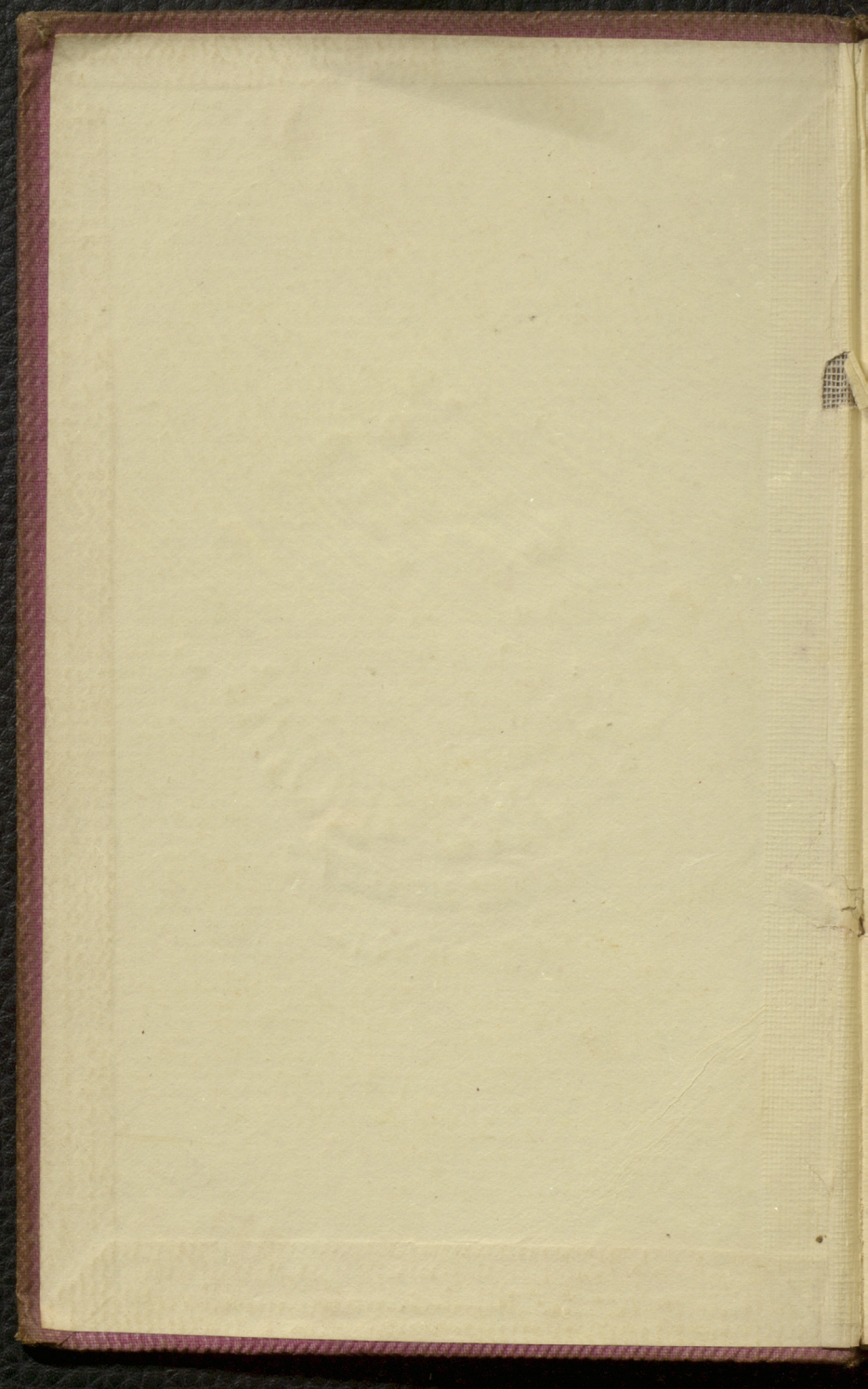




BEETONS HORN

BY HENRY MORLEY
ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES BENNETT'S

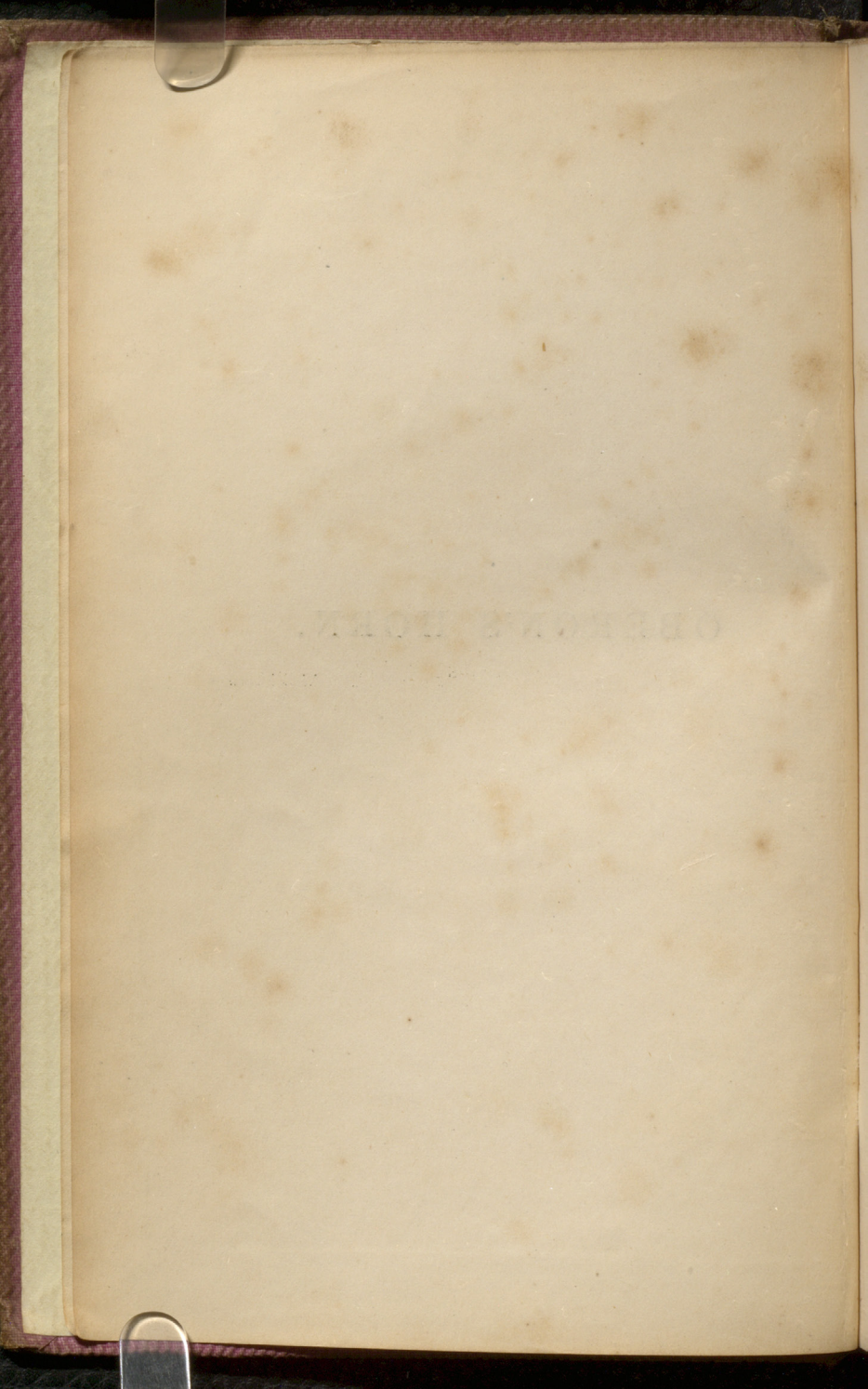


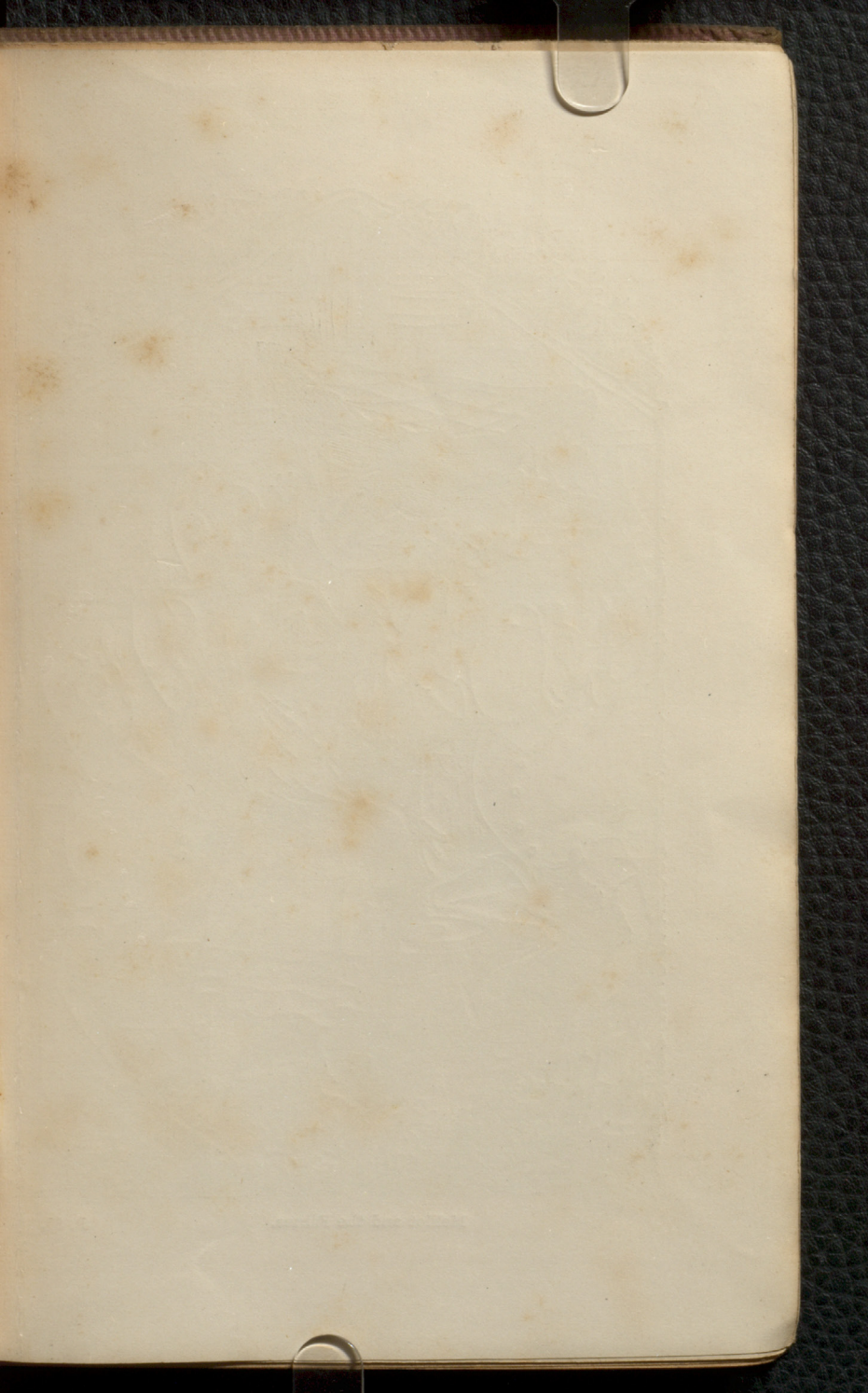
Hath been done
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CHERRY HILL

(19199)

OBERON'S HORN.

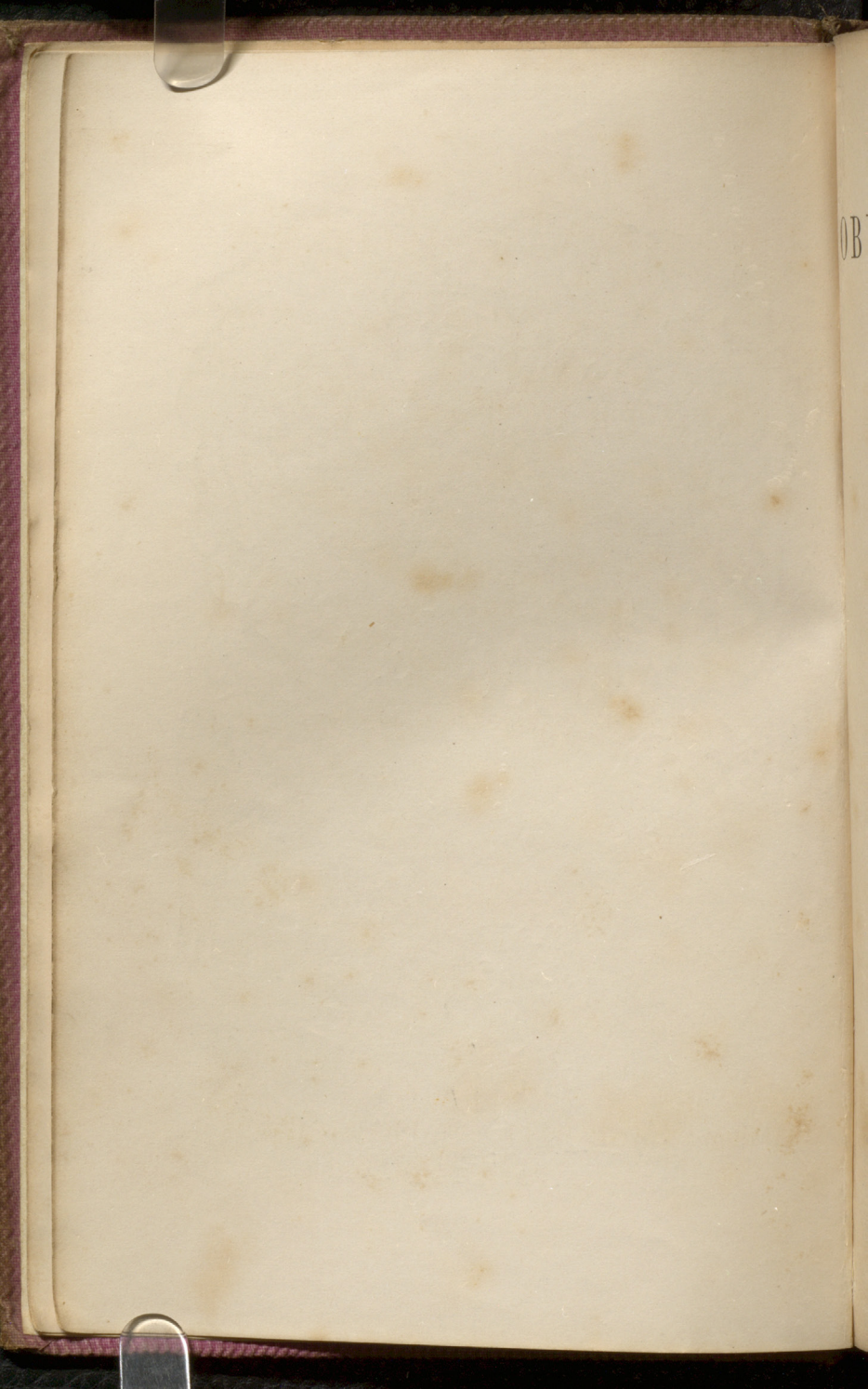






Melilot and the Fairies.





OBERON'S HORN :

A BOOK OF

FAIRY TALES.

BY

HENRY MORLEY.

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES H. BENNETT.

“ He plays
Soft Voluntaries only, and Assays
As wanton as the Sports of Children are.”
HOMERIC HYMNS: *George Chapman.*

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1861.

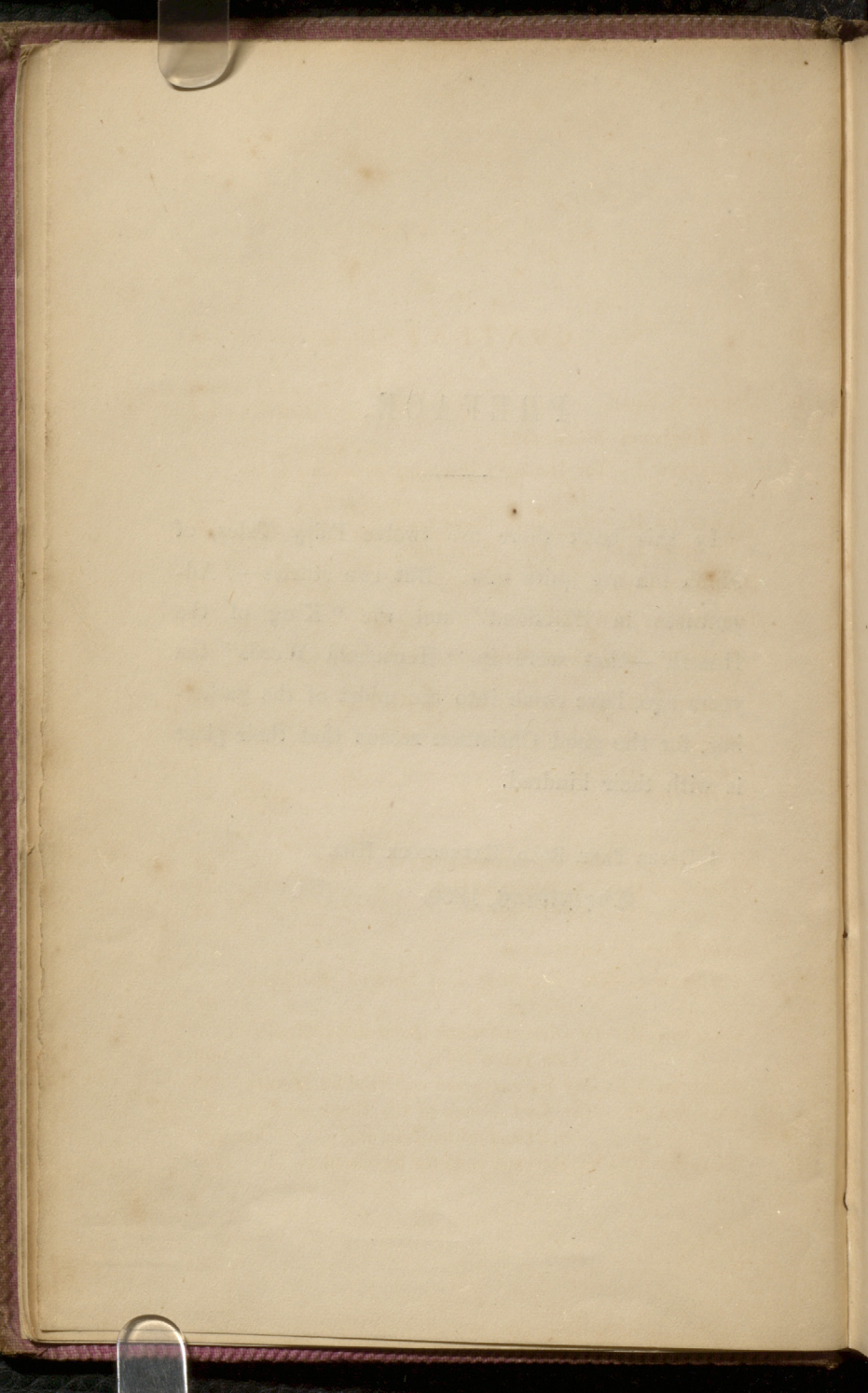
DALZIEL, BROTHERS. CAMDEN PRESS, LONDON.

P R E F A C E .

IN this book there are twelve Fairy Tales, of which ten are quite new. But two stories—"Adventures in Skitzland" and the "King of the Hearth"—that were in "Household Words" ten years ago, have come into the midst of the gathering, for the good Christmas reason that their place is with their kindred.

4, UPPER PARK ROAD, HAVERSTOCK HILL.

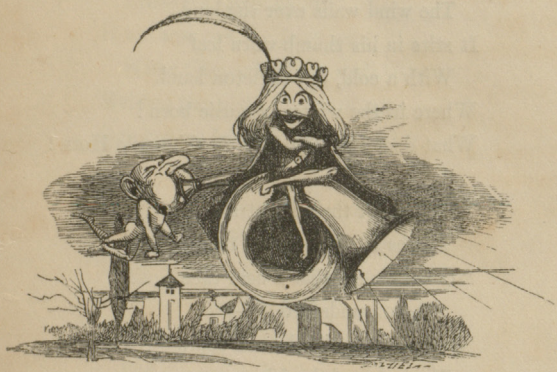
Christmas, 1860.



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OBERON'S HORN.

On the way to a school that stood
By the side of a winding stream,
There sat alone, in a wintry wood,
A child in a waking dream.
The mire was under the snow,
The rock was under the mire ;
A lesson he did not know,
Of which he began to tire,
Fluttering open, lay on his knee ;
The wearisome, troublesome verb, To Be.

From the top of the upright pine
 The snow lump falls with a thud,
 Coming from where the sunbeams shine
 To lie in the heart of the mud.
 The child knows grammar as grief;
 The wind wails over the land,
 It stirs in his thumb-worn leaf
 With a cold, dry skeleton hand.
 Where in the winter is music born!
 What does the child hear? Oberon's Horn!

The pulse of the fairy strain
 Throbs in the pulse of the child;
 "O well is me that I hear thee again,
 Oberon undefiled!"—
 Well is it for all who can share
 The pulse of the fairy strain:
 Content is the burden of care
 And pleasure the flower of pain;
 Nothing is barren and none are forlorn
 Within sound of the music of Oberon's Horn.

The skeleton touch of the wind
 Grows soft as the warm caress
 Of a sleeping mother whose fingers find
 Their way to a nursling's tress.
 The wood, too, replies with a smile;
 Lilies are here for snow,
 And birds in the blossoming aisle
 Are choir to the flowers below.
 But the Verb has leapt from the leaf thumbworn
 To dance to the music of Oberon's Horn.

Odd stories To Be can tell,
 When Oberon winds his Horn ;—
 The verb we all conjugate ill or well
 For whose tenses and moods we were born.
 Of the little we learn by rote
 Little we fairly know
 If we hear not the fairy note
 When Oberon's Horn shall blow,
 Melting the rusty fetters of wit,
 Quickening life and the sense of it.

Three notes, Fair, Kind and True,
 Are all the Fairy plays :
 Three colours alone are in every hue
 Of the many-tinted days.
 But what is a child to care
 For earnest under its jest ?
 And how is a man to share
 The toy that a boy likes best ?
 Tickle with straws that are empty of corn ;
 Let the music ring hollow from Oberon's Horn.

I know that it does in France,
 And for us there is rare delight
 In a wit that on nothing can tumble and dance
 And dazzle without giving light.
 But English wit rings best
 With an earnest undertone,
 'Tis when reason lies under the jest
 That an Englishman's laugh is his own.
 We wish to mean nothing but, English born,
 We hear with our hearts even Oberon's Horn.

By a child of the age of a man
Whom the Fairies had always in thrall,
These stories are told you without any plan,
But a wish to mean nothing at all.
Yet fancy must play over truth
Let us labour out life as we may ;
And we all, man, woman and youth,
In England mean more than we say.
Then why should the North go the way of the South
Or a French tongue speak with an English mouth ?

Through the busy English land
These notes of the Fairy Horn
Sound for the boy who can understand
That in him a man was born ;
For the woman and girl who can feed
On other talk than wooing,
Where thought belongs to deed
And life consists in doing ;
For the wholesome man who can play with a child ;
And for all honest fancy that dares run wild.



THE LETTERED MACKEREL

CHAPTER I.

THE MACKEREL DISCOVERS SOMETHING IN HIS LINE.

It is not every fish that knows how to give a dancing party. The Mackerel does not dance, he sings, and enjoys music of every sort except a catch. Therefore he does not attend the fancy balls of my Lord Shark, which are so fine that they throw all the sea into commotion.

My Lord Shark fattens upon hospitality. He asks his meat to dine with him, introduces affably the Whale to the Shrimp, and the Pike to the Gudgeon; heads the revels jovially, and sends everybody home, who does get home, so full of the good things of the sea, that the tide rolls with his praises. Some there are who do not get home, but they cannot complain.

Once upon a time, my Lord Shark gave one of his fancy balls. The fishes, in preparing themselves for the revel, had used up everything they could find in their masquerade store, and were still only half-dressed. Gale and Whirlwind, therefore, were commissioned to send down many more shiploads of frippery. The said firm, which drives a roaring trade, busied itself to such good purpose for its customers the fishes, that this one particular ball was the grandest ever given under water.

The small fry that was permitted to look on made walls and roof to the great dining hall. Kept in square, head over head, by a detachment of Sword-fishes, glittering eyes and golden noses of seven hundred and seven million million of Pilchards formed the lofty walls. Those eyes and noses belonged only to fortunate possessors of front places in the great mob eager to see the feast. Many of the distinguished guests liked to eat bits of the wall as much as any other delicacy offered for refreshment; but holes made by their nibbling were filled up instantly by the exulting outsiders, for whom front places were thus procured. The roof of the ball-room was a floating cloud of those

small beings which sometimes appear as fire upon the surface of the wave. It was a joke of the Whale's every ten minutes to break from the dance into the outer sea, and then come tumbling back into the ball-room through the roof, with his great mouth open, swallowing the candles. For the myriads in the roof served also as candles at the feast they covered in. I know no more than that, in some such fashion, a whole palace was made for the occasion, of rooms scooped out of the crowd of little fishes, miles broad and miles deep, that thronged to see the fun. Except what he had of Gale and Whirlwind, who are well-known purveyors of meat to the fishes, besides being establishments of the great frippery store under the sea, my Lord Shark's feast came with the crowd that admired it, and the guests who were to entertain each other.

The costume worn at this fancy ball displayed numberless treasures of the deep. Lord Shark had made himself a chain of state from the skeleton hands of good men lost in a December tempest. He had wrapped himself in a gay coat, that was the three-coloured flag of their wrecked vessel; but as it did not keep him comfortable, he thought of enlarging it before his next ball with some patches bitten out of other flags. My Lord had covered his tail with an odd red cap, much dirtied, and had wriggled till his nose was set fast in a gilt brass crown, which had in some way fallen among the fishes. Being nearly stifled by this, he was obliged to gasp so much that his teeth were constantly on view. Still my Lord Shark he was, and the

feast was his. Two Cuttle-fish, who had covered themselves with more slime than belonged to them by nature, flaunted in goose feather. These creatures waited near my Lord's jaws, and whenever they saw that he was preparing for a snap, darkened the water round about him with their ink. For the Shark—to inspire confidence among his guests—declared that he ate nothing, and wished none to see him fixing his teeth in his prey. A circle of Sprats surrounded this great creature, for he was glad when he looked at them to know how great he was. They were some Sprats who had been present at the breaking of a barrel of pitch, and being stained—for the pitch stuck—of the colour of Whales, they believed themselves to be a sort of Whale, and as they swam, half-split themselves with struggling to blow waterspouts out of their noses.

Distinguished among the company there was the Crab, who kept a stall or grotto of men's bones, and who had filled his grotto with old nails and chips of wood, crosses and whips and chains and curiosities in bottles. He had a sceptre from the broken figure-head of an old war-vessel, fastened to one of his forelegs, and this he trailed behind him in the mud as he crawled round and round his stall, in anything but a straightforward way, begging of every fish who seemed to be of consequence, that he would please to remember the grotto. A free kind of Sword-fish fell into a passion with this Crab, ran at him, and turned him over on his back, at the same time knocking his grotto down. Then

there came swimming through the holes they made in an old three-crowned hat, files of Sardines, who ran away with the clog on the Crab's leg, and so left the poor creature free to scramble quickly out of sight.

But the Mackerel saw none of the gaiety and had part in none of the Shark's feast. He stayed at home for a good many different-sized reasons, and one great reason—that he was too busy. For years he had devoted his whole mind to a question of magic. He had been occupied intensely with the study of that mysterious line which, till this day, wit of man or fish never availed to decipher, the line written in strange letters on the Mackerel's back. Clearly these are the varied letters of some words of mystery. In a strange language writing is traced on the back of the Mackerel, and it is even underlined in evidence of its importance. Now, it happened that our Mackerel, who had been studying his own back for a hundred years in a glass borrowed from a Mermaid, read the first letter of the magic line at a time when the revel of the Shark's great fancy ball was shaking all the water round his cave. And in the moment when he knew what was the interpretation of the first letter, his tail-fins grew into legs having feet each with a thousand toes, and his gill-fins stretched themselves into arms having hands each with a thousand fingers. Music had been his sole refreshment in the intervals of work. A good-natured Siren used to bring her harp and sing with him. Sometimes when she meant soon to come back, her harp had been left in a corner of his cave. There

it was, at that moment, ready to be touched, and the exulting Mackerel, taking it between his feet, swept his two thousand fingers through its many strings. Then music, such as no ten-fingered creature ever made, brought all the Sirens to his door. A magnificent Cod-fish, rolling by on his way to the fancy ball, pushed through the Sirens, and looking in as he passed, said, "Not bad for a Mackerel!" But all the little Pilchards, who, like the Herrings, have music in their hearts, ran to the wonderful harper when the sound of his song reached them. Off and away went, therefore, the walls of the ball-room. After the walls ran the guests, till, in a little while, there remained only, in open water, my Lord Shark and his black Sprats. My Lord, for want of better meat, snapped at these creatures, made a wry face as he crunched them, and then spat them out. For Sprat and pitch sauce disagreed even with him.

CHAPTER II.

MORE IN THE SAME LINE.

ALTHOUGH there may be more fish in the sea than ever came out of it, there never was another fish so bold as the Mackerel, who, popping his head above water, hailed a fishing-boat to carry him to shore. "Is it a Mackerel?" thought to himself Filarete, the fisherman. "Can a Mackerel hold up a long arm, stretch a finger, and cry, Boat, ahoy!" Of

course this fisherman did not know how this fish was studying his letters with advantage to himself. The first letter he learned gave him a thousand fingers and a thousand toes. The interpretation of the second letter on his back having now flashed upon him, he was able to speak in a thousand tongues. As most fishes are mute, the greater number of these tongues were those of men, and beasts, and birds. "My talents are drowned in the sea," said Mackerel; "I care not for a fishy reputation. Why have my tail-fins become legs, except that I may walk upon the land? To the land I will go, being on fire to extend through earth and air the fame that has already circled through the water." So, as he meant, nevertheless, to go on studying his back, he tucked under his arm the Mermaid's glass, bought for a song. He took also his new thousand-stringed harp. It was made for him by the Sirens, of hair from their own tresses, stretched over the shell of that crawling thing of the deep, which once put the chiefs of men into its purple livery.

The Mackerel was looking for a boat to carry him over the surf to the shore, when he hailed the young fisherman Filarete, with "Boat, ahoy!"

"What do you want? What are you?"

"I am the famous Doctor Mackerel Pescadillo, linguist and composer. Take me over the breakers. I have business ashore." As he spoke, Doctor Pescadillo reached the side of the fishing boat, and putting up an arm, seized, with a many-fingered hand, the boatman's oar, and jumped in cleverly.

"Legs too," said Filarete, "and you stand upright! Business ashore! I think you have." Then he entangled him in eight or ten folds of his fishing net. "You and I will have business together, my fine fish." And he began to amuse himself as he pulled eagerly to land, with crying, "Walk up! all alive!" already fancying himself the prince of showmen. "All alive; the Mackerel is now upon his legs, and speaking. Now's your time! Be quick; for the miracle of nature is engaged to marry the Randan of the Pacific Ocean's Grandmother, and is going off directly in a fly!" While he spoke, the boat occupied his attention, for he was backing her across the breakers. Away darted the Mackerel when she was safely beached, and scampered singing up the shingle.

With a thousand fingers upon each hand, knots are very soon unpicked. Pescadillo had not only unpicked himself a way out of the net, but had unpicked every knot in the whole mesh; so that when he leapt out of the boat, Filarete's nets were become a litter of loose string. The Mackerel ran faster than a swallow flies, and yet the fisherman gave chase, for the mischievous fish, instead of running out of sight, often sat down or lay down, feigning sleep, and never started off again until the hand, stretched out to seize him, was within a scale's breadth of his body. For he was resolved that Filarete should be his follower.

They ran till dusk, when they got to the top of a mountain, which they had been climbing all the afternoon, for it had pleased the fish to try his

friend's wind to the utmost. On the mountain top were ragged points of granite, but the central peak was a smooth table, on which twenty men could stand. The Mackerel then slipped into a hole under a peak, while the fisherman, distrusting his feet in the dark, sat down to use his eyes. He was too hungry to sleep, and watched well until morning, when he observed, where he had lost sight of the Mackerel, a gleam as of water in a cranny of the rock. He had been drenched in the mists of evening, and had seen the moon half the night through. He had heard odd music after sunset, as if a thousand or two of tiny fingers had been harping. The ridiculous Mackerel had sung also sentimental songs about the stars.

Then, as dawn approached, when the poor fisherman was shivering with cold and hunger, the Mackerel, still full of sentiment, as he was empty of all other meat, was heard singing :—

“Now like the tender hope of fish, the doubtful morning
breaks,
Scarce venturing to thrust a beam upon the sullen flakes,
That stretch across the East, as though they gathered there to
bar
The passage of the coursers of the sun's triumphal car.”

“Tooraloral la !” said the fisherman, “but I will venture a thrust on your flakes with something handier than a beam, my good friend.” The Mackerel was at the bottom of a deep cleft in the rock, where he could not be reached by his friend's arm, and he had turned his hole into a fountain of

sentiment, because that was the most nauseous thing he could produce for the vexation of his adversary. But Filarete saw a bush growing near the Mackerel's retreat, and felt that he could produce what would be more stirring than any nonsense verses. He tore off, therefore, a long straight bough, rapidly stripped it into a small pole, and began savagely to thrust at Doctor Pescadillo. As he did so, he found that the gleam from the cleft was not of water, but of looking-glass, in which the Mackerel seemed to have been admiring himself, while he sang. The glass he smashed, but the owner of it ran up his stick almost into his hand, leaped over his head, and, with his music-shell tucked under one of his arms, had climbed the sharpest pinnacle of rock before the fisherman turned round to look for him. The Mermaid's glass was broken, when he had almost made out the third letter of his line.

"Well," said Filarete, "I'll starve you out, though I can no more catch you up there than I can reach yonder Mackerel sky."

Mackerel sky! Pescadillo stretched his legs and spread his arms, and gazed up at the clouds that wrote his line over and over again on shadowy mackerel backs far overhead. His eyeballs started forward; he stood on the tips of his two thousand toes, and spread abroad into the air two thousand fingers, as if they were about to clutch; then read aloud with a low voice, at which the mountain quaked, the third of the letters in his mystic line.

In the same instant a thousand dishes of choice food smoked on the table of the mountain top.

Close to the right hand of Pescadillo there was floating in the air the meat he liked best, in a shining dish. Filarete's favourite dish came also to his hand. "Now let us breakfast," said the Mackerel. Filarete was already breakfasting. Fish and fisherman stood where they were; the right thing came always at the right time, from the table to the hand of each. When they had both eaten enough, the breakfast vanished, but the fisherman said to the fish, "My lord, I am your servant. While you can command such a table as that, I know how great and good you are, and I will follow you about the world."

"I take you, man, into my service," said the gracious Mackerel. "Now, tell me, what is yonder city by the lake? There is the sea behind us, and the mountain peaks are to the right and left. I am not for the sea or for the mountains. I shall go down into that city—what is it?"

"The city, my Lord Doctor Pescadillo, is the city of Picon, by the Lake Picuda. It is there I sold my—may I say, in your worshipful presence—fish. The way from the sea is by yonder ravine. The lake is always bubbling, and produces only bubbles. Little corn or fruit will grow on the plains, and these wild mountains, as you see, are barren. The people of the city live, therefore, almost entirely on what we poor fellows get out of the sea. They seldom have enough to eat; but you will feed them. Not in your own worshipful person, no. Yet you run risk until they find out what sort of a fish you are."

"There is a king there, I hope," said the Mackerel.

"My lord, there are a hundred kings, each with ten daughters. The country, being barren, is so hard to govern, that it takes a hundred kings to make anything of it."

"Very good," said the Mackerel, "I will go down to those kings and offer marriage to their thousand daughters."

CHAPTER III.

THE LAST OF HIS LINE.

THE principles upon which Doctor Pescadillo had established his first happy attempts to read the writing on his back having helped him to three letters, enabled him thereafter to make quick and easy progress in research. When he and his Squire reached the landward foot of the mountains, they were hungry again, but the Mackerel had only to repeat the discovered third letter upon his back, and a new feast of a thousand dishes smoked upon the ground before them. Still also the slightest freak of appetite in master and man was so well studied, that each had under his hand exactly what he wanted, at the moment when the notion of it came into his head. When they had eaten, being foot-weary with yesterday's race and the morning's scramble down the mountain's side, and, furthermore, lazy with

fullness of meat, the wayfarers lay down on their backs and looked up at the sky, wishing for a coach to come and carry them into the city. There was still Mackerel enough overhead to engage the attention of the Doctor. Was it possible that thus, when half asleep, he seized the true reading of two letters at once. The tremendous possibility caused him to leap to his feet. He tried one of them—the fourth of his line—and instantly a thousand horses, harnessed to a chariot, galloped by. They halted when the chariot was abreast of Mackerel and man. Their mouths were free; there were no reins to guide them; and it was noticeable that when any of the magic coursers put their heads to the dry ground and opened their mouths, corn or hay ran up between their teeth, and little water springs welled up where they were thirsty. “The other letter,” thought the Doctor, “must be right since this is right; but as I get what I want by the thousand for each letter, and don’t yet know anything more that I want, let me keep it by me for a little while.”

It is in common kindness to be expected that the person to whom this story is told should be told also what is the sound of the letters, that, when spoken, will produce at once a dinner, or an equipage on this liberal scale. But the letters are those of a dead language that was never living among ordinary men, and known only to a most ancient race of sorcerers, whose mouths were like the mouths of fishes. The last survivor of that race—a thousand thousand years ago,—upon the day of his death caught a Mackerel, the only kind of fish having a mouth

exactly fit for the pronouncing of his language. In dark letters he wrote with his finger on the fish's back a line of power, as he died. The letters of this line, and of course also the line itself, only the mouth of a Mackerel can utter. It is for that reason that they cannot be told in the story.

Pescadillo understood already a thousand tongues, among which, tongues of horses were included. He learnt, therefore, at once, from conversation with his stud, that he might trust them to do as he wished; and by addressing them all clearly in their own language before starting upon any journey, he afterwards knew how to save himself all trouble of explanation when upon the road. As they galloped into the city of Picon by the Lake Picuda, there was a commotion on the pavement, and a rush of bright eyes to the windows. The two eyes of a lovely Princess looked out of each of the ten windows of each of the hundred royal palaces. As horse after horse galloped by in the same traces, and still no coach, but still more harnessed horses followed, first there was a cry of joy for horse-riders; because clearly this was the troop of a grand circus entering the town. Then, as there came by still horses and horses, the people cried there were too many horses, for the land did not yield corn to feed them, and even if these riders brought so much corn with them, they should give it to the people who were hungry. At last, when the streets were full of the horses, there appeared the chariot they drew, and in it was a common fisherman, with a small fish. "Yah!" cried the mob. "Do you want all these

horses," cried the kings in chorus, "to bring only one fish to market?"

The Mackerel endeavoured with his harp and song to still the uproar, but in vain. There was no help for it; he spoke his reserved fifth letter, and cried "Silence!" There fell instantly upon the town a stillness as of night in the great desert when no wind stirs. Not even the rasp of a breath or the scrape of a foot was heard, though men seemed to be raving, shouting, and stamping quite as much as before. Now, therefore, the wonderful music was to be heard, and by it a few women were soothed.

The horses, being at rest, began to feed heartily upon the corn they got out of the stones on the road, and a rush was made to their mouths. But the wise Doctor spoke his third letter, and there appeared the thousand dishes of hot meat, dancing about without hands to carry them, and thrusting themselves, ready carved, under everybody's hand. While the people fed—everyone getting the dinner he liked best—the Mackerel played music, and hoped within himself that the same letter by which he had enforced silence would have power to unloose from its own spell. It had. By uttering that letter, the most fortunate of fishes could stop any sound at will, and let it go again when he thought proper.

A creature that could give such dinners had his own way entirely in the city and land of Picon. The hundred kings deposed themselves for love of him, declared him sole king, and themselves his viceroys. He changed the next letter he read into a thousand palaces of wonders, and in each there was a study,

walled with looking glass, so that he worked with comfort at the writing on his back. Every new letter he learnt to utter crowned with thousandfold fulfilment the wish of the hour. The thousand Princesses vied for his love, but he began to see that he could not be happy with a thousand wives. His last letter, except the very last, he gave to the wish that the one thousand dear Princesses could be all rolled into one.

Then there was a sight to be seen! Royal Princesses tumbling out of windows and doors, rolling about the streets like balls, every two that came together lost in one another, till the thousand had all rolled together into one colossal damsel. Her the poor little fish was very proud to marry. He did not think himself small, and yet, being small, a large wife was entirely to his fancy. Even in common life we see the shrimps of men marrying whales of women. This couple was married in great state—the fisherman being groomsman to the Mackerel, and all her hundred fathers standing by to give away the bride.

The wedding ball was so magnificent beyond belief, that King Pescadillo, in his brilliant court, surrounded by his hundred kingly fathers-in-law, could not help thinking of the old days under water, where so much was thought of the Shark's ball, and when the friends of his youth laughed at him for staying at home to learn his letters. As he thought this, he looked at himself in the great mirrors on the wall. There was the one last letter nearest to his legs, his flush of triumph so quickened

his wit, that he could read it at a glance, and whispered it unconsciously while he was wishing my Lord Shark were there to see what a state ball Lord Mackerel was giving. He looked up, and saw the ball-room walled with glass, behind which were a thousand sharks in sea-water glaring upon the company. The company was in extreme delight at this clever addition to its entertainment.

Then the little Mackerel's heart beat with exultation. "Something," he said to himself, "I know not what, is near. This is my wedding day, and on this day of all days I have finished reading the inscription on my back, letter by letter. If the power of the single letters be so great as to fulfil wish after wish, and tempt me on till I learn all, now that I know all, what will be the strength of the whole charm!"

Ah, cunning sorcerer, last of your line, you fellow who died a thousand thousand years ago, and on your last day wrote upon a fish's back the word that would give you life again when it was spoken, you had reason for being liberal in your rewards to the fish that would spell out that word for you!

The Royal Pescadillo stood upon the stool before his throne, and spoke the letter that compelled strict silence. Then, with panting sides, dread at the great unknown issue of his adventure tempering his triumph, he gasped out the entire magic word; and at the word the giant sorcerer, with a great hairy face, of which the beard trailed behind his feet, entered the ball-room door. This might be

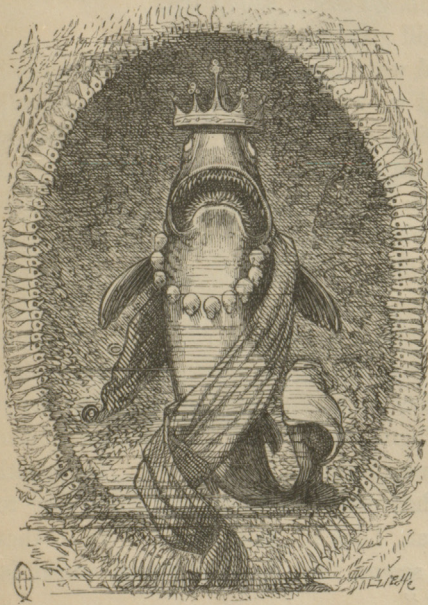
right, thought Pescadillo, though his little knees knocked at each other, and the thousand fingers of each hand twitched nervously. The cruel sorcerer advanced to the poor little fish, seized him, and thrust him into his great mouth as the first morsel to be eaten in his second course of life.

The first and last. He should not have been cruel. With his two thousand little fingers Pescadillo fastened to the hair about the monster's lip, and as he hung there he dug with his two thousand little toes into the monster's throat, so that he could not bite, he could do nothing but cough and choke. And the wise Mackerel held tight. He would not be coughed up, though he was almost blown off his legs by the tremendous coughing. All the company had run away; nobody had stayed to see how the brave little Mackerel fought out his battle in the sorcerer's mouth, till the great wretch, in a fit of choking, tripped over his own beard, reeled heavily against the glass walls, and broke through into the tank, where all the Sharks were swimming.

The Sharks soon finished the battle, and with a large sorcerer to eat had no eyes for the little morsel of a Mackerel, who seized his opportunity to slip away, and ran back with the stream of water to the sea from which it had been raised by magic channels.

And so Mackerel got safely home again. In all his life he never read another line, and he warned all his relations to get through their lives as merrily as they were able, without ever inquiring what

hey carried on their backs. "Not for thousands," he said, "would he himself have been so curious had he known everything when he began his studies!"



DICK AND DOLL.

DICK and Doll were the best friends till they married. Then,

“I will go east,” said Dick.

“I will go west,” said Doll.

“And we will never see each other more!”

“And we will never see each other more!”

So Dick, going to the uttermost East, was half-wrecked in the sea, and was half-baked on the land, half-eaten by the insects, and half-stripped of all he had, before he got into a desert at his journey's end.

And Doll, going to the uttermost West, went to the bottom of the sea, but floated up to be wounded on land with a hundred arrows, to be stripped of all but the rags left her in charity, and to walk the skin off her feet in getting to the desert at her journey's end. There she saw, in the twilight of the wilderness, a man limping towards her. They both limped on till they came together, and stood face to face.

“What, Dick!” said Doll. “Is it thou, man? Then it seems that the big round world is not to part us!”

“It seems not,” said Dick; “and so what say you, Doll? I think we may as well go home together.”

“To part from each other never more!”

“To part from each other never more!”



THE BAG OF MINUTES.

CHAPTER I.

TIME ON HAND.

ONCE upon a time there was a youth, named Trigonel, who was a grief to his mother, because he had never in his life eaten hot meat. As an infant in arms, hot meat was not his food, and when he could use his legs he was abroad at work

or at play, so busy or so idle, that he never came to dinner till his meat was cold.

Dame Peafflower, Trigonel's mother, was a proud and particular woman. It was her noon of glory to set a hot dish in the middle of her table at the very moment when the sun—that hot dish on which all the flowers feast—stood in the middle of the day. For the sun to stand still at noon would not have been more unnatural than for the potatoes in the pot of Mistress Peafflower to need another minute's boiling when the clock struck twelve. Keeping hot is over-cooking. "Better," she said, "let meat be cold than overcooked." Papilion, her husband, was of the same mind; and little Vetch, her only daughter, being helpful to the mother in the house, and being indeed the person who peeled the potatoes, always was on the spot when she ought to be eating. But of her one son, Trigonel, it was the single fault that he was always behind time in coming to his dinner.

Yet this Trigonel was a brave, stalwart lad; able, in hour of need, to bear the whole weight of the house upon his shoulders. Father Papilion, who was a woodcutter, chopped his foot one day with a false stroke of the axe. He was then confined to his house for many weeks; not while he got well, but while his wound got worse and worse, until at last his life was nearly at an end. Trigonel worked with the strength of two men in the forest. In many hours of the night he was his father's watchful nurse. He found odd moments, too, in which he could make mirth and sing with a voice

cracking into manly roughness, delicate songs for his small sister Vetch, whose joy of childhood was not to be quenched because there was a day of sorrow on its way to her. The young man was true, in short, to everything but his dinner.

Happy are they who in youth have some acquaintanceship among the Fairies of the Hours. Aster, the noon fairy, was Trigonel's good friend. She had come to him in his childhood, when he rolled on his back among the cowslips of the meadow. Then she appeared, and always, like the sheen of a maiden in gold armour, with long locks of golden hair. A plume like a flash of light waved over the diamond helmet beneath which glanced her blue eyes, more radiant than all. To other sight than that of Trigonel she was a ray, and nothing more. At mid-day, Papilion and Peaflower gave their minds to their meat; so that they did not see, as they must have seen, had they but dined at half-past twelve o'clock, the sunshine that at noon, even when all the upper air was thick with fog and sleet, would glitter daily for a little while about their boy. He had told his parents often and openly enough that he stayed from his dinner to talk with the noon fairy, but they only grieved that he should joke upon so serious a matter as the being late at meals.

Trigonel stood under a green oak in the autumn wood, leaning against the mighty heap of fagot bundles that he had prepared since sunrise. The light of his fairy shone on his brown face and dingy clothes, and made the fagots glow as if

they were ablaze. Grasshoppers chirped in the light, butterflies fluttered through it, and the cups of the golden acorns overhead gleamed like cut jewels. Aster sat at the youth's feet, with her helmet off. She held between her fondling palms the hand from which the axe had fallen, and was dazzling him by looking up into his face.

"Farewell," she said. "You are a man. Work henceforth by yourself. Each of my days, remember, is but for an hour, and yet you will be giving life to me all the hours through while you are brave and open as the noon."

Trigonel laughed. "Am I to add twenty-three hours to the one that is your life? It is but fair, then, that you should beg me also a spare minute of your father. You have told me that he is a great magician, owner of the sandheaps by the border of the endless sea, where each grain of the sand is a minute, and each drop of the flood an everlasting age. Surely the old man would not deny his daughter one spadeful of sand. You know that you want to give it as a keepsake to your friend."

"Ah, me!" sighed Aster. "But you ask that as a keepsake which may cause you to forget me. Wear in your cap, my better gift, this crystal; it will be a star to me while you are true; and take care not to wear it in the sun if ever you and honesty be parted. For the other gift, say nothing! My father, who flies by unseen, grants you your wish."

Aster slid back into the sun. The incredulous youth, with a cheery laugh, looked upward, shak-

ing his black hair at her, and waving with both hands his farewell as she flashed from sight. Then, being left alone, he turned his face towards his dinner.

There was a narrow belt of moor between the forest in which Trigonel cut wood and his father's cottage. The sun was hot on the dry turf, and there was a dropping fire among the pods of the whin-blossoms that were scattering their seeds with the pop of a fairy cannonade. Suddenly the air was chill, the wind screamed through the forest, and the forest itself was not to be seen. Overhead shone the sun, there was blue day over the cottage roof, beyond was a far prospect over field, and copse, and stream. But Trigonel looked back upon the blank of night, through which the wind rushed wailing and sobbing. Mightier than the wind was presently a sound as of the stroke of hugest wings by which the air had been thus beaten to tempest. Then the roar ceased, the storm rolled back, and the great giant Time, with a face high and hard as a mountain top, and with his beard rolling like a cloud among the clouds, stood still over Trigonel. One huge arm he upreared, and with the gesture of a reveller, swept his great hour-glass through the upper sky.

"Spill! spill!" cried Trigonel. "Crack me a hole in your glass and give me of your sands."

Father Time fixed his eyes on the youth, but said nothing. Putting one hand into the robe about his breast he drew out what seemed to be a leathern purse well filled, and dropped it at his feet; then, with a frown, spread his wide wings again and passed on in the hurricane he raised. When Time beats

with his wings in angry flight we may be thrown by the wild weather he makes, as Trigonel was, unexpectedly upon our faces. Trigonel, when the darkness passed and left him in the sun again—while it obscured the distant prospect of field, copse, and stream—perceived with joy that he had fallen so that his nose struck into a sand-bag. Cruel or kind, Father Time had granted him his wish, and had presented him with as much as he could carry on his back of that choice sand in which the grains are minutes. Trigonel's heart was lighter than his step as, shouldering his bag, he slowly tottered on to his cold dinner.

CHAPTER II.

TIME WASTED.

BUT the dinner was not cold when Trigonel entered the empty kitchen. It was the second hour of afternoon, and the old white hen, who should have smoked at twelve upon the table, was a black hen, smoking by the fire in company with her new kindred the cinders. It was dull company, for in the ashy grate the coals had been a good deal put out by the boiling over of the saucepans. The clean dinner plates were still upon their shelf.

“Little Vetch! Mother!” the youth cried in terror as he entered. But there was no answer. Dropping his sand-bag heedlessly upon the floor and

without staying to close the cottage door, Trigonel hurried up the ladder to the sleeping loft. There was his father, dying. Vetch, poor maid, trembling, weeping, fondling, lay on the bed nestled to Papilion's panting breast, and at the bed-head knelt the mother with her whole soul fixed upon her husband. Trigonel, kneeling beside her, put his strong rough arm about her neck and bowed his head upon the coverlet.

"O, boy, it snaps my heart," the mother said. "Thirty years my good man, and the more life the more love. O, for a little, little more time; till we go together. O, for a little, little time. But a few minutes are left him."

"Minutes, mother!" Trigonel cried, jumping up. "A little time!" At the word he was down the ladder. In the room below he fell upon a select party of porkers that had found their way in, and were thrusting hungry snouts into his treasure bag. There never was a man yet who secured himself a little spare time but a part of it was eaten by the pigs.

Trigonel seized a handful of the sand as the pigs took their leave. They were none of them the better, he saw, for their meal. Time, he thought, is a thing to hold and not to swallow. Hurrying back, therefore, to the sick-bed, he pressed some of the sand into Papilion's failing grasp. It was clutched eagerly, and in that instant life flowed back upon the dying.

Death-bed life was in this way prolonged. It soon appeared that while Papilion had in his hand some of the sand, he was the master of so much Time as

he held. A grain of the sand vanished with each minute that went, but till the bag was empty the old man might live. For many years he could be kept thus balanced on the point of death.

Dame Peaflower soon put a check on the loose handling of the precious grains. Counting them into sixties and double sixties she had them sewn up carefully into small one-hour and two-hour bags. Of these some were again stitched together into twelve and twenty-four-hour packets. Had her husband's life depended only on her punctuality in keeping him supplied with Time, it was secure. But it depended also on his own grasp of the fairy gift. In a little while he became weary of the days beyond his span, impatient of the fist for ever clenched that his wife tied up like a pudding when he dozed, lest the hand loosened in sleep might let his life slip through its fingers. Therefore, one day, when Trigonel and Vetch were both gone to the wood, and when his dame was nursing him, Papilion, raising his head from his pillow, kissed her quietly, and while he thus took her attention slipped the freshly-supplied twelve-hour bag out of his palm into her bosom. Then he sank back with a smile that never changed.

"He was quite right," afterwards said Peaflower to her son, "I'd seen myself, dear as he was and is, his life had been kept too long to the fire. It isn't only meat that can be overdone. If I were you, boy, I would throw away that sackful of leisure. Strict to time and ready to the minute is worth any heap of odd minutes to spare."

In the old days, when the kitchen clock might have been set by the ways of its mistress, it had never come into the mind of Dame Peaflower to tell even her son that she was a punctual woman. Punctuality was nature to her—no more talked of than digestion by the healthy. Now, however, she made daily assertion of her good old principles against the heap of odd minutes that tempted her. They were so handy. For the sands that had added minutes to the life of which the time was out, gave also to healthy people time outside the common day. Sixty grains held in the hand melted into an hour, of which no record was kept by clock or sun. If little Vetch wanted two hours of play instead of one, she took a sixty-grain packet of Trigonel's sand; went out at eleven, played for two hours, and yet was home again at noon to dinner. If Madam Peaflower had a day's washing to get through, she would hold a linen bag of sand between her little finger and her palm, while she rubbed in the suds with the other three fingers and thumb. It was not easy work, but a day's washing had been got through in that way, upon one occasion, between eleven o'clock and one minute past eleven, when the poor Peaflower was so weary and weary that she would much rather have gone to bed than cooked the dinner. The sand being at hand, no little delays were heeded. There was always time for everything. At one second to twelve it was not too late to roast an ox before the clock struck. Always time for everything was on its way to become no time for anything with the most punctual of living creatures—and how tired she was! Although

the clock took no note of her added work, she felt it in her bones. The Fairy-sand gave time, not strength, beyond the common bounds. Then, too, if she was tired, how fagged was Trigonel! That young man, eager to earn for his mother and sister silk attire, sometimes would make his arms ache with twelve hours of chopping between breakfast and dinner. And when he did come home to dinner, very likely he would find his mother fast asleep upon the floor. Always oppressed by fatigue, she was apt to drop asleep suddenly and unexpectedly. Even when she had in her hand the Fairy-sand, it would then slip from her hold, and the hours of the day would march in procession over her, till Trigonel came home and woke her up. Little Vetch, too, when she had overplayed herself, would drop about the house like a fly in November. Sometimes even Trigonel the brave, who was so haggard that he looked like an old man, went off into a sound morning sleep over his wood-cutting. Then, if by chance it happened that his mother and Vetch were snoring on the floor at home, the sun might set before they all came to themselves, and wondered whether they had had their dinner.

Vetch was the first to find that the natural day had the right number of hours for her. While her mother and her brother were still worrying and wearying themselves, she, meddling no longer with the Fairy-sand, budded and blossomed into the full beauty of her maidenhood. The mother's house-keeping had fallen into such confusion of hours, that the cheerful and busy daughter took that charge out

of her hands. It was Vetch now who, setting her ways by the sun, kept up a wholesome order in all household affairs; who made out the time of the true noon by setting on the kitchen table the meat she herself had cooked; and who sought to lessen the unruliness not only of Trigonel, but also of the good Dame Peaflower herself.

“Mother,” she said, one day when they were shelling peas together at the kitchen table, “Poppy, the ploughboy, knows a great deal.”

“Ah!” said Peaflower.

“What do you think he told me yesterday?”

“Well, I think I can guess.”

“No,” Vetch answered, with a bright smile, and the flicker of a blush; “you guess nothing important. Poppy and I only talk about important things.” While she spoke, Trigonel entered hastily, crying out, “Where’s the sand, mother—be quick!”

“Why, what’s the matter, boy?”

Trigonel, with a large packet of sand in his hand, and the whole bag on his shoulder, had only time to say, before he hurried out—

“Grand notion of Poppy’s! Ducks for dinner? I shall be back in the cracking of a peascod!”

CHAPTER III.

A FORTUNE MADE IN NO TIME.

POPPY had simply been suggesting, as a confidential family friend, that fairy gifts have nothing

at all to do with ordinary life. The sand in Trigonel's bag probably was worth a thousand gold pieces a grain to somebody. He had heard of a King who would have given his throne for two minutes of time. If kings frequently made such offers, Trigonel might furnish his kitchen with a fine set of a dozen thrones, instead of the four old oaken chairs that his father had chopped out of the forest. Magic tools could be meant only for working upon magic stuff. Dolt of a Trigonel! To get no more out of his fairy sand than a few silver crowns more profit by his wood-cutting. Let him shoulder his bag of minutes, and hold some of the sand tight in his hand, while he looked out for great adventures. Let him always have sand in his fist, and he might, if he did not rest too easily content, step out of his door to come back with his fortune made in no time. So he did.

That is the Prince Marattin who comes galloping across the plain, where there is distant prospect from the cottage-door of field and copse and stream. Field and copse and stream—and mountains where there were no mountains last night. The plain was being changed into a valley among high and tumbled rocks, while Prince Marattin spurred for life towards the one opening still left on the side of the forest.

“Out of the way, bagman!” said the Prince, as Trigonel, standing before him, seized the reins. But that youth, taking the horse by his right foreleg, thrust a four-hour packet of sand between the hoof and the shoe, and then, flinging his sand-bag across the horse's neck, himself jumped up behind his gracious Highness. “I am in peril of life! Down,

fellow!" the Prince cried. "Never mind that," Trigonel answered. "Take a good grip of my bag that lies before you, and no matter what your peril is, you shall get out of it."

The Prince, who was in danger enough to grasp at a straw, fastened of course at once upon the sand-bag.

"Now," Trigonel said, "be easy, my lord. Our time's our own." The Prince Marattin and his horse were as white as the miller with long scampering through all the dust they raised. Trigonel, now sitting behind his Highness, wiped a large piece of his back with his coat-sleeve, and saw that he wore copper armour. "Only copper!" he said to himself. "You poor halfpenny Prince! Where shall I find the Crown Prince who wears silver?" Marattin saw that, although his horse had changed its pace for that of a mere beast of burden, not another stone was added to the ring of rocks, so he said nothing until they had passed through the opening towards the forest. Over that, they saw the giants striding, as men stride over grass, everyone with a lot of mountains on his back.

"Wonderful man!" said Marattin, then. "You have helped me through the prison wall these enemies of mine were building, and have brought me to where they will rain mountains over us till we are crushed. How shall I thank you?"

"A giant helps me who is stronger than them all," said Trigonel. "Amble on; we have time." The army of giants stood like a wilderness of sublime statues; everyone with the sign, and no more than the sign

of life and motion in his limbs ; as the horse stumbled among the patches of trees, crushed and trampled by the great feet treading over them, with Marattin, Trigonel, and the sand-bag all on his back.

“Now,” Trigonel said, when they had passed from between the thickest pair of giant legs, and were toiling over a great hillock of foot, “my lord, the Bagman will bid you good day. I must shoulder my bag and begone.”

“Not leaving me to ruin—”

“No ! For your horse and copper armour I will give you two hours to escape with. You are a king ?”

“Since yesterday !”

Trigonel did not like the fellow. The cold of his heart struck through his eyes ; his long, pointed moustaches were like bayonets, and under his mouth there hung a beard like a false tongue.

“Very well,” said the youth. “If you want another two hours, have them. Take my cap and leathern jerkin. Give me your horse and copper armour, and we part.”

So the Prince went on his way afoot in cap and leathern jerkin, with a two-hour packet of time clenched in his fist. Trigonel took his gracious Highness's address and trotted away with his sack before him, and the copper on his back.

Always taking care that there should be plenty of spare time in his hand and plenty tucked between one of the horse's front hoofs and his shoe, Trigonel travelled at his leisure. He went forward till the helmets of the giants, when looked back upon, appeared like distant mountain crests ; and there

was a large city before him, out of which had been brought, by a great crowd, a knight in armour, covered with the dust that the crowd raised. He had a rope tied round his neck, and sat in the hangman's cart. As Trigonel rode up to him, the Knight began to cry with might and main, "Behold the enemy! He, of the copper armour, is Marattin! Seize him, and let him tell you that I am his enemy and not his spy!"

"I wear Marattin's armour," Trigonel said, taking off the helmet. "But whoever knows him may see that I am not he."

The Knight, leaping out of the cart, ran forward to seize Trigonel's hand, and said, "Great hero, have you vanquished him? Shout, people, for the suppressor of Marattin!" And the people would have shouted themselves thirsty again for much less than that. Trigonel put his hand on the Knight's shoulder to answer him, and saw that here was a man dressed in silver armour. "Only silver!" he said to himself. "You poor crown Prince! Where shall I find the Sovereign Emperor who wears nothing but gold." But he spoke to himself, so that he was overheard.

"That Emperor is my father," said the Silver Knight. "Of course you wish to carry your good tidings to him."

"At once," said Trigonel, giving time to the Silver Knight. "The people will not lose a minute, though we ride for a month, and leave them standing here. Borrow that mare out of the hangman's cart, let me see to her shoes, and

ride with me to the country of the Emperor, your father."

So Trigonel rode with the Silver Prince into the city, leaving the crowd exactly as they found it; every listener in it with his ear turned; every one who spoke or hallooed with his mouth still open, his gesture fixed, or the cap he had thrown still in the air.

"We had made undersea gangways," said the Silver Prince, "out of my father's island into most lands round about. Suddenly coming up into this city by a path just opened, I was taken for a spy of Marattin, whom I hate, and against whose treacheries all men are watching. I believed him to be now surrounded by the giants that will crush him; yet if you yourself are not his vanquisher, how came you by his armour?"

"Never mind," Trigonel answered. They had passed through a mountain cavern near the city walls, and were now traversing an endless tunnel, lighted by towers open to the sky. To each of them there was an ascent by winding terraces. "May we not mount one of these towers?" From the battlemented summit of the first they climbed Trigonel and the Prince looked out over the sea. A stiff breeze caught their helmet plumes, and the salt spray broke over them. A dotted line of towers led their eyes to a white streak on the horizon.

"That," said the Prince, stretching arm and finger to it, "is the country of my golden father, which strikes root through the foundations of the sea, and becomes neighbour to all nations."

The way seemed to be long to the dominions of the Emperor in Gold. At last they were reached, and Trigonel restored to a magnificent father the young Prince whom he had saved out of the hangman's hands.

This Prince was but a younger son. Eldest son of the golden Lord was the illustrious Duke (the name of whose rank has been corrupted into Duck) of Diamonds. The Duke of Diamonds was paved with precious stones from top to toe, and wore by his side a sword of many jewels, beaten into a blade at the forge of the fairies. Trigonel, open as noon, told all his story to the King, confessing candidly that he had come abroad to make his fortune. He had it in copper, when he bought for one hundred and twenty grains of sand the armour of Marattin. He had not asked for it in silver when he saved the Silver Knight, because he learnt that the Emperor in Gold was his father. Now, however, he owned that he felt partiality towards the Duke of Diamonds.

"Well," said the King, "say no more. I will not buy your sand, because we are in this land already a hundred years ahead of the rest of the world, but you shall go home in a suit of armour like my eldest son's, and that alone is worth a common dukedom. Possibly you have a sister?"

"Sire, I have."

"Then shall my son, the Diamond Duke, who wants a wife, ride home with you himself, and if he should like your sister, he will marry her."

So it was done; and as this is no traveller's tale, I need not describe how they made the journey.

Trigonel, dressed in diamonds, rode beside the Diamond Duke, who was mounted upon a great piebald horse in sapphire harness. They were both shouting, "House, ho!" outside the cottage of Dame Peaflower, before Vetch, with her dainty little thumb had scraped the peas out of the shell she was cracking when her brother stepped into the sun to make his fortune. Mother and daughter hurried to the threshold; but the Diamond Duke, when he looked at Vetch, immediately saw that she would be the best wife in the world for him. So the first words he said to her (and she was the first person to whom he spoke) were, "Marry me." But Vetch had her fortune made already in the love of her dear oracle, Poppy, the ploughboy. Therefore, she said, "No, thank you," to the Duke of Diamonds. Dame Peaflower explained to the Duke, that Poppy, although only a ploughboy, knew a great deal, and had on this very occasion been her son Trigonel's adviser.

"Better, still," said the Duke. "We in our land want a wise Vizier quite as much as I want a wife. Poppy knows a great deal. Poppy's advice has clothed your son in diamonds. Fetch Poppy, and he shall be our Minister of State. The tender little Vetch shall be his wife. You, sir, who have saved my life, shall be my friend, and we will all take care of the good mother. Let us dine together, and then start."

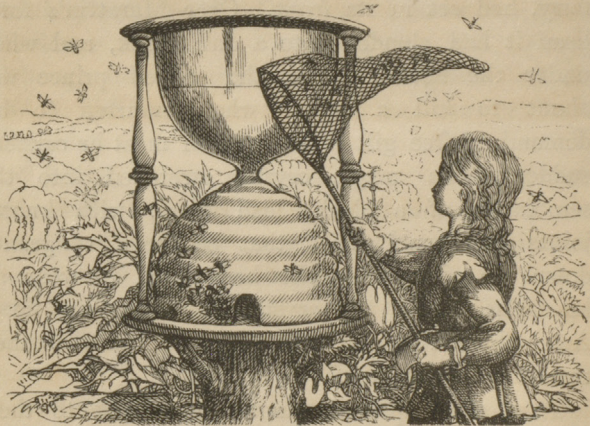
Vetch was willing to go if Poppy thought he would like a State Minister's business as well as ploughing. Poppy was sent for and the affair was

settled. So the Widow Peaflower sat down at noon to her dinner of ducks and green peas with the betrothed Poppy and Vetch, one on each side of her. Her ducks were carved by the Duke of Diamonds himself. But Trigonel, who was gone out to feed the horses, had not come in when the ducks were cut. His eye had been caught by a well-remembered flash descending swiftly from the sun, and lost behind the mountains that now made a valley of his native plain. The flash was Aster, the noon fairy, ablaze with wrath, having in rigid grasp her downward pointed spear.

When Trigonel exchanged his cap and jerkin for Marattin's armour, he had left in his cap, too thoughtlessly, the crystal which his playfellow, the fairy, had set in its front. Over Marattin's forehead it had clouded into a dull black, and when under the noonday sun, the wicked prince was about to kill a beggar who demurred to his demand of free gift of the broken meat he carried; suddenly the magic crystal stretched into the semblance of a black, lean hand, with knotty joints and cruel nails, that beckoned vengeance down. Against him who had dared to wear on his false front the crystal of the noon fairy, Aster herself struck the spear. Marattin died thus of a sunstroke.

Then the appeased giants went back to their caves, leaving the mountains they had raised as records of their wrath; and Aster, playful as of old, but with a whisper of rebuke, appeared again to Trigonel, who had his crystal back, clear as at first.

Again, therefore, the youth had missed his mid-day dinner, but he dined at one o'clock, and afterwards was ready to depart with Peaflower, Vetch, and Poppy, to the wonderful land, where the Duke of Diamonds would be their bosom friend. There is nothing else to be told except that before starting, Trigonel, by the advice of Counsellor Poppy, scattered his bag of minutes to the winds, and ever since he did that, grains of spare time, seldom to be caught, are thought to have been dancing upon puffs and eddies of wind up and down the world.





THE TOAD'S WIFE.

Rospo was an ambitious nobleman, who had a jewel of a wife. What poets feign that their loves have, she really had. Her eyes were diamonds, her teeth were pearls; her hair was of the purest gold. She was a wife much valued by her husband.

“Ah!” said he, one morning, when he observed her biting bread at breakfast. “What teeth, my treasure! A gift of only one such pearl would

make the chief Sultana, who has rule over the great Sultan himself, my servant. Ah, me! ah, me! my fortune at Court could be made with one of those large double teeth that your cheek hides. And you bite bread with them."

"I would give more than a tooth to serve you," said the good wife; and she really caused her largest double tooth to be drawn for him. It was a pearl for any queen.

"You said you would give more than a tooth to serve me," Rospo whispered to his wife, a fortnight afterwards, when they walked in the woods together. "The Queen longs for another pearl like that I gave her, because then she might have a pair of ear-drops beautiful enough to make the houris die of envy." And he had the other tooth.

A week afterwards, Rospo was very sad. The mighty Vizier to the Sultan of the Dawn was dying, he explained. Another man competed with himself in bribes to become the old Vizier's successor. He had spent all in vain, and was a ruined man, unless one other bag of gold could be obtained to give weight to his claim.

"Be comforted," said the kind wife. "Look at this idle wealth of hair, on a head that is never seen by the world uncovered. Take it and win your prize." Accordingly she had her head shaved to the scalp, and gave him all her golden hair, for which he returned vows of everlasting love.

“Vexatious accident!” cried Rospo, rushing suddenly into his wife’s chamber, three days afterwards. “The Sultan of the Dawn has changed his favourite. Another of his wives now rules him. Yesterday it was all Zarem, now it is all Zeram; and Zeram is furious against me, because of the two great pearls given by me to her rival.”

“Take my other grinders,” said the wife.

“Useless, alas! useless!” said the husband. “All the pearls in your mouth, furious as she is, will barely suffice to turn her anger into friendship.”

“At least,” said the kind lady, “you may take them all and try.”

“Glorious success, my precious one,” said Rospo to his wife, next day. “Zeram is mad with delight at the pearl bracelet I have given her. The Vizier cannot live another hour. The Sultan is now on his way to consult with him for the last time, and hear his last wishes. That miserly wretch, even in his last hour, is greedy for a bribe. My rival has just left his door. I know that I have but to ask for one of those great diamond eyes of yours, and have it in time to make sure of the creature’s good word against whatever gift another can have offered him.” So Rospo rushed away again, with one of his wife’s eyes in his hand, and in the evening went back to her with exultation, crying out, “Better, and better! It needs only the other diamond to make me Vizier. The old man is dead, and spoke for me. But when the Sultan saw upon the coverlet the diamond I had just given, he said

that no man should be the Vizier but he who would present his Ruler with another diamond as glorious as that."

"But," said the wife, "I am now bald, toothless, and one-eyed. Will you bear with me and guide me when I am left altogether blind?"

"An Eastern wife," said Rospo, angrily, "is never seen of men, and has nothing to see except her husband. You know well what I am like. Think that after all I have done, and all the trouble I have had, and wealth I have risked, without that other diamond I shall be ruined."

So the good wife was left sitting in darkness, and her husband, become Vizier to the Sultan of the Dawn, returned to her no more. Why should he? How could she help him when she could not help herself?

But Oberon and Titania were then travelling across the country of the Dawn. So they went one of them to Rospo, and the other one to his deserted wife.

The Sultan did not see the King of the Fairies, but it was odd that he did not see any more his own Vizier, who had been flattering him but a minute ago. And there was a large toad hopping to the door. It seemed to have come from underneath the throne.

Oberon, leading the Toad by a magic string, met on his way Titania, who advanced towards him lovingly, with her arm on the neck of the most radiant of fairies. It was a fairy with eyes of the

starlight, hair of plaited sunbeams, and teeth through which she could lisp a magic language.

"I take this good wife for my friend," Titanie said.

"And I have brought that fellow Rospo to the dust," said Oberon. "See, here he is, and for his punishment he bears a jewel in his head. The Sultan has not missed it from its casket yet, and when he does he will not know that the Toad's head is its casket now. The Toad's head shall be heavy with it; he shall never be without a headache until Oberon is dead. Come with us, beautiful new fairy."

"Nay," said the fairy wife. "Since the Toad is my husband, I shall make my couch with him and cherish him." She did so; and because of her there is not a more humbled and harmless, or a more home-keeping creature upon earth than the Toad, who was once so eager to go out and be a Vizier. His headache is still constant; one has only to look at him and see that. Of the precious jewel in his head we have all heard. As for the Toad's Wife, in the homes of generous and patient women she has, in our own time, now and then been seen.

ROBIN AND RICHARD.

ROBIN and Richard went up a hill one night to look for witches, and as they came down again found, tied to a tree, an old black nag, who had cropped all the grass within his tether, and was straining his neck to get at another blade or two.

“Poor devil,” said Richard. “May your master get a bag and bottle that he cannot fill!”

Robin said nothing, but threw large handfuls of grass within reach of the horse, who only said, “Ho! ho!” and turning the loose grass up with his nose, disclosed a leathern water-bottle and a meal-bag lying under it. “Master Richard,” he said, “have what you wish yourself, for I am yours! But I am Master Robin’s too, and he shall ride me.”

Richard took what was offered him; Robin untied the nag; and as they went home they resolved to set out next morning on their travels. But they went to bed at dawn. So, as every nurse knows, they lay abed until the sun was very high, when Robin said to Richard:—

“You go before with your bottle and bag,
And I’ll come after on my black nag.”

Robin, when he came up to Richard, found him with a miller, of whom he had bought as much meal as would fill his bag. All the contents of the mill were poured into it, and still the bag was empty. Thereupon, Richard said that the miller was still in his debt, and held his bottle until all the millstream had run into it, and had not filled it. But Robin, when the bread and water were all gone, as the debt still was unpaid, took up the miller himself on his nag, and trotted off with him. These brothers did much of this kind of business, married scolds, and had bad attorneys for their children.



STIFF-BEARD.

RUTIFOL, Prince of Athyrium, was the kindest fellow in the world; yet there were thousands of people by whom all his goodness was forgotten, because he had one little outside oddity about him, which caused him to be known commonly as Stiff-Beard, or the Prince with the Upright Hair.

Botrychio, his father, revered widely as The Man, was the most shining of the lords of men. In

his proud country the highest chief did not descend to share with a mob of sovereigns who were not all respectable, any such name as Emperor or King. He was known as, among men, The Man; not even The Man of Athyrium, but The Man. Simply The Man—because to be most distinguished among men of Athyrium, who were the greatest people in the world, was to be, for all the world, the Man of Men. Botrychio had an enormously strong body and a wonderful intensity of brain. By right of them he held this title; but it did happen that when his son Rutifol was born, the intensity of the father's brain seemed to have determined that the whole strength of the father's body should descend in the son into the parts about the brain. So it happened that Rutifol had from infancy the thickest and the hardest skull, as well as the stiffest crop of hair, that has ever yet been heard of.

When only ten days old he had his head shaved with a file; for the young hairs, every one growing straight out of the head, wounded his mother and his nurse like needles. They were too hard to be cut with a razor, and the smith who filed them off had to wear gauntlets while he was about his work. But the more the hair of The Man's son was filed, or trimmed with nippers, the more it grew to be stiff. At the age of five, each hair of his head was about as long, as thick and sharp as a large darning-needle. At the age of ten, by an accident that would have been the death of any other boy, he fell, head foremost, from the top of the clock-tower of his father's palace into the paved court below. The ends of his

hairs then ran to the very roots through the marble into the ground below, and his strong head buried itself in the pavement like a cannon ball, as far as the root of his nose, so that he remained with his legs flourishing in the air till he was uprooted, late at night, by machinery that had to be erected for that purpose over him. One or two of his hairs were broken, but he had not suffered the slightest bruise.

The rapid growth of the strong hair made it necessary that it should be daily trimmed. When whiskers, beard, and moustache had sprouted, every hair straight and strong as a corking-pin, in the same terrible fashion, no consideration of the fact that the more poor Rutifol's hair was trimmed the stiffer it would grow, could excuse him for not using a hair-dresser. His hair, therefore, was dressed every morning by four blacksmiths, on an anvil fitted up for the purpose in his Highness's dressing-room. The Prince laid his strong head on the anvil, while his feebler body was stretched easily upon a sofa. The anvil was arranged in the place of the sofa-pillow. The four blacksmiths then, working together with all their might, tipped his hair with great sledge hammers, that broke down all the sharp points, leaving only an inch or two towards the root that could not be destroyed by hammering. When this was done they trimmed the rough hair neatly by filing the jagged ends. Yet this Prince with the Upright Hair had mild eyes under eyebrows that looked daggers; and he had lips that would have gladly kissed a wife if he could have given anybody one kiss without a thousand stabs.

Now, it was necessary to the well-being of Athyrium that Prince Rutifol should marry. Botrychio, his father, said so, and whatever The Man said was to be done, had to be done quickly. Rutifol was himself the Coming Man, and after him there must be more to come, that could not come if Rutifol remained unmarried. So supreme was the inherent dignity of the Lord of Athyrium, that it could receive no addition from a wife's rank. The wife of The Man might be any woman in the world, born Empress or born rag-picker; once married to The Man, she became The Woman, and was at the topmost height of human glory. But of all women, the Maid Lunary was most disposed to marry Rutifol. Lunary was a noble damsel, with a fair face and long yellow hair, who dressed in pearls and silver every day of her life; and of all youths, it was Rutifol who was most ready to marry her. "If you would but get rid of that stiff beard!" she said, when he declared his mind.

"Sweet maid," he answered, "I will wrap two feet of bolster round my hair whenever I come into your presence. You shall not have a scratch though we live ninety years together."

"And how am I to sleep of a morning," Lunary asked, "when you are having your head dressed by the blacksmiths? No, my dear Rutifol, surely some oil can be found that will soften even hair like yours, and change its colour from that dismal iron grey. I will engage myself to you only on condition that we marry when your chin is smooth."

Rutifol bowed assent. Raising Maid Lunary's hand, he guided her taper fingers carefully between the spikes of his beard and moustaches; it was a slender hand, and by opening his mouth to its utmost width, he could make room enough to advance the longest finger to one of his lips. This was the prettiest way he had of kissing her. The unmanageable part of his stiff beard was now so long that he could only feed himself by using a fork and spoon of more than ordinary length; and as he could bring no cup to his lips, he sucked through straw when he was thirsty. His head he covered night and day with a huge wadded turban; but the stiff porcupine beard would in no way be conquered or concealed. Prince Stiff-Beard, therefore, was the name by which poor Rutifol commonly went; they were only the wise people who had more imagination for what was under his turban than eyes for what was under his nose, by whom he was known as the Prince with Upright Hair.

The fairies know so much that they may have from the first been busy with their own devices to promote the growth of this young prince's hair. Certainly it was odd that when the scaly giant Cetarach caught the fairy Moonwort astride on a wild bee that was flying to the nest which, with his hard crocodile hands, he was robbing of its honey, he should have replied as he did to her threats:—"Titania's subject, are you?" he said. "Her favourite dancer, eh? Well, henceforth you shall dance before me. See; I tie you by the leg to my waist-buckle, and there you may dance till

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I die. For your comfort let me tell you that I have a surprising constitution, and I like so well to see you twist and twirl, that I shall laugh and live the longer for your company."

"The fairies will make war upon you," Moonwort said.

"Let them," said Cetarach. "I shall enjoy the sport of having others like yourself about me."

"I hope, though—"

"Don't hope, though. Let me be merciful and put you out of the pain of hoping. My good mother, Scolopender, boiled me with fennel and other herbs, when I was a baby; with charmed herbs, over a charmed fire, in water that rained out of a cloud raised by enchantment. I don't know what the powers of herbs are, but you may rely upon it the good Scolopender knew; and she has told me many a time that I am charmed against every sort of death, unless it be death by the chin of a man who can kill me with one scrub of his beard. You see, little Miss, what a comfort it is to have you here and talk to you about myself. After she had gathered her herbs mamma did not notice that she dropped on the way a piece of Bristle Fern, which her cat brought to her in his mouth after I had been fished up out of the pot. It was not worth while to boil me again for charm against a risk like that. Do you think I look like a fellow to be killed with a single rub of a man's bristly chin?" Cetarach drew himself up to his full height, and stretched his scaly arms

in triumph. His skin, from head to foot, was like the crocodile's.

At night, when Cetarach was asleep, Titania missed the beautiful court-dancer, Moonwort, from her ring. The bee she had ridden and the bees whom the giant robbed had been flying distracted up and down their wood—the same wood that was haunted by the fairies. A stray fairy had from the bees the fatal news upon her way to Court, and when it was told there, all the fairies, with the bees for guides, flew to the monster's cave. But, alack the day, how powerless they were against him! They could not even tickle him so that he should twitch a finger in his sleep. Least of all could they unloose little Moonwort from the knot that tied her to the giant's waist-buckle.

Around Moonwort, wakeful prisoner, the bees and fairies then assembled, to learn what she had to tell. But when she had told all, Titania laughed. Then all the fairies laughed, because they knew that their queen's mirth betokened happiness; and Moonwort also laughed, well knowing that her mistress was not cruel.

"Here is a beautiful adventure," said her Majesty, "for that Prince Rutifol, whom they call Stiff-Beard. In how many days can a bee fly hence to Athyrium?"

"Sweet Sovereign, in ten."

Titania then whispered her message in the ear of Moonwort's bee and sent him off, but the whole swarm went with him as escort. At the end of ten days they came to the Court of

Botrychio, where Rutifol, with a head and face like a porcupine's back, was in a pantry, with Maid Lunary, pounding together lard and almonds. That was a compound wherewith he had been advised to dress his head seven times a day. The bees, when they had flown thrice round his spiky hair, swarmed on the pestle. But Moonwort's bee soon rose again, and fluttering in the air close to his ear, hummed these words:—

“Rutifol, attend to me! Know why we have appeared!
Hard and scaly Cetarach, the son of Scolopender,
Gripes the little tender Moonwort. You are her defender!
Hard and scaly Cetarach you can lay upon his back,
And set the fairy dancer free, with one scrub of your beard.”

When Stiff-Beard heard the name of Cetarach, his hair lengthened and his beard seemed to grow stiffer. A strange instinct impelled him to leap up and strike his fist so fiercely on the table that the pestle jumped out of the mortar, and the bees, all flying from it, rose again with a wild buzz into the air. Maid Lunary herself was scared away.

Now, as it happened that The Man's great black horse was at the door, Rutifol, hurrying out, leapt on its back. Being invited by the bees to follow them, he rode for ten days over moor and fell, through brook and river. He slept on his journey in the open air when it was dark, and breakfasted at daylight on the honey that the bees collected for him in the early dawn.

On the tenth day they had reached a frowning rock which overhung the sea. Then the Prince turned

his horse into a meadow, and a dozen bees remained to watch it. Rutifol had come abroad to fight the giant, in the same green velvet tunic and red satin body-clothes that he had on when he was pounding almonds with Maid Lunary. He had not so much as a court sword by his side; but then, to be sure, he had one of those heads that can fight its way through anything.

The sharp, loose stones of the mountain side tore great holes in his gilt and jewelled slippers, as he struggled up. The sea widened before him; the opposite coast rose and spread into a far vision of opposite country. There were river meadows and sea marshes below him; the golden autumn plain and the great fairy-haunted forest that was but as one of the cloud shadows darkening their surface. All these were not many times larger than the eagle soaring over them, the flapping of whose near wings the climber heard. Beyond the plains, mountain surged over mountain; here in sunshine, there smeared with the falling darkness of a distant shower. The chill gust of the wind on the mountain height began to whistle through the Prince's teeth; but it would have blown them down his throat before it could have stirred one of the stiff, upright hairs upon his head and chin.

A turn in the path brought the Prince, who had been left by the bees, suddenly into the presence of the giant Cetarach. The monster looked like a great lizard in the figure of a man. His scales were of the same colour as the rock, and he was lying among the crags, with his feet dipped in a mountain tarn.

His head was fixed, and motionless as the head of a reptile at rest, but his eyes were intent on his waist-buckle ; for there, set in the full rush of a draught of ice-cold mountain wind, the tender little Moonwort, with a string about her waist, was pirouetting.

When the tiny fairy saw Rutifol scrambling up the rocks, she clapped her hands, and suddenly stood still to look at him. The giant, slowly moving one of his arms, pinched her, but she only answered with a little cry of joy. Cetarach then turned his head languidly to see what pleased her, and beheld—terrible sight—a man unarmed, fighting against the wind, that had already torn some of his silk clothes into shreds ; yet, making his way slowly up, with a fierce head, on which the rigid hair stood all upright and motionless. Upon his chin the stranger bore the terror of ten thousand lances.

“ Oh, Mother Scolopender ! was this danger possible ? ” the monster cried. “ But you shall dance for me still. Do not exult yet, little prisoner ! Know that I bear a charmed life and can fly where none may follow.” Confident in this thought, Cetarach climbed a fresh height of the mountain, and paused at the edge of a deep stony chasm, where the great hills had been cleft from head to foot. Into that gulf Rutifol saw him leap ; and into the same gulf Rutifol, when he had reached its edge, fearlessly flung himself head foremost. Cetarach had indeed been charmed in the cauldron against hurt from broken bones, but Stiff-Beard knew well that he had only to fall on his head to be secure from hurt by any sort of tumble. The rock on which the Prince

fell was so hard that the hard tips of his hair, instead of piercing it, rebounded from it, casting him up again into the sky. Four times he thus rebounded, and at each stroke of his hair on the flint there was so much fire struck that lightning seemed to flash through the dark chasm.

Then the giant, arming each of his great scaly claws with a ton's weight of rock, began to beat about Rutifol's head; and having caught the head between the two stones, tried to grind it into powder. It was well for the Prince that the stupid monster had not tried a blow upon his body before beating him off his legs with a stroke on the whisker, that assisted the leap up at his own throat. There, when he had a firm gripe on the giant's neck, with one scrape of his beard, he scratched his head off.

When the head fell, there, of course, ran out of it all the knowledge and the ignorance it had contained. The ignorance rushed out as a black mist that filled the whole ravine, making the air so dark that it was not easy for Stiff-Beard to grope his way to Cetarach's waist-buckle. At last he found it, and felt that already the string was broken, and the fairy gone. "Well," he thought, with a shrug of his shoulders, "now it is my turn to be helped." He could not climb out of the abyss through that black darkness, so he felt his way back to the giant's scaly head, and when he had found that, sat upon it to await the rescue that he knew would come.

It came, but not at once. Rutifol had been waiting for some hours, when a point of light far above him, struck like the beam of a star through the

night by which he was surrounded. It broke into rainbow colours that defined clearly the tiny figure of the Fairy king, who was placing on his bow an arrow tipped with a sharp point of blinding light. And when he shot that arrow through the darkness of the gulf, the dense mist broke into a million of rainbows. The hanging gardens of the fairies then were seen by the Prince, colouring the rugged peaks far overhead, and all that stirred in them, distant as they were, was to be perceived, through their own magical light, as distinctly as if they had been close at hand. By Oberon's side, in the middle of the gardens, sat Titania, on piled cushions of rose-leaves. A host of fairies gambolled on the yellow garden paths that seemed to have been gravelled with the dust of the queen lily. Merrily capering before the throne of Oberon was Moonwort, who led the Queen's company of fairy dancers. The Prince, gazing up between the rainbows, watched her with delight, and beat quick time with his own big foot to her movements. Then he saw what seemed to be a dark army marching up to the gates of the fairy garden. It was the friendly regiment of bees hived in the fairy forest. Only Moonwort's bee was admitted to the royal presence, and upon his back Moonwort presently flew down to Rutifol. As she descended, all the fairies turned their faces to look after her, and fix their eyes on her friend Stiff-Beard, who still sat upon the scaly head of Cetarach.

At that moment, the moon rising over the mountain top, flooded the Prince with so much light, that he could see very clearly lying here and there the

few bits of knowledge that had run out of Cetarach's head when it was scraped off. One of these lay at his feet. Idly he picked it up, and found it to be knowledge of the place in which lay hidden Scolopender's magic herbal. This was the book that had taught her all her secrets. While Rutifol turned the information over, Moonwort chimed in his ear, "Your fairy lover finds it above her wit to discover the way to cover your head with slender splendour, or render hair like spike tender. By hook or by crook in the magic book of Ceterach's engenderer, the mighty Scolopender, we must look."

"Ah," said he, "I have just picked up the knowledge of that book's hiding-place. But then I cannot get at it without the key. The key is a drop of bat's blood, and there is here no bat's blood, unless Cetarach had bat's blood in his body."

"Oberon gave me the key, and here it is," said Moonwort, holding up the small bubble in which, as in a bag, she carried it. "Now show me the lock it is to fit."

"The drop must fall on the red toadstool, yonder."

Moonwort galloped her bee over the toadstool, and, bursting her bubble as she crossed it, let the drop of bat's blood sink into its crown. At once the rock below began to heave, and there sprang up a plant like a cactus, with thick leathery leaves, and each leaf spotted with words. The bee flew in and out among its foliage, while Moonwort read as she rode, until, having found what she looked for, she clapped hands and read aloud this recipe—"For Softening a Stubborn Head of Hair."

“Take Half a Pound of the Bloom of the Plum,
Scraped from the Fruit with a Dainty Thumb;
From Nine A. M. until One o'clock strikes,
Let a Soft Little Palm rub this into the Spikes.”

Having read this aloud, the fairy broke into gay laughter, and fluttered back through all the rainbows to the fairies, who were laughing with her. Presently she was to be seen dancing madly again before the fairy throne, with all her company of fairy dancers threading mazes round about her.

“I am mocked,” thought Rutilol; “yet she is provokingly pretty, and all is to be forgiven for such dancing!” Although he had been sitting down that cleft in the heart of the mountain from mid-day until midnight, the Prince only cared to keep his eyes fixed on the fairy gardens, and to watch the twirling of the fairy dancer whom he had set free. But Oberon, at last, putting his horn to his lips, sounded a low, musical note, that Stiff-Beard closed his eyes to hear. All sense that there might have been of hunger or fatigue passed out of his frame, and he seemed to be gliding with the sound, in perfect happiness, he knew not whither. As the sense of the music became fainter, the sense of the gliding became very distinct. For Stiff-Beard, opening his eyes again, saw that he was, in truth, sailing down a broad, smooth river, in an ivory boat, with the light night-wind flapping in her silken sails, and the full moon silvering the ripples in her wake. The black horse of Botrychio his father, on which he had ridden forth, was littered down in

a state cabin, that seemed to have been fitted up for him with a jewelled rack and golden manger. There were no sailors on board; but the rudder knew its work.

For this was the river that flowed through the great city, and by the many-towered palace of The Man; and as the sails furled themselves, the boat stood still abreast of the marble road that led up to the palace yard. Rutifol had not time to wish for a broad plank between the boat and shore before the black horse came out of his stall to cross a little bridge that rose out of the water, and seemed, like the water, to be silver. The horse having passed over this bridge, walked in the direction of the stables, and was neighing up the ostler, before Stiff-Beard, having shaken off his sense of being in a dream, had leapt to shore. Then, when he had quitted it, the ivory boat, without losing its daintiness of form, shrank to the size of a cockleshell, and seemed to have a straw for mast, with sails of gossamer. Rutifol believed that he saw Moonwort on board, dancing at him.

When the most noble Botrychio awoke next morning, it was told him that his son, who had been absent eleven days, was now returned. The Prince, therefore, was sent for; and, coming into his father's presence with hair as Upright as ever, told him all that had happened, and how he had come home with a sure receipt for softening his stubborn head of hair:—

“Take Half a Pound of the Bloom of Plum,
Scraped from the Fruit with a Dainty Thumb.
From Nine A.M. until One o'clock strikes,
Let a Soft Little Palm rub this into the Spikes.”

"Here," said the Maid Lunary, when the receipt had been written down and read at Court; "here are two things to be done. I claim to be the first to serve my future husband, let who will be the second. The first of the two things to be done, it is my privilege to do.—Ho, page! go order me ten baskets of plums with the bloom on."

Plums were brought. The Maid Lunary dressed for the occasion; and with her sleeves daintily tucked up, rubbed her thumb over plum after plum, and wiped the bloom off very easily. But when the bloom was rubbed from all the plums, she had got nothing of it but a faint little suggestion of dirt upon her fingers. "Order more plums!" she cried. More plums were brought. She rubbed at plums all the day long, and her success was, that by night-fall she had a most decided stain of dirt upon her thumb. But there was nothing to put into the half-pound porcelain jar, with which the proper quantity of bloom was to be measured. "We are mocked!" she cried. "Prince with the Upright Hair, I wash my hands of you." So she left the jar standing in the marble court of the palace, in the midst of the heaps of plums over which she had been rubbing her thumb, and went to bed in a sad pet.

Rutifol also went to bed, and dreamt that he saw Moonwort dancing between the boughs of all the plum-trees in the world, scraping, with fairy thumb, the bloom from all their fruit; and whenever she had collected her own tiny hand full throwing it into the laps of other fairies, who flew to and fro. When the moon had reached that part of the sky from

which her direct light went through the Prince's windows and struck on his pillow, he was roused, and tumbled out of bed with a sleepy desire to know whether the fairies really were at work for him. But he was wide awake in an instant when, on looking down into the court-yard, he saw Moonwort's company of dancers capering round the porcelain pot, while there was a constant flying to and fro of little fairies, who seemed to be transacting business inside it.

"Kind little Moonwort!" Stiff-Beard sighed. "What an active wife you will be for somebody!"

In the morning there was half-a-pound of plumbloom in the jar, exact to a hair's weight; and how it got there, only Stiff-Beard knew. He told his father privately, but kept the secret from the people. Then the Maid Lunary was called upon, as some one else had taken out of her hands the preparation of the hair-powder, to claim her right of rubbing it into the Prince's head.

But, "I've washed my hands of this whole business," she said. None of her attendant ladies and no lady of the Court would offer, with her soft little palm, from nine in the morning until one o'clock struck, to rub the balm into those frightful spikes. His Highness The Man at last declared that there was only one course left to him. So he proclaimed that any person who, with a hand of the required softness, would apply the balm to the Prince's head in the required manner, should, if a man, take half his possessions; if a woman, take his son. "I wish you an old crone to wife," said the Maid Lunary to Rutifol.

And it seemed likely that her wish would come

to pass. Rutifol sat, every morning, by the porcelain pot in the court-yard, with his head bare, ready for any helping hand; and not a hand was offered, until after many days there came into the yard an old crone who was very wrinkled, though not very ugly. She had bright eyes, and a white soft chin; but she was bald, toothless, deeply wrinkled, and bent nearly double by the weight of years. Her wrinkled hand was small, and wonderfully soft; there could be no doubt that she might claim her right to risk its skin upon the spikes of Rutifol's head, if she chose to do so. She did choose to do so; and the Maid Lunary rejoiced; but the Prince was not sorry, for he understood the fun that he saw in his old friend's eyes. "Surely, you are an old friend?" he said, as the crone dipped her hands into the porcelain pot and rubbed them together. "Nobody would call me a young friend," she answered; and he was sure, by some far away ring in her cracked voice, that this was Fairy Moonwort, playing tricks upon him.

At the first stroke of nine, the old woman began to rub the plum-bloom over Rutifol's head, beard, and whiskers. The points of the hairs bent under her hands, and Lunary was very much disposed to take her work from her, when she saw that there was no real danger in it. But The Man held firmly by the promise he had given. All the Ministers of State were assembled in the sunny court-yard under the clock-tower; The Man himself sitting under the shade of the great columned portico, surrounded by the carved emblems of Justice that led into his great audience hall. At noon, the Prince's hair flowed over his shoulders in

soft ringlets, and his beard was like fine silk. A question was then raised by the old woman while she rubbed—Was it required that she should carry out the terms of the prescription to the letter? Rutifol's hair already was soft, and she believed the head itself had now begun to soften. But The august Man having declared that when anything that has to be done, is not done to the letter, worse evil than can be dreaded from fulfilment of the duty is sure to arise from neglect of it, the old woman rubbed on. Yet it was evident that, before one o'clock struck, the unnatural hardness of Rutifol's head would be subdued into softness like that of the hair now flowing over it in glossy ringlets. The Prince's head bent, indeed, already under the touch, and when one o'clock struck, he jumped to his feet with faultless hair and beard, and so soft-headed that his skull could be squeezed like a sponge. But the strength that had gone out of his head seemed to have been forced down into his legs, for he was unable to keep them still, even in the majestic presence of his father. And he not only shuffled, beat time, and cut small, unexpected capers, but occasionally took upright leaps, twinkling his feet while he did so, in a way that astonished all the courtiers.

"What was to be done, is done. But that my son's condition is improved," The Man said, "I will not undertake to say, or that it will be improved, my good woman, when you have married him. What is your age?"

"Nine hundred and seventy-three come next May-day," the good woman replied.

"Oh yes, I know," said Rutifol, "and you are Moonwort. Fairies are very long lived. I will be yours."

"And I am yours," she said. "It is true that I am Moonwort. Nevertheless, like weds only with like. Either I must become a woman, as you see, with my years upon me, to live as a Princess here; or you must become a Fairy as I am, to dance with me before Titania."

"What say you, father?" asked the Prince, bounding with joy into the sky, and falling into an imposing attitude of supplication upon one of his great toes.

"It is not for me, son, to control your destiny. A man must do what he can best do. You had a gifted head, and did with it the work it had to do. Now, it appears that you have highly gifted legs."

"Then, O father, it must be, now that my head is soft, my destiny to dance. Yes, I will be a Fairy with you, Moonwort.—Principal male dancer at the Court of Oberon, and such a wife to dance with! Destiny of destinies!"

The Man would have sighed aloud had not a gay strain of soft music then arising drowned the sigh in his heart, and brought smiles to his face. The courtiers all smiled, the Maid Lunary laughed, and everybody presently began snapping fingers in tune with the music. Then all the grosser parts of Rutifol burst into air with a loud explosion, the old woman vanished, and the most exquisite of little Fairy men was to be seen waltzing out of the Court with the merriest and

loveliest of little Fairy women. As they twirled themselves out of sight, the fairy music followed them, till it was out of hearing.

It was heard again, though, after midnight, when it floated The Man out of his bed, and wafted him to his son Fol's (the Prince had left part of his name behind him), to Fol's wedding in Fairyland. There he saw what a fine thing it is to be principal dancer to the Fairy Sovereigns. The greatest of potentates having come home at dawn from his son's wedding, got out of bed at breakfast time, perfectly satisfied. He had seen his son well settled. He had obtained also a treaty of commerce with Puck, from which he expected great advantage to the State.





MELILOT.

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE NEIGHBOURS OF MELILOT.

It had been raining for ten months, and everybody felt as if it had been raining for ten years. In the driest part of the country, in the driest corners of the driest houses there was damp. Whoever came near a fire began to steam; whoever left the fire began to moisten as the damp entered the clothes.

There was a breath of wet on everything indoors, and a flood of wet on everything out of doors, and Melilot was wet through when she came to the door of a broken-roofed cottage that stood in a marsh between two lakes.

Melilot was a pretty girl of twelve, who had lived in a cottage up the mountains, as the only child of hardworking parents, who taught her all that was good, and whose one worldly good she was ; for they had nothing to eat but what they could force to grow out of a stony patch of ground upon the mountain side. They had loved Melilot, and they loved each other. To feed their little one they had deprived themselves, till when the rain running down the mountain side had washed away their little garden crops, first the mother died, for she it was who had denied herself the most, and then the father also died in a long passion of weeping. The nearest neighbours occupied the cottage in the valley on the marsh between the lakes. In hunger and grief, therefore, Melilot went down to them, to ask for human help.

From Melilot's home it was a long way up to the peak of the mountains, and a long way down to the marshy valley in which lay the two lakes with a narrow spit of earth between them, and a black rocky mountain overhanging them upon the other side. A gloomy defile, between high rocks, led out of the valley on the one side, and on the other side it opened upon a waste of bog, over which the thick mist brooded, and the rain now fell with never-ending plash.

The runlets on the mountain formed a waterfall, that dashing over a smooth wall of rock, broke into foam on the ragged floor of a great rocky basin near Melilot's cottage door. Then after a short rush, seething and foaming down a slope rugged with granite boulders, the great cataract fell with a mighty roar over another precipice upon the stream that, swollen by the rains almost into a river, carried its flood into one of the lakes. It was partly by this waterfall that the path down into the valley ran.

Melilot knew that her father, when alive, had avoided the people in the lake cottage, and had forbidden her, although they were the only neighbours, to go near their dwelling. But her father now was dead and her mother was dead, and there was need of human help if she would bury them. Her father too had told her, that when she was left helpless she would have to go out and serve others for her daily bread. To what others than these could the child look? So by the stony side of the stream, and by the edge of the lake, her only path in the marsh, Melilot came down shivering and weeping through the pitiless rain, and knocked at the door of the lake cottage.

"Who's that?" asked a hoarse voice inside.

"That's Melilot from up above us," said a hoarser voice.

"Come in then, little Melilot," another voice said, that was the hoarsest of the three.

The child flinched before opening the door, but she did open it, and set one foot over the threshold, then she stopped. There was nothing in the cottage

but a muddy puddle on the floor, into which rain ran from the broken roof. Three men sat together in the puddle, squatted like frogs. They had broad noses and spotted faces, and the brightest of bright eyes, which were all turned to look at Melilot when she came in.



“We are glad to see you, Melilot,” said the one who sat in the middle, holding out a hand that had all its fingers webbed together. He was the one who had the hoarsest voice. “My friend on the right is Dock, Dodder sits on my left, and I am Squill. Come in and shut the door behind you.”

Melilot had to choose between the dreary, empty

world outside, and trust in these three creatures—who were more horrible to look at than I care to tell. She hesitated only for an instant, then went in and shut the door behind her.

“A long time ago your father came to us, and he went out and shut the door upon us. You are wiser than your father, little girl.”

“My father, O my dear father,” began Melilot, and fell to weeping bitterly.

“Her father is dead,” said Dock, who was the least hoarse.

“And her mother too,” said Dodder, who was hoarser.

“And she wants us to help her to bury them,” croaked Squill.

“She is fainting with hunger,” said Dock.

“She is dying of hunger and grief,” said Dodder.

“And we have nothing to offer her but tadpoles, which she cannot eat,” said Squill.

“Dear neighbours, I am nothing,” said the child. “I do not know that I am hungry. But if you would come with me and help me.”

“She asks us to her house,” said Dock.

“We may go,” said Dodder, “if we are invited.”

“Little Melilot,” said Squill then, in his hoarsest tone of all, “we will all follow you to the mountain hut.” Then the three ugly creatures splashed out of their pool, and moved, web-footed too, about their cottage with ungainly hopping. Melilot all the while only thanked them, frankly looking up into their bright eyes that were eager, very eager, but not cruel.

CHAPTER II.

THE MOUNTAIN HUT.

MELILOT, with her three wonderful neighbours, Dock, Dodder, and Squill, hopping arm in arm behind her, and getting a good hold on the stones with their web feet, began to climb the mountain. Rain still poured out of the sky; runlets flooded their path, and the great cataract roared by their side. The faint and hungry child had climbed but half the way to her desolate home when she swooned, and was caught in the arms of Squill.

"Sprinkle water," said Dock.

"No need of that," said Dodder.

"It will not be right for us to carry her," said Squill.

Either because there was more than a sprinkling of water, or because of her own stout young heart, Melilot recovered and climbed on. They reached the hut, and when there, the three neighbours at once bestirred themselves. Because of the flood outside, they dug the graves under the roof, one on each side of the hearth, for Melilot's dead father and mother, and so buried them. Then the child made her friends sit down to rest; one in her father's chair, one in her mother's, and one on her own little stool. She raked the embers of the fire and put on fresh wood until a blaze leapt up that was strong enough to warm them, before she would turn

aside. Then, standing in a corner by the morsel of window that looked out towards the waterfall, she gave way to her sobbing. But, again—brave little heart—conquering herself, she came forward to where the monsters were sitting, with their legs crossed, basking in the firelight, and said, “I am sorry, dear, kind neighbours, that I have no supper to offer you.”

“Nay, but you have,” said Dock.

The child followed the glance of his eyes, and saw that on her father’s grave there stood a loaf of bread, and on her mother’s grave, a cup of milk.

“They are for you, from the good angels.” She said. “Oh, I am thankful!” Then Melilot broke the bread into three pieces, and gave a piece to each, and held the milk for them when they would drink.

“She is famished, herself,” said Dodder.

“We must eat all of it up,” said Squill.

So they ate all of it up; and while they ate, there was no thought in the child’s heart but of pleasure that she had this bread to give.

When they had eaten all, there was another loaf upon the father’s grave, and on the mother’s grave another and a larger cup of milk.

“See, there!” Dock said.

“Whose supper is that?” asked Dodder.

“It must be for the pious little daughter Melilot, and no one else,” said Squill.

The three neighbours refused to take another crumb; they had eaten so much tadpole, they said, for their dinners. Melilot, therefore, supped, but left much bread and milk, secretly thinking that her

friends would require breakfast if they should consent to stay with her throughout the night. It was long since the sun set, reddening the mists of the plain, and now the mountain path beside the torrent was all dark and very perilous. The monsters eagerly watched their little hostess with their brilliant eyes, and assented, as it seemed, with exultation, to her wish that they would sleep in the hut. There were but two beds under its roof, Melilot's own little straw pallet, and that on which her parents were to sleep no more, on which she was no more to kneel beside them in the humble morning prayer. With sacred thoughts of hospitality the child gave up to the use of those who had smoothed for her dear parents a new bed, the bed that was no longer theirs. And the three monsters, after looking at her gratefully, lay down on it together and went to sleep on it, with their arms twisted about each other's necks. The child looked down upon them clinging together in their sleep as in their talk, and saw a weariness of pain defined in many a kindly-turned line of their half frog-like faces. If one stirred in sleep, it was to nestle closer to the other two. "How strange," she said to herself, "that I should at first have thought them ugly!" Then she knelt in prayer by her little nest of straw, and did not forget them in her prayers. There was a blessing on them in her heart, as she lay down to sleep.

But when Melilot lay down with her face towards the hearth, the dying embers shone with a red light on the two solemn graves. She turned her face to the wall, and the rush of the torrent on the other

side was louder than the passion of her weeping. But the noise of the waterfall first soothed her, and then, fixing her attention, drew her from her bed towards the little window, from which she was able to look out into the black night, through which it roared. A night not altogether black, for there was a short lull in the rain, though the wind howled round the mountain, and through a chance break in the scurrying night-clouds, the full moon now and then flashed, lighting the lakes in the valley far below, and causing the torrent outside the window to gleam through the night shadows of the great rocks among which it fell. Could it be the song of busy fairies that came thence to the child's ear?

“ Up to the moon and cut down that ray!
In and out the foam wreaths plaiting;
Spin the froth and weave the spray!
Melilot is watching! Melilot is waiting!
Pick the moonbeam into shreds,
Twist it, twist it into threads!
Threads of the moonlight, yarn of the bubble,
Weave into muslin, double and double!
Fold all and carry it, tarry ye not,
To the chamber of gentle and true Melilot.”

Almost at the same moment the door of the hut opened, and Melilot, turning round, saw two beautiful youths enter, bright as the moonlight, who laid a white bale at her feet, and said that it came from the Fairy Muslin Works. Having done that, they flew out in the shape of fireflies, and Melilot herself closed the door after them. It was her first act to

shut the door, because she was bred to be a careful little housewife, and she thought the night-air would not be good for the sleepers.

Then the child looked again at the three monsters cuddled together on her father's and mother's bed. "The fairies have done this for me," she considered to herself, "that I might not have to send away kind helpers without a gift. White muslin is not quite the dress that will suit lodging such as theirs, but it is all I have! If I could make them, by the time they wake, three dresses, they would see at any rate that I was glad to work for them as they had worked for me."

So Melilot began measuring her neighbours with the string of her poor little apron; and when she had measured them all, shrank with her scissors and thread and the bale of fairy muslin into the farthest corner of her hut, and set to work by the light of a pine stick, shaded from the eyes of her guests with a screen made of her own ragged old frock.

While the child stitched, the fairies sang, and it was a marvel to her that her needle never wanted threading. Keeping time with her fingers to the fairy song, she worked with a speed that almost surpassed her desire, and altogether surpassed understanding. One needleful of thread made the three coats, and the thread when the coats were made was as long as it had been when they were begun.

Very soon after dawn the white dresses were made, and all the muslin had been used in making them, except what was left in the small litter of

fragments round the stool upon which Melilot had been at work. Three coats of white muslin, daintily folded, were laid by the bed of the three guests, and each was folded with that corner uppermost on which there had been written in thread its owner's name. Dock was worked in the corner of one; Dodder in the corner of another; and in the corner of the third coat, Squill.

Then Melilot lay down for an hour's sleep, and, weary with grief as with toil, slept heavily. Dock, Dodder, and Squill were awake before her, and the first thing that each of them did upon awaking was to look upon his new coat. The next thing that each of them did was to put on his new coat, and after this the next thing they all did was to change into three beautiful fairy youths,—Dock with yellow hair, Dodder with brown, and Squill with black. Thus they stood hand-in-hand by the little girl's bed.

"She has freed us, the dear child!" said Dock.

"She," said Dodder, "she, our darling, and our brothers of the waterfall."

"She has saved nothing for herself," said Squill. "Did not the child once wish to wear muslin in the place of these poor rags? I kiss them, brothers, for her sake." But Squill's kiss on the girl's ragged frock made it a treasure for an empire.

"And I kiss the walls that sheltered us," said Dodder. But Dodder's kiss upon the walls changed them into a close network of fragrant blossoms.

"And I kiss the lips that bade us hither," Dock said; and at his kiss the child smiled, and her

eyes opened upon the three fairies in the muslin dresses she had made.

"Ah, Fairies," she said, "those are the dresses I made for my three dear neighbours. Do not take back your gift, although the muslin is indeed yours, and the thread too, I know, and—and the work too, for surely it was you who made the needle run. I have done nothing, and am but a poor little child; only I thought you meant to give me something to be grateful with."

"We did not give you your good heart, dear little Melilot," the fairies said; and now their speaking was in softest unison. "That has done more for us than all our love and service will repay. We were your neighbours, but we are your servants now."

"No, no, no," said the child. "I was afraid to ask to be your servant, because I thought last night you were too poor to feed me, as I am too poor and weak to feed myself. The angels themselves gave me bread yesterday, and I have some yet. But all is changed about me. Why do the walls flower, and why is my dress covered with glittering stones? Ah, yes, I am at home," she said, for her eyes fell on the two graves.

Then, as she rose to her knees, with quivering lips, the three fairies went out into the sun, and stood at the door to see how all the rains were gone, and the bright morning beams played in the spray of the cataract.

"Do you see anything between us and the sun?" Dock asked of the other two.

"A speck," said Dodder.

"Frogbit herself," said Squill.

CHAPTER III.

SIR CRUCIFER.

PRESENTLY, Melilot bade the three fairies come in to share her breakfast. She had saved bread from last night, and while she took it from its place among the blossoms that last night were mud, again the loaf of bread stood on her father's, and the cup of milk upon her mother's, grave. "The angels of my father and mother feed me still," she said; "I must abide under the shelter of their wings."

The Fairies came at her bidding to eat with her; but Squill, excusing himself, went to the stool about which were the chips and shreds of fairy muslin. There, joining each to each with a stroke of his finger, he was shaping them into a little net, when Melilot, who had been sent out to feel the sunshine, came in, saying that there was a chill wind; and though it was foolishness to think so, it did really seem to have come with a black raven, that was sitting on the roof.

"You had better strike through the roof, Frogbit," Squill cried, looking up. The bird croaked as if in defiance, and at once began to beat a way in through the flowers. As it did so, the leaves of the bower withered, and the blossoms all began to stink.

But Squill leapt up, and holding the net he had

made under the hole Frogbit was making, caught her as she fell through, and held her captured in the folds of fairy muslin that seemed to stand like iron against the beating of her wings.

"Poor bird!" said Melilot.

"Our enemy who came on a bad errand is our prisoner," said Dock.

"Cleverly done," said Dodder. "Very cleverly done, brother Squill."

But Melilot, who loved man, beast, and bird, bent over the fluttering Raven, and was not hindered from taking it, net and all, to her bosom, though it struck at her fiercely with its great bill that, strong as it was, could not tear through the muslin net.

"Poor bird!" said the child; "how can a Raven be your enemy?"

"Theirs and yours!" the Raven herself shrieked.

"Theirs and yours!"

"And mine, bird! I would do you no hurt. See, I kiss you." When Melilot stooped to kiss through the thin muslin the Raven's head, the bird struggled to escape from the kiss with an agony of terror.

"Nay," said the gentle child, "no evil can come of a true kiss."

Good came of it; for at the touch of her kiss, the wicked Fairy Frogbit dropped out of the form of a Raven into a black, shapeless lump of earth.

"What have I done?" the child cried, weeping.

Then the three Fairies threw the lump of earth into the waterfall, and told her all that she had done. They told her how of old they had lived with their

brother Fairies of the Torrent till the wicked Frogbit came and turned the land below into a marshy wilderness, in which she ruled over her own evil race. One day she and her people had contrived to seize Titania herself, as she flew over the marsh on the way to her subjects of the mountain. They could not change her beauty, or stain her bright nature, but they held her prisoner for a time among their stagnant pools, till she was rescued in a moonlight attack by the Fairies of the waterfall, who left three prisoners, Dock, Dodder, and Squill, in the hands of the enemy. Those prisoners Frogbit had shut up in loathsome frog-like bodies, and set in the cottage between the lakes, while she brought down never-ending rain over the whole district, to make their prison the more gloomy. The Fairies of the bright running and leaping water were condemned to sit in stagnant puddle, and eat tadpoles, having their own bright natures shut up in forms so detestable, that Frogbit hoped to make their case more wretched by a mockery of hope.

“Live there,” she said, “till a mortal child can look at you without being afraid; till there is a little girl in the world bold enough to seek you out, and trust you with all that she holds most sacred; to shut herself up with you, and believe in you entirely; to give up to you her own supper, and of her own free thought make white muslin dresses to your filthy shapes.”

She spoke mockingly of white muslin, because she knew of the old fairy trade that had been carried on for ages on the mountains. There the

fairies weave after their own fashion into muslin the white sheets of foam; and when the three prisoners had heard their doom they were not in despair. For although Frogbit, who had never been up the mountain, knew nothing of the one little hut there was upon it, yet all the fairies knew it, and they knew well the little Melilot.

"Then I have really been a friend to you," the child said,

"Ay," they replied, "and to Frogbit a friend. An innocent kiss is the charm that breaks all evil spells, and you have with a kiss broken the spell that raised in her a clod of earth into a creature of mischief. We, of the torrent, will direct the waters that they wash that clod of earth from which evil is banned, to a place where it may yield lilies and violets, of which good fairies shall be born.

The three fairies returning to their own race, were still Melilot's neighbours and friends, and the child grew up to womanhood, the favourite of all the fairies of the waterfall. Her bower blossomed and the ground about it was made into a delicious garden. Her dress of precious stones was thrown into a corner, and she was arrayed by the fairies in their shining muslin that would take no soil. But still she found, morning and night, the only bread she ate upon her father's grave, and upon her mother's grave the milk that nourished her.

Whether the bad fairies over whom Frogbit had ruled left the marsh Melilot did not know, but the marsh dried and became a great plain, which men tilled, and upon which at last men fought.

Sobbing and panting Melilot ran down the hillside when she saw men cased in iron galloping to and fro, and falling wounded to lie bleeding and uncared for on the quaking ground. Every fear was mastered by her sacred pity, and her fairy muslin was unstained, though she knelt on the red mud of the battle-field and laid the wounded soldier's head upon her lap. None, even in the direst madness of the strife, could strike upon the frail white girl, who saw only the suffering about her, and thought only of wounds that she might bind. Had any struck, her muslin was an armour firmer than all steel; and there was no rent in her dress, as she tore from it strip after strip, to bind rents in the flesh of men who lay in their death-agonies about her.

In the tumult of flight, the defeated host parted before her, and sped on; still leaving her untrampled and untouched. But once, reaching a white arm into the crowd, she caught from it a wounded soldier as he fell, and with the other hand seized the shaft of the spear that a fierce youth, hot in pursuit, thrust on his falling enemy. She fainted as she did so; and the youth, letting his spear drop, knelt beside her, and looked down into her face. His tears presently were falling on her lifeless cheek. The flight and the pursuit rushed by, and he was still kneeling beside her, when the moon rose, and three youths, dressed in white, stood near.

“Are you her brothers,” he asked. “Who is this, with a dress that has passed unstained through blood and mire, and with a face so holy?”

“Take her up in your arms,” they said, “and we will show you where to carry her.”

The young soldier lifted her with reverence, and took her up the mountain to the bower by the waterfall. The scent of the flowers, when they came into its garden, gave fresh life to her. The soldier gently laid her down upon a bank of wild thyme, and looked up for the three youths, but they were gone. He went into the bower, and saw therein scanty furniture, a dress of jewels worth an empire thrown into a corner, and two graves, on one of which stood bread, and on the other, milk. He brought the food out to the girl, and, at her bidding, broke bread with her.

Now, Dock, Dodder, and Squill were match-makers. They had made up their minds that Melilot should be to Sir Crucifer—that was the soldier’s name—as near in trust and in love as her mother had been to her father. So they put the cottage between the two lakes into repair, and made him a home out of the place in which they had been imprisoned. There he dreamt, all the nights through, sacred dreams, of her by whose side he spent all his days.

Much the girl heard, as she sat with the soldier by the waterfall, of the high struggle for all that makes man good and glorious, that bred the strife out of which she had drawn him for a little time. Much the soldier learnt as he sat with the girl, from a companion whose thoughts purified his zeal, and made his aspirations happier and more unbounded. One day there were words said that made the girl a

woman ; and when she awoke on the next morning, her father's grave was overgrown with laurel bushes, and her mother's grave was lost under a wealth of flowering myrtle.

But there was no food provided.

When Sir Crucifer came to her that sunny morning, "I have a sign," she said. "It is time that I also take my part in the struggle of which you have told me. Let us go down together to the plains."

She gathered for him a branch of laurel, and she plucked a sprig of myrtle for herself. These never faded, they remained green as the daughter's memory of those two dear ones from whose graves they came. But in all their long after-lives of love and labour, neither of them remembered the worth of an empire in stone that they left unregarded in a corner of the hut.

The spray was radiant, and the foam was white as her bright fairy muslin, as it floated over the strength of the water-fall, when Melilot and her soldier, hand in hand, went down the mountain. They passed out of her bower, she in the full flood of the sunshine, with an arm raised upward, and a calm face turned towards him as he, walking in her shadow, pointed to the plains below.



ADVENTURES IN SKITZLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNING IS A BORE—I FALL INTO MISFORTUNE.

I AM fond of gardening. I like to dig. If among the operations of the garden any need for such a work can be at any time discovered or invented, I like digging a hole. On the 3rd of March, 1839, I began a hole behind the kitchen wall, wherein to it was originally intended to transplant a plum-tree.

The exercise was so much to my taste, that a strange humour impelled me to dig on. A fascination held me to the task. I neglected my business. I disappeared from the earth's surface. A boy, who worked a basket by means of a rope and pulley, aided me; so aided, I confined my whole attention to spade labour. The centripetal force seemed to have made me its especial victim. I dug on until Autumn. In the beginning of November I observed that, upon percussion, the sound given by the floor of my pit was resonant. I did not intermit my labour, urged as I was by a mysterious instinct downwards. On applying my ear, I occasionally heard a subdued sort of rattle, which caused me to form a theory that the centre of the earth might be composed of mucus. In November, the ground broke beneath me into a hollow, and I fell a considerable distance. I alighted on the box-seat of a four-horse coach, which happened to be running at that time immediately underneath. The coachman took no notice whatever of my sudden arrival by his side. He was so completely muffled up, that I could observe only the skilful way in which he handled reins and whip. The horses were yellow. I had seen no more than this, when the guard's horn blew, and presently we pulled up at an inn. A waiter came out, and appeared to collect four bags from the passengers inside the coach. He then came round to me.

“Dine here, sir?”

“Yes, certainly,” said I.

“Trouble you for your stomach, sir.”

While the waiter was looking up with a polite stare into my puzzled face, my neighbour, the coachman, put one hand within his outer coat, as if to feel for money in his waistcoat pocket. Directly afterwards his fingers came again to light, and pulled forth an enormous sack. Notwithstanding that it was abnormally enlarged, I knew by observation of its form and texture that this was a stomach, with the œsophagus attached. This, then, the waiter caught as it was thrown down to him, and hung it carelessly over his arm, together with the four smaller bags (which I now knew to be also stomachs) collected from the passengers within the coach. I started up, and as I happened to look round, observed a skeleton face upon the shoulders of a gentleman who sat immediately behind my back. My own features were noticed at the same time by the guard, who now came forward, touching his hat.

“Beg your pardon, sir, but you’ve been and done it.”

“Done what?”

“Why, sir, you should have booked your place, and not come up in this clandestine way. However, you’ve been and done it!”

“My good man, what have I done?”

“Why, sir, the Baron Terroro’s eyes had the box-seat, and I strongly suspect you’ve been and sat upon them.”

I looked involuntarily to see whether I had been sitting upon anything except the simple cushion. Truly enough, there was an eye, which I had crushed and flattened.

"Only one," I said.

"Worse for you, and better for him. The other eye had time to escape, and it will know you again, that's certain. Well, it's no business of mine. Of course you've no appetite now for dinner? Better pay your fare, sir. To the Green Bull in Spectacles, where we put up, it's ten-and-six."

"Is there room inside?" I inquired. It was advisable to shrink from observation.

"Yes, sir. The inside passengers are mostly skeleton. There's room for three, sir. Inside, one-pound-one."

I paid the money, and became an inside passenger.

CHAPTER II.

OF DIVISIONS WHICH OCCUR IN SKITZLAND—I AM TAKEN UP.

PROFESSOR ZUCKER'S Lectures on Anatomy had so fortified me, that I did not shrink from entering the Skitzton coach. It contained living limbs, loose or attached to skeletons in other respects bare, except that they were clothed with broadcloth garments, cut after the English fashion. One passenger only had a complete face of flesh, he had also one living hand; the other hand I guessed was bony, because it was concealed in a glove obviously padded. By observing the fit of his clothes, I came to a conclusion that this gentleman was stuffed throughout; that all his limbs, except the head and hand, were artificial. Two pairs of legs, in woollen stockings,

and a pair of ears, were in a corner of the coach, and in another corner there were nineteen or twenty Scalps.

I thought it well to look astonished at nothing, and, having pointed in a careless manner to the scalps, asked what might be their destination? The person with the Face and Hand replied to me; and although evidently himself a gentleman, he addressed me with a tone of unconcealed respect.

"They are going to Skitzton, sir, to the hair-dresser's."

"Yes, to be sure," I said. "They are to make Natural Skin Wigs. I might have known."

"I beg your pardon, sir. There is a ball to-morrow night at Culmsey. But the gentry do not like to employ village barbers, and therefore many of the better class of people send their hair to Skitzton, and receive it back by the return coach properly cut and curled."

"Oh," said I. "Ah! Oh, indeed!"

"Dinners, gentlemen!" said a voice at the window, and the waiter handed in four stomachs, now tolerably well filled. Each passenger received his property, and pulling open his chest with as much composure as if he were unbuttoning his waistcoat, restored his stomach, with a dinner in it, to the right position. Then the reckonings were paid, and the coach started.

I thought of my garden, and much wished that somebody could throw Professor Zucker down the hole that I had dug. A few things were to be met with in Skitzland which would rather puzzle him.

They puzzled me; but I took refuge in silence, and so fortified, protected my ignorance from an exposure.

“You are going to Court, sir, I presume?” said my Face and Hand friend, after a short pause. His was the only mouth in the coach, excepting mine, so that he was the only passenger able to enter into conversation.

“My dear sir,” I replied, “let me be frank with you. I have arrived here unexpectedly out of another world. Of the manners and customs, nay, of the very nature of the people who inhabit this country, I know nothing. For any information you can give me, I shall be very grateful.”

My friend smiled incredulity, and said:—

“Whatever you are pleased to profess, I will believe. What you are pleased to feign a wish for, I am proud to furnish. In Skitzland, the inhabitants, until they come of age, retain that illustrious appearance which you have been so fortunate as never to have lost. During the night of his twenty-first birth-day, each Skitzlander loses the limbs which up to that period have received from him no care, no education. Of those neglected parts the skeletons alone remain, but all those organs which he has employed sufficiently continue unimpaired. I, for example, devoted to the study of the law, forgot all occupation but to think, to use my senses, and to write. I rarely used my legs, and therefore Nature has deprived me of them.”

“But,” I observed, “it seems that in Skitzland you are able to take yourselves to pieces.”

"No one has that power, sir, more largely than yourself. What organs we have we can detach on any service."

"If they can fly," I asked, "why are they sent in coaches? There were a pair of eyes on the box-seat."

"Simply for safety against accidents. Eyes flying alone are likely to be seized by birds, and incur many dangers. They are sent, therefore, usually under protection, like any other valuable parcel."

"Do many accidents occur?"

"Very few. For mutual protection, and also because a single member is often all that has been left existing of a fellow Skitzlander, our laws, as you, sir, know much better than myself, estimate the destruction of any part absent on duty from its skeleton as a crime equivalent to murder."

After this I held my tongue. Presently my friend again inquired whether I was going up to Court?

"Why should I go to Court?"

"Oh, sir, it pleases you to be facetious. You must be aware that any Skitzlander who has been left by Nature in possession of every limb, sits in the Assembly of the Perfect, or the Upper House, and receives many state emoluments and dignities."

"Are there many members of that Upper Assembly?"

"Sir, there were forty-two. But if you are now travelling to claim your seat, the number will be raised to forty-three."

"The Baron Terroro," I hinted.

"My brother, sir. His eyes are on the box-seat

under my care. Undoubtedly he is a member of the Upper House."

I was now anxious to get out of the coach as soon as possible. My wish was fulfilled after the next pause. One Eye, followed by six Pairs of Arms, with strong hard Hands belonging to them, flew in at the window. I was collared ; the door was opened, and all hands were at work to drag me out and away. The twelve Hands whisked me through the air, while the one Eye sailed before us, like an old bird, leader of the flight.

CHAPTER III.

MY IMPRISONMENT AND TRIAL FOR MURDER.

WHAT sort of sky have they in Skitzland? Our earth overarches them, and, as the sunlight filters through, it causes a subdued illumination with very pure rays. Skitzland is situated nearly in the centre of our globe ; it hangs there like a shrunken kernel in the middle of a nutshell. The height from Skitzland to the overarching canopy is great ; so great, that if I had not fallen personally from above the firmament, I should have considered it to be a blue sky similar to ours. At night it is quite dark ; but during the day there is an appearance in the heaven of white spots ; their glistening reminded me of stars. I noticed them as I was being conveyed to prison by the strong arms of justice, for it was by a detachment of members from the Skitzon police that I was now hurried along. The air was

very warm, and corroborated the common observation of an increase of heat as you get into the pith of our planet. The theory of Central Fire, however, is, you perceive, quite overturned by my experience.

We alighted near the outskirts of a large and busy town. Through its streets I was dragged publicly, much stared at, and much staring. The street-life was one busy nightmare of disjointed limbs. Professor Zucker, could he have been dragged through Skitzton, would have delivered his farewell lecture upon his return. "Gentlemen, Fuit Ilium—Fuit Ischium—Fuit Sacrum—Anatomy has lost her seat among the sciences. My occupation's gone." Professor Owen's book "On the Nature of Limbs," must contain in the next edition, an appendix "Upon Limbs in Skitzland." I was dragged through the streets, and all that I saw there, in the present age of little faith, I dare not tell you. I was dragged through the streets to prison and there duly chained, after having been subjected to the scrutiny of about fifty couples of eyes drawn up in a line within the prison door. I was chained in a dark cell, a cell so dark that I could very faintly perceive the figure of some being who was my companion. Whether this individual had ears wherewith to hear, and mouth wherewith to answer me, I could not see, but at a venture I addressed him. My thirst for information was unconquerable; I began, therefore, immediately with a question:

"Friend, what are those stars which we see shining in the sky at mid-day?"

An awful gloom being an unsatisfactory reply, I asked again.

“Man, do not mock at misery. You will yourself be one of them.”

“Believe me,” I said, “I am strangely ignorant. Explain yourself.”

He answered with a hollow voice :

“Murderers are shot up out of mortars into the sky, and stick there. Those white, glistening specks, they are their skeletons.”

Justice is prompt in Skitzland. I was tried incredibly fast by a jury of twelve men who had absolutely heads. The judges had nothing but brain, mouth, and ear. Three powerful tongues defended me, but as they were not suffered to talk nonsense, they had little to say. The whole case was too clear to be talked into cloudiness. Baron Terroro, in person deposed, that he had sent his eyes to see a friend at Culmsey, and that they were returning on the Skitzton coach, when I, illegally, came with my whole bulk upon the box-seat, which he occupied. That one of his eyes was, in that manner, totally destroyed, but that the other eye, having escaped, identified me, and brought to his brain intelligence of the calamity which had befallen. He deposed further, that having received this information, he despatched his uncrushed eye with arms from the police-office, and accompanied by several members of the detective force, to capture the offender, and to procure the full proofs of my crime. A sub-inspector of the Skitzton police then deposed that he sent three of his faculties, with his mouth, eye, and ear,

to meet the coach. That the driver, consisting only of a stomach and hands, had been unable to observe what passed. That the guard, on the contrary, had taxed me with my deed, that he had seen me rise from my seat upon the murdered eye, and that he had heard me make confession of my guilt. The guard was brought next into court, and told his tale. Then I was called upon for my defence. If a man wearing a cloth coat and trousers, and talking excellent English, were to plead at the Old Bailey that he had broken into some citizen's premises accidentally by falling from the moon, his tale would be received in London as mine was in Skitzton. I was severely reprimanded for my levity, and ordered to be silent. The judge summed up, and the jury found me Guilty. The judge, who had put on the black cap before the verdict was pronounced, held out no hope of mercy, and straightway sentenced me to death, according to the laws and usage of the realm.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST HOURS OF THE CONDEMNED IN SKITZLAND—
I AM EXECUTED.

THE period which intervenes between the sentence and execution of a criminal in Skitzland, is not longer than three hours. In order to increase the terror of death by contrast, the condemned man is suffered to taste at the table of life from which he is banished, the most luscious viands. All the attain-

able enjoyment that his wit can ask for, he is allowed to have, during the three hours before he is shot, like rubbish, off the fields of Skitzland.

Under guard, of course, I was now to be led whithersoever I desired.

Several churches were open. They never are all shut in Skitzton. I was taken into one. A man with heart and life was preaching. People with hearts were in some pews; people with brains, in others; people with ears only, in some. In a neighbouring church, there was a popular preacher, a skeleton with life. His congregation was a crowd of ears, and nothing more.

There was a day performance at the Opera. I went to that. Fine lungs and mouths possessed the stage, and afterwards there was a great bewilderment with legs. I was surprised to notice that many of the most beautiful ladies were carried in and out, and lifted about like dolls. My guides sneered at my pretence of ignorance, when I asked why this was. But they were bound to please me in all practicable ways, so they informed me, although somewhat pettishly. It seems that in Skitzland, ladies who possess and have cultivated only their good looks, lose, at the age of twenty-one, all other endowments. So they become literally dolls, but dolls of a superior kind; for they can not only open and shut their eyes, but also sigh; wag slowly with their heads, and sometimes take a pocket-handkerchief out of a bag, and drop it. But as their limbs are powerless, they have to be lifted and dragged about after the fashion that excited my astonishment.

I said then, "Let me see the poor." They took me to a workhouse. The men, there, were all yellow; and they wore a dress which looked as though it were composed of asphalt; it had also a smell like that of pitch. I asked for explanation of these things.

A superintendent of police remarked that I was losing opportunities of real enjoyment for the idle purpose of persisting in my fable of having dropped down from the sky. However, I compelled him to explain to me what was the reason of these things. The information I obtained, was briefly this:—that Nature, in Skitzland, never removes the stomach. Every man has to feed himself; and the necessity for finding food, joined to the necessity for buying clothes, is a mainspring whereby the whole clock-work of civilised life is kept in motion. Now, if a man positively cannot feed and clothe himself, he becomes a pauper. He then goes to the workhouse, where he has his stomach filled with a cement. That stopping lasts a life-time, and he thereafter needs no food. His body, however, becomes yellow by the superfluity of bile. The yellow-boy, which is the Skitzland epithet for pauper, is at the same time provided with a suit of clothes. The clothes are of a material so tough that they can be worn unrepaired for more than eighty years. The pauper is now freed from care, but were he in this state cast loose upon society, since he has not that stimulus to labour which excites industry in other men, he would become an element of danger in the state. Nature no longer compelling him to work, the law compels him.

The remainder of his life is forfeit to the uses of his country. He labours at the workhouse, costing nothing more than the expense of lodging, after the first inconsiderable outlay for cement wherewith to plug his stomach, and for the one suit of apparel.

When we came out of the workhouse, all the bells in the town were tolling. The superintendent told me that I had sadly frittered away time, for I had now no more than half an hour to live. Upon that I leaned my back against a post, and asked him to prepare me for my part in the impending ceremony by giving me a little information on the subject of executions.

I found that it was usual for a man to be executed with great ceremony upon the spot whereon his crime had been committed. That in case of rebellions or tumults in the provinces, when large numbers were not unfrequently condemned to death, the sentence of the law was carried out in the chief towns of the disturbed districts. That large numbers of people were thus sometimes discharged from a single market-place, and that the repeated strokes appeared to shake, or crack, or pierce in some degree that portion of the sky towards which the artillery had been directed. I here at once saw that I had discovered the true cause of earthquakes and volcanoes; and this shows how great light may be thrown upon theories concerning the hidden constitution of this earth, by going more deeply into the matter of it than had been done by any one before I dug my hole. Our volcanoes, it is now proved, are situated over the market-places of various provincial towns in

Skitzland. When a revolution happens, the rebels are shot up,—discharged from mortars by means of an explosive material evidently far more powerful than our gunpowder or gun-cotton; and they are pulverised by the friction in grinding their way through the earth. How simple and easy truth appears, when we have once arrived at it.

The sound of muffled drums approached us, and a long procession turned the corner of a street. I was placed in the middle of it,—Baron Terrero by my side. All then began to float so rapidly away, that I was nearly left alone, when forty arms came back and collared me. It was considered to be a proof of my refractory disposition that I would make no use of my innate power of flight. I was therefore dragged in this procession swiftly through the air, drums playing, fifes lamenting.

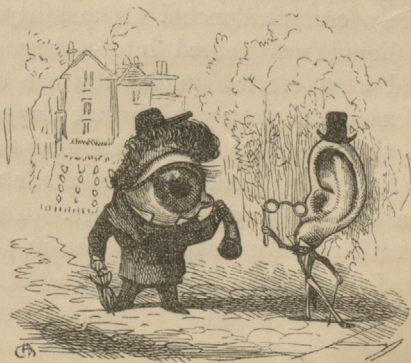
We alighted on the spot where I had fallen, and the hole through which I had come I saw above me. It was very small, but the light from above shining more vividly through it made it look, with its rough edges, like a crumpled moon. A quantity of some explosive liquid was poured into a large mortar, which had been erected (under the eye of Baron Terrero) exactly where my misfortune happened. I was then thrust in, the Baron ramming me down, and pounding with a long stock or pestle upon my head in a noticeably vicious manner. The Baron then cried "Fire!" and as I shot out, in the midst of a blaze, I saw him looking upward.

CHAPTER V.

MY REVENGE UPON THE SKITZLANDERS.

By great good fortune, they had planted their artillery so well, that I was fired up through my hole again, and alighted in my own garden just a little singed. My first thought was to run to an adjoining bed of vegetable marrows. Thirty vegetable marrows and two pumpkins I rained down to astonish the Skitzlanders, and I fervently hope that one of them may have knocked out the remaining eye of my vindictive enemy the Baron. I then went into the pantry, and obtained a basket full of eggs, and having rained these down upon the Skitzlanders, I left them.

It was after breakfast when I went down to Skitzland, and I came back while the dinner-bell was ringing.





THE KING OF THE HEARTH.

THIS tale was told by a miner at a tap-room fire. "It was in the year One thousand, eight, four, four; by token it was the same year in which the block fell upon Mr. Timothy's leg, I was taking a short turn among the coke ovens to get an appetite for my Christmas dinner. You are aware, gentlemen, that hereabouts there are a great number of deserted pits. The entrances to these are mostly covered with a board or two

There aren't many stiles in our pit-country, so we are drove to using these for firewood. The old pit mouths being left uncovered, and sometimes hidden in brushwood, it is a very common thing for sheep to tumble in, and if gentlemen go shooting hereabouts, they may chance to return home without a dog.

"I was thinking a good deal, and not minding where I walked, till, in the middle of my reflections—my natural Christmas thoughts, I felt a bump on the back; likewise an odd freedom about my legs, followed up with a crash against the hinder part of my head, and I was at the bottom of a pit in no time. I was not killed, as you see, but, of course, I was much stunned, and lay for a long time, I suppose. When I opened my eyes, there was nothing to be seen more than a faint glimmer from the daylight far above, and a great many dancing stars which seemed like a swarm of gnats, ready to settle on my body. I was thinking how I should find rescue, when an odd matter got my attention. I was, unless my ears deceived me, not alone; for I heard, as distinctly as I now hear Mr. Drum's leg upon the fender, I heard a loud voice. It came from a distant gallery. 'Who did you say?' asked the voice in a hoarse tone; a softer voice replied, 'Phil Spruce, I think.' 'Very well,' answered the big sound; 'I'll come to him directly.'

"Here was a state of things. A gentleman lived here, and knew of my intrusion. Moreover, I myself was known. Was the acquaintance mutual? Well, gentlemen, that question was soon to be settled, for presently I heard a rustling and a crack-

ling noise, like the approach of a lady in a very stiff silk dress. But that gruff voice!—I trembled. As the sound came nearer, a light gleamed over the dark, dirty walls, and glittered in the puddle upon which I was reposing. ‘He or she has brought a candle: that is wise.’ So I looked round. Mother of Miracles! He, she, or it. What do you think approached? A mass of cinder, glowing hot, shaped into head, body, arms, and legs; black coal on the crown of its head, red glow on the cheeks, and all the rest white hot, with here and there a little eruption of black bubbles, spiriting out lighted gas. It was the shape of a huge man, who walked up, with a most friendly expression in his face, evidently intending to give me a warm reception.

“And so he did, as I will tell you presently. It needed not the aid of his natural qualities to throw me into a great and sudden heat; his supernatural appearance was enough for that. Then I was seized with a great fear lest, in his friendliness, he should expect me to shake hands. That was as if I should have thrust my fingers into this tap-room grate. Well, ma’am (your good health, Mrs. Pittis), the strange thing came up to me quite pleasant, with a beaming face, and said, in something of a voice like a hoarse blast-pipe, ‘Glad to see you, Mr. Spruce. How did you come here?’ ‘Oh,’ said I, ‘sir,’ not liking to be behindhand in civility, ‘I only just dropped in.’ ‘Cold, up above, Mr. Spruce? Will you walk in and take a little something warm.’ A little something warm! What’s that? thought I. ‘Oh yes,’ I said, ‘with all my heart, sir.’ ‘Come

along, then ; you seem stiff in the bones, Mr. Spruce, allow me to help you up.' 'Oh Lord !' I cried, forgetting my manners. 'No, thank you, sir. Spruce is my name, and spruce my nature. I can get up quite nimble.' And so I did, with a leap ; although it made my joints ache, I can tell you. The Thing bowed, and seemed to be quite glowing double with delight to see me. Take a little something warm, I thought again. Oh, but I won't, though ! However, I must not seem eager to get away just yet : the beast seems to think I came down on purpose to see him. 'After you, sir !' said I, bowing, and pulling my forelock ; 'if you will be so good as to lead, I'll follow.' 'This way, then, Philip.'

"So we went along a gallery, and came to a vault which was lighted by the bodies of a great number of imps, all made of brisk live coal, like my conductor. 'I dare say you find the room close,' said the king—for I found afterwards he was a real king, though he was so familiar ; 'what will you take to drink ?' I calculated there was nothing weaker than vitriol in his cellar, so I begged to be excused. 'It is not my habit, sir, to drink early mornings ; and indeed I must not let my wife wait dinner. We will have a little gossip, if you please, and then you will let one of your servants light me out, perhaps. I merely dropped in, as you are aware, my dear sir.' 'Quite aware of that, my dear Phil. And very glad I am to get your company. Of course you are anxious to be up above in good time ; and if you can stop here an hour, I shall be happy to accompany you.' Indeed, thought I to myself, Polly will stare.

‘Most happy,’ I replied. ‘I fear you will take harm from that nasty puddle at my door,’ observed the king. ‘Wouldn’t you wish to lie down, and rest a bit, before we start out together.’ I thought that a safe way of getting through the time. ‘You are very good,’ said I. ‘Get a bed ready, Coffin and Purse!’ Two bright little imps darted away, and the Thing, turning round to me with a sulphurous yawn, said, ‘I don’t mind, Phil, if I lie down with you.’ Surely he’s roasting me, I thought.

“True as sorrow, Mr. Timothy, Coffin and Purse came back in no time to say the bed was ready; and I followed the king with as good courage as a Smithfield martyr. But I did not, I did *not* expect what followed. We went into a small vault, of which half the floor was covered by a blazing fire: all the coals had been raked level, and that was Coffin and Purse’s bed-making. ‘Well, I’ll get in at once,’ said the king; ‘you see we’ve a nice light mattress.’ ‘Light, sir! why it’s in vivid blazes. You don’t suppose I can lie down on that.’ ‘Why not, Phil? You see I do. Here I am, snug and comfortable.’ ‘Yes, my dear sir, but you forget the difference there is between us?’ ‘And yes again, Mr. Spruce; but please to remember this is Christmas Day: a day on which all differences should be ended.’

“‘And now,’ said the monster, sitting up suddenly upon a corner of the bed, ‘and now, Phil, I will urge you to nothing. You are a reasoning man, and count for a philosopher. Let’s argue a bit, Mr. Spruce.’ ‘I’m favourable to free discussion,’ I replied; ‘but I decide on principles of common

sense.' 'Let common sense decide,' replied the king, crossing his knees, and looking conversational: 'The point at issue is, whether with your views it would be better for you to remain a man or to become a cinder. What were your thoughts this morning, Philip Spruce?' 'This morning I was thinking about human nature, sir.' 'And how did you decide upon it, Philip?' 'Humbly asking pardon, sir, and meaning no offence, may I inquire whether in present company it is permitted to speak disrespectfully of the Devil?' "

"I wouldn't have said that, Phil, to a man of his appearance."

"Lord bless you, Mr. Timothy, he looked so mild disposed, and 'No offence,' he says; 'speak out without reserve.' 'Then, sir,' said I, 'this is what I think of human nature. I believe that it was full of every sort of goodness, and that men were naturally well disposed to one another, till the Devil got that great idea of his. Men are born to worship their Creator, and to supply the wants of their neighbours; but then comes in the deceiving fiery monster, with a pocketful of money, and says, quite disinterested, 'Gentlemen and Ladies, it's of no use asking you to venerate me; you don't do it, and you oughtn't to; but the most convenient and proper thing is for every individual to worship only just his self. You see the result of this,' says the old sinner; 'by paying sacrifice to your own images, you just change things from the right-hand pocket to the left, or if you go abroad, as you must do, in search of offerings, all the fish comes to your own net, and all the fat into your own

belly. You smoke your own incense, and if you chance to be remiss in your devotions, you may make peace and atonement any way you please. Then, says the great brimstone beast—I beg your pardon, sir, excuse my liberty of speech,—if anybody remark you are my servants, you can laugh, and tell them you are no such fools. As for any formulary of religion, follow in that the fashion of your country——’

“The cinder gentleman, Mrs. Pittis, my dear, rolled about in the fire, quite at his ease, and said, ‘Very good, Phil. And what else have you to say of human nature?’ by which you will see that he had discrimination enough to perceive the value of my observations. ‘The result is, sir,’ I says to him then, ‘that the whole human race is a dancing and a trumpeting in corners, every man singing hymns in honour of his self. And the old enemy capers up and down the country and the town, rejoicing at the outcry which he hears from every lip in his honour. A friend is rarer than a phœnix; for no man can serve two images, and each sticks firmly by his own.’

“‘Have you no charity yourself, this Christmas, Mr. Spruce?’ inquired the king, after he had called to his two imps that they should put fresh coals upon the bed, and rake it up. ‘When I was a young man, sir,’ said I, ‘no one could have started in the world with a stronger faith in human goodness. But I’ve seen my error. All the ways of human nature are humbug, sir; as for my fellow-creatures, I’ve been very much deceived in ’em. That’s all I know in answer to your question.’

“ ‘I understand you, Phil,’ the king said, lounging back upon the bed, and kindling the new coals into a blaze around him by the mere contact of his body: ‘You are a philosopher out at elbows, and therefore a little out of temper with the world. You would like best to make your observations upon human nature without being jostled. You’d rather see the play from a snug little box, than be an actor in it, kicked about and worried.’ ‘Ah, sir, said I, ‘and where is such a seat provided?’ ‘Philip, I can answer that question,’ said the king; ‘and what is more, I can give you free admission to a snug private box.’ ‘How so, sir?’ said I quite eagerly. ‘The coal-box, Phil,’ replied the king. ‘I’m puzzled, sir,’ said I. ‘In what way is my condition to be improved by the act of sitting in a coal-box?’ ‘That, my dear Phil, I will make as clear to you as a fire on a frosty night. Know, then, that I am King among the Coals.’ I bowed, and was upon the point of kissing his extended hand, but drew back my nose suddenly. ‘The cinder which I now have on I wear—because it is large and easy—in the manner of a dressing gown, when here at home. I am, however, a spirit, and ruler over many other spirits similarly formed. Now, Phil, the business and amusement of myself and subjects is to transfer ourselves at will into the tenancy of any coal we please. The scuttles of the whole kingdom are our meeting-houses. Every coal cast upon the fire, Phil, is by our means animated with a living spirit. It is our amusement, then, to have a merry sport among ourselves; and it is our privilege to watch the

scenes enacted round the hearths which we enliven. When the cinder becomes cold, the spirit is again set free, and flies, whither it pleases, to a new abode.'”

“Isn't that the doctrine of metamycosis?” asked a boy, who was a national scholar, tapping the ashes from his pipe-bowl.

“It's a thing I never heard on,” said the game-keeper. Mr. Spruce went on:—

“‘Did you never,’ continued his majesty, ‘when gazing into the fire, see a grotesque face glow before you? That face, Phil, has been mine. You have then seen the King among the Coals. If you become a cinder, Mr. Spruce, you may consider yourself made a judge.’

“‘Well, sir,’ says I, ‘your reverence, it's firstly requisite to judge whether I will or won't sit down upon the fire. It's my opinion, I won't. I'd like a little more discussion.’ ‘Talk away, Phil,’ said the king. ‘Well, sir,’ says I, ‘since you're always a-looking—leastways in winter—through the bars of grates, it's possible you've seen a bit yourself of human nature. Don't it fidget you? ‘Why,’ says he, ‘Phil,’ a-stretching out his arms for a great yawn so suddenly as very nigh to set my coat on fire with his red fingers, ‘I have been tolerably patient, haven't I?’ ‘If it's sarcasm you mean,’ says I, a little nettled, ‘I must say it's a figure of speech I don't approve of.’

“‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ he says, ‘and here's an answer to your question. It's my opinion, Mr. Spruce, that as a cinder you will be agreeably surprised. I do see people sitting around me, now and

then, whom I can't altogether get my coals to blaze for cheerfully. They sit and talk disparagement about all manner of folks their neighbours; they have a cupboard in their hearts for hoarding up the grievances they spend their lives in searching for; they hate the world, and could cut scandal out of millstones, but if one hints that they are erring, they are up in arms and don't approve of sarcasm.' 'Sir,' says I, 'you are personal.' 'By no means, Mr. Spruce; you, and a number like you, are good people in the main, and deeply to be pitied for your foolish blunder. You're a philosopher, Phil,' he says, 'and did you never hear that your "I" is the only thing certainly existent, and that the world without may be a mere shadow or mere part of you, or if external, of no certain form or tint, having the colour of the medium through which you view it—your own nature.' Here I saw occasion for a joke. 'Sir,' I says, 'if my own "I" is the only thing certainly existing, then the external world is all my eye, which proves what I propounded.' His flames went dead all of a sudden, and he looked black from top to toe. 'I am sure I beg your pardon, sir,' says I, 'excuse my liberty.'

"He took no verbal notice of what I had said, but gave a tremendous shiver, and his flames began to play again. 'I'm of a warm and cheerful turn of mind,' says he, 'and I must say, that whenever I look out upon the men and women in the world, I see them warm and cheerful.' 'That's nothing wonderful,' said I; 'it's just because you see them sitting round your blaze.' 'Well,' says he, 'Mr.

Spruce, I'm very glad you own so much; for my opinion is, that if you had shone out cheerfully when you were in the world, and warmed the folks that came within your influence—if you had put a little kindly glow into your countenance, you would have been surrounded as I generally am.' 'You're young,' says I, 'and you have had no experience; leastways, your experience have not been human. You get stirred when you're low, and people tend you for their own sakes—you ain't preyed upon by disappointments.'

“‘Young!’ said he; ‘disappointments!’ And to my horror, he stood bolt upright, to be impressive. ‘Look you, Mr. Spruce, the youngest is the wisest; the child remembers throughout years a happy day, and can forget his tears as fast as they evaporate. He grows up, and his budding youth imagines love. Two or three fancies commonly precede his love. As each of these decays, he, in his inexperience, is eloquent about his blighted hopes, his dead first love, and so on. In the first blossom of his manhood, winds are keen to him; at his first plunge into the stream of active life, he finds the water cold. Who shall condemn his shiver? But if he is to be a healthy man, he will strike out right soon, and glow with cheerful exercise in buffeting the stream. Youth, Mr. Spruce, may be allowed to call the water of the world too cold, but so long only as its plunge is recent. It is a libel on maturity and age to say that we live longer to love less. Preyed upon by disappointments’--

“‘Yes,’ says I, ‘preyed upon.’

“ ‘ Say, rather, blessed with trial. Who’d care to swim in a cork jacket! Trouble is a privilege, believe me, friend, to those who know from whose hand, for what purpose it is sent. I do not mean the trouble people cut out for themselves by curdling all the milk of kindness in their neighbours. But when a man will be a man, will labour with Truth, Charity, and Self-Reliance—always frank and open in his dealings—always giving credit to his neighbours for their good deeds, and humbly abstaining from a judgment of what looks like evil in their conduct—when he knows, under God, no helper but his own brave heart and his own untiring hand—there is no disappointment in repulse. He learns the lesson Heaven teaches him, his Faith and Hope and Charity by constant active effort become strong—gloriously strong—just as the blacksmith’s right arm becomes mighty by the constant wielding of his hammer. Disappointment—let the coward pluck up courage—disappointment is a sheet-and-pumpkin phantom to the bold. Let him who has battled side by side with Trouble say whether it was not an angel sent to be his help. Find a true-hearted man whose energies have brought him safe through years of difficulty; ask him whether he found the crowd to be base-natured through which he was called upon to force his way? Believe me, he will tell you, No.’ Having said this his majesty broke out into a blaze, and laid down in his bed again. ‘ Well,’ he said, ‘ Philip, will you come to bed with me?’

“ ‘ Why, sir,’ said I, ‘ to say the best of it, you’re under a misconception; but if it’s in the nature of a

coal to take such cheerful views of things as you appear to do, I'd rather be a coal than what I am. It's cold work living in the flesh, such as I find it; you seem jolly as a hot cinder, and for the matter of that, what am I now but dust and ashes? Coke is preferable.'

“ ‘Coffin and Purse, you're wanted,’ cried the king. And indeed, Mrs. Pittis, and indeed, gentlemen, I must turn aside one minute to remark the singularity of this king's body-guard, Coffin and Purse. ‘Cash and Mortality,’ said the king to me, ‘make up, according to your theory, the aim and end of man. So with a couple of cinders you can twit him with his degradation. Sometimes Coffin, sometimes Purse, leaps out into his lap when he is cogitating.’ ‘Yes,’ said I, ‘that will be extremely humorous. But, so please your majesty, I still have one objection to joining your honourable body.’ ‘What is that, Phil?’ ‘I suppose if I sit down in them there flames they'll burn me.’ ‘To be sure,’ said the king, kicking up his heels, and scraping a furnace load of live coals over his body, just as you might pull up the blanket when you're in bed to-night, Mrs. Pittis. ‘Well, your highness,’ said I, ‘how about the pain?’ ‘Pah!’ says the king, ‘where's your philosophy? Did you never see a fly jump into a lamp-flame?’ ‘Yes, sure,’ I answered. ‘And what happened then? A moment's crackle, and an end of it. You've no time to feel pain.’ ‘Well, then,’ said I, ‘if your majesty will make a hole for me as near the middle as is convenient to yourself, I will jump into the bed straightway.’ The king

made a great spatter among the coals, and in I jumped. You know, ma'am, that a great part of our bodies is composed of water."

"I don't know that of any gentleman in this room," replied the landlady. "But I do believe that you are two parts built out of strong beer."

"There was a burst,—a flash, gentlemen; the liquid part of me went off in instantaneous steam. I cried out with a sharp burn in my foot. The pot was boiling over furiously that contained our bit of dinner; and as I sat close in to the fire, I got considerably scalded. How I got back in the steam to my own fireside, I never rightly comprehended. Fill the can now, Mrs. Pittis."

"Yes," said the landlady, "but let me tell you, Mr. Spruce, that King of the Hearth's a gentleman, and if you really had gone with the coals and got acquainted with firesides, it would have done you a great deal of good. You'd have owned then that there is a mighty deal more love than hatred in the world. You'd have heard round almost any hearth you chose to play eavesdropper to, household words anything but hard or bitter. Some people do not pay their scores with me, but on the whole I live. Some of our human natures may run termagant; but on the whole we men and women love. Among the worst are those who won't bear quietly their share of work, who can't learn self-reliance, but run to and fro squealing for help, and talking sentiment against their neighbours, who won't carry their burdens for them. The more such folks are helped, the more they are helpless; the more they are

pitied the more they will make themselves pitiable. There's no smell to these roses, quoth the skunk. It's all very well for a musty, discontented old bachelor, to say there's no love in the world, but it's a falsehood. I know better."

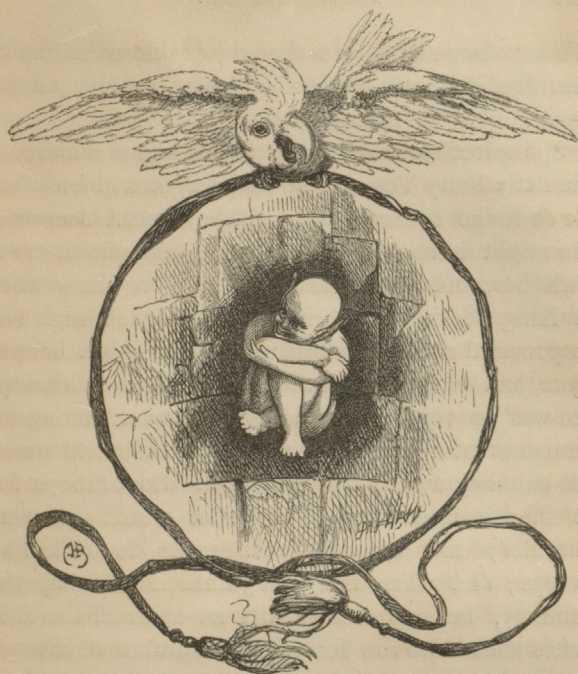
"My pipe's out," said the boy. "Be smart there with the 'baccy."



MOTHER GOOSE.

“HAVE the goodness to observe my children,” said a wise-looking Goose to a Spaniel, who was playing with her puppies. “See how my dear goslings follow me about the farmyard, walking as I walk, cackling as I cackle; already, young as they are, they have the minds of perfect geese. You never see these well-trained little creatures behave as your puppies behave. Look there, now! With what show of wrath the tan pup darts at you, and gnaws your coat with his young teeth! Fun, is it? Sin, I say. Can anything be more absurd than the twisting and rolling and tumbling of yonder son of yours, who now lies on his back and snaps at flies? Why don’t you confine him to the use of his four legs? Why do you let him grow up, as he will, in the belief that rolling is walking, and that flies are dog’s-meat? See, see how my dear goslings follow in my train, trying to look as I look, waddle as I waddle, cackle as I cackle.”

“Wise Mother Goose,” answered the Spaniel, “puppies play thus when they are young, because, when they are old, they must be fit companions of men. Yours, I own, is the best training for a goose. Only give me for son a brisk young dog, whose limbs, while he is growing, twist, wriggle, and roll, and whose young wits riot in joyous antics, that hereafter he may be of body swift and strong, and of mind earnest and faithful in the service of his Master!”



SILVER TASSELS.

THE only ailment to which good Fairies are subject is an affection of the fancy, whereby they grow mad for mischief. A Fairy so altered is called a Rogue Fairy; and the Rogue Fairy, usually a male, will often separate himself from his own circle, and, looking for a solitary den of his own, fix himself perhaps, as the Rogue Splug did, in a chimney. The Rogue likes a nest in a chimney.

He can drop smut into the pot, or blow the smoke into the house as often as he pleases, and has all the household at his mercy.

Splug lost his temper over the doings of his friend the little Fairy Teasel, who had forgotten himself so far as to go as companion to the Queen Cockatoo. He might have gone to the same magnificent court with her, and distinguished himself in the service of King Cockatoo—a brilliant sovereign, though not so powerful as his forefathers had been—but he was cross, and chose rather to go and live in a chimney. He was so very cross that there was no living for human creatures in the sweet little cottage of which the chimney was in his possession. Soot always fell at the times when a fall of soot would do most mischief; the cottagers were made to look like sweeps; and when the sweep himself came up the chimney, he was tickled till he sneezed the soot flakes about like the leaves in an autumn whirlwind. Long pots, short pots, crooked pots, cowls of all sorts were fixed upon the chimney-top, but always tumbled, and tore through the roof where they could clatter down on something choice. At last, the cottage was deserted, and the owner of it, my Lord Hemp, the hardest and the richest man in the whole realm of Gossamer, never went near it. For in the blackening of Hemp's face Splug took a particular delight.

The cottage haunted by this Rogue Fairy was on the outskirts of Feathergrass, the capital of Gossamer. My Lord Hemp, who occupied a house in the city nearly as fine as the Queen's Palace, was

so grand a man, and in his own opinion so choice a man, that he was not without hope of marrying his sovereign, Queen Sappodilla.

Now, it happened that when the cottage had been for a long time empty, and when anybody might have lived in it for nothing who would undertake to make the smoke go up its chimney, there came into those parts a poor widow, whose name was Neroli. She brought with her all her goods in a small bundle, and ten gold pieces, all that her poor husband had been able to lay by for her before he died. She came on foot into the city of Feathergrass, with her bundle in one hand, and her little seven year old daughter, Silver Tassels, holding by the other. Mother and child were dressed in old clothes so well mended, that you hardly might observe how many times they had been torn, and all their finery was on the child in form of an old girdle of silver thread, with a small pair of silver tassels that a godmother had given her. Neroli and little Silver Tassels walked up and down for some time through the scented groves and among the palaces of Feathergrass, in vain search for a place that they could make into a pleasant home. At last they sat down in a large public garden to eat their dry bread among the lilies that grew under the shadow of some blossoming orange-trees. As they sat, a tall gentleman came by, sharp-eyed, sharp-nosed, and thin-lipped, with powdered hair, and a great deal of white muslin frill about his neck. It was my Lord Hemp going to court, magnificently dressed in blue-and-white satin, trimmed with flowers and with

thick gold fringe on all the borders of his clothes. Neroli was very beautiful. She had, like her child, a wealth of sunny brown hair falling about her white forehead, and they both had faithful blue eyes that no living creature could mistrust. The child had the rounder cheeks; but child and mother were alike weary and white when my Lord Hemp stood still before them.

"A little girl that can wear silver tassels should eat cake," he said. Neroli supposed, therefore, that he was about to pull a cake out of his pocket. But he only added in a harsh voice, "Why do you give dry bread to such a child as that, and let her eat it here. Eating is not permitted in these gardens!"

"We have no home, yet," Neroli faltered; "we have been looking for a room this morning. As for the dry bread, sir, we have but ten gold crowns in the world, and must not eat them."

"My dear woman, pardon me," said Hemp. "You have ten gold crowns, and you want a lodging. I am interested in you; and as I happen to have empty at this moment a very pretty cottage just outside the town, I will let you live in it. Pay me only the worth of one room as a little weekly rent. You will be punctual, I see that in your face. The payment is only a form, which it will be a pleasure to you to observe. You can earn money?"

"I hope to live by my needle. Therefore we have come to Feathergrass."

"My recommendation at Court you may rely upon. Allow my steward to show you the premises. If you were to pay in advance four gold pieces,

the cottage would be your own for the first half-year, and we should be simply neighbours and friends. Afterwards the small rent might be paid weekly, for I know that way will suit you best, my dear young friend. Oxlip," he said, turning to the steward, who was following at the head of a troop of gilt servants in attendance upon the great lord, "conduct this lady and her charming daughter to the cottage of mine now so fortunately empty. If she will accept that as her home, and me as her friend, say for the next seven or fourteen years, see that there is a little writing drawn up for our mutual assurance. Madam, I kiss your hand. The Queen awaits me."

So Neroli and Silver Tassels came to the cottage, which was not far from the town, and as pretty a place as one might wish to look at. A grove of date palms rose behind its garden, which was hedged with scarlet cactus blossoms, and sweet flowering myrtle. The road opposite its door crossed by a mossy wooden bridge a river of the clearest water, in which water-lilies opened their great blossoms and spread their floating leaves. On the other side of the river was a strip of flat ground at the foot of round hills covered with rose gardens. These belonged to the merchants who owned a great factory higher up by the water-side, where perfume of roses was extracted for the markets of the world. The runnings from the factory made rosewater of all the streams. The cottage itself was thatched with sweet flag; and, like most of the huts in the realms of Gossamer, was built of rough blocks of a fragrant wood that grows large in

those parts. Only the hearth-place and the chimney were not of wood, but of sand burnt, according to the custom of the country, into rough plates of a sort of fireproof glass.

Here, then, Neroli gladly enough agreed to live for seven years to come, paying at once for the first half-year's possession, four of her gold pieces; and bound to pay thereafter, weekly rent at the same rate. Little was spent for furniture. She and her daughter slept on the waste rose leaves, that cost only the trouble of fetching from the factory. She had little to buy beyond a table and two chairs, a tub and a basket, a pot and a kettle. The few clothes they had, and some small household necessaries brought from the home lost by the death of the house father were in the bundle that Neroli brought with her, and among the necessaries was a well-stored workbox, the poor woman's stock in trade.

Her plan might have been changed, and she might have found work at the neighbouring factory, but that was manned (if I may say manned) by slaves. The needlework she got was very poor. Lord Hemp, though it might have been worth his while to support the tenant he had caught, struck her off his mind for the next six months on receipt of four of her gold crowns. He knew that he could not advise the grand ladies of Queen Sappodilla's court, which is the most handsomely dressed court in the world, to send their rich stuffs to be made up in a chimney; for the cottage all the world of Feathergrass knew to be no better than a chimney, when a fire was lighted in it. But the poor traders who could afford

Neroli very little pay, did, for love of her gentle face, and out of pity that Lord Hemp should have so cruelly entrapped her, give her what work they could; only in doing so they begged, with a puzzling earnestness, that she would bring it home to them clean, if possible.

This puzzled Neroli, because Splug was not in his chimney when she took possession of the house, and all about her was clean as a lily bud. Splug, finding himself left without amusement, had gone off to try whether he could not break one of the tail feathers of Queen Cockatoo, but had been seized on the way by an old parrot, supernaturally gifted, who fastened a claw upon one of his little buttons, and talked to him for six months, till his head span round and round; at least, it span round and round so swiftly that the parrot was made giddy by looking at what he had done, and his claw lost hold upon Splug's button, although with his beak he still was able to hold forth. Splug flew off, but his head continued to spin for another twelvemonth, so that he was too confused to understand whither he went; because, though he might be journeying straight on, what was before him in one instant was behind him in the next. At last he was sufficiently recovered from the punishment inflicted on him by the parrot to discover his way back into his own chimney. When he entered it, smoke was ascending, and at once he eased his mind by kicking all the soot down to the fire, and blowing the smoke back into the house. Then he listened mischievously for the noise of scolding that had usually followed, but heard only

two soft voices. So he peeped down, and saw a fair woman, with rich brown hair falling about her shoulders, and a poor old dress, sooted in front, who was pouring into a dish a few cooked roots out of a saucepan, into which the soot had fallen. A pale little girl, who also had brown hair and wistful blue eyes, sat before an empty plate on the other side of the table, and said, "I am not hungry, mother." With the faintest little quiver of the face, the woman shook her head over the sooty mess "This does not look nice, does it, Silver Tassels. But you had no dinner yesterday. You must not say you are not hungry."

"I mean, mother, I am not hungrier than I can bear." The woman and child kissed each other, and no more was said.

"Odd people these!" Splug thought to himself, and came down, himself very much like a lump of soot, to sit unobserved among the crickets, watching them. He could see that the child would have cried had she been alone, and so would the mother; but, being together, one pair of blue eyes smiled into the other, and fond little words were said while the fallen soot was being cleared away. Then the poor mother took off her soiled dress, and sat down by her work-box with some coarse stuff upon which she began to sew and sew for the dear bread, while the child lighted the fire again, stooping as she did so, till her silver tassels almost came upon Splug's nose. The fairy looked up at it curiously. "Certainly," he thought, "that girdle was made at Titania's court. I have seen Teasel, ages ago, work-

ing upon those tassels. Pretty thing, truly, to wear them and want a dinner!"

When the fire was lighted, Silver Tassels made some water hot, and pouring it into a little tub, quietly began to wash her mother's only dress, while still the mother, sitting in her underclothes, with her brown hair about her shoulders, and her blue eyes as they were bent down filming with tears, sewed and sewed for the dear bread.

Splug ran up the chimney again and came down on the other side as a poor wooden-legged soldier, who tapped at the door and asked for charity. "I have not eaten for two days," he said.

"Ah, friend," said Neroli, "neither has my child."

"Nor you?"

"Nor I; but that is little. I had my golden childhood, and may bear some sorrow now. But she—look at her!"

Silver Tassels, standing on a little stool, with cheeks not so round as they had been, was rubbing at the sooty dress, trying to wash it well with a thumb's-end of soap. When her mother pointed to her, she began a cheery little song, learnt in her babyhood.

"Well," said the soldier, "we are all three hungry, and the dates are ripe in the wood outside. I will go pick up some of the fallen dates, and we will make a feast together."

The child stopped in her song, and opened her blue eyes to their utmost width as she looked at him, and said, wonderingly, "They are not ours."

"They belong to Lord Hemp, who owns the land, and to whom we owe to-day a week's rent for the cottage we are in," the mother explained; and it was clear to her that there was no more to be said.

"Oh, well," said the soldier, "Lord Hemp is the richest man in Feathergrass, and eats of the daintiest. He can spare a handful of dates to the starving."

"No doubt," Neroli said. "Perhaps I shall have to ask him for so much."

"I cannot wait to ask," said Splug. "Do as you will. I am off to the wood for my dinner."

As he was going away, "Ah, little daughter," said Neroli, "he must be hungrier than we are, or he would not think of that. He would not do it if we had anything to give." So she took her silver thimble from her finger, and following the lame soldier, pressed it into his hand. "The worth of it," she said, "will buy at least a piece of bread, and then help may come before you are again tempted to steal."

The soldier thanked her, and went off towards the town.

"Dearest mother," said poor little Silver Tassels, when she came in again, "you work all the long day with needles, and without your thimble you will be so hurt!"

"Without my thimble he would have been more hurt than at the finger-tip. Ah, darling! it is hard for us, but think how very terrible his hunger must have been!" Now, Splug heard all this as he sat

in the chimney, crosslegged and potbellied, with the thimble on his head.

A little later in the afternoon, there was a great rout of gilt servants on horseback, scampering over the bridge, followed at full speed by a gilt coach drawn by six cream-coloured horses, behind which more gilt servants, all of them blackamoors, followed on foot. This was my Lord Hemp coming in full dress from his country-house to dine with Queen Sappodilla.

When he came by the door of the cottage, "Halt!" he cried; for he remembered that a week's rent was just due, and as he had been told that the chimney had not smoked since the new tenants went in, he was not afraid to go in himself and get the small morsel of money that was owing.

When Splug saw his old enemy come in, dressed in white-and-blue satin pranked with flowers, and wearing over his neatly powdered head, a crimson velvet hat with a whole peacock's tail in it, he chuckled to himself, but waited to hear what might pass, before he began any mischief.

"Quick, my two florins," said my lord, not taking his hat off in the widow's presence. "Quick, my good lady! The Queen waits for me!"

"Alas, sir, if you would wait"—

"Wait!" he cried. "Is not the money due to-day? Not got it; very well, that need not trouble you. What shall I take instead? I cannot put your pots and pans into my carriage; but see now, there's that silver girdle of your child's."

"Oh no, sir," the mother said, "not that!—at least not yet."

"Well, there's your work-box."



"Mother cannot live without that," said the child.
"Please take my tassels."

"They will do for next week," said my lord, as he directed two big footmen to put the widow's work-box into his carriage, first gathering up into it, the

scissors that had dropped from her lap when she rose to receive him, and the needles and threads that were lying on the table. And she, when starving with her child, would not have robbed him of a fallen date !

But Splug, in the form of a cricket, jumped into the work-box and jumped out again, leaving a charm behind. While my lord rolled home in his great coach with the box that was the poor woman's hope of daily bread by his side, he was thinking of the elegant things he would say to Queen Sappodilla, for on that evening he intended openly to ask her hand. But, at a word from Splug all the needles and pins were alive, and the needles, when they had all threaded themselves quietly, were slipping out of the box to busy themselves with his lordship. One stitched the back of his fine hat to the back of his coat-collar ; another sewed up his pockets ; another fastened the legs of his trousers to his boots. Whatever was hooked, tied, or buttoned of the clothes he wore, the busy needles sewed up with the neatest of invisible stitches, but so strongly, that not even a knife could cut them through. That done, all that had been in the work-box flying and gliding softly up and down disposed itself in folds of my lord's clothes, so that he carried everything with him but the box itself, when he went into her Majesty's presence.

But in what state did he appear before his sovereign ? He had not been able to pull his gloves off, and the utmost that he had been able to do with his hat, was to thrust it from the front of his head, so that the great peacock's tail streamed down over his back.

" My lord is ill ? " said the Queen.

“Pardon me, great Sappodilla, that I do not come with naked hands into your presence. I have stained my fingers to-day with so much ink, in your service, that I dare not have them seen.”

“But your hat, my lord”—

“Is a part of my coat; a new fashion. I hope you admire it. Ow! Ow! whew!” My lord danced briskly, lifting up, as fast and as high as he could, first one leg and then the other. The Queen, who did not know that her favourite's legs were then being attacked by five large needles, two darners and three tailor's-betweens, smiled and said, “A new fashion in deportment also, I perceive.”

“Emotion, august mistress! Emotion, caused by your graciousness.” Then he clapped both his hands upon his back and cried one long Ow! louder than before. Queen Sappodilla really thought that love for her had turned his lordship's brain, so, as she meant soon to make him happy, she at once asked him to take her in to dinner. Feeling for needles as he went, but finding none, because they nimbly slipped from fold to fold as he pursued them, my Lord Hemp led her Majesty to dinner. He dined alone with the Queen that day, and was expected after the cheese, to prefer his suit. But when he sat down to table, he jumped up again with a wild cry, flinging his arms out and knocking down a massive footman who stood near. “Poor man, he evidently suffers much on my account,” said to herself Sappodilla.

But the needles and pins suffered my lord to sit down and rest, until his soup was placed before him. Then as he bent over it, the scissors buried themselves

in his periwig and snipped lock after lock of hair into his soup-plate. The Queen had her eyes on her own soup and did not observe this, but when her plate was empty, my lord still was playing with his spoon. Something was the matter he felt, but no sign of his distraction must appear. Everything must go smoothly to-night. He would like to go home at once, take off his periwig, and search himself for pins; but if he did, he never could hope to be King of Gossamer. So he made up his mind, and with audible gulps,—which the Queen flattered herself were hysterical,—swallowed the soup with all the hair in it. It was not much easier to eat a piece of fish, through which a whole skein of cotton had found opportunity to entangle itself. As the skein was undivided, and would not be pulled away, it was necessary (in order to escape observation) that my lord should eat his bit of fish in one lump, when her Majesty happened to look another way. The effort to do this was boldly made, but it was unsuccessful. My lord managed to get all his bit of fish into his mouth at once, but then the threads hindered the swallowing. He turned black in the face, and three doctors had been sent for before he got it down. Nevertheless on such a momentous occasion, he did not choose to be invalided. Happen what might, he must fight through his dinner and secure the prize of a Queen's promise to be his wife before he slept that night. The next dish served was pickled pork and parsnips. He was not well certainly, but surely he could eat a bit of that. And as the Queen condoled with him and he talked courteously to her, with a bit

of parsnip on the end of his fork, the lump of wax out of the work-box saw his opportunity, seized the position on the fork, went into my lord's mouth, and when my lord's teeth closed on him never did wax hold so tight. Lord Hemp could not open his mouth any more that evening to swallow or to speak, because he could not draw his teeth out of the wax, and the Queen took him for a maniac with a piece of parsnip in his mouth. He was obliged to quit the half-finished dinner and forego the golden opportunity, that never came again; for on the day following, Sappodilla heard what changed her mind. Lord Hemp was taken home in his great coach. The widow's work-box was still on the seat, he opened it and found it empty, though still heavy, for it was made of stout wood. When he dropped the lid, the box itself started up and flew at his face, so that when he got home his eyes were black and his nose was swollen with the thrashing it had given him.

Lord Hemp having reached home, was taken to bed. The seal of wax then dropped out of his mouth, and he began storming frightfully. That was because he was sewn up so firmly in his satin clothes, that all his ten valets could not pull them off. The seams refusing to be ripped, he had to be peeled out of his white-and-blue satin with a knife in such a way, that the whole suit was destroyed. Then all the pins and needles went to bed with him, and the scissors sat up all night to cut his bedclothes into strips.

It is impossible in less than a day to tell all that

Lord Hemp suffered from the enemies that the Rogue Fairy had raised up against him. But we may be sorry that he was of a temper to get worse instead of wiser for his griefs. He felt that he was punished by some fairy for his cruelty in carrying away what was the slender prop of the poor widow's house. But he said, "I will not be bullied, even by a fairy. If I do not have my rent next week, let her look out! I go myself, and I will bring away the silver tassels."

About these silver tassels, the Rogue Splug was worrying his brains. "I am sure," he said to himself, "I ought to remember something about them. Teasel worked on them, I know. If I could see Teasel! If! But then there's that Parrot—Well, well, I will wait another week; and though I am a Rogue and Lord Hemp is another, this woman and girl are not to starve. I will go and scratch in their garden."

"Mother," said Silver Tassels, when Neroli woke from the sleep into which she had wept and prayed herself, after losing all her means of livelihood, "There is a date-tree in our garden,—within the hedge! And it is full of fruit, too!"

The mother saw that this was true, and feared lest some false friend, perhaps even the old soldier, had brought in the night one of the Lord Hemp's trees into her garden. But no, the tree had brighter leaves and larger fruit, of a more golden colour, than any of those in the date-grove behind the house. The child ran gaily out and filled her apron. Dates! These were too delicious to be dates.

Yet they had stones, as my Lord Hemp discovered, for he came, harder than ever, when another week was over, and because there was no money little Silver Tassels meekly put her girdle in his hand. As the great lord went away with it the tree caught his attention. He looked up, and instantly every date spat down into his face a stone as hard as his own heart. "I should like," said his lordship, as he got into his coach, "I should like to get rid of this piece of property."

But Splug, when the Lord Hemp was gone and had carried away with him the silver girdle, thought to himself, "I will risk that Parrot! It was all very well for an innocent child to have the tassels, but now—I am off."

Flying half round the world to escape being again waylaid and engaged in conversation for the rest of his life, Splug travelled in half a day to the Court of the Cockatoos, and stood before Teasel as she was combing out the Queen Cockatoo's crest.

"What, Splug!" she cried, "and with a thimble on your head!"

"Never mind that. Answer me quickly. Did you not work once at a girdle with two silver tassels?"

The Queen Cockatoo gave a wild scream that brought King Cockatoo and half his army to her rescue. He was holding a review.

"The Silver Tassels, my own dear Splug," Teasel whispered; "have you found them. I can leave the Cockatoo to-morrow if you have."

"I know where they are," Splug answered. "But before I tell you, tell me what they are."

"They are the two ends of the power of the Cockatoos. These birds were a grand people while that fairy girdle was worn by their queen, for it kept off a race of magicians that became their enemies. It was lost ages ago, and then the magicians had power to change their enemies to birds. My friend the Queen Cockatoo has lost three of her sons who have gone out into the world to seek the girdle, and I came to comfort my dear friend, perhaps to help her. Now, Splug, where is it?"

"In evil hands," said the Rogue, "from which the Cockatoos themselves must go and take it. I will be their guide, but save me, somebody, from being clutched on the way by that Parrot, who has already once had me by the button for a six months' talk."

"Lead on," said the King Cockatoo. "My armies follow. Scaring the clouds with their wild war-scream, a flight of myriads of cockatoos swept over the realm of Gossamer, eclipsed the sun over the city of Feathergrass, and stormed the palace of Lord Hemp. Cockatoos broke all his windows, cockatoos flew screeching in masses through his halls and chambers, screeching cockatoos seized him by the hair, arms, body, and legs with a thousand claws and beaks, while their king found the girdle with the silver tassels and straightway flew with it homeward.

"What shall we do with the prisoner?" screeched all the cockatoos. The King being gone, Splug

took on himself to answer. "Carry him to the Parrot! Let the Parrot claw him by the button! Let the Parrot talk to him till he can talk no more!" So it was done, and the Parrot, who can talk for ever, still has my Lord Hemp by the button, somewhere in space, and is still talking to him about things that he cannot understand; because for the last thousand years my lord's head has been spinning round and round, and he knows only that the Parrot's claw is fastened on his coat, and that the Parrot's beak wags up and down, pouring out endless monotony of sounds, from which there is no hope of his escaping.

But the Queen Cockatoo, who had been following the army, was met very near Feathergrass, by her victorious lord, who had the girdle in his grasp. She put it on, and instantly she and the King, with all their host, came to the ground in their true shapes. He was the most splendid of Emperors and she of Empresses, heading a court and army of lords, ladies, and soldiers, so gorgeously dressed, that Queen Sapodilla, to whom they went to pay their respects, saw the glory of her magnificently decorated courtiers pale before that of the rich strangers in scarlet, gold, and azure blue. The surface of the earth round about Neroli's cottage, when the host of the cockatoos gathered about her, blazed with more than the glory of the richest sunset in the sky. There was a tapping at the door, and the child lifted the latch to a beautiful boy wearing a silver crown. He stepped in, and was followed by a shining Emperor and Empress, very

fine to see, and handsome people, though they had hooked noses, and looked yellower than usual round the eyes. The Empress wore the girdle with the silver tassels, which has since that day once more been lost, so that in our time the cockatoos are birds again.

“Good mother Neroli,” said the beautiful youth—and this was Splug himself, for Teasel’s sake no longer a rogue. Slipping from behind the Empress in scarlet, yellow and azure blue, the Fairy Teasel put her little arm round the waist of her friend Splug, as he took from his head the silver crown, and said, “Dear mother Neroli, I have worn your silver thimble on my head till it has grown into a silver crown. Never ask now how I came by it. Wear it!” It was on her head before she could answer, and in the same moment she was robed in pure silver from top to toe.

“Ah, beautiful mother!” then cried little Silver Tassels.

“Not more beautiful than in her old worn clothes, my child! Never more beautiful than when she gave that thimble to the Rogue who tempted her.”

“Ah, mother, always beautiful,” said the child, sobbing happily upon her breast.

“For your silver tassels, little maid, you shall have all that can be given by the Emperor and Empress of the Cockatoos. Teasel here and I give nothing, you are richer far than we. So, darling, we are beggars to you for a wee bit of your heart. Be our own sister, and let us live with you in this house with our good mother Neroli,—in this house that

can never again want bread for those in it, and for the poor who shall come to its door, while there is power in the throne of Oberon, and while there remains the nation of the Cockatoos."

STANZA.

Night hath to God departed, prayer-laden.
As when through autumn twilight homeward throng
From the day's gleaning maiden after maiden,
Each with a full sheaf glad, so—with a song
Awakening the lark—so pass along,
Their bosoms burdened with a gathered store,
The pleasant hours which to the night belong,
And in the garner of our God they pour
Hopes, praises, pure resolves, fruits which the darkness bore.



THE STAVESACRE FAIRIES.

THIS is the tale of Teel the shoemaker, Whirlwig the hatter, and Surmullet the tailor.

Teel was a shoemaker, about whom very few people knew how well he understood his business. So one evening the poor fellow, slipping dolefully out of the town in which he starved, went for a walk on a neighbouring common. It was a small, rough piece of broken ground, ragged with briar, fern, and furze,

scratched over with deep rutted paths, drilled into with rabbit-holes, here and there scooped also into forgotten sandpits, and dabbled with pools. At one end a steep and jagged lump of sand-rock cropped up through the brambles. On the top of the bit of rock the shoemaker sat down to think. From that height there was a view over the meadows round about the common. Behind him they sloped up into a line of bare downs, with the white chalk glimmering here and there through their green banks. Before him the rich landscape was warm with trees. Alders and great willows were clustered near the river; oaks gathered in knolls about the slopes of the deer-park; pear, plum, and other fruit-trees overtopped the little country-town, and all the yellow roads that led out from Stavesacre into the world at large were fringed with blackberry, wild rose, and honeysuckle hedges, broken with elms, and upon one side, beyond the bridge, raised to the rank of an avenue with lines of poplar.

Trees gathered about the quiet town so closely as to hide all but the great mossy church-tower from the eyes of Teel, as he sat on the sand-rock, with his feet dangling over its sides, and looked about him. Already the mild evening star was in the sky, the rooks were flocking to their nests in a small wood that dipped over the riverside, where the stream flowed between the farther slopes of the smooth park. The distant peal of the town-bells told the shoemaker that Hodge, Peter, and Jeff, cobblers and bell-ringers, had met for practice in the belfry before spending (prosperous men!) a social

evening together in the parlour of the Sandhopper's Arms.

When the bell-ringing was over, there were more stars in the darkening sky, and presently the moon rose, large and red, from behind the wood in which the rooks were sleeping. A bend of the river was alight directly. All was so still that Teel heard now and then the faint creak of the insects stirring in the bushes of the common, and the whirr of the night-moth as she flew by.

"Heigho!" he sighed. "I get nothing by this thinking; so I will go home to my good dame."

He was about to rise, when a young rabbit leapt into his lap. The rabbit tamely suffered him to pull its ears.

"Silly puss!" said the shoemaker; "when you jump into the lap of a man who has an empty cupboard, don't you know that you are good to eat? But never fear, small creature. As you trust me, you shall take no harm."

"Very well!" said the rabbit — no longer a rabbit; for, indeed, he was a curiously little man in grey body-clothes, but without coat or hat, and with his feet quite naked. He had a tiny bundle in one hand, which he held up to Teel. "I hope, my good fellow, I may trust you. Make me a pair of shoes out of the leather in this bundle, and return me all the pieces. I will pay you well, and bring you some more custom, if your fit is good."

"Fit good!" said the neglected artist. "Those ignorant people of Stavesacre are content to wear clumps on their feet. They fatten no less than three

cobblers with their custom, and have suffered me, a proper shoemaker, to starve. Yes, sir! I can fit a dainty foot like yours, sir, in a way to show you something of my art. Am I to send the shoes, or will your honour call for them?"

"I will call at your house for them," the fairy said. "Be ready, if you can, at this hour, this day week."

At the appointed hour Teel was quite ready; and Till, his good wife, had been so careful to help him in obeying the wish of his fairy customer, that not a shred of leather or thread—though it were but a shred no bigger than a morsel of a line of spider's web, was left on or below the table at which Teel had worked. All was put, with the shoes themselves, into the tiny bag. Then as they sat—too poor to afford candle—in the light that was half moonlight and half twilight, the old couple suddenly saw the little grey fairy busy about that bag. He weighed it first in one hand, and then in the other. He opened it, took out the shoes, turned out and examined all the pieces. Then he put the pieces back, and, sitting down upon Till's spectacle-case, put on the shoes. When they were on, he got up and danced about in them to try their fit. They fitted perfectly. Advancing at last to the edge of the table, he said, "Brother Teel, I am authorized to appoint you shoemaker in ordinary to the fairies of the Downs and Commons. Remove, therefore, to your new house on the sand-rock in Stavesacre Common, where you will have plenty of custom and good pay as long as we may trust you."

“Oh, sir,” said Till, “you may trust my old man with shoes of gold.”

“He will find shoes of gold that are his own, in his new house. I pay them to him in exchange for these. There is a piping hot supper also waiting for you both in your new house, so I advise you to move into it at once. You need take nothing with you. Tools, furniture, and even clothes, are there already.”

Tools, furniture, and new clothes, yes. But nevertheless, after the fairy vanished, Teel and Till, indulging themselves with the extravagance of a candle, searched their house through, and filled a large bundle with household treasure. There was the Sacred Book, in which they had read to each other; there were the little clothes, at which Till worked when she had been a younger (but still not a young) wife, and the small shoes Teel made for the baby, that was still the baby to their hearts as when it was lost, a score of years ago.

Then Till had to wipe the dust from her mother's Cookery Book, given to her on her marriage. That edifying work had been neglected of late, for want of the eggs and butter, without which, in its opinion, nothing could be brought into being. But there was the mother's name, in her own hand, written across the title-page, worth all the dainties that were ever fried. Till had more relics, and the foolish shoemaker had treasures put away in drawers,—dead flowers, faded ribbons. “Do you know Till,” he said, “I must have you carry to the new house, the whole of your white wedding-dress, that is in yonder worm-eaten old press.” So off they went at last under

the moonlight, he with a pack and she with a pack.

When they came to the skirt of the common they saw all the windows lighted in a neat, little white house on the top of the sand-rock. When they had climbed the sand-rock, the cottage-door opened to them of its own accord, and a delicate smell of boiled rabbit and onions kissed their noses. In a dainty little parlour, that dish, dear alike to Teel and Till, smoked ready for them. There were hot mealy potatoes too, boiled as few but the fairies can succeed in boiling them; also, there were two bright glasses set beside a foaming jug of ale. "What a sweet perfume of meat!" said Teel; "and onion," added Till, who was so much moved by the sight of a comfortable hot supper and the smell of onion, that she wiped her eyes as she sat down.

A half-open door was opposite Teel's seat, and there was a lighted room beyond. "I must just run and peep in," said the poor shoemaker. So he ran across and peeped, and what he saw was his new workshop. There were his counter and his cases, and his shoemaker's bench, and the tiniest little tools, made with broad handles to suit his grasp. But sitting all round the shop, row behind row, were thousands of little fairies in grey body-clothes, without hats, coats, or shoes, who cried as he peeped in, "Good evening to you, gossip. We are all waiting for you to measure us, when you have supped!"

Before Teel could answer them, there was a clatter behind him, that obliged him to turn round. It was caused by the falling of a large pair of gold shoes

through the ceiling to the floor, followed by a cry of "Shoes for you, shoemaker!" Thereupon all the fairies in the shop began to sing:—

"Shoes! Wonderful Shoes!
Safe on the water, safe on the land,
Ready to run at the word of command."

Whirlwig was a hatter, who had made felt caps for the ploughmen of Stavesacre, though he was clever enough to fit with the glossiest of hats, the head even of a crocodile. He had plenty of custom for his caps; but he would have poured his earnings out as easily as he poured beer into his throat at the Sandhopper's Arms, if his wife Willwit had not been careful and honest as she was. A month after Teel had left the town, and gone to live in his new cottage on the sand-rock, Whirlwig was seeing a comrade home over the common after a supper at the club of Noisy Dogs, at which he was perpetual vice-president. On the other side of the common his friend left him, and went on to his own village. Whirlwig turned back to Stavesacre, but in the middle of the common he lay down (as he afterwards said), to think a bit. "Dame Willwit," he thought to himself, "will say there's little enough in my pocket. Poor woman! She don't know what a famous supper I got for my money. I'll go home and tell her of it."

He was trying to rise, when a young rabbit jumped into his lap, and tamely suffered him to seize it by the ears. "Heigho!" cried the hatter, "here's a supper for the good dame too. I'll take you home to her, trust me."

“Very well,” said the rabbit, no longer a rabbit, being indeed a curiously little man in grey body-clothes, without coat or hat, but with the neatest of small shoes upon his feet. “Very well, my good fellow, I hope I may trust your wife at least, to see that you deal fairly. Then holding up a tiny bundle, he said, “Make me a cap out of the felt in this bundle and return me all the pieces. I will pay you well, and bring you some more custom if your fit is good.”

The hatter laughed with defiance, “Fit good!” he cried. “Though I have been making caps for block-heads all my days, I know what I know; you shall wear, sir, what will make you feel the real use of your head. Am I to send the hat, or will your honour call for it?”

The fairy said he would call at that same hour on that day week. The little cap was ready in good time. Whirlwig had made a careless litter of the pieces of felt cut off while he worked, but Willwit, his prudent wife, not only had gathered them all carefully into the tiny bag, together with the new cap; she had also locked the door of the house and put the key into her pocket, so that her husband could not help being at home to receive his customer. The fairy came as he had come to Teel, and being satisfied with what he found, advanced to the edge of the table and said, “Brother Whirlwig, I am authorized to appoint you hatter in ordinary to the fairies of the Downs and Commons. Remove therefore to your new house by the roadside on Stavesacre Common, where you will have plenty of custom and good pay as long as we may trust you.”

"Oh, sir," said Willwit, "there's not a truer soul than my old man's when he only gives himself time to consider about what he does. But I do wish he'd make himself a considering cap,—I do indeed!"

"He will find a considering cap in his new house. I pay it to him in exchange for this. Supper is laid there, Dame Willwit, for you and your children; so I advise you to remove at once. As for your good man, he has supped already. Everything you will want is there; you need take nothing."

The fairy was gone, and Dame Willwit at once began to get her seven children out of bed. When they were dressed, the whole family went under the moonlight to the common, where there was a new white house on the turf by the roadside. The house door opened for them of its own accord. In the snug kitchen there was a hot rabbit-pie upon the table, large enough for all, and Whirlwig was inclined to indulge in a second supper; but on peeping into a second room from which light shone through the partly open door, he found in his new shop thousands of tiny customers, all eager to be measured without one moment's delay. So he set to work while his wife and children ate and drank, and the savoury steam of the pie made his mouth water. Once he ran back when he heard something fall to the floor in the next room. It was a felt cap that had tumbled through the ceiling, followed by a cry of "A cap for you, hatter!" Thereupon all the fairies in the shop began to sing:—

“Cap! Wonderful Cap!
Wear it for counsel; and when you despair,
The advice of the Cap will relieve you of care.”

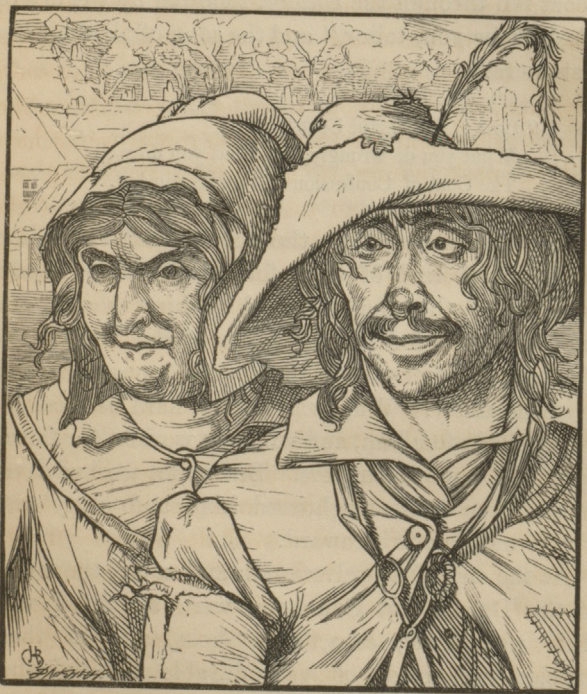
Surmullet was a clever tailor, but a rascal, and his wife, Smull, was no better than himself. He had lost his trade by robbery of customers, and lived by robbery upon the roads. He was lurking at night in the bottom of one of the sandpits on Stavesacre Common, to waylay a traveller, when the rabbit jumped also upon his knee. The rabbit would have had its neck wrung in an instant if it had not changed in less than an instant into the form of the little fairy with grey body-clothes, a neat little cap, and perfect shoes, wanting only a coat to be completely dressed. When Surmullet received from this tiny customer the order for a coat, he said that he would rather take a coat than make a coat, but for all that he would fit the little gentleman so that he should think he had two skins.

Surmullet also was to finish his work in a week, and did finish it. The little man looked grave when he came for his coat and missed the pieces. But he nevertheless formally declared Surmullet's appointment as tailor to the fairies of the Downs and Commons, and invited him to his new place of business, at the bottom of the sandpit in Stavesacre Common. There he would find plenty of custom and good pay as long as he was to be trusted.

“Trust!” sneered his wife. “One man is as safe as another, for the matter of that. There's no man who wouldn't own himself thief if he had on a coat of confession.”

“You will find such a coat in your new house,” the fairy said. “I pay it in exchange for this.”

Surmullet and his wife were eager to be gone. The bottom of the sandpit was a newly-established place of business for them; but the advantage of a



house built there, in which they might be always lurking, and from which they might at any time pounce out upon a traveller, was to be secured without an hour's delay. So they went to the common, and found that there was really a white house built

at the bottom of the largest sandpit. Going down into it they found no supper, but a crowd of little men, angrily waiting to be measured for their coats. As they looked dangerous, Surmullet began measuring directly. While he did so you may be sure that a coat fell through the ceiling, followed by the cry of "A coat for you, tailor," and the song of all the little customers:—

“ Coat ! Wonderful Coat !

What you do wrongly, and what you do well,
The Coat of Confession will make you tell.”

Now the shoemaker, the hatter, and the tailor, worked hard each of them for a twelvemonth and a day, before they had finished making shoes, and hats, and coats for all the fairies of the Downs and Commons. Teel worked hard with honest will, and lived in luxury. Whirlwig worked hard because his wife looked after him, and while he worked the fairies gave him famous suppers. Surmullet worked hard because the fairies frightened him, and every man who is not true is a coward.

At the end of a twelvemonth and a day the fairies of the Downs and Commons were all fitted with their new coats, caps, and shoes, and as these articles were made of very durable material, they would outlast the lives of the tailor, hatter, and shoemaker, who made them. Teel was the first to finish. The house on the sand-rock vanished when the last fairy was shod, and the tradesman to the fairies went back with his old wife to their cottage in the town. They took with them nothing but

what they had brought thence, except the golden Shoes of Safety. A month afterwards, Whirlwig, the latter, came back with his wife and seven children, richer for all his work only by the Considering Cap; and Surmullet returned next with the Coat of Confession on his arm.

They had all been kept so closely to their work, that they had never been outside the white houses, invisible to other eyes, in which the fairies had supplied their wants. They had been completely and unaccountably lost out of Stavesacre. Their houses remained vacant, because new people never came into that quiet place, and the settled inhabitants were so entirely settled, that a Stavesacre man never so much as thought of moving from one house into another. When, as it rarely happened, anybody went away from Stavesacre, somebody painted on a window of the house he quitted that it was To Let. Then it remained empty, until natural increase of population in the place itself would, in the course, perhaps, of many generations, cause another tenant to be reared. The process was a very slow one. In the half-century before the time of which this story tells, the increase of the population had been only from two thousand one hundred and five to two thousand one hundred and eleven.

When Teel and Till came back into the town, and said they had only been as far as the common, where they had spent the year in shoemaking for the fairies, Stavesacre said, that was a fine tale, but no doubt they had their reasons for being secret; and opinion was divided as to the way in which Teel

came by his gold shoes. A month afterwards, Stavesacre looked out of window to see Whirlwig and Willwit, his wife, tramping in again with their seven children. He, too, said that he had been no farther than the common, where he had been making caps for the fairies, and was only the richer by a Considering Cap for his pains. The only persons who believed that story were Teel and Till, and Dame Till lost no time in holding consultation with Dame Willwit, and comparing their experience of fairy patronage.

"I am told," said Till, "that those ne'er-do-wells, Surmullet and his wife, were lost out of town soon after you. Has he been in the same employ, I wonder!"

While the two women talked together, Whirlwig came downstairs in a rusty blue coat, a stained and soiled red waistcoat, and high walls of shirt-collar about his cheeks. "I am going to sup at the club," he said to his wife, as he went out.

"Ah," sighed Willwit; "the fairies gave him a Considering Cap, and he always has refused to put it on. A poor man, with a wife and seven children, needs to put on his Considering Cap before he goes to sup at the club; but he shall wear it after he comes home. I will put him to bed in it to-night."

"A famous notion, gossip," said Dame Till. "But what my man is to do with his shoes, I wish I could see. He hasn't a fault to be mended, bless his old heart!"

“Or a sorrow to be cured,” said her friend, “when you are by.”

But Till looked into the empty air, and her fingers strayed towards a lock of baby hair that had lain folded in paper for a score of years upon her bosom.

Willwit took her by the other hand, like a kind gossip as she was, and said, “Yes, though it be twenty years ago, it must be hard to miss your little Clary. And you had but her.”

“If we had but her grave to kneel over!” mourned the good Till. “She may be living with the thieves who stole her, and they may have made her one of them!”

“If she be alive, there is still hope that you may find her. Truly, dear friend, the man would walk on shoes of gold who brought her back to you.”

“On shoes of gold!” Till cried. And leaping up, she clapped her hands for joy. “Oh, neighbour, neighbour! let me go!”

“Husband,” she panted, when, out of breath with the haste she had made, she got home to her old man; “put on those fairy Shoes of Safety, and go out to find our child. My heart tells me they were given you for that.”

“But whither shall I go?”

“Put on the shoes and go—‘Safe on the water and safe on the land, ready to run at the word of command,’ the fairies said they were. Then bid them carry you to Clary, if she be alive.”

“You are right, and I am gone,” said Teel. While he was gone, Till went to the old locker, in

which she treasured as a relic her white wedding-dress.

At the word of command, the shoes carried Teel swiftly, lightly, through the town. They ran, without touching ground, down the slope to the river, crossed the surface of the water without wetting a sole, and sped over the sward of the deer-park to the wood by the far slopes of the winding stream. The autumn leaves were falling on its sheltered paths, but the wonderful shoes did not stir or tread upon a fallen leaf as they sped on, causing their wearer to flit like a shadow through the underwood, already damp with night-dew. At last Teel struck into the thickness of a massive oak, and entering its substance, stood still, in the very heart-wood of the mighty trunk, that clipped him about like a cloud.

The brighter for that veil around it and above it was the mossy nest over which Teel now stood still. Here it was that the fairies of the Wood who stole her, held his little Clary cradled. Here she was sleeping happily, in form not a day older than when she was lost, soothed by singing from a choir of green wood-fairies, who were her attendants. But when Teel snatched her up, and fell to kissing her, the fairies sang:—

“Playfellow Clary, nice to steal,
You must go home with Father Teel.
Clary will be our playfellow for good,
If father don't leave his Gold Shoes in the wood.”

Teel instantly stepped out of the shadow of the

oak, and took his shoes off. Their gold rose in a mist that ran along the ground and spread into the trees, until the autumn leaves dropped yellow and clinking upon paths that had become strewn with gold. The gnarled trunk of the oak was solid enough when Teel turned his back upon it.

So, without stooping to pick up any of the gold through which he walked, and without flinching when his naked feet trod among thorns, the old shoemaker went through the forest. Slowly, and trembling with joy, he went through the forest, bearing upon his arms the sleeping infant. It was a long walk home, and there was the bridge beyond the poplar avenue to be crossed outside Stavesacre, for which reason his way must be through the main street. But the stars were all out when he reached it, and half the town was already abed. Few saw the old man limping with torn feet over the stones as he went homeward by the light of the crescent moon and of the stars, pressing with shrivelled, knotted hands, the tender sleeping child to his warm heart.

Till saw him from afar, and ran to him through the night shadows in her yellowish white wedding dress. She had been holding solemn festival in this attire, sitting alone in her poor room, and so awaiting the return of Clary. If she thought of an old time, she had not thought it would come back to her so perfectly that Clary would be Baby Clary still. She was a yearling child when lost, and as a yearling child she was returned into her mother's bosom. Age had not hardened the true heart that welcomed her. It was a dainty sight to see the old dame

crooning with love as she wept fast tears over the child that smiled up at her from the lap of muslin and old lace and limp white satin bows. Till pressed its nose into the wreck of the great true love-knot upon her bosom, and got her thin grey hair into confusion with its golden curls as she sat lip to lip with it in her agony of joy. Meanwhile her old man, kneeling before the newly-lighted fire, stirred in their single pot a baby-mess with one of his thin hands. His other hand moved with a wandering touch about his wife and child.

Presently the child was to be fed with a wooden spoon, and grasped the spoon as it was coming to its mouth. Immediately the wood was gold. They were in no joy about that, but in some concern lest there should be an objectionable change made in the gruel. No, that was excellent. And Clary throve like any other child; was healthy, happy, natural, except that she would sometimes murmur a strange fairy music in her sleep, and that, when touched by her, wood became gold.

By noon next day so many planks, beams, window-frames, and doorposts of the shoemaker's cottage were transmuted into shining gold, that gossip Willwit held her breath when she ran in with something of interest to tell to gossip Till. We know what there was to be told Willwit. What she had to say to Till was that her good man Whirlwig, waking up that morning with the Considering Cap on his head, had sat up in his bed, and poured out such a stream of wise reflections on the headache he had got, and on the responsibilities he had got; on the

necessity of getting a new coat for the boy Daniel, and new shoes for Heartsease, and a new gown for Willwit ; on the devotion and prudence of his valuable wife Willwit and his own past wastefulness ; on the propriety of instantly resigning his place as Vice-President of Noisy Dogs, of clearing out his shop and making a great stir if possible to procure increase of custom ; on the possibility of saving enough for the purchase of a small pony-cart with which he could go in search of customers to the surrounding villages ; on the cost of a cart and of a pony ; on the average rate of his possible week's earnings in Stavesacre, and on the average weekly cost of a sufficiency of meal, of meat, of butter, of eggs ; on the advantages and disadvantages of keeping a pig and his own powers of building a pigsty ; on the number of years it would take to turn by economy a pig into a cow ; on the best thing to be done for little Sorrel's cough, and the cause of that pain in the side his wife had been complaining of ; and so on, and so on, that he was another man. He had sold ten caps that morning ; he was inventing, as a speculation of his own, a grand official hat for the next mayor of Stavesacre. He had already found her money enough to get a leg of pork and stuffing for their dinner.

"I wouldn't have my good man lose this industry," said Willwit ; "no, not if he got, instead of it, your child's wonderful power of gold-making."

"I don't care for the gold making," said Till, "though I suppose it makes us very rich. That old chair you sit on, now it's made of gold, must be worth something. Take it home, gossip. Nobody

need be poor in Stavesacre if this is to last with Clary, but it's so like a disease, that I shall be glad enough to see her cured."

When she said that a green dwarf with a very long nose peeped in at the door. "Oh, good morning, dame Till," he said. "If you don't wish that child of yours to infect any more wood with a jaundice, let her walk round the room three times in the gold Shoes of Safety. Here they are. If you are in the mind to make that use of them, keep them; if not, let them be cast back into the wood yonder, where your good man left them." The dwarf threw the shoes into the room and vanished.

Till put little Clary's feet into the shoes directly, and began to guide her tottering.

"Think what you do," said Willwit. "The child's power will give you never ending wealth."

"I want my own natural and healthy little Clary," Till replied.

"But won't you wait till you have advised with your husband?"

"As to Clary, and all else, my Teel and I are of one heart."

So Clary pattered three times round the room in the gold shoes. After the first round, there was no sign of amendment, for all the wood in the house not changed already, became gold. After the second round, everything that was made of cotton, hemp, or flax, the child's clothes, all the linen the two women wore and their poor cotton gowns, changed into cloth of gold.

"I fear to go round again," said Till. "The disease

grows stronger, and the dwarf may have meant only to mock me. Yet I will have trust."

So she went round for the third time, and after that there was no change, but there was not a splinter of wood left in the house, with which to try whether the desired change in the child really was effected. The women, dressed as they were, in gold from head to foot, dared not go out of doors to fetch a stick. It was lucky for them, that at this moment the knave Surmullet and Smull his wife stepped in.

They were then coming in from the common, and as they passed Teel's cottage in the empty country street, were the first to notice the golden window-frames and door-posts, and the brilliant gold door of Teel's cottage. Inside, the room was like a gold mine, with two golden women in it and a golden child.

But a passing boy or two soon spread the news, and all the town had presently turned out to look at the shoemaker's cottage with golden beams and posts, and doors, and golden thatch. Surmullet and Smull had been hearing wonders inside, while they looked greedily about them, and Smull had fetched a faggot from the yard to put in the child's hand. It remained wood. "A pretty game you have spoiled," she said. "My worthy husband also had a fairy gift, and who knows what may come of it. Put on your coat, good man."

Surmullet put on the Coat of Confession which he had brought in on his arm, and suddenly began to tell of all his rogueries. In-doors and out-of-doors all Stavesacre was there to wonder and listen. Surmullet seized upon every man he had cheated or robbed

and made a thoroughly clean breast of his offence; but he was astonished at the good-nature with which all his confessions were received.

When Teel came home with the shoe-leather for which he had been to the tanyard two miles down the river, he found himself suddenly seized by the mob of townspeople before and about his cottage, lifted upon men's shoulders, and beset with a great shout of "Teel! Teel! Teel for the next Mayor!" More astonishing still were the shouts of "Bravo, Surmullet!" Though Surmullet was telling half the town that he had robbed and cheated it, yet there he was, speaking the truth. He who went out a year and a day since, a sneak whom no man trusted, and who trusted nobody,—he who was known to be a thief when he used all his cunning to get credit for honesty,—was now held to be honest when he manfully confessed all that was in him, though the all was bad.

Now, the end of the story is, that Surmullet, finding comfort in his Coat of Confession, ceased to be the coward that he had been. He grew to be fearless in speaking the truth, and, from being true in word, soon became true in deed. By shifting his coat slyly and whenever he could to other men's backs, he found that other men, forced to speak all the good and evil that was in them, commonly turned out better than almost anybody else expected. The sensation of being trusted was to Surmullet himself very welcome; and even Smull was content to stand with her husband in the good books of her neighbours.

Whirlwig became the most considerate and pains-taking man in the whole world.

Teel and his wife were the richest people in or out of Stavesacre, after they had given gold away to Whirlwig, to Surmullet, and to every poor neighbour. There was built for them a fine house in the deer-park, where they loved, all their days, the kindest and prettiest of daughters. Teel wore the Mayor's cap that Whirlwig had distinguished himself by inventing. In the second year of his mayoralty, he gave his wonderful Shoes, and, in the same year, Whirlwig and Surmullet, who no longer needed magic help, gave also their Cap and Coat, to be held in perpetual possession by the town-council of Stavesacre.

The Shoes, Coat, and Cap were kept in a strong tower and committed to the keeping of six faithful wardens. Whenever an offence was committed in the town, an officer of justice, putting on the Shoes, commanded them to bring him face to face with the offender. Instantly tracked and seized, the culprit was brought into the presence of the Mayor. There all the witnesses, and the offender himself, wore, when they gave evidence of what they knew, the wonderful Coat of Confession. The whole truth about everything that related to an offence being thus presented to the Mayor, that magistrate put on the wonderful Considering Cap, and arrived at the wisest possible decision of the case. There being no escape for any Stavesacre criminal while the Cap, Coat, and Shoes were there to secure his capture and conviction, nobody played the rogue; and the Stavesacre men lived for a century with so little necessity for keeping their eyes open that they became sleepier than ever.

So it happened that one day all the six warders,

who kept the apparatus of Stavesacre justice, were asleep together in the porch of the tower. When they awoke, Cap, Coat, and Shoes were gone, and half the houses in the town—bolts and bars having long fallen out of use—were robbed that night. The thieves were great-grandchildren of Surmullet, and as they crossed Stavesacre Common with a waggon-load of plunder, they threw into one of the pools a bundle which contained not only the Considering Cap and Coat of Confession, but also the golden Shoes of Safety; for, although these were of solid value, there was great fear of their fairy power.

Whenever the pools are dragged on Stavesacre Common, if that bundle should be found, let it be forwarded immediately to the Lord Chief Justice.





ELAN THE ARMOURER.

WHERE no ship is sailing, and no bird is flying, far away from all land the great waves mingle their foam with the low, scudding clouds. Sea and air break in storm against each other. The lightning leaps over the rolling hills of water; over the falling hill-tops the wind hisses and the thunder-crash descends; but the hills fall to rise as mountains, and the mountains rise to be dashed through the sky in powder by the

fierce stroke of the gale. The roar of the beaten water, and the hiss of the foam swept by the hurricane into the upper sky, are as a whisper to the thunder-peals that crack as if the globe itself were being rent in twain.

There is a red gleam tossing between heaven and earth. It cannot be a ship's light, for no ship could live in such a gale. The lightning flashes into it; the thunder rattles over it. The water beats it up into the battling clouds, and leaves it to fall back into the depths; but the hills of the sea do not cover it. Out of the lowest abyss it mounts again, and grows as a fire. It is a floating forge fire, and a mighty anvil rides beside it, upon which a giant beats. The giant's calm face and his yellow hair, dragged by the wind, are ruddy in the blaze of his own furnace. The flame of the forge flickers on his naked arm as, when it is raised, the hammer-head plunges among the thunder-clouds before it falls upon the armour he is shaping. That is Elan who rides the Waters, terrible in strength.

Of his strength, the sea-nymphs are enamoured. In calm weather, they play about his forge and delight more in the ring of his hammer through the vault of heaven, than in softest music of the syrens.

From afar over the waves, the sound of the hammer could be heard on the shores of the kingdom of Cockpaddle, when there was a clear sea and no speck on the horizon. Sometimes at night, watchmen upon some coast cliff of Cockpaddle saw, like the gleam of a distant lighthouse, the moving forge-fire of Elan of the Waters twinkle between sky and ocean.

Then the watchmen lighted their own signal fires upon the hill top, and height after height was tipped with flame, as the quick signal passed. Armed knights and cross-bow men then crowded the Cockpaidle war galleys. The rowers strained their arms, obedient to the whip that urged them ; for they were in no haste of their own, to come within reach of the giant's hammer. Every King Pipit, down to Pipit the Twenty-ninth-and-a-third who ruled at the time of which this story tells (there had been ninety-one kings of the name, but many had their tenths and their thirds reckoned as fractions, so that Pipit the Eleventh had been held to mean not the Eleventh King Pipit, but Pipit the Eleventh of a king),—every Pipit had laboured to make Elan his prisoner. For there was an ancient prophecy, boding destruction to the race of Pipits when the chained fairy Euroe should come to Cockpaidle with a sword of Elan's sharpening and armour shapen at his ever-blazing forge.

Pipit the Twenty-ninth-and-a-third, King of Cockpaidle, was the most bewildering of sovereigns. Traitors among his subjects dared to ask each other very secretly, whether his real face must not be something shameful ; for he never went abroad with a mask. He had indeed a closet full of masks, all differing from each other, and cunningly devised to imitate a real face of some sort. Without one of these over his face,—if he had a face—Pipit was never seen, even by the friend—if he had a friend—of his bosom. He was nothing in the world but the King of Cockpaidle. You may say, it was something to be that. Perhaps

he himself thought so, when he stocked his cupboard, but he soon found it the least of a something to be nothing in the world but that. A man who in one day might eat his breakfast with his cat's face on, ride out in his ape's face, dine in his dog's face, receive friends from behind a cock's face, and go to bed in the face of a lynx, bewildered everybody. The face he chose was always at odds with the mind in which he wore it. His words were also always at odds with his thoughts, in order that he might be too dark for any man to see into; he was as careful to avoid a true word, as most men are to keep their mouths clean from a false one. Therefore, as people who speak truth are apt to believe they hear the truth from others, King Pipit overreached so many neighbours during the first few years of his reign, that he was supposed to have a wonderfully clever head.

King Pipit, in his mask as a wild hog, sat on a very high throne in the middle of his Court.

"Ambassador from the Estates of Brill, begone!" he said; whereupon a gentleman in a gold coat and amber-satin stockings advanced to the steps of his throne and knelt before him. It was etiquette in Pipit's Court, and held to be useful discipline for all who waited on it, that when Come was meant the word was Go, and so Begone was of course Pipit for Come before me.

"Be silent," said Pipit. Thereupon the ambassador from Brill began to speak, and spoke officially, saying—

"Sire, I am not ignorant that you wish not ill to Euroe. Therefore I come not to tell you that her

raft is not wrecked upon a shoal not far from the Brill coast, and were it not that we do not hear from afar, day and night, not a sound of the hammer of Elan the Armourer, our ships would not have rescued her, and not have brought her as a guest to your great capital."

"Tell my Admiral I shall not want him for ten years," King Pipit cried to his attendants. Thereupon the Admiral was summoned by a breathless messenger to come without a moment's loss of time into the sublimest presence.

"Draw up my war-galleys on all my coasts. Let them lie high and dry upon the shore," said Pipit, while the Admiral was coming. Messengers were sent at once to all the coasts, ordering the war-galleys to be got ready for instant service.

"When anybody sees my Admiral, let him be told," said Pipit, "that as there is no more work for him upon the seas, I shall be glad if he will look in and play beggar-my-neighbour with me in my private cabinet. I shall sit here all day to hear petitions." Thereupon he retired immediately, and the Court broke up. A great concourse of petitioners that waited at the gate was at the same time kicked back into holes and corners of the city.

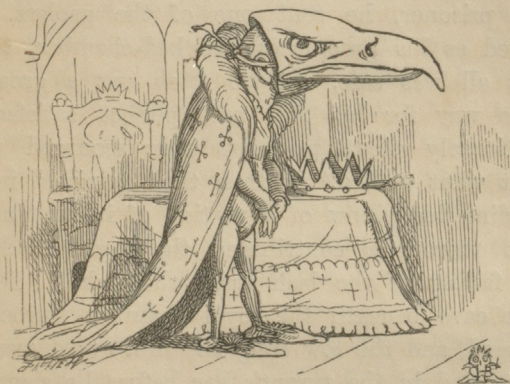
Stripped of her ornaments and chained down to a raft, the fairy Euroe, in form of a fair woman, had been tossed for many years on the wide waters. So wide were the waters upon which she was tossed, that never once had her path crossed that of the strong giant Elan. At last—though it may not have been clear to anyone but Pipit, from the

guarded language of the Brill ambassador—her raft had really struck upon a bank of sand, hardly within sight of the shores of Brill. Then the planks parted from under her, and from the chains that bound her to them. She stood in her fetters knee-deep in the shallow waves, imperishable as a fairy, but much suffering.

So she stood, on a warm and breezy summer's day, when there was no sound to be heard but the far, far distant clang of Elan's hammer. A flock, as it were, of white pigeons crossing the horizon, spread over the sea. They were King Pipit's war-galleys, with the sails spread, and a watchman upon every one of their crows' nests and high swan-like prows. The ships, when Euroe had been descried, drew together in a long line between her and the point from which the sound of the Sea Armourer's hammer seemed to come. Towards that point every knight pointed his lance, every bowman his arrow. A gilded boat, with a silk canopy, put off from the chief galley, and the Admiral himself was rowed to the fair Euroe, whose limbs were veiled only by the trickling ringlets of her hair.

"Madam," the Admiral said, "seeing you wrecked, I stay to rescue you, although our fleet is bound upon a distant expedition. Suffer me to throw over you this robe of honour." As he said this, his men threw over her shoulders a white sheet of penance, painted over with all manner of horrid shapes. "I very deeply regret," he said, "that we cannot strike your chains off without

hurting you. Believe, however, that I have a master who will gild them." Poor Euroe! Her power as a fairy was bound by those chains, and she was carried off a helpless prisoner, while all the fleets of Cockpaidle covering her capture were manned with knights and bowmen ready to fight Elan the Armourer, should he attempt a rescue.



When Euroe stood in the Court of Pipit, the false king made so low and courteous an obeisance to her that she was immediately seized and conveyed to his secret dungeons. These dungeons were built under and near the royal bed-chamber. A pipe carried from each cell every sound of complaint, every groan, every restless shuffle of a foot or clank of a chain, to a reservoir in the air-pillow of the royal bed. When King Pipit went to bed, his pillow was stuffed with those sounds, that soothed him into easy slumber with assur-

ance that his enemies were safe. Pipit the Twenty-ninth-and-a-third, like his royal predecessors, knew every captive by the sound of his or of her footstep, by the rub of the chain, or the tone of the cry of suffering, or nightly prayer. He made sure that he had all his groans before he slept in peace, counting them as a good monk might count his beads. Whenever he missed the stir of any one prisoner, he sent one of the gaolers, who served as his grooms of the bed-chamber, to see that all was safe, and to fetch out a groan in some way for his full and perfect satisfaction. Obstinate silent prisoners were scourged when Pipit went to bed. If then they persisted in defrauding his pillow of a portion of its stuffing, at least there was contributed the sound made by the falling of the lash upon their skin. Into a dark cave beneath the royal chamber Euroe was dragged, and the low song she murmured was the last sound in the tyrant's ear before he slept.

But in the darkness of the night there was a cry, "Elan! Elan!" Elan the Armourer had come to Cockpaidle, and was walking on the land. He had discerned from afar the galleys of King Pipit, and the planks of Euroe's broken raft had floated round his anvil. The armour was forged, and the sharp sword was tempered. Therefore, shouldering his mighty hammer, and with the fairy sword and armour upon his left arm, Elan marched over the waves to the shore of Cockpaidle, and strode over cliffs and hills, rivers and woods, to Pipit's capital. He struck no blow, but steadily walked forward with

his hammer on his shoulder, and he walked so carefully that there was not a field-mouse crushed under his tread.

But when he came to Pipit's palace he stood still, and raising the great hammer high into the night, struck one blow on the corner-stone. Then all the outer walls fell forward with a mighty crash, and the stones that fell upon the giant hurt him no more than if they had been falling dust. When the walls fell the prisons were laid open, and the false king felt the night-air blowing in upon him as he was awakened. The shock of the ruin woke him, and the glad shout of the captives that had made his pillow tremble. Pipit sat up in his bed, shivering with fear, and looking straight before him through the vulture-faced mask in which it had pleased him to go to bed, dimly saw Elan the Armourer, who filled the night with his great presence. The giant had already rubbed to dust with his strong hand the chains of Euroe, and now a light suddenly poured from the cave below. The fairy had regained her power as she buckled on the breastplate he had made for her, crowned her head with the helmet, and grasped the keen sword in her right hand. From the fairy in the fullness of her power the light poured.

In all the houses servant-maids jumped out of bed, accusing the false house-clocks; mistresses jumped out of bed, accusing the overslept maids; masters jumped out of bed and clamoured for their breakfasts, wondering how they could have slept till it was blazing noon. But maids, mistresses, and masters

were soon running to the palace, crowding the great square and all the streets that led into it, looking up with their hands over their eyes at the blinding beauty of Euroe. She had risen as an airy spirit through the solid stone-roof of her cave into the chamber of the miserable naked Pipit, and stood fully armed over the bed in which he knelt. He clasped his trembling hands before her in entreaty, and turned up to her glorious face his vulture-mask. The terrors of the dungeons were laid bare to every eye, and in the full light of Euroe's brightness, Elan the Armourer stood like a massive tower.

Then Euroe, before all the people, stretched towards King Pipit her unarmed hand, and plucking from his face the mask he wore, laid bare the face beneath that had so long been hidden. A great shudder ran through the crowd, and Pipit spread his hands over the unmasked horror.

"Live the great fairy!" cried the people.

"Live Euroe!" Elan cried with a voice that was heard to the remotest village on the borders of Cockpaidle. "Live Euroe! Queen Euroe!" replied in a glad shout every voice of man upon the land; and upon the cry of the throng about the palace there seemed to roll back as thunder from all corners of the sky, "Live Queen Euroe!"

Then a low murmur arising grew among the crowd, and confused voices joined in words that altogether meant, "We have been Pipit's; Pipit now is ours!" The miserable king grasped at the robe of Euroe, the robe of shame in which he had clothed her, but upon which the foul painted shapes were

changed to happy visions, glowing, as it seemed, with colour from the rainbow. There was no hold for Pipit on that robe. It was to his strained fingers as if he caught at air.

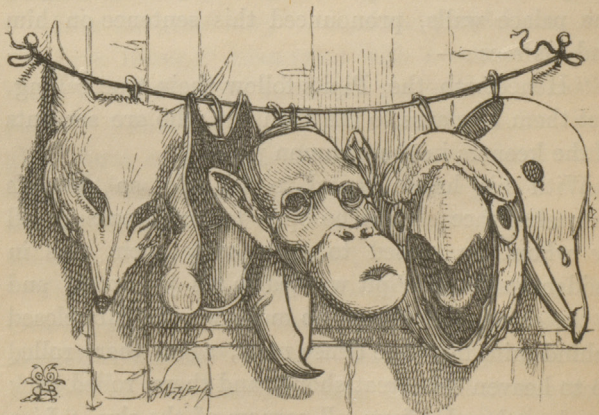
Then Elan took up in his hand the quivering and quaking Pipit, as a man might grasp a sparrow, and lifting him out of his nest, laid him upon the ground among his people. There, while he still covered his foul face with both his hands, he knelt and prayed that none would trust the dangerous Euroe; knelt and promised, knelt and swore, that he would constitute his people, if they only trusted him again, partners with him in power, and devote his whole life to their welfare. "Ah! ah!" they answered; "but we know that to be Pipit for Grind us in slavery and make us wretched." "Believe me! believe me!" Pipit mourned. But the people, looking at the dungeons under dungeons exposed by the falling of the palace walls, pronounced this sentence on him and his race:—

"Henceforth the Pipits follow their true calling. Let them be slaves to the turnkeys who are servants of the keepers in the common jails!"

With his hands bound to his side, so that his unmasked face should be open to sight, causing all by whom he passed to turn away their eyes in sudden loathing, Pipit was led to his jail-work, and as the crowd that opened to make way for him closed behind him into one dense mass, again there rolled up to heaven the great shout, and there rolled back as a low thunder from all corners of the sky, "Live Euroe! Queen Euroe!"

The high throne of the Pipits was uprooted from its place, and borne by a great concourse of men, women, and children, out into the free air. There it was set up in the sight of all the people. Then the chiefs of the nation, in the plain true words they had been longing for so many years to speak, offered their homage to Euroe, and led her to her high seat. But giant Elan sat on the steps of the throne leaning upon his hammer.

For two thousand years and more the bright fairy Euroe reigned over Cockpaidle in truth, justice, and mercy, and the place of the giant Elan was at her feet, sunning himself always in the light of her pure beauty. All who knew her loved her, but it was Elan who had been born to love her most of all. All who served her were true to her, but of her world of friends old Elan was the truest.





BACON PIE.

ONCE upon a time there was a great magician, and his name was Picrotoxin. His wife's name was Menisper, and she was not a conjurer at all, but no more than a simple, orderly, hard-working woman. Picrotoxin, being a great conjurer himself, did not want two of the same trade under his roof. He wanted to agree with a good housewifely soul, who would wonder at him and obey him, and with whom

he could forget his magic when he pleased, and drop down—or it might be, climb up—into a happy human life. They had no children, and they lived in a lone cottage together, on a great lump of a moorland hill that had a large iron beacon on the top. In the grate of the beacon an old man, named Moonseed, the only other person living on the hill, lighted a fire of nights for the guidance of ships in a sea channel full of perilous shoals, currents, and tideways, from which the broad back of the hill could be seen, when clouds were not too low. That hill was a huge waste of stone, lichen, puff-ball, and fern; of bog, moss, rush, horse-tail, and liver-wort, covering a tall heap of peat-bog, marshes, pools, and pebbly wastes of marl, cornstone, and red conglomerate, that rose and rose for miles about, until it came to a head wherein the clouds hung when there was any rain at hand. When the rain really came, it flooded the pools into lakes, soaked with water the great spongy marshes, and made of nearly the whole mountain a slough, over which the driving mists raced after one another, and the water plashed till only the wild ducks and the bitterns would choose to be out-of-doors.

Quietly on the top of this hill lived Moonseed, the beacon-keeper. Horses could jolt a waggon-load of wood and coal up the great slope in any but the wettest weather. Moonseed had also at his service a rough little moor pony, that helped him in the carrying of stores.

Somewhere upon the side of this hill lived Picrotoxin the immensely powerful magician, and his

wife Menisper. They had no settled address, for it pleased the great man to move house on the most trivial occasions. Sometimes his house slipped down hill. Sometimes he ran it round from one side to another, much to the discomposure of his wife. For Menisper was expected to do all that a good cottager's wife ought to do: to cook, to market, to keep fowls and a pig; and it was no small trouble to her, when she came from market with a heavy basket on her arm, home to the place where she had left her house, and found that it had pleased Picrotoxin, in her absence, to move to the opposite side of the hill. If he had carried off the cottage and forgotten to take with it the poultry and the pig, the poor woman had to take them along with her in a search over the mountain side. Again, if Picrotoxin wished to keep his wife in her own natural place, and to solace himself in the intervals of conjuring with that happy pastoral life to which, as a country maid, she had been born, he ought not to have turned away from her hog's-lard and fried potatoes, her rich soup of oatmeal and treacle, her hard, buttered dumpling, or neglected to praise her bold execution of the favourite pie of the district, made of successive layers of sliced apple, bacon-fat, and onion, thick layers and plenty of them, covered in with a stout, oily pie-crust. Her pies could be smelt out at sea, when Menisper was baking them; and once a ship was wrecked in the channel below, because the pilot held his nose, instead of steering, when it was a pie day on the hill side. Yet Picrotoxin, though determined that his wife should market, make and

bake, was too much of a conjurer to eat the dinners she prepared for him.

This great magician had discovered by his art much that was doing at the palace, and among other matters, at what hour his king dined. Then fixing that as his own dinner hour, when there was set before him one of these savoury tarts, he cried, "Good wife, that is a pie for a king! The King shall have it. Up, pie, through chimneys, to king! Open doors! In king's dinner to us!" Instantly the pie flew up the chimney, the cottage door opened wide, and there rushed in a splash of soup over their tablecloth, followed by boiled, and fried, and stewed, fishes, and fowls, and joints of many meats, tarts, jellies, costly fruits, and a great splashing of spilt wines. "There, old woman," said the conjurer, "a fair exchange. The King has got more than the worth of all this in your famous pie. Fall to!"

"Yes, husband," said Menisper, "you praise my pie, but you don't eat it. Besides, I'd have put in the biggest onions and more bacon, and put more lard in the crust if I had known you meant to send it to the King."

"Never mind, sweetheart," said the magician, "you shall make something on purpose for his Majesty to-morrow. I rather like the thought of changing dinners; so, henceforth, you are sole Cook to King Cocculus, and we will put up quietly with what the palace cooks provide. Don't keep any of these leavings. Feed the pig with what is fit for him, and throw the rest away."

So the King's jellies, and creams, and pine-apples

were mixed with his cabbage and his truffles into pig-wash, and all his meat that Picrotoxin and Menisper did not eat, was thrown over the moor.

Cocculus, King of Lardizabala, lost five pounds of his weight every week; one pound through vexation, and the rest through want of dinner. There was a state dinner, the first time Picrotoxin played this trick, and that was one of the things the magician knew. Cissa, the treacherous Grand-Duke of Ampelos, a person most particular about his eating, was chief guest. When the soup was set on the table, suddenly it rose out of the tureen, and dashing itself into a double current on the face of the Grand-Duke, between it and the door, flew out-of-doors. "Sire, sire," cried the cooks, running into the banquet-hall, forgetful of all proper decorum in their consternation. "All the dinner—all of it—has flown out of doors!" But while they spoke, there was an overpowering smell of onion, followed by the entry, through the chimney, of Menisper's pie, that set itself down, with a thump, between the Grand-Duke and his Majesty.

"This is strange! This is terrible!" said the Grand-Duke, shivering from top to toe. "I recommend, sire," said the Prime Minister of Lardizabala, "that we send for the bonzes." The bonzes were sent for, and declaring, for state reasons, that the pie came out of Paradise, where it was made especially for the Grand-Duke, pronounced a blessing upon all who should partake of it. "But the crust," said his Majesty, "is very black. It is well. That shall gladden the mouths of our bonzes." So the bonzes

were obliged to eat the sooty crust, and the chief guests of the King ate Menisper's apple, onion, and bacon. Whatever else was brought flew out-of-doors, the wine rushing abroad out of every bottle as it was uncorked by the chief butler and his men.

The pie was praised, and much was said of the delicate attention that must have been paid by the Houris to the known daintiness of Cissa, the Grand-Duke of Ampelos. The Grand-Duke, himself, spoke never a word; but, on the day following, sailed back in a swift ship to his own country, smelling of onions when he reached it a month afterwards, and declared war against Lardizabala.

Now, when the second change of dinner came, and the bonzes, who had eaten enough soot, being sent for, pronounced that the black and greasy tablets of potato, mixed with cubes of bacon, had been chopped by demons, Cocculus and all his court went dinnerless. Let nothing be said of the hard, ten-pounder dumpling, or of the three red-herrings fried with cabbage, for which the King's dinner was exchanged on the two next days.

Picrotoxin ate well, and he drank well; for it was only on the first day that, because of what he knew, the soups, gravies, and wines were made to travel without their tureens, boats, and bottles. Afterwards, royal soup-tureens, bottles, and decanters lay broken about the moor in which the happy conjurer resided; and the simple-minded conjurer's wife, sure that what her husband said was right, and growing to be proud of the praise he bestowed upon her royal cookery, adopted all the hints he threw out touching

pig's-fry and other dainties with which she might vary the diet of her King.

At last King Cocculus, who had found comfort in lunch, resolved to dine no more. A hundred changes of his cooks, the padlocking of dish-covers over his dishes, every device that his Cabinet Ministers were able to invent, had been in vain. There was a standing offer of a thousand crowns a day, for any person who could cook the King a dinner that would lie still to be eaten. Nobody had won that prize.

One day, Menisper's pig being fat, the good housewife was forced to admire him aloud. "See, husband," she said, "with such a pig outside his door, mightn't a king be happy!"

"Off, pig, and be doorkeeper to the King!" said Picrotoxin. Menisper wept when the pig vanished; but her husband comforted her, and said, "Dear wife, I mean that you shall see your pig again; ay, and that you shall be thanked for your cookery by the King Cocculus, himself, in presence of his Court and people. Lock the house door, and come out for a walk with me.

They locked up the door, and the house was immediately lost in a mist.

As they went down the hill side, they were overtaken by a troop of knights in armour, who were carrying off Moonseed, the Beacon-keeper.

"They are carrying off Moonseed, without his pony," Picrotoxin said. "It is not far to Lardizabalon" (that is the name of the seaport capital of Lardizabala), "but we will ride." So the magician said three times, "C'up, C'up," and Moonseed's little

pony trotted down to them. "Take him by the head, wife," he advised. Menisper took him by the head. "Now hold him tight, while I pull at his tail." As the conjurer pulled, the pony stretched to the length of a crocodile. Then he pulled each of the pony's legs till they were longer than those of the tallest cameleopard. Then he broke a head of bulrush into three pieces, threw one piece over his head as he gave the animal the other two pieces to eat, and instantly the pony spread into a horse as stout as any hippopotamus. "Very fattening stuff that," said Menisper. "I wish I had known of it when I had the pig to feed."

"Now, wife, we are going to Court to see the pig and his King. Put your foot in my hand, here is a long arm,—a long, long, long, long arm—and up you are! Now I leap after you and off we go!"

"But how your beard grows!" said Menisper as they jolted down hill with great strides, and at every jolt more hair seemed to be shaken out of Picrotoxin's chin.

"And how comely you are becoming!" said the conjurer, for with every jolt the wife seemed to be getting a fresh pound of fat upon her bones. "You will look like a King's cook by the time we come to Lardizabalon, and I shall look like the Prime Minister of the Moon."

"The Moon, man? Surely you mean of the moor."

"No, wife, King Cocculus believes there is no man on earth so clever as himself. Therefore I will come down upon him from the Moon. Oh, never fear, I

have a great work in hand. As for you, you shall see your pig sitting outside the door of the state council-chamber, and you shall be King's cook in the Royal kitchen, and you shall be thanked by the whole nation for your apple-tart with onions and bacon. Look you, here is the great city, and here round the corner by the lighthouse is the channel that lies underneath our hill."

"Picrotoxin! Picrotoxin! What work is it that you have in hand now? What are you about? How everybody stops and stares at us, and our great horse! How all the other horses and carriages have to run down the by-streets to make room for us! We take up the whole carriage-road. I feel big, I do, and I am going to Court as a proud woman, this day!"

When they came to the palace gardens, the huge pony stepped over the gates and lumbered over the grass to the palace-door, where he stood still. But then he was so tall that it was much easier for his riders to alight upon the roof than on the doorstep. Therefore they stepped upon the roof, and Picrotoxin called down to the throng of lacqueys who were wondering and running in and out. "Be so good as to let my pony loose upon the lawn, and tell King Cocculus that the Prime Minister of the Moon has come down to him with a cook."

So the two wonderful strangers walked about upon the palace roof, and when the Enchanter came to the great chimney of the council-chamber, "This," he said, "is our way in." A Gold Stick at the door was saying that a person calling himself Prime Minister

of the Moon was on the tiles with a fat cook, and said that he was coming down to see his Majesty, when suddenly there was a terrible clatter in the chimney, and down Picrotoxin came, pulling after him not very easily, for she was a tight fit, the round Menisper. Gold Stick ran forward at the sight, leaving the door open, and Menisper saw that her pig sat on the mat outside.

“My chimney must have wanted sweeping,” said King Cocculus to the new comers. “What a large quantity of soot you have brought down!”

A man in armour of chased gold and in a cloak of crimson velvet stood before the King, and behind this man were five knights, each holding a leathern sack. Behind King Cocculus there was an open money-chest, from which a score of silken pages were about to fill the sacks. “There is exactly soot enough to fill those bags,” said Picrotoxin. “Pay to your black enemy his tribute in his own coin, soot.”

“What mean you, knave?”

“The Moon sees everything,” answered the magician. “Be advised by the Prime Minister of the Moon, who has just brought down the right money due to Cissa, Duke of Ampelos.”

“In your moony counsel,” said the King, “there may be wit. Pages, put soot instead of gold into those bags!” But all the pages looked at their white doublets and their dainty fingers, to which gold might stick if it would, but soot was unsuitable. While they were hesitating, the knights closed the mouths of the bags, frowned, and clashed their

swords ; nevertheless the soot was in the bags, and the King's floor was as clean as the two strangers who had brought it down, and who advanced now to the royal council table.

"You were about, sire, to buy a false peace," Picrotoxin said. "I have observed the doings of the treacherous Grand-Duke of Ampelos. It was high time for me to come down upon him."

"Thank you," said the King. "Then perhaps you will send my answer to him by this his high lord."

"His high lord!" cried the magician. "That ambassador in scarlet and gold was littered on the same day with your doorkeeper."

"The pig that haunts me!" shuddered Cocculus.

"This gentleman is Pork," said Picrotoxin. "If he and his five knights do not confess the cheat upon your senses, they shall be sent home as sausages in chains."

Then the ambassadors fell forward on their hands and squeaked. "It is true, sire ; we are pigs."

"I had a fit doorkeeper to wait on such ambassadors," the King replied. "But whence came that doorkeeper? Is he, too, from the Moon?"

There was a clatter of arms outside. Word was brought that the King's knights had found the person who must be concerned in the magical thieving of the royal dinners. The Beacon Hill was covered with the broken pieces of the royal crockery and bones of the King's meat. The only man upon the hill was captured : and they brought in the old keeper of the beacon.

“What is your name, fellow?” the King asked.

“Moonseed.”

“Moonseed! Are you from the Moon, too!” cried King Cocculus. As he spoke there was a great crash of glass, for Moonseed’s enlarged pony being upon the lawn outside, and tall enough to look in at all the palace windows, had spied his old master. So he thrust his enormous head through all the glass in the council-chamber and began to lick the old man’s hand.

“I am not awake,” said Cocculus, falling back into his throne with the face of a man who is giving up a riddle. “I am in bed after a supper of too savoury pork-pie, and soot had fallen on the crust. I am asleep with the Moon shining on my face. Are these men pigs?”

The knight from Ampelos and his five attendants, each holding a bag full of soot, again fell on their hands and squeaked in concert, “We are pigs!”

“What awful horse is that?”

“He has,” said Moonseed, “the eyes of my little pony; but if he be my pony, he has grown out of all knowledge.”

“Is that a pig that waits outside the door?” asked Cocculus. At a glance from Picrotoxin Menisper’s pig stood on his two hind-legs, advanced to the king’s chair, bowed respectfully, and said, “I am.”

“Gentlemen and pigs, and Ministers of the Moon and moonseeds,” the King groaned, “pray make yourselves at home. Help! Help! Somebody, carry me away, or wake me!”



Then Picrotoxin advanced and bowed low before his Majesty. As he spoke he had pig's eyes and cheeks, and a round moist snout over his beard.

"Be assured, sire," he said, "that the interest of Lardizabala and of your august person are being watched. What you behold now is a great political crisis."

"O dear! O dear!" The poor King groaned. "My head begins to ache."

"A state," said Picrotoxin, "may be saved in many ways. Complexities of the political machine that puzzle a bystander"—

"Stop," said the King suddenly. "Did you not say that you had brought a cook? I see a gleam

of light. By help of that cook may I dine to-day?"

"May it please your Majesty to smile upon your cook," said the enchanter, bringing forward his good wife Menisper.

"She looks," said his Majesty, "like a king's cook."

Menisper curtsied with a happy smile. "Let her command the kitchen, and produce for me to-day her choicest dish. I ask but one dish, and that it will stand before me until I have eaten it."

"Sire, it shall be so," said Picrotoxin.

"May it please your Majesty," then asked a knight, "what are we to do with the enchanter Moonseed?"

"Prime Minister of the Moon, advise us," said the helpless and bewildered King.

"Let him mount his large horse, and ride swiftly through the land, commanding all your liege subjects to save their bacon, and to bring it to the royal commissioners, whom you will presently appoint to buy up all the bacon in the land.

"Buy all the bacon in the land of Lardizabala! Is there a state reason for that too? Be it so. Prime Minister of the Moon, do as you will, say what you will to these ambassadors. Cook,—dinner at six!"

The King retired to his inner chamber, and then trotted after him Menisper's pig to take up a new station at his closet-door. The envoys from Cissa, Grand-Duke of Ampelos, were treated like pigs and dismissed. Moonseed was dispatched on the great

pony to command all people in Lardizabala to save their bacon, and also to outbid private consumers in the price offered by his Majesty King Cocculus for onions and apples. Menisper retired to the kitchen and prepared her choicest dish. While it was baking, Picrotoxin called her away to smell—though she thought them less fragrant—the flowers in the garden.

Half an hour afterwards, a little crowd of knights and scullions, carrying a man who seemed to be in a swoon, clamoured at the door of the royal closet,—“Sire! My lord! State news! A paper! A traitor!”

The King opened his door, and the little crowd rushed in, some carrying the almost lifeless stranger, one holding out six seeds, another holding out an open letter.

“Your Majesty’s dinner was baking in the oven”—

“Yes, good, yes.”

“Yes, sire, your pie was in the oven and the new cook had gone out of the kitchen”—

“Oh,” said the King. “It is to be a pie then?”

“Yes, sire, and nobody was by, may it please you, sire, when this man crawled out of a large fish-kettle in which he had been hiding, leaving the lid off and his coat and hat in it, and in his coat-pocket was his pocket handkerchief, and in the lining of his hat there was this letter.”

“Yes, sire,” said he who held the seeds, “and in his hand were these six seeds, like peas. And in the letter we find they are deadly poison.”

“Yes, sire,” cried two or three of the crowd who held the man, “and here is the assassin who crawled

to the oven where your pie was being baked; but when he opened the oven, the stink of the pie knocked him down, and so we found him."

"What do you say?" the King cried, aghast.
"The stink of the pie!"

"Yes, sire, tremendous. We are not sure that the man will recover."

"Good gracious!" said Cocculus, with a groan of despair, "the oven-door has been left open, and I smell it myself. It may be smelt all over the palace. It is like that pie of apple, onions, and bacon that came down the chimney once or twice."

"The letter, sire, the letter!" said the man who held it. "Somebody, read it to his Majesty!"

Somebody read as follows:—

"Eminent Hog,

"The attempt you made on my behalf to poison Cocculus and all his Court, by rubbing candril-seeds over the inside of the soup-tureens, gravy-dishes, and decanters, on the occasion of my giving him the honour of my company to dinner, I find to have been frustrated by a powerful enchanter, who now fights against me. He it was who splashed the poisoned soup across my face, who forced us to eat that which is our own flesh and blood, and caused our lips to have been embittered in vain with the antidote that would have enabled us to drink, unharmed, the candril poison. That enchanter lives upon the beacon-hill that is beyond Lardizabalon, and against him vengeance is sworn by the whole fraternity of swine of Ampelos, to which you belong, and of which I, Cissa, Grand-Duke of Ampelos, am

the Grand-Master. His time will come; our ships are nearly fit for sea; and the magician on the beacon-hill shall save from our wrath neither himself nor the state of Lardizabala. But first it is fit that King Cocculus be poisoned secretly; for which purpose I send you candril-seed, and require that you find some place of hiding in his kitchen, and there lurk until you find an opportunity of poisoning his meat. I have sent threats to that king, with demands for tribute. If he pay gold, the gold is yours when you succeed, and will be held in trust for you by the faithful brethren who are charged with this mission. Should you be taken prisoner, find means to gain time for yourself. The invasion, for which we are now almost prepared, will turn the blood of Cocculus to ditchwater."

"What astonishes me most," said Cocculus, "is that a person should have thought it necessary to add poison to a pie like that I smell. But what? what? what? I have smelt such a pie before. Ha! ha! I have an idea! Sound trumpets; all the world shall know it."

Trumpets sounded in the palace and the courtyard, heralds went into the city to proclaim by sound of trumpet, "His most gracious Majesty the King of Lardizabala has an idea!" All the people, and especially the newspaper reporters, flocked into the squares to hear it; and in half an hour the words spoken in the royal closet were trumpeted forth in the streets; and they were these:—

"WHOEVER MADE THIS PIE, MADE THAT PIE!"

Public opinion in Lardizabala had long come to

the conclusion that political affairs were in a complex and peculiar position. The order to save bacon had been discussed hotly at public meetings, and the interference by the state with ordinary rules of trade, in buying up onions and apples at a price much above the market value, though it had been lauded highly by the Government newspapers, was denounced as profligacy by the Opposition press. But what was to be said for or against the King's idea, "Whoever made This Pie, made That Pie," none but the most wonderfully well-informed of editors could tell.

While King Cocculus was agitated with his great idea, and causing messengers to be sent for the new cook, and for her introducer, the Prime Minister of the Moon, Menisper's faithful pig, who sat at the door of the King's chamber, was seen to be shedding tears. The half-poisoned prisoner had been placed on the ground, and was there slowly recovering his breath. As he aroused he often looked towards the pig sitting outside the door. At last their eyes met, and they rushed towards each other, with loud cries of "My brother! My own, long lost brother!"

"We were of one farrow, sire," explained the faithful pig; "pardon these tears!"

"Oh, brother," said the hog who had been misled into the paths of crime, "I repent of all my wickedness, now that I have your love to reclaim me. On your breast I will pour out a full confession of these plots." So, lying with his head between his brother pig's forelegs, in a repentant attitude, the prisoner told, in the presence of King Cocculus, a dreadfully long story, chiefly about the part he had himself

taken in the rising of pigs in the Grand Dukedom of Ampelos, after his brother had been sold to the foreign merchant of whom Menisper had bought him when he was a tender pigling. The greatest of the hogs knew a hog who was descended from the men turned into hogs by a great enchantress, many thousand years ago, and he had got from him the name and address of that enchantress. Then, through some toils he had found his way to her, and obtained from her a charm that would turn pigs into men. Thus all the pigs in Ampelos had become men; and rising in revolt, they had placed Cissa, the greatest hog, upon the chair of the Grand-Duke. Among themselves they had divided, with much quarrelling, the chief places of trust in the state. At Cissa's court was greed and gluttony. From devouring victuals, the Grand-Duke turned to devouring states; and he was on the point of annexing Lardazabala, after poisoning the King at a friendly banquet given to himself, when the poisoned soup was dashed into his own face, and, by some unknown power, he was forced ignominiously to eat pig.

The penitent creature who told this and more was in the middle of a list of treacheries, when Picrotoxin and Menisper entered.

"The King's dinner is cooked and served," Menisper said.

"Prime Minister of the Moon," said Cocculus, "before I attempt to dine upon the pie that saved the state"—

"That is to save it, sire," said the enchanter.

"That has saved it, I tell you," cried the King im-

patiently; "for has it not saved me? I publicly thank this cook that you have brought me for her morning's work." Proud woman was Menisper then. "That repentant creature and his brother may be united as one household henceforth in a royal styce. I will not punish him, or make him into bacon."

"May it please your Majesty," said Picrotoxin, "you shall prosper in pigs all your days, if you will meet, as I advise you, the invasion that is threatened."

"Speak, Prime Minister of the Moon!"

"Let all the coasts,—except the coast of the channel underneath the Beacon Hill—be fortified with bakehouses, and mount in each bakehouse a heavy battery of iron ovens. Let the bacon that has been saved, the onions and apples that have been bought and stored in your arsenals, be distributed among the bakehouses and made into pies like that of which you know. When the enemy's fleet is seen to approach the coast at any point, let the ovens be loaded with the pies, and let the fires be lighted; let the pies bake till the ships draw near, then let the oven doors and all the seaward doors of the bakehouses be suddenly flung open. Thus drive the foe away from every point, except the shore under the Beacon Hill; then leave the rest to me."

"Absurd," cried the King. "Bombard an enemy with such a smell as that. It would be barbarous; it would be against all rules of civilized war. But I owe much to the pie, and I will show my gratitude by dining on it, if I can."

The King went therefore in procession, with the usual sound of trumpet, into his great banqueting-

hall, where the pie he knew of, stood alone on the great table, and was growing cold. "Somebody carve!" said the King. "May it please your Majesty," said the Lord Steward, "my health is delicate, and I dare not." Nobody dared. "Poltroons," the King said, "look at me." He thrust his knife into the pie and turned pale. Reflecting for an instant, he with a rapid hand cut a small slice out of the pie, then turned and fled in the rout of all his attendant courtiers and lacqueys who fled with him, pressing their hands tightly down over their noses. He was gasping for breath when he met Picrotoxin. "Order the batteries," he said, "your notion was not at all absurd. If the opening of the ovens be not enough to repel the enemy, open the pies upon them! open the pies!"

Batteries like these, terrible to a man, might well strike dread into the Armada of pigs. Under lead of Cissa the Grand-Duke, a mighty host of ships brought all the fraternity of which he was Grand-Master to invade the coast of Lardizabala, but upon no point dared they approach land, till it was discovered that the straits below the Beacon Hill were undefended by the batteries that bristled everywhere else. Into those straits at high water the fleet pushed, and therein at low water every ship was stranded that had not already run aground. The beacon keeper was gone, and there was no light to direct a pilot. In the night Picrotoxin stalked alone over the moors, and from the summit of the hill rolled down by mighty spells cloud after cloud, that covered the lost ships with a thick darkness. Then he gathered fernseed, and when he had filled with it

his peaked cap, let his cloak fly with the gale, and rode in it upon a whirlwind of his own raising three times round the fleet, scattering the seed that dropped like points of living fire into the darkness.

Among the ships word had gone forth from Cissa while the darkness gathered, that this was the work of the enchanter on the Beacon Hill, who had been warring against him, and against whom he had been warned. The Beacon Hill must be stormed at daylight, the enchanter seized and killed, the finest possible position taken for a military camp, which would command Lardizabalon, the enemy's capital. It was so natural to these creatures to feel themselves pigs, that they hardly knew how changed they were in outside character, when, as a vast herd of swine, they all plunged through the water, gained the shore, and stormed the hill next morning. It was now walled round, but there was an open gate on the sea front through which the pigs rushed, with the greatest of hogs, Cissa, at their head. Cissa had mounted to the beacon before the last of his army had passed through the gate, and then the gate was shut.

So the huge hill was covered (as it is to this day) with the finest herd of swine that any man in the world ever has seen; and Picrotoxin gave the whole herd to his king. The pigs were wild for a few weeks, but a sufficient number of swineherds having been appointed, they were in good time brought into subjection. Menisper was, on a day appointed for the purpose, thanked by the King before his Court and all his people for her famous pie. The nation gave her seven pigs of gold.

Thus it was that her clever husband brought her cooking to honour ; though he did not himself like to eat her pies. Many such pies have since been made from the pigs of the herd upon the Beacon Hill, for which reason, and as a memorial of the service they had done, they are to this day called Beacon Pies by many people.



A CHRISTMAS VOICE.

Acts we can read, but actors are impelled
By motives ill-revealed to mortal sight ;
Foul deeds must be in foul abhorrence held,
Man may do foully from a sense of right.

Teach me, O Lord, for ever to pursue
The path which conscience may to me proclaim ;
And, while I labour to maintain the True,
No right in censure feel ; no truth in blame.

Whether a sunbeam, or a single mote
Disturb the clearness of our upward gaze ;
Enough, we gaze. Enough, our hearts devote
To Thee all service, gratitude and praise.

Enough, we knock ; Thy gates are open wide,—
Enough, we ask ; Thy blessings are bestowed,—
Enough, we come ; to none shall be denied
The living waters which for all have flowed.



THE CUNNING OF SISSOO.

CHAPTER I.

SISSOO KILLS DRAGONS.

IN a cottage by a brook-side, at the foot of a small wooded-hill, there lived a boy whose name was Sissoo. All his relations who were not dead were abroad, so that he was quite alone, and had to keep himself as he best could. Since he was twelve years

old, that was not difficult. Sometimes he worked on farms. Oftener, because he was a wonderfully clever lad, he went out for a day's housework where there was something to be contrived that puzzled village wit. Many a day's work he got by his toy-making. For between six in the morning and six in the evening, with no other tool than his four-bladed pocket-knife, he would turn a ball of string and a billet of wood into so many wonderful play-things, that a family of children was supplied with a month's joy whenever the wise elders had been hiring Sissoo for a day's work in the nursery. If a lock was hampered, if the bucket was lost in the well, if the mouse that ate the cheese would not be caught, or if a child cried for an hour and was not to be quieted, the first thought of everybody within reach of Sissoo, was that Sissoo should be sent for. There was no sort of lock that Sissoo could not pick. Sissoo was deeper than any well, slyer than any mouse, and so full of merry tricks, that he could set the most miserable child laughing in half a minute.

As he earned quite enough to keep himself, and was clever enough to do harder things than wait upon himself, Sissoo lived alone in the small cottage by the brookside. There he is now to be seen, cutting a block of wood for some wonderful purpose into a great litter of chips, while the evening sunshine slanting through his lattice lights up his fresh rosy cheek, and brings into light the threads of gold in his brown hair. He works with stout hard hands that have already done more than their

share of labour. He is a robust, healthy, cheery lad, singing to himself while he slices, snips, and chips.

But he leaves off singing, when there comes a knock at his door. Jumping from his bench, he runs to open to a stranger, who stands in the porch under its great festoons of roses. This is a tall gentleman in a violet velvet cloak, lined with indigo satin, thrown gracefully over his shoulders, partly covering the blue velvet tunic richly trimmed and bordered with green silk, below which are his legs handsomely dressed in yellow breeches, orange stockings, and red shoes. The gentleman has a diamond star on his breast, an enormous gold chain round his neck, and a court-sword by his side, hilted with emeralds and rubies. He has a hat, to which a bunch of cock's-feathers is fastened by a bunch of many coloured jewels, jauntily set over a broad fair face, more than half-covered with a jungle of pale hair. He balances between two fingers a riding-whip, and his piebald horse, gaily caparisoned, is being walked up and down the road by a magnificent plum-coloured groom.

"Aw-yaw-wan Sissoo liv-ya?" asked his Magnificence, who drawled in the Hawbawyaw dialect of his native tongue, the object of which is to give an impression that the speaker aspires to be honoured as a blank in creation, having nothing in his head and nothing on his hands.

"I'm Sissoo," said the boy. "Who are you? What do you want?"

"Want-ya," said the Court splendour. "Aw-wawtha's Ma'sty wants-ya kil-sm wums."

"Will you have the goodness to repeat that?" said Sissoo.

"Aw-aim a stick, go'stick and King's Mazinjaw."

"Do you mean that his Majesty. King Calabash the Second, who lives yonder at the big house in Hairgrass, has heard of me, and wants me for a day's job?"

"Yaws, t'kill wums."

"To kill worms!"

The King's messenger, taking more time than we can spare in repeating it over the delivery of his errand, at last gave Sissoo to understand that his cleverness at odd jobs had been talked about at Court, and that he was wanted by the King to kill twelve worms, which were, in fact, dragons. They lived in a cave near Hairgrass; and, roaming abroad in search of food, ate up any man, woman, or child they met, that did not look tough or unwholesome.

"It is only sunset," said Sissoo, "and we are at Hairgrass in two hours, if you take me up behind you. I've Mother Jonquil's roof to mend to-morrow. Next day I'm engaged to make a puppet-show for Polly Daisy. The day after that is booked by Farmer Kelp, who wants some notion of a way I have of putting seeds into the ground. On Saturday I've promised to mind Widow Dewberry's house for her, while she's away. I'd better do the King's job now, to-night. Jump up, my lord, and let me ride behind you!"

"Bsud!" said the messenger.

"Absurd, is it? Then, by your leave, I'll ride alone. Your groom is mounted; you can ride with

him," said Sissoo, as he galloped away on the messenger's horse, and left him with his mouth and eyes wide open, vacantly fingering his sandy beard.

So Sissoo rode to court, made his own way to the presence of King Calabash, when access was denied him, and found his Majesty, who was depressed by a severe cold, eating gruel for his early supper. A tallow-candle, on a rich gold salver, was at his elbow, and six footmen were waiting to apply the tallow to his royal nose.

"What boy is this who intrudes on us?" the King asked.

"You sent for Sissoo," answered the boy, "and here I am. I've no time but to-night for that job of the dragons. Besides, if they eat people every day, whatever I can do I ought to do before to-morrow."

"Well," said King Calabash, "if you are as clever as you are bold, I pity the dragons. But if not, I pity you. If you destroy those worms, their treasure is yours. There are twelve of them, and they must have a hundred waggon-loads of gold hid in their cave. If they destroy you, they will crunch your bones."

"I don't think much of dragons," said Sissoo. "But if I kill them, will you send their treasure after me? I cannot stop to see about it, because I must be at Mother Jonquil's before seven to-morrow morning. But, by-the-by, I shall want a horse to take me back."

"I will give you the fleetest horse out of my stable," said the King. "It shall stand, saddled for you,

in the court-yard ; but it will only be given to you in exchange for the tails of the twelve dragons, which you must produce as evidence that they are dead. Every ounce of the treasure also, if the dragons are killed by to-morrow morning, I will cause to be delivered at your door. What arms will you take, boy ? ”

“ Only the two that belong to me,” Sissoo replied. “ Ten fingers, a head, and a pocket-knife, are twelve to twelve against the monsters.”

So Sissoo was taken to the dragon's cave, and left in the midst of dark night at the mouth of it. He peeped in, and all was dark ; by which he knew that the beasts were asleep ; for, had only one of them been awake, the blaze of his eyes would have made the cave as light as day. There were a dozen light flickerings of a dull red flame at one end of the cave, which Sissoo rightly took to be the breath out of the dragons' mouths.

He climbed down without making any noise, and found the huge creatures all asleep in a heap together over the bones of their supper. As they lay in a heap snoring, with their mouths half open, each of them made a noise like the firing of a ship's guns through the whistle of a storm at sea.

“ Oh dear me,” said Sissoo, when he got down into the cave. “ This little business need not detain me

He slipped among the dragons, who could be aroused by nothing short of a noise more terrible than their own snoring, and as they lay coiled together, Sissoo lifted very carefully and gently, all the ends of their

long serpent tails, till he had laid the tip of every dragon's tail across his neighbour's teeth. Then he rolled a big lump of stone down the mouth of the oldest of the dragons, and immediately scrambled up to the mouth of the cave again.

The stone having got into the big dragon's throat, stuck there, and soon began to choke and rouse him. He coughed, he lashed his tail, of which the end was then immediately bitten off; he snapped his teeth, and doing so, snapped off the end of the tail of his neighbour, who ran forward between sleeping and waking, and bit fiercely at the end of the tail that he found running like a lance over his tongue. Every dragon soon woke up horribly cross, twisting with pain, because the tip of his tail was bitten off, and upon opening his eyes, saw the dragon nearest to him spitting a tail-end, which he took to be his own, out of his mouth.

A desperate fight of dragon against dragon then ensued, of which the clamour was heard in the city of Hairgrass. King Calabash, though he had taken a sedative draught after his gruel, was aroused by it and said to his Queen, "What a night of it that boy is making with the dragons!" "I'm sure," said the Queen, "he must have made them very angry. If he is killing them, I wish he could contrive to go about his work more quietly."

Nobody in Hairgrass slept, until the noise of screaming, blowing, and yelling, was all over. When the dragons had fairly destroyed one another, Sissoo went down and collected the ends of their tails which they had bitten off for him, and carrying them to the palace court, exchanged them for the swift horse that

was to bear him to his day's work over Mother Jonquil's thatch.

CHAPTER II.

SISSOO VANQUISHES A GIANT.

FOR the next fortnight, there was a continual delivery of sacks of gold at Sissoo's door, because the King was mindful of his promise, and took care to send him every ounce of the dragons' hoard. Now there lived hard by in a castle, as large as a hundred mountains, the tall Giant Cormier, who was so big that his head was always damp with the clouds hanging about his hair. But he was not too tall to stoop to a mean theft, and when Cormier saw how many sacks of gold were crammed into Sissoo's little house, till there was only one room left that was not as full of it as an autumn barn is full of corn, Sissoo, who knew him to be a thief, took notice that his fingers twitched whenever he went by. The boy, whose cunning had destroyed twelve dragons at one stroke, was not to be offended rashly even by a giant. Cormier did not venture upon force. "If I can pilfer a few sacks," he thought, "by opening the large window of that back-room, through which I think I can get my hand, I daresay they will not be missed."

But Sissoo, who saw him looking hungrily and often at that window, sent a little of his gold to town

and bought with it a ton of the strongest Hachah snuff. This excellent snuff takes a man quite off his legs, whenever it makes him sneeze. Covering his nose with sponge, Sissoo carefully filled all the gold sacks near the large back-window with the light dust of the snuff, putting gold pieces on the tops and at the sides. Then he took care to leave the window just a little open, and locking up his house, hid in the bushes of the brook. As soon as it was dusk, he saw the giant's head peeping over the hill. Cormier spied out the unguarded window. Nobody stirred in or near the house. His golden opportunity, the giant thought, was come. Stretching a long arm across the hillside, he slipped his fingers in upon his prize and carried off the first ten sacks on which they laid their clutch.

But when the giant got back to his castle, and had locked himself up in his private room, he shook the bags to empty their contents out on the floor and count his gain. Then out there came a cloud of Hachah, snuff of snuffs, that got into his nose. At the first sneeze he blew all the glass out of his windows, and a fresh eddy of snuff was raised up as the wind rushed in. At the second sneeze, Cormier was lifted from his legs and knocked against the ceiling with such force, that the whole castle shook. By the third sneeze, he was blown through the substance of his own door and embedded in the wall beyond, where one sneeze more rent the wall in which he was fixed, so that a great part of the castle fell and buried him under its ruins.

What remained of the castle was Sissoo's by right

of conquest, and the boy moved into it with all his treasures.

CHAPTER III.

SISSOO OUTWITS AN ENCHANTER.

Sissoo now worked among his villagers for love and not for money, but he was as brisk and useful as he had been from the first, and kind as ever to all children younger than himself. The children of the village used to come and play about his castle when they liked, and the old people ate and drank in it when they liked, while Sissoo laboured every day for somebody, and would go out for a long day's work with his pocket-knife as often as he had done when his life depended on his earnings.

One day an old man came to him, who said that he had just taken a house in the village, where he had heard everybody talk about the cunning of Sissoo and his kindness in helping any of his neighbours. Would he mind coming to help a feeble old fellow, who had to put his house in order? There was a great deal to be done in it, and he was very poor. Certainly, Sissoo said, he could come. The very next day he was free to come, so on the next day he went.

Sissoo quite understood that for an old man who has a new house to settle into, there are a great many little matters to be done, and as he had only

that day to spare, he went to his work so early that it was not even sunrise when he reached the cottage to which he had been directed. When he came near the door he heard mewing inside. The door was opened; while he stood still in the shadow of the porch a large cat came out, walking upon her hind legs like a lady, followed with civil bows by the old man himself. "Good bye, Purslane," the enchanter (for he was an enchanter) said; "Good bye, and take care of yourself. I can perceive a strong smell of the dawn. Trust me to make a mouse of the lad before nightfall, for all his cunning! Never fear, Purslane; my nephew Cormier, whom you can't marry now, shall be avenged. Till after sunset then, good bye."

"Good bye, Touch-me-not, good bye, Touch-me-not," said Pussy, and no more was seen of her.

"Aha, old Touch-me-not," said Sissoo to himself. "Did I get up too early for you? And are you quite sure that you will turn me into cat's-meat?" He waited half an hour before he tapped at the enchanter's door, and then the old man looked down upon him from an upper window, yawning as if he had just had his sleep disturbed.

"Is that the kind Sissoo already," he said. "So early afoot to help his poor old neighbour Quickset!"

"Is your name Quickset?" asked the boy. "The name written upon your face is Touch-me-not."

"Quickset! Quickset it is!" mumbled the enchanter as he shut the window, and as he came down stairs he rubbed his hand over his chin and cheeks and forehead. Truly this boy, he thought, will be

too cunning for me if I do not mind. If he is sharp enough to see my name in my face, what else may he not read in it. I'd better pass a smear over the writing. So, as he passed the fireplace, he took up a handful of black ashes and wiped his face with them before opening the door.

"Why, What's-your-name!" Sissoo said, when the door was opened by the old man, and he saw the ashes on his face. "Why, What's-your-name, what a face you have! Where did you go to bed? I think you must have been sitting to-night with the cat."

The enchanter opened and shut his eyes. I must make short work, he thought, with this terrible boy, and then he said, "I have been blowing the embers, Sissoo. My good boy must want his breakfast, and an old man's fit for nothing except cowering and pottering and cooking at the fire. I'll get our breakfast ready, my dear boy."

"No, go to bed again, till the day is a bit older. I'll go to work meanwhile, and be as quiet as a mouse. If you like, I'll make you a nice breakfast broth, and bring it you in bed. You must have pot-herbs in the house. There's an exceedingly strong smell of purslane."

The boy's nose, thought the enchanter to himself, is as sharp as his eyes, for it is nothing but the name of purslane that he smells. If I am to make a mouse of him, I must be cautious and not let him catch me napping.

"Yes, my dear young friend," said Touch-me-not; "I have a good many herbs in my little pantry yonder. We poor people, who cannot afford much

meat, are glad of the cheap green sauce that will make the little we eat savoury. I can brew delicious broths out of my pot-herbs; one of them is very soothing to the morning stomach, as you shall soon find, my dear. It takes trouble to make, but for you what would I not do?"

"And what shall I do for you, neighbour? upon what shall I begin?"

"I'm a poor lone old man," said the enchanter, "and before everything I want to be well fastened in. I've had some iron bars, as you see, put across the window. I should like you to make sure for me that they are firm. And that lock's hampered, I think."

Sissoo soon proved the firmness of the bars. Nobody could get through the window; that was clear. The hampered lock was mended with a cunning poke or two from the smallest blade of Sissoo's four-bladed knife, and then the boy opened the big blade and said to the old man—

"Perhaps you don't know what a place this is for mice, and what a fellow I am at a mousetrap. I'll make you a trap while you are picking and sorting all those herbs for your breakfast broth; and I know, too, how to prepare a piece of cheese so that no mouse living can resist the bait. What say you?"

"Good, very good," said the enchanter, and he chuckled to himself. "Clever boy, he shall run at his own bait; I'll catch him in his own trap, cunning as he is, in his own trap, his own trap."

So Sissoo chipped and dug about a lump of wood with his invaluable pocket-knife, twisted some bits of wire, and had his bait ready set by the time the en-

chanter's broth was mixed and the fire lighted under it. Sissoo had watched him narrowly, for that he meant to brew a charm he saw. He saw also, that in passing in and out for divers herbs and spices, Touch-me-not had contrived to lock on the other side two doors leading out of the room. Then on the excuse of having gone out for some other herb into the garden, he had come in by the front-door and slyly shifted the key to the outside.

"Sissoo, my dear," said the old man, and the boy's ears were sharp to detect the tremble of excitement, under tones meant to sound very careless. "For this broth to be good, it must boil well; and we shall want more wood under it. I've made the fire a little hotter than my poor old head can bear, when I lean over it to stir the pot. Would you mind stirring for me while I go out for the wood."

"Fetching wood is a boy's work," answered Sissoo. "You told me yourself, that an old man was fit for nothing except cowering and cooking at the fire."

A slight hissing was heard at the bottom of the pot as it began to boil, and the enchanter, without answering, made suddenly a leap towards the outer door that he had purposely left open. But Sissoo, who had suspected what was brewing, was on the alert, and had chosen for himself a seat so near the door that he jumped out and snapped the latch so sharply on his enemy, that he almost had caught him by the nose. Swiftly he turned the lock, and running to look in at the window, saw the enchanter with his arms spread beating against door after door, and then rushing towards the barred window. But as he ran, a thick steam rose out of the broth and hid him from

the boy's eyes, for he never reached the window-bars to glare on Sissoo face to face. When the steam passed away and everything in the room was to be seen again, Touch-me-not was no longer there. But there was a mouse caught in Sissoo's cage, eagerly breakfasting upon the bait that no mouse could resist.

Sissoo unlocked the cottage door and went home to his breakfast. After sunset he watched near the cottage and saw the cat Purslane slink in at the door. One squeak was heard, and she ran out again almost directly with a dead mouse in her mouth. Sissoo, then peeping into the empty room, saw that his cage had been torn open.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

SISSOO PUTS A STOP TO OUR HORN BLOWING.

Sissoo had done a great many hundred other clever things, when there came a knock at his door one cold, moonlight night, and he opened it to a small dancing creature, many-coloured as the rainbow, and bright as the sun, who was now leaping to the ceiling, now flickering on half a leg up and down all the walls, and who announced himself as Fol, principal male dancer at the Court of Oberon. He had come as a messenger from his Majesty. A horse was outside, the great black horse of the Man who was Fol's father, and on this Sissoo was to ride instantly to Oberon's Court that would be

held in the next forest as soon as the moon stood in mid-sky.

Sissoo went, and was received with favour by King Oberon, who told him that, by universal suffrage of the Fairies, he was declared one of themselves; and that he should appoint him his chief horn-blower, if he would accept that office.

“Will you accept it?”

“Certainly, my liege lord, I will,” the boy replied.

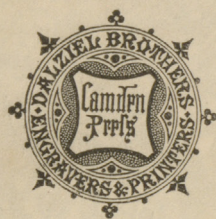
“Then you must get me out of the difficulty I am now in,” said the Fairy King. “I dropped my horn in the wood some weeks ago, and it appears that it was found by a couple of owls, who have since been hooting through it in a very dreadful way. First, they cried Mackerel through it; yesterday, they were making it grunt like a pig. You must get it away from them, Sissoo. I sent Puck for it; but the madcap, child as he is, only romped with them, and tricked them out in foolscaps. But I must have my horn again; I must, indeed, Sissoo, and I rely upon your cunning.”

Sissoo went directly to the owls' nest, where he found the owls making big eyes over the paper on which they were scratching notes of all their new horn music. They were so busy that they did not see him come under their perch. Cunningly disguised in an old cloth cap, and a well-worn jacket and trousers, he turned up a cheerful, patient face to them, as they discovered him, and answered to their screech of Who are you? What do you want? with the words—

“I am the Printer's Devil, and I want Oberon's Horn.”

The two owls said no more, but gravely scrambled down the tree, and gave all that they had into his hand. Having done that, they scrambled up again to their own perch, and sitting side by side, each with his own scratching tool under his wing, there they sit solemnly expecting all that they deserve.





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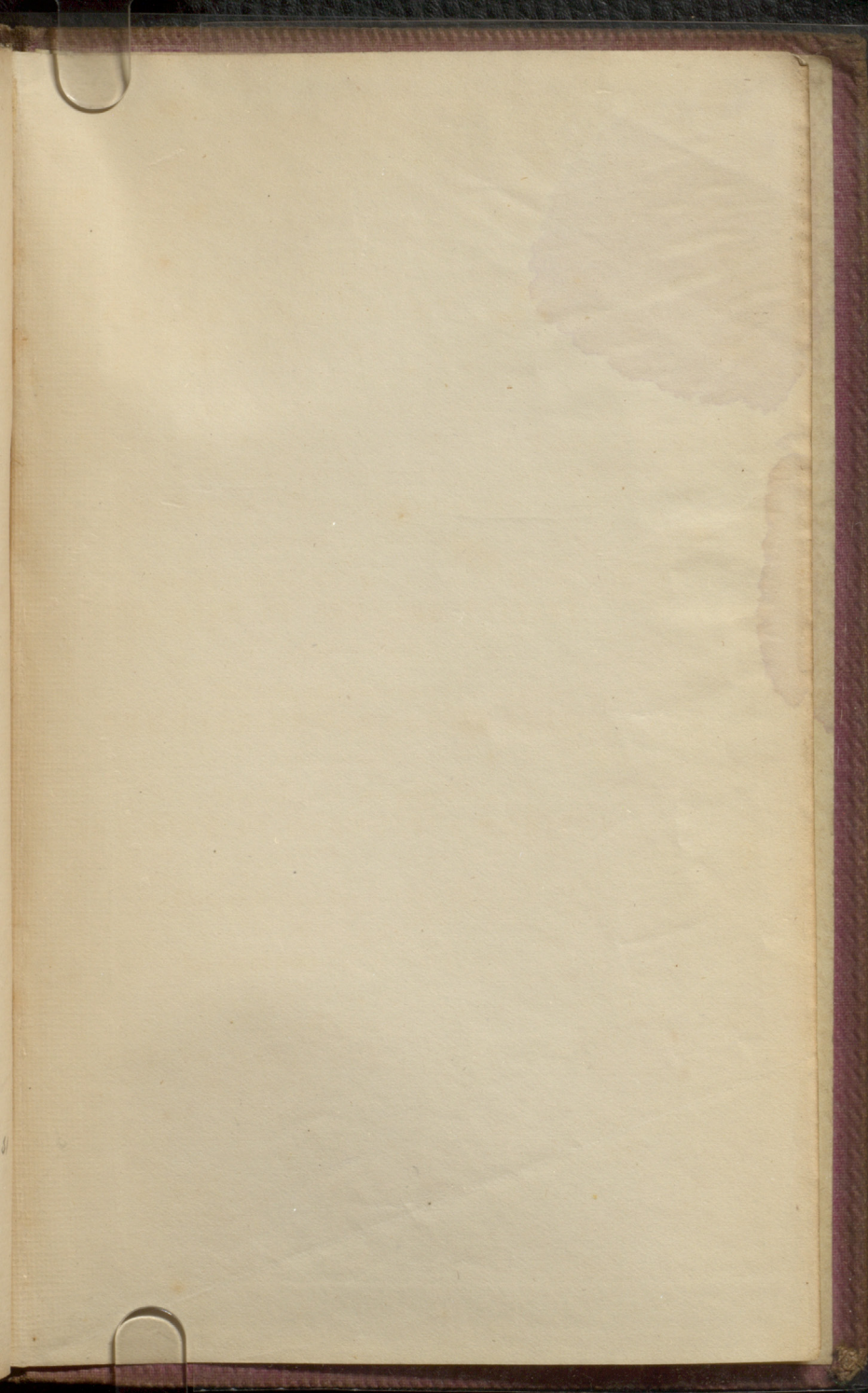
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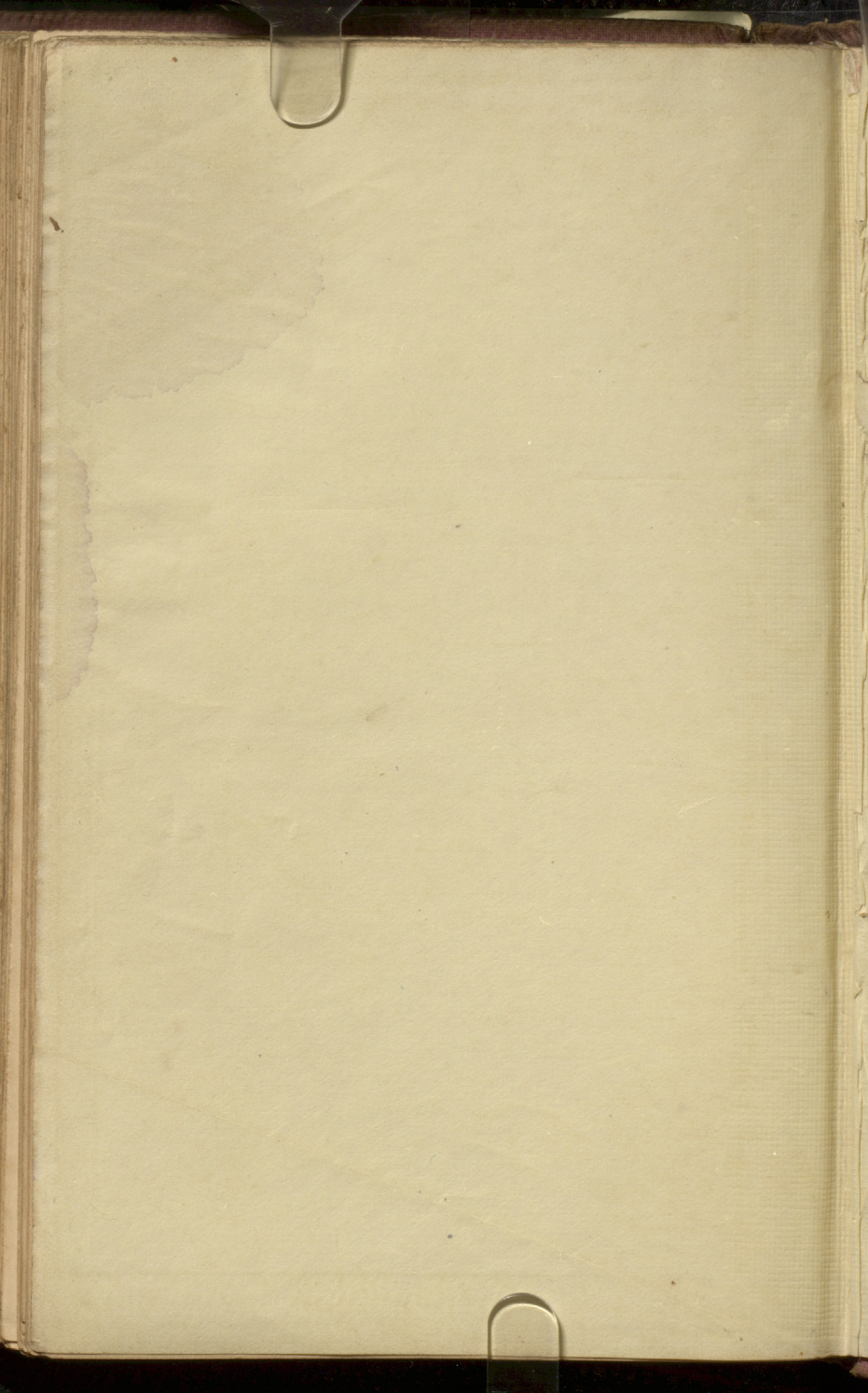
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