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"HE SENT UP IN THE BASKET, FIRST, THE THREE MEN, AND THEN THE KING'S DAUGHTERS."

BRITISH FAIRY AND FOLK TALES

EDITED BY

W. J. GLOVER

AUTHOR OF "TALES FROM THE EARTHLY PARADISE" AND "TALES FROM THE POETS"

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	The Fairies of the Downs and Commons (*English*)	1
II.	The Sea-Maiden (*Scotch*)	30
III.	A Legend of Tipperary (*Irish*)	51
IV.	The Story of King Lludd (*Welsh*)	59
V.	The Magic Mackerel (*English*)	69
VI.	The Battle of the Birds (*Scotch*)	92
VII.	Legend of Bottle Hill (*Irish*)	112
VIII.	Melilot (*English*)	128
IX.	The Smith and the Fairies (*Scotch*)	151
X.	Dreaming Tim Jarvis (*Irish*)	157
XI.	An Emperor's Dream (*Welsh*)	169
XII.	Silver Tassels (*English*)	183
XIII.	The Son of the Scottish Yeoman (*Scotch*)	208
XIV.	Rent Day (*Irish*)	223
XV.	The Chicken Market (*English*)	229
XVI.	The Inheritance (*Scotch*)	255
XVII.	The Giant's Stairs (*Irish*)	259
XVIII.	The King of Lochlin's Daughters (*Scotch*)	269
XIX.	The Tail (*English*)	281

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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By CHARLES FOLKARD

"He sent up in the basket, first the three men, and then the King's Daughters" . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

"Here she was sleeping, in form not a day older than when she was lost" 20

"'Good luck and victory were following thee, lad,' said the Princess" 40

"A good-natured siren used to bring her harp and sing with him" 74

"In the mouth of day the Giant's Daughter said that her father's breath was burning her back" 104

"Melilot recovered and climbed on" . . . 134

"'What! Splug,' she cried, 'and with a thimble on your head'" 204

"Then Goody, take my arm, old woman, and come on" 248

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BRITISH FAIRY AND FOLK TALES

I

THE FAIRIES OF THE DOWNS AND COMMONS

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

Teel was a shoemaker, about whom very few people knew how well he understood his business. So one evening the poor fellow, slipping dolefully out of the town in which he starved, went for a walk on a neighbouring common. It was a small rough piece of broken ground, ragged with brier, fern, and furze, scratched over with deep-rutted paths, drilled into with rabbit-holes, here and there scooped also into forgotten sandpits, and dabbled with pools. At one end a steep and jagged lump of sand-rock cropped up through the brambles. On the top of the bit of rock the shoemaker sat

down to think. From that height there was a view over the meadows round about the common. Behind him they sloped up into a line of bare downs, with the white chalk glimmering here and there through their green banks. Before him the rich landscape was warm with trees. Alders and great willows were clustered near the river; oaks gathered in knolls about the slopes of the deer park; pear, plum, and other fruit trees overtopped the little country town, and all the yellow roads that led out from Stavesacre into the world at large were fringed with blackberry, wild rose, and honeysuckle hedges, broken with elms, and upon one side, beyond the bridge, raised to the rank of an avenue with lines of poplar.

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

ringers, had met for practice in the belfry before spending a social evening together in the parlour of the Sandhopper's Arms.

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

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

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

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

"Very well," said the rabbit—no longer a rabbit; for, indeed, he was a curiously little man in grey body-clothes, but without coat or hat, and with his feet quite naked. He had a tiny bundle in one hand, which he held up to Teel.

"I hope, my good fellow, I may trust you. Make me a pair of shoes out of the leather in this bundle, and return me all the pieces. I will pay you well, and bring you some more custom if your fit is good."

"Fit good!" said the neglected artist. "Those ignorant people of Stavesacre are content to wear clumps on their feet. They fatten no less than three cobblers with their custom, and have suffered me, a proper shoemaker, to starve. Yes, sir! I can fit a dainty foot like yours, sir, in a way to show you something of my art. Am I to send the shoes, or will your honour call for them?"

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

At the appointed hour Teel was quite ready; and Till, his good wife, had been so careful to help him in obeying the wish of his Fairy customer that not a shred of leather or thread—though it were but a shred no bigger than a morsel of a line of spider's web—was left on or below the table at which Teel had worked. All was put, with the shoes themselves, into the tiny bag. Then as they sat—too poor to afford candle—in the light that was half moonlight and half

twilight, the old couple suddenly saw the little grey Fairy busy about that bag. He weighed it first in one hand, and then in the other. He opened it, took out the shoes, turned out and examined all the pieces. Then he put the pieces back, and, sitting down upon Till's spectacle-case, put on the shoes. When they were on, he got up and danced about in them to try their fit. They fitted perfectly. Advancing at last to the edge of the table, he said, "Brother Teel, I am authorised to appoint you shoemaker-in-ordinary to the Fairies of the Downs and Commons. Remove, therefore, to your new house on the sand-rock in Stavesacre Common, where you will have plenty of custom and good pay as long as we may trust you."

"Oh, sir," said Till, "you may trust my old man with shoes of gold!"

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

Tools, furniture, and new clothes—yes. But nevertheless, after the Fairy vanished, Teel and

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

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

When they came to the skirt of the common

they saw all the windows lighted in a neat little white house on the top of the sand-rock. When they had climbed the sand-rock the cottage-door opened to them of its own accord, and a delicate smell of boiled rabbit and onions kissed their noses. In a dainty little parlour, that dish, dear alike to Teel and Till, smoked ready for them. There were hot mealy potatoes too, boiled as few but the Fairies can succeed in boiling them ; also, there were two bright glasses set beside a foaming jug of ale.

" What a sweet perfume of meat ! " said Teel.

" And onion," added Till, who was so much moved by the sight of a comfortable hot supper and the smell of onion, that she wiped her eyes as she sat down.

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

to you, gossip. We are all waiting for you to measure us when you have supped!"

Before Teel could answer them, there was a clatter behind him that obliged him to turn round. It was caused by the falling of a large pair of gold shoes through the ceiling to the floor, followed by a cry of "Shoes for you, shoemaker!" Thereupon all the Fairies in the shop began to sing:

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

Whirlwig was a hatter, who had made felt caps for the ploughmen of Stavesacre, though he was clever enough to fit with the glossiest of hats the head even of a crocodile. He had plenty of custom for his caps; but he would have poured his earnings out as easily as he poured beer into his throat at the Sandhopper's Arms, if his wife Willwit had not been careful and honest as she was. A month after Teel had left the town and gone to live in his new cottage on the sand-rock, Whirlwig was seeing a comrade home over the common after a supper at the club of Noisy Dogs, at which he was vice-president. On the other side of the common his friend left him, and went on to his own village. Whirlwig turned back to Stavesacre, but in the middle of the

common he lay down (as he afterwards said) to think a bit. "Dame Willwit," he thought to himself, "will say there's little enough in my pocket. Poor woman! She doesn't know what a famous supper I have had for my money. I'll go home and tell her of it."

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

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

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

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

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

"He will find a considering cap in his new house. I pay it to him in exchange for this. Supper is laid there, Dame Willwit, for you and your children; so I advise you to remove at

once. As for your good man, he has supped already. Everything you will want is there; you need take nothing."

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

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

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

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

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

"You will find such a coat in your new house," the Fairy said. "I'll pay it in exchange for this."

Surmullet and his wife were eager to be gone. The bottom of the sandpit was a newly-established place of business for them; but the advantage of a house built there, in which they might be always lurking, and from which they might at any time pounce out upon a traveller, was to be secured without an hour's delay. So they went to the common, and found that there was really a white house built at the bottom of the largest sandpit. Going down into it they found no supper, but a crowd of little men, angrily waiting to be measured for their coats. As they looked dangerous, Surmullet began measuring directly. While he did so you may be sure that a coat fell through the ceiling, followed by the cry of "A coat for you, tailor!" and the song of all the little customers:

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

Now the shoemaker, the hatter, and the

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

At the end of a twelvemonth and a day the Fairies of the Downs and Commons were all fitted with their new coats, caps, and shoes, and as these articles were made of very durable material, they would outlast the lives of the tailor, hatter, and shoemaker who made them. Teel was the first to finish. The house on the sand-rock vanished when the last Fairy was shod, and the tradesman to the Fairies went back with his old wife to their cottage in the town. They took with them nothing but what they had brought thence, except the golden Shoes of Safety. A month afterwards, Whirlwig, the hatter, came back with his wife and seven children, richer for all his work only by the Considering Cap; and Surmullet returned next, with the Coat of Confession on his arm.

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

When Teel and Till came back into the town, and said they had only been as far as the common, where they had spent the year in shoemaking for the Fairies, Stavesacre said that was a fine tale, but no doubt they had their reasons for

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

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

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

"Ah!" sighed Willwit, "the Fairies gave him a Considering Cap, and he always has refused to put it on. A poor man, with a wife and seven children, needs to put on his Considering Cap before he goes to sup at the club; but he shall

wear it after he comes home. I will put him to bed in it to-night."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

" But whither shall I go ? "

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

" You are right, and I am gone," said Teel.

While he was gone, Till went to the old locker, in which she treasured as a relic her white wedding-dress.

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

substance, stood still, in the very heart-wood of the mighty trunk, that clipped him about like a cloud.

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

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

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

So, without stooping to pick up any of the gold through which he walked, and without

flinching when his naked feet trod among thorns, the old shoemaker went through the forest. Slowly, and trembling with joy, he went through the forest, bearing upon his arms the sleeping infant. It was a long walk home, and there was the bridge beyond the poplar avenue to be crossed outside Stavesacre, for which reason his way must be through the main street. But the stars were all out when he reached it, and half the town was already abed. Few saw the old man limping with torn feet over the stones as he went homeward by the light of the crescent moon and of the stars, pressing, with shrivelled, knotted hands, the tender sleeping child to his warm heart.

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

"HERE SHE WAS SLEEPING, IN FORM NOT A DAY OLDER THAN WHEN SHE WAS LOST."

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

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

By noon next day so many planks, beams, window-frames, and doorposts of the shoemaker's cottage were changed into shining gold, that gossip Willwit held her breath when she ran in

with something of interest to tell to gossip Till. We know what there was to be told by Willwit. What she had to say to Till was that her good man Whirlwig, waking up that morning with the Considering Cap on his head, had sat up in his bed, and poured out such a stream of wise reflections on the headache he had got, and on the responsibilities he had got : on the necessity of getting a new coat for the boy Daniel, and new shoes for Heartsease, and a new gown for Willwit ; on the devotion and prudence of his valuable wife Willwit and his own past wastefulness ; on the wisdom of instantly resigning his place as Vice-President of Noisy Dogs ; of clearing out his shop, and making a great stir, if possible, to procure increase of custom ; on the possibility of saving enough for the purchase of a small pony-cart with which he could go in search of customers to the surrounding villages ; on the cost of a cart and of a pony ; on his possible week's earnings in Stavesacre, and on the average weekly cost of a sufficiency of meal, of meat, of butter, of eggs ; on the advantages and disadvantages of keeping a pig, and his own powers of building a pigsty ; on the numbers of years it would take to turn, by saving, a pig into a cow ; on the best thing to be done for little Sorrel's

cough, and the cause of that pain in the side his wife had been complaining of; and so on, and so on, that he was another man. He had sold ten caps that morning; he was inventing, as a speculation of his own, a grand official hat for the next Mayor of Stavesacre. He had already found her money enough to get a leg of pork and stuffing for their dinner.

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

"I don't care for the gold-making," said Till, "though I suppose it makes us very rich. That old chair you sit on, now it's made of gold, must be worth something. Take it home, gossip. Nobody need be poor in Stavesacre if this is to last with Clary; but it's so like a disease, that I shall be glad enough to see her cured."

When she said that, a green dwarf with a very long nose peeped in at the door. "Oh, good morning, Dame Till," he said. "If you don't wish that child of yours to turn any more wood into gold, let her walk round the room three times in the gold Shoes of Safety. Here they are. If you are in the mind to make that use of them, keep them; if not, let them be cast

back into the wood yonder, where your good man left them." The dwarf threw the shoes into the room and vanished.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I fear to go round again," said Till. "The disease grows stronger, and the dwarf may have meant only to mock me. Yet I will have trust."

So she went round for the third time, and after that there was no change, but there was not a splinter of wood left in the house with

which to try whether the desired change in the child really was effected. The women, dressed as they were in gold from head to foot, dared not go out of doors to fetch a stick. It was lucky for them that at this moment the knave Surmullet and Smull his wife stepped in.

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

But a passing boy or two soon spread the news, and all the town had presently turned out to look at the shoemaker's cottage, with golden beams and posts and doors, and golden thatch. Surmullet and Smull had been hearing wonders inside, while they looked greedily about them, and Smull had fetched a fagot from the yard to put in the child's hand. It remained wood.

"A pretty game you have spoiled," she said. "My worthy husband also had a fairy gift, and who knows what may come of it. Put on your coat, good man."

Surmullet put on the Coat of Confession

which he had brought in on his arm, and suddenly began to tell of all his rogueries. Indoors and out of doors, all Stavesacre was there to wonder and listen. Surmullet seized upon every man he had cheated or robbed, and made a thoroughly clean breast of his offence ; but he was astonished at the good nature with which all his confessions were received.

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

Now the end of the story is, that Surmullet, finding comfort in his Coat of Confession, ceased

to be the coward that he had been. By shifting his coat slyly and whenever he could to other men's backs, he found that other men, forced to speak all the good and evil that was in them, commonly turned out better than almost anybody else expected. The sensation of being trusted was to Surmullet himself very welcome ; and even Smull was content to stand with her husband in the good books of her neighbours.

Whirlwig became the most considerate and painstaking man in the whole world.

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

The Shoes, Coat, and Cap were kept in a strong tower, and committed to the keeping of

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

So it happened that one day all the six warders who kept the apparatus of Stavesacre justice were asleep together in the porch of the tower. When they awoke, Cap, Coat, and Shoes were gone, and half the houses in the town—bolts and bars having long fallen out of use—were robbed that night. The thieves were great-

grandchildren of Surmullet, and as they crossed Stavesacre Common with a wagon-load of plunder they threw into one of the pools a bundle, which contained not only the Considering Cap and Coat of Confession, but also the Golden Shoes of Safety ; for, although these were of solid value, there was great fear of their fairy power.

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

II

THE SEA-MAIDEN

THERE was ere now a poor old fisher, but on this day he was not getting much fish. On a day of days, and he fishing, there rose a sea-maiden at the side of his boat, and she asked him if he was getting fish. The old man answered and said that he was not.

"What reward wouldst thou give me for sending plenty of fish to thee?"

"Ach!" said the old man, "I have not much to spare."

"Wilt thou give me the first son thou hast?"

"It is I that would give thee that, if I were to have a son; there is not, and there will not be a son of mine."

"Name all thou hast," said the maiden.

"I have but an old mare of a horse, an old dog, myself, and my wife. There's for thee all the creatures of the great world that are mine."

"Here, then, are three grains for thee that

thou shalt give thy wife this very night, and three others to the dog, and these three to the mare, and these three likewise thou shalt plant behind thy house, and in time thy wife will have three sons, the mare three foals, and the dog three puppies, and there will grow three trees behind thy house, and the trees will be a sign, when one of the sons dies, one of the trees will wither. Now, take thyself home, and remember me when thy son is three years of age, and thou thyself wilt get plenty of fish after this."

Everything happened as the sea-maiden said, and he himself was getting plenty of fish; but when the end of the three years was nearing, the old man was growing sorrowful, heavy-hearted, while he failed each day as it came. On the namesake of the day, he went to fish as he used, but he did not take his son with him.

The sea-maiden rose at the side of the boat and asked, "Didst thou bring thy son with thee hither to me?"

"Och! I did not bring him. I forgot that this was the day."

"Yes, yes! then," said the sea-maiden, "thou shalt get four other years of him, to try if it be easier for thee to part from him. Here thou hast his like age," and she lifted up a big

bouncing baby. "Is thy son as fine as this one?"

He went home full of glee and delight, for that he had got four other years of his son, and he kept on fishing and getting plenty of fish, but at the end of the next four years sorrow and woe struck him, and he took not a meal, and did not a turn, and his wife could not think what was ailing him. This time he did not know what to do, but he set it before him, that he would not take his son with him this time either.

He went to fish as at the former times, and the sea-maiden rose at the side of the boat, and asked him, "Didst thou bring thy son hither to me?"

"Och! I forgot him this time too."

"Go home then," said the sea-maiden, "and at the end of seven years after this, thou art sure to remember me, but then it will not be the easier for thee to part with him, but thou shalt get fish as thou used to do."

The old man went home full of joy; he had got seven other years of his son, and before seven years passed, the old man thought that he himself would be dead, and that he would see the sea-maiden no more.

But no matter, the end of those seven years was nearing also, and if it was, the old man was not without care and trouble. He had rest neither day nor night. The eldest son asked his father one day if any one were troubling him? The old man said that some one was, but that belonged neither to him nor to any one else. The lad said he *must* know what it was. His father told him at last, how the matter was between him and the sea-maiden.

"Let not that put you in any trouble," said the son; "I will not oppose you."

"Thou shalt not; thou shalt not go, my son, though I should not get fish for ever."

"If you will not let me go with you, go to the smithy, and let the smith make me a great strong sword, and I will go to the end of fortune."

His father went to the smithy, and the smith made a doughty sword for him. His father came home with the sword. The lad grasped it and gave it a shake or two, and it went in a hundred splinters. He asked his father to go to the smithy and get him another sword in which there should be twice as much weight; and so did his father, and so likewise it happened to the next sword—it broke in two halves. Back went the old man to the smithy; and the smith

made a great sword, its like he never made before.

"There's thy sword for thee," said the smith, "and the fist must be good that plays this blade."

The old man gave the sword to his son, who gave it a shake or two. "This will do," said he, "it's high time now to travel on my way."

On the next morning he put a saddle on the black horse that the mare had, and he put the world under his head,[1] and his black dog was by his side. When he went on a bit, he fell in with the carcass of a sheep beside the road. At the carrion were a great dog, a falcon, and an otter. He came down off the horse, and divided the carcass amongst the three: three shares to the dog, two shares to the otter, and one share to the falcon.

"For this," said the dog, "if swiftness of foot or sharpness of tooth will give thee aid, mind me, and I will be at thy side."

Said the otter: "If the swimming of foot on the ground of a pool will loose thee, mind me, and I will be at thy side."

Said the falcon: "If hardship comes on thee, where swiftness of wing or crook of a claw

[1] Took the world for his pillow.

will do good, mind me, and I will be at thy side."

On this he went onward till he reached a king's house, and he took service as a herd, and his wages were to be according to the milk of the cattle. He went away with the cattle, and the grazing was but bare. When lateness came, and when he took them home they had not much milk, the place was so bare, and his meat and drink was but spare this night.

On the next day he went on farther with them; and at last he came to a place exceedingly grassy, in a green glen, of which he never saw the like.

But about the time when he should go behind the cattle, for taking homewards, who is seen coming but a great giant with his sword in his hand.

"HIU! HAW!! HOGARAICH!!!" shouted the giant. "It is long since my teeth tasted flesh. The cattle are mine; they are on my march; and a dead man art thou."

"That may be easier to say than to do," said the herdsman.

To grips they went, himself and the giant. He saw that he was far from friend, and near his foe. He drew the great clean-sweeping sword and neared the giant. In the play of

the battle the black dog leaped on the giant's back. The herdsman drew back his sword, and the head was off the giant in a twinkling. He leaped on the black horse and went to look for the giant's house. He reached a door, and in the haste that the giant made he had left each gate and door open.

In went the herdsman, and found magnificence and money in plenty, dresses of every kind in the wardrobe, with gold and silver, and each thing finer than the other. At the mouth of night he took himself to the king's house, but he took not a thing from the giant's house. And when the cattle were milked this night there *was* milk. He got good feeding this night, meat and drink without stint, and the king was hugely pleased that he had caught such a herdsman. He went on for a time in this way, but at last the glen grew bare of grass, and the grazing was not so good.

He thought he would go a little farther forward in on the giant's land, where he saw a great park of grass. He returned for the cattle and drove them in.

They were but a short time grazing in the park when a great wild giant came full of rage and madness.

"Hiu! Haw!! Hogaraich!!!" said the giant. "It is a drink of thy blood that quenches my thirst this night."

"There is no knowing," answered the herdsman, "but that's easier to say than to do."

At each other went the men. *There* was the shaking of blades!

At length and at last it seemed as if the giant would get the victory. Then the herdsman called for his dog, and with one spring the black dog caught the giant by the neck, and swiftly the herdsman struck off his head.

He went home very tired this night, but it's a wonder if the king's cattle had not milk. The whole family was delighted that they had got such a herdsman.

He followed herding in this way for a time; but one night after he came home, instead of getting "All hail" and "Good luck" from the dairymaid, all were crying and full of woe.

He asked what cause of woe there was this night. The dairymaid said that a great beast with three heads was in the loch, which was to devour some one every year, and the lot had fallen this year on the king's daughter, "and in the middle of to-morrow she is to meet the beast at the upper end of the loch, but there is

a great suitor yonder who is going to rescue her."

"What suitor is that?" asked the herdsman.

"Oh, he is a great General of arms," said the dairymaid, "and when he kills the beast, he will marry the king's daughter, for the king has said that he who could save his daughter should marry her."

On the morrow when the time was nearing, the king's daughter and this hero of arms went to give a meeting to the beast, and they reached the black corrie at the upper end of the loch. They were there but a short time when the beast stirred in the midst of the loch; but on the General's seeing this terror of a beast with three heads, he took fright, slunk away, and hid himself, leaving the king's daughter fearful and trembling, with no one at all to save her.

At a glance she saw a doughty handsome youth, riding a black horse, coming where she was. He was marvellously arrayed, and full armed, and his black dog moving after him.

"There is gloom on thy face, lady," said the youth. "What dost thou here?"

"Oh, that's no matter," answered the princess. "It's not long I'll be here at all events."

"Not that," said he.

"A worthy fled as likely as thou, and not long since."

"He is a worthy who stands the war," answered the youth. He lay down beside her and said if he should fall asleep, she should rouse him when she saw the beast making for shore.

"What is rousing for thee?" she asked.

"Rousing for me is to put the gold ring on thy finger on my little finger."

It was not long before she saw the beast making for shore. She took a ring off her finger and put it on the lad's. He awoke and went with his sword and his dog to meet the beast. What spluttering and splashing between them! The dog was doing all he might, and the king's daughter was palsied with fear of the noise of the beast. They would now be under, and now above. At last he cut off one of the heads. The dragon gave one roar, and the son of earth, Echo of the rocks, called to his screech, and he drove the loch into fury from end to end, then in a twinkling went out of sight.

"Good luck and victory were following thee, lad!" said the princess. "I am safe for one night, but the beast will come again, and for ever, until the other two heads come off him."

He caught the beast's head and drew a withy

through it, and told her to bring it with her there to-morrow. She went home with the head on her shoulder, and the herdsman betook himself to the cows. She had not gone far when this great General saw her, and he said to her that he would kill her if she would not say that 'twas he took the head off the beast.

"Oh, 'tis I will say it. Who else took the head off, but thou?"

They reached the king's house, and the head was on the General's shoulder. But here was rejoicing that she should come home alive and whole, and this great captain with the beast's head in his hand. On the morrow they went away, and there was no question at all but that this hero would save the king's daughter.

They reached the same place, and were not long there when the fearful beast stirred in the midst of the loch, and the hero slunk away as he did on yesterday, but it was not long after this when the man of the black horse came, with another dress on. No matter, she knew that it was the very same lad.

"It is I am pleased to see thee," said she. "I am in hopes that thou wilt handle thy great sword to-day as thou didst yesterday. Come up and take breath."

"GOOD LUCK AND VICTORY WERE FOLLOWING THEE, LAD,"
SAID THE PRINCESS.

Soon they saw the beast steaming in the midst of the loch.

The lad lay down to rest. "If I sleep before the beast comes, rouse me."

"What is rousing for thee?"

"Rousing for me is to put the ear-ring that is in thine ear in mine."

He had not well fallen asleep when the king's daughter cried, "Rouse! rouse!" but wake he would not. She took the ear-ring out of her ear and put it in the ear of the lad. At once he woke and went to meet the beast. What a spluttering, splashing, raving, and roaring! They kept on thus for a long time, and about the mouth of night he cut another head off. He put it on the withy, leaped on the black horse, and betook himself to the herding. The king's daughter went home with the heads.

The General met her, and took the heads from her, saying that she must tell that it was he who took the head off the beast this time also.

"Who else took the head off, but thou?" said she.

They reached the king's house with the heads. Then there was joy and gladness. If the king was hopeful the first night, he was now sure that this great hero would save his daughter, and there

was no question at all but that the other head would be off the beast on the morrow.

About the same time on the morrow the two went away. The officer hid himself, as he usually did. The king's daughter betook herself to the bank of the loch. The hero of the black horse came and lay by her side to rest. She woke the lad, put another ear-ring in his other ear; and at the beast he went.

But if the dragon roared and raved on the days that were passed, this day it was horrible. No matter, he took the third head off the beast, but not without a struggle. He drew it through the withy, and she went home with the heads. When they reached the king's house, all were full of smiles, and the General was to marry the princess the next day.

The wedding was going on, and every one about the castle longing till the priest should come. But when he came, she would marry but the one who could take the heads off the withy without cutting the withy.

"Who should take the heads off the withy but the man that put the heads on?" said the king.

The General tried, but he could not loose them. At last there was no one about the house

but had tried to take the heads off the withy, but they could not. The king asked if there were any one else about the house that would try. They said that the herdsman had not tried them yet. Word was sent to him, and he was not long throwing them hither and thither.

"But stop a bit, my lad," said the king's daughter, "the man that took the heads off the beast has my ring and my two ear-rings."

The herdsman put his hand in his pocket and threw them on the board.

"Thou art he," said the princess.

The king was not so pleased when he saw that it was a herdsman who was to marry his daughter, but he ordered that he should be put in a better dress. His daughter spoke and said that he had a dress as fine as any that ever was in his castle, and thus it happened. The herdsman put on the giant's golden dress and they were married.

Everything went well for some time. One day they were sauntering by the side of the loch when there came a beast more wonderfully terrible than the other, and took him away to the loch without fear or asking. The king's daughter was now mournful, tearful, sorrowful, and was always looking at the loch. An old

smith met her and she told him what had befallen her. He advised her to spread everything that was finer than another in the very same place where the beast took away her husband, and so she did.

The beast put up his nose and said, "Fine is thy jewellery, king's daughter."

"Finer than that is the jewel that thou tookest from me. Give me one sight of my husband, and thou shalt get any one thing of all these thou seest."

The beast brought him up.

"Deliver him to me, and thou shalt get all thou seest," said she.

The beast did so. He threw him alive and whole on the bank.

A short time after this, when they were walking at the side of the loch, the same beast took away the princess. Sorrowful was each one that was in the town on this night. Her husband was mournful, tearful, wandering down and up about the banks of the loch, by day and night. The old smith met him. The smith told him that there was no way of killing the Beast but this one way: "In the island that is in the midst of the loch is the white-footed hind, of the slenderest legs, and the swiftest

step, and though she should be caught, there would spring a crow out of her, and though the crow should be caught, there would spring a trout out of her, but there is an egg in the mouth of the trout, and the soul of the beast is in the egg, and if the egg breaks, the beast is dead."

Now, there was no way of getting to this island, for the beast would sink each boat and raft that went on the loch. He thought he would try to leap the strait with the black horse, and even so he did. The black horse leaped the strait, and the black dog with one bound after him. He saw the hind, and he let the black dog after her, but when the black dog would be on one side of the island, the hind would be on the other side.

" Oh, good were now the great dog of the carcass of flesh here ! "

No sooner spoke he the word than the generous dog was at his side and after the hind. The worthies were not long in bringing her to earth. But he no sooner caught her than a crow sprang out of her.

" 'Tis now were good the falcon grey, of sharpest eye and swiftest wing ! "

No sooner said he this than the falcon was after the crow, and was not long putting her to

earth. As the crow fell on the bank of the loch, out of her jumped the trout.

"Oh, that thou wert by me now, O otter!"

No sooner said than the otter was at his side. Out on the loch she leapt and brought the trout from the midst of the loch; but no sooner was the otter on shore with the trout than the egg came from his mouth. He sprang and put his foot on it. 'Twas then the beast let out a roar, and said, "Break not the egg, and thou gettest all thou askest."

"Deliver to me my wife."

In the wink of an eye she was by his side. When he got hold of her hand in both his hands he let his foot down on the egg, and the beast died.

The dead thing was horrible to look upon. The three heads were off it doubtless, but if they were, there were heads under, and heads over head on it, and eyes, and five hundred feet. But no matter, they left it there and went home, and there was delight and smiling in the king's house that night. And till now he had not told the king how he killed the giants. The king put great honour on him, and he was a great man with the king.

He and his wife were walking one day, when

he noticed a little castle beside the loch in a wood, and asked his wife who was dwelling in it. She said that no one would go near that castle, for that no one who had gone there had yet come back to tell the tale.

"The matter must not be so," said he, "this very night I will see who is dwelling in it."

"Go not, go not," said his wife; "there never went man to this castle that returned."

"Be that as it pleases."

He went. When he reached the door, a little flattering crone met him standing in the door.

"All hail and good luck to thee, fisher's son; 'tis I myself am pleased to see thee; great is the honour for this kingdom, thy like to be come into it—thy coming in is fame for this little dwelling; go in first; honour to the gentles; go on, and take breath."

In he went, but as he was going up, she smote him a blow on the back of his head, and at once, there he fell.

On this night there was woe in the king's castle, and on the morrow there was a wail in the fisher's house. The tree was seen withering, and the fisher's second son said that his brother

was dead, and he made a vow that he would go and find where the corpse of his brother was lying. He put saddle on a black horse, and rode after his black dog (for the three sons of the fisher had a black horse and a black dog), and without going hither or thither he followed on his brother's steps till he reached the king's house.

This one was so like his elder brother, that the king's daughter thought it was her husband. He stayed in the castle. They told him how it befell his brother; and to the little castle of the crone, go he must—happen hard or soft as it might. To the castle he went; and just as befell the eldest brother, so in each way it befell the middle son, and with one blow the crone felled him stretched beside his brother.

On seeing the second tree withering, the fisher's youngest son said that now his two brothers were dead, he must know what death had come on them. On the black horse he went, and followed the dog as his brothers did, and came to the king's house. 'Twas the king who was pleased to see him; but to the black castle they would not let him go. But to the castle he must go, and he went.

"All hail and good luck to thyself, fisher's

son; 'tis I am pleased to see thee; go in and take breath," said the crone.

"In before me, thou crone; I don't like flattery out of doors; go in and let's hear thy speech."

In went the crone, and when her back was to him he drew his sword and whipped her head off; but the sword flew out of his hand. Swiftly the crone gripped her head with both hands and put it on her neck as it was before. The dog sprang on the crone, but she struck the generous dog with the club of magic; and there he lay. But this only maddened the youth the more. He got hold of the magic club, and with one blow on the top of the head, she was on earth in the wink of an eye. He went forward and saw his two brothers lying side by side. He gave a blow to each one with the magic club, and on foot they were. And what spoil! Gold and silver, and each thing more precious than another, in the crone's castle.

They came back to the king's house and there was rejoicing!

The king was growing old. The eldest son of the fisherman was crowned king, and the pair of brothers stayed a day and a year in the king's house, and then the two went on their

journey home, with the gold and silver of the crone, and every other grand thing which the king gave them; and if they have not died since then, they are alive to this very day.

III

A LEGEND OF TIPPERARY

In Tipperary is one of the most singularly shaped hills in the world. It has a peak at the top like a conical nightcap thrown carelessly over your head as you awake in the morning. On the very point is built a sort of lodge, where in the summer the lady who built it and her friends used to go on parties of pleasure; but that was long after the days of the fairies, and it is, I believe, now deserted.

But before lodge was built, or acre sown, there was close to the head of this hill a large pasturage, where a herdsman spent his days and nights among the herd. The spot had been an old fairy ground, and the good people were angry that the scene of their light and airy gambols should be trampled by the rude hoofs of bulls and cows. The lowing of the cattle sounded sad in their ears, and the chief of the fairies of the hill determined in person to drive away the new-comers, and the way she thought of was this.

When the harvest nights came on, and the moon shone bright and brilliant over the hill, and the cattle were lying down hushed and quiet, and the herdsman, wrapt in his mantle, was musing with his heart gladdened by the glorious company of the stars twinkling above him, she would come and dance before him, now in one shape, now in another, but all ugly and frightful to behold. One time she would be a great horse, with the wings of an eagle, and a tail like a dragon, hissing loud and spitting fire. Then in a moment she would change into a little man lame of a leg, with a bull's head, and a lambent flame playing round it. Then into a great ape, with duck's feet and a turkey-cock's tail. But I should be all day about it were I to tell you all the shapes she took.

And then she would roar, or neigh, or hiss, or bellow, or howl, or hoot, as never yet was roaring, neighing, hissing, bellowing, howling, or hooting, heard in this world before or since. The poor herdsman would cover his face, and call on all the saints for help, but it was no use. With one puff of her breath she would blow away the fold of his greatcoat, let him hold it never so tightly over his eyes, and not a saint in heaven paid him the slightest attention. And

to make matters worse, he never could stir ; no, nor even shut his eyes, but there was obliged to stay, held by what power he knew not, gazing at these terrible sights until the hair of his head would lift his hat half a foot over his crown, and his teeth would be ready to fall out from chattering. But the cattle would scamper about mad, as if they were bitten by the fly ; and this would last until the sun rose over the hill.

The poor cattle, from want of rest, were pining away, and food did them no good ; besides, they met with accidents without end. Never a night passed that some of them did not fall into a pit and get maimed, or maybe killed. Some would tumble into a river and be drowned ; in a word, there seemed never to be an end of the accidents. But what made matters worse, there could not be a herdsman got to tend the cattle by night. One visit from the fairy drove the stoutest-hearted almost mad.

The owner of the ground did not know what to do. He offered double, treble, quadruple wages, but not a man could be found for the sake of money to go through the horror of facing the fairy. She rejoiced at the successful issue of her project, and continued her pranks. The herd gradually thinning, and no man daring to

remain on the ground, the fairies came back in numbers, and gambolled as merrily as before, quaffing dewdrops from acorns, and spreading their feast on the heads of capacious mushrooms.

What was to be done ? The puzzled farmer thought in vain. He found that his substance was daily diminishing, his people terrified, and his rent-day coming round. It is no wonder that he looked gloomy, and walked mournfully down the road.

Now in that part of the world dwelt a man of the name of Larry Hoolahan, who played on the pipes better than any other player within fifteen parishes. A roving, dashing blade was Larry, and feared nothing. He would face a mad bull, or fight single-handed against a fair. In one of his gloomy walks the farmer met him, and on Larry's asking the cause of his down looks, he told him all his misfortunes.

" If that is all ails you," said Larry, " make your mind easy. Were there as many fairies on the peak as there are potato blossoms in Tipperary, I would face them. It would be a queer thing, indeed, if I, who never was afraid of a proper man, should turn my back upon a brat of a fairy not the bigness of one's thumb."

" Larry," said the farmer, " do not talk so

bold, for you know not who is hearing you ; but, if you make your words good, and watch my herds for a week on the top of the mountain, your hand shall be free of my dish till the sun has burnt itself down to the bigness of a farthing rushlight."

The bargain was struck, and Larry went to the hilltop, when the moon began to peep over the brow. He took his seat on a big stone under a hollow of the hill, with his back to the wind, and pulled out his pipes. He had not played long when the voice of the fairies was heard upon the blast, like a slow stream of music. Presently they burst out into a loud laugh, and Larry could plainly hear one say, "What! another man upon the fairies' ring? Go to him, queen, and make him repent his rashness," and they flew away.

Larry felt them pass by his face as they flew like a swarm of midges ; and, looking up hastily, he saw between the moon and him a great black cat, standing on the very tip of its claws, with its back up, and mewing with the voice of a water-mill. Presently it swelled up towards the sky, and, turning round on its left hind leg, whirled till it fell to the ground, from which it started up in the shape of a salmon, with a cravat round its neck, and a pair of new top-boots.

"Go on, jewel," said Larry, "if you dance, I'll pipe;" and he struck up.

So she turned into this, and that, and the other, but still Larry played on, as he well knew how. At last she lost patience, as ladies will do when you do not mind their scolding, and changed herself into a calf, milk-white as the cream of Cork, and with eyes as mild as those of the girl I love. She came up gentle and fawning, in hopes to throw him off his guard by quietness, and then to work him some wrong. But Larry was not so deceived; for when she came up, he, dropping his pipes, leaped upon her back.

Now from the top of the mountain, as you look westward to the broad Atlantic, you will see the Shannon, queen of rivers, "spreading like a sea," and running on in gentle course to mingle with the ocean through the fair city of Limerick. It on this night shone under the moon and looked beautiful from the distant hill. Fifty boats were gliding up and down on the sweet current, and the song of the fishermen rose gaily from the shore.

Larry, as I said before, leaped upon the back of the fairy, and she, rejoiced at the opportunity, sprang from the hilltop, and bounded clear, at

one jump, over the Shannon, flowing as it was just ten miles from the mountain's base. It was done in a second, and when she alighted on the distant bank, kicking up her heels, she flung Larry on the soft turf. No sooner was he thus planted, than he looked her straight in the face, and scratching his head, cried out, "By my word, well done! That was not a bad leap *for a calf*!"

She looked at him for a moment, and then assumed her own shape.

"Laurence," said she, "you are a bold fellow; will you come back the way you went?"

"And that's what I will," said he, "if you let me."

So changing to a calf again, again Larry got on her back, and at another bound they were again upon the top of the peak. The fairy, once more resuming her figure, addressed him: "You have shown so much courage, Laurence, that while you keep herds on this hill you never shall be molested by me or mine. The day dawns, go down to the farmer, and tell him this; and if anything I can do may be of service to you, ask and you shall have it."

She vanished accordingly, and kept her word in never visiting the hill during Larry's life;

but he never troubled her with requests. He piped and lived at the farmer's expense, and roosted in his chimney corner, occasionally casting an eye to the flock. He died at last, and is buried in a green valley of pleasant Tipperary; but whether the fairies returned to the hill after his death is more than I can say.

NOTE.—The hill is Knocksheogowna, which signifies "*The Hill of the Fairy Calf.*"

IV

THE STORY OF KING LLUDD

Beli the Great had four sons, the eldest being called Lludd[1] and the youngest Llevelys. After the death of Beli, the kingdom of the Island of Britain fell into the hands of Lludd his eldest son, and Lludd ruled prosperously, and rebuilt the walls of London, and encompassed it about with numberless towers. After that he bade the citizens build houses therein, such as no houses in the kingdoms could equal. And, moreover, he was a mighty warrior, and generous and liberal in giving meat and drink to all that sought them. And though he had many castles and cities, this one loved he more than any. He dwelt therein most part of the year, therefore was it called Caer Lludd, and at last Caer London. And after the stranger-race came there, it was called London.

Lludd loved Llevelys best of all his brothers,

[1] Lludd is the celebrated King Lud, brother to Cæsar's opponent, Cassivelaunus.

because he was a wise and discreet man. Having heard that the king of France had died, leaving no heir except a daughter, and that he had left all his possessions in her hands, he came to Lludd his brother, to beseech his counsel and aid. And that not so much for his own welfare, as to seek to add to the glory and honour and dignity of his kindred, if he might go to France to woo the maiden for his wife. And forthwith his brother conferred with him, and this counsel was pleasing unto him.

So he prepared ships and filled them with armed knights, and set forth towards France. As soon as they had landed, they sent messengers to show the nobles of France the cause of the embassy. By the joint counsel of the nobles of France and of the princes, the maiden was given to Llevelys, and the crown of the kingdom with her. And thenceforth he ruled the land discreetly, and wisely, and happily, as long as his life lasted.

After a space of time had passed, three plagues fell on the Island of Britain, such as none in the islands had ever seen the like of. The first was a certain race that came, and was called the Coranians; and so great was their knowledge, that there was no discourse upon the face of the

Island, however low it might be spoken, but what, if the wind met it, it was known to them. And through this they could not be injured.

The second plague was a shriek which came on every May-eve, over every hearth in the Island of Britain. This went through people's hearts, and so scared them, that the men lost their hue and their strength, and the women their children, and the young men and the maidens lost their senses, and all the animals and trees and the earth and the waters, were left barren.

The third plague was, that however much of provisions and food might be prepared in the king's courts, were there even so much as a year's provision of meat and drink, none of it could ever be found, except what was consumed in the first night. And two of these plagues, no one ever knew their cause, therefore was there better hope of being freed from the first than from the second and third.

Thereupon King Lludd felt great sorrow and care, because that he knew not how he might be freed from these plagues. He called to him all the nobles of his kingdom, and asked counsel of them what they should do against these afflictions. By the common counsel of the nobles,

Lludd, the son of Beli, went to Llevelys, his brother, king of France, for he was a man great of counsel and wisdom, to seek his advice.

They made ready a fleet in secret and in silence, lest that race should know the cause of their errand, or any besides the king and his counsellors. When they were made ready, they went into their ships, Lludd and those whom he chose with him. And they began to cleave the seas towards France.

When these tidings came to Llevelys, seeing that he knew not the cause of his brother's ships, he came on the other side to meet him, and with him was a fleet vast of size. When Lludd saw this, he left all the ships out upon the sea except one only; and in that one he came to meet his brother, and he likewise with a single ship came to meet him. When they were come together, each put his arms about the other's neck, and they welcomed each other with brotherly love.

After that Lludd had shown his brother the cause of his errand, Llevelys said that he himself knew the cause of the coming to those lands. And they took counsel together to discourse on the matter otherwise than thus, in order that

the wind might not catch their words, nor the Coranians know what they might say. Then Llevelys caused a long horn to be made of brass, and through this horn they discoursed. But whatsoever words they spoke through this horn, one to the other, neither of them could hear any other but harsh and hostile words. And when Llevelys saw this, and that there was a demon thwarting them and disturbing through this horn, he caused wine to be put therein to wash it. Through the virtue of the wine the demon was driven out of the horn. When their discourse was unobstructed, Llevelys told his brother that he would give him some insects whereof he should keep some to breed, lest by chance the like affliction might come a second time. Other of these insects he should take and bruise in water. And he assured him that it would have power to destroy the race of the Coranians. That is to say, that when he came home to his kingdom he should call together all the people, both of his own race and of the race of the Coranians, for a conference, as though with the intent of making peace between them; and that when they were all together, he should take this charmed water, and cast it over all alike. And he assured him that the water would poison the

race of the Coranians, but that it would not slay or harm those of his own race.

"And the second plague," said he, "that is in thy dominion, behold it is a dragon. And another dragon of a foreign race is fighting with it, and striving to overcome it. Therefore does your dragon make a fearful outcry. And on this wise mayest thou come to know this. After thou hast returned home, cause the island to be measured in its length and breadth, and in the place where thou dost find the exact central point, there cause a pit to be dug, and cause a cauldron full of the best mead that can be made to be put in the pit, with a covering of satin over the face of the cauldron. And then, in thine own person, do thou remain there watching, and thou wilt see the dragons fighting in the form of terrific animals. At length they will take the form of dragons in the air. Last of all, after wearying themselves with fierce and furious fighting, they will fall in the form of two pigs upon the covering, and they will sink in, and the covering with them, and they will draw it down to the very bottom of the cauldron. They will drink up the whole of the mead, and after that they will sleep. Thereupon do thou immediately fold the covering around them, and bury them

in a kistvaen,[1] in the strongest place thou hast in thy dominions, and hide them in the earth. And as long as they shall bide in that strong place no plague shall come to the Island of Britain from elsewhere.

"The cause of the third plague," said he, "is a mighty man of magic, who takes thy meat and thy drink and thy store. And he, through illusions and charms, causes every one to sleep. Therefore it is needful for thee in thy own person to watch thy food and thy provisions. And lest he should overcome thee with sleep, be there a cauldron of cold water by thy side, and when thou art oppressed with sleep, plunge into the cauldron."

Then Lludd returned back unto his land. Immediately he summoned to him the whole of his own race and of the Coranians. And as Llevelys had taught him, he bruised the insects in water, the which he cast over them all together, and forthwith it destroyed the whole tribe of the Coranians, without hurt to any of the Britons.

Some time after this, Lludd caused the island to be measured in its length and in its breadth. And in Oxford he found the central point, and

[1] An enclosure formed of a few large stones placed on edge, with a stone cover, used as a sepulchre.

in that place he caused the earth to be dug, and in that pit a cauldron to be set, full of the best mead that could be made, and a covering of satin over the face of it. He himself watched that night. While he was there, he beheld the dragons fighting. When they were weary they fell, and came down upon the top of the satin, and drew it with them to the bottom of the cauldron. When they had drunk the mead they slept. In their sleep, Lludd folded the covering around them, and in the securest place he had in Snowdon, he hid them in a kistvaen. After that this spot was called Dinas Emreis.[1] Thus the fierce outcry ceased in his dominions.

When this was ended, King Lludd caused an exceeding great banquet to be prepared. When it was ready, he placed a vessel of cold water by his side, and he in his own proper person watched it. As he abode thus clad with arms, about the third watch of the night, lo, he heard many surpassing fascinations and various songs. Drowsiness urged him to sleep. Upon this, lest he should be hindered from his purpose and be overcome by sleep, he went often into the water. At last, behold, a man of vast size, clad in strong, heavy armour, came in, bearing a hamper.

[1] Dinas Emrys is a small hill in one of the valleys of Snowdon

And, as he was wont, he put all the food and provisions of meat and drink into the hamper, and proceeded to go with it forth. Nothing was ever more wonderful to Lludd, than that the hamper should hold so much.

Thereupon, King Lludd went after him and spoke unto him thus: "Stop, stop!" said he, "though thou hast done many insults and much spoil erstwhile, thou shalt not do so any more, unless thy skill in arms and thy prowess be greater than mine."

Then he instantly put down the hamper on the floor, and awaited him. A fierce encounter was between them, so that the glittering fire flew out from their arms. At the last Lludd grappled with him, and fate bestowed the victory on Lludd. And he threw the plague to the earth. After he had overcome him by strength and might, he besought his mercy. "How can I grant thee mercy," said the king, "after all the many injuries and wrongs that thou hast done me?"

"All the losses that ever I have caused thee," said he, "I will make thee atonement for, equal to what I have taken. And I will never do the like from this time forth. But thy faithful vassal will I be." And the king accepted this from him.

Thus Lludd freed the Island of Britain from the three plagues. From thenceforth until the end of his life,[1] in prosperous peace did Lludd, the son of Beli, rule the Island of Britain. And this tale is called the Story of Lludd and Llevelys. And thus it ends.

[1] Legend states that King Lud was buried in London, near the gate still bearing his name—Ludgate.

V

THE MAGIC MACKEREL

I

The Mackerel discovers Something in his Line

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

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

Once upon a time, my Lord Shark gave one of his fancy balls. The fishes, in preparing

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

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

The roof of the ballroom was a floating cloud of those small beings which sometimes appear as fire upon the surface of the wave. It was a joke of the Whale's every ten minutes to

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

The costumes worn at this fancy ball displayed numberless treasures of the deep. Lord Shark had made himself a chain of state from the skeleton hands of good men lost in a December tempest. He had wrapped himself in a gay coat, that was the three-coloured flag of their wrecked vessel; but as it did not keep him comfortable, he thought of enlarging it before his next ball with some patches bitten out of other flags. My Lord had covered his tail with an odd red cap, much dirtied, and had wriggled till

his nose was set fast in a gilt brass crown, which had in some way fallen among the fishes. Being nearly stifled by this, he was obliged to gasp so much that his teeth were constantly on view. Still my Lord Shark he was, and the feast was his.

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

Distinguished among the company there was the Crab, who kept a stall or grotto of men's bones, and who had filled his grotto with old nails

and chips of wood, crosses and whips, and chains and curiosities in bottles. He had a sceptre from the broken figure-head of an old war-vessel fastened to one of his fore-legs, and this he trailed behind him in the mud as he crawled round and round his stall, in anything but a straightforward way, begging of every fish who seemed to be of consequence that he would please to remember the grotto. A free kind of Sword-fish fell into a passion with this Crab, ran at him, and turned him over on his back, at the same time knocking his grotto down. Then there came swimming through the holes they made in an old three-crowned hat, files of Sardines, who ran away with the clog on the Crab's leg, and so left the poor creature free to scramble quickly out of sight.

But the Mackerel saw none of the gaiety, and had part in none of the Shark's feast. He stayed at home for a good many different-sized reasons, and one great reason—that he was too busy. For years he had devoted his whole mind to a question of magic. He had been occupied intensely with the study of that mysterious line which, till this day, wit of man or fish never availed to decipher—the line written in strange letters on the Mackerel's back. Clearly

these are the varied letters of some words of mystery. In a strange language writing is traced on the back of the Mackerel, and it is even underlined in evidence of its importance.

Now it happened that our Mackerel, who had been studying his own back for a hundred years in a glass borrowed from a Mermaid, read the first letter of the magic line at a time when the revel of the Shark's great fancy ball was shaking all the water round his cave. And in the moment when he knew what was the interpretation of the first letter, his tail-fins grew into legs having feet each with a thousand toes, and his gill-fins stretched themselves into arms having hands each with a thousand fingers.

Music had been his sole refreshment in the intervals of work. A good-natured Siren used to bring her harp and sing with him. Sometimes, when she meant soon to come back, her harp had been left in a corner of his cave. There it was at that moment, ready to be touched, and the exulting Mackerel, taking it between his feet, swept his two thousand fingers through its many strings. Then music such as no ten-fingered creature ever made, brought all the Sirens to his door. A magnificent Cod-fish, rolling by on his way to the fancy ball, pushed through the

"A GOOD-NATURED SIREN USED TO BRING HER HARP AND SING WITH HIM."

Sirens, and looking in as he passed, said, "Not bad for a Mackerel!" But all the little Pilchards, who, like the Herrings, have music in their hearts, ran to the wonderful harper when the sound of his song reached them. Off and away went, therefore, the walls of the ballroom. After the walls ran the guests, till, in a little while, there remained only, in open water, my Lord Shark and his black Sprats. My Lord, for want of better meat, snapped at these creatures, made a wry face as he crunched them, and then spat them out. For Sprat and pitch sauce disagreed even with him.

II

More in the Same Line

Although there may be more fish in the sea than ever came out of it, there never was another fish so bold as the Mackerel, who, popping his head above water, hailed a fishing-boat to carry him to shore.

"Is it a Mackerel," thought to himself Filarete, the fisherman. "Can a Mackerel hold up a long arm, stretch a finger, and cry 'Boat, ahoy'?"

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

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

"What do you want? What are you!"

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

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

With a thousand fingers upon each hand, knots are very soon unpicked. Pescadillo had not only unpicked himself a way out of the net,

but had unpicked every knot in the whole mesh, so that when he leapt out of the boat, Filarete's nets were become a litter of loose string. The Mackerel ran faster than a swallow flies, and yet the fisherman gave chase; for the mischievous fish, instead of running out of sight, often sat down or lay down, feigning sleep, and never started off again until the hand, stretched out to seize him, was within a scale's-breadth of his body. For he was resolved that Filarete should be his follower.

They ran till dusk, when they got to the top of a mountain, which they had been climbing all the afternoon; for it had pleased the fish to try his friend's wind to the utmost. On the mountain-top were ragged points of granite, but the central peak was a smooth table on which twenty men could stand. The Mackerel then slipped into a hole under a peak, while the fisherman, distrusting his feet, sat down to use his eyes. He was too hungry to sleep, and watched well until morning, when he observed, where he had lost sight of the Mackerel, a gleam as of water in a cranny of the rock. He had been drenched in the mists of evening, and had seen the moon half the night through. He had heard odd music after sunset, as if a thousand

or two of tiny fingers had been harping. The ridiculous Mackerel had sung also sentimental songs about the stars.

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

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

" Tooraloral la ! " said the fisherman, " but I will venture a thrust on your flakes with something handier than a beam, my good friend." The Mackerel was at the bottom of a deep cleft in the rock, where he could not be reached by his friend's arm, and he had turned his hole into a fountain of sentiment, because that was the most nauseous thing he could produce for the vexation of his adversary. But Filarete saw a bush growing near the Mackerel's retreat, and felt that he could produce what would be more stirring than any nonsense verses. He tore off, therefore, a long straight bough, rapidly stripped it into a small pole, and began savagely to thrust at Doctor Pescadillo. As he did so, he found that the gleam from the cleft was not of water,

but of looking-glass, in which the Mackerel seemed to have been admiring himself while he sang. The glass he smashed, but the owner of it ran up his stick almost into his hand, leapt over his head, and, with his music-shell tucked under one of his arms, had climbed the sharpest pinnacle of rock before the fisherman turned round to look for him. The Mermaid's glass was broken when he had almost made out the third letter of his line.

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

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

In the same instant a thousand dishes of choice food smoked on the table of the mountain-top. Close to the right hand of Pescadillo there was floating in the air the meat he liked best,

in a shining dish. Filarete's favourite dish came also to his hand.

"Now let us breakfast," said the Mackerel.

Filarete was already breakfasting. Fish and fisherman stood where they were; the right thing came always at the right time from the table to the hand of each. When they had both eaten enough, the breakfast vanished; but the fisherman said to the fish, "My lord, I am your servant. While you can command such a table as that, I know how great and good you are, and I will follow you about the world."

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

"The city, my Lord Doctor Pescadillo, is the city of Picon, by the Lake Picuda. It is there I sold my—may I say in your worshipful presence—fish. The way from the sea is by yonder ravine. The lake is always bubbling, and produces only bubbles. Little corn or fruit will grow on the plains, and these wild mountains, as you see, are barren. The people of the city live, therefore, almost entirely on what we poor

fellows get out of the sea. They seldom have enough to eat; but you will feed them. Not in your own worshipful person, no. Yet you run risk until they find out what sort of a fish you are."

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

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

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

III

The Last of his Line

The principles upon which Doctor Pescadillo had established his first happy attempts to read the writing on his back having helped him to three letters, enabled him thereafter to make quick and easy progress in research. When he and his Squire reached the landward foot of the mountains, they were hungry again; but the Mackerel had only to repeat the discovered third

letter upon his back, and a new feast of a thousand dishes smoked upon the ground before them. Still, also the slightest freak of appetite in master and man was so well studied, that each had under his hand exactly what he wanted, at the moment when the notion of it came into his head.

When they had eaten, being foot-weary with yesterday's race and the morning's scramble down the mountain's side, and furthermore, lazy with fulness of meat, the wayfarers lay down on their backs and looked up at the sky, wishing for a coach to come and carry them into the city. There was still Mackerel enough overhead to engage the attention of the Doctor. Was it possible that thus, when half asleep, he seized the true reading of two letters at once? The tremendous possibility caused him to leap to his feet. He tried one of them—the fourth of his line—and instantly a thousand horses, harnessed to a chariot, galloped by. They halted when the chariot was abreast of Mackerel and man. Their mouths were free; there were no reins to guide them; and it was noticeable that when any of the magic coursers put their heads to the dry ground and opened their mouths, corn or hay ran up between their teeth, and little water-springs welled up where they were thirsty.

"The other letter," thought the Doctor, "must be right since this is right; but as I get what I want by the thousand for each letter, and don't yet know anything more that I want, let me keep it by me for a little while."

It is in common kindness to be expected that the person to whom this story is told should be told also what is the sound of the letters that, when spoken, will produce at once a dinner, or an equipage on this liberal scale. But the letters are those of a dead language that was never living among ordinary men, and known only to a most ancient race of sorcerers, whose mouths were like the mouths of fishes. The last survivor of that race—a thousand thousand years ago—upon the day of his death caught a Mackerel, the only kind of fish having a mouth exactly fit for the pronouncing of his language. In dark letters he wrote with his finger on the fish's back a line of power as he died. The letters of this line, and of course also the line itself, only the mouth of a Mackerel can utter. It is for that reason that they cannot be told in the story.

Pescadillo understood already a thousand tongues, among which tongues of horses were included. He learnt, therefore, at once, from

conversation with his stud, that he might trust them to do as he wished ; and by addressing them all clearly in their own language before starting upon any journey, he afterwards knew how to save himself all trouble of explanation when upon the road. As they galloped into the city of Picon, by the Lake Picuda, there was a commotion on the pavement, and a rush of bright eyes to the windows. The two eyes of a lovely Princess looked out of each of the ten windows of each of the hundred royal palaces.

As horse after horse galloped by in the same traces, and still no coach, but still more harnessed horses followed, first there was a cry of joy for horse-riders, because clearly this was the troop of a grand circus entering the town. Then, as there came by still horses and horses, the people cried there were too many horses, for the land did not yield corn to feed them, and even if these riders brought so much corn with them, they should give it to the people, who were hungry.

At last, when the streets were full of the horses, there appeared the chariot they drew, and in it was a common fisherman, with a small fish.

" Yah ! " cried the mob. " Do you want

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

The Mackerel endeavoured with his harp and song to still the uproar, but in vain. There was no help for it; he spoke his reserved fifth letter, and cried "Silence!"

There fell instantly upon the town a stillness as of night in the great desert when no wind stirs. Not even the rasp of a breath or the scrape of a foot was heard, though men seemed to be raving, shouting, and stamping quite as much as before. Now, therefore, the wonderful music was to be heard, and by it a few women were soothed.

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

most fortunate of fishes could stop any sound at will, and let it go again when he thought proper.

A creature that could give such dinners had his own way entirely in the city and land of Picon. The hundred kings deposed themselves for love of him, declared him sole king, and themselves his viceroys. He changed the next letter he read into a thousand palaces of wonders, and in each there was a study, walled with looking-glass, so that he worked with comfort at the writing on his back. Every new letter he learnt to utter crowned with thousandfold fulfilment the wish of the hour. The thousand Princesses vied for his love; but he began to see that he could not be happy with a thousand wives. His last letter, except the very last, he gave to the wish that the one thousand dear Princesses could be all rolled into one.

Then there was a sight to be seen! Royal Princesses tumbling out of windows and doors, rolling about the streets like balls, every two that came together lost in one another, till the thousand had all rolled together into one colossal damsel. Her the poor little fish was very proud to marry. He did not think himself small, and yet, being small, a large wife was entirely to his

fancy. This couple was married in great state —the fisherman being groomsman to the Mackerel, and all her hundred fathers standing by to give away the bride.

The wedding ball was so magnificent beyond belief that King Pescadillo, in his brilliant court, surrounded by his hundred kingly fathers-in-law, could not help thinking of the old days under water, where so much was thought of the Shark's ball, and when the friends of his youth laughed at him for staying at home to learn his letters. As he thought this, he looked at himself in the great mirrors on the wall. There was the one last letter nearest to his legs. His flush of triumph so quickened his wit that he could read it at a glance, and whispered it unconsciously while he was wishing my Lord Shark were there to see what a state ball Lord Mackerel was giving. He looked up, and saw the ballroom walled with glass, behind which there were a thousand sharks in sea-water glaring upon the company. The company was in extreme delight at this clever addition to its entertainment.

Then the little Mackerel's heart beat with exultation. "Something," he said to himself, "I know not what, is near. This is my

wedding-day, and on this day of all days I have finished reading the inscription on my back, letter by letter. If the power of the single letters be so great as to fulfil wish after wish, and tempt me on till I learn all, now that I know all, what will be the strength of the whole charm?"

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

The Royal Pescadillo stood upon the stool before his throne, and spoke the letter that compelled strict silence. Then, with panting sides, dread at the great unknown issue of his adventure tempering his triumph, he gasped out the entire magic word; and at the word the giant sorcerer, with a great hairy face, of which the beard trailed behind his feet, entered the ballroom door. This might be right, thought Pescadillo, though his little knees knocked at each other, and the thousand fingers of each hand twitched nervously. The cruel sorcerer advanced to the poor little fish, seized him, and thrust him into his great mouth as the

first morsel to be eaten in his second course of life.

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

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

And so Mackerel got safely home again. In all his life he never read another line, and he

warned all his relations to get through their lives as merrily as they were able, without ever inquiring what they carried on their backs. " Not for thousands," he said, " would he himself have been so curious had he known everything when he began his studies ! "

VI

THE BATTLE OF THE BIRDS

THERE was once a time when every creature and bird was gathering to battle. The son of the king of Tethertown said that he would go to see the battle, and that he would bring sure word home to his father, the king, who would be king of the creatures this year. The battle was over before he arrived all but one fight, between a great black raven and a snake, and it seemed as if the snake would get the victory over the raven. When the king's son saw this, he helped the raven, and with one blow took the head off the snake. When the raven had taken breath, and saw that the snake was dead, he said, "For thy kindness to me this day, I will give thee a sight. Come up now on the root of my two wings." The king's son mounted upon the raven, and before he stopped, he took him over seven Bens, and seven Glens, and seven Mountain Moors.

"Now," said the raven, "seest thou that

house yonder ? Go to it. It is a sister of mine that makes her dwelling there; and I will go bail that thou art welcome. And if she asks thee, Wert thou at the battle of the birds ? say thou that thou wert. And if she asks, Didst thou see my likeness ? say that thou sawest it. But be sure that thou meetest me to-morrow morning here, in this place." The king's son got good and right good treatment this night. Meat of each meat, drink of each drink, warm water to his feet, and a soft bed for his limbs.

On the next day the raven gave him the same sight over seven Bens, and seven Glens, and seven Mountain Moors. They saw a dwelling far off, but, though far off, they were soon there. He got good treatment this night, as before,—plenty of meat and drink, and warm water to his feet, and a soft bed to his limbs,—and on the next day it was the same thing.

On the third morning, instead of seeing the raven as at the other times, who should meet him but the handsomest lad he ever saw, with a bundle in his hand. The king's son asked this lad if he had seen a big black raven. Said the lad to him, "Thou wilt never see the raven again, for I am that raven. I was put under spells ; it was meeting thee that loosed me, and

for that thou art getting this bundle. Now," said the lad, "thou wilt turn back on the self-same steps, and thou wilt lie a night in each house, as thou wert before; but thy lot is not to lose the bundle which I gave thee, till thou art in the place where thou wouldst most wish to dwell."

The king's son turned his back to the lad, and his face to his father's house; and he got lodging from the raven's sisters, just as he got it when going forward. When he was nearing his father's house he was going through a close wood. It seemed to him that the bundle was growing heavy, and he thought he would look what was in it.

When he loosed the bundle, it was not without astonishing himself. In a twinkling he sees the very grandest place he ever saw. A great castle, and an orchard about the castle, in which was every kind of fruit and herb. He stood full of wonder and regret for having loosed the bundle —it was not in his power to put it back again— and he would have wished this pretty place to be in the pretty little green hollow that was opposite his father's house; but, at one glance, he sees a great giant coming towards him.

"Bad's the place where thou hast built thy house, king's son," says the giant.

"Yes, but it is not here I would wish it to be, though it happened to be here by mishap," says the king's son.

"What's the reward thou wouldst give me for putting it back in the bundle as it was before?"

"What's the reward thou wouldst ask?"

"Give me the first son thou hast when he is seven years of age," says the giant.

"Thou wilt get that if I have a son," said the king's son.

In a twinkling the giant put each garden, and orchard, and castle in the bundle as they were before. "Now," says the giant, "take thou thine own road, and I will take my road; but mind thy promise, and though thou shouldst forget, I will remember."

The king's son took to the road, and at the end of a few days he reached the place he was fondest of. He loosed the bundle, and the same place was just as it was before. And when he opened the castle door he sees the handsomest maiden he ever cast eye upon.

"Advance, king's son," said the pretty maid; "everything is in order for thee, if thou wilt marry me."

"It's I am the man that is willing," said the king's son. And they were married.

But at the end of a day and seven years, what great man is seen coming to the castle but the giant. The king's son minded his promise to the giant, and till now he had not told his promise to the queen. "Leave thou the matter between me and the giant," says the queen.

"Turn out thy son," says the giant; "mind your promise."

"Thou wilt get that," says the king, "when his mother puts him in order for his journey." The queen arrayed the cook's son, and she gave him to the giant by the hand. The giant went away with him; but he had not gone far when he put a rod in the hand of the little laddie. The giant asked him, "If thy father had that rod what would he do with it?"

"If my father had that rod he would beat the dogs and the cats, if they would be going near the king's meat," said the little laddie.

"Thou'rt the cook's son," said the giant, and he turned back to the castle in rage and madness. He told them that if they did not turn out the king's son to him, the highest stone of the castle would be the lowest.

Said the queen to the king, "We'll try it yet; the butler's son is of the same age as our own."

She arrayed the butler's son and gave him

to the giant by the hand. The giant had not gone far when he put the rod in his hand. "If thy father had that rod," says the giant, "what would he do with it?"

"He would beat the dogs and the cats when they would be coming near the king's bottles and glasses."

"Thou art the son of the butler," says the giant, and returned in very great rage and anger. The earth shook under the sole of his feet, and the castle shook and all that was in it. "OUT HERE THY SON," says the giant, "or in a twinkling the stone that is highest in thy dwelling will be the lowest." So needs must, they had to give the king's son to the giant.

The giant took him to his own house, and he reared him as his own son. On a day of days when the giant was from home, the lad heard the sweetest music he ever heard in a room at the top of the giant's house. At a glance he saw the finest face he had ever seen. She beckoned to him to come a bit nearer to her, and she told him to go this time, but to be sure to be at the same place about midnight.

And, as he promised, he did. The giant's daughter was at his side in a twinkling, and she said, "To-morrow thou wilt get the choice of

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7

my two sisters to marry; but say thou that thou wilt not take either, but me. My father wants me to marry the son of the king of the Green City, but I don't like him."

On the morrow the giant took out his three daughters, and said, "Now, son of the king of Tethertown, thou hast not lost by living with me so long. Thou wilt marry one of the two eldest of my daughters, and with her leave to go home with her the day after the wedding."

"If thou wilt give me this pretty little one," says the king's son, "I will take thee at thy word."

The giant's wrath kindled, and he said, "Before thou gett'st her thou must do the three things that I ask thee to do."

"Say on," says the king's son.

The giant took him to the byre. "Now," says the giant, "a hundred cattle live here, and the stable has not been cleansed for seven years. I am going from home to-day, and if this byre is not cleaned before night comes, so clean that a golden apple will run from end to end of it, not only shalt thou not get my daughter, but 'tis a drink of thy blood that will quench my thirst this night."

He began cleaning the byre, but it was just as

well to keep baling the great ocean. After midday, when sweat was blinding him, the giant's young daughter came where he was and said to him, "Thou art being punished, king's son."

"I am that," says he.

"Come over, and lay down thy weariness."

"I will do that," says he; "there is but death awaiting me, at any rate."

He sat down near her, and was so tired that he fell asleep. When he awoke, the giant's daughter was not to be seen, but the byre was so well cleaned that a golden apple would run from end to end of it.

In came the giant. "Thou hast cleaned the byre, king's son?"

"I have cleaned it."

"Somebody cleaned it," says the giant.

"Thou didst not clean it, at all events," said the king's son.

"Yes, yes! Since thou wert so active to-day, thou wilt get to this time to-morrow to thatch this byre with birds'-down—birds with no two feathers of one colour."

The king's son was on foot before the sun; he caught up his bow and his quiver of arrows to kill the birds. He took to the moors, but the birds were not so easy to take. He was running

after them till the sweat was blinding him. About midday who should come but the giant's daughter.

"Thou art exhausting thyself, king's son."

"I am," said he. "There fell but these two blackbirds, and both of one colour."

"Come over and lay down thy weariness on this pretty hillock."

"It's I am willing." He thought she would aid him this time too, and he sat down near her, and he was not long before he fell asleep.

When he awoke, the giant's daughter was gone. He thought he would go back to the house, where he saw the byre thatched with feathers. When the giant came home, he said, "Thou hast thatched the byre, king's son?"

"I thatched it."

"Somebody thatched it," said the giant.

"Thou didst not thatch it."

"Yes, yes!" said the giant. "Now, there is a fir tree beside that loch down there, and there is a magpie's nest in its top. The eggs thou wilt find in the nest. I must have them for my first meal. Not one must be burst or broken, and there are five in the nest."

Early in the morning the king's son went where the tree was, and that tree was not hard

to hit upon. Its match was not in the whole wood. From the foot to the first branch was five hundred feet. The king's son was going all round the tree. She came who was always bringing help to him.

"Thou art losing the skin of thy hands and feet."

"Ach! I am; I am no sooner up than down."

"This is no time for stopping," says the giant's daughter. She thrust finger after finger into the tree, till she made a ladder for the king's son to go up to the magpie's nest. When he was at the nest, she said, "Make haste now with the eggs, for my father's breath is burning my back." In her hurry she had broken her little finger and left it in the top of the tree.

"Now," said she, "thou wilt go home with the eggs quickly, and thou wilt marry me if thou canst know me. I and my two sisters will be arrayed in the same garments, and made like each other, but look at me when my father says, 'Go, choose thy wife, king's son'; and thou wilt see a hand without a little finger."

He gave the eggs to the giant. "Yes, yes!" said the giant, "be making ready for thy marriage."

Then indeed there was a wedding, and it *was*

a wedding—giants and gentlemen, and the son of the king of the Green City was in the midst of them. The dancing began, and the giant's house was shaking from top to bottom.

"It is time for thee to depart, son of the king of Tethertown," said the giant, "take thy bride from amidst those."

She put out the hand off which the little finger was, and he caught her by the hand.

"Thou hast aimed well this time too; but there is no knowing but we may meet thee another way," said the giant.

"We must fly quick, quick, or for certain my father will kill thee," said the giant's daughter.

Out they went, and mounted the blue-grey filly in the stable.

"Stop a while," said she, "and I will play a trick to the old hero." She jumped in, and cut an apple into nine shares; she put two shares at the head of the bed, two shares at the foot, two shares at the door of the kitchen, two shares at the big door, and one outside the house.

The giant awoke and called, "Are you asleep?" "We are not yet," said the apple that was at the head of the bed. At the end of a while he called again. "We are not yet," said the apple that was at the foot of the bed. A while after

this he called again. "We are not yet," said the apple at the kitchen door. The giant called again. The apple that was at the big door answered. "You are now going far from me," said the giant. "We are not yet," answered the apple that was outside the house. "You are flying," called the giant. The giant jumped on his feet, and to the bed he went, but it was empty.

"My own daughter's tricks are trying me," said the giant. "Here's after them."

In the mouth of day, the giant's daughter said that her father's breath was burning her back. "Put thy hand, quick," said she, "in the ear of the grey filly, and whatever thou findest in it, throw it behind thee."

"There is a twig of a sloe tree," said he.

"Throw it behind thee."

No sooner did he that, than there were twenty miles of blackthorn wood, so thick that scarce a weasel could go through it. The giant came headlong, and there he is fleecing his head and neck in the thorns.

"My own daughter's tricks are here as before," said the giant; "but if I had my own big axe and wood-knife here, I would not be long making a way through this." He went home for the

big axe and the wood-knife, and sure he was not long on his journey and in making a way through the blackthorn.

"I will leave the axe and the wood-knife here till I return."

"If thou leave them," said a rook that was in a tree, "we will steal them."

"You will do that," said the giant; "then I will take them home." He returned and left them at the house.

At the heat of day the giant's daughter felt her father's breath burning her back.

"Put thy finger in the filly's ear, and throw behind thee whatever thou findest in it."

He got a splinter of grey stone, and in a twinkling there were twenty miles, by breadth and height, of great grey rock behind them. The giant came full pelt, but past the rock he could not go.

"The tricks of my own daughter are the hardest things that ever met me," said the giant; "but if I had my lever and my mighty mattock, I would not be long making my way through this rock also." There was no help for it, but to turn the chase for them, and he was the boy to split the stones. He was not long making a road through the rock.

"IN THE MOUTH OF DAY THE GIANT'S DAUGHTER SAID THAT HER FATHER'S BREATH WAS BURNING HER BACK."

"I will leave the tools here, and I will return no more."

"If thou leave them," said the rook, "we will steal them."

"Do that if thou wilt; there is no time to go back."

At the time of breaking the watch, the giant's daughter said that she was feeling her father's breath burning her back.

"Look in the filly's ear, king's son, or else we are lost."

He did so, and it was a bladder of water that was in her ear this time. He threw it behind him, and there was a fresh-water loch, twenty miles in length and breadth, behind them.

The giant came on, but with the speed he had on him, he was in the middle of the loch, and he went under, and rose no more.

On the next day the young companions were come in sight of his father's house. "Now," said she, "my father is drowned, and he won't trouble us any more; but before we go farther, go thou to thy father's house, and tell that thou hast brought me; but this is thy lot, let neither man nor creature kiss thee, for if thou dost thou wilt not remember that thou hast ever seen me."

Every one he met was giving him welcome and luck, and he charged his father and mother not to kiss him; but as mishap was to be, an old greyhound was in, and she knew him, and jumped up to his mouth, and after that he did not remember the giant's daughter.

She was sitting at the well's side as he left her, but the king's son did not return. As evening came on she climbed up into a tree of oak that was beside the well, and lay in the fork of the tree all that night. A shoemaker had a house near the well, and about midday on the morrow, the shoemaker asked his wife to go for a drink for him out of the well. When she reached the well, and when she saw the shadow of her that was in the tree, thinking it was her own shadow—and she never thought till now she was so handsome—she gave a cast to the dish that was in her hand and it was broken on the ground, and she took herself to the house without vessel or water.

"Where is the water, wife?" said the shoemaker.

"Thou shambling, contemptible old carle, without grace, I have stayed too long thy water and wood slave."

"I am thinking, wife, that thou hast turned crazy. Go thou, daughter, quickly, and fetch a drink for thy father."

His daughter went, and in the same way so it happened to her. She never thought till now that she was so lovable, and she took herself home.

"Up with the drink," said her father.

"Thou home-spun shoe carle, dost thou think that I am fit to be thy slave?"

The poor shoemaker thought that they had taken a turn in their understandings, and he went himself to the well. He saw the shadow of the maiden in the well, and he looked up to the tree, and saw the finest woman he ever saw.

"Thy seat is wavering, but thy face is fair," said the shoemaker. "Come down, for there is need of thee for a short while at my house."

The shoemaker understood that this was the shadow that had driven his people mad. He took her to his house, and said that he had but a poor cottage, but that she should get a share of all that was in it.

At the end of a day or two came a company of gentlemen lads to the shoemaker's house for

shoes to be made them, for the king had come home, and was going to marry. The lads gave a glance at the giant's daughter. "'Tis thou hast the pretty daughter here," said they to the shoemaker.

"She is pretty, indeed, but she is no daughter of mine."

"St. Nail!" said one, "I would give a hundred pounds to marry her."

The two others said the very same. The poor shoemaker said that he had nothing to do with her.

"But," said they, "ask her to-night, and send us word to-morrow."

When the gentles went away, she asked the shoemaker, "What was that they were saying about me?"

The shoemaker told her.

"Go thou after them," said she, "I will marry one of them, and let him bring his purse with him."

The youth returned, and gave the shoemaker the hundred pounds he promised.

When she saw him she asked the lad for a drink of water from a tumbler that was on the board on the farther side of the room. He went, but back again he could not come, but stood

holding the vessel of water the whole night. On the morrow she asked the shoemaker to take the lubberly boy away.

This wooer went and betook himself to his home, but he did not tell the other two how it happened to him. Next came the second youth.

"Look," she said to him, "if the latch is on the door." The latch laid hold of his hands, and kept him standing there the whole of one night. On the morrow he went, under shame and disgrace. No matter, he did not tell the other how it had happened, and on the third day he came. As it happened to the two others, so it happened to him. One foot stuck to the floor; he could neither come nor go. On the morrow he took his soles out and fled, never looking behind him.

"Now," said the girl to the shoemaker, "thine is the sporran of gold; I have no need of it. It will better thee, and I am no worse for thy kindness to me."

The shoemaker had the shoes ready, and on that very day the king was to be married. He was going to the castle with them when the girl said, "I would like to get a sight of the king's son before he marries."

"Come with me," said the shoemaker, "I am well acquainted with the servants at the castle, and thou shalt get a sight of the king's son and all the company."

When the gentles saw the pretty woman they took her to the guest-room and filled for her a glass of wine. When she was going to drink, a flame went up out of the glass, and a golden pigeon and a silver pigeon sprang out of it. They were flying about when three grains of barley fell on the floor. The silver pigeon sprang and ate it. Said the golden pigeon to him, "If thou hadst mind when I cleared the byre, thou wouldst not eat that without giving me a share."

Again fell three other grains of barley, and the silver pigeon sprang and ate that, as before.

"If thou hadst mind when I thatched the byre, thou wouldst not eat that without giving me my share," said the golden pigeon.

Three other grains fell, and the silver pigeon sprang and ate that.

"If thou hadst mind when I harried the magpie's nest, thou wouldst not eat that without giving me my share," said the golden pigeon. "I lost my little finger bringing it down, and I want it still."

The king's son remembered, and he knew who it was. He sprang where she was and kissed her. When the priest came they married a second time. And there I left them.

VII

LEGEND OF BOTTLE HILL

It was in the good days, when the little people most impudently called fairies were more frequently seen than they are in these unbelieving times, that a farmer named Mick Purcell rented a few acres of barren ground in the neighbourhood of the once-celebrated monastery of Mourne, situated about three miles from Mallow and thirteen from "the beautiful city called Cork."

Mick had a wife and family; they all did what they could, and that was but little, for the poor man had no child grown up big enough to help him in his work; and all the poor woman could do was to mind the children, and to milk the one cow, and to boil the potatoes, and carry the eggs to market to Mallow; but with all they could do, 'twas hard enough on them to pay the rent. Well, they did manage it for a good while, but at last came a bad year, and the little grain of oats was all spoiled, and the chickens died of

the pip, and the pig got the measles—*she* was sold in Mallow and brought almost nothing; and poor Mick found that he hadn't enough to half pay his rent, and two gales were due.

"Why then, Molly," says he, "what'll we do?"

"Wisha, then, mavourneen, what would you do but take the cow to the fair of Cork and sell her. Monday is fair day, and so you must go to-morrow, that the poor beast may be rested *again* the fair."

"And what'll we do when she's gone?" says Mick sorrowfully.

"Never a know I know, Mick, but sure God won't leave us without Him, Mick; and you know how good He was to us when poor little Billy was sick, and we had nothing at all for him to take, that good doctor gentleman at Ballydahin come riding and asking for a drink of milk; and how he gave us two shillings; and how he sent the things and bottles for the child, and gave me my breakfast when I went over to ask a question, so he did; and how he came to see Billy, and never left off his goodness till he was quite well?"

"Oh, you are always that way, Molly, and I believe you are right after all, so I won't be

sorry for selling the cow; but I'll go to-morrow, and you must put a needle and thread through my coat, for you know 'tis ripped under the arm."

Molly told him he should have everything right, and about twelve o'clock next day he left her, getting a charge not to sell his cow except for the highest penny. Mick promised to mind it, and went his way along the road. He drove his cow slowly through the little stream which crosses it, and runs by the old walls of Mourne. As he passed he glanced his eye upon the towers and one of the old elder trees, which were only then little bits of switches.

"Oh, then, if I only had half the money that's buried in you, 'tisn't driving this poor cow I'd be now! Why, then, isn't it too bad that it should be there covered over with earth, and many a one besides me wanting? Well, if it's God's will, I'll have some money myself coming back."

So saying, he moved on after his beast. 'Twas a fine day, and the sun shone brightly on the walls of the old abbey as he passed under them. He then crossed an extensive mountain tract, and after six long miles he came to the top of that hill—Bottle Hill 'tis called now, but that

was not the name of it then, and just there a man overtook him.

"Good-morrow," says he.

"Good-morrow, kindly," says Mick, looking at the stranger, who was a little man, you'd almost call him a dwarf, only he wasn't quite so little. He had a bit of an old, wrinkled, yellow face, for all the world like a dried cauliflower, only he had a sharp little nose, and red eyes, and white hair, and his lips were not red, but all his face was one colour, and his eyes never were quiet, but looking at everything, and although they were red, they made Mick feel quite cold when he looked at them. In truth, he did not much like the little man's company; and he couldn't see one bit of his legs, nor his body, for, though the day was warm, he was all wrapped up in a big greatcoat.

Mick drove his cow something faster, but the little man kept up with him. Mick didn't know how he walked, for he was almost afraid to look at him, for fear the old man would be angry. Yet he thought his fellow-traveller did not seem to walk like other men, nor to put one foot before the other, but to glide over the rough road—and rough enough it was—like a shadow, without noise and without effort. Mick's heart trembled

within him, and he said a prayer to himself, wishing he hadn't come out that day, or that he was on Fair-Hill, or that he hadn't the cow to mind, that he might run away from the bad thing—when, in the midst of his fears, he was again addressed by his companion.

"Where are you going with the cow, honest man?"

"To the fair of Cork, then," said Mick, trembling at the shrill and piercing tones of the voice.

"Are you going to sell her?" asked the stranger.

"Why, then, what else am I going for but to sell her?"

"Will you sell her to me?"

Mick started—he was afraid to have anything to do with the little man, and he was more afraid to say no.

"What'll you give for her?"

"I'll tell you what, I'll give you this bottle," said the little one, pulling a bottle from under his coat.

Mick looked at him and the bottle, and, in spite of his terror, he could not help bursting into a loud fit of laughter.

"Laugh if you will," said the little man,

" but I tell you this bottle is better for you than all the money you will get for the cow in Cork—ay, than ten thousand times as much."

Mick laughed again. " Why, then, do you think I am such a fool as to give my good cow for a bottle—and an empty one, too ? Indeed, then, I won't."

" You had better give me the cow, and take the bottle—you'll not be sorry for it."

" Why, then, and what would Molly say ? I'd never hear the end of it ; and how would I pay the rent ? And what would we all do without a penny of money ? "

" I tell you this bottle is better to you than money ; take it, and give me the cow. I ask you for the last time, Mick Purcell."

Mick started.

" How does he know my name ? " thought he.

The stranger proceeded : " Mick Purcell, I know you, and I have a regard for you ; therefore do as I warn you, or you may be sorry for it. How do you know but your cow will die before you get to Cork ? "

Mick was going to say " God forbid ! " but the little man went on. " And how do you know but there will be much cattle at the fair, and you will get a bad price, or maybe you

might be robbed when you are coming home? But what need I talk more to you, when you are determined to throw away your luck, Mick Purcell."

"Oh, no, I would not throw away my luck, sir," said Mick, "and if I was sure the bottle was as good as you say, though I never liked an empty bottle, I'd give you the cow in the name——"

"Never mind names," said the stranger, "but give me the cow; I would not tell you a lie. Here, take the bottle, and when you go home, do what I direct exactly."

Mick hesitated.

"Well, then, good-bye, I can stay no longer: once more, take it, and be rich; refuse it and beg for your life, and see your children in poverty, and your wife dying for want. That will happen to you, Mick Purcell!" said the little man with a malicious grin, which made him look ten times more ugly than ever.

"Maybe 'tis true," said Mick, still hesitating; he did not know what to do—he could hardly help believing the old man, and at length in a fit of desperation he seized the bottle. "Take the cow," said he, "and if you are telling a lie, the curse of the poor will be on you."

"I care neither for your curses nor your blessings, but I have spoken truth, Mick Purcell, and that you will find to-night, if you do what I tell you."

"And what's that?" says Mick.

"When you go home, never mind if your wife is angry, but be quiet yourself, and make her sweep the room clean, set the table out right, and spread a clean cloth over it; then put the bottle on the ground, saying these words: 'Bottle, do your duty,' and you will see the end of it."

"And is this all?" says Mick.

"No more," said the stranger. "Good-bye, Mick Purcell—you are a rich man."

"God grant it!" said Mick, as the old man moved after the cow, and Mick retraced the road towards his cabin; but he could not help turning back his head, to look after the purchaser of his cow, who was nowhere to be seen.

"Lord between us and harm!" said Mick. "*He* can't belong to this earth; but where is the cow?" She too was gone, and Mick went homeward muttering prayers, and holding fast the bottle.

"And what would I do if it broke?" thought he. "Oh, but I'll take care of that." So he

put it into his bosom, and went on anxious to prove his bottle, and doubting of the reception he should meet from his wife. Balancing his anxieties with his expectation, his fears with his hopes, he reached home in the evening, and surprised his wife, sitting over the turf fire in the big chimney.

"Oh, Mick, are you come back? Sure you weren't at Cork all the way? What has happened to you? Where is the cow? Did you sell her? How much money did you get for her? What news have you? Tell us everything about it."

"Why then, Molly, if you'll give me time, I'll tell you all about it. If you want to know where the cow is, 'tisn't Mick can tell you, for the never a know does he know where she is now."

"Oh, then, you sold her; and where's the money?"

"Arrah! stop awhile, Molly, and I'll tell you all about it."

"But what is that bottle under your waistcoat?" said Molly, spying its neck sticking out.

"Why, then, be easy now, can't you," said Mick, "till I tell it to you;" and putting the bottle on the table, "That's all I got for the cow."

His poor wife was thunderstruck. "All you

got! And what good is that, Mick? Oh, I never thought you were such a fool; and what'll we do for the rent, and what——"

"Now, Molly, can't you hearken to reason? Didn't I tell you how the old man, or whatsomever he was, met me—no, he did not meet me either, but he was there with me—on the big hill, and how he made me sell him the cow, and told me the bottle was the only thing for me?"

"Yes, indeed, the only thing for you, you fool!" said Molly, seizing the bottle to hurl it at her poor husband's head; but Mick caught it, and quietly loosened his wife's grasp, and placed the bottle again in his bosom. Poor Molly sat down crying, while Mick told her his story, with many a crossing and blessing between him and harm. His wife could not help believing him, particularly as she had as much faith in fairies as she had in the priest, who indeed never discouraged her belief in the fairies; maybe he didn't know she believed in them, and maybe he believed in them himself. She got up, however, without saying one word, and began to sweep the earthen floor with a bunch of heath; then she tidied up everything, and put out the long table, and spread the clean cloth, for she

had only one, upon it, and Mick, placing the bottle on the ground, looked at it, and said, "Bottle, do your duty."

"Look there! look there, mammy!" said his chubby eldest boy, a boy about five years old. "Look there! look there!" And he sprang to his mother's side, as two tiny little fellows rose like light from the bottle, and in an instant covered the table with dishes and plates of gold and silver, full of the finest food that ever was seen, and when all was done went into the bottle again.

Mick and his wife looked at everything with astonishment; they had never seen such plates and dishes before, and didn't think they could ever admire them enough; the very sight almost took away their appetites. But at length Molly said, "Come and sit down, Mick, and try and eat a bit; sure you ought to be hungry after such a good day's work."

"Why, then, the man told no lie about the bottle."

Mick sat down, after putting the children to the table; and they made a hearty meal, though they couldn't taste half the dishes.

"Now," said Molly, "I wonder will those two good little gentlemen carry away these fine things again?" They waited, but no one came;

so Molly put up the dishes and plates very carefully, saying, "Why, then, Mick, that was no lie sure enough; but you'll be a rich man yet, Mick Purcell."

Mick and his wife and children went to their bed, not to sleep, but to settle about selling the fine things they did not want, and to take more land. Mick went to Cork and sold his plate, and bought a horse and cart, and began to show that he was making money; and they did all they could to keep the bottle a secret. But for all that, their landlord found it out, for he came to Mick one day and asked him where he got all his money—sure it was not by the farm; and he bothered him so much, that at last Mick told him of the bottle. His landlord offered him a deal of money for it, but Mick would not give it, till at last he offered to give him all his farm for ever; so Mick, who was very rich, thought he'd never want any more money, and gave him the bottle. But Mick was mistaken; he and his family spent money as if there was no end of it, and, to make the story short, they became poorer and poorer, till at last they had nothing left but one cow, and Mick once more drove his cow before him to sell her at Cork fair, hoping to meet the old man and get another

bottle. It was hardly daybreak when he left home, and he walked on at a good pace till he reached the big hill. The mists were sleeping in the valleys and curling like smoke-wreaths upon the brown heath around him; the sun rose on his left, and just at his feet a lark sprang from its grassy couch and poured forth its joyous matin song, ascending into the clear blue sky.

Mick crossed himself, listening as he advanced to the sweet song of the lark, but thinking, notwithstanding, all the time of the little old man, when, just as he reached the summit of the hill, and cast his eyes over the extensive prospect before and around him, he was startled and rejoiced by the same well-known voice: "Well, Mick Purcell, I told you you would be a rich man."

"Indeed, then, sure enough I was; that's no lie for you, sir. Good morning to you, but it is not rich I am now—but have you another bottle, for I want it now as much as I did long ago? so if you have it, sir, here is the cow for it."

"And here is the bottle," said the old man, smiling; "you know what to do with it."

"Oh, then, sure I do, as good right I have."

"Well, farewell for ever, Mick Purcell; I told you you would be a rich man."

"And good-bye to you, sir," said Mick, as he turned back, "and good luck to you, and good luck to the big hill—it wants a name—Bottle Hill. Good-bye, sir, good-bye."

So Mick walked back as fast as he could, never looking after the white-faced little gentleman and the cow, so anxious was he to bring home the bottle. Well, he arrived with it safely enough and called out, as soon as he saw Molly, "Oh, sure, I've another bottle!"

"Arrah! then, have you? why, then, you're a lucky man, Mick Purcell, that's what you are."

In an instant she put everything right, and Mick, looking at his bottle, exultingly cried out, "Bottle, do your duty."

In a twinkling, two great stout men with big cudgels issued from the bottle (I do not know how they got room in it) and belaboured poor Mick and his wife and all the family, till they lay on the floor, when in they went again.

Mick, as soon as he recovered, got up and looked about him. He thought and thought, and at last he took up his wife and his children; and, leaving them to recover as well as they could, he took the bottle under his coat, and went to his landlord, who had a great company. He got a

servant to tell him he wanted to speak to him, and at last he came out to Mick.

"Well, what do you want now?"

"Nothing, sir, only I have another bottle."

"Oh, ho! is it as good as the first?"

"Yes, sir, and better; if you like, I will show it to you before all the ladies and gentlemen."

"Come along then."

So saying, Mick was brought into the great hall, where he saw his old bottle standing high up on a shelf. "Ah, ha!" said he to himself, "maybe I won't have you by and by."

"Now," said the landlord, "show us your bottle."

Mick set it on the floor, and uttered the words. In a moment the landlord was tumbled on the floor; ladies and gentlemen, servants and all, were running and roaring, and sprawling and kicking, and shrieking. Wine cups and salvers were knocked about in every direction, until the landlord called out, "Stop them, Mick Purcell, or I'll have you hanged!"

"They never shall stop," said Mick, "till I get my own bottle that I see up there at top of that shelf."

"Give it down to him, give it down to him, before we are all killed!" said the landlord.

Mick put his bottle in his bosom ; in jumped the two men into the new bottle, and he carried the bottles home.

I need not lengthen my story by telling how he got richer than ever, how his son married his landlord's only daughter, how he and his wife died when they were very old, and how some of the servants, fighting at their wake, broke the bottles ; but still the hill has the name upon it—ay, and so 'twill be always Bottle Hill to the end of the world, and so it ought, for it is a strange story.

VIII

MELILOT

I

The Three Neighbours of Melilot

It had been raining for ten months, and everybody felt as if it had been raining for ten years. In the driest part of the country, in the driest corners of the driest houses, there was damp. Whoever came near a fire began to steam; whoever left the fire began to moisten as the damp entered the clothes. There was a breath of wet on everything indoors, and Melilot was wet through when she came to the door of a broken-roofed cottage that stood in a marsh between two lakes.

Melilot was a pretty girl of twelve, who had lived in a cottage up the mountains, as the only child of hard-working parents, who taught her all that was good, and whose one worldly good she was; for they had nothing to eat but what they could force to grow out of a stony patch of

ground upon the mountain-side. They had loved Melilot, and they loved each other. To feed their little one they had deprived themselves, till when the rain running down the mountain-side had washed away their little garden crops, first the mother died—for she it was who had denied herself the most—and then the father also died in a long passion of weeping. The nearest neighbours occupied the cotttage in the valley on the marsh between the lakes. In hunger and grief, therefore, Melilot went down to them to ask for human help.

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

The runlets on the mountain formed a waterfall that, dashing over a smooth wall of rock broke into foam on the ragged floor of a great rocky basin near Melilot's cottage door. Then after a short rush, seething and foaming down

a slope rugged with granite boulders, the great cataract fell with a mighty roar over another precipice upon the stream that, swollen by the rains almost into a river, carried its flood into one of the lakes. It was partly by this waterfall that the path down into the valley ran.

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

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

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

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

The child flinched before opening the door,

but she did open it, and set one foot over the threshold ; then she stopped. There was nothing in the cottage but a muddy puddle on the floor, into which rain ran from the broken roof. Three men sat together in the puddle, squatted like frogs. They had broad noses and spotted faces, and the brightest of bright eyes, which were all turned to look at Melilot when she came in.

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

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

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

" My father, oh, my dear father ! " began Melilot, and fell to weeping bitterly.

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

"And her mother too," said Dodder, who was hoarser.

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

"She is fainting with hunger," said Dock.

"She is dying of hunger and grief," said Dodder.

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

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

"She asks us to her house," said Dock.

"We may go," said Dodder, "if we are invited."

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

II

The Mountain Hut

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

"Sprinkle water," said Dock.

"No need of that," said Dodder.

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

Either because there was more than a sprinkling of water, or because of her own stout young heart, Melilot recovered and climbed on. They reached the hut, and when there, the three neighbours at once bestirred themselves. Because of the flood outside, they dug the graves under the roof, one on each side of the hearth, for Melilot's dead father and mother, and so buried them. Then the child made her friends sit down to rest; one in her father's chair, one in

her mother's, and one on her own little stool. She raked the embers of the fire and put on fresh wood until a blaze leapt up that was strong enough to warm them before she would turn aside. Then standing in a corner by the morsel of window that looked out towards the waterfall, she gave way to her sobbing. But again—brave little heart—conquering herself, she came forward to where the monsters were sitting, with their legs crossed, basking in the firelight, and said, "I am sorry, dear, kind neighbours, that I have no supper to offer you."

"Nay, but you have," said Dock.

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

"They are for you, from the good angels."

"Oh, I am thankful!" Then Melilot broke the bread into three pieces, and gave a piece to each, and held the milk for them when they would drink.

"She is famished herself," said Dodder.

"We must eat all of it up," said Squill.

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

"MELITOT RECOVERED AND CLIMBED ON."

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

"See there!" Dock said.

"Whose supper is that?" asked Dodder.

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

The three neighbours refused to take another crumb; they had eaten so much tadpole, they said, for their dinners. Melilot, therefore, supped, but left much bread and milk, secretly thinking that her friends would require breakfast if they should consent to stay with her throughout the night. It was long since the sun set, reddening the mists of the plain, and now the mountain path beside the torrent was all dark and very perilous. The monsters eagerly watched their little hostess with their brilliant eyes, and assented, as it seemed, with exultation, to her wish that they would sleep in the hut. There were but two beds under its roof—Melilot's own little straw pallet, and that on which her parents were to sleep no more, on which she was no more to kneel beside them in the humble morning prayer. With sacred thoughts of hospitality the child gave up to the use of those who had smoothed for her dear parents a new bed, the bed that was

no longer theirs, and the three monsters, after looking at her gratefully, lay down on it together and went to sleep on it, with their arms twisted about each other's necks. The child looked down upon them, clinging together in their sleep as in their talk, and saw a weariness of pain defined in many a kindly-turned line of their half frog-like faces. If one stirred in sleep, it was to nestle closer to the other two. "How strange," she said to herself, "that I should at first have thought them ugly!" Then she knelt in prayer by her little nest of straw, and did not forget them in her prayers. There was a blessing on them in her heart as she lay down to sleep.

But when Melilot lay down with her face towards the hearth, the dying embers shone with a red light on the two solemn graves. She turned her face to the wall, and the rush of the torrent on the other side was louder than the passion of her weeping. But the noise of the waterfall first soothed her, and then, fixing her attention, drew her from her bed towards the little window, from which she was able to look out into the black night through which it roared. A night not altogether black, for there was a short lull in the rain, though the wind howled round the mountain, and through a chance

break in the scurrying night-clouds the full moon now and then flashed, lighting the lakes in the valley far below, and causing the torrent outside the window to gleam through the night shadows of the great rocks among which it fell. Could it be the song of busy Fairies that came thence to the child's ear ?

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

Almost at the same moment the door of the hut opened, and Melilot, turning round, saw two beautiful youths enter, bright as the moonlight, who laid a white bale at her feet, and said that it came from the Fairy Muslin Works. Having done that, they flew out in the shape of fire-flies, and Melilot herself closed the door after them. It was her first act to shut the door, because she was bred to be a careful little housewife, and she thought the night air would not be good for the sleepers.

Then the child looked again at the three

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

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

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

Very soon after dawn the white dresses were made, and all the muslin had been used in making them, except what was left in the small litter of fragments round the stool upon which Melilot had been at work. Three coats of white muslin, daintily folded, were laid by the bed of the three guests, and each was folded with that corner uppermost on which there had been written in thread its owner's name. Dock was worked in the corner of one, Dodder in the corner of another, and in the corner of the third coat, Squill.

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

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

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

"She has saved nothing for herself," said

Squill. "Did not the child once wish to tear muslin in place of these poor rags? I kiss them, brothers, for her sake." But Squill's kiss on the girl's ragged frock made it a treasure for an empire.

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

"And I kiss the lips that bade us hither," Dock said; and at his kiss the child smiled, and her eyes opened upon the three Fairies in the muslin dresses she had made.

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

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

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

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

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

"A speck," said Dodder.

"Frogbit herself," said Squill.

III

Sir Crucifer

Presently Melilot bade the three Fairies come in to share her breakfast. She had saved bread from last night, and while she took it from its place among the blossoms that last night were

mud, again the loaf of bread stood on her father's, and the cup of milk upon her mother's grave. "The angels of my father and mother feed me still," she said. "I must abide under the shelter of their wings."

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

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

But Squill leapt up, and holding the net he had made under the hole Frogbit was making, caught her as she fell through, and held her captured in the folds of Fairy muslin that seemed to stand like iron against the beating of her wings.

"Poor bird!" said Melilot.

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

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

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

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

"Theirs and yours!" the raven herself shrieked. "Theirs and yours!"

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

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

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

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

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

"Live there," she said, "till a mortal child

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

She spoke mockingly of white muslin, because she knew of the old Fairy trade that had been carried on for ages on the mountains. There the Fairies weave after their own fashion into muslin the white sheets of foam ; and when the three prisoners had heard their doom they were not in despair. For although Frogbit, who had never been up the mountain, knew nothing of the one little hut there was upon it, yet all the Fairies knew it, and they knew well the little Melilot.

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

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

it may yield lilies and violets, of which good Fairies shall be born."

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

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

Sobbing and panting, Melilot ran down the hillside when she saw men cased in iron galloping to and fro, and falling wounded to lie bleeding and uncared for on the quaking ground. Every fear was mastered by her sacred pity, and her Fairy muslin was unstained, though she knelt on the red mud of the battlefield and laid the wounded soldier's head upon her lap. None,

even in the direst madness of the strife, could strike upon the frail white girl, who saw only the suffering about her, and thought only of wounds that she might bind. Had any struck, her muslin was an armour finer than all steel; and there was no rent in her dress, as she tore from it strip after strip, to bind rents in the flesh of men who lay in their death-agonies about her.

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

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

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

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

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

Much the girl heard, as she sat with the soldier by the waterfall, of the high struggle for all that makes man good and glorious, that bred the strife out of which she had drawn him for

a little time. Much the soldier learnt as he sat with the girl, from a companion whose thoughts purified his zeal, and made his aspirations happier and more unbounded. One day there were words said that made the girl a woman, and when she awoke on the next morning, her father's grave was overgrown with laurel bushes, and her mother's grave was lost under a wealth of flowering myrtle.

But there was no food provided.

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

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

The spray was radiant, and the foam was white as her bright Fairy muslin, as it floated over the strength of the waterfall, when Melilot and her soldier, hand in hand, went down the

mountain. They passed out of her bower, she in the full flood of sunshine, with an arm raised upward and a calm face turned towards him, as he, walking in her shadow, pointed to the plains below.

IX

THE SMITH AND THE FAIRIES

Years ago there lived in Crossbrigg a smith of the name of MacEachern. This man had an only child, a boy of about thirteen or fourteen years of age, cheerful, strong, and healthy. All of a sudden he fell ill ; took to his bed and moped whole days away. No one could tell what was the matter with him, and the boy himself could not, or would not, tell how he felt. He was wasting away fast, getting thin, old, and yellow, and his father and all his friends were afraid that he would die.

At last one day, after the boy had been lying in this condition for a long time, getting neither better nor worse, always confined to bed, but with an extraordinary appetite—one day, while sadly revolving these things, and standing idly at his forge, with no heart to work, the smith was agreeably surprised to see an old man, well known to him for his sagacity and knowledge of out-of-the-way things, walk into his

workshop. Forthwith he told him the occurrence which had clouded his life.

The old man looked grave as he listened, and after sitting a long time pondering over all he had heard, gave his opinion thus: "It is not your son you have got. The boy has been carried away by the Fairies, and they have left an elf in his place."

"Alas! and what then am I to do?" said the smith. "How am I ever to see my own son again?"

"I will tell you how," answered the old man. "But first, to make sure that it is not your own son you have got, take as many empty egg-shells as you can get, go with them into the room, spread them out carefully before his sight, then proceed to draw water with them, carrying them two and two in your hands as if they were a great weight, and arrange, when full, with every sort of earnestness round the fire."

The smith accordingly gathered as many broken egg-shells as he could get, went into the room, and proceeded to carry out all his instructions.

He had not been long at work before there arose from the bed a shout of laughter, and the voice of the seeming sick boy exclaimed, "I am

now eight hundred years of age, and I have never seen the like of that before."

The smith returned and told the old man. "Well, now," said the sage to him, "did I not tell you that it was not your son you had; your son is in Borra-cheill in a digh there (that is, a round green hill frequented by Fairies). Get rid as soon as possible of this intruder, and I think I may promise you your son."

"You must light a very large and bright fire before the bed on which this stranger is lying. He will ask you, 'What is the use of such a fire as that?' Answer him at once, 'You will see that presently.' And then seize him, and throw him into the middle of it. If it is your own son you have got, he will call out to save him, but if not, he will fly through the roof."

The smith again followed the old man's advice, kindled a large fire, answered the question put to him as he had been directed to do, and seizing the child flung him in without hesitation. The elf gave an awful yell, and sprang through the roof, where a hole was left to let the smoke out.

On a certain night the old man told him the green round hill, where the Fairies kept the boy, would be open. And on that night the smith, having provided himself with a bible, a dirk,

and a crowing cock, was to proceed to the hill. He would hear singing and dancing and much merriment going on, but he was to advance boldly ; the bible he carried would be a certain safeguard to him against any danger from the Fairies. On entering the hill he was to stick the dirk in the threshold, to prevent the hill from closing upon him ; " and then," continued the old man, " on entering you will see a spacious apartment before you, beautifully clean, and there, standing far within, working at a forge, you will also see your own son. When you are questioned, say you come to seek him, and will not go without him."

Not long after this, the time came round, and the smith sallied forth, prepared as instructed. Sure enough, as he approached the hill there was a light where light was seldom seen before. Soon after a sound of piping, dancing, and joyous merriment reached the anxious father on the night wind.

Overcoming every impulse to fear, the smith approached the threshold steadily, stuck the dirk into it as directed, and entered. Protected by the bible he carried on his breast, the Fairies could not touch him, but they asked him, with a good deal of displeasure, what he wanted there.

He answered, "I want my son, whom I see down there, and I will not go without him."

Upon hearing this, the whole company before him gave a loud laugh, which wakened up the cock he carried dozing in his arms, who at once leaped up on his shoulders, clapped his wings lustily, and crowed loud and long.

The Fairies, incensed, seized the smith and his son, and throwing them out of the hill, flung the dirk after them, and in an instant all was dark.

For a year and a day the boy never did a turn of work, and hardly ever spoke a word. But at last one day, sitting by his father and watching him finishing a sword he was making for some chief, and which he was very particular about, he suddenly exclaimed, "That is not the way to do it," and taking the tools from his father's hands he set to work himself in his place, and soon fashioned a sword, the like of which was never seen in the country before.

From that day the young man wrought constantly with his father, and became the inventor of a peculiarly fine and well-tempered weapon, the making of which kept the two smiths, father and son, in constant employment, spread their fame far and wide, and gave them

the means in abundance, as they before had the disposition to live content with all the world and very happily with one another.

The walls of the house where this celebrated smith lived and wrought are standing to this day (1860), not far from the parish church of Kilchoman, Islay.

X

DREAMING TIM JARVIS

Timothy Jarvis was a decent, honest, quiet, hard-working man, as everybody knows that knows Balledehob.

Now Balledehob is a small place, about forty miles west of Cork. It is situated on the summit of a hill, and yet it is in a deep valley, for on all sides there are lofty mountains that rise one above another in barren grandeur, and seem to look down with scorn upon the little busy village which they surround with their idle and unproductive magnificence. Man and beast have alike deserted them to the dominion of the eagle, who soars majestically over them. On the highest of these mountains there is a small, and as is commonly believed, unfathomable lake, the only inhabitant of which is a huge serpent, who has been sometimes seen to stretch its enormous head above the waters, and frequently is heard to utter a noise which shakes the very rocks to their foundation.

But, as I was saying, everybody knew Tim Jarvis to be a decent, honest, quiet, hard-working man, who was thriving enough to be able to give his daughter Nelly a fortune of ten pounds, and Tim himself was snug enough besides. He was seldom backward on rent day. His ground was never distrained but twice, and both times through a small bit of a mistake, and his landlord had never but once to say to him, "Tim Jarvis, you're all behind, Tim, like the cow's tail."

Now it so happened that Tim took to sleeping heavily, and the sleep set Tim dreaming, and he dreamed all night, and night after night, about crocks full of gold and other precious stones. The grey dawn of the morning would see Tim digging away in a bog-hole, maybe, or rooting under some old stone walls. At last he dreamt that he found a mighty great crock of gold and silver—and where do you think? Every step of the way upon London Bridge itself! Twice Tim dreamt it, and three times Tim dreamt the same thing, and at last he made up his mind to transport himself, and go over to London in Pat Mahoney's coaster—and so he did!

Well, he got there, and found the bridge without much difficulty. Every day he walked up and down looking for the crock of gold, but

never the find did he find it. One day, however, as he was looking over the bridge into the water, a man, or something like a man, with great black whiskers, like a Hessian, and a black cloak that reached down to the ground, tapped him on the shoulder, and said, "Tim Jarvis, do you see me?"

"Surely I do, sir," said Tim; wondering that anybody should know him in the strange place.

"Tim, what is it brings you here in foreign parts, so far away from your own cabin by the mine of grey copper at Balledehob?"

"Please your honour, I'm come to seek my fortune."

"You're a fool for your pains, Tim, if that's all," remarked the stranger in the black cloak; "this is a big place to seek one's fortune in, to be sure, but it's not easy to find it."

Now Tim, after debating a long time with himself, and considering, in the first place, that it might be the stranger who was to find the crock of gold for him, and in the next, that the stranger might direct him where to find it, came to the resolution of telling him all.

"There's many a one like me comes here seeking their fortunes," said Tim.

"True," said the stranger.

"But," continued Tim, looking up, "the cause for myself leaving the wife, and Nelly, and the boys, and travelling so far, is to look for a crock of gold that I'm told is lying somewhere hereabouts."

"And who told you that, Tim?"

"Why, then, sir, that's what I can't tell myself rightly—only I dreamt it."

"Ho, ho! is that all, Tim?" said the stranger, laughing. "I had a dream myself, and I dreamed that I found a crock of gold in the Fort field, on Jerry Driscoll's ground at Balledehob, and by the same token, the pit where it lay was close to a large furze bush all full of yellow blossom."

Tim knew Jerry Driscoll's ground well, and, moreover, he knew the Fort field as well as he knew his own potato garden; he was certain, too, of the very furze bush at the north end of it.

"By all the crosses in a yard of check, I always thought there was money in that same field!" he exclaimed.

The moment he had spoken this the stranger disappeared, and Tim Jarvis, wondering at all that had happened to him, made the best of his way back to Ireland. Norah, as may well be

supposed, had no very warm welcome for her runaway husband—the dreaming rascal, as she called him—and so soon as she set eyes upon him, all the blood of her body in one minute was into her knuckles to be at him; but Tim, after his long journey, looked so cheerful and so happy-like, that she could not find it in her heart to give him the first blow. He managed to pacify his wife by two or three broad hints about a new cloak and a pair of shoes, and decent clothes for Nelly, and brogues for the boys, and some corduroy for himself. "It wasn't for nothing I went to foreign parts," he said, "and you'll see what'll come out of it—mind my words."

A few days afterwards Tim sold his cabin and his garden, and bought the Fort field of Jerry Driscoll, that had nothing in it, but was full of thistles, and old stones, and blackberry bushes; and all the neighbours—as well they might—thought he was cracked!

The first night that Tim could summon courage to begin his work, he walked off to the field with his spade upon his shoulder, and away he dug all night by the side of the furze bush, till he came to a big stone. He struck his spade against it, and he heard a hollow sound, but as the morning had begun to dawn, and the

neighbours would be going out to their work, Tim, not wishing to have the thing talked about, went home to the little hovel, where Norah and the children were huddled together under a heap of straw; for he had sold everything he had in the world to purchase Driscoll's field.

It is impossible to describe the epithets and reproaches bestowed by the poor woman on her unlucky husband for bringing her into such a way. Epithets and reproaches which Tim had but one mode of answering, as thus: "Norah, did you see e'er a cow you'd like?" or, "Norah, dear, hasn't Poll Deasy a feather-bed to sell?" or, "Norah, honey, wouldn't you like your silver buckles as big as Mrs. Doyle's?"

As soon as night came, Tim stood beside the furze bush, spade in hand. The moment he jumped down into the pit he heard a strange rumbling noise under him, and so, putting his ear against the great stone, he listened, and overheard a discourse that made the hair on his head stand up like bulrushes, and every limb tremble.

"How shall we bother Tim?" said one voice.

"Take him to the mountain, to be sure, and make him a toothful for the old serpent"; "'tis

long since he has had a good meal," said another voice.

Tim shook like a potato-blossom in a storm.

" No," said a third voice, " plunge him in the bog, neck and heels."

Tim was a dead man, barring the breath.

" Stop ! " said a fourth ; but Tim heard no more, for Tim was dead entirely. In about an hour, however, the life came back into him, and he crept home to Norah.

When the next night arrived, the hopes of the crock of gold got the better of his fears, and away he went to the field. Jumping into the pit, with desperate wrench he wrenched up the stone. All at once up rushed a blast of wind, wild and fierce, and down fell Tim—down, down, and down he went—until he thumped upon what seemed to be, for all the world, like a floor of sharp pins, which made him bellow out in earnest. Then he heard a whisk and a hurra, and instantly voices beyond number cried out :

" Welcome, Tim Jarvis, dear !
Welcome down here ! "

Though Tim's teeth chattered like magpies with the fright, he continued to make answer, " I'm he—he—har—ti—ly ob—ob—liged to—to you all, gen—gen—tlemen, fo—for your civility to

—to a poor stranger like myself." But though he had heard all the voices about him, he could see nothing, the place was so dark and so lonesome in itself for want of the light. Then something pulled Tim by the hair of his head, and dragged him, he did not know how far, but he knew he was going faster than the wind, for he heard it behind him, trying to keep up with him, and it could not. On, on, on he went, till all at once, and suddenly, he was stopped, and somebody came up to him and said, "Well, Tim Jarvis, and how do you like your ride?"

"Mighty well! I thank your honour," said Tim; "and 'twas a good beast I rode, surely!"

There was a great laugh at Tim's answer, and then there was a whispering, and a great cugger-mugger and coshering; and at last a pretty little bit of a voice said, "Shut your eyes, and you'll see, Tim."

"By my word, then," said Tim, "that is the queer way of seeing; but I'm not the man to gainsay you, so I'll do as you bid me, anyhow." Presently he felt a small warm hand rubbed over his eyes with an ointment, and in the next minute he saw himself in the middle of thousands of little men and women, not half so high as his brogue, that were pelting one another with golden

guineas and lily-white thirteens,[1] as if they were so much dirt. The finest dressed and the biggest of them all went up to Tim and said, " Tim Jarvis, because you are a decent, honest, quiet, civil, well-spoken man, and know how to behave yourself in strange company, we've altered our minds about you, and will find a neighbour of yours that will do just as well to give to the old serpent."

" Oh, then, long life to you, sir ? " said Tim, " and there's no doubt of that."

" But what will you say, Tim," inquired the little fellow, " if we fill your pockets with these yellow boys ? What will you say, Tim, and what will you do with them ? "

" Your honour's honour, and your honour's glory," answered Tim, " I'll not be able to say anything for a month with thanking you—and indeed I've enough to do with them. I'd make a grand lady, you see, at once of Norah—she has been a good wife to me. We'll have a nice bit of pork for dinner, and I'd build a new cabin, and I'd have a fresh egg every morning myself for my breakfast, and I'd snap my fingers at the squire, and beat his hounds, if they'd come coursing through my fields, and I'd have a new

[1] An English shilling was thirteen pence, Irish currency.

plough, and Norah, your honour, would have a new cloak, and the boys would have shoes and stockings as well as Biddy Leary's children—that's my sister—and Nelly would marry Bill Long of Affadown; and, your honour, I'd have some corduroy for myself to make breeches, and a cow, and a beautiful coat with shining buttons, and a horse to ride, or maybe two. I'd have everything," said Tim, "in life, good or bad, that is to be got for love or money—hurra-whoop!—and that's what I'd do."

"Take care, Tim," said the little fellow, "that your money does not go faster than it came, with your hurra-whoop."

But Tim heeded not this speech; heaps of gold were around him, and he filled and filled away as hard as he could, his coat and his waist-coat and his breeches pockets; and he thought himself very clever, moreover, because he stuffed some of the guineas inside his clothes. When the little people perceived this, they cried out, "Go home, Tim Jarvis, go home, and think yourself a lucky man."

"I hope, gentlemen," said he, "we won't part forever, but maybe ye'll ask me to see you again, and to give you a fair and square account of what I've done with your money."

To this there was no answer, only another shout, "Go home, Tim Jarvis, go home, fair play is a jewel; but shut your eyes, or ye'll never see the light of day again."

Tim shut his eyes, knowing now that was the way to see clearly, and away he was whisked as before—away, away he went till he again stopped all of a sudden.

He rubbed his eyes with his two thumbs—and where was he? Where, but in the very pit in the field that was Jerry Driscoll's, and his wife Norah above with a big stick ready to beat "her dreaming husband." Tim roared out to the woman to leave the life in him, and put his hands in his pockets to show her the gold; but he pulled out nothing, only a handful of small stones mixed with yellow furze blossoms. The bush was under him, and the great flagstone that he had wrenched up, as he thought, was lying, as if it was never stirred, by his side, and the pit was just as his spade had made it.

Tim Jarvis, vexed, disappointed, and almost heart-broken, followed his wife home; and, strange to say, from that night he left off dreaming and delving in bog-holes and rooting in old caves. He took again to his hard-working habits, and was soon able to buy back his little cabin and

former potato-garden, and to get all the enjoyment he anticipated from the fairy gold.

Give Tim one or, at most, two glasses of punch (and neither friend, acquaintance, nor gossip can make him take more), and he will relate the story to you much better than you have it here. Indeed, it is worth going to Balledehob to hear him tell it. He always pledges himself to the truth of every word with his forefingers crossed; and when he comes to speak of the loss of his guineas, he never fails to console himself by adding, "If they stayed with me I wouldn't have luck with them, sir, and Father O'Shea told me 'twas as well for me they were changed, for if they hadn't, they'd have burned holes in my pocket, and got out that way."

I shall never forget his solemn countenance, and the deep tones of his warning voice, when he concluded his tale, by telling me that the next day after his ride with the Fairies, Mick Dowling was missing, and he believed him to be given to the *sarpint* in his place, as he had never been heard of since.

XI

AN EMPEROR'S DREAM

Maxen Wledig was Emperor of Rome, and he was a comelier man, and a better and a wiser than any emperor that had been before him. One day he held a council of kings, and he said to his friends, "I desire to go to-morrow to hunt." The next day in the morning he set forth with his retinue and came to the valley of the river that flowed towards Rome. He hunted through the valley until midday. With him were two-and-thirty crowned kings, that were his vassals; not for the delight of hunting went the emperor with them, but to put himself on equal terms with those kings.

The sun was high in the sky over their heads, and the heat was great. Sleep came upon Maxen Wledig. His attendants stood and set up their shields around him upon the shafts of their spears to protect him from the sun, and placed a gold enamelled shield under his head; so Maxen slept.

And he saw a dream. This is the dream that he saw. He was journeying along the valley of the river towards its source, and he came to the highest mountain in the world. He thought that the mountain was as high as the sky, and when he came over the mountain, it seemed to him that he went through the fairest and most level regions that man ever yet beheld, on the other side of the mountain. He saw large and mighty rivers descending from the mountain to the sea, and towards the mouths of the rivers he proceeded. As he journeyed thus, he came to the mouth of the largest river ever seen. He beheld a great city at the entrance of the river, and a vast castle in the city, and saw many high towers of various colours in the castle. At the mouth of the river was a fleet, the largest ever seen. And he saw one ship among the fleet, larger was it by far, and fairer than all the others. Of such part of the ship as he could see above the water, one plank was gilded and the other silvered over. He saw a bridge of the bone of a whale from the ship to the land, and he thought that he went along the bridge and came into the ship.

A sail was hoisted on the ship, and along the sea and the ocean was it borne. Then it seemed

that he came to the fairest island in the whole world, and he traversed the island from sea to sea, even to the farthest shore of the island. Valleys he saw, and steeps, and rocks of wondrous height, and rugged precipices. Never yet saw he the like. And thence he beheld an island in the sea, facing this rugged land. Between him and this island was a country of which the plain was as large as the sea, the mountain as vast as the wood. And from the mountain he saw a river that flowed through the land and fell into the sea. At the mouth of the river he beheld a castle, the fairest that man ever saw, and the gate of the castle was open, and he went into the castle. In it he saw a fair hall, of which the roof seemed to be all gold, the walls of the hall seemed to be entirely of glittering precious gems, the doors all seemed to be of gold. Golden seats were in the hall, and silver tables. And on a seat opposite to him he beheld two auburn-haired youths playing at chess. He saw a silver board for the chess, and golden pieces thereon. The garments of the youths were of jet-black satin, and chaplets of ruddy gold bound their hair, whereon were sparkling jewels of great price, rubies and gems, alternately with imperial stones. Buskins of new Cordovan leather

were on their feet, fastened by slides of red gold.

Beside a pillar in the hall he saw a hoary-headed man in a chair of ivory, with the figures of two eagles of ruddy gold thereon. Bracelets of gold were upon his arms, and many rings were on his hands, and a golden torque about his neck, and his hair was bound with a golden diadem. He was of powerful aspect. A chess-board of gold was before him, and a rod of gold, and a steel file in his hand. He was carving out chessmen.

He saw a maiden sitting before him in a chair of ruddy gold. Not more easy than to gaze upon the sun when brightest, was it to look upon her by reason of her beauty. A vest of white silk was upon the maiden, with clasps of red gold at the breast; and a surcoat of gold tissue upon her, and a frontlet of red gold upon her head, and rubies and gems were in the frontlet, alternating with pearls and imperial stones. A girdle of ruddy gold was around her. She was the fairest sight that man ever beheld.

The maiden arose from her chair before him, and he threw his arms about the neck of the maiden, and they two sat together in the chair of gold; and the chair was not less roomy for

them both, than for the maiden alone. As he had his arms about the maiden's neck, behold, through the chafing of the dogs at their leashing, and the clashing of the shields as they struck against each other, and the beating together of the shafts of the spears, and the neighing of the horses and their prancing, the emperor awoke.

When he awoke, nor spirit nor existence was left him, because of the maiden he had seen in his sleep. Then his household spoke to him, "Lord," said they, "is it not past the time for thee to take thy food?" Thereupon the emperor mounted his palfrey, the saddest man that mortal ever saw, and went forth towards Rome.

Thus he was during the space of a week. When they of the household went to drink wine and mead out of golden vessels, he went not with any of them. When they went to listen to songs and tales, he went not with them there; neither could he be persuaded to do anything but sleep. And as often as he slept, he beheld in his dreams the maiden he loved best; but except when he slept he saw nothing of her, for he knew not where in the world she was.

One day the page of the chamber spake unto him; now, although he was page of the chamber, he was king of the Romans. "Lord," said he,

" all the people revile thee." " Wherefore do they revile me ? " asked the emperor. " Because they can get neither message nor answer from thee as men should have from their lord. This is the cause why thou art spoken evil of." " Youth," said the emperor, " do thou bring unto me the wise men of Rome, and I will tell them wherefore I am sorrowful."

Then the wise men of Rome were brought to the emperor, and he spake to them. " Sages of Rome," said he, " I have seen a dream. And in the dream I beheld a maiden, and because of the maiden is there neither life, nor spirit, nor existence within me."

" Lord," they answered, " since thou judgest us worthy to counsel thee, we will give thee counsel. This is it ; that thou send messengers for three years to the three parts of the world to seek for thy dream. And as thou knowest not what day or what night good news may come to thee, the hope thereof will support thee."

So the messengers journeyed for the space of a year, wandering about the world and seeking tidings concerning his dream. But when they came back at the end of the year, they knew not one word more than they did the day they set

forth. Then was the emperor exceeding sorrowful, for he thought that he should never have tidings of her whom he best loved.

Then spoke the king of the Romans unto the emperor. "Lord," said he, "go forth to hunt by the way thou didst seem to go, whether it were to the east or to the west." So the emperor went forth to the hunt, and he came to the bank of the river. "Behold," said he, "this is where I was when I saw the dream, and I went towards the source of the river westward."

Thereupon thirteen messengers of the emperor's set forth, and before them they saw a high mountain, which seemed to them to touch the sky. Now this was the guise in which the messengers journeyed; one sleeve was on the cap of each of them in front, as a sign that they were messengers, in order that through what hostile land soever they might pass no harm might be done them. When they were come over this mountain, they beheld vast plains, and large rivers flowing there through.

"Behold," said they, "the land which our master saw."

They went along the mouths of the rivers, until they came to the mighty river which they saw flowing to the sea, and the vast city, and the

many-coloured high towers in the castle. They saw the largest fleet in the world, in the harbour of the river, and one ship that was larger than any of the others. "Behold again," said they, "the dream that our master saw." And in the great ship they crossed the sea, and came to the Island of Britain. They traversed the island until they came to Snowdon.

"Behold," said they, "the rugged land that our master saw."

And they went forward until they saw Anglesey before them, and until they saw Arvon likewise. "Behold," said they, "the land our master saw in his sleep." And they saw Aber Sain, and a castle at the mouth of the river. The portal of the castle saw they open, and into it they went, and they saw a hall in the castle. Then said they, "Behold, the hall which he saw in his sleep." They went into the hall, and they beheld two youths playing at chess on the golden bench. Beside a pillar was a hoary-headed man, in the ivory chair, carving chessmen. And they beheld the maiden sitting on a chair of ruddy gold.

The messengers bent down upon their knees. "Empress of Rome, all hail!"

"Ha, gentles," said the maiden, "ye bear

the seeming of honourable men, and the badge of envoys. What mockery is this ye do to me ? "

" We mock thee not, lady ; but the Emperor of Rome hath seen thee in his sleep, and he has neither life nor spirit left because of thee. Thou shalt have of us therefore the choice, lady, whether thou wilt go with us and be made Empress of Rome, or that the emperor come hither and take thee for his wife."

" Ha, lords," said the maiden, " I will not deny what ye say, neither will I believe it too well. If the emperor love me, let him come here to seek me."

By day and night the messengers hied them back. When their horses failed, they bought other fresh ones. When they came to Rome, they saluted the emperor, and asked their boon, which was given to them according as they named it. " We will be thy guides, Lord," said they, " over sea and land, to the place where is the woman whom best thou lovest, for we know her name, her kindred, and her race."

Immediately the emperor set forth with his army, and these men were his guides. Toward the Island of Britain they went over the sea and the deep. He conquered the Island from Beli

and his sons, and drove them to the sea, and went forward even to Arvon. And the emperor knew the land when he saw it. When he beheld the castle of Aber Sain, "Look yonder," said he, "there is the castle wherein I saw the damsel whom I best love." He went forward into the castle and into the hall, and there he saw the two brothers playing at chess. Their old father was sitting on a chair of ivory carving chessmen. The maiden whom he had beheld in his sleep he saw sitting on a chair of gold.

"Empress of Rome," said he, "all hail!" and that day she became his bride.

On the morrow, the damsel asked her maiden portion. He told her to name what she would. She asked to have the Island of Britain for her father, from the Channel to the Irish Sea, together with the three adjacent Islands, to hold under the Empress of Rome, and to have three chief castles made for her, in whatever places she might choose in the Island of Britain. She chose to have the highest castle made at Arvon. And they brought thither earth from Rome, that it might be more healthful for the emperor to sleep, and sit, and walk upon. After that the two other castles were made for her, which were Caerllen and Caermarthen.

One day the emperor went to hunt at Caermarthen, and he came so far as the top of Brevi Vawr, and there the emperor pitched his tent. That encamping place is called Cadeir Maxen, even to this day. Then Helen, his wife, bethought her to make high roads from one castle to another throughout the Island of Britain. And the roads were made.

Seven years did the emperor tarry in this Island. Now, at that time the men of Rome had a custom that whatsoever emperor should remain in other lands more than seven years should remain to his own overthrow, and should never return to Rome again.

So they made a new emperor. This one wrote a letter of threat to Maxen. There was nought in the letter but only this: "If thou comest, and if thou ever comest to Rome." Even unto Caerlleon came this letter to Maxen, and these tidings. Then sent he a letter to the man who styled himself emperor in Rome. There was nought in this letter also but only this: "If I come to Rome, and if I come."

Thereupon Maxen set forth towards Rome with his army, and vanquished France and every land on the way, and sat down before the city of Rome.

A year was the emperor before the city, and he was no nearer taking it than the first day. After him came the brothers of Helen from the Island of Britain, and a small host with them, and better warriors were in that small host than twice as many Romans. The emperor was told that a host was seen, halting close to his army and encamping, and no man ever saw a fairer or better appointed host for its size, nor more handsome standards.

Helen went to see the hosts, and she knew the standards of her brothers. Then came the brothers to meet the emperor. And the emperor was glad because of them, and embraced them.

Then they looked at the Romans as they attacked the city. Said one brother to the other, "We will try to attack the city more expertly than this." So they measured by night the height of the wall, and they sent their carpenters to the wood, and a ladder was made for every four men of their number. Now when these were ready, every day at midday the emperors went to meat, and they ceased to fight on both sides till all had finished eating. In the morning the men of Britain took their food, and while the two emperors were at meat, the Britons came to the city, placed their ladders

against it, and forthwith came in through the city.

The new emperor had no time to arm himself when they fell upon him, and slew him, and many others with him. Three nights and three days were they subduing the men that were in the city and taking the castle. Others of them kept the city, lest any of the host of Maxen should come therein, until they had subjected all to their will.

Then spake Maxen to Helen, "I marvel, lady, that thy brothers have not conquered this city for me."

"Lord, emperor," she answered, "the wisest youths in the world are my brothers. Go thou thither and ask the city of them, and if it be in their possession, thou shalt have it gladly."

So the emperor and Helen went and demanded the city. They told the emperor that none had taken the city, and that none could give it him, but the men of the Island of Britain. Then the gates of the city of Rome were opened, and the emperor sat on the throne, and all the men of Rome submitted themselves unto him.

The emperor then said unto the brothers, "Lords, I have now had possession of the whole of my empire. This host give I unto you to

vanquish whatever region ye may desire in the world."

So they set forth and conquered lands, and castles, and cities. They slew all the men, but the women they kept alive. Thus they continued until the young men that had come with them were grown grey-headed, from the length of time they were upon this conquest.

Then spoke one brother to the other, "Whether wilt thou rather tarry in this land or go back into the land whence thou didst come forth?" Now the younger chose to go back to his own land, and many with him, but the elder tarried there with the other part and dwelt there.

And this dream is called the Dream of Maxen Wledig, Emperor of Rome. And here it ends.

XII

SILVER TASSELS

The only ailment to which good Fairies are subject is an affection of the fancy, whereby they grow mad for mischief. A Fairy so altered is called a Rogue Fairy, and the Rogue Fairy, usually a male, will often separate himself from his own circle, and, looking for a solitary den of his own, fix himself, perhaps, as the Rogue Splug did, in a chimney. The Rogue likes a nest in a chimney. He can drop smut into the pot, or blow the smoke into the house, as often as he pleases, and has all the household at his mercy.

Splug lost his temper over the doings of his friend the little Fairy Teasel, who had forgotten herself so far as to go as companion to the Queen Cockatoo. He might have gone to the same magnificent Court with her, and distinguished himself in the service of King Cockatoo —a brilliant sovereign, though not so powerful as his forefathers had been—but he was cross,

and chose rather to go and live in a chimney. He was so very cross that there was no living for human creatures in the sweet little cottage of which the chimney was in his possession. Soot always fell at the times when a fall of soot would do most mischief; the cottages were made to look like sweeps; and when the sweep himself came up the chimney, he was tickled till he sneezed the soot-flakes about like the leaves in an autumn whirlwind. Long pots, short pots, crooked pots, cowls of all sorts, were fixed upon the chimney-top, but always tumbled and tore through the roof, where they could clatter down on something choice. At last the cottage was deserted, and the owner of it, my Lord Hemp, the hardest and the richest man in the whole realm of Gossamer, never went near it. For in the blackening of Hemp's face Splug took a particular delight.

The cottage haunted by this Rogue Fairy was on the outskirts of Feathergrass, the capital of Gossamer. My Lord Hemp, who occupied a house in the city nearly as fine as the Queen's Palace, was so grand a man, and in his own opinion so choice a man, that he was not without hope of marrying his sovereign, Queen Sappodilla.

Now it happened that when the cottage had

been for a long time empty, and when anybody might have lived in it for nothing who would undertake to make the smoke go up the chimney, there came into those parts a poor widow, whose name was Neroli. She brought with her all her goods in a small bundle, and ten gold pieces—all that her poor husband had been able to lay by for her before he died. She came on foot into the city of Feathergrass, with her bundle in one hand and her little seven-year-old daughter, Silver Tassels, holding by the other. Mother and child were dressed in old clothes so well mended that you hardly might observe how many times they had been torn, and all their finery was on the child in form of an old girdle of silver thread, with a small pair of silver tassels that a godmother had given her.

Neroli and little Silver Tassels walked up and down for some time through the scented groves and among the palaces of Feathergrass, in vain search for a place that they could make into a pleasant home. At last they sat down in a large public garden to eat their dry bread among the lilies which grew under the shadow of some blossoming orange-trees. As they sat a tall gentleman came by, sharp-eyed, sharp-nosed, and thin-lipped, with powdered hair, and a great

deal of white muslin frill about his neck. It was my Lord Hemp going to Court, magnificently dressed in blue and white satin, trimmed with flowers, and with thick gold fringe on all the borders of his clothes. Neroli was very beautiful. She had, like her child, a wealth of sunny brown hair falling about her white forehead, and they both had faithful blue eyes that no living creature could mistrust. The child had the rounder cheeks, but child and mother were alike weary and white when my Lord Hemp stood still before them.

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

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

"My dear woman, pardon me," said Hemp. "You have ten gold crowns, and you want a lodging. I am interested in you; and as I happen to have empty at this moment a very

pretty cottage just outside the town, I will let you live in it. Pay me only the worth of one room as a little weekly rent. You will be punctual; I see that in your face. The payment is only a form, which it will be a pleasure to you to observe. You can earn money?"

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

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

So Neroli and Silver Tassels came to the

cottage, which was not far from the town, and as pretty a place as one might wish to look at. A grove of date-palms rose behind its garden, which was edged with scarlet cactus blossoms and sweet flowering myrtle. The road opposite its door crossed by a mossy wooden bridge a river of the clearest water, in which water-lilies opened their great blossoms and spread their floating leaves. On the other side of the river was a strip of flat ground at the foot of round hills covered with rose gardens. These belonged to the merchants who owned a great factory higher up by the waterside, where perfume of roses was extracted for the markets of the world. The runnings from the factory made rose-water of all the streams. The cottage itself was thatched with sweet flag, and, like most of the huts in the realms of Gossamer, was built of rough blocks of a fragrant wood that grows large in those parts. Only the hearth-place and the chimney were not of wood, but of sand, burnt, according to the custom of the country, into rough plates of a sort of fire-proof glass.

Here, then, Neroli gladly enough agreed to live for seven years to come, paying at once for the first half-year's possession, four of her gold pieces, and bound to pay thereafter weekly

rent at the same rate. Little was spent for furniture. She and her daughter slept on the waste rose-leaves that cost only the trouble of fetching from the factory. She had little to buy beyond a table and two chairs, a tub and a basket, a pot and a kettle. The few clothes they had, and some small household necessaries, brought from the home lost by death of the house father, were in the bundle that Neroli had with her, and among the necessaries was a well-stored workbox, the poor woman's stock-in-trade.

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

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

This puzzled Neroli, because Splug was not in his chimney when she took possession of the house, and all about her was clean as a lily-bud. Splug, finding himself left without amusement, had gone off to try whether he could not break one of the tail-feathers of Queen Cockatoo, but had been seized on the way by an old Parrot, supernaturally gifted, who fastened a claw upon one of his little buttons, and talked to him for six months, till his head span round and round; at least, it span round and round so swiftly that the Parrot was made giddy by looking at what he had done, and his claw lost hold upon Splug's button, although with his beak he still was able to hold forth.

Splug flew off, but his head continued to spin for another twelvemonth, so that he was too confused to understand whither he went, because, though he might be journeying straight on, what was before him in one instant was behind

him in the next. At last he was recovered sufficiently from the punishment inflicted on him by the Parrot to discover his way back into his own chimney. When he entered it, smoke was ascending, and at once he eased his mind by kicking all the soot down to the fire, and blowing the smoke back into the house. Then he listened mischievously for the noise of scolding that had usually followed, but heard only two soft voices. So he peeped down, and saw a fair woman, with rich brown hair falling about her shoulders, and a poor old dress, sooted in front, who was pouring into a dish a few cooked roots out of a saucepan into which the soot had fallen. A pale little girl, who had also brown hair and wistful blue eyes, sat before an empty plate on the other side of the table and said, "I am not hungry, mother." With the faintest little quiver of the face, the woman shook her head over the sooty mess. "This does not look nice, does it, Silver Tassels? But you had no dinner yesterday. You must not say you are not hungry."

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

"Odd people these!" Splug thought to himself, and came down, himself very much like

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

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

Splug ran up the chimney again, and came down on the other side as a poor wooden-legged soldier, who tapped at the door and asked for

charity. "I have not eaten for two days," he said.

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

"Nor you?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Without my thimble he would have been more hurt than at the finger-tip. Ah, darling, it is hard for us, but think how very terrible his

hunger must have been!" Now, Splug heard all this as he sat in the chimney, cross-legged, with the thimble on his head.

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

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

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

"Quick, my two florins!" said my lord, not taking his hat off in the widow's presence.

"Quick, my good lady! The Queen waits for me!"

"Alas, sir, if you would wait——"

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

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

"Well, there's your workbox."

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

"They will do for next week," said my lord, as he directed two big footmen to put the widow's workbox into his carriage, first gathering up into it the scissors that had dropped from her lap when she rose to receive him, and the needles and threads that were lying on the table. And she, when starving with her child, would not have robbed him of a fallen date!

But Splug, in the form of a cricket, jumped into the workbox and jumped out again, leaving a charm behind. While my lord rolled home in his great coach, with the box that was the poor woman's hope of daily bread by his side, he was

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

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

" My lord is ill ! " said the Queen.

" Pardon me, great Sappodilla, that I do not

come with naked hands into your presence. I have stained my fingers to-day with so much ink in your service that I dare not have them seen."

"But your hat, my lord——"

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

"Emotion, august mistress! Emotion caused by your graciousness." Then he clapped both his hands upon his back, and cried out one long "Ow!" louder than before. Queen Sappodilla really thought that love for her had turned his lordship's brain, so, as she meant soon to make him happy, she at once asked him to take her in to dinner.

Feeling for needles as he went, but finding none, because they nimbly slipped from fold to fold as he pursued them, my Lord Hemp led her Majesty to dinner. He dined alone with the Queen that day, and was expected, after the cheese,

to prefer his suit. But when he sat down to table, he jumped up again with a wild cry, flinging his arms out, and knocking down a massive footman who stood near. "Poor man! he evidently suffers much on my account," said to herself Sappodilla.

But the needles and pins suffered my lord to sit down and rest until his fish was placed before him. Then, as he bent over it he saw a whole skein of cotton entangled with it. As the skein was undivided, and would not be pulled away, it was necessary (in order to escape observation) that my lord should eat his bit of fish in one lump, when her Majesty happened to look another way. The effort to do this was boldly made, but it was unsuccessful. My lord managed to get all his bit of fish into his mouth at once, but then the threads hindered the swallowing. He turned black in the face, and three doctors had been sent for before he got it down. Nevertheless, on such a momentous occasion, he did not choose to be invalided. Happen what might, he must fight through his dinner, and secure the prize of a Queen's promise to be his wife before he slept that night.

The next dish served was pickled pork and parsnips. He was not well, certainly, but surely

he could eat a bit of that. And as the Queen condoled with him, and he talked courteously to her, with a bit of parsnip on the end of his fork, the lump of wax out of the workbox saw his opportunity, seized the position on the fork, went into my lord's mouth, and when my lord's teeth closed on him, never did wax hold so tight. Lord Hemp could not open his mouth any more that evening to swallow or to speak, because he could not draw his teeth out of the wax, and the Queen took him for a maniac with a piece of parsnip in his mouth. He was obliged to quit the half-finished dinner and forego the golden opportunity, that never came again ; for, on the day following, Sappodilla heard what changed her mind.

Lord Hemp was taken home in his great coach. The widow's workbox was still on the seat ; he opened it and found it empty, though still heavy, for it was made of stout wood. When he dropped the lid, the box itself started up and flew at his face, so that when he got home his eyes were black and his nose was swollen with the thrashing it had given him.

Lord Hemp having reached home, was taken to bed. The seal of wax then dropped out of his mouth, and he began storming frightfully.

That was because he was sewn up so firmly in his satin clothes that all his ten valets could not pull them off. The seams refusing to be ripped, he had to be peeled out of his white and blue satin with a knife, in such a way that the whole suit was destroyed. Then all the pins and needles went to bed with him, and the scissors sat up all night to cut his bedclothes into strips.

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

About these silver tassels the Rogue Splug was worrying his brains. "I am sure," he said to himself, "I ought to remember something about them. Teasel worked on them, I know. If I could see Teasel! If! But then there's that Parrot. Well, well, I will visit another week, and though I am a Rogue and Lord Hemp is

another, this woman and girl are not to starve. I will go and scratch in their garden."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"They are the two ends of the power of the Cockatoos. These birds were a grand people

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

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

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

"WHAT, SPLUG," SHE CRIED, "AND WITH A THIMBLE ON YOUR HEAD."

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

But the Queen Cockatoo, who had been following the army, was met very near Feather-grass by her victorious lord, who had the girdle in his grasp. She put it on, and instantly she and the King, with all their host, came to the ground in their true shapes. He was the most splendid of emperors and she of empresses, heading a Court and army of lords, ladies, and soldiers, so gorgeously dressed that Queen Sappodilla, to whom they went to pay their respects, saw the glory of her magnificently decorated courtiers

pale before that of the rich strangers in scarlet, gold, and azure blue.

The surface of the earth round about Neroli's cottage, when the host of the cockatoos gathered about her, blazed with more than the glory of the richest sunset in the sky. There was a tapping at the door, and the child lifted the latch to a beautiful boy wearing a silver crown. He stepped in, and was followed by a shining Emperor and Empress, very fine to see, and handsome people, though they had hooked noses, and looked yellower than usual round the eyes. The Empress wore the girdle with the silver tassels, which has since that day once more been lost, so that in our time the cockatoos are birds again.

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

same moment she was robed in pure silver from top to toe.

"Ah, beautiful mother!" then cried little Silver Tassels.

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

"Oh, mother, always beautiful!" said the child, sobbing happily upon her breast.

"For your silver tassels, little maid, you shall have all that can be given by the Emperor and Empress of the Cockatoos. Teasel here and I give nothing, you are richer far than we. So, darling, we are beggars to you for a wee bit of your heart. Be our own sister, and let us live with you in this house with our good Mother Neroli—in this house that can never again want bread for those in it, and for the poor who shall come to its door, while there is power in the throne of Oberon, and while there remains the nation of the Cockatoos."

XIII

THE SON OF THE SCOTTISH YEOMAN WHO STOLE THE BISHOP'S HORSE AND DAUGHTER, AND THE BISHOP HIMSELF

THERE was once a Scottish yeoman who had three sons. When the youngest of them came to be of age to follow a profession, he set apart three hundred marks for each of them. The youngest son asked that his portion might be given to himself, as he was going away to seek his fortune. He went to the great city of London. He was for a time there, and what was he doing but learning to be a gentleman's servant? He at last set about finding a master. He heard that the chief magistrate of London wanted a servant. He applied to him, they agreed, and he entered his service. The chief magistrate was in the habit of going every day in the week to meet the Archbishop of London in a particular place. The servant attended his master, for he always went out with him. When

they had broken up their meeting on one occasion, they returned homewards, and the servant said to the master by the way :

" That is a good brown horse of the bishop's, with your leave, master."

" Yes, my man, he has the best horse in London."

" What think you," said the servant, " would he take for the horse, if he were to sell it ? "

" Oh, you fool ! " said his master, " I thought you were a sensible fellow ; many a man has tried to buy that horse, and it has defied them as yet."

" I'll return and try," said he.

His master returned with him to see what would happen. This was on a Thursday. The young man asked the bishop, would he " sell the horse " ? The bishop became amazed and angry, and said he did not expect that he could buy it.

" But what beast could you, or any man have," said the young man, " that might not be bought ? "

" Senseless fellow," said the bishop, " how foolish you are ! Go away home, you shan't buy my horse."

" What will you wager," said the young man,

"that I won't have the horse by this time to-morrow?"

"Is it my horse you mean?" said the bishop.

"Yes, your horse. What will you wager that I don't steal it?"

"I'll wager five hundred marks that you don't."

"Then," said the young man, "I have only one pound, but I'll wager that, and my head besides, that I do."

"Agreed."

"Observe," said the young man, "that I have wagered my head and the pound with you, and if I steal the horse he will be my own property."

"That he will, assuredly," said the chief magistrate.

"I agree to that," said the bishop.

They returned home that night.

"Poor fellow," said the chief magistrate to his servant by the way. "I am very well satisfied with you since I got you. I am not willing to lose you now. You are foolish. The bishop will take care that neither you nor any other man will steal the horse. He'll have him watched."

When night came, the young man started,

and set to work. He went to the bishop's house. What did he find out there, but that they had the horse in a room, and men along with it, who were busy eating and drinking. He looked about him, and soon saw that he would require another clever fellow with him. In looking about, whom does he find but one of the lazy fellows about the town.

"If you go with me for a little time," said he, "I will give you something for your pains."

"I'll do that," said the other.

He set off, and at the first start, both he and his man reached the hangman of the city.

"Can you tell me," said he to the hangman, "where I can get a dead man?"

"Yes," said the hangman, "there was a man hanged this very day, after midday."

"If you go and get him for me," said the young man, "I'll give you something for your pains."

The hangman agreed, and went away with him to where the body was.

"Do you know now," said the young man, "where I can get a long, stout rope?"

"Yes," said the hangman, "the rope that hanged the man is here quite convenient; you'll get it."

They set off with the body, both himself and his man. They reached the bishop's house.

"Stay you here and take charge of this, until I get up on the top of the house," said he.

He put both his mouth and his ear to the chimney in order to discover where the men were, and to hear what they were saying as they were now talking loudly from having drunk too much.

"Place the end of the rope," said he to the man, "round the dead man's neck, and throw the other up to me."

He dragged the dead man up to the top of the chimney. The men in the room began to hear the rubbish in the chimney falling down. He let the body down by degrees, until at last he saw the bright light of the watchmen falling on the dead man's feet.

"See," said they, "what is this? Oh, the Scottish thief! He preferred dying in this way to losing his head. He has destroyed himself."

Down from the chimney came the young man in haste. In he went into the very middle of the men, and as the horse was led out by the door, his hand was the first to seize the bridle. He went with the horse to the stable, and said to them that they might now go and sleep, that they were safe enough.

"Now," said he to the other man, "I believe you to be a clever fellow; be at hand here to-morrow evening, and I will see you again."

He paid him at the same time, and the man was much pleased. He, himself, returned to his master's stable with the bishop's brown horse. He went to rest, and though the daylight came early, earlier than that did his master come to his door.

"I wouldn't grudge my pains," said he, "if my poor Scotsman were here before me to-day."

"I am here, good master, and the bishop's brown horse beside me."

"Well done, my man, you're a clever fellow. I had a high opinion of you before; I think much more of you now."

They prepared this day, too, to go and visit the bishop. It was Friday.

"Now," said the servant, "I left home without a horse yesterday, but I won't leave in the same way to-day."

"Well, my man," said his master, "as you have got the horse, I'll give you a saddle."

So they set off this day again to meet the bishop, his master and himself riding their horses. They saw the bishop coming to meet them, apparently mad. When they came close to-

gether they observed that the bishop rode another horse, by no means so good as his own. The bishop and chief magistrate met with salutations, then turning to the magistrate's servant:

"Scoundrel," said he, "and thorough thief!"

"You can't call me worse," said the other. "I don't know that you can call me that justly, for, you know, I told you what I was to do. Without more words, pay me my five hundred marks."

This had to be done, though not very willingly.

"What would you now say," said the lad, "if I were to steal your daughter to-night?"

"My daughter, you worthless fellow, you shan't steal my daughter."

"I'll wager five hundred marks and the brown horse," said the lad, "that I'll steal her."

"I'll wager five hundred marks that you don't," said the bishop.

The wager was laid. The lad and his master went home. "Young man," said the master, "I thought well of you at one time, but you have done a foolish thing now, just when you had made yourself all right."

"Never mind, good master, I'll make the attempt at any rate."

When night came, the chief magistrate's servant set off for the bishop's house. When he reached it, he saw a gentleman coming out at the door.

"Oh," said he to the gentleman, "what is this going on at the bishop's house to-night?"

"A great and important matter," said the gentleman, "a rascally Scotsman who is threatening to steal the bishop's daughter, but I can tell you neither he nor any other man will steal her, she is well guarded.

"Oh, I'm sure of that," said the lad, and turned away. "There is a man in England, however," said he to himself, "who must try it."

He set off to the king's tailors, and asked them whether they had any dresses ready for great people.

"No," said the tailor, "but a dress I have for the king's daughter, and one for her maid-of-honour."

"What will you take for the use of these for a couple of hours?"

"Oh," said the tailor, "I fear I dare not give them to you."

"Don't be in the least afraid," said the lad, "I'll pay you, and I'll return the two dresses

without any injury or loss. You'll get a hundred marks."

The tailor coveted so large a sum, so he gave them to him. He returned and found his man of the former night. They went to a private place, and got themselves fitted out in the dresses. When this was done as well as they could, they came to the bishop's door. Before he arrived at the door he found out that when any of the royal family came to the bishop's house they didn't knock, but rubbed the bottom of the door with the point of the foot. He came to the door and rubbed. There was a doorkeeper at the door that night, and he ran and told the bishop.

"There is some one of the royal family at the door," said he.

"No," said the bishop, "there is not. It's the thief of a Scotsman that is there."

The doorkeeper looked through the keyhole, and saw the appearance of two ladies who stood there. He went to his master and told them so. His master went to the door that he might see for himself. He who was outside would give another and another rub to the door, at the same time abusing the bishop for his folly. The bishop listened, and recognised the voice of the

king's daughter. The door was quickly opened, and the bishop bowed low to the lady. She began immediately to chide him for laying any wager respecting his daughter, saying that he was much blamed for what he had done.

"It was very wrong of you," said she, "to have done it without my knowledge, and you would not have required to have made such a stir or been so foolish as all this."

"You will excuse me," said the bishop.

"I can't excuse you," she said.

Into the room he led the king's daughter, in which his own daughter was, and persons watching her. She was in the middle of the room, sitting on a chair, and the others sitting all around.

Said the king's daughter to her, "My dear, your father is a very foolish man to place you in such great danger; for if he had given me notice, and placed you under my care, any man who might venture to approach you would assuredly not only be hanged, but burned alive. Go," said she to the bishop, "to bed, and dismiss this large company, lest men laugh at you."

He told the company that they might now go to rest, that the queen's daughter and her maid-of-honour would take charge of his daughter.

When they had all gone away the queen's daughter said, "Come with me, my dear, to the palace," and led her out to where the brown horse stood all ready.

As soon as the Scotsman got her there, he threw off the dress he wore in a dark place and put a different one on above his own, and mounted the horse. The other man was sent home with the dresses to the tailor after he had been paid, and told to meet there again the next night.

Early as daylight came, earlier came his master to the stable.

"I wouldn't grudge my pains, if my poor Scotsman were here before me to-day."

"Eh, and so I am," said the lad, "and the bishop's daughter is with me."

"Oh," said the magistrate, "I always thought well of you, but now I think more of you than ever."

This was Saturday. He and his master had to go and meet the bishop this day also. If the bishop looked angry the former day, he looked much angrier this one. The chief magistrate's servant rode on his horse and saddle behind his master. When he came near the bishop, he could only call him "thief" and "scoundrel."

"You cannot say that to me with justice,"

said the lad. " Send across here my five hundred marks."

The bishop paid the money, abusing the other all the time.

" Oh, man, give up your abuse. I'll wager you the ten hundred marks that I'll steal yourself to-night."

" That you steal me, you worthless fellow ! You shan't be allowed," and he wagered the ten hundred marks.

" I'll get these ten hundred marks back again," said the bishop, " but I will wager you fifteen hundred marks that you don't steal me."

The chief magistrate fixed the bargain for them, and the lad and his master went home.

" My man," said the master, " I have always thought well of you till now ; you will now lose the money you gained, for you can't steal the man."

" I have no fear of that," said the servant.

When night came he set off to the bishop's house. Then he thought he would go where he could find the fishermen of the city. When he reached them he asked whether they had " any fresh killed salmon " ? They said they had.

" If you skin so many of them for me, I will

give you such and such a sum of money, or as much as will be just and right."

The fishermen said they would do as he wished. They gave him as many fish skins as he thought would make him a cloak of the length and breadth he wished. He then went to the tailors, and asked would they make him a dress of the fish skins by twelve o'clock to-night, and they would be paid for it. They told him what sum they would take, and took the young man's measure and began the dress. By twelve o'clock it was ready.

The lad left with the dress, and when he found himself a short way from the bishop's church he put it on. He had found a key to open the church and he went in. He at once went to the pulpit. The doorkeeper, casting an eye in on an occasion, while a great watch was kept over the bishop, saw a light in the church, and went and reported it.

"A light," said the master. "Go and see what light it is." It was past twelve o'clock by this time.

"Oh," said the doorkeeper, coming back, "there is a man preaching in it."

The bishop drew out his timepiece and saw it was the beginning of Sunday. He went

running to the church. When he saw the brightness inside, and all the movements of the man who was preaching, he was seized with fear. He opened the door a little, and put in his head that he might see what he was like. There was not a language under the stars that the man in the pulpit was not talking. When he came to the languages which the bishop understood, he began to denounce him as a man who had lost his senses. In the bishop ran, and went down on his knees before the pulpit. There he began to pray, and when he saw the brightness that was about the pulpit he took to heart the things that were said to him. At length the preacher said if he would promise sincere repentance and go with him, he would grant him forgiveness. The bishop promised that he would.

"Come with me, that I may have a little more time with you," said he.

"I will," said the bishop, "though thou shouldst ask me to leave the world."

He went, and the young man walked before him. They reached the stable of the chief magistrate. He got a seat for the bishop and then sat down himself. They required no light, for the servant's clothes were shining bright. He then expounded to the bishop in some languages

which he could understand, and in others which he could not. He went on in that way until it was time for his master to come in the morning. When the time drew near, he threw off the dress, bent down and hid it, for it was near daylight. The bishop was now silent, and the chief magistrate came.

"I wouldn't grudge my pains," said he, "if I had my poor Scotsman here before me to-day."

"Eh, so I am here, and the bishop with me."

"Hey, my man," said his master. "You have done well."

"Oh, you infamous scoundrel," said the bishop, "is it thus you have got the better of me?"

"I'll tell you what it is," said the chief magistrate. "You had better be civil to him. Don't abuse him. He has got your daughter, your horse, and your money, and as for yourself, you know that he cannot support you, so it is best for you to support him. Take him back with you."

The young man left and went home with the bishop. He and the bishop's daughter were married, and the father showed him much kindness. I left them there.

XIV

RENT DAY

"Oh ullagone, ullagone! this is a wide world, but what will we do in it, or where will we go?" muttered Bill Doody, as he sat on a rock by the Lake of Killarney. "What will we do? To-morrow's rent day, and Tim the Driver swears if we don't pay up our rent, he'll take everything we have; and then, sure enough there's Judy and myself, and the poor little children will be turned out to starve on the high road, for the never a halfpenny of rent have I!—Oh, that ever I should live to see this day!"

Thus did Bill Doody bemoan his hard fate, pouring his sorrows to the reckless waves of the most beautiful of lakes, which seemed to mock his misery as they rejoiced beneath the cloudless sky of a May morning. That lake, glittering in sunshine, sprinkled with fairy isles of rock and verdure, and bounded by giant hills of ever-varying hues, might, with its magic

beauty, charm all sadness but despair; for, alas:

> "How ill the scene that offers rest,
> And heart that cannot rest agree!"

Yet Bill Doody was not so desolate as he supposed; there was one listening to him he little thought of, and help was at hand from a quarter he could not have expected.

"What's the matter with you, my poor man?" said a tall, portly looking gentleman, at the same time stepping out of a furze-brake. Now Bill was seated on a rock that commanded the view of a large field. Nothing in the field could be concealed from him, except this furze-brake, which grew in a hollow near the margin of the lake. He was, therefore, not a little surprised at the gentleman's sudden appearance, and began to question whether the personage before him belonged to this world or not. He, however, soon mustered courage sufficient to tell him how his crops had failed, how some bad member had charmed away his butter, and how Tim the Driver threatened to turn him out of the farm if he didn't pay up every penny of the rent by twelve o'clock next day.

"A sad story, indeed," said the stranger, "but surely, if you represented the case to your

landlord's agent, he won't have the heart to turn you out."

"Heart, your honour! Where would an agent get a heart?" exclaimed Bill. "I see your honour does not know him; besides, he has an eye on the farm this long time for a friend of his own, so I expect no mercy at all at all, only to be turned out."

"Take this, my poor fellow, take this," said the stranger, pouring a purse full of gold into Bill's old hat, which in his grief he had flung on the ground. "Pay the fellow your rent, but I'll take care it shall do him no good. I remember the time when things went otherwise in this country, when I would have hung up such a fellow in the twinkling of an eye!"

These words were lost upon Bill, who was insensible to everything but the sight of the gold, and before he could unfix his gaze, and lift up his head to pour out his hundred thousand blessings the stranger was gone. The bewildered peasant looked around in search of his benefactor, and at last he thought he saw him riding on a white horse a long way off on the lake.

"O'Donoghue, O'Donoghue!" shouted Bill; "the good, the blessed O'Donoghue!" and he ran capering like a madman to show Judy the

gold, and to rejoice her heart with the prospect of wealth and happiness.

The next day Bill proceeded to the agent's; not sneakingly, with his hat in his hand, his eyes fixed on the ground, and his knees bending under him, but bold and upright, like a man conscious of his independence.

"Why don't you take off your hat, fellow; don't you know you are speaking to a magistrate?" said the agent.

"I know I'm not speaking to the king, sir," said Bill, "and I never take off my hat but to them I can respect and love. The Eye that sees all knows I've no right either to respect or love an agent!"

"You scoundrel!" retorted the man in office, biting his lips with rage at such an unusual and unexpected opposition, "I'll teach you how to be insolent again—I have the power, remember."

"To the cost of the country, I know you have," said Bill, who still remained with his head as firmly covered as if he was the lord Kingsale himself.

"But come," said the magistrate. "Have you got the money for me? This is rent day. If there's one penny of it wanting, prepare to

turn out before night, for you shall not remain another hour in possession."

"There is your rent," said Bill, with an unmoved expression of tone and countenance; "you'd better count it, and give me a receipt in full."

The agent gave a look of amazement at the gold, for it was gold—real guineas! and not bits of dirty, ragged small notes, that are only fit to light one's pipe with. However willing the agent may have been to ruin, as he thought, the unfortunate tenant, he took up the gold, and handed the receipt to Bill, who strutted off with it as proud as a cat of her whiskers.

The agent, going to his desk shortly after, was confounded at beholding a heap of gingerbread cakes instead of the money he had placed there. He raved and swore, but all to no purpose; the gold had become gingerbread cakes, just marked like the guineas, with the king's head, and Bill had the receipt in his pocket, so he saw there was no use in saying anything about the affair, as he would only get laughed at for his pains.

From that hour Bill Doody grew rich; all his undertakings prospered, and he often blesses the day that he met with O'Donoghue, the

great prince that lives down under the lake of Killarney.

Like the butterfly, the spirit of O'Donoghue closely hovers over the perfume of the hills and flowers it loves ; while, as the reflection of a star in the waters of a pure lake, to those who look not above, that glorious spirit is believed to dwell beneath.

XV

THE CHICKEN MARKET

I

Ben Ody is resolved on carrying his Chickens to a Pretty Market

Once upon a time there was a rustic whose name was Ben Ody, and he knew more of what is in an egg than that it is something good to eat. He understood how one thing comes out of another. Ben Ody, when he had no more sense than the rest of the world, kept fowls ; and when he grew to be so wise, he had been carrying his chickens to a pretty market.

There is a woody wilderness in Dulmansland, and few reach to the heart of it ; but there is open market held by Fairies in the middle of that wilderness, and any man who gets to it may talk and traffic with the market-people to his own great gain. Ben Ody knew that there was such a market, and resolved to carry thither a large basketful of chickens.

Goody Madge Ody cried down his design. Chickens, she said, were worth three shillings a couple in their own good town of Peniworth, and that was their just price all the world over. He might grind down his legs from under him in travelling to the strange market, and find, she would answer for it, nobody but a fool to pay a shilling more. Ben Ody made answer to his wife that she talked like a woman, and then set out like a man upon his journey.

He had not gone ten steps from his door before he met somebody who offered him four shillings a pair for all his chickens. But Goodman Ben refused the money, saying to himself one has not to go far to find a fool. He had not gone ten miles before he met somebody who offered for his chickens four shillings apiece. Should he halt on his way to Fairyland because he was tempted by so great a certainty of present gain? Ody covered up the basket with his pocket-handkerchief, and travelled on. The very chickens cried "cheap! cheap!" to one another when the bargain was proposed. "I hope for better luck than that," said Ody, as he went his way.

A forward young hen who was of the company in the basket, getting her head, after a little perseverance, through one of the holes in her

master's handkerchief, turned one eye up to him, and clucked, "Luck! luck! luck! Ha!" He could not tell whether she spoke in sympathy or in derision. For, to the last, wise as he became, Ben Ody could not arrive at the whole and exact mind even of a hen.

On the first night of his journey Goodman Ben, when he came to an inn, supped upon juicy steak with oyster sauce, and bought wheat for his poultry. On the second night he had cold shoulder, and fed the chickens upon bran. On the third night he had sour milk for supper, and a very little bread, of which he gave all to his birds. Should he halt on his way to Fairyland because he was repelled by so great a certainty of present hunger? On the fourth night he supped at a pig-trough, and slept in a barn, upon the floor of which his hens found pickings. On the fifth night he came to the seacoast, where a keen wind, blustering from the east, cruelly threatened to cut off his nose and ears. The wild waves champed on the restraining bit of shore, tossing abroad white flakes of foam. Behind the flying foam-flakes the wind raced, like a starved hound, whining. There was rough water stirring eagerly, flashing white lines, reflecting from the tempestuous sky, just quitted

by the sun, a ghastly yellow light. But in the west, water and air were heavy with the purple gloom that buried all, and was not to be cloven even by the stroke of all the lightnings in it.

Who could tell when it was from the wind, when from the wave, when from the cloud, that thunder came ? In that fierce tumult a man's ears were stuffed with the incessant roar, his eyes filled with the rising of great waters, and the rising also of their own small flood, under pinch of the wind that had grip on every nerve. The tongue within the mouth was salted, and all juices of the flesh seemed to be brine. A driving rain began to whip the Goodman in the face. No shelter was to be had in the low red crags behind him, or on the flat, treeless land above. Beyond a gap in the cliffs, far away by a white sea-mark, a boat-house could be seen. But there was between the drenched man and that mockery of shelter a wide wet bog and the estuary of a river.

Then fell upon his mind's ear the voice of his Goody, who talked like a woman, and upon his mind's eye a vision of the market-place at Peniworth that was now left, a five days' journey, behind his back. The chickens all were become cheerless—cold fowls without tongue. Ben Ody

had their basket by this time under his gaberdine, that dripped and flapped over them, a dismal substitute for the warm mother's wing, under which they still could remember how they once were nursed.

Suddenly, through the splashing of the rain, light shone from their owner's countenance. Sore hunger, prompter of his wit, reminded him that he knew, as every man may know, one sentence, at least, of the speech of hens. The hint given him from the basket at the outset of his journey, which it had then suited his humour to consider English, belonged naturally to one of the languages of the great Poultry Stock, and was, in fact, Hennish for "I am about to lay an egg." "Where," he cried, "is that egg? For eggs are good to eat, and I am desperately hungry."

There was a flutter in the basket, followed by a delicate rap on his elbow. Was that a mouse running down his sleeve? The egg was in his hand.

"Pah!" said the countryman, "the egg's alive! It can't be eatable." But Ben Ody put the two ends of the egg to his lips, and found one cold, the other hot. Right enough! he thought. So he made for himself a hole in the small end,

sucked thereat, and was nearly choked before he knew that what he had swallowed was tobacco-smoke. What wonder ? Again and again had he prophesied to Goody, and said, " Goody, we shall have the poultry copying the puppies, and the chickens will soon learn to smoke before they break the shell." How this young embryo came by his cigars was only one out of a thousand mysteries of the tobacco trade.

Ben Ody peeped into the egg-shell, and the smoke immediately stung him in the eye. He might as well hope to look down a chimney when fresh wood has been laid on the fire below. Meantime, the wind howled and the sea roared in his ears, the rain lashed his face, and the salt spray leapt into his mouth as his teeth chattered with cold. The tobacco-smoke curled up from the egg like the smoke of a fusee that has burnt close to another sort of shell. " Next only to food comes tobacco," sighed the weary man. " After you, therefore, if you please, my little chicken ! "

A wisp of dead herbage was blowing by, and a bit of stout reed in it caught Ben's attention. " I will have you," he thought, " for a pipe-stem, and accordingly he thrust one end of it through a convenient part of the shell. Immediately

a venerable head, as big as an old pea, as yellow and as wrinkled, but having as much white beard as a dozen dandelion seeds, thrust itself from inside through a hole of its own breaking, and cried, "How many more draughts are you going to expose me to, young man?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," Ben Ody said. "You are no chicken!"

"Why are you standing out there in the rain?" said the little man, still in a rage. "How much damp are you going to bring in with you? Now then, the supper will get cold, as well as you!"

Whether he himself had become smaller, or the egg had become larger, Ben could not then tell, for he had no point of comparison as he stood there in the tempest, with his face towards the boundless sea. Moreover, he was a man on such terms with himself that in the most reduced condition he could not feel small. He could not, indeed, fail to perceive that his chicken-basket towered high above his head, its wicker sides rising like columns of a temple, in which there were enshrined sublime hens and a cock holding his head higher than any weather-cock in Dulmansland. But ah! what a fine lime-white hermitage, tapestried inside from dome to floor

with the most exquisite of tissues, was the vaulted chamber he had taken for an egg. Therein sat the yellow man, and by no means a little man, beside a fire hot enough to have parched his pea of a head (which now seemed to be as big as a ripe pumpkin), and there he knocked out the dead ashes from his pipe before he turned his chair round to the supper-table.

The rain splashed and the wind howled outside, while the wide dome that sheltered them rocked like a great ship in the storm. For supper there was a bee's thigh stewed in its own burden of honey; and Ben Ody was so hungry that he ate slice after slice, and feasted on the honey till his clothes began to feel too tight for him.

"Now," said the yellow hermit, "my name's Yolk. You are my guest, sir, and I am your servant. What dew do you take?"

Here he produced two round bottles from a cupboard, each warranted to hold an exact unbroken dewdrop. "This," he said, "is Thistledew, and this has been distilled on Woodbine Blossom."

Then Yolk broke the seal of one bottle carefully, produced a couple of cups, and shared with his guest a drop of Thistledew, at which

they drank and drank till prudence counselled them to leave a little in the bottle. Ody hardly knew what he had been talking about, so much had the dew risen to his head, when at last his servant became angry, and began to beat the table, shouting again and again, "Shut your hand firmly upon what you want, and there you have it!"

Then Ben Ody shut his hand, and there were barleycorns forcing their way out between his fingers. He shut both his hands firmly, opened them side by side, so that he made a scoop of his two palms, and the scoop was at once full to overflowing of good barley. Then he knew that what he had been arguing about was supper for his fowls, and he went out to feed them.

II

Over the Sea

The storm was over, though the sea raged still against the land, but no star shone. The moon, breaking for an instant through a rift in the clouds, made the wet, glistening shore so light that one of his colossal chickens, having spied the Goodman as he clambered up the side of a

great pebble, mistook him for a grub, and being peckish, made a snap at him.

"You would not," said Yolk, laughing at Ben's escape, "have been the first man eaten up by his own chickens when travelling this way to market. You have held to your mind with them, and they are your own. Treasure them. Golden eggs are a mere goose's business to the eggs they lay. But they may eat you up, nevertheless. We are yours, yet have a care, Master Ben Ody. You are ours."

"Dear Mr. Yolk, what must I do?"

"Go on."

"Through the sea, I suppose?"

"Certainly, through the sea. This is the Sea of Trouble, through which you must go, unless you will return to Peniworth."

"But here is every hen as large as a parsonage, and a cock bigger than our parish church. I might well leave them alone to find their suppers. If they grow up at this rate, nothing smaller than a sea-serpent will be the worm that any one of them will scratch for. What ship is to carry them?"

"There is no ship to carry them," said Yolk.

"Ah, very well. To fowls of that size the sea

is a puddle. But, for myself, where am I to find a little skiff—a mere cock-boat—what if it were but an egg-shell ? " And Ben cast a wistful look upon the hermitage.

" Go on," said Yolk. " I only stay behind to let the fowls out of the basket. You may trust us all to follow."

" The night is pitch-dark, Mr. Yolk. The sea and the wind are buffeting and tearing at each other. Here is the tide rising, and a wave at its first innings has almost bowled me down."

For a minute there escaped a ray of moonlight from the storm above ; it fled like a white spirit, and vanished suddenly across the waste of surging waters. Under its touch there had flashed into sight, pale and still, the tall figure of Yolk, with one arm raised, and a long finger pointing seaward.

" Courage, Ben Ody ! Dare and overcome ! Turn neither to the right nor to the left. Go on resolved, and you will reach the Fairy Market."

The rustic put faith in the exhortation, and his heart enlarged within him. " Shut your hand firmly upon what you want, and there you have it ! "

" Courage ! " Ben Ody cried, with both fists clenched, beating the waves back as they struck

him on the brow. He was among them, and his large tread became heavy on the corals of the sea-bottom as his frame grew to the measure of his grand audacity.

Sharks leaping about him, worried him as flies worry a dog. Great whales gathered in shoals and joined their forces in wild rushes at his legs. As well might earwigs hope to trip the heels of a prize-fighter.

"Mr. Yolk," said Ody, when they were half-way across, "it seems to me that this is pretty night-work for a man whose supper was but a few slices out of a bee's leg and half a dewdrop."

"It is getting to be all spirit with you, Mr. Ody," said the man out of the egg. "Your courage is not of the sort they cut up with a knife and fork. Starvation strengthens it. There is meat enough in a bee's leg to give metal to the man who is resolved. So here we are, safe out of deep water, and sure-footed among the shallows. This rain is but the earth's morning wash, for there, you see, rises the sun over the sandhills."

"Well," said Ody, "I have had my wash, and now, if I could only polish myself with a towel, give my hair a handsome combing, and brush my old smock and boots and gaiters into something fit to be looked at——"

"Look! look! look! here!" clucked a voice behind him.

"That's the voice of the speckled hen, I know," said Ben, turning upon her. "Speckled! Why, Yolk, are these my chickens? Was that sea a beauty bath?"

Though a humming bird grew to the size of an ostrich, and increased as much in beauty as in size, it would be no match for one of Ben Ody's chickens as those chickens now shone down the dawn. They had crossed the water, and stood glittering among the dull sandhills like hillocks of rainbow in the morning rain.

"Three shillings a couple, did you say, Madge? And that glorious being yonder," whispered the rustic, "is my speckled hen, for it is she who has demeaned herself to lay me an egg for my breakfast. Here it is." But as Goodman took it up, the shell broke in his hand, and there fell out of it a small clothes-brush, a comb, and a large towel. When Ben Ody rubbed his face dry with this towel, soft and delicate as any spider's web, though stronger than chain-cable, the wrinkles and the freckles and the stubble of his beard came away with the water. His crooked nose, kneaded up in it for a moment, became as the nose of an Apollo

and his old mouth blossomed again with its early roses. He dug the comb into his hair, and shook out exquisite odours while he pulled the grizzled mat into brown silken tresses. He brushed at his smock, his boots, and his gaiters, clearing away all that was rustic as he rubbed. The smock brushed out into a purple velvet robe, enriched with a fine gold embroidery and fringed with amethysts. The gaiters, when their shell of dirt had been cleared off, displayed an inner crust of diamonds, and the old hobnailed boots, which, with the feet inside, were filed down by one minute's brushing to a dainty size and shape, cleaned into easy slippers of rich orange morocco with red heels. At the same time there came a sensation of silk and fine linen over the entire body and legs of Mr. Ody.

"Now, Master, that you have done polishing yourself," said Yolk, "will you oblige me with the brush and towel?"

Yolk cleaned himself into the figure of a black-haired page, in a full suit of amber satin, Still there was a touch of bile in his complexion. but his face was smooth, and the long white bristles of his beard had shrunk into a tender down upon the chin. Upon his upper lip the towel left only a slender black moustache of hair

that might be in the very first month of its crispness.

"There's nothing," he said, "so refreshing as a good rub with a towel, when one has been hard at work all night."

"Except breakfast," observed my Lord Ben. "Towels and combs and yellow pages are all very well, but my intention was to eat that egg."

"Shut your hand firmly upon what you want, and there you have it! Call for what breakfast you please, Master."

"Oh, certainly. A pint of old ale and a muffin! There, Yellow Page! The muffin is for you—the ale for me."

"May I be permitted to suggest that if I had as much might in my hands as you in yours, I should know how to choose myself a better breakfast."

"Throw the muffin to the fowls, if you don't like it. Stay, I beg your pardon for remembering old ways. At Peniworth I had my morning draught, and Madge she had her muffin. Hold that muffin for a minute, and keep it as hot as you can, while I shut my hand upon my Goody. There, I have her!" With her mob-cap and her false red wig; her tortoiseshell spectacles, her turn-up nose, and the one front-tooth in her

mouth ; with her old flowered gown tucked up about her waist, and a black petticoat flapping over the wrinkles in her grey worsted stockings ; with her feet raised upon pattens, her bare shrivelled arms still wet to the elbows with soapsuds, and a dripping lump of mottled soap in her right hand, while her left hand slipped greasily out of her husband's grasp—there stood Goody Madge.

"Let me give you a rub, Goody, with this towel."

"I'll have no spiders' webs thrust in my mouth. Keep off, I say ! None of your play-acting with me."

"After only a week's parting, do you not remember Ben again ? Have I not been fighting alone through my trouble, and do I not give you my hand now I am fairly through that sea, and safe to find my way into the Fairy Chicken Market ? "

"My Ben certainly left Peniworth on a fool's errand with a basketful of chickens. But if you are he, you've altered greatly for the worse. What other sign am I to know you by ? "

"The morning muffin ! "

"And that morning draught, I see ! But who's the boy ? "

"He is the yellow boy who waits upon me."

"What have you done with the hens?"

"Look yonder. What do you think of them? Three shillings a couple in our market-place, and if I take them farther, I shall only find a fool to pay a shilling more?"

"Nonsense, Ben. Fine feathers don't make fine fowl. How will they roast?"

"They glorify me, they give power to my hands, they give me back more than my youth, they grow without food, they are the delight of my eyes; and am I, because in our old market-place nothing but bread and meat is bartered for, to wring their necks and sell them for the pot?"

"Alack! alack! alack! Yah!" cried a voice from the sand-heaps.

"That is the black hen's voice," said Mrs. Margery. "I'll go and look for her egg."

III

Through Waste and Wilderness

The light rain had passed away, and mist was rolling from the earth as the sun rose. Yolk laid a hand on Ody's wrist, and drawing close to

him, looked with an awed face landward. On the verge of the land, where the last blades of coarse grass were waving in the sea-wind, the outline visible against the sky was indistinctly broken by the gleam of some white ruined gravestones and the swelling up of graves. A heavy mist was rolling upward from that undefended graveyard on the border of the sea. Within the mist, and part of it, were solemn shapes that spread themselves abroad—the shapes of ghostly gravediggers, each with a black mattock in his hand.

"They are gone, Master. I saw them sitting on the shore watching for us."

"For us?"

"Go up, Master, and see those graves. They are all marked with plain stones; not a name ever was carved on one of them. Here the storm beats and the lichens grow. This headstone was beaten down upon its grave when the blast of the night-wind shrieked over the forgotten dead. They were all wrecked men whom the ghosts have buried, working silently, and leaving not a trace beyond the hillock and a headstone such as these."

Goodman Ody shivered. "This hole in the sand was made for me, no doubt, and I ob-

serve now that the shore is lined with heaps of chicken-bone."

"Many a man," said Yolk, "carrying his chickens to the Fairy Market, has been taken dead out of this Sea of Trouble. When the resolve falters in the midst of peril, all is lost. Every man cannot shut his hand firmly upon what he wants."

Then there came upon Ben Ody's ear the voice of his Goody, crying, "Come down, man! Here's the black hen's egg; only she isn't black, and a pretty egg it is for your fine feathers to lay. It's empty!"

"Stop," answered the Goodman; "stop till I come. Now crack that egg, and you shall see what you shall see come out of it. Well, Goody, what is it?"

"My wedding-ring," said the old dame, "and that is curious. When you were three days away, I was vexed at you, and took it off, and put it away in a teapot. How it came here—how I came here—how you come to be so foolish—what has come to the chickens—who that young man is—and what's coming to us all, who knows?"

"Never mind, Margery; put out your finger, and on goes the ring again. Is there any spell

in it, I wonder, Mr. Yolk? How do you feel now, Madge?"

"I feel like sticking by you, Ben."

"Then may the black hen lay nothing but wedding-rings, and may I be the jeweller that sells them. On we go. My love's as old as yours, Goody, although the matter of the chickens puts a difference between us. You'd shine like a queen if you would only scrub your face well with this towel."

"I'm Goody Madge, and I don't wish to be transmogrified."

"Then, Goody, you shall not even put your pattens off. So take my arm, old woman, and come on."

The forward road lay through a vast sandy plain, filled with rabbit holes. The fowls, glittering with all colours that play in the diamond, led the way, and were as a rainbow of hope moving before them. Ben Ody, beautiful in his new youth, walked lovingly with his old wife, who, having shaken down her flounced gown, had wiped her arms upon her apron, put the bit of mottled soap into her pocket, and was carrying her pattens in her hand. She did not care about the splendour of his newly-gotten youth; he did not care about her wrinkles and grey hairs.

"THEN, GOODY, TAKE MY ARM, OLD WOMAN, AND COME ON."

The bells had rung for them both, years ago, from Peniworth church-steeple. There was one memory, one heart between them. Yolk described the road. "These," he said, "were the famous warrens of Mockery on the confines of Dulmansland." Ben was pleased with the ways of the little rabbits that ran out of their holes to nibble and make mouths at him. They were so free with Goody's heel that she put on her pattens again to protect her toes from their incessant nibbling. They were thus bold because they saw her dread of them. Ben Ody's slippers were proof against all their bites. Shrubs became numerous, in which venomous snakes hissed as they passed. Trees multiplied, and, following their chickens, the wayfarers soon were buried in the great Forest or Wilderness of Doubt.

"By the straight path, on and be resolved," Yolk whispered. Everywhere there was to be heard the roaring of a lion round the corner, but none ever leapt out to dispute the forward way. As the forest darkened and the night set in, and the moon threw only a stray spear-shaft of light among the trees, Goody said, under her breath: "I go where you go, Ben, but I have heard laughter at men who took their chickens to a pretty market, and I have some fear of what it means."

Ben answered with a brave word, crushed the bunch of wormwood in his hand, and steadily went on.

IV

The Market Reached

"Did you see that, Ben?"

"Yes, what was it?"

"Flash of eyes! There are queer people about us in the wood, and they make no sound. One of them ran against me, and walked through me, and could not be felt. Hark, Ben! What voice is that?"

"The nightingale."

"Oh, husband! I wish we were well through the wood."

"That's a bold cock of ours to blow his clarion against the nightingale," said Ben. "There is a distant answer. Trumpet music, that comes nearer and nearer. There's a chorus coming with it. Hark, old girl, hark to the words! We must be getting to our journey's end."

> "Make way through the press, Oh yes! Oh yes!
> To the never despairing, the manfully daring,
> Market is open, Oh yes! Oh yes!"

Then, under the gloomy forest-paths, the chickens all began to shine with their own light. The wood was full of spirit lamps, for every lamp was a Fairy. The glorious procession was seen coming onward like the miracle of a bright sunbeam in the midst of night. There was no light but that which issued from the robes and beaming faces of the Fairies.

On each side of the path the Fairies stood in treble line, face over face. Behind and above these keepers of the way, among the trees and on the trees, a frolicsome crowd made with its happiness a wall of light that shone reflected from Ben Ody, in his royal purple, and Madge, in her figured cotton gown. Hemmed in by Fairy faces, of which every one looked lovingly upon her Ben, a little dazed by the light, a little troubled with embarrassment about her pattens, the Goody took a firm grip of her husband's arm, and happily marched on.

That path led to the open space of the great Fairy Market, which is hemmed in by the dark Forest of Doubt. The moon stood over it large and round, but the whole market was filled in part with its own emerald light from the robes of the Fairies, in part with the white and rosy radiance of their faces, and the glitter of a crowd of eyes

brighter than stars that cluster in the milky way.

Goody Madge was beset by praises of her chickens, and her heart warmed at the sound of merry traffic from fragrant alcoves cut out of the forest. She felt no more concern about her pattens. Nobody heeded them, and yet it seemed that everybody heeded her and her Goodman.

"What shall I give you for those chickens, mortal dame?" a busy Elf asked of the Goody.

"Three shillings a couple, Madam, was their price at Peniworth, but——"

"Shillings! What are shillings, you dear friend?

"Wit or beauty, troth to duty,
Strength to conquer or obey,
Heart to give well, soul to live well,
Such alone is Fairies' pay."

"That's a funny sort of money," said old Madge, almost in rhyme.

Then another Fairy whispered, "Don't be eager. Bide your time."

Goodman Ben Ody spoke with Yolk, and then began to sing:

"All the fowls that hither we bring,
Body and legs, liver and wing,
We mean to present to the Fairy King."

Then there was more music and more chorus-

ing, and, in the middle of the market-place, Oberon, who descended in form of a moonbeam, became visibly present on a bed of night-flowers there laid for him. The burden of the chorus changed when in a ring of dancing light the Fairies stood about the royal couch and fixed their eyes upon Ben Ody and his wife, as they were left alone together in the great space opposite the King.

> "To you he descends; you are his friends.
> To the never despairing, the manfully daring,
> Oberon speaks and the world attends."

"Your chickens shall come into my barnyard, Goodman Ody," said the King. "What shall I give you more than thanks for them?"

"Only your hand to kiss," Ben stammered.

The circle of the Fairies closed in on the Goodman and his wife, as Oberon stretched forth his royal hand. Ben stood erect when he had kissed it; erect even when he saw the Fairy King rise from his couch, and bending reverently over it, himself kiss the brown, wrinkled hand of the old Goody.

"Goodman Ben Ody," said His Majesty, "you that have kissed the hand of Oberon, are minded to go back to Peniworth and dig with a new strength in your own farm. Out of the

fulness of your heart as of your hand, you will deal wisely, liberally, gently, with your fellows. The wiser you become, the better will you feel why Oberon paid homage to your faithful wife. Dame Margery requires none of your Fairy lore. Look down, fortunate husband, into the old eyes under her spectacles, and learn to read in them the greater mysteries of a good woman's soul."

Margery's hand shook, and her pattens clicked together, as she heard these fine things said about herself. It was odd that they should make her think of her lame youngest boy, the cowherd, and a great deal more curious that he should take that very time to pull the bobbin and come limping in over the stone floor of her kitchen. Never before was known such easy travelling as the return from Oberon's Court into the old house-place. Ben, in his usual smock, and with the usual freckles and wrinkles, was only fetching his spade out of the tool-house. But there had been no dreaming. The chickens were gone, and, in a suit of corduroy, a fair-sized ploughboy, with a face yellow and seamed as an old pea, there was Yolk smoking his pipe in the chimney-corner.

XVI

THE INHERITANCE

THERE was once a farmer who was well off. He had three sons. When he was on the bed of death he called them to him and said, "My sons, I am going to leave you; let there be no disputing when I am gone. In a certain drawer, in a dresser in the inner room, you will find a sum of gold; divide it fairly and honestly amongst you, work the farm, and live together as you have done with me"; and shortly after the old man went away. The sons buried him, and when all was over they went to the drawer, and when they drew it out there was nothing in it.

They stood for a while without speaking a word. Then the youngest spoke. "There is no knowing if there ever was any money at all." "There was money, surely, wherever it is now," said the second; and the eldest said, "Our father never told a lie. There was money, certainly, though I cannot understand the matter.

Come, let us go to such an old man; he was our father's friend; he knew him well; he was at school with him; and no man knew so much of his affairs. Let us go to consult him."

So the brothers went to the house of the old man and told him all that had happened.

"Stay with me," said the old man, "and I will think over this matter. I cannot understand it; but, as you know, your father and I were very great with each other. When he had children I stood sponsor, and when I had children he did the same. I know that your father never told a lie." And he kept them there, and gave them meat and drink for ten days.

Then he sent for the three young lads, and he made them sit down beside him, and said:

"There was once a young lad, and he was poor, and he fell in love with the daughter of a rich neighbour. The maiden loved him too, but because he was so poor there could be no wedding. At last they pledged themselves to each other, and the young man went away and stayed in his own house. After a time there came another suitor, and because he was well-off, the girl's father made her promise to marry him, and after a time they were married. But directly afterwards the bridegroom found her

weeping and bewailing. 'What ails thee?' he said. The bride would say nothing for a long time, then she told him all about it, and how she had pledged herself to another. 'Dress thyself,' said the man, 'and follow me.' So she dressed herself in her wedding clothes, and he took the horse, and put her behind him, and rode to the house of the other man, leaving the bride there at the door while he returned home.

"'What brought thee here?' said he.

"'The man I married to-day. When I told him of the promise we had made he brought me here himself and left me.'

"Immediately he loosed the maiden from the promise she had given, and set her on the horse, telling her to return to her husband.

"So the bride rode away. She had not gone far when she came to a thick wood where three robbers stopped and seized her.

"'Aha!' said one, "we have waited long, and have got nothing, but now we have the bride herself.'

"'Oh,' said she, 'let me go, let me go to my husband. Here are ten pounds in gold—take them, and let me go on my journey.' So she begged and prayed for a long time.

"At last one of the robbers, who was of a

better nature than the rest, said, 'Come, I will take you home myself.'

"'Take thou the money,' said she.

"'I will not take a penny,' said the robber, but the other two said, 'Give us the money,' and they took the ten pounds.

"The maiden rode home, and the robber left her at her husband's door.

"Now," said the old man, "which of all these do you think did best?"

"I think the man that sent the maiden to him to whom she was pledged, was the honest, generous man," said the eldest son. "He did well."

The second said, "Yes, but the man to whom she was pledged did still better, when he sent her to her husband."

"Then," said the youngest, "I don't know myself; but perhaps the wisest of all were the robbers who got the money."

Then the old man rose up and said, "Thou hast thy father's gold and silver. I have kept you here for ten days. I have watched you well. I know your father never told a lie, and thou hast stolen the money." So the youngest son had to confess the fact, and the money was got and divided.

XVII

THE GIANT'S STAIRS

On the road between Passage and Cork there is an old mansion called Ronayne's Court. It may be easily known from the stack of chimneys and the gable ends, which are to be seen, look at it which way you will. Here it was that Maurice Ronayne and his wife Margaret kept house, as may be learned to this day from the great old chimney-piece, on which is carved their arms. They were a mighty worthy couple, and had but one son, who was called Philip, after no less a person than the King of Spain.

Immediately on his smelling the cold air of this world the child sneezed, and it was naturally taken to be a good sign of his having a clear head; but the subsequent rapidity of his learning was truly amazing, for on the very first day a primer was put into his hand he tore out the A B C page and destroyed it, as a thing quite beneath his notice. No wonder then that both father and mother were proud of their heir, who

gave such indisputable proofs of genius, or, as they call it in that part of the world, "*genus*."

One morning, however, Master Phil, who was then just seven years old, was missing, and no one could tell what had become of him; servants were sent in all directions to seek him, on horseback and on foot, but they returned without any tidings of the boy, whose disappearance altogether was most unaccountable. A large reward was offered, but it brought them no news, and years rolled away without Mr. and Mrs. Ronayne having obtained any satisfactory account of the fate of their lost child.

There lived, at this time, one Robert Kelly, a blacksmith by trade. He was what is termed a handy man, and his abilities were held in much estimation by the lads and the lasses of the neighbourhood; for, independent of shoeing horses, which he did to great perfection, and making plough irons, he interpreted dreams for the young women, sang at their weddings, and was so good-natured a fellow at a christening, that he was godfather to half the country round.

Now it happened that Robin had a dream himself, and young Philip Ronayne appeared to him in it at the dead hour of the night. Robin

thought he saw the boy mounted upon a beautiful white horse, and that he told him how he was made a page to the giant Mahon MacMahon, who had carried him off, and who held his court in the hard heart of the rock. "The seven years —my time of service—are clean out, Robin," said he, "and if you release me this night, I will be the making of you for ever after."

"And how will I know," said Robin—cunning enough, even in his sleep—"but this is all a dream?"

"Take that," said the boy, "for a token," and at the word the white horse struck out with one of his hind legs, and gave poor Robin such a kick in the forehead, that, thinking he was a dead man, he roared as loud as he could after his brains, and woke up calling a thousand murders. He found himself in bed, but he had the mark of the blow, the regular print of a horseshoe upon his forehead, as red as blood; and Robin Kelly, who never before found himself puzzled at the dream of any other person, did not know what to think of his own.

Robin was well acquainted with the Giant's Stairs, as, indeed, who is not that knows the harbour! They consist of great masses of rock, which, piled one above another, rise like a flight

of steps, from very deep water, against the bold cliff of Carrigmahon. Nor are they badly suited for stairs to those who have legs of sufficient length to stride over a moderate-sized house, or to enable them to clear the space of a mile in a hop, step, and jump. Both these feats the giant MacMahon was said to have performed, in the days of Finnian glory, and the common tradition of the country placed his dwelling within the cliff up whose side the stairs led.

Such was the impression which the dream made on Robin, that he determined to put its truth to the test. It occurred to him, however, before setting out on this adventure, that a plough iron may be no bad companion, as, from experience, he knew it was an excellent knock-down argument, having, on more occasions than one, settled a little disagreement very quietly ; so, putting one on his shoulder, off he marched in the cool of the evening through the Hawk's Glen to Monkstown. Here an old gossip of his, Tom Clancey by name, lived, who, on hearing Robin's dream, promised him the use of his skiff, and moreover, offered to assist in rowing it to the Giant's Stairs.

After a supper which was of the best, they embarked. It was a beautiful still night, and the little boat glided swiftly along. The regular

dip of the oars, the distant song of the sailor, and sometimes the voice of a belated traveller at the ferry, alone broke the quietness of the land and sea and sky. The tide was in their favour, and in a few minutes Robin and his friend rested on their oars under the dark shadow of the Giant's Stairs. Robin looked anxiously for the entrance to the Giant's palace, which, it was said, may be found by any one seeking it at midnight; but no such entrance could he see. His impatience had hurried him there before that time, and after waiting a considerable space in a state of suspense not to be described, Robin, with pure vexation, could not help exclaiming to his companion, "'Tis a pair of fools we are, Tom Clancey, for coming here at all on the strength of a dream."

"And whose doing is it," said Tom, "but your own?"

At the moment he spoke, they perceived a faint glimmering light to proceed from the cliff, which gradually increased until a porch big enough for a king's palace unfolded itself almost on a level with the water. They pulled the skiff directly towards the opening, and Robin Kelly, seizing his plough iron, boldly entered with a strong hand and a stout heart. Wild and

strange was that entrance; the whole of which appeared formed of grim and grotesque faces, blending so strangely each with the other that it was impossible to define any; the chin of one formed the nose of another; what appeared to be a fixed and stern eye, if dwelt upon, changed to a gaping mouth, and the lines of the lofty forehead grew into a majestic and flowing beard. The more Robin allowed himself to contemplate the forms around him, the more terrific they became; and the stony expression of this crowd of faces assumed a savage ferocity as his imagination converted feature after feature into a different shape and character. Losing the twilight in which these forms were visible, he advanced through a dark and devious passage, whilst a deep and rumbling noise sounded as if the rock was about to close upon him and swallow him up alive for ever. Now, indeed, poor Robin felt afraid.

"Robin, Robin," said he, "if you were a fool for coming here, what in the name of fortune are you now?" But as before, he had scarcely spoken, when he saw a small light twinkling through the darkness of the distance, like a star in the midnight sky. To retreat was out of the question; for so many turnings and windings

were in the passage, that he considered he had but little chance of making his way back. He therefore proceeded towards the light, and came at last into a spacious chamber, from the roof of which hung the solitary lamp that had guided him. Emerging from such profound gloom, the single lamp afforded Robin abundant light to discover several gigantic figures seated round a massive stone table, as if in serious deliberation, but no word disturbed the breathless silence which prevailed. At the head of this table sat Mahon MacMahon himself, whose majestic beard had taken root, and in the course of ages grown into the stone slab. He was the first who perceived Robin, and instantly starting up, drew his long beard from out the huge lump of rock in such haste, and with so sudden a jerk, that it was shattered into a thousand pieces.

"What seek you?" he demanded in a voiec of thunder.

"I come," answered Robin, with as much boldness as he could put on—for his heart was almost fainting within him—"I come," said he, "to claim Philip Ronayne, whose time of service is out this night."

"And who sent you here?" said the giant.

"'Twas of my own accord I came," said Robin.

"Then you must single him out from among my pages." said the giant; "and if you fix on the wrong one your life is the forfeit. Follow me."

He led Robin into a hall of vast extent and filled with lights; along either side were rows of beautiful children all apparently seven years old, and none beyond that age, dressed in green, and every one dressed exactly alike.

"Here," said Mahon, "you are free to take Philip Ronanye, if you will; but, remember, I give but one choice."

Robin was sadly perplexed, for there were hundreds upon hundreds of children, and he had no very clear recollection of the boy he sought. But he walked along the hall, by the side of Mahon as if nothing was the matter, although his great iron dress clanked fearfully at every step, sounding louder than Robin's own sledge battering on his anvil.

They had nearly reached the end of the hall without speaking, when Robin, seeing that the only means he had was to make friends with the giant, determined to try what effect a few soft words might have upon him.

"'Tis a fine wholesome appearance the poor

children carry," remarked Robin, "although they have been here so long shut out from the fresh air and the blessed light of heaven. 'Tis tenderly your honour must have reared them!"

"Ay," said the giant, "that is true for you, so give me your hand; for you are, I believe, a very honest fellow for a blacksmith."

Robin at the first look did not much like the huge size of the hand, and therefore presented his plough-iron, which the giant seizing, twisted in his grasp round and round again as if it had been a potato stalk; on seeing this all the children set up a shout of laughter. In the midst of their mirth Robin thought he heard his name called, and, all ear and eye, he put his hand on the boy whom he fancied had spoken, crying out at the same time, "Let me live or die for it, but this is young Phil Ronayne."

"It is Philip Ronayne—happy Philip Ronayne," said his young companions, and in an instant the hall became dark. Crashing noises were heard, and all was in strange confusion; but Robin held fast his prize, and found himself lying in the grey dawn of the morning at the head of the Giant's Stairs with the boy clasped in his arms.

Robin had plenty of gossips to spread the

story of his wonderful adventure; the whole barony rung with it.

"Are you quite sure, Robin, it is young Phil Ronayne you have brought back with you?" was the regular question; for although the boy had been seven years away, his appearance now was just the same as on the day he was missed. He had neither grown taller nor older in look, and he spoke of things which had happened before he was carried off as one awakened from sleep, or as if they had occurred yesterday.

"Am I sure? Well, that's a queer question," was Robin's reply; "seeing the boy has the blue eyes of the mother, with the foxy hair of the father, to say nothing of the wart on the right side of his little nose."

However Robin Kelly may have been questioned, the worthy couple of Ronayne's Court doubted not that he was the deliverer of their child from the power of the giant MacMahon, and the reward they bestowed upon him equalled their gratitude.

Philip Ronayne lived to be an old man, and he was remarkable to the day of his death for his skill in working in brass and iron, which it was believed he had learned during his seven years' apprenticeship to the giant Mahon MacMahon.

XVIII

THE KING OF LOCHLIN'S THREE DAUGHTERS

THERE was a king over Lochlin, once upon a time, who had three daughters. They went out on a day to take a walk, and there came three giants, who took with them the daughters of the king, and there was no knowing where they had gone.

Then the king sent word for the wise man of the place, and he asked him if he knew where his daughters had gone. The wizard said to the king that three giants had taken them with them, and they were in the earth down below, and there was no way to get them but by making a ship that would sail on sea and land. So it was that the king set out an order, any one who would build a ship that would sail on sea and on land, that he would get the king's big daughter to marry.

There was a widow there who had three sons; and the eldest said to his mother, "Cook for me a bannock. I am going away to cut wood and

to build a ship that will go to seek the daughters of the king. Give me a big bannock; it will be small enough before I build a ship."

He got it and went away. He arrived where there was a great wood and a river, and there he sat at the side of the river to eat his bannock. A great Shape came out of the river and she asked a part of his meal. He said that he would not give her a morsel, that it was little enough for himself. He began cutting the wood, and every tree he cut would be on foot again; and so he was till the night came.

When the night came, he went home mournfully and tearfully. His mother asked, "How went it with thee to-day, my son?"

"But black ill," answered the lad. "Every tree I would cut would be on foot again."

A day or two after this, the middle brother said that he himself would go; and he asked his mother to cook him a cake; and in the very way as it happened to his eldest brother, so it happened to him. The Shape came from the water and asked a part of the cake. He gave it her. When she had eaten her own share of the bannock, she said to him that she knew what had brought him there as well as he himself, but he was to go home, and to be sure to meet

her there at the end of a day and year; and that the ship would be ready at the end.

It was thus it happened. At the end of a day and a year the widow's young son went, and found the ship floating on the river, fully equipped. He went away then with the ship, with a following of gentlemen, as great as were in the kingdom, to marry the daughters of the king.

They were but a short time sailing when they saw a man drinking a river that was there. They asked him, "What art thou doing there?"

"I am drinking up this river."

"Thou hadst better come with me, and I will give thee meat and wages, and better work than that."

"I will," said he.

They had not gone forward far, when they saw a man eating stoats in a park.

"What art thou doing there?" said he.

"I am here going to eat all the stoats in this park."

"Thou hadst better go with me, and thou wilt get work and wages better than raw flesh."

"I will," said he.

They went but a short distance when they saw another man with his ear to the earth.

"What art thou doing there?" said he.

"I am here hearing the grass coming through earth."

"Go with me, and thou wilt get meat and better wages than to be there with thy ear to the earth."

They were thus sailing back and forwards, when the man who was listening said, "This is the place in which are the king's daughters and the giants."

The widow's son and the three who had fallen in with them were let down in a creel in a great hole that was there. They reached the house of the big giant.

"Ha! ha!" said the giant, "I know well what thou art seeking here. Thou art seeking the king's daughter, but thou wilt not get that, unless thou hast a man that will drink as much water as I."

He set the man who was drinking the river to hold drinking against the giant, and before he was half satisfied the giant burst. Then they went where the second giant was.

"Ho, hoth! ha, hath!" said the giant. "I know well what sent thee here, thou art seeking the king's daughter; but thou shalt not get her, if thou hast not a man who will eat as much flesh as I."

He set the man who was eating the stoats to hold the eating of flesh against the giant, but before he was half satisfied the giant burst. Then he went where the third giant was.

"Haio!" said the giant. "I know what sent thee here; but thou wilt not get the king's daughter, by any means, unless thou stayest a day and a year by me, a slave."

"I will do that," said he, and he sent up in the basket, first the three men, and then the king's daughters. The three great men were waiting at the mouth of the hole till they should come up, and they went with them to the king, and told the king that they themselves had done all the daring deeds.

When the end of a day and year had come, the widow's son said to the giant that he was going.

"I have an eagle that will set you up to the top of the hole," said the giant.

The giant set the eagle away with him, and five stoats and ten for a meal for her; but the eagle went not half-way up through the hole when she had eaten the stoats and returned back again.

"Thou must remain by me another day and year, then I will send thee away," said the giant."

When the end of this year came he sent the eagle away with him, and ten stoats and twenty. They went this time well farther on than they went before, but she ate the stoats and turned back.

"Thou must," said the giant, "stay by me another year, and then I will send thee away."

The end of this year came, and the giant sent them away, with threescore of stoats for the eagle's meat. When they were at the mouth of the hole the stoats were eaten, and she was going to turn back; but he took a steak out of his own thigh, and gave this to the eagle, and with one spring she was on the surface of the earth.

At the time of parting the eagle gave him a whistle, saying, "Any hard lot that comes on thee, whistle and I will be at thy side."

He did not allow his foot to stop, or empty a puddle out of his shoe, till he reached the king's big town. He went where there was a smith in the town, and asked him if he wanted a man to blow the bellows.

"Yes," said the smith.

He was but a short time there when the king's big daughter sent word for the smith.

"I am hearing," said she, "that thou art

the best smith in the town; but if thou dost not make for me a golden crown, like the one that I had when I was with the giant, the head shall be taken off thee."

The smith came home sorrowfully, and his wife asked him his news from the king's house.

"There is but poor news," said the smith. "The king's daughter is asking that a golden crown shall be made for her, like the crown that she had when she was under the earth with the giant; but what do I know what likeness was on the crown that the giant had?"

The bellows-blowing servant said, "Let not that set thee thinking; get thou for me enough gold, and I will not be long making the crown."

The smith got gold as he was asked, with the king's order. The servant went in to the smithy, shut the door, and began to splinter the gold asunder and to throw it out of the window. Each one that came the way was gathering the gold that the bellows lad was hurling out. Here, then, he blew the whistle, and in the twinkling of an eye the eagle came.

"Go," said he to the eagle, "and bring here the golden crown that is above the big giant's door."

The eagle went. She was not long on the

way, and brought the crown back with her. The lad gave it to the smith, who went merrily and cheerily with it to the king's daughter.

"Well then," said she, "if I did not know that it could not be done, I would not believe that this is not the crown I had when I was with the big giant."

The king's second daughter then said to the smith, "Thou wilt lose thy head if thou dost not make for me a silver crown, like the one I had when I was with the giant."

The smith took himself home in misery; but his wife went to meet him, expecting great news and flattery. But so it was, and the bellows-blower said that he would make a silver crown if he could get enough silver.

The smith got plenty of silver with the king's order.

The servant went and did as he did before. He whistled; the eagle came.

"Go," said he, "and bring hither here to me, the silver crown that the king's middle daughter had when she was with the giant."

The eagle went, and was not long coming back with the silver crown. The smith went merrily, cheerily, with it to the king's daughter.

"Well, then," said she, "it is marvellously

like the crown I had when I was with the giant."

The king's young daughter said to the smith that he should make a copper crown for her, like the one she had when she was with the giant.

The smith now was taking courage, and went home much more pleasantly this turn.

The lad began to splinter the copper, and to throw it out of each door and window; that now they were from each end of the town gathering the copper, as they were gathering the silver and gold. He blew the whistle, and the eagle was at his side.

"Go back," said he, "and bring here hither to me the copper crown that the king's young daughter had when she was with the giant."

The eagle went, and was not long going and coming. He gave the crown to the smith, who went merrily, cheerily, and gave it to the king's young daughter.

"Well, then," said she, "I would not believe that this was not the very crown that I had when I was with the giant underground, if there were a way of getting it."

Here the king said to the smith that he must tell him where he had learned crown-making,

" for I did not know the like of thee was in the kingdom."

" Well, then," said the smith, " with your leave, oh king, it was not I who made the crowns, but the lad I have blowing the bellows."

" I must see thy lad," said the king. " He must make a crown for myself."

The king ordered four horses in a coach that they should go to seek the smith's servant. When the coach came to the smithy, the lad was smutty and dirty, blowing the bellows. The horsemen came in and asked for the man who was going to look on the king.

" That is he yonder, blowing the bellows," said the smith.

" Ooo ! ooo ! " said they, and they caught him and threw him head foremost into the coach, as if they had a dog.

They went not far on their journey when he blew the whistle. The eagle was at his side.

" If ever thou didst good for me, take me out of this, and fill it full of stones," said he.

The eagle did so.

The king was out waiting for them, and when he opened the door of the coach, he was like to be dead with the stones bouncing on top of him. He ordered the servants to be caught

and hanged for giving such an affront to the king.

Then the king sent other servants with a coach; and when they had reached the smithy, "Ooo! ooo!" said they. "Is this the black thing the king sent us to seek?"

They caught him and cast him into the coach as if they had a turf peat.

But they went not far on their way when he blew the whistle, and the eagle was at his side.

"Take me out of this," said he, "and fill it with every dirt thou canst get."

When the coach reached the palace, the king went to open the door. All the dirt and rubbish fell about the king's head. Then he fell into a great rage, and ordered the horsemen to be hanged immediately.

Then the king sent his own confidential servant, and when he reached the smithy, he caught the black bellows-blower by the hand.

"The king," said he, "sent me to seek thee. Thou hadst better clean a little of the coal off thy face."

The lad did so; he cleaned himself well, and right well, and the king's servant caught him by the hand and put him into the coach.

They were but a short time going, when he blew the whistle. The eagle came, and he asked her to bring the gold and silver dress that was with the big giant here without delay, and the eagle was not long going and coming with the dress.

The lad arrayed himself in the gorgeous robe. When they came to the palace, the king opened the door of the coach, and there was the very finest man the king ever saw.

Together they entered the palace, and the lad told the king how it happened to him from first to last.

The three great men who were going to marry the king's daughters were hanged, and the king's big daughter was given to him to marry. They made them a wedding the length of twenty days; and I left them dancing, and I know not but that they are cutting capers on the floor till the day of to-day.

XIX

THE TAIL

THERE was a shepherd once who went out to the hill to look after his sheep. It was misty and cold, and he had much trouble to find them. At last he had them all but one, and after much searching he found that one too in a peat hag half-drowned; so he took off his plaid, and bent down and took hold of the sheep's tail, and he pulled! The sheep was heavy with water, and he could not lift her, so he took off his coat and he *pulled*!! But it was too much for him, so he spat on his hands and took a good hold of the tail, and he PULLED!! and the tail broke! And if it had not been for that, this tale would have been a great deal longer.

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