WONDER TALES FROM MANY LANDS

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Author: Katharine Pyle

Illustrator: Katharine Pyle

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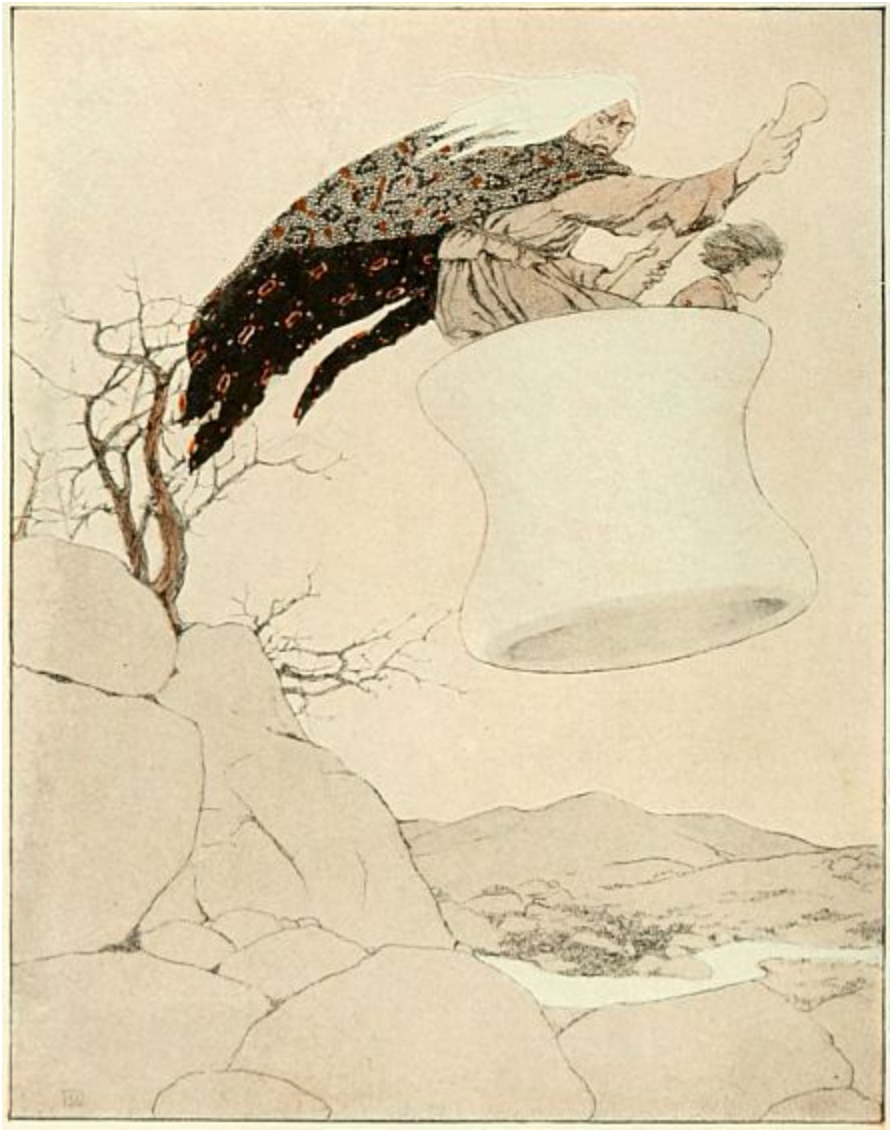

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WONDER TALES FROM MANY LANDS

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED
BY

KATHARINE PYLE

LONDON
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CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

WONDER TALES FROM MANY LANDS

LONG, BROAD, AND SHARPSIGHT
A STORY FROM BOHEMIA

THERE was once a King who had one only son, and him he loved better than anything in the whole world—better even than his own life. The King’s greatest desire was to see his son married, but though the Prince had travelled in many lands, and had seen many noble and beautiful ladies, there was not one among them all whom he wished to have for a wife.

One day the King called his son to him and said, “My son, for a long time now I have hoped to see you choose a bride, but you have desired no one. Take now this silver key. Go to the top of the castle, and there you will see a steel door. This key will unlock it. Open the door and enter. Look carefully at everything in the room, and then return and tell me what you have seen. But, whatever you do, do not touch nor draw aside the curtain that hangs at the right of the door. If you should disobey me and do this thing, you will suffer the greatest dangers, and may even pay for it with your life.”

The Prince wondered greatly at his father’s words, but he took the key and went to the top of the castle, and there he found the steel door his father had described. He unlocked it with the silver key, stepped inside, and looked about him. When he had done so, he was filled with amazement at what he saw. The room had twelve sides, and on eleven of these sides were pictures of eleven princesses more beautiful than any the Prince had ever seen in all his life before. Moreover, these pictures were as though they were alive. When the Prince looked at them, they moved and

smiled and blushed and beckoned to him. He went from one to the other, and they were so beautiful that each one he looked upon seemed lovelier than the last. But lovely though they were, there was not one of them whom the Prince wished to have for a wife.

Last of all, the Prince came to the twelfth side of the room, and it was covered over with a curtain, and the curtain was of velvet richly embroidered with gold and precious stones. The Prince stood before it and looked at it and looked at it. He tried to peer under its edges, but he could see nothing; never in all his life had he longed for anything as he longed to lift that curtain and see what was behind it.

At last his longing grew so great that he could withstand it no longer. He laid his hand upon the folds and drew it aside, and when he had done so, his heart melted within him for love and joy. For there was the portrait of a maiden so fair and lovely that all the other eleven beauties were as nothing beside her.

The Prince stood and looked at her, and she looked back at him, and she did not blush or beckon to him as the others had done, but rather she grew pale.

“Yes,” said the Prince at last, “you and you only shall be my bride, even though I should have to go to the ends of the world to find you.”

When he said that, the picture bowed its head gravely.

Then the Prince dropped the curtain and left the room and went down to where the old King was waiting for him. As soon as he came before his father, the old man asked whether he had found the room and entered it.

“I did,” answered the Prince.

“And what did you see in the room, my son?”

“I saw a picture of the maiden whom I wish to have for a wife.”

“And which of the eleven was it?”

“It was none of the eleven; it was the twelfth—she whose portrait hangs behind the curtain.”

When the old King heard this, he gave a cry of grief. “Alas, alas, my son! What have you done! Did I not warn you not to lift the curtain and not to look behind it?”

“You warned me, my father, and yet I could not but look, and now I have seen the only one whom I will ever marry. Tell me, I pray of you, who she is, that I may go in search of her.”

“Well did I know that misfortune would come upon you if ever you entered that room. That Princess whom you have seen is indeed the most beautiful Princess in all the world, but she is also the most unfortunate. Because of her beauty, she was carried away by a wicked and powerful Magician who wished to marry her. To this, however, she would not consent. He still keeps her a prisoner in an iron castle far away beyond forest, plain, and mountain at the very end of the world. Many princes and heroes and brave men have tried to rescue her, but none has ever succeeded. They have lost their lives in the attempt, and the Magician has turned them all into stone statues to adorn his castle. And now you are determined to throw away your life also.”

“That may be,” said the Prince; “and yet it may also be that I shall succeed even though others have failed. At any rate, I must try, for I cannot live without her.”

When the King found that his son was determined to go, and that nothing could stay him, he gave him a jewelled

sword and the finest steed in his stable and bade him God-speed.

So the Prince set out with his father’s blessing, and he rode along and rode along until at last he came to a forest that was so vast there seemed to be no end to it. In this forest he quite lost his way. He was therefore very glad when he saw some one trudging along in front of him.

The Prince rode on until he overtook the man, and then he reined in his horse and bade him good day.

“Good day,” answered the man.

“Do you know the ways through this forest?” asked the Prince.

“No, I know nothing about them, but that never bothers me. If at any time I think I am going in the wrong direction, it is easy to right myself.”

“How is that?” said the Prince.

“Oh, I have the power of stretching myself out to any length, and if I lose my way I have only to make myself tall enough to see over the tree-tops, and then I can easily tell where I am.”

“That must be very curious. I should like to see that,” said the Prince.

Well, that was easy enough, and the man would be glad enough to oblige him. So he began to stretch himself. He stretched and stretched and stretched until he was taller than the tallest tree in the forest. His head and body were quite lost to sight among the branches, and all that the Prince could see were his legs and feet.

“Is that enough?” the man called down to the Prince.

“Yes, that is enough,” answered the Prince, and he had to shout to make himself heard, the man’s head was so far away.

Then the man began to shrink. He shrank and shrank until he was no taller than the Prince himself.

“You are a wonderful fellow,” said the Prince. “What is your name?”

The man’s name was Long.

“And what did you see up there?”

“I saw a plain and great mountains beyond, and still beyond that an iron castle, and it was so far away that it must be at the very end of the world.”

“It is that castle that I am seeking,” said the Prince, “and now I see that you are the very man to guide me there. Tell me, Long, will you take service with me? If you will, I will pay you well.”

Yes, Long would do that, and not for the sake of the money either, but because he had taken a fancy to the Prince.

So the Prince and his new servant travelled along together, and presently they came out of the forest on to a plain, and there, far in front of them, was another man also travelling along toward the mountains.

“Look, Master!” said Long. “Do you see that man? His name is Broad. You ought to have him for a servant too, for he is even more wonderful than I am.”

“Call him, then,” said the Prince, “and I will speak with him.”

No, Long could not call him, for Broad was too far away to hear him, but he could soon overtake him. So Long stretched himself out until he was tall enough to go half a mile at every step. In this way he soon overtook Broad and stopped him, and then he and Broad waited until the Prince had caught up to them.

“Good day,” said the Prince to Broad.

“Good day,” answered Broad.

“My servant here tells me that you are a very wonderful person,” said the Prince. “What can you do that is so wonderful?”

What Broad could do was to spread himself out until he was as broad across as he wished to be.

“I should like to see that,” said the Prince.

Very well! Nothing was easier, and Broad was willing to show him. “But first,” said Broad, “do you get behind those rocks over yonder. Otherwise you may get hurt. And now I will begin.”

“Quick! quick, Master!” cried Long, in a voice of fear. “We have not a moment to lose,” and he ran at full speed and crouched down behind the rocks. The Prince followed him, and he also got behind the rocks, but he did not know why Long was in such a hurry, nor why he seemed so frightened. He soon saw, however, for when Broad began to spread, he spread so fast and with such force that unless the Prince and Long had been behind the rocks, they would certainly have been pushed against them and crushed.

“Is that enough?” cried Broad, after he had spread out so wide that the Prince could scarcely see across him.

“Yes, that is enough.”

So Broad began to shrink, and soon he was no fatter than he had been before.

“Yes, you are certainly a very wonderful fellow, and I should like to have you for a servant,” said the Prince. “Will you come with me also?”

Yes, Broad would come, for a master who was good enough for Long was good enough for him too. So now the Prince had two servants. He rode on across the plain toward the mountains, and the two followed him.

After a while they came to a man sitting by the way with a bandage over his eyes. The Prince stopped and spoke to him.

“Are you blind, my poor fellow, that you wear a bandage over your eyes?”

“No,” answered the man, “I am not blind. I wear the bandage because I see too well without it. Even now, with this bandage, I can see as clearly as you ever can. If I take it off, I can see for hundreds of miles, and when I look at anything steadily my sight is so strong that the thing is riven to pieces, or bursts into flame and is burned.”

“That is a very curious thing,” said the Prince. “Could you break yonder rock to pieces merely by looking at it?”

“Yes, I could do that.”

“I would like to see it done,” said the Prince.

Well, the man was ready to oblige him. So he took the bandage from his eyes and fixed his gaze on the rock. First the rock grew hot, and then it smoked, and then, with a great noise, it exploded into tiny fragments, so that the pieces flew about through the air.

“Yes, you are even more wonderful than these other two,” said the Prince, “and they are wonderful enough. How are you called?”

“My name is Sharpsight.”

“Well, Sharpsight, will you take service with me, for I need just such a servant as you?”

Yes, Sharpsight would do that; so now the Prince had three servants, and they were such servants as no one in the world ever had before.

They travelled along over the plain, and at last they came to the foot of the mountain that lay between them and the iron castle.

“Now we must either go over it or round it,” said the Prince; “and which shall it be?”

“No need for that, Master,” answered Sharpsight. “Just let me unbandage my eyes, but be careful you are not struck by any of the flying pieces when the mountain begins to split.”

So the Prince and Broad and Long took shelter behind a clump of trees, and then Sharpsight uncovered his eyes. He fixed his eyes on the mountain, and presently it began to groan and split and splinter. Pieces of sharp rock and stones flew through the air. It was not long before Sharpsight’s gaze had bored a way straight through the mountain and out on the other side. Then he put back the bandage over his eyes and called to the Prince that the way was clear.

The Prince and his companions came out from their shelter, and when they saw the way that Sharpsight had made through the mountain they could not wonder enough. It was so broad and clear that ten men could have ridden through it abreast.

With such a way before them it did not take them long to go through the mountain, and then they found themselves in the country beyond, and a black and terrible land it was too. Nowhere was there any sound or sign of life. There were fields, but no grass. There were trees, but they bore neither leaves nor fruit. There was a river, but it did not flow, and there was light, and yet they saw no sun. But darker and gloomier than all the rest was the castle which rose before them. It was the iron castle where the Black Magician lived.

There was a moat round the castle and an iron bridge across it. The companions rode across the bridge, and no sooner were they over than the bridge rose behind them and they were prisoners.

They could not have turned back even if they had wished to, but none of them had any thought of such a thing.

The Prince struck with his sword upon the great door of the castle, and at once it opened before him, but when he entered he saw no one. Before him was a great hall, and on either side of it was a long row of stone figures. These statues were all figures of knights and kings and princes. The Prince looked at them and wondered, for they were so lifelike that it seemed scarcely possible to believe that they were of stone.

He and his companions went on farther into the castle, and everywhere they found rooms magnificently furnished, but silent and deserted. Nowhere was there any sign of life.

Last of all they entered what seemed to be a dining-hall. Here was a table set with the most delicious things to eat and drink. There were four places about the table, and one of them was somewhat higher than the others, as though intended for the prince or king.

“One might think this table had been set for us,” said the Prince. “We will wait for a while, and then, if no one comes, we will eat, at any rate.”

They waited for some time and then took their places at the table. At once invisible hands filled the goblets and other invisible hands passed the dishes.

The Prince and his companions ate and drank all they wished, and then they rose from the table, meaning to look farther through the castle.

At this moment the door opened and a tall man with a long grey beard came into the room. From head to foot he was dressed entirely in black velvet, even to his cap and shoes, and round his waist his robe was fastened with three iron bands. In one hand was an ivory wand, curiously carved; with the other he led a lady so beautiful, and yet so pale and sad-looking, that the heart ached to look at her. The moment the Prince saw her he knew her as the one whose picture he had seen behind the golden curtain—the one whom he had said should be his bride.

The Magician, for it was he, spoke at once to the Prince. “I know why you have come here, and that you hope to win this Princess for your bride. Many others have come here with the same wish and have failed. Now you shall have your turn. For three nights you must watch here with her. If each morning I return and find her still with you, then you shall have her for a bride after the third morning. But if she is gone, you shall be turned into a stone statue, such as those you have already seen about my palace.”

“That ought not to be a hard task,” said the Prince. “Gladly will I watch with her for three nights; if in the morning you find her gone, I am willing to suffer whatever

you will. But my three companions must also watch with me.”

Yes, the Magician was willing to agree to that, so he left the lady there with the four, and then went away, closing the door behind him.

As soon as the Magician had gone the Prince and his followers made ready to guard the room so that no one could come in to take the lady away, nor could she herself leave without their knowing it.

Long lay down and stretched himself out until he encircled the whole room, and anyone who went in or out would have to step over him. Sharpsight sat down to watch, while Broad stood in the doorway and made himself so broad that no one could possibly have squeezed in past him. Meanwhile the Prince tried to talk to the lady, but she would not look at him nor answer him.

In this way some time passed, and then suddenly the Prince began to feel very drowsy. He tried to rouse himself, but in spite of his efforts his eyes closed, and he fell into a deep sleep.

It was not until the early morning that he woke. Then he roused himself and looked about him. His companions too were only just opening their eyes, for they, like himself, had been asleep, and the lady was gone from the room.

When the Prince saw this he began to groan and lament, but his companions told him not to despair.

“Wait until I see if I can tell you where she is,” said Sharpsight. He leaned from the window and looked about.

“Yes, I see her,” he said. “A hundred miles away from here is a forest. In that forest is an oak-tree. On the topmost

bough of that oak-tree is an acorn, and in that acorn is the Princess hidden.”

“But what good is it to know where she is unless we can get her back before the Magician comes?” cried the Prince. “It would take us days to journey there and to return.”

“Not so long as that, Master,” answered Long. “Have patience for a moment until I see what I can do.” He then stepped outside and made himself so tall that he could go ten miles at a step. He set Sharpsight on his shoulder to show him the way, and away he went, and he made such good time that he was back in the castle again before the Prince could have walked three times round the room.

“Here, Master,” he said, “here is the acorn. Take it and throw it upon the floor.”

The Prince threw the acorn upon the floor, and at once it flew open, and there stood the Princess before him.

Hardly had this happened when the door opened and the Magician came into the room. When he saw the Princess he gave a cry of rage, and one of the iron bands about his middle broke with a loud noise.

He looked at the Prince, and his eyes flashed as if with red fire. “This time you have succeeded in keeping the Princess with you,” he cried, “but do not be too sure that you can do the same thing again. To-night you shall try once more.”

So saying he went away, taking the Princess with him. In the evening he came again, and again he brought the Princess.

“Watch her well,” said he to the Prince, with an evil smile. “Remember, if she is not still here to-morrow morning you

will share the fate of the others who have tried to watch her and have failed."

"Very well," answered the Prince. "What must be must be, and I can only do my best."

The Magician then went away, leaving the Princess with them as before.

The Prince and his companions had determined that this night they would stay awake, whatever happened, but presently their eyelids grew as heavy as lead, and soon, in spite of themselves, they all fell into a deep sleep.

When they awoke the day was breaking, and the Princess had again disappeared. The Prince was ready to tear his hair with despair, but Sharpsight bade him take heart.

"Wait until I take a look about," he said. "If I cannot see her, then it will be time for you to despair."

He leaned from the window, and first he looked east, and then he looked west, and then he looked toward the north. "Yes, now I see her," he said, "but she is far enough away. Two hundred miles from here is a desert. In that desert is a rock, in that rock is a golden ring, and that ring is the Princess."

"That is far away indeed," groaned the Prince, "and at any moment the Magician may be here."

"Never mind, Master," cried Long. "Two hundred miles is not so far when one can go twenty miles at a step." He then made himself twice as tall as the day before, and taking Sharpsight on his shoulders he set out for the desert.

It was not long before he was back again, and in his hand he carried the golden ring. "If it had not been for Sharpsight," he said, "I would have been forced to bring

back the whole rock with me, but he fixed his eyes upon it, and at once it split into a thousand pieces and the ring fell out. Here! Take the ring, Master, quick, and throw it upon the floor."

The Prince did so, and as soon as the ring touched the ground it was transformed into the Princess.

At this moment the Magician opened the door and came into the room. When he saw the Princess he stopped short, and his face turned black with rage and fear. At the same moment the second band about his middle flew apart.

"Ah, well!" he cried to the Prince, "no doubt you think you are very clever, but remember there is still another night, and next time you may not prove so lucky in keeping the Princess with you."

So saying he went away with the Princess, and the Prince saw him no more until evening. Then for the third time he came, and brought the Princess with him.

"Watch her well," said he, "for I promise you will not have so easy a task this time as you have had before."

Then he went away, and the four comrades set themselves to watch. But again all happened as it had before. In spite of themselves they could not stay awake. First they nodded and then they snored, and then they fell into such a deep sleep that if the walls had fallen about them they would not have known it. For this was an enchanted sleep that the Magician had thrown upon them in order to take away the Princess.

Not until day began to dawn did the four awake, and when they did there was nothing to be seen of the Princess.

"Well, she is not here in the room," said Sharpsight, "so methinks I'd better look outside."

Then he leaned from the window, and for a long time he looked about him. At last he spoke. “Master, I see the Princess, but to bring her back will not be such an easy task as it was before. Three hundred miles from here is a sea. At the bottom of the sea is a shell. In that shell is a pearl, and that pearl is the Princess. But to bring that pearl up from the sea is a task for Broad as well as Long.”

“Very well,” said the Prince, “then Long must take Broad with him on one shoulder. Only make haste and return again quickly, in heaven’s name, or the Magician may be here before you are back, and we shall be turned into stone.”

Well, the three servants were willing enough to be off. Long stretched himself out until he was three times as tall as he had been the first time, and that was the most he could stretch. Then he went away, thirty miles at a step. At that rate it was no time before he came to the sea. But the sea was fathoms deep, and the shell lay at the very bottom of it, and try as he might he could not reach it.

“Now it is my turn,” said Broad. Then he lay down and put his mouth to the sea and began to drink. He drank and drank and swelled and swelled until it was wonderful to see him, and in the end he swallowed so much of the water that it was easy enough for Long to reach down and pick up the shell.

“And now we must make haste,” cried Sharpsight, “for as I look back at the castle I see that the Magician is already waking.”

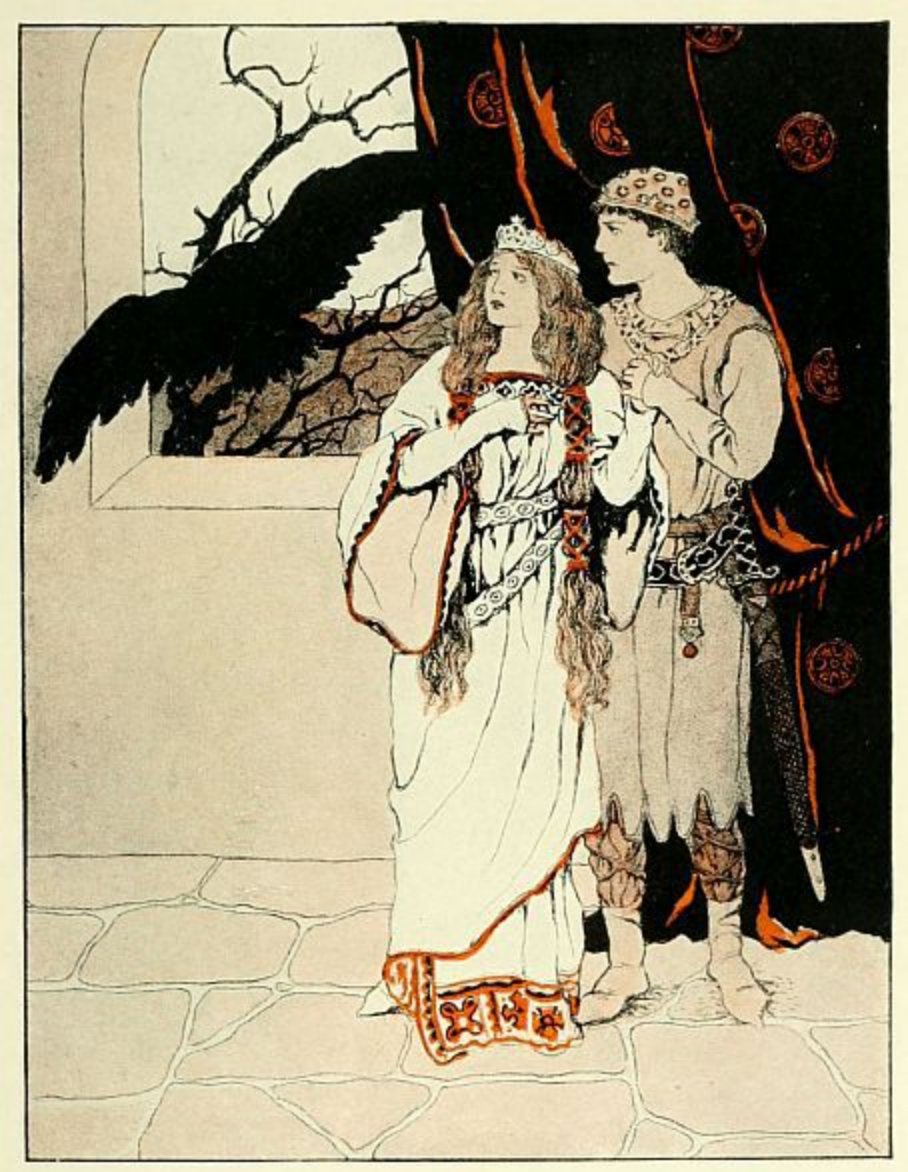
At once Long took his companions on his shoulders and started back the way he had come. But Broad had drunk so much water and was so heavy that Long could not go as fast as he otherwise would. “Broad, you will have to wait here, and I will come back for you later,” he cried, and with that

he threw Broad down from his shoulder as though he had been a sack full of grain.

Broad had not been expecting such a fall and was not prepared for it. He gasped and choked, and then the sea he had swallowed rose all about them; it filled the valley and washed up over the foot of the mountains. Long was so tall that he was able to wade out of it, though the water was up to his waist, and Sharpsight too was safe, for he was on Long’s shoulder; but Broad was like to have been drowned. He only saved himself by catching hold of Long’s hand, and so he was drawn out of the water and up on dry land.

“That was a pretty trick to play upon me,” he gasped and spluttered.

But Long had no time to answer him, for already Sharpsight was whispering in his ear that the Magician had awakened and was now on his way to the Prince. He caught Broad by the belt and swung him up on his shoulder, and this he could easily do, because now Broad was so shrunken that he was quite light.



THERE WAS A GREAT BLACK RAVEN IN THE ROOM WITH THEM

In two more steps Long had reached the castle, but already the Magician was opening the door of the chamber where the Prince was.

“Quick! Quick!” cried Sharpsight. “Throw the pearl in at the window.”

And indeed there was no time to be lost. Long threw the pearl in through the window, and the moment it touched the floor it turned into the Princess. She stood there before the

Prince, no longer pale and sad, but smiling and as rosy as the dawn.

Already the Magician was in the room, with an evil smile upon his face. When he saw the Princess standing there he gave a cry so loud and terrible that the whole castle shook with it. And now the third iron band that was about his waist broke.

At once the black velvet robe that had been held about him by the bands rose and spread into two great black wings. His eyes shrank, his nose grew long and sharp, and instead of the Magician there was a great black raven in the room with them. Heavily flapping, it rose from the ground. Three times round the room it flew, croaking mournfully, and then out through the window.

And now through all the castle arose a stir and hum of life. The stone figures in the hall stirred and looked about them, and stepped down, no longer cold dead stone, but living, breathing people. They were those who had come to the castle to search for the Princess, and had been bewitched by the Magician and turned into statues; the evil charm was broken, and they were alive once more.

When they found that it was the Prince and his followers who had delivered them they did not know how to thank them enough. They could not even grudge the Princess to the Prince, for it was he who had brought them back to life. They all said they would return with the Prince to his own country, so as to be at the wedding when he was married to the Princess.

And what a wedding it was! There was enough cake and ale for all to feast to their hearts’ content.

The old King was so happy that he at once made over the kingdom to his son, that he and his bride might reign.

As for the three companions, they ate and drank till they were full, and then they set out into the world again. The Prince begged and entreated them to stay with him, but they would not. They were too fond of travelling about the world, and for all I know they may be in some corner of it still.

THE DWARF WITH THE GOLDEN BEARD
A SLAVONIC FAIRY TALE

THE Princess Beautiful was the daughter of the King of the Silver Mountains, and she was no less lovely than her name. Because of her beauty many heroes and princes came to her father's kingdom, all seeking her in marriage. The Princess cared for none of them, however, except the young Prince Dobrotek. Him she loved with all her heart, and her father was quite willing that she should choose him for a husband, for the Prince was rich and powerful as well as handsome.

The marriage between them was arranged, and the guests from far and near were invited to attend. Among those asked was a dwarf who had also been a suitor for the hand of the Princess.

This dwarf was a very powerful magician, and as he was very malicious as well as powerful, he was greatly feared by every one. He was scarcely two feet high, and so ugly that it was enough to frighten one only to look at him. His great pride was his beard, which was seven feet long, and every hair of it was of pure gold. Because of its length he wore it twisted round and round his neck like a golden collar. Thus he avoided tripping over it at every step.

When this dwarf heard that the Princess was to marry Dobrotek he was filled with rage and chagrin. In spite of his hideousness he was so vain of his beard that he could not imagine why the Princess should have chosen another instead of himself. He swore that even still she should take

him for a husband, and that if she did not do this then she should marry no one. However, he said nothing of this vow to anyone. He accepted the invitation to the wedding, and when the day came he was one of the first of the guests to arrive.

All went to the church and took their places, and when the Prince and Princess stood before the altar they were so handsome that every one was filled with admiration.

The priest opened his book and was just about to make them man and wife when a frightful noise arose outside. It was a sound of whistling and roaring and rending. Then the doors were burst open, and a terrible hurricane swept into the church.

The guests were so frightened that they hid themselves under the seats, but the storm touched none of them. It swept up the aisle and caught up the Princess Beautiful as though she were a feather. The Prince threw his arms about her and tried to hold her. But he could do nothing against such a hurricane. She was torn from his grasp and swept out of the church and away, no one knew whither.

When the storm was over the people came out from under the seats and looked about them, but look as they might they could see no bride. Only the Prince was standing before the altar, tearing his hair with despair because the Princess was lost to him.

And well might he despair, for the hurricane that had carried the Princess away was no common storm. It had been raised by the wicked enchantments of the dwarf, and had swept Princess Beautiful far away, over plain and mountain, over sea and forest, to the very castle of the dwarf himself. There she was lying in an enchanted sleep, and it would be a bold man who could hope to rescue her.

When the King of the Silver Mountains found his daughter gone he was in a terrible rage. “It was for you to save her,” cried he to the Prince. “She was your bride, and you should have lost your life before you allowed her to be torn from you.”

To this the Prince answered nothing, for he thought the same himself. Yet who can stand against magic? Only enchantment, indeed, could have prevailed against him.

“Go!” cried the King, “find her and bring her back to me, or your life shall answer for it.”

The Prince wished nothing better than to go in search of his bride. Life was worth nothing to him without her, and at once he made ready to depart. He was in such haste that he stopped for neither sword nor armour, but leaped upon his horse and rode forth as he was.

On and on he rode, many miles and many leagues, but the farther he rode the less he heard of the Princess, and the more he despaired of ever finding her. At last he entered a forest so dark and vast that it seemed to have no end. As he rode on through the shadows he suddenly heard a sharp and piteous cry. He looked about him to see whence it came, and presently he found a hare struggling in the clutch of a great grey owl.

The Prince had a kind heart. He seized a stick and quickly drove the owl away from its prey. For awhile the hare lay stretched out and panting, but presently it recovered itself.

“Prince,” it said to Dobrotek, “you have saved my life, and I am not ungrateful. I know why you are here and whom you seek. To rescue the Princess Beautiful will be no easy task. It was the Dwarf of the Golden Beard who raised the tempest that carried the Princess away. Even now he holds her a prisoner in his castle. Whoever would rescue her must first

overcome the dwarf, and to do this one must be in possession of the Sword of Sharpness.”

“And where is that sword to be found?” asked the Prince.

“On a mountain many leagues away. It is guarded by a dragon who keeps watch over it night and day. Only when the sun is at its highest does the dragon sleep, and then but for a few short minutes. To gain possession of the sword one must ride the wild horse that lives here in the forest and that moves faster than the wind.”

“And can I find that horse and ride him?”

“It can be done. Under yonder rock lies a golden bridle. It has lain hidden there for over a hundred years. With it lies a golden whistle. The sound of that whistle will call the horse, wherever he is. But he is very terrible to look upon, for his eyes are like burning coals, and he breathes smoke and fire from his nostrils. He will come at you as though to tear you to pieces, but do not be afraid. Cast the bridle over his head, and he will at once become quite tame and gentle. Then you can ride him wheresoever you wish. He will bear you to the mountain where the dragon lies and will help you to gain possession of the sword.”

The Prince thanked the hare for its advice. He lifted the rock from its place, and there beneath it lay the golden bridle and the golden whistle. The Prince took up the bridle, and at once the whole glade was filled with light; and no wonder, for the bridle was studded with precious stones and glittered like the sun. He raised the whistle to his lips and blew upon it loud and clear.

At once, from far away in the forest, came a loud sound of neighing, and of galloping hoofs. The wild horse was coming. On and on it came, nearer and nearer. Its eyes

shone like coals of fire, and the leaves were withered on either side of it because of its fiery breath.

It rushed at the Prince as though it would tear him to pieces; but he was ready for it, and as soon as it was near enough he threw the bridle over its head. At once the fire faded from its eyes. Its breath grew quiet, and it stood there as gentle and harmless as a lamb.

“Master,” it said to Dobrotek, “I am yours now. Whatsoever you wish me to do, I will do, and I will bear you wherever you wish to go.”

“First, then,” said the Prince, “I wish you to carry me to the mountain where I can find the Sword of Sharpness.”

“Very well, Master, I will do so. But before we start on such a dangerous adventure as that you should be properly armed. Do you enter in at one of my ears and go on until you come out of the other.”

At once it seemed to the Prince as though the horse’s ear were a great cave opening out before him. He entered in and went on and on, though it was very dark there in the horse’s head. Presently he saw another opening before him, and that was the horse’s other ear. He came out through it and found himself in the forest again, but now he was clothed as a warrior prince should be, in shining armour, and he held a sword in his hand.

“That is right,” said the horse. “Now mount and ride, for we have far to go.”

So the Prince said good-bye to the friendly hare and thanked it again. He mounted upon the horse’s back and away they went like the wind. Soon they were out of the forest, and the dark was left behind them. On they went and

on they went, until they came within sight of a smoking mountain; there the horse stopped.

“Master,” said he, “do you see that mountain in front of us and the smoke that rises over it?”

Yes, the Prince saw it.

“That smoke is the breath of the dragon that guards the Sword of Sharpness. Just now he is awake, and if we were to venture within reach he would soon scorch us to cinders with his breath. There are, as the hare told you, only a few short minutes at midday when he sleeps, and when we may approach him safely. To gain the sword I must, in those few minutes, cross the plain before us and climb the mountain. Only I, who go like the wind, could do such a thing, and even for me it will be difficult. We may both lose our lives in the attempt.”

“Nevertheless, we must try it,” said the Prince, “for unless I can gain the sword, and free the Princess from the dwarf, life is worth nothing to me.”

“Very well,” answered the horse. “Then we will attempt it, for you are my master.”

So all the rest of that day the horse and the Prince lay hidden, for it was already afternoon. Through the night and the next morning they waited, and the Prince could see the flames and columns of smoke that the dragon breathed forth. But as the sun rose high in the heavens the dragon became sleepy, and the flames burned lower and with less smoke. At last the sun was at its height.

“And now, Master, is our time,” cried the horse. With that he galloped out on to the plain and made for the mountain. On he flew as fast as the wind, and faster. The Prince could hardly breathe, and he could not see at all, so fast the horse

went. The plain was crossed, the mountain climbed, but already the dragon was awakening. “Quick, quick! the sword. There it lies beside him!” cried the horse.

The Prince stooped and caught up the Sword of Sharpness, and in that instant the dragon awoke. It reared its head and seemed about to devour the Prince, but when it saw what he held in his hand it dropped its crest and fawned at his feet.

“You are my master,” it said, “for you hold the Sword of Sharpness. But do not kill me. Spare my life, and I will give you advice that may save your own.”

“What is the advice?” asked the Prince.

“When you reach the dwarf’s castle (for I know that you are going there, and why), you may with this sword be able to overcome the dwarf. But after you have done that, you must cut off his beard and carry it away with you. It will serve as proof that you and you alone have slain him. You must also fill a flask with water from the fountain in the midst of the garden. It is the Water of Life, and you will need it. You will need the Cap of Invisibility too that the dwarf sometimes wears upon his head. All three of these things you must have. Do not neglect what I tell you, for if you do evil will certainly come upon you.”

“It is well,” said the Prince. “I will remember what you say, and if no good comes of it, no harm can either.”

So saying, the Prince drew his own sword from its sheath and left it on the mountain, taking the Sword of Sharpness in its place. Then he rode down the mountain and away over the plain. Once he looked back, but he saw neither flame nor smoke behind him. The dragon lay there as harmless as any worm, for with the Sword of Sharpness all its power was gone.

On and on rode the Prince, so fast that the wind was left behind, and at last he and his horse came within sight of a castle all of iron. About it was a wall that was seven times the height of a man, and this also was of iron.

“Look, Prince,” said the horse. “That is the dwarf’s castle that we see before us.”

Then on they went again and never stopped until they reached the castle gate. Beside the gate hung a great brazen war trumpet. The Prince lifted it to his lips and blew upon it such a blast that it was like to split the ears of those who heard it. Again he blew, and once again.

“And now, Master, take out the sword from its sheath and make ready, for the dwarf will soon be here,” said the horse.

Meanwhile the Princess Beautiful had been living behind those iron walls, and she had been not unhappy, though she had often grieved because Prince Dobrotek was not with her.

When the dwarf had caused her to be swept away by the hurricane he had thrown her into an enchanted sleep, and in this sleep she lay until she was safely placed in a room that the dwarf had specially prepared for her. This room was made entirely of mirrors, only divided here and there by curtains of cloth of gold. These curtains were embroidered with scenes from the dwarf’s own life and from the life of the Princess. In the mirrors Beautiful could see her own beauty repeated endlessly. The furniture of the room was all of gold, curiously carved, and the cushions were embroidered with gold and precious stones.

When the Princess opened her eyes and looked about her she did not know where she was. She had no remembrance of the storm that had brought her hither. She remembered only that she had stood beside Prince Dobrotek in the

church, and that a great noise had arisen outside. After that she had known nothing until she awoke in this chamber.

She arose from the couch where she was lying and began to examine the room. All the light came from a dome overhead. She could find neither doors nor windows, and she wondered much how she had been brought into a room like this.

While she was looking about her she heard a noise behind her that made her turn quickly. At one side the mirrors had swung apart like doors, and through this opening came a procession of enormous black slaves bearing a golden throne in their midst. Upon this throne sat the Dwarf with the Golden Beard. The slaves set the throne down in the middle of the room and at once withdrew, closing the mirrored doors behind them.

When the Princess saw the dwarf she was very much alarmed. She at once suspected that it was he who had brought her here, and that he meant to keep her a prisoner until she would consent to marry him.

The dwarf stepped down from the throne and approached her with a smiling air, but she shrank away from him into the farthest corner of the room.

The dwarf was magnificently dressed. His beard had been brushed till it shone like glass, and he had thrown it over one arm as though it were a mantle. But in his left hand he carried a cap of some coarse grey stuff that was in strange contrast with the rest of his dress.

“Most beautiful Princess,” said he, “you are welcome indeed in my castle. None could be more so, and I hope to make you so happy that you will be more than content to spend your life here with me.”

“Miserable dwarf!” cried the Princess, “do you really think you will be able to make me stay here with you? Do you not know that Prince Dobrotek will come in search of me soon? He will certainly find me! Then he will punish you as you deserve for your insolence.”

The Princess was trembling now, but with rage rather than fear. The dwarf seemed not at all disturbed by her anger, however.

“Beautiful one,” he said, still smiling, “you are even more beautiful when you are angry than when you are pleased. Let Prince Dobrotek come. I fear him not at all. But do not let us waste our time in talking of him. Instead let us talk of ourselves, and of how pleasantly we will pass our days together.”

So saying, the dwarf came close to the Princess and attempted to take her hand. But instead of permitting this, the Princess gave him such a blow upon the ear that he fairly staggered under it. His beard slipped from his arm, and in trying to steady himself he tripped on it and fell his length upon the floor.

The Princess laughed maliciously. At the sound of her laughter the dwarf became filled with fury. His eyes flashed fire as he scrambled to his feet. “Miserable girl!” he cried. “Do you dare to laugh? The time will come when you will feel more like weeping, if not for me then for yourself. Some day you will be glad enough to receive my caresses. Now I will leave you, and when I come again it will be in a different manner.” So saying, he gathered up his beard and rushed through the mirror door, closing it behind him.

His words, and his manner of going, frightened the Princess. She again began to look about her for some way of escape. Suddenly she saw upon the floor the grey cap that

the dwarf had carried in his hand. He must have dropped it when he fell, and he had been too angry to notice that he was leaving it behind. She picked it up and stood turning it thoughtfully in her hands. Then, without considering why she did so, she placed it upon her head. She was standing directly in front of a mirror at the time. To her amazement, the moment she had the cap on her head every reflection of her vanished from every mirror in the room. The Princess could hardly believe her eyes. She might have been thin air for any impression she made upon the glass. She took the cap from her head, and immediately her reflections appeared again in the mirrors. She replaced it, and they vanished from sight. Then the Princess knew that she held the Cap of Invisibility—the cap that causes anyone who wears it to become invisible.

As she stood there with the cap still upon her head, the mirror door was burst open and the dwarf rushed into the room. His dress was disordered and his eyes glared wildly.

He looked hastily about him, but he could see neither the cap nor the Princess. At once he knew that she had found the cap and had put it on.

“Ah, ha!” he cried to the invisible Princess. “So you have found it! You have put it on, and hope so to escape me. But I know you are still here, even though I cannot see you. I will find you, never fear.”

Spreading his arms wide, he rushed about the room, hoping to touch the Princess and seize her, but as he could not see her she was easily able to escape him. Now and then he stopped and listened, hoping the Princess would make some sound that would tell him where she was, but at these times Beautiful too stood still. She did not move, she scarcely breathed, lest he should hear her.

Suddenly the Princess saw something that gave her a hope of escape. The dwarf had neglected to fasten the swinging mirror behind him when he entered. She flew to it and pushed it open. Beyond lay a long corridor. Down this the Princess fled, not knowing where it would lead her.

But the dwarf saw the mirror move, and guessed she had passed out through it. With a cry of rage he sprang after her.

At the end of the corridor was a barred door. Beautiful had scarcely time to unfasten this door and run through before the dwarf reached it. But once outside the door she found herself in a wide and open garden. Here she could pause and take breath. The dwarf had no means of knowing in which direction she had gone. He could not hear her footsteps upon the soft grass, and the rustling of the wind among the leaves prevented his hearing the sound of her dress as she moved.

For a while the dwarf ran up and down the garden, hoping some accident might bring him to the Princess. But he grasped nothing except empty air. Discouraged, he turned back to the castle at last, muttering threats as he went.

After he had gone the Princess began to look about her. She found the garden very beautiful. There were winding paths and fountains and fruit trees and pergolas where she could rest when she was weary. She tasted the fruit and found it delicious. It seemed to her she could live there for ever very happily, if only her dear Prince Dobrotek were with her.

As for the dwarf, in the days that followed the Princess quite lost her fear of him, though he often came to the garden in search of her. After a time she even amused herself by teasing him. She would take off her cap and allow him to see her. Then, as he rushed toward her, she would

put it on again and vanish from his sight. Or she would run just in front of him, singing as she went, that he might know where she was. The poor dwarf would chase madly after the sound. Then, when it seemed that he was just about to catch her, she would suddenly become silent and step aside on the grass, and laugh to herself to see him run past her, grasping at the air.

But this was a dangerous game for the Princess to play; she was not always to escape so easily. One day she was running before him, just out of reach, and calling to him to follow, when a low branch caught her cap and brushed it from her head. Immediately she became visible.

With a cry of triumph the dwarf caught the cap as it fell and thrust it in his bosom. Then he seized the Princess by the wrist.

“I have you now, my pretty bird. No use to struggle. You shall not escape again.”

In despair the Princess tried to tear herself loose from his hold, but the dwarf’s fingers were like iron.

At this moment from outside the gate sounded the loud blast of a war trumpet. At once the dwarf guessed that it was Prince Dobrotek who blew it, and that he had come in search of the Princess.

Suddenly, and before Beautiful could hinder him, he drew her to him and breathed upon her eyelids; at the same time he muttered the words of a magic charm.

At once the Princess felt her senses leaving her. In vain she strove to move or speak. In spite of herself her eyes closed, and she sank softly to the ground in a deep sleep.

As soon as the dwarf saw that his charm had worked he caused a dark cloud to gather about him, which entirely hid

him from view. Rising in this cloud, he floated high above the iron walls and paused directly over Prince Dobrotek. He drew his sword and made ready to slay the bold Prince who had come against him.

Dobrotek looked up and wondered to see the dark cloud that had so suddenly gathered above him.

“Beware!” cried the wild horse loudly. “It is the dwarf. He is about to strike.”

Scarcely had he spoken when the darkness drew down about them. Through this darkness shot a flash as bright as lightning. It was the dwarf’s sword that had struck at the Prince. But swift as the stroke was, the horse was no less swift. He sprang aside, and the sword drove so deep into the earth that the dwarf was not able to draw it out again.

“Strike! Strike!” cried the horse to Dobrotek. “It is your chance!”

Dobrotek raised the Sword of Sharpness and struck into the cloud, and his blow was so sharp and true that the dwarf’s head was cut from his body and fell at the Prince’s feet.

Dobrotek alighted, and cutting off the dwarf’s beard, he wound it about him like a glittering golden belt. Then, leaving the head where it lay, he opened the gate and went into the garden.

He had not far to go in his search for Beautiful, for she was lying asleep upon the grass close to the gate. Dobrotek was filled with joy at the sight.

“Princess, awake! awake!” he cried. “It is I, Dobrotek. I have come to rescue you.”

The Princess neither stirred nor woke. Her lashes rested on her cheeks, and she breathed so gently that her breast scarcely moved.

“Master,” said the horse, “this is no natural sleep. It is some enchantment. Take up that cap that lies beside her. Then fill your flask at the fountain of the Water of Life and let us go. Do not try to wake her now. When it is time, you can do so by sprinkling upon her a few drops of the water. But first let us make haste to leave this place, for it is still full of evil magic.”

Dobrotek was not slow to do as the horse bade him. He filled a flask with the Water of Life and hid the Cap of Invisibility in his bosom. Then, lifting the Princess in his arms, he mounted the horse and rode back with her the way they had come.

It was not long before they reached the place where the Prince had saved the hare from the owl in the forest. Here the Prince found his own horse. It had not wandered away, but had stayed there, browsing on the grass and leaves and drinking from a stream near by.

“And now, Prince,” said the wild steed, “it is time for us to part. Light down and take the bridle from my head. Put it back again where you found it, and cover it with the rock; but keep the whistle by you. If ever you need me, blow upon it, and I will come to your aid.”

Dobrotek did as the steed bade him. He lighted down and took the bridle from its head. He put it in the hole where he had found it and rolled back the rock upon it. Then the horse bade him farewell, and tore away through the forest, neighing as it went and breathing flames of fire.

After it had gone the Prince felt very weary. He had not yet awakened the Princess, but had laid her, still asleep,

upon the soft moss of the forest. Now he stretched himself at her feet, and at once fell into a deep slumber.

Now it so chanced that while he was asleep King Sarudine, the King of the Black Country, came riding through the forest. He too had been a suitor for the hand of the Princess, but he had been refused. When he heard that she had been spirited away, and that Prince Dobrotek had gone to seek for her, he also determined to set out on the same mission. He hoped that he might be the first to find her and so win her for his bride. For the King, her father, had sent out a proclamation that whoever could find the Princess Beautiful and rescue her should have her for his wife.

What was the amazement of Sarudine, as he came through the lonely wood, suddenly to see the Princess lying there asleep, with Dobrotek at her feet.

At first he drew his sword, thinking to kill the Prince; but after a moment’s thought he put it back in its sheath. Then bending over Beautiful he very quietly lifted her in his arms, mounted his horse, and rode away with her.

Dobrotek was so wearied with his adventures that he slept on for some time, not knowing that the Princess had again been stolen from him.

But when at last he woke and found her gone, he was like one mad, so great was his despair. He rushed about hither and thither through the forest, calling her name aloud, and seeking her everywhere, but nowhere could he find her.

Suddenly he bethought him of his golden whistle, and putting it to his lips he blew so loud and shrill that the forest echoed to the sound. At once the great grey horse came galloping through the forest to him.

Dobrotek ran to meet it. “Tell me,” he cried, “you who know all things, where is Beautiful? She has been stolen from me, and I cannot find her.”

“She is no longer here in the forest,” answered the horse. “She has been carried away by King Sarudine. He has taken her back to her father’s castle, and now he claims her as his bride, for he says that he is the one who found and rescued her. But she still sleeps her enchanted sleep, and none can waken her. You alone can do this, for you have the Waters of Life. Hasten back to the castle, therefore, but before you go to waken her, put on the Cap of Invisibility. King Sarudine fears you, and he has set guards about the castle with orders to slay you if you attempt to enter. All their watchfulness will be in vain, however, if you wear the cap upon your head.”

The advice was wise, and Dobrotek at once did as the horse told him. He drew out the cap and put it upon his head. So he became invisible. Then he rode away in the direction of the country of the Silver Mountains.

He rode on and on, and after a while he came to where the first line of guards was set. They heard the galloping of a horse, and looked all about them, but they could see no one, so he passed in safety. Not long after he came to a second line of soldiers, and he went by them unseen also. Then he passed a third line of guards, and after that he was at the palace.

The Prince entered in, and went from one room to another, and presently he came to the great audience hall. There sat the King upon a golden throne. At his right hand sat King Sarudine, and at his left the Princess lay upon a golden couch, and so beautiful she looked as she lay asleep that the Prince’s heart melted within him for love. He lifted the cap from his head, and there they all saw him standing before them.

The King of the Black Mountains turned pale and trembled at the sight of him, but the old King gave a loud cry of surprise. He had thought that Prince Dobrotek had met his death long ago, or that if he lived he would be afraid to return to the Silver Mountain Country without bringing the Princess with him.

“Rash Prince!” he cried; “what are you doing here? Do you not fear to appear before me, having failed in your search?”

“I did not fail,” answered the Prince, “there lies the Princess, and were it not for me she would still be a prisoner in the castle of the Dwarf of the Golden Beard.”

“How is that?” asked the King.

Then Dobrotek told them his story. He told of how he had become master of the wild horse in the forest, of how he had gained possession of the Sword of Sharpness, and then of how he had ridden to the dwarf’s castle and slain him in battle. He also told how he had brought the Princess away with him, how he had fallen asleep in the forest, and of how the King of the Black Country had stolen Beautiful from him while he slept.

The old King listened attentively to all that Dobrotek told him. When the Prince had made an end to his story the old King turned to King Sarudine beside him.

“And what have you to say to this?” he asked. “Is this story true?”

“Much of it is true,” answered Sarudine, hardily, “but still more of it is false. It is true that it was the dwarf who carried Beautiful away. It is true that he kept her a prisoner, and that he was slain by the Sword of Sharpness. But it was I who won the sword and slew the dwarf, and it was I who rescued the Princess. What better proof of this is needed than that it was I who brought her here?”

“That is only proof that you stole her from me,” cried the Prince. “The proof that I can offer is better still. If you slew the dwarf, where is his beard?”

To this the King of the Black Country could answer nothing, for he did not know where the beard was.

“Then I can tell you,” cried the Prince. With these words he threw aside his mantle, and there, wound about him like a glittering girdle, was the golden beard of the dwarf.

When the old King saw the beard he could doubt no longer as to which of the two had slain the dwarf and

rescued the Princess. He turned such a terrible look upon Sarudine that the young King trembled.

“So you would have deceived me!” he cried. “You thought to win the Princess by a trick. Away! Away with you! Let me never see your face again; and if ever again you venture into my country, you shall be thrown into a dungeon and remain there as long as you live.”

Then, as Sarudine was hurried away by the guards, the old King turned again to the Prince. “You have indeed rescued the Princess,” he said, “but your task is still only half completed. She sleeps, and none can wake her. Until that is done, no man can have her for wife.”

“That is not such a hard matter, either,” said the Prince. With that he drew from his bosom the flask that held the Waters of Life and scattered a few drops upon the Princess.

At once she drew a deep breath and slowly opened her eyes. As soon as she saw the Prince she sprang to her feet and threw herself into his arms. The enchantment was broken, and she had awakened at last.

Then throughout the palace there was the greatest happiness and rejoicing. There never had been anything like the favours the old King heaped upon Dobrotek. The marriage between him and the Princess was again prepared for, and this time all went well. Nothing happened to interfere with the wedding, and the Prince and Beautiful were made man and wife. They loved each other all the more tenderly for the dangers they had shared, and from that time on they lived in all the happiness that true love brings.

THE GREAT WHITE BEAR AND THE TROLLS
A STORY FROM THE NORSE

THERE was once a man in Finmark named Halvor, who had a great white bear, and this great white bear knew many tricks. One day the man thought to himself, “This bear is very wonderful. I will take it as a present to the King of Denmark, and perhaps he will give me in return a whole bag of money.” So he set out along the road to Denmark, leading the bear behind him.

He journeyed on and journeyed on, and after a while he came to a deep, dark forest. There was no house in sight, and as it was almost night Halvor began to be afraid he would have to sleep on the ground, with only the trees overhead for a shelter.

Presently, however, he heard the sound of a woodcutter’s axe. He followed the sound, and soon he came to an opening in the forest. There, sure enough, was a man hard at work cutting down trees. “And wherever there’s a man,” thought Halvor to himself, “there must be a house for him to live in.”

“Good day,” said Halvor.

“Good day!” answered the man, staring with all his eyes at the great white bear.

“Will you give us shelter for the night, my bear and me?” asked Halvor. “And will you give us a bit of food too? I will pay you well if you will.”

“Gladly would I give you both food and shelter,” answered the man, “but to-night, of all nights in the year, no one may stop in my home except at the risk of his life.”

“How is that?” asked Halvor; and he was very much surprised.

“Why, it is this way. This is the eve of St John, and on every St John’s Eve all the trolls in the forest come to my house. I am obliged to spread a feast for them, and there they stay all night, eating and drinking. If they found anyone in the house at that time, they would surely tear him to pieces. Even I and my wife dare not stay. We are obliged to spend the night in the forest.”

“This is a strange business,” said Halvor. “Nevertheless, I have a mind to stop there and see what these same trolls look like. As to their hurting me, as long as I have my bear with me there is nothing in the world that I am afraid of.”

The woodcutter was alarmed at these words. “No, no; do not risk it, I beg of you!” he cried. “Do you spend the night with us out under the trees, and to-morrow we can safely return to our home.”

But Halvor would not listen to this. He was determined to sleep in a house that night, and, moreover, he had a great curiosity to see what trolls looked like.

“Very well,” said the woodcutter at last, “since you are determined to risk your life, do you follow yonder path, and it will soon bring you to my house.”

Halvor thanked him and went on his way, and it was not long before he and his bear reached the woodcutter’s home. He opened the door and went in, and when he saw the feast the woodcutter had spread for the trolls his mouth fairly watered to taste of it. There were sausages and ale and fish

and cakes and rice porridge and all sorts of good things. He tasted a bit here and there and gave his bear some, and then he sat down to wait for the coming of the trolls. As for the bear, he lay down beside his master and went to sleep.

They had not been there long when a great noise arose in the forest outside. It was a sound of moaning and groaning and whistling and shrieking. So loud and terrible it grew that Halvor was frightened in spite of himself. The cold crept up and down his back and the hair rose on his head. The sound came nearer and nearer, and by the time it reached the door Halvor was so frightened that he could bear it no longer. He jumped up and ran to the stove. Quickly he opened the oven door and hid himself inside, pulling the door to behind him. The great white bear paid no attention, however, but only snored in his sleep.

Scarcely was Halvor inside the oven when the door of the house was burst open and all the trolls of the forest came pouring into the room.

There were big trolls and little trolls, fat trolls and thin. Some had long tails and some had short tails and some had no tails at all. Some had two eyes and some had three, and some had only one set in the middle of the forehead. One there was, and the others called him Long Nose, who had a nose as long and as thin as a poker.

The trolls banged the door behind them, and then they gathered round the table where the feast was spread.

“What is this?” cried the biggest troll in a terrible voice (and Halvor’s heart trembled within him). “Some one has been here before us. The food has been tasted and ale has been spilled.”

At once Long Nose began snuffing about. “Whoever has been here is here still,” he cried. “Let us find him and tear

him to pieces.”

“Here is his pussy-cat, anyway,” cried the smallest troll of all, pointing to the white bear. “Oh, what a pretty cat it is! Pussy! Pussy! Pussy!” And the little troll put a piece of sausage on a fork and stuck it against the white bear’s nose.

At that the great white bear gave a roar and rose to its feet. It gave the troll a blow with its paw that sent him spinning across the room. He of the long nose had it almost broken off, and the big troll’s ears rang with the box he got. This way and that the trolls were knocked and beaten by the bear, until at last they tore the door open and fled away into the forest, howling.

When they had all gone Halvor crawled out and closed the door, and then he and the white bear sat down and feasted to their hearts’ content. After that the two of them lay down and slept quietly for the rest of the night.

In the morning the woodcutter and his family stole back to the house and peeped in at the window. What was their surprise to see Halvor and his bear sitting there and eating their breakfasts as though nothing in the world had happened to them.

“How is this?” cried the woodcutter. “Did the trolls not come?”

“Oh, yes, they came,” answered Halvor, “but we drove them away, and I do not think they will trouble you again.” He then told the woodcutter all that had happened in the night. “After the beating they received, they will be in no hurry to visit you again,” he said.

The woodcutter was filled with joy and gratitude when he heard this. He and his wife entreated Halvor to stay there in

the forest and make his home with them, but this he refused to do. He was on his way to Denmark to sell his bear to the King, and to Denmark he would go. So off he set, after saying good-bye, and the good wishes of the woodcutter and his wife went with him.

Now the very next year, on St John’s Eve, the woodcutter was out in the forest cutting wood, when a great ugly troll stuck his head out of a tree near by.

“Woodcutter! Woodcutter!” he cried.

“Well,” said the woodcutter, “what is it?”

“Tell me, have you that great white cat with you still?”

“Yes, I have; and, moreover, now she has five kittens, and each one of them is larger and stronger than she is.”

“Is that so?” cried the troll, in a great fright. “Then good-bye, woodcutter, for we will never come to your house again.”

Then he drew in his head and the tree closed together, and that was the last the woodcutter heard or saw of the trolls. After that he and his family lived undisturbed and unafraid.

As for Halvor, he had already reached Denmark, and the King had been so pleased with the bear that he paid a whole bag of money for it, just as Halvor had hoped, and with that bag of money Halvor set up in trade so successfully that he became one of the richest men in Denmark.

THE STORY OF THE THREE BILLY GOAT GRUFFS
A STORY FROM THE NORSE

THERE were once three Billy Goats who lived in a meadow at the foot of a mountain, and their last name was Gruff. There was the Big Billy Goat Gruff, and the Middle-sized Billy Goat Gruff, and the Little Billy Goat Gruff. They all three jumped about among the rocks in the meadow and ate what grass they could find, but it wasn't very much.

One day the Littlest Billy Goat Gruff looked up at the high mountain overhead, and he thought to himself, "It looks as though there were a great deal of fine grass up on the mountain. I believe I'll just run up there all by myself, without telling anyone, and eat so much grass and eat so much grass that I'll grow to be as big as anybody."

So off the Little Billy Goat Gruff started without telling his brothers a word about it. He ran along, tip-tap, tip-tap, tip-tap, until at last he came to a wide river, with a bridge over it.

Now the Little Billy Goat did not know it, but this bridge belonged to a great, terrible Troll, and the little goat had not gone more than half-way across when he heard the Troll shouting from under the bridge.

"Who's that going across my bridge?" shouted the Troll in his great loud voice.

"It's me, the Littlest Billy Goat Gruff!" answered the Little Billy Goat in his little bit of voice.

“Oh! it’s the Littlest Billy Goat Gruff, is it? Well, you won’t go much farther, for I’m the Troll that owns this bridge, and now I’m coming to eat you up.” And with that the Troll looked up over the edge of the bridge.

When the Little Billy Goat Gruff saw him, he was very much frightened. “Oh, dear, good Mr Troll, please don’t eat me up,” he cried. “I’m such a very little goat that I would scarcely be a mouthful for you. I have a brother who is a great deal bigger than I am; wait till he comes, for he’d make a much better meal for you than I would.”

“But if he’s much bigger than you are he may be tough.”

“Oh, no, he’s just as tender as I am.”

“And a great deal bigger?”

“Oh, yes, a great deal bigger.”

“Very well then, I’ll wait for him. Run along!”

So the little goat ran on, tip-tap! tip-tap! tip-tap! across the bridge, and on up the mountain to where he was safe. And glad enough he was to be out of that scrape, I can tell you.

Now it was not very long after this that the Middle-sized Billy Goat Gruff began to think he’d like to go up on the mountain too. He did not say anything about it to the Great Big Billy Goat Gruff, but off he set, all by himself—trap-trap! trap-trap! trap-trap! After a while he came to the bridge, where the Troll lived, and he stepped out upon it, trap-trap! trap-trap! trap-trap!

He’d barely reached the middle of it when the Troll began shouting at him in his great, terrible voice:

“Who’s that going across my bridge?”

“It’s me, the Middle-sized Billy Goat Gruff,” answered the Middle-sized Billy Goat in his middle-sized voice.

“Oh, it is, is it? Then you’re the very one I’ve been waiting for. I’m the Troll that owns this bridge, and now I’m coming to eat you up.”

At that the Middle-sized Billy Goat Gruff was in a great fright. “Oh, dear Mr Troll, good Mr Troll, please don’t eat me up! I have a brother that’s a great deal bigger than I am. Just wait till he comes along, for he’d make a much better meal for you than I would.”

“A great deal bigger?”

“Yes, a great deal bigger.”

“Very well then, run along and I’ll wait till he comes. Only the biggest goat there is is fit to make a meal for me.”

The Middle-sized Billy Goat was not slow to run along as the Troll bade him. He hurried across the river and up the mountain as fast as he could go, trappity-trap! trappity-trap! trappity-trap! And just weren’t he and his little brother glad to see each other again, and to be safely over the Troll’s bridge, and up where the good grass was!

And now it was the turn of the Big Billy Goat Gruff to begin to think he’d like to go up on the mountain too. “I believe that’s where the Little Billy Goat Gruff and the Middle-sized Billy Goat Gruff have gone,” said he to himself. “If I don’t look out they’ll be growing so fat up there that they’ll be as big as I am. I think I’d better go and eat the long green mountain grass too.” So the next morning off he set in the pleasant sunshine. Klumph-klumph! klumph-klumph! He was so big you could hear his hoofs pounding on the stones while he was still a mile away.

After a while he came to the bridge where the Troll lived, and out he stepped on it, klumph-klumph! klumph-klumph! and the bridge shook and bent under his weight as he walked. Then the Troll that lived under it was in a fearful rage. “Who’s that going across my bridge?” he bellowed, and his voice was so terrible that all the little fish in the river swam away and hid under the rocks at the sound of it.

But the Big Billy Goat was not one bit frightened.

“It’s me, the Biggest Billy Goat Gruff,” he answered, in a voice as big as the Troll’s own.

“Oh, it is, is it? Then just stop a bit—for you’re the one I’ve been waiting for. I’m the Troll that owns this bridge, and now I’m coming to eat you up!” and with that the great grey Troll poked his head up over the bridge, and his eyes looked like two great mill-wheels, and they were going round and round in his head with rage. But still the Big Billy Goat was not one bit frightened.

“So you’re a Troll, are you! And you own this bridge, do you? And now you’re going to eat me up? We’ll just see about that:

“I have a forehead as hard as stone,
And I’ll mash you all up, body and bone!”

When the Troll heard the Big Billy Goat talk to him that way he bellowed so that the Middle-sized Billy Goat and the Little Billy Goat heard him all the way up on the mountain where they were. He jumped up on the bridge and put down his big, bushy head and ran at the Billy Goat, and the Big Billy Goat put down his head and ran at the Troll, and they met in the middle of the bridge. But the Billy Goat’s head was harder than the Troll’s, so he knocked him down and thumped him about, and then he took him up on his horns

and threw him over the edge of the bridge into the river below, and the Troll sank like a piece of lead and never was seen or heard of again.

But the Big Billy Goat went on up the mountain; and you may believe that his two brothers were glad to see him again, and to hear that the great wicked Troll was gone from under the bridge.

And after that they all stayed up on the mountain together, and the smaller goats ate so much grass and grew so fat and big that after a while no one could have told one Billy Goat from the other.

THE STONES OF PLOUVINEC
A TALE FROM BRITTANY

IN the little village of Plouvinec there once lived a poor stone-cutter named Bernet.

Bernet was an honest and industrious young man, and yet he never seemed to succeed in the world. Work as he might, he was always poor. This was a great grief to him, for he was in love with the beautiful Madeleine Pornec, and she was the daughter of the richest man in Plouvinec.

Madeleine had many suitors, but she cared for none of them except Bernet. She would gladly have married him in spite of his poverty, but her father was covetous as well as rich. He had no wish for a poor son-in-law, and Madeleine was so beautiful he expected her to marry some rich merchant, or a well-to-do farmer at least. But if Madeleine could not have Bernet for a husband, she was determined that she would have no one.

There came a winter when Bernet found himself poorer than he had ever been before. Scarcely anyone seemed to have any need for a stone-cutter, and even for such work as he did get he was poorly paid. He learned to know what it meant to go without a meal and to be cold as well as hungry.

As Christmas drew near, the landlord of the inn at Plouvinec decided to give a feast for all the good folk of the village, and Bernet was invited along with all the rest.

He was glad enough to go to the feast, for he knew that Madeleine was to be there, and even if he did not have a

chance to talk to her, he could at least look at her, and that would be better than nothing.

The feast was a fine one. There was plenty to eat and drink, and all was of the best, and the more the guests feasted, the merrier they grew. If Bernet and Madeleine ate little and spoke less, no one noticed it. People were too busy filling their own stomachs and laughing at the jokes that were cracked. The fun was at its height when the door was pushed open, and a ragged, ill-looking beggar slipped into the room.

At the sight of him the laughter and merriment died away. This beggar was well known to all the people of the village, though none knew whence he came nor where he went when he was away on his wanderings. He was sly and crafty, and he was feared as well as disliked, for it was said that he had the evil eye. Whether he had or not, it was well known that no one had ever offended him without having some misfortune happen soon after.

“I heard there was a great feast here to-night,” said the beggar in a humble voice, “and that all the village had been bidden to it. Perhaps, when all have eaten, there may be some scraps that I might pick up.”

“Scraps there are in plenty,” answered the landlord, “but it is not scraps that I am offering to anyone to-night. Draw up a chair to the table, and eat and drink what you will. There is more than enough for all.” But the landlord looked none too well pleased as he spoke. It was a piece of ill-luck to have the beggar come to his house this night of all nights, to spoil the pleasure of the guests.

The beggar drew up to the table as the landlord bade him, but the fun and merriment were ended. Presently the

guests began to leave the table, and after thanking their host, they went away to their own homes.

When the beggar had eaten and drunk to his heart's content, he pushed back his chair from the table.

"I have eaten well," said he to the landlord. "Is there not now some corner where I can spend the night?"

"There is the stable," answered the landlord grudgingly. "Every room in the house is full, but if you choose to sleep there among the clean hay, I am not the one to say you nay."

Well, the beggar was well content with that. He went out to the stable, and there he snuggled down among the soft hay, and soon he was fast asleep. He had slept for some hours, and it was midnight, when he suddenly awoke with a startled feeling that he was not alone in the stable. In the darkness two strange voices were talking together.

"Well, brother, how goes it since last Christmas?" asked one voice.

"Poorly, brother, but poorly," answered the other. "Methinks the work has been heavier these last twelve months than ever before."

The beggar, listening as he lay in the hay, wondered who could be talking there at this hour of the night. Then he discovered that the voices came from the stalls near by; the ox and the donkey were talking together.

The beggar was so surprised that he almost exclaimed aloud, but he restrained himself. He remembered a story he had often heard, but had never before believed, that on every Christmas night it is given to the dumb beasts in the stalls to talk in human tones for a short time. It was said that those who had been lucky enough to hear them at such

times had sometimes learned strange secrets from their talk. Now the beggar lay listening with all his ears, and scarcely daring to breathe lest he should disturb them.

“It has been a hard year for me too,” said the ox, answering what the donkey had just said. “I would our master had some of the treasure that lies hidden under the stones of Plouvinec. Then he could buy more oxen and more donkeys, and the work would be easier for us.”

“The treasure! What treasure is that?” asked the donkey.

The ox seemed very much surprised. “Have you never heard? I thought every one knew of the hidden treasure under the stones.”

“Tell me about it,” said the donkey, “for I dearly love a tale.”

The ox was not loath to do this. At once it began:

“You know the barren heath just outside of Plouvinec, and the great stones that lie there, each so large that it would take more than a team of oxen to drag it from its place?”

Yes, the donkey knew that heath, and the stones too. He had often passed by them on his journeys to the neighbouring town.

“It is said that under those stones lies hidden an enormous treasure of gold,” said the ox. “That is the story; it is well known. But none has seen that treasure; jealously the stones guard it. Once in every hundred years, however, the stones go down to the river to drink. They are only away for a few minutes; then they come rolling back in mad haste to cover their gold again. But if anyone could be there on the heath for those few minutes, it is a wonderful sight that he would see while the stones are away. It is now a hundred years, all but a week, since the stones went down to drink.”

“Then a week from to-night the treasure will be uncovered again?” asked the donkey.

“Yes, exactly a week from now, at midnight.”

“Ah, if only our master knew this,” and the donkey sighed heavily. “If only we could tell him! Then he might go to the heath and not only see the treasure, but gather a sack full of it for himself.”

“Yes, but even if he did, he would never return with it alive. As I told you, the stones are very jealous of their treasure, and are away for only a few minutes. By the time he had gathered up the gold and was ready to escape, the stones would return and would crush him to powder.”

The beggar, who had become very much excited at the story, felt a cold shiver creep over him at these words.

“No one could ever bring away any of it then?” asked the donkey.

“I did not say that. The stones are enchanted. If anyone could find a five-leaved clover, and carry it with him to the heath, the stones could not harm him, for the five-leaved clover is a magic plant that has power over all enchanted things, and those stones are enchanted.”

“Then all he would need would be to have a five-leaved clover.”

“If he carried that with him, the stones could not harm him. He might escape safely with the treasure, but it would do him little good. With the first rays of the sun the treasure would crumble away unless the life of a human being had been sacrificed to the stones there on the heath before sunrise.”

“And who would sacrifice a human life for a treasure!” cried the donkey. “Not our master, I am sure.”

The ox made no answer, and now the donkey too was silent. The hour had passed in which they could speak in human voices. For another year they would again be only dumb brutes.

As for the beggar, he lay among the hay, shaking all over with excitement. Visions of untold wealth shone before his eyes. The treasure of Plouvinec! Why, if he could only get it, he would be the richest man in the village. In the village? No, in the country—in the whole world! Only to see it and handle it for a few hours would be something. But before even that were possible and safe it would be necessary to find a five-leaved clover.

With the earliest peep of dawn the beggar rolled from the hay, and, wrapping his rags about him, stole out of the stable and away into the country. There he began looking about for bunches of clover. These were not hard to find; they were everywhere, though the most of them were withered now. He found and examined clump after clump. Here and there he found a stem that bore four leaves, but none had five. Night came on, and the darkness made him give up the search; but the next day he began anew. Again he was unsuccessful. So day after day passed by, and still he had not found the thing he sought so eagerly.

The beggar was in a fever of rage and disappointment. Six days slipped by. By the time the seventh dawned he was so discouraged that he hunted for only a few hours. Then, though it was still daylight, he determined to give up the search. With drooping head he turned back toward the village. As he was passing a heap of rocks he noticed a clump of clover growing in a crevice. Idly, and with no hope of success, he stooped and began to examine it leaf by leaf.

Suddenly he gave a cry of joy. His legs trembled under him so that he was obliged to sink to his knees. The last stem of all bore five leaves. He had found his five-leaved clover!

With the magic plant safely hidden away in his bosom the beggar hurried back toward the village. He would rest in the inn until night. Then he would go to the heath, and if the story the ox had told were true, he would see a sight such as no one living had ever seen before.

His way led him past the heath. Dusk was falling as he approached it. Suddenly the beggar paused and listened. From among the stones sounded a strange tap-tapping. Cautiously he drew nearer, peering about among the stones. Then he saw what seemed to him a curious sight for such a place and such a time. Before the largest stone of all stood Bernet, busily at work with hammer and chisel. He was cutting a cross upon the face of the rock.

The beggar drew near to him so quietly that Bernet did not notice him. He started as a voice suddenly spoke close to his ear.

“That is a strange thing for you to be doing,” said the beggar. “Why should you waste your time in cutting a cross in such a lonely place as this?”

“The sign of the cross never comes amiss, wherever it may be,” answered Bernet. “And as for wasting my time, no one seems to have any use for it at present. It is better for me to spend it in this way than to idle it away over nothing.”

Suddenly a strange idea flashed into the beggar’s mind—a thought so strange and terrible that it made him turn pale. He drew nearer to the stone-cutter and laid his hand upon his arm.

“Listen, Bernet,” said he; “you are a clever workman and an honest one as well, and yet all your work scarcely brings you in enough to live on. Suppose I were to tell you that in one night you might become rich—richer than the richest man in the village—so that there would be no desire that you could not satisfy; what would you think of that?”

“I would think nothing of it, for I would know it was not true,” answered Bernet carelessly.

“But it *is* true; it is *true*, I tell you,” cried the beggar. “Listen, and I will tell you.”

He drew still nearer to Bernet, so that his mouth almost touched the stone-cutter’s ear, and in a whisper he repeated to him the story he had heard the ox telling the donkey—the story of the treasure that was buried under the stones of Plouvinec. But it was only a part of the story that he told after all, for he did not tell Bernet that anyone who was rash enough to seek the treasure would be crushed by the stones unless he carried a five-leaved clover; nor did he tell him that if the treasure were carried away from the heath it would turn to ashes unless a human life had been sacrificed to the stones. As Bernet listened to the story he became very grave. His eyes shone through the fading light as he stared at the beggar’s face.

“Why do you tell me this?” he asked. “And why are you willing to share the treasure that might be all your own? If you make me rich, what do you expect me to do for you in return?”

“Do you not see?” answered the beggar. “You are much stronger than I. I, as you know, am a weak man and slow of movement. While the stones are away we two together could gather more than twice as much as I could gather myself. In return for telling you this secret, all I ask is that if

we go there and gather all we can, and bring it away with us, you will make an even division with me—that you will give me half of all we get."

"That seems only just," said Bernet slowly. "It would be strange if this story of the hidden treasure proved to be true. At any rate, I will come with you to the heath to-night. We will bring with us some large bags, and if we manage to secure even a small part of the gold you talk of I shall never cease to be grateful to you."

The beggar could not answer. His teeth were chattering, half with fear and half with excitement. The honest stone-cutter little guessed that the beggar was planning to sacrifice him to the stones in order that he himself might become a rich man.

It was well on toward midnight when Bernet and the beggar returned to the heath with the bags. The moon shone clear and bright, and by its light they could see the stones towering up above them, solid and motionless. It seemed impossible to believe that they had ever stirred from their places, or ever would again. In the moonlight Bernet could clearly see the cross that he had carved upon the largest stone.

He and the beggar lay hidden behind a clump of bushes. All was still except for the faint sound of the river some short distance away. Suddenly a breath seemed to pass over the heath. Far off, in the village of Plouvinec, sounded the first stroke of twelve.

At that stroke the two men saw a strange and wonderful thing happen. The motionless stones rocked and stirred in their places. With a rending sound they tore themselves from the places where they had stood for so long. Then down the slope toward the river they rolled, bounding faster

and faster, while there on the heath an immense treasure glittered in the moonlight.

“Quick! quick!” cried the beggar in a shrill voice. “They will return! We have not a moment to waste.”

Greedily he threw himself upon the treasure. Gathering it up by handfuls he thrust it hurriedly into a sack. Bernet was not slow to follow his example. They worked with such frenzy that soon the two largest sacks were almost full. In their haste everything but the gold was forgotten.

Some sound, a rumbling and crashing, made Bernet look up. At once he sprang to his feet with a cry of fear.

“Look! look!” he cried. “The stones are returning. They are almost on us. We shall be crushed.”

“You, perhaps; but not I,” answered the beggar. “You should have provided yourself with a five-leaved clover. It is a magic herb, and the stones have no power to touch him who holds it.”

Even as the beggar spoke the stones were almost upon them. Trembling, but secure, he held up the five-leaved clover before them. As he did so the ranks of stones divided, passing around him a rank on either side; then, closing together, they rolled on toward Bernet.

The poor stone-cutter felt that he was lost. He tried to murmur a prayer, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth with fear.

Suddenly the largest stone of all, the one upon which he had cut the cross, separated itself from the others. Rolling in front of them, it placed itself before him as a shield. Grey and immovable it towered above him. A moment the others paused as if irresolute, while Bernet cowered close against

the protecting stone. Then they rolled by without touching him and settled sullenly into their places.

The beggar was already gathering up the sacks. He believed himself safe, but he wished to leave the heath as quickly as possible. He glanced fearfully over his shoulder. Then he gave a shriek, and, turning, he held up the five-leaved clover. The largest stone was rolling toward him. It was almost upon him.

But the magic herb had no power over a stone marked with a cross. On it rolled, over the miserable man, and into the place where it must rest again for still another hundred years.

It was morning, and the sun was high in the heavens when Bernet staggered into the inn at Plouvinec. A heavy, bulging sack was thrown over one shoulder; a second sack he dragged behind him. They were full of gold—the treasure from under the stones of Plouvinec.

From that time Bernet was the richest man in Plouvinec. Madeleine’s father was glad enough to call him son-in-law and to welcome him into his family. He and Madeleine were married, and lived in the greatest comfort and happiness all their days. But for as long as he lived Bernet could never be induced to go near the heath nor to look upon the stones that had so nearly caused his death.

THE KING OF THE BUFFALOES
AN AMERICAN INDIAN TALE

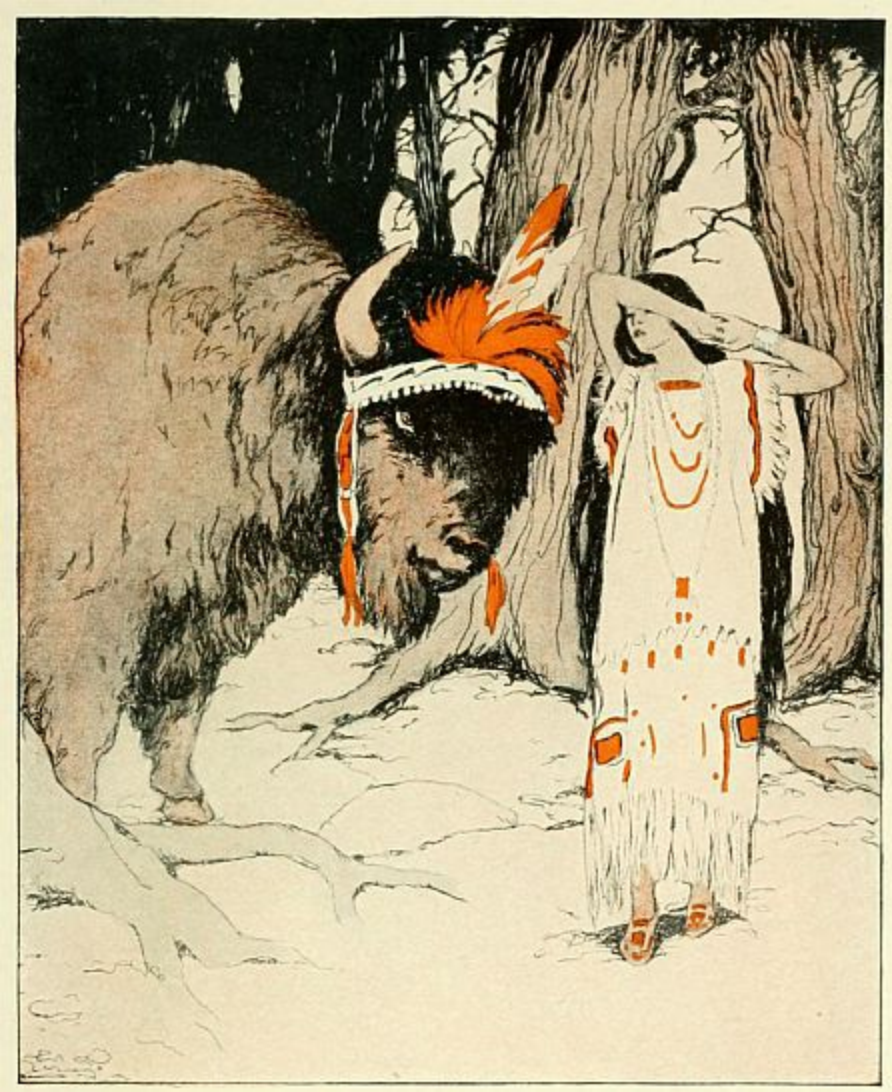
A LAME Indian and his daughter once lived on the edge of a lonely forest, apart from any tribe or village. The Indian, whose name was Agodaguada, was a great hunter and fisher in spite of his lameness. Every day he went off into the forest, and while he was away his daughter, Iola, took care of the lodge and did the cooking.

They would have been very contented there if it had not been for a herd of buffaloes that lived on the other side of the forest. The king of this herd was a magician. He had seen Iola once as she was gathering wood in the forest, and had fallen in love with her, for she was very beautiful. Agodaguada often came upon him hiding in the bushes near the hut, or heard him bellowing down at a stream near by. Agodaguada cautioned his daughter never to leave the lodge while he was away, for he feared the buffalo might seize her and carry her off.

He himself was tormented by the ungainly beasts. They muddied the streams where he fished and drove away the game by their bellowing. Gradually he was obliged to go farther and farther from the lodge to find deer or fish. Often as he sat quietly watching for game a hoarse voice would begin to sing at him from behind the bushes or rocks:

“You lame mannikin,
Don’t you think it a sin
To pen up your daughter?
—Say, Agodaguada—
To shut up your daughter,
Don’t you think it a sin?”

Sometimes he aimed an arrow or a stone at the place from which the voice sounded, and then a great dark body would go lumbering and crashing away through the forest, and Agodaguada would know that it was one of the buffaloes that had followed him.



HE SPOKE TO HER IN THE SOFTEST VOICE HE COULD MANAGE

One day, when Agodaguada was far from home, his daughter climbed up on top of the lodge, and sat there to comb her hair, for it was very long. Every now and then she stopped to listen and look about her, to make sure there was no danger.

For a long time all was silent except for the singing of the birds. She finished combing her hair, and was just about to go down into the lodge when suddenly a great noise arose, a crashing of underbrush and thundering of hoofs. The herd of buffaloes, with the king at their head, was charging down upon the hut. Iola had no time to move before she felt the logs breaking away beneath her. They were scattered this way and that like straws. In another moment Iola found herself seated on the back of the king of buffaloes. She was being carried swiftly away through the forest, while the lodge lay in ruins behind them.

On and on went the buffalo, until at last, in the deepest and darkest part of the forest, he paused and allowed Iola to slip from his back.

This was the spot where he and his followers had their camp, and it was here he intended to keep Iola until she consented to become his wife. He spoke to her in the softest voice he could manage, telling her that this was to be her home, but Iola would not look at him, nor answer. She only turned away, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly.

But the buffalo king was not discouraged. He had the power to take the shape of a man when he chose, and it was in this shape that he meant to woo her and win her to be his wife. And this he had no doubt of being able to do before long.

Meanwhile Agodaguada had been trying to fish, but he found his enemies more tormenting than ever. Their hoarse voices sang after him wherever he went:

“You lame mannikin,
Don’t you think it a sin
To shut up your daughter?
—Say, Agodaguada—
To shut up your daughter?
Do you think she is in?
Are you sure she is in?”

As Agodaguada listened, he became thoughtful. He rolled up his line and started back through the forest toward the lodge. As he came near his home he quickened his steps. He noticed that the small trees and underbrush had been trampled down as though a great herd had passed that way. Presently he began to run, and he was still running when he broke into the open where his lodge had stood. But the lodge was there no longer. Instead, he saw only the ruins that the buffaloes had left behind them. Iola was gone.

Agodaguada did not at once follow the enemy, however. He ran to the ruins and began tearing the logs aside and burrowing under them. Presently he gave a cry of joy and drew out from beneath them an old worn pouch of deerskin. From this pouch he took a pair of moccasins and put them on his feet. They were magic moccasins and were Agodaguada’s greatest treasure. And now he was ready to follow Iola and save her from the buffaloes.

It was not hard to trace the way they had gone. The herd had left a broad track of broken trees and branches through the dark forest.

The magic moccasins leaped a hundred yards at each step. They carried Agodaguada along faster than a bird can fly. The buffaloes had gone at full speed, and had had the start of him by several hours, but so swiftly he went that by twilight he found himself close to their camp.

Here he slipped the moccasins from his feet. As silently as a snake he crawled past the other wigwams toward the lodge of the king.

As he came near it he heard the sound of a flute, and soon he was close enough to look inside and see who was playing. It was the king himself. He had taken his human form and was playing upon his flute a love song to Iola, but as a man he was even more hideous than he was as a buffalo.

Iola sat with her back turned toward him. She looked very sad. Her head was sunk on her breast, and she took no notice of his love song or of his languishing glances.

Suddenly Iola started. From the thicket outside had sounded the whistle of a partridge. It was the whistle her father always gave as he came near home after a day of hunting. The buffalo, playing on his flute, had heard nothing.

Iola sat still a few moments longer, and then she rose. “I will go down to the spring,” she said, “and fetch the water for the cooking.”

When the buffalo heard her say this he was filled with joy. He took it as a sign that she was now ready to live with him in his wigwam and be his wife. Believing this, he was quite willing to allow her to go down to the spring by herself.

Iola stepped outside, and as soon as her father saw her alone there he rose up from among the bushes. His magic moccasins were once more upon his feet. He motioned her to follow. “Quick!” he whispered. As soon as they were clear of the bushes Agodaguada lifted his daughter in his arms and leaped away with her through the forest.

In the lodge the buffalo waited for Iola a long time. Sometimes he listened for her footsteps, and sometimes he

played upon his flute. At last he began to grow suspicious and went out to look for her. Everywhere he looked and hunted, and at last he came to where her father had hidden in the bushes, and there he saw the marks Agodaguada had made as he had leaped away with Iola in his arms.

Then the buffalo knew he had been tricked. With a bellow of rage he called his herd together and started after Iola and her father.

Agodaguada had already gone some distance, but his daughter weighed him down, and the moccasins could not move as swiftly as when they had only himself to carry. He had only just reached the edge of the forest when he heard the buffaloes behind him. They had caught sight of him. The king gave a bellow of triumph. But now Agodaguada was out of the forest and leaping swiftly over an open plain. The whole herd were thundering after him at full speed, but just as the leader reached him Agodaguada leaped aside. Before the buffaloes could stop themselves they had charged on past him.

They turned and again rushed at him. But suddenly a flight of arrows darkened the air. Several buffaloes fell dead upon the plain, and the king was wounded. These arrows were shot by a band of hunters who had come to this plain in search of game, and had hidden themselves in a thicket. From there they had seen Agodaguada race with the buffaloes.

Though the king was wounded, he would still have pursued Agodaguada, but his followers had turned tail and were fleeing back into the forest. He stood pawing the earth and frothing until another arrow struck him, and then, bellowing with rage, he turned and followed his herd.

He did not stop at the camp, however. He was so full of anger and chagrin that he went on and on until he reached the wide plains of the West, where he had never been seen or heard of before.

But Agodaguada joined the band of hunters who had saved him, and Iola was married to their young chief and lived happily with him in his lodge for ever after.

THE JACKAL AND THE ALLIGATOR
A HINDU FAIRY TALE

THERE was once a little jackal who lived near the banks of a great river. Every day he went down to the water to catch the little crabs that were there.

Now in that same river there lived a cruel alligator. He saw the little jackal come down to the river every day, and he thought to himself, “What a nice, tender morsel this little jackal would be if I could only catch him.” So one day the alligator hid himself in the mud of the river so that just the tip of his nose stuck out, and it looked almost exactly like the back of a crab.

Very soon the little jackal came running along the bank of the river, looking for crabs. When he saw the end of the alligator’s nose, he thought, “That looks like the back of a fine big crab,” and he put in his paw to scoop it out of the mud.

As soon as he did that, snap!—the teeth of the alligator came together, and there he had the jackal by the paw.

The little jackal was terribly frightened, for he was sure the alligator would pull him into the river and eat him. However, he began to laugh, though the alligator’s teeth hurt him terribly. “Oh, you stupid old alligator,” he cried. “You thought you would catch my paw, and you didn’t catch anything but a bulrush root that I stuck down there in the water to tickle your nose. Ah, silly, silly alligator!”

When the alligator heard that, he was much disappointed. “I certainly thought I had caught that little jackal,” he said to

himself, “and it seems I have caught nothing but a bulrush root. There is no use in holding on to that.” So he opened his mouth.

Then the little jackal snatched his paw out. “Oh, stupid one!” he cried. “You did have me, and you let me go again. Oh, ring-a-ting! ring-a-ting! You’ll never catch me again.” So saying, away he ran up into the jungle.

The alligator was furiously angry. “Well, he tricked me that time,” he said, “but the next time I catch him he will not get away so easily.” So he hid himself again in the mud and waited and watched. But the little jackal came no more to the river. He was afraid. He stayed up in the country and lived on figs that he gathered under a wild fig-tree.

But the alligator was determined to have the jackal, so when he found the jackal came no more to the river he crawled out one morning very early, and dragged himself to the wild fig-tree and gathered together a great heap of figs, and hid himself under them.

In a little while the jackal came running toward the fig-tree, licking his lips, for he was very hungry. When he saw the great heap of figs he was delighted. “How nice!” he said. “Now I will not have the trouble of gathering the figs together; they are there all ready for me.”

He went nearer and nearer to the heap of figs, and then he stopped. “It really looks almost as though something might be hidden under those figs,” he thought. Then he cried out loud, “When I come to the fig-tree all the figs that are any good roll about in the wind, but those figs lie so still that I do not think they can be fit to eat. I will have to go to some other place if I want to get good figs!”

When the alligator heard this, he thought, “This little jackal is very particular. I will just shake myself and make

the figs roll about a little, or he will not come near enough for me to catch him.” So he shook himself, and away the figs rolled this way and that.

“Oh, you stupid old alligator!” cried the jackal. “If you had stayed quite still, you might have caught me. Ring-a-ting, ring-a-ting! Thank you for shaking yourself and letting me know you were there!” And then he ran away as fast as his legs would carry him.

The alligator gnashed his teeth with rage. “Never mind! I will have this little jackal yet,” he cried, and he hid himself in the tall grass beside the path that led to the fig-tree. He waited there for several days, but he saw nothing of the jackal. The jackal was afraid to come to the fig-tree any more. He stayed in the jungle and fed on such roots and berries as he could find there, but as he could find but little, he grew very thin and miserable.

Then one morning the alligator made his way to the jackal’s house while the jackal was away. He squeezed himself in through the doorway (for it was very narrow), and hid under the heap of dead leaves that was the jackal’s bed.

Toward evening the little jackal came running home, and he was very hungry, for he had found little to eat all day, and he was very tired too. He was just about to go in and throw himself down on his bed when he noticed that the sides of the doorway were scraped and broken as though some big animal had forced its way in.

The little jackal was terribly frightened. “Is it possible,” he thought, “that the wicked alligator has come to hunt for me here in my own house and is waiting inside to catch me?” Then he cried out aloud, “What is the matter, little house? Every day when I come home you say ‘All is well, little

jackal,’ but to-day you say nothing, and I am afraid to come in.”

This was not true; the little house did not really speak to him, but he wanted to find out whether the alligator was there. But the stupid alligator believed him. He thought to himself, “I will have to speak in place of the little house, or this tiresome little jackal will not come in.” He made his voice as small and soft as he could, and said, “All is well, little jackal.”

When the jackal heard the alligator speak, and knew he was really inside the house, he was more frightened than ever. However, he answered quite cheerfully, “Very well, little house! I will come in as soon as I have been to the brook for a drink of water.”

When the alligator heard that he was filled with joy, but he lay quite still under the leaves without moving. “Now I will have that little jackal at last,” he thought. “This time he shall not escape me.”

But while he waited the little jackal gathered together a great heap of dead-wood and underbrush and piled it up against the door of the house. When it was big enough he set fire to it, and it blazed up with a great noise and burned the wicked alligator to death, and that was the end of him. But the little jackal danced about and sang:

“The alligator’s dead, and I am so glad!
The alligator’s dead, and I am so glad!
Ring-a-ting, ring-a-ting! Ring-a-ting, ring-a-ting!
The alligator’s dead, and I am so glad!”

And always after that the little jackal could go wherever he pleased in safety, and he ate so many ripe figs and so many crabs that he grew as fat as fat could be.

THE BABA YAGA
A RUSSIAN FAIRY TALE

THERE were once a man and wife who had no child, though they wished for one above all things.

One day, when the husband was away, the wife laid a big stick of wood in the cradle and began to rock it and sing to it. Presently she looked and saw that the stick had arms and legs. Filled with joy, she began to rock and sing to it again; she kept it up for a long time, and when she looked again, there, instead of the stick of wood, was a fine little boy in the cradle.

The woman took the child up and nursed him, and after that he was to her as her own son. She named him Peter, and made a little suit of clothes and a cloth cap for him to wear.

One day Peter put on his little coat and went out in a boat to fish on the river.

At noon his mother went down to the bank of the stream and called to him, “Peter, Peter, bring your boat to shore, for I have brought a little cake for you to eat.”

Then Peter said to his boat:

“Little boat, little boat, float a little nearer.
Little boat, little boat, float a little nearer.”

The boat floated up to the shore; Peter took the cake and went back to his fishing again.

Now it so happened that a Baba Yaga, a terrible witch, was hiding in the bushes near-by. She heard all that passed between the woman and the child. So after the woman had gone home, the Baba Yaga waited for a while, and then she went down to the edge of the river and hid herself there, and called out:

“Peter, Peter, bring your boat to the shore, for I have brought another little cake for you.”

But when Peter heard her voice, which was very coarse and loud, he knew it must be a Baba Yaga calling him, so he said:

“Little boat, little boat, float a little farther.
Little boat, little boat, float a little farther.”

Then the boat floated away still farther out of the Baba Yaga’s reach.

The old witch soon guessed what was the matter, and she rushed off to a blacksmith, who lived over beyond the forest.

“Blacksmith, blacksmith, forge me a little fine voice as quickly as you can,” she cried, “or I will put you in my mortar and grind you to pieces with my pestle.”

The blacksmith was frightened. He made her a little fine voice as quickly as he could, and the Baba Yaga took it and hastened back to the river.

There she hid herself close to the shore and called in her little new voice, “Peter, Peter, bring your boat to the shore, for I have brought another little cake for you to eat.”

When Peter heard the Baba Yaga calling him in her fine, small voice, he thought it was his mother, so he said to his

boat:

“Little boat, little boat, float a little nearer.
Little boat, little boat, float a little nearer.”

Then the little boat came to the land. Peter looked all about, but saw no one. He wondered where his mother had gone, and stepped out of his boat to look for her.

Immediately the Baba Yaga seized him. Like a whirlwind she rushed away with him through the forest and never stopped till she reached her own house. There she shut him up in a cage behind the house to keep him until he grew fat.

After she had shut him up, she went back into the house, and her little cat was there. “Mistress,” said the cat, “I have cooked the dinner for you, and I am very hungry. Will you not give me something to eat?”

“All that I leave, that you can have,” answered the Baba Yaga. She sat down at the table and ate up everything but one small bone. That was all the cat had.

Meanwhile at home the mother waited and waited for Peter to come back from the river with his fish. Then at last she went down to look for him. There was his boat drawn up on the shore empty, and all round it were marks of the Baba Yaga’s feet, and the trees and bushes were broken where she had rushed away through the forest. Then the mother knew that a witch had carried off the little boy.

She went back home, weeping and wailing.

Now the woman had a very faithful servant, and when this girl heard her mistress wailing, she asked her what the matter was.

The woman told her all that she had seen down at the river, and how she was sure a Baba Yaga had flown away with Peter.

“Mistress,” said the girl, “there is no reason for you to despair. Just give me a little wheaten cake to keep the life in me, and I will set out and find Peter, even though I have to travel to the end of the world.”

Then the woman was comforted. She gave the servant a cake, and the girl set out in search of Peter.

She went on and on, and after a while she came to the Baba Yaga’s house. It stood on fowls’ legs, and turned whichever way the wind blew. The girl knocked at the door, and the Baba Yaga opened it.

“What do you want here?” she asked. “Are you seeking work or shunning work?”

“I am seeking work,” answered the girl. “Can you give me anything to do?”

The witch scowled at her terribly. “You may come in,” she said, “and set my house in order, but do not go peeping and prying about, or it will be the worse for you.”

The girl went in and began to set the house in order, while the Baba Yaga flew away into the forest, riding in a mortar, urging it along with a pestle, and sweeping away the traces with a broom.

After the witch had gone, the little cat said to the girl, “Give me, I beg of you, a little food, for I am starving with hunger.”

“Here is a little cake; it is all I have, but I will give it to you in Heaven’s name.”

The little cat took the cake and ate it all up, every crumb.

“Now listen,” said the cat. “I know why you are here, and that you are searching for the little boy named Peter. He is in a cage behind the house, but you can do nothing to help him now. Wait until after dinner, when the Baba Yaga goes to sleep. Then rub her eyes with pitch so that she cannot get them open, and you may escape with the child through the forest.”

The girl thanked the little cat and promised to do in all things as it bade her.

When the Baba Yaga came home, “Well, have you been peeping and prying?” she asked.

“That I have not,” answered the girl.

The Baba Yaga sat down, ate everything there was on the table, bones and all. Then she lay down and went to sleep. She snored terribly.

The girl took some pitch and smeared the witch’s eyelids with it. Then she went out to where Peter was and let him out of the cage, and they ran away through the forest together.

The Baba Yaga slept for a long time. At last she yawned and woke, but she could not get her eyes open. They were stuck tight with pitch. She was in a terrible rage; she stamped about and roared terribly. “I know who has done this,” she cried, “and as soon as I get my eyes open, I will go after her and tear her to pieces.” Then she called to the cat to come and scratch her eyes open with its sharp little claws.

“That I will not,” answered the cat. “As long as I have been with you, you have given me nothing but hard words and bones to gnaw, but she stroked my fur, and gave me a

cake to eat. Scratch your own eyes open, for you shall have no help from me.” And then the little cat ran away into the forest.

But the faithful servant and Peter journeyed safely on through the forest, and you may guess whether or not the mother was glad to have her little Peter safe home again.

As to the old Baba Yaga, she may be shouting and stamping and rubbing the pitch from her eyes yet, for all I know.

TAMLANE
A STORY FROM AN OLD SCOTCH BALLAD

FAIR Janet was the daughter of the Earl of March, and she was so beautiful that many knights and noble gentlemen had asked her to marry them, but she would say yes to none of them.

One day she sat at her window sewing a seam, and she heard the sound of a horn down in the forest. It blew so sweet and it blew so clear that she laid down her seam to listen, and it seemed to her that it called “Janet, fair Janet, come hither!”

Fair Janet dropped her sewing and down to the wood she ran. She looked about her, and there stood a handsome knight. From head to foot he was dressed in green, and in his hand he held a silver horn, and when he saw her he raised it to his lips and blew again so soft and clear that Janet had never heard anything like it.

“Now tell me,” said she, “is that a fairy horn that it blows so sweet a note?”

“It is indeed a fairy horn,” answered the stranger, “and it was in Fairyland that I learned to wind it. In many a forest have I blown it, north and south, and east and west, and you are the first to hear and answer it.”

Then fair Janet was afraid, for she thought the stranger must be a fairy knight, and she did not know what charm he might cast about her.

The knight saw she was frightened, so he said, “From Fairyland I brought it, yet I am of human flesh and blood like you. I am the son of the Earl of Murray, and once my name was John, though in Fairyland they call me Tamlane. When I was a child, the fairies stole me, and they have kept me with them ever since. Bright and fair it is in Fairyland, and I am the Queen’s favoured knight, but my heart wearies to be back in my own country and living with my own kind once more.”

“And will not the fairies let you go?” asked fair Janet, and now she was not afraid.

“That they will not of their own wills, and only a lady brave and true can set me free. You yourself are that lady, fair Janet, for you alone have heard and answered my horn.”

Then Janet promised she would do whatever Tamlane bade her do, if by so doing she might bring him back from Fairyland, for he was very good to look upon. She let him put a ring upon her finger, and they kissed each other as a sign that they were betrothed.

Then Tamlane told her what she must do. On every Hallowe’en at midnight the fairies ride abroad, and on that night she must go to Milescross and wait for them to pass. At midnight they would come.

First would ride the Fairy Queen, her horse hung round with bells. After her would come all her ladies and esquires, and then her band of knights, and it was among these that Tamlane would ride.

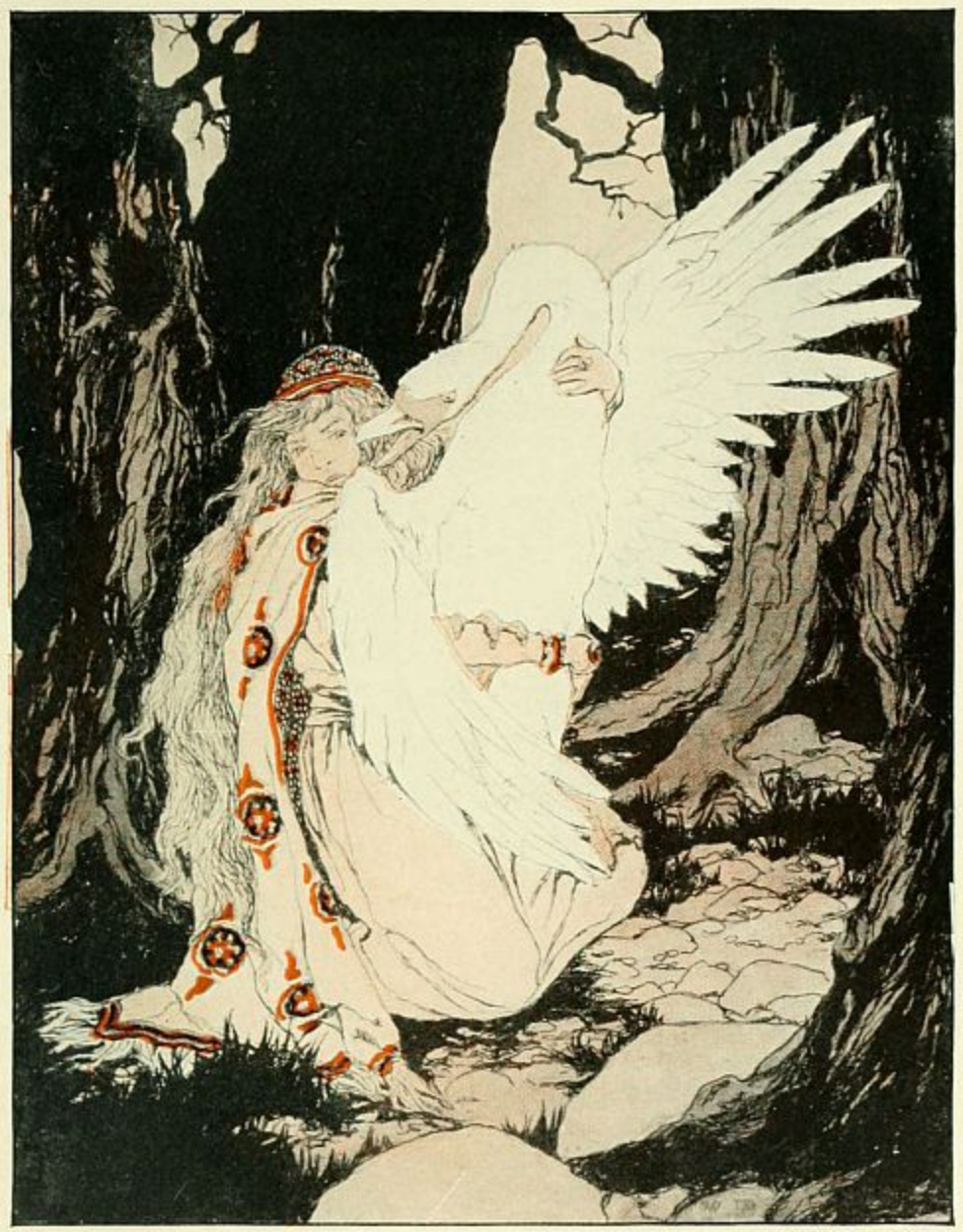
“You’ll know me from among them all,” said he, “by the snow-white horse I ride. Moreover, I’ll wear a glove on my right hand, but my left hand will hang bare. Then is the time for you, Janet. Spring up and pull me from my horse and hold me tight. There will be a loud cry raised, and they’ll

change me into many shapes in your arms, but hold me tight, whatever I seem to be. Always it will be I, and I will not harm you. Do this, and when I take my own shape again I will be free of the fairies for ever.”

Janet promised to do all that he told her to, though she was terrified at the thought of what might happen, and then they kissed each other again and parted.

Now three nights after it was Hallowe’en, and Janet went out to Milescross, and hid herself there and waited.

When midnight came there was a sound of bells, and a white light, and the fairies came riding by. First came the Queen, and she was very beautiful, with a circlet of stars about her head. Then came her ladies and squires, talking and laughing together; and next a troop of knights all in green, and each with a silver horn. Some rode on black horses, and some on brown, but one knight there was who rode a milk-white steed. His right hand was gloved, but his left hand hung down bare at his side. He rode on and never turned his head, but when Janet saw him she knew him for her true love, Tamlane, and she sprang forward and caught him by the mantle and pulled him down from off his horse and gripped him tight. Then from all the fairy train there arose a cry, “Tamlane’s awa’!” “Tamlane’s awa’!”



THEN IT WAS A SWAN THAT BEAT ITS WINGS IN HER FACE

Suddenly it was no knight that Janet held in her arms, but a great grey wolf. It struggled and snapped, and its breath was hot in her face. Almost it broke from her, but she remembered Tamlane’s words and held it tight. And then it was not a wolf she held, but a bale of burning straw. The flames roared in her ears, but she clasped it close, and it did not scorch her. Then it was a great serpent that wrapped itself about her, and tried to slip from her arms, but she held

it tight and did not let it go. Then it was a swan that beat its wings in her face, but she shut her eyes and held it. Then the wings were still, and she opened her eyes, and saw it was her own true love, Tamlane, that she clasped in her arms.

The Fairy Queen turned herself about, and she cried, “Tamlane, Tamlane, if I had known yesterday what I know to-day, I would have taken out your two blue eyes and given you eyes of stone; had I known yesterday what I know to-day, I would have taken the heart of flesh out of your bosom and put in a heart of clay; had I but known yesterday what I know now, never should you have ridden abroad with me this night!”

Then suddenly the fairies were gone, and Tamlane and Janet stood there alone. He took her by the hand, and they went back to her father’s castle together. There they were married with great joy and feasting, and they lived together happily all the rest of their lives, a faithful and loving man and wife.

THE FARMER AND THE PIXY
AN ENGLISH FAIRY TALE

FARMER BOGGINS lived on a lonely farm, and there were a great many pixies and other fairies all around.

One morning in threshing-time Farmer Boggins went out to the barn before anyone else, and what was his surprise to find that a great heap of grain had been threshed out in the night. He wondered who had done it. When his labourers came to work he questioned them, but none of them knew anything about it.

The next night the same thing happened; no one went near the barn, but in the morning there was a heap of clean grain on the floor.

The third night the farmer made up his mind to find out who it was that was helping him, so he hid himself behind some hay, and lay there watching. The moon shone in and lighted all the floor, but for a long time the farmer heard and saw nothing.

Then suddenly he heard a sound of threshing, and there was a pixy beating out the grain with a flail. The little man was not a foot high. He was as brown as a nut and had scarce a rag of clothes upon him.

He worked so hard that the sweat poured down his forehead, and now and then he stopped to wipe it away. Then he would cry out proudly, “How I sweat! How I sweat!”

The farmer was filled with admiration, and the third time the little man cried “How I sweat!” the farmer could hold his tongue no longer, but answered him, “That you do!”

No sooner had he spoken, however, than the pixy was gone.

The farmer waited for a while, but the little man did not return. At last Farmer Boggins went back to the house and told his good wife all that had happened.

“You stupid!” she cried, when he had made an end of the story. “You should never have spoken to him. The small folk cannot bear to be spoken to!”

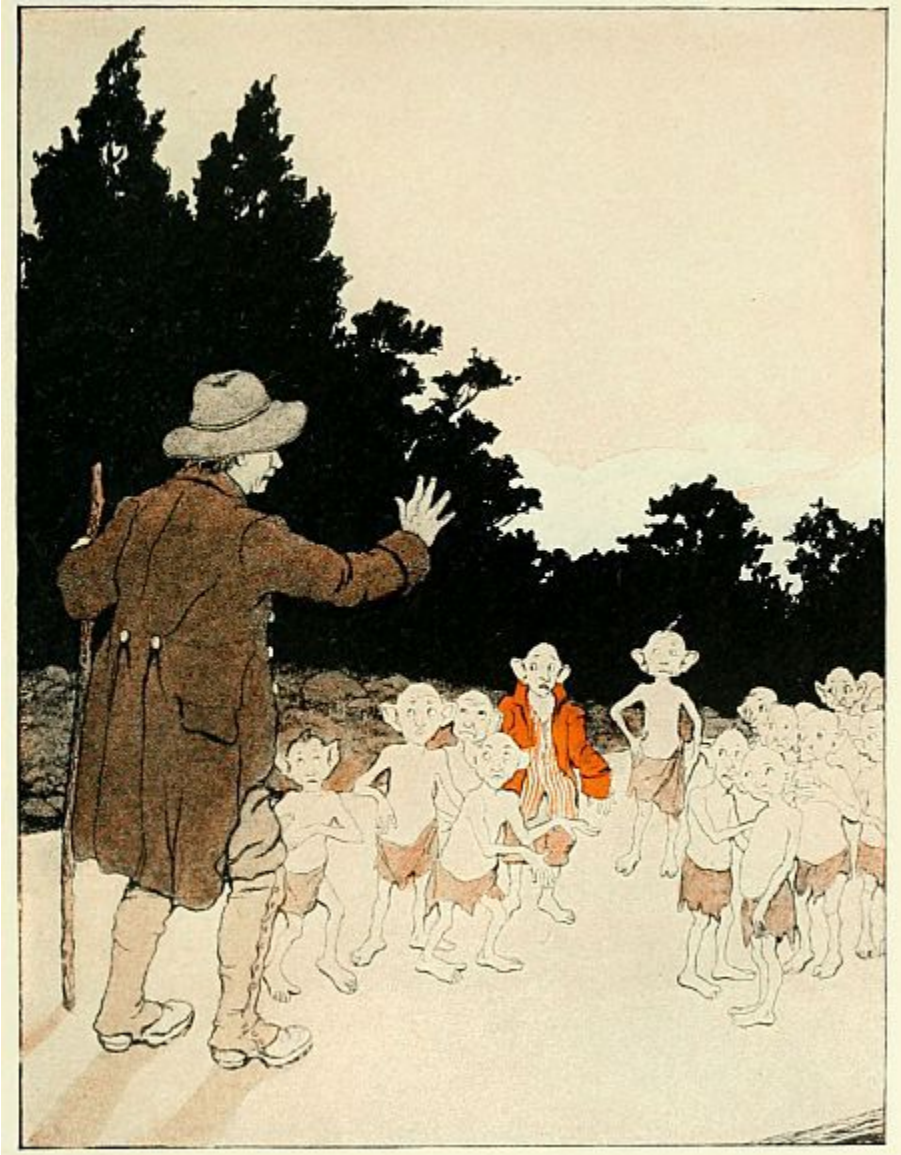
Well, the mischief was done, and now the only thing to do was to think of some way to coax the pixy back again to the work.

Early the next morning the good wife woke her husband.

“Husband,” said she, “did you say the little man had scarce a stitch of clothes upon him?”

“That’s what I said,” answered the farmer.

“Then listen,” said his wife. “To-day I will make a little suit of clothes for him, and you shall take it out and lay it in the barn where he will be likely to see it if he comes back. Maybe then he’ll be so pleased he’ll get over his anger and begin to work for you again.”



“NOT SO FAST, MY FINE LITTLE FELLOW,” HE SAID

Well, that seemed a good plan to the farmer, so his wife set to work, and by evening she had made a complete set of little clothes just the size for a pixy. The farmer took it out to the barn and spread it out in the moonlight and hid himself where he could watch and see what would happen.

For a long time all was still, and Farmer Boggins was beginning to feel sleepy, when suddenly he saw the pixy was there. The little man had a flail in his hands and was going toward a heap of grain. Then he saw the little suit

lying there in the moonlight. At first he stood quite still, and then he laid down the flail and took up the clothes. He looked at them all over, and then he put them on.

When he was dressed he began to hop about and sing:

“How fine I am, how fine I am:
Now I am nobody’s working-man.”

So singing, he danced across the floor and out of the barn and down the hill.

Then the farmer was in a rage. His wife had taken all the trouble to make the clothes, and the little man had taken them and gone off without doing a stroke of work to pay for them. But this should not be the end of the matter.

At the foot of the hill the farm road crossed a stream, and there was a bridge. The farmer went down to the bridge and hid himself beside it, for he thought that if the pixy were really leaving the farm, this was the way he would go.

Sure enough, Boggins had not been hidden there long when he heard a sound of voices, and along came a whole troop of pixies. They all looked exactly like the little man the farmer had seen in the barn, but none of them were dressed. Last of all came a pixy in a little suit of clothes, so the farmer knew he must be the one who had threshed out the grain.

Just as this pixy reached the bridge, Farmer Boggins stepped out in front of him. “Not so fast, my fine little fellow,” he said. “There’s some work owing me in payment for that suit you’re wearing.”

The farmer had scarcely got the words out of his mouth when he heard a great splash in the stream behind him, and

a voice that sounded like his wife’s cried, “Husband! Husband! Come quick and help me, or I’ll drown.”

The farmer turned about, and immediately there was a burst of elfin laughter. The stream lay silent and smooth in the moonlight. No one was there, and when the farmer turned back to the bridge again every pixy was gone from it.

Then the farmer knew that he had been tricked, and he had to go home without either the pixy or the suit of clothes. His wife was there though. She had never been out of the house at all, and a fine scolding she gave him for letting himself be tricked that way by the little men.

But the pixy never came back to help him with his grain, or to thank him for the suit of clothes either.

RABBIT’S EYES
A KOREAN FAIRY TALE

ONCE upon a time the king of the fishes fell ill, and no one knew what was the matter with him. All the doctors in the sea were called in, one after another, and not one of them could cure him.

Once when the fishes were talking about it, a turtle stuck its head out of a crack in a rock. “It is a pity,” said the turtle, “that no one has ever thought of asking my advice. I could cure the king in a twinkling. All he has to do is to swallow the eye of a live rabbit, and he will become perfectly well again.”

This the turtle said, not because he knew anything at all about the matter, but because he wished to appear wise before the fishes.

Now it so chanced that one of the fishes that heard him was the son of the king’s councillor, and he swam straight home and told his father what he had heard the turtle say. The councillor told the king, and the king, who was feeling very ill that day, bade them bring the turtle to him immediately.

When the messengers told the turtle that the king wished to speak to him, the turtle was very much frightened. He drew his head and his tail into his shell and pretended that he was asleep, but in the end he was obliged to go with the messengers.

They soon reached the palace, and the turtle was taken immediately to where the king was. He was lying on a bed

of seaweed and looking very ill indeed, and all his doctors were gathered round him.

The king turned his eyes toward the turtle, and spoke in a weak voice. “Tell me, friend, is it true that you said you could cure me?”

Yes, it was true.

“And that all I have to do is to swallow the eye of a live rabbit, and I will be well again?”

Yes, that was true too.

“Then go get a live rabbit and bring it here immediately, that I may be well.”

When the turtle heard these words he was in despair. It did not seem at all likely that he could catch a rabbit and bring it down into the sea, but he was so much afraid of the king that he did not dare to explain this to him. He said nothing, but crawled away as soon as he could, wishing he could find some crack where he could hide himself and never be found again.

Suddenly he remembered he had once seen a rabbit frisking about on a hill not far from the seashore, and he determined to set out to find it.

He crawled out of the sea and started up the hill. He climbed and he climbed, and after a while he came to the top, and there he sat down to rest.

Presently along came the rabbit, and it stopped to speak to him.

“Good day,” said the rabbit.

“Good day,” said the turtle.

“And what are you doing so far away from the sea?” asked the rabbit.

“Oh, I only came up here to look about and see what the green world was like,” answered the turtle.

“And what do you think of it, now you are here?”

“Oh, it’s not so bad; but you ought to see the beautiful palaces and gardens we have down under the sea.” The turtle began telling the rabbit about them, and he talked so long and said so many fine things about them, that the rabbit began to wish to see them for himself.

“Would it be very hard for me to live down under the water?” he asked.

“Oh, no,” said the turtle. “It might be a little inconvenient at first, but that would not last long. If you like, I will take you on my back and carry you down to the bottom of the sea, and then you can see whether it is not all just as grand and beautiful as I have been telling you.”

Well, the rabbit could not resist his curiosity, and he agreed to go with the turtle.

They went to the edge of the sea, and then the rabbit got on the turtle’s back, and down they went through the water to the very bottom of the sea. The rabbit did not like it at first, but he soon grew used to it, and when he saw all the fine palaces and gardens that were there, he was filled with wonder.

The turtle took him directly to the palace of the king. There he bade the rabbit get down and wait awhile, and he promised that presently he would show him the king of all this magnificence.

The rabbit was delighted and willingly agreed to wait there while the turtle went to announce him.

But while the turtle was away the rabbit heard two fishes talking in the room next to where he was. He was very inquisitive, so he cocked his ears forward and listened to what they were saying. What was his horror to find that they were talking about taking out his eyes and giving them to the king. The rabbit did not know what to do, nor how he was to escape from the dangerous position he was in.

Presently the turtle came back, and the chief councillor came with him, and immediately the rabbit began to talk. “Well,” said he, “it all seems very fine here, and I am glad I came, but I wish now I had brought my own eyes with me so that I could see it better. You see, the eyes I have in my head now are only glass eyes. I am so afraid of getting my own eyes hurt or dusty that I generally keep them in a safe place, and wear these glass eyes instead. But if I had only known how much there would be to look at, I would certainly have brought my own eyes.”

When the turtle and the councillor heard this, they were very much disappointed, for they believed the rabbit was speaking the truth, and that the eyes he had in his head at the time were only glass eyes.

“I will take you back to the shore,” said the turtle, “and then you can go and get your real eyes and come back again, for there are many more things for you to see here—things more wonderful and beautiful than anything I have yet shown you.”

Well, the rabbit was willing to do that, so he got upon the turtle’s back, and the turtle swam up and up with him through the sea.

As soon as they reached the shore the rabbit leaped from the turtle’s back, and away he went up the hill as fast as he could scamper, and he was glad enough to be out of that scrape, I can tell you. But the turtle waited, and he waited, and he waited, but the rabbit never did come back, and at last the turtle was obliged to go home without him.

As for the king of the fishes, if he ever got well, it was not the eye of a live rabbit that cured him; of that you may be sure.

MUDJEE MONEDO
AN AMERICAN INDIAN TALE

UPON the banks of the broad Ogechee River there once stood a little Indian village. The people who lived there were prosperous and happy. There were fish in the river and game in the forest, and no one lacked for anything.

But after a time a terrible misfortune fell upon the people. An ogre named Mudjee Monedo came to live near them. Upon an open plain he laid out a racecourse, and it was his amusement to challenge the young men of the village to race with him there. None dared to refuse, for the ogre was cruel and revengeful, and they feared what he might do to the old men and children if they should refuse; and yet to race with him meant death.

“Life against life,” the ogre would cry, laying his hand on the goal-post. “My life in wager against yours. This post is the goal, yonder charred stump the turning-point. The loser pays the forfeit with his life.”

But none of the Indian warriors ever could win in that race with Mudjee Monedo. The ogre had the power to turn himself at will into any four-footed animal that he might choose. If he found he was being outstripped in the race he would change himself into a wolf, a deer, or a buffalo, and so easily win the race against the swiftest runner of them all. So, one after another, the finest young men of the village were slain at the goal-post.

A deep gloom settled over those who were still left alive. They would have taken their wives and children and gone elsewhere to live, but they knew the ogre would follow on

their tracks. Their only hope was that some time a warrior might rise among them who would be able to outwit the ogre and win the race.

Somewhat away from the other lodges, and in the shadow of the forest, lived a widow with a daughter and a young son. This son was a boy of twelve named Manedowa. The widow's husband and her ten eldest sons had all raced with the ogre at one time or another, and all had paid the forfeit with their lives. Now Manedowa was fast growing tall and manly. Instead of being glad of this the widow was terrified. She dreaded the time when the ogre might think the boy old enough to race with him. Already Mudjee Monedo had his eye upon him. Often he would make some excuse to come to the lodge when the boy was busy there. Then the ogre would look him up and down.

"You are growing fast," he would say. "You will make a famous runner. Some time you must come and look at my racecourse. Perhaps we may even run a friendly race together—though I am growing too old and stiff to have any chance against young limbs like yours."

Then the widow would shudder and make some excuse to send the boy away out of sight. She knew that when he was fully grown it would not be for long that the ogre would spare him.

One day the boy was away fishing and the widow and her daughter were busy in the lodge together. Suddenly a shadow fell across the floor. They looked up in terror, expecting to see the ogre peering in. Instead, a handsome young warrior stood there in the doorway. He was a stranger. They had never seen him before. The sunshine played upon his shining limbs like fire. His eyes were bright and piercing, and above his forehead waved a plume of gorgeous feathers. For a moment he stood looking in upon

them. Then he laid a deer down upon the threshold, and silently turned and disappeared in the green depths of the forest.

Wondering, the mother and her daughter stared after him. They did not know who he could be. They waited for some time, and then, as he did not return, they cut up the deer and hung it up to dry.

Two days after this the stranger again came to the lodge. As silently as before he laid a bear down before them, and again disappeared among the thickets; but that night they heard the sound of his pipe not far from the lodge; it was a love song to the girl that he was playing.

The next evening he came again, bringing more game, but this time he entered and sat down. After that he stayed in the widow’s lodge, and the girl became his wife. She was very happy, for no other hunter brought home such fine game as he, and no other was as handsome and as noble-looking.

Every morning he went away, gliding off silently into the depths of the forest and disappearing from their sight. Where he went they did not know, but every night he came again, bringing to them the choicest of game and fish. The plume above his forehead shone with strange colours, and sometimes it seemed as though the light about him came from himself, and not from the sunshine or the firelight. Neither the girl nor her mother dared to question him as to who he was or whence he came.

With so much game hanging about the lodge it was not long before Mudjee Monedo grew suspicious. He suspected that some warrior had come to live with the widow and her daughter and that they were hiding it from him. Often he stole up silently to the lodge hoping to find the hunter there,

but he never saw him. At last he questioned the widow openly.

“All this game,” he said, trying to smile at her pleasantly, “where does it come from?”

The widow began to tremble. “My son—” she began.

“Your son!” interrupted the Magician. “Do you mean to tell me that your son could shoot a bear or a buffalo such as I have seen here?”

“He is very large and strong for his age,” said the poor widow.

“If he is old enough to shoot such game he is old enough to race with me,” cried the ogre. “I will come again when he is at home, and he and I will talk of it.”

The Mudjee Monedo turned on his heel and strode away through the forest, breaking the young trees and muttering to himself as he went.

The widow and her daughter were almost dead with fright. If they told the ogre of the strange warrior who had come to live in their lodge he would without doubt challenge the stranger to race with him. If they did not, it would be the boy who would be slain.

That night when the hunter returned as usual with his game the widow told him of all that had happened—of how Mudjee Monedo had come to the lodge and questioned her, of how she had pretended it was her son who had shot the game, and of the threat that the ogre had used.

The warrior listened to all she had to say in silence. When she had ended he answered calmly, “It is well. I will run a race with this Mudjee Monedo. To-morrow he will come this

way again. Then ask him to stop and eat with you, and I too will be here."

His wife and her mother began to beg and implore him not to let the Magician see him, but he silenced them. "Let it be as I say," said he. "To-morrow do you put corn meal and herbs in a pot to cook, and add to it three birch buds. Mudjee Monedo and I will eat of it together."

The next morning very early the ogre appeared at the lodge door, but the stranger had already gone into the forest. Mudjee Monedo looked about him and saw all the fresh meat. "Truly your son has become a mighty hunter," he sneered.

"No, Mudjee Monedo," answered the widow. "I knew it was useless to try to deceive you. It is not my son, but my son-in-law, who has shot all this game. He is a mighty warrior. He will soon return from the forest. Sit down, and when he comes you can eat together."

"Did I not know it?" cried the ogre triumphantly. "No one may hope to deceive Mudjee Monedo for long."

He entered the lodge and sat down. He had not been there long before the stranger appeared in the doorway. The brave was in the full dress of a warrior. Across his forehead was a broad band of red paint, and the feathers above his forehead were red and blue. The ogre's eyes glistened at the sight of him. The hunter greeted Mudjee Monedo, and sat down not far from him.

Presently, while his wife and mother-in-law made ready the food, he and the ogre talked. Soon Mudjee Monedo asked the warrior whether he would not run a race with him upon his racecourse.

Calmly the stranger agreed.

“But I am growing old,” said Mudjee Monedo slyly. “I am not strong and tireless as I was once. Because of that, if I race with you you must let me set the wager.”

To this, also, the stranger agreed. Then the food was ready, and he courteously asked Mudjee Monedo to eat with him. The ogre could not refuse, but when he saw the dish that was set before them he became very uneasy. Well he knew that for him there was evil in that food. The strange warrior, however, took no notice of his confusion. He dipped into the dish and ate of it, and Mudjee Monedo was obliged to do likewise, though the herbs that were in it tickled his throat and set him coughing.

Finally the warrior lifted the dish, drank deep of it, and handed it to the other. The ogre hesitated a moment. The broth was hateful to him, but he was afraid to refuse. In haste to be done with it he raised it to his mouth and swallowed what was left of it at one gulp.

Suddenly he coughed and choked. One of the birch buds at the bottom of the pot had lodged in his windpipe. His face turned purple and his eyes seemed starting from their sockets. He got to his feet and staggered out into the open air. A moment he turned and tried to speak, but a violent fit of coughing stopped him, and he hurried away through the thickets, still wheezing and choking as he went.

By the next day the news had gone through the village that a strange warrior was to run a race with Mudjee Monedo, and a great crowd gathered on the hills near by to see the race.

When the stranger appeared upon the course a murmur of wonder arose. Never had the people seen such a warrior before. He was taller by a head than the tallest youth in the village, and his feet scarce seemed to touch the earth, so

lightly did he walk. Then hope sprang up in the people's hearts. Might it not be that this wondrous stranger would in some way win the race and free them from the power of the ogre.

Mudjee Monedo looked about him at the waiting people, and seemed to read what was in their hearts. His lips drew back in a cruel smile. Then he laid his hand upon the goal-post.

"You have let me choose my own wager," he cried aloud, so that all might hear what he said to the stranger. "It is this: life against life; my life against yours. This post is the goal, yonder charred stump the turning-point. The loser pays the forfeit."

"So be it," answered the stranger in a clear ringing voice. "I will abide by the wager, as must you."

At a signal he and the ogre sprang forward on the course. Mudjee Monedo ran well, but the stranger soon outstripped him. So swiftly he ran his feet scarce seemed to touch the ground. The light played about him, and his feathers streamed behind him in the wind. Never had the ogre been so easily outrun. Sooner than usual he was obliged to turn himself into a wolf or he would have been left too far behind. In that shape he tore past the warrior, but as he passed the stranger heard a wheezing in his throat and knew that the birch bud was still there.

A low moan sounded from the crowd of watching Indians on the hill-side as they saw the grey wolf leading in the race. But the next moment, the moan changed to a shout of surprise. The strange warrior had changed himself into a partridge; he rose swiftly in the air, flew past over Mudjee Monedo, and lighted on the course far ahead of him. Then he resumed his natural form and again ran forward.

The ogre did not know what had happened. He heard the shout and the whirr of wings above him, and now he saw the stranger far ahead. He was very much surprised, but again he used his magic and turned himself into a deer. With long leaps and bounds he overtook and passed beyond the running warrior.

Again there was a whirr of wings. The partridge flew past overhead, and a mocking voice cried in the ogre's ear, "Mudjee Monedo, is this the best you can do?" A moment later the ogre saw the stranger once more far ahead, and running as lightly and gracefully as ever.

The charred stump was passed and Mudjee Monedo's heart began to beat hard against his sides. Never had he had to strive so hard. For the third time he used his magic, and turned himself into his third and last form, that of a buffalo. It was in this shape that he generally won the race. With his great shaggy head down, his eyes as red as blood and his tongue lolling from his mouth, the ogre thundered past the stranger.

Once again there was a whirr of wings. The partridge rose from the ground and flew past over the head of the straining buffalo. "Mudjee Monedo," he called from above, "is this the best you can do? I fear you will lose the wager."

With despair the ogre saw that the stranger had once more flown far ahead of him, and was now almost within reach of the goal-post. Suddenly stopping, Mudjee Monedo resumed his natural form. "Hold! hold!" he called to the warrior. "A word with you."

The stranger gave a mocking laugh. Springing forward he laid his hand upon the goal-post, and a mighty shout burst from the watching people on the hill. Then a stillness fell

upon them. In silence they watched the ogre as he slowly went forward toward the goal-post.

As he drew near the stranger Mudjee Monedo tried to smile, but his pale lips trembled. “It was all a joke,” he muttered. “You will spare my life, as I would have spared yours. You run well and we must have many races together.”

“Wretch!” cried the stranger. “What was the wager? Life against life; the loser pays the forfeit.”

Swift as lightning he caught up the club that hung from the goal-post, and with one blow he struck the ogre to the earth. Then again a great shout arose from the people, and like a stream they flowed down from the hill-side and gathered around the warrior.

For a time there was great rejoicing. Fires were lighted and a great feast made. When night came and the stranger went back to his lodge a vast crowd followed him. It was growing dark, but suddenly a pale light shone about the warrior. He turned to them, and as they looked at his face they suddenly knew it was no human warrior who stood before them, but the Good Genius, Minno Monedo. Silent and in awe they drew back from him. He motioned them to leave him, and they obeyed him, still in awe and silence.

After they had all gone Minno Monedo turned to his wife and took her by the hand. “The time has now come,” he said, “when I must return to the Spirit-land. It is for you to choose whether you will come with me or stay here with your own people. Which shall it be?”

“I will go with you,” answered the wife.

So it was; she and the Good Genius disappeared from the earth, and her tribe saw them no more.

For a while her mother grieved for her, but Manedowa grew up strong and brave, and in time brought home a wife who bore him many children.

Grass grew over the course where the ogre had run his races; his lodge fell into ruins, but still around the camp-fires the Indians tell the story of Minno Monedo, and of how he came to save their tribe from Mudjee Monedo.

DAPPLEGRIM
A TALE ADAPTED FROM THE NORSE

THERE was once a rich man who had seven sons, and they were all stout, well-grown lads.

When the man's time came to die he called his sons about him that he might divide his goods among them. He asked each one, beginning at the eldest, what he wished to have left to him. One said one thing, and one another; one wanted the house, and one the land; one wanted gold, and one the flocks and herds. At last it came the turn of the youngest, who was called Boots, to say what he wished to have. But by this time nothing was left to choose but seven wild mares that ran about free on one of the farther hills. All the other things had been promised to his brothers.

"Very well," said Boots; "I am satisfied. The seven mares will do for me. When they have colts, I will leave the colts with their mothers until they are big enough and then I will sell them, and so I will have enough to live upon."

The six older sons thought Boots a great simpleton to be satisfied with so little, but since he was content, it was not for them to quarrel over it.

Soon afterward the man died, and the six older brothers divided his riches among them in very friendly fashion.

As for Boots, he asked for nothing, but he took his staff in his hand, and set out for the farther hill to look at his seven wild mares. It was half a day's journey to the hill, but Boots thought nothing of that. He reached it before his shoes were worn out, and there were the seven wild mares grazing

hither and thither, and each one had a foal with her. They were fat and well-grown foals, but beside the seven there was another colt there on the hill, and he was a wonder. His coat was a beautiful dappled grey, and shone like silk; and he was more than twice the size of any of the other foals.

“Now in all my life never have I seen a colt like that colt,” cried Boots. “The other seven foals I will leave here with their mothers, but this one I will take out into the world with me, for already he is big enough and stout enough for me to ride him.”

“Nay, Master,” answered the colt; “that is not what you should do. Do you leave me here for another year to run free and grow, and it will be well worth your while. But as for the other seven foals, take them to the market and sell them, and with the money you receive buy me fodder. Store the fodder in yonder old ruined building and leave the door open, so that I can go in and out and eat at will, and by next year I will be better fit for riding.”

Boots was willing to do this, so he gathered the seven foals together and drove them away to market. There he sold them as the dappled colt had bade him and bought fodder, and this fodder he stored in the old ruined building for the colt to feed upon at will. Then the lad went away to a city near-by and took service to wait until the year was up.

At the end of the year, to a day, Boots came back again to the hill, and there were the seven wild mares at graze, and again each had a well-grown foal beside her. But as for the dappled colt, it was a wonder. It was twice as large as before, and if before its coat had been like silk, now it was like satin, it shone so.

Boots looked and wondered and wondered and looked. “Well it is,” he said, “that I left you here a year longer. But

now you must go with me, for with such a horse as you to ride upon, the king of the country himself will be glad to take me into his service."

"Nay, Master," answered the foal, "the time is not yet. Let me run free for still another year, but take the seven mares and their foals to market, and sell them for what you can get. With the money buy fodder and place it where you did before, and if you do this thing you will never regret it."

Well, Boots was willing to do that too. He drove the mares and their foals to market, and sold them and bought fodder with the money. Then he went away to the city again and took service for another twelve months.

At the end of the year, to a day, Boots came back to the hill to look at his dappled colt, but before he reached there he saw a light in the sky and heard a sound as of thunder. The sound drew nearer and nearer, and then Boots saw the colt coming to meet him, and the noise was made by its hoofs, for it was so huge that the earth trembled under it as it came; and if its coat had been like satin before, now it shone like glass, so that the light was reflected all about it, and that was what Boots had seen.

"By my faith," cried Boots, "never have I beheld such a horse before. The King himself hath not another like it."

"That is true," answered the steed. "And now, Master, the time has come for you to ride me out into the world, and together we will make your fortune."

Then Boots tried to mount, but Dapplegrim (for so Boots named the horse) was so huge that he was obliged to lie down before his master could get upon his back.

Once Boots was up, away the horse went, so fast that the wind whistled past their ears, and they never stopped nor

stayed until they came to the castle of the King of the country.

Here Boots knocked at the door and asked the King if he might take service with him, and the King could have jumped for joy at the thought of having him. For never in his life before had he seen such a horse as Dapplegrim; and as for Boots, the King was sure that only a hero could be the master of such a steed.

So now Boots was one of the King’s own men, and soon he became such a favourite that the King would have him always by his side, and talked to him more than to anyone else.

But this made the noblemen who were about the castle very jealous. And not only did they have to make way for Boots, but all their own horses had to be taken out of the castle stable so that Dapplegrim might have the more room. Before long they began to plot and plan as to how they could rid themselves of Boots, and his great grey steed as well.

Now, though the King of that country was very rich and powerful, he was so sad that he was never seen to smile, for he had had only one child, a daughter, and her a troll had stolen away. The troll kept her a prisoner in his house at the top of a great glass hill. This hill was as slippery as ice and as steep as a house.

Many princes and brave men had tried to rescue the Princess, for she was as beautiful as the day, and the King had promised her in marriage to anyone who would bring her back to him. None had succeeded, however, and those who had tried had always lost their lives; for though the King had promised her as a wife to whoever could save her,

he had also sworn to cut off the heads of all those who tried and failed.

Now one day several of the noblemen who were jealous of Boots came to the King and told him that Boots had been saying this and that, and that he could ride up the hill on Dapplegrim as easily as not, and could rescue the Princess if only the King would ask him to.

As soon as the King heard this he sent for Boots to come before him.

“How is this?” said he. “Why do you tell others that you can rescue the Princess if you choose, and yet you never tell me?”

“But I never said such a thing,” said Boots.

“Yes, but you did.”

“No, but I didn’t.”

The King would not listen to him, however. He was determined that Boots must set out on the adventure at once. If he rescued the Princess, he should have her for a wife, but if he failed his head should be cut from his shoulders.

As soon as Boots left the King, he went straight out to Dapplegrim’s stall, and he was down in the mouth, as you may well believe.

“What is the matter, Master?” asked Dapplegrim.

“Matter enough,” answered Boots; and then he told the great grey horse all that the King had been saying to him.

The great grey horse listened attentively. “This is no easy thing the King has asked of you,” he said; “but it might have been worse. And then it isn’t every day one has a chance of

winning a princess for a wife. Do you go back to the King and ask him for ten pounds of iron and twelve pounds of steel, and six blacksmiths to do some work for us, for I must be properly shod before we start out on this adventure."

Well, Boots went back to the King and asked him for just that, ten pounds of iron and twelve pounds of steel, and six blacksmiths to work for him.

The King did not say no. Ten pounds of iron and twelve pounds of steel were brought to the palace, and six blacksmiths came to shoe the great horse Dapplegrim, and it was a task for all six of them; for after the shoes were made, it took three blacksmiths to hold up each one of Dapplegrim's feet and three more to fit the shoe to it, but when it was done never any other horse in all the world was shod like him.

Then Boots mounted and rode forth. On and on went Dapplegrim, so fast and far that you might have thought they would have ridden over the very edge of the world.

Finally Dapplegrim asked, "Master, do you see anything?"

"Yes," said Boots, "I see something far before us. It looks like a wall of snow with a black spot on top of it no bigger than a nut."

"That white wall is the hill of glass," said the grey horse, "and the spot on top of it is the troll's house, but we have still a journey to make before we reach it."

Then on they went and on they went, and after a while they came to the foot of the hill. When Boots looked at it his heart sank within him, for he did not see how any living thing could keep a foothold on it.

"Well, here we are, Master," said Dapplegrim. "And now, unless we can mount the hill, it is an ill day for you and me

too.”

Then Boots gathered up the reins and rode the great grey horse straight at it, and the fire flashed from under Dapplegrim’s feet. Three times Boots rode Dapplegrim at the hill. The first time the great horse scarcely mounted as high as a man could reach, and then his feet slipped from under him and back he fell.

The second time he rode half-way up the hill, and then again back, back he slipped.

The third time he sprang forward upon the hill of glass, and as his great feet struck it the glass cracked and crashed beneath him, and up and up he went, to the very top, and on into the troll’s house.

The beautiful Princess was sitting beside the window, weeping, her golden hair all loose and falling about her, and the troll was there beside her.

Dapplegrim thundered into the hall and over to the Princess, and Boots stopped and caught her up to the saddle beside him. Then Dapplegrim wheeled, and away they went, faster than the wind, and the troll did not even have time to catch up the sword that lay beside him or to try to stop them.

It was a long way back to the castle, and Dapplegrim had two to carry now, but that was nothing to him. On and on they went, and when they thundered up to the castle gate the King and all his court came out to meet them. Then there were great rejoicings and kissings and shoutings, as you may believe.

Boots stood there among them, and he was the hero of it all. “And now, when am I to marry the Princess?” he asked.

At that the King began to hum and haw. It had been all very well to promise her to Boots as long as she was sitting in the troll’s house at the top of the hill, but now that she was back in the castle again it was a different matter.

“Listen,” said the King; “you shall have her as a bride, of course. I have never said anything different, but first you must level down the ridge of rock there in front of the castle, for it is so high and black that never a ray of sunlight comes in at the windows from one year’s end to the other.”

Well, that was not in the bargain at all, and Boots did not know how he was to level down a whole mountain of rock. But the King would not listen to him. Not till the ridge was levelled down could he marry the Princess, and moreover, if he failed in doing it, his head should be cut from his shoulders.

Then Boots went out to Dapplegrim’s stall, and his mouth was down at the corners, as you may well believe.

“Well, Master, and what is the matter now?” asked Dapplegrim.

Then Boots told him all about it, and what he had said, and what the King had said, and how he feared he was to lose his head after all.

“Oh, well, this is not such an easy task,” said the great grey steed, “but, after all, we may be able to do it. But first do you ask the King for twelve pounds of iron and fifteen pounds of steel, and have new shoes put upon my feet, for we will need them.”

That is just what Boots did. He asked the King for twelve pounds of iron and fifteen pounds of steel, and the King did not refuse him. And this time it took eight blacksmiths to shoe the great grey horse.

When Dapplegrim was newly shod, Boots mounted upon his back and rode away toward the ridge of rock, and the King and all his court came out to watch what he would do.

Dapplegrim rode up to the top of the rocky ridge, and then he stamped with his great iron-shod feet, and he was so heavy that at once the ridge sank down fifteen ells into the earth.

Then Boots rode up and down, and every time Dapplegrim stamped the ridge sank down under him, until at last it was as level with the earth as the palm of your hand.

“And now may I have the Princess for my wife?” asked Boots.

Of course, of course! The King had never intended anything else, but before she could go to church with Boots she must have a horse as great and fine as Dapplegrim to ride upon. Boots might have three days to find such a horse for his bride, but at the end of that time, if he had not found it, his head would be cut from his shoulders.

Well, that seemed a hard thing to Boots. That had never been in the bargain at all. Besides, he doubted if there was such another horse as Dapplegrim in all the world beside.

Out he went to Dapplegrim’s stall, and if he had been down in the mouth before he was ten times more so now.

“Well, Master, what is it this time?” asked the great grey horse. “Are you not to have the Princess for your wife?”

Yes, Boots was to have her, but not before he should do this and that, and he told the whole story to Dapplegrim.

“This is a harder task than either of the others,” said the great horse. “There is only one other horse in the whole world that is my match in size and strength. Whether or not we can get him I do not know, for he is very wild and fierce. But before we start out on this adventure I must be new shod with fifteen pounds of iron and fifteen pounds of steel. Besides this, you must ask the King to give you a barrel of tar, twelve sacks of grain, and the carcasses of twelve oxen, and twelve hides of bullocks set all over with sharp spikes. Have these loaded upon me, and then we will set out, and what is to happen will happen.”

Well, Boots went to the King and asked for all these things, and the King did not refuse him. Dapplegrim was new shod with fifteen pounds of iron and fifteen pounds of steel, and upon his back were loaded twelve sacks of grain, and the carcasses of twelve oxen, and the hides of twelve bullocks set all over with sharp spikes, and a barrel of tar.

Last of all, Boots mounted his steed and away they rode, and the earth shook beneath them, and the wind whistled past their ears.

They went on and on and on, till all the world seemed left behind, and at last they came out into a barren plain, and all the air around them and overhead seemed filled with the sound of the beating of great wings.

“Now tell me,” said Boots, “what is that sound I hear, for it almost makes me feel afraid?”

“That,” answered Dapplegrim, “is the beating of the wings of all the birds of the air that have been sent out to stop us. But do not be afraid. Cut a hole in each of the bags

we carry, so that the grain will run out, and the birds will be so busy picking it up that they will never notice us."

This Boots did, and the grain ran out in a stream behind them. Then the birds gathered in such countless numbers that the whole plain was covered with them. But they were so busy pecking up the grain that they never even looked at Boots or the great grey horse.

On rode Boots and on he rode, and after a while he and Dapplegrim came into a great black forest.

Then from all around there sounded a mighty roaring that fairly shook the trees, it was so loud.

"What is that sound?" asked Boots. "Now tell me, for it almost makes me feel afraid."

"That," said Dapplegrim, "is the roaring of all the beasts of the earth that have been sent out to stop us, but do you throw down the twelve carcasses of the oxen, and the beasts will be so busy eating them that they will never even look at us."

Boots did as Dapplegrim bade him, and immediately from behind the trees and thickets sprang out a multitude of wild beasts, and they fell upon the carcasses and began to tear them and eat. They did not even so much as look at Dapplegrim or his master.

On and on went Boots and his great grey steed, and now they came out of the forest upon a place that was covered with great rocks and boulders, and here Dapplegrim bade Boots light down.

"Master, the time has now come for the hardest part of all our venture," said the horse. "It may be I will not come out of it alive, nor you either, but that is as it may be. Take down the barrel of tar and set it yonder among the rocks, take off

my bridle and then cover me all over with the spiked hides. When this is done, do you climb up in yonder tree, where you will be out of harm's way. Presently the steed that we are in search of will come, and he and I will fight together. Watch carefully that barrel of tar, for while we are fighting it will be set on fire. If the fire burns low and smoky, I will be overcome, and then you must try to escape as best you can, but if the flame rises straight and clear, then I am winning. In that case make haste to come down and slip the bridle over the head of the strange horse. Then he will become gentle and quiet, and you may do with him what you will."

Boots obeyed Dapplegrim in everything. He took down the barrel of tar and set it among the rocks. He took off Dapplegrim's bridle and covered him all over with the spiked hides. Then he climbed up in the tall tree near-by and hid himself among its leaves.

No sooner had he done all this than Dapplegrim struck the ground three times and neighed loud and clear.

At once from far away there came a sound of neighing. Nearer and nearer it came, and so loud and terrible it was that Boots was filled with fear. Then from beyond the rocks came galloping a great grey dappled horse, and if Dapplegrim was big, this one was full as large. If Dapplegrim was strong, this one was as strong, if not stronger. Fire flashed from his eyes and smoke poured from his nostrils.

At once he and Dapplegrim began to fight. Up and down they fought, and sometimes one seemed to be winning and sometimes the other, but always, whenever the strange horse tried to seize Dapplegrim with his teeth, he could not, because of the spiked hides that covered him.

As they fought, a spark from their hoofs fell upon the barrel of tar and set it on fire. The flame of it rose straight

and clear through the air.

At once Boots slipped down from the tree and ran over to where the two horses were fighting. As soon as he did so, he saw that Dapplegrim had seized the strange horse by the neck and was holding him with his teeth.

Boots made haste to slip the bridle over the strange horse's head, and at once it became quiet and gentle, only it still shook and sweated from the fight.

Then Boots mounted on the new Dapplegrim's back and rode back toward the castle, and the old Dapplegrim trotted along beside him. Safely they passed through the forest and crossed the plain, and as they neared the castle they saw that the King and all his court had come out to meet them, for they had heard the news of their coming.

Boots lighted down from the new Dapplegrim and led both horses to the King, and the King was filled with wonder and amazement at the sight of two such horses, and both exactly alike.

"And now," said Boots, "can you tell me which is the new Dapplegrim and which the old?"

Well, the King looked them all over from head to tail; he looked at their eyes and their ears and their hoofs, and not a hair did one have that was different from the other's. The King was obliged to own that he could not tell which was which.

"So I have brought the horse as you bade me," said Boots, "and now am I to have the Princess for a wife?"

Well, there was nothing more for the King to do but to let Boots marry the Princess. But now the Princess herself had something to say about it.

“Look,” said she to Boots. “You have shown how brave you are: now let us see whether you are clever as well. I will hide twice, and you shall hide twice. If you can find me, and I cannot find you, then we will know you are more clever than I am, and I will marry you. But if you fail, then you must look elsewhere for a wife.”

Well, Boots did not like that very much, but he did not know how to refuse. “Very well,” said he. “Then that is the bargain.”

The Princess was to hide first, and this is what she did. She changed herself into a white duck and floated on the pond that was behind the castle stable.

Boots hunted for her high and low; he looked everywhere, but he could not find her. Then he went out to Dapplegrim’s stall and told him all about it.

“You should have come to me in the first place,” said Dapplegrim. “Do you take a gun and go out to the pond behind the castle stable. Aim at the white duck that is floating there, as though you meant to shoot it, and you will find the Princess fast enough.”

Boots did as Dapplegrim bade him. He took his gun out to the pond behind the stable, and there, sure enough, was a white duck floating about in the sunshine.

Boots took aim at it as though to shoot. Then the Princess was terribly frightened. “Do not shoot,” she cried; “it is I, the Princess.”

So Boots had found her once.

The next time the Princess hid she turned herself into a loaf of bread, and lay with the other loaves on the kitchen table. Boots hunted for her high and low, but nowhere could he find her. Then he went out to Dapplegrim’s stall.

“What shall I do about it now?” he said. “I have hunted for the Princess everywhere, and still I cannot find her.”

“Why did you not come to me in the first place?” asked Dapplegrim. “Do you take a knife and lay it on the middle loaf that is on the kitchen table, as though to cut it, and you will find the Princess fast enough.”

Well, Boots was not slow to do as Dapplegrim bade him. He took a sharp knife and went into the castle kitchen, and there were seven fresh loaves of bread on the table.

Boots drew the middle loaf toward him, and laid the sharp edge of the knife on it as though to cut it.

Then the loaf cried aloud in a woeful voice, “Alas, do not cut me! It is I, your Princess.”

And so Boots had found the Princess for the second time.

Now it was Boots’ turn to hide, and while the Princess was not looking he changed himself into a fly and hid in Dapplegrim’s ear.

The Princess hunted for him everywhere, all through the castle, but she could not find him. Last of all she came to Dapplegrim’s stall to look there, but when she tried to enter Dapplegrim would not let her. He kicked and snorted and bit until the Princess was fairly frightened.

At last she was obliged to own that she could not find Boots. Then at once he stood before her in his own proper shape.

“You have failed once,” he said. “Now let us see whether you will be any more clever the second time.”

The next thing Boots did was to change himself into a clod of earth and hide in the hollow of Dapplegrim’s foot.

The Princess hunted for him everywhere, but she could not find him. Then she came to Dapplegrim’s stall, and this time he let her enter. The Princess looked him all over but could not find Boots. Last of all she tried to lift Dapplegrim’s feet to look under them, but this she could not do. The great grey horse stood like a rock, and she could not move him.

Then the Princess was obliged to own herself beaten.

At once Boots stood before her. “Now,” said he, “I have fairly won you for a bride, and you shall not say no to me.”

“Yes, yes; that is right,” said the Princess. “Now I know that you are the cleverest as well as the bravest man in all the world, and you and you alone shall be my husband.”

So Boots and the Princess were married with great rejoicing and magnificence, and if anyone were sorry it was not the Princess nor Boots.

As for Dapplegrim, nothing was too good for him. If he had wished it, he might have had a bridle of gold and a saddle set with precious gems, and a silver bed to lie on. He lived to a good old age, and they were all happy for ever after.

THE FISH PRINCE
A HINDU FOLK TALE

THERE were once a Rajah and Ranee who had no child, though every day they prayed that one might be sent to them. For this reason the Ranee at last became quite melancholy, and took no more pleasure in anything.

One day some fish were brought to the palace kitchen to be prepared as usual for the Rajah's dinner. Among them was one such as the cook had never seen before. Its scales shone with all the colours of the rainbow, and upon its head was a mark that looked like a little golden crown. The cook examined it curiously, and then was about to prepare it for cooking as he had done with the others, but it lifted up its head and spoke to him.

"Do not kill me," said the fish. "Instead, put me in a basin of water and carry me to the Ranee, and it may be I will amuse her."

The cook was very much surprised to hear a fish speaking, and it seemed to him such a wonderful creature that it might very well amuse even the Ranee; he therefore put it in a basin of water, and gave it to a maid, and bade her carry it to the queen.

The maid did as she was told, and the Ranee was indeed very much pleased with the beautiful little fish. All day she kept it beside her and watched its quick movements and its changing colours. The next day she was even more pleased with it, and before long she became so fond of it that she could not have loved it better if it had been her own child.

She named it Muchie Rajah, or the Fish Prince, and called it her son.

After a time the fish grew so large that it could no longer live in the basin, and then it was put in a marble bath. As it still continued to grow, the Ranee had a great tank made for it out in the palace gardens. Here every day she went to visit it. She always carried some rice with her, and when she called it, the great fish would rise through the water and eat from her hand, and play about where she could see it.

But one day when the Ranee came to the tank she saw Muchie Rajah lying on the water very still. His colours looked dull, and when she called to him he came to her slowly, and would not eat the rice she had brought to him.

The Ranee was greatly troubled. “Alas, my dear son,” she cried, “what is it that ails you? Are you sick, that you will not eat the good rice I have brought to you?”

“I am not sick,” answered the great fish, “but I am very, very lonely. My mother, I beg of you to have a little room built in the side of the tank, and bring some young girl to live in it all the time and be company for me.”

The Ranee could refuse nothing to her dear Muchie Rajah. She immediately sent for masons and stone-cutters, and had a little room made in the side of the tank. The room was so cleverly built that the fish could reach his head over the side of it, and yet it was protected from the water in such a way that one could live in it safely and not be drowned. The walls of it were carved and coloured and set with precious stones, so that it was very beautiful, and there were hanging lamps in it to give light by day and night.

After all was finished, the Ranee sent out messengers through the country to find some beautiful girl to come and live in the little room, and be the bride of her dear Muchie

Rajah. To the parents of such a girl she promised to give a lac of gold mohurs.

But though the messengers journeyed far and near, they could find no parents who were willing to give their daughter to the Fish Prince. “No, no,” they said; “our daughters are worth more to us than a lac of gold mohurs. This Muchie Rajah is very large and strong and fierce, and what he wishes is not a bride, but some young girl to eat.”

Now not far from the palace there lived a fakir, whose wife had died and left him with one daughter. This girl, whose name was Balna, was very beautiful. After the death of his first wife the fakir married again. The second wife also had a daughter, but her daughter was as ugly as Balna was beautiful, and as ill-tempered as Balna was sweet and gentle.

The stepmother hated Balna and was very jealous of her, and would have done anything to rid the house of her.

One time the fakir went away on a long journey, leaving his house and all that was in it in the charge of his wife. The messengers were still seeking for a bride for the Muchie Rajah, and as soon as the fakir had gone his wife sent for them, and said, “I have a daughter whom I am willing to let you have for the Fish Prince, and as she is very beautiful I am sure you will be delighted with her.”

The messengers were very glad to hear this, and said they would come for the girl the next day, and bring a lac of gold mohurs to the woman in payment for her.

After they had gone the stepmother called Balna to her and told her what she had promised.

The girl was very much frightened. “Alas!” she cried, “what have you done? The great fish will certainly eat me. If

my father had been here he would never have allowed you to sell me."

"This is silly talk," answered the stepmother. "Why should the fish eat you? He is lonely and wishes a companion. You ought to be proud and happy to be the wife of a Rajah, even if he is only a fish."

She then bade the girl go down to the river and wash her *saree*,[1] that she might be clean and neat when the messengers came for her.

Balna took her *saree* and went down to the river to wash it, and as she washed it she wept bitterly.

Now it so happened that an old seven-headed cobra had a hole in the bank of the river, and lived there with his wife and children. He heard the sound of weeping just above him, and it kept on for so long that after a while he stuck one of his heads out of the hole and spoke to the girl.

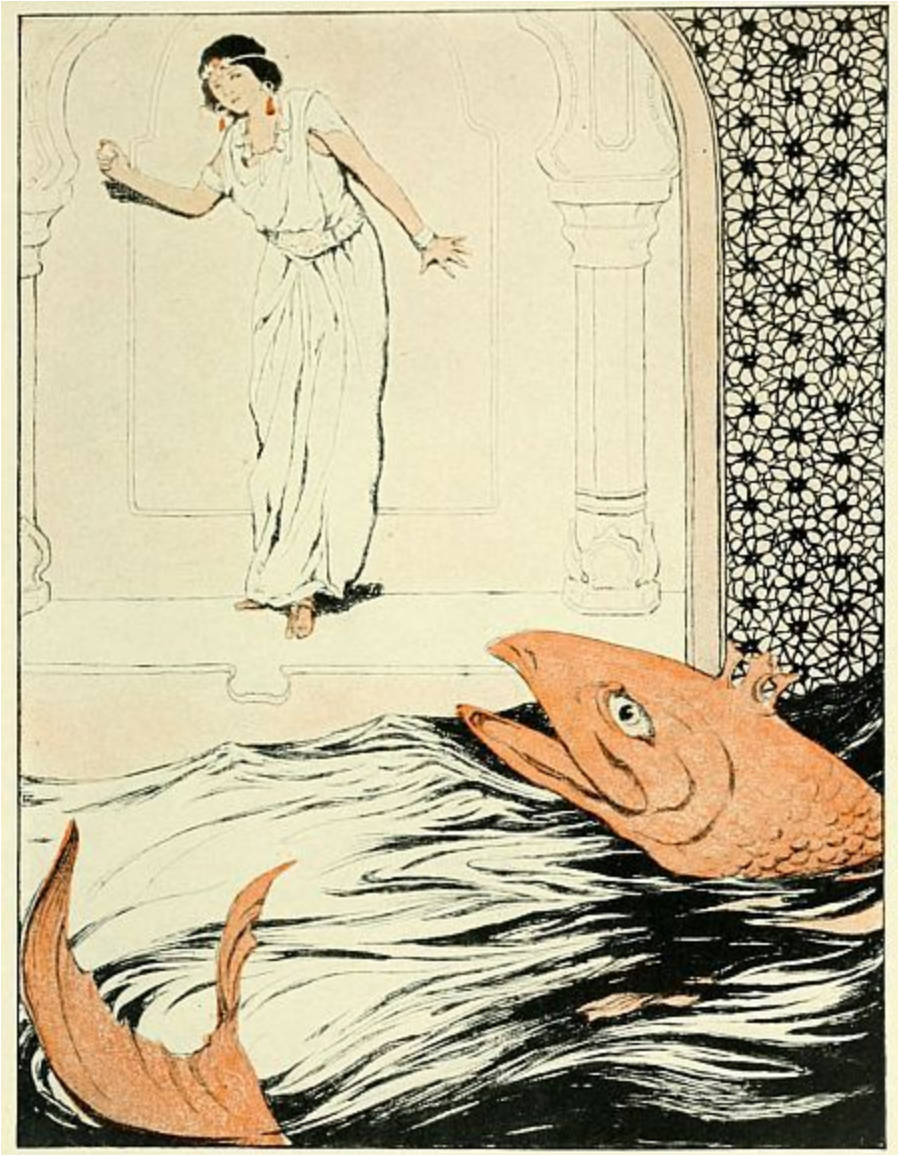
"Why are you weeping here?" he said. "Do you not know that your tears are dropping down into my house like rain, and that they are very salt?"

"Oh, Father Cobra, excuse me," answered the girl, "but I have good cause to weep. My stepmother has sold me to be the bride of Muchie Rajah, and I know he will certainly eat me, for he is very large and fierce."

"Listen to me, daughter," said the cobra, "for I am very wise and know all things. This great fish you speak of is not a fish at all, but the Rajah of a far country. In some way he offended the gods, and as a punishment he was changed into the shape of a fish and sent to live in the river. Now if you will do exactly what I tell you to do, you can break this enchantment and become his Ranee; but if you do not do as I say, then he will of a certainty eat you as you fear."

The cobra then gave the girl three stones, and bade her tie them into the corner of her *saree* so as not to lose them. “To-morrow the messengers will come and take you to Muchie Rajah,” he said. “They will put you in the little room in the side of the tank. When it is night, you must not on any account go to sleep. If you do, you will be lost. But take these stones in your hand and watch. When he comes near you, throw a stone at him. Immediately he will sink to the bottom of the tank and will lie there for a while. When he comes again, throw the second stone at him and he will again go away, and when he comes for the third time, throw the third stone. Then the enchantment will be broken, and he will resume his natural form, and you will have nothing more to fear from him.”

The girl heard with joy what the cobra said to her. She thanked him and tied the stones in the corner of the *saree*, and then she ran on home again. When she went into the house her stepmother was surprised to see how cheerful she had become. She no longer wept nor complained, and when, the next day, the messengers came for her, she was quite willing to go away with them.



SHE MANAGED TO THROW THE THIRD STONE AT HIM

At the palace the old Ranee was waiting impatiently for the bride, and she was delighted when she saw what a beautiful girl the messengers had brought with them.

Balna was taken out to the tank, and a great crowd of people followed to see what would become of her. Many of them pitied her, and they wondered that she went so cheerfully, for they expected no less than that she would be eaten by the great fish.

After she was put in the little room in the side of the tank the crowd waited about for a long time. Every moment they expected to see Muchie Rajah rise through the water and swallow her, but nothing happened. The water lay black and still, and there was no sound but the lapping of the little waves against the stonework.

After a while night came, and the people grew tired of waiting and went away to their homes. Balna was left in the little room all alone. She untied the corner of her saree and took out the three stones. Two she laid on the floor beside her, and one she kept in her hand.

About midnight the water was disturbed. The waves dashed louder against the stones. There was a hissing sound, and Muchie Rajah rose through the water. He came rushing on toward the room, his mouth open, and his scales as red as rubies.

Balna was terribly frightened, but she held the stone fast and waited. When he was almost near enough to seize her, she threw the stone at him.

Immediately Muchie Rajah closed his jaws and sank down into the depths of the water where she could not see him.

After that she waited and watched for some time, but all was still. Then again the waves dashed louder. They rose to the edge of the stonework. Muchie Rajah came rushing through the water again, his mouth open, and his scales shining like fire.

Balna was more frightened than ever, but she threw the second stone at him, and again he sank through the water, and all was still.

This time he was gone longer than before, and the girl watched and waited. Then, suddenly, with a roaring sound,

he came rushing at her again; his tail beat the waters into foam about him; his scales shone so red that the whole tank seemed full of blood.

Balna was almost dead with fright, but she managed to throw the third stone at him. No sooner did it touch Muchie Rajah than the enchantment was broken. Instead of the great fish, a handsome young Rajah stood there before her. He was dressed in cloth of gold embroidered in wonderful colours. His turban was fastened with an enormous ruby, and on his breast hung a chain set with precious stones. He took Balna by the hand and spoke to her.

“You have saved both my life and your own,” he said. “The enchantment is broken, and now we can live together happily, and you and you only shall be my bride.”

Very early the next morning the Ranee and her attendants came out to the tank to see whether the girl was still alive, or whether she had been eaten by the great fish. What was their surprise to find in the tank room not only Balna, but a handsome young prince, who told them he was Muchie Rajah. He also told them how Balna had broken the enchantment, and that now he would marry her and live in his own proper shape for ever.

Then there was great rejoicing, and the old Rajah and Ranee adopted the Fish Prince as their own son, and Balna was to them in place of a daughter.

When the fakir’s wife heard what had happened to Balna, and how, instead of being eaten by the fish, she had become the bride of a great Rajah, she was ready to die with rage and spite. However, she hid her feelings and went to the palace and made friends with Balna. She pretended that she had only wished her well, and had known all along how it would turn out. Balna, who was very simple and

forgiving, believed all the wicked stepmother said to her. She made her and the step-sister welcome at the palace, and gave them many gifts, but they only hated her more and more and were always plotting how they could injure her.

One time Balna and her stepmother and her step-sister went down to walk by the river in the cool of the afternoon. Presently the step-sister began to admire the young Ranee's jewels, and she asked Balna to let her try them on: "For," said she, "I have never worn such beautiful jewels as those are."

Balna was quite willing, and she took off the jewels and put them upon her sister—the armlets, the necklaces, the rings, and the bracelets. Just at the last the step-sister allowed one of the earrings to fall to the ground. "Look," cried she, "I have dropped an earring. Do you pick it up for me, Balna, for I fear that if I stoop others may fall off too."

The young Ranee stooped for the earring. Then the stepmother gave her such a push that she fell into the river. The place where she fell in was very deep, and she sank out of sight immediately.

The two wicked women waited there for a while, but they saw nothing of her, so they were sure she must be drowned; then they went back to the palace.

The step-sister was still wearing all of Balna's jewels, and she was so covered up with them that every one thought she was the young Ranee. They went at once to Balna's apartments, and there the fakir's wife put her daughter to bed, and gave out that the Ranee was very ill and could see no one. It was a long time before even Muchie Rajah himself was allowed to enter the room. When he did, he was shocked to see how his beautiful bride had changed.

“It is because of her illness,” said the fakir’s wife. “Wait until she is well again, then all will be as it was before.”

The young Rajah never doubted but that it was his bride who lay there, and he was very unhappy because his delicate Ranee had become so coarse and ugly and stupid. Still he was kind to her, and often came to visit her in her apartments.

But Balna had not been drowned as her stepmother and her sister thought. It so happened that the place where she had fallen into the river was close to where the old seven-headed cobra had his hole. He had heard the sound of voices overhead, and then a great splash; he looked out to see what had caused it, and there he saw the young Ranee struggling in the water. He felt sorry for her, and reached out and drew her into his hole. Then he carried her up to where she could get some air, for his hole had two openings, one into the river and one out on to the bank overhead.

The young Ranee was almost drowned, but presently she came to herself again. Then she wished to set out for the palace, but this the cobra would not allow her to do.

“Your stepmother and your sister are there even now,” he said, “and if you went back they would certainly do you some harm. Stay here with me, and if your husband, the Rajah, comes to look for you, I will let you go back with him, but not otherwise.”

When Balna heard this she was very sad, but she was obliged to stay there in the cobra’s hole, as he said. After a time her little son was born there, and she named him Muchie Lal, the Ruby Fish, after his father.

The little Muchie Lal grew up strong and straight and handsome, and the old cobra became so fond of him that he

loved him better than he did his own children; there was scarcely anything he would refuse him.

One day a bangle-seller came past the cobra's hole, and Muchie Lal wished to buy some of his bangles, but the cobra said, "No, these are very common bangles, and not suitable for a prince to wear. I will give the man some jewels, and he shall make for you bangles such as you ought to have."

The cobra then brought from his treasure-house a number of diamonds and rubies and other precious stones. He gave them to the bangle-seller. "Take these," he said, "and make them into bangles, and bring them back to me as quickly as possible and you shall be well paid. And remember, they must be very handsome, for they are for this prince, Muchie Lal."

The bangle-seller took the stones home with him and made the bangles, and they were finished in a week's time. Then he started out to carry them back to the cobra. They were very handsome, and he was so proud of them that he carried them so that every one might see.

Now on his way it so chanced that he met Muchie Rajah, and the prince was so surprised to see a poor man carrying such costly bangles that he stopped and began to question him.

"Those are very handsome jewels," said he. "I have never seen finer. Even I myself have none like them. Tell me, how did you come by them?"

"They are not mine," answered the bangle-seller; "they belong to an old seven-headed cobra who lives down by the river. He gave them to me to make into bangles for a young prince named Muchie Lal, who lives with him."

The Rajah was very much surprised at what the bangle-seller told him. “This is a strange story,” said he. “I will go with you, for I should like to see this young prince who lives in a cobra’s hole.”

So Muchie Rajah went down to the river bank with the bangle-seller. Muchie Lal was there playing close to the cobra’s hole with the young cobras. When he saw the bangle-seller he ran to meet him, calling to him to know whether he had brought the bangles; and the young prince was so exactly like his mother, the beautiful Balna, that the Rajah was filled with joy and sorrow.

“Tell me, child,” he cried, “who are you, and who was your mother?”

“I am Muchie Lal,” answered the boy, “and my mother is the Ranee Balna, and we live here by the river in the hole of an old seven-headed cobra.”

Then Muchie Rajah knelt down by the cobra’s hole and called, “Oh, my dear wife, if it is you, and you are still alive, answer me!”

Balna heard his voice down in the cobra’s hole, and came running out and threw herself into his arms.

“Oh, I have waited for you so long,” she cried, “but you have come at last, and now I can go back with you to the palace.”

So they were very happy. Only the cobra was sad to have them go, and the cobra’s children were grieved to lose their little playmate. But he promised them to come back sometimes and play with them there by the river.

Then the Rajah and the Ranee and Muchie Lal all went back to the palace together, and there was great rejoicing.

But when the fakir’s wife and her daughter heard that Balna was still alive, and that her husband had found her, they were so frightened that they ran away and hid themselves in the deep forest, and no one has ever heard of them again from that day to this.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] A long piece of cotton or silk cloth, forming the principal garment of Hindu women.

THE MAGIC RICE KETTLE
A KOREAN STORY

THERE was once an old man who was so poor he was scarcely able to buy food enough to keep him alive.

He had never married, and so he had no children, but he had a little dog and cat that lived with him, and these two he loved as though they were his own son and daughter. What little he had was shared with them, and if they were sometimes hungry, it was because he had nothing in the house to eat.

One day the old man found that all he had was one scant handful of rice.

“Alas, my little dog and cat, what will become of us now?” he cried. “This handful of rice is all that is left to keep us alive. After it is gone, you must seek another master who can feed you better than I. Even if I must starve, that is no reason why you should too.”

The little cat mewed, and the dog looked up into his master’s face, as though they had understood all he said to them.

The old man put the rice over the fire to cook, and just as it was done, and he was about to feed the animals, the light in the hut was darkened; looking round, he saw a tall stranger standing in the open doorway.

“Good day,” said the stranger.

“Good day,” answered the old man.

“I have come a long way,” said the stranger, “and I am footsore and weary. May I come in and rest?”

Yes, he might do that and welcome.

The stranger came in and sat down in the most comfortable place. “I am hungry as well as weary.”

“Alas,” cried the old man, “this is a poor house in which to seek for food.”

The stranger looked all about him. “Is not that rice that I see?” he asked, pointing to the kettle.

“Yes, it is rice, but my little dog and cat are hungry also, and not another morsel have we in the house beside that.”

“Nevertheless, it is right that a man should be fed before dumb brutes,” said the stranger. “Give me at least a taste of the rice before you feed them.”

The old man did not know how to refuse him.

“Take some of it, then,” he said, “but leave a little for them, I beg of you.”

At once the stranger dipped into the kettle and began to eat, and he ate so fast that before the old man could stop him, all the rice was gone from the kettle, to the very last grain.

The old man was cut to the heart to think that his guest could have done this. Now his little dog and cat would have to go to bed hungry. All the same, he said nothing. He took up the empty kettle and was about to put it back on the shelf when the stranger said to him, “Fill the kettle with water and hang it over the fire again.”

“Why should I do that?” asked the old man. “Water will not fill our stomachs or satisfy our hunger.”

“Nevertheless, do as I bid you,” said the stranger.

He spoke in such a way that the old man did not dare to disobey him. Muttering to himself, he filled the kettle with water and hung it over the fire.

The stranger drew out a piece of something that looked like amber and threw it in the pot. At once the water began to boil, and as it did so it became filled with rice. And such rice! The grains were twice as big as usual, and from them arose a smell more delicious than anything the old man had ever smelled before in all his life.

Filled with wonder and fear, he turned toward where the stranger had been sitting, but the guest was gone. He had disappeared, and only the little cat and dog were left in the room, waiting hungrily for their dinner.

The old man lifted the kettle from the fire and began to serve out the rice. And now a still more wonderful thing happened. No matter how much was dipped out from the kettle, still it was always full. He could hardly believe his eyes. He dipped and dipped. Soon all the pots and kettles and bowls in the house were full of rice, and still the more he took out the more there was.

“It is magic,” cried the old man. “It must be that the amber the stranger threw in the pot was a charm. If so, puss and my dog and I need never suffer hunger again.”

And so it turned out to be. As long as the amber was in the kettle, it was always full of rice to the brim. The rice was always fresh, and delicious too, so that not only the neighbours but the people from the village across the river came to buy it; and they paid well for it.

The little cat and dog grew fat and sleek. As for the man, he not only had enough to eat, but he was able to buy for

himself all the clothes he needed and to make presents to those who were poorer than himself.

One evening the old man felt very tired. So many people had come through the day to buy rice that his arm quite ached with serving it out.

He took a bowl and filled it for the cat and dog, and was about to set it on the floor when he noticed to his surprise that the kettle was not as full as it had been. He took another bowl and dipped out some more of the rice. The kettle failed to fill itself.

Again he dipped, and the more he took out, the emptier the kettle grew. The old man was very much frightened. He plunged his hands into the rice that was left in the kettle and began to feel about for the charm, but it was not there. Somehow, that day, while he was dipping out the rice for his customers, he must have dipped out the charm, and some one had carried it off home with his bowl of rice.

The old man was ready to tear his hair with despair. At once he ran out and began to go about the neighbourhood, knocking at all the doors and begging to know whether a piece of amber had been found in the rice the people there had bought that day. But every one told him no. They had found nothing in their bowls but rice.

Worn out with sorrow, he went back to his hut at last and threw himself on the floor to sleep. It was a long time, however, before he could close his eyes. Soon all the money that had been paid him for the rice would be spent, and he was too old to work. Then there would be nothing for him but the same poverty and hunger he had endured for so many years. And his little dog and cat would have to suffer with him unless they were wise enough to run away and seek another master. At last, toward morning, the old man

fell asleep, and then the dog and cat began to talk together in low tones.

“This is a bad business,” said the dog.

“Bad enough,” answered puss. “Our master has been very careless. He deserves to suffer. As for me, I have no notion of being half-starved again the way I used to be. I shall go away and try to find another home where there will be more to eat than here.”

“You are very ungrateful,” answered the dog. “Instead of planning to run away, you ought to set your wits to work to think how we can help our master.”

“But how could we do that? I know of no way.”

“Let us go out and hunt for the charm. Perhaps we can find it. Our sense of smell is so keen that if we came anywhere near where it is I am sure we could find it, however well it was hidden. We will go from house to house—all through the village, if need be. I will nose about in the gardens and out-buildings, and you must manage to creep into the houses and hunt about through the rooms.”

“Very well,” answered the cat. “I am sure I would be glad enough to help our master, and to stay with him too, if only he could give us enough to eat.”

So, early the next day, before the old man was awake, the dog and the cat started out together on their search. The people of the village were still asleep, but the cat managed to find a way to creep into several of the houses, and the dog searched about outside, as he had promised to do.

But with all their searchings, they found nothing except some scraps of food here and there. These they ate, and so

satisfied their hunger somewhat. Then, when night came, they returned home, footsore and weary.

The old man was very glad to see them. All day he had missed them and had wondered where they were. He had saved some supper for them and was surprised that they did not seem more hungry for it. He was still very sad. All day people had been coming to the hut to buy rice from him, and when they found he had none to sell, they had been very much disappointed. Some of them had even been angry and had scolded him.

The following day the dog and cat continued their search, but night found them still unsuccessful. So it went on, day after day and week after week. At last they had visited every house in the village, but they had seen and heard nothing of the charm.

“Now you see how it is. We are only wasting our time,” said the cat. “I knew we could not find it, and I, for one, shall begin to look for another home.”

“Nay, but wait a bit,” answered the dog. “Have you forgotten that many of our master’s customers came from the village across the river? We have not searched there yet.”

“No, nor will we as far as I am concerned,” answered the cat. “I am no swimmer. I have no idea of getting drowned. If you want to search there, you will have to go by yourself.”

The dog began to beg and plead with her. “Very soon,” said he, “the river will be frozen, and then we can cross on the ice without your wetting even the smallest toe of your paw. Only come!”

“Very well,” said the cat at last. “I will do it; but mind you, we must wait until the river is well frozen, and there is no

chance of our breaking through.”

The dog agreed to this, and so, one cold day, when the river was as hard as stone, the two friends crossed to the farther side, and at once began to search the houses there.

At the first house they found nothing. At the second it was the same thing; but no sooner had the cat entered the third house than she smelled something that reminded her of the rice that had bubbled up in the magic kettle. She made her way from one room to the other, and at last she came to a small upper chamber that seemed to be unused. And now she could smell the charm more strongly than ever, and the smell seemed to come from the top of a high chest of drawers.

With a bound puss leaped to the top of it and looked about her. There, pushed well back against the wall, was a heavy wooden box, and the moment the cat put her nose to the keyhole she knew that the charm was inside of it.

She had found the charm, and that was one thing, but how to get it out of the box was quite a different matter. The box was locked, and puss soon found it was impossible to raise the lid. She tried to push it off the chest of drawers, hoping that if it fell on the floor it might burst open, but the box was so heavy that she could not budge it a hair’s breadth. It seemed a hopeless matter. If the dog were only there, no doubt he could have pushed the box off; but then he had no way of getting into the house; and even if he did, he could not climb to the top of the chest of drawers.

But when puss went down to tell him about it, he did not seem to think it was such a hopeless matter after all. He was overjoyed that she had found the charm, and was sure that they could get it out of the box some way or other.

“What we need,” said he, “is to get a good big rat to come and gnaw a hole in the box for us.”

“Yes, but that is not so easy to do,” said the cat. “The rats have no love for me, as you very well know. I have caught and eaten too many of them. I believe they would be glad to starve me to death if they only could.”

“You might make a bargain with them,” said the dog. “They would be glad enough to help you, if you, in return, would promise not to catch any of them for ten years to come.”

Well, the cat did not want to make that bargain at all. She was too fond of catching the rats whenever she could. She and the dog argued about it for a long time, but at last she agreed to do as he wished.

The next thing was to get a message to the king of the rats, and puss knew of a way to manage that. She had seen a mouse-hole near one of the out-buildings, and now she set herself very patiently to wait beside it until the mouse should come out. She had to wait for a long time too. Perhaps the mouse had heard the two friends prowling about. At any rate, it lay so still in its hole that no one would have guessed it was there at all except a cat. At length, toward evening, the mouse thought it might be safe to venture out. But scarcely had it poked its nose out of its hole when the cat pounced upon it and held it in her claws.

The mouse began to beg and plead for mercy. “Oh, good Mrs Cat—oh, dear Mrs Cat, spare me, I pray of you! I have a wife and five little mouselings at home, and they would surely die of grief if any harm came to me.”

“I am not going to hurt you,” answered the cat, though her mouth watered to eat it. “Instead, I am going to let you

go, if you will promise to carry a message for me to the king of the rats.”

When the mouse heard that the cat would let it go, it could hardly believe in its good fortune. It promised that it would do anything the cat wished it to, and at once the cat took her paws off it and set it free. Then she told it what the message was that she wished it to carry for her: she wished the king to send a rat to gnaw a hole in a box so that she could get a charm that was locked away in it; if the king would do this, she, in return, would promise not to hurt or harm any mouse or rat for ten long years.

The mouse listened attentively, and as soon as he was sure he quite understood the message he hurried away to carry it to the king of the rats. He was only gone for a short time, and when he came back he brought a stout, strong young rat with him. This rat had been sent by the king, who was ready to agree to the bargain the cat had proposed, and had sent the strongest, sharpest-toothed rat he had to gnaw the hole in the box.

As soon as the cat heard this, she made her way back into the house, while the rat and the mouse followed close after her, leaving the dog to wait for them outside. The cat led the way to the upper room and showed the rat the box on the chest of drawers. At once he set to work on it. He gnawed and gnawed and gnawed, but the wood was as hard as stone, as well as very thick.

At last he gnawed through it, but the hole was too small for him to crawl through, and he was too exhausted to make it any larger. The cat, indeed, could reach her paw through, and could even feel the charm, but she could not hook it out, though she tried again and again. But here the mouse made itself of use. It slipped through the hole into the box and quickly brought the charm out in its mouth.

When the cat saw the charm she purred with joy. Once again she promised the rat and mouse that she would not even try to catch them or any of their kind for ten years. Then she took the charm in her mouth and ran down to where the dog was.

The dog was even more delighted than she when he saw the charm.

“Oh, my dear master!” he cried. “How happy he will be.”

“Yes,” said the cat; “but now make haste. If the people in the house discover the charm is gone, they might suspect us, and follow us, and try to get it back.”

“Come, then,” said the dog. “But, oh, my dear master! I can hardly wait to show him the charm.”

The cat and dog hurried on down to the river, but when they reached the bank they met with a new difficulty. The weather had suddenly turned very warm and the ice had begun to melt. In many places it was gone altogether, and where it was left it was too thin even to bear such small animals as themselves.

“And now what are we to do?” cried the cat. “We will never be able to get back to our village.”

“Oh, yes, we can,” replied the dog. “Do you mount upon my back. Dig your claws deep into my long hair and hold on tight, and I will carry you across.”

The cat was terribly frightened at the thought of such a thing, but still she saw no other way to cross the river. She climbed upon the dog’s back, fastened her claws well in his hair, and then he plunged into the water and began to swim across.

All went well until they neared the other bank. A crowd of children had gathered there to see the ice break up. When they saw the dog swimming across with the cat on his back, it seemed to them the funniest thing they had ever seen in all their lives.

The dog was so busy swimming that he did not even notice them, but the cat, upon his back, saw everything that was going on. She herself suddenly began to think what a funny thing it was that she should be riding at ease on the dog’s back, while he was swimming so hard.

She tried not to laugh, but she was so amused that at last she could refrain no longer. She burst into a loud cat-laugh, and at once the charm slipped from her mouth plump into the river, and sank to the bottom.

“The charm! The charm!” the cat cried. “I have dropped it in the river, and it has sunk to the bottom.”

As soon as the dog heard that, he dived down into the river to regain it. He was in such a hurry that he never thought of telling the cat of what he meant to do.

The cat’s claws were fastened so firmly in his hair that she could not have let go if she had wished. Also her mouth was open, so that when they went down into the river she swallowed a great deal of water. By the time the dog came to the top again, panting and snorting, the cat was almost drowned.

But the dog was too angry to think anything of that. “Wait till we get to the shore,” he growled. “Just wait until we get to the shore, and see what I will do to you for dropping the charm.”

But the cat had no idea of waiting for this. As they came near the shore, she bounded from the dog’s back to the dry

land, and then she raced away and up a tall tree.

The dog chased after her, but he could not catch her. For some time he stood at the foot of the tree, barking and growling, but at last he trotted on home with drooping head and ears and a sad heart.

The old man was very glad to welcome the dog home again. He had feared it was lost. He looked out from the door in all directions, hoping to see the cat also, but the cat, which had now climbed down from the tree, had gone to look for another home. It feared the dog’s anger too much to venture back to the hut. Moreover, it had no liking for poverty and hunger, and it hoped to find some place where it would be better fed than with the old man.

And now indeed there were hard times in the hut. The old man grew poorer and poorer, and thinner and thinner, and it was just as bad with the faithful dog. The dog spent much of his time down at the river looking sadly at the place where the charm had been lost and wishing there were some way for him to find it.

Now there was a great deal of fishing done in that river, and sometimes one of the fishermen, more kind-hearted than the rest, would throw a fish to the hungry dog. This the dog always carried home to his master, and the two faithful friends would share it together. It was always a feast day when this happened.

One day one of the fishermen, who had been very lucky, called to the dog and threw him a particularly large fish.

The dog caught it in his mouth and started home with it. Suddenly he smelled something: it was like the magic rice that had bubbled up in the pot; it must be the charm; it could be nothing but that; and the smell came from the fish he was carrying in his mouth.

As soon as the dog was sure of this, he began to run. He could not get home fast enough. He reached the hut and bounded in and laid the fish upon the table.

“Good dog! Good dog!” cried his master. “Have you brought us a fine dinner to-day?”

He took his knife and began to prepare the fish, but scarcely had he cut into it before the blade struck against something hard. The old man looked to see what it was, and what was his joy and amazement to find that it was the charm, which the fish must have swallowed.

The old man was so delighted that he hardly knew how to contain himself.

“Oh, my precious charm!” he cried. “Oh, what good fortune! Oh, how happy I am! Wait until I fill the kettle, my dear little dog, and then what a feast we will have.”

He took out the pot and filled it with water, and hung it over the fire. Then he threw the charm into it. At once the rice began to boil and bubble up. The whole house was filled with the delicious smell of it.

It did not take long for the neighbours to find out that the old man had his wonderful rice again. They hastened to buy of him, and soon he had made even more money than before.

One day the cat, which had grown very lean and thin, came sneaking into the house with one of the customers. As soon as the dog saw her he gave a snarl and was about to fly at her, but the old man caught the cat up in his arms. “Oh, my dear little cat,” he cried, “how glad I am to see you. But how thin you have grown! Never mind; there is plenty in the house now, and soon you will grow fat again.”

So the cat came back to her master again, but for as long as she lived the dog never forgave her, and they never became friends again. The old man did not know that however. He loved them both; he was quite happy to have them as companions, and lived very prosperous and contented until the end of his days.

THE CROW PERI
A PERSIAN STORY

THERE was once a youth named Hassan, who was so poor that he had scarcely rags to cover him, and he was often obliged to go hungry to bed.

One day Hassan went out to the forest beyond the city and set a snare, hoping to catch a bird or some small animal that would serve him for a meal. After setting it, he hid himself in the bushes near by to wait. He had not been there long when he heard a loud flapping, and running out he saw that a large black crow was caught in the snare.

Hassan was greatly disappointed. He had hoped for something more worth eating than a crow. However, even that was better than nothing. He took the bird from the snare, and was about to wring its neck when it spoke to him in a human voice.

“Hassan, Hassan, do not kill me! Spare my life and I will make your fortune for you.”

Hassan was greatly surprised to hear the crow speak, but after a moment he swallowed his surprise and answered it.

“Make my fortune!” cried he. “How can you make my fortune?—you, a crow? No, no, I am hungry, and the best fortune that can happen to me now is to have a full stomach!”

Again he was about to wring the bird’s neck, but it called to him so piteously that he could not but pause.

“Hassan! Hassan! You do not know what you are doing. I am no common crow. Let me go now, and do you return to-morrow to this same spot and you will find something in the snare that will be worth more to you than I can possibly be.”

“Very well,” said Hassan. “I will let you go, but I do this through pity, and not because I believe in the least that you can better my fortunes.”

“That is well,” said the crow. “You will see, however, that I will keep my promise. But before you let me go, pluck three feathers from my wings. If you are ever in trouble, blow one of these feathers into the air and call to me, and I will come and give you aid.”

Hassan did as the crow bade him. He plucked three feathers from its wings, but as he did so he could not keep from laughing.

“You may laugh,” said the crow, “but you will soon find that my promises are not vain. To-morrow return to your snare, and you will find in it something that will be of value to you.”

It then spread its wings and flew away over the tree-tops, flapping heavily.

Hassan returned home, but the next day he came to the forest again. As he approached the spot where the snare was, he gave a cry of joy and wonder. Caught in it was the most beautiful bird he had ever seen or dreamed of. Its feathers were of pure silver, and over them played the most gorgeous colours, like the colours of a rainbow. Its eyes shone like diamonds, and its crest was tipped with jewels of seven different kinds.

“Such a bird as this is not to be eaten,” said Hassan to himself. “It is a gift that is fit for the King. I will take it to the

palace and present it to him, and he will be sure to reward me handsomely.” At the same time he could not help marvelling to think how truly the crow had spoken.

The youth hastened back to the city and borrowed a cage from a neighbour. Then he returned to the tree, and put the wonderful bird in the cage, and set out for the palace. He had thrown a piece of cloth over the cage, so as to hide the bird, but the light from it was so bright that it shone through, and set every one to wondering what it could be that the ragged youth was carrying so carefully.

At the palace Hassan found that it was a difficult matter to see the King. At last, however, he was allowed to come before his presence, and at once he uncovered the cage so that the bird could be seen.

The King was filled with wonder at the sight. He had never seen such a bird before. He questioned Hassan and made him repeat again and again the story of how he had caught the bird, and exactly what it was that the crow had said to him.

“There is some magic in this,” said the King. “I will keep the bird, and never before have I received a gift that pleased me so much. I will also prove to you that the crow spoke the truth, for, from now on, your fortune is made.”

The King then caused the youth to be clothed in magnificent garments, and he also gave him for his own a handsome house near to the palace, and slaves to serve him, and gold to spend. Every day he sent for Hassan to come to him, and because the youth was clever and handsome and adroit, he soon became the King’s favourite above all others.

But success is sure to make enemies. The King’s former favourite became very jealous of Hassan, and he began to

scheme to destroy the youth, and win back the King's favour to himself. One day he went to the King and said, "What a pity it is that such a wonderful bird as Hassan has brought you should be kept in a cage! What it should have is an ivory palace, in which you could visit it and sit at ease to watch it."

"That is true," answered the King, "but I do not know how I could obtain such a palace. There is not enough ivory in all my kingdom to build such a thing."

"It is plain enough," answered Hassan's enemy, "that Hassan is the favourite of some magic power. Ask him to build the palace, and if he refuses, threaten him with death. Then I am sure that in some way he will be able to provide it for you."

This the enemy said, not because he at all believed it, but because he wished to destroy Hassan.

After spending a short time in thought, the King agreed to this plan. He sent for Hassan and said to him, "I am, as you know, greatly delighted with the bird that you have given me, but now I wish for still another thing. I wish you to build an ivory palace in which the bird can live, and in which I can go to visit it."

"Alas, your Majesty, how can I build such a place as that?" cried Hassan. "I have nothing of my own, as you know, but only what you yourself have given me, and in all your kingdom there is not enough ivory to build a whole palace of it."

"Nevertheless, you must provide it," answered the King, "and if you do not do so, your life shall answer for it."

When Hassan heard these words, he was greatly troubled. He went out from the King's presence and returned home,

and there he prepared to die, for he knew not where to find enough ivory to build one room, to say nothing of a whole palace.

Suddenly, in the midst of his despair, he remembered the three feathers that he had plucked from the crow's wing. He feared they were lost, but after some search he found them laid away in a corner with the rags he had once worn. He took them up, and blowing one of them into the air he called upon the crow to come and help him.

Almost at once he heard outside a heavy flapping of wings, and a large crow flew in through the window and lighted beside him.

"What do you wish?" asked the crow, "and why have you called upon me? Are you in trouble?"

"Trouble enough," answered Hassan, "and trouble that may end in my losing my life." He then told the crow what it was that the King had demanded of him, and that he did not see how it would be possible for him to carry it out.

"Do not despair over this," answered the crow. "It is not such a difficult matter as you seem to think. Ask the King to give you forty cartloads of wine, with bullocks to pull them, and forty slaves to drive the carts, and do you come away with me into the forest, and I may be able to get the ivory for you."

The youth had little hope of this. Still, he asked the King for the things, as the crow had bade him,—forty cartloads of wine, the bullocks, and the forty slaves, and the King was not slow to give them to him. Then Hassan went away with them into the forest, and the crow flew before to show him in which direction to go. After they had journeyed a long distance, they came to a pool, and all round this pool were marks that showed that it was the drinking-place for a great

herd of elephants. There had been a drought, however, and the water had almost dried up.

The crow bade Hassan fill the pool with the wine he had brought with him, and this he did. Then, by the crow's directions, Hassan hid himself and the carts and bullocks and slaves some little distance away.

Toward evening there was a great noise of trampling and trumpeting in the forest, and a huge herd of elephants came down to the pool to drink. They were very thirsty, for the supply of water had been low for some days. When they found the pool full to the brim, they trumpeted with joy and rushed to it to drink. They drank and drank, and presently they were all overcome with the wine and fell down and lay as though dead.

Then Hassan called to the forty slaves, and they came and cut off all the elephants' tusks and loaded them upon the carts, and there were forty cartloads.

Hassan and his slaves and carts left the forest before the elephants awoke, and by the next day they were back in the city again.

When the King saw the loads of ivory that Hassan had brought with him, he could not wonder enough.

Hassan's enemy was filled with rage and envy, but he dissembled. "Did I not know it?" said he to the King. "I tell you there is nothing in the world that Hassan cannot do if only he wishes to."

The ivory palace was built, and every day the King went there to sit and watch the bird, and Hassan was more of a favourite with him than ever.

But one day Hassan's enemy thought of a new plot to destroy him. He went to the King and said, "What a pity it is

that such a beautiful bird as this should never make a sound. No doubt it could make the most ravishing music if it would but sing."

"Yes, it is a pity," answered the King, and at once he became dissatisfied.

"It must be that the bird misses its former owner," said the enemy. "If Hassan really wished to please you, he would find the former owner and bring him here, so that the bird might sing again."

"Yes, that is true," said the King, "and I would greatly like to hear it sing."

He then sent for Hassan and told him what he wished.

“But, your Majesty,” cried Hassan in despair, “I do not know who was the owner of the bird, nor have I any means for finding out. As you know, I caught it in a snare far away from the city, and where there is no house within sight.”

Nevertheless the King was determined that Hassan must find the former owner of the bird and bring him to the palace. If he did not, his life should answer for it.

Hassan went out from the King’s presence very sad. Then he bethought himself of the crow’s feathers. He took one of the two that still remained, and blew it into the air, and called to the crow to come.

Almost at once the crow appeared and settled on the ground beside him.

“What is it that you wish now?” it asked. “Are you again in trouble?”

“Yes, I am in trouble, and my trouble is very grievous.” Hassan then told the crow what it was that the King demanded of him.

“This is a more difficult matter than the former one,” answered the crow. “Nevertheless, it may be managed. Do you ask the King to give you a vessel fitted out in the most complete and magnificent way. The sails must be of silk and the figurehead of gold. It must be painted and gilded within and without. There must be a dining-hall hung about with velvet curtains, and the dishes must be of solid gold. There must also be a bathroom with a marble bath-tub, and there must be damsels on the ship, dressed in shining colours, and with bracelets and anklets of gold set with precious stones. Do this, and then, when the vessel is ready, I will instruct you further.”

Hassan did as the crow bade him. He went to the King and asked him for a vessel fitted out in exactly the manner the crow had described to him. This the King gave him.

When the vessel was finished, Hassan went on board, taking the crow with him. They sailed away and sailed away, and always the crow told Hassan in which direction to steer. After seven days and seven nights, they came within sight of an island. The island was very pleasant to look upon, for there were flowers and trees loaded with fruit, and shining domes and palaces.

“Look, Hassan,” said the crow. “That is the place whither we are bound. Now listen attentively to what I tell you, for I can guide you no farther; I must leave you, but if you will follow out exactly all my directions, everything will go well with you. That island belongs to the Queen of the Peris. She is a very powerful fairy, and very beautiful. She is very curious as well. When she sees your vessel, she will be anxious to find out about it, whence it comes, and who is the owner. She will send her messengers to inquire about it. But you must answer no questions, and you must let no one but the Queen herself come on board. She will wish to go all over the vessel, and when she sees the bathroom she will admire it so much that she will wish to take a bath there. This you must agree to. Then, while she is bathing, you must sail away with her, for she is the owner of the Wonder Bird, and for her and her alone will it sing.”

Hassan promised to do exactly as the crow bade him in all things, and then it spread its wings and flew away and out of sight. Hassan ordered the captain to sail the vessel up close to the shore of the island, and there they dropped anchor.

Presently he could see that they had been observed from the island. People gathered on the shore, many of them

magnificently dressed, and presently several boats put out and were rowed over to the ship’s side. In them were messengers from the Queen.

These messengers questioned Hassan as to whence the vessel came and whose it was. But Hassan would answer none of these questions. Neither would he allow them to come on board to examine the vessel, though they greatly wished it, and it had been, indeed, their Queen’s commands that they should do so.

“If the Queen wishes to know about the vessel, she must come herself,” said Hassan.

The messengers returned to shore very much dissatisfied. But presently another boat put forth from the shore, and in it was the Queen herself. She was rowed over to the ship’s side, and she said to the youth that she would now come on board herself and bring her maidens with her.

She was so beautiful and so magnificent that Hassan scarcely knew how to refuse her. However, he remembered the crow’s words, and was determined to obey them.

“Your majesty, if you will do me the honour to enter my ship, it and all that are in it are yours,” he said; “but as to anyone’s coming on board with you, that I cannot allow, for I was expressly forbidden to permit anyone but yourself to visit the ship.”

The Queen was very much offended by Hassan’s words. Still, she was so very curious that she could not resist coming on board to see whether the ship was really as magnificent within as it seemed from the outside.

The youth showed her all over it, and she was filled with admiration at the beauty and completeness of its furnishing. When she entered the room where the marble bath was, she

was particularly delighted, and after examining all the arrangements she signified to Hassan that she would like to bathe in the marble tub.

Hassan at once retired and sent the damsels he had brought with him to attend the Queen.

While she was bathing, the sails were set, and the ship sailed away from the island and back across the sea toward Hassan's own country.

When the Queen had finished bathing, and had returned to the deck, she was amazed to find the ship under way and the island already lost to view. She commanded Hassan to carry her back at once to her island, but this the youth would in nowise consent to do. He explained to the Queen why it was that he had carried her off—that it was to save his own life. He said that later on, if she wished, she might return to her own country, but first she must see whether the bird belonged to her, and whether it would sing for her. He also told her so many pleasant things about the King, his master, that the Queen became quite curious to see him.

"I make no doubt from what you tell me," said she, "that the bird is one that I lost some time ago. If it is, I shall be glad to make it sing for your master, but after that I must of course return home, and I shall take the bird with me."

The youth doubted whether the King would agree to this, but he kept his thoughts to himself, and at last brought the Queen to the city and into the King's palace.

When the King saw the lady Hassan had brought with him, he was amazed at her beauty. He could think of nothing else. Even the bird was forgotten. He caused her to sit at his right hand and did all he could to entertain her.

The Queen was no less pleased with him, and some time was spent in talking pleasantly together.

“And now, your Majesty,” said the Queen at last, “let us visit the ivory palace where the Wonder Bird is kept, and see whether it is mine, and if it is, I can promise you that it will immediately begin to sing, and that its voice is as beautiful as its plumage.”

The King at once arose, and together they went to the ivory palace. No sooner had the Queen crossed the threshold than the bird burst into song, and its song was so beautiful that all who heard it stood as though enchanted. They could not stir, nor scarcely breathe until the song was ended.

After the first day at the King’s palace, the Queen spoke no more of returning to her own island. She had fallen deeply in love with the King, and he with her.

Before long they were married, and then Hassan became more of a favourite with them than ever. Wealth and honours were heaped upon him, and there was nothing that the King and Queen were not ready to do for him.

The former favourite was more filled with rage and envy than ever. He could scarcely eat or sleep, he was so envious.

Now after the King and Queen had been married for little more than a year the Queen fell ill, and her illness was so grievous that all the doctors in the kingdom could do nothing for her. At last it seemed as though she must surely die.

When this became known, Hassan’s enemy went to the King and said, “Your Majesty, I am but an ignorant man. I know you think nothing of me or my words, but is it not

possible that there is some drug in the Queen’s own country that might cure her? And if so, why should not Hassan be sent to fetch it for her? For he and he alone knows where her island lies.”

This the enemy said because he hoped that if Hassan returned to the island the people there would either kill him or make a prisoner of him because he had carried off their Queen.

The King, however, never thought of that. He thought only of what might save the Queen’s life. The advice he received seemed to him very wise. He at once sent for Hassan and told him what he wished him to do—that he was to return to the Queen’s own country, and demand of her court physician some drug that would make her well.

Hassan thoroughly understood how dangerous this errand might prove. He knew, too, why his enemy had suggested it; that it was not through any love of the Queen, but from hatred of him.

However, he said nothing of this to the King. He only agreed to what his master wished and at once made ready to set out. First, however, he took out the third feather that the crow had given him, blew it into the air, and called the crow to come to him.

At once the crow appeared.

“What would you have of me now?” it asked of the youth. “Has some new trouble come upon you?”

“That I do not know,” answered Hassan, “but the King is sending me upon a mission that may, it seems to me, prove very dangerous.”

He then told the crow what it was that the King required of him.

The crow seemed greatly disturbed when it heard of the Queen’s illness. “You must go,” it said, “and go at once. There is indeed a drug in the Queen’s palace that will save her life if you can but fetch it in time. You will suffer no harm from the people in the palace. They will, indeed, give you the drug at once when they learn that the Queen is in need of it. But at the gateway of the palace there are two fierce lions. These would certainly tear you to pieces before ever you could enter, unless you had my help to depend on.”

The crow then bade the youth look carefully at its right wing. “You will find there a single silver feather,” it said. “Pluck it out and carry it with you. When the lions spring at you, you must at once touch them with that feather, and then they will become gentle, and you can pass them by unharmed.”

The crow stooped before Hassan and spread wide its wings, and Hassan saw that the third feather from the tip of the right wing was of pure silver. He plucked it out, and having hidden it in a safe place in his clothing, he started out on his journey. For seven days and seven nights he sailed across the seas in the same direction as he had gone before, and on the morning of the eighth day he came within sight of the island. He landed and made his way toward the palace, and he saw no one on his way. No sooner did he approach the gateway than two fierce lions sprang out and rushed at him as though to tear him to pieces.

Hassan was terrified at their appearance. It seemed as though he must surely lose his life, but he stood firm until they were almost upon him, and then he touched them with the feather. At once they became perfectly gentle, and even fawned at his feet as though he were their master. So Hassan passed by them unharmed and entered the palace.

Those who were there were very much surprised to see a stranger enter. They could not understand how it was he had been able to pass by the lions without being torn to pieces.

The youth explained the matter to them, however, and showed them the silver feather. He also told them the sore need of their Queen, and begged them, if they had any drug that could save her, to bring it to him at once and let him go.

The people of the palace looked at him strangely when he showed them the feather. But when he made known the illness of the Queen they hastened to fetch a drug she always used, and gave it to him.

“This will save her,” they told him, “for she has often used it to bring back life when it was almost gone.”

They then escorted him to the seashore, showing him the greatest honour, and many of them wished to return with him to the King’s country, but this he dared not allow.

It was again seven days and seven nights before Hassan came to the end of the journey, and by that time the King was in despair. He had no longer any hope. However, when he heard that the ship had arrived, he sent his swiftest horses and riders to meet Hassan and bring him to the palace.

The youth was at once taken into the room where the Queen was lying stretched upon a couch, seemingly lifeless. The King, the court physician, and her attendants were with her.

“Have you brought it? The drug?” cried the King.

Hassan drew it forth from his bosom, where he carried it, and placed it in the hands of the Queen’s physician. He did

not notice that the crow had followed him into the room.

The physician poured a few drops of the drug into a goblet and held it to the Queen’s lips. No sooner had she swallowed it than a wonderful change came over her. The colour returned to her cheeks and the life to her limbs. She opened her eyes and sat up and looked about her.

At once her eyes fell upon the crow, and it was to it that she addressed her first words.

“Oh, thou careless and disobedient one!” she cried, “into what danger didst thou not throw thy mistress.”

“Alas!” answered the crow, “thou hast indeed been near to death. But all that is over now. There is only happiness before thee. But for me, is my misery never to end?”

“Yes, and that right soon,” cried the Queen. “If I owe my danger to thee, so also do I owe to thee my happiness. Draw near to me.”

All in the room had listened in wonder to this talk between the Queen and the crow. But a still stranger thing was to happen.

As the crow hopped close to the couch, the Queen took a few drops of water from a vial near by and sprinkled it over the bird, at the same time pronouncing some magic words.

At once, instead of the crow, a tall and graceful maiden stood there before the Queen, a maiden of such great beauty that she was even the equal of the Queen herself.

The King and Hassan were filled with wonder at this sight.

The Queen then turned to the King with a gentle smile.

“This maiden,” said she, “was my favourite of all the Peris that once attended me. But she grew proud and haughty

because of my favour, and at last presumed to disobey even me. To punish her, I changed her into a crow and sent her to fly about the world, despised by all. But I will now forgive her because she brought me to you, and will take her back into favour if she can assure me of her repentance.”

The Peri sank on her knees before the Queen and kissed her hand, weeping. She assured her mistress that her pride was indeed broken, and that from now on she would be her faithful and obedient servant.

The Queen then raised her from her knees and made her sit beside her, and all was joy and happiness.

As for Hassan, he found the maiden so beautiful that he could not keep his eyes from her. Already he loved her with his whole heart, and longed for nothing so much as to have her for a wife. The Peri returned his love, and with the consent of the King and Queen they were married, and from that time on they lived in the greatest joy and contentment.

As for the former favourite, he was so miserable over the sight of Hassan’s happiness that at length he could bear it no longer. He sold his house and goods and sailed away, no one knew whither, and if anyone regretted him, it was not Hassan.

THE FOUR WISHES
A GERMAN STORY

THERE was once a baron so rich and powerful that only the king himself was greater. He was very fierce and warlike, and what he wished for he took from rich and poor alike, and none was able to withstand him.

The baron had a very gentle and beautiful wife. Often she wept bitterly over the evil deeds her husband did in the world, but this the baron never knew, for she was careful to hide her tears from him.

One day the lady was sitting beside a fountain in the gardens, and she was very sad. Presently she leaned her head on her hand and began to weep. Suddenly the waters of the fountain were disturbed, and up from the midst of them arose the figure of a nixie or water spirit.

The lady was frightened at such a strange sight, but the nixie spoke to her gently and bade her not be afraid.

“I,” said she, “am the spirit who watches over the fortunes of the castle. I have come to tell you that within a year a child will be born to you—a little girl. This child will suffer many things, both dangers and sorrows. There is only one way in which she can be protected. If you will make me her godmother I will be able to guard her and bring her safely through her troubles, but in no other way can she be saved from them.”

The lady was filled with amazement at what she heard. She had known there was a spirit that watched over the

fortunes of the castle, and now she promised eagerly that if a child came to her the nixie should be its godmother.

At once the nixie smiled at her and waved its hand, and then sank back again into the waters of the fountain.

In less than a year, as the nixie had foretold, a little daughter was born to the lady, a child as beautiful as the day. The time for christening the child was set. She was to be called Matilda, after her mother, but the lady refused to say who was to stand godmother to the child. A godmother she had chosen, but she would tell no one who that godmother was.

The hour of the christening arrived, all the ladies and gentlemen of the court were gathered together, and still no godmother. Suddenly, without a sound, a stranger appeared among them. She was dressed from head to foot in silver that shone and rippled like running water, and a silver veil was wound about her head. At once the Lady Matilda recognized her as the nixie.

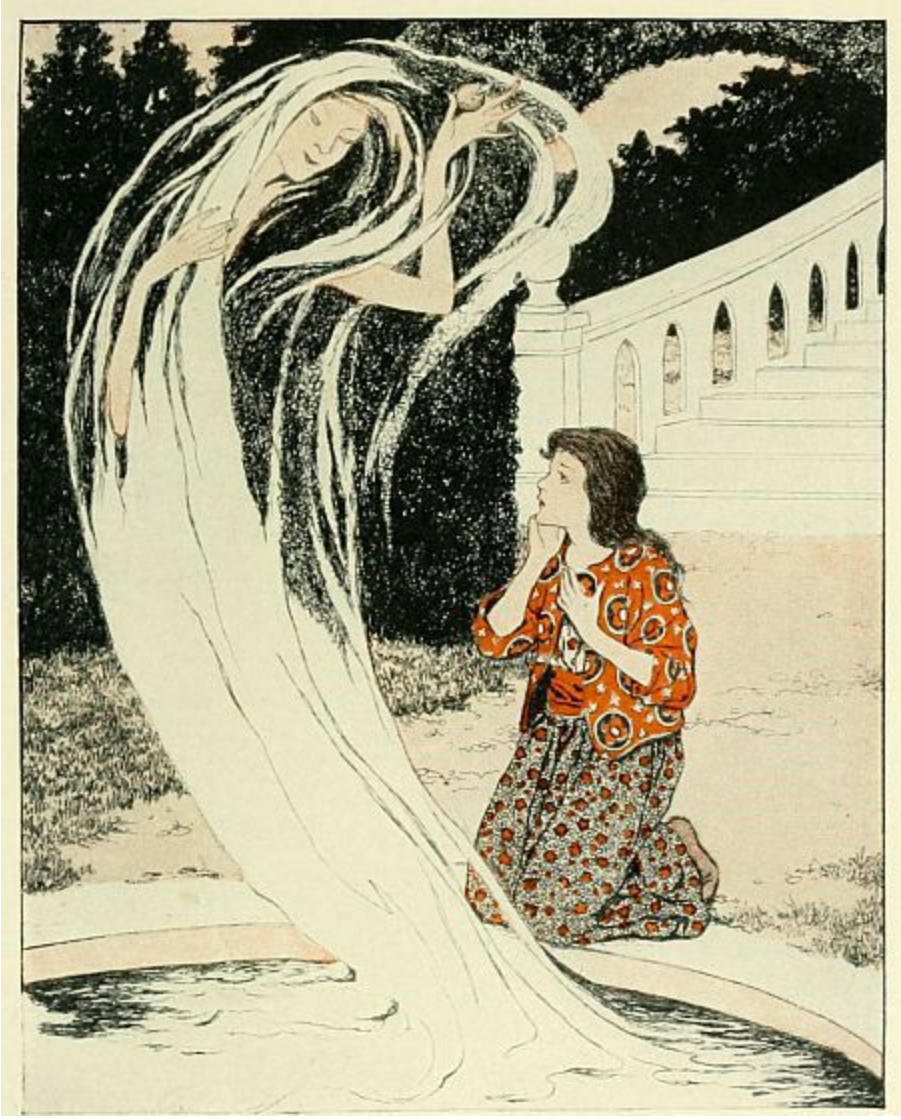
The water spirit took her place as godmother to the child, and the christening proceeded. When it was over, every one looked to see what gift the godmother would give the child. They had no doubt that it would be something very rare and handsome, but instead it was only a common little carved wooden ball, such as ladies sometimes use to carry perfume in. This the godmother placed in the child’s hand. Then, turning to the lady, she said, “Guard carefully this ball which I have given to the child. Place it in some safe place for her. Her good fortune—yes, even her life itself—depends upon this ball.”

After saying this, the stranger at once disappeared, and none could tell where she went, nor how.

The Lady Matilda took the ball and put it away among her jewels in a strong chest, and orders were given that no one should touch or disturb it. As soon as the little Matilda was old enough, the mother meant to give the ball to her and tell her of its value.

Before that time, however, and while the child was still very young, the lady died, and the ball was forgotten. The little Matilda grew up, knowing nothing of its worth; indeed, she did not even know that there was such a thing in the castle.

Not long after his wife’s death the baron married again. His second wife was a very handsome woman, but she was cold and proud and envious. From the first day she saw Matilda, she hated the child because of her beauty and her gentleness. She treated her so unkindly that Matilda was very unhappy. She was worse fed and clothed than any servant in the castle, and the meanest room and the hardest bed were given to her. Still she grew in beauty day by day, and every one except the stepmother loved her for her gentle ways and her sweetness.



“DO NOT BE AFRAID, MY CHILD,” SAID THE NIXIE TO MATILDA

One day the stepmother wished to examine the jewels that had once belonged to the Lady Matilda. She intended to choose from among them such as she might admire. She had the jewel casket brought to her room, and unlocked it and began to examine the ornaments that were in it. Some of them she decided to keep, but others she threw aside. At last, hidden away in a corner, she came upon a common little carved wooden ball.

“What is this?” she asked. “Why should this have been locked away with the jewels as though it were valuable?”

Her ladies whom she had brought with her to the castle could not tell her, and she disdainfully threw the ball out through the open window of her room.

Now it so chanced that Matilda was passing under the window at that very time, and the ball fell directly at her feet. Surprised, she stooped and picked it up, and examined it. The top seemed to be screwed on, but though she tried again and again she could not unscrew it. However, Matilda took the greatest fancy to the ball. Through the day she carried it in her pocket or the bosom of her dress, and at night she slipped it under her pillow, and somehow she felt quite happy and contented now in spite of the unkindness of her stepmother.

One day Matilda sat down beside the fountain in the garden, and, as usual, she began to play with the ball, tossing it up into the air and catching it again. Suddenly the ball slipped from her fingers and fell into the fountain. Matilda bent over and tried to reach it, but it had floated beyond her reach. Then a hand appeared in the waters and seized it, and the figure of the nixie rose out of the fountain.

“Do not be afraid, my child,” said the nixie to Matilda. “I wish you nothing but good. I am your godmother, and it was I who gave this ball to your mother to keep for you until you were old enough to take charge of it yourself. Unfortunately she died before that time arrived. It is well you have found it at last, for the time is at hand when you will need it. Listen well to what I now tell you. This ball contains three wishes which you can use at any time. But be careful. Only in the time of your greatest need must you use its magic, for after it has given you three wishes, its power will be gone, and it can do nothing more for you.”

The nixie then told Matilda that there was one other way in which the ball could aid her. If at any time she wished to

become invisible, she had only to hold it in her hand and say:

“Light to guide me,
Dark to hide me,
Let no harm nor ill betide me.”

No one then would be able to see her until she wished to become visible again.

At once, after saying this, the nixie disappeared, dissolving back into the waters, but the ball she left lying on the grass beside the fountain.

Matilda picked it up and slipped it into her bosom, and then went back to the castle, very grave and thoughtful.

Now in the years while Matilda was growing to womanhood, the baron’s enemies had grown very strong, so strong indeed that they no longer feared him. A plan was made to attack him in his castle, to take him prisoner, and to rob him of the possessions that he himself had stolen from others. The attack was planned for a certain night when there would be no moon, and it would be too dark for those inside the castle to see their enemies approach.

Matilda went to bed early that evening, and soon fell asleep. She slept for only a few hours, however. Suddenly, just before midnight, she was awakened by a great uproar and confusion. The assault had begun. The baron’s enemies had surrounded the castle. They entered in and captured the baron and his wife, and presently they came to the door of Matilda’s room and began to break down the door. The poor girl was overcome with terror.

Suddenly she remembered the charm the nixie had taught her. She caught up the wooden ball from under her pillow, and in a whisper she repeated:

“Light to guide me,
Dark to hide me,
Let no harm nor ill betide me.”

At once she became invisible. The door was broken open, and the foemen came into the room, but they saw no one. Matilda, indeed, was there close beside them, but they could not see her, and she was careful not to brush against them. Unseen, she passed from the room and down the stairs and out of the castle. There was a light in the heavens now, a red glow of flames, for the castle had been set on fire.

Matilda hurried away, and when she had gone far enough to feel that she was safe, she wished and became visible again. Just as day was breaking, she came to a deep forest. So far she had seen no one, but before venturing farther she gathered roots and herbs, and with them she stained her face and hands so that no one would have known her. She looked like a gipsy, or some poor servant-maid in search of work. She had now no fear of robbers, for who would think of stopping anyone so poor and miserable-looking as she?

All day she travelled through the forest, and by night she came out on the other side of it and saw before her a great castle. Matilda knocked at the door and humbly begged the woman who opened it to take her in and give her food and shelter. In return for such help she would gladly do any work that might be needed about the castle.

Now it so happened that the old woman was the housekeeper, and she was in need of a scullery-maid. Matilda, with her poor clothes and her darkened hands and face, looked just the one for such a place.

“If you are willing to work,” said the housekeeper, “it may be that we can strike a bargain. You may begin by scouring

these pots and pans. If you do it well, I will keep you here as scullery-maid.”

Matilda at once set to work, and soon had the kettles and pans shining like new. The housekeeper was very much pleased, and decided to engage her. So Matilda became a scullery-maid in the castle. Sometimes she helped the cook, for she was very clever in cookery.

Now the nobleman to whom this castle belonged was a young and handsome count named Conrad. His father was dead and his mother was anxious to see him married; but never yet had the count seen any lady who attracted him sufficiently.

At last the old countess decided to give a ball for the count, and to invite to it all the most beautiful ladies from the country round. Among them all she hoped her son would see some one whom he would care to make his wife.

The invitations were sent out, and everywhere there was great excitement. Not only was the count young and handsome; he was also as rich as a prince, and so courteous that he was beloved by all. There were few among the ladies who did not hope that they might be chosen as his bride.

At the castle nothing was talked of but the ball that was to be given for the count. Matilda listened to all that was said, and the more she heard, the more she wished that she too might go to the dance and mingle with the other ladies. All the while she had been at the castle she had kept the ball with her, but she had been careful not to use any of the three wishes it contained. But now the time had come when she determined to try its power. The night of the ball Matilda finished her work early, and then she stole away to her room and fastened the door so that no one could come in.

First of all she took water and washed off the stain from her face and hands. When this was done, her skin was once more as fair as a lily, and her cheeks as red as roses. She shook down her wonderful hair so that it fell in a cloud about her. She combed and braided it, and then she took out the little wooden ball and held it in her hand.

“Little ball, I hold you close;
Little ball, I hold you tight;
By your magic power I pray
Grant my wish to me to-night,”

she whispered. And then, “I wish,” she said, “for a gown more beautiful than any that ever was seen, and for ornaments to go with it—jewels for my neck and jewels for my hair, and slippers, and a fan to wave in my hand.”

At once, upon the bed, appeared a gown more beautiful than Matilda had ever dreamed of. It was woven all of silver, and set with pearls, and with it there were ornaments for her neck and hair and a fan of shining plumes; and on the floor beside the bed stood a tiny pair of satin slippers embroidered with pearls and threads of silver.

Trembling with haste, Matilda dressed, for already the night was late, and when at last she stood clothed all in silvery white, the whole room shone with the light of her beauty.

She stole down the stairs unnoticed, and it was not long before she reached the old countess’s house where the ball was being held. Many beautiful ladies were there, the loveliest in the land, but when Matilda entered the ballroom, she outshone them all as the moon outshines the stars at night.

From the moment he saw her Count Conrad had eyes for no one else, and there was no one else with whom he would dance. Before the end of the evening he drew her aside into another room.

“Listen,” said he. “Never before in all my life have I seen anyone as beautiful as you, nor one whom I could love as already I love you. Tell me, I pray, who you are. Only some great lady or princess could be as beautiful as you.”

Matilda was filled with joy when the count said he loved her, but immediately after she became sad, for she thought that if he learned she was only a kitchen-maid in his castle, he would no longer care for her.

“Look, I beg of you,” she said, “and see whether there is not some one listening at the door.”

The count thought Matilda wished to tell him some secret, and he at once went to the door to make sure that no one could overhear it.

Matilda drew the wooden ball from her pocket and whispered:

“Light to guide me,
Dark to hide me,
Let no harm nor ill betide me.”

At once she became invisible, and she slipped past the count and hurried back to the castle.

When the count turned, he was very much surprised to find that his beautiful partner had disappeared. He could not imagine what had become of her. He hunted for her everywhere, and asked every one which way she had gone, but no one had seen her.

He was very much disquieted at this. However, there was to be another ball the next night, and Count Conrad felt sure Matilda would appear at it also. This time he was determined she should not leave him until he knew who she was and whence she came. To make sure of this, he decided to set a guard about the house, with orders to follow any strange lady who passed out alone, and watch where she went.

All the next day but little was to be heard anywhere but talk of the wonderful stranger, of how beautiful she had been, and how magnificently dressed, and of how much the count had admired her. Every one wondered whether she would appear again at the second ball.

When evening came, Matilda made haste to finish her work, and then stole away to her little garret room. Taking the ball in her hand, she said:

“Little ball, now serve me right,
Grant the wish I wish to-night.

I wish I may have a gown even more beautiful than the one I wore last night, and all ornaments that should go with it.”

At once the room was filled with light, and Matilda saw, lying upon the bed, a gown made entirely of cloth of gold, and set with precious stones. There were jewels for her neck and arms, and a pair of golden slippers that shone like glass. Matilda dressed in haste, and throwing a dark cloak over her, she stole away through the night to the ball.

Count Conrad had been watching for her. He would, indeed, look at no one else, and as soon as she entered, he hastened to her side.

If she had been beautiful the night before, she was far more so now. Then she had shone like the moon, but now

she glittered like the sun, so that it dazzled the eyes to look at her.

The count begged her to dance with him, and as soon as he could, he drew her aside into another room. He then took from his hand a ring, and placing it upon her finger, he said, “Now you are my own true love, for you wear my ring upon your finger. But tell me, I pray of you, who you are and whence you come, that I may ask your hand in marriage in a proper manner.”

“Alas, my mother is dead,” answered Matilda, “and my father, I fear, has also been put to death by cruel enemies.”

So saying she dropped her fan. The count at once stooped to pick it up. Quick as thought, as he stooped, Matilda drew her ball from her pocket and whispered the magic charm:

“Light to guide me,
Dark to hide me,
Let no harm nor ill betide me.”

At once she became invisible, and slipping from the room, she hastened back to the castle.

When the count looked up and found that his beautiful partner had once more disappeared, he was in despair. He searched through every room, and then sent for his guards and questioned them closely. None of them could tell him anything of the stranger, however. Not one had seen her pass by. This was not strange, for Matilda had remained invisible until she reached the castle. She was even then in her little attic room, slipping off her beautiful clothes, and staining her face and hands that she might again appear as the kitchen wench.

Again the count had lost her. But now he determined to give a ball himself. He caused it to be made known that this ball was in honour of the unknown beauty, and he had no doubt but that she would appear at it as she had at the other two. This time he determined that not for one instant would he lose sight of her.

The count's ball was to be much more magnificent than those that the old countess had given. All the servants in the castle were set to work preparing for it, and Matilda was no less busy than the others. She had not a moment to herself.

The night of the ball arrived, and there was still much to be done in the kitchen. Matilda began to see that there would be no chance for her to slip away from her work and appear at the ball.

She did indeed ask the housekeeper to allow her an hour that she might go outside and peep in through a window at the dancers, but the housekeeper refused her angrily.

"Look in through the windows!" she cried. "What are you thinking of? You would frighten the ladies to death with your gipsy face and your big eyes. No; do you stay here in the kitchen where you belong, and do your work in a proper manner."

Matilda would not disobey her, but as she scoured the pots and pans, she could not prevent the tears from falling. She could think of nothing but Count Conrad, of how handsome he was, and how kind and gentle.

Meanwhile the count was standing close to the door of the ballroom, waiting for the beautiful stranger to appear. Great coaches rolled up to the entrance of the castle. Beautiful ladies in silks and satins and jewels swept through the rooms. They waved their fans and smiled at the count,

but he had no eyes for any of them. His thoughts were all of Matilda. Little he guessed that even then she was scouring kettles in the kitchen below and weeping as she scoured.

As hour after hour passed and she did not appear, the count's heart grew heavy with grief. By the time the ball was over and his guests were leaving, he was quite ill with disappointment. He could hardly stand to bid them farewell. The beautiful stranger had not come, and now he feared he would never see her again.

The next day word passed through the castle that the young count was unable to leave his bed. He had fallen ill through grief and disappointment. Doctors were sent for, but they could do nothing for him. One thing could cure him and one alone, and that was some knowledge of the beautiful stranger who had danced with him.

Matilda had managed to win the confidence of the old housekeeper, and now she went to her and said, "I have heard how ill the count is and how all the medicines the doctors have given him have failed to help him. If you will but let me, I can make a broth of such wonderful qualities that if the count will but taste of it he will be cured."

At first the housekeeper refused, but Matilda still urged and entreated, until at last the old woman grew tired of saying 'no' to her.

"Very well, then," she said. "It will do no harm for you to make a bowl of broth, but as to its having the power to cure the count, that, of course, I do not believe."

Matilda at once set to work, and as she was very clever at cooking, she made a broth so rich and delicious that it made the mouth water just to smell of it. It was as clear as crystal, and of a rich amber colour. When it was done, she put it in a silver bowl and covered it over with a napkin, but before

doing this she managed to drop into it the ring that the count had given her.

The broth was so good that the housekeeper was delighted with it, and she herself carried it up to her master’s room.

When she entered with it, the count turned away his head. “Why do you come here?” he said. “Do not trouble me. I wish for nothing.”

But the housekeeper would not be sent away in this manner. “I have brought you a bowl of broth,” she said, “and it is so delicious that if you will but taste of it, I am sure you will be better.”

With these words she uncovered the bowl and placed it before the count, and the broth was so clear that at once he saw the ring lying at the bottom of it.

“What is this!” he cried. “Who has made this broth? Tell me immediately.”

The housekeeper was frightened at his look and tone. “It is good broth,” she cried; “the best of broth, I am sure, even though it was made by our little kitchen-maid.”

“Whoever made it, send her to me at once,” demanded the count.

The housekeeper was very much concerned. She hurried away to the kitchen.

“What is to be done now?” she said to Matilda. “The count demands to see you, but the sight of your rags and dark face would surely throw him into a fever. This is a pretty piece of work!”

“Do not be troubled,” said Matilda. “I will wash my face and hands, and then do you lend me your cloak and your long veil. With them I can cover myself so that he will not be able to see what I look like.”

To this the housekeeper agreed, as she could think of no better plan.

Matilda took the cloak and veil and hastened away with them to her own room. There she combed her hair and washed off the stain, and then she put on her golden dress and her jewels, which she had kept hidden away since the night of the ball. When she was dressed, she covered herself carefully with the cloak and veil, so that even the housekeeper’s prying eyes could not catch a glint of the finery beneath. So disguised, Matilda went up to Count Conrad’s room and stood modestly just inside the doorway.

The count had been waiting for her impatiently, and as soon as she entered, he said, “Was it you who made the broth the housekeeper brought to me?”

“It was I,” answered Matilda.

“And who was it who put the ring in it?”

“It was I.”

“Then tell me,” cried the count, “who gave you the ring. How came you by it?”

“It was you yourself who gave me the ring, and it was you who placed it on my finger,” said Matilda.

With these words she put aside the veil and dropped the cloak from her shoulders. There she stood before him, blushing, and filling all the room with the light of her beauty.

The count was transported with joy. “You have come!” he cried, “and you have come at the time when I most despaired of finding you. Now we will be married, and never again shall you leave me.”

At these words Matilda grew very sad. “Alas, that may not be,” said she. “Have you forgotten that I am only your kitchen-maid?”

But the count loved her too dearly to care for that. “You will be my wife,” he said, “and then who will dare to remember what you were before?”

“Yes, but there is another reason why we can never, never marry,” sighed Matilda. “You will agree with me as to that when I tell you that my father was your father’s bitterest enemy.”

“Who was your father?” asked the count, wondering.

Matilda then related to him her whole story, who her father was, how her mother had died while she was still a child, and about her stepmother and her nixie godmother. She also told him of how she had chanced to come to his castle and take service there.

The count listened to all she had to say, and when she had come to an end, he took her in his arms and embraced her tenderly.

“I care not who you are,” he said, “nor whence you come. I know only that I love you, and that you and you alone shall be my bride.”

Matilda was very happy when she heard this. She already loved the count dearly, and now she could no longer refuse him.

Almost at once preparations for the wedding were begun, and people from far and near were invited to come to it.

The first to be asked was the count’s mother, a proud and covetous old woman. She had been the one who was most eager for her son to marry, but when she heard whom he had chosen for a bride, that it was the daughter of an enemy, and, moreover, a girl both poor and homeless, she was filled with rage.

At once she hastened to the castle, and urged and entreated the count to give up Matilda, but he would not listen to her. He loved his bride too tenderly for that.

When his mother found that all her efforts to separate them were in vain, she left the castle in a fury, and drove away to her home. Never again, she vowed, would she set foot in the castle as long as Matilda was there, and the time would come when the young count would bitterly regret his choice of a wife.

Count Conrad was grieved at his mother’s anger, but he was too happy with Matilda to grieve long. He and she were soon married, and so sweet and gentle was her character that every day the count loved her better and was more contented with his choice.

When the count and Matilda had been married for a year, a child was born to them, a little boy so handsome and big and strong that the count was filled with joy and pride.

The nurse who had charge of the child was sent to the castle by the old countess, and both the count and Matilda were delighted at what they took to be a sign that his mother had forgiven them. This was not the case however. The old countess still hated Matilda with a bitter hatred, and had sent the nurse, hoping she might find some way to injure her, and if possible to separate her from the count.

Matilda always slept with the baby’s cradle close to her own bed. One night, when all the castle was wrapped in sleep, the old nurse slipped into the room, and lifting the child carefully from the cradle, she carried it away without waking anyone.

In the morning, as soon as Matilda awoke, her eyes as usual turned first of all to the cradle. She was greatly surprised to see that it was empty, and at once called the nurse and demanded what had become of the child.

The nurse pretended to be equally surprised. “I do not know,” she answered. “When I last saw him, he was asleep in the cradle beside your ladyship.”

Matilda was very much alarmed. The count was called, the castle searched thoroughly, and every one was questioned, but they could find no trace of the baby.

“It must be some evil spirit or enchantress who has carried him away,” said the nurse. “Last night I heard a beating of wings outside my window, and a strange sound of sighing and moaning, but I thought it was only some great bird that was lost in the night.”

This the nurse said not because she had really heard anything, but because this was part of a plot that she and the old countess had hatched between them.

Days passed, and still nothing was heard of the child. The count was in despair. Even Matilda herself was scarcely more dear to him than his infant son.

At the end of a year another child was born to Matilda, and this also was a son, a child as strong and handsome as the first.

But again, when the infant was only a few weeks old, the nurse stole it away secretly in the night, without being seen

by anyone. In the morning the cradle was empty, and no trace of the child could be found anywhere.

The count was filled with grief and anguish. In his heart he secretly blamed Matilda because she had not awakened when the child was carried away. But he restrained himself from reproaching her. He could not help treating her somewhat coldly, however, and Matilda was grieved to the heart not only over the loss of the child, but because she feared her husband no longer loved her.

At the end of the year, still a third child was born, and now, in order to make sure that it should not be stolen, a watch was kept over the infant—by day and night; and though he slept by Matilda’s side, there was always some one else in the room with them.

But even this precaution could not keep the nurse from carrying out her wicked plans. When the child was still only a few weeks old, she managed one evening to put a sleeping potion in the repast that was served to Matilda, and in that of the attendant as well.

Night came and the child was laid in the cradle close to Matilda’s bed. The attendant took her place at the door. It was not long, however, before Matilda and the attendant fell into a deep sleep. The nurse then stole into the room, and lifting the child from the cradle, she carried it away with her as she had the two others.

When morning came, and it was discovered that this child too had been stolen, the count could restrain himself no longer. The woman who had been in attendance was thrown into prison, and he heaped reproaches on Matilda for having allowed this third child, the most beautiful of them all, to be stolen from her side.

“You should not be surprised,” said the wicked nurse, “and the attendant is not to blame. There is some enchantment in this, and if you will come aside with me into a private room, I will tell you of some things I have seen here in the castle in the last three years.”

The count was in a state to listen to anything, and he allowed the nurse to speak to him in private, and to tell him the story that she and the old countess had arranged between them.

She told him that though Matilda seemed so fair and gentle, she was in reality a wicked enchantress. This his mother had known, and it was for this reason she had been so unwilling that he should marry her, and for no other cause. During the night when the child was stolen, the nurse said, she had been awakened by a beating of wings, and had stolen to the door and looked out. There she had seen Matilda talking with a being that from its looks could be nothing but an evil spirit. Presently (so the nurse said) Matilda had gone back into her chamber, and when she returned she was carrying the child, and she had given it into the hands of the strange being. “After that,” said the nurse, “I saw no more, for I was afraid to look. But I make no doubt that that is what has become of all the children, and that the young countess caused the attendant to fall into an enchanted sleep so that she might have a chance to give the baby to the evil spirit.”

The count was so distracted with grief that he was ready to believe anything. He remembered what Matilda had told him of her godmother the nixie, and it seemed to him possible that this water spirit had some power over her that might cause her to sacrifice her children. In his distraction he sent for his mother to question her as to what she knew.

The old countess had been waiting for this summons. She came to him at once and in haste, and her heart was full of evil joy at the thought that at last she was to have Matilda in her power.

When she appeared before her son, however, she dissembled her joy, and pretended to be sad.

“Alas, my dear son,” said she, “what I feared has come to pass at last. I would have warned you before that the bride you had chosen was a wicked enchantress, but I knew you would not listen to me. Now, however, she has shown herself in her own wicked character. She has sacrificed her children to an evil spirit, and it is only right that she should be punished for her wickedness.”

The count knew not what to answer to this. He still loved Matilda, but if she had done such a wicked thing as to give her children to an evil spirit, she must suffer for it.

“What you say may be true,” said he to his mother. “As for me, I am so distracted that I no longer seem to understand anything. I will go away on a long journey, and I will leave Matilda in your hands. Do as you think best with her, only treat her as gently as you can.”

As soon as the count had said this he left his mother and went away, and it was well for his mother that he did so. She was so overjoyed at the way her plans had turned out that she could no longer hide her satisfaction. The count left the castle without bidding farewell to his wife. Matilda was cut to the heart when she found he had left her without a word. She was also terrified at the thought that now the old countess had her in her power.

Matilda had indeed good cause for fear. As soon as the count had gone, his mother caused an iron room to be built. All about this room were ovens arranged in such a way that

the room could be made so hot that it would be impossible for anyone to remain in it for long and live. After it was finished, Matilda was induced to go into it, and as soon as she was inside, the door was shut and locked.

The moment Matilda found that she had been locked in the room alone, she suspected some evil. She looked about her for a way of escape, but the walls were of iron, and the room had been built in such a way that there were no windows.

“Alas,” said Matilda, “are my misfortunes never to end? Oh, my dear husband, how had you the heart to leave me here alone and in the power of that wicked woman?”

In her despair Matilda threw herself down upon the floor of the room. As she did so, she felt something hard in the pocket of her dress. She slipped her hand into it and drew out the wooden ball that she had so long forgotten. One more wish was left to her. Now, if ever, was her time of need. Holding it in her hand she whispered:

“Little ball, so great my need,
Only you can help indeed;
Save me now and set me free,
Give my children back to me.”

Without her willing it, the ball slipped from her fingers and fell upon the floor, and was broken to pieces. From these fragments arose a silvery mist that spread through the room and filled it with a refreshing coolness. In the midst of the mist appeared the nixie, and in her arms she carried three beautiful little boys. They were the children who had been stolen from Matilda.

The nixie smiled upon her godchild and spoke in a voice like the flowing of cool waters. “At last you have remembered me and my gift,” she said. “Long have I been waiting for you to call upon me, my child. Now I am here, and no harm can come to you. Look! Here are the three children that the wicked old countess caused to be thrown into the water, thinking to drown them. But I saved them. They have been safe in my care until you should call upon me, and now I restore them to you.”

So saying, she placed the children in Matilda’s arms, and the mother clasped them to her, weeping with joy.

Meanwhile the men who had been in charge of the ovens that were to heat the room found that in spite of all they could do the walls of it remained cool. They went to the old countess and told her this. “Our fires are burning brightly,” they said, “and are so hot that we can scarcely go near them, and yet the walls of the room are even cooler than when we began.”

The countess could not understand how this could be. She was about to go and probe the mystery when she heard

a clatter of hoofs outside, and a sound of loud voices. She looked from a window, and saw to her surprise and alarm that it was her son returning to the castle.

The count, indeed, had been unable to bear the thought of having left Matilda in his mother’s care. He feared some harm might come to her, and the farther he went, the more anxious he had grown. At last he had turned his horse and ridden back with all speed to tell Matilda that he still loved her, and that whatever their sorrow was, they would bear it together.

As soon as the old countess saw her son, she knew that her plots had failed, and she feared his wrath when he should find his wife shut in the iron room. She determined not to wait for that, and calling the wicked nurse, they escaped together from the castle and fled away, nobody knew whither.

As for the count, he hurried through the castle, searching everywhere for Matilda, and at last he came to the iron room. When he found that she was locked inside it, and saw the ovens all about it, he was like one distracted.

He turned the key and threw open the door, but he scarce dared look inside. He dreaded what he might see there.

When he did summon courage, however, what was his wonder to see not only his wife, but there in her arms the three children they had lost. He could hardly believe his eyes and was well-nigh crazy with joy. Flinging himself on his knees before her, he begged her to forgive him for having doubted her and for having left her as he had done.

Matilda, who was all mildness and sweetness, raised him from his knees and placed the children in his arms.

“See,” said she, “you have no longer any reason to mistrust me. These are our own dear children whom the nixie has returned to us.”

She then told the count the whole story, and when she came to an end they kissed each other and the children, and from that time on they lived in mutual love and happiness.

As for the wicked old countess, unless she died of spite, she may be living and wandering over the world to this very day.

WHY THE ANIMALS NO LONGER FEAR THE SHEEP
A FRENCH CREOLE STORY

LONG, long ago, when the animals were not as wise as they are now, they were all very much afraid of the sheep. Even the lion and tiger were afraid of him. They had never seen him angry, but he had such a solemn look, and his beard was so long, and his horns so strong and curly, that they were sure he would be very dangerous indeed if he were once roused.

One day old Papa Sheep invited Mr Tiger to come and spend the day with him, and he also invited him to bring Little Tiger along to play with Little Sheep, for Mr Tiger's little boy was just the same age as Papa Sheep's little boy.

Mr Tiger was very pleased at this invitation. He was glad to come himself, and he was glad to have Little Tiger become friendly with Little Sheep, for after a while Little Sheep would probably grow up and be just as big and strong and dangerous as his father was.

Mr Tiger and his little boy arrived quite early in the morning at the sheep's house, and they brought a present with them, so that Papa Sheep would feel pleased with them. The present they brought was a basket of nice fresh green things such as all sheep like.

Papa Sheep thanked them for the present, and patted Little Tiger on the head, and then he told the two children to run out of doors and play, because he and Mr Tiger wanted to talk big talk together.

The little ones were very glad to do this, for it was bright and pleasant outside, and they liked it better than staying in the house.

Little Tiger was very frisky and frolicsome, and Little Sheep was too. At first they ran about and chased each other, and tried which could jump highest, but after a while they grew rougher in their play. Little Sheep butted Little Tiger with his forehead, and then Little Tiger raised his paw and gave Little Sheep a blow on the side of the head.

Though the Tiger was young and small, he was also very strong, and his blow sent Little Sheep tumbling heels over head. Little Sheep was not angry however. He got up and laughed and laughed. When he laughed he opened his mouth wide, and Little Tiger was very much surprised to see what little teeth the sheep had. He did not say anything at the time, however, but only went on with his play.

But when Little Tiger and his father were walking home together that evening, Little Tiger said, “Papa, I saw Little Sheep’s teeth to-day, and he only has little, little bits of teeth. They do not look as though they could bite anyone.”

“Hush, hush,” cried the Tiger. “You mustn’t talk in that way. Some one might hear you.”

“But it is true,” said Little Tiger. “Why, I wouldn’t be afraid of Little Sheep now, even if he *did* get angry.”

“Will you be quiet?” cried the Tiger angrily. “If you ever say such a thing again I will box you so hard that you will forget whether you ever saw his teeth or not.”

All the same Mr Tiger could not help wondering whether what Little Tiger had said was true. How strange it would be if Little Sheep only had little weak teeth, and stranger still if Papa Sheep’s teeth were just the same!

That night, after all the Tiger family had gone to bed, Mr Tiger began to talk to his wife in a low tone.

“Do you know what Little Tiger said to-day?”

“No; how should I know? Some nonsense, no doubt.”

“He said he saw Little Sheep’s teeth, and that they were so small and weak he did not believe he could bite anybody.”

“Oh! oh! be quiet,” cried his wife. “Are you crazy to talk so? Suppose some one heard you, and went and told Papa Sheep what you had been saying. He certainly would come and tear us all to pieces.”

Mr Tiger said nothing in answer to this, but the less he said, the more he thought. At last he made up his mind to find out for a certainty whether Papa Sheep had biting teeth or no. For this purpose he in his turn invited Papa Sheep and Little Sheep to come and spend the day with him and his family.

Papa Sheep accepted the invitation, and on the day named he and Little Sheep arrived bright and early at the tiger’s house.

As before, the little ones went out of doors to play, and the big animals sat and talked inside the house.

Presently Mr Tiger brought out a bottle of wine and set it on the table, and he and the sheep began to drink together. The more Papa Sheep drank, the merrier he grew. He quite lost his solemn look. He began to laugh loudly, and he threw back his head and opened his mouth so wide that the tiger could see every tooth he had. And very poor teeth they were too—so small and weak that they were not fit for biting anything tougher than grass.

When Mr Tiger saw how small the sheep’s teeth were, he became very angry. He was in a rage to think he had ever been afraid of Papa Sheep, and had treated him with respect. With a roar he sprang at the old sheep, and gave him such a blow with his paw that the sheep fell down dead.

Little Tiger, outside, heard the noise, and he ran and looked in at the window. As soon as he saw what had happened, he called to Little Sheep, “Run, Little Sheep! Run away, quick! My papa is biting your papa, and if you do not run away he will bite you next.”

When Little Sheep heard this he was very much frightened. He did not stop to ask any questions. He took to his heels and ran home, crying bitterly all the way.

Old Mother Sheep saw him coming and hurried out to meet him. “What is the matter?” she cried. “Where is your father, and why are you crying so bitterly?”

“Oh! oh!” wept Little Sheep. “The Tiger! He has bitten Papa to pieces, and I’m afraid he’ll come and bite me too.”

When Mother Sheep heard this, she too began to weep and lament. “What shall we do now?” she cried. “Where shall we go? The Tiger will certainly come in search of us next, and tear us to pieces as he did your father.”

At this the Little Sheep raised his voice and wept more bitterly than ever.

Now it so chanced that when Mother Sheep ran out to meet Little Sheep she met him under a tall tree, and in this tree the Queen of the Birds was sitting. The Queen heard everything the two below her said, and she felt very sorry for them because they were in such distress and terror. She flew down to a branch just over their heads and spoke to them in a soothing manner.

“I have overheard all that you have been saying. This Tiger that you speak of is indeed a very wicked animal. You are in great danger, but do not be afraid. I will help you. I have a plan that may rid us of him for ever. Do you go back to your home. Shut yourself in and remain there quietly until I send you further word.”

When Mother Sheep heard this she was comforted, for she saw at once that it was a queen that was speaking to her. She promised to do as she was told, and with Little Sheep at her side she returned quickly to the house. There they shut themselves in and sat down to wait for what might happen.

Meanwhile the Queen flew away to the forest where she lived, and called all the birds together. “Listen now,” she said to them. “Do you know what the wicked Tiger has done? He has killed poor old Papa Sheep, who never did harm to anyone. We all know how cruel the Tiger is, but this is the worst thing he has done yet. It is time for us to rid the forest of him.”

The Queen then told them that she was going to give a grand ball. To this ball she intended to invite the Tiger. And not only should he be invited, but he should be her own partner for the dance. “When the music begins, you also must take partners,” said she. “We will all stand up to dance, and then I will give a sign, and all the herons must clap their wings together. When they do this, the rest of you must instantly hide your heads under your wings. When I make another sign, they will again clap their wings, and then you must take your heads out again. If the plan I have in my mind only works out well, we will soon put an end to this Tiger.”

The birds promised to obey their Queen exactly in everything, and then she sent several of them away to the

Tiger’s house to invite him to the ball.

The Tiger was at home when the birds arrived, and he was very much flattered when he heard that the Queen wished him to come to her ball. He was even more delighted when he found that he was to be the Queen’s own partner in the dance.

He at once began to make himself ready, smoothing his whiskers, and brushing his coat until it shone.

The Tiger’s wife, however, was not at all pleased. “What nonsense is this?” cried she. “Why should you want to go to a ball? You have never been to court before, and you will not know how to act. You will be sure to do something foolish, and then every one will laugh at you.”

The Tiger became very angry when she said this. “Of course I shall go,” he cried. “I know how to behave as well as anyone. You only talk this way because you are jealous at not being asked. If you had been invited too, you would have been eager enough to go. But you cannot dissuade me, whatever you say.” The Tiger then hurried away through the forest to the place where the ball was to be held.

As soon as the Queen of the Birds saw him coming, she made haste to welcome him. A fine feast was already spread, and the Queen made the Tiger sit down at her right hand, and she offered him so many delicious things that he ate and drank a great deal more than was good for him. She also flattered him until he hardly knew what he was doing.

After the feast was ended the music began to play, and the birds all stood up to dance. Each one had a partner, but the Queen’s partner was the Tiger himself, as she had promised him. When all were in position, the Queen gave a sign, and the great herons clapped their wings together with a loud noise. The noise was so very loud and so very sudden

that it made the Tiger blink, and in that moment that the Tiger blinked all the birds hid their heads under their wings.

When the Tiger looked about him again he was very much surprised to see all the birds standing there apparently without any heads. The Queen alone held her head high, and she looked at him with an angry air.

“How is this?” said she. “Are these your court manners? Do you not know that at court no one except the Queen ever dances without removing his head? Look about you. Do you see even a single one of the birds with his head on?”

“But—but—” stammered the Tiger, “after the dance is over, what will they do without their heads? Your Majesty, how could I take care of my wife and family without a head?”

“Oh,” said the Queen smiling, “after the dance is over they will have their heads again. It is only while they dance that they are without them. I will show you.”

With these words the Queen again gave a sign. At once all the herons clapped their wings, and in the instant when the Tiger blinked the birds drew their heads from under their wings. The Tiger looked about him. There the birds all stood just as before, only now their heads were in their proper places, and they were all looking at him with a scornful air.

“Oh, your Majesty,” cried the Tiger, “I am very much ashamed. I have never been to court before, and I did not know what was expected of me. If you will excuse me, I will run home and get rid of my head, and then I will return at once to dance with you.”

“Very well,” answered the Queen, “only do not be gone long”; and she smiled upon him sweetly.

At once the Tiger bounded away, but the Queen bade a little sparrow follow him and bring her word of what happened to him.

The Tiger hurried on, leaping over logs and breaking through bushes, while the sparrow fluttered overhead unnoticed.

He reached his home, and scarcely had he crossed the threshold before he began to bawl for his wife. “Wife! Wife! Come here, quick! Bring an axe and chop off my head.”

“Are you crazy?” cried his wife. “Chop off your head! Why should I do that?”

“You do not understand. I am to dance with the Queen, and no one may do that as long as he has a head on his shoulders.”

“All the better for you. Why should you dance with her? And I certainly shall not kill you, Queen or no Queen.”

When his wife said this, Mr Tiger fell into a terrible rage. “Am I the master of the house, or am I not?” he cried. “Do as I tell you, or I will tear you to pieces, as I did the poor silly Sheep.” He looked so fierce that his wife was terrified. She ran out and got the axe. When she returned with it, however, she again began to argue with him. “Think, husband—think well what you would have me do. If your head is once off, there will be no putting it on again. That will be the end of you.”

“You do not understand,” cried the Tiger. “The Queen will see to that. She will see that my head is put back again after the dance.” Then, as his wife still hesitated, he began to roar in such a terrible manner that she almost lost her wits, and seizing the axe, she cut off his head in a hurry. And that was the end of him, for even if the Queen had been

able to do it, she would not have restored the head of such a wicked beast.

As soon as the sparrow had seen the end of the Tiger, he flew back to carry the news to the Queen. Then there was the greatest rejoicing all through the forest. Not a single bird or beast but was glad the Tiger was dead. No one, however, rejoiced as heartily as Mother Sheep and Little Sheep, for they were the ones who had been in most danger. Now they could come out from their house again and go about their usual business.

After a while, as time passed by, Little Sheep played so hard and ate so much that he grew up to be Big Sheep. He was larger and stronger than his father had ever been. His beard was longer, and his horns were curlier, and yet nobody was afraid of him. Word had gone to all the animals that the sheep’s teeth were too small and weak to hurt anyone. And so it has been ever since. Not one of the animals has been afraid of the sheep from that day to this.

PRINCESS ROSETTA
A FRENCH FAIRY TALE

THERE were once a King and Queen who had three of the most beautiful children in the world. They loved all the children tenderly, one no better than the others; but the youngest, who was a girl, was always kept locked up in a strong tower. She was allowed to see no one but her attendants, and her parents and her two brothers, who went every day to visit her.

No one knew why she was kept shut up in this way except the King and Queen. Even her brothers did not know, and they often grieved to think that their sister Rosetta should be a prisoner all her life.

The fact was that when Rosetta was born a fairy had appeared to her parents and had told them that some time the princess would bring a great misfortune upon her brothers. Because of her they would be cast into a dungeon and perhaps even lose their lives. These misfortunes would happen when the Princess Rosetta was about to be married.

The royal parents were greatly troubled at hearing this, and they immediately caused a high tower to be built, and in this they placed the child. Every luxury was hers; the most beautiful clothes and jewels, and the most delicious and delicately cooked food. Her furniture was of gold and was carved in strange and wonderful shapes, and the hangings were all woven of gold and silver thread and richly embroidered.

No one, however, as was said, ever came to the tower, or saw her, except her father and mother and her brothers and

the ladies who waited upon her.

The royal parents intended to tell their sons the reason for this imprisonment when Rosetta should have reached the age of eighteen. Her brothers would then understand that it was not through any cruelty that their sister was kept prisoner, but to protect their own lives.

Unfortunately, just before Rosetta's eighteenth birthday the King and Queen both died, and so suddenly that they had no time to reveal to anyone what the fairy had told them.

The keys of the tower were given to the elder prince, and one of his first acts was to set Rosetta free.

The princess was delighted to be able to see at last what the world outside of her tower was like. Everything was a wonder to her—the trees, the grass, the flowers and fountains. She wished to know the names of everything.

At one spot in the gardens a peacock sat sunning itself.

"What is that beautiful creature called?" she asked.

"That, dear sister, is a peacock," answered the princes.

"A peacock!" cried Rosetta. "Never in my life did I dream that such a beautiful thing existed. I am sure that in all the world there can be nothing else that is quite so beautiful. Dear brothers, if you love me, find the King of the Peacocks and bring him here, for he, and he alone, shall be my husband. Moreover, unless you find him and bring him to me, I shall certainly die of grief."

The princes loved their sister so dearly that they could refuse nothing that she asked of them. They at once began to make ready to set out into the world in search of the country of the peacocks. Before starting they caused a

portrait of their sister to be painted. This they intended to take with them to the Peacock country, for they were sure that if the king of that country could only know how beautiful Rosetta was, he would never be contented until he had her for his queen.

As soon as their preparations had been made and the portrait was finished, the two princes set out upon their travels. They journeyed on and on, over many seas and many mountains and through many strange lands, until at last they came to a country where there were nothing but peacocks. There were peacock bakers and peacock tradesmen. Peacocks went in and out of the houses, and drove through the streets in magnificent coaches shining with gold and precious stones. Everywhere were only peacocks spreading their tails and parading in all their magnificence. Strangely enough, however, the King who ruled over this country was not a peacock at all, but a young man so handsome and graceful that even the peacocks could not equal him in beauty.

The princes, who had not taken long in finding the castle, were brought before the King by the peacocks who attended him. The brothers at once told him that they too were sons of a king, and that they were travelling through the world upon a secret errand of great importance. They did not tell him what their errand was, but after they had been talking with him for a short time, they began to speak of their sister, and of her beauty and sweetness. The young King became quite eager to see such a lovely creature, and the brothers sent for the portrait they had brought with them and showed it to him.

The King of the Peacocks had no sooner seen it than he fell violently in love with Rosetta, and begged them to promise her to him for a bride. The brothers were the more ready to do this because they had found that the Peacock

King was not only singularly handsome, but that he was one of the richest and most powerful kings in the whole world.

Messengers were appointed to go to the princes' country and to bring Rosetta back with them. They were urged to make all the speed they could, for the young King was so eager to see the Beauty that he was ready to die with impatience.

After they had gone, the King had the portrait put where he could see it constantly, and feast his eyes upon it, and he was only happy when he was with it. The more he looked at it, however, the more he doubted whether any human being could be as beautiful as the painting. The brothers were obliged to assure him every day that when he saw Rosetta he would find her even more lovely than her portrait.

"Very well," said the Peacock King at last, "if I find all that you tell me is true, I will load you with wealth and honours, but if you have deceived me, I will surely put you to death."

The brothers were not dismayed at this threat, for they knew that it was impossible that he should be disappointed in the beauty of their sister.

Meanwhile the messengers, after many days, reached the country where Rosetta lived. They at once were brought before her, and when she heard that they had come to take her to the King of the Peacocks, she was wild with joy. She determined to set out at once, and as the journey was shorter by way of the sea, she made up her mind to go in a ship rather than in a coach and by land. She took with her only an old nurse and her foster-sister, and her little dog Fifine. This little dog was very wonderful, and had been given to her by a fairy. He was of a bright green colour and had only one ear, but he understood everything the princess said to him, and he knew a hundred pretty tricks.

The old nurse and her daughter pretended to be very fond of Rosetta, but in truth they hated her because she was so beautiful and beloved, and would have been glad to injure her in any way.

After they had sailed along for several days, and were almost within sight of the kingdom of the Peacocks, the old nurse brought to Rosetta a drink that she had mixed, and in which she had put a sleeping potion. Rosetta suspected nothing, and she drank all the old woman had brought her, except for a small part that she gave to Fifine.

Rosetta had scarcely swallowed the potion before she became very drowsy. Her eyelids weighed like lead, and before long she fell into a deep sleep. Fifine also became very sleepy. He crawled in under the silken covering that the princess had drawn over her, and lay there as though dead.

As soon as the old nurse saw that Rosetta was asleep, and that nothing could awaken her, she went to the sailors, and by means of bribes and threats she obliged them to do exactly as she bade them. Under her directions they carried the mattress upon which Rosetta lay up to the deck. The nurse looked about for Fifine, but could not find the little dog anywhere, for it was hidden under the coverlet. “No matter,” said she. “I wished to keep the little animal for my daughter, but it is probably hiding somewhere about the ship, and I will find it later.”

She then made the sailors take up the mattress and throw it overboard into the sea. This they did without awakening either Rosetta or Fifine. They then set all sail and sped on toward the shores of the Peacock country, which could already be seen before them. The wicked nurse felt sure that it would not be long before the mattress would become heavy with water and would sink, so she and her daughter need trouble themselves no more about the hated Rosetta.

Meanwhile the King of the Peacocks was growing more and more impatient to see his bride. Watchers had been placed upon the seashore to bring him news the moment the sails of the returning ship were seen.

It was on the twenty-first day after the messengers had departed that these watchers hastened to the palace, all out of breath, and told the King that the ship was approaching.

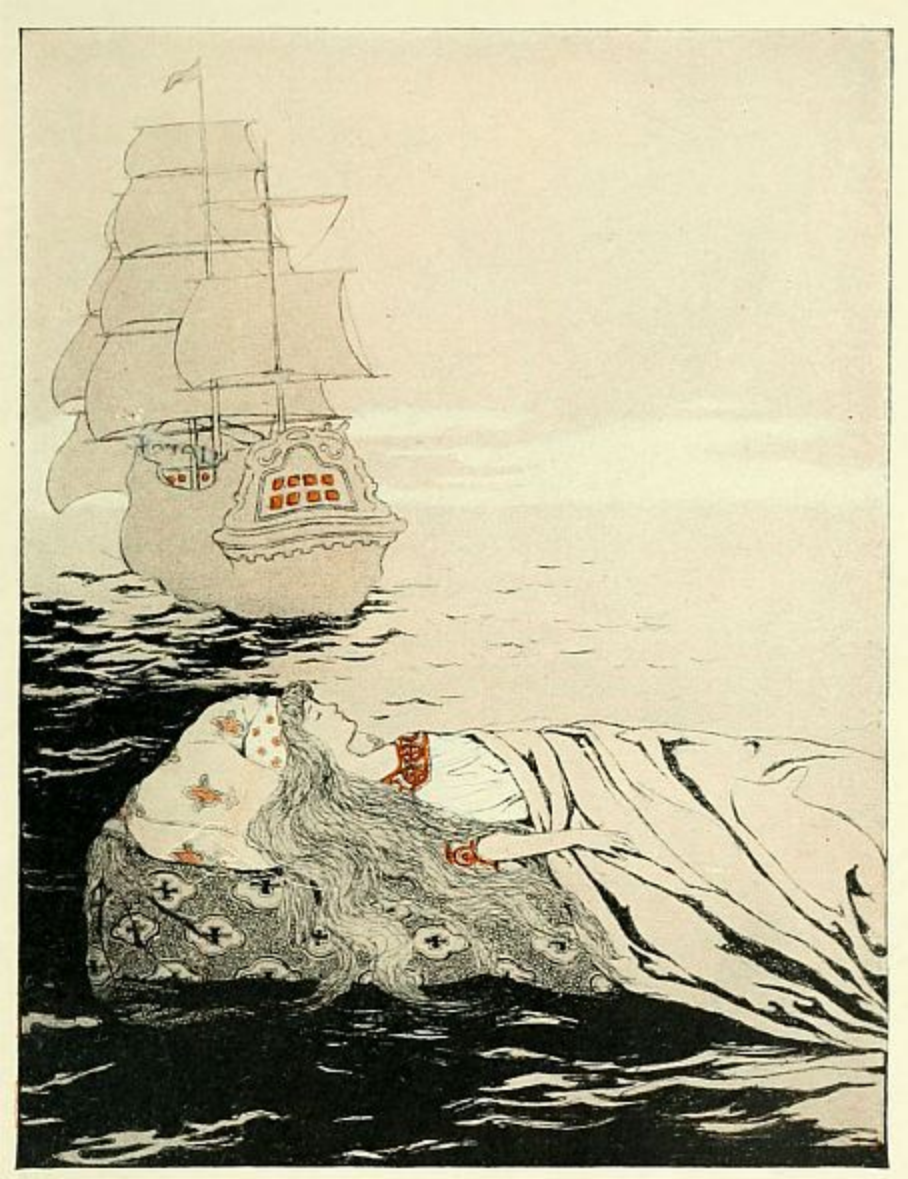
The King called his attendants about him, and hurried down to the seashore.

The vessel had already come to land. The wicked nurse had dressed her daughter in the most magnificent of Rosetta's clothes, which she wore as a toad might wear the dress of a fairy. The nurse had also bedecked her with the jewels belonging to the princess, and last of all she had thrown a silver veil over her, as though to guard her beauty from the sun.

As the prince saw this magnificently dressed person approaching him, he assumed it must be his bride. He hastened to meet her, and threw back the veil that covered her face, but when he saw the ugliness beneath the veil he almost fainted. He at once decided that the two princes had deceived him; that they had tricked him into sending for their sister and promising to marry her because no other king had been willing to take such a hideous creature for his wife.

Filled with rage, he sent his guards to take the princes and throw them into the deepest and darkest of the palace dungeons. He had given his word that he would marry their sister, and this word he could not break, but he promised himself that upon the day when he was married to this creature the two brothers should die.

The princes, meanwhile, had also heard that the ship had returned. They had no doubt that their sister was on board, and they had at once made ready to appear before the King, to be loaded with wealth and honours as he had promised them.



THE MATTRESS UPON WHICH SHE LAY HAD FLOATED ON AND ON

It was not long, indeed, before they heard a loud knock on their door, but instead of smiling courtiers coming to congratulate them, a guard of soldiers had arrived, and the two brothers were carried away, not to a grateful king, but

to a horrible dungeon where their only companions were snakes and toads and slimy crawling things. The princes could not understand it. They could not imagine what had happened, nor why they were treated in this way. The soldiers would not answer their questions, and after they were shut in the dungeon no living soul came near them except the jailer, who unlocked the door to throw in to them a few vile crusts, and he was both deaf and dumb.

While the princes were lying thus imprisoned, preparations for the wedding were being made. A magnificent apartment had been set apart for the bride. Everything she asked for was given her, jewels and dresses of every kind, but the King she never saw. He had fallen ill with rage and disappointment, and no one could come near him except his attendants and the doctors.

The old nurse and her daughter were well content, however. The ugly girl was to become a queen, and one of the greatest queens in all the world, and that was enough for them. As for Rosetta, they were sure that she had been drowned, and that there was no need to trouble themselves about her.

The princess had not been drowned however. She was alive and well, and even more beautiful than ever, and she was at that very moment living in a poor hut in the outskirts of the city, and within sight of the very castle itself.

After the ship had sailed away and left her, the mattress upon which she lay had floated on and on until at last it had stranded upon a rock not far out from the shore.

The jar of striking the rock woke Fifine, for the little dog had only swallowed a small portion of the sleeping potion. He crawled out from under the silken coverlet, which was trailing in the sea, and when he saw the water all about him

and his mistress still asleep, he began to bark as loudly as he could. The noise he made attracted the attention of a poor old beggar who lived in a hut not far away.

The old man hastened down to the water's edge, and with the aid of a boat-hook soon managed to draw the mattress to shore. What was his amazement to see a beautiful lady lying upon it fast asleep, and a little green dog keeping guard over her.

The old man tried to arouse Rosetta, but for a long time he was unsuccessful. At length, however, she opened her eyes and sat up and looked about her. She was amazed to find herself stranded upon an unknown shore and with only an old man and Fifine for her attendants instead of safely aboard her ship, with her nurse and foster-sister in attendance upon her.

"Where am I?" she cried. "Where is the ship and where are my attendants? And who are you, old man?"

The old man told her he was only a poor beggar, and of how he had seen her mattress stranded upon a rock and had drawn it to shore, and that this country where she found herself was the kingdom of the Peacocks. As to any ship, he knew nothing of it.

Rosetta could not wonder enough when she learned she was already in the Peacock country. The old man even pointed out to her a shining castle and a town not far away, and told her that was the place where the King of the Peacocks lived.

Seeing she was now able to raise herself and move about, the old man invited her to come with him to his hut. "It is but a poor place for a great princess," he said (for it was easy for him to see that Rosetta was a princess), "but at least it will be a safe shelter for you."

Rosetta gladly accepted his invitation. His hut was indeed poor and mean, but the old man was so kind and eager to please her that she could not but be grateful. He was greatly distressed because he could offer her nothing to eat but a piece of black bread and a cup of water.

“Do not grieve over that,” said the princess. “Only give me a basket and we shall soon be supplied with a fine feast.”

Wondering, the old man gave her a basket. Rosetta tied it round the neck of Fifine.

“Fifine,” said she, “run to the palace of the King and bring us from there a part of the dinner that has been prepared for him.”

Fifine understood every word perfectly. He at once set out, and made such good speed that he quickly reached the palace. He slipped into the kitchen without being seen. The King’s dinner was done to a turn, and waiting to be carried to him. Fifine, slipping about here and there, managed to steal a part of everything, and the best part at that, of the meat, the poultry, the pastries and sweetmeats—he took some of each, and hid it in the basket. Then he ran away, still without being noticed, and was soon back at the old man’s hut.

The old man was filled with amazement when he saw what the dog had brought. Never had he seen such delicious food before. The princess sat down and he served her, and after she had finished he ate his fill, and still there was some left.

The next day Rosetta wished for some fresh food. She had no love for cold dishes. Again she tied the basket round the neck of the little dog. “Fifine,” she said, “you did very

well yesterday. To-day you must again bring me a portion of all that the King is to have for dinner.”

Fifine bounded away with the basket, and it was not long before he returned, bringing a part of all that was to have been served to the King.

So it went on for some time. Every day the best part of the King’s dinner was stolen just before it was ready to be carried to him. Rosetta and the old man feasted finely every day, and the poor young King was like to die of hunger, because every day his dinner was stolen. A guard was set about the palace kitchen to prevent anyone except the cook and his assistants from going in and out, but still the food continued to disappear; for Fifine was so small and quick that he managed to escape the notice of the guard.

At last one day a little scullion, who had grown very curious about the matter, hid himself behind the kitchen door, determined to watch for himself. The dinner was cooked, and ready to be put into the dishes, when the scullion saw a little green dog, with a basket tied about his neck, slip into the room. The dog looked about to make sure that no one was watching. Seeing no one, he hastened to take the best part of the dinner and put it in the basket. As soon as he had done this, he slipped silently from the kitchen and ran off as fast as he could toward the old man’s hut. The scullion followed him and saw where he went. Then he returned to the palace and told the cook what he had seen. The cook found it hard to believe such a strange tale, but still he repeated it to the Captain of the Guard, the Captain told it to the Grand Councillor, the Grand Councillor told it to the King’s favourite, and so in time it reached the ears of the King himself.

“This is a curious thing if it is true,” said the King. “I would like to see it for myself.” So the next day he arose,

and just before dinner-time he went down to the kitchen and hid himself behind the door. He had not been there long when the door was pushed open, and a little green dog slipped into the room. The little animal went from dish to dish, just as the scullion had said, and helped himself until his basket was full. Then he slipped away and ran home to the old man’s hut, and the King followed him without being observed.

His Majesty did not go as far as the hut, however. He waited until the little dog had been admitted and the door closed behind him, and then he returned to his palace, very thoughtful.

The next day he sent to the hut for Rosetta and the old man to appear before him. The beggar was greatly alarmed when he received the message.

“See what you have brought upon us,” he cried to the princess. “No doubt they have discovered that it is your dog that has been stealing the King’s dinner, and now we shall be punished for it. Perhaps we may even lose our lives.”

Rosetta, however, was not troubled. She was, indeed, only too glad to be brought before the King. It was what she had been hoping for. She waited only to draw a veil over her face, and then she was ready to go with the guard to the palace.

As soon as Rosetta, with the beggar and Fifine, entered the room where the young King was, he was struck by the grace and dignity with which she moved. He called her close to him and began to question her.

“Who are you,” he asked, “and whence do you come? And is it you who have caused my dinners to disappear?”

To all this Rosetta answered nothing. The King then leaned forward and drew the veil aside from her face. As soon as he did so, the beauty of the princess shone forth like the sun. Every one was amazed at it. As for the King, he was overcome with joy and wonder, for he at once recognized her as the original of the portrait that the princes had shown him, only her living face was far more beautiful than the painting, even as the sun surpasses the moon in brightness.

“Beautiful princess, whence come you?” he cried. “Why have you hidden from me for all these days and allowed another to take your place? And one so hideous as she who claims to be my bride?”

Rosetta told him her story as far as she knew it, and the King listened attentively. He at once guessed that it was the treachery of the old nurse and her daughter that had placed Rosetta in this situation. He sent for them to appear before him, and while he waited for them to come, he and the princess talked together, and so wise she was and so witty that with every word she said he loved her better.

The nurse and her daughter, when they received the King’s message, made sure that he had sent for them in order to arrange the time for the wedding. They were overjoyed, and at once put on their finest clothes. But no sooner had they entered the audience-room, and seen Rosetta seated on the throne beside the King, than they almost swooned with terror. They knew that now all had been discovered, and they fell on their knees before him and began to beseech him to pardon them.

The King was so angry at the wrong they had done the princess that he would have sent them to some miserable dungeon for the rest of their lives. But Rosetta was as tender-hearted as she was beautiful. She pleaded with him

to have mercy; so the two wicked women were spared that fate.

Instead, their fine clothes were taken from them, and they were dressed in rags and driven from the palace, and as they were too ugly and wicked for anyone but Rosetta to pity them, no doubt they ended their lives in misery.

The two princes were brought from their dungeons and given all the wealth and honours the King had promised them, and when they learned how he had been deceived, they could not but forgive him his ill-treatment of them.

As for the old beggar-man, he was made rich for life.

The King and the princess were married, and lived in mutual love and happiness to the end of their days; and as for Fifine, he slept on satin cushions and ate the daintiest fare, and lived long enough to play with Rosetta’s children and show them the hundred pretty tricks he knew.

Transcriber’s Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Page 137, “or” changed to “of” (of iron and fifteen)

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