THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

ILLUSTRATED BY

ARTHUR RACKHAM

Little folks
The land of enchantment

THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

"'I WANT NONE OF YOUR LEAPING AND DANCING NOW'" (See p. 77).

[Little folks]

THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

ILLUSTRATED BY

ARTHUR RACKHAM

A.R.W.S.

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LIMITED

LONDON, PARIS, NEW YORK, TORONTO AND MELBOURNE

MCMVII

CONTENTS.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE stories and illustrations in this book originally appeared in "Little Folks" between 1896 and 1902, during which period most of the numbers of the magazine contained some of my drawings.

Many of the drawings so appearing have already been republished in book form—included, often, in volumes containing illustrations by other hands.

The publishers have felt that some of those drawings that have not hitherto been republished are worthy of a longer life and a better presentation than was possible in the magazine, and they have collected these in the present book with the stories they were designed to illustrate.

I have been glad to assist in the selection of the drawings included in this volume.

ARTHUR RACKHAM.

Hampstead, May, 1907.

THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT.

THE MAKER OF GHOSTS AND THE MAKER OF SHADOWS.

I.

ONCE upon a time there were two friends who set out together to seek their fortunes. The one was a maker of ghosts and the other a maker of shadows; and all the luggage that they took with them consisted of their trade samples done up in brown paper parcels.

They wore woolly breeches made from thistle-down and wild cotton, reaching from waist to knee, where they were tied with plaited grass; they had woolly coats fastened with small leather thongs down the front, and their thick belts of plaited grass held a number of very useful tools. Their heads were covered with caps having three points ornamented with coloured tassels.

"Well, where shall we go first?" asked the maker of ghosts thoughtfully.

"Oh! I don't know that it matters," said the maker of shadows, "as long as we go forward; but look, yonder is a signpost; let us see whither it points."

So they went up to it and read thereon:

"The very country we want!" exclaimed the maker of ghosts; and the other agreeing, they set out briskly without further hesitation.

Now, strange as it may seem, this country is not very easy to reach, nor is it peopled with many inhabitants; but the travellers were

prepared to meet any difficulty and, if need be, danger; for they knew quite well that if you sit down and fold your hands together fortune will not fall into your lap.

After walking for the best part of the day, they came to a wild and rugged country, and here they struck a narrow path which led through a gorge in the hills. By-and-by it opened out into a grassy plot where was a bubbling spring, and behind it a moss-grown cave. It was an ideal spot for an encampment, and the friends at once made up their minds to stay there for the night. Gathering some brushwood they soon had a cheerful fire burning, and just within the sheltering cave, with dry moss for a pillow, they closed their weary eyes and fell asleep.

About a couple of hours passed when the maker of ghosts awoke, and, as the fire was getting low, he got up without disturbing his friend, and hunted for more fuel. It was not easy to find, groping about in the dark, and the search led him some distance from the cave. He was just about to come back with an armful of brushwood, when he was startled by the sound of footsteps, and had barely time to throw himself down and hide behind his burden, before there came along five fierce-looking robbers, armed to the teeth, each driving a laden mule before him.

They were astonished to find the maker of shadows asleep by the fire, and in a trice they pounced upon him, and bound him hand and foot.

All this the maker of ghosts saw as he lay quaking with fear. As he could do nothing at present to help his friend, he wisely took care of himself, and so rolled over and over ever so softly, until he was at a safe distance from the cave.

He was more frightened for his poor friend than for himself, and longed to fly to his aid. What if the robbers should kill him? It was a terrible thought! He strained his ears to catch the slightest sound. Sometimes he imagined that he heard a faint cry for help— then he fancied he heard a groan. The wind as it rustled the dry leaves made him shake, and the stillness that followed added to his fears.

At last he could bear the suspense no longer, and so, at the risk of his life, he crept cautiously back until he came within sight of the cave. There by the light of the fire he saw that four of the robbers were lying asleep, with the maker of shadows in their midst, whilst the fifth robber kept watch. Fortunately, the man did not see him, and so, somewhat comforted by the sight of his friend, but still terribly

anxious, the maker of ghosts stole back into the darkness, and passed the remaining long hours of the night without a wink of sleep.

As soon as it began to grow light, he again crept towards the cave; but when he got within earshot he heard the sound of voices, and had only time to conceal himself behind a stone before the robbers came out, and, mounting their mules, rode away down the gorge. He anxiously counted them—one, two, three, four, five—and then he knew that his friend had been left alone. But had they killed him?

"He was chained to the side of the cave, tightly bound and gagged."

When he had watched them well out of sight, he ran as fast as he could to the cave. What was his joy to see his friend alive! He was chained to the side of the cave, tightly bound and gagged.

It took such a long time to set him free that they did not consider it safe to think of immediate flight, lest the robbers should return soon and give chase, when they would be sure to be overtaken and recaptured.

After a few minutes' anxious consultation they hit on a plan which promised better, particularly as there would be no moon that night, and they set to work upon it as fast as they could.

Gathering a quantity of firewood they piled it in a great heap, and to make it blaze up quickly, they emptied over it a barrel of oil which they had found in the cave. Next they dragged some branches, and placed them in a half-circle round the brushwood, and upon them seated a goodly company of ghosts taken from their trade samples. There was a skeleton, two black men, four hideous monkeys, a witch on a broomstick, and Father Time with his scythe. On the trees behind, they arranged a background of their weirdest shadows.

When everything was ready it was quite dark, and soon the sound of hoofs was heard in the distance. At the right moment the two friends applied a light to the brushwood, and, just as the robbers turned the

corner which brought them within sight of the cave, the fire burst into flame, and the whole of the gruesome and unexpected company sprang into view.

The black men groaned, the skeleton and Time whistled on their bones, the monkeys howled hideously, and the other ghosts waved and beckoned, pointing to the big pot hanging over the fire from which came forth pale green flames. The flickering light cast strange reflections, and the shadows behind added considerably to the weird effect.

The plot was completely successful: the mules plunged right and left; the robbers turned and fled, tripping one another up, scrambling and racing for dear life. One of them, venturing to look back, saw to his horror the monkeys and a lanky skeleton in full chase.

This was the finishing touch. Flinging away even their weapons to lighten them, the robbers ran faster than before, and for aught that history records may be running yet!

The monkeys and skeleton were borne by the maker of ghosts and his friend back to the scene of their triumph, and then they found time to examine the robbers' hoard.

There was a great deal of treasure in the cave, but it was mostly bulky, and they could only fill their pockets with some of the lighter valuables—the rest of the things they buried. Then, picking their way as best they might up the gorge, they again fared forward, and by noon approached the land of Common-Sense, crossing a narrow strip of neutral ground, scattered over with old signposts and milestones, where all those who had lost their senses might find them again. Indeed, they had gone but a few steps when they chanced to meet the right minds of two lunatics.

With them they had some talk, but they were sad, and the reason soon came out: they were shadowless, and, "until we get shadows," they said, "we can't be happy."

So the maker of shadows set to work at once, and made them such a beautiful pair that they jumped for joy, and gladly paid a good round sum for them, not in gold or silver, but in grains of common-sense, which was the current coin in this region.

The maker of ghosts and the maker of shadows went on their way invigorated by the fresh and balmy air, which was full of the smell of roses and the song of birds. The fleecy clouds were tinged with the beautiful hues of rainbows; butterflies flashed their golden-purple

"The robbers turned and fled" (p. 12).

wings in the sunshine, and bees were abroad humming drowsily from flower to flower.

So happy did the friends feel that one of them sang whilst the other played an accompaniment on the ghost of a fiddle :

"Kiddlewinko joss sticks losp,
I sing the lay of the wicked wasp ;

"Who—krimee gimbo gingerly kose,
Bit the goblin-baron's nose,

"But samary sugary pongo sly,
The baron hit him in the eye :

"Rumble jumble rokey tort,
The triumph of that wasp was short."

Thus beguiling the way, the two friends entered the land of Common-Sense and in due time reached the capital. It was perched on the spur of some high hills, and the zigzag path which led to it had been hewn out of the solid rock. This path was overlooked by the king's castle, which stood on the very verge of a precipice, and could only be reached by a narrow bridge.

His Majesty, however, had to content himself with some very modest private apartments in the town, for his castle was haunted. None knew what evil deeds had been done there, but, at the witching hour of night, awful and blood-curdling were the groans and shrieks which rent the air. Crimson cats burning with internal fires, with flaming eyes and rolling tongues, appeared at times upon the battlements. Sometimes a black omnibus, full of skeletons, drawn by griffins, and driven by a KOFER in yellow tights, with a cocked hat and a lavender tie, was seen to enter beneath the gloomy portcullis.

Now the king had been for a long time engaged to a beautiful and amiable princess, but they were too poor to marry. The cellars of the castle were known to be full of common-sense, but it could not be got at, and the king had promised a third of his realm to whosoever should disenchant the building and deliver the treasure into his hands. How many had made the attempt and failed the chasm in front gave ghastly proof, for it was full of the bodies of victims.

And yet there existed a charm for disenchanting the castle written in rhyme and handed down from father to son; but unfortunately there was lacking the common-sense to interpret it.

Now the maker of shadows and the maker of ghosts had plenty of common-sense, and having a copy of the charm they carefully considered it. It ran thus:

"Shadow of royalty firmly clasp
Round what you hold but cannot grasp:
Thread with the bristles of a hog
The eye-tooth of the jolliwog:
The ingredients bray in a mortar well,
Whilst ninety and nine you quickly tell.
Then when the thunderstorm's begun,
And the turret clock is striking one,
Sprinkle it well on the courtyard floor,
Sprinkle it well on the castle door.
Sneeze not, nor pause to say 'Oh my!'
'Potwillikins!' or 'Nelly Bly!'

"A black omnibus . . . driven by a Kofer in yellow tights . . . was seen to enter" (p. 14).

"Then only shall the enchantment fall
From turret, keep, and embattled wall,
And plentiful stores of common-sense
Shall be your well-earned recompense."

The two pored over the paper doubtful and perplexed. To begin with, the shadow of royalty must be genuine or the charm would not work. The only royalty they knew anything of was the king, but his shadow was sacred, and it might be dangerous to ask him to part with it. Those who addressed him always did so in such words as these :— "May your gracious Majesty's august shadow never be less!" Taking

another standpoint, the lion was the king of beasts, the eagle the king of birds : would their shadows be truly royal ? They thought not.

But the shadow must be clasped round what they could hold but could not grasp ! A slippery eel ? No. A red hot poker ? Of course not. What could it be ?

And then again, the eye-tooth of a jolliwog ! What was the jolliwog ? An animal perhaps, or perhaps a fish ; at any rate, they had never before heard of such a creature.

II.

Well, not to lose valuable time, the maker of ghosts set to work to puzzle out by himself the second, third, and fourth lines, whilst the maker of shadows went to call upon the king. Sending in his card, he was at once admitted to the royal presence, when he frankly spoke of the intentions of his friend and himself, and how in the well-known charm for disenchanting the castle a royal shadow was a necessary part.

His Majesty's interest was at once aroused.

" You are heartily welcome to my shadow," said he, " so far as my own feelings are concerned, but public opinion would not sanction the loss, I am quite sure."

" Your Majesty's gracious words give me hope," replied the maker of shadows ; and then he made known an idea which was floating in his head. It was that he should make a shadow for the king in all respects like the real one. That when it was ready he should bring it with him, and at noon, when the real shadow was at its smallest, he should take that off very carefully and substitute for it the one he had prepared.

The king prudently asked to see some shadows as a proof of the artist's skill. So the next day a few samples were submitted for his inspection, with which he was so well pleased that the maker of shadows set to work at once on the new shadow, and when it was finished he brought it to the king.

So at mid-day the royal shadow was carefully put into a bottle and corked, and the new shadow so skilfully substituted that those who afterwards came to call, repeated—" May your gracious Majesty's

august shadow never be less," without hesitation.

So far successful, the maker of shadows now asked the king about the jolliwog.

"I don't know myself," said he, "but I will write you a letter of introduction to a very wise philosopher, who, I think, can give you the information."

"A few samples were submitted" (p. 16).

Now this learned individual lived in a remote and desert place. Here was a clump of camphor trees, and the hollow trunk of one of the largest of them served for a residence, the smell of the wood being admirably calculated to keep away ants and prevent the philosopher from taking cold. There was close at hand a library fashioned in the same way, a museum, an aviary, and an observatory, whilst a small kitchen-garden supplied his daily needs. The philosopher would sometimes remark to a chance visitor in his simple unaffected way: "What more do I want?"

His appearance at once commanded respect, for he was as bald as a looking-glass, and his snowy beard touched the ground. His present occupation was the translation of the language of birds, several being there to assist him at that very moment. When the maker of shadows presented himself, he courteously set the work aside, and, having read the introductory letter, asked in what way he could be of service.

"I am anxious," said the maker of shadows, "to know what the jolliwog is, and how I can obtain his eye-tooth?"

"Ah!" replied the philosopher; and with this profound remark retired to his hammock, motioning his visitor to occupy his camp-stool.

After some time had passed the philosopher again appeared, and

going to his museum, selected a phial. This he handed to the maker of shadows, saying—

"The jolliwog is swift of flight,
Sharp his eye and keen his sight;
Greased lightning is the only thing
With which to catch him on the wing.
If to his haunts you'd like to go,
A stork shall take you to and fro."

And he waved his hand towards a group of birds standing near.

"Ever so many thanks," said the maker of shadows. "May I further trespass upon your kindness by asking you to allow another of your birds to carry a message to my friend that he may know where I have gone?"

"With pleasure," replied the philosopher; and then he called, "Mercury! Mercury!" for that was the name of his carrier pigeon, who at once set out with his message for the capital of Common-Sense, whilst the stork, with the maker of shadows on his back, departed in quest of the jolliwog.

Meanwhile, the shadow of royalty had long since been bottled, but the maker of ghosts had in vain racked his brains to discover what he might hold but could not grasp. With his hair rumpled all over his head he sat the image of despair, when he heard a tap at the door.

"Who's there?" said he.

"I, Mercury, with a message," replied a small voice. The maker of ghosts started violently, and changed colour.

"I've got it! Mercury!" he said with a knowing smile. Then he opened the door. The bird delivered his message, and flew back again to his master.

When he had gone, the maker of ghosts sat down to dinner and made a hearty meal, for he had not eaten for ever so many hours through anxiety and worry, and his mind was now at rest.

By-and-by he put on his cap, and went into the town to make a purchase. Mercury! Yes! That was what he wanted, for that is what you can hold but cannot grasp! He also bought a mortar and a hog's bristle. Then taking the shadow of royalty he carefully clasped it around the mercury, and rebottling, calmly awaited the return of his friend.

The land to which the stork was flying with the maker of shadows

is so seldom visited that, should you look in the very largest atlas, the probability is you would not find it. It is hemmed in by a natural rampart of high mountains, and the country beyond is full of fissures, and clefts, and chasms dangerous and treacherous. Solitary, inaccessible, under the light of garish sun or silver moon, in the heat of summer or cold of winter, the jolliwog might well smile a smile expressive of peace and security, as he basked by the side of a big crevice close to his home. Yes! he smiled, and closed his eyes in sleep.

But he would not have felt so comfortable had he been aware of the threatened danger, for the stork with its rider flew overhead, keeping a sharp look-out below. To and fro, and hither and thither, they had gone, and every inch of ground they had narrowly examined, but never a sign of the jolliwog! They were tired and almost ready to give it up, when the bird spied the object of their search, and giving the maker of shadows the joyful news, swooped downwards.

"He jumped down the crevice" (p. 20).

Perhaps the jolliwog heard the sound of the wings, perhaps the uncorking of the bottle of greased lightning aroused him ; at any rate he woke up in a fright, and jumped down the crevice.

But quick as were his movements, the greased lightning was quicker, and caught him on the wing.

The maker of shadows then deftly extracted his eye-tooth, and wrapping it carefully in tissue paper put the parcel in his breast pocket. Then the two returned in great glee to the land of Common-Sense.

It may be imagined what mutual congratulations passed between the two friends when the maker of shadows reached the capital. The bottles were produced, and, a neat hole being made in the jolliwog's tooth, it was threaded with the hog's bristle. Then they fell to pounding and mixing all the ingredients in a mortar as they quickly counted ninety-nine.

This done, they awaited a change of weather, as the spell could only be broken during a thunderstorm.

One day it was close and threatening ; the longed-for storm was evidently not far off. On the morrow the atmosphere was stiflingly oppressive, but though there was no air stirring, all along the eastward horizon a frowning black rampart of clouds reared itself, slowly mounting higher and higher until it blotted out the sun. Birds with startled cries flew hither and thither, and folk out of doors, after a glance at the angry sky, hurried to get under cover. Then it was completely dark, and Nature seemed to hold her breath in awful expectation.

Suddenly from out of the gloom there came a vivid flash of lightning, almost blinding in its intensity, and then the thunder pealed in a succession of crashes which made the houses shake. Great drops of rain as big as pennies splashed on the ground.

Faster and faster came the rain, and the thunder roared till it was deafening, and the gutters of the town were like mountain torrents.

At midnight the two adventurers prepared to sally forth, each taking a part of the mixture, for they divided the charm between them. There was a sulphurous smell in the air, and the dazzling flashes of lightning rather confused the sight than helped to show the way.

Now when they reached the narrow causeway it wanted but five minutes to one o'clock, so binding their upper lips to prevent a sneeze, they began their perilous passage. The wind roared and they could hardly stand against it, so they crouched on all fours, and held on like

"A troop of gigantic cats, with flashing eyes" (p. 22).

grim death. Half way across, so fearful a gust assailed them that they were all but hurled into the depths below.

Suddenly above the thunder resounded a mighty crash! The portcullis was raised, and the black omnibus with its ghastly freight, and the Kofer in yellow tights and lavender tie lashing the griffins, issued from the gloomy portal and galloped across the causeway.

The two friends seizing their opportunity hurried forward, and entered beneath the portcullis before it fell. Immediately the turret clock boomed ONE! The maker of ghosts at once opened his bottle and sprinkled the door, whilst his friend sprinkled the courtyard floor.

As they did so, the earth suddenly yawned beneath them, and from it rose a dense cloud of cayenne pepper, the dust of chillies, and the most powerful snuff. Fortunate it was that they had bandaged their upper lips, otherwise they must inevitably have sneezed!

But half the mixture had been sprinkled when there was heard a hurried scampering and fearful howling, and a troop of gigantic cats with flashing eyes, rolling tongues, and all aglow with internal fires, sprang upon them from the front.

To await their approach seemed like courting instant destruction, but, remembering the warning in the verses of the charm, they went on with their business, although their hair stood on end, their teeth chattered, their blood ran cold, and the very marrow of their bones was chilled.

As the last particle of the mixture was used, there came a blinding flash of lightning, and the maker of ghosts and the maker of shadows fell at full length and knew no more.

When they recovered consciousness they could not at first recognise their surroundings. The storm had passed, the air was clear, and the silver radiance of the moon shone softly on wall and tower. No horrid cats were to be seen, no fearful sounds were to be heard, for the charm had wrought its magical effect, and the castle was completely disenchanted.

The joy of the king may be imagined. With a total disregard of etiquette, he immediately hurried off with his sweetheart to the castle to confirm the good news with his own eyes. The Chancellor of the Exchequer too examined the cellars, and found them filled with common-sense beyond his most sanguine expectations.

The king's marriage was forthwith celebrated. It was followed by a banquet to which the maker of ghosts and the maker of shadows were specially invited, and, as the most honoured guests, occupied seats to the right and left of the royal pair.

His Majesty made a speech in which he warmly thanked and praised the two strangers, and he wound up by confirming his promise of a third of his kingdom as a reward for their memorable services.

The maker of ghosts, responding for himself and his friend, prudently declined the offer as not being suitable to their station, and respectfully suggested that common-sense would be of more service to them. The request was at once granted in a most liberal spirit; and thus was laid the foundation of the fortunes of the maker of ghosts and the maker of shadows.

THE MINES OF EXPERIENCE.

Being the Further Adventures of the Maker of Ghosts and the Maker of Shadows.

THE maker of ghosts and the maker of shadows had little to do in the way of preparation on leaving the capital of Common-Sense. Their ghost and shadow samples were done up in brown-paper parcels, while their breeches pockets bulged with the common-sense they had gained. From the first they had made up their minds to adopt a straightforward policy; so straight forward they went, and that took them on the road to Puzzledom.

After walking the greater part of the day they got into a fog, which gradually became denser, and at last rose like a wall before them. The highway ended abruptly; but they groped forward until they were brought up by what seemed to be the bottom rung of a huge ladder.

"Hem!" exclaimed the maker of shadows, "skywards, eh? I'll venture a little way up!"

He had only climbed a step or two, however, when down he came with a run.

"What's the matter?" asked the maker of ghosts anxiously.

"Why, 'things are not what they seem,' as the poet says. There are the steps plain enough apparently, but when I went to take hold of them I pawed the air and seemed to lose my footing in the fog. I believe the ladder's bewitched!"

"I'll tell you what!" cried the other. "We're beyond the bounds of Common-Sense. But it is late; let us, therefore, rest to-night where we are, and in the morning very likely the mist may be gone."

This sensible advice was acted upon. Curling themselves up in shadows to keep off the damp, they slept soundly until a loud "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" awoke them.

"That sounded like a good honest crow," said the maker of ghosts. "But was it the voice of a Common-Sense fowl?"

"I can't tell," said he of the shadows; "but I do know that I'm hungry. Let us eat, and leave exploring until afterwards."

So they sat down to breakfast. Now, just as they had finished they heard someone coming, and as he came he sang:

"Twisted himself into a note of interrogation."

"Who to Puzzledom would get,
Caius epistolam scribet;
He or she, or it, or that,
Balbus carmen cantabat,
Has to find a guide and key,
X Y Z and W V:
Rich or poor, whoe'er you be,
U T S and R Q P.
Mind you come in time for tea.
Twenty-seven's the cube of three.
If you're wise you'll come before.
Sixteen is the square of—Hello!"

"Good-morning," said the maker of ghosts. "Will you kindly direct us to Puzzledom?"

"Willingly," replied the Puzzler. "Bisect the foot of the ladder, which makes the first declension; the inflatus of the hypothenuse of its parabolic curve should give the centre of the square." He paused, and then added: "Pardon me, I see that you are strangers: with your permission I will call a key-spook."

And, having done so, the obliging Puzzler wished them a pleasant journey.

They turned to the spook. That worthy carried a large bunch of keys at his girdle. His nature was simple and confiding; he was, in fact, so plain and transparent that you could easily see through him. Never for a moment still, he fidgeted about, tying his arms and legs into knots, and then untying them again. And now he said nothing, but twisted himself into a note of interrogation.

"Puzzledom," said the maker of ghosts promptly.

The spook nodded, and producing from his girdle the key to the situation, he led the two friends on until, the mist clearing, they saw, at a short distance before them, the town of Puzzledom. They closely followed their guide along a maze-like path, where high trees on every side hid the landscape. Sometimes the party had to return upon their steps. Sometimes they trod underground passages; but at

last, after going through a longer tunnel than usual, they suddenly saw daylight and stepped into the middle of the market-place.

This fine square resolved the mystery of ages, for philosophers have always held that it is impossible to square the circle. Here was a circle squared, for the eye could not tell whether this large space was a circle or a square.

The number of Puzzlers to be seen was quite astonishing. Collected in groups of twos and threes, they eagerly asked or tried to solve riddles. Of these there were many sorts ; and it was the occupation of some to sift the riddles just as it is the occupation of others elsewhere to sift thistles.

But the key-spook had twisted himself into a note of interrogation again, and the maker of ghosts asked him if he knew of any place where they could stay, as the town seemed so full. He looked perplexed, then, having stood on his head to collect his ideas, said :

"I think I know of a ground-gnome,
Within whose house you'd feel at home."

"The very thing," said the two friends ; "lead on, Mr. Spook, we follow."

Their guide took from his bunch another key, and opened a subterranean door. The passage in which they now found themselves was large enough for them to stand upright in. A short way off they saw a glimmer of light : here was the house of the ground-gnome.

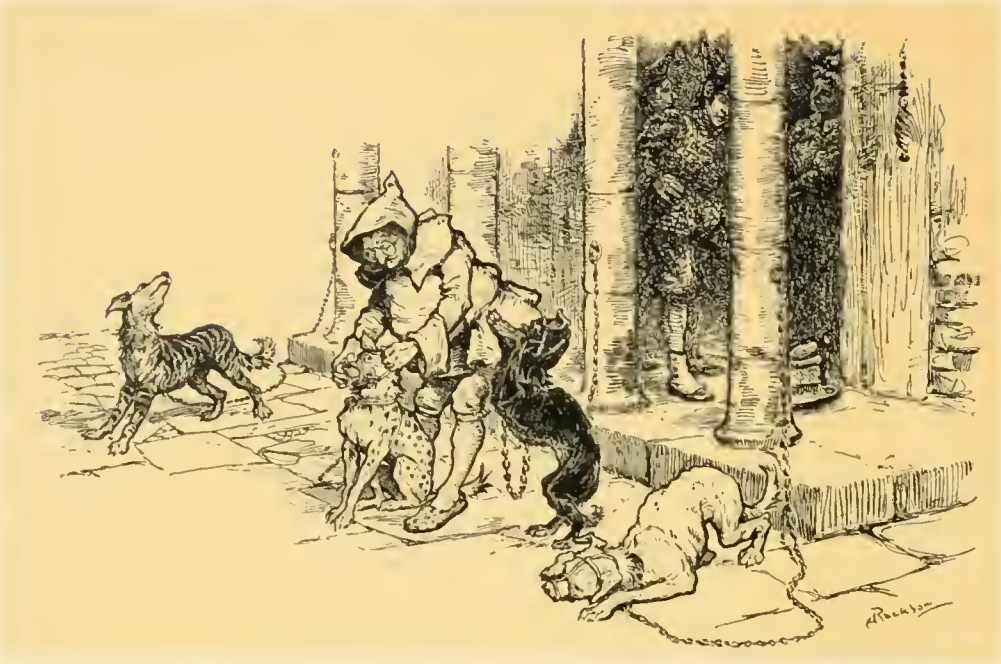
Reaching the end of the passage, the spook tapped at a door, when a voice bade them enter. So doing, they passed into a cheerful room filled with the soft light of innumerable glow-worms.

The ground-gnome was a comfortable fatherly body, and he agreed to accommodate the maker of ghosts and the maker of shadows for a moderate quantity of common-sense. Both he and the spook showed quite an interest in the strangers, and made free—in a kindly way—to ask them their object in coming to Puzzledom.

So they said they were seeking their fortunes, that they had got a good deal of common-sense, but hardly knew what to do next.

Hearing this, the spook got quite excited, tied his limbs in the most astonishing knots, and at length said to the ground gnome :

"Mustard-pot and pepper-castor,
What about your worthy master ? "



"The ground-gnome began to muzzle the dogs" (p. 27).

"True," said their host; and then he explained, "I am an attendant-gnome, you know, and wait upon my master, Sir Oracle. Now, he is so wise that no doubt he could tell you what to do next. Mr. Spook is quite right, and you couldn't do better than consult him."

"And if," put in the friendly spook eagerly,

"In his advice you don't agree,
You need not pay his moderate fee!"

"Well, what do you think?" said the maker of shadows to his friend.

"Why, we've profited so much by wise advice in the past, and this is such a fair suggestion that I think we'd better accept it. Pray where does Sir Oracle live, and when could we see him?"

"Oh, he's to be seen now, I expect," said the ground-gnome. "If you like, I'll take you to his house at once."

And the obliging spook said—

'Until your footsteps you retrace,
I'll be custodian of the place."

So the three set out together.

The house they sought was in a retired side-street. In front was a portico supported by four pillars, and to each pillar a dog was chained. The first dog was white, the second black, the third spotted, and the fourth striped. Over the portico was written in large letters—

"I am Sir Oracle, and When I Speak Let no Dog Bark."

The ground-gnome began to muzzle the dogs one after another, and whilst he did so the maker of ghosts and the maker of shadows sent in their cards.

They were shown into Sir Oracle's study, which was built of india-rubber to ensure perfect quiet. Having made known their wishes, the learned individual pondered a few moments, then wrung his hands, and the ground-gnome answering the summons, he said briefly—

"Wind me up, if you please."

The ground-gnome dipped a large towel in water, squeezed it out, and wound it round his master's head. By his side he placed a cup of the strongest coffee and his long pipe ready to his hand. Then, motioning to the maker of ghosts and his friend, they all retired, and left the sage to his meditations.

"When the wisdom begins to ooze from every pore," explained the ground-gnome, "Sir Oracle will smoke; as he smokes the wisdom will enter the smoke wreaths, and you can then take down the message in writing."

They waited outside on the doormat; every now and again the attendant-gnome put his eye to the keyhole. At length he beckoned and whispered, "Enter, and take the answer."

So the two went in on tiptoe alone. It was an impressive sight. There sat Sir Oracle, the empty cup before him, his eyes closed, and the smoke wreaths from the first whiff hovering above his head until it settled on the ceiling in the form of a word. So smoke wreath succeeded smoke wreath and word word, until the answer was there plainly to be read—

"Who'd Fortune woo
Must have these two—
Common-sense,
Experience."

After taking down the rhyme, the maker of ghosts and the maker

of shadows looked again at the ceiling—it was bare; they glanced at Sir Oracle—he slept. So they withdrew on tiptoe as they had entered.

"Well," said the attendant-gnome, "how did you get on? Ah, yes," he continued, when the rhyme was shown to him, "you'll have to work in the Mines of Experience."

"But where are the mines, and how do we get there?" asked the maker of shadows anxiously.

"Oh, my master's fee includes a ticket of admission to the mines, but if you take his advice you have hard work before you."

"The advice is wise," said the two friends, "and we gladly accept it."

"Pluckily spoken," replied the attendant-gnome; "and now I'll unmuzzle the dogs so that they may bark approval."

Which they did, and made the welkin ring.

A few days passed in uneventful travelling, and then the maker of ghosts and the maker of shadows knew by the look of the country that they were close to the Mines of Experience.

Here and there notices appeared, such as—

"TO BE SOLD CHEAP.
BANKRUPT STOCK. RARE OLD EXPERIENCE."

"A FEW GOOD WAREHOUSES TO LET FOR STORING EXPERIENCE."

"WANTED, NEW EXPERIENCE BY A MINOR."

"USE THE SAFETY-LAMPS OF PATIENCE AND HOPE.
NONE OTHERS GENUINE."

And now, having reached the end of their journey, the two friends gave up their ticket and determined to get to work at once on the common-sense principle of "Don't put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day." Having, therefore, changed their clothes for miners' dress, they took basket, pick, and safety-lamp and sought the mouth of the shaft.

The descent was by means of upright ladders, five-and-twenty in number; and the lower down they got, the more difficult was their progress. The walls of the shaft dripped with moisture, and the rungs of the ladders were often damp and slippery. Now and then, too, a rung was missing, so that they had to be very careful of their footsteps. When they reached the level ground at the bottom of the shaft they

rested awhile to get their breath, and, as they did so, watched their fellow-miners busily at work. Then they set out in a straightforward direction as usual. They went a long way, their object being to get beyond the crowd and strike some fresh and rare experience for themselves.

Having reached an out-of-the-way part of the mine, they began to use their picks on some splendid-looking ore. It was very hard work indeed, and they spent the greater part of the day in their efforts. Then, shouldering their well-filled baskets, they started for the bottom of the shaft.

After they had gone some way—

"Hello!" exclaimed the maker of ghosts, who was leading, "here are two passages. Which shall we take?"

"Oh!" said the other, "this one, to be sure, as it leads straight forward."

"Hem!" said the maker of ghosts, "I thought myself the other straight forward; but on second thoughts, no doubt you are correct."

So the two plodded on. But some distance further, again two passages showed themselves. The maker of shadows looked puzzled.

"I'm afraid we're getting a little mixed," he observed.

"No," replied the ghost maker; "this is evidently the straightforward path. We shall be at the foot of the shaft directly, you'll see."

Still they plodded on, and still no sign of the bottom of the shaft.

"I don't hear a sound," said the shadow maker. "Hadn't we better go back?"

"Perhaps we had," replied the maker of ghosts, "though I don't like to be beaten."

But alas! their efforts only ended in weariness and disappointment. To crown their misfortunes *both their lamps went out*, and thus they were left in the dark and completely lost.

"How foolish we were not to bring a few candles with us!" said the maker of ghosts.

"How foolish we were to come so far and trust to our wits without even a plan of the mines, which, I daresay, we could have easily got!"

They shouted for help, but the echoes seemed only to mock them. Time passed: they were hoarse with calling, and knew not what to do. They had nothing to eat and nothing to drink. Afraid to move for fear of falling into some unknown pit, afraid to stay still lest they should slowly starve to death, their plight was indeed terrible.

"Danced with glee."

Just when they were at their wits' end they thought they could see afar the faint glimmer of a light. Nearer it came and nearer, and then, to their amazement, an old and yellow dwarf stood before them. He was dressed in knee breeches, a dress coat, and scarlet waistcoat. He wore a pigtail, and his head was covered with a fool's cap of vivid green, surmounted by a firefly lantern. He looked at them narrowly, and then danced with glee, chanting in a shrill voice the while—

"Lost, ha, ha! Lost, ho ho!
They can't tell which way to go!"

"Yes," said the maker of ghosts sadly, "we are indeed lost. Good sir, will you kindly direct us to the bottom of the shaft?"

The dwarf still danced, but to a different tune.

"Lost, lost, lost, lost!
What will not your experience cost?
What have you got, and what will you pay
The yellow dwarf if he shows you the way?"

The maker of ghosts and the maker of shadows offered him their

baskets. He pounced eagerly upon their contents, then pulled a wry face and fell to dancing again.

"This is no good! If you'd go hence
Fork out a peck of common-sense!"

"All right, good sir," said the maker of shadows. "Guide us to within sight of the bottom of the shaft and you shall be paid in full."

The dwarf hesitated, though he still kept up dance and chant.

"Nothing venture, nothing win!
Oh! what a plight these two are in!"

Then he became more serious, saying—

"Agreed, agreed!
Follow my lead."

The dwarf went on so rapidly that the maker of ghosts and his friend had much ado to keep him in sight. However, after a long time of doubling and twisting, they gained the bottom of the shaft, although they could not have told it in the dark had not their hands grasped the ladders.

Directly they had paid their strange guide disappeared, and the two friends had to wait until morning, when their fellow-miners descended with their lamps, before they could see their way to regain the surface of the earth. But when they showed their dearly bought ore to an experience dealer, he said it was too common to be worth anything!

Well, the two friends felt very mortified, but it was no use to be discouraged. They laid out some common-sense in a good plan of the mines, and then hurried off to the mouth of the shaft again. By this time the morning was well advanced, and they made all the haste they could in descending the ladders.

They got as far as the twenty-fifth, when the maker of ghosts, who was leading, missed his footing and fell plump down the rest of the way. His friend, who, in his haste, followed too close behind him, slipped also and shared the same fate, so that both lay sprawling on the ground, badly bruised and shaken.

Their heavy fall dislodged some of the ore in the side of the shaft, and they managed to fill one of their baskets with it; but, on trying to stand, they found that they were so badly hurt that they had to shout for help.

They were hoisted with difficulty to the mouth of the shaft and taken to the hospital. There they had to stay for a whole weary month, being, indeed, fortunate to have escaped with so little injury.

"His friend . . . slipped also" (p. 31).

During this time they got someone to take a sample of the ore to the experience dealer for his opinion.

"What is it worth?—That!" said the honest man, snapping his fingers.

They now felt so very doleful that the doctor going his rounds noticed it, and asked what troubled them. They told him.

"You can't complain that you have not got any experience now," said he, with a smile, "only you've not got the right sort. Still, you've secured a plan of the mines, and you'll probably be more careful in future, and not be so sparing in the way of common-sense. By-the-bye, what picks and spades do you use?"

They told him, and he gravely shook his head, remarking—

"Oh, there's no common-sense in them: you must have better, in order to succeed." And he passed on.

Altogether this month of idleness was a gain to them, for it made them think, and they determined that they would go to work more wisely in future.

On the day they left the hospital and returned to their lodgings they found that someone had been inquiring about them. As they were wondering who it could be they heard a tap at the door, and—who should enter but the ground-gnome!

"I only arrived to-day," he said. "Well, how are you getting on? Fairly on the road to fortune?"

Of course they had to own their failure and tell him of their accident.

"But," they asked, "how came *you* to be here?"

"Oh, I wanted a holiday, and as Sir Oracle consented to spare me, I thought I might as well come and join you if you will allow me."

They were all of them thoughtful for a time.

"Yes," said the ground-gnome, following out his train of ideas, "to get the right sort of experience is not always easy. Now, I ought to know a good deal about underground ways, and if——"

He paused without concluding the sentence.

"If what?" asked the maker of ghosts.

"Oh," returned the other with a smile, "I was only wishing that we could come across the yellow dwarf."

"What?" cried both his hearers together.

"Why, the dwarfs, you know, are splendid miners; they've got all the best experience."

The maker of ghosts and the maker of shadows rapidly related their adventure.

"Well, now," said the ground-gnome, "your experience may not prove so dear after all. The thing is to hit on a plan. The dwarfs only work at night, and vanish at daybreak. What we want is to find out *where* they work. Let's see—one of you is by occupation a maker of ghosts and the other a maker of shadows? I thought as much. Can either of you crow? Very good: I'll tell you my idea; then let us three lay our heads together, and for once, I think, we'll astonish the yellow dwarf."

Several days were now spent by the three in laying their plans. The maker of ghosts made a large cock, the maker of shadows a big dark shadow, whilst the ground-gnome saw to his glow-worms, looked out two pairs of goloshes, put up some small tins of compressed food essence, polished the lamps, picks and spades, and got ready three large strong baskets. One special item of the preparations was a length of fine but strong silken cord.

Now, this was their plan. They proposed to descend the shaft just before sunset and go to the gallery first worked by the maker of ghosts and his friend. From this as a starting-place they would try to find the passage in which they met the yellow dwarf. Likely enough it would prove a difficult task, nor was it probable that the plan of the mines would be here of much use; hence the wise precaution of bringing with them the silken cord, which they would unwind as they went

along, having fixed one end at the starting-point, so that it would be an unerring clue to finding their way back again. The gallery reached, the maker of ghosts would pretend to be lost and shout for help, when they hoped that the yellow dwarf would be within hearing. The shadow was brought to conceal them if necessary, and the ghost of a cock by way of precaution, as it is well known that the underground dwarfs cannot endure Chanticleer and his shrill summons. All being ready, the three made a hearty meal, and at the appointed time descended the shaft. They had little difficulty in finding the place where they had got their first experience, and then carefully made fast the end of the silken cord. That done, the maker of ghosts led the way, whilst the others, having put on their goloshes, to deaden the sound of their footsteps, followed under cover of the made shadow. After they had gone some distance, their leader paused and held up his hand. They listened, and found they could hear the sound of falling water. They were on the wrong road evidently, so went back again, rewinding the silk as they went.

Well, they made a good many trials—so many, indeed, that they were almost ready to give it up in despair. Time pressed, and as yet they had done nothing. At last, by a lucky chance, they struck the familiar gallery. Some distance along they came to a halt; the maker of ghosts advanced a few steps, put out his lamp, and began shouting for help. The others waited behind, completely hidden by the thick shadow.

Sure enough, after a great deal of shouting, a distant glimmer of light gladdened their eyes, and by-and-by, the yellow dwarf himself appeared with a pick under his arm, and clothed in his familiar dress His sharp little eyes glanced here and there, but, of course, he could only see the maker of ghosts, to whom he gave a facetious poke with the pick handle and began to chant as usual—

"Oh! what a painful sight! 'Tis plain
The gentleman is lost again.
Little Jane's uncle, and Jack's papa,
With a whobblechick wagstep and ha, ha, ha!
What have you got, and what will you pay
The yellow dwarf to show you the way?"

"I fear, good sir," dolefully replied the maker of ghosts, "that I have nothing to offer you but my very best thanks, and these I tender with all my heart."

"In spite of his protests, they bore him off."

The little man gave an ugly leer and said—

"Add to that a bushel of sense,
Mixed with the best experience;
Else for ever in slavery groan,
For I'll have ye, and work ye to skin and bone.
With a rum-tum-ti, and a rum-tum-toe,
A tee-to-tum, and a ho, ho, ho!"

And he burst into peals of laughter, dancing and snapping his long bony fingers. Then, calling some of his men about him, he pointed to the maker of ghosts, saying—

"A trespasser who cannot pay;
Seize him, and carry him away."

And, in spite of his protests, they bore him off, raising as they did so a shout of "Nepo! Nepo! Nepo!" A door opened in the wall. The dwarf and their prisoner entered, and it closed again with a bang, the echoes of which reverberated along the narrow galleries like distant thunder. The maker of shadows and the ground-gnome hurried up, but just too late to enter. They stared at each other. Here was a pretty kettle of fish!

They groped carefully along the gallery wall, but there was no sign of a door. They went down on their hands and knees; not a crack met their finger tips. Then they searched diligently with their lights. There was one place in the floor that looked a little worn; and on tapping ever so gently on the wall above, the sound seemed a bit more hollow. Even, however, if this were something more than fancy, it did not help them much. What was to be done?

They sat down and fell to serious consideration. Had anything been said that might afford a clue? The yellow dwarf's rhymes seemed part sense, part nonsense, and nothing that he had said sounded likely to be of any use, though his recalled malice added to their fears.

"What was it they called out as they led him away?" asked the ground-gnome.

"Why, ne—ne—something or other—yes, I have it, 'Nepo,'" replied the maker of shadows; "but what sense is there in that? Was it the name of someone, do you think?"

"Hem!" said the ground-gnome thoughtfully. "'Nepo,' backwards, is 'Open,' and they repeated it three times. I'll tell you what: it's a password like 'Open sesame'—probably 'Nepo' to go in, and 'Open' to come out! Let's try it."

So they said softly, just above the seemingly worn floor, "Nepo, nepo, nepo!" and behold! the concealed door in the wall slowly opened, and they went in. Then, lest it should close again with a bang, one of them propped it ajar with the spare lantern.

It was a crooked passage in which they now stood, and it gave them, fortunately, an opportunity for hiding themselves in their shadow. They hurried along some distance, their goloshes making no noise, until, by-and-by, they caught sight of a distant light and heard sounds of merriment.

The crooked passage ended in a large cavern, which had been mined in every direction by the industrious dwarfs. It was now full of the small people. They had formed a ring, hand in hand, and danced to a merry tune. In their midst was the maker of ghosts; his coat was off, and he was already hard at work wielding his pick with might and main at a hole in the ground, while at his feet was a growing heap of experience. The sweat poured from his brow with his exertions, yet if he stopped but a moment to rest, the dwarf king beat him with a knotted whip. There was not the slightest doubt that he was carrying

" He was already hard at work" (p. 36).

out his promise to make a slave of the maker of ghosts and work him to " skin and bone."

Suddenly a shadow dimmed the lights! The dancing instantly stopped, and with a dread of some impending danger the scared dwarfs crowded hurriedly together. To their horror the shade was followed by a huge cock, which flapped its wings and crowed most lustily " Cock-a-doodle-doo ! "

Out went all the lights, and, with shrill cries of alarm, the yellow dwarf and his subjects vanished.

The maker of shadows and the ground-gnome hurried to the side of the maker of ghosts. He was much exhausted, but after a time he revived, and then the maker of shadows and the ground-gnome set to work with their picks and shovels to fill their baskets with the experience.

When they had got as much as they could carry, they prepared to go ; but, on looking for the passage which they came in by, they found there were a dozen zigzag passages, all just alike ! The silk cord would

have told them in a moment what they wanted to know, but, unfortunately, they had dropped it in their excitement. Down on their hands and knees they went, and, having now so much experience, they were not long in finding the ball of silk. Hastening down the right passage, which seemed much longer than before, they discovered that the lantern had been moved and the entrance door was fast shut!

The maker of ghosts was in a terrible state of alarm, because, you see, his nerves had suffered so much. The ground-gnome too was agitated, and in vain repeated "Nepo, nepo, nepo!" for the door still remained closed. Fortunately, the maker of shadows had his wits about him and cried, "Open, open, open!" Whereupon the door in the wall *did* open, they went out quickly, and got home just before sunrise.

The whole of the day they devoted to sleep, but in the evening once more started for the dwarf's cavern. They arrived at the place where they had first fastened the silk, but found that the ball had been carried off and where before there had been only four passages there were now twenty. The dwarfs had indeed been busy.

So the three wisely gave up further search as likely to be useless, and, returning to the mouth of the shaft, went to the bank where they had placed their experience and took a fair sample of it to the market. All the dealers to whom they showed it said it was of excellent quality, but, to be thoroughly satisfied, they had it analysed, when it was found to consist of two parts of the choicest experience mixed with one part of the best common-sense, and this filled them with joy.

A small portion they set aside as a present for the kindly spook, and one third then fell to the ground-gnome as his share. To what was left they added their own store of common-sense, which now made an equal proportion of experience and common-sense. Well might the maker of ghosts and the maker of shadows congratulate each other that, after all their troubles, they were at last on the high road to fortune!

A. E. Bonser.

HARRY AND HERODOTUS; OR, TALES OF AN OLD TRAVELLER.*

I.—OF THE WONDERS OF EGYPT.

POOR Harry was disappointed of a trip to Greece, owing to illness in his family, and whilst he was moping during his parents' absence, Herodotus came upon him one day in the garden, and spent several days with him recounting tales of ancient Greece and Persia. Harry was much grieved when his entertaining friend left him, but Herodotus promised to return the next year and tell him more strange tales. It was Midsummer again, and Harry had returned from the long-deferred trip to Greece full of excitement and wonder at all he had seen. He wandered down to his favourite spot by the river side. There he sat dreaming over all he had seen, when a shadow suddenly fell across the grass. Harry looked up sharply. It was Herodotus, his old friend, in his flowing white garments, gazing down at him with his clear eyes.

Harry sprang to his feet.

"Oh, sir! Oh, Herodotus! How glad I am to see you again."

The Greek smiled.

"And I am much rejoiced to see thee."

"Didst thou visit my native country? Thou hast seen the City of the Violet Crown,† and many other spots famed in history and in song? Thou hast trod ground which the heroes trod—thou hast gazed on the mountains which witnessed their wondrous deeds, on the sea which bore them away on strange journeys?"

"Yes," answered Harry, his eyes sparkling, "and it was all far, far finer than I thought it would be. Besides, everything you had

* I have to acknowledge the valuable assistance which I have derived from the notes and translation of Herodotus by the Rev. Canon George Rawlinson.

† Athens was so called.

told me made it so much more interesting. In fact, I owe you no end, for Father was so pleased that I knew so much about all the old chaps you told me about that he promised me—what do you think?"

"I am no Delphic Oracle!" replied Herodotus, smiling.

"Well, he said he would take me to Egypt next year. Isn't that ripping?"

"I am glad for thee," said Herodotus, "and strange 'tis that I was about to tell thee of ancient Egypt. Even as I came towards thee I had this in my mind."

"Right away!" cried Harry. "I'm so glad you're starting."

"Well, thou knowest that the Egyptian race is one of the oldest in the world; that the record of their kings, or 'dynasties' as they are called, goeth back to three thousand years and more before the birth of Christ. In ancient Egypt the people boasted that they were the oldest race of all, but their king Psammetichus, who died in 611 B.C., was the first to undeceive them. And he did it in this wise. He took two infants and gave them to his shepherds, with strict commands to bring them up in a cottage apart from all other dwellings on the hills. None was to speak to them—only were they to have their fill of goats' milk each day. Psammetichus' commands were faithfully obeyed; and one day, two years after, when the herdsman entered the hut, the children ran towards him with outstretched hands, crying 'Becos.' At first the man took no heed of this; but after a while he told the king, who summoned the children to his presence. 'Becos' they cried again, and Psammetichus set to work at once to find what people used that word. He discovered it to be Phrygian for 'bread.' The Phrygians dwelt in Asia Minor, thou knowest. Thereupon Psammetichus declared that although the Egyptians exceeded most nations in antiquity, yet the Phrygians exceeded them."

"Those old johnnies had some first-rate ideas," said Harry approvingly, as he chewed a piece of grass and lay on his back amongst the buttercups.

"Methinks, though," said Herodotus musingly, "that the word the children spoke was sooner the cry of the goats than a Phrygian word."

"I never thought of that," said Harry. "Of course, 'becos' does sound like bleating. It's a good story, anyway."

"Thou wilt marvel," continued Herodotus, "to hear of things which existed in ancient Egypt—of inventions, of games, of customs—

"All through Egypt every man burns a lamp" (p. 42).

which point to the wisdom and civilisation of the people. Yet wilt thou *not* marvel when once thou seest the works raised by Egyptian patience and skill in the desert—the mighty Pyramids, and the calm, smiling Sphinx, who has gazed out over the wide sands for ages, with the secret of her makers locked in her stone lips."

"Tell me about them," said Harry.

"It is difficult to know where to commence, for there is so much to tell. Thou knowest the two chief gods of the Egyptians?"

"No," answered Harry.

"Thou hast not heard of Isis, the goddess with horns of a cow, wife of Osiris, who shared with Ra, the sun-god, chief place among the gods of Egypt; nor of Seth, with whom Osiris perpetually strives? Osiris thou mayest consider the good, Seth the evil in the world. Nor of Horus, son of Osiris and Isis, also a sun-god? Nor of Apis, the sacred bull, the emblem of Osiris? Nor of Serapis, the dead bull? Thou wilt hear and see much of them when thou visitest the country. The Egyptians paid much heed to the ceremonies of religion, and sacrificed to their gods—animal and vegetable sacrifices—and they burned much incense. I cannot tell thee of all their festivals and customs, but of some I will speak. One did I witness which pleased me much—the Feast of Lamps, in honour of Isis. There is one night when all the dwellers in Säro burn lights around their houses—floating wicks in saucers of salt and oil—while all through Egypt every man burns a lamp."

"How pretty it must have looked," said Harry. "Something like the Earl's Court Exhibition at night."

Herodotus looked slightly puzzled, but went on—

"But other festivals were less pleasant. In one priests and worshippers engaged in combat with wooden clubs, and oftentimes grievous hurt was caused, though I was assured that none was killed."

"What on earth did they do that for?" asked Harry, sitting up excitedly at the mention of a fight.

"It was a custom to oppose the entrance of the image of the god into the temple at the close of the day. It was also a custom at festivals of Osiris for men and women to beat themselves and even cut their faces with knives."

"How very unpleasant!" said Harry.

"The explanation of the fight," said Herodotus, "is said to be that the god Mars, who had been brought up in the temple, wanted to visit his mother, but her attendants, never having seen him, refused

him admission. Whereupon the warlike god went to a neighbouring city and rallied round him a body of men, who forced an entrance for him, and treated the attendants none too gently. Therefore a fight with clubs is appointed for this festival."

"Were the Egyptian gods at all like the Greek?" asked Harry.

"Oh, yes!" replied Herodotus, "for it is my belief that the Greek gods came, with but few exceptions, from Egypt—but this is a subject too long and too deep to speak of now. When thou readest my writings thou wilt learn much about this very question."

"I wish I could read them already," said Harry. "I believe there was some man—a poet, I think—who said he awoke one morning and found himself famous. Now, I'd far sooner wake one morning and find I knew Greek."

"Ah!" replied Herodotus smiling, "naught of value is gained save by labour. The poet had laboured, thou mayest be sure—possibly with tears and hunger—ere he attained that fame."

"I suppose so," said Harry sighing. "Please tell me some more now, Herodotus. What were the priests like?"

"They wore linen garments, and shoes of the papyrus plant, which thou knowest was a reed, and from which so many things were made by the Egyptians. And they might only eat of certain things—fish and beans they might not touch. Moreover, they bathed twice each day and twice each night, and all things for their sustenance were provided for them. They had thousands of different ceremonies, but in different parts of Egypt different customs prevailed. For instance, the Thebans would not sacrifice goats or rams, and held them sacred, while some of the Egyptians sacrificed goats in preference to sheep, and hold the cow, the emblem of Isis, entirely sacred, and so forth."

"What happened when a cow died?" asked Harry.

"The carcase was cast into the river; but when an ox died it was buried in the suburbs of the town, with one horn, or both, appearing above the ground. Then, when the body was decayed a boat came from the island of Prosopitis and collected the bones from the different cities."

"Queer notions," mused Harry.

"Animals played a great part in the life of Egypt," said Herodotus, "and when next I visit thee I will tell thee more concerning them and other strange things, ere we come to the history of the people and their kings."

"Must you go already?" said Harry, his face falling.

"Yes," replied the Greek, gathering his robes around him; "but ere I go, I pray thee remember that I tell thee many wondrous things I heard from others, but thou must not think I believe all to be true. When thou art older, thou canst search and think them out for thyself. Farewell."

And Harry stood alone among the buttercups.

II.—TELLS OF THE STRANGE CREATURES THAT DWELT IN EGYPT.

HARRY had just come back from his afternoon's work with Mr. Grey, the clergyman, with whom he was studying that summer, for he was not strong enough to go to school. He dismounted hurriedly—Harry was lucky enough to possess a pony—and ran down to the stream. He had a presentiment that Herodotus would be there. It was several days since the Greek had told him of the wonders of Egypt, and Harry was beginning to long for his friend. For once, a presentiment came true. There by the water's edge sat the Greek, wrapped in thought, and gazing at the yellow waterlilies with unseeing eyes. Harry was almost afraid to disturb him, but at the sound of a breaking twig Herodotus looked up and smiled.

"I am glad thou art here. I wondered if thou wouldst come."

"Well, I had a sort of a kind of feeling you would come," said Harry, "and so I rushed down here. I'm awfully glad to see you again, Herodotus. You see, Mother and Father are away such a lot, and I've no one to speak to except old Nurse, and I'm a bit lonely now and again."

"Yes, I can understand that thou art solitary, for thou hast neither brother nor sister, but then thou hast much to make life pleasant."

"Oh, yes," said Harry, flicking his boot with his riding whip. "Of course I have; lots of chaps would envy me, I'm sure, but I wish I had a brother."

Herodotus looked with admiring eyes at the little boy with his curly hair and dark eyes, and his upright figure, which riding clothes set off so well.

"Now forget thy sorrows," he said banteringly, "and listen to more of my traveller's tales."

Harry sat down on the grass, clasped his arms round his knees—a favourite position of his—and fixed his eyes on Herodotus' face.

"Special food was prepared for him" (p. 47).

"I'm longing to hear more about those old Egyptian fellows," he said.

"Well, one peculiarity which will interest thee since thou comest from thy studies is the writing of the Egyptians. They had two kinds —one sacred and one common—the one used by the priests being called *hieratic;* the one used by anyone who could write being *demotic.* Moreover, they wrote from right to left, and not from left to right, as thou and I do now, though of old we also wrote from right to left. Thou hast no doubt seen some of the Egyptian writing, which thou wouldst call *hieroglyphics,* and in which the letters and words are chiefly represented by pictures."

"I suppose I could see it on Cleopatra's Needle?" said Harry. "It stands down by the river in London, you know. Mother told me it came from Egypt. It must have wanted a jolly big ship to bring it over."

"I have seen it," said Herodotus; "with the sphinxes guarding it on either side. Now, lest I weary thee, I will tell thee of the animals of Egypt, for, like all boys of thy race, I have no doubt thou lovest all animals."

"Ra—ther!" said Harry; "you should see my guinea—— No, I won't interrupt, for I want to hear you speak. Were they kind to animals in Egypt? Some people are brutes, so Father says, and treat animals shamefully."

"The Egyptians held most animals sacred," said Herodotus, smiling at Harry's outburst, "and each animal had special persons to watch over it—both men and women—what thou mightst call 'animal priests.' Thus, when a man had made a vow to a god he shaved his son's head, weighed the hair against a sum of silver, and devoted the money to purchasing food for the animal sacred to the god. Moreover, if a man killed a sacred animal intentionally, he suffered death; if unintentionally, he paid a fine. But there was no punishment save death for the killing of an ibis or a hawk."

"What awful rot!" said Harry. "As if a man's life was worth less than an animal's. I love all animals, but I can't see that."

"Nay," replied Herodotus, "I cannot see the justice, but remember that men's ideas could not be the same many thousands of years ago."

"Weren't cats very sacred in Egypt?" said Harry. "I thought I heard that they turned cats into mummies, just like people."

"Yes, thou hast heard aright. I can tell thee a strange tale

of the cats of Egypt. When a fire occurred, the people allowed it to rage itself out, while they stood round and tried to prevent the cats from being burnt. But the animals slipped past them into the flames and invariably perished. Whereupon the whole household went into mourning, and shaved their eyebrows."

"Well, I never!" said Harry, in great astonishment.

"They were buried at Bubastis—embalmed as thou sayest."

"Father knows a man who has some cat mummies, I believe," said Harry. "I must get him to show them to me. They must be funny things to have about the house. Please tell me some more animal yarns, Herodotus."

"Dogs, hawks, and shrew-mice, and, of course, ibises, were buried in sacred spots; but wolves and bears, of which there were but few, were buried where they were found."

"And the crocodiles: what happened to them?"

"Ah! there was a difference in their case. Some Egyptians considered them sacred, others as a foe. Some of them—those who dwelt near Lake Mœris—tamed one special crocodile, and put rings of gold in his ears, and bracelets on his forefeet. Special food was prepared for him, and when he died there was great ceremony. The people of Elephantine, however, did not hold them sacred, but ate them."

"It must be pretty difficult to catch a crocodile," reflected Harry.

"I will tell thee one mode of capture. A piece of pork was placed upon a hook and flung into the centre of the stream, while a man upon the bank beat a pig. The cries of the pig attracted the crocodile, who swam towards the shore, came upon the pork, swallowed it, and was then dragged to land and killed."

"Rather a good idea," said Harry. "Ugh! they do look such brutes. I've seen them at the Zoo."

"They are indeed terrible. Only one creature fears them not—that is the bird called the trochilus. It happens that the crocodile, owing to its living in the water, has his mouth infested with leeches. When he comes out of the water and lies upon the land he opens his jaws and lies with them thus, facing the west. Then the trochilus flies into the crocodile's mouth and devours the leeches, greatly to the relief of the animal, who does not harm the bird."

"That is *most* interesting," said Harry. "Not very pleasant, though, for the tro—troch—what d'you call him?—trochilus, if the crocodile shut his mouth by mistake."

"I do not think that occurred often," replied Herodotus smiling. "I did not see it, that I can tell thee."

"And what next, Herodotus?" urged Harry. "I love these animal stories."

"Hast thou heard of the phœnix?"

"No," said Harry, "I can't say I have. Was it animal, vegetable, or mineral?"

"It was a bird," replied the Greek; "a sacred bird, which I have never seen save on pictures. That is not surprising, for the Egyptians say it comes but once in five hundred years, when the old phœnix dies. Its feathers are partly red and partly golden, and it resembles an eagle."

"Five hundred years," mused Harry. "That's a good innings."

"I have heard a strange story of the phœnix, which I fear me is not true. I was told that it journeys from Arabia with the body of its parent, which it places in the Temple of the Sun. And the manner of bringing it is this. It makes a large ball of myrrh (which is a spice thou knowest), as heavy as it can carry. Then it hollows it out, places the parent's body inside, plasters the hole up, and bears the ball along to Egypt."

"It does sound rather like a fairy tale," said Harry. "Now I come to think of it, I do believe I've heard of the phœnix. I think Father once told me about a red and gold bird that made its own funeral pile —I think he called it—and then set fire to it, and was burnt up, singing all the time, and then came to life again out of the ashes. Can I be dreaming?"

"Nay," replied Herodotus, "I, too, have heard that story."

"And I've seen a picture of some Fire Insurance thing with a phœnix on it, I believe. Can you just draw me a picture of it?"

Herodotus took out his waxen tablets and stilus, and drew a rough sketch.

"Yes, that's it," cried Harry. "You know a fire insurance is a place where you pay some money every year, and if your house is burnt down they pay you, so it's a jolly good trade mark to have a phœnix."

"Yes," replied Herodotus, who seemed *rather* mystified at Harry's strange description!

"Any more animals?" asked Harry.

"Winged serpents, I was told, had lived in Egypt, and I myself journeyed to Buto to see if this were true. There I was shown ribs and back-bones without number at the entrance to a narrow pass in the

mountains, which leads to Arabia. I was told that in the springtime the winged serpents come flying from Arabia to Egypt, but are met by the ibises, who destroy them all. Therefore I saw none living."

"Well, there are flying-fish," said Harry, "so why shouldn't there be flying snakes? I shouldn't like to meet one. A crawling snake must be bad enough—just fancy what a flying snake must be, especially if it's poisonous."

"And now I have no more to tell thee of animals, but will speak to thee of the customs of the Egyptians and other things. What thinkest thou of their custom at banquets? When the feast was ended in the house of a rich man, a servant went round to each guest with a coffin containing the wooden image of a corpse, carved and painted to represent nature as far as possible. To each in turn he showed the image and said: 'Gaze here, and drink and be merry, for when you die such will you be.'"

"What a very strange idea," said Harry, and he was quite thoughtful for a moment or two.

"To me it was a beautiful idea," said the Greek. "Men think too little of the flying hours, and act as if they were to live for ever. It is well to be reminded of what is the fate of all, lest we linger too long at the banquet. But thou needst not brood over such things now. When thou art older thou wilt have time for such thoughts. Meanwhile, enjoy the sunshine and the green leaves, and be happy—that is thy task."

There was a silence for a few minutes.

"I am thinking of what will interest thee most from out the many stories I can tell thee. Thou shouldst know that in one custom the Egyptians resembled a Greek people—the Lacedæmonians—they who dwelt in Sparta. They had great respect for age, and when a young man met an old man in the street he stept aside to let him pass, or if an old man came in when a young man was present the latter rose from his seat."

"We're taught to do that, too," said Harry.

"The Lacedæmonians alone of all the Greeks practised this—a custom of much value," said Herodotus. "But in one custom they differed from us all. On meeting in the street they did not greet each other by word of mouth, but bowed, sinking the hand to the knee."

"And what did they wear?" asked Harry.

"Chiefly linen garments—a tunic fringed about the legs, and some-

times a white woollen garment over this. But they did not like woollen garments, and never wore them in the temples or were buried in them."

"It does seem so strange to think of wool and linen and all the things we use now being just as common in those days," said Harry. "And I saw in a book, yesterday, pictures of some Egyptians weaving and cooking, and doing things very much as we do now. Oh, bother the gnats! How they do sting!"

And Harry made a frantic grasp at the air.

Herodotus smiled.

"Thy friends the Egyptians had devised a plan to defeat the attacks of the gnats. In certain parts of Egypt they slept in high towers out of the reach of these pests, but in other parts they spread the nets with which they fished by day over their beds at night, and crept beneath them and slept secure from the insects."

"Why, that's like the mosquito nets they have nowadays," said Harry in surprise. "It seems to me they had everything we have."

"Many things—not all things," said Herodotus, as the sound of a motor-car, panting up the drive, reached their ears. "They had not such strange engines in my day. Doubtless friends of thine await thee. Farewell."

And he was gone.

"Bother!" cried Harry. "I wonder when he'll come again."

III.—CURIOUS CUSTOMS AND STRANGE STORIES.

THE motor-car which cut short Herodotus' last visit was one belonging to Harry's Uncle Peter, and Uncle Peter himself was inside it, as well as his son—Harry's cousin Dick. Uncle Peter had come to carry Harry off for a Saturday to Monday motor tour, and, sorry though he was to miss Herodotus, the thought of such a novel experience was a very pleasant one, and Harry was in a wild state of excitement when they set off. His old nurse had hurriedly packed up a few things and stood on the doorstep side by side with the butler and the footman, her eyes turned up to heaven and her hands uplifted, as the motor whisked out of sight at a rate of twenty miles an hour.

"I trust I may see my precious lamb again," she said, as she turned indoors; "but I have my fears."

So had the butler, but he did not like to say so, for fear of being thought old-fashioned.

But the footman laughed.

And lo and behold ! back came Harry on Monday morning, bubbling over with excitement at their various adventures, and not at all the worse for them. Mr. Grey had a very restless pupil that morning, and he breathed a sigh of relief when he heard the pony carrying Master Harry away.

Harry rushed down to the stream as soon as he had finished his lunch, and was much disappointed not to see Herodotus. He threw himself down on the grass, and tried to "possess his soul in patience." But the minutes seemed to crawl by, and at last he sprang up, saying :

"He's not coming ; what a beastly bother ! " when he suddenly saw Herodotus at his side. His frown cleared, and he smiled up at the Greek.

"I thought you weren't coming," he said.

"In good truth thou didst appear sad," replied Herodotus. "It pleases me that thou dost so greatly enjoy our discourses. And what hast thou done and seen since last we met ? "

Whereupon Harry plunged into an account of the motor trip, to which Herodotus listened with much interest.

"I have seen these strange machines," he said, "and have little admiration for them. A chariot pleaseth me more. And now let us to our morning's discourse."

"What are we going to talk about ? " asked Harry.

"We had completed the strange animals of Egypt, methinks," replied the Greek. "Now will we turn to other strange matters. Methinks I have not touched on the custom of embalming."

"No," said Harry ; "I don't think you have. That's got to do with mummies, hasn't it ? "

"Yes," replied Herodotus ; "thou knowest, perchance, that the Egyptians preserved the bodies of their dead—from the highest to the lowest in the land."

"Oh, yes," said Harry. "I've seen the mummies in the British Museum, and jolly interesting they are, too."

"Then will I not speak more of this custom, for I have much more to tell thee. Hast thou heard of the lotus flower ? "

"No," said Harry.

"Thou must remember that. It is a water lily which grows in Egypt after the Nile floods, and the ancient Egyptians gathered the blossoms, dried them in the sun, and crushed the centre of each flower

into a flour, of which they made bread. This was for economy's sake. The root, too, of the lotus they did eat—it had a very agreeable taste. Why laughest thou ? "

"You made such a beastly bad pun," said Harry. "Didn't you notice ? You said they crush the centre of each flower into a flour. Please excuse me ; perhaps you didn't have puns in Greek."

It was Herodotus' turn to smile now.

"No puns ! Ah, my boy, wait till thou readest our plays."

"I'm longing to," said Harry, "especially if they're funny. But I'm sorry I interrupted you, Herodotus. Please go on."

"I have not told thee much of the Nile. Thou knowest that every year it overflowed. 'Twas a strange sight. Nowadays thou hast heard that men have set dams which prevent it ; but of old the whole country was under water, and the cities appeared like islands floating in it. In those days thou couldst sail from the sea-coast town of Canôbus across the plain to Naucratis, past the cities of Anthylla and Archandropolis. It will amuse thee to hear that the city of Anthylla was given to the wife of the ruler of Egypt to keep her in shoes. This custom exists from the days of the Persian conquest."

"Why, that's something like what Father once told me. Let me think ; what was it ? Oh, I know. It was about 'pin money.' In olden times, I believe, pins were so dear that people used to give their wives money for them—a sort of allowance, I think, they call it ; and that's how people come to speak of 'pin money' nowadays."

Herodotus did not seem to understand much of this discourse, but he smiled blandly, and went on :

"Now will I begin to tell thee something of the history of Egypt. Till now I have told thee of things I have myself seen or discovered by enquiry. But what follows was told me by the Egyptians.

"The first king of Egypt, I was told, was called Mên, but the date of his reign is lost in the mist of ages. It was he who built a dyke to protect Memphis from the Nile floods, so thou seest, as one said of old, 'There is no new thing under the sun.'

"After Mên there followed three hundred and thirty kings and one queen, who was called Nitocris."

"Oh, wasn't there a queen of Babylon called Nitocris ? " cried Harry.

"Yes," replied the Greek, and he seemed pleased. "Strange to say, Nitocris of the Egyptians was also famed for her dealings with a river,

"Then was the thief's opportunity" (p. 55).

as thou mayest remember Nitocris of the Babylonians served her country by diverting the course of the Euphrates."

"Yes, I remember," said Harry; "and then she was buried over a gateway, with the inscription and all that fuss."

"Thou hast remembered more than I had thought. Well, this Nitocris of Egypt was set on the throne in room of her brother, who was murdered by the people. Nitocris planned revenge. She built a great underground chamber, and, on pretence of inviting the Egyptians (whom she knew had played the chief part in her brother's death) to celebrate the opening of it, she let in the river upon them while they were feasting, and drowned them all. Then she killed herself to avoid punishment.

"The next monarch of whom I will tell thee was Rhampsinitus—before him was one great conqueror and explorer-king, Sesostris, but I have not much of interest to tell thee concerning him. Rhampsinitus had great wealth, especially of silver, and in order to keep it in safety he had a great stone chamber built on to his palace. The builder, however, devised one stone which he could remove, and thus obtain entrance to the treasure-house under cover of night. When he was dying he revealed the secret to his sons, and they continued to plunder the king's treasure. Rhampsinitus at length noticed his decreasing wealth, and could not imagine how the thief obtained entrance, for the chamber seemed intact. So he set a trap near one of the jars which held his treasure, and behold! when next the thief and his brother entered the treasure-chamber one of them was fast caught in the trap. Whereupon he cried:

"'Cut off my head, oh brother, that none may know who I am when I am found, and thus thou mayest escape.'"

"Rather decent of him," observed Harry.

"The brother did as he was bid, and escaped by means of the stone, bearing the head with him. When day broke the king came into the room and found the headless body of the thief. Greatly puzzled was the king, both as to how the thief had effected entrance, and what had become of his head. So he commanded that the body should be hung up outside the palace wall, in order that any person who might appear to be grief-stricken at sight of it should be brought before him. When the mother of the thief heard of the way in which her son's body was treated, she was most unhappy, and begged her other son to find a way to rescue it.

"'Otherwise,' said she, 'will I go to the king myself and tell him all.'

"She gave him no peace till at last he devised a plan. He filled some skins with wine, placed them on donkeys, and made his way to the place where the guards were watching his brother's body. Arrived there, he opened one or two of the skins, so that the wine began to pour out. He appeared distracted at the supposed accident, so the guards rushed to help him, each bringing some vessel in which to catch the wine. The thief pretended to be very angry at their interference, but at last allowed himself to be pacified to such an extent that he presented them with some of the wine. They drank far too much of it, and soon fell fast asleep. Then was the thief's opportunity. He cut down his brother's body, shaved off the right side of each soldier's beard, and left them to awake to their folly!"

"What a smart chap," said Harry, admiringly. "He'd have made a splendid Sherlock Holmes. What happened to him?"

"Well, the king was so struck with his cleverness—for he had other adventures—that he offered him a free pardon and his daughter for his wife; so he did not do so badly after all.

"There is a strange tale told of Rhampsinitus, too, that he went down to the region which we call Hades—where those who are dead go, thou knowest—and there he played at dice with the goddess Ceres, who gave him a golden napkin when he returned to the light of day."

"That sounds a bit of a tale, doesn't it?" said Harry, with a knowing air.

"I cannot tell whether these things be true or not—I can but vouch for those things mine eyes have seen. It doth not follow that a man believes all tales he tells you. For instance, I will tell thee a strange belief of the Egyptians, but thou needest not think it is mine. They believed that when a man dies, his spirit enters into the form of an animal, and thus onwards through the ages from one to another, till it has passed through all creatures of earth, air, and water, when it at length enters into human form again. They said, moreover, that all these changes took three thousand years to achieve."

"What a strange notion," said Harry. "I shouldn't much like to become an animal, except, perhaps, a horse, or a dog—but fancy being a frog or a mouse. Ugh!"

"Well, we must part for to-day," said the Greek, wrapping his

"chiton" round him. "On the morrow I will tell thee of other strange things."

"Oh, Herodotus, I shan't be here to-morrow. I am to go over and spend the day with my granny. I'm very fond of her, and I haven't seen her for a long time; but oh! I am sorry to miss you. You'll come the day after, won't you?"

"If the sun be shining."

And Harry was once more alone by the river's brink.

IV.—TELLS OF MANY AND STRANGE KINGS.

HARRY happened to oversleep himself after his visit to his grandmother, so Herodotus was waiting for him. Harry was profuse in apologies.

"It matters not," said the Greek. "Tell me, didst thou have much pleasure yesterday?"

"Rather," said Harry. "I always enjoy myself at Granny's. But I had a near squeak of not coming back. She wanted me to come and stay with her, but I said I couldn't, because Mr. Grey will be back to-morrow, and Father always says I do nothing and forget all I know when I'm at Granny's. So I'm going to her for Christmas, and that'll be lovely. She gave me a pound, too, and I'm going to get a book all about Egypt. Not bad, was it?"

"Nay, thou art indeed favoured by fortune," replied Herodotus.

"But I'm very lonely sometimes," said Harry, wistfully. "You see, Father, and Mother are away so often, and this is a large house for only nurse and me."

"That is true," said Herodotus; "but since nothing is perfect, thou must needs take some evil with so much good."

"I s'pose so," Harry replied doubtfully. "What are you going to tell me this morning, Herodotus?"

"I will tell thee something of the Pyramids. Thou knowest it has puzzled men through the ages how such gigantic works were achieved. Cheops, the king who succeeded Rhampsinitus, was twenty years in building his pyramid. From his reign begins the misgovernment of Egypt, and the crushing down of the poor. The temples were closed, and men were set to work on hewing and dragging stones for the great buildings. A hundred thousand men were set working, and every three months a hundred thousand more took their places."

"Gracious!" cried Harry. "And how high is it?"

"Thou wouldst say 460 feet and a few inches; but in my day the outer casing was not torn away, and thus it was still larger."

"What a pity!" said Harry.

"Yes, for on it was inscribed the quantity of radishes, onions, and garlic consumed by the men who raised it."

"What awful food!" said Harry.

"Yes, to thine ears it is not pleasant, but doubtless they found it not so ill to their lips, though, 'tis true, the people were grievously unhappy."

"And who came after Cheops?"

"Chephren, his brother; but his pyramid is not so fine as Cheops'. He was hated as much as Cheops; indeed, so bitter was the memory of these two kings to the people that they would not call the pyramids by their names."

"And what happened next?"

"Mycerinus, son of Cheops, came to the throne, and speedily reopened the temples and released the people from oppression. He was said to be one of the wisest of kings, and was much beloved. But a heavy affliction fell upon him. His only child—a young daughter—died, and the king was heart-broken. In his grief he determined to raise a strange tomb to her. He had a cow made of wood, hollowed out, and covered with gold outside. Inside the cow he placed the body of his daughter."

"Poor little girl," said Harry.

"This strange tomb was kept at Saïs, in the palace, and spices were burned before it every day, while a lamp burned in the chamber all night. And once a year it was brought into the light of day; for they say that the daughter of Mycerinus, when dying, begged her father to let her once a year see the sunlight."

"Poor little girl," said Harry.

"Yet another calamity threatened Mycerinus. An oracle came to him which foretold that he would only live six years, and in the seventh year he should die. Mycerinus was very unhappy and indignant.

"'Why should this befall me?' he cried, 'who have ruled wisely and justly, while my father and uncle oppressed the people?'

"But the oracle replied:

"'Therein lies thy fault, for it was destined that Egypt should be oppressed for a hundred and fifty years. Thy father and uncle saw this, but thou wast blind.'

"Upon this Mycerinus saw his doom was sealed, so he determined

to make the most of his six years. Thus he enjoyed himself with feasting and gaiety both day and night, and travelled here, there, and everywhere in search of pleasure. He hoped in this way to cheat the oracle by turning night into day, and thus live twelve years instead of six."

"I think it was rather rough on Mycerinus," said Harry. "Don't you? Poor chap! He did his best, and all he got was bothers."

"The ways of the gods are not the ways of men," said Herodotus.

"Who was the next king?" asked Harry.

"The next one of interest was Sethôn, but before he came to the throne the Ethiopians had held the land for many years, and had driven out a blind king named Anysis; but of this I will not tell thee more. Sethôn was a priest, and he neglected and offended the army, so that when Sennacherib, King of Assyria, came down on his land the warriors would not fight for Sethôn. Then was the king in great distress, and he prayed fervently to the gods to help him. And he did not pray in vain, for an answer came in a dream, wherein he saw the god at his side, and heard him say, 'Go forth without fear.'

"So Sethôn gathered working people around him, and set out to meet the Assyrians. The two armies pitched their camp opposite each other, and waited for the morning to do battle. In the night a swarm of field mice gnawed the quivers and bow-strings of the Assyrians, and also the thongs of their shields, so that they had no weapons, and were put to flight with great slaughter."

"What a bit of luck for Sethôn," remarked Harry.

"Thou canst imagine he was grateful; a stone statue was set up in the Temple of Vulcan—Sethôn with a mouse in his hand, and the inscription ran: 'Look on me, and learn to reverence the gods.'

"After Sethôn, twelve kings ruled over Egypt, and all went well and peacefully till a certain day, when the twelve had met together to worship in the temple of Vulcan. It happened that the high priest brought by mistake eleven golden goblets instead of twelve, and Psammetichus, the king who stood last, was left without one. So he took his bronze helmet, and held it out instead. The kings were startled and enraged, for they remembered a prophecy which ran that he who should pour forth a libation from a cup of bronze in the temple of Vulcan should become king of all Egypt. The kings thought Psammetichus had done this on purpose, which was untrue. At first they wished to put him to death; but, finding he had really acted thoughtlessly, they contented themselves with banishing him."

"Poor chap!" said Harry. "But I daresay the oracle turned out all right in the end—it generally did."

"Yes," replied Herodotus, "for Psammetichus, anxious to revenge himself, consulted the oracle of Buto, and was told that 'vengeance would come from the sea, when brazen men should appear.' This did not seem very probable, and Psammetichus was much disappointed. But soon afterwards some Carians and Ionians were driven on the Egyptian coast by foul weather, and, behold! they were attired in brazen armour. Word was brought to Psammetichus, and with their help and that of other Egyptians, he advanced against his brother-kings and defeated them."

"Good business!" said Harry. "And what then?"

"I have little or nothing more to tell thee of Psammetichus. After him followed his son Necho, who is said to have been the first to construct the canal to the Red Sea, which in these days is called the Suez Canal. Thou hast heard of it?"

"Yes, rather," said Harry. "I never knew, though, that the old Egyptians had one."

"Indeed, many say that it existed in Sesostris' days, or even before. I do but tell what I was told. It is said, though, that a hundred and twenty thousand Egyptians perished in the making of it in Necho's reign.

"After Necho died, his son Psammis reigned, and I will tell thee of a strange but wise judgment, which will please thee, since it speaks of games, and I know thou art as eager for them as were ever the boys of my youth."

"Yes, the Greeks were Ai at games, weren't they? I've often heard my father speak about them, and he said that a Greek would sooner have the crown of wild olive—that was what the best man got, wasn't it?—than anything else in the world."

"It is true," replied the Greek, his eyes lighting up at the remembrance of those great days—of the purple hills, and the golden sunlight, and the vast concourse of people, and the pick of Grecian manhood striving for the olive crown.

"Well," he continued, "ambassadors came to Psammis from Elis, to obtain from the Egyptians—whose wisdom was world-famous—the assurance that the rules and arrangements of the Olympic games were perfect. The king assembled his wise men around him, and asked the boastful Eleans every detail concerning the games. At last he asked

whether the citizens of Elis were allowed to compete. The Eleans answered promptly that the lists were open to any and every Greek. Then the king said :

"It is not well, for it is impossible that you should favour one of your own citizens. Therefore, if you wish to make your games perfect, no Elean must take part in them."

"Which took them down a peg or two, I suppose ?" said Harry.

"I have no more to tell thee of Psammis ; and after him came Apries, who was dispossessed of his throne by Amasis, one of his subjects, of whom I can tell thee a story. This Amasis was at first looked down upon by his people, because he was not of royal blood. So Amasis did a clever thing. He took a golden foot-bath, in which he and his guests used to wash their feet. Then he broke it up, melted it down, and made of it an image of one of the gods. Then he placed it in the centre of the city, and all the people bowed down to it. Amasis smiled, and called all the people together.

"'This image,' he said, 'was made of a foot-bath, which you accounted of little value, but which now you bow down to. Likewise, I *was* but a private person, but *now* I am a king, and it is meet that you should do me honour.'

"The people were so pleased at this that they at once went over to his side."

"Was he a good king ?" asked Harry.

"Yes," said Herodotus, "but men found fault with him because, when his duties of State were finished, he was wont to jest and drink and feast with his friends. Indeed, some said to him that it was scarce kingly, whereupon Amasis replied :

"'The archers do not keep their bows ever tightly strung ; they slacken them when their work is finished. Likewise a king cannot for ever devote himself to heavy work, or he would lose his spirit. Thus do I divide my time between business and pleasure.'

"But, though this was well enough, it is said that before Amasis was king it was his chief delight to drink and feast, and, indeed, to such an extent that when his purse failed, he used to rob people. If he were caught and he denied having stolen, his accusers used to drag him before the oracle, which would sometimes say 'Guilty,' at other times 'Not guilty.' When he came to the throne he gave high power to those oracles which had convicted him when guilty, but he would have nothing to do with those which had proved incorrect."

" A swarm of field-mice gnawed the quivers and bow-strings " (p. 58).

"He seems to have been awfully clever," said Harry admiringly.

"Yes," said Herodotus, "and he built great buildings, of which I admire most a chamber built of a single stone, which came from Elephantine. This block was so huge that it took three years to convey it to Saïs, and two thousand people were employed in the journey. It stood in a strange position—just in front of the Temple of Minerva, and men give two reasons for this. One is that when it reached that spot the architect, thinking of the weary toil the stone had cost, heaved a deep sigh. Amasis chanced to hear it, and, regarding it as an omen, would not allow the stone to go further. Others say that one of the workmen happened to be crushed when the stone reached that spot, and therefore Amasis would not have it moved."

"Oh, you aren't going, are you?" cried Harry with unconcealed disappointment, as Herodotus rose.

"I cannot stay," replied the Greek; "I have given thee longer than is right to-day; but I will come again on the morrow."

Herodotus stood looking for a moment at his young friend. Then Harry said:

"Oh, but Mr. Grey will be home, and I shall not have a morning till Saturday."

"'Tis not so long," replied Herodotus, smiling at Harry's downcast face. "Thou wilt enjoy it all the more when it does come."

He laid his hand kindly for a moment on Harry's head, and then vanished.

Harry stood disconsolate for a moment. Then he suddenly remembered that there was chocolate pudding for lunch, and that it was a splendid day for a ride. So he raced up to the house and enjoyed the rest of the day. Herodotus had told him plenty over which he could think.

V.—THE PERSIANS AGAIN.

At last, Saturday morning came to the impatient Harry, and he was down by the river's brink before the dew was off the grass. Consequently he had some little while to wait for Herodotus, but he was not bored. Harry was a regular country boy, and the sights and sounds which are lost on the "town mouse" had an ever-fresh interest for him. The splash which marked a water-rat—the slowly widening circle which spoke of trout—the green or blue gleam of a dragon-fly—

the "susurrus" (as the Romans called it) of the wind in the trees and the reeds—these and a thousand other beautiful trifles kept Harry's eyes and ears employed. He was intently gazing at a splendid water-beetle when he became aware of Herodotus' presence, and sprang to his feet.

"That's all right," he said. "I am so glad to see you again, Herodotus."

"Thou hast ever a warm greeting," replied the Greek, smiling. "But methinks thou shouldst not sit on the damp grass. For myself, I fear it greatly, for I am no longer young, and the ills of old age may soon come upon me."

"H'm," replied Harry. "You're right. Old Nurse would be in a fit if she knew. Shall we sit on that log—I believe it's quite dry?"

Herodotus approved the idea, and Harry was soon astride of the log, gazing anxiously into Herodotus' face.

"I believe you're leaving soon," he burst out.

"Thou hast guessed rightly," replied Herodotus. "I can, indeed, give thee but one day more."

"Oh, what rot!" cried Harry, and his face fell.

"I am as grieved as thou art; but as I have often told thee, it is foolish to repine at the inevitable, and I may return again some day. Moreover, let us not waste time now, for I have much to tell thee to-day."

Harry tried to look cheerful, and prepared to listen.

"I have yet more to tell thee of Amasis, the last king of Egypt of whom I spoke. It was in his reign that it came into the mind of Cambyses, the Persian, to invade Egypt. They give various reasons for the invasion. Some say that Cyrus, Cambyses' father——"

"Oh, yes, I remember Cyrus. He conquered Babylon, and was killed in that battle against some queen or other, wasn't he?"

"Yes, Tomyris, Queen of the Massagetans. I am glad thou hast not forgotten Cyrus. Well, Cyrus sent to ask Amasis for his most skilful eye-doctor, and the man whom Amasis selected was exceedingly wroth at having to leave his wife and children. So in revenge he advised Cambyses to ask Amasis for his daughter in marriage. Amasis did not wish to send her, and consequently he played a trick on Cambyses. He loaded the daughter of the late king, Apries—her name was Nitētis, and she was very beautiful—with jewels and fine robes, and sent her to Cambyses. For some time Nitētis did not betray Amasis, but one

day she told the Persian king the truth, and Cambyses was so enraged that he determined to invade Egypt."

"I should think he did lose his hair," put in Harry. "I think it was a mean trick to play. Some of those chaps were cads."

"Others give a different story. They say that one day a Persian lady came to see Cassandanē, Cyrus' queen. She noticed how handsome her children were, and could not cease from admiring them.

"'Alas!' said poor Cassandanē. 'I would that Cyrus thought like you, for he neglects me for Nitētis of Egypt.'

"Cambyses, her eldest son, heard these words, and clenching his fists, cried in a rage, 'Mother, when I am a man I will turn Egypt upside down for you.' He was only ten years old at the time, but he kept his word."

"Well done, Cambyses!" observed Harry.

"There was another incident which assisted Cambyses. Phanes, an Egyptian, and a valiant warrior, fell foul of Amasis, and determined to desert him for Cambyses. Amasis pursued him, but he evaded the messenger by making him drunk, and eventually arrived in Persia. He gave Cambyses much useful information, and, above all, advised him to make an ally of the king of the Arabs, in order that he might traverse the desert safely. For thou must remember that in one portion of the desert which had to be crossed no water can be obtained for three days."

"Gracious!" said Harry. "Oh! I'm just longing to see the desert. But, do you know, Herodotus, I always thought it was as flat as a pancake; and now Mr. Grey, who has been there, says it is quite hilly and rocky. It rather upset my idea of it; but, anyhow, I shall soon see for myself, I hope. Please forgive me for interrupting."

"It matters not," said Herodotus, "save that I have lost the thread of my discourse. However, I will tell thee of a curious thing which occurs to me. It had often appeared strange to me that, in spite of wine being brought in earthen jars twice a year into Egypt, there was never a jar to be seen. What thinkest thou had become of them?"

"I give it up," said Harry. "It sounds to me like a riddle, and I'm no good at them."

"'Tis very simple," replied the Greek. "When the jars are empty the 'demarch,' or what thou wouldst call mayor, of the town collects all of them and sends them to Memphis. Then they are filled with water, taken into the desert, and stored there."

"Cambyses and the Arabian king pledged faith with each other" (p. 66).

"What a neat idea," said Harry.

"Yes, necessity maketh man ingenious. Well, Cambyses and the Arabian king pledged faith with each other; and an Arab, whatever be his faults, never breaks faith. When two men swear to be friends, they go through a ceremony which would astonish you, who speak of friendship so lightly."

"Yes, Father always says we talk of friends by the dozen here—one ought to say acquaintances."

"Thy father is right. Well, when Arabs swear friendship they stand one on each side of a third man, who with a stone makes a cut near the middle finger of the hand of the other two. Then he dips a piece of their dress in the blood and moistens seven stones with it, at the same time uttering a prayer. Then the man who pledges his friendship commends the other to all his friends, and they are bound to see the promise carried out."

"What a fuss," said Harry; "but I daresay it was a very good thing. Well, did the Arab king help Cambyses?"

"Yes; he loaded camels with skins of water, and drove them into the desert to await the coming of the army. Thus Cambyses crossed the desert in comfort, and pitched his camp near that of the Egyptians."

"Oh, Amasis had come out to meet him, then?"

"Nay, not Amasis, for he had meanwhile died, after a long and prosperous reign. His son Psammenitus ruled instead. Now Psammenitus did a cruel thing. Phanes, the runaway Egyptian, had left several sons behind him. The king had them brought out and slain before their father's eyes, in the space between the camps."

"There *were* some brutes about in those days," said Harry fiercely.

"Well, it profited them little," said Herodotus, "for the Egyptians were defeated grievously."

"I can't help feeling glad," said Harry.

"I must tell thee of a curious thing I noticed when I visited the battlefield. I saw the bones of those who fell still lying on the field, and the skulls of the Persians were so weak that if you struck them even with a pebble you could break a hole in them, while those of the Egyptians were so strong that you might strike with all your force and scarce break them."

"How strange," cried Harry. "How does that happen?"

"The natives told me, and it seems probable enough, that the Egyptians, when quite young, have their heads shaved and exposed

to the sun and air, which harden them ; while the Persians wear a turban from their youth, and thus the skull remains weak. Certain it is, too, that you see fewer bald men in Egypt than elsewhere."

"I must have a look when I go there," said Harry. "I'd better make some notes, Herodotus, or I'll never remember everything. Please go on now."

"After the battle the Egyptians fled to Memphis ; but they were soon compelled to surrender, and Psammenitus was taken. Soon after Cambyses determined to test the fallen king's spirit, so he first commanded his daughter to be clothed like a slave and to be sent, together with other high-born Egyptian maidens, to draw water. When they passed where Psammenitus and their fathers were seated, the poor girls wept bitterly. So did all the fathers, save Psammenitus, who, having gazed once, fixed his eyes on the ground.

"Next passed by Psammenitus' son and 2,000 Egyptians of the same age, with halters round their necks and bridles in their mouths. The unhappy fathers knew they were bound to suffer death, and they wept very bitterly, all save the king, who sat motionless as before.

"Then there chanced to pass by a friend of Psammenitus' youth—a dear friend who had been stripped of all he possessed, and now came begging from the soldiers. At this the fallen king burst into a passion of tears, and cried aloud to his friend in an agony of grief. Upon this, the messengers who had been told off to watch him hurried to Cambyses with news of this strange behaviour."

"Poor Psammenitus, I'm even sorry for him. He had his good side, it seems."

"Listen further," said Herodotus. "Cambyses sent a messenger to Psammenitus to ask him why, when his daughter and his son went by he did not weep, but when his friend went by he was overcome with sorrow.

"Psammenitus replied : 'O King, mine own griefs were too deep for tears, but the sorrows of my friend deserved them. When a man falls from position and wealth into beggary in his old age, tears are most meet.'

"Cambyses was much struck with this message, and Crœsus——"

"Our old friend ?" cried Harry.

"The same—he had come with Cambyses. Yes, Crœsus and the others standing round wept."

"Fancy Crœsus being there. I'd almost forgotten him. Poor

chap; I daresay he thought of himself when he heard Psammenitus' answer."

"It was a case much like his. Thou rememberest Cyrus spared his life at the last moment, when the funeral pyre was lighted? Well, Cambyses was so touched at Psammenitus' words that he declared his son should not die. The messengers were too late, however. The youth had already been killed."

"What hard luck!" cried Harry sorrowfully.

"Yes, in truth," replied Herodotus. "But, at any rate, Psammenitus himself was brought to the Court, and could have enjoyed a happier life than he expected, only he fell to plotting against Cambyses, and was accordingly put to death."

"That was stupid of him," observed Harry. "If I had been he I should have made the best of a bad job. Well, and what happened next, Herodotus?"

"After his conquest of Egypt, Cambyses turned his attention to the Ethiopians, who lived far south, and were noted for their wonderful strength and height and beauty. But Cambyses was wily. He did not wage open war, but sent spies to find out the strength and ways of the Ethiopians."

"What an old fox," said Harry. "And what happened?"

"Well, he sent these spies, who were taken from the Ichthyophagi, or fish eaters (a people who dwelt on what thou callest the Arabian Gulf). These Ichthyophagi knew the Ethiopian tongue, so they brought rich presents to the king—a purple robe, a gold chain for the neck, armlets, an alabaster box of myrrh, and a cask of palm wine—and declared that Cambyses wished to be their ally and friend.

"But the Ethiopian king knew better, and he said: 'It is not true. Ye are sent as a spy by your king, who is an unjust king, for he made war on a land which was not his, and on a people which had never harmed him.'"

"He seems to have been a decent sort," remarked Harry, who always had to put in his word.

"Then the king continued: 'Tell your master, when he can bend the bow which I shall send him, then let him make war on the long-lived Ethiops. Until then let him thank the gods that it is not in the minds of the Ethiopians to desire lands which are not theirs.'

"Then he unstrung the bow and handed it to the messengers."

"He was a splendid chap," said Harry. "Please tell some more about him."

"After these words the messenger displayed the gifts of Cambyses. The king wondered how the robe became purple, and when the messengers explained the dyer's art he said, 'Truly the men are deceitful, and so are their garments.'

"Ha! ha!" laughed Harry. "That was good. I wonder what he'd say now to all the imitation things!"

"Next," went on Herodotus, "the messengers showed the necklace and armlets, and explained their use.

"'We have fetters, too,' said the king, 'only ours are stronger.'

"Then they showed him the myrrh, and how it was used to anoint the limbs, and he repeated what he said of the robe. Lastly, he tasted the wine, and that of all the gifts he praised. 'What do the Persians eat?' he asked, 'and how long do they live?'

"The messengers answered that the king ate bread, and described it. They said, moreover, that eighty years was the highest age.

"'Then am I not astonished,' said the king, 'that ye die so soon, since ye eat dirt. I am sure ye would not live so long were it not for this same drink which ye have brought me.'

"But in this he was wrong, for drinking was a great vice of the Persians, and brought them much trouble.

"Then he told the Ichthyophagi that he and his people lived mostly to be a hundred and twenty years old—some even older. They ate boiled meat, and drank milk. And he showed them a fountain in which they bathed, and——

"But it grows late," broke off Herodotus suddenly. "I had not noticed how the time fled. I must not linger here another moment. When shall I meet thee for the last time?"

"I can't get off till next Saturday," said Harry, dolefully, "for I've extra work, but I'll be longing to see——"

He looked round.

Herodotus had vanished.

VI.—OFF TO EGYPT.

CONTRARY to Herodotus' expectations, Harry did not meet him with a face as long as a fiddle on the Saturday morning which was to end their meetings for a time at least. No, Harry came running through the grass, brandishing a letter in his hand, and so out of breath that it seemed highly probable he had run all the way from the house. He tried to speak, but all he could say was :

"Ooph—ooph—ooph—I say—ooph—oh ! dear——" ; till at last he gave it up and sat down for a few minutes. Herodotus looked on smiling.

At last Harry looked up and said :

"I'm better now. I did sprint, and no mistake. Would you like to listen to this, Herodotus ?"

"Yes, truly, for it must be of a joyful nature to excite thee thus."

"It's from my pater," said Harry, "and he writes :—

"'I have now decided to leave for Egypt at the end of October, and you, your mother, and I will remain there till the end of April. I have secured a dahabiyeh' ("goodness knows what that is," said Harry), 'and I hope we shall have a delightful time.'

"Great Scott ! I should think we would. Isn't it too ripping, Herodotus ? And do you know what a daha—thingummyjig is ?"

"A dahabiyeh is a boat to take thee up the Nile," replied the Greek.

"How scrummy," cried Harry, whose language grew more slangy in moments of excitement. "I say, Father *is* a brick, isn't he ?"

"I suppose that is a term of affection ?" said Herodotus.

"Yes," answered Harry. "It means a jolly good sort. Oh, Herodotus ! I *am* so glad."

"Thou seest I was right when I said it is wrong to grieve over what cannot be helped. Thou wast so sad at my departure——"

"Oh ! and don't think I'm not sorry now, Herodotus, please ; only, of course, this has driven it out of my head. It's a long while till November, and I shall miss you very much."

"I believe thee, my boy. We are indeed good friends. Maybe next summer I shall come to thee again and hear *thy* stories of Egypt. Now we must cease our gossip if thou wouldst hear the end of Cambyses."

"Yes, please go on," said Harry, stuffing the letter into his pocket and settling himself in the grass. "You broke off in the middle of a sentence last week. Don't you remember? You were telling about the Ethiopians."

"I am glad thou rememberest so well."

"Well, wasn't it strange? On Sunday at church the text was, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?' I *nearly* shouted when I heard it."

"That would not have been seemly in the holy building," said Herodotus. "Well, I will tell thee more of these same Ethiops. I left thee as I was telling of the fountain which they showed the Ichthyophagi—the messengers of Cambyses. This fountain had a scent like violets. When they bathed in it their skin became glossy, as if they had bathed in oil, and they ascribed their long life in part to this."

"It sounds delicious," said Harry. "And what then?"

"Then the king showed them a prison in which all the prisoners were loaded with golden chains. For copper—not gold—was the most precious metal among the Ethiops."

"How funny. Fancy if a penny were worth more than a pound!"

"Next the messengers were shown the Table of the Sun—of all strange things in Ethiopia surely the strangest. The Table of the Sun was a meadow outside the city, which was filled with the boiled flesh of various animals. The magistrates of the city are said to provide the meat during the night, and anyone may eat of it during the day. The meat, is, however, supposed by the people to appear miraculously out of the ground."

"I have never heard anything stranger," said Harry. "Please tell me some more."

"Last of all, the Ethiopians showed the messengers their manner of burial. They embalm the bodies something in the manner of the Egyptians; then they cover them with plaster, and paint this to resemble the living man. The body is then encased in a crystal pillar and preserved, first for a year at home, then outside the town."

"That's queer, too," said Harry. "I wish I had seen all those sights."

"When the messengers had seen everything they returned to Cambyses, who flew into a violent rage at the message. He was already half mad at the time, for he set off for Ethiopia without any preparation or food. Naturally, he had not proceeded far before the little

food they had failed, and the men had to eat the beasts of burden."

"How horrible!"

"Yes, but worse followed. At length they had to eat grass and herbs, but when these failed, and they came to the far-reaching desert, starvation stared them in the face, and their sufferings were so terrible that Cambyses was forced to return. Numbers of his men died, and thus ended his expedition against the Ethiops."

"He made a nice mess of it."

"Yes, but that was not all. He had sent part of his army against the Ammonians, and this never returned. It was believed they were lost in the sand."

"Cambyses' luck seemed to be turning," said Harry.

"Yes," replied Herodotus; "now hear what followed. It chanced that, just about the time Cambyses returned from his expedition with the remnant of his army, the sacred bull Apis appeared in Egypt. This was the signal for great rejoicing and feasting, and Cambyses, downcast and angry, immediately imagined that the people were rejoicing at his misfortunes. He asked them the cause of their joy, and they replied:

"'One of our gods, who only once in many years appears to us, hath come amongst us again, and 'tis our custom thus to do him honour.'

"Cambyses replied: 'Ye lie, and ye shall all suffer death.'

"When the punishment had been carried out, Cambyses called the priests and asked them to explain the feasting and rejoicing. They gave the same answer, whereupon Cambyses cried:—

"'Ye lie too. Soon will I discover whether a tame god has come to Egypt or no.' So he commanded Apis to be brought before him. The sacred bull was always black with a square spot of white upon his forehead, and on his back the figure of an eagle; the hairs in his tail were double, and he had a beetle on his tongue.

"When Apis was led into Cambyses' presence, the king drew his dagger and wounded the animal in the thigh. Apis fell to the ground, and Cambyses burst into mocking laughter.

"'A fine god, forsooth,' he cried, 'and fit for you, you woodenheads! But you shall pay dearly for having thus made a fool of me.'

"Then he had the priests scourged, and forbade any more feasting on pain of death."

"Cambyses was greatly delighted at this, but his sister burst into tears" (p. 74).

"What a wretch he was!" said Harry. "And what happened to the poor bull?"

"He died from the wound, and was buried secretly by the priests. We must not, however, judge Cambyses as we would other men, for there is little doubt he was mad. Soon after he slew Apis he had his brother Smerdis put to death because he had a vision in which Smerdis sat on the royal throne, with his head touching the heavens. This dreadful act he followed up by slaying his sister."

"What an awful brute!"

"It is said that her death was caused by the following incident. Cambyses had set a lion cub to fight a young dog. The dog was getting the worst of it when a brother pup came to his aid, and between the two they vanquished the cub. Cambyses was greatly delighted at this, but his sister burst into tears.

"'Why dost thou weep?' asked the king roughly.

"'Alas! when I saw the young dog come to his brother's help I thought of Smerdis, whom there was none to aid.'

"This angered Cambyses so much, say the Greeks, that he put her to death.

"On the other hand, the Egyptians say that she offended Cambyses by taking a lettuce one day at table and stripping off the leaves.

"'My lord,' she said, 'when, thinkest thou, was the lettuce prettier—with its leaves, or as it is now?'

"Cambyses answered: 'With its leaves.'

"'Alas!' she said, 'thou hast done to the house of Cyrus even as I have done to the lettuce.'

"But it was not only his own family that he treated thus. One day he summoned his most trusty messenger, Prexaspes, and said:

"'What manner of man do the Persians think me, Prexaspes?'"

"Jolly awkward for Prexaspes," put in Harry. "What did he say?"

"Prexaspes answered, 'O King, they praise thee in all things but one. They say thou art too fond of wine.'

"This angered Cambyses, and he cried, 'Ah! they say I drink too much, and am mad; I swear it is not true, and I will prove it to you, Prexaspes. There stands thy son, my cup-bearer, in the vestibule. Behold, if I shoot and hit him in the heart, the Persians will see that I am not mad, for no madman could take so sure an aim. If I miss him, then I grant them they are right.'

"Thus speaking, he snatched up his bow and shot the boy dead—straight through the heart.

"Whereupon the king turned with a laugh to Prexaspes, who was paralysed at this fearful deed, and cried :—

"'Now, Prexaspes, am I mad? or are the Persians? Could any mortal shoot straighter?'"

"And Prexaspes dared not protest, for he saw the king was mad."

"How awful! how fearful!" said Harry, his eyes wide with horror.

"Indeed, it was a fearful time. At length Crœsus ventured to remonstrate with the king, saying that Cyrus had himself charged him to give advice at need, and that if Cambyses continued to put innocent men—even children—to death, his people would rise against him.

"But Cambyses turned on him and said he would have none of his advice, and after all he had not been so successful himself as a king, nor in his counsel to Cyrus, that he could presume to take Cambyses to task. 'Now will I punish thee as I have long intended,' he concluded; and, picking up his bow, he aimed at Crœsus. Crœsus fled, and Cambyses ordered his servants to pursue and kill him. The servants, however, thought it best to spare Crœsus, and pretend to Cambyses that he was killed, for if Cambyses felt sorry afterwards, they would doubtless receive a reward for saving Crœsus; and if Cambyses did not relent, they could easily kill him later."

"Rather 'cute, that idea," said Harry.

"As it happened, Cambyses did repent Crœsus' supposed death, whereupon his servants told him he was still alive.

"'I am glad,' said Cambyses, 'that he lives, but you, who disobeyed my orders, shall die.'"

"Well, I never!" cried Harry. "What a monster!"

"Yes, but his time was at hand. Two brothers, Persians, whom Cambyses had left behind in Persia, revolted against him. Patizeithes, the one brother, laid the plot, which was a daring one. The other brother was called Smerdis, and resembled the dead brother of the king. So Patizeithes persuaded him to pose as the dead Smerdis, and set him on the Persian throne. He then sent heralds far and wide to proclaim the news that Smerdis, son of Cyrus, and not Cambyses, was now king."

"That was a bold bit of business," said Harry.

"Yes," said Herodotus, "for the herald came to Agbatana, where Cambyses and his army lay, and he went straight through the host and proclaimed his message.

"Cambyses immediately imagined that Prexaspes, whom he had charged to kill Smerdis, had dealt falsely. So he turned upon him and taxed him with treachery.

"'O, my king,' replied Prexaspes, 'unless the dead can come to life, thou hast no need to fear Smerdis thy brother. Question, I pray thee, this herald, and see if this be not some trick.'

"Cambyses approved of this, and the herald confessed that he had not seen Smerdis—the king's brother—since the day Cambyses left for Egypt. It was Patizeithes who had given him the message, purporting to come from Smerdis.

"Then Prexaspes cried :—

"'I see it all now, O king. Patizeithes hath a brother named Smerdis. It is a trick—a plot.'

"Then Cambyses also saw the truth, and bitterly he grieved that he had slain his brother needlessly, for the Smerdis of his dream was doubtless the brother of Patizeithes. Wild with anger at his ill-luck, he sprang to his horse, meaning to be revenged on his enemies, but as he leapt to the saddle the button of his scabbard fell off, wounding him in the thigh, in exactly the same spot where he had wounded Apis.

"'Alas!' cried Cambyses, who felt the wound was mortal, 'what do they call this city?'

"The people replied, 'Agbatana,' and Cambyses remembered that it had been prophesied he should die at a place of that name. The shock brought back his senses, and he said :—

"'Here, then, Cambyses, son of Cyrus, is doomed to die.'

"When he felt his end approaching, he summoned the Persians around him, and gave them many instructions as to regaining the kingdom, which they carefully omitted to carry out after his death.

"Bitterly did Cambyses lament his misfortunes before he died, but since they were of his own making, one can waste little pity on him."

"And what happened to the mock Smerdis?" asked Harry.

"The people believed he was the real one after all, and as Prexaspes turned round and vowed he had not slain him he reigned in peace for eight months. Cyrus, thou wilt remember, was a great and mighty king. It is told of him that when he was beginning to be successful,

certain Greeks—the Ionians and Æolians—sent to beg for his protection, whereas they had ignored him when he asked them to revolt against Crœsus. But Cyrus sent back a message in the form of a story. 'There was once a piper,' said he, 'who piped by the seashore, thinking the fish would leap out of the water on to the land. But the fish remained unmoved. Then the man fetched a net and dragged a quantity of them ashore, whereupon they all began to leap and dance. "Do not trouble yourselves," said the piper. "I want none of your leaping and dancing now." '

"I see," said Harry, thoughtfully. "Rather neat, that."

"But of what happened then," said Herodotus, "and of many other things I cannot tell thee, for it waxes late."

"Must you go now?" said Harry sorrowfully.

"In truth, yes. But, mayhap, we shall yet meet again, and I will then tell thee of Darius and other mighty men—of strange peoples and strange sights—for I have not yet told thee half that I have seen and heard."

"Yes, *do* come back," said Harry. "I can't tell you how I enjoy your talks, Herodotus. I wish we learned all history like that."

"Farewell, now, my boy. Thou hast a place in my affections, and I am loth to leave thee. May thy journey to Egypt be all thou hopest, and good fortune attend thee at all times."

"Thank you, Herodotus; and, please—" (Harry coloured up), "please, I've something for you. I thought p'raps you'd look at it sometimes and remember me."

And Harry tugged out of his pocket a small silver frame containing his likeness.

The Greek took it and gazed on it.

"I thank thee, my little friend. Nought could please me more. Truly, 'tis a wonderful age, this age of thine."

He rested his hand affectionately on Harry's head for a moment—then he was gone.

Once more Harry stood alone in the long grass by the river.

B. Sidney Woolf.

THE STORIES OF BEN THE SAILORMAN.

I.—BEN AND THE CANNIBAL PIRATES.

"SO you want me to spin you a yarn about the cannibal pirates, eh, Master Charles? Well, maybe you've heard of Pekowchilee in China? No? It's a town, then, on the lovely Hoang-Kiang River, latitude 22° north, if my memory serves. The ship was the *Saucy Susan*, and we had aboard a cargo of kites and curious heathen masks, both of which they're very fond of out there; likewise tusks of ivory, bars of yellow gold, and whopping big ruby gems from the mines of Highlowchoofoo.

"Having dropped down the river, we up with our square sails, and leaving the 'Flowery Land' far on our weather bow, made for the Malay Peninsula, the island of Borneo being on our port quarter. Now, off these coasts lie lots of little islands infested with Dyaks. Maybe your ma's books mention those gentry, Master Charles? No? Well, they're a set of nasty, thieving rascals—cannibal pirates every mother's son of them, up to all the dirtiest tricks and dodges. And I'll tell you their little game, Master Charles. Did you ever watch a spider catch a fly?"

The boy nodded assent.

"Well, these pirates go to work in much the same way. Their web is the wide ocean when a dead calm is on, when the sun blazes down fit to roast you, and the sailors go about a-whistling for a wind. Behind each little island, maybe, there lies hidden a pirate vessel, ready to pounce out on any unfortunate ship that happens to be becalmed. When it comes up with her the crew grab their nasty long knives, and swarm aboard by hundreds, and fifty to one that ill-fated ship is never heard of again.

"Well, something less than a fortnight after leaving the mouth of the lovely Hoang-Kiang, sure enough the wind dropped, and the sails hung limp from the yards. There wasn't a cloud in the sky; the

sun blazed overhead and was reflected from water as smooth as oil.

"'Ben,' says the captain, 'oblige me by going up into the crow's-nest and casting your eye around.'"

"Why, Ben, were you to look for eggs?" said the wondering Charlie.

"Eggs?" echoed the sailor, with as puzzled a look.

"You said crow's-nest, didn't you? But do birds build their nests up the masts of vessels, and did the captain collect eggs?"

Ben's astonishment subsided into a broad grin.

"Shift your 'el-em, Master Charles, you're on the wrong tack. There weren't any poultry aboard the *Saucy Susan*. The crow's-nest is what they call the place where the look-out stands, but why it's so called is more than I can say, and so I won't deceive you. I climbed the rigging, and was scarcely stowed away before I clapped my eyes on a strange craft creeping out from behind one of the islands, and I sang out, 'A sail.'

"'Where away?' says the captain.

"'On our starboard bow,' says I.

"'Can you make out her rig?' says the captain.

"'She's too far off,' says I, 'but if she's a Christian craft my name's not Benjamin.' In another minute I sung out, 'A sail on the port quarter, sir!'

"'Glue your peepers to her, Ben, and tell us what she's like.'

"'Ay, ay, sir,' I calls back, 'my eyes are glued, and she's so much like the first that you couldn't tell t'other from which.' Almost as quick as before, I sung out again, 'A sail, sir, dead ahead!'

"'Avast there,' says the captain, 'you're a-seeing too much.' And up he climbed himself with his spy-glass. He'd hardly got fixed when, 'Shiver my timbers!' says he, 'but you're right,' and then he claps his eyes astern. 'May I never splice the mainbrace again if there aren't three more of the same gentry. Ben,' says he, as solemn as a judge, 'it's about all U.P. with us.'

"Down we went on deck, and all hands being piped, the captain says, 'My lads, we're in a tight place, and so I won't deceive you. There's three strange craft ahead and three strange craft astern, each one choke full of cannibal pirates thirsting for our blood. They'll kill us if we don't kill them. To be cooked and eaten is the least we can hope for; but I mean to do my best to beat them off or die in the

attempt, and "England expects that every man this day will do his duty." Now anyone who's chicken-hearted can leave the ship at once, as there's only room aboard for heroes.'

"We tars had a word together, and then I spoke up for the lot of us. 'We're with you, sir, every mother's son,' I says.

"'That's as I expected, my hearties,' says the skipper, 'so "Rule Britannia" and "God Save the Queen"!'

"Well, we had a stiff glass of lemonade all round, which heartened us up, and then we polished the guns and cutlasses while the captain climbed to the crow's-nest again. When he came down he called me aside, and, says he, 'Ben, my lad, the heathen will be here in an hour at farthest. There'll be two hundred fighting men aboard each "pray-you"' (for so he called their vessels). 'Six times two makes twelve,' says he; 'that is twelve hundred all told, while we muster twenty and a half, taking the cabin-boy as half a man. Now, Ben,' says he, 'you've got a useful figure-head, and so I put it to you, as between man and man, what's to be done?'

"'Sir,' says I, after studying a couple of shakes, 'I've got an idea which may or may not work, as the case may be, and so I won't deceive you.'

"'Out with it, then, my lad,' says he.

"'I propose,' says I, 'as how all the ruby gems and bars of gold should be piled on deck and polished up like mirrors, and when the sun shines on the glittering heaps I doubt if these cannibal pirates will be able to stand the glare.'

"'Ben,' says the captain, 'tip us your flipper, for it's a bright idea.'

"So we bustled about and hoisted up the yellow bars, and the ruby gems we fetched in baskets, and when they were all set out 'twas a sight to make your mouth water.

"Meanwhile the skipper went below, and returned with a parcel. 'There, my lads,' says he, 'there's blue spectacles; put on a pair, every mother's son, and then there'll be no chance of your going blind with the glare.' So we each of us put one on, and then fell to work with wash-leather and elbow-grease a-polishing like mad.

"By this time the pray-yous were within hail, and I give you my word they didn't improve on acquaintance. In each vessel were about fifty slaves, all chained together and pulling at the long sweeps."

"Oh, Ben, were the chimney-sweeps being tortured?"

"The pirates shaded their squinny eyes" (p. 82).

"No, no, Master Charles; sweeps are just very long oars. For the rest, 'twas as the captain had said—in each 'pray-you' were a couple of hundred or more raging savages, as black as your boots, and nearly as naked as when they were born. They had squinny eyes and hair like door-mats, and were armed with nasty, long, sharp knives. We could see the steaming stew-pots aboard them as plain as a pike-staff ready to boil us down to meat jelly."

Charlie greedily devoured these appetising details. "Oh, Ben, weren't you awfully frightened?"

"Well, Master Charles, for a moment my heart was in my mouth, and so I won't deceive you. I heard the cabin-boy a-blubbering, and the skipper himself looked white about the gills; and then a most remarkable thing happened. But where's that tobacco got to, I wonder?" Ben began a laborious search, first for his coil of pig-tail, and then for his ancient knife, Charlie meanwhile fuming with impatience. With great deliberation a chunk was cut off, eyed with approval, and appropriated in the usual manner.

"Well, Ben?" said Charlie, interrogatively.

"Well, Master Charles, what's our bearings?"

"Why, Ben, 'and then a most remarkable thing happened.'"

"Right you are, Master Charles, a remarkable thing *did* happen. Maybe you've noticed a moth fluttering round a candle?"

"Oh, yes, Ben, yes."

"Now can you tell me why, I wonder?"

"Because it is attracted by the light."

"Right you are again, Master Charles. Well, it's the same with the fishes. When the yellow gold and the ruby gems began a-shining like so many fiery suns, the sharks and the saw-fish, the porpoises and the dolphins, the whales, and all the other leviathans of the deep, came a-crowding round, hustling each other to get nearer to the light. Thousands and thousands of fishes were soon jammed between us and the enemy, so that the 'pray-yous' couldn't budge an inch to get at us, while the pirates shaded their squinny eyes, and even then couldn't see us for the blinding glare. Where we mariners would have been without our blue spectacles I leave you to judge.

"We now felt a bit more comfortable, and dinner being ready, we fell to with a will on salt junk and plum duff, for after our exertions we were all pretty peckish. By-and-by the captain drew me aside again. 'Ben,' says he, 'it's getting late, and what shall we do when the sun goes down? I'm a-thinking the cannibal pirates will make short work of us then.'"

"But why should he think that?" said Charlie.

"Well, you see, Master Charles, directly the sun goes down in those parts it is as dark as pitch, there being no twilight, so that the yellow gold and the ruby gems would cease to sparkle, the leviathans of the deep would clap on all sail, and the Dyaks would board us before we could say, 'Jack Robinson.'

"'Now, this is what I would suggest,' says I. 'There's lots of luminous paint aboard and plenty of ugly masks. Let us put on the masks, daubed with luminous paint, and if that doesn't give the heathen a scare, my name's not Benjamin.'

"'Ben,' says the skipper, 'you're a man of resource. Shiver my timbers, but it's a dodge worth trying.'

"So we got the masks out of the hold and fell to work a-painting them. By-and-by, down goes the sun, on go the masks, and then you never saw a frightfuller ship's crew than we were, each with a face

like a full moon, or a grinning demon, or, maybe, an ass's head with enormous ears, or a tremendous nose and eyes as big as saucers. I give you my word, Master Charles, we were almost afraid of each other, and that's a fact. Then we fell a-groaning, and yelled and screeched, and jumped about."

"You never saw a frightfuller ship's crew" (p. 82).

"Oh, what fun!" said Charlie. "But what about the pirates?"

"Well, Master Charles, I should think they must have been scared out of their wits. We could hear their cries of horror and the splashing of their oars in their frantic efforts to escape. Then we sent up a few rockets—*whisht!*—and that finished them, for when they saw the long trails of fire, and the stars, as they thought, a-falling down out of the sky, they just skedaddled like mad."

"But did they come back, Ben?"

"No, Master Charles; and before morning the blessed breeze began to blow, and the *Saucy Susan* was soon a-skimming along under sky-scrapers and stun-sails alow and aloft. We saw no more of the cannibal pirates, and had no particular want to. The breeze held, and a few days after we dropped anchor in Singapore Harbour, and jolly glad we were to get there, and so I won't deceive you."

II.—THE WRECK OF THE "JOLLY DOGS."

WHAT! Another story, Master Charles? Well, I never! Anybody would think I'd nothing better to do than spin yarns to young gentlemen. I'm so clever, am I, and you're so fond of my stories, eh? That's the way you come round the old sailor. Well, well, then, what shall it be? Suppose I tell you how the *Jolly Dogs* was wrecked in a hurricane, me and the captain being the only survivors?"

"Oh, Ben, please do," said Charlie.

The sailor put down one of the nets that seemed to demand so much of his attention, and groping first in one pocket and then another, produced a coil of pigtail tobacco. Again he rummaged the cavernous recesses of his clothing, and brought to light a knife stained with juice, and worn with much service. With great deliberation he cut off a suitable portion, eyed it with satisfaction, and put it in his mouth. "There, now we're all snug and shipshape, we'll down with the 'el-em, and let her go easy. Well, Master Charles, the *Jolly Dogs* left Valparaiso with a cargo of eagles, condors, and performing monkeys for Darnwell's world-renowned menagerie. Maybe your ma's taken you there, Master Charles?"

"Yes, indeed, Ben."

"That's the time of day! It's well to know something of the chart as we go along. We'd fair weather, and nothing particular happened until we were off the island of Juan Fernandez."

"What! Robinson Crusoe's?" exclaimed the boy excitedly.

"The very same, Master Charles, and so I won't deceive you. Now, if you remember, he was wrecked in an awful storm. Pacific Ocean some old Johnny named the sea thereabouts, but me and Crusoe found it rather different. It was six bells and my watch. The morning had been close and stuffy, and so hot you could have cooked your bit of steak and kidney on the blazing deck. Now, as my eye swept the horizon, I saw a small black cloud a-coming up; in a couple of shakes 'twas as large as the mainsail, and beneath it the water showed like a white frill. I was that surprised, I just stood and stared. The blackness rose like a great wall, forked lightning darted up and down it, and I heard a loud hissing—'twas a hurricane a-coming up express speed."

"Oh, Ben, what did you do?"

"Well, Master Charles, for the moment I lost my head, and I sings

out, 'Man overboard! Breakers ahead! Stop thief!' My mates came a-tumbling up the hatches, and the skipper, who was having a snooze in his private cabin, rushed out in his pie-jammas. No sooner had he clapped his eyes on the elements than he sings out, 'All hands shorten sail immediate!' I give you my word, Master Charles, the hurricane was upon us before he'd done a-speaking, and the wind did the business, the forestay being blown to ribbons, and the main, main-top, and main to'gallant sails clean out of the bolt ropes, while the *Jolly Dogs* heeled over, until her scuppers were buried in the water. The ocean was just great mountains of foam, each one ready to topple over on us. And the noise! Well, there! A thousand mad bulls a-bellowing and another thousand ravening lions a-roaring, would give you but a poor idea of it. Add to this the jabber-jabber of the frightened monkeys and screams of the eagles and condors, 'twas like Bedlam broke loose.

"Then the ship's head was yawing about, and—come to look—the mariner who was a-steering had been washed overboard. Me and the captain made a rush for the wheel, and, as we did so, the whole Pacific seemingly rose up forrud like a tremendous precipice, and came thundering down on the fo'c'sle. We threw ourselves down, and held on for our lives, and in another minute I thought I was drownded sure-ly, for I was a-wallowing in the ocean. But no, when I managed to fetch my wind, there was the skipper sitting up a-gasping and a-staring with all his eyes, as well he might."

"Why, Ben, what was it?"

"Well, Master Charles, that big sea had just made a clean sweep of the deck, including fifteen able-bodied mariners, the cook, and the cabin-boy, every mother's son of them, and me and the captain had it all to ourselves aboard that ill-fated vessel."

"Oh, Ben, how dreadful!"

"Right you are, Master Charles. Howsomever, we picked ourselves up, lashed ourselves to the wheel, and got her head round so as to run before the wind and avoid the breaking seas. We'd scarcely got fixed before it grew terrible dark, only every now and then the lightning made things as plain as day. Suddenly I sings out, 'Waterspouts ahead!'

"'How many of 'em?' says the captain.

"'Three,' says I.

"'Shiver my timbers!' says he, all of a tremble, 'I don't want

them aboard my ship. We ain't chartered for to carry waterspouts. Ben, my lad, are you a-keeping cool ? '

" ' As a cucumber,' says I.

" ' Then,' says he, ' oblige me by firing the cannon ; you'll find her loaded, and don't miss the spouts, or it's all U.P.'

" ' Ay, ay, sir,' says I, and, undoing my lashings, made a bolt forrud. It was dangerous work, but I managed to keep my pins, found the cannon, and, crouching behind the bulwarks, waited for the lightning. It showed the waterspouts just ahead. I whistled once for the captain to port the 'el-em. This brought the spouts into a straight line ; then, when another flash came, I sighted the gun, and touched her off for all she was worth. The shot went slap through the three waterspouts one after the other, and down they came a-tumbling harmlessly into the sea. We were saved."

" Didn't the captain think you very clever ? " asked Charlie, with an eye to details.

" Well, Master Charles," replied the modest Ben, " that's hardly for me to say ; besides, we were so surrounded with dangers we'd little time to be a-passing compliments. In dodging the spouts the ship's head had paid off, and now the masts, which had been a-working loose, suddenly snapped, and went by the board, taking with them all the standing rigging, so there we were, a helpless wreck.

" The first monkey dipped the can into the oil, and passed it to the next, and . . .

" ' My word ! ' says the skipper. ' We shan't be long afloat, and so I puts it to you, as between man and man, hadn't we better quit ? '

" ' Sir,' says I, after turning things over in my mind, ' I've an idea which may or may not work, and so I won't deceive you.'

" ' Then out with it, my lad,' says he.

" ' Well,' says I, ' there's a barrel of petroleum on the deck. Let's try a-pouring oil on the troubled waters.'

"Says the captain, 'There's the oil right enough, likewise the troubled waters; but as I can't leave the wheel and you can't do the job alone, it ain't no manner of use, my lad.'

"That set me a-thinking. 'Sir,' says I, 'they say as how apes are wonderful clever; let's get them to lend a hand, and the thing's done.'

"'Ben,' says the skipper, 'I admire your figure-head, so tip us your flipper; and as to this monkey business, do as you think best.'

"Well, I went below, picked out a score of intelligent apes, stove in the head of the oil cask, took a big can, and showed the monkeys what I wanted done. Don't tell me, Master Charles, dumb animals have got no reason. Those poor brutes grasped the idea instanter,

. . so on up to yours truly, a-squatting on the bowsprit."

and formed a line, lashing themselves taut with their tails. The first monkey dipped the can into the oil and passed it to the next, and him to the next, and so on up to yours truly, a-squatting on the bowsprit waiting for the seventh wave."

"Why the seventh?" asked Charlie.

"Because the seventh is always the biggest, but why I can't rightly

say. I could see the waves by their white crests a-gleaming through the darkness, and when the seventh came along I emptied the oil on to it, and I give you my word, Master Charles, the troubled waters quieted down and passed gently under our counter. Meanwhile, the skipper, as it was getting lighter, was busy a-cyphering, and now passed along a written message to me. He'd figured it out that there being forty gallons in the cask, the oil would only last to the 280th wave. 'We're just past the 275th,' says he, 'for I've been a-counting them, and what's to be done now?'

"'Hold on,' says I.

"After the oil gave out, the very next seventh wave—a whopper—struck the vessel a tremendous blow, knocking the rudder clean out of the sternpost, and starting some of the planks, whereby she began to leak badly. Something must be done quickly. The skipper, who had a soft heart, was for giving the poor birds a chance of freedom. So we opened the after hatch, and out they flew. Just as we were a-going to lift the small hatch forrud to free the rest I says to the captain, 'Sir,' says I, 'why don't me and you follow the fowls of the air?'

"He supposed our troubles had driven me dotty.

"'Where's your wings, Benjamin?' says he.

"'Under hatches,' says I, 'and so I won't deceive you. There's just room for the two of us on this here hatch, and we're light-weight for want of victuals; 'twould be holiday work for fifty great strapping birds to take us in tow.' Says the captain, 'It's a dodge worth trying.' He'd been in the poultry line himself when a nipper had the captain, so he chooses fifty of the finest birds, while I fastened a rope to each of the four corners of the hatch and tied them together. To this we tethered the eagles and condors, seated ourselves, and cast loose. 'Twas not a moment too soon, for as we rose in the air, the *Jolly Dogs* took a whopping big plunge, and down she sank beneath the billows. 'Twas a narrow squeak for us of a watery grave, Master Charles. Howsomever, there we were, and the birds at once steered for home."

"But how could they know the way, Ben?"

"Ah, just let me ask you a question, Master Charles. How do the fowls of the air migrate without a chart or a compass? Nobody knows, yet they always find their way. I can only tell you that when morning dawned land was beneath us, and we were heading straight for the top of an Andy. There were fields of snow and rivers of ice, and the cold! 'Twas enough to freeze the marrow in the bones. Says the skipper,

a-pointing with his shaky finger, 'Have we escaped the raging billows only to become frozen meat? If we could shorten sail or pay out the anchor, we'd heave to and ride easy. Benjamin,' says he, 'tip us your flipper and good-bye; it's death or broken legs, but I'm a-going to jump.'

"'Avast!' says I. 'There's half a chance yet. Do you swarm up the port rigging and I the starboard, and cut away the halyards.'

"Up we went and chopped at the ropes for dear life. Every chop set loose a fowl and reduced canvas, when, instead of rising, we began to sink, until we reached the ground with a bump that knocked all the sense out of us. When we could collect our wits we were alone half-way up the mountain.

"'Ben,' says the skipper, in an awesome voice. "'What cheer, my hearty! Are you dead?'

"I *was* glad to hear him pipe up. 'I'm here, sir,' says I, 'leastways, what's left of me, but I feels as if all my timbers were started, sure-ly.'

"With that we overhauled each other most particular, but found our hulls sound and seaworthy. So after we'd rested a spell, we up anchor and steered for the distant plain, and 'twasn't long, Master Charles, before we were a-rubbing noses with the friendly natives, with immediate prospect of victualling the ship on turtle soup and roast parrot."

III.—HOW BEN WENT A-FISHING.

"FISHING, eh, Master Charles? Well, what sport?"

"Oh, Ben," said Charlie, "it's so disappointing! I'd got such a jolly lot of snails, and I wrapped them up in a paper parcel, and tied it tight with string, and carried it ever so carefully; but first one of them managed to crawl out, and then another, and the paper got all slimy and broke. I'd ever such trouble! When I reached the water there were actually only three or four left, so I put them by me in a safe place. Then I got out my line, but 'twas all of a tangle, and by the time I straightened it all my bait had crawled away! I do think snails are the tiresomest creatures, don't you? But how do you manage them, Ben, because I suppose you've done a lot of fishing?"

The old sailor chuckled. "Yes, I've done my share, Master Charles, and not all holiday work neither. Seafaring men carry their lives in their hands. While we're a-fishing for one thing, too, maybe we'll catch another, as a friend of mine told me he did somewhere in the South Seas. Did your ma ever tell you of the Great Sea Serpent? Yes?

Well, 'twas him as my friend hooked. He'd put his bit of bait over the side, and was a-waiting for a nibble, as innocent as a lamb, when the reptile happened to come along. In a couple of shakes he'd swallowed hook, and bait, and line, and then he riz out of the ocean as high as the truck of the foremast, with a mane like a lion, and shiny scales like soup plates, and bulging eyes and a forked tongue like a dragon. Well, there! My friend Bill, being a family man, thought it his duty to get under hatches, and had to swallow a stiff glass of ginger-beer to steady his nerves and all. Eh? What became of the snake? Well, that Bill never told me, and so I won't deceive you. He'd no particular wish, hadn't Bill, to cultivate its acquaintance. No, most of my fishing has been done without bait, Master Charles, for it ain't any manner of use to show snails, or, for the matter of that, worms, to a whale—he'd only smile."

"Why, yes," said Charlie, reflectively. "I suppose whales are ever so big. I saw the bones of one once, and it must have been a whopper. But how do you catch them, Ben, and what do you do with them after they're caught?"

"I'll just tell you about the very first whale as ever I caught, Master Charles, for 'twas an adventure I ain't likely to forget."

"Adventure, Ben? Oh, do tell!"

"Well, we'd been a-cruising off the Greenland coast, Master Charles, in the neighbourhood of Scorsby's Island and Smith's Sound, when one morning the mariner at the mast-head sings out, 'There she spouts!'"

"What *did* he mean?" asked Charlie.

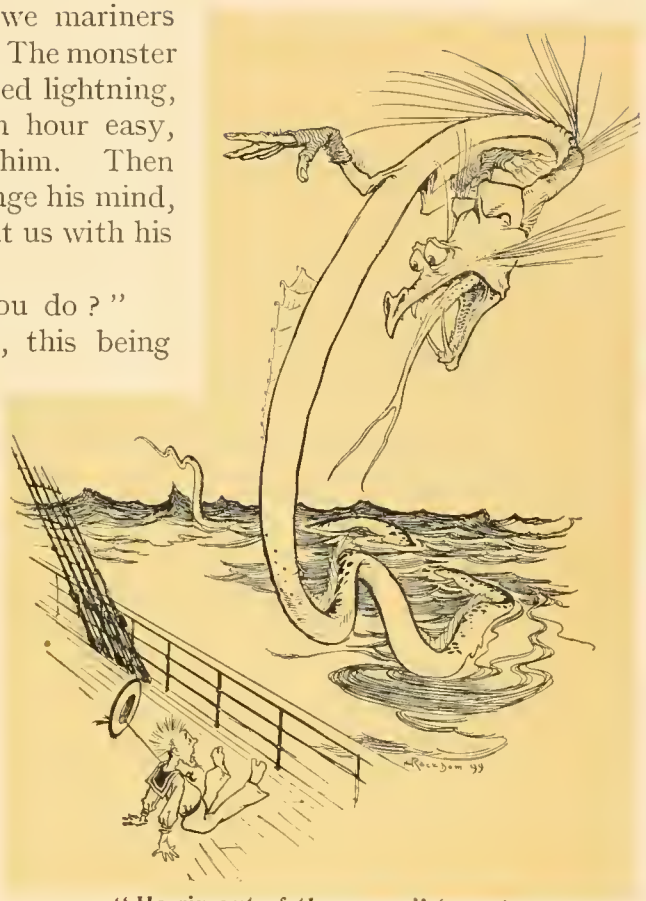
"Why, you see, whales don't live all their time under water, but have to come to the surface every now and then for a mouthful of fresh air. It's then they spout or throw up the water from their noses, and that was what this one was a-doing of. The boats were hanging from the davits ready for launching, and in less than no time four of them gave chase. I was in the first along with the mate, who stood in the bows, harpoon in hand, ready to strike when we got near enough. They do tell me that nowadays the harpoon is fired from a gun; so you may lie on your sofy on the quarter-deck a-smoking your weed, and take your fishing easy. But 'twasn't so when I was a nipper; whaling then was real dangerous work, and no mistake.

"Well, by-and-by we came up with the leviathan, which was having a snooze. The mate took careful aim; away went the harpoon, with line attached, and buried itself deep in the whale. Then the mate

shouted, 'Starn all!' and we mariners backed water for our lives. The monster was off like a flash of greased lightning, a-doing his forty knots an hour easy, and dragged us along after him. Then suddenly, he seemed to change his mind, for, doubling back, he ran at us with his great mouth wide open."

"Oh, Ben, what did you do?"

"Well, Master Charles, this being so, overboard I jumped, and only just in the nick of time. I heard a snap, like a million crackers let off, and when I clapped my eyes where the boat had been, she'd vanished, along with the mate and six able-bodied mariners, every mother's son of them down the whale's jaws. The leviathan was so busy that he didn't notice yours truly, and so I quietly swam towards him, and, clambering on his back, held on by the harpoon, which I told you was a-sticking up."



"He riz out of the ocean" (p. 90).

"But, Ben, wasn't that a very dangerous thing to do?"

"Right you are, Master Charles, but as I wasn't a fish, nor exactly partial to sharks, and there was no sail in sight, I thought maybe 'twas the best thing to be done.

"Well, the whale made tracks so fast that it a'most took the wind out of my pipes, but for all that I managed to hold on. I was mortal afraid he'd dive, and wondered whatever I should do if he did. Just as I'd taken as long a breath as I could in preparation, sure enough he dove."

"Dove?" said Charlie in a puzzled tone. "You mean dived, don't you?"

Ben glared at this daring interruption. "'Dove,' I said, Master Charles, and 'dove' I'll stand by. Now I put it to you, Master Charles, as between man and man, you say 'drive, drove'; 'thrive, throve,' and 'strive, strove,' don't you? Then why not 'dive, dove'?"

As Charlie seemed quite unprepared to combat this convincing argument, the old sailor triumphantly continued. "Yes, down that leviathan dove with me on his back a-holding on to the harpoon like grim death.

"Well, we wallowed in the Arctic Ocean until I'd only got half a squeak left in me, but just when I thought I should be drownded sure-ly, an idea flashed across my mind quite sudden-like. Why not make use of the rope a-hanging from the harpoon? I seized hold of it and shot up to the surface, and jolly glad I was to fill my pipes once more with the blessed air. The leviathan kept bowling along a-doing his forty-knot business down below with me in tow at the end of the rope a-floating on my back.

"We kept on this way for ever so long, but by-and-by, to my great joy, I sighted land, and found we were making straight for it. Now, I knew my whale must come up sooner or later to breathe—'twas only a question of time—and so, sure enough, in about a quarter of an hour up he came, close to the shore. I've no doubt in my own mind he'd gone a little scranny with fright and pain, and had lost his bearings altogether—anyway, he ran aground. 'Now,' thinks I, 'as this here leviathan seems short of his change, what's the reason?' Because, you know, Master Charles, there's generally a reason for everything. 'Maybe it's dispepsy from swallowing the boat and seven tough mariners; maybe it's the iron a-sticking in his wits—if that's so another inch or two might finish him.' So I hauled on the slack of the rope and clambered on to his back. Then I got hold of the harpoon, and pulled and hung on to it for all I was worth, and the iron went little by little into him until, sure enough, his flippers ceased to wobble, and he was as dead as a door-nail. He'd stranded on a rocky little island some distance from the mainland, and the question now was—what to do next. 'Twas too far a swim to the distant shore. I must stay where I was until somebody picked me up, unless, meanwhile, I died for want of victuals to keep me a-going, or I perished of cold, for I give you my word, Master Charles, the nights up north are freezers, and no mistake! I thought, too, a Polar bear might chance to come along and want me for his dinner, and so, what with one thing and another, I was feeling rather low, when

"With me in tow at the end of the rope, a-floating on my back" (p. 92).

I says to myself, says I, 'Benjamin, my son, why not kill three birds with one stone?'"

"How three birds, Ben?" asked Charlie.

"Why," said the ancient mariner, "cold, hunger, and a signal of distress, they were the three birds. You see, I had an idea a-working in my brain, and so I felt in my pockets and brought out my match-box soppy with salt water; then I opened it ever so careful, and turned out the matches one by one. They were as wet as wet, but in the middle of the box, to my great joy, I discovered a solitary match that was fairly dry. Next I cut off an inch or two from the end of the harpoon-rope,

separated the strands, found the innermost ones dry, and wrapped them round the match. Then I went to work on the harpoon, and wrestled with it, and lugged and tugged at it, until, just when I was a'most spent, I managed to get it out. Then I peeped into the hole which it had made, and, as I had hoped and expected, saw the sperm oil a-welling up.

"I now took my precious match, and yet was almost afraid to use it, for my life depended on my lighting that there oil! Ah, many's the match I've wasted, Master Charles, and little guessed as I should come to such a pass as I'd give the world, if I had it, for just one dry box of them! I dropped down on my marrow-bones, my heart a-beating like one o'clock, and, sheltering the match with my coat as well as I was able, prepared to strike. Suppose it should be blown out? Suppose it wouldn't light at all? Hardly daring to breathe, with the greatest care I struck; the match burst into flame, and I lighted the oil, which flared up like a good 'un. 'Now, Benjamin,' says I to myself, 'you won't die just yet awhile of cold or hunger.' I warmed myself at the blaze and dried my clothes, and then, taking my knife, I cut a nice steak from the carcase of the whale, and this I cooked at the fire, using the point of the harpoon as a toasting-fork. The meat was soon done to a turn, and then I fell to and ate it every bit, for after my exertions I felt pretty peckish, I can tell you.

"By this time 'twas night, and the third bird I'd killed with the one stone—I mean my beacon—blazed up finely. I'd now no fear of bears, or of being froze, so I laid me down where I was for forty winks. Just when I'd got to the thirty-ninth, as it seemed to me, and was dreaming that I was a whale and a-fishing for ships with a rod and line, I heard a hail: 'Ahoy there, ahoy! Shipmate, what cheer?'

"Opening my eyes, I saw that it was day. I was surrounded by the simple Arctics in their dug-outs, who sat a-staring with all their eyes, as well they might, to see a leviathan of the deep a-burning his own private oil-lamp, and yonder—blessed sight!—was a boat, full of Jack Tars, a-pulling towards me, while a homeward bound ship lay in the offing. They had seen my signal of distress, and had come to rescue me. Yes, Master Charles, I was saved, and I think you'll be ready to admit what I told you when I began this here yarn, that I ain't likely to forget in a hurry how I went a-fishing for my first whale."

IV.—BEN THE CASTAWAY.

"ONCE, when I was a-cruising in the Pacific, Master Charles, the vessel fell a prey to pirates. Me and the rest of the crew fought like wild cats, but 'twas no manner of use, for the odds were six to one. We all got knocked on the head for our pains, every mother's son, and all but me were chucked into the yawning ocean. They were a-going to serve me the same, but I happened to come to in the very nick of time, for I'd only been stunned. The pirate captain says to me, says he, 'Ben, my lad, you must join our gallant band, for we are in want of such brave fellows as you,' says he. 'We're free as the air, victuals and drink to your taste, and a fine fortune in prospect. Say the word and your name shall be enrolled on the ship's books,' says he, 'and proud we'll be to have you.'

"'Avast,' I answers him, 'not me; I may be poor but I'm honest, and so I won't deceive you; neither do I yearn to have my name enrolled.'

"'Well, please yourself,' says he; 'it's that or death by torture!'

"I can't say my spirits were particularly boisterous on hearing this, but I was as firm as a rock."

"I think that was awfully brave of you," said Charlie.

"Well, Master Charles, it's not for me to say," replied the modest Ben. "Anyway, seeing as how I wouldn't budge, the skipper fell into a violent rage. First he was for skinning of me, then he'd have me boiled, but at last the worst he could think of was to put me into a leaky boat without any oars and cast me adrift. This being done immediate, the rascals sheered off and left me to my fate, after chucking in their nasty black flag as a parting gift."

"Oh, Ben, what did you do?"

"Well, Master Charles, that's just the question I put to myself; says I, 'My lad, you're like to hop the twig this time and no mistake. The sharks will put you in their larder and feast on pickled Benjamin. You've no victuals and too much water, so what's your little game?'

"I give you my word, Master Charles, I was feeling somewhat down in the dumps at the dismal prospect, when my eye fell on the flag, and down I went on my hands and knees a-feeling careful for the leaks. To my great joy I could only find three, so I up and tore the hateful flag into strips, which I stuffed into the holes, whereby the sea stopped

a-coming in. Then I seized the empty locker at the stern of the boat, and fell a-baling like mad, till I managed to clear the craft of water. And now, come to look, the pirates had left the rudder behind, thinking, of course, 'twas useless as I had no oars. In a couple of shakes I unshipped it, and began to use it as a paddle."

"Oh, Ben, you were clever! But where were you going?"

"You must ask me another, Master Charlie, for that's more than I can tell you, but I thought 'twas best to keep a-moving. By the time night fell, I was that spent that I just laid me down in the bottom of the boat and fell fast asleep. When I woke 'twas day, and lo and behold, land was in sight!"

"An island, Ben?"

"Yes, Master Charles, a desert island, and outside it a coral reef. Maybe your ma has told you all about coral insects, Master Charles?"

"Oh, yes, Ben, and they're wonderful creatures, I know."

"Right you are, Master Charles, Ai sea-masons they are and no mistake. Well, inside the reef was a lagoon, or kind of bay, and here the water was as clear as crystal. I could see the coral insects a-building down below, likewise rainbow-coloured fishes a-swimming about, to say nothing of the lobsters and turtles. Lovely seaweed waved to and fro, and as to the shells—well, there! I could have spent all my time a-staring at them if I hadn't had something more important to think about. Beaching the boat, I set out to explore the country. There was a fine stretch of sand, and as I hurried over it, bent on victuals and drink, what should I see but a lot of marks all scattered up and down."

"The mark of a foot, don't you mean?" corrected Charlie, thinking, of course, of his favourite Crusoe.

"No, Master Charles," replied the old sailor, "marks I said, and marks I'll stand by, but not just ordinary marks! The sight brought me up with a round turn, I can tell you; then with my heart in my mouth I nipped along. It was a palm tree I was a-making for, with big cocoanuts growing on it more lovelier than what you get for 'three shies a penny.' But 'twas easier to reach the palm than to climb it. As I was a-gazing, I clapped my eyes on a great snake up top having a snooze, with his tail hanging down a matter of a dozen feet or so. Without more ado, I laid hold of the slack of the monster's tail, and began a-swarming up hand over hand."

"But, Ben, wasn't that a very dangerous thing to do?"

"Right you are, Master Charles; but when your inside's a-urging you on so that peck you must, you can't afford to be particular as to ways and means. I give you my word, Master Charles, that snake was astonished when, peeping over, he clapped his eyes on yours truly. 'Burr-r-r-r!' says I. I was almost sorry for the poor reptile, for he turned pale with fright, and his tail shook so that I had difficulty in holding on. Howsomever, I'd no mind to linger, so I picked about a dozen cocoanuts as sharp as I could and reached the ground again in less than no time. Then I climbed some way up the hill in front of me and fell to on the cocoanuts. They were just lovely, and I managed to put away half-a-dozen of them; then I up anchor, and steered for the top of the hill, thinking that I should be able to 'view the landscape o'er,' as the poet says, and so get my bearings. It was such stiff work, however, that soon I had to pay out the anchor and sit down again. 'Hullo!' says I to myself, 'what's the matter with this here hill?' for, come to touch the ground, it seemed to me rather hot! I wondered a spell, and then got under way and made another start. Up and up I goes, and by-and-by touches Mother Earth again. 'Geewilikins!' says I, 'the ground's a-getting hotter!' Just then I claps my eyes on the top, which had been out of sight before, and I sees blue smoke a-curling upwards. 'Shiver my timbers!' says I, 'it's a burning mountain!'

"I put a reef or two in my sails, and steered a bit more careful, and after a longish cruise reached the top. 'Twas well I was half-speed, or maybe I should have toppled headlong inside the mountain. The hole was big enough, in all conscience. Seeing as how I was there, I kept well to windward and peeped over the edge."

"Oh, Ben," said Charlie, "I shouldn't have done that; I should just have scampered off as fast as ever I could!"

"Well, maybe you would, Master Charles, and small blame to you, when you'd seen the sight I saw!"

"Why, what did you see, Ben?"

"Fire, Master Charles, and plenty of it; but it wasn't so much that as made me stare with all my eyes. Now, if you'll just overhaul your memory, Master Charles, you'll call to mind the marks I told you I saw in the sand."

"Yes, Ben, yes."

"Well, then, now I saw them as made those marks, Master Charles, a-moving about in the fire."

"Ben!" exclaimed the boy, his eyes wide open with astonishment. "What were they? Oh, do tell!"

The ancient mariner lowered his voice to a hoarse whisper: "Salamanders!"

"Eh? What?" asked Charlie, almost speechless.

"Did you never hear tell of salamanders, Master Charles—creatures that live in the fire? Yes, there they were, salamanders and salamanderesses, and plenty of them."

"Dear Ben, whatever were they like?"

"Well, Master Charles, I was somewhat dazed with the light, and so I won't deceive you, but it seemed to me that they were yellow, and blue, and red, just the colours of the flames, and with tails like scorpions; they were dancing and prancing about like as if it were a free-and-easy. To tell the truth, I didn't much care to linger, in case I should be seen and the pleasure of my company requested; so, clapping on all sail, I steered for the sandy beach. I didn't stop there neither, but launched the boat and cruised along shore till I reached the opposite side of the island. I landed on the coral strand, and here I determined to lay by, as I thought 'twas too rocky a place for salamanders. If you'd like to know my opinion, Master Charles, as between man and man," said Ben confidentially, "it's this: though salamanders live chiefly in the fire they enjoy sometimes a bracing sea bath by way of a pick-me-up, and the sandy beach as I just told you of happened to be their bathing place. Anyway, I saw no more of those gentry, and, for the matter of that, I didn't want to.

"On this side of the island I discovered a pool of boiling water, which I found most handy for cooking the lobsters and turtles I caught. A little way up the mountain, where the earth was comfortably warm, I made me a little house of piled-up stones, and there I took my snoozes. I'd now a state-cabin all to myself, likewise could victual the ship handsome; I was governor over a whole island, and yet I wasn't happy, but cast about how I might get away, the loneliness preyed so on my spirits. At last, one fine morning, I couldn't stand it any longer, but made up my mind to skedaddle, so, filling my boat with cocoanuts and boiled lobster, I embarked upon the unknown ocean."

"Oh, Ben, weren't you afraid?" asked Charlie.

"No, Master Charles, for seafaring men mostly carry their lives in their hands. But I was in luck this time, for, two days after, I was

"I found most handy for cooking the lobsters and turtles I caught" (p. 98).

sighted by her Majesty's cruiser *Blunderbuss* and taken on board; and none too soon, as I'd finished my last cocoanut.

"'Admiral,' says I to the captain, 'you see before you a poor unfortunate mariner.' 'Belay,' says the skipper, 'isn't your name Benjamin?' 'Admiral,' I answers him astonished, 'Benjamin it is, and so I won't deceive you.' 'Then, Ben, tip us your flipper,' says he, 'and glad I am to see you, my hearty, safe and sound.'"

"So you knew each other, did you, Ben?" said Charlie.

"Well, Master Charles, I can't exactly charge my memory with knowing that there admiral in particular. Leastways, you see he knew me, and by-and-by when we were a-having a stiff glass of lemonade together, sociable-like, he entered in the log with his own hand an account of my adventures, which, as he was pleased to observe, being a truthful man, were indeed 'very surprising.'"

V.—HOW THEY GAVE THE PIRATES BEANS.

"'SHIVER my timbers!' says the captain, when I'd told him about the pirate vessel. 'And can such things be?' 'Admiral,' I answers him, 'they can and are, and so I won't deceive you.' 'Then,' says he, 'it's my bounden duty, a-sailing under the meteor flag, to go for those same pirates and give them beans,' says he; 'my Queen and the British Lion expect of me no less.' 'Hurrah!' says I. 'Them's my sentiments to a T.' He studied a spell, and then says he: 'Ben, my lad, would you know the pirate captain if you came across him again?' 'Admiral,' I replies, 'should I know my own mother? Only set me face to face with the villain, a fair field and no favour!' The captain smiled at my eagerness. 'Ben,' says he, 'I admire your spirit, so tip us your flipper; but now get you to your bunk, my hearty, for I'm sure you're sadly in need of rest and refreshment.' 'Admiral,' I answers him, 'conditional on my being hailed should the foe be sighted, I obey; and so I thank you kindly.'

"I'd given, as near as I could, the lay of the land, and away steamed the *Blunderbuss* for the desert island.

"When morning dawned, and I came above hatches, not a sail was in sight, and the ship was a-doing her twenty knots in fine style. The skipper was a-pacing the quarter-deck, and seeing yours truly he at once calls me to him, and after kindly inquiring how I found myself, says he, 'And now, Ben, oblige me by going up aloft and casting your eye around.'

"So I climbed the rigging, and sung out almost immediate, 'Land on the weather bow!' Whereupon the captain himself climbs up alongside of me. 'There ain't no land marked down on the chart,' says he; 'maybe it's something new.' 'Admiral,' I answers him, 'don't you

see the blue smoke a-rising from it? As sure as my name's Benjamin,' says I, 'that there's Salamander Island.' 'Shiver my timbers!' says the captain, quite excited, and down he went to take an observation and enter the exact bearings of the discovery in his log."

"But, Ben," said Charlie, "though Salamander Island was a good name, I think it really ought to have been called Benjamin Isle."

"Well, Master Charles," replied the ancient mariner, with his usual modesty, "maybe you're right, but that's hardly for me to say. Salamander was the name as passed between me and the admiral. Howsomever, when he'd done, he says to me, 'Now, Ben, I'd like to put it to you, as between man and man, shall we steer north, south, east, or west?' says he. 'We don't want this here piratical craft to give us the slip!' 'Admiral,' I answers him, 'lay your course two p'ints north of east, likewise double your look-out and keep a-moving.' 'Ben,' says he, 'it shall be done.'

"Well, we forged ahead, but though a reward was offered to the look-outs aloft, and though me and the captain kept our weather eyes open, never a sail, big or little, did we sight.

"'What's the cut of her jib?' says the skipper to me.

"'A milk-white hull with a red stripe,' says I, 'schooner-rigged and a-flying the Union Jack.'

"Well, we cruised till about ten bells in the afternoon, when a mariner aloft hails the quarter-deck, where was me and the admiral a-walking up and down. 'Sail ho!' says he. 'Where away?' says the skipper. 'Right a-head, sir!' 'Can you make out her rig?' 'She's a foreign barque,' says the look-out, 'and a-sailing this way.'

"As the two vessels came nearer, the skipper ran up the British flag, and the barque she ran up the French. The Mossoos slowed a bit as they saw we wanted to speak, and we were about half a mile as it were apart.

"'What ship is that?' we signalled. 'The *Vive la France*,' says they. 'We're Her Britannic Majesty's corvette *Blunderbuss*,' says we. 'Please have you seen a schooner with a milk-white hull and a red stripe?' 'Why, yes,' says the Mossoos, 'a matter of ten knots a-starn and bound due east; you'll catch up with her if you're smart.' So we thanked the Frenchy and passed the compliment of dipping our flag three times, and they did the same by us, and off we went, cock-sure of our game.

" 'Don't you see the blue smoke a-rising from it?' " (p. 101).

" When it got dark we daren't show a light, as, of course, we didn't want the pirate to know we were a-coming. Suddenly the look-out forrud yells, 'Luff—luff your 'el-em. Man overboard!' We'd a narrow shave of running down something that showed white in the water. A boat was lowered, and away she went in chase in charge of the mate, while we shortened sail and waited for her. When she came back the mate sings out for hoisting tackle, so we rigs up a pulley on the main-yard, and hoists the something they'd picked up a-board—and what d'ye think it was, Master Charles?"

" A big chest," suggested Charlie, " which contained treasure."

The old sailor chuckled. " No, Master Charles, 'twas just a poor shipwrecked sailor, and, come to look, a Frenchy. He was bound

hand and foot, and gagged, and was lashed to a couple of planks which was white with a red stripe. He was that pale about the gills that we thought at first he had hopped the twig. Howsomever, we hung him up by the heels, whereby the water he'd shipped ran out of him; and brandy and rubbing did the rest. He was as weak as a church rat, but managed to whisper the word 'Pirates!' I looks at the skipper and him at me. Says the skipper, 'Was the pirate vessel a schooner with a milk-white hull and a red stripe?' The Mossoo feebly nodded. 'Shiver my timbers!' says the captain, 'but we've been nicely tricked. 'Bout ship!' says he. 'Set every stitch of canvas, raise every ha'porth of steam. A fippund note to the mariner what first sights that there furrin barque!'"

"But, Ben," said puzzled Charlie, "you don't mean to say that the foreign barque was really the pirate schooner?"

"Not exactly, Master Charles; 'twas in this way, as the skipper guessed, and as we found out for certain afterwards; the Frenchy was a-sailing along one night when every soul aboard was a-roosting under hatches without a thought of guile, the mariner at the 'el-em and the look-out forrud being the only men on deck. Behold you, all of a sudden the pirate schooner ranges up alongside, throws out grappling-irons, and then the rascals swarmed aboard; and it's all U.P. with the unfortunate Mossoos. They were made to walk the plank, every mother's son."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Charlie.

"Why," said Ben, "a plank was put out from the vessel, and then each Mossoo, being blindfolded, was invited to take a walk along it. As the walk ended in the ocean, there was an end of the unfortunate Frenchies. As for the captain, he was bound hand and foot, tied to a piece of the pirate ship, and chucked into the sea, there to die a sure but lingering death, if it hadn't a-been that we come along, and rescued him from a watery grave just in the nick of time. The barque being a much better craft than the schooner, the pirates shipped aboard her the best of their own cargo, not forgetting, of course, the guns and powder, and finished by blowing up their own vessel, so as it could tell no tales. I give you my word, Master Charles, we might easily have sailed a wild-goose chase till doomsday in search of the schooner with the milk-white hull and red stripe, and then not found her, she being all the time at the bottom of the briny!

"Next morning, directly we clap our eyes on the horizon, there

was the furrin barque, sure enough, and we were a-coming up with her hand over hand. By-and-by we fires across her bows, which brought her to instanter, and then we ranges up alongside. The captain of the furrin barque calls through his speaking-trumpet a parley-vousing in the French lingo. Directly I claps my eyes on him I says to our skipper, 'That's him, admiral; that's the pirate captain. I should know him anywheres!"

"Our captain tipped me the wink, and then he hollers back, 'All right, but we're just a-going to pay you a friendly visit!'

"With that a hundred and fifty bold Jack Tars, each armed to the teeth, boarded the barque, headed by yours truly. When the pirate chief sees me, he turns white about the gills and gives a kind of gasp; then he pulls hisself together for to brazen it out. Says he, 'You have no right aboard a harmless trader, and, what's more, you'd best beware how you insult the French flag!'

"'French flag!' I answers him; and putting my hand in the breast-pocket of his overcoat, whips out his handkerchief, which I had noticed, being keen of sight. 'French flag, indeed—pray what do you call that?'

"'Twas the pirate flag, white skull and crossbones on a black ground, which he'd stuffed in his pocket to conceal it like!

"'No, no,' says I, 'that won't wash; the game's up, and so I won't deceive you. All our guns are double-shotted, and a broadside will blow you into smithereens!'

"On hearing these words the two or three pirates on deck fell on their knees and howled for mercy.

"'You must leave that to the admiral,' says I; 'meanwhile, summon the rest of your miserable crew, and let them stack arms, every mother's son.' So they came up the hatchway, gave up their guns and cutlasses, and were put under a strong guard; but the pirate captain was delivered over to the admiral. 'O—you villain,' says he, 'I can't a-bear to look at you; hanging's too good for the likes of you. Howsomever,' says he, a-turning to the crew, 'to the yard-arm with him, my hearties!' So we strung up the pirate chief, and there he dangled as a warning to all evil-doers.

"'Now, Ben,' says the captain, drawing me aside confidential-like, 'and what shall we do with the rest of the gang?' 'Admiral,' I answers him pat, 'do as you said you would—give 'em beans.' I then told him as how the furrin barque was from the Indies, laden with Tonquin

"We landed the pirates."

beans and spices. 'Now,' says I, 'put 'em ashore on Salamander Island, give 'em the beans, and let 'em shift for themselves.' 'Benjamin,' says the skipper, 'I admire your figurehead, so tip us your flipper, and as you say so shall it be!'

"Whereupon, Master Charles, we shaped our course for Salamander Island, and when we got there we landed the pirates, every mother's son. Each man was given a couple of bushels of beans, and a quart or so of red pepper pods. 'There! That'll warm their insides, I'll be bound,' says the skipper, with a grin; 'they've peppered others, so it is but fair to pepper them; and the beans, though hard, are filling diet, so they won't starve. Likewise,' says he, 'they can plant and sow, and the crops will remind them of their misdeeds; and who can tell,' says the skipper, says he, 'but what in time they may repent?' 'Admiral,' I answers him, 'you never said a truer word, and so I won't deceive you.'

"So we hoisted in the boats, and with the furrin barque in tow, off we sailed; and ever since, when I see that there admiral, me and him has a quiet chuckle together over how we 'gave the pirates beans.'"

VI.—BEN EXTENDS THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

THE old sailor was quieter than usual, apparently lost in reveries of the past, as he pulled at the familiar black pipe. Master Charlie fidgeted and wriggled, almost afraid to speak, yet longing to wheedle another story out of his companion. At length he ventured to remark, "I'm going back to school next week, Ben."

The sailor roused himself. "Are you indeed, Master Charles? It's a fine thing to be a scholar. I never was put to books when I was a young nipper."

Charlie rummaged in his pocket and produced a screw of paper, which he tendered to his friend. "That's tobacco, Ben, which I thought perhaps you'd accept; and it's very kind of you, I'm sure, to have told me all those jolly stories. You see, it's ever so much nicer than reading stories in books, because often they're not true, you know; and you've had such very wonderful adventures, haven't you, Ben?"

"Well, for the matter of that, Master Charles, I'll not deny but what I've knocked about more than most, and what I says that I'll stand by. I thank you kindly, Master Charles, for remembering of yours truly. Talking of tobacco," added the old sailor meditatively, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and proceeded to fill it with his new acquisition, "it's a co-in-ci-dence that I was just a-thinking of a curious experience I had when I was serving aboard her Majesty's gunboat *Ring-tailed Roarer*, off the west coast of Africa. But there! I daresay you'd like to hear one more yarn, and so I don't know as I can do better than tell it you; wherefore, if you're so minded, we'll just clap on all sail, and begin before your ma gives you a hail for dinner."

"Oh, thank you, Ben! Please do."

"Well, we were a-cruising up the Crocodile River, if my memory don't deceive me, Master Charles, and me and the skipper was forrud, a-resting from our labours and the fearful heat of them regions, and without a thought of guile we was a-smoking of our pipes together, sociable-like, when what should come along but an old hippopotamus. It paddled up just to leeward with its snout in the air, sniffing and grunting occasionally in a contented sort of way as our smoke floated in its direction. I was a-watching of it curious-like, and wondering what its little game might be, when suddenly a thought struck me. I got up quietly, leaned over the gun'le, and taking the pipe, which I'd

just filled, from my lips, placed the stem of it in the monster's jaws. It was exactly what it wanted, Master Charles, and what, I suppose, it least expected. If it didn't actually grin, it gave an unmistakable grunt of joy, and put out at once for home. But it hadn't gone far before an idea seemed to strike it all of a heap, for it paddled back and again waited. By a happy thought I chucked it a box of matches. It was the very thing it needed, and, grunting its thanks, it made tracks, puffing like a penny steamer, and leaving a long trail of smoke in its wake. The behaviour of the creature was that ridiculous that me and the skipper laughed fit to split."

"Oh, Ben, that was awfully clever of the hippopotamus," said Charlie; "isn't it wonderful what creatures can do, don't you think?"

"Right you are, Master Charles. And yet," added the old sailor reflectively, "there's them as don't give brute beasts credit for possessing reason! I give you my word, a man's only got to travel a spell with his eyes wide open for to see the wonders of Nature. Now," continued Ben, removing the pipe from his lips with an argumentative flourish, "look at monkeys; ain't they up to snuff, I should like to know? You'll have seen them yourself, Master Charles, in the Zoo, or leastways read about their little games in some of your ma's books. But did you ever hear of a monkey in the picture line—a regular artist, so to say? No? Well, it comes into this here yarn, and takes the cake for cleverness.

"Now, you must know, Master Charles, that the most powerful po-ten-tate in them parts was the King of Cuffeecocoland, and one day the skipper says to me in confidence, says he, 'Ben, my lad, I wish I wasn't glued to the *Ring-tailed*. I wants to get this here king under British protection, likewise to open up a trade through his country, and I've been a-wondering if you'd undertake this little job for me. I won't conceal from you the dangers that lie in your way: there's forests, and deserts, and scarcity of rations, likewise they do say as how the Cuffeecocoites are cannibals, every mother's son. It may be death or glory, my lad, and so what say you?'

"Well, I hadn't my old woman to think of in those days, and, being anxious to oblige, I answers him: 'A man can die but once,' says I, 'and so I won't deceive you; I'm willing for to do the best I can with this here po-ten-tate, or perish in the attempt.'

"Having taken in hand this little job, I had to study how I was a-going to carry it out. I chose me a couple of friendly niggers, like-

wise a wheelbarrow for to hold the swag. We filled it with cocoanuts to keep our gills moist in the desert, likewise a gold-laced scarlet swallow-tailed coat, a cocked hat with feathers, fireworks, and cigars. Each of us carried, of course, shooting irons.

"The skipper landed us on the coral strand, and we at once began to push our way through mangrove-bushes and tree-ferns. The shore was fringed with monkey-trees, which were bowed down with the weight of monkeys, and the welkin, Master Charles, rang with the jabbering of these creatures mixed with the hoarse screams of parrots and cockatoos. Then we entered the forest, where the trees were a-growing a thousand feet high, so that it made your eyes fair ache to try and get a squint at the top of them. We hadn't gone far before 'Hist!' says I to the niggers, and pointed forrud."

"Why, Ben, whatever was it?" asked Charlie.

"Well, Master Charles, a little way down the forest glade, and just a p'int or so to starboard, rose a hillock of smooth chalk. Squatting on its haunches, with its back towards us, was a giant ape. It held in one of its paws a sharpened lump of plumbago, the which is common to them parts, and with it was a-drawing on the chalk the likeness of another of its kind. It was that busy that it didn't notice us at first, but directly it did it ran to an india-rubber tree, close by, pounced upon some dried sap that had oozed from it, rubbed out the plumbago marks, and cut its stick before you could have said Jack Robinson. Now, I ventures to put it to you, Master Charles, as between man and man, wasn't that there a clever monkey? 'Yes,' says you, and right you are, Master Charles.

"On the third day we entered the desert, and roamed the trackless waste. The sun blazed overhead like unto a flaming furnace, only a jolly sight more so, and there wasn't a tree, or a shrub, or even a blade of grass. Victuals and drink ran short, and we carried our lives in our hands. We knew for sure that the heathen were a-raging around us there or thereabouts, likewise the ravening wild beasts. We killed one lion which was a thirsting for our blood, likewise some apes, and took their skins along with us.

"Sometimes the my-rage would set our mouths a-watering, and sometimes we grovelled in the sand while the sy-moon swep' over us. More or less we were always on the jump; if 'twasn't one dreadful danger, why, then, 'twas another, whereby we couldn't complain of want of variety. One morning, howsomever, we claps our peepers on

some palm trees on the distant horizon—but was it really an o-a-sis or only one of these here silly my-rages? The niggers seemed to have no doubt about its being the real article, and were flabbergasted to that extent that their teeth were all of a chatter. To hearten them up I proposed a game at 'Aunt Sally, three shies a penny,' with the cocoanuts we'd saved, and that pulled them together again.

"By-and-by we got near to the o-a-sis, and, peeping through the thick grass, lo and behold, there were the heathen a-doing a double shuffle, likewise a-snapping their fingers and singing:

"'Hi, hi! Yip, yip! Across the yaller sand
White boss, he come to Cuffeecocoland;
White boss, he come, when will he go away?
White boss, he come, hi, hi! He come to stay.'"

"It was a-drawing on the chalk" (p. 108).

"Why, Ben," cried Charlie excitedly, "could the Cuffee-what-d'ye-call-'ems talk English?"

"Bless your innocent heart, Master Charles, no, but I've given you to the best of my recollection the sense or the nonsense of their jabber."

"But what did they mean, Ben, about your not going away, and how did they know you were there?"

"Well, now, Master Charles, you must ask me another. They'd heard tell, of course, as how there was an officer a-coming. As to their meaning, I think it was that the Cuffeecocoites would soon be politely asking of each other, 'Will you prefer roast or boiled Benjamin, my brother?'—or sister, as the case might be."

"Oh, Ben!" exclaimed Charlie, with a shudder. "How very dreadful!"

"Right you are, Master Charles; howsomever, this being so, I fell a-considering how I could best impress these here gentry with the great importance of yours truly, not yearning extra particular to be either boiled or roasted just yet. I got my niggers to rig up a swing between two palm-trees, then I put on the lion's skin, which covered me up completely, and began a-swinging backward and forward. There I sits with my jaws open, smoking a she-root, and my long tail a-swinging free behind. Well, in a couple of shakes the heathen they see the smoke a-curling upward, not knowing anyone was near, and then they takes a squint through the leaves at a raging lion all on fire, as they thinks, enjoying of hisself amazing. I give you my word, Master Charles, they'd never clapped eyes on such a sight afore, and they didn't stop long a-staring neither, but skedaddled in a precious funk. This being so, me and the niggers set to a-roaring like mad, which helped the Cuffeecocoites over the ground considerable.

"I knew that they wouldn't come back again till the next day, when they'd be sure to bring some pals along with them, so I studied for to surprise them still more. In the morning we were up betimes, and this was our little game. I rigs out the niggers in the monkey skins, whereby they looks like the real article, a-walking on their behind legs. We fills the wheelbarrow with green leaves, and in I gets, dressed up like unto a lion again, and a-smoking my she-root. Then one monkey he tools me along, while the other walks in front with a bell in one hand and a-waving of the British flag with the other. By-and-by the heathen they come a-peering and a-squinting through the leaves, and are more astonished than ever.

"At last we reaches the capital, and the Cuffeecocoites turn out in crowds to meet us. The nigger in front waves the flag, and keeps a-ringing of his bell and bawling, 'Make way, ladies and gents, for the British Lion!' And by-and-by we claps our eyes on the king hisself, seated on a throne made of the skulls of his enemies, and all inlaid with yellow gold and ruby gems; and his warriors in their war-paint were around him a-staring with all their eyes. The darkies bowed down before the throne, and banged their noddles against the ground three times, and yelled for us to do similar immediate."

"So I suppose you had to, Ben?" said Charlie.

The old sailor looked surprised, and replied in an injured tone, "Not me, Master Charles; 'twould take a jolly lot of po-ten-tates, more obstreperouser even than that one, for to make yours truly grovel.

No, I just outs of the barrow, and I says to his Majesty, 'How are you, my buck? Tip us your flipper!'"

"Oh, Ben, you just were brave," said Charlie; "but wasn't the king astonished?"

"Right you are, Master Charles, he was kind of struck dumb with amazement. Near by, however, was his chief medicine man a-squatting on another throne, and he ups and says he:

> "'Whoe'er you are, whate'er you be,
> This axe shall make mincemeat of thee,'

and he swipes a terrible chop at me with an enormous hatchet."

"Oh, Ben, and did he hit you?"

"Not much, Master Charles; for I dodged the deadly weapon, and putting a hand into each of my waistcoat pockets I pulls out a couple of squibs, lights them at the end of my she-root, and chucks them at his bare breast. I give you my word, Master Charles, he yelled fit to burst his skin, and fell a-grovelling on the ground; so I follows the squibs with some crackers, and that just about finished him, never having seen such things before. That there black po-ten-tate turned white about the gills, and all the people trembled; then I sat me down on the throne of the medicine man, and I claps the king a good sounding whack on the back. 'You see,' says I, 'what comes of insulting of the British Lion;' but you're all right, old horse, so keep up your pecker.'

"Then I tells him more about the British Lion, likewise our gracious Queen, and shows him the flag, and points out the advantages of trade, and all the time I has my foot on the neck of that there medicine man. Then I makes the king a present of the scarlet coat and the cocked hat and feathers, and I helps him to put them on, and I shows him hisself in a looking-glass, the which I had brought with me a-purpose. And he rubs noses with me then and there, and appoints me his chief medicine man; likewise he tells me as how he'd a soft place in his heart for the Queen, from what I had told him, and would like to marry her straight off. Then I explained to him as how that wouldn't very well do, as the lady lived far, far away beyond the setting sun, but he could be her great friend, and she would protect him from all his enemies, and he could have any quantity of cowrie shells in return for ivory and gold dust. Likewise I rigs up a flagstaff on the king's palace, and hoists the Union Jack, and when night fell we had a grand display of

"The other walks in front with a bell in one hand" (p. 110).

fireworks, and all the heathen joined in the mazy dance to the beating of tom-toms; there was a great feast, too, in honour of the occasion, and I taught that there po-ten-tate to play Aunt Sally, which he did in his cocked hat and swaller-tailed coat, and enjoyed it amazing.

"The next day I takes my leave of Cuffeecocoland, and with a guard of honour makes tracks for the coast and the *Ring-tailed*. And when I come to the Crocodile River, I tells the skipper how I'd fixed up things all friendly-like with that there po-ten-tate."

"What did he say?" asked Charlie.

"Well, Master Charles, if you must know: 'Ben, my lad,' says he, 'tip us your flipper; you've earned the gratitude of your Queen and country. Likewise,' says he, 'I shall recommend you for promotion in the very next letter which I sends her most gracious Majesty.'"

"And did he?" asked Charlie.

"Well," said the ancient mariner, "he did, Master Charles, and yet he didn't. For you see 'twas this way: the *Ring-tailed* was wrecked before that there letter was posted, and captain and crew was drownd-ed in the Indian Ocean, while Ben barely escaped with his life. But there, there's them as is promoted, and then again there's them as isn't; but come what may, it's right for you to do your level best without fear or favour, and so I won't deceive you." A. L. Bonser.

STORIES FROM THE EDDA.

I.—THE GODS OF ASGARD.

THE dwelling-place of the Northern gods, or æsir, was called Asgard; there they had many shining palaces, the chief of which was called Valhalla. With branches stretching over the earth, and the crown reaching up to the heavens, stood the mighty ash Yggdrasil. It was in great danger of destruction, for harmful worms gnawed at its three roots, four deer ran up and down its branches, biting off the buds and leaves, while on its summit browsed another deer. On the topmost branch sat an eagle, between whose eyes perched a hawk; a mischievous squirrel scampered up and down, breeding dispute between the eagle and the most dangerous of the worms. Daily the three fates watered the tree from Urd's well, so that the hour of destruction might be delayed.

Chief of the gods was Odin, or Woden as he was called. He ever brooded over the fate of gods and men, and pondered how he might avert the destruction of the world that he foresaw, and for this reason he even gave one eye for a draught from Mimir's wisdom-giving well that lay by one of the roots of Yggdrasil. He often went among men to learn what they were doing, and to right the wrong. Sometimes he went as a splendid warrior; sometimes as an old man, with a broad-brimmed hat pulled low over his brow and a blue cloak flung round him. He possessed a wonderful spear, and a horse with eight legs, called Sleipnir, that was unequalled for speed, and could ride on the air. In Asgard two ravens sat on his shoulders, whispering all they had seen on their daily flight, while two wolves lay at his feet. He was attended by a number of warrior maidens called Valkyrie, who rode to battle fully armed, and carried to Valhalla those whom Odin selected for death. Only those who died by the sword went there, and many a warrior, dying of sickness or old age, threw himself on his sword that he might

not lose his chance of Valhalla. Here they spent a happy life, fighting all day and feasting at night on the flesh of a boar that daily came to life again, and drinking mead.

Next to Odin came his mighty son, Thor the Thunderer, dreaded by the giants, the enemies of gods and men. He was terrible to behold when he stood before them, grasping with his iron glove his hammer, Miœlnir, and girded with a belt that doubled his strength. When he was angry he would draw his brows over his flaming eyes and blow into his fiery red beard. When he drove forth in his chariot, drawn by two goats, the earth shook to its foundations, the rocks burst asunder, the abysses howled, and sparks flew from the stones. His wife was the golden-haired Sif.

The best-beloved of the gods was Balder, the beautiful, the god of light and of springtime. Nothing evil could approach his dwelling, where he lived with Nanna, his wife. Other gods were Freyr, the sun god, who owned a sword that could fight by itself; Hoenir; Bragi the wise; Loki, the evil doer; Hœder, the blind winter god. Then there was Heimdall, the warder of the bridge Bifrœst, called by men the rainbow, connecting heaven and earth, or Asgard and Midgard, as men named them. He had a horn with which to summon the gods if the giants tried to cross the bridge; he was so sharp of sight that he could see over a distance of a hundred miles by day and by night, so keen of ear that he could hear the grass grow in the fields and the wool on the sheep's back, and he needed less sleep than a bird.

Chief among the goddesses were Odin's wife, Frigg; Freyr's beautiful sister Freya, who drove abroad in a chariot drawn by cats, and wore a necklace of exceeding beauty; and Iduna, Bragi's wife, who guarded the apples of youth, without which the gods would grow old and haggard.

II.—THE TREASURES OF ANDVARI.

Odin, Loki, and Hoenir went forth together to see how it fared in the world. They came to a river, and went along its banks till they reached a waterfall, where an otter sat, with blinking eyes, devouring a salmon he had caught. Loki hurled a stone at him; it struck him on the head and killed him. Proud was Loki of his skill as they lifted up otter and salmon. Soon they reached a great farm owned by Hreidmar, a mighty man, learned in magic. They besought him that he would take them in for the night.

"Food we have enough," said they, and showed him their booty.

When Hreidmar saw the otter, anger and grief filled his heart, for it was his son. He summoned his sons Regin and Fafnir to take vengeance on the murderers.

There entered two great men, and they fell upon the gods and bound them. "We will redeem our lives," said Odin, when he saw their strength availed not. "We will pay what ye will for the murdered man."

The giants, after much debate, consented, and solemn oaths were sworn that the gods would keep their word, for there was little faith between the gods and giants.

"Take off the skin of the otter," said Hreidmar. "If you would redeem your lives you must fill it full of red gold, and you must cover the fur so that not one hair is without gold. Then shall there be peace between us."

Odin took Loki aside and bade him go to the dwarf called Andvari, while he and Hoenir remained as hostages. Loki went his way and came to where the dwarf swam in the water in the shape of a pike. He caught him in his hand, and demanded his gold. Now the dwarf loved the red gold as though it had been his life, and his heart was heavy within him. But there was no help, for he was in Loki's power. They went into the cave, and Andvari fetched forth the great stores of gold. Loki noticed that the dwarf was concealing a tiny golden ring. "Give up the ring," cried he. "I bade thee give me all."

Then the dwarf fell on his knees. "Take not the ring," he implored. "Thou hast taken my treasure; leave me the ring."

"Thou shalt not retain one piece of gold," returned Loki coldly. "Why wouldst thou keep the ring?"

"Because," said Andvari, "with it I can renew my wealth."

"Now have I cause enough to take it from thee," said Loki. "Nothing shalt thou keep."

"Take it," cried Andvari. "But I will attach a curse to it. Whoever owns this ring, he shall lose his life because of it."

"Be it so," said Loki. "I am content to abide thereby." He went back to Hreidmar's house, and gave Odin the gold and the ring. Odin kept the ring because he deemed it beautiful, and gave the remaining gold to Hreidmar, who filled the otter skin, pressing the gold tightly together till the skin stood upright. Then Odin covered the outside with gold.

Hreidmar examined it very closely. "Lo," said he, "there is one hair uncovered. If you do not cover that, our agreement is broken and ye cannot be set free." Then Odin drew forth the ring and placed it on the empty hair.

"Now," said he, "the agreement is fulfilled and we have redeemed our lives." Therewith he took his spear, but as they prepared to depart, Loki stopped on the threshold. "Because of thy greed," said he to Hreidmar, "the curse shall stay with the ring. Whosoever owneth the ring shall lose his life because of it." And herewith the gods departed.

While Hreidmar stood contemplating the treasure, Regin and Fafnir, his sons, came to him and demanded their share of the fine.

"Not so," cried Hreidmar. "The gold is mine, and ye shall have none of it."

The brothers took counsel together how they could obtain possession of the gold, and they resolved to kill their father. So they fell upon him unawares and slew him, and the curse of the ring began to work. Now, the two brothers fell to quarrelling, for when Regin claimed his share of the treasure Fafnir denied him, saying:

"It is a likely thing that I should share with thee the wealth for which I slew my father. Hence with thee, brother, if thou wouldst not share his fate."

Regin was more cunning than Fafnir, but he was not so strong; so he took his sword and fled, planning vengeance. Fafnir went forth to a wild heath. Here he dug a deep pit and laid in it his gold and other treasures, and assuming the shape of a terrible dragon he placed himself on the top of it; only once in the day did he creep away to drink water.

Regin went away and became a smith at the court of King Hialprek, where Sigurd (or Siegfried as he is called in some tales), a king's son, was dwelling, and he trained Sigurd to deeds of strength, because through him he hoped to avenge his wrongs. When Sigurd was strong and tall, Regin made him a sword called Gram; it was so sharp that when he held it in a running stream he cut in twain a flock of wool that the current bore against the blade, and that he cleft Regin's anvil with it. Then Regin told the brave lad of the terrible dragon on the heath, and Sigurd, yearning to show his strength, determined to kill him. He dug a pit in the dragon's path and hid therein.

Fafnir left his lair to go to the water, and as he crawled over the

"Sigurd pierced him with his sword, and he died" (p. 118).

pit Sigurd pierced him with his sword and he died. Now came Regin and bade him cut out Fafnir's heart and roast it for him while he slept. Sigurd obeyed. He made a great fire and roasted the heart, and after a time he touched it with his fingers to see if it were done; but he burnt himself and put his finger in his mouth to ease the pain. Suddenly he heard voices above him, and found that they came from eagles, and that he understood their words.

"Foolish is Sigurd," said one, "to sit there and roast the dragon's heart for Regin. Better would it be for him if he ate the food himself."

"Yea," returned the other. "And better would it be for Sigurd if he arose and slew Regin, who is plotting his death."

Then Sigurd ate the heart, and now he could understand the language of birds and beasts; and he dealt Regin a mighty blow and slew him. So the ring had already wrought three deaths. Sigurd now owned the treasure, which was known as the Nibelungen hoard, and the curse still clung to the ring, so that in after days it brought about his death and the death of many a brave hero.

III.—THE FORGING OF THE HAMMER.

Loki, the mischief-maker, cut off the beautiful golden locks of Sif, the wife of Thor, the Thunderer. Great was her sorrow when she awoke, and terrible was the wrath of Thor. He pulled his shaggy brows over his blazing eyes, and blowing into his fiery beard swore that Loki should pay for the insult with his life. But Loki humbled himself and pleaded for mercy, saying that "ere many hours had passed Sif should own golden tresses that none could distinguish from her own." So Thor spared him, and Loki summoned his dwarfs and bade them make him the hair, a spear, and a ship, all three of which were possessed of remarkable qualities. And when Loki saw how successful his dwarfs had been he went to a dwarf called Brock, whose brother, Sindri, was distinguished for his rare skill, and exhibited his treasures.

"I will wager my head," said he, "that thy brother Sindri cannot produce three treasures to equal mine."

Brock straightway sought out Sindri and told him of the wager. Sindri built up his fire, and taking the skin of a pig he laid it on his forge and bade Brock blow the bellows without ceasing, lest the work

be spoilt ; and with that he went away. So Brock blew the bellows. Presently a fly settled on his hand and stung him sharply, but the dwarf took no notice. The fly was none other than Loki, who wished to spoil the work and win his wager ; but his artifice was vain, and in a little while Sindri returned and took from the forge a boar with shining bristles of gold.

He next placed gold on the forge, and bade his brother cease not from blowing lest the work be spoiled. Scarce had he left, when the vicious fly returned and attacked the hapless dwarf, stinging his neck sharply, but though the pain was great, he bravely stuck to his work, and the baffled god withdrew as Sindri returned. Now Sindri drew from the fire a ring of gold, and he gazed on it well pleased. Next he placed on the forge the piece of iron he had brought with him.

" Now, brother," said he as he went away, " let nothing tempt thee to desist from thy labours, lest our work be unavailing and the wager lost."

Then Brock set to work, but once again the buzzing fly came in at the window and renewed his attack. This time he stung the defenceless dwarf between the eyes so venomously that the blood dripped down, and the dwarf was constrained to cease from work for one second and wipe the blood from his eyes. Sindri rushed in, crying out that all was lost ; and hastening to the forge he drew forth a hammer. It was perfect in all things save only the handle, and that was too short because of that moment's pause.

Brock and Loki started forth laden with their treasures, and came to Asgard, where the gods assembled to view what they had brought. In the centre of the hall, in the judgment seats, sat Odin, Thor, and Freyr. First Loki advanced and gave Thor the golden hair. Thor placed it on the head of Sif and it grew as though it had been her own, and none could tell the difference. To Odin he gave the spear, Gungnir, that never missed its mark. To Freyr he gave the ship. The name thereof was Skidbladnir, and it was so made that the owner could take it to pieces and put it in his pocket. And when its sails were hoist, the wind was always with it.

Well pleased were the gods with these gifts, and curious to see if the dwarf's came near them in merit. Brock advanced with his treasures.

" The ring is for thee, Odin," said he. " Its name is Draupnir, and every ninth night eight other rings drop from it, equally costly. Take thou the hammer, Thor. Miœlnir is its name, and wondrous its

strength, for howsoever hard thou strikest it cannot be broken; when thou hast hurled it at thy foe it will ever return to thee, and it can become so small that thou canst hide it in thy pouch. For thee, Freyr, Sindri sends the boar Gullinbursti. It can run on the clouds and through water, by day or by night, swifter than horse can run, and the darkest night, the densest wood, will be lighted up by its gleaming bristles of gold."

Then the gods pondered awhile, but in the end they declared that the hammer was the best of all the gifts. And in this they judged wisely, for many a time Miœlnir saved Asgard from the giants. So Brock had won his wager; but Loki was by no means minded to lose his head, and offered to redeem it with much treasure. But Brock would not consent.

"You must catch me first, if you would have my head," laughed Loki, and vanished, for his shoes carried him through air and water. But Thor pursued him and brought him back, an unwilling captive. Now Brock seized his knife, but Loki declared that it was his head only that belonged to Brock; the neck he might not touch.

Then said Brock: "Think not to 'scape me thus. If thy head is mine I will sew up thy evil mouth as a mark." But his knife could make no holes in the lips for the thread to pass through, for Loki brought it about that it would not cut.

"If but my brother's awl were here," he sighed, and, lo, the awl was in his hand. So he sewed up Loki's mouth, and the gods laughed mightily. But it was not long before Loki had freed himself from his bonds.

IV.—THE LOSING OF THE HAMMER.

THOR awoke one morning and stretched out his arm to feel for his hammer. But it was not there, and the strong god rose in wrath, and sought for it, but in vain. Then he went to Loki, who was cunning and sharp of wit, and whose aid the gods sought when trouble came to them.

"Rise up, Loki," cried Thor, "and give me thine aid, for my hammer is stolen, and I know not where it is."

"I will find it," said Loki, "if it be anywhere. Come, let us go to Freya, that she may lend me her feather dress."

They went to Freya, and Loki asked her for her feather dress, which

"Once again the buzzing fly came in at the window" (p. 119).

would enable him to fly through the air. "Gladly will I lend it thee, Loki," said beautiful Freya. "Thou shouldst have it, though it were of silver; thou shouldst have it, though it were of gold."

Then Loki donned the feather dress, and flew through the air, and his feathers rustled in the wind as he took his way. He never hesitated, but directed his flight straight to the land of the giants, for well he knew that they alone would have ventured on so daring a theft. Before him rose a great castle, and in front of it sat Thrym, the mighty giant, contented and smiling as he decked his dogs with collars of gold and combed the beautiful manes of his horses.

"Ha, Loki, how fares it with the gods, and what brings you hither to Giant Land?" cried Thrym when he beheld the god.

"Ill fares it with the gods," returned Loki gloomily, "while you keep hidden the hammer of Thor."

"Yes," laughed Thrym, "I have hidden the hammer. Deep it lies in the bosom of the earth, eight miles below its surface, where only I can find it. And never again will Thor grasp his treasure till Freya comes hither to be my bride."

Away flew Loki, his feather dress rustling as he took his flight to Asgard. He told Thor what he had heard, and the two gods sought out Freya and bade her put on bridal array and be Thrym's bride.

Then the wrath of the goddess awoke.

"Think ye I am mad?" she cried with flashing eyes. "What should I do in Giant Land as the giant's bride? Not at such a price canst thou redeem thy hammer, Thor."

Sorrowfully the two gods went from her.

Thor's loss could no longer be concealed, and he summoned the other gods to take counsel. They gazed at each other in sore dismay, but none knew what to advise.

"There is but one thing to be done," at last spake Heimdall the wise. "Thor must deck himself in bridal array, and round his neck must he place Freya's gleaming necklace, and he must go to Thrym as his bride."

"Never will I thus humble myself," cried Thor in fury. "The gods would scorn me, and call me a woman if I should put on woman's robes."

"Speak not thus, Thor," cried Loki. "There is no other way. Right soon will the giants dwell in Asgard if you do not fetch the hammer home."

The other gods urged him also, and unwillingly Thor submitted and decked himself in bridal robes. Round his neck he placed Freya's gleaming necklace ; from his girdle hung keys, and over his face a long veil, so that none could see that he was a god. Loki dressed himself as his maid, and he was pleasant to look upon as they set forth on Thor's chariot. The earth shook, sparks flew from the rocks, as the goats hastened upon their way. Thrym had prepared all things for his wedding feast, and sent abroad his invitations.

" Of cattle and wealth I have abundance," said he. " All that was wanting to me was Freya as my wife, and now she is coming hither."

Thor and Loki reached their destination, and entered the hall where the guests awaited them, and all marvelled at the tall and stately bride. Then Thrym advanced to greet her, as was fitting, and led her to her place at the banquet. But if the guests had wondered at the stature of the bride, they were no less amazed at her appetite. Thor alone devoured an entire ox, eight salmon, and all the sweetmeats that were prepared for the women.

Thrym watched in amazement. " Full many a bride have I seen," said he, " but never in my life saw I one eat so greedily."

Loki, the quick-witted, made answer with his guileful tongue. " For eight long nights Freya has touched no food, so great was her longing to reach Giant Land."

Then Thrym was well pleased ; but again his astonishment could not be concealed when his bride alone emptied three hogsheads of mead. " Many a bride have I seen," said he, " but never saw I bride who drank like mine."

But Loki, the ready-witted, again made answer. " For eight nights no drop has passed Freya's lips, so great was her longing for Giant Land."

Then the giant turned to lift his bride's veil and press a kiss on the fair brow. But in dismay he sprang back the whole length of the hall. " Terrible," he cried, " is Freya's flaming eye ; her glance went through me like burning fire."

" 'Tis small wonder," returned Loki quickly. " For eight long nights Freya has not closed her eyes, so great was her longing for Giant Land."

Then Thrym was satisfied, and now his sister drew near to the bride. " If you would win my love and affection," said she, " you must pay for them with rings of red gold."

But now the banquet was over, and Thrym called to his men to bring thither the hammer.

The hammer was brought and the heart of Thor waxed glad and laughed within him for joy when he saw his treasure. He grasped its handle and swung it over Thrym, and with one blow he felled him to the earth. And his sister received blows in place of the rings of red gold she craved. Then Thor made an end of all the giants assembled there, and he and Loki went back with Miœlnir to make glad the hearts of the gods. And thus was dismay averted from Asgard.

V.—THE CHILDREN OF LOKI.

Odin, sitting on his high seat, discovered that Loki had three children as evil as himself, and he ordered them to be brought before him. One was named Hel, she was hideous to behold, half black, half flesh-coloured. Odin cast her down to Niflheim, which lay by one of the roots of Yggdrasil, and gave her power over all who died of sickness or old age. Lofty railings protected her vast domains. Her hall was called Misery, her keys Hunger, Greed was her knife, Lazy her man, and Slow her maid. Her threshold was named Ruin, her bed Trouble, and her curtain Threatening Misfortune.

The second of Loki's children was the horrible Midgard snake. Odin cast it in the sea, where it grew till it lay curled round the earth with its tail in its mouth.

The third was the Fenris wolf, and the gods deemed him harmless, and let him dwell among them, although Tyr, the god of the sword, alone had courage to feed him. But he grew mightily in strength and size, and the gods were troubled, and took counsel together how they might bind him. They made a strong fetter and brought it him.

"Let us bind thee with this that thou mayest try its strength," said they.

The wolf looked, and seeing it was but weak he let them bind him. Then he stretched himself and lo, the fetter broke. So they made another chain, stronger than the first. "Come," they said, "and let us try thee with this. Great will be thy fame if thou canst break so strong a bond."

He looked at it doubtfully, for he saw it was stronger than the first, but his strength had increased, and he was willing to run a little risk

for the sake of so much honour. He submitted to be bound, then he shook himself and the chain broke in many pieces.

Sore dismayed were the gods, and they sent to the dwarfs for aid, and the dwarfs gave them a strong bond made of many curious things. It was slight to look upon, like a ribbon of silk, and the wolf shook his head. "There is magic in it; I will not try it," he said.

"Why," said the gods, as they vainly tried to tear it, "true it is stronger than the others, but what is that to thee, who art so strong?"

"Methinks," returned the Fenris wolf, "I shall get little honour by rending so feeble a band. Yet if it be wrought by cunning and deceit, ye shall not put it on me."

The gods mocked him, saying, "Thou hast broken heavy fetters of iron: canst thou not tear a little silken ribbon? If thou canst not, small cause have we gods to fear thee, and we will unbind thee again."

"Nay," said the wolf, "it is not so. If I am bound so that I cannot unloose myself, ye will but mock me, and it will be too late for me to seek your aid. I will not try this fetter, unless one of you will put his hand into my mouth as a pledge that all is fair."

The gods looked one upon the other, and none liked to run the risk. At last Tyr put his hand into the wolf's mouth. The gods bound their foe. He rose and stretched himself and, lo, the silken ribbon hardened. He strove to rend it, but in vain; it only grew harder and harder. Helpless and furious he bit off Tyr's hand. When the gods saw that his efforts were unavailing they laughed loud and long. Only Tyr did not laugh, for he had lost his hand. They took the Fenris wolf and bound him with strong chains to a great rock. He opened his mouth to snap at them, and they placed in it a sword, point upwards, and there he lay howling till the Day of Doom.

VI.—THOR'S JOURNEY TO THE GIANTS.

THOR, the Thunderer, the mighty god, arose and seized his hammer. "I will go forth and seek the giants," said he, "that I may slay them, lest they come to Asgard and do us dire harm." Then he set forth in his chariot, drawn by two goats, and with him fared Loki, the mischief-maker. The chariot thundered on its way over hill and dale, and sparks flew from the hoofs of the goats, and the earth shook as they tore on their way.

"It grows dark," said Thor; "let us seek shelter for the night in yon peasant's hut."

The peasant welcomed them, but his heart was grieved, for he had but scanty fare to set before them.

"I will bring flesh to the meal," said Thor, and raising his hammer he struck his goats full on the forehead that they fell down and were dead. "Prepare them for the fire," said he, "and lay their skins beside the hearth. But look to it that ye break no bone, or it will go ill with you."

So they sat down and feasted royally. Then Loki, the mischief-maker, with his guileful tongue, whispered to Thialfi, the peasant's son: "Break thou that bone, for within it lies hid the marrow, the best part of the meat."

So Thialfi did as Loki told him, and Thor knew it not. When the meal was ended, the bones were placed on the skin, and all lay down and slumbered. But at dawn Thor arose and swung Miœlnir, his hammer, over skin and bones, and, lo, the goats lived and rose up. But one of them was lame, for Thialfi had broken the leg-bone.

Then terrible was the wrath of Thor, and they who beheld it shook with fear. He pulled down his mighty brows over his blazing eyes, and blew into his fiery beard, and all fell on their knees in terror, and dared not meet his gaze. "Is it thus ye repay me the kindness I have shown?" cried he in tones of thunder. "Death shall be your lot, you shameless peasant, for the wrong you have done me!"

Then the sorrowful household pleaded for mercy, and offered all they had in expiation of the deed. The heart of Thor melted with pity at their fear; perchance he knew whose counsel caused the mischief, so he unbent his brows and spoke:

"Be it so. I will grant you your life, but there must be atonement, and, therefore, henceforth Thialfi shall be my servant and follow me in my journeyings, and my goats will I leave here, for of what service is a lame goat to me?"

The peasant blessed him for his mercy, and gave him his son, and Thialfi went forth with Loki and Thor as their servant, and he carried the food as it was meet he should.

So they set out in quest of the Land of the Giants. They crossed the great sea, and wandered on till they reached a mighty forest, the trees whereof grew high and hid the sun, while the undergrowth was dense. All day had they walked, and yet they found no outlet. And

at night Loki discovered a hut for them to sleep in, a spacious building with an entrance hall almost as large as the chief apartment. But towards midnight the earth shook, the hut trembled, and terrible sounds disturbed their slumbers.

"This house is dangerous," cried Thor; "I will rest in the open air."

Then Thialfi discovered an outhouse, and he and Loki took refuge there, for they were sore afraid. But Thor knew no fear, so the livelong night he kept watch with his hammer at the door.

All night the terrible sounds continued. When the darkness grew a little less, because beyond the trees the sun was rising, Thor arose and went forth to see if he might find what manner of thing had disturbed them. He had gone but a few paces when he discovered a man of mighty stature lying on the ground. Thor was no dwarf, he towered above all men, yet by this Giant's side he felt himself but small. He stood and gazed, and as he gazed the Giant snored. "Ha," said the god, as he girded on his belt that doubled his strength; "that was the sound that troubled us. What manner of man is this whose snores are like to earthquakes?"

As he spoke, the Giant awoke, rose up to his full height, and it is said that, for the only time in his life, the heart of the Thunderer failed him, and he could not strike.

"What is thy name, friend?" he asked.

"I am called Skrymir," answered the Giant; "but I have no need to ask thee who thou art. Thy red beard and thy hammer betray thee for the mighty god Thor. But where have I laid my glove? Ah, yonder it lies." Then Thor, to his shame, discovered that the hut where he and his comrades had spent the night was naught but the Giant's glove, and the thumb thereof they had taken for an outhouse! But he held his peace, and when they had broken their fast Skrymir spoke.

"Let us go forth together," said he. "A journey seems shorter in good company. We will put our provisions in one bundle. It will be but a little matter for me to carry them." So he put all together, and they journeyed through the forest all that day; and when it was night they rested beneath a tall oak.

"Eat your supper," said Skrymir, throwing down the bundle; "I have no desire for food." So saying, he laid himself beneath an oak, and in another minute the forest shook with his snores.

The others prepared to sup, but in vain did they strive to open the bundle. They could neither break nor undo the rope that bound it. Then anger filled Thor, and he crept softly to where Skrymir lay. He raised his hammer high above his head, and dealt the Giant a mighty blow, and had it been an ordinary man who lay there, he would have needed no second stroke. Skrymir awoke, and drew his hand across his forehead. "Did a leaf fall on my face?" he asked. "Have you supped, Thor? Are you going to sleep?"

"We are preparing for rest," said Thor sullenly. He went away, and with his companions lay down under a distant tree, but sleep came not nigh them. When it was midnight, Thor arose, and stole to the side of the sleeping giant. He raised his hammer with a mighty swing, and brought it full on the brow of his foe, so that the weapon sank right in!

Skrymir opened his eyes and shook his head.

"Did an acorn fall from the tree?" said he. "What ails thee, Thor, that thou standest beside me, and sleepest not?"

"I woke from a dream," returned Thor, great wonder in his heart that any should live after such a blow. "The night is yet young; let us sleep again."

So he laid him down again, but not to sleep; amazement and anger filled his heart as he listened to the earth-shaking snores of Skrymir. When the grey dawn was breaking in the sky, Thor arose for the third time, and girded his belt tighter, and placing one foot before the other, he raised his hammer and struck the Giant on the temple, and all his strength was in the blow. Skrymir yawned and stretched himself. "A twig fell on my face from the tree," said he, rubbing his cheek. "But 'tis time we went on our way." Never a word said Thor, but great was his amazement; and his companions gazed in silent fear on the man on whom the heavy strokes of the strongest of the gods fell so lightly. "Ye are not far now from Utgard," went on the Giant. "I heard you say, one to the other, that I was no small man. But this I tell you. In Utgard are men beside whom I am but as a dwarf! Let no boastful speech pass your lips, for none there will brook proud words. I would advise you to turn your steps elsewhere; but if that may not be, then take your way to the east, and you will reach the place you seek. For me, my path lies northward to yonder mountains."

"He raised his hammer with a mighty swing" (p. 128).

VII.—HOW THOR CAME TO UTGARD.

SKRYMIR departed, and the gods travelled to the east; and at the hour of noon there loomed upon their sight a mighty castle, that seemed to reach to the blue vault of heaven; it was built of strong stones, and was, in truth, fit for the Giants' home. All round it was a wall, and the gate was fast shut. Thor's efforts were unavailing to open it, so they slipped through the bars, feeling much ashamed. They crossed the courtyard, and entered into a hall so vast that it was a journey to go from end to end! In the hall were set tables and benches, and on the benches sat men of lofty stature; at the head of the table sat the King, and on the table was spread a feast. When they drew near, the King glanced at them.

"Ye are welcome in the hall of Utgardloki," quoth he. "By thy red beard and thy hammer, thou shouldst be Thor, friend. But I can scarce think that Thor is so small in stature, or is thy strength greater than thy body would make us think?"

"Try me," said Thor wrathfully. "I am stronger than thou lookest for."

"So be it," said Utgardloki. "For none may stay here who cannot excel in some way. What can ye do?"

Then Loki cried out, "Try me at the feast, O King. Truly your men may be stronger than I, but I think there is none can beat me in speed at a meal."

So the men brought in a great trough of meat at the King's command, and it was no small load. Loki and Logi, one of the Giants, sat down, one at each end, and ate, and in a little space they met in the middle of the trough. Loki had devoured the meat, but Logi had also consumed the bones and the wooden trough, and was proclaimed the victor. Then Utgardloki asked Thialfi in what art he excelled.

"In good sooth," said Thialfi, "I am accounted a swift runner."

"That is truly an excellent art," rejoined the King; "but swift indeed must your running be if you would bear away the prize here."

So they went forth to the racecourse, and a young man, Hugi, was summoned to run with Thialfi. Three times were they to run to the goal. The first time Hugi reached it in time to turn back and meet Thialfi. So they ran for the second time, and when Thialfi was yet a bow shot from the goal, Hugi arrived and turned again to meet him.

Then they started for the third time, and this time Hugi reached the goal when Thialfi was in the middle of the course.

"Enough of this sport," cried Utgardloki, "for it is plain Thialfi cannot compete with my people. Tell me, Thor, in what art dost thou excel that we may see and wonder at thy marvellous strength."

"Try me at the wine-cup," cried Thor. "I know there is none can beat me there!"

So they went back to the hall, and the King called for a horn. "We esteem him a good drinker who empties it at a draught," said he. "Some do it in two, but there are none here such weaklings that they cannot do it in three."

The horn was long, but it did not seem very large to Thor, who was thirsty. He raised it to his lips and took a long draught, till he was out of breath. Then he looked at the horn. He found he had made but little difference in its contents.

"'Twas well drunk," said the King, "but yet 'tis not much. Never had I believed it if any had told me that Thor could drink no better than that."

Again Thor set the horn to his lips, and pulled and pulled at its contents till the breath left him, but when he looked therein it seemed to him he had drunk less than before, though now it could be carried without spilling its contents.

"Ha, Thor," cried Utgardloki, "methinks thou must take a longer pull if thou wouldst empty the cup at the third draught." Then Thor waxed exceeding wrathful. He put forth all his strength, and when he put down the cup at the third draught the contents were greatly diminished, but it was not empty and he would drink no more.

"'Tis plain," said the mocking host, "thy strength is less than we thought." But Thor made answer thus:

"Truly, if I were at home and the gods deemed me a poor drinker after that draught, I should think it strange. Try me at something else. What other trial of strength can you propose?"

A large grey cat ran across the hall, and Utgardloki told Thor that his young men in sport often tried to lift her. Thor followed her. He pulled and tugged with all his strength, but he could only raise one foot a very little from the ground! Ill-pleased was he when Utgardloki smiled at his vain efforts, and he cried out for one of the young men to wrestle with him. But Utgardloki said "It would be child's

play for these to wrestle with thee. But summon hither Elli, my nurse, and let Thor wrestle with her if he will. She has overthrown men who seemed not weaker than he."

An aged woman came at his call, and she and Thor wrestled long, but he could not move her, and at last she forced him on one knee, and the King said it was enough, and that it was time for rest. So they laid them down in the hall, and when day came Thor and his companions arose and prepared to depart hastily, but the King bade them stay and break their fast. When they had eaten well, he went with them to the gates and asked of Thor if his journey had contented him, but Thor said: "I cannot say my sojourn here redounds greatly to my honour. Ill-pleased am I that you should think me such a weakling."

"Now will I reveal the truth to you," said Utgardloki, "for you are departing, and never while I live shall you enter these walls again. And, verily, had I known how great was your strength you had never set foot within them, for a little more, and you had brought terrible misfortunes upon us. Listen! All you have seen was illusion! I was Skrymir, and I fastened the bundle with iron bands, hence you could not open it. Had your blows fallen on me when I lay stretched beneath the oak, I had been slain, but, unseen by you, I held a mountain betwixt myself and your hammer, and on it you cleft three deep valleys, one at each blow. Loki ate well, but Logi was the wild-fire, and burnt up the meat and the trough. Swift is the running of Thialfi, but Hugi was my thought, and who can outspeed a thought? Now, as for your drinking! Never, in good sooth, did I think it was in anyone's power to drink as you drank. The end of the horn was in the ocean, and when you go thither you will see how great a difference you have made. Men call it the ebb. The cat was the Midgard snake, and we trembled when you lifted its foot, for you lifted it almost to the sky. Elli was Old Age, and many a mighty man has she overthrown. And now farewell. It will be better if you come this way no more."

Then Thor raised his weapon in his anger, but ere the blow fell Utgardloki had vanished. The great castle disappeared, and far and wide was nothing to be seen but beautiful green fields. And Thor and his companions went their way, pondering silently over all that they had seen.

VIII.—THE FISHING OF THOR.

THOR pondered deeply how he could avenge himself on the giants for the deceptions practised on him in Utgard, and so recover his honour. He assumed the form of a youth, and went forth to visit one of the frost giants named Hymir, who gave him shelter for the night. When it was dawn, the giant arose, and prepared to go forth and catch fish in the sea. Thor offered to accompany him, but the giant shook his head.

"Little help should I have from thee," he said; "thou art too small and young to be aught but a hindrance to me. Long shall I be away, and thou would'st find it bitter cold."

"Be not afraid," returned Thor. "It remains to be seen which of us will first desire to return. What bait shall we take?"

Hymir told him to choose his own bait, whereupon he went to the giants' herds, slew the biggest ox, and tore off his head. Then he joined Hymir in the boat and rowed, so that the latter wondered at his strength. At length, the giant said they had reached his usual fishing ground, but Thor desired to go further out to sea. After a time Hymir ceased rowing.

"It is not safe to go further," said he, "lest we chance upon the Midgard snake."

Thor said they must not stop yet, and rowed with all his might, while Hymir sat in sullen silence. At last Thor stopped rowing, and baited a mighty line with the ox's head, for it was no small fish that he meant to catch that day.

The Midgard snake lay at the bottom of the ocean. When the tempting bait dangled before it, it raised its head, and snapped at it, and the hook caught in the snake's mouth. Then it grew mad with rage and terror, and pulled and tugged at the line, so that Thor was flung to the bottom of the boat. Now his wrath awoke, and with his wrath his strength grew. His feet went through the boat, and he stood on the sea bottom. The snake struggled and fought, lashing the water, so that the sea grew wild and tumultuous, the waves dashed high, and great was the turmoil, but Thor never let go, and slowly, slowly, he raised the monster out of the water. Its horrible eyes were fixed on him; it breathed forth venom against him, but little cared the mighty god, as he stood there straining every muscle.

With pale face and sinking heart the giant watched the deadly struggle; he saw how the boat filled with water, and his courage failed him, so that he grew faint with terror.

Thor heeded him not, but, raising his hammer, prepared to slay the enemy of the gods, but Hymir rushed forward and cut through the line. The earth groaned and shuddered, the rocks burst asunder, the abyss howled, as swiftly the great snake sank through the waters to its lair at the bottom of the sea, and there it lay till its hour had come, and with it the hour of Thor, the strong god.

Terrible was the wrath of Thor; few there were who cared to face him when his anger came upon him. The giant sat and said no word. Then Thor struck him a blow, so that he fell into the water, while he himself waded to the shore. Hymir managed to save himself, but ere long he and all his kin perished at the hands of the slayer of giants.

IX.—THE DEATH OF BALDER.

Foreboding filled the minds of the gods, and their hearts were heavy within them, for evil signs were abroad, and they knew not what they portended. Iduna, the guardian of the apples of youth, sank down from the great ash Yggdrasil to the gloomy dwelling of Hel, the goddess of the underworld. Loki, Heimdall, and Bragi went forth to question her, but she only wept and made no answer, so Loki and Heimdall left Bragi, her husband, by her side, and returned to Asgard, and the gods pondered deeply.

Evil dreams disturbed the slumbers of Balder the Beloved. The gods feared that danger threatened him, and they resolved to do all that they could to avert it betimes. Frigg, his mother, took an oath from all things living or dead, from bird and beast, from stock and stone, from plant and tree, from fire and water, that no harm should come to Balder. And when she had done this, the gods felt safe, and it became a sport among them that Balder stood in their midst, and they hurled their weapons at him, for they deemed that nought could hurt him.

Loki, ever envious and eager for mischief, was displeased that Balder, whom he especially disliked because others loved him, should be safe from injury. He took on himself the guise of an old woman, and sought out Frigg.

"Hymir rushed forward and cut through the line" (p. 134).

"Welcome, Mother," said Frigg. "Canst thou tell me what the gods are doing?"

"Ay, truly, that can I," returned the old woman. "They are shooting at Balder, but even though they hit him, their missiles do him no harm."

"I can well believe it," answered Frigg. "For I have taken an oath from all things living or dead that they will do no harm to beautiful Balder."

"Have all things sworn?" asked the old woman, trying to conceal her eagerness.

"All things but one," replied Frigg. "To the east of Valhalla there grows a little plant called the mistletoe; of that I asked no oath, for it seemed to me too young."

Loki had learned what he wanted to know. He went away, resumed his own shape, and sought for the mistletoe. Then he returned to the gods, who were still continuing their sport. Hœder the blind stood apart.

"Why do you not join the game?" asked Loki.

"I have no weapon," answered Hœder, "and I am blind, so how can I tell where Balder stands, that I may aim at him?"

"Here is a weapon," returned Loki. "Come with me, and I will tell you where Balder stands, so that you cannot fail to hit him."

He put the mistletoe into Hœder's hand, and told him in which direction to hurl it. The missile flew through the air and pierced Balder, and he fell dead.

The gods stood round, amazed and stunned, and for a while there was silence in the vast hall. Then there broke forth a wailing and a lamentation beyond the power of words to tell, as the mighty gods wept for the most beloved of all their brethren, and none could speak for grief. But the sorrow of Odin was deepest, for long ago he had given his eye to know the future, and he saw that the signs were fulfilled, and that the end was nigh.

At length Frigg asked the gods which of them would ride to Hel and plead for the return of Balder. Hermodhr the swift, Odin's son, made ready to go: he saddled Sleipnir, his father's horse, and rode off at full speed on his perilous journey.

The gods took Balder's body, and brought it to his ship; but when they would have launched the ship, lo! it would not move. They sent for a woman of the race of giants, called Hyrrockin. She came,

"There broke forth a wailing and a lamentation" (p. 136).

riding upon a wolf, and for bridle she had a snake. She sprang from her steed, and four strong men were summoned to hold him ; but they could only master him when they had thrown him on the ground. One push from Hyrrockin sufficed to move the ship, but so great was the violence she used that fire flew from the rollers on which it rested, and the very earth shook. Thor's anger blazed forth, and he would have slain her, but the other gods pleaded for her, and he let her live.

Then Balder's body was laid on the ship, and when Nanna his wife beheld this, her heart broke with grief, and she died. They laid her by her husband's side, and they brought all his treasures, and led forth his horse, and placed them on the ship. Last of all came Odin, and he laid the ring Draupnir beside his son, and whispered words in his ear that none might hear ; and it was never known what he had said. Then the ship was set on fire, and Thor advanced to swing his hammer over it and consecrate it. The dwarf Lit ran between his feet, and Thor flung him into the fire. Now the flames rose up fiercely, and the gods watched in silence as the burning ship drifted away, bearing from their midst the best beloved of all their host.

For nine long days and nights Hermodhr rode without pause through dark, gloomy valleys, till he reached the River Giœll, which flows past the gate of Helheim. The river was spanned by a bridge, which was paved with gleaming gold. Over this rode the god, and at the other end stood a warder.

"What is thy name ?" asked she, "and whence dost thou come ? But yesterday five troops of dead men rode across yon bridge, and it did not thunder more loudly beneath their steps than beneath thine, a solitary rider. Thy colour is not the colour of the dead. Since thou art living, why ridest thou to Hel ?"

"I ride to Hel to seek for Balder," answered Hermodhr. "Have you seen him ride this way ?"

"Yes," answered she. "He has passed this way. Northward lies thy road if thou wouldst seek him."

The messenger rode on till he reached the gates of Hel, but there was no way for him to enter, because he was yet alive. So he tightened his girth and set spurs to his horse, and Sleipnir cleared the gate without touching it. Hermodhr dismounted and entered the hall, and there he beheld Balder sitting by Hel, in the place of honour. He waited till morning, and then he asked Hel to allow Balder to return

with him. "For," said he, "men and gods are desolate without him, and the whole world is wrapped in grief at his death."

"Is Balder, truly, so beloved?" asked Hel. "If that be so, give me proof thereof. If all things on earth, living or dead, weep for him, then shall he return. But if there is any one thing that will not weep, then must he abide with me."

Hermodhr's mission was at an end, and he prepared to depart. Balder took leave of him, and sent the ring Draupnir to his father Odin, as a token, and Nanna sent gifts to Frigg. Hermodhr rode back to Asgard, and told the gods all that he had seen and heard. Messengers went forth through all the world, and bade all things weep for Balder, that he might return to gladden the hearts of gods and men. Then all things wept. The gods wept, and men, the birds in the air, the beasts in wood and field, the fish in river and brook, the plants and the trees, the very stones shed tears for Balder. But in a cave sat a giantess, whose name was Thœck, and when the messengers came to her and bade her weep, she shook her head. "With dry eyes will I weep for Balder," she answered, in scorn. "Little good had I from him, living or dead. Let Hel keep her own."

And she would not weep. So, though all other things had wept, their tears were unavailing because of the hardness of heart of Thœck, and Balder could return no more to Asgard to gladden the hearts of the gods. But there were many who said that the giantess was none other than Loki, who was ever the cause of evil. It is not known for certain; but, if it were so, terrible was the vengeance that the gods wrought upon him, as we shall hear. As for Hœder, though he had, all unwittingly, brought such bitter woe to gods and men, he could not escape from punishment. He was slain by Odin's son, Vali, when the latter was but one night old.

X.—THE BINDING OF LOKI.

The gods held a council, and decided that the time had come when Loki must be punished for all his evil deeds. Loki, who ever feared their vengeance, discovered their intention, and fled away to the mountains. Here, on a high peak, he had built himself a house with four doors, one on each side, so that he could see in every direction, and, if danger threatened, could seek a refuge elsewhere. Near his

house ran a swift river, and at one point it dashed over shelving rocks, and rushed down as a foaming waterfall. Beyond lay the blue sea. Now, Loki's mind was ever haunted by fear, and as he sat in his hut watching, he thought to himself what the gods would do to effect his capture, for well he knew that their vengeance was only delayed, and his punishment was sure if they found him. Sometimes he would assume the form of a salmon, and swimming about in the cool, clear river, he would wonder how they could easiest catch him in that shape. One day it chanced that a new idea came into his head. He took some flaxen thread and began to fashion it into a net, such as men use now to catch fish; but ever as he wrought, he looked with fear from side to side. Suddenly he saw that the gods had at last found his hiding-place, and were crossing the mountains to attack him. He flung his net into the fire that burnt brightly before him, and changing to a salmon plunged into the stream. The gods entered the house whence he had fled, but becuse they were gods, they divined what had happened, and that the salmon placidly swimming in the stream was the enemy they were in search of. As they looked about, they saw the fragments of the net that were not wholly consumed. They carefully studied it, for till then no such thing had been seen, and soon perceived its use. They took the flaxen thread, and set to work, and in a little space they had fashioned a large net, with which they went to the river, and so it chanced that Loki wrought his own undoing. Thor held one end of the net, his comrades held the other. But Loki fought hard for his freedom. He lay flat beneath two stones, so that the net swept over him, but did not enclose him. The keen-eyed gods saw that some living thing lay beneath the net, and they weighted it with heavy stones ere they cast it in again. This time Loki swam in front of the net, and the gods pursued him; but when they came near the sea he turned, cleared the net at a spring, and sprang into the waterfall. But now his pursuers knew where he was. They divided into two parties; one stood on the one bank, and one on the other, and each held a part of the net which was thus stretched across the river from shore to shore. Thor waded into the water, and followed close behind the net, and so they slowly drove Loki back to the sea. Now was he placed between two dangers, for in the sea he could not live. He turned, and leaped again across the net. Thor was watching for this, and caught hold of him, but he was so slippery that he would yet have escaped had not his enemy grasped him by the tail. And, there-

"Held a cup to catch the venomous drops". (p. 142).

fore, said the ancient Norsemen, the salmon have pointed tails to this day.

The gods silently bore Loki, who had resumed his own shape, to a cave, where they laid him on three upright stones, and bound him fast to them. Over his head they fastened a huge and terrible snake. From its mouth dropped a deadly poison, and when the venom touched Loki's face, the strong god writhed in agony. So they went away and left him; but his faithful wife, Sigyn, remained by his side, and held a cup to catch the venomous drops and save her husband pain. When the cup was full, she had to go forth and empty it. Then the poison fell on Loki's face, and he shook so that the whole world trembled, and men said this caused the earthquake.

So it was decreed that Loki should lie there to the Day of Doom, when his fetters would be riven asunder, and he would perish with all other things, good and evil.

XI.—THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS.

THERE was a time when there was no evil, when the gods played with their golden disks, when none did wrong. And this was the golden age. But the love of gold awoke among gods and men, and guilt was born, oaths were broken, and strife and murder came into the world. So it came about that the gods must perish with the world they had created.

Evil portents were to precede the Day of Doom, signs that all could read. When Iduna fell from the sunny heights, when Balder was slain, the gods felt that the dread time would not be long in coming. But there were other signs to be looked for as the day drew nearer. First there would be three long years of terrible war, when all bonds should be loosened, when faith, and law, and order should perish, when father should turn against son and brother against brother, and all evil things should rule the world. After this there would be three years of icy, freezing winter, without spring or summer. A bitter frost would check all growth, the trees would not bud, the flowers would not blossom, the corn would not grow. The snow would fall and fall, and cover all the earth with its white cloak; fierce winds would rage from pole to pole; the pale sun grow sad and give no warmth. When this comes to pass, men may know that the end draws nigh. When

the time is accomplished, the sun and the moon will be overtaken by the hungry wolves that ever chased them through the sky, and they will be devoured. The stars will fall from heaven, and terrible darkness will encompass the world. The earth will shake in terror, the trees be uprooted, the mountains will fall, all bonds and fetters will be broken, and Loki and his evil brood will regain their freedom. The Midgard snake will feel its strength, and will swim to the shore, causing the sea to flood the land. Nagelfar, the ship that has been slowly growing through long ages, will be finished, and come sailing from the east, bearing the giants to their last fight. Over the sea come sailing Muspel's sons, the children of fire, led by Surtur, and steered by Loki. When they land and ride across the bridge Bifrœst, Heimdall, the warder, will blow a piercing blast on his horn to summon all the gods and the dead warriors to the combat. The Fenris wolf, Loki's son, will rush on its way with gaping mouth, its upper jaw touching the sky, its lower the earth.

With Loki come Hel and her followers.

Then the gods will ride forth for their last fight. Foremost is Odin on Sleipnir, with his helmet of gold, his gleaming armour, and Gungnir his spear. Yggdrasil shakes, and the heavens tremble. Towards him rushes the Fenris wolf, and terrible is the struggle. But it is decreed that the gods shall suffer for their deeds, and Odin will perish. Not unavenged, however, for Widar, his son, shall grasp the wolf by his jaws, and tear them asunder, so that he dies.

Still more dreadful will be the fight between Thor and the Midgard snake. Thor will kill the hideous monster, but little shall his strength avail him. Not nine paces will he move away ere he falls dead, killed by the poisonous breath of his foe. Loki and Heimdall meet in mortal combat, and fall by each other's hands. So the battle rages, and one after the other the gods fall, and their enemies perish even in their victory. Then will Surtur fling fire over the world, the sea will rise up and dash over it, impenetrable darkness will reign, and there will be silence.

But not for ever will the darkness and the desolation endure. From the waves will arise a new world, a beautiful world with fields of emerald green where the corn will grow, though no man will sow it. A new sun, a new moon will be born, and Balder and Hœder will return and many others, and they will build a palace brighter than the

sun. They will find again the golden disks lost in the past, and peace and happiness will reign.

So sang the ancient bards ; but we, living so long after, read another meaning in the story. There was a twilight of the gods, but it was not brought about by fire and sword. The foe who conquered them was He whom later singers called the "White Christ," before whose teaching the false faiths perished and the world grew young again.

E. S. Buchheim.

Printed by Cassell & Company, Limited, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.