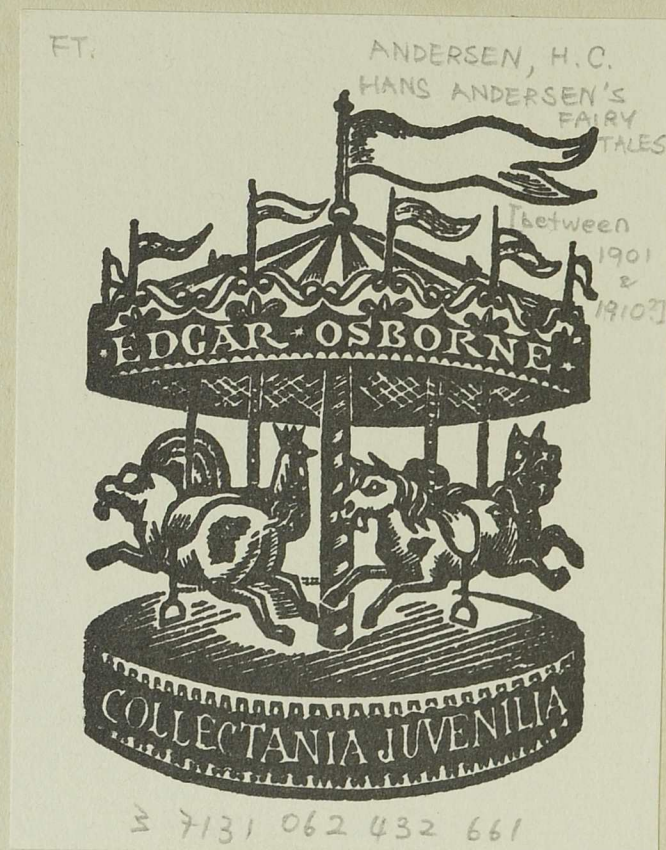


HANS ANDERSEN'S
Fairy Stories



Illustrated by MABEL LUCIE ATTWELL

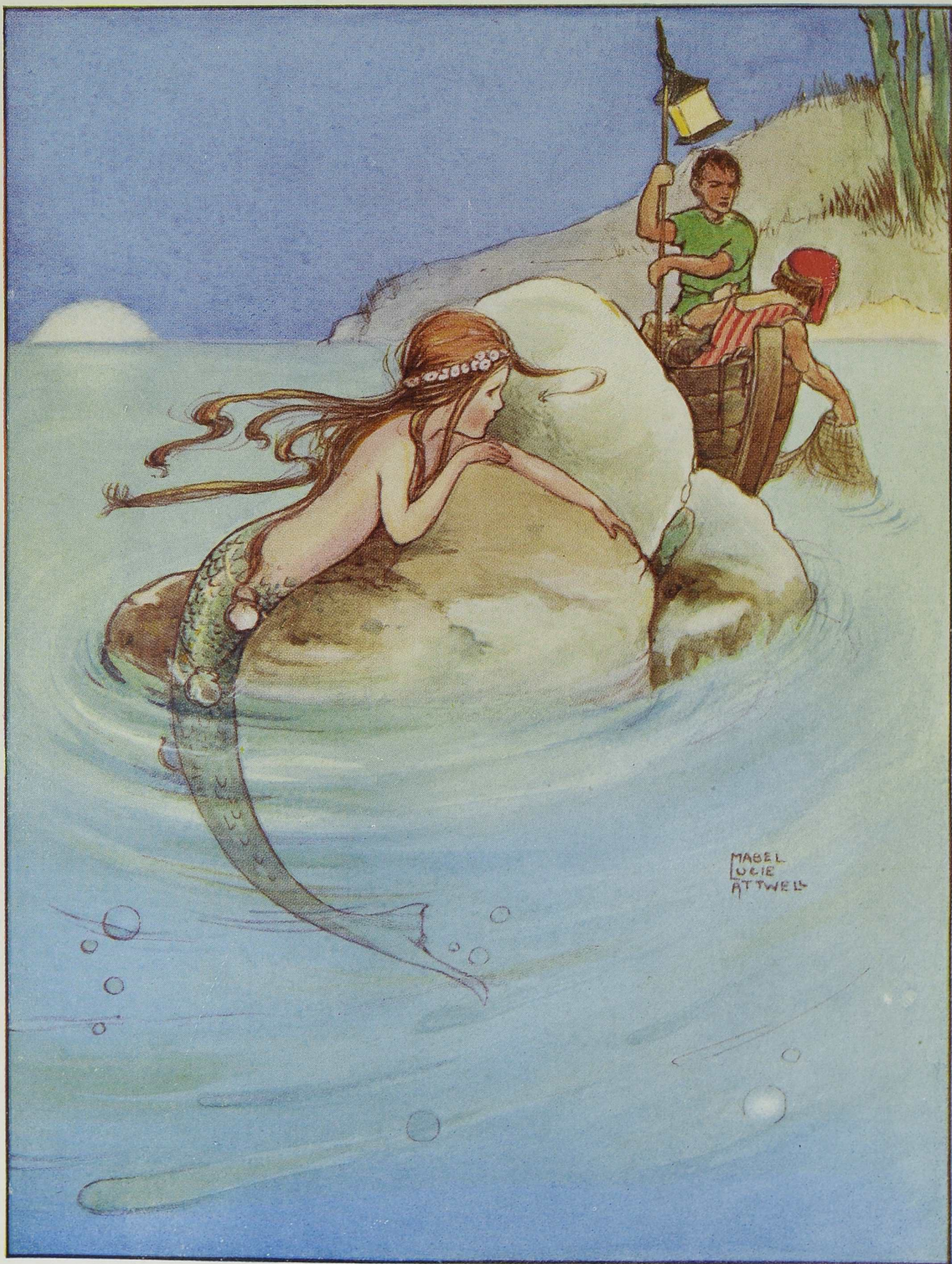
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THE LITTLE MERMAID

HANS ANDERSEN'S Fairy Stories

Illustrated by
MABEL LUCIE ATTWELL



Edited by
Capt. Edric Vredenburg
10th London Regt.

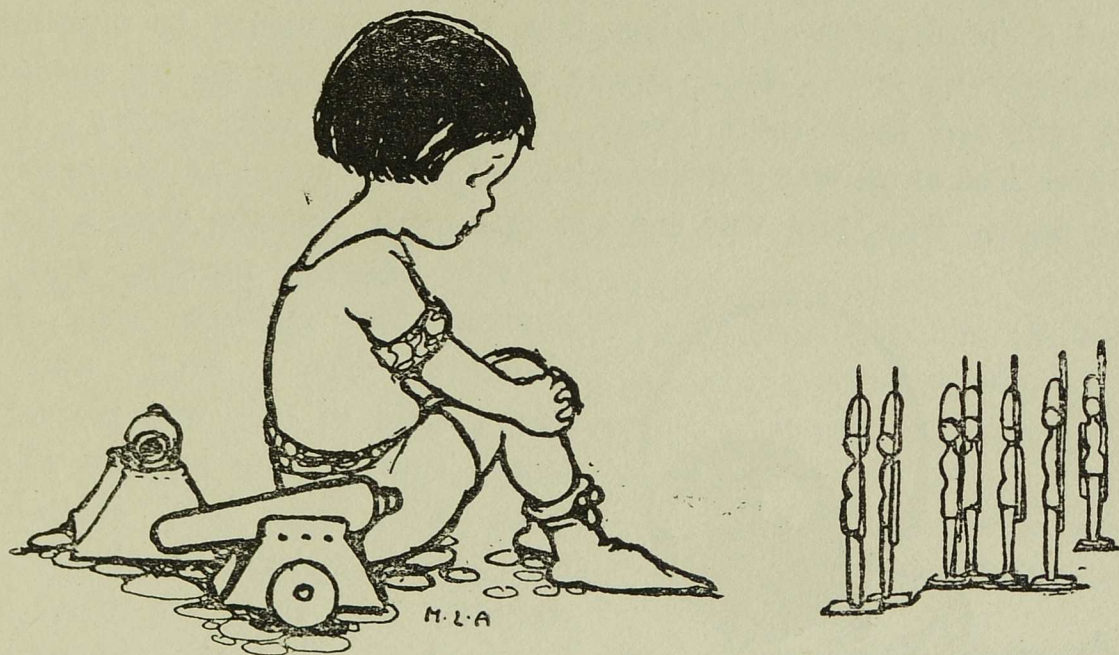
RAPHAEL TUCK & SONS, LTD
LONDON · PARIS · NEW YORK ·

DESIGNED & PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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THE STEADFAST TIN SOLDIER

THERE were once five-and-twenty tin soldiers that were all brothers, for they were all made out of the same old tin pan. They all shouldered their muskets, looked stiff, and wore a smart red and blue uniform. The first thing they heard in this world, when the lid was taken off the box in which they lay, were the words "Tin Soldiers!" spoken by a little boy, who was clapping his hands with joy. They had been given him on his birthday, and he now set them up on the table. Each soldier was exactly the image of the other, except one that was a little different to the rest; and he had only one leg, having been melted the last of the batch, when there was not enough tin left. Yet he stood as firmly on his one leg as the others on their two legs; and it was precisely he who became a remarkable character.

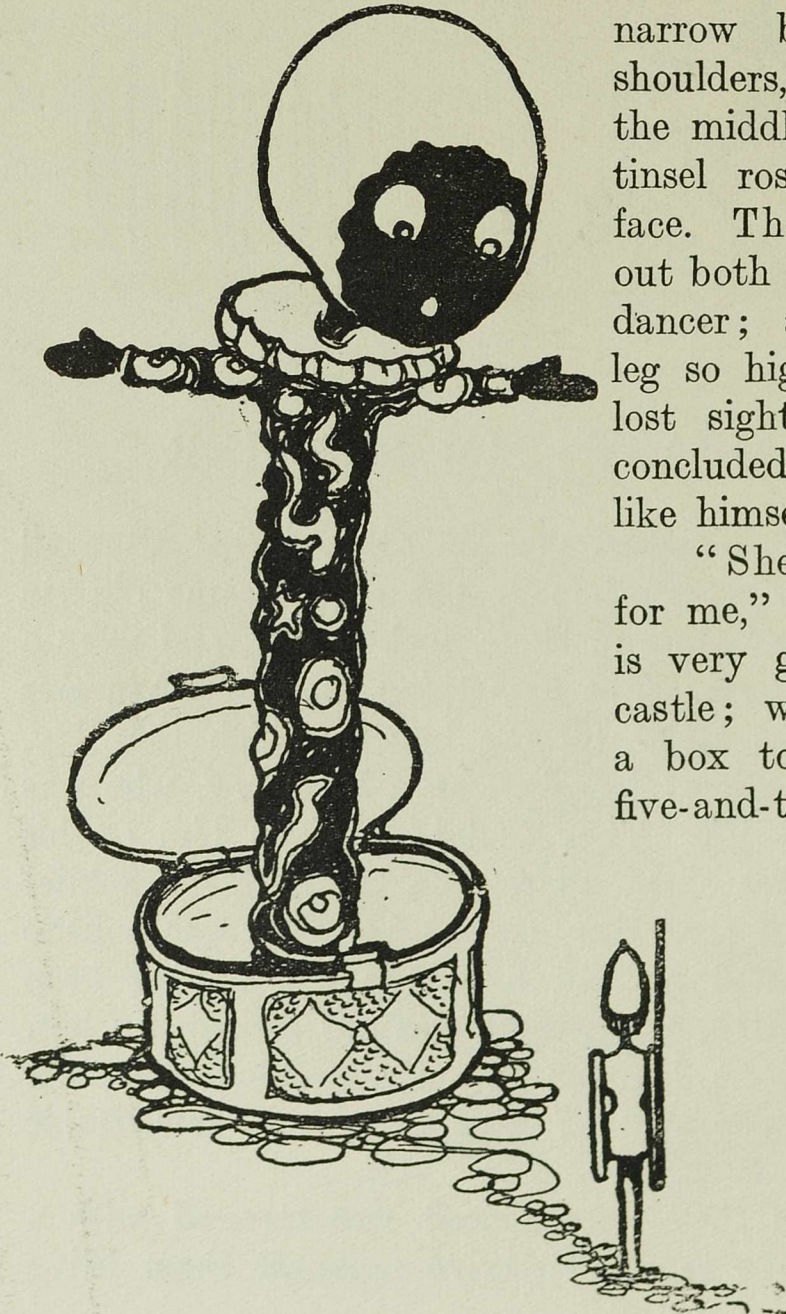
The table on which they were placed was strewn with a number of other toys, the most attractive amongst them being

a pretty little paper castle. One might see through the tiny windows into the rooms. In front of the castle stood little trees, round a small piece of looking-glass, that was meant to represent a transparent lake. Wax swans were swimming on its surface, that reflected back their image. This was all very pretty; but the prettiest of all was a diminutive lady, who stood at the castle's open door. She, too, was cut out of paper; but she wore a dress

of the clearest muslin, and a narrow blue ribbon over her shoulders, like a scarf; and in the middle of this was placed a tinsel rose, as big as her whole face. The little lady stretched out both her arms, for she was a dancer; and then she lifted her leg so high, that the tin soldier lost sight of it, and therefore concluded that she had only one, like himself.

"She would make a fit wife for me," thought he, "only she is very genteel, and lives in a castle; while I have nothing but a box to live in, and we are five-and-twenty of us in that

It would be no place for a lady! Still, I must try and scrape acquaintance with her." And then he laid himself at full length behind a snuff-box that happened to be on the table, and from thence he would



peep at the delicate little lady, who continued standing on one leg without losing her balance.

Towards evening, all the other tin soldiers were put back into the box, and the people of the house went to bed; so now the playthings began to play at various games. The tin soldiers rattled in their box, for they wanted to join the rest, but they could not lift up the lid. The nut-cracker threw somersets, and the pencil jumped about the table; and there was such a din, that the canary-bird awoke, and began to speak, and in poetry, too. The only ones who did not move from their places were the tin soldier and the dancer. She stood on tip-toe, and stretched out both her arms; and he was just as persevering on his one leg. He did not take his eyes off her for a single moment.

The clock now struck twelve, when—crack! up flew the lid of the snuff-box; there was no snuff in it, but a little black gnome, for it was a puzzle.

“Tin soldier,” said the gnome, “don’t be hankering after forbidden fruit.”

But the tin soldier pretended not to have heard him.

“Only wait till to-morrow,” observed the gnome.

Next morning, when the children were up, the tin soldier was placed in the window; and whether it was the gnome or the draught that did it, certain it is that the window fell open and down the soldier fell, head over ears, from the third story into the street below. It was a tremendous fall! His cap and bayonet stuck fast between the flagstones, while his leg stood upright in the air.

The servant-girl and the little boy went downstairs immediately to look for him; but though they had nearly trodden upon him, they could not manage to find him. If the tin soldier had but called out: “Here am I!” they might have found him; but he did not think it consistent with his uniform to cry out for help.

It now began to rain. The drops fell faster and faster, and there was soon a regular shower. When it was over, two boys that were idling about the streets, happened to pass by. “Look,”

said one of them, "there lies a tin soldier. He shall have a sail in a boat." And so they made a boat out of a newspaper, and placed the soldier inside it, and set him floating down the gutter. The two boys ran by his side, clapping their hands. Bless us and save us! what waves there were in the gutter, and what a strong current! It was, to be sure, at high water, owing to the rain. The paper boat rocked up and down, and sometimes whirled round so fast that the tin soldier trembled; yet he remained at his post, made no faces, looked straight before him, and shouldered his musket.

On a sudden, the boat shot under a long bridge that lay across the gutter, where it was as dark as in his box.

"Where am I going to?" thought he. "This must surely be the gnome's fault! Oh! if the little lady were but here at my side in the boat, it might then be as dark as it pleased, and I should not care."

A huge rat, that lived under the bridge of the gutter, now made his appearance.

"Have you a pass?" inquired the rat. "Come, out with it." But the tin soldier remained silent, and held his musket still more tightly.

The boat flew past, and the rat followed. How he did gnash his teeth, and call out to the wood-shavings and the straw: "Stop him! stop him! He has not paid the toll, nor shown his pass."

But the stream gushed on more madly still, and the tin soldier could already see daylight at the point where the bridge ended; at the same time, however, he heard a rushing sound, well calculated to appal even the bravest. Only fancy! just where the bridge left off, the waters widened into a large sheet that fell into the mouth of a sewer; and such a situation was as perilous to him as it would be for us to sail down a waterfall in a boat.

He was now so near the precipice, that he could no longer keep himself back. The boat dashed on, and the poor tin soldier kept as stiff as ever he could, that nobody should say of him he

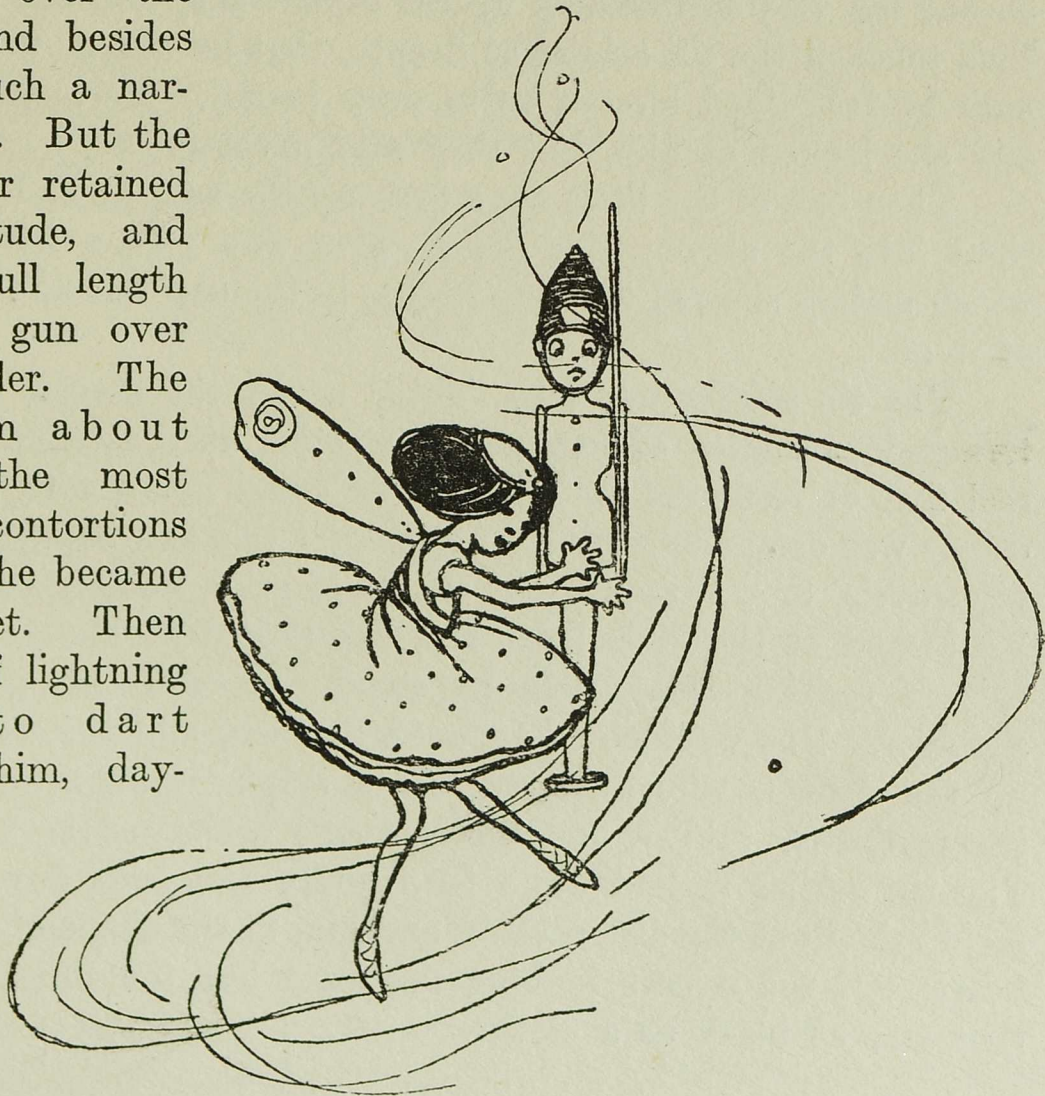


THE STEADFAST TIN SOLDIER

had even so much as winked an eye. The boat now spun round three or four times, till it was filled with water to the edge—and sink it must! The tin soldier stood up to his neck in water, while the boat sank deeper and deeper, the paper went gradually to rags, and the waters now closed over the tin soldier's head. He thought of the elegant little dancer whom he should never see again, and in his ears rang the burden of the old song:—

“On, soldier! on—on—though swords clash and shots rattle,
'Tis thy fate to find death in the midst of battle.”

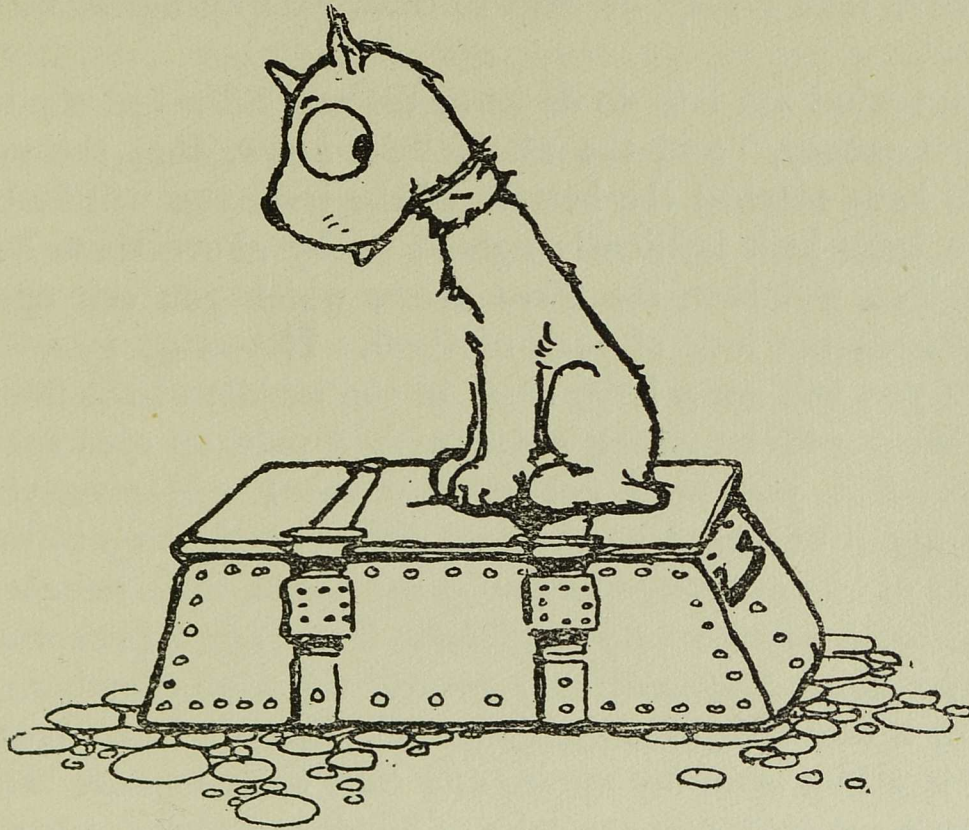
And now the paper fell in two, and down the tin soldier was flung—but was instantly swallowed up by a huge fish. Oh! how dark it was inside the fish!—worse a great deal than under the bridge over the gutter, and besides it was such a narrow place. But the tin soldier retained his fortitude, and lay at full length with his gun over his shoulder. The fish swam about making the most frightful contortions—at last he became quite quiet. Then a flash of lightning seemed to dart through him, daylight appeared, and a voice called out:



"The tin soldier, as I'm alive!" The fish had been caught, taken to market, and sold, and was now in the kitchen where the cook was opening it with a large knife. She picked up the soldier by the waist, between her finger and thumb, and carried him into the sitting-room, where everybody was desirous of seeing such a celebrated man, who had travelled about inside a fish—but the tin soldier was not the more conceited for that. They placed him on the table, and there—what odd events do happen in the world to be sure! The tin soldier found himself once more in the identical room in which he had been before, and saw the same children, and the same playthings on the table, together with the noble castle and the elegant little dancer. She was still standing on one leg, and still holding up the other—she, too, was steadfast. This touched the tin soldier so deeply, that he was fit to weep tin, only he restrained himself as in duty bound. He looked at her, and she looked at him, but they said nothing.

Then one of the little boys took up the soldier, and flung him right into the stove; nor did he give any reason for so doing, which plainly showed that the gnome in the box was at the bottom of it all.

The tin soldier was now lighted up by the flames, and felt a tremendous degree of heat; but whether it proceeded from the real fire, or from the fire of love, he could not exactly tell. His colour was completely gone, but whether this had happened during his travels, or was merely the effects of grief, nobody could guess. He looked at the little lady, and she looked at him, and he felt himself melting away, still he stood firm with his gun on his shoulder. The door now happened to open, and the wind caught up the dancer, who fluttered like a sylph, right into the stove beside the tin soldier, and was instantly consumed by the flames. The tin soldier melted down to a lump, and next day when the maid raked out the ashes, she found him in the shape of a little tin heart. Of the dancer nothing remained but the tinsel rose, and that was as black as a cinder.



THE TINDER BOX

A SOLDIER came marching along on the high road. Left! Right! Left! Right! He had his knapsack on his back, and his sword at his side, for he had been to war, and was returning home.

On his way he happened to meet a very repulsive-looking old witch, whose under-lip hung down to her chin. She said: "Good-evening, soldier—what a handsome sword, and what a large knapsack you have got! You are a very proper sort of soldier! And you shall have as much money as ever you like."

"Thank you, you old witch," said the soldier.

"You see that large tree?" said the witch, pointing to a tree near at hand. "Well! it is quite hollow inside. You must climb to the top, and then you will see a hole, through which you must let yourself down quite deep into the tree. I will tie a rope round

your body, that I may be able to draw you up again, when you call out."

"But what am I to do down in the tree?" asked the soldier.

"Get money," said the witch, "for know, that the moment you will have reached the bottom of the tree, you will find yourself in a large hall, brilliantly lighted up by above three hundred lamps. You will then see three doors, which you can open, for the key is in the lock of each of them. If you go into the first chamber you will see a large chest in the middle of the floor, and on the chest will be sitting a dog with a pair of eyes as big as tea-cups. But you need not mind him. I will give you my checked apron to spread on the floor; then go right up to the dog, seize hold of him and place him upon my apron, open the chest and take as many pennies as you please. They are copper ones. If you prefer silver, you need only go into the next chamber. Only there sits a dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels. But never mind him. Place him upon my apron, and take some money. If, however, you want gold, you can take as much as you can carry away, by going into the third chamber. Only the dog that sits on the money chest in that room has eyes as big as a tower. Believe me, he is a bad dog! Yet you need not mind. If you set him upon my apron, he won't hurt you, and then take as much gold as you like out of the chest."

"This is no bad job!" said the soldier; "but what shall I give you, you old witch; for, of course, you don't oblige me for nothing?"

"Yet not a single penny do I require," said the witch. "The only thing I ask you to bring me is an old tinder-box, which my grandmother forgot last time she went down there."

"Well, then, tie the rope round me," said the soldier.

"Here it is," said the witch, "and here is my checked apron."

The soldier then climbed up the tree, slid down through the aperture, and found himself as the witch had told him he would, in a large hall below, where many hundreds of lamps were burning

He now opened the first door—oh, dear!—there stood the dog staring at him with eyes as big as tea-cups.

“You are a nice fellow!” said the soldier, setting him upon the witch’s apron; and then he took as many copper pennies as his pockets could hold; and shutting down the lid, he replaced the dog upon it, and went into the other room. And sure enough, there sat the dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels.

“You had better not stare at me so,” said the soldier, “or you will have tears in your eyes!” And he then set the dog upon the witch’s apron. But when he saw what a load of silver there was in the chest, he flung away all the copper he had taken, and filled his pockets and knapsack with nothing but silver. Then he went into the third chamber. Now that was really hideous! The dog had, positively, a pair of eyes as large as two towers, that kept turning about like wheels.

“Good-evening,” said the soldier, touching his cap, for he had never seen such a dog before. On closer inspection, however, he thought he had made enough ado, and therefore lifted him on to the floor, and opened the chest.

Bless us! what a deal of gold was there to be seen! Enough to buy up the whole town, and all the sugar-pigs of all the stall-women, all the lead soldiers, whips, and rocking-horses in the whole world! It was, indeed, a huge sight of gold! The soldier now flung away all the silver with which he had encumbered his pockets and his knapsack, and exchanged it for gold; and he crammed not only all his pockets and his knapsack, but even his cap and his boots so full that he could hardly walk.

“Now draw me up, you old witch!” said he.

“Have you got the tinder-box?” asked the witch.

“Zounds!” said the soldier, “I clean forgot it!”

And he went back and fetched it. The witch then drew him up, and he found himself once more on the highway with his pockets, boots, knapsack, and cap, filled with gold.

“What are you going to do with the tinder-box?” asked the soldier.

“That’s nothing to you,” said the witch. “You have got plenty of money—now give me the tinder-box.”

“Do you know what?” said the soldier. “You must either tell me at once what you mean to do with it, or I’ll draw my sword and cut your head off.”

“I won’t,” said the witch.

The soldier immediately struck her head off—and there she lay! Then he tied up all his money in her apron, and slung it at his back like a bundle, put the tinder-box into his pocket, and walked towards the town.

A very pretty town it was! He turned into the nicest inn he could find, asked for the best room, and ordered his favourite dishes for dinner; for now he was rich, having so much money in his possession.

The waiter who cleaned his boots did, to be sure, think them wonderfully shabby boots for such a wealthy gentleman; for he had not yet purchased new ones. On the following day, however, he procured proper boots and handsome clothes. From a mere common soldier he had now become a grand gentleman; and the people told him of all the fine things to be seen in their city, and what a handsome princess the king’s daughter was.

“Where can she be seen?” asked the soldier.

“She is not to be seen at all,” said they. “She lives in a large copper castle, flanked with towers, and surrounded by walls. Nobody but the king is allowed to go in or out; for it has been foretold that she will marry a common soldier, and the king can’t endure such an idea.”

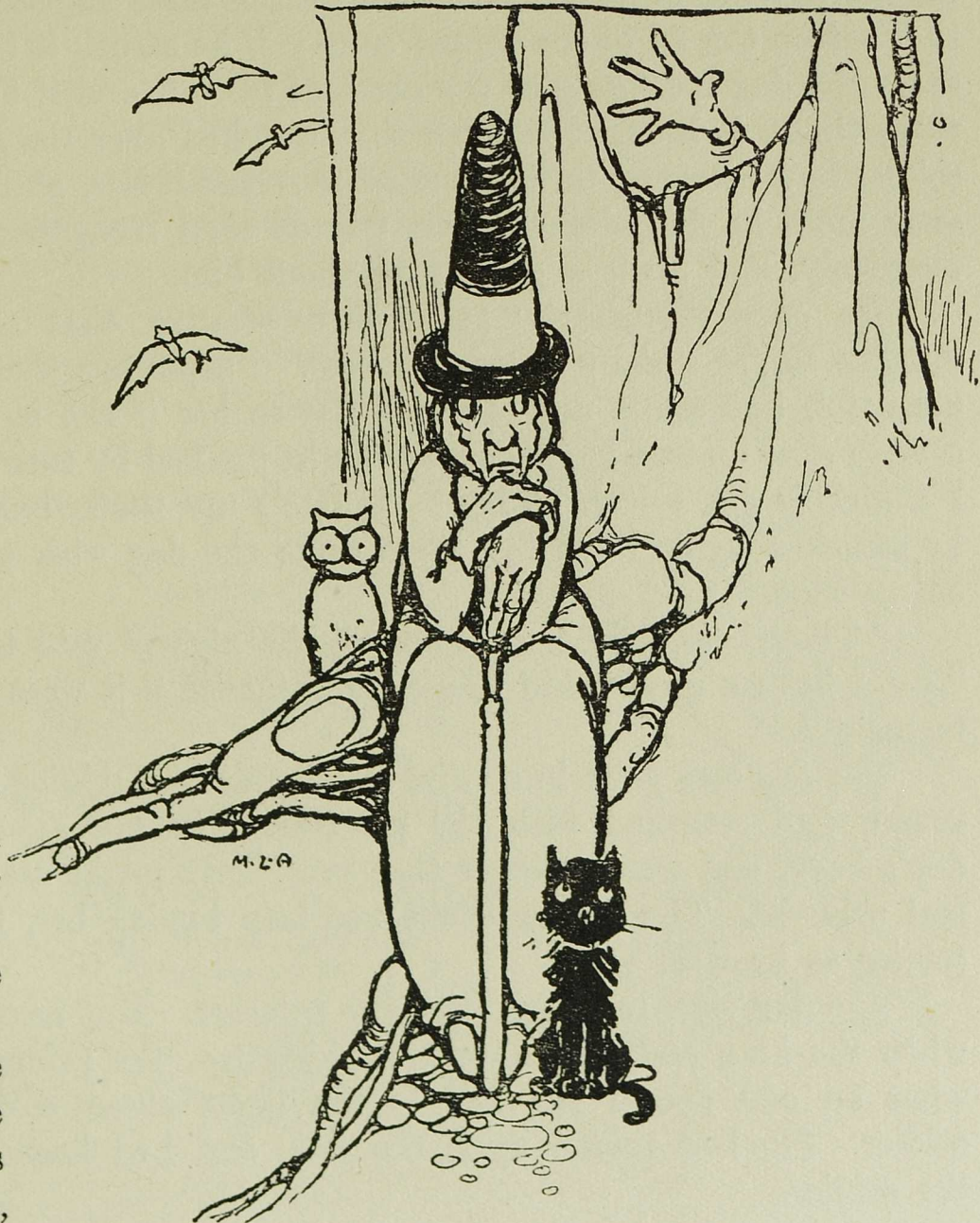
“I should like to see her, however,” said the soldier. But he could not by any means obtain leave to do so.

He now led a very pleasant life. He visited the theatres, drove in the king’s park, and gave abundant alms to the poor; and that was good of him, because he remembered, by his early days, how sad it is not to possess a penny in the world. He was now rich, and had fine clothes, and plenty of friends, who all declared that he was an excellent fellow, and a real gentleman; and the soldier was nothing loth to hear this said. As, however, he kept daily giving away money, and never receiving any, he at last had

nothing but two pennies left, and he was obliged to give up the elegant rooms he had inhabited, and to take a little garret, where he had to clean his own boots, and even mend them with a darning needle. None of his friends came to see him, now, there were so many stairs to go up.

One dark evening he had not enough money to buy a light; but he happened to recollect that there was a candle-end in the tinder-box which he had fetched out of the tree, into which the

witch had helped him to slide down. So he looked for the tinder-box and the candle-end, but no sooner had he struck a few sparks from the flint than the door flew open, and the dog, whose eyes were as big as tea-cups,



whom he had seen down in the tree, stood before him saying: "What orders, master?"

"How is this?" asked the soldier. "Well, it's a pleasant tinder-box indeed, if it can bring me all I wish for. Bring me some money!" added he to the dog.

And away went the dog; and back he came, in a trice, carrying a large bag of copper in his mouth.

The soldier now knew the value of the tinder-box he had in his possession. If he struck the flint once, there appeared the dog that sat on the lid of the copper coins; if he struck it twice, there came the dog belonging to the chest of silver; and if he struck it three times, it brought the dog that watched over the gold. The soldier now returned to the handsome rooms below, and appeared once more in fine clothes. His friends then recognized him immediately, and made a great fuss about him.

He once thought: "It is very strange that one cannot manage to get a sight of this princess. People say she is so very beautiful, but that's not of much use to her if she is obliged to remain shut up in a large copper castle, flanked by turrets. Can't I somehow get a look at her? Where's my tinder-box?" And he struck a light, when lo! there came the dog with eyes as big as tea-cups.

"Though it is in the middle of the night," said the soldier, "yet I have a great mind to see the princess, if it were only for a moment."

The dog was gone in a jiffy, and before the soldier could look round, had returned with the princess. She lay asleep on the dog's back, and was so lovely that everybody might see she was a real princess. The soldier could not help kissing her, like a true soldier as he was.

The dog then ran back with the princess. But next morning, when the king and queen were drinking tea, the princess related what an odd dream she had in the night about a dog and a soldier. She had ridden upon the dog, and had been kissed by the soldier.

"Really this is a pretty story," said the queen.

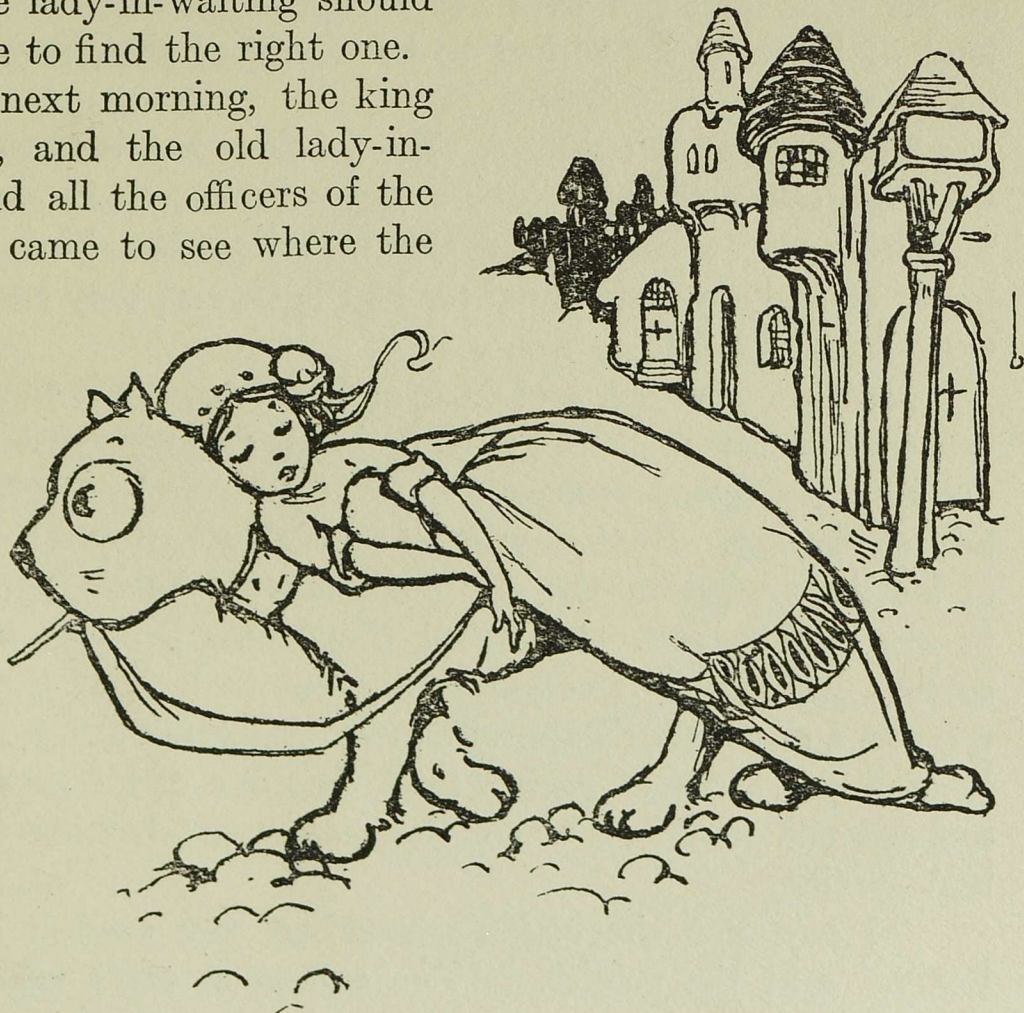
An elderly lady-in-waiting was set to watch that night by the princess's bed, in order to see whether it had been a real dream, or whether there might be any truth in it.

The soldier longed excessively to see the princess once more; so the dog was sent again in the night to fetch her, and ran away as fast as he could. But the old lady-in-waiting put on snow-boots and ran after him at almost as quick a pace. When she saw that they went into a large house, she thought she should know how to find it again by making a huge cross on the door with a piece of chalk. She then went home, and lay down, and presently the dog returned with the princess; but when he saw the cross on the door of the house where the soldier lived, he took a piece of chalk and marked every door in the town with a cross, so that the lady-in-waiting should not be able to find the right one.

Early next morning, the king and queen, and the old lady-in-waiting, and all the officers of the household, came to see where the princess had been.

"It must be here," said the king on perceiving the first door that was marked with a cross.

"No, there, my dear



husband," said the queen, seeing the second door similarly marked.

"But there's one, and there's another," said all present; for whichever way they looked, there were crosses on all the doors.

They were then convinced that it was no use seeking any further.

But the queen was a clever woman who knew something beyond merely riding out in a coach. She took up her large gold scissors, and cut out a piece of silk into small bits, and made a pretty little bag; having filled it with buck-wheat flour, she fastened it to the princess's back, and then cut a small hole in the bag, so that the flour should strew the whole way the princess went.

During the night, the dog came again, and took the princess on his back, and ran with her to the soldier, who had grown so fond of her that he wished to be a prince, that he might marry her.

The dog did not remark that the flour had bestrewed the way from the castle to the soldier's very window, as he ran up to the wall with the princess. In the morning, the king and queen found out where their daughter had been, and they had the soldier taken and put into prison.

And there he sat, and dark and dull enough it was! Besides, they said to him: "You shall be hanged to-morrow!" which was not a very pleasant prospect, especially as he had left his tinder-box at the inn. Next morning he could see, through the gratings of his little window, the crowds that were hastening out of town to see him hanged. He heard the drums beating, and saw the soldiers marching. Everybody ran out to look at them, amongst the rest a shoemaker's apprentice, in his leather apron and slippers. He galloped away at such a rate, that one of his slippers flew off, and hit the wall just where the soldier sat looking through the iron grating.

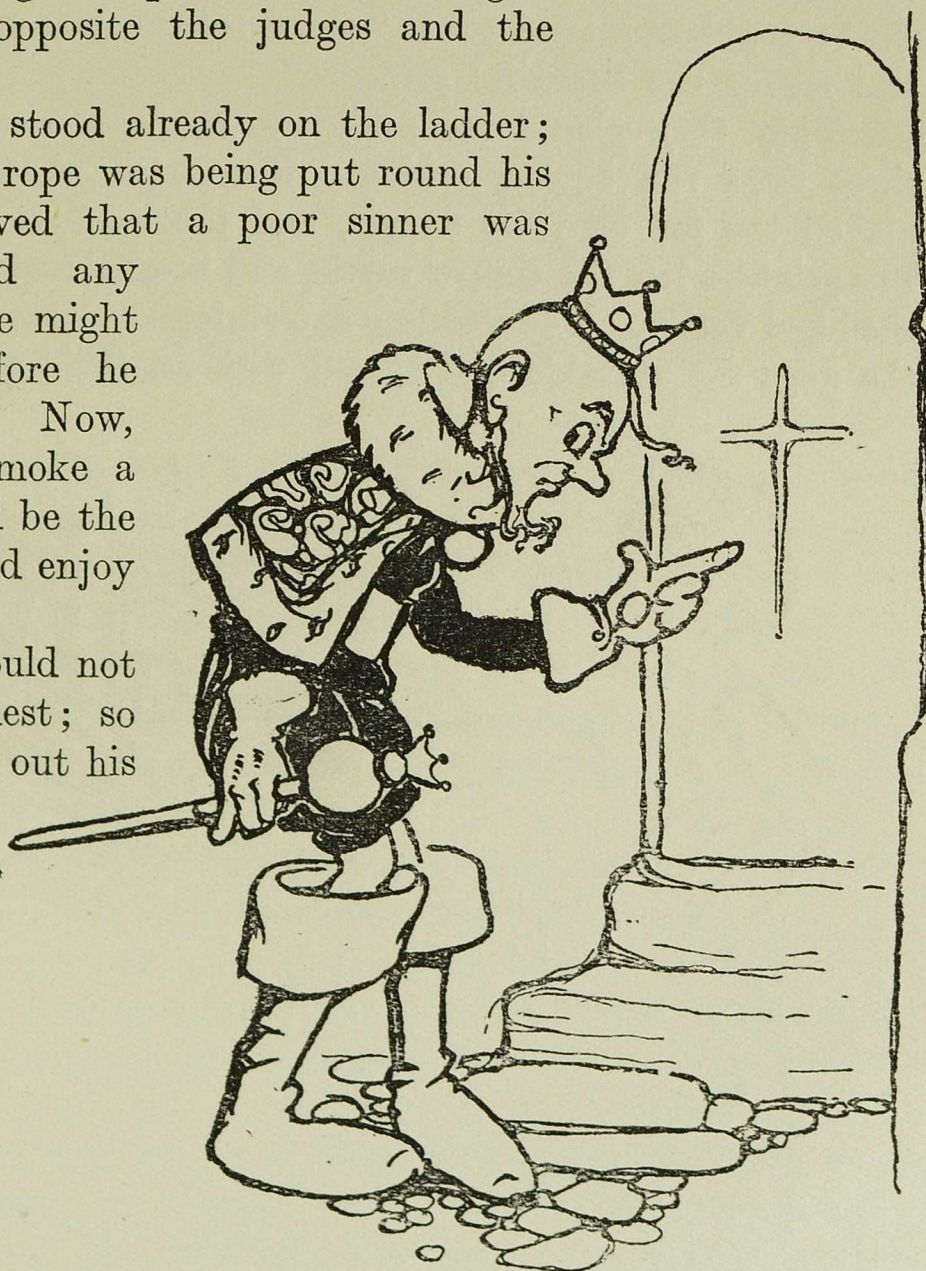
"I say, you shoemaker's 'prentice, you needn't be in such a hurry," said the soldier. "The execution can't take place till I

am there. But if you have a mind to run and fetch me my tinder-box, you shall have four shillings, only you must go as fast as your legs will carry you." The shoemaker's apprentice liked the notion of earning four shillings, so away he ran, and fetched the tinder-box, and handed it over to the soldier. But we shall see what came to pass.

Outside the town stood a large gibbet, surrounded by walls. Around these stood the soldiers, and several thousands of human beings. The king and queen sat on a magnificent throne, opposite the judges and the whole council.

The soldier stood already on the ladder; but just as the rope was being put round his neck, he observed that a poor sinner was always granted any innocent wish he might express before he suffered death. Now, he wished to smoke a pipe, as it would be the last pipe he could enjoy in this world.

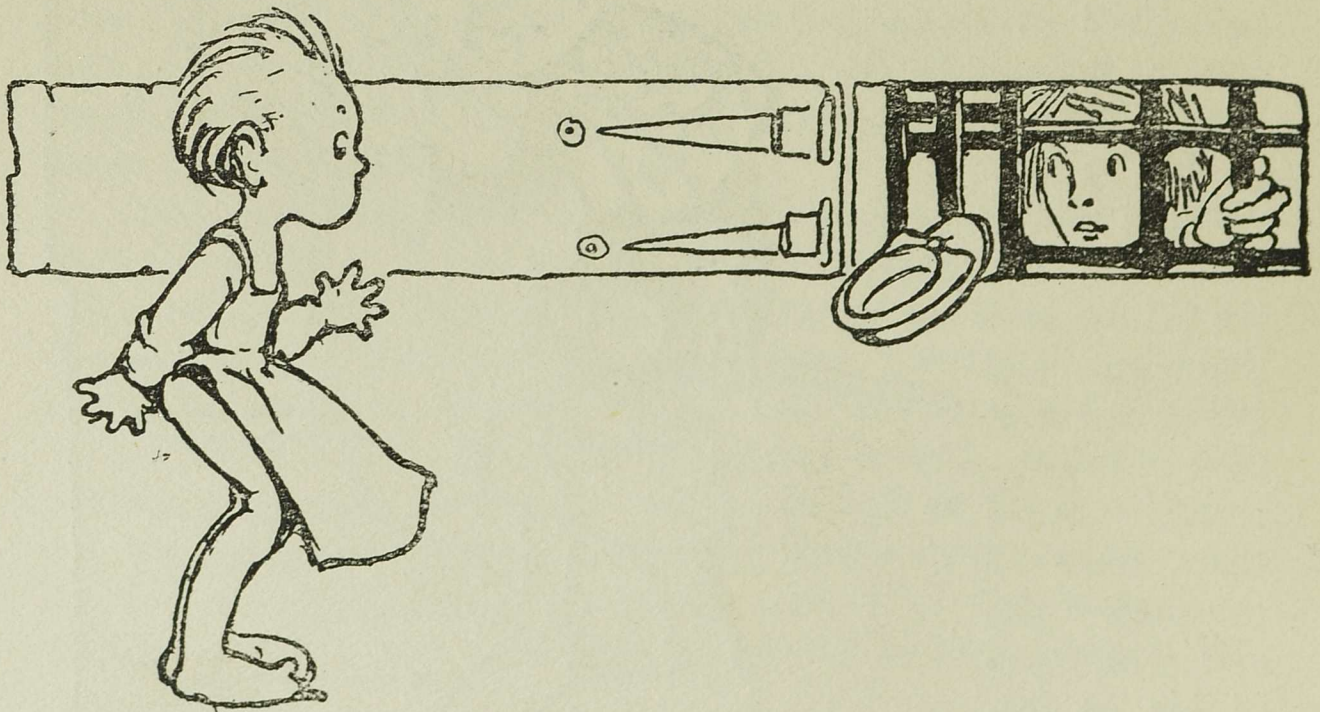
The king could not refuse his request; so the soldier took out his tinder-box, and struck the flint, once — twice — thrice! And there came all the dogs — the one with eyes as big as tea-cups, the one with eyes like

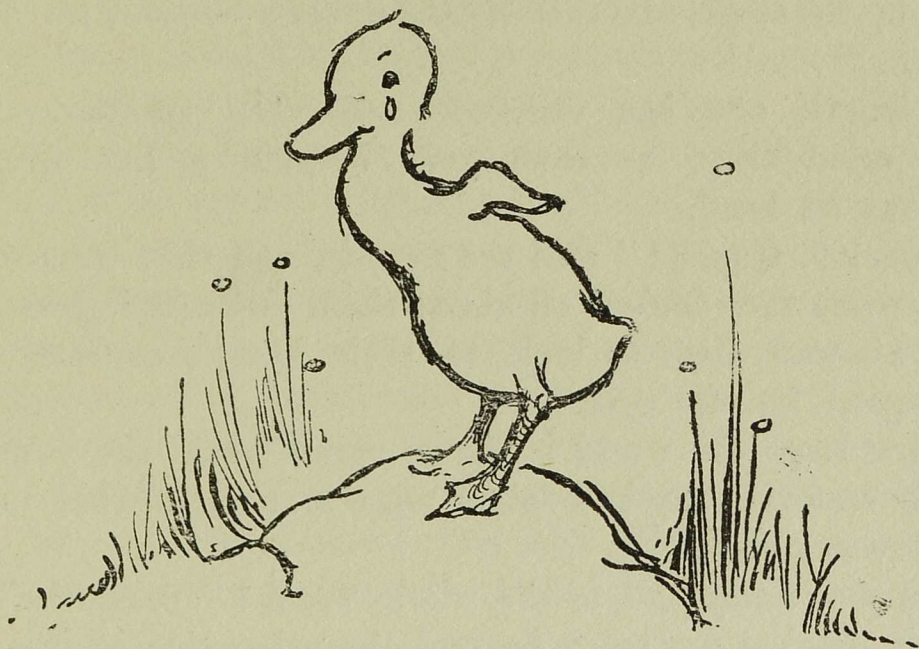


mill-wheels, and the one whose eyes were as large as the towers.

"Help me, that I may not be hanged!" said the soldier. And the dogs fell upon the judge and the whole council, seized some by the legs, and others by the nose, and flung them several fathoms high into the air, so that when they fell down again they were shattered to pieces. "I order you not to," said the king; but the largest dog seized him, as well as the queen, and tossed them up like the others. The soldiers were then frightened, and the whole population cried out: "Good soldier, you shall be our king, and marry the beautiful princess."

They then placed the soldier in the king's carriage, and the three dogs ran before, crying "Hurrah!" And the little boys played the fife on their fingers, and the soldiers presented arms. The princess left the copper castle, and became a queen, all of which she liked vastly. The wedding entertainment lasted eight days, and the dogs sat at table and stared with all their might.





THE UGLY DUCKLING

HOW beautiful looked everything out in the fields! It was summer, and the corn was yellow, the oats were green, the hay-ricks were standing in the verdant meadows, and the stork was walking about on his long, red legs, chattering away in Egyptian—the language he had learned from his lady mother. The corn-fields and meadows were surrounded by large forests, in the middle of which lay deep lakes. Oh, it was lovely, indeed, to walk abroad in the country just then!

In a sunny spot stood an old country-house, encircled by canals. Between the wall and the water's edge there grew huge burdock leaves, that had shot up to such a height that a little child might have stood upright under the tallest of them; and this spot was as wild as though it had been situated in the depths of a wood. In this snug retirement a duck was sitting on her nest to hatch her young; but she began to think it a wearisome task, as the little ones seemed very backward in making their appearance; besides, she had few visitors; for the other ducks preferred

swimming about in the canals, instead of being at the trouble of climbing up the slope, and then sitting under a burdock leaf to gossip with her.

At length one egg cracked, and then another. "Peep! Peep!" cried they, as each yolk became a live thing, and popped out its head.

"Quack! Quack!" said the mother, and they tried to cackle like her, while they looked all about them under the green leaves; and she allowed them to look to their heart's content, because green is good for the eyes.

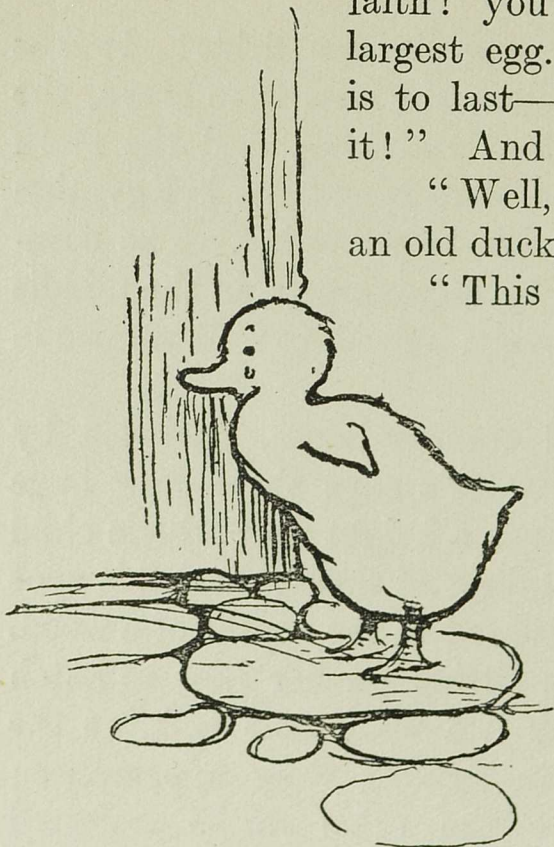
"How large the world is, to be sure!" said the young ones. And truly enough, they had rather more room than when they were still in the egg-shell.

"Do you fancy this is the whole world?" cried the mother. "Why, it reaches far away beyond the other side of the garden, down to the parson's field; though I never went to such a distance as that! But are you all here?" continued she, rising. "No, faith! you are not; for there still lies the largest egg. I wonder how long this business is to last—I really begin to get quite tired of it!" And she sat down once more.

"Well, how are you getting on?" inquired an old duck, who came to pay her a visit.

"This egg takes a deal of hatching," answered the sitting duck, "it won't break; but just look at the others, are they not the prettiest ducklings ever seen? They are the image of their father, who, by-the-by, does not trouble himself to come and see me."

"Let me look at the egg that won't break," quoth the old duck. "Take my word for it, it must be a guinea-fowl's egg. I



was once deceived in the same way, and I bestowed a great deal of care and anxiety on the youngsters, for they are afraid of water. I could not make them take to it. I stormed and raved, but it was of no use. Let's see the egg. Sure enough it is a guinea-fowl's egg. Leave it alone, and set about teaching the other children to swim."

"I'll just sit upon it a little longer," said the duck; "for since I have sat so long, a few days more won't make much difference."

"Please yourself," said the old duck, as she went away.

At length the large egg cracked. "Peep! peep!" squeaked the youngster, as he crept out. How big and ugly he was to be sure! The duck looked at him, saying: "Really this is a most enormous duckling! None of the others are like him. I wonder whether he is a guinea-chick after all? Well, we shall soon see when we get down to the water; for in he shall go, though I push him in myself."

On the following morning the weather was most delightful, and the sun was shining brightly on the green burdock leaves. The mother duck took her young brood down to the canal. Splash into the water she went. "Quack! Quack!" she cried, and forthwith one duckling after another jumped in. The water closed over their heads for a moment; but they soon rose to the surface again, and swam around so nicely, just as if their legs paddled them about of their own accord; and they had all taken to the water; even the ugly, grey-coated youngster swam about with the rest.

"Nay he is no guinea-chick," said she, "only look how capitally he uses his legs, and how steady he keeps himself—he's every inch my own child! And really he's very pretty when one comes to look at him attentively. Quack! Quack!" added she; "now come along, and I'll take you into high society, and introduce you to the duck-yard; but mind you keep close to me that nobody may tread upon you; and, above all, beware of the cat."

They now reached the farm-yard, where there was a great hubbub. Two families were fighting for an eel's head, which, in the end, was carried off by the cat.

"See, children, that's the way with the world!" remarked the mother of the ducklings, licking her beak, for she would have been very glad to have had the eel's head for herself. "Now, move on!" said she, "and mind you cackle properly, and bow your head before that old duck yonder; she is the noblest born of them all, and is of Spanish descent, and that's why she is so dignified; and look! she has a red rag tied to her leg, which is the greatest mark of distinction that can be bestowed upon a duck, as it shows an anxiety not to lose her, and that she should be recognized by both beast and man. Now cackle—and don't turn in your toes; a well-bred duckling spreads his feet wide apart, like papa and mamma, in this sort of way. Now bend your neck, and say 'Quack!'"

The ducklings did as they were bid; but the other ducks, after looking at them, only said aloud, "Now, look; here comes another set, as if we were not numerous enough already. And bless me! what a queer-looking chap one of the ducklings is to be sure—we can't put up with him!" And one of the throng darted forward, and bit him in the neck. "Leave him alone," said the mother, "he did no harm to any one." "No, but he is too big and awkward," said the biting duck, "and therefore he wants a thrashing."

"Mamma has a sweet little family," said the old duck, with the rag about her leg: "They are all pretty except one, who is rather ill-favoured. I wish mamma could polish him a little."

"I'm afraid that will be impossible, your grace," said the mother of the ducklings. "It's true he's not pretty, but he has a very good disposition, and swims as well, or perhaps better than all the others put together. However, he may grow prettier, and perhaps become smaller; he remained too long in the egg-shell, and therefore his figure is not properly formed." And with this she smoothed down the ruffled feathers of his neck, adding, "At all events, as he is a drake, it won't matter so much. I think he'll prove strong, and be able to fight his way through the world."

"The other ducklings are elegant little creatures," said the



THE UGLY DUCKLING

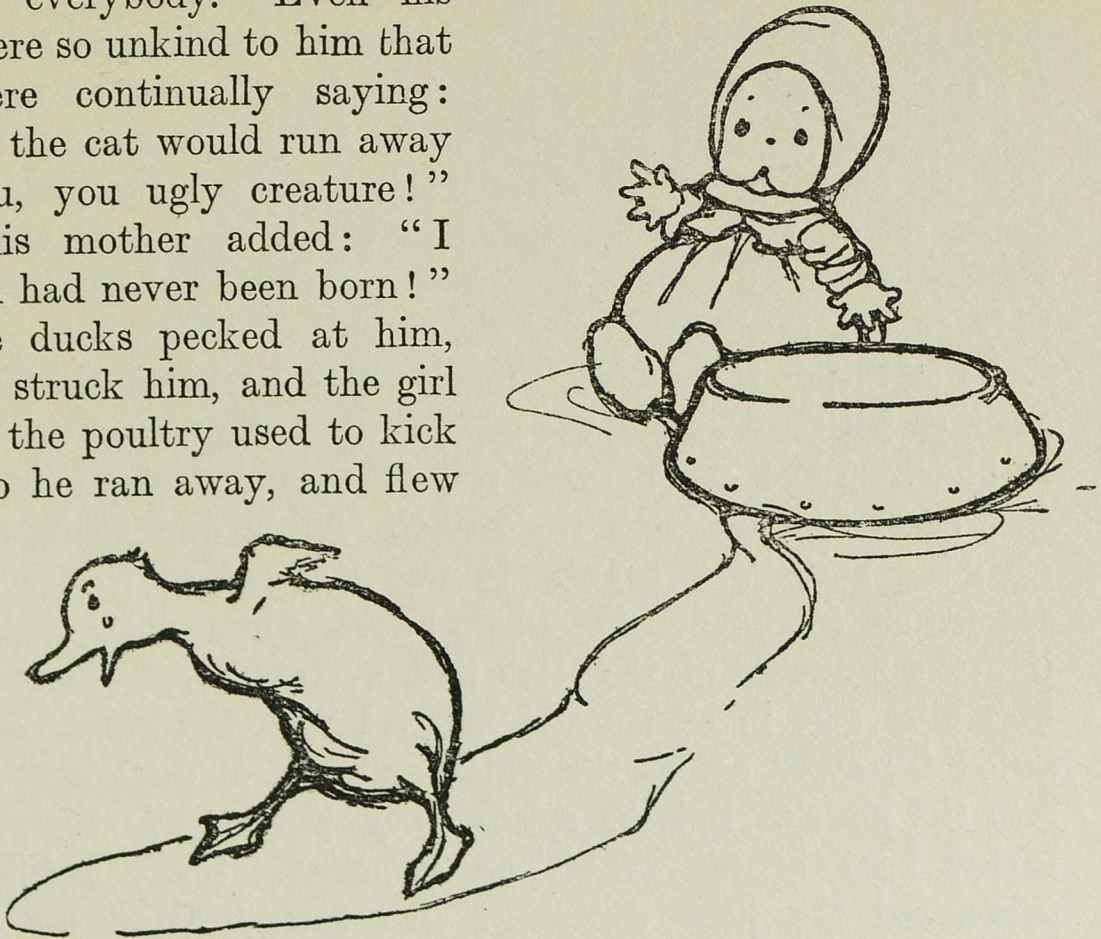
old duck. "Now make yourself at home; and if you should happen to find an eel's head, you can bring it to me."

And so the family made themselves comfortable.

But the poor duckling, who had been the last to creep out of his egg-shell, and looked so ugly, was bitten, pushed about, and made game of, not only by the ducks, but by the hens. They all declared he was much too big; and a turkey-cock who fancied himself at least an emperor, because he had come into the world with spurs, now puffed himself like a vessel in full sail and flew at the duckling, and blustered till his head turned completely red, so that the poor little thing did not know where he could walk or stand, and was quite grieved at being so ugly that the whole farm-yard scouted him.

Nor did matters mend the next day, or the following ones, but rather grew worse and worse. The poor duckling was hunted down by everybody. Even his sisters were so unkind to him that they were continually saying: "I wish the cat would run away with you, you ugly creature!" While his mother added: "I wish you had never been born!" And the ducks pecked at him, the hens struck him, and the girl who fed the poultry used to kick him. So he ran away, and flew

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were startled, and took wing. "That is because I am so ugly," thought the duckling, as he closed his eyes, though he ran on further till he came to a large marsh inhabited by wild ducks. Here he spent the whole night—and tired and sorrowful enough he was.

On the following morning when the wild ducks rose and saw their new comrade, they said, "What sort of a creature are you?" Upon which the duckling greeted them all round as civilly as he knew how.

"You are remarkably ugly," observed the wild ducks, "but we don't care about that so long as you do not want to marry into our family." Poor forlorn creature! He had truly no such thoughts in his head. All he wanted was to obtain leave to be among the rushes, and drink a little of the marsh water.

He remained there two whole days, at the end of which there came two wild geese, or more properly speaking, goslings, who were only just out of the egg-shell, and consequently very pert. "I say, friend," quoth they, "you are so ugly, that we should have no objection to take you with us for a travelling companion. In the neighbouring marsh there dwell some sweetly pretty female geese, all of them unmarried, and who cackle most charmingly. Perhaps you may have a chance to pick up a wife amongst them, ugly as you are."

Pop! pop! sounded through the air, and the two wild goslings fell dead among the rushes, while the water turned as red as blood. Pop! pop! again echoed around, and whole flocks of wild geese flew up from the rushes. Again and again the same alarming noise was heard. It was a shooting party, and the sportsmen surrounded the whole marsh, while others had climbed into the branches of the trees that overshadowed the rushes. A blue mist rose in clouds and mingled with the green leaves, and sailed far away across the water; a pack of dogs next flounced into the marsh. Splash, splash they went, while the reeds and rushes bent beneath them on all sides. What a fright they occasioned the poor duckling! He turned away his head to

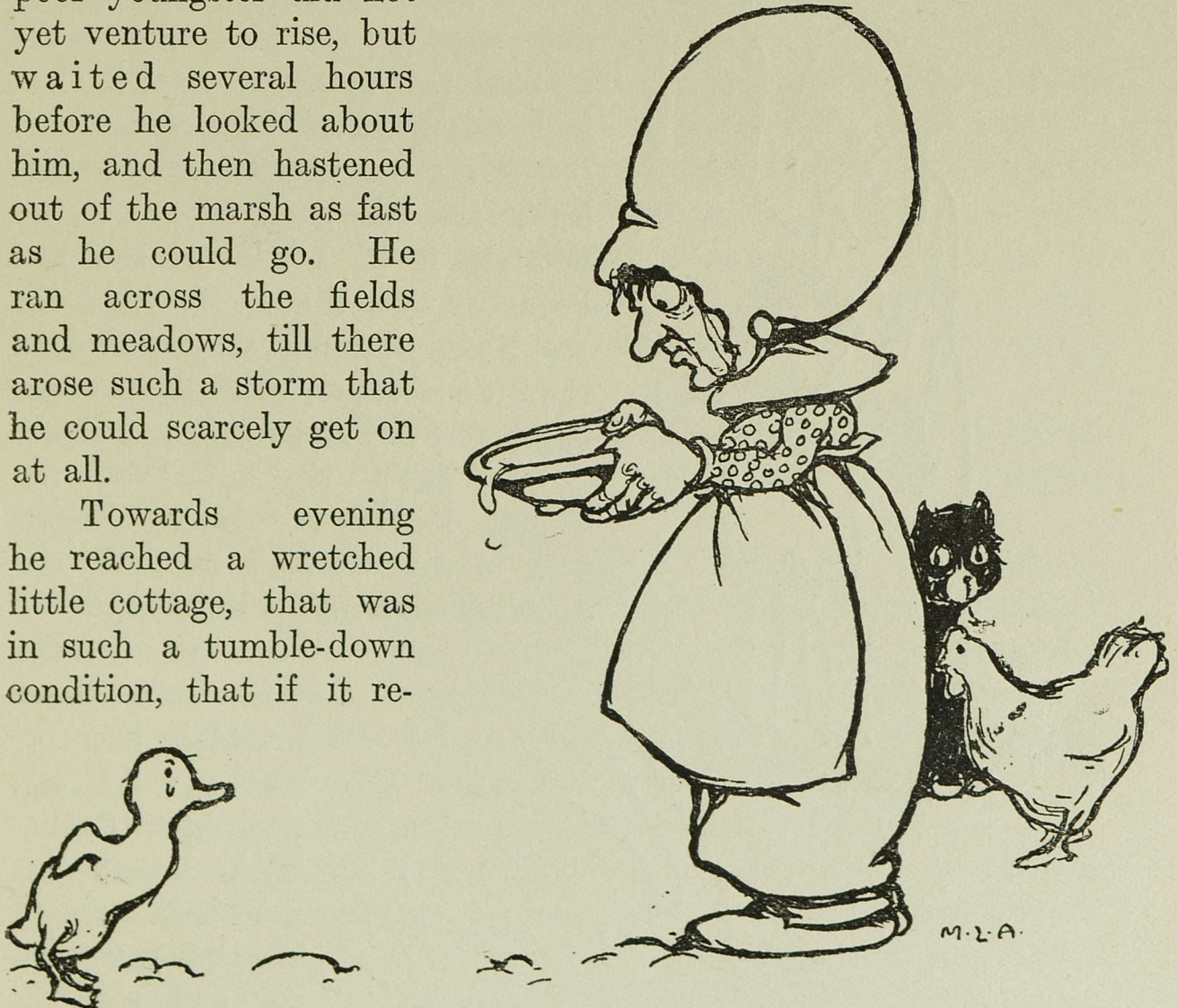
hide it under his wing, when lo! a tremendous-looking dog his tongue lolling out, and his eyes glaring fearfully, stood right before him, opening his jaws and showing his sharp teeth, as though he would gobble up the poor little duckling at a mouthful!—but splash! splash! on he went without touching him.

“Thank goodness!” sighed the duckling, “I am so ugly that even a dog won’t bite me.”

And he lay quite still, while the shot rattled through the rushes, and pop after pop echoed through the air.

It was not till late in the day that all became quiet, but the poor youngster did not yet venture to rise, but waited several hours before he looked about him, and then hastened out of the marsh as fast as he could go. He ran across the fields and meadows, till there arose such a storm that he could scarcely get on at all.

Towards evening he reached a wretched little cottage, that was in such a tumble-down condition, that if it re-



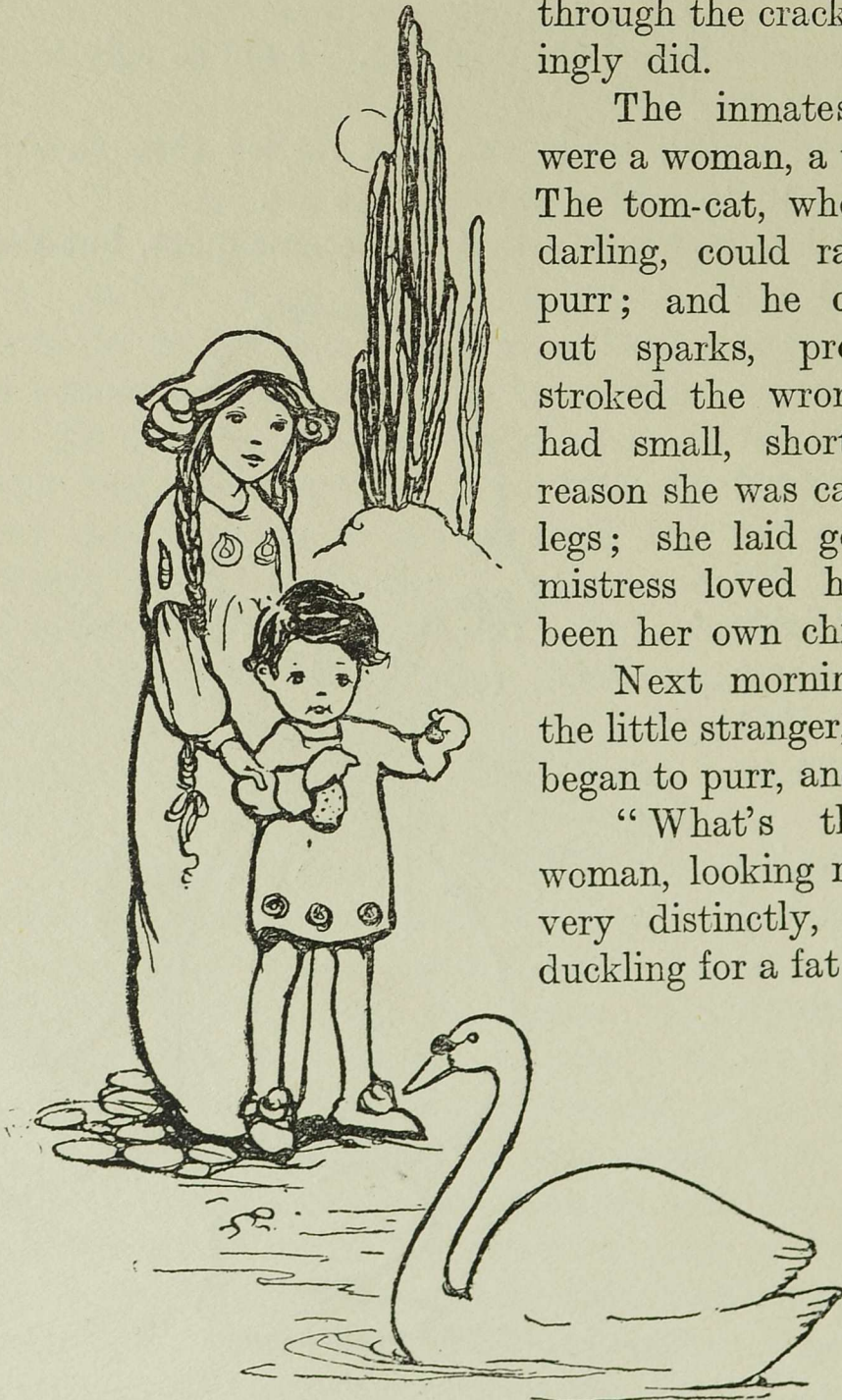
mained standing at all, it could only be from not yet having made up its mind on which side it should fall first. The tempest was now raging to such a height that the duckling was forced to sit down to stem the wind, when he perceived the door hung so loosely on one of its hinges, that he could slip into the room through the crack, which he accordingly did.

The inmates of the cottage were a woman, a tom-cat and a hen. The tom-cat, whom she called her darling, could raise his back and purr; and he could even throw out sparks, provided he were stroked the wrong way. The hen had small, short legs, for which reason she was called Henny Short-legs; she laid good eggs, and her mistress loved her as if she had been her own child.

Next morning they perceived the little stranger, when the tom-cat began to purr, and the hen to cluck.

"What's that?" said the woman, looking round. Not seeing very distinctly, she mistook the duckling for a fat duck that had lost

its way. "Why, this is quite a prize!" she remarked; "I can now get ducks' eggs, unless indeed it be a male! We must wait a bit and see."



So the duckling was kept on trial for three weeks; but no eggs were forthcoming. The tom-cat and the hen were the master and mistress of the house, and always said, "We and the world"—for they fancied themselves to be the half, and by far the best half too, of the whole universe. The duckling thought there might be two opinions on this point; but the hen would not admit of any such doubts.

"Can you lay eggs?" asked she.

"No."

"Then have the goodness to hold your tongue."

And the tom-cat inquired "Can you raise your back, or purr, or throw out sparks?"

"No."

"Then you have no business to have any opinion at all, when rational people are talking."

The duckling sat in a corner very much out of spirits, when in came the fresh air and sunshine, which gave him such a strange longing to swim on the water, that he could not help saying so to the hen:—"What's this whim?" said she: "That comes of being idle. If you could either lay eggs or purr, you would not indulge in such fancies."

"But it is so delightful to swim about on the water!" observed the duckling, "and to feel it close over one's head when one dives down to the bottom."

"A great pleasure, indeed!" quoth the hen. "You must be crazy, surely! Only ask the cat—for he is the wisest creature I know—how he would like to swim on the water, or to dive under it. To say nothing of myself, just ask our old mistress, who is wiser than anybody in the world, how she'd relish swimming and feeling the waters close above her head."

"You can't understand me!" said the duckling.

"We can't understand you? I should like to know who could. You don't suppose you are wiser than the tom-cat and our mistress—to say nothing of myself? Don't take these idle fancies into your head, child; but thank Heaven for all the kindness that

has been shown you. Have you not found a warm room, and company that might improve you? But you are a mere chatter-box, and there's no pleasant intercourse to be had with you. And you may take my word for it, for I mean you well. I say disagreeable things, which is a mark of true friendship. Now, look to it, and mind that you either lay eggs, or learn to purr and emit sparks."

"I think I'll take my chance, and go abroad into the wide world," said the duckling.

"Do," said the hen.

And the duckling went forth, and swam on the water, and dived beneath its surface: but he was slighted by all other animals, on account of his ugliness.

Autumn had now set in. The leaves of the forests had turned first yellow and then brown; and the wind caught them up, and made them dance about. It began to be very cold in the higher regions of the air, and the clouds looked heavy with hail and flakes of snow; while the raven sat on a hedge crying, "Caw! caw!" from sheer cold; and one began to shiver, if one merely thought about it. The poor duckling had a bad time of it! One evening, just as the sun was setting in all its glory, there came a whole flock of beautiful big birds from a large grove. The duckling had never seen any so lovely before. They were dazzlingly white, with long, graceful necks; they were swans. They uttered a peculiar cry, and then spread their magnificent wings, and away they flew from the cold country to warmer lands across the open sea. They rose so high—so high that the ugly duckling felt a strange sensation come over him. He turned round and round in the water like a wheel, stretched his neck up into the air towards them, and uttered so loud and strange a cry, that he was frightened at it himself. Oh! never could he again forget those beautiful, happy birds; and when they were quite out of sight, he dived down to the bottom of the water, and when he once more rose to the surface, he was half beside himself. He knew not how these birds were called, nor whither they were

bound: but he felt an affection for them, such as he had never yet experienced for any living creature. Nor did he even presume to envy them; for how could it ever have entered his head to wish himself endowed with their loveliness! He would have been glad enough if the ducks had merely suffered him to remain among them—poor ugly animal that he was!

And the winter proved so very, very cold! The duckling was obliged to keep swimming about for fear the water should freeze entirely: but every night, the hole in which he swam grew smaller and smaller. It now froze so hard, that the surface of the ice cracked again; yet the duckling still paddled about, to prevent the hole from closing up. At last he was so exhausted, that he lay insensible, and became icebound.

Early next morning, a peasant came by, and seeing what had happened, broke the ice to pieces with his wooden shoe, and carried the duckling home to his wife; so the little creature was revived once more.

The children wished to play with him; but the duckling thought they meant to hurt him, and in his fright he bounced right into a bowl of milk, that was spurted all over the room. The woman clapped her hands, which only frightened him still more, and drove him first into the butter tub, then down into the meal tub, and out again. What a scene then ensued! The woman screamed, and flung the tongs at him; the children tumbled over each other in their endeavour to catch the duckling, and laughed and shrieked. Luckily the door stood open, and he slipped through, and then over the fagots, into the newly-fallen snow, where he lay quite exhausted.

But it would be too painful to tell of all the privations and misery that the duckling endured during the hard winter. He was lying in a marsh, amongst the reeds, when the sun again began to shine. The larks were singing, and the spring had set in, in all its beauty. The duckling now felt able to flap his wings: they rustled much more loudly than before, and bore him away most sturdily; and ere he was well aware of it, he found himself in a

large garden, where the apple-trees were in full blossom, and the fragrant elder was steeping its long, drooping branches in the waters of a winding canal. Oh, how beautiful everything looked in the first freshness of spring! Three magnificent white swans now emerged from the thicket before him; they flapped their wings, and then swam lightly on the surface of the water. The duckling recognized the beautiful creatures, and was impressed with feelings of melancholy peculiar to himself.

"I will fly towards those royal birds—and they will strike me dead for daring to approach them, so ugly as I am! But it matters not. Better to be killed by them, than to be pecked at by the ducks, beaten by the hens, pushed about by the girl that feeds the poultry, and to suffer want in the winter."

And he flew into the water, and swam towards these splendid swans, who rushed to meet him, with rustling wings, the moment they saw him.

"Do but kill me!" said the poor bird, as he bent his head down to the surface of the water and awaited his doom.

But what did he see in the clear stream? Why, his own image, which was no longer that of a heavy-looking dark grey bird, ugly and ill-favoured, but of a beautiful swan!

It matters not being born in a duck-yard, when one is hatched from a swan's egg!

He now rejoiced over all the misery and the straits he had endured, as it made him feel the full depth of the happiness that awaited him.

And the large swans swam round him, and stroked him with their beaks.

Some little children now came into the garden, and threw bread-crumbs and corn into the water; and the youngest cried "There is a new one!"

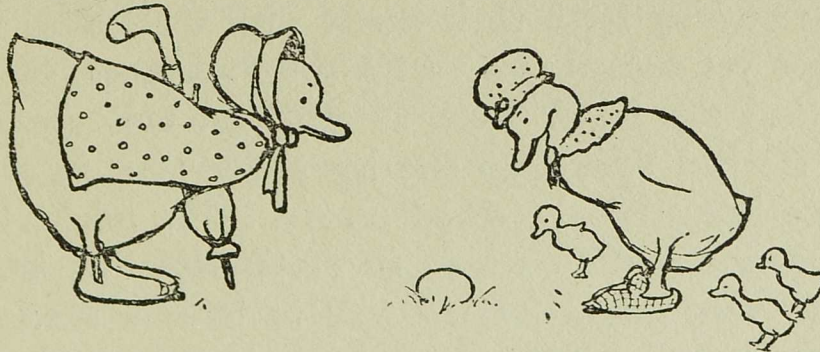
The other children were delighted, too, and repeated "Yes, there is a new one just come!"

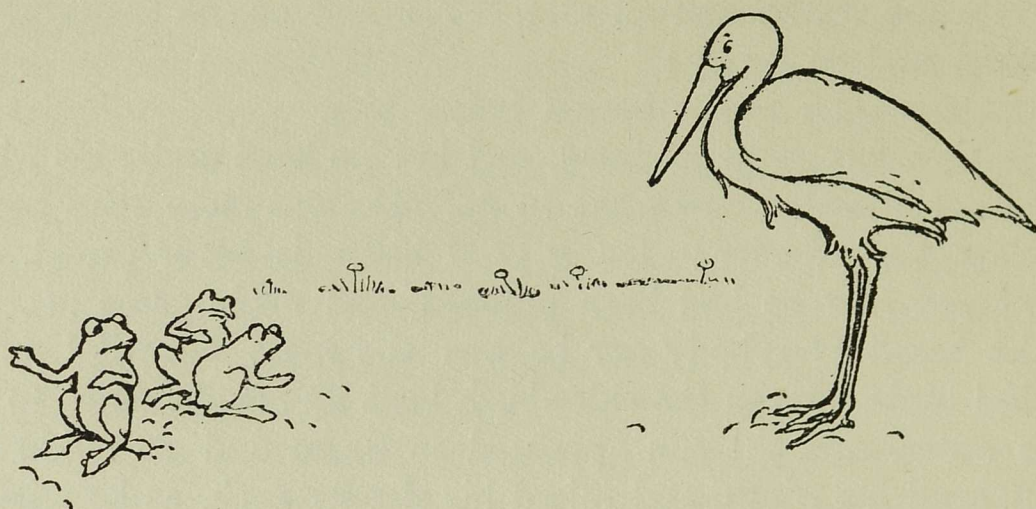
And they clapped their hands, and capered about, and then ran to their father and mother, and more bread and cake was

flung into the water, and all said, "The new one is the prettiest. So young, and so lovely!"

And the elder swans bowed before him.

He then felt quite ashamed, and hid his head under his wings. He did not himself know what to do. He was more than happy, yet none the prouder; for a good heart is never proud. He remembered how he had been pursued, and made game of; and now he heard everybody say he was the most beautiful of all beautiful birds. Even the elder-bush bent its boughs down to him in the water, and the sun appeared so warm and so mild! He then flapped his wings, and raised his slender neck, as he cried, in the fulness of his heart: "I never dreamed of such happiness while I was an ugly duckling."





THE STORKS

ON the last house in a little village there lay a stork's nest. The mother stork sat in the nest beside her four little ones, who were stretching forth their heads with their little black bills, that had not yet turned red. At a short distance, on the top of the roof, stood the father stork as stiff and bolt upright as well could be. He had drawn up one leg under him, in order not to remain quite idle while he stood sentry. One might have taken him to be carved out of wood, so motionless was he. "It, no doubt, looks very grand for my wife to have a sentinel by her nest!" thought he. "They can't know that I am her husband, and they will, of course, conclude that I have been commanded to stand here. It looks so noble!" And he continued standing on one leg.

A whole swarm of children were playing in the street below; and when they perceived the stork the forwardest of the boys sang the old song about the stork, in which the others soon joined. Only each sang it, just as he happened to recollect it:—

"Stork, stork—fly home and rest,
Nor on one leg thus sentry keep!
Your wife is sitting in her nest,
To lull her little ones to sleep.

There's a halter for one,
There's a stake for another;
For a third there's a gun
And a spit for his brother!"

"Only listen to what the boys are singing!" said the young storks. "They say we shall be hanged and burned."

"You shouldn't mind what they say," said the mother stork; "if you don't listen it won't hurt you."

But the boys went on singing, and pointing at the stork with their fingers. Only one boy, whose name was Peter, said it was a shame to make game of animals, and would not join the rest. The mother stork comforted her young ones. "Don't trouble your heads about it," said she; "only see how quiet your father stands, and that on one leg!"

"We are frightened!" said the young ones, drawing back their heads into the nest.

Next day, when the children had again assembled to play, they no sooner saw the storks than they began their song:—

"There's a halter for one,
There's a stake for another."

"Are we to be hanged and burned?" asked the young storks.

"No; to be sure not," said the mother. "You shall learn how to fly, and I'll train you. Then we will fly to the meadows, and pay a visit to the frogs, who will bow to us in the water, and sing 'Croak! croak!' And then we'll eat them up, and that will be a right good treat!"

"And what next?" asked the youngsters.

"Then all the storks in the land will assemble, and the autumn manœuvres will begin; and every one must know how to fly properly, for that is very important. For whoever does not fly as he ought, is pierced to death by the general's beak; therefore, mind you learn something when the drilling begins."

"Then we shall be spitted after all, as the boys said—and hark! they are singing it again."

"Attend to me, and not to them," said the mother stork. "After the principal review, we shall fly to the warm countries, far from here, over hills and forests. We fly to Egypt, where there are three-cornered stone houses, one point of which reaches to the clouds—they are called pyramids, and are older than a stork can well imagine. And in that same land there is a river which overflows its banks, and turns the whole country into mire. We then go into the mire and eat frogs."

"Oh—oh!" exclaimed all the youngsters.

"It is a delightful place truly! One can eat all day long, and while we are feasting there, in this country there is not a green leaf left upon the trees. It is so cold here that the very clouds freeze in lumps, and fall down in little rags." It was snow she meant, only she could not explain it better.

"Will the naughty boys freeze in lumps?" asked the young storks.

"No, they will not freeze in lumps, but they will be very near doing so, and they will be obliged to sit moping in a gloomy room, while you will be flying about in foreign lands, where there are flowers and warm sunshine."

Some time had now passed by, and the young ones had grown so big that they could stand upright in the nest, and look all about them; and the father stork came every day with nice frogs, little serpents, and all such dainties as storks delight in, that he could find. And how funny it was to see all the clever feats he performed to amuse them. He would lay his head right round upon his tail; then he would clatter with his bill just like a little rattle; and then he would tell them stories, all relating to swamps and fens.

"Come, you must now learn to fly," said the mother stork, one day, and the four youngsters were all obliged to come out on the top of the roof. How they did stagger! They tried to poise themselves with their wings, but they had nearly fallen to the ground below.

"Look at me," said the mother. "This is the way to hold

your head! And you must place your feet so! Left! right! Left! right! That's what will help you forward in the world." She then flew a little way, and the young ones took a little leap without assistance—but plump! down they fell, for their bodies were still too heavy.

"I won't fly!" said one youngster, creeping back into the nest. "I don't care about going to warm countries."

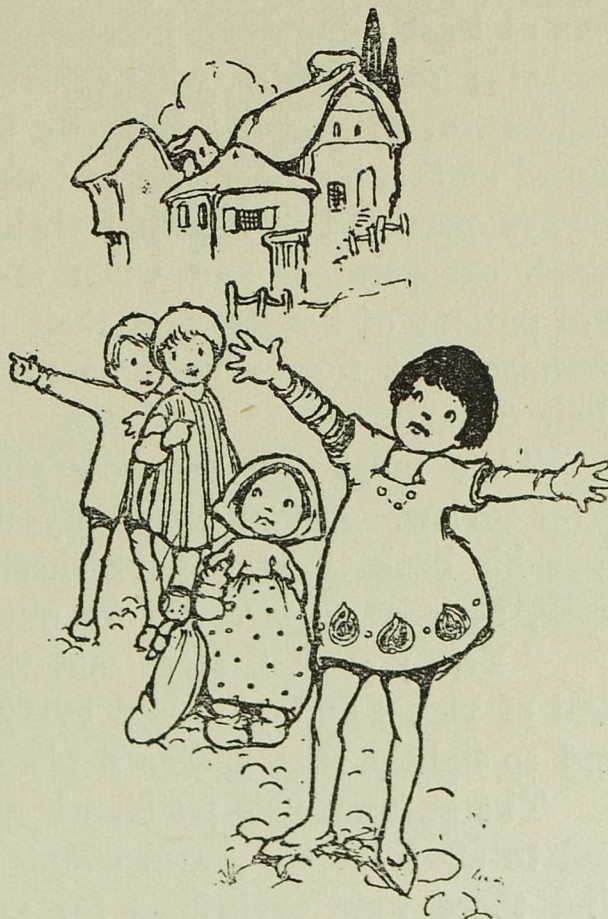
"Would you like to stay and freeze here in the winter? And wait till the boys come to hang, to burn, or to roast you? Well, then, I'll call them."

"Oh, no!" said the young stork, hopping back to the roof like the others. On the third day they already began to fly a little, and then they fancied they should be able at once to hover in the air, upborne by their wings, and this they accordingly attempted, when down they fell, and were then obliged to flap their wings as quickly as they could. The boys now came into the street below, singing their song:—

"Stork, stork—fly home and rest."

"Shan't we fly down and peck them?" asked the young ones.

"No; leave them alone," said the mother. "Attend to me—that's far more important—one—two—three! Now let's fly round to the right One—two—three! Now to the left, round the chimney. Now that was very well! That last flap of your wings was so graceful and so proper, that you shall have leave to fly with me to-morrow to the marsh.



Several genteel families of storks are coming thither with their children; now let me see that mine are the best bred of all, and mind you strut about with a due degree of pride, for that looks well, and makes one respected."

"But shan't we take revenge on the naughty boys?" asked the young storks.

"Let them scream away as much as they like. You can fly up to the clouds, and go to the land of the Pyramids, while they are freezing, and can neither see a green leaf nor eat a sweet apple."

"But we wish to be revenged," whispered the young ones amongst each other; and then they were drilled again.

Of all the boys in the street, none seemed more bent on singing the song that made game of the storks, than the one who had first introduced it; and he was a little fellow, scarcely more than six years old. The young storks, to be sure, fancied that he was at least a hundred, because he was so much bigger than their parents; and besides, what did they know about the ages of little children or of grown men? So their whole vengeance was to be aimed at this boy, because he had been the first to begin, and had always persisted in mocking them. The young storks were very much exasperated, and when they grew bigger, they grew still less patient of insults, and their mother was at length obliged to promise that they should be revenged, but only on the day of their departure.

"We must first see how you will acquit yourselves at the great review. If you don't do your duty properly, and the general runs his beak through your chests, then the boys will be in the right, at least so far. So we must wait and see."

"Yes, you shall see," said the youngsters; and they took a deal of pains, and practised every day, till they flew so elegantly and so lightly that it was a pleasure to see them.

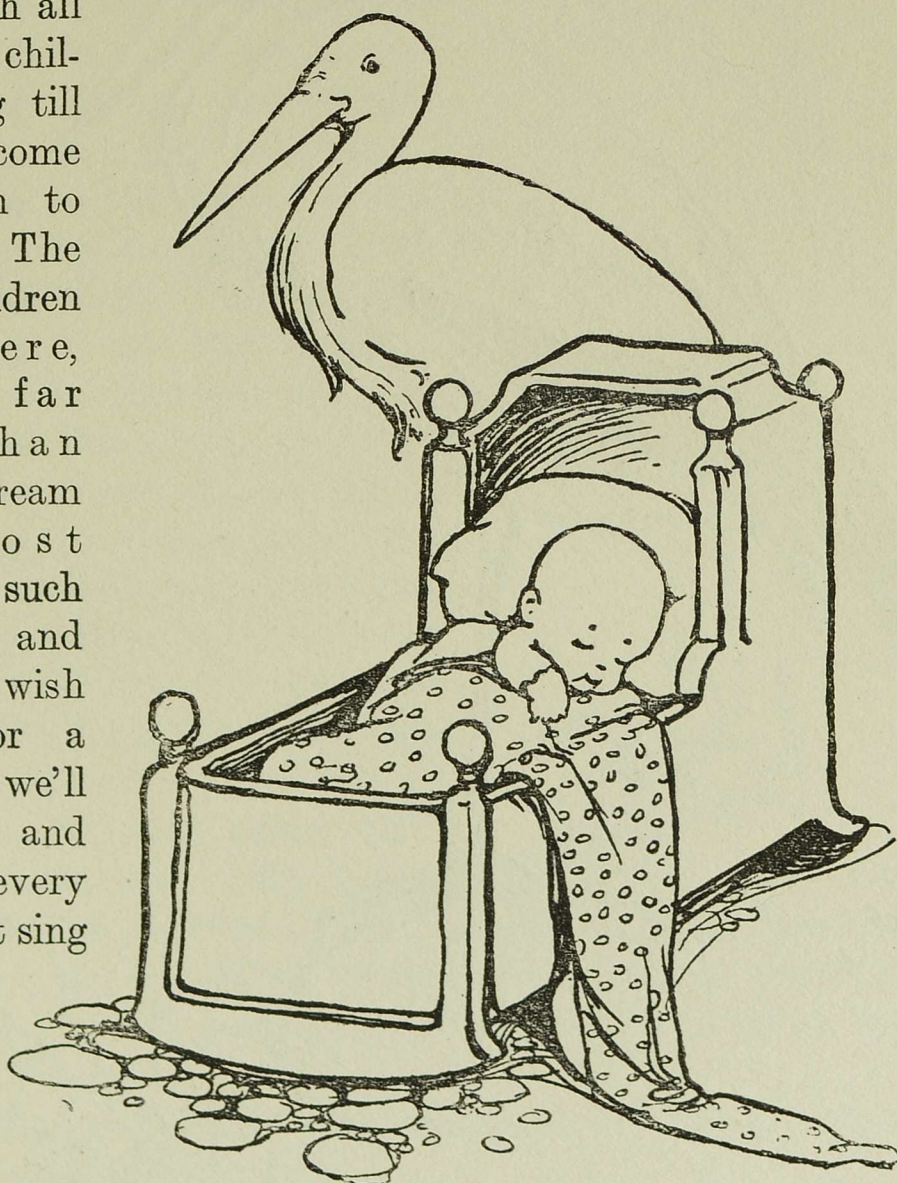
The autumn now set in, when all the storks began to assemble and to start for the warm countries, leaving winter behind them. And there were evolutions for you! The young fledglings were

set to fly over forests and villages, to see whether they could acquit themselves properly, for they had a long voyage before them. But the young storks gave such proofs of capacity, that their certificate ran as follows:—"Remarkably well—with the present of a frog and a serpent." This was the most palpable proof of the satisfaction they had given; and they might now eat the frog and the serpent, which they lost no time in doing.

"Now for our revenge!" said they.

"Yes, assuredly," said the mother stork; "and I have found out what would be the fairest revenge to take. I know where lies the pond in which all the little human children are waiting till the storks shall come and bring them to their parents. The prettiest little children lie sleeping there, and dreaming far more sweetly than they will ever dream hereafter. Most parents wish for such a little infant, and most children wish for a sister or a brother. Now we'll fly to the pond, and fetch one for every child who did not sing the naughty song, and make game of the storks."

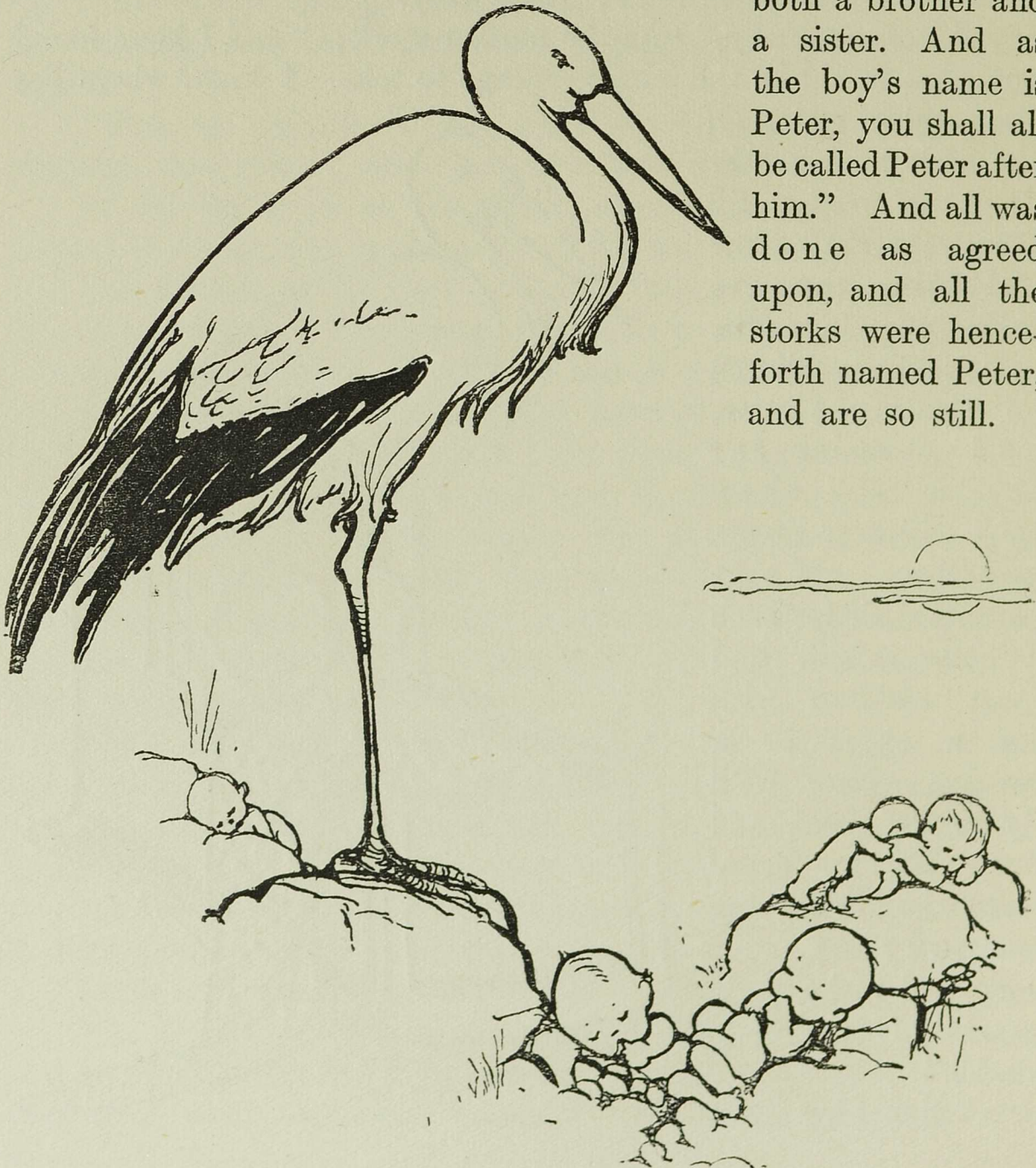
"But the



naughty, ugly boy, who was the first to begin singing it," cried the young storks, "what shall we do with him?"

"In the pond lies a little infant, who has dreamed itself to death. We'll take him home to the naughty boy, and then he'll cry, because we've brought him a little dead brother. But as for the good boy—you have not forgotten him—who said it was a shame to make game of animals, we will bring him

both a brother and a sister. And as the boy's name is Peter, you shall all be called Peter after him." And all was done as agreed upon, and all the storks were henceforth named Peter, and are so still.



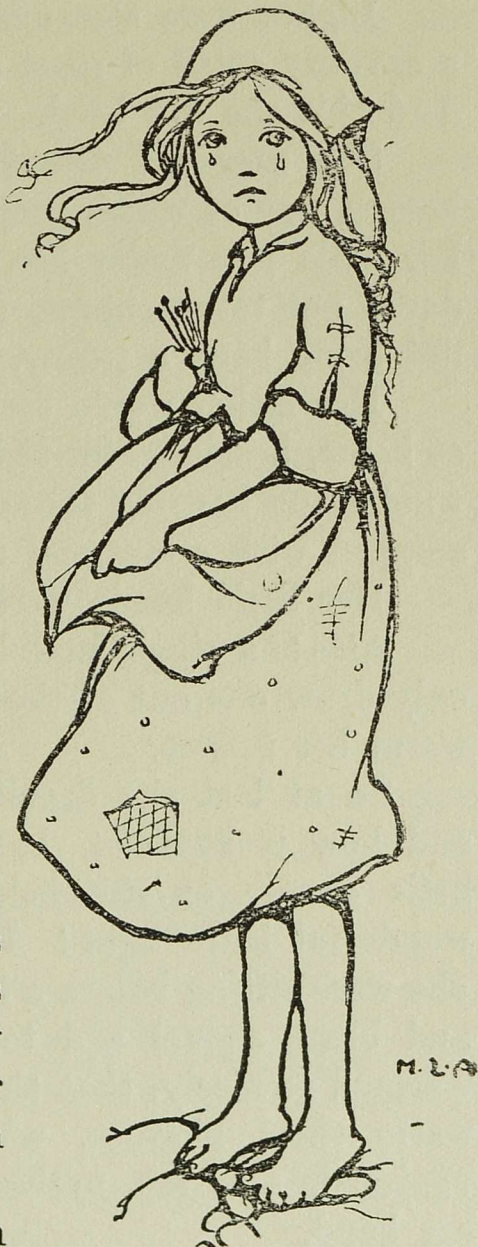
THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL

IT was dreadfully cold, it snowed, and was getting quite dark, for it was evening—yes, the last evening of the year.

Amid the cold and the darkness, a little girl, with bare head, and naked feet, was roaming through the streets. It is true she had on a pair of slippers, when she left home, but that was not of much use, for they were very large slippers; so large, indeed, that they had hitherto been used by her mother; besides, the little creature lost them as she hurried across the street, to avoid two carriages that were driving at a fearful rate. One of the slippers was not to be found, and the other was pounced upon by a boy, who ran away with it, saying that it would serve for a cradle when he should have children of his own.

So the little girl went along, with her little bare feet, that were red and blue with cold. She carried a number of matches in an old apron, and she held a bundle of them in her hand. Nobody had bought anything of her the whole livelong day, and nobody had even given her a penny.

She crept along, shivering with cold and hunger, a perfect picture of misery—poor little thing!



The snow-flakes covered her long flaxen hair, which hung in pretty curls round her throat; but she heeded them not.

Lights were streaming from all the windows, and there was a savoury smell of roast goose; for it was St. Silvester's evening. And this she did heed.

She now sat down, cowering in a corner formed by two houses, one of which projected beyond the other. She had drawn her little feet under her, but she felt colder than ever; yet she dared not return home, for she had not sold a match, and could not bring back a penny.

Her father would certainly beat her; and it was cold enough at home, besides,—for they had only the roof above them, and the wind came howling through it, though the largest holes had been stopped with straw and rags.

Her little hands were nearly frozen with cold.

Alas! a single match might do her some good, if she might only draw one out of the bundle, and rub it against the wall, and warm her fingers.

So at last she drew one out. Whist! how it shed sparks, and how it burned! It gave out a warm, bright flame, like a little candle, as she held her hands over it,—truly, it was a wonderful little light! It really seemed to the little girl as if she were sitting before a large iron stove, with polished brass feet, and brass shovel and tongs. The fire burned so blessedly, and warmed so nicely, that the little creature stretched out her feet to warm them likewise, when lo! the flame expired, the stove vanished, and left nothing but the little half-burned match in her hand.

She rubbed another match against the wall. It gave a light, and where it shone upon the wall, the latter became as transparent as a veil, and she could see into the room.

A snow-white table-cloth was spread upon the table, on which stood a splendid china dinner service, while a roast goose, stuffed with apples and prunes, sent forth the most savoury fumes. And what was more delightful still, the goose jumped down from the

dish, and waddled along the ground with a knife and fork in its breast, up to the poor girl.

The match then went out, and nothing remained but the thick, damp wall.

She lit another match.

She now sat under the most magnificent Christmas tree, that was larger, and more superbly decked than even the one she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant's. A thousand tapers burned on its green branches, and gay pictures, such as one sees on placards, seemed to be looking down upon her. The match then went out.

The Christmas lights kept rising higher and higher. They now looked like stars in the sky. One of them fell down, and left a long streak of fire.

"Somebody is now dying," thought the little girl,—for her old grandmother, the only person who had ever loved her, and who was now dead, had told her, that when a star falls, it is a sign that a soul is going up to heaven.

She again rubbed a match upon a wall, and it was again light all around; and in the brightness stood her old grandmother, clear and shining like a spirit, yet looking so mild and loving.

"Grandmother," cried the little one; "Oh! take me with you! I know you will go away when the match goes out,—you will vanish like the warm stove, and the delicious roast goose, and the fine, large Christmas-tree!"

And she made haste to rub the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to hold her grandmother fast.

And the matches gave a light that was brighter than noon-day. Her grandmother had never appeared so beautiful nor so large. She took the little girl in her arms, and both flew upwards, all radiant and joyful, far, far above mortal ken—where there was neither cold, nor hunger, nor care to be found; for it was to the Land of the Blessed that they had flown.

But, in the cold dawn, the poor girl might be seen leaning

against the wall, with red cheeks and smiling mouth: she had been frozen on the last night of the old year.

The new year's sun shone upon the little corpse.

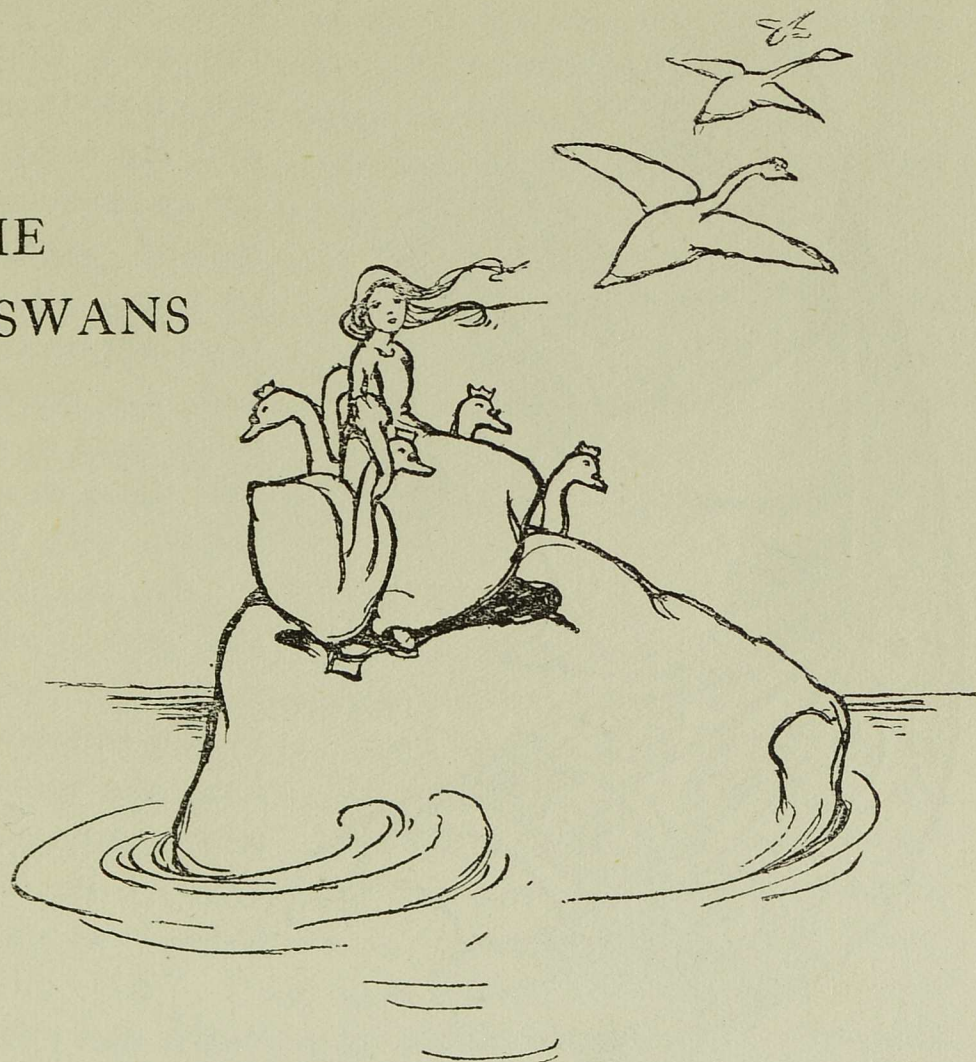
The child sat in the stiffness of death, still holding the matches, one bundle of which was burned.

People said: "She tried to warm herself."

Nobody dreamed of the fine things she had seen, nor in what splendour she had entered upon the joys of the New Year, together with her grandmother.



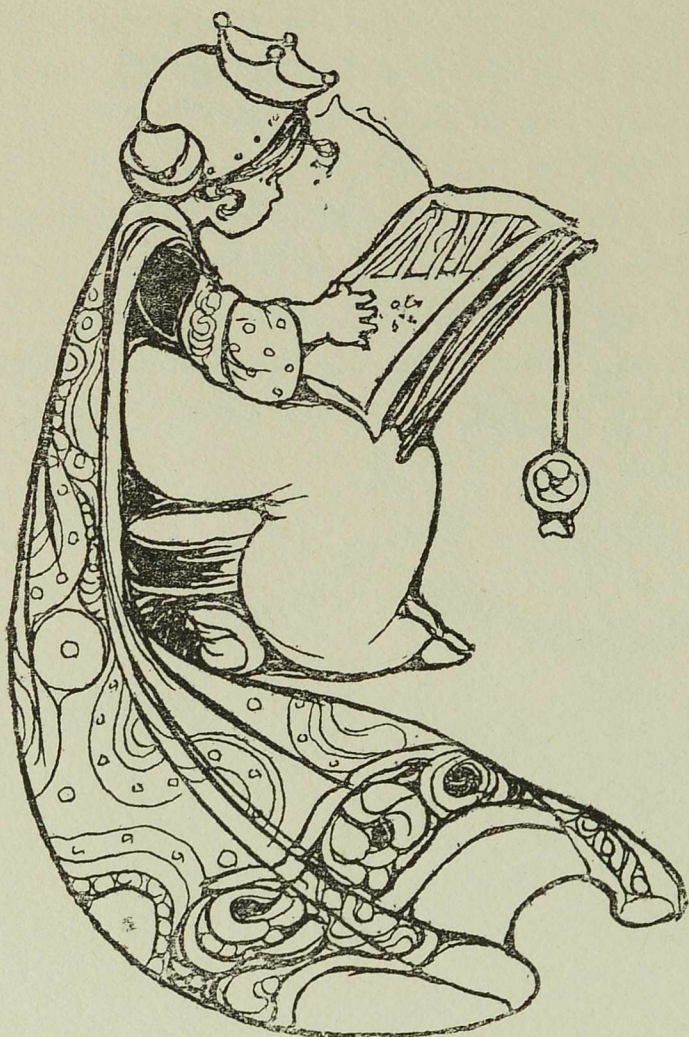
THE WILD SWANS



FAR away hence, in the land whither the swans fly when it is cold winter with us, there once lived a king who had eleven sons, and one daughter named Elisa. The eleven brothers were princes and used to go to school with a star on their breast, and a sword at their side. They wrote on gold slates with diamond pencils, and learned by heart as easily as they could read; one could immediately perceive they were princes. Their sister Elisa sat on a little glass stool, and had a book full of prints, that had cost nearly half the kingdom to purchase.

O, these children were happy indeed,—but, unfortunately, their happiness was not to last.

Their father, who was the king of the land, married a wicked queen, who was not well disposed towards the poor children,



This they perceived from the very first day. There were festivities in the palace, and the children were playing at receiving visitors; but instead of their obtaining, as usual, all the cakes and roast apples that were to be had, she merely gave them some sand in a tea-cup, and told them they could make-believe with that.

In the following week, she sent their little sister Elisa to a peasant's cottage in the country; and before long, she spoke so ill of the poor princes to the king that he no longer troubled himself about them.

"Fly out into the world, and pick up your own livelihood," said the wicked queen. "Fly in the shape of large birds without a voice." But she could not make things as bad as she wished, for they were turned into eleven beautiful wild swans; and away they flew out of the palace windows, uttering a peculiar cry, as they swept over the park to the forest beyond.

It was still early, as they passed by the peasant's cottage, where Elisa lay asleep. They hovered over the roof, and extended their long necks, and flapped their wings, but nobody heard or saw them; so they were obliged to go on. And they rose up to the clouds, and flew out into the wide world, until they reached a large, gloomy forest, that shelved down to the sea-shore.

Poor little Elisa was standing in a room in the cottage, playing with a green leaf, for she had no other toy. And she perceived a

hole through the leaf, and looked up at the sun, when she fancied she saw her brothers' clear eyes; and every time the warm sunbeams fell on her cheeks, she used to think of their kisses.

One day was just as monotonous as another. If the wind rustled through the large hedge of rose-bushes, he would whisper to the roses: "Who can be more beautiful than you?" But the roses would shake their heads, and answer: "Elisa." And if the old woman sat before the door, on a Sunday, reading her psalm-book, the wind would turn over the leaves, and say to the book: "Who can be more pious than you?" And then the psalm-book would answer: "Elisa." And both the roses and the psalm-book spoke the truth.

When she was fifteen she was to return home. But when the queen saw how beautiful she was, her heart was filled with hatred and spite. She would willingly have turned her into a wild swan, like her brothers, but she dared not do it just yet, because the king wished to see his daughter. Early in the morning the queen went into the bath-room, which was built of marble, and furnished with soft cushions, and the most beautiful carpet and hangings imaginable; and she took three toads and kissed them, and said to one of them: "Sit upon Elisa's head when she comes into the bath, that she may become stupid like yourself. Sit upon her forehead," said she to another, "that she may grow as ugly as you, so that her father may not recognize her. Rest on her heart," whispered she to the third, "that she may have a bad disposition, which will breed her pain." She then put the toads into the transparent water, which turned green, and next called Elisa, and helped her to undress and get into the bath. And as Elisa dipped her head under the water, one toad placed itself on her hair, another on her forehead, and a third on her breast. But she did not appear to observe them; and as soon as she rose up again, three poppies were floating on the water. If the animals had not been venomous, and had not been kissed by the witch, they would have been changed into red roses. But flowers they became, however, because they had rested on her head and her heart. She

was too pious and too innocent for any witchcraft to have power over her.

When the wicked queen perceived this, she rubbed the princess with walnut-juice till she was quite brown, and besmeared her face with rancid ointment, and tangled her magnificent hair, till it was impossible to recognize the beautiful Elisa.

When her father saw her he was quite frightened, and declared she was not his daughter. Nobody but the watch-dog and the swallows could recognize her—only they were poor animals, and could not speak a word.

Poor Elisa then cried, and thought of her eleven brothers, who were all away. And she stole out of the palace in great affliction, and walked the whole day long across fields and marshes, till she reached the large forest. She knew not whither she was going, but she felt so sad, and she longed to see her brothers, whom she felt certain had been driven out into the world like herself, and she determined to seek till she found them.

She had been but a short time in the wood when the night came on; and having walked a long way, she lay down on the soft moss, said her prayers, and leaned her head against the stump of a tree. It was perfectly quiet all around, the air was mild, and hundreds of glow-worms lit up the surrounding grass and moss like green fire; and if she touched a twig ever so lightly, the brilliant insects showered down like so many falling stars.

All night she dreamed of her brothers. She thought they were playing together as in childhood, and were writing with the diamond pencils on the gold slates, and looking at the prints in the book that had cost half the kingdom. Only, instead of making sums on the slates, as heretofore, they wrote down the valiant deeds they had achieved, and all that they had done and seen; and in the print-book everything was living—the birds were singing, and the figures were walking out of the book, and speaking to Elisa and her brothers. But the moment the latter turned over the leaves, they jumped back into their places, that no disorder might ensue.



THE WILD SWANS

The sun was already high in the heavens when she awoke. Not that she could see the sun, for the lofty trees were arching overhead, but its beams were playing here and there, like the light fluttering of a gold gauze scarf; and there came a sweet fragrance from the woods, and the birds almost perched on her shoulders. She heard the rippling of water, which proceeded from several large streams that fell into a lake, that had a most beautiful sandy bed. Thick bushes grew round the lake, but the deer had made a large opening at one spot, through which Elisa was enabled to reach the water. Its surface was so clear, that when the wind did not ruffle the branches and bushes, one might have fancied they had been painted at the bottom of the lake, so plainly was every leaf reflected, whether it stood in the sunshine or the shade.

As soon as Elisa saw her own image, she was frightened at finding herself so brown and so ugly. But on wetting her little hand, and rubbing her eyes and forehead, her white skin was soon apparent once more. She then undressed, and got into the water; and a lovelier royal child than herself could not have been met with in the wide world. When she had dressed herself again, and braided her long hair, she went to the running stream, and drank out of the hollow of her hand, and then she wandered deeper into the forest, without knowing what she meant to do. She thought of her brothers, and trusted that God would not abandon her. God had bidden the wild apples grow to feed the hungry, and He led her to one of these trees, whose boughs were bending beneath the weight of their fruit. Here she made her midday's meal, and after propping up the branches, she went into the gloomiest depths of the forest. It was so quiet here that she could hear the sound of her own footsteps, and every little dried leaf that crackled under her feet. Not a bird was to be seen, nor did a sunbeam penetrate through the large dark branches. The lofty trunks stood so close to each other, that when she looked before her it seemed as if she were shut in by a lattice made of huge beams of wood. It was solitude such as she had never known before.

The night was quite dark. Not a little glow-worm beamed from the moss. She lay down sorrowfully to compose herself to sleep. She then fancied that the boughs above her head moved aside, and that the Almighty looked down upon her with pitying eyes, while little angels hovered above His head and under His arms.

Next morning when she awoke, she could not tell whether this was a dream, or whether it had really taken place. She then set out, but had not gone many steps when she met an old woman, with a basket full of berries. The old woman gave her some to eat, and Elisa asked her if she had not seen eleven princes riding through the forest. "No," said the old woman; "but yesterday I saw eleven swans with gold crowns on their heads, swimming down the river hereabouts."

She then led Elisa a little further towards a slope, at the foot of which ran a winding rivulet. The trees on its banks stretched forth their long, leafy branches till they met, and wherever their growth would not have allowed them to mingle their foliage, the roots had broken loose from the soil, and hung entwined with the branches across the water.

Elisa then bid the old dame farewell, and followed the rivulet till it flowed towards a wide, open shore.

The sea now lay before the young maiden, in all its splendour, but not a sail was to be seen, and not so much as a boat could be descried. How was she to proceed further? She looked at the countless little pebbles on the shore, which the water had worn till they were quite smooth—glass, iron, stones, everything, in short, that lay there and had been washed by the waves, had assumed the shape from water, though it was softer still than her delicate hand. "It rolls along indefatigably, and wears away the hardest substances—I will be equally indefatigable. Thanks for the lesson you gave me, ye clear, rolling waves! My heart tells me you will bear me to my dear brothers!"

In the moist sea-weeds lay eleven white swan's feathers, which she gathered into a bunch. Drops of water trembled upon



them; but whether they were dew-drops or tears, nobody could tell. It was lonely on that sea-shore, but she did not feel it to be so, for the sea was ever changing, and displayed more variety in a few hours than the sweetest landscapes could show in a whole year. If a heavy black cloud arose, it seemed as if the sea meant to say: "I, too, know how to look dark;" and then the wind blew, and the waves turned their white side outwards. But if the clouds were rosy, then the winds slept, and the sea looked like a rose-

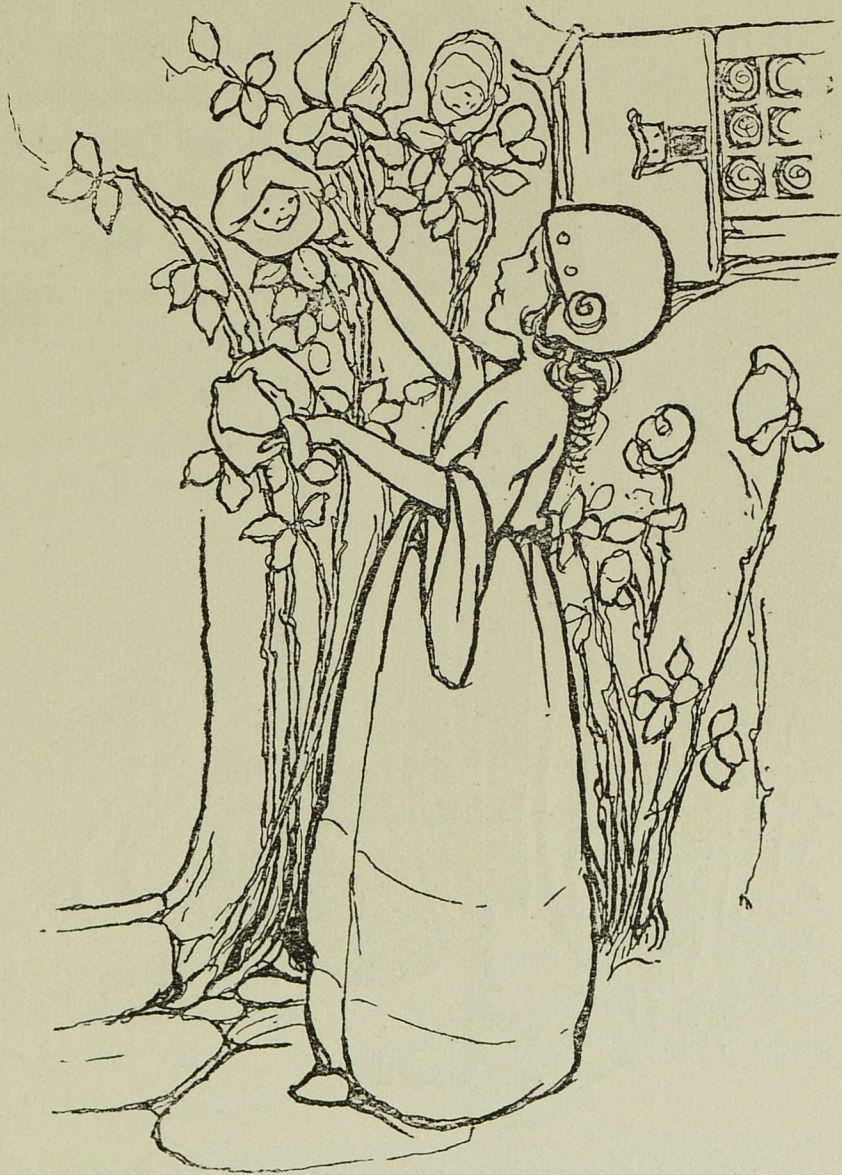
leaf—now white, now green. Yet, however calm it might be, there was always a slight motion near the shore, and the waters would heave slightly, like the breast of a slumbering infant.

Just at sunset Elisa saw eleven wild swans, with gold crowns on their heads, flying towards the shore, one behind the other, like a long white ribbon. Elisa then went up the slope and hid herself behind a bush; the swans came down quite close to her, and flapped their large white wings.

The sun had no sooner sunk into the water, than their swans' plumage fell off, and Elisa's brothers stood there as eleven handsome princes. She uttered a loud scream; for, changed as they were, she knew and felt it must be they. She flung herself into their arms, calling them by their names; and the princes were quite happy on recognizing their little sister, and finding how beautiful she had grown. They laughed and cried all in a breath, and they had soon related to each other how wicked their stepmother had been to them all.

"We brothers," said the eldest, "fly about as wild swans, as long as the sun stands in the heavens; but no sooner has it sunk down than we recover our human shape. Therefore, must we always provide a resting-place for our feet towards sunset; for were we flying in the clouds at this hour, we should fall into the sea on resuming our natural form. We do not live here. There lies across the sea a country as beautiful as this; but the way thither is long. We have to cross the wide sea, and there is not an island to be met with on the passage; only one solitary little rock lifts its head from the midst of the waters, and is barely large enough to afford us a resting-place by crowding closely together. If the sea is rough, the waves dash over us; still, we thank God even for this barren crag, where we spend the night in our human shape, for without it we should never be able to visit our beloved country, since it requires two of the longest days in the year for our flight. It is only once a year that we have the privilege of visiting our home, and we have but eleven days to remain here and to fly over the forest, whence we can look upon the palace where

we were born, and where our father lives, and at the church where our mother lies buried. We feel here as if the very trees and bushes were related to us; we see the wild horses careering over the steppes as we saw them in childhood; we hear the charcoal-burners singing the old songs to which we danced as children; it is, in short, the land of our birth, and hither do we feel ourselves irresistibly attracted; and here have we found you, our dear little sister. But we

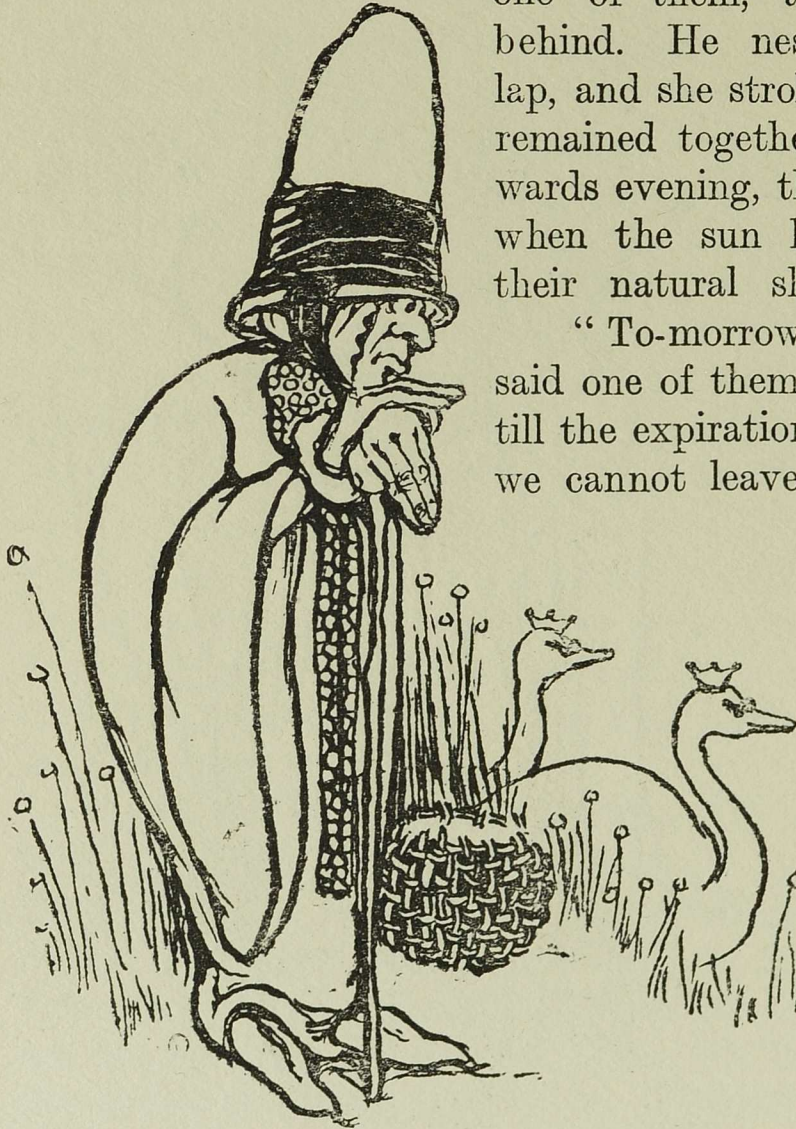


have only two days left to remain here, and then we must cross the sea to go to a beautiful country, which, however is not our own. How shall we take you with us, when we have neither ship nor boat?"

"How can I break your spell?" asked the sister.

And they talked nearly the whole night through, and only slept a very few hours.

Elisa awoke on hearing the rustling of the swans' wings as they hovered over her, for her brothers were once more transformed. They described large circles, and at length flew quite away; but



one of them, the youngest, remained behind. He nestled his head in her lap, and she stroked his wings, and they remained together the whole day. Towards evening, the others returned; and when the sun had set, they resumed their natural shapes.

"To-morrow we must fly away," said one of them, "and may not return till the expiration of a whole year. Yet we cannot leave you thus. Have you the courage to accompany us? My arm is strong enough to carry you through the forest, and why should not the wings of us all suffice to bear you across the ocean?"

"Yes, do take me with you," said Elisa.

They spent the whole night in making a net with the pliant bark of osiers and ropy sedges; and the net proved large and strong. Elisa lay down upon it, and when the sun rose, and her brothers were changed to swans, they took up the net with their beaks, and flew up to the clouds with their beloved sister, who was still fast asleep. As the sunbeams fell right upon her countenance, one of the swans hovered over her head to shade her with his broad wings.

They were far from land when Elisa awoke. She thought she was still dreaming, so strange did it seem to her to be carried up in the air over the wide sea. By her side lay a branch full of

delicious ripe berries, and a bundle of savoury roots; these had been gathered by her youngest brother, and placed ready for her use. She smiled her thanks to him, for she recognized him in the swan who was hovering over her to shade her with his wings.

They were so high up in the air, that the largest ship below them looked like a white sea-mew riding on the waves. A great cloud stood behind them like a vast mountain, and on this Elisa saw depicted her own shadow and that of the eleven swans, in giant proportions. This was a prettier picture than she had ever yet seen. But when the sun rose higher, and the cloud remained further behind them, the floating vision vanished from her sight.

They flew on and on the livelong day, like an arrow hurtling through the air; still, they proceeded somewhat more slowly than usual, having their sister to carry. Dark clouds arose as evening came on, and Elisa beheld the sinking sun with an anxious heart, for as yet no rock was in sight. It seemed to her as if the swans were flapping their wings with desperate efforts. Alas! she was the cause they could not advance faster. And at sunset they must recover their human shape, and fall into the sea, and get drowned! Oh! how she prayed for their safety, from her inmost heart!—but still no rock appeared. The black cloud approached: violent gusts of wind told of a coming storm, while the clouds, gathered into one massive threatening wave, seemed to move forward like lead. One flash of lightning followed upon another.

The sun had now reached the edge of the sea. Elisa's heart beat fast, and the swans darted down so swiftly that she thought they must fall. But now, again, they soared in the air. The sun had dipped half into the water, when at length the little rock appeared below them. It did not look larger than a sea-dog's head, peeping out of the waves. The sun sank so rapidly, that it now only looked like a star—and, at that moment, their feet touched the solid ground. The sun went out like the last spark in a piece of burnt paper, and the brothers now stood arm-in-arm around their sister; but there was not an inch more room than just sufficient for herself and them.

The waves lashed the rock, and a drizzling mist kept falling over them, while the sky was lighted up with continual flashes, and one clap of thunder followed close upon another; but the sister and her brothers sat holding each other's hands, and singing psalms, from which they derived both hope and courage.

Towards dawn the air was pure and still; and the moment the sun had risen, the swans carried Elisa away from the rock.

The sea was yet rough, and, when seen from above, the white foam that crested the dark green waves looked like millions of swans swimming on the waters.

When the sun had risen higher, Elisa saw before her, in the air, a mountain, with masses of glittering ice upon its crags, from the midst of which rose a castle at least a mile long, with colonnade upon colonnade piled boldly each on the top of the other. Forests of palm-trees were waving below, together with flowers as large as mill-wheels.

She inquired if that was the land whither they were bound? But the swans shook their heads, for what she saw was nothing but the fairy Morgiana's beautiful and ever-varying castle, built of clouds, and which no mortal could enter. Elisa was still gazing at it, when down fell mountains, forests, and castle in one vast heap, and twenty stately churches, all alike, with high steeples, and gothic windows, rose upon their ruins.

She thought she heard the organ pealing, but it was the roaring of the sea that deceived her.

As she approached the churches, these, in turn, changed to a large fleet, that seemed to be sailing under her. On looking below, however, she discovered it to be mere clouds of mist, that were gliding across the waters. She thus kept viewing an endless succession of sights, till at length she perceived the real land whither they were going, where stood the finest blue mountains, with cedar forests, towers, and castles. Long before sunset, she sat on a rock, in front of a large cavern, that was overgrown with delicate green creepers, looking like an embroidered carpet.

“Now we shall see what you will dream about to-night,” said the youngest brother, as he showed his sister her chamber.

“Heaven send that I may dream how to save you!” said she; and this notion busied her intently, and she prayed heartily to God to help her,—so heartily, indeed, that she continued praying in her sleep. She then thought she was flying through the air to the fairy Morgiana’s castle of clouds; and the fairy came forth to welcome her, in all her beauty and splendour, yet resembling, withal, the old woman who had given her the berries in the forest, and told her of the swans with gold crowns on their heads.

“Your brothers can be delivered,” said she, “but have you sufficient courage and constancy to break the spell? Water is softer than your delicate hands, and yet it wears away stones; but it does not feel the pains your fingers will have to feel; and, having no heart, it cannot suffer the cares and anxiety that you will have to endure. Do you see this stinging-nettle that I hold in my hand? A number of the same sort grow round the cavern in which you are sleeping; and, mark me well, only those, and such as grow in churchyards, are available for the purpose in question. You must pluck them, although they will blister your hands. By treading upon them with your feet you will obtain flax, with which you must braid eleven coats of mail, with long sleeves, that will no sooner be thrown over the eleven swans, than the spell will be broken. But remember that from the moment you begin this work, until it be finished, though it should take years to accomplish, you must not speak a word, or the first syllable you pronounce would strike a death dagger through your brothers’ hearts. Their lives depend on your silence. Mark this well.”

And at the same time she touched her hand with the nettle, which was like burning fire and caused Elisa to wake. It was broad day, and close beside her lay a nettle, like those she had seen in her dream. She then fell on her knees, and thanked God, and left the cave to begin her work.

Her delicate hands now plucked the ugly nettles, that were like fire. Large blisters rose on her hands and arms; yet she suffered



cheerfully, in the hopes of delivering her beloved brothers. She trod each nettle with her bare feet, and then began to braid the green flax.

When the sun had sunk, her brothers came home, and were frightened to find her dumb. They thought it some fresh spell contrived by their wicked step-mother. But on seeing her hands they understood what she was doing for their sakes; and the youngest brother wept, and wherever his tears fell on her hands, the burning blisters disappeared. She worked all night, for she could not rest till she had delivered

her dear brothers. The swans were absent during the whole of the following day, and she sat alone; but never had the hours seemed to fly faster. One coat of mail was already finished, and she then began another. A bugle-horn now echoed amongst the mountains, and made her start with fear. The sound approached—she heard the barking of dogs, and she flew back into the cave in great alarm, and, tying up the nettles, that she had gathered and dressed, into a bundle, she sat upon it.

At that moment a large dog jumped out from a narrow pass

between the mountains, and was quickly followed by another, and another still; they barked loudly, and ran back, and then returned again. In a few minutes all the huntsmen stood before the cave, and the handsomest amongst them was the king of the land. He stepped up to Elisa, who was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

"How did you come hither, lovely maiden?" asked he. Elisa shook her head. She dared not speak, for her brothers' delivery and lives were at stake: and she hid her hands under her apron, that the king might not see what she was enduring. "Come with me," said he, "you cannot remain here. If you are as good as you are beautiful, I will dress you in silk and velvet, and place my gold crown on your head, and you shall dwell in my richest palace." He then lifted her on to his horse. She wept, and wrung her hands, but the king said: "I do but wish for your happiness. Some day you will thank me for what I am doing."

And then he hunted through the mountains, and held her before him on his horse, and the huntsmen hunted behind them.

Towards sunset, the handsome capital, with its churches and cupolas, lay before them. And the king led her into the palace where large fountains were playing in marble halls, whose walls and ceilings were adorned with paintings. But she had not the heart to look at these fine things, and kept weeping and mourning. However, she willingly allowed the women to dress her in regal robes, to braid her hair with pearls, and to put delicate gloves over her scorched fingers.

When she appeared in all her magnificence, she looked so dazzlingly beautiful, that the whole court bowed still more profoundly before her. And the king chose her for his bride, though the archbishop shook his head, and whispered that the pretty maid of the forest was in all likelihood a witch, who had fascinated the eyes and befooled the heart of their king.

But the king would not listen to him, and ordered the music to strike up, and the most costly dishes to be laid on the table, whilst the loveliest girls danced around her. And she was led through the fragrant garden, to most magnificent rooms, but not a

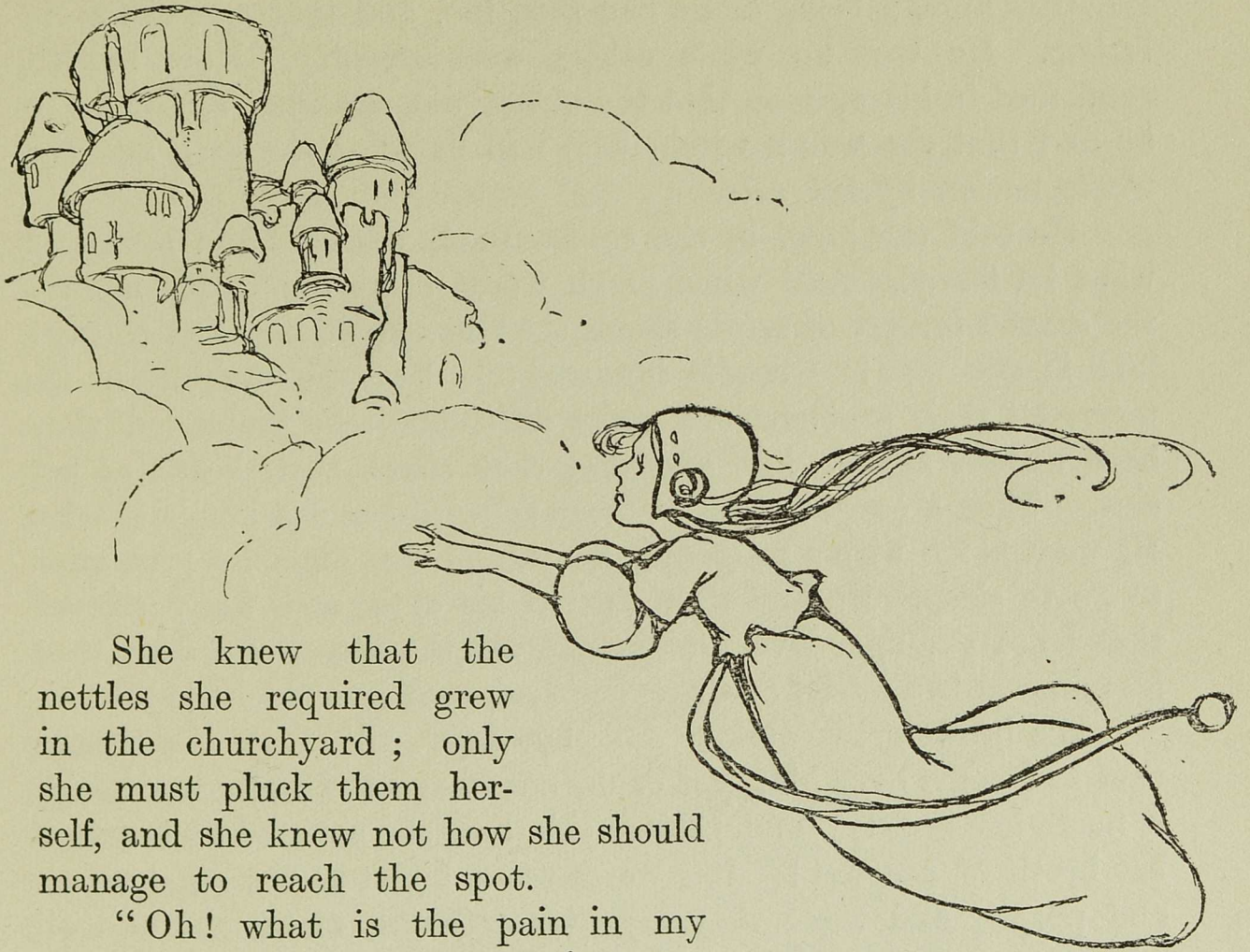
smile could be won from her lips, or made to sparkle in her eyes. She seemed the image of sorrow. The king then opened a little room, close to her sleeping chamber, that was provided with a costly green carpet, and was exactly like the cave she came from. On the floor lay the bundle of flax that she had spun out of the nettles, while the coat of mail, which she had finished, hung from the ceiling. All these things had been taken away by a huntsman who looked upon them as curiosities.

"You can fancy yourself in your early home," said the king. "Here is the work which busied you in the cave; and now, in the midst of all your magnificence, it may amuse you to look back at those days."

When Elisa saw that which interested her so deeply, a smile played round her mouth, and the blood rushed back to her cheeks. She thought of her brothers' delivery, and kissed the king's hand, while he pressed her to his heart, and ordered all the bells to ring to announce their marriage. And the beautiful, dumb maid of the forest became the queen of the land.

The archbishop whispered slanderous words into the king's ears, but they could not reach his heart. The wedding, he was determined, should take place, and the archbishop himself was obliged to place the crown on the new queen's head, though he maliciously pressed down its narrow circlet on her forehead, so that it hurt her. But a heavier circlet bound her heart, and that was her sorrow for her brothers' fate. She did not heed her bodily sufferings. She remained mute, for a single word would have cost her brothers their lives; but her eyes expressed deep love for the kind handsome king, who did everything to please her. Each day she loved him more and more. Oh! how it would have relieved her to have told him her sorrows, and to be able to complain! But dumb she must remain, and in silence must she finish her work. She, therefore, used to steal away from his side at night, and go into the little room that was decorated like the cave, and plaited one coat of mail after another.

On beginning the seventh, however there was no flax left.



She knew that the nettles she required grew in the churchyard ; only she must pluck them herself, and she knew not how she should manage to reach the spot.

“Oh! what is the pain in my fingers compared to the anxiety my heart endures?” thought she. “I must attempt the adventure! The Lord will not withdraw His hand from me.” And with as much fear and trembling as if she were about to commit a wicked action, did she steal down into the garden one moonlight night, and crossing the long alleys, she threaded the lonely streets until she reached the churchyard. There she saw a circle of phantoms sitting on one of the broadest gravestones. These ugly witches took off their rags as if they were going to bathe, and then they dug up the fresh graves with their long, skinny fingers, took out the dead bodies, and devoured their flesh. Elisa was obliged to pass by them, and they scowled upon her; but she prayed silently, and plucked the burning nettles, and carried them home.

One human being alone had seen her, and that was the archbishop. He was up while others were sleeping. Now he felt confirmed in his opinion that the queen was not what she ought to be and that she was a witch, who had befooled the king and the whole nation by her arts.

He told the king, in the confessional, what he had seen and what he feared. And when harsh words came out of his mouth, the carved images of saints shook their heads, as much as to say: "It is not true! Elisa is innocent!" But the archbishop interpreted their protestations quite differently: he pretended they bore witness against her, and that they shook their heads at her sins. Then a couple of bitter tears rolled down the king's cheeks. He went home with a misgiving heart, and that night he pretended to go to sleep. But no sleep visited his eyes, and he perceived that Elisa got up. Every night she did the same, and each time he followed her softly, and saw her disappear into the little room.

His brow grew darker day by day. Elisa saw the change that had come over him, yet could not imagine the reason, though it made her uneasy—and, besides this, how she suffered at heart on her brothers' account! Her warm tears bedewed the regal velvet and purple, and there they lay like glittering diamonds, and all who saw their splendour wished to be a queen. Meantime, she had nearly finished her work. Only one coat of mail was wanting; but she was short of flax, and had not a single nettle left. Once more—and this once only—would she have to go to the churchyard, and gather a few handfuls of nettles. She thought with horror of this lonely excursion, and of the frightful phantoms, but her will was as firm as her trust in the Lord.

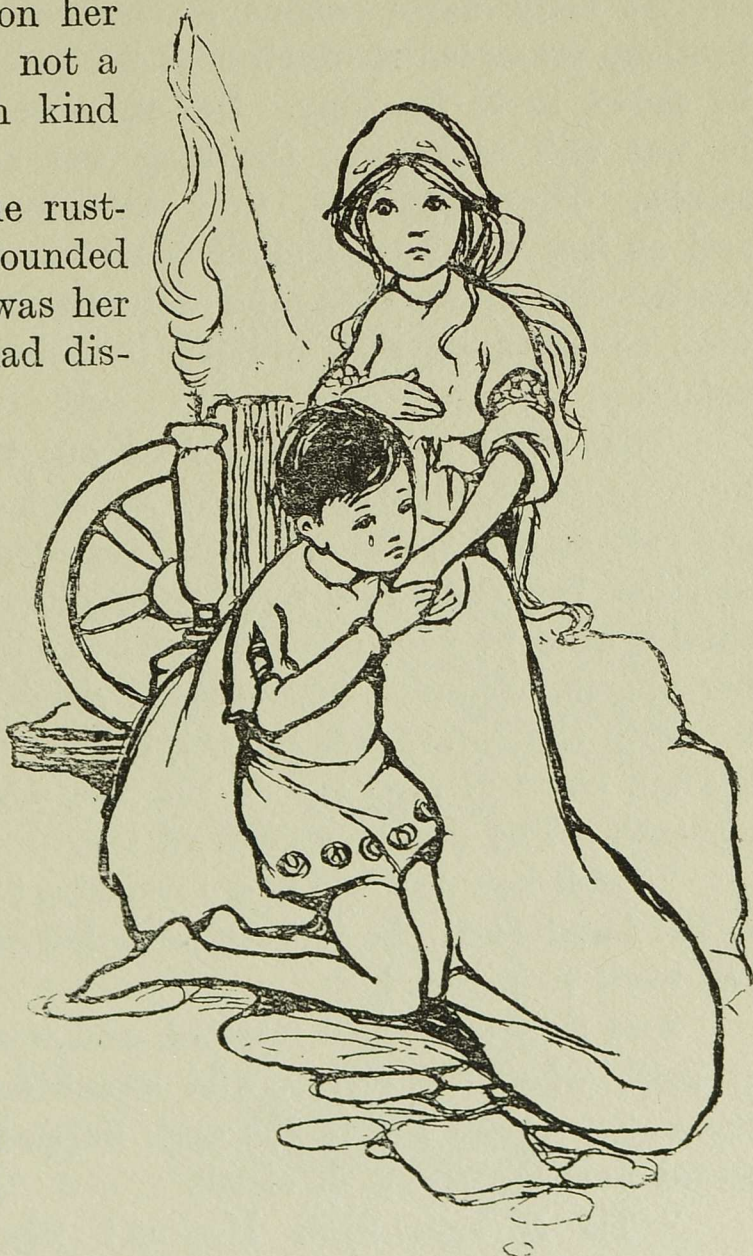
Elisa went, but the king and the archbishop followed her. They saw her disappear behind the grated door of the churchyard, and when they had nearly come up with her, the witches were sitting on the gravestone, as Elisa had seen them, and the king turned away, for he fancied that she, whose head had been pillowed on his breast that very evening, was making one amongst those loathsome creatures.

"The people must judge her," said he. And the people pronounced that she was to be burned as a witch.

She was now taken from the splendour of the royal palace to a dark, damp dungeon, where the wind whistled through a grating; and instead of silk and velvet they gave her the bunch of nettles which she had gathered—this was to serve as her pillow, while the hard, burning coats of mail that she had plaited were to be her coverlet. But nothing could have been more welcome to her—she resumed her work, and prayed to Heaven. The boys in the street sang lampoons upon her outside her prison, and not a soul comforted her with kind words.

Towards evening, the rustling of a swan's wings sounded near the grating. This was her youngest brother, who had discovered his sister's dungeon; and she sobbed her joy at seeing him, although she knew that the following night would, in all probability, be her last. But now her work was almost completed, and her brothers were there.

The archbishop came to spend the last hour with her, as he had promised the king he would do so. But she shook her head, and begged him by looks and by signs to go away



For, unless she completed her work that night, her sufferings, her tears, and her sleepless nights would all prove vain. The archbishop left the prison, muttering calumnies against her, but poor Elisa knew that she was innocent, and therefore she proceeded with her task.

The little mice ran about on the floor; they dragged the nettles to her feet, in order to help as well as they could; while a thrush sat near the grating of a window, and sang most sweetly all night long, to keep up her spirits.

At early dawn, about an hour before sunrise, the eleven brothers presented themselves at the palace gate, and requested to be shown in to the king. But they were told it was impossible. It was still night, and the king was asleep, and could not be awoken. They implored, they threatened, the guard appeared, and at last the king himself came out to inquire what was the matter—but just then the sun rose, and no more princes were to be seen, and nothing but eleven swans flew over the palace.

The whole population flowed out through the gates of the town to see the witch burnt. An old, sorry-looking hack drew the cart on which she sat; she was dressed in a sackcloth kirtle, and her beautiful hair was hanging loose on her shoulders; her cheeks were as pale as death, and her lips moved slightly, while her fingers continued braiding the green flax. Even on her way to death she would not interrupt the work she had undertaken; the ten coats of mail lay at her feet, and she was finishing the eleventh. The people scoffed at her.

“Look how the witch is muttering! She has no psalm-book in her hand—no! she is busy with her hateful juggling—let’s tear her work to pieces.”

And they all rushed forward, and were going to tear the coats of mail, when the eleven wild swans darted down, and placing themselves round her in the cart, flapped their large wings. The crowd now gave way in alarm.

“’Tis a sign from Heaven! She is surely innocent!”

whispered the multitude; but they did not dare to say so aloud.

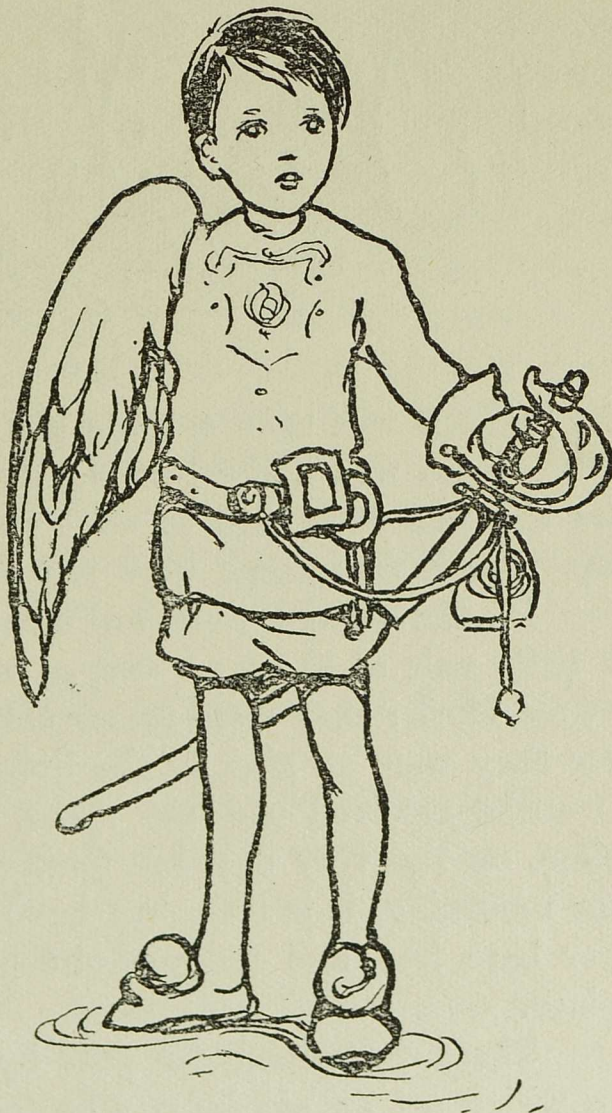
The executioner now took hold of her, but she hastily threw the eleven coats of mail over the swans, when eleven handsome princes instantly stood before her. Only the youngest had a swan's wing instead of an arm, because a sleeve was wanting to complete his coat of mail, for she had not been able to finish it.

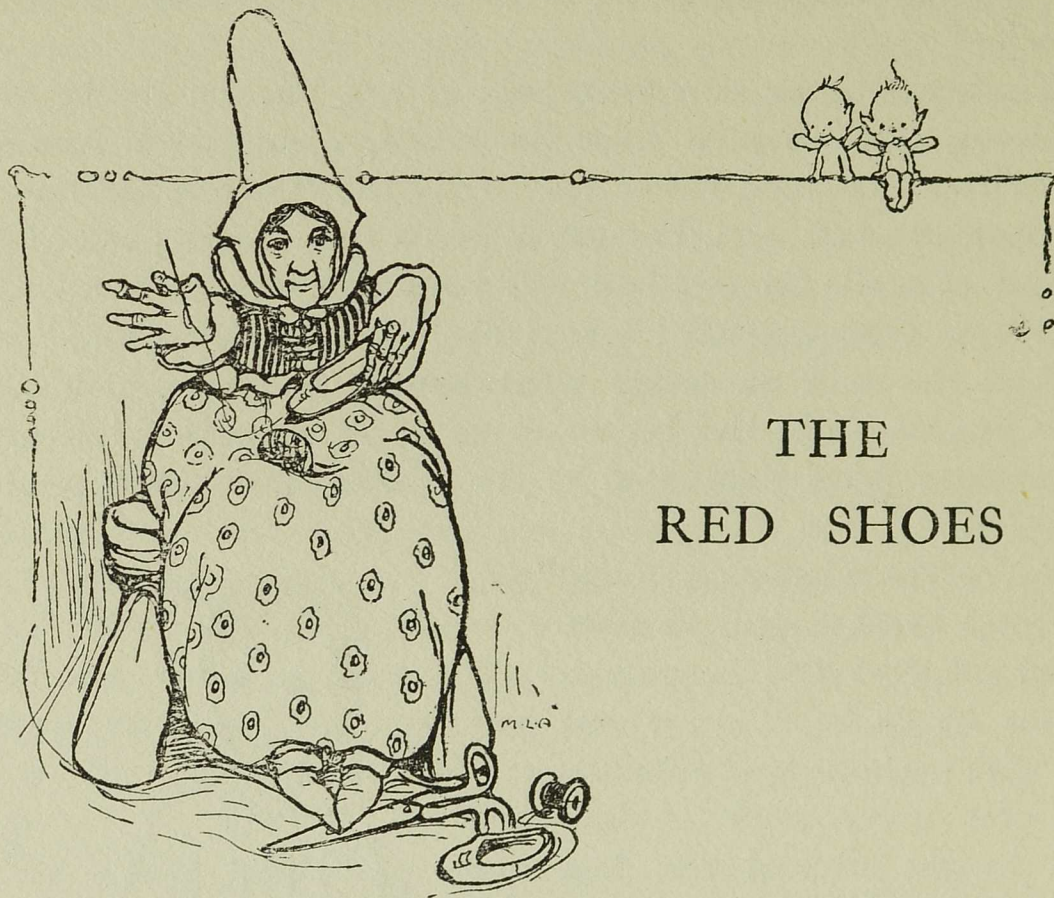
"Now I may speak!" said she. "I am innocent!"

And the mob, on seeing what had taken place, now bowed before her, as if she had been a saint; but she sank fainting into her brothers' arms, exhausted by the intense anxiety and grief she had suffered.

"Yes, she is innocent!" said the eldest brother, and he now related all that had happened. And as he spoke, the air was filled with perfume as of a million roses—for every stick of firewood in the funeral pile had taken root and put forth twigs, and there stood a fragrant hedge, both tall and thick, full of red roses; and quite above bloomed a flower as white and brilliant as a star. The king plucked it, and placed it in Elisa's bosom, and she awoke, with a peaceful and happy heart.

And all the bells fell a-ringing of themselves, and birds flocked thither in long processions. And such a wedding party as returned to the palace no king had ever seen before.





THE RED SHOES

THERE was once a little girl who was delicately pretty, but who was obliged to walk about with bare feet in summer, for she was poor, and to wear coarse, wooden shoes in winter, so that her little insteps were red all over.

In the village lived an old shoemaker's wife, who fashioned a little pair of shoes as well as she could out of some old strips of red cloth: they were rather clumsy, but the intention was kind, for they were to give to the little girl, whose name was Karen.

She received the red shoes, and put them on, for the first time, on the very day her mother was buried. They were not fit for mourning, it is true, but having no others, she put them on to her bare feet, and followed the pauper's coffin to its last resting-place.

There happened to pass by a large, old-fashioned carriage, in which sat an old lady, who took compassion on the little girl,

and said to the preacher: "Pray, give me that little girl, and I will adopt her."

And Karen fancied that all this was owing to the red shoes, but the old lady thought them abominable, and ordered them to be burnt. Karen then was dressed in clean and tidy clothes, and was taught to read and sew, and people said she was pretty. But the looking-glass said: "You are more than pretty—you are beautiful!"

The queen once travelled through the land, with her little daughter, who was a princess. And crowds flocked towards the palace, and Karen amongst the rest, to see the little princess, who stood at a window, dressed in the finest white clothes. She had neither a train, nor a golden crown, but beautiful red morocco shoes—which, it must be confessed, were a trifle prettier than those the shoemaker's wife had patched together for little Karen. Surely nothing in the world can be compared to red shoes!

Karen was now old enough to be confirmed. She had new clothes given her, and she was to have a pair of new shoes likewise. The rich shoemaker of the town took the measure of her little foot in his own house, in a room where a number of glass cases were filled with elegant shoes and shining boots. It was a very pretty sight, but as the old lady could not see very well, she took no pleasure in it. Amongst the shoes was a pair of red ones, just like those the princess wore. How pretty they were, to be sure! The shoemaker said they had been made for a count's child, but had not fitted well.

"Are they of polished leather?" asked the old lady, "for they shine so?"

"They shine indeed," said Karen; and they fitted her and were purchased. But the old lady did not know they were red, or she would never have allowed Karen to go to be confirmed in red shoes, which she, however, now did.

Everybody looked at her feet. And when she stepped across the church to reach the choir, she fancied that even the old pictures over the graves, the portraits of preachers and their wives, with

their stiff collars and long black clothes, were fixing their eyes on her red shoes. And she thought of nothing but them, even when the preacher laid his hands on her head, and descanted on the Holy Baptism that admitted her within the pale of God's servants, and reminded her that she must now behave like a grown Christian. And the organ pealed solemnly, while the children's voices joined with those of the choristers; but Karen thought of nothing but her red shoes.

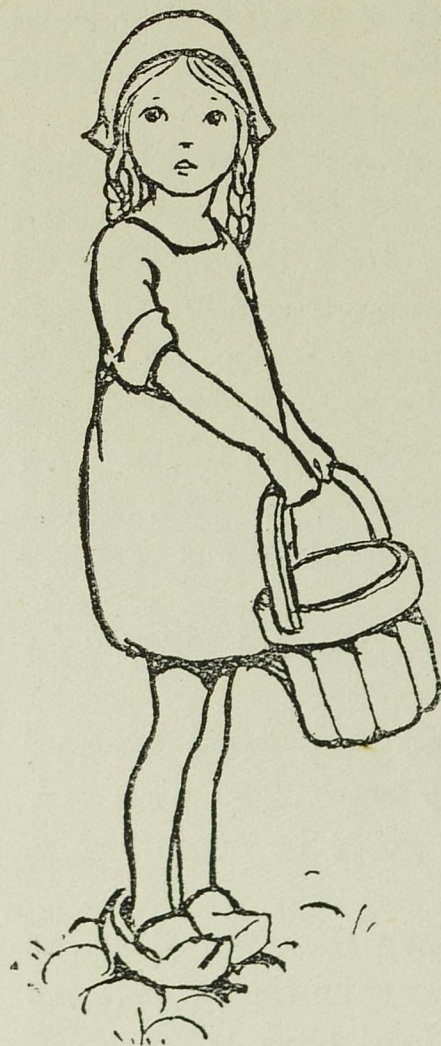
In the afternoon, the old lady heard everybody say that the shoes were red; and she said it was quite shocking, and highly improper, and that in future Karen must always go to church in black shoes, even though they should be somewhat worn. Next Sunday she was to receive the Sacrament; and Karen looked first

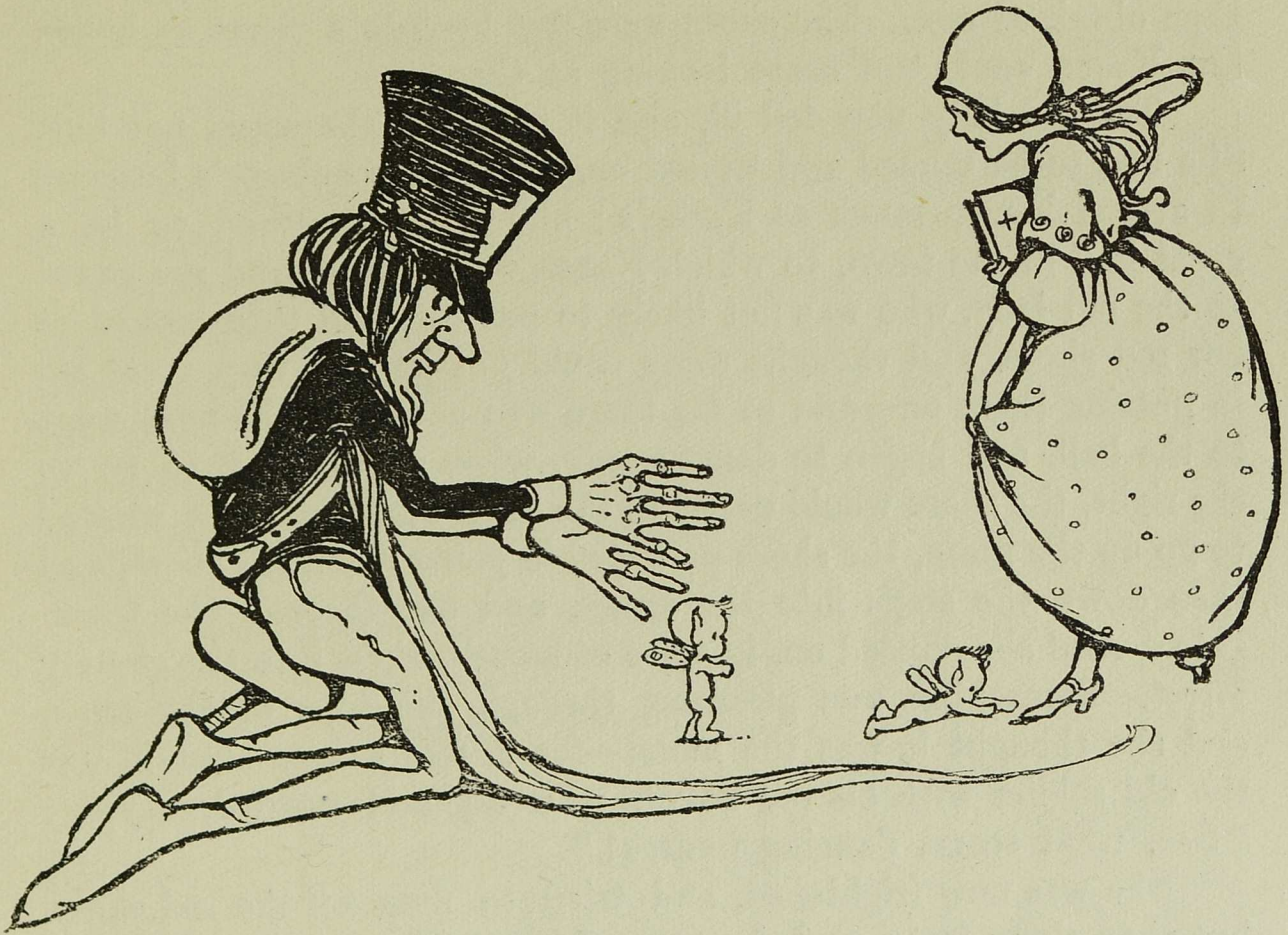
at the black shoes and then at the red ones, and then looked again, and finished by putting on the red shoes.

The sun shone brightly. Karen and the old lady went by the footway across the corn-field, which was rather dusty. Near the church door stood an old invalid soldier, with a crutch-stick and a singularly long beard, that was red rather than white, for he had red hair: and he stooped to the ground, and asked the old lady if he might wipe her shoes. And Karen likewise put out her little foot. "See, what smart dancing pumps!" said the soldier, "they will stick on firmly when you dance:" and thereupon, he slapped the soles with his hand.

The old lady gave the invalid soldier some alms, and entered the church with Karen.

And everybody inside looked at Karen's red shoes, and all the pictures





looked at them; and when Karen knelt before the altar, and put the gold cup to her lips, she thought only of her red shoes: and it seemed to her as though they were swimming in the Communion cup; and she forgot to sing the psalm, and forgot to say the Lord's Prayer.

The congregation now left the church, and the old lady got into the carriage. As Karen raised her foot to step in after her, the old soldier said: "See, what smart dancing pumps!" And Karen could not help making a few dancing steps, and having once begun, her feet went on dancing. It was just as if the shoes had some power over her. She danced round the church corner, and could not stop herself, and the coachman was obliged to run after her and catch hold of her, and lift her into the carriage; but her feet went on dancing, so that she trod on the good old lady's toes at a great rate. At last the shoes were taken off her feet, which

then obtained rest. The shoes were put by into a closet at home, but Karen could not cease looking at them.

The old lady now fell ill, and it was said she could not live. She had to be nursed and waited on, and it was nobody's business to attend her so much as Karen's ; but there happened to be a great ball in the town, to which Karen was invited, and she gazed at the old lady, who was not likely to recover, and then looked at her red shoes, and thought there could not be any very great sin in putting them on—and so far there was not—but she next went to the ball, and began to dance: only, when she wanted to go to the right, the shoes would dance to the left; and when she wanted to go up the room, the shoes persisted in going down the room, and then down the steps into the street, and out through the town-gate. And she danced on, in spite of herself, right into the gloomy forest. Something was gleaming through the tops of the trees, and she thought it was the moon—for it was a face—but it was the old soldier with his red beard, who sat and nodded, saying: "See, what smart dancing pumps!"

She was now frightened, and tried to fling off the red shoes, but they clung fast; and she tore off her stockings; but the shoes had, as it were, grown to her feet, and dance she must, —across fields and meadows—in rain or in sunshine—by day and night—only by night it was far more dreadful still.

She danced up the open churchyard, where the dead did not dance, having something much better to do. She would fain have sat down on some pauper's grave, where grows the bitter fern, but there was no rest for her. And as she danced towards the open church door, she saw an angel, in long white clothes, and with wings that reached from his shoulders down to the earth. His countenance was stern and grave, and his hand grasped a broad and shining sword.

"Thou shalt dance!" said he, "dance in thy red shoes until thou art pale and cold, and till thy skin has shrivelled up to a skeleton. Thou shalt dance from door to door; and thou shalt knock at the doors where live proud and haughty children,

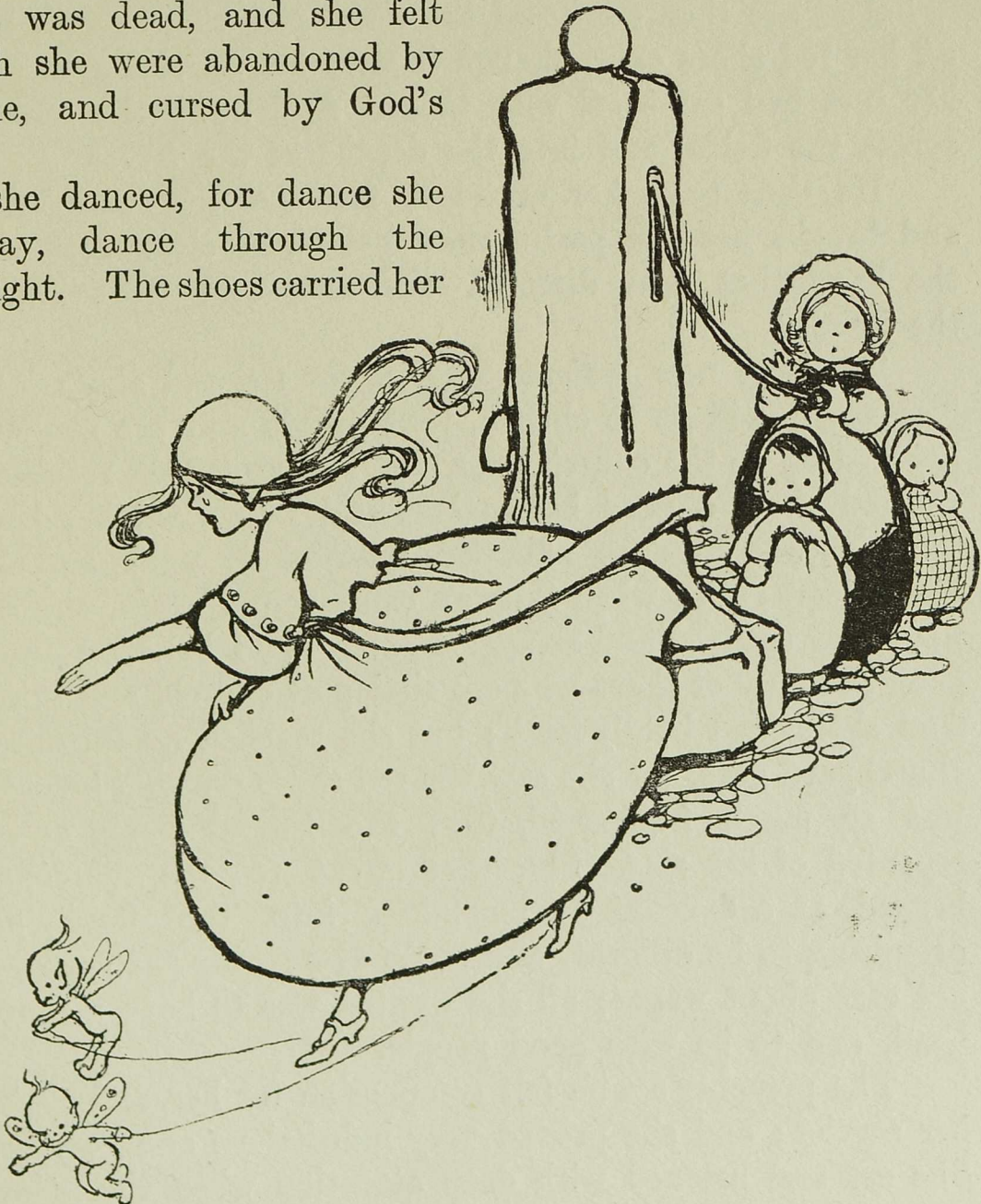
that they may hear thee, and take warning! Thou shalt dance—yea, dance——”

“Mercy!” cried Karen. But she heard not what the angel answered, for the shoes carried her from the door into the fields, away—away—still dancing on and on.

One morning she danced past a well-known door; she heard the sounds of a dirge from within, and a coffin, decked with flowers, was brought forth: and she now knew that her old patroness was dead, and she felt as though she were abandoned by every one, and cursed by God’s angel.

On she danced, for dance she must,—ay, dance through the gloomy night. The shoes carried her through

brambles and stumps of trees, which scratched her till she bled. And she danced across the heath, to a little lonely house, where



she knew the executioner lived; and she tapped at the windows with her fingers, saying. "Come out—come out. I cannot come in, for I am obliged to dance." And the executioner said: "Do you not know who I am? It is I who strike off wicked men's heads, and I perceive that my axe now clinks."

"Do not strike off my head," said Karen, "for then I shall not be able to repent of my sins? But strike my feet off that I may get rid of my red shoes."

And she then confessed her sins, and the executioner struck off her red shoes only, though it gave her as sharp a pang as if her toes had come off with them. And away the shoes danced, across the fields, and into the depths of the forest.

He then gave her crutches, for she felt unable to walk, and taught her the psalm that penitents sing, and she kissed the hand that had directed the axe, and went away across the heath.

"I have now suffered enough for the red shoes," said she; "so now I will go to church, that people may see me." And she hobbled up to the church door, but had no sooner reached it, than the red shoes danced before her, and frightened her back.

She was in deep affliction that whole week, and shed many bitter tears; but when Sunday came round again, she said: "I have now suffered and struggled enough! I believe I am quite as good as many of those who are sitting at church, and bridling up." And she sallied boldly forth; but she reached no further than the churchyard gate, for she saw the red shoes dancing before her, and was so much frightened, that she turned back, and heartily repented of her sins. She then went to the parsonage, and begged, as a favour, to be taken into the family's service, promising to be diligent, and to do everything she could. She did not care about wages; all she wanted was to have a roof over her head, and to be with good people.

The preacher's wife felt compassion for her, and took her into her service; and she proved very industrious and very thoughtful. She sat and listened with deep attention when the preacher read

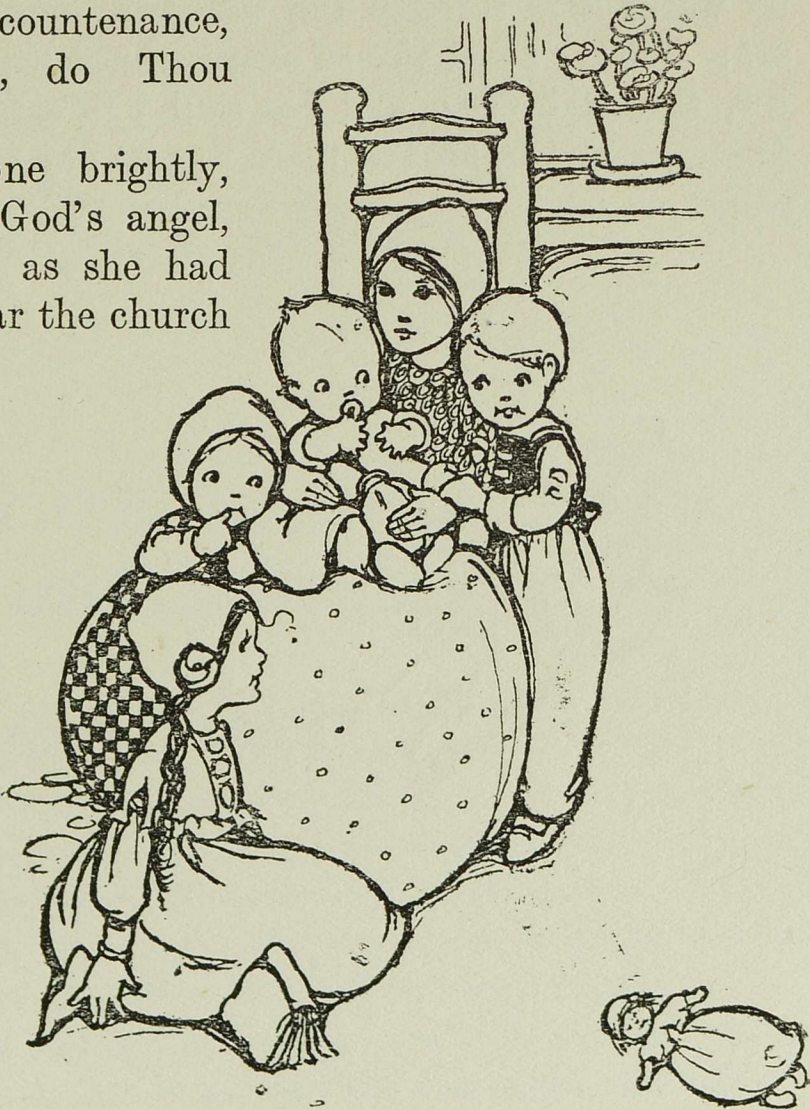


THE RED SHOES

the Bible aloud in the evening. All the children made much of her; but when they spoke of dress, or finery, or beauty, she would then shake her head.

On the following Sunday they all went to church, and they asked her if she would accompany them; but she looked at her crutches with tearful eyes. And so the others went forth to listen to the Word of God, while she repaired alone to her little chamber, that was only just large enough to contain a bed and a chair. And here she sat down, with her psalm-book in her hand, and as she read its pages, in a pious frame of mind, the wind wafted to her the sounds of the organ from the church, and she raised her tearful countenance, saying: "O Lord, do Thou succour me?"

Then the sun shone brightly, and before her stood God's angel, in white clothes, such as she had seen him that night near the church door; only he no longer bore the sharp sword in his hand, but held a beautiful green branch, all full of roses; and he touched the ceiling with it, and the ceiling forthwith became lofty; and at the spot where he had touched it shone a golden star. And he touched the walls, and they widened; and she could see the organ that was being played

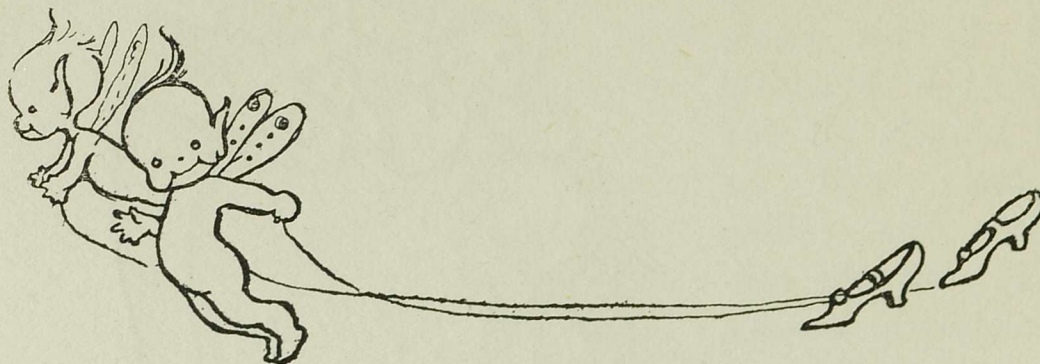


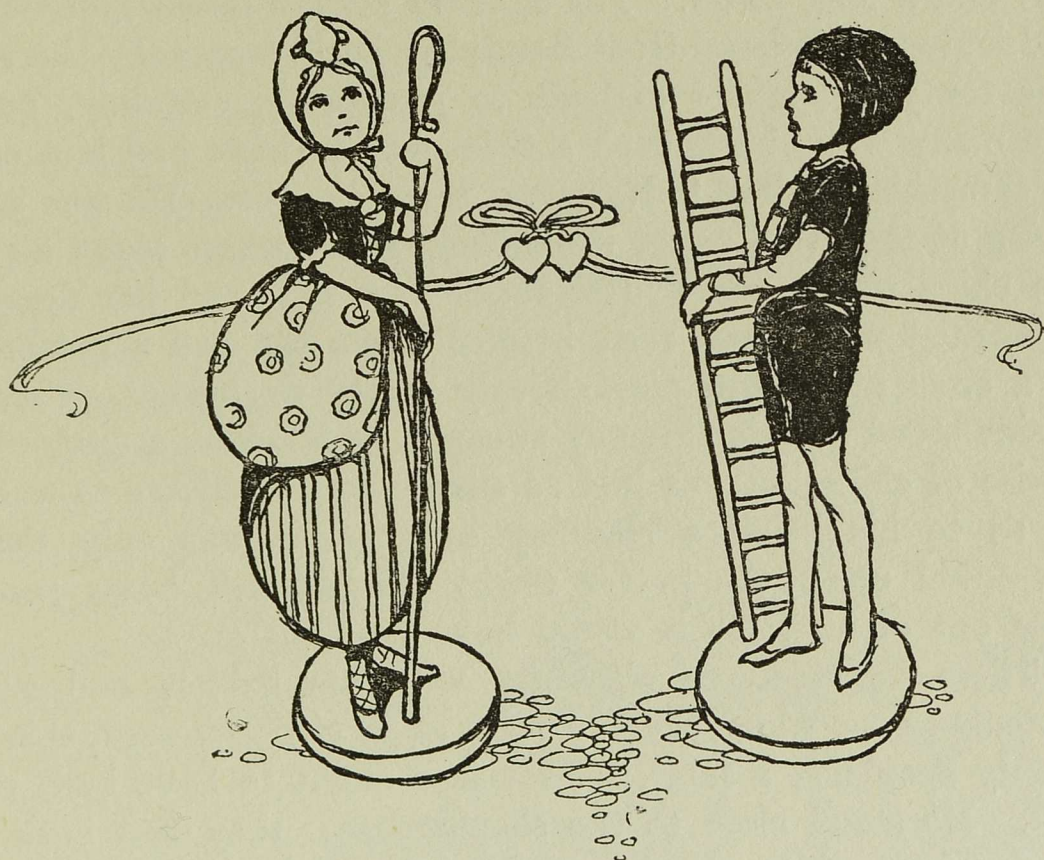
upon. She saw, too, the old pictures of the preachers and their wives, and the congregation sitting on their neat chairs, and singing out of their psalm-books.

For the church itself had come to the poor girl in her small chamber, or she had come to it. She sat on a chair, amongst the rest of the preacher's servants, and when they had finished the psalm and looked up, they nodded, and said: "That was right of you to come, Karen."

"It is by the grace of God," said she.

And the organ pealed forth, and the chorus of children's voices sounded most sweet and lovely! The bright sunshine shed its warm rays through the windows, over the pew where Karen sat; and her heart was so overwhelmed with sunshine, peace, and joy, that it broke; and her soul was carried up to God on a sunbeam, and in heaven there was no one who asked about the red shoes.





THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER

HAVE you ever seen an old wooden cupboard, quite black with age, and ornamented with carved scrolls and foliage, and nondescript figures? Just such an one stood in a sitting-room; it was a legacy left by the great-grandmother of the family—it was covered from top to bottom with carved roses and tulips. There were the oddest scrolls, out of which peeped little stags' heads with their antlers. But in the middle of the cupboard was represented the full-length figure of a man; it is true he was rather ridiculous to look at, and was grinning—for one could not call it laughing—and, moreover, he had goat's legs, little horns upon his

head, and a long beard. The children always called him General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-sergeant—there's a name for you! rather difficult to pronounce, certainly, nor are there many who obtain such a title—but to have had him carved was something indeed! However, there he was. He was always looking at the table under the looking-glass, where stood a pretty little china shepherdess. Her shoes were gilt, and her dress was ornamented with a red rose, besides which she had a golden hat, and a crook; she was marvellously pretty to behold. Close by her side stood a little chimney sweeper, as black as a coal, though likewise of china, he was just as clean and as delicate as another, and as to his being a chimney sweeper, it was only that he represented one; the potter might just as well have made a prince out of him, for it would have been all one!

There he stood so elegantly with his ladder, and with a countenance as white and as rosy as a girl's—indeed, this was, properly speaking, a fault, for his face ought to have been rather black. He stood close to the shepherdess; they had both been placed where they stood; and having been so placed, they became betrothed to each other. They were well matched, being both young people, made of the same china and equally fragile.

Close to them sat another figure, three times their size. He was an old Chinese, who could nod his head. He also was made of china, and pretended to be the grandfather of the little shepherdess, but this he could not prove. He maintained that he was entitled to control her, and, therefore, when General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-sergeant asked for the little shepherdess's hand, he nodded consent.

“You will obtain in him,” said the old Chinese, “a husband whom I verily believe to be mahogany. You will become the lady of General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-sergeant! and he has a whole cupboardful of plate, to say nothing of what may be hid in the spring drawers and secret compartments.”

"I don't choose to live in the dark cupboard," said the little shepherdess. "I have heard say that he has eleven china wives in it already."

"Then you can become the twelfth!" said the Chinese; "to-night, as soon as you hear a creaking in the old press, your wedding shall take place, as true as I'm a Chinese." And thereupon he nodded his head, and fell asleep.

But the little shepherdess cried, and looked at her sweetheart, the china chimney sweeper.



"I entreat you," said she, "to go with me into the wide world, for we can't remain here."

"I will do anything you please," said the little chimney sweeper; "let us set out immediately. I think I can maintain you by my profession."

"I wish we were but safe down from the table!" said she. "I shall not be easy till we are out in the wide world."

And he comforted her, and showed her how she might set her little foot on the carved projections and gilt foliage of the feet of the table; besides, he took his ladder to help, and so they managed to reach the floor. But when they looked towards the old cupboard, they saw it was all in an uproar.

The carved stags poked out their heads, raised their antlers, and turned their necks. The General-and-Lieutenant-General-

Goat-Bandyls-Field-sergeant was cutting tremendous capers, and bawling out to the Chinese, "They are running away! they are running away!"

The fugitives were somewhat frightened, and jumped into the drawer in the window seat.

Here lay several packs of cards, that were not complete, and a little doll's theatre, which had been built up as neatly as could be. A play was being represented, and all the queens, whether of hearts or diamonds, spades or clubs, sat in the front row, fanning themselves with their tulips; and behind them stood all the knaves, and showed that they had heads both upwards and downwards, as playing cards have. The play was about two lovers who were not allowed to marry; and the shepherdess cried, for it seemed just like her own story. "I cannot bear it," said she. "I must leave the drawer." But when they had reached the floor, and looked up at the table, there was the old Chinese awake, and shaking himself—and down he came on the floor like a lump.

"The old Chinese is coming!" shrieked the little shepherdess, falling on her china knee, for she was much afflicted.

"I have thought of a plan," said the chimney sweeper. "Suppose we creep into the jar of perfumes that stands in the corner. There we might lie upon roses and lavender, and throw salt into his eyes if he comes near us."

"That would be of no use," said she. "Besides, I know that the old Chinese and the jar were formerly betrothed; and there always remains a degree of goodwill when one has been on such terms. No! we have nothing for it but to go out into the wide world!"

"Have you really the courage to go out into the wide world with me?" asked the chimney sweeper. "Have you reflected how large it is, and that we can never come back hither?"

"I have," said she.

And the chimney sweeper looked hard at her, and said, "My way lies through the chimney. Have you really the courage

to go with me, not only through the stove itself, but to creep through the flue? We shall then come out by the chimney, and then I know how to manage. We shall climb so high that they won't be able to reach us, and quite at the top is a hole that leads out into the wide world."

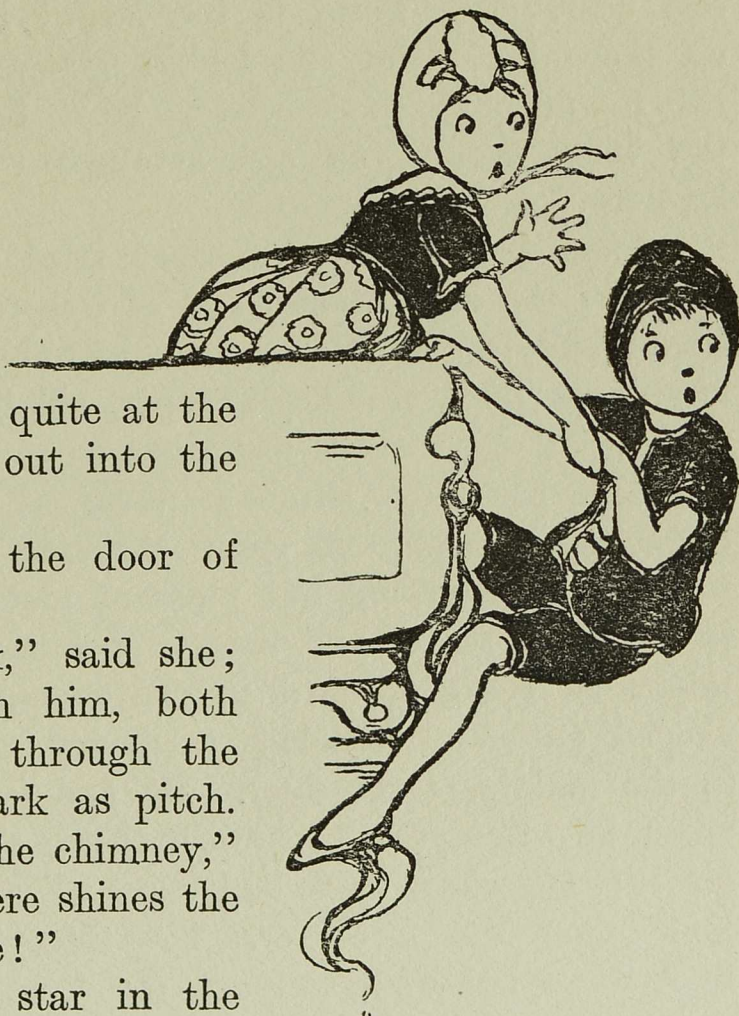
And he led her to the door of the stove.

"It looks very black," said she; still, in she went with him, both through the stove, and through the pipe, where it was as dark as pitch.

"Now we are in the chimney," said he; "and look! there shines the most beautiful star above!"

And it was a real star in the sky that seemed to shine down upon them, as though it would light them on their way. And now they climbed, and crept—and a frightful way it was—so steep and so high! But he went first, and smoothed it as much as he could; he held her, and showed her the best places to set her little china foot upon, and so they managed to reach the edge of the chimney-pot, on which they sat down—for they were vastly tired, as may be imagined.

The sky and all its stars were above them, and all the roofs of the town lay below. They saw far around them, and a great way out into the wide world. It was not what the poor shepherdess had fancied it. She leaned her little head on her chimney sweeper's shoulder, and cried till she washed the gilding off her sash. "This is too much!" said she, "it is more than I



can bear. The world is too large! I wish I were safe back on the table under the looking-glass. I shall never be happy till I am once more there. Now I have followed you into the wide world, you can accompany me back, if you really love me."

Then the chimney sweeper tried to reason with her, and spoke of the old Chinese, and of General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-sergeant; but she sobbed so violently, and kissed her little chimney-sweeper, till he could not do otherwise than what she wished, foolish as it was.

And so they climbed down the chimney with infinite difficulty. They next crept through the flue and the stove, which were anything but pleasant places; and then they stood in the dark stove, and listened behind the door, to catch what might be going forward in the room. All was quiet, so they peeped out—and behold! there lay the old Chinese sprawling in the middle of the floor. He had fallen down from the table, when he attempted to pursue them, and lay broken into three pieces: his whole back had come off in one lump, and his head had rolled into a corner. The General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-sergeant stood where he always had done, and was wrapped in thought.

"This is shocking!" said the little shepherdess; "my old grandfather is broken to pieces, and by our fault! I shall not be able to survive such a mishap!" And so saying, she wrung her little hands.

"He can be riveted!" said the chimney sweeper—"he can be riveted. Do not take on so! If they cement his back, and put a proper rivet through his neck, he will be just as good as new, and will be able to say as many disagreeable things to us as ever."

"Do you think so?" said she. And then they crept up on to the table, where they formerly stood.

"Since we have got no further than this," said the chimney sweeper, "we might have saved ourselves a deal of trouble."



MADEL
JOHN
ATTWELL

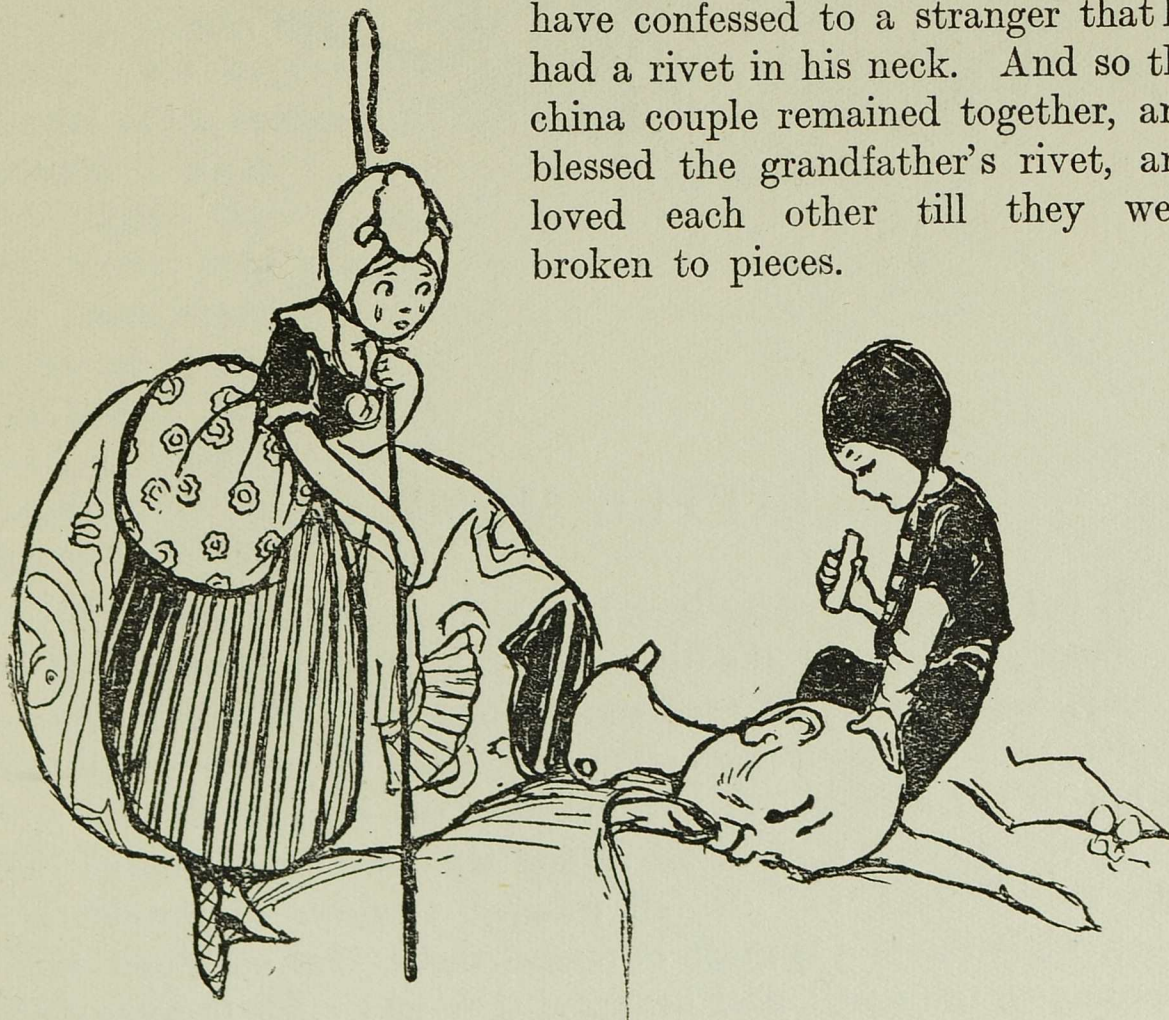
THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER

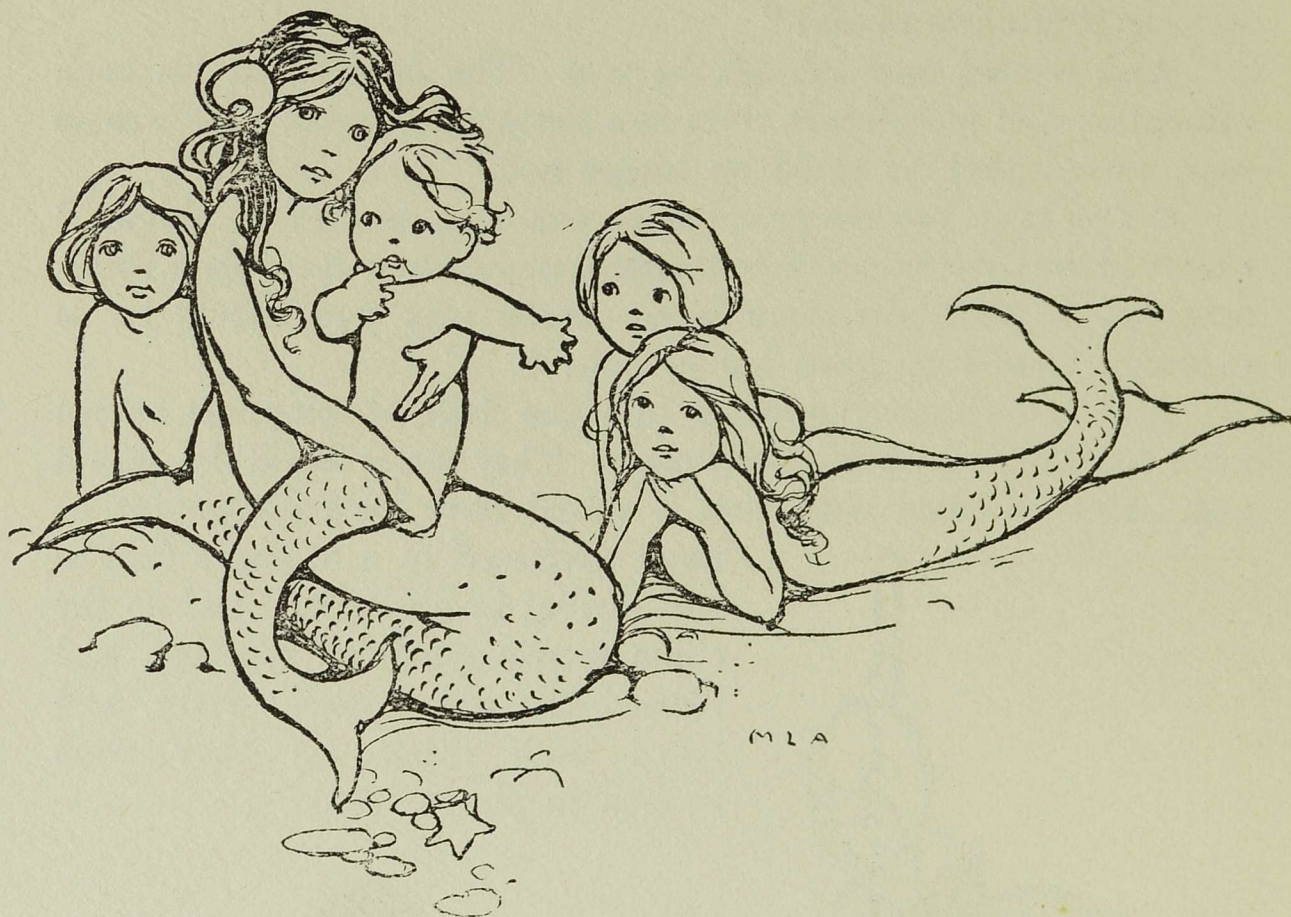
"I wish grandfather was riveted," said the shepherdess. "I wonder if it costs much!"

And riveted sure enough he was. The family had his back cemented, and an efficient rivet run through his neck. He was as new, except that he could no longer nod.

"You have become proud since you were broken to shivers," observed the General-and-Lieutenant-General-Goat-Bandylegs-Field-sergeant. "Methinks there is no reason why you should be so captious. Am I to have her or not?"

And the chimney sweeper and the little shepherdess looked most touchingly at the old Chinese. They were afraid he would nod. But he could not; and it would have been derogatory to have confessed to a stranger that he had a rivet in his neck. And so the china couple remained together, and blessed the grandfather's rivet, and loved each other till they were broken to pieces.





THE LITTLE MERMAID

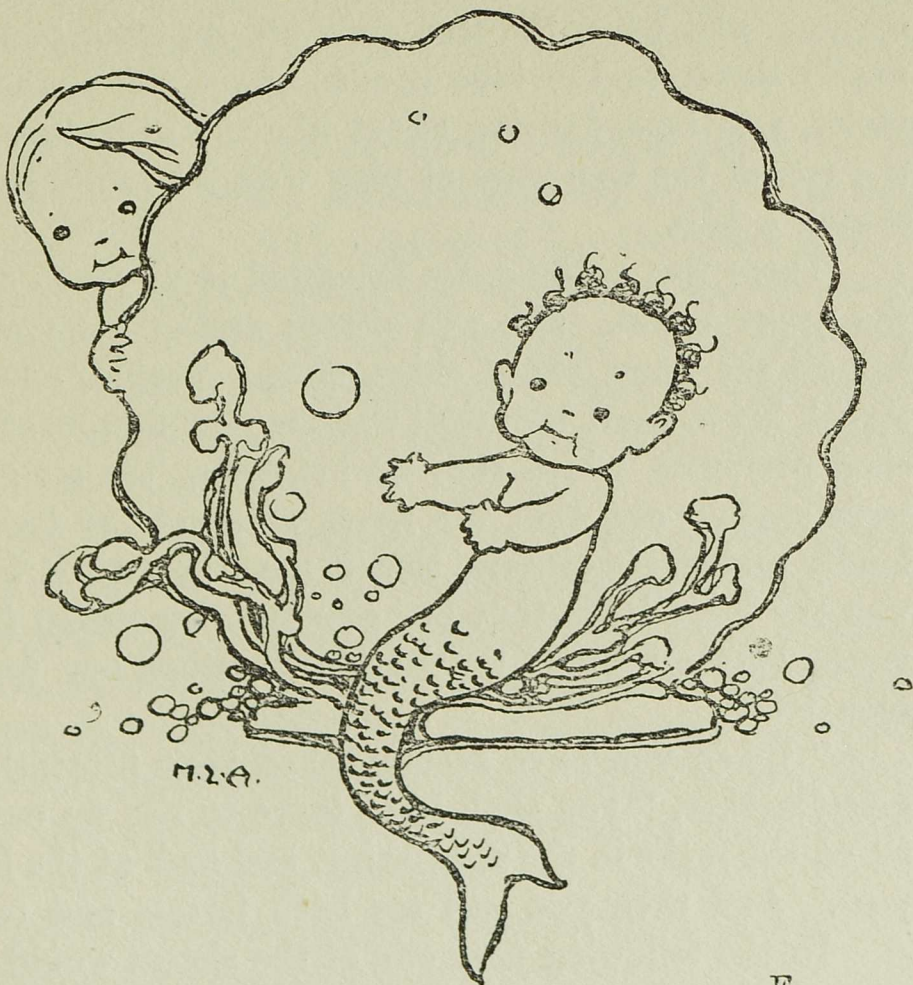
FAR out at sea the water is as blue as the prettiest corn-flowers and as clear as the purest crystal. But it is very deep—so deep, indeed, that no rope can fathom it; and many church steeples need be piled one upon the other to reach from the bottom to the surface. It is there that the sea-folk dwell.

In the deepest spot of all stands the sea-king's palace; its walls are of coral, and its tall pointed windows of the clearest amber, while the roof is made of mussel-shells, that open and shut according to the tide. And beautiful they look; for in each shell lies a pearl, any one of which would be worthy to be placed in a queen's crown.

The sea-king had been a widower for many years, so his aged mother kept house for him. She was a very wise woman, but extremely proud of her noble birth, which entitled her to wear twelve oyster-shells on her tail, while other well-born persons might only wear six. In all other respects she was a very praiseworthy sort of body; and especially as regards the care she took of the little princesses, her grand-daughters. They were six pretty children; but the youngest was the prettiest of all. Her skin was as clear and delicate as a rose leaf, and her eyes as blue as the deepest sea; but she had no feet any more than the others, and her body ended in a fish's tail.

They were free to play about all day long in the vast rooms of the palace below water, where live flowers grew upon the walls. The large amber windows were opened, when the fishes would swim inwards to them just as the swallows fly into our houses when we open the windows; only the fishes swam right up to the princesses, ate out of their hands, and allowed themselves to be stroked.

In front of the palace was a large garden, with bright red and dark blue trees, whose fruit glittered like gold, and whose blossoms



were like fiery sparks, as both stalks and leaves kept rustling continually.

Each of the little princesses had a plot of ground in the garden, where she might dig and plant as she pleased. One sowed her flowers so as to come up in the shape of a whale; another preferred the figure of a little mermaid; but the youngest planted hers in a circle to imitate the sun, and chose flowers as red as the sun appeared to her. She was a singular child, both silent and thoughtful; and while her sisters were delighted with all the strange things that they obtained through the wrecks of various ships, she had never claimed anything—with the exception of the red flowers that resembled the sun above—but a pretty statue, representing a handsome youth, and hewn out of pure white marble, that had sunk to the bottom of the sea when a ship ran aground. She planted a bright red weeping-willow beside the statue; and when the tree grew up, its fresh boughs hung over it nearly down to the blue sands, where the shadow looked quite violet, and kept dancing about like the branches. It seemed as if the top of the tree were at play with its roots, and each trying to snatch a kiss.

There was nothing she delighted in so much as to hear about the upper world. She was always asking her grandmother to tell her all she knew about ships, towns, people, and animals; what struck her as most beautiful was that the flowers of the earth should shed perfumes, which they do not below the sea; that the forests were green; and that the fishes amongst the trees should sing so loudly and so exquisitely, that it must be a treat to hear them. It was the little birds that her grandmother called fishes, or else her young listeners would not have understood her, for they had never seen birds.

“When you have accomplished your fifteenth year,” said the grandmother, “you shall have leave to rise up out of the sea, and sit on the rocks in the moonshine, and look at the large ships sailing past. And then you will see both forests and towns.”

In the following year one of the sisters would reach the age of

fifteen; but as all the rest were each a year younger than the other, the youngest would have to wait five years before it would be her turn to come up from the bottom of the ocean and see what our world is like. However, the eldest promised to tell the others what she saw, and what struck her as most beautiful on the first day; for their grandmother did not tell them enough, and there were so many things they wanted to know.

The eldest princess was now fifteen, and was allowed to rise up to the surface of the sea.

On her return she had a great deal to relate; but the most delightful thing of all, she said, was to lie upon a sand bank in the calm sea, and to gaze upon the large city near the coast, where lights were shining like hundreds of stars; to listen to the sounds of music, to the din of carriages, and the busy hum of the crowd; and to see the church steeples, and hear the bells ringing. And she longed after all these things, just because she could not approach them.

In the following year, the second sister obtained leave to rise up to the surface of the water, and swim about at her pleasure. She went up just at sunset, which seemed to her the finest sight of all. She said that the whole sky looked like gold; and as to the clouds, their beauty was beyond all description. Red and violet clouds sailed rapidly above her head, while a flock of wild swans, resembling a long, white scarf, flew still faster than they, across the sea towards the setting sun.

The year after the third sister went up. She was the boldest of them all; so she swam up a river that fell into the sea. In a small creek, she met with a whole troop of little human children. They were naked, and dabbling about in the water. She wanted to play with them, but they fled away in great alarm; and there came a little black animal (she meant a dog, only she had never seen one before), who barked at her so tremendously, that she was frightened, and sought to reach the open sea.

The fourth sister was less daring. She remained in the midst of the sea, and maintained that it was most beautiful at that point,

because from thence one could see for miles around, and the sky looked like a glass bell above one's head. She had seen ships, but only at a distance—they looked like sea-mews; and the waggish dolphins had thrown somersets, and the large whales had squirted water through their nostrils, so that one might fancy there were hundreds of fountains all around.

It was now the fifth sister's turn. Her birthday was in the winter.

Huge icebergs were floating about glittering like diamonds. She had placed herself upon the largest of them, and all the vessels scudded past in great alarm, as though fearful of approaching the spot where she was sitting; but towards evening the sky became overcast, it thundered and lightened, while the dark sea lifted up the huge icebergs on high. All the vessels reefed in their sails, and their passengers were panic-stricken—while she sat quietly on her floating block of ice, and watched the blue lightning as it zigzagged along the shining sea.

It frequently happened in the evening, that the five sisters would entwine their arms, and rise up to the surface of the water all in a row. They had beautiful voices, far finer than any human being's; and when a storm was coming on, and they anticipated that a ship might sink, they swam before the vessel, and sang most sweetly of the delights to be found beneath the water, begging the sea-farers not to be afraid of coming down below. But the sailors could not understand what they said, and mistook their words for the howling of the tempest; and they never saw all the fine things below, for if the ship sank, the men were drowned, and their bodies alone reached the sea-king's palace.

When the sisters rose up arm-in arm through the water, the youngest would stand alone, looking after them, and felt ready to cry; only mermaids have no tears, and therefore suffer all the more.

"How I wish I were fifteen!" said she. "I am sure I shall love the world above, and the beings that inhabit it."

At last she reached the age of fifteen.

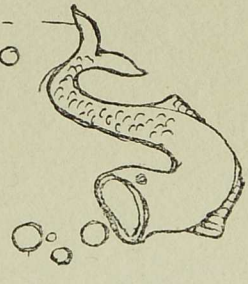
“Well! now you are grown up,” said her grandmother, the widow of the late king. “So let me dress you like your sisters.” And she placed in her hair a wreath of white lilies, every leaf of which was half a pearl. And the old dame ordered eight large oyster shells to be fastened to the princess’s tail, to denote her high rank.



“But they hurt me so,” said the little mermaid.

“Pride must suffer pain,” said the old lady.

Oh! how gladly would she have shaken off all this pomp, and laid aside her heavy wreath—the red flowers in her garden adorned her far better—but she could not help herself. “Farewell!” cried she rising as lightly as a bubble to the surface of the water.



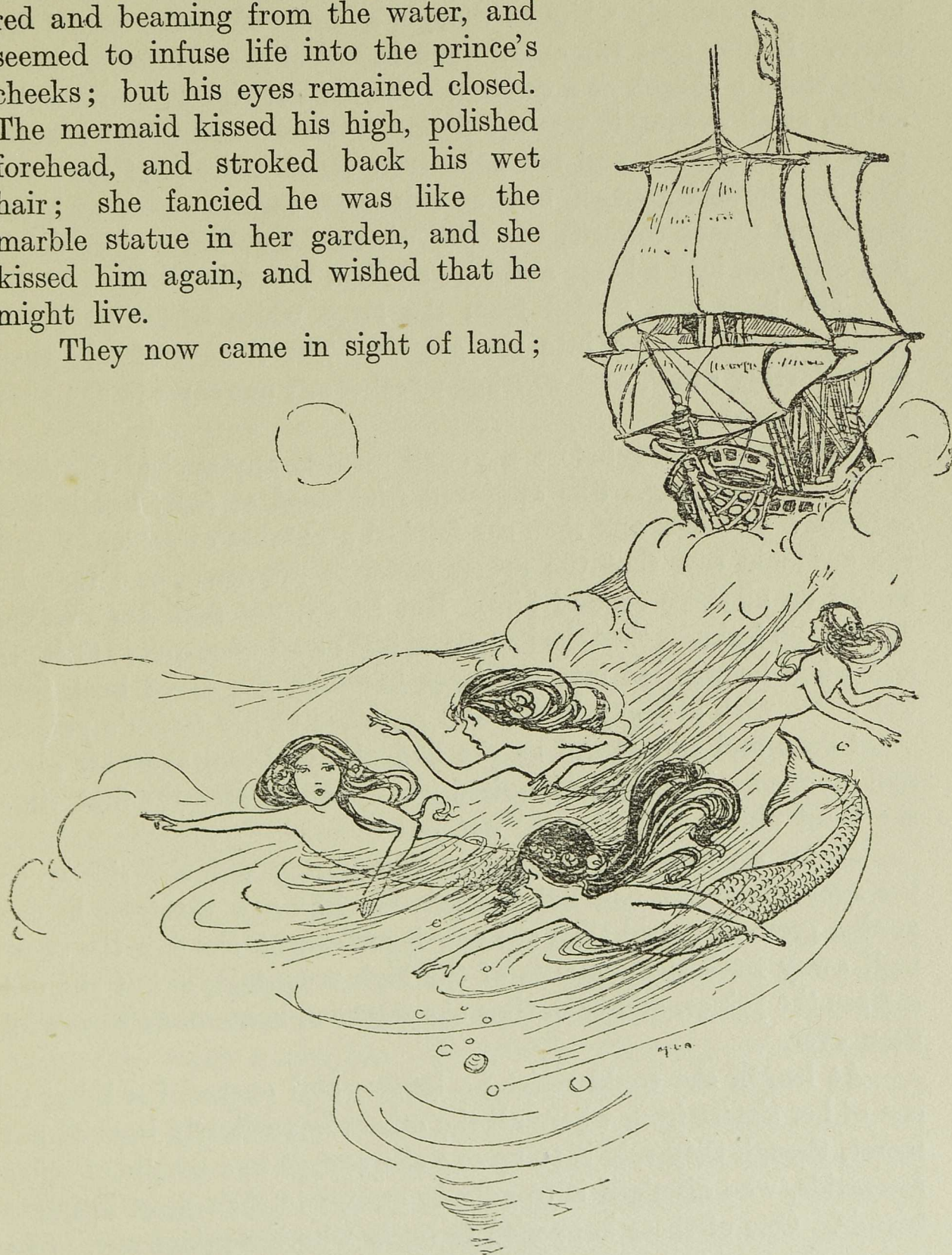
The sun had just sunk as she raised her head above the waves, but the clouds were still pink, and fringed with gold; and through the fast vanishing rosy tints of the air beamed the evening in all its beauty. The atmosphere was mild and cool, and the sea quite calm. A large ship with three masts was lying on its surface; only a single sail was hoisted, for not a breeze was stirring, and the sailors were sitting all about in the rigging. There were musical instruments playing, and voices singing; and when the evening grew darker, hundreds of gay-coloured lanterns were lighted, which looked like the flags of all nations streaming through the air. The little mermaid swam close to the cabin window, and as often as the water lifted her up, she peeped in through the transparent panes,

and saw a number of well-dressed persons. But the handsomest of all was the prince, with large black eyes; he could not be above sixteen, and it was his birthday that was being celebrated with such magnificence.

It was late. Still the little mermaid could not take her eyes off the ship or the handsome prince. Still she sat rocking up and down in the water, so as to peep into the cabin. But now the ship began to move faster, the sails were unfurled one after another, the waves ran higher, heavy clouds flitted across the sky, and flashes of lightning were seen in the distance. A tremendous storm seemed coming on, so the sailors reefed in the sails once more; the billows heaved, like so many gigantic black mountains, but the ship dived down like a swan between the high waves, and then rose again on the towering pinnacle of the waters. At length, the planks gave way beneath the repeated lashings of the waves, a leak was sprung, the mast was broken right in twain like a reed, and the vessel drooped on one side, while the water filled the hold. The little mermaid now perceived that the crew were in danger and she was herself obliged to take care not to be hurt by the beams and planks belonging to the ship, that were dispersed upon the waters. For one moment it was so pitch dark that she could see nothing; but when a flash of lightning illumined the sky, and enabled her to discern distinctly all on board, she looked especially for the young prince, whom she perceived sinking into the water, just as the ship burst asunder. She was then quite pleased at the thought of his coming down to her, till she reflected that human beings cannot live in water, and that he would be dead by the time he reached her father's palace. She dived deep down into the sea, and then, rising again between the waves, she managed at length to reach the young prince, who was scarcely able to buffet any longer with the stormy sea. His arms and legs began to feel powerless, his beautiful eyes were closed, and he would have died had not the little mermaid come to his assistance. She held his head above the water, and then let the waves carry them whither they pleased. Towards morning the storm had abated; but not a wreck of the

vessel was to be seen. The sun rose red and beaming from the water, and seemed to infuse life into the prince's cheeks; but his eyes remained closed. The mermaid kissed his high, polished forehead, and stroked back his wet hair; she fancied he was like the marble statue in her garden, and she kissed him again, and wished that he might live.

They now came in sight of land;



and she saw high blue mountains, on the tops of which the snow looked as dazzlingly white as though a flock of swans was lying there. Below, near the coast, were beautiful green forests, and in front stood a church or a convent—she did not rightly know which—but, at all events, it was a building. Citrons and China oranges grew in the garden, and tall palm-trees stood in front of the door. The sea formed a small bay at this spot, so she swam with the handsome prince towards the cliff, where the delicate white sands had collected into a heap, and here she laid him down.

The bells now pealed from the large white building, and a number of girls came into the garden. The little mermaid then swam farther away, and watched whether any one came to the poor prince's assistance.

It was not long before a young maiden approached the spot where he was lying. She appeared frightened at first, but it was only for a moment, and then she fetched a number of persons; and the mermaid saw that the prince came to life again, and that he smiled on all those around him. But he did not send her a smile, neither did he know that she had saved him: so she felt quite afflicted; and when he was led into the large building, she dived back into the water with a heavy heart, and returned to her father's palace.

Silent and thoughtful as she had always been, she now grew still more so. Her sisters inquired what she had seen the first time she went above, but she did not tell them.

Many an evening, and many a morning, did she rise up to the spot where she had left the prince. She saw the fruit in the garden grow ripe, and then she saw it gathered; she saw the snow melt away from the summits of the high mountains: but she did not see the prince, and each time she returned home more sorrowful than ever.

At length she could resist no longer, and opened her heart to one of her sisters from whom all the others immediately learned her secret, though they told it to no one else except to a couple of other mermaids, who divulged it to nobody except to their most intimate friends. One of these happened to know who the prince was. She

too, had seen the gala on board ship, and informed them whence he came, and where his kingdom lay.

“Come, little sister!” said the other princesses, and, entwining their arms, they rose up, in a long row, out of the sea, at the spot where they knew the prince’s palace stood.

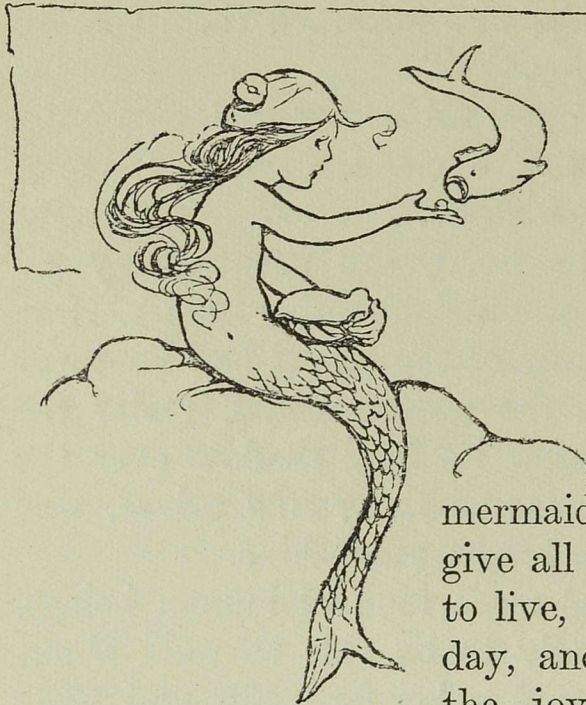
Now that she knew where he lived, she spent many an evening, and many a night, on the neighbouring water. She swam much nearer the shore than any of the others had ventured to do: nay, she even went up to the narrow canal, under the handsome marble balcony, that threw its long shadow over the water. There she would sit, and gaze at the young prince, who thought himself quite alone in the bright moonshine.

She soon grew to be more and more fond of human beings, and to long more and more fervently to be able to walk about amongst them, for their world appeared to her far larger and more beautiful than her own.

There was such a deal that she wanted to learn, but her sisters were not able to answer all her questions; therefore, she applied to her old grandmother, who was well acquainted with the upper world, which she called, very correctly the lands above the sea.

“If human beings do not get drowned,” asked the little mermaid, “can they live for ever? Do not they die, as we do here in the sea?”

“Yes,” said the ancient dame, “they must die as well as we; and the term of their life is even shorter than ours. We can live to be three hundred years old; but when we cease to be here, we shall only be changed into foam, and are not even buried below among those we love. Our souls are not immortal. We shall never enter upon a new life. We are like the green reed, that can never flourish again when it has once been cut through. Human beings, on the contrary, have a soul that lives eternally—yea, even after the body has been committed to the earth—and that rises up through the clear, pure air, to the bright stars above! Like as we rise out of the water, to look at the haunts of men, so do they rise



to unknown and favoured regions, that we shall never be privileged to see."

"And why have we not an immortal soul?"

asked the little mermaid, sorrowfully. "I would willingly give all the hundreds of years I may have to live, to be a human being but for one day, and to have the hope of sharing in the joys of the heavenly world."

"You must not think about that," said the old dame. "We feel that we are very much happier and better than the human race above."

"So I shall die, and be driven about like foam on the sea, and cease to hear the music of the waves, and to see the beautiful flowers, and the red sun. Is there nothing I can do to obtain an immortal soul?" "No," said the old sea-queen; "unless a human being loved you so dearly that you were more to him than either father or mother; if all his thoughts and his love were centred in you, and he allowed the priest to lay his right hand in yours, promising to be faithful to you here and hereafter; then would his soul glide into your body, and you would obtain a share in the happiness awaiting human beings. He would give you a soul without forfeiting his own. But this will never happen! Your fish's tail, which is a beauty amongst us sea-folk, is thought a deformity on earth, because they know no better—it is necessary there to have two stout props, that they call legs, in order to be beautiful!"

The little mermaid sighed as she cast a glance at her fish's tail. But she thought, "I will go to the sea-witch, who has always

frightened me hitherto, but now, perhaps she can advise and help me."

The little mermaid then left her garden, and repaired to the rushing whirlpool, behind which the sorceress lived. She had never gone that way before. Neither flowers nor sea-grass grew there; and nothing but bare, grey, sandy ground led to the whirlpool, where the waters kept eddying like waving mill-wheels, dragging everything they clutched hold of into the fathomless depth below. Between these whirlpools, that might have crushed her in their rude grasp, was the mermaid forced to pass to reach the dominions of the sea-witch, and even here, during a good part of the way, there was no other road than across a sheet of warm, bubbling mire, which the witch called her turf-common. At the back of this lay her house, in the midst of a most singular forest: its trees and bushes were polypi—half animal half plant—they looked like hundred-headed serpents growing out of the ground; the branches were long, slimy arms, with fingers like flexible worms, and they could move every joint from the root to the tip. They laid fast hold of whatever they could snatch from the sea, and never yielded it up again. The little mermaid was so frightened at the sight of them that her heart beat with fear, and she was fain to turn back; but then she thought of the prince, and of the soul that human beings possessed, and she took courage. She knotted up her long, flowing hair, that the polypi might not seize hold of her locks; and crossing her hands over her bosom, she darted along as a fish shoots through the water, between the ugly polypi, that stretched forth their flexible arms and fingers behind her. She perceived how each of them retained what it had seized, with hundreds of little arms, as strong as iron clasps.

She now approached a vast swamp in the forest, where large, fat water-snakes were wallowing in the mire, and displaying their ugly whitish-yellow bodies. In the midst of this loathsome spot stood a house built of the bones of shipwrecked human beings, and within sat the sea-witch, feeding a toad from her mouth, just as

people amongst us give a little canary bird a lump of sugar to eat. She called the nasty fat water-snakes her little chicks, and let them creep all over her bosom.

"I know what you want!" said the sea-witch; "it is very stupid of you, but you shall have your way, as it will plunge you into misfortune, my fair princess. You want to be rid of your fish's tail, and to have a couple of props like those human beings have to walk about upon, in order that the young prince may fall in love with you, and that you may obtain his hand, and an immortal soul into the bargain!" And then the old witch laughed so loudly and so repulsively, that the toad and the snakes fell to the ground, where they lay wriggling about. "You come just at the nick of time," added the witch, "for to-morrow, by sunrise, I should no longer be able to help you till another year had flown past. I will prepare you a potion; and you must swim ashore with it to-morrow, before sunrise, and then sit down and drink it. Your tail will disappear, and shrivel up into what human beings call neat legs—but mind, it will hurt you as much as if a sharp sword were thrust through you. Everybody that sees you will say you are the most beautiful mortal ever seen. You will retain the floating elegance of your gait; no dancer will move so lightly as you, but every step you take will be like treading upon such sharp knives, that you would think your blood must flow. If you choose to put up with sufferings like these, I have the power to help you."

"I do," said the little mermaid, in a trembling voice, as she thought of the prince and of an immortal soul.

"But bethink you well," said the witch; "if once you obtain a human form, you can never be a mermaid again! You will never be able to dive down into the water to your sisters, or return to your father's palace; and if you should fail in winning the prince's love to the degree of his forgetting both father and mother for your sake, and loving you with his whole soul and bidding the priest join your hands in marriage, then you will never obtain an immortal soul! And the very day after he will have married

another, your heart will break, and you will dissolve into the foam on the billows."

"I am resolved," said the little mermaid, who had turned as pale as death.

"But you must pay me my dues," said the witch, "and it is no small matter I require. You have the loveliest voice of all the inhabitants of the deep, and you reckon upon its tones to charm him into loving you. Now, you must give me this beautiful voice. I choose to have the best of all you possess in exchange for my valuable potion. For I must mix my own blood with it, that it may prove as sharp as a two-edged sword."

"But if you take away my voice," said the little mermaid, "what have I left?"

"Your lovely form," said the witch; "your aerial step, and your expressive eyes—with these you surely can befool a man's heart. Well? Has your courage melted away? Come, put out your little tongue, and let me cut it off for my fee, and you shall have the valuable potion."

"So be it," said the little mermaid; and the witch put her caldron on the fire to prepare the potion.

"Cleanliness is a virtue!" quoth she, scouring the caldron with the snakes that she had tied into a knot, after which she pricked her own breast and let her black blood trickle down into the vessel. The steam rose up in such fanciful shapes, that no one could have looked at them without a shudder. The witch kept flinging fresh materials into the caldron every moment, and when it began to simmer it was like the wailings of a crocodile. At length the potion was ready, and it looked like the purest spring water.

"Here it is," said the witch, cutting off the little mermaid's tongue; so now she was dumb, and could neither sing nor speak.

"If the polypi should seize hold of you on your return through my forest," said the witch, "you need only sprinkle a single drop of this potion over them, and their arms and fingers will be shivered to a thousand pieces." But the little mermaid had no need of this

talisman; the polypi drew back in alarm from her on perceiving the dazzling potion, that shone in her hand like a twinkling star. So she crossed rapidly through the forest, the swamp, and the raging whirlpool.

She saw her father's palace, and her heart seemed ready to burst with anguish. She stole into the garden and plucked a flower from each of her sisters' flower beds, kissed her hand a thousand times to her old home, and then rose up through the blue waters.

The sun had not yet risen when she saw the prince's castle, and reached the magnificent marble steps. The moon shone brightly. The little mermaid drank the sharp and burning potion and it seemed as if a two-edged sword was run through her delicate frame. She fainted away, and remained apparently lifeless. When the sun rose over the sea, she awoke and felt a sharp pang; but just before her stood the handsome young prince. He gazed at her so intently with his coal-black eyes that she cast hers to the ground, and now perceived that her fish's tail had disappeared, and that she had a pair of the neatest little white legs that a maiden could desire. Only having no clothes on, she was obliged to enwrap herself in her long thick hair. The prince inquired who she was, and how she had come thither; but she could only look at him with her mild but sorrowful deep blue eyes, for speak she could not. He then took her by the hand, and led her into the palace. Every step she took was, as the witch had warned her it would be, like treading on the points of needles and sharp knives; but she bore it willingly; and, hand in hand with the prince, she glided in as lightly as a soap bubble, so that he, as well as everybody else, marvelled at her lovely aerial gait.

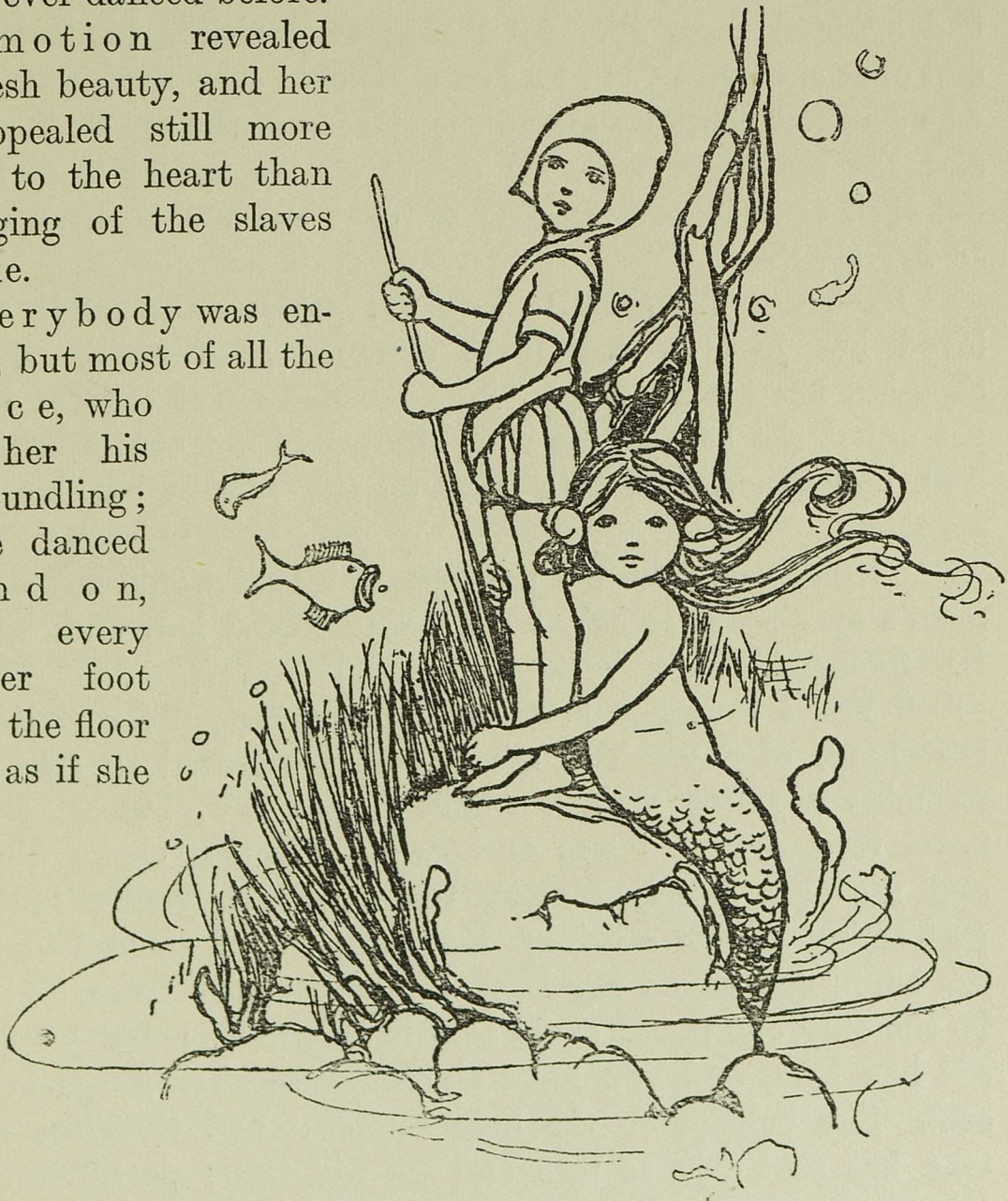
She was now dressed in costly robes of silk and muslin, and was the most beautiful of all the inmates of the palace; but she was dumb, and could neither sing nor speak. Handsome female slaves, attired in silk and gold, came and sang before the prince and his royal parents; and one of them happening to sing more beautifully than all the others, the prince clapped his hands and

smiled. This afflicted the little mermaid. She knew that she herself had sung much more exquisitely, and thought "Oh, did he but know that to be near him I sacrificed my voice to all eternity!"

The female slaves now performed a variety of elegant aerial-looking dances to the sound of the most delightful music. The little mermaid then raised her beautiful white arms, stood on the tips of her toes, and floated across the floor in such a way as no one had ever danced before.

Every motion revealed some fresh beauty, and her eyes appealed still more directly to the heart than the singing of the slaves had done.

Everybody was enchanted, but most of all the prince, who called her his little foundling; and she danced on and on, though every time her foot touched the floor she felt as if she were treading on sharp knives. The prince declared that



he would never part with her, and she obtained leave to sleep on a velvet cushion before his door.

At night, when others slept throughout the prince's palace, she would go and sit on the broad, marble steps, for it cooled her burning feet to bathe them in sea-water; and then she thought of those below the deep.

One night her sisters rose up arm-in-arm, and sang so mournfully as they glided over the waters! She then made them a sign, when they recognized her, and told her how deeply she had afflicted them all. After that they visited her every night; and once she perceived at a great distance her aged grandmother, who had not come up above the surface of the sea for many years, and the sea king, with his crown on his head. They stretched out their arms to her, but they did not venture so near the shore as her sisters.

Each day she grew to love the prince more fondly; and he loved her just as one loves a dear, good child. But as to choosing her for his queen, such an idea never entered his head; yet unless she became his wife, she would not obtain an immortal soul, and would melt into foam on the morrow of his wedding another.

"Don't you love me the best of all?" would the little mermaid's eyes seem to ask, when he embraced her, and kissed her fair forehead.

"Yes, I love you best," said the prince, "for you have the best heart of any. You are the most devoted to me, and you resemble a young maiden whom I once saw, but whom I shall never meet again. I was on board a ship that sank; the billows cast me near a holy temple, where several young maids were performing Divine service; the youngest of them found me on the shore and saved my life. I saw her only twice. She would be the only one that I could love in this world; but your features are like hers, and you have almost driven her image out of my soul. She belongs to the holy temple; and therefore my good star has sent you to me—and we will never part."

"Alas! he knows not that it was I who saved his life!" thought the little mermaid. "I bore him across the sea to the wood where stands the holy temple, and I sat beneath the foam to watch whether any human beings came to help him. I saw the pretty girl whom he loves better than he does me." And the mermaid heaved a deep sigh; for tears she had none to shed. "He says the maiden belongs to the holy temple, and she will therefore never return to the world. They will not meet again, while I am by his side and see him every day. I will take care of him, and love him, and sacrifice my life to him."

But now came a talk of the prince being about to marry, and to obtain for his wife the beautiful daughter of a neighbouring king; and that was why he was fitting out such a magnificent vessel. The prince was travelling ostensibly on a mere visit to his neighbour's estates, but, in reality, to see the king's daughter. He was to be accompanied by a numerous retinue. The little mermaid shook her head and smiled. She knew the prince's thoughts better than the others did. "I must travel," he had said to her. "I must see this beautiful princess, because my parents require it of me; but they will not force me to bring her home as my bride. I cannot love her. She will not resemble the beautiful maid in the temple whom you are like; and if I were compelled to choose a bride, it would sooner be you, my dumb foundling, with those expressive eyes of yours." And he kissed her rosy mouth, and played with her long hair, and rested his head against her heart, which beat high with hopes of human felicity and of an immortal soul.

"You are not afraid of the sea, my dumb child, are you?" said he, as they stood on the magnificent vessel that was to carry them to the neighbouring king's dominions. And he talked to her about tempests and calm, of the singular fishes to be found in the deep, and of the wonderful things the divers saw below: and she smiled, for she knew, better than any one else, what was in the sea beneath.

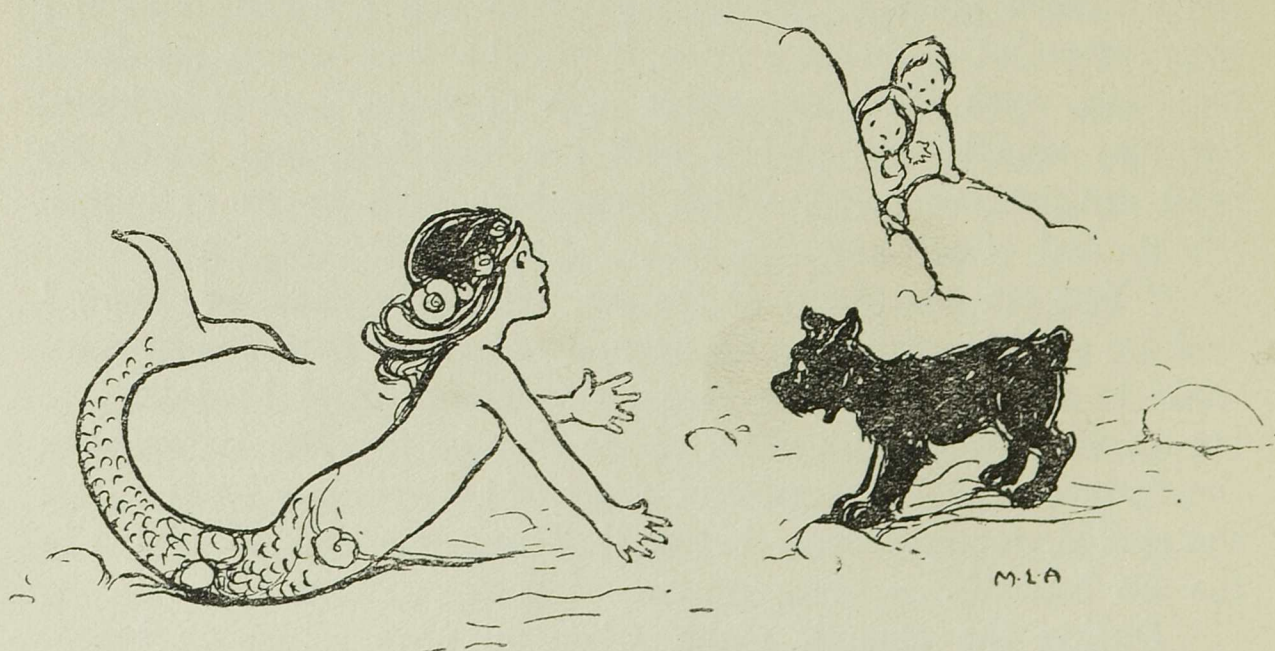
During the moonlit night, when all were asleep on board,

not even excepting the helmsman at his rudder, she sat on deck, and gazed through the clear waters, and fancied she saw her father's palace. High above it stood her aged grandmother, with her silver crown on her head, looking up intently at the keel of the ship. Then her sisters rose up to the surface, and gazed at her mournfully, and wrung their white hands. She made a sign to them, smiled, and would fain have told them that she was happy and well off; but the cabin-boy approached, and the sisters dived beneath the waves, leaving him to believe that the white forms he thought he descried were only the foam upon the waters.

Next morning, the ship came into port at the neighbouring king's splendid capital. The bells were all set a-ringing, trumpets sounded flourishes from high turrets; and soldiers, with flying colours and shining bayonets, stood ready to welcome the stranger. Every day brought some fresh entertainment: balls and feasts succeeded each other. But the princess was not yet there, for she had been brought up, people said, in a far-distant, holy temple, where she had acquired all manner of royal virtues.

At last she came.

The little mermaid was curious to judge of her beauty, and she was obliged to acknowledge to herself that she had never seen



a lovelier face. Her skin was delicate and transparent, and beneath her long, dark lashes sparkled a pair of sincere, dark-blue eyes.

“It is you!” cried the prince,—“you who saved me, when I lay like a lifeless corpse upon the shore!” And he folded his blushing bride in his arms. “Oh, I am too happy!” said he to the little mermaid: “my fondest dream has come to pass. You will rejoice at my happiness, for you wish me better than any of them.” And the little mermaid kissed his hand, and felt already as if her heart were about to break. His wedding-morning would bring her death, and she would be then changed into foam upon the sea.

All the church-bells were ringing, and the heralds rode through the streets, and proclaimed the approaching nuptials. Perfumed oil was burning in costly silver lamps, on all the altars. The priests were swinging their censers; while the bride and bridegroom joined their hands, and received the bishop’s blessing. The little mermaid, dressed in silk and gold, held up the bride’s train; but her ears did not hear the solemn music, neither did her eyes behold the ceremony; she thought of the approaching gloom of death, and of all she had lost in this world.

That same evening the bride and bridegroom went on board. The cannons were roaring, the banners were streaming, and a costly tent of gold and purple, lined with beautiful cushions, had been prepared on deck for the reception of the bridal pair. The vessel then set sail, with a favourable wind, and glided smoothly along the calm sea.

When it grew dark, a number of variegated lamps were lighted, and the crew danced merrily on deck. The little mermaid could not help remembering her first visit to the sea’s surface, when she witnessed similar festivities and magnificence; and she twirled round in the dance, half poised in the air, like a swallow when pursued; and all present cheered her in ecstasies, for never had she danced so enchantingly before. Her tender feet felt the sharp pangs of knives; but she heeded it not, for a sharper pang had shot

*

through her heart. She knew this was the last evening she should ever be able to see him for whom she had left both her relations and her home, sacrificed her beautiful voice, and daily suffered most excruciating pains, without his having even dreamed that such was the case. It was the last night on which she might breathe the same air as he, and gaze on the deep sea and the starry sky. An eternal night, unenlightened by either thoughts or dreams, now awaited her; for she had no soul, and could never now obtain one. Yet all was joy and gaiety on board till long past midnight; and she was fain to laugh and dance, though the thoughts of death were in her heart. The prince kissed his beautiful bride, and she played with his black locks; and they went, arm-in-arm, to rest beneath the splendid tent.

All was now quiet on board; the steersman only was sitting at the helm, as the little mermaid leaned her white arms on the edge of the vessel, and looked towards the east for the first blush of morning. She then saw her sisters rising out of the waters. They were as pale as herself, and their long and beautiful locks were no longer streaming to the winds, for they had been cut off.

"We gave them to the witch," said they, "to obtain help, that you might not die to-night. She gave us a knife in exchange—and a sharp one it is, as you may see. Now, before sunrise, you must plunge it into the prince's heart; and when his warm blood shall besprinkle your feet, they will again close up into a fish's tail, and you will be a mermaid once more, and can come down to us, and live out your three hundred years, before you turn into inanimate, salt foam. Haste, then! He or you must die before sunrise! Our old grandmother has fretted till her white hair has fallen off, as ours has fallen under the witch's scissors. Haste then! Do you not perceive those red streaks in the sky? In a few minutes the sun will rise, and then you must die!" And they then heaved a deep, deep sigh, as they sank down into the waves.

The little mermaid lifted the scarlet curtain of the tent, and beheld the fair bride resting her head on the prince's breast; and she bent down and kissed his beautiful forehead, then looked up

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her eyes towards the prince who was calling his bride by her name, in his sleep. She alone filled his thoughts, and the mermaid's fingers clutched the knife instinctively—but in another moment she hurled the blade far away into the waves, that gleamed redly where it fell, as though drops of blood were gurgling up from the water. She gave the prince one last, dying look, and then jumped overboard, and felt her body dissolving into foam.

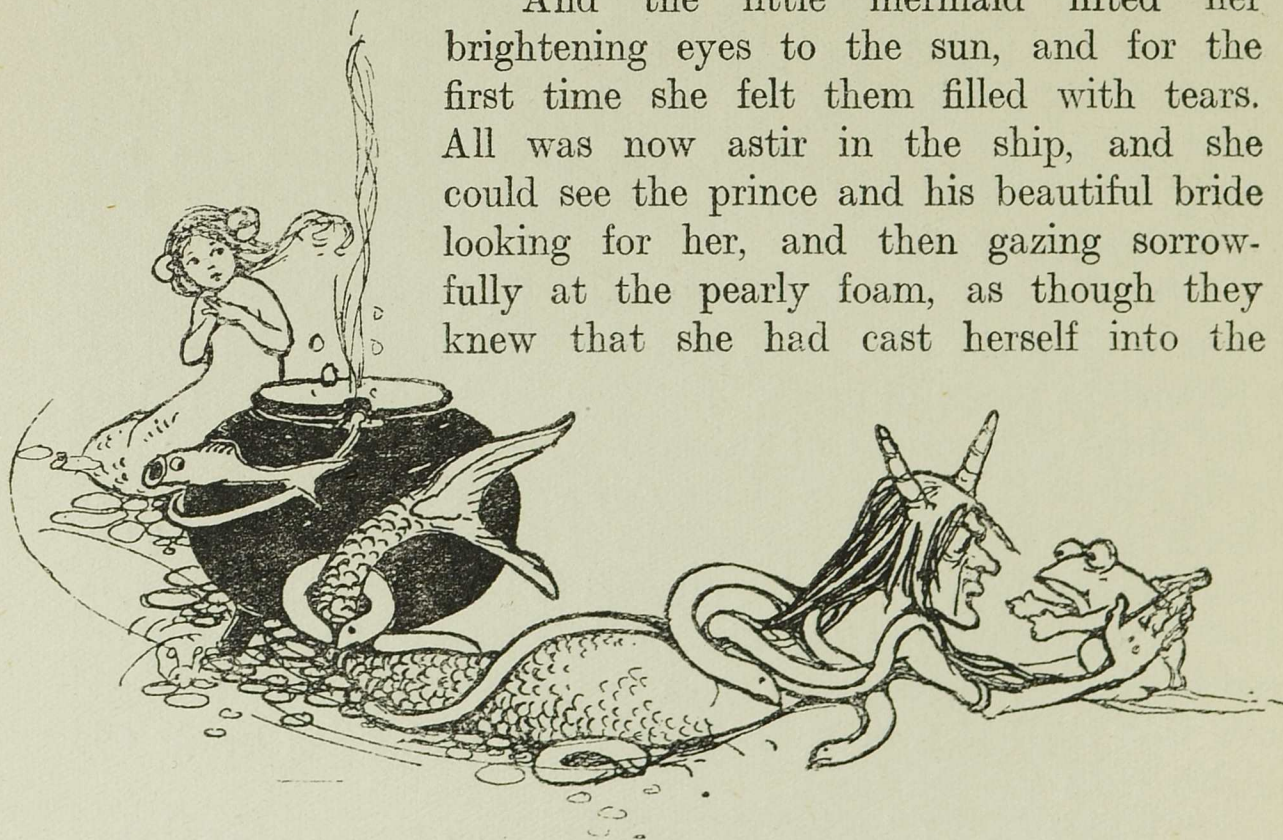
The sun now rose out of the sea; its beams threw a kindly warmth upon the cold foam, and the little mermaid did not experience the pangs of death. She saw the bright sun, and above were floating hundreds of transparent, beautiful creatures; she could still catch a glimpse of the ship's white sails, and of the red clouds in the sky, across the swarms of these lovely beings. Their language was melody, but too ethereal to be heard by human ears, just as no human eye can discern their forms. Though without wings, their lightness poises them in the air. The little mermaid saw that she had a body like theirs, that kept rising higher and higher from out the foam.

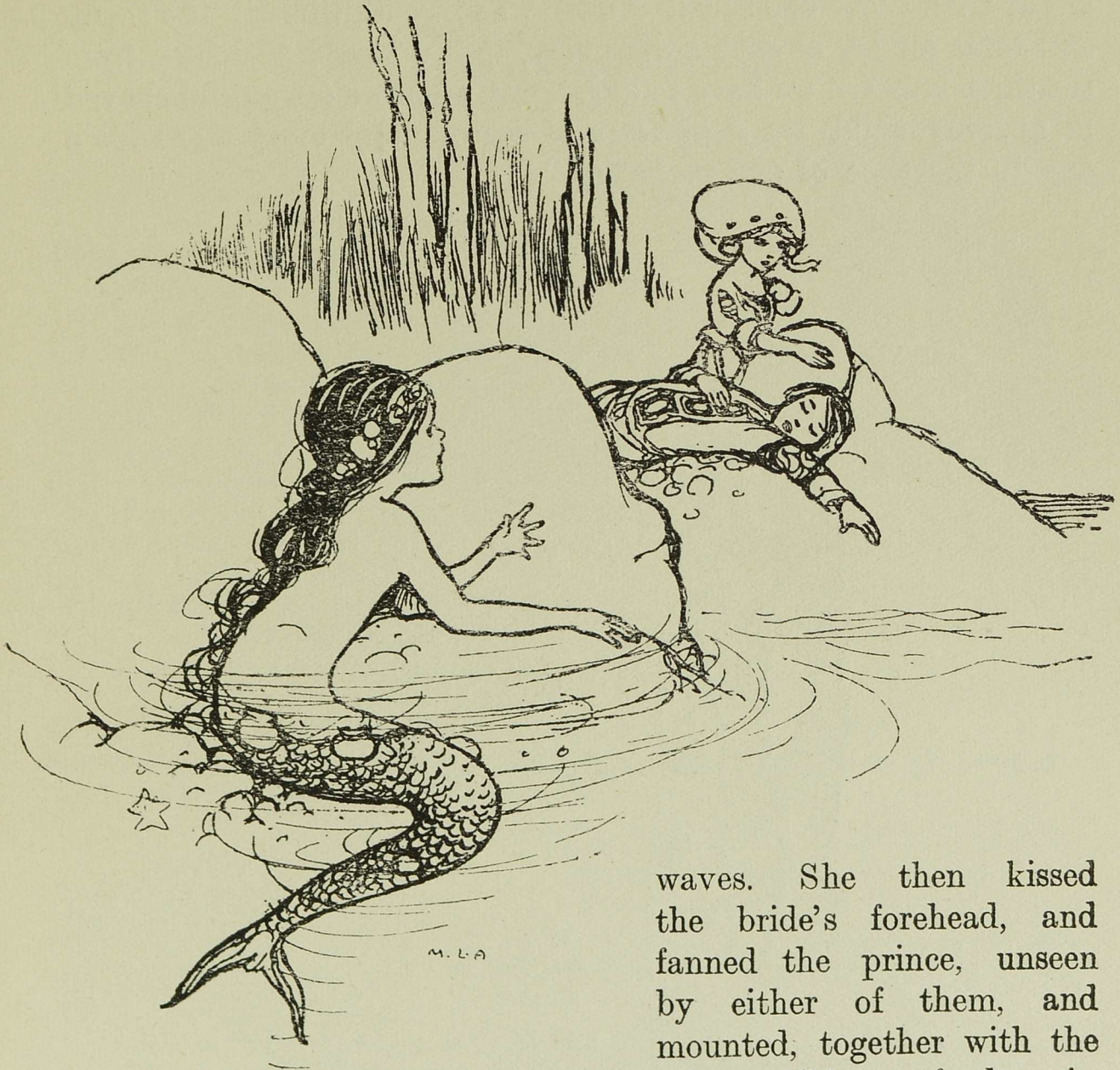
“Where am I?” asked she, and her voice sounded like that of

her companions, so ethereal, that no earthly music could give an adequate idea of its sweetness.

"Amongst the daughters of the air!" answered they. "A mermaid has not an immortal soul, and cannot obtain one, unless she wins the love of some human being—her eternal welfare depends on the will of another. But the daughters of the air, although not possessing an immortal soul by nature, can obtain one by their good deeds. We fly to warm countries, and fan the burning atmosphere, laden with pestilence, that destroys the sons of man. We diffuse the perfume of flowers through the air to heal and to refresh. When we have striven for three hundred years to do all the good in our power, we then obtain an immortal soul, and share in the eternal happiness of the human race. You, poor little mermaid! have striven with your whole heart like ourselves. You have suffered and endured, and have raised yourself into an aerial spirit, and now your own good works may obtain you an immortal soul after the lapse of three hundred years."

And the little mermaid lifted her brightening eyes to the sun, and for the first time she felt them filled with tears. All was now astir in the ship, and she could see the prince and his beautiful bride looking for her, and then gazing sorrowfully at the pearly foam, as though they knew that she had cast herself into the





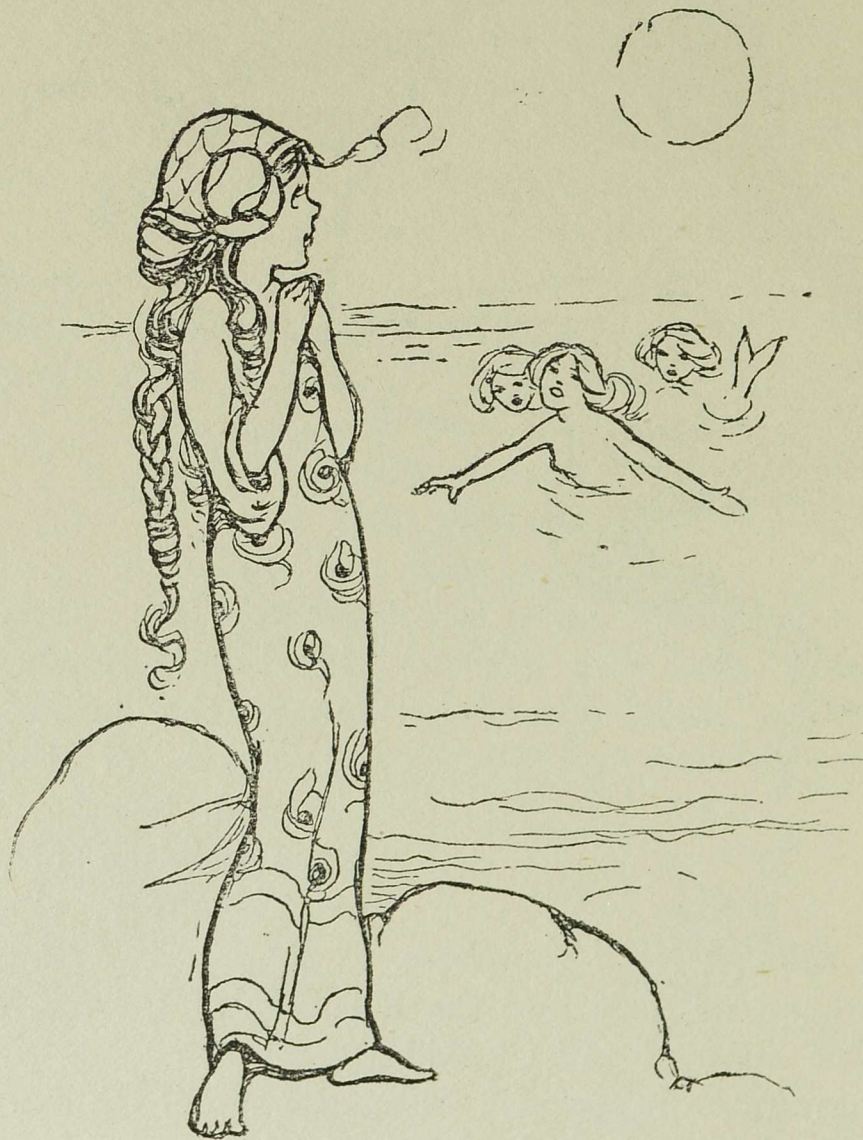
waves. She then kissed the bride's forehead, and fanned the prince, unseen by either of them, and mounted, together with the other children of the air, on the rosy cloud that

was sailing through the atmosphere.

"Thus shall we glide into the Kingdom of Heaven, after the lapse of three hundred years," said she.

"We may reach it sooner," whispered one of the daughters of the air. "We enter unseen the dwellings of man, and for each day on which we have met with a good child, who is the joy of his parents, and deserving of their love, the Almighty shortens the time

of our trial. The child little thinks, when we fly through the room, and smile for joy at such a discovery, that a year is deducted from the three hundred we have to live. But when we see an ill-behaved or naughty child, we shed tears of sorrow, and every tear adds a day to the time of our probation."



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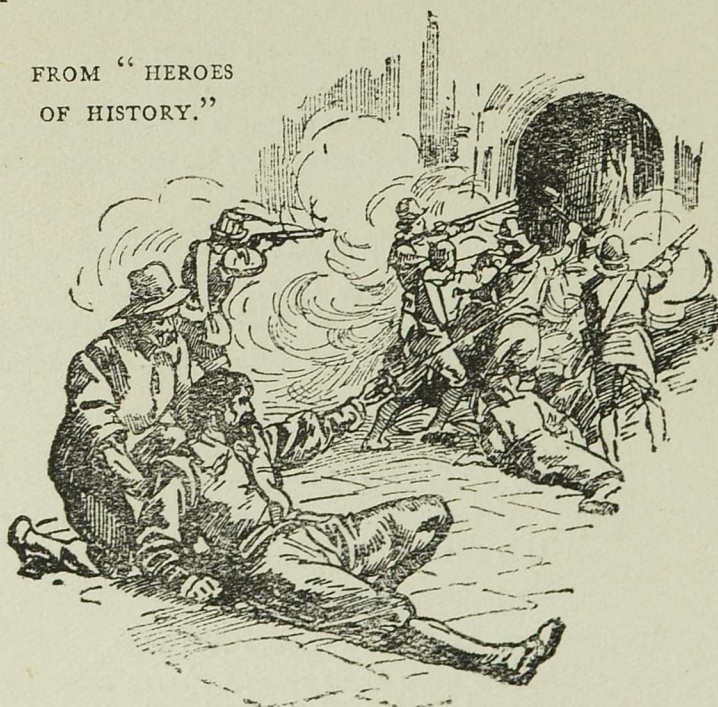
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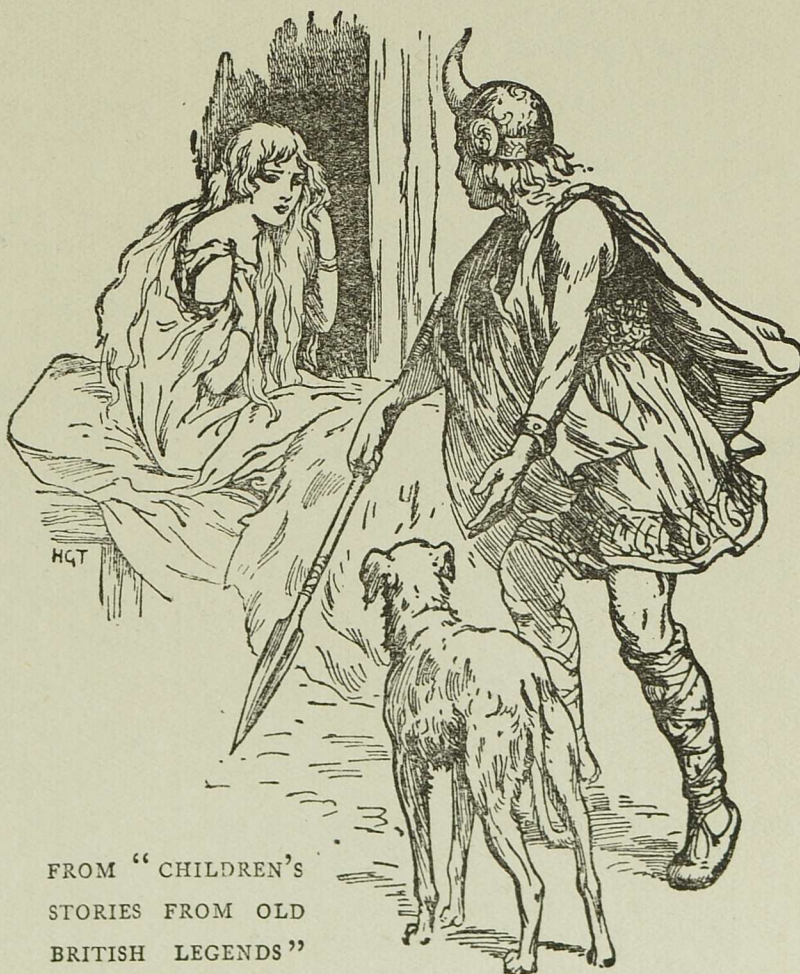
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