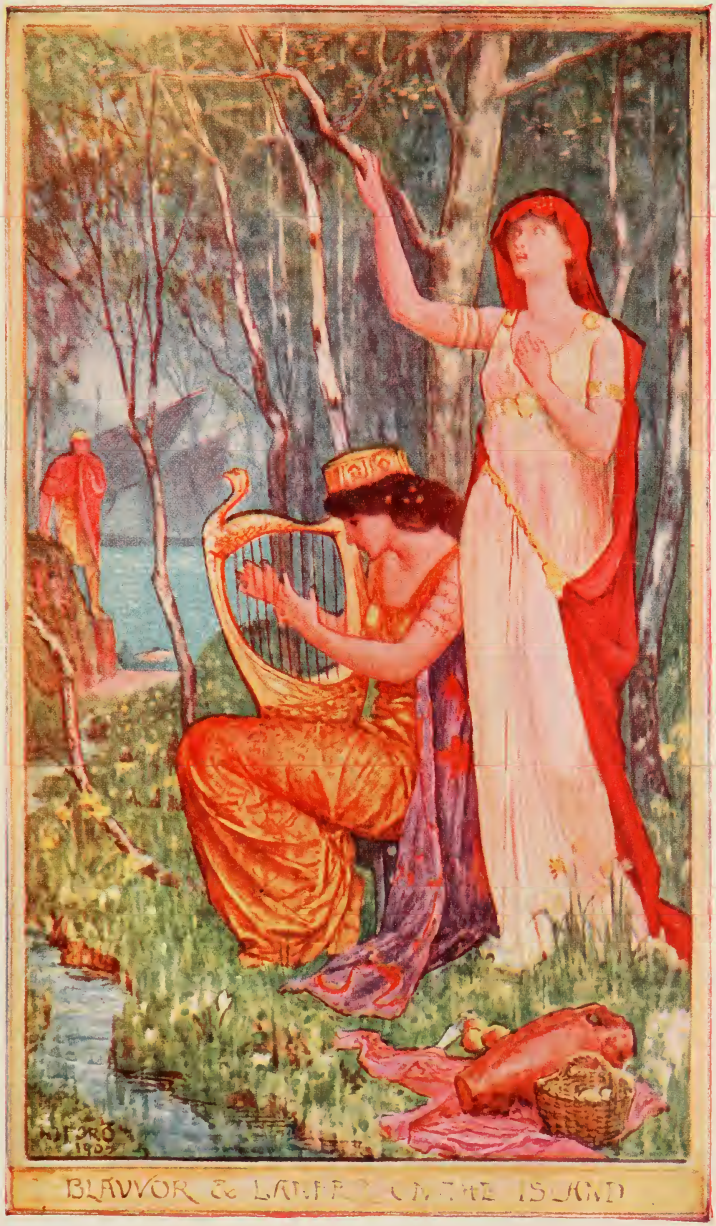
THE GOLDEN MERMAID
AND OTHER
STORIES



The Golden Mermaid

THE GOLDEN MERMAID

AND OTHER STORIES

FROM THE FAIRY BOOKS

EDITED BY

ANDREW LANG

WITH A COLOURED FRONTISPIECE AND
NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS BY

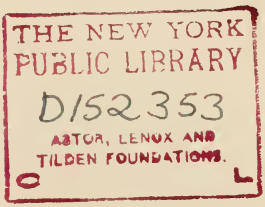
HENRY J. FORD

NEW IMPRESSION

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
LONDON • NEW YORK • TORONTO
1930

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO. LTD.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C. 4
6 OLD COURT HOUSE STREET, CALCUTTA
53 NICOL ROAD, BOMBAY
MOUNT ROAD, MADRAS

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
55 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK
221 EAST 20TH STREET, CHICAGO
TREMONT TEMPLE, BOSTON
128–132 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, TORONTO



CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

COLOURED PLATE

FULL-PAGE PLATES

IN THE TEXT

THE GOLDEN MERMAID

A POWERFUL King had, among many other treasures, a wonderful tree in his garden, which bore every year beautiful golden apples. But the King was never able to enjoy his treasure, for he might watch and guard them as he liked, as soon as they began to get ripe they were always stolen. At last, in despair, he sent for his three sons, and said to the two eldest, 'Get yourselves ready for a journey. Take gold and silver with you, and a large retinue of servants, as beseems two noble princes, and go through the world till you find out who it is that steals my golden apples, and, if possible, bring the thief to me that I may punish him as he deserves.' His sons were delighted at this proposal, for they had long wished to see something of the world, so they got ready for their journey with all haste, bade their father farewell, and left the town.

The youngest Prince was much disappointed

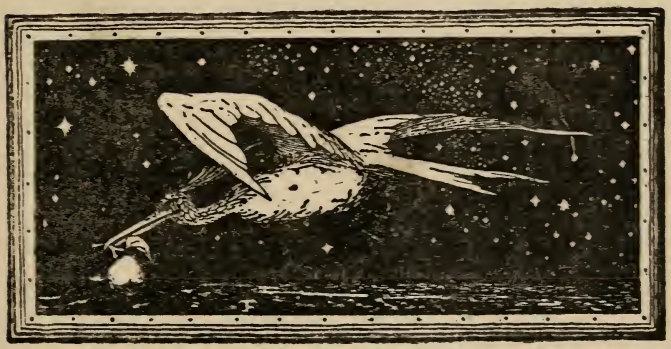
that he too was not sent out on his travels; but his father wouldn't hear of his going, for he had always been looked upon as the stupid one of the family, and the King was afraid of something happening to him. But the Prince begged and implored so long, that at last his father consented to let him go, and furnished him with gold and silver as he had done his brothers. But he gave him the most wretched horse in his stable, because the foolish youth hadn't asked for a better. So he too set out on his journey to secure the thief, amid the jeers and laughter of the whole court and town.

His path led him first through a wood, and he hadn't gone very far when he met a lean-looking wolf who stood still as he approached. The Prince asked him if he was hungry, and when the wolf said he was, he got down from his horse and said, 'If you are really as you say and look, you may take my horse and eat it.'

The wolf didn't wait to have the offer repeated, but set to work, and soon made an end of the poor beast. When the Prince saw how different the wolf looked when he had finished his meal, he said to him, 'Now, my friend, since you have

eaten up my horse, and I have such a long way to go, that, with the best will in the world, I couldn't manage it on foot, the least you can do for me is to act as my horse and to take me on your back.'

'Most certainly,' said the wolf, and, letting the Prince mount him, he trotted gaily through the



wood. After they had gone a little way he turned round and asked his rider where he wanted to go to, and the Prince proceeded to tell him the whole story of the golden apples that had been stolen out of the King's garden, and how his other two brothers had set forth with many followers to find the thief. When he had finished his story, the wolf, who was in reality no wolf but a

mighty magician, said he thought he could tell him who the thief was, and could help him to secure him. 'There lives,' he said, 'in a neighbouring country, a mighty Emperor who has a beautiful golden bird in a cage, and this is the creature who steals the golden apples, but it flies so fast that it is impossible to catch it at its theft. You must slip into the Emperor's palace by night and steal the bird with the cage; but be very careful not to touch the walls as you go out.'

The following night the Prince stole into the Emperor's palace, and found the bird in its cage as the wolf had told him he would. He took hold of it carefully, but in spite of all his caution he touched the wall in trying to pass by some sleeping watchmen. They awoke at once, and, seizing him, beat him and put him into chains. Next day he was led before the Emperor, who at once condemned him to death and to be thrown into a dark dungeon till the day of his execution arrived.

The wolf, who, of course, knew by his magic arts all that had happened to the Prince, turned himself at once into a mighty mon-

arch with a large train of followers, and proceeded to the court of the Emperor, where he was received with every show of honour. The Emperor and he conversed on many subjects, and, among other things, the stranger asked his host if he had many slaves. The Emperor told him he had more than he knew what to do with, and that a new one had been captured that very night for trying to steal his magic bird, but that, as he had already more than enough to feed and support, he was going to have this last captive hanged next morning.

'He must have been a most daring thief,' said the King, 'to try to steal the magic bird, for depend upon it the creature must have been well guarded. I would really like to see this bold rascal.' 'By all means,' said the Emperor; and he himself led his guest down to the dungeon where the unfortunate Prince was kept prisoner. When the Emperor stepped out of the cell with the King, the latter turned to him and said, 'Most mighty Emperor, I have been much disappointed. I had thought to find a powerful robber, and instead of that I have seen the most miserable creature I can imagine. Hanging is

far too good for him. If I had to sentence him I should make him perform some very difficult

task, under pain of death. If he did it so much the better for you, and if he didn't, matters

would just be as they are now and he could still be hanged.' 'Your counsel,' said the Emperor, 'is excellent, and, as it happens, I've got the very thing for him to do. My nearest neighbour, who is also a mighty Emperor, possesses a golden horse which he guards most carefully. The prisoner shall be told to steal this horse and bring it to me.'

The Prince was then let out of his dungeon, and told his life would be spared if he succeeded in bringing the golden horse to the Emperor. He did not feel very elated at this announcement, for he did not know how in the world he was to set about the task, and he started on his way weeping bitterly, and wondering what had made him leave his father's house and kingdom. But before he had gone far his friend the wolf stood before him and said, 'Dear Prince, why are you so cast down? It is true you didn't succeed in catching the bird; but don't let that discourage you, for this time you will be all the more careful, and will doubtless catch the horse.' With these and like words the wolf comforted the Prince, and warned him specially not to touch the wall, or let the horse touch it as he

led it out, or he would fail in the same way as he had done with the bird.

After a somewhat lengthy journey the Prince and the wolf came to the kingdom ruled over by the Emperor who possessed the golden horse. One evening late they reached the capital, and the wolf advised the Prince to set to work at once, before their presence in the city had aroused the watchfulness of the guards. They slipped unnoticed into the Emperor's stables and into the very place where there were the most guards, for there the wolf rightly surmised they would find the horse. When they came to a certain inner door the wolf told the Prince to remain outside, while he went in. In a short time he returned and said, 'My dear Prince, the horse is most securely watched, but I have bewitched all the guards, and if you will only be careful not to touch the wall yourself, or let the horse touch it as you go out, there is no danger and the game is yours.' The Prince, who had made up his mind to be more than cautious this time, went cheerfully to work. He found all the guards fast asleep, and, slipping into the horse's stall, he seized it by the bridle

and led it out; but, unfortunately, before they had got quite clear of the stables a gadfly stung the horse and caused it to switch its tail, whereby it touched the wall. In a moment all the guards awoke, seized the Prince and beat him mercilessly with their horse-whips, after which they bound him with chains, and flung him into a dungeon. Next morning they brought him before the Emperor, who treated him exactly as the King with the golden bird had done, and commanded him to be beheaded on the following day.

When the wolf-magician saw that the Prince had failed this time too, he transformed himself again into a mighty king, and proceeded with an even more gorgeous retinue than the first time to the court of the Emperor. He was courteously received and entertained, and once more after dinner he led the conversation on to the subject of slaves, and in the course of it again requested to be allowed to see the bold robber who had dared to break into the Emperor's stable to steal his most valuable possession. The Emperor consented, and all happened exactly as it had done at the court of the Emperor with the golden bird; the

prisoner's life was to be spared only on condition that within three days he should obtain possession of the golden mermaid, whom hitherto no mortal had ever approached.

Very depressed by his dangerous and difficult task, the Prince left his gloomy prison; but, to his great joy, he met his friend the wolf before he had gone many miles on his journey. The cunning creature pretended he knew nothing of what had happened to the Prince, and asked him how he had fared with the horse. The Prince told him all about his misadventure, and the condition on which the Emperor had promised to spare his life. Then the wolf reminded him that he had twice got him out of prison, and that if he would only trust in him, and do exactly as he told him, he would certainly succeed in this last undertaking. Thereupon they bent their steps towards the sea, which stretched out before them, as far as their eyes could see, all the waves dancing and glittering in the bright sunshine. 'Now,' continued the wolf, 'I am going to turn myself into a boat full of the most beautiful silken merchandise, and you must jump boldly into the boat, and

steer with my tail in your hand right out into the open sea. You will soon come upon the golden mermaid. Whatever you do, don't follow her if she calls you, but on the contrary say to her, "The buyer comes to the seller, not the seller to the buyer." After which you must steer towards the land, and she will follow you, for she won't be able to resist the beautiful wares you have on board your ship.'

The Prince promised faithfully to do all he had been told, whereupon the wolf changed himself into a ship full of most exquisite silks, of every shade and colour imaginable. The astonished Prince stepped into the boat, and, holding the wolf's tail in his hand, he steered boldly out into the open sea, where the sun was gilding the blue waves with its golden rays. Soon he saw the golden mermaid swimming near the ship, beckoning and calling to him to follow her; but, mindful of the wolf's warning, he told her in a loud voice that if she wished to buy anything she must come to him. With these words he turned his magic ship round and steered back towards the land. The mermaid called out to him to stand still, but he refused to listen to her

and never paused till he reached the sand of the shore. Here he stopped and waited for the mermaid, who had swum after him. When she drew near the boat he saw that she was far more beautiful than any mortal he had ever beheld. She swam round the ship for some time, and then swung herself gracefully on board, in order to examine the beautiful silken stuffs more closely. Then the Prince seized her in his arms, and kissing her tenderly on the cheeks and lips, he told her she was his for ever; at the same moment the boat turned into a wolf again, which so terrified the mermaid that she clung to the Prince for protection.

So the golden mermaid was successfully caught, and she soon felt quite happy in her new life when she saw she had nothing to fear either from the Prince or the wolf—she rode on the back of the latter, and the Prince rode behind her. When they reached the country ruled over by the Emperor with the golden horse, the Prince jumped down, and, helping the mermaid to alight, he led her before the Emperor. At the sight of the beautiful mermaid and of the grim wolf, who stuck close to the Prince this time,

The Golden Mermaid was caught

the guards all made respectful obeisance, and soon the three stood before his Imperial Majesty. When the Emperor heard from the Prince how he had gained possession of his fair prize, he at once recognised that he had been helped by some magic art, and on the spot gave up all claim to the beautiful mermaid. 'Dear youth,' he said, 'forgive me for my shameful conduct to you, and, as a sign that you pardon me, accept the golden horse as a present. I acknowledge your power to be greater even than I can understand, for you have succeeded in gaining possession of the golden mermaid, whom hitherto no mortal has ever been able to approach.' Then they all sat down to a huge feast, and the Prince had to relate his adventures all over again, to the wonder and astonishment of the whole company.

But the Prince was wearying now to return to his own kingdom, so as soon as the feast was over he took farewell of the Emperor, and set out on his homeward way. He lifted the mermaid on to the golden horse, and swung himself up behind her—and so they rode on merrily, with the wolf trotting behind, till they came to the country of the Emperor with the golden

bird. The renown of the Prince and his adventure had gone before him, and the Emperor sat on his throne awaiting the arrival of the Prince and his companions. When the three rode into the courtyard of the palace, they were surprised and delighted to find everything festively illuminated and decorated for their reception. When the Prince and the golden mermaid, with the wolf behind them, mounted the steps of the palace, the Emperor came forward to meet them, and led them to the throne room. At the same moment a servant appeared with the golden bird in its golden cage, and the Emperor begged the Prince to accept it with his love, and to forgive him the indignity he had suffered at his hands. Then the Emperor bent low before the beautiful mermaid, and, offering her his arm, he led her in to dinner, closely followed by the Prince and his friend the wolf; the latter seating himself at table, not the least embarrassed that no one had invited him to do so.

As soon as the sumptuous meal was over, the Prince and his mermaid took leave of the Emperor, and, seating themselves on the golden horse, continued their homeward journey. On

the way the wolf turned to the Prince and said, 'Dear friends, I must now bid you farewell, but I leave you under such happy circumstances that I cannot feel our parting to be a sad one.' The Prince was very unhappy when he heard these words, and begged the wolf to stay with them always; but this the good creature refused to do, though he thanked the Prince kindly for his invitation, and called out as he disappeared into the thicket, 'Should any evil befall you, dear Prince, at any time, you may rely on my friendship and gratitude.' These were the wolf's parting words, and the Prince could not restrain his tears when he saw his friend vanishing in the distance; but one glance at his beloved mermaid soon cheered him up again, and they continued on their journey merrily.

The news of his son's adventures had already reached his father's court, and everyone was more than astonished at the success of the once despised Prince. His elder brothers, who had in vain gone in pursuit of the thief of the golden apples, were furious over their younger brother's good fortune, and plotted and planned how they were to kill him. They hid themselves in the

wood through which the Prince had to pass on his way to the palace, and there fell on him, and, having beaten him to death, they carried off the golden horse and the golden bird. But nothing they could do would persuade the golden mermaid to go with them or move from the spot, for ever since she had left the sea, she had so attached herself to her Prince that she asked nothing else than to live or die with him.

For many weeks the poor mermaid sat and watched over the dead body of her lover, weeping salt tears over his loss, when suddenly one day their old friend the wolf appeared and said, 'Cover the Prince's body with all the leaves and flowers you can find in the wood.' The maiden did as he told her, and then the wolf breathed over the flowery grave, and, lo and behold! the Prince lay there sleeping as peacefully as a child. 'Now you may wake him if you like,' said the wolf, and the mermaid bent over him and gently kissed the wounds his brothers had made on his forehead, and the Prince awoke, and you may imagine how delighted he was to find his beautiful mermaid beside him, though he felt a little depressed when he thought of the loss of the

golden bird and the golden horse. After a time the wolf, who had likewise fallen on the Prince's neck, advised them to continue their journey, and once more the Prince and his lovely bride mounted on the faithful beast's back.

The King's joy was great when he embraced his youngest son, for he had long since despaired

of his return. He received the wolf and the beautiful golden mermaid most cordially too, and the Prince was made to tell his adventures all over from the beginning. The poor old father grew very sad when he heard of the shameful conduct of his elder sons, and had them called before him. They turned as white as

death when they saw their brother, whom they thought they had murdered, standing beside them alive and well, and so startled were they that when the King asked them why they had behaved so wickedly to their brother they could think of no lie, but confessed at once that they had slain the young Prince in order to obtain possession of the golden horse and the golden bird. Their father's wrath knew no bounds, and he ordered them both to be banished, but he could not do enough to honour his youngest son, and his marriage with the beautiful mermaid was celebrated with much pomp and magnificence. When the festivities were over, the wolf bade them all farewell, and returned once more to his life in the woods, much to the regret of the old King and the young Prince and his bride.

And so ended the adventures of the Prince with his friend the wolf.

THE THREE ROBES[1]

Long, long ago, a king and queen reigned over a large and powerful country. What their names were nobody knows, but their son was called Sigurd, and their daughter Lineik, and these young people were famed throughout the whole kingdom for their wisdom and beauty.

There was only a year between them, and they loved each other so much that they could do nothing apart. When they began to grow up the king gave them a house of their own to live in, with servants and carriages, and everything they could possibly want.

For many years they all lived happily together, and then the queen fell ill, and knew that she would never get better.

'Promise me two things,' she said one day to the king; 'one, that if you marry again, as indeed you must, you will not choose as your

[1] See frontispiece

wife a woman from some small state or distant island, who knows nothing of the world, and will be taken up with thoughts of her grandeur. But rather seek out a princess of some great kingdom, who has been used to courts all her life, and holds them at their true worth. The other thing I have to ask is, that you will never cease to watch over our children, who will soon become your greatest joy.'

These were the queen's last words, and a few hours later she was dead. The king was so bowed down with sorrow that he would not attend even to the business of the kingdom, and at last his Prime Minister had to tell him that the people were complaining that they had nobody to right their wrongs. 'You must rouse yourself, sir,' went on the minister, 'and put aside your own sorrows for the sake of your country.'

'You do not spare me,' answered the king; 'but what you say is just, and your counsel is good. I have heard that men say, likewise, that it will be for the good of my kingdom for me to marry again, though my heart will never cease to be with my lost wife. But it was her

wish also; therefore, to you I entrust the duty of finding a lady fitted to share my throne; only, see that she comes neither from a small town nor a remote island.'

So an embassy was prepared, with the minister at its head, to visit the greatest courts in the world, and to choose out a suitable princess. But the vessel which carried them had not been gone many days when a thick fog came on, and the captain could see neither to the right nor to the left. For a whole month the ship drifted about in darkness, till at length the fog lifted and they beheld a cliff jutting out just in front. On one side of the cliff lay a sheltered bay, in which the vessel was soon anchored, and though they did not know where they were, at any rate they felt sure of fresh fruit and water.

The minister left the rest of his followers on board the ship, and taking a small boat, rowed himself to land, in order to look about him and find out if the island was really as deserted as it seemed.

He had not gone far, when he heard the sound of music, and, turning in its direction, he saw a woman of marvellous beauty sitting on

a low stool playing on a harp, while a girl beside her sang. The minister stopped and greeted the lady politely, and she replied with friendliness, asking him why he had come to such an out-of-the-way place. In answer he told her of the object of his journey.

'I am in the same state as your master,' replied the lady; 'I was married to a mighty king who ruled over this land, till Vikings [sea-robbers] came and slew him and put all the people to death. But I managed to escape, and hid myself here with my daughter.'

And the daughter listened, and said softly to her mother: 'Are you speaking the truth now?'

'Remember your promise,' answered the mother angrily, giving her a pinch which was unseen by the minister.

'What is your name, madam?' asked he, much touched by this sad story.

'Blauvor,' she replied, 'and my daughter is called Laufer'; and then she inquired the name of the minister, and of the king his master. After this they talked of many things, and the lady showed herself learned in all that a woman should know, and even in much that men only

were commonly taught. 'What a wife she would make for the king!' thought the minister to himself, and before long he had begged the honour of her hand for his master. She declared at first that she was too unworthy to accept the position offered her, and that the minister would soon repent his choice; but this only made him the more eager, and in the end he gained her consent, and prevailed on her to return with him at once to his own country.

The minister then conducted the mother and daughter back to the ship; the anchor was raised, the sails spread, and a fair wind was behind them.

Now that the fog had lifted they could see as they looked back that, except just along the shore, the island was bare and deserted and not fit for men to live in; but about that nobody cared. They had a quick voyage, and in six days they reached the land, and at once set out for the capital, a messenger being sent on first by the minister to inform the king of what had happened.

When his Majesty's eyes fell on the two beautiful women, clad in dresses of gold and silver,

he forgot his sorrows and ordered preparations for the wedding to be made without delay. In his joy he never remembered to inquire in what kind of country the future queen had been found. In fact his head was so turned by the beauty of the two ladies that when the invitations were sent by his orders to all the great people in the kingdom, he did not even recollect his two children, who remained shut up in their own house!

After the marriage the king ceased to have any will of his own and did nothing without consulting his wife. She was present at all his councils, and her opinion was asked before making peace or war. But when a few months had passed the king began to have doubts as to whether the minister's choice had really been a wise one, and he noticed that his children lived more and more in their palace and never came near their stepmother.

It always happens that if a person's eyes are once opened they see a great deal more than they ever expected; and soon it struck the king that the members of his court had a way of disappearing one after the other without any reason.

At first he had not paid much attention to the fact, but merely appointed some fresh person to the vacant place. As, however, man after man vanished without leaving any trace, he began to grow uncomfortable and to wonder if the queen could have anything to do with it.

Things were in this state when, one day, his wife said to him that it was time for him to make a progress through his kingdom and see that his governors were not cheating him of the money that was his due. 'And you need not be anxious about going,' she added, 'for I will rule the country while you are away as carefully as you could yourself.'

The king had no great desire to undertake this journey, but the queen's will was stronger than his, and he was too lazy to make a fight for it. So he said nothing and set about his preparations, ordering his finest ship to be ready to carry him round the coast. Still his heart was heavy, and he felt uneasy, though he could not have told why; and the night before he was to start he went to the children's palace to take leave of his son and daughter.

He had not seen them for some time, and they

gave him a warm welcome, for they loved him dearly and he had always been kind to them. They had much to tell him, but after a while he checked their merry talk and said:

'If I should never come back from this journey I fear that it may not be safe for you to stay here; so directly there are no more hopes of my return go instantly and take the road eastwards till you reach a high mountain, which you must cross. Once over the mountain keep along by the side of a little bay till you come to two trees, one green and the other red, standing in a thicket, and so far back from the road that without looking for them you would never see them. Hide each in the trunk of one of the trees and there you will be safe from all your enemies.'

With these words the king bade them farewell and entered sadly into his ship. For a few days the wind was fair, and everything seemed going smoothly; then, suddenly, a gale sprang up, and a fearful storm of thunder and lightning, such as had never happened within the memory of man. In spite of the efforts of the frightened sailors the vessel was driven on the rocks, and not a man on board was saved.

That very night Prince Sigurd had a dream, in which he thought his father appeared to him in dripping clothes, and, taking the crown from his head, laid it at his son's feet, leaving the room as silently as he had entered it.

Hastily the prince awoke his sister Lineik, and they agreed that their father must be dead, and that they must lose no time in obeying his orders and putting themselves in safety. So they collected their jewels and a few clothes and left the house without being observed by anyone.

They hurried on till they arrived at the mountain without once looking back. Then Sigurd glanced round and saw that their stepmother was following them, with an expression on her face which made her uglier than the ugliest old witch. Between her and them lay a thick wood, and Sigurd stopped for a moment to set it on fire; then he and his sister hastened on more swiftly than before, till they reached the grove with the red and green trees, into which they jumped, and felt that at last they were safe.

Now, at that time there reigned over Greece a king who was very rich and powerful, although his name has somehow been forgotten. He had

two children, a son and a daughter, who were more beautiful and accomplished than any Greeks had been before, and they were the pride of their father's heart.

The prince had no sooner grown out of boyhood than he prevailed on his father to make war during the summer months on a neighbouring nation, so as to give him a chance of making himself famous. In winter, however, when it was difficult to get food and horses in that wild country, the army was dispersed, and the prince returned home.

During one of these wars he had heard reports of the Princess Lineik's beauty, and he resolved to seek her out, and to ask for her hand in marriage. All this Blauvor, the queen, found out by means of her black arts, and when the prince drew near the capital she put a splendid dress on her own daughter and then went to meet her guest.

She bade him welcome to her palace, and when they had finished supper she told him of the loss of her husband, and how there was no one left to govern the kingdom but herself.

'But where is the Princess Lineik?' asked the prince when she had ended her tale.

'Here,' answered the queen, bringing forward the girl, whom she had hitherto kept in the background.

The prince looked at her and was rather disappointed. The maiden was pretty enough, but not much out of the common.

'Oh, you must not wonder at her pale face and heavy eyes,' said the queen hastily, for she saw what was passing in his mind. 'She has never got over the loss of both father and mother.'

'That shows a good heart,' thought the prince; 'and when she is happy her beauty will soon come back.' And without any further delay he begged the queen to consent to their betrothal, for the marriage must take place in his own country.

The queen was enchanted. She had hardly expected to succeed so soon, and she at once set about her preparations. Indeed she wished to travel with the young couple, to make sure that nothing should go wrong; but here the prince was firm, and he would take no one with him but Laufer, who he thought was Lineik.

They soon took leave of the queen, and set sail in a splendid ship; but in a short time a dense fog came on, and in the dark the captain steered out of his course, and they found themselves in a bay which was quite strange to all the crew. The prince ordered a boat to be lowered, and went on shore to look about him, and it was not long before he noticed the two beautiful trees quite different from any that grew in Greece. Calling one of the sailors, he bade him cut them down, and carry them on board the ship. This was done, and as the sky was now clear they put out to sea, and arrived in Greece without any more adventures.

The news that the prince had brought home a bride had gone before them, and they were greeted with flowery arches and crowns of coloured lights. The king and queen met them on the steps of the palace, and conducted the girl to the women's house, where she would have to remain until her marriage. The prince then went to his own rooms and ordered that the trees should be brought in to him.

The next morning the prince bade his attendants bring his future bride to his own apart-

ments, and when she came he gave her silk which she was to weave into three robes—one red, one green, and one blue—and these must all be ready before the wedding. The blue one was to be done first and the green last, and this was to be the most splendid of all, 'For I will wear it at our marriage,' said he.

Left alone, Laufer sat and stared at the heap of shining silk before her. She did not know how to weave, and burst into tears as she thought that everything would be discovered, for Lineik's skill in weaving was as famous as her beauty. As she sat with her face hidden and her body shaken by sobs, Sigurd in his tree heard her and was moved to pity. 'Lineik, my sister,' he called, softly, 'Laufer is weeping; help her, I pray you.'

'Have you forgotten the wrongs her mother did to us?' answered Lineik, 'and that it is owing to her that we are banished from home?'

But she was not really unforgiving, and very soon she slid quietly out of her hiding-place, and taking the silk from Laufer's hands began to weave it. So quick and clever was she that the blue dress was not only woven but embroidered,

and Lineik was safe back in her tree before the prince returned.

'It is the most beautiful work I have ever seen,' said he, taking up a bit. 'And I am sure that the red one will be still better, because the stuff is richer,' and with a low bow he left the room.

Laufer had hoped secretly that when the prince had seen the blue dress finished he would have let her off the other two; but when she found she was expected to fulfil the whole task, her heart sank and she began to cry loudly. Again Sigurd heard her, and begged Lineik to come to her help, and Lineik, feeling sorry for her distress, wove and embroidered the second dress as she had done the first, mixing gold thread and precious stones till you could hardly see the red of the stuff. When it was done she glided into her tree just as the prince came in.

'You are as quick as you are clever,' said he, admiringly. 'This looks as if it had been embroidered by the fairies! But as the green robe must outshine the other two I will give you three days in which to finish it. After it is ready we will be married at once.'

Now, as he spoke, there rose up in Laufer's mind all the unkind things that she and her mother had done to Lineik. Could she hope that they would be forgotten, and that Lineik would come to her rescue for the third time? And perhaps Lineik, who had not forgotten the past either, might have left her alone, to get on as best she could, had not Sigurd, her brother, implored her to help just once more. So Lineik again slid out of her tree, and, to Laufer's great relief, set herself to work. When the shining green silk was ready she caught the sun's rays and the moon's beams on the point of her needle and wove them into a pattern such as no man had ever seen. But it took a long time, and on the third morning, just as she was putting the last stitches into the last flower, the prince came in.

Lineik jumped up quickly, and tried to get past him back to her tree; but the folds of the silk were wrapped round her, and she would have fallen had not the prince caught her.

'I have thought for some time that all was not quite straight here,' said he. 'Tell me who you are, and where you come from.'

Lineik then told her name and her story. When she had ended the prince turned angrily to Laufer, and declared that, as a punishment for her wicked lies, she deserved to die a shameful death.

But Laufer fell at his feet and begged for mercy. It was her mother's fault, she said: 'It was she, and not I, who passed me off as the Princess Lineik. The only lie I have ever told you was about the robes, and I do not deserve death for that.'

She was still on her knees when Prince Sigurd entered the room. He prayed the Prince of Greece to forgive Laufer, which he did, on condition that Lineik would consent to marry him. 'Not till my stepmother is dead,' answered she, 'for she has brought misery to all that came near her.' Then Laufer told them that Blauvor was not the wife of a king, but an ogress who had stolen her from a neighbouring palace and had brought her up as her daughter. And besides being an ogress she was also a witch, and by her black arts had sunk the ship in which the father of Sigurd and Lineik had set sail. It was she who had caused the disappearance of the

LINEIK CAUGHT BY THE PRINCE

courtiers, for which no one could account, by eating them during the night, and she hoped to get rid of all the people in the country, and then to fill the land with ogres and ogresses like herself.

So Prince Sigurd and the Prince of Greece collected an army swiftly, and marched upon the town where Blauvor had her palace. They came so suddenly that no one knew of it, and if they had, Blauvor had eaten most of the strong men; and others, fearful of something they could not tell what, had secretly left the place. Therefore she was easily captured, and the next day was beheaded in the market-place. Afterwards the two princes marched back to Greece.

Lineik had no longer any reason for putting off her wedding, and married the Prince of Greece at the same time that Sigurd married the princess. And Laufer remained with Lineik as her friend and sister, till they found a husband for her in a great nobleman; and all three couples lived happily until they died.

THE SNOW-MAN

'How astonishingly cold it is! My body is cracking all over!' said the Snow-man. 'The wind is really cutting one's very life out! And how that fiery thing up there glares!' He meant the sun, which was just setting. 'It shan't make me blink, though, and I shall keep quite cool and collected.'

Instead of eyes he had two large three-cornered pieces of slate in his head; his mouth consisted of an old rake, so that he had teeth as well.

He was born amidst the shouts and laughter of the boys, and greeted by the jingling bells and cracking whips of the sledges.

The sun went down, the full moon rose, large, round, clear, and beautiful, in the dark blue sky.

'There it is again on the other side!' said the Snow-man, by which he meant the sun was appearing again. 'I have become quite accus-

tomed to its glaring. I hope it will hang there and shine, so that I may be able to see myself. I wish I knew, though, how one ought to set about changing one's position. I should very much like to move about. If I only could, I would glide up and down the ice there, as I saw the boys doing; but somehow or other, I don't know how to run.'

'Bow-wow!' barked the old yard-dog; he was rather hoarse and couldn't bark very well. His hoarseness came on when he was a house-dog and used to lie in front of the stove. 'The sun will soon teach you to run! I saw that last winter with your predecessor, and farther back still with *his* predecessors! They have all run away!'

'I don't understand you, my friend,' said the Snow-man. 'That thing up there is to teach me to run?' He meant the moon. 'Well, it certainly did run just now, for I saw it quite plainly over there, and now here it is on this side.'

'You know nothing at all about it,' said the yard-dog. 'Why, you have only just been made. The thing you see there is the moon; the other thing you saw going down the other

side was the sun. He will come up again to-morrow morning, and will soon teach you how to run away down the gutter. The weather is going to change; I feel it already by the pain in my left hind-leg; the weather is certainly going to change.'

'I can't understand him,' said the Snow-man; 'but I have an idea that he is speaking of something unpleasant. That thing that glares so, and then disappears, the sun, as he calls it, is not my friend. I know that by instinct.'

'Bow-wow!' barked the yard-dog, and walked three times round himself, and then crept into his kennel to sleep. The weather really did change. Towards morning a dense damp fog lay over the whole neighbourhood; later on came an icy wind, which sent the frost packing. But when the sun rose, it was a glorious sight. The trees and shrubs were covered with rime, and looked like a wood of coral, and every branch was thick with long white blossoms. The most delicate twigs, which are lost among the foliage in summer-time, came now into prominence, and it was like a spider's web of glistening white. The lady-birches waved in the wind;

"The Sun will soon teach you to run" said the Yard-dog.

and when the sun shone, everything glittered and sparkled as if it were sprinkled with diamond dust, and great diamonds were lying on the snowy carpet.

'Isn't it wonderful?' exclaimed a girl who was walking with a young man in the garden. They stopped near the Snow-man, and looked at the glistening trees. 'Summer cannot show a more beautiful sight,' she said, with her eyes shining.

'And one can't get a fellow like this in summer either,' said the young man, pointing to the Snow-man. 'He's a beauty!'

The girl laughed, and nodded to the Snow-man, and they both danced away over the snow.

'Who were those two?' asked the Snow-man of the yard-dog. 'You have been in this yard longer than I have. Do you know who they are?'

'Do I know them indeed?' answered the yard-dog. 'She has often stroked me, and he has given me bones. I don't bite either of them!'

'But what are they?' asked the Snow-man.

'Lovers!' replied the yard-dog. 'They will go into one kennel and gnaw the same bone!'

'Are they the same kind of beings that we are?' asked the Snow-man.

'They are our masters,' answered the yard-dog. 'Really people who have only been in the world one day know very little. That's the conclusion I have come to. Now *I* have age and wisdom; I know everyone in the house, and I can remember a time when I was not lying here in a cold kennel. Bow-wow!'

'The cold is splendid,' said the Snow-man. 'Tell me some more. But don't rattle your chain so, it makes me crack!'

'Bow-wow!' barked the yard-dog. 'They used to say I was a pretty little fellow; then I lay in a velvet-covered chair in my master's house. My mistress used to nurse me, and kiss and fondle me, and call me her dear, sweet little Alice! But by-and-by I grew too big, and I was given to the housekeeper, and I went into the kitchen. You can see into it from where you are standing; you can look at the room in which I was master, for so I was when I was with the housekeeper. Of course it was a smaller place than upstairs, but it was more comfortable, for I wasn't chased about and teased by the

children as I had been before. My food was just as good, or even better. I had my own pillow, and there was a stove there, which at this time of year is the most beautiful thing in the world. I used to creep right under that stove. Ah me! I often dream of that stove still. Bow-wow!'

'Is a stove so beautiful?' asked the Snow-man. 'Is it anything like me?'

'It is just the opposite of you! It is coal-black, and has a long neck with a brass pipe. It eats firewood, so that fire spouts out of its mouth. One has to keep close beside it—quite underneath is the nicest of all. You can see it through the window from where you are standing.'

And the Snow-man looked in that direction, and saw a smooth polished object with a brass pipe. The flicker from the fire reached him across the snow. The Snow-man felt wonderfully happy, and a feeling came over him which he could not express; but all those who are not snow-men know about it.

'Why did you leave her?' asked the Snow-man. He had a feeling that such a being must be a lady. 'How could you leave such a place?'

'I had to!' said the yard-dog. 'They turned me out of doors, and chained me up here. I had bitten the youngest boy in the leg, because he took away the bone I was gnawing; a bone for a bone, I thought! But they were very angry, and from that time I have been chained here, and I have lost my voice. Don't you hear how hoarse I am? Bow-wow! I can't speak like other dogs. Bow-wow! That was the end of happiness!'

The Snow-man, however, was not listening to him any more; he was looking into the room where the housekeeper lived, where the stove stood on its four iron legs, and seemed to be just the same size as the Snow-man.

'How something is cracking inside me!' he said. 'Shall I never be able to get in there? It is certainly a very innocent wish, and our innocent wishes ought to be fulfilled. I must get there, and lean against the stove, if I have to break the window first!'

'You will never get inside there!' said the yard-dog; 'and if you were to reach the stove you would disappear. Bow-wow!'

'I'm as good as gone already!' answered the Snow-man. 'I believe I'm breaking up!'

The whole day the Snow-man looked through the window; towards dusk the room grew still more inviting; the stove gave out a mild light, not at all like the moon or even the sun; no, as only a stove can shine when it has something to feed upon. When the door of the room was open, it flared up—this was one of its peculiarities; it flickered quite red upon the Snow-man's white face.

'I can't stand it any longer!' he said. 'How beautiful it looks with its tongue stretched out like that!'

It was a long night, but the Snow-man did not find it so; there he stood, wrapt in his pleasant thoughts, and they froze, so that he cracked.

Next morning the panes of the kitchen window were covered with ice, and the most beautiful ice-flowers that even a snow-man could desire, only they blotted out the stove. The window would not open; he couldn't see the stove which he thought was such a lovely lady There was a cracking and cracking inside him and all around;

there was just such a frost as a snow-man would delight in. But this Snow-man was different: how could he feel happy?

'Yours is a bad illness for a Snow-man!' said the yard-dog. 'I also suffered from it, but I have got over it. Bow-wow!' he barked. 'The weather is going to change!' he added.

The weather did change. There came a thaw.

When this set in the Snow-man set off. He did not say anything, and he did not complain, and those are bad signs.

One morning he broke up altogether. And lo! where he had stood there remained a broom-stick standing upright, round which the boys had built him!

'Ah! now I understand why he loved the stove,' said the yard-dog. 'That is the raker they use to clean out the stove! The Snow-man had a stove-raker in his body! That's what was the matter with him! And now it's all over with him! Bow-wow!'

And before long it was all over with the winter too! 'Bow-wow!' barked the hoarse yard-dog.

But the young girl sang:

'Woods, your bright green garments don!
Willows, your woolly gloves put on!
Lark and cuckoo, daily sing—
February has brought the spring!
My heart joins in your song so sweet;
Come out, dear sun, the world to greet!'

And no one thought of the Snow-man.

THE SHIRT-COLLAR

THERE was once a fine gentleman whose entire worldly possessions consisted of a boot-jack and a hair-brush; but he had the most beautiful shirt-collar in the world, and it is about this that we are going to hear a story.

The shirt-collar was so old that he began to think about marrying; and it happened one day that he and a garter came into the wash-tub together.

'Hulloa!' said the shirt-collar, 'never before have I seen anything so slim and delicate, so elegant and pretty! May I be permitted to ask your name?'

'I shan't tell you,' said the garter.

'Where is the place of your abode?' asked the shirt-collar.

But the garter was of a bashful disposition, and did not think it proper to answer.

'Perhaps you are a girdle?' said the shirt-

collar—'an under girdle? for I see that you are for use as well as for ornament, my pretty miss!'

'You ought not to speak to me!' said the garter; 'I'm sure I haven't given you any encouragement!'

'When anyone is as beautiful as you,' said the shirt-collar, 'is not that encouragement enough?'

'Go away, don't come so close!' said the garter. 'You seem to be a gentleman!'

'So I am, and a very fine one too!' said the shirt-collar; 'I possess a boot-jack and a hair-brush!'

That was not true; it was his master who owned these things; but he was a terrible boaster.

'Don't come so close,' said the garter. 'I'm not accustomed to such treatment!'

'What affectation!' said the shirt-collar. And then they were taken out of the wash-tub, starched, and hung on a chair in the sun to dry, and then laid on the ironing-board. Then came the glowing iron.

'Mistress widow!' said the shirt-collar, 'dear mistress widow! I am becoming another man,

all my creases are coming out; you are burning a hole in me! Ugh! Stop, I implore you!'

'You rag!' said the iron, travelling proudly over the shirt-collar, for it thought it was a steam-engine and ought to be at the station drawing trucks.

'Rag!' it said.

The shirt-collar was rather frayed out at the edge, so the scissors came to cut off the threads.

'Oh!' said the shirt-collar, 'you must be a dancer! How high you can kick! That is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen! No man can imitate you!'

'I know that!' said the scissors.

'You ought to be a duchess!' said the shirt-collar. 'My worldly possessions consist of a fine gentleman, a boot-jack, and a hair-brush. If only I had a duchy!'

'What! He wants to marry me?' said the scissors, and she was so angry that she gave the collar a sharp snip, so that it had to be cast aside as good for nothing.

'Well, I shall have to propose to the hair-brush!' thought the shirt-collar. 'It is really

wonderful what fine hair you have, madam! Have you never thought of marrying?'

'Yes, that I have!' answered the hair-brush; 'I'm engaged to the boot-jack!'

'Engaged!' exclaimed the shirt-collar. And now there was no one he could marry, so he took to despising matrimony.

Time passed, and the shirt-collar came in a rag-bag to the paper-mill. There was a large assortment of rags, the fine ones in one heap, and the coarse ones in another, as they should be. They had all much to tell, but no one more than the shirt-collar, for he was a hopeless braggart.

'I have had a terrible number of love affairs!' he said. 'They gave me no peace. I was such a fine gentleman, so stiff with starch! I had a boot-jack and a hair-brush, which I never used! You should just have seen me then! Never shall I forget my first love! She was a girdle, so delicate and soft and pretty! She threw herself into a wash-tub for my sake! Then there was a widow, who glowed with love for me. But I left her alone, till she became black. Then there was the dancer, who inflicted the

wound which has caused me to be here now; she was very violent! My own hair-brush was in love with me, and lost all her hair in consequence. Yes, I have experienced much in that line; but I grieve most of all for the garter—I mean, the girdle, who threw herself into a wash-tub. I have much on my conscience; it is high time for me to become white paper!'

And so he did! he became white paper, the very paper on which this story is printed. And that was because he had boasted so terribly about things which were not true. We should take this to heart, so that it may not happen to us, for we cannot indeed tell if we may not some day come to the rag-bag, and be made into white paper, on which will be printed our whole history, even the most secret parts, so that we too go about the world relating it, like the shirt-collar.

PETER BULL

THERE once lived in Denmark a peasant and his wife who owned a very good farm, but had no children. They often lamented to each other that they had no one of their own to inherit all the wealth that they possessed. They continued to prosper, and became rich people, but there was no heir to it all.

One year it happened that they owned a pretty little bull-calf, which they called Peter. It was the prettiest little creature they had ever seen—so beautiful and so wise that it understood everything that was said to it, and so gentle and so full of play that both the man and his wife came to be as fond of it as if it had been their own child.

One day the man said to his wife, 'I wonder, now, whether our parish clerk could teach Peter to talk; in that case we could not do better than adopt him as our son, and let him inherit all that we possess.'

'Well, I don't know,' said his wife, 'our clerk is tremendously learned, and knows much more than his Paternoster, and I could almost believe that he might be able to teach Peter to talk, for Peter has a wonderfully good head too. You might at least ask him about it.'

Off went the man to the clerk, and asked him whether he thought he could teach a bull-calf that they had to speak, for they wished so much to have it as their heir.

The clerk was no fool; he looked round about to see that no one could overhear them, and said, 'Oh, yes, I can easily do that, but you must not speak to anyone about it. It must be done in all secrecy, and the priest must not know of it, otherwise I shall get into trouble, as it is forbidden. It will also cost you something, as some very expensive books are required.'

That did not matter at all, the man said; they would not care so very much what it cost. The clerk could have a hundred dollars to begin with to buy the books. He also promised to tell no one about it, and to bring the calf round in the evening.

He gave the clerk the hundred dollars on the

spot, and in the evening took the calf round to him, and the clerk promised to do his best with it. In a week's time he came back to the clerk to hear about the calf and see how it was thriving. The clerk, however, said that he could not get a sight of it, for then Peter would long after him and forget all that he had already learned. He was getting on well with his learning, but another hundred dollars were needed, as they must have more books. The peasant had the money with him, so he gave it to the clerk, and went home again with high hopes.

In another week the man came again to learn what progress Peter had made now.

'He is getting on very well,' said the clerk.

'I suppose he can't say anything yet?' said the man.

'Oh, yes,' said the clerk, 'he can say "Moo" now.'

'Do you think he will get on with his learning?' asked the peasant.

'Oh, yes,' said the clerk, 'but I shall want another hundred dollars for books. Peter can't learn well out of the ones that he has got.'

'Well, well,' said the man, 'what must be spent *shall* be spent.'

So he gave the clerk the third hundred dollars for books, and a cask of good old ale for Peter. The clerk drank the ale himself, and gave the calf milk, which he thought would be better for it.

Some weeks passed, during which the peasant did not come round to ask after the calf, being frightened lest it should cost him another hundred dollars, for he had begun to squirm a bit at having to part with so much money. Meanwhile the clerk decided that the calf was as fat as it could be, so he killed it. After he had got all the beef out of the way he went inside, put on his black clothes, and made his way to the peasant's house.

As soon as he had said 'Good day,' he asked, 'Has Peter come home here?'

'No, indeed, he hasn't,' said the man; 'surely he hasn't run away?'

'I hope,' said the clerk, 'that he would not behave so contemptibly after all the trouble I have had to teach him, and all that I have spent upon him. I have had to spend at least a hundred dollars of my own money to buy books for him before I got him so far on. He could say anything he liked now, so he said to-

day that he longed to see his parents again. I was willing to give him that pleasure, but I was afraid that he wouldn't be able to find the way here by himself, so I made myself ready to go with him. When we had got outside the house I remembered that I had left my stick inside, and went in again to get it. When I came out again Peter had gone off on his own account. I thought he would be here, and if he isn't I don't know where he is.'

The peasant and his wife began to lament bitterly that Peter had run away in this fashion, just when they were to have so much joy of him, and after they had spent so much on his education. The worst of it was that now they had no heir after all. The clerk comforted them as best he could; he also was greatly distressed that Peter should have behaved in such a way just when he should have gained honour from his pupil. Perhaps he had only gone astray, and he would advertise him at church next Sunday, and find out whether anyone had seen him. Then he bade them 'Good-bye,' and went home and dined on a good fat veal roast.

Now it so happened that the clerk took in a

newspaper, and one day he chanced to read in its columns of a new merchant who had settled in a town at some distance, and whose name was 'Peter Bull.' He put the newspaper in his pocket, and went round to the sorrowing couple who had lost their heir. He read the paragraph to them, and added, 'I wonder, now, whether that could be your bull-calf Peter?'

'Yes, of course it is,' said the man; 'who else would it be?'

His wife then spoke up and said, 'You must set out, goodman, and see about him, for it *is* he, I am perfectly certain. Take a good sum of money with you, too; for who knows but what he may want some cash now that he has turned a merchant?'

Next day the man got a bag of money on his back and a sandwich in his pocket, and his pipe in his mouth, and set out for the town where the new merchant lived. It was no short way, and he travelled for many days before he finally arrived there. He reached it one morning, just at daybreak, found out the right place, and asked if the merchant was at home. Yes, he was, said the people, but he was not up yet.

'That doesn't matter,' said the peasant, 'for I am his father. Just show me up to his bedroom.'

He was shown up to the room, and as soon as he entered it, and caught sight of the merchant, he recognised him at once. He had the same broad forehead, the same thick neck, and same red hair, but in other respects he was now like a human being. The peasant rushed straight up to him and took a firm hold of him. 'O Peter,' said he, 'what a sorrow you have caused us, both myself and your mother, by running off like this just as we had got you well educated! Get up, now, so that I can see you properly, and have a talk with you.'

The merchant thought that it was a lunatic who had made his way in to him, and thought it best to take things quietly.

'All right,' said he, 'I shall do so at once. He got out of bed and made haste to dress himself.

'Ay,' said the peasant, 'now I can see how clever our clerk is. He has done well by you, for now you look just like a human being. If one didn't know it, one would never think that it was you we got from the red cow. Will you come home with me now?'

'No,' said the merchant, 'I can't find time just now. I have a big business to look after.'

'You could have the farm at once, you know,' said the peasant, 'and we old people would retire. But if you would rather stay in business, of course you may do so. Are you in want of anything?'

'Oh, yes,' said the merchant; 'I want nothing so much as money. A merchant has always a use for that.'

'I can well believe that,' said the peasant, 'for you had nothing at all to start with. I have brought some with me for that very end.' With that he emptied his bag of money out upon the table, so that it was all covered with bright dollars.

When the merchant saw what kind of man he had before him he began to speak him fair, and invited him to stay with him for some days, so that they might have some more talk together.

'Very well,' said the peasant, 'but you must call me "Father."'

'I have neither father nor mother alive,' said Peter Bull.

'I know that,' said the man; 'your real father

was sold at Hamburg last Michaelmas, and your real mother died while calving in spring; but my wife and I have adopted you as our own, and you are our only heir, so you must call me "Father."'

Peter Bull was quite willing to do so, and it was settled that he should keep the money, while the peasant made his will and left to him all that he had, before he went home to his wife, and told her the whole story.

She was delighted to hear that it was true enough about Peter Bull—that he was no other than their own bull-calf.

'You must go at once and tell the clerk,' said she, 'and pay him the hundred dollars of his own money that he spent upon our son. He has earned them well, and more besides, for all the joy he has given us in having such a son and heir.'

The man agreed with this, and thanked the clerk for all he had done, and gave him two hundred dollars. Then he sold the farm, and removed with his wife to the town where their dear son and heir was living. To him they gave all their wealth, and lived with him till their dying days.

PRINCESS MINON-MINETTE

ONCE upon a time there lived a young king whose name was Souci, and he had been brought up, ever since he was a baby, by the fairy Inconstancy. Now the fairy Girouette had a kind heart, but she was a very trying person to live with, for she never knew her own mind for two minutes together, and as she was the sole ruler at court till the prince grew up everything was always at sixes and sevens. At first she determined to follow the old custom of keeping the young king ignorant of the duties he would have to perform some day; then, quite suddenly, she resigned the reins of government into his hands; but, unluckily, it was too late to train him properly for the post. However, the fairy did not think of that, but, carried away by her new ideas, she hastily formed a Council, and named as Prime Minister the excellent 'Ditto,' so called

because he had never been known to contradict anybody.

Young Prince Souci had a handsome face, and at the bottom a good deal of common sense; but he had never been taught good manners, and was shy and awkward; and had, besides, never learned how to use his brains.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the Council did not get through much work. Indeed, the affairs of the country fell into such disorder that at last the people broke out into open rebellion, and it was only the courage of the king, who continued to play the flute while swords and spears were flashing before the palace gate, that prevented civil war from being declared.

No sooner was the revolt put down than the Council turned their attention to the question of the young king's marriage. Various princesses were proposed to him, and the fairy, who was anxious to get the affair over before she left the court for ever, gave it as her opinion that the Princess Diaphana would make the most suitable wife. Accordingly envoys were sent to bring back an exact report of the princess's looks and

ways, and they returned saying that she was tall and well made, but so very light that the equerries who accompanied her in her walks had to be always watching her, lest she should suddenly be blown away. This had happened so often that her subjects lived in terror of losing her altogether, and tried everything they could think of to keep her to the ground. They even suggested that she should carry weights in her pockets, or have them tied to her ankles; but this idea was given up, as the princess found it so uncomfortable. At length it was decided that she was never to go out in a wind, and in order to make matters surer still the equerries each held the end of a string which was fastened to her waist.

The Council talked over this report for some days, and then the king made up his mind that he would judge for himself, and pretend to be his own ambassador. This plan was by no means new, but it had often succeeded, and, anyhow, they could think of nothing better.

Such a splendid embassy had never before been seen in any country. The kingdom was left in the charge of the Prime Minister, who answered

'Ditto' to everything; but the choice was better than it seemed, for the worthy man was much beloved by the people, as he agreed with all they said, and they left him feeling very pleased with themselves and their own wisdom.

When the king arrived at Diaphana's court he found a magnificent reception awaiting him, for, though they pretended not to know who he was, secrets like this are never hidden. Now the young king had a great dislike to long ceremonies, so he proposed that his second interview with the princess should take place in the garden. The princess made some difficulties, but, as the weather was lovely and very still, she at last consented to the king's wishes. But no sooner had they finished their first bows and curtseys than a slight breeze sprang up, and began to sway the princess, whose equerries had retired out of respect. The king went forward to steady her, but the wind that he caused only drove her further away from him. He rushed after her exclaiming, 'O princess! are you really running away from me?'

'Good gracious, no!' she replied. 'Run a little quicker and you will be able to stop me,

and I shall be for ever grateful. That is what comes of talking in a garden,' she added in disgust; 'as if one wasn't much better in a room that was tightly closed all round.'

The king ran as fast as he could, but the wind ran faster still, and in a moment the princess was whirled to the bottom of the garden, which was bounded by a ditch. She cleared it like a bird, and the king, who was obliged to stop short at the edge, saw the lovely Diaphana flying over the plain, sometimes driven to the right, sometimes to the left, till at last she vanished out of sight.

By this time the whole court were running over the plain, some on foot and some on horseback, all hurrying to the help of their princess, who really was in some danger, for the wind was rising to the force of a gale. The king looked on for a little, and then returned with his attendants to the palace, reflecting all the while on the extreme lightness of his proposed bride and the absurdity of having a wife that rose in the air better than any kite. He thought on the whole that it would be wiser not to wait longer, but to depart at once, and he started on horseback at the very moment when the princess had been


PRINCESS DIAHUNA
IS CARRIED OFF
BY THE DIABEZAR

found by her followers, wet to the skin, and blown against a rick. Souci met the carriage which was bringing her home, and stopped to congratulate her on her escape, and to advise her to put on dry clothes. Then he continued his journey.

It took a good while for the king to get home again, and he was rather cross at having had so much trouble for nothing. Besides which, his courtiers made fun at his adventure, and he did not like being laughed at, though of course they did not dare to do it before his face. And the end of it was that very soon he started on his travels again, only allowing one equerry to accompany him, and even this attendant he managed to lose the moment he had left his own kingdom behind him.

Now it was the custom in those days for princes and princesses to be brought up by fairies, who loved them as their own children, and did not mind what inconvenience they put other people to for their sakes, for all the world as if they had been real mothers. The fairy Aveline, who lived in a country that touched at one point the kingdom of King Souci, had under her care the lovely Princess Minon-Minette, and

had made up her mind to marry her to the young king, who, in spite of his awkward manners, which could be improved, was really very much nicer than most of the young men she was likely to meet.

So Aveline made her preparations accordingly, and began by arranging that the equerry should lose himself in the forest, after which she took away the king's sword and his horse while he lay asleep under a tree. Her reason for this was that she felt persuaded that, finding himself suddenly alone and robbed of everything, the king would hide his real birth, and would have to fall back on his powers of pleasing, like other men, which would be much better for him.

When the king awoke and found that the tree to which he had tied his horse had its lowest branch broken, and that nothing living was in sight, he was much dismayed, and sought high and low for his lost treasure, but all in vain. After a time he began to get hungry, so he decided that he had better try to find his way out of the forest, and perhaps he might have a chance of getting something to eat. He had only gone a few steps when he met Aveline, who had taken

Princess Diaphana blown against the haystack

the shape of an old woman with a heavy bundle of faggots on her back. She staggered along the path and almost fell at his feet, and Souci, afraid that she might have hurt herself, picked her up and set her on her feet again before passing on his way. But he was not to be let off so easy.

'What about my bundle?' cried the old woman. 'Where is your politeness? Really, you seem to have been very nicely brought up! What have they taught you?'

'Taught me? Nothing,' replied he.

'I can well believe it!' she said. 'You don't know even how to pick up a bundle. Oh, you can come near; I am cleverer than you, and know how to pick up a bundle very well.'

The king blushed at her words, which he felt had a great deal of truth in them, and took up the bundle meekly.

Aveline, delighted at the success of her first experiment, hobbled along after him, chattering all the while, as old women do.

'I wish,' she said, 'that all kings had done as much once in their lives. Then they would know what a lot of trouble it takes to get wood for their fires.'

Souci felt this to be true, and was sorry for the old woman.

'Where are we going to?' asked he.

'To the castle of the White Demon; and if you are in want of work I will find you something to do.'

'But I can't do anything,' he said, 'except carry a bundle, and I shan't earn much by that.'

'Oh, you are learning,' replied the old woman, 'and it isn't bad for a first lesson.' But the king was paying very little attention to her, for he was rather cross and very tired. Indeed, he felt that he really could not carry the bundle any further, and was about to lay it down when up came a young maiden more beautiful than the day, and covered with precious stones. She ran to them, exclaiming to the old woman:

'Oh, you poor thing! I was just coming after you to see if I could help you.'

'Here is a young man,' replied the old woman, 'who will be quite ready to give you up the bundle. You see he does not look as if he enjoyed carrying it.'

'Will you let me take it, sir?' she asked.

But the king felt ashamed of himself, and held

on to it tightly, while the presence of the princess put him in a better temper.

So they all travelled together till they arrived at a very ordinary-looking house, which Aveline pointed out as the castle of the White Demon, and told the king that he might put down his bundle in the courtyard. The young man was terribly afraid of being recognised by someone in this strange position, and would have turned on his heel and gone away had it not been for the thought of Minon-Minette. Still, he felt very awkward and lonely, for both the princess and the old woman had entered the castle without taking the slightest notice of the young man, who remained where he was for some time, not quite knowing what he had better do. At length a servant arrived and led him up into a beautiful room filled with people, who were either playing on musical instruments or talking in a lively manner, which astonished the king, who stood silently listening, and not at all pleased at the want of attention paid him.

Matters went on this way for some time. Every day the king fell more and more in love with Minon-Minette, and every day the princess

seemed more and more taken up with other people. At last, in despair, the prince sought out the old woman, to try to get some advice from her as to his conduct, or, anyway, to have the pleasure of talking about Minon-Minette.

He found her spinning in an underground chamber, but quite ready to tell him all he wanted to know. In answer to his questions he learned that in order to win the hand of the princess it was not enough to be born a prince, for she would marry nobody who had not proved himself faithful, and had, besides, all those talents and accomplishments which help to make people happy.

For a moment Souci was very much cast down on hearing this, but then he plucked up. 'Tell me what I must do in order to win the heart of the princess, and no matter how hard it is I will do it. And show me how I can repay you for your kindness, and you shall have anything I can give you. Shall I bring in your bundle of faggots every day?'

'It is enough that you should have made the offer,' replied the old woman; and she added,

holding out a skein of thread, 'Take this; one day you will be thankful for it, and when it becomes useless your difficulties will be past.'

'Is it the skein of my life?' he asked.

'It is the skein of your love's ill-luck,' she said.

And he took it and went away.

Now the fairy Girouette, who had brought up Souci, had an old friend called Grimace, the protectress of Prince Fluet. Grimace often talked over the young prince's affairs with Girouette, and, when she decided that he was old enough to govern his own kingdom, consulted Girouette as to a suitable wife. Girouette, who never stopped to think or to make inquiries, drew such a delightful picture of Minon-Minette that Grimace determined to spare no pains to bring about the marriage, and accordingly Fluet was presented at court. But though the young man was pleasant and handsome, the princess thought him rather womanish in some ways, and displayed her opinion so openly as to draw upon herself and Aveline the anger of the fairy, who declared that Minon-Minette should never know happiness till she had found a bridge without an

arch and a bird without feathers. So saying, she also went away.

Before the king set out afresh on his travels Aveline had restored to him his horse and his sword, and though these were but small consolation for the absence of the princess, they were better than nothing, for he felt that somehow they might be the means of leading him back to her.

After crossing several deserts the king arrived at length in a country that seemed inhabited, but the instant he stepped over the border he was seized and flung into chains, and dragged at once to the capital. He asked his guards why he was treated like this, but the only answer he got was that he was in the territory of the Iron King, for in those days countries had no names of their own, but were called after their rulers.

The young man was led into the presence of the Iron King, who was seated on a black throne in a hall also hung with black, as a token of mourning for all the relations whom he had put to death.

'What are you doing in my country?' he cried fiercely.

'I came here by accident,' replied Souci, 'and if I ever escape from your clutches I will take warning by you and treat my subjects differently.'

'Do you dare to insult me in my own court?' cried the king. 'Away with him to Little Ease!'

Now Little Ease was an iron cage hung by four thick chains in the middle of a great vaulted hall, and the prisoner inside could neither sit, nor stand, nor lie; and, besides that, he was made to suffer by turns unbearable heat and cold, while a hundred heavy bolts kept everything safe. Girouette, whose business it was to see after Souci, had forgotten his existence in the excitement of some new idea, and he would not have been alive long to trouble anybody if Aveline had not come to the rescue and whispered in his ear, 'And the skein of thread?' He took it up obediently, though he did not see how it would help him; but he tied it round one of the iron bars of his cage, which seemed the only thing he could do, and gave a pull. To his surprise the bar gave way at once, and he found he could break it into a thousand pieces. After this it did not

take him long to get out of his cage, or to treat the closely barred windows of the hall in the same manner. But even after he had done all this freedom appeared as far from him as ever, for between him and the open country was a high wall, and so smooth that not even a monkey could climb it. Then Souci's heart died within him. He saw nothing for it but to submit to some horrible death, but he determined that the Iron King should not profit more than he could help, and flung his precious thread into the air, saying, as he did so, 'O fairy, my misfortunes are greater than your power. I am grateful for your goodwill, but take back your gift!' The fairy had pity on his youth and want of faith, and took care that one end of the thread remained in his hand. He suddenly felt a jerk, and saw that the thread must have caught on something, and this thought filled him with the daring that is born of despair. 'Better,' he said to himself, 'trust to a thread than to the mercies of a king'; and, gliding down, he found himself safe on the other side of the wall. Then he rolled up the thread and put it carefully into his pocket, breathing silent thanks to the fairy.

Now Minon-Minette had been kept informed by Aveline of the prince's adventures, and when she heard of the way in which he had been treated by the Iron King she became furious, and began to prepare for war. She made her plans with all the secrecy she could, but when great armies are collected people are apt to suspect a storm is brewing, and of course it is very difficult to keep anything hidden from fairy godmothers. Anyway, Grimace soon heard of it, and as she had never forgiven Minon-Minette for refusing Prince Fluet, she felt that here was her chance of revenge.

Up to this time Aveline had been able to put a stop to many of Grimace's spiteful tricks, and to keep guard over Minon-Minette, but she had no power over anything that happened at a distance; and when the princess declared her intention of putting herself at the head of her army, and began to train herself to bear fatigue by hunting daily, the fairy entreated her to be careful never to cross the borders of her dominions without Aveline to protect her. The princess at once gave her promise, and all went well for some days. Unluckily one morning, as

Minon-Minette was cantering slowly on her beautiful white horse, thinking a great deal about Souci and not at all of the boundaries of her kingdom (of which, indeed, she was very ignorant), she suddenly found herself in front of a house made entirely of dead leaves, which somehow brought all sorts of unpleasant things into her head. She remembered Aveline's warning, and tried to turn her horse, but it stood as still as if it had been marble. Then the princess felt that she was slowly, and against her will, being dragged to the ground. She shrieked, and clung tightly to the saddle, but it was all in vain; she longed to fly, but something outside herself proved too strong for her, and she was forced to take the path that led to the House of Dead Leaves.

Scarcely had her feet touched the threshold when Grimace appeared. 'So here you are at last, Minon-Minette! I have been watching for you a long time, and my trap was ready for you from the beginning. Come here, my darling! I will teach you to make war on my friends! Things won't turn out exactly as you fancied. What you have got to do now is to go on your

knees to the king and crave his pardon, and before he consents to a peace you will have to implore him to grant you the favour of becoming his wife. Meanwhile you will have to be my servant.'

From that day the poor princess was put to the hardest and dirtiest work, and each morning something more disagreeable seemed to await her. Besides which, she had no food but a little black bread, and no bed but a little straw. Out of pure spite she was sent in the heat of the day to look after the geese, and would most likely have got a sunstroke if she had not happened to pick up in the fields a large fan, with which she sheltered her face. To be sure, a fan seems a rather odd possession for a goose girl, but the princess did not think of that, and she forgot all her troubles when, on opening the fan to use it as a parasol, out tumbled a letter from her lover. Then she felt sure that the fairy had not forgotten her, and took heart.

When Grimace saw that Minon-Minette still managed to look as white as snow, instead of being burnt as brown as a berry, she wondered what could have happened, and began to watch

her closely. The following day, when the sun was at its highest and hottest, she noticed her draw a fan from the folds of her dress and hold it before her eyes. The fairy, in a rage, tried to snatch it from her, but the princess would not let it go. 'Give me that fan at once!' cried Grimace.

'Never while I live!' answered the princess, and, not knowing where it would be safest, placed it under her feet. In an instant she felt herself rising from the ground, with the fan always beneath her, and while Grimace was too much blinded by her fury to notice what was going on the princess was quickly soaring out of her reach.

All this time Souci had been wandering through the world with his precious thread carefully fastened round him, seeking every possible and impossible place where his beloved princess might chance to be. But though he sometimes found traces of her, or even messages scratched on a rock, or cut in the bark of a tree, she herself was nowhere to be found. 'If she is not on the earth,' said Souci to himself, 'perhaps she is hiding somewhere in the air. It is there that I


BEHOLD·THE·
BIRD·WITHOUT
FEATHERS·&·
THE·BRIDGE·
WITHOUT·AN
ARCH·

shall find her.' So, by the help of his thread, he tried to mount upwards, but he could go such a little way, and hurt himself dreadfully when he tumbled back to earth again. Still he did not give up, and after many days of efforts and tumbles he found to his great joy that he could go a little higher and stay up a little longer than he had done at first, and by-and-by he was able to live in the air altogether. But alas! the world of the air seemed as empty of her as the world below, and Souci was beginning to despair, and to think that he must go and search the world that lay in the sea. He was floating sadly along, not paying any heed to where he was going, when he saw in the distance a beautiful, bright sort of bird coming towards him. His heart beat fast—he did not know why—and as they both drew near the voice of the princess exclaimed, 'Behold the bird without feathers and the bridge without an arch!'

So their first meeting took place in the air, but it was none the less happy for that; and the fan grew big enough to hold the king as well as Aveline, who had hastened to give them some good advice. She guided the fan above the spot

where the two armies lay encamped before each other ready to give battle. The fight was long and bloody, but in the end the Iron King was obliged to give way and surrender to the princess, who set him to keep King Souci's sheep, first making him swear a solemn oath that he would treat them kindly.

Then the marriage took place, in the presence of Girouette, whom they had the greatest trouble to find, and who was much astonished to discover how much business had been got through in her absence.

SNOWFLAKE

Once upon a time there lived a peasant called Ivan, and he had a wife whose name was Marie. They would have been quite happy except for one thing: they had no children to play with, and as they were now old people they did not find that watching the children of their neighbours at all made up to them for having none of their own.

One winter, which nobody living will ever forget, the snow lay so deep that it came up to the knees of even the tallest man. When it had all fallen, and the sun was shining again, the children ran out into the street to play, and the old man and his wife sat at their window and gazed at them. The children first made a sort of little terrace, and stamped it hard and firm, and then they began to make a snow-woman. Ivan and Marie watched them, the while thinking about many things.

Suddenly Ivan's face brightened, and, looking at his wife, he said, 'Wife, why shouldn't *we* make a snow-woman too?'

'Why not?' replied Marie, who happened to be in a very good temper; 'it might amuse us a little. But there is no use making a woman. Let us make a little snow-child, and pretend it is a living one.'

'Yes, let us do that,' said Ivan, and he took down his cap and went into the garden with his old wife.

Then the two set to work with all their might to make a doll out of the snow. They shaped a little body and two little hands and two little feet. On top of all they placed a ball of snow, out of which the head was to be.

'What in the world are you doing?' asked a passer-by.

'Can't you guess?' returned Ivan.

'Making a snow-child,' replied Marie.

They had finished the nose and the chin. Two holes were left for the eyes, and Ivan carefully shaped out the mouth. No sooner had he done so than he felt a warm breath upon his cheek. He started back in surprise and looked—and

behold! the eyes of the child met his, and its lips, which were as red as raspberries, smiled at him!

'What is it?' cried Ivan, crossing himself. 'Am I mad, or is the thing bewitched?'

The snow-child bent its head as if it had been really alive. It moved its little arms and its little legs in the snow that lay about it just as the living children did theirs.

'Ah! Ivan, Ivan,' exclaimed Marie, trembling with joy, 'Heaven has sent us a child at last!' And she threw herself upon Snowflake (for that was the snow-child's name) and covered her with kisses. And the loose snow fell away from Snowflake as an egg-shell does from an egg, and it was a little girl whom Marie held in her arms.

'Oh! my darling Snowflake!' cried the old woman, and led her into the cottage.

And Snowflake grew fast; each hour as well as each day made a difference, and every day she became more and more beautiful. The old couple hardly knew how to contain themselves for joy, and thought of nothing else. The cottage was always full of village children, for they amused Snowflake, and there was nothing

in the world they would not have done to amuse her. She was their doll, and they were continually inventing new dresses for her, and teaching her songs or playing with her. Nobody knew how clever she was! She noticed everything, and could learn a lesson in a moment. Anyone would have taken her for thirteen at least! And, besides all that, she was so good and obedient; and so pretty, too! Her skin was as white as snow, her eyes were as blue as forget-me-nots, and her hair was long and golden. Only her cheeks had no colour in them, but were as fair as her forehead.

So the winter went on, till at last the spring sun mounted higher in the heavens and began to warm the earth. The grass grew green in the fields, and high in the air the larks were heard singing. The village girls met and danced in a ring, singing, 'Beautiful spring, how came you here? How came you here? Did you come on a plough, or was it a harrow?' Only Snowflake sat quite still by the window of the cottage.

'What is the matter, dear child?' asked Marie. 'Why are you so sad? Are you ill? or have they treated you unkindly?'

'No,' replied Snowflake, 'it is nothing, mother; no one has hurt me: I am well.'

The spring sun had chased away the last snow from its hiding place under the hedges; the fields were full of flowers; nightingales sang in the trees, and all the world was gay. But the gayer grew the birds and the flowers the sadder became Snowflake. She hid herself from her playmates, and curled herself up where the shadows were deepest, like a lily amongst its leaves. Her only pleasure was to lie amid the green willows near some sparkling stream. At the dawn and at twilight only she seemed happy. When a great storm broke, and the earth was white with hail, she became bright and joyous as the Snowflake of old; but when the clouds passed, and the hail melted beneath the sun, Snowflake would burst into tears and weep as a sister would weep over her brother.

The spring passed, and it was the eve of St. John, or Midsummer Day. This was the greatest holiday of the year, when the young girls met in the woods to dance and play. They went to fetch Snowflake, and said to Marie: 'Let her come and dance with us.'

But Marie was afraid: she could not tell why, only she could not bear the child to go. Snowflake did not wish to go either, but they had no excuse ready. So Marie kissed the girl and said: 'Go, my Snowflake, and be happy with your friends, and you, dear children, be careful of her. You know she is the light of my eyes to me.'

'Oh, we will take care of her,' cried the girls gaily, and they ran off to the woods. There they wore wreaths, gathered nosegays, and sang songs —some sad, some merry. And whatever they did Snowflake did too.

When the sun set they lit a fire of dry grass, and placed themselves in a row, Snowflake being the last of all. 'Now watch us,' they said, 'and run just as we do.'

And they all began to sing and to jump one after another across the fire.

Suddenly, close behind them, they heard a sigh, then a groan. 'Ah!' They turned hastily and looked at each other. There was nothing. They looked again. Where was Snowflake? She has hidden herself for fun, they thought, and searched for her everywhere. 'Snowflake! Snowflake!' But there was no answer. 'Where

can she be? Oh, she must have gone home.' They returned to the village, but there was no Snowflake.

For days after that they sought her high and low. They examined every bush and every hedge, but there was no Snowflake. And long after everyone else had given up hope Ivan and Marie would wander through the woods crying, 'Snowflake, my dove, come back, come back!' And sometimes they thought they heard a call, but it was never the voice of Snowflake.

And what *had* become of her? Had a fierce wild beast seized her and dragged her into his lair in the forest? Had some bird carried her off across the wide blue sea?

No, no beast had touched her, no bird had borne her away. With the first breath of flame that swept over her when she ran with her friends Snowflake had melted away, and a little soft haze floating upwards was all that remained of her.

I KNOW WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

THERE was once a man who had three daughters, and they were all married to trolls, who lived underground. One day the man thought that he would pay them a visit, and his wife gave him some dry bread to eat by the way. After he had walked some distance he grew both tired and hungry, so he sat down on the east side of a mound and began to eat his dry bread. The mound then opened, and his youngest daughter came out of it, and said, 'Why, father! why are you not coming in to see me?'

'Oh,' said he, 'if I had known that you lived here, and had seen any entrance, I would have come in.'

Then he entered the mound along with her.

The troll came home soon after this, and his wife told him that her father was come, and

asked him to go and buy some beef to make broth with.

'We can get it easier than that,' said the troll.

He fixed an iron spike into one of the beams of the roof, and ran his head against this till he

had knocked several large pieces off his head. He was just as well as ever after doing this, and they got their broth without further trouble.

The troll then gave the old man a sackful of money, and laden with this he betook himself

homewards. When he came near his home he remembered that he had a cow about to calve, so he laid down the money on the ground, ran home as fast as he could, and asked his wife whether the cow had calved yet.

'What kind of a hurry is this to come home in?' said she. 'No, the cow has not calved yet.'

'Then you must come out and help me in with a sackful of money,' said the man.

'A sackful of money?' cried his wife.

'Yes, a sackful of money,' said he. 'Is that so very wonderful?'

His wife did not believe very much what he told her, but she humoured him, and went out with him.

When they came to the spot where he had left it there was no money there; a thief had come along and stolen it. His wife then grew angry and scolded him heartily.

'Well, well!' said he, 'hang the money! I know what I have learned.'

'What have you learned?' said she.

'Ah! *I* know that,' said the man.

After some time had passed the man had a mind to visit his second eldest daughter. His

wife again gave him some dry bread to eat, and when he grew tired and hungry he sat down on the east side of a mound and began to eat it. As he sat there his daughter came up out of the mound, and invited him to come inside, which he did very willingly.

Soon after this the troll came home. It was dark by that time, and his wife bade him go and buy some candles.

'Oh, we shall soon get a light,' said the troll. With that he dipped his fingers into the fire, and they then gave light without being burned in the least.

The old man got two sacks of money here, and plodded away homewards with these. When he was very nearly home he again thought of the cow that was with calf, so he laid down the money, ran home, and asked his wife whether the cow had calved yet.

'Whatever is the matter with you?' said she. 'You come hurrying as if the whole house was about to fall. You may set your mind at rest: the cow has not calved yet.'

The man now asked her to come and help him home with the two sacks of money. She did not believe him very much, but he continued to assure her that it was quite true, till at last she gave in and went with him. When they came to the spot there had again been a thief there and taken the money. It was no wonder that the woman was angry about this, but the man only said, 'Ah, if you only knew what I have learned.'

A third time the man set out—to visit his eldest daughter. When he came to a mound he sat down on the east side of it and ate the dry bread which his wife had given him to take with him. The daughter then came out of the mound and invited her father to come inside.

In a little while the troll came home, and his wife asked him to go and buy some fish.

'We can get them much more easily than that,' said the troll. 'Give me your dough trough and your ladle.'

They seated themselves in the trough, and

rowed out on the lake which was beside the mound. When they had got out a little way the troll said to his wife, 'Are my eyes green?'

'No, not yet,' said she.

He rowed on a little further and asked again, 'Are my eyes not green yet?'

'Yes,' said his wife, 'they are green now.'

Then the troll sprang into the water and ladled up so many fish that in a short time the trough could hold no more. They then rowed home again, and had a good meal off the fish.

The old man now got three sacks full of money, and set off home with them. When he was almost home the cow again came into his head, and he laid down the money. This time, however, he took his wooden shoes and laid them above the money, thinking that no one would take it after that. Then he ran home and asked his wife whether the cow had calved. It had not, and she scolded him again for behaving in this way, but in the end he persuaded her to go with him to help him with the three sacks of money.

When they came to the spot they found only the wooden shoes, for a thief had come along in the meantime and taken all the money. The woman was very angry, and broke out upon her husband; but he took it all very quietly, and only said, 'Hang the money! I know what I have learned.'

'What have you learned, I should like to know?' said his wife.

'You will see that yet,' said the man.

One day his wife took a fancy for broth, and said to him, 'Oh, go to the village, and buy a piece of beef to make broth.'

'There's no need of that,' said he; 'we can get it an easier way.' With that he drove a spike into a beam, and ran his head against it, and in consequence had to lie in bed for a long time afterwards.

After he had recovered from this his wife asked him one day to go and buy candles, as they had none.

'No,' he said, 'there's no need for that'; and he stuck his hand into the fire. This also made him take to bed for a good while.

When he had got better again his wife one day wanted fish, and asked him to go and buy some. The man, however, wished again to show what he had learned, so he asked her to come along with him and bring her dough trough and a ladle. They both seated themselves in this, and rowed upon the lake. When they had got out a little way the man said, 'Are my eyes green?'

'No,' said his wife; 'why should they be?'

They rowed a little further out, and he asked again, 'Are my eyes not green yet?'

'What nonsense is this?' said she; 'why should they be green?'

'Oh, my dear,' said he, 'can't you just say that they are green?'

'Very well,' said she, 'they *are* green.'

As soon as he heard this he sprang out into the water with the ladle for the fishes, but he just got leave to stay there with them!

THE CUNNING SHOEMAKER

ONCE upon a time there lived a shoemaker who could get no work to do, and was so poor that he and his wife nearly died of hunger. At last he said to her, 'It is no use waiting on here—I can find nothing; so I shall go down to Mascalucia, and perhaps there I shall be more lucky.'

So down he went to Mascalucia, and walked through the streets crying, 'Who wants some shoes?' And very soon a window was pushed up, and a woman's head was thrust out of it.

'Here are a pair for you to patch,' she said. And he sat down on her doorstep and set about patching them.

'How much do I owe you?' she asked when they were done.

'A shilling.'

'Here is eighteenpence, and good luck to you.' And he went his way. He turned into the next street and set up his cry again, and it was not

long before another window was pushed up and another head appeared.

'Here are some shoes for you to patch.'

And the shoemaker sat down on the doorstep and patched them.

'How much do I owe you?' asked the woman when the shoes were finished.

'A florin.'

'Here is a crown piece, and good luck to you.' And she shut the window.

'Well,' thought the shoemaker, 'I have done finely. But I will not go back to my wife just yet, as, if I only go on at this rate, I shall soon have enough money to buy a donkey.'

Having made up his mind what was best to do, he stayed in the town a few days longer—till he had four gold pieces safe in his purse. Then he went to the market, and for two of them he bought a good strong donkey, and, mounting on its back, he rode home to Catania. But as he entered a thick wood he saw in the distance a band of robbers who were coming quickly towards him.

'I am lost,' thought he; 'they are sure to take from me all the money that I have earned, and I shall be as poor as ever I was. What can

I do?' However, being a clever little man and full of spirit, he did not lose heart, but, taking five florins, he fastened them out of sight under the donkey's thick mane. Then he rode on.

Directly the robbers came up to him they seized him exactly as he had foretold and took away all his money.

'Oh, dear friends!' he cried, wringing his hands, 'I am only a poor shoemaker, and have nothing but this donkey left in the world.'

As he spoke the donkey gave himself a shake, and down fell the five florins.

'Where did that come from?' asked the robbers.

'Ah,' replied the shoemaker, 'you have guessed my secret. The donkey is a golden donkey, and supplies me with all my money.'

'Sell him to us,' said the robbers. 'We will give you any price you like.'

The shoemaker at first declared that nothing would induce him to sell him, but at last he agreed to hand him over to the robbers for fifty gold pieces. 'But listen to what I tell you,' said he. 'You must each take it in turn to own him for a night and a day, or else you will all be fighting over the money.'

With these words they parted, the robbers driving the donkey to their cave in the forest and the shoemaker returning home, very pleased with the success of his trick. He just stopped on the way to pick up a good dinner, and the next day spent most of his gains in buying a small vineyard.

Meanwhile the robbers had arrived at the cave where they lived, and the captain, calling them all round him, announced that it was his right to have the donkey for the first night. His companions agreed, and then he told his wife to put a mattress in the stable. She asked if he had gone out of his mind, but he answered crossly, 'What is that to you? Do as you are bid, and to-morrow I will bring you some treasures.'

Very early the captain awoke and searched the stable, but could find nothing, and guessed that Master Joseph had been making fun of them. 'Well,' he said to himself, 'if *I* have been taken in, the others shall not come off any better.'

So, when one of his men arrived and asked him eagerly how much money he had got, he answered gaily, 'Oh. comrade, if you only knew!

But I shall say nothing about it till everyone has had his turn!'

One after another they all took the donkey, but no money was forthcoming for anybody. At length, when all the band had been tricked, they held a council, and resolved to march to the shoemaker's house and punish him well for his cunning. Just as before, the shoemaker saw them a long way off, and began to think how he could outwit them again. When he had hit upon a plan he called his wife, and said to her, 'Take a bladder and fill it with blood, and bind it round your neck. When the robbers come and demand the money they gave me for the donkey I shall shout to you and tell you to get it quickly. You must argue with me, and decline to obey me, and then I shall plunge my knife into the bladder, and you must fall to the ground as if you were dead. There you must lie till I play on my guitar; then get up and begin to dance.'

The wife made haste to do as she was bid, and there was no time to lose, for the robbers were drawing very near the house. They entered with a great noise, and overwhelmed the shoemaker with reproaches for having deceived them about the donkey.

'The poor beast must have lost its power owing to the change of masters,' said he; 'but we will not quarrel about it. You shall have back the fifty gold pieces that you gave for him. Aita,' he cried to his wife, 'go quickly to the chest upstairs, and bring down the money for these gentlemen.'

'Wait a little,' answered she; 'I must first bake this fish. It will be spoilt if I leave it now.'

'Go this instant, as you are bid,' shouted the shoemaker, stamping as if he were in a great passion; but, as she did not stir, he drew his knife and stabbed her in the neck. The blood spurted out freely, and she fell to the ground as if she were dead.

'What have you done?' asked the robbers, looking at him in dismay. 'The poor woman was doing nothing.'

'Perhaps I was hasty, but it is easily set right,' replied the shoemaker, taking down his guitar and beginning to play. Hardly had he struck the first notes when his wife sat up; then got on her feet and danced.

The robbers stared with open mouths, and at last they said, 'Master Joseph, you may keep

the fifty gold pieces. But tell us what you will take for your guitar, for you must sell it to us.'

'Oh, that is impossible!' replied the shoemaker, 'for every time I have a quarrel with my wife I just strike her dead, and so give vent to my anger. This has become such a habit with me that I don't think I could break myself of it; and, of course, if I got rid of the guitar I could never bring her back to life again.'

However, the robbers would not listen to him, and at last he consented to take forty gold pieces for the guitar.

Then they all returned to their cave in the forest, delighted with their new purchase, and longing for a chance of trying its powers. But the captain declared that the first trial belonged to him, and after that the others might have their turn.

That evening he called to his wife and said, 'What have you got for supper?'

'Macaroni,' answered she.

'Why have you not boiled a fish?' he cried, and stabbed her in the neck so that she fell dead. The captain, who was not in the least angry, seized the guitar and began to play; but, let him play as loud as he would, the dead woman

never stirred. 'Oh, lying shoemaker! Oh, abominable knave! Twice has he got the better of me. But I will pay him out!'

So he raged and swore, but it did him no good. The fact remained that he had killed his wife and could not bring her back again.

The next morning came one of the robbers to fetch the guitar, and to hear what had happened.

'Well, how have you got on?'

'Oh, splendidly! I stabbed my wife, and then began to play, and now she is as well as ever.'

'Did you really? Then this evening I will try for myself.'

Of course the same thing happened over again, till all the wives had been killed secretly, and when there were no more left they whispered to each other the dreadful tale, and swore to be avenged on the shoemaker.

The band lost no time in setting out for his house, and, as before, the shoemaker saw them coming from afar. He called to his wife, who was washing in the kitchen: 'Listen, Aita: when the robbers come and ask for me, say I have gone to the vineyard. Then tell the dog to call me, and chase him from the house.'

When he had given these directions he ran out of the back door and hid behind a barrel. A few minutes later the robbers arrived, and called loudly for the shoemaker.

'Alas! good gentlemen, he is up in the vineyard, but I will send the dog after him at once. Here! now quickly to the vineyard, and tell your master some gentlemen are here who wish to speak to him. Go as fast as you can.' And she opened the door and let the dog out.

'You can really trust the dog to call your husband?' asked the robbers.

'Dear me, yes! He understands everything, and will always carry any message I give him.'

By-and-by the shoemaker came in and said, 'Good morning, gentlemen; the dog tells me you wish to speak to me.'

'Yes, we do,' replied the robber; 'we have come to speak to you about that guitar. It is your fault that we have murdered all our wives; and, though we played as you told us, none of them ever came back to life.'

'You could not have played properly,' said the shoemaker. 'It was your own fault.'

'Well, we will forget all about it,' answered the robbers, 'if you will only sell us your dog.'

'Oh, that is impossible! I should never get on without him.'

But the robbers offered him forty gold pieces, and at last he agreed to let them have the dog.

So they departed, taking the dog with them, and when they got back to their cave the captain declared that it was his right to have the first trial.

He then called his daughter, and said to her, 'I am going to the inn; if anybody wants me, loose the dog and send him to call me.'

About an hour after someone arrived on business, and the girl untied the dog and said, 'Go to the inn and call my father!' The dog bounded off, but ran straight to the shoemaker.

When the robber got home and found no dog, he thought, 'He must have gone back to his old master,' and, though night had already fallen, he went off after him.

'Master Joseph, is the dog here?' asked he.

'Ah! yes, the poor beast is so fond of me! You must give him time to get accustomed to new ways.'

So the captain brought the dog back, and the following morning handed him over to another of the band, just saying that the animal really could do what the shoemaker had said.

The second robber carefully kept his own counsel, and fetched the dog secretly back from the shoemaker, and so on through the whole band. At length, when everybody had suffered, they met and told the whole story, and next day they all marched off in fury to the man who had made game of them. After reproaching him with having deceived them, they tied him up in a sack, and told him they were going to throw him into the sea. The shoemaker lay quite still, and let them do as they would.

They went on till they came to a church, and the robbers said, 'The sun is hot and the sack is heavy; let us leave it here and go in and rest.' So they put the sack down by the roadside, and went into the church.

Now, on a hill near by there was a swineherd looking after a great herd of pigs and whistling merrily.

When Master Joseph heard him he cried out as loud as he could, 'I won't; I won't, I say.'

'What won't you do?' asked the swineherd.

'Oh,' replied the shoemaker, 'they want me to marry the king's daughter, and I won't do it.'

'How lucky you are!' sighed the swineherd. 'Now, if it were only me!'

'Oh, if that's all!' replied the cunning shoemaker, 'get you into this sack, and let me out.'

Then the swineherd opened the sack and took the place of the shoemaker, who went gaily off, driving the pigs before him.

When the robbers were rested they came out of the church, took up the sack, and carried it to the sea, where they threw it in, and it sank directly. As they came back they met the shoemaker, and stared at him with open mouths.

'Oh, if you only knew how many pigs live in the sea,' he cried. 'And the deeper you go the more there are. I have just brought up these, and mean to return for some more.'

'There are still some left there?'

'Oh, more than I could count,' replied the shoemaker. 'I will show you what you must do.' Then he led the robbers back to the shore. 'Now,' said he, 'you must each of you tie a stone to your necks, so that you may be sure to go deep enough, for I found the pigs that you saw very deep down indeed.'

Then the robbers all tied stones round their necks, and jumped in, and were drowned, and Master Joseph drove his pigs home, and was a rich man to the end of his days.

THE KING WHO WOULD HAVE A BEAUTIFUL WIFE

FIFTY years ago there lived a king who was very anxious to get married; but, as he was quite determined that his wife should be as beautiful as the sun, the thing was not so easy as it seemed, for no maiden came up to his standard. Then he commanded a trusty servant to search through the length and breadth of the land till he found a girl fair enough to be queen, and if he had the good luck to discover one he was to bring her back with him.

The servant set out at once on his journey, and sought high and low—in castles and cottages; but though pretty maidens were plentiful as blackberries, he felt sure that none of them would please the king.

One day he had wandered far and wide, and was feeling very tired and thirsty. By the roadside stood a tiny little house, and here he knocked

and asked for a cup of water. Now in this house dwelt two sisters, and one was eighty and the other ninety years old. They were very poor and earned their living by spinning. This had kept their hands very soft and white, like the hands of a girl, and when the water was passed through the lattice, and the servant saw the small delicate fingers, he said to himself, 'A maiden indeed must be lovely if she has a hand like that.' And he made haste back, and told the king.

'Go back at once,' said his majesty, 'and try to get a sight of her.'

The faithful servant departed on his errand without losing any time, and again he knocked at the door of the little house and begged for some water. As before, the old woman did not open the door, but passed the water through the lattice.

'Do you live here alone?' asked the man.

'No,' replied she, 'my sister lives with me. We are poor girls, and have to work for our bread.'

'How old are you?'

'I am fifteen, and she is twenty.'

Then the servant went back to the king, and told him all he knew. And his majesty answered: 'I will have the fifteen-year-old one. Go and bring her here.'

The servant returned a third time to the little house, and knocked at the door. In reply to his knock the lattice window was pushed open, and a voice inquired what it was he wanted.

'The king has desired me to bring back the youngest of you to become his queen,' he replied.

'Tell his majesty I am ready to do his bidding, but since my birth no ray of light has fallen upon my face. If it should ever do so I shall instantly grow black. Therefore beg, I pray you, his most gracious majesty to send this evening a shut carriage, and I will return in it to the castle.

When the king heard this he ordered his great golden carriage to be prepared, and in it to be placed some magnificent robes; and the old woman wrapped herself in a thick veil, and was driven to the castle.

The king was eagerly awaiting her, and when she arrived he begged her politely to raise her veil and let him see her face.

But she answered: 'Here the tapers are too bright and the light too strong. Would you have me turn black under your very eyes?'

And the king believed her words, and the marriage took place without the veil being once lifted. Afterwards, when they were alone, he raised the corner, and knew for the first time that he had wedded a wrinkled old woman. And, in a furious burst of anger, he dashed open the window and flung her out. But, luckily for her, her clothes caught on a nail in the wall, and kept her hanging between heaven and earth.

While she was thus suspended, expecting every moment to be dashed to the ground, four fairies happened to pass by.

'Look, sisters,' cried one, 'surely that is the old woman that the king sent for. Shall we wish that her clothes may give way, and that she should be dashed to the ground?'

'Oh, no! no!' exclaimed another. 'Let us wish her something good. I myself will wish her youth.'

'And I beauty.'

'And I wisdom.'

'And I a tender heart.'

Her clothes caught on a nail

So spake the fairies, and went their way, leaving the most beautiful maiden in the world behind them.

The next morning when the king looked from his window he saw this lovely creature hanging on the nail. 'Ah! what have I done? Surely I must have been blind last night!'

And he ordered long ladders to be brought and the maiden to be rescued. Then he fell on his knees before her, and prayed her to forgive him, and a great feast was made in her honour.

Some days after came the ninety-year-old sister to the palace and asked for the queen.

'Who is that hideous old witch?' said the king.

'Oh, an old neighbour of mine, who is half silly,' she replied.

But the old woman looked at her steadily, and knew her again, and said: 'How have you managed to grow so young and beautiful? I should like to be young and beautiful too.'

This question she repeated the whole day long, till at length the queen lost patience and said: 'I had my old head cut off, and this new head grew in its place.'

Then the old woman went to a barber, and spoke to him, saying, 'I will give you all you ask if you will only cut off my head, so that I may become young and lovely.'

'But, my good woman, if I do that you will die!'

But the old woman would listen to nothing; and at last the barber took out his knife and struck the first blow at her neck.

'Ah!' she shrieked as she felt the pain.

'Il faut souffrir pour être belle,' said the barber, who had been in France.

And at the second blow her head rolled off, and the old woman was dead for good and all.

CATHERINE AND HER DESTINY

Long ago there lived a rich merchant who, besides possessing more treasures than any king in the world, had in his great hall three chairs, one of silver, one of gold, and one of diamonds. But his greatest treasure of all was his only daughter, who was called Catherine.

One day Catherine was sitting in her own room when suddenly the door flew open, and in came a tall and beautiful woman holding in her hands a little wheel.

'Catherine,' she said, going up to the girl, 'which would you rather have—a happy youth or a happy old age?'

Catherine was so taken by surprise that she did not know what to answer, and the lady repeated again, 'Which would you rather have—a happy youth or a happy old age?'

Then Catherine thought to herself, 'If I say a happy youth, then I shall have to suffer all the

rest of my life. No, I would bear trouble now, and have something better to look forward to.' So she looked up and replied, 'Give me a happy old age,'

'So be it,' said the lady, and turned her wheel as she spoke, vanishing the next moment as suddenly as she had come.

Now this beautiful lady was the Destiny of poor Catherine.

Only a few days after this the merchant heard the news that all his finest ships, laden with the richest merchandise, had been sunk in a storm, and he was left a beggar. The shock was too much for him. He took to his bed, and in a short time he was dead of his disappointment.

So poor Catherine was left alone in the world without a penny or a creature to help her. But she was a brave girl and full of spirit, and soon made up her mind that the best thing she could do was to go to the nearest town and become a servant. She lost no time in getting herself ready, and did not take long over her journey; and as she was passing down the chief street of the town a noble lady saw her out of the window, and, struck by her sad face, said to her:


CATHERINE
& HER DESTINY.

'Where are you going all alone, my pretty girl?'

'Ah, my lady, I am very poor, and must go to service to earn my bread.'

'I will take you into my service,' said she; and Catherine served her well.

Some time after her mistress said to Catherine, 'I am obliged to go out for a long while, and must lock the house door, so that no thieves shall get in.'

So she went away, and Catherine took her work and sat down at the window. Suddenly the door burst open, and in came her Destiny.

'Oh! so here you are, Catherine! Did you really think I was going to leave you in peace?' And as she spoke she walked to the linen press where Catherine's mistress kept all her finest sheets and underclothes, tore everything in pieces, and flung them on the floor. Poor Catherine wrung her hands and wept, for she thought to herself, 'When my lady comes back and sees all this ruin she will think it is my fault,' and, starting up, she fled through the open door. Then Destiny took all the pieces and made them whole again, and put them back

in the press, and when everything was tidy she too left the house.

When the mistress reached home she called Catherine, but no Catherine was there. 'Can she have robbed me?' thought the old lady, and looked hastily round the house; but nothing was missing. She wondered why Catherine should have disappeared like this, but she heard no more of her, and in a few days she filled her place.

Meanwhile Catherine wandered on and on, without knowing very well where she was going, till at last she came to another town. Just as before, a noble lady happened to see her passing her window, and called out to her, 'Where are you going all alone, my pretty girl?'

And Catherine answered, 'Ah, my lady, I am very poor, and must go to service to earn my bread.'

'I will take you into my service,' said the lady; and Catherine served her well, and hoped she might now be left in peace. But, exactly as before, one day that Catherine was left in the house alone her Destiny came again and spoke to her with hard words: 'What! are you here now?' And in a passion she tore up everything

she saw, till in sheer misery poor Catherine rushed out of the house. And so it befell for seven years, and directly Catherine found a fresh place her Destiny came and forced her to leave it.

After seven years, however, Destiny seemed to get tired of persecuting her, and a time of peace set in for Catherine. When she had been chased away from her last house by Destiny's wicked pranks she had taken service with another lady, who told her that it would be part of her daily work to walk to a mountain that overshadowed the town, and, climbing up to the top, she was to lay on the ground some loaves of freshly baked bread, and cry with a loud voice, 'O Destiny, my mistress,' three times. Then her lady's Destiny would come and take away the offering. That will I gladly do,' said Catherine.

So the years went by, and Catherine was still there, and every day she climbed the mountain with her basket of bread on her arm. She was happier than she had been, but sometimes, when no one saw her, she would weep as she thought over her old life, and how different it was from

the one she was now leading. One day her lady saw her, and said, 'Catherine, what is it? Why are you always weeping?' And then Catherine told her story.

'I have got an idea,' exclaimed the lady. 'To-morrow, when you take the bread to the mountain, you shall pray my Destiny to speak to yours, and entreat her to leave you in peace. Perhaps something may come of it!'

At these words Catherine dried her eyes, and next morning, when she climbed the mountain, she told all she had suffered, and cried, 'O Destiny, my mistress, pray, I entreat you, of my Destiny that she may leave me in peace.'

And Destiny answered, 'Oh, my poor girl, know you not your Destiny lies buried under seven coverlids, and can hear nothing? But if you will come to-morrow I will bring her with me.'

And after Catherine had gone her way her lady's Destiny went to find her sister, and said to her, 'Dear sister, has not Catherine suffered enough? It is surely time for her good days to begin?'

And the sister answered, 'To-morrow you

shall bring her to me, and I will give her something that may help her out of her need.'

The next morning Catherine set out earlier than usual for the mountain, and her lady's Destiny took the girl by the hand and led her to her sister, who lay under the seven coverlids. And her Destiny held out to Catherine a ball of silk, saying, 'Keep this—it may be useful some day'; then pulled the coverings over her head again.

But Catherine walked sadly down the hill, and went straight to her lady and showed her the silken ball, which was the end of all her high hopes.

'What shall I do with it?' she asked. 'It is not worth sixpence, and it is no good to me!'

'Take care of it,' replied her mistress. 'Who can tell how useful it may be?'

A little while after this grand preparations were made for the king's marriage, and all the tailors in the town were busy embroidering fine clothes. The wedding garment was so beautiful nothing like it had ever been seen before, but when it was almost finished the tailor found that he had no more silk. The colour was very rare,

and none could be found like it, and the king made a proclamation that if anyone happened to possess any they should bring it to the court, and he would give them a large sum.

'Catherine!' exclaimed the lady, who had been to the tailor's and seen the wedding garment, 'your ball of silk is exactly the right colour. Bring it to the king, and you can ask what you like for it.'

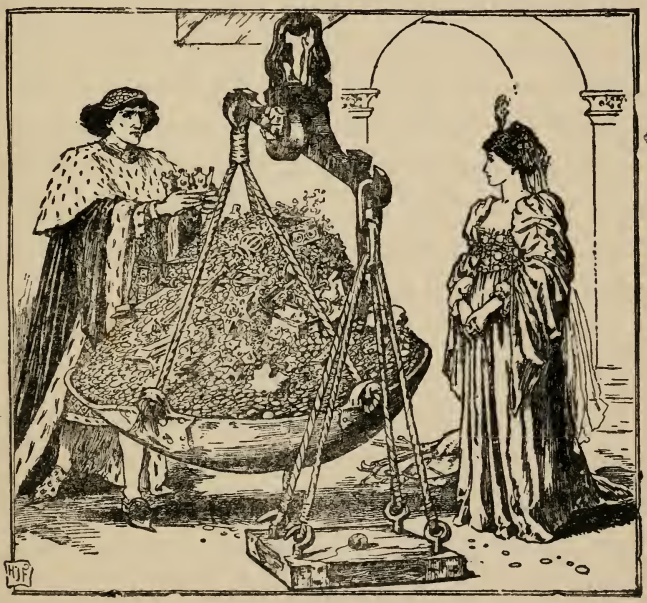
Then Catherine put on her best clothes and went to the court, and looked more beautiful than any woman there.

'May it please your majesty,' she said, 'I have brought you a ball of silk of the colour you asked for, as no one else has any in the town.'

'Your majesty,' asked one of the courtiers, 'shall I give the maiden its weight in gold?'

The king agreed, and a pair of scales were brought; and a handful of gold was placed in one scale and the silken ball in the other. But lo! let the king lay in the scales as many gold pieces as he would, the silk was always heavier still. Then the king took some larger scales, and heaped up all his treasures on the one side, but the silk on the other outweighed them all. At

last there was only one thing left that had not been put in, and that was his golden crown. And he took it from his head and set it on top of all, and at last the scale moved and the ball had found its balance.



'Where got you this silk?' asked the king.

'It was given me, royal majesty, by my mistress,' replied Catherine.

'That is not true,' said the king, 'and if you

do not tell me the truth I will have your head cut off this instant.'

So Catherine told him the whole story, and how she had once been as rich as he.

Now there lived at the court a wise woman, and she said to Catherine, 'You have suffered much, my poor girl, but at length your luck has turned, and I know by the weighing of the scales through the crown that you will die a queen.'

'So she shall,' cried the king, who overheard these words; 'she shall die my queen, for she is more beautiful than all the ladies of the court, and I will marry no one else.'

And so it fell out. The king sent back the bride he had promised to wed to her own country, and the same Catherine was queen at the marriage feast instead, and lived happy and contented to the end of her life.

THE WATER OF LIFE

THREE brothers and one sister lived together in a small cottage, and they loved one another dearly. One day the eldest brother, who had never done anything but amuse himself from sunrise to sunset, said to the rest, 'Let us all work hard, and perhaps we shall grow rich, and be able to build ourselves a palace.'

And his brothers and sister answered joyfully, 'Yes, we will all work!'

So they fell to working with all their might, till at last they became rich, and were able to build themselves a beautiful palace; and everyone came from miles round to see its wonders, and to say how splendid it was. No one thought of finding any faults, till at length an old woman, who had been walking through the rooms with a crowd of people, suddenly exclaimed, 'Yes, it is a splendid palace, but there is still something it needs!'

'And what may that be?'

'A church.'

When they heard this the brothers set to work again to earn some more money, and when they had got enough they set about building a church which should be as large and beautiful as the palace itself.

And after the church was finished greater numbers of people than ever flocked to see the palace and the church and vast gardens and magnificent halls.

But one day, as the brothers were as usual doing the honours to their guests, an old man turned to them and said, 'Yes, it is all most beautiful, but there is still something it needs!'

'And what may that be?'

'A pitcher of the water of life, a branch of the tree the smell of whose flowers gives eternal beauty, and the talking bird.'

'And where am I to find all those?'

'Go to the mountain that is far off yonder, and you will find what you seek.'

After the old man had bowed politely and taken farewell of them the eldest brother said to the rest, 'I will go in search of the water

of life, and the talking bird, and the tree of beauty.'

'But suppose some evil thing befalls you?' asked his sister. 'How shall we know?'

'You are right,' he replied; 'I had not thought of that!'

Then they followed the old man, and said to him, 'My eldest brother wishes to seek for the water of life, and the tree of beauty, and the talking bird, that you tell him are needful to make our palace perfect. But how shall we know if any evil thing befall him?'

So the old man took them a knife, and gave it to them, saying, 'Keep this carefully, and as long as the blade is bright all is well; but if the blade is bloody, then know that evil has befallen him.'

The brothers thanked him, and departed, and went straight to the palace, where they found the young man making ready to set out for the mountain where the treasures he longed for lay hid.

And he walked, and he walked, and he walked, till he had gone a great way, and there he met a giant.

'Can you tell me how much further I have still to go before I reach that mountain yonder?'

'And why do you wish to go there?'

'I am seeking the water of life, the talking bird, and a branch of the tree of beauty.'

'Many have passed by seeking those treasures, but none have ever come back; and you will never come back either, unless you mark my words. Follow this path, and when you reach the mountain you will find it covered with stones. Do not stop to look at them, but keep on your way. As you go you will hear scoffs and laughs behind you; it will be the stones that mock. Do not heed them; above all, do not turn round. If you do you will become as one of them. Walk straight on till you get to the top, and then take all you wish for.'

The young man thanked him for his counsel, and walked, and walked, and walked, till he reached the mountain. And as he climbed he heard behind him scoffs and jeers, but he kept his ears steadily closed to them. At last the noise grew so loud that he lost patience, and he stooped to pick up a stone to hurl into the midst of the clamour. when suddenly his arm

seemed to stiffen, and the next moment he was a stone himself!

That day his sister, who thought her brother's steps were long in returning, took out the knife and found the blade was red as blood. Then she cried out to her brothers that something terrible had come to pass.

'I will go and find him,' said the second. And he went.

And he walked, and he walked, and he walked, till he met the giant, and asked him if he had seen a young man travelling towards the mountain.

And the giant answered, 'Yes, I have seen him pass, but I have not seen him come back. The spell must have worked upon him.'

'Then what can I do to disenchant him, and find the water of life, the talking bird, and a branch of the tree of beauty?'

'Follow this path, and when you reach the mountain you will find it covered with stones. Do not stop to look at them, but climb steadily on. Above all, heed not the laughs and scoffs that will arise on all sides, and never turn round. And when you reach the top you can then take all you desire.'

The young man thanked him for his counsel, and set out for the mountain. But no sooner did he reach it than loud jests and gibes broke out on every side, and almost deafened him. For some time he let them rail, and pushed boldly on, till he had passed the place which his brother had gained; then suddenly he thought that among the scoffing sounds he heard his brother's voice. He stopped and looked back; and another stone was added to the number.

Meanwhile the sister left at home was counting the days when her two brothers should return to her. The time seemed long, and it would be hard to say how often she took out the knife and looked at its polished blade to make sure that this one at least was still safe. The blade was always bright and clear; each time she looked she had the happiness of knowing that all was well, till one evening, tired and anxious, as she frequently was at the end of the day, she took it from its drawer, and behold! the blade was red with blood. Her cry of horror brought her youngest brother to her, and, unable to speak, she held out the knife!

'I will go,' he said.

So he walked, and he walked, and he walked, until he met the giant, and he asked, 'Have two young men, making for yonder mountain, passed this way?'

And the giant answered, 'Yes, they have passed by, but they never came back, and by this I know that the spell has fallen upon them.'

'Then what must I do to free them, and to get the water of life, and the talking bird, and the branch of the tree of beauty?'

'Go to the mountain, which you will find so thickly covered with stones that you will hardly be able to place your feet, and walk straight forward, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, and paying no heed to the laughs and scoffs which will follow you, till you reach the top, and then you may take all that you desire.'

The young man thanked the giant for his counsel, and set forth to the mountain. And when he began to climb there burst forth all around him a storm of scoffs and jeers; but he thought of the giant's words, and looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, till the mountain-top lay straight before him. A moment now and he would have gained it, when, through

the groans and yells, he heard his brothers' voices. He turned, and there was one stone the more.

And all this while his sister was pacing up and down the palace, hardly letting the knife out of her hand, and dreading what she knew she would see, and what she *did* see. The blade grew red before her eyes, and she said, 'Now it is my turn.'

So she walked, and she walked, and she walked, till she came to the giant, and prayed him to tell her if he had seen three young men pass that way seeking the distant mountain.

'I have seen them pass, but they have never returned, and by this I know that the spell has fallen upon them.'

'And what must I do to set them free, and to find the water of life, and the talking bird, and a branch of the tree of beauty?'

'You must go to that mountain, which is so full of stones that your feet will hardly find a place to tread, and as you climb you will hear a noise as if all the stones in the world were mocking you; but pay no heed to anything you may hear, and, once you gain the top, you have gained everything.'

The girl thanked him for his counsel, and set out for the mountain ; and scarcely had she gone a few steps upwards when cries and screams broke forth around her, and she felt as if each

stone she trod on were a living thing. But she remembered the words of the giant, and knew not what had befallen her brothers, and kept her face steadily towards the mountain-top, which

grew nearer and nearer every moment. But as she mounted the clamour increased sevenfold: high above them all rang the voices of her three brothers. But the girl took no heed, and at last ner feet stood upon the top.

Then she looked round, and saw, lying in a hollow, the pool of the water of life. And she took the brazen pitcher that she had brought with her, and filled it to the brim. By the side of the pool stood the tree of beauty, with the talking bird on one of its boughs; and she caught the bird, and placed it in a cage, and broke off one of the branches.

After that she turned, and went joyfully down the hill again, carrying her treasures, but her long climb had tired her out, and the brazen pitcher was very heavy, and as she walked a few drops of the water spilt on the stones, and as it touched them they changed into young men and maidens, crowding about her to give thanks for their deliverance.

So she learnt by this how the evil spell might be broken, and she carefully sprinkled every stone till there was not one left—only a great company of youths and girls who followed her down the mountain.

When they arrived at the palace she did not lose a moment in planting the branch of the tree of beauty and watering it with the water of life. And the branch shot up into a tree, and was heavy with flowers, and the talking bird nestled in its branches.

Now the fame of these wonders was noised abroad, and the people flocked in great numbers to see the three marvels, and the maiden who had won them; and among the sightseers came the king's son, who would not go till everything was shown him, and till he had heard how it had all happened. And the prince admired the strangeness and beauty of the treasures in the palace, but more than all he admired the beauty and courage of the maiden who had brought them there. So he went home and told his parents, and gained their consent to wed her for his wife.

Then the marriage was celebrated in the church adjoining the palace. Then the bridegroom took her to his own home, where they lived happy for ever after.

THE MAN WITHOUT A HEART

ONCE upon a time there were seven brothers, who were orphans, and had no sister. Therefore they were obliged to do all their own housework. This they did not like at all; so after much deliberation they decided to get married. There were, unfortunately, no young girls to be found in the place where they lived; but the elder brothers agreed to go out into the world and seek for brides, promising to bring back a very pretty wife for the youngest also if he would meanwhile stay at home and take care of the house. He consented willingly, and the six young men set off in good spirits.

On their way they came to a small cottage standing quite by itself in a wood; and before the door stood an old, old man, who accosted the brothers, saying, 'Hullo, you young fellows! Whither away so fast and cheerily?'

'We are going to find bonny brides for our-

selves, and one for our youngest brother at home,' they replied.

'Oh! dear youths,' said the old man, 'I am *terribly* lonely here; pray bring a bride for me also; only remember, she must be young and pretty.'

'What does a shrivelled old grey thing like that want with a pretty young bride?' thought the brothers, and went on their way.

Presently they came to a town where were seven sisters, as young and as lovely as anyone could wish. Each brother chose one, and the youngest they kept for their brother at home. Then the whole party set out on the return journey, and again their path led through the wood and past the old man's cottage.

There he stood before the door, and cried: 'Oh! you fine fellows, what a charming bride you have brought me!'

'She is not for you,' said the young men. 'She is for our youngest brother, as we promised.'

'What!' said the old man, 'promised! I'll make you eat your promises!' And with that he took his magic wand, and, murmuring a

charm, he touched both brothers and brides, and immediately they were turned into grey stones.

Only the youngest sister he had not bewitched. He took her into the cottage, and from that time she was obliged to keep house for him. She was not very unhappy, but one thought troubled her. What if the old man should die and leave her here alone in the solitary cottage deep in the heart of the wood! She would be as 'terribly lonely' as he had formerly been.

One day she told him of her fear.

'Don't be anxious,' he said. 'You need neither fear my death nor desire it, for I have no heart in my breast! However, if I *should* die, you will find my wand above the door, and with it you can set free your sisters and their lovers. Then you will surely have company enough.'

'Where in all the world do you keep your heart, if not in your breast?' asked the girl.

'Do you want to know everything?' her husband said. 'Well, if you *must* know, my heart is in the bedcover.'

When the old man had gone out about his business his bride passed her time in embroidering beautiful flowers on the bed quilt to make

THE SIX BROTHERS AND THEIR BRIDES TURNED INTO STONES BY THE OLD MAN.

his heart happy. The old man was much amused. He laughed, and said to her: 'You are a good child, but I was only joking. My heart is really in—in——'

'Now where is it, dear husband?'

'It is in the doorway,' he replied.

Next day, while he was out, the girl decorated the door with gay feathers and fresh flowers, and hung garlands upon it. And on his return the old fellow asked what it all meant.

'I did it to show my love for your heart,' said the girl.

And again the old man smiled, saying, 'You are a dear child, but my heart is not in the doorway.'

Then the poor young bride was very vexed, and said, 'Ah, my dear! you really *have* a heart somewhere, so you may die and leave me all alone.'

The old man did his best to comfort her by repeating all he had said before, but she begged him afresh to tell her truly where his heart was, and at last he told her.

'Far, far from here,' said he, 'in a lonely spot, stands a great church, as old as old can be. Its

doors are of iron, and round it runs a deep moat, spanned by no bridge. Within that church is a bird which flies up and down; it never eats, and never drinks, and never dies. No one can catch it, and while that bird lives so shall I, for in it is my heart.'

It made the little bride quite sad to think she could do nothing to show her love for the old man's heart. She used to think about it as she sat all alone during the long days, for her husband was almost always out.

One day a young traveller came past the house, and seeing such a pretty girl he wished her 'Good day.'

She returned his greeting, and as he drew near she asked him whence he came and where he was going.

'Alas!' sighed the youth, 'I am very sorrowful. I had six brothers who went away to find brides for themselves and one for me; but they have never come home, so now I am going to look for them.'

'Oh, good friend,' said the girl, 'you need go no farther. Come, sit down, eat and drink, and afterwards I'll tell you all about it.'

She gave him food, and when he had finished his meal she told him how his brothers had come to the town where she lived with her sisters, how they had each chosen a bride, and, taking herself with them, had started for home. She wept as she told how the others were turned to stone, and how she was kept as the old man's bride. She left out nothing, even telling him the story of her husband's heart.

When the young man heard this he said: 'I shall go in search of the bird. It may be that God will help me to find and catch it.'

'Yes, *do* go,' she said; 'it will be a good deed, for then you can set your brothers and my sisters free.' Then she hid the young man, for it was now late, and her husband would soon be home.

Next morning, when the old man had gone out, she prepared a supply of provisions for her guest, and sent him off on his travels, wishing him good luck and success.

He walked on and on till he thought it must be time for breakfast; so he opened his knapsack, and was delighted to find such a store of good things. 'What a feast!' he exclaimed; 'will anyone come and share it?'

'Moo-oo,' sounded close behind him, and looking round he saw a great red ox, which said, 'I have much pleasure in accepting your kind invitation.'

'I'm delighted to see you. Pray help yourself. All I have is at your service,' said the hospitable youth. And the ox lay down comfortably, licking his lips, and made a hearty meal.

'Many thanks to you,' said the animal as it rose up. 'When you are in danger or necessity call me, even if only by a thought'; and it disappeared among the bushes.

The young man packed up all the food that was left, and wandered on till the shortening shadows and his own hunger warned him that it was midday. He laid the cloth on the ground and spread out his provisions, saying at the same time: 'Dinner is ready, and anyone who wishes to share it is welcome.'

Then there was a great rustling in the undergrowth, and out ran a wild boar, grunting: 'Umph, umph, umph; someone said dinner was ready. Was it you? and did you mean me to come?

'By all means. Help yourself to what I have,'

said the young traveller. And the two enjoyed their meal together.

Afterwards the boar got up, saying, 'Thank you; when in need you be you must quickly call for me,' and he rolled off.

For a long time the youth walked on. By evening he was miles away. He felt hungry again, and, having still some provisions left, thought he had better make ready his supper. When it was all spread out he cried as before, 'Anyone who cares to share my meal is welcome.'

He heard a sound overhead like the flapping of wings, and a shadow was cast upon the ground. Then a huge griffin appeared, saying: 'I heard someone giving an invitation to eat; is there anything for me?'

'Why not?' said the youth. 'Come down and take all you want. There won't be much left after this.'

So the griffin alighted and ate his fill, saying, as he flew away, 'Call me if you need me.'

'What a hurry he was in!' the youth said to himself. 'He might have been able to direct me to the church, for I shall never find it alone.'

He gathered up his things, and started to walk a little farther before resting. He had not gone far when all of a sudden he saw the church!

He soon came to it, or rather to the wide and deep moat which surrounded it without a single bridge by which to cross.

It was too late to attempt anything now; and, besides, the poor youth was very tired, so he lay down on the ground and fell fast asleep.

Next morning, when he awoke, he began to wish himself over the moat; and the thought occurred to him that if only the red ox were there, and thirsty enough to drink up all the water in the moat, he might walk across it dry-shod.

Scarcely had the thought crossed his brain before the ox appeared and began to drink up the water.

The grateful youth hastened across as soon as the moat was dry, but found it impossible to penetrate the thick walls and strong iron doors of the church.

'I believe that big boar would be of more use here than I am,' he thought, and lo! at the wish the wild boar came and began to push hard

The Griffin is made welcome

against the wall. He managed to loosen one stone with his tusks, and, having made a beginning, stone after stone was poked out till he had made quite a large hole, big enough to let a man go through.

The young man quickly entered the church, and saw a bird flying about, but he could not catch it.

'Oh!' he exclaimed, 'if only the griffin were here, he would soon catch it.'

At these words the griffin appeared, and, seizing the bird, gave it to the youth, who carried it off carefully, while the griffin flew away.

The young man hurried home as fast as possible, and reached the cottage before evening. He told his story to the little bride, who, after giving him some food and drink, hid him with his bird beneath the bed.

Presently the old man came home, and complained of feeling ill. Nothing, he said, would go well with him any more: his 'heart bird' was caught.

The youth under the bed heard this, and thought, 'This old fellow has done me no particular harm, but then he has bewitched my

brothers and their brides, and has kept *my* bride for himself, and that is certainly bad enough.'

So he pinched the bird, and the old man cried, 'Ah! I feel death gripping me! Child, I am dying!

With these words he fell fainting from his chair, and as the youth, before he knew what he was doing, had squeezed the bird to death, the old man died also.

Out crept the young man from under the bed, and the girl took the magic wand (which she found where the old man had told her), and, touching the twelve grey stones, transformed them at once into the six brothers and their brides.

Then there was great joy, and kissing and embracing. And there lay the old man, quite dead, and no magic wand could restore him to life, even had they wished it.

After that they all went away and were married, and lived many years happily together.

THE TWO BROTHERS

Long ago there lived two brothers, both of them very handsome, and both so very poor that they seldom had anything to eat but the fish which they caught. One day they had been out in their boat since sunrise without a single bite, and were just thinking of putting up their lines and going home to bed when they felt a little feeble tug, and, drawing in hastily, they found a tiny fish at the end of the hook.

'What a wretched little creature!' cried one brother. 'However, it is better than nothing, and I will bake him with bread crumbs and have him for supper.'

'Oh, do not kill me yet!' begged the fish; 'I will bring you good luck—indeed I will!'

'You silly thing!' said the young man; 'I've caught you, and I shall eat you.'

But his brother was sorry for the fish, and put in a word for him.

'Let the poor little fellow live. He would hardly make one bite, and, after all, how do we know we are not throwing away our luck? Put him back into the sea. It will be much better.'

'If you will let me live,' said the fish, 'you will find on the sands to-morrow morning two beautiful horses splendidly saddled and bridled, and on them you can go through the world as knights seeking adventures.'

'Oh, dear, what nonsense!' exclaimed the elder; 'and, besides, what proof have we that you are speaking the truth?'

But again the younger brother interposed: 'Oh, do let him live! You know if he is lying to us we can always catch him again. It is quite worth while trying.'

At last the young man gave in, and threw the fish back into the sea; and both brothers went supperless to bed, and wondered what fortune the next day would bring.

At the first streaks of dawn they were both up, and in a very few minutes were running down to the shore. And there, just as the fish had said, stood two magnificent horses, saddled and bridled, and on their backs lay suits of

armour and under-dresses, two swords, and two purses of gold.

'There!' said the younger brother. 'Are you not thankful you did not eat that fish? He has brought us good luck, and there is no knowing how great we may become! Now, we will each seek our own adventures. If you will take one road I will go the other.'

'Very well,' replied the elder; 'but how shall we let each other know if we are both living?'

'Do you see this fig tree?' said the younger. 'Well, whenever we want news of each other we have only to come here and make a slit with our swords in the back. If milk flows, it is a sign that we are well and prosperous; but if, instead of milk, there is blood, then we are either dead or in great danger.'

Then the two brothers put on their armour, buckled their swords, and pocketed their purses; and, after taking a tender farewell of each other, they mounted their horses and went their various ways.

The elder brother rode straight on till he reached the borders of a strange kingdom. He crossed the frontier. and soon found himself on

the banks of a river; and before him, in the middle of the stream, a beautiful girl sat chained to a rock and weeping bitterly. For in this river dwelt a serpent with seven heads, who threatened to lay waste the whole land by breathing fire and flame from his nostrils unless the king sent him every morning a man for his breakfast. This had gone on so long that now there were no men left, and he had been obliged to send his own daughter instead, and the poor girl was waiting till the monster got hungry and felt inclined to eat her.

When the young man saw the maiden weeping bitterly he said to her, 'What is the matter, my poor girl?'

'Oh!' she answered, 'I am chained here till a horrible serpent with seven heads comes to eat me. Oh, sir, do not linger here, or he will eat you too.'

'I shall stay,' replied the young man, 'for I mean to set you free.'

'That is impossible. You do not know what a fearful monster the serpent is; you can do nothing against him.'

'That is my affair. beautiful captive,' answered

he; 'only tell me, which way will the serpent come?'

'Well, if you are resolved to free me, listen to my advice. Stand a little on one side, and then, when the serpent rises to the surface, I will say to him, "O serpent, to-day you can eat two people. But you had better begin first with the young man, for I am chained and cannot run away." When he hears this, most likely he will attack you.'

So the young man stood carefully on one side, and by-and-by he heard a great rushing in the water; and a horrible monster came up to the surface and looked out for the rock where the king's daughter was chained, for it was getting late and he was hungry.

But she cried out, 'O serpent, to-day you can eat two people. And you had better begin with the young man, for I am chained and cannot run away.'

Then the serpent made a rush at the youth with wide-open jaws to swallow him at one gulp, but the young man leaped aside and drew his sword, and fought till he had cut off all the seven heads. And when the great serpent lay dead

at his feet he loosed the bonds of the king's daughter, and she flung herself into his arms and said, 'You have saved me from that monster, and now you shall be my husband, for my father has made a proclamation that whoever could slay the serpent should have his daughter to wife.'

But he answered, 'I cannot become your husband yet, for I have still far to travel. But wait for me seven years and seven months. Then, if I do not return, you are free to marry whom you will. And in case you should have forgotten, I will take these seven tongues with me, so that when I bring them forth you may know that I am really he who slew the serpent.'

So saying he cut out the seven tongues, and the princess gave him a thick cloth to wrap them in; and he mounted his horse and rode away.

Not long after he had gone there arrived at the river a slave who had been sent by the king to learn the fate of his beloved daughter. And when the slave saw the princess standing free and safe before him, with the body of the monster lying at her feet, a wicked plan came into his head, and he said, 'Unless you promise

THE·FIGHT·WITH·THE·SEVEN-HEADED·SERPENT·

to tell your father it was I who slew the serpent, I will kill you and bury you in this place, and no one will ever know what befell.'

What could the poor girl do? This time there was no knight to come to her aid. So she promised to do as the slave wished, and he took up the seven heads and brought the princess to her father.

Oh, how enchanted the king was to see her again, and the whole town shared his joy!

And the slave was called upon to tell how he had slain the monster, and when he had ended the king declared that he should have the princess to wife.

But she flung herself at her father's feet, and prayed him to delay. 'You have passed your royal word, and cannot go back from it. Yet grant me this grace, and let seven years and seven months go by before you wed me. When they are over, then I will marry the slave.' And the king listened to her, and seven years and seven months she looked for her bridegroom, and wept for him night and day.

All this time the young man was riding through the world, and when the seven years

and seven months were over he came back to the town where the princess lived—only a few days before the wedding. And he stood before the king, and said to him: 'Give me your daughter, O king, for I slew the seven-headed serpent. And as a sign that my words are true, look on these seven tongues, which I cut from his seven heads, and on this embroidered cloth, which was given me by your daughter.'

Then the princess lifted up her voice, and said, 'Yes, dear father, he has spoken the truth, and it is he who is my real bridegroom. Yet pardon the slave, for he was sorely tempted.'

But the king answered, 'Such treachery can no man pardon. Quick, away with him, and off with his head!'

So the false slave was put to death, that none might follow in his footsteps, and the wedding feast was held, and the hearts of all rejoiced that the true bridegroom had come at last.

These two lived happy and contentedly for a long while, when one evening, as the young man was looking from the window, he saw on a mountain that lay out beyond the town a great bright light.

'What can it be?' he said to his wife.

'Ah! do not look at it,' she answered, 'for it comes from the house of a wicked witch whom no man can manage to kill.' But the princess had better have kept silence, for her words made her husband's heart burn within him, and he longed to try his strength against the witch's cunning. And all day long the feeling grew stronger, till the next morning he mounted his horse, and, in spite of his wife's tears, he rode oft to the mountain. The distance was greater than he thought, and it was dark before he reached the foot of the mountain; indeed, he could not have found the road at all had it not been for the bright light, which shone like the moon on his path. At length he came to the door of a fine castle, which had a blaze streaming from every window. He mounted a flight of steps and entered a hall where a hideous old woman was sitting on a golden chair.

She scowled at the young man and said, 'With a single one of the hairs of my head I can turn you into stone.'

'Oh, what nonsense!' cried he. 'Be quiet, old woman. What could you do with one hair?

But the witch pulled out a hair and laid it on his shoulder, and his limbs grew cold and heavy, and he could not stir.

Now at this very moment the younger brother

The Witch casts a spell on the Elder Brother.

was thinking of him, and wondering how he had got on during all the years since they had parted. 'I will go to the fig tree,' he said to himself, 'to see whether he is alive or dead.' So he rode through the forest till he came to where the fig

tree stood, and cut a slit in the bark, and waited. In a moment a little gurgling noise was heard, and out came a stream of blood, running fast. 'Ah, woe is me!' he cried bitterly. 'My brother is dead or dying! Shall I ever reach him in time to save his life?' Then, leaping on his horse, he shouted, 'Now, my steed, fly like the wind!' and they rode right through the world, till one day they came to the town where the young man and his wife lived. Here the princess had been sitting every day since the morning that her husband had left her, weeping bitter tears, and listening for his footsteps. And when she saw his brother ride under the balcony she mistook him for her own husband, for they were so alike that no man might tell the difference, and her heart bounded, and, leaning down, she called to him, 'At last! at last! How long have I waited for thee!' When the younger brother heard these words he said to himself, 'So it was here that my brother lived, and this beautiful woman is my sister-in-law,' but he kept silence, and let her believe he was indeed her husband. Full of joy, the princess led him to the old king, who welcomed him as his own son, and ordered a feast to be made for him. And the princess

was beside herself with gladness, but when she would have put her arms round him and kissed him he held up his hand to stop her, saying, 'Touch me not,' at which she marvelled greatly.

In this manner several days went by. And one evening, as the young man leaned from the balcony, he saw a bright light shining on the mountain.

'What can that be?' he said to the princess.

'Oh, come away,' she cried; 'has not that light already proved your bane? Do you wish to fight a second time with that old witch?'

He marked her words, though she knew it not, and they taught him where his brother was, and what had befallen him. So before sunrise he stole out early, saddled his horse, and rode off to the mountain. But the way was further than he thought, and on the road he met a little old man who asked him whither he was going.

Then the young man told him his story, and added, 'Somehow or other I must free my brother, who has fallen into the power of an old witch.'

'I will tell you what you must do,' said the old man. 'The witch's power lies in her hair; so when you see her spring on her and seize her

by the hair, and then she cannot harm you. Be very careful never to let her hair go, bid her lead you to your brother, and force her to bring him back to life. For she has an ointment that will heal all wounds, and even wake the dead. And when your brother stands safe and well before you, then cut off her head, for she is a wicked woman.'

The young man was grateful for these words, and promised to obey them. Then he rode on, and soon reached the castle. He walked boldly up the steps and entered the hall, where the hideous old witch came to meet him. She grinned horribly at him, and cried out, 'With one hair of my head I can change you into stone.'

'Can you, indeed?' said the young man, seizing her by the hair. 'You old wretch! tell me what you have done with my brother, or I will cut your head off this very instant.' Now the witch's strength was all gone from her, and she had to obey.

'I will take you to your brother,' she said, hoping to get the better of him by cunning, 'but leave me alone. You hold me so tight that I cannot walk.'

'You must manage somehow,' he answered, and held her tighter than ever. She led him into a large hall filled with stone statues, which once had been men, and, pointing out one, she said, 'There is your brother.'

The young man looked at them all and shook his head. 'My brother is not here. Take me to him, or it will be the worse for you.' But she tried to put him off with other statues, though it was no good, and it was not until they had reached the last hall of all that he saw his brother lying on the ground.

'*That* is my brother,' said he. 'Now give me the ointment that will restore him to life.'

Very unwillingly the old witch opened a cupboard close by filled with bottles and jars, and took down one and held it out to the young man. But he was on the watch for trickery, and examined it carefully, and saw it had no power to heal. This happened many times, till at length she found it was no use, and gave him the one he wanted. And when he had it safe he made her stoop down and smear it over his brother's face, taking care all the while never to loose her hair, and when the dead man opened his eyes the youth drew his sword and cut off

her head with a single blow. Then the elder brother got up and stretched himself, and said, 'Oh, how long I have slept! And where am I?'

'The old witch had enchanted you, but now she is dead and you are free. We will wake up the other knights that she laid under her spells, and then we will go.'

This they did, and after sharing amongst them the jewels and gold they found in the castle, each man went his way. The two brothers remained together, the elder tightly grasping the ointment which had brought him back to life.

They had much to tell each other as they rode along, and at last the younger man exclaimed, 'O fool, to leave such a beautiful wife to go and fight a witch! She took me for her husband, and I did not say her nay.'

When the elder brother heard this a great rage filled his heart, and, without saying one word, he drew his sword and slew his brother, and his body rolled in the dust. Then he rode on till he reached his home, where his wife was still sitting, weeping bitterly. When she saw him she sprang up with a cry, and threw herself into his arms. 'Oh, how long have I

waited for thee! Never, never must you leave me any more!'

When the old king heard the news he welcomed him as a son, and made ready a feast, and all the court sat down. And in the evening, when the young man was alone with his wife, she said to him, 'Why would you not let me touch you when you came back, but always thrust me away when I tried to put my arms round you or kiss you?'

Then the young man understood how true his brother had been to him, and he sat down and wept and wrung his hands because of the wicked murder that he had done. Suddenly he sprang to his feet, for he remembered the ointment which lay hidden in his garments, and he rushed to the place where his brother still lay. He fell on his knees beside the body, and, taking out the salve, he rubbed it over the neck where the wound was gaping wide, and the skin healed and the sinews grew strong, and the dead man sat up and looked round him. And the two brothers embraced each other, and the elder asked forgiveness for his wicked blow; and they went back to the palace together, and were never parted any more.

MASTER AND PUPIL

THERE was once a man who had a son who was very clever at reading, and took great delight in it. He went out into the world to seek service somewhere, and as he was walking between some mounds he met a man, who asked him where he was going.

'I am going about seeking for service,' said the boy.

'Will you serve me?' asked the man.

'Oh, yes; just as readily you as anyone else,' said the boy.

'But can you read?' asked the man.

'As well as the priest,' said the boy.

'Then I can't have you,' said the man. 'In fact, I was just wanting a boy who couldn't read. His only work would be to dust my old books.'

The man then went on his way, and left the boy looking after him.

'It was a pity I didn't get that place,' thought he. 'That was just the very thing for me.'

Making up his mind to get the situation if possible, he hid himself behind one of the mounds, and turned his jacket outside in, so that

the man would not know him again so easily. Then he ran behind the mounds, and met the man at the other end of them.

'Where are you going, my little boy?' said the man, who did not notice that it was the same one he had met before.

'I am going about seeking for service,' said the boy.

'Will you serve me?' asked the man.

'Oh, yes; just as readily you as anyone else,' said the boy.

'But can you read?' said the man.

'No, I don't know a single letter,' said the boy.

The man then took him into his service, and all the work he had to do was to dust his master's books. But as he did this he had plenty of time to read them as well, and he read away at them until at last he was just as wise as his master—who was a great wizard—and could perform all kinds of magic. Among other feats, he could change himself into the shape of any animal, or any other thing that he pleased.

When he had learned all this he did not think it worth while staying there any longer, so he ran away home to his parents again. Soon after this there was a market in the next village, and

the boy told his mother that he had learned how to change himself into the shape of any animal he chose.

'Now,' said he, 'I shall change myself to a horse, and father can take me to market and sell me. I shall come home again all right.'

His mother was frightened at the idea, but the boy told her that she need not be alarmed; all would be well. So he changed himself to a horse, such a fine horse, too, that his father got a high price for it at the market; but after the bargain was made, and the money paid, the boy changed again to his own shape, when no one was looking, and went home.

The story spread all over the country about the fine horse that had been sold and then had disappeared, and at last the news came to the ears of the wizard.

'Aha!' said he, 'this is that boy of mine, who befooled me and ran away; but I shall have him yet.'

The next time that there was a market the boy again changed himself to a horse, and was taken thither by his father. The horse soon found a purchaser, and while the two were inside drinking the luck-penny the wizard came along and saw the horse. He knew at once that it was

not an ordinary one, so he also went inside, and offered the purchaser far more than he had paid for it, so the latter sold it to him.

The first thing the wizard now did was to lead the horse away to a smith to get a red-hot nail driven into its mouth, because after that it could not change its shape again. When the horse saw this it changed itself to a dove, and flew up into the air. The wizard at once changed himself into a hawk, and flew up after it. The dove now turned into a gold ring, and fell into a girl's lap. The hawk now turned into a man, and offered the girl a great sum of money for the gold ring, but she would not part with it, seeing that it had fallen down to her, as it were, from heaven. However, the wizard kept on offering her more and more for it, until at last the gold ring grew frightened, and changed itself into a grain of barley, which fell on the ground. The man then turned into a hen, and began to search for the grain of barley, but this again changed itself to a pole-cat, and took off the hen's head with a single snap.

The wizard was now dead, the pole-cat put on human shape, and the youth afterwards married the girl, and from that time forward let all his magic arts alone.

The Mayflower Press, Plymouth, England. William Brendon & Son, Ltd.