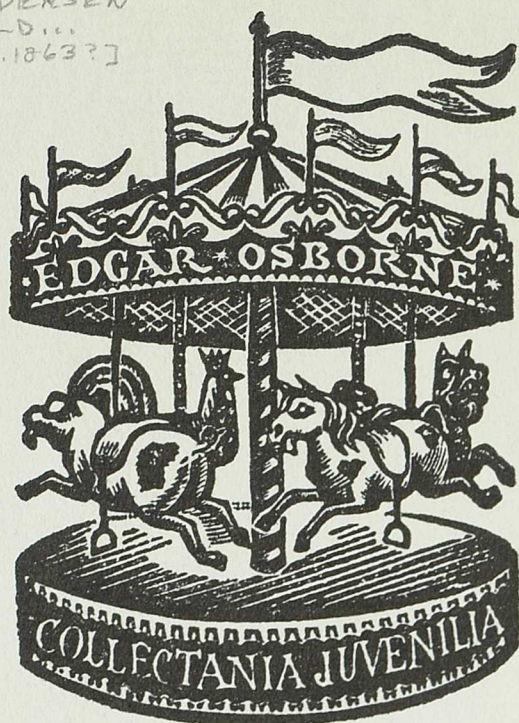


THE
WILD SWANS.

FT (TBC)
ANDERSEN
WILD...
[ca. 1863?]



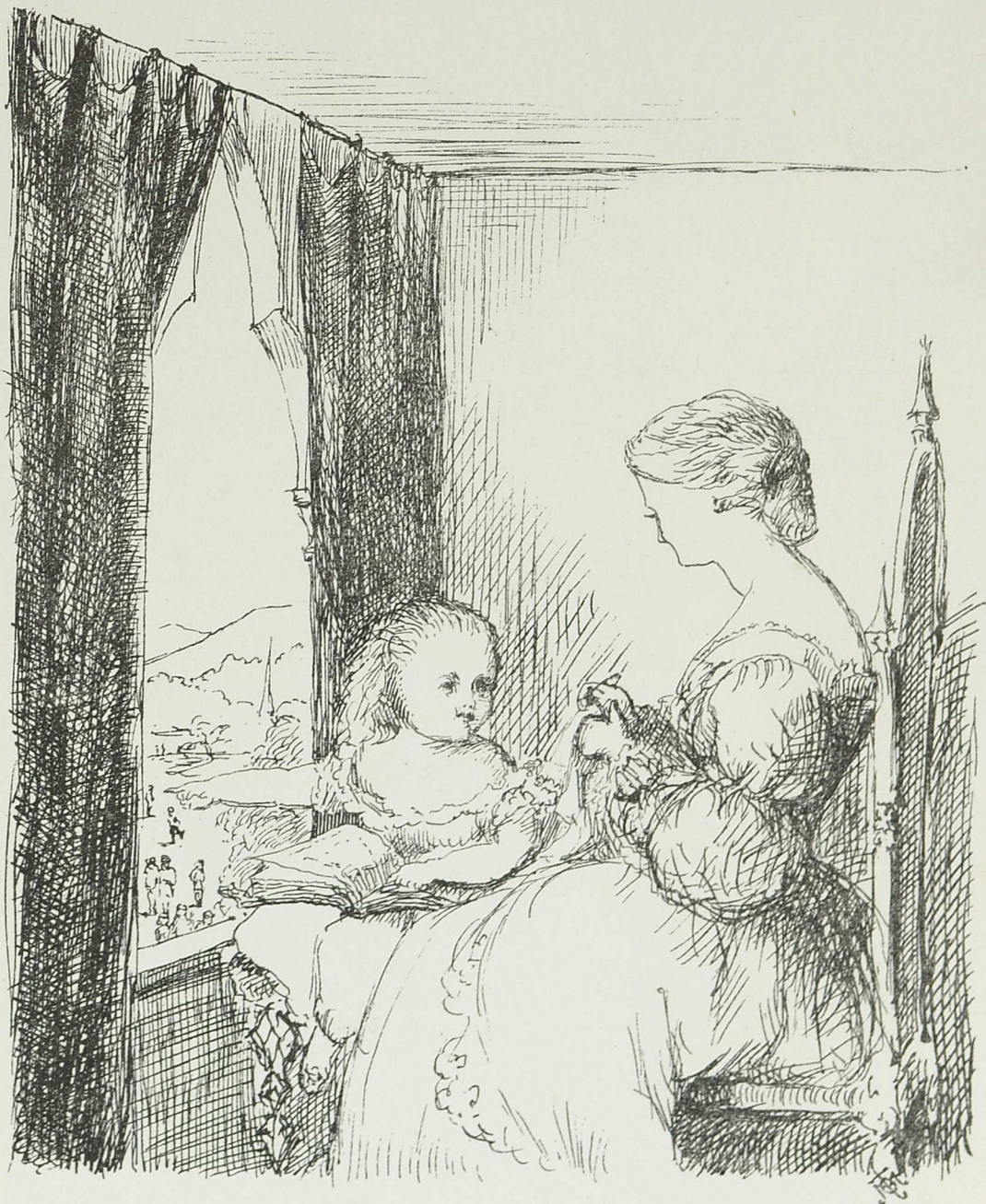
37131 062453 600

10

From the
the
\$100 000 000

1

THE WILD SWANS.







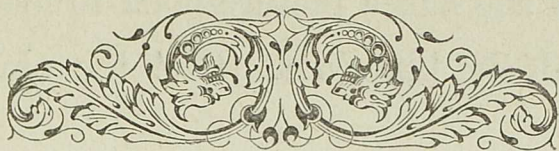
THE
WILD SWANS:

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

.....
With Illustrations.





THE WILD SWANS.

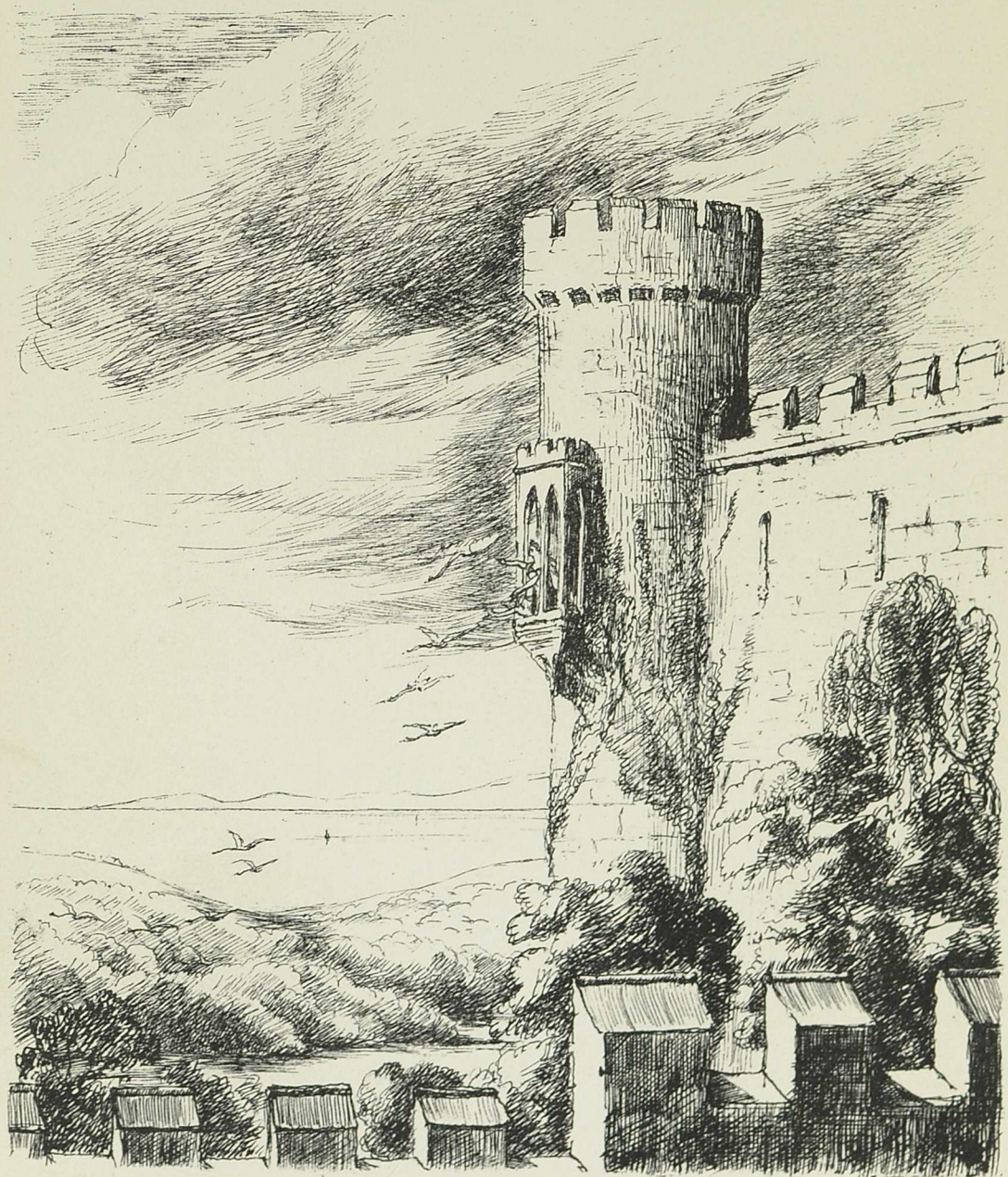
CHAPTER I.

FAR away from hence, in the country to which the swallows fly, when it is winter-time with us, there once lived a king. He had eleven sons and one daughter, whose name was Elise.

The eleven brothers were, of course, Princes, and wore stars on their breasts and swords at their sides, when they went to school. They had golden tablets, on which they wrote with diamond pencils, and they could say by heart as easily as they could read: one might therefore feel certain that they were Princes.

Their little sister Elise sat on a stool made of crystal, and she had a picture-book to look at, which had cost half the kingdom. Oh! the children were so happy!

But their happiness was not to last long. Their father, who was king over the whole land, married a wicked queen, who was a witch, and who did not love the poor children at all. They found this out the first day she came; for there was great rejoicing throughout the castle in honour of the king's marriage, and the children played at "receiving company;" but, instead of having whole cakes and roasted apples given to them, as usual, for their game, the queen only allowed them some sand in a tea-cup, and said they could 'make believe' that this was anything they chose. The week after, she sent little Elise away to be brought up in the country by a peasant and his wife; and it was not long before she told the king so many stories against the poor Princes, that he ceased to trouble himself any more about them.



CHAPTER II.

“**F**LY out into the world, and take care of yourselves,” said the cruel queen, to the brothers. “Fly away in the shape of great birds without voices!” But she could not do them so much harm as she wished, and they were changed into eleven splendid wild swans. With a strange cry they flew away, out of the castle windows, over the park, and into the forest.

It was still early in the morning, when they came near to where Elise lay sleeping in her little chamber in the peasant’s cottage. They hovered over the roof, stretched out their long necks and flapped their great wings; but nobody saw or heard them. They must go on still farther, high up into the clouds, and out into the wide world; so they flew

off into a great forest, which extended to the sea-shore.

As for poor little Elise, she remained in the cottage, and amused herself, as best she could, with a green leaf; for she had no other plaything. She pierced a hole in the leaf, and when she looked through it at the sun, it seemed to her as though she saw her brothers' bright eyes; and whenever the sunbeams shone on her cheeks, she thought of their warm kisses.

One day went by like another. As the wind blew through the great rose-bushes outside the house, she whispered to the roses: "Who can be more beautiful than you?" But the roses shook their heads and said, "Elise is more lovely." And when the old peasant woman sat outside her door on Sunday, reading her hymn-book, the wind turned over the leaves and said to the book, "Who can be more pious than thou art?" The hymn-book replied, "Elise is more pious;" and what the roses and the book said, was perfectly true.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Elise was fifteen years old, she was taken back to her father's castle, and as soon as the bad queen saw how lovely she had grown, she not only disliked but hated her. Willingly would she have changed her into a wild swan, as she had changed the brothers; but she dared not do so immediately, because the king would certainly wish to see his daughter.

Early in the morning the queen went to the bath, which was built of marble, and fitted up with soft cushions and splendid hangings. She took three toads, kissed them, and said to one: "When Elise comes to bathe, place thyself on her head, that she may become as stupid as thou art." "Sit thou on

her brow," said she to another, "that she become so ugly, that her father will not recognize her." "Rest thou on her heart," she whispered to the third, "and fill it with bad thoughts, which will make her unhappy!" Then she put the toads into the clear water, which immediately turned to a greenish hue. She called Elise, undressed her, and left her standing in the water.

As Elise dipped under the water, one toad placed itself in her hair, another on her forehead, and the third on her breast. But she appeared scarcely to observe them; and as soon as she rose up again, three scarlet poppies floated on the water. Had they not been naturally poisonous creatures, and been kissed by the witch queen, they would have turned into roses: nevertheless they became flowers, because they had rested on the head and heart of Elise, for she was too good and innocent for enchantment to have any power over her.

As soon as the bad queen saw what had happened, she rubbed Elise all over with walnut juice, so that

she became of a swarthy brown; smeared her face with an unpleasant ointment, and let her splendid hair fall in tangled masses over her shoulders. It was impossible to recognize in her the beautiful Elise.

When the king, her father, saw her, he was much terrified and said that it could not be his daughter. No one would recognize her, except the watch-dogs and swallows; but they were poor dumb animals, and were of no account.

Poor Elise wept and thought of her eleven brothers, who were all gone away. Dejected, she stole out of the castle, and wandered the whole day over field and moor, till she came to the great forest. She did not know in the least which way she wished to go, but she felt very unhappy, and longed for her brothers, who had been driven out into the world—she determined to go in search of them.

CHAPTER IV.


ELISE had only been a short time in the forest when night drew on. She had quite lost her way; so she lay down on the soft moss, said her evening prayer, and rested her head on the stump of a tree. How quiet it was there! the air was so mild, and round about in the moss and grass hundreds of glow-worms shone with a green light; and when Elise moved the branches lightly with her hand, the shining fire-flies fell down upon her, like shooting stars.

The whole night she dreamt of her brothers; in her dreams they played together, as when they were children, wrote with diamond pencils on golden tablets, and looked at the beautiful picture-book,

which cost half the kingdom. But on the tablets, they did not write, as formerly, cyphers and strokes, but the brave deeds which they had accomplished, all that they had seen and experienced; and in the picture-book, every thing was alive; the birds sang, the people came in and out of the book, and talked to Elise and her brothers. But when they turned the leaf over, they all sprang back into their former places.

When Elise awoke, the sun was already high in the heavens. She could not indeed see it, for the high trees spread their branches thickly and closely above her head; but its rays played directly over her, like a golden tissue. There was a sweet fresh scent, and the birds perched on her shoulders. The splashing of water met her ear, and she then discovered several springs, whose waters flowed down to the sandy sea-shore and were lost in the ocean. The bushes grew thickly all around, but in one place the deer had made a great opening, and here Elise went down to the water. The stream was so

clear that when the bushes were undisturbed by the breeze, it seemed as though their reflexions were painted on the bottom of it.

When Elise perceived how brown and ugly she looked, she was frightened, but on wetting her little hand, and rubbing her eyes and forehead with it, the white skin shone out again. She then undressed herself and bathed in the fresh water; and a more beautiful Princess could not have been found!

When she had dressed herself again and braided her long hair, she went to the bubbling spring, drank out of the hollow of her hand, and wandered farther into the forest, without knowing whither she went, thinking all the time of her brothers, and of the good God who would never forsake her. Before long she came to a wild apple tree, the boughs of which were heavily laden with fruit. Here she made her mid-day meal, then propped up the drooping branches, and passed on into the darkest part of the forest, where it was so still that the only sound she heard was the crackling of the dry leaves under



her feet. There was not a bird to be seen, nor could a sunbeam penetrate the thick foliage. The stems of the trees grew so closely together, that they formed a complete trellis-work. Oh! here was indeed solitude, such as Elise had never before experienced!

The night grew dark! Not a single little glow-worm glittered on the moss! Sorrowfully Elise lay down to sleep!

CHAPTER V.


WHEN awaking, Elise went a few steps onwards and met an old woman carrying a basket of berries, some of which she gave to Elise, who asked her whether she had seen eleven Princes ride through the forest?

“No!” said the old woman, “but yesterday I saw eleven swans with golden crowns on their heads, swimming on the river hard by.”

And she led Elise a little farther on, to a sloping bank, at the foot of which meandered a little stream, and the trees on its banks stretched their long leafy boughs towards one another, and here and there, where they were unable to touch in their natural

growth, they had torn their roots out of the earth and hung them twisted together over the water.

Elise bid farewell to the old woman and pursued her way along the stream, to the place where it joined the sea.

The whole glorious ocean lay before the young maiden, but not one sail was visible, not a single boat was to be seen. How could she now continue her journey? She gazed on the innumerable little stones lying on the beach, which the water had polished, till they were all quite smooth and round. Glass, iron, stone, all that lay there heaped together had been fashioned thus by the water, although it was much softer than her little hand. "It rolls onwards unceasingly," thought Elise, "and thus makes smooth to itself the roughest and hardest things. Even thus unwearied will I be. Thanks for your lesson, ye clear rolling waves! one day, my heart tells me, you will carry me to my brothers!"

On the scattered sea-weed lay eleven white swan's-

feathers, which Elise collected together into a group. There were water-drops lying on them, but whether from tears or dew, no one could tell. It was very lonely there on the beach, but Elise felt it not, for the sea presented an endless variety ; indeed in one short hour it shewed more change than the sweet lake could in a whole year.

Now there came a great black cloud, as though the sea would say, "I can look black also;" and then the wind blew and the waves tossed up their white crests. But soon the clouds became red and the winds slept, so that the sea looked like a rose-leaf; by and bye it changed to green, and then to white; but though it was so still, there was a slight movement on the shore, and the water heaved gently, like the bosom of a sleeping child.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the sun was on the point of setting, Elise beheld eleven wild swans with golden crowns on their heads, flying over the land; as they flew one behind the other, they looked like a long white ribbon. Elise scrambled up the cliff and hid herself behind a bush, and the swans settled near her, flapping their great wings.

The moment the sun sank below the horizon, the plumage of the swans suddenly fell off, and eleven handsome Princes stood before her. She uttered a loud cry, for although they were much altered, she at once felt and knew that they were her brothers. She sprang into their arms and called them by their names; and the Princes felt very happy at seeing their little sister Elise again, for they recognized

her, although she had grown so tall and beautiful. They laughed and they cried, and in a short time had related to one another how unkind their step-mother had shewn herself towards them.

“We brothers,” said the eldest, “fly in the shape of wild swans during the day-time; as soon as the sun has set, we resume our human shape. Therefore we must always be on the watch to provide ourselves, by sunset, with a resting-place: for should we chance to be flying near the clouds at that time, we should fall into the sea. We do not dwell here. On the other side there lies a land as beautiful as this; but the way to it is long: to reach it, we must traverse the great ocean; there is no island on the way, where we could pass the night, only one little rock, which rises from the midst of the sea, and on which there is only just space enough for us to stand close together. When the sea is rough, the water dashes over us; but still we are thankful for even this dry land. There we spend the night in our human form, and but for this rock, we could never

revisit our Fatherland, for we need two of the longest days in the year for our journey. Only once in the year are we allowed to visit our home, and here we must remain eleven days, and fly over the great forest, from whence we can see the castle, in which we were born, and where our father dwells, and the high tower of that church, where our mother lies buried. Here we feel as though the trees and bushes were related to us; here the wild horses gallop over the plain, as they used to do in our childhood; here the charcoal-burners sing the old songs, to which we used to dance when we were children. This is our Fatherland; we feel ourselves drawn towards this place, and here we have found our dear little sister! We can remain in this place for two days, and then we must go over the sea to a beautiful country, which, however, is not our home! How can we carry you with us? We have neither ship nor boat."

"By what means can I set you free?" said the sister. And they conversed nearly all the night, and slept for only one hour.

CHAPTER VII.


GLISE was awakened by the sound of the swans' wings flapping over her. The brothers were again transformed; they flew round and round in great circles, and at last far away. But one of them, the youngest, remained behind, and laid his downy head on her shoulder, whilst she stroked his wings; thus they remained together the whole day. Towards evening the others returned, and at sunset they all appeared in their natural form.

“To-morrow,” said one of them, “we must fly from hence, and cannot return for the space of a year. But we cannot leave you thus. Have you courage to come with us, dear sister? My arm is strong enough to carry you through the forest: would not all our wings together be strong enough to bear you over the ocean?”

“Yes, take me with you,” said Elise.

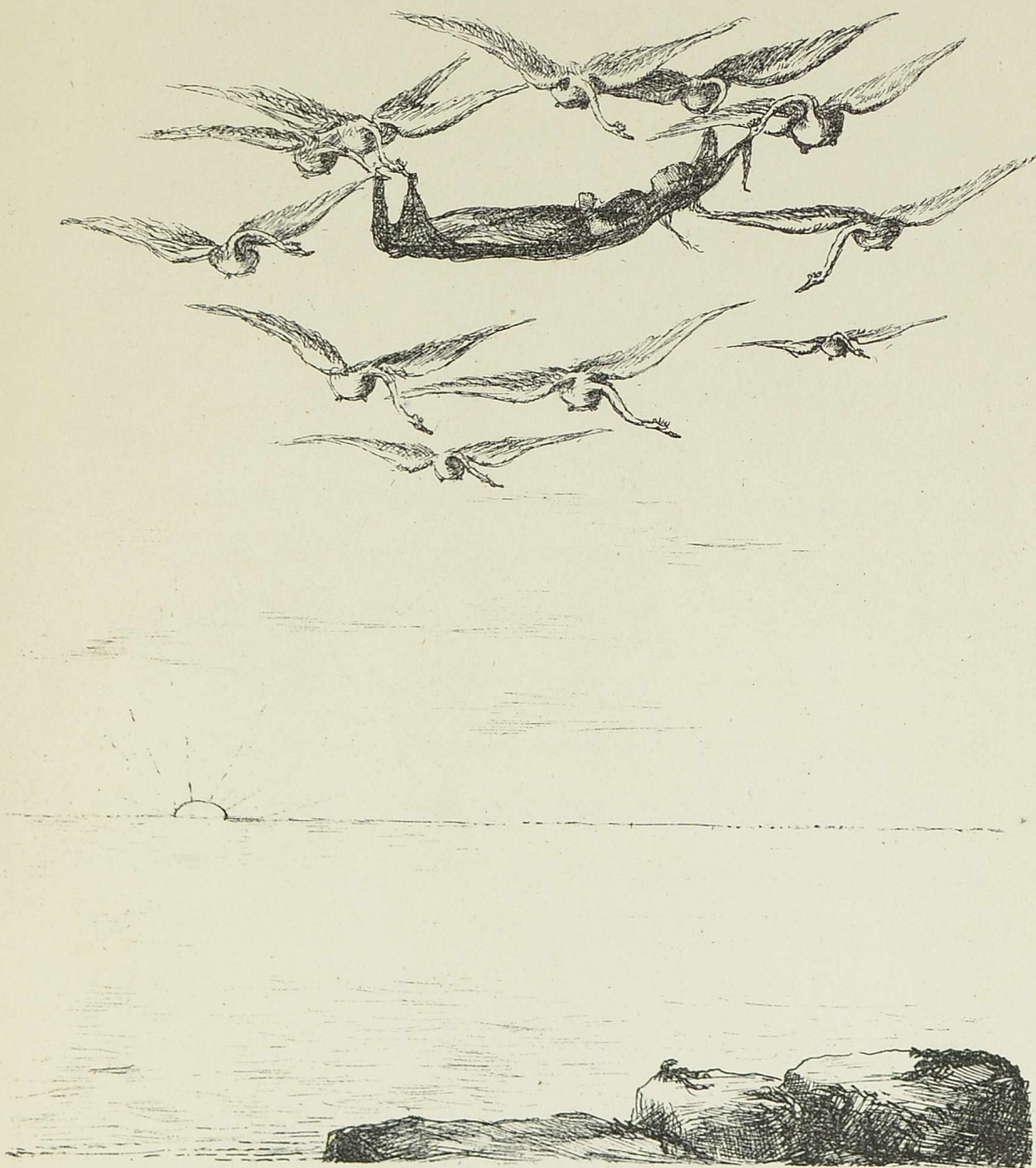
So they spent the whole night in weaving a net of the leaves of the sedge and the flexible bark of the willow; it was large and strong; and on this net Elise laid herself down to sleep. When the sun rose, and the brothers were changed into wild swans, they took hold of the net with their bills and flew with their still sleeping sister high up into the clouds. The sunbeams fell on her face, therefore one of the swans flew over her head, in order to shade her with his broad wings.

They were already far from land when Elise awoke; she thought she must be still dreaming, it appeared so strange to her to find herself carried so high through the air, over the sea. At her side lay a bough of beautiful ripe berries and a bundle of sweet roots, which had been gathered and laid there by her youngest brother. She smiled her thanks to him, when she recognized him, for he it was who flew over her, to shade her with his wings.

The whole day the swans flew on like an arrow

through the air; but they went more slowly than formerly, for now they had their sister to carry. The weather became stormy; evening drew on: anxiously Elise saw the sun begin to set, for as yet the solitary cliff in the sea was not in sight. It seemed to her, that the swans flapped their wings more strongly. Ah! she felt it was owing to her weight that they could not go more swiftly. When the sun should set, they must become men, fall into the sea and be drowned. She prayed in her innermost heart, but still she could see no rock. The black clouds came nearer; the gusts of wind foreboded a storm; the clouds stood in a threatening mass, from which lightning shot forth: flash followed flash.

The sun was now on the edge of the horizon; Elise's heart beat fast: the swans, in their flight, shot up so quickly in the air, that she thought she should fall; but now they hovered again. The sun was half under the water when Elise first beheld the little rock beneath them. It looked no bigger than



a seal with its head above water. The sun now sank so fast that it appeared only like a star, and at this moment Elise's feet rested on firm ground. The sun became extinguished like sparks in burnt paper; she saw her brothers standing around her, arm-in-arm, but there was only just room enough for her and them. The sea dashed against the rock, and covered her with spray: the heavens were one blaze of lightning, and peal after peal of thunder rolled above them: but the sister and brothers held one another's hands and sang psalms, which gave them comfort and strength.

At dawn the air was clear and still, and as soon as the sun had risen, the swans flew from the island with Elise. The sea still ran high, and it looked to them, as they rose in the air, as though the foam on the dark green water were millions of swans swimming on the sea.

As the sun rose higher, Elise saw before her, as though floating in mid-air, a mountainous country, with sparkling icebergs near the shore; and in the

midst of it rose a castle fully a mile in length, with magnificent colonnades, one above the other: beneath grew palm groves, and splendid flowers as large as mill-wheels. She asked whether this was the land to which they were bound; but the swans shook their heads; for that which she saw was the ever-changing cloud-castle of the splendid Fata Morgana, which no man dares enter. As Elise gazed on it, mountain, forest, and castle, all became mingled together, and in their place stood twenty grand churches, all alike, with high doors and pointed windows. She fancied she heard the tones of the organ; but it was only the sound of the sea. Now the churches seemed quite near, and now changed to a fleet of ships sailing beneath her: then she looked down and saw that it was only a sea-fog, gliding over the water. Thus Elise had an ever-varying scene before her eyes, and at last saw the real land to which they were going; for there rose before them the most beautiful blue mountain, with cedar forests and towns and castles.

Long before the sun went down, Elise found herself seated on a rock in front of a wide cavern, overgrown with lovely creeping plants, which had all the appearance of embroidered tapestry.

“Now we shall see what you will dream about to-night;” said the youngest brother, as he pointed out her sleeping chamber.

“Heaven grant that I may dream how to release you;” said she. And this thought soon occupied her mind. She prayed for help: yes, even in her sleep she continued to pray. In her dreams she seemed to be flying in the air to the cloud-castle of the Fata Morgana; and the brilliant fairy who came to meet her, exactly resembled the old woman who had given her berries in the forest, and who had told her of the swans with the golden crowns on their heads.

“Thy brothers can be released,” said she: “but hast thou courage and perseverance? True it is, that the water is softer than thy hands, and yet it moulds the stones; but it feels not the pain, which

thy hands will feel; it has no heart, and suffers not the anguish and torment which thou must endure. Seest thou the stinging-nettle which I hold in my hand? Many of the same kind grow round the cave, where thou art sleeping; only these and those which grow in the church-yard are of any use—mark that! These must thou pluck, although they will blister thy hands. Bruise the nettles with thy feet; thus thou wilt obtain hemp, of which thou must weave eleven shirts of mail with long sleeves, throw these over the swans, and the spell will be broken. But remember, that from the moment thou beginnest this, until it is completed, even if it should take thee a year, thou must not speak: the first word which thou utterest, will strike as a fatal dagger into thy brothers' hearts! On thy silence depends their life. Remember all this."

She touched the hand of Elise with the nettle, which burnt like fire, and Elise awoke.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was broad daylight, and close beside her lay a nettle like that which she had seen in her dream. She fell on her knees in thankfulness, and on rising left the cave, in order to begin her task. With her delicate fingers she grasped the hateful nettles, which blistered her hands and arms: but the hope of setting her brothers free, made her bear the pain willingly. She bruised each nettle with her bare feet, and then wove the green hemp.

At sunset the brothers arrived and were astonished to find her dumb: they feared it was the effect of some new spell of the wicked queen: and on seeing her hands, they grieved still more at the pain she was suffering for their sakes; but when the youngest

brother wept, and his tears fell on the burning blisters, she felt no pain.

During the night, Elise continued her work, for she could not rest till she had liberated her brothers. The whole of the following day, she sat in her loneliness, while the swans were absent, but the time had never seemed to fly so quickly. One shirt was already finished, and now she began the next.

Suddenly a hunting-horn sounded among the mountains: Elise was seized with alarm. The sound came nearer, and she could hear the baying of the hounds; terrified, she fled into the cave, bound together the nettles she had gathered and seated herself upon them. In a few minutes all the hunters stood at the mouth of the cave, and the handsomest of them all was the king of the land. He stepped towards Elise: never before had he beheld so beautiful a maiden. "How came you here, lovely child?" said he.

Elise shook her head, for she dared not speak; it would cost her brothers their freedom and their

lives; and she hid her hands under her apron, that the king might not see how blistered they were.

“Come with me,” said he: “here thou **must** remain no longer. If thou art as good as thou art beautiful, I will clothe thee in silk and velvet, and set a golden crown upon thy head, and thou shalt live in my most splendid castle!” And he placed her on his horse. Elise wept and wrung her hands; but the king said, “I only desire thy happiness; some day, thou wilt thank me.” And he rode away over the mountains, holding her before him on his horse, and the huntsmen following him.

By sunset the royal city lay before them, with its domes and churches; and on reaching it, the king led her into the castle, where great fountains played into marble basins, and where the walls and hangings were bright with pictures. But Elise had no eyes for them. She only wept and mourned, whilst she allowed the attendants to dress her in queenly robes, twist pearls in her hair, and draw gloves over her poor blistered hands. When she appeared in

all her splendour, her beauty was so dazzling that the courtiers bowed before her, and the king chose her for his bride, although the Archbishop shook his head, and whispered, that the forest maiden must be a witch, to have thus dazzled the eyes, and captivated the heart of the king. But to all this, the king paid no attention; he ordered a splendid banquet to be served, and caused music to be played, whilst the loveliest maidens danced before them.



CHAPTER IX.

THE king then led Elise through perfumed gardens to a magnificent saloon, but no smile played on her lips, or beamed in her eyes: she stood there the picture of grief. But the king opened the door of a little chamber close by, which was hung with costly green tapestry, and resembled exactly the cave she had just left. On the floor lay the bundle of hemp she had spun from the nettles, and on the wall hung the shirt of mail which was finished. All these things the huntsmen had brought with them, out of curiosity.

“Here canst thou fancy thyself in thy former home,” said the king; “here is the work on which

thou wast then employed: in the midst of all thy splendour, it may please thee to recall those times."

When Elise saw these things, so precious to her, a smile played round her mouth and the colour returned to her cheeks, and thinking of the release of her brothers, she kissed the hand of the king, who pressed her to his heart, and immediately gave orders that all the church bells should ring in honour of their wedding; for the beautiful dumb maiden of the forest should be queen of the land.

And now the Archbishop whispered evil words in the king's ear, to which, however, the king paid no heed. The wedding should take place, and the Archbishop himself must place the crown on the head of Elise. He spitefully pressed the narrow circlet so hard on her forehead, that it hurt her; but a heavier weight pressed on her heart, even her grief for her brothers, so that she did not feel the bodily pain. She was still dumb; for a single word would cost the lives of her brothers; but her eyes spoke of fervent love for the good king, who was

doing all in his power to make her happy. Every day he became dearer to her. Oh! that she dared confide all her troubles to him; but she must remain dumb, till her work was finished.

Therefore every night she stole into her little cave-like chamber, and there wove a shirt like the former ones.

CHAPTER X.


BY the time the seventh shirt was begun, Elise had no hemp left. She knew that the nettles she required grew in the church-yard; but they must be gathered by herself. How should she obtain them? "Oh! what is the pain in my fingers, compared with the torture which I suffer in my heart!" thought she. "I must risk it!" With a beating heart, as though it were some evil deed she meditated, Elise slipped into the garden in the moonlight, and passed through the long alleys and lonely paths to the church-yard. Here she beheld a circle of witches, sitting on one of the broad grave-stones. She was obliged to pass close by them, and they fixed their wicked eyes upon her, but she

persevered, gathered the stinging-nettles, and carried them back to the castle.

Only one person had seen her, and that was the Archbishop, who was on the watch, while the others slept. He was now confirmed in his opinion that the queen was a sorceress, who had bewitched the king and all the court. He therefore requested a private interview with the king, to whom he related all he had seen, and all he feared; and when the king heard his tale, he was much grieved, and two large tears rolled down his cheeks. He returned to the castle with doubt in his heart, and lay down to sleep; but no sleep came to his eyes. Each night he observed how Elise rose, and each time he followed her softly, and saw her disappear into her chamber.

Day by day his face grew darker. Elise saw this, but did not know the reason; still it made her anxious, and how much she already suffered on her brothers' account! The hot tears fell on her royal

robes and lay there, sparkling like diamonds: yet all, who saw her splendour, envied her.

Meanwhile her work was nearly finished; only one shirt of mail was still wanting; but her hemp was all used and she had not a single nettle. Once more, for the last time, she must go to the church-yard and gather a handful. She thought with terror on this lonely expedition, and with dread of the horrible witches. But her resolution was as firm as was her trust in Providence.

Elise went; but the king and the Archbishop followed her. They watched her disappear through the church-yard gate, and as they drew nearer, they beheld the witches, sitting on the grave-stones.

The king turned away, for he fancied that Elise was amongst them.

"The people must judge her," said he; and accordingly the next day she was tried, and sentenced to be burnt to death.



CHAPTER XI.

ELISE was led from the splendid saloons to a dark, damp dungeon, where the wind whistled through the grated window. Instead of velvet and silk, they gave her the bundle of nettles, which she had gathered; on this she might lay her head, and the rough shirts must be her coverlet; but they could not have given her anything she should have liked better: so she at once resumed her task. The boys in the street outside, sang jeering songs about her; no one had a kind word for her.

But towards evening, Elise heard the fluttering of a swan's wings at her window: it was her youngest brother. He had found his sister, and she sobbed aloud for joy, though she knew that the coming

night would probably be her last. But the work was nearly finished, and her brothers were at hand.

The Archbishop now came, in order to be with her during her last hours, according to the king's desire. But Elise shook her head and begged, by looks and signs, that he would leave her; for this night the work must be finished, else all her sufferings and sleepless nights would have been in vain. The Archbishop retired, pouring fourth bitter words against her; but poor Elise knew that she was innocent, and continued her work. The little mice ran across the floor, and dragged the nettles to her feet, in order to help her, and a thrush perched himself on the bar of the window, and sang the whole night as cheerfully as he could, so that she might not lose courage.

CHAPTER XII.

AND now the day began to dawn: in less than an hour, the sun would rise. The eleven brothers (in their human form) stood at the gate of the castle, and requested that they might be brought into the king's presence. "That cannot be," was the reply: "the king sleeps and must not be waked." They entreated; they implored. The guard turned out; even the king sent to enquire what they wanted. At that moment the sun rose, and there were no brothers to be seen: but over the castle flew eleven wild swans.

From the gates of the city, poured fourth a stream of people; they were going to see the witch burned. Soon Elise appeared, dressed in sack-cloth, and seated in a cart drawn by an old lame horse. Her beautiful hair hung round her lovely face, her lips

moved slightly, whilst her fingers wove the green hemp: even on the way to execution, she did not abandon her work, the ten shirts of mail lay at her feet; she making the eleventh. The people derided her: "Look at the witch, how she mutters! She has no hymn-book in her hand. No: there she sits with her hateful spells. Tear them in a thousand pieces!" And they all pressed round her and would have snatched away the shirts.

Then the eleven swans came flying down and settled around her on the cart, flapping their great wings. The frightened crowd drew back. "That is a sign from heaven; she is surely innocent!" whispered many. But they dared not say so aloud. The executioner now seized Elise by the hand, but she hastily threw the eleven shirts of mail over the swans, and immediately eleven handsome Princes stood beside her. But the youngest had still a swan's wing, instead of one arm, for there was yet one sleeve wanting to his shirt, which Elise had not been able to finish.



“Now I am free to speak!” said she. “I am innocent!” And the people, who saw what had happened, bowed themselves before her, as though she were a saint; but anxiety and pain had so worked on her delicate frame, that she sank lifeless into her brother’s arms.

“Yes,” said the eldest brother, “innocent she truly is!” and then he related all that had happened.

While he spoke, a fragrance as of a million roses diffused itself around, for each faggot in the pile had taken root, and thus was changed into a thick hedge of sweetbriar, covered with red roses. Quite at the top bloomed a pure white flower, which glittered like a star; the king gathered it and placed it on Elise’s bosom, upon which she awoke, with peace and happiness in her heart. And all the church bells began to ring of their own accord; the birds came flocking round, and there was such a wedding procession back to the castle, as no king had ever seen before!

Printed by J. Gaddock, Ipswich.

