

ANDERSEN'S
FAIRY TALES.



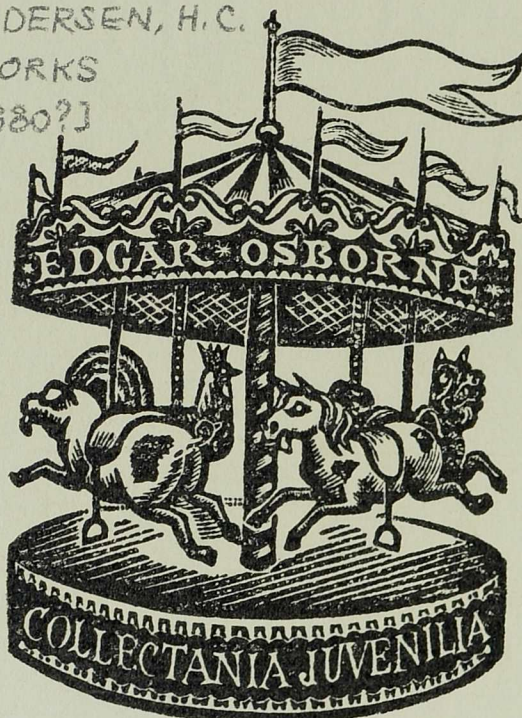
THE STORKS.

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STORKS

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The Storks.



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guarding her nest. They do not know that I am her husband; they will think I have been commanded to stand here, which is quite aristocratic;” and so he continued standing on one leg.

In the street below were a number of children at play, and when they caught sight of the storks, one of the boldest amongst the boys began to sing a song about them, and very soon he was joined by the rest. These are the words of the song, but each only sang what he could remember of them in his own way.

“Stork, stork, fly away,
Stand not on one leg, I pray;
See your wife is in her nest,
With her little ones at rest.
They will hang one,
And fry another;
They will shoot a third,
And roast his brother.”

“Just hear what those boys are singing,” said the young storks; “they say we shall be hanged and roasted.”

“Never mind what they say; you need not listen,” said the mother. “They can do no harm.”

But the boys went on singing and pointing at the storks, and mocking at them, excepting one of the boys whose name was Peter; he said it was a shame to make fun of animals, and would not join with them at all. The mother stork comforted her young ones, and told them not to mind. “See,” she said, “how quiet your father stands, although he is only on one leg.”

“But we are very much frightened,” said the young storks, and they drew back their heads into the nest.

The next day, when the children were playing together, and saw the storks, they sang the same song again—

“They will hang one,
And roast another.”

“Shall we be hanged and roasted?” asked the young storks.

“No, certainly not,” said the mother. “I will teach you to fly, and when you have learnt, we will fly into the meadows, and pay a visit to the frogs, who will bow themselves to us in the water, and cry ‘Croak, croak,’ and then we shall eat them up; that will be fun.”

“And what next?” asked the young storks.

“Then,” replied the mother, “all the storks in the country will assemble together, and go through their autumn manœuvres, so that it is very important for every one to know how to fly properly. If they do not, the general will thrust them through with his beak, and kill them. Therefore you must take pains and learn, so as to be ready when the drilling begins.”

“Then we may be killed after all, as the boys say; and hark! they are singing again.”

“Listen to me, and not to them,” said the mother stork. “After the great review is over, we shall fly away to warm countries far from hence, where there are mountains and forests. To Egypt, where we shall see

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three-cornered houses built of stone, with pointed tops that reach nearly to the clouds. They are called Pyramids, and are older than a stork could imagine ; and in that country there is a river that overflows its banks, and then goes back, leaving nothing but mire ; there we can walk about, and eat frogs in abundance."

"Oh, o—h!" cried the young storks.

"Yes, it is a delightful place; there is nothing to do all day long but eat, and while we are so well off out there, in this country there will not be a single green leaf on the trees, and the weather will be so cold that the clouds will freeze, and fall on the earth in little white rags." The stork meant snow, but she could not explain it in any other way.

"Will the naughty boys freeze and fall in pieces?" asked the young storks.

"No, they will not freeze and fall into pieces," said the mother, "but they will be very cold, and be obliged to sit all day in a dark, gloomy room, while we shall be flying about in foreign lands, where there are blooming flowers and warm sunshine."

Time passed on, and the young storks grew so large that they could stand upright in the nest and look about them. The father brought them, every day, beautiful frogs, little snakes, and all kinds of stork-dainties that he could find. And then, how funny it was to see the tricks he would perform to amuse them. He would lay his head quite round over his tail, and clatter with his beak, as if it had been a rattle ; and then he would tell them stories all about the marshes and fens.

"Come," said the mother one day, "now you must learn to fly." And all the four young ones were obliged to come out on the top of the roof. Oh, how they tottered at first, and were obliged to balance themselves with their wings, or they would have fallen to the ground below.

"Look at me," said the mother, "you must hold your heads in this way, and place your feet so. Once, twice, once, twice—that is it. Now you will be able to take care of yourselves in the world."

Then she flew a little distance from them, and the young ones made a spring to follow her ; but down they fell plump, for their bodies were still too heavy.

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

"Would you like to stay here and freeze when the winter comes?" said the mother, "or till the boys come to hang you, or to roast you?—Well then, I'll call them."

"Oh no, no," said the young stork, jumping out on the roof with the others ; and now they were all attentive, and by the third day could fly a little. They began to fancy they could soar, so they tried to do so, resting on their wings, but they soon found themselves falling, and had to flap their wings as quickly as possible. The boys came again in the street singing their song:—

"Stork, stork, fly away."

"Shall we fly down, and pick their eyes out?" asked the young storks.

"No; leave them alone," said the mother. "Listen to me; that is much more important. Now then. One—two—three. Now to the right. One—two—three. Now to the left, round the chimney. There now, that was very good. That last flap of the wings was so easy and graceful, that I shall give you permission to fly with me to-morrow to the marshes. There will be a number of very superior storks there with their families, and I expect you to show them that my children are the best brought up of any who may be present. You must strut about proudly—it will look very well and make you respected."

"But may we not punish those naughty boys?" asked the young storks.

"No; let them scream away as much as they like. You can fly from them now up high amid the clouds, and will be in the land of the pyramids when they are freezing, and have not a green leaf on the trees or an apple to eat."

"We will revenge ourselves," whispered the young storks to each other, as they again joined the exercising.

Of all the boys in the street who sang the mocking song about the storks, not one was so determined to go on with it as he who first began it. Yet he was a little fellow not more than six years old. To the young storks he appeared at least a hundred, for he was so much bigger than their father and mother. To be sure, storks cannot be expected to know how old children and grown-up people are. So they determined to have their revenge on this boy, because he began the song first and would keep on with it. The young storks were very angry, and grew worse as they grew older; so at last their mother was obliged to promise that they should be revenged, but not until the day of their departure.

"We must see first, how you acquit yourselves at the grand review," said she. "If you get on badly there, the general will thrust his beak through you, and you will be killed, as the boys said, though not exactly in the same manner. So we must wait and see."

"You shall see," said the young birds, and then they took such pains and practised so well every day, that at last it was quite a pleasure to see them fly so lightly and prettily. As soon as the autumn arrived, all the storks began to assemble together before taking their departure for warm countries during the winter. Then the review commenced. They flew over forests and villages to show what they could do, for they had a long journey before them. The young storks performed their part so well that they received a mark of honour, with frogs and snakes as a present. These presents were the best part of the affair, for they could eat the frogs and snakes, which they very quickly did.

"Now let us have our revenge," they cried.

"Yes, certainly," cried the mother stork. "I have thought upon the best way to be revenged. I know the pond in which all the little children lie, waiting till the storks come to take them to their parents. The prettiest little babies lie there dreaming more sweetly than they will ever dream in time to come. All parents are glad to have a little child, and children are so pleased with a little brother or sister. Now we will fly to the pond and

fetch a little baby for each of the children who did not sing that naughty song to make game of the storks."

"But the naughty boy, who began the song first, what shall we do to him?" cried the young storks.

"There lies in the pond a little dead baby who has dreamed itself to death," said the mother. "We will take it to the naughty boy, and he will cry because we have brought him a little dead brother. But you have not forgotten the good boy who said it was a shame to laugh at animals: we will take him a little sister and brother too, because he was good. He is called Peter, and you shall all be called Peter in future."

So they all did what their mother had arranged, and from that day, even till now, all the storks have been called Peter.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

FAR away towards the east, in India, which seemed in those days the world's end, stood the Tree of the Sun; a noble tree, such as we have never seen, and perhaps never may see.

The summit of this tree spreads itself for miles like an entire forest, each of its smaller branches forming a complete tree. Palms, beech-trees, pines, plane-trees, and various other kinds, which are found in all parts of the world, were here like small branches, shooting forth from the great tree; while the larger boughs, with their knots and curves, formed valleys and hills, clothed with velvety green and covered with flowers. Everywhere it was like a blooming meadow or a lovely garden. Here were birds from all quarters of the world assembled together; birds from the primeval forests of America, from the rose gardens of Damascus, and from the deserts of Africa, in which the elephant and the lion may boast of being the only rulers. Birds from the Polar regions came flying here, and of course the stork and the swallow were not absent. But the birds were not the only living creatures. There were stags, squirrels, antelopes, and hundreds of other beautiful and light-footed animals here found a home.

The summit of the tree was as a wide-spreading garden, and in the midst of it, where the green boughs formed a kind of hill, stood a castle of crystal, with a view from it towards every quarter of heaven. Each tower was erected in the form of a lily, and within the stem was a winding staircase, through which one could ascend to the top and step out upon the leaves as upon balconies. The calyx of the flower itself formed a most beautiful, glittering, circular hall, above which no other roof arose than the blue firmament and the sun and stars.

Just as much splendour, but of another kind, appeared below, in the wide halls of the castle. Here, on the walls, were reflected pictures of the world, which represented numerous and varied scenes of everything that took place daily, so that it was useless to read the newspapers, and indeed there were none to be obtained in this spot. All was to be seen in living pictures by those who wished it, but all would have been too much for even the wisest man, and this man dwelt here. His name is very difficult; you would not be able to pronounce it, so it may be omitted. He knew everything that a man on earth can know or imagine. Every invention already in existence or yet to be, was known to him, and much more; still everything on earth has a limit. The wise King Solomon was not half so wise as this man. He could govern the powers of nature and held sway over potent spirits; even Death itself was obliged to give him every morning a list of those who were to die during the day. And King Solomon himself had to die at last, and this fact it was which so often occupied the thoughts of this great man in the castle on the Tree of the Sun. He knew that he also, however high he might tower above other men in wisdom, must one day die. He knew that his children would fade away like the leaves of the forest, and become dust. He saw the human race wither and fall like leaves from the tree; he saw new men come to fill their places, but the leaves that fell off never sprouted forth again; they crumbled to dust or were absorbed into other plants.

"What happens to man," asked the wise man of himself, "when touched by the angel of death? What can death be? The body decays, and the soul. Yes, what is the soul, and whither does it go?"

"To eternal life," says the comforting voice of religion.

"But what is this change? Where and how shall we exist?"

"Above in heaven," answers the pious man; "it is there we hope to go."

"Above!" repeated the wise man, fixing his eyes upon the moon and stars above him. He saw that to this earthly sphere *above* and *below* were constantly changing places, and that the position varied according to the spot on which a man found himself. He knew, also, that even if he ascended to the top of the highest mountain which rears its lofty summit on this earth, the air, which seems to us clear and transparent, would there be dark and cloudy; the sun would have a coppery glow and send forth no rays, and our earth would lie beneath him wrapped in an orange-coloured mist. How narrow are the limits which confine the bodily sight, and how little can be seen by the eye of the soul. How little do the wisest among us know of that which is so important to us all.

In the most secret chamber of the castle lay the greatest treasure on earth—the Book of Truth. The wise man had read it through, page after page. Every man may read in this book, but only in fragments. To many eyes the characters seem so mixed in confusion that the words cannot be distinguished. On certain pages the writing often appears so pale or so blurred that the page becomes a blank. The wiser a man becomes, the more he will read, and those who are wisest read most.

The wise man knew how to unite the sunlight and the moonlight with the light of reason and the hidden powers of nature; and through this stronger light, many things in the pages were made clear to him. But in the portion of the book entitled "Life after Death," not a single point could he see distinctly. This pained him. Should he never be able here on earth to obtain a light by which everything written in the Book of Truth should become clear to him? Like the wise King Solomon, he understood the language of animals, and could interpret their talk into song; but that made him none the wiser. He found out the nature of plants and metals, and their power in curing diseases and arresting death, but none to destroy death itself. In all created things within his reach, he sought the light that should shine upon the certainty of an eternal life, but he found it not. The Book of Truth lay open before him, but its pages were to him as blank paper. Christianity placed before him in the Bible a promise of eternal life, but he wanted to read it in *his* book, in which nothing on the subject appeared to be written.

He had five children; four sons, educated as the children of such a wise father should be, and a daughter, fair, gentle, and intelligent, but she was blind; yet this deprivation appeared as nothing to her; her father and brothers were outward eyes to her, and a vivid imagination made everything clear to her mental sight. The sons had never gone farther from the castle than the branches of the trees extended, and the sister had scarcely ever left home. They were happy children in that home of their childhood, the beautiful and fragrant Tree of the Sun. Like all children, they loved to hear stories related to them, and their father told them many things which other children would not have understood; but these were as clever as most grown-up people are among us. He explained to them what they saw in the pictures of life on the castle walls—the doings of man, and the progress of events in all the lands of the earth; and the sons often expressed a wish that they could be present, and take a part in these great deeds. Then their father told them that in the world there was nothing but toil and difficulty; that it was not quite what it appeared to them, as they looked upon it in their beautiful home. He spoke to them of the true, the beautiful, and the good, and told them that these three held together in the world, and by that union they became crystallized into a precious jewel, clearer than a diamond of the first water—a jewel, whose splendour had a value even in the sight of God, in whose brightness all things are dim. This jewel was called the philosopher's stone. He told them that by searching, man could attain to a knowledge of the existence of God, and that it was in the power of every man to discover the certainty that such a jewel as the philosopher's stone really existed. This information would have been beyond the perception of other children; but these children understood, and others will learn to comprehend its meaning after a time. They questioned their father about the true, the beautiful, and the good, and he explained it to them in many ways. He told them that God, when He made man out of the dust of the earth, touched His work five times, leaving five intense feelings, which we call the five senses. Through these,

the true, the beautiful, and the good are seen, understood, and perceived, and through these they are valued, protected, and encouraged. Five senses have been given mentally and corporeally, inwardly and outwardly, to body and soul.

The children thought deeply on all these things, and meditated upon them day and night. Then the eldest of the brothers dreamt a splendid dream. Strange to say, not only the second brother but also the third and fourth brothers all dreamt exactly the same thing; namely, that each went out into the world to find the philosopher's stone. Each dreamt that he found it, and that, as he rode back on his swift horse, in the morning dawn, over the velvety green meadows, to his home in the castle of his father, that the stone gleamed from his forehead like a beaming light; and threw such a bright radiance upon the pages of the Book of Truth that every word was illuminated which spoke of the life beyond the grave. But the sister had no dream of going out into the wide world; it never entered her mind. Her world was her father's house.

"I shall ride forth into the wide world," said the eldest brother. "I must try what life is like there, as I mix with men. I will practise only the good and true; with these I will protect the beautiful. Much shall be changed for the better while I am there."

Now, these thoughts were great and daring, as our thoughts generally are at home, before we have gone out into the world, and encountered its storms and tempests, its thorns and its thistles. In him, and in all his brothers, the five senses were highly cultivated, inwardly and outwardly; but each of them had one sense which in keenness and development surpassed the other four. In the case of the eldest, this pre-eminent sense was *sight*, which he hoped would be of special service. He had eyes for all times and all people; eyes that could discover in the depths of the earth hidden treasures, and look into the hearts of men, as through a pane of glass; he could read more than is often seen on the cheek that blushes or grows pale, and in the eye that droops or smiles. Stags and antelopes accompanied him to the western boundary of his home, and there he found the wild swans. These he followed, and found himself far away in the north, far from the land of his father, which extended eastward to the ends of the earth. How he opened his eyes with astonishment! How many things were to be seen here! and so different to the mere representation of pictures such as those in his father's house. At first he nearly lost his eyes in astonishment at the rubbish and mockery brought forward to represent the beautiful; but he kept his eyes, and soon found full employment for them. He wished to go thoroughly and honestly to work in his endeavour to understand the true, the beautiful, and the good. But how were they represented in the world? He observed that the wreath which rightly belonged to the beautiful was often given to the hideous; that the good was often passed by unnoticed, while mediocrity was applauded, when it should have been hissed. People looked at the dress, and not at the wearer; thought more of a name than of doing their duty; and trusted more to reputation than to real service. It was everywhere the same.

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"I see I must make a regular attack on these things," said he; and he accordingly did not spare them. But while looking for the truth came the evil one, the father of lies, to intercept him. Gladly would the fiend have plucked out the eyes of this *Seer*, but that would have been a too straightforward path for him; he works more cunningly. He allowed the young man to seek for, and discover, the beautiful and the good; but while he was contemplating them, the evil spirit blew one mote after another into each of his eyes; and such a proceeding would injure the strongest sight. Then he blew upon the motes, and they became beams, so that the clearness of his sight was gone, and the *Seer* was like a blind man in the world, and had no longer any faith in it. He had lost his good opinion of the world, as well as of himself; and when a man gives up the world, and himself too, it is all over with him.

"All over," said the wild swan, who flew across the sea to the east.

"All over," twitted the swallows, who were also flying eastward towards the Tree of the Sun. It was no good news which they carried home.

"I think the *Seer* has been badly served," said the second brother, "but the *Hearer* may be more successful."

This one possessed the sense of *hearing* to a very high degree: so acute was this sense, that it was said he could hear the grass grow. He took a fond leave of all at home, and rode away, provided with good abilities and good intentions. The swallows escorted him, and he followed the swans till he found himself out in the world, and far away from home. But he soon discovered that one may have too much of a good thing. His hearing was too fine. He not only heard the grass grow, but could hear every man's heart beat, whether in sorrow or in joy. The whole world was to him like a clockmaker's great workshop, in which all the clocks were going "tick, tick," and all the turret clocks striking "ding dong." It was unbearable. For a long time his ears endured it, but at last all the noise and tumult became too much for one man to bear.

There were rascally boys of sixty years old—for years do not alone make a man—who raised a tumult, which might have made the *Hearer* laugh, but for the applause which followed, echoing through every street and house, and was even heard in country roads. Falsehood thrust itself forward, and played the hypocrite; the bells on the fool's-cap jingled, and declared they were church bells, and the noise became so bad for the *Hearer* that he thrust his fingers into his ears. Still, he could hear false notes and bad singing, gossip and idle words, scandal and slander, groaning and moaning, without and within. "Heaven help us!" He thrust his fingers farther and farther into his ears, till at last the drums burst! And now he could hear nothing more of the true, the beautiful, and the good; for his hearing was to have been the means by which he hoped to acquire this knowledge. He became silent and suspicious, and at last trusted no one, not even himself, and no longer hoping to find and bring home the costly jewel, he gave it up, and gave himself up too, which was worse than all.

The birds in their flight towards the east carried the tidings, and the news reached the castle in the Tree of the Sun.

"I will try now," said the third brother; "I have a keen *nose*." Now that was not a very elegant expression, but it was his way, and we must take him as he was. He had a cheerful temper, and was, besides, a real poet; he could make many things appear poetical, by the way in which he spoke of them, and ideas struck him long before they occurred to the minds of others. "I can smell," he would say; and he attributed to the sense of smelling, which he possessed in a high degree, a great power in the region of the beautiful. "I can smell," he would say, "and many places are fragrant or beautiful according to the taste of the frequenters. One man feels at home in the atmosphere of the tavern, among the flaring tallow candles, and when the smell of spirits mingles with the fumes of bad tobacco. Another prefers sitting amidst the overpowering scent of jasmine, or perfuming himself with scented olive oil. This man seeks the fresh sea breeze, while that one climbs the lofty mountain-top, to look down upon the busy life in miniature beneath him."

As he spoke in this way, it seemed as if he had already been out in the world, as if he had already known and associated with man. But this experience was intuitive—it was the poetry within him, a gift from Heaven bestowed on him in his cradle. He bade farewell to his parental roof in the Tree of the Sun, and departed on foot from the pleasant scenes that surrounded his home. Arrived at its confines, he mounted on the back of an ostrich, which runs faster than a horse, and afterwards, when he fell in with the wild swans, he swung himself on the strongest of them, for he loved change, and away he flew over the sea to distant lands, where there were great forests, deep lakes, lofty mountains, and proud cities. Wherever he came it seemed as if sunshine travelled with him across the fields, for every flower, every bush, exhaled a renewed fragrance, as if conscious that a friend and protector was near; one who understood them, and knew their value. The stunted rose-bush shot forth twigs, unfolded its leaves, and bore the most beautiful roses; every one could see it, and even the black, slimy, wood-snail noticed its beauty. "I will give my seal to the flower," said the snail; "I have trailed my slime upon it, I can do no more."

"Thus it always fares with the beautiful in this world," said the poet. And he made a song upon it, and sang it after his own fashion, but nobody listened. Then he gave a drummer twopence and a peacock's feather, and composed a song for the drum, and the drummer beat it through the streets of the town, and when the people heard it they said, "That is a capital tune." The poet wrote many songs about the true, the beautiful, and the good. His songs were listened to in the tavern, where the tallow candles flared, in the fresh clover field, in the forest, and on the high seas; and it appeared as if this brother was to be more fortunate than the other two.

But the evil spirit was angry at this, so he set to work with soot and incense, which he can mix so artfully as to confuse an angel, and how much more easily a poor poet. The evil one knew how to manage such people. He so completely surrounded the poet with incense that the man lost his

head, forgot his mission and his home, and at last lost himself and vanished in smoke.

But when the little birds heard of it, they mourned, and for three days they sang not one song. The black wood-snail became blacker still; not for grief, but for envy. "They should have offered me incense," he said, "for it was I who gave him the idea of the most famous of his songs—the drum song of 'The Way of the World'; and it was I who spat at the rose; I can bring a witness to that fact."

But no tidings of all this reached the poet's home in India. The birds had all been silent for three days, and when the time of mourning was over, so deep had been their grief, that they had forgotten for whom they wept. Such is the way of the world.

"Now I must go out into the world, and disappear like the rest," said the fourth brother. He was as good tempered as the third, but no poet, though he could be witty.

The two oldest had filled the castle with joyfulness, and now the last brightness was going away. Sight and hearing have always been considered two of the chief senses among men, and those which they wish to keep bright; the other senses are looked upon as of less importance.

But the younger son had a different opinion; he had cultivated his taste in every way, and taste is very powerful. It rules over what goes into the mouth, as well as over all which is presented to the mind; and, consequently, this brother took upon himself to *taste* everything stored up in bottles or jars; this he called the rough part of his work. Every man's mind was to him as a vessel in which something was concocting; every land a kind of mental kitchen. "There are no delicacies here," he said; so he wished to go out into the world to find something delicate to suit his taste. "Perhaps fortune may be more favourable to me than it was to my brothers. I shall start on my travels, but what conveyance shall I choose? Are air balloons invented yet?" he asked of his father, who knew of all inventions that had been made, or would be made.

Air balloons had not then been invented, nor steam-ships, nor railways.

"Good," said he; "then I shall choose an air balloon; my father knows how they are to be made and guided. Nobody has invented one yet, and the people will believe that it is an aerial phantom. When I have done with the balloon I shall burn it, and for this purpose you must give me a few pieces of another invention, which will come next; I mean a few chemical matches."

He obtained what he wanted, and flew away. The birds accompanied him farther than they had the other brothers. They were curious to know how this flight would end. Many more of them came swooping down; they thought it must be some new bird, and he soon had a goodly company of followers. They came in clouds till the air became darkened with birds, as it was with the cloud of locusts over the land of Egypt.

And now he was out in the wide world. The balloon descended over one of the greatest cities, and the aeronaut took up his station at the highest point, on the church steeple. The balloon rose again into the air, which it

ought not to have done ; what became of it is not known, neither is it of any consequence, for balloons had not then been invented.

There he sat on the church steeple. The birds no longer hovered over him ; they had got tired of him, and he was tired of them. All the chimneys in the town were smoking.

"There are altars erected to my honour," said the wind, who wished to say something agreeable to him as he sat there boldly looking down upon the people in the street. There was one stepping along, proud of his purse ; another, of the key he carried behind him, though he had nothing to lock up ; another took a pride in his moth-eaten coat ; and another, in his mortified body. "Vanity, all vanity !" he exclaimed. "I must go down there by-and-by, and touch and taste ; but I shall sit here a little while longer, for the wind blows pleasantly at my back. I shall remain here as long as the wind blows, and enjoy a little rest. It is comfortable to sleep late in the morning when one has a great deal to do," said the sluggard ; "so I shall stop here as long as the wind blows, for it pleases me."

And there he stayed. But as he was sitting on the weather-cock of the steeple, which kept turning round and round with him, he was under the false impression that the same wind still blew, and that he could stay where he was without expense.

But in India, in the castle on the Tree of the Sun, all was solitary and still, since the brothers had gone away one after the other.

"Nothing goes well with them," said the father ; "they will never bring the glittering jewel home, it is not made for me ; they are all dead and gone." Then he bent down over the Book of Truth and gazed on the page on which he should have read of the life after death, but for him there was nothing to be read or learned upon it.

His blind daughter was his consolation and joy ; she clung to him with sincere affection, and for the sake of his happiness and peace she wished the costly jewel could be found and brought home.

With longing tenderness she thought of her brothers. Where were they ? Where did they live ? How she wished she might dream of them ; but it was strange that not even in dreams could she be brought near to them. But at last one night she dreamt that she heard the voices of her brothers calling to her from the distant world, and she could not refrain herself, but went out to them, and yet it seemed in her dream that she still remained in her father's house. She did not *see* her brothers, but she *felt*, as it were, a fire burning in her hand, which, however, did not hurt her, for it was the jewel she was bringing to her father. When she awoke she thought for a moment that she still held the stone, but she only grasped the knob of her distaff.

During the long evenings she had spun constantly, and round the distaff were woven threads finer than the web of a spider ; human eyes could never have distinguished these threads when separated from each other. But she had wetted them with her tears, and the twist was as strong as a cable. She rose with the impression that her dream must be a reality, and her resolution was taken.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

It was still night, and her father slept; she pressed a kiss upon his hand, and then took her distaff and fastened the end of the thread to her father's house. But for this, blind as she was, she would never have found her way home again; to this thread she must hold fast, and trust not to others or even to herself. From the Tree of the Sun she broke four leaves; which she gave up to the wind and the weather, that they might be carried to her brothers as letters and a greeting, in case she did not meet them in the wide world. Poor blind child, what would become of her in those distant regions? But she had the invisible thread, to which she could hold fast; and she possessed a gift which all the others lacked. This was a determination to throw herself entirely into whatever she undertook, and it made her feel as if she had eyes even at the tips of her fingers, and could hear down into her very heart. Quietly she went forth into the noisy, bustling, wonderful world, and wherever she went the skies grew bright, and she felt the warm sunbeam, and a rainbow above in the blue heavens seemed to span the dark world. She heard the song of the bird, and smelt the scent of the orange groves and apple orchards so strongly that she seemed to taste it. Soft tones and charming songs reached her ear, as well as harsh sounds and rough words—thoughts and opinions in strange contradiction to each other. Into the deepest recesses of her heart penetrated the echoes of human thoughts and feelings. Now she heard the following words sadly sung:—

“Life is a shadow that flits away
In a night of darkness and woe.”

But then would follow brighter thoughts:

“Life has the rose's sweet perfume
With sunshine, light, and joy.”

And if one stanza sounded painfully—

“Each mortal thinks of himself alone,
Is a truth, alas, too clearly known”

Then, on the other hand, came the answer—

“Love, like a mighty flowing stream,
Fills every heart with its radiant gleam.”

She heard, indeed, such words as these—

In the petty turmoil here below,
All is a vain and paltry show.”

Then came also words of comfort—

“Great and good are the actions done
By many whose worth is never known.”

And if sometimes the mocking strain reached her—

“Why not join in the jesting cry
That contemns all gifts from the throne on high?”

In the blind girl's heart a stronger voice repeated—

“To trust in thyself and God is best,
In his holy will for ever to rest.”

And whenever she entered a circle of human beings, men and women, both young and old, the knowledge of the true, the beautiful, and the good beamed into their hearts. Wherever she went, whether into the study of the artist, the festive and decorated hall, or the crowded factory with its whirring wheels, in each and all it was as if a sunbeam were stealing in. Gentle tones were stirred, flowers exhaled their perfume, and a refreshing dew-drop fell upon the exhausted heart.

But the evil spirit could not see this and remain contented. He had more cleverness than ten thousand men, and he found means to compass his end. He betook himself to the marsh, and collected a few little bubbles of stagnant water. Then he uttered over them the echoes of lying words that they might become strong. He mixed up together songs of praise with lying epitaphs, as many as he could find, boiled them in tears shed by envy; put upon them rouge, which he had scraped from faded cheeks, and from these he produced a maiden, in form and appearance like the blind girl, the angel of completeness, as men called her. The evil one's plot was successful. The world knew not which was the true, and indeed how should the world know?

“To trust in thyself and God is best
In His holy will for ever to rest.”

So sung the blind girl in full faith. She had entrusted the four green leaves from the Tree of the Sun to the winds, as letters of greeting to her brothers, and she had full confidence that the leaves would reach them. She fully believed that the jewel which outshines all the glories of the world would yet be found, and that upon the forehead of humanity it would glitter even in the castle of her father. “Even in my father's house,” she repeated. “Yes, the place in which this jewel is to be found is earth, and I shall bring more than the promise of it with me. I feel it glow and swell more and more in my closed hand. Every grain of truth which the keen wind carried up and whirled towards me I caught and treasured. I allowed it to be penetrated with the fragrance of the beautiful, of which there is so much in the world, even for the blind. I took the beatings of a heart engaged in a good action, and added them to my treasure. All that I can bring is but dust; still, it is a part of the jewel we seek, and there is plenty, my hand is quite full of it.”

She soon found herself again at home; and carried thither in a flight of thought, never having loosened her hold of the invisible thread fastened to her father's house. As she stretched out her hand to her father, the powers of evil dashed with the fury of a hurricane over the Tree of the Sun; a blast of wind rushed through the open doors, and into the sanctuary, where lay the Book of Truth.

“It will be blown to dust by the wind,” said the father, as he seized the open hand she held towards him.

THE LOVELIEST ROSE IN THE WORLD.

"No," she replied, with quiet confidence, "it is indestructible. I feel its beam warming my very soul."

Then her father observed that a dazzling flame gleamed from the white page on which the shining dust had passed from her hand. It was there to prove the certainty of eternal life, and on the book glowed one shining word, and only one, the word BELIEVE. And soon the four brothers were again with the father and daughter. When the green leaf from home fell on the bosom of each, a longing had seized them to return. They had arrived, accompanied by the birds of passage, the stag, the antelope, and all the creatures of the forest who wished to take part in their joy.

We have often seen, when the sunbeam bursts through a crack in the door into a dusty room, how a whirling column of dust seems to circle round. But this was not poor, insignificant, common dust, which the blind girl had brought; even the rainbow's colours are dim when compared with the beauty which shone from the page on which it had fallen. The beaming word BELIEVE, from every grain of truth, had the brightness of the beautiful and the good, more bright than the mighty pillar of flame that led Moses and the children of Israel to the land of Canaan, and from the word BELIEVE arose the bridge of hope, reaching even to the unmeasurable Love in the realms of the infinite.

THE LOVELIEST ROSE IN THE WORLD.

THERE lived once a great queen, in whose garden were found at all seasons the most splendid flowers, and from every land in the world. She specially loved roses, and therefore she possessed the most beautiful varieties of this flower, from the wild hedge-rose, with its apple-scented leaves, to the splendid Provence rose. They grew near the shelter of the walls, wound themselves round columns and window-frames, crept along passages and over the ceilings of the halls. They were of every fragrance and colour.

But care and sorrow dwelt within these halls; the queen lay upon a sick bed, and the doctors declared that she must die. "There is still one thing that could save her," said one of the wisest among them. "Bring her the loveliest rose in the world; one which exhibits the purest and brightest love, and if it is brought to her before her eyes close, she will not die."

Then from all parts came those who brought roses that bloomed in every garden, but they were not the right sort. The flower must be one from the garden of love; but which of the roses there showed forth the highest and purest love? The poets sang of this rose, the loveliest in the world, and each named one which he considered worthy of that title; and intelligence

of what was required was sent far and wide to every heart that beat with love; to every class, age, and condition.

"No one has yet named the flower," said the wise man. "No one has pointed out the spot where it blooms in all its splendour. It is not a rose from the coffin of Romeo and Juliet, or from the grave of Walburg, though these roses will live in everlasting song. It is not one of the roses which sprouted forth from the blood-stained fame of Winkelreid. The blood which flows from the breast of a hero who dies for his country is sacred, and his memory is sweet, and no rose can be redder than the blood which flows from his veins. Neither is it the magic flower of Science, to obtain which wondrous flower a man devotes many an hour of his fresh young life in sleepless nights, in a lonely chamber.

"I know where it blooms," said a happy mother, who came with her lovely child to the bedside of the queen. "I know where the loveliest rose in the world is. It is seen on the blooming cheeks of my sweet child, when it expresses the pure and holy love of infancy; when refreshed by sleep it opens its eyes, and smiles upon me with childlike affection."

"This is a lovely rose," said the wise man; "but there is one still more lovely."

"Yes, one far more lovely," said one of the women. "I have seen it, and a loftier and purer rose does not bloom. But it was white, like the leaves of a blush-rose. I saw it on the cheeks of the queen. She had taken off her golden crown, and through the long, dreary night she carried her sick child in her arms. She wept over it, kissed it, and prayed for it as only a mother can pray in the hour of her anguish."

"Holy and wonderful in its might is the white rose of grief, but it is not the one we seek."

"No; the loveliest rose in the world I saw at the Lord's table," said the good old bishop. "I saw it shine as if an angel's face had appeared. A young maiden knelt at the altar, and renewed the vows made at her baptism; and there were white roses and red roses on the blushing cheeks of that young girl. She looked up to heaven with all the purity and love of her young spirit, in all the expression of the highest and purest love."

"May she be blessed!" said the wise man; "but no one has yet named the loveliest rose in the world."

Then there came into the room a child—the queen's little son. Tears stood in his eyes, and glistened on his cheeks; he carried a great book, and the binding was of velvet, with silver clasps. "Mother," cried the little boy; "only hear what I have read." And the child seated himself by the bedside, and read from the book of Him who suffered death on the cross to save all men, even those who are yet unborn. He read, "Greater love hath no man than this," and as he read a roseate hue spread over the cheeks of the queen, and her eyes became so enlightened and clear, that she saw from the leaves of the book a lovely rose spring forth, a type of Him who shed His blood on the cross.

"I see it," she said. "He who beholds this, the loveliest rose on earth, shall never die."



THE SNOW MAN.

"It is so delightfully cold," said the Snow Man, "that it makes my whole body crackle. This is just the kind of wind to blow life into one. How that great red thing up there is staring at me" He meant the sun, who was just setting. "It shall not make me wink. I shall manage to keep the pieces."

He had two triangular pieces of tile in his head, instead of eyes; his mouth was made of an old broken rake, and was, of course, furnished with teeth. He had been brought into existence amid the joyous shouts of boys, the jingling of sleigh-bells, and the slashing of whips. The sun went down, and the full moon rose, large, round, and clear, shining in the deep blue.

"There it comes again, from the other side," said the Snow Man, who supposed the sun was showing himself once more. "Ah, I have cured him of staring, though; now he may hang up there, and shine, that I may see myself. If I only knew how to manage to move away from this place,—I should so like to move. If I could, I would slide along yonder on the ice, as I have seen the boys do; but I don't understand how; I don't even know how to run."

"Away, away," barked the old yard-dog. He was quite hoarse, and could not pronounce "Bow wow" properly. He had once been an indoor dog, and lay by the fire, and he had been hoarse ever since. "The sun will make you run some day. I saw him, last winter, make your predecessor run, and his predecessor before him. Away, away, they all have to go."

"I don't understand you, comrade," said the Snow Man. "Is that thing up yonder to teach me to run? I saw it running itself a little while ago, and now it has come creeping up from the other side."

"You know nothing at all," replied the yard-dog; "but then, you've only lately been patched up. What you see yonder is the moon, and the one before it was the sun. It will come again to-morrow, and most likely teach you to run down into the ditch by the well; for I think the weather is going to change. I can feel such pricks and stabs in my left leg; I am sure there is going to be a change."

"I don't understand him," said the Snow Man to himself; "but I have a feeling that he is talking of something very disagreeable. The one who stared so just now, and whom he calls the sun, is not my friend; I can feel that too."

"Away, away," barked the yard-dog, and then he turned round three times, and crept into his kennel to sleep.

There was really a change in the weather. Towards morning, a thick fog covered the whole country round, and a keen wind arose, so that the cold



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seemed to freeze one's bones; but when the sun rose, the sight was splendid. Trees and bushes were covered with hoar frost, and looked like a forest of white coral; while on every twig glittered frozen dew drops. The many delicate forms concealed in summer by luxuriant foliage, were now clearly defined, and looked like glittering lace-work. From every twig glistened a white radiance. The birch, waving in the wind, looked full of life, like trees in summer; and its appearance was wondrously beautiful. And where the sun shone, how everything glittered and sparkled, as if diamond dust had been strewn about; while the snowy carpet of the earth

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appeared as if covered with diamonds, from which countless lights gleamed, whiter than even the snow itself.

"This is really beautiful," said a young girl, who had come into the garden with a young man; and they both stood still near the Snow Man, and contemplated the glittering scene. "Summer cannot show a more beautiful sight," she exclaimed, while her eyes sparkled.

"And we can't have such a fellow as this in the summer-time," replied the young man, pointing to the Snow Man; "he is capital."

The girl laughed, and nodded at the Snow Man, and then tripped away over the snow with her friend. The snow creaked and crackled beneath her feet, as if she had been treading on starch.

"Who are these two?" asked the Snow Man of the yard-dog. "You have been here longer than I have; do you know them?"

"Of course I know them," replied the yard-dog; "she has stroked my back many times, and he has given me a bone of meat. I never bite those two."

"But what are they?" asked the Snow Man.

"They are lovers," he replied; "they will go and live in the same kennel by-and-by, and gnaw at the same bone. Away, away!"

"Are they the same kind of beings as you and I?" asked the Snow Man.

"Well, they belong to the same master," retorted the yard-dog. "Certainly people who were only born yesterday know very little. I can see that in you. I have age and experience. I know every one here in the house, and I know there was once a time when I did not lie out here in the cold, fastened to a chain. Away, away!"

"The cold is delightful," said the Snow Man; "but do tell me, tell me; only you must not clank your chain so; for it jars all through me when you do that."

"Away, away!" barked the yard-dog; "I'll tell you: they said I was a pretty little fellow once; then I used to lie in a velvet-covered chair, up at the master's house, and sit in the mistress's lap. They used to kiss my nose, and wipe my paws with an embroidered handkerchief, and I was called 'Ami, dear Ami, sweet Ami.' But after awhile I grew too big for them, and they sent me away to the housekeeper's room; so I came to live on the lower storey. You can look into the room from where you stand, and see where I was master once; for I was indeed master to the housekeeper. It was certainly a smaller room than those upstairs; but I was more comfortable: for I was not being continually taken hold of and pulled about by the children, as I had been. I received quite as good food, or even better. I had my own cushion, and there was a stove—it is the finest thing in the world at this season of the year. I used to go under the stove, and lie down quite beneath it. Ah, I still dream of that stove. Away, away!"

"Does a stove look beautiful?" asked the Snow Man; "is it at all like me?"

"It is just the reverse of you," said the dog; "it's as black as a crow, and has a long neck and a brass knob; it eats firewood, so that fire spurts

out of its mouth. We should keep on one side, or under it, to be comfortable. You can see it through the window from where you stand."

Then the Snow Man looked, and saw a bright polished thing with a brazen knob, and fire gleaming from the lower part of it. The Snow Man felt quite a strange sensation come over him; it was very odd, he knew not what it meant, and he could not account for it. But there are people who are not men of snow, who understand what it is. "And why did you leave her?" asked the Snow Man, for it seemed to him that the stove must be of the female sex. "How could you give up such a comfortable place?"

"I was obliged," replied the yard-dog. "They turned me out of doors, and chained me up here. I had bitten the youngest of my master's sons in the leg, because he kicked away the bone I was gnawing. 'Bone for bone,' I thought; but they were so angry, and from that time I have been fastened to a chain, and lost my bone. Don't you hear how hoarse I am. Away, away! I can't talk any more like other dogs. Away, away, that is the end of it all."

But the Snow Man was no longer listening. He was looking into the housekeeper's room on the lower storey, where the stove stood on its four iron legs, looking about the same size as the Snow Man himself. "What a strange crackling I feel within me," he said. "Shall I ever get in there? It is an innocent wish, and innocent wishes are sure to be fulfilled. I must go in there and lean against her, even if I have to break the window."

"You must never go in there," said the yard-dog, "for if you approach the stove, you'll melt away, away."

"I might as well go," said the Snow Man, "for I think I am breaking up as it is."

During the whole day the Snow Man stood looking in through the window, and in the twilight hour the room became still more inviting, for from the stove came a gentle glow, not like the sun or the moon; no, only the bright light which gleams from a stove when it has been well fed. When the door of the stove was opened, the flames darted out of its mouth; this is customary with all stoves. The light of the flame fell directly on the face and breast of the Snow Man with a ruddy gleam. "I can endure it no longer," said he; "how beautiful it looks when it stretches out its tongue!"

The night was long, but it did not appear so to the Snow Man, who stood there enjoying his own reflections, and crackling with the cold. In the morning, the window-panes of the housekeeper's room were covered with ice. They were the most beautiful ice-flowers any Snow Man could desire, but they concealed the stove. These window-panes would not thaw, and he could see nothing of the stove, which he pictured to himself, as if it had been a lovely human being. The snow crackled and the wind whistled around him; it was just the kind of frosty weather a Snow Man might thoroughly enjoy. But he did not enjoy it; how, indeed, could he enjoy anything when he was "stove-sick?"

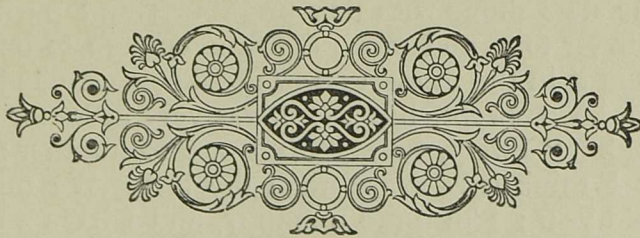
"That is a terrible disease for a Snow Man," said the yard-dog; "I have suffered from it myself, but I got over it. Away, away," he barked,

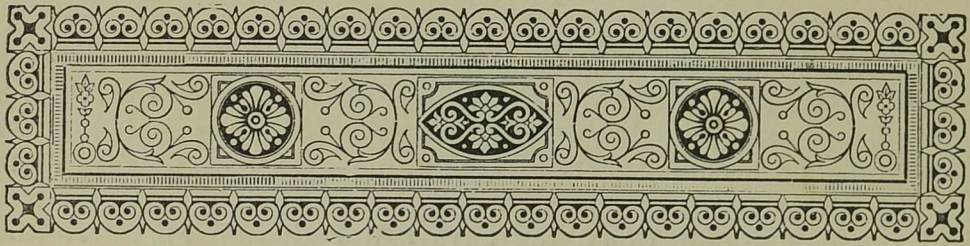
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and then he added, "the weather is going to change." And the weather did change ; it began to thaw. As the warmth increased, the Snow Man decreased. He said nothing, and made no complaint, which is a sure sign. One morning he broke, and sunk down altogether ; and, behold, where he had stood, something like a broomstick remained sticking up in the ground. It was the pole round which the boys had built him up. "Ah, now I understand why he had such a great longing for the stove," said the yard-dog. "Why, there's the shovel that is used for cleaning out the stove, fastened to the pole." The Snow Man had a stove scraper in his body ; that was what moved him so. "But it's all over now. Away, away." And soon the winter passed. "Away, away," barked the hoarse yard-dog. But the girls in the house sang :—

"Come from your fragrant home, green thyme ;
Stretch your soft branches, willow-tree ;
The months are bringing the sweet spring-time,
When the lark in the sky sings joyfully.
Come, gentle sun, while the cuckoo sings,
And I'll mock his note in my wanderings."

And nobody thought any more of the Snow Man.





THE STORY OF THE YEAR.

It was near the end of January, and a terrible fall of snow was pelting down, and whirling through the streets and lanes; the windows were plastered with snow on the outside, snow fell in masses from the roofs. Every one seemed in a great hurry; they ran, they flew, fell into each other's arms, holding fast for a moment as long as they could stand safely. Coaches and horses looked as if they had been frosted with sugar. The footmen stood with their backs against the carriages, so as to turn their faces from the wind. The foot passengers kept within the shelter of the carriages, which could only move slowly on in the deep snow. At last the storm abated, and a narrow path was swept clean in front of the houses; when two persons met in this path they stood still, for neither liked to take the first step on one side into the deep snow to let the other pass him. There they stood silent and motionless, till at last, as if by tacit consent, they each sacrificed a leg and buried it in the deep snow. Towards evening, the weather became calm. The sky, cleared from the snow, looked more lofty and transparent, while the stars shone with new brightness and purity. The frozen snow crackled under foot, and was quite firm enough to bear the sparrows, who hopped upon it in the morning dawn. They searched for food in the path which had been swept, but there was very little for them, and they were terribly cold. "Tweet, tweet," said one to another; "they call this a new year, but I think it is worse than the last. We might just as well have kept the old year; I'm quite unhappy, and I have a right to be so."

"Yes, you have; and yet the people ran about and fired off guns, to usher in the new year," said a little shivering sparrow. "They threw things against the doors, and were quite beside themselves with joy, because the old year had disappeared. I was glad, too, for I expected we should have some warm days, but my hopes have come to nothing. It freezes harder than ever; I think mankind have made a mistake in reckoning time."

"That they have," said a third, an old sparrow with a white poll; "they have something they call a calendar; it's an invention of their own, and everything must be arranged according to it, but it won't do. When spring



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comes, then the year begins. It is the voice of nature, and I reckon by that."

"But when will spring come?" asked the others.

"It will come when the stork returns, but he is very uncertain, and here in the town no one knows anything about it. In the country they have more knowledge. Shall we fly away there and wait? We shall be nearer to spring then, certainly."

"That may be all very well," said another sparrow, who had been hopping about for a long time, chirping, but not saying anything of consequence, "but I have found a few comforts here in town which, I'm afraid, I should miss out in the country. Here in this neighbourhood, there lives a family of people who have been so sensible as to place three or four flower-pots against the wall in the court-yard, so that the openings are all turned inward, and the bottom of each points outward. In the latter a hole has been cut large enough for me to fly in and out. I and my husband have built a nest in one of these pots, and all our young ones, who have now flown away, were brought up there. The people who live there, of course, made the whole arrangement, that they might have the pleasure of seeing us, or they would not have done it. It pleased them also to strew bread-crumbs for us, and so we have food, and may consider ourselves provided for. So I think my husband and I will stay where we are; although we are not very happy, but we shall stay."

"And we will fly into the country," said the others, "to see if spring is coming." And away they flew.

In the country it was really winter, a few degrees colder than in the town. The sharp winds blew over the snow-covered fields. The farmer, wrapped in warm clothing, sat in his sleigh, and beat his arms across his chest to keep off the cold. The whip lay on his lap. The horses ran till they smoked. The snow crackled, the sparrows hopped about in the wheel-ruts, and shivered, crying, "Tweet, tweet; when will spring come? It is very long in coming."

"Very long indeed," sounded over the field, from the nearest snow-covered hill. It might have been the echo which people heard, or perhaps the words of that wonderful old man, who sat high on a heap of snow, regardless of wind or weather. He was all in white; he had on a peasant's coarse white coat of frieze. He had long white hair, a pale face, and large clear blue eyes. "Who is that old man?" asked the sparrows.

"I know who he is," said an old raven, who sat on the fence, and was condescending enough to acknowledge that we are all equal in the sight of Heaven, even as little birds, and therefore he talked with the sparrows, and gave them the information they wanted. "I know who the old man is," he said. "It is Winter, the old man of last year; he is not dead yet, as the calendar says, but acts as guardian to little Prince Spring who is coming. Winter rules here still. Ugh! the cold makes you shiver, little ones, does it not?"

"There! Did I not tell you so?" said the smallest of the sparrows. "The calendar is only an invention of man, and is not arranged according

to nature. They should leave these things to us ; we are created so much more clever than they are."

One week passed, and then another. The forest looked dark, the hard-frozen lake lay like a sheet of lead. The mountains had disappeared, for over the land hung damp, icy mists. Large black crows flew about in silence ; it was as if nature slept. At length a sunbeam glided over the lake, and it shone like burnished silver. But the snow on the fields and the hills did not glitter as before. The white form of Winter sat there still, with his unwandering gaze fixed on the south. He did not perceive that the snowy carpet seemed to sink as it were into the earth ; that here and there a little green patch of grass appeared, and that these patches were covered with sparrows.

"Tee-wit, tee-wit ; is spring coming at last ?"

Spring ! How the cry resounded over field and meadow, and through the dark-brown woods, where the fresh green moss still gleamed on the trunks of the trees, and from the south came the two first storks flying through the air, and on the back of each sat a lovely little child, a boy and a girl. They greeted the earth with a kiss, and wherever they placed their feet white flowers sprung up from beneath the snow. Hand in hand they approached the old ice-man, Winter, embraced him and clung to his breast ; and as they did so in a moment all three were enveloped in a thick, damp mist, dark and heavy, that closed over them like a veil. The wind arose with mighty rustling tone, and cleared away the mist. Then the sun shone out warmly. Winter had vanished away, and the beautiful children of Spring sat on the throne of the year.

"This is really a new year," cried all the sparrows ; "now we shall get our rights, and have some return for what we suffered in winter."

Wherever the two children wandered, green buds burst forth on bush and tree, the grass grew higher, and the corn-fields became lovely in delicate green.

The little maiden strewed flowers in her path. She held her apron before her : it was full of flowers ; it was as if they sprung into life there, for the more she scattered around her, the more flowers did her apron contain. Eagerly she showered snowy blossoms over apple and peach-trees, so that they stood in full beauty before even their green leaves had burst from the bud. Then the boy and the girl clapped their hands, and troops of birds came flying by, no one knew from whence, and they all twittered and chirped, singing, "Spring has come !" How beautiful everything was ! Many an old dame came forth from her door into the sunshine, and shuffled about with great delight, glancing at the golden flowers which glittered everywhere in the fields, as they used to do in her young days. The world grew young again to her, as she said, "It is a blessed time out here to-day." The forest already wore its dress of dark-green buds. The thyme blossomed in fresh fragrance. Primroses and anemones sprung forth, and violets bloomed in the shade, while every blade of grass was full of strength and sap. Who could resist sitting down on such a beautiful carpet ? and then the young children of Spring seated themselves, holding each other's

THE STORY OF THE YEAR.

hands, and sang, and laughed, and grew. A gentle rain fell upon them from the sky, but they did not notice it, for the rain-drops were their own tears of joy. They kissed each other, and were betrothed; and in the same moment the buds of the trees unfolded, and when the sun rose, the forest was green. Hand in hand the two wandered beneath the fresh pendant canopy of foliage, while the sun's rays gleamed through the opening of the shade, in changing and varied colours. The delicate young leaves filled the air with refreshing odour. Merrily rippled the clear brooks and rivulets between the green, velvety rushes, and over the many-coloured pebbles beneath. All nature spoke of abundance and plenty. The cuckoo sang, and the lark carolled, for it was now beautiful spring. The careful willows had, however, covered their blossoms with woolly gloves; and this carefulness is rather tedious. Days and weeks went by, and the heat increased. Warm air waved the corn as it grew golden in the sun. The white northern lily spread its large green leaves over the glossy mirror of the woodland lake, and the fishes sought the shadows beneath them. In a sheltered part of the wood, the sun shone upon the walls of a farm house, brightening the blooming roses, and ripening the black juicy berries, which hung on the loaded cherry-trees, with his hot beams. Here sat the lovely wife of Summer, the same whom we have seen as a child and a bride; her eyes were fixed on dark gathering clouds, which in wavy outlines of black and indigo were piling themselves up like mountains, higher and higher. They came from every side, always increasing like a rising, rolling sea. Then they swooped towards the forest, where every sound had been silenced as if by magic, every breath hushed, every bird mute. All nature stood still in grave suspense. But in the lanes and the highways, passengers on foot or in carriages were hurrying to find a place of shelter. Then came a flash of light, as if the sun had rushed forth from the sky, flaming, burning, all-devouring, and darkness returned amid a rolling crash of thunder. The rain poured down in streams,—now there was darkness, then blinding light,—now thrilling silence, then deafening din. The young brown reeds on the moor waved to and fro in feathery billows; the forest boughs were hidden in a watery mist, and still light and darkness followed each other, still came the silence after the roar, while the corn and the blades of grass lay beaten down and swamped, so that it seemed almost impossible they could ever raise themselves again. But after a while the rain began to fall gently, the sun's rays pierced the clouds, and the water-drops glittered like pearls on leaf and stem. The birds sang, the fishes leaped up to the surface of the water, the gnats danced in the sunshine, and yonder, on a rock by the heaving salt sea, sat Summer himself, a strong man with sturdy limbs and long, dripping hair. Strengthened by the cool bath, he sat in the warm sunshine, while all around him renewed nature bloomed strong, luxuriant, and beautiful: it was summer, warm, lovely summer. Sweet and pleasant was the fragrance wafted from the clover-field, where the bees swarmed round the ruined tower, the bramble twined itself over the old altar, which, washed by the rain, glittered in the sunshine; and thither flew the queen bee with her swarm, and pre-

pared wax and honey. But Summer and his bosom-wife saw it with different eyes, to them the altar-table was covered with the offerings of nature. The evening sky shone like gold, no church dome could ever gleam so brightly, and between the golden evening and the blushing morning there was moonlight. It was indeed summer. And days and weeks passed, the bright scythes of the reapers glittered in the corn-fields, the branches of the apple-trees bent low, heavy with the red and golden fruit. The hop, hanging in clusters, filled the air with sweet fragrance, and beneath the hazel-bushes, where the nuts hung in great bunches, rested a man and a woman—Summer and his grave consort.

"See," she exclaimed, "what wealth, what blessings surround us. Everything is home-like and good, and yet, I know not why, I long for rest and peace; I can scarcely express what I feel. They are already ploughing the fields again; more and more the people wish for gain. See, the storks are flocking together, and following the plough at a short distance. They are the birds from Egypt, who carried us through the air. Do you remember how we came as children to this land of the north; we brought with us flowers and bright sunshine, and green to the forests, but the wind has been rough with them, and they are now become dark and brown, like the trees of the south, but they do not, like them, bear golden fruit."

"Do you wish to see golden fruit?" said the man, "then rejoice," and he lifted his arm. The leaves of the forest put on colours of red and gold, and bright tints covered the woodlands. The rose-bushes gleamed with scarlet hips, and the branches of the elder-trees hung down with the weight of the full, dark berries. The wild chestnuts fell ripe from their dark, green shells, and in the forests the violets bloomed for the second time. But the queen of the year became more and more silent and pale.

"It blows cold," she said, "and night brings the damp mist; I long for the land of my childhood." Then she saw the storks fly away every one, and she stretched out her hands towards them. She looked at the empty nests; in one of them grew a long-stalked corn-flower, in another the yellow mustard seed, as if the nest had been placed there only for its comfort and protection, and the sparrows were flying round them all.

"Tweet, where has the master of the nest gone?" cried one; "I suppose he could not bear it when the wind blew, and therefore he has left this country. I wish him a pleasant journey."

The forest leaves became more and more yellow, leaf after leaf fell, and the stormy winds of Autumn howled. The year was now far advanced, and upon the fallen, yellow leaves, lay the queen of the year, looking up with mild eyes at a gleaming star, and her husband stood by her. A gust of wind swept through the foliage, and the leaves fell in a shower. The summer queen was gone, but a butterfly, the last of the year, flew through the cold air. Damp fogs came, icy winds blew, and the long, dark nights of winter approached. The ruler of the year appeared with hair white as snow, but he knew it not; he thought snow-flakes falling from the sky covered his head, as they decked the green fields with a thin, white covering of snow. And then the church bells rang out for Christmas time.

THE STORY OF THE YEAR.

"The bells are ringing for the new-born year," said the ruler, "soon will a new ruler and his bride be born, and I shall go to rest with my wife in yonder light-giving star."

In the fresh, green fir-wood, where the snow lay all around, stood the angel of Christmas, and consecrated the young trees that were to adorn his feast.

"May there be joy in the rooms, and under the green boughs," said the old ruler of the year. In a few weeks he had become a very old man, with hair as white as snow. "My resting-time draws near; the young pair of the year will soon claim my crown and sceptre."

"But the night is still thine," said the angel of Christmas, "for power, but not for rest. Let the snow lie warmly upon the tender seed. Learn to endure the thought that another is worshipped whilst thou art still lord. Learn to endure being forgotten while yet thou livest. The hour of thy freedom will come when Spring appears."

"And when will Spring come?" asked Winter.

"It will come when the stork returns."

And with white locks and snowy beard, cold, bent, and hoary, but strong as the wintry storm, and firm as the ice, old Winter sat on the snowdrift-covered hill, looking towards the south, where Winter had sat before, and gazed. The ice glittered, the snow crackled, the skaters skimmed over the polished surface of the lakes; ravens and crows formed a pleasing contrast to the white ground, and not a breath of wind stirred, and in the still air old Winter clenched his fists and the ice lay fathoms deep between the lands. Then came the sparrows again out of the town, and asked, "Who is that old man?" The raven sat there still, or it might be his son, which is the same thing, and he said to them,—

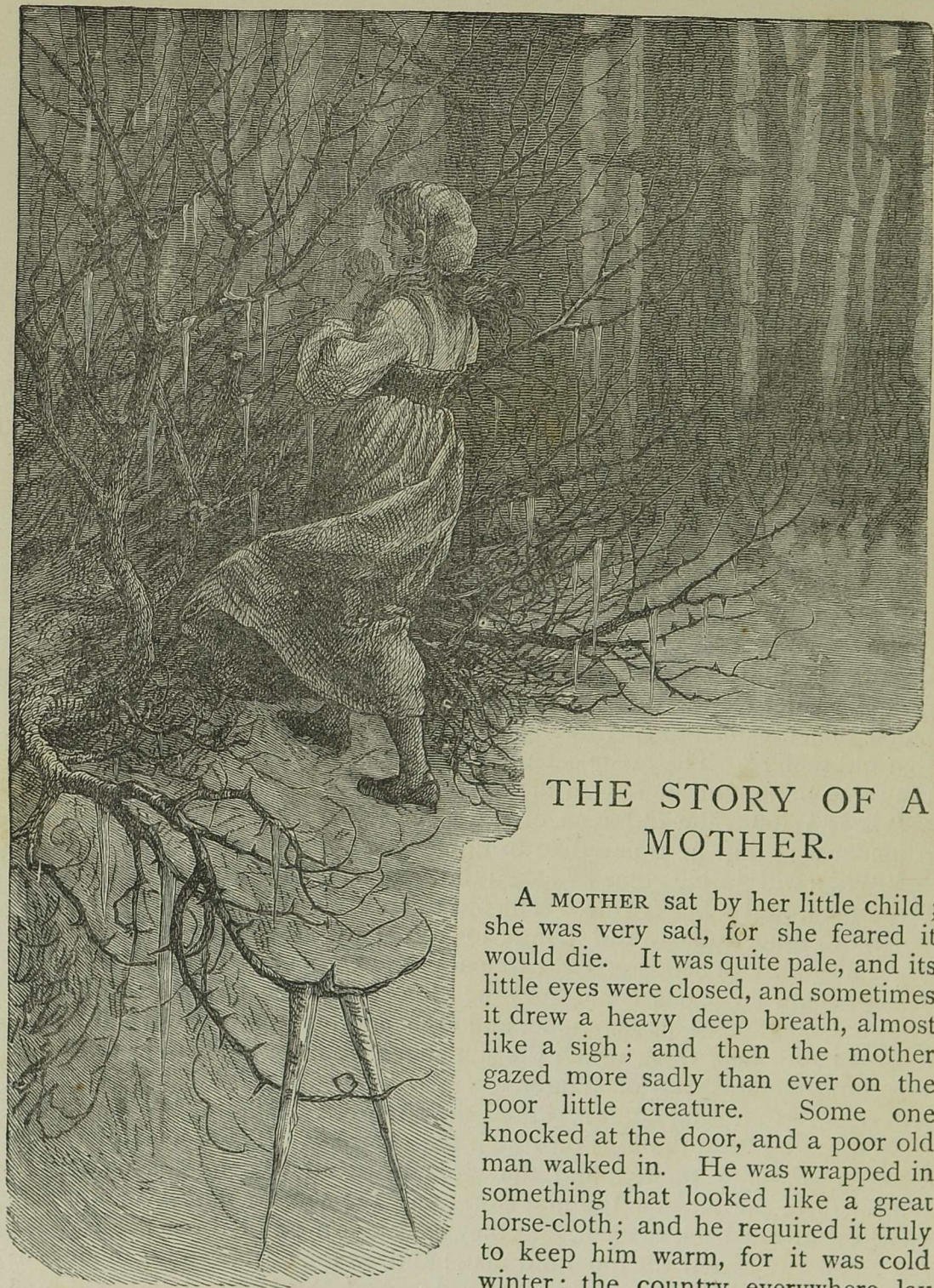
"It is Winter, the old man of the former year; he is not dead, as the calendar says, but he is guardian to the spring, which is coming."

"When will Spring come?" asked the sparrows, "for we shall have better times then, and a better rule. The old times are worth nothing."

And in quiet thought old Winter looked at the leafless forest, where the graceful form and bends of each tree and branch could be seen; and while Winter slept, icy mists came from the clouds, and the ruler dreamt of his youthful days and of his manhood, and in the morning dawn the whole forest glittered with hoar frost, which the sun shook from the branches,—and this was the summer dream of Winter.

"When will Spring come?" asked the sparrows. "Spring!" Again the echo sounded from the hills on which the snow lay. The sunshine became warmer, the snow melted, and the birds twittered, "Spring is coming!" And high in the air flew the first stork, and the second followed; a lovely child sat on the back of each, and they sank down on the open field, kissed the earth, and kissed the quiet old man; and, as the mist from the mountain-top, he vanished away and disappeared. And the story of the year was finished.

"This is all very fine, no doubt," said the sparrows, "and it is very beautiful; but it is not according to the calendar, therefore it must be all wrong."



THE STORY OF A MOTHER.

A MOTHER sat by her little child ; she was very sad, for she feared it would die. It was quite pale, and its little eyes were closed, and sometimes it drew a heavy deep breath, almost like a sigh ; and then the mother gazed more sadly than ever on the poor little creature. Some one knocked at the door, and a poor old man walked in. He was wrapped in something that looked like a great horse-cloth ; and he required it truly to keep him warm, for it was cold winter ; the country everywhere lay covered with snow and ice, and the wind blew so sharply that it cut one's face. The little child had dozed off to sleep for a moment, and the mother

seeing that the old man shivered with the cold, rose and placed a small mug of beer on the stove to warm for him. The old man sat and rocked the cradle ; and the mother seated herself on a chair near him, and looked at her sick child who still breathed heavily, and took hold of its little hand.

"You think I shall keep him, do you not?" she said. "Our all-merciful God will surely not take him away from me."

The old man, who was indeed Death himself, nodded his head in a peculiar manner, which might have signified either Yes, or No ; and the mother cast down her eyes, while the tears rolled down her cheeks. Then her head became heavy, for she had not closed her eyes for three days and nights, and she slept, but only for a moment. Shivering with cold, she started up and looked round the room. The old man was gone, and her child—it was gone too!—the old man had taken it with him. In the corner of the room the old clock began to strike ; "whirr" went the chains, the heavy weight sank to the ground, and the clock stopped ; and the poor mother rushed out of the house calling for her child. Out in the snow sat a woman in long black garments, and she said to the mother, "Death has been with you in your room. I saw him hastening away with your little child ; he strides faster than the wind, and never brings back what he has taken away."

"Only tell me which way he has gone," said the mother ; "tell me the way, I will find him."

"I know the way," said the woman in the black garments ; "but before I tell you, you must sing to me all the songs that you have sung to your child ; I love these songs, I have heard them before. I am Night, and I saw your tears flow as you sang."

"I will sing them all to you," said the mother ; "but do not detain me now. I must overtake him, and find my child."

But Night sat silent and still. Then the mother wept and sang, and wrung her hands. And there were many songs, and yet even more tears ; till at length Night said, "Go to the right, into the dark forest of fir-trees ; for I saw Death take that road with your little child."

Within the wood the mother came to cross roads, and she knew not which to take. Just by stood a thorn-bush ; it had neither leaf nor flower, for it was the cold winter time, and icicles hung on the branches. "Have you not seen Death go by, with my little child?" she asked.

"Yes," replied the thorn-bush ; "but I will not tell you which way he has taken until you have warmed me in your bosom. I am freezing to death here, and turning to ice."

Then she pressed the bramble to her bosom quite close, so that it might be thawed, and the thorns pierced her flesh, and great drops of blood flowed ; but the bramble shot forth fresh green leaves, and they became flowers on the cold winter's night, so warm is the heart of a sorrowing mother. Then the bramble-bush told her the path she must take. She came at length to a great lake, on which there was neither ship nor boat to be seen. The lake was not frozen sufficiently for her to pass over on the ice, nor was it open enough for her to wade through ; and yet she must

cross it, if she wished to find her child. Then she laid herself down to drink up the water of the lake, which was of course impossible for any human being to do; but the bereaved mother thought that perhaps a miracle might take place to help her. "You will never succeed in this," said the lake; "let us make an agreement together, which will be better. I love to collect pearls, and your eyes are the purest I have ever seen. If you will weep those eyes away in tears into my waters, then I will take you to the large hothouse where Death dwells and rears flowers and trees, every one of which is a human life."

"Oh, what would I not give to reach my child!" said the weeping mother; and as she still continued to weep, her eyes fell into the depths of the lake, and became two costly pearls.

Then the lake lifted her up, and wafted her across to the opposite shore as if she were on a swing, where stood a wonderful building many miles in length. No one could tell whether it was a mountain covered with forests and full of caves, or whether it had been built. But the poor mother could not see, for she had wept out her eyes into the lake. "Where shall I find Death, who went away with my little child?" she asked.

"He has not arrived here yet," said an old grey-haired woman, who was walking about, and watering Death's hothouse. "How have you found your way here? and who helped you?"

"God has helped me," she replied. "He is merciful; will you not be merciful too? Where shall I find my little child?"

"I do not know the child," said the old woman; "and you are blind. Many flowers and trees have faded to-night, and Death will soon come to transplant them. You know already that every human being has a life-tree or a life-flower, just as may be ordained for him. They look like other plants; but they have hearts that beat. Children's hearts also beat; from that you may perhaps be able to recognise your child. But what will you give me, if I tell you what more you will have to do?"

"I have nothing to give," said the afflicted mother; "but I would go to the ends of the earth for you."

"I can give you nothing to do for me there," said the old woman; "but you can give me your long black hair. You know yourself that it is beautiful, and it pleases me. You can take my white hair in exchange, which will be something in return."

"Do you ask nothing more than that?" said she. "I will give it you with pleasure."

And she gave up her beautiful hair, and received in return the white locks of the old woman. Then they went into Death's vast hothouse, where flowers and trees grew together in wonderful profusion. Blooming hyacinths, under glass bells, and peonies, like strong trees. There grew water-plants, some quite fresh, others looking sickly, which had water-snakes twining round them, and black crabs clinging to their stems. There stood noble palm-trees, oaks, and plantains, and beneath them bloomed thyme and parsley. Each tree and flower had a name; each represented a human life, and belonged to men still living, some in China, others in Greenland

and in all parts of the world. Some large trees had been planted in little pots, so that they were cramped for room, and seemed about to burst the pot in pieces; while many weak little flowers were growing in rich soil, with moss all around them, carefully tended and cared for. The sorrowing mother bent over the little plants, and heard the human heart beating in each, and recognised the beatings of her child's heart among millions of others.

"That is it," she cried, stretching out her hand towards a little crocus-flower which hung down its sickly head.

"Do not touch the flower," exclaimed the old woman; "but place yourself here; and when Death comes—I expect him every minute—do not let him pull up that plant, but threaten him that if he does you will serve the other flowers in the same manner. This will make him afraid; for he must account to God for each of them. None can be uprooted unless he receives permission to do so."

There rushed through the hothouse a chill of icy coldness, and the blind mother felt that Death had arrived.

"How did you find your way hither?" asked he; "how could you come here faster than I have?"

"I am a mother," she answered.

And Death stretched out his hand towards the delicate little flower; but she held her hands tightly round it, and held it fast at the same time, with the most anxious care, lest she should touch one of the leaves. Then Death breathed upon her hands, and she felt his breath colder than the icy wind, and her hands sank down powerless.

"You cannot prevail against me," said Death.

"But a God of mercy can," said she.

"I only do His will," replied Death. "I am His gardener. I take all His flowers and trees, and transplant them into the gardens of Paradise in an unknown land. How they flourish there, and what that garden resembles, I may not tell you."

"Give me back my child," said the mother, weeping and imploring; and she seized two beautiful flowers in her hands, and cried to Death, "I will tear up all your flowers, for I am in despair."

"Do not touch them," said Death. "You say you are unhappy; and would you make another mother as unhappy as yourself?"

"Another mother!" cried the poor woman, setting the flowers free from her hands.

"There are your eyes," said Death. "I fished them up out of the lake for you. They were shining brightly; but I knew not that they were yours. Take them back—they are clearer now than before—and then look into the deep well which is close by here. I will tell you the names of the two flowers which you wished to pull up; and you will see the whole future of the human beings they represent, and what you were about to frustrate and destroy."

Then she looked into the well; and it was a glorious sight to behold how one of them became a blessing to the world, and how much happiness and

joy it spread around. But she saw that the life of the other was full of care and poverty, misery and woe.

"Both are the will of God," said Death.

"Which is the unhappy flower, and which is the blessed one?" she asked.

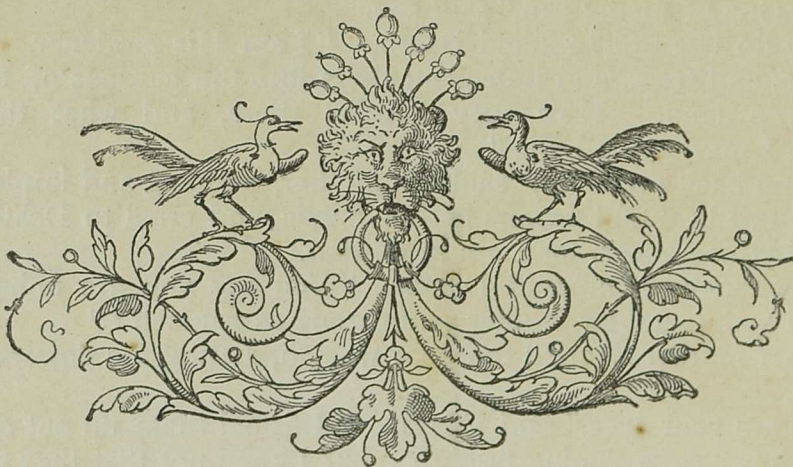
"That I may not tell you," said Death; "but thus far you may learn, that one of the two flowers represents your own child. It was the fate of your child that you saw,—the future of your own child."

Then the mother screamed aloud with terror, "Which of them belongs to my child? Tell me that. Deliver the unhappy child. Release it from so much misery. Rather take it away. Take it to the kingdom of God. Forget my tears and my entreaties; forget all that I have said or done."

"I do not understand you," said Death. "Will you have your child back? or shall I carry him away to a place that you do not know?"

Then the mother wrung her hands, fell on her knees, and prayed to God, "Grant not my prayers, when they are contrary to Thy will, which at all times must be the best. Oh, hear them not;" and her head sank upon her bosom.

Then Death carried away her child to the unknown land.



LIST OF THE SERIES.

1. The Fir Tree.
2. The Roses.
3. The Nightingale.
4. Ib and Christina.
5. The Old House.
6. The Golden Treasure.
7. The Storks.
8. The Jewish Maiden.
9. Anne Lisbeth.
10. The Shadow.
11. The Snow-Queen.
12. The Little Mermaid.
13. The Garden of Paradise.
14. Little Claus and Big Claus.
15. The Mother's Love.

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Each part is complete in itself and contains two Coloured Plates besides several fine woodcuts.