

GRUFFEL SWILLENDRINKEN



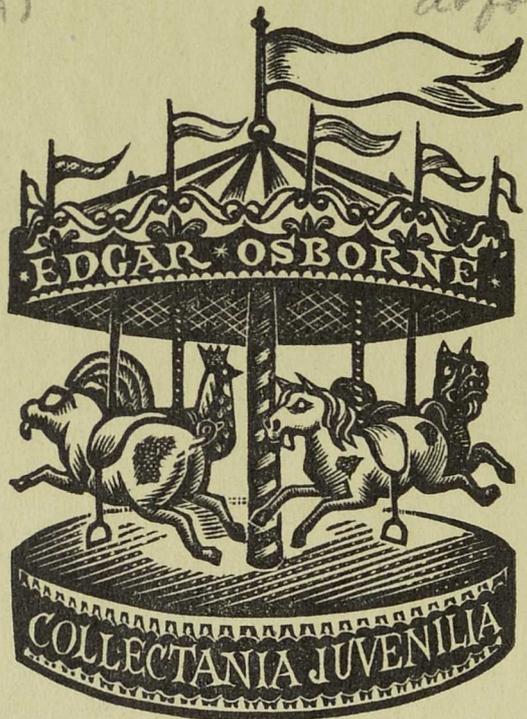
OR
THE REPROOF
OF THE
BRUTES.

BY
ALFRED CROWQUILL.

GRIFFITH & FARRAN, LATE GRANT & GRIFFITH,
CORNER OF ST PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, LONDON.

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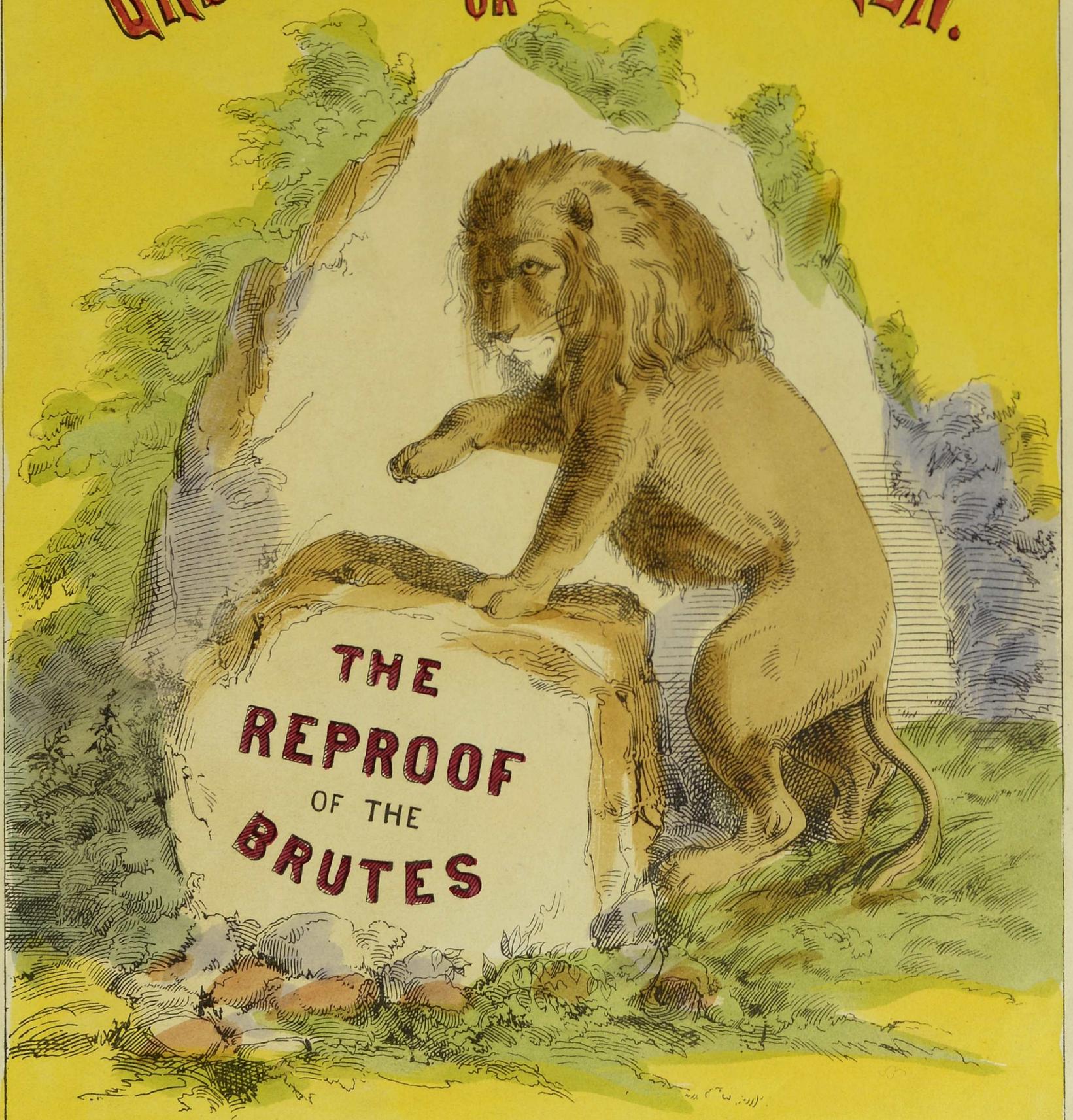


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PREFACE

THANK HIM WHO SHOWS
YOU THE PITFALL.



INTRODUCTION



OF
GRUFFEL TO THE BOTTLE.



RUFFEL SWILLENDRINKEN was a fine spirited fellow; at least so all his riotous companions said; and they knew more of him than anybody else, for the best part of his time was spent in the wine-house, where he reigned like a king, and where his orders were the first attended to by the host, and where he had a nice arm chair kept entirely for his use and comfort.

Gruffel had a turn for singing, and lungs to carry out the tune to perfection, and as his songs all turned upon the praise of drinking, they caused him and his companions to drink the more.

Most of his idle companions were very poor, as such people generally are; so that he had to pay for them just to secure their company, and their friendship was sure to last until his money was all gone.

It was a very curious thing, and Gruffel always thought so, that just as they were getting very cozy and comfortable, it always became, as if by magic, time to go home; when it came to this pass (and the host was snoring, tired out, with his head on the table) they departed singing and shouting on their way to their separate houses, and disturbed their wretched families.

Gruffel Swillendrinken had a wife and three children, and a nice little cottage, with a small portion of land; he neglected the former, and, strange to say, was drinking the latter away daily.

His children rather feared than loved him, and his poor wife was filled with grief and terror.

He was angry with himself, and he who is on bad terms with himself, cannot be on good terms with anybody else; the hearth that his selfishness had made desolate, chilled him, and the voices that he had hushed into whispers by his ferocity made him nervous, so he sought again and again the noisy knot



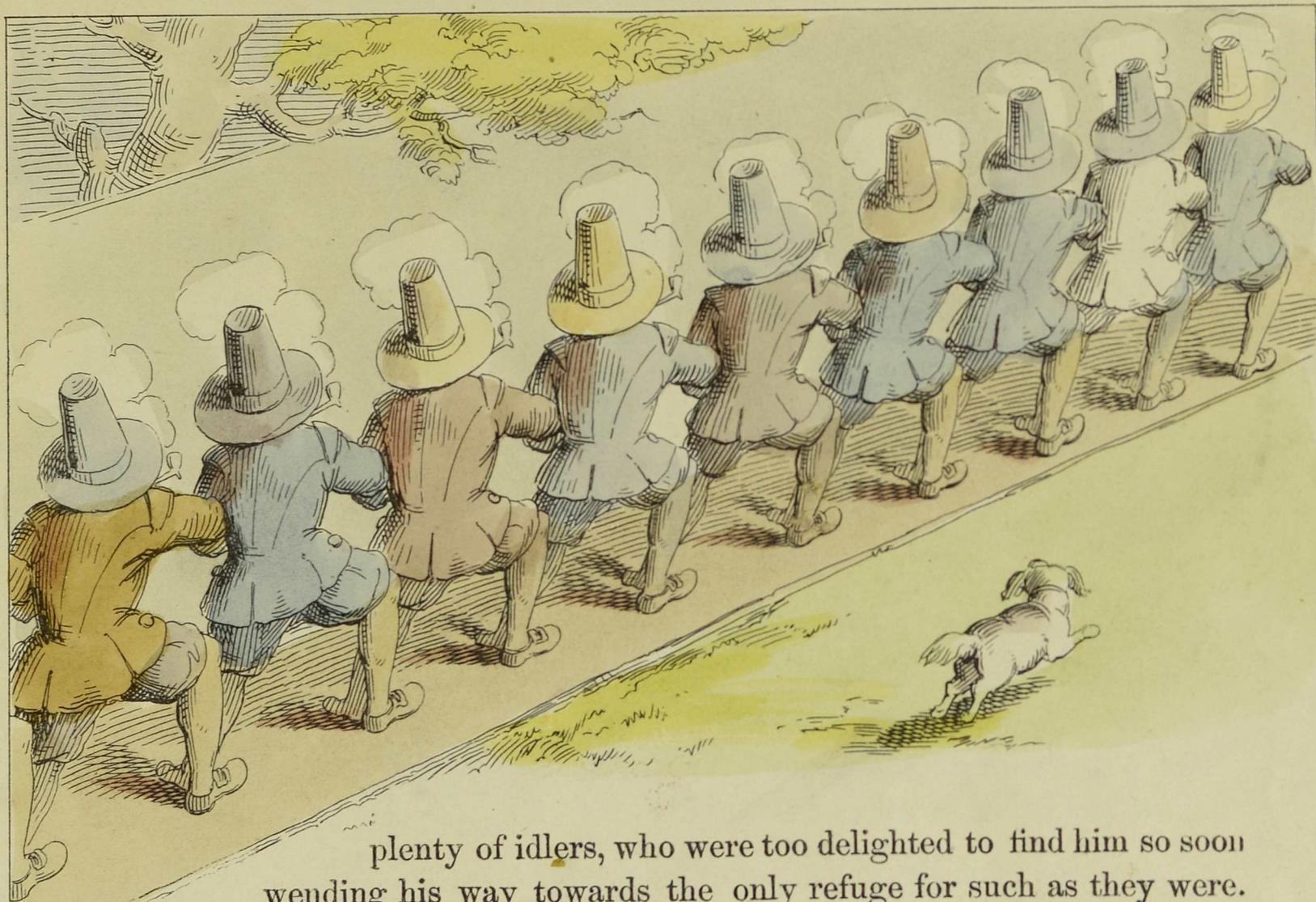
of drinkers, and the cheerful blaze of the log fire at the tavern.

His little patrimony grew less so rapidly, that his wife, in terror at the prospect, when she looked at her dear children, ventured to shew him that they were suffering from his sad conduct, that their food was scant, and that the glow of health was leaving their cheeks, and that if he did not soon alter his wicked courses, he would have to answer for their deaths.

A scowl darkened his brow as he listened to her, but no pity entered his heart in answer to her pleadings. In the fervor of her imploring she placed her trembling hand upon his shoulder, with a savage threat he thrust her from him, and she fell to the floor amidst the terrified screams of his children.

His good angel shewed him the enormity of his fault, to strike the wife of his bosom; but he soon dashed aside the thoughts that should have reclaimed him, and with the loud voice of bravado silenced the still small voice of conscience.

So he started off to the wine-shop, determined upon a long day of enjoyment, and perhaps a night too at the end of it. On his way he gathered



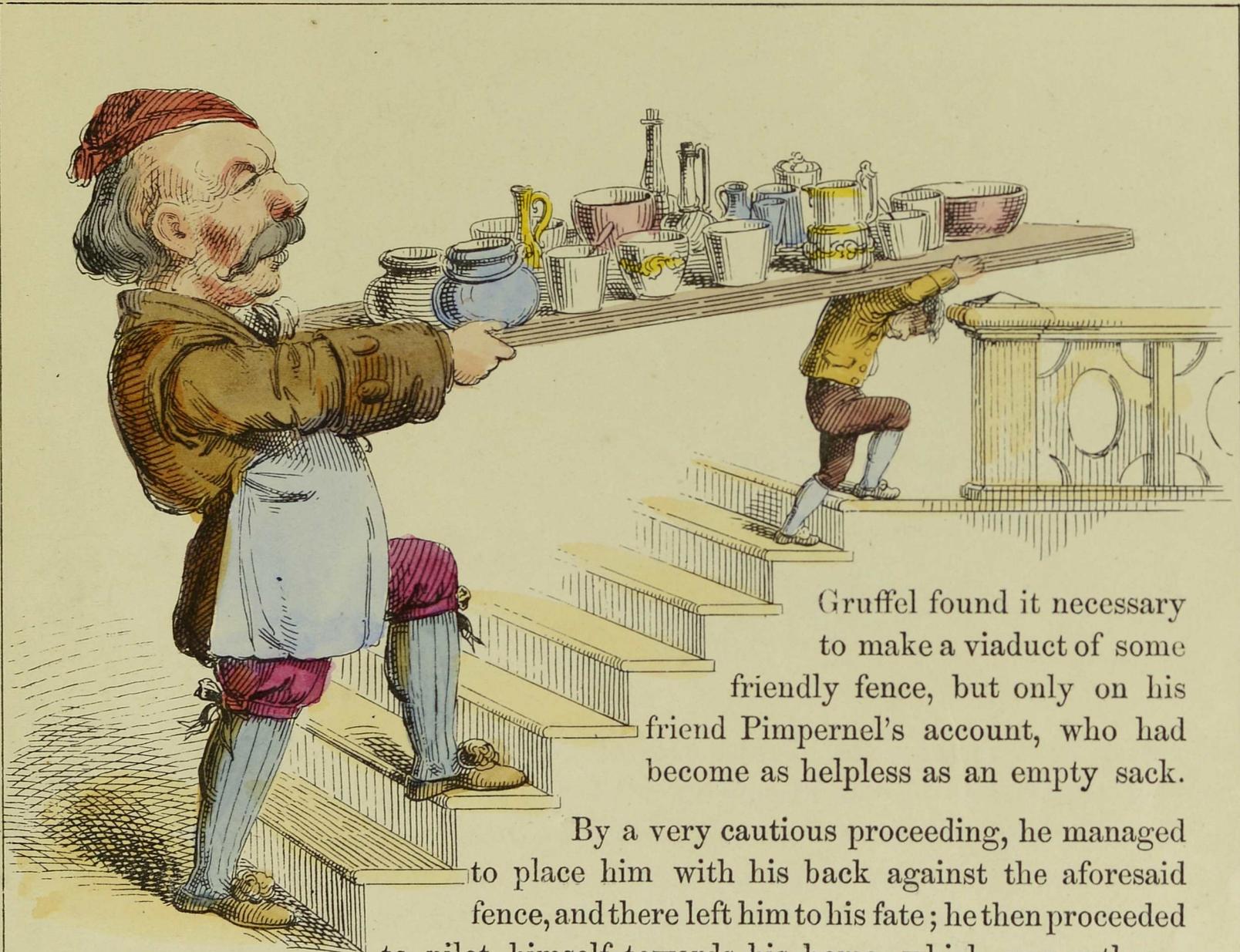
plenty of idlers, who were too delighted to find him so soon wending his way towards the only refuge for such as they were.

How they applauded his very independent resolve of neglecting his wife's advice and his family's comfort! The landlord threw on an immense log that quickly blazed up the chimney with thousands of cheerful sparks; and so they all set in to a good hard drinking bout, which soon banished the various uncomfortable demons that claim their victims after a debauch, and only leave them for a time at a fresh brewing.

The jolliest night will have an end, and the largest pitcher will get empty at last; so, in the due course of time, the clock struck twelve, and Gruffel and his toppers had got their skins full. The observant host, seeing that they could drink no more, prepared to turn them out.

He found them, with the greatest kindness, their hats and caps, and it would have been quite as well could he have found them their legs, which, by the strangest perversity, would bend about in the most wonderful manner, and refuse to do their duty.

When they came out into the bright moonlight and sniffed the morning air, they were scattered as if by a bomb-shell; some measured their lengths upon the footpath, while others embraced the trees and posts with wonderful affection.



Gruffel found it necessary to make a viaduct of some friendly fence, but only on his friend Pimpernel's account, who had become as helpless as an empty sack.

By a very cautious proceeding, he managed to place him with his back against the aforesaid fence, and there left him to his fate; he then proceeded to pilot himself towards his home, which was rather a difficult matter, for the moon shone very brightly through the interstices of the fence, which, as he moved, appeared to move also. This did not improve his condition, but was equal to another bowl in stupifying him.

He, however, with a bold heart, still continued his course, hand over hand; but the fence seemed to be determined to go all the way home with him, or else there was no other end to it; he continued at work in the most meritorious manner, but with no good result, for his wooden guide kept wavering on before him. He paused to consider; but he found that this attempt would end in sleep, so he roused himself and proceeded to work again. He did get on this time, for he entered a dense, dark wood, still holding tight by his guide.

“What a fool I am,” said he to himself, “why this is Mynheer Brechthausen's park paling, just round the corner and I am at home; but there's that confounded brook, and that narrow plank to cross; well, I suppose I shall do it, I've done it hundreds of time before, so here goes.”



But there was no corner to turn round; so, in the natural course of things he still went on and on, until he found himself in positive darkness; for the wood was so dense that not the slightest gleam of the moonlight could find its way through the roof of branches. "As I only make bad worse," said Gruffel, "I'll stay where I am, for I really begin to think that I have lost my way; we should not have had that last bowl; that last bowl! How it has scattered the milksops, to be sure; poor Pimpernel! poor Schaffe! poor Deidrich! poor,— poor all of 'em." At this point of his meditation he burst out into a loud and idiotic laugh, as he pictured his scattered band sleeping where they fell in the bright moonlight.

His loud laugh echoed through the still night air; but the echo was most wonderful, for it would not leave off; but as it appeared just upon the verge of dying away, it was taken up by something in the close vicinity, and revived as powerfully as at first. It soon changed its character into a laugh of fiendish mockery, which chilled Gruffel's blood. He, however, mustered up courage, and called out—

"Come, come, none of your nonsense; if you are a neighbour rather lend us your arm, and I will reward you with a dram for your pains; so don't keep braying there like a jackass."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when the laughing gentleman, whom he had summoned with so little ceremony, stood before him. As he did



so, Gruffel's hair stood on end,
for he was decidedly not a pleasant neighbour,
nor did he look like one belonging to the earth at all.

He was in fact a gnome, or brownie, or something of that supernatural kind, and not the most prepossessing of his race. He was short in stature, with a most malicious grin upon his ugly countenance, which was lighted most brilliantly from some internal flame; the same phosphoric light pervaded the whole of his body, so that he appeared to be nothing but a man lantern.

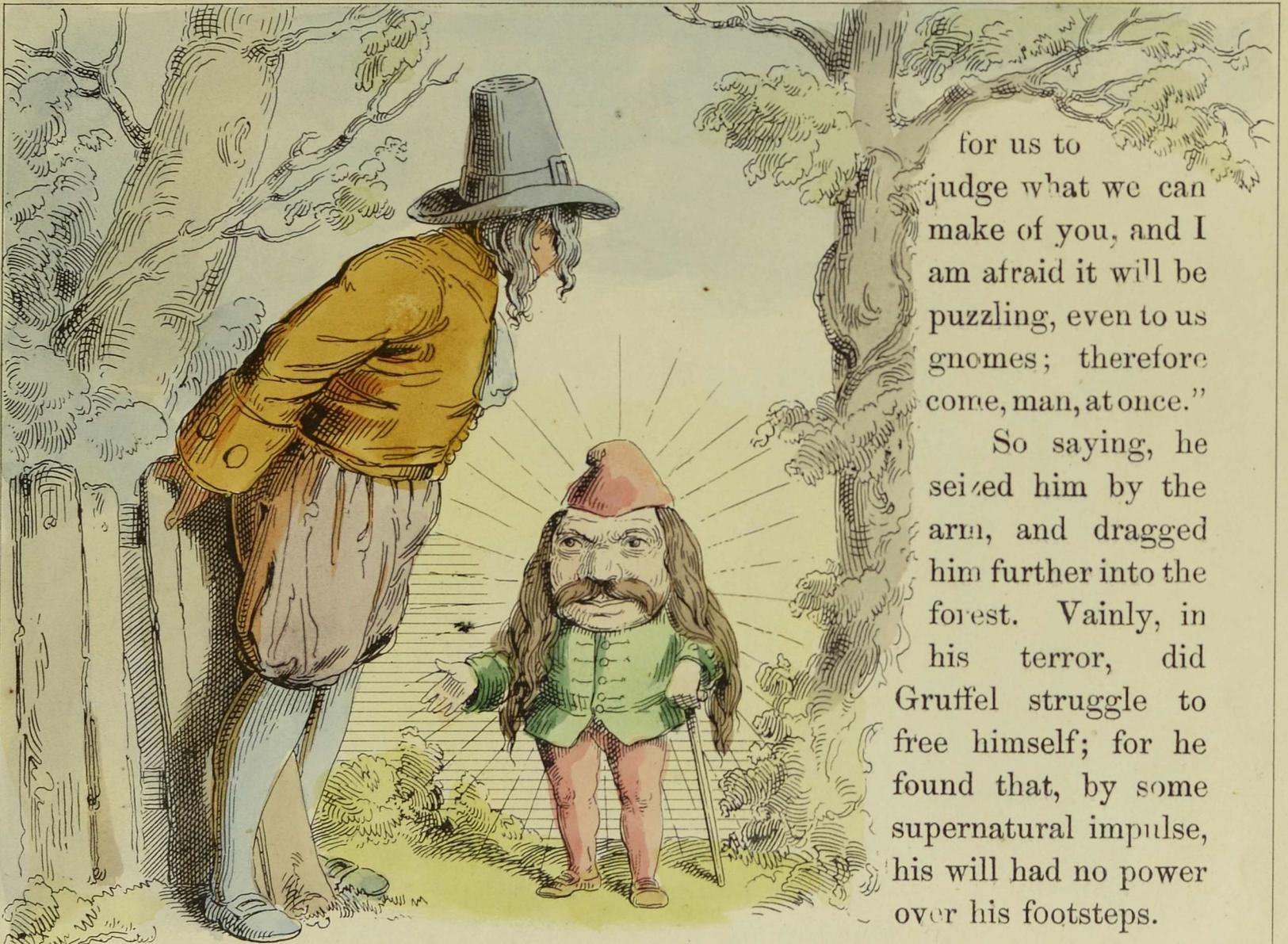
"Here I am, Gruffel, at your service," said the frightful little apparition; "take my arm, and I will take you where you ought to go."

"I beg your pardon," stammered Gruffel, "but I shall do very well; I am close at home, sir, you are very kind, thank you."

"Close at home!" said the demon, with a sarcastic laugh, "why, you are deep in the recesses of the Black Forest; guided by the gnome's paling you could not miss your way to our retreat, so I bid you a hearty welcome, and must lead you to your trial."

"My trial?" exclaimed Gruffel, in mortal fear.

"Yes, your trial," replied the gnome; "you ceased to be a man when you struck your wife down upon your hearth stone so now you fall under our dominion



for us to judge what we can make of you, and I am afraid it will be puzzling, even to us gnomes; therefore come, man, at once."

So saying, he seized him by the arm, and dragged him further into the forest. Vainly, in his terror, did Gruffel struggle to free himself; for he found that, by some supernatural impulse, his will had no power over his footsteps.

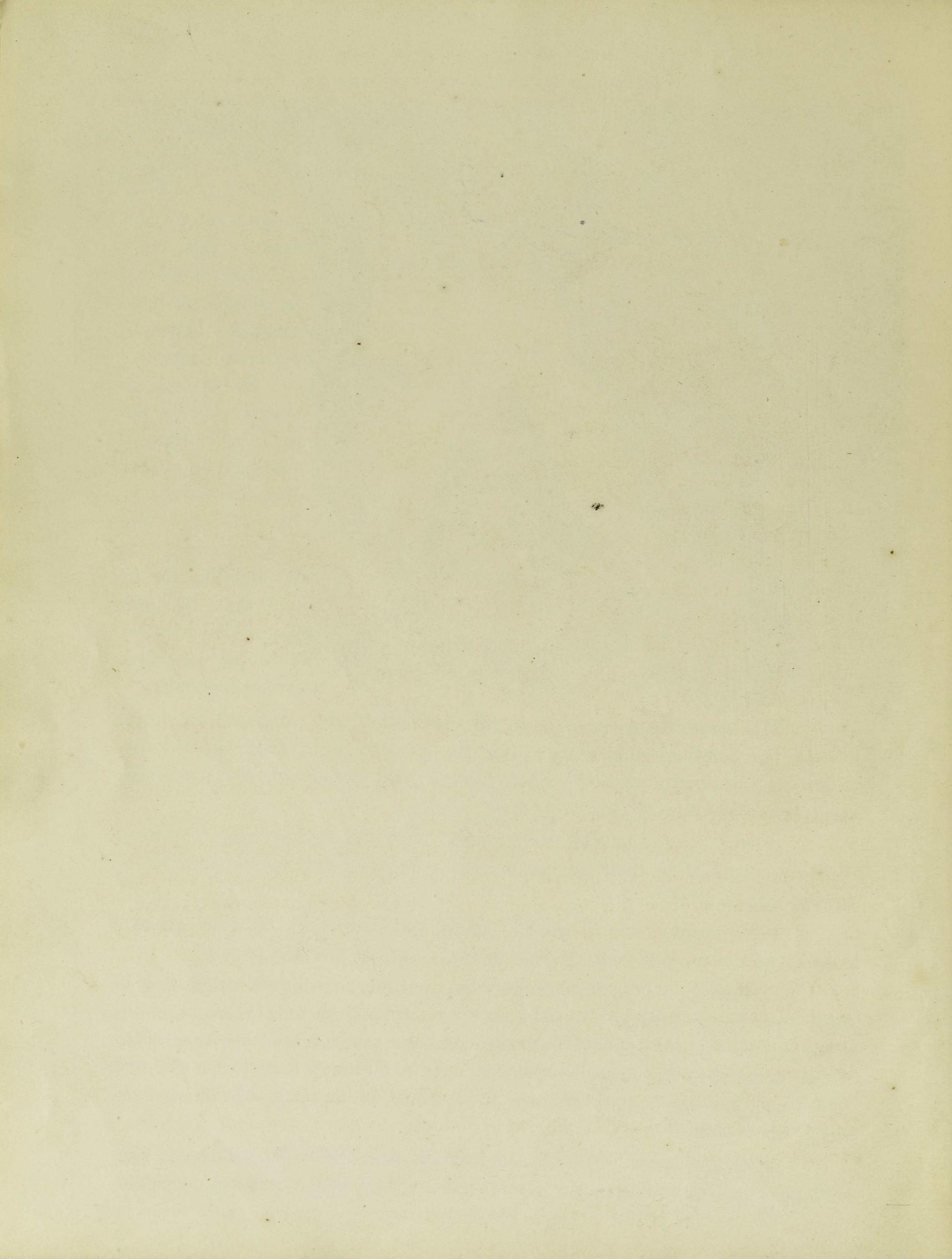
His terrible suspense, as to his destination, was soon put an end to by the more terrible reality; for the gnome's light soon showed him that he was surrounded by a whole host of wild beasts, whose eyes glared upon him in the most appalling manner.

"Don't be afraid," said the gnome, "they will not hurt you; you must reconcile yourself to their appearance and companionship, as you are soon to become one of them."

"To become one of them!" exclaimed Gruffel; "Oh, good gnome! what is the meaning of your terrible words? pray be merciful to me."

"Silence, sot!" replied the gnome, savagely; "all your praying is in vain; your fate is sealed; you have by your own acts become inhuman, and it is but justice that you should be turned into one of these wild denizens of the forest; and a very fit companionship too. As to which of their forms you will take, I have not as yet made up my mind, so sit down upon this fallen tree, and I will cogitate."

With that he withdrew his arm from the sinking Gruffel, who seated himself tacitly upon the trunk of the tree indicated. After some minutes of considera-



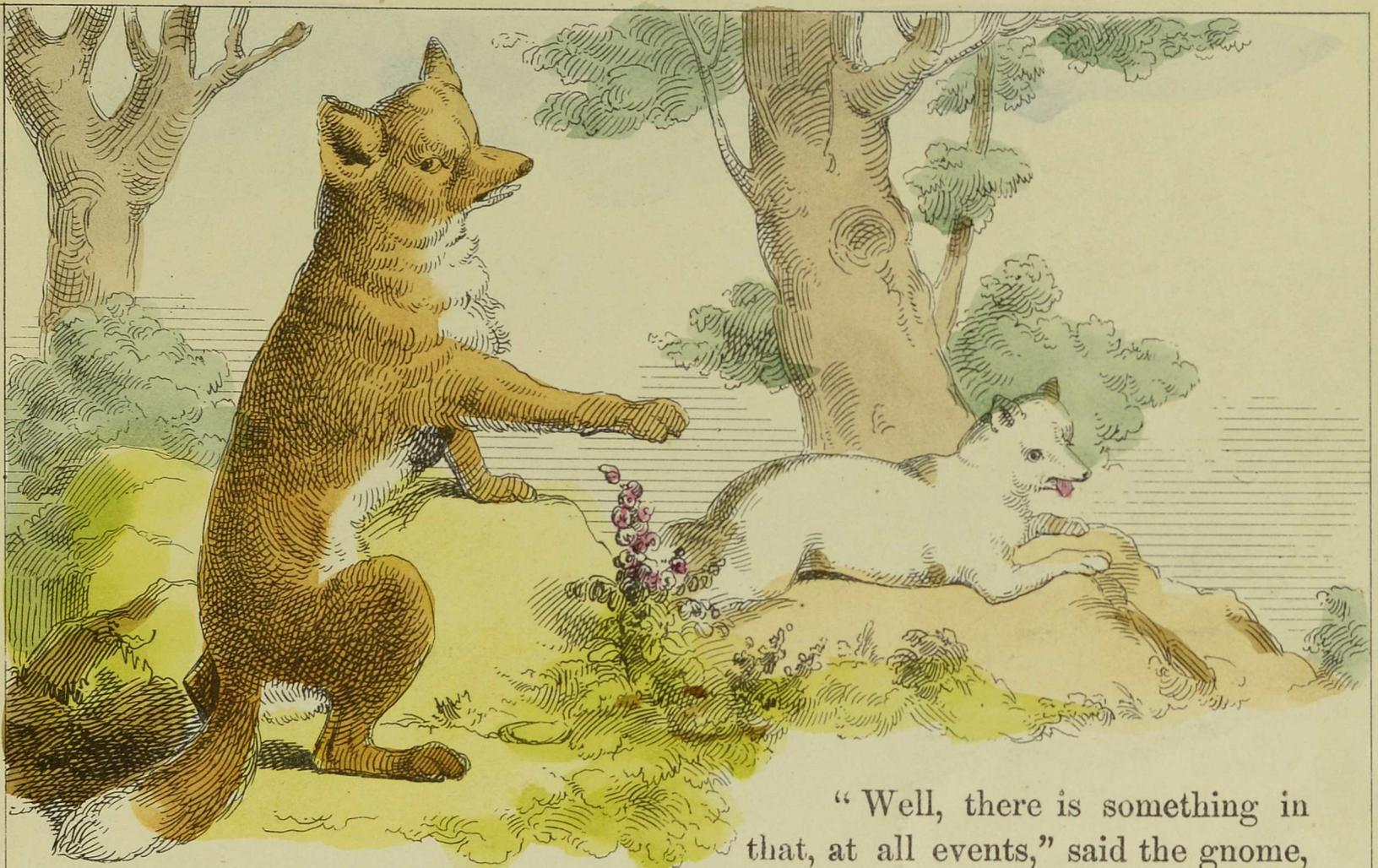


tion the gnome spoke, addressing the brutes around, who seemed to pay implicit attention to his words.

“Brutes! I have brought this outside of a man, that I might give him a fitting punishment for his many acts debasing to his kind. It is my intention to change him into the form of one of you, that he may no longer disgrace his fellows, but I hesitate only as to which.”

A low growl of discontent broke from the assembled brutes at these words.

“Why, you seem rather displeased, my good friends, at my intentions; that growl of discontent is not very flattering to the gentleman here, who is so soon to become a distinguished member of your society. I am, however, ready to hear any of you speak, before I decide finally. What say you, shall he be turned into a bear? “Why a bear?” said a shaggy member of that class; “why a bear? why pick out my fraternity? Is there anything in which I resemble that lackadaisical fool, that you should insult a respectable brute, by proposing to give him such a form? I cherish my young, and teach them how to provide for themselves according to their nature; does he do that? If not, why should I have a stigma thrown upon my race? It is unjust and cruel, Sir Gnome.” As he concluded his short speech he growled most savagely, and cast no loving eye upon Gruffel.



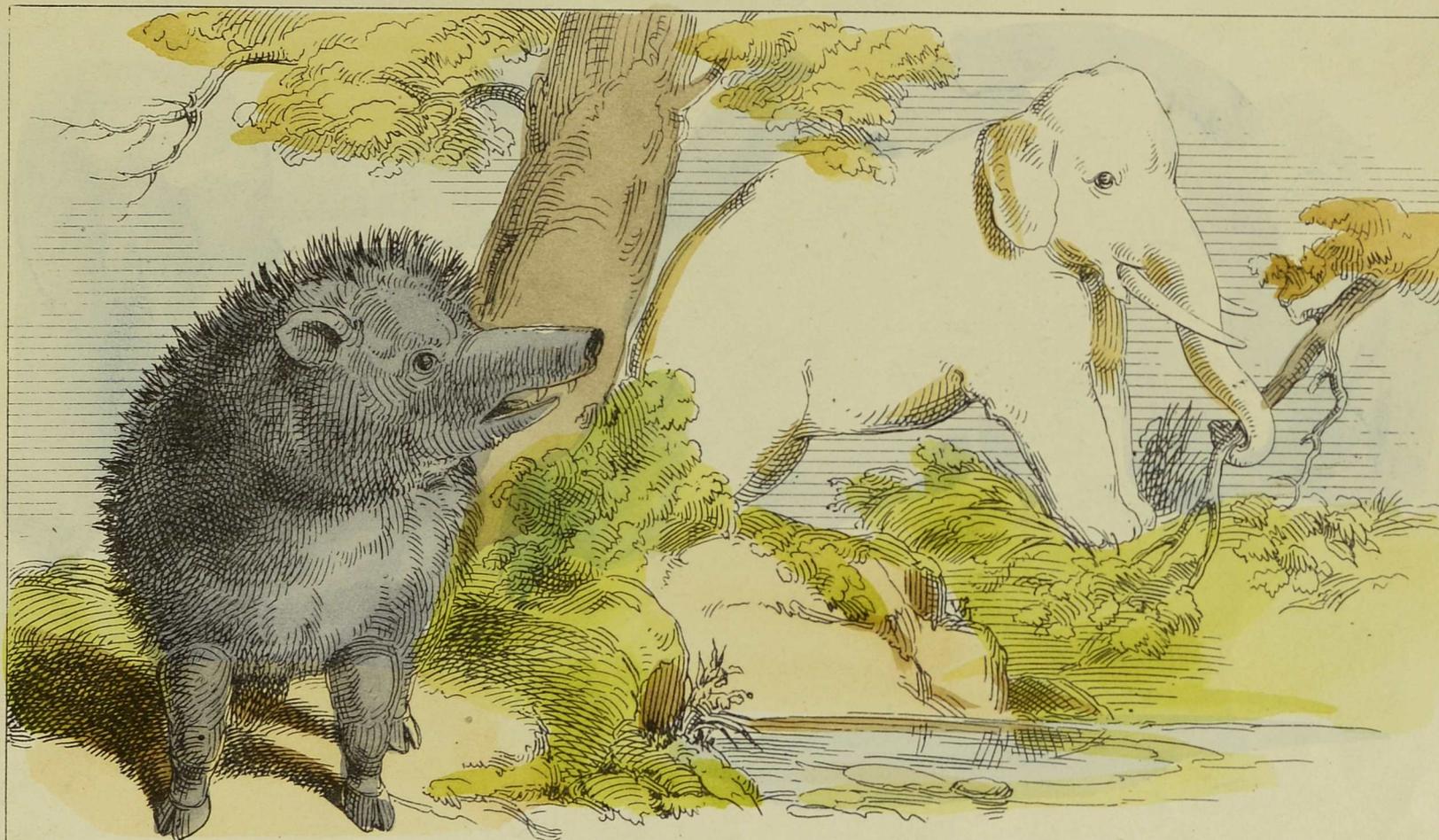
“ Well, there is something in that, at all events,” said the gnome, laughing, “ so you shall stand excused from having him as a brother, for he certainly is a most stupid donkey; donkey! ah, that is it; I will turn him into an ass.”

“ Stop a bit,” said a stupid looking jackass, “ I have a right to my say, according to your promise; although man, for some unaccountable reason, has made me the type of stupidity, I believe that I have my share of brains as well as another; I therefore must say I do not see why I should be insulted by having my likeness taken by your friend, who in no one thing resembles me. Do I not labor for my livelihood? Am I not patient and celebrated for unremitting industry? Am I not content with the simplest of food and the scantiest of shelter? Why then, only because I am an ass, should I be put upon?” Another growl, but of applause, greeted the conclusion of the honest donkey’s speech.

The gnome made a mock bow to the donkey, and said, “ Sir, I ought to have known your nature better; for this man is truly most unlike you; he is a lazy vagabond, therefore you shall be free from his companionship. I find I must turn him to brutes of worse character. If the fox will excuse me, I will mention his name.”

Upon this announcement the fox jumped up with an indignant flourish of his tail.

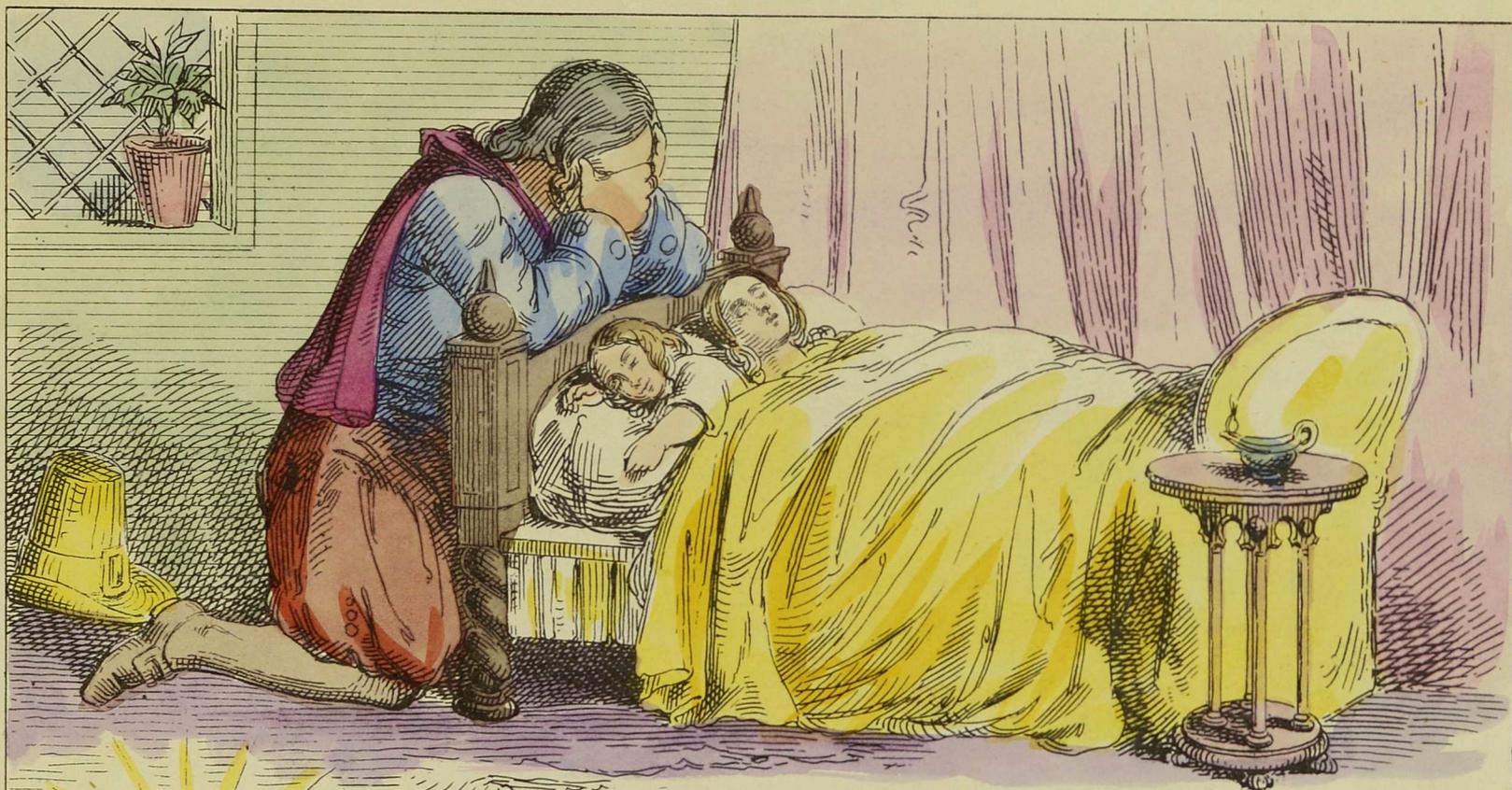
THE INDIGNATION OF THE HOG.



making a ferocious snap at the chattering monkey's tail, who immediately made for a place of safety, "a cur I think you said; in what is he like a dog? Is he grateful for kindness? Is he faithful to his trust? Is he untiring in the service of his friend, or does he protect the hearthstone that shelters him? Answer me that, Mr. Chatterer; if he does any one of these things I am content that he should become a dog; if not, I scorn his fellowship, and declare war upon him."

"Stop, stop, not so fast, Mr. Dog, cool your ire," exclaimed the gnome, "rest content, I never intended anything but punishment. To make him a dog would be raising him in the scale; so, as he is so fond of wallowing in the mire, I will make him a pig." A loud grunt greeted this announcement, and a large hog, whose ears flapped with excitement, came forward.

"I most humbly beg to represent," said he, "that that would be injustice indeed, for I may say, as others have done, in what am I like this candidate for honors? Am I not content with any food? Am I not the poor man's friend while living, and do I not, when dead, become the almost sole support of himself and family? When your friend dies he only further troubles and distresses his friends to bury him, for he is then of no earthly use." Having so spoken, the hog picked up a few acorns, and went off munching them with much *sang froid*.



“Well,” said the gnome, “I am fairly puzzled as to what I am to turn you into, so as to degrade you; for these brutes repudiate you with proper and honest disdain. I fear that I must think of some other punishment, for it really appears to me that every brute does its duty according to its nature and position in the scale of creation; and I cannot insult them by placing you among them.”

“Good gnome,” said the noble lion, rising with much majesty, “I have not spoken because I could not imagine that you had any intention of turning your friend into a lion; but I feel myself now called upon to get you out of this dilemma. You have, from a good motive, brought this man here to punish him, which you cannot do by investing him with any of the attributes of the brutes in my kingdom. I am sure that with your shrewd sense, you see at once that such an act would only be a reward; for it would better his condition. Now, good gnome, if you will allow me to suggest to your superior wisdom, that all your power is useless in the endeavour to punish this man, who takes such infinite pains to punish himself; for is his heart not desolate? Does he not shut out from it all the affection and natural love of his kind, in sheer selfishness? Does he not sink deeper and deeper into the slough of despond from his mad excess? Is it such a one as this that you have rashly brought among us brutes, to degrade by making him take the form of one of

us? Good gnome, you must be told that there is nothing that crawls upon the face of the earth so degraded as a drunken man. Go, then, conduct him to his own door, and let him reflect that the lowest of my subjects shrink from such a companionship."

The light faded within the gnome's body; but something like it glittered on the casement of Gruffel's cottage, at the door of which he found himself standing. He entered and looked upon his sleeping wife and children, his sighs answered their soft breathings as he knelt beside them, humbled and penitent.

The next morning the merry voices of children gladdened the cottage, and a smile of happy contentment played upon the face of Gruffel's wife;— Why? Gruffel had vowed to become a man again. The demon of drink fled at his first resolve, and he did not think it beneath him to imitate the virtues of the brutes, who had given him a lasting lesson in the dark glades of the Black Forest.



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