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MAN IN THE MOON.

AND

Another Tale for Children at Christmastide.



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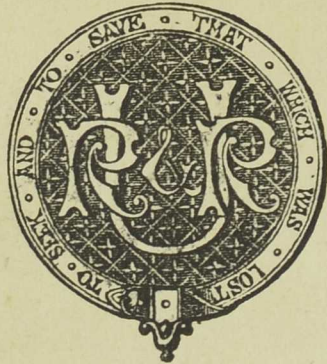
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LONDON:
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THE MAN IN THE MOON.

ONCE upon a time, long before people were able to learn what they wanted to know from printed books, long before children had pretty pictures to tell them tales, there lived an old student with his pupil. Together they spent all the day in poring over musty old books and papers, trying to find out why the sun was hot; and in the night-time they might always be seen gazing at the sky, counting how many stars there were there. They were very curious folk, and wanted to know the reasons for all sorts of out-of-the-way things that everybody else was content to know the mere facts of, such as why birds have two wings and not three, why crocodiles have no fins, seeing that they can swim in the water, and many other matters that would not interest sensible beings. They always had at their side a

young owl, and a serpent, toothless and blind with age; for they thought that youthful observation and aged craftiness were most suitable companions for them in their labours. If at any time old Fusticus, for so the old student was named, got dispirited in his work, or felt inclined to give it up as a hopeless task, he had but to turn round in his chair, and there behind him sat his owl, who seemed to say, as he cocked his head on one side, "Never despair, success only comes after long perseverance!" Or if he stuck fast at any point, and could make no progress, one glance at the old serpent made him think, "Snakes wait whole days and nights on watch for their prey; why should I give in?" And, strange to say, with a little more attention and care, he always did get over his smaller difficulties.

But at last old Fusticus got weary of his long studies, as he seemed never to find an answer to any one of the questions he had set himself; and he was about to give them up altogether, when he came across a curious passage in the old tome in which he was reading. For a long time he could not make it out at all, but after

deep thought and consultation with his pupil, he discovered that it was a spell, by which he could call up the Spirit of Darkness, whom he could compel to grant him any three wishes that he might demand. The only condition was that he should give to the Spirit of Darkness whatever he should ask of him.

Old Fusticus thought and thought a long time over this discovery, and at last decided to make use of it. So one day he repeated the charm he had learnt from the book, and when he had finished the last word, to his amazement, for he did not quite believe it was all true, there stood before him the Spirit of Darkness! He was not at all like what he had imagined he would have been; for he had not a hideous face, nor a tail, but was dressed in the costume of a court gentleman, with a sword at his side and a cocked hat in his hand. He had, too, a pigtail, ruffles and all complete!

“Sire,” he said to Fusticus, “what is your will? You have summoned me to you by a power not your own—you know the condition on which you use that power. What is your wish?”

“My wish you shall soon learn, or rather my three wishes. But what is it that you demand in return?”

“All that I ask is now—nothing! All that I want is your first-born babe!”

“I have no child—I am an old man without a wife. If I had a child, you should have him.” Fusticus did not think what he was saying, you see; but he felt quite safe in offering a thing that did not exist.

“’Tis a bargain!” cried the wicked Spirit at once and with glee. “Here is a written compact! Sign!” and Fusticus with a laugh put his name to the paper, for he thought: “Ah, my fine fellow! you have over-reached yourself this time! In trying to get too much, you have got nothing at all!” and he laughed again.

“Your wishes?” asked the Spirit of Darkness, putting the signed document into his coat-tail pocket.

“Well!” said Fusticus, “first of all I will have—dear me! what shall I have? Now I come to think of it, I don’t know that I want anything at all! Let me see, I have clothes, a house, my owl and my old serpent, I have a pupil, my books, my—oh! I know! I



have not got a horse to ride upon! But to wish for only a horse! Spirit, let me have a *Cock* large enough for me to ride upon!”

And forthwith there appeared a monstrous cock, so large that Fusticus could easily sit upon its back. And this he at once did. “Shan’t I look grand now!” thought Fusticus, “as I ride through the village. All eyes will be upon me!” Just at that moment the cock gave a loud crow, and began to strut onwards, and away they went to the village. And as the last sound of the cock’s crow died away, the Spirit of Darkness vanished.

The cock made his way straight to the village, and through the chief street. Everybody turned to look at Fusticus and his remarkable mode of travelling, but his friends did not, as he had expected, seem very much struck with its grandeur. “Poor old Fusticus has gone quite mad,” they said to each other; “that comes of too much reading!” and they would not return the polite bows that Fusticus showered upon them. And so silly old Fusticus soon came to repent his first wish. “Oh! that I had not been so foolish!” cried Fusticus,

and as soon as he got out of the village, he dismounted from his cock, and again called upon the Spirit of Darkness.

“And so you already want something more? You mortals are never contented,” said the latter. “Everybody laughs at my steed,” answered Fusticus; “I cannot ride through the streets without looking absurd! Give me a golden carriage, drawn by four real horses this time, with as many servants as attend a duke;” and the next moment up drove the most magnificent carriage he had ever beheld, with four prancing white horses, and a footman and two postilions. Behind it rode two lords, to guard it. “Now I shall indeed be happy! Now my friends can no longer laugh!” thought Fusticus, and the very next day he took his first drive.

When his friends saw that Fusticus had come into such luck, and had such a grand carriage of his own, they all thought “Dear me! some rich relation of Fusticus must have died, and left him all this. I hope he did not see me laugh when he passed me yesterday on that curious cock of his!” But Fusticus was too

pleased to be unfriendly with anybody, when he saw what marked attention his grand equipage brought him. He sat smiling inside his carriage and had a kind word for all, even for the poor old woman he saw the rough villagers jeering at and abusing. He even called to them to stop breaking the pitchers and pots that she was trying to sell in the market-place, the only grudge that they had against her being that she had a rather more hooked nose than their own!

Fusticus now lived for some time quite happy. Everybody thought a great deal of him, because of his fine carriage, in which he used to take daily drives. All the young unmarried ladies of the village tormented him that he was still a bachelor, saying that his carriage must have been made for two, as there were two seats in it. And this seemed such a forcible argument to Fusticus, that he soon took one of the ladies as a wife. In course of time a little baby was born to them. Scarcely was the child a week old, when one morning, just as Fusticus was nursing his little pet, in through the window sprang the Spirit of Darkness! Drawing the

written compact from his pocket, he said, "In accordance with this, give me up your child, your first-born! But you have one wish still left. What may it be?" Fusticus was struck dumb; he could not recover himself for a long time, for in his happiness he had quite forgotten his promise, quite forgotten his third wish, and all about the Spirit of Darkness!

"I cannot yield my child, my young and innocent darling!" he cried. "Anything else you may take—my life, my carriage, anything, but leave me my child!"

"The child! the child! and nothing else!" shrieked the demon, and then, regaining himself, with a smile added: "And your last wish?"

"If I lose my boy," answered Fusticus, "my joy on this earth is for ever gone. If you take my child, then, oh Spirit of Darkness and Deceit! then, may I for all eternity pass my life in the Moon!" "Granted too is your third——" "But I have not finished yet," broke in Fusticus, "and may my child for ever remain with me there!"

And there you may see them both to this day, but



the child was changed into a spider. And every now and then the good little spider lets himself down by his thread to the earth and takes his father back all the news of the day.

But if you, Reader, had three wishes granted to you, I hope you would choose them better and more wisely than did old Fusticus!







A FORTUNE IN AN EMPTY WALLET.

IN the north of England, several hundred years ago, there lived a young knight. He was very poor, as his father had spent all his money, and the only things of value that he left his son were a white horse of wonderful beauty and a very curious old sword. Edgar—that was the knight's name—was obliged to leave his home, for he had no money to spend in keeping up a large house; and, besides, his father had been deeply in debt, and the tradesmen were clamouring for their bills to be paid, and threatening to put him in prison if he did not pay them. So, having filled two bundles with clothes and food, he mounted his horse and rode off to seek his fortune abroad.

He had been journeying along for several days, not knowing where to go or what to do, when one evening

he found himself riding through a dark and gloomy forest. He was thinking to himself how dismal his future looked, and was wondering how he should be able to make a living, when all of a sudden his horse started, reared up on his hind-legs, and then stood quite still, trembling with fright.

Edgar looked around him, and saw, standing under the shadow of an old yew-tree, the figure of an aged man. His form was bent with years, and he leaned for support on a thick knotted stick. His clothes were patched and torn, his toes peeped out from his worn-out boots, while in one hand he carried an old wallet, which had been carefully mended, and which evidently contained something that he greatly valued.

As soon as Edgar's horse stopped short, the old man came near, and asked for alms.

“You have come to the wrong person,” replied Edgar; “for though I would gladly help you if I could, I expect that I am quite as poor as you are, except that I still have my sword and my good steed.”



The old man looked earnestly at the sword, and his eyes sparkled as he asked eagerly—

“Where did you get that sword from?”

“My father gave it to me,” replied Edgar; “and he brought it home with him when he returned from the wars beyond the seas.”

“Noble knight!” returned the old man, “in my wallet I have a jewel that is beyond price. That sword of yours takes my fancy, and if you like to exchange it for my wallet and what it contains, I assure you that you will not repent it.”

“Let me first see the jewel,” said Edgar; for although he was very anxious to get it, he wanted first of all to make quite sure that it was really there.

“Before I let you have my wallet I must have your sword,” said the old man; “but if you do not like your bargain, I will give it you back again. You see I cannot possibly run away with it, for you are on horseback, while I am on foot.”

At first Edgar refused to do this, but at last he agreed; for he thought to himself that he could easily

get the sword back, as of course the old man could not run as fast as his horse. He therefore handed down his sword and received the old wallet in exchange.

He opened it eagerly, but to his rage and dismay found that it was empty. In his anger he turned round so suddenly, that by accident he touched his horse with his spur. The horse at once began to gallop off, and it had carried him some distance before he could stop it.

When he returned to the spot where he had given up his sword, he at first saw nothing of the beggar, but happening to look up, to his great surprise he saw him sitting in the top of a tall tree, having climbed there so as to be out of his reach.

“Honoured knight!” cried the beggar, “forgive me for playing you such a trick, and rest assured that you shall not in the end suffer for it. This sword which I hold in my hand belonged to my great-grandfather, who was killed in the first crusade, and it has chanced to become your property in some way or other. I knew it at once by the curious hilt, of which the cross-piece is, as you know, turned up at one end and down at the

other. Give me your knightly word that you will not harm me, and I will come down and explain to you how it is that I value the sword so highly. Of one thing you may be certain—I shall not deceive you again. And what I tell you will be of great service to you.”

Edgar promised the beggar that he should be safe, and the latter began to scramble down from his uncomfortable perch. But, wonderful to relate, he was quite changed, and was now a handsome youth, though still dressed in the same tattered old clothes.

“My name,” said the beggar, “is Bertram; and to you I owe a debt of gratitude that I can never repay, for by means of this sword I can win back the castle and lands of my ancestors, from which I have been lately driven to wander about in the guise of an old beggar. Henceforth we will be as brothers, and the half of my lands shall be yours; for had it not been for you, they would never again have become mine. But let me tell you my story.

“Three years ago my father died, and I became heir to all his estates; but my step-mother was a wicked

woman, and hated me with all her might. Twelve months since she married again, and both she and her husband set to work to drive me from my home. Many of their attempts failed; but at last they secured the help of an old wizard, who turned me into a beggar. Of course nobody recognized me in this disguise, and my own servants only laughed and jeered when I told them who I was, and my step-father drove me from the castle with blows that I was too feeble to resist.

“I begged him to have mercy, but he only laughed; and the wizard, who was standing by him, said, ‘A beggar you must remain until you find your great-grandfather’s sword:’ then they slammed the door in my face.

“My father thought that he was perfectly safe to keep the castle for ever, as he believed the sword had been lost in a foreign land, and that I never could possibly find it again. But chance has brought it to me when I least expected it, and at a time when I am within a mile of my castle. Come, my friend, let us go and take possession, for I know that the wizard

spoke the truth when he said that I should enjoy my own again when I got this sword, because already half of what he said has come true, since I am once more my own self, instead of being an old beggar."

Edgar took Bertram up behind him on his horse, and together they rode off to the castle, which was not far distant. Leaving the horse tied to a tree, they drew near to the gate, when they heard shouts and songs and music, from which they knew that a great feast was being held.

"This way," said Bertram; and they ran down a narrow passage, then up a steep flight of stairs which led to a platform, from which they could look into the courtyard. A wonderful scene met their eyes. The courtyard was full of people, who were eating, drinking, singing, and enjoying themselves to their hearts' content. Two funny men were so happy that they were kissing each other; and in the middle several servants, with their long sharp knives, were cutting up an ox that had been roasted whole, while a number more were bringing

in fresh dishes of delicacies, such as peacocks, truffles, and boars' heads.

Bertram quickly looked around, and whispering to Edgar—"He is not here," motioned him to follow, and ran down the stairs again.

They passed through many passages and rooms, meeting no one, for everybody seemed to be helping at the feast. At length they reached a stone terrace that ran along outside the wall of the castle. They walked along this, until Bertram suddenly stopped opposite a large window, and signed to Edgar to look through.

He did so, and saw a man seated at a table with a lot of money before him, which he was paying away as fast as he could to several wicked-looking Jews with fur caps, who were putting it into bags, and carrying it away.

"The wretch!" said Bertram; "see how he is wasting my money. Let us dash in upon him through the window, so that he may see his day is over." So saying, he jumped right through the window on to the floor, closely followed by Edgar.



At the sound of the breaking of glass the Jews looked up, and seeing two strange figures coming through the window, they ran off as fast as they could, leaving their money behind, and shouting out that they had seen a spirit. His step-father fainted with terror, but the old steward at once knew his master again, and kneeling down, kissed his hand, blessing the day that had brought him back once more. Soon all the servants came running in, having heard the shouts of the Jews as they rushed away. Their delight at again seeing their young master, whom they had mourned as dead, was beyond bounds, and they brought him beautiful clothes, and took away his ragged garments, while his wicked step-father was hurried off to prison.

They then conducted him to the courtyard, and seated him in the chair of state, after which they served the banquet that had been prepared for his step-father. But amidst all his happiness Bertram did not forget his friend Edgar, who had been the means of restoring his inheritance to him. Taking him by the hand, he led him to the seat of honour, saying aloud as he did so,—

“Henceforth we are brothers, and everything shall belong to both of us equally. But for you, I should still be wandering about in the forest; so the least I can do is to share my good-fortune with you.”

Bertram and Edgar lived together for many years, beloved by all; and Edgar never repented the day when he exchanged his sword for an empty wallet.



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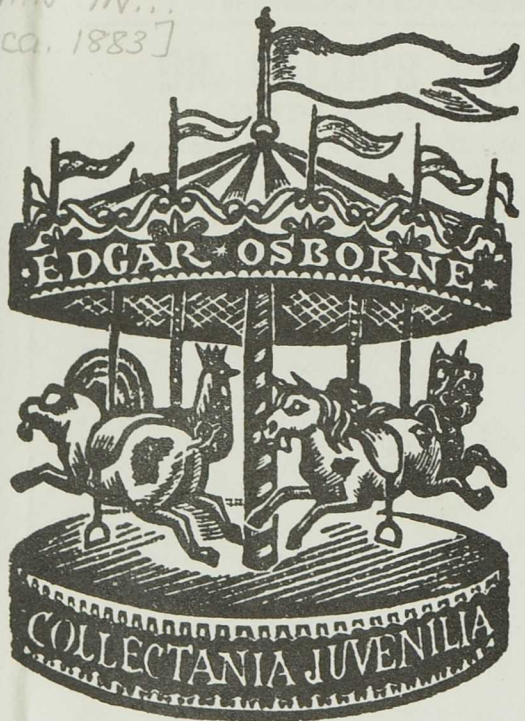
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