to eat her up. The toad was so horrified that she crawled straight up to the hen.

"Oh, it has friends to back it!" cried the hen. "Look at the crawling thing!" and she turned away. "I don't want the nasty green morsel," she said; "it would only stick in my throat."

The other hens were of the same opinion, and they turned away. "I got away from them," said the caterpillar; "it is a good thing to have such presence of mind as I have. But the most difficult thing yet remains to be done, and that is to get back on to my cabbage leaf. Now, where is it?"

The little toad came up to offer her sympathy. She was glad that her ugliness had frightened the hens away.

"What do you mean by that?" said the caterpillar. "I got away myself. You are extremely ugly to look at. May I beg to be left alone in my own property? Now I smell cabbage. This must be my leaf. There is nothing like property. But I must climb up higher."

"Yes; higher!" echoed the little toad; "higher! She feels just as I do. But she is not in good spirits to-day: she has been frightened. We all want to rise higher." And she raised herself as high as she could.

The stork was sitting in his nest on the roof of the farm-house: he flapped, and the mother stork flapped too.

"How high up they live!" thought the toad. "Whoever could get up there?"

In the farm-house there lived two young students; the one was a poet and the other a naturalist. The one sang joyously of all that God had created, and how it was mirrored in his own heart; he sang it out clear and strong in tuneful verses; the other took hold of the thing itself, and cut it up, if need be. He looked on God's creation as a great arithmetical problem; subtracted and multiplied; tried to learn it by heart, and speak reasonably about everything; he was all reason, and he spoke very sensibly. They were good, light-hearted people, both of them.

"There's a fine specimen of a toad! I must have that in spirits," said the naturalist.

"Why, you have two already," said the poet; "let it enjoy its life in peace."

"But how frightfully hideous it is!" said the other.

"If we could only find the jewel in its head, I would stand by while you dissected it."

"Jewel!" cried the naturalist. "You don't seem to know much about natural history."

"But is there not something very beautiful in the popular belief that the toad, the ugliest of all animals, has a precious jewel in its head? Is it not so with men? What a jewel Æsop had! and then Socrates——"

The toad heard no more; she had not understood half of it. The students went on their way, and the toad escaped being put in spirits for one while at least.

"They were speaking of the jewel," she said. "What a good thing that I have not got it! I might have met with great unpleasantness."

A sound was heard from the roof of the farmhouse. The father stork was reading a lecture to his family; and all he said was aimed at the two men in the garden below.

"Mankind is a conceited species," said the stork. "Listen how their tongues go, and yet they cannot even cluck! They plume themselves on their fluent speech! And such a language as it is! They have only to go a day's journey and no one can understand them. Now, our language is spoken all over the world; in the far north and in Egypt too. And they cannot even fly! They dart about in a machine they call a railway, and as often as not they break their neck. It makes my beak run cold only to think of it! The world can go on without men. We can do without them. If we can only get frogs and worms!"

"That was a long speech," cried the toad. "What a great man he is, and how high up he sits! I never saw any one sit so high. And how he swims!" she added, as she saw him fly through the air.

The mother stork sat still in her nest and talked to her young ones about Egypt and the waters of the Nile, and of the incomparable mud of that distant land. It all sounded very new and fascinating to the little toad.

"I must go to Egypt," she said. "If the stork or one of his young ones would but take me with them! I would oblige him in everything I could. Yes, I must go to Egypt. I am so happy. All the joy and longing that I feel is better than having a jewel in my head."

And all the time she *had* the jewel! The deathless longing for better things.

Suddenly the stork flew downwards; he had seen the toad in the grass, and he seized it roughly. His beak squeezed her, the wind rushed past them, but upwards they rose—on towards Egypt, she knew that; and her eyes sent out sparks of fire.

"Croak! ah!"

The body was dead, the toad was killed. But what became of the sparks of fire?

The sunbeam caught them, and the jewel from the toad's head, and carried them—whither?

Do not ask the naturalist; ask the poet. He will make a fairy tale of it for you, and the storks and the caterpillar will be in it. Only think: the caterpillar will turn into a beautiful butterfly. The storks will fly across the sea to Africa, and come back, the very same way, to the same country, the same roof! That sounds *too* wild and improbable, does it not? But you may ask even the naturalist; he will be obliged to confess that it is true. Indeed, you must have seen it yourself.

"But the jewel in the toad's head?"

Look for it in the sun; and try to find it.

The light is too strong. Our eyes cannot bear it yet. We cannot gaze upon the splendour round us, but God will give us power enough to do so some day. That will be the finest fairy tale of all, and we shall all be in it.

Good Deeds are not Forgotten.

N old castle stood surrounded by its walls and moat; the drawbridge was seldom lowered, for there were many unwelcome guests round about. Below the eaves of the roof were loopholes through which one could send down on the enemy showers of bullets, boiling water, or molten lead. The rooms within were lofty, and that was just as well, for the clouds of smoke from the fire on the hearth rose up to the ceiling and curled round the great, knotted beams of wood. On the walls hung pictures of knights in armour, and richly-dressed ladies; the most queenly of them all walked through the castle halls as mistress and chatelaine. Her name was Meta Mogens, and the castle was her own.

One evening a band of robbers came to the castle. They slew three

of the servants and the great mastiff in the courtyard. Then they bound Meta Mogens with the dog's chain, and tied her to the kennel, while they rioted in the hall and made free with the wine and beer from the cellar.

The Lady Meta was bound fast by the dog's chain; she could not even bark.

But look! One of the robber's servant lads comes stealing towards her, holds his very breath lest he should be discovered and shot dead.

"Lady Meta Mogens," said the lad, "do you remember how my father, when your lord was still living, was forced to ride the wooden horse? You interceded for him, but it was of no avail. He was sentenced to ride till his limbs were racked and numb. But you stole out to him, as I now steal out to you, and pushed a stone under each of his feet, so that he could rest upon them. No one saw the deed—or at least they pretended not to see it, for you were their young duchess, the lady of the castle. My father told me the tale himself, and I have not forgotten. Now I am come to set you free, Lady Meta Mogens."

Then they took two horses from the stables and galloped away through rain and storm to seek for help.

"You have richly repaid the little help I gave to your old father," said Meta Mogens.

"Good deeds are not forgotten," said the lad.

The robbers were put to death.

There was once an old castle; it is standing yet. It is not the home of Lady Meta Mogens, but of another noble family.

We are in our own days now. The sun shines on the gilded turrets; little wooded islands lie like bouquets upon the moat, and the wild swans circle round them. The garden is full of roses, but the fairest flower is the lady of the castle; she is radiant with happiness—the joy of good deeds. Their memory does not live in the world without; it is cherished deeply in grateful hearts, the safest place of all, for there good deeds are not forgotten.

The lady leaves the castle for the peasant's hut in the fields, where the poor lame girl lives. The low window looks towards the north, the sun never falls upon the room, and the child can see nothing but a scrap of ploughed field shut in by high palings. Suddenly the sunlight bursts into the room and fills it from end to end; the warm, golden sunlight from heaven. It pours in through the large new window that looks southward through what was before a dead, bare wall.

The cripple sits in the warm light, and looks out on forest and lake. The world has grown so large for her, so grand and beautiful, and all through one word from the gentle mistress of the castle.

"The word was so easy, the deed so insignificant," she said; "and the joy it gave was so unspeakably great and full of blessing."

And she continues to work good deeds; she thinks of all in the houses of the poor, and of those who suffer in the houses of the rich. The deeds lie hidden and unnoticed, but God remembers them.

Good deeds are not forgotten.

"The fairy touched her hand with the burning nettles."

An old house stood in the centre of the busy town. It had halls and lofty rooms, but we have no business there; we will stay in the kitchen. It is warm and bright, clean and tidy. The dishcovers are as bright as silver, the tables white as curd, the dresser as clean as hands can make it. All this order and cleanliness is the work of a servant girl, and, besides that, she has found time to dress herself as if she were going to church. She wears a bow on her cap—a black bow, in sign of mourning; and yet she has no one to mourn for; neither father nor mother, kinsman nor sweetheart. She is but a poor, hard-working girl. She was engaged long ago to a youth as poor as herself. One day he came to her and said, "We two have not a penny between us; the rich widow up the street has spoken to me. She could make me a rich man, but you have my heart. What shall I do?"

"Do what you think will make you happy," said the girl. "Be kind and faithful to her, but understand this—from the moment we part, we must never meet again."

Years passed away. One day she met her former lover face to face in the street. He looked white and wretched, and she could not help stopping to speak to him. "How are you going on?" she said.

"Well and prosperously in every respect," he answered. "My wife is true and good, but you have my heart. I have prayed and struggled, and the battle will soon be over. We shall not meet again till we meet in heaven."

A week passed away; and this morning there was a notice of his death in the papers. That is why the girl wears her black bow. He is dead, and has left a widow and three stepchildren, the paper says. The black bow is a sign of mourning, and the girl's face is a still sadder sign. She keeps her love and sorrow in her heart—where love is not forgotten.

There you have the three stories, three leaves on one stem. Will you have more? There are plenty of such trefoil plants in the heart—all unforgotten.

The Wild Swans.

FAR away from here, where the swallows fly when we have winter, there lived a king who had eleven sons and one daughter named Elisa The eleven sons were princes, and went to school with a star on their breast and a sword by their side; they wrote on gold slates with diamond pencils, and directly they read anything, they knew it off by heart; any one could see that they were princes. Their little sister sat on a plate-

glass footstool, and had a picture-book which had cost as much as half a kingdom.

The children had everything they could possibly wish for; but things were not to last for ever in this way.

Their father, who was king over the whole land, married a wicked queen, who did not like the poor children. She let it be seen on the very first day. There was great festivity held at the palace, and the children were playing at "paying visits," but instead of receiving all the cakes and baked apples that were to be had, the queen only gave them some sand in a teacup, and said they could make believe with that. The week following she sent little Elisa to a peasant's cottage in the country; and before long she told the king such tales of the eleven young princes that he no longer troubled himself about them.

"Fly forth into the world and provide for yourselves," said the new queen; "fly forth like great birds without a voice." But she could not make things turn out as bad as she wished; the princes were changed into eleven beautiful swans. With a strange, wild cry, they flew from the palace windows, across the park to the great forest.

It was early dawn as they passed by the little cottage where their sister Elisa lay sleeping in the peasant's chamber. They hovered above the roof, stretched their long necks and flapped their wings, but no one heard or saw them. On they went, high in the air towards the dark forest which stretched down to the sea-shore.

Poor little Elisa stood in the peasant's hut and played with a green leaf; she had no other playthings. She made a hole in the leaf and looked through it up to the sun; she fancied she could see her brothers' clear, bright eyes; and when the warm sunbeams kissed her cheek, she thought of all their kisses.

One day passed like another; when the wind rustled through the rosebush by the door, it whispered to the roses "Who is as beautiful as you are?" And the roses answered, "Elisa!" And when the old woman sat on Sunday in the porch, reading her hymn-book, the wind turned over the leaves and said, "Who is more pious than you are?" And the hymn-book answered, "Elisa!" And what the hymn-book and the roses said was the simple truth.

When Elisa was fifteen years old she was sent home to the palace. The wicked queen saw how lovely she was, and envy filled her heart. She would have liked to change her into a wild swan, but she dared not do so just then, for the king had asked to see his daughter.

Early in the morning the queen went into her bath-room; soft cushions and rich hangings lay round the marble bath. She took three toads, kissed one of them and said to it, "Sit on Elisa's head when she gets into the bath, so that she may become as stupid as you are. Sit on her forehead," she said to the second, "so that she may become ugly, and her father may not recognize her. Rest on her heart," she said to the third, "that she may become bad-hearted, and may suffer from it!" Then she threw the toads into the clear water, which immediately turned into a greenish colour, and called Elisa to the bath. As the young princess lay down in the water, the three toads placed themselves on her hair, her forehead, and her heart. But she did not seem to notice them, and as soon as she raised herself

up, there lay three scarlet poppies floating on the water. If the toads had not been venomous, and if the witch had not kissed them, they would have changed into roses. Even as it was they were changed into flowers, because they had rested on her head and on her heart. She was too good and innocent for evil spells to have any power over her.

When the wicked queen saw this she rubbed Elisa's face and neck with walnut juice till her fair skin looked dark brown ; then she tangled her beautiful hair. It was impossible to recognize the lovely girl.

The king started back in horror when he saw her, and said she was not his daughter. No one knew her but the yard dog and the swallows, and they were poor, dumb creatures, who could not speak a word in her defence.

The poor child wept and thought of her eleven brothers who were far away. She stole out of the palace and wandered far over field and moor till she reached the great forest. She did not know in the least whither she was going; but she felt heart-broken, and longed to see her brothers : she knew that they too had been driven out into the world, and she wanted to find them.

Before long, the night closed over her in the wood ; she had strayed far away from any path and track, so she lay down just where she was in the soft moss, said her evening prayers, and rested her head on the stump of a tree. All was silent round her, the air was mild, and in the grass myriads of glowworms shone like sparks of fire. If she did but touch a branch near her, they fell to the ground as the shooting stars dart through the sky.

All night long she dreamed of her brothers ; they were children again, playing together, or writing with diamond pencils on their golden slates, or looking at the splendid picture-book which had cost half the kingdom. But in her dream they did not write round O's and pothooks as they used to do ; they wrote down all the glorious deeds that they had done, all that they had seen and lived through. And in the picture-book, all the pictures were alive and came out of the page to talk to Elisa and her brothers ; but as soon as the leaf was turned over they went back again to their places, so that there was no confusion.

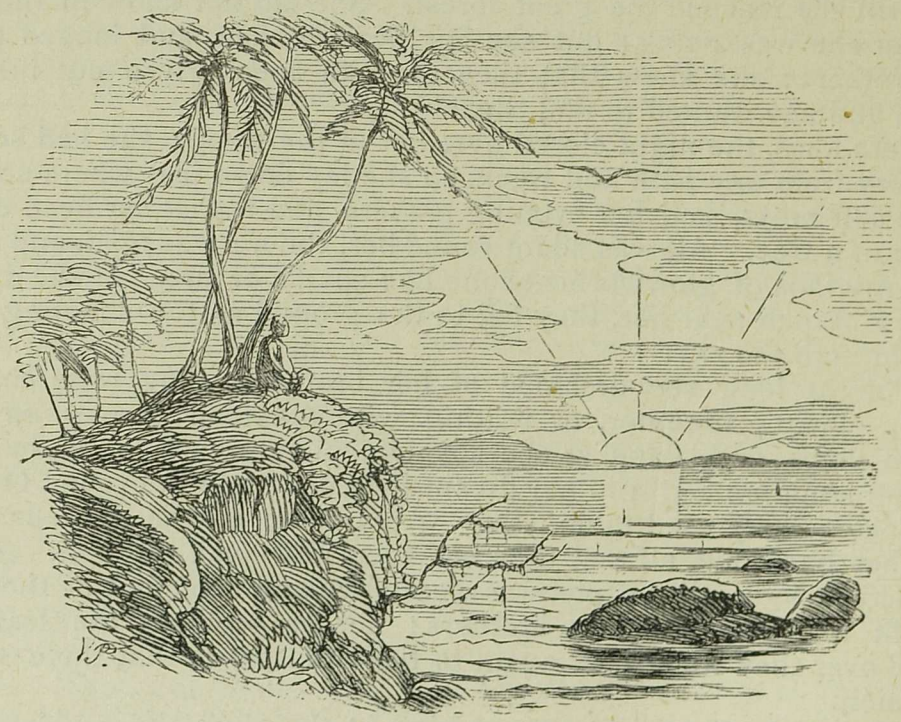
When she awoke the sun stood high in the sky ; she could not see it, for the branches met close overhead ; but the sunbeams wove their golden webs among the leaves, fragrance rose up from the cool earth, and the birds almost rested on her shoulders. She heard the ripple of water and found some springs which flowed into a tiny lake with a clear, sandy bed. Thick bushes closed it in, except in one place where a stag had forced its way to drink. Elisa went down to the water's edge ; it was so clear that when the wind was still you would have thought that every leaf above it was painted on the surface, with every shadow and gleam of light.

When Elisa caught sight of her face in the water she was frightened at her own ugliness ; but she wet her forehead with her finger and the white skin showed through the brown colouring. She undressed and stepped into the lake, and when she came out again there was no lovelier maiden to be seen in all the world.

When she had dressed herself and plaited her golden hair, she went up to the bubbling spring and drank out of the hollow of her hand. Then she wandered on, not knowing whither. She thought of her eleven brothers and of God Who would not forsake her. He makes the wild apples grow to feed the hungry; and before her stood a tree laden with the golden fruit. Elisa ate her breakfast, propped up the drooping branches, and wandered on into the heart of the forest.

It was so silent that she could hear her own footsteps and the rustle of the dry leaves beneath her feet. There was not a bird to be seen, not a single sunbeam found its way through the thick branches; the trees stood so close together that when she looked before her, it seemed as if a high wooden palisading closed her in on every side. She had never dreamed of such loneliness before.

The night was very dark; not a single glow-worm glittered in the



moss. She laid herself down to sleep with a sad heart; but in her dreams it seemed to her that angel faces smiled upon her from the distant heaven. In the morning she hardly knew whether she had dreamed this, or whether it was really true.

She went on a little way, and met an old woman carrying a basket of berries. The old woman gave her some of the fruit, and Elisa asked her if she had seen eleven princes riding through the forest.

"No," said the old woman; "but yesterday I saw eleven swans, with golden crowns upon their heads, come swimming up the river."

She led Elisa to a steep slope, below which flowed a winding river; the trees upon its banks stretched out their branches to meet those of the trees on the opposite shore; and where they could not reach so far, the roots had loosened themselves from the earth, and hung tangled among the branches above the water.

Elisa said good-bye to the old woman, and followed the course of the river till it flowed out into the sea.

Before her lay the glorious, measureless ocean; not a sail showed itself upon the horizon, not a boat lay near the shore.

How was she to cross it? She looked at the countless pebbles on the shore; the water had made them all round and smooth; glass, iron, stone, all that lay washed up on to the beach, had received its shape from the force of the wave, and yet the water itself was softer and weaker than her own hand!

"It rolls on unwearied, and smooths down every obstacle—I will be just as unwearied. Thanks for your lesson, clear, rolling waves! one day, my heart tells me, you will carry me to my brothers."

On the drifted seaweed lay eleven white swans' feathers; Elisa gathered them into a bundle; drops of water lay upon them, whether it was dew or tears she could not tell. It was lonely on the sea shore, but she did not mind that, for the sea changed every instant; its form and colour varied more in a day than the quiet inland lakes can vary in a year. A black cloud would cross the sky, and the sea seemed to say, "I, too, can look dark and gloomy;" the wind would chase the cloud away and curl the waves till they rose white as froth. But when the wind slept and the rosy sky shone clear, the sea lay smooth as a roseleaf, and changed from green to silver; even then there would be a faint ripple along the shore, where the wave rose gently as the breast of a sleeping child.

Towards sunset Elisa saw eleven wild swans, with golden crowns upon their heads, come flying to the shore, one behind another, like a long white ribbon. She hid herself behind a bush, and the swans lighted down close beside her and flapped their great, white wings.

The moment the sun set in the sea the swans' feathers disappeared, and eleven young princes stood upon the shore. Elisa gave a low cry and sprang towards them. They were grown and altered, but she felt sure they were her own dear brothers; she called them by their names and the princes clasped their little sister in their arms. She, too, was grown into a tall, beautiful maiden; they laughed and cried together, and told each other how wickedly their stepmother had treated them.

"As long as the sun is above the horizon," said the eldest of the brothers, "we fly about in the shape of wild swans, but after sunset we regain our human shape. That is why we are obliged to make for the shore every evening, for if the sun should set while we were above the water, we should sink down and be drowned. We do not live here; there is a beautiful country across the sea; but it is a long way from here, and there is no island on the way where we can rest. There is nothing but a small, bare rock, just large enough to hold us all if we stand close together. When the sea runs high, the waves dash over us, but still we thank God for the shelter. We spend the night there in our human shape; and were it not for that rock we could never visit our own dear land; as it is, we are obliged to choose the two longest days in the year for our journey. It is only once a year that we are allowed to revisit our home; we stay here eleven days, and we fly through the great forest till we can see the palace where we were born, and the church near which our mother lies buried. It seems to us as

if every tree and bush was an old friend; the wild horses gallop across the moor as we saw them when we were children; the charcoal burners sing the dear old songs to which we used to dance; we feel ourselves drawn hither as by a spell; and now we have found you, dear little sister! We have two days more to stay here, and then we must go back to the land beyond the sea. It is beautiful, but it is not our home. How shall we take you with us? We have neither ship nor boat."

"How can I set you free?" said Elisa; and they sat talking far into the night; they did not have many hours' sleep.

Elisa was awoke by the rush of the swans' great wings as they fluttered overhead; her brothers were circling round her, and at last they flew away out of sight. But the youngest remained behind, and laid his head against her breast, while she stroked his soft white wings. They stayed together the whole day, and towards evening the others came back.

At sunset they regained their human shape. "To-morrow we must fly far from here, and it will be a whole year before we come back again," said the eldest. "But we cannot leave you behind. Have you courage to come with us? My arm is strong enough to carry you through the wood; surely our wings could bear you across the sea."

"Take me with you," said Elisa.

They passed the whole night in plaiting a strong, pliant raft of sedge and willow bark. Elisa lay down upon it; and when the sun rose, her brothers, in the shape of wild swans, lifted the raft in their beaks and flew with their little sister towards the clouds.

Elisa was still asleep; the sun shone straight on to her face, and one of the swans hovered over her to shield her with his broad white wings. They were far from the land when Elisa awoke; she thought she was still dreaming, for it seemed so strange and wonderful to be flying through the air above the sea. By her side lay a branch of a blackberry bush laden with fruit, and some sweet roots. It was her youngest brother who had found them and placed them there. She smiled at him and thanked him: she knew which he was. It was he who shaded her face with his wide wings.

They were so high above the sea that the largest ship below them looked like a white seagull on the waves. Behind them floated a great cloud, and on it Elisa saw her shadow and the shadow of the eleven swans as they bore her past. It was a lovelier picture than any in her picture-book. But when the sun rose higher the shadow painting vanished from the cloud.

They flew on the whole day through, darting arrow-like through the air, and yet they went more slowly than usual because of the weight they had to carry. A storm-cloud threatened them; the night drew on, Elisa saw the sun sink lower and lower, and yet there was no sign of the cliff above the waves. It seemed to her that the swans' wings moved more heavily. Alas! it was her fault that they could not fly faster: if the sun set before the rock was reached, they must all perish in the waves! She prayed to God from her inmost heart. The storm-cloud came nearer, in heavy leaden masses; lightning darted from its black depths; and there was no rock above the sea.

The sun touched the edge of the water. Elisa's heart trembled, for the swans sank swiftly downwards. The sun was half hidden below the waves, and then at last she saw the little rock beneath her feet. It looked no bigger than a seal lifting his head above the waves. The sun sank lower, till it was no bigger than a star, and her foot touched the solid ground. The sun went out like the last spark in burning paper, and she saw her eleven brothers stand round her arm-in-arm. There was just room enough for her and for them, and no more. The sea beat against the rock and the spray dashed over it, the heaven quivered in one sheet of flame, and the thunder rolled above them peal on peal. The brothers and their little sister clasped hands and sang hymns to cheer each other through the night and storm.

In the early dawn the air was fresh and mild, and at sunrise the swans rose high in air carrying Elisa from the rock. The sea still ran high, the white foam on the dark green waves looked as if a million swans were swimming over the sea.

When the sun rose higher Elisa saw before her, half veiled in mist, a mountainous land with snow-white peaks and a splendid palace with colonnades of marble, under which grew stately palm-trees and glowing flowers. She asked if that was the country whither they were flying; but her brothers told her that what she saw was only the changeful cloud palace of the Fairy Morgana, into whose land no human being may ever enter.

As Elisa looked at it, mountains, forests, and palace disappeared, and twenty lofty churches, all alike, with high steeples and Gothic windows, stood before her. She thought she heard the sound of the organ, but it was only the roar of the sea beneath her. Now she seemed close to the churches, and she found that they had changed to a fleet in full sail; but as she looked closely she saw nothing but misty clouds sailing above the water. The changing scenes passed before her eyes all the day through, until at last she saw the real land; a lovely coast with faint blue mountain peaks, dark cedar woods, cities, and palaces. Long before the sun set, she was sitting at the entrance of a great cave half veiled by climbing plants, it looked like an embroidered tapestry.

"Now we shall see what you will dream of to-night," said the youngest prince, as he showed her her sleeping-room.

"Heaven grant that I may dream how I can set you free," she said. The thought filled her heart; she prayed fervently to God for help, and even in her sleep her prayer went on. It seemed to her in her dream that she rose in the air and flew to the cloud palace of the Fairy Morgana. The fairy came to meet her, bright and radiant; and yet she reminded Elisa of the old woman who had given her berries in the wood, and told her about the eleven swans with the golden crowns.

"Your brothers can be saved if you have constancy and courage. The water, it is true, is softer than your hand, and yet it shapes the hard stone; but it feels no pain such as your hands will feel, it has no heart to suffer fear and pain such as you must bear. Do you see these stinging-nettles in my hands? Those which grow near the entrance of your cave are of the same sort; it is only those and the nettles from the churchyard which are of any use: remember that. You must

gather them though the blisters rise all over your hand. Tread out the nettles with your feet till you have made them into flax; and when you have plaited eleven coats of the flax, with long sleeves, throw the coats over the eleven swans, and the spell will be broken. But remember that from the moment that you begin the work till the moment when it is finished, no word must pass your lips; not even if the work should last for years. The first word you speak will be a fatal dagger in the hearts of your brothers. Their lives hang on your silence. Remember that!"

The fairy touched her hand with the burning nettles; a sharp pain like a fire thrilled through her fingers, and she awoke. It was clear daylight, and by her side lay a nettle such as she had seen in her dream. She fell on her knees and thanked God, then she went out of the cave to begin her work.

She seized the stinging-nettles with her delicate fingers; the nettles burned like fire; the blisters rose upon her hands and arms, but she willingly bore the pain for the sake of her dear brothers. She trod the nettles with her feet and plaited the green flax.

When the sun was set her brothers came home and wondered to find her so silent; they thought it was a new spell worked by their wicked stepmother. But when they saw her hands, they understood what she was doing. The youngest brother wept, and where the tears fell on her hands the blisters disappeared and she felt no pain.

She spent the whole night over her work; for she could not rest till she had broken the evil spell and set her brothers free. The next day she worked alone while the swans were away; the time flew by faster than ever, but by nightfall one coat was finished and the second was begun.

Suddenly a hunting horn was heard among the rocks. The sound came nearer; she heard the hounds bay and shrank back in terror; she seized her bundle of nettles, tied them up together, and sat down holding them in her hand.

A great hound came running up the ravine, another followed, and again another; they bayed aloud and ran back, but always came again. In another moment the whole hunt stopped before the entrance of the cave. The handsomest of the hunters was the king of the land. He went up to Elisa and thought she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

"How did you come hither, you lovely child?" he cried. Elisa shook her head; she dared not speak, for on her silence depended her brothers' life and deliverance. She hid her hands under her apron that the king might not see what she had to suffer.

"Come with me," he said, "you must not stay here. If you are as good as you are beautiful, I will dress you in silk and velvet, and set my golden crown upon your head. Come—you shall be queen in my palace." He lifted her on his horse; she wept bitterly and wrung her hands, but the king said, "I am acting for your own happiness, one day you will thank me for it." With these words he sprang on the horse in front of her, and they galloped away through the mountain pass, the whole hunt following in their track.

Before sunset the royal city, with all its domes and steeples, lay before them. The king led Elisa to the palace, where fountains plashed and played in the marble halls, and the walls were bright with beautiful pictures. But Elisa had no eyes for all the splendour; she wept bitterly while the maids of honour dressed her in royal robes, wove pearls in her golden hair, and drew on delicate gloves over her blistered hands.

As she stood there in her glittering dress she looked so exquisitely beautiful that the courtiers bowed before her, and the young king chose her for his bride. But the archbishop shook his head, and whispered that the lovely forest maiden was very probably a witch who had dazzled the king's eyes and befooled his heart.

At first the king did not heed him. Music sounded; a splendid feast was served in the palace halls, and lovely maidens danced before the throne. They led Elisa through fragrant gardens and beautiful rooms; but not a smile rose to her lips or in her eyes, she stood there a picture of misery. The king opened the door of the little chamber where she was to sleep, it was hung with green, like the forest cave where he had found her.

On the rich green carpet lay her bundle of flax and the coat which she had already finished. One of the hunters had brought them as curiosities.

"Here you can dream yourself back in your forest home," said the king. "There is your work; it will please you to look back on past days in the midst of all your splendour."

Then for the first time the colour came back to Elisa's face, and a smile rose to her lips. She kissed the young king's hand, and he clasped her to his heart.

The bells rang out for the wedding, the beautiful forest maiden was to be queen over all the land. The archbishop had whispered evil words into the king's ear, but they could not reach his heart or stop the marriage. He himself was forced to place the crown on Elisa's hair, and in his anger he pressed down the golden circlet so heavily that it hurt her brow.

But a heavier load weighed down her heart. She did not feel her bodily sufferings, they were forgotten in the loss of her eleven brothers. Her lips were sealed; a single word would have caused the death of her dear ones, but her beautiful eyes spoke out her love to the kind, handsome king. Every day she learned to love him more dearly; he spared no pains to win her heart, and she longed to confide in him and tell him all she suffered. But that could not be; her work must be finished in silence. Every night she stole from his side to her little room and knitted one coat after another. When she had finished the seventh, her flax was gone.

The nettles which she wanted grew in the churchyard, and she must gather them herself. How was she to get there?

"Oh, what is the pain in my fingers to the sorrow in my heart!" she cried. "I must venture. The Lord will not withdraw His help from me." With fear and trembling, as if she were about to commit an evil deed, she stole out into the clear, moonlit night, passed through the gardens and the lonely streets till she reached the churchyard.

There, on one of the large gravestones she saw an ugly group of Lamiæ. The hideous witches fluttered their foul rags and stretched out their skinny hands as if to seize her; then they tore up the earth to drag the corpses from their graves. Elisa was obliged to pass close to them, and they fixed her with their evil eyes. She prayed silently, gathered the burning nettles and returned to the palace.

Only one man had seen her, and that was the archbishop; he woke while others slept. Now he had found the proof of his suspicion that all was not as it should be with the new queen. She was a witch and had bewitched both king and people.

When the king knelt in the confessional, the archbishop told him what he had seen and what he feared. As the harsh words passed his lips the images of the saints shook their heads, as much as to say, "It is not true. Elisa is innocent." But the archbishop interpreted it differently: he said that they shook their heads in horror of her sin. Two heavy tears rolled down the king's cheeks; he went home with doubt in his heart, and the next night he feigned to fall asleep. But he was wide awake when Elisa rose and disappeared in her little chamber. Night after night he watched her leave his side, and day by day his face grew sadder and darker.

Elisa saw the change and felt it keenly, though she did not guess the cause. Her heart was full of sorrow for her brothers; her hot tears lay like diamonds on her royal purple robes—the people as they saw them shine and glitter wished that they too might be queen. Meanwhile the work was nearly done, there only remained one coat to finish, but once more her flax failed her, she had not one nettle left.

She thought with fear and horror of her lonely walk, and of the hideous Lamiæ, but her will stood firm, and her trust in God was unshaken.

Elisa went; but the king and the archbishop followed her. They saw her disappear within the churchyard-gate, and when they reached the place they saw only the foul Lamiæ among the graves. The young king turned away, for he thought that one of that evil band was she whose head had rested that very night upon his heart.

"The people must judge her," he said. "I cannot." And the people sentenced her to be burnt alive at the stake.

They led her out of the palace into a dark, damp cell, where the wind howled through the iron-barred windows. Instead of silk and velvet they gave her her bundle of green nettles and the ten knitted coats as a pillow for her head. They could have given her nothing she liked better; she took up her work and prayed to God. Outside the prison windows the crowd sang mocking songs about her, there was not one to comfort her with a kind word.

But towards sunset she heard the flutter of a swan's wings; it was her youngest brother who had found her out at last. Elisa sobbed for joy, though she knew that this night would be her last. But then the work was nearly ended, and her brothers were here.

The archbishop came to be with her in her last hours, he had promised the king that he would do so. But she shook her head and made signs to him to leave her. Her work must be finished this very night or all would be in vain; tears, pain, sleepless nights—all that

she had suffered. The archbishop left her with threatening words; but Elisa knew that she was innocent, and she worked on unwearied.

The little mice ran across the floor and dragged the nettles to her feet; it was all that they could do. A thrush sat on the window-bar, and sang loud and clear to keep up her courage and her trust in God.

The dawn approached—it was an hour before sunrise. At the palace gates stood the eleven princes, entreating that they might be led before the king. The servants told them that it was impossible; they must wait till daylight for the king was sleeping and might not be awaked. But the young princes begged and threatened, the guard turned out, and even the king himself sent to ask what was happening at the gates. But it was too late; the sun rose, and nothing was to be seen but eleven white swans flying across the palace roof.

The crowd went streaming out from the city gates to see the witch burnt at the stake. Elisa sat in a cart drawn by an old half-starved horse: she wore a coarse, grey dress; her golden hair fell in rich masses over her shoulders, her cheeks were pale as death, her lips moved softly as she knitted on. Even on her way to death she could not interrupt her work; ten coats lay at her feet, and she held the eleventh in her hands.

The rabble mocked her. "Look at the witch!" they cried. "How she mutters! She has no Bible in her hand. There she sits with her vile jugglery! Let us tear it in pieces!"

They made a dash at the cart, to seize the knitted coats, but eleven great swans swooped down upon them, closed round the cart, and drove back the crowd with their beaks and wings.

"It is a sign from heaven," whispered some among the crowd as they fell back. "She must be innocent." But they dared not say it aloud.

The executioner seized her hand, but she turned and hurriedly threw the knitted coats over the eleven swans. Eleven young princes stood in their place, the youngest had a swan's wing instead of an arm; for she had not had time to finish the eleventh coat.

"Now I may speak," she cried. "I am innocent!"

And the crowd who had seen all that passed, bowed down before her as before a saint; but Elisa fell fainting in her brothers' arms. Grief, suspense, and pain had almost broken her heart.

"Yes, she is innocent," said her eldest brother, and he told the whole story of their lives. While he was speaking the fragrance of a thousand roses filled the air; every log of wood around the stake had taken root and put out flowers and leaves; where the pile had lain stood a tall cluster of rose-trees covered with lovely crimson roses, and above them all was one white flower which glittered like a star. The king gathered it and laid it on Elisa's breast; and she awoke with peace and gladness at her heart.

And all the bells in all the churches began to ring of their own accord; and the birds came flying up in long lines. There was such a bridal procession back to the palace as no king ever had before or since.

A Leaf from Heaven.

HIGH in the clear, pure air an angel flew by with a flower from the garden of heaven. As he kissed the flower, a tiny leaf fell to the earth and sank into the soft soil in the heart of a wood; there it took root at once, and put forth shoots and leaves among the other forest plants.

"That's a comical looking shoot," they cried. And not one of them would acknowledge the new-comer; not even the thistles and stinging-nettles.

"It must be a kind of garden flower," they said; and the plant was mocked and jeered at as a garden flower.

"Where are you pushing yourself to?" cried the tall thistle, whose leaves are armed with prickly darts; "you send out your shoots far enough I hope. We don't stand here to hold you up."

The winter came; the snow lay over the heavenly plant, and gleamed with as bright a lustre as if there were sunshine streaming through it from below. In the spring-tide the plant stood forth in full bloom, lovelier than any other in the forest.

Then the professor of botany came up to the spot; he could set

down in black and white exactly what everything was. He looked at the plant, felt it, and found that it was not mentioned in his botanical dictionary; he could not possibly find out to what class it belonged.

"It is a degenerate species," he cried. "I do not know it. It is not classed in any system."

"Not classed in any system!" echoed the thistles and the stinging-nettles. The tall trees saw and heard it all, but they said nothing; and that is always the wisest course for stupid people to pursue.

A poor innocent maiden came through the wood; her heart was pure, her intellect strong in its faith. All her wealth was an old Bible; when she read it she heard God's voice speaking from the pages and saying to her—When men would work you ill, remember how Joseph said, "Be not grieved in your heart, nor angry with yourself." When you are misunderstood and scorned, think of Him whom men mocked upon the Cross, and of His prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The girl stopped before the wondrous plant; its green leaves showered down richest fragrance; its flowers glowed in the sunlight like a coloured flame; and from each cup and bell there came a sound as if within them lay a hidden fount of melody which centuries could not exhaust.

The maiden looked with pious rapture on this lovely work of God's hand; she bent down a flower-laden branch that she might breathe in its sweet fragrance. A light rose in her mind and peace filled her heart; she would not break off any of the blossoms, for she knew how soon they would fade; but she gathered one green leaf and laid it in her Bible, where it kept unchanged, green, and fresh.

For a few weeks it lay between the leaves of the Bible; and then, still inside the sacred book, it was placed in the young girl's coffin. Her head rested upon it as on a pillow, and her sweet face bore the impress of her soul's joy in the presence of her Lord.

Out in the forest the wonderful plant grew tall as a tree, and the birds of passage bowed before it as they flew by.

"Do you see their outlandish ways and manners?" cried the thistles and the stinging-nettles. "That is not the way in which we behave ourselves in these parts."

The black snails spat at the beautiful plant.

The swineherd passed that way one morning; he was come to pull up brambles and thistles to burn into ashes.

The plant from heaven was torn up and put into his bundle among the rest. "It will do to burn," he cried; and so said, so done.

Now, the king of the country had suffered for years from a profound melancholy; he worked and studied hard, but it was of no avail. He read learned treatises and the lightest of light literature, but all in vain. His councillors had consulted a learned sage about his health, and they received the answer that there existed but one means of cure for him. "In the king's own dominions," said the sage, "there grows a heavenly plant;" and then followed a description of the plant itself, and of the spot where it grew.

"Why I put it in my bundle," said the swineherd: "it was burnt to ashes long ago. I knew no better."

"Knew no better! Depth below depth of ignorance!" The poor swineherd took these words to heart; those who uttered them meant them for him alone.

Not a leaf of the plant was to be found. The only one in all the world lay in the dead girl's coffin, and no one knew of that.

The king wandered gloomily in the forest to the place where the plant once grew. "It stood here," he cried; "the place is sacred henceforth."

A golden railing was erected round the spot and a sentry placed on guard before it.

The professor of botany wrote an exhaustive treatise on the subject of the heavenly plant; he was knighted, and the distinction was a very good thing both for himself and his family. And that is, perhaps, the only pleasant part of the story, for the plant was lost for ever, and the king remained sad, gloomy, and suspicious—but then, as the sentry said,—"so he was before."

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The Old Church Bell.

WRITTEN FOR THE SCHILLER ALBUM.

IN the German province of Wurtemberg, where the acacia blossoms by the road side, and the apple and pear trees bend to the earth under their weight of golden fruit in autumn, lies the little town of Marbach. It is but a small place, but it nestles close to the beautiful Neckar which hurries by, past villages, lordly castles, and green vineyards, to blend its waters with the proud waves of the Rhine.

It was late in the autumn; the vine leaf was turning red, quick, gusty showers fell among the leaves, the chill winds grew stronger and keener; it was not a pleasant season for the poor.

The days grew darker—darker even under the open sky, darkest of all in the low, small houses. One of these houses turned its gables to the street, and stood there looking mean and squalid. But those who dwelt within it had a treasure of faith and hope within their hearts. A little son had just been born to them; born amid the joyous chiming of the old bell in the steeple yonder. The pale mother kissed her child's clear eyes and golden hair, and wrote on the fly-leaf of the old Bible, "On the tenth of November, 1759, God sent us a son;" a few

days later they added the words, "baptized by the names of John Christopher Frederick."

And what became of the poor lad from the little town of Marbach? No one knew then; not even the bell, high as it hung in the steeple, and ready as it had been to ring and chime for him who was afterwards to write the sweetest "Song of the Bell."

The boy grew, and the world grew with him. His parents removed to another town, but they left dear friends behind them. About six years afterwards the mother brought her little boy on a visit to his birthplace; he was then barely six years old; but he knew already many a story out of the Bible, and had listened many a night when his father read aloud from Klopstock's "Messiah" or Gellert's fables. Often the child had wept over the story of Him Who suffered death upon the cross for us all.

Marbach was not much altered; there was little change in the houses, with their pointed gables, low windows, and projecting upper storeys; but there were fresh graves in the churchyard, and among the churchyard grass lay the old bell. It had fallen from its place; the metal was cracked and could never ring again; a new bell hung in the belfry.

The mother and her child stood looking at their old friend. The child listened thoughtfully while his mother told him how the old bell had rung for births and deaths, marriages and funerals, fire and war, peace and rejoicing—ringing the changes through the drama of man's life. He heard, too, that the bell had rung at his own birth, and he stooped down and kissed it, as it lay, old, cast away, and forgotten, among the grass and nettles.

The boy grew into a youth; tall, thin, and pale, with freckled face, yellow hair, and deep, clear eyes. And how did he prosper? We find him in high favour at the military school among the sons of the higher classes, as they were called, and that was in itself honour and good fortune for him. He wore gaiters; a stiff collar and powdered wig; and he learned many things, among others, how to obey the command, "March! Halt! Right-about-face!" There was a good deal to be made out of that.

We are almost forgetting the old church bell. Of course it had to be sent to the foundry to be melted down; but what would become of it was as impossible to foretell as to prophesy what would come of the bell which echoed and rang in the boy's heart. This bell rang out at last, and made itself heard through the narrow school-room walls in spite of all the din of "Forward! march!" It chimed into the ears of the boy's comrades and far out into the land.

But it was not for that that he had been admitted into the military school and received board and education gratis. His place in the machinery of the universe was distinctly marked out for him; but how little we are understood by those who choose for us! and what wonder, when we understand ourselves so little! It is, however, by just such pressure that the gem is shaped. Here the pressure was evident enough—would the world ever recognize and own the gem?

A great festival was held in the capital of the province. Thousands of lamps were lit, and coloured rockets shot up flaming toward the sky.

The festival yet lives in men's memories, but only for the sake of the pupil in the military school, who on that day broke away from father, mother, and all whom he held dear, to follow the voice of the bell within his heart, lest he should sink down into the stream of the commonplace.

The old church bell lay safe and sheltered under the churchyard wall; and the wind, as it sighed past it, might have told of the young wanderer whose birth the bell had greeted. It could have told how he sank down on the roadside from sheer exhaustion, with only hope and a few pages of "Fiesco" for all his wealth. It could have told how the critics, who heard the pages read, went away in the middle to play at skittles; how the pale fugitive lay ill for months together in the wretched inn, and how among the sounds of drunken riot he wrote his "Ideal." Heavy, sorrow-laden days; but the heart must suffer before it can sing of suffering.

Dark winter nights and rainy days passed for the old bell in the churchyard. It was sent away farther than it could see, even when it hung high in the steeple. And the young man? Yes; the bell within his heart rang out farther than his eyes could reach, or his foot could wander; it rings still through the whole world, across the widest seas. As to the old bell, it was sent away from Marbach to Bavaria. Now, how and when did that happen? Many years after it had fallen from its steeple, it was ordered to be recast in Stuttgardt, and used for a statue of bronze which was to be erected there in honour of one of Germany's greatest men. And see how strangely things happen!

In Denmark, on one of the green islands where the Huns' graves lie, was born a poor lad, whose father worked as a carver in wood among the wharves. Thither the boy, dressed in an old cloak and wearing wooden shoes, would carry him his dinner every day. Years passed on, and the child had become the glory of his native land; the whole world looked with wonder on the lovely works, sculptured in stone or marble, which came from his hand; and it was this very child—now grown to manhood—who received the commission to model in clay the likeness of him whose name had been written John Frederick Christopher in the family Bible.

The glowing metal flowed into the mould; the old church bell, whose voice and distant home were forgotten by all, flowed into the mould and formed the head and breast of the statue which stands in Stuttgardt before the palace, in the square where he, whose likeness it is, so often walked in joy and sorrow—the boy from Marbach, the pupil at the military school, the fugitive, the great, immortal poet who sang of William Tell and of the Maid of Orleans!

It was a lovely summer day; flags waved from every turret and steeple in royal Stuttgardt; the bells rang out joyously, but one bell was silent. It stood, with the sunlight pouring over it, as the shape and face of the dead poet.

A hundred years had passed away since it had rung to welcome the birth of the poor boy at Marbach—of him who was afterwards the glory and pride of Germany, the poet with the woman's heart—the immortal John Christopher Frederick Schiller.

The Silver Shilling.

THERE was once a shilling brand-new from the Mint. "Hurrah!" it cried; "here I go out into the wide world!" and out it did go. The child clasped it in warm hands, the miser with convulsive clutch; the old folk turned it over and over before parting with it, the young folk soon let it go. The shilling was of silver, there was not much copper in it, and it had travelled for a year in the world—that is, in the country where it was coined.

But one day it went to foreign parts; it was the last coin in its master's purse; its master himself did not know it was there till he felt it between his fingers. "Why, here is a silver shilling!" he cried; "well, it can take the journey with me," and the shilling clinked for joy. It had plenty of foreign companions in the purse; they came and went, but the shilling always stayed behind, and that is a distinction.

Many weeks passed away; the shilling had travelled a long distance; indeed it hardly knew where it was. The coins told it that they were French and Italian One of them said, now we are in such a town, now in such another, but that told the shilling nothing. How could it get any idea of the scenes around it when it was always kept in the purse? But one day, when the purse was open, the shilling crept close to the opening and looked out. It ought not to have done so; and its curiosity was punished, as we shall hear. It slipped out into the trouser pocket and was brought down with the clothes to be brushed, but as they were being carried through the hall the shilling slipped out on to the floor, unseen and unheard.

The next morning the gentleman took his leave, and the shilling remained behind till it was found and sent out again in the company of three other coins. "It is very pleasant," said the shilling, "to go out into the world and see other manners and other places."

"Whatever kind of a shilling is this?" was the next thing it heard. "Why, it is not current coin; it is a bad one, it is good for nothing."

Yes; now begins the history of the shilling as told by itself.

"'A bad one! Good for nothing!' it cut me to the heart," said the shilling. "I knew I rang well and had the genuine stamp. They must have made a mistake, or they could not mean me. But they did mean me! It was I whom they called good for nothing. 'I must pass this in the dark,' said the man who held me; and I was passed in the dark and abused in the daylight: 'A bad one, good for nothing. We must get rid of it as soon as possible.'"

"I trembled every time that I was secretly passed off as current coin. Wretched shilling that I was! of what use was my silver, my value, and my superscription, if they were all counted as nothing? In the world's eyes one is simply what the world chooses to call us.

It must be terrible to have a bad conscience, and steal about in crooked ways, if I, who am quite innocent, feel so wretched at the mere appearance of dishonesty. Every time a fresh person touched me I shuddered; for I foresaw that I should be cast down scornfully, as a cheat and a lie. I came once to a poor old woman, she received me in payment for a hard day's work, but she could not pass me on again. No one would take me; I was a real trouble to the old woman. 'I shall be obliged to cheat some one with this shilling,' she said; 'with the best will in the world, I cannot afford to keep a bad shilling. The rich baker shall have it; he can bear the loss; but it is not right after all.' 'And so now I must burden the conscience of this old woman,' I sighed. 'Am I really so altered in my later days?' The woman offered me to the baker, but he was far too wide awake to keep me, and he threw me back into her face. She could get no bread for me, and I felt sorrowful at heart to think that I had been coined only to cause misery to other people; I who in my youth had been so proud of my sterling value! The woman took me home, looked at me kindly, and said, 'No; I will not cheat any one with it; I will bore a hole through it, so that every one may see that it is false—and yet, the thought has just struck me, it may be a lucky shilling! I will thread a cord through the hole and give it to our neighbour's little girl to wear round her neck.'

"She bored a hole through me. It is certainly not agreeable to have a hole bored through one, but one can bear a great deal when a thing is meant for one's good. A cord was passed through me; I became a kind of medal, and was hung round the neck of the little girl, who kissed me, and smiled at me, and let me rest upon her innocent breast.

"When the morning came, the mother took me in her hands, and had her own ideas about me; I felt sure of that. She took out a pair of scissors, cut the cord, laid me in vinegar till I turned green, filled up the hole, and took me to the lottery rooms. 'We will soon see whether or no it is a lucky shilling,' she said.

"How ill I felt! I thought I should have burst; I knew I was disguised and should be cast away, and that before the very face of all the coins round me, proud of their stamp and worth! But I was spared that disgrace, the collector threw me down carelessly among the other coins. Whether I won or lost anything I cannot tell; but of this I am certain, namely, that on the following morning I was found out to be of no value, and was sent forth again to deceive and cheat. It is an intolerable disgrace, especially when one has an honest intention and character as I certainly have.

"For a whole year through I was passed from hand to hand and house to house, always unwelcome, always looked on askance. No one trusted me, and I trusted no one, not even myself. It was a dreadful time. One day I was passed to a foreigner who was confiding enough to accept me as genuine, but when he tried to pass me on I heard once more the exclamation, 'Good for nothing!'

"'I took it for a good one,' said the man. He looked at me more attentively, and his whole face lighted up. 'Why, what is that?' he cried. 'It is one of our own coins; a good, honest shilling, that has

had a hole bored through it as if it were false. It is really curious. I will put it aside and take it home.'

"I felt a thrill of joy. I was called a good, honest shilling, and I was to be taken home, where every one knew me, and would be sure that I was sterling silver. I could have sent out sparks of joy if it had been my nature to do so: but I leave that to steel; I am silver.

"I was wrapped up in white paper so that I might not be given away with other coins; and when a countryman of ours came up I was brought out and highly praised. They said I was 'interesting;' it is really remarkable that one can be interesting without saying a single word.

"At last I reached home once more. All my troubles were over. My friends rallied round me, for I was current coin and sterling silver. And I have no more unpleasantness to relate, although a hole had been driven through me as if I were false; that does not signify at all, provided one is *not* false. Let us endure bravely, for all will come right in the end. That is my creed," said the shilling.

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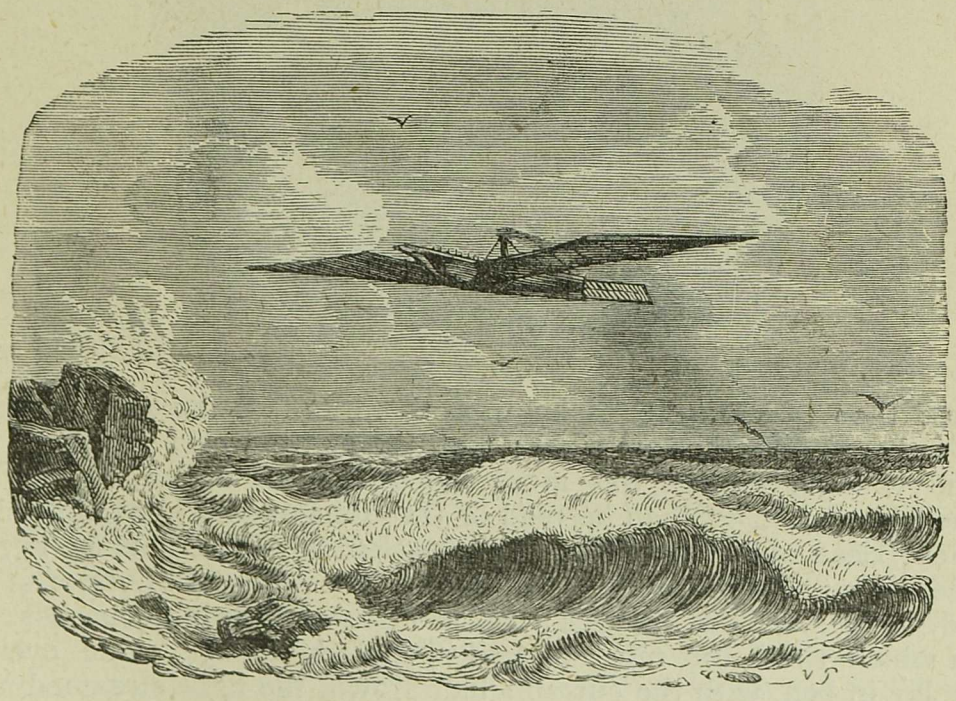
Two Brothers.



ON one of the Danish islands, where the old Kingstone, the primeval seat of justice, stands among the corn-fields and the tall trees in the beech woods, there lies a little town whose low houses are roofed with red tiles. In one of these houses there were curious things going on before the glowing

fire upon the hearth. There was mixing and distilling, boiling of liquids in curious glasses, and pulling plants and herbs to pieces. An old man stood overlooking all.

"One must do right and speak the truth," he said; "truth must be sought for in all created things."

In the poorly-furnished room there sat two boys; they were both young, but their brains were filled with lofty thoughts. Father and mother, too, spoke to them of truth and justice. "Truth," they said, "is like the face of God."

The elder boy looked playful and daring; his greatest pleasure was reading about the sun and moon and the powers of Nature. He loved it better than any fairy tale. "How beautiful it must be," he thought, "to go on voyages of discovery, or to find out how the birds

fly, and then to learn the lesson from them, to find the truth of it all! Yes, father and mother are right; truth holds the world together."

The younger brother was more thoughtful, his delight was to lose himself in a book. When he read of Jacob disguising himself in skins to cheat Esau of his birthright, he clenched his little fists in rage at the deceiver; when he read of tyrants, of the evil and injustice of the world, tears stood in his eyes; the thought of the righteousness and truth which shall and must prevail filled him wholly. One evening as he lay in bed, with the curtains half drawn, the light streamed upon him. He had taken his book to bed with him; he wanted to finish the history of Solon.

His thoughts carried him far away, it was as if the bed became a ship and bore him forward with outspread sails. Was he dreaming? or what was happening to him? He glided over rolling waters, over the great sea of time. He heard the voice of Solon, and though the

tongue was a foreign one, yet he understood the words of the Danish motto, "The land is ruled by law."

The genius of humanity stood in the lonely room, stooped over the sleeping child and kissed his brow. "Be strong in the battle of life. Let the truth within your heart go forth towards the land of truth!"

The elder brother stood at the window watching the mists as they rolled along the meadows; it was not the elfin band of dancers, as his old nurse told him, they were mists, warmer than the air, and that was why they rose. A star shot, and the boy's thoughts rose in a moment from earth to heaven.

The stars glittered; golden threads seemed to hang from them to the earth. "Fly with me!" said a voice within the boy's heart. The mighty genius of the air, swifter than the flight of birds or arrow, bore him upward where the rays bound star to star.

Our earth circled below them in thin air; one town seemed close to another. Through the spheres rang out a voice which cried, "What is near and what is far when the genius of the air uplifts the soul?"

Once more the little one stood at the window and looked out: the younger brother lay sleeping in his bed. The mother called them by their names: "Anders Sandöe" and "Hans Christian."

Denmark knows them; the world knows them: the two brothers Oersted.

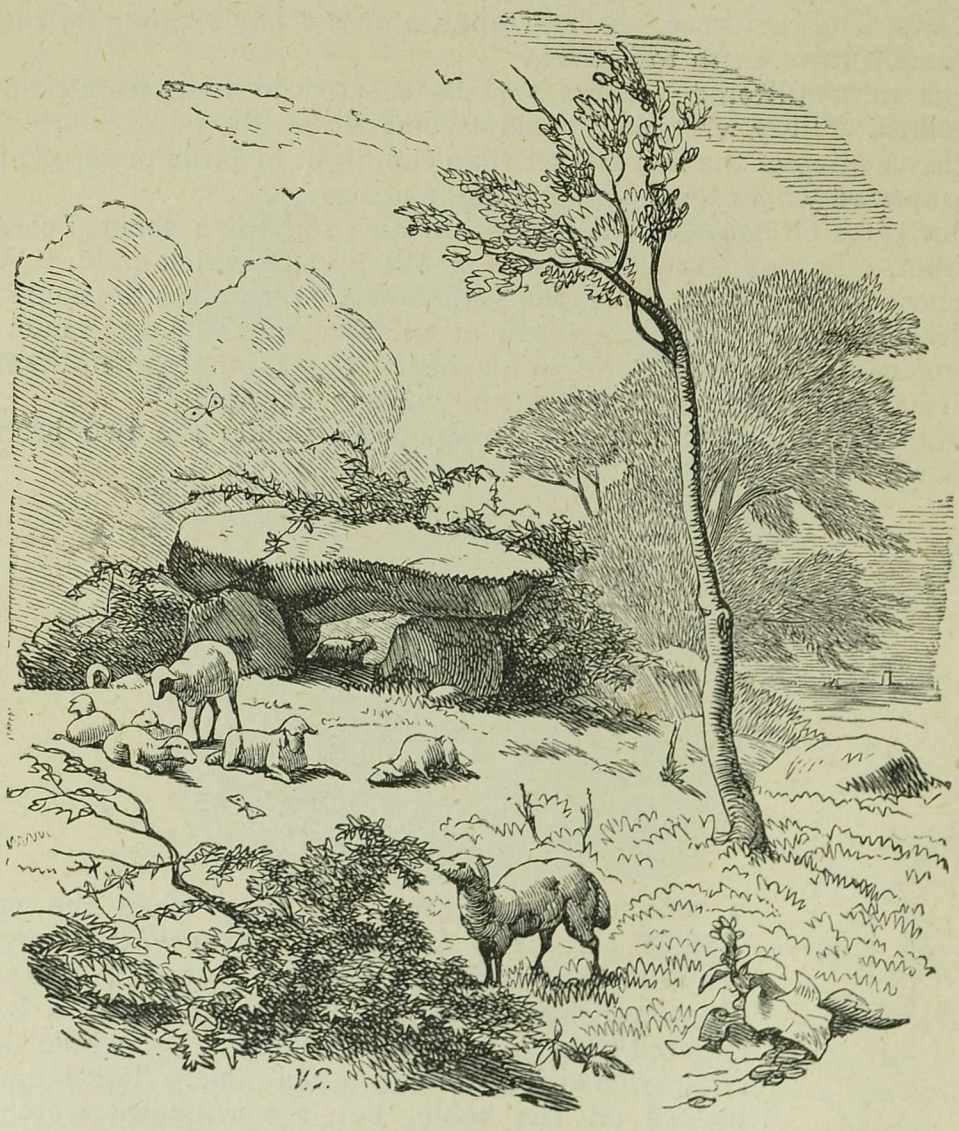
The Old Gravestone.

IT was the springtime, the time when the young lambs are merry in the field, and when every one says to his neighbour, "What beautiful, long evenings we have now!" In the parlour of a house, situated in a small provincial town, the whole family circle was sitting round the tea-table. The lamp was lighted on the table, but the windows were wide open, and through the hanging curtains and the flowering plants one saw the clear, moonlit sky. But no one noticed it; everybody was talking of a large, old stone which lay in the centre of the yard close to the kitchen door; the maids set out the dishes upon it to dry them in the sun, the children played over it. It was an old gravestone.

"Yes," said the master of the house, "I think the stone comes from the old convent burying-ground. I remember everything was pulled down and sold; the chancel of the church, the gravestones, and

the epitaphs. My father received the stones; they were cut up for paving stones, but this one was placed as it is in our own courtyard."

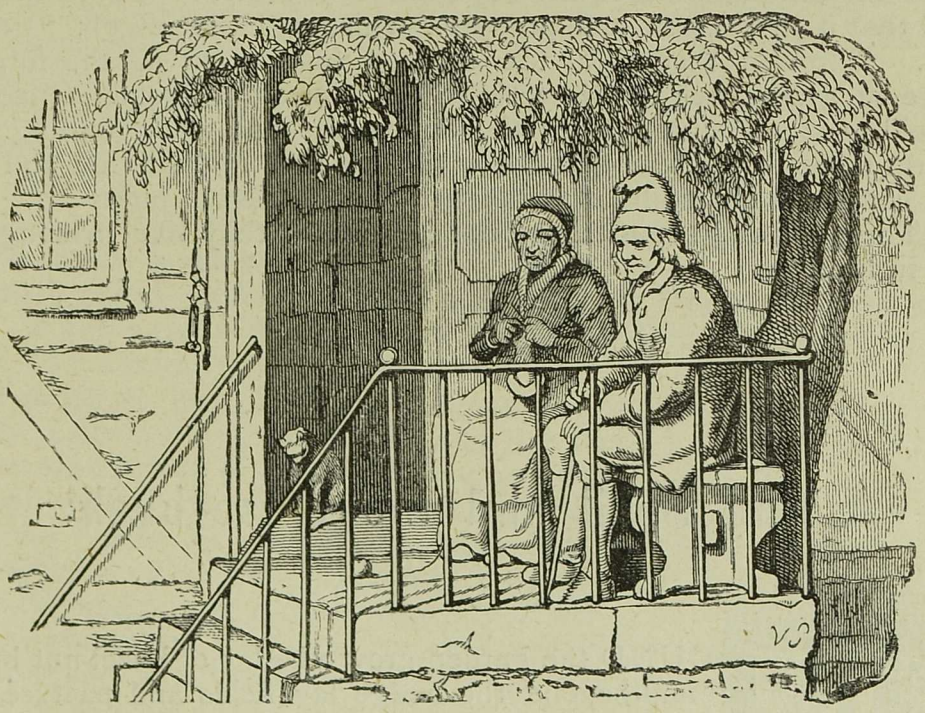
"Any one can tell that it is a gravestone," said the eldest child. "There is an hour-glass and a piece of an angel; but the inscription is almost worn away. The name *Preben* and a capital *S* still remain; and lower down you read *Martha*, and that is all. Even that you can only read when it has been raining, or when any one has washed the stone."



"Preben!" cried an old man—so old, that he might have been the grandfather of any one else in the room. "Preben! why, it must be the gravestone of Preben Schwane and his wife! They were the very last who were buried in the old churchyard. I remember the dear old couple from the time when I was quite a child. Every one knew them and loved them; people said that they could have filled a cask with gold; but they lived very simply, and dressed in the plainest stuffs. They were very particular about their linen though, and would have everything bright and clean. They were a good old couple, Preben

and Martha. When they sat together under the spreading linden-tree, at the top of the garden steps, they would give a friendly greeting to every passer-by.

"They were very good to the poor; there was sense and true religion also in their charity. The old woman died first: I remember the day perfectly, I was a little lad, and my father had taken me to old Preben's house; we were there just as Martha sank to rest; the corpse was lying in the very room where we were. The old man wept bitterly: he told us how many years they had lived together, how he learned to love her first, and how lonely he should now be without her. I was but a lad, but I remember listening to the others, and wondering to see the colour come into old Preben's face as he spoke of his courtship, and said what a pretty lass his Martha was; and told us all the little harmless, clever stratagems he used to practise that he might meet



her. His eyes brightened as he mentioned his wedding-day—and all the while Martha lay dead, an old, old woman, in the very room! and he, an old man, spoke of hope and youth. Yes; that is always the way. I was young then, but now I am old, as old as Preben Schwane. Time passes, and everything changes. I remember the day she was buried: Preben followed close behind the coffin. Several years before this, the old people had ordered their gravestone, with a blank space to be left for the date of their death. The stone was laid above the grave in the convent churchyard, and in another year it was taken up and Preben was laid by his wife's side. They did not leave so much money as people expected; and what there was went to some distant relations of whom no one had ever heard. The old house, with its wooden steps and spreading linden-tree, was pulled down by order of the corporation; it was too old and decayed to be left standing. Afterwards, when the convent church met with the same fate, the gravestone was offered to

any one who would buy it; and now, you say, it lies in the courtyard and serves as a play-ground for the children. A paved street runs straight over the old folk's resting-place. No one thinks about them now." The old man shook his head sadly. "Forgotten!" he cried. "Everything must be forgotten!"

They began to speak of other things; but the youngest child, a clever, thoughtful boy, slipped in between the window-curtains and looked out at the old gravestone. It shone silver-white in the moonlight; formerly the child had thought of it only as an old stone, but now it looked to him like the open page of a pictured chronicle.

All that he had heard of Preben and Martha Schwane seemed written on the stone; he looked at the clear sky as at the face of God.

"Forgotten! Everything must be forgotten!" re-echoed through the room.

An unseen angel kissed the boy's innocent brow. "Guard the corn-seed that it may ripen and prosper," whispered the angel; "guard it well. Through thee shall the defaced inscription of the forgotten grave be given back to the world in clear letters of gold. Once more the old people shall sit under the linden-tree and walk, smiling, arm-in-arm through the streets, with a friendly greeting for rich and poor. The corn-seed of this hour shall ripen to a harvest of poesy.

"The good and beautiful are not forgotten; they live in song, they live in love."

The Snail and the Rose-bush.

ROUND the garden grew a hedge of hazel-nut bushes, and beyond the hedge lay fields and pasture lands where cows and sheep lay in the sunshine. A rose-bush stood in the centre of the garden, and under the rose-bush lay a snail, silent and self-contained.

"Wait till my day comes," it thought; "I shall do something better than putting out roses and nuts, or giving milk, like bushes, or cows, or sheep."

"I expect a great deal from you," said the rose-tree. "May I ask when it will come to light?"

"I take time," said the snail. "You are so impatient. Suspense excites interest and expectation."

The next year the snail was lying in the same place under the rose-tree, which was covered with fresh buds and blossoms. The snail crept half-way out of its shell; put out its feelers and drew them in again.

"Everything looks just as it did last year. No progress anywhere; the rose-tree puts out roses again; it cannot get beyond that."

Summer and autumn passed; the rose-bush bore roses till the snow fell and the weather grew rough and stormy; then it bent towards the earth, and the snail crept back into its shell.

A new year began; the roses came out again, and so did the snail.

"You are very old," said the snail. "You should begin to think about retiring: you have shown the world all that you can do; whether it was of much account is an open question which I have had no time to think out. But one thing is clear, you have done nothing at all for your inner development, or you would have brought forth something different. Can you give account of all this? You are fast approaching your end. Do you understand what I say?"

"You frighten me," said the rose-tree. "I have never given any thought to the subject."

"No; you have certainly not troubled yourself with much thought. Have you ever considered why you blossomed? or why in this way instead of any other?"

"Never," said the rose-bush. "I blossom with thankful joy, because I cannot help it."

"You have an easy life of it," said the snail.

"Indeed I have. All is done for me; but even more is done for you. You are one of those deep-thinking, highly-gifted natures, on which the world looks with wonder."

"That does not strike me," said the snail. "The world is nothing to me. What have I to do with the world? I have enough to do with my own affairs."

"But must we not give back to the world the best that is in us? Certainly, I have only given roses; but it was all I had to give. But you—you who are so highly gifted—what will you give?"

"What shall I give? I spit at the world! I defy it—it does not concern me. Put out roses if you will; it is no affair of mine. Let the hazel-bushes give their nuts, and the cows their milk; they have their public, and I have mine—within myself."

And the snail went back into her shell and shut herself up.

"That is very sad," said the rose-bush. "With the best will in the world I cannot shut myself up; I must stand here and put out roses. They are falling now; the wind carries them away. But I saw a rose lying in the mistress's hymn-book, and one resting on a maiden's breast, and one kissed by a loving, merry child. That filled my heart with joy; it was a blessing to me; and it will remain as my memory and my life."

And the rose-bush bloomed on in innocence, while the snail lay idle in her shell. The world did not concern it.

Years passed away.

The snail had crumbled into dust; the rose-bush had crumbled into dust—even the rose in the hymn-book had vanished from the earth; but in the garden there blossomed other roses, fresh and beautiful as ever, and beneath them crawled other snails, which spat at and defied the world. It was nothing to them.

Shall we begin to read the tale all over again from the very beginning? There will not be any difference.

The Snow Man.

"NOW amazingly cold it is! My whole body chips and cracks," said the snow man. "The wind is enough to blow one's life out. And how that red thing up there stares!" He meant the sun, which was just about to set. "It shall not make me wink. I shall hold fast to my pieces."

By his "pieces," he meant two three-cornered pieces of slate which were meant for his eyes; his mouth was made out of an old broken rake, so he had plenty of teeth.

He was born amid the joyous shouts of the boys, the ringing of sleigh-bells, and cracking of whips.

The sun set; the moon rose full and clear in the thin, blue air.

"There it comes on the other side," said the snow man; "there is the sun again. I have broken it of staring, that is one good thing. It can hang and shine for me to see myself. I wish I knew how to walk about; I should very much like to move on a little. If I could, I would go and slide among the boys yonder; but I cannot understand how they manage it."

"Bow-wow!" barked the old yard-dog; he could not bark very loud, for he had caught a dreadful cold when he was a house-dog and slept by the stove, and it made him extremely hoarse. "Bow-wow! The sun will soon teach you how to move on. I saw that last winter when your predecessor was here, and the winter before that when *his* predecessor was here. They have all moved on."

"I don't understand you, my good fellow," said the snow man. "Is that thing up there going to make me move on? why, it ran away itself when I looked it firmly in the face; and now it creeps up again on the other side."

"You know nothing," said the yard-dog; "how can you, when you are only just built up? That is the moon, and the one which went away is the sun; it will be here again to-morrow, and then it will soon teach you how to run about. The weather is going to change—I know that by the pain in my left hind leg—the weather is going to change."

"I can't understand him," said the snow man; "but I have an instinct that he is saying something disagreeable. The thing that shone so, the sun, as he calls it, is not my friend. I feel sure of that."

"Bow-wow!" said the yard-dog. He walked three times round himself and lay down to sleep in his kennel.

The weather really did change. Towards morning a damp mist

THE SNOWMAN.

lay on the earth; the icy wind blew, the frost nipped one to the bone; but when the sun rose who can describe the splendour? Tree and shrub were covered with rime frost, and looked like silver coral, the branches all bestrewn with sparkling blossoms. All the delicate tracery hidden by the thick leaves in summer now stood out sharp and clear, a perfect lace-work woven in silver gossamer. The birches waved in the wind; and when the sun shone out it threw a glory over the whole scene, growing brighter and brighter till earth and trees seemed strewn with diamond dust or sprinkled with myriad tiny flames clearer than the snow itself.

"How wonderfully beautiful!" exclaimed a young girl; "the summer itself can show us nothing lovelier than this."

She was standing by the snow man and looking out upon the feathery trees.

"Yes," said the young man at her side; "and in summer one doesn't get such a fellow as this to look at. He is a jolly snow man."

The girl laughed. She nodded at the snow man; and then the young man seized her round the waist and they danced across the dry, powdery snow.

"Who are those two?" said the snow man to the yard-dog. "You have been longer in the yard than I: do you know them?"

"I should think I do," said the yard-dog. "She has often stroked me, and he has given me bits of meat. I don't bite either of them."

"But what are they?" asked the snow man.

"Lovers," said the yard-dog. "They will go into one kennel and eat of one bone. Bow-wow!"

"Are they the same sort of creatures that we are, you and I?" asked the snow man.

"They belong to our masters," said the dog. "Really, it is astonishing how ignorant people are when they are only a day old! I see that by yourself. I have both age and experience; I know all the people in the house, for I have not always been shut out in the cold. Bow-wow!"

"The cold is delightful," said the snow man. "Tell me some more; but don't rattle your chain, for it makes me crack."

"Bow-wow!" said the yard-dog. "I was a pretty little puppy; I lived on a satin cushion in an arm-chair at the house up yonder. My mistress nursed me, stroked me, and called me her dear, sweet Ami. Ami was my name. But I grew too big, and they gave me to the housekeeper, and I came down into the kitchen. You can see into the room from where you stand. It was not so grand as the up-stair rooms, but it was much more comfortable. I had as good food, nay, even better than I had before; and there were no children to tease me. Above all, I could creep under the stove. It was the happiest time of my life. I dream of the stove now—bow-wow!"

"Is the stove so beautiful then?" asked the snow man. "Is it anything like me?"

"It is just the opposite of you. It has a long neck, and it is as black as jet. It eats coal and wood till the fire flashes from its mouth. You are obliged to keep on one side of it; indeed, it is pleasantest of all to creep right underneath it. You can see it from where you stand."

The snow man looked in at the window and saw before it a tall, polished object, black as jet, with fire glowing within. A sudden feeling came over it, which it could not account for or explain. Other people, who are not snow men, know the feeling only too well.

"How could you leave her?" exclaimed the snow man. It felt certain that the object belonged to the female sex. "How could you leave such a place?"

"I was obliged to," said the yard-dog; "they turned me out of doors and tied me up. I had bitten the youngest son in the leg. He would always take away my bones from me; and bone for bone was my idea. However they resented it deeply, and from that day to this I have been tied up. Listen how hoarse I am—bow-wow! I have quite lost my proper voice—bow-wow!"

But the snow man was paying no attention. He stood gazing into the kitchen at the stove. There it stood on its four brass feet; it was exactly the same height as the snow man.

"How strange I feel!" thought the snow man. "Shall I never get in there? I must go in. It is an innocent wish, and surely our innocent wishes will be granted! I must go in and lean against her, even if I have to break the window."

"You will never get in there," said the yard-dog; "and if you were to come near the stove there would be an end of you."

"I believe I am breaking up," sighed the snow man.

The whole day through the snow man stood gazing in at the stove; the room looked more inviting than ever in the dusk: a mild radiance shone from the stove; not like the sun, nor like the moon, but with a lustre such as only a stove can give when it is cooking something nice to eat. Whenever the door opened the flame leaped out of its mouth—that was an old habit. The glow fell across the white face of the snow man, and cast a ruddy tint upon its heart."

"I cannot bear it," said the snow man. "How beautiful she is!"

The night was long, but the snow man was not lonely. It stood sunk in its own deep thoughts, and froze till it cracked again.

In the morning the kitchen windows were frosted with the loveliest flowers and crystals. The snow man owned their beauty, but then they hid the stove. The panes would not thaw. Everything was freezing as hard as it could. It was such a frost as ought to have rejoiced a snow man's heart. But the snow man could not rejoice. What was the frost to him? He was suffering from stove-sickness.

"That is a dangerous disease for a snow man," said the yard-dog. "I have suffered from it myself, but I have got over it—bow-wow! We shall have a change in the weather."

The frost broke up. It began to thaw.

The thaw increased; the snow man diminished. It did not complain, but that is the worst possible sign.

One morning it broke up altogether. But something that looked like a broom-handle was still left standing.

"That explains all," said the yard-dog. "Now I see why it suffered from stove-sickness. That is the raker which they use to clean out the stove. The snow man had the stove-raker in its body. Well, it is all over now—bow-wow!"

And it was soon all over with the winter also. "Bow-wow!" barked the yard-dog hoarsely.

But within the house the children sang—

"The leaves are green! come out to play,
The willow wears her gloves to-day;
Cuckoo and lark together sing,
For February brings the spring.
Cuckoo! Tra-la! so runs their strain;
Oh, golden sun, shine out again!"

And not one of them thinks of the snow man.

—o—

Good for Nothing.

THE mayor stood at his open window; a breastpin glittered in his shirt-front, his ruffles were newly starched, and he had just finished shaving. He had, we must confess, cut himself a little, but then he had stuck a piece of newspaper over the place.

"Hallo, youngster!" he cried to a lad who was walking by in the street below. It was the son of the poor washerwoman; the boy stopped short and pulled off his cap—the brim was broken in

the middle; it seemed made on purpose to be pulled off and put in one's pocket. In his clumsy, wooden shoes, and poor, but well-darned clothes, the boy stood there as humbly as if he were in the presence of a king.

"Good boy," said the mayor; "you know your manners. I suppose your mother is washing down in the river, and you are carrying her what you have got hidden in that bottle in your pocket? What a thing it is to be sure! How much have you got?"

"A pint," said the boy, in a timid, faltering voice.

"And she had as much this morning, I suppose?"

"No, it was yesterday," said the boy.

"Two pints make a quart! That kind of people is really shocking! Tell your mother she is a good-for-nothing woman; she ought to be ashamed. Mind you don't grow up a drunkard—but you will though. Poor boy! There, go along."

The boy went on, still holding his cap in his hand. The wind played with his yellow hair as it rose in thick waves from his brow. He turned round the street-corner into the narrow lane that led to the water's edge, where his mother stood at her washing bench beating out the clothes with the heavy wooden bar.

The current was strong, for the sluices by the mill were open; the heavy sheets floated down the stream and nearly tore away the bench. The woman held it firm with all her strength.

"I should soon have been carried away," she said. "I am glad you are come, for my strength is almost gone. The water is so cold, and I have been standing here for six hours. Have you brought me anything?"

The boy took the bottle out of his pocket; she held it to her lips and drank a draught.

"That has done me good," she cried. "How it warms one! It is as good as hot meat, and not so dear. Drink, my lad, you are pale to-day, and you shiver in your thin clothes. The autumn is coming on and the water grows very cold. I hope I am not going to be ill. Give me another draught, and take a little yourself; only a drop though, for I don't want you to get used to it."

She crossed the bridge on which the boy was standing and stepped on to the land; the water poured down from the straw matting tied round her waist, and from her petticoat.

"I work till I wear my fingers to the bone," she said; "but I do not grumble. It is for your sake; if I can only bring you up respectably, I do not mind."

As she spoke they were joined by an old woman, a poor creature lame of one leg, and wearing a false lock of hair to hide that she had lost one eye. She was an old friend of the washerwoman's, and she was known as "Martha of the lock."

"Poor creature!" she cried, "you work yourself to death in that cold water. You may well want something to warm your limbs, and yet spiteful tongues find something bad to say about the little drop you drink." And with that, old Martha repeated all that the mayor had said, for she had heard it every word. The old woman was filled with indignation that the mayor should have said to a child that his mother

was good-for-nothing, and especially as on that very day there was to be a large dinner-party at the mayor's house, with plenty of rare, strong wines. Many of the guests would drink more than was good for them; but that is a different thing. Nobody would call them good-for-nothing.

"So the mayor has been talking to you," said the washerwoman, with trembling lips—"telling you that your mother is a good-for-nothing woman! Perhaps he is right; but he should not have said so to my child. It is not the first thing I have had to suffer from that house!"

"Yes," said old Martha, "you were in service there when the mayor's father and mother were living. It is a long while ago; many a bushel of salt has been eaten since then, and no doubt the people are thirsty. The mayor gives a great dinner-party to-day: there will be wine by the bottleful. The guests were to have been put off, but there was no time. The mayor has heard to-day that his youngest brother in Copenhagen is dead. The cook told me all about it."

"Dead!" cried the washerwoman, turning pale as death.

"Come, come," said Martha, "don't take it to heart in that way."

"Is he dead?" said the woman. Bitter tears rolled down her cheeks. "He was a good, kind heart," she said. "God does not make many like him. Oh, what is this? Everything turns round before my eyes. Can it be that I have drunk more than I can bear? I feel faint and giddy."

She leaned against the wooden paling. "You look white," said Martha. "Stand quiet, and it will pass away." But it did not pass away. "Let me take you home," said Martha; "I fear you are really ill this time."

"But the washing?"

"I will see to the washing. Come, give me your arm. The lad will watch by the clothes till I come back and finish them; there is not much to do."

The washerwoman felt her knees tremble under her. "I have stood too long in the cold water," she said; "and I have eaten no food to-day. I feel trembling with fever; how I shall get home I cannot think. And that poor child——" She began to cry. The boy cried, too, as he sat alone on the river side by the half-finished clothes.

The two women walked slowly down the street; the washerwoman staggered dizzily at every step. In front of the mayor's house she lost consciousness and fell heavily to the ground. A crowd of people ran together; Martha went into the house for help; the mayor and his guests came to the window and looked out.

"It is the washerwoman," said the mayor. "She has been taking a drop too much. She is a good-for-nothing woman. It is a sad thing for that nice lad of hers. I like that boy. But the mother is good-for-nothing."

The washerwoman came to herself and was taken home and put to bed. Martha warmed some beer, with butter and sugar—it was the only medicine she knew; and then she went back to the river. She washed the things badly enough, but she meant well, and brought the clothes safe home in a basket.

Towards evening she sat in the washerwoman's house; the mayor's

They carried her to the pauper burial-ground. Martha planted a little rose-tree on the grave; the child stood by the grave crying bitterly.

"My dear, dear mother!" he cried. "Is it true, what they all say? Was she good-for-nothing?"

"Nay!" said the old servant, pointing to the sky. "She was a good and noble woman. I have thought well of her for years; but since last night I have known better what she was. And God knows it too, and one day He will make it clear, even though the whole world call her good-for-nothing."

What the Old Man does is always Right.

I WILL tell you a story which was told to me when I was a little boy. Every time I heard it I thought it more beautiful than before, for some stories are like some people, the older they grow the nicer they are.

Of course you have often been in the country? You must have seen there a very old farm-house, with a thatched roof. Mosses and grass grow on the thatch, a stork's nest is built above the eaves; there could not be such a house without its stork's nest. The walls are sloping, all the windows are low, and only one of them is made to open. The baking oven bulges out of the wall like a huge

wen, elder-trees hang over the palings, and by the gate is a small pond with two or three ducks upon it. Close to the house door is the dog's kennel; he is a good watch-dog, and barks at every passer-by.

It was in just such a farm-house in the country that there lived an old peasant and his wife. They had not many things to call their own, and yet they had one which they could do without. That was their horse, which used to crop the grass along the road-side. The old peasant often rode to town upon the horse, and oftener still lent it to his neighbours, who found some means of repaying the loan by doing the old couple many a little act of kindness. But still the man and his wife thought it would be best to try and sell the horse, or at any rate to exchange it for something which would be of more use to them. The question was, for what?

"You will know that best, old man," said the wife. "It is the fair this very day. Suppose you ride to town and sell the horse, or exchange it for something or other. Whatever you do will be right. Come, go to the fair."

She tied his neckhandkerchief for him; she could do that better than he could; she tied it in two bows, and it looked very nice. Then she smoothed his hat with the palm of her hand, gave him a hearty kiss, and started him off on the horse which he was to sell or exchange for something better. Oh, the old man knew very well what he was about!

The sun stood high in the cloudless sky; crowds of people, riding, driving, or walking, wended their way along the dusty road to the fair. There was no shelter anywhere from the burning sun.

Among the rest was a man driving his cow to the market; it was as nice a cow as one would wish to see. "She would give a rare quantity of milk," thought the old peasant. "I could not do better than change the horse for her."

"I say, you with the cow there!" he cried. "I'll tell you what, a horse costs a vast deal more than a cow, I know; but I don't mind that; a cow will be more useful to me just now, and I'll change with you, if you like."

"Yes, I do like," said the other; and the exchange was made.

And now the old peasant might as well have turned back and gone home again, for he had done all he had to do; but as he had started to go to the fair, he thought he would not go back without having seen anything of it, so he went on, driving his cow before him.

In a little time he came up to a man with a sheep; it was a very good sheep, fat, and with a fine fleece.

"I should dearly like that sheep," thought the old peasant. "It could eat the grass on the road-side, and in the winter we could have it in the house. It would be more convenient, in many ways, to have a sheep than a cow. Shall we exchange?" he said to the man.

"With all my heart," said the man. The exchange was made, and our peasant and his sheep went on towards the fair.

Before long he met a man who was coming out of a field and carrying a goose under his arm.

"That's a nice goose you have there," said the old man, "plump and fat, and well feathered. It would look nice, tied to the palings with a string, by the side of our pond. That would be the thing for

my old woman; she could pick up any kind of rubbish for its feed. How many times has she wished for a goose! Now there is a chance, and, upon my word, she *shall* have one. Shall we exchange? I'll give you my sheep for your goose, and be much obliged into the bargain."

The man was willing enough, and the old peasant got the goose.

By this time he had nearly reached the town; the crowd increased to such a degree that men and animals jostled against each other along the road, on the footpaths, and even in the potato-field beyond the hedge. In the field was the farmer's hen tied by the leg with a string, lest she should be frightened at the crowd and try to fly away. The hen had short tail feathers; she blinked her round eyes and looked very knowing. "Cluck, cluck!" said the hen. What she meant by it, I cannot say, but the moment our old peasant caught sight of her he cried, "That's the very finest hen I ever saw in my life! The parson's brood hen is nothing to her. Upon my word, I should like to have that hen. A hen can find itself pretty nearly; a grain here and a grain there. Shall we exchange?" he said to the farmer. And they exchanged. The farmer had the goose and the old man took the hen.

By this time he had done a great deal of business on his journey, and he felt rather tired. A drop of beer and bit of bread and cheese would do him good, he thought, so he turned into the inn. Just as he was going in, the servant-man came out of the door, so they met in the porch. The servant was carrying a heavy sack.

"What have you got in your sack?" said the old man.

"Apples," said the man; "windfalls for the pigs, a whole sackful."

"For the pigs? What a shocking waste! I wish my old woman could see them. We had but one apple on our tree last year, we kept it on the oak-press to look at till it went mouldy. It looks like property, my old woman used to say. What would she say to this, a whole sackful? I do wish she could see them!"

"What will you give for them, sack and all?" asked the man.

"I'll change my hen for them," said the old peasant; and so he did. He carried the apples into the parlour of the inn, and set up the sack carefully against the stove while he went into the bar. But there was a fire in the stove; he never thought of that. The room was filled with guests, horse dealers, cow drivers, and farmers. Among them were two Englishmen, so rich that their pockets were almost bursting with gold pieces. They were laying wagers, and—but you shall hear.

"*H-i-s-s-s-s! h-i-s-s-s-s-s!*" Whatever was the matter with the stove? The apples were beginning to roast! "What is that?" cried the guests.

"Why, I'll just tell you," said the old peasant; and out came the story from beginning to end—all the exchanges, beginning with the cow and ending with the sack of apples.

"My word! won't you be taken to task when you get home?" said one of the Englishmen. "Won't your old woman give it you!"

"Give me what?" said the old man. "I'll tell you what she'll give me, she'll give me a kiss, and she'll say, 'What my old man does is always right.'"

"What will you bet?" said the Englishman. "I'll lay you a hundred pounds in gold to a hundred pounds weight of apples."

"I've only got a bushel," said the peasant; "a bushel of gold will be enough, and I'll put myself and the old woman into the bargain, that will be good measure, I think."

"Done, and done again." The wager was laid.

The innkeeper brought out his trap; the peasant and the two Englishmen got in, and off they went to the old farm-house.

"Well, old woman!"

"Well, old man!"

"I've made the exchange."

"Trust you for knowing what you are about," said the old woman, giving him a kiss, and noticing neither the two strangers nor the sack of apples.

"I have got a cow instead of the horse."

"Heaven be praised! Why, we shall have milk and butter and cheese for our own table. That is a good exchange."

"Yes; but I changed the cow for a sheep."

"Better and better. You think of everything. We have just enough grass for a sheep, and then there is the milk and the wool. I can have plenty of warm stockings now. A cow is of no use for stockings; indeed they lose their hairs. You think of everything."

"Yes; but I changed the sheep for a goose."

"Then we shall really taste roast goose before the year is out. You must have done that on purpose to please me! We will let her run about a little, with a string round her leg, till she is fatter still."

"Yes; but I changed the goose for a fowl."

"And a capital exchange too! She will lay us some eggs, and we shall have chickens, and in a little while there will be quite a poultry-yard. How I have wished for a poultry-yard!"

"Yes; but I changed the hen for a sack of apples—windfalls."

"Apples! Then I must really give you a kiss. Why, what do you think? As soon as you were gone this morning I began to think whatever I could get you for your supper to-night. At last I thought of ham and pancakes; I had the eggs, and I had the ham, but I had no sweet herbs to put in. So I went across to the schoolmaster's, for I know they have plenty. But his wife is a mean woman, though she talks so pleasantly. I asked her to lend me a few sweet herbs."

"'Lend you some herbs?' she said; 'oh, I have nothing to lend! We have nothing in our garden. I could not even lend you a green apple, my dear woman.' And now I can lend her ten, or indeed a whole sackful! It makes me laugh to think of it." And she gave her husband a hearty kiss.

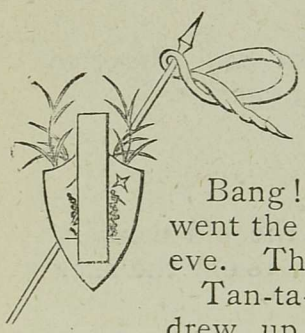
"Well done!" cried the Englishmen, with one voice. "Always from bad to worse, and merry whatever happens! It is worth the money any day to come and see it."

And they paid down a bushel of gold coins to the old man, who was kissed instead of scolded.

Yes; it always answers best for the wife to stand by her husband, and uphold all that he does as the wisest and the best.

There, that is the story. I heard it when I was a child; and now you have heard it too, and know that "What the Old Man does is always Right."

Twelve by the Mail.



IT was a bitter cold night; the sky was full of stars; not a breath of air was stirring.

Bang! an old pot was thrown against the door; piff! paff! went the guns to greet the New Year. It was New-Year's eve. The church clock struck twelve.

Tan-ta-ra! tra-ra! up came the mail. The great coach drew up before the city gates: every place was taken, twelve passengers had arrived by the mail.

"A happy New Year!" cried the people in the house where they were sitting out the old year: the glasses were filled, and on the stroke of twelve a bumper was drank in honour of the New Year.

"A happy New Year!" was the cry; "a pretty wife, plenty of money, and no sorrow or care!"

These were the wishes that were passing from mouth to mouth, amid the clinking of glasses, while the mail-coach stopped before the city gate.

And who were the travellers by the mail? Each of them carried his passport and his travelling bag; and they all brought presents for me and you and everybody in the city. Who were they? what did they want? and what had they brought?

"Good morning," they said to the sentry at the gate.

"Good morning," answered the sentry, for the clock had struck twelve.

"Your name and condition?" asked the sentry of the first who got down from the coach.

"Look for yourself in the passport," said the man. "I am myself." He looked a splendid fellow in his bearskin and fur boots. "I am the man on whom many a one has fixed his hopes," he said. "If you will call on me to-morrow, I will give you a New-Year's present. I scatter coppers and sixpences among the people, and I give plenty of balls. One-and-thirty balls I give; I have no time for more. My ships are frozen in the harbours, but my counting-houses are warm and comfortable. I am a merchant, and my name is January, and I bring my accounts with me."

The second passenger alighted from the coach; a merry, harum-scarum kind of a fellow. He was manager of all the theatres, masked balls, and every imaginable amusement. All his luggage consisted of a large cask.

"We will see the bottom of the cask before carnival time," he cried. "I mean to amuse you all and myself as well; a short life and a merry one! I have not long to live, even when they put me in an extra day; but who cares? Hurrah!"

"You must not shout so," said the sentry.

"Not shout?" cried the traveller; "do you know who I am? I am Prince Carnival, and I am travelling under the name of February."

THE EVENING PARTY.

The third passenger alighted; he looked spare and thin from fasting, he held his head high, for he was a connection of the forty knights, and he was also a weather prophet. But that is not a lucrative profession, and so he thought highly of fasting. In his button-hole he wore a bunch of violets, but they were very small.

"March, March," the fourth passenger called out to him, giving him a slap on the shoulder, "quick into the guard-house yonder; they are drinking hot punch: I can smell it from where I stand. Come, march, March!" But it was not true about the punch, April was trying to make an April fool of his fellow traveller. That was the way he always began his career in life. He looked very flourishing; was by no means overworked, but took plenty of holidays. "If the world were only a little more settled!" he cried; "but I have to be gay or dismal, according to circumstances: rain to-day and sun to-morrow, putting on warm clothes and taking them off again. I am a kind of house agent and funeral manager, I can laugh or cry according to circumstances. I have my summer wardrobe in my portmanteau, but it would be very foolish to put it on. On Sundays I walk about in shoes and silk stockings, and carry a muff."

A lady followed him out of the carriage. Miss May was her name. She wore goloshes with her summer toilet—a pale green dress, and a wreath of anemones in her hair. Her handkerchief was scented so strongly with wild thyme that the sentry sneezed loudly. "Health and blessings attend you!" was her greeting. How pretty she was! And she was a singer also; not an opera singer or a concert singer—no, she sang out in the forest, with the birds in the green wood, for her own amusement.

"Now the young mistress is coming," said the others; and out stepped a young lady, delicate, proud, and beautiful. All the members of her household who served my Lady June were rather given to take things easily, and get up late in the morning. She had her own private carriage, but she travelled with the others in the mail-coach to show that she was not high-minded.

Her brother July was with her, a stalwart lad in summer costume, and wearing a broad-brimmed hat. He did not carry much luggage with him, because he found it inconvenient in the great heat: he had a pair of swimming trousers, but that is not much.

Their mother, Mistress August, followed—the great wholesale dealer in fruit and vegetables, proprietress of fish ponds, and gentlewoman farmer. She was stout, and looked overheated in her large crinoline. "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread" was her favourite text; she was indeed a notable housewife, seeing to everything herself, and carrying out beer to the field labourers. "Work before play," she said; "after the harvest, the dance and merrymaking."

After her, came a man carrying a colour-box in his hand, for the whole of his luggage. It was the great painter September; the splendid colourist on his way to the forest, where the leaves would change under his artist-hand to scarlet, yellow, and golden brown. He whistled like a young blackbird, and had an eye for everything beautiful The garland of hops round his beer-jug was twisted by his nimble fingers; he was a quick worker.

The rich landed proprietor, Squire October, followed him; his head was filled with plans for the improvement of agriculture and the delights of the chase. He never travelled without his dogs and guns, and he had a good deal of luggage besides, a bagful of nuts and an English plough. He had a great deal to say on the subject of farming, but the constant coughing of his neighour prevented his being heard.

It was November who coughed so dreadfully; he was suffering from a terrible cold in the head, and yet he said that he should be obliged to go out and see the servant-maids in their winter quarters. He should lose his cold, he said, as soon as he could set to work at his sawing and wood cutting; that had been his favourite employment as far back as he could remember. In the evening he amused himself with making skates, saying that he knew there would soon be a great demand for them.

The last passenger to leave the coach was the old mother December; a tiny, white-haired old lady, with clear, bright eyes. She carried under her arm a flower-pot, where a little fir tree was growing. "I must watch and tend my little tree," she said, "so that it may grow tall and beautiful by Christmas Eve, when I want it to reach the ceiling, and shine bright with hundreds of lighted tapers, gilt apples, and coloured pictures. My foot-warmer warms one like a fire; I take my book of fairy tales out of my pocket and read aloud till all the children in the room are still. Then the figures on the tree become alive, the little waxen angel on the top spreads its golden wings and flies down to kiss the children. It kisses all; even the poor children in the street who are singing carols about the Star of Bethlehem."

"Right!" said the sentry. "The coach can pass through. The twelve passengers are all here."

"Send them in here to me before they go," said the inspector; "I have made out their passports for one month each, and when that is over I shall write my report. Mr. January, have the goodness to step up here."

And Mr. January stepped up there.

When a year has passed away I can tell you what the inspector's report was, and what the twelve passengers brought for me, and you, and all of us. As yet I do not know, and they do not know themselves —for we live in strange times now-a-days.

The Thorny Path of Honour.

THERE is an old fairy tale about the thorny path of honour —about a hunter who attained at length to honour and dignity, but not until he had passed through perilous struggles and conquered many hindrances. Who has not thought, when he read the legend, of his own thorny path of honour and the hindrances which beset it? The fairy tale lies

very near the boundaries of our real life; but the tale has its happy ending here on earth, while in our life-story the thorny path leads on into eternity.

The history of the world is like a magic-lantern, where we see on the dark background of the present the bright pictures of the benefactors of our race, the martyrs of genius who trod the thorny path of honour.

They came from every age and every clime; each picture lasting only for a moment, but bringing with it a whole lifetime of struggle and victory. Let us look at a few of the glorious band, the band which shall never die out while the earth remains.

Before us rises a crowded amphitheatre. The mockery and satire of an Aristophanes is poured out upon the crowd; on the stage, Socrates, the greatest man of Athens, the people's shield and defender against the thirty tyrants, is held up to public ridicule. He who saved Alcibiades and Xenophon in the tumult of the battle, and whose intellect soared beyond the gods of antiquity! He is present himself, and rises from among the spectators, that the laughing Athenians may see the likeness between himself and the caricature upon the stage. He stands above them all, sublime and alone.

Let the rank, poisonous hemlock, and not the fruitful olive, spread its shadow over the Athenian town. Seven towns disputed among themselves the honour of being Homer's birthplace; but the honour was not acknowledged till after his death. Let us look on him in his lifetime. He goes on foot from town to town, reciting his verses to earn his daily bread; care for the morrow has turned his hair white. He, the great seer, is blind, and feels painfully after his path; thorns tear the mantle of the poet-king. His songs still live, and lend to the gods and heroes of old time the only glory they possess.

One picture after another rises from the East and from the West, parted far asunder by space and time; but all of them showing a part of the thorny path of honour where the briers and thistles put out no flowers until they are wanted to adorn a grave.

Beneath the palm trees passes a file of camels heavily laden with indigo and costly treasures, sent by the ruler of the country to him whose songs are the joy of the people and the glory of the land. Treachery and envy have driven him into exile. He was found; the caravan approaches the town where he has sought refuge; but as it nears the gate a mean funeral passes out and stops the way. The dead upon the bier is he whom they seek. The poet Firdusi has trod the thorny path of honour to the end.

A thick-lipped African, black as night, with crisp, woolly hair, sits on the marble steps of the palace in Lisbon and asks for alms. Without the copper coins which the faithful slave carries to his master day by day, Camoens, the author of the "Lusiad," would die of hunger.

A costly monument now stands above the poet's grave. The scene changes.

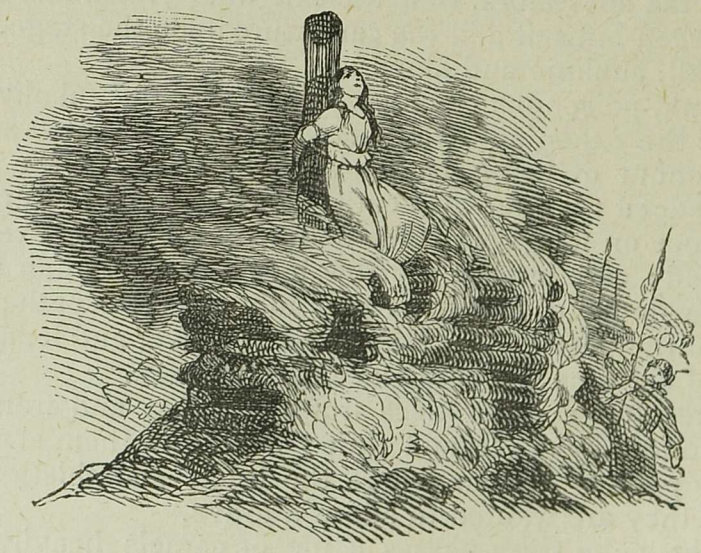
Behind the iron bars stands a man pale as death, with long, uncombed beard. "I have made a discovery, the greatest that has been made for centuries; and in return, they have kept me here for twenty years." "Who is the man?" "A madman," answers the keeper roughly. "What

follies will they not take up? He fancies that he can move himself along by the help of steam!" It is Solomon Caus, the discoverer of the mighty power of steam—a power of which he had spoken in dim, mysterious words which filled Richelieu with vague fear, and doomed the speaker to a death in a lunatic asylum!

Here stands Columbus, whom the street-boys mocked and persecuted because he sought to discover a new world. He discovered it, and the shouts of exultant crowds and the ringing of bells greeted his success. Before long the shouts were drowned by envious voices, and the bold discoverer, who presented a continent to his sovereign, was rewarded with a heavy iron chain. He begged that the chain might be laid with him in his coffin, to show the world how merit was rewarded by his contemporaries.

One scene chases another—the thorny path of honour is no solitary track.

Here, in rayless night, sits he who mapped out the mountains of the



moon; he who soared to the starry worlds above; who caught the faint undertone of Nature, and felt that the earth moved under his feet. Blind and deaf, Galileo sits racked by bodily suffering, scarcely able to raise his foot—that foot which once, in despair of heart at man's persistent denial of the truth, he stamped upon the ground, and cried, "*E pur si muove!*"

Here stands a woman with an angel's faith and enthusiasm, and a child's heart; she wears the mailed breastplate, and leads on the advancing ranks to victory and triumph. The shout of triumph dies away, the faggots are lighted round the stake. Joan of Arc is burnt as a witch.

The coming century defames the white lily: Voltaire, the satirist of sound, healthy reason, sings of "La Pucelle."

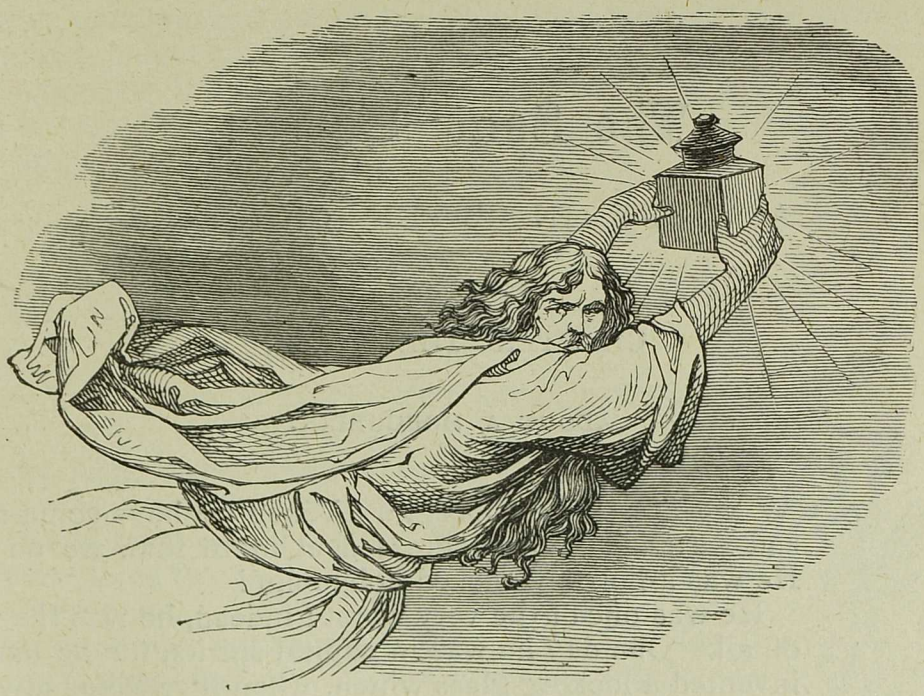
On the Kingstatte, the Danish nobles burn the king's decrees: the flames rise high; they cast a lustre on the century and on the law-giver; they throw a glory on the grey prison walls where sits the grey-haired king, working with his fingers a rift in the stone table before

him—the former ruler over three kingdoms, the friend of trader and peasant, the people's sovereign, Christian the Second. His life has been written by his enemies; we, who cannot deny his guilt, will remember his captivity of seven-and-twenty years.

A ship sails from the Danish shore; against the mast leans a man who casts a parting glance upon the island of Hveen. It is Tycho Brahe: he raised the name of Denmark to the skies, and his reward was insult and distress. He sails for a foreign land. "Heaven bends above me wherever I go," he cried, "and what can I want more?" Foreign lands receive and welcome the distinguished Dane.

"Free, were it not for intolerable pain!" sounds in our ears. What a picture! Griffenfeld, the Danish Prometheus, chained to the rocky island of Munkholm.

We are in America, on the shores of one of the largest rivers; a



countless multitude is assembled to see a ship defy the elements and make her way against the stream. The ship begins to move, and comes to a sudden stop; the crowd breaks out into jeers and hisses. It is Robert Fulton, who has set himself to solve the problem; as the ship stops, the father cries, "Madness, folly! let him hide his head in a lunatic asylum!" Suddenly a little nail, which stopped the engines, breaks, and the ship moves on, her paddles once more churn the water—the steam-cloud shortens hours to minutes between the countries of all the world.

How can one picture the joy of such a moment, when, penetrated by the spirit of one's mission, all past doubt and sorrow, every wound caused by the thorns on honour's path—nay, even one's own sins and mistakes—are forgotten and lost in strength and light and blessing? Discord is changed to harmony, and men are brought to acknowledge

the revelation of God's mercy in its every manifestation, and to feel that in it they have the promise of all things.

So looked upon, the thorny path of honour shows itself as a track of glory round the earth: thrice happy the wanderer who is elected to tread the bridge between God the Divine Architect and the human race!

On mighty wings the spirit of history floats through the ages, cheering, consoling, inspiring gentle thoughts, and showing on the dark background the bright forms of the wanderers along the thorny path of honour—the path which finds no joyous ending here on earth, but stretches out beyond this world into eternity.

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The Snow Queen:

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

ABOUT A HOBGOBLIN.

NOW we are going to begin. When we have come to the end we shall know a great deal more than we do now. He was a horribly wicked hobgoblin!

He was one of the very worst; indeed, he was the worst of all. One day he was in capital spirits, for he had just invented a looking-glass which, when it reflected anything good or beautiful, made it dwindle almost to nothing, while anything bad and ugly stood out in clear lines, and appeared twice its proper size. The most beautiful landscapes, seen in the mirror, looked like boiled spinach; the best men appeared repulsive, or stood on their heads, with no bodies; every face seen in the glass was distorted, and scarcely to be recognized; and if one had a freckle, one might be sure that it would spread over one's nose and mouth. "That was the beauty of it," said the hobgoblin. If a good, pious thought crossed one's heart, the looking-glass reflected a grin; and the goblin laughed with delight at his invention. Those who attended his school—for he kept a school—said, everywhere, that he had done wonders for them, and that now for the first time they had learned to know the world and men. They went about everywhere with the

goblin's mirror, till at last there was not a country or a person that had not been seen through the magic glass. They then wanted to fly up to heaven and hold up the mirror before the angels, but the higher they flew the more the mirror strained and grinned; and at last it fell from their hands and shivered into a million-billion pieces, and more besides.

And then it was that the real mischief began, for the tiny bits of glass, no bigger than a grain of sand, flew all over the world; and when one of them flew into a person's eye, there it remained, and the man saw everything distorted or out of drawing, or else he had eyes for nothing that was not false and perverse, for every atom had as much power as the whole mirror. Some men had a piece lodged right in their hearts, and then it was really dreadful—the heart was turned into a lump of ice. A few of the pieces were large enough to be used as window-panes, and it did not answer to look at your friends through that window; other pieces were made into spectacles, and it was a bad case whenever any one put on a pair of these spectacles in order to see clearly and judge impartially! The hobgoblin laughed till his sides ached again, he was so tickled at his handiwork. But the little pieces of glass kept flying about all over the world, and——Well, you shall just hear.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

ABOUT A LITTLE BOY AND A LITTLE GIRL.

In the large town where there are so many people and so many houses that there is no room for every one to have a little garden to himself, and most people have to be contented with flowers in flower-pots, there lived two poor children who had a garden not much larger than a flower-pot.

They were not brother and sister, but they loved each other as dearly as if they had been. Their parents lived in two attics exactly opposite each other, and in each house, just where the roof projected and the spouting ran along it, there was a little window; one had but to cross the water-pipe to pass from one window to another.

In each window stood a wooden box, in which garden herbs were growing round a beautiful red rose tree in the centre. The children's parents put the boxes crosswise over the spouting, so that they reached from one window to another, and looked like a wall of flowers. Sweet-peas hung down and hid the sides of the boxes, the roses shot up and climbed round the windows, making a triumphal arch of leaves and flowers. The boxes were very high, and the children knew that they must not climb out upon them without permission; but sometimes they were allowed to carry out their little footstools and sit under the rose trees, and then they used to have a famous game of play.

The winter put an end to their play, of course. The windows were frozen over, and the children could only warm pennies at the stove

and hold them against the pane till they had made a round, round peephole, through which their soft, bright eyes looked at each other. His name was Kay and hers was Gerda. In the summer they could meet by just taking a jump out of the window, but in the winter they were obliged to run down the long flight of stairs and through the passage out into the snow.

"Look at the white bees," said the old grandmother; "they are going to swarm."

"Have they a queen-bee?" said Kay, for he knew that real bees have a queen.

"Of course they have," said the grandmother; "she is the largest of them all, and she always flies where they swarm the thickest. But she never lies still upon the ground; her home is in the black cloud. Many a time she flies at midnight through the streets and covers the window-panes with beautiful frosted stars and flowers."

"Yes, we have seen them," said the two children; and then they knew that the story was true.

"Can the snow queen come in here?" said the little girl.

"Let her try," said the boy; "I would put her on the stove till she was melted."

The grandmother stroked his hair, and told him some more stories.

That night, when little Kay was going to bed, he climbed on to a chair and looked through the round peephole; a few snow-flakes were still falling, and one of them, the largest of all, settled on the edge of the flower-box. It grew and grew till it changed into a beautiful maiden dressed in white, silvery gauze, sparkling with frosted crystals. She was dazzlingly fair, but cold as ice. Her eyes shone like two stars, but there was neither peace nor rest in their glances. She nodded in at the window and waved her hand. Kay was frightened,

and jumped down from the chair. It was as if a large white bird flew past the window.

The next day was a white frost; and in due time the spring came. The sun shone, the leaves came out, the swallows built their nests, the windows were thrown open, and Kay and Gerda sat once more in their little garden, high above the narrow street.

How gloriously the roses blossomed this year! Gerda had learned a hymn all about roses, and when it spoke of the roses she thought it meant hers and Kay's; she taught it to the little boy, and he sang it with her.

"The roses all must fade and die,
We shall see Christ the Child on high."

And the children held each other by the hand, and kissed the roses; they looked out into God's clear sunshine, and sang as if the Child Christ stood beside them. What lovely summer days they were! and how beautiful it was out under the crimson roses, which seemed as if they never would leave off blooming!

Kay and Gerda were looking at the beasts and birds in their picture-book, when suddenly, just as the church clock struck five, Kay said, "Oh, something has stung my heart and flown into my eye!"

Gerda threw her arms round his neck; he rubbed his eye, but there was nothing to be seen.

"I think it is out now," he said; but it was not out. It was one of the tiny pieces of glass belonging to the magic mirror—you remember the mirror? the goblin's glass which made everything great and good look mean and ugly, and showed up all the bad and evil things, so that if any one had a fault that was the only thing you saw of him in the mirror? Poor Kay had got a piece in his eye and another in his heart. They did not hurt him, but there they were, and his heart began to turn to ice.

"What are you crying for?" he said to Gerda; "it makes you look so ugly. I am all right. Oh, look at that rose, it is all grub-eaten! And this one is dwarfed and stunted. After all, the roses are ugly things, as ugly as the boxes they grow in." And he kicked at the boxes and began to pull the roses to pieces.

"Kay, what are you doing?" said the little girl; and when he saw how frightened she was, he pulled off another rose and ran in at his window, away from sweet little Gerda.

The next time she brought him the picture-book to look at, he said it was only fit for babies in long clothes; and when his grandmother told him tales he always met them with a "but;" or else he would stand behind her, put on a pair of spectacles, and imitate all she said. He did it very cleverly, and made every one laugh. Before long he could imitate the voice and walk of every one he saw; any peculiarity or defect he copied capitally, and people said, "That lad has a clever head on his shoulders." All this came from the glass in his heart; and, by-and-by, he began to tease little Gerda, who loved him with all her heart.

His games and amusements were quite different now from what they were before. In winter, when it snowed, he would hold out a burning-

glass, and let the flakes fall on his blue coat. "Look in the glass, Gerda," he cried; and she saw how every snow-flake looked ten times larger and sparkled like a silver flower. "See how regular it is," said Kay; "that is much more interesting than looking at flowers. There is not one fault. All is according to rule. If only they would not melt!"

Soon afterwards Kay came up, wearing thick gloves and carrying his skates over his shoulder. "I am going out to play with the other boys," he said; and away he went.

In the great square where the boys played, the boldest among them used to tie their sleighs to the back of some countryman's cart, and get a good ride behind it. That was fine fun. When they were in the height of their play a large sleigh drove into the square; it was painted white, and inside it sat a figure muffled up in a rough cloak of white fur, and wearing a white fur cap. The sleigh drove twice round the square, and Kay tied his little sleigh behind it. Away it went, faster and faster, right out into the next street. The figure inside nodded at Kay as if they were old friends; every time Kay tried to untie his sleigh the figure nodded again, and Kay sat still. On they went, out beyond the town gates. It began to snow heavily, Kay could not see his hands before his face; he loosened the string which tied the sleighs together, but it made no difference, on they both went, swift as the wind. He cried aloud, but no one heard him; the snow whirled by, and the sleighs flew faster, sometimes they gave a jolt as if they were flying over hedges and ditches. Kay was frightened. He tried to say the Lord's Prayer, but he could remember nothing but the multiplication table.

The snow-flakes grew larger, till they looked like great white birds; the sleigh suddenly stopped; the figure rose; cloak and hat had vanished, and there stood a maiden in snowy robes, tall and dazzlingly fair—it was the snow queen.

"We have ridden well," she cried; "but you are freezing. Creep in under my fur." She drew him into the sleigh and wrapped her cloak round him. He felt as if he were sinking in a snow-drift.

"Are you cold now?" she said, and kissed his brow. Her kiss was colder than ice; it thrilled to his heart. For a moment, he felt as if he were going to die; but after a while he felt better, and did not mind the cold at all.

"My sleigh—don't forget my sleigh!" he cried. That was the first thing he thought of. It was tied to one of the white birds, who flew away with it. The snow queen kissed Kay again; and this time he forgot Gerda and his old grandmother, and every one he had left at home.

"Now you shall have no more kisses," said the snow queen, "or I should kiss you to death."

Kay looked at her. She was very beautiful. He thought he had never seen such a fine, clever face. She did not look now as if she were made of ice, as he thought she was when she stood outside his window long ago. She was perfect in his eyes, and he was not afraid.

He told her that he could do mental arithmetic as far as fractions, and he knew how many square miles there were in the country, and

what the population was. She smiled still, and it seemed to Kay that all he knew was not enough. He looked out into the wide space round him; the queen flew with him high in the air to the black cloud: the storm raged round them, it was as if it sang old melodies. They flew over forest and lake, over land and sea, the cold wind rushed past below them, the wolves howled, the snow crackled; above them flew black, cawing crows, and the moon shone large and round. Kay looked at it in the long winter nights. By day he slept at the feet of the snow queen.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

ABOUT THE FLOWER-GARDEN AND THE WOMAN WHO COULD CONJURE.

But what became of little Gerda when Kay did not come back? Where could he be? No one knew: no one could help her. The boys only said that they had seen him tie his sleigh behind another large one, and drive out towards the town gate. No one knew where he was. Little Gerda wept bitterly. Then she said that he must be dead—drowned in the river that runs past the school. Ah, the winter days were long and sad!

The spring came on with the warm sunshine.

"Kay is dead and gone," said little Gerda.

"I don't believe it," said the sunshine.

"Kay is dead and gone," said Gerda to the swallows.

"We don't believe it," said the swallows; and by degrees Gerda began to feel doubtful about it herself.

"I will put on my new red shoes, which Kay has never seen," she said, "and go down to the river to ask after him."

It was very early. She kissed her old grandmother, who was still asleep, put on her red shoes, and went out through the town gates to the river.

"Is it true that you have taken away my little playfellow?" she said. "I will give you my red shoes, if you will send him back to me."

It seemed to her that the waves nodded strangely in answer. She took off her red shoes, which were the things she liked best in the world, and threw them in the river. They fell in close to the shore, and the waves bore them back to her feet. It was as much as to say they could not send back little Kay, so they would not keep her shoes. But Gerda thought she ought to have thrown them farther out; so she crept into a boat which lay among the reeds, went to the very end of it, and threw them in from there. Now the boat was not fastened to the shore, and as Gerda threw out the shoes it slipped away from the reeds. The little girl felt it move and ran back as quickly as she could, but by the time she reached the other end the boat was yards away from land, and drifting fast down the stream.

Gerda began to cry. No one heard her except the swallows, and they could not carry her to the shore. All they could do was to fly along the bank by her side, and sing, "Here we are!" The boat flew down the stream; Gerda sat quite still, with nothing on her feet but stockings; the two red shoes came swimming after, but they could not reach the boat.

It was very pretty on both sides of the river; there were beautiful flowers, tall trees, and grassy slopes, with cows and sheep. But there was not a human being to be seen.

"Perhaps the river will carry me on to Kay," said Gerda. She became more cheerful, and watched the green, sunny shores for hours together. At last she came to a large cherry-garden, in the centre of which stood a little cottage, with red and blue windows and thatched roof. Before the door stood two wooden soldiers, presenting arms.

Gerda called out to them, for she thought they were alive, but of course they did not hear. The current bore straight towards the land, and she called out louder.

At the sound of her voice an old woman came out of the cottage. She walked with a crutch, and wore a large garden bonnet, on which were painted flowers and leaves.

"You poor little child!" exclaimed the old woman; "how have you come down the broad, rushing river? What brings you so far out in the wide world?" She came down to the water's edge, drew the boat to land with her crutch, and lifted little Gerda out.

Gerda was glad to be on dry land again, although she was rather afraid of the old woman.

"Come in and tell me who you are and how you came here."

When Gerda had told her everything, the old woman said, "Hem! hem!" "Have you seen Kay? has he been here?" said Gerda.

The old woman told her that she had not seen him, but that he might yet come. She begged Gerda not to fret, but to come out and eat cherries and look at the flowers. "They were prettier than any picture-book," she said, "for each flower could tell its own story."

Then she took the child's hand, led her into the cottage, and shut the door.

The windows were very high, and the panes were yellow, red, and blue, so that the sunshine took the most wonderful colours. On the table stood a plate of cherries, and Gerda ate as many as she liked, for the old woman gave her leave to do so. While she was eating them the old woman combed her hair with a golden comb, and the soft, yellow curls fell round the sweet, fair face which looked so like a rose.

"I have often wished to have a dear little girl like you," said the old woman; "now you will see how happy we shall be together." And as she went on combing Gerda's hair, the child gradually forgot all about Kay, for the old woman was a witch. She was not, however, a wicked witch; she only conjured now and then for her amusement, and she wanted to keep little Gerda. So she went out into the garden and stretched out her crutch over the roses, and they all sank down, just as they were, into the earth, you could not see the place where they had stood. The old woman thought that if Gerda saw the roses she would be reminded of Kay and try to run away.

She called Gerda out into the flower-garden. What fragrance, and what a wealth of colour! There was every imaginable flower growing, and all in full bloom, no matter what the season was. No picture-book could be gayer and brighter. Gerda laughed for joy, and played about till the sun went down behind the tall cherry trees. Then she lay down to sleep in a pretty little bed, with pillows of crimson silk stuffed with violets. No queen upon her wedding night could have had brighter dreams.

The next day she played about among the flowers. Day after day passed by. Gerda knew every flower, and yet, although there were so many of them, it seemed to her that one was wanting, but she could not think what it was. One day, however, she happened to look at the painted wreath on the old woman's bonnet, and among the flowers she saw a rose. The old woman had forgotten to hide the picture when she conjured all the roses into the earth. But that is always the way—one cannot think of everything at once!

"What, are there no roses here?" cried Gerda. She ran among the flower-beds to find one, but she looked in vain. Then she sat down and cried, and her tears fell on the very place where a rose-tree had been buried. The warm tears sank into the earth, and as soon as they touched the roses the whole bush sprang up again in full bloom, just as it sank. Gerda threw her arms round it and kissed the roses. She thought of her roses at home and of little Kay.

"Oh, how I have been hindered!" she cried. "Why, I was looking for Kay. Do you know where he is?" she asked the roses; "do you think he is dead?"

"He is not dead," said the roses. "We have been in the earth where the dead people lie, and Kay was not there."

"Thank you," said little Gerda. She went to the other flowers, looked into their cups, and asked them, "Do you know where Kay is?"

But every flower was dreaming over its own story; Gerda heard plenty of them, but nothing at all about little Kay. The tiger-lily said, "Do you hear the drum? Tum-tum! It has but those two notes,

'tum-tum!' Listen to the women's funeral chant, and the cry of the priests! Veiled in her long, red cloak, the Hindoo woman stands upon the pile; the flames leap round her and her dead husband; but the woman thinks only of the living—of him whose eyes burn hotter than the fire which will soon consume her body to ashes. Can the heart's flame die out among the ashes of the funeral pile?"

"I cannot understand you at all," said Gerda.

"That is my story," said the tiger-lily.

The convolvulus said, "An ancient castle frowns above the narrow path; evergreens cling to the crumbling walls and twine round the balcony, where a lovely maiden is standing. She looks down the narrow path. No rose upon the spray is lovelier, no apple-blossom stirred by the wind is more graceful than she. Her rich, silken robe rustles. 'Is he not coming?' she cries."

"Do you mean Kay?" said little Gerda.

"I am only telling my story, my dream," said the convolvulus.

The little snowdrop said, "The swing is set up between two tall trees, two pretty little girls—their dresses as white as snow, and long, green ribbons streaming from their hats—are sitting swinging. Their brother, who is taller than they, stands in the swing and winds his arm round the cord to support himself. In one hand he holds a clay pipe, and in the other a little dish. He is blowing soap-bubbles, and as the swing flies through the air the bubbles float round, purple and green and gold. The last one is still hanging on the bowl of the pipe. Down below, the little black dog, light as a bubble himself, tries to jump on to the swing as it falls back; but it rises again, the dog falls and barks furiously. The children tease him as the bubbles burst. A dream of changing colour, lit up by the golden sunlight.

"That is my story."

"And it may be a very pretty one," said Gerda; "but you tell it so mournfully, and you do not even mention Kay."

The hyacinths said, "There were three beautiful sisters, fragile and delicate. One was dressed in red, one in blue, and one in pure white. They danced hand in hand by moonlight, near the silent lake. They were not elves, but human maidens. The scent rose from the forest, rich and strong; the maidens disappeared in the wood, the perfume grew stronger still. Three coffins glided on to the lake from the dark forest and drifted away; within the coffins lay the three lovely maidens. The little glow-worms sparkled round the coffins like wandering stars. Were the maidens dead or sleeping? The scent of the flowers says they are dead; the vesper bell tolls as for a dirge."

"You make me quite sad," said little Gerda. "Your scent is so strong. It reminds me of the three dead maidens. Oh! is Kay really dead? The roses have been in the ground and they say he is not there."

"Cling clang!" rang the hyacinth bells; "we are not chiming for Kay, we do not know him. It is our song; the only song we know."

Gerda went to the buttercup, which shone like gold among its green leaves. "Tell me, you little golden star," she cried, "do you know where I shall find my lost playmate?"

The buttercups shone brighter than ever, and looked at Gerda. What were they going to say? It was nothing about Kay.

"The first spring sunbeams fell into a poor courtyard, and gilded the white walls of the neighbour's house. The first yellow flower had just opened, and the old grandmother sat out of doors on her chair. Her granddaughter, a poor servant girl with a pretty face, had just come home for a visit. She kissed her grandmother, and the kiss was rich with the heart's best gold. Gold on the lips, gold in the earth, gold in the early dawn. That is my story."

"Poor old grandmother!" said Gerda. "How she is fretting after me and Kay! But I shall soon go back home and bring him with me. It is of no use asking the flowers; they know nothing but their own story, they can give me no help."

She tied up her dress so that she could run more quickly, but the narcissus caught her foot as she passed. She turned and looked at the tall, yellow flower. "Do you know anything, I wonder?" she thought. She bent over the flower to listen. The narcissus said, "I can see myself! I can see myself! A little dancer stands in the garret-chamber up yonder. She is half-dressed, and she stands first on one leg and then on two. She tramples the world under her feet; she is only an illusion. She pours water out of the teapot on to a piece of stuff which she has in her hand. It is her bodice—cleanliness is a virtue. Her white dress hangs up on a hook. That, too, has been washed in the teapot and dried on the roof. She puts it on, and ties a saffron-coloured scarf round her neck to make her dress look whiter. Out flies her little foot! See how she stands on one stem! I can see myself—I can see myself!"

"What does that matter to me?" said Gerda. "Why do you call me back to listen to such nonsense?" and she ran down to the garden gate.

The gate was shut, but she forced open the rusty latch; it sprang open, and little Gerda ran barefoot out into the world. She looked back three times, but no one was following her; and when she could run no farther she sat down upon a stone to rest. On looking round she saw that the summer was over, and the autumn far advanced: in the beautiful garden, among the enchanted flowers and sunshine, she had seen no change of season and felt no breath of chill autumnal air.

"How I have hindered myself!" she cried. "Why, it is autumn—I must not rest any longer." And she rose to go.

Oh, how tired and sore her little feet were! It was cold and rough all around her, the long willow-leaves were yellow, and the dew dropped down like rain; one after another the leaves fell from the trees. There were no fruits but sloes, and they were hard and sour. The world looked grey, and bare, and sorrowful.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

ABOUT A PRINCE AND A PRINCESS.

Gerda was obliged to rest again. A great crow came hopping across the snow to the place where she sat. He had been standing looking at her for a long time, and moving his head from side to side. At last he

said, "Caw! caw! good-day, good-day!" He could not pronounce his words very clearly; but he meant well to the little girl, and asked her whither she was going alone in the wide world? Gerda understood the word "*alone*" in a moment; and she told the crow her story from beginning to end, and asked him whether he had seen Kay.

The crow nodded thoughtfully and replied, "It may be so—it may be so!"

"What? You have seen him?" and Gerda almost kissed the crow to death.

"Gently, gently," said the crow. "Be calm. I think so—I believe—it may be little Kay. But he has quite forgotten you; he loves the princess."

"Does he live with a princess?" asked Gerda.

"Yes. Now listen—but it is so difficult for me to speak your language. Do you understand the crows' language? I could tell you better if you did."

"No, I have not learnt it," said Gerda. "My grandmother understood it and could speak it. What a pity I never learned it!"

"Never mind," said the crow; "I must tell you, as well as I can. But I shall not get on very well." And he told Gerda all he knew. "In this very kingdom where we are now sitting there lives a princess so outrageously clever that she has learnt all the newspapers in the world. And she has forgotten them again—she is as clever as that. A short time ago when she was sitting on her throne—and that is not half such a treat as people say—she began to sing. This was the song. 'Why should I not get married?' Now, there is a great deal in that," continued the crow. "And she wanted to get married; but she wanted also to find a man who could speak when he was spoken to, and do more than stand upright and look grand, for one gets tired of that in time. So she ordered the drum to be beat to call up all the court ladies; and when they heard what she wanted they were extremely delighted.

"You may believe every word I am saying," said the crow. "I have a tame sweetheart who hops about in the palace all day long, and she told me everything."

Of course the sweetheart was a crow. Birds of a feather flock together, and a crow is always a crow.

"The newspapers were immediately published with a row of hearts round the border and the princess's monogram at the top; and in the leading article it said that every good-looking young man was at liberty to come to the palace and speak to the princess. Any one who spoke so as to be heard might make himself at home; but the one who spoke the best would be chosen to marry the princess. Yes, yes," said the crow, "you may believe me; it is as true as that I am sitting here. Young men came up in crowds; there was quite a tumult and stir in all the land; but nothing was settled, either on the first or second day. They could all speak well enough when they were in the street; but when they entered the palace hall and saw the royal guards in silver, when they went up the stairs and saw the lacqueys all in gold, and the brilliant, lofty rooms, they were quite taken aback. And when they stood before the throne where the princess sat they could do nothing but repeat the last word she had said, and she had

not the slightest desire to hear that over again. It seemed as if all the good folk had drunk off a sleeping-draught, for not a word could they find till they stood in the street again. There was a row of them reaching from the palace entrance to the town gates. I know, for I was among them," said the crow. "They were hungry and thirsty, and they did not get even a glass of water inside the palace. Some of the cleverest had brought some pieces of bread and butter, and they took care not to share it with their neighbours. No! let him look hungry, and then the princess won't have him. That was what they thought."

"But Kay, little Kay?" interrupted Gerda. "Was he among the crowd?"

"Wait a little—we are just coming to him. It was on the third day; there came up a youth, without horse or carriage, marching merrily right up to the palace door. His eyes sparkled like yours; he had beautiful hair, but his clothes were poor enough."

"It was Kay!" exclaimed Gerda exultingly. "I have found him again!" and she clapped her hands for joy.

"He had a little bundle on his back," said the crow.

"It must have been his skates," said Gerda. "He had them with him when he went away."

"It may be so," said the crow. "I did not look very closely at it. But I know this from my tame sweetheart, that when he came through the entrance door and saw the royal guards in silver and the lacqueys in gold he was not in the least confused. He just nodded to them, and said, 'You must find it rather tiresome standing perched up there from morning to night. For my part, I would rather go inside.' The halls were ablaze with light, councillors and excellencies were walking about in slippers, carrying golden vessels; it was enough to fill one with awe. And his boots creaked tremendously, but he was not in the least abashed."

"It is Kay, I am sure it is!" cried Gerda. "He had new boots on, and I have heard them creak myself in grandmother's room."

"Upon my word, they *did* creak," said the crow. "And on he went right up to the princess, not one whit afraid. She was sitting on a pearl as large as a spinning-wheel: all the maids of honour stood round her, with their attendants behind them, and every attendant had a maid of her own behind her. Then came the courtiers, with their attendants behind them, and the attendants' servants, and every servant had a boy to stand behind him—and the airs of these boys were so overpowering that one hardly dared to look at them, for the nearer they stood to the door the prouder they were."

"It must have been awful!" said little Gerda. "And did Kay win the princess?"

"If I had not been a crow I would have taken her myself," said the crow, "in spite of my previous engagement. I hear the young man spoke as well as I do when I am speaking my own language: I heard that from my tame sweetheart. She tells me, he was most polite and ready-witted: he said he had not come as a suitor, but only to listen to the princess's wisdom. And the end of it was that they fell in love with each other."

"It must be Kay," said Gerda. "He is so clever: he can work sums up to fractions. Oh, do please take me to the palace!"

"That is easily said," replied the crow, "but how is it to be done? I will talk it over with my tame sweetheart, and she will perhaps advise us. But I must tell you that it is scarcely likely a little girl like you will be admitted into the palace."

"Oh, but I shall be!" cried Gerda. "When Kay hears that I am there he will come out and fetch me."

"Wait for me at the gate," said the crow, nodding; and he flew away.

It was late at night when the crow came back. "Caw! caw!" he cried. "I am to give you her kind regards; and here is a piece of bread for you. She took it out of the kitchen, where there is enough and to spare; for she said you must be hungry. It is quite impossible for you to be admitted into the palace. You see, you have no shoes and stockings on! The royal guards in silver and the lacqueys in gold would not allow it. Don't cry: you shall go in for all that. My betrothed knows a private staircase which leads to the prince's room, and she will manage to get the key."

They went into the palace garden, and along the broad avenue where the leaves were falling; and when the lights behind the palace windows had gone out one by one, the crow led Gerda to a back door which had been left unlocked.

Oh, how her heart beat with suspense and longing! She felt as if she were committing an evil deed, and yet all she wanted was to find little Kay. It must be he! She remembered so clearly his long hair and his clever, bright eyes; she could see him smile as he used to do at home under the roses. Surely he would be glad to see her, to hear what a long way she had travelled for his sake, and to learn how sorrowful they were at home when he did not come back! She felt happy, but half afraid.

They went up the private staircase. A small lamp was burning on the landing, and before it stood the tame crow, turning her head from side to side that she might get a good look at Gerda. Gerda courtesied low, as her grandmother had taught her.

"My betrothed has spoken of you so highly to me, my dear young lady," said the tame crow, "that I am delighted to serve you; your life-story is most interesting. Kindly take up the lamp, and I will precede you. We will go straight on, for we shall meet no one here."

"I seem to hear some one behind us," whispered Gerda. A strange sighing sound rushed past her, and things that looked like shadows on the wall—horses with flying manes and thin legs, huntsmen, ladies, and knights on horseback.

"They are only dreams," said the crow. "They are coming to invite the thoughts of all the lords and ladies to the dream-chase. That is all the better for us, because they will be sound asleep. But I hope that when you attain to rank and distinction you will show a grateful heart!"

"That is a matter of course," said the wild crow.

They entered the first room; the walls were hung with rose-coloured

satin and brocaded flowers. The dreams followed them and rushed by so swiftly that Gerda could scarcely see the quality, as the tame crow called them. Every room was more splendid than the last; it was enough to dazzle one. At last they entered the bedroom. The ceiling was shaped like a tall palm tree, with leaves of crystal; and from the centre there hung two stems of gold, supporting two beds, formed like the cup of a lily. The princess's bed was snow-white, the other was red. Gerda went to the bed and pulled aside the crimson leaves. She caught a glimpse of a brown neck. Oh, surely it was Kay! She called him by his name, and held the lamp above his face; the dreams rushed from the room by troops. The prince awoke, turned round, and —it was not Kay!

The brown neck was the only likeness between them, though the prince was young and handsome. Then the princess looked out through her white lily leaves, and asked who was there. Gerda wept bitterly as she told them all her story, and what the crows had done for her.

"Poor child!" cried the prince and princess, both together. They praised the crows, and said they were not at all displeased with them; but they were never to do it again. In the present instance they should be rewarded.

"Would you like to be set free?" asked the princess; "or should you prefer a permanent appointment as court crows, with the perquisites from the kitchen?"

The crows bowed down to the ground, and begged for the permanent appointment. They thought of their old age, and said it would be nice to have something laid by for their latter days.

The prince rose from his bed and let Gerda sleep in it; and that was all he could do to help her.

Gerda folded her little hands and thought to herself, "How good they all are to me—men and animals alike!" Then she fell asleep, and the dreams came flying back. They looked like happy angels, and they drew after them a little sleigh in which Kay sat smiling. But they were only dreams, and so, of course, when Gerda woke they were gone away.

The next day she was dressed in silk and velvet, and the princess asked her to stay at the palace and enjoy herself. But Gerda only begged for a little pony-carriage and a pair of boots, so that she might set out again in search of little Kay.

She received all she asked for, and a muff as well; and when she left the palace in her pretty travelling dress, she saw a beautiful golden carriage drawn up before the door, with the coat of arms of the prince and princess. Coachman, footmen, and out-riders—for there were out-riders as well—all wore crowns of gold. The prince himself put her into the carriage, and the princess came out to wish her all success. The forest crow, who was now married to his sweetheart, went with her for the first three miles; he sat by her side, because he could not ride with his back to the horses. The other crow stood on the palace steps and flapped her wings; she did not accompany them, for she was suffering from a bilious headache, caused by eating too many good things since her recent appointment as court crow. Inside the

carriage Gerda found a store of sugar-cakes, fruit, and gingerbread-nuts.

"Good-bye, good-bye!" said the prince and princess. Little Gerda cried, and the crow cried. At the end of the three miles, the crow had to say good-bye, and that was the hardest parting of all. He flew on to a tree and flapped his wings in the sunshine as long as the carriage remained in sight.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

ABOUT THE LITTLE ROBBER GIRL.

They drove on through the dark forest; but the coach shone like a torch, and that dazzled the eyes of the robbers till they could bear it no longer.

"Gold! gold!" they shouted; and they rushed out, slew the coachman, footmen, and outriders, and pulled little Gerda out of the carriage.

"She is fat, she is tender, she has been fed on nuts," cried the old robber queen. She wore a long beard, and her eyebrows hung down over her eyes.

"She is as good as a nice, fat lamb; what a dainty bit she will be!" And she drew out her sharp knife; it was horrible to see how it gleamed.

"Yah!" shrieked the robber queen at the same moment. Her daughter, a rough, rude girl, had jumped on her back and bitten her ear. "You——!" said the robber queen, and she had no time to kill Gerda.

"She shall play with me," said the robber girl. "She shall give me her muff, and her pretty dress, and sleep in my bed." And she bit her mother again till the old queen leaped up into the air and wrestled with her daughter. The robbers laughed aloud. "See how she dances with her cub!" they cried.

"I shall ride in the carriage," said the robber girl. And she had her way, for she was dreadfully spoiled and obstinate. She and Gerda sat in the carriage, and away they galloped over stock and stone. The little robber girl was just the same height as Gerda, but stouter and broader shouldered. Her skin was brown and swarthy, and her eyes black and almost sorrowful. She threw her arm round Gerda's waist. "Nobody shall kill you unless I am angry with you," she said. "I suppose you are a princess?"

"No," said Gerda. And then she told her story all through, and how dearly she loved little Kay.

The robber girl looked at her solemnly. "They shall not kill you even if I am angry with you," she said; "for then I can do it myself." And she dried Gerda's eyes, and put her hands into the warm, soft muff.

The coach suddenly stopped before the courtyard of the robbers' castle. The building was hardly better than a ruin; ravens and crows flew in and out of the rifts in the halls, and the great bulldogs, each of which looked ready enough to swallow a man, sprang to their full height, but did not bark, for that was forbidden. A clear fire was

burning on the stone-floor of the lofty, smoke-blackened room. The wreaths of smoke coiled and wound about the ancient rafters ; a kettle-ful of rich soup was boiling over the fire ; hares and rabbits were roasting on the spit.

" You shall sleep with me and all my little pets to-night," said the robber girl. Something was given them to eat and drink, and then they went into a corner where straw and carpets were laid down for beds. Above the bed were more than a hundred pigeons on laths and perches ; they seemed asleep, but they moved their heads slowly as the robber girl came up.

" Every one of them belongs to me," said the little robber girl. She seized hold of the nearest, held it by its feet and shook it till its wings flapped again. " Kiss it," she said, sticking it against Gerda's face. " Those are the wood gentry up there," she said, pointing to a kind of cage made by a grating of bars placed before a hole in the wall ; " if they were not kept very safe they would fly away. And here is my old favourite Baa ! She pulled forward a reindeer which was tied up to the wall with a metal ring round his neck. " We have to hold him pretty fast or else he would give us the slip. At night I tickle him with my sharp knife ; he is dreadfully afraid of that, I can tell you." She drew a long, sharp knife out of a crevice in the wall and let it slide across the reindeer's neck. The poor animal shivered and plunged wildly, but the robber girl laughed and pulled Gerda into bed with her.

" Do you keep the knife by you while you are asleep ? " said Gerda, looking timidly at the glittering blade. " Always," said the little robber girl. " One never knows what may happen. Now, tell me again about little Kay, and why you came out into the wide world." And Gerda began all over again, while the wood-pigeons moaned in the cage and the tame ones slept. The robber girl put one arm round Gerda's neck and clutched the knife in her other hand. She snored so loudly that Gerda could not close her eyes all night, she did not feel sure whether she was to live or die. The robbers sat drinking round the fire, and their riotous songs filled the little girl with dread.

Suddenly one of the wood-pigeons began to talk. " Curroo ! curroo ! " it cried. " We have seen little Kay. A white bird drew his sleigh. He sat by the side of the snow queen. They passed through the wood as we lay in our nests. The snow queen breathed on us, and all the young ones died but two. Curroo ! curroo ! "

" What do you say up there ? " said Gerda. " Where was the snow queen going ? Tell me all you know."

" Most likely she was going to Lapland, where there is always snow and ice. Ask the reindeer, the one who is tied up by a cord."

" There is ice and snow," said the reindeer. " It is a splendid place. We gallop about unfettered in the glittering plains. The snow queen has her summer palace there ; but her grandest palace is the one by the north pole, up in Spitzbergen."

" Oh, Kay, my little Kay ! " cried Gerda. " Lie still, or I will plunge my knife into your heart," said the little robber girl.

In the morning Gerda told the robber girl all that the wood-pigeons had said. She listened gloomily and nodded her head. " It is all one ! " she cried. " Do you know where Lapland is ? " she asked the reindeer.

"Who should know better than I?" said he, and his eyes sparkled. "I was born and bred there; I have galloped over all its snow fields."

"Look here," said the robber girl to Gerda—"all our men are away; there is only my mother here, and she will stay; but towards midday she will drink out of the great bottle till she falls asleep, and then I will do something for you."

She sprang out of bed, squeezed her mother round the neck, pulled her beard, and cried, "Good morning, my dear old nanny-goat!" And her mother filliped her nose till it was black and blue, and it was all done from pure love.

When the robber queen had drank out of her bottle and was gone to sleep, her daughter went up to the reindeer and said, "I could amuse myself often by tickling you with my sharp knife, for it makes you look so absurd; but, in spite of that, I am going to untie your cord and help you out, so that you may run to Lapland. You must make the best use of your legs and carry this little girl to the snow queen's palace, where her little playmate is. I dare say you heard all she said, for she spoke loud enough, and you were listening."

The reindeer bounded with joy. The robber girl lifted Gerda on his back, and had the forethought to tie her firmly on. She gave her her own little cushion for a seat, and her fur boots. "You must have them back," she said, "for it will be dreadfully cold; but I am going to keep the muff, it is so pretty. Not that you need freeze. Here are my mother's driving-gloves; they will come up to your elbows. Come, creep in. And now your hands look like my ugly old mother's."

Gerda wept for joy.

"I can't bear to see you whimper," said the robber girl. "Look merry, this minute! Here are two loaves and a ham, so you won't die of hunger. Everything was tied fast to the saddle; the little robber girl opened the door, called in all the dogs, cut the rope with her sharp knife, and said to the reindeer, "Off with you, and take care of the little girl."

Gerda held out her hands in their great driving gloves, and said, "Good-bye!" And away went the reindeer over stock and stone, through the dark wood, across marsh and fen, as fast as he could run. The wolves howled and the ravens shrieked. A light quivered in the sky like fitful flames. "There they are," cried the reindeer, "my old northern lights! How they shine!"

Faster and faster they went; the loaves were eaten up and the ham also, and then they were in Lapland.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

ABOUT THE LAPLAND WOMAN AND THE FINLAND WOMAN.

The reindeer stopped before a squalid, wretched-looking hut. The roof nearly touched the ground, and the door was so low that every one who passed in and out had to creep on their hands and knees. No

one was in the hut but an old Lapland woman, who was boiling fish by the light of a train-oil lamp. The reindeer told her Gerda's story; but not until he had told his own, which seemed to him far more important; and Gerda was so benumbed with cold that she could not speak.

"Poor creature!" said the Lapland woman; "you have a long journey before you still. You must travel a hundred miles farther into Finland, the snow queen is living there just now, at her country, seat, and burning Bengal lights every evening. I will write a few lines to her on a dried stockfish, for I have no paper; and then all you have to do is to give my letter to the Finland woman. She will be able to advise you better than than I can do."

When Gerda had warmed herself thoroughly and had taken something to eat and drink, the Lapland woman wrote the letter on the dried stockfish, begged her to take care of it, and tied her safely on the reindeer's back.

Away they went once more. The whole air was whizzing and starting with the beautiful blue flashes. The northern lights burned all night long. At last they came to Finland and knocked at the wise woman's chimney, for door she had none.

Inside the hut the heat was almost stifling, and the Finland woman went about half dressed. She lifted little Gerda down from the reindeer, took off her boots and driving-gloves, or she would not have been able to bear the heat, laid a piece of ice on the reindeer's head, and read the letter. She read it over carefully three times, and then, as she knew it by heart, she put the fish in the kettle to boil for dinner—she never wasted anything.

The reindeer told his story, and when he had quite finished he told Gerda's. The old Finland woman blinked her sharp eyes, but did not say a word.

"You are wise and cunning," said the reindeer. "I know that you can tie up all the winds of heaven in a coil of rope. If the sailor unties the first knot he has a favourable wind; but if he unties the second, he is sorry for it before long; and if he unties the third and fourth there comes such a storm as lays whole forests low. Can you not give the little girl a potion which will make her as strong as twelve men, so that she may be able to conquer the snow queen?"

"The strength of twelve men would not help her much," said the Finland woman. She went up to her bed and took from it a large roll of parchment, written all over in the most curious characters. This she read and pondered till the perspiration poured down her forehead.

But the reindeer begged so hard for little Gerda, and the child looked at her with such tearful, imploring eyes, that the Finland woman felt her own eyes beginning to twinkle again. She drew the reindeer aside into a corner and whispered something to him while she put fresh pieces of ice on his head.

"Kay is in the snow queen's palace," she whispered, "and he finds everything there just to his liking. He thinks it is the best place in the world; but that is because he has a tiny splinter of glass in his eye, and another in his heart. Until they are taken away the snow queen will have him in her power, and no one can help him."

"But can you not give little Gerda something which will give her power over the whole thing?"

"I can give her no greater power than she already possesses. Do you not see how great that is? Do you not see how all things, men and animals alike, are forced to help her? and how well she has succeeded already, although she started barefoot in the world? She can receive no spells from us; her power lies in her heart, and consists in her being a dear, innocent child. If she cannot find her own way to the snow queen's palace, and to set Kay free, we cannot help her. The snow queen's park begins two miles from here, and thither you must carry the little girl. Then set her down by the bush which bears red berries among the snow; don't stay for any foolish chatter, but make haste back to me." And the Finland woman tied Gerda on the reindeer's back, and they set off at full speed.

"Oh, I have left my boots! I have left my gloves!" cried little Gerda. It was the bitter cold which made her find out her loss, but the reindeer dared not stop. He ran on till he saw the bush with the red berries, and there Gerda got down. Great tears fell from the reindeer's eyes; Gerda kissed him; and he turned away without speaking and ran back to the Finland woman's hut. There stood poor little Gerda, barefoot and without gloves, in the bitter Finland ice and snow.

She ran forward as fast as she could among a whole army of whirling snowflakes. They did not fall from the clouds, for the sky overhead was clear and brilliant with the northern lights. The snowflakes ran along the ground, and the nearer they came, the larger they grew. Gerda remembered how large they had looked when she saw them through the burning glass. But now they were larger and more terrible than ever; they were alive; it was the vanguard of the snow queen's army. They were of the most wonderful shapes; some of them like ugly, bristling swine; some like knotted coils of snakes, and some like fat little bears, with ruffled fur; but all were dazzlingly white, and all were alive.

Then little Gerda began to say, "Our Father Which art in heaven." It was so cold that she could see her own breath as it came from her lips, like vapour. The vapoury wreaths thickened and grew, and when they touched the ground they took the shape of little angels, with helmets, spears, and shields. Every second their numbers increased, and by the time Gerda had finished her prayer there was a whole legion round her. The angels touched the snowflakes with their glittering spears, and the flakes broke into a thousand pieces. Gerda went bravely forward; the angels stroked her hands and feet till they got back a little warmth, and Gerda reached the palace in safety.

But now it is time to see what Kay was doing. He certainly was not thinking of little Gerda—least of all, that she was standing outside the palace door.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

ABOUT THE SNOW QUEEN'S PALACE, AND WHAT HAPPENED THERE.

The palace walls were built of drifting snow, and the doors and windows of keen, cold winds. There were more than a hundred chambers in the palace, shaped just as the snow had been blown together; the largest of them was many miles in length. The glittering northern lights gleamed through them all, and showed how empty, cold, and bare they were. Amusements of any kind were utterly unknown in the lofty, brilliant halls; there was never even a juvenile bears' ball, where the young polar bears could dance on their hind-legs and show their polished manners; never a merry game at tic, or a tea-party with bonbons and gossip for the arctic young lady foxes. The great halls were silent, bare, and cold. The northern lights shone so accurately that you could tell when they were highest and when lowest. In the centre of the endless hall was a frozen lake which had cracked in a thousand directions at once. Each piece was like all the rest, and in the centre of the lake sat the snow queen, when she was at home. She said the lake was the mirror of reason, the best and most glorious place in the world.

Little Kay was blue, nay, almost black with cold, but he did not know it, for the snow queen had kissed him till he was numb, and his heart was a lump of ice. He was busily dragging together sharp, flat pieces of ice, and trying to make them fit into one another. It was just like trying to fit together a Chinese puzzle. He made the cleverest shapes and designs; they were part of the ice puzzle of reason. Kay thought there was nothing in the universe higher or better than these puzzles, but that was because of the piece of glass in his eye. He could place the pieces of ice in written words, but never in the one word he wanted them to make—Eternity! The snow queen had said to him, "If you can make out that word you shall be your own master, and I will give you the whole world and a pair of new skates." But he could not make out the word.

"I am going to fly down to the warm countries," said the snow queen. "I must look into my black kettles, as people call them"—it was the burning craters of Etna and Vesuvius which she meant—"I must whiten them over a little. It will improve them, and be good for the grapes and lemons." The snow queen flew away, and Kay sat alone in the bleak, desolate halls; he bent over his ice-flakes and thought till his limbs cracked again; stiff and silent he sat there, you would have thought that he was frozen.

It was just at that moment that little Gerda entered the palace gate. Keen, bitter winds moaned round her as if they were trying vainly to go to sleep. She walked on through the desolate halls till she saw Kay, and then, with a cry of delight, she rushed forward and clasped him in her arms. "Kay, dear little Kay," she cried, "have I found you at last?" She held him close to her heart; but he remained silent and cold. Then Gerda began to cry, and her hot tears fell on

his head and on his breast; they sank into his heart till the ice was melted and the piece of glass washed away. He looked up at her, and she sang—

"The roses all must fade and die,
We shall see Christ the Child on high."

Kay burst into tears, and the piece of glass swam out of his eye. Then he knew her again and cried aloud, "Gerda, my sweet little Gerda! Where have you been all this long time? and where am I?"

He looked round him and shivered. "How cold it is here!" he cried; "how bare and empty!" He clung to Gerda, and she laughed and cried for joy. It was such a pretty sight that even the pieces of ice danced about; and when they were tired they fell of their own accord into the very word which the snow queen had bid him make out! There it lay, bright and clear—Eternity. Kay was his own master now, and free to go where he would.

Gerda kissed his cheeks and they glowed red, she kissed his eyes and they shone like her own, she kissed his hands and feet and he felt strong and happy again. The snow queen might come home now whenever she liked; there stood his release-warrant written in glittering letters of ice.

Hand-in-hand the children wandered out of the lofty palace, talking of the old grandmother and of the roses on the roof. Wherever they came the winds sank to rest and the sun broke out; and when they reached the bush with the red berries they found the reindeer waiting for them. He had brought with him another young reindeer whose udders were full of milk; the children drank long draughts of the warm milk and kissed the kind animal. The two reindeers carried Kay and Gerda to the Finland woman first; there they sat till they were warmed and rested and had talked over their homeward journey. They rode next to the Lapland woman, she had made them some clothes and mended their sleigh. The reindeers ran with them as far as the borders of the land; the first green of early spring was beginning to show. "Good-bye!" said the children to the reindeers. "Good-bye!" they said all round. The young birds were beginning to twitter, the delicate green buds were seen on every tree, and out of the forest came a splendid horse which Gerda knew well, for it had been harnessed to the golden coach.

On its back sat a young girl, with a scarlet cap on her head and a pair of pistols in her belt. It was the little robber girl; she had had enough of living at home and was on her way to the North; if that did not suit her, she meant to try some other place. She knew Gerda at once, and Gerda knew her. Both of them were delighted.

"You're a nice fellow to go roving about in this fashion!" she said to Kay. "I should like to know whether you think you deserve that any one should run all over the world to find you!"

But Gerda patted her cheeks and asked after the prince and princess.

"They are travelling abroad," said the robber girl.

"And the crow?" said Gerda.

"Oh, the crow is dead!" answered the robber girl. "His tame sweetheart is now a widow, and hops about with a piece of black crape

tied round her leg. She makes a great fuss and to-do, but it is all gammon. But now tell me what has happened to you and how you caught him ?"

And Kay and Gerda told her all.

"Snip-snap-snurre-purre-basselurre !" said the robber girl. She shook hands with them both, and promised that if ever she rode through their town she would call and see them. And then she rode away, out into the wide world. But Kay and Gerda wandered homeward hand-in-hand. The lovely springtide was blossoming round them, the church bells rang, and they saw the tall steeples of the great town where they lived. On they went, through the town gates, up the staircase, into the room where the old grandmother was sitting. Everything stood in its old place, the clock ticked as before, the pendulum swung to and fro; but as they passed through the doorway they found that they were quite grown up. The roses peeped in at the window, and there stood the low stools where they used to sit when they were children. They sat down hand-in-hand; the cold, brilliant emptiness of the snow queen's palace faded from their memory like a bad dream. The old grandmother sat in the sunshine and read aloud out of her Bible, "Except ye become as little children ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Kay and Gerda looked into each other's eyes, and all at once they understood the old hymn—

> "The roses all must fade and die,
> We shall see Christ the Child on high."

There they sat, grown up, and children still. Children in heart and soul.

And it was summer—warm, blessed, glorious summer!

—o—

The Last Dream of the Old Oak:

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

IN the wood which crowns the steep, rocky shore of the northern sea, there stands an old, old oak tree. It was three hundred and sixty-five years old; but the long years seemed no more to the old tree than as many days would seem to us. We wake by day and sleep at night, and then there are our dreams; but with the tree it is quite different. It is awake through three seasons of the year, and never sleeps before the winter comes. The winter is its only time for rest—its quiet night after the long day of spring, summer, and autumn. Many a summer day had the tiny flies who only live

one day danced round his leaves; hovering in the warm sunshine and sporting away their short, sunny life. "Poor little ones," the old oak would say, when they rested for a moment on his green leaves, "only to live one day! how short—how sad it is!"

"Sad—short?" cried the ephemera; "we do not know what you mean. "Life is warm and light and beautiful, and we are happy."

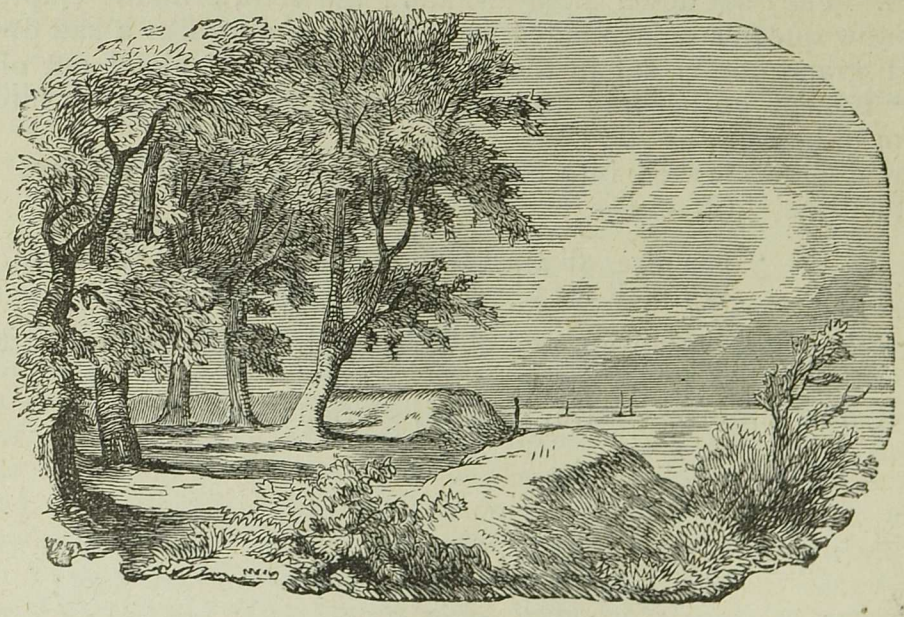
"But only for a day—then it is all over."

"Over?" echoed the ephemera. "What do you mean by *over?* Shall you be over?"

"No! I live out thousands of your days. My life is reckoned by centuries. It is so long you cannot even reckon it."

"No, for we do not understand you. You have thousands of our days; but we have thousands of minutes in which to be alive and happy. Is all the beauty in the world over when you die?"

"No," said the oak; "it will last through long years—more than I can reckon."



"Then things are equal with us, only we reckon differently," said the ephemera.

And the little flies danced on in the warm sunshine; they rejoiced in the gauze and velvet of their delicately-woven wings, in the soft summer air, rich with the fragrance of clover fields and roses, of elder blossom and honeysuckle, of the white privet hedges, the wild thyme, mint, and primroses; the perfumes blended so sweetly, that the little flies were almost intoxicated. The long, long day was filled with happiness, and when the sun set a pleasant drowsiness fell on the tiny flies: wearied out with joy, their dainty wings had not strength to bear them up; gently they sank down to the moss and grass beneath, nodded a good-bye to the beautiful world, and fell asleep. That was their death.

"Poor little ephemera!" sighed the old oak; "life has indeed been short for you."

And every summer day saw again the same dance, the same question

and reply, the same falling asleep. It went on through whole generations of ephemera, and all were brimful of happiness.

The oak stood there wide awake through spring, summer, and autumn; night, the time for rest, was approaching for her. Winter was at hand.

Already the storms sang their "good-night." A leaf fell, one here, one there. "We are rustling and falling: good-night; sleep well! We will sing you to sleep. Is not that good news? We can hear your old branches creak with rapture! Sleep sound and well! It is your three-hundredth-and-sixty-fifth night. You are but a youngster in the world as yet. Good-night! The snow is spreading a soft, warm coverlet over your feet. Good-night, and pleasant dreams!"

The oak stood there bare of every leaf, sleeping its long winter sleep and dreaming many a dream. Its dreams, like ours, were always about something which had happened to itself.

The tree had been small once, and had lain in an acorn for its cradle. According to human computation, it was now in its fourth century; it was the best and tallest tree in the forest; its crest towered above its fellows, and was seen far out at sea. It served the sailors as a beacon; more eyes than it dreamed of were turned towards it. The wild pigeon built her nest high up among its branches; the cuckoo sang her song upon its boughs; and in the autumn, when its leaves looked like beaten copper-plates, the birds of passage, rested on the branches before they crossed the sea. But now it was winter; the old tree stood leafless and bare; you saw every turn of its gnarled and crooked branches as they hung round the trunk. Crows and rooks came in turn and settled on the branches. They talked of the hard season which was just beginning, and how difficult it was to pick up a living.

It was about the sacred Christmas time that the oak dreamed its most beautiful dream.

It had an instinctive feeling that it was Christmas time. The church bells were ringing in his dream, and yet it seemed a summer day, warm and lovely. It spread abroad its glorious crown, and let the sunlight pour through the leaves and branches. The air was filled with the scent of flowers and herbs, bright-coloured butterflies chased each other, the summer-flies danced as if the world had been made on purpose for them to play in. All that the tree had lived through in its long life passed before it now in a stately procession. Knights and noble ladies of old times rode by, waving plumes upon their hats, and falcons on their wrists; the hunting horn echoed through the wood, and the hounds bayed aloud. Then the oak saw troops of hostile warriors armed with glittering weapons, pikes, and halberts. Tents were set up and struck again; the bivouac fires burned red, the soldiers sang and slept under the shadow of the boughs. They passed away, and the tree saw happy lovers standing together in the quiet moonshine, and carving each other's name in its grey-green bark. Long ago, the lyre and the æolian harp were hung upon its branches, and in its dream their tones came back in sweet mysterious echoes. The wood-pigeons cooed as if to tell the tree what it was feeling, and the cuckoo counted over the summer days which it had yet to live.

It seemed as if a new life thrilled suddenly from the tiniest root

through every leaf and twig up to the highest crown. The tree felt itself stretch and strain; felt that there was warmth and life even in the dark earth among its roots; felt its strength deepen every moment. It grew higher and higher; there was no standing still; its crown spread out fuller and wider, and as the tree grew so did its happiness also, and its longing to rise higher still towards the shining sun.

Already it was far above the clouds; the flights of birds of passage and great white swans flew far below it towards the south.

And every leaf of the tree received the gift of sight, as if it had eyes to see with; the stars were visible in the clear noontide; they shone like mild and loving eyes, making the old tree think of other eyes—gentle and true children's and lovers' eyes which had met each other's glances beneath its leaves in years gone by.

It was a wonderful moment, full of life and joy. And among all its happiness the tree felt an earnest longing that all the other trees in the forest below, that all the herbs and shrubs and flowers could rise with it and see the glory, and be filled with the same gladness. The stately, royal oak was not quite happy without having around it all its companions, great and small; the yearning for them thrilled through every twig and leaf, just as it thrills through a human heart.

The oak tree waved its crest to and fro as if in search of them; it bent downwards and met a rush of fragrance, the scent of violets, wild thyme, and honeysuckle, and, as it thought, the voice of the cuckoo.

Yes, the green crest of the forest pierced the clouds, and the oak watched the other trees rising round it. Shrubs and herbs tore themselves loose, and flew swiftly upward. The silver birch was the swiftest of all; its slender stem darted upward in a zig-zag of white fire; its green branches streamed and waved around it like a veil of gauze or hanging banners. The whole life of the wood, even the brown reeds, rose with the rest; singing-birds followed them, trilling their sweetest songs; and on the blades of grass, which fluttered like untied ribbons in the air, the grasshopper sat polishing his wings with his legs. Cockchafers hummed, the birds sang each his own song; the merry chorus rose even to the gates of heaven.

"But where is the little blue flower that grows by the water?" said the oak; "where are the purple harebells and the little daisy?" For the oak loved to have them all around him. "Here we are; here we are!" it sounded in the air.

"But the last year's honeysuckles?" cried the oak; "the beautiful white may, and the wild apple blossom in the wood, with all the flowers of all the years that are gone? If they were only alive now they would share in our happiness!"

"We do share it. Here we are!" came faint, faint voices far above in the air, as if they had been there long before.

"Well, this is really too beautiful!" cried the old oak. "They are all here, I have them all. Not one is forgotten. Who could dream of such happiness? How is it possible?"

"In God's kingdom all things are possible," came the answer from above.

The old tree, which had been rising all the time, felt as if its roots were being torn out of the earth.

"She stood there proudly, her cruel feet resting on Rudy's corpse."

"That is the best of all!" it cried. "Now there is nothing to hold me back. I can fly upward to the light and glory. And all my loved ones are with me, great and small. Every one!"

That was the old oak's dream; and while it dreamed a terrible storm raged over land and sea on Christmas Eve. The heavy waves dashed against the shore; the old tree was torn up by the roots, and fell crashing to the ground, at the very moment when it dreamed that its roots were loosened and set free. It fell. It's three hundred and sixty-five years were over, like the one day of the summer fly.

When the sun rose on Christmas Day the storm had passed away. Joyously the bells rang out from every steeple, and from every chimney, great and small, the blue smoke rose like the incense from the old Druid altars. The sea grew calm by slow degrees; and on board of a great ship, which had weathered the storm, the gay flags were flying in honour of the Christmas feast.

"The tree is gone. The old oak tree, our beacon on the coast. It must have fallen in last night's storm. Who can fill its place? No one!" It was a short funeral sermon; short, but well meant.

The old tree lay stretched out upon its bier of snow, and above it floated the notes of the Christmas hymns sung by the sailors on the ship. A hymn that sang of Christmas joy, of the soul's redemption through Jesus Christ, and of eternal life.

"Sing, Christian men, on Christmas morn:
Sing of the Son to Mary born;
Of Sharon's Rose without a thorn;
Alleluia!"

That was the old carol which the sailors sang on board the ship; and every man felt raised above himself by prayer and praise, as the old oak felt in its last, best dream on Christmas night.

The Ice Maiden.

I. Little Rudy.

LET us betake ourselves to Switzerland, and wander through the lovely mountain land where the pine woods cling to the sides of precipitous cliffs. We will climb up the glittering white glaciers, and down again to the green meadows through which the leaping streams hurry wildly forward as if they could not reach the sea too soon. The sun burns hot as fire in the low valleys, and on the icy peaks its hot rays melt the masses of hard ice till they sink and swim in rolling avalanches or changing glaciers. Two of these

glaciers lie in the wide rocky passes between the Schreckhorn and the Wetterhorn, close to the little town of Grindelwald. They are wonderful to look upon, and in the summer-time crowds of visitors come to see them from all quarters of the world.

They come across the high snow-clad mountains, and from the deep valleys ; and as they climb higher and higher the valley sinks beneath their feet until it looks as it would if it were seen from an air-balloon. Above them, on the mountain peaks, the clouds hang like thick, black veils, while, below in the valleys, where the brown wooden houses lie scattered about among woods and fields, a sunlit patch stands out in brilliant green, as if it were transparent. Below them, the waterfalls leap and roar; above them, they steal with a gentle ripple down the rock, like fluttering silver ribbons.

On each side of the mountain path are wooden houses, each with its plot of potatoes. Not one could afford to be without it, for inside the houses are troops of hungry children who all take kindly to their food. Out they run from every side and gather round the traveller to offer their wares for sale. Every child is a trader already, and offers carved toy-houses, modelled like the mountain cottages. In rain or sunshine they are always there with their wares.

Some years ago, a little boy used often to be seen among them on the mountain path. He stood apart from the rest, with a serious look in his eyes, and held his wooden toys tightly in both hands, as if he were very loth to let them go. Either on account of his grave, childish face, or because he was so very young, he was often noticed by the strangers who passed that way, and he sold more goods than any other child, without knowing why. Higher up in the mountain lived his grandfather, the old wood-carver. It was he who carved the dainty toy-houses, and in his large press at home there was a multitude of such toys. Nut-crackers, knives and forks, and glove-boxes, all of them covered with carved leaves, or grasses, or with the chamois flying from the hunter. It was a feast for children's eyes ; but Rudy was fonder of the old gun which rested on the beams close to the ceiling : his grandfather had promised that he should have it for his own, but not yet—not till he had grown strong and able to handle it.

Young as the boy was, he had learned to mind the goats ; and if ever there was a good goatherd in all the land, it was little Rudy. He climbed even higher than the goats themselves, for he liked to reach the birds' nests in the tall trees on the mountain edge. He was a fearless child ; but he never played with other children, and scarcely ever smiled, except when he stood by the roaring waterfall, or heard the avalanche thunder down some mountain chasm. The only time he met the other children was when his grandfather sent him down to offer his wood-carvings for sale. Rudy did not like the task; he loved to wander alone among the mountains, or to listen to his grandfather's stories about old times. He heard of the people in Meyringen, where he was born : the Meyringen folk said his grandfather had not lived there always ; they had wandered thither from the far north ; the earliest settlers were called Swedes. Rudy was very proud of knowing so much ; but he learned still more from his other companions, and he had plenty of companions in the house. First came the great dog

Ajola, which belonged to Rudy's father; and next came the tom-cat. Rudy had a profound respect for the cat, for it was he who had taught him how to climb.

"Come out on the roof with me, Rudy," the cat had said to him. He spoke quite clearly and distinctly, and Rudy understood him in a moment, for when children are too young to speak for themselves they have no difficulty in understanding all that the ducks and cats and dogs say. Of course that is only when they are quite little things, just at that age when their grandfather's stick is a fiery, neighing horse with flowing mane and tail. Some children keep this knowledge longer than others, and then everybody says that they are extremely babyish, and very backward for their age. What things people will say to be sure!

"Come out on the roof with me, Rudy," was the first thing he heard the cat say. "It is all nonsense about falling off," continued the bold animal; "people don't fall if they are not afraid. Come along! Set your paw down like this—now your other; feel your way with your fore-paws. Keep your eyes open, of course, and your limbs supple. If you come to a cleft, jump over it as I do. Look!"

And Rudy learned his lesson. He and the cat would often sit side-by-side upon the roof or the branches of the trees; and after awhile Rudy went where the cat would not go—along the extreme ledges of the precipice.

He often climbed to the mountain top before the sun had risen and drank his morning draught of the fresh mountain air, the draught mixed by God Himself, and towards which all that men can do is only to read the written recipe—the fresh scent of the mountain herbs, mint, and wild thyme. All the close, heavy vapours are sucked up by the clouds, and the wind blows them away over the pine woods; the spirit of the fragrance becomes pure, rarefied air, and that was Rudy's morning draught.

The blessed sunbeams kissed his cheek; the evil spirit Dizziness stood lurking near, but dared not approach him. The swallows, out of the seven nests round his grandfather's house, flew round him, singing, "We and you—we and you!" They brought him friendly messages from all at home, even from the two hens, the only birds with whom Rudy never associated.

Child as he was, he had already travelled, and travelled rather a long journey. He was born in Canton Valais, and had been carried to Grindelwald across the mountains. Not very long ago, too, he had walked to the Staubbach, and seen it trembling like a veil of silver gauze against the dazzling whiteness of the Jungfrau. And he had stood on the great glacier at Grindelwald—but that was a sorrowful story. It was there that his mother met her death, and all Rudy's baby-merriment had been frozen and stilled for ever. "When the lad was not twelve months old," said his grandfather, "he laughed oftener than he cried; but after he had lain in the ice-cleft it seemed as though a thorough change passed over him." The old man seldom spoke of these things, but the whole canton knew about them.

Rudy's father had been a postilion; the great dog, Ajola, always went with him on his journeys across the Simplon to the lake of Geneva. In the Rhone valley in Canton Valais, Rudy had some relations on his

father's side; his uncle lived there, and was well-known as a famous guide and chamois hunter. Rudy was only a year old when he lost his father; and his mother was anxious to take her baby home to her friends in the Bernese Oberland. In the month of June she started homewards across the Gemmi pass, in the company of two chamois hunters. They had travelled more than half way over the high peak in the snow fields, her native town was clearly in sight, with all its wooden houses—there was only the great glacier to cross. The snow had newly fallen and hid a cleft that split the ice, not very far down, but still lower than the height of a man. A stream of icy water rushed through it; and into this cleft the young mother sank silently, without one shriek or cry for aid. Nothing was heard but the faint wail of a little child. More than an hour passed away before the two guides could procure ropes and poles from the neighbouring houses, and, after many attempts, two bodies were drawn up out of the crevice. Every means of restoration was tried, and in a little while the baby breathed again, but the mother was past all human help. And so it happened that the old grandfather received into his house at Grindelwald only a poor little orphan child who cried oftener than he laughed, and who seemed to have left all his smiles behind him in the frozen ice cleft. The change must have come upon him in the cold, unearthly chasm, where, as the Swiss peasants say, "The souls of the lost are imprisoned till the Judgment Day."

There lies the glacier, like a rushing torrent arrested at full speed and frozen into glassy blocks of green, transparent ice, pile upon pile; beneath it flow the streams of melted ice and snow among caves, vaults, and shining corridors. It is a strange and wondrous palace—the home of the ice maiden, the glacier queen. Fatal and destructive spirit, child of the air and ruler of the mountain streams, the ice maiden can outrun the chamois on the mountain peaks, where the boldest climber must cut his way step by step. She sails on slender pine stems across the roaring waterfalls, and springs from precipice to precipice, with her long white hair streaming in the breeze and her green robe flying round her, with the changeful opal tints of the mountain lakes.

"Mine is the power to crush and kill," she cried. "They have stolen from me a beautiful boy—a child whom I have kissed, but have not kissed to death. He is back among his kind, tending his goats upon the mountain heights. But he shall not escape me. I will claim him yet, for he is mine!"

She called up her evil spirit Dizziness, and bade him act for her; for the ice maiden could not bear the sultry summer air of the valleys and the scent of mint and thyme. Dizziness came up at her call, he and his brothers, for there are many of them. Some of them sit on staircases and balustrades, some run like squirrels along the mountain edge, some tread the air as the swimmer cleaves the sea, and lure their victims down into the abyss. These spirits and their queen clutch at human beings as the polypus clutches at everything which comes in its reach. The ice maiden chose out the strongest spirit, and bade him seize Rudy.

"Oh, yes!" said the spirit; "seize *him*? That is easier said than done. That monster of a cat has taught him all her tricks. And

he has a power of his own that drives me from him. I cannot touch the boy. Often, when he is leaning over the precipice, I long to tickle the soles of his feet and send him head over heels into the abyss; but I never can manage it."

"It shall be done," said the ice maiden, "either by you or by me."

"No, no!" cried voices, echoing softly among the mountains like the chime of church bells. The voices were those of other spirits, good and kind, who wish well to human beings—the spirits of the sunshine. They encamp every night along the mountain peaks, and spread wide their rosy wings; the sunset falls upon them in all its glory, and people call it the Alpine glow.

When the sun has set they sleep in the soft, white snow, and appear again in the morning. They are fond of flowers and butterflies and human beings, and, among the latter, they loved Rudy most of all.

"You shall not seize him!" they cried.

"I have seized on stronger than he," answered the ice maiden.

Then the spirits of the sunshine sang the old song about the traveller from whom the stormwind vainly tried to take his cloak. "You may seize him, perhaps, but you will not be able to hold him fast," they said, "for he is stronger even than we. He will one day rise higher than the sun, our mother; and he knows the magic word which compels wind and wave to serve his will. You can but loose the heavy burden from him, he will rise high above your grasp."

So sang the spirits, in clear, bell-like chorus.

Every morning the sunbeams stole in through Rudy's window-pane and kissed his cheek. They tried to melt away the icy kisses which the glacier queen had given him as he lay on his dead mother's breast, before he was saved as by a miracle.

II. The Journey to the New Home.

Rudy was now eight years old; his uncle, who lived in the Rhone valley, wished to have the boy sent to him, that he might begin to learn something and have a better chance of getting on in the world. His old grandfather saw the sense of that and let him go.

So Rudy said good-bye. Not to his grandfather only; there was Ajola, the old dog.

"Your father was a postilion, and I was his dog," said Ajola. "We have travelled about a good deal together; I knew most of the dogs and men across the mountains. I never was a great talker, but now that we have so short a time to spend together I shall say rather more than usual. I will tell you a story that has puzzled me all my life. I have been thinking over it for a long time past—I may say that I have pondered the matter deeply. I do not understand it, and neither will you; but that is of no consequence. One thing I *have* made clear, and that is that things are not equally divided in this world, either for dogs or men. It is not every one who is born to be nursed and lap milk; I have not found it to be my case, but I once met a kind of a dog

who was driving along in a post-chaise, where he or she sat on a cushion, like a human being. The lady, its mistress, had a bottle of milk with her, out of which this dog was fed; it was then offered some sugar-cakes, at which it merely sniffed, and did not condescend to eat, so its mistress ate them herself. I, meanwhile, was running by the side of the carriage, hungry as a dog can be, and chewing the cud of my own thoughts for want of anything better. It seemed to me that things were not quite as they ought to be, in more ways than one. Should you like to be nursed and drive in a coach? I heartily hope you may; but you will not be able to attain to it by your own merits. I have not attained to it myself, neither by barking nor by howling."

That was Ajola's story. Rudy kissed him and bade him farewell. Then he took the cat in his arms, who tried hard to get away.

"You are getting too strong for me," said the cat; "and I do not care to make use of my claws against you. Climb away over the mountains. I have taught you the way. Never think it possible that you can fall, and you will stand anywhere."

With that the cat jumped down, for he was too proud to let Rudy see that he was ready to cry at parting.

The hens were strutting about the yard; one of them had had her tail shot off by a traveller, who thought himself a fine sportsman. The man had taken the fowl for a bird of prey.

"Rudy is going to wander over the mountain," said the hen.

"He is always in such a hurry," said the other. "I do not like leave-takings," and away they walked.

Then Rudy said good-bye to the goats; they bleated piteously, and wanted to come with him. It was a sad parting.

Two trusty guides, who were going to cross the Gemmi pass, took charge of Rudy. It was a long walk for such a little boy, but he was a good walker, and had plenty of courage.

The swallows flew with him a little way: "We and you, you and we!" Their path lay across the foaming Lutschine, which breaks forth in myriad tiny streams from the Grindelwald glacier. Trunks of fallen trees and blocks of stone served as bridges. When they had reached the alder forest they began to ascend the mountain where the glacier had loosened itself from the mountain side; and now they began to cross the glacier itself. Rudy was sometimes obliged to crawl on his hands and knees; his eyes sparkled with joy, and he trod so firmly in his iron-clasped shoes that it seemed as if he wished to leave the trace of his every footstep. The black earth, which the mountain stream had scattered on the glacier, gave it a weather beaten look, but the glassy, blue-green ice showed through it all the same. There were small ice bound pools to wander round, and as the travellers edged past them one heavy stone that was rocking on the brink of the abyss lost its balance and fell, thundering, down, and sent up a thousand echoes from the ravine below.

On they climbed, higher and higher; the glacier stretched upwards like a frozen river, hemmed in by jagged cliffs. Rudy remembered for a moment the story he had heard of his own fall into the ice cleft when he was a baby; how he had lain in his mother's arms in the cold death-like snow. But the thought passed away; the tale seemed only

one among many such that he had heard. Now and then the men thought that the path was too difficult for the child, and held out a helping hand towards him, but he was not afraid, and stood like a chamois on the slippery ice. Sometimes their path lay between bare grey stones, sometimes among the pine woods, or across the sunlit meadows; every moment the landscape changed around them, but the three great mountain peaks were ever before their eyes—every child can tell their names—the Jungfrau, the Monk, and the Eiger. Rudy had never climbed so high before; the snow lay round him like a boundless sea, and from time to time the wind tossed away a flake from its swelling waves, as it blew off the foam from the crest of the breakers. The glaciers here lie close together; the palaces of the ice maiden, whose power is used to crush and to destroy. The sun shone warm; the dazzling snow was sprinkled over with blue diamond-like sparks. Countless numbers of bees and butterflies lay dead upon the snow. Either they had ventured too high or the wind had blown them to the spot where the bitter cold killed them. A threatening cloud, swollen with the Föhn, hung like a ball of black wool round the Wetterhorn. Rudy never lost the memory of this journey—of the night quarters on the mountain peak, and of the rushing water which, working through ages that make one giddy only to think upon, saws through and conquers the massive stone.

A lonely stone building gave them shelter for the night; a fire was soon lighted with fir cones and dry wood; the guides sat round it smoking their pipes and drinking hot spiced wine. Little Rudy drank some with them, and listened to their tales of the mysterious beings of the mountain peaks; of the gigantic water-snakes which haunt the frozen lakes; the nightly band of spectres who carry the sleeping stranger on to the floating city of Venice; the wild shepherd who leads his black sheep across the meadows. If they had not seen him, they had heard the faint, unearthly tinkle of his sheep-bells. Rudy listened eagerly, but without a thrill of fear; and as he listened he thought he heard the hollow, ghostly sound. It drew nearer; the guides heard it also; they stopped in their story, and told Rudy he must not go to sleep.

It was the Föhn, the stormy south wind, that rushes down from the mountain heights, snapping the great trees asunder like so many reeds, and carrying the wooden cottages across the flood just as one moves a piece on a chessboard.

By-and-by they told Rudy that the danger was over, and he might go to sleep. Tired out with his long walk, the child slept at once, at the first word of command.

The next morning they set out again. The sun lit up new mountains and new valleys for Rudy to see. They were now in Canton Valais, beyond the mountain chain one sees from Grindelwald. The boy saw other clefts, other mountain passes, and other men. But what men they were! Misshapen forms, weird, yellow faces, with unsightly swellings disfiguring the throat—he saw the Crétins, as they dragged themselves wearily along and stared at the strangers with vacant eyes. Were all the people like this in his new home?

III. Rudy's Uncle.

Heaven be praised! the people in his uncle's house looked like those whom the child had left behind, except indeed poor Saperli. Saperli was a poor, forsaken Crétin of weak intellect, who wandered about the canton and was sheltered for a while in every house, and Rudy happened to find him at his uncle's when he arrived there after his journey.

His uncle was a famous hunter, and carried on a cooper's business as well. His aunt was a lively little Frenchwoman, with a bird-like face, eagle eyes, and a long, yellow neck.

Everything was new to Rudy: dress, manners, and language, but the child soon caught up the last. The home was better furnished and larger than his grandfather's cottage. The rooms were lofty; antlers and polished fowling-pieces ornamented the walls; over the door was an image of the Virgin, before which stood a burning lamp and a nosegay of fresh Alpine roses.

Rudy's uncle was not only a successful hunter; he was one of the best guides. The child was now the pet of the household; before he came it was the old, blind hound who was everybody's favourite. The dog was too old to hunt now, but his master remembered his past services, and the dog was cared for and caressed like one of the family. Rudy stroked him, but the old hound did not like strangers. Before long, however, they were fast friends, and Rudy was made free of house and home.

"It is not a bad place, our Canton Valais," said his uncle; "we have plenty of chamois, they do not die out so fast as the wild goats; and it is better here now than it used to be. Let people praise bygone days as much as they please, our own times are the best. The sack is open; a current of fresh air passes through our valley. When a worn-out thing falls to pieces, something better comes to take its place." When his uncle was in a talking mood, he would speak of his own youth and of his father before him, when Valais was, as he called it, a tied-up sackful of wretched, sick people, miserable Crétins. "The French soldiers were the best doctors," he said; "they killed the disease and the patients too. The French know how to conquer in more ways than one, and so do the Frenchwomen also." With that the hunter laughed and nodded at his wife, who was a Frenchwoman born and bred. "And they can conquer the stone also," he continued. "They made the Simplon pass through the solid rock; and what a path it is! I might say to a little three-year-old child, 'Go down to Italy; keep on the high road,' and the child would get there without fail if it only did as it was bid." And then the hunter sang a French song, and cried, "Hurrah! Long live Napoleon!"

This was the first time that Rudy had heard of France, and of Lyons, the great town on the Rhone, where his uncle had been.

It was not long before Rudy also became an agile chamois hunter: he had the making of it in him, his uncle said. He learned how to handle a gun and to shoot at a mark; and his uncle made him drink the warm blood of a chamois, a draught which preserves him who drinks it from

ever feeling giddy. He learned, too, to know the times at which the avalanches fell from the different mountains, in the morning or in the evening, just as the sun's rays caught them. He studied the firm, agile spring of the chamois; and where there was no foothold he learned to steady himself by his elbows, and to cling with his back and the muscles of his loins. The chamois are wise, and post sentries; the hunter must be wiser still and never cross their scent. He must perplex and mislead them. One day Rudy saw his uncle hang his hat and cloak upon a stick, and the chamois took it for a man.

The mountain path was narrow, a mere ledge along the yawning precipice. The half-melted snow crumbled the rock, and the stones fell at every step. Rudy watched while his uncle crept along the ledge on his face; the loose pieces of rock fell one by one into the measureless depths below. Rudy was standing on a projecting point of rock about a hundred paces behind his uncle; suddenly he saw a great eagle circling in the air above the unconscious hunter, and poising above him, ready to swoop down and plunge with him to the abyss. The hunter's eyes were fixed upon the chamois; Rudy saw nothing but the eagle; he knew what the bird wanted, and he kept his gun ready to take aim. At the moment the chamois made a spring the hunter fired, and the animal fell dead. Her young one fled away, as if it had passed through a life of fear and flight. Frightened by the noise, the great eagle flew swiftly away, and the hunter knew nothing of his danger till he learned it from Rudy.

They turned towards home in the highest spirits, the hunter whistling a song as he went. Suddenly a strange sound was heard; they looked round; yonder, on the rocky heights, the snow heaved and rose in great waves, as a sheet of white linen heaves when the wind passes under it.

The snow waves broke up and changed from firm marble slabs into rushing, foaming torrents, with a sullen roar like a muffled sound of thunder. It was an avalanche falling, not upon Rudy and his uncle, but near them—alas! much too near them.

"Hold fast, Rudy," shouted his uncle; "cling with all your might."

Rudy clung to the nearest tree, and his uncle climbed up into the branches. The avalanche thundered down beside them; but the stormwing that spreads out from it on either side caught the tree to which they were clinging, and snapped it in two, like a dry reed. Rudy lay safe upon the earth, but his uncle was hurled far away; and the boy found him, beneath the jagged branches, with his hands still warm, but his kind face crushed out of human form. Rudy stood pale and trembling under the first shock of his life and its first thrill of fear.

Late at night he reached home with his terrible message. The poor wife did not utter a cry or shed a tear till they carried her husband's body into the house, and then her grief broke out in tears and sobs. The Crétin crept away to his bed and hid there for two days. On the third day he came to Rudy.

"Write a letter for me," he said. "Saperli cannot write. Saperli can take it to the post."

"A letter for you?" said Rudy. "To whom?"

"To the Lord Christ."

"To whom do you say?"

The Crétin folded his hands, looked imploringly at Rudy, and answered, solemnly, "To Jesus Christ. Saperli wants to send Him a letter; and beg that Saperli may die, and not the master in the house here!"

Rudy pressed his hand. "The letter will not bring the master back," he said. But it was no easy task to make the Crétin believe him.

"Now you must be our support," said the widow to Rudy. And the boy fulfilled his task.

IV. Babette.

Who is the best shot in Canton Valais? The chamois had found that out long ago. "Beware of Rudy!" they said, one to another. Who is the handsomest hunter in the canton? "Rudy," answered the young girls; and *they* did not say "Beware of Rudy." Their careful mothers did not say so either, for Rudy was as polite to them as he was to the young girls. How merry and bold he was! His cheeks were sunburnt, his teeth pearly white, his hair black and wavy; he was a handsome youth, and just twenty years old. The icy water could not harm him when he swam the lakes; he could turn and twist about like a fish; he was the best climber in all the district, and could cling like a snail to the sides of the cliff. His muscles and sinews never failed him at his leaps, and he did credit to his teachers, the cat and the chamois.

Rudy was the best guide; every one had confidence in him, and he might easily have made his fortune, but he had no liking for the work, nor for his uncle's trade; his whole delight was fixed in chamois hunting. There was plenty of money to be earned by a skilful hunter, and every one said that Rudy would be a good match if he did not look too high. He was certainly a good dancer; the young girls dreamed of him, and some of them thought of him even when they were awake.

"Rudy kissed me in the dance," said Annette, the schoolmaster's daughter, to her dearest friend. She ought not to have said so, not even to her dearest friend. Such secrets cannot be kept; they are like sand in a sieve; and before long every one knew that Rudy, brave and good as he was, had kissed some one in the dance. But he had not kissed the one he loved the best.

"Oh, Rudy!" said an old hunter; "he has kissed Annette, and now he has begun with A, he will go on through the whole alphabet."

This kiss was the utmost that the gossips could find to reproach him with, and it had not been given to the maiden of his heart.

Down in the valley near Bex lived the rich miller. The mill stood near the rushing stream, the house—a large building three storeys high, with little turrets, and its roof of wood and tin, which glittered in the sunlight—was sheltered by two great walnut trees. On the highest turret was a weathercock, an apple transfixed by an arrow, in memory of Tell's famous shot. The mill was picturesque, and found plenty to

paint it and write about it; but the miller's daughter allowed no one to paint her or to write about her. At least that was Rudy's firm belief. She was painted clearly in his heart, and her blue eyes had kindled a fire there—a fire which had flamed out suddenly, as most fires do. The strangest thing was, that the pretty Babette knew nothing at all about it: she and Rudy had never spoken a word to each other.

The miller was rich, and therefore Babette was not easily to be won. But there is nothing too high to be reached when one knows how to climb, and no one falls unless he is afraid. Rudy had learned that lesson long ago.

Now, it happened that Rudy had some business to transact in Bex. It was quite a journey then, for the railway was not opened. The broad valley stretches away from the Rhone glacier along the foot of the Simplon, between myriad mountain peaks, and through it rushes the beautiful Rhone. Too often the river overflows its bed and carries destruction to the meadow lands and *châlets* on its banks. Between Sion and St. Maurice the valley bends like an elbow, and beyond St. Maurice it narrows till there is only room for the river and a road wide enough to let a single carriage pass. An old tower stands by the road-side as guardian of the valley, for there the Canton Valais ends and Canton Vaud begins. Across the bridge you see the custom house of the frontier, and the next town beyond is Bex. The country is rich and luxuriant: a perfect garden of walnut and chestnut trees, now and then a cypress or a pomegranate tree is seen among them; and the air is as warm as if one were in Italy.

Rudy arrived in Bex and finished his business. He then walked about the town a little; but he did not see even a miller's boy, much less Babette. That was not as it should be.

Evening drew on; the air was heavy with the scent of wild thyme and lime blossoms; a faint blue mist veiled the wooded mountain sides; deep silence reigned over all. Not a chill, deathlike silence, but the hush of perfect rest; it was as if Nature was holding her breath while her photograph was being taken on the blue background of the sky. Here and there stiff telegraph posts stood among the green trees in the meadow, and against one of these a figure was leaning—motionless as the post itself. It was Rudy, silent as the landscape round him. For all that he was not asleep, much less dead. The telegraph wires are silent, even when news that will rouse the world is flying through them; and at this moment thoughts of life and death to Rudy—plans for the happiness of his whole life—were flying through his brain. His eyes were fixed on the twinkling light that came and went through the leaves round the miller's window. He stood so still that you would have thought he was watching a chamois—or, rather, he himself was the chamois, for it will stand for hours together as if carved out of the rock, till suddenly a stone falls and it flies away; and just then a thought fell across Rudy's brain, and he started up at last.

"Never despair!" he cried. "A visit to the mill will be the thing. 'Good evening, miller—good evening, Babette!' A man never falls unless he is afraid, and Babette must see me sometime, if I am ever to be her husband."

Rudy laughed and walked up to the mill in good spirits; he knew what he wanted this time. Nothing less than Babette.

The river rushed on above its yellowish bed; willows and linden trees hung over the foaming waters. Rudy struck into the path that led to the miller's house. But, as the children sing—

"The door was shut, the folk were gone;
The cat sat on the step alone!"

"Mew!" said the cat, setting up her back and rubbing herself against the door. But Rudy had forgotten the cat's language. He knocked at the door; no one heard him, so no one answered. "Mew!" said the cat. When Rudy was a little child he would have understood in a moment that the cat was telling him that no one was at home. As it was, he was obliged to go and make inquiries at the mill; and there he learned that the miller and Babette were gone to the grand shooting match at Interlachen. The contest was to begin on the next day, and to last through the week; visitors from all the German cantons were expected.

Poor Rudy! he certainly had not chosen a lucky day for his visit to Bex; all he could do now was to go back again; and so he did, across St. Maurice and Sion to his native valley. But he was not cast down; when the sun rose on the following day his good temper had been up long before, if indeed it had ever set.

"Babette is in Interlachen," he said to himself; "many a long day's journey from here if one goes by the highway, but not nearly so long if one goes right across the mountains. I know the way from my earliest childhood. And there is a shooting match going on! I will be first among the shooters; and I could not have a better place in which to make Babette's acquaintance."

Rudy made for the Gemmi pass. His light knapsack, in which was all his Sunday bravery, was slung across his shoulders; he carried his gun and hunting-pouch, and entered the pass, intending to descend at Grindelwald. Even then he had no trifling distance to go; but the match had only just begun; and the miller and Babette were going to stay with their friends in Interlachen till all the gaieties were over.

Joyously Rudy marched along in the fresh, bracing mountain air; the valley sank beneath him, the horizon widened, first one snow-peak rose before him, then another, and then the whole mountain chain of glittering snow-white Alps. He knew every peak, and made straight for the Schreckhorn, which stood lifting up its finger of whitened stone high in the blue air.

At length the brow of the chain was crossed; the grassy tracts sloped downwards towards his native valley; around him were trees and flowers rich with the lavish wealth of beauty; and in his heart there was the unclouded joy of youth, which will know nothing either of old age or of death, and proudly claims to live, to rule, and to enjoy. He felt free as the birds of the air. The swallows circled round him and sang as they had sung of old. "We and you! we and you!" All was freedom and gladness.

Below him lay the green velvet of the meadows with their houses of brown wood, among which the Lutschinen leaped and tumbled.

He saw the two glaciers with their glass-green edges and discoloured snow; and he looked fearlessly into the deep cracks and crevices. The church bells rang out a welcome to him, and made his heart beat so loud with old memories that for a moment Babette herself was forgotten.

He trod once more the mountain path where he had stood when he was a little boy and offered toys for sale. Yonder, behind the pine trees, he saw his grandfather's house. Strangers were living there now; and other children came to meet him, offering him their wood-carvings and flowers. One of them offered him an Alpine rose, Rudy accepted it as a good omen; and his thoughts flew back to Babette. He crossed the bridge where the two Lutschinen meet, the foliage was thicker, and the walnut trees cast a pleasant shadow. Now he saw the waving flags, the white cross on a red ground—the flag of the Dane and of the Swede. Interlachen lay at his feet.

"Can there be a prettier sight in the world," thought Rudy, "than a Swiss town in holiday dress?" It was not in the least like any other town—a compact, symmetrical mass of grand stone houses—no, it looked as if the pretty brown houses had run down of their own free will from the mountain into the valley, and grouped themselves on either side of the swift, arrowy river, in self-willed fashion, rather irregular and in and out, but making a pretty street for all that. The finest street has grown into existence since Rudy's childhood; it seemed to him as if all the toy-houses in his grandfather's chest had been planted in a row and had grown to full-size, like the ancient chestnut trees. Every house was an hotel, with projecting roof and delicately carved front; and between it and the street was a garden ablaze with flowers and sparkling with fountains. There were no buildings on the other side of the street, so that nothing interposed to hide from view the soft, green meadow lands through which the cows wandered, tinkling their bells, or the mountain chain, which parted and fell back a little in the centre, as if to let every one see, in all its brilliant loveliness, the snow-clad steeps of the Jungfrau.

What a multitude of finely-dressed ladies and gentlemen filled the streets! and what a throng of Swiss from every canton! Every marksman wore in his cap a ticket, on which was written the number of successful shots which he had made. There was plenty of noise and bustle, music singing and trumpet blowing. All the houses were decorated with flags, flowers, and mottos of every kind. Crack! crack! went the shots. That was the best music, Rudy thought. In the excitement of the scene he nearly forgot Babette and the cause which had brought him thither.

He soon found his way to the marksmen, and his shot never once failed to hit the very centre of the mark.

"Who is that young stranger?" the people asked each other. "He speaks French as if he came from Valais, but his German is very good also."

"He lived at Grindelwald when he was a child," said one of the old huntsmen.

The dark-eyed stranger was full of life and spirit; his eye and his arm were both of them sure and true. Courage gives success, and

Rudy had always plenty of courage. Very soon he was the centre of an admiring circle, murmurs of applause met his ears on every side; Babette had vanished from his thoughts. A heavy hand fell on his shoulder, and a voice said to him, in French, "You come from Canton Valais, don't you?"

Rudy turned round and saw a broad, red face smiling pleasantly on him. It was the rich miller from Bex, and hidden behind his portly form was the slender figure of Babette, and her soft, bright eyes. The miller from Valais was proud that it was a man from his own canton who had carried off prize after prize. Rudy must certainly have been a Sunday child, for the very people whom he had come to meet, and had forgotten, were now making the first advances to him.

When two neighbours meet in this way among strangers acquaintanceship is soon struck up between them. Rudy was the first marksman at the shooting match; the miller was the first man at Bex, thanks to his money and his good mill. The two men shook hands for the first time, and then Babette held out her little hand, with a true-hearted smile. Rudy held it so long that she coloured as red as a rose.

The miller spoke of their journey and of the towns they had passed through; in his opinion they had travelled an immense distance, for they had come by rail, and steamboat, and coach.

"I chose a shorter road," said Rudy. "I crossed the mountains. There is no path too high to be crossed."

"Not if you don't mind breaking your neck," said the miller. "And you look just the one to do that, some day or other, out of sheer recklessness."

"Oh, people need never fall if they make up their minds that they won't," said Rudy.

The miller's relation, in whose house he was staying, invited Rudy to come in, for he also was born in Canton Valais. The young man took the invitation as a good omen, and a sign that Fortune was in his favour—and so she always is to those who think for themselves, and who remember that, though she gives us nuts, she does not crack them for us."

Rudy sat among the guests as if he were one of the family; healths were drunk in his honour; Babette clinked her glass with the rest, and Rudy returned thanks for the honour.

Towards evening they walked down the beautiful new street in front of the hotels. There was such a crowd of people walking to and fro under the tall chestnut trees, that Rudy was obliged to offer Babette his arm. He was so glad to have met such kind friends, he said—Vaud and Valais were always good neighbours; it was almost like one canton. He spoke with such warmth that Babette could not help pressing his hand. They walked side by side as if they were old acquaintances; Babette chattered merrily, and Rudy liked to hear her laugh at the affected manners and wonderful dresses of the foreign visitors. She did not laugh from ill-nature, but from sheer lightness of heart, for she knew that some, at least, of the strangers were good and noble people. She told Rudy about her English godmother, a great lady, who, eighteen years ago, when Babette was christened, had

stood sponsor for her in Bex, and gave her the beautiful brooch she was wearing then. She had written twice to her godmother, and this year she would very likely meet her and her two daughters. The daughters were old maids, nearly thirty, said Babette—Babette was just eighteen.

The pretty little mouth was never still for an instant, and all that it said seemed to Rudy to be of the highest importance. He, too, told her many things; among others, he told her how often he had been to Bex, and how many times he had seen her when she little thought of it. He spoke of the last visit he had paid to the mill, with many thoughts in his heart that he could not explain at present, and how, when he heard that she and her father were gone to Interlachen, he thought the way was not so long that one could not climb over the mountain wall and shorten it.

Yes, he said all that, and more besides; he told her that it was for her sake, and not to join in the shooting match, that he had come to Interlachen!

Babette was silent; it seemed to her that he had said too much, and that she had listened too long.

As they wandered on the sun set behind the Alps, and the Jungfrau stood out in splendour, framed in rich green woodlands. Every one stopped to look at the beautiful sight.

"Nothing can be more beautiful than this!" said Babette.

"Nothing?" said Rudy, looking into her face. "I must go home," he said, a few moments later.

"Come and see us in Bex," whispered Babette; "my father will be pleased to see you."

V. The Homeward Journey.

Oh, what a number of things Rudy had to carry as he made his way home across the mountains! Three silver cups, two beautiful guns, and a silver coffee-pot: the coffee-pot would be very useful in case he wanted to set up housekeeping. And he carried something else, or it carried him, homewards—something higher and better than his prizes. The weather was dull and stormy, with grey skies and heavy rain; the shining mountain peaks had disappeared beneath a veil of black crape. The last sounds of the axe came from the valley below, and the tree stems rolled down the slopes: seen from above, the stately trunks looked like thin, dry sticks. The Lutschine rushed on with its monotonous roar. The wind rose higher, and the clouds sailed fast. Suddenly a young maiden stood at Rudy's side; he had not noticed her till she was close to him: she also was going to cross the pass. In the maiden's eyes lay a strange, mysterious power; they were clear as glass, and fathomless in their wondrous depth.

"Have you a lover?" asked Rudy, for his head was full of such thoughts just then.

"No," said the maiden, "not one!" and she laughed as if the

answer was not true. "Do not let us go all this way round," she said: "turn to the left, that is the shorter way."

"It is the shortest way to fall into an ice cleft," said Rudy. "Do you pretend to be a guide, and yet know no better than that?"

"I know the way," said the maiden, "and my thoughts are clear, but yours are wandering down in the valley. On the mountain heights you should think of the ice maiden: she has no love for human beings; at least, men say so."

"I am not afraid of her," said Rudy. "She was obliged to give me up when I was a child, and I am not going back to her now that I am a man."

The darkness increased, the rain fell fast, and the snowflakes whirled through the air.

"Give me your hand," said the maiden, "I can help you;" and Rudy felt himself touched by ice-cold fingers.

"You help me!" he cried. "I do not want a woman's help in climbing." He stepped forward more quickly; the snow-storm closed him round; the wind howled, and behind him he heard the maiden singing—it sounded weird and strange in the stormy night. "It must be a spirit in the service of the ice maiden," thought Rudy: he had heard of such things when he was a boy and passed the night here, with the two guides, on his way to Valais.

The snow fell lighter, the clouds lay below him; he looked back, but there was no one to be seen. The sounds of the strange, unearthly laughter followed him yet.

But when he reached the spot where the path slopes downwards toward the Rhone valley, he saw above Chamouni a strip of clear blue sky, in which two lovely stars were shining. They glowed and trembled, and Rudy thought of his fortune and of Babette, and the thoughts drove away the cold.

VI. The Visit to the Mill.

"You have brought some splendid things home with you!" said his aunt. Her queer little bird-like eyes sparkled, and she twisted her long neck about in a wonderful way. "You are a lucky boy, Rudy," she said; "I must really give you a kiss."

Rudy let himself be kissed; but his face showed that he looked on the performance as a mild domestic penance.

"What a handsome lad you are, Rudy!" said the little woman.

"I don't see it," said Rudy, laughing; but he was pleased, for all that.

"I can tell you again," said his aunt, "you have luck on your side."

"You may be right on that point," said Rudy; and he thought of Babette.

"They must be at home by this time," he said to himself. "It is two days beyond the time they mentioned. I must go down to Bex."

Never had he felt such a longing for the lovely valley. He went to

Bex, and they were at home this time. Rudy was well received, and the miller gave him many kind messages from his friends in Interlachen. Babette was very silent, but her eyes spoke, and Rudy was quite contented. And even the miller, who generally liked to keep all the conversation to himself, and was accustomed to have every one laughing at his puns and jokes, seemed to prefer for once to let Rudy speak and listen to the young man's tales of his adventures in the chase. Rudy spoke of the dangers which the hunter had to brave on the mountain heights, how he was forced to crawl along the perilous ledge of snow and over the half-frozen bridge of ice which crosses the steep, deep clefts. His eyes sparkled when he spoke of the chamois' cleverness and their wonderful leaps, or of the föhnwind and the avalanche. He saw very well that he was gaining ground in the miller's favour, especially when he told him about the eagles and the vultures on the heights.

Not far off there was an eagle's nest in Canton Valais, cleverly built close under a projecting ledge of rock; and in the nest was a young eagle, but it was impossible to seize it. Only a few days before, an Englishman had offered Rudy a handful of gold if he could take the young eagle alive; "But there is a limit to everything," said Rudy. "No man living could do it; it would be only foolhardiness to try."

The wine flowed freely, and the talk never flagged. The evening was all too short, thought Rudy; and yet it was midnight when he returned home from his first visit to the mill.

The lights still twinkled behind the windows of the mill through the green leaves of the walnut-trees; out through the hole in the roof came the parlour cat, the kitchen cat appeared along the spouting.

"Do you know what is going on in the mill?" said the parlour cat. "There is a secret betrothal in the house. The miller knows nothing about it. Rudy and Babette have been treading on each other's paws under the table all the evening. They trod on me twice, but I did not mew, because it would have attracted attention."

"I should have mewed," said the kitchen cat.

"What is allowed in the kitchen would not be allowed in the parlour," said the parlour cat; "I am anxious to know what the miller will say when he hears of the engagement."

Yes, indeed; and Rudy was anxious to know that also. He had not long to wait. Before many days were over, Rudy, hopeful as ever, was sitting in the omnibus which runs between Valais and Vaud, thinking of the consent which he should be sure to win before nightfall.

In the evening there was Rudy in the omnibus again; and in the mill the parlour cat was running about primed with news.

"Do you know what happened, you kitchen cat? The miller knows all now. Things have come to a pretty pass. Rudy has been here; he and Babette were whispering together for ever so long outside the miller's door. I lay at their feet, but they had no eyes for me. 'I am going at once to see your father,' said Rudy; 'it is the most honourable way.' 'Shall I come with you,' said Babette, 'to give you courage?' 'I have plenty of courage,' said Rudy; 'but still, if you are with me your father must be civil, whether he will or no.' They

got up, and Rudy trod with all his force on my tail. He is extremely awkward. I mewed, but neither he nor Babette paid the least attention. They opened the door and went in, but I went in first and sat on the back of a chair; I was curious to know how it would end. And it ended in this way—the miller showed Rudy the door, and sent him off to his mountains and his chamois. He may aim at them, but not at our Babette."

"But what passed? what did they say?" asked the kitchen cat.

"What did they say? Everything that people do say in such circumstances. 'I love her and she loves me, and when there is milk for one there is milk for two.'

"'Babette is above you,' said the miller; 'you look too high.'

"'Nothing is too high for a man to reach if he knows how to climb,' said Rudy, for he is a bold fellow.

"'You cannot reach the eaglet in her nest,' said the miller; 'you said so yourself; and Babette is higher than the eaglet.'

"'I will have them both,' said Rudy.

"'Bring me the bird alive, and I will make you a present of Babette,' said the miller, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. 'But now we have had enough of this visit, Rudy; and if you call to-morrow you will find no one at home. I wish you good-day!'

"And Babette said good-bye, but as piteously as a little kitten who cannot see its mother. 'A word holds good between man and man,' said Rudy. 'Do not cry, Babette! I will win the young eaglet.' 'You will break your neck, I hope,' said the miller, 'and then we shall be rid of your coming here.' I call that a dismissal with a vengeance. Rudy is gone, and Babette sits and cries all day; but the miller goes about singing bits of German songs which he learned on his journey to Interlachen. I don't make myself miserable about it, for it does no good."

"But it seems that there is still a chance," said the kitchen cat.

VII. The Eagle's Nest.

Along the rocky path came the hunter's song, ringing out hope and gladness in every note. It was Rudy's voice; he was on his way to visit his friend Vesinaud.

"You must come to help me," he said; "we will take Nagli with us. I want to take the eaglet out of the nest under the ledge of rock."

"Why not the man out of the moon?" said his friend. "It would be just as easy. You seem in good spirits."

"So I am. I am thinking of getting married. But, seriously, I will tell you exactly how things are."

And before long Vesinaud and Nagli knew all that had happened.

"You are a bold lad!" they cried. "But it won't do. You will break your neck."

"A man never falls unless he thinks he is going to fall," said Rudy.

At midnight they set out with ladders, ropes, and poles; the path

led upward through shrub and woodland, across loose, rolling stones, higher and higher. Waters rushed beneath them and trickled from above; damp clouds sailed through the night. The hunters reached the ledge of the bare precipice. Here it was darker still, for the awful rocky walls nearly met, and below them was the abyss, with its roar and rush of water. The men sat silent on the stone to wait for dawn; the first thing to be done was to kill the mother eagle when she flew out of the nest in search of food. Rudy sat cowering down, and motionless, as if he were a piece of the rock on which he sat; his gun was cocked and ready for instant aim, his eyes were fixed on the topmost cleft, where the nest lay hidden below the projecting rock. The three hunters had a long, long time to wait.

At last something stirred and rustled overhead; two guns took careful aim; a shapeless form rose from the nest and darkened the air above them. A shot rang out sharply; for a moment the outspread wings fluttered, and then the royal bird sank slowly down; it seemed as if it must fill up the narrow cleft and tear the hunters down with it to the abyss below. Heavily it sank into the depth, breaking the twigs and bushes as it fell.

And now the hunters bestirred themselves. Three of the longest ladders were tied together and placed on the extreme outer point of the ledge; but they did not reach high enough; the rock rose smooth as a wall above the topmost of them to the nest. After a short consultation, it was agreed that two ladders must be tied together, dragged up to the peak above the eagle's nest, and let down thence over the projecting ledge, so that the lowest round met the top of the highest ladder from below. It was a dreadful business to drag the heavy ladders up the rock, but it was done at last; the top was made fast with cords, and the ladders let down over the projecting ledge, where they swung and trembled above the abyss. Rudy had already begun to climb. It was a bitterly cold morning; damp vapour clouds rose from the depths below; the young man clung as the fly clings to a loose straw which has fallen from the swallow's nest on the roof-chimney—only if the straw breaks the fly can fly away, while Rudy can but break his neck. The wind surged passed his ears, and from the abyss below came the sound of the thawing glaciers of the ice maiden's palace.

The ladders swung as the cobweb swings beneath the climbing spider when it tries to clutch at something outside its web, for now Rudy had reached the top of the five ladders which rested on the ledge. He seized the two sides of the ladders above him; they had been tied with a strong and careful hand, but they creaked and swayed to and fro as if they hung on disjointed hinges.

The five ladders from below seemed no better than a bending reed. But the terrible part was now to come; Rudy had to climb as the cat climbs—well for him that he had learnt the lesson. He did not even know that Dizziness stood close behind him, stretching out his polypus arms ready to draw him down to the abyss. He was now on the highest round of the ladder, and even here he could not see into the nest, although he could touch it with his hand. He felt the thick branches which supported the lower part of the nest, and when he had

tried their strength he swung himself off the ladder and raised himself breast-high above the nest. The horrible smell of putrid meat rose in his face from the carcases of young lambs, chamois, and birds. The evil spirit behind him blew the foul air in his eyes in the hope of sending him stunned and blinded to the depths below, where the ice maiden herself lay floating on the black waters, her white hair unbound, her eyes fixed upon him with the deadly gleam, like the flash that comes from the muzzle of a gun.

"I have thee now!" she cried.

Down in a corner of the eagle's nest sat the young eaglet. It could not fly yet, but it was a strong, powerful bird. Rudy's eager eyes were fixed upon it; he grasped it firmly in one hand, and with the other he threw the noose round its legs. It was a prisoner, but alive; Rudy lifted it out, the silken cord held its legs firmly; he slung the bird over his shoulder so that it hung down far below his feet, and then, grasping the friendly rope from above, he swung himself on to the ladder and began his descent.

"Hold fast. Believe you cannot fall, and you shall not fall." It was the old lesson, and he had learnt it well. He held fast, he thought he could not fall, and he did not fall!

A wild shout of exultation and triumph burst from the men below. Rudy stood on the ledge of rock with the live eaglet in his hand.

VIII. What the Parlour Cat had to Tell.

"Here is what you asked me for," said Rudy, as he entered the miller's room at Bex. He set down a basket on the floor and raised the lid. Two yellow, black-rimmed eyes gleamed out, shooting forth angry sparks of light, as if they would burn up all on whom their glances fell. A short, hooked beak snapped savagely, and a red throat twisted to and fro.

"The eaglet!" cried the miller. Babette screamed and shrank back; her startled eyes turned from Rudy to the bird, and from the bird to Rudy.

"You are not easily frightened," said the miller.

"And you always keep your word," said Rudy. "Each of us has his own quality."

"Why ever did you not break your neck?" said the miller.

"Because I held fast," said Rudy; "and I shall hold fast to Babette."

"You have not got her yet," said the miller; but he laughed, and Babette knew that was a good sign.

"We must get the creature out of the basket; it stares enough to drive any one mad. How did you manage it?"

Rudy began at the beginning, and the miller opened his eyes in astonishment.

"You have certainly luck enough and pluck enough to win three wives," said the miller.

"Thank you," said Rudy; "but I only want one."

"You have not got Babette yet, young man," said the miller, patting him on the shoulder.

"Do you know the latest news from the mill?" said the parlour cat to the kitchen cat. "Rudy has brought us the young eaglet and has received Babette in exchange. They have kissed each other, and they let the miller see them do it. That is as good as a betrothal. The old man was quite civil; he drew in his claws and took his after-dinner nap, leaving the young couple to sit and purr. They have so much to say that they will not have finished before Christmas."

And they had not finished before Christmas. The wind swept away the dry leaf; the snowdrifts rose high in the valleys; the ice maiden sat in her splendid winter palace, where the walls rise smooth as glass and the summer waterfalls hang down like frozen crystal. Fantastic wreaths and garlands of glittering ice twine round the snowy pine branches. The ice maiden rides on the winter wind, even through the lowest valleys. She came to Bex and saw Rudy sitting in the mill with Babette. He was very often there in the winter-time, for the wedding was to take place in the following summer.

Within the pleasant room all was light and sunshine; Alpine roses stood on the tables and blossomed round Babette—pretty, laughing Babette!—who was herself a picture of the spring-time, the time which makes every bird in the greenwood sing of love and summer.

"How those two do chatter!" said the parlour cat. "They are always together. I have had enough of their mewing."

IX. The Ice Maiden.

The spring had flung abroad its bright green garlands of walnut and chestnut trees, and nowhere did they unfold more rich and luxuriant foliage than from the bridge of St. Maurice to the shores of the lake of Geneva. Thither rushes the Rhone from its source beneath the grass-green glacier where the ice maiden lives. Sometimes she issues forth, riding on the icy wind, and sits where the hot sunlight vainly falls upon the snowy peaks; her sinister glance rests on the sunlit valleys below, where men are hurrying to and fro, busy as honey-bees.

"Powers and spirits, do the sun spirits call you?" she cried, scornfully. "Spirits? not so—worms of the earth, crushed by the first fall of snow!" She raised her proud head and looked round with death-darting eyes. From the mountain near came the sounds of pickaxe and the blasting of rocks. A tunnel was being made for the new railway.

"They are playing at moles," said the ice maiden, "burrowing passages under the earth, that is the reason of this baby clatter; when I remove my palaces, I do so to the sound of thunder and the hurricane."

A column of steam rose from the valley, bending forward like a fluttering veil; it was the waving plume from the steam-engine, as a

train shot along the line, turning and twisting like the evolutions of a huge snake.

"They are playing at conquerors," said the ice maiden; "but the powers of Nature are the real victors." She laughed aloud, and the mocking tones echoed through the valley. "An avalanche is falling," people said.

But the spirits of the sunshine sang louder still. They sang of the will of man which must conquer in the end; which rides on the sea, removes mountains, fills up valleys, and subjects the powers of Nature to its decrees. Just then a string of travellers crossed the snow fields where the ice maiden sat; they had bound themselves one to the other with strong ropes; they looked like one body slowly moving across the glassy ice on the edge of the abyss.

"Worms!" said the ice maiden; "*you* to claim to be lords of the powers of Nature!" She turned from them and looked bodingly at the train as it flew forward across the deep valley. "There they sit, these thoughts and minds of men!" she cried. "One, proud as a king, sits alone; half of them are sleeping, half are packed in close groups. And when the steam-dragon stops, they will get out and disperse themselves through the world, to conquer it!" she laughed again.

"There falls another avalanche!" they said, in the valley.

"It cannot reach us," said two voices in the train—two hearts with only one pulse between them, as people say. It was Rudy and Babette. The miller was travelling with them.

"I go as luggage," he said; "I am taken as a necessary appendage."

"There they sit, those two," said the ice maiden. "Many a chamois have I crushed, many million Alpine roses have I trampled into ruin. I did not spare the roots. Those are the thoughts of men, down there—well, I will tread them out of the world!" and she laughed once more.

"There falls another avalanche!" they said, in the valley.

X. The Godmother.

Montreux, Clarens, Vevay, and Creci lie like a garland round the north-eastern shore of the Lake of Geneva. In Montreux lived Babette's rich godmother; she had just arrived there with her daughters and her nephew. The story of Babette's betrothal and the capture of the young eaglet had delighted her beyond measure; and she had written to beg of the miller to bring Babette and her lover over to Montreux. That was the reason of the present journey.

The steamer was waiting for them at Villeneuve, at the end of the lake, and half an hour's journey would take them on to Vevay. Every turn of the coast has been sung by the poets: here, under the walnut trees, Byron sat by the deep-blue lake and wrote his "Prisoner of Chillon." Yonder, where the grey-green willows bend towards the waters, Rousseau wandered and dreamed of his Eloise. The Rhone streams into the lake from the snow-clad mountains of Savoy, and

notfar from the river's mouth rises a little island, so small that it looks only like a boat upon the lake. It is a tiny rock, which, about a hundred years ago, a lady caused to be enclosed with stones, covered with earth, and planted with three acacia trees. The trees have thriven well, and now they overshadow all the island. Babette was delighted with the spot; she said it was the prettiest place she had ever seen, and that she must visit it again some day. The steamboat bore them past it and landed them at Vevay.

They climbed up between the white, sunlit walls which bound the vineyards round Montreux. The peasants' cottages were shadowed by spreading fig trees, laurels and cypresses grew in the gardens; and half-way up the path was the house where Babette's godmother was staying.

The little party was heartily welcomed. The godmother was a pleasant-looking, round-faced woman; as a little child, she must have looked like one of Raffaelle's angels. Now, she had an old angel-face with a glory of silver hair. The daughters were fair, tall, and slender. Their young cousin was a yellow-haired Englishman, with whiskers long enough for three gentlemen to share between them. He was dressed in white summer travelling dress, and paid Babette the greatest attention.

Richly-bound books, drawings, and tablets lay scattered about upon the tables; the balcony looked down upon the blue lake, which lay so still and clear that the mountains of Savoy were mirrored in its waters, with their towns, woods, and snowy peaks.

Rudy, who was generally so bold and ready of speech, was not at ease; he walked about as if he were treading on egg-shells. The time seemed as long to him as if he were in a treadmill. And then they all went out for a walk. That was just as tiresome; Rudy could scarcely keep in step with them; it took him two steps forward and one back, they walked so slowly. They went over the Castle of Chillon, and saw its gloomy torture cells; the blocks and rusty chains, trap-doors through which the unhappy prisoners were thrust down on to sharp iron stakes below. And they called it a pleasure to see such things! a place of execution idealized by Byron's poem. Rudy saw nothing but the place of execution; he looked out of one of the heavy stone windows, and looked at the island on the lake. He wished himself there, away from all the chattering voices, under the acacia trees. But Babette has enjoyed herself immensely; she said that she thought the young Englishman perfect.

"A perfect coxcomb!" said Rudy; and that was the first time that Rudy had said anything which displeased her. The Englishman had given her a little book as a memento of the place: it was "The Prisoner of Chillon," translated into French, so that Babette could read it.

"The book may be all very well," said Rudy; "but the finely-combed fellow who gave it to you does not suit my taste."

"He looked just like a sack of flour without the flour," said the miller, laughing at his own wit. Rudy laughed also, and said "that was just what he did look like."

XI. The Cousin.

When Rudy came to the mill, a few days later, he found the young Englishman there. Babette was just going to take up a dish of trout to him; she had garnished the dish herself with fresh parsley, to make it look more inviting. That was quite unnecessary, Rudy thought. What brought the Englishman here? What did he come for? To be served and waited on by Babette? Rudy was jealous, and that delighted Babette. She liked to sound every chord of his heart, to know his strength and his weakness. Love was only play to her at present, and she played with Rudy's whole heart. It is only fair to say that he was her one and only love; her best treasure in all the world; but yet, the more his brow darkened, the more her eyes sparkled with pleasure. She would almost have kissed the young Englishman, with his golden whiskers, if by that means she could have driven Rudy into a frenzy of jealousy, because that would show her how dearly he loved her. It was wrong and wicked of Babette; but then she was only eighteen. She did not think deeply about it; and still less did she think that her conduct, as the miller's daughter and Rudy's betrothed bride, might appear light and unwomanly in the eyes of the young Englishman, and of others also.

The mill stood on the high road, where the snow-clad mountains arch over the path. The country folk call the place Diablereto; a rushing mountain stream flows past it, churned into white foam, like soap-lather on grey water. The mill wheels were turned, not by this stream, but by a smaller one on the other side of the river. It dashed down the rocks and over a mill dam; then, gaining in power and speed, it fell into a wooden basin and flowed through a narrow channel to the wheel. The channel often overflowed, and at best it only offered a slippery, dangerous path to any one who might take it into his head to use it as a short way to enter the mill. This idea had occurred to the young Englishman. Dressed in white, like a miller's boy, he clambered over it at night, guided by the light in Babette's window. But no one had taught him how to climb, and he nearly fell head first into the stream below. As it was, his sleeves and trousers were wet through and sprinkled with mud; and in that plight he climbed the linden tree before Babette's window, and began to imitate the cry of the night owl. It was the only bird to which he could do justice. Babette heard him and looked through the thin curtains. When she saw the white figure in the tree, she knew who it was, and her heart beat with shame and anger. She put out her light, saw that the bolts were closed, and let him howl, "Tu-whit, tu-whoo!" as long as he liked. How dreadful it would have been if Rudy had been in the mill! But Rudy was not in the mill: worse still, he was standing just under the linden tree! Babette heard the sound of loud, angry voices; very soon, blows, nay, murder might follow!

She opened the window in deadly fear, and called to Rudy, begging him to go away. "I will not have you stay here!" she cried.

"You will not have me stay here?" he said. "Then it was planned

between you ; I understand ; you expected some one else. For shame, Babette ! "

" You are intolerable ! " said Babette. " Go away; I hate you ! ' and she cried with anger.

" I have not deserved this," said Rudy. He turned away ; his cheeks and his heart burned like fire.

Babette threw herself on her bed and cried.

" He can think ill of me, and I love him so dearly ! "

She broke out in anger, and that did her good. If she had not been angry, she would have been very unhappy. As it was, she could sleep the refreshing sleep of injured virtue.

XII. Evil Powers.

Rudy went homewards ; he climbed the mountains and reached the cool, fresh air where the snow lay white and the ice maiden reigned. The leafy trees lay so far below him that they looked like a potato field. The pines were stunted, Alpine roses grew here and there, the snow lay in strips and patches, like linen spread out to bleach. A blue gentian that stood right in his path he crushed under the but-end of his gun.

Higher up he saw two chamois ; his eyes sparkled and his thoughts took another turn ; he was not near enough to fire, and he climbed higher still. Scanty grass grew between the blocks of stone ; the chamois walked lazily before him across the snow fields ; he quickened his steps. The mists sank down around him ; suddenly he found himself on the edge of the precipice. The rain began to fall heavily.

He felt a burning thirst ; his head was hot as fire, his limbs cold as ice ; he took up his hunting flask, but it was empty ; he had never thought of filling it when he hurried away from the mill. He had never been ill before, but now he began to understand what it must feel like ; he was tired, and felt a longing to rest and sleep, but the rain was falling all around. Everything danced and trembled before his eyes, when he suddenly saw a little dwelling built against the rock. He had never noticed the house before ; a young girl stood at the door ; he thought at first it was the schoolmaster's daughter Annette, whom he had kissed in the dance, but it was not Annette. He must have seen her face before ; perhaps it was at Grindelwald, the night of the shooting match at Interlachen.

" How did you come here ? " he said.

" This is my home ; I tend my flock."

" Your flock ? Where do they feed ? There is nothing here but snow."

" Much you know about what there is here ! " said the girl, with a laugh. " Behind the rock is a capital pasture land, where I take my goats. I tend them carefully, and never lose one. What has been mine once is mine for ever."

" You are daring," said Rudy.

" So are you," she answered.

"Have you any milk in the house?" asked Rudy. "If you have, give me some, for I am parched with thirst."

"I will give you something better than milk," she said. "Yesterday some travellers rested here, with their guide, and they left one of their bottles of wine. You have never tasted such wine. They will never come back for it, and I do not drink it. Take it."

She fetched the wine, poured it into a wooden bowl, and handed it to Rudy.

"It is good wine!" he cried. "I never tasted any like it."

His eyes sparkled; a glow of life and power ran through his veins, as if every care had vanished from his life.

"Why, it *is* Annette!" he cried. "Give me a kiss."

"Then give me the beautiful ring you are wearing on your finger."

"My betrothal ring?"

"Your betrothal ring!" echoed the maiden. She poured out a fresh draught of wine, and held it to his lips. He drank. A joyous thrill quickened his pulses; he felt as if the whole world belonged to him. Why should he fret and grieve? All things are made to be enjoyed, and to make us happy. The stream of life is the stream of joy, and to drift idly along its current is happiness. He looked at the young girl; it was Annette, and yet not Annette; still less could it be the phantom which had crossed his path at Grindelwald. The maiden before him was fair as the white snow, fresh as the Alpine roses, nimble as a chamois; but she was flesh and blood, like himself. He flung his arms round her, looked for a moment in her clear eyes, and in that moment—ah! who can put it into words?—was it the soul's life or death? Was he lifted up to heaven, or dragged down to the abyss? He saw the ice round him widen into sea-blue, glassy walls, down which the water fell pearly clear, with a sound like the chime of fairy bells, and a gleam, like quivering arrows, of blue flame. The ice maiden kissed him, and her kiss thrilled him through with an icy shiver; a cry of pain broke from him, he tore himself from her arms, staggered, and his eyes closed in darkness. The powers of evil had played their game.

When Rudy unclosed his eyes the hut had vanished, and the maiden had vanished with it. Water dripped down from the bare rock; the snow lay all around; Rudy was wet to the skin, and shivering with cold. His betrothal ring, the ring Babette had given him, was no longer on his finger. His gun lay idly in the snow; he tried to fire it off, and it missed fire. Damp clouds hovered beneath him in the ravine, and among them sat Dizziness, lurking to pounce upon his helpless prey. Far below there was a sound as if a mass of rock had fallen, and was crushing into ruin all that lay in its path.

But in the mill at Bex Babette was crying bitterly. Rudy had not been to see her for six days. Rudy, who had behaved so shamefully, who would have to beg her pardon, and whom she loved with all her heart!

XIII. In the Mill.

"Human beings are extremely queer," said the parlour cat to the kitchen cat. "Rudy and Babette have fallen out now. She cries, and he does not appear to think any more about her."

"I am very sorry to hear it," said the kitchen cat.

"So am I," said the parlour cat; "but I am not going to make myself miserable about it. Let her marry yellow whiskers if she likes; but he has never been seen here since he tried to get on the roof."

Evil powers work their spells within us and around us. Rudy had found that out, and thought about it a great deal. What had happened to him on the mountain? Was it a vision or a feverish fancy? Until that night he had known nothing either of fever or of any other illness. But as he passed sentence on Babette, he looked into his own heart, and saw there the traces of the wild hunt and the hot Föhn wind from the south. Should he be able to confess all to Babette? All the evil thoughts which might ripen into deeds in the hour of temptation? He had lost her ring, and that very loss had won him back to her. Would she confess to him? His heart swelled as he thought of her; a host of memories arose within him. He saw her as clearly as if she stood before him—a pretty, pouting child. Many a loving word which she had spoken out of the fulness of her heart passed like a sunbeam through his memory, and before long all was sunshine when he thought of Babette.

Yes; she must confess to him, and she should, too!

He went to the mill. The confession began with a kiss, and ended by Rudy's being pronounced the only sinner. It was all his fault. It was simply abominable of him to doubt Babette! Such mistrust and violence might bring them both into misery. Yes, they might. And Babette preached him a little sermon that highly amused them both and suited her bewitchingly well. In one thing she owned Rudy was quite right. The cousin *was* a coxcomb, and she was going to burn the book he had given her; for she did not wish to have anything which could remind her of him.

"The quarrel is over," said the parlour cat. "They have made it up. Rudy has been here, and they are friends again. They say it is the greatest happiness in the world."

"I heard, the other night," said the kitchen cat—"I heard some rats say that the greatest happiness in the world was to eat tallow candles and to have plenty of greasy bacon. Now, who is to be believed—the rats or the lovers?"

"Believe nobody," said the parlour cat. "That is always the safest."

The fairest and brightest day for Rudy and Babette was drawing near. The wedding was at hand.

They were not to be married in Bex. Babette's godmother had insisted that the wedding should take place in the little church at Montreux. The miller made a point of attending to her wishes, for he knew what her wedding present would be, and it was quite worth while

to try and please her. The day was fixed. They were to start for Villeneuve in the evening, and early the next morning they would take the boat to Montreux, so that the young English ladies might dress the bride.

"I suppose there will be some kind of a wedding feast in the mill?" said the parlour cat. "If not, I would not give a mew for the whole business!"

"There will be a feast," said the kitchen cat. "Ducks are being killed and fowls plucked. There is a whole roebuck roasting on the spit. It makes my mouth water. They start to-morrow."

Yes, to-morrow! Rudy and Babette were sitting together for the last time as betrothed lovers in the mill.

The Alpine heights glowed red, the bells rang, the spirits of the sunshine sang, "Whatever happens is the best—let the best happen!"

XIV. Dreams of the Night.

The sun had set; the clouds sank down between the mountains into the Rhone valley; the Föhn wind blew from the African plains across the Alps. It tore the clouds to pieces and sank into sudden stillness. The torn clouds hung in strange, fantastic shapes among the mountains and the hurrying Rhone. They took the form of the sea monsters of primeval ages, of hovering eagles, of giant frogs from the marsh. They sank down to the rushing river and sailed above it in the air. The stream tore away an uprooted pine stem, and whirled it round and round in circling eddies. The spirits Dizziness and his fellows rose from the foaming stream; the white moonshine fell upon them, upon the woods and driving clouds, and the strange visions of the night. The mountaineers saw them through their window panes: they sailed in front of their queen, the ice maiden. She had left her glacier palace, and, seated on the fragile pine stem, she floated down the icy current towards the lake.

"The wedding guests are coming," sighed spectre voices, high in the air.

Spectres without, and dreams within. Babette dreamed a wonderful dream.

It seemed to her that she had been married for years to Rudy, and that she was sitting in her house while her husband was hunting the chamois on the mountains. By her side sat the fair-haired Englishman; his eyes were eloquent, his words charmed her like a spell, he held out his hand, and she rose up to follow him. They left the house together. Downwards and ever downwards—it seemed as if a load of sin lay on her heart—sin against Rudy and against God. Suddenly she found herself alone; her clothes torn, her hair turned grey. In her agony she looked up, and on the edge of the rock above her she saw Rudy. She stretched out her arms to him, but dared not call to him; then she saw that it was not he, but only his hat and coat set up on his alpenstock, as the hunters do when they wish to deceive the chamois.

Then Babette felt that her heart was broken. "Oh, that I had died upon my wedding day!" she cried. "That would have been the best for Rudy and for me. Who can tell what lies before him?" And, in godless despair, she flung herself down from the rock. A string snapped, a wail arose——!

Babette awoke, pale as death; but the dream had passed away. "Why had she dreamed of the Englishman?" she asked herself, with a shudder. "Could he be at Montreux? Would she see him at the wedding?" A shadow crossed her face and she knit her brow; but soon the smiles came back again, for the sun was shining, and to-morrow was her wedding day.

Rudy was already in the parlour when she came down-stairs, and before long they started to Villeneuve. They were very happy; and the miller was as happy as either of them; he was a good father and a kind-hearted soul.

"Now we have the house to ourselves," said the parlour cat.

XV. The End.

It was not quite dark when the travellers reached Villeneuve and ordered supper. The miller leant back in his arm chair, smoked his pipe, and took his evening nap. The lovers walked arm-in-arm along the shore of the deep-blue lake, the gloomy walls and grey towers of Chillon were mirrored in the waters, the little island with the three acacias lay like a nosegay on the lake.

"It must be lovely on that island," said Babette. "How I long to go across and see it!" The wish was not hard to realize. A boat lay tied up almost at their feet; it was easy to undo the knot. There was no one in sight to ask whether they might have the boat, and Rudy untied it without further ceremony: he could manage an oar well.

Away they flew over the yielding water, so supple and so strong. It has a pliant back to carry burdens, and hungry jaws to swallow treasure; it is mild as feebleness itself, and strong as death and destruction. In a few moments they landed on the island; there was only room for one couple of dancers. Rudy waltzed round twice, three times, with Babette in his arms; then they sat down under the acacias and watched the lake and sky and shore turn red and gold in the sunset. The pine woods changed to a pure lilac, like a bank of heather, and where the trees ended the bare rock gleamed as if it were transparent. The clouds were crimson, and the lake heaved like a floating roseleaf. Gradually the violet shadows stole down the snow-clad mountains of Savoy; the topmost peak glowed like lava newly issued from the earth. Rudy and Babette said there had never been such an Alpine glow. The Dent du Midi shone like the disc of the full moon against the horizon.

"What beauty! what happiness!" cried the lovers.

"Earth has no more to give me," said Rudy. "A night like this is

worth a whole life. How often I have been so happy that I have said to myself, 'If you were to die this moment, what a happy life yours would have been!' Then the day ended, and the next began, and was happier still. How good God is to us, Babette!"

"I am so happy—happy to the depths of my heart!" she said.

"The world can give me no more than this," repeated Rudy.

The vesper bells rang out from the mountains of Savoy, and in the golden west rose the violet heights of the Jura.

"God grant you always the best and happiest, Rudy!" said Babette.

"He will," said Rudy. "To-morrow He will give me you to be my own true wife."

"The boat!" cried Babette suddenly.

The boat had broken loose and was drifting away from the island.

"I will fetch it back," said Rudy. He threw aside his coat and boots and swam after the boat with powerful strokes.

Cold and deep was the ice current from the glacier in the mountains. Rudy looked into the depths and saw, for a second, the shine and glitter of a golden ring. He thought of his betrothal ring, and as he thought the ring in the water grew larger and larger, and deep below the eddying circles he saw the clear glacier; fathomless clefts yawned within it; the water dripped down pearly clear, with a sound like the chime of bells, and a gleam like white and blue flames. In one flash he saw all that takes us many words to write. Hunters and maidens, men and women, who had fallen into the ice clefts of the mountain, were standing, alive, in the ice queen's palace, with smiling eyes and rosy lips. Farther away still came the sound of a mighty organ and the bells of ruined cities buried beneath the sea. He saw the people kneeling in prayer beneath the fretted roof of ice; the organ pipes were all of ice, and the roaring ice stream lent them their echoing tones. On the clear, transparent ground sat the ice maiden. She saw Rudy, darted up through the water, and kissed his feet. An electric shock—the shiver of death itself—passed through his limbs. Ice or fire? Who could tell which?

"Mine! mine!" she cried. "I kissed your brow when you were a little child. I kissed your lips when you were a man. Now I have kissed your feet and made you wholly mine!"

He disappeared in the clear, blue water.

All was silent: the bells ceased their chiming; the last tones died away along the sunset clouds.

"Mine!" sounded a voice from below.

"Mine!" echoed a voice from God's heaven.

Ah, how glorious to pass from love to love, from earth to heaven!

A string snapped, a wail arose; death's icy kiss conquered the transitory; the discord was resolved to harmony; the prologue ended that the life drama might begin.

Do you call this a sad story?

Poor Babette! To her it was all hopeless, despairing sorrow. The boat drifted farther away; not a soul at Vevay knew that the bridal pair had rowed to the little island. The night came on heavy with cloud and storm; flash followed flash from the heights of Jura, and glittered over Switzerland and over Savoy; blue lightning and heavy

thunderclaps following each other at scarcely a moment's interval. Sometimes the lightning flamed out clear as the noontide, and every vineyard stood forth in the yellow glare, only to be again engulphed in sudden darkness. Sometimes the flashes came in leaping circles, in zigzags and scrolls of fire. The boat drifted to the shore; all living things sought for shelter; and at length the rain streamed down in fury.

"Where can Rudy and Babette be in all this storm?" said the miller.

Babette was sitting motionless, without one cry or moan; her hands lay folded in her lap, her heart seemed dead.

"Under the deep water!" she murmured to herself. "There he lies, as if he were under the glacier."

She remembered all he had told her of his mother's death, and of his rescue from the ice cleft. "The ice maiden has him at last!" she cried.

A flash, vivid, and blinding as white fire, shone in her startled eyes. She sprang to her feet; the lake rose like a shining glacier, and on the waters stood the spectral, gleaming form of the ice maiden. A blueish glory shone round her; she stood there proudly, drawn up to her full height, her cruel feet resting on Rudy's corpse. "Mine!" she cried; and once more the darkness closed in above the rolling waters.

Then Babette broke out into wild sorrow. "Oh, God," she cried, "send down to comfort me! Why must he die when the day of our happiness was about to dawn? I cannot comprehend Thy dealings. I grope in the dark amid the decrees of Thy Almighty wisdom!"

A ray of light flashed through her heart in answer to her prayer. Suddenly there arose before her her dream of last night; she remembered her own despairing words, "Why did I not die upon my wedding day? That would have been the best for Rudy and for me!"

"Alas!" she cried, "was the germ of sin lying hidden in my heart? Was the dream a picture of my future life? a string which must be snapped before I could be saved? Unhappy that I am!"

Weeping, she sat there in the gloomy night. Through the deep stillness Rudy's last words rang again and again through her ears. "Earth has no more that it can give me." They were spoken out of the fulness of joy, they echoed back in the depths of sorrow.

Years have passed away. The lake smiles within its smiling shores, the vines put forth their swelling grapes, steamboats cross the water with flags flying, and little pleasure boats dart to and fro like white butterflies. The railroad from Chillon to the Rhone valley is open, and at every station alight troops of visitors, with guide-books bound in red cloth, to teach them what they ought to visit. They make parties to Chillon, they admire the little island with the three acacias, and the guide-books tell them the story of the bridal pair who rowed thither one evening in the year 1856. "Not till the following morning were the bride's cries for help heard on the shore," says the guide-book.

But the book says nothing of Babette's quiet after-life with her father. Not at the mill; that is in the hands of strangers now. The miller and his daughter live in a large house near the railway station;

and from the windows they can look across the chestnut trees to the Alps where Rudy loved to climb. As the sun sets they see the Alpine glow; the spirits of the sunshine encamp upon the mountain heights and sing their old song about the wanderer from whom the storm-wind tore his mantle—the outer covering, but not the man himself.

Roselight falls on the Alpine snow, roselight blesses every heart in which this thought dwells—"God's Will is best."

But the lesson is not taught to every one as clearly as it was to Babette in her dream.

The Last Pearl.

WE are in a rich and happy house, where all, master and mistress, friends and servants, are filled with joy and gladness. That very day has seen a son and heir born to the happy parents.

In the room where the mother and child were sleeping the lamp was carefully shaded, silken curtains were drawn before the windows; the carpet was soft as moss, and everything breathed of rest and peace. The nurse was sleeping; and she could sleep with a heart at rest, for all was well. The fairy of the house bent over the bed and held a network of glittering stars above the child; each star was a pearl of

fortune and happiness. Among them one saw health, riches, fortune, love—all that man longs for here below.

"They have brought all," said the fairy.

"Not all," said a voice near. It came from the child's guardian angel. "One fairy has kept back her gift. She will bring it, but not yet; not till years have passed away. The last pearl is wanting."

"The last pearl wanting? But that must not be. Let us go and seek the fairy, that the starry wreath may be complete."

"She will come; do not fear. She will come unsought."

"Tell me where she lives. Why is she lingering? Tell me where to find her, and I will go and get the pearl."

"You *will* go?" said the good angel. "Then I will lead you to her at once, wherever she may be. She has no settled home, she passes from the palace to the cottage, but she leaves no child of man untouched. To all she brings a gift, whether it be a bauble or a world. And she will come to this child also. You will not wait for her? Then let us go to fetch the pearl, the last in the wreath."

Hand-in-hand they flew to the place where the fairy was staying with her pearl.

It was a large house, with gloomy corridors and empty rooms; a strange stillness rested upon it; through the open windows the night air entered at will, and the long white blinds stirred in the chill wind.

Within the largest room stood an open coffin, in which lay the body of a woman, young and very beautiful. Freshly-gathered roses lay on her breast and folded hands; her fair face, ennobled and glorified by death, bore in its stillness the outward sign of its dedication to God and its entrance into the Unseen.

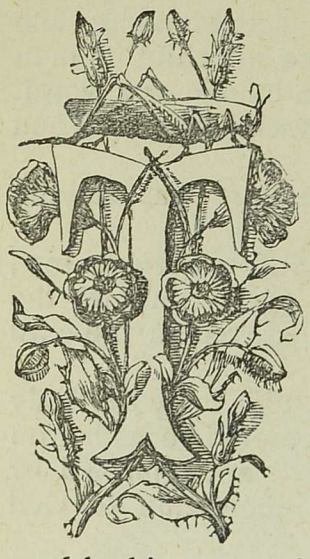
Husband and children stood round the coffin, and their tears fell like rain: the youngest child nestled in its father's arms. All were taking their last look on the dear face; the father kissed her hand. It lay helpless as a fallen leaf; a little while back it was unwearied in loving, helpful deeds for all. No word was spoken, but in the silence lay a world of sorrow. With hushed steps the mourners left the chamber.

A burning taper stands by the coffin; its red wick rises higher and the flame flutters in the wind. Strange footsteps enter the room, the lid is placed upon the coffin, and the strokes of the hammer fall heaviest on the mourners' hearts.

"Whither have you led me?" said the fairy. "You will find no pearl here."

"Here in this very room, hallowed by prayer and sorrow," said the angel. She pointed to a corner of the room, the place where the dead mother used to have her chair, among her flowers and books, and from which, like the good fairy of the house, she used to pour her gifts on all, and be the focus and centre of all household joy. A stranger sat there now, a woman draped in black; it was the fairy Sorrow, reigning as mistress in the place of the dead. A hot tear fell in her lap, and lay there like a pearl; it glittered with all the colours of the rainbow, and the angel took it in his hand.

"Here is the last, best pearl," said the angel: "the pearl of sorrow, which lends a lustre and a meaning to all the rest. Learn to see within it the glory of the rainbow which binds earth to heaven; the bridge that leads us through death to life. Only in darkness we can see the stars, only through sorrow can we reach perfection. Within the pearl of sorrow the soul's wings lie folded, waiting to bear us hence to eternal joy."



In the Duckyard.

THERE was once a Portuguese duck—Spanish, some people said; but it does not signify; any way, she was called the Portuguese. She laid eggs, was killed, cooked, and eaten; that was her path in life. All the ducklings that crept out of her eggs were also called Portuguese, and that was something to begin with. After a while the family dwindled down to one duck, and the duck-yard was often invaded by hens, and crowed over by the cock.

"His loud crowing irritates me," said the Portuguese; "but no one can deny that he is good-looking, considering that he is not a drake. He ought to modulate his voice better; but that is an art only learned in the higher circles; you find it among the singing-birds in linden trees over the garden wall. How beautifully they sing! There is something so touching in their voices—quite Portuguese, I call it. If I had a little singing-bird of my own I would be quite a mother to it; it is my nature to be kind—it lies in my Portuguese blood."

As she spoke, a little singing-bird fell head over heels into the duck-yard from the roof. The cat had chased it, and its wing was broken.

"That is just like the cat," said the Portuguese duck; "she is a monster. I saw that when I had children of my own. To think that such a creature should be allowed to live and wander about respectable people's roofs! I do not believe it is the case in Portugal."

She pitied the little singing-bird, and so did the other ducks who were not Portuguese.

"Poor little thing!" they said, as they came up one after the other. "We certainly cannot sing; but we have a kind of sounding-board, or something of the kind, inside us; we feel that it is there, though we do not talk much about it."

"I must do something for the poor little creature," said the Portuguese duck; "it is only my duty." She flew into the water-trough

and flapped her wings till the water splashed out over the singing-bird. It was half drowned by its bath, but it was kindly meant.

"That is a good action," said the Portuguese duck. "I hope the others will take example by me."

"Tweet!" said the little bird. One of its wings was broken and it could scarcely shake itself, but it understood that the shower-bath was kindly meant. "You have a kind heart, madame," it said; but it did not desire another bath.

"I have never thought about my heart," said the Portuguese; but I know that I love all my fellow creatures, excepting cats; and since a cat ate two of my ducklings, no one can expect me to love cats. Make yourself at home; it is not difficult. I am not a native of this country, as I dare say you have seen by my manner and appearance; my drake belongs to this place, he is not of my family, but I am not proud. If any one in the yard can understand you, I may say that it will be myself."

"She has Portugal on the brain," said a common little duck who affected to be witty. The other common ducks were delighted with the joke. "Portugal on the brain!" they cried. "Did you hear that? It was too good."

The ducks crowded round the little singing-bird. "The Portuguese will manage the language best," they said.

"As for us, we don't use quite such long words, but we have just as much sympathy. If we can do nothing else for you, we can walk about quietly, and perhaps that is the best."

"You have a lovely voice," said one of the others.

"It must be a delightful feeling to be able to give so much joy to others. I do not know how to sing myself, and so I hold my tongue. That is better than talking nonsense."

"Don't tease him so," said the Portuguese; "he requires rest and attention. Shall I give you another bath?"

"Oh no, let me keep myself dry!" he said.

"The water cure is the only thing that benefits me when I am indisposed," said the Portuguese. "Amusements are also very beneficial. Our neighbours the hens will pay us a visit before long; among them are two Cochin China fowls; they wear trousers, are highly cultivated, and are of foreign extraction. I think the more of them on that account."

The hens arrived; the cock was with them; he was so polite this time that he was not at all rude.

"You are a genuine singing-bird," he said, "and you make as much of your little voice as you possibly can. But one must have a little more of the locomotive about one's tones, if one wishes people to know one is there."

The Cochin China fowls were charmed with the singing-bird. He was still ruffled from his bath, and looked, as they said, like a Cochin China chicken. "He is charming," they cried; and they began to talk Chinese to him.

"You and we are of the same race," they said. "All the ducks, even the Portuguese, are aquatic birds. I dare say you have noticed that. You do not know us yet; it is not every one who takes the

trouble to learn to know us; not even among the hens, although we are born to fill a higher place than most of the others. We care little about their neglect, however; we go quietly on our own way, their principles are not ours. We only look on the best side of everything, and only speak of what is good. It is very difficult, for there is really none to speak of. Excepting ourselves and the cock, there is positively no one who is at once clever and polite. Certainly not the inhabitants of the duckyard. We warn you, my dear little singing-bird: pray do not trust that short-tailed duck; she is most deceitful. The speckled one, over there, is extremely quarrelsome, she always manages to have the last word and to be in the wrong. The fat duck yonder speaks ill of every one; now that is contrary to our nature; if one has nothing good to say of one's neighbour, one should hold one's beak. The Portuguese is the only one who has any pretensions to cultivation and good manners; but she is passionate, and talks a great deal too much about Portugal."

"What are those Cochin China fowls whispering about?" said the ducks. "I am sick of seeing them; they are always whispering. I never speak to them."

Just then the drake came up. He took the singing-bird for a sparrow. "Isn't it a sparrow?" he said. "How should I know? It is all the same thing; he belongs to the playthings of life; and when one likes playthings, one gets them; that is all."

"Do not mind anything he says," whispered the Portuguese. "He is very respectable as a drake of business, and he thinks that business should go before all. I am going to rest myself now. I consider that it is a duty which every duck owes to herself, so that she may be nice and fat when she is embalmed in sage and onions."

She laid herself down in the sun and blinked with one eye; she had a comfortable place and slept soundly.

The little singing-bird was busy with his broken wing; at last he too lay still, nestled closely against his protectress; the sun was warm; he too had found a good place.

Meanwhile the hens were wide awake; they walked about, scratching and pecking; in reality, they had only come to find something to eat. The Cochin China pair was the first to leave, and the others soon after followed them. The witty duckling pointed to the Portuguese and the little bird, and said that the old Portuguese was growing bird-childish. The other ducks laughed immoderately. "Bird-childish!" they whispered. "What a capital hit!" And they repeated the old joke about "Portugal on the brain."

When all had been silent for a while, a handful of food was thrown among them with such force that they all bounced up in a great commotion. The Portuguese trod heavily on the little singing-bird.

"Tweet!" he cried. "You hurt me, madame."

"Why do you lie in my way?" she said. "You should not be so sensitive. I have nerves as well as you, but you don't hear me cry tweet!"

"Do not be angry with me," said the singing-bird; "it slipped out before I was aware."

The Portuguese did not hear him; she was already among the

others, eating as fast as she could. When she had finished her meal she came to lie down again. The little bird nestled up to her and sang, to make himself agreeable.

"Tra-la, tra-la!
To the sky
I sing and fly:
To my nest
I sink and rest,
Tra-la, tra-la!"

"I wish to be quiet after my meals," said the Portuguese. "You must conform to the ways of the yard. I am going to sleep."

The little bird was quite taken aback, for he thought he should please her by his singing. When the Portuguese awoke, he came up to her with a grain of corn which he had found; he laid it at her feet; but as she had not slept well she was, of course, in a very bad temper.

"Give it to a chicken," she said, "and do not be always getting in my way."

"Why are you angry?" said the little bird. "What have I done?"

"Done?" said the Portuguese. "What a vulgar expression! Pray, pay more attention to your words."

"Yesterday the sun shone," said the little bird; "to-day the air is close and grey."

"You do not seem to have been taught how to calculate," said the Portuguese. "The day is not over yet. Now, do not stand so stupidly looking at me!"

"But your eyes look like the eyes that hunted me into the yard."

"What!" cried the Portuguese, "you compare me with the cat—the cruel beast of prey? There is not a drop of base blood within me. I took care of you, and I will try and teach you better manners."

She straightway bit off the bird's head. He lay dead at her feet.

"Now look at that!" she cried. "Could he not even bear that? He was really too fragile for this world. I have been a mother to him, that I am sure of. I have a kind heart."

The cock put his head inside the yard and crowed with locomotive power.

"You will be the death of me, with your crowing!" she cried.

"It is all your fault. He has lost his head, and I shall soon go out of my mind."

"There is not much of him left," said the cock.

"Speak respectfully of him," said the Portuguese. "He was very good style, and highly cultivated. And he was extremely affectionate and tender-hearted. I like to see that both in animals and in men, as they call themselves."

The ducks crowded round the dead bird. They have strong passions, and feel both envy and pity very deeply. Here there was nothing to envy, so they gave free vent to their pity.

"We shall never have such another singing-bird!" said the Cochin China fowls; "he was almost a Chinese."

They wept till they clucked again, and then all the hens clucked; and the ducks walked about with red eyes.

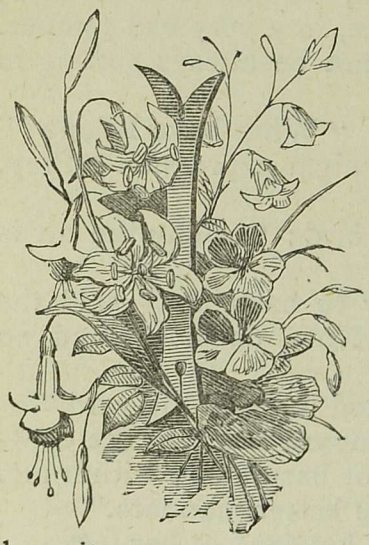
"We have feeling hearts," they said; "no one can dispute that."

"Indeed, we have!" said the Portuguese; "almost as much as they have in Portugal."

"Now, let us think about getting something to eat," said the drake. "That is the most important thing. If one plaything gets broken, we find another, that is all."

—o—

The Bottle Neck.

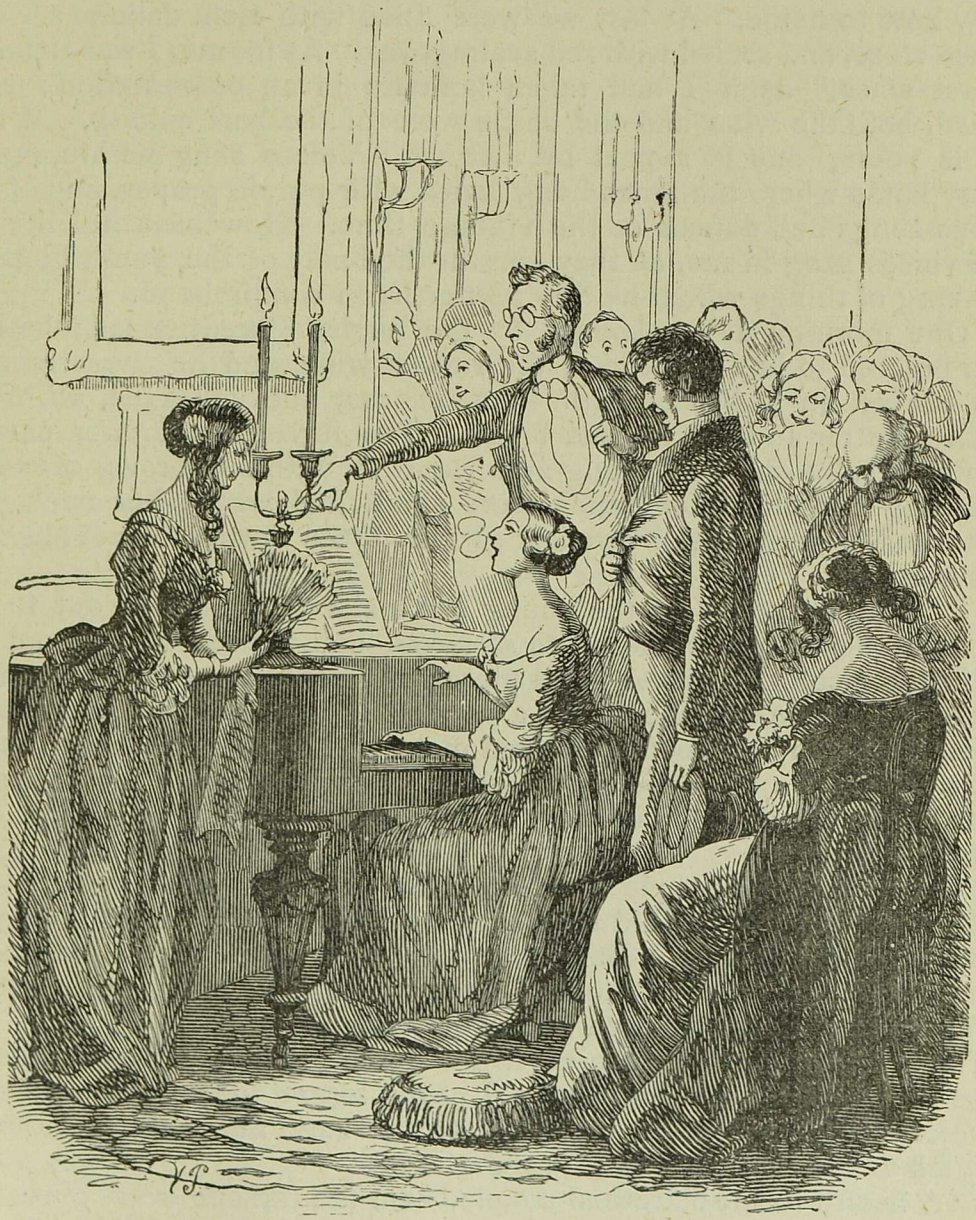


IN a narrow, poverty-stricken lane there stood, among other squalid houses, one with which time had dealt so hardly that it looked ready to fall in all directions. Many poor families lived in the house, and the poorest person of all lived in the garret chamber, under the gable roof. In the little window hung a bird-cage, in which there was not even a glass to hold the water. The bird drank out of a bottle neck, which was turned upside down and made fast with a cork. An old maid stood at the window; she put some groundsel into the cage, and the bird hopped about and sang so merrily that it was a pleasure to hear it.

"Yes; it is easy for you to sing," said the bottle neck—that is, he did not speak as we do, because a bottle neck cannot speak, but he thought it quietly to himself, just as we often say things to ourselves without speaking. "You may well sing, with all your proper limbs in good order. You should just try it when there is only the top of you left, and that turned upside down and made fast with a cork. I don't think you would sing then. But perhaps it is as well for somebody to be in good spirits. I have no reason to sing, even if I could. Now, when I was a whole bottle, I sang well. I was called a perfect lark. That was when I went with the furrier's family to the picnic. We went into the wood, and the daughter received an offer that very day. I remember it as well as if it were yesterday. I have gone through a great deal, now I come to reflect upon it. I have passed through fire and water; I have lain deep in the earth, and have risen higher than most folk, and now I am swinging inside a bird's cage. It would be worth while to listen to my story, though I do not talk loud about it. I cannot; that is the reason."

The bottle neck then began to tell its story—to think it over, that is. The bird sang his own song, and down in the street below every one

went on his way, thinking of his own affairs or of nothing at all. The bottle neck began with the furnace in the glass works : he remembered, first of all, that he was blown into life and felt very warm. He looked into the glowing oven from which he was taken and felt as if he should like to jump back again into its hot glow ; but after a while he grew comfortable and happy where he was. He stood in a row with a regiment of bottles like himself—all brothers and sisters sprung from



the same oven. Some were cast into champagne bottles, and some beer bottles, and that made a difference between them. Later in life it may easily happen that the beer bottle may be filled with champagne and brought into good society, with music and singing, and every accompaniment of refined existence.

On the other hand, it is possible that a champagne bottle may be filled with blacking ; but that does not signify, it is easy to see by the

shape which is the genuine aristocrat. Birth must tell, even if one is filled with blacking.

"At that time I did not think that I should end my days in a birdcage, though even here I am of use in the world; it is not an ignoble existence. When I saw the daylight again, after my removal from the glass works, I found myself being washed and rinsed out in a wine merchant's cellar. It was a curious feeling. There we lay, hollow and empty, without any corks, feeling as if we wanted something which we did not know how to name. At last we were filled with rich, delicious wine, corked close, and sealed with red sealing-wax. As for me, I was ticketed "First class," as if I had taken honours in an examination; and, indeed, both the wine and the bottle were of the best quality. When one is young one is a poet by instinct. Voices sang within me of sunny lands where the vines hang laden with purple grapes, and of the joyous songs and dances of the vintage time. How beautiful life is! The voices sang in me, as they sing in the heart of the youthful poet, speaking of things which neither he nor I can comprehend.

"One morning I was bought by the furrier's 'prentice lad; he had been ordered to buy a bottle of the richest wine, and he chose me. I was packed in a basket with ham, cheese, and sausages, with the freshest butter and the whitest bread. The furrier's daughter packed me up herself; she was young and beautiful, with soft brown eyes and a smiling mouth. Her hands were small and white, her neck was whiter still; she was the loveliest girl in all the town, and yet she had no sweetheart.

"The basket rested on the young girl's side as we drove out to the wood; I peeped out of the white *serviette*, and my red seal stared her full in the face. I was very well placed and could see the young sailor by her side. He was the son of a portrait painter, and had just passed his examination and been appointed mate on board a merchant vessel. The next day he was about to sail for foreign climes. There was a great deal said about his coming voyage, and the young girl's lips lost all their smiles.

"The two young people wandered off alone into the forest paths and talked together. What did they say? I cannot tell you that. I was in the provision basket. But when they came back I was taken out immediately; everybody laughed; the furrier's daughter was rather silent, but her cheeks glowed like two roses.

The father took the corkscrew in his hand. It is a curious sensation to be uncorked for the first time. I never forgot the solemn moment, a voice within me cried "Pop!" as the cork flew out; and how it gurgled as the wine flowed into the glasses!

"'A health to the betrothed couple,' said the father; every glass was drained to the dregs, and the young sailor kissed his plighted bride.

"'Health and happiness!' cried the old people. 'A safe return and a happy wedding, this time next year!' said the sailor. Again the glasses were emptied. The young man lifted me high in the air and said, 'You have served me on the happiest day of my life; no one shall drink from you again.'

"But he was mistaken in that. He hurled me through the air. I fell among the reeds on the shore of a little pond, and it seems to me

that I lay there a long time. 'I gave them wine, and they have given me muddy water,' I thought to myself; 'but I believe they meant well.' I could no longer see the merry picnic party, but I could hear their songs and laughter. At last there came up two peasant lads who saw me lying in the reeds and took me home.

"In the forester's hut, where the two boys lived, their mother was busily packing up a few things for their eldest brother Peter. He was a sailor, and had been there the day before to say good-bye. A parcel had just been tied up—a small bottle filled with herb-tea and brandy—when the boys came in, carrying me. I was a stronger, larger bottle, and could hold more, so they took me instead of the smaller one. The stuff they poured inside me was certainly not like the rich red wine, but it was very good in its way. The father carried me into the town and gave me to the young sailor, with his mother's last farewells. Thus it was that I started out on my wanderings with Peter Jensen; and the first person I saw on the ship was the young sailor who threw me into the pond. But he did not even look at me; and if he had, he would scarcely have known that it was I who had celebrated his betrothal and given the wine with which they drank to his safe return.

"I had no more wine to give any one now, but I had something quite as good. Whenever Peter fetched me out for the benefit of his comrades he was called "the apothecary;" the medicine was pronounced excellent, and I dispensed it faithfully as long as I had a drop left inside me. Those were merry days, and it was then that the sailors, on hearing me sing and gurgle, gave me the name of Peter Jensen's lark.

"Days and months passed by, and I was laid aside in a corner. I cannot tell whether it was on the outward voyage or on the return home, for I never got a sight of land; but suddenly a storm rose, and we tossed and rocked on the black, raging billows. The masts broke, the pumps were useless, and the ship sank in the pitch darkness. Just at the last moment the young mate thrust a paper into my neck, replaced the cork, and hurled me into the sea. On the paper was written the name of his ship and of his bride, and the words, "We are sinking. God's will be done!" He little thought that the very bottle out of which his cup of hope and gladness had been filled was now drifting along the waves bearing a message from the dead.

"The ship sank with all hands; I flew forward like a bird with my loving greeting. The sun rose and set. I felt as I felt long ago when I wished so earnestly to fly back to my oven and rest.

"I passed through many calms and storms, and was not harmed by sea monsters or by the jagged breakers. The current carried me northward or southward, as it happened. In short, I was my own master, and I soon found that one might easily have too much of one's own will.

"The written paper, with its last farewell, would only bring sorrow and mourning when it fell into the proper hands; but where were the little hands, so soft and white, which spread the white cloth on the forest turf on the betrothal day? Where was the furrier's pretty daughter? Where was my native land? In a word, where was I myself? I grew heartily tired of drifting about; I was never made for such work. At

last I drifted to land; but, alas! I could not understand a word that was spoken. It was a foreign country, and one really loses a good deal by being ignorant of the languages spoken round one.

"I was picked up and examined very carefully; the paper was taken out and unfolded, and turned first on one side and then on the other; but no one could read a word of the writing. They guessed that I had been thrown overboard, and that the paper could tell them more about it; but what did the paper say? It was put back in its place, and I was kept in a dark cupboard in a large house.

"Every time any foreigners arrived I was brought out and the paper was handed round; and after a while the words, which were only written in pencil, got so smeared and rubbed that they were quite illegible. I stayed for some time in the cupboard, and then I was laid on the ground, and soon became covered with dust and cobwebs. How often I thought of the happy days when I poured out rich wine in the green woods, or even when I tossed upon the waves, bearing a loving greeting, a farewell sigh!

"I was left untouched for twenty years, and I might have lain in the dust till now, only that the house was pulled down to be rebuilt. Some people found me, but I could not understand what they said; it is impossible to learn a language when one has been kept for twenty years in the attic. If I had been brought down-stairs I might have learned it well.

"However, the people washed and rinsed me out, and I really wanted the attention. It made me feel young again; I looked quite clear and transparent; but my letter that I had kept so carefully was lost in the process.

"I was filled with seeds, and I had a general notion what they were. After that, I was sent on my travels again, but in perfect darkness; I had not even a lamp or lantern, not to speak of a sight of the sun and moon, till I reached my destination and was unpacked.

"'How carefully they have packed this bottle!' said a voice; 'and I daresay it will be broken after all.' But I was not broken; and, what is more, I understood every word; it was the language which I heard spoken round ny native oven, in the forest, and on board ship—the dear old language which I understood so well! I had come home again, and every word was a greeting and a welcome. I nearly jumped out of their hands for joy; and I scarcely noticed that I was uncorked, emptied, and laid by in the cellar. There is no place like home, even if it is a cellar. I lay there for many years, I believe, happy and contented, and then I was brought out once more.

"There was a great festival going on—a garden feast, with fireworks and illuminations. Chinese lanterns hung like gigantic tulips, anu wreaths of coloured lamps stretched from tree to tree. It was a lovely evening; the stars were shining, and the crescent moon rose with the pale blue disc of the full moon cradled within it: it was a pretty sight for good eyes.

"The illuminations extended to the most secluded paths, and gave sufficient light to find one's way. At intervals one came on bottles holding burning tapers, and among these bottles I obtained a very good place. I thoroughly enjoyed myself, for I was once more among green

leaves, the sound of music and laughter, and the sight of happy faces. The greatest crowd was gathered together where the Chinese lanterns shed round their many-coloured splendour; but I liked my place just as well; it was hushed, and had a charm of its own. In such an hour one forgets twenty years of neglect in a garret; and it is good to forget.

"A solitary couple wandered by me, and made me think of the gallant sailor and the furrier's daughter; it was as if I was living over my life again." Among the people in the gardens were some who were not invited guests, but who were allowed to wander round the outskirts of the illuminations and see what they could of its beauty. And thus it was that an old maid wandered down the path and thought of the day in the green wood, and of the happiest hour of her life. One does not forget such hours if one lives to be ever so old. She passed close to the bottle, but neither recognized the other; that is often the way with people in this world. We take up the bottle's story from this point.

The feast was ended. The bottle was taken back to the wine merchant's and refilled with wine, in readiness for a great adventure. This was nothing less than to make a balloon ascent with a famous æronaut. A crowd of people had assembled to look on, a military band was engaged, and great excitement prevailed. The bottle looked on tranquilly from its basket, where it lay beside a rabbit, who was in a state of great perturbation, because it knew that it was going to be taken up on purpose to be thrown out of the car. The bottle knew nothing about ascents or descents. It only saw the balloon distend and become fuller and larger and more restless; the ropes were cut and away went balloon, rabbit, and bottle, amid the joyous strains of the band and the hurrahs of all the people. "This is an odd kind of sailing," thought the bottle; "but, at least, there seems no danger of a collision." Thousands of people looked up at the balloon; and one of the thousands was the old maid who had seen the illuminations. She stood at her garret window by the birdcage; the cage had no water-glass in it then, but only a cup.

A myrtle was growing in a flower-pot which stood on the window sill; the old maid put out her head to watch the balloon; she saw the rabbit come tumbling down from the car; she saw the aeronaut drink to the health of every one beneath him, and then hurl the bottle high in air. She little thought that it was the same bottle which she had seen flying high in the air before, in the days when she was a young and happy girl.

The flight was so sudden that the bottle had no time to think of what was happening to it. Never had it reached to such a height before; roofs and steeples lay far beneath it, men and women looked like little children.

The bottle now began its descent; not with a quiet despair, like the rabbit, but turning over and over in somersaults of delight and excitement. It felt quite young again, and it was half full of wine for a very few seconds. What a journey it was! The sun shone on it, the crowds of people gazed at it, the balloon was far away, the bottle was free as air. Down it crashed on a roof and broke in two; but that did

not stop it; it rolled and fell into a courtyard, where it broke in countless pieces, but the neck lay there unbroken, as if it had been cut off with a glazier's diamond.

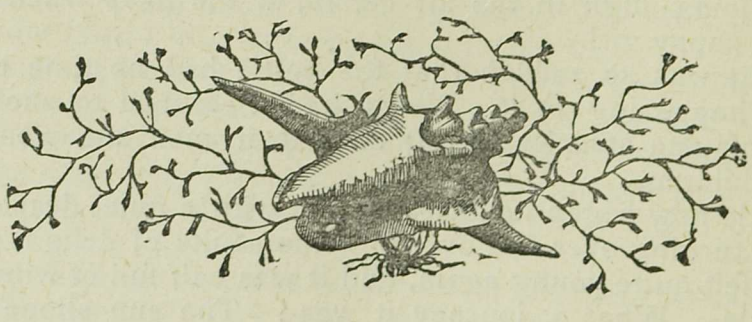
"I could make a good drinking glass for a birdcage out of this," said the man who picked it up; but he had neither bird nor cage, and it was hardly to be expected that he should buy a bird and cage just because he had found the bottle neck. Suddenly he bethought himself of the old maid who lived in the garret; it would be the very thing for her. And so it was that the bottle neck found itself in the garret, received a cork, and had what had been uppermost before turned undermost; a thing that often occurs in similar changes of circumstances. There it was, filled with water, and set up in the cage where the bird was singing joyously.

"It is easy for you to sing," said the bottle neck. It was a remarkable character now; it had made a balloon ascent; so much of its history was known to all around it. Now it hung in the cage listening to the bird, and the passers-by in the street below, while the old maid conversed with her visitor.

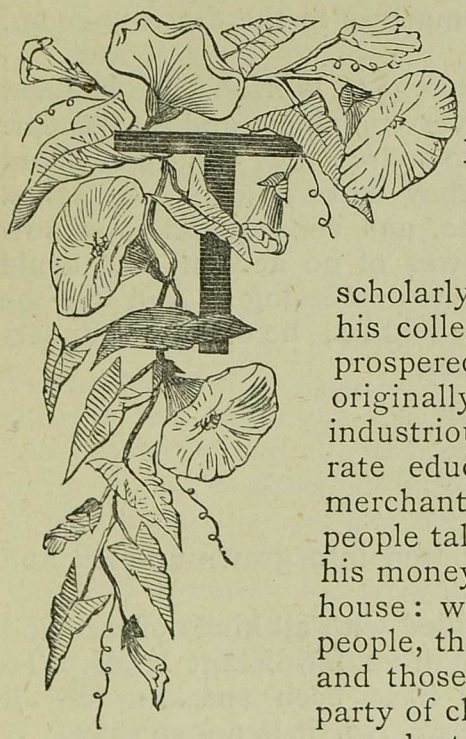
She was not speaking of the bottle neck, but of the myrtle in the window.

"You need not spend a dollar on your daughter's bridal wreath," she said, "I shall have a lovely bouquet to give you. Just see how the myrtle thrives! It is a slip of the myrtle you gave me on the day after my betrothal: I was to gather my bridal wreath from it when the year was ended. Do you remember? That day never came; he, who was to be my guardian and husband, sleeps under the restless seas! The myrtle lived to be an old tree, and I took the last slip from it. Now it will come to the wedding feast after all, in your daughter's bridal wreath."

Tears stood in the old maid's eyes. She talked over the happy days gone by, and the betrothal in the wood. Old thoughts rose up within her; but the thought that she had close to her, in her own window, a token of that very time; the same bottle that flew up into the air and fired off its cork like a popgun for joy at her betrothal—that thought never occurred to her. Neither did the bottle neck recognize the old maid; it paid no attention to what she was saying for the very reason that it was thinking so much about her.



Children's Prattle.



THERE was a children's party at the rich merchant's; and all the little guests were the children of rich and distinguished people. The merchant was a scholarly man himself, he had taken a degree at his college, and when he went into business he prospered and grew very wealthy. His father had originally been a cattle dealer, an honest and industrious man, and he had given his son a first-rate education and a good start in life. The merchant was both clever and good-hearted; but people talked much less about his heart than about his money. Very aristocratic people visited at his house: well-born people, as they are called, clever people, those who were both well-born and clever, and those who were neither. This time it was a party of children who were met together, and there was plenty of children's prattle. Children, as we all know, are very outspoken; and among the rest there was one lovely little girl who had learned from the servants to be extremely proud. Her parents were well-bred, sensible people; her father was a chamberlain, and she knew very well that that was something great.

"I am a chamberlain's daughter," she said; she might just as easily have been a chimneysweep's daughter, only it had happened otherwise. Then she told the other children that she was "well-born" and said that if people were not "well-born," they could never come to any good. It was no use their being clever or industrious, if they were not "well-born," they were nothing.

"And those whose names end in 'sen,'" she said, "they are never worth knowing; they are of no account at all. One must just put one's arms akimbo and make these '*sens*' keep their distance." And with that, she put her pretty little hands on each side of her waist and rounded her dimpled elbows. She was a pretty little girl.

But the merchant's little daughter was very angry; her father's name was Petersen, and she knew that it ended in "sen," so she said, angrily, "My father can buy a hundred pounds' worth of bonbons and throw them all among the children; can your father do that?"

"Yes; but my father," said the daughter of an author, "can put your father, and everybody's father, in the newspaper! My

mother says that everybody is afraid of him, because he governs the newspaper."

And the little creature looked as proud as if she had been a real princess who was obliged to look proud.

But outside the door stood a poor boy looking in through the chink. He was so poor and mean that he dared not go into the room. He had been turning the spit for the cook in the kitchen, and she had allowed him to stand behind the door and look at the beautifully-dressed children who were enjoying themselves in the drawing-room. It was a great treat for him.

"If I were only one of them!" he thought to himself. He listened to their conversation, and it made him very unhappy, and no wonder. His father and mother had not a penny to spare; they could not afford to buy a newspaper, much less could they write in one. And then came the worst of all: his father's name, and consequently his own name too, ended in "sen;" so that he was of no account; he could never come to any good. It was very depressing! And yet he thought he was born as well as any one could be; he could not understand how it was possible to be born better.

That was what happened on that night.

Years passed away and turned the children into grown-up men and women.

A splendid house stood in the town, filled with all kinds of rare and costly treasures. People came to see it from far-distant lands. To which of all the children of whom we have been speaking did it belong? Oh, that is very easy to guess. No, it is not so easy. It belonged to the poor boy who stood outside the door; he had come to some good, although his name ended in "sen"—

THORWALDSEN.

And the three other children, the well-born, the rich, and the clever child? Well, the one had no reason to reproach the other. They all became what Nature meant them to be. As to what they said and thought when they were little, it was mere children's prattle.

The Farmyard Cock and the Weathercock.

IN the farmyard there stood two cocks: the one on a dunghill, the other on the roof. They were both very conceited. Which of them do you think had the most to be proud of? Tell us what you think, though we shall keep to our own opinion whatever you say.

The poultry-yard was divided by a boarding from another yard, in which was a dunghill, and on the dunghill lay a cucumber, which had the consciousness of being the production of a forcing bed. "One is born to it," said the inner voice of the cucumber: "it is not every one who is born to be a cucumber. The hens and ducks and all the live stock of the farmyard are fellow creatures. I look up most of all to the cock; he is of far greater importance than the weathercock, which is placed so high, and yet cannot even creak, much less crow. It has neither hen nor chick; it only thinks of itself.

"No; the farmyard cock is something like a cock. His walk is a dance of triumph, his crow is music; wherever he comes he makes it clear to every one what a trumpeter must be. If he would only come over here! Ah! even if he ate me up, body and stalk, to die for him would be a glorious death!" That was what the cucumber said.

At night there came on a dreadful storm. Chickens, hens, even the cock himself sought shelter; the wind tore down the boarding between the two yards, the tiles clattered down from the roofs, but the weathercock stood firm. He did not even turn round; he could not move; he was young and newly cast, but thoughtful and very steady: he was born old. He had no resemblance whatever to the birds of the air, the swallows or the sparrows; he despised them all as common, chirping birds. The pigeons, he thought, were large and white and shining, like mother-of-pearl: they were more like a kind of weathercock, but they were stout and stupid; they thought about nothing but eating, and were very dull in society.

The birds of passage had paid a visit to the weathercock and told him about foreign lands, travelling adventures, and hair-breadth escapes from robbers, in the shape of birds of prey: their stories were new and thrilling; the first time of telling, that is, afterwards, the weathercock found that they repeated themselves—and what can be more tiresome than that in a story? They were bores, and everything else was a bore. There was no one to associate with; every body was insipid and commonplace.

"The world is utterly uninteresting," he said; "the whole concern is a bore."

The weathercock was stuck up in more ways than one, and that circumstance alone would have made him interesting in the eyes of

the cucumber, if she had only known it; but she had eyes only for the farmyard cock, and he was now in the yard with her.

The wind had blown down the plank, but the storm was over.

"What do you think of that cock-crowing?" said the farmyard cock to the hens and chickens; "it was rather rough, it wanted finish and style."

The fowls stepped on to the dunghill, and the cock trod over it with soldierly tread. "Garden growth!" he said, to the cucumber. The word revealed to her, her inner worth, and she heeded not that the cock pecked her and ate her up. A glorious death!

The hens and chickens came running up: when one runs, all the others follow; they looked at the cock, and were proud that he belonged to the same race.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" he crowed; "the chickens become hens when I cry aloud through the poultry yards of the world!"

And the hens and chickens clucked, and the cock proclaimed a piece of news. "A cock can lay an egg! And do you know what is in the egg? A basilisk! No one can endure the sight of it. Human beings know that, and now you know it too. You know what lies within me."

Thereupon the cock set up his comb, flapped his wings, and crowed again. The hens and chickens shivered; they were proud to hear that he was a cock of world-wide fame; they clucked till the weathercock heard them, but he did not stir.

"It is all folly," said the inner voice of the weathercock. "He can lay no eggs; and I am too lazy to do so. If I chose, I could lay a wind-egg, but the world is not worth it. It is all folly. Indeed I have had enough of stopping here."

And with that the weathercock broke off; but he did not strike the farmyard cock dead, though the hens say that that was what he was aiming at.

The moral is—"It is always better to crow than to be stuck up and break down at last."

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The Beetle.

THE emperor's riding horse had just been shod with gold; a golden horse-shoe for every foot.

Why was he shod with gold?

He was a beautiful animal, spirited and gentle, with slender legs, bright eyes, and a silken mane that flowed like a veil over his neck. He had carried his master through clouds of smoke and a hail-storm of bullets; he had plunged, and bitten, and charged the foe with the bravest, and when his master fought hand-

to-hand with an opponent, the good horse bore him in one wild spring safe over his enemy's fallen steed, and saved his golden crown and his life. The emperor's life was worth far more than gold or gems, and so it was that the horse fairly earned his golden shoes.

A beetle came creeping by. "Great folk come first, and then little ones," he said; "but size is not everything." And he stretched out his thin legs.

"What is that for?" asked the farrier.

"I wish to be shod with golden shoes," said the beetle.

"You must be out of your mind!" said the farrier. "*You* want to be shod with gold?"

"Certainly I do," said the beetle. "Am I not just as good as that huge brute in there who is waited on and fed, and currycombed? Do not I belong to the imperial stables?"

"But don't you understand the reason that the horse is shod with gold?" asked the farrier.

"Understand! I understand that it is a disparagement of myself," said the beetle. "It has been done on purpose to annoy me, and I am going out into the wide world."

"Go and prosper," said the farrier.

"You are a low fellow!" said the beetle. He walked out of the stable and flew into a flower garden full of lovely roses and sweet with the scent of lavender.

"Is it not beautiful here?" said a little ladybird who was flying about with her pretty red and black wings. "Is it not a pretty, pleasant place?"

"I am accustomed to something better," said the beetle. "You call this a pretty place? Why, there is not even a dunghill!"

He went on farther; and under the shadow of a large stack he saw a caterpillar crawling along. "How lovely the world is!" cried the caterpillar. "The sun is so warm, and everything is so bright and cheerful; and when I sleep—die, as people call it—I shall wake up as a butterfly!"

"What foolish idea have you got into your head?" said the beetle. "Wake up as a butterfly indeed! I come from the imperial stables, but no one there, not even the emperor's riding horse, who wears my cast-off golden shoes, imagines such a thing. Get wings and fly! Nonsense! But I can fly already, without making up as a butterfly." And away he flew. "I do not mean to get angry," he said, to himself, "but I really cannot help it."

Soon after, he fell down on a green lawn; he pretended to go to sleep, and in a few moments he slept in earnest.

A sudden shower fell hissing from the clouds. The beetle woke up at the sound, and tried to creep into the earth, but there was no hole. He was rolled over and over, and forced to swim as best he could, for flying was out of the question; he began to fear that he should never leave the place alive. He lay just where he was and gave himself up for lost.

When the storm passed over, and the beetle had blinked the water out of his eyes, he saw something white shining on the grass. It was some linen which had been spread out to bleach, and the beetle crept

into its folds. There he lay; it was a sad change from the imperial stables, but there was nothing better to be had. He stayed there for a day and a night, and the rain kept on falling. Towards morning he crept out, extremely indignant with the climate.

Two frogs were sitting on the wet linen, their bright eyes sparkled with joy. "What glorious weather it is!" cried one of them. "How it refreshes one! This linen holds the water beautifully, my hind-legs are twitching for a swim."

"I should like to know," said the second frog, "whether the swallow, in all her wanderings, ever meets with a better climate than ours. Such healthy dampness! He who cannot enjoy a day like this is no patriot."

"Have you ever been in the imperial stables?" said the beetle. "That is the climate for me! But one cannot carry one's climate about with one. Is there no dunghill here, where a person of position may find lodging and feel himself at home?"

The frogs either did not or would not understand him.

"I never ask a question twice," said the beetle, when he had asked three times and got no answer.

He went on farther and came to a piece of broken earthenware, which certainly ought not to have been lying there; but as it was there, it gave good shelter from the rain and wind, and made a comfortable home for three families of earwigs. They are people of no pretensions and only seek sociability. The mother earwigs are most affectionate; each thinks her own child the best and cleverest.

"My boy is just engaged," said a mother. "The dear fellow! His earnest wish is to gain the ear of a minister. It is so artless and lovable of him! His engagement, too, will steady him wonderfully; and what a joy that is to a mother!"

"My son," said another mother, "started upon his travels when he was scarcely out of the egg. He is all life and fire; he runs his very horns off. What a joy that is to a mother! Is it not so, Mr. Beetle?" She knew the traveller by his dress.

"You are both right," said the beetle; and then they begged him to walk into the parlour—in other words, to creep under the piece of earthenware as far as he could.

"Now, you must look at my little earwigs," said the other mother. "They are sweet children, and very amusing. Never are they the least troublesome, except when they are uncomfortable in their little stomachs: unfortunately, that is very often the case at their age."

And then every mother brought her baby, and all the babies clutched at the beetle's beard.

"Little rogues! they will find something to play with," said the mothers, beaming with loving pride; but the beetle thought he had had enough of it, and asked how far it was to the nearest dunghill.

"It is quite out in the wide world," said an earwig. "Beyond the ditch. I hope none of my children will ever get so far; it would kill me."

"I shall try to get there all the same," said the beetle; and he went away without saying good-bye, for that is the latest fashion

By the ditch he met several of his own race, genuine beetles.

"This is our home," they said; "we are very comfortably situated. May we beg you to come in? Step on this soft mud. The journey has tired you, no doubt."

"It has indeed," said the beetle. "I have been exposed to heavy rain, and have been obliged to lie on damp sheets, and cleanliness always tries me very much; and I have shooting pains in my wing from standing in a draught under a piece of broken earthenware. It is quite a treat to find oneself among one's own kindred."

"Do you come from the dunghill?" asked the eldest beetle.

"I come from the imperial stables," replied the traveller, loftily. "I was born there, with golden shoes on my feet; but I am travelling on secret service. Do not question me as to the nature of my mission. I shall never betray it."

With that the beetle alighted on the soft mud. There he found three young lady beetles, who giggled because they did not know what to say.

"They are none of them engaged," said the mother; and the young lady beetles giggled again—from embarrassment this time.

"I never saw fairer beetles, even in the imperial stables!" said the traveller.

"Do not spoil my girls," said the mother. "Do not speak to them unless your intentions are honourable. But I am sure they are, and so I give you my maternal blessing."

"Hurrah!" cried all the other beetles; and so our beetle found himself engaged. The wedding followed immediately, for there was no reason for any delay. The next day passed off pleasantly, and the next was not disagreeable; but on the third, it became necessary to think about providing for the bride, and perhaps for the children.

"I have let myself be taken in," said the beetle; "there is nothing to be done now but to take them in."

No sooner said than done. Off he went, and stayed out all that day, and all the next night, leaving his wife a helpless widow. "Fie!" said the other beetles; "that person whom we have taken into our family is a thorough vagabond: he deserts his wife and leaves her on our hands again!"

"Oh, well!" said the mother, "she can stay here at home, and be unmarried. Shame on the villain who deserted her!"

By this time our beetle was far away, and had sailed across the ditch on a cabbage leaf. In the early morning there came up two persons and saw the beetle continuing his journey. They picked him up, twirled him round and round, and looked profoundly learned, especially one of them—a small boy. "Allah suns the black beetle in the black stone in the black rock." Is not that what the Koran says? Then he translated the beetle's name into Latin, and dilated upon its species and habits. The second person, who was an old professor, voted that they should not take him home, because, he said, they had just as good specimens there already. The beetle thought the remark coarse and uncivil, and flew out of the professor's hands. His wings were dry now, so he managed to fly for a considerable distance, till he reached a hot-house; the window was open, and he flew in and buried himself in the warm earth. "This is bliss!" he exclaimed.

He fell asleep and dreamed that the emperor's riding horse had stumbled and died, and had bequeathed to him the four golden shoes, and promised that he should have two more.

It was a pleasant dream. When the beetle awoke, he crawled out and looked about him. What a splendid place it was! In the background tall palm trees rose to the lofty roof; the sun lent them a transparent radiance; and beneath them was a wreath of greenery and lovely flowers, some red as flame, some yellow as amber, some white as new-fallen snow.

"A nice display of plants," said the beetle; "they will taste very good when they are decayed; the place is a perfect store room. I dare say that there are several of my relations here. I will see if I can find any one with whom I can associate. I am proud, and proud of my pride."

He lounged about in the hot-house for some time, thinking of his dream about the dead horse and golden shoes.

Suddenly a hand seized him, squeezed him, and twirled him round and round.

The gardener's little boy and his sister had come into the hot-house and found the beetle. They proceeded to amuse themselves with him: first they rolled him up in a vine leaf, then they put him in a trouser pocket, and when he struggled they squeezed him tighter still. Then they ran with him to the brink of the large pond, at the other end of the garden. The beetle was then put into a broken wooden shoe and tied to a stick which did duty for a mast. He was a sailor now, and was forced to take to the water.

The pond was large; the beetle looked upon it as an ocean, and was so astonished at the sight that he fell over on his back and shook his six legs furiously.

His boat sped down the current far from land; but the boy turned up his trousers and fetched it back. After a while, the boy was called away in earnest, and the ship had to sail away in earnest also. On it went to the open sea; it was dreadful for the beetle; he could not fly, and he was tied to the mast.

A fly paid him a visit. "What charming weather it is!" said the

fly. "I will rest a little in the sunshine; you are delightfully situated here."

"You speak without reflecting," said the beetle; "I am tied up."

"Well, I am not tied up," said the fly; and off he flew.

"By this time I have learned to know the world," said the beetle. "It is a contemptible world; I am the only honest person in it. First, I am refused golden shoes; then I have to lie on damp linen, to stand in a draught, and, finally, to burden myself with a wife. When by good luck I escape, and wander on to learn more of the world around me, up comes a human boy, ties me up, and abandons me to the fury of the waves! And all this time that horse is prancing about in golden shoes! That is what annoys me most of all. But it is useless looking for sympathy in this world. My life story is very interesting; but of what use is it if no one is to know it? Certainly the world does not deserve to know it; if it had any merit or sense of justice, it would have given me golden shoes when I stretched out my legs. Had it done so, I would have remained an ornament of the imperial stables; as it is, they have lost me—the world has lost me. It is all over!"

That, however, was a mistake; a boat came by, and some young girls were rowing. "Look at that wooden shoe," cried one of them.

"There is a poor little creature tied up in it," said another. The boat passed close by; the young girls fished up the wooden shoe, cut the thread without hurting the beetle, and, when they reached the shore, laid him carefully on the grass.

"Crawl and creep; fly when you can. Freedom is a glorious thing!" said the beetle.

He flew through the open window of a great building and sank down exhausted on the soft, silken mane of the emperor's riding horse. The beetle was at home again. He clung to the mane and drew a deep breath.

"Here I sit upon the emperor's horse," he cried, "sit upon him as emperor! What am I saying? Yes, so it is; I see it all now. That was a happy thought. Why did the horse receive his golden shoes? The answer is clear as the day. He received them for my sake!"

The beetle thereupon became quite hilarious.

"Travelling brightens up one's wits," he said.

The sun shone into the stable and made everything look warm and cheerful.

"The world is not so bad after all," said the beetle, "if one knows how to take it."

Yes, the world was everything it should be now that the emperor's horse had been shod with gold in order that the beetle might ride upon it.

"I will go to the other beetles," he said, "and tell them the honour which has been shown to me. I will relate the unpleasantness of my journey, and assure them that I have now made up my mind to stay at home until my horse has cast his golden shoes."

Little Ida's Flowers.

"MY poor flowers are quite dead," said little Ida. "How pretty they looked last night! and now they are all faded. Why do they fade?" she said, to the student who was sitting on the sofa. The student was very fond of little Ida: he could tell the most beautiful stories, and cut out the funniest faces and pictures. He cut out hearts with little dancing ladies inside; flowers and castles in which all the doors and windows opened and shut. He was something like a student. "Why do the flowers droop so?" repeated the child, holding out her faded nosegay.

"Don't you know what is the matter with them?" said the student; "they went to the ball last night, and they are tired to death."

"But flowers cannot dance!" said little Ida.

"Indeed, they can!" said the student; "when it is dark, and we are fast asleep, they dance about merrily; they go to a ball almost every night."

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

"Yes," said the student; "young daisies and mayblossoms go."

"Where do the flowers dance?" asked the child.

"Have you never been in the palace gardens, outside the town gates? The palace where the king lives in summer, and where there are so many flowers? You remember the swans that swim up to you for bread crumbs? Well, you may depend upon it, that there are splendid balls there."

"I was in the gardens with my mother yesterday," said Ida, "but all the leaves were off the trees, and there was not a single flower. Where are they all? There were so many there last summer."

"They are in the palace," said the student. "As soon as the king and the court go to town, the flowers run out of the garden into the palace, and there they have fine games. The two most beautiful roses sit on the throne for the king and queen; the red coxcombs stand in a row on each side and bow—they are the chamberlains; then all the pretty flowers come in, and the ball begins. The blue violets are little midshipmen, and dance with the crocuses and hyacinths, whom they call young ladies; the tulips and tiger-lilies are the old dowagers; it is their place to sit and watch the dancers and see that everything passes off well."

"But is no one there to scold the flowers for dancing in the king's palace?" said little Ida.

"No one knows anything about it," said the student; "sometimes the old steward walks about in the night, to see that everything is safe; he carries a large bundle of keys, but as soon as the flowers hear the rattle of the keys they run and hide themselves behind the curtains, and just let their heads peep out."

"'I can smell that there are some flowers here,' says the old man; but he cannot see them."

"They dug a little grave in the garden."

"Capital!" said little Ida, clapping her hands. "But could not I see the flowers if I were there?"

"Yes," said the student, "if you remember to look in at the window the next time that you go there, you will soon see them. I saw them to-day; there was a tall yellow lily lying stretched out on the sofa like a court lady."

"Can the flowers in the Botanical Gardens go to the ball?" asked little Ida. "Can they walk such a long way?"

"Certainly," said the student; "they can fly if they like. Have you never seen the beautiful red, and yellow, and white butterflies? They look like flowers, and they were flowers once; they have broken loose from their stem and fluttered their leaves like wings, and learned to fly; and because they were always well-behaved, they received permission to fly about in the daytime, instead of sitting still on their stems, and so at last their leaves became real wings. You must have seen that yourself. It may be that the flowers in the Botanical Gardens have never been to the palace, and do not know anything about the ball; and I will tell you what: let us try and astonish the professor! you know him, he lives close to. Well, the next time you go into his garden, you just whisper to one of the flowers that there is a great ball at the palace; she will tell all the rest, and they will all fly away together; so that when the professor comes he will not find a single flower, and will not be able to imagine what can have become of them."

"But how can the flower tell the others? They cannot speak."

"No; but they can make signs," said the student. "Have you never seen them nodding and waving their green leaves when the wind blows? That means as much to them as words do to us."

"Can the professor understand their signs?" asked little Ida.

"Certainly. He went into his garden one morning and saw a great stinging-nettle making signs to a beautiful red pink. It was saying, 'You are very pretty and I love you dearly.' But the professor cannot endure that kind of thing, and he tapped the nettle on its leaves, and the nettle stung him. From that day to this the professor never ventures to touch a stinging-nettle.'

"What a funny thing!" said little Ida, laughing.

"How can you put such fancies into the child's head?" said the learned barrister, who was there on a visit, and who sat listening on the sofa. He could not bear the student, nor his pictures either. He watched him cut out a man hanging to a gallows and holding a heart in his hand; that was a heart stealer; or sometimes it was an old witch riding on a broomstick. The barrister did not like them. "How can you put such fancies into the child's head?" he always said. "Such utter nonsense!"

But little Ida thought it was very funny, and she thought a great deal about what the student had told her. The flowers hung down their heads; they were tired with dancing all night. They looked quite ill. Ida took them to her other playthings, which stood on her pretty little table; she had a large drawerful of the prettiest things. Her doll Sophie was asleep in the doll's bed, and Ida shook her to wake her up. "You really must get up, Sophie," she said; "you must

put up with the drawer for this night. These poor flowers are ill, and they must sleep in your bed; perhaps they will get well by to-morrow." She lifted the doll out, but Sophie looked cross, and did not say a word; she was annoyed at having to give up her bed.

Ida laid the flowers on the doll's bed, put the counterpane over them, and told them to lie still while she made them some tea, so that they might be quite well in the morning. She drew the curtains close round the bed, so that the sun might not shine in their eyes.

All night through she could not help thinking of what the student had told her. And when she went to bed she took care to look behind the window curtains, where her mother's hyacinths and tulips stood in pots, and whisper to them, "I know you are going to the ball to-night." The flowers pretended they did not understand her, and never moved a leaf. But Ida knew what she knew.

When she was in bed she lay awake thinking how beautiful it must be to see the flowers dancing in the palace. "I wonder if my flowers go," she thought. Then she fell asleep. But in the night she woke again; she had been dreaming about the flowers and the student. All was silent in the bedroom where Ida lay, the night lamp was burning on the table; her father and mother were asleep.

"I wonder if my flowers are still in Sophie's bed," she said. "I should dearly like to go and see. She sat up and looked at the door; it was partly open. She listened, and it seemed to her that she heard the piano played very, very faintly: it sounded prettier than she had ever heard it.

"I feel sure the flowers are dancing," she thought. "Oh, how I should like to go and see them!" But she dared not get up, lest she should wake her father and mother.

"I wish they would come in here!" she said. But the flowers did not come, and the music kept on playing more sweetly than ever. At last, she could bear it no longer; it was too beautiful. She crept out of her little bed and walked quietly to the door and looked into the drawing-room. Oh, what a beautiful sight she saw! There was no lamp, but the moonlight fell upon the floor and made the room as light as day. All the hyacinths and tulips stood in two long rows; there was not one left in the window—nothing but empty pots. The flowers were dancing in the moonlight, tripping through all the figures, and holding each other by their long green leaves while they waltzed round the room. At the piano sat a tall, yellow lily, which Ida distinctly remembered having seen in the summer. She was certain of it, for the student had said to her, "Is not that lily like Miss Lina?" Every one laughed at him then; but now Ida saw that the flower was really very like Miss Lina; she had the same manner of playing, turning her head languidly from side to side, smiling and beating time to the music. No one noticed little Ida. Then she saw a large blue crocus jump on to the table where the playthings were, run up to the doll's bed, and draw aside the curtains. There lay Ida's flowers; but they got up directly and nodded to the others, to say that they would come and dance with them. The old toy chimney-sweeper with the broken lip stood up and made his bow to the pretty flowers; they did not look at all ill, and jumped merrily down to the others.

Then came a sound as if something fell off the table; Ida looked and saw that it was the carnival rod; it seemed that the rod was a distant relation of the flowers. It was very elegant, and on the top of it sat a little wax doll who wore a broad hat, like the barrister's. The carnival rod danced about on its three red feet with great spirit; the mazurka was its favourite dance, and it stamped loudly on the floor; none of the flowers could dance the mazurka, because of the stamping it requires; they were all too light.

The little wax doll on the top of the carnival rod suddenly became life size, and called out to the paper flowers, "How can you put such fancies into the child's head? It is utterly absurd!" And it looked exactly like the barrister with the broad hat, just as yellow and cross. But the paper flowers switched it on its thin legs, and it shrank back to its former size and was a little wax doll again. Little Ida could not help laughing, for the rod danced on faster than ever, and the barrister was obliged to dance with him; it made no difference whether he made himself big or little; doll or barrister, he had to dance all the same. At last the other flowers said a good word for him, especially those who had laid in Sophie's bed, and the carnival rod left off dancing. Just then a knocking was heard inside the drawer where the playthings were. The old toy chimney-sweeper with the broken lip ran along the edge of the table, lay down on his face, and began to pull out the drawer. Sophie sat up and looked round in astonishment. "Is there a ball going on?" she asked. "Why did no one tell me about it?"

"May I have the pleasure——" began the chimney-sweeper, with a bow.

"No, you may not," said Sophie. "Do you think I would dance with you?" and she turned her back upon him. Then she sat up in the drawer and waited for one of the flowers to come and ask her to dance, but no one came. "Hem! hem! hem!" cried Sophie. But still no one came. The chimney-sweeper danced by himself, and did not dance at all badly.

When Sophie saw that none of the flowers seemed to notice her, she let herself fall from the drawer with a loud crash. All the flowers ran up to ask if she had hurt herself; they were very polite, especially those which had slept in Sophie's bed. But she had not hurt herself, and when Ida's flowers thanked her so prettily for their night's rest, and made much of her, she let them take her into the middle of the room where the moon shone brightest and dance with her, while the other flowers stood round in a circle. Then Sophie was good-tempered again, and said they might keep her bed; she did not mind in the least about sleeping in the drawer.

But the flowers said, "Thank you kindly, but we shall not live long. To-morrow morning we shall all be dead. Tell little Ida to bury us out in the garden by the dead canary bird, and then we shall wake up brighter than ever."

"No, you must not die," said Sophie, kissing the flowers. The hall door opened and a procession of beautiful flowers came dancing in. Ida could not think how they got there; they must have come from the king's palace. First of all came two beautiful roses wearing golden crowns; they were the king and queen. Then came the pretty pinks

and stocks bowing all round to the other flowers. They brought their own band. The poppies and peonies blew through long pea-shells till they were quite red in the face. The blue-bells and snow-drops rang out music like a chime of sleigh-bells. It was pretty music. Then came in all the other flowers, with violets and heart's-ease, daisies and may-blossom. They danced altogether, and kissed each other. It was a lovely sight.

At last they wished each other good-night; and then little Ida crept back to bed and dreamed about all that she had been seeing.

When she got up the next morning, she ran directly to the little table to see if the flowers were there. She found them in the bed, quite dead, beneath the counterpane. Sophie was in the drawer, looking very sleepy.

"Well, don't you remember what you were to say to me?" said little Ida. But Sophie looked more stupid than ever, and did not speak

"You are very disagreeable," said Ida, "and they all danced with you." Then she took a pretty little paper-box with some beautiful birds painted upon it, and in it she laid the dead flowers. "This shall be your pretty little coffin," she said, "and when my cousins come they shall help me to bury you in the garden, so that you may wake up quite well next summer."

The cousins were two boys, named John and Adolf; they were full of fun, and their father had just given them two new cross-bows, which they had brought to show Ida. She told them all about the dead flowers, and then they obtained leave to bury them. The boys marched first with their cross-bows, and Ida followed with the dead flowers in the pretty coffin. She kissed the flowers, and then she buried the box in the earth by the dead canary. The two boys shot arrows over the grave; it was all they could do, for they had no guns or cannon.

The Pen and the Inkstand.

IN a poet's room the remark was once made, "It is wonderful what things come out of an inkstand! What will come next, I wonder? It is really very wonderful."

The inkstand was on the table listening. "Yes, indeed," it cried, "it is past all comprehension! That is what I am always saying myself," it went on, addressing the pen and the other things on the table; "it is wonderful how many things come out of me. It is simply incredible! I do not even know myself what is coming next when the man once begins to wake my creative powers. One drop is enough for half a page, and what cannot be written on half a page? I am a singular being. All the poet's works, the characters

people fancy they know personally, the deep feeling, the rich humour, the vivid descriptions of scenery, all come from me. I cannot explain it myself, for I do not know the scenery I describe ; but still the power lies within me.

"All the graceful heroines and valiant knights on fiery steeds, rich and poor, I know not whom, all come from me. I assure you I think nothing of it."

" You are right, as far as that goes," said the pen. " You never do think, either about that or anything else. If you did, you would understand that you are nothing but a fluid. You give me the fluid medium by which I bring to light on paper all that lies hidden within me. It is the pen that writes. Every child knows that ; and yet most men have as much insight into poetry as an old inkstand has."

" You have had very little experience as yet," replied the inkstand. " You have only been a week in use, and you are already half worn out. Do you imagine that you are the poet ? Why, you are only a servant, and before you came I have had many others, some of the goose family and some of English manufacture. I know them all, quills as well as steel. I have had many in my service already, and I shall have many more, as soon as the man comes who sets me in motion and writes down what he finds in me. I should like to know what he will take out next."

" Inkpot ! " said the pen.

Late in the evening the poet came home ; he had been at a concert to hear a famous violinist, and he came home enchanted with the music. The player had poured forth a wealth of melody from the little instrument ; the poet heard the sound of pearl-like chimes of falling waters, of a choir of birds, of the wind sighing through the pine woods. He felt as if he heard his own heart's weeping, in sweet rhythmic measure like a woman's singing ; not only the strings, but the bridge, and screws, and sounding-board seemed filled with music. It was a wonderful performance, and yet it seemed so easy and simple, as if any one could play it ; for the violin and the bow seemed to play of their own accord ; it was they who sang ; the master's hand was forgotten, and so was the great Master of all who breathes life, soul, and power into His children, according to His will.

But the poet remembered him, and wrote down his thoughts.

" What folly would it be for the violin to pride itself upon its musical powers ! and yet what else do we do, we artists, poets, and inventors, when we forget Him whose instruments we are ? We have nothing of which we may be proud. To Him alone be glory ! "

That was what the poet wrote down ; he wrote it in the form of a parable, and called it " The Master and the Instruments."

" That is one for you, madame," said the pen to the inkstand when they were alone again. " Did you hear him read aloud what I have just written ? "

" I heard him read what I gave him to write," said the inkstand. " That was a hit at you for your conduct. To think that you should not even understand when you are being laughed at ! I gave you a rap from my inmost heart, and I should think I ought to know my own satire."

"Inkpot!" said the pen

"Writingstick!" said the inkstand.

And each of them felt that he had given a good answer; and that is a very pleasant feeling; one can sleep upon it, as they did. But the poet did not sleep; thoughts flashed from him as the music rose from the violin, soft as falling pearls, wild as the storm winds through the woods; he felt his heart thrill under the touch of the eternal Master.

To Him alone be glory!

The Girl who Trod upon Bread.

THE story of the girl who trod upon bread because she would not soil her shoes, and of the punishment that overtook her in consequence, is well known, for it has been written down and printed.

The girl's name was Inge; she was a poor child, proud and cruel, with a bad, unfeeling heart. When she was quite a little child it was her chief pleasure to catch flies and tear off their wings, so as to change them into creeping things. After a time she began to catch beetles and stick pins through them; then she would push a little piece of paper towards them, and when the poor creatures would clutch at it as they writhed about in their struggles to get away from the pin, Inge would laugh, and say, "Look at the beetle reading; he is trying to turn over the leaf!"

As she grew older she grew worse, but unfortunately she had a pretty face; if she had been ugly, people would have scolded her instead of spoiling her.

"She wants a heavy hand over her," her mother used to say. "When she was a little child she used to trample on my apron; some day, I fear that she will trample on my heart."

And so in time she did.

She went into service with some grand people who took great notice of her, and dressed her as if she were their own child; Inge looked prettier and grew more insolent every day.

After a year had passed, the lady said to her, "You ought to go and see your father and mother, Inge."

Inge went; but her only feeling was the wish to let all her old friends see how fine she looked. But when she came to the village, and saw the lads and lasses chattering together, and her mother bending under a large bundle of faggots, resting herself for a moment that she might draw breath after her work, Inge turned away and went straight back again. It was shameful, she thought, that any one so pretty and

THE GIRL AND THE LOAF OF BREAD.

so finely dressed should have a poor, ragged mother who picked up sticks for her fire. She was not sorry or remorseful in the least; she was very angry.

Six months passed away. "You ought to go and see your old parents," said her mistress; "you shall take them this large white loaf; they will be glad to see you again."

Inge put on her best dress and a pair of new shoes; she held up her dress and walked very carefully, to avoid the mud and dust; and there was no harm in that. But when she came to the foot-path that led across the moor, and saw that it was muddy like a marshy swamp, she threw down the loaf and stepped upon it so that she might not soil her shoes; but just as she trod on it, with one foot on the loaf, she sank down deeper and deeper in the swamp till there were only a few bubbles to show the place where she had disappeared.

That is the story as far as it is printed.

But what became of Inge? She sank down through the bog to the brewhouse of the marsh queen. The marsh queen is a relation of the elves, who have been painted and written about a great deal, so that they are very well known. But few people know anything about the marsh queen, except that, when the mist rises in summer from the meadows, it comes from the marsh queen's brewhouse. There it was that Inge found herself, and a horrible place she thought it; the muddiest vault is a palace to the marsh queen's brewhouse. Every cask and vat is foul with slime; the air makes one faint and giddy; and the ground is covered with frogs, toads, and writhing snakes. The touch of the dreadful reptiles was so icy cold that Inge's limbs were stiffened into stone. The loaf still drew her downwards, as an amber stud drags down a reed of straw.

The marsh queen was at home and had just received two visitors. One of these was a wicked old witch who had brought her work with her. She was knitting up slanders and idle words, and weaving them into a great tissue of lies; she was a quick, clever workwoman.

As soon as she caught sight of Inge she put her glass in her eye and looked at her attentively. "That girl has good abilities," she said. "I shall beg her from you in memory of my visit. She will make a good statue in my godson's antechamber."

The marsh queen had no objection, and the witch took Inge to her home.

It was an antechamber with neither beginning nor end; it made one dizzy and sick to look backward or forward through its endless space. Myriads of despairing creatures were waiting for the gates of mercy to be open to them; and they had long enough to wait. Great fat spiders wove cobwebs for thousands of years round their feet; the webs cut like snares and bound them like iron chains; while every heart ached with its nameless misery of unrest. The miser stood there, having forgotten the key of his treasure casket. I should never end if I were to write down all the tortures of the place. Inge shuddered with a terrible pain; it was as if she were being riveted to the loaf.

"That is because I tried to keep my feet clean and tidy!" said Inge. "How they all stare at me!" and indeed they did, with every

evil passion glaring from their eyes and lurking round their silent lips. They were horrible to see.

"It must be a pleasure to look at me with my pretty face and fine clothes," thought Inge. She turned her eyes; she could not turn her neck, for she was stiff as stone. She forgot that she had passed through the marsh queen's brewhouse; her clothes were covered with mud, a snake was twisting in her hair and round her neck, and from the folds of her dress there looked out hideous toads. It was very dreadful, "But the others look just as bad," she thought, and that comforted her a little.

But the worst of all was the dreadful hunger that tormented her. She tried in vain to stoop down and break off a piece of the loaf; she could move nothing but her eyes, and all they saw was horrible. Then came a swarm of insects and settled upon her; she blinked her eyes, but it was all in vain; the insects were the flies and beetles whom she had tormented, and they could not fly away.

"If this lasts much longer I cannot bear it," said Inge. But it did last, and she had to bear it.

A hot tear fell on her head and rolled down her cheek to the loaf on which she stood. Then came another, and another. Who was weeping for Inge? It was her poor old mother, above her, on the earth; for a mother's tears always find their way to the child's heart; but they bring no relief, only an added torment. This terrible hunger wasted her; it seemed as if all within her were consumed and dried away; as if she were become like a hollow reed, which sucks in every sound. She heard all the words which were spoken about her in the earth, and all she heard was harsh and stern. Her mother wept over her, but she only said, "Pride goes before a fall. Inge has broken her mother's heart."

For every one on earth knew of her sin; a cowherd had seen her tread upon the loaf and disappear below the marsh, as he stood upon the hill by the moor.

"You have broken your mother's heart, Inge," said the mother. "I said you would long ago!"

"I wish I had never been born!" said Inge. "It would have been much better for me. What good does it do now for my mother to weep?"

She heard her master and mistress say that she was a sinful girl, who had trampled on the gifts of God, and against whom the gates of mercy were shut for ever.

"Why did they not punish me, and cure my faults, if I had any?" said Inge.

Then she heard her story made into a song, and sung about the streets by all the girls and boys.

"To think that I must hear all this and suffer so much!" cried Inge.

"Well, they will have to be punished soon; there will be plenty of sins to punish. Ah, how I am tortured!"

Her heart hardened itself even more than her face was changed. "Who can grow better down here?" she said. "I cannot, and I will not. See how they stare at me!"

Her soul was filled with rage and hatred towards all mankind.

"Now they have something to talk about up there at last," she said. "Ah, how I suffer!"

She heard the children telling her own story; "wicked Inge," they called her, and said that she was so ugly and so naughty that she deserved to be severely punished.

These and many other hard words came from the children's lips.

But one day, when pain and hunger were gnawing at her hollow body, she heard them telling her story to a little innocent child, and when it was ended she heard the child burst into tears of pity and sorrow. "Will she never come out?" sobbed the little girl.

"Never any more," said the other children.

"Not if she says she is sorry and will never do it again?"

"I don't know; but she never will say she is sorry," was the answer.

"I want her to be sorry and come out," said the child, and she would not be pacified. "I will give away my doll and all my playthings, if she may come up. It is dreadful—poor Inge!"

The words went straight to Inge's heart: it was the first time that any one had said "poor Inge," without saying something about her faults; and now that an innocent little child was crying and begging for mercy for her, she felt a strange, new longing to cry herself, but she could not, and that was another torment.

As years passed away on the earth—there was no change where Inge was—she heard people speak of her very seldom.

Suddenly a sigh reached her ear. "Inge, Inge, you have been my greatest trouble!" It was her dying mother's last sigh.

Sometimes she heard her mistress speak gently of her. "I wonder whether I shall ever see Inge again," she said. "One never knows where one may go." But Inge knew well that her kind mistress would never come where she was.

The time passed on—a long and bitter time of sorrow.

Then Inge heard some one call her by her name, and saw above her head the light of two clear stars; the light fell from soft eyes which were closing for ever on the earth. So many years had passed since the little girl had cried over "poor Inge," that she was now an old woman whom God was calling to Himself. In one's last moment every thought and deed of one's life comes back to the memory, and the dying woman remembered how she had cried over Inge's story when she was a little child; the impression was so vivid that she exclaimed aloud, "Oh, my God, if I have not trodden Thy gifts under my feet, it is only because Thou hast upheld me; forsake me not in my last hour!"

Her eyes closed and opened on the Unseen. Inge had been in her latest thoughts, was now seen by her in all her misery. She burst into tears of pity at the sight, and stood forlorn in Paradise, weeping for the lost Inge. The tears sounded like an echo in the hollow shell that enclosed the sinful, suffering soul; the love from on high was made clear by an angel's tears. Why should the happy spirit weep for her? Inge thought of every wicked. cruel deed she had done, and she too wept aloud: tears such as she had never wept before: tears of shame and penitence. She felt her sin, and owned that the gates of

mercy were closed to her; and at the same moment a ray of glory shot down into the abyss, with a power and warmth stronger than the power of the sunbeam that melts the snow. More quickly than the snow flake melts which has fallen on the warm lips of a child, did Inge's frozen form dissolve in mist, and a little bird flew up in a sudden zigzag to the earth. But the bird was timid and shy; ashamed of itself, and shrinking from the presence of all around. It flew into a hole of the ruined wall and cowered down, trembling and voiceless, not daring to look out on the beautiful things around it. How lovely everything was! The air was fresh and mild; the moon cast a soft light upon the earth; tree and shrub breathed out a rich fragrance. The bird was happy in its little home; its feathers were soft and warm; it felt that all around it was the work of a loving Hand; and the bird longed to break forth in songs of gratitude and praise; but it could not do so. It would gladly have sung like the cuckoo or the nightingale, but God, who hears the mute praises of the meanest worm, hears the bird's muttered hymns, as He heard the praises in David's heart before the psalms broke forth in word and melody.

For weeks together the silent songs arose to heaven; surely they would break forth at the first good deed done! but the deed had yet to be found.

The blessed Christmas time drew nigh; the farmer planted a stake near the wall and tied up to it a sheaf of oats, that the birds might keep a merry Christmas and have a good meal in honour of the Saviour's birth.

The sun rose on Christmas morning and shone on the sheaf and the crowd of chirping birds that fluttered round it. "Tweet! tweet!" sounded from the hole in the wall. The thought had become a song; the faint cry swelled to a joyous hymn; the thought of a good deed flashed into its heart. It flew forth into the air, and in heaven they all knew what bird it was.

The winter was hard and long, the rivers were frozen, the birds had scant measure of food; our bird flew far and wide in the tracks of sleighs, and found here a grain or two of corn and there some crumbs of bread. It ate very little itself, but it called upon all the half-starved sparrows to come and eat what it had found. It flew on to the window sills of the town, and wherever a loving hand had scattered crumbs it called the other birds and let them feast.

Before the winter was over, the bird had given away so many crumbs that if they had been weighed they would have been found to be as heavy as the loaf on which Inge had trod because she would not soil her shoes; and when the last crumb was found and given away, the bird's wings became white as snow. "Look at that seagull flying across the river," said the children, when they saw the white bird; now it dipped into the waves, now it rose into the golden sunshine; it was impossible to follow its flight: one child said that it had flown straight up into the sun.

Grandmother.

VERY old is grandmother; her face is wrinkled, and her hair as white as snow. Her eyes are like two stars, but softer and milder than any stars can be; they are so kind and peaceful that it does one good only to look into them. She can tell the most beautiful stories, and she has a heavy brocaded silk dress, stiff with its inwrought flowers, and rustling as she walks along. She knows almost everything; and it is quite certain that she lived a long while before father and mother. She often reads out of her hymn-book with the large silver clasps; between the leaves lies a rose, quite dry and faded; not half so beautiful as the roses in the glass, and yet grandmother smiles at it more tenderly than at all the rest, and sometimes the tears come into her eyes at sight of it. Why does she look so often at the dead flower in the book? Do you know? Every time when her tears fall on the faded leaves the flower lives again, the colours glow bright, the room is filled with fragrance, the walls sink away in mist, and all around rises the glorious forest, where the sun shines through the leaves, and grandmother walks along the winding path. She is young and fair; a gentle girl with golden hair and rosy cheeks; no rose is fresher; and her eyes—why, they have never changed; even now she has the same sweet, loving eyes. By her side walks a young man, tall and stalwart; he gathers the rose and gives it to her; she smiles; grandmother does not smile like that now—and yet, yes, she is smiling now. But the vision has faded; the forest path, the young man's handsome face, the old, old memories have all passed away. The rose lies dead in the hymn-book, and grandmother is sitting there, an old woman, looking down upon the yellow leaves.

Grandmother is dead now. She was sitting in the armchair, telling one of her beautiful stories; she had just said, "That is the end of the tale—I am tired now." She leant her head back in the chair and closed her eyes. We could hear her quiet breathing; her face was full of peace and joy, as if a sunbeam rested on its features; she smiled again; and then some one said that she was dead.

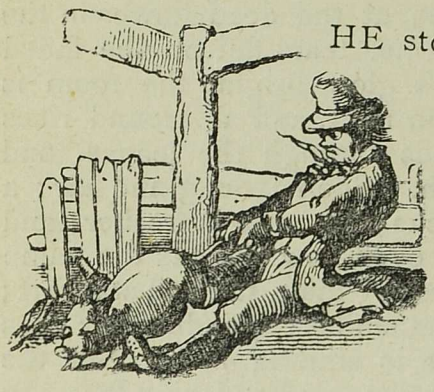
They laid her in a black coffin, she was shrouded in pure white, and lay there peacefully, with closed eyes and smiling lips. Every wrinkle had disappeared; no one was afraid to look on the kind, dead face; we all knew it was dear, good grandmother. Her head rested on the hymn-book, where the dead rose lay; and then she was carried away and buried.

On the grave, close beneath the churchyard wall, a rose-tree was planted, it was full of flowers, and the nightingale flew singing over the roses. Inside the church the organ played the same hymn-tunes which were printed in the buried book. The moonlight shone upon the grave, but the dead was not there; every child might go boldly at night to gather a flower from below the churchyard wall. The dead

know more than we. They know that we should be seized with dread at sight of them, and they do not come again. The earth is heaped above the coffin ; the hymn-book has crumbled into dust, the rose with all its memories has vanished. But overhead fresh roses are blooming, the nightingale sings, and the organ breathes forth, strong and sweet. Overhead one still remembers grandmother and her kind young eyes; for eyes can never die or grow old. Our own shall one day see grandmother again, young and beautiful as on the day when first she kissed the rose which now lies mouldering in the grave.

—o—

The Marsh King's Daughter.



THE storks tell to their young ones many a story. They are almost always tales of the moorland and the sedge; and they are always adapted to the age and capabilities of the listener. The very youngest are satisfied if they hear "Kribble-krabble-plurry-murry;" they think that is very nice ; but the elder ones like something with a deeper meaning, or a fragment of family history. One of the very oldest stories told by the storks is known to us all; it is the story of Moses lying among the reeds on the banks of the Nile. The second is not nearly so widely known; perhaps because it is an inland story. It has been handed down for thousands of years from mother stork to mother stork. Each one has told it better than the last, and we are going to tell it now the best of all.

The first pair of storks who brought over the story, and were mixed up in it themselves, had their summer residence in the Viking's palace on the moorland in Wendyssel, or, if we wish to show our learning, on the great heath near Hjorring, at the northern point of Jutland. The place is still a vast, desolate moor; you can read all about it in the official description of the district. It is said to have been upheaved from the bottom of the sea long ages back; and it has spread abroad in miles of watery meadows, of dangerous fen and quagmire, and turf land, with stunted shrubs and blackberry bushes. The landscape is almost always veiled in mist; and, seventy years ago, wolves prowled across the moor. Well may it be called a "wild waste;" and one may think what it must have looked like a thousand years ago. In some things one would notice but little change: the brown reeds grow just as tall and wave the same shaped leaves and blueish, feathery plumes ; the silver birch still wears its delicate crown

The priest lifted up the cross ; it shone like gold."

of drooping leaves; and as to the living dwellers on the marsh, the fly has not changed the pattern of her gauzy wings, nor the stork his favourite uniform of black and white, with red stockings. Men, indeed, have made many a change in their costume since then; but one thing has never varied, namely, that whoever treads the marsh to-day meets the same fate which they met who trod it years ago, be he huntsman or groom, squire or knight—he sinks down through the fen to the palace of the marsh king, deep below the earth. Very little is known of the marsh king and his government, and perhaps that is all the better.

Near the moor, close to the Lymfiard formed by the North Sea and the Cattegat, stood the Viking's palace, with its stone, water-tight dungeons underground; its turrets and its three projecting storeys. On the roof the storks had built a nest; the mother stork was sitting on her eggs, and feeling sure that she should not have all her trouble for nothing.

One evening the father stork stayed out very late; and when he came home he looked extremely flurried and excited. "I have something horrible to tell you," he said to his wife.

"Then it must stand over," she said. "Consider that I am hatching my eggs; it might upset me and have an injurious effect on the brood."

"But you must know it," he answered. "She is here. The daughter of our host in Egypt. She has ventured to make the journey, and is gone by this time."

"What, the child who sprung from the race of the fairies? Now, *do* go on. Don't you know that I must not be kept waiting when I am sitting on my eggs?"

"My dear little mother! You see, she believed what the doctor said, and what you told me. She has come to find the flowers from the marsh, which will cure her sick father; she is travelling in the disguise of a swan, with the other swan princesses, who are come to the North to renew their youth. And by this time she is gone!"

"How you spin it out!" cried the mother stork. "My eggs will get a chill. I cannot bear to be kept in this suspense."

"I have been watching," said the father stork; "and this evening, as I walked among the reeds, I saw three swans. Something in the movement said to me, "That is not genuine swan, it is only feathers." You know the feeling, my dear; you can tell in a moment when all is not quite right."

"I thought you were speaking of the princess," she said; "I am sick of hearing about swans and feathers."

"You know the kind of pond that lies in the centre of the moor?" continued the father stork; "you can see a portion of it if you raise yourself a little; a bare stump of an old alder tree stands there among the reeds. The three swans lighted down upon it, fluttered their wings, and looked around them: one of them cast aside her robe of feathers, and I recognized our Egyptian princess in a moment. She stood there veiled in her long, black hair, and I heard her beg the others to take great care of her swan's dress while she dived into the pond to break off the magic flower which floats upon the waters. The

others nodded and lifted up the dress in their beaks. 'What can they be going to do?' I thought to myself. The next moment I saw them rise up in the air with the princess's robe. 'Dive down below and stay there!' they cried. 'You shall never see Egypt again!' and they tore the dress to shreds, till the feathers flew about like a snow-storm; and then they flew away, the cruel, treacherous princesses!"

"What a horrible thing!" cried the mother stork. "I cannot bear to hear any more. Come, what happened next?"

"The princess cried aloud, and her tears fell on the alder stump. It was no common alder; it was the marsh king himself, who reigns over the whole moor. I saw him stretch out his knotty arms like long, shining branches, and clutch at the princess. The poor child fled from him in terror; she sped along the green, shaking bog; but the ground would not bear my weight, much less hers, and I saw her sink below the fen, and the alder stump followed her and dragged her down. Black bubbles rose from the marsh, and then every trace of them had vanished. The princess lies buried in the marsh, and will never bring a flower to Egypt. It would have broken your heart, little mother, if you had seen it."

"You should not tell me such stories at a time like this; it might spoil all my eggs. The princess will know how to take care of herself. Some one is sure to help a fairy child. Now, if it had been you or I, it would have been all over with us."

"I shall go there every day to see if anything comes of it," said the father stork; and so he did.

A long time passed away, and then the stork saw a green stem rise from the pond. When it had pierced the surface of the water, it unfolded into a cluster of leaves, with one large bud in the centre. The stork flew over the pond and saw the bud open under the burning sun; inside the flower lay a lovely little baby, as fresh and bright as if it had just left its bath. It looked so like the Egyptian princess, that for a moment the stork thought that it must be she; but when he had taken time to reflect, he decided that it was the child of the princess and the marsh king who lay sleeping in the water-lily.

"She cannot possibly stay here," said the father stork; "and there are too many of us already in my nest. Stay! I know what I will do with her. The Viking's wife has no children; she has often longed for a little one, and I hear them say the stork will bring one some day. I will take them at their word. How delighted they will all be!"

The stork lifted the little creature from the lily, flew to the Viking's palace, pecked a hole in the panes of bladder which covered the window frame, and laid the baby in the lap of the Viking's wife. He then flew back to his wife, and told her with much pride of what he had done; the young storks heard all he said, for they were quite old enough now.

"So the princess is not dead," said the father; "she has sent her little baby up here, and now that is provided for."

"Did I not say so from the very first?" said the mother stork. "Now, give a little of your interest to your own family. The time for our autumn journey is at hand; I feel a twitching in my wings. The cuckoo and the nightingale are gone already, and I heard the quails

say that they were going to start as soon as ever the wind was favourable. Our young ones will come off famously at the grand review, or else I am very much mistaken."

The Viking's wife was delighted beyond measure when she woke up and saw the lovely little baby in her lap; she kissed and caressed it, but it cried and screamed and struggled, fighting with its little hands and feet, and seemed to be in pain or great distress. At last it cried itself to sleep, and as it lay there, hushed and peaceful, it looked a lovely little thing. The Viking's wife was radiant with delight; she felt well in body and mind, and light at heart; it seemed to her as if her husband and his men, who were away from home, must come back as suddenly and unexpectedly as the child had come to her.

There was much to be done in the house to prepare for her lord's return; the lady and her maids were busy in hanging up the splendid tapestry which they had themselves embroidered with stories out of the lives of their idols, Thor, Odin, and Freya. Slaves brightened and cleaned the ancient shields which ornamented the walls; cushions were placed upon the benches, and dry logs piled on the earth in the centre of the hall, so that the flame could be kindled in a moment. Before nightfall the Viking's wife was wearied out and sank into a quiet sleep.

When she awoke, towards morning, she started up in terror; the child had disappeared. She sprang from her couch, lighted a resin torch, and searched the room. At the bottom of the bed, where her feet had rested, there lay a large, hideous frog! She shuddered at the sight, and took up a heavy bar to kill the reptile; but it looked into her face with such piteous, imploring eyes, that she had not courage to strike the blow. Once more she continued her search; the frog uttered a faint croak; she started at the sound, ran to the shutter, and tore it open: the sun rushed into the room and fell on to the couch and the great frog. Suddenly it seemed as if its wide mouth grew small and rosy red; its limbs stretched themselves out, and—yes, it was her own lovely little child who lay there; the ugly frog was gone!

"What can it mean?" she cried. "Have I dreamed an evil dream? It is my own pretty baby lying there." She took it in her arms, but the child tore, and kicked, and struggled, and bit like a young wild cat.

The Viking did not come on that day, or the next; the wind was against him; it was blowing southward for the storks. What drives one forward holds another back.

When a few days and nights had passed away, the Viking's wife had found out the secret spell which lay upon her child. By day, the little thing was as beautiful as a fairy, but wild, untamed, and evil-tempered; by night, it was a hideous frog, silent and meek, with shrinking, sorrowful eyes. Two forms and two natures changed with the sunlight; by day the baby had its mother's face and its father's heart; by night, its mother's gentle soul looked out from the marsh king's hideous ugliness. Who would have power to break the spell?

The Viking's wife lived in fear and dread of her husband's return; her heart began to cling to the poor little thing; she knew that she would not dare to confide the secret to the Viking, for she did not

doubt that he would insist on following the old custom of the country and order the child to be exposed on the highway for any one to take who would. The Viking's wife was resolved that this should never be; her husband should never see the child except by daylight.

One morning a rush of stork wings flew across the roof; more than a hundred pairs of storks had rested during the night from the fatigue of the grand review; and now they flew high overhead towards the south.

"All the men to the front; the wives and children to follow," was the word of command.

"How light we feel!" sang the young storks, in chorus; "we twitch and quiver to our very toes, as if we were filled with living frogs. How beautiful it is to fly abroad to foreign lands!"

"Keep in the ranks with us," cried the elder storks; "do not use your beaks so much, it exhausts the lungs."

And the storks flew away.

At the same moment the sounds of the horn echoed across the heath; the Viking had landed, with his men, and was hastening homeward, laden with booty from the Gallic coast and from the British shores, where the people cried in terror—

"Deliver us from the fury of the Northmen!"

Life and noise and merriment came with the Viking to the palace on the lonely moor. The great vats of mead were borne into the hall; the fire was lighted; horses were slaughtered, and everything made ready for a royal feast. The high priest sprinkled the doomed slaves with warm blood; the flame leaped, the smoke curled black among the rafters, the soot fell down in flakes—but the guests were used to that. Every visitor received a rich present; past treachery and falsehood were forgotten; they drank deeply, and threw the bones left from the meal in each other's faces, in token of good fellowship. The bard, half hero and half minstrel, who had taken part in the last foray, and knew well of what he sung, then chanted a wild ballad, reciting the story of their expeditions and the noble deeds which each one had done. Every verse ended with the refrain, "Our gold and land, our friends and joys, all die, and we die too; but a brave man's memory never dies." And then the guests clashed their swords against their shields and beat upon the table with knives and bones, according as their manner was.

The Viking's wife sat on a raised bench in the open hall: she wore robes of silk, golden bracelets, and amber beads. She had dressed herself in her richest jewels, and the minstrel sang of her beauty and of the golden treasure which she had brought to her lord. The Viking was delighted with the beautiful baby; he had only seen it by day, and its wild ways pleased him well. The child would make a splendid woman, he said, and be a fit mate for a hero. She would not blink her eyes if a practised hand aimed in jest at her eyebrows with its glittering sword.

The mead casks were emptied, and others were brought in; the guests were men who ate and drank without measure; they knew the old proverb, "The cattle know when to leave the pasture, but a fool does not know the measure of his stomach." They knew that and

many another wise saying, as, for instance, "A welcome guest is tedious if he stays too long;" and yet they stayed on and on. Meat and mead are two good things, and there was mirth and song besides. At night the vassals and serfs slept among the ashes, dipped their fingers into the dishes and licked them with delight. Those were fine times!

The Viking and his men sallied forth again when the autumn leaves began to fall; they went to the coast of Britain; "A pleasure trip across the water," the Viking said. His wife stayed at home with the little girl; and one thing is certain, namely, that she learned to love the ugly frog, with its sorrowful eyes, better than the little beauty that fought and bit at all who came near it.

The chill, raw autumn mist lay on the wood and over the moor; the snowflakes fell in feathery showers; the winter was sharp and bitter; the swallows took possession of the storks' nests, and talked over the former owners, as they always do. But, meanwhile, where were the storks—what had become of the long file of birds which had flown southward?

The storks were now in Egypt, where the sunlight falls as hot as on our loveliest summer day. Tamarind trees and acacias blossomed all around; the Turkish crescent glittered bright on mosque and minaret, and many a pair of storks rested from their long journey on the towers and lofty roofs. The nests lay side by side among the fallen columns and the ruins of ancient, long-forgotten temples. The date palm lifted its crown of leaves and spread abroad a grateful shadow; the grey pyramids gleamed like gigantic shadows through the thin, transparent air of the desert, where the ostrich trains himself in swiftness, and the lion looks, with large, bright eyes, upon the marble sphinx half buried in the sand. The Nile had retreated from its bed, and the river channel swarmed with frogs and presented a delightful prospect to the hungry storks. The young ones thought it must be an optical delusion, too beautiful to be true.

"It is always so here. Now you see how we spend our days in the warm countries," said the mother stork; and the young ones felt their mouths water.

"Is there anything else to see?" they asked. "Shall we go farther into the country?"

"There is nothing to be seen there," replied the mother; "nothing but immense forests, with tangled branches and thorny plants that bar and choke up the road. The elephant may perhaps tread himself a path with his heavy feet; but the snakes are too big for us, and the lizards too lively. If you go to the desert, you only get your eyes full of sand, in fine weather; and if there is anything like a storm, you are buried outright in a sandheap. This is the best place. Here you have plenty of frogs and locusts. I shall stay here, and so must you."

They built their nest. The elder ones rested on the tall minarets; they found plenty to do with smoothing their feathers and sharpening their beaks on their red stockings. Now and then they lifted up their

hands and bowed to each other with stately grace, and a wise look in their brown eyes. The young lady storks tripped through the brown reeds, swallowing a frog at every third step, and looking furtively at the gentlemen storks. They made acquaintances, and learned a coquettish way of tossing young snakes, which was very becoming, and the snakes tasted nice too. The young male storks began to quarrel, flapped their wings, and pecked each other with their beaks till they drew blood. In this way many of the young people became engaged, which was what they wanted—indeed, the one thing they lived for. Then they went to their nests and began to quarrel again, for in hot countries every one gets very fierce and hot-tempered. But there was a great deal of enjoyment too, and the old storks did not mind the fighting, they thought everything was becoming to their young ones; and there was sunshine every day, and plenty to eat, and nothing to do but amuse oneself.

But in the splendid Egyptian palace there was neither peace nor pleasure to be found. The master lay on his couch in the lofty, richly-painted room—the walls were so bright that it looked like one great tulip; but the rich noble lay stiff and paralyzed, stretched out helpless, like a mummy. His family and servants were round him; he was not dead, and yet one could hardly say that he was alive. The magic flower from the North, which had been sought for by the one who loved him best, had never been found. His fair young daughter, who had flown northward, in her swan's dress, over land and sea, would never come home again. "She is dead!" said the two princesses, when they came back. This is the story which they had told on their return:—

"We were flying high in the air, all three of us together, when a huntsman saw us and took aim. His arrow killed our dear friend and sister, and she sank down, dying, into the moorland lake. We buried her in the cool earth beneath the silver birch, and then we avenged her death. We lighted a fire under the swallows' wings; they flew to their nests in the thatched roof; the house broke out in clear flames, the huntsman and his family were burned to ashes. The light from the fire shone across the lake to her grave under the silver birch. She will never see Egypt again!"

Then they wept; and the father stork, who was listening, ground his beak with rage.

"Treachery and lies!" he cried. "I should like to thrust my beak deep into their hearts."

"And very likely break it short off," said the mother stork. "What a fright you would be then! Think of yourself first and of your family. Other people's business is nothing to us."

"I shall go and stand on the edge of the open cupola to-morrow," said her husband, "and hear what the doctors and wise men say about the patient. Perhaps they will come a little nearer the truth."

The doctors and the wise men came and said a great deal, but the stork could make nothing of it; and there was nothing in it that was of any use for the sick man or for the princess in the marsh. But still we may as well listen to what people have to say; one has to listen to a great many things in this world.

"Love brings forth life. The highest love brings forth the highest life. Only through love can life be saved." That was an old saying, and it was truly and wisely spoken; as the wise men all declared.

"That is a beautiful thought," said the stork.

"I cannot say that I understand it," answered his wife; "but that is its fault, and not mine. And, beautiful or not, I have other things to think of."

The learned men then began to discourse upon the different kinds of love: the love between parents and children, and the love of the sunbeam to the growing seed. The warm ray kisses the cold, bare earth, and the living germ breaks through to greet it. It was all too learned and high-flown for the stork; he could not follow it, much less repeat it to his wife. He felt weighed down with the pressure of his thoughts; his eyes were nearly closed, and he stood the whole day long, motionless, on one leg; so much learning was a heavy burden to bear.

One thing, however, he did understand. Every one, high and low, had said, from their innermost heart, that it was a sorrow and grief to the whole country that the king lay sick and helpless on his bed, and that joy and peace would be spread abroad over the whole land if he got well again. But where could the flower be found which would restore him to health? They had searched, consulted learned treatises, the stars of heaven, the winds and storms; and the result of all their patience was the sentence we quoted above—"Love brings life." In saying that, they overshot themselves, and said a great deal more than they understood. But they kept on repeating it, and even wrote it down as their prescription. And there, of course, they were stopped again; how were they to make up the prescription now they had written it down? At last they agreed that it must be carried out by the princess; she loved her father dearly, and it was to her alone that they could look for help.

That happened many years ago; and the princess, one night, when the crescent moon was sinking down towards the marble sphinx, thrust away the choking sand, and entered the long passage that led to the interior of the Pyramids, where the mighty kings of old times lay embalmed upon their shelves. The princess had been told in a dream that she must lay her head upon the breast of one of the dead kings, and all would be made clear to her. She obeyed the dream, and learned the secret of her father's restoration. The spot where the healing lotus grew in the distant Danish land was shown to her in a vision, and thus it was that the princess left her home, wearing the swan's plumage.

The two storks knew all about that; and now we know rather more than we knew before. We know that the marsh king drew her down through the fen; and that she is lost to her home for ever. One of the wise men said, as they had said before, "Love brings forth life," and with that they were obliged to rest contented, for there was nothing more to be done.

"I shall not rest till I have stolen the swans' dresses from those wicked princesses," said the father stork. "I will not have them

coming and making fresh mischief on the moor. I will hide the two dresses up here till they are wanted."

"Where shall you hide them?" said the mother stork.

"In our nest. There is room both here and in our nest at home. I and the young ones will carry them between us; and if they are too heavy for us to carry all the way, there are plenty of places where we can hide them till our next year's wandering. Of course one dress would be enough for the princess, but I prefer to take both; one can never have too many wraps in the North."

"No one will thank you for it," said his wife. "But you are the master. Except at breeding time, I have no voice in anything."

The little child in the Viking's fortress had been named Helga; it was too soft and pretty a name for a temper like hers. Every month added to the little creature's beauty, and showed more plainly her violent and untameable spirit. Year by year, as the storks made their bi-annual journey—in the spring to the moor, and in autumn to the shores of the Nile—the child grew up into a lovely maiden of sixteen: a fair shell, holding a bitter kernel; wild and hard, even in those wild and hard times.

It was her greatest pleasure to dip her white hands in the warm blood of the horses slain in sacrifice; in one of her outbreaks she bit off the head of the black cock which the high priest was about to sacrifice; and she said to her foster-father, in sober earnestness, "If your enemy were pulling down the roof from your house while you lay asleep, I would not wake you if I could; for my ears tingle still with the blow you gave them years ago. I have not forgotten!"

But the Viking only laughed at her wild words. He was proud of her beauty, and knew nothing of the spell under which she lay.

She rode her horse bare-backed, as if she were cast in one piece with the fiery roan; and never swerved from her seat when the horse bit and kicked the other horses. Often when the Viking's ship was coming in, the young girl would spring down, dressed as she was, from the high rock into the tumbling waves, and swim to meet the fleet. She cut off the longest tress of her beautiful hair to make a string for her bow: "If you want a thing done, do it yourself," she cried.

The Viking's wife was strong-willed and resolute, judged by the standard of the time; but, in comparison with her daughter, she seemed a timid, shrinking woman. And then she knew of the dreadful spell that lay upon the unhappy girl.

Many a time she shuddered to see Helga climb on to the ledge above the well in the courtyard, balance herself for a while in wild, ungraceful contortions, and then throw herself down into the deep water. There she would dive about in her frog's nature, and climb out again with swift, cat-like motion, dripping with water, which fell in streams from her dress upon the leaves and rushes which were strewn on the floor of the hall.

Only in the still, evening twilight was Helga to be reasoned with or held in check. At that time she grew silent and thoughtful, and an

nstinctive feeling made her keep close to her mother's side. And when the sun had set, and her form had changed, she would sit cowering in the shadow. Her body was much larger than that of the largest frog, and all the more hideous because of its size. She looked like a misshapen dwarf with a frog's head and webbed fingers. Her eyes were very sorrowful, and her voice was like the inarticulate sobbing of a child in its sleep. The Viking's wife would take her on her knees, forgetting her ugly shape, and, looking into her piteous eyes, she often said, "I almost wish you would stay always in your present form. My silent frog-child is not so terrible as the beautiful girl I see by day."

And she wrote rhymes against witch spells and sorcery and threw them over the wretched girl, but they were all of them powerless.

"I can hardly believe that she was ever little enough to lie in the cup of a water-lily," said the father stork; "she is quite grown-up now, and as like the Egyptian princess as it is possible to be. I fear we shall never see her again; nothing has come to help her; her mother's love has brought no life, as the wise men said it would do.

"I have flown through the Eastern land here and there and everywhere, and she has never given a token that she is alive. I will tell you now, that every year when I used to come home a day or two before you, in order to set the nest to rights and have all things in readiness for your return, I used to wander about at night, as if I were no better than a bat or an owl, flying across the pond. But I never saw anything of her; and I suppose I have had all my trouble in bringing the dresses for nothing. It took us three years to get them here, and now here they lie; it does not seem as if they would ever be wanted. Just suppose that a fire breaks out in the Viking's palace; why, they would be ruined!"

"And what would our good nest be, I should like to know?" said the mother stork. "That doesn't seem to trouble you; you think more of your rubbishing swans' feathers and your marsh princess than of your wife and children. You had better go into the mud and stop with her. You are not a good father; and so I told you before, when I was hatching my first brood. I am in hourly fear of having one of the children shot by an arrow, thanks to that girl Helga; she does not care what she does. We have been longer about the house than she has, and she ought to remember that. We never forget what we owe; every year we are ready with our rightful tribute: a feather, an egg, and a young stork. But, for all that, I cannot make myself at home here as I used to do, and as I do in Egypt. I cannot walk about the house and be a friend and companion to the inmates. No! I have to sit up here and fret myself to death with the outrageous conduct of that girl—the hussy! And I am enraged with you, too. Why could you not let her lie quiet in her water-lily? There would have been an end of her then, long ago!"

"Your heart is better than your tongue, my dear," said the father stork. "I know you better than you do yourself."

With that he gave a hop and two flaps with his wings, stretched out his legs behind him, and flew away, without moving his wide-spread wings. He had gone a long distance before he fluttered them

again ; the sun shone down on his white plumage, his proud head, and strong, graceful flight.

"He is the handsomest of them all!" said his wife, looking after him; "but I am not going to tell him so."

Early in the autumn the Viking came home laden with booty and leading a train of prisoners. Among the latter was a young Christian priest, one of those who mock at the gods of the Northern land.

A great deal had been said in hall and chamber about the new faith which had spread so rapidly in the South and had been carried by Saint Angsarius as far as Hedebei, on the Schlei. Helga herself had heard of the faith of the white Christ, who gave His life to redeem the souls of men; but all she heard had passed out of her mind as soon as spoken. It seemed as if she could attach no sense to the word love, except when she was cowering out of sight in the twilight, in the form of a frog; but the Viking's wife had listened to the saga of the Son of God, and felt touched to the heart.

The men who were just returned from the sea told stories of magnificent stone temples built in honour of Him Whose Name is love. Heavy chalices of beaten gold and censers sweet with the rich odour of incense were found among the booty—altar vessels, in which flowed no blood of slaughtered slaves, but where the consecrated Bread and Wine became the Body and Blood of Him who gave Himself for generations yet unborn.

In the deep, vaulted dungeons of the Viking's palace they threw the Christian priest, his hands and feet bound with tight cords. He was as fair to look upon as the bright god Baldur; and the heart of the Viking's wife was troubled at sight of his sufferings. But Helga said he should be tied by the heels to the tails of wild oxen and torn to pieces.

"I would loose the dogs after him across the swamp," she cried. "It would be a sight for the gods. I should like to hunt him to his death!"

But the Viking would not hear of such a death. The priest had defied the gods, and he should be slain and offered up in sacrifice upon their altars.

Helga begged to be allowed to sprinkle the idols and the people with the blood of the victim. She sharpened her gleaming knife; and when one of the wild hounds came leaping by her, she thrust the blade into his side: "Only to try my knife," she cried. The Viking's wife looked sorrowfully at the cruel girl, and when the night came on she spoke to her out of the fulness of her troubled heart.

The ugly frog-like figure cowered before her, with its sad, brown eyes fixed upon her face. It listened, and seemed to gather from the words some insight into the feelings of a human soul.

"No word has ever passed my lips," said the Viking's wife, "of what you have made me suffer; not even my lord and master knows the bitterness of my grief. A mother's love is great; but you cannot know its meaning, for your heart is like the cold, wet water-plants—love never enters it."

The wretched shape trembled; it seemed as if the words touched

an invisible band between body and soul; great tears stood in its eyes.

"The time of trouble and pain will come to you at last, and it will be a bitter hour to me. Better for you to have been abandoned in the high road, and the chilly night had frozen you to an eternal sleep!"

The Viking's wife wept bitter tears, turned away in anger and sorrow, and passed silently through the loose curtains of skins which hung between the halls.

The frog sat alone in the silence; not a sound was heard, except that every now and then a stifled sigh broke from the shrinking form. It seemed as if a new life was breaking, with bitter pains, in Helga's heart. She took a step forward, listened, and seized in her awkward hands the heavy iron bar which lay across the door. With a great effort, she drew it back, and noiselessly freed the latch from the clasp which held it down; she lifted the flickering lamp which stood in the antechamber, and, as if a strong will lent her power, she drew back the iron bolt from the dungeon door, and stole down to the prisoner. He was sleeping; she touched him with her cold, damp hand; and when he woke he shuddered at the sight of her hideous form as if he had seen an evil vision. She drew forth her knife, cut the cords which bound his hands and feet, and beckoned to him to follow her.

He made the sign of the cross, and, as the figure remained motionless, he said, in the words of the Psalmist, "'Blessed is the man who provideth for the sick and needy; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble.' Who art thou? What is the meaning of such an awkward form filled with such kindly pity?"

The frog-like shape beckoned to him silently, led him through lonely passages to the stables, and pointed to a horse. The priest sprang on the horse's back, and his strange guide leapt up before him and clung to the horse's mane. They started at a quick trot along a path he never could have found for himself, and sped onward towards the open moor.

The Christian forgot the ugly shape, and thought only of God's mercy working through the monster's form; he chanted aloud his litanies and hymns as they rode on.

The figure trembled: was it the sacred words that filled it with dread, or the chill breath of the coming dawn? What passed within her? She drew herself up and tried to spring down from the horse; but the priest held her back by force, and went on with his chanted prayer, as if to loose the evil spell. The horse changed his pace to a gallop, the sky was tinged with red, and with the first sunbeam the figure changed. Helga was once more the young beauty with the demon's heart. The priest held the beautiful maiden in his arms, and, with a start of fear, he checked the horse to a standstill, prepared for some new outbreak of magic. With one bound Helga sprang to the ground; her short, childish dress barely reaching to her knees; she tore her knife from her girdle and sprang upon the priest. "Let me but reach you," she cried, "and my knife shall pierce your heart. You are white as death already—coward and slave!"

She sprang upon him, and they wrestled together in deadly combat; it seemed as if an invisible power was granted to the Christian soldier;

he held her firmly, and bound round her ankles the loose withes of an old oak tree, among which her feet had become entangled. Close beside it flowed a spring; the priest sprinkled the water on Helga's face and breast, bidding the evil spirit to come forth, and pronouncing over her the Christian blessing. But the water of faith is powerless when it does not meet the source of faith within.

And yet not altogether powerless even then. The sacred rite awed her into silence; she let fall her arms and gazed with paling cheeks on him whom she thought must be a mighty magician, speaking strange, awful runes, and tracing mysterious signs in the air. She would not have blenched from the gleam of the falling axe or sharp, whizzing knife-blade; but the sign of the cross upon her brow made her stand like a spell-bound bird, her head drooping on her breast.

The priest spoke to her gently of the merciful deed she had done for him on the previous night, when she came to him in hideous shape, untied his hands, and led him forth to light and freedom. She, too, he said, lay bound in tighter bands than his, and she, too, should be loosed and set free. Hewould take her to Saint Angsarius in Hedebei, and there, in the Christian town, the spell should be broken. But he would not let her take her old place on the horse's neck.

"Sit behind me, not before," he cried. "There lies a power in your beauty which is given to it by the foul fiend. I fear it, though the victory shall be mine in Christ."

He knelt down. The silent forest was hallowed to a church: the birds sang hymns of praise, the wild thyme offered incense. The horse stood motionless, only plucking at the sprays of the fruit-laden brambles so that they fell into Helga's hands, as if offering themselves for her refreshment. The priest spoke of the earnest expectation of all nature, and called on the true Light to "shine on them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide their feet into the way of peace."

Helga let herself be lifted on to the horse, and sat there like one in a waking dream. The priest tied two branches together in the shape of a cross, and held it aloft as they rode on through the wood, which grew denser at every step, and closed at last into a pathless forest.

Wild undergrowth choked the way; the spring became a marshy bog; it was necessary to lead the horse by a circuitous path. There was a bracing power in the fresh forest air, and a deeper strength in the priest's earnest prayers.

The rain wears away the stone; the waves round off the sharpest rock; the dew of grace showered down on Helga made the crooked straight and the rough places plain. She knew it not herself; neither does the seed within the earth know that the dew and sunbeam bring with them growth and life.

As the mother's cradle-song reaches the child's heart in inarticulate words, to which the meaning only comes in after years, so now the Word Himself was working in the heart He had redeemed. They rode on through wood and moorland, and towards evening they fell in with a band of robbers.

"Where did you steal that fair maiden?" cried the robber, as they seized the horse's bridle and dragged the travellers to the ground. The priest had no weapon but Helga's knife; but he fought fiercely

and warily against his assailants. A heavy axe was swung over him; he sprang aside, and the axe fell on the horse's neck. The poor animal fell to the earth, and Helga, as if awaking from a long trance, rushed towards the fallen steed. The priest placed himself before her as a shield; but one of the robbers, raising a heavy iron hammer, dashed out his brains with one blow: he fell dead to the earth.

The robbers seized fair Helga by her white arms and slender waist; the sun went down, and they held in their grasp a hideous frog. A wide, pale-green mouth half covered the face; thin, damp arms and webbed, scaly hands lay in their own. They loosed her in horror; and she stood among them, a vile reptile, for a moment, and then, obeying her frog's instinct, she hopped noiselessly among the brushwood. The robbers knew that Loke had played them an evil trick, and they hurried from the place in fear and dread.

The full moon rose clear above the earth as Helga crept out of the thicket and stood beside the dead bodies of the slain horse and the Christian priest. She looked on them with eyes that seemed ready to weep, and a croaking sob broke from her lips, as when a child breaks into stifled tears. She bent over them, and, fetching water in her large, thin hands, sprinkled it upon the lifeless bodies. But they were dead, and by-and-by the conviction stole in upon her mind. They were dead, and before long their bodies would be a prey to the beasts and birds. That must not be. Helga tore up the earth with her long fingers, to make a grave; she took the branch of a tree to help her, and worked till the harsh skin cracked and the blood dropped on the ground. She saw then that the task was impossible, and, throwing down the branch, she began to cover the dead bodies with fresh green leaves; over the leaves she laid a trellis-work of small twigs, and filled up the spaces with dried leaves and moss, fastening down the green covering with the heaviest stones she could find, and striving to make the rude mounds peaceful and secure. The night wore quickly away, and when the sun broke forth, fair Helga stood by the Christian's grave in all her beauty, with bloodstained hands and hot tears on her lovely cheeks.

For the first time, it seemed as if the two natures struggled together at their meeting; she trembled from head to foot, and gazed round as if awaking from a dream. Suddenly she clung for support to a slender tree, climbed up its trunk, and hid herself among the topmost branches. There she sat, like a frightened squirrel, and passed the whole day amid the unbroken stillness of the forest, which, some folks say, is deep as the stillness of death. But below her she saw the circling dance of bright-coloured butterflies, and the busy hurrying to and fro of the ants in their ant hill; while the air was filled with swarms of merry gnats and humming flies, lady-birds, and yellow moths; and on the ground the worm crawled forth and the mole plodded along. Except for these, the forest was hushed and dead. No one saw Helga, except the magpies, and they will see everything. They came flying right to her, in their audacious, inquisitive way, but one glance from her eyes was enough to scare them away again; they did not know what to make of her—and she did not know what to make of herself.

When the sun set her transformation summoned her to fresh

activity; she slid down from the tree; and when the last ray disappeared she stood there, in her frog shape, with torn, scarred hands, but with such a look of love and pity in her eyes as had never been in them before—a look that spoke of a human heart, and a maiden's gentleness, and the beautiful eyes overflowed with tears of relief and quiet hope.

The cross of wood which the priest had made of two tree-branches still lay upon the grave. Helga raised it up, and planted it between the two mounds. The thought seemed to come of itself, along with a flood of memories and tears. She made the same blessed sign in the sand round the grave; and as she traced it with both hands, the webbed skin fell away, and the fair, white fingers met her astonished gaze. She ran to the spring and washed her hands in the clear water; once more she made the sign of the cross between herself and the grave; her lips trembled, and she whispered softly the name she had heard so often spoken by the priest, "Jesus Christ."

Then the hideous frog-skin fell away from her and left her fair and beautiful; her head sank on her breast, a heavy weariness weighed down her limbs, and she fell asleep.

Towards midnight she awoke. Beside her stood the dead horse, gleaming white, with a strange light playing round his wounded neck; and near him was the slain priest, beautiful as Baldur in his glory, the Viking's wife would have called him, but dreadful, too, as he stood radiant in light that glowed like fire.

A glance of such keen, penetrating insight shone from his grave, gentle eyes that Helga felt it search her very heart. She shrank and trembled, and her memory grew clear and vivid, as if it had been the Judgment Day. All the goodness that had been shown to her, every loving word that had been spoken, rose up before her. She saw that it was love alone which had sustained and guided her, while the creature of soul and dust, spirit and clay, had struggled so fiercely. She saw, too, that she had done nothing for herself; all had been given to her; she had only followed her own wild impulses. The sense of her unworthiness and imperfection flashed like lightning through her heart, and she bowed to the earth in true humility.

"Child of clay," said the Christian priest, "thou wast made of the dust of the earth, and from that dust thou shalt one day rise again. The light within thee is a ray from God Himself, and aspires back to its source. I am come from the land of death, and thou wilt soon pass through its dark valley to the glorious home of the everlasting hills. I cannot lead thee to Hedebei to receive Christian baptism until thou hast drawn from the pond on the moor the living root of thy being. Thy power of will and deed must be used before the sacred rite is gone through."

He raised her on the horse and placed in her hand a golden censer, like the one she had seen in the Viking's palace; a cloud of richest incense rose from it, and the wounds in the forehead of the priest shone like a wreath of stars. He lifted the cross from the grave, and the horse started away through the forest and across the open battle fields round the heath, where the Pagan warriors slept by their slain steeds. One by one the figures rose from their graves and galloped towards the

distant hills; they stood in ranks, their golden coronets bright with the moonlight, their mantles fluttering in the wind. The dragon who guards the buried treasure lifted its head and looked after them; the gnomes stole out of the mountain clefts and the furrows of the fields, darting to and fro with quivering flames, red and blue and green, like myriad will-o'-the-wisps.

On sped the horse, across marsh and moor and swamp, towards the lonely pond. The priest lifted up the cross; it shone like gold. He sang aloud his litanies, and fair Helga joined her voice with his, as a child tries to falter out the hymns which its mother sings; she swung the golden censer to and fro, and every rush and reed broke out into blossom; a host of water-lilies rose to the surface of the desolate pond, and lay there like a gauzy veil of blossom; the hidden life in every seed and bud broke forth in flowers, and, stretched out along the pure, white petals, lay a sleeping woman, young and fair. Helga looked into the sleeping face, and thought for a moment that it was her own reflection in the water; but it was her mother whom she saw, the Egyptian princess from the shores of the Nile.

The priest lifted up the sleeping form on to the horse, but the phantom steed sank under the weight, as if its body were but a cere-cloth floating in the wind. The sign of the cross was traced above it, and the airy shape grew strong, and bore its triple load away from the fen to the dry land.

As they touched the shore the cock crowed from the Viking's palace; the dream phantoms melted away and blended with the morning air; but the mother and child stood face to face.

"Is it I myself who look out from the waters?" cried the mother.

"Is it I myself who rise from the green sedge?" said Helga.

And in a moment the mother and child lay clasped in each other's arms; the mother's heart beat loudest, and she understood its voice. "My child!" she cried; "my heart's flower, my lotus from the deep, deep water!"

She wept, and her tears fell like a baptism of love on Helga's beautiful head.

"Here it was," said the mother, "that I came in my swan's plumage, and here I threw it off. I sank deep down through the shaking moor, which closed above me like a grave. A swift current bore me away, a drowsy weight pressed down my eyelids, and I slept. Dreams hovered through my soul; I thought I was lying in the Pyramids of Egypt, but before me stood the gnarled alder stump which terrified me on the moorland pond. I looked at the cracks and knots of the twisted branches; they shone like fiery hieroglyphics; it was the shell of the mummy on which I was gazing; it broke open, and out came the shrouded figure, the ancient king, who had lain among the dead for thousands of years; his form was black as pitch, like the wood-snail or the soft marsh mud; marsh king or mummy of the Pyramids, I knew not which he was. In deadly terror I sank down in a swoon, and when I recovered consciousness I found upon my breast a little bird which fluttered its soft wings and sang sweetly. It rose in the air towards the black, vaulted ceiling over us, but a long green band still bound it to my breast. I understood its fluttering cries

for freedom, light, and air; I remembered my own distant home, my vanished life and love, and I let go the band. The bird fluttered away; and from that hour I fell into a heavy, dreamless sleep, until the sound of sacred hymns and the scent of incense woke me and set me free."

Where is the green band that bound the child to its mother's heart? Only the stork had seen it; the slender, waving stem of the pearly lily, the cradle of the child who now lay once again upon her mother's heart.

As they rested thus in each other's arms, the stork flew round them in ever-narrowing circles; at last he flew straight to his nest, brought out the swans' dresses, and threw one to each of the princesses. They put them on, and rose from the earth in the shape of two white swans.

"Now we can speak to each other," said the father stork: "now we can understand each other, even though our beaks are rather differently shaped. It has happened just right that you came now, for we are going South to-morrow—mother, and young ones, and all. Yes, look at me closely. I am an old friend from the shores of the Nile, and so is my wife; but her beak is sharper than her heart. She always said that the princess would manage to help herself, and I and my sons brought the swans' dresses here. How delighted I am! and what a good thing that I am still here! When the day dawns we shall all start on our autumn journey; you have only to keep behind us, and you cannot miss the way."

"And the lotus flower which I was to bring is flying at my side!" said the Egyptian princess. "My heart's flower; the riddle is solved. Oh, let us hasten homeward!"

But Helga begged that she might take leave of her foster-mother before she bade farewell to the Danish shore. Every loving word and deed, every tear of sorrow which the Viking's wife had shed, rose clear before her soul; it seemed almost as if she must love that mother best.

"Yes, we must go to the Viking's palace," said the father stork; "my wife and children are waiting for us there. How the youngsters will open their eyes and snap their beaks! And so will my wife. She is rather short in her way of speaking, but she has a good heart. I will just give a clap or two to tell them I am coming."

And the stork cried out his loudest, and sailed, with the two swans, towards the Viking's palace.

Every one was fast asleep within the walls; but the Viking's wife was restless. She had gone to bed very late, her heart racked with fears for Helga, who had disappeared three days since with the Christian prisoner.

The girl must have helped him to escape, for it was her horse which was missing from the stables; but what power had worked such a miracle? The Viking's wife thought over all she had heard of the wonders worked by the white Christ, and by those who followed Him. Her anxious thoughts gave place to dreams. She thought that she was sitting awake upon her couch; all around her was storm and darkness; she heard the tumbling waves rush in with a roar from east and west, like the floods of the North Sea and the Cattegat. The monstrous snake which coils round the earth from its lair at the bottom of the sea was convulsed with trembling horror; it was the hour of the

old gods' overthrow, the terrible day Ragnorok, as the Pagans call the Judgment Day. The battle cry sounded, the steel-clad gods rode by upon the rainbow to fight their last battle; before them flew the winged Valkyria, behind them came the hosts of the dead; flashes of wild auroras struggled with the darkness; but the darkness conquered. It was a fearful hour.

Close to the trembling woman cowered Helga in her frog-like shape. The Viking's wife took the hideous form upon her knee and soothed and cheered it. The air was rent with the clang of meeting swords, the heavy blows of axe and hatchet, the hissing shower of arrows, which whizzed by like a storm of drifting hail. The hour was come for the heaven and earth to shrink away, the stars to fall, and all the universe to sink into the lake of fire. But they knew that a new heaven and a new earth were to arise, that fields of corn would wave where now only the barren waste of sea heaved and roared, and that over all would reign the nameless God. To Him would ascend Baldur, the beautiful, slain hero, redeemed from the dead. He came, the Viking's wife saw his face and knew him for the Christian priest—"The Christ has conquered!" she exclaimed aloud.

She pressed a kiss on Helga's forehead, and the hideous disguise fell away; Helga stood before her in all her beauty, sweet, gentle, and loving. She kissed her foster-mother's hands, thanked and blessed her for all her love and sorrow, and for naming the name which had set her free. "The Christ has conquered," she repeated; and then she rose up like a stately swan, spread her white wings, and flew away through the air.

The Viking's wife awoke at the sound of the fluttering wings. She hurried to the window and saw the flocks of storks circling round the palace turrets. Everywhere the birds were gathering, on roof and walls, on tree and fortress all around. Bird close to bird, the storks rose in wide circles; but opposite the place where she stood, and just over the well where Helga's wilful ways had so often filled her heart with dread, two white swans lingered and looked back at her with mild, loving eyes.

She was still full of her dream; she remembered how Helga had just left her in a swan's form, and a thrill of relief lightened her heart.

The swans bent their necks, as if in greeting; the Viking's wife spread out her arms and smiled, with tears in her eyes.

Then, with much clapping of beaks and rustling of wings, the whole army of storks turned southward and flew away.

"We shall not wait for the swans," said the mother stork; "they can do as they please about coming. We cannot possibly sit here till the marsh birds go. There is something imposing in our way of travelling in clans and families, instead of going as the finches and partridges do, the males in one flock and the females in another, a fashion which appears to me most indelicate. What do you think of that style of moving the wing? Did you ever? I mean those two swans yonder."

"Well, well, every bird has its own style of flying," said the father stork. "The swans fly aslant, the cranes in a triangle, the moor fowl in spiral lines, like snakes."

"Don't speak of snakes while we are up here," said his wife; "it puts fancies into the children's heads which cannot be realized."

"Are those the high mountains you told me of?" said Helga, in her swan's dress.

"Those are storm-clouds floating below us," said her mother.

"What are those white clouds which reach so high?" said Helga.

"Those are mountains, covered with eternal snow," said her mother, as they crossed the Alps and flew toward the Mediterranean Sea.

"Africa! The shores of Egypt!" cried the daughters of the Nile exultingly, as they saw far below them a yellow, undulating strip of land. And the storks saw it also, and quickened their flight.

"I can scent the Nile mud and the wet frogs," said the mother stork; "it makes my beak water. Yes, you will soon taste them. And you will see many birds of our family—ibises, cranes, and marabouts. None of them are nearly as beautiful as we. They give themselves great airs, especially the ibis; he is quite spoiled and affected. The people here make him into a mummy and stuff him with herbs. For my part, I would rather be stuffed with live frogs; so would you, I dare say—and so you shall, too. Better have plenty when one is alive than be set up for a show when one is dead; at least that is my opinion, and I am generally right."

"The storks are come!" was the cry in the rich palace, where the king lay stretched out on his leopard skins, half living and half dead, waiting and pining for the lotus flower from the North; servants and kinsmen stood around his bed.

Two snow-white swans flew into the hall; they had come with the storks. They threw aside their swans' plumages and stood beside the bed, two lovely women, as like each other as two dew-drops. They bent down over the sick man's couch, threw back their long hair; and as fair Helga bent over her grandfather's pale, helpless form, the colour came back to the old man's cheeks, his eyes sparkled, and he rose from his couch with his youth renewed, and a strong life thrilling through his powerless limbs. His daughter and his grandchild clasped him in their arms as one who had awaked from a long, heavy dream.

Joy reigned in the palace and in the stork's nest: in the latter it arose principally from the good living; the frogs swarmed in troops, they seemed positively to rise up out of the earth. And while the learned man wrote down the story of the two princesses and the magic lotus flower, and spoke of it as a real blessing for the house and country, the father stork told the tale to his family in his own fashion—but not till they had eaten a good meal; they had something else to do besides listening to stories till that was over.

"Now, you will become somebody at last," said the mother stork; "there is no doubt about that."

"Why should I become somebody?" said the stork. "What have I done? Nothing at all."

"You have done more than any one else. The princesses would never have seen Egypt again or cured the old man, if it had not been

for you. Something will be found for you. They will perhaps grant you a doctor's hat, and our future children will be born with one, and their children the same, and so on. You have already quite the style of an Egyptian doctor in my eyes."

The learned men developed the fundamental principle, as they called it, that love brings life. They interpreted this saying in many ways. The princess was the sunbeam; she descended to the marsh king, and from them arose the magic flower.

"I cannot repeat it word for word," said the stork, who had been listening from the roof and was trying to tell his family what he had heard. "All that they said was so well thought out and arranged, that every one of them received a title on the spot. Even the cook got a medal; most likely for the soup."

"And what did you get?" said the mother stork. "They ought not to forget the most important. The learned men have done nothing but use their tongues. But your recompense will certainly come."

Late at night, when a mild, happy sleep had settled down on the house of gladness, some one still waked and watched. Not the father stork; he stood sentry on one leg and slept at his post. It was fair Helga. She leaned out from the balcony and gazed through the blue air; the stars were larger and brighter than those she had seen in the North, and yet they were the same. She thought of the Viking's wife on the wild moor, of her soft eyes, and the tears they had shed for her frog-child, who was now living in splendour by the shores of the Nile. She remembered the love shown by a Pagan woman towards a hideous, repulsive form, which was only capable of inspiring disgust in all who saw it. She gazed at the shining stars and thought of the glory which played round the forehead of the Christian priest who bore her through the forest. Echoes of words spoken by him, and of the hymns he sang, floated through her memory, words telling of the great Source of love which embraces all mankind.

That highest love was not yet reached and won. Helga was like a child who turns from the giver, and looks only at the splendid gifts lavished around it. Day by day she was more absorbed in the new joys and splendour offered to her in her stately home. It was the daring, insatiable aspirations of early youth spreading their wings in fearless flight. She was startled from her dream one day by a noise in the courtyard below. She saw there two ostriches running swiftly in close circles: Helga had never seen the unwieldy birds before, with their short wings and awkward movements. They looked as if some one had once done them harm, and Helga asked what birds they were. Then, for the first time, she heard the Egyptian saga of the ostrich. The race of the ostrich was once graceful and beautiful as any among the birds; its wings were large and strong. One morning the great birds said to it: "Brother, shall we go to-morrow to drink at the river if God will?" And the ostrich answered, "I shall go." It would not say "if God will." In early dawn they flew towards the sun; the ostrich flew far in front of the other birds, and rose proudly towards the sun, higher and higher. It trusted only to its own power, and thought not of the Giver. Then the avenging angel drew aside the veil from the sun's sea of flames, the bird's wings were scorched to their sides in a moment,

and it fell heavily to the earth. From that hour to this the ostrich cannot rise above the earth; it runs in circles like a hunted thing, and serves as a warning to all men, that in all their deeds and plans they should say, in their hearts at least—"If God will."

Helga bowed her head in thought; she looked at the foolish bird, and saw its fear and its senseless joy at sight of its own shadow on the white wall. A serious earnestness struck root within her. A life rich in present and future happiness had been won for her, and all would be given her—as God willed.

In the early spring, when the storks flew northward, fair Helga beckoned to the father stork, took off the golden bracelet on which her name was engraved, and clasped it round his neck, praying him to take it to the Viking's wife, that she might know her foster-child still lived and thought of her.

"It is heavy to carry," said the father stork; "but gold and fame are not to be thrown away. The stork brings luck. They must acknowledge that up yonder."

"You lay gold and I lay eggs," said his wife; "but then you only lay once for all, and I lay every year. No one gives us any thanks for it. It is very mortifying."

"We have our own good conscience, little mother," said the stork.

"Conscience, indeed!" said his wife. "That gives neither food nor feathers."

The little nightingale in the tamarind grove was also flying northward. Fair Helga had often heard her sing in the moor, and she wanted to give her a message. She understood the speech of the birds ever since she had worn her swan's dress, and had often talked with the storks and swallows; the nightingale would certainly understand her. She begged the little bird to fly to the beechwood in the Jutland peninsula to find out the two graves covered with leaves and stone, and to persuade the singing-birds to build their nests near the grave, so that the place might be filled with their songs. The nightingale flew away, and time passed by.

In the autumn, an eagle on the Egyptian pyramid saw a stately caravan of richly-laden camels led by richly-dressed men on fiery Arab horses, white as silver, with slender limbs and flowing manes. Royal guests, the suite of an Arabian prince, entered within the palace by the Nile, where the stork nests lay empty. But they were not left long untenanted; the storks came back on the very day when fair Helga sat, dressed as a bride, in gold and jewels, by the side of her bridegroom, the Arabian prince. The prince was handsome as a prince should be, and the mother and grandfather sat with them at the wedding feast.

But Helga's eyes were not fixed on the bridegroom's brown, manly face; she had no glance for the dark, fiery eyes that hung upon her every glance; she saw nothing but the shining star which shot across the sky.

The sound of wings was heard; the storks had come. The old pair from the Viking's palace flew straight to the verandah of the palace; they knew what feast was going on, and they had been told at the

boundary of the land that Helga had had them painted on the wall, as part of her own life story.

"That is very prettily thought of," said the father stork.

"They could scarcely do less," said his wife.

When Helga saw them she ran on to the balcony to stroke their necks. The storks bowed their heads and arched their necks, and the youngest of the children was old enough to understand the honour.

Helga looked up to the shining star which grew still clearer and clearer. Between it and herself stood the radiant form of the Christian priest, coming down from heaven to bless her marriage festival.

"The joys above outweigh all that the earth can offer," he said.

"Oh, take me with you!" pleaded fair Helga; "let me see only for one moment the joy of heaven." She prayed and entreated with all her heart, and the priest raised her up in a flood of light and melody towards the everlasting gates. The glory seemed within her and around her, but there are no words to paint it.

"Now we must go back. You are missed," said the Christian priest.

"Only one look! only one moment more!" said Helga.

"We must go back. The guests are taking leave."

"Only one look! The last!"

Helga stood again in the verandah. The wedding bonfires were extinguished; the lights in the hall were burnt out; the storks were away; no sign of guest or bridegroom was to be seen.

A terror fell upon her; she hurried from room to room; strange soldiers slept in the hall; she turned to her own chamber, but the door led her into a garden, and the sun rose over the place.

Only a moment in heaven and the long night was over on earth!

Some storks flew by. She called to them, and the father stork turned and flew towards her.

"You speak our language," he cried. "What is your will? What are you doing here?"

"It is I—Helga! Do you not know me? Only a minute ago we were speaking together in the balcony."

"You are mistaken," said the stork. "You have been dreaming."

"No, no!" she cried, and reminded him of the Viking's palace and the journey to the South.

The stork blinked his eyes. "That is a very old story," he said. "It happened in the days of my great-great-grandfather. Certainly there was once an Egyptian princess who disappeared upon her wedding day and was never seen again; but that was centuries ago. You can read it for yourself on the monument in the garden; the swans and storks are carved upon it, and over all stands the princess, in white marble."

It was true. Helga saw it, understood, and sank upon her knees.

The sun broke forth in glory, and as, of old, the frog-like figure vanished at its rays and gave way to a form of beauty, so now, at the baptism of fire, a form lovelier and purer than the earthly beauty rose up to the eternal Father.

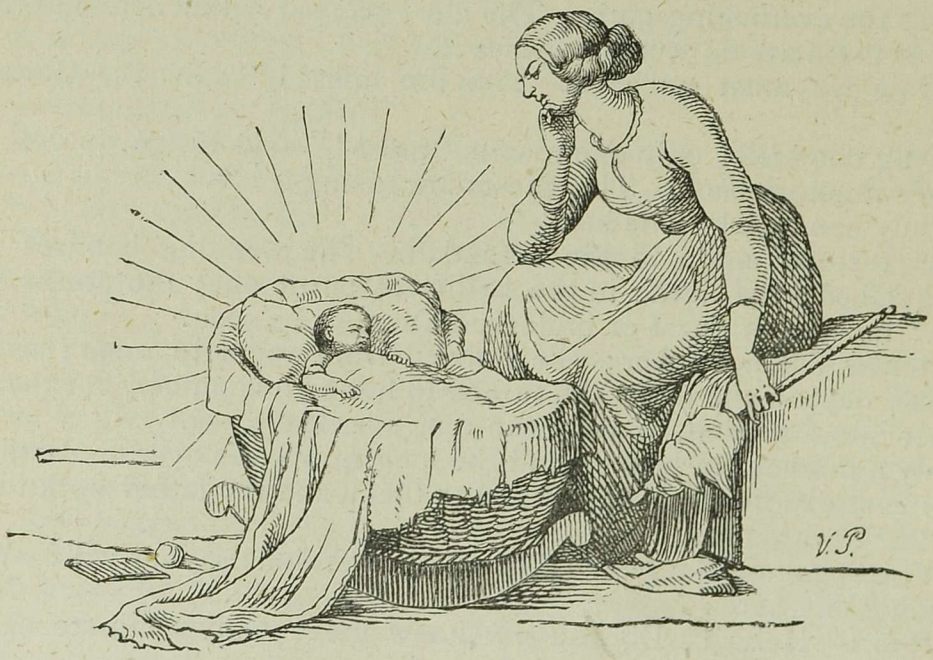
The body crumbled into dust, and a white lotus flower lay where Helga had been standing.

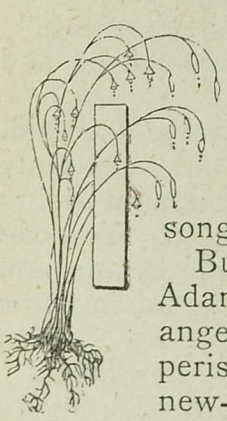
"Well, that is quite a new end to the story," said the father stork. "I did not expect that. But I like it."

"What will the young ones say to it, I wonder?" said his wife.

"Yes; that is the most important, after all," said the father stork.

The Phœnix.





IN the garden of Paradise a rose tree grew beneath the tree of knowledge. Among the roses a bird was born; its flight was like a sunbeam, its colours glorious, its song the sweetest music.

But when Eve gathered the forbidden fruit, and she and Adam were driven out of Paradise, a spark fell from the angel's flaming sword and set the nest on fire. The bird perished in the flames, but out of the glowing egg the new-born phœnix soared aloft, the sole bird of its kind in all the world. The saga says that its nest is built in Arabia, and that every hundred years it destroys itself by fire, and from its ashes falls the burning egg out of which the new phœnix springs to life.

The bird hovers around us all, bright in colour, glorious in song. When the mother sits by her child's cradle, it rests upon the infant's pillow, and its gleaming wings form a glory over the little head.

It flies through the lowly room of poverty, and fills it with sunlight and the scent of violets.

But the bird is not the phœnix of Arabia only: it flutters in the gleam of the northern lights, across the ice fields of Lapland, and among the pale flowers of the brief Greenland summer. Through the copper mines of Falun, through the English coal pits it flies, like a dusky moth, above the hymn-book in the pious workman's hands. It glides down the Ganges on the lotus blossom, and the eyes of the Hindoo maiden brighten at its coming.

Bird phœnix! bird of Paradise! sacred swan of song! do you not know it? It sat upon the car of Thespis like a chattering raven, and flapped its black wings. Over Iceland's echoing harp it rose like a red-beaked swan; on Shakespeare's shoulder it lighted, like Odin's raven, and whispered, "Immortality!" It flew through Wartburg's knightly halls at the minstrels' feast.

Bird phœnix! It sang the "*Marseillaise*," and you kissed the feather that fell from its wings; it came to you in the glory of Paradise, and you turned, perchance, away to look at the sparrow strutting there with tinselled wings.

The bird of Paradise! Born anew every century; born in flames to die in flames again. Its image hangs in the halls of wealth, and wanders lonely in desolate byways: only a saga, "Bird phœnix in Arabia!"

At thy birth in Paradise beneath the tree of knowledge God gave thee thy true name—Poesy!

The Marionettes.

ON board the steamer was an elderly man with such a beaming face that, if it did not belie him, showed at once that he was the happiest man in the world. And so he said he was; I heard it from his own lips. He was a Dane, a travelling stage manager. He had his whole company with him in a large wooden box; he was a marionette player. His inborn talent, he told me, had been developed by a lecturer at the Polytechnic Institution.

I did not quite understand him at first, but one day he told me his whole story, from beginning to end; and this is it.

"It was in the little town of Slagelse," he said; "I was giving a performance before a really brilliant audience, all juveniles, with the exception of a pair of elderly matrons. Suddenly there entered a person dressed in black, with a student-like air about him; he sat down, laughed at all the telling hits, applauded every point, and behaved like a model listener. I was determined to

know who he was; and I found out that he was a lecturer from the Institute of Copenhagen who had been sent down to improve the provincials. My performance was over exactly at eight. Children must go to bed early, and the convenience of the public must be studied. At nine, the lecturer began *his* performance and experiments, and I was his listener. It was curious to hear and to see. The greater part of it went beyond me; but I thought to myself that if men could find out all that, they must be meant to last for a good while longer than their life in this world. The experiments were positive miracles, and yet everything was as natural as air and water. In the time of Moses and the prophets a lecturer like that would have been one of the sages of the land; in the Middle Ages they would have burned him at the stake. I did not sleep all night; and the next time the lecturer appeared at my performance my wit flashed brighter than ever. I once heard an actor say, that when he played the part of a lover he always singled out one of the audience, and played to her alone. The lecturer was my *she*, my one listener for whom alone I acted. When the play was over, and every marionette had received a call, I was invited by the lecturer to come and drink a glass of wine with him in his rooms. He spoke of my comedies, and I of his science, and we both enjoyed the conversation. But there was a great deal of his jugglery that he could not explain to me himself. For instance, a piece of iron that falls through a cylinder becomes magnetic. Now, what is the meaning of that? The spirit comes upon it; but how, and where from? I thought to myself. It is the same with men; they are tumbled helter-skelter into the world, and the spirit falls upon them and up rises a Luther or a Napoleon, or some such person. 'The whole world is full of miracles,' said the lecturer; 'but we are so used to them, that we call them every-day circumstances.' He went on talking and explaining things till I felt as if my brain were growing bigger, and I declared that if I were not such a very old boy I would go at once to the Polytechnic classes and begin to learn a little more about this curious world, although I was one of the happiest of men."

"'One of the happiest?' cried the lecturer; and the thing seemed to please him. 'Are you happy?' 'Yes,' I cried. 'I am happy. I am made welcome wherever I go. I have *one* wish, I own, which sometimes lies like an Alp upon my good spirits. I should like to be manager of a living company; to be a real stage manager.' 'You wish your marionettes to become living actors and actresses and you to be their manager; then you would be happy—is that it?' 'Yes,' I said. The lecturer did not approve of my desire; we talked it over for a long while as we clinked our glasses. The wine was excellent, but it must have been bewitched, or I never could have drunk so much without feeling any ill effects from it. I remained clear-sighted and sensible; the room was filled with sunlight; it streamed from the lecturer till he reminded me of one of the gods of olden time, when they used to wander through the world in their eternal youth and mix freely with the sons of men. I told him what I thought; he smiled, and I could have sworn that he was a god in disguise, or at least one of the family. And I was right. My highest wish was to be fulfilled; I was to be the manager of a living company. We touched our glasses and drank a

toast to my success. He packed up my marionettes in the box, strapped it on to my back, and let us fall together down a cylinder. I can hear it now; how we rolled and tumbled and fell with a crash on to the floor! I lay under the table; I know that for certain; and the whole company sprang out of the box. The spirit had fallen on us all; every marionette was become a great artist—they told me so themselves—and I was the manager. All was ready for the first performance; the actors wished to rehearse with me, and the public was waiting. The *danseuse* said that the house would be ruined if she did not stand on one leg; she was the great attraction, and begged to be treated accordingly. The actress who played the queen demanded to be addressed as a queen off the stage as well as on, or she would get out of practice. The footman, who had only to bring in a letter, claimed equality with the first lover; he was of equal importance as an artistic whole, he said; the hero would play no part that was not entirely composed of points which would bring down the house.

"The *prima donna* would only play in rose-coloured light, blue did not suit her, and she could not bear it——it was a perfect wasp's nest, and I was in the midst of it—I was manager. My breath failed me, my head spun; I was more miserable than I had ever been in my life. I seemed to have fallen among a new race of men; I only wished I had them safe in my box again. At last, I told them straight out that they were only marionettes after all; and they fell upon me and beat me to death. I lay on the bed in my own room: how I got there the lecturer may know, but I do not. The moonlight fell on the floor, where the open box lay upset, with all the marionettes in wild confusion, small and great, the whole company. But I lost no time; I sprang out of bed, bundled them all into the box, some by the head and some by the leg, shut down the lid with a snap, and sat down on the top. 'Now, you will just stay there,' I said; 'I will take care how I wish you alive again.' I felt quite happy; all my good spirits returned; I was once more the happiest man in the world. The lecturer had given me wisdom. I sat there in unalloyed happiness, and fell asleep on the lid. The next day—it was twelve o'clock; I cannot explain why I slept so long—I was still there, happy and contented, fully assured of the folly of my one wish. I inquired for the Polytechnic lecturer, but he was gone, vanished like the gods of olden times! Ever since that time I have been perfectly happy. My company never argue with me, and the public is always delighted. I can patch up my pieces just as I will; I pick the best things out of all the comedies in the world, and no one is angry. Plays which are now discarded, but to which, some thirty years ago, the public flocked like mad, and cried till the tears ran down their cheeks, I set up on my little stage and act for the benefit of the children, who cry as heartily as their fathers and mothers had done before. I abridge the plays, of course, for young folk do not like too much love nonsense and speechifying; to please them, it must be sad, but soon over."

The Child in the Grave.

SORROW filled both heart and home. The youngest child, a boy just four years old, the pride and joy of his parents, was lying dead. There were still two daughters left, the eldest almost old enough to be confirmed; they were dear, good girls; but the child that one has lost is always the dearest; and in this case it was the youngest, and a son. It was a bitter trial. The sisters grieved as young hearts do, principally mourning for their parents' sorrow: the father was bowed down with grief, but the mother was crushed to the earth with measureless despair. She could not realize that the child was dead, that it must be laid in the coffin and carried to the grave. "God could not mean to take away her boy," she said; and when it was all over and there was no hope left, she cried aloud, in her despair, "God does not know; He has heartless servants on the earth who act against His will, and who will not listen to a mother's prayers."

In her grief she turned away from God, and her heart was filled with black, despairing thoughts—doubt of the life beyond the grave, fear that the dead mouldered to dust in the earth, and so perished utterly. Nothing seemed left for her to cling to, and she sank deeper and deeper in despair.

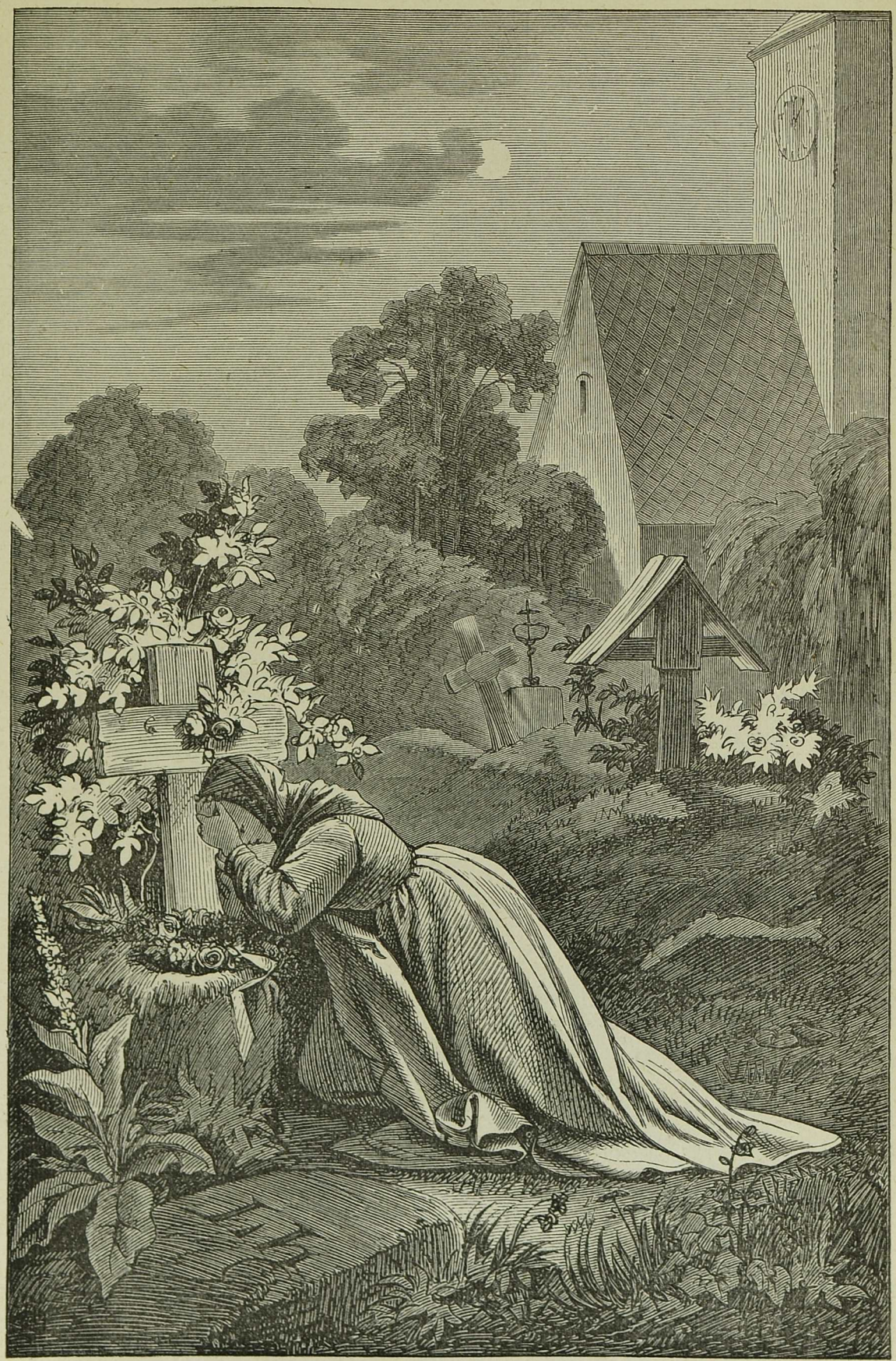
She could not weep; she did not think of the two children who were still left to her; her husband's tears fell on her hair, but she would not raise her eyes to his; her whole being was wrapped up in recalling every innocent word and action of her lost boy.

The day for the funeral drew near; the mother had not slept all night, but in the early dawn she sank into a short slumber, during which the coffin was carried into a distant room and the lid was nailed down there, so that she could not hear the strokes of the hammer.

When she awoke and asked to see her child, her husband answered her with tears. "The coffin is closed," he said; "we had no choice left."

"When God is cruel to me, what can I expect from men?" said the mother, with bitter sobs and tears.

The coffin was carried to the grave; the wretched mother sat, with her daughters, looking through the open door. Her thoughts found nothing on which they could rest within her home; she gave herself up to her sorrow, which drifted her hither and thither like a rudderless ship. The day of the funeral passed away, and many another day of changeless grief followed. Her two children and her husband watched her with tearful eyes and heavy hearts; she did not even hear their words of consolation; and, indeed, what could they say to comfort her? they were themselves in need of comfort.



"She laid her head upon the grave."

THE CHILD IN THE GRAVE.

She could not sleep. In former troubles sleep had been her best friend, strengthening her body and calming her spirit; but now, when they persuaded her to seek her couch, she lay there with closed eyes, silent, but wakeful. One night her husband listened to her quiet breathing, and, thinking that she had at last found some respite from her trouble, sank to sleep himself with a lightened heart. He did not notice that she rose, dressed quietly, and stole out of the house to the place whither her thoughts had gone before—to the grave which held her child. She passed quickly through the garden and took the path that led to the churchyard; no one saw her on her way; and she could see nothing but the goal on which her eyes were bent.

It was a lovely, starlit night: the air was mild, as it often is in the beginning of September. She entered the churchyard and walked straight to the little grave, which looked like a garden of fragrant flowers. She sat down and laid her head upon the grave, as if through the thick layer of earth she could see the little one's sweet smile and loving eyes. His dear face was so clearly before her, his patient look as he lay on his sick bed when she bent over him and took the hand he was too weak to hold out. As she had sat then by his bed, so she was sitting now by his grave; she gave her tears free course, and they fell on the grave like rain.

"You desire to go down to your child," said a voice near her; a clear, deep voice that went to her very heart. She looked up. By her side stood a man shrouded in hood and cloak; his face was stern, but it was a face that one could trust; and his eyes shone with the light of youth.

"Down to my child?" she repeated, with the unbelief of despair.

"Dare you follow me?" said the stranger. "I am Death."

She bent her head in assent. In a moment it seemed to her that the stars poured down a lustre like the full moon upon the flowers above the grave. The earthy lid sank gently like a floating veil; the mother sank with it, and Death covered her with his mantle. It was night, the night of death; they sank deeper than the graveyard spade can reach; the churchyard lay like a roof above them.

The shrouding mantle fell to the earth. The mother stood in a large and lofty hall filled with soft twilight. In a moment her dead child lay clasped to her heart, smiling in beauty such as even she had never seen in him before. She uttered a cry; but it was drowned in the burst of glorious, heavenly music which rose from behind the thick curtain that fell between the hall and the eternal land.

"Mother! darling mother!" said the child. It was the same sweet voice, and kiss followed kiss in the joy of reunion.

The child pointed to the curtain. "It is not so beautiful on earth, mother, is it? Do you see? Is not that happiness?"

But the mother could see nothing but the dark night; she looked with earthly eyes. God had not called her as He had called the child. She heard the music, but not the Word in which she must believe.

"I may fly now with the other children yonder. I may rise to God," said the child. "But when you cry so I am afraid; and yet I

long to go. You will soon come to me, mother dear. I may go, may I not?"

"Oh, stay!" cried the mother; "only a moment more! Let me hold you in my arms and kiss you once again."

She clasped him yet more closely to her heart. "What is that?" she cried, for some one called her by her name in tones of distress.

"Do you not hear?" said the child. "It is my father calling you." There was a short silence, and then they heard the sound of children weeping. "It is my sisters," said the child. "Mother, you have not forgotten them?"

A terror fell upon the mother as she thought of those whom she had left behind. She looked into the hall; shadowy forms swept by her and disappeared behind the heavy curtain. Were her husband and children among them? No, their voices sounded from above; she had almost forgotten them in the presence of the dead.

"Mother, the heavenly bells are ringing," said the child; "the sun is about to rise."

A dazzling light fell round her; the child disappeared, and she was borne upwards. The chill air fanned her face; she raised her head, and saw that she was lying in the churchyard on her child's grave. But God had met her in a dream, and been to her a support for her trembling feet and a light for her troubled soul. She bent her knee and prayed.

"Oh, God, forgive me that I sought to keep back an immortal soul from its flight, and that I forgot my duties to the living whom Thou hast given me!"

The words seemed to bring comfort to her heart. The sun broke out; a little bird sang overhead, and the church bells rang for early service.

A holy peace rested on her heart and on all around. She knew her God, she knew her duties, and, with a longing heart, she hastened homeward. She waked her husband with a kiss; words of love and comfort passed between them; she was strong and mild as a wife should be, and it was she who spoke the words of truest comfort,

"God's will is always best."

"Where have you found your strength and resignation?" said her husband.

She kissed him, and kissed the children.

"They were sent to me from God, through my child in the grave."

The Butterfly.

THE butterfly wanted to take a wife from among the flowers; and, of course, he wished to find a very pretty one. With that end in view, he flew, with searching looks, from one end of the flower world to the other. He found that every flower sat still and demure on her stem, as befits a maiden who is not engaged; but there were so many of them that it was a very difficult thing to choose out one. The butterfly did not like trouble, so he flew to the daisy, or Marguerite, as the French call her.

It is well known that Marguerite can tell fortunes; lovers often come to her and pull off her leaves, one by one, asking each one a question—"Does she love me? Tenderly? A little? Passionately? Not at all?" and so on. Every one questions her in his own language. The butterfly flew up to the daisy; he did not pull off her leaves, but he kissed them one by one. "I shall get on better by fair means," he thought to himself.

"Dear Mistress Marguerite," he said, "you are the wisest of the flowers; you can foresee the future. I entreat you to tell me whether I shall take this one or that: who shall be my bride? If I only knew that, I would fly straight to her and ask her hand."

But Marguerite did not answer him. She was angry that he had called her mistress instead of miss. There is a difference, she thought. He asked her three times, but as she still remained silent, he would not ask again, but flew to make his proposal in his own person.

It was in the early spring; snowdrops and crocuses were blooming all around. "Pretty little things," said the butterfly, "charming little girls, but rather too prim." Like all young men, the butterfly preferred older girls.

He flew to the anemones, but found them rather too bitter; the violets were too gushing; the lime blossoms too small, and had too large a family circle; the apple blossoms, certainly they were as beautiful as roses, but then they are here to-day and gone to-morrow, falling just at a breath of wind—"That marriage would soon come to an end," thought the butterfly. The sweet-pea blossom was the one that pleased him best; she was pink and white, elegant, and delicate-looking, and yet very domesticated, one of those pretty girls who are not out of place either in the kitchen or in the drawing-room. The butterfly was on the point of making his declaration, when he saw next to the object of his choice a pod, from which hung a faded blossom. "Who is that?" asked the butterfly.

"It is my sister," said the sweet-pea.

"Indeed!" he cried. "And in a little while you will look like that," he thought to himself, and flew off with a shudder.

The honeysuckle hung in full bloom over the trellis; there were numbers of that kind of maidens, with long faces, and yellow complexions; but the butterfly did not care for them at all.

Then which could he take?

The spring passed by, the summer drew to an end, autumn came on, and still he was undecided.

The flowers were now more splendid and brilliant than ever; but they had lost their chief charm, the sweet, dewy freshness of youth. That loss is felt even by the heart which has lost its own youthfulness; and there is little enough freshness to be found among the dahlias and poppies.

The butterfly turned to the wild thyme on the ground.

The wild thyme is all one blossom, fragrant through and through, and filled with richest scent in every leaf. "I will take her," said the butterfly.

And he made her an offer.

The wild thyme stood very still, and listened to him till he had finished. Then she said, "Friendship I can give you as much as you like. But nothing more. We are both getting old; do not let us make simpletons of ourselves at our time of life. We can be very good friends as we are."

And so it came to pass that the butterfly could get no wife at all. He had been too long in choosing, which is a great mistake; and he remained an old bachelor.

It was late in autumn, and cold, rainy weather. The wind blew so cold through the old willow trees that their boughs cracked again. It was not weather for flying about in light summer dress; the butterfly found that out, and crept quite accidentally, as he said, under the shelter of a roof, in a room where the fire made it as warm as summer. There he managed to live, but "Life is not enough," he cried; "one must have freedom, sunshine, and a little flower."

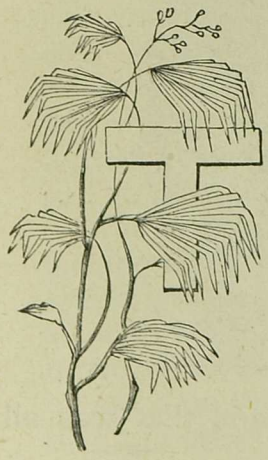
He flew against the window panes, and was immediately caught. His colours were admired, a pin was stuck through him, and he was exhibited in the cabinet of curiosities. Nothing more could possibly have been done for him.

"Now I am fixed to a stem like the flowers," said the butterfly. "It is not nearly so pleasant as I thought. Marriage must be the same kind of thing; one is bound fast for one's life." And he consoled himself as well as he could with the reflection.

"That is a very poor consolation," said the plants in the pots which stood in the window.

"Those flowers in pots are never to be trusted," thought the butterfly; "they are spoiled by their intercourse with human beings."

The Goblin and the Huckster.



THERE was once a thorough-going student who lived in a garret, and had nothing in the world which belonged to him. And there was also a thorough-going huckster who lived on the ground-floor, and to whom the whole house belonged. The goblin clung to the huckster, because every Christmas Eve he found a bowlful of hot preserve, with the spoon put in ready for him to use; the huckster was able to afford it, and so the goblin stayed in his shop, which is very instructive for us.

One night the student came into the shop to buy some cheese and candles; he had no one to send, so he came himself; he received what he asked for, paid for it, and the huckster's wife nodded to him and wished him good-night. She was a woman who could do more than nod: she knew how to use her tongue. The student nodded in return; but suddenly he stopped, and began to read the paper in which the cheese was wrapped up. It was a leaf torn out of an old book—a book which ought never to have been torn, for it was full of poetry.

"I have some more of the same sort," said the huckster. "I bought the book from an old woman for some coffee-berries. If you like to give me two groschen you shall have the rest."

"Give me the book instead of the cheese," said the student. "I can eat my bread without cheese. It would be a sin for the book to be torn up. You are a capital fellow, but you understand as much about poetry as that old tub there."

That sounded very rude, especially to the tub; but the huckster laughed, and so did the student; he had only spoken in jest. But the goblin was very angry that any one should venture to say such things to a huckster who was landlord of the house, and who sold such good butter.

At night, when the shop was shut and every one was gone to bed but the student, the goblin came out and went into the mistress's bedroom. He opened her mouth and borrowed her tongue, which, of course, was quite useless to her while she was asleep. But it was very useful to the goblin, for every article on which he laid the tongue became able to speak and express itself just as freely as the good lady

herself did; only one thing could have it at a time, and that was all the better and prevented all confusion.

The goblin laid the tongue on the old tub, which was full of newspapers. "Is it really true," he said, "that you know nothing about poetry?"

"Certainly not," said the tub. "Poetry is a kind of thing that is found in newspapers, and is frequently cut out. I have more of it inside me than the student has, although I am but a common tub in a huckster's shop."

The goblin laid the tongue on the coffee-mill. My word, how it did go! And he laid it on the butter-dish and the cash-box, and they all agreed with the waste-paper tub. Now a majority always commands respect, and the goblin made up his mind to go at once and tell the student.

He stole softly up the back stairs which led to the garret where the student lived. A light was burning in the room, and the goblin looked through the keyhole.

The student was reading out of the book which he had bought at the huckster's; and from the pages of the book there rose a glittering tree, which spread its golden boughs over the student's head. Every leaf was fresh and dewy, and every flower held the face of a fair girl, some with soft, dark eyes, some with clear blue ones, like forget-me-nots. Each fruit shone like a dazzling star, and the room was filled with sweet, mysterious music.

The little goblin had never imagined, much less seen, such a beautiful sight; he stood on tiptoe, and stared, and stared till the light went out: probably the student had blown out the candle and was gone to bed. The music was heard still in faint, lulling tones, like a cradle song.

"What a splendid place!" exclaimed the goblin. "I was not prepared for anything of the kind. I should like to stay with the student." He stopped for a moment, thinking it over; he was a sensible little man; and then he said, with a sigh, "He has no jam," and went downstairs again to the huckster's shop. It was high time he came, for the tub had almost worn out the landlady's tongue; it had said every thing that was within it on the one side, and it was just going to turn round. The goblin immediately took away the tongue and carried it back to its owner; but from that time everything in the shop, from the cash-box to the shavings, was so impressed by the tub, and thought so highly of it, that whenever the huckster read aloud in the evenings, on whatever subject it might be, they firmly believed that he had learned it all from the tub.

But the goblin was no longer contented with the wisdom and information which he gathered from the shop. As soon as the lamp was lighted in the student's room, the rays seemed to draw him upward like strong cords. He stood looking through the keyhole, and his heart was filled with a sense of space and infinity such as one feels upon the tossing sea when the storm-wind sighs past; he burst into tears, not knowing why, but the tears did him good. How lovely it must be to sit with the student underneath the golden tree! but that could not be; he must content himself with the keyhole, and be glad of that. There he stood on the cold, bare floor; the autumn wind blew in through the rifts and crevices, but the goblin felt no chill until the light went out and the music died away beneath the tree. Then, indeed, he shivered from head to foot, and hurried back to his warm, comfortable corner. When Christmas time came, and the dish of jam was filled to the brim for him, then the huckster got back his old place in the goblin's heart.

But in the middle of the night the goblin was awoke by a loud outcry and knocking at the shutters. The night watchman blew his horn; a great fire had broken out in the town. Was it at the huckster's or in the neighbouring houses? Where was it? Terror spread on all sides. The huckster's wife was so unnerved that she took out her golden earrings and put them into her pocket, so as to save at least something. The huckster rushed to find his papers, the servant girl seized her black silk mantle—she could afford to wear one. Every one tried to save

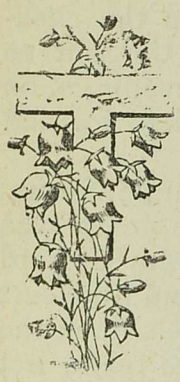
what he prized most, and so did the goblin. He rushed up-stairs to the student's room; the door was open, the student was at the window gazing at the fire, which was raging in the opposite house. On the table lay the old book; the goblin snatched it up, placed it inside his red cap, and held it on his head with both hands. "The best treasure of the house is saved," he cried to himself, and rushed to the top of the chimney, where he sat down to watch the fire. There he sat, lighted up by the flames, and holding on his red cap with both hands. Now, for the first time, he understood which master possessed the true affection of his heart. But when the fire was put out, and the goblin was calmer —yes, then—

"I will divide myself between the two," he said; "I cannot quite break with the huckster, because of the jam."

And in that the goblin spoke just like a man. We, too, cannot break with the huckster—because of the jam.

—o—

The Wicked Prince.



THERE was once a wicked prince; his one end and aim was to conquer the whole world and fill every land with fear and dread. He and his soldiers trampled down the standing corn, wasted the crops with fire and sword, burnt down the peasants' cottages till the flames licked off the leaves from the trees and burnt up the fruits on the scorched and blackened boughs.

Many a poor mother fled, with her baby in her arms, from the smoking ruins of her home; but the wicked soldiers hunted them down, the fiends themselves could not have been more pitiless. The prince thought that all was well, and said no word to check the misery. Every day his power increased, his name was feared by all, and his arms were crowned with success. He filled his capital with the spoils he had seized in conquered cities; no place in the world could show such piles of treasure. He built splendid palaces, halls, and churches; and all who saw the magnificent buildings and the treasures they contained exclaimed, with admiration, "What a great prince!" and forgot the misery into which he had plunged whole nations and the sighs of despair which rose from the ashes of myriad ruined cities.

The prince looked at his palaces and at his treasures, and he, too, said, within himself, "What a great prince! But I must have more," he cried. "No power must equal mine, far less surpass it." He then made war against all his neighbours and conquered them all.

The vanquished kings were harnessed with chains of gold to his victorious chariot; and when he sat at meat they were forced to serve

him on their knees, and to be fed with the broken victuals which were thrown to them by the courtiers.

Statues of the prince were set up in the palaces and public squares; he demanded that they should also be placed before the altars in the churches; but there the priests made a stand. "Prince," said they, "you are great, but God is greater; we dare not comply with your command."

"Well, then," exclaimed the prince; "I will conquer God."

And in his foolish presumption and impiety he ordered that a splendid ship should be built, with which he could sail upward through the sky. It was magnificent and gorgeous to look upon, coloured like the tail of a peacock, and full of eyes, each eye being the muzzle of a gun. At the pressure of a single spring a myriad bullets whizzed from every side, while the fiery mouths were at once reloaded. Hundreds of eagles were harnessed to the ship, and away it rose, swift as an arrow, to meet the sun. The earth lay deep below: at first it looked like a ploughed field along which the mountains rose in ridges by the furrows' side; then like a coloured map, with faint, confused markings; then like a dark shape veiled in mist and cloud. Higher and higher rose the eagles, till God sent down one of His angels; the wicked prince hurled his myriad bullets at the glorious form, but the balls fell back like powerless hailstones. One drop of blood from the angel's wing fell on the ship and weighed it down like a mountain of lead. The eagles' pinions failed, the storm-wind rushed by the sinking ship, heavy clouds of smoke from the burnt towns below rose up in dreadful shapes and hunted the vessel as it sank to its ruin. They took the form of sea-monsters with hungry claws, of gigantic shears that snapped at the powerless ship, of falling crags and fire-breathing dragons. The prince fell back half dead, and the ship was caught in the thick branches of a forest.

"I will conquer God," he cried. "I have sworn it, and my will shall prevail." For seven years he toiled and built new ships for sailing through the air, and forged lightnings of hardest steel to storm the walls of heaven. He summoned together all his armies; miles of ground were covered by them as they stood in rank and file. The prince led them towards the ships; and God sent down a tiny cloud of gnats that closed round the prince and stung his face and hands. Wild with fury, he drew his sword and struck out wildly, but the blade only met the empty air. He then ordered costly wrappings to be brought and placed over him, that the gnats might not be able to reach him. His orders were obeyed; but one gnat had hidden inside the wraps and crept into the prince's ear. Its stings burnt like fire, the venom reached the prince's brain and drove him mad. He tore away the coverings from his body, dashed them from him, and danced naked, in his pain and fury, before his rough, wild soldiers. A burst of mockery rose from them at sight of the mad prince who swore to conquer God, and whom God had conquered with one little gnat!

Little Tuk.

YES, he was called Tuk. It was not his real name; it was a baby-name which he had given to himself before he could speak. He meant it for Charles, and it does just as well when one has been told what it means. Tuk was set to mind his little sister Gussy, who was much younger than he, and to learn his geography lesson; but he could not manage the two things together, try how he would. The poor lad sat, with his sister on his knee, singing all the songs he knew to amuse her, and every now and then casting an anxious look at the open book before him. By the next morning he would have to say, without a fault, all the towns in *Zealand*, and to know every mortal thing about them that can be known.

At last his mother came home from work and took little Gussy on to her lap. Tuk ran quickly to the window and read till his eyes ached, but the daylight was almost gone, and his mother could not afford to let him have a candle.

"There goes the old washerwoman from the alley yonder," said his mother, as she looked out of the window. "Poor old woman! She can hardly drag herself along, and she is obliged to carry that heavy bucket from the well. Be a good boy, Tukky, and go and help her, will you?"

And Tuk ran out and helped the old woman to carry her bucket.

When he came back it was quite dark, there was no chance of a candle, and he had to go to bed on the little oak chest in the corner.

There he lay, thinking over his lesson and all the towns in *Zealand*. He put the geography book under his pillow, for he had heard that that was a very good thing if you want to be sure of knowing your lesson, only you cannot always depend upon it. He lay and thought and thought till it seemed as if some one kissed his eyes and mouth, and he fell asleep. And yet he was not so sound asleep that he could not see the old washerwoman looking at him with her kind eyes, and hear her say, "It would be a shame if you did not know your lesson to-morrow. You have helped me, and now I am going to help you; but God will help you always."

And all at once something began to stir and fidget under the pillow.

"Cluck! cluck! cluck!" It was a hen from Kjöge.* "I am a Kjöge hen," she cried; and then she told Tuk how many inhabit-

* Kjöge, a small town on the coast, where a rather inglorious battle was fought with the English in 1807. When children are lifted up by taking their head in both hands, it is called "showing them Kjöge hens."

ants there were in the town, and all about the battle which happened there, and which was scarcely worth talking about. Crash! bang! down fell a wooden bird, the parrot which serves for a target in the shooting gallery at Prastöe.* He said that there were as many inhabitants in Prastöe as there were nails in his body. He was a proud bird. "Thorwaldsen lived by me," he said. "Bump! I am very comfortable here."

Then little Tuk found himself on horseback. Trot, trot, hippity-hop! off they went. A splendidly dressed knight, with a plumed helmet, sat before him; and the horse carried them through the woods to the old town of Wordingborg.† It was a large, busy place. High turrets stood on the king's fortress palace; lights and music came through the windows, for within the walls King Waldemar was dancing with the court ladies. The sun rose, and the whole palace crumbled to ruins; one after another the turrets fell till only one was left on the hill where once the palace stood. The town looked poor and miserable, and the schoolboys ran about with their lesson-books under their arms, saying, "Two thousand inhabitants"—but that was a story, for they had not nearly so many.

Little Tuk was lying in his bed, not quite certain whether he was dreaming or waking. Some one stood close beside him. "Little Tuk," cried the stranger. It was a sailor; a very small man; he looked like a little middy, but he was no such thing. "I bring you a message from Corsor," ‡ he said. It is a rising place, with plenty of steamboats and mail coaches. Formerly, people thought it ugly; but no one could think so now. It lies close by the sea, and has good roads and pleasure gardens. It gave birth to a poet who was witty and amusing, and that is more than some of them are. Once it tried to send out a ship which was to sail round the earth, but it did not do so, although it could have done so if it had chosen. And the air of the place is beautiful, for the town gates are planted round with rose trees."

Little Tuk opened his eyes, and everything around him looked red and green; but when the dazzling play of colour had passed away, he saw a wooded height above the bay, and a beautiful old church, with two pointed steeples. Silver waterfalls rushed down the heights, and kept up a ceaseless plashing, and by the spring sat King Hroar, with a golden crown on his white head. Close to, lay the town of Roeskilde;§ all the kings and queens of Denmark went hand-in-hand to the church upon the hill; the organ played and the waters plashed. Little Tuk saw and heard it all. "Do not forget the towns," said King Hroar.

And the whole scene vanished. Where could it be gone to? It

* Prastöe, a still smaller town, in the neighbourhood of which Thorwaldsen generally resided.

† Wordingborg, once a city of some note; now an insignificant place, visited only for its tower and the ruins of King Waldemar's palace.

‡ Corsor, on the Great Belt. Before the introduction of steamboats, travellers were detained here waiting for a favourable wind. Heiberg has satirized it as the most wearisome of Danish towns. The poet Baggesen was born here.

§ Roeskilde (Hroar's spring), ancient capital of Denmark. Many of the Danish sovereigns are buried in the cathedral. The Danish parliament met here.

was like turning over the leaf of a book. Now, little Tuk could see nothing but an old peasant woman from Soröe,* where the grass grows in the market-place. She wore a grey linen apron over her head and shoulders, it looked very wet, as if it had been in a heavy shower. "So it has," she said; and she told him a great deal out of Holberg's comedies. "Croak!" she said, "it is very wet in Soröe; it is as still as death. Croak!" and there she was, a frog. "Croak!" and there she was, an old woman! "One must dress to suit the weather," she said. "It is very wet. My town is like a bottle, you cannot go in or out without a cork. Formerly, I used to have beautiful fish, now I have only rosy-cheeked boys who come to learn wisdom, and Hebrew, and Greek. Croak! croak!"

It sounded like the frogs in the marsh or the noise of creaking boots; always the same monotonous sound, it was quite wearying, and little Tuk fell asleep, which was not a bad thing for him.

But even in his sleep he had a dream, or something of the sort. His little sister Gussy had suddenly grown up into a tall, slender maiden, with blue eyes and fair, curling hair. She could fly without wings, and she and little Tuk flew together across the blue lakes, and above the dark-green woods of Zealand.

"Do you hear the cock crow, little Tuk? The cocks are flying from Kjöge. You shall have a farmyard one day—a beautiful, large farmyard. You shall never suffer hunger or thirst; and you will make your mark, as people say. You will become a rich and happy man; your house shall rise up like King Waldemar's tower, and shall be filled with statues like those at Prastöe. You understand me, I hope? Your name shall travel round the world like the ship which ought to have been sent from Corsor; and in Roeskilde—don't forget the towns," said King Hroar—"you will one day speak wisely and well; and when at last you lie in your grave, little Tuk, you will sleep as soundly——"

"As if I were in Soröe," said little Tuk, and with that he awoke.

It was bright daylight, and he could not remember what he had been dreaming about; but that did not matter. It is not at all necessary that people should know what is going to happen to them.

He sprang out of bed and ran to his lesson-book, and as soon as he looked at the page he found he knew it all by heart.

The old washerwoman looked in at the door, and said "Thank you, my dear, for your help last night. May all your pleasant dreams come true!"

Little Tuk had forgotten what they were; but God remembered them.

* Soröe, a quiet, beautifully situated place. Holberg, the Molière of Denmark, founded an academy here, in which the poets Hauch and Ingemann were professors.

The Darning Needle.

THERE was once a darning needle who thought herself so fine that she fancied she was an embroidery needle at the very least.

"Now, mind you hold me fast," she said to the fingers who picked her up. "Don't let me fall; if I fall on the ground I shall never be found again, I am so fine."

"I can manage," said the fingers, taking her round the waist.

"See, I bring my train after me," said the darning needle, as she drew a long piece of cotton through the work; but there was no knot at the end of the cotton.

The fingers stuck the needle into the cook's slipper; the upper leather had come undone and had to be sewn up.

"What coarse work!" said the darning needle; "I shall never get through; I shall break, I know I shall." And she did break.

"Didn't I say I was too fine?" she cried. "I am too fine."

"Now it is good for nothing," said the fingers; but they were obliged to hold it fast, while the cook dropped sealing-wax on to the end and stuck the needle in the front of her dress.

"Now I am a breast-pin," said the darning needle. "I knew I should attain distinction. When one has merit, one wins merit." And she laughed to herself; a darning needle never shows outwardly that she is laughing. She sat in her place as if she were in a coach of state, and looked round proudly.

"May I ask if you are made of gold?" she said to her neighbour, the pin. "You look exceedingly bright, but your head is peculiar, it is so extremely small. You must endeavour to grow; it is not every one who is crowned with sealing-wax." And with that the darning needle drew herself up so proudly that she fell out of the cook's dress right on to the sink, which was just being washed down.

"Now I am going a journey," said the darning needle. "I hope I shall not be lost." But she was lost.

"I am too fine for this world," she cried, as she lay in the gutter, "but I know who I am, and that is always a consolation."

And the darning needle lost none of her pride nor her good humour. All sorts of things swam over her—shavings, bits of straw, and pieces of old newspapers. "See how they sail!" cried the darning needle. "They little know who lies beneath them. I stay where I am, firmly fixed in one place. There goes a shaving, thinking of nothing but himself; a mere chip! Here comes a blade of straw; well, how it spins! Pray do not be so wrapped up in yourself; you might knock

against a stone. There floats a piece of newspaper; every word upon it has been forgotten long ago, and yet what airs it gives itself! I sit still and patient. I know who I am, and that is enough for me."

One day there floated to her side something which sparkled so bright, that the darning needle took it for a diamond. It was a bit of broken glass, and on account of its brilliancy the darning needle accosted it, and introduced herself as a breast-pin.

"You are a diamond, I think?"

"Something of the kind," said the broken glass. And, as they each believed the other's representation, they entered into conversation, and both agreed what a conceited world it was.

"I once lived in a lady's work-box," said the darning needle; "the lady was a cook; she had five fingers on each hand, and anything like the conceit of those fingers it would be impossible to imagine. And yet they were only made to take me in and out of the work-box."

"Were they of good birth then?" said the bit of glass.

"Dear me, no!" said the darning needle; "but their conceit passed all belief. They were five brothers, and they all held together, although they were of different lengths. The first, the thumb, was short and stout, and had but one joint, so that he bowed very stiffly; but that did not prevent his saying that if he were lost his master would be disqualified for military service. The forefinger was extremely greedy and forward, poking itself into everything, sweet or sour, pointing at the sun and moon, and guiding the pen in writing; Master Longman, the middle finger, was the tallest, and looked down on all the rest. Goldband, the fourth, wore a yellow sash round his waist; and the little one did nothing at all, and was proud of that. I could not endure their boasting, and so I left."

"And now we sit here and shine," said the bit of glass.

Just then a gush of water poured down the gutter; it overflowed and carried the broken glass away.

"And now he is promoted, while I am left," cried the darning needle; "I am too fine, and that is my pride and comfort." And she remained alone with her great thoughts of herself. "I could almost believe that I was born of a sunbeam," she thought; "I am so extremely fine. It seems as if the sunbeams came to look for me under the water. I am so fine that even my mother could not find me; If I had my old eye I could weep, not that I would do so, for I consider it vulgar."

Two days later there came up some street boys, poking about in the gutter to find coppers, old nails, and such-like things. It was dirty work, and they enjoyed it very much.

"Hallo!" cried one, who had pricked himself with the darning needle; "here's a fellow!"

"I am not a fellow, I am a young lady," cried the darning needle; but no one heard her. The sealing-wax was washed away and the needle was quite black; but black makes any one look slim, and the darning needle thought herself finer than ever.

"Here comes an egg-shell," said one of the boys; and he set up the darning needle inside the shell. "White walls and I quite black! That is a fine contrast," said the darning needle. "Now I can be

seen. I hope I shall not be seasick, for then I should give myself up."

But she was not seasick, and did not give herself up. "A steel stomach is a very good preventive against seasickness; one feels truly how far one stands above the majority of mankind. My attack has passed away. The more finely wrought one is, the more one can bear."

"Crash!" said the egg-shell. A wagon passed over it. "Heavens! what a weight!" said the darning needle. "I shall break!" But she did not break, although the wagon passed over her; she lay stretched out at full length—and there she may lie.

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The Bell.

T dusk, in the narrow streets of the great town, when the sun went down, and the sky between the chimneys was yellow with gold, a sound was heard by one and another like the tones of a church bell; but it could only be heard for a moment, because of the constant noise and rattle of the streets.

"The evening bell is ringing," people would say to each other. "Listen! The sun is setting now."

Those who lived outside the town, where the houses stood farther apart, with little gardens and fields between, saw the sunset better and heard the bell far more clearly. The sound seemed to come from a church in the heart of the fragrant forest, and the people looked towards it with wistful, reverent glances.

The years passed by, and one said to another, "I wonder if there really is a church out in the wood? The bell has a sweet, rich tone, let us go and try to find it."

The rich drove in carriages and the poor went on foot; but the way seemed very long, and when they came to a group of willow trees which grew on the outskirts of the forest they sat down to rest, looked up through the green, waving branches, and thought that they were now really in the country. The pastrycook from the town came and set up a tent under the trees; then came a rival pastrycook and set up an opposition tent, which was covered in with a bell-like roof of tarpaulin, to keep out the rain. When the people went home again, they said that it was most romantic, and quite different from an ordinary tea. Three persons declared that they had been through the

wood to the very end, and that the sound of the bell seemed then to come from the town. One man wrote a song about it, and said that the bell sounded like the voice of a loving mother to a child, no music could be sweeter than the chiming of the bell.

The king of the country took it up, and said that whoever could find out whence the sound came should have the title of "Bellman to the Universe," even in the case of there being no bell.

In consequence of this many people explored the wood, for the title had a handsome salary attached to it; but there was only one who came back with any kind of explanation. None of them pushed far enough, not even the one who had a theory about it; but he said that the sound proceeded from a very large owl in a hollow tree, who kept knocking her head against the trunk of the tree, but whether the sound came from the owl or the tree he could not say with any degree of certainty. He was at once installed as "Bellman to the Universe," and every year he wrote a treatise upon the owl which left people as wise as they were before.

It was confirmation day. The preacher had spoken earnestly and well; the candidates were deeply moved; it was an important day for them, they passed from childhood to maturity; the childish soul was to be henceforth the soul of a grown-up person. It was glorious sunshine; the confirmation candidates went out of the town, and the sweet, mysterious bell sounded clearer than ever from the wood. They instantly felt a longing to penetrate to the hidden bell—all but three of them, that is. Of these three, one wanted to go home and try on her ball dress; she had only been confirmed for the sake of the ball. The second was a poor lad who had borrowed his confirmation coat and shoes from his landlord's son, and he had promised to take them back at a certain hour. The third said that he never went to any new place unless his parents were with him, that he had always been a good boy, and always meant to be, even though he was confirmed, and that they ought not to laugh at him. But they all did laugh.

So those three turned back; but the others trotted on into the wood. The sun shone, and the birds sang; the children held each other's hands and sang hymns, for they had not as yet been placed in their different positions in life; they were at present mere confirmation candidates in the sight of God.

But two of the youngest were very soon tired, and went back to the town; and two little girls sat down to twist wreaths of flowers, so they did not come. And when the others got as far as the willows, where the pastrycooks had set up their tents, they said, "Now we are out in the country; the bell does not really exist, it is only fancy."

But just then the bell rang out so loud and sweet that four or five resolved to go on into the wood. It was close and thickly planted, and very difficult to pass through. Wood lilies and anemones grew almost too tall, blooming convolvuli and flowering brambles hung in long garlands from tree to tree, while the nightingales sang and the sun shone. It was really beautiful. But it was certainly no path for girls; they would have torn their dresses to ribbons. There were jagged blocks of stone overgrown with mosses of all colours; the fresh springs gurgled between the grasses in liquid, silvery tones. "Can that be the bell?"

said one of the candidates. "I must stay and listen." He lay down by the spring and let the others go on.

They came to a house built of bark and the boughs of trees; a large apple tree spread its branches over the roof as if it were calling down a blessing upon the house, which was overgrown with blossoming roses, the long sprays hung down between the gables, and over the door hung a little bell. Could it be that which they had heard? Every one thought it must be, except one, who said that this bell was too faint to be heard so far away, and that the tones which touched the hearts so deeply were very different. But the boy was a king's son, and that kind of person always wants to be wiser than every one else, the others said.

So they let him go on alone; and as he went his heart was filled more and more with the loveliness of the forest; he still heard the little bell that so delighted the others, and sometimes the wind carried the sound of the tea-bell from the refreshment stalls. But the sweet, clear voice of the unseen bell rose above them all, as the sound of an organ; it came from the left, the side where the heart lies.

Something rustled in the forest path, and a little boy appeared before the king's son; a boy wearing wooden shoes and a jacket so much too small for him that it showed his long, thin wrists. It was the child who had gone back to return the coat and boots to the landlord's son. He had given them back and started in his poor clothes, for the bell sounded so beautiful he was obliged to go towards it.

"Let us go together," said the king's son. But the poor lad with the wooden shoes was bashful. He tugged at his short sleeves, and said he was afraid that he could not walk so fast; besides, he thought that the bell sounded to the right, for that was the place for everything great and beautiful.

"Then we are not likely to meet again," said the king's son. He nodded to the poor boy, who turned away to the thickest part of the wood, where the thorns and briers tore his poor clothes and scratched his hands and face. The king's son received several smart blows, but the sun shone down upon his path; and he it is whom we will follow.

He was a resolute lad. "I must and will find the bell," he said, "even if I have to go to the end of the world."

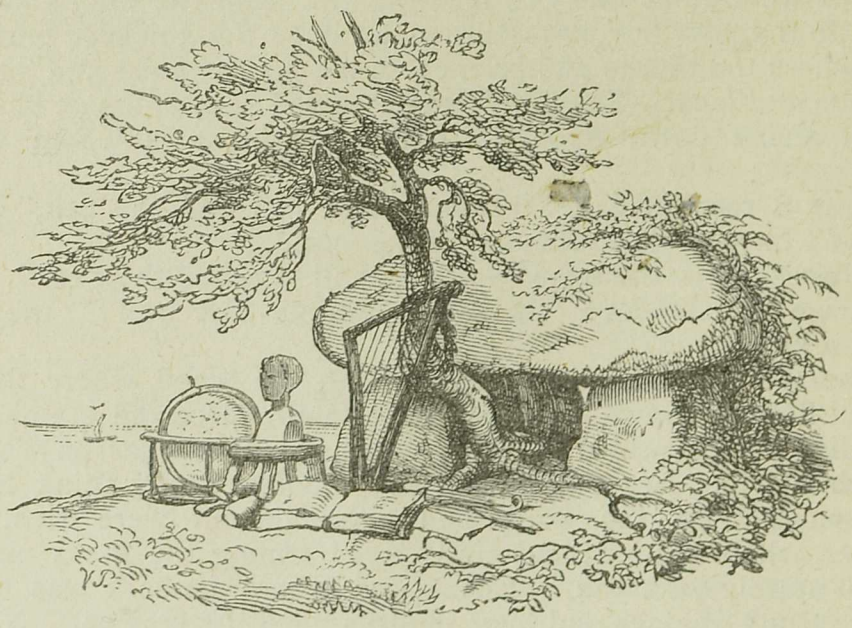
Ugly apes sat in the trees overhead, and gnashed their teeth at him. "Shall we thrash him? Shall we pummel him well?" they cried. "He is a king's son."

But he went on unharmed deeper into the wood, where the most beautiful flowers grew—white star-lilies with blood-red stamens, sky-blue tulips that sparkled in the wind, and apple trees on which the apples hung like large, glittering soap-bubbles; only think how the trees sparkled in the sunshine! Roundabout were rich, green meadows, where the hart and hind played among the grass under the shade of stately oaks and beeches—and where the bark was stripped from the trunk grasses and long tendrils filled the crevice. Now and again he came on openings in the wood with silent lakes, on which the white swans sailed and fluttered their wings. The king's son sat still to listen, and he thought sometimes that the bell sounded from

their shadowy depths; but he soon found that it was not so, and the chime was ringing farther on in the wood.

The sun set; the air glowed like fire; a silence fell upon the forest. The king's son sank upon his knees and said his evening prayers. "Never shall I find what I am seeking. The sun is setting and the night will soon be here. But perhaps I can see the sun once more before it sinks below the horizon. I will climb this rock, its peak is higher than the tallest tree."

He seized the roots and brambles and climbed up the wet stones, where the water-snakes were writhing and the toads spit at him, but he reached the peak before the sun had set. Ah, what a glorious sight! The sea, the measureless, beautiful sea, whose waves came rolling in along the coast, stretched away before his dazzled sight, and the sun stood like a great altar at the meeting-point of sea and sky. Everything was fused into a glowing gold: the wood sang, and the child's heart echoed its voice. Nature rose up like a consecrated church, with tree-stems for columns, flowers and grass for inwrought tapestries, and heaven itself for the vaulted roof. As the sun set the rich colours faded; but a million stars were lighted; they shone like diamond lamps, and the king's son spread out his arms toward the sky, and wood, and sea. Suddenly, from the path on the right, there came the poor boy with his short-sleeved jacket and wooden shoes; he had reached the place just as soon as the prince, and his path had led him to the very same place. The children ran to meet each other; they clasped hands in the great church of nature and poetry. And above them sounded the unseen, sacred bell; happy spirits hovered round them in the air and sang an exultant Hallelujah!



Psyche.

IN the rosy dawn the rays from the morning star fall on the white wall in fanciful arabesques, as if it would write down all it had seen for long centuries upon our circling earth.

Let us listen to one of its stories.

"A short time ago"—when a star says a short time, it generally means a few centuries—"my rays fell on a young artist in the city of the popes, the world-famed Rome. Many things have changed in the course of time; but not so quickly as the human race passes from childhood to manhood. The imperial fortress was then, as now, a ruin; fig trees and laurels grew between the fallen marble columns of the ruined baths, where the walls are still bright with gold. The Coliseum was a ruin. The church bells rang, censers were swung, and through the streets there came processions with tapers and gleaming banners. Churches were hallowed, and art was hallowed also. In Rome lived Raffaelle, the greatest painter of the world; there, too, lived the first sculptor of the age, Michael Angelo. The pope himself did homage to them both, and honoured them with his visits; art was recognized, reverenced, and rewarded. But, in spite of all, there was some greatness and merit which had not yet been acknowledged.

An old house stood in a narrow lane; it had once been a temple. A young artist lived there; he was poor and unknown, but rich in friends—artists like himself, young in years and heart, in hope and fancy. They told him that he was rich in talent and genius, but that he was a fool; that he never thought of his future; that he always broke up the works he modelled in clay, and never would be contented, or finish any of his attempts; and yet that must be done if he meant to win fame or money.

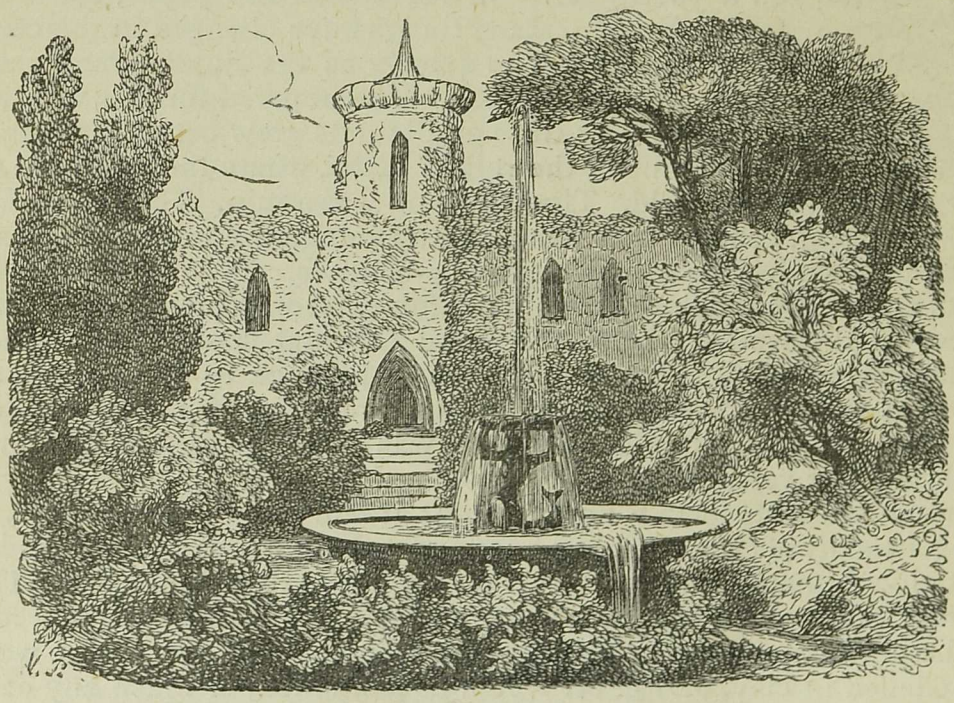
"You are a dreamer," they said to him, "and it is a very sad thing for you. The reason is that you have never lived, have never quaffed deep draughts of life, as all should do. It is in youth that one should lose one's self in the life around one. Look at the great master, Raffaelle; the pope honours him, the world admires him, and he is no scorner of wine and gold."

"Nor of the beautiful Fornarina," said Angelo, one of the gayest of his friends.

Every one spoke according to his age and sense. They tried to draw the young artist into their gay, wild life; at times he felt a momentary inclination to yield to them; he was young, impulsive, and well able to join in their sparkling talk and joyous laughter. But what they called Raffaelle's "merry life" faded from his thoughts like morning dew when he gazed on the heavenly light that streamed from the great

master's canvas, or the lovely forms which the old Greek sculptors had moulded and chiselled from the marble in past centuries. His breast would expand with the longing to create, as they had done, something great, sublime, and beautiful. He sought to reproduce the fair ideal within him; but in what form? The soft clay moulded itself beneath his fingers into shapes of beauty, but the day afterwards he broke to pieces all that he had wrought.

One day he passed by one of those splendid palaces in which Rome is so rich; he passed before the open entrance and saw how the colonnades, adorned with pictures, enclosed a little garden. The garden was filled with lovely roses; great white water-lilies, with green, velvety leaves, rose from the marble basin where the clear water plashed; and by the fountain stood a young maiden, the daughter of the princely



house—tall, slender, exquisitely beautiful. Never had he seen so lovely a face, and yet—yes, it hung, painted by Raffaëlle's hand, "My Psyche" of the Roman palace. There it was but painted, here it stood alive!

The face haunted his brain and heart. He went back to his wretched room and modelled the Psyche in clay; it was the face of the young Roman princess, and, for the first time, he was contented with his work. It meant something for him; it was she. His friends who saw it exclaimed with joy; the work was a revelation of his genius; they had foreseen it, and now the world would own it.

The clay is soft and plastic, but it has not the whiteness and durability of marble; the Psyche must be enshrined in marble, and the costly block was near at hand. It was the artist's one inheritance, bequeathed from his parents—the block in his garden; broken glass, herbs, and fragments of artichokes lay on it and defaced its surface,

but within it was white as mountain snow, and worthy to enshrine the Psyche.

One day—the star does not tell us this, for it could not see it, but we know it—one day an aristocratic group of Roman notabilities entered the quiet by-street. The carriage stopped before the door, and the occupants found their way to the room of the young artist of whom they had heard by chance. And who were the distinguished guests? It was the high-born maiden herself who stood before him, with her exquisite smile, as her father said, "Why, see; that is your very image, as you stand and live!" But the marble could not reproduce her smile, nor the glance which fell from her clear eyes upon the artist's face.

"The Psyche must be executed in marble; when the work is completed I will purchase it," said the Roman prince. His voice spoke the word of life for the lifeless clay, and the cold marble, and the trembling artist.

A new life entered the lonely workroom; joyous talk and eager industry reigned together. The morning star watched the progress of the work. The clay itself seemed to possess a soul since she had gazed upon it.

"Now I know what life is," said the artist. "Life is love; it is the glorious outpouring of one's whole being into the beautiful. What the others call enjoyment is but for a moment; it is only the froth upon the intoxicating dregs, and not the pure, rich wine that gives strength and life."

The marble block was brought into the workroom, measured, chiselled, and sawn. The mechanical part was quickly done, and the stone, day by day, was transformed into the likeness of the Psyche, of the lovely maiden. The heavy marble became living, floating, graceful—a fair, sweet Psyche, with her innocent smile, just as she was mirrored in the artist's heart.

The star of dawn knew well what was passing in the young man's heart, understood the flush on his cheeks and the fire in his eye, while he gave forth the ideal within him.

"You are a master equal to the Greeks of old," cried his friends. "The whole world will admire your Psyche."

"*My* Psyche," he repeated. "Mine. Yes; she must be mine. I, too, am an artist like the masters of old. God has ennobled me with the divine gift of genius."

He knelt down with tears of thanksgiving; but, rising, forgot God for the Psyche who stood there moulded in drifting snow just flushed with dawn.

And now he was to see the living Psyche, she whose words rang like music in his soul. He went to the princely palace with the news that the Psyche was finished. He passed through the open courtyard where the water splashed from the dolphins' mouths into the marble basin, where the white flowers bloomed and the roses breathed out richest fragrance. He entered the great hall, which was hung with pictures and ancestral shields. Haughty servants lounged about on the carved benches as if they were the masters of the house. The artist gave his message, and they led him up the soft carpets of the

marble staircase. He passed between rows of statues, across mosaic floors, and through richly-furnished rooms. The splendour oppressed him, but when the prince received him with a cordial, kindly greeting his courage revived. He was told that the signorina wished to see and thank him, and he followed the servant into the lovely room of which her beauty was the highest charm.

She spoke to him, and no chanted *miserere* had such power to touch the heart and raise the soul.

He raised her hand to his lips; no roseleaf was softer, but from its touch a fire thrilled through his frame. Words flowed from his lips; he knew not what he said. Is the crater conscious of its burning lava?

He confessed his love. She stood amazed, indignant, outraged; with a shiver, she drew back her hand, as if it had met the touch of some base reptile. Her cheeks glowed, her eyes gleamed black as night.

"Madman!" she cried. "Leave me—away!" She turned from him, and her face wore the stern beauty of a Medusa.

Half lifeless, the artist rushed to his house; he woke from his stunned trance in frenzied madness, seized his hammer, and swung it over the marble form. His friend Angelo rushed in and caught his arm in a firm grasp.

"Are you mad?" he cried. "What would you do?"

They wrestled together. Angelo was the stronger, and the artist sank down, faint and breathless, on his couch.

"What has happened?" said Angelo. "Speak! Collect yourself."

But what could he say? Angelo tried vainly to understand his broken exclamations.

"It is your solitary dreaming that is killing you," said Angelo. "Be a man, as we are. Live no longer in an ideal world. A draught of wine will still your nerves, and a lovely girl shall be your physician. The maiden of the Campagna is as lovely as any princess in a marble palace. Follow me; I will be your guide. The time will come when you are old, and then you will lie by like a withered leaf. Enjoy your youth, and follow me."

He drew him from the room. Fire glowed in the artist's veins; he felt a wild desire to escape from himself, to lose his own identity, and he followed Angelo. In a remote part of the city is an *osteria* much frequented by students; yellow citrons, with their dark, glossy leaves, hide the ancient walls; the *osteria* itself looked like a cave in the ruins; a lamp burned before an image of the Virgin; a bright fire blazed on the hearth—all was being made ready for a supper, and the tables were spread out of doors under the citron trees.

The two friends were received with acclamation; the wine was passed round freely, songs arose, to the tinkling chime of the guitar. At the first note of the *saltarella* two young Roman girls joined in the dance like beautiful bacchantes. No Psyches these, no delicate roses; but hardy, glowing carnations.

Even after sunset the day was hot; there was fire in the blood, fire in the wine, fire in every glance. The air glowed with crimson and gold, and life borrowed its bright colouring.

"At last you have joined us. Let yourself drift with the stream."

"You are right," said the artist. "I have been a fool. Man belongs to realities and not to dreams."

The young men left the *osteria*, with song and music; the maidens of the Campagna came with them.

In Angelo's room, strewn with coloured sketches, scattered folios, and glowing pictures, the voices sounded fainter, but not less joyous. Around lay many a likeness of the beautiful Roman girls; but none were so beautiful as the living forms. The six-branched candelabra shone from all its tapers, and the human form won the glory of the gods of old.

"Apollo! Jupiter! I am lifted to your heaven. I feel that the blossom of life opens now for the first time in my heart!"

Yes, the blossom opened wide, snapped, and fell. A deadly vapour rose from its calyx, blinding the eyes, overpowering the reason; the firework of the senses died out and darkness took its place.

The artist was once more in his own room; he sat down upon his couch and tried to collect his thoughts. "Shame!" was the cry that passed his lips and echoed in the depths of his heart. He buried his face in his pillow, his thoughts became confused, and he fell asleep.

In the early morning he started up and questioned his memory again. What had happened? Had he been dreaming? Was her visit, his presence at the *osteria*, the evening with the maidens of the Campagna—was it all a dream? No, it was the reality which he had never known before.

The clear star glowed in the purple light, its rays fell upon him and on the marble Psyche; he shivered as his eyes fell on the immortal work, his glance seemed a profanation. He threw a veil over the statue; once more he went to uncover it, but he refrained; he had no strength to look upon his work.

Silent, gloomy, and self-absorbed, he sat alone the whole day through, conscious of nothing that passed without; none knowing what thoughts were stirring in his heart.

Days, weeks passed away; the nights were the longest. One morning the glittering star saw him rise from his couch shaking with fever; he staggered to the marble statue, drew back the veil, and then, almost fainting under the load, bore the statue to the garden. In the shadow stood an old dried-up well; in this he let fall the Psyche, and covered it with earth, dried wood, and nettles.

"Leave me! away!" was his short epitaph.

The star saw it in the rosy air, and its rays trembled on two large tears which coursed down the artist's deathly-pale cheeks. His friends gathered round his sick bed and said that he was stricken for death.

Brother Ignatius from the neighbouring convent visited him as friend and physician; he brought to him the consolations of religion, spoke of the peace of the Church, of human sin, and of the grace of God.

His words fell like glowing sunbeams on humid soil; they rose in misty clouds and vapours, and through the floating veil the artist looked down on human life. His aims had all been falsehoods and delusion. Art was a sorceress who leads men into vainglory and sinful passion, and wraps them round with lies. She still speaks with the voice of the serpent, "Eat, and ye shall be as gods."

For the first time in his life he seemed to catch a glimpse of the way of truth and peace. In the Church was light and strength, in the monk's cell was the peace which leads men through time to eternity.

Brother Ignatius seconded these thoughts and upheld him in his resolution. The worldling became the servant of the Church; the young artist renounced the world and entered the cloister.

The brothers welcomed him kindly, and his initiation was like a festival day. He saw the light of heaven stream from the sacred pictures within the church.

And when he stood at sunset looking through the grating of his little cell, and saw below him the eternal city, with its ruined temples, its death-stricken Coliseum, in its spring-like beauty of evergreens, roses, and acacias, he felt moved to his inmost heart. The open, desolate Campagna, the waving palm trees, the orange and citron groves, the distant gleam of the blue mountains crowned with snow, all seemed painted in the clear air, blending in one vision of beauty, filled with peace—a lovely dream. Yes, life was a dream; and dreams can last for hours; but the monk's life is reckoned by days and months and weary years.

The sin that makes men vile and miserable comes from within, and the novice found out the truth more clearly day by day. What fires of evil passion raged within him! What a torrent of sin swept through his whole being! He macerated his body, but the disease lay deeper than his penances could reach. His very efforts for good twisted and writhed like the serpent of old, now bidding him presume on the offer of free forgiveness, now filling him with self-righteous thoughts of his greatness as a son of the Church.

Years passed away, and one day the monk met Angelo face to face.

"Man!" cried Angelo; "is it really you? And are you happy? No: for you have sinned against God's gift of genius, and squandered away your talent. Read the parable of the ten talents. What have you gained in your new life? A dreamer from first to last, you have now woven for yourself a religion of dreams."

"Leave me, thou tempter!" cried the monk, turning away.

"I have seen a messenger from the evil one," said the monk to himself. "I once gave him my finger and he took my whole hand. No!" he continued, with a sigh; "the evil is within me, within us all; and yet we walk the world, with unabashed face, seeking enjoyment! I seek my wellbeing in the consolations of religion—can they be nothing but consolations? If all around me here is false as the world I have left—illusions like the glow of sunset and the vapoury blue of the distant mountains which changes to bare, cold stone when one has followed it to its source! Eternity! measureless, silent ocean beckoning us on with mysterious voices, filling us with longings till we plunge into it, sink into its mocking depths, and cease to be. Illusions! Leave me—away!"

Tearless and self-absorbed, he sank upon his knees—to whom? Not to his God; it was but the habit of long years which made him kneel.

The deeper he looked within the blacker grew the darkness. He found nothing to which he could cling. "To have lost my life in vain!"

he cried. The thought grew like a snowball, crushed him, and left him dead.

"I can trust no one with the worm that gnaws within me; from the day my secret escapes me, I am in the power of another man."

The divine power within him strove and struggled.

"Oh, God, be merciful!" he cried, in his despair; "I have despised Thy gifts and left my mission unfulfilled. The Psyche in my breast shall be buried like that other Psyche, my best life-work, and she will never rise from her grave."

The morning star shone in the clear air; the star which shall doubtless fail and die while the soul learns and lives; its rays traced upon the white convent walls no word of God's mercy or of the loving joy of a believing heart.

"My spirit within me—can it live a conscious life for ever? Can the Incomprehensible come to pass? Ah, yes! for my whole life is incomprehensible. Thou, O Lord, art incomprehensible. Thy universe is one great miracle of power and love."

His eyes gleamed bright and closed in death. The sound of the church bell was the last earthly sound above him; he was buried in earth which had been brought from Jerusalem and was mingled with the dust of the saints.

After long years they dug out his skeleton and dressed it in the habit of his order; a rosary was placed in its fingers, and it was set up among the long row of dead monks whose skeletons filled the convent vaults.

Years rolled on.

The helpless bones fell to the earth; the skulls were piled up in heaps before the church, where they formed an outer wall.

The burning sun shone down upon his skull among the rest; no one knew its name or history. A lizard darted through the chambers of the brain where once great thoughts and lovely fancies had reigned. The lizard sprang away, and the skull fell into dust.

Centuries had gone by.

The morning star shone fair as ever through the circling years; the air gleamed rosy red, and trembled with dewy freshness.

In a place which once had been a narrow lane there stood a convent of nuns. One of the sisters had died and was about to be buried in the garden. The spade struck against a stone, the stone gleamed white as marble, a fair, rounded shoulder came to light. And then the spade was plied more carefully, a graceful head, and fluttering butterfly wings appeared above the surface. From the grave in which the young nun was to be buried a lovely Psyche, wrought in the purest marble, was lifted into the dewy, rose-tinged light of day.

"The work is perfect; it is a creation of the best days of art," said all who saw it. Who could the master be? No one could tell. None knew but the glittering star; the star who had seen his whole life, its strength and weakness, who knew that he was but a man, long since dead and crumbled into dust; but the outcoming of his best efforts, the work that bore witness to the divine power within, to the Psyche that is immortal—the glorious marble Psyche still lived to be the wonder of a world!

The morning star poured down its golden rays through the rosy air upon the Psyche, and upon the wondering eyes which gazed upon it and saw the soul wrought in marble.

All that is earthly fades and is forgotten; all that is heavenly lives on in fame; and when fame itself dies away, the Psyche lives for ever.

—o—

Soup made out of a Sausage Skewer.

I.

"WE had a most sumptuous dinner yesterday," said an old mouse of the female sex to one who had not been present at the festivity. "I sat number twenty-one from the king, that was not at all a bad place. Should you like to know the bill of fare? The courses were admirably arranged: mouldy bread, bacon rind, tallow candle, and sausage; and then the same dishes were again in the same order. It was as good as having two meals. Agreeable cordiality and genial nonsense prevailed, as is befitting in a family circle. Nothing whatever was left on the table, except a sausage skewer, and on that the conversation happened to fall. Mention was made of the saying, 'Soup made of sausage skins,' or, as some people render it, 'Soup made out of a sausage skewer;' every one had heard the saying, but no one had tasted the soup, much less made any of it. A charming toast was given in honour of the inventor. 'May he be appointed guardian of the poor!' Was not that witty? And the king said that whichever of the young female mice could prepare the soup in the most savoury manner should be his queen, and he granted a year and a day's time for study."

"That was not amiss," said the second mouse; "but how is the soup made?"

"Oh, yes; I dare say! That is what we all asked, old and young. Every one wanted to be queen; but there were not many who could face the thought of the journey out into the wide world, and it would certainly be necessary to take one. It is not every one's affair to leave her family circle; cheese paring and bacon rind are not met with every day when one is from home; one has to suffer hunger, and, not improbably, to be eaten up alive by a cat."

It was doubtless such considerations as these which deterred the majority of young mice from going out into the world to collect knowledge. Only four could be found who were willing to undertake the journey. They were poor, but young and brisk; each one wished to go to a different quarter of the globe from the others, for then it would

be seen to which of them fortune was favourable. Each mouse took with her a sausage skewer, to remind her of the object of her journey, and to be her pilgrim's staff.

They started at the beginning of May, and did not return till the May of the following year—three of them, that is, for the fourth neither came herself nor sent a message.

"The brightest of festivals is never quite without a cloud," said the king of the mice when the day arrived. Invitations had been sent out to all the mice for miles round; they met in the kitchen, and the three mice who had travelled stood in a row apart; in the place set aside for the fourth mouse stood a sausage skewer hung with crape. No one ventured to give an opinion until the mouse king had said what was fitting to be said.

We shall hear.

II. What the First Little Mouse had Seen and Learnt on Her Travels.

"When I first started out into the wide world," said the little mouse, "I thought, as many do at my age, that I possessed all the knowledge in the universe; but I was mistaken; it takes a long time to attain to that. I went to sea in a ship which was bound for the North. I had been told that the ship's cook was a good manager; but there is no merit in that when one has stores of pickled pork and mouldy flour. One lives luxuriously, but it is not the place where one can to learn to make soup out of a sausage skewer. We sailed on for many days and nights, the ship lurched frightfully, and we did not escape without many a wetting, but at last we reached the place to which we were going, and I left the vessel. It was in the far North.

"It is really curious to leave one's household nook, to go in a ship which soon becomes a nook of itself, and then suddenly to find oneself hundreds of miles away, in strange scenes and among strange faces. I saw great, trackless forests of birch and pine, the fragrance was so strong that I sneezed—I thought of sausage. And there were deep lakes, clear when you looked closely into them, but seen from a distance, black as ink. White swans rested on them, so motionless that I took them for foam, but when they flew I knew them in a moment; they belong to the goose family, it is always useless for people to try and disavow their connections. I kept to my own kindred, and associated only with wood and field mice: they are extremely ignorant, especially in all that regards cookery, and it was that which I was most anxious to learn.

"The expression, 'Soup made out of a sausage skewer,' was utterly unknown to them; and the assurance that it could actually be made created the greatest astonishment and excitement among them. The news flew from mouth to mouth, and I felt very dispirited as to the success of my mission. I little thought that I was to be initiated in the process that very night. It was the middle of summer, and the

mice said that was why the wood smelt so strong and the lakes looked so dark and clear, with their white, floating swans.

"On the outskirts of the wood was a small group of cottages, and a maypole, as tall as the mast of a ship, stood wreathed with flowers. Lads and lasses were dancing round it to the tones of a violin; the merriment was carried on till after the moon had risen; but I took no part in it. What has a young mouse to do with maypole dancing? I sat alone on the soft moss and held my sausage skewer. The moon shone brightest on to a spot where a tree stood overgrown with the finest moss, as fine, I may venture to say, as the skin of his majesty; but the moss was green, a very soothing colour for the eyes.

"On a sudden there appeared a crowd of the prettiest little people I ever saw, they looked like human beings, but much better proportioned, and they were dressed in the petals of flowers trimmed with gnats' wings; it did not look at all amiss. It seemed to me, from their movements, that they were looking for something, I hardly knew what; but at last they came up to me, and their leader said, pointing to my sausage skewer, 'That is the very thing we want, it is pointed and just made on purpose.'

"'Borrow you may, but keep you may not,' I said.

"'No; not keep it,' they cried. I loosed the skewer, and they danced away with it to a patch of grass, and stuck it in the earth. They wanted to have a maypole also, and how they did decorate it to be sure!

"Little spiders spun it round with gold thread, and hung it with glittering scarfs and banners so white, in the moonlight, that my eyes were quite dazzled. They took colours from the butterflies' wings and sprinkled them over it; they powdered it with flowers and diamonds. I did not know my skewer; there was not such another maypole in the world. And then there came up the whole elfin tribe, the most delicate little creatures possible. They invited me to look on at the revels from a certain distance, for I was too large for them.

"Then the music began. It was like a chime of glass bells, so full and clear that I thought the swans were singing; then I seemed to hear the voice of the thrush and the cuckoo, and at last the sound of the whole forest. Voices of children, of bells, and of birds; the loveliest melodies, and they all came out of the elfins' maypole that was my sausage skewer. I could not have believed that so much could be drawn from a skewer; but it depends on the hands into which it falls. I was touched; I wept as a young mouse can weep—tears of joy. The night was very short, as it is up there just at that time. In the early dawn the fresh breeze rippled the surface of the lakes; the waving garlands, the hanging bridges, and airy balustrades all disappeared. Six elves brought my sausage skewer back to me, and asked me if there was any wish that I should like to be granted. I immediately begged them to tell me how to make soup out of a sausage skewer.

"'Why, I should think you know by this time,' said their leader. 'You saw us do it last night; I dare say you hardly knew your skewer again.'

"'That is the way they take it,' I thought to myself; and then I told them plainly what was the object of my journey and what I hoped

would be my reward on my return. 'Of what use is it to my king and country,' I said, 'that I have seen your enjoyment? I cannot shake the skewer, and say, "This is the way it is made, and here comes the soup." Soup like that could only be tolerated when every one had eaten as much as they possibly could.'

"Then the elf dipped his finger in the cup of a blue violet, and said to me, 'See here. I touch your pilgrim staff, and when you return home, place it upon the heart of your king, and it will be covered with violets, even in the coldest winter time. And now I think I have given you something to take home with you, and a little more too.'" The little mouse held the staff upon the king's heart, and it became a wreath of beautiful violets; the perfume was so strong that the king ordered the mice who stood nearest to the fire to put their tails between the bars, so that there might be a smell of burnt hair, for the scent of the violets was intolerable, it was not the kind of fragrance one cared for.

"But what did you say about 'more?'" said the mouse king.

"Ah, yes," said the little mouse. "It is, I believe, what is called an effect." She turned the skewer round, and behold every flower had disappeared; nothing was to be seen but the bare wood! She raised it in her hand as the conductor lifts his *bâton*. "Violets, the elf told me, are for the smell and touch; but something must be left for the hearing and the taste." The little mouse then began to beat time, and a burst of music was heard, not like that listened to by the elves in the forest, but such as one hears in the kitchen. It was a cooking and boiling and simmering, as if the wind were sighing through every pot and pan, and making them all boil over. The shovel rang against the frying-pan, and then came a lull, through which one heard the faint singing of the tea-kettle; it was admirably done. Then the little pot boiled and the great pot boiled, and neither of them cared for the other; there seemed no rhyme nor reason in the pots. The mouse waved her *bâton* more wildly; the bubbles rose up, the pots boiled over, the wind rushed down the chimney—the tumult was terrible, and the mouse dropped the skewer.

"That is a difficult recipe," said the king; "is not the soup coming soon?"

"That is all," said the little mouse, with a bow.

"All?" cried the king. "Then we should be glad to hear what the second mouse has to say."

III. What the Second Little Mouse had to Say.

"I was born in the palace library," said the second mouse; "neither my family nor myself have had the good fortune to reach the dining-room, far less the larder; it was not till I set out on my travels that I saw I must confess that we often suffered from hunger in the library; on the other hand, we gained much useful information. The rumour of the prize offered by the king to whomsoever should find out the best way of making soup out of a sausage skewer penetrated even to us;

and my old grandmother produced a manuscript which she could not read herself, but which she had heard read aloud. In this manuscript occurred these words: 'When one is a poet, one can make soup out of a sausage skewer.' My grandmother asked me if I was a poet. I felt myself blameless in that respect, and told her so. She then said that I must go out and become one. I asked her what was required for the purpose, because it seemed as difficult to me to find out that as to find the recipe for the soup itself. My grandmother had heard much reading aloud, and she immediately answered, 'Three things—Sense, Fancy, and Feeling. If you have these, you are a poet, and then the soup-making will be a trifle to you.'

"I went away to the West in order that I might become a poet.

"Sense is the principal thing. I knew that, and therefore I went in search of it first. Now, where could I find it? 'Go to the ant and learn wisdom.' It was a great Jewish king who said that, I had heard it repeated in the library. Naturally, I never slackened my pace till I reached the first anthill, and there I kept on the watch to learn wisdom.

"The ants are a most respectable nation. They are common sense in person. With them everything is like a sum, with answer and proof complete. Work, and lay eggs, they say; and then you work for the present and the future also, and they practise their own precept. They are divided into clean and dirty ants, and are numbered according to their rank. The queen is number one; her opinion is always right, she possesses all the wisdom of the world, and it was important for me to know that. She spoke of everything, and so wisely, that it seemed to me mere nonsense. She said that her anthill was the highest thing in the world, and yet there was a tree close to which was much higher; no one could deny it, so it was never mentioned. One evening an ant lost her way on this tree and travelled up it, not to the top indeed, but still higher than any ant had been before. When she returned home she spoke of the higher view to which she had reached on her travels, but her remarks were considered insulting to the community, and she was condemned to wear a muzzle, and to perpetual solitude. But a short time after another ant climbed the tree and made the same discoveries; on her return she spoke of it, but vaguely and allegorically, as people say, and therefore, as she was a respectable ant, and one of the clean ones, every one believed her; and at her death an egg-shell was erected over her grave, as a monument, in token of her learning and research. I saw," continued the little mouse, "that the ants ran about carrying their eggs on their backs; if one dropped an egg, she gave herself a great deal of trouble in trying to pick it up. Then the others would try to help her till they nearly lost their own eggs, on which they immediately left off, saying that 'Charity begins at home.' Thus, as the queen said, they exhibited both feeling and sense. 'Sense,' continued her majesty, 'should be the prominent quality in us all. I have it myself in an eminent degree.' She raised herself on her hind-legs, it was impossible to mistake her. I ran forward and swallowed her. 'Go to the ants and learn wisdom.' So I had done. I had swallowed the queen.

"I now went nearer to the above-mentioned tree; it was an oak, with

a tall trunk and wide-spread crown. I knew that it was very old, and that it was inhabited by a nymph or dryad, who is born with the tree and dies with it. I had learned all this in the library; and now I beheld both an oak and a dryad. The nymph gave a loud scream when she saw me, for, like most young women, she was extremely frightened at mice. She had more reason to be frightened than most of her sex have, for I could have gnawed through the tree on which her life depended. I spoke to the nymph gently and earnestly; she took courage, lifted me up in her white hand, and told me that I should have one of the two things I was seeking that very evening. She told me that Phantastes, another name for Fancy, was her great friend; he was beautiful as the god of love, and spent many an hour under her leafy branches. He called the nymph his dryad and the oak his tree; the tree after his own heart; for the gnarled roots sank deep into the ground, and the crown rose high toward heaven, learning to know the keen wind, the hot sun, and the drifting snow, as they should be known.

"'Yes,' continued the dryad, 'the birds sing among the leaves and tell stories of the lands through which they fly; the stork has built a nest on one withered branch, so that we hear a little about the Pyramids. All that pleases Phantastes, but he is not satisfied till I have told him all the history of my life. I go back to my earliest childhood, when the tree was so small that a nettle overshadowed it, and tell him all that has passed between that time and this. Sit down under the tree, and be ready when Phantastes comes; if you can pluck one feather from his wing you have enough, no poet can have a better gift.'

"Phantastes came, the feather was pulled out, and I got it," said the little mouse. "I soaked it in water till it was soft; it was very indigestible even then, but I nibbled it up at last. It is quite easy to gnaw oneself into a poet. I had now two of the things I wanted, the third was yet to come. The sense and fancy I had swallowed told me where to get the third, and that was in the library. It appears that a man has written some romances on purpose to ease people of their superfluous tears; the books are a kind of sponge which suck up fine feelings. I remembered some of these books; they looked well-thumbed and very greasy, they must have imbibed an ocean of sentiment.

"I hastened back to the library and immediately devoured a whole romance—the soft part, that is, the crust or binding I left. When I had eaten that and one more I felt a kind of commotion in my inside; I began a third, and then I was a poet. I said so to myself, and I say so to every one else. I suffered from headache and stomachache, and I know not what aches besides. I began to consider how all my acquirements could be used in making soup out of a sausage skewer; I thought over everything I had ever heard in reference to sausage skewers; stories of chips, sticks, shavings, and pegs recurred to my memory. The ant queen had a fund of common sense, and I thought of the man who put a chip in his mouth and at once became invisible; I thought of cribbage pegs, washerwoman's pegs, 'Sticking at nothing,' 'Breaking the stick across any one's back,' and every kind of saying in any way connected with skewers, sticks, and pegs. My thoughts all turned to skewers, sticks, and pegs. Endless poems and stories can

be made out of them when one is a poet, as I am; I have gnawed myself into one; and I shall be able to present your majesty every day of the week with a chip, that is, a poem. That is my soup."

"Let us hear what the third has to say," said the mouse king.

"Peep, peep!" was heard at the kitchen door, and a little mouse—it was the fourth of the mice who had tried for the prize and who was believed to be dead—darted in like an arrow. She tore down the sausage skewer with the black crape; she had been travelling day and night by rail, in the luggage van, whenever she had an opportunity, and yet she was almost too late. She rushed forward, looking very much flurried; she had lost her skewer, but not her tongue, for she immediately began to speak as if they were all waiting for her and meant to hear no one else, as if nothing else in the world was of any consequence. She appeared so unexpectedly and spoke so fast that no one had time to stop her or say a word till she had had her say. Let us hear what she said.

IV. What the Fourth Little Mouse, who Spoke Before the Third, had to Tell.

"I betook myself at once to the great city," she said; "the name has escaped me; I have a bad memory for names. From the railway I was taken, with some contraband goods, to the prison, and, once there, I ran into the turnkey's lodge. The turnkey was talking about his prisoners, especially about one of them who was under arrest for having spoken some rash words which had been commented on, and written down, and made notes of, 'The whole business,' said the turnkey, 'is nothing but soup made out of a sausage skewer; but, unluckily, the soup may cost him his head.' This aroused my sympathy for the prisoner," said the little mouse; "I took my opportunity and slipped into the cell, there is a mouse-hole behind every closed door. The prisoner looked pale, he had a long beard and large, bright eyes. The lamp flickered and smoked, but it could scarcely make the walls blacker than they were already. The prisoner scratched verses and pictures on the black ground; I did not read them. I think he was suffering from dulness, for I found myself quite a welcome guest. He enticed me with crumbs of bread, whistling, and kind words, and seemed pleased when I put confidence in him. We grew fast friends, he shared his food with me, bread and sausage; I lived in clover, but it was more for the sake of his society than of his food that I lingered. He let me walk on his hand and arm and beard, calling me his little friend. I began to be sincerely attached to him; that kind of sentiment is generally mutual. I forgot what had brought me out into the world—forgot my pilgrim staff, and let it fall into a crack of the floor, where it still lies. I wished to remain where I was, for if I had gone away the poor prisoner would have had no one—and that is too little—in this world. I stayed, but he did not. He spoke to me very mournfully, for the last time, gave me twice as much bread and cheese as usual, kissed his

hand to me, and went away. He never came back. I do not know his history. 'It is all soup made out of a sausage skewer,' the turnkey said. I went out into his lodge and was well punished for having trusted him.

"He put me into a trap, a perfect treadmill—you run and run and never get any forwarder. It is horrible. The turnkey's little grandchild was a sweet little girl, with laughing eyes and lips, and hair like spun gold. 'Poor little mouse!' she said, looking into my cage. She pulled out the iron bar, and I sprang on to the window sill and then into the spouting. 'Free! free!' I cried. I thought of nothing else, not even of the object of my journey.

"It was dark; the night drew on. I took up my abode in an old tower; no one lived there but a watchman and an owl. I trusted neither of them, least of all the owl. Owls are like cats, and have the bad habit of eating mice; but one may be mistaken sometimes, and so I found. She was a respectable, well-informed owl; and knew as much as I did, far more than the watchman. The young owls made a great to-do about every trifle, but the sharpest words she ever said to them were, 'Don't make soup out of a sausage skewer!' Her indulgence and gentleness inspired me with so much confidence that I looked out of my crack and uttered a faint squeak. This pleased the owl so much that she took me under her protection, and declared that no one should do me any harm, she would keep me for her own eating in the winter when provisions ran short.

"She was clever in everything. She told me that the watchman could only blow through the horn that hangs at his side. 'He is very proud of it, and takes himself for an owl in the turret,' she said; 'but it is a poor performance—soup made out of a sausage skewer.'

"I then begged the owl to give me the recipe for this soup. 'Soup made out of a sausage skewer,' she answered, 'is only an expression used by human beings. It means many different things. Every one understands it in his own way and believes himself to be in the right. In reality, it is nothing at all.'

"'Nothing!' The word struck me. Truth is not always agreeable, but it must go before all. The old owl said the same. I thought over the matter, and saw that if I brought home that which goes before all, I should bring home far more than soup made out of a sausage skewer. And so I hurried home to bring that which is highest and best of all, the truth. We mice are an enlightened people, and our king is in advance of us all. He is capable of choosing me for his queen, for the truth's sake."

"Your truth is a lie," said the third mouse, who had not been allowed time to speak; "I can make the soup, and I am going to do so."

V. How the Soup was Made.

"I have not been from home," said the third mouse. "I stayed where I was, which is the most sensible thing to do. There is

nothing to be gained by travelling; everything can be obtained just as well here. I stayed. I have not gained my recipe from supernatural beings, neither have I eaten it, nor learnt it from an owl. I have found it out by my own thought. Be so kind as to put the pot on to the fire. Thank you. Now pour in some water—quite full, to the very brim. That will do. Now make up the fire; let the water boil quickly; it must boil over and over, and be kept at boiling point. Now throw in the skewer. And now, if his majesty will deign to stir up the soup with the end of his tail, that is all that is required. The longer it is stirred the richer the soup will be; no seasoning is necessary, nothing but constant stirring. It is not an expensive soup."

"Cannot some one else stir it?" said the king.

"No," said the mouse; "the virtue lies in the king's tail alone."

The water seethed and bubbled. The mouse king approached the hearth; it looked very dangerous. He stretched out his tail as the mice do when they dip their tails in the cream-jug and lick them afterwards, but this time his tail got no farther than the hot steam from the pot. The king sprang hastily down. "Of course you shall be my queen," he said; "there is no doubt about that. As to the soup, it can stand over till our golden wedding, this time fifty years, when it can be given to the poor of my realm, that they may have something by which to remember the occasion."

The wedding was celebrated at once; but several of the mice said, as they went home, that the soup was not "Soup made out of a sausage skewer," after all; it was more like "Soup made out of a mouse's tail." They found one or two things to praise in what they had heard, but, as a whole, the stories might have been better. "I should have said so—and so—and so."

That was their criticism; people are always so wise after the event.

This story spread all over the world; opinions were divided about it, but the story remained what it was before. And, indeed, it is always the same in great things, as well as in small—even in making soup out of a sausage skewer one gets no thanks for one's trouble.

The Shirt Collar.

THERE was once a fine gentleman whose whole property consisted of a bootjack and a hair-brush, but he certainly had the finest shirt collar in the world, and it is about this shirt collar that we are going to hear a story. He was so old that he thought it was high time to marry, and one day he found himself in the same wash-tub with a garter.

"Dear me!" said the shirt collar; "I never saw anything so slender and delicate, so tender and pretty! May I ask your name?"

"I shall not tell you," said the garter.

"Where do you live when you are at home?" said the shirt collar.

But the garter was bashful, and hardly knew how to answer the question.

"I suppose you are a girdle," said the shirt collar; "a kind of under-girdle. I see that you are made for use as well as for ornament, my little miss."

"You ought not to speak to me," said the garter; "I am sure I have given you no encouragement."

"Oh, when one is as pretty as you are, it is encouragement enough," said the shirt collar.

"Go away; do not come so close to me," said the garter; "you seem to me to be a man."

"I am a fine gentleman," said the shirt collar; "I possess a hair-brush and a bootjack." That was not true. It was his master who owned them both. But the shirt collar was an irreclaimable boaster.

"Do not come so near to me," said the garter; "I am not accustomed to it."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the shirt collar. They were taken out of the tub, starched, and hung over a chair in the sunshine. Then they came upon the ironing-board, and up came the glowing iron.

"Ah, Mistress Widow!" said the shirt collar. "Dear Mistress Widow! I am getting quite hot. I feel quite another person: all my creases are coming out. You are burning a hole in me. Ah! I propose to you."

"You old rag!" said the iron, passing proudly over the collar: she thought she was a steam-engine, and ought to be out on the railway drawing a train of carriages. "Rag!" she cried.

The shirt collar was a little frayed out at the edges, the scissors were brought out to cut off the threads.

"Oh," exclaimed the shirt collar, "what a splendid dancer! How beautifully you can stand on one leg! That is the most charming thing I ever saw in my life. There is no one in the world who could equal you."

"I know that," said the scissors.

"You deserve to be a countess," said the shirt collar. "I have nothing but a fine gentleman, a hair-brush, and a bootjack. I wish I had an earldom, for your sake!"

"What! is he proposing to me?" cried the scissors; and in her anger she gave him such a snip that he had to be thrown aside as good for nothing.

"I shall have to propose to the hair-brush," thought the shirt collar. "What beautiful hair you have, my dear young lady!" he cried. "Have you never thought about becoming engaged yet?"

"Of course I have," answered the hair-brush. "Why, I am engaged to the bootjack."

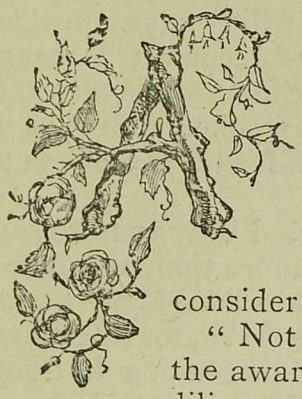
"Indeed!" said the shirt collar. There was no one left now to whom he could propose, so he began to despise matrimony altogether.

Time passed on, and the shirt collar came into the sack at the paper mill. There were a great number of rags, the coarse ones in one place and the fine ones in another, as they ought to be. They had a great deal to relate, but the shirt collar talked the most, for he was a dreadful boaster.

"I have had endless love affairs," he said. "They gave me no peace. But I was a fine gentleman, stiff as starch. I had a hair-brush and a bootjack, which I never used. Never shall I forget my first love! She was a girdle; the softest, tenderest creature! She threw herself into the washing-tub, for love of me. And there was a widow who was very hot about me, but I neglected her, and she fretted herself quite black. It was a dancer who gave me this wound; she was extremely violent. My own hair-brush was in love with me, and lost all her hair from grief. Yes, I have gone through a great deal in that way; but I grieve most deeply for the garter—I mean the girdle—who threw herself into the washing-tub. I have a great deal to answer for; it is high time that I was made into white paper."

And he was made into white paper, together with all the other rags; and this is the very paper on which this tale is printed. It was done on purpose to punish him for having gone about boasting so dreadfully of things that are not true. Let us take the lesson to heart and be warned by his fate; for how do we know that we shall not one day go into the rag-bag and be ground into white paper, with our whole history, even the most secret parts of it, printed in large letters, so that we shall have to go about publishing our sins, like the shirt collar?

The Racers.



PRIZE, or rather two prizes, a great one and a small one, were to be awarded for the greatest swiftness—not in one race, but through a whole year.

"I received the first prize," said the hare. "Justice is certain to be done when one has plenty of good friends on the committee; but that the snail should have received the second prize, I consider almost as a personal insult."

"Not at all," said the hedgestake, who had witnessed the awarding of the prizes; "consideration must be had to diligence and good will. Many estimable people spoke to that effect, and I quite agree with them. It certainly took the snail six months to cross the threshold, but she broke her collar-bone in her haste, and that proves what the speed was to her. Then, again, she lived for nothing but her race, and ran with her house on her back. All that is very touching, and therefore she received the second prize."

"I think they might have taken me into consideration," said the swallow; "I should think no one has shown greater swiftness than I have. Where have I not been? Far, far away!"

"That is just what disqualifies you," said the hedgestake; "you are too unsteady. Always flying abroad at the first breath of cold weather. You have no patriotism, and cannot be taken into account."

"Then if I were to sleep through the whole winter in the marsh and go nowhere," said the swallow, "could I compete then?"

"Bring a certificate from the old moor hen, that you have slept away half the time in your own country, and then you may compete."

"I ought to have had the first prize instead of the second," said the snail. "I know one thing, and that is, that the hare only ran out of cowardice, because he thought he was being pursued. Now, I made the race the business of my life, and have become a cripple in running it. If any one deserves the first prize, I do; but then I am not clever at fine talking and boasting. I despise such ways!"

"I am able to assert upon oath, at least so far as my own vote is concerned," said the old finger-post in the wood, who was a member of the judges' committee, "that each prize has been awarded with due care and deliberation. I have one plan of action to which I adhere. Seven times have I had the honour of voting on the judges' committee, and I have acted each time on a definite principle. For the first prize I begin at the beginning of the alphabet, and for the second, at the end. I will endeavour to explain myself more clearly, if you will favour me with your attention. The eighth letter from *A* is *H;* therefore the hare receives the first prize. The eighth letter from *Z* is *S;* therefore the snail receives the second prize. Next year, *I* will receive the first and *R* the second prize. Order should be observed in all things. One must have a standing-point."

"If I had not been on the committee," said the mule, "I should have voted for myself. Speed is not the only thing to be considered; there are other qualities equally important, as, for instance, the weight one can draw after one. But it is not that which I should have brought forward this time, nor the cunning by which the hare deceives the huntsman in her flight; there is another thing on which many people lay great stress, and which should not be left out of account; I mean that which is called the Beautiful. Now the Beautiful always attracts me, and when I saw the hare's soft, long ears, so silken that it is a pleasure to look upon them, it seemed to me as if I saw myself as a child, and I voted for the hare."

"Buzz!" said the fly. "I am not going to talk. I only want to say one thing. I really think I have deserved rather more than any hare. Not long ago, I outran one of them and crushed his hind-leg. I was sitting in front of the engine on the railway; I often do so, for it teaches one one's own swiftness. A young hare was scudding along in front of the train; he had no idea that I was behind him; at last he was obliged to stop and get out of the way, but the engine crushed his leg, for I was there. The hare lay still, but I rushed on. I think that should be called distancing him. But I don't want the prize."

"It seems to me," thought the wild rose—she did not say so, because it was not in her nature to be ready with her opinion, it would have been better if it had been—"it seems to me that the sunbeam ought to have had the first prize, and the second too. It darts in one moment down the immeasurable space between the sun and our earth, and comes with such power and beauty that all nature wakes at its presence, and we roses flush red and send out fragrance. The honourable committee of judges do not seem to have thought of that. If I were the sunbeam I would give them a sunstroke; but then they would all lose their reason, and they can do that without a sunstroke. I say nothing," said the wild rose. "Let peace reign in the forest. It is glorious to bloom, to give out fragrance, and to live in song and saga. The sunbeam will outlive us all."

"What *is* the first prize?" said the earthworm, who had overslept herself and only just appeared on the spot.

"Free admission to a cabbage garden," said the mule; "I proposed it myself. The hare was to receive the prize, and I, as a thoughtful and active member of the committee, had a view to his advantage: he is now provided for. The snail may sit on the bank and lick up moss and sunshine; she has also been elected a member of our committee. It is very desirable to have some one on the committee who understands the department practically. I must say that I expect great things from the future; we have made a very good beginning."

The Travelling Companion.

THE lad was in great trouble; his father was ill, and near to death. They two were alone in the little room; the lamp on the table was almost out, and it was late at night.

"You have been a good son, John," said the dying father. "God will be your guide through the world." He looked at him with loving, tender eyes, and died; it was just as if he fell asleep. John wept; he had no friend in the world now, neither father nor mother, brother nor sister. He knelt by the bedside, kissed his dead father's hand, and wept bitter tears. At last his eyes closed and he slept, his head resting on the edge of the bed.

He dreamed a strange dream: he saw the sun and moon bow before him; he saw his father strong and well again, and heard him laugh as he used to do when he was glad at heart. A beautiful girl, with a golden crown upon her shining hair, reached him her hand, and his father said, "Do you see what a bride you have won? She is the fairest in all the world." He awoke, and the dream was gone away; his father lay cold and dead upon the bed. No one else was near.

In the following week the dead man was buried; John followed close behind the coffin; he could never again see the good father who had loved him so dearly. He heard the earth fall heavily on the coffin-lid, watched it till the last corner was hidden from sight, and then he thought his heart would break. A psalm was sung above the grave; the sweet, sacred tones brought the tears into John's eyes; he wept, and his grief was lightened. The sun shone down brightly through the green trees, as much as to say, "You must not grieve. See how beautiful heaven is! Your father is there now, praying to God that His blessing may rest on you always."

"I will try to be good, and then I shall meet my father again in heaven," said John. "How much I shall have to tell him! And he will show me the glories of heaven, and explain them to me just as he used to teach me on earth. Oh, what joy that will be!"

He pictured the meeting to himself so clearly that he smiled, even while the tears ran down his cheeks. The little birds in the chestnut trees overhead sang "Tweet! tweet!" They were merry, although they had been at the funeral; but then they knew that the dead man was now in heaven, where he had larger wings than theirs, and was happy because he had served God on earth. That is why they were so glad. John saw them fly from the green trees out into the world, and he longed to fly with them. He cut a cross of wood to place on his father's grave; and when he brought it in the evening the grave was strewn with sand and flowers. Unknown friends had done the kindly act, for many loved and respected the dead father.

Early the next morning John tied up his little bundle, hid in his waistband his whole fortune, which consisted of fifty dollars and two silver shillings, and wandered out into the world. But first he went into the churchyard and said a parting prayer over his father's grave.

Out in the fields where he walked the flowers stood fresh and fair in the warm sunshine; they nodded in the wind, as if to say, "Welcome to the greenwood! Is it not lovely here?" But John looked back once more to see the old church where he had been baptized as a little child, and whither he went, with his father, to service and sang his psalms. Above him, through the fretwork of the belfry tower, he saw the goblin of the steeple, with his little, pointed red cap, shading his face with his hand to keep the sun out of his eyes. John nodded a good-bye, and the little goblin waved his red cap, placed his hand on his heart, and kissed his fingers, in token of his good wishes for the wanderer.

John now began to think of the number of beautiful things he should see in the wide world, and he walked on farther than he had ever been before. He neither knew the places through which he passed nor the people whom he met. He was in foreign parts for the first time.

The first night he slept on a haycock in the field—he had no other bed. But it was beautiful, he thought; the king could not have a better. The whole field, with the brook, for a chamber, the haystacks standing sentinel round him, and the blue sky for a ceiling; he did not wish for a lovelier sleeping-room. The green grass, with its tiny red and white flower, was his carpet; the elder trees and wild-rose

bushes were his flower garden; the clear brook was his bath-room; and the green sedge waved to him their good morning and good night. The full moon served him for a silver lamp hanging from the blue ceiling, and there was no fear of its setting the curtains on fire. John slept soundly, and did not wake till the sun rose and the birds sang, "Good morning! are you not up yet?"

It was Sunday, and the bells were ringing for church. The people came to hear the preacher, and John followed them. He sang the psalms, and listened to the Word of God; it was as if he were at home in his own church, kneeling by his father's side.

Round the church lay many graves, some of them overgrown with long, green grass. He thought of his father's grave, which would soon look as neglected as these, since he was not there to weed and trim it. He sat down and began to weed the graves, set up the wooden crosses which had been blown down, and lay the wreaths in their places again. "Perhaps some one will do as much for my father's grave," he thought, "since I am not there myself."

An old beggar was standing by the churchyard gate, leaning upon his crutch. John gave him his two silver shillings, and then went on, happy and contented, into the wide world.

Towards evening a terrible storm came on; he hurried to get under shelter, but the darkness closed round him. At last he reached a little church on the top of a solitary hill.

"I will sit down in a corner," he said, going in. "I am tired and need a little rest." He knelt down, folded his hands, and said his evening prayer; and almost before he knew it he fell asleep and dreamed, while the thunder and lightning raged outside.

When he awoke it was midnight; the storm had passed, and the moon was shining on him through the windows. In the centre of the church there stood an open coffin, in which lay a dead man awaiting burial. John was not in the least timid; he had a good conscience, and he knew that the dead harm no one. The living who are wicked work harm enough. Two such wicked men were standing close by the dead man lying in the church; they came to take the helpless corpse from the coffin and throw it out before the church door.

"Why are you acting thus?" asked John. "It is a wicked deed. Let him rest, in Jesu's Name!"

"Nonsense!" said the wicked men. "He has cheated us of our due. He owes us money; he could not pay, and now he lies there dead, and we shall not have a penny. We mean to have our revenge, and he shall lie like a dog outside the church door."

"I have only fifty dollars," said John; "it is my whole inheritance, but I will gladly give it you if you will promise me solemnly to leave the poor dead man in peace. I shall be able to manage without the money. I have healthy and strong limbs, and God will be my guide."

"Yes," said the men, "if you will pay his debt we will do him no harm, you may rely upon it." They took the money which he gave them, laughed aloud at his good nature, and left the church. John laid the corpse back in his coffin, folded the dead hands, and went on his way, contented, through the dark forest.

Roundabout, where the moon shone through the thick trees, he saw the

pretty little elves at play. They did not mind his presence; they knew that he was a good, harmless man; it is only wicked people who never get a sight of the fairies. Some of them were no taller than a finger's breadth. Their long, yellow hair was fastened up with golden combs; they swung, two and two, on the great dewdrops which lay on the leaves and the tall grass; sometimes the drops rolled off, and the elves fell down among the tall blades of grass, and that called forth the laughter and mirth of the little ones. It was charming to see. They sang, and John recognized distinctly the pretty songs which he had learnt as a boy. Great, bright-coloured spiders, with silver crowns on their heads, were set to spin suspension bridges and palaces from one hedge to another; and when the dew shone upon their work it glittered in the moonlight like silvery glass. So it went on till the sun rose. The little elves crept then into the buds of the flowers, and the wind seized on their bridges and palaces and blew them away like cobwebs through the air.

John had just come out of the wood, and a man's loud voice called, from behind him, "Hallo! comrade, whither are you wandering?"

"Out into the wide world," said John. "I have neither father nor mother; I am a poor lad, but the Lord will help me."

"I also am going out into the wide world," said the stranger. "Shall we bear each other company?"

"With pleasure," said he; and they walked on together.

They became great friends, for they were both good men. But John soon saw that the stranger was far cleverer than he. He had travelled through the whole world, and could talk of every possible thing which existed.

The sun stood high in the sky when they sat down under a tall tree to eat their breakfast. Just at that time there came up an old woman, bent and weak. She leant upon her crutch, and carried on her back a bundle of firewood which she had gathered in the wood. Her apron was tied up, and John saw that three great rods of fern fronds and willow withes peeped out of it. When she had nearly reached the two friends she slipped on one foot, fell, and uttered a loud cry, for she had broken her leg.

John thought at once that they ought to carry the poor old woman home to her house; but the stranger untied his bundle, took out a box, and said that he had some salve which would make her leg strong and well, so that she could walk home herself just as if she had not broken it. But he asked, in return, for the three rods which she carried in her apron.

"That would be good payment," said the old woman, nodding strangely with her head. She did not wish to part with the rods, but then it was not pleasant to be lying there with a broken leg. So she gave up the rods; and as soon as he had rubbed the salve on the leg the old woman got up and walked away much better than she walked before. So much for what the salve could do. But it cannot be had at the apothecary's.

"What do you want with the rods?" John asked his companion.

"They will make three nice brooms," he answered, "just the sort I like, for I am a queer customer."

Then they walked on a good way farther.

"See, how the sky is clouding over!" said John, pointing straight before him. "What heavy clouds!"

"No, those are not clouds," said his companion; "those are mountains—the high, beautiful mountains which lead up above the clouds into the fresh air. It is glorious there. To-morrow we shall indeed be far out into the wide world."

But they were not as near as they seemed to be; they had a whole day's journey to go before they reached the mountains, where the black forests grew up toward heaven and huge blocks of stone lay all around. It would be a wearisome journey to cross them, and the two travellers turned into the inn to rest and recruit their strength for the morrow's journey.

A crowd of people was assembled in the large tap room, where a showman was exhibiting his puppet show. He had just set up his little theatre, and the audience sat round looking at the play. But in the front row a stout butcher had taken his place in the very best seat of all; his great bulldog, who looked very savage, sat by his side and opened his eyes, like all the rest.

The play began; it was a pretty play, with a king and queen; they sat on the most beautiful thrones, with golden crowns on their heads and long trains to their robes, for they could afford it all. The most charming puppets, with glass eyes and long moustaches, stood by all the doors, to open and shut them, that the fresh air might come into the room. It was an elegant play. But when the queen rose up and crossed the stage, the great bulldog—heaven knows what were his reasons—sprang straight upon the stage, and seized the queen by the middle of her body till she cracked again. It was horrible!

The poor showman was very alarmed and distressed about his queen. She was the prettiest of them all; now, the horrid bulldog had bitten her head off! But afterwards, when the people were gone away, the stranger, who had come with John, said that he would soon set her to rights again; and then he brought out his box and smeared the puppet with the salve which he had tried on the old woman when she had broken her leg. As soon as the puppet was smeared she was quite whole, nay, more, she could move all her limbs herself, without having the string pulled for her. She was like a living actress now, only that she could not speak. The showman was delighted; there was no need for him to hold the puppet, she could dance alone. None of the others could do that.

When the night came on, and all the people in the inn were gone to bed, a deep sighing was heard in the house, and it continued so long that every one got up to see what it was.

The showman went to his little theatre, for that was where the sound came from. The puppets were lying about in wild confusion, sighing piteously, and staring with their glass eyes. They all longed to be smeared like the queen, that they might move of themselves. The queen sank on her knees, lifted up her golden crown, and pleaded, "Take my crown, but smear my spouse and people!" The showman could not help weeping, he felt so sorry for them. He promised John's friend to give him all the money he should take for his

performance on the following night, if he would only smear a few of his best puppets. The stranger replied that he required nothing further than the sabre which the showman wore at his side; and when he received it he smeared six puppets, who immediately danced, and so prettily that every one who saw them danced too. The coachman danced with the cook and the boots with the housemaid, all the guests danced, the fire-shovel and the tongs, but they fell down at the first pirouette. It was a merry night.

The next morning John and his companion started to climb the high mountains and pass through the pinewoods. They climbed so high that the steeples looked like little berries among the green trees. They could see for miles around them. John had never before seen so much of the beauty of this lovely world. The sun shone warm in the blue air, and among the mountain peaks they heard the hunter's horn sound sweetly. The tears rose in his eyes, and he could not help exclaiming, "Oh, God, how glorious Thou art! and how great is Thy goodness towards us in giving us all these beautiful things!"

The stranger stood there, with folded hands, and looked across the woods and towns into the warm sunshine. At the same time a sweet sound was heard overhead. They looked up; a great white swan hovered above them and sang as they had never heard a bird sing before. But his song grew fainter and fainter; he bowed his head and sank slowly to their feet, where he lay dead—the beautiful bird!

"Two such lovely wings as these," said the stranger, "so large and white, are worth money. I will take them with me. You see now why I wanted to have a sabre." And he hewed off with one stroke both wings of the dead swan, and kept them for himself.

They travelled on for many miles across the mountains, until at last they came to a great city with hundreds of steeples, shining like silver in the sunshine. In the centre of the town was a splendid marble palace, roofed with pure gold. The king lived there.

John and his friend would not at once enter the town; they stayed in the inn before the gates, so that they could make themselves tidy, for they wanted to look respectable when they walked through the streets. The landlord told them that the king was a very good man who never did any one any harm, but his daughter—heaven preserve us!—she *was* a wicked princess! Beauty she had in plenty, no one could be prettier or more elegant. But what did that matter? She was a wicked witch, and it was her wickedness that had driven many a noble prince to lose his life. Every one had permission to ask her in marriage. Any one might come, prince or beggar, it was all one to her. All he had to do was to guess three things that she had just thought of. If he could do that she would marry him, and he should be king over the whole land when her father died; but if he could not guess them, she had him immediately hung or beheaded. Her father, the old king, was in great distress about it, but he could not interfere, for he had once said that he would never have anything to do with her lovers, she could do as she pleased. Every time when a prince came and tried to guess, in order to win the princess, he was hung or beheaded immediately after his failure. To be sure, he had been warned in time, and could have stayed at home. The old king was so troubled

at all the sorrow and distress that he and all his soldiers spent one day in every year as a day of fasting and prayer, that the princess might become good. But she would do nothing of the kind. The old women who drank brandy used to colour it black before they drank it, in token of mourning, and they certainly could not do more.

"The horrid princess!" exclaimed John. "She really ought to feel the rod. If I were her father she should be soundly whipped."

Just then they heard the people cry "Hurrah!" The princess was passing by, and she was really so beautiful that every one forgot how wicked she was and could not help cheering. Twelve lovely maidens, in white silk robes, and all carrying a golden tulip in their hands, rode beside her on black horses. The princess herself rode a white horse, whose trappings were studded with diamonds and rubies. Her habit was of cloth of gold, and the whip she carried glittered like a sunbeam. Round her hair was a golden chain like a wreath of stars, and her mantle was made of myriad butterflies' wings sewn together. But she was far lovelier than all her fine clothes.

When John saw her he turned as red as a drop of blood, and could not utter a single word. The princess was exactly like the beautiful girl he had seen in his dream on the night on which his father died. He thought her so beautiful that he could not help loving her. It could not be true that she was a wicked witch who had the people hung or beheaded if they could not guess what she asked them. "Every one has leave to ask her hand, even the poorest beggar. I shall certainly go to the palace, for I cannot help it." They all told him he ought not to go, for he would fare no better than the rest.

His companion also endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, but John felt sure of carrying it through. He brushed his shoes and coat, washed his face and hands, combed his fair hair, and went on alone to the palace.

"Come in," said the old king, as John knocked at the door. John entered, and the old king came to meet him in dressing-gown and slippers, his crown was on his head, the sceptre in one hand and the ball in the other. "Wait a bit," he said, and put the ball under his arm to shake hands with John. But as soon as he heard that the young man was come as a lover he began to weep so bitterly that both ball and sceptre fell to the ground, and he was obliged to dry his eyes on his dressing-gown. The poor old monarch!

"Let it alone," he cried. "You will come to a bad end like all the others. Just come here and see." He led him out into the princess's pleasure garden. It was a horrible sight. Three or four princes who had failed to guess the princess's thoughts hung from every tree; and every time the wind blew their bones rattled so that all the little birds flew away in terror and never came into the garden again. The flowers were tied up to human bones, and sculls grinned from the flower pots. It was a strange garden for a princess. "There you see them," said the old king. "You will be served just the same. Do let it alone; you make me quite miserable; I take it so to heart."

John kissed the good old king's hand and said all must turn out well, for he was enchanted with the beautiful princess.

Just then the princess and her maidens came riding up to the palace, and John and the old king went out to wish them good morning. She was wondrously beautiful, and she held out her hand to John. He thought more of her than ever. It was impossible that she could be a wicked witch, as people said. They then entered the great hall, where the little pages offered them jam and gingerbread nuts. But the old king was sad and could eat nothing; besides, the gingerbread nuts were too hard for him.

It was arranged that John should return to the palace on the following morning; the judges and all the council would be assembled to be present at the guessing. If he succeeded he would have to come twice more; but all his predecessors had failed in the first guess and lost their lives at once.

John was not anxious about the result. On the contrary, he was delighted; he trusted in God and thought of the beautiful princess. But how he should succeed he knew not, and did not care to think about. He danced merrily back to the inn, where his companion was awaiting him.

He could not leave off talking about the princess, her beauty, and graceful manners; he longed for the morrow, that he might go to the palace and try his skill.

But his companion shook his head sadly. "I was getting fond of you," he said, "and we might have kept together for a long time. Now I shall have to lose you, my poor boy! I could find it in my heart to weep, but I will not spoil your joy on this last evening of our being together. I can cry when you are gone, to-morrow."

The whole town knew that a new lover had presented himself, and a general consternation prevailed. The theatres were closed, the king prayed in the church, and the bakers tied crape round their gingerbread husbands. The distress was general, for John's fate was considered to be hopeless.

Towards evening his friend brewed a bowl of punch, and said to him, "Come, let us be merry and drink to the princess's health." But when John had drunk two glasses he felt so sleepy that he could not keep his eyes open, and he fell asleep. His companion lifted him gently from his chair and placed him in his bed. When the night came on he took the swan's two wings and bound them to his shoulders; the longest of the rods which he had bought from the old woman he put in his pocket, opened the window, and flew out to the palace, where he hid himself under the princess's window.

The whole city was silent; the church bells chimed a quarter to twelve. The princess's window opened and the princess, clad in a long white mantle, flew, with two black wings, towards the mountains. John's friend flew behind her, invisible, and flogged her with his rod till the blood came. It was a wild journey through the night; the wind swelled out the white mantle like a ship's sail, and the moon shone through it.

"How it hails! how it hails!" cried the princess, at every blow; and it served her quite right. At last she reached the mountains and knocked at the rocky side. The mountain opened, with a noise like thunder, and the princess entered. The stranger followed her; no

one could see him, for he was invisible. They passed through a long corridor; the walls gleamed with a strange light, thousands of glittering spiders were running up and down them like sparks of fire. They entered a large hall built of silver and gold; red and blue flowers, as large as sunflowers, shone by the walls, but no one could gather them, for the stems were twisted snakes and the flowers were fire which breathed from their jaws. The ceiling was one mass of shining glow-worms and sky-blue bats flapping their thin wings. It looked a weird place. In the centre of the floor stood a throne resting on the skeletons of four horses, and adorned with bordering of glittering spiders; the throne itself was made of milk-white glass, and the cushions were small black mice, which lay coiled up biting each other's tails. Above the throne was a canopy of rose-coloured cobwebs ornamented with small green wings that sparkled like jewels. On the throne sat an old sorcerer, with a crown on his ugly head and a sceptre in his hand. He kissed the princess on the forehead and let her sit down on the throne. Then began a concert; great black locusts blew their harmonicons, and the duck beat her own breast, for she had no drum. It was a curious performance. Little black goblins, with wills-o'-the-wisp on their caps, danced round the hall. No one saw the stranger; he had placed himself behind the throne, and heard and saw everything. The courtiers who came in were very stately and elegant; but those who examined them closely saw through them at once; they were nothing at all but broom sticks with cabbage-heads upon them; the sorcerer had bewitched them into life and dressed them in embroidered clothes. But that did not matter; they were only there for show.

After a little dancing, the princess told the sorcerer that a new lover had presented himself; and asked what she had better think of to puzzle him when he came to the palace on the following morning.

"I will tell you," said the sorcerer. "You must think of something very easy, he will be the less likely to hit upon that. Think of one of your shoes; he will never guess it. Have him beheaded, and do not forget to bring me his eyes to-morrow."

The princess bowed and promised not to forget the eyes. The sorcerer then opened the mountain again, and she flew back to the palace; but the stranger followed her closely and thrashed her so soundly that she winced at the sharp hailstones and hurried home. The stranger then flew back to the inn, where John was still sleeping, took off his wings and got into bed. He might well feel tired.

It was early morning when John awoke. His friend got up and told him that he had had a dream about the princess; he had dreamed that she thought of her shoe, and he advised John to choose that for his guess.

"As well that as anything else," said John. "Perhaps you have dreamed of the right thing, for I always trusted that God would help me: but I will say good-bye to you in case I should fail, for, if I do, we shall not meet again."

They kissed each other, and John went through the city to the palace. The hall was filled with people; the judges leaned back in their easy-chairs, with eider-down cushions behind their heads, for they had a great deal to think about. The old king stood up and wiped his

eyes with his white pocket-handkerchief. The princess entered, and bowed gracefully to every one present; but she held out her hand to John and said, "Good morning."

And now he was asked to guess what she had thought of; ah! how kindly she looked in his face! But as soon as he uttered the one word *shoe*, she turned as white as chalk and trembled from head to foot. That did not help her, however, for he had guessed right.

Heavens! how delighted the old king was! He turned a summersault from pure joy. And all the people applauded him and John, the first lover who had ever guessed right.

The stranger was glad that all had gone off so well. John folded his hands and thanked God; he felt sure that he should be helped the two next times. The following day he was to guess again.

The night passed away as the previous night had done. John fell asleep, and the stranger flew behind the princess and beat her harder than ever, for he had taken two rods this time. No one saw him, and he heard all that was said. The princess agreed to think of her glove; and the stranger told John, as if it were a dream. John guessed right for the second time. On this occasion the whole court turned somersaults, as they had seen the king do so before. But the princess lay on the sofa and would not speak a word. It now remained to be seen whether John would guess right the third and last time. If so, he would certainly marry the beautiful young princess and inherit the whole kingdom at her father's death; but if not, he would lose his life, and the sorcerer would have his beautiful blue eyes.

That evening John went to bed early, said his prayers, and fell asleep; but his friend put on the swan's wings, bound his sabre at his side, took all three of his rods, and started on his journey.

It was pitch dark, and such a storm came on that the slates flew off the roofs, and the trees in the garden, where the skeletons hung, waved like reeds in the wind. The thunder and lightning never ceased for a moment, the roll and flash seemed to be endless. Suddenly the window opened, and the princess flew out; she was as pale as death, but she laughed at the storm and thought it was not half bad enough. Her white mantle spread round her like a sail; the stranger whipped her till the blood fell upon the ground and she could scarcely fly. At last she reached the mountain.

"It hails, and the storm is raging," she cried; "I never was out in such weather before."

"One can have too much of a good thing," said the old sorcerer.

The princess then told him that John had guessed right for the second time. "If he succeed to-morrow," she said, "I shall never be able to come to the mountain again, and I shall lose all my magic art."

"He shall not succeed," said the sorcerer, seeing her distress; "I will think of something that he has never thought of, unless he is a greater sorcerer than I. But let us be merry now."

He seized the princess by the hands, and they danced about with all the little goblins, who were there with their wills-o'-the-wisp. The red spiders ran up and down the walls, sending out sparks of fire. The owl beat the drum, the crickets chirped, the black locusts played the harmonicon. It was a merry ball.

When they had danced long enough, the princess said she must return, or she should be missed in the palace. The sorcerer said he would go with her, to bear her company.

They started out into the storm, and the stranger broke his three rods over their shoulders; the sorcerer had never been out in such a storm of hail before. At the palace he bade the princess farewell, and as he was going away he whispered to her, "Think of my head." But the stranger heard it, and just as the princess entered her room and the sorcerer turned homewards, the stranger seized him by his long beard, drew his sabre, and struck off his head, without the sorcerer's having even seen him. He threw the body to the fishes in the lake; and when he had washed the head he wrapped it up in his silk handkerchief, carried it home to the inn, and went to bed.

The next morning he gave the handkerchief to John, and told him not to open it till the princess had asked him what she was thinking of.

The people in the palace hall were packed together like radishes in a bundle. The judges sat on their chairs with the white cushions, the king had on new clothes, and the crown and sceptre were freshly polished; he looked solemn and imposing. But the princess was very pale, and was dressed in deep black, as if she were going to a funeral.

"What have I thought of?" she said to John. He untied the handkerchief, and was horrified himself at sight of the hideous head.

A shudder ran through the court, for it was a dreadful sight; but the princess sat as if changed to stone, and did not speak. At last she rose and gave John her hand; he had guessed right. She looked neither to the right nor to the left, but said, with a deep sigh, "Now you are my master. The wedding shall take place to-night."

"That is the way!" said the old king. "That is the way for me!"

The people cried "Hurrah!" the bands paraded through the streets, the bells were fired, the bakers took the crape off the gingerbread husbands—joy reigned everywhere. Three roasted oxen, stuffed with ducks and chickens, were placed in the centre of the market place, and any one might go and help themselves. The fountains played wine instead of water, and for every penny bun bought at the baker's six large cakes were given in, and the cakes had raisins in them.

At night the city was illuminated, the soldiers let off cannon, and the street boys popguns; and there was plenty of feasting and dancing within the palace. All the fine ladies and gentlemen danced together, you could hear them singing a great way off.

"As the spinning-wheels fly round,
With a dreamy, whirring sound,
Let your fair feet spurn the ground,
Pretty maidens!
Dance while music murmurs sweet,
Dance till fallen from your feet
Are the dainty shoes so neat,
Pretty maidens!"

But the princess was still a witch at heart, and could not bear John. The stranger had thought of that. He gave John three feathers from the swan's wings and a phial containing a few drops, and told him to fill a great cask full of water, place it before the princess's bed, and, just

as she was getting in to bed, push her into the water and dip her under three times. The third time would cure her of her witchcraft, and she would love him dearly.

John did as his friend advised him. He poured the drops, and let fall the feathers into the water, and followed all the directions. The princess cried and struggled as he forced her under the water, and she rose up in the form of a great black swan, with sparkling eyes; the second time she rose she was white, except for a black ring round her neck. John said a prayer, let the water close for the third time above her head, and she rose up immediately as a beautiful princess, lovelier than she had ever been before. She thanked him, with tears in her glorious eyes, for having set her free from the dreadful spell.

The next morning the old king appeared, with all his court, and the congratulations lasted till late into the day. Last of all came up the travelling companion; he had his stick in his hand and his knapsack on his back. John embraced him over and over again, and begged him not to go away, but to stay with him, for it was he who had made his fortune. But the stranger shook his head and said, gently, "My time is up. I have but paid my debt. Do you remember giving all your fortune to save a dead man in the lonely church from the hands of wicked men? It was I you saved."

And as he spoke he vanished.

The wedding lasted a whole month. John and the princess loved each other dearly, and the old king lived through many happy years, and saw his little grandchildren ride on his knees and play with his crown and sceptre. But John was crowned king over the whole land.

"Something."

MEAN to be something," said the eldest of five brothers; "I will be of some use in the world, if it be in ever so mean a capacity. Only let my work be good, and I shall have done something. I will make bricks; they cannot be done without, and that will be something."

"But something which is far too little," said the second brother; "your work could be done just as well by a machine. No; I will be a mason, that *is* something, and it is what I mean to be. A mason has his own guild, and his own club; indeed, if all goes well, I can have men under me, and that is something."

"But it is not much," said the third; "it is not a profession. You

may be a worthy man, but even as a master mason you are only one of what is called the 'common people.' I have a higher aim. I will be an architect, and let my work lead me into the domain of art and thought; I will be recognized among those who stand high in intellect. I know I must work my way up from the ranks; in plain words, I must go about as a carpenter's boy with a paper cap, though I have been used to wear a good hat. I must go to fetch beer for the men, and be on terms of equality with them all. I shall not like it, but I shall look upon it all as a masquerade; and when I am my own master, then I shall go my own way and drop all connection with the others. I shall go to the school of art, learn drawing, and become an architect. That will be something, and a great deal too. I may be dubbed esquire, and receive more letters still at the end of my name; I shall build and build as others have done before me, and I call that something to build upon—a very considerable something."

"I think nothing of your something," said the fourth. "I will not follow in the footprints of other people. I will strike out a path for myself. I mean to be a genius, and shall outdo all you others. I will create a new style, and give the idea of an architecture suitable for the climate and production of the land, the nationality of the people, and the development of the period. And I shall reserve one storey for my own genius."

"But suppose the climate and the production are good for nothing?" said the fifth. "That would be an unpleasant circumstance, for they have an influence. Nationality may be dwelt upon till it becomes an affectation; the development of the period may pass away with your own life. I see plainly that none of you will be anything, however much you may think so. But act as you please. I shall be an outsider, and talk over all you do. There is in everything a something which is not as it should be, and that I shall find out and speak about; I shall be a critic, and that is something."

He did so. And every one said of him, "There is certainly something in that young man. He has a good head. But he does nothing." And exactly because he did nothing he became something.

Now, that is but a short story, and yet there is no end to it as long as the world lasts.

But is there nothing more to say about the five brothers? That would be "nothing," instead of "something."

Now, listen; this is a fairy tale:—

The eldest brother who made bricks soon became aware that from every finished brick there fell a copper coin; and these copper coins, small as they are, will yet make a silver crown in time, and whoever takes a silver crown in his hand and knocks at the door of either butcher, baker, or tailor is certain to be well received, and to get what he asks for; that was what the bricks gave. Even the cracked, imperfect ones were not thrown away, a use was found for them.

On the high coast wall built of earth, the sheltering dyke by the sea shore, Margaret, the poor old widow woman, wanted to build herself a house, and begged for the cracked and broken bricks. The eldest brother let her have them; he had a kind heart, although he never got any farther than brickmaking. The poor woman built herself a little house;

it was low and narrow, the one window was awry, the door was too low, and the roof might have been better thatched, but still it was a shelter; and from the crooked window one could see far across the rolling waves which broke against the heavy sea wall. The salt spray sprinkled the thatched roof, which stood there safely when the man who had given the bricks had been long since dead and buried.

The second brother understood his trade better; but then he had been better taught. When he had served his time he packed up his knapsack and set off on his travels, singing the old song—

"Light of purse and light of heart,
On my wanderings I start;
And in many a foreign land
Learn to use my eye and hand.
When my home again I see,
Where my true love waits for me,
I will work till I have won
Wealth for labour fairly done."

And so he did. When he came home and set up for himself he built one house after another till he had built a street full, and the street, in return, built him a house for himself. Every one knew it. "The street has built him his house" was a common saying among his neighbours. It was not a grand house, and the floor was only made of lime; but when he led his young wife across the threshold, a beautiful flower sprang from every stone in the wall and wove a pretty tapestry. It was a pretty home and a happy marriage. The flag of the guild waved above the house. The apprentices and fellow-workmen cried "Hurrah!" Yes, that was something. And then the owner died—and that was something, too.

Then came the third brother—the architect. He had risen from a carpenter's boy in a paper cap to a student at the school of art, and then to a full-fledged architect. He was dubbed esquire and had other letters tacked on to the end of his name. If the street had built his brother a house, he had a street named after him, and the most beautiful house in the street was his own. He was indeed something, with a long title before and after it. His children were spoken of as "gentlefolk's children," and when he died his widow was called a "widow of good position," and that is something; and his name is still up at the street corner as the name of the street, and is in every one's mouth, and that is something.

Then came the genius—the fourth brother—who was to do something quite original; to invent a new style and an upper storey into the bargain. Unfortunately, he fell down and broke his neck; but he had a splendid funeral, with banners and music, and flowers strewn along the streets. Besides that, there were flourishing paragraphs in the newspapers, and three funeral sermons held over his grave, and a monument put up to mark the place where he was buried. It was only one storey high, but that is something.

And now he was dead, like the others; and only the fifth brother, the critic, survived. It was proper for him to live the longest, because it gave him a chance of having the last word, and that was of great

importance to him. He was a clever fellow, people said. At last his hour came; he died, and knocked at the gate of heaven. Through that gate the souls pass two and two, and the critic found himself standing by the side of another soul, who also wanted to enter, and that was no other than old Margaret from the house on the sea coast.

"It must be for the sake of the contrast that I and this poor soul are to enter together," thought the critic. "Well, and who may you be, my good woman?" he said, aloud. "Do you want to pass the gate?"

The old woman courtesied as well as she could; she thought it was St. Peter himself who was questioning her. "I am a poor old woman with no family," she said; "old Margaret of the house by the sea."

"And how did you leave the world below?" he said, just to pass away the time, for he found it tiresome standing and waiting there so long.

"How I left it? I hardly know," said the old woman. "I lay ill and bedridden for some years, and I suppose it was the shock of leaving my bed in the frost and cold. It is a hard winter, but it cannot hurt me now. There were some days of calm, but bitter cold weather, as your reverence, doubtless, knows. The ice lay over the sea; all the townsfolk were out sleighing, skating, and dancing on the ice; I could hear the music as I lay in my poor bit of a room. When the night closed in the moon rose, but not so bright as usual. I looked out of my bed across the sea, and saw on the horizon an oddly-shaped white cloud. I lay watching it, and saw a black spot in the centre of the cloud; the spot widened, and I knew what it meant, for I am old and experienced. The sign is not often seen, but I knew it, and it made me shudder. Twice before I had seen it, and knew that it meant sudden storm and the terrible spring-tide; and there were all the poor creatures dancing and shouting about on the ice. The whole town was there, young and old, and no one to warn them, unless any one saw what I saw and understood its meaning. In my fear, new life seemed to come into my helpless limbs. I got out of bed somehow, and dragged myself to the window, but I could go no further. I managed to open the window. There they were, lads and lasses, dancing and singing on the ice, flags flying, bands playing, and above them all the white cloud with the black spot. I shouted as loud as I could, but no one heard me; I was too far away.

"Very soon the storm must break forth, the ice split asunder, and all upon it perish hopelessly. They could not hear me; I could not reach them; there was no hope. Suddenly God put it into my head to set fire to my bed; it would be better for the whole house to be burnt down than for that multitude of helpless people to perish. I got a light; and soon the flames shot up high in the air, and were seen by every one on the ice. I managed to get out of the door, and there I lay on the threshold, while the flames rushed out after me through door and window. Every one ran to help me; they thought I was being burned to death, and there was not one who did not come. I heard them coming; and then I heard a sound like a discharge of

heavy cannon. The spring-tide lifted up the ice and shattered it into crashing splinters; but the people were safe; they had reached the dyke; I had saved them all. But I suppose the shock, or the cold, or, maybe, the fright, was too much for me, and so here I am at the gate of heaven. They say it will be opened even to such a poor creature as I am; and now, as I have lost my home on the coast, they may give me one here."

And the gates of heaven opened. An angel led the poor woman inside; a piece of straw dropped from her hand as she entered, it had fallen from her bed when she had set fire to her house in order to warn the people. The straw turned to pure gold, and grew like living flowers and tendrils wreathing higher and higher round the gate of heaven.

"Look!" said the angel. "This poor woman has brought that. What have you brought? Nothing! You have not even made a brick; and if you could go back to earth and try to do even so much, your bricks would be worth little; but still, made with good will, they would be something. As it is, you cannot go back, and I can do nothing for you."

But the old woman from the house on the sea coast looked back and pleaded with him. "His brother gave me the bits of tiles and brick-ends to build my house, and that was a great thing for a poor old woman like me. Could not all the pieces count as one brick for him? It would be an act of mercy. He is in need of mercy now, and the Fountain of Mercy is here."

"Your brother," said the angel, "he whom you called the meanest, whose honest work you scorned, now offers you his heavenly gift. You shall not be rejected; you shall be allowed to stand here and reflect over your past life, and to work out what you have left undone. But here you cannot come until in very deed, by some good act, you have done something."

"I could have said all that much better myself," thought the critic, but for once he did not say so—and that was something.

"The Storm that Moves the Shield."

IN old times, when grandfather was a little boy and played about in scarlet breeches and a scarlet jacket, with a belt round his waist and plume in his cap—for that was the way little boys were dressed in his childhood, when they wore all their best clothes—in old times things were very different from what they are now. There was more brightness and colour in the streets, as well as in the children's dresses; it is all

done away with now and called old-fashioned, but it is amusing to hear grandfather talk about it.

What a sight it must have been when the shoemakers carried the shield through the town when the court of justice was removed! The silken banners waved; on the shield itself was a large boot and a two-headed eagle; the youngest 'prentice lad carried the "Welcome," and the guild wore rosettes of red and white ribbons on their shirt sleeves; the elder brethren carried drawn swords, with a lemon on the point of the blade. Then came the full band. The favourite instrument was called the "bird;" it was a huge staff with a crescent upon it, and all kinds of danglements hanging from it—regular Turkish music. This "bird" was lifted high in the air and swung till it jingled and rang again; the sun shone on its gold and brass and silver till ones eyes were dazzled.

In front of the procession ran Harlequin, in his spangled suit with black mask, and as many bells on his head as a sleigh horse. He struck at the people with his wand, but did them no harm; and the crowd made way for him and then closed round him again. The children fell over each other in the gutters; old women put their arms akimbo, looked cross, and took snuff. One laughed, another chattered, the crowd filled all the staircases, windows, and housetops. The sun shone, and a little rain fell; but that was good for the farmers, and even if they did get a sprinkling it only gave them something to laugh at.

What tales grandfather could tell! He had seen the town in all its glory when he was a little boy. The white-haired burgomaster delivered the speech from the platform where the shield was hung up; the speech was in rhyme, as if it were a poem, and so it was. It had taken three of them to make it, and they had drunk a good bowl of punch between them to help them in the task.

And the crowd cheered the speech, but not so much as they cheered the Harlequin when he scrambled on to the platform and made faces at them.

He was a capital Harlequin, and drank mead out of brandy-glasses, which he afterwards threw among the crowd. The people caught the glasses before they fell; my grandfather has one now; a mason caught it and kept it for him. It was a merry sight. The shield on the new courts of justice was wreathed with flowers and green boughs.

"One does not forget a sight like that, however long one lives," grandfather said; and he did not forget it. He saw many another sight in after years, but his favourite story was always about the shield being carried through the streets to the new courts of justice.

When my grandfather was a little boy he went with his parents to the capital to see the procession of the shield. There were so many people in the streets that he thought the festivities must have begun already; and there were shields enough hung out over the shops to have filled galleries of pictures. The tailors hung out paintings of all kinds of clothes, coarse as well as fine; but the tobacco merchants were the most amusing. On their shields you saw little boys smoking cigars, just like life. There were shields with butter and herrings, coffins, and clergymen's neckties, not to speak of inscriptions and

announcements. You could spend days in the streets looking at the pictures on the shields; and then it was so instructive, because, as my grandfather said, you had only to look at the shields to know what sort of people lived in the houses.

It was because of the shield that my grandfather came to the great city; he said so himself, and he had not a little story-teller on his tongue, as my mother used to say when he was making fun of me; no, he looked the picture of truth.

The first night he arrived a dreadful storm broke out, the newspapers said that the oldest inhabitant could not recall such a one. The whole air was filled with brick-ends, the timber fell crashing down, and one wheelbarrow ran all the way down the street by itself, just to get under shelter. It thundered and lightened and blew; it was a frightful storm. The water ran over the canal bridge, for it did not know where else to go; the wind carried away the chimneys, and more than one proud steeple was forced to bend, and never got over it since.

There was a famous shield hanging at the door of the captain of the fire brigade, who always came up with the last fire engine; the wind blew it down, whirled it away, and, oddly enough, blew it up against the door of a poor chimney-sweeper, who had saved three lives in the last fire. But the shield meant nothing by it.

The barber's shield, the great brass plate, was torn down and blown against the councillor's door; and that was really too bad, because the councillor's wife was called by every one, even her very dearest friends, "the razor blade." She was so sharp that she knew more about people than they knew themselves.

Then came a shield bearing a split, dried up, flat fish, right against the door of a newspaper editor. That was a very flat joke on the part of the storm, for every one knows that a newspaper editor is not to be trifled with; he is a king in his own office, and in his own opinion. The weathercock flew on to the opposite roof and stopped there, looking like the blackest malice, the neighbours said.

The cooper's shield was hung up under a placard, "Ladies' toilettes."

The bill of fare from the hotel was blown over the door of a theatre, where no one ever went, and there it hung, looking comical enough, "Horse-radish, Soup, and Stuffed Calves' Head." The people came to see that.

The honourable shield of the furrier's company—a fox skin—was blown on to the knocker of the house where lived a young man who went to church regularly, looked like a shut umbrella, and was declared by his aunt to be an "example." The inscription "Establishment for Higher Culture" was hung over the door of the billiard-room, and the establishment itself received the placard, "Children Reared from the Bottle," which was not witty, but simply rude. But the storm had done it all, and knew no better.

It was a fearful night; and on the next morning, only think—almost all the shields in the town had changed places! In some cases the change showed such malice that my grandfather would not speak of them; but I saw him laugh inwardly, and I believe he knows more about it than he professed to do.

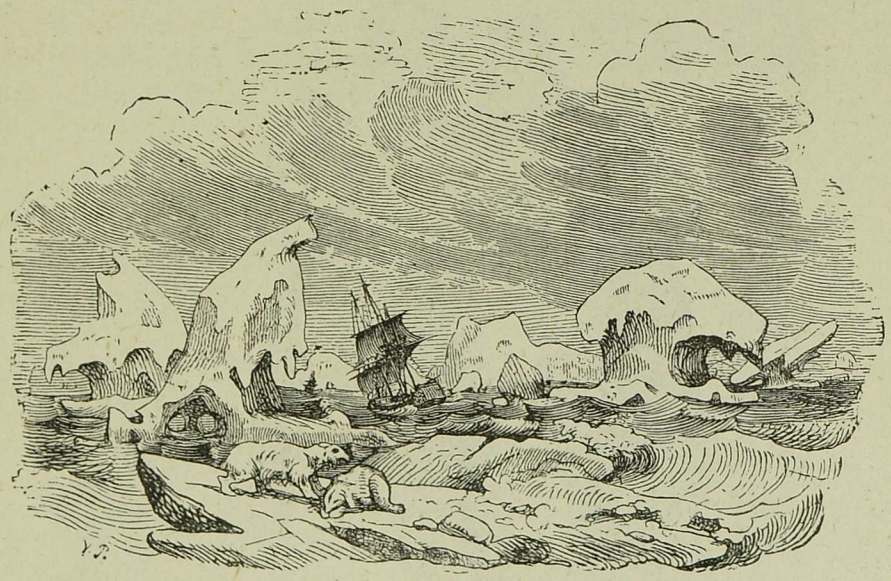
The poor people in the town, and especially strangers, were always

making mistakes and being led astray by the shields. Some people who were going to a solemn political debate found themselves in a riotous boys' school, where the scholars were shouting and leaping over the forms.

And some mistook the church and the theatre, and that is dreadful.

We never have such a storm now; it only happened in the days when grandfather was a little boy. Possibly we shall never live through one like it, but our grandchildren may; and we hope and pray that, as the proverb says, "They may all stay quietly indoors while the storm moves the shields."

From the Uttermost Parts of the Sea.



LARGE ships had been sent out to the North Pole to try and explore the farthest limits of the icy coast, and to penetrate as far as human skill could take them through the frozen seas. For many a month they had steered through mist and ice, struggling against bitter hardships: at last the winter had closed in, the sun seemed to have disappeared from the world, the long night of weeks had begun. As far as the eye could reach nothing was seen but one plain of ice; the ships were moored to the frozen pack; the snow lay drifted in mountainous heaps, and the sailors built huts out of it in the shape of beehives—some of them as large as the Huns' graves, and some only large enough to hold one or two men at once. It was not dark, for the red and blue Northern lights gleamed in the sky like one great firework. The snow glittered, the night was like a

silver twilight. When the aurora shone brightest the Esquimaux came out in their rough fur skins; they crossed the ice in sleighs, and brought with them bundles of skins and furs. It was warm enough within the snow huts, thanks to the furs and coverings, which served at once for carpets and beds; but outside it was colder than we can even imagine. The sailors in their icy prison thought of their distant homes; they knew that it was late autumn there, and they fancied they saw the yellow leaves falling from the trees. Towards evening their watches told them the hour, two men lay down to sleep in the snow hut. The youngest of them had with him his greatest treasure; a Bible which his grandmother had given him at parting. Every night the sacred volume rested under his pillow; he knew its contents by heart, and read its pages every day. As the young man lay in his hut he often said to himself the beautiful words, "If I take the wings

of the morning and remain in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall Thy hand uphold me, and Thy arms shall strengthen me." And, with the words fresh on his lips, and faith in God deep in his heart, he closed his eyes and fell asleep. A happy dream came to him; his soul lived and was active, while his body slept. He heard the sound of old familiar melodies, warm, sunny breezes played round him, the snow walls of his hut were penetrated with the radiance. He raised his head; the light did not come from the walls, but fell from the strong wings of an angel, whose fair, glorious face bent over him. As if from the cup of a white lily, the angel rose from the pages of the Bible and spread out his arms. The snow walls sank to the ground like a misty veil; the green hills and dales of his home lay round him in the warm sunshine. The red gold of autumn lay on the woods; the storks' nest was empty, but there were yet some

apples hanging on the leafless boughs of the trees. The scarlet hips gleamed in the hedge, and the starling sang in its green cage over the peasant's door. It sang the tune it had been taught, and the grandmother came out and hung some groundsel round the cage, as the dreamer had often done himself.

By the well stood the blacksmith's pretty daughter, smiling at the old woman while she drew water from the well. The grandmother answered her smile, and held up a letter which she had received that morning. The letter had come from the far North, where the old woman's grandson lay dreaming under God's fatherly care. The two women laughed and cried over the letter, and the dreamer, shadowed by the angel's wings, laughed and cried with them, for he saw and heard it all.

The letter was read aloud, and in it the words of the text were written, "If I take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy right hand uphold me, and Thy arm shall strengthen me." The sound of chanted psalms filled the air; the angel let his wings fall like a veil upon the sleeper's face; the vision had vanished; darkness fell upon the hut, but the Bible lay under his pillow and faith lived in his heart. God and his home were with him still, in the uttermost parts of the sea.

The Bird of Song.

IT is winter-time; the earth is covered with snow, white and hard as marble from the rock. The air is clear; the wind sharp as a finely-tempered sword; the trees stand like white coral or frosted almond blossom; it is bracing and fresh as on the Alpine peaks.

The night is bright with the aurora and the glitter of myriad stars.

Storms come on, the clouds gather and let fall the whirling snowflakes; pathway and house, narrow lane and open field, are buried beneath the swan's-down coverlet.

But we, seated by the bright fireside, listen to a saga of old times.

On the open sea floated a giant's grave; at midnight the ghost of the dead hero rose; his kingly crown encircled his flowing hair; he was clad in steel and iron; his head was bent with sorrow, and he sighed like a lost spirit.

A ship sailed by. The sailors cast anchor and stepped ashore; but

among them was a singer, who cried to the dead hero, "Why art thou sad? What is thy sorrow?"

The spirit answered, "No one has sung of my life and mighty deeds. They lie forgotten. No song or saga carries them abroad to the hearts of men, and I have neither rest nor peace."

And he spoke of his mighty deeds, known by his contemporaries, but all unsung because there was no poet in the land.

Then the old bard touched the strings of the harp and sang of the youthful courage of the hero, the strength of manhood, and the power of good deeds. At his words, the face of the hero shone like foam in the moonlight, his form rose radiant in light and triumph; it vanished like a gleam of the aurora; nothing was seen but the green turf mound, with the unwritten stone; but just as the last sound of the harp died away, a little singing-bird seemed to dart from the quivering strings—a bird with a song like the thrush's note, with all the depth of human joy and pain like the voice of home, as the bird of passage hears it as he returns from his distant flight. The bird flew far over vale and mountain, wood and meadow. It was the bird of song which never dies.

We hear the song as we sit in the warm room, where the snow-flakes fall like white bees and the storm rages. The bird sings not only the hero's dirge, but soft love songs, true and tender, of Northern faith and constancy; in his song are fairy tales, proverbs, and sayings, which, like runes laid upon a dead man's lips, force him to speak, and thus the song is owned by its fatherland.

In the old heathen days, in the time of the Vikings, its tones dwelt in the harp of the bards. In the days of chivalry, when might was right and strength held the scales of justice, a peasant ranked on an equality with a dog. Where could the bird of song find shelter? Neither coarseness nor stupidity thought of him.

But in the window of the knightly tower, where the noble lady bent above her parchment and wrote down old sagas and memories, and the old woman in the wood and the wandering pedler, who sat by her telling old legends, the bird which never dies flew round them singing, as it will sing so long as earth has a patch of green on which it may rest its foot—the bird of song and saga.

It sings to us to-day. Outside is night and storm. The bird lays the runes upon our lips, and we know our native land. God speaks to us, in our mother-tongue, in the tones of the bird of song. Old memories arise, and faded colours shine out bright; saga and song give us a draught of happiness which inspires our hearts and brain and makes our night a Christmas festival.

The snowflakes whirl, the ice cracks, the storm rages, for he is lord, but not the Lord of all.

It is winter-time; the wind is keen as a two-edged sword; the snow-flakes fell; it snowed, as it seemed to us, for days and weeks; the snow lay like a mountain above the roads—a heavy dream of a winter's night. All lies buried under the snow but the golden cross on the church. The symbol of our faith rises from the snowy grave and shines in the blue air and golden sunshine.

The birds of heaven fly over the buried city, small birds and great;

they sing and twitter; just as it comes to them, each bird sings its own song.

First came the sparrows, chirping at every trifle in the streets and lanes, in the nests and houses; they know all that goes on in the house, back as well as front. "We know the buried city and all living things within it. Tweet! tweet!"

The black crows and ravens fly over the buried city. "Caw! caw!" they cried. "There is something to be had down there; something to eat. That is the most important—and that is their opinion down there. Caw! caw!"

The wild swans come on rushing wings and sing of the great and beautiful which would yet arise from the thoughts and hearts of the men who lay buried under the snow of the buried city.

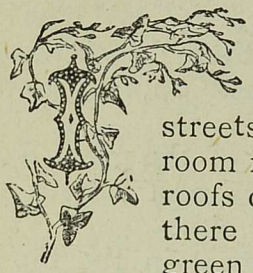
No death is there, but life in every form. We hear it in the tones that sound like the church organ—like the song of the fairies, like Ossian's harp, like the rushing wings of the Valkyrias. What harmony! It penetrates our heart and raises up our thoughts. That is the bird of song which we hear.

And in this moment the warm breath from God's heaven falls on the snow; the snowdrift breaks into rifts; the sun shines; the spring comes with the birds—new races with the same old familiar tones.

Listen to the story of the year. "The power of the storm, the heavy dream of winter, all dissolves and lives and blends in the glorious voice of the bird of song, which never dies."

What the Moon Saw.

Prologue.



AM a poor boy living in one of the narrowest back streets of a great town. I have plenty of light, for my room is at the top of the house and looks out on all the roofs of the crowded streets. When I first came to live there I felt very lonely and dispirited; instead of the green woods round my home, I had only the smoky chimneys for my horizon. And I had not one friend, not one well-known face to greet me in all the town. One night I stood at my lonely window and looked out with a sad heart. Ah! what a glad surprise! At last, an old familiar face looked into mine, a friend from my lost home; the only thing that was not altered round me—the dear old moon! She shone in upon me with her kind, round, beaming face, just as she shone between the willows on the moor. I kissed my hand to her, and she shone straight into my room and promised to look in upon me a little every night. She has kept her word faithfully; and every time she comes she has something to tell me of the things which she has seen on her nightly wanderings.

These are some of the tales she told me.

The Spinning Wheel.

"Some years ago," said the moon, "I was in Copenhagen. I looked in at the window of a poorly-furnished room. The father and mother were sleeping soundly, but the little child was wide awake. I saw his bright eyes between the flowered chintz curtains of his little bed, and thought that they were looking at the gaily-painted cuckoo-clock that hung against the wall. A cuckoo sat upon the top, the heavy weights hung down, and the pendulum, with its brightly-polished disc, swung to and fro, 'Tic-tac, tic-tac.' But it was not on the clock that the wakeful eyes were fixed. Close to the clock stood the mother's spinning-wheel, and of all the things in the house the child loved the spinning-wheel best of all. Perhaps because he might never touch it. He knew that if he did so, he should get a rap on the finger, but he loved to sit down in front of it and watch his mother spin. For hours together he watched the whirring wheel and listened to its dreamy hum, while the thoughts spun through his baby brain. And now, father and mother were asleep; he looked first at them, then at the wheel, and soon afterwards came one little, naked foot, and then another, out of the bed, then two little white legs, and then—bang! there he stood on the floor. He

turned once more to see if his father and mother really slept; yes, they slept soundly; and gently, in his short, white nightshirt, he pattered across to the wheel and began to spin. I kissed his golden hair and bright blue eyes; it was a pretty picture. The curtain moved; his mother woke and looked out, and thought she saw a little elf at play. 'For heaven's sake, wake and tell me what it is!' she cried, to her husband. He started up and rubbed his eyes at sight of the busy, happy child. 'Why, it is our Bertel,' he cried.

"And with one glance I turned from the lowly room and saw—for my sight reaches far and wide—the lofty hall of the Vatican, with its groups of marble gods. My beams glanced past the Laocoon, where the marble seems to sigh; past the Muses, whose breasts one would have fancied rose and fell, and rested on the colossal group of the River Nile. There, leaning against the mysterious sphinx, lay the river god, dreaming of the fast-flying years. Loves played round him and sported fearlessly with the crocodiles at his feet. Opposite to him, in a cornucopia, sat a very little love, his dimpled arms folded, his serious, lovely eyes fixed on the god. It was the exact likeness of the living child at the spinning-wheel, and yet the great wheel of time had turned for thousands of years since the love sprang from the marble. And it must turn as many times again before the marble shall give forth another work like that.

"That," said the moon, "I saw years ago. But only yesterday, as I was looking on a bay in the eastern coast of Zealand and lighting up its woods and hills, its red-walled castle, where the swans swim in the moat, its country town with the little church among the fruit gardens, I saw a torchlight procession of boats cross the quiet water of the bay. They were not out for the eel-fishing; it was a grea solemnity. Music rose from the boats, a song was sung, and in the centre of one of the boats stood a tall, powerfully-made man, in whose honour the procession was arranged. He wore a large mantle; his eyes were blue and his hair white as snow. I knew him; I thought of the marble group in the Vatican, and of the lowly room where the little child sat spinning in his little white nightshirt. The wheel of time had turned; new gods sprang forth from the stone. Cheers rose from the boats—'Hurrah for Bertel Thorwaldsen!'"

The Bear that Played at Soldiers.

"It was in a little country town," said the moon; "I saw it all a year ago, but that does not matter; I saw it as clearly as if it were yesterday; the newspaper report of it which I read this evening was not half so clear. Down-stairs, in the tap-room of the inn, sat the bear leader eating his supper; the bear stood outside, tied up to the wooden post; the poor bear that never harms any one, savage as he looks! Up-stairs in the attic three little children were playing by the light of my beams; the eldest was scarcely eight years old, and the youngest not quite two. 'Pit-pat' came up the wooden stairs; who could it be? The door

burst open, and in came the great shaggy bear! He had grown tired of standing down in the yard and had found his way up-stairs. I watched him do it,' said the moon. The children were all so frightened at the rough-looking beast that they crept one into one corner and one into another; but he found them all three, sniffed round them, but did them no harm.

"'What a large dog!' they cried, and stroked his rough head. The bear lay down on the floor, and the youngest of the children rolled over him and hid his golden curls in the bear's thick, black coat. Then the eldest boy brought out his drum and began to beat it till the room rang again; the bear stood up on his hind-legs and danced so that it was a pleasure to see him. Then all the children took up their little muskets; they gave one to the bear, and he held it as tightly as a soldier should do; he was a famous playfellow; and now the word was given, 'Right, left, right, left!' Just then the door was opened and the children's mother came in. You should have seen her! her voiceless terror, her face white as death, her parted lips, her wild, fear-stricken eyes! But the youngest child nodded to her merrily, and cried, aloud, in his baby fashion, 'We only playing soldiers.'

"And *then* the bear leader came."

Died on the Throne of France.

"Yesterday," said the moon, "I looked down on the gay town of Paris, and my beams lit up the lofty halls of the Louvre. An old woman, poorly dressed, evidently one of the poorest of the poor, followed one of the under servants into the great throne-room. It had cost her many an entreaty and much perseverance to induce the man to let her penetrate so far. She folded her thin hands and looked round solemnly, as if she were in a church. 'Here it was,' she cried; 'just here;' and she drew nearer to the throne, with its rich draperies of velvet inwrought with gold. 'There!' she cried; 'there!' She knelt down and kissed the draperies; I think she wept. 'It was not this velvet,' said the servant; and a smile played round his lips. 'But it was here,' said the woman, 'and it looked like this.' 'Not quite,' answered the man. 'The windows were smashed in, the doors pulled down, the floor stained with blood. But still you may say, "My grandson died on the throne of France."' 'Died!' echoed the old woman. Not another word was spoken; they left the room; the dusk grew deeper; and I poured a flood of silver on the rich velvets of the throne. Who was the old woman? I can tell you her story.

"It was in the Revolution of July, towards the end of that victorious day when every house was a fortress and every window an entrenchment. The crowd attacked the Tuileries; women and children mingled in the ranks and thronged the halls and corridors of the palace. A poor, little, ragged boy fought bravely among his elder comrades, and sank to the ground pierced through with the thrust of many a bayonet.

It was in the throne-room; they laid the child upon the throne and bound the velvet drapery round his wounds; his blood flowed down, staining the royal purple. What a picture! The splendid throne-room, the fighting groups, a broken banner trailing on the ground, the tricolor waving from the bayonets' points, and on the throne the dying child, with pale face and solemn, wistful eyes! His glance was fixed upon the distant heaven, his limbs quivered in the death struggle, his heaving breast and wretched, blood-stained rags rested upon the golden lilies. By the child's cradle an old crone had uttered the prophecy, 'He shall die upon the throne of France,' and his mother's heart had dreamed of a new Napoleon. I kissed the wreath of *immortelles* on his grave, and the forehead of his old grandmother, who sat and dreamed of the long-vanished scene, which I have copied down for you, of the child who died upon the throne of France."

Children's Troubles.

"I saw a little girl crying," said the moon; "she was crying over the wickedness of the world. She had just received a present of a beautiful doll—a doll so delicate and lovely it seemed as if it could not be born to sorrow and care. But the little girl's brothers, the wretched boys, had carried off the doll, set her on the branch of a tall tree in the garden, and run away. The little girl could not reach up to the doll to lift her down, and that is why she was crying. The doll was crying too, or at least stretching out her arms in a despairing way among the branches, and looking very sorrowful. Yes; this must be what mamma meant by 'the troubles of life.' The poor doll! It began to grow dark; the night would soon close in. Was she to be left in the tree all night? The little girl could not find it in her heart to leave her there. 'I will stay with you,' she said, although she was by no means courageous. Already she seemed to see the little gnomes, in their tall, pointed caps, peeping at her from behind the tree stems; and yonder, in the dark, winding alleys, the ghosts came dancing nearer and nearer, stretching out their hands and pointing at the doll in the tree. Oh, how dreadfully frightened the little girl felt! 'They cannot hurt me,' she said, to herself; 'I have not done anything wrong.' She began to consider. 'Have I done anything wrong? Oh, yes! I have laughed at the poor duck with the red rag round her leg. She limped so funnily, and I laughed at her. It is a wicked thing to laugh at dumb animals. Have you laughed at any poor dumb animals?' she said, looking up at the doll; and the doll seemed as if she shook her head in answer."

The Emigrants.

"I stole across the heath at Luneburg," said the moon; "a lonely cottage stood near to a group of leafless trees, and among the branches a nightingale was singing. She had lost her way, and the keen, cold night would be her last; it was her dying song she was singing.

The red dawn glimmered in the east, and across the heath came a long file of peasants' families on their way to Bremen or Hamburg. There, ships awaited them to carry them to America, where they hoped to make their fortunes. The women carried their babies on their backs, the elder children ran along by their sides; a wretched horse drew the cart containing their odds and ends of household furniture. The cold wind blew, the children pressed closer to their mothers' sides; the women looked up to my round disc, and thought of all the bitter poverty which had driven them from their homes, the grinding cares, the heavy taxes which they could not pay. The same thought was in every heart; they followed the brightening dawn as if it were the prelude to the sun of fortune. They heard the nightingale sing, the bird of fortune and true prophetess, but they did not know that she was singing her death song.

"The rough wind blew, but they did not understand its words.

"'Sail over the sea,' cried the wind; 'you have paid your passage with your last farthing; penniless and helpless you will enter on your Canaan. Soon you will have to sell yourselves, your wives, and children. But you will not suffer long. Behind the broad, rank leaves lurks the death angel, and his greeting will breathe a deadly poison in your blood. Sail on, sail on across the rolling waves.' But the wanderers listened joyously to the song of the nightingale, the bird of good omen.

"Day broke from the shining clouds; the wanderers had passed out of sight. Groups of peasants crossed the heath on their way to church; the women in their black dresses and snow-white linen caps looked like the old pictures in the church; around them lay the silent heath, the dry, dead fern, the scorched-up grass between the sand-heaps. They carried their hymn-books in their hands and entered the church. Oh, pray for them who are wandering to their death across the rolling ocean!"

By the Huns' Grave.

"Along the shore stretches a dewy, fragrant wood of oaks and beeches. In early spring it is the home of myriad nightingales; between it and the ever-changing sea runs a stretch of golden sand. One carriage after another rolls by, but my glance turns from them to fall on my favourite spot, the Huns' grave, where the blackthorn and flowering bramble twine round the grey stone. Here is poetry in nature. How do you think men receive and comprehend it? Well, I will tell you what I heard and saw last night.

"First of all came up two rich gentlemen farmers. 'Capital timber,' said one of them.

"'There must be ten loads of firewood to each tree,' answered the other; 'we shall have a sharp winter; last year we got fourteen dollars the load.' They passed on.

"'A wretched road this!' exclaimed the next traveller.

"'It's those confounded trees,' answered his companion; 'one cannot get a breath of air, except from the sea;' and they passed on.

"The mail coach came up next. As it passed the prettiest spot all its passengers were sleeping; the guard blew his horn, but he only thought, 'I blow very nicely; there's a good echo here. I wonder if the passengers like it.' And the coach rattled past.

"Then came up two young men, galloping along on horseback. 'Here is youth and champagne in the blood,' I thought; 'they will understand;' and there was a smile on their lips as they looked at the moss-grown hill and the dark tendrils.

"'I should like to take a walk there with Christine, the miller's pretty daughter,' said one of them; and on they went.

"The flowers sent out their fragrance; not a breath of air was stirring; the sea looked like a fragment of the sky. A carriage rolled by with six persons inside; four of them were asleep; the fifth was thinking whether or no his new summer coat would be a good fit; the sixth bent out of the carriage and asked if there were anything remarkable about the heap of stones.

"'No,' said the coachman, 'it is a heap of stones; but the trees are remarkable.'

"'How so?'

"'In this way. When the snow lies thick in the winter and makes the whole place look like a plain, the trees are a landmark for me and keep me from driving into the sea. That is why I call them remarkable." And on he drove.

"Then there came up a painter. His eyes sparkled, and he whistled aloud. The nightingales answered, one outvying the other. 'Hold your noise!' he cried, as he noted down all the colours and half tints. 'Blue, lilac, madder brown; it will make a capital picture.' He took it all in as the mirror receives an image, and whistled a march of Rossini's.

"Last of all there came up a poor girl; she sat down to rest on the Huns' grave, and laid down her burden; her sweet, pale face turned towards the forest, her eyes shone bright as they gazed on sea and sky. Her hands were folded as if she were in prayer. She did not understand her own feeling; but I know that in years to come that moment, and the landscape roundabout, will live fairer and truer in her memory than on the painter's canvas with his carefully-noted colours. My beams followed her till the dawn kissed her brow."

The Mother of the Rothschilds.

"I will give you a picture from Frankfurt," said the moon. "I was especially noticing one building. It was not Goethe's birthplace, nor the old Guildhall, where, through the barred windows, stood forth the horns of the oxen which were slaughtered at the emperor's coronation and given to the people. It was a trader's house, painted green, and looking rather poverty-stricken. I stood at the entrance of the narrow Jew's quarter; it was the house of the Rothschilds.

"I looked through the open door; the hall and staircase were lighted

up; footmen, with wax lights burning in heavy silver candelabra, bowed profoundly before an old woman who was borne up-stairs in a sedan chair. The owner of the house stood with bared head, and bent low to kiss her hand. It was his mother; she nodded kindly to him and to the servants, as they bore her into the small house in the gloomy, narrow lane.

"There she had lived and borne her children; there she had seen her fortunes rise and blossom; if she forsook the mean house in the despised quarter, perhaps her fortune would forsake her; at least, that was her belief."

Here the moon broke off her story; her visit had been a short one, but I thought of the old woman in the cramped, mean house; only one word from her, and she would have her brilliant house by the Thames or her villa by the bay of Naples.

"If I forsook the home where my sons' fortune first arose, their fortune would, perhaps, forsake them."

It is a superstition, but one of those for which one only finds the key by adding the two words, "*A mother.*"

The Little Chimney-Sweeper.

"Yesterday, in the early dawn," said the moon, "not a chimney was smoking in the great town, and it happened to be the chimneys at which I was looking. Suddenly from the top of one of them came forth a little head, and then half a body; two black arms were crossed on the edge of the chimney, and a shrill voice cried, 'Hurrah!' It was a little chimney-sweeper who, for the first time in his life, had climbed up to the very top and put out his head in the fresh air above.

"'Hurrah!' he cried. Yes, indeed; this was a very different thing from creeping through the dark flues and narrow pipes. The air was sweet and cool, his eyes wandered over the whole town as far as the green forest; the sun rose and shone straight into his merry face, streaked as it was with soot and grime.

"'All the town can see me now,' he cried, 'and the sun and moon into the bargain! Hurrah!' and he waved his brush in triumph."

By the Ganges.

"Last night"—they are the moon's own words—"I glided through the clear air of the Indian land and watched my reflection in the sacred Ganges: my beams strove vainly to penetrate the thick tangle of the old plane tree which curved and arched itself like the shell of the tortoise. A Hindoo maiden stole out of the thicket, fair as Eve, light as the young gazelle—an airy, sylph-like form, and yet with all the soft, voluptuous, glowing life of the daughters of the Eastern land.

"I could read the thoughts through her fine, transparent skin; the thorny lianas tore her sandals; but she trod hurriedly forwards; the wild beast returning from the river, whither it had gone to quench its thirst, sprang aside in terror, for the maiden held in her hand a burning lamp. I could see the red blood course through her fingers as she held them round the flame, to protect it from the wind.

"She approached the river, placed the lamp tenderly in the swift current, and watched it glide swiftly away; the flame shook and quivered, as if it were on the point of being extinguished, but it burnt on, and the girl's dark, gleaming eyes, half veiled by their long, silken lashes, followed it with an anxious glance.

"She knew that if the light burnt on as long as the lamp was in sight, her lover was still alive; but if it went out, it was a sign that he was dead.

"The lamp burned bright, and her heart beat in thankfulness; she sank upon her knees and prayed.

"Beside her in the grass lay the shining snake; but she thought of nothing but of Brama and her bridegroom. 'He lives!' she cried, and the mountains sent back the echo—'He lives!'"

The Little Girl and the Chickens.

"Yesterday," said the moon, "I was looking down into a little court-yard enclosed by houses; there I saw a hen and eleven chickens; a pretty little girl was playing round them.

"The hen was frightened and spread her wings over the brood, with terrified cluckings; and the little girl's father came out and scolded the child. I glided on and thought no more about it; but to-night I happened to be looking down into the self-same yard. All was still; but before long the little girl came out, stole on tiptoe to the hen-house, drew back the bolt, and crept in all among the hens and chickens.

"They cackled and clucked in a great fright, and the little girl ran after them. I saw it all clearly, for I was looking through a hole in the wall. I felt quite angry with the naughty girl, and was very glad when her father came out, and, seizing her roughly by the arm, scolded her more severely than before.

"She threw back her head, and great tears stood in her blue eyes. 'What are you doing here?' he cried.

"She wept. 'I wanted to go in and kiss the hen,' she said, 'and ask her to forgive me for frightening her yesterday. I dared not tell you first.'

"Her father kissed her on her sweet, innocent brow; and I, too, kissed her eyes and lips."

A Comedy.

"Last night I was in a German theatre," said the moon; "it was in a small town; a large building used for stabling had been made into

a theatre for the occasion; the stalls where the horses used to stand were fitted up as boxes, all the woodwork was covered with coloured paper, and from the low roof there hung an iron chandelier.

"A shade hid it from the eyes of the audience for the present, so that at the first tinkle of the prompter's bell it might burst forth and dazzle them with sudden brightness, just as is the way in real, large theatres.

"'Ring-a-ting!' went the bell, and the little iron chandelier seemed to leap all at once into existence; every one could tell in a moment that the play had begun.

"A young prince who, with his newly-married bride, was travelling through the town was honouring the performance with his presence, so that the house was choke-full, except just beneath the iron chandelier, where one saw nothing but an empty, hollow place, like the crater of a volcano.

"Not a soul could sit there, for the candles dripped incessantly. I saw it all; the house was so warm that all the little square shutters in the wall had to be opened, and through the holes the little boys and girls of the town looked in, although the policemen inside threatened them with their truncheons. Close to the orchestra sat the young prince and princess, in two easy-chairs; on any other night the burgomaster and his wife would have sat there, but for this once they had to sit on wooden benches, like the rest of the world.

"'That shows how one bird of prey drives out another,' was the whispered remark of the townspeople; and everything seemed to be more solemn and imposing. The candles guttered, the crowd was rapped on the knuckles, and I," said the moon, "shone through the whole comedy."

A Picture.

"I have been in Upsala," said the moon. "I looked down on the great plain with its scanty grass and its unfruitful fields. I mirrored myself in the waters while the steamboat drove the fish in among the sedge. Below me sailed the clouds, and threw long shadows over the mounds which are known as Odin, Thor, and Freya's graves. The names are cut in the thin turf above the mounds; the traveller finds no stone in which to carve his name, no rock on which to paint it, so he cuts it deeply in the grass.

"The bare earth is covered with letters and names; they look like a great network stretching over the heights—an immortality which will be covered by the new crop of grass.

"There stood a man, a poet; he emptied the horn of mead clasped with silver and whispered a beloved name. He prayed the winds not to reveal his secret, but I heard the name; I knew it.

"A princely coronet gleamed above it, and therefore he murmured it below his breath; I smiled, for a poet's crown shone above his brow, and the nobility of Leonora d'Este hangs upon Tasso's name.

"I, too, know where the rose of beauty blossoms."

So said the moon, and a cloud passed over it. May no clouds pass between the poet and the rose!

A Greeting.

Heavy clouds veiled the sky, the moon was not to be seen. I stood doubly alone in my little chamber, and looked out into the night towards the place where it should have shone. My thoughts roved far and wide, and rose up to my kind, nightly visitor who showed me such beautiful pictures and told me stories every evening.

Ah! what has not the moon lived through?

It shone above the waves of the Deluge, and smiled down upon the ark as it smiles on me; and brought promises of hope to the new race which was to people the world.

When the people of Israel wept by the waters of Babylon, it shone sadly through the willows where hung the silent harps. When *Romeo* climbed to the balcony, and the kiss of love rose like a cherub's thought towards heaven, the veiled moon looked through the dark cypress trees in the transparent air.

It saw the hero of St. Helena gaze sadly from his lonely rock across the waste of waters, while great thoughts rose in his brain.

What could not the moon tell!

The story of the world lies unfolded before it like a fairy tale. To-night I do not see thee, dear old friend; I can write down no story in memory of thy visit.

And behold, as I looked up dreamily to the clouds, there stole out a ray of light, a solitary moonbeam; the clouds gathered again darker than ever, but I knew that the moon had sent me a kindly greeting, a last good-night.

In the Far North.

Listen to the moon's story.

"I followed the Polar bear and the great whales to the eastern coast of Greenland; bare, ice-covered cliffs rose round a valley where willows and flowering thorn were in full bloom. The fragrant lychnis spread round its sweet odour; my light was dim, my shield pale as the leaf of a water-lily which, long since parted from its stem, has drifted idly on the waves; the Northern lights were burning, and their rays spread in green and red reflections across the sky, like quivering columns of coloured fire.

"The Greenland folk were gathered together for a dance and merry-making; they had no eyes for the glory of the heavens, it was an old familiar sight to them. 'Let the souls of the departed play at ball with the head of the walrus,' they exclaimed, according to their wild belief; their thoughts were wholly given to the dance.

"In the midst of the circle stood a Greenlander beating a small drum and singing a stirring song of the seal fishery; the chorus joined in, 'Eia-eia, eia!' and danced about in their heavy, white mantles of bearskin; it looked like a dance of Polar bears; and the gestures were weird and bold.

"Then came trials and the passing of sentence. The contending parties came up together, and the accuser recited in a wild chant the

crimes of which he charged his enemy; the beating of drums and a mad dance accompanied his angry, scornful words. The accused replied with cool cunning, and the crowd laughed aloud and passed sentence.

"The mountains split and groaned, the glaciers fell, the heavy blocks of ice were shivered in their fall to powdery spray. It was a lovely summer night—for Greenland.

"A hundred paces farther, in the open tent covered with skins, lay a sick man; as yet life coursed through his veins, but he must die soon, for both he himself and all who stood around his bed thought that his hour was come.

"His wife was sewing tightly round him his shroud of skins, so that she might not need to touch a corpse by-and-by; and she asked him, 'Will you be buried in the fresh-fallen snow on the mountain? I will ornament the spot with your pipe and your canoe. The wind shall whistle above the grave. Or will you rather be thrown into the sea?'

"'Into the sea,' he whispered, and nodded with a mournful smile.

"'It is a pleasant summer tent,' said his wife; 'thousands of seals leap in its waters; the walrus sleeps at your feet; the chase is safe and the sport is good.'

"The children, loudly weeping, tore down the skin covering from the windows, so that the dying man might be carried to the sea—the stormy sea which had given him food in his lifetime, and would now give him a resting-place in death.

"His monuments were the floating icebergs that change their forms day and night; the seal lies sleeping on the block of ice, the storm-bird circles, screaming, overhead."

The Long Journey.

"I knew an old maid," said the moon; "every winter she wore a yellow satin cloak lined with fur; it was her only one, so it was always in fashion. Every summer she wore the same straw bonnet and the same blue-grey gown.

"She visited no one but an old lady who lived just opposite her, on the other side of the street; and last year she visited no one at all; her friend was dead. All alone, the old maid sat sewing at her window, where in the summer there bloomed some pretty flowers, and in the winter a box of fresh cresses. Last month I missed her from her place in the window; but I knew she was alive, for I had not yet seen her start on the long journey about which she and her friend talked so often.

"'Yes,' she used to say, 'when I come to die I shall go a longer journey than I have ever taken yet in my whole life. Our family vault is six miles from here, outside the town, and I shall have to be taken there that I may sleep among my own people.'

"Yesterday a hearse stopped before the house, a coffin was carried out, and I knew that she was dead; the coffin was placed inside the hearse and away they drove. There she lay, the quiet, silent old maid who had never been outside her house for a year; and

the hearse rolled away as quickly as if it were going to a merry meeting.

"When it reached the country road it went more quickly still; the coachman looked back once or twice; I think he was half afraid of seeing his passenger sitting up behind him, wearing her yellow satin cloak. He lashed his horses so furiously and held them in so tightly that they champed the bit, and pulled against the rein.

"They were young, spirited horses; a hare ran straight across the path and they took fright and ran away. The old maid, who from year's end to year's end had moved so slowly about her lonely house, now that she was dead, drove like the wind over stock and stone along the king's highway. The door flew open, the coffin, wrapped in its straw matting, was flung out upon the roadside, while hearse, coachman, and horses sped on in their breathless flight.

"The lark rose singing from the field, and sang her morning song above the coffin, then hopping on to the matting, pecked at it with her beak as if she were trying to tear open the shell of a chrysalis.

"Then, with a burst of song, she rose again; and I faded behind the rosy clouds of the dawning day."

The Bride.

"It was a marriage feast," said the moon; "songs were sung, healths were drunk, all was rich and splendid; the guests had taken leave, midnight was past. The mother kissed the bridegroom and the bride; but I looked only on the bride, through the narrow space between the half-drawn window curtains.

"The lamp shone through the silent room. 'Heaven be praised, they are gone at last!' said the bridegroom, kissing her hands and lips. She smiled with tearful eyes, and leaned upon his shoulder as the trembling lotus flower rests on the rippling stream; and she whispered words of happiness and hope.

"'Sleep sweetly,' he cried; and she drew aside the curtains from the window. 'How bright the moon is shining!' said the bride; 'see how still and clear it is to-night!' The light was extinguished, and my golden beams alone lit up the quiet room and the happy gleam of their eyes. May womanly gentleness breath on the harpstrings of the poet when he sings of the mystery of life and love."

The City of the Dead.

"I bring you a picture from Pompeii," said the moon; "I was in the outskirts of the city, in the Street of Tombs, as it is called, where one finds the beautiful monuments; where the happy youths, their foreheads crowned with roses, danced with the fair daughters of Lais. A deathlike stillness reigned around; German soldiers in the Neapolitan service kept watch, and played with cards and dice.

"A party of foreigners from beyond the mountains wandered through the streets, accompanied by a guard; they came to see the city risen from the dead by the light of my full beams. I showed them the trace of the carriage wheels in the streets paved with broad slabs of lava; I showed them the names upon the doors, and the few signs that hung up here and there. In the small courtyards they saw the basins of the fountains bordered with mussel and conch shells, but no silver water leaped into the air, no sound came through the painted rooms where the metal dog kept watch and ward at the door.

"It was a city of the dead; only that Vesuvius chanted its eternal hymn, whose every separate verse is called by men an eruption.

"We went into the temple of Venus, built of the purest marble, with its high altar before the marble steps, and its fresh green willows that grew between the columns. The air was blue and transparent, and in the background stood Vesuvius, black as night, with the single jet of flame rising from it like the shaft of a pine tree. The lurid smoke lay round it in the stillness of the night, like the crest of the pine above its stem, but red as blood.

"Among the visitors was a singer, a great and genuine artist, at whose feet I had seen Europe lay down its homage. As the strangers approached the ancient theatre, they took their places on the steps of the amphitheatre; a small part of the space was filled, as it used to be thousands of years ago. The stage stands yet as it ever did, with its stone *coulisses* and the two open arches in the background, through which was seen the selfsame scenery as that which formed the background ages since, the lovely mountains between Sorrento and Amalfi.

"The singer, half in sport, stepped forward on to the ancient stage and sang. The place inspired her. I thought of the wild Arabian steed when he tosses his flying mane and dashes with the speed of the wind across the plain, it was the same lightness and security. I thought of the suffering Mother at the foot of the Cross, as the tone changed to a cry of deep and noble sorrow.

"Then, all around, as in the ages past, broke forth a thunder of applause, and the listeners praised the singer and exulted in the glorious gift of song.

"Three minutes later, and the stage was empty, all were gone away, and not a sound broke the stillness.

"The visitors had passed by, but the ruins stood unchanged, as they may stand for centuries more; and no one knows aught of the outburst of applause, of the fair singer, her smile and her heavenly voice—forgotten and gone by; even for me the hour is a vanished memory."

The Critics.

"I looked in at an editor's window," said the moon; "it was somewhere in Germany. There was plenty of handsome furniture, a great many books, and a chaos of newspapers. Several young men were in the room; the editor stood at his desk; two little books, both by young authors, lay before him and were being discussed at the moment.

"'This one is sent to me,' said the editor; 'I have not read it. It is prettily got up; what do you say to the contents?'

"'Oh!' said one of the guests, himself a poet, 'it is very well done; rather spun out, but then the writer is but young. The verses might certainly be better. The tone is exceedingly healthy, and the ideas just as common-place. But what will you have? One cannot always light on something new. You can safely praise it, I think. I do not suppose he will ever be anything extraordinary as a poet; but he is very well informed, a distinguished Orientalist, and an excellent critic. It was he who wrote that capital review of my "Domestic Life and Fancy." One must not be too hard on a young man.'

"'But he is a perfect donkey,' said another of the guests. 'What is worse in poetry than common-place mediocrity? and he never rises above it.'

"'Poor fellow,' said a third; 'and his aunt is so proud of him! She is the lady who subscribed for so many copies of your last translation.'

"'Is she indeed?' said the editor. 'A very nice person. Well, I have just prepared a short criticism. Indisputable talent; a welcome gift; nicely got up; a flower in the garden of poetry, and so on. But now as to this other book. The author wants me to buy it. I hear it is talked about already. He has genius. Don't you think so?'

"'People say so,' replied the poet; 'but the book strikes me as rather wild. The punctuation is particularly queer.'

"'He wants a little pulling to pieces, I fancy, or he will be thinking a vast deal too much of himself.'

"'But that is unjust,' cried a fourth; 'do not let us dwell on such little faults when there is so much good to praise. He puts all the others into the shade.'

"'Dear me, if he is such a tremendous genius as all that, he can surely stand a little fault-finding. There are plenty of people left to praise him to his face, do not let us turn his head with applause.'

"'Unmistakable talent,' said the editor; 'the usual negligence; that the verses are open to criticism may be seen by a reference to page twenty-five, where the hiatus is twice repeated. Careful study of the ancients is recommended, &c.'

"I went away," said the moon, "and looked into the windows of the aunt's house. There sat the tame poet, surrounded by rapturous friends, applauded by all the guests, and extremely happy.

"I sought out the other, who was pronounced 'rather wild.' He, too, was at a large party at the house of a patron of literature. The conversation fell on the book of the other poet.

"'I shall read yours too,' said Mæcenas; 'but, to speak the truth, I do not expect much from it. You are too wild, too fantastic for me, though I acknowledge that, as a man, you are most respectable.'

"A young girl sat apart in a corner and read, in an old book—

> "'"'Tis an old tale, yet ever new,
> Man loves the false, and hates the true;
> Turns from the thinker's daring grace
> To bow before the mean and base."'

The Children and the Storks.

"By the forest path," said the moon, "there lie two peasants' houses, with low doors and windows set irregularly, now high and now low in the walls; hawthorn and barberries grow all around, the thatch is covered with green mosses, yellow stonecrop, and grey lichen.

"In the garden one finds nothing but potatoes and cabbages; but close to the hedge there stands a great, spreading elder tree, and under its branches sat a little girl, with her brown eyes fixed on the old oak tree between the two houses.

"This tree had a tall, hollow trunk, which was sawn off at the top; and there the stork had built his nest. He was standing there at the moment and clapping his beak.

"A little boy came out and stood by the little girl; they were brother and sister. 'What are you looking at?' he said.

"'I am looking at the stork,' she said; 'the neighbour's wife says he is going to bring us a little brother or sister to-day, and I want to see him bring it.'

"'He will do no such thing,' said the boy; 'I know better. She told me the very same thing, but I saw her laugh when she said it; and I asked her if she dared say, "Upon my soul and honour," and she dared not, so I know that it is all a tale to amuse us children with.'

"'But where will it come from then?' asked the little girl.

"'God will bring it,' said the boy. 'He carries the babies under His cloak; but no one can see Him, so that we shall not be able to see Him when He brings it.'

"At the same moment the branches of the elder tree rustled overhead; the children clasped their hands and looked at each other; it was certainly God Who was come to bring the baby.

"They clasped each other's hands; the cottage door opened and the neighbour's wife looked out. 'Come in,' she said, smiling; 'come and see what the stork has brought you; it is a little brother.'

"And the children nodded; they knew that beforehand."

The Clown and the Columbine.

"I know a clown," said the moon, "who sets the theatre in a roar at the very sight of him, and that by no great art, it is his very nature that makes him so comic. He was a born clown when he was a little lad romping with his playfellows; nature had set one hump upon his back and one upon his chest, and had made his mind to match. No one possessed a greater range and mobility of feeling than he. The stage was his ideal world. If he had been tall and slender he would have been the first tragedian, for his soul was fired with great and heroic thoughts; as it was, he played the part of clown.

"Even his melancholy bitterness heightened the dry, comic humour of his lean face, and waked the laughter of the public, who clapped their favourite. The pretty columbine was very kind to him, but, for

all that, she preferred the harlequin for a husband; it would have been *too* absurd if beauty and ugliness had made a match of it.

"When the clown was in his saddest mood she was the only one who could make him break out into loud laughter; at first she would be sad as he was, then calmer, then full of playful merriment.

"'I know what is the matter with you,' she cried; 'you are in love!' and then he always laughed.

"'I in love?' he cried; 'that would be a capital farce; how the public would applaud!'

"'Yes; you are in love,' she went on; and added, with solemn pathos, 'and what is more, you are in love with me!'

"People can say such things to each other when all love between them is out of the question. The clown executed a clever leap, and all his melancholy was gone. And yet the pretty columbine had spoken the truth; he loved her dearly, as he loved the great and beautiful in his art.

"On her wedding-day he was the merriest of all the guests, but at night he wept; the public would have laughed heartily at his distorted face.

"A few days ago the poor columbine died; and the harlequin was allowed to be absent from his place on the stage; he was a widower and had a right to mourn.

"The manager wanted to bring out something very comic, so that the public might not feel the loss of the harlequin and columbine, and therefore the clown was required to be doubly amusing; he danced and leaped, with despair in his heart, and the public was quite satisfied. 'Bravo, bravissimo!' they cried, and applauded frantically. The clown received a call; he was inimitable.

"Late at night, when the performance was over, he wandered out of the town to the lonely cemetery. The wreath of flowers upon the columbine's grave was already faded; the clown sat down upon the grave, his head leaning upon his hand, his eyes upturned to me. It was a scene for a painter. The grotesque figure looked like a carved monument; a clown upon a grave; a strange, incongruous spectacle!"

"If the public could have seen their favourite, they would have applauded him more heartily than ever, and cried, 'Bravo! Bravissimo!'"

What will the Dogs think?

Listen to what the moon says. "I have seen the young cadet put on his epaulettes for the first time, the young maiden stand before her mirror in her first ball-dress, and the royal bride arrayed in her wedding robes; but never have I seen such rapturous delight as I saw to-night shown by a little maid of four years old.

"She had just put on, for the first time, a new blue dress and a hat with pink ribbons. Every one in the room ran to the light, for my beams were not clear enough to show the finery.

"The little creature stood in the centre of the group, stiff as a wax doll, her plump arms held carefully away from her dress, and her

fingers outspread. Oh, how her eyes and her whole face shone with joy!

"'To-morrow, you may go a walk into town,' said her mother.

"The child looked up at her hat and down at her dress, and cried, with a happy smile, 'Oh, mother, *what* will the dogs think when they see me in my new frock?'"

The City of the Waves.

"I brought you a picture from Pompeii," said the moon, "from the corpse-like city set up for a show among her living neighbours. I know another stranger still—no corpse this time, but a spectre, the ghost of a city.

"Everywhere, wherever I have seen a fountain fall plashing into its marble basin, I seemed to hear the legend of the floating city. The running brooks murmur its name, the waves on the seashore sing of it.

"A mist floats over the surface of the sea; it is the widow's veil; the bridegroom of the sea is dead, his halls and castles are lifeless ruins; his home is now his grave.

"Do you know his home? The sound of horses' feet, the roll of carriage wheels have never been heard within its streets; the fish darts through them silently, and the gondola glides ghostlike over the green waters.

"I will show you the forum," said the moon, "the great square of the city, and you will think yourself transplanted into a city of dreams. The grass grows between the marble stones, and myriad doves fly round the high tower in the rosy dawn. Silent arcades and long corridors surround you on three sides; yonder sits the Turk with his long pipe; the beautiful Greek boy leans against the columns and looks up at the banners and trophies of ancient times and past splendour.

"The flags hang down like folds of crape; a little girl has put down her heavy bucket of water below them and sat down to rest; the strap by which she carries it is yet slung across her shoulder, and she leans against the shaft of a column set up to celebrate a victory.

"It is no fairy palace, but a church, which you see before you, the gilded domes and cupolas sparkle in my beams; the brazen horses overhead have taken long journeys, like the enchanted steeds of a fairy tale, they have travelled far and wide.

"Do you see the pictured glories of the walls and windows? It seems as if, in carrying out the adornment of the temple, some great genius had followed the caprice of a child. Look at the winged lions on the column; the gold sparkles yet, but the wings are clipped, the lion is dead. The bridegroom of the sea is dead; all is desolate in the empty halls, and where, of old, the glowing pictures hung, the walls stand naked and bare.

"The lazzaroni sleep under the columned arches where once no step but a noble's might pass.

"From the deep wells, or is it from the *piombi* of the Bridge of

Sighs, there comes a sigh, as when, in years past, the music ceased on the gay gondolas and the bridal ring fell from the Bucentaur into the gleaming waves of the Adrian Sea.

"Veil thyself in mist, oh widowed waters! draw the folds closely over the breast, and let them rest upon thy bridegroom's grave—Venice, the marble, ghostlike city."

A Tragedy.

"I looked in one night at a great theatre," said the moon; "the whole house was filled with spectators, for a new actor was about to make his first appearance. My beams fell through the little window in the wall; a painted face was pressed against the pane; it was that of the hero of the night.

"A soldier's beard curled on his chin, but his eyes were full of tears; he had just been hissed off the stage, and he had deserved it. Poor fellow! And yet no failure can be tolerated in the region of art; and though the man felt keenly and loved art deeply, his love was not returned.

"The prompter's bell sounded, and the actor had to put on an air of bold and noble daring, and to play out his part before the public, who laughed him to scorn.

"When the play was over, I saw a man wrapped in a cloak steal down the steps. It was the despised tragedian. The machinists whispered one to another as he passed. I followed the poor wretch to his home. Hanging is an ugly death, and one has not always poison about one. I know he thought of both.

"I saw him study his pale face in the mirror, and half close his eyes to see if he should make a handsome corpse; a man may be profoundly miserable and profoundly artificial at the selfsame moment. He thought of death and suicide; he wept bitterly over his hard fate, and when one has stopped to do that one does not kill one's self.

"A year passed by, and I saw the same painted face again, the same curly beard. This time it was on the boards of a wandering booth, among a company of strolling players. He looked up to me and smiled, and yet only a minute since he had been hissed off the stage again, this time by a wretched, untaught audience.

"That night a poverty-stricken hearse drove out of the town, and not one mourner followed it. Our painted hero was a suicide at last. The driver of the hearse was the only attendant, no one followed but myself. They buried him in the corner by the churchyard wall; the stinging-nettles grow rank close to the spot, and the sexton throws down thorns and weeds from the other graves above his resting-place."

Past and Present.

"I come from Rome," said the moon. "There, in the centre of the town, on one of the seven hills, lie the ruins of the imperial fortress.

The wild fig-tree grows in the rifts of the walls, and covers their bare spaces with its grey-green leaves; between the heaps of rubbish the ass treads the laurel underfoot, and feeds on the unfruitful thistle. Here, whence, in past ages, the Roman eagles took their flight—came, saw, and conquered—a passage leads to a little miserable house built of clay, between two broken marble columns. The vine hangs like a funeral garland over the crooked window. An old woman lived there with her grandchild; they were sole rulers of the imperial fortress, and showed to strangers its past treasures.

"Nothing is left of the splendid throne-room but the bare walls; the dark cypress flings her black shadow over the place where the throne stood. The rubbish lies a foot deep on the creviced floor. The little maiden often sits there on her wooden stool when the bells ring for vespers.

"Through the hole in the door at her side she can overlook half the city of Rome, as far as the great dome of Saint Peter's.

"To-night it was silent as ever, and the little girl stood in my full light. She carried on her head a clay pitcher, filled with water, and shaped like the pitchers of ancient Rome; her scanty petticoat with its short sleeves was torn, and I kissed the child's delicately sloped shoulders, her black eyes, and the dark masses of her waving hair. She toiled painfully up the steep steps formed of pieces of broken marble and capitals of fallen columns. Bright-coloured lizards darted across her feet, but she was not afraid. She raised her hand to pull the bell; a hare's foot tied to the end of a piece of string was the only bell of the imperial fortress.

"She paused a moment. What was she thinking of? Perhaps of the beautiful child Jesus, who, dressed in silver and gold, stood beneath her in the chapel, where the silver lamps were shining, where her young playmates joined in the song which she knew too, though I do not know it.

"She gave a sudden start, the earthen pitcher fell from her shoulder and broke to pieces on the chiselled blocks of marble.

"She burst into tears; the fair daughter of the imperial fortress wept over the wretched broken pitcher. There she stood crying bitterly, barefooted and afraid, not daring to pull the bell—the entrance bell of the imperial fortress."

In the Desert.

"I followed the caravan from a city in Fezzan," said the moon; "it halted in the outskirts of the desert, on one of the salt plains that glitter like a lake of ice, and are covered for a short distance with a thin layer of sand. The eldest traveller, his water-flask hanging from his girdle, and a sack filled with unleavened bread upon his head, traced a square upon the sand, and wrote with his staff a few words from the Koran. Then the whole caravan passed over the consecrated place. One young merchant, a child of the sun, as I saw by his

glowing eyes and finely-formed limbs, rode thoughtfully on his white snorting steed.

"Was he thinking of his fair, young bride? Only a few days since, the camels, adorned with rare skins and precious shawls, bore the beautiful maiden to the walls of the town. Drums beat and fifes resounded, the women sang a joyous chorus, and shots were fired round the camel. The bridegroom shot farthest, and fastest, and truest, and now he was crossing the lonely desert with the caravan.

"I followed them for many nights. I saw them rest between the palm trees by the well; a knife was thrust into the fallen camel, and his flesh was roasted at the fire. My rays cooled the burning sand; my beams showed them the black rocks which rose like dead islands out of a sea of sand. They met no hostile tribes upon the trackless way; no storm arose, no sandy column brought destruction over the caravan.

"At home the fair wife prays for her husband and her father. 'Are they dead?' she asks my golden crescent. 'Are they dead?' she asks my round disc. The desert is far behind them now; they are sitting under the tall palm trees, where the crane circles round them with wings an ell long, and the pelican looks down upon them from the branches of the mimosa. The luxuriant foliage is trodden under-foot by the heavy feet of elephants; a band of negroes is returning from a market in the interior of the country. The women with copper coins twisted in their black hair, and wearing indigo-coloured garments, drive forward the heavy-laden oxen, on whose backs the naked black children sleep soundly.

"A negro leads a lion cub in a string; they approach the caravan; the young merchant sits motionless and silent, thinking of his young wife, dreaming in this land of the blacks of his fair white blossom beyond the desert. He raised his head——." A cloud passed over the moon, and then another and another. I heard no more that night.

The Convent.

"I was looking down in the Tyrol," said the moon: "I saw the dark pines throw deep shadows athwart the rocks. I saw Saint Christopher with the child Jesus on his shoulder, standing against the houses; a gigantic figure reaching from the basement to the gabled roof. Saint Florian poured water on the burning roof, and the Christ hung on the Cross at the wayside.

"Old pictures these for the new race of travellers; but I saw them set up one after another. High on the rocky slope a lonely convent is perched like a swallow's nest; two of the sisters were ringing the bell in the high tower. They were both young, and so their glances fell far across the mountains, out into the world.

"A travelling carriage drove by them along the path below; the post horn sounded gaily and the nuns looked down with wandering thoughts; the eyes of the youngest were full of tears.

"The horn sounded fainter and fainter; the clanging of the convent bell drowned its dying tones."

Pe and Soui-Hong.

"Last night I looked down upon a lawn in China," said the moon. "My rays lit up the bare walls that form the streets; here and there is a gate, but it is tightly shut, for what matters the world outside to a Chinaman? Closed jalousies cover the windows behind the house wall, but from the temple a faint light stole through the panes.

"I looked in and saw the glittering splendour; from ceiling to floor the walls were covered with bright pictures taken from the lives of the gods upon the earth, and painted in vivid colours with plenty of burning gold. In every niche stood an image of some divinity wrought in white metal, and half hidden by gay flags and glittering draperies, and before every image stood an altar covered with flowers, tapers, and vessels of holy water. In the place of honour, high above the rest, was the image of Fu, the chief of the gods, dressed in silken robes of the sacred yellow colour.

"At the foot of the altar sat a living form; a young priest; he seemed to be praying, but in the midst of his prayer he sank into a reverie; a sinful reverie it must have been, for his cheeks glowed fever red, and his head sank lower on his breast.

"Poor Soui-Hong! Perhaps he was dreaming that he was working in one of the little flower beds of the gardens hidden behind the walls of the street, and that the work was pleasanter than that of watching the tapers in the temple. Or was he longing to sit down at the richly spread table, and between every dish to wipe his mouth with silver paper? Or was his sin so great, that had his thoughts been spoken aloud they would have drawn down upon him the doom of death? Did they wander forth with the ships of the barbarians to the distant English shores?

"No; his thoughts did not reach so far: and yet they were as sinful as the warm blood of youth could produce: sinful above all in this place, before the statues of Fu and of the sacred gods. I know whither his thoughts were wandering. At the remotest end of the town, on the flat stone-paved roof where the parapet seems built of porcelain and the pretty vases stand filled with great, bell-like flowers, there stands the fair Pe, with her slanting, roguish eyes, her pouting lips, and her tiny feet. Her slipper was narrow, but her heart was narrower still. She raised her finely-formed arms, and the satin sleeves rustled as she did so. Before her stood a glass bowl of gold and silver fish; she stirred the water softly with a thin, painted stick; very softly, for she too was dreaming. Thinking, perhaps, how bright and glittering the fish looked, how safe they were in their glass home, how well fed, day by day—and how much happier they would be at liberty!

"Yes; the fair Pe knew that; and her thoughts flew far away towards the temple, but not to meditate upon the gods. Poor Pe!

poor Soui-Hong! their earthly thoughts met, but my cold beams lay between them like a cherub's sword."

The Swan's Flight.

"The sea was becalmed," said the moon; "the water was as transparent as the pure air through which I sailed; I could see in the depths below the strange sea plants whose giant stems twined fathom deep, like the interlacing branches of the forest. The fish darted above them to and fro.

"High in the air came a flight of wild swans; one of them lingered behind and sank downwards, with weary wings; lower and lower he sank, his eyes fixed on the airy caravan which flew farther and farther away; his wings were wide outspread, he sank like a bubble through the silent air and touched the surface of the water. His head lay back upon his white wings; he lay like a lotus flower upon the breast of the quiet, sheltered sea.

"The wind rose and curled the shining stretch of waters; the great, broad waves rolled on brilliant as the purest ether; the swan raised his head, and the bright spray fell in showers of blue fire over his breast and wings. The dawn tinged the rosy waves; and the swan arose, strengthened and refreshed, and flew, to meet the rising sun, towards the faint blue coastline, whither the flight of swans were already gone; but he flew alone, with longing in his breast—flew alone across the blue, tumbling waters."

The Crown and the Coffin.

"Between the dusky pinewoods," said the moon, "near the gloomy shores of the Roxen, lies the old convent church of Wreta. My rays steal through the railing in the wall to the high roof where kings lie sleeping in their stone coffins. Above them, on the wall, hangs the sign of earthly greatness—a royal crown; but it is only made of wood, painted and gilded. It is held in its place by a wooden peg driven into the wall; the worm has eaten through the gilded wood, the spider has spun her web from the crown to the coffin below, it hangs like a crape banner hung out in sign of mourning for the dead.

"How sound they slumber! I remember them all so well. I can recall yet their bright, haughty smile, their lips that spoke of keen joy and of deep sorrow. When the steamboat, that darts to and fro like a magic spell between the mountains, brings a stranger to these shores, he comes sometimes to visit the lonely cloister, asks for the kings' names, and they sound forgotten and dead. He glances upward to the worm-eaten crown and smiles; if he has a kind heart there is a touch of sadness in his smile.

"Sleep on, ye dead! The moon remembers you, and in the dead of night sends down her silent beams to your silent kingdom, over which hangs the painted pinewood crown."

Wanderers.

"Close by the roadside," said the moon, "there stands an inn, and opposite to it is a coachhouse. It had just been roofed, and I looked through the rifts and open spaces into the shadow-filled place. The turkey had gone to roost among the rafters, and the saddle was tossed aside into the empty crib.

"In the middle of the floor stood a post-chaise; the travellers were sleeping while the horses were being watered, and while the coachman stretched his limbs—though I know better than any one else that he had slept soundly for more than half the journey.

"The door of the coachman's room stood open, the bed looked as if it had been turned topsy-turvey; the candlestick was on the floor, and the light had burnt down nearly to the socket. The wind blew cold through the cracks of the walls; it was nearer dawn than midnight. In the shed yonder a family of wandering musicians were sleeping on the ground; the father and mother dreamed of the burning spirit in the brandy-flask, and their little daughter dreamed of the burning tears in her eyes: her harp lay at her side, her dog slept at her feet."

The Writing on the Wall.

"Through the silent vaults of air," said the moon, "I look down on the drifting clouds and see great shadows hurrying over the earth below. I looked down into a prison, a closed carriage stood before it, a prisoner was to be brought forth. My rays pierced the iron bars of the window and saw him writing something on the wall. They were not words he was tracing, but a melody, a last outpouring of his soul, a farewell to the place he was about to leave that night. The door opened; he was led out, and he looked up to my round disc; but clouds sailed between my face and his as if we were never to see each other. He entered the carriage, the door was shut, the whip cracked; the horses galloped, amid clouds of dust, towards the wood.

"My rays could not follow them there, but they entered the prison cell and strove to read the writing on the wall; his last farewell, for where words fail music speaks. But my rays could only reach a few notes; the greater part was wrapped in darkness. Was it a dirge he had written, or a song of triumph? Was he driving to the arms of his dear ones or to his death? My rays cannot read all the secrets of the mortals on the earth below me.

"Through the silent vaults of air I look down on the drifting clouds and see great shadows hurrying over the earth below."

Bread and Butter.

"I am very fond of children," said the moon, "especially of the little ones; they are so droll: often, when they are little thinking of me, I watch them through the half-drawn curtains of the window. It is so

pretty to see how they set about undressing themselves! first comes the little, round, naked shoulder out of the tiny frock, and then the plump, white arm; or else I see the stockings pulled off, and a pretty little leg, round and firm, comes in sight, with a foot fit to be kissed—and I do kiss it!" cried the moon.

"Last night—I must tell you this story—last night, I looked in at a window where the blinds were not drawn down, for there was no house opposite, and I saw a whole roomful of little brothers and sisters. Among them was a little maid of four years old, who knew the Lord's Prayer as well as any one else; her mother sits by her bedside every night to hear her say it, and then the little one gets a kiss, and the mother stays till she has gone to sleep—not a very long time, for the little eyes are soon shut.

"Last night the two eldest ones were rather wild; one of them hopped about the room on one leg in his long, white nightgown; the second stood on a chair, with the clothes of all the others round him; he was acting, and the rest were to guess who he was trying to represent; the two next were putting up the playthings tidily in the drawer, and that was quite right, but their mother told them they must all be silent, for their little sister was saying her prayers.

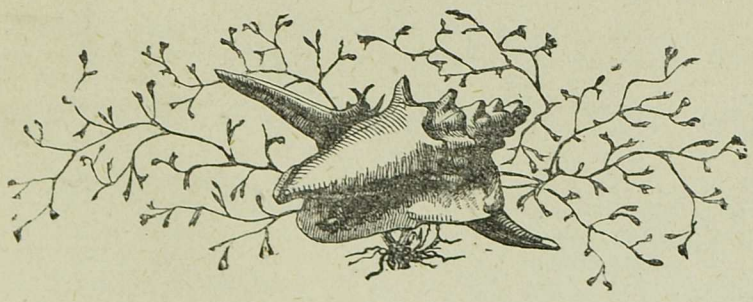
"I looked in over the lamp," said the moon; "the little girl of four years old knelt by her bed in her clean, white nightgown; her hands were folded, her little face was very serious, she was saying the Lord's Prayer aloud.

"'What is that?' cried her mother, interrupting her; 'what did you say after "Give us this day our daily bread?" I did not hear what you said; what was it?'

"The child was silent and looked shyly into her mother's face.

"'What else did you say besides "Give us this day our daily bread?'"

"'Don't be angry, mother,' said the little girl; 'I said, "and give us plenty of butter on it, too."'"



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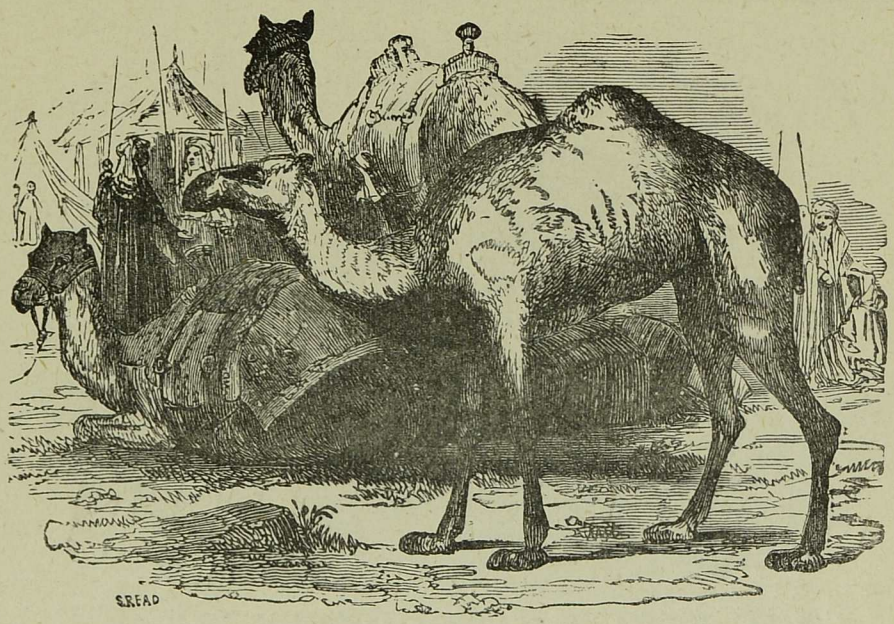

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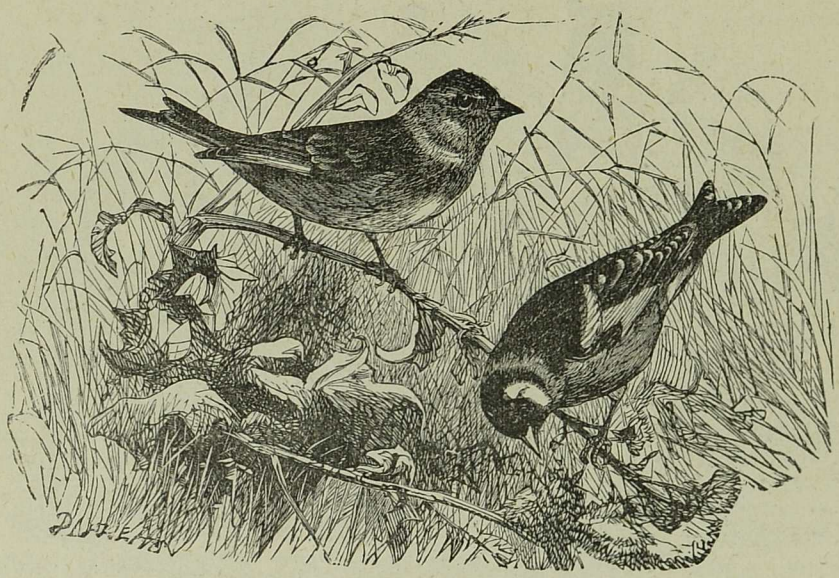

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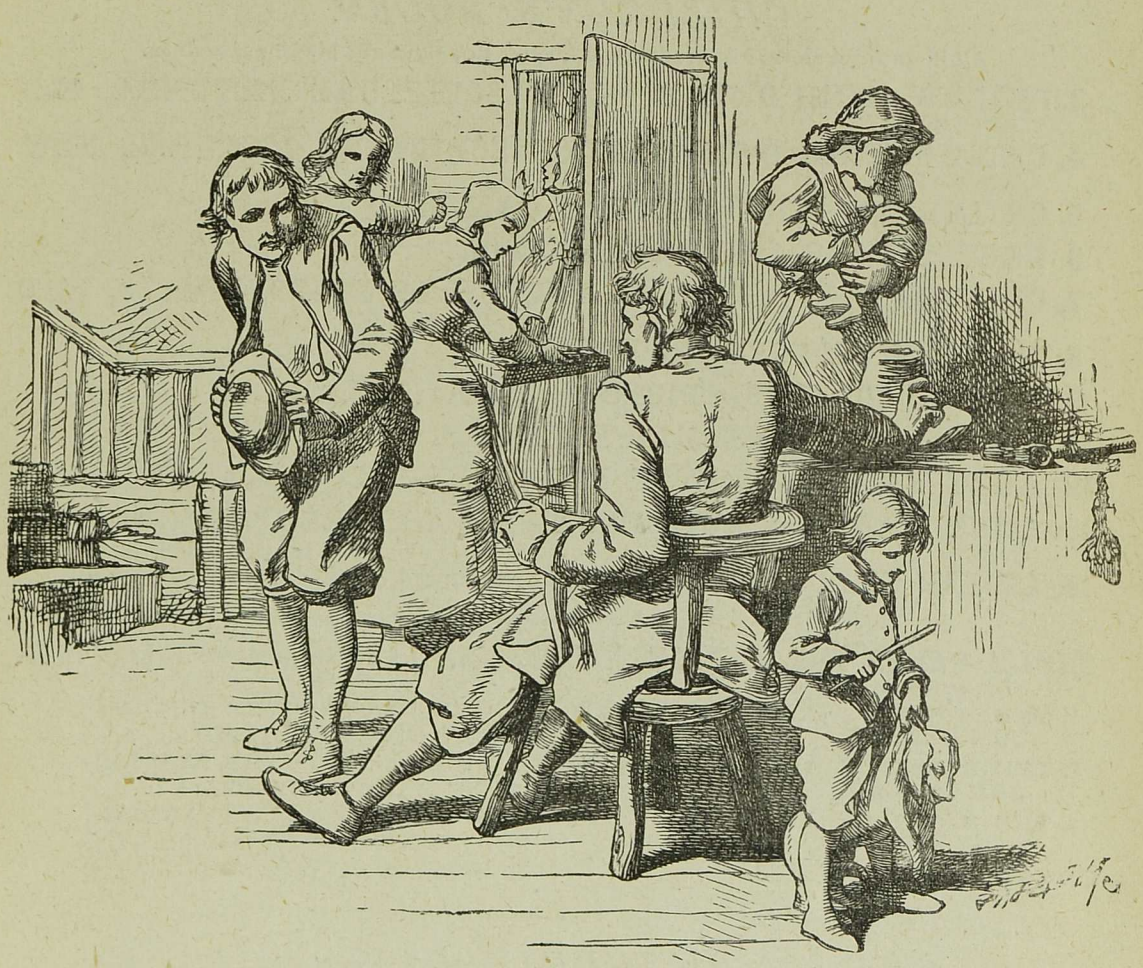

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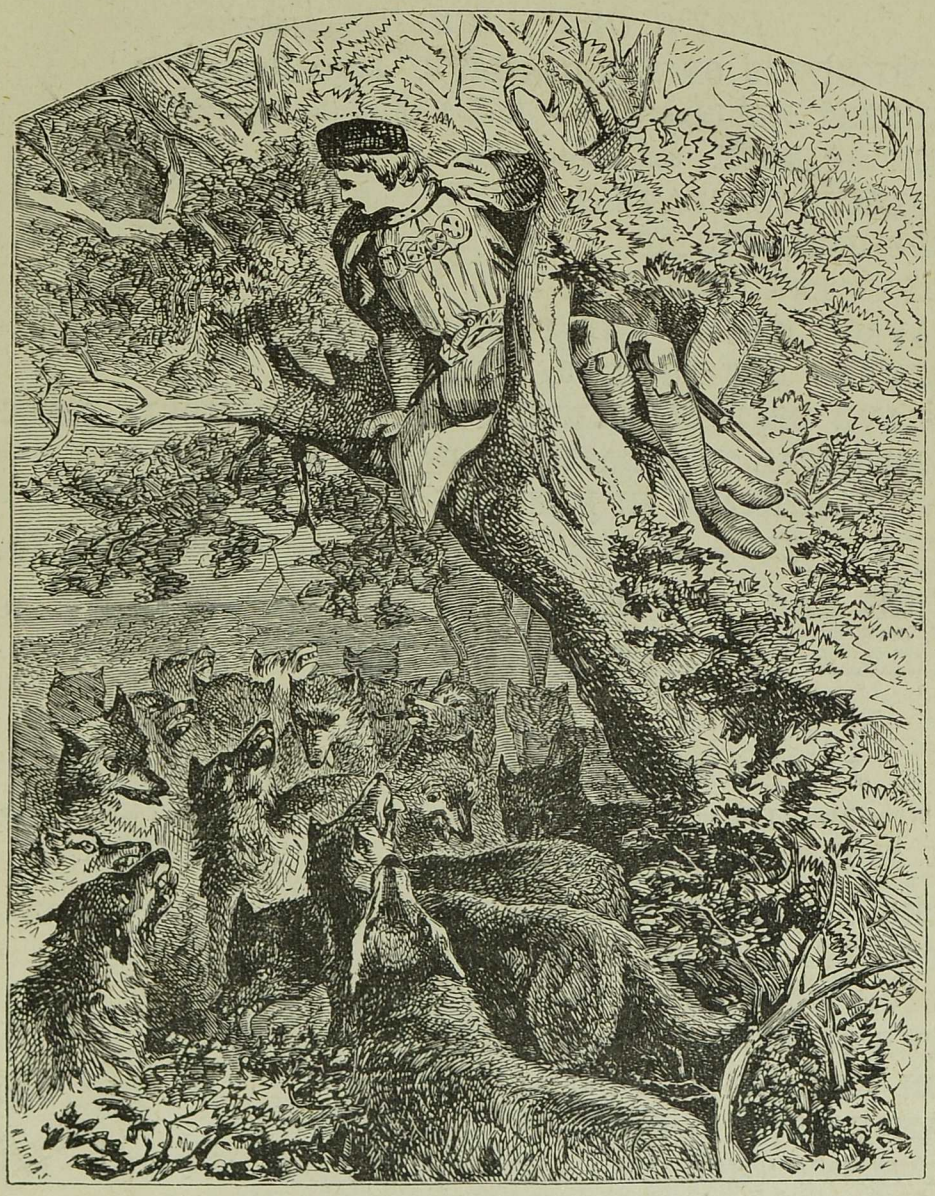

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