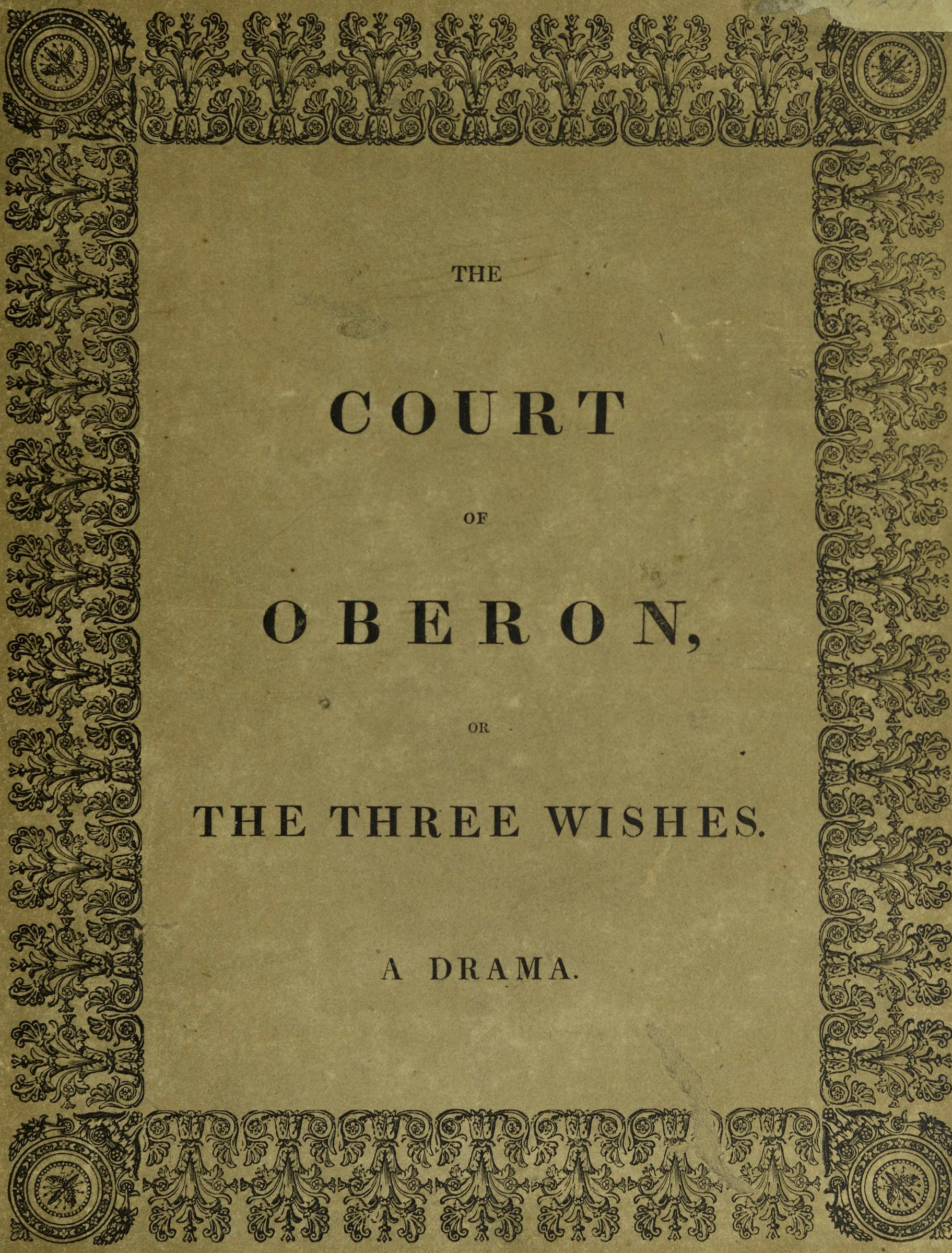


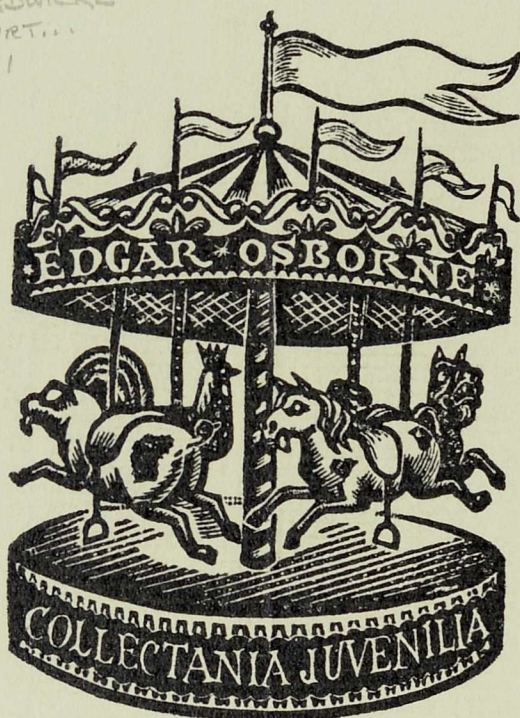
New York

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THE
COURT
OF
OBERON,
OR
THE THREE WISHES.
A DRAMA.

TBC (SB) fol
HARDWICKE
COURT...
1831



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COURT OF OBERON, ACT I.

Drawn on Stone by J. S. TEMPLETON, from a Drawing by the COUNTESS OF HARDWICKE.

Printed by Engelmann & Co.

THE
COURT OF OBERON,
OR
THE THREE WISHES.

A DRAMA
IN THREE ACTS.

LONDON:

PRINTED AT THE SHAKSPEARE PRESS BY W. NICOL.

MDCCCXXI.

DEDICATED BY PERMISSION

TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE PRINCESS VICTORIA.

THE DRAMA OF

THE COURT OF OBERON,

OR

THE THREE WISHES,

BY

THE COUNTESS OF HARDWICKE.

PRINTED FOR THE BAZAAR

PATRONIZED BY HER MAJESTY

IN AID OF THE DISTRESSED IRISH.

MAY, 1831.

P R E F A C E.

THE little Drama of THE COURT OF OBERON, or THE THREE WISHES, was written by the COUNTESS OF HARDWICKE, for the amusement of her children and their friends, about the end of the last century. The plan of THE THREE WISHES was taken from a French piece, to which was added THE COURT OF OBERON, to render it more suitable to her juvenile performers, the youngest of whom was but two years old, when the representation took place in the Gallery at WIMPOLE.

When this trifling production had served its purpose it was no more thought of, nor did it again see the light till HER GRACIOUS MAJESTY announced her benevolent intention of patronizing a Bazaar, for the succour of the distressed Irish.

It was then suggested that among the contributions made by Ladies of their fancy works for the profit of the Bazaar, this might also find a place.—Yet it could scarcely have been ventured upon without the condescending permission of HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUCHESS OF KENT, to

PREFACE.

dedicate this little work to HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS VICTORIA.—Under such a sanction, and for such a purpose, it is now sent to the Bazaar, in the hope that it may afford some feeble aid to a people, whom the writer will ever remember with affectionate regard.

May, 1831.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HODGE.	.	Lord Grantham,
SIMON.	.	Hon. Frederick Robinson, <i>now Viscount Goderich.</i>
JUSTICE.	.	Hon. Mrs. Eliot, <i>afterwards Countess of St. Germans.</i>
MARGERY.	.	Miss Dashwood, <i>now Marchioness of Ely.</i>
SUSAN.	.	Lady Anne Yorke, <i>Countess of Mexborough.</i>

FAIRIES.

OBERON.	.	Master Campbell.
QUEEN MAB.	.	Lady Catherine Yorke, <i>Countess of Caledon.</i>
ELFINA.	.	Lady Elizabeth Yorke, <i>Lady Stuart de Rothsay.</i>
GLORIANA.	.	Lady Caroline Yorke, <i>Viscountess Eastnor.</i>

Attendant Fairies.

THE COURT OF OBERON,

OR

THE THREE WISHES.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE—A FOREST BY MOONLIGHT.

Enter ELFINA.

Fays and fairies list my call,
Hasten hither one and all,
Hasten, for the hour is near
The fairy court assembles here,
Fairies all appear, appear !

Enter FAIRIES *from all sides, singing.*

We come, we come.

We come, we come, we come.

ELFINA.

Lo ! they come from bower and brake,
Murmuring rill, or silent lake,

From the daisy spangled green,
Hill, or dale, or sylvan scene,
From the earth and from the air
Hither fairies, quick repair!

FAIRIES.

We come—we come.—

We come, we come, we come.

More FAIRIES enter singing and dancing.

ELFINA.

Mark the moon, “our silver sun,”
'Tis time our revels were begun;
Bend beneath her gracious light,
And hail, Oh hail the Queen of Night.
We do not love the garish day
All is toil beneath its ray,
War and strife to day belong
But give the night to dance and song;
Spirits all, advance, advance
And featly form your fairy dance.

A Dance.

Enter QUEEN MAB and the PRINCESS GLORIANA.

MAB.

Subjects of our fairy court,
Pleased I join your moonlight sport,
For our radiant Queen of Night
Summons every elf, and sprite,
Summons every thing that lives,
To taste the happiness she gives ;
But pleasure must not always last,
And when the midnight hour is past
Leave sport and gambol, dance and play,
And deftly my commands obey.

MAB addresses each FAIRY separately.

Shake the rod before the child
Whom, his mother's love has spoiled ;
Guard the tender maid's repose,
But flush the haughty beauty's nose ;
Will o' Wisp, mislead the sight,
Of sly marauder in the night ;
Ever, in the sluggard's ear,
Do thou crow, like chanticleer ;
Wake the miser, with a start
Shake his door and scare his heart ;
Pinch the rich man's gouty toe,
Too much food will work him woe,

'Twould mend his health, and cheer his mind
To give it to the hungry hind.
The drunken sot, on drowsy bed,
Punish thou, with aching head ;
And for the slanderer's evil tongue
Let it be by blisters stung.—
Yet sweeter tasks I will assign
To you, ye little fairies nine,
Let not naughty boy molest
The feathered warbler's mossy nest.
Train the tendrils of the vine,
For mortals love the rosy wine ;
Save the blossom from the frost,
Lest th'ambrosial fruit be lost ;
Shake the rose, surcharged with dew,
Deck the board with harebells blue.
Gather honey from the flower
And bid the glow-worm light the bower,
These be your tasks, and light as air
Go forth, and for the feast prepare.

Enter OBERON, King of the Fairies.

MAB.

He comes ! he comes ! the fairy king !
Oh Oberon ! what joy you bring.

OBERON.

Sweet Mab ! I much thy pains commend,
And willing toils that all befriend ;
My little Gloriana too !
Dost thou come tripping o'er the dew !
Ye fays and fairies, much I grieve,
That oft your moonlight sports I leave,
But think, how great a load of care,
The king of fairy land must bear ;
While you may rove as best may suit ye,
The monarch thinks but of his duty.

ELFINA.

But wherefore all our sports forsake,
Why never skim the glassy lake,
Nor, on the ripple of the stream,
Catch the moonlight's silver gleam ?

MAB.

When in my nutshell coach I ride,
Why art thou never by my side.
When on the bat's light wing I fly,
My Oberon is never nigh ;
And when we dance our fairy ring,
Alas ! where lurks our fairy king ?

ELFINA.

When we spread our festive board,
The bee resigns its sweetest hoard ;
Our feasts, of spicy buds we make,
We gather berries from the brake,
And tiny seeds of mignonette,
With wild thyme mixed, and violet ;
Though acorn cups we fill with dew,
Feasts, nor sports, have charms for you.

OBERON.

My sister dear ! My gentle Queen,
Chide not though I'm seldom seen ;
How should *you* know a monarch's care,
Light are the tasks that you prepare,
While I, with all my power and grace,
Can scarce controul man's stubborn race.

MAB.

Leave wayward mortals to themselves,
They are but peevish, froward elves ;
Still anxious for some fancied blessing,
Though, when attained, not worth possessing.
In vain, you teach them to be wise,
While they what's good and just despise.

OBERON.

Alas ! how would the world go wrong,
If Oberon should leave them long ;
Ah ! think, my Queen, how dire their state
If I should leave them to their fate !
No ! still I'll strive the race to mend,
The proud man's foe, the good man's friend,
The faithful lover, I reward,
The virtuous maiden, I will guard,
The idle and the vicious still,
I punish by their wayward will ;
Dost thou see yon cottage there ?

MAB.

Well !

OBERON.

That contains my present care.
Briefly I'll the tale unfold.
Susan sweet and Henry bold,
He as good as she is fair,
An honest, simple, virtuous pair—
By avaricious parents crost
Their happy prospects all are lost.

MAB.

By yon shining orb of night,
We must set this matter right.

ELFINA.

The youthful pair must never part.

OBERON.

But the parents both shall smart.
The mother, who with angry voice,
Now forbids her daughter's choice,
Shall ere night her cause befriend
And their constant love commend.
While lazy, drinking Hodge complains
Of toil severe, and scanty gains,
Still murmuring at his cruel lot,
While health, and strength are both forgot.
I'll bid him choose what best may please him,
And grant his wishes but to tease him.

ELFINA.

Break off, break off, for Chanticleer,
Proclaims the morning hour is near;
Hide you, ye fays, in flowery cells,
There gather sweets to form your spells,

Or on the bosom of the rose
Cushioned lie in sweet repose ;
While in the lily's ample bell
A bower, where kings may love to dwell,
Let the royal pair recline,
Till gaudy day has ceased to shine ;
Then with the moonbeams' trembling light
Again we revel here to-night.

*All assemble round the King and Queen,
and the curtain falls.*

ACT SECOND.

SCENE.—A COTTAGE.

SUSAN *sitting pensively at a spinning-wheel. She spins a little, then speaks.*

It's pleasanter to spin here than within doors, at least one may be a little quiet.—This wheel is quite spoiled, I can't spin, not I, and there's nobody in all the village can mend it;—see there now. My mother will be so angry if I don't finish my task. If Harry was at home, I am sure he would not mind going ten miles to get it set to rights,—but since he left the village all goes wrong,—and yet when he was here, I am sure I was very unhappy, for my mother was so cross if he did but speak to me, that many a time I begged him never, never to come again, but he didn't mind that:—and now that he is gone for a sailor, I think of nothing but seas, and rocks, and storms and tempests. (*rises*) Well! there is one thing at least that I am determined on, I will *not* marry Mr. Simon, my mother may scold me as much as she will, aye and beat me too,—it a'nt the first time, but I won't have him, no not if Harry should not come home these *two* years, and by that time Simon will

be dead of old age,—besides, mercy upon me!—he is Harry's Uncle.—Poor Harry! when he came to take leave of me, he made believe not to mind it, and he said he was sure he should bring home a power of money,—what a sad thing money is! and he said if he had a hundred pounds it should all be for somebody;—Oh! I knew well enough who he meant by somebody:—why sure it's nine o'clock by the Sun, I must go and get father's breakfast—I wonder what Harry has for breakfast,—my father says the sailors never get nothing but salt water and old cable ropes, but I think he was only jeering me;—for I am sure he likes Harry in his heart a great deal better than old Simon.

MARGERY *calls behind the Scene.*

Susan! Susan!

SUSAN.

Oh la! My mother calls. Coming, coming. (*runs out*)

Enter HODGE, with a flask under his arm, an axe in his hand, and a bundle of wood on his back.

HODGE.

There, lie you there, how weary I am, (*yawns*) I can't drag one foot after t'other, if my wife should scold me never so, I must sit down and rest myself. And so I will that's flat.—What a sad life we poor folks live!—Work, work,

work, from morning to night, and not a bit the better for it.—As soon as day breaks, summer or winter, must I be abroad, wet or dry, no matter, and here must I stay everlastingly chopping of wood, hacking and hewing till I hav'nt a leg to stand on, or a hand to hold the axe, (*takes up his flask*) if I had not a little friend here, I should be in piteous taking.—A friend in need (*drinks*) is a friend indeed. Long live the man who first invented ale—he was a great man, and a great friend to the poor, here is his health, his good health; his very good health.—If I were a king, I would not have a poor man in my dominions, not a subject of mine should do an hour's work, I'd make it death by the law to work;—every pump should run with ale, not a drop of water in the kingdom;—why even now hard as it is, if a poor hard working honest, sober fellow like myself, could get enough of ale, every day and all day long, it would not be so bad,—but what with the dearness of the times, what with the Landlord's rent, and the King's taxes, and the Parson's tithes, and my Devil of a wife at home, I lead the life of a dog,—yes, a man had better be a dog, a very dog, than such a wretched miserable half starved, overworked wretch as myself.—Hey dey! What a clap of thunder!

Enter Oberon.

HODGE.

Oh Heavens! What do I see! A Spirit! A Fairy! Oh

Sir!—Oh Spirit! Oh Goblin! Spare my life; indeed, indeed it is not worth the taking.

OBERON.

Touched with pity at your grief,
I come to give the wished relief,
Lament no more your wretched state,
But be the master of your fate,
On my well known power rely,
For OBERON the King, am I.—
Trembling mortal, cease your fear
And mark my words, distinct and clear,
When the golden glorious sun
Shall his daily course have run,
When the silver Queen of Light
Throws her radiance o'er the night,
Choose what you will of wishes three,
Your choice is uncontroll'd and free;—
But yet, beware! nor blindly run,
For mark! no sooner said, than done.

Exit Oberon.

HODGE.

It is gone! Hey where is it? What is all this? Why, what the deuce, am I awake? Why sure I dream, three wishes did it say? I'll be sworn I saw it as plain there, before my two eyes as I see my bottle now,—now, let

me, let me remember what it said—yes, it was that—it said it was Ob... Oberon the fairy King. Oh! many a time I have heard strange noises in the forest here by moonlight.—He was come to grant me three wishes! Three, and why not four I wonder, hush, hush, I must not grumble *now*; indeed I never did grumble, never, though I was as poor as a rat. No more poverty now, no more starving, no more hacking and hewing—but what shall I wish? I must have all my wishes wished before night—that won't be difficult, I think if I had a thousand wishes I could find something for them all—Well! suppose I were to... no hang it that's a small affair—I'll wish, I'll wish for the manor house, and, yet, they say, it's all tumbling to pieces,—suppose I wish to be the schoolmaster, he an't much richer than we are.—I'll be the clerk of the parish, Oh la! I can't read—I have it now, I'll be, I'll be, a justice of the peace, that will do pretty well—yet, it is a good deal of trouble too, and I can't look grave and solemn—no, no! I am determined never to look grave again—that won't do.—Hold, hold, a coach and six—but the neighbours wou'd laugh if they saw HODGE looking out of the window—but then—I may wish for another face that they may not know me again, and yet my own face is not much amiss—I might get a worse in exchange. I am quite thirsty with thinking—I must finish my bottle and return to my meditations.
(*drinks*)

Enter MARGERY.

MARGERY.

Ah! ah! have I caught you, you drunken sot!

HODGE.

Good morning Margery, good morning, dear.

MARGERY.

Good morning! you lazy fellow! is this the way you work?

HODGE.

Patience, good Madge, don't be angry, love.

MARGERY.

Not angry! not angry when

HODGE.

Well, well, be angry then, if you like it.

MARGERY.

You are enough to provoke a saint, if it was not for me, would not you and your family starve! I work night and day. I brew, and I bake, I scrub, and I wash, I knit, and I spin, and all for an idle, drinking, lounging fellow.

HODGE.

Why, Wife!

MARGERY.

Wife, quotha, you neither care for wife or child—There's your poor girl Susan,—who will ever think of marrying a daughter of yours, pray? Why you must come on the parish if her husband will not maintain you, and who likes to do that, pray?

HODGE.

Tol de rol de rol.

MARGERY.

To be sure, neighbour Simon is not over young, and he has had a wife already, but luckily she's dead, and then Simon's a rich man that need not fear

HODGE.

Simon, forsooth

MARGERY.

He's a very rich man, and though he be'nt quite so young as Susan, yet thirty or forty years is no great matter, and then he is so rich, as I said before.

HODGE.

I know he is what *you* may call rich.

MARGERY.

Well !

HODGE.

Well, much good may it do him.

MARGERY.

Then will you give him your daughter or no ?

HODGE.

I won't.

MARGERY.

Why who the deuce will you give her to, then.

HODGE.

To a Lord.

MARGERY.

Are you drunk ?

HODGE.

To a Duke.

MARGERY.

I shall lose all patience.

HODGE.

To a King.

MARGERY.

Why Hodge are you mad.

HODGE.

I need but speak the word . . . To a King.

MARGERY.

Stuff! Nonsense !

HODGE.

Oh Margery ! I can hold no longer, I am the happiest of men, and if you behave yourself properly you shall be the happiest of women.

MARGERY.

Why sure he's out of his wits.

HODGE.

My dear, dear, Margery.

MARGERY.

Oh ! he's mad,—he's mad indeed.

HODGE.

Listen.

MARGERY.

Well !

HODGE.

You won't believe me.

MARGERY.

Pray go on.

HODGE.

Did you hear a great clap of thunder ?

MARGERY.

Well, what's that to the purpose.

HODGE.

Did you hear it I say ?

MARGERY.

To be sure I did.

HODGE.

Right.—Well Margery—in this very spot where we are now standing, quite tired with working, cursing our wretched poverty, swearing *a little* at my scolding wife . . .

MARGERY.

Hey dey, Sirrah !

HODGE.

Swearing a little at my scolding wife . . . King Oberon himself appeared before me.

MARGERY.

Ah ! Hodge take care what you say,—take care what you say, you must not jest with the fairies, they are no jesting matter.

HODGE.

Jesting ! it's no joke I promise you.

MARGERY.

Hodge, Hodge, mind what you say.

HODGE.

Mind what *he* says, wife !—Any three wishes I make before night, he will grant, what think you now ?

MARGERY.

Think ! Why sure you are not serious, are you speaking the real true truth ?

HODGE.

I tell you, Margery, it is as true, as that you, and I, are standing here ; three wishes ! any three wishes I choose, to be granted this very night.

MARGERY.

Why troth, I can scarce believe it,—you don't joke, now do you?

HODGE.

(*With dignity*) No upon my honour . . . upon the honour of a rich man,—a great man,—a man who may be what he pleases.

MARGERY.

Three wishes! Oh how delightful! If I could but believe it I should be ready to go out of my wits.

HODGE.

And I only ask you whether a man after such an adventure may not reasonably be permitted to take a little repose.

MARGERY.

Repose? To be sure my dear, three wishes did not you say my love, I wonder who should repose themselves if you mayn't. Oh la! oh la! how delightful! my dear Hodge!

HODGE.

I am a drunken sot!

MARGERY.

No! No!

HODGE.

A lazy dolt.

MARGERY.

I did but joke.

HODGE.

Who neither cares for wife nor child.

MARGERY.

Nay, hush, hush.

HODGE.

Who would let them all starve,

MARGERY.

My dear husband.

HODGE.

Who will come upon the parish, ha ! ha ! ha !

MARGERY.

I can't but laugh at that, but let's be friends.

HODGE.

I can't bear malice, not I, come shake hands, good luck makes good friends.

MARGERY.

You have not wished for any thing yet, have you ?

HODGE.

Ah ! that is what distresses me.

MARGERY.

Pray Hodge, my dear Hodge, take good care what you choose, three wishes are not as if there were a hundred.

HODGE.

Right, very right, Margery.

MARGERY.

If I should think of any thing Hodge, I . . . I . . .

HODGE.

Yes, but as two opinions are better than one, I will go visit the Justice, he is a very learned man, and not at all

proud,—he has drank a pot of beer with me before now,—he shall give his opinion on the business, and then as I go, I will step in and speak a word with some of our creditors; they may be sure enough of their money now, only wait till night.

MARGERY.

That's well thought of, for if you were arrested to day, it would cost you a wish to get out of prison again. Good bye, dear.

HODGE.

Good bye, love.

Exit.

MARGERY *alone.*

Am I awake? Is my name Margery? Margery Hodge! the woodcutter's wife? Oh lud, oh lud! what a great lady I am going to be; I who thought no joy so great as a ride in neighbour Simon's pleasure cart, shall now drive about in my coach and six. I will have a ring on every finger, diamonds and rubies in my ears, the finest lace that can be had for money, a train to my silks and satins three yards long, and as I go sweeping along the village, the very children will cry, there goes Madam Margery... Margery! I don't like that name, and Madam Hodge is not much better. Well! it an't the first time a man has changed his name for an estate—an estate! How sweetly that sounds, an estate! A coach and six prancing horses! Oh Gemini! I shall go wild with joy.

Enter SIMON.

SIMON.

Good day to you neighbour Margery, I am glad to see you look so pleased, you've got some good news I hope?

MARGERY.

(*Disdainfully*) Do you think so, Mr. Simon.

SIMON.

Pray, if it an't too much liberty, may a body ask?

MARGERY.

If I am pleased, it an't for nothing, I assure you.

SIMON.

Indeed! I am glad of it, heartily glad of it.

MARGERY.

The whole village, aye, the whole county will go wild with envy. (*aside*)

SIMON.

And so, it's something very fine neighbour, hey?

MARGERY.

(*Aside*) The lady at the great house will be as mad as any of them.

SIMON.

Why, what the deuce

MARGERY.

I can't but laugh to think of it, ha! ha! ha!

SIMON.

Nay, as to that, I can't but laugh too, but neighbour . . .

MARGERY.

It will be so funny

SIMON.

Well ! but at least you may hear a body speak ; why, Margery, I say. (*loud*)

MARGERY.

Pray, what's the matter, Mr. Simon ?

SIMON.

I am very happy, as I said before, to see you in such good humour.

MARGERY.

Sir, you are very obliging. (*with dignity*)

SIMON.

Why what a plague has come to her, but for Susan's sake I won't offend her. (*aside*) Well, neighbour, since you are so soon to be my mother-in-law, for I hope as how . . .

MARGERY.

Did you speak, neighbour ?

SIMON.

And so, since it is all settled, that I am to have your pretty daughter

MARGERY.

You ! Mr. Simon, ha ! ha ! ha ! that indeed, ha ! ha ! ha !

SIMON.

I came d'ye see on purpose.

MARGERY.

On purpose to marry Susan ? It's droll enough.

SIMON.

(*Mocking her*) He! he! he! what's all this for? I shall lose patience I promise you. Why, didn't you promise me I was to have her?

MARGERY.

(*Coldly*) I once had some thoughts of it.

SIMON.

Well! well! no offence I hope, but you are very queer, dame Margery, methinks, why yesterday you thought me quite good enough for your daughter, aye and glad to have me too.

MARGERY.

Yesterday, ah, very true, I did think so *yesterday*, Mr. Simon,—that was a very different thing indeed.

SIMON.

And truly without boasting I may say that

MARGERY.

A day may make a very great difference, and let me tell you, neighbour Simon, that to day is not yesterday.

SIMON.

And pray where's the difference, an't you Margery Hodge, the wood-cutter's wife, and an't I Simon, one of the richest farmers in the parish.

MARGERY.

(*With dignity*) Yes, you are, and you always will be Mr. Simon, for whom I have the greatest respect, but I shall not long be Margery, nor Susan, Susan.

SIMON.

She's out of her wits. (*aside*)

MARGERY.

Oh la! how he stares, hi! hi! hi!

SIMON.

(*Aside*) Why sure there must be something here that I can't comprehend.

Enter SUSAN.

SUSAN.

Oh! my dear mother, is it true? is it really true? why, my father tells me we are going to be so rich!

SIMON.

Hey dey!

MARGERY.

Hold your tongue, child—don't talk on matters you don't understand—however I am very glad you are here, for I cannot take a better opportunity than this to..

SUSAN.

Dear mother! oh, pray! pray! (*afraid and half crying*)

MARGERY.

Did not I order you to love Mr. Simon, answer me that.

SUSAN.

Y...e...s, but then, I...I...

MARGERY.

Well, I now give you my commands, in one word as well as in a hundred, that you think no more of him.

SIMON.

Hey! what! why, Margery... sure...

MARGERY.

Margery, quotha! Susan do you hear.

SUSAN.

(*Smiling*) Oh la, yes! mother, I hear you very well.

MARGERY.

So much the better.

SUSAN.

Mr. Simon is very kind, but I can't say I much fancy him.

MARGERY.

So much the better, child, so much the better.

SUSAN.

No offence I hope, Mr. Simon, but indeed it's true.

SIMON.

Well! well! there is no need for so much talking.

MARGERY.

So, you see this matter is settled, neighbour Simon.

SUSAN.

And now dear, dear mother, tell me how we are to be rich,—has father found a treasure?

SIMON.

Oh ho! a treasure, that's it surely.

MARGERY.

Hold your tongue, child ; but I am so pleased that you don't care for Mr. Simon that I must kiss you, for you are a dear sweet tractable child, that's the truth on't. She shall be a Duchess. (*aside*)

SUSAN.

Now, if I don't speak a word for Harry. (*aside*)

MARGERY.

You shall have a husband, child, that you shall.

SUSAN.

(*Smiling*) Indeed !

MARGERY.

A younger, handsomer, smarter husband.

SUSAN.

Why to be sure I must say that Harry is much

MARGERY.

Harry ? Harry ? what's that, what's that ?

SIMON.

Harry, why here's something new.

MARGERY.

Who talked of Harry, pray ?

SUSAN.

Why sure, did you not say just now that you was to marry me to Harry ?

MARGERY.

I say so ?

SUSAN.

Why, you said I was to have a younger, handsomer, smarter who could I think it was but Harry.—

MARGERY.

Again! If you ever dare to mention that name, I'll make you repent it.

SIMON.

Pray, neighbour Margery, why don't you kiss the dear sweet tractable child!

MARGERY.

Well! it's no business of your's, neighbour Simon, mind your own affairs; but Susan, I forbid you ever to name his name before me, no! nor even to think of him.

SUSAN.

Nay! I can't help thinking of him—I think of nothing else.

MARGERY.

You saucy minx, how do you dare . . .

SUSAN.

La mother! how can I help it.

SIMON.

Poor child, I could not find in my heart to vex her. (*aside*)

MARGERY.

A poor low-lived creature.

SUSAN.

I am sure I shall never forget him.

MARGERY.

Won't you, Mrs. Prate-apace, take that then to make you

remember him. (*gives Simon a box on the ear instead of Susan.*)

SIMON.

Hey, softly, Margery, softly, the deuce is in the woman.

MARGERY.

I'll make you mind me I promise you, (*aside*) hold I must not stay talking here, my husband may be playing the fool if I don't look after him. (*loud*) Susan do you stay here till I come back. Your sarvant, Mr. Simon.

Exit Margery.

SUSAN.

I am very sorry Mr. Simon.

SIMON.

For what my pretty dear.

SUSAN.

Why for the box on the ear.

SIMON.

That your mother gave me?

SUSAN.

I hope it has not hurt you very bad.

SIMON.

I am very glad that it saved your pretty face.

SUSAN.

Her hand is a little heavy to be sure.

SIMON.

Why she don't beat you, my pretty Susan?

SUSAN.

No, not very often, only when she's angry about Harry.

SIMON.

And pray, pretty maid, who is this Harry?

SUSAN.

Oh la! Mr. Simon, why you know, don't you?

SIMON.

Indeed I don't, I am only just come to the village.

SUSAN.

And you really don't know?

SIMON.

No, how should I, child, all that I see is that this same pretty fellow Harry, is the cause that you won't have me.

SUSAN.

No Mr. Simon not quite that, but to be sure

SIMON.

To be sure you had rather marry him than me.

SUSAN.

Why, I can't say but what I had, Mr. Simon. (*curtseys*)

SIMON.

Heigh ho! I am answered, yet I love her for her frankness too,—but, you have not told me where this Harry is.

SUSAN.

Oh! Mr. Simon he is far, far away, sailing on the salt sea in the midst of storms and tempests.

SIMON.

Indeed!—So he is gone to sea, why did he leave you, pretty Susan?

SUSAN.

Why, he went to beat the French, and bring home a fortune, and then we shall be so happy!

SIMON.

But had he no friends, no relations that would help the poor lad?

SUSAN.

(*Smiling*) No relations, Mr. Simon?

SIMON.

Aye, was there nobody that could have done some little matter for him, instead of letting him go to sea?

SUSAN.

Ah! Yes, Mr. Simon, he *has* a relation, a very rich relation.

SIMON.

Well, and what did he say to it?

SUSAN.

He never heard of it, for Harry thought his relation would not let him marry so poor a girl as I.

SIMON.

He did very wrong not to tell him, for I am sure any man must be a hard hearted, stingy fellow, that would not assist a pretty young couple when a little money would set all to rights.

SUSAN.

Oh ! Mr. Simon, my dear Mr. Simon, do you think so ? and will you assist us, for Harry, poor Harry is your own, own nephew !

SIMON.

What my nephew, Harry Ploughshare ? Oh ! the pretty fellow ! why I protest I had forgot that he was more than a little boy, so high, aye, so goes time, heigh ho !

SUSAN.

You an't angry, I hope ?

SIMON.

I can't say I'm pleased, but no more of that. Susan give me your hand ; I can't have you for my wife, but you shall be my niece, and I will love you as my daughter. I will speak to your father about it this very day.

SUSAN.

Oh ! how good you are, we shall love you so dearly !

SIMON.

Your mother is a little in the tantrums or so to-day, but I'll warrant she'll come round. Well, I will go now to your father, and lose no more time. Good bye, dear Susan, good bye.

Exeunt separately.

ACT THIRD.

SCENE.—THE INTERIOR OF A COTTAGE.

Enter HODGE.—The JUSTICE in the back ground.

HODGE.

What a fine thing it is to be rich ! or to have it in one's power to be so if one pleases.—I did not know I had been so beloved in our village. It's a pity I had not known it, when I was in greater need of it; there is not a neighbour that don't shake me by the hand, and look so pleased !

Enter SIMON, and SUSAN following him.

HODGE.

Well, neighbour Simon—how are you ?

SIMON.

Thank you kindly. I am going to speak to you about our little Susan here.

HODGE.

Why look you, neighbour Simon, fewest words are best. I am much afraid Susan does not love you.

SUSAN.

Indeed, father, you are mistaken, I love him dearly.

HODGE.

Hey dey !

SIMON.

Aye, but she loves my nephew Harry Ploughshare better.

HODGE.

I fear, I fear, my wife will never consent, for you don't know all. Oh ! you have not heard. Such a history !

SIMON.

Yes, I have heard that you have found a treasure !

HODGE.

A treasure ! I have found three treasures, an't it Mr. Justice ?

JUSTICE.

Yes, if you act with prudence, as I shall advise.

HODGE.

That I certainly shall, for to be sure you must know better than any body in the parish.

JUSTICE.

No doubt. Now don't be uneasy I tell you. Giving advice is what I excel in, and every body to whom I ever gave it has been the better for it, for this reason, because. . because. . it is excellent.

SIMON.

But is it really a treasure and of what sort, neighbour ?

HODGE.

Why, I can't say as how that I have it yet . . but . .

SIMON.

Why, Margery as good as said . . .

HODGE.

Margery! why, between you and I, Margery is a fool.
Lord! here she comes.

Enter MARGERY.

MARGERY.

Hey, Mr. Simon—are you here still—I thought . .

HODGE.

Why, wife, he will help us—he has a good head of his own.—Mr. Justice has been trying this hour to find some idea in his head, and cannot find one. No, not one idea! not one!

JUSTICE.

Slow and sure, neighbour Hodge, one word from a wise man is worth a hundred from a fool.

SIMON.

(*Aside*) I am sure he's slow.

JUSTICE.

Now, let me consider. Did you say three wishes?

MARGERY. HODGE.

Yes, *three* wishes.

SIMON.

What! what! is this the treasure?

HODGE.

Hush, Simon, don't disturb him, he has perhaps got a notion,—come here, I'll tell you how it is.

MARGERY.

(*To the Justice.*) Mr. Justice, pray don't mind what my husband says, he is a very good sort of man in his way, but, to speak the truth, there is more sense in my little finger than in his whole body.

JUSTICE.

Softly, softly, good woman, it is not in this manner business should be done.

SIMON.

It is very strange I must say.

HODGE.

Very strange, and all true, I assure you.

SIMON.

(*Aside*) Well, I must see the end on't.

HODGE.

Mr. Justice!

JUSTICE.

Hush, don't interrupt me.

HODGE.

Well, let's sit down. Sitting is as cheap as standing as the saying is. Margery, get us some ale, and, d'ye hear, there's a dish of little gudgeons in the pantry. *Exit* MARGERY.

SIMON.

Good ale, Mr. Justice, is a great improver of the understanding.

JUSTICE.

Sometimes it is—sometimes it is not—on the contrary—there are cases—and that depends upon circumstances—where ale—even the best—cannot—absolutely—although—but—I hope—

Enter MARGERY and SUSAN, with a dish, table cloth, &c.

SIMON.

Let me assist you, Madam Margery.

MARGERY.

(Smiles and draws up her head) Thank you, Sir.—

HODGE.

The nearer it comes to the time the more anxious I am.

JUSTICE.

Why that is not unusual—I have known cases in which at the very moment when a man's fortune, his character—his—in short—might possibly—Well! let's drink.—

SIMON.

So we will—

JUSTICE.

(Snatching the bottle) Moderation, gentlemen. Moderation, I tell you.

MARGERY.

Well! now the wishes, come, pray make haste.

JUSTICE.

(*Drinks quick*) I make all the haste I can.

SIMON.

(*Quizzing him*) Ah, he's a clever man!

MARGERY.

Suppose now I was —

JUSTICE.

Will you—will you be quiet—

HODGE.

I'll tell you what I think—

JUSTICE.

Don't be too hasty, prudence is always a good thing—
be silent—

MARGERY.

Oh la! Oh la! my dear Hodge.

HODGE.

Hold your tongue, Margery.

MARGERY.

All depends on this moment.

JUSTICE.

Be silent! I command you both.

(*a long silence—Simon bursts out laughing—all hold
up their fingers, and cry—hush.*)

JUSTICE.

Hodge, you must wish—

MARGERY.

Well, well ?

JUSTICE.

For a cellar that shall always be full.

MARGERY.

No ! no ! that's too little. I should like to be a burning beauty.

HODGE.

A Beauty ! Margery—why where's the use of that.

JUSTICE.

First a full cellar—next a full kitchen—and then—

MARGERY.

Lord ! Mr. Justice—I tell you when we are rich, we can have all that, without the trouble of wishing for it.

HODGE.

Well, by all I see, we are no nearer than we were at first.

MARGERY.

(*Crossly*) Not a bit nearer.

SIMON.

Let's finish our ale, and then perhaps we may do better.

HODGE.

Aye, let's finish our ale—but we must eat something, as well as drink,—here Simon take the loaf ; Mr. Justice, here's some nice little gudgeons—they are but small, but you shall have a better dinner to-morrow, I promise you.

JUSTICE.

Very good, very good.

HODGE.

I know you are fond of nice roasted eel, I wish with all my heart there was one for your sake.

An Eel appears in the plate, they all rise and exclaim—

ALL

Mercy on us—there is an eel, an eel !

HODGE.

I'm undone !

The Justice and Simon set themselves down again to the table.

JUSTICE.

An excellent eel,—upon my word,—and well roasted too.

SIMON.

Faith ! an admirable eel.

HODGE.

Oh Margery !

MARGERY.

Oh ! ruin, ruin !

SIMON.

Nay, taste it, it's quite hot—no wonder.

HODGE.

I could kill myself.

MARGERY.

Oh! you blundering dolt.

HODGE.

Nay, Wife.

JUSTICE.

(*After drinking*) No words—no words.

MARGERY.

See what he has done!

JUSTICE.

Listen, can't you listen, and I will tell you how to make the best of it.

MARGERY.

An eel! a roasted eel! a pretty thing to wish for indeed!

SIMON.

It is very strange, faith!

MARGERY.

Oh! if I was not the best wife that ever lived, I would strangle you with my own hands.—

SIMON.

Good Soul!

JUSTICE.

Patience, Margery—Patience—Patience is a great virtue, and becomes us all.

HODGE.

Come, Margery, don't you go for to fret yourself into a passion, what's done cannot be undone, and as his worship says

MARGERY.

Oh ! I could

HODGE.

My dear wife . . .

MARGERY.

Don't come near me.

JUSTICE.

Aye, don't go near her, an angry woman is a dangerous person.

SIMON.

I never tasted any thing so good,—never in my life, to be sure it an't a bargain. It's a little dear, I must confess.

JUSTICE.

Well, well ! neighbour—we need not complain, we don't pay for it.

HODGE.

I must own I was wrong—but there are still two good wishes left.

MARGERY.

Two wishes ! two devils !

HODGE.

Come, come wife.

JUSTICE.

Why all your scolding won't mend it.

MARGERY.

Get you about your business Sir,—Oh ! if it had been me !

HODGE.

Hold your tongue, Margery, I say.

MARGERY.

Hold *your* tongue, Sirrah, and eat your eel if you choose.
When you might have had a mountain of gold,—a kingdom,—a world—to go and wish for an *eel*!—Oh fool ! fool !
idiot—ass—beast !

HODGE.

Lud ! Lud ! how you deafen me. I wish you were dumb.

MARGERY.

Aw, ho, haw. (*endeavours to speak but utters no words*)

HODGE.

Oh ! wretch that I am, what have I done now ?

JUSTICE.

Hey dey ! A dumb woman, rather extraordinary — I never met with one in all my practice before.

SIMON.

Here's two of your wishes gone. (*laughing heartily*)

MARGERY.

Aw, aw, . (*tries to beat them all round, and runs out*)

The JUSTICE and SIMON laugh heartily, HODGE remains quite stupified.

JUSTICE.

If this continues I shall no longer be wanted, but however, neighbour Hodge, at present I advise you . . .

HODGE.

To go hang myself.

JUSTICE.

No, leave that to the law. If you go on as you have done, there's no fear but you'll come to it at last.

HODGE.

Two wishes gone. Oh! oh! oh!

JUSTICE

And just when I was going to recommend . . .

Enter SUSAN crying.

SIMON.

What's the matter, pretty Susan.

SUSAN.

My mother . . .

SIMON.

I'll be sworn she has not scolded you.

SUSAN.

I met her just now, I was doing no harm, and she gave me such a slap in the face.

SIMON.

Indeed, I wish I had had it instead.

SUSAN.

And when I asked what I had done, she began beating me again without saying a word.

SIMON.

That I believe.

JUSTICE.

When one has nothing to say, the best way is—to say nothing.

SUSAN.

Well, if father loves me, I shan't care,—did you speak to him. (*to Simon*)

HODGE.

Oh! a sad mistake!

SUSAN.

Dear Father, what's the matter, Mr. Simon! Mr. Justice!

SIMON.

Ah Susan! very unlucky! an eel!

SUSAN.

An eel! what has an eel to do with this business?

SIMON.

Oh! too much—we have eat the eel at the expence of your father's first wish. The second has taken away your mother's speech.

SUSAN.

Oh! Father, father, take your third wish, and wish Harry home from sea again!

HODGE.

Aye, so I might my dear Susan, if I had all my wishes remaining, I would have given you one with all my heart, my poor dear child, but now !

SIMON.

Well, though I can't help laughing, yet I am half sorry too for Dame Margery,—she did talk a little queer this morning that's the truth on't, but then never to talk any more is a great punishment to be sure.

JUSTICE.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody good.

SUSAN.

Oh ! my poor mother, I dare not go to her, for fear she should beat me again.

SIMON.

Aye, her reasoning now is all at her finger's ends. Come, I'll go and see what she is about poor creature. *Exit.*

SUSAN.

Aye, do, dear Mr. Simon—Oh ! he is the best man in the world. But my dear father pray don't mind it, don't be so distressed, you have still one wish left.

HODGE.

Aye, child, but two are thrown away, and for nothing too.

JUSTICE.

Pardon me—not for nothing—for an excellent supper and a dumb wife. Not so bad—not so bad.

Enter MARGERY and SIMON.

SUSAN.

Oh dear! here is my mother! oh dear, dear, see how sad she looks, it's enough to break one's heart. Oh! mother, mother, can't you speak to me.

MARGERY.

(Takes hold of Susan's arm) Hon, hi, hon, haw.

SIMON.

Oh! It is a hard matter certainly, Mrs. Margery, and truly when you had a tongue no person knew better how to use it, I must say.

MARGERY.

(Shakes her head) Hon, hi, hon, haw *(points to Susan to go to her father)*

HODGE.

None of your signs, Margery, I tell you they won't do.

MARGERY.

(Holds up her hands to the Justice)

JUSTICE.

Poor dumb creature!

SIMON.

Indeed, indeed, neighbour Hodge, I think you had better take pity on your poor wife here a little.

HODGE.

My poor wife! why it's all along of her scolding that I have wasted my two first wishes, and do you think that I

will be such a fool now as to throw away my last wish and give her her tongue again, no, no, no.—Yet faith, I am half sorry for her too. (*aside*)

SUSAN.

Oh! Father when we had no wishes at all, we did very well, and except a little matter now and then, we were very happy. Oh! consider my poor mother.

HODGE.

Be quiet—I do consider her, and I am determined to make her happy and myself too.—

ALL.

That's right, that's right.

HODGE.

(*Aside*) Yes, I think, that will be best.. I think.. I think I had best be a king..

SUSAN.

Well, father...

HODGE.

Yes, Margery, you shall be happy, you shall be a queen.

SIMON.

Aye, Margery, but a dumb queen!

JUSTICE.

A queen, and not speak, that would never do.

MARGERY.

Hon, hi, ha, han. (*shakes her head mournfully*)

SUSAN.

Oh ! Father what good would that do her—where is the use of being happy if one can't talk of it you know.

HODGE.

Foolish girl ! wouldn't you like to be a Princess ? a king's daughter !

SUSAN.

No, that I wouldn't unless Harry was a prince.

SIMON.

That's a brave girl—Well Hodge if you will give Margery back her voice, I will promise for her she will never scold you again, that's to say no more than reason.

MARGERY.

(Holds up her hands to HODGE.)

SIMON.

No more scolding Dame Margery, and no more beating of my pretty Susan, d'ye hear ?

JUSTICE.

Beating ! that is what the law interprets to be an assault and battery, and is against the statute made and provided in the reign of . . .

MARGERY.

(Entreating) Hon, hi, haw, hon, hi.

HODGE.

But then I should be Hodge—Hodge the woodcutter to the end of my life.

SIMON.

Well ! and where's the harm ! You will be Hodge, and Margery, (though she did not think so this morning,) will be still Margery—and Susan will be pretty Susan ; your names are good names now—if you will but take care and keep them so.

SUSAN.

Well ! and I won't be so wicked as to wish for Harry back if it stands in poor mother's way.

MARGERY.

(Takes her hand and they fall at HODGE's feet.)

SUSAN.

Pray, pray let her speak again—my dear, dear father, think, think, what it is never to speak, no not all one's life.

JUSTICE.

It might perhaps be as well.

HODGE.

I wonder what's the matter with me,—I fear I'm going to be a fool, hang it,—what shall I do.

MARGERY.

(Entreating) Aw, haw, hon.

HODGE.

Well, well, I will—oh ! but then ..rise Margery, rise Susan. I will—I wish—I cannot resist you—I am resolved—Oh Oberon ! King of the fairies—I wish my wife to be—to be—restored to her speech. *(with a sigh) (a clap of thunder.)*

MARGERY.

(*Out of breath*) Oh! my dear husband—my dear Hodge, let me kiss you, and you Mr. Simon, and you my dear, dear Susan, and you Mr. Justice, and every body—Oh la! oh la! what a fright I was in—Oh! Hodge, how could you terrify me so—I shall never get over it, but come I won't bear malice not I,—shake hands—Oh! Susan, I wish Harry Ploughshare was here—I'd have you married this minute, and I hope you will make as good a wife as your mother has done before you—

HODGE.

Oh! oh!

JUSTICE.

If you can give no better advice than that, you had better have been silent still, he! he! he!

MARGERY.

Let me speak I tell you—what was I saying—you have put it out of my head.

HODGE.

There's no help now! will you hear me.

MARGERY.

Speak, my dear husband, speak, it shall never be me who will hinder you—speak—speak I pray.

HODGE.

Will you hold your tongue then.

MARGERY.

Ah Hodge! what a difference, I tell you to speak, and you bid me hold my tongue.

SIMON.

Ha! ha! ha!

JUSTICE.

—Ho! ho! ho! that's very true—she is much in the right.

HODGE.

But who will pay my debts? what will the butcher and the baker say?

JUSTICE.

Come, we must come to some conclusion—you know if you had taken the advice I have roared myself hoarse in giving you

SIMON.

My good friend—I will get them to let you have a little time—Harry Ploughshare is on his way home, and I will give him a farm on his wedding day, with twenty pounds a year—Hey, Susan? As for you, Margery, leave off scolding—and Hodge, my good neighbour, leave off drinking and take to work.

*Music heard at a distance, they all listen in surprise.
The Scene opens and discovers the KING—QUEEN—and
the PRINCESS OF THE FAIRIES.*

OBERON.

Tremble not mortals, though you see

The King of fairy land, in me;

Nor dread the splendour of our state,

No awful terrors round me wait;

Your griefs, your failings, I lament,
But punish vice, or discontent.
Your murmurs struck my watchful ear,
And drew me from the fairy sphere ;
I gave you wishes—but I knew,
The choice was far too great for you.
Then mortals bear the task assigned—
A life of toil, with chearful mind ;
Nor murmur at the lot that's given,
For industry is blessed by Heaven.

MAB.

Great Oberon, with powerful sway,
'Tis thine, to make proud man obey,
'Tis mine, the partner of thy throne,
To guard the female mind alone ;
To teach the wife, with virtuous wiles,
To deck her face with pleasing smiles ;
Good humour is the magic art,
That, having gained, retains the heart ;
Would you mend your spouse, good dame ?
Prince or Peasant 'tis the same,—
A happy home, a chearful wife,
Make a paradise of life.

ELFINA.

Elfina, too, a word would say
Before we close this happy day,

My part is sure a pleasing care,
'Tis mine, to tend th'unmarried fair,
To gather, with the morning dew,
The whiteness of the lily hue,
To tinge the cheek with rosy dye,
To point the sparkle of the eye,
To one, I give a beauteous face,
Another, some attractive grace ;
With innocence, join artless ease,
And teach the maiden how to please.

OBERON. (*advancing*)

No more!—I feel some strange alarm,
Some powerful spell—some potent charm
Controuls the magic of my wand,
And makes it tremble in my hand !
Yes ! Oberon for once must own
The terrors of a mortal's frown.
Yet should this gracious circle smile,
Should our weak art the hour beguile,
Applaud our effort, ease our pain,
And Oberon's a King again !

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