

HANS ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES



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From Daddo.

**Hans Andersen's
Fairy Tales**





HANS ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

SELECTED AND EDITED FOR CHILDREN



Illustrated by HELEN STRATTON

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The Tinder-Box

A SOLDIER was marching along the highroad—left, right! left, right! He had his knapsack on his back and a sword by his side, for he had been to the wars, and was now returning home. And on the road he met an old witch; a horrid-looking creature she was.

“Good evening, soldier!” said she. “What a bright sword, and what a large knapsack you have, my fine fellow! I’ll tell you what: you shall have as much money for your own as you can wish for!”

“Thanks, old witch!” cried the soldier.

“Do you see yonder large tree?” said the witch, pointing to a tree that stood close by the wayside. “It is quite hollow. Climb up to the top, and you will find a hole large enough for you to creep through, and thus you will get down into the tree. I will tie a rope round your waist, so that I can pull you up again when you call me.”

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“But what am I to do?” asked the soldier.

“What are you to do?” repeated the witch; “why, fetch money, to be sure! As soon as you get to the bottom, you will find yourself in a wide passage; then you will see three doors, and on opening the first you will enter a room. In the middle of it, on the floor, lies a large chest. A dog is seated on it, his eyes as large as tea-cups; but never you mind, don’t trouble yourself about him! I will lend you my blue apron; you must spread it out on the floor, then go briskly up to the dog, seize him, and set him down on it. When that is done, you can open the chest, and take as much money out of it as you please. That chest contains none but copper coins. If you like silver better, you have only to go into the next room; there you will find a dog with eyes as large as mill-wheels. Don’t be afraid of him; you have only to set him down on my apron, and then rifle the chest at your leisure. But if you would rather have gold than either silver or copper, that is to be had too, if you pass on into the third chamber. The dog that sits on this third money-chest has eyes as large as the Round Tower. But don’t be alarmed; if you set him down on my apron, he will do you no harm, and you can take as much golden treasure from the chest as you like.”

“Not a bad plan that, upon my word!” said the soldier. “But how much of the money am I to give you?”

“Not a penny will I have,” returned the witch. “The only thing I want you to bring me is an old tinder-box which my grandmother left there by mistake.”



THE SOLDIER AND THE FIRST DOG

THE TINDER-BOX

“Well, give me the rope and I’ll go,” said the soldier.

“Here it is,” said the witch, “and here is my apron.”

So the soldier climbed the tree, let himself down through the hole in the trunk, and suddenly found himself in the passage, which was lighted up by many hundred lamps.

He opened the first door. Bravo! There sat the dog with eyes as large as tea-cups, staring at him.

“There’s a good dog!” quoth the soldier, as he spread the witch’s apron on the floor, and lifted the animal upon it. He then filled his pockets with the copper coins, and passed on into the second apartment.

Huzza! There sat the dog with eyes like mill-wheels.

“You had really better not stare at me so,” remarked the soldier; “it will make your eyes weak!” and with that he set the dog down on the witch’s apron. But when he beheld the vast quantity of silver in the chest, he threw all his pence away in disgust, and hastened to fill his pockets and his knapsack with the silver. Then he passed into the third chamber. The dog in this chamber actually had a pair of eyes each as large as the Round Tower, and they kept rolling round like wheels.

“Good evening!” said the soldier, and he lifted his cap respectfully, for such a monster of a dog he had never before seen or heard of. Then thinking, “The sooner it’s done the better!” he took hold of the immense creature, removed him from the chest to the floor, and raised the lid of the chest. Oh, what a sight of gold was there!—enough to buy not only all Copenhagen, but all the cakes and sugar-plums, all the tin soldiers, whips, and

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rocking-horses in the world! Yes, he must be satisfied now. Hastily he threw out all the silver money he had stuffed into his pockets and knapsack, and took gold instead—so much of it that he could hardly walk for the weight he carried. He lifted the dog on to the chest again, banged the door of the room behind him, and called out: “Halloo, you old witch, pull me up!”

“Have you got the tinder-box?” asked the witch.

“Upon my honour, I’d quite forgotten it!” shouted the soldier, and back he went to fetch it. The witch then drew him up through the tree; and now he again stood in the highroad.

“What are you going to do with the box?” he asked.

“That’s no concern of yours,” returned the witch. “You’ve got your money; give me my tinder-box!”

“Well, take your choice!” said the soldier. “Tell me what you want with it, or I’ll cut off your head.”

“I won’t tell you!” screamed the witch.

So the soldier drew his sword and cut off her head. Then he made haste to knot all his money securely in her blue apron, slung it across his back,





THE LONELY PRINCESS

THE TINDER-BOX

put the tinder-box into his pocket, and went on to the nearest city.

It was a large, handsome city. He walked into the first hotel in the place, called for the best rooms, and ordered the choicest dishes for his supper.

The servant who cleaned his boots could not help thinking they were disgracefully shabby and worn to belong to such a grand gentleman; however, next day the soldier provided himself with new boots, and very gay clothes besides. He was now a great man, and the people of the hotel were called in to give him information about all the places of amusement in the city, and about their King, and the beautiful Princess, his daughter.

"I should rather like to see her," said the soldier.

"No one can see her at all," was the reply; "she dwells in a great copper palace, with ever so many walls and towers round it. No one but the King may visit her, because it has been foretold that she will marry a common soldier, and our King would not like that."

"Shouldn't I like to see her, though, just for once!" thought the soldier.

And now he lived a gay life; went continually to the theatre, drove out in the Royal Gardens, and gave much money in alms to the poor. He had a crowd of friends, who one and all declared he was a most capital fellow. But, as he was now giving and spending every day, and never received anything in return, his money began to fail him. At last he had only twopence left, and was forced to remove from his splendid apartments, and take

THE TINDER-BOX

refuge in an attic, where he had to brush his boots and darn his clothes himself, and where none of his friends ever came to see him, because there were so many stairs to go up, it was quite fatiguing.

It was a very dark evening, and he could not afford to buy himself so much as a rush-light; however, he remembered, all at once, that there were a few matches lying in the tinder-box that the old witch had bade him fetch out of the hollow tree. So he brought out the tinder-box and began to strike a light; but no sooner had he rubbed the flint-stone, and made the sparks fly out, than the door burst suddenly open, and the dog with eyes as large as tea-cups, which he had seen in the cavern beneath the tree, stood before him and said: "What commands has my master for his slave?"

"This is a pretty joke!" cried the soldier; "a fine sort of tinder-box this is, if it will really provide me with whatever I want. Fetch me some money this instant!" said he to the dog. The creature vanished, and in half a minute was back again, with a large bag full of pence.

So now the soldier understood the rare virtue of this charming tinder-box. If he struck the flint only once, the dog that sat on the chest full of copper came to him; if he struck it twice, the dog that watched over the silver answered his summons; and if he struck it three times, he was forthwith attended by the guardian of the gold.

He could now remove back to his princely apartments; he bought himself an entirely new suit of clothes, and all his friends remembered him again, and loved him



THE PRINCESS IS BROUGHT TO THE SOLDIER

THE TINDER-BOX

as much as ever. But one evening the thought occurred to him: "How truly ridiculous it is that no one should be allowed to see this Princess! They all say she is so very beautiful; what a shame it is that she should be shut up in that great copper palace! And I do so want to see her!—Where's my tinder-box, by the by?" He struck the flint, and lo! before him stood the dog with eyes as large as tea-cups.

"It is rather late, I must own," began the soldier; "but I do want to see the Princess so much, only for one minute, you know!"

And the dog was out of the door, and, before the soldier had time to think of what he should say or do, was back again, with the Princess sitting asleep on his back. A real Princess was this; so beautiful, so enchantingly beautiful! The soldier could not help himself; he knelt and kissed her hand: then the dog ran back to the palace with the Princess. Next morning, while she was at breakfast with the King and Queen, the Princess said that she had had a very strange dream. She had dreamt that she was riding on an enormously large dog, and that a soldier had knelt and kissed her hand.

"A pretty sort of a dream, indeed!" exclaimed the Queen. And she insisted that one of the ladies of the Court should watch by the Princess's bedside that night.

In the evening, the soldier summoned the dog to fetch the Princess again. This he did, and ran as fast as he could; not so fast, however, but that the ancient dame watching at the Princess's couch was able to follow them.

THE TINDER-BOX



She saw the dog vanish into a large house; then she took out a piece of chalk and made a great white cross on the door. But on his way back the dog chanced to observe the cross; so he immediately took another piece of chalk, and set a cross on every door in the town.

Early in the morning out came the King, the Queen, and the royal household, all curious to see where the

Princess had been. "Here it is!" exclaimed the King, as soon as he saw the first street-door with a cross chalked on it. "My dear, where are your eyes? This is the house!" cried the Queen, seeing that the second door bore a cross. Then, on discovering that there were crosses on all the doors, they gave up the search as vain.

But the Queen was an exceedingly wise and prudent woman. She now took her gold scissors, cut a large piece of silk stuff into strips, and sewed these strips together, to make a pretty, neat little bag. This bag she filled with the finest flour, and tied to the Princess's waist, cutting a hole in it just large enough to let the

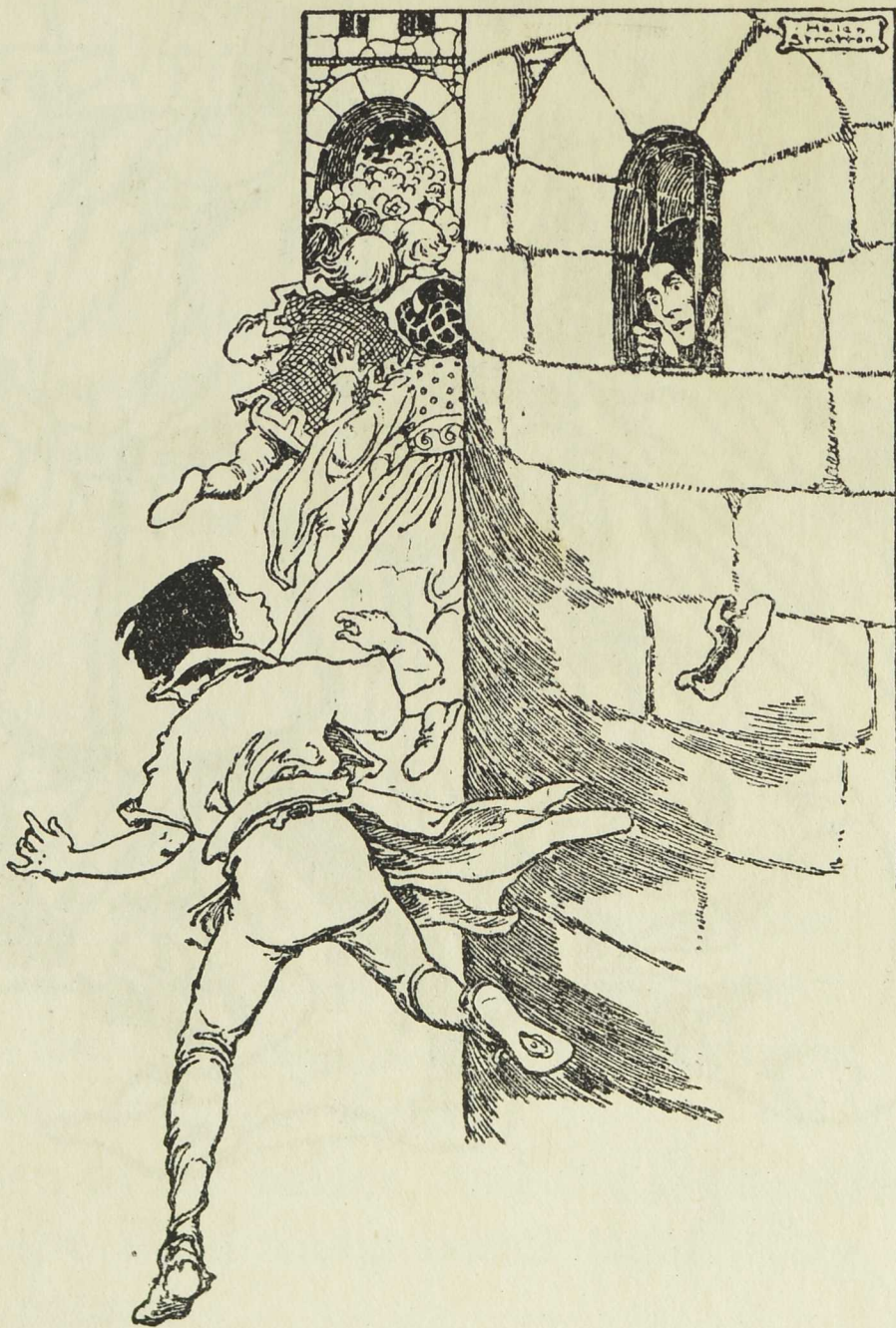
THE TINDER-BOX

flour drop out gradually while the Princess was moving.

That evening the dog came again, took the Princess on his back, and ran away with her to the soldier. He never perceived how the flour went drip, drip, dripping, all the way from the palace to the soldier's room, and from the soldier's room back to the palace. So next morning the King and Queen easily found where their daughter had been carried, and cast the soldier into prison.

And now he sat in the prison: and the turnkey kept coming in to remind him that to-morrow he was to be hanged; and the tinder-box had been left in his lodgings!

When morning came, he could, through his narrow iron grating, watch the people all hurrying along to see him hanged, and the soldiers marching to the place of execution. What a crowd there was! Among the rest was a shoe-maker's apprentice, who bustled





THE SOLDIER IS SAVED!

THE TINDER-BOX

on with such speed that one of his slippers flew off and struck the bars of the soldier's prison window.

"Stop, stop, little 'prentice!" cried the soldier. "It's of no use for you to be in such a hurry, for none of the fun will begin till I come: but if you'll oblige me by running to my lodgings, and fetching me my tinder-box, I'll give you twopence. But you must run for your life!" So away the boy raced, and brought the tinder-box to the soldier.

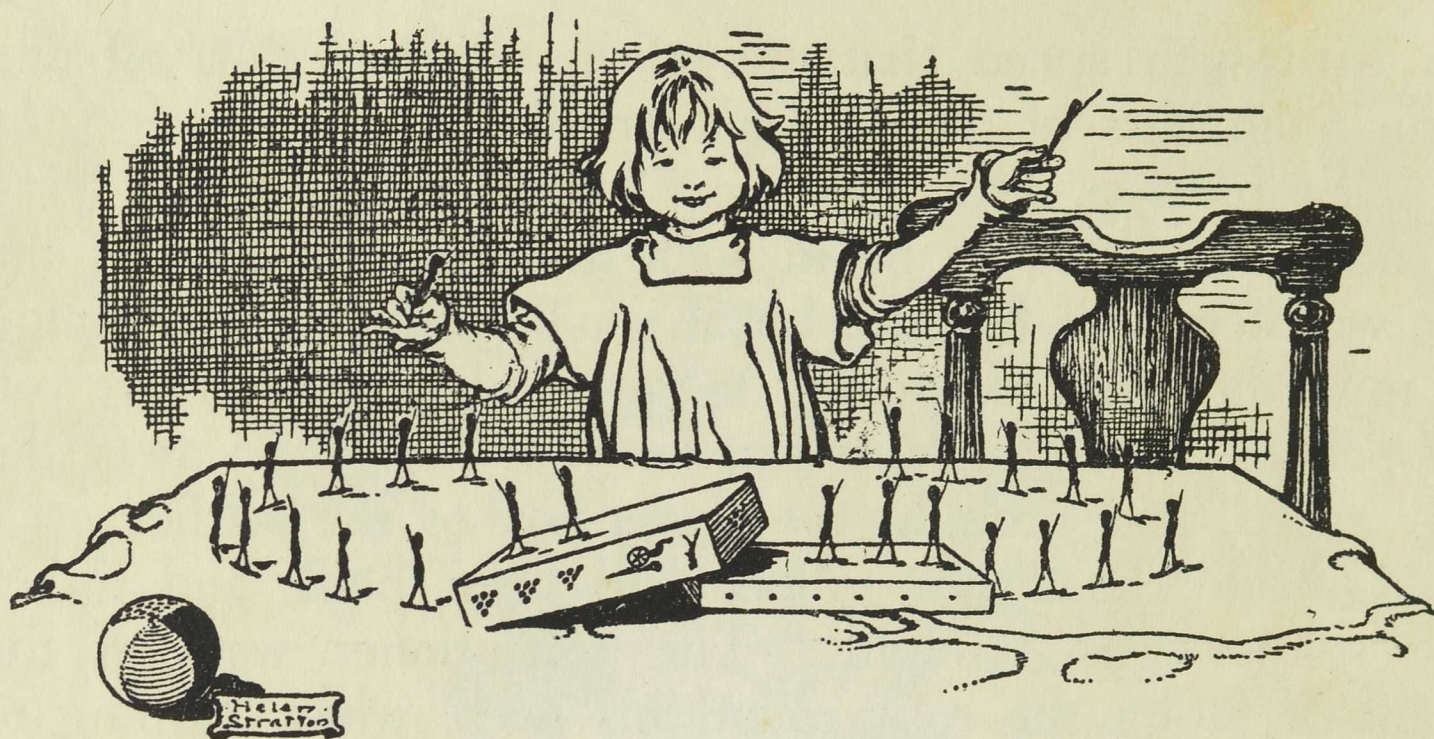
Outside the city a gibbet had been built, and hither the soldier was brought. The executioner was on the point of fitting the rope round his neck, when, turning to their Majesties, he asked them to let him smoke a pipe of tobacco before he died.

The King could not refuse this harmless request, so the soldier took out his tinder-box and struck the flint thrice—and lo! the three wizard dogs stood before him.

'Now, help me, don't let me be hanged!' cried the soldier. And forthwith the three terrible dogs fell upon the judges and councillors, tossing them into the air.

"We will not——" began the King, but the monster dog with eyes as large as the Round Tower seized both him and the Queen, and flung them up into the air after the councillors. And the soldiers were all desperately frightened, and the people shouted out with one voice: "Good soldier, you shall be our King, and the beautiful Princess shall be your wife, and our Queen!"

So the soldier was taken to the palace, and the Princess was made Queen, which she liked much better than living a prisoner in the copper palace.



The Constant Tin Soldier

THERE were once five-and-twenty tin soldiers, all brothers, for they had all been made out of one old tin spoon. They carried muskets in their arms, and held themselves very upright; and their uniforms were red and blue—very gay indeed. The first words they heard in this world, when the lid was taken off the box wherein they lay, were, “Tin soldiers!” It was a little boy who made this exclamation, clapping his hands at the same time. They had been given to him because it was his birthday, and he now set them out on the table.

The soldiers resembled each other to a hair. One only was rather different from the rest; he had but one leg, for he had been made last, when there was not quite enough tin left. He stood as firmly, however, upon his one leg as the others did upon their two.

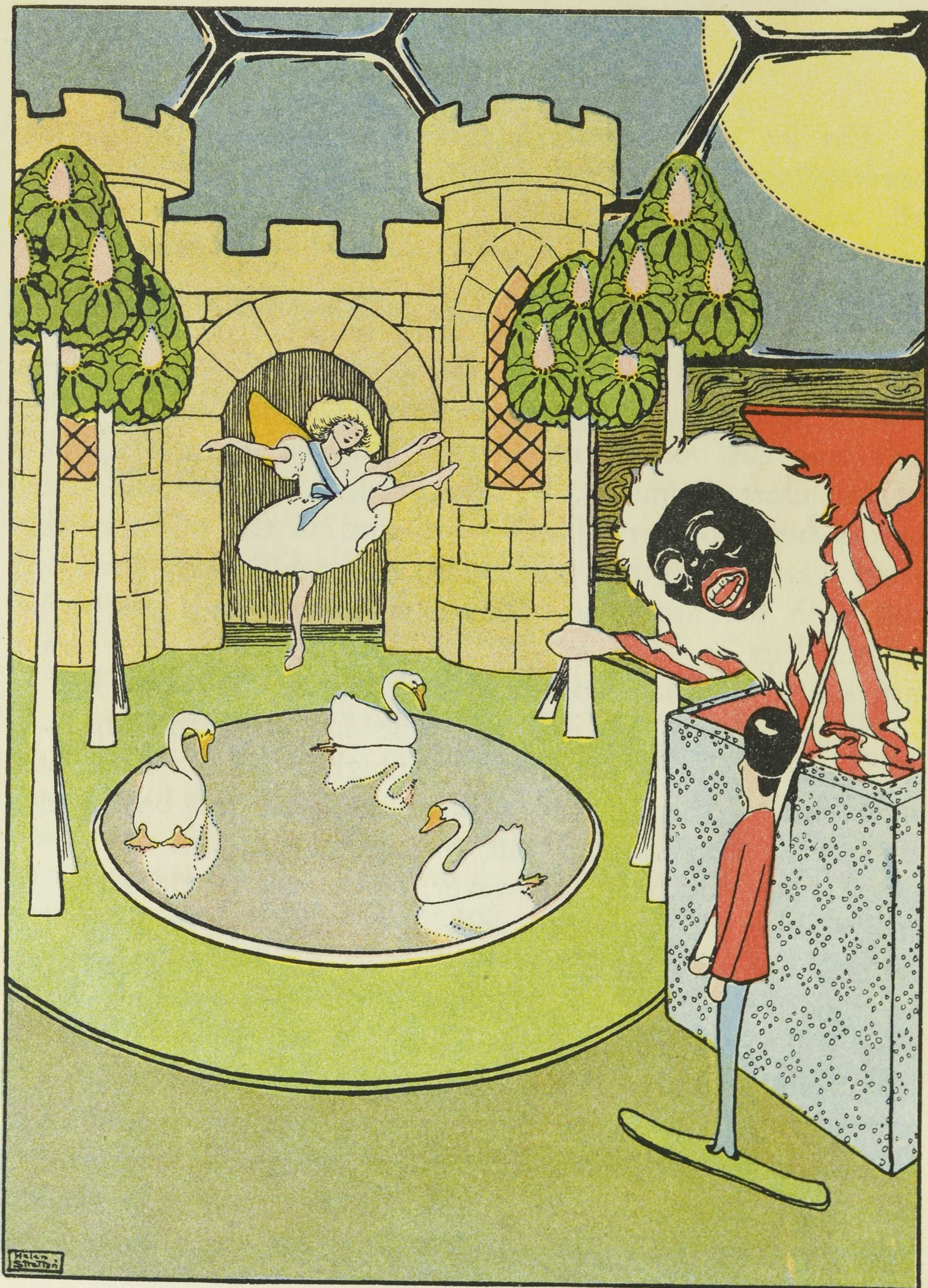
THE CONSTANT TIN SOLDIER

On the table, where the tin soldiers were set out, were several other playthings, but the most charming of them all was a pretty pasteboard castle. In front of the castle stood some tiny trees, clustering round a little mirror intended to represent a lake; and some waxen swans swam in the lake and were reflected on its surface.

All this was very pretty, but prettiest of all was a little damsel standing in the open doorway of the castle. She, too, was cut out of pasteboard; but she had on a frock of the clearest muslin, a little sky-blue riband was flung across her shoulders like a scarf, and in the midst of this scarf was set a bright gold wing. The little lady stretched out both her arms, for she was a dancer, and raised one of her legs so high in the air that the tin soldier could not see it, and fancied she had, like him, only one leg.

"She would be just the wife for me," thought he, "but then, she is of rather too high a rank. She lives in a castle: I have only a box. Besides, the box is not my own; there are all our five-and-twenty men in it: it is no place for her! However, there will be no harm in my making acquaintance with her;" and so he stationed himself behind a snuff-box that stood on the table. From this place he had a full view of the delicate little lady, who still remained standing on one leg.

When evening came, all the other tin soldiers were put away into the box, and the people of the house went to bed. The playthings now began to play in their turn. They pretended to visit, fight battles, and give balls. The tin soldiers rattled in the box, for they wanted to



THE JEALOUS JACK-IN-THE-BOX

THE CONSTANT TIN SOLDIER

play too, but the lid would not come off. The nut-crackers cut capers, and the slate-pencil played at buying and selling on the slate. There was such a racket that the canary-bird woke up, and began to talk too; but he always talked in verse. The only two who did not move from their places were the little tin soldier and the beautiful dancer. She constantly remained in her graceful position, standing on the very tip of her toe, with outstretched arms; and, as for him, he stood just as firmly on his one leg, never for a single moment turning his eyes away from her.

Twelve o'clock struck. Crash! Open sprang the lid of the snuff-box, but there was no snuff inside it; no, out jumped a little black conjuror—a Jack-in-the-box. “Tin soldier!” said he, “please keep your eyes to yourself!”

But the tin soldier pretended not to hear.

“Well, only wait till to-morrow!” said the conjuror.

When the morrow had come, and the children were out of bed, the tin soldier was placed on the window-ledge; and, whether the conjuror or the wind caused it, all at once the window flew open, and out fell the tin soldier, head foremost, from the third storey to the ground!

The maid-servant and the little boy immediately came down to look for him; but although they very nearly trod on him, they could not see him. If the tin soldier had but called out, “Here I am!” they might easily have found him; but he thought it would not be becoming for him to cry out, as he was in uniform.

It now began to rain; every drop fell heavier than

THE CONSTANT TIN SOLDIER

the last, and there was a soaking shower. When it was over, two boys came by.

"Look," said one, "here is a tin soldier; he shall have a sail for once in his life."

So they made a boat out of an old newspaper, and put the tin soldier into it. Away he sailed down the gutter, both the boys running alongside and clapping their hands. The paper boat rocked to and fro, and every now and then veered round so quickly that the tin soldier became giddy; still, he moved not a muscle.

All at once the boat sailed under a long gutter-board, where it was as dark as at home in his own box.

"Where shall I get to next?" thought he. "Yes, to be sure, it is all that conjuror's doing! Ah, if the little maiden were but sailing with me in the boat I would not mind its being twice as dark!"

Just then a great water-rat that lived under the gutter-board darted out from its nest.

"Have you a passport?" asked he. "Where is it?"

But the tin soldier was silent, and held his weapon with a still firmer grasp. The boat sailed on, and the rat followed. Oh! how furiously he showed his teeth, and cried out to sticks and straws: "Stop him, stop him! he has not paid the toll; he has not shown his passport!" But the stream grew stronger and stronger. The tin soldier could already catch a glimpse of the bright daylight before the boat came from under the tunnel; but at the same time he heard a roaring noise, at which the boldest heart might well have trembled. Where the

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tunnel ended, the water of the gutter fell into a great canal, and this was as dangerous for the tin soldier as sailing down a mighty waterfall would be for us.

He was now so close to the fall that he could no longer stand upright. The boat darted forwards: the poor tin soldier held himself as stiff and immovable as possible; no one could accuse him of having even blinked. The boat spun round and round three, nay, four times, and was filled with water to the brim; it must sink. The tin soldier stood up to his neck in water: deeper and deeper sank the boat, softer and softer grew the paper; the water

THE CONSTANT TIN SOLDIER

went over the soldier's head. He thought of the pretty little dancer whom he should never see again, and these words rang in his ears:

"Wild adventure, mortal danger,
Be thy portion, valiant stranger!"

The paper now tore asunder, and the tin soldier fell through the rent; and at that moment he was swallowed up by a large fish. Oh, how dark it was! worse even than under the gutter-board; and so narrow, too! But the tin soldier was as constant as ever; there he lay, at full length, still shouldering his arms.

The fish turned and twisted about, and made the strangest movements. At last he became quite still. A flash of lightning, as it were, darted through him; the daylight shone brightly, and someone exclaimed: "A tin soldier!" The fish had been caught, taken to the market, sold, and brought home into the kitchen, where the servant-girl was cutting him up with a large knife. She seized the tin soldier by the middle with two of her fingers, and took him into the parlour.

They set him on the table, and—how could anything so extraordinary happen in this world!—the tin soldier was in the very room in which he had been before. He saw the same children, the same playthings on the table—among them the beautiful castle with the pretty little dancing maiden, who was still standing upon one leg, while she held the other high in the air. She too was constant. It quite affected the tin soldier; he could have found it in his heart to weep tin tears, but such weakness would have

THE CONSTANT TIN SOLDIER

been unbecoming in a soldier. He looked at her and she looked at him, but neither spoke a word.

And now one of the little boys took the soldier and threw him without ceremony into the stove. No doubt the conjuror in the snuff-box must have had a hand in that.

The tin soldier stood in a blaze of red light. He felt extremely hot.

Whether this heat was the result of the actual fire or of the flames of love within him he knew not. He had entirely lost his colour. Whether this change had happened during his travels, or was the effect of strong emotion, I know not. He looked upon the little damsel, she looked upon him, and he felt that he was melting; but, constant as ever, he still stood shouldering his arms. A door opened, the wind seized the dancer, and, like a sylph, she flew straightway into the stove, to the tin soldier; they both flamed up into a blaze and were gone. The soldier was melted, and dripped down among the ashes; and when the maid cleaned out the fireplace the next day she found his remains in the shape of a little tin heart. Of the dancer all that was left was the gold wing, burnt black as coal.





The Ugly Duckling

IT was beautiful in the country; it was summertime, the wheat was yellow, the oats were green, the hay was stacked up in the meadows, and the stork paraded about on his long red legs, talking in Egyptian, which language he had learned from his mother. Yes, it was indeed beautiful in the country! The sunshine fell warmly on an old mansion, surrounded by deep canals, and from whose walls down to the water's edge there grew large burdock-leaves, so high that children could stand upright among them without being seen. This place was wild and unfrequented, and on that account a duck had chosen to make her nest there. She was sitting on her eggs; but the pleasure she had felt at first was now almost gone, because she had been there so long, and had so few visitors, for the other ducks preferred swimming on the canals to sitting gossiping with her.

At last the eggs cracked, and one little head after

THE UGLY DUCKLING

another appeared. "Quack, quack!" said the duck, and all got up as well as they could, and peeped about.

"How large the world is!" said the little ones.

"Do you imagine this to be the whole of the world?" said the mother. "It extends far beyond the other side of the garden, to the pastor's field; but I have never been there. Are you all here?" And then she got up. "No, I have not got you all, the largest egg is still here. How long will this last? I am so weary of it!" And then she sat down again.

"Well, and how are you getting on?" asked an old duck, who had come to pay her a visit.

"This one egg keeps me so long," said the mother; "it will not break: but you should see the others! They are the prettiest little ducklings I have seen in all my days."

"Depend upon it," said the old duck, "that is a turkey's egg. I was cheated in the same way once myself, and I had such trouble with the young ones; for they were afraid of the water, and I could not get them to go near it. I called and scolded, but it was all of no use. Leave it, and teach the other little ones to swim."

"I will sit on it a little longer," said the mother. "I have been sitting so long, that I may as well spend the harvest here."

The great egg burst at last. "Tchick, tchick!" said the little one, and out it tumbled. But oh! how large and ugly it was! The duck looked at it. "That is a great, strong creature," said she; "none of the others are at all like it. Can it be a young turkey-cock? Well, we



IN THE DUCK-YARD

THE UGLY DUCKLING

shall soon find out; it must go into the water, though I push it in myself."

The next day there was delightful weather, and the sun shone warmly upon all the green leaves when mother-duck with all her family went down to the canal. Plump! she went into the water. "Quack, quack!" cried she, and one duckling after another jumped in. The water closed over their heads, but all came up again, and swam quite easily. All were there, even the ugly, grey one.

"No! it is not a turkey," said the mother-duck; "only see how prettily it moves its legs, how upright it holds itself. It is my own child, and it is really very pretty when one looks more closely at it. Quack, quack! now I will take you into the world: but keep close to me, or someone may tread on you; and beware of the cat!"

When they came into the duck-yard, two families were quarrelling about the remains of an eel, which in the end was secured by the cat.

"See, my children, such is the way of the world," said the mother-duck, wiping her beak, for she too was fond of roasted eels. "Now use your legs," said she, "keep together, and bow to the old duck you see yonder. She is the most distinguished of all the fowls present, and is of Spanish blood, which accounts for her dignified appearance and manners. And look, she has a red rag on her leg; that is considered extremely handsome, and is the greatest honour a duck can have."

The other ducks who were in the yard looked at them and said aloud: "Only see, now we have another brood,

THE UGLY DUCKLING

as if there were not enough of us already. And fie! how ugly that one is; we will not endure it," and immediately one of them flew at the gray duckling and bit him.

"Leave him alone," said the mother, "he is doing no one any harm."

"Yes, but he is so large, and so strange-looking!"

"Those are fine children that our good mother has," said the old duck with the red rag on her leg. "All are pretty except one, and that has not turned out well."

"Certainly he is not handsome," said the mother, "but he is a very good child, and swims as well as the others, indeed rather better. I think he will grow like the others in time. Besides," added she, "he is a drake; I think he will be very strong, so he will fight his way through."

"The other ducks are very pretty," said the old duck. "Pray make yourselves at home, and if you find an eel's head you can bring it to me."

And accordingly they made themselves at home.

But the poor duckling who had come last out of his egg-shell, and who was so ugly, was bitten, pecked, and teased by both ducks and hens. And the turkey-cock, who fancied he was an emperor, puffed himself up like a ship in full sail, and marched up to the duckling quite red with passion. The poor thing scarcely knew what to do; he was quite distressed because he was so ugly.

So passed the first day, and afterwards matters grew worse and worse. Even his brothers and sisters behaved unkindly, and were constantly saying, "May the cat take you, you ugly thing!" The mother said, "Ah, if you

Helen
Stratton



THE UGLY DUCKLING IS ILL-TREATED

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were only far away!" The ducks bit him, the hens pecked him, and the girl who fed the poultry kicked him. He ran through the hedge; the little birds in the bushes were terrified. "That is because I am so ugly," thought the duckling, and ran on. At last he came to a wide moor, where lived some wild ducks; here he lay the whole night, so tired and so comfortless. In the morning the wild ducks perceived him. "Pray who are you?" asked they; and our duckling greeted them as politely as possible.

"You are really very ugly," they said; "but that does not matter to us, if you do not marry into our families."

Poor thing! he had never thought of marrying; he only wished to lie among the reeds. There he stayed for two days. On the third day there came two wild geese, or rather ganders, who had not been long out of their egg-shells, which accounts for their impertinence.

"Hark-ye!" said they, "you are so ugly that we like you infinitely well; will you come with us? On another moor, not far from this, are some dear wild geese. You are truly in the way to make your fortune."

Bang! a gun went off all at once, and both ganders were stretched dead among the reeds. Bang! a gun went off again; whole flocks of wild geese flew up, and another report followed.

There was a grand hunting party. The hunters lay in ambush all around; some were even sitting in the trees, whose huge branches stretched far over the moor. The hounds splashed about in the mud, bending the reeds and rushes in all directions. How frightened the



THE HOUNDS FRIGHTEN THE DUCKLING

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poor little duck was! He turned his head, thinking to hide it under his wing, and in a moment a fierce-looking dog stood close to him, his tongue hanging out of his mouth, his eyes sparkling fearfully. He opened wide his jaws at the sight of our duckling, showed him his sharp teeth—and, splash, splash! was gone.

“Well! let me be thankful,” sighed the duckling; “I am so ugly that even the dog will not eat me.”

And now he lay still, though the shooting continued among the reeds. The noise did not cease till late in the day, and even then the poor little thing dared not stir. He waited several hours before he looked around him, and then hastened away from the moor as fast as he could, running over fields and meadows.

Towards evening he reached a wretched little hut, so wretched that it knew not on which side to fall, and therefore remained standing. He noticed that there was a space between the door and the wall wide enough to let him through; so, as the storm was becoming worse and worse, he crept into the room.

In this room lived an old woman, with her tom-cat and her hen. The cat, whom she called her little son, knew how to set up his back and purr. The hen, who had very short legs, and was therefore called “Cuckoo Shortlegs”, laid very good eggs.

The next morning the cat began to mew, and the hen to cackle, when they saw the new guest.

“What is the matter?” asked the old woman. Her eyes were not good, so she took the duckling to be a fat



THE OLD WOMAN'S HUT

THE UGLY DUCKLING

duck who had lost her way. "This is a capital catch," said she; "I shall now have duck's eggs, if it be not a drake. We must try." So the duckling was put to the proof for three weeks; but no eggs made their appearance.

Now the cat was the master of the house, and the hen was the mistress, and they used always to say, "We and the world," for they imagined themselves to be not only the half of the world, but also by far the better half. The duckling thought it was possible to be of a different opinion, but that the hen would not allow.

"Can you lay eggs?" asked she.

"No."

"Well, then, hold your tongue!"

And the cat said, "Can you set up your back? Can you purr?"

"No."

"Well, then, you should have no opinion when wise persons are speaking."



So the duckling sat alone in a corner, and was in a very bad humour. He happened, however, to think of the fresh air and bright sunshine, and these thoughts gave him such a strong desire to swim again that he could not help telling them to the hen.

"What ails you?" said the hen.
"You have nothing

THE UGLY DUCKLING

to do, and therefore brood over these fancies; either lay eggs, or purr, then you will forget them."

"But it is so delicious to swim," said the duckling; "so delicious when the waters close over your head, and you plunge to the bottom."

"Well, that is a queer sort of pleasure," said the hen; "I think you must be crazy! Not to speak of myself, ask the cat—he is the most sensible animal I know—whether he would like to swim or to plunge to the bottom of the water. Ask our mistress—no one is wiser than she. Do you think she would take pleasure in swimming, and in the waters closing over her head?"

"You do not understand me," said the duckling.

"What, we do not understand you! So you think yourself wiser than the cat, and the old woman, not to speak of myself! Do not fancy any such thing, child, but be thankful for all the kindness that has been shown you. Are you not lodged in a warm room, and have you not the advantage of society from which you can learn something? But you are a simpleton, and it is wearisome to have anything to do with you. Believe me, I wish you well. I tell you unpleasant truths, but it is thus that real friendship is shown. Come, for once give yourself the trouble to learn to purr, or to lay eggs."

"I think I will go out into the wide world again," said the duckling.

"Well, go," answered the hen.

So the duckling went. And the autumn came, the leaves turned yellow and brown, the wind caught them

THE UGLY DUCKLING



and danced them about, the air was very cold, the clouds were heavy with hail or snow, and the raven sat on the tree and croaked. The poor duckling was certainly not very comfortable!

One evening, just as the sun was setting, a flock of large birds rose from the brushwood. The duckling had never seen anything so beautiful before; their plumage was of a dazzling white, and they had long, slender necks. They were swans. They uttered a singular cry, spread out their long, splendid wings, and flew away from those cold regions to warmer countries, across the open sea. They flew so high, so very high! and the ugly duckling's feelings

THE UGLY DUCKLING

were very strange; he turned round and round in the water like a mill-wheel, strained his neck to look after them, and sent forth such a loud and strange cry, that it almost frightened himself. Ah! he could not forget them, those noble birds! those happy birds! The duckling knew not what the birds were called, knew not whither they were flying, yet he loved them as he had never before loved anything. He envied them not: it would never have occurred to him to wish such beauty for himself; he would have been quite contented if the ducks in the duck-yard had but endured his company.

And the winter was so cold, so cold! The duckling had to swim round and round in the water to keep it from freezing. But every night the opening in which he swam became smaller and smaller; and he had to make good use of his legs to prevent the water from freezing entirely. At last, wearied out, he lay stiff and cold in the ice.

Early in the morning there passed by a peasant, who saw him, broke the ice in pieces with his wooden shoe, and brought him home to his wife.



THE UGLY DUCKLING

The duckling soon revived. The children would have played with him, but he thought they wished to tease him, and in his terror jumped into the milk-pail, so that the milk was spilled about the room. The good woman screamed and clapped her hands. The duckling flew thence into the pan where the butter was kept, and thence into the meal-barrel, and out again.

The woman screamed once more, and struck at him with the tongs; the children ran races with each other, trying to catch him, and laughed and screamed likewise. It was well for him that the door stood open; he jumped out among the bushes into the new-fallen snow, and lay there as in a dream.

But it would be too sad to relate all the trouble and misery he had to suffer during the winter. He was lying on a moor, among the reeds, when the sun began to shine warmly again, the larks sang, and the beautiful spring returned.

Once more he shook his wings. They were stronger than formerly, and bore him forward quickly; and before he was well aware of it he was in a large garden, where the apple-trees stood in full bloom, where the syringas sent forth their fragrance and hung their long green branches down into the winding canal. Oh! everything was so lovely, so full of the freshness of spring!

Out of the thicket came three beautiful white swans. They displayed their feathers so proudly, and swam so lightly, so lightly! The duckling knew the glorious creatures, and was seized with a strange sadness.



THE UGLY DUCKLING IS TERRIFIED

THE UGLY DUCKLING

"I will fly to them, those kingly birds!" said he. "They will kill me, because I, ugly as I am, have presumed to approach them; but it matters not. Better be killed by them than be bitten by the ducks, pecked by the hens, kicked by the girl who feeds the poultry, and have so much to suffer during the winter!" He flew into the water, and swam towards the beautiful creatures. They saw him and shot forward to meet him. "Only kill me," said the poor duckling, and he bowed his head low, expecting death. But what did he see in the water? He saw beneath him his own form, no longer that of a plump, ugly, gray bird—but that of a swan!

It matters not to have been born in a duck-yard, if one has been hatched from a swan's egg.

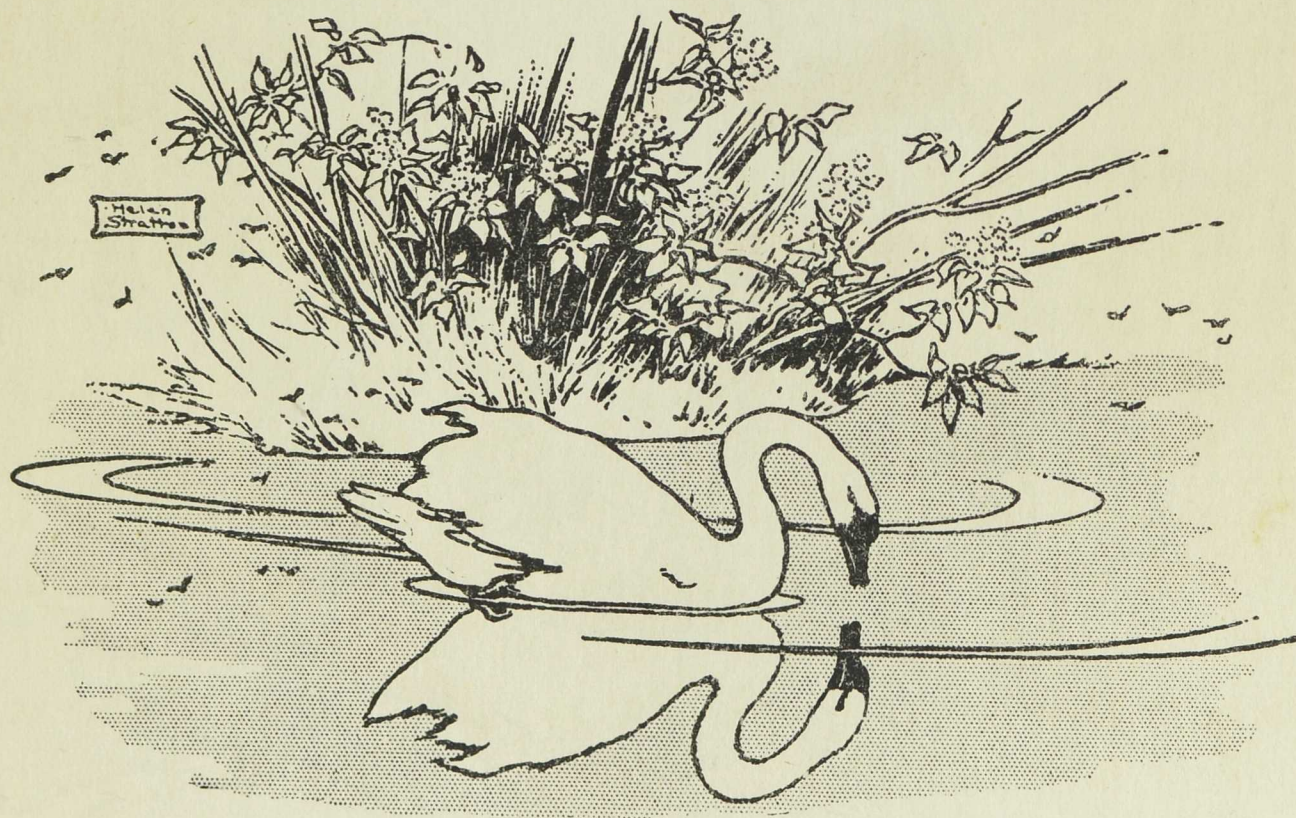
The larger swans swam round him, and stroked him with their beaks, and he was very happy.

Some little children were running about in the garden. They threw grain and bread into the water, and the youngest exclaimed, "There is a new one!" The others also cried out, "Yes, a new swan has come!" and they clapped their hands, and ran and told their father and mother. Bread and cake were thrown into the water, and everyone said, "The new one is the best, so young and so beautiful!" and the old swans bowed before him. The young swan felt quite ashamed, and hid his head under his wing. He was all too happy, but still not proud, for a good heart is never proud.

He remembered how he had been laughed at and cruelly treated, and he now heard everyone say he was

THE UGLY DUCKLING

the most beautiful of all beautiful birds. The syringas bent down their branches towards him, and the sun shone warmly and brightly. He shook his feathers, stretched his slender neck, and in the joy of his heart said: "How little did I dream of so much happiness when I was the ugly, despised duckling!"





THE DESPISED DUCKLIN



Helel-
Stratton

BECOMES A SWAN!

The Top and the Ball

A TOP and a ball were lying close together in a drawer, among other playthings.

Thus said the top to the ball:

"Why should we not become bride and bridegroom, since we are thrown so much together?"

But the ball, who was made of morocco leather, and fancied herself a very fashionable young lady, would not hear of such a proposal.

The next day, the little boy to whom the playthings belonged painted the top red and yellow, and drove a brass nail through the middle of him.

"Look at me now!" said he to the ball; "what do you say to me now? Why should not we become man and wife? We suit each other so well. You can jump, and I can spin; it would not be easy to find a couple happier than we should be."

"Do you think so?" said the ball. "Perhaps you do not know that my father and mother were morocco slippers, and that I have cork in my body."

"Yes, but I am made of mahogany," said the top. "The Burgomaster manufactured me with his own hands, and took great pleasure in turning me."

"You don't talk amiss," said the ball; "but I am not at liberty. I am as good as betrothed to a young swallow. Whenever I fly up in the air, he puts his head out of his nest and says: 'Will you marry me?' I have said 'Yes' to him in my heart, and that is almost the same as a betrothal. But I will never forget you!"

THE TOP AND THE BALL

“That will be of great use!” said the top.

Next day the ball was taken out. The top saw her fly like a bird into the air, so high that she could be seen no longer; she came back again, but every time she touched the ground she sprang higher than before. Either love, or the cork she had in her body, must have been the cause of this.

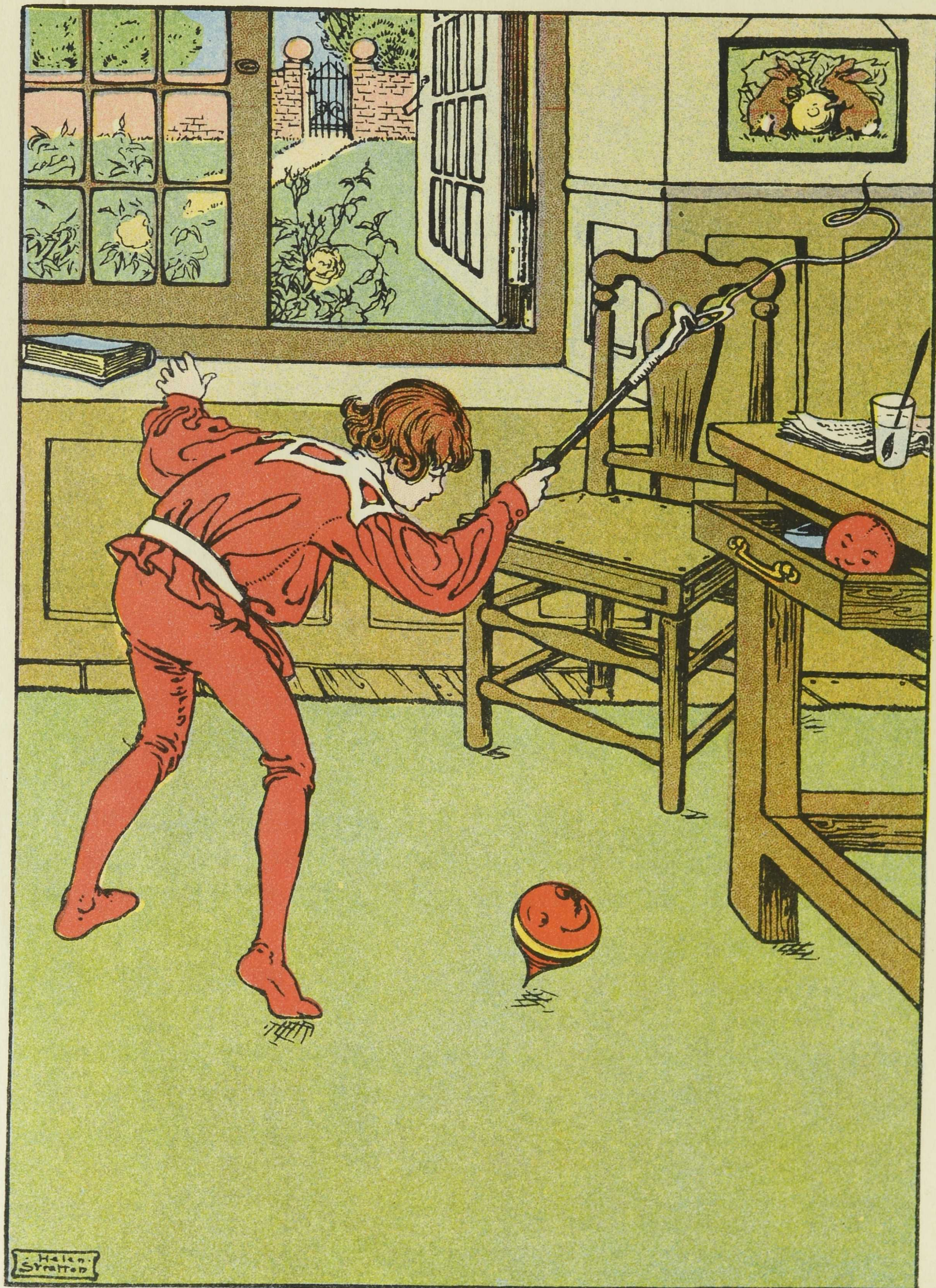


The ninth time she did not return—she was gone!

“I know well where she is,” sighed the top; “she is in the swallow’s nest, celebrating her wedding.” The more the top thought of it, the more beautiful did the ball appear to him; and he spun and hummed, but was always thinking of the dear ball, who in his imagination grew more and more lovable. Thus passed several years. There was constant love!

The top was no longer young. One day, however, he was gilded all over; never before had he looked so handsome. He spun most bravely, humming all the time: yes, that was famous! But all at once he sprang too high, and was gone! They sought and sought, even in the cellar; but he was nowhere to be found.

Where was he? In a barrel full of all sorts of rubbish, cabbage-stalks, sweepings, dust, and so on.



THE BOY PLAYS WITH THE TOP

THE TOP AND THE BALL

"Alas! here I lie; my gay gilding will soon be spoiled. And what sort of trumpery can I have fallen in with?"

He peeped at a long cabbage-stalk which lay near him, and at a strange round thing, somewhat like an apple. But it was not an apple; it was an old ball, which had lain several years in the gutter.

"Thank goodness! At last I see an equal, with whom I may speak," said the ball, looking fixedly at the gilt top. "I am made of real morocco, sewed together by a young lady's hands, and I have cork in my body; but I shall never again be noticed by anyone! I was on the point of marriage with a swallow when I fell into the gutter, where I lay for five years. Think what it is for a young lady to be in such a situation!"

But the top answered not a word; he thought of his long-lamented companion, and the more he heard the more certain he became that it was she herself.

The servant-maid now came, and was going to turn the barrel over. "Hurrah!" exclaimed she, "there is the gilt top."

And the top was brought back to the play-room. He was used and admired as before; but nothing more was heard of the ball, nor did the top ever even speak of his former love for her; such a feeling must have passed away.

How could it be otherwise, when he found that she had lain five years in the gutter, and that she was so much altered that he scarcely knew her?



The Wild Swans

FAR, far away, in a country whither the Swallows fly in our winter-time, there dwelt a King who had eleven sons and one daughter, the beautiful Elise. The eleven brothers went to school with stars on their breasts and swords by their sides; they wrote on golden tablets with diamond pens, and could read either with a book or without one. In short, it was easy to perceive that they were princes. Their sister Elise used to sit upon a little glass stool, and had a picture-book which had cost the half of a kingdom. Oh, the children were so happy! But happy they were not to remain always.

Their mother was dead, and their father the King married a very wicked Queen, who was not at all kind to the poor children. They found this out on the first day after the marriage, when the Queen gave them only some sand in a little dish, and told them to imagine that it was something nice.

THE WILD SWANS

The week after, she sent the little Elise to be brought up by some peasants in the country; and before long she told the King so many falsehoods about the poor Princes that he would have nothing more to do with them.

“Away, out into the world, and take care of yourselves,” said the wicked Queen; “fly away in the form of great, speechless birds.” But she could not make their transformation so disagreeable as she wished; the Princes were changed into eleven white Swans, and, sending forth a strange cry, they flew out of the palace windows.

It was still early in the morning when they passed by the place where Elise lay sleeping in the peasants’ cottage. They flew several times round the roof, stretched their long necks, and flapped their wings, but no one either heard or saw them; and they were forced to fly away to the forest which extended as far as the seashore.

The poor little Elise stood in the peasants’ cottage amusing herself with a green leaf, for she had no other plaything. She pricked a hole in the leaf and peeped through it at the sun, and then she fancied she saw her brothers’ bright eyes; and when the warm sunbeams shone upon her cheeks, she thought of her brothers’ kisses.

One day passed exactly like another. When the wind blew through the thick hedge of rose-trees in front of the house, it would whisper to the roses, “Who is more beautiful than you?” But the roses would shake their heads and say, “Elise”. And when the peasant’s wife sat on Sundays reading her hymn-book, the wind would say to the book, “Who is more pious than thou?”

THE WILD SWANS

“Elise,” replied the hymn-book. And what the roses and the hymn-book said was no more than the truth.

When Elise was fifteen years old, her father sent some of his servants to bring her home. Now when the Queen saw how beautiful she was, she hated her more than ever, and would willingly have transformed her, like her brothers, into a wild swan, but she dared not do so, because the King wished to see his daughter.

So the next morning she went into a bath made of marble; and she took three toads, kissed them, and said to one, “Settle thou upon Elise’s head, that she may become dull and sleepy like thee.” “Settle thou upon her forehead,” said she to another, “and let her become ugly like thee, so that her father may not know her again.” And “Do thou place thyself upon her bosom,” whispered she to the third, “that her heart may become corrupt and evil, a torment to herself.” She then put the toads into the clear water, which was immediately tinted with a green colour; and having called Elise, took off her clothes and made her get into the bath. As Elise sank under the water, one toad settled among her hair, another on her forehead, and the third upon her bosom. But she seemed not at all aware of it; she rose up, and three poppies were seen swimming on the water. Had not the animals been poisonous and kissed by a witch, they would have been changed into roses whilst they remained on Elise’s head and heart: she was too good for magic to have any power over her.

When the Queen perceived this, she rubbed walnut



THE QUEEN'S MAGIC FAILS



ELISE LEAVES THE PALACE

THE WILD SWANS

juice all over the maiden's skin, so that it became quite swarthy, smeared a nasty salve over her lovely face, and entangled her long, thick hair, till it was impossible to recognize the beautiful Elise. When her father saw her, he was shocked, and said she could not be his daughter; and no one would have anything to do with her but the mastiff and the swallows.

Poor Elise wept, and in great distress stole away and wandered the whole day over fields and moors, till she reached the forest. She knew not where to go, but she was so sad, and longed so much to see her brothers, that she made up her mind to seek and find them.

She had not been long in the forest when night came on, and she lost her way in the darkness. So she lay down on the soft moss, said her evening prayer, and leaned her head against the trunk of a tree. It was very still in the forest, the air was mild, and from the grass and mould around gleamed the green lights of many hundred glow-worms; and when Elise touched one of the branches hanging over her, bright insects fell down like stars.

All the night long she dreamed of her brothers. It seemed to her that they were all children again, played together, and wrote with diamond pens upon golden tablets. But they did not as formerly make straight strokes and pot-hooks upon the tablets. No; they wrote of the bold deeds they had done, and the strange adventures with which they had met. In their picture-book, too, everything seemed alive; the birds sang, and men and women stepped from the pages and talked to Elise and her brothers,

THE WILD SWANS

jumping back into their places, however, when she turned over the leaves, so that the pictures did not get confused together.

When Elise awoke, the sun was already high in the heavens. She could not see it, certainly, for the tall trees of the forest entwined their thickly-leaved branches closely together, so that, as the sunbeams played upon them, they looked like a golden veil waving to and fro. She heard the noise of water, and when she went towards it she found a pool, formed by several springs. Bushes were growing thickly round it, but the deer had trodden a broad path through them, and by this path Elise went down to the water's edge. The water was so clear that had not the boughs and bushes around been moved to and fro by the wind, she might have fancied they were painted upon the smooth surface, so distinctly was each little leaf mirrored upon it.

As soon as Elise saw her face reflected in the water, she was quite startled, so brown and ugly did it look. When, however, she wet her little hand, and rubbed her brow and eyes, the white skin again appeared. So she took off her clothes, stepped into the water, and bathed; and in the whole world there was not a king's daughter more beautiful than she then appeared.

After she had dressed herself, and had braided her hair, she wandered farther into the forest. She knew not where she was going, but she thought of her brothers, and of the good God who, she felt, would never forsake her. He it was who made the wild crab-trees grow, in

THE WILD SWANS

order to feed the hungry, and who showed her a tree whose boughs bent under the weight of their fruit. She made her noonday meal under the shade of this tree, then propped up the boughs, and walked on in the dark twilight of the forest. It was so still that she could hear her own footsteps, and the rustling of each little withered leaf that was crushed beneath her feet; not



a bird was to be seen, and the tall stems of the trees stood so close together, that when she looked straight before her she seemed enclosed by trellis-work upon trellis-work.

And the night was so dark!—not a single glow-worm sent forth its light. Sad and melancholy, she lay down to sleep, and then it seemed to her as though the boughs above her opened, and she saw the Angel of God smiling down upon her, and a thousand little cherubs all around him. When she awoke in the morning she could not tell whether this was a dream, or whether she had really been so watched.

She walked on a little farther, and met an old woman with a basket full of berries. The old woman gave her some of the berries, and Elise asked if she had not seen eleven Princes ride through the wood.



ELISE AND THE OLD WOMAN

THE WILD SWANS

"No," said the old woman, "but I saw yesterday eleven Swans, with golden crowns on their heads, swim down the brook near this place."

And she led Elise on a little farther to a precipice, the base of which was washed by a brook. The trees on each side stretched their long, leafy branches towards each other, and where they could not unite the roots had disengaged themselves from the earth and hung their interlaced fibres over the water.

Elise bade the old woman farewell, and wandered by the stream till the great, beautiful sea lay before her eyes. But not a ship, not a boat was to be seen; how was she to go on? She noticed the numberless little stones on the shore, all of which the waves had washed into a round form; glass, iron, stone, everything that lay scattered there, had been moulded into shape, and yet the water which had done this was much softer than Elise's delicate little hand. "It rolls on unweariedly," said she, "and subdues what is so hard; I will be no less unwearied! Thank you for the lesson you have given me, ye bright rolling waves; some day, my heart tells me, you shall carry me to my dear brothers!"

Upon the wet sea-grass lay eleven white swan-feathers. Elise collected them together; drops of water hung about them, whether dew or tears she could not tell. She was quite alone on the seashore, but she did not mind that, for the sea was full of interest to her, and gave her more pleasure in a few hours than the gentle inland waters could have offered in a whole year. When a

THE WILD SWANS



black cloud passed over the sky, it seemed as if the sea would say, "I too can look dark", and then the wind would blow and the waves fling out their white foam: but when the clouds shone with a bright red tint, and the winds were asleep, the sea also became like a rose-leaf in hue; and as it reposed peacefully it heaved gently, like the bosom of a sleeping child.

At sunset Elise saw eleven Wild Swans, with golden crowns on their heads, fly towards the land, looking like a streaming white ribbon. She climbed the precipice, and concealed herself behind a bush. The Swans settled close to her, and flapped their long white wings.

As the sun sank beneath the water, the Swans also disappeared, and in their place stood eleven handsome Princes, the brothers of Elise. She uttered a loud cry, for although they were very much altered, she knew that they were, felt that they must be, her brothers. Then she ran into their arms, calling them by their names—and how happy were *they* to see and recognize their sister, who was now grown so tall and so beautiful! They

THE WILD SWANS

laughed and wept, and soon told each other how wickedly their stepmother had acted towards them.

"We," said the eldest of the brothers, "fly or swim as long as the sun is above the horizon, but when it sinks below we appear again in our human form; we are therefore obliged to look out for a safe resting-place, for if at sunset we were flying among the clouds, we should fall down as soon as the spell broke. We do not dwell here. A land quite as beautiful as this lies on the opposite side of the sea, but it is far off. To reach it, we have to cross



THE WILD SWANS

the deep waters, and there is no island midway on which we may rest at night; only one little, solitary rock rises from the waves, and upon it we just find room enough to stand side by side. There we spend the night in our human form, and when the sea is rough we are sprinkled by its foam: but we are thankful for that resting-place, for without it we should never be able to visit our dear native country. Only once in the year are we allowed to make this visit to the home of our fathers; we require two of the longest days for our flight, and can remain here only eleven days, during which time we fly over the large forest, whence we can see the palace in which we were born and where our father dwells, and the tower of the church in which our mother was buried. Here even the trees and bushes seem of kin to us; here the wild horses still race over the plains; here the charcoal-burner still sings the same old tunes to which we used to dance; and here we have found thee, thou dear little sister! We have yet two days longer to stay here, then we must fly over the sea to a land beautiful indeed, but not our fatherland. How shall we take thee with us?"

"How shall I be able to release you?" said their sister. So they went on talking almost the whole of the night; and they slept only a few hours.

Elise was awakened by the rustling of wings, and saw the Swans fluttering above her; her brothers were again transformed. For some time they sailed around in large circles, but at last they flew far, far away. One of them remained behind with Elise; he was the youngest. They passed



THE YOUNGEST SWAN STAYS WITH ELISE

THE WILD SWANS

the whole day together. Towards evening the others came back, and when the sun was set, again they stood on the firm ground, in their natural form.

“To-morrow we shall fly away,” they said, “and may not return for a year: but we cannot leave thee; hast thou courage to accompany us? Our arms are strong enough to bear thee through the forest; shall we not have sufficient strength in our wings to transport thee over the sea?”

“Yes, take me with you,” said Elise.

So they spent the whole night in weaving a net of the pliant willow bark and the tough rushes, and their net was thick and strong. Elise lay down upon it, and when the sun had risen, and the brothers were again transformed into wild Swans, they seized the net with their beaks and flew up high among the clouds with their dear sister, who was still sleeping.

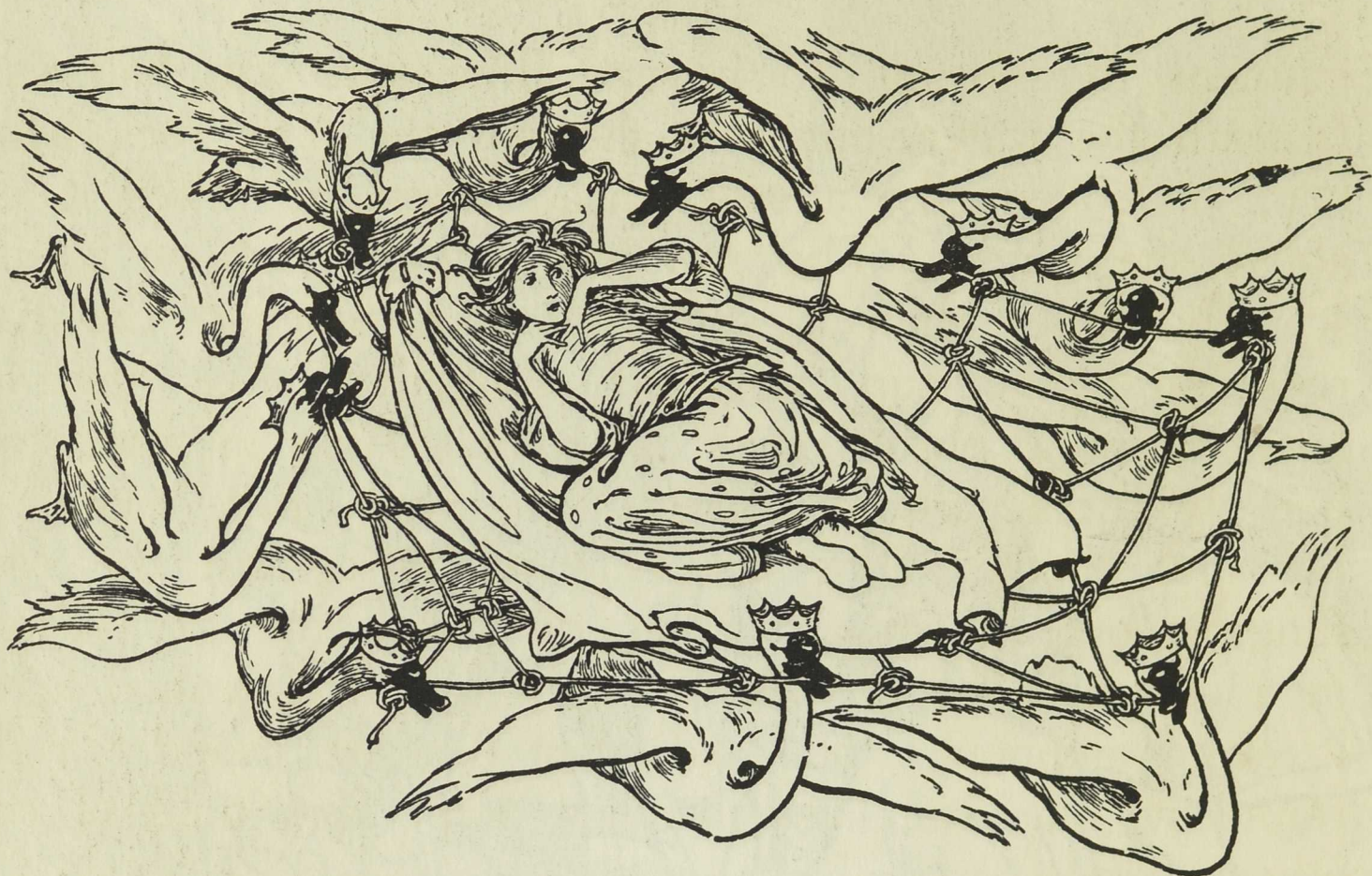
They were already far from land when Elise awoke. She thought she was dreaming, so strange did it appear to her to be travelling through the air, and over the sea. By her side lay a cluster of pretty berries, and a handful of savoury roots. Her youngest brother had collected and laid them there; and she thanked him with a smile.

They soared so high, that the first ship they saw beneath them seemed like a white sea-gull hovering over the water. Elise saw behind her a large cloud, which looked like a mountain, and on it were gigantic shadows of herself and the eleven Swans; soon, however, the sun rose higher, the cloud remained far behind, and the floating, shadowy picture disappeared.



THE WEAVING OF THE NET

THE WILD SWANS



The whole day they continued flying. A heavy tempest was gathering as evening approached. Anxiously did Elise watch the sun; it was setting, still the solitary rock could not be seen. Alas! it would be her fault if her brothers did not arrive at the place in time! They would become human beings when the sun set, and if this happened before they reached the rock, they must fall into the sea, and be drowned. She prayed to God most fervently. Still no rock was to be seen. The black clouds drew nearer, with violent gusts of wind, and one flash of lightning rapidly followed another.

The sun was now on the rim of the sea. Elise's heart beat violently. The Swans shot downward so swiftly that she thought she must fall, but in another

THE WILD SWANS

moment they began to hover. The sun was half sunk beneath the water, but now she saw the little rock below her; it looked like a seal's head when he raises it just above the water. The sun was sinking fast—it seemed scarcely larger than a star: her foot touched the hard rock, and the sun vanished altogether, like the last spark from a burnt piece of paper. Arm in arm stood her brothers around her; there was just room for her and them. The sea beat wildly against the rock, flinging over them a shower of foam; the sky seemed in a continual blaze with the lightning that flashed across it every moment, and peal after peal of thunder rolled round it, but sister and brothers kept firm hold of each other's hands.





THE CASTLE OF THE FAIRY MORGANA

THE WILD SWANS

By daybreak the air was pure and still, and as soon as the sun rose the Swans flew away with Elise from the rock. The waves rose higher and higher, and when they looked from the clouds down upon the blackish-green sea, covered with white foam, they might have fancied that millions of swans were swimming on its surface.

As the day advanced, Elise saw floating in the air before her a land of mountains and glaciers, and, in the centre, a palace a mile in length, with splendid colonnades, surrounded by palm-trees and gorgeous-looking flowers, as large as mill-wheels. She asked if this were the country to which they were flying, but the Swans shook their heads, for what she saw was the beautiful airy castle of the fairy Morgana, where no human being was admitted; and whilst Elise still bent her eyes upon it, mountains, trees, and castle all disappeared, and in their place stood twelve churches, with high towers. She was now close to these churches, but behold! they had changed into a large fleet; she then looked down and saw it was only a sea-mist passing rapidly over the water. Such strange scenes kept floating before her eyes, till at last the actual land to which she was going appeared in sight. Beautiful blue mountains, cedar woods, towns, and castles rose to view. Long before sunset Elise sat down among the mountains, in front of a large cavern, where delicate young creepers grew around so thickly that the ground appeared covered with gay embroidered carpets.

“Now we shall see what thou wilt dream of to-night!” said her youngest brother, as he showed her her chamber.

Help
Stratio



THE JOURNEY C



ER THE SEA

THE WILD SWANS

“Oh, that I could dream how you might be released from the spell!” said she; and she could think of nothing else. She prayed most earnestly for God’s assistance; nay, even in her dreams she continued praying, and it appeared to her that she was flying up high in the air towards the castle of the fairy Morgana. The fairy came forward to meet her, radiant and beautiful, and yet Elise fancied she resembled the old woman who had told her of the swans with the golden crowns.

“Thou *canst* release thy brothers,” said she, “but hast thou courage and patience enough? The water is indeed softer than thy delicate hands, and yet can mould the hard stones to its will, but then it cannot feel the pain which thy tender fingers will feel; it hath no heart, and cannot suffer the anxiety and grief which thou must suffer. Dost thou see these stinging-nettles which I have in my hand? There are many round the cave where thou art sleeping; only those that grow there or on the graves in the churchyard are of use, remember that! Thou must pluck them, although they sting thy hand; thou must trample on them with thy feet, and get yarn from them, and with this yarn thou must weave eleven shirts with long sleeves. When they are all made, throw them over the eleven wild Swans, and the spell will be broken. But mark this: from the moment that thou beginnest thy work till it is completed, even should it occupy thee for years, thou must not speak a word: the first syllable that escapeth thy lips will fall like a dagger into the hearts of thy brothers; on thy tongue dependeth their life. Mark well all this!”

THE WILD SWANS



At the same moment the fairy touched Elise's hands with a nettle, which made them burn like fire, and Elise awoke. It was broad daylight, and close to her lay a nettle like the one she had seen in her dream. She fell upon her knees and thanked God, and then went out of the cave to begin her work. She plucked the disagreeable stinging-nettles; they burned large blisters on her hands and arms, but she bore the pain willingly, in the hope of releasing her dear brothers. Then she trampled on the nettles with her naked feet, and spun the green yarn.

At sunset came her brothers, who found out what their sister was doing for their sake. The youngest brother



ELISE GATHERS THE STINGING-NETTLES

THE WILD SWANS

wept, and when his tears fell upon her hands, Elise felt no more pain—the blisters disappeared.

The whole night she spent at her work, for she could not rest till she had released her brothers. All the following day she sat in her solitude, for the Swans had flown away; but never had time passed so quickly. One shirt was ready; she now began the second.

Suddenly a hunting-horn resounded among the mountains. Elise was frightened. The noise came nearer; she heard hounds barking. In great terror she fled into the cave, bound up into a bundle the nettles which she had gathered and combed, and sat down upon it.

She had just done so when a large dog sprang out from the bushes. Two others immediately followed; and before long the hunters stood in front of the cave. The handsomest among them was the King of that country, who stepped up to Elise.

“How camest thou here, thou beautiful child?” said he. Elise shook her head; she dared not speak, a word might have cost the life of her brothers: and she hid her hands lest the King should see how she was suffering.

“Come with me,” said he, “thou must not stay here! If thou art good as thou art beautiful, I will dress thee in velvet and silk, I will put a gold crown upon thy head, and thou shalt dwell in my palace!” So he lifted her upon his horse, while she wept and wrung her hands; but the King said, “I only desire thy happiness; thou shalt thank me for this some day!” And away he rode, holding her on his horse in front. When the sun set,

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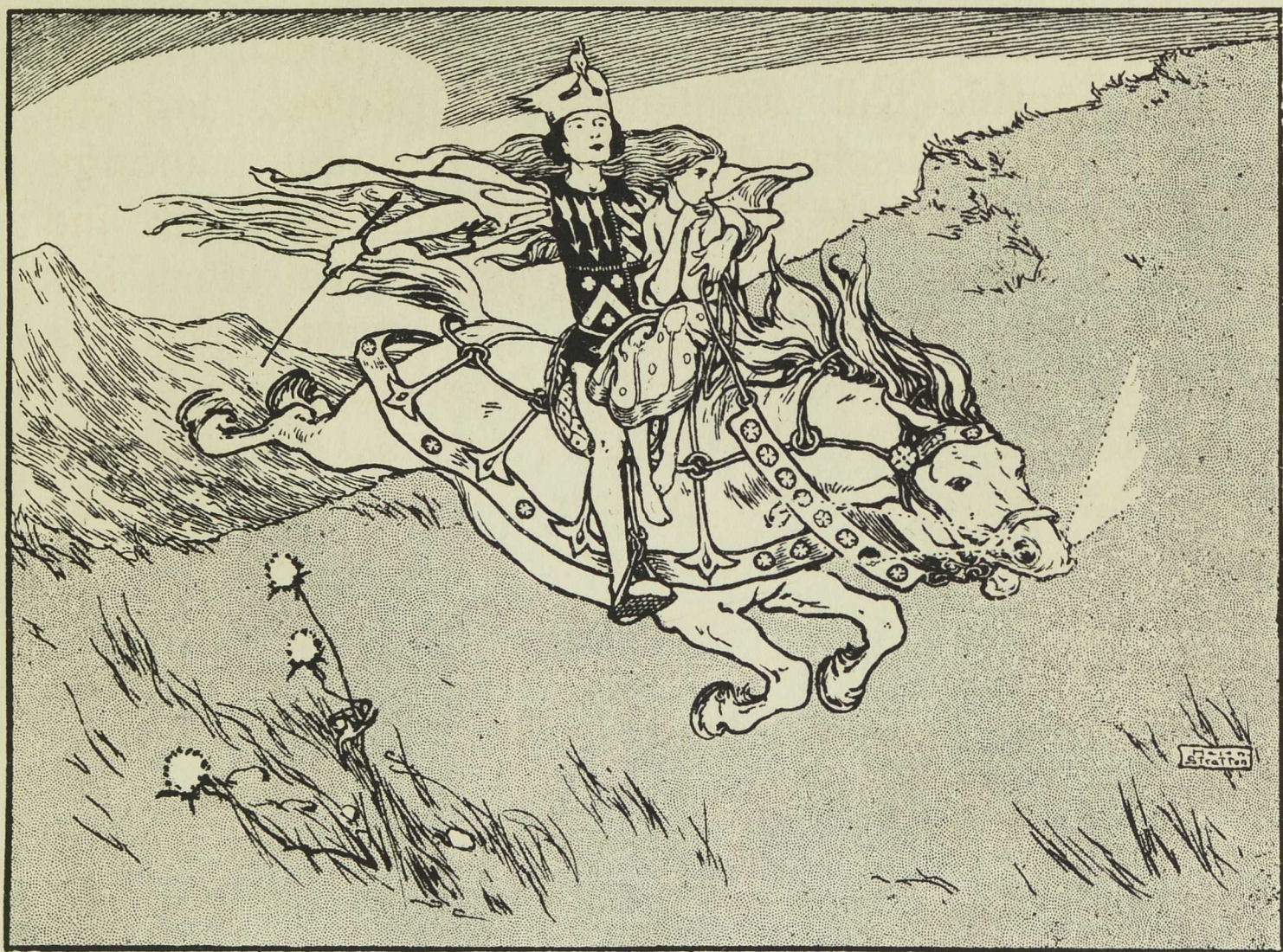
the King's capital, with its churches and domes, lay before them. The King led Elise into the palace, where, in a high marble hall, fountains were playing, and the walls and ceiling displayed the most beautiful paintings. But Elise cared not for all this splendour; she wept and mourned in silence, even whilst some female attendants dressed her in royal robes, wove costly pearls into her hair, and drew soft gloves over her blistered hands.

And now she was fully dressed, and as she stood in her splendid attire her beauty was so dazzling that the courtiers all bowed low before her, and the King chose her for his bride, although the Archbishop shook his head, and whispered that the "beautiful lady of the wood must be a witch, who had infatuated the King's heart".

But the King did not listen; he ordered that music should be played. A sumptuous banquet was served, and the loveliest maidens danced round the bride. She was led through fragrant gardens into magnificent halls, but not a smile was seen to play upon her lips, or beam from her eyes. The King then opened a small room next her bedroom: it was adorned with costly green tapestry, and exactly resembled the cave in which she had been found; upon the ground lay the bundle of yarn which she had spun from the nettles, and by the wall hung the shirt she had completed.

When Elise saw what was so dear to her heart, she smiled, and the blood returned to her cheeks; she thought her brothers might still be released, and she kissed the King's hand. He pressed her to his heart, and ordered

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the bells of all the churches in the city to be rung, to announce the celebration of their wedding.

The Archbishop whispered evil words in the King's ear, but they made no impression upon him; he and Elise were married, and her eyes beamed with heartfelt love for the King, so good and handsome, who had done so much to make her happy. She became more warmly attached to him every day. Oh! how much she wished she might confide to him all her sorrows! But she was forced to remain silent, she could not speak until her work was finished. So she stole away every night,



THE ARCHBISHOP WATCHES ELISE

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and worked at her shirts; but by the time she had begun the seventh, all her yarn was spent.

She knew that the nettles she needed grew in the churchyard, but she must gather them herself.

“Oh, what is the pain in my fingers compared with the anguish my heart suffers!” thought she. “I must venture to the churchyard; the good God will not withdraw His protection from me!”

Fearful as though she were about to do something wrong, one moonlight night she crept down to the road leading to the churchyard. She saw sitting on one of the broadest tombstones a number of ugly old witches, who fixed their wicked eyes upon her; but she repeated her prayer, gathered the stinging-nettles, and took them back with her into the palace.

One person only had seen her. It was the Archbishop; he was awake when others slept. Now he was convinced that all was not right about the Queen: she must be a witch.

He told the King what he had seen, and what he feared; and when the slanderous words came from his lips, the sculptured images of the saints shook their heads, as though they would say, “It is untrue, Elise is innocent!” But the Archbishop thought it was a testimony against her that the holy images shook their heads at hearing of her sin.

Thereafter the King, pretending to sleep, noticed that Elise rose from her bed every night, and every time he followed her secretly and saw her enter her little room.

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His countenance became darker every day; Elise perceived it, though she knew not the cause. She was much pained, and besides, what did she not suffer in her heart for her brothers! She had now nearly finished her work; only one shirt was wanting. Unfortunately, yarn was wanting also; she had not a single nettle left. Once more, only this one time, she must go to the churchyard

and gather a few handfuls. She shuddered when she thought of the solitary walk and of the witches, but her resolution was as firm as her trust in God.

She went, and the King and the Archbishop followed her. They saw the witches sitting on the tombstones; and the King believed her whose head had rested on his bosom to be of them. "Let the people judge her!" said he. And the people condemned Elise to be burnt.

She was now dragged from the King's splendid palace into a dark prison. Instead of velvet and silk, they gave her the bundle of nettles she had gathered; on that must

THE WILD SWANS

she lay her head, and the shirts she had woven must serve as mattress and counterpane. But they could not have given her anything she valued so much; and she continued her work, at the same time praying earnestly.

Towards evening she heard the rustling of a swan's wings at the grating. It was the youngest of her brothers, who had at last found her, and she sobbed aloud for joy.

The Archbishop came in to spend the last hour with her; he had promised the King he would; but she shook her head and entreated him with her eyes and gestures to go: this night she must finish her work, or all she had suffered, her pain, her anxiety, her sleepless nights, would be in vain. The Archbishop went away with many angry words, but the unfortunate Elise knew herself to be perfectly innocent, and went on with her work.

An hour before sunrise, the eleven brothers stood before the palace gates, requesting an audience with the King; but it could not be, they were told. They entreated, they threatened. The King himself at last stepped out to ask what was the matter; but at that moment the sun rose, the brothers could be seen no longer, and eleven white Swans flew away over the palace.

The people poured forth from the gates of the city; they wished to see the witch burnt. A coarse frock of sackcloth had been put upon Elise, her beautiful long hair hung loosely over her shoulders, and her cheeks were of a deathly paleness. But her lips moved gently, as her fingers wove the green yarn: the ten shirts lay at her feet, she was now labouring to complete the eleventh.

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The crowd insulted her. "Look at the witch, how she mutters! There she sits with her accursed hocus-pocus! Tear it from her!"

And they all crowded about her, and were on the point of snatching away the shirts, when eleven white Swans came flying towards the cart, settled all round her, and flapped their wings.

The crowd gave way in terror. "It is a sign from Heaven! She is certainly innocent!" whispered some; they dared not say so aloud.

The Sheriff now seized her by the hand; in a moment she threw the eleven shirts over the Swans, and eleven handsome Princes appeared in their place. The youngest had, however, only one arm, and a wing instead of the other, for one sleeve in his shirt had not been quite finished.

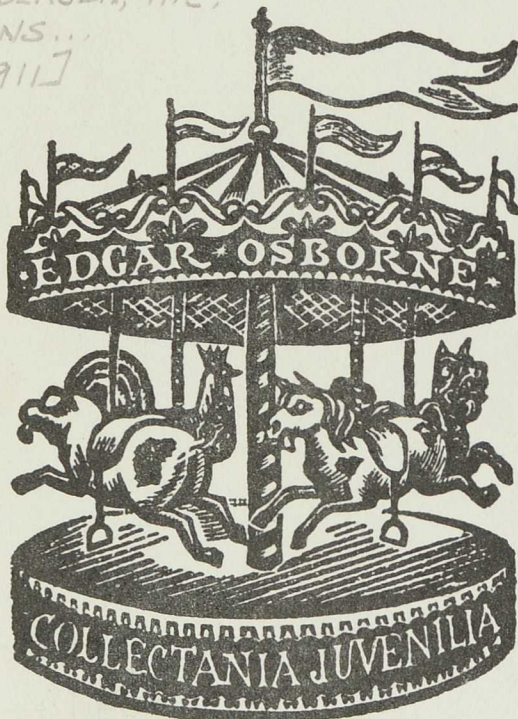
"Now I may speak," said Elise. "I am innocent!"

"Yes, she is innocent," said her eldest brother, and he now related their wonderful history. Whilst he spoke a fragrance, as delicious as though it proceeded from millions of roses, diffused itself around, for every piece of wood in the funeral pile had taken root and sent forth branches, and a hedge of red roses surrounded Elise.

And then all the church-bells began to ring of their own accord, and birds flew to the spot in swarms, and there was a joyous procession back to the palace, such as no king has ever seen equalled.

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