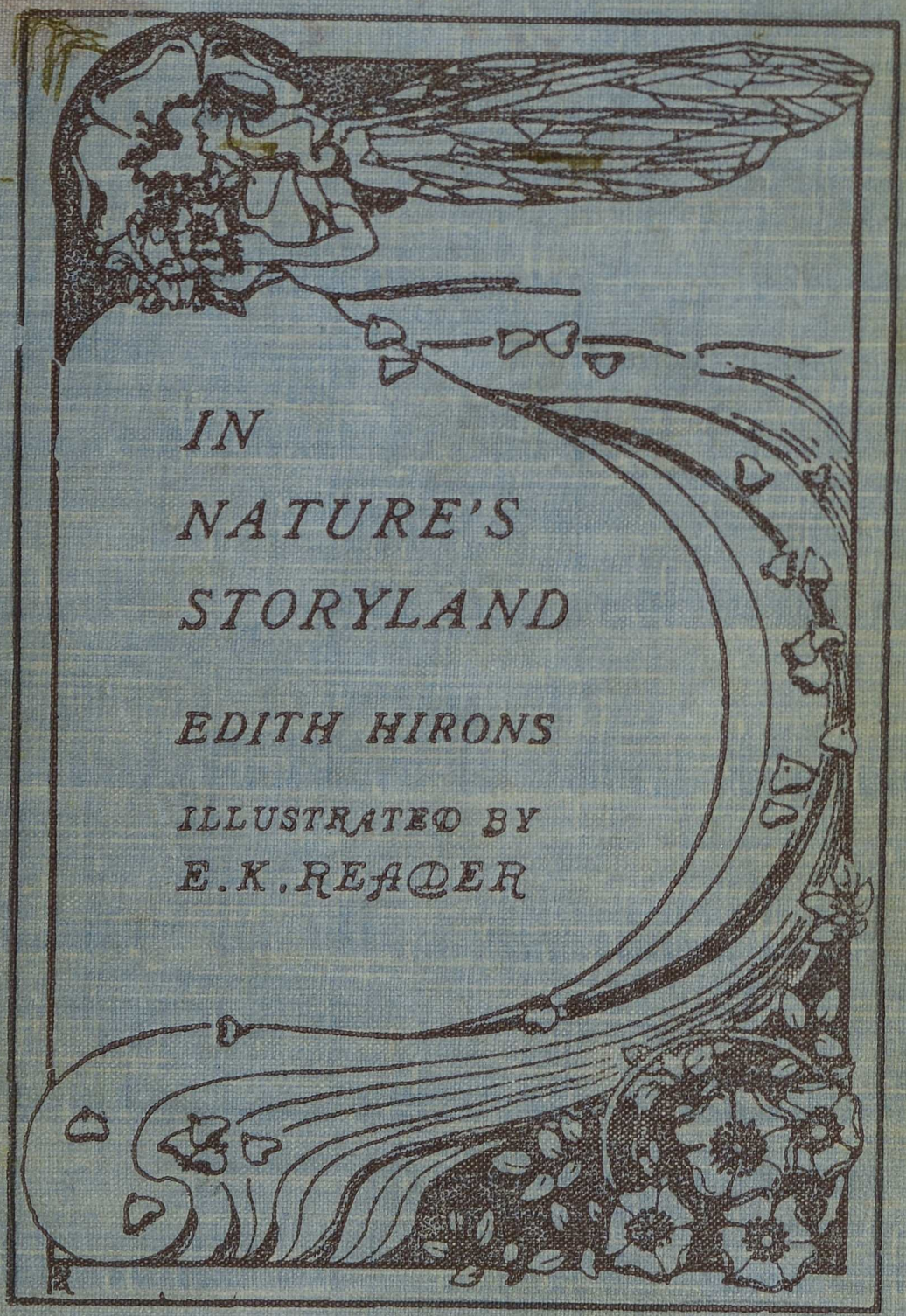
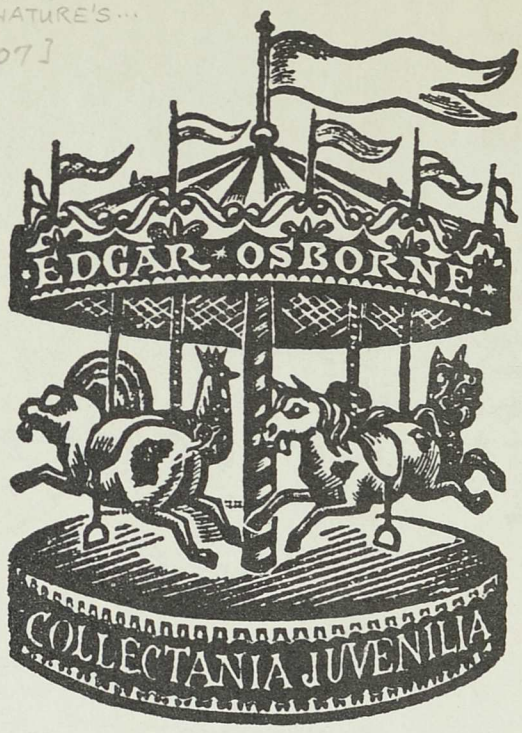


IN NATURE'S STORYLAND

EDITH HIRONS

ILLUSTRATED BY
E. K. REAGER



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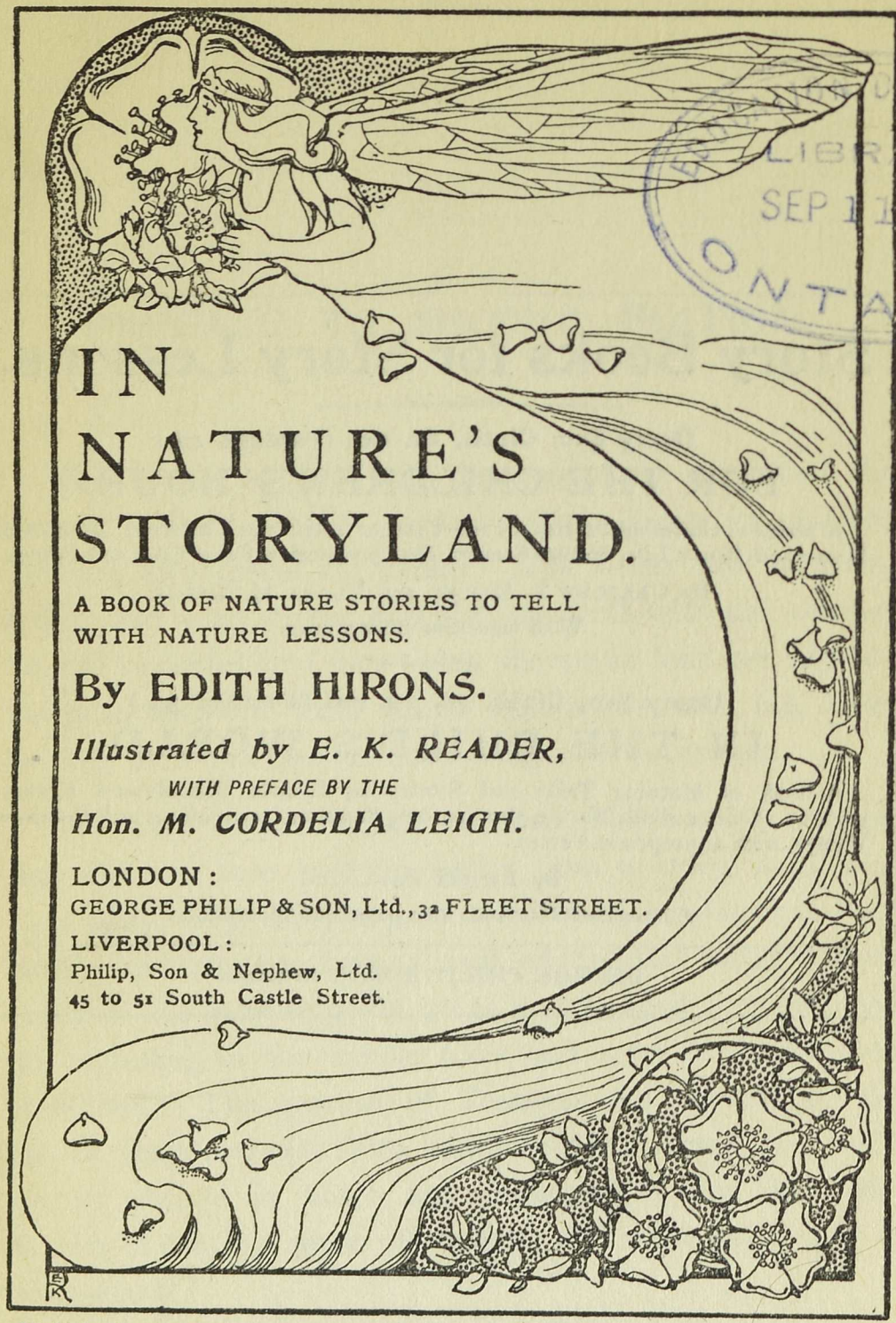

IN NATURE'S STORYLAND.

A BOOK OF NATURE STORIES TO TELL WITH NATURE LESSONS.

By EDITH HIRONS.

Illustrated by E. K. READER,

WITH PREFACE BY THE

Hon. M. CORDELIA LEIGH.

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Second Edition—Revised and Enlarged.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

Few words of mine can be needed to commend the Second Edition of this book to those lovers of children who are also lovers of Nature. The writer has evidently a close and sympathetic acquaintance both with the wonderful and beautiful land into which she would lead her scholars and also with the little people themselves, who can never be loth to follow her on such delightful excursions.

We have only to recall our own childhood to realize that children love nothing better than a story, and, next to a story, they enjoy a picture. We know also that both stories and pictures have a real educational value. How much of the knowledge of great and learned men has had its beginning in the simple tales and story-books of their childhood! The greatest of Teachers did not disdain the use of stories drawn from common-place scenes and well-known objects in home and country-life—the housewife looking for a lost piece of money; the sower going out to sow—since

> "Truth embodied in a tale
> Shall enter in at lowly doors."

Little children remember best the stories that are told —not *read*—to them ; and, if they are invited to repeat the stories afterwards in their own words, the impression made on their minds will probably never be lost.

Many little country children are poets by nature, moving in a Paradise of which the gate is only closed when they begin to think that fairies do not exist and that flowers do not really talk. But perhaps those who love Nature the best retain longest the child-like spirit: keeping their hold on that beautiful and happy kingdom into which this book invites us all, old and young, to enter and take possession.

M. CORDELIA LEIGH.

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PART II.

THE WHITE PRINCE.

(A Legend of the Snowdrop.)

The little White Prince lived with his father, King Albion, in the Palace Beautiful, which stood near to a great forest, where the trees grew so tall and closely together, that it was difficult to creep between them. But here and there were open spaces, where wild flowers patterned a soft, green, moss carpet, and the scarlet and yellow toadstools grew in fairy rings. The beautiful forest was the fairy Kingdom of Oberon and his subjects, the elves and pixies. It was a delightful fairy-land. On moonlight nights the fairies danced round their rings or played hide-and-seek under the biggest toadstools; the little people led merry lives indeed.

Suddenly all was changed; the only son of King Oberon died, and the forest fairy-land was plunged into mourning. The fairies came with words of comfort to their king, but he hid himself and refused to see them. They were dismayed.

"What shall we do?" they asked each other.

"I have a plan," said one, "though it is rather daring, but I would do anything to bring happiness once more to our beloved king."

"Certainly, so would we all," answered the other fairies. "Unfold your plan; do not keep us in suspense," they urged.

"We will fetch the White Prince from the Palace Beautiful, and he shall become the adopted son of King Oberon," announced the fairy, boldly.

For a moment his hearers were speechless with surprise, but when they found their voices, they all agreed that it was a splendid idea, and the next night while the White Prince was soundly sleeping, he was carried from the Palace Beautiful to Oberon.

The Fairy King was delighted with the pretty child, but King Albion was beside himself with grief. He sent out soldiers in every direction, but they could not find the Prince, neither could they enter the forest, for the fairies had cast a spell about it. At length King Albion gave up the search and mourned his little son as lost for ever.

The fairies were tiny people, and when they stole the little Prince they never thought that some day he would become a man. He grew taller and taller until he was six times as big as the Fairy King. When the little people realised this they were filled with horror.

"What a dreadful size he is!" said one.

"What shall we do with him?" asked another.

"Why not send him back to his own father?" suggested a third.

"Whatever we do we can't let him go away," replied Oberon; "he knows all the secrets of Fairy-land. No! we will weave a spell about him that he may grow no more." But the spell did not work, and the White Prince grew taller every day.

Then the angry fairies treated him unkindly, not one of them spoke to him except Kenna, who was Oberon's daughter, and therefore a Fairy Princess.

She loved the White Prince and had promised to become his wife, but when her father knew their secret, he became so angry that he forgot to be prudent.

"Turn him out!" he shouted; "he shall not stay in my

THE FAIRY KENNA AND THE WHITE PRINCE.

kingdom another hour." The fairies were only too delighted, and in a little time the White Prince was cast out of the forest. Then a strange thing happened—he at once remembered that he was King Albion's son, and that his home was the Palace Beautiful. He ran across the lawns and up the marble steps which led to the Palace; he knew his father, who received him with a joy too great for words.

King Albion made a splendid feast in his honour, and invited all the noble lords and ladies to make merry with him. The King beamed with happiness, which was reflected on the faces of the company, only the Prince looked sad.

"Are you not happy, my son?" asked the King, tenderly. "You shall in future dwell in the Palace Beautiful. I give it you now; I will reside elsewhere."

"Dear father, I am grateful for your magnificent present: but I shall never be happy unless Kenna shares it with me."

"Who is she?" asked the King.

"The Fairy Princess," replied his son. "She is now a prisoner, and I am hated by all the fairies because I could not keep small."

"We will send an army for Kenna," declared the King. "My friend Neptune, who rules the Sea Kingdom, will help me."

They gathered together a great army, and, as the King was old, the White Prince was chosen leader. His armour was dazzlingly white, his helmet was surmounted by three white plumes, and he rode a milk-white steed The people bowed low before him.

"There goes the White Prince! Make way for the King's son!" they shouted.

Neptune was quite as splendid. He rode in a blue and

silver chariot drawn by six prancing sea-horses. He was followed by all kinds of strange creatures from the caves of the sea. As they moved towards the forest the breath of the sea-horses was like a gale of wind, which shook the trees until many fell.

King Oberon drew up his fairies in battle array, but the moment they saw Neptune's strange followers they turned and fled in terror. The Fairy King and one of his captains tried in vain to rally them. Then the captain, in his despair, aimed an arrow at the White Prince, who was sorely wounded. Thus the poor little Fairy Princess found him. She laid soothing herbs on his wounds to heal them, and every leaf which touched him was transformed into a pure white snow-drop, until he was surrounded by a carpet of these sweet flowers.

After a time the White Prince revived, and was carried to the Palace Beautiful, where Kenna nursed him back to health, and became his wife—the White Princess. But the other fairies were driven from the forest, and their kingdom came to an end. Some hid in caves or under rocks, others in streams, where they dwell to this day ; for none of them are allowed in the great forest by the Palace Beautiful.

IN THE WATER MEADOWS.

The Hayes farmhouse stood on a little hill which rose from the surrounding plain—a plain of rich pastures, everywhere diversified with hedgerows and studded with trees. A winding row of silvery-leaved, dripping willows marked the river, which hurried between its green banks towards the sea.

It was February. A sudden thaw had been followed by heavy rain. The river could not contain the water, which overflowed its banks and flooded the plain, transforming its rich pastures into water meadows.

Farmer Jones, who lived at the Hayes, was almost a prisoner ; he could only reach the village by rowing his boat over the flooded fields.

The farmer had one daughter—Phyllis—a dear little maiden of four. She knew a great deal, but was puzzled by the rain.

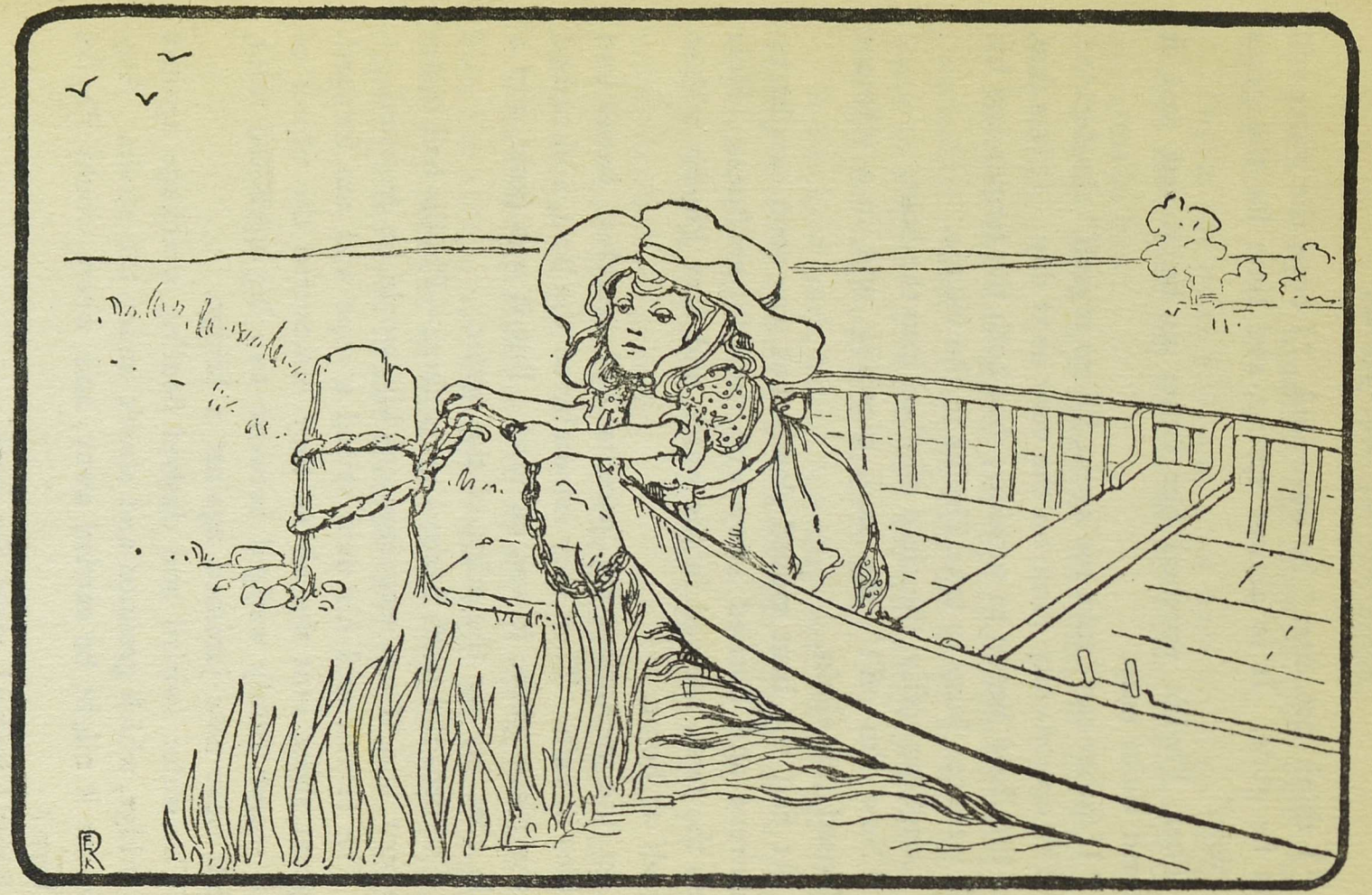
"Where does it all come from?" she asked.

The father pointed to the big dark clouds, scudding before the wind and hiding the blue of the sky.

"Those are rain-clouds," he replied. "You will be able to understand when you are older."

One day the farmer took Phyllis in the boat. She was charmed.

"You must take me again, please, father," she said, coaxingly.



PHYLLIS UNCHAINS THE BOAT.

"I think not, dear," he answered. "I hope the water will soon be gone. It is almost spring, and time for the grass to grow."

Then Phyllis watched her father as he rowed, and it seemed quite easy.

"If father can't take me again, I'll go myself," she decided.

The opportunity came on the very next day. It was fine, and the flood began to subside; but both the farmer and his wife were too busy to take Phyllis to the village.

Laughing softly, the child climbed into the boat.

"Now I'm off!" she said, gleefully, and in a moment unloosed the chain.

At first the boat moved slowly, but was soon caught by a current and hurried away with dreadful swiftness. How deep the trees seemed in the water, and how Phyllis wished herself at home.

In the meantime her parents had searched barns and stables in vain. Then they remembered the boat, and rushed to the place where it was chained. But it was gone, and a little coat lay by the edge of the water.

The dreadful truth flashed upon them—Phyllis had taken the boat, and, if not recovered quickly, would be drowned.

The farmer and his men seized a rope and ran forward. A great shout rent the air as they discovered the object of their search firmly wedged between two big uprooted trees, which were now jammed against a bridge.

The water swirled and dashed floating wreckage against the bridge, which groaned and shook under the strain. Any moment it might be carried away, and where would Phyllis be then?

Bump! bump! went the boat.

Crack ! crack ! answered the trees as they were thrown against it.

Phyllis sat quite still, and tried hard to keep back the tears. How glad she was to see her father, and she held out her arms to him.

"I must save my darling !" he cried, in an agony of desperation.

He then tied one end of the rope round his body, and his men held the other. Plunging into the water, he was quickly borne to Phyllis. In a moment she was clasped in his arms, and the men began to pull them to land.

It was hard work, but at last they were safely out of the water ; and the little girl's mother was crying for very joy that her child had been saved.

But Phyllis never forgot that terrible journey in the boat, not even when she grew up.

Now the river has been widened, and the water meadows are no longer flooded.

The Hayes farmhouse still stands on the little hill away from the village, but, when the snow melts, the meadows are quickly green, and in them the little children gather pink-tipped, golden-eyed daisies to make their pretty daisy chains.

THE TWO ROBINS.

Two robins lived in the mossy bank of a country lane. In summer, when the hedges were covered with wild roses, and insects were plentiful, this was a delightful home ; but in winter, when the roses were replaced by snow, and robin food was scarce, the mossy bank was cheerless indeed.

It was winter now, and the two robins—Redbreast and Brownie—were cold and hungry.

"Dear me!" said Redbreast; "the snow has quite covered our home. What shall we do to-night?"

Mrs. Robin began to cry. "Oh, Redbreast, we shall be frozen to death!"

"Come, Brownie, don't cry!" said Mr. Robin. "Let us fly into the town."

"I don't like the town ; there are so many children," murmured Brownie, plaintively.

"Tweet! that is only what you imagine," replied Redbreast, reprovingly.

Away they flew, over snow-covered fields and wind-swept hills, until they reached the town. They perched on a wall which surrounded a school. When the robins peeped in they saw children in every room, and beautiful fires to keep them warm.

"How I should like to sit by a fire," said Brownie, who was vainly trying to warm her cold little toes by drawing up

first one leg and then the other under her wings. Suddenly the children ru shed into the playground.

"Let us make a snow-man!" they shouted. "Let us make a snow-man!"

They brought hands and caps full of snow, until a splendid snow man glittered and spar kled in the cold wintry sunshine. They put sticks for his ar ms, stones for his eyes, and an ancient tall hat upon his head. Then the boys and girls danced round him, singing a merry song.

"How pretty!" remarked Redbreast, when they had finished. "Now *we* will sing a song." And sing they did, until they almost burst their tiny throats.

"Look at those little robins!" said a small fat boy, who resembled a prosperous robin himself.

"I expect they are hungry. We will put some crumbs on the snow-man's hat for them," said a kind little girl.

In a short time there were enough crumbs to feed a hundred birds, but the two robins dared not approach until the children had gone home. When the last child skipped out of sight round the corner, the robins flew quickly from the wall and began their meal. They ate and ate as if they would never cease—they were terribly hungry, these two little birdies.

"How good of the boys and girls!" said Brownie.

"Yes," answered Redbreast. "If children only guessed how grateful we are for a few crumbs, they would be put down every day. Now, where are we going to roost to-night?"

"Let us creep into the snow-man's hat," suggested Brownie.

"A splendid idea," declared Redbreast; and there was just

room to squeeze under the brim. It was beautifully warm inside the leather lining, and, putting their little heads under their wings, they were soon fast asleep. They awoke with a start. What was that dreadful sound which made them tremble?

"Meow! meow!"

Alas! they knew only too well the owner of that terrible voice—*it was the cat.*

"Meow! meow!" she screamed impatiently from the foot of the snow-man. She had discovered the robins, and was planning to reach them.

"Meow! meow! I'm after you! I'm after you!" screamed the horrid voice again, as she began to climb up the snow-man.

Now, during the night a thaw had set in; the snow was no longer crisp and hard, but soft and yielding. Therefore, when puss began to climb up the snow-man, he toppled right over and stood on his head. Redbreast and Brownie were prisoners, but safe; for the cat was so scared that she ran away, and never entered the playground again.

At last the morning came, and with it the school children. They laughed loudly at the snow-man's plight.

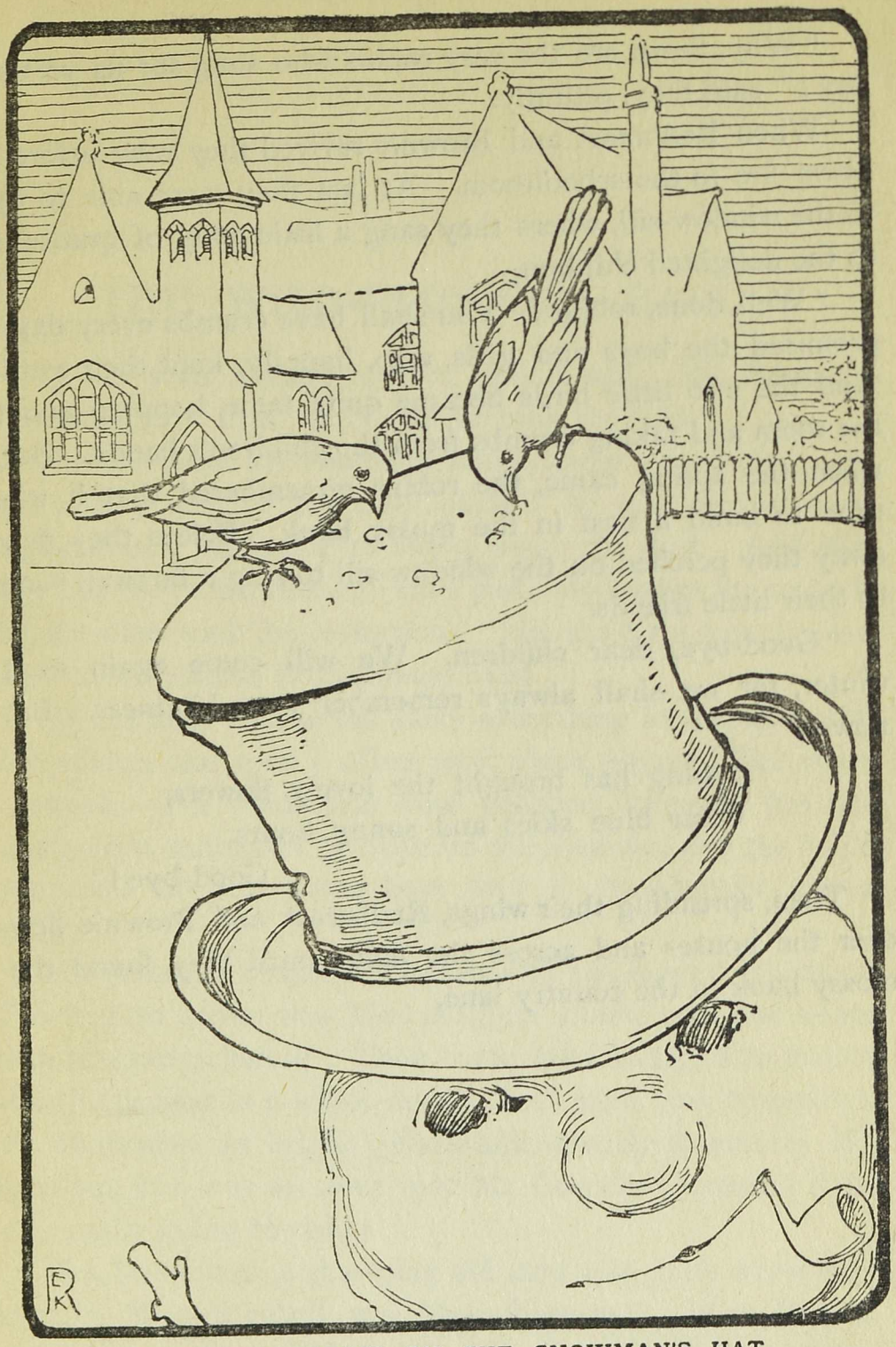
"Doesn't he look funny, standing on his head; and, oh! he's crushed his hat," said one.

"We've time to build him again before the bell rings," said another.

But the snow would not stick; it was thawing.

"It's useless. We'll take the old hat for a football," suggested a third.

The first kick disclosed the two robins, nearly drowned, and faint with fright. The children crowded round.



THE TWO ROBINS ON THE SNOWMAN'S HAT.

"Why, those are the very robins who sang for us yesterday!" said they, pitifully.

When Redbreast and Brownie revived they were before a warm fire in the schoolroom. At last they were able to fly to the window-sill, where they sang a little song of gratitude to the delighted children.

"Well done, robins! You shall have crumbs every day," promised the boys and girls, who, happily, kept their word. And the two little birds became quite tame, hopping about the room and taking crumbs from the children's hands. But, when the spring came, the robins remembered that it was time to build a nest in the mossy bank. Before they flew away they perched on the window-sill to sing a farewell song to their little friends.

"Good-bye, dear children. We will come again next winter, for we shall always remember your kindness. But now—

Spring has brought the lovely flowers,
Clear blue skies and sunny hours.
Good-bye!"

Then, spreading their wings, Redbreast and Brownie flew over the houses and across the fields until they found the mossy bank in the country lane.

THE WILD-FLOWERS' BALL.

It was such a good idea to have a ball. Mr. Primrose first thought of it, so, of course, he took the lead.

Not far from his woodland home, under a spreading oak, was a fairy ring. "The very place!" he said, and at once engaged two field-mice to sweep away the dust. And this they did very well, although they had only teazles for brooms. Mr. Swallow took the invitations. He could fly quickly, and knew where all the Wild-flowers lived.

On the afternoon of the party everything looked splendid. The spiders had spun a silken roof, which gleamed like silver lacework. The toadstools were polished for seats, the sun sent golden sunbeams to disperse the shadows, and the band, composed of six honey-bees and a grasshopper, stood ready.

Mr. Primrose received his guests by the biggest toadstool. The first to arrive was Miss Ragged Robin, who had never been to a party before. Then came Miss Daisy, who looked beautifully neat in a white muslin frock with pink trimmings. Mr. Buttercup, in bright yellow silk, greatly resembled Mr. Kingcup, who was so stout that Mr. Cowslip wondered if he were really going to dance.

Mrs. Dandelion, a charming old lady with fluffy white hair, brought Miss Bluebell and Miss Speedwell. Miss Forget-me-not wore the prettiest gown of sky-blue silk; but Miss

Violet was the belle of the ball. She looked charming in a deep-purple gown trimmed with pale heliotrope and gold, and sweetest fragrance floated around her. Many other flowers were invited too, and, when they had all arrived, Mr. Primrose opened the ball.

It was a delightful scene—the Wild-flowers in their charming bright-hued dresses, the murmuring music, and the sunbeams which flashed and quivered over all.

There was one little flower who tried to hide in the shadow of a toadstool. It was poor little Miss Ragged Robin. When the Swallow brought the invitation, she accepted at once ; she never thought of her gown. As the flowers assembled in their dainty dresses, some of many colours, she wished herself back in her marshy home. No one asked her to dance, and some of the flowers were even spiteful. Miss Forget-me-not was careful not to touch a ragged flower, while Miss Daisy remarked that at least she might mend her gown ; but Miss Bluebell was most unkind.

"I wonder how she dare come to our ball in a ragged, pink, cotton frock," she said, loudly.

Ragged Robin looked at her poor despised garments, and began to cry.

"I'll never—never go to a party again!" she sobbed.

Now, Mr. Primrose had noticed the little ragged lady. He saw that no one spoke to her, and he was quite aware of the reason. He determined to give his guests a lesson.

"Will you dance with me?" he asked.

"My dress is not pretty," she faltered.

"Never mind your dress, but let us begin," he said.

How proud she felt as she glided round the fairy ring: and she danced her very best. Mr. Primrose felt happy too ;

PREPARING FOR A WILD-FLOWER'S BALL.

and that is the best of a kind action—it gives even more pleasure to the doer than the receiver.

"I've never enjoyed a dance more," declared Mr. Primrose; and it was true, for Miss Ragged Robin was a charming dancer.

Ashamed of their unkindness, the other flowers begged to be her partners; and Miss Ragged Robin no longer wished to hide—she was as happy as she could be.

At last the evening shadows began to fall, and the blue mists to rise from the river. The sunbeams smiled and kissed the little flower-dancers "good-night," before they went to their father, the Sun.

Then the Wild-flowers went home also, for Miss Daisy was almost asleep, the bees flew away, the grasshopper curled himself up under a toadstool, and all was silent under the spreading oak.

MRS. OWL'S ACADEMY.

"Really!" remarked Mrs. Owl one day to her husband, "mice are becoming so scarce, that I hardly know which way to turn. Our two children had only a mouse's tail between them for dinner, to-day."

"Humph!" said Mr. Owl, "I have had *nothing*."

"*You*, indeed!" began his wife; but Mr. Owl hurriedly continued the conversation—he knew she was not pleased. She expected him to support the whole family. It was too much.

"What is to be done?" he asked.

"There is only one thing to do at present—I must start a school."

"A school?"

"Please do not repeat my words in that manner before the children: it is not good form," said Mrs. Owl. "Yes, I intend to begin school at once, though I shall not call it by that name."

Mr. Owl was much impressed, and his wife continued—

"I think academy will be more suitable. It's a splendid word which I learnt from two artists who were painting our oak tree. Of course, they were quite unaware that I was listening inside to all they said. I peeped out to see the picture, but it was nothing like this oak. I gathered that they intended to take it to the Academy and there learn to

paint owl's trees properly. Therefore you see an academy is a place where people learn things. I shall call my school an academy," she added, primly.

"Are you quite sure that the word means that?" enquired Mr. Owl, somewhat anxiously.

"Quite sure; and I intend you to paint a card to hang in front of Owl's Oak."

THE BIRDLETS' ACADEMY,
BY
MRS. OWL, T.W.
Mouse Catching, Nest Building, and the old Bird Languages taught.

"T.W." meant that Mrs. Owl had passed examinations in owl language, and could say "Too-whit, too-whoo" without a mistake.

Not far from the Owl's Oak was a rookery. This was a number of trees growing closely together, in the tops of which a colony of rooks had built their nests.

Lord and Lady Rook, who lived in the tallest tree, had several noisy, quarrelsome children. When her ladyship saw Mrs. Owl's card, she said to Lord Rook, "The very thing; our children shall go to the Academy to learn good manners."

Mrs. Crow, a friend of Lady Rook's, had four children, and these were sent also, while Mrs. Hawk sent *her* children, to show that she could afford it. Mr. Hawk grumbled at the expense—twenty mousetails per week—but his wife immediately silenced him.

"You must do as others do, and keep up appearances," she said.

Mrs. Owl was delighted, for on the very first day she had ten scholars, representing one hundred mousetails per week—quite enough to feed the owl children.

It was a pity that, after such a good beginning, trouble should arise—yet arise it did, and in this way. The birdlets quickly learned "Mouse-catching," which they practised at home to their parents' great delight; then "Nest-building"—and in this their progress was equally rapid.

Mrs. Owl began an old bird language. She thought her own the best, of course, and placing the rooklets, crowlets, hawklets, and owlets in a row, said very sharply, "Attention!"

Immediately they all stood very straight, with claws together and wings folded behind.

"Repeat this after me," commanded Mrs. Owl: giving a loud "Too-whit, too-whoo-oo."

The owlets managed "Too-woo-oo," which was a *little* like it, but the rooklets and crowlets said "Caw," and looked foolish, while the hawklets jerked out a despairing "Twerk," which was *nothing* like it at all.

"Try again," said Mrs. Owl, encouragingly.

They tried again with the same result.

"Very well," remarked Mrs. Owl, sternly; "you shall be detained until you *do* say it."

At this they began to cry; while Mrs. Owl lost her temper, and buffeted them with her wings, making them cry still more.

There was such a babel of "Caws" and "Twerks" that Mr. Owl fled away from the noise. But he quickly regretted his flight, for as he was unable to see in the sun, the small birds pecked him until he took refuge in the old church tower.

Meanwhile the rooklets, crowlets, and hawklets hurried

home to tell their parents that Mrs. Owl had taken away their playtime and flapped them with her wings, and all because they could not repeat long foreign words. Lady Rook at once visited Mrs. Owl.

"I shall remove the honourable rooklets from your Academy. I refuse to allow them to do *hard* lessons," said her Ladyship.

Mrs. Owl deigned no reply, contenting herself with blinking her round yellow eyes and ruffling her feathers, but the two owlets lay on their backs and began to kick in all directions. They looked so fierce that Lady Rook fled in terror.

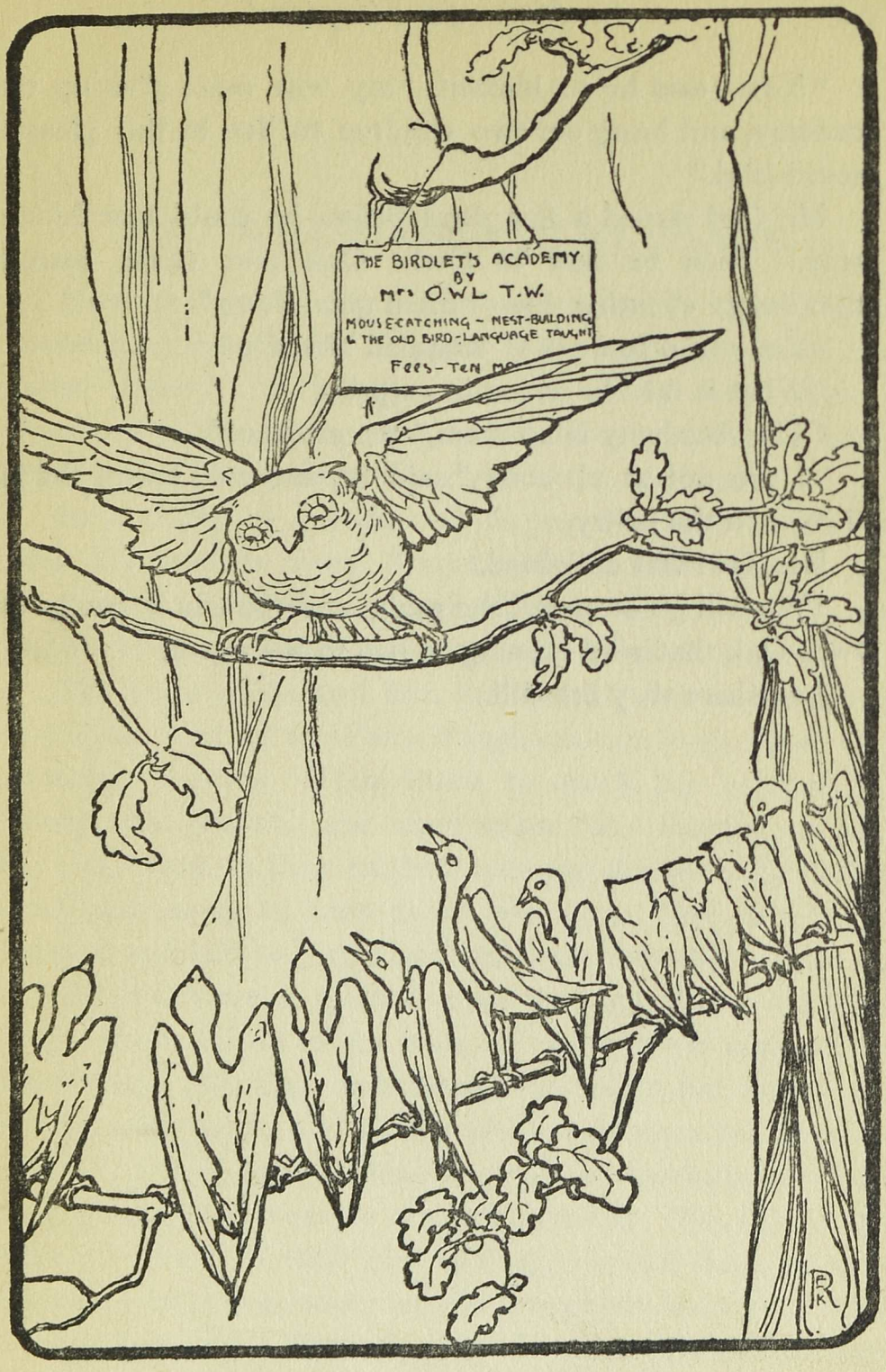
"Oh!" she said to Mrs. Crow, "what a dreadful family, and to think our dear birdies have associated with them. I assure, dear Mrs. Crow, that the owl children are absolute savages."

"Only fancy," said Mrs. Crow to Mrs. Hawk; "Lady Rook called upon the owls and was nearly killed. She has, of course, withdrawn her children from the academy, and, as we are cousins, I shall do likewise."

"And I," replied Mrs. Hawk. "I never *did* think much of the owls—birds who are never seen in the daylight. Neither do I believe in this fancy 'Mouse-catching'—what was good enough for me should do for my children."

In this manner Mrs. Owl lost all her scholars.

Mr. Owl was occupied much more pleasantly. As he sat on the beam which supported the bells in the church tower, he heard a sound which pleased him better than the sweetest music. It was "squeak, squeak" in front of him, and "squeak, squeak" behind him, in fact, squeaks came from all directions. He joyfully realised that the church tower was full of mice.



MRS. OWL AND HER PUPILS.

"Now," said he to himself, "my wife must give up that academy, and bring our two children to live in this pleasant mouse-land."

Mr. Owl stayed a few days before he could tear himself away. Then he flew to Owl's Oak and could scarcely enter before shouting out—"Such good news."

"You mean *bad* news," snapped Mrs. Owl.

"What is it?" he asked in surprise.

"The Academy is no more," she answered.

"I am not at all sorry," said he, and told her of the big fat mice in the belfry.

Mrs. Owl was delighted,

"We will go at once," she said; and the whole family left Owl's Oak that very evening to live in the tower.

And there they are still.

MR. AND MRS. STICKLEBACK.

How pretty the little river looked as it rippled along between green banks—fringed with feathery grasses and velvet rushes! In the middle of the stream were masses of forget-me-nots, and big white water-lilies; while tall water-soldiers and yellow-flags waved gently in the breeze.

In a clump of grasses and forget-me-nots lived a lovely fairy, Myosotis, or Fairy Forget-me-knot. She wore a blue gown, with a yellow sash and slippers: she had golden hair and silver wings, which made her look delightfully pretty.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Stickleback was in the water, just under that of the Fairy Forget-me-not, with whom they were very friendly. They loved to watch her painting the dainty blue flowers; she loved to see them flashing through the clear water in their rainbow coloured dresses, with stickles erect and ready to keep away intruders. They lived quite happily, and had only one trouble, which they shared with the whirligigs and water-spiders—they were all afraid of a giant frog. He had lived in the river for months, his appetite for insects was unfailing, and though he dared not attack the sticklebacks, yet he had been heard to announce his intention of stealing their eggs. These were placed carefully in a tiny nest among the roots of the water-weeds The little fishes were so proud of their nest and eggs which they jealously guarded; they were never left for a moment, because of what the frog had said. How they hated to hear his monotonous "quork! quork!"

That was the noise he always made—"quork! quork!" Therefore it was not surprising that everyone called him Quorky.

"Oh dear!" sighed Mr. Stickleback, "I am tired of staying by the nest all day long. I *should* enjoy a trip down the river."

"Why do you not go?" asked Fairy Forget-me-not. "Quorky has gone away."

"Gone away?" echoed Mr. Stickleback, unbelievingly.

"I hope Mrs. Duck has eaten him," said Fairy Forget-me-not, cheerfully; "it is quite true that for a whole week no one has seen him or heard his horrid croak."

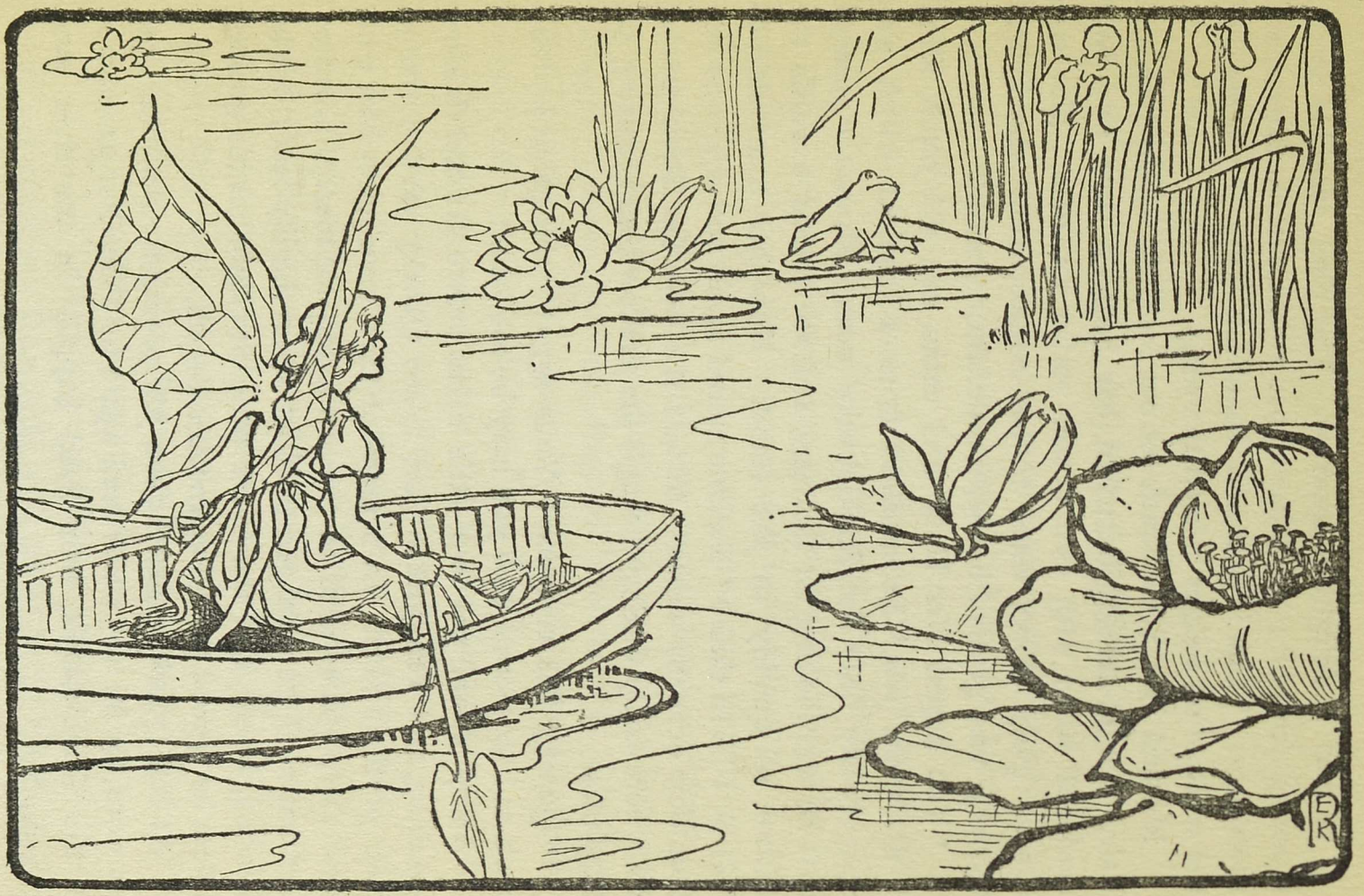
"Then I will go down the river, and Mrs. Stickleback shall come too," declared Mr. Stickleback, joyfully. "We'll start early to-morrow morning and swim to the shadow of the willow tree—a splendid place for fat May-flies—and I need a change of diet."

"It will be delightful. You must come with us, dear Myosotis," said Mrs. Stickleback.

The Forget-me-not Fairy shook her head. "I have hurt my wings and cannot fly," she answered, "but I can come in my little boat, though, as my rowing does not equal your swimming, you must not wait for me—I will follow at my leisure."

Thus it was arranged, and the three friends looked forward with delight to the morrow. They little thought that a mischievous tadpole had listened eagerly to their conversation and had related it to his father, Quorky, who had at that moment returned.

"Ha! ha!" laughed he, "so they go a-fishing for May-flies, do they? What a feast I shall have too! Eggs for breakfast. Quork, quork."



MYOSOTIS AND QUORKY.

It was a delightful morrow. The river sparkled in the morning sunshine: the fishes leaped to the surface to greet the sunbeams. "Life is beautiful, beautiful," sang the birds, and the whispering sedges echoed the song.

Mr. and Mrs. Stickleback set out for their willow tree, and Fairy Forget-me-not launched her boat—a very tiny boat made of bark, with two flower stalks for oars. She was rowing gaily along, when to her consternation she beheld Quorky, who greeted her with a defiant "Quork."

"You hoped Mrs. Duck had eaten me, did you? Mind I don't eat *you*," he croaked from a lily-leaf which was dangerously near the Sticklebacks' nest. Myosotis guessed that he was looking for the eggs, and she rowed towards the willow as quickly as she could. How her arms ached! "Shall I be in time?" she murmured again and again as her boat flew over the water. At last she saw the Sticklebacks, who were lazily flitting through the shallows, and feasting on May-flies.

"Quorky has returned! Your eggs!" she gasped. "Go back at once—even now you may be too late."

Away swam the two little fishes before she had finished speaking, and were just in time to see Quorky dive down to their precious nest. In a moment they were upon him with their sharp spines until he croaked loudly for mercy. Bruised and battered, he managed to climb upon the lily-leaf; but he was a prisoner, and the brave little Sticklebacks his gaolers, unless he agreed to live in another stream.

At last Quorky sulkily gave his promise. And he kept his word, for he was never seen again by Fairy Forget-me-not or the Sticklebacks, who lived happily in the river ever afterwards.

THE ROSE QUEEN.

Far, far away, over the snow-clad mountains and beyond the deep blue sea, there was a beautiful country where it was always summer.

The grass was deeply green, the woods were shady, and in every field was a clear pool, so that none need be hot or thirsty.

This delightful land was peopled with fairies—the fairies of blossoms which had bloomed and withered away. Did you not see them—these dainty tiny creatures playing in their own particular flowers, and taking care of them until they died?

Among these flower fairies were pure white Snowdrops, dancing yellow Daffodils, fragrant Violets, blue Cornflowers, splendid Sunflowers, sturdy Dahlias, and many, many others, who lived together in Flower Fairy Land.

But the Queen of them all was the Rose, who, dressed in pink and green satin, was charming to behold.

She lived in a dazzling palace of summer lilies, whose great green clappers and golden hammers swung inside their glistening bells, making chimes of fairy music. Two big arums kept guard at the palace-gate, which none might enter unless they knew the password—"Rose."

One morning the Queen awoke very early. Her waiting-maids, the Rosebuds, were still asleep.

"I think I will go out and bathe in the dew," she said. "I will not wake my Rosebuds, as I prefer to go alone."

How pleasant it was outside the palace! The air was fresh, and the dewdrops on the spiders' webs made them resemble nets of pearls.

With deep delight the Fairy Queen was gazing at one of these wonderful webs, when suddenly she heard a sound of many footsteps pattering behind her. Turning quickly, she beheld a most ugly creature, who appeared to her a perfect monster. He had a fierce-looking horn in front, and no less than sixteen limbs, instead of the two legs which are allowed to fairies. The Rose Queen remembered him—Mr. Caterpillar; she also remembered the words of her Aunt Cabbage Rose, who said:

"Beware of Caterpillar! It is he who eats the heart of a Rose."

She rushed back to the palace, and, in terror, hid herself in a flower; but she could hear Caterpillar quickly following, his sixteen limbs sounding a horrid "creeap, cruap—creeap, cruap."

"Creeap, cruap—creeap, cruap," and he was at the palace-gate. There it was his turn to be surprised.

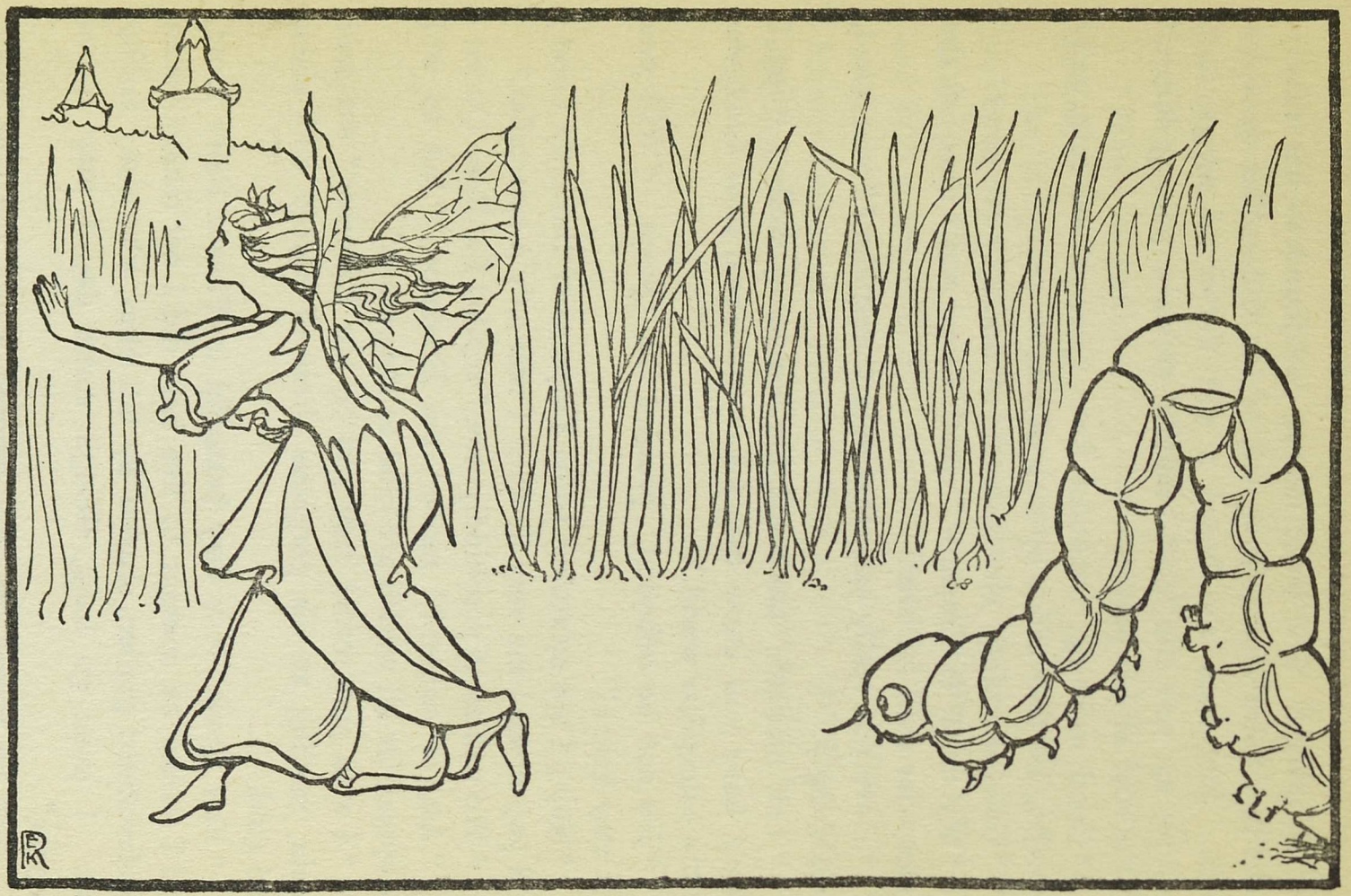
"Password!" shouted the guard number one.

"Password!" shouted guard number two.

But neither of them received a reply, because Caterpillar was unacquainted with the password—"Rose."

Then the big Arums fell upon him with their clubs. Whack! whack! The guards never ceased their mighty blows until Caterpillar lay senseless at the palace-gate. There they left him, because they were unable to move him.

In time the Rose Queen became accustomed to his withered-looking body, and could pass without feeling alarmed. One day she looked—and, yes! a strange thing



THE ROSE QUEEN CHASED BY MR. CATERPILLAR.

had happened. She went nearer, and found to her amazement that there was nothing left of Mr. Caterpillar except a shell. Just then she heard a soft flutter of wings, and, looking up, saw the most beautiful creature poising himself on the roof of her palace.

"Good morning, beautiful Rose Queen!" he said, gaily drooping his four wings by way of a bow.

"Good morning," she answered; "and who are you?"

"My name is Emperor," quoth he; "and I have left the Caterpillar shell for ever."

"Have you really been that ugly Caterpillar?" she asked, wonderingly.

"Yes, madam," answered the Emperor, stiffly; "but I would have you know that I was considered *most handsome* in the caterpillar world."

"Do not be offended," pleaded the Queen. "Will you not stay here?"

"Nay; I am returning to be Emperor of Butterfly Land; and you treated me very ill when I was only a caterpillar."

"We will treat you kindly now," replied the Rose Queen

"Ah, of course!" replied the Emperor; "but so will everyone, for all worlds are kind to Emperors."

"I wish you would stay and be our Emperor," she said again, looking at his gorgeous dress of purple and black and gold.

"Fair Queen, it is very beautiful in Flower Fairy Land, and I should be content to live here did I not remember an old-fashioned garden, shaded by tall elms, where my family live. I must go back, though some day I may return to you."

Then he spread his gaily-painted wings and flew away.

He reached the garden, but, alas! several Emperors were there already. They were his brothers, and were quite as handsome as he.

"Pray, what am *I* to rule?" he asked.

"Whatever you can find that does not belong to us," they replied, coldly.

The Emperor reflected deeply. In Butterfly Land he would certainly have to fight for a kingdom; while the Rose Queen had invited him to stay in Flower Fairy Land and help to rule over her beautiful country.

His decision was quickly made. He returned to the Flower Fairies and married their Queen, and they were all as happy as Fairies and Butterflies could possibly be.

JACK AND JILL.

Their real names were Valentine and Valentina, for they were twins, and their birthday was Valentine's Day. It was Uncle John who called them Jack and Jill, when they stayed at his farm. Although they were seven years old, they had not been in the country before ; so everything was delightful and new to them.

It was haymaking time ; wild roses and honeysuckles climbed over green hedges, and bright red cherries bobbed on the cherry trees ; the country was at its best. One fine morning they set out to spend the whole day in the hayfield. The haymakers cut down the grass, and, alas! the pretty moon-daisies and yellow-rattles too. The children loved the flowers, and felt really sorry to see them dried and withered by the sun and wind. They followed Uncle John into another field, where the grass had been cut some days before, and was grey and brown instead of green. It was now called hay, and that very afternoon must be carried to the stack-yard.

Jack and Jill wandered about until they felt hungry, and were glad to see their lunch. They had oat-cakes, butter-milk, bread and honey, and cherries—a feast fit for a king. When all these good things had disappeared, uncle returned to the farm for another waggon, and, as Jack elected to accompany him, Jill was left alone sitting in a nest of hay.

JILL IN THE HAYFIELD.

"Buzz, buzz, buzz," sang a bee, and the little girl felt so drowsy.

"Buzz, buzz, buzz." It was quite a lullaby, and soon she was asleep and dreaming.

A moon-daisy lay at her feet, and she would never again rear her pretty head towards the blue sky, for she was cut off close to the root.

"Poor Daisy!" said Jill, stroking the white velvet petals, already beginning to droop. "Poor Daisy! It seems so hard to die when you are young and beautiful."

"Little girl," said the Daisy, turning her big golden eye to Jill's face, "do not grieve; I shall wither, but I shall not die."

"I will tell you a story about my friend who was cut down last year. At first she felt faint—as I do now—but the sunbeams kissed her, so that she withered and felt no more pain; and the summer wind kissed her too, and that soft kiss enabled her to keep her fragrance for ever. She was then taken with the dried grass and placed in a haystack.

"As yet she had been of little use in the world, but one cold day, when the snow covered the ground, she and her friends were taken out in a bunch of hay.

"'How sweet this hay smells,' remarked the farmer. 'I shall give it to my beautiful horse, Fly-away.'

"My friend felt very proud indeed because she was to be given to Fly-away, and would at last be of some use in the world. And this is the end of my story."

Then the moon-daisy began dancing—dancing up and down—and she became more withered, until she did not look like a flower at all. Many of her withered friends came also, and one of them, a big yellow-rattle, suggested that Jill should be made to dance.

"No! no!" pleaded Jill in terror. "I do not wish to dance; I would rather not be hay."

"Rather not be hay?" echoed a hearty voice in her ear; and there was Uncle John looking at her. "I should think not, indeed; and who wishes you to be?"

"The yellow-rattle," replied Jill, half awake.

"You have been asleep, lassie," said her uncle.

Jill sat up. "Oh, yes, Uncle John! and I've been dreaming of the flowers. I shall tell Jack all about it, and he will not feel sorry for them any more."

But Uncle John made no answer, though he smiled and looked as if he could say a great deal.

THE COTTAGE BY THE SEA.

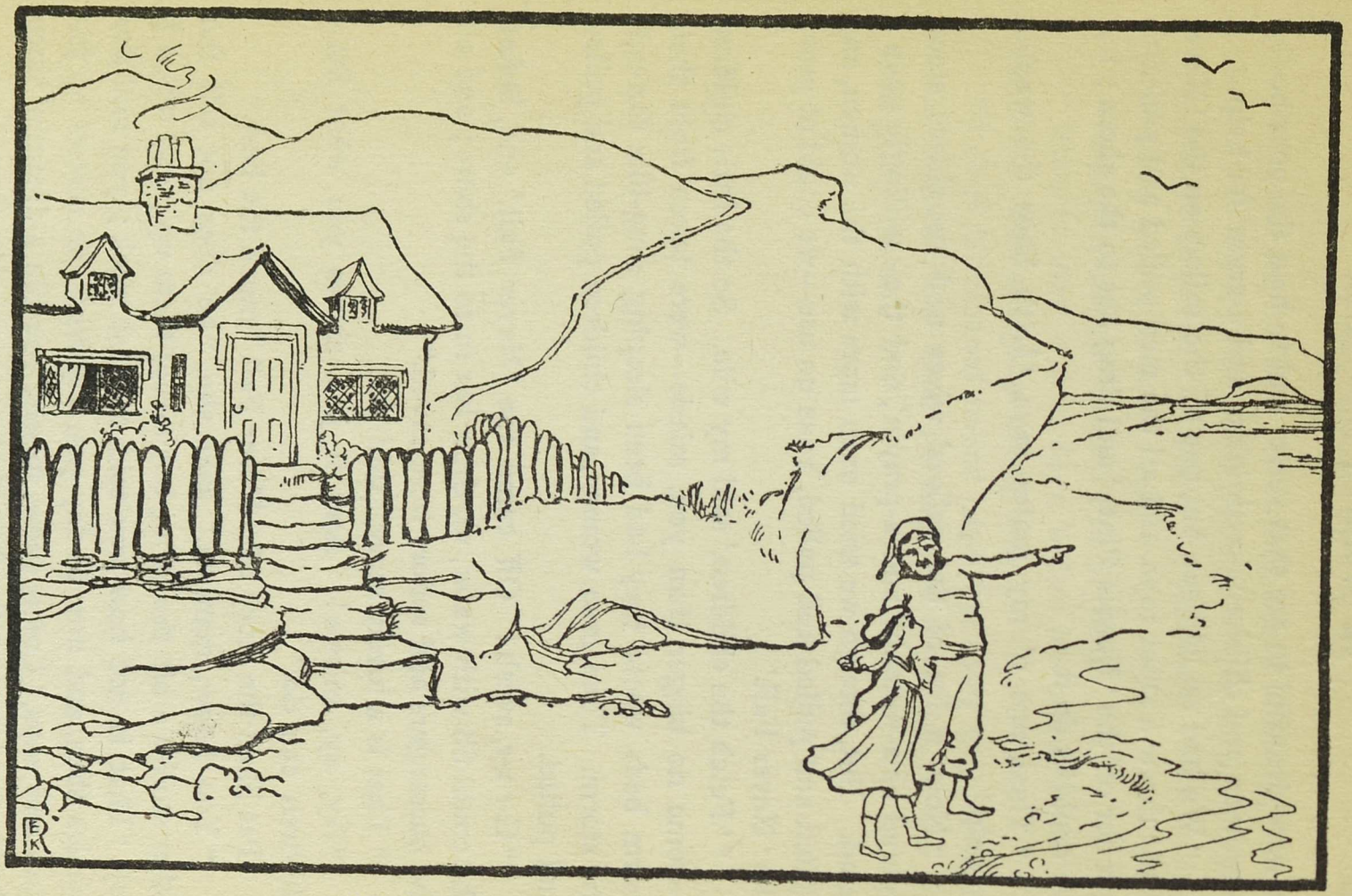
Pet was a little London girl, who had been so ill that she was ordered to the seaside. Her mamma took her to a tiny cottage at the edge of the water; when the tide was high it would flow over the doorstep. In front, stretched a beautiful bay, but on one side of it were sharp rocks, which were dangerous to ships in stormy weather. Behind the cottage rose a high hill, which in autumn was covered with purple heather.

Sometimes Pet and her mamma climbed to the top and looked down at the village on the other side, for there were no houses near the cottage, which belonged to an old sailor and his wife. The sailor told excellent stories, and often amused Pet in this manner.

One day he related to her the story of a ship called "Never Fail," which ran on the rocks.

"You know, missie," he began, "although it be pleasant here in summer, it be bad enough in winter—the storms be past belief. Last winter, a ship—the 'Never Fail'—struck on yon rocks, and she was full of sailors and passengers. I'd watched her for some time, and when I saw her drifting towards the 'Needle Pints' I ran and roused the village.

"All the men turned out, and we stood on the shore, while the waves ran so high that often we could not see the ship. At last, as we expected, she struck the 'Needle Pints.' Oh!



THE STORY OF THE GOOD SHIP "NEVER FAIL."

it were dreadful to see that vessel and to hear the poor bodies —women and children—a-shriekin' and a-cryin' for help.

"We had no lifeboat, but one of the sailors on the 'Never Fail' threw a stout rope, and all the men pulled and pulled to get her off the 'Needle Pints' and drag her to the shore; but we couldn't do it.

"Then, one o' my mates says, 'Let's have the women to help.'

"Now, a lot of the sailors' wives and daughters stood behind us a-watchin' and a-prayin', and they willingly gave a hand. But, though we tried once more with the women, and pulled and pulled and pulled, 'twas no use—we could'nt move the 'Never Fail.'

"'Fetch the children,' said my wife. So the little children —some no bigger than you, missie—were taken from their warm beds, where they had been sleeping snug-like through the storm. Then, men, women, and children pulled and pulled and pulled.

"G-r-r-r, swish! Off came the 'Never Fail,' and, before she could fill with water, we drew her in to the shore; and all the passengers and sailors were saved."

"That is a lovely story," said Pet.

"Ay, ay, missie! And it just shows you what little children can do."

Pet liked the story of "Never Fail" much the best.

"You know, mamma," said she, "he does not tell the other stories a bit the same, but mixes them up; and when I say, 'That is not how you told me last week; you said *five* whales then, and now to-day you say *ten*'—he screws up his eyes and says, 'Come, come, missie, you bin a-dreamin' since then; you know as the five whales was another time.'"

Pet's mamma smiled. "I expect, dear," she said, "he tells the story of "Never Fail" so well because it really happened. I read about it in the newspaper at the time. You must tell papa when he comes next week."

"Is papa coming?" asked Pet, joyfully.

"Yes; to stay a few days before he takes us back to London. You are quite strong now."

"I shall be pleased to see papa, but sorry to go away. I wish," sighed Pet, "that we might always live in this little cottage by the sea."

IN NUTLAND.

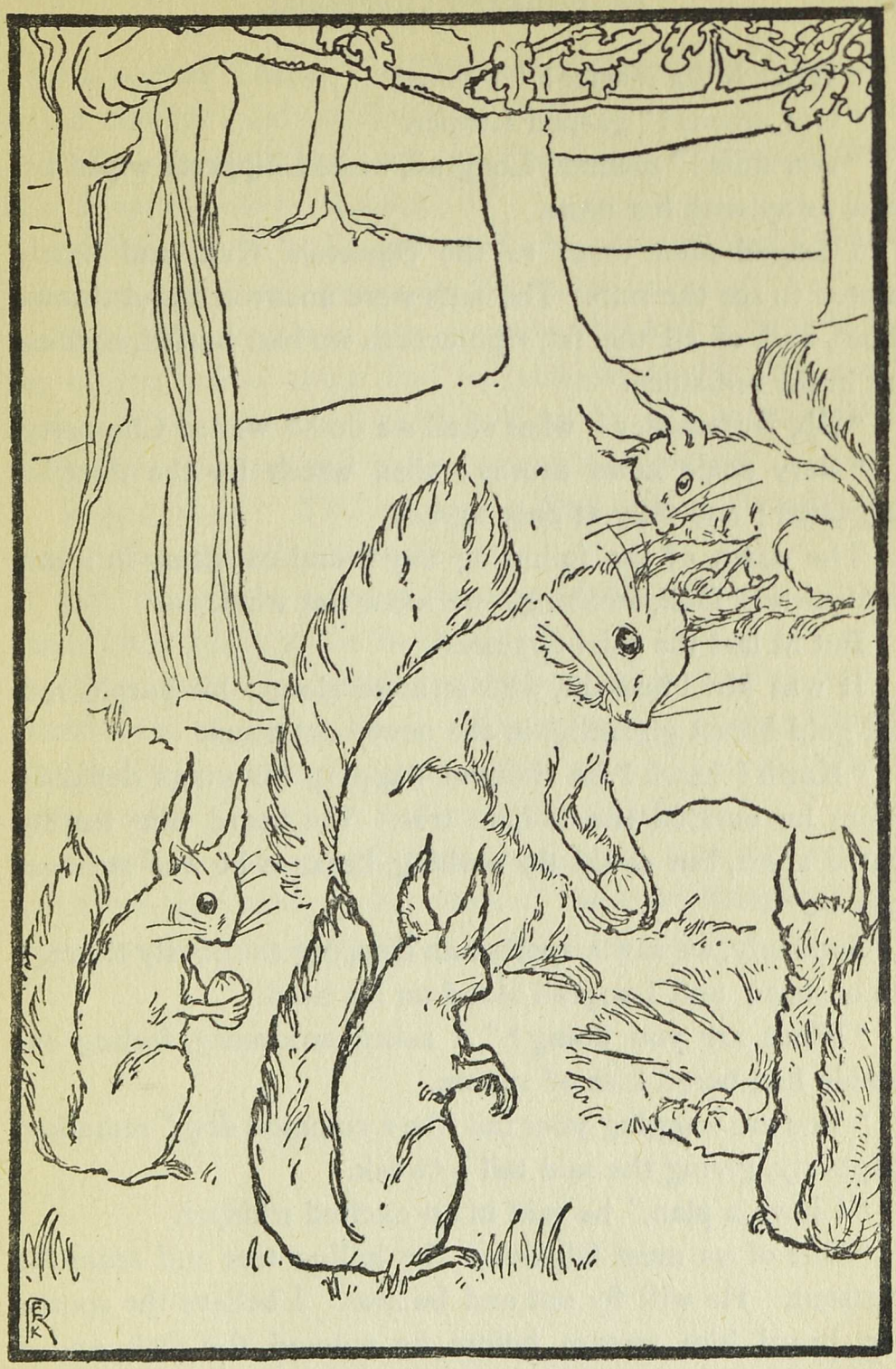
My name is Nutcracker, and I live with Papa and Mamma-Squirrel in Nutland. Besides them, I have also my brothers, Leaper and Longtail, and a sister, Chipperty.

You would love to see Nutland in October. Nutland, when all the trees have changed their summer robes of green for lovely autumn-tinted gowns of russet-gold or silver-grey. It is then that the hazel-bushes droop their rich brown clusters, great oaks shower down bushels of crisp acorns, while silvery beeches drop prickly purses of kernels for the squirrel-folk.

Yes! Nutland is a beautiful wood, and in the middle grows our Oak. All my family have used this tree since it kindly made its trunk hollow. It is the squirrels' store-house, though we also bury a great many acorns just where they fall under the trees. Our father taught us how to do it.

"Now, Nutcracker, Leaper, Longtail, and Chipperty," said he, "you must learn to dig holes in the ground for nuts and acorns"; and we were obliged to do it, though it was not nearly so easy as climbing trees.

We worked hard, and hid quite a large store of squirrel-food at the base of the hollow trunk. But the next morning we had a dreadful shock. Leaper, Longtail and Chipperty went to the Squirrels' Oak, leaving me asleep in the fir-tree. I awoke to see them before me—their whiskers stiff with horror.



MR. SQUIRREL TEACHING HIS CHILDREN.

THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN.

Autumn had come, and the boys and girls who lived at Windmill Farm were going a-blackberrying.

"You must try Garth Mountain, which is more of a hill than a mountain," said their mother. "I went myself when I was young, and the blackberries are splendid."

Early in the morning they were off—Jim, Will, Jane, Kitty and Marjorie—with happy faces, and each carrying a hooked stick and a basket, in which was a cake and a bottle of milk. Jim was the eldest and Marjorie the youngest; the rest came in between. Jim would not allow lingering to gather stray blackberries.

"Wait until we reach Garth," said he, "where some of the bushes are even low enough for Marjorie. We shall soon fill our baskets."

"I fill my basket," remarked Marjorie, who certainly considered herself the chief of the party. Her brothers and sisters laughingly took turns in carrying her pick-a-back, for she was but four years old, and it was a long way from Windmill Farm to Garth Mountain. The children enjoyed the walk, however. The sun was bright, and the squirrels were having an acorn breakfast beneath the oaks, while the robins and blackbirds feasted on berries.

The Garth looked nearer and nearer as the children trotted merrily along. They saw the sheep climbing its side, and at last they were at the foot.

"Here we are," said Will; "and, since we want our baskets for the blackberries, we'd better eat our cakes."

"Don't listen to him," cried Jim. "No; we'll gather our berries first."

"But what can we do with our cakes and milk?" persisted Will.

"Hide them in this hollow tree," replied Jim; and in this quaint place were stowed away five bottles of milk and five cakes.

Then the fun began. Surely such blackberries had never been seen before—great clusters of them, and so ripe that many fell off at the slightest touch. But the best ones grew on the top of the bushes, and were pulled down with the hooked sticks.

The five baskets were full at last, and the children's lips were as black as their fingers, showing plainly what they had been doing.

They returned to the hollow tree, and Jim put in his hand for the cakes. He felt nothing.

"This *is* the tree," exclaimed the lad, with a blank look, "but there is nothing."

"Oh, dear!" cried his brothers and sisters in chorus.

Jim tried again; but all had vanished.

"Someone has stolen them," observed Kitty.

"Marjorie is hungry," sighed the little one.

"It's all your fault, Jim," said Will. "If we'd eaten them first we should have been sure of them."

Just then an old man appeared. He had a hooked stick very like the children's, but he leaned upon it. He wore a white linen coat and a big hat; his cheeks were like apples, while his faded blue eyes had a twinkle in them still.

"Who are you?" asked Kitty.

"The Old Man of the Mountain," he replied. "I've lived here for seventy years. I was born in a little white cottage, but that was blown down, and I was obliged to build the little hut in which I live now."

"Do you not go away sometimes?"

"No," replied the Old Man of the Mountain. "I look after my sheep all day, with the help of my dog, Gyp. But you boys and girls seem to be in trouble. Can I help you?" he asked, kindly.

"I'm afraid not," replied Jim. "We hid something in this hollow tree, and now it's gone."

"Humph! You've been trespassing; no wonder your things were stolen. The tree is somebody's home."

"Who lives here?" asked Will, excitedly; "because, whoever it is, he's a robber!"

"Softly, softly, my young friend," replied the Old Man of the Mountain. "It's Mr. Fox, and he's gone out for the day. He thought he heard the hounds this morning. I'm quite sure *he's* not a robber."

"You seem to know a lot, Mr. Old Man of the Mountain," remarked Will, sneeringly.

"I do," he replied; "I know you've lost five small bottles of milk and five cakes."

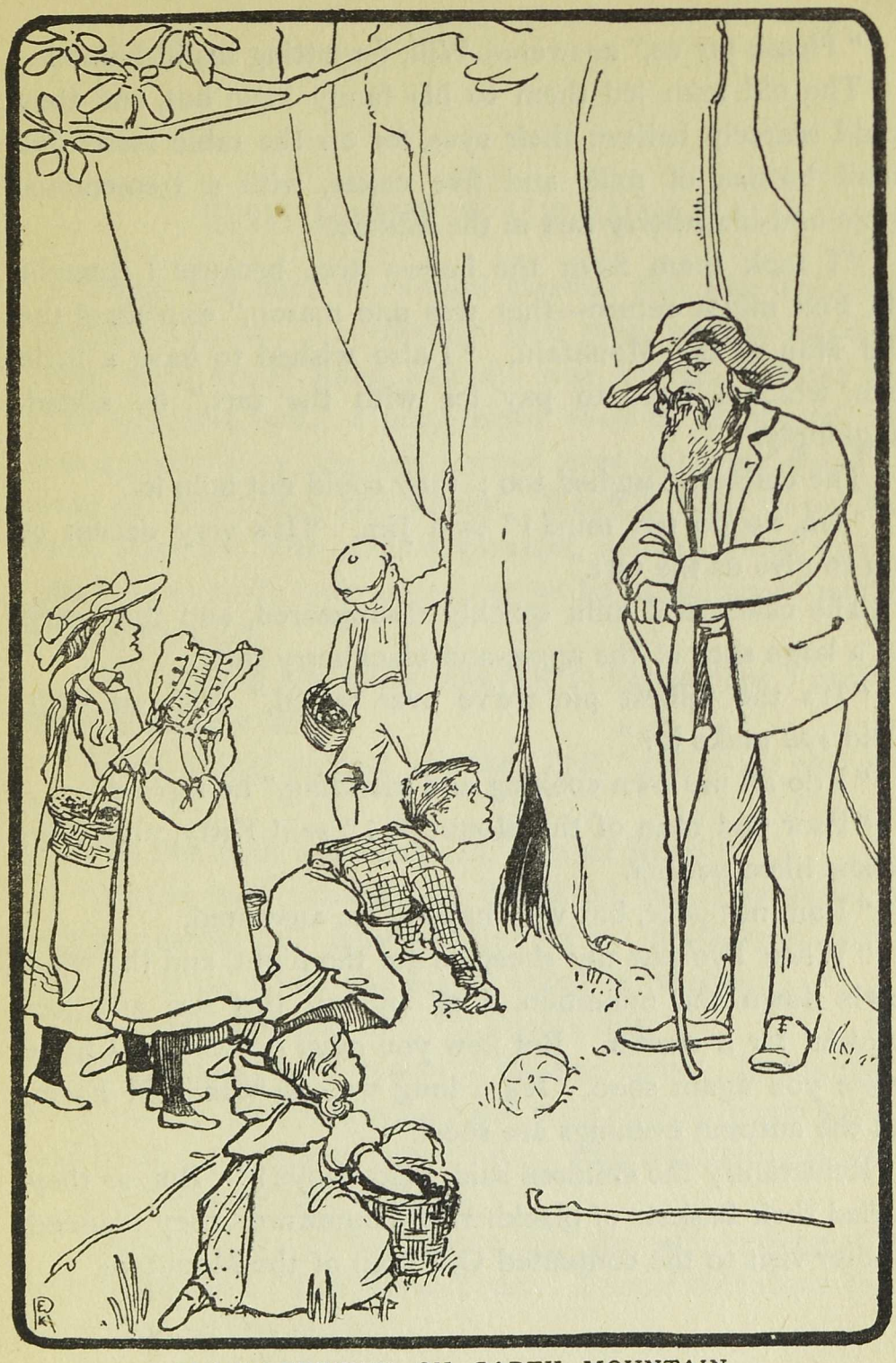
For a moment the children were dumb with surprise.

"Perhaps you can also tell us where they are; we are hungry," said Jim.

"We hungry; must have cakes," supplemented Marjorie, sternly.

Old Man of the Mountain laughed.

"Should you like some apple-and-blackberry tart?" he asked, smilingly.



BLACKBERRYING ON GARTH MOUNTAIN.

"Please try us," answered Will, forgetting his ill-humour.

The old man led them to his funny little hut, and they could scarcely believe their eyes, for on the table stood five small bottles of milk and five cakes, with a tremendous apple-and-blackberry tart in the middle.

"I took them from the hollow tree because I thought Mr. Fox might return—that was one reason," explained the Old Man of the Mountain. "I also wished to have a little joke, which I hope to pay for with the tart," he added, laughingly.

The children laughed too; they could not help it.

"Oh, *we* do not mind!" said Jim. "It's very decent of you to give us the tart."

The cakes and milk quickly disappeared, and they each ate a large slice of the apple-and-blackberry tart.

"It's the jolliest pie we've ever tasted," declared Will. "Did *you* make it?"

"I do all my own cooking and mending," he replied.

"Poor Old Man of the Mountain!" said Kitty, pityingly, for she liked neither.

"I am not poor, but very happy," he answered.

"When I've put my sheep in for the night, and the wind howls down the mountain, I sit by my turf fire and feel thankful for a shelter. But now you must go, though I hope to see you again soon. It's a long way to Windmill Farm, and the autumn evenings are short."

Reluctantly the children said "Good-bye!" But, as they carried their baskets of blackberries homewards, they planned another visit to the contented Old Man of the Mountain.

THE FAIRY'S UMBRELLA.

There was once a beautiful Heather Bell who had a fairy daughter, Erica. As Heather Bell grew on the moor, her roots were firmly fixed, and she was unable to move from that spot, but, being a fairy, Erica could fly anywhere. She was a pretty fairy, too, and always wore a purple dress, and lived on dewberries and honey. Many a fairy would have been charmed with such a pleasant life, but Erica was not. She wished to fly over smooth green fields and apple orchards just as bees did.

"I'm tired of the moor," she said to her mother, "and I'm tired of being a fairy."

"Fie! Erica," replied Heather Bell, "where do you wish to go?"

"To the fields and orchards," replied Erica.

"Fields and orchards are delightful, but they would not suit a heather-bell fairy; there are no dewberries and no honey. How would you live?" asked her mother.

"I should not stay long," argued Erica.

"You would have to stay if the rain came. Remember, if once you get wet, your wings will stick to your gown and you will be at the mercy of any creature who wishes to eat you."

But Erica refused to listen.

"Mother is trying to frighten me," she said, looking at the bright sunshine, "and it won't rain. I *must* visit those lovely fields beyond the moor."

Away she flew over thousands and thousands of heather bells and dewberry bushes, until she came to a smooth green meadow, curiously studded with white objects. Some were as large as a plate, others as small as a button, but all were exactly the shape of an open umbrella. Erica clapped her tiny hands.

"I need not fear the rain—here are hundreds of delightful umbrellas. She alighted on a big one, which was smooth as velvet; she crept under and, lo! it was brown. Then she ran to a pink one; it was cream underneath and wonderfully cosy —a pink umbrella, lined with cream satin.

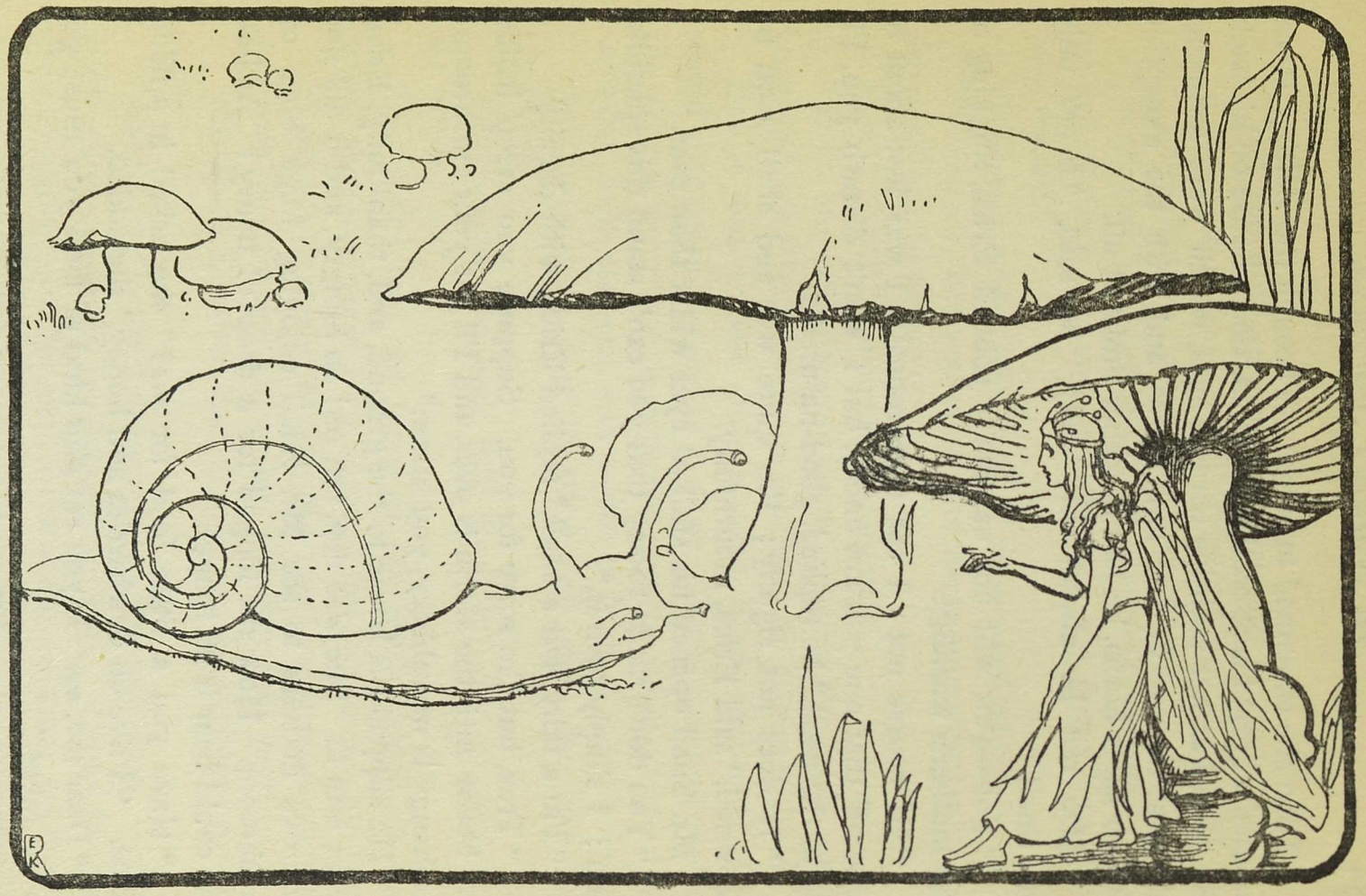
"Now, this is charming. I shall certainly stay here," declared Erica, quite forgetting the dewberries and honey.

"What a splendid world. I—don't—think—I'll—ever—go —back—to—the—moor." And, having made this decision, she fell fast asleep.

When she awoke, the weather had completely changed. The lightning flashed, the thunder rolled, and a deluge drenched the short grass. *And her pink umbrella began to grow!* At first she could not believe it, but it was true; it grew visibly.

"I don't mind," she said aloud, to encourage herself; "I shan't get wet."

But still the umbrella grew, and, as the cover rose higher and higher, the rain beat in under it. Sad indeed was Erica's plight. Her shoes were wet, her purple gown fell apart like wet blotting paper, and her wings glued themselves to the fragments. She could not fly; she had no food, and the drenching rain still continued. Cold and miserable, she remembered her mother's advice, and, too late, wished she had taken it.



THE HEATHER BELL FAIRY AND MR. SNAIL

Then she screamed in terror. Through the pelting storm loomed a great black creature, who carried a house on his back. He stared at her with his curious eyes, which were swinging about at the end of two long horns, and, with the exception of two short horns, he had no other limbs at all.

"Do not be afraid, little lady," he said, "I am only Mr. Snail."

"You—you will not eat me?" sobbed Erica, thinking of her mother's warning.

"Of course not; I eat mushrooms. I was just about to dine off that one you are under, but I won't disturb you, I'll go to the next," he replied, good-naturedly.

"It does not signify; I'm quite wet and shall soon be drowned," said Erica, mournfully.

Mr. Snail opened his stalked eyes wider than ever.

"You don't mean to say that you can't stand this splendid rain; I simply love it."

"I'm a fairy, not a snail," replied Erica, with dignity.

"True, but I'm sorry for you. Suppose you creep inside my house until the storm is over, and I'll eat your mushroom; exchange is no robbery, you know."

He slipped his house to the ground, and, thankfully, Erica crept into it. She was dry, but oh! so hungry, and it did not improve matters to see Mr. Snail enjoying huge bites of mushroom. How she longed for a drop of honey! At last she could bear it no longer.

"Have you a little food for *me*?" she asked in a faint voice. "I live on dewberries and honey," she added.

"Dear me, *no*. If you eat *that* kind of food you must go to the moor."

"That is where I live with my mother," explained Erica.

"Then you were very silly to leave her."

"I know that now," wept Erica; "and if I could only return I would never, never leave her again."

"Well, well," replied Mr. Snail, who was certainly tender-hearted; "since you can't fly through the rain, I'll take you back myself."

"Will you, really, Mr. Snail? How good of you."

"Not at all; but you must promise to be content with your surroundings, in future."

"I will, I will," she answered, eagerly.

"Then we will start at once," replied Mr. Snail, slowly hoisting his house, with Erica inside, upon his broad back.

But it was a slow journey, and Erica wondered if she would ever reach the end of it alive. Creep, creep, all through the stormy night and through the equally stormy next day—until Mr. Snail stopped with a jerk in front of Erica's house.

Great was the joy of Heather Bell when she beheld her fairy child.

"I thought she was lost for ever," she explained to Mr. Snail.

Then Erica told the story of Mr. Snail's kindness—how he had sheltered her in his house, and finally brought her home.

"I am very grateful to you, Mr. Snail; you must certainly stay here as our guest," remarked Heather Bell, prettily.

Mr. Snail, however, had already turned his horns towards home.

"Everybody in their proper places," he answered; "you in heatherland, me in my mushroom meadow. If your daughter cares to return on a fine day, I can always place a mushroom at her disposal"; and, politely waving his horns, he crept away.

But Erica had learned the lesson of contentment; she never wished to see a "Fairy's Umbrella" again.

THE GOLDEN APPLES.

Once upon a time, long, long ago, there was in a certain country a beautiful garden.

Flowers of every colour scented the air, and ripe fruit hung temptingly from the branches of the trees. But the most wonderful tree in the garden was that on which grew the golden apples—apples which glittered in the sunshine and dazzled the eyes of those who gazed upon them.

This fruit was most precious, being a present from the beautiful Queen Juno to King Jupiter. He placed the golden apple tree in the garden which he made especially for it, and commanded three fair ladies to guard it carefully.

At the gate, so that none might enter the garden, was a terrible dragon, who had one hundred heads. Jupiter thought that nobody would dare to pass this fearsome beast, yet there was one who *did* perform this feat—after a long journey and by overcoming tremendous obstacles. His name was Hercules, and he was the strongest man who ever lived. He delighted to shew his strength and daring, and by so doing hoped to obtain great honour. He killed a savage lion and a monster who had a great many heads. He caught a stag which ran more swiftly than any other; he fought successfully against the giants, and performed wonderful deeds. At last he set out to obtain the golden apples.

Now, Hercules did not even know the country in which they grew. He asked the water-fairies: *they* did not know

THE GOLDEN APPLE TREE.

either, but advised him to ask Tereus, who lived among the rocks in the sea, and knew everything. He was not a nice acquaintance. Some of his tricks were disconcerting, for if he did not wish to answer a question he immediately changed himself into a fish. Knowing this, Hercules caught Tereus asleep and held him until he told all he knew.

"Where are the golden apples?" asked Hercules.

"Ah! they are in the far off country of India," replied Tereus.

"I wish to obtain them," said Hercules.

"That you will never do," replied Tereus. "The apples are guarded by three fair ladies; the garden by a terrible dragon."

"Nevertheless, I am determined to bring the golden apples back," replied Hercules.

He crossed the sea and came to India, where he wandered many days without finding the beautiful garden, where the golden apples grew.

Then he came to a high mountain, on which poor Prometheus was tightly bound. As he lay, unable to move, a big bird, called a vulture, pecked his flesh, causing great agony. Hercules at once killed the bird, and freed the wretched Prometheus. The latter knew all about the apples, and was so grateful that he told Hercules the best way to obtain them.

At last Hercules stood before the terrible dragon with one hundred heads, who guarded the gate of Jupiter's beautiful garden. After a great struggle the dragon was killed, and Hercules managed to obtain three of the apples of gold.

But these were worth a fortune to him, and when he returned to his own country the people received him as a hero, and thought him worthy to be a king.

THE BITER BIT.

Farmer Brown lived at a beautiful old farmhouse in the country. It was a charming residence, with red cabbage-roses growing on the walls, ivy climbing over the roof, even to the chimney-top, and honeysuckle trailing round the porch.

There were old-fashioned flower beds planted with sun-flowers and hollyhocks, and on each side of the garden-walk were quaint-looking yew trees cut to represent peacocks.

A little beyond this pretty flower garden was the kitchen garden, with potatoes and other vegetables, while a fine apple tree grew in the midst. These gardens were at the front of the house ; at the back was a farmyard for cows and horses, sheep and pigs. The animals did not always live there, for, after being fed, they were placed in different fields.

The pigs were taken to the field outside the kitchen garden. It was named Acorn Field, because of the oak trees which flourished there. In the autumn they were brown with acorns, which fell when ripe, and were eaten by the pigs.

One of these animals was very dainty about his food. He was not a nice pig, and was always grumbling.

"What a shame," he remarked one day, "that a handsome pig like me should have to live on squirrel-food."

The other pigs laughed, and called him Growler.

One day when Farmer Brown entered his kitchen garden

he stood aghast. What a sight! The pretty flowers were trampled down, the potatoes rooted up, and a fine row of cabbages ruined.

"Who has done this damage?" said Farmer Brown. He looked at the gate, but it was fastened; down the hedge, but could find no gaps. He knew the garden had been visited by a pig, but how did he enter?

The farmer was puzzled, but determined to watch for the thief. The next morning he hid in the big apple tree, which commanded a view of both field and garden. Now, in the hedge an old tree trunk had been placed some years before. The centre of the tree had decayed, so that there was a tunnel from one end to the other, quite big enough for Growler to creep through.

The farmer saw piggie leave his companions, trot up to the garden hedge, cunningly look round him, and finally enter the hollow trunk. In a moment Growler was in the garden.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Farmer Brown. "I never thought of that; but I'll play piggie a trick yet."

After driving Growler back to the field, he dragged the hollow trunk from the hedge, placing it across the gap exactly at right angles to its former position.

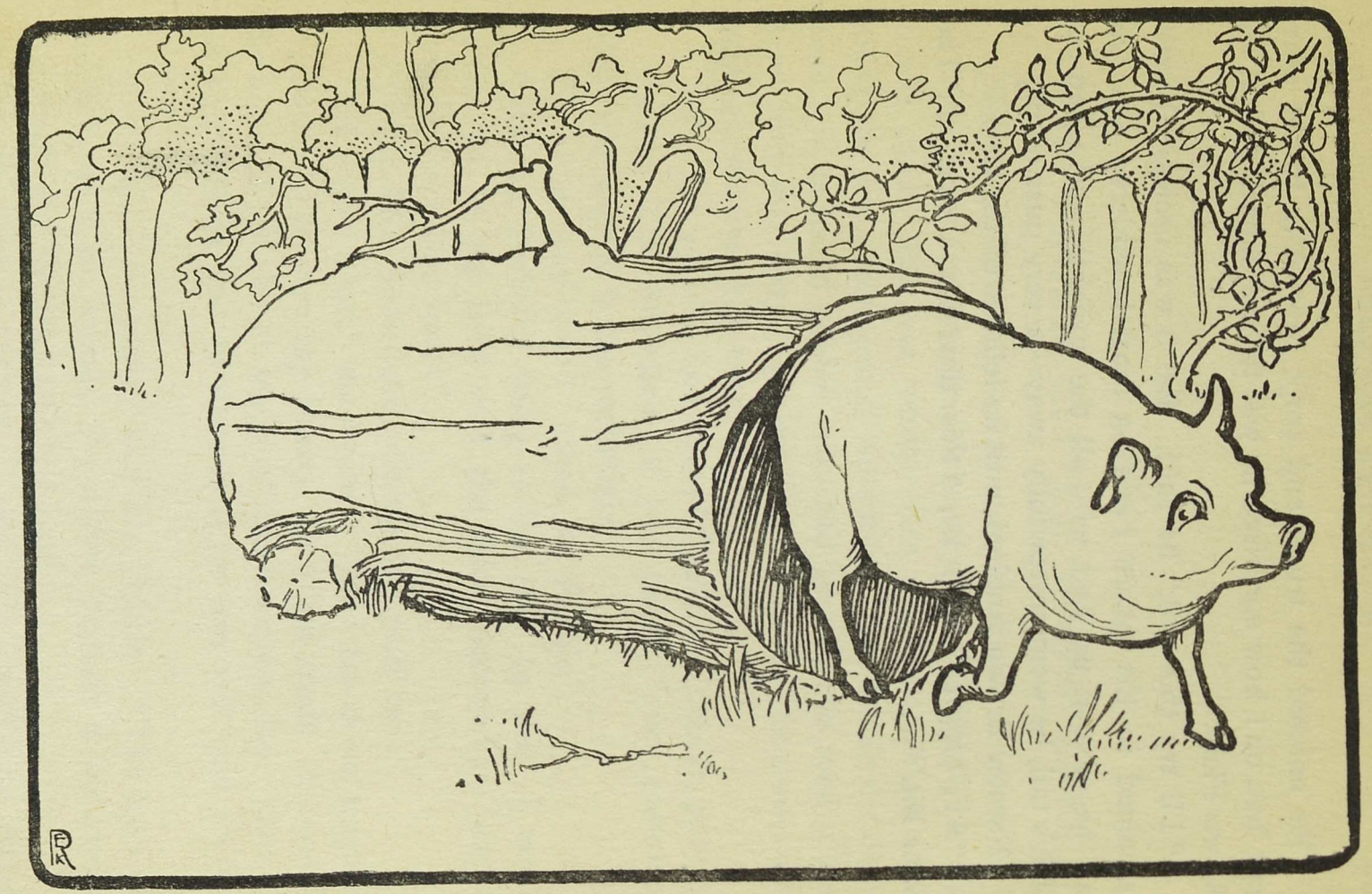
"Now," he chuckled, "when piggie comes back, as come back he *will*, he'll be surprised."

Once again Growler trotted up to the old tree.

"Humph! humph!" he grunted. "This hole looks different, somehow."

He sniffed it, then gave a little squeal of delight; he had found, as he thought, *another* hole.

"Why, there are *two* holes; I can get into the garden in two ways."



GROWLER SURPRISED.

He entered the trunk and crept cautiously to the other end, but, oh ! how surprised he was to find himself still in the Acorn Field.

" I'll try this end," he said. But it was useless ; he still remained in the Acorn Field—a most bewildered pig. At last he gave it up, and, with all the sprightly curl taken out of his tail, he went sorrowfully away—a very puzzled pig.

Farmer Brown laughed until he fell out of the tree.

"Ah, piggie !" said he, " this time it's a case of ' The Biter Bit.' "

THE PROUD LITTLE SNOWFLAKE.

She came fluttering down—down from the snow-cloud—so softly that no one heard her as she fell lightly on the frozen road. She was whiter than a goose's feather; but, alas! she was a very proud snowflake. She fell in the night, near a little round pebble, who had been in the road a long time, and was dirty. He could not help that, because many carts passed over him every day.

"How do you do, Snowflake?" said Mr. Pebble, politely.

"I am *Miss* Snowflake, if you please!" she answered, glistening angrily in the moonlight.

"Why are you cross?" asked Mr. Pebble.

"Because I dislike being in the road by *you*. I would rather be in the field with the other snowflakes, helping to keep the plants warm."

"Well, *Miss* Snowflake, you can be useful here."

"Of course I can," she replied. "As I am alone, someone will stop to admire my beauty, for I am made of crystals. You do not see things made of crystals every day. *You* are an ugly pebble, and so dirty that no one will care to look at you."

"But still, I am useful," said Mr. Pebble. "The boys like me because I am round; the horses, because I am smooth and small, and do not hurt their feet."

"Pooh! that is nothing!" said Miss Snowflake, rudely.

"People never care to look at ugly things like you, when they can see pretty things like me."

"Do not be too sure," retorted Mr. Pebble; "if pretty people are rude, they are never loved. Anyway, I shall last much longer than you, for, if the sun shines to-morrow, you will melt."

"I won't melt," she answered, crossly; "I am frozen hard."

Mr. Pebble said no more, but went to sleep. When he awoke the sun was shining brightly. It was a beautiful winter's morning. Miss Snowflake was awake too.

"Do you think the sun will shine all day?" she asked.

"I cannot tell," he answered; "we never know what the weather will be in this country."

"What is the name of it?"

"England; and a very good country, too, since it has made a law to protect *us*. The boys are not allowed to throw us about, for, if they do, the big blue-clothes' and brass-button men punish them."

"Dear me!" said Miss Snowflake. "And what happens if we snowflakes are thrown about?"

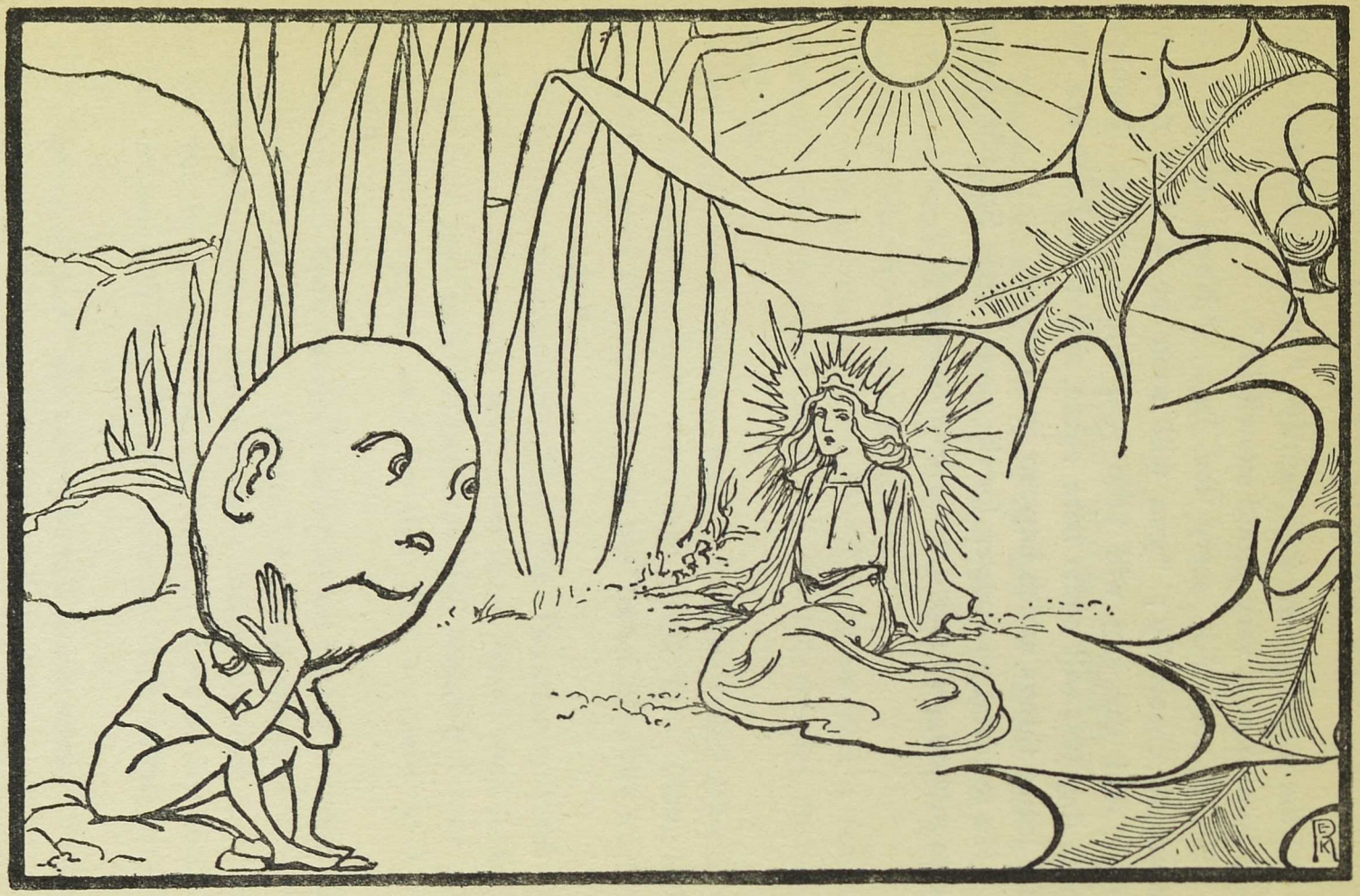
"Oh, nothing! The boys get hundreds of you and make you into snowballs, which they throw at each other. It is great fun."

Miss Snowflake did not understand this at all; further, she did not altogether believe it. But she began to feel very hot and damp.

Mr. Pebble saw that she was gradually melting.

"Come under my shadow," he suggested, kindly. But she was too proud, and the sun melted her bit by bit.

At last, however, when it was too late, she knew that Mr. Pebble was right.



MR. PEBBLE AND MISS SNOWFLAKE.

"I *am* melting," she said, faintly; "and it is my own fault, for I have been a very proud snowflake."

Mr. Pebble felt sorry for her. "Never mind!" he answered, cheerfully; "you will soon be a little drop of water, and the sun will take you into a cloud. Perhaps some day you will come here again, and then I can tell you of a lot of things which happen on my road."

He received no answer, for the proud little Snowflake was quite melted, *and only a waterdrop remained.*

BALDUR THE BEAUTIFUL.

The people of Asgard were as tall as giants, and much stronger than the strongest men are now. They were extremely fond of fighting, and each could do something that no one else in the world could do.

One warrior, named Thor the Thunderer, had a famous hammer, which, however far it was thrown, always returned to his hand.

Another—the handsome, cunning Loki—could transform himself into any creature: even into a little fly. Then, Loki had a son called Fenrir, who was not like a boy, but was the shape of a fierce wolf.

As might be imagined, Thor the Thunderer, Loki the Cunning, and Fenrir the Wolf were more feared than loved.

The best and most beloved of this wonderful race was Baldur the Beautiful, and he was just as good as Loki was evil.

Baldur had been carefully brought up by his parents, and was a good son to them. His mother loved him dearly.

One night Baldur had a curious dream, warning him that his life was in danger. In the morning he told his mother of this dream, and she became anxious, and feared greatly for him.

"What can I do?" she asked herself many times. "What can I do to avert this terrible danger from my son?"

Then she thought of a plan. She went all over the world,

and asked every living creature and every growing thing to promise that they would not hurt Baldur.

And people, and animals, and plants promised readily, because they loved him.

But there was one plant—the Mistletoe—which, unfortunately, his mother omitted to ask.

She saw it clinging to other trees for support, and thought such a weakling unworthy of notice.

When the friends of Baldur heard that no person or thing could hurt him, because of the promise to his mother, they took great pleasure in throwing at him for fun. The heaviest stone, the thickest branch, the sharpest arrow, all gleamed off him as lightly as a feather. Baldur was regarded as a wonder, and was more beloved and more popular than ever.

"What a fuss!" said Loki the Cunning, who was bitterly jealous of Baldur. "What can they see in him? If I knew of any way to kill him, it should be done."

Every day the hatred of Loki increased, and, unluckily, he discovered that the Mistletoe had not promised to spare Baldur's life. He quickly obtained branches of the plant and made them into sharp arrows.

"When *these* arrows are sped, they won't glance off the Beautiful Baldur like others do," he said to himself, with an evil chuckle.

Loki was too cunning, however, to shoot them himself. No one liked him, and he might be suspected.

But when Baldur and his companions were playing their favourite game, Loki strolled up to Höth, the blind man—

"It is to honour Baldur that his friends shoot thus, because they know full well that no harm will befall him. Will you not shoot like the others, if I guide your hand?"

BALDUR THE BEAUTIFUL.

The unsuspecting Höth joyfully assented.

Loki then gave a mistletoe arrow to Höth, who, all unwittingly shot the fatal shaft; nor did it glance off harmlessly, but struck with full force, and, alas! Baldur the Beautiful was slain.

The people were dazed with grief at the death of their beloved friend; the trees, and even the stones, wept for him; the birds could not sing, nor the flowers bloom, for very sorrow.

When poor, miserable Höth faltered out his story, vengeance was vowed on Loki. He was quickly caught, bound hand and foot, and sentenced to languish in a dreadful prison for ever.

The inhabitants of Asgard and every living thing mourned so long and so deeply, that, after a time, Baldur was allowed to come back to them again. And once more the birds sang and the flowers bloomed, because of the return to Asgard of Baldur the Beautiful.

THE BIGGEST BOOK IN THE WORLD.

Old Jake was seventy, but could neither read nor write. His grandson, little John, was seven, and could write his name and spell short words, though not well enough to read his new prize.

"Mother," he asked, "will you read my prize for me?"

"I have no time," she answered, "it must be placed in the bookcase until you are able to manage it yourself."

"May I shew it grandfather?" continued John.

"Of course, and he'll be quite proud of you. It is more than *he* ever won in his life."

"Was grandfather a—a—dunce?" asked little John, diffidently.

"Oh no!" replied his mother in a shocked tone. "When grandfather was a little boy, children were not obliged to go to school, and as there was not one in his village, he never learned to read at all."

"Poor grandfather! I will teach him myself," said the little boy, pityingly.

"Ah, well!" laughed his mother, "seventy and seven are more alike than people think. Remember to ask him to tea, I shall make some cheese-cakes."

Little John set off with the prize under his arm. He met

his grandfather by the stile which leads into the cornfield, and at once shewed the book.

"I'm sorry neither of us can read it," said John, "but I'll teach you all I know, if you like."

Grandfather's eyes twinkled.

"That is very good of you," he answered, "but just let me see the prize."

"It's a fine book," he said, "nice long words, and no pictures to take your attention from the reading."

"I should like some pictures," remarked his small grandson.

"Ah, well! you can't have everything; suppose you teach me the letters you know," suggested his grandfather.

Little John gladly agreed, and his lesson must have been successful, for his grandfather could soon find out every "O" on the first page.

"Now," said old Jake, "you've shewn me how to read your prize, I'll shew you how to read the biggest book in the world."

"Are there any pictures?" asked John cautiously.

"It is full of beautiful pictures."

"And stories?"

"There are thousands and thousands of stories as well as thousands and thousands of pictures," replied his grandfather.

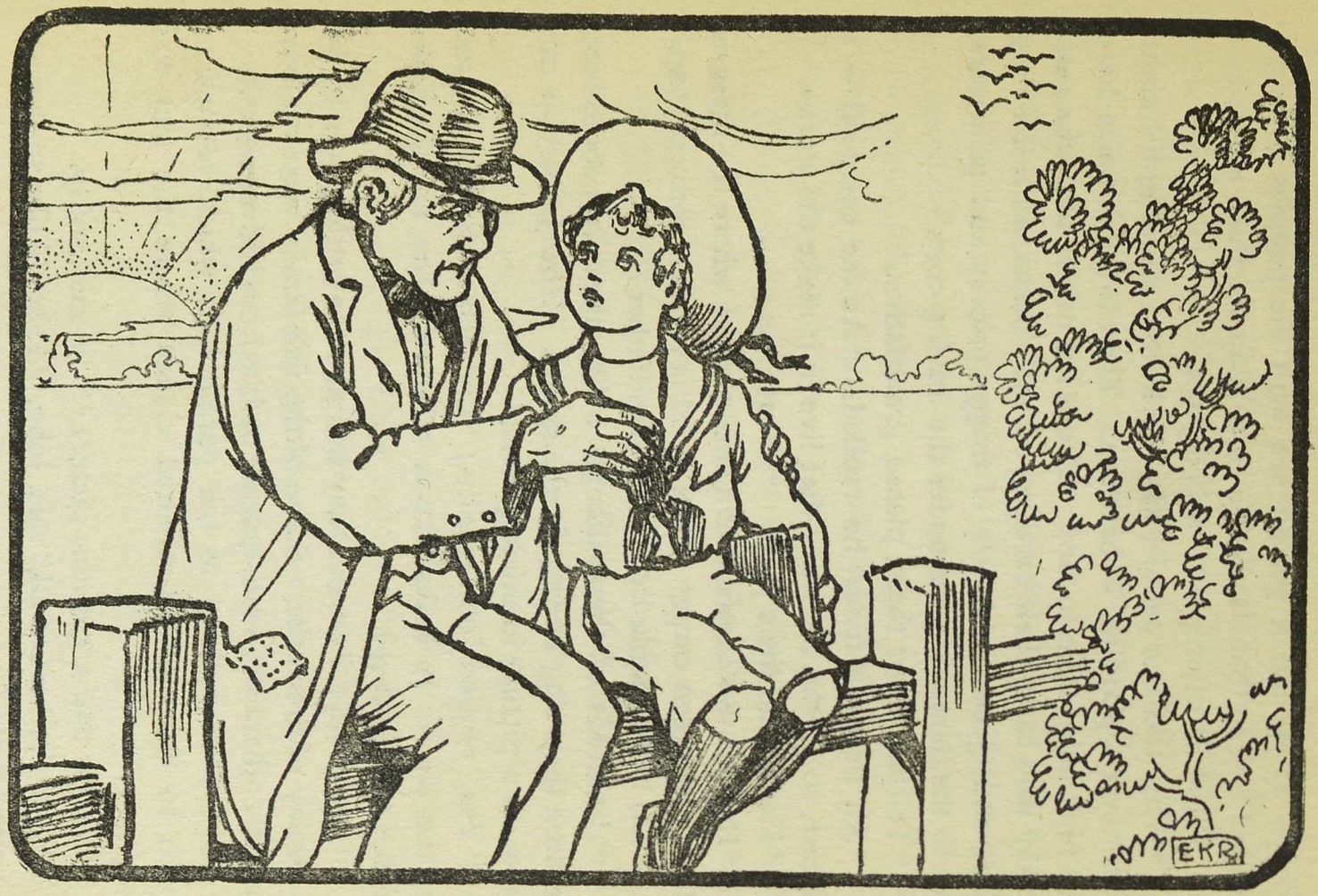
John's eyes sparkled. "Where is it?" he said. "Let us begin it at once."

"Perhaps my big book will be like your prize—a bit too hard for you," said his grandfather.

"Only let me try," coaxed little John.

Old Jake lifted him to the top of the stile, and there they sat side by side.

"We'll take this cornfield for our first picture, John.



THE BIGGEST BOOK IN THE WORLD.

Look! It is like a golden sea, with the poppies for boats, painted red, so that the little people may see them easily."

"What little people?" asked John.

"Why the bee people, who work from morning till night, with never a playtime in between. Then two field-mice have five pink baby-mice to feed. There are others too—the snail family who carry their cottages on their backs, while the Frog King and Queen, with lots of froggy princes and princesses, live in the damp furrows under the waving corn."

"Tell me about them, please, grandfather."

"All in good time," he replied. "As the cornfield is a picture, so all the creatures that live in it make the stories."

"I see," said little John. "What next?"

"Beyond the cornfield is a shady wood, where the moss is like a soft green carpet. The wood is another picture, John."

"Do little people live there, grandfather?"

"Hundreds of them, though I like the bird people best, because they sing sweetly in the spring. Now John, you can shew *me* a picture in my big book."

"Yes," replied John readily; "my picture shall be the sun on the river. It looks like a rainbow. Are not the fishes afraid, grandfather?"

"Not at all; I expect they imagine the setting sun to be a display of fireworks. Some of the fish family wear rainbow dresses, others have red-spotted or black-and-silver coats."

Old Jake pointed to the purple hills which seemed to reach to the rainbow-coloured clouds where the sun was setting.

"Is not that a glorious picture?" he said, softly.

"It is the best of all," said John. "I should like to sleep in a pretty cloud."

"You would have to get up early, for the moment the sun wakes, the little sun-fairies begin to roll the clouds away. How would you like to be tumbled out of a cloud, eh?"

But little John made no reply; he was thinking of the golden cornfield, the shady forest, the shining river, and the sunset beyond the distant hills.

"They are beautiful pictures," he remarked at last, "but I should like to know more about the bee and bird people, the red-spotted fishes, and the sun-fairies. When will you tell me their stories, grandfather?"

"You can learn them yourself," replied old Jake.

"How?" queried John.

"Keep your eyes and ears open when you walk in the country, then you will see the pictures and hear the stories of the biggest book in the world."

"What is the name of this book, grandfather?"

"It is called by some the Book of Nature, though the name matters little. And now, John, we must go home to tea; I would not miss your mother's cheese-cakes for a new sixpence."

Old Jake and little John went away, the sun sank out of sight, the rainbow light faded from the river, the shady wood became dark, and the cornfield melted into the rising mist.

And thus the evening softly closed some open leaves of the Book of Nature—"The Biggest Book in the World."

THE SNAIL FAMILY.

They lived in a quaint, old-world, kitchen garden, which could only be described as a snail's fairy-land. Between its box-bordered walks were gooseberry and currant bushes, a bed of fragrant herbs, a cabbage patch, and, under the wall which separated it from the orchard, a strawberry bed. It was an ideal garden ; one in which Lord and Lady Snail could live comfortably, and bring up their only son, little Crawler, respectably.

The snail family were very proud, for they had cottages, while the slugs had none. Lady Snail said that this made a great difference, and all the other snails agreed with her.

It was strawberry time. Lord and Lady Snail had taught Crawler how to hide from the gardener when eating a strawberry breakfast. The little one had also made his first little house, and snail-papa and snail-mamma were delighted.

"Really," said she, "our son is coming on remarkably well. Just look at him with his sweet little cottage on his back. He is a credit to our family."

Snail-papa lazily ran one eye up a horn to see. It was quite true; Crawler was getting along at the rate of three feet an hour.

"I shouldn't wonder if he doesn't do something to be

talked about," continued snail-mamma. "Ah! he's actually beginning to climb the wall."

Snail-papa fell off his strawberry in alarm.

"That he must never do," he said quickly. "It is not safe."

"Crawler, come back at once!"

The little snail unwillingly returned.

"Listen!" said his father, sternly. "Over that wall is an orchard full of apples and pears. I must confess I've often wished to taste them, but it cannot be, for they belong to a terrible snail-eating blackbird, the greatest enemy of our race."

"There he is," continued snail-papa with a shudder, as a loud 'pink-pink' sounded from the orchard.

"If he sees you he will swallow you. Stay under the strawberry leaves and you are safe."

"Your father is right," said snail-mamma, "and mind you are obedient."

And Crawler *was* obedient until he added another room to his cottage; then he felt grown up, and considered it was time to see the world: the most desirable world being apple-land.

"I can't be expected to stay in a strawberry bed all my life," he argued. "Besides, Snail-eater is taking a holiday, I've not heard him for some time. I must certainly climb the wall, and see the world."

The next morning before Lord and Lady Snail were awake, Crawler was half-way up the wall, and when they missed him there was consternation among the strawberry leaves. The distracted snails searched everywhere for their disobedient son, and at last they discovered the streak of slime which betrayed his whereabouts.

"You naughty, naughty child," cried snail-mamma; "when you come down I'll fasten you in your house for a week."

"He'll never come down at all; Snail-eater will catch him," prophesied snail-papa, gloomily, "as hundreds of our race have been caught before."

Crawler crept on steadily until he reached the top of the wall, where he glued himself firmly to the edge.

"What a charming world," he exclaimed with delight, "and as I thought, it is made of apples. I'm glad I came if only to prove there is no danger."

"Pink-pink! Pink-pink!"

Snail-eater saw him. Oh! how terrified Crawler felt, as he heard that dreaded voice. With a great effort, he managed to jerk himself off the wall. He fell 'plump' on a stone in the strawberry bed, and there he lay, safe for a time, but with a cracked cottage and broken body. He was nothing but a jelly.

Thus snail-papa and snail-mamma found him.

"A nice thing you've done," began his father. "We shall all probably lose our lives; we shall not dare to move from one strawberry to another."

"That is true," chimed in snail-mamma. "Through you, entirely through you, the Snail-eater has found us out, and he's not called Snail-eater for nothing. I know him."

"I suppose we must get away now, as soon as possible," sighed snail-papa, thinking of the delightful strawberry bed.

"Pray, how are we to do so?" asked snail-mamma, irritably. "Blackbird has eyes if he hasn't horns. and Crawler won't be able to stir for weeks."

"We must take our chance, and since Crawler is a cripple I'll carry him on my back, though he doesn't deserve it,"

THE SNAIL FAMILY.

answered snail-papa. With great difficulty Crawler was placed on the roof of his father's house, and then to the snails' great sorrow, though, doubtless, to the gardener's great joy, the three snails left the strawberry bed for ever.

They toiled on and on until they came to the bed of herbs, and would almost have given their houses had it only been the cabbage patch. They were so faint with hunger that they were obliged to rest on a bunch of thyme, which, soft and fragrant, spread its branches around.

"Where are we going?" asked Crawler.

"To the cabbage patch," snapped Lord Snail. "That is what we've come down to—a cabbage patch."

"I should like a cabbage patch," sighed Crawler.

"Give me a strawberry bed," said Lady Snail.

"I could do with a summer apple," remarked his lordship, gazing longingly at a heavily laden branch, which leaned over the wall from the orchard.

"Plop!"

The snails hurriedly retired to their cottages, then cautiously put forth a horn to see what had happened.

They could scarcely believe it. A magnificent summer apple had fallen from the branch and lay about two snail lengths away.

"It smells like sweet-briar," said Lady Snail, joyfully.

"How often have I longed to taste one, and lo! here it is," said snail-papa. "After all, everything *does* come to him who waits."

"We'll wait no longer," said snail-mamma; "we'll begin."

How the three snails ate, and ate! In a short time there was a big hole under the apple where no one could see it.

"Pink-pink! Pink-pink!" shouted the blackbird in a dis-

appointed voice. He had searched the strawberry bed for Crawler, but in vain.

"There is the Snail-eater again; let us hide," said snail-papa in trembling tones: whereupon they crept right into the apple.

"What a splendid apple," remarked the gardener a few minutes later. "I should like to eat it, only my mistress says all her neighbour's fruit must be returned to the orchard," and he threw the apple over the wall without noticing the snails inside.

"I wonder we're not dead," gasped snail-papa, as they crawled out painfully.

"The long grass saved us," said snail-mamma, "but we've quite lost the strawberry bed through our son's disobedience."

"We haven't even the cabbage patch," groaned snail-papa.

"But we've the orchard," answered Crawler, "and we can easily conceal ourselves from Snail-eater in the long grass."

"That is something, and I suppose we must make the best of it," sighed snail-mamma.

They did make the best of it, and as Crawler's adventure had taught him a lesson, they all lived very comfortably ever after.

BOMBUS, THE ROBBER-BEE.

"There are robbers *and* robbers, but this one takes the honey," remarked the Queen of Bee-land to her courtiers.

"Hum-m-m!" boomed the drones.

"Hum-m-m!" sang the workers.

Her majesty preened her gauze wings thoughtfully.

"It can't be a wasp who steals our honey," she resumed; "we should hear him."

"Hum-m-m, we should hear him!" echoed the bees.

"Neither can it be an earwig; we should see him," she continued.

"Hum-m-m, we should see him!" chorused the bees.

"Perhaps it's an ant from ant-hill," suggested Buzz.

The Queen looked at the speaker, causing her to remember that a monarch must not be addressed in a familiar manner.

"Buzz, your velvet coat is covered with pollen dust," replied her majesty; "brush yourself at once!"

And it was not until Buzz had dusted herself with her little hairy feet that the Queen felt able to resume the conversation.

"The Ant Queen is a friend of mine, and she tells me that her people have already stored up enough food for the winter. *They* would not steal our honey—yet it goes."

"Hum-m-m, it goes!" groaned the fat, lazy drones,

who, never having gathered a drop of honey, were loudest in bewailing its loss.

It was really strange. Every day during the month of June, honey had disappeared from Bee-hive Palace, where dwelt the Queen of Bee-land and her twenty thousand subjects. Not one of them had seen the honey-stealer, and at last her majesty called all the honey-bees together to consider the matter.

As the Queen glanced round them, she noticed that Apis, a pretty brown bee, looked as if she had something to say.

"Well, Apis, what do *you* think?" asked her majesty in an encouraging tone.

"Oh, beautiful Queen of Bee-land, live for ever!" began Apis, politely.

"Thank you!" answered her majesty; "but we shan't live till Christmas if this honey-stealing goes on."

"Gracious Queen," continued Apis, "neither wasp nor earwig has stolen our honey."

"Then, if neither wasp nor earwig has stolen our honey, who is the robber?" asked the Queen.

"Hum-m-m! Who is the robber?" boomed the drones.

"If the drones speak again, sting them to death!" commanded her majesty; and the drones were heard no more.

"It may be a foreign bee," suggested Apis.

"Is that all you have to say, Apis?"

"That is all, your majesty, except that we must each look out for the honey-stealer."

"Most certainly!" agreed the Queen; "and the bee who discovers the robber shall become our Chief Honey Taster."

"Hum-m-m!" sang the bees, wild with delight. "Who will be Chief Honey Taster to the Queen?"

With a graceful sweep of her wings, by way of farewell, her majesty retired to her Parlour of Golden Wax, and twice ten thousand bees flew from Bee-hive Palace into the sweet-scented gardens of Bee-land.

Every little brown bee was determined to become the Chief Honey Taster to the Queen, if——. But there were twenty thousand 'ifs,' and Apis was certainly the cleverest of all the honey-bees.

"What is the use of flying about the whole time when seeking the honey-stealer? It's like looking for a needle in a haystack," said Apis to herself. "I'll go back to the rose tree by the hive, and watch there."

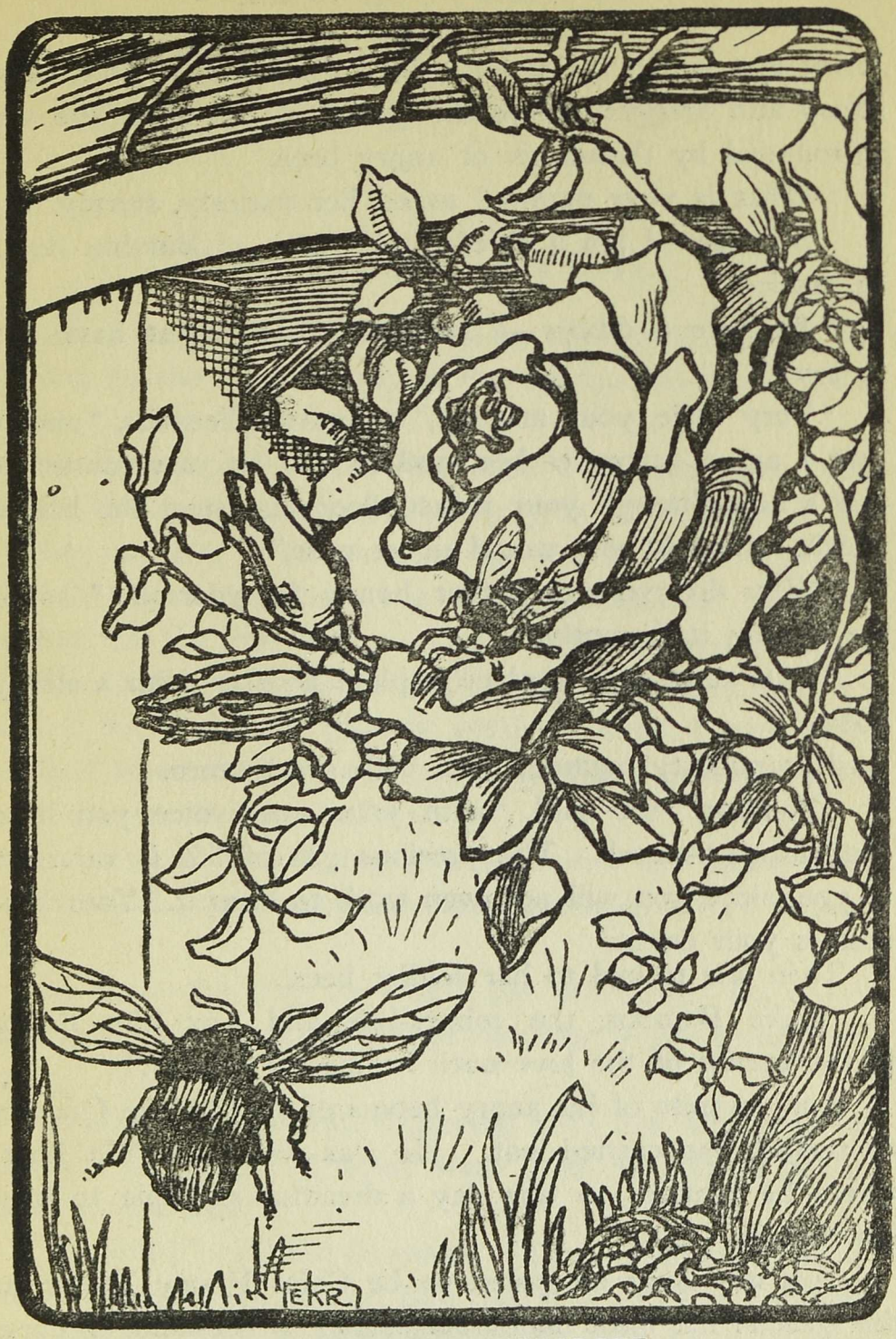
The sun was hot, and a lovely pink rose had hidden her blushing face under the shady hive. Apis had barely concealed herself in this fragrant blossom when she heard a noise like the wind in the chimney, yet there was no wind at all.

"Boom—boom—boom!"

It was a terrifying sound, but Apis bravely peeped out. Then she almost fell from the rose, for directly under the tree was the biggest bumble bee she had ever beheld. He ceased to 'boom,' and, crawling to a hole which the bees had never dreamed of, cautiously entered Bee-hive Palace.

"Ah! The honey-stealer!" whispered Apis, as she rapidly flew to the hole and began to fill it with wax. Other bees joined her, and soon the robber-bee was waxed firmly in.

But he was quite unaware that he was a prisoner, so



BOMBUS, THE ROBBER-BEE.

intent was he on his stolen meal. He was surprised when seized and dragged before the Queen of Bee-land, who was surrounded by thousands of angry bees.

"What is your name?" asked her majesty, sternly.

"Bombus. I am a chief of the tribe of Bumble Bees," he replied.

"You are a robber—a honey-stealer! What have you to say?"

"Very little, your majesty," answered Bombus, "except that I am a carpenter bee, and it was an easy matter to saw a hole through your palace floor and steal the honey, which I thought you would never miss."

"Why do you not gather honey for yourself?" asked the Queen, indignantly.

"It is too much trouble," replied Bombus with a sleepy boom.

Her majesty regarded him with great scorn.

"Bombus," she said, "with your own voice you have condemned yourself. The precious gift of life is valueless to you, since you will not even work to keep it. Your laziness is your doom."

Then she turned to her soldier bees.

"Take Bombus, the robber-bee, and wax him firmly in the corner of the hive until he dies of hunger."

And, in spite of his angry booms of protest, the Queen's command was carried out. He was waxed to the floor, where he remains to this day a dreadful example to lazy bee-robbers.

Apis was duly promoted to be Chief Honey Taster to the Queen: the most honourable office in Bee-land, and one which even a child would like to hold.

THE MAGIC MATCH.

I am a magic match, and also an aristocratic match, for I belong to the noble family of the Safety-Matches, of Box Castle.

I shall not speak of the time when I was part of a pine tree, for that portion of my life-history is shared by millions of other matches in all parts of the world. No! I prefer to relate my adventures as a Safety-match, and to show how I earned the title of *magic*—a distinction shared by none.

Box Castle is a wooden structure, beautifully painted without, but somewhat gloomy within—indeed, I must confess that when inside I was unhappy, for I shared it with eleven dozen and eleven others.

It was worse than living in a shoe with the famous old woman, and I was so crowded that sometimes I felt I should strike.

One day—the day on which my adventures began—I heard a woman speaking to the shopman who owned Box Castle.

"My little boy is always playing with fire and striking matches," she said. "I want some that he cannot strike except on the box."

"Certainly!" said the shopman. "I can recommend these safety-matches." He handed Box Castle and its one hundred and forty-four inhabitants to the woman, and she carried us all away to her house.

After a time our Castle was rudely opened, and a finger and thumb extracted my first brother.

He was violently scraped against a brick, but he remained firm; then against the table leg, but he refused to ignite; and, finally, against Box Castle. There was a terrific explosion, and my brother was no more.

"That is quite satisfactory," murmured the woman, flinging his blackened body into the fire. I discerned that she had wantonly destroyed him to verify the shopman's words.

The next minute I, too, had a fright, for she seized me; but to my joy she placed me half-way out of Box Castle, and I could then obtain a good view of my surroundings.

I was the only one selected for this honour, and naturally I glowed with pride.

"You needn't swell your head out like a common fusee," remarked my hundredth brother. "You've nothing to be proud of; you'll be the next to go."

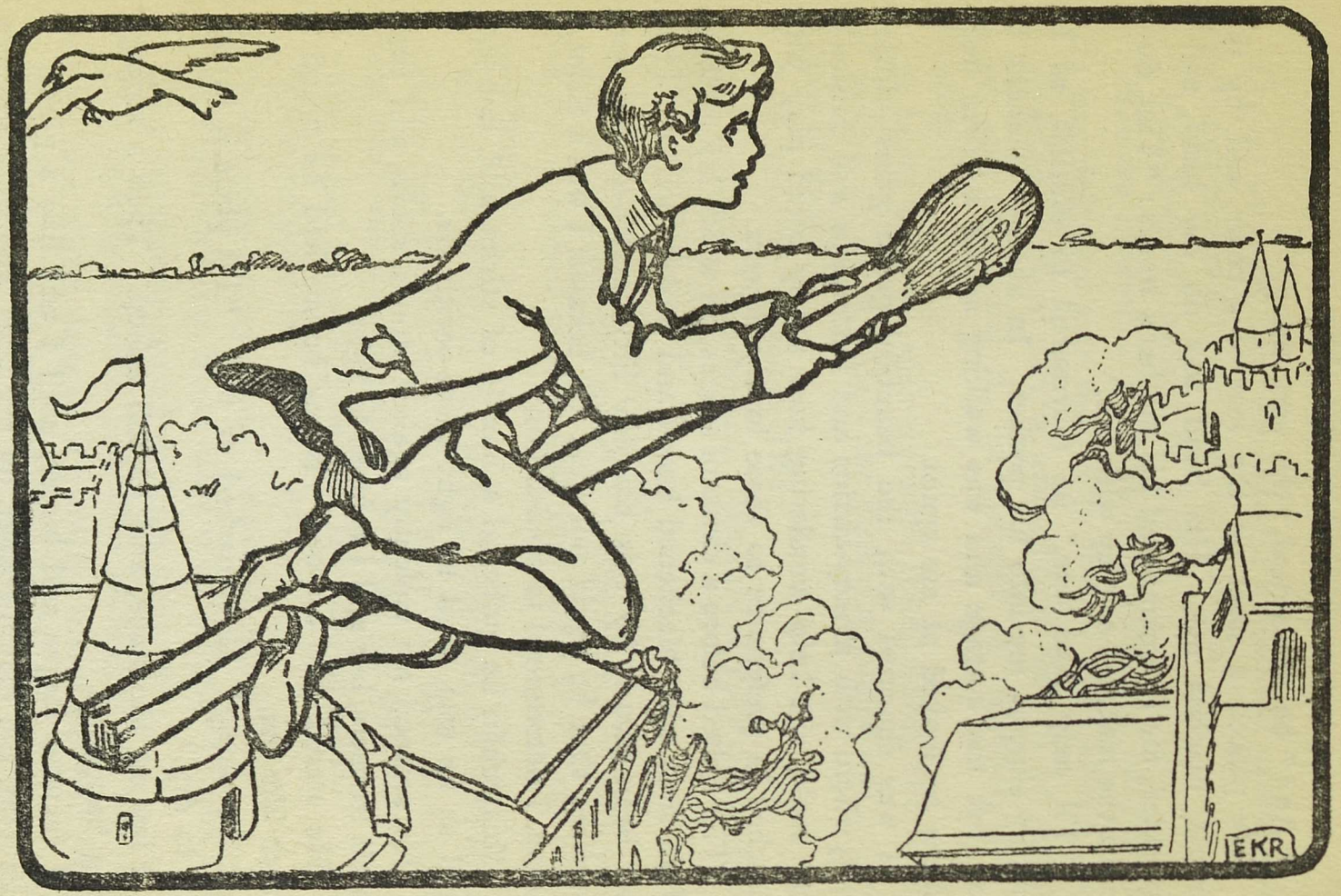
"Yes," chimed in another; "you're placed ready to strike, and will be the first victim of match-box etiquette."

"It is ever the way of the tinder world," I answered, "to be envious of the good fortune of another."

My answer was greeted with sparkles of mirth, which I ignored, as I wished to pursue my investigations.

I found I was on the high shelf of a cottage kitchen. In this room were children—a boy of nine and a girl of two. She called him "Tim"; he called her "Baby," and I gathered that she was his especial charge during the absence of their mother.

In a little while the baby fell asleep, and Tim carefully laid a shawl over her. Then he looked round the room, and saw—*me.*



THE MAGIC MATCH.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "the very thing."

He placed a stool on the seat of a chair, and, by this means, reached me. His hand was on my head, and I trembled, for I remembered his mother's words: "Tim, don't touch the matches or play with fire."

"I'll only take one," he murmured to himself, as he guiltily slipped me into his pocket. In another moment he had left the cottage and was walking across a green field, where he looked at me again.

I was charmed with the beautiful green grass—dotted everywhere with money-chains and buttercups and daisies—and could not help wondering how a boy could play with matches in preference to these lovely flowers.

Tim halted before a circle of stones, on which lay matches of all sizes with blackened heads and broken bodies. They had been struck by this naughty little match-stealer, and, knowing that he could not hurt me, because I was a Safety-match, I determined to punish him.

Meanwhile he gathered a bundle of sticks, and, hot and tired as he was, tried to light them—with *me*.

He scraped me violently against stones, sticks, and even on his trousers, but still I refused to light.

He stared like an owl. Never before had he found a match like me.

"It's damp," he remarked at last. "I'll place it in the sun to dry."

I lay on the stone, and he fell asleep. Then a strange thing happened.

I became larger and larger, until I was like a giant. I took Tim, the match-stealer, on my back, and went through the air more swiftly than the swallows fly to Africa.

On, on we sped, until we came to a beautiful palace, with towers and turrets glittering in the sunshine.

"How lovely!" exclaimed Tim.

Then we entered a room in this glittering palace, and Tim was delighted with the pretty things. But, after a time, he obtained a lighted candle, and amused himself by putting it out and re-lighting it. In the end he carelessly left it burning.

It burnt until its wick guttered down, down, and finally fell against a curtain. Alas! the glittering palace was quickly a mass of flames.

"Oh, save it!" pleaded Tim.

"It is ruined," I answered: "because of your carelessness. Nothing can save it now."

"I will never——" began Tim.

"Your promises are useless," I interrupted. "How often have you promised your mother and never kept your word? Come along."

But as the wretched Tim refused to mount my back again, I caught him by the hair of his head and took him home, where baby was playing happily with the old wax doll.

Tim seated himself quite near the fire—as usual.

"Give me your doll, Baby," he said.

"Can't give 'oo my dollie," answered Baby, firmly.

"I'll make it blaze, blaze, blaze, ever so high," coaxed Tim.

Baby reluctantly parted with her treasure.

Tim joyfully seized it, and, after holding it in the fire till its head was alight, dangled it gleefully before Baby's eyes.

Poor Baby! She was transfixed with horror to see her dollie frizzling away. Then, suddenly snatching her toy, and sobbing pitifully, she crushed it against her breast. In a moment Baby's dress was also on fire.

Tim ran to the door, screaming for help, but the cottage was lonely. He rushed back to the kitchen, and bumped against *me*—Safety-Match.

"Now, you wretched little play-with-fire, you shall do no more mischief," I said, "for I intend to take you to Italy and throw you on the top of Mount Vesuvius. You'll have plenty of fire there."

Bump, bump, bump.

I was once again on the stone—a giant no more—while Tim was rubbing his eyes and staring at Baby, who was energetically bumping his head with her doll to wake him.

"I comed out to find 'oo, and 'oo was asleep and kying, so I banged 'oo's head wiv' dollie," announced that small person.

"Wasn't it Safety-Match? No; there he is on the stone. I suppose I dreamed it all. But, darling Baby," said Tim, earnestly, "I'll never steal matches nor play with fire again."

Tim kept his word. He took me back to the cottage and restored me to Box Castle.

Now, am I not a wonderful Safety-Match to make him dream so vividly? Have I not every right to be called "The Magic Match?"

PETER'S SHADOW.

It was not lessons that puzzled Peter, but a little dark thing which would not leave him.

The moment he played in the sunshine, the dark thing appeared; when he threw, his companion threw; if he played at marbles, 'knuckle up,' the dark thing knuckled up as well.

This was quite amusing—at first, but as the novelty wore off, he became annoyed and even angry.

"I'll make it go away," he cried; "I'll fight it." But though he struck out with all his might, he only managed to hit the gravel and graze his fists. Then he tried to dance upon it, but the tantalising little dark thing danced also.

"What is it, Peter?" asked his mother, astonished beyond measure to see her small son in tears, and prancing madly about on the gravel.

"It's this little black thing," sobbed Peter.

His mother glanced round in alarm. She thought, vaguely, of blackbeetles and snails, which, though harmless enough, are not general favourites.

"Where is it?" she asked.

"Here," answered Peter, pointing to the ground, where the black thing appeared to be pointing also. "It follows me everywhere," explained Peter. "It never speaks, and it plays ball and marbles, and it's rude and fights sometimes."

"Ah! does it?" remarked his mother, with twinkling eyes.

"Yes," continued Peter; "it's just been trying to fight me now. I tried to dance on it, but I couldn't somehow, nor could I make it go away."

"I should think not," replied his mother, laughing heartily. "You foolish child, you have been trying to fight your own shadow."

"My shadow?" echoed Peter.

"Of course. I've a shadow, too, so has the house, and the rose bush."

Little Peter looked about him, and quickly saw that his mother was right; everything had its own shadow.

"I see them all, mother," he answered, slowly. "How pretty the leaf shadows look on the grass, when the wind sways the branches overhead."

At that moment the sun hid behind a cloud, and Peter's shadow almost melted away.

"He's gone! he's gone!" shouted Peter.

"Not quite," replied his mother. "There still remains a little of him. Now Peter, what makes the shadow?"

"I suppose I do," answered Peter, thoughtfully.

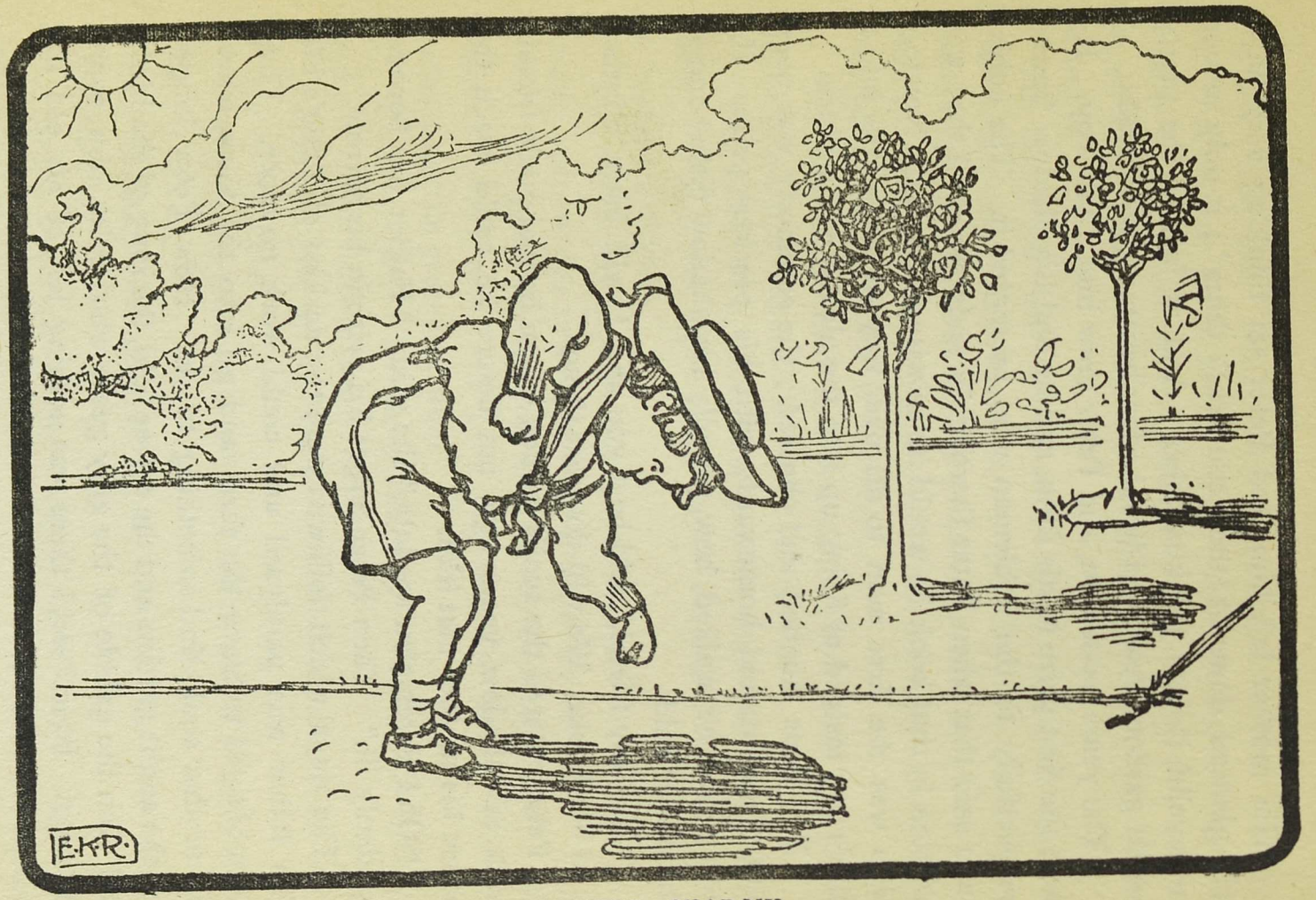
"Quite right, Peter. You stop the light that comes from the sun. If you were made of glass, the light could shine through you, and there would be no shadow. Do you understand?"

"Yes, mother, and I shall not be so silly about my shadow again."

"Is it Peter who sometimes has a rude fighting shadow?" asked his mother.

The boy hung his head: he could not answer a word.

"Because its owner must in future behave well, then the shadow will behave well too."



PETER'S SHADOW.

His mother left him, and Peter sat thinking very hard. He glanced down at 'the little black thing'; it only moved an eyelid, it was thinking also. And at last, in the pretty sunlit garden, Peter and his shadow became great friends.

The years passed on, and Peter grew into a tall boy. He won the first prize in his form, and he and his shadow bowed respectfully to the nobleman who presented it. The nobleman said that when Peter thoroughly understood all that was written in that book he would be as wise as Sir Isaac Newton, who was the first man to discover why an apple falls into a boy's cap instead of flying up into the air out of his reach.

The boys laughed and cheered; the ceremony was over, and Peter started homewards with his precious prize. He noticed, as he walked, how proudly his shadow flitted across the clover field.

"Yes, my friend," said he, "you and I will learn all that is in our book. We will do great things."

Peter entered the sunlit garden where he had made friends with his shadow years ago, but before he could reach the house his mother met him.

"Oh! Peter, you are late," she said. "Father has become suddenly ill." Then Peter forgot his prize in his sorrow.

The days which followed were the darkest of Peter's life. His father was paralysed and could work no more. They were obliged to leave the farm and go into the town, where the mother could find something to do. How Peter longed for the sunlit garden and the clover field, the song of the birds, and even the gabble of the grey geese who woke him every morning. Poor Peter! there was nothing left of his old life except his shadow.

"We must work," remarked Peter to his faithful friend;

and work they did. Peter was a brave lad, he toiled all day and studied his prize every night. At first he could make little of it, but he persevered, and at length began to understand about the sun and the wonderful worlds that circle round it.

At last Peter was twenty-one, and, of course, his shadow was twenty-one; they were grown up. By this time Peter understood all that was in his prize book, and a great deal besides. He knew exactly how shadows are caused, and how they behave at all times of the day.

The nobleman, who had presented Peter with his prize, heard of his perseverance and sent for him.

"You have been brave and persevering," said the nobleman. "You must leave your day-work, and I will help you to become a scholar."

The nobleman kept his word, and in a few years Peter was known everywhere as a clever and prosperous man.

To his great joy he was able to buy back his father's old country home, and, one June morning, he drove with his parents up the gravelled path.

"Here we are!" he said, cheerily. "The sunlit garden and the clover field are ours once more."

"How did you do it, Peter?" asked his mother, with tears of joy in her eyes.

"By perseverance and real hard work, which always tells," said his father.

"I think it was all due to my shadow," answered Peter, whimsically.

"May it never grow less," laughed his father, as he glanced with pride at his only son.

THE POTATO GOBLINS.

"Do you know what a goblin is?" asked grandmamma. "Of course you do not; children seem too old now-a-days for goblins and fairies."

Grandmamma was not complimentary, but she was kind. Every year her two grandchildren, Jim and Betty, were invited to stay with her in London, and, as their home was in the country, this visit was a great treat. The children thought that London was the grandest city in the world. They stood for hours watching the people, and the trams and 'buses, and they were so impressed by the policeman who regulated the traffic, that Jim declared he should be a policeman when he grew up.

Then there were the shops—particularly the toy shops. Grandmamma always spent a whole day looking at them, though, being a wise grandmamma, she never entered but one, where she stayed exactly five minutes.

"Now, children," she would say, "you have five minutes to choose a toy; so make up your minds."

Have *you* ever tried to make up your mind in five minutes? Because, if so, you will understand how difficult it was for Jim to choose between an engine which would go itself and a gun; or for Betty to choose between a doll's house and a butcher's shop with joints of meat ready for sale.

The day that grandmamma spoke of goblins was 'Toy-shop' day, but, alas! it was wet.

The pitiless drizzle at breakfast became a positive downpour by dinner-time. No toys could be chosen that day.

"It's no use fretting," said Jane, grandmamma's maid, as Jim refused his pudding, and Betty's eyes filled with tears. "It's no use fretting. For my part, I'm glad of the rain; it will wash the windows and save me the trouble. If you have finished dinner you may go to grandmamma's room."

"Since it is wet, we will sit cosily by the fire and amuse ourselves," remarked grandmamma, and that was how she came to mention goblins.

"What is a goblin, grandmamma?" asked Jim.

Grandmamma knew quite well what a goblin was in her own mind, yet she could not tell the children until she had consulted a big book which was full of words.

"As you do not know," she answered at last, "I must tell you. A goblin is a naughty little fairy man, who always wears a red cap, has an ugly face and long, pointed ears."

"I should like to see one," observed Jim.

"So should I," remarked Betty.

Grandmamma thought for a minute. "Well," she said, "goblins are not easy to find, for, like the fairies, they are very shy little people. They hide in the shadows, or in the flowers, or behind the sunbeams."

"I think that perhaps I can shew you what a goblin is like," continued grandmamma, "though it will only be a make-believe."

"Will it be a doll-goblin?" asked Jim.

"Something of the kind," answered grandmamma. "Run to Jane, Betty, and ask her to give you three potatoes with heads; and you, Jim, ask for a few *used* matches and a bit of sand-paper."

"We shall have a potato goblin each," said grandmamma, when the children returned.

She rubbed the black off the used matches with the sand-paper; Jim and Betty watching with curious eyes.

Then she took up potato number one.

"Do you see his head?"

"Yes."

"Now we must put in two short matches for his ears, two long ones for his legs, and two of medium length for his arms. There, you have a very smart goblin indeed!"

"That must be a soldier goblin," remarked Betty.

"Very likely," replied grandmamma. "Now for number two, who is rather fat."

"Perhaps he is lazy," suggested Betty.

"In that case he must be eaten," replied grandmamma, promptly, supplying ears, arms, and legs as before.

"He does not look lazy at all," said Betty decidedly, "but rather like Mr. Punch."

Grandmamma was much amused. "Very good indeed," she laughed. "Mr. Punch should feel quite flattered; he has never been compared with a goblin before."

"Number three appears to be sitting down," continued grandmamma, as she deftly decorated him. The children screamed with delight, he looked so funny.

At this moment Jane looked in to remind the children that grandmamma could not bear much noise. But what could Jane say when grandmamma herself laughed until she almost cried?

"Well, I never! You'll suffer for this, ma'am," remarked Jane, in an offended tone, as she withdrew.

But she had broken the spell. Grandmamma found a

THE POTATO GOBLINS.

pretty red box, with a picture on the lid, which was just large enough to hold the potato goblins.

"Place them in the box, and see what happens," suggested she.

Jim and Betty obeyed, but forgot to see if anything happened, because the next day was fine enough for a 'Toy-shop' day, and after that they thought of nothing but their new toys.

They had left grandmamma, and returned to their country home, before the potato goblins were again remembered.

"Let us look in the red box," suggested Jim one day.

At first they could scarcely believe that the shrivelled, weird-looking things were the three potato goblins.

They took out the soldier goblin, and laughed merrily, for he had grown long hair and a beard, while the fat one had developed a large tuft on his back which made him look more like Mr. Punch than ever. The sitting-down goblin sat down still, but now carried a bunch of sticks like the man in the moon.

"What are these bunches?" asked Betty.

"I can't tell; we'll ask father," replied Jim.

It is true that fathers know everything, and, of course, their father explained that the hair-like things were stems which, when planted in the earth, would grow other potatoes.

"We will plant them," said Betty.

"Yes," replied Jim; "and just fancy our potato goblins are quite as wonderful as real goblins."

"And much more useful," remarked their father. You see, he was rather like Jane, who was glad of the rain, even on a 'Toy-shop' day, because it cleaned her windows.

THE CROOKED SIXPENCE.

"How delightful it is to feel quite new," said a copper penny to a silver sixpence.

The two coins had met in a lady's purse, which was tightly clasped in the owner's hand.

"Have you noticed that I shine like gold?" continued the penny. "I am splendid, and the exact colour of the sun as it sinks down like a copper ball behind the mountains. Yes," chinking with glee, "I feel quite pleased to be alive."

The little sixpence was old and crooked, with a hole bored through her head, and she had lived in the world long enough to know the danger of boasting.

"Do not boast, Mr. Penny," she replied; "I grant you are handsome, but, after all, I am worth six of you, while a sovereign could buy two hundred and forty of your family."

"What nonsense!" answered the penny, rudely. "You are jealous of my looks. I am stamped with a picture of the King's head; just think what honour is mine! You have scarcely any head at all, and no date: I don't call it respectable to be without a date."

"I had one once, and could shine even more brightly than you," retorted the sixpence.

"It is easy to say that," replied the penny, "but I was made this year—I am a King's penny."

"And I am a Queen's sixpence, for I was made when Victoria the Good was Queen of the Empire," replied the sixpence, quietly.

"Where is your Queen now?" asked the penny, curiously.

"Alas! she is dead, though she lived many years and all the people loved her. When she died they wept, remembering her wisdom and goodness."

"Humph," said the penny, "that generally happens; people never seem to be properly appreciated until they die."

"Oh! they are sometimes," replied the sixpence. "My mistress thinks the world of me."

Chink, chink, chink, went the penny. He was greatly amused at the idea of any one caring for the crooked sixpence, and chinking was his way of laughing.

"You need not chink," said the sixpence; "until you came I always had this part of the purse to myself. I feel sure you have been placed by me accidentally."

"Why do you think that?" enquired the penny, though he could not believe it.

"That belongs to the end of my story," she replied; "and, in order to understand it, you must hear the beginning."

"I first lived upon a watch-chain—that is the cause of the hole through my head," explained the sixpence. "Those were grand days. I could see the world as I dangled from the chain. Ah! shouldn't I like a swing now, old as I am."

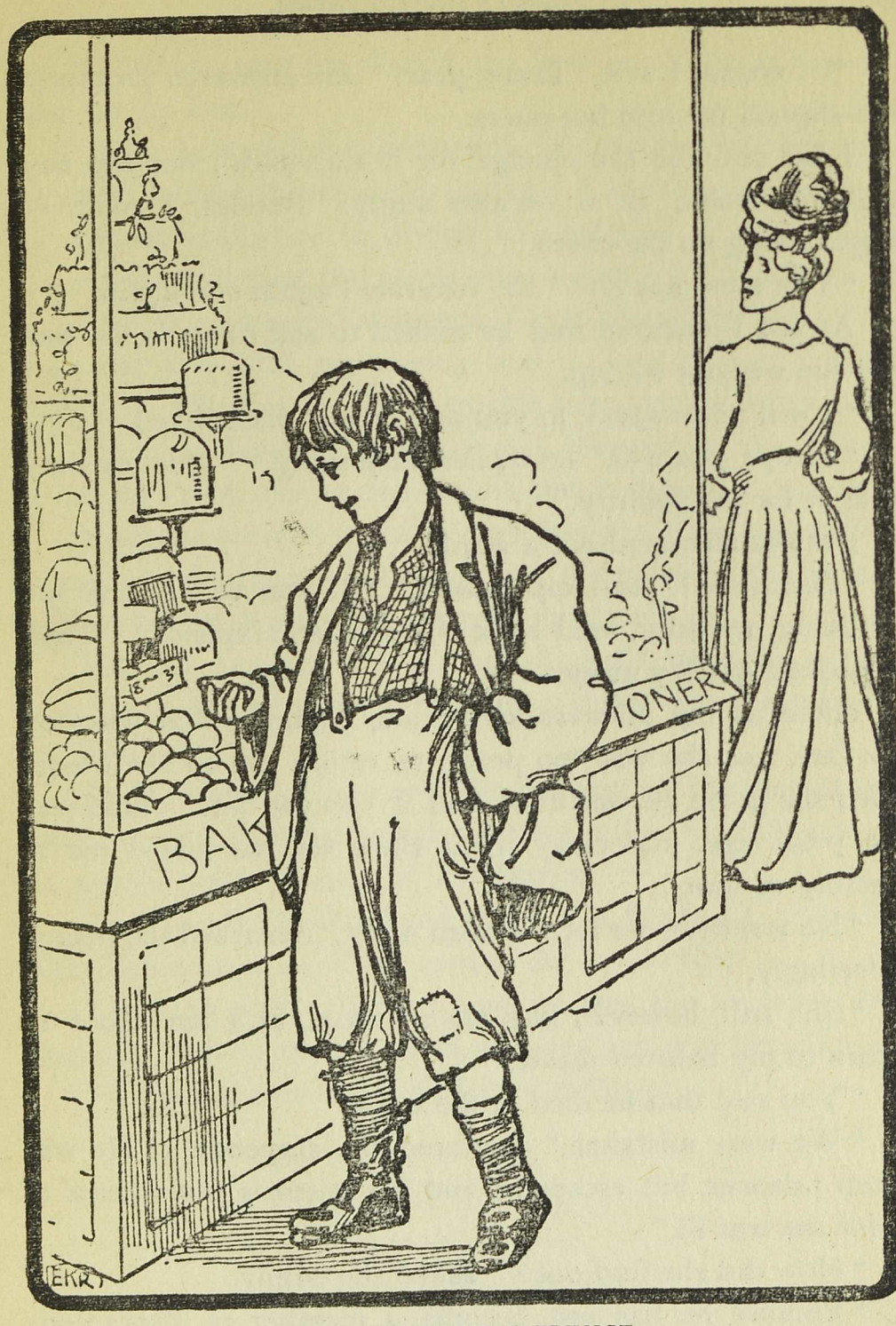
"One day my master met a friend, who was young and pretty.

She saw me at once.

"A crooked sixpence? How lovely!" she exclaimed.

My master took me from my chain.

"Will you keep it, for luck?" he asked.



THE CROOKED SIXPENCE.

"Of course I will. Thank you!" she answered promptly, and slipped me into her purse.

I did not like the change, for it was dark; nor my new mistress's voice, for it became angry. Besides, I could no longer swing on the chain.

"You must not go!" she reiterated again and again.

At last I gathered that he wished to sail away to the war, and she was not willing.

"I will never speak to you any more," she sobbed.

"I hope you will," he replied very sadly. "It is my duty to fight for my country."

But she answered not a word.

"Good-bye!" said my master. "If you can forgive me for doing my duty, send back the crooked sixpence." Then he walked quickly away.

Often, as my mistress kissed me, I felt her hot tears on my face, yet she was too proud to return me to her friend. Then she heard he was dead, and it was too late. That was five years ago, and every night since, she has kissed me in memory of him."

"No wonder your face is worn away," remarked the penny, unfeelingly.

"She will, however, kiss me no more, as I am about to return to my beloved master."

"You said that he died in the wars?"

"We were mistaken," answered the sixpence. "He was taken prisoner, but escaped; and my mistress never heard of it, for she was ill."

"How did she find out?" asked the penny.

"Because he has just become a member of Parliament, and his photograph and life-story were printed in a newspaper."

"That is charming!" said the penny. "I trust that will also be my fate."

"Yes; all's well that ends well. My mistress has informed me that I must be returned to-day. I am delighted—it will be a great distinction to belong to a member of Parliament."

At that moment the purse was opened with a jerk.

"Ah, my treasured sixpence!" exclaimed the lady; "and how did this bold new penny find its way in here? Come out, sir! I'll give you away to this poor ragged boy."

Thus the boastful penny found himself in the palm of a beggar child, who at once spent him in buying a bun.

Next the penny bought a dozen marbles, then, successively, a pair of boot-laces, an orange, and a medley of things, until he lost his brightness and became quite worn out.

But the sixpence was coated with gold, placed in a round glass case, and once again hung on a chain, where she leads a charming life.

In due time the lady and the member of Parliament were married, and it was a proud moment when he took his wife to see the noble Houses of Parliament.

The member pointed out where the Lords sit, and where the Commons sit, and the terrace for tea-parties.

The lady was delighted, and so was the sixpence, who, dancing joyfully on the chain, chinked softly to herself:—

"They have *me* to thank for everything."

THE SUN FAIRIES.

It had been a long winter. The early spring days were dull and cold, and only the hardiest spring flowers dared show their dainty faces above the brown earth.

The people who had every right to expect clear sunshine, blue skies, and spring blossoms, grumbled loudly.

"What wretched weather," said one.

"The spring is unusually late," said another.

"I'm afraid *the sun is cooling*," remarked a third.

And it was the last remark that roused in the Sun-father a sense of his dignity and responsibility.

"I never knew such beings as the earth people," he said, angrily. "The weather is never right for them. It is always too hot or too cold, or too wet or too dry. I can never satisfy them, and now they add insult to injury by saying *I am cooling*."

Then the Sun-father indignantly hid his face behind banks upon banks of clouds, and the earth people had the wettest day of the year.

"That served them right," said he, peeping out in the evening to view the dripping landscape. "That served them right; to-morrow I'll begin to shew them what I can do. How dare they hint that I am wearing out?"

Next morning, the Sun-father called his children, the Sun-fairies, around him. There were millions and millions of

them, and the sight was one of unparalleled magnificence, but it could not be seen from the earth because of the clouds between.

"The earth people are dissatisfied," began the Sun-father, "not entirely without reason, I admit, for they had a deluge yesterday. But to-day it is my pleasure to send among them seven sun-fairies, who shall fly on a sunbeam to the earth, and remain there till the evening. When they return I shall be glad to hear what they have done."

Then the Sun-father shot forth a brilliant sunbeam, upon which, side by side, sat seven lovely fairies. All day long these fairies darted hither and thither, never still, but always busy. And, as they worked, the earth people became more cheerful.

"It is clearing up; the spring is coming at last," said they

The evening came and seven happy little sun-children flew back on their sunbeam, to their father, the Sun.

The fairies looked charming, for each had a dress to match her name.

The first fairy was Sun-fairy Red.

"What have you done to-day, Sun-fairy Red?" asked her father.

"A great many things. I tinted the daises, opened a few apple blossoms, and painted the cheeks of the boys and girls with the rosy flush of health. I looked for the cherries and strawberries, but they come in the summer and it is only spring. Oh! yes, and I coloured the breasts of the robins, until they glowed as red as my gown."

"You have done well," remarked the Sun-father.

"What have you done to-day, Sun-fairy Orange?"

"I've been helping the others, and have only done one

thing by myself," replied Sun-fairy Orange. "I looked into a place where they were making marmalade, and I painted the fruit a delightful shade. I should like to taste the marmalade; I know it will be the right colour—as orange as my gown."

"I'm afraid you are greedy," said her father. "Let us hear your sister. What have you done to-day, Sun-fairy Yellow?"

"Oh! father, I've been so busy," replied she. "I heard that some poor little town children were coming to the country, just for the day, so I went before them, and turned many of the flowers into gold. There were celandines, dandelions, primroses, cowslips, and hundreds of buttercups."

"Were the children pleased?" asked Sun-father.

"They were delighted, and called the buttercups 'gold-i-tops,' because they were as yellow as my gown."

"I love children," said the Sun-father. "I'm exceedingly glad that you gave them pleasure; who comes next?"

It was the Sun-fairy Green—a charming fairy dressed in the softest shades; it was restful only to look at her.

"What have you done to-day, Sun-fairy Green?"

"I've not nearly finished, father," she replied; "it took so long to paint the young wheat, and the acres and acres of grass, that I had little time for the trees, and the birds want the leaves to hide their nests. The hedge sparrows are complaining."

"The birds are grumbling now, are they?" asked the Sun-father.

"Yes," replied Sun-fairy Green. "I think they catch it from the people. I go on and take no notice, which is quite the best thing to do. If they are not careful I shall change them into woodpeckers, then they will be as green as my gown."

THE SUN FAIRIES.

"I admire your spirit, Sun-fairy Green," remarked her father; "but what have *you* done to-day, Sun-fairy Blue?"

"A very great deal," she answered. "This morning I rolled up a few clouds, and painted a big patch of the sky. Then I rushed down to the earth, and coloured the speedwells and ever so many birds' eggs as blue as my gown."

"Well done," said the Sun-father. "Now for the next Sun-fairy. What have you done to-day, Sun-fairy Indigo?"

"Nothing at all except help the others. If you had sent me to India, father, where grows the indigo plant, or to North America, where lives the indigo-bird, I would have coloured them as indigo as my gown."

"All in good time, daughter," said the Sun-father. "Now for the last of the Sun-fairies. What have you done to-day, Sun-fairy Violet?"

"I flew down to a bank where grew some wee, modest flowers, who hid themselves in the grass, though some of them lifted their faces to me. They were of the sweetest fragrance, and of many shades—from pure white to the deepest, darkest purple. They were all called 'violets,' though none but they whom I kissed became as violet as my gown."

"Is that all?" asked the Sun-father.

"Not quite, father," replied Sun-fairy Violet, shyly; "because we all joined in making a glorious beam of light, which cheered the earth and made everything begin to grow."

"And you shall now make something else," said the Sun-father. "Below, I see a cloud of raindrops. I command the seven Sun-fairies—Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, and Violet—to place themselves in front of the cloud and make a rainbow."

The sunbeam, on which the seven fairies sat clasping each

other's hands, shot forth once again, and there was gradually formed a beautiful rainbow, which glowed with the richest colours, for all the earth people to see.

Hundreds looked upon it, and remembered God's promise to the world.

Then the Sun-father recalled the seven Sun-fairies.

"You made a splendid rainbow," he said. "To-morrow I shall send you, and all the other Sun-fairies, to the earth again."

And when the morrow came, the Sun-father kept his word. Long before people were awake, all the clouds were rolled away, the sky was painted blue, the leaves were unfolded, and the flowers sprang up in every field and hedgerow. The bees came out for their first airing, even the frogs woke up, and the birds almost burst their little throats in singing songs of welcome to the spring.

"What a delightful day! Spring has come at last," said the earth people, though very few of them thought of the millions and millions of Sun-fairies who were hard at work in every nook and cranny. It was they who painted the sky, and coaxed the flowers to grow; it was they who made the day delightful, who brought the spring, and who woke the small creatures from their winter sleep.

And when these millions of Sun-fairies returned to their father, the Sun, he said:—

"I wonder if the earth people think I'm cooling *now?*"

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