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Tales from The Secret Kingdom

By
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The Wonderful Journey.

ONCE upon a time there was an old woman; she was so old and bent that the little children thought she must be a hundred years old at least, and all their fathers and mothers called her "Granny." She had a kind heart and had seen much trouble, for her husband and her son had both gone to the wars and had never come back, so she lived all alone in a little cottage just outside the village.

One dark winter's evening there came a rap at the door, and opening it she found a little beggar lad with a basket of tiny things all carved out of wood.

"Any little chairs and tables for your grandchildren?" said the beggar lad. "Any little boxes to keep your tinder dry?"

"Alas!" said Granny, "I have no grandchildren. Be off with you, and do not mock an old woman!"

The little beggar lad said nothing and turned meekly away, but when he was

gone the old woman's heart smote her.

"I wish I had not been so sharp with him," she said. "I cannot rest for thinking of him; I have a great mind to call him back."

But, looking out, she could see him nowhere; nevertheless, so sharply did she reproach herself, she wrapped her old cloak round her and taking the lantern and two pennies from her stocking went out into the bitter night to find him if she might. She searched all through the village, and at last she found him sitting meekly on a doorstep eating a dry crust.

"Have you sold anything?" she asked.

"Nothing," said the beggar lad.

"Ah well!" said Granny, "I have changed my mind. I will have a little table for myself and two little chairs for my husband and my son who went to the wars and never came back."

"They will come back," said the beggar lad.

"Not now," said Granny. "Here are two pennies and here is a piece of bread—the best I have. What will you do to-night?"

"I shall do well enough," said the beggar lad, and then he thanked her and turned away so quickly that he was lost to sight in the darkness before she could call him back. So she went home carrying her lantern in one hand and the little chairs and table in the other, and as soon as she reached her cottage door and had let herself in she put down her purchases and, blowing out the lantern, went supperless to bed, for she had given her supper to the beggar lad.

About the middle of the night she was suddenly awakened by a blast of cold air blowing into the cottage, and sitting up in bed she found the door wide open and the room full of moonlight. As she sat trembling and half afraid to move she was astonished to see a splendid little gentleman about two inches high, dressed in a court suit of cloth of gold, lead in a little lady who was also about two inches high and wore a dress which sparkled all over like a thousand diamonds.

"I think we shall find entertainment here," said the little gentleman, walking towards the tiny table which Granny had bought and placing a chair on either side of it; then he bowed, the little lady curtsied, the door shut of its own accord, and they both sat down. Immediately there was a clatter as of little dishes and a tinkle as of tiny glasses and a most delicious smell of all kinds of good things to eat. Hardly daring to breathe Granny leaned forward and saw that there were two tiny candles on the table and the most delicate feast she had ever beheld; there was a rich soup in a silver tureen, and a roast

fowl stuffed with all manner of spices; and puddings stuck all over with sugar-plums, and all sorts of beautiful pastries, and in the middle a great dish of ripe peaches. As she saw all these good things Granny remembered how hungry she was and gave a great sigh.

"Our hostess is awake," said the little lady. "It would be only polite to ask her to join us."

"I am entirely of your opinion," said the little gentleman; then they both rose, and looking towards the bed, the lady made a profound curtsy and the little gentleman bowed, and they both said:

"Pray give us the pleasure of your company."

The poor old woman was half dead with fright; nevertheless, before she knew what was happening she found herself stepping from her bed and walking to the table, and either they had grown up or she had grown down, for she found herself exactly the same height as the little lady and gentleman who appeared to be about two inches high.

"We are delighted to meet you," said the little lady.

"Pray sit here," said the little gentleman, giving her his chair and fetching himself a reel of cotton, which seemed just the right height for him; and how it happened she never knew, but Granny found herself seated in her best gown, while the little gentleman carved her the roast fowl and the little lady helped her to all manner of dainties.

"We are greatly grieved to hear about your husband and your son," said the little lady. "But, believe me, things are not so bad as you imagine."

"By no means," said the little gentle-

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man, helping her to another slice of the fowl as he spoke. "Make a good supper, for you have a long journey before you."

"Oh, sir!" cried the old woman. "Where am I going? I am very, very old to take a journey."

"To find your husband and your son, of course," said the little lady. "I am sure you do not wish them to remain lost for ever, and if they cannot come to you (and it is quite plain they cannot, or they would have been here before now) you must go to them."

"This is wonderful," said Granny. "How did you know about them?"

"We know all about it," said the little gentleman. "Finish your supper and you shall see what you shall see."

So the old woman made haste to finish her supper, and when she had done the little lady drew from her finger a ring set with a single stone which she told Granny to put on.

"Now," said the little lady, "look steadily at the diamond in the ring and tell me what you see."

The stone in the ring seemed to flash like liquid fire, and Granny felt quite dazzled as she looked at it, but suddenly she cried out: "I can see a monstrous castle in a foreign land; the sun is setting behind it, and the gates are all dark."

"Your husband is a captive there," said the little lady. "You must release him. Look again."

"I see the gates of the castle open and a band of men come wearily forth; they enter some miserable hovels outside the walls and the darkness hides them all."

"Your son is one of them," said the little gentleman. "They are all serfs, and you must deliver them."

Then he rose and bowed to her, and the little lady rose and curtsied deeply; together they advanced to the door which swung open at their approach, and stepping out into the moonlight the door shut again and hid them from sight.

In the morning Granny woke in her bed and thought she must have been dreaming until she felt something pressing her finger like a ring, and she remembered she had not given back her jewel to the little lady who was two inches high. But the strange thing was that nothing whatever was to be seen upon her finger, and were it not that she could still feel it there, and that the tiny chairs were standing by the table just as they were left after the feast, Granny would have been sure it was all a dream.

As it was she made haste to sweep her cottage and put all in order; then tying the tiny chairs and table with her few possessions into a little bundle, she drew her old cloak around her and stepped out into the world to find her husband and her son.

It was Christmas morning, the snow lay upon the ground and the bells were ringing to call the good folk to church, but the old woman turned her face westward towards the country where the sun sets, and as she trudged she sang the carol she taught her son to sing when he was a little boy:

"Brown robin on the bough,
What carol singest thou
This bitter wintry morn?
'In russet tho' I'm dress'd,
Ruddy shall be my vest
For Him in manger born."

“ Sing robin, rose and thorn!
 Child Jesus
 On this day
 Of Mary mild is born.”

Her old voice was weak and tired, but she sang bravely as she trudged on, and the trees of the forest bent down and caressed her with their cold fingers as though they liked to hear her, so she kept a good heart and went on—

“ A rose awoke from sleep,
 On wintry fields to peep,
 And opened petals pale.
 ‘Bloomed in my dreams this night
 A mystic Rose and bright.
 My King I wake to hail.’

“ Sing robin, rose and thorn!
 Child Jesus
 On this day
 Of Mary mild is born.”

The day wore on to evening, the sun went down and the stars came out, but still she went on; she stumbled over the knotted roots of trees and the brambles caught her dress.

“ Accursèd bramble thorn—”
 sang the old woman—

“ Of disobedience born,
 What guerdon waits for thee?
 ‘Sprung am I of man’s sin,
 Yet He your peace shall win
 Whose royal crown I’ll be.’

“ Sing robin, rose and thorn!
 Child Jesus
 On this day
 Of Mary mild is born.”

By next day she had travelled many,

many miles, and always she kept her face turned towards the country where the sun sets, and as she went she sang:

“ Sing robin, rose and thorn!
 Child Jesus
 On this day
 Of Mary mild is born.”

But on the fourth night she was seized by a band of rough men and made a prisoner. “Here’s an old gammer!” they cried. “To go gadding about the country singing songs! Let us see what is in that bundle of hers!”

But when they found nothing but a dry crust and a few odds and ends (for they thought nothing of the tiny chairs and table) their rage knew no bounds, for they were half starved themselves and very wild and fierce. Poor Granny fell on her knees and begged them to spare her life. “Spare your life?” said they. “Yes, we’ll spare it if you can give us a good supper.” And then they jeered and said, “Where’s our supper? Make haste and cook it.”

Poor Granny wrung her hands and gave herself up for lost; then she suddenly resolved to make one more effort and begged them to give her time. “We will give you one hour to say your prayers, and no more,” said they. Then they tethered her by a long rope to a tree so that she could not escape, and laid themselves down and went to sleep, for they did not believe she could do anything.

As soon as they were all asleep, the old woman took her little table and set the two chairs in position, and said: “Little lady and gentleman, your feast is ready for you; and spare me what is left, for I have great need of it.”

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Immediately there was a clatter of little plates and a tinkling of little glasses, and a most delicious smell of all kinds of good things to eat. From under a brake of fern appeared the little gentleman leading the little lady who was two inches high, and they advanced to the tiny table, which was immediately covered with the most delicate dishes.

"We are delighted to meet you again," said the little lady, curtsying profoundly.

"Pray join us," said the little gentleman, offering her the other chair and fetching himself a fir-cone, which seemed just the right height.

"Make a good supper," said the little lady, helping her to a beautiful little pie. "And do not be frightened about your friends there; we know all about it, and there will be plenty for them."

"They are not really such bad fellows," said the little gentleman. "And they may be very useful to you. They are sailors who were carried away captive and are escaping to the coast; they have neither food nor money, which makes them very fierce."

"We will drink your health," said the little lady. "Then you can give them their supper; and pray call upon us whenever you need us."

So they drank her health, and the little lady curtsyed and the little gentleman made a profound bow, and together they departed by way of the brake of fern.

When they were gone the old woman went back to the sleeping men and shook their leader by the shoulder.

"Make haste and take this rope from my waist so that I can move about," she said, "and I will give you your supper."

The man was so astonished that his

mouth fell wide open, and he stared at her without moving.

"Make haste," said the old woman, "and do as I bid you. Make all your companions sit in a ring, and do not let one move from his place or there will be no supper for any of you."

So the man did as she bade him, and as soon as all were seated Granny stepped behind the brake of fern and came back with her apron full of bread; then she gave them each a steaming bowl of soup, and afterwards cut up an enormous game pie which appeared on the little table by some means or other and seemed as if it would never come to an end. When all were supplied the old woman quietly put the little table and chairs in her pocket (for she was not minded that they should know too much about it), and sat down to watch them eat.

"This is something like a supper," said the men. "Wherever did it all come from?"

"The good fairies gave it you," said Granny. "Be thankful and ask no questions." And she would say no more.

After that they treated her with great respect, and next morning she told them her story.

"We have heard of the land you speak of," said the men. "It lies across the Western Ocean, a bleak and desolate shore where sailors seldom go. We have heard that the whole country is under a curse, and is ruled by a dread tyrant until someone shall come who can break the spell. If you are determined to go there, come with us to the coast, and we will do our best to find you a ship sailing thither."

So they journeyed on together, the old woman singing as they went. Every evening she gave them a famous supper from

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the little table, and every evening the little lady and gentleman drank her health and wished her good speed. One day they met a band of robbers who, as soon as they saw the old woman, cried: "Give us your old gammer or we will take her by force. We need someone to cook and mend for us."

"What!" said the sailormen. "Give you our old grandmother who feeds us on soup and white bread and the finest game pie, and moreover sings as sweetly as a nightingale? Never!" And they fell upon the robbers and gave them as sound a drubbing as could be wished, and so continued on their way to the coast.

But when at length they reached the sea and the city which is there, they were dismayed. All was silent as the grave; the shops were shut and the streets deserted, no children played in the doorways, and no women sang at the looms. They peeped into a church, and behold! it was hung with black, and the choristers sat silent in their stalls. In the harbour lay a few ships, but their sails were furled, and no sailor sang in the shrouds; the quay was deserted and neither merchant nor man was to be seen. A woman in a black mantle carrying an apron full of bread suddenly appeared, but when they would have spoken to her she hastily tapped at a door and, being admitted, shut the door in their faces, but without a sound.

"This is a place of ill omen," said the men, hardly daring to speak above a whisper. "The very inns are closed. Let us be gone."

"Courage!" said the old woman. "I am convinced that all will yet be well, and I shall reach my journey's end." And she lifted up her old voice and sang:

"Sing robin, rose and thorn!
Child Jesus
On this day
Of Mary mild is born."

Immediately the door was opened and the same woman appeared. "Silence," she cried in a whisper. "Do you wish to bring trouble upon us all?"

"Nay," said Granny. "But to cheer our hearts. What ails this city?"

The woman looked up and down the street. "It is the command of the Princess," she said, and even as she spoke she cried, "Quick, come inside, all of you; the Princess is coming."

They hastily entered the house, and the woman shut the door, but Granny went to the window and peeped through the shutter. She saw a long and strange procession come down the street; first came fifty men-at-arms, all garbed in black, then twelve grave and elderly councillors with silver hair and flowing beards, and after them a band of ladies-in-waiting also garbed in black. Last of all, under a canopy of black velvet, supported by sticks of ebony borne by four blackmoors, came the princess herself. She was quite young, and had once been very beautiful, but now she was thin and wasted, and her cheeks were white as snow. Her long black hair hung loose over her shoulders, and six pages held up her heavy black train; she walked feebly, as though she could scarcely put one foot before the other, and passed slowly from sight.

"Poor lady!" said Granny. "My heart aches for her. What ails her?"

"No one knows," said the woman of the city. "Great honours would be given any who should cure her. This was once a

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pleasant city, and she was the pride and darling of us all; now you see to what a pass things have come. A certain prince came here a-wooing, and to him she was betrothed; but ere their nuptials might be celebrated the prince sailed away to do some knightly deed which should win him imperishable glory, promising to return in a year and a day. Ere a year was passed, however, on a certain day the princess cried aloud that a great weight had fallen on her heart, and since then she has never smiled nor spoken, nor can she be induced by any art to eat sufficient to sustain a sparrow. By the advice of her councillors she goes daily to the cathedral to pray for her recovery, and by an edict the city has been hushed as you see. The very thieves and robbers have deserted the place; the last went a seven-night ago. 'Care killed the cat,' said they. 'If we stay we shall meet the same fate,' so off they went."

"We met them," said the sailormen, "and gave them as sound a drubbing as could be wished."

"As for the prince," said the woman, "from that day to this he has never been seen."

As they were speaking the procession came slowly back on its way to the palace; the princess walked even more slowly than she went, and her white hands were pressed against her heart where the weight lay. As she passed the old woman went to the door and opened it.

"Where are you going?" cried the sailors.

"To the palace," said Granny. "I will come back to you by supper time."

"We will come with you," said they, and so they followed silently until the

palace gates were reached, when the guard would have stopped them.

"Let them enter, good sirs!" cried Granny. "I have great hopes that I may do something for your princess." And when they heard that they bade her enter, and she was admitted to the chamber where the princess lay on her couch surrounded by her ministers and her ladies in their black gowns.

"Now," said the oldest and gravest of the councillors, "what can you do?"

"I can at least make the poor lady eat," said the old woman. "Give me leave to sleep in her chamber to-night, and she shall have such a meal as she never saw before. I may be able to do more, but I do not know."

"How are we to believe you can do this?" said the councillor.

"Indeed she can," said one of the sailormen who had followed her in and refused to be turned out. "She is the most wonderful old grandmother that ever lived; she can fetch you a banquet out of nowhere, and is hand-in-glove with all the good fairies."

So it was arranged that she should return to the palace at evening and sleep in the princess's chamber, and the rest of the day she spent going up and down the city singing wherever she went; and because she was going to cure the princess nobody dared stop her, so she quite cheered them all up; and presently some children came out and joined in, and in the evening they all went to the palace together singing—

"Sing robin, rose and thorn!

Child Jesus

On this day

Of Mary mild is born."

It was quite cheerful, and nobody had felt so happy for a long time.

The princess was lying in her chamber on a bed of silver with a canopy of black velvet over her; a candle in a tall silver candlestick stood on either side of her, and at her feet was a small couch for Granny. The old woman stretched herself on it until the ladies-in-waiting had withdrawn, then she arose, and taking the tiny table and chairs from her pocket she set them on the floor and said, "Little lady and gentleman, will it please you to let me dine with you to-night?"

Immediately the window flew open and the little gentleman appeared leading the little lady who was two inches high. They were more magnificently dressed than ever, and as they advanced the little gentleman bowed profoundly.

"It appears we are to have company to-night," said the little lady as she curtsied.

"I hope you will not mind?" said Granny. "Here is a poor lady in great distress; I felt sure you would help her."

"We are delighted to do anything for you that we can," said the little gentleman. "Nothing could give us greater pleasure."

All this time the princess could hardly believe her ears, and when they turned toward the silver couch and the little lady advanced to request her company at the feast they found her actually sitting up with astonishment and putting on her silver slippers. She stepped out of bed in her black satin night-gown, and as soon as Granny had thrown a fur robe round her the little lady took her by the right hand and led her to the table, while the little gentleman bowed profoundly. Immediately the table was covered with the

most magnificent feast that had ever been spread; the plates and dishes were all of solid gold and the goblets sparkled with jewels. The princess and Granny sat on the two little chairs, and the little gentleman fetched two reels of silk from the princess's work-box, which were just the right height for the little lady and himself.

"In the morning I shall wake up and find it is all a dream," said the princess, and she pinched herself to see if she was really awake.

"We assure you that you are quite awake," said the little lady, as she helped her to soup out of a tureen that shone like a rainbow. "Make a good supper, for you are going on a long journey."

"How shall I do it?" said the princess. "I am so weak that I can scarcely walk to the cathedral and back."

"I will take care of you, my sweet lady," said the old woman. "I too am going a long journey to find my husband and son who went to the wars and never came back; perchance we can go part of the way together."

"Indeed you can," said the little gentleman, handing a goblet to the princess. "When you have drained this goblet to the last drop you will be strong and brave enough for anything."

So she pledged him, and as she drained the last drop the weight lifted from her heart, and she cried out to Granny, "I will go with you to the end of the world."

"Well spoken!" cried Granny. "My journey lies toward the land where the sun sets; where else must we go?"

"Stretch out your right hand," said the little lady, and as Granny held her hand out under the candle-light the ring which had been invisible so long began to flash

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and sparkle again on her finger. The princess gazed earnestly at the great jewel in the ring, and suddenly she cried: "I see a great castle in a barren land. A gloomy sea beats on the shore, and between it and the castle is a leafless forest."

"Thither must you go," said the little gentleman; then he arose and bowed profoundly to Granny and the princess, and escorted the little lady away through the window which flew open and shut after them again of its own accord.

In the morning the ladies-in-waiting were overjoyed to find the princess already dressed in her robes and looking quite well. "Hasten!" she said. "Summon my councillors and let all the shipwrights attend my pleasure. Fetch me the head cook and give orders to the men-at-arms to present themselves. Let a fleet be prepared and all folk hold themselves in readiness."

At that there was the utmost joy and confusion; the bells were rung and people ran hither and thither, heralds proclaimed the princess's will at every street corner with blasts of the trumpet, the bakers began baking bread as hard as they could go, the shipwrights began repainting the ships, the sailors sang as they coiled new ropes, the children laughed and the people cheered, the soldiers presented arms, and the tailors cut out and sewed new suits of clothes with incredible swiftness, and all were as happy as the day was long. Granny was treated with the greatest honour and set at the princess's right hand, and the band of sailormen who had brought her thither were handsomely rewarded and given a fine new ship for themselves.

In a month and a day all was ready,

and the princess and her train embarked with Granny and a great company of men-at-arms to find the prince and Granny's husband and son who had never come back. They sailed for many days, and at last an east wind began to blow which drove them helplessly before it for seven days and seven nights, and on the eighth morning the wind sank, and when day dawned they found themselves by a gloomy coast and knew that they had reached their journey's end. Inland could be seen the great castle, very stern and grey, and reaching down to the water's edge was the leafless forest of trees standing in straight lines like men-at-arms drawn up for battle, and motionless and grey as stone.

"Come," said Granny. "Let us land at once, for yonder lies our journey's end."

A boat was lowered, but no one moved, for a great dread had seized the stoutest hearts as they saw that shore.

"Will no one come with me?" said Granny.

"I will," said the princess.

"You shall not go!" cried her councillors, but they were too late, for she had leapt lightly into the boat, and she and Granny were already some distance away before they had finished wringing their hands. One of Granny's own sailormen rowed them, but they would not allow him to land.

"You are a brave man," said Granny. "But remain here until we return. Have no fear for us; the talisman has not ceased to shine upon my finger since we embarked." And she held up her hand upon which the ring flashed in the sunlight.

So she and the princess went hand in

hand through the forest, and as she went she sang—

“Sing robin, rose and thorn!”

and the grey trees bent down and caressed her with their cold fingers as though they loved her. And it happened that she put up her hand with the ring on it and clasped one of the branches as she passed, and lo and behold! it turned warm in her grasp, and looking up she found she held a noble prince by the hand. The princess screamed, but the gentleman fell at Granny's feet and thanked her for his deliverance, and begged her to release his followers who were also changed into trees. So Granny went up and down the lines of trees grasping their leafless boughs in her warm hand, and as she touched them, by the power of her talisman each turned into a captain or a man-at-arms or a prince, and soon there was a great army drawn up on the shore. Granny and the princess walked up and down until they were so weary that they could hardly stand, but by the end of the day every man in that enchanted forest had regained his proper shape, and at the head of them all stood the prince they had come to seek.

“This comes of keeping a good heart,” said the old woman as the prince and princess embraced with joy.

“Madam,” said the prince as he knelt before her, “all these people owe their lives to you, for all were changed at some time or other into trees by the very enchanter they came to destroy, who lives in yonder castle. Command us now and we will obey you, for your power is greater than his.”

“I am but an old woman,” said Granny,

“but the good fairies have been kind to me. Follow me now and let us release my husband who is a prisoner in his power.”

So they marched to the castle, the old woman singing at their head, and as they went a man rushed out of a miserable cottage near by and cried, “Why, that is my old mother, and that is the carol she taught me when I was a little boy.” And as they fell into each other's arms a young woman came out of the cottage with two children, and a baby in her arms. She was his wife, and had been carried away captive to this place many years before.

“And these are my grandchildren,” said Granny. “I have brought them each a present,” and she gave them the little table and the tiny chairs.

Then they marched upon the castle and surrounded it, and battered down the doors. Within all was empty and silent; they passed through long stone corridors and empty halls, but not a soul could they find. At last in the very inmost room, surrounded by books of magic and crystals of every hue, they found the enchanter himself, crouching and vainly trying to weave a spell which should be stronger than the talisman on the old woman's finger. Him they seized and instantly slew, then they took his keys and released the prisoners in the dungeons, among whom was the old woman's husband. He was quite an old, old man, and had been shut up for years because he would not help the enchanter in his wickedness, while his son had been made a slave to till the soil. Now they were all united again, and great was their joy. Granny and her husband and son and daughter and the prince and princess marched at the head of the army down to the shore, where they found a

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great array of boats waiting to take them to the ships; as the last man-at-arms stepped into the last boat there was a great clap of thunder, and the enchanter's castle sank slowly into the ground and vanished for ever, so that was the end of all his power.

As for the prince and princess, they returned with great happiness to the city by the sea, where they were married with the greatest rejoicings; all the princes and nobles whom Granny had released attended the wedding, and Granny and all her family were given splendid lodgings in the palace itself. On the wedding night the old woman lay awake thinking of all the wonderful things that had happened, when the door of the room opened and the little gentleman who was just two inches high appeared leading the little lady by the hand. The little gentleman bowed profoundly while the little lady curtsied.

"This is the last time we shall have the pleasure of meeting you," said the little gentleman. "The king has commanded us

to escort you and your husband to his own country."

"Sir," said the old woman, "you have been very good to me. I pray you tell me what country is this?"

"It is the land where everyone becomes young again," said the little gentleman, "and is a place of great felicity. You are well known to the king, who regards you with great favour."

The old woman looked at him in astonishment.

"Have you forgotten the beggar lad from whom you bought the little table and chairs?" said the little lady. "It is his pleasure to travel thus about the world and seek what hospitality may be found. Now he awaits you in his own land."

Then the old woman woke her husband, and together they kissed their sleeping son and daughter and blessed their grandchildren; then they went away with the little lady and gentleman to the land where they regained their youth, and there they are to this day.

The Lucky Penny.

FORTUNE *went out for a walk one day
And dropped a bright penny just in my way.
It was stamped with the image and name of Puck;
As I put it in my pocket, I cried, "What luck!"*



The Magic Sandals.

ONCE upon a time there was a princess who was the most beautiful king's daughter that ever was born; her eyes were like two stars and her fingers were like the sickle of the young moon; moreover she was of such a sweet disposition that it was impossible to help loving her. She had many suitors, but to all of them she made the same reply—"There is only one thing in the world which I really want, and you cannot give it me." And when they saw that her mind was really made up they understood that there was no more to be said, and went back to their own kingdoms.

But at last there came to her palace a prince who was not only extraordinarily brave and handsome, but was also very determined; so when the princess made the same reply to him that she had made to all the other princes, he at once said, "Will you tell me what it is you want?"

At that the princess turned very red and said, "No." Then he said, "I will stay

here until you do tell me, and then I will get it for you at once," and from that he was not to be moved. So he waited patiently for many months, and every day he asked the princess what was her heart's desire, and every day she answered, "I will not tell you."

But at last she saw that he was as determined as she was, so she called him to her presence and bade him look out of her chamber window. The palace stood upon a rock looking out across the sea, and as the prince looked out of the window the sun went down behind the waves and a pathway of pure gold appeared upon the waters, which led from the palace right away to the edge of the world, where it was lost to sight.

"Once," said the princess, "when I was a little girl I was sitting all alone at this window and the sun was going down, and a beautiful lady came down the golden pathway right across the sea and kissed her hand to me. On her feet were golden

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sandals, and as she ran they sparkled like diamonds and scarcely touched the waves; I wish I had those magic sandals and could run across the waters to the lands beyond the sea."

"I will get them for you," said the prince, and prepared to start at once.

"I only told you because you were so obstinate," said the princess. "But I do not wish you to go; you may never find them, and you will certainly run into great danger."

"A promise is a promise," said the prince, "and I will most certainly get them for you."

So he kissed her hand, and made haste to depart. At the quayside he found a vessel just about to sail, so he went on board, and by nightfall was sailing westward to find the country where lived the lady who wore golden sandals and ran across the waters. They sailed for days and days, and in the evenings the prince would watch the golden pathway towards the sun and wonder when he should reach the end of it, but at last one day they saw land ahead, and he hoped he had come to the end of his journey. As soon as he landed he began to inquire for the lady who wore golden sandals and ran across the waters, but the people had never heard of her and laughed at him for a silly fellow.

"Listen to this madman!" said they. "Here's a pretty tale for a fine morning!" Then they laughed more than ever, for they thought themselves wonderfully witty. But while they were all laughing and holding their sides because they ached, a little cripple boy said to the prince, "If you will carry me home I will tell you something." So the prince picked him up

and carried him to his home, and as he set him down the boy said to him, "Our king's daughter wears golden slippers."

So the prince thanked him, and went straight to the palace and asked to see the king's daughter. Now she was as pretty as pretty could be; her cheeks were pink and her hair was golden, and on her feet she wore the prettiest gold slippers imaginable. When she saw the prince she thought what a fine young man he was, and inquired most graciously what she could do for him.

"I have come many leagues to find you," said the prince. "I have heard of your golden sandals, and how you run across the waters."

"That is quite true," said the princess, for she was as vain as a peacock. "I am as light as a feather." Then she commanded the harpers to play, and danced to show him how light she was on her feet. But it was quite untrue that she could run across the waters, and such a thought had never entered her head, so when the prince asked her to let him see her run across the lake she said, "To-morrow," and bade him remain at the palace as her guest. But on the morrow she said, "Wait another day," and on the next day she said, "I am not in the mood." And so it went on for many days. And at last she saw plainly that something must be done, and being very vain of her light feet she thought it was just possible she might be able to run across the water in the marble basin in her garden, but when she tried to do it by herself she fell right in and was nearly drowned. Then she sent for the chief glazier and made him cover the surface of the water with the clearest glass; it was clear as crystal, and the water weeds

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could be seen beneath quite plainly, and the goldfish swimming to and fro; it was impossible to tell there was anything there at all. Then she put on her most gorgeous robes, and sent for the prince.

"Now you shall see me run across the water," said she, and ran lightly across; but her gold slippers went tap, tap, tap upon the glass with every step, and the prince took his sword and smashed the glass in pieces, and the water spurted up from beneath. Then the princess flew into a rage because he had discovered the cheat, and ordered him to be turned out of the palace. "Away with him out of my sight," she said. "Give him dust to eat and rags to wear, and run him out of the kingdom." So the guard fell upon him there and then, and because they were so many and he was only one, they overpowered him and took his fine clothes away and dressed him like a beggar; then they took him a day's march from the palace and bade him make himself scarce.

"Willingly," said the prince. "I have wasted too much time already upon a cheat." So he set his face towards the setting sun and trudged forward for many days, getting his living as he could. And one day he came to the shores of another sea, for he had walked right across that country, and there was the pathway of gold just as it appeared from the palace window in the beginning, leading across the waters towards the edge of the world. By the shore was a ship, so the prince went to the sailors and asked them to give him a passage.

"Right willingly," said they, "if you will earn it."

"Nothing is worth having that is not

worth paying for," said the prince, so they struck a bargain there and then, and the prince agreed to do all that was required of him. So they sailed away towards the setting sun for many days, and when at last they reached a new and strange land the prince and the sailors parted excellent friends.

"Fare you well, beggar-man," said they. "Good speed and kind fortune; when you have seen enough of this country return hither, and if we be this way, we'll take you kindly home again."

So the prince thanked them for that, and went his way. The strange country was beautiful and wild, and the people were kindly, but he could get no certain news of the lady who wore golden sandals; some said that they had heard of her, but she was dead; some declared that she never existed, but was a figure in a dream. Others declared that she lived in the heart of an inaccessible mountain, and appeared but once in a hundred years. However, the prince did not lose heart, but continued to search, for he said, "A promise is a promise, and must be performed; and at any rate the people here have heard of her." So he kept a good heart.

One day he was marching along a lonely road beside a broad river when suddenly a voice called to him, "King's son, king's son! Come and help me!" At first he could see no one, then he spied a little old woman among the rushes on the bank, and on inquiring what he could do for her she showed him scores of tubs standing in the water, full of linen.

"Come," said she, briskly, "roll up your sleeves and give me a hand with this linen."

"Why, mother," said he, "what ever do you want with all this linen?"

"I do all the washing for the court," she said, "twice a year. Come now! All this must be wrung out by sundown."

So she seized one end of a pane of linen and the prince seized the other, and they wrung, and wrung, and wrung until the prince thought his hands would drop off. And when they had wrung all the counterpanes, they wrung hundreds of sheets, and when the sheets were done, they wrung the blankets, and after the blankets came the tablecloths, and there seemed no end to them. But just as the sun went down they suddenly came to the last one, and the old woman stopped and mopped her forehead.

"I cannot think what I should have done without you," she said. "And to show you that I am not ungrateful, your wrists shall never be tired again nor fail you when you need them."

"That is indeed kind of you," said the prince. "But tell me, to what king does all this linen belong?"

"Never you mind," said the old woman, and then she vanished completely, and all her linen with her.

Next day he was going along the same road when he heard another voice call out, "King's son! king's son! Come and help me."

When he had looked about for some time he descried a hole in the rocks by the roadside and, going in, found a smithy and a little old man leaning upon a heavy hammer. Upon the anvil lay a lump of red-hot metal ready to be beaten into shape.

"Come and give me a hand with this," said the little old man. "There is a spare hammer in the corner; take your turn

with me." The little old man swung his hammer as easily as a feather, and the sparks flew in all directions, but when the prince tried to swing in turn he found it was almost beyond his strength. However, he was not willing to be beaten, and he put out his whole strength and managed to swing his hammer once.

"Keep it up," said the little old man, laying on again, and though his arms felt as though they were breaking, the prince swung his hammer again.

"Now we are getting along nicely," said the old man, laying on once more, and though he thought every stroke would be his last, the prince managed to take his turn until the piece of metal was beaten flat.

"I don't know what I should have done without you," said the little old man. "You have a fine pair of arms, and they shall never fail you as long as you live."

"I am much obliged to you," said the prince; and then he told him of his search for the lady who wore golden sandals and ran across the water.

"You are on the right road at last," said the little old man, "and if you are prepared to seek them on the land and on the water and in the air, you may win them, but you will need a stout heart."

"So be it," said the prince. "I am not afraid."

"Then follow the road you are on," said the little old man, "and you will see what you will see." And at that he vanished and his forge with him.

After that the prince stepped out briskly, and as he went he sang, because his heart was so light. The road left the valley and the river and wound among the hills, and every mile it grew steeper

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and lonelier, until at length the prince found himself among the mountains and far, far above the dwellings of mortal men. Then suddenly the road began to descend, until at length it reached the shores of a lonely lake, and there it stopped short, and there was no way of getting across. All round the lake were high hills, steep and silent, with no way across them save the road by which the prince had come, and there was not so much as a hut to be seen where one might find a meal.

"Now we shall see what we shall see," said the prince, and sat down to wait for what might happen. He had a morsel of dry bread in his wallet, and he thought he might as well have a meal; and while he was munching it, suddenly the wind began to blow from the east and he saw a white line of foam rise upon the face of the lake and come towards him like a wave right across the water. Standing upon the wave was the most beautiful lady he had ever seen; she held herself very erect and her red-gold hair floated around her like a shining veil; her feet were pointed just so, and upon them she wore the most beautiful golden sandals which seemed scarcely to touch the water. As the wave reached the shore where the prince sat and she stepped upon dry land, he ran forward and fell upon his knees before her.

"Gracious lady," he said, "I will perform any service you bid me if you will only give me your golden sandals."

"I do not need any service," said the lady, severely. "And I cannot give you my sandals."

"Madam," said the prince, "I am ready to do your bidding in earth, air and water, if you will command me, and I will never

leave you till I have won a reward from you."

"I am sorry for you," said the lady, "but you do not know what you are talking about," and as she spoke she suddenly rose into the air with her hair floating round her like a veil, and vanished from sight, for she was the wife of the East Wind and could fly like the People of the Air.

So she went home and told her husband about it. "There is a mad fellow on the shore of my lake where I go for my diversion," she said, "and he wants my golden sandals. What ever shall I do? I shall be afraid to go there again."

"I will soon see about that," said the East Wind, with a jolly laugh. "Next time you go, I will go with you." And so it was settled.

Meanwhile the prince was wondering what to do next. "It is plain I am no match for her on land," he said. "Next time I will meet her upon the water."

So he set to work and fashioned himself a rough boat of rowan wood which cannot be bewitched, and prepared to wait until the lady should come again. He waited many days, but at last he saw her coming across the water, her feet just resting upon the wave which carried her across; the wind was roaring loudly, and her hair floated wide in the breeze, because the East Wind himself was with her, but the prince could not see him because he was invisible. Then the prince made haste to launch his boat, and drove it straight towards her, crying, "Hear me, noble lady, and let me serve you upon the water, if I may not on the land, and win a reward from you."

But she said, "Away, foolish fellow!"

and the East Wind blew upon his boat till it spun round and round like a cockleshell. Then the prince grasped the lady firmly by her ankles, and she cried out to her husband, "Save me!" So the East Wind seized her in his strong arms and flew away with her to the palace of the East Winds, and she cried all the way; and lo and behold! when the East Wind set his wife down on the ground there was the prince still firmly grasping her ankles and very much astonished and out of breath.

"Oh!" said the wife of the East Wind. "What a terrible journey! I have never had such a journey since the North Wind flew off with my sister."

"This is more than a joke," said the East Wind, who was now properly enraged. "What do you mean by it, jackanapes?"

"A promise is a promise," said the prince. "I have sworn to obtain the magic sandals for the princess whom I serve, that she may run across the waters, and see the lands beyond the sea, and I am ready to perform any service for this lady, if she will command me, in return for them."

"You are a very obstinate young man," said the lady, "and you cannot succeed, for the East Wind will never let you have them."

"I can at least try," said the prince.

"Very well," said the lady. "You shall try, but I warn you, you will fail." Then she bade her husband place his own ring on the prince's finger, so that he might see like the People of the Air, and when that was done he could see the East Wind as plainly as his own hand, and straightway they rushed at each other and wrestled for the advantage. And though the East Wind

put forth all his strength he could not break the prince's grasp, for his wrist did not weary nor his arms fail him, as had been promised him, and he held on and fought like a man. But although he did his utmost he could not prevail against the East Wind, for he was the mightiest of his kindred and could have crushed the prince a hundred times over had he been so minded, but he contented himself with trying to break his hold, and so they wrestled and neither gained the advantage; and at last the wife of the East Wind cried, "Stop fighting," and at once they ceased, and the prince fell to the ground because there was no breath left in him.

"Here's a brave man," said the lady. "What shall we do with him? I am minded to give him my sandals after all."

"I am perfectly willing," said the East Wind. "That was a fine tussle, and he deserves them, for he fought well."

So the wife of the East Wind took off her golden sandals and hung them round the prince's neck, and the East Wind fetched a cloud for his wife to ride upon, and together they took the prince back to the shores of the lonely lake and laid him very tenderly in his own boat, for he was completely worn out, and did not know what was happening to him.

Now while all this was happening the princess had been watching and waiting in her palace by the sea, and when the prince did not return she began to fear evil had befallen him, and at last she could bear the suspense no longer, and set out to see for herself. She sailed away in a stately ship for many days, and at last came to the country where the prince first landed. She went straight to the palace

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and asked the king's daughter if she could give her any news, but the king's daughter would tell her nothing at all, only counselled her to return to her own country, saying the prince must surely have been drowned. But the princess was not willing to believe it, and so, dressing herself like a poor girl, she left the palace secretly and began inquiring of the common people. And at last she met the little cripple lad who had sent the prince to the palace, and after that she never lost hope, and she kept on her journey until she too reached the other side of the country, and saw the golden pathway across the sea. Then she knew the prince must have gone that way, and going to the waterside she found the very ship in which he had crossed; the sailors could give her no news of the prince, but they agreed to give her a passage, and they told her all about the beggar-man who was their last passenger. When she reached the strange country the princess asked everyone she met if they had seen the prince, but none of them had seen any strangers save the beggar-man who had come across the sea. And at last she almost despaired, but one day as she was trudging along a lonely road she espied a little old woman who cried, "Here's a maid come seeking a beggar-man!"

"Why do you say that?" said the princess. "What have I to do with this beggar-man? I am tired of hearing of him."

"You might do worse," said the little old woman, and then she told her how he had helped her wring her linen till the sun went down. And at that the princess sprang to her feet and declared, "I will find this beggar-man or perish!"

"Well, then, keep to the road," said the

little old woman, and vanished. The princess did not need twice telling, but kept to the road with a will, and presently a little old man ran out of his smithy and gave her the same advice, and she thanked him and hurried on. And soon she reached the shore of the lonely lake, and there she found the prince in his ragged clothes, asleep in the boat with the golden sandals round his neck. By his side sat a lady with red-gold hair who did not say a word as the princess bent over the prince and took the sandals from his neck, and threw them into the bottom of the boat. And at that moment the prince awoke and saw the princess in her poor clothes. "I have come to find you," she said. "Let us go home to our own country." And at that they started to return at once, for they had no eyes for anything but each other; but the lady called them back.

"You have forgotten your sandals," she said.

"I do not want them now," said the princess.

"Why?" said the lady. "They were your heart's desire."

"I have got my heart's desire," said the princess. And at that the lady laughed heartily and clapped her hands and called to her husband, the East Wind, who came bustling over the hills in the highest of spirits.

"You came in rags," said the East Wind. "But you shall go home in state, and I will drive you myself." And so he did, upon a rosy cloud, and they arrived at the palace by the sea just as the sun was rising.

So the prince and princess were married, and the East Wind and his wife came to the wedding. The prince and the East

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Wind became great friends, for the East princess her golden sandals and taught
Wind said he liked a man who could stand her to run across the waters. And so they
up to him; and his wife often lent the all lived happily ever after.

The Unknown Sea.

T*HERE is a ship no man has seen—
She sails the unknown sea;
Her purple sails are made of silk,
Her decks are scrubbed as white as milk,
And her masts are gold and ebonie.*

*Her skipper sings an ancient song
To an ancient melodie;
He sails his ship for miles and miles
To trade among the Enchanted Isles
In the midst of the unknown sea.*

*He carries amber and tortoise shell
For the Queen of Faërie,
And caskets full of spices rare
And musk to scent the mermaids' hair
And pearls from the unknown sea.*



Silver & Gold.

THERE was once a young maiden who lived all alone; her father and mother were dead, and she had neither brother nor sister; she was quite alone in the world. She had a little house all to herself, and a garden with a fountain, and in the summer she tended her garden and in the winter she sat at her spinning-wheel and spun good linen thread which she sold to a pedlar who came for it once a year. He was almost the only person she ever saw, for the king's city was far away and no one passed along that lonely road unless he was obliged. Still she did not feel lonely, for the birds all loved her because she was so pretty and kind-hearted, and they used to sing their sweetest songs to her, while the trees in the forest were always trying to peep into her garden and grew as close to the little house as they could. One evening the birds suddenly ceased singing, and going to the door the girl saw

them wheeling in the air above her and apparently much distressed.

"The birds know when misfortune is at hand," said the girl. "What is going to happen, I wonder?"

As she spoke a number of them left the rest and flew away down the road and were lost to sight; but in a moment they came back, and in the midst of them was a mighty bird which flew wearily and cried mournfully as if in pain. The other birds were trying to beat it back, but it was too strong for them to hinder, and at last it drifted towards the little house and dropped at the maiden's feet.

Bending over it she saw a cruel arrow sticking in its breast, and drawing it out she hastily staunched the wound; then running into the house for a bowl of water she sprinkled a few drops over it. The next instant she screamed loudly, for lo and behold! the bird had vanished, and there stood before her a man in rich eastern

robes with a great wound over his heart.

"Alas!" said she. "What would you here, and from whence do you come?"

"Do not be frightened," said he. "I am a great enchanter and was wounded by a powerful enemy from whom I was escaping in the shape of a bird. You have saved my life, and I am much beholden to you; let me stay here till I have recovered from my wound, and I will give you whatever you ask."

"You are welcome," said the maiden. "Respect this house." So she took him in and bound up his wound with an ointment of strong spices which he gave her, and in a few days he was quite well.

"Now," said the enchanter, "what shall I do for you? I will make you a princess and turn this cottage into a palace, and give you an army of slaves. Would you like that?"

"No," said the maiden. "A palace would be lonely for me, all by myself; for I am quite alone in the world."

"Well," said the enchanter, "I will give you a noble husband, very strong and handsome."

"Oh, no!" said the maiden. "Suppose I did not like him! That would not do at all!"

"Do you like jewels?" said he, and putting his hand in his robe he pulled out a handful of the most splendid jewels in the world.

"They are very beautiful," said the maiden, "but I should always be afraid of robbers with these in the house. You are very welcome to what I have done for you, and I want nothing but to remain here and look after my house and my garden."

"I fear you will remain a long time,"

said the enchanter. "Nevertheless, I wish you well and I will give you the most valuable thing I possess."

Then he unwrapped the gold turban from his head and out of its folds he took a little brown nut.

"When I am gone," said he, "plant this in your garden and tend it carefully. When it is grown up and become a tree be careful to gather every nut that it bears, and you will be the luckiest woman in the world."

Before she could thank him he suddenly vanished, the birds began to sing again, and she was left standing with the little brown nut in her hand.

It did not look of any value except to be eaten at once; nevertheless the maiden felt sure that something wonderful would happen if she did as the enchanter had said, so she went at once into the garden and planted it. In a very short time a green shoot appeared which grew and grew until it was soon a beautiful tree, and the very same year it bore clusters of nuts, and lo and behold! when they were ripe each nut was of pure gold in a sheath of silver!

"Now I am rich indeed!" cried the maiden. "I can buy anything I like." But as she had already everything she really wanted she decided that the enchanter's gift was not of much use to her after all, and when the pedlar came to buy her linen thread she gave him a handful of the precious nuts which he took away with him to the city, where the king soon heard about them. Nevertheless, she carefully obeyed the enchanter and gathered every nut from the tree, and in doing so she found just one nut which was not like the rest but was small and brown like the

one the enchanter gave her. This one she cracked and ate, and it had a kernel as white as milk, of such a delicious flavour that she would willingly have given all the nuts of gold in their silver sheaths for another like it.

Meanwhile the king could not sleep for thinking of the marvellous tree which bore nuts of silver and gold, and ordering his horse to be saddled he took with him his most trusted minister and rode away to see for himself.

The maiden very willingly showed him all her store of nuts and the tree growing in the garden, and when he saw them he did not know whether to be more glad at the sight of so much treasure or frightened lest some enemy should find out about it and invade his kingdom. So returning to his city, he forbade his subjects to speak of the golden nuts on pain of death, and hastily bade his chief builder build a wall right round the cottage and its garden.

When the wall was finished it was so high that none of the forest trees could peep over and only the sun and the stars could look in. But when the last brick was laid the maiden found that the cruel king had built a prison round her, for there was no door at all and the only window was so high up that there was no hope of escape. Inside the wall there was a flight of steps from the ground to this window, and up these the girl had to go if she wished to look out upon the world. Once a year the king and his ministers came to receive the golden nuts which the tree had borne, which she let down to them from her window by means of a basket tied to a rope, receiving in return enough meal to last her a twelvemonth;

but few other people ever passed her way because the king forbade it, and her old friend, the pedlar, she never saw again because the cruel king cut off his head so that he might not tell any tales. Still every year the tree bore its golden nuts in their sheaths of silver and one little brown nut beside, which the maiden never failed to keep for herself, and for years she lived inside her prison wall until at last the king died, and his son, and his son's son, and his son after him, and still the maiden remained in her prison, a very long time as the enchanter had said, though everyone who had ever spoken to her was dead hundreds of years ago.

Now there was a certain king who had seven sons; as each son came of age he sent him out into the world with a horse, a sword, and a purse of money, and bade him do knightly deeds and win imperishable glory. When the first son left his father's court he rode due north for thirty days, and at the end he reached a forest, where he met an enchanter peaceably returning homeward in the guise of a merchant.

"Have you anything I should like to buy?" said the prince.

"How would you like an enchanted life, so that you would never grow old nor your enemies have power to harm you?" said the supposed merchant.

"Very much indeed," said the prince.

"Then," said the enchanter, drawing a sword, "fight for it."

So they crossed swords and almost at the first blow the enchanter struck the prince's sword out of his grasp.

"Go home and play with dolls," said the enchanter, and vanished. So the prince went home and said the world was grown

old and quiet, and there were no more deeds to be done.

When the second son left his father's court he also rode north for thirty days, and met the enchanter, who asked him the same question, but he fared no better than the first, save that he fought more bravely and the enchanter commended him ere he vanished. But this prince rode home and told his younger brothers all about it, and they all began to practise the use of the sword most mightily, for each was determined to win the wonderful gift from the enchanter if he could.

When they met, the third brother fought with the enchanter till noon before he was disarmed, and the fourth brother fought till sunset, and the fifth brother fought till the stars came out in the sky and the enchanter bade him put up his sword, for he had proved his mettle.

"But you have far to go and much to do ere you win your desire," said the enchanter. "Rest quietly with me this night and in the morning take your horse and ride due west. Turn aside for naught till you reach a river with seven swans feeding on the bank; toss them a morsel, so that your luck may be good, and cross straightway. On the other side you will find a road which will bring you to a high-walled prison without a door; bring me the brown nut which grows on the tree inside that prison and stay not for silver or gold."

"How shall I enter the prison?" asked the prince.

"Use your wits," said the enchanter.

So in the morning the fifth brother rode due west, and in time came to a river with seven swans feeding on the bank. They came towards him for what he might

please to throw them, but he thrust them back with the flat of his sword and rode to the river bank. "Greedy creatures!" he said, "you are always eating."

"You will never come back," cried the swans after him in their language, but he paid no heed to them but swam across the river and his horse accompanied him.

On the other side he found the road and soon reached the high wall which guarded the wonderful tree. No way could he find of getting in or out; the only window was too high and too narrow. He climbed the highest tree he could find and still he could not see over the wall, so at last he decided to wait.

"Some one must go in sooner or later," said he, "and if I wait long enough I shall see how." So he made himself a hut of boughs opposite the one window and there he lived quite comfortably for several months.

At last he saw two strangers riding up the road, leading a mule laden with sacks of meal. When they reached the wall they shouted and the prince saw a small bag pushed through the one window and lowered to the ground by a rope. Six bags were lowered, all filled with golden nuts in sheaths of silver which the men carefully counted. Then the sacks of meal were tied to the rope and pulled up; but while this was being done the prince stole forward and seized one of the bags. However, one of the men saw him, and hastily drawing his sword pursued him and smote off his head, so he never went back, as the swans had said.

Now the sixth brother was as brave as any of the others and he was also very cunning, so when he also met the enchanter he not only proved his mettle but

was careful to do exactly as he was told. When he came to the river he tossed a morsel to the swans and went on without delay; outside the high wall he also decided to wait and see what would happen, and finding the hut his brother had built, he lived there comfortably for several months. At last the two men came again, and things happened exactly as before, save that the prince hid until the men were far away with their costly load before he came out of his hiding place. Then he shouted until a voice from the window answered him.

"Let down your rope," he cried, and the maiden joyfully let it down, for she thought some one had come to rescue her at last. She was not strong enough to pull him up, but holding the rope with one hand he managed to cut himself sufficient foothold with the point of his sword, and so at last he reached her narrow window. He could not get through, but from there it was easy to fling the long end of the rope over the top of the wall and let it hang down the other side, where the maiden caught it and made it fast; then he cut his way right to the top of the wall and let himself down on to the top of the staircase inside.

Far below him he saw a little house and a pretty garden with a fountain, but what gave him greatest joy was the sight of the wonderful tree on which grew the little brown nut he had come so far to seek, so, scarcely seeing the maiden beside him, he dashed down the stairs, sword in hand, searched the boughs and gathered the precious treasure, and before the maiden could fall on her knees and implore his aid he had rushed up the stairs again and made escape by the way he came.

Once safely on the ground he stayed for nothing, but saddled his horse and rode back as swiftly as he could to the place where he had left the enchanter.

"I have done all that you told me," said the prince. "And here is the nut."

"Have you brought nothing else?" asked the enchanter.

"Nothing," said the sixth brother.

"You have done well," said the enchanter, as he cracked the nut and ate the kernel, "but not well enough." Then he vanished, and the sixth brother never saw him again as long as he lived.

After a while the seventh brother also went out into the world and in course of time met the enchanter, and having proved his mettle was sent on the same quest. He did exactly as the sixth brother had done at first, but when he had clambered up the ancient wall as far as the narrow window he paused and, looking through, saw the poor maiden on her knees begging him to rescue her.

"Lady!" said he, "are you all alone?"

"I am a prisoner," said she, "and quite alone in the world. Do not forsake me as the other prince did."

"I will not forsake you," said the prince. "Lend me your spade."

So she fetched her garden spade and gave it him through the narrow window, then, bidding her be of good cheer, he slid down the rope to the ground again, and began to dig a tunnel right under the wall. He toiled till his back ached and his hands were sore; he toiled all night and all day; he toiled till he ached all over, and when he was too tired to work any more, the great birds out of the forest flew down and helped him. They pecked at the mortar between the bricks until they were

loosened, and so, what with one thing and another, by the seventh day there was a tunnel big enough for one to crawl right through and out on the other side.

When at length he stood inside the garden, he thought he had never seen any one so beautiful as the maiden who tended it and almost forgot why he had come so far, but at last he remembered to ask her if she would give him the little brown nut from the tree, which she did most gladly, and then he wrapped her in his cloak and they crept through the tunnel, and she was free once more.

The prince lifted her on his horse before him and together they rode slowly back to where the enchanter awaited them, whom, as soon as the maiden saw him, she immediately recognised.

"You have stayed in your little house a long time," said the enchanter.

"A long, long time," said she. "Your gift brought me great misfortune. Five hundred times has the tree borne nuts of silver and gold since I was made a prisoner for its sake."

"Then you must be five hundred years old and more," said the enchanter, and at that the prince gazed at her in terror, for she was as fair to see as on the day the first brick of the wall was laid, and he

thought she must be a witch. But he loved her truly, and he said:

"I care not. You shall come with me to the good archbishop, and he shall exorcise the evil spirit and I will make you my wife."

"You are a good lad," said the enchanter, "but the archbishop shall marry you and no more. Where is the little brown nut I bade you fetch me?"

"Here it is," said the prince.

The enchanter took it and cracked it, and the kernel he gave to the prince.

"Eat it," said he. "It is my wedding present to you. When you have eaten it you will have an enchanted life like your bride's; and she has been waiting for you five hundred years."

And at that he vanished before they could say "thank you." So the maiden rode away with the prince, and they were married and lived happily ever after. And she became a princess and had a palace and an army of slaves, as well as a husband, noble, brave and strong, who gave her the most beautiful jewels in the world, all of which the enchanter had offered her. But she had an enchanted life as well, and that she owed to the little brown nut which grew on the tree which bore nuts of silver and gold.

The King's Son.

T*HE fairies came to the christening
And kissed the baby's lips,
And his eyes and his hair and his dimples
And his delicate finger tips.*

*And one of them promised him riches,
And one of them promised him might,
And another promised undying fame
For valour in the fight.*

*And one of them kissed the Queen Mother
As he lay on her lap in the hall,
And of all the fairies who came that day
She gave him most of all.*



The Enchanter's Wife.

ONCE upon a time there was a kingdom far away beyond the sea which was as beautiful as heart could desire. It was guarded by lofty mountains and watered by innumerable brooks and streamlets, and the people of the country were good and diligent and kind; in a word, it was a fortunate land.

But there came a summer when all the brooks dried up and the streams dwindled away, when no rain fell and the crops withered in the fields, and when the very mountains themselves were so scorched in the sun that the rocks lost their coolness and burnt the foot of the wayfarer. Then the astrologers openly declared that the country was doomed to destruction and that the evil genii of the air were calling up the fires which are in the heart of the earth to consume everything. And straightway all who had strength and spirit left packed up such belongings as they could and took their way over the mountain passes or through the narrow

valleys out into the world beyond, where they looked to find both food and safety. But many could not go, being too old or feeble, or too young or without means to take the journey. So these stayed on, dragging out a miserable existence and expecting they knew not what. And some stayed because they could not bring themselves to desert these poor people, and among them were the king and queen and their fair daughter, who in their turn were waited on by a noble band of knights and ladies as compassionate and as staunch as themselves.

And at the height of their misery there came wandering over the mountains into this waterless land a solitary enchanter with his book under his arm. He was dark and spare and silent and withal young and a personable man; his eyes were like two dark stars in his head, and he looked as if he could be very terrible. Nevertheless, when he had gone a day's journey through the country he turned aside

peaceably at nightfall and sat himself down on a bank to make his evening meal. A child and an old woman came out of a cottage close by to gaze at this stranger who had come into the country which every nimble soul was leaving as fast as he could, and watched him while he ate his bread and cheese. When he had finished, the enchanter asked them very civilly for a drink of water.

"Water there is none," said the old woman, "save a little at the bottom of the well, and that is muddy and not fit to drink. But there is still a sup of wine in the house to spare a spent stranger, and one lemon to which you are kindly welcome."

"Nay, mother," said the enchanter, "I will not take your store; look you, I have some store of my own," and at that he made a movement with his right hand, and lo! a tiny fountain sprang from the earth and danced in the air around his fingers.

"Here is all a reasonable man can require," said he, and taking a cup from his girdle he drank and bade the old woman do likewise, and also her son who came from the cottage at her outcry. When all had quenched their thirst the enchanter stretched out his hand again and said, "Return to your rest, my sister," and the little fountain sank into the earth and nothing was left save a sweet coolness where its drops had fallen upon the parched air.

But the old woman's son waited for nothing, but started off there and then and ran and ran and ran until at dawn he reached the king's palace. There he thrust himself, all breathless and weary as he was, past the guards and would take nay

from nobody until he stood, all covered in dust, in the king's presence; and then he said:

"What would you give a man who could find water in the land?"

And the king said, "My only daughter for his wife."

Then said the man, "There is a stranger come into the land and even now resting at my cottage door, whom the secret fountains obey and hurry to dance at his beckoning."

At that there was the liveliest commotion; the queen and her ladies wept for pure joy and the knights contended for the honour of bringing the stranger into the city. Soon a noble embassy started from the gates, guided by the old woman's son, charged at all hazards and at the cost of any promises to persuade the enchanter to return with them. They met him in the highway munching a crust and reading his book as he walked, and he halted and surveyed them gravely while they ranged themselves before him and saluted him with great consideration.

"What can I do for you, noble sirs?" said he.

"Our sovereign master, the king, entertains your company," said the chief noble.

"A small request," said the enchanter, smiling. "Lead the way, I beg of you."

"Be pleased to mount my steed," said the chief noble, bowing very low, and so they returned very joyfully, and the king and all his court came down to welcome them.

"Now," said the enchanter when they were all seated within, "what is it that you wish from me? I am by profession a magician, but I have some knowledge of

courts that I did not get out of my books, and I know you are in great straits."

"You speak truly," said the king, "and I see you are a wise man. Therefore I beg that you, whom the hidden streams obey, will tell me why rain and brook alike have failed my kingdom and left us all to perish of thirst."

"This is the work of my mortal enemy, a great invisible magician, who rides upon the hot winds of the desert and causes the villages to be overwhelmed with sand," said the enchanter. "Him I am seeking throughout the world that I may destroy him (for I possess a knowledge greater than his), and it was to hinder me that he has locked up the water-springs to all who have not words of power on their lips, to the intent that I might die of thirst when I came hither. But now I am truly sorry that you and your people have so suffered, and I will make what amends I can."

"Say you so?" cried the king joyfully. "Ask what you will to the half of my kingdom; it is yours, and I will add thereto the hand of my daughter in marriage."

Thereupon the enchanter looked upon the princess attentively; then he said, "So be it. I ask nothing else."

Then he signified to them that they should follow him out into the courtyard, and there he made a sign with his hand, and straightway a little fountain sprang up from the earth and danced round his fingers; and when all had tasted the sweet water and exclaimed with joy, he said, "Let us go further afield. But," he said, turning to the princess, "bring cloak and hood for there will be rain."

So cloaks were brought, and they went out into the country a long way, and the air was hot like an oven, and a scorching

wind blew upon them as if it would force them back.

"Ha! my old enemy," cried the enchanter, "in a little while I will be even with you!" And though the wind raged round them as though it would sweep them from their feet and many of the court were not a little frightened, he went steadily forward until they stood in a wide valley where formerly a fresh stream had made all green and prosperous, but which was now barren and waste. There he called a halt, and stretching up both hands he cried aloud in a strange tongue, and immediately a mighty jet of water burst from the bed of the stream and tossed its bright head in the air. And a fine cloud of moisture which shone in the sunshine like a thousand diamonds and sapphires went up from the fountain and returned again all over the country as rain.

Then what joy was everywhere, and how the very courtiers forgot all about decorum and cheered lustily, while the enchanter stood in their midst in his plain stuff gown, saying nothing and looking at the princess; noticing which the king suddenly remembered his promise and began to hum! and ha! a little, for it had occurred to him that the enchanter was not of royal blood. However the princess would hear nothing of it, for she said, "We are all greatly beholden to this gentleman, and without him we should all have perished." So when the enchanter held out his hand again she laid her own in it, and together they went back to the city and were wedded with great magnificence.

And the next day they bade good-bye to the king and queen and rode away to the enchanter's home. They passed

through many strange countries and saw people of every colour under the sun, and slept in many wonderful and beautiful palaces where the enchanter had friends. They saw many islands where fabulous treasures were concealed, and the enchanter showed the princess the caverns where the seamaidens store their pearls; a mermaid came up out of the water and offered her a chaplet of pearls for a wedding gift and sang to her until she felt her heart must part company with her body and go to live in the coral groves beneath the sea. They went away at last, promising to return again some day, and at last came to a great lake whose farther shore could not be seen. Among the rushes on the margin was moored a barge of state, spread with silken cushions as though the owner were close at hand.

"Who can have left this here unguarded?" exclaimed the princess.

"It is yours," said the enchanter. "We are nearly home and this has come to meet you and carry you the last mile of the way."

So they stepped into it, and their horses came docilely after them and stood quietly while the boat floated out on to the water and an invisible helmsman sang softly of the islands of the sea. And presently they came to a green island all set about with trees and flowering bushes, and in the middle of it, lo and behold! a palace of white and rosy marble more beautiful than the dawn.

"This is your home," said the enchanter, "and here you may command all creatures visible and invisible, and they will obey you."

And so it was. The island was more beautiful than the Kingdom in the Moun-

tains, and all creatures therein served and obeyed the enchanter and his wife; as for those two, they dwelt together in increasing happiness and contentment (for they loved each other dearly) and the princess learnt all manner of magical lore out of the enchanter's great book, and made friends with all manner of strange elves that live in the woods and fields. And so they fared for a year and a day.

Now all this while the enchanter's enemy was not idle. When he found that the enchanter had not died of thirst in the Kingdom in the Mountains, and that, moreover, the land was filled again with running streams and more prosperous than ever, he wasted no more time over a bad job but set his wits to work to devise him an ill turn some other way. So long as the enchanter remained in his home he could not reach him, for all around the island the North Wind and the South West Wind held joint and undisputed sway, and let him ride as high as he pleased among the clouds one or other of these two Winds met him and sent him about his business. So after a while he retired to the desert in great dudgeon to think out entirely new plans.

And one day when he was riding upon a sandstorm, and he himself could scarcely see a yard beyond his nose he came upon a young Dream standing on his head upon a sandhill.

"Come up!" cried the bad magician. "What are you doing there?"

"Cooling my heels," said the young Dream, coming the right way up.

"No doubt you are as mad one way up as the other," said the magician indulgently. "But boys will be boys. Come and ride with me."

The Enchanter's Wife.

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"No, thanks," said the young Dream. "Too hot!" and immediately stood on his head again.

"Very well," said the magician, and got off the sandstorm which immediately dispersed in a shower of fine sand and the sun came out again. "Now we can have a quiet chat," said the magician, sitting down on the sandhill, "and you can remain which end up you please."

The young Dream thanked him very much, for he was not a bad fellow, though quite mad like all his family. So he remained with his heels in the air, and the magician bent down and whispered in his ear.

"I suppose you can go wherever you like?" said the bad magician.

"Anywhere!" said the young Dream proudly.

"There is one lady you will never tell your nonsense to, however," said the magician. "Even I cannot visit her."

"I will go and see her to-night," said the young Dream, coming right end up abruptly.

"You cannot do it," said the magician, slyly.

"That is all you know about it," said the young Dream, standing first on his head and then on his heels as quick as lightning to show he was much put out.

"Very well," said the magician. "Then when you come back you can tell me what the lady's husband wears round his neck, so I shall know whether you are speaking the truth."

The next morning the princess said to her husband: "I had such a funny dream last night. Tell me, what is it that you wear on the fine chain round your neck day and night?"

"It is my talisman," said the enchanter. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I dreamt it was a sugar-plum," said the princess, laughing.

Then the enchanter opened his gown and showed her a wonderful jewel which shone like fire and ice upon his breast.

"I am not of the race of magicians," said the enchanter, "for I was stolen away from my human parents when I was a child. But I was adopted by my master in the full Council of all Enchanters and instructed by him in magic lore. However, some of the race of magicians, of the more evil sort, bear me an undying grudge and would destroy me if they could, wherefore my master hung this mighty jewel round my neck to be my talisman."

"Is it that which keeps all danger from this island?" said the princess.

"That and my enchantments," said her husband. "I have some power, as you know, and when I go abroad to seek out my great enemy, as I must do shortly, I will put a spell round the land which shall keep you safe from all harm. But where the talisman is, there is no danger."

Some days later the bad magician, riding his fieriest wind, again found the young Dream standing upon a sandhill, but right end up and looking quite sensible.

"I had the greatest trouble with your lady, but I prevailed in the end," said the young Dream, proudly. "Nothing can withstand me."

"I thought as much," said the magician when he had heard the whole tale. "But this is a scurvy fellow to go off on his journeys and leave his wife with no better protection than a rubbishy spell. Let him

leave her the talisman and trust himself to his own enchantments."

"That is true," said the young Dream. "I will go back and tell him so myself; though I must own to you that I have already spent three nights upon this business, for the lady keeps tight hold upon her thoughts."

"Not so fast," said the bad magician. "We can do better than this. Depend upon it, if that idle fellow were to lose his talisman he would never set foot beyond his island again, and we should all be spared a great deal of mischief."

"The very thing!" cried the young Dream. "Two heads are better than one," and then they laid their heads together, and what they said cannot be told, but at the end the bad magician laughed immoderately, and the young Dream stood on his head, and in that position bounced on to six sandhills, one after the other, as though he were made of india rubber.

That night the princess woke up in a terrible fright; she had dreamed that her husband had gone out into the world to seek his enemy and been taken prisoner and slain. The next night she dreamed the same dream, and when this had happened six nights running she began to think seriously what was to be done.

"If I tell my husband he will laugh at me, for he is as brave as a lion," she thought, "and if I do nothing, he will go out into the world and be slain." And she felt very wretched; then all of a sudden she thought of a plan and ran to find her husband. He was sitting in the garden under a plum tree, and she picked up a piece of stick and drew a complete circle round him.

"What are you doing?" said he.

"Just to show you how clever I am," she said, "I am going to put you to sleep."

"Mighty magician!" said the enchanter, laughing, "I entreat you to spare me."

"Not so!" she answered, and so to please her, when she said the magic words he made no bother about it, but went straight off to sleep, as sound as a house. But had he not wished it she could have done nothing at all with him, because he was a very great enchanter. However, as soon as he was safely asleep she knelt down and drew the golden chain with the talisman over his head and hung it round her own neck.

"Now," she said, "we are all quite safe, for nothing can hurt us while the talisman is in my keeping, and he will never go out into the world without it." And even as she spoke the sky turned black and the island shook as if the earth quaked, and when it grew light again the enchanter had vanished.

The princess searched all that day, but no trace of him could she find, and when night came she lay down and slept for sheer sorrow. The next morning she called all the elves and birds out of the woodlands and meadows, but they could give her no tidings of the enchanter, though she questioned them diligently one by one, and when night came she slept again for sheer sorrow. But in the morning the eldest of all the Dreams came and whispered in her ears: he is a poet, and though he too is mad, he is forever trying to tell people the truth. Nobody ever quite believes him because they are not sure whether the strange things he says are due to his madness or are simply his poetical manner of speaking, but he never despairs and always hopes that some day

The Enchanter's Wife.

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people will believe him. And certainly he has said many grand and beautiful things which some folk think profound and others say are all moonshine. On this occasion he was most distressed because one of his family had behaved so badly, and he tried so hard to express himself plainly that the princess, although disinclined ever to believe a Dream again, was forced to listen to him.

"Hearken to me, O princess!" said he. "An enchantment has been laid upon you, and by the lips of one of my own household. This it was that made you behave so foolishly when you took the talisman from off your husband's neck. His enemy was waiting for that moment, for without it his power could never reach him, but then his spells gathered round him more swiftly than the winds and snatched him away captive and bound him fast. Now make haste, for the longer you tarry, the nearer is his death." All this he said not plainly as it is written here, but in his own language which is more beautiful and exalted than any heard by waking ears. Nevertheless the princess understood him perfectly, and she said, "What am I to do?" and he said, "Wisdom is to be found in books and endurance in the world," for he was quite worn out with the effort to speak plainly.

When the princess woke her mind was made up; first she would get what help she could from the enchanter's great book, then she must hasten out into the world to seek him. She spent days and nights searching the pages of the book, and much was in a language she could not read and much was too hard to understand, but she persevered, and presently she found that great mention was made of a power-

ful enchantress named Sibylla, to whom it seemed all magicians must pay respect, and at last she closed the book and said, "I will find the Lady Sibylla." So she went out into the world asking her way of the wild things, but most of them had never heard of Sibylla, and those who had would say nothing but "Hush!" when asked about her. And she went up hill and down dale getting no tidings till at length she came to the seashore and found the mermaid who had sung to her when she came thither with the enchanter.

"Yes, I know Sibylla," said the mermaid. "Be advised and go home, for you will get nothing from her except at a great price."

"Nevertheless, I will go to her," said the princess.

"Be advised again," said the mermaid. "Once long ago she got the worst of a bargain, and she has been harder than iron ever since."

"Nevertheless, I will bargain with her," said the princess.

"Then beware how you cry out," said the mermaid, and at that she threw her cold arms round the princess and dived with her under the sea, and though the princess thought she must die she did not cry out, and in a moment the mermaid cast her up on a sandy beach half way across the world, still clasping the enchanter's great book which was barely hurt at all.

"That was quick work," said the mermaid, "but indeed you will find it best to be quick in anything that concerns Sibylla. Yonder lies her home; good fortune go with you." Then she dived back into the sea and disappeared from sight.

The princess walked up the beach feel-

ing very lonely and frightened and found a little temple in a grove and an ancient crone gathering sticks.

"Dame," said she, "where dwells the Lady Sibylla?"

"I am Sibylla," said the crone. "What do you want with me?"

"I have come to market with you," said the princess, "for I hear you give nothing without payment."

"I know all about you," said Sibylla, "and if you look in that bucket of water you will see the fellow who hoodwinked you so easily." The princess looked in the bucket and saw a picture of the young Dream standing on his head on a sand-hill. "Now," said Sibylla, "I should like to hear what you think you can give *me!*"

"Nothing but my five wits and my service, such as it is," said the princess. "I will do your bidding and be your servant for as long as you please if you will set my husband free."

"Very well," said Sibylla with a chuckle. "Be my servant. Fetch me the plume from King Fir Tree's brow."

The princess went up into the woods and searched until she was weary, and in the very heart of them she found the King Fir Tree, standing a little apart on a mossy knoll. His trunk soared high in the air and tapered to such fineness that the winds bent it this way and that with a stately motion as they passed. At the very summit was a little green plume that stirred gaily in every idle breeze, and the princess strained her head back on her shoulders to watch it, it was so far above her. She had little hope of ever reaching it, but after a while she began to attempt to climb the tree. Alas, she could make no progress at all, for climbing trees is not

usually taught to princesses, and when darkness came her hands were bleeding and her clothes torn, and she was no further up the tree than when she began. So she went back to the seashore empty-handed.

"Lazy servant, lazy servant!" cried Sibylla, and beat her soundly. "You shall have no supper to-night."

So the princess went supperless to bed, and the next day she was so stiff she could scarcely rise. Nevertheless she waited on her mistress, and took thankfully the crust Sibylla flung her, then went her way into the woods again to seek the plume on King Fir Tree's brow. That day she had no better success than before, and again she was beaten and went supperless to bed. Next morning she rose betimes, tended her mistress and went her way into the woods, and so she did many mornings without success, and always there were beatings and no supper when she returned home at night. Still she persevered, and at last she began to make a little progress, and then a little more, and one day she got half way up King Fir Tree's trunk, when she turned giddy and fell to the ground. There she lay until Sibylla found her and carried her home and was almost kind to her, but as soon as she was well again Sibylla rated her as before.

"Lazy servant, lazy servant!" she said. "King Fir Tree will be cut down and burnt before you stir yourself."

So the princess went out and tried again, and at last, what with continual trying and continual beating, she grew hard and nimble and could climb like a cat. But even then she was no better off, for when she had climbed right up King Fir Tree as high as she could go, the

plume still waved high above her and King Fir Tree bowed and bent under her weight as though he would snap, and the princess dared go no higher. Neither dare she cut down King Fir Tree, for that was expressly forbidden, so the princess sat down on the ground and cried. And again she was beaten and went supperless to bed; nevertheless she waited on Sibylla and was patient and industrious. And all at once she bethought her again of the enchanter's great book and what the Poet Dream had said about wisdom, so when she went into the woods that day she took the great book with her and spent no more time climbing, but studied the book until her head ached. And so she did many days, and what she could not understand the Poet Dream would try to explain to her in his exalted language at night, and sometimes she understood him and sometimes she did not, but he never gave up, for he was deeply ashamed of his kinsman's share in her misfortunes, and bit by bit she began to comprehend him, and day by day she grew more wise, but all this time Sibylla's only word for her was "Lazy servant, lazy servant!" and this though she tended her hand and foot.

And at last the princess knew all it was possible for her to learn, and she decided to make another attempt. She took the talisman from her neck and gave it to Sibylla with the enchanter's book and said, "Guard these for me," and Sibylla took them without a word. Then the princess went up into the woods and stood before King Fir Tree, and with the knowledge she had gained out of the enchanter's book she turned herself into a little brown squirrel, the tiniest ever seen. Up the trunk of King Fir Tree ran the squirrel,

up to the very top and bit off the little green plume with its sharp teeth, and so ran down to earth again. But alas, the squirrel had forgotten all the wisdom in the enchanter's book and could not say the spell that would transform it into the princess again, but it had just sufficient wit to run all the way to the beach and lay King Fir Tree's plume at Sibylla's feet.

"Well done, little poppet!" said Sibylla, picking up the squirrel and giving it a whole pocketful of nuts, and when the little creature had made a good meal she put it in her empty pocket and went up into the woods herself.

"Nobody shall say I do not stick to my bargains," said she as she went straight up to King Fir Tree himself and dealt him a blow with her stick. And lo and behold! King Fir Tree dwindled and dwindled and changed and changed and there was the enchanter himself, dark and spare but withal a personable man.

"I have a few of your belongings," said Sibylla, and gave him his talisman. Instantly he vanished and Sibylla waited smiling to herself; in a few seconds he was back again.

"Take your time," said Sibylla, "and do not be so abrupt."

"I felt the presence of my enemy," said the enchanter, "and it was worth some haste to destroy him."

"I took care he should be here," said Sibylla. "He thought himself a clever fellow when he changed you into a fir tree, but he made a mistake when he placed you in my sacred grove. He thought by that to condemn you to a living death for countless years, since none dare cut down my trees, and they stand until they fall, but

I doubt his last days were full of anxious watching. Then she laughed, and the enchanter kissed her wrinkled hands.

"Here is something else of yours," she said, giving him his book, "and this you may have for a keepsake." And at that she took the little squirrel out of her pocket, and the enchanter laid it in his bosom.

"Now farewell to you both and the shortest way home," said Sibylla, and of her might there can be no shadow of

doubt, for the next instant the enchanter was standing in his own island, and the princess in her torn garments and her proper form stood by him. And all they had to say to each other cannot be told here, and indeed could only be properly told in the language of the Poet Dream, which is too exalted to be written down with pen and ink, but this much is known about them for certain, that they both lived happily ever after.

An Invitation.

DO you know the way to Fairyland? It's just across the green;
So take my hand and let us go to seek the Fairy Queen,
And beg from her the silver cup she holds in her lily-white hand,
And a piece of the beautiful white bread they eat in Fairyland.

*Who drinks from out of her silver cup will never grow grey or old;
Who eats the fairy bread will be a hardy knight and bold.
So take my hand and let us go and seek the Fairy Queen—
It isn't far when you know the way; it's just across the green.*



The Two Merry Princes.

ONCE upon a time two knights were riding along the highway in search of adventures when they came to an ancient city of whose existence they had never even heard. They were both king's sons and of a cheerful disposition, and brave as lions, nevertheless when they saw this city all the mirth died out of them and one said to the other, "This looks an evil place and good to avoid. What think you, brother? Is there any glorious deed to be done in a place like this?"

And the second, whose name was Perysal, said, "Have we come so far and dared so much to be daunted by any place, be it silent as the grave? Come, let us see what is to be seen."

So they rode on and just outside the gate of the city they found an old woman sitting by a well.

"The people in this city must all be mad," said the first prince, who was

named Caled. "Tell me, good mother," he said to the old woman, "have your townspeople no enemies that they can afford to dig their wells outside the walls and risk having no water in case of a siege?"

"Young gentleman," said the old woman, "this well is outside the city because it is a lucky well, and those who go in thither have need of all the luck they can get. If it is your purpose to enter, let me give you each a cupful of water over which you may wish."

"With all my heart, mother," said Caled. "And let me help you with the bucket, for it is too heavy for you." As he spoke, he leapt from his horse and let down the bucket and drew it up full of the purest water; the old woman produced an ancient silver cup and gave it him and bade him wish ere he drank.

"May my sword never fail me nor my right arm stiffen," cried he and drained the cup.

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"A right good wish," said the woman. "Have no fear." And she handed the cup to Perysal.

"May I never forget the day I met thee," said Perysal, who was fond of his joke, "and may tyrants fall flat before me!"

"Better and better," said the old woman. "I see you are two honest gentlemen, and before you go I will give your horses a drink out of the lucky well also." And so she did and they gave her a silver piece each and turned towards the gate.

"And when we come back," said Perysal, "we will bring you a grand new gown and a fine pair of shoes."

The old woman nodded to them but said no more, so they rode into the city. It was very ancient and the houses were built in a fashion such as the two princes had never seen in their lives, of great blocks of stone with iron doors and barred windows, so that the humblest dwelling looked as strong as a prison. There were very few people about and those did not look friendly, so the two princes rode on up the street which was very narrow and led up a steep hill, and at the top they found a great open square and a most magnificent palace in the middle of it. But even here all was quiet as the grave and the hoofs of the two horses seemed to make an extraordinary clatter as the princes rode into the courtyard.

Two splendidly dressed grooms came forward as they drew rein. "Who lives here, sirrah?" said Caled.

"The Very High and Mighty Duke Gambidius," answered the man, "and his daughter, the Most Sublime Lady Joanna."

"Highly-tighty!" said Perysal. "We

find ourselves among great folk, it seems. Come, brother, let us go in. And you, varlet," he said to the man, "take good care of our most noble and exalted horses." So they went within and were announced. A courtier took them at once into a vast hall hung with cloth of gold and furnished with great magnificence. At the end of the apartment on two raised seats sat the Duke Gambidius and his daughter, Joanna, while around them stood the ladies and gentlemen who waited on their good pleasure, all very richly dressed and all of a grave countenance.

"The most illustrious princes, Caled and Perysal," proclaimed the courtier, and the two princes advanced and bowed. The duke rose and bowed to Caled and turned to bow towards Perysal, when lo and behold! he rolled right down the steps of the dais, and fell flat on the floor. Instantly there was great confusion; the two princes picked him up, the courtiers dusted him down and the court physician felt his pulse.

"A sudden faintness," said the physician. "The cares of state. Will your highness take the air?"

Caled gave the duke his arm and they proceeded to the terrace followed by Perysal and most of the court. Steps led down from the terrace to a beautiful little lake surrounded by a flower garden, and a breeze came across the water laden with the scent of spices, which was most delightful.

The duke stood at the head of the steps and breathed the fresh air. He was an elderly man, very fat and puffy, and his eyes were hard and cruel. However, he turned to Caled and thanked him very courteously for his attentions, then turned

once more to Perysal, but the very moment he opened his lips to speak to him, lo and behold! down he went again, flat as a pancake, and this time, before a finger could be laid upon him, he gave a mighty heave and toppled right down the steps and fell into the lake with a splash which drenched all the beholders. And he would assuredly have been drowned had not Caled and the court physician fished him out and marched him off between them and put him to bed.

Meanwhile Perysal returned to the Lady Joanna and her ladies and saluted her. She did not rise to greet him, but she gave him her hand to kiss and bade him sit by her on her father's chair of state.

"I am greatly grieved at your father's sudden sickness," said Perysal.

"It will pass," said the lady, coldly. "Tell me what has brought you to this unfortunate country."

"My brother-in-arms and I are the sons of two neighbouring kings," said Perysal, "and we are travelling through the world in search of adventure in order that we may prove our valour."

"Did you see an old woman at the gate?" said the lady.

"Yes," said Perysal, "she gave us both a drink of water."

"And told you a number of lies, I'll warrant," she said. "She is a witch and when I catch her I will burn her. Help me to catch her and free this city from her machinations and there is nothing that I will refuse you."

Now the Lady Joanna was very splendid to look upon. Her hair was black as night, her skin white as snow, her lips as red as berries and her eyes bright as crystal, while she was dressed with un-

imaginable splendour. Nevertheless, Perysal did not answer her at once, for he was by no means sure that she was telling the truth, and at that moment Caled returned from putting the duke to bed, and the lady immediately ordered a feast to be spread.

Six stout servants at once ran into the hall, bearing golden dishes and cups and flagons of wine, a boar's head, a roasted peacock and pasties and sweets of every description. Caled gave the Lady Joanna his hand and led her to the head of the table and soon all were seated at the banquet. Nevertheless no one spoke a word save the lady and the two princes, while the servants ran about in slippers of velvet without making a sound. The Lady Joanna said very little but the two princes were in good spirits because neither could forget how funny the fat duke had looked when he rolled into the lake, and whenever they thought of it they had hard work to keep from bursting into laughter. However, they remembered their manners and ate their supper with dignity, and when the banquet was ended, Caled begged the Lady Joanna to do him the honour to tread a measure with him.

"Willingly," she said, and ordered her musicians to strike up. So they trod a measure together, and the Lady Joanna danced as beautifully as sunlight upon the water. Then she requested Perysal that he would dance with one of her ladies-in-waiting, and he said, "Willingly, if he might have the honour of her hand in the dance afterwards," and thereat she smiled and said, "I will see." So he led out the fairest of the ladies-in-waiting and she danced even more beautifully than her mistress, but she kept her eyes on the ground and said never a word. After that

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the Lady Joanna commanded a country dance and gave her hand to Caled and they took their places at the top of the two lines. The musicians struck up, the lady and Caled stepped out and bowed to Perysal and his partner, when lo and behold! just as the lady stood opposite Perysal down she went as flat as a pancake. Immediately, everyone rushed to pick her up and set her on her feet, but she was scarlet with mortification and speechless with rage.

"Some fool," she cried at last, "has dropped gravy from the roast as he served. I will have the flesh whipped off the bones of every one of those lackeys to-morrow to teach them to be more careful. Summon my servants."

Immediately a score of menials rushed into the hall with mops and dusters, and falling on their knees rubbed every inch of the polished floor until it shone like glass.

"Now," said the Lady Joanna, "I will dance with you only," and she gave her hand to Perysal and he led her out. But scarcely had she faced him and the musicians struck up than down she went, plump! again; and when he picked her up with all courtesy, down she went again, and again a third time and then he picked her up and carried her to her chair of state, while her teeth chattered in her head with pure rage.

She made a great effort, however, to disguise her anger, so she swallowed her mortification and smiled sweetly at Perysal. "I am so much beloved," she said, "that my servants sometimes overreach themselves in their anxiety to please me. The simpletons have polished this floor till no one can walk upon it with safety.

Nevertheless, I am determined to tread a measure with you; let a carpet be brought."

Instantly six blackamoors in robes of cloth of silver entered the room carrying a silken carpet which they unrolled and spread on the floor, and the Lady Joanna left her chair and walked down the hall with immense dignity; nevertheless, she was plainly afraid lest she should fall again, and she held up her trailing skirts with both hands, and lifted up her feet carefully, stepping high like a turkey-cock, and at the sight the princes hardly knew how to restrain their mirth, and the grave-faced ladies and gentlemen-in-waiting kept their eyes fixed on the floor. When she stood in the centre of the carpet she beckoned Perysal to follow her and commanded the musicians to strike up; and at the very moment that he bowed before her and she essayed to respond with a deep curtsy, down she went again, and this time all the ladies and gentlemen in the room could not set her on her feet again. So her terrified ladies laid her on a couch and the six blackamoors carried her off to her chamber, and Perysal and Caled would not suffer her ladies to follow her, for they said, "She will surely do you some mischief in her fury and then would we exact vengeance. But we would not willingly lay hands on a woman, therefore let her tend herself to-night and in the morning we will see if we cannot teach her a better frame of mind." So the ladies-in-waiting went thankfully to their own chambers and the two princes bade the chief gentlemen show them where they should spend the night. And when they entered their chamber they dismissed the attendants and bolted and barred the door,

and Caled said, "This is a right evil place and we are likely to have our hands full."

"The old woman spoke truly," said Perysal, "when she said that those who came thither had need of all the luck they could get."

"And that was a right good wish of thine," quoth Caled. "Never did I think to see tyrants fall so flat!" And then they laughed Ha, ha! and Ho, ho! until the palace rang and the Duke Gambidius and the Lady Joanna heard them and shivered with rage. But the two merry princes agreed to watch turn and turn about throughout the night, and while one watched the other slept and neither cared a button for all the tyrants in the world.

In the morning they returned to the great hall and found a magnificent repast ready, but no sign of the Lady Joanna or the Duke Gambidius. And while they debated whether they should fall to at once the head cook entered carrying on a dish a most magnificent pasty stuffed with all manner of dainties. He was very fat and full of conceit and he came waddling over the floor holding the pasty aloft and puffing with importance, and just as he came opposite Perysal, down he went and the pasty flew over his head and his feet waved in the air.

"Why, here is another of them," said Perysal. "A tyrant in the hall makes a tyrant in the kitchen plainly. I warrant he hath oppressed his scullions sorely. Come up, sirrah, and do not roll upon the floor before your betters."

The unfortunate cook rolled right over in his efforts to get upon his feet again, but he was so fat that the more he rolled, the more he bounced, and the more his feet waved in the air; nor did the princes

move a finger to help him, partly because they were sore with laughing and partly because he did not deserve it. And at last the cook gave up the attempt and rolled over on his face and so scrambled on his hands and knees to where the two princes stood.

"Thou scurvy knave!" said Perysal. "If we spare thy life, wilt thou deal honestly and show us the secret places of this palace?"

"Willingly, good sirs," panted the cook, "if only I can regain my feet."

"Since you consent you may rise," said Caled, and after much rolling and floundering the wretched cook scrambled to his feet and stood trembling before the two princes.

"Now lead on," said Caled, "and let us begin with the kitchens. I have a curiosity to see them." So the cook led them to the kitchen and as they entered there was a cry and a splash and the head scullion fell into the wash-tub.

"There goes another," said Perysal. "Haul the fellow out and hang him up to dry." So they hauled him out, and the two princes bade all the serving men and maids stand before them and tell their wrongs and they should be righted. But nevertheless not one spoke, though they were as miserable a company as one could wish to see. Then said Caled, "This is the strangest kitchen that ever I did see. What be these statues by the walls?"

Then said the cook in a whisper, "These were once living men."

"And so they shall be again," said Perysal, "or we will know the reason why."

And at that the scullions raised their heads and tried to smile and even ventured to ask for pity and protection,

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which the princes gladly promised and continued their progress through the castle. And they found all most magnificent but wherever they went they found statues of silver and stone and iron, and everywhere the cook said the same thing, "These were once living men."

And in the inmost room of the castle they found a mighty statue of granite in the shape of a man clad in armour from head to foot and carrying a great shield and sword. And he was at least twenty feet high and his face was cruel and crafty and the hair on the cook's head stood on end as he looked at him. "Who was this?" said Perysal, but the cook answered, "I cannot tell," nor would he say one word more, though his legs shook under him so that he suddenly rolled over again and his feet waved in the air. But this time the two princes helped him to scramble to his feet and bade him take courage for none should hurt him; so he followed them gratefully back to the great hall and there they found the lady-in-waiting with whom Perysal had danced the night before.

"Save yourselves, princes," she said, "for if you linger there is no escape and you will be turned to stone or become thralls such as I am. Get you gone before the duke and his witch daughter are astir."

"Never!" cried Perysal. "Where is that villainous duke who was put so carefully to bed? I will have him out of his chamber and make him fight for his miserable life."

And he rushed from the hall with his drawn sword in his hand and stormed up the grand staircase and burst into the duke's chamber and kicked the duke downstairs.

"Thou miserable tyrant!" he cried, "op-

pressor of ladies and treacherous host! Arm thyself quickly and fight for thy worthless life." But the duke had no mind to do any such thing and his one thought was to get away from Perysal until his daughter had time to put a spell upon him which would keep him quiet for ever. So he scrambled to his feet, and ran with Perysal in hot pursuit behind him; and he dodged and doubled and turned with all his might, in between the marble columns, round and round the high presses and the silver statues, in and out between anything that was big enough to hide him from Perysal and so save him from a fall, but at last he could dodge no longer and he rushed out on to the terrace and rolled right down the marble steps again and into the lake. And this time nobody troubled to pull him out and that was the end of him.

Meanwhile Caled was left alone with the lady-in-waiting, who wrung her hands and besought him that he would follow his brother and urge him to escape while there was yet time.

"And leave you and all these unhappy creatures to your fate?" said Caled, drawing his sword. "Nay, sweet lady, we have sworn to stay until we have wrought your deliverance and stay we will!"

"A right knightly speech," said a mocking voice, and turning, Caled saw that the Lady Joanna had entered the room and was laughing evilly to herself. "Stay and enjoy our hospitality till you crumble into dust," she said, and she raised her hand and pointed at Caled and he turned into stone from head to foot. The lady-in-waiting stood rooted to the ground with terror nor could she move hand or foot.

"What!" said the witch, "can you not

take your own counsel? Escape, escape as you bade these silly princes." But she was mocking her, for she knew the poor lady could not escape and she walked right up to her and Caled and said, "I have a mind to see how you would look in silver," and the lady-in-waiting turned into silver from head to foot. But even as the witch laughed and clapped her hands with glee, the statue that was Caled raised its right arm and smote the witch's head from her shoulders and it rolled to the ground. And at the same moment all her enchantments came to an end.

Then what joy and commotion there was on every side. Caled and the lady-in-waiting regained their proper forms and the statues jumped from their pedestals and danced with joy.

Perysal came running into the hall with the news that the wicked duke was no more, while all over the palace could be heard the sound of people running to and fro and rejoicing.

"But," said the lady-in-waiting to Caled, "I do not understand it at all. I saw you change into stone before my very eyes, yet you have slain this evil witch and put an end to all her enchantments."

"We owe it all to that excellent old grandmother at the gate," said Caled. "She promised me my right arm should never stiffen nor my sword fail me, so when all the rest of me was turned to stone, power remained in that arm sufficient to save us."

Now all this time more and more people were coming into the hall whom the death of the sorceress had set free, all rejoicing with one another and eager to thank their deliverers, and there was the merriest din ever heard; but while they laughed and

exclaimed at their good fortune, a fearful roar rang through the palace and a mighty voice shouted, "WHERE IS GAMBIDIUS?" The very floor shook under foot and the window panes rattled, while the lady-in-waiting turned white as death.

"Fear nothing," said Caled, "I will protect you."

As he spoke the sound of dreadful footsteps drew near and the awful voice roared again, "WHERE IS THE WITCH WOMAN?"

"Why," said Perysal, "it must be the granite giant. He too has been disenchanted. Stand clear of the door, good people, and let me deal with him!"

And even as he spoke, the curtains were torn aside and the giant strode into the hall. He was the most horrible sight imaginable; his skin was black like ebony and his hands were like great talons; he had two little red eyes which glowed like coals. He stood twenty feet high and was broad in proportion and he carried his huge sword drawn in his hand. "When I have slain Gambidius and his daughter," he shouted, "and have torn them in pieces, I will deal with the rest of you." And he foamed at the mouth and glared upon them as if he would have devoured them. But Perysal stood with his drawn sword and defied him.

"Gambidius and his daughter are no more," he cried. "You have me to deal with now, great bully."

At that the giant leapt towards him with a yell of rage but just as he was about to strike, down he went as flat as a pancake and Perysal sprang upon him and drove his sword through his body and right through his evil heart. Nevertheless, as he fell, the giant's great hand struck

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Caled and sent him spinning right across the apartment; but that jolly prince picked himself up before one could cry "Snip!" and rushed back and cut off the giant's head. "For," said he, "I could not be left out of so good a deed."

"Now," cried Perysal, "blessings on that wonderful old lady at the gate! 'May tyrants fall flat before me,' I asked, and lo! they fall flat on every hand."

"Nevertheless, brother," said Caled, "I could wish this tyrant had fallen in another direction. He nearly knocked all the breath out of my body."

And then they laughed Ha-ha-ha! and Ho-ho-ho! and there was the greatest rejoicing.

"But," cried Perysal, "one thing remains to be done. Fetch me the finest gown in the palace; let it be warm and ample and of the costliest cloth, edged with fur and handsomely embroidered. And bring me the most beautiful pair of shoes you can find, and let them be such as will comfort an old woman's feet, and then we will all go and pay our thanks where thanks are due."

So they ran willingly and ransacked the wardrobes to find what was wanted and they brought him a gown just such as he had described and the finest pair of shoes imaginable. Then they all formed a procession, with the two princes at the head and the lady-in-waiting between them bearing the gown and shoes; and as they went down the hill towards the gate all the folk who followed from the palace laughed and shouted and sang and joked with one another. Only the people in the houses like prisons took no part in their rejoicings.

And at the gate, there was the old

woman by the well. "Why!" she said, "what is the meaning of all this?" But her eyes shone very brightly.

"Exchange is no robbery," said Perysal, "and I can keep a promise, mother, as well as you."

So she let the lady-in-waiting put the fine gown upon her and lace the beautiful shoes upon her feet, and as she stood up in her fine clothes, she grew tall and slim and straight, and her grey hair turned bright golden, and her withered cheeks became like lilies and roses, and all the folk cried out in wonder.

Then she gave her hands to the two princes to kiss and praised them for their valour. "Long have I sat beside this well, and many have gone through the gate to try their fortune and never returned again till ye brought them back in triumph behind you. This evil giant whom ye have slain was the owner and ruler of the city and those who dwell in the prison-houses are his creatures and like-minded with himself. Gambidius and his daughter overcame the giant with craft and sorcery, but his minions they disdained and would have daintier flesh to wait upon them. So they made thralls of all who came unto them and were not strong enough to resist, and those who strove were turned into statues. But now ye have freed them all, and as for this evil city, I am not minded to endure the sight of it any longer."

And as she spoke, the city melted away and in its place was a lovely countryside with hills and vales and fields of waving corn.

"Now," said she, "let those who will dwell here in peace and prosperity, and those who will return to their own coun-

tries. And as for you, my two merry princes, let fortune and favour follow you all the days of your life." And as she spoke, she vanished, and those who were minded to stay found themselves suddenly established with houses and lands and everything heart could desire, while those who wished to return to their own countries found themselves suddenly transported thither without the slightest trouble.

But some chose to follow Caled and Perysal back to their own kingdoms, and

among them were the gentle lady-in-waiting, and the head cook and scullion, both of whom were quite cured of bad behaviour. And the lady-in-waiting was wedded to Caled with great magnificence and the head cook made the most wonderful wedding cake that was ever seen or tasted; so they all lived happily ever after. And never did Caled's sword fail him nor his right arm stiffen, and as for Perysal, wherever he went tyrants fell flat before him.

The Fairy Rule.

A *BEGGAR to-day and a king to-morrow,
A peck of joy and a pinch of sorrow;
That's the way the world was made
When the fairies frolicked in every glade.*

*To-night in a prison with bread and water,
To-morrow you wed with the king's fair daughter;
That's the sort of life you lead
When you follow King Oberon over the mead.*

*One day rags and the next day silk,
And a coach with horses as white as milk;
That's what happens to nobody's darling
When she goes to the ball to meet Prince Charming.*



The Secret Kingdom.

THE Prince of the Dreams is the eldest of his house and, like all the rest of his family, he is mad. He rules over two kingdoms. The first is the realm of Sleep; it is wide as the world, and anyone from the king to a beggar is free to enter; the other is secret and very hard to find. All the most beautiful things that have ever been seen or thought of are to be found there, kept safe and sound in the Secret Kingdom of the Dreams; it is full of splendid adventures and the most fabulous treasures, and beside the Dreams themselves it is inhabited by many famous knights and noble ladies who have won the favour of the Prince, and whom alone it would be a wonderful thing to see. So it is not in the least astonishing that the way to that kingdom is much sought after.

Now once upon a time the Prince of the Dreams was taking his walks abroad in the world, disguised as a wandering minstrel, for he is a poet and knows the

finest song in the world. And in some places the folk listened to him with joy and gave him cakes and wine, and in others they pelted him with stones, declaring he was a mad fellow whom nobody could make head or tail of, for you must know he sings in a language of his own which is too exalted for ordinary speech, which many people have never heard and few can understand. However, he is very kind-hearted, and so he goes up and down the world singing his strange songs, hoping that someone will understand and ask him to tell them more of his ancient wisdom, and then, if he is pleased with them, it is all odds that he will take them by the hand and show them the way to the Secret Kingdom. Now one day he had travelled far and had had no luck at all, and as night drew on he reflected what he should do; at his girdle hung two silver keys which unlock the gates of his two kingdoms, and seeing no shelter near he took the larger key in his hand and

stamped upon the highway three times. Immediately a large keyhole appeared in the road, and he was just about to insert the key when a glimmer of light appeared in the woods near by, and he perceived a little cottage close at hand, through the open door of which could be seen an old woman blowing up her fire with a pair of bellows.

"Now who knows," said the Poet Dream, "whether here my luck may not mend?" so he stamped with his foot again, the keyhole disappeared and he crossed the greensward to the cottage door.

"Good even to you, mother," he said. "Can you give me shelter for the night or at least a morsel of supper?"

"Supper you may have, such as it is," said the old woman, "and a bed of fern in the barn. There is nobody here but my granddaughter and myself, and we are poor folk, but to bread and cheese you are kindly welcome."

"I am much beholden to you," said he, "and after supper I will entertain you to the best of my ability."

"That will be delightful," said the old woman. "It is many a year since a minstrel passed this way, and few bother about an old woman."

"Come in and be welcome," said her granddaughter, and leaving her spinning-wheel, she fetched him a stool in the chimney corner and set bread and cheese and a great pitcher of milk on the table, and a little platter of dewberries for the guest alone. So they sat by the fireside and supped very pleasantly together, and when they had finished, the Prince of the Dreams told stories of the cities he had passed through, and the wonderful lands

he had seen, all of which pleased the old woman and her granddaughter mightily. And as they made him so welcome and seemed disposed to believe all that he told them he unslung his harp from his back and began to sing in his own language.

"I don't pretend to understand all that," said the old woman when he had finished. "And indeed it is mostly moonshine, but it reminds me very much of something I heard when I was a young girl," and here she wiped her eyes, for she was very old and could not think of her youth without tears. "But I know," she said, "you have come to the right place, for my granddaughter here can teach you the finest song in the world."

And at that the Prince smiled, for he knew well enough that the finest song in the world belonged to himself, however mad he might be. However, he said nothing, and the young girl rose and went to her spinning-wheel and set the wheel turning, and as its hum filled the room she began to sing, and lo and behold! it was his own magic song. I wish I could write it down for you, but it is too exalted for pen and ink, and I myself have only heard it twice in my dreams, but it is quite unmistakable and you will know it when you hear it; and it can turn the world upside down. The Prince of the Dreams nearly bounced in his seat, and for two pins he would have stood on his head like the youngest of the Dreams, but he remembered himself just in time and the young girl stopped at the end of the verse.

"Go on," said the prince. "There is more of it."

"That is all I know," said the girl.

"Did you ever hear anything like it?" said the old woman.

"There is nothing like it in the world," said the prince. "Where did you learn it?" he asked the girl.

"When I was a little child," she said, "I lived just outside a great city, and one day a minstrel came out on the highway singing this song, and the people of the city came after him flinging stones at him for a mad fellow. But when no one was looking I went down the highway to find him, and offered him a penny to sing me a song. So he took me on his knee and sang me the whole song over and over again."

"So I did," said the prince to himself. "I had forgotten all about it."

"But I was too little to remember more than one verse," said the girl. "However, it was worth a penny."

"So it was," said the prince to himself. "I have got that penny still somewhere." And he wished he were not quite so mad and could remember where it was.

"What are you talking to yourself about?" said the old woman. "You are worn out, I can see, and would be better asleep. Here is a lantern; the barn is just yonder. Shake yourself down a good bed of dry fern, and may you have pleasant dreams."

So the Prince of the Dreams thanked her and made his way to the barn; there he set down the lantern and clapped his hands. Immediately the barn was filled with Dreams of every age and condition and the whole place glowed like a rainbow, for the Dreams go very gaily dressed and find it hard to keep still, nor do they care whether they go about on their heads or their heels. The prince looked about

him and called to him two of the gravest and most beautiful of the company.

"Go to the cottage," said he, "and guide the old woman and her granddaughter safely into the Kingdom of Sleep. Tell them your most wonderful stories, but say nothing of the Secret Kingdom whither I am bound myself. And for the rest of you, do as it pleases you."

In a trice they were all off, some on their heads and some on their heels, and the two more soberly to the cottage. Then the prince stepped out into the moonlight, and taking in his hand the smaller key that hung at his girdle he fitted it in the lock of a silver door that suddenly grew up in front of him out of nowhere, and opening the door passed through into the Secret Kingdom. Immediately he was much changed, and no longer looked like a poor minstrel, but a very handsome prince dressed in a suit of silver like moonshine. He was standing in a green valley carpeted with flowers and musical with the songs of birds and full of the murmuring of streams. On either hand were mountains clothed in mists of blue and amethyst, with snow-capped peaks gleaming in the sunshine, and at the far end of the valley was a palace of white marble with a hundred steps leading down to a little lake gay with pink and white water-lilies. Thither the prince bent his steps and entering the palace sent a young Dream, whom he found idly standing on his head in the vestibule, to fetch the noble lady who had charge of his treasures. When she came they went into the inmost room of the palace and the prince placed her at his side on a bench of silver. "Tell me," he said, "did I ever give into your keeping a penny I had of

a child outside one of the cities of the world?" www.libtool.com.cn

"Indeed you did," she said, "and I have it safe. Shall I bring it you?"

"Nay," said he, "I will come with you, for methinks I forget my treasures."

So they went together to the treasure-room; it is vaulted like the arch of heaven and the ceiling sparkles with jewels, while the walls are hung with tapestries which change colour before your eyes and tell a thousand wonderful stories. All around are golden cabinets stored with jewels and spices and toys of crystal, while in the middle of the floor is a great heap of silken garments of every imaginable hue and shape which never wear out and to which the Dreams help themselves as they feel disposed. "Here is the penny," said the noble lady, going to one of the cabinets and unlocking a drawer.

"What a beautiful thing," said the prince as he took it in his hand, and indeed, as he touched it, it glowed like fire and a hundred veins of gold gleamed in the bronze. That is because he can see into the very heart of things whenever he troubles to look, and that is why he is a poet and can tell the right answer to any riddle.

"What a rich maid was she who gave me this!" said he, "since even her pennies are gold at heart. I must see more of her." And at that he looked out of the window and saw something like a rainbow and a whirlwind rolled into one coming up the valley, and as it drew nearer he saw it was the Dream he had sent to wait upon the old woman's granddaughter, completely bereft of all the wits he ever had.

"Why, what is this?" he said. "Come

hither, sirrah, and tell me why you neglect your duties."

The Dream was so confused that he shot straight in at the window and fell all in a heap on the pile of silken garments on the floor.

"What ever shall I do?" he cried, scrambling to his feet and falling on his knees before the Prince Dream. "I have no power left at all. The lady you sent me to attend would have none of me; she did indeed suffer me to accompany her as far as the Kingdom of Sleep, but there she sent me about my business, declaring she needed no guide. And when I, seeing that she bent her step towards the gate which leads from that realm to the Secret Kingdom (of which she has some strange knowledge), pressed my suit upon her, she left me abruptly and returned to the world. Thither I followed her, but in a while she again entered the Kingdom of Sleep and made for the gate of the Secret Kingdom, and when I would have distracted her attention, she rated me soundly for an idle fellow who should have none of her thoughts. Then in despair, I told her her home was burning and her grandmother and her guest perishing in the flames, and though she plainly did not believe me, she hurried back to the world to see, and there I left her, sitting by the fire, much vexed in mind. And this is plain, that she obeys not the rule of the Dreams in the Kingdom of Sleep but makes them subject to her pleasure, and I doubt not, if she finds her way thither, that she will bend the Secret Kingdom to her will also."

"Now, as I live," said the Prince, "this is a rare maid, for yonder she comes!"

Immediately the younger Dream, who

was ordinarily of a grave and beautiful behaviour, stood upon his head in the greatest agitation, while the noble lady looking out of the window saw the young girl herself, dressed in her poor clothes and clumsy wooden shoes, coming up the valley and making straight for the palace.

"Come with me," said the prince, "and we will receive this lady fittingly."

So when the young girl came to the palace she found a young Dream waiting to conduct her to the inmost room, and there she found the Prince of the Dreams seated on his silver bench with knights and noble ladies round about him, and all the happy, dancing Dreams dressed in their brightest and best and all standing the right way up to do her honour.

"Welcome, fair maid," said the prince, taking her hand kindly. "What is it you would have of me?"

Now she did not recognise him again, for he was much changed; nevertheless she looked at him strangely as he spoke, for his voice reminded her of her guest.

"I come seeking an old minstrel," she said. "I pray you tell me if he be still alive and in the world. Or doth he dwell in this strange kingdom where I perceive you all speak his language?"

"He is yet alive and to be found in the world," said the prince. "Why do you seek him?"

"I would fain learn of him the rest of his magic song," said the girl, "for without it I shall never be content at heart."

"Why do you desire it so greatly?" asked the prince.

"There is much wisdom in it," said the girl, "and great power. It can turn the world upside down. The words of it are all magic, and can unlock the door of any

prison and any treasure-house. It will make a fire to warm you in winter and will call up fountains from the sand in the summer heat. Whoever has once learnt part of it can never rest till he knows the whole."

"This is great power to put into the hands of a mortal," said the prince. "How am I to know that you are to be trusted with it?"

"I know some part of it already," said the girl, "and it has unlocked for me the gate of this kingdom which I think must be the Land of Heart's Desire. But if the singer of this song is in the world I must go back to the world, for even here I could not be happy without it all."

"Go back to the world then," said the prince, "and follow my counsel. Leave your cottage and seek out the cities, getting your living as you can. I see you have much wisdom for your years, and it may be you will find this ancient minstrel of whom you speak and obtain your wish of him. Meanwhile, there is with you in your home a harmless fellow, a minstrel also, who has been much about the world and is willing to serve you. Take him for your guide, but do not trust too greatly to his wits, for I fear he is a little mad. And for your grandmother do not be uneasy, for she shall dwell with me in this enchanted valley while you are on your travels."

And as she would have thanked him he laid his finger on her lips and she suddenly found herself sitting up in her bed in the little cottage in the woods. It was just dawn, and looking across the room she saw her grandmother's bed was empty and the rugs neatly folded and laid aside as though they would not be wanted for

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a long while, and she knew she had gone to the Secret Kingdom.

Nevertheless she wished she had been able to bid her farewell, and she dressed and went to the door of the cottage feeling very sad. As she stood there she saw the Prince Dream in his worn minstrel's dress coming across from the barn with a bucket of water in one hand and a bundle of faggots on his shoulder.

"Good-morrow to you," he said. "Why do you look so sad? Have you had bad dreams?"

"My grandmother has gone away," said she, "and will not return for a long while, and I am feeling lonely."

"Do not be sad," said the Poet Dream. "She is a wise woman, and will fare well wherever she goes. And such as I am, I am at your service."

"I thank you," said the girl, "I shall soon have need of you." And she felt much comforted at his words and went about the getting of a meal with a much lighter heart.

"I am minded to go out into the world," she said as they sat at breakfast. "Will you bear me company? I go seeking an old minstrel and you have been much about the world and know where such are most likely to be found. If you will be my guide you will do me great service."

"Right willingly," said the prince, and when they had finished breakfast, he helped her sweep up the hearth and make all fast and sound in the cottage; then they stepped out upon the highway and so went their way into the great world.

So they tramped along and soon came to a great city, and there the prince unslung his harp and would have begun to sing in his own tongue.

"Not so fast," said the girl. "Let us see first if these folk are good to strangers." So she stepped to the open door of the nearest house and said to the woman within, "Good mother, will you give me a drink of water?"

"Be off with you, for an idle bag-of-bones," said the woman; so the girl tried the next house and got the same answer. "Nothing begets nothing in this town," said the girl, and stayed no more, but went to the market place and there opened her pack and drew from it some bunches of dried herbs she had brought from her home.

"Simples for sale!" she cried. "Who'll buy my rare simples? Here's herbs for all your aches and pains. This is for the ear-ache and this is for the toothache, and this will cure the cold in your head." Presently an old goody gave her a penny for a little bunch of her herbs, and then a woman bought some to cure her little girl of biting her thumbs, and soon the girl was doing a good trade. When the Prince of the Dreams saw her comfortably established in her place and doing a good business he said: "I am minded to see something of this city. Meet me at sundown without the further gate. You will be quite safe, for no one will molest a respectable huckstress."

So she agreed, and he went his way into the byways of the city, and where he saw a likely face he would unslung his harp and begin to sing in his strange magical tongue, and the cage birds stopped singing and the winds stole more softly down the alleys to listen to him. But the folk of the town understood never a word of him, and bade him be off for a gangrel loon. And the children followed

him singing ribald songs and flinging dirt and stones at him, so when he joined the young girl outside the city in the evening she had food and pence and he had nought but bruises.

"What did I tell you?" she said.

"I remember well," he answered. "Nought begets nought."

"Let me bind up that cut for you," she said, "then we will sup and see about lodging for the night." So she bound up his forehead where a stone had cut it, and then they shared the bread she had bought with the price of her simples. And while they sat under the hedgerow and the night drew on, a bent old woman stole out of the city and came where they sat. And she said to the prince, "Will you sing me the song you sang this morning, but softly, lest the rabble come out of the city?"

So he unslung his harp and sang her a little part of it over and over again, and as he sang the tears rolled down the woman's face, and as she wept a great load which lay upon her heart melted away, and when she rose to go home she was no longer bent and bowed, but stood upright and firm upon her feet.

"Now bless the day that I heard your voice," said the old woman as she went away, "and good luck follow you. Here's all I can spare for you. I feel almost young again; I believe if I could understand all that you say I should regain my youth."

"And that is quite true," said the Prince of the Dreams as the old woman walked briskly away.

"I see," said the girl, "that you have a good memory; that was the song I sang to you last night. And I see there are more simples in the world than herbs, and you are the better doctor."

"There is much to be learnt going up and down the world," said the prince.

"When I have learnt the rest of the song I will teach you all I know," said the girl, and though he smiled to himself he thanked her kindly.

The next day they came to a great castle standing upon a gigantic rock and approached by a solitary road. Up this they toiled, and at the gate the girl said: "I will sell no more simples. If my old minstrel is in the world, as I am told he is, I shall not find him sitting in an apothecary's shop." So she went into the courtyard and began to sing, while the Prince of the Dreams played for her upon his harp. And the lord of the castle put his head out of the window and said, "My pretty singing bird, what do you lack? Is it a fine silk gown? Come in and sing to me and you shall have a plenty."

So she went in and sang to him, and he begged her to stay there, but she told him of her quest and inquired for the old minstrel. "There is no one old here," said the lord, "but stay with me and he shall be fetched."

"I thank you kindly, sir," she said, "but I must seek him myself."

"Nay, if you will not stop for fair words you shall for foul," said he. "I will compel you to stop."

"Think not to stay me," she said, "for there is a word of power in my mouth which will open any door."

"Is there so, witch?" said he. "You shall have somewhat else in your mouth for company." And at that he made a sign and two stout fellows seized her and thrust a gag into her mouth so she could not utter a sound, and locked her securely in a little room in the very topmost turret

of the tower. And as for the Prince of the Dreams, when he would have gone to her help the varlets fell upon him and bound him fast to wait their lord's pleasure. But the lord of the castle having got, as he thought, what he wanted, was not disposed to trouble himself about a wandering madman, so he bade them unloose the fellow and kick him out of the castle, which was done with great heartiness.

As soon as night came the Prince of the Dreams took his own proper form, and going to the castle slid through the window of the turret on a moonbeam. The poor maid had given herself up for lost, and when she saw him concluded at once that she was dreaming.

"Come now," said he. "Where one can get in, two can get out. Set your foot on this moonbeam and step up on to the window sill." And to show her the way, he walked up the moonbeam, out of the window and stood in the air outside.

"I am certainly dreaming," thought the girl. "But nobody is ever hurt in a dream. Here goes!" And she set her foot firmly on the moonbeam and stepped upon the window ledge.

"Now keep a good heart," said the prince, and he took her firmly by the wrists and swung her right out of the window on to another moonbeam which immediately began to return from whence it came, and carried them with incredible swiftness right up to the moon itself where the prince has a palace of his own. And there the moon princesses untied the cruel gag and bathed the poor maid's face with scented unguents and sang to her like nightingales, while twenty little stars served her with cakes and honey.

"This is the most delightful dream I

ever had," said the girl. "I wish my poor minstrel were here with me."

"Come," said the prince, "it is time you returned to earth," and he picked her up in his arms as though she were a feather and began to drop slowly down to the world. And as they floated through the air, he sang his magical song, and the girl forgot every one of her troubles and fell into a deep sleep, and in the morning she awoke under a hedgerow far away from the castle, and lo and behold! there was the Prince of the Dreams dressed in the tattered gown of the minstrel making a fire for their breakfast.

"Why, where is the castle?" said the girl, "and how have I got out of prison?"

"There is no castle about here," said the prince. "You must have had a bad dream." And sure enough no castle was to be seen; nevertheless she noticed that the prince limped as he walked, and moreover the tune of his magical song was running in her head. However, she said nothing, but ate and drank what he gave her, and busied herself recollecting all she could of her dream, as she supposed it to be, and particularly the song he had sung. And when she had hummed it over once or twice to herself, she found that she now knew another verse of the finest song of the world, but not all of it, because she had fallen asleep before the end.

"I don't understand all that has happened," said the girl, "but my two eyes tell me you have been taking care of me while I slept and have got buffeted for your pains. But thanks to you, I have had a fortunate dream, and you must share my good luck." Thereupon she bade him listen carefully and sang him the second verse of his own song and made him sing

it after her; and as he sang, the birds ceased their own singing and the wild things came out of the woods to listen, and a little snake in green and gold laid its head on his knee, and its eyes shone like two jewels. When the song was ended the snake slid back into the grass and the creatures returned to the woods again.

"Come," said the girl, "let us get on into the world; and give me your arm and lean on me, for I see you are a great minstrel, whether you be mad or no."

So they fared on their way, the prince limping as he went, and the girl told him all the lore she had learnt of her grandmother and much more that she had found out for herself by virtue of the song she had learnt as a child from the old minstrel, which is itself a key to much knowledge. And he told her strange tales of the ways of men and the curious treasures that are hidden in the earth; and as they went they liked each other more and more, but neither of them spoke of the Secret Kingdom. And at last they came to a royal city where dwelt a great king, and found the whole court in a commotion. Nobody wanted either songs or simples, because the king had lost the big diamond out of his ring and nobody could sleep or rest till it was found. Criers went up and down the city ringing their bells and offering rewards, and heralds stood upon the ramparts making proclamation to the sound of the trumpet all day long.

"Here's a pretty fuss about a paltry jewel," said the Prince of the Dreams. "Tell the king the jewel is in the fishpond, and let us all get on with our business."

"And what may your business be, madman?" said one; nevertheless a dozen

people rushed to the king and said, "Here's a mad soothsayer declares the gem is in the fishpond!"

Immediately the king ordered the fish to be caught and the marble basin emptied of the water, and there was more running to and fro, and such a commotion as never was. Nevertheless the pond at last was dry, and there sure enough was the big diamond lying at the bottom.

"Depend upon it," said the king, "he put it there. I know these fellows who pretend to know so much and deceive the ignorant. Catch me this soothsayer and bring him here in a trice."

Now the Prince of the Dreams had taken advantage of the peace in the city to venture abroad and see if anyone would understand his songs. The town criers had ceased ringing their bells, and the trumpeters had stopped blowing; folks had ceased running about and bawling, and all was peace and quietness, so the Prince had just stepped out into the streets and begun his song when the king's officers fell upon him and haled him off to the court.

"So you thought to reap a fine reward, sirrah!" cried the king. "But I know your tricks; those who hide can find. You are a pestilential madman. Away with him to prison!" And, in a trice, he was bound and clapped into a dungeon.

Now when the young girl heard of it, her rage knew no bounds. "I may not know everything," she said, "but I know enough, with good intent, to turn this city upside down and inside out." And off she went to the palace as fast as her feet would carry her.

"Vile and ungrateful king!" she said. "What have you done with my minstrel?"

Listen to me and beware how you withstand me!" And instantly she began to sing, not as she sang in the cottage and by the roadside, but as though she commanded, and as she sang all the houses turned inside out and upside down. The roofs were where the floors should be, and all the folk found themselves walking on the ceilings; and the walls were brick and stone inside and silk and tapestry outside; and as for the people's clothes, such a sight was never seen before. Some folk who went fine without were found to be all rags within, and some who went soberly dressed were found to be wearing cloth of gold; while as for the king, his fine dress turned inside out and changed into a suit of buckram.

"A fine king you are!" said the girl. "Where is my minstrel?"

"Nay," said the king, "I know not; he was in the dungeons; he must be now in the attics, and the keys have all fallen down the chimneys."

"Then," said the girl, "go you before me to the attics." So up he went, willy-nilly, and she after him, singing as she went, and as she passed the doors flew open and the captives came out. And at last they found the Prince of the Dreams, and when the king had knelt at her bidding and unfastened his bonds, she took him by the hand and drew him out of the palace and out of the city, no one molesting them.

And when at last they were safe and sound outside she said: "This is the end of my journey; now I know indeed whose is the magical song that can turn the world upside down, and he it was whom I met as a child in the guise of an old minstrel. It was no dream that came to

me in my prison in the castle, but he himself in his proper form. Come with me, and we will seek this prince in his Secret Kingdom, and I will petition him to teach thee all his song, for thou art a great minstrel and of more wisdom than I."

And he said, "I am content."

Then she put out her hand and immediately a little silver door grew up before her out of nowhere, and she pushed it open, and they passed through. And immediately the prince appeared in his proper form, very handsome and habited in a suit of silver like moonshine; and when the maid saw this she would have fallen to the ground, but he took her by the hand and said: "Why, thou wast never afraid before. Dost thou fear to dwell for ever in the Secret Kingdom?"

"Nay," she said, "if that be thy pleasure."

So they wandered up the valley, and as they went the prince sang his magic song, and the very air danced in the sunshine for sheer happiness, and the girl could not forbear to sing too, but joined her voice to his, and in that manner she learnt the end of the song. And as they came to the little lake which is before the palace she saw her own reflection in the water, and exclaimed, for she was more beautiful than the day and her poor dress was turned into a robe of silver.

"Why, what am I become?" she said.

"Princess of the Dreams, so please you," said the Poet Dream; and so they went into their palace and were married and lived happily ever after. And sometimes they visit the world and sing their magical song, and sometimes the folk reward them with stones and sometimes with cakes and wine; but always they go

back to the Secret Kingdom of the ladies are there to this day in great
Dreams, and they and their knights and felicity.

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The Banquet.

BREAD and cheese by the roadside,
Berries in the wood,
A draught of water from the spring—
These are passing good.

*But when you come to my kingdom
You shall have cakes and wine,
And a beautiful dish of ice cream
And grapes from a magic vine.*

*And the cook shall make a pasty
Stuffed with dainties rare;
And twenty men shall serve the board
And stand behind your chair.*



The Whispering Trees.

ONCE upon a time, long, long ago, a king and queen invited the fairies to their little daughter's christening. She was their only child and they were very proud of her, for all their subjects declared that never had there been such a beautiful baby. So there was great rejoicing all over the kingdom and the bells were rung and the people feasted and made merry in honour of the little princess. And the king and queen spared no pains to please their guests, and especially the fairies, for whom the most elaborate preparations were made, and all expressed the greatest delight with what had been done for them and dowered the infant princess with every imaginable gift. One gave her beauty and another a sweet temper; one promised her riches and another a handsome husband; one said she should dance like the fairies themselves and another that she should sing like the nightingale, and so on, until the king and queen were nearly beside them-

selves with delight. And when the rejoicing was at its height a horrible old hag tottered into the chamber and she said, "The princess shall be blind!" Then before a finger could be laid upon her she vanished in a puff of smoke and there was nothing left but two sooty marks on the floor where she had stood.

The queen and her ladies-in-waiting burst into tears and all the fairies looked very grave; the king fell on his knees and offered them his crown if they would only undo this dreadful misfortune, but they shook their heads, for it is well known that no fairy can take away another fairy's christening gift; so all felt very wretched and despondent and everyone wept except the little princess herself, and she continued to smile and wave her chubby hands contentedly, although she was now quite blind. And just as the fairies were preparing to take their leave there was a great blowing of trumpets and a little fairy flew through the window

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escorted by a score of elfin trumpeters all blowing upon their trumpets most delightfully.

"Dear me!" cried the newcomer, "I am almost too late. But I was delayed upon the road by one of my godchildren who had got into trouble. And now pray what is the matter here?"

"The bad old fairy who lives in the volcano," said one of the other fairies, "has said that the princess shall be blind."

"That is indeed a misfortune," said the newcomer. "Still there is a way out, but the princess must find it for herself. And I will give her the key of it as my present. Listen all! The princess shall hear what she shall hear."

Instantly the fairy trumpeters played a fanfare and the baby clapped her hands and crowed with delight. Then the fairies took their leave and returned to their own homes; the queen and the ladies-in-waiting dried their eyes and tried to comfort each other, and everybody went about saying that as soon as the princess grew up she would be sure to find the way out of her blindness.

Nevertheless, when the princess was grown up and had become all that the good fairies had said she should be, she still could not see nor did it seem likely that she ever would. But one thing was very plain, and that was that the princess heard more than ordinary folks. She knew what was going on all over the world, not only in distant countries but in the cottages round about the palace gates; and she knew what ships were at sea and when they would have rain and when the first swallow was coming from the south; and she was so greatly beloved that when the old king and queen died the people would

not hear of anyone else for their ruler but proclaimed her their sovereign with one accord.

Now, one day she was sitting alone in her garden beneath the trees, listening to the river that ran by at her feet and told her tales of what was going on in the mountains from whence it came and all the wonderful things it would see when it reached the ocean, when suddenly she heard the trees begin to whisper over her head.

"Ssh!" said the trees. "Look who comes here."

The princess listened attentively and heard the sound of a boat being beached quite close at hand.

"A handsome youth," said the trees to one another. "Ssh! He is landing, and coming towards our lady. Now what can a poor lad like him have to say to a princess? See, he is taking off his cap and bowing to her."

"Good-morrow to you, young sir," said the princess kindly. "What is your business with me?"

"My business is with the princess of this country, gentle lady," said the young man. "I have come to beg that she will take me into her service."

"Ssh!" said the trees. "He takes the princess for a lady-in-waiting. How laughable!" And they tittered gently among themselves and all their leaves rustled.

"And what services can you render the princess?" asked the princess herself, who heard all that was said over her head.

"I have heard the princess is blind," said the young man, "and I am very learned in all manner of healing herbs, and strong and hardy too, so that I would not fear to range the wide world over, if

need be, to find aught that would cure her."

"You are a good lad," said the princess, who perceived that he did not know her, for though she was blind her eyes were beautiful to behold. "But I fear you can not do much for her, for she must find her own way out of her trouble. Nevertheless I will speak to her for you if you are desirous."

"Gentle lady," said the young man earnestly, "there is nothing I wish more, and the princess will indeed find her way out if she appoints me to her service."

"Listen to him!" said the trees. "He believes all that he says, and he stands up as proudly as a young knight, for all his poor clothes. Who can he be, and what has he got there?"

"What have you got there?" said the princess quickly.

"Only a basket of mountain strawberries I was bringing the princess," said the young man, "but if you will speak to her for me, I will give them to you, and I will rise early and gather her some more to-morrow."

"Give them to me," said the princess, holding out her hands, and he placed them in her hands and never guessed she could not see.

"These are the most delicious fruit I ever tasted in my life," said the princess. "Take this handful for yourself and tell me why you are so anxious to serve the princess."

"I have heard she is much beloved," said the young man, "and it is a sin and a shame that she should be blind to gratify an old hag's spite."

"Well, well," said the princess. "Come

again to-morrow and I will see what I can do for you."

"You are a most sweet lady," said the young man, "and I am glad that we shall both serve the same mistress."

At this the trees laughed more than ever. "Saucy fellow!" they said. "How he talks! He is most diverting." However, the princess speedily dismissed the young man and he got into his boat and sailed away.

No sooner had he gone, however, than a lark who was tired of singing dropped to the ground near the princess and began to chatter to the trees.

"What was the king's son doing here?" said the lark.

"What king's son?" said the trees. "There has been no one here save a country youth who came in his boat desiring to enter the princess's service."

"That was the youngest son of the king of the next kingdom," said the lark. "I saw him steal out of his father's palace and disguise himself, and sail swiftly up the river with a willing breeze to help him."

"So-ho! So-ho!" said the trees. "This is news indeed."

"The evening breeze will take him home," said the lark, "but he has many miles to go and it will be dark ere he reaches his father's palace."

"Now I am indeed hearing something," thought the princess, and hearkened intently; however, the lark had no more news to give, so she tired of listening to the trees discussing the matter and retired into her palace.

Meanwhile the disguised prince was sailing swiftly down the river; nevertheless evening came on ere he was half-way

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home and it was dark when he reached his father's palace and found the whole court searching for him. But when his father found where he had been he was highly displeased.

"Do you not know," he said, "that it is the right of your elder brother to go out into the world first and win fame and honour for himself? Go to your own apartments, sir, and remain there until I give you leave. Your brother shall undertake anything that needs to be done."

And as he protested, the king locked him in his bedchamber and set a guard before the door. But at dawn the young prince tore his sheets into strips, knotted them together and let himself down from his window; then he made all the haste he could to reach the mountains and gather a fresh basket of wild strawberries for the princess.

Meanwhile his flight had been discovered and the king's wrath knew no bounds. He hastily summoned his elder son and said: "There is no time to be lost if you are to be first in the field. Disguise yourself with all speed and take your brother's boat, then get you to the blind princess and offer her your services."

Now the elder prince was of a vain and frivolous disposition, and had no great desire for the adventure which he foresaw would be a dull and arduous one, so he said, "It is no use, sire, for me to give out that I am learned in the uses of herbs, for I do not know a balsam from a thistle."

"Very well," said the king, "then you shall go as a pedlar, and I will furnish you with all manner of powerful spices and unguents to put among your trinkets, but go you shall." So the prince made the

best of a bad business and was soon suitably dressed and equipped with a pedlar's tray decked with ribbons and a pack full of the rarest spices. He stepped into his brother's boat and a willing breeze filled the sail and soon carried him far up the river, and by afternoon he came to the confines of the princess's dominions and found her sitting in the gardens of her palace, just as his brother had described her. And of course he had no idea she was the princess herself, but took her to be the lady-in-waiting of whom his brother had told. So he stepped out of the boat with great assurance and advanced towards her.

"Ssh!" said the trees. "Here comes the king's son again. To-day he has got himself up as a pedlar; now what is the reason of that?"

"Good-day to you, king's son," said the princess, as she heard him draw near, and when he heard her call him "king's son" he was so confused that he dropped his pack and his tray and all his wares were littered over the pathway.

"Of all the simpletons!" said the trees. "What can have made him lose his wits so? Only see him grovelling after his wares!" And they laughed till their branches creaked and some of them split their bark, and the princess laughed to hear them.

"Pick up your wares," she said, "and tell me why you are so anxious to enter my service."

"Your pardon, madam, but I do not care about your service," said the prince shortly. "I have come to offer my services to your mistress."

"I am the princess," she said, and at that he was so astounded that the trees

tittered again, and the princess laughed outright.

"Because I am blind," she said, "I am not to be imposed upon. Now answer me truthfully: What hath befallen the prince who came to me yesterday with offers of service and why have you come in his stead?"

"She is right, she is right," whispered the trees. "It is another prince. Oh, how diverting!"

"My father bade me take my brother's place and locked him up in his chamber," answered the prince. "Nevertheless he escaped ere daybreak!"

"A noble lad," said the princess. "But as for you, if you indeed crave opportunity to win glory, get you out into the world and seek my release from my misfortune; for all your spices and unguents are worth nothing at all."

So the prince vowed that he desired nothing more and followed her to the palace where she had him properly armed and apparelled and mounted on a splendid horse, and he rode away into the world to do her bidding. However, he soon tired of his quest, and after engaging in several adventures which did nobody much good he returned to his father's kingdom and could not be induced to stir hand or foot out of it again.

Meanwhile his younger brother had been meeting with many adventures. When he returned to the river with his basket full of strawberries he was greatly put about to find his boat gone, but he was determined not to be hindered from carrying out his purpose and started to trudge his way back to the princess's kingdom on foot. "And who knows?" said he, "I may

get a lift on the road." So he packed his berries in green leaves and set out.

And the same evening he came to a little cottage by the roadside and found an old goody making her supper off dry bread. "Dry fare, dry fare," she said. "I mind the days I had white bread and honey as much as I wished. But nobody thinks of the old."

"Why, mother," said the prince, "here is something to sweeten your fare," and he gave her of his berries as much as she wished until they were all gone.

"Bide here the night," said the old woman, "and get me more of those berries to-morrow and you shall ask your reward."

So the prince remained the night, and in the morning he rose and trudged all the way back to the mountains and gathered a double quantity of the berries, and the old woman eat them all up and said the same as before. "Get me more of those berries and you shall ask your reward."

So the prince remained another night and in the morning trudged again to the mountains and gathered a treble quantity, and the old woman eat those up also and praised him more and more. And she said, "Remain only one more night and gather me more of those berries and there is nothing you can ask of me that I will not give you." So the prince remained a third night and in the morning sought the mountains and gathered all the berries he could carry, and the old woman gobbled them all up, every one, and besought that he would stay yet one more night and fetch her some more.

But he said: "Nay. These three days I have done your bidding. And what I gave

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you first I gave freely, but now keep your promises to me for these last three days."

Then she said, "Stay but one more night and all shall be as you wish." But he said, "I have stayed too long."

Then she hobbled into her cottage and held her crutch upside down, and immediately the cottage sparkled with jewels which encrusted the walls and lay in heaps on the floor. "Fill your pockets with these and stay one more night," said the old woman.

"Nay, mother," said the prince, "I can stay no longer. And I perceive that you are a mighty enchanter, and you have promised to refuse me nothing I ask of you. Tell me what will cure the blind princess."

Now the old woman was in a quandary, for if she told the prince, she knew she would enrage the old fairy who lived in the volcano, and if she refused to keep her word, she would be disgraced forever among all enchanters. So she flew into a violent passion. "Ungrateful upstart," she said, "hearken to me." And she pronounced the charm and he repeated it after her. "Much good may it do you," she said, "for you will never reach the princess."

"Shall I not?" he said. "We shall see." And he set out. He followed the river until it was dusk and then turned aside into a thicket and lay down, and while he slept the old crone placed an enchantment on the woods, and when he woke in the morning he found a pathless maze had grown up round him and he could not get out, though he wandered up and down till he fell exhausted. And at last he gave up all hope of escaping and lay down in despair to die.

Meanwhile the princess sat in her garden waiting for his return and wondered why he never came. And the trees whispered over her head of what was going on in the world and one day she heard them say: "Such news! Such news! The prince is a prisoner in the woods. He will never get out by himself." Then the princess sat as still as a mouse and listened intently until she had learnt all that had befallen the young man and whereabouts he was imprisoned, and when she was satisfied that she knew all there was to be learnt, she retired to her palace and summoned her Lord Chancellor.

"I am going a long journey into the woods," she said. "During my absence, you must govern the kingdom. Now let a company of woodmen with their axes and billhooks be assembled to attend me, and let my state barge be in readiness. Also let a quantity of victuals be prepared and see that a skilful leech is also in my company, for I may need his services."

And all was done as she said, most willingly and joyfully, and in the morning she started on her journey. The barge floated down the river with the leech and the provisions, but the princess and her woodmen went on foot, for the princess trusted to the whispering trees to guide her on her road. And she said: "Hew down all brushwood that stops the way and make me a path, but let no man touch the trees on pain of death, for they are my friends and have done me great service."

And there was great commotion among the trees when the news of her journey spread abroad, and one tree told another until every tree in the woods for miles knew she was coming and was all agog to see her pass. And the princess smiled to

herself as she heard them call to one another. "Ssh! Here she comes! How fast she travels! Do you think she will be in time?" And when they said that, the princess pushed on faster than ever, and her woodmen hewed down the brushwood before her and worked like giants, but nobody touched the trees.

Nevertheless, the princess was obliged to spend one night in the woods, and they brought the victuals out of her barge and made a fire, and supped and laid themselves down to sleep in their mantles. But in the morning, the princess heard the trees say: "She must hasten, she must hasten. Let her follow the river and she will be right, but she must hasten, she must hasten." And all their leaves rustled as they repeated, "Hasten, hasten!" So the barge set sail once more and the princess and her woodmen pushed on with all speed and stayed for nought; and as they went the princess heard one tree say to another, "He is sending her a message." And the next tree said, "What message?" And the first tree answered: "He is sitting in his prison and crying out, 'If anyone hears me, let him go to the blind princess and tell her to repeat this charm.'" "How do you know?" said the second tree. "My neighbour told me," said the first. And as the princess went on, the whole wood seemed full of it, and every leaf seemed to be saying, "Have you heard the message the prince is sending to the blind princess?" And they murmured the magic charm one to another and at last the princess cried out: "I have learnt it! I have learnt it! Listen all to me!" And she repeated the words of the charm and immediately she could see.

Then what joy was there among her

woodmen, but the princess would not suffer them to linger, but urged them to hurry on lest they should be too late. And at evening time they reached the thicket in which the prince was imprisoned and started to hew their way through, and they heard the prince's voice calling very faintly, "Good people all, who pass along the river, carry my words to the blind princess and tell her to repeat this charm."

Then the princess cried out, "She has got your message and she can see as well as anybody."

"I am glad of that," said the prince, "for I am dying. The enchantress told me I should never reach the princess."

"No," cried the princess, "but she will reach you. Hasten, hasten!" And all the trees repeated, "Hasten, hasten!" until their leaves rustled again. And the woodmen plied their axes until the sweat dripped off them, and at last they hewed a way right through the maze of bushes, and the prince was free. And the leech gave him a potent draught out of a crystal phial which completely restored him and he stood upon his feet looking as strong and handsome as the first day the princess saw him.

"Gentle lady," he said to the princess, "I am indeed rejoiced that your mistress is restored, for it was a sin and a shame that she should suffer so to please an old hag's spite. And now I will beseech her that she will give you to me for my bride, for I am a king's son and you are the sweetest lady that ever I saw."

"I am the princess," she said, "and I am much beholden to you for all you have done for me. Return with me to my kingdom and all shall be as you wish."

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“With all my heart,” said the prince, “and as for this worthy leech, I declare he is the finest physician in twenty kingdoms and he shall have a chain of pure gold studded with rubies.”

So they spent one more night in the woods and the next day they all entered the princess’s state barge and returned in great joy to her palace.

And there was a grand wedding, and

the prince and princess were crowned king and queen, the leech wore his new chain, the woodmen were each given a handsome reward, and there was feasting and rejoicing all over the kingdom. So they all lived happily ever after. And the trees told each other all about it for miles and miles, and they whispered to each other: “Ssh! We told you so. We knew how it would be. We told you so! Ssh!”

The Wedding Gown.

SPIDERS, spin the veil!
The elves are making the gown,
All of the softest silk
And light as thistledown:

Pearls to deck the hem,
A girdle at the waist,
A petticoat made of sea foam
And a mantle silver laced.

Embroidered with eglantine
And a pattern of roses wild:
This is the wedding gown
For the Fairy Godmother's child.



The Fog Princess.

ONCE upon a time a poet sat in his garret writing a beautiful poem. From his window he could see right across the roofs of the city to where the pigeons fluttered round the spires of the cathedral, and he could even catch a glimpse of the river between the tall houses opposite his dwelling. There had been a fog all day, but now the sun could be seen sinking to rest in a mist of gold and purple.

"How sublime are all the aspects of nature," said the poet, and continued writing his poem. When it was finished he meant to take it to the king, who would perhaps give him a purse of gold for it. "And then," thought the poet, "what a fine time I shall have, to be sure. I will buy a new suit of clothes and eat white bread every day." And the thought cheered him up wonderfully, for he was very poor.

But presently the fog rose again and crept over the face of the sun and across the city, and tiny puffs and wisps of

vapour came up the stairs of the house where the poet sat writing, and knocked at his door. Getting no answer, for he had not heard them, they floated through the keyhole and under the door, and some came down the chimney, and quite a lot between the window casements, which were old and fitted badly. Soon the room was full of fog, and the poet's eyes began to smart and tingle.

"Pouf! pah!" said the poet, "this detestable fog will not let me work to-day, and drives me nearly crazy." And he buttoned up his old coat to keep himself warm, and blew upon his fingers. "Pouf!" he said again. "It gets down my throat, and is not nearly so sustaining as a good piece of roast meat would be. I wonder if the King's cook would let me watch the roast for him to-night? Then I might get a whole plateful from the joint for my supper, or, at the worst, a slice of bread and dripping." And being very hungry, for he had had no dinner that day, he

laid down his pen and left his garret, carefully locking the door behind him.

"Let us see what he has written," said a voice as soon as he had gone.

"Nothing worth the trouble of coming here, I dare assure you," said a second voice.

"Do not be so sure," said the first voice, which belonged to a beautiful lady clad in a dove-coloured mantle, with a dress of gold, and purple shoes. The poet had not seen her because she was quite invisible, but she was no less a personage than the Fog Princess, and her companion was the King of the Sea Mists. He is a very cold and icy-hearted monarch, but he was desperately in love with the Fog Princess, and wished to make her his queen. She, however, greatly preferred the poor poet, who could not buy himself a good meal once a day.

"He has such beautiful thoughts," she said.

"Beautiful fiddlesticks!" said the King of the Sea Mists. "Besides, half of them are not his own. He gets them from the moonstruck Prince of the Dreams, who sits on his pillow half the night talking balderdash."

"It is perfectly clear that he must be a remarkable man," said the Fog Princess, "if the Prince of the Dreams troubles to talk to him at all; and it is plainer still that he must be a great poet if he can make head or tail of what the prince says, for, as everyone knows, the prince is quite mad."

"It is perfectly clear," said the King of the Sea Mists, "that you are determined to irritate me in every way you possibly can, and I give you warning I shall not put up with it much longer."

"You are very disagreeable," said the Fog Princess, "and I wish you would go away. The more I see of you the less you please me."

At these words the King of the Sea Mists rushed out of the garret in a furious rage, while the Princess sat down in the poet's chair and read his poem right through from the beginning and enjoyed herself very much. "This is a splendid poem," she said; "I shall take this to the king myself and see that it is rewarded as it deserves."

Meanwhile the King of the Sea Mists was rushing down the river, which is his highway to the sea. As he passed he glanced in the windows of the king's palace until the courtiers drew the curtains to shut him out, so he went on very huffily until he spied the window of the kitchen, and, looking through, saw the poet minding the spit and basting the roast with a long spoon. The head cook was himself very fond of poetry, though he did not wish it to be generally known lest it should cost him his place, for his master would fear he might spoil the pastry if his head were filled with rhymes. But he often visited the poet privately, and let him read his poems aloud to him, and once or twice he got him to write a song for the lady he was courting, which pleased her mightily. In return, the cook allowed the poet to sit in the kitchen and make himself useful at odd times, and so earn a good meal now and then.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the King of the Sea Mists; "see this starveling fellow sitting there and looking so mightily wise about nothing! I will soon give him something to look solemn about." And he breathed

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gustily into the chamber and made all the scullions shiver.

"Ugh!" said the cook, "what a sickening mist. Shut the window quickly." At once the window was shut with a slam, but the King of the Sea Mists was flying far down the river by that time, and was soon out to sea. He did not pause for an instant, however, but made straight for an islet in the very middle of the ocean, and there he found a mermaid combing her yellow hair with a comb of pearl, and singing most entrancingly.

"I want you to do me a favour," said the King of the Sea Mists.

"What will you give me if I do?" said the mermaid.

"A rope of pearls and a mirror encrusted with emeralds," said the King.

"Go away," said the mermaid pettishly, "you are wasting my time, and I am busy. There are millions of pearls scattered over the floor of the ocean, and I can see myself in the waters."

"What will content you?" said the King humbly.

"Give me the big diamond out of your crown," said the mermaid, and though he did not like parting with it, he picked the diamond out of its setting with the point of his dagger and gave it to her there and then.

"Now tell me what it is you want me to do," she said.

"I want you to come across the sea at once and sing under the windows of the king's palace," said the King of the Sea Mists.

"But that is up the river," said the mermaid, "and I don't like rivers. They are narrow and poky and full of dirty ships

encrusted with barnacles which hurt my tail."

"This is a fine broad river," said the King, "with steps of white marble coming down from the palace to the water's edge. It is a truly delightful place, and all the ships are out at sea."

"But I shall be caught in a net," she objected, "and have to spend the rest of my life in a pond or else be killed."

"You will be quite safe," said the King. "I will come with you, and hide you so securely that no fisherman will dare to launch his boat upon the waters."

And as the mermaid had no wish to give up the beautiful diamond, she said, "Very well, let us start at once."

As she spoke she plunged into the waves and swam swiftly in the direction of the king's palace. "Faster!" cried the King. "Faster, faster! There is no time to lose."

"How you hurry me," said the mermaid; "I shall have no breath to sing with."

"Give me your hand," said the King, flying low over the waves. "Give me your hand and let me help you." So she reached up her hand to him, and he drew her through the waters so swiftly that she could hardly tell whither she was going, and all at once she found that she had entered the river, and a moment later they reached the steps before the king's palace. But when she found she was to sing outside the kitchen she was highly offended.

"I did not come so far to serenade scullions," she said haughtily.

"For nothing else would I have paid so high a price," said the King of the Sea Mists.

"A paltry bauble," she said scornfully. "You can get forty more like it any fine morning; you can have it back and I will go home."

"Very well," said the King, "give me the diamond and go home." For he was quite out of patience.

"Don't be so hasty," said the mermaid, who had no intention of parting with the diamond. "I was only joking. But tell me, how am I to make myself heard when all the windows are fast shut?"

"Upon my word," said the King, "everything is against me. But wait only a moment and I will see if something can be done."

"Do not be long," said the mermaid, "for if I hear a boat I shall dive, and that will be the last you will see of me."

However, he was already gone up the great steps and flying through the gardens of the palace to the grand entrance. There he found a young and mischievous breeze playing at hide and seek in the vestibule with one of the court ladies.

"Young gentleman," said the King, "I have an errand for you."

"How can I serve you, sir?" said the young breeze, who knew the King by sight, and was, moreover, somewhat tired of the game.

"Hasten to the kitchen and blow up the fire until it roars up the chimney and the scullions faint."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the young breeze. "Very good, your majesty; it shall be done." And off he went, roaring to himself over the joke, and blew up the fire with such goodwill that in a very short time the perspiration stood in great beads on the cook's forehead, and the youngest scullion fell on the floor in a swoon.

"Ugh! ugh!" cried the cook. "Open the window, for mercy's sake, or we shall all be roasted alive! And you, sir, take care you keep the spit turning or the roast will burn."

"Now," said the King of the Sea Mists, as he saw the window fly open, "take off his attention but for a moment, and the roast will be spoiled, and he is a ruined man!"

"Aha!" said the mermaid, "so it is your rival, the poet, is it? Had I known I would not have stirred an inch from my islet; however, a bargain is a bargain." And she began to sing.

Now the poet was extremely particular about the way he performed his duties in the king's kitchen, for he was very grateful to the cook, who was not only willing to do him a good turn whenever he could, but truly appreciated his poetry. And this, the poet thought, showed that the cook possessed a fine soul and a good understanding, as indeed it did, for it is not everyone who will listen respectfully to what a poor man has to say. So whenever the poet watched the roast for his friend he was very careful not to let his thoughts wander after the fine rhymes which would pop into his mind, nor allow himself to gaze at the wonderful pictures which presented themselves in the fire, and so forget for one instant to keep the spit turning and the roast well basted. But, as everyone knows, no one can listen to the song of a mermaid and pay attention to what he is doing, not even a starving man who has just sat down to a banquet. So when the mermaid began to sing the poet turned his head to listen, though he tried very hard to keep one eye on the roast, and continued absent-mindedly to

twirl the spit. But the mermaiden was thoroughly put out at having been brought on such an errand, which she considered much beneath her, and to spite the King of the Sea Mists, she sang of the Fog Princess, exerting herself to sing more beautifully than she had ever sung before. And as she sang of the lonely princess who sits in a secret bower weaving robes for the sun, and wonderful quilts and coverlets for his bedchamber; who steals across the city and hides all that is ugly and bad out of sight, and makes the folk sit indoors for a little and do nothing, while they have leisure to think how much better they might be; who even makes them shed a few tears now and then lest they should forget how and become completely dried up and crusted; and has even been known to make kings cough and remember that they are made like other men; as the mermaiden sang of all these things and the beauty of the Princess and her slender white fingers and her gentle ways, the poet forgot all about the roast and the spit, and the king's dinner and his own supper, and recollected nothing in the world except that he had called the Fog Princess detestable, and that he must find her and beg her pardon. And his heart swelled within him, and he left his place by the fire to go to the window and look out, but there was nothing to be seen but the white sea mist, and he could only hear the mermaiden singing more enchantingly than a thousand nightingales. But while he leant out of the window there was a horrible smell of burning behind him, and a terrible clatter and commotion, and the whole kitchen filled with smoke.

"Help, help!" cried the scullions, "the roast is burning!"

"Where is that lazy scoundrel of a poet?" cried the cook. "Let me lay hold of him and I will break every bone in his body."

"The dinner is ruined," bewailed the second cook.

"Alas! alas!" bemoaned the kitchen wenches.

"Where is that poet?" shouted the cook. "Out with him! Kick him! Beat him! Roll him over! Tumble him into the gutter!"

"Out with him!" shouted the scullions all together, and before one could say "Snap" the poet was flung out of the palace, kicked and bruised all over, and as hungry as he went in.

"That is a good piece of work!" said the King of the Sea Mists. "He will never dare to shew his nose in the palace again, and will soon starve to death in his garret."

"Do not be too sure about that," said the mermaiden, and entirely refused to say any more about it, but dived head first into the water and hastened back to the islet in the middle of the ocean.

Now it was just at this point that the Fog Princess determined to take the poet's beautiful poem to the king herself and see that it received a proper reward, so she left the garret through a hole in the roof where a tile was broken, and floated across the city to the palace. In the presence chamber she found the king sitting with the queen and the royal family, in a very bad temper because the dinner had been spoiled.

"Ugh!" said the king. "Pouf! pah! ouch! I can scarcely breathe for the fog; the chamber is full of it. How did it get in? Close the doors at once."

"Look at this, your majesty," said the

Fog Princess, laying the poem on his knee, "and do honour to the genius who lives in your city."

"Ugh!" said the king, "I shall choke; my eyes are running with water so that I can scarcely see."

"All the better," said the Fog Princess; "the tears will wash away your pride, and you will be able to see more clearly. Now dry your eyes and see what I have brought you."

"Upon my word!" said the king (who did not hear a word she said), "this is dreadful. Open the doors, varlets, and let the fog out."

"Very well," said the Fog Princess, "I will leave you to come to your senses." And she floated out through the door and down the grand staircase into the street.

"Thank goodness," said the king, as he dried his eyes, "that is a little better. The fog was so thick for a while that if anyone had stood quite close to me I could not have seen him."

"But there was someone standing quite close to you," said the youngest princess. "I saw her plainly; a beautiful lady in a cloak of dove colour, with a dress of gold, and purple shoes. She was speaking to you, but I could not hear what she said."

"Nonsense, child," said the king, "you have been dreaming. But bless my soul, what is this on my knee? She must have left it behind her." And he took up the poem and began to read. And as he read he forgot that his dinner had been ruined and he had cried in public, that the day had been bad and his subjects troublesome, and quite forgot to send his youngest daughter to bed. And he read on and on, and at last he cried: "Summon the heralds, and at dawn let them go out into

the world and search out the mighty poet who honours my dominions with his presence. Let them bid him to my court that he may crown it with fame!" So when he had given these orders he locked up the poem with the crown jewels, and went to bed very happy and contented.

Meanwhile the poet had returned to his garret and found his poem was gone. "Now I am indeed a ruined man," he cried, "and I must wander across the world and seek a living how I can." So he locked his garret up once more and took his way very sadly and painfully into the country. And as the moon rose in the sky he came upon the Prince of the Dreams sitting by the roadside in the guise of a minstrel, wrapped up in an old cloak and eating a crust of bread.

"Welcome, brother," said the Prince, "come and share this excellent crust and wrap yourself in a corner of my old cloak." So the poet sat down very thankfully and supped on half a crust, and when the last crumb was gone he told the Prince all about his misfortunes.

"But the greatest misfortune of all," he said, "is that I have despised this beautiful lady. I wish I could find her and beg her pardon; then I would go out into the world and win fame and honour for her sake." And thereupon he made a song in her praise.

"Bravo!" said the Prince of Dreams. "That is a capital song. I will sing it all over the world and make you famous." And while they were talking in this strain the night wore away and it grew light.

"Why, dear me!" said the poet, "we are not alone. Who is this gentleman?"

"This is a friend of mine," said the Prince of the Dreams. "He is the South

The Fog Princess.

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West Wind, and I think he has something to say to you." www.libtool.com.cn

"I have been waiting to beg your pardon," said the South West Wind, bowing. "A member of my household, a certain young breeze, has been interfering in your affairs lately, and I am afraid caused a good deal of trouble and pain. I have spanked him well for his impudence, but I am not sure that he did you an altogether bad turn, for I fancy your affairs are mending."

"I am much obliged to you," said the poet.

"I also have been interfering in your affairs," said another voice, and, turning, he saw the Fog Princess standing quite close to him in her dove-coloured mantle and golden gown. And, strange to say, he did not cough, nor did his eyes run with water, but he knelt at her feet and kissed her fingers; and he loved her as much as she loved him.

And at that moment the king's heralds came down the highway in search of him, and proclaimed his good fortune to the sound of their trumpets.

"Now you are indeed a famous and fortunate man," said the South West Wind, "and we are all glad of your good luck, and proud to be your friends."

"And I shall be able to make it up to the cook, who was my first patron," said the poet, "and prove that I am not an ungrateful fellow."

So he returned to the city, and was feasted and honoured and made much of, while his poems were written on vellum in letters of gold. And after a while he married the Fog Princess, and went to live with her in the Dominions of the South West Wind, and made songs for the fairies to sing.

So the poet and the Fog Princess lived happily ever after.

The Knight Errant.

I WANDERED out in the world one day
And found a tree of blossoming may;
I picked me a branch to carry in my hand
And danced my way through the flowery land.

*I met a prince in armour bright;
He was a strong and goodly wight.
He leapt from his horse and knelt on the ground
And swore to follow me the wide world round.*

*"A dragon I'll slay for the flowers in your hand,
For your smile I will rout a robber band;
And the proudest of all proud knights I'll be
If you'll promise, sweet maid, to marry me."*



The Story of the Ancient Man.

THERE was once a gallant soldier who went to the wars and fought gloriously, as every soldier should do, and when he was too old to follow his king to battle he came home to his wife and little son for good and cultivated his garden. But he never forgot that he had been a good soldier, and was always ready to go to the aid of anybody in distress; and he taught his little son to do the same. "Never forget," he said, "that you are a soldier's son, and it is your duty to protect all helpless things from wrong."

As the boy grew he taught him all manner of ways of using a sword and how to defend himself and the proper way to besiege a castle, and used all means to make his son strong and of great endurance. "These things will be very useful to you when you are a man," he said, and the boy took such pains in all that he taught him that he became as fine a swordsman as his father, and between

them they were the terror of evil-doers for miles around.

When his son was twenty-one the old soldier said, "You are a man now, and it is only proper you should have a sword of your own and not use my old one any more. Come with me into the city and we will see what can be done." So they went along the high road to the king's city and found a certain smith who lived just outside the palace gates.

"Friend," said the old soldier, "here is a piece of work for you. Make me a fine new sword fit for a strong and hardy man; this is my son, who is twenty-one to-day, and I am minded to make him a present of one."

"Right gladly," said the smith. "And since you have been a good friend to me more than once in your life, I will tell you what I will do. I have here a very ancient sword which, it is said, was used by Hector at the siege of Troy; I will work a little piece of the blade into your son's

weapon and that will bring him luck. And as for the young man, I hope he will do you credit."

"I'm sure I hope so, too," said the old soldier, "and we are much beholden to you."

So the smith blew up his fire and set to work; he tempered and tested the steel many times before he was satisfied, but at last all was to his liking, and he fashioned a strong and gleaming blade with a hilt very cunningly contrived and ornamented, and when it was done they all three felt there never could have been a finer sword in the world.

"Sir," said the young man, "I do not deserve such a sword. How can I thank you?"

"It will be quite sufficient thanks if you do not disgrace it," said the smith, "and I do not think you will."

"Nor I," said his father. "He is a good lad." And so they went home together, very proud and happy.

Not long after this the old soldier fell ill, and as he lay dying he called his son and gave him his blessing and said: "When I am gone you must go out into the world and seek your fortune. There are many fine and noble kingdoms to be seen and much honour to be gained by a brave man; only be a good lad and remember my teaching and there is nothing you may not do."

When the morning came the old soldier was dead, and, his mother having died many years before, the young man did all his father had bidden him and then took his sword and started out to find his fortune. He went very sorrowfully at first, for he had loved his father dearly, but after a few days the appearance of the

strange country he was passing through, and the hope of meeting with some adventure, raised his spirits and he went on, still soberly, but in better heart and ready for anything that might happen.

However, nothing of importance happened to him for several days until he came to a great forest, in which he speedily lost himself. It was a very ancient forest, and dark and gloomy even at mid-day, for the trees stood thick and close and no sunlight came between their branches. When night came he could not see an inch before him and continually stumbled and fell over the great ruts in the track he was following. Still he pushed on, for he was hungry and cold and hoped to reach some shelter; moreover, it began to rain, and he was soon wet to the skin. However, he did not despair, for he said, "To find a fortune one must be able to endure anything," so he blew upon his fingers and went on. And just when he felt he must really give up and wait for morning, he saw a light twinkling ahead and spied a tiny cottage half hidden in the trees. It was so small it was little more than a hut, but firelight glowed through the windows, so the young man went to the door and knocked. The wind howled around him as he did so and he could not hear if anyone answered him, so he knocked again and then again, three times, and at that a voice said, "Come in and shut the door after you."

So the young man lifted the latch and went in, and as he did so the fire blazed up in front of him and dazzled his eyes. When he could see clearly he turned round hastily to the door, and, lo and behold! it had vanished. Instead of being in a tiny room he found himself in what

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seemed to be a vast hall in the forest. There was no roof, only the sky above full of twinkling stars; and the walls were the forest trees, growing so straight and close to each other that there seemed no way out between them. There was no rain and no wind buffeted him, though he could plainly hear it raging in the forest outside; instead the air was mild and warm, and in the centre of the hall an immense fire blazed comfortably, before which sat an ancient man, very grave and venerable.

"Come in," said the old man. "Rest and be welcome;" and at that a great drowsiness seized the young man, and he laid himself down on some skins before the fire and fell fast asleep without a word.

When he awoke it was broad daylight and the sun was shining; the huge fire was still blazing in the centre of the hall and the ancient man was already preparing a meal. The young man sat up hastily and begged his host to excuse his oversleeping; but the old man merely set a platter before him and bade him make a good breakfast.

"I am seeking my fortune," said the young man, "and I am indeed grateful to you for your kindness. Before I go my way is there nothing I could do for you?"

"Indeed you can," said the old man. "My pile of wood needs replenishing. Take the axe there and split up those great tree trunks lying yonder into logs for me."

So the young man took the axe and toiled all day, and by evening had an immense pile of logs neatly stacked, but still there was much to be done.

"No hurry," said the young man. "If I may stay with you another night I will finish the rest for you to-morrow."

"You are welcome," said the old man, "and work well done deserves reward. You may look at my picture gallery."

The young man looked around him, but no picture gallery could he see, only the straight, close trunks of the forest trees making a wall around them, and in the centre the blazing fire and thousands of purple foxgloves growing all round him and glowing in the evening sun.

"Come with me," said the old man, and led him towards the forest wall. Then the young man gave a cry of wonder, for, as they approached, a space seemed to grow between the trees opposite him, and, looking through, he beheld a vast expanse of ocean with blue, tossing waves and a rich argosy sailing by, the sun shining on the golden sails.

"A noble sight!" cried the young man. "Would that I were on yonder stately galleon."

"Stay!" said the old man, and led him on. Between the next two trees another scene was disclosed. A knight in full armour rode down a broad highway, his pennon fluttering in the breeze and his horse's bridle jingling like little bells; the young man could even hear the song he was singing to himself as he rode towards them.

"A brave man, I doubt not," said he. "But, good sir, this is wonderful!"

"Come!" said the old man, "here is another picture." Looking between the next two trees the young man saw the moon shining down upon a wild mountain gorge, at the foot of which rushed a dark, tossing river. Up a difficult pathway in the cliff toiled a long string of men in strange eastern garments carrying sacks of treasure, each of which was worth a

king's ransom. The young man watched till the last man was out of sight.

"You have seen enough for one day," said the old man. "These are my windows through which I look out upon the world; to-morrow you shall look again, and perhaps you will see your fortune. For to-night, rest and be welcome."

And at that the young man again became suddenly very drowsy and stretching himself out before the fire, fell fast asleep without a word.

In the morning he was up betimes and hard at work with his axe; nevertheless it was sundown before he finished and swept up the chips neatly to serve as kindlings.

"You are indeed a good lad," said the old man, "and there is no picture in my gallery you may not see if you wish it. Come with me and let us begin."

So the young man followed his host and looked out between the tree trunks at many wonderful countries and marvellous creatures. He saw many noble castles, and ladies as fair as the sun, and dragons guarding treasure, and strange cities no man had ever heard of, but at last he came to a picture from which he could not take his eyes. He saw a beautiful lady sitting in the upper room of a castle turret; the window was open, and he could see all that passed. She was sitting at a table on which were great piles of gold which she was counting. As fast as she counted it an evil man tied it up in a bag and carried it away, while another man opened a fresh bag and poured out its contents for her to begin anew. As she counted the shining gold she sighed heavily from time to time, and at last two great tears fell from her eyes and rolled to the ground, where they turned

into two pearls. These were seized by the two evil men, who bore them away in triumph, leaving the lady alone and locking the door upon her.

"Poor lady!" cried the young man, "let me go to her! I will not rest till I deliver her."

"Nay!" said the old man. "Much danger lies there. Be advised by me and seek your fortune elsewhere."

"Sir," said the young man, "I perceive this lady is in great distress, and I should disgrace my good sword if I neglected to draw it on her behalf. I pray you tell me who she is."

"She is a great lady," said the old man, "and a princess. The two wicked brothers you saw made war upon her and brought her captive from her own land. It is her own treasure they compel her to count, and every day she weeps two pearls, for the sake of which they have sworn never to let her go."

"Will they not?" said the young man. "I will have a word to say about that. Good sir, do not seek to dissuade me, but set me on the road to find her."

"Very well," said the old man, "so be it."

So in the morning he led him once more to the forest wall and bade him look out. Now he beheld the castle where the lady sat as at a great distance, and at his feet lay a road which wound in and out between the hills and appeared to lead toward it.

"There lies your road," said the old man. "Fare you well and good luck attend you. It is doubtful if you will ever see me again, for few mortals ever see this enchanted hall a second time. Nevertheless, if you are in great need, you may call

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upon me and perchance your feet may find the road." www.libtool.com.cn

Then the young man thanked him and stepped out between the tree trunks towards the great high road, but when he looked back for a last glimpse of the hall in the forest, behold! it had vanished, and there was only a tiny cottage to be seen, so small that it was almost a hut.

He marched along the road with a brave heart and a light foot, and all his thoughts were of how he might set free that unhappy lady, but though he rested not for aught upon the way it was dark ere he reached the castle drawbridge, and he was forced to stop and consider how to proceed.

"A bold appearance and a handful of luck," said he, "are sometimes better than a whole army. I will examine the place carefully while night favours, and in the morning I will try what the steel of Hector's sword can do for me." So he went carefully round about and marked the construction of the walls and the lie of the turrets and tested the deepness of the moat, and finally laid himself down in a bed of fern and prepared to sleep till morning. He had not lain there long when he heard sounds as of the drawbridge being stealthily lowered, and, peeping from his hiding place, he saw the two wicked brothers come softly across and make for the wood near by. One carried a spade and the other had a lantern and a little casket in which were the two pearls the princess had wept that day. The young man followed them silently until they came to a place in the wood, where he who carried the spade began to dig and soon laid bare a strong oaken chest, in which they placed the two pearls; then

they covered the chest with earth again, and strewing leaves over the spot, prepared to return. When they turned to go, however, they found the young man in their path with his drawn sword in his hand.

"Miserable wretches!" said he, "you are at my mercy; your lives shall only be spared on condition that you release your captive instantly."

But the brother with the spade dashed at him and dealt him a blow; however, he defended himself easily, as his father had taught him, and running his enemy through, turned upon the other brother, who threw down his lantern and ran for his life. After him ran the young man and pursued him across the drawbridge into the courtyard of the castle, where the wicked man just managed to slam a door in his face and so escaped.

"I have certainly been lucky so far," said the young man. "Here I am inside the castle, and it shall go hard with me if I do not get out of it again and the princess with me."

He was not left long alone; the remaining brother roused his men. "Go!" said he, "slay me that robber who is in the courtyard and bring me his head."

The men-at-arms did not wait to be told twice; they came rushing down the castle stairway and tumbled headlong into the courtyard, where they found the young man waiting for them at the entrance to the drawbridge with the moonlight shining on his naked blade.

"Good evening to you, gentlemen!" he cried. "You do me too much honour to wait upon me in such numbers!" and soon their swords were going ding-dong, ding-dong, and there was such a fight as was

never seen before. But there were so many of them that they got in each other's way, and the young man parried and thrust so swiftly, and the moonlight ran up and down his blade at such a rate, that he seemed to have fifty blades striking at once; and so the men-at-arms got quite dazzled and thrust at each other by mistake, and finally panic overwhelmed them, and, throwing down their arms, they fled for safety.

"Hurrah!" cried the young man, rushing after them, "this is certainly the luckiest sword in the world," and at that the men-at-arms felt certain there was no escape, and, falling on their knees, begged for mercy. "Mercy!" cried the young man, "I will think about mercy presently. Where is your master?"

"Good sir," said one, "I will lead you to him."

"You shall," said the young man, and, driving the rest before him into a large chamber near at hand, he locked them in and bade the man lead on.

The remaining brother, however, was a great coward, and, seeing how things had gone, he did not wait for the young man to find him, but jumped out of a turret window and fell into the moat and was drowned.

So the young man first locked up the man who had guided him, and then went in search of the princess. He found her on her knees in her little room greatly terrified by all the din and confusion, and she could hardly believe that she was free, and that he alone had saved her.

"It is all owing to the lucky piece in my sword," he said. "And now, if you will let me, noble lady, I will conduct you to your own kingdom."

"Alas, good sir!" said she, "how can you do that? I do not know the way to it, and if I did, it is all laid waste and overrun by the robbers my two enemies left behind them."

"There are few things so bad," said the young man, "that they cannot be mended. You cannot stay here with these desperate men; wait for me but a few minutes and I will return and lead you to the court of our king, where you may dwell in safety, and then I will seek your kingdom and see what can be done with it."

So she followed him down the stairs and across the courtyard to the drawbridge, where he left her a short while; when he returned he was leading a horse by the bridle and carrying something tied up in his handkerchief.

"These are the pearls you have wept," said he as he helped her to mount; then tying the bundle to her girdle he took the horse's bridle and led it out on to the road, and by daybreak they were well on their way. They travelled along the road by which the young man had come, and all went well until they reached the great forest, and then they were hopelessly lost. For two days and two nights they wandered up and down trying to find their way out, and then a great storm came on and drenched them to the skin. The poor princess was cold and hungry too, as well as wet, and at last she could not bear it any longer and began to cry.

"Alas, good sir!" she said, "of what avail was it to rescue me, for here we shall both certainly perish."

"Not yet, noble lady," said the young man, but indeed he well-nigh despaired when he beheld her weep; and then he

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suddenly bethought him of the hall in the wood. www.libtool.com.cn

"Do not be frightened," he said. "I will call upon a friend of mine, and perchance he may succour us," and then he lifted up his voice above the noise of the winds and cried, "Good friend, good friend, I have found my fortune, but my need is sore!" And as he ceased, lo and behold! they saw a faint light twinkling close at hand, and behold! a little cottage, scarcely more than a hut.

"Now," said the young man, "fear nothing, but go to the door and knock thrice, and when you are admitted commend me to my venerable friend. In his keeping you may dwell in safety until your kingdom is at peace, and when all is well he will set you on your road home. For my part, I have thought what to do."

"You are a brave man and I thank you," said the lady. "Nevertheless I fear you are quite mad." However, she walked to the door of the cottage and knocked thrice, and, being told to enter, she went in and the door slammed behind her and the cottage vanished.

When the day dawned the young man at once set himself to find his way back to the castle, and now he was alone he had more luck, and soon found himself back on the road. As soon as he reached the castle he released the men-at-arms, who were all very hungry and miserable. "Come!" said he, "I will see if I cannot make honest men of you," and when they had had a good meal he took them into his employ and drilled them and trained them until they were as fine a body of men as one could wish to see. He had plenty of gold, for the whole treasure of

the two brothers was at his disposal, and his men were proud to serve so redoubtable a master; and when he felt that he had made honest soldiers of them all he bade one of them lead him to the kingdom of the princess, and rode away at the head of his band to see what could be done with it.

He found it in a sad state, given up to pillage and fire, and infested with robbers. The poor folk were afraid to dwell in their houses, but huddled together in bands in the wildest places and lived upon what they could get.

The young man soon put an end to that; he drubbed the robbers up and down and out of the country, and such was the terror of his sword and the fame of his name that soon there was not one left; and at that the people were very willing to make him king, but he said, "No! you have a princess, a right noble lady, and I will only govern for her until she returns, which she must do shortly."

So they made him a prince instead, and he looked after the kingdom so well that soon it was a pleasure to behold.

Now when the princess found herself in the hall in the wood she was at first so amazed that she could neither move nor speak, but seeing a grave and venerable man by the fire she at length collected her wits, and, advancing, saluted him courteously and commended the young man to him. The ancient man rose and spread a pile of skins near the fire. "Rest, and be welcome," said he, and at that she was suddenly seized with a great drowsiness and, laying herself down, fell fast asleep without another word. As soon as she was asleep the old man rose and plucked a handful of foxglove bells and

strewed them over her, and as long as the bells remained fresh she never moved. Each day the old man plucked fresh foxgloves, for within that enchanted hall they blossom all the year round and still she slept and never moved, although at last a whole year had flown by. Every evening the ancient man went to the tree trunks and gazed out upon the world, and at last one morning he plucked no more foxglove bells, and the princess sighed in her sleep and at last she awoke.

"It is time for you to go home," said the old man. "Come with me and fear nothing." So she gave him her hand and followed him to the tree trunks, and, looking between the two nearest trees, she found herself looking into a smith's forge.

"Good sir," said she, "this is not my home; I am a princess."

"That is true," said the ancient man. "Nevertheless, we have some work to do here. Follow me."

So they stepped into the little room, and the ancient man immediately stood upright and became an undoubted smith. Then he blew up the fire and laid a piece of metal on the anvil, and beat it into shape and fashioned a scabbard.

"What is that for?" said the princess.

"To sheathe a good sword," said he.

Then he took another piece of metal and fashioned a sword, very light and dainty and fit for a lady to handle.

"What is that for?" said the princess.

"For you to dub a brave man knight," said he.

Then he took a third piece of metal and made a small coffer, very strong and cunningly devised.

"What is that for?" said the princess.

"To hold your dowry," said he, and held it while she took the pearls from her girdle and dropped them inside.

And at the moment someone came to the door and looked in. It was the young man himself, very richly dressed and looking every inch a prince. He had grown very uneasy because the princess had not returned to her palace, so he had set out to look for her in all the kingdoms of the world, and at last he had come to his own country, and, not finding her there, had looked in on his way to see the smith who forged him his sword.

"That was a right good sword and a lucky one that you forged me, good sir," he said, "and it has brought me much honour; nevertheless, I shall know neither rest nor happiness till I find the noble lady whom I serve, and she, alas! is lost."

And at that the princess stepped forward, and he fell on his knees before her. So she dubbed him her knight, and girt his sword and scabbard upon him; and he swore to protect her and her kingdom from all her enemies as long as he could strike a blow. And she gave the casket of pearls into his keeping right willingly, for they loved each other with all their hearts, as was only natural.

"I am glad this mad fellow has found you again, noble lady," said the smith, "for if he goes on as he has begun with that sword of his I do not know what he may not do."

"I am sorry I called him mad," said the princess, "for he has done me great service."

Then the smith opened a door in the wall, and, stepping through, they found themselves once more in the hall in the

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forest, and the smith had become an ancient man again, very grave and venerable.

"Farewell," said he, and gave them his blessing. Then he led them towards two mighty trees in the forest wall, and, stepping between them, they suddenly found themselves on the steps of their own palace and all the people cheering

and shouting, "Long live our king and queen!" But the ancient man and his enchanted hall had vanished utterly, and they never saw him again.

So they were crowned, and the son of the old soldier became a mighty king and famous all over the world, and the princess wept no more pearls as long as she lived, but they lived happily ever after.

Good Company.

T*HERE are plenty of fine adventures,
Out in the world to-day,
And I shall be glad of your company
To cheer me on my way.*

*For you, I see, are high of heart
And your eyes are bright and keen,
And I can show you all the roads
Of this wonderful world and green.*

*And when we part at our journey's end
And the giant is safely slain,
We'll make a vow at the wishing well
That we will meet again.*

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