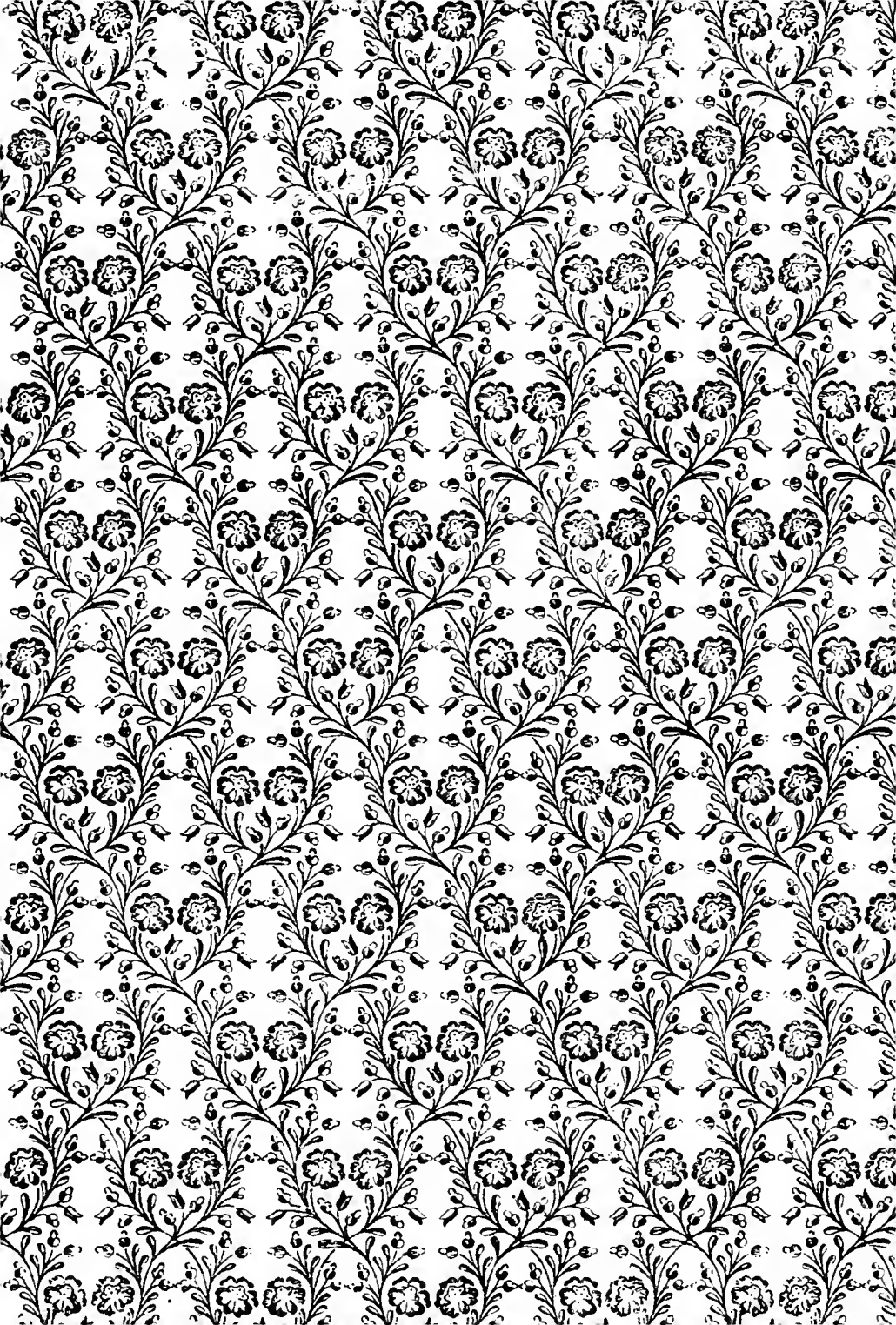
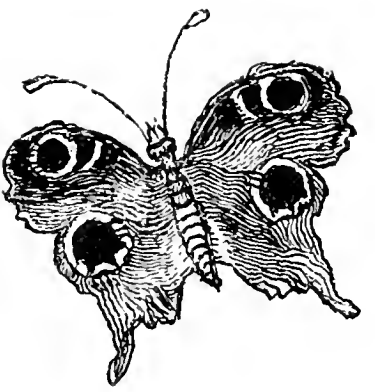
The Feather





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"BUT THE EAGLE HAD THE BEST OF IT AFTER ALL."

BY

AUTHOR OF 'THE BROWN OWL'

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY
F. MADOX BROWN

LONDON

1892

TO JULIET

'True, I talk of dreams,
Which are the children of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,
Which is as thin of substance as the air.'

THE FEATHER

ONCE upon a time there was a King who reigned over a country as yet, for a reason you may learn later on, undiscovered—a most lovely country, full of green dales and groves of oak, a land of dappled meadows and sweet rivers, a green cup in a circlet of mountains, in whose shadow the grass was greenest; and the only road to enter the country lay up steep, boiling waterfalls, and thereafter through rugged passes, the channels that the rivers had cut for themselves. Therefore, as you may imagine, the dwellers in the land were

little troubled by inroads of hostile nations; and they lived peaceful lives, managing their own affairs, and troubling little about the rest of the world.

Now this King, like many kings before and after him, had a daughter who, while very young, had, I am sorry to say, been very self-willed; and the King, on the death of his wife, finding himself utterly unable to manage the Princess, handed her over to the care of an aged nurse, who, however, was not much more successful —but that is neither here nor there.

For years everything went on smoothly, and it seemed as if everything intended to go on smoothly until doomsday, in which case this history would probably never have been written. But one evening in summer the Princess and her nurse, who had by this time become less able than ever to manage her charge, sat on a terrace facing the west. The Princess had been amusing herself by

pelting the swans swimming in the river with rose-leaves, which the indignant swans snapped up as they fluttered down on the air or floated by on the river.

But after a time she began to tire of this pastime, and sitting down, looked at the sun that was just setting, a blinding glare of orange flame behind the black hills. Suddenly she turned to the nurse and said:

'What's on the other side of the hills?'

'Lawk-a-mussy-me, miss!' answered the nurse, 'I'm sure I don't know. What a question to ask!'

'Then why don't you ask some one who has been there?'

'Because no one ever has, miss.'

'But why not?'

'Because there's a fiery serpent that eats every one who comes near the hills; and if you're not eaten up, you're bound to tumble down a precipice that's nearly three miles

deep, before you can get over the hills.'

'Oh, what fun! Let's go,' said the Princess, by no means awed. But the nurse shook her head.

'No, miss, I won't go; and I'm sure your pa won't let you go.'

'Oh yes, he will; let's go and ask him.'

But at that moment a black shadow came across the sun, and the swans, with a terrified 'honk, honk,' darted across the water to hide themselves in the reeds on the other side of the river, churning dark tracks in the purple of the sunlit water's glassy calmness.

'Oh dear! oh dear! it's a boggles, and it's coming this way,' cried the nurse.

'But what is a boggles, nurse?'

'Oh dear, it's coming! Come into the house and I'll tell you—come.'

'Not until you tell me what a boggles is.'

The nurse perforce gave in.

'A boggles is a thing with a hooked beak and a squeaky voice, with hair like snakes in corkscrews; and it haunts houses and carries off things; and when it once gets in it never leaves again—oh dear, it's on us! Oh-h-h!'

Her cries only made the thing see them sooner. It was only an eagle, not a boggles; but it was on the look-out for food, and the sun shining on the Princess's hair had caught its eyes, and in spite of the cries of the nurse it swooped down, and, seizing the Princess in its claws, began to carry her off. The nurse, however, held on to her valiantly, screaming all the while for help; but the eagle had the best of it after all, for it carried up, not only the Princess, but the nurse also.

The nurse held on to her charge for some seconds, but finding the attempt useless she let go her hold;

and since it happened that at the moment they were over the river, she fell into it with a great splash, and was drifted on shore by the current.

Thus the Princess was carried off; and although the land far and wide was searched, no traces of her were discoverable. You may imagine for yourself what sorrow and rage the King indulged in. He turned the nurse off without warning, and even, in a paroxysm of rage, kicked one of his pages downstairs; nevertheless that did not bring back the Princess.

As a last resource he consulted a wise woman (ill-natured people called her a witch) who lived near the palace. But the witch could only say that the Princess would return some day, but she couldn't or wouldn't say when, even though the King threatened to burn her. So it was all of no use, and the King was, and remained, in despair. But,

since his Majesty is not the important personage in the story, we may as well leave him and return to the Princess.

She, as you can think, was not particularly happy or comfortable, for the claws of the eagle pinched her, and besides, she was very frightened; for, you see, she didn't know that it wasn't a boggles, as the nurse had called it, and a boggles is a great deal worse than the worst eagle ever invented.

Meanwhile the eagle continued flying straight towards the sun, which was getting lower and lower, so that by the time they reached the mountains it was dark altogether. But the eagle didn't seem at all afraid of the darkness, and just went on flying as if nothing had happened, until suddenly it let the Princess down on a rock—at least, that was what it seemed to her to be. Not knowing what else to do, she sat where the eagle had let

her fall, for she remembered something about the precipice three miles deep, and she did not at all wish to tumble down that.

She expected that the eagle would set to and make a meal off her at once. But somehow or other, either it had had enough to eat during the day, or else did not like to begin to have supper so late for fear of nightmare; at any rate, it abstained, and that was the most interesting matter to her. Everything was so quiet around that at last, in spite of herself, she fell asleep. She slept quite easily until daylight, although the hardness of the rock was certainly somewhat unpleasant. When she opened her eyes it was already light, and the sun at her back was darting black shadows of the jagged mountains on to the shimmering gray sea of mist that veiled the land below. Her first thought was naturally of the eagle, and she did not need to look very

far for him, since he was washing himself in a little pool close by, keeping an eye on her the while.

As soon as he saw her move he gave himself a final shake, so that the water flew all around, sparkling in the sunlight; after which he came towards her by hops until he was quite close — rather too close, she thought. Nevertheless she did not move, having heard somewhere that, under the circumstances, that is the worst thing to do; she also remembered animals cannot stand being looked at steadily by the human eye, therefore she looked very steadfastly at the eyes of the eagle. But the remedy did not seem to work well in this case, for the glassy yellow eyes of the bird looked bad-tempered, and it winked angrily, seeming to say, 'Whom are you staring at?' And then it began to stretch out its bill towards her until it was within a few inches of her face. This was

more than she could stand, and she said sharply, 'Take your head away.'

The eagle, however, took no notice whatever of this; and seeing nothing better to do, she lifted up her hand and gave it a smart box on the ear, or rather on the place where its ear should have been. The eagle drew back its beak in a hurry and scratched its head with one claw as if it were puzzled. After a moment's reflection it put out its head again, and once more the Princess lifted up her hand; but when the eagle saw that it jumped backwards in a hurry, as if it did not care to receive a second box on the ear, and began to stride sulkily away as if it thought it better to wait a while. When it reached the edge of the rock—for I have forgotten to tell you that they were on a flat rock at the top of a mountain—it sat preening its feathers in a sulky manner, as if it imagined itself a very ill-used bird; moreover, although it seemed

inclined to remain there a long time, I need not tell you that the Princess had no objections. However, after a time even the waiting began to grow unpleasant; but suddenly a peculiar sound, as of something shooting through the air, came from below, and the eagle gave a leap and fell down a mass of tumbled feathers with an arrow quivering in their centre, and, with hardly a shudder, it was dead.

The Princess, as you may imagine, was a good deal startled by this sudden occurrence, but I cannot say she was very sorry for the eagle; on the contrary, she was rather glad to be rid of him, and it suddenly came into her head that the man who had shot the arrow might possibly be somewhere below, and in that case might come up and save her if she called to him. So she tried to get up, but she was so stiff that she could hardly move, and when she did stand up

she had pins and needles in one of her feet, and had to stamp hard on the ground before it would go away. So that it was some time before she got to the edge and looked over. Now it happened that, just as she bent carefully forward to look down the side, the head of a man appeared over the edge, and his hands were so near her that he almost caught hold of her foot as he put them up to help himself. As she drew back a little to let him have room, he suddenly noticed her, and almost let go his hold in astonishment.

'Hullo, little girl,' he said; 'how did you come here? It's rather early in the morning for you to be up. But who are you when you're at home?'

'I'm the daughter of King Caret.'

'King how much?'

'King Caret, I said; and I should be glad if you would help me down from this height, and show me the way back.'

'How on earth can I show you the way back when I don't know who King Caret is?'

'But surely you must know who he is?'

'Never heard of him. What's he like, and what's he king of?'

'He's the King of Aoland.'

'And where's Aoland?'

'I don't know—it's somewhere over those mountains—the eagle brought me here, you know.'

'Ah! the eagle brought you here, did he? It's a little habit he's got; he's carried off no end of my kids and young sheep, so I suppose he thought he'd try a change and carry off one of King Turnip — I mean Caret's. But if he brought you from over the mountains you won't get back in a hurry, I can tell you; you'd have to jump up a precipice three miles high, and then you'd be eaten by old Kinchof the dragon.'

'Oh dear! then I shall never get back!'

'No, I'm afraid you won't. But don't begin to cry now—there, there—and I'll take you to King Mumkie; he's the king of this country, you know.'

'What an awful name—Mumkie!'

'Yes, it is rather unpleasant, isn't it? And then, he's a usurper—he drove the last king out and made himself king instead. He used to be a cat's-meat man, but he got up an army and drove the other off the throne, and now *he's* turned into a gardener—his name's Abbonamento.'

'Oh, never mind what his name is, only get me down—I'm awfully hungry; for you see I've been up here all night.'

'Oh! all right. But I say, how are you going to get down—you can't climb, can you?'

'I don't know,' she answered; 'I've never tried.'

'Then you can be sure you can't. The only thing seems to be for me to carry you down.'

But the Princess did not seem to relish the idea at all.

'You might let me drop, you know; it's rather steep.' And it was pretty steep, too—about as steep as the wall of a house, and a good deal higher than a very high house. However, it seemed to be the only thing to do, so she let herself be carried down. The man took her on one arm, and yet seemed to climb down about as easily as if he were going downstairs. However, the Princess did not notice that, since she kept her eyes shut hard, for, to tell the truth, she was rather nervous.

But at last they were at the bottom, and he let her down on to the ground.

'Now, what are you going to do?' he said.

'I don't know at all. What can I do?'

'You'd better go and see King Mumkie and ask him what to do.'

'But he has got such a dreadful name, it sounds as if he was awfully ugly,' she said.

'But he's not at all; he's just like me, and I'm sure I'm handsome enough for any one.'

The Princess looked at him now for the first time; for you see, she had not noticed him very much while she was on the mountain. But now she could hardly repress a shudder; for he was awfully ugly. To begin with, he was big enough for any giant, and then his hair was of a purple hue, and his eyes of a delicate sea-green that flashed in the shade like a cat's; and then his nose was awfully red, and shaped like a mangel-wurzel; and his teeth, which were long and bright green, shone in the sun like danger-signals. Altogether he was not prepossessing; and the Princess could hardly help smiling

when he said that the King was as handsome as himself. However, he went on:

'My name's Wopole; I'm King Mumkie's falconer, and so I can tell you all about him. Come, let's go towards the town.'

And as there seemed nothing else to do, she set out with him; but he walked so fast that she could hardly keep up.

'How slowly you do walk!' he grumbled in a bad-tempered manner; 'can't you keep up? Come along, I can't wait all day.' And he went on faster than ever, so that she had to run to keep up with him. Suddenly he stopped as if he had been shot.

'Confound it, I've forgotten to bring the eagle, and I shall have to go all the way back and get it. Oh—ouch!' And he began to howl in such a dreadful manner that the Princess felt quite relieved when he turned and ran towards the hill at the top of his speed, howling all the way.

'What on earth shall I do now?' thought the Princess. 'If I wait for this dreadful giant, goodness knows what may happen, and then his king has such an unpleasant name; at any rate, I should like some breakfast, for I'm awfully hungry. I think I'll go on towards the town, and see if I can't find some one who'll show me the way home.'

So she went on down the lane for some way, until, coming to a place where a stream went across the path, she knelt down and scooped up a little water in the palm of her hand and drank it; for, you see, the sun was very hot now, and the heat made her throat feel quite dry and parched. When she had finished she went and lay down in the long grass that bordered the road, for she was rather tired. She intended to wait till some one came along, only she was quite resolved not to go with the giant at any rate. So she lay quietly in the

shade listening to the loud humming of the bees and the chirp of a linnet that was pluming itself, swinging on a bough above her head.

She had not been waiting long before she heard a dreadful noise behind her coming down the road, and in a few minutes she recognised the voice of the giant, who seemed to be in a terrible temper. Gradually the sound of his voice and his footsteps came nearer. The Princess did not know what to do, for if she tried to run away he would only catch her up; so she lay perfectly still, hoping he would pass her without seeing her. And that is just what did happen; for, in a few moments, he came rushing round the corner shouting out, 'Stop! stop! will you?' And as his eyes were fixed on the road far in advance, of course he did not notice her, and was soon round another bend in the road. The Princess noticed that he had the eagle hanging

with its claws round his neck, and the jolting, as he went by, had shaken one of its large tail feathers out, and as soon as she had got over her fright, she went and picked it up out of the dusty road.

Just as she picked it up, the clatter of feet running along the road came to her ears, and for a moment she feared that the giant had returned; but soon a cow trotted round the bend and stopped at the stream to drink, presently another, and then a third. Each of them took a long look at the Princess, and then bent down its head to take a draught out of the stream. Just then an old man came round the corner, and when he saw the cows had stopped he called out:

'Gee on, Lightfoot; now, Daisy; come up, Cherry,' and the cows gave their heads a toss, and walked slowly through the stream.

The Princess hurried to one side

of the road, for, like many people, she had an instinctive dread of anything like a cow or a bull.

The old man noticed it and smiled.

'Oh, you needn't be afraid, miss, they won't hurt you,' he said; but all the same, she didn't care to go too near them. 'They've just been frightened by Wopole, King Mumkie's falconer,' he went on. 'Wopole came running round the corner suddenly, and almost knocked Lightfoot—that's the dun cow—over. He was roaring out "Where is she?" awfully loud. I pity her when he gets her, whoever she is.'

'But who is *she*?' asked the Princess.

'I don't know—how should I?'

'Oh, I only thought you might know. But what will he do with her when he gets her?'

'I don't know; fry her in lard or something—that's what they generally do to strangers in the town now.'

'Oh dear!' said the Princess; 'how am I to get away from him?'

The old man looked at her curiously.

'Oh! you're her,' he said.

'I rather think I am. But how am I to get away?' she answered.

'If you'll come with me I'll take you to my cottage over there, and they'll never think of looking for you there.'

But the Princess did not exactly like the idea.

'Aren't you one of these people?' she asked; 'because I don't relish being fried in lard, or oil, or anything else.'

But the old man shook his head.

'Good gracious me, no!' he said. 'I wouldn't let them roast the last stranger that came to the town, and so they turned me out.'

'Oh,' said the Princess, 'then you must be King Abominable.'

'I am Abbonamento.'

'Then I suppose I shall be safe with you?'

'Quite safe, if you like to come; only just help me to drive the cows.' And the old man called to his animals who were browsing in the grass at the wayside, and they trudged quietly on till they came to a gate in the hedge. This they waited for the old man to open for them, and then went through the meadow until they came to a little farmhouse half hidden by trees.

'This is my house,' the King said. 'Just wait a moment till I have put the cows in the byre, and then I'll come back and let you in; for you see my wife's away at the market, and there's no one else at home.'

So the Princess stopped where she was, and the old man went whistling round to the back of the house driving his cows before him.

It was a very small house, with the thatched roof coming so low down that you could touch it almost with your hand, and the windows were

quite overshadowed by it. Over a little arbour of trellis-work before the door ran a rose-tree of deep red flowers, and the roses were full of bees that came from the hives arranged on benches under the eaves, and a few chickens were asleep on one leg under the porch.

In two or three minutes the door opened, and the old man appeared, and the chickens walked lazily away.

'I entered by a back door,' he explained. 'Come in and make yourself at home.'

The inside of the house was just as small and homely as the outside, and the rooms were refreshingly shady and cool after the hot sunlight without.

'Sit down,' said the old man, pointing to an arm-chair; and the Princess did as she was told.

'Now,' said he, 'if you will tell me where you come from, I will try to find out how to take you back.'

So she told him all her story, and

he listened very attentively. When she had finished he said:

'It's lucky for you that Wopole forgot the eagle, or goodness knows what would have happened to you; but how you're to get back I don't know. It's my opinion you never will, for no one was ever known to pass those mountains safely yet.'

I don't know what else he would have gone on to say, but by this time the Princess had begun to cry bitterly.

'Oh dear me!' said the old man, 'what a fool I was to go and tell her all that. Now goodness knows what'll happen. Oh dear, oh dear, Princess, don't go on weeping like that, or you'll melt altogether; do leave off.'

But the Princess did not seem at all inclined to leave off, and she might have melted altogether, only just then the door opened, and an old woman with a market-basket on her arm and a big umbrella in her hand came into

the room, but stood transfixed with her eyes and mouth wide open when she saw the Princess.

'My! Abbonamento, what's the little girl crying for? and where does she come from? and what does it all mean?'

And she picked up her umbrella, which she had dropped, and leaned it against the table, and put her market-basket on a chair. This she did very slowly, and all the while the old king was telling her what had happened, so that by the time she had finished her preparations she knew nearly as much about it as he did. When he had finished she shook her head.

'Poor girl! poor girl! So you come from the land on the other side of the mountains. I know it.'

The Princess had by this time left off crying, and when she heard the old lady say 'I know it' she said:

'"Kennst du das Land
Wo die Citronen blühen?"'

But the old lady shook her head.

'That's Greek, and I never could understand Greek. If it had been German or French now—but just translate it for me, will you?'

So the Princess translated it for her.

'"Knowest thou the land where blooms the lemon-flower?"'

But the old lady shook her head.

'I don't know so much about the lemon-flower; but my grand-aunt Thompson had a sister whose daughter had a servant who'd seen the dragon eat up the last man that ever tried to cross the mountains.'

'But I don't see how that is to help me to get back—do you?'

'No, I don't exactly; but perhaps something will turn up to help you. Won't it, Abbonamento?'

Abbonamento nodded.

'But what shall I do in the meanwhile?' said the Princess; 'for, you see,

I don't want to be fried in lard, as you say the townsmen are in the habit of doing.'

'You'd better stop with us,' said Abbonamento. 'Eh, wife, what do you say?'

And his wife said:

'Oh yes, certainly; it's the only thing to do. Do stop.'

'Well, I suppose I must,' said the Princess. 'Only, shan't I be rather in the way?'

But the King answered:

'Oh, not at all, quite the other way. You'll be very useful. You can milk the cows, and pluck the fowls, and feed the pigs, and all sorts of things.'

'But what will the people of the town say if they see me?' asked the Princess.

'The people of the town—oh, they never come near me, although they are glad to buy butter and milk and eggs of me in the market. They think it seems grand to say they buy their

things of a king; but they never trouble about me at all except for that.'

Just at this moment the old lady, thinking it her turn to say something, said:

'By the bye, you have not told us your name yet.'

'Would you like it in full, or only what I'm generally called?' asked the Princess.

'Oh, say it in full, unless you've any objection.'

'Well, you see, it's rather long; it generally takes about a quarter of an hour to say, only if you want it particularly I'll tell you.'

But the Queen answered:

'Ah! well, perhaps we'll wait for a time, until we've got leisure to listen to it. Meanwhile you might tell us what the short of it is.'

'They generally call me the Princess Ernalie. Now you might tell me your name, if you don't mind.'

'They generally call me Queen Araminta. If you like, and are not too tired, I'll show you the farm, and then we'll have dinner.'

So the Princess went through the yard to the cows' byre, and from the stalls to the pig-sties, and from the sties to the poultry-run, and thence to the orchard, and from the orchard to the flower-garden, and after that home again.

So it was arranged that the Princess Ernalie was to stop with the King and Queen until something should turn up. But nothing ever did turn up, and the days lengthened into months, and the months into years, and still she stayed with the old couple; and as time went on she seemed to do almost all the work of the farm, for the old King and Queen were beginning to get too old and weak for hard work. And gradually she began to forget about her native land, and it seemed as if the farm were to be her

home for ever. And every year she grew taller and more beautiful; but that's a habit that princesses have pretty often. So five years passed quietly away, and nothing seemed likely to disturb the peace of the household.

Every morning regularly she got up at five o'clock to drive the cows to the pasture, and then she fed the poultry, and, if it happened to be a Thursday or Saturday, she went with the Queen to take the butter and eggs to market; besides which she had to milk the cows and cook the dinner, and all sorts of things, so that she was gradually turning into a simple country maid.

During all the five years no one from the town ever came near the house, and so you may imagine how surprised she was one morning when she got up and opened her bedroom window to see a man coming across the clover-field towards the house. She watched him come right up to

the door, and then, when she heard him knock, ran down to tell the King and Queen that a man was knocking at the door.

'Who on earth can it be?' asked Abbonamento.

'It's not the tax-collector, is it?' asked Araminta.

'Oh no, it's not him; he's an old man, and this one is quite young,' answered the Princess.

'Nor the water-man?'

'No, it's not him either. There he is knocking again.'

Indeed, the knocking was becoming quite furious.

'He's a very impatient young man, whoever he is,' said Abbonamento. 'You'd better go and tell him not to make such a noise. Let him in—be quick, or he'll knock the door down!'

And it seemed so likely, that Ernalie ran down as fast as she could and opened the door.

'Why can't you open the door faster?' said an angry voice; and then Ernalie saw a young man looking at her in a state of great surprise. 'Why, who are you?' he asked. 'Is this not the house of their Majesties King Abbonamento and Queen Araminta?'

'They used to be King and Queen at one time,' answered Ernalie.

'They ought to be now,' said the young man with a frown.

'That's quite another thing,' retorted Ernalie.

'Oh, is it?' said he, with a smile this time. 'But who on earth are you, if I may ask?'

'I am Her Royal Highness Princess Ernalie of Aoland; and who on earth are you, if I may ask?'

'I am Prince Treblo of this country,' answered he.

'I suppose you are the son of King Mumkie, then?' said she.

'Good gracious, no!' said the Prince.

The Princess was just about to say, 'Then whose son are you?' when the old King burst into the room. He had evidently got up in a hurry, and he was only attired in his flowered dressing-gown.

'My long-lost chee-yld!' he exclaimed, as he threw himself into the stranger's arms. 'Araminta! Araminta! come along, it's Treblo.'

And the Queen came rushing down in haste, as you may imagine. Over the rest of this affecting scene we will draw a curtain—that's what they generally do with affecting scenes—in books, at least.

The Princess Ernalie easily perceived that she was a little—as the French say—*de trop*; that is, finding that 'three was company and four none.' So she left the room and went upstairs to comb her hair and wash her face and hands, and make herself look smart generally; for she thought that would be only right on

the day on which the eldest son of the house came home—especially as he was very handsome.

Now it happened that as she was bending down to pick up her best shoes from under her toilet-table, one of them had gone a little far back, and as she drew it out she noticed that something lay behind the shoe, and she drew that out too. You may perhaps remember that she had picked up out of the road an eagle's feather which Wopole had let fall as he hurried by with the eagle on his back. Well, then, it was this feather that she now drew out from under the toilet-table. It had lain there since she had first entered the room five years ago. Now this doesn't say much for the cleanliness of the floors, but in those unsophisticated days they never thought of sweeping any hidden spot in the floor. This habit, curiously enough, survives even now among some people.

However, to return to the Princess Ernalie.

When she picked up the feather she stood upright again and examined it carefully.

'Why, how nice,' she said. 'It's the old eagle's feather. Now that'll come in handy; my hat rather wanted a new feather, and it'll just suit the colour of my hair and eyes.'

So she went to the looking-glass and held the feather close against her hair. But to her astonishment nothing was to be seen in the glass—not a vestige of herself; it seemed as if she had vanished altogether.

'Why, what's the matter with the glass?' she said. 'Something seems to have gone wrong with it.' So she put the feather on the table and went to rub the glass, but when she looked at it she was there all right again.

'That's queer,' she thought; 'I can't have been right in front of the glass.' So she took up the feather and went

in front of the glass. This time she saw herself very well, but as soon as the feather touched her hair she vanished just as before.

'Good gracious!' she said; 'what is the matter with the glass?' So she tried again, and the result was always the same—whenever the feather touched her hair she vanished. 'It must be something the matter with the feather.' So she examined it quite closely, and she found rolled round the quill end of it a small piece of paper on which was written:

'Guard well the feather, for whoso toucheth his hair therewith—though he be but feather-brained—shall be invisible, yet shall he see all.'

Ernalie read it over once or twice from beginning to end.

'The writing says "his" hair; but it seems to act just as well with "her" hair—that is, my hair. What fun I shall have now. I think I'll try it on at once on the King. But then, it

might frighten him. No, I'll wait, and try it on Treblo; and that reminds me I think that they've had enough of it all to themselves now. I'll go and see if I can do anything for them.' So she locked the feather up in one of the drawers, and then, putting on her shoes, went downstairs.

Now it happened that just as she had almost reached the bottom step her heel came out of her shoe, and as she stopped to put it firmly on again she heard the voice of the stranger saying:

'By the bye, mother, who was that girl who opened the door to me?'

'Oh! that's Ernalie,' answered the Queen's voice.

(It seemed as if the shoe took some time to get on again.)

'So she told me; but who is Ernalie?' he asked again.

'Oh! you'd better get her to tell you that too when she comes down. Well, what do you think of her?'

'Oh, she's—she's just lovely,' answered he.

('Listeners never hear any good of themselves,' thought the Princess. However, the shoe had come on just at that moment, and she entered the room.)

'Speak of the—ahem!' the King was just saying, when the Prince interrupted him.

'"Speak of angels, and you hear the rustling of their wings," you mean,' he said.

'Thank you for the compliment, if it was meant for me,' said the Princess.

'Oh! don't mention it—it's nothing when you're used to it,'said Treblo, who, to tell the truth, seemed rather confused.

'And are you used to calling young ladies angels?' said his father sharply. 'I suppose it's some of the foreign manners you've learnt.'

'Suppose we change the subject,' retorted his son, and the subject was changed.

Ernalie retired again. She wanted to look after the dinner, so that it might not be late, and so nothing else in particular happened, for Treblo went round the farm with his father, and Araminta went into the kitchen to help Ernalie with the dinner. When the goose was turning on the spit, and the apple-tart had been put into the oven, the Princess had time to ask some questions about Treblo, and the Queen told her that he had been sent out of the way by Mumkie, in order that he might not attempt to put his father on the throne again; but after seven years he had come back safe, having had all sorts of adventures, and he now felt quite confident that he would be able to restore his father, for he was very popular with the army that had just returned from the war, and as to the people of the town, they cared very little who was king—in fact, they rather preferred Abbonamento to Mumkie. So Araminta was quite

cheerful over it, for she much preferred living in a palace to living in a cottage.

Things went merrily through the day, and at dinner-time they drank the health of the King and Queen of the country, and altogether they seemed very happy. After dinner the King composed himself for his afternoon nap, and the Queen took down a volume of sermons and began to read. Ernalie went out to milk the cows and take the eggs from the hens' nests. As to the Prince, he said he was going out to take a walk.

Before going out the Princess slipped up to her room, and took the eagle's feather from the drawer where she had locked it up. She intended to try if she were invisible to the cows and poultry. So she put it in her sun-bonnet and went out. It really seemed as if it was quite correct about the feather, for as soon as she got out of the door a bee ran right against her,

and then a sparrow that was chirping on a rail allowed her to catch hold of it before it took any notice of her approach. However, she let it go, and it flew away, looking very astonished indeed, as you may imagine.

She reached the pasture, and opened the gate, calling to the cows:

'Daisy, Daisy; come, Lightfoot; Cherry, come!'

The cows looked up from the ground, and came towards the gate, looking very astonished indeed; but when they got quite close and saw no one they stopped, and however much she called them they refused to move.

'This will never do,' she said; 'I must really let them see me, or they won't come.'

So she took the feather from her bonnet, and called again. This time the cows seemed quite ready to come, and they trotted along to the gate and crowded round her to be stroked. So she shut the gate again and told the

cows to go on—for they understood her quite well—and then she went on after them. When they got to the dairy she milked them one after the other as they came in their regular order to the stool. She was milking the last one—Cherry, the best of them all—and she leaned her face against its side, and listened to the 'thud, thud,' of the milk as it streamed into the pail with a foam like the sea in a rage. She was in fact almost lulled to sleep by it, when she was startled by a voice behind her. It was so sudden that she almost upset the milk-pail in her fright.

'It seems to be easy work milking,' said the voice, and she looked round and saw it was the Prince, who had come quietly up behind, and was leaning over the fence at her back, looking on lazily at her.

'Oh! how you startled me, Prince,' she said.

'Did I?' he answered. 'I am very

sorry for that; but you needn't call me Prince yet. I'm not a Prince, you see, and then you're the adopted daughter of my parents, so you ought to call me your brother.'

'Oh, really!' said she. 'However, you soon will be a Prince, and then I shan't be able to call you brother, shall I?'

'Why not?'

'Because you will be a Prince, and I am only a dairymaid.'

'But you're a Princess, aren't you?' he asked.

'I was a Princess once,' she said, with a sigh; 'but——'

'You shall be again,' he said.

'But how do you know?' she asked.

'I know—oh, well, let's change the subject. As I said before, it seems to be easy work milking. You might let me try?'

But she said:

'It wouldn't be any good. Cherry

wouldn't let any one but me touch her. Besides, I've just done, and I'm going to carry the pails to the house.'

'Let me carry them for you?' he said quickly.

'Oh, thanks; if you'll take two, I'll take the other two, and thus we shall do it all in one journey,' she answered.

So he did as he was told, and the pails were put safely in the house.

'Now I must go and get the eggs,' she said.

'Can I be of any use?' asked the Prince.

But she answered:

'Oh no, there's nothing for you to do, thanks.'

But he went with her all the same. I suppose he thought he might be of some use. So she let him hold the basket for her, and the eggs were also put safely in the house. Just, however, as he had put them down, a shrill whistle sounded twice from

behind the garden hedge, and the Prince said :

'Oh, that's a friend of mine. You must excuse me for a few moments,' and he went towards the hedge.

'I wonder who his friend is,' she said to herself. 'I think I'll put the feather on again and go after them. It would be a good way of trying my feather on men.'

So she took the feather out of her pocket again, and put it in her bonnet, and then ran after him. He had got over the fence some time before she reached it, but he was still in sight on the other side, and with him his friend was walking. He seemed to be a soldier, so far as she knew. They were talking very earnestly ; but, from where she was, she was not able to hear what they said. So she too got over the fence, and went towards them ; but she reached them rather too late to hear anything much that

they did say. What she did hear was this, from the soldier:

'Then you will come to-night at half-past twelve?'

'Yes,' answered the Prince.

'We'll have everything ready, and it will be easily done. If I were you I wouldn't tell the King or Queen, it would only make them nervous, and we're sure to succeed.'

'Very well,' said Treblo; 'at half-past twelve.'

('Half-past twelve,' thought the Princess; 'what on earth is he going to do at that time of night? It sounds funny. I think I'll go with him to look after him.' For, you see, Ernalie was rather inquisitive, as you may have found out by this time.)

So the soldier went one way, and Treblo went back to the house whistling 'When the king shall enjoy his own again.'

But the Princess ran on in front of him and reached the house first,

so that by the time he was there she had taken the feather out of her bonnet and was quite visible again.

He came in quite naturally, as if nothing had happened, and the rest of the day went off quietly enough.

They went very early to bed at the farm, and the house was quiet by half-past eight.

Just before they went to bed Ernalie asked the Prince:

'Do you like walking at night much?'

'It depends upon the night very much,' he answered.

'Such a night as this, for instance,' said she.

'Oh yes—"a moonlight night for a ramble," don't you know?' he said, laughing.

'About half-past twelve, I suppose.'

The Prince looked astonished and shocked.

'Half-past twelve!' he said, with his eyes wide open; 'why, I'm never out

after eight. My mother says the night air's not good for me.'

'Oh, is that it?' said the Princess. 'However, I'm tired; good-night.' And she went to her room and lay down on her bed with all her clothes on. It was rather hard work keeping awake for such a time, but at last she heard the kitchen clock strike twelve, and she knew it was twenty past. So she got up as quietly as possible and put on the feather, for, you see, she didn't want any one to see her. It seemed very ghostly getting up so late at night, and although she stepped very lightly, the stairs creaked loudly. She went into the sitting-room and sat on a chair waiting for the Prince to come down. She had to wait close on half an hour; for, you see, the Prince had heard the clock strike too, but didn't know it was twenty minutes slow. However, at last he came down-stairs holding the candle in his hand. He hadn't put his boots on for fear

of waking any one, and so he, too, sat down on a chair to put them on. This was rather unpleasant for the Princess, for of course she had to keep as quiet as a mouse for fear of making him suspicious; for, you see, it was so quiet that the least breath she took could be heard. At last the putting on of his boots was finished, and he stood up, saying to himself out loud, 'Now, where's my hat?' and then he looked straight at the Princess and said, 'Ah, there it is,' and he began to walk towards her.

'What can he want?' thought the Princess; and then she looked down at the chair—for, you see, she could see right through herself—and she discovered she was sitting on his hat. By this time he was quite close to her and bending down to pick his hat up, so she jumped sideways off the chair as fast as she could; but even then, as he put his hand out, he caught hold of hers, which had

not time to get out of the way. As soon as his hand closed on it, however, he let go as if it had stung him.

'Good gracious! what is that?' he said in astonishment. And he did look so funny that she had hard work to keep from laughing at him. However, he calmed down in a minute, and again tried to take up his hat. This time you may be sure that the Princess's hand was no longer there, for she had taken herself and it over to the other side of the table. So he took up the hat and looked at it.

'Looks as if it had been sat on,' he muttered. 'Just like 'em; people always do sit on my hat if they can.' However, he pushed it out straight again and looked at his boots to see if the laces were quite tight; and then he blew the light out, seeming, by the noise he was making, to be trying to get out of the door. When she heard him in the passage she thought it was

about time to follow him. So she tried to do it, making as little noise as possible; but although she did try very hard she did not succeed very well, for she fell right over a chair and made noise enough to be heard all over the house.

'What on earth's that?' she heard the Prince ask, and then he lit a match to look. But he didn't see anything, and the light allowed the Princess to get quite close to him without upsetting anything more, and he opened the door, letting the moonlight shine in clear and white. While he was standing at the door she managed to slip past him into the open air, and there she waited for him. He wasn't very long coming, and then she followed him down the garden, keeping to the grassy edge, and not walking on the path for fear of the noise that her feet would make on the gravel. They reached the field and then the road, and the Prince was joined by the other man whom the

Princess had seen before. This man —whom, by the bye, the Prince called Ablot — was dressed in complete armour, and he carried another suit, which the Prince proceeded to put on.

('This begins to look exciting,' thought Ernalie. 'Perhaps he's a highwayman, or a footpad—anyhow, I mean to keep up with them.')

So she walked on faster, for she had fallen a little behind. When she got up with them she heard the Prince say:

'Well, we'll surround the Palace, take Mumkie prisoner, and turn him into the market-gardener; and then we'll proclaim it to the rest of the citizens that my father and mother are King and Queen once more, and if they won't give in—so much the worse for them. The soldiers are all on my side.'

The other answered:

'Oh, but they'll give in without the

soldiers. They're not at all fond of Mumkie. He has made himself very unpopular of late. You see, he put a farthing on the income tax, and he's raised the price of everything that begins with "S," like "sausages" and "sealing-wax" and "soap" and "sewing-machines." Now your father only raised the price of things that begin with "Z," and there aren't many "Z's," you know; there's "zebras" and "zeal," and you can't make much out of selling zeal.'

('Ah, that's what you're up to!' thought the Princess. 'We ought to have some fun then.')

However, they were walking too fast for her to think much. All she could do was to keep up, and that she did to the best of her power, until at last they reached the middle of the town, where the King's Palace stood. Here they halted to take counsel.

'You wait here while I go and fetch the men,' said Ablot, and as the Prince made no objection, he went and left him

standing in the moonlit square. As Ablot seemed gone rather a long time, the Princess thought she would have a little fun, and going close to the Prince she whispered in his ear:

'Does your mother know you're out?'

The Prince turned round once or twice, as if to assure himself that there was no one hiding behind his back; but as he could see no one, he simply said:

'I beg your pardon.'

'That's very good of you; but I thought you were never allowed out after half-past eight o'clock. I heard you tell Ernalie so this evening. I'm afraid you told a fib.'

The Prince looked very astonished.

'Who or what are you?' he asked.

'Never you mind. I've a good mind not to let you succeed this evening, because you deceive not only your old mother who is asleep at home, but you have also told a fib

to that innocent girl, of whom I'm very fond.' ('That's quite true,' thought the Princess. 'I'm very fond of myself.' And so she was.)

The Prince looked astonished.

'How on earth could you know that?' he said.

'I heard it, I tell you.'

'But there was no one in the room except the Princess and myself.'

'All the same, I heard every word you said, and, what's more, I shall hear every word you ever say to her,' answered the Princess.

'Well, then, you'll be a great nuisance,' said the Prince angrily.

'Very well, I'll tell the Princess all that you say, and I've a good mind not to let you succeed, as I've said before.'

'Then you'll do the Princess a great deal of harm if you do.'

'Why?'

'Because she's—she's——' he began.

'She's what?' asked the voice.

'Oh, well, never mind.'

'But I do mind,' said the voice.

'"She's all that fancy painted!" if you want to know so much,' said the Prince.

'But I don't see how that'll make any difference to her in case you should succeed,' said the voice.

'You're uncommonly dull if you don't see it,' said the Prince, who was beginning to feel bad-tempered over being cross-questioned thus.

'Don't be rude, or you shan't succeed,' said the voice.

'If I don't succeed the Princess will never become Queen of the kingdom.'

'How can she become Queen of the *king*dom?—it would have to be a *queen*dom. And I don't see, if you do succeed, how she is to become Queen!'

'As I've said before,' said the Prince, 'you're excessively dull if you don't see.'

'I shall tell her what you said.'

'Oh, do anything you like, only leave me alone, do,' said the Prince, who by this time was quite in a temper.

So she let him alone, and made no answer when he wanted her to talk again. However, in a few minutes Ablot came into the square, followed by a large number of men, whom she heard him command to surround the Palace, which they accordingly did; and then, choosing five men, he and the Prince entered the Palace, Ernalie following them, for she didn't know exactly what else to do. The first of the Palace guards they came to was fast asleep, and they did not molest him; but the second one was awake, and so was the third one. These two made some resistance, but they were soon knocked down and bound; but that was not much good, for they made such a noise that they would soon have brought the household about their ears, only it happened to

be Saturday and all the servants were having a half holiday, and the only effect of the shouting was to bring King Mumkie out on to the landing. He had been sitting up to let the servants in when they came home, and he was in rather a bad temper.

'What the deuce are you making such a noise for?' he shouted to the guards.

But as the guards had been gagged by this time, they could only gurgle hopelessly.

'Why don't you answer?' roared the King. But the guards made no reply, and the King came running down to see what was the matter. He was holding a candlestick above his head, and the light that fell on his face showed that he was in a very great rage indeed. When he saw the Prince in the hall he stopped, and said:

'What do you want making this unearthly row at this time of night?

Every one's in bed, and I shall catch my death of cold coming down in my dressing-gown into this cold hall. Now, just go off—do, and leave me alone.'

'I shall not,' answered the Prince.

'Why not? What do you want at this time of night?'

'I want the throne!'

'Then you can't have it; it's a reserved seat, and I've taken it already.'

'But what right have you to it?'

'I'm the sovereign,' said Mumkie.

'You're a false coin then—you're not *half* a sovereign!'

'I'm quite as good as the last sovereign. He's lost the crown, so he's only worth fifteen shillings.'

'Well, fifteen shillings is three crowns, and you haven't got one.'

'Yes, I have.'

'Well, then, you won't have it long.'

'I shall have it to the end of my life.'

'Not if I can help it,' retorted the Prince.

'But you can't help it.'

'Why not, pray?'

'Well, you can't, unless you scalp me,—it's the crown of my head I mean.'

'Well, then, I'll have your head cut off.'

'I shall die then, so I shall keep the crown until I die. Besides, I shall have your head cut off instead, for I'll call out the soldiers.'

'That's no good. They're all on my side,' answered the Prince.

'Then it's all up with me. As Julius Cæsar says—let's see, what did he say, now?—ah yes!' and he began to roar 'A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!'

'You'll make *yourself* hoarse if you go on roaring like that. Besides, your share of the kingdom isn't worth a horse—it's not even worth a horse-chestnut.'

'That's rather old,' said the King. 'However, what are you going to do with me?'

'I'm going to turn you into what you wanted to turn my father into. You shall have his cottage and all the live-stock and implements thereto appertaining.'

'What does that mean?' asked the astonished Mumkie.

'Oh, find out,' said the Prince. And he found out eventually.

The Prince now gave orders that he should be taken to the coal-cellar and locked in there for fear of escape. And so the poor old man was led off, muttering to himself, 'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.'

But the Prince answered:

'Well, you needn't talk; your head doesn't wear a crown.' And from that time forth it didn't.

While this was being done, the Princess had noticed that a man had been stealing round the corner. He

was standing close beside her now, and he seemed quite unconscious of her presence. The Princess looked at him.

'He must be one of the five they brought in with them,' she said to herself. So she counted; but to her astonishment she found there were six of them—with him.

'He must be some one belonging to the Palace,' she thought, 'and he may be up to some mischief.' So she watched him closely. It was evident that the rest thought he was one of themselves, for they took no notice of him in particular.

The man, however, seemed quite innocent; but the Princess noticed that he was fingering a pistol that he had in his belt in a most suspicious way. So she kept quite close to him while they descended the stairs to the cellars. And she was right; for, in the twinkling of a bed-post, he drew the pistol from his belt and aimed

straight towards the Prince. But before he could draw the trigger, she lifted up her hand and gave him such a box on the ear that, in his astonishment and pain, he dropped the pistol altogether, and it exploded harmlessly. As for the man, he was so astonished that he sat down on the floor with his mouth and eyes wide open, looking like an expiring frog.

At the report of his pistol every one turned, and Ablot noticed him for the first time.

'Why, who are you?' he said.

But the man only gasped.

'Who is he?' asked the Prince of the men.

'We thought he was one of us,' they all answered in astonishment.

'Who are you?' asked the Prince.

But he only gasped on in silence.

'Stick a pin into him, and see if that will bring him to.' And a man was just going to do it when he said, in a gruff voice :

'Don't ; I'm Wopole.'

'Oh, you're Wopole. And who's he?' asked the Prince.

'I used to be the falconer of the late tyrant, now sojourning in the coal-hole there.'

'Oh! and so you tried to shoot me?'

'Not at all, your Majesty. I was only firing a royal salute to show my joy at your ascent to the throne.'

'That's not true,' said the voice of the Princess, so suddenly that every one started and the falconer collapsed again.

'I've a good mind to have your head cut off,' said the Prince, who by this time had grown used to the voice. 'However, I'll just put you in the coal-hole along with your late master.'

Wopole having been accordingly put into the hole, everything seemed quiet; and as it was getting late, the Princess thought she would leave them. She

therefore returned as fast as she could, and getting into bed slept soundly till morning.

She did not awake until long after her usual hour, for you see she was not used to being out so late, and she was only roused in the morning by the Queen knocking at the door.

'Ernalie! Ernalie!' she called; 'get up. It's half-past seven. You ought to have been up this two hours.'

She got up as fast as she could; and when she had laid the table, the King and Queen came down.

'I wish you'd knock at Treblo's door and tell him we're waiting breakfast for him,' the Queen said to Ernalie, and she accordingly went; but she couldn't get any answer, and she went downstairs once more and told them he seemed to be out.

'Where can he be?' asked the King.

'I rather think he's gone out for a walk,' suggested the Princess.

'It's funny; he usedn't to be fond of getting up so early. Just go to the door and see if he is coming across the fields.'

Ernalie obediently went to the door, and shading her eyes from the glare of the sun, looked over the fields towards the road.

She came back quickly.

'I can't see him,' she said; 'but there's a whole lot of people coming across the field.'

The King looked vexedly astonished.

'What on earth do they want?' he said. 'It must be some fresh trick of Mumkie for bothering me.'

However, by this time the people had reached the garden gate, and they could hear a man's step on the gravel-walk. It stopped at the door, and a knock was heard.

'Come in,' cried the King; and the man entered, bowing profoundly.

When the King saw who it was he looked surprised, and said:

'Why, Lord Corax, what do you want with me?'

'I have come to receive your Majesty's orders,' said the man in a singularly hoarse voice.

The King looked still more astonished.

'My orders! What *do* you mean?'

'I mean your Majesty's orders for the management of affairs,' said the man, with a still deeper obeisance.

A light broke on the King's face.

'Oh! that's what you mean, is it?' he said.

'It is, your Majesty,' answered the courtier, bowing once more.

'It strikes me you're rather late in the day coming here, aren't you?' asked his Majesty.

The courtier pulled out a large watch.

'It is, I believe, at the present moment thirty-five and a half minutes

after eight A.M., your Majesty. At eight precisely I received orders from your Majesty's son to come hither, bringing with me your Majesty's coach and guard of honour. Likewise a person, by name Mumkie, who is for the future to inhabit this cottage, and to enjoy the privilege of using for his own purposes all the live stock—sheep, oxen, kine, sows, pigs, cocks, hens——'

Here the King interrupted him.

'That is enough. Tell them to get the carriage ready for three, and send Mumkie to me.'

'Just so, your Majesty,' said the courtier, and departed on his errand.

When he had gone the King said to the Queen and Ernalie:

'Now, my dears, run up and put on your best things, and, Araminta, just see if our crowns are *very* tarnished. We ought to make our triumphal entry in state, for we are reinstated. And, by the bye, see if

you've got an old coronet of Treblo's that will fit Ernalie.'

'What for, your Majesty?' asked Ernalie in surprise.

'For you to wear, of course,' said the King.

'But what do I want with a crown? I have to stop here with Mumkie—I'm part of the live stock.'

'Good gracious! what do you mean?' said the King and Queen together.

'Well, you see, the agreement between your son and Mumkie was that Mumkie should have *all* the live stock of the farm, and as I'm alive I suppose I'm part of the live stock.'

'I suppose you are,' said the King.

Just at that moment a voice was heard outside, saying:

'May I come in?'

'Oh yes, come in,' said the King.

And Mumkie entered, looking very dirty and black with coal-dust, for, you see, he had spent the night in

the coal-cellar. They were all very much surprised, and naturally too, and the King remarked :

'Good-morning! *Have* you washed?'

Mumkie shook his head.

'I've been watched—only it's not quite the same thing, your Majesty.'

'Well, never mind. So there's been a revolt, has there?'

'A revolution, sire,' answered Mumkie.

'Ah, well, it's all the same. They manage these things quickly here. By the bye, what was the arrangement that my son made about this house?'

'He said I was to have the house and all the live stock.'

'*All* the live stock?' said the King.

'All, your Majesty.'

'Then I'm afraid it's all up with you, Ernalie!'

'I'm afraid it is, your Majesty, unless your Majesty would buy me from this gentleman.'

'Good idea! What'll you take for her, Mumkie?'

Mumkie looked at her critically.

'What's your weight?' he said to her suddenly.

'I don't exactly see what that has to do with it.'

'Well, I suppose you're good, aren't you?'

'Oh, very good,' said the Princess.

'She's as good as gold,' said the Queen.

'Just so,' said Mumkie. 'That's why I wanted to know her weight. You see, I'll sell her to you for her weight in gold.'

The King put his hand in his pocket, and drew out his purse and looked into it.

'Will you take threepence-farthing on account?' he said.

But Mumkie shook his head.

'We only take ready money here, or pay on delivery.'

'Then I suppose the only thing to

do is to go to the Palace and fetch the money. Good-bye till then, Ernalie.'

So Ernalie kissed the King and Queen, and watched them go down the garden walk to the carriage, and saw them get in. The guard of honour fired a royal salute, and they drove off at a gallop. But Ernalie turned back into the house where Mumkie was awaiting her.

'I've got a friend coming here to-day, shortly, and I don't want to have our conversation overheard, so when he comes you cut your stick. Go and perform some wholesome menial function—clean the plates. Understand? And don't you listen at the door, miss.'

'I am not in the habit of listening at doors, and you'd better call me "your Royal Highness," if you please.'

'And why, your Royal Highness?'

'Because I'm a Princess.'

'Oh, you are! Then, I suppose, you're a foreigner? And they have a custom here with foreigners of boiling them alive. How would you like that, your Royal Highness?'

'You daren't do it,' said the Princess; but all the same she felt rather frightened. Just then a knock came at the door.

'That's Wopole,' said Mumkie, 'so your Royal Highness may take yourself off, and if I catch you listening at the door I'll skin you alive.'

'I never listen at doors,' said the Princess. But she thought to herself: 'I listen inside the room sometimes, though.' And she ran upstairs to fetch her feather. She got it very quickly, and ran downstairs as lightly as possible. They had shut the door of the room, but she opened it boldly, and stepped in as quietly as she could. Mumkie looked up, as if he expected to see some one come in; but of course he did not.

'It's the wind, I suppose,' said Wopole. 'Anyhow, you'd better shut it. Some one might be listening.'

So Mumkie got up and shut it, and then went back to his seat again.

'You say you can't try to murder this Prince again?' he said.

Wopole shook his head.

'It's no good. I tried last night, and I got such a box on my ear that I was half killed.'

'But who gave it to you?'

'How on earth should I know? I could see nobody. Just as I was raising the pistol to shoot—bang! it came. I wouldn't try it again for anything.'

'What a nuisance it is that you let that feather fall out of the eagle's tail. You could have done it easily then. As it is, I don't know what to do. You won't try again, and I'm too old, and no one else in the country would hurt him for love or money. There's only one other thing to do, and it's not an easy task, anyway.'

'Oh, never mind the ease or difficulty. If it's possible to be done, I'll do it.'

'Then I'll tell you. You'll have to cut his thread of life.'

'Really, and what with?'

'Oh, anything you like. The trouble is to get to the place where they're kept.'

'Oh! and where is that?'

'They're kept by three old women who live in the moon. They're called the Fates.'

'And how am I to get to the moon?'

'That's just it. You'll have to take a boat one evening at six, and if you sail straight towards the moon while she is visible, and anchor when she is out of sight, in three weeks and two days you will reach the end of the sea, where the moon touches at night, and then you can get out of the boat; and take care to haul it up out of reach of the sea, or else it'll be carried off,

and you won't be able to get back to the earth again.'

'And when I've got to the moon what am I to do?'

'The moon's not a very large place, although it's certainly larger than it looks from the earth. There are five people who live in the moon. One is the man in the moon, the rest are all women; these are three Fates, who sit twisting the threads of life into one large rope, and besides that there's Diana; but she keeps to herself, and never troubles about the other four. When you touch the shore you'll see the man in the moon. He's a wrinkled old man, who carries a bundle of sticks and a lanthorn. When you meet him, give him a loaf of bread to pacify him, for the moon being made of green cheese they have nothing else to eat, and so they're very fond of bread to eat with it. Ask him the way to the Miss Parkers—those are the three Fates. He'll show you

in reward for the bread, and then you'll see the house. Knock at the door, and when it's opened, slip in. The Fates are blind, and won't see you. When you get in you'll see a lot of reels of silver threads. Among them you'll see his thread. You'll know it by the label on the reel. Cut that and those of the King and Queen, and then come back again as soon as you like.'

'Very well, then; when shall I start?' asked Wopole.

'When you will.'

'Will to-morrow evening do?'

'Yes, quite well.'

'Very well, I'll start to-morrow evening about eight. In the meantime, I must see about getting food, as I'm not a fasting man.'

'Very well, do.'

Just then came a knock at the door, and Wopole said:

'Well, I suppose it's settled. I shall open the door and see who's knocking.'

'Yes, do. I suppose it's some one come to buy this Princess.'

'Oh, is it?' and Wopole went to open the door.

The Princess meanwhile quietly slipped upstairs and took the feather out. In a few moments she heard a voice calling her, and she went down. She found the Prince with the other two in the little parlour.

'Good-morning, Ernalie,' he said; and she answered, 'Good-morning.'

'This absurd man,' the Prince went on, 'insists that you shall be weighed, although I offered him two thousand ounces of gold; and I'm sure you don't weigh that. However, he will have you weighed, and it can't be helped.'

'I suppose it can't,' said the Princess.

So she was weighed. It doesn't matter what she did weigh, but it was less than two thousand ounces. The Prince ordered the two men

whom he had brought with him as bearers of the gold, to stop and see it properly weighed out, and then he set out with the Princess for the town.

'I thought you wouldn't mind there not being an escort,' he said apologetically; 'but all the people about the Palace are busy preparing for a festival.'

The Princess said she didn't mind at all.

She had not had much time to think about what she had heard Wopole and Mumkie say, nevertheless she determined to tell the Prince all she had heard.

When he had listened to it all, he laughed.

'Ah, well, if that's all I've got to fear I'm quite safe. He's sure to get drowned if he tries,' was all he said; and he refused to say anything more on the subject.

So they went quietly on till they

came to a slight hill down which the road went, and from the top they could see the city shining in the morning sun.

'It's a very beautiful place, isn't it?' said the Prince.

'Very beautiful; only my own country is far more beautiful.'

'It must be very beautiful indeed, then. However, I suppose this is good enough for you while you are away from your own country.'

'It'll have to be, at any rate,' said the Princess dismally, as they went down the hill.

They soon reached the city, and went, through crowds of bowing citizens and citizenesses, to the Palace, where they found the King and Queen anxiously awaiting them.

'So you've come at last,' the King said; 'I was afraid that you would come to some harm with that Mumkie.'

But the Princess laughed.

'Oh no,' she said; 'I'm quite able

to take care of myself and of other people too; and while I was in the house I heard something of great importance.' And she proceeded to tell them what she had heard.

But when she had finished, the King laughed even more than his son had done.

'Why, my dear little girl,' he said, 'do you believe all that rigmarole? They were having a joke at your expense. They must have heard you outside the door and wanted to frighten you. Don't you think of such rubbish. Why, if they tried it on alone they'd get swallowed up in a storm; and I'm sure none of my people would ever help them.'

But the Princess did not feel at all convinced, all the same.

'You might just as well have them put in prison, and then they couldn't do anything.'

But the King shook his head.

'That's just it, you see; I've only

just let them go, and I can't put them into prison unless they've committed some fresh crime.'

'But isn't it treason to compass the death of the King or his eldest son?'

'It is; but then it's such a foolish scheme that no one would believe any one capable of inventing it. So we'd better leave it alone.'

But still the Princess was not at all convinced.

'If you won't stop him going, I shall go with him,' she said.

'But he won't take you,' said the King.

'He won't be able to help it,' said she.

'Oh, well, have your own way, my dear,' said the King good-naturedly; for he thought she would change her mind. But she was quite in earnest.

However, she didn't say anything more about it, and the rest of the day went on quietly.

The old King and his son attended

the council just as if nothing unusual had ever intervened between it and the last council they had held before they had been turned out. As for the Queen and Princess, they occupied themselves with choosing dresses for a grand ball that was to be given on the day after the morrow. So that the time was pretty well filled up until the evening; and as the Princess said she felt rather tired, she went out to take a walk on the sands by the sea. To tell the truth, she intended to see whether Wopole were not making preparations.

Now it so happened that the Prince, too, was going out to take an evening stroll, and so they went together; and as the town was rather full, they walked along the beach to get out of the way of the enthusiastic populace, who insisted on congratulating him on his good fortune. This is a habit of populaces, they are all fond of congratulating any one who is suc-

cessful—but they never assist any one to success if they can help it. So they walked on for some time, and as the evening was approaching, turned back towards the harbour.

Now it happened that as they came round a bend of the shore they noticed a crowd assembled round one of the boats.

'I wonder what the excitement is?' said the Princess.

'I don't know, really, unless it's some gigantic dog-fish, or perhaps they've found a scale of the sea-serpent. Shall we go and look at it?'

'Yes, let us,' said the Princess eagerly.

And so they went towards the crowd, who made way at their approach.

'Why, it's Wopole!' said the Princess suddenly; and so it was.

'What is he up to?' asked the Prince of one of the bystanders.

'I don't know, your Majesty, only we saw him coming along bringing packages of things to his boat here, and we thought we'd come and see that he wasn't up to mischief.'

The Prince then spoke to Wopole, who was looking angrily at him.

'Well, Wopole,' he said, 'what are you up to now?'

'I'm going to leave the country,' said he angrily.

'A good thing for the country,' said several of the crowd. But the Prince said:

'I'm sorry you're going to leave us. However, I shall be glad to make you a small present before you go.' And he felt in his coat, and after a moment's search he drew out a minute pair of nail-scissors. 'Perhaps these might be of some use to you. They're very good for cutting threads of any kind. Good-day.'

And pretending not to notice his look of astonishment, he drew the

Princess's arm through his, and they walked off.

'Why did you do that?' asked the Princess, after they had got out of hearing.

The Prince laughed.

'I thought it might surprise him a little,' he said. 'And they wouldn't cut butter if they were heated, so he won't do much harm with them.'

'So you don't mean to stop him?'

The Prince laughed.

'No, no!' he said; 'why should I? He'll never get to the moon.'

'Then if you don't stop him I shall go with him.'

'I think he'll take care that you don't,' retorted the Prince.

'But he won't be able to help himself.'

'And why not?'

'Because he won't be able to see me.'

'Nonsense!'

'You may call it nonsense if you

like. But do you remember some one who spoke to you last night in the square? You couldn't see me then, and why should he stop me if he can't see me?'

'Good gracious! Was that you last night? How stupid of me not to recognise your voice! But you won't go with him, will you?'

'I shall, unless you stop him.'

'But I promised not to stop him, and I can't break my promise.'

'Then I must go, that's all. I can't allow you and your father and mother to be killed because you've promised not to stop him.'

'But, Ernalie, can't I go instead?'

'He wouldn't take you, and you can't make yourself invisible, you see.'

'But all the same, you must not go; it's absurd.'

'Why?'

'You may be drowned, or anything.'

'If I'm drowned or anything Wopole will have to be drowned or anythinged too, so that you'll be safe in any case.'

'But I don't want to be safe if you are drowned.'

'What difference will it make to you if I'm drowned or not?'

'Oh, Ernalie, you are too bad,' he said earnestly. 'Can't you see I love you more than all the world?'

The Princess looked at him in utter astonishment.

'You love me!' she said, with her lips parted and the colour coming and going in her cheeks. 'Why, whatever made you?'

And the Prince answered naturally:

'Why, you did, of course.'

'But you've not known me for more than two days.'

'If I had known you only for two hours it would have been more than enough. You are the most beautiful girl I ever saw.'

'Perhaps you've not seen many,' said the Princess.

He took no notice of her flippant remark—he was very much in earnest.

'I love you as much as the whole world, and a great deal besides. And don't you love me a little in return?'

'Well, to tell the truth, I never thought of it at all before; but now I come to think of it I do love you, and a very great deal too—if you don't tease.'

So they prolonged the stroll indefinitely, thinking nothing about the unpleasant walking that the heavy shingle afforded, or even that it was getting very dark, and that the air was chilly with the night and the sea-foam that the wind blew against them, so that it was after supper-time by a great deal when they arrived at the Palace once more. But all that he could say would not persuade her not to go with Wopole, although she was very sorry that she could not stop. But, as she

said, it was no use stopping if her love died, and if any one was to die she would be the one. Wopole was sure to die with her, so the Prince would be safe at any rate. And although the King and Queen both tried to dissuade her it made no difference. She refused to promise not to go.

So on the next day they watched her carefully, though without hindering her going about.

The day went past just as the day before had done, and about the same time in the evening she asked the Prince to go down to the beach with her, and they went just as before. But all the while the Prince kept fast hold of her hand.

So they walked along the beach as the wind freshened, and they talked of all sorts of things,—it is not necessary to say what.

But the Princess noticed that the boat which Wopole had loaded with

provisions was almost in the water, and Wopole and Mumkie were both standing talking by it.

So she drew the feather quietly out of her pocket, for you may be sure she had not forgotten to bring it. Suddenly she said:

'Oh dear! my shoe's full of sand. I must take it off and shake it out.'

'Will you let me do it for you?' said the Prince, who stepped easily into the trap.

'Yes, you might, if it's not too much trouble,' she said.

So he knelt down, and unlaced her shoe, took it off, and shook out the sand, and then put it on again for her. He was just getting up again when the Princess gave him a little push, so that he lost his balance altogether, and before he could recover himself she put the feather to her hair, and ran along the sands to the boat which Wopole and Mumkie were just about to launch.

She stepped over the back just before they reached it, and then she went at once to the front of the boat in order not to be in the way of Wopole when he got on board. In a moment the boat was dancing on the water, and Wopole sprang in over the stern. The boat shipped a good deal over the bows, and the Princess got rather wet. However, she was too excited to care much about a little water.

In a few moments Wopole had hauled up the sail, and the boat began to move through the dancing waters. Just at this moment Treblo reached the edge of the sea, and saw the boat well out of his power.

'Come back!' he cried to Wopole.

'Don't you!' said Mumkie.

'You needn't be afraid!' Wopole called as loud as he could. 'I shan't come back!'

'But you've got the Princess on board!'

'You bet!' remarked Wopole with familiar vulgarity now he was out of the Prince's reach.

The Princess thought it was her turn to say something, so she called:

'Good-bye, Treblo, my love, good-bye!'

Wopole was naturally somewhat surprised at this voice that appeared to come from nowhere in particular.

'I suppose she's hanging in the water,' he said to himself out loud. 'I shan't trouble to help her on board if she is. I shall just let her drown.'

'How very good of you,' remarked Ernalie sweetly.

Wopole looked surprised.

'Sounds as if she was on board. However, she isn't.'

And as the Princess thought it best to be quiet, he remained of the same opinion.

All the while the boat had been getting rapidly out of the bay, and the Princess thought they were quite

safe from pursuit. But suddenly Wopole rose from his seat in the stern and let down the sail.

'What on earth is he going to do?' thought the Princess. 'He can't be going to stop.'

However, it was soon pretty clear what he was going to do, for she noticed he was steering towards a large vessel that lay near them.

The way that the sail had left on the boat was sufficient to carry them to the vessel, which the boat soon bumped against. Wopole now seemed to be coming forward; and as there was not room in the boat for her to slip past him, she jumped from the bow and managed to scramble on board the ship, although it was rather difficult, and boats have a habit of slipping away under any one who tries jumping off them.

However, she luckily managed it, and was soon safe on board.

She was followed almost immediately

by Wopole, who didn't find much difficulty in getting on board; in fact, he came so quickly that he almost fell on top of the Princess. However, she just managed to slip out of his way, and he did not notice her, as he was occupied in tying the boat-rope to a cleat.

He then went through various nautical exercises—such as boxing the compass, and shivering his timbers, and danging his lee-deadlights, and other things which it takes a sailor, or a nautical novel-writer, to understand. The effect of these operations was to make the sails run up, and then the vessel bent to the freshening gale and began to walk the waters like a thing of life—at least, as like a thing of life as a wet sheet and a flowing sea and a wind to follow after, but no legs, could make it walk.

Wopole had taken the helm by this time, and he was steering a course east by west, so that they stood—

that is, they walked—straight out from the shore. Thus they sailed on for an hour or two till the moon began to show itself, and then Wopole altered the course so that they sailed straight towards her. It might be as well to explain that in those days a ship was only provided with two sails, and so one man could manage a pretty large ship; and as Wopole was a very strong man, it stands to reason that he could manage a rather large ship. So, you see, it was not altogether so impossible as it looks to sail for three weeks alone on the sea, although I own it would be somewhat difficult nowadays.

When the moon rose, as I have mentioned before, Wopole steered straight for it, and he continued steering straight towards it all night—at least all the time that the moon could be seen.

Towards sunrise, however, the moon set; and as soon as he could see it no more, he let down the sail, threw his anchor overboard, and in a few moments the ship was at rest.

When this had been done he walked to a hatch, which he opened, and took out some beef, captain's biscuits, and pickled pork. From these he cut slices and placed the slices on plates, after which he took the joints back to the hatchway and put them in the meat-safes again. Then he filled a glass with water from a little cistern that stood on deck.

After these preparations, he sat down and made a comfortable meal, and then he went downstairs — that is, down the hatchway — and into his cabin.

He seemed to have departed for good, so the Princess followed his example—at least, so far as the eating was concerned; only, she washed the knives, forks, and plates before she used them.

'I wonder if he'll see any difference in the size of the joints?' she thought to herself. 'If he does, he won't know how it is, so that's all right.'

So she made a hearty meal, and then replaced the things just as he had put them.

The question now was—how to pass away the time?—and it was a very difficult one to answer. There were no books to read—at least, she was not able to find any on deck. So she tried playing cat's-cradle by herself; but that was not a very great success, because there was no one to take it up. She next attempted going to sleep, but that was not a success either. Then she tried counting how many times the ship rolled in the course of an hour; but she always forgot how many hundreds she had counted. At last she went and sat on one of the bulwarks and watched the porpoises as they played about the ship's bows. So the day passed away and evening came, and just as the sun set Wopole came on deck yawning and stretching himself.

He looked at the vane, which was

blown out nearly straight in the evening wind.

'A nice breeze,' the Princess heard him say to himself. 'If the wind holds good like this it won't take more than a fortnight.'

'Thank goodness,' the Princess said to herself; for she was beginning already to grow rather tired of the adventure. 'I think I'll go down and see what the vessel is like below-stairs.'

So she descended the dark hatchway as well as she could, though it was no easy matter, for the boat was beginning to roll in a most unpleasant manner; for, you see, the wind was freshening a good deal, and Wopole had not yet hoisted the sails. However, she managed to get to the bottom without tumbling down more than four steps at a time.

It was not quite dark in the cabin below, for an open port-hole let in the last rays of daylight.

The cabin was a very small one, though it did not seem very cosy; however, the Princess was delighted to see one thing, and that was that there were some books on a table in the centre of the cabin.

She went and looked at their titles, but it was too dark to read them, and she didn't know where to find the matches. Through the porthole she could see that the sea was getting rougher, and the waves were beginning to dash loudly against the side of the boat.

'It'll be getting wet on deck,' she thought to herself; 'I think I shall stop where I am, for I hate being damp, and I'm quite comfortable here.' Just at this moment she heard heavy steps coming down the hatchway. 'Good gracious! here's Wopole coming down. What does he want, I wonder?'

Wopole opened the door and looked in, but he didn't seem to notice her. He just put his arm

round the door and unhooked a tarpaulin coat that was hanging there. Then he took a sou'-wester from another peg and put it on his head and shut the door again, and she heard him tramp up on to the deck.

'I suppose he's gone for good,' she said to herself. 'Anyhow, I'll lock the door, and then he won't be able to get in.' So she locked the door with the key that was in the lock. 'Now I wonder where the bed is?' she thought. 'That place like a shelf can't be it; but it's got bed-clothes on it. However, I can't get into it. I shall just lie on this sofa for the night.'

So she lay down and slept all night in spite of the noise that the wind and waves made.

She awoke next morning on hearing a most tremendous rumble and splashing.

'What is that?' she said to herself. 'He must be letting out the anchor.'

And so he was; for in a moment she heard him coming downstairs.

'I wonder what he'll do when he finds the door locked?' she thought.

Just then he reached the door and turned the handle, but the door refused to move; and although he kicked and banged, it was all no use.

'I'll go and fetch a hatchet and prise it open,' he grunted, out of breath with his exertions; and he thumped up the stairs again.

But meanwhile the Princess unlocked the door, and seizing a couple of books at random off the bookshelf she ran up on deck; but she kept possession of the door-key.

Now it so happened that Wopole had dropped his hatchet in front of the hatchway, and he was bending down to pick it up just as she came out of it, so that the result was a collision; and as Wopole was bending down he got considerably the worst of it, although the books that the

Princess was carrying were thrown right out of her hands.

Wopole got up from the sitting posture which the sudden shock had made him assume.

'Well, this is extraordinary! Shiver my old lee-scuppers if it isn't! Here first I can't get into my cabin, and then I'm knocked over by my own books that come flying at my head. I think it's those books that are the cause of the mischief, and I'll just throw them overboard,' and he was just bending over to pick them up. But this was too much for the Princess, who had no wish to be left for the whole of another day without books. So she snatched the books from just under his hand—at least, the book he was going to pick up—and as soon as she touched it, it became invisible.

Wopole shook his head dismally as if he had quite expected it, and then he tried to pick up the other one;

but just the same thing happened. Now the Princess had just been bending down to pick the book up as he bent down, and the wind blew her hair right across his eyes. He, feeling the tickling, put his hand up to his face and caught the hair before she could draw it away.

'What is this now?' he said, as he examined his hand. 'Feels like hair,' he mused. But in his fit of musing he let his fingers relax their grasp, and she drew her hair away very quickly.

'I thought so,' Wopole said. 'It was only the hair—the wind, I mean. I wonder what's the matter with the books, though? It must be the cabin that's bewitched them. I won't sleep in that cabin to-day. I'll change my apartments at once.'

And he did. So, for the rest of the time, the Princess had the cabin all to herself, and she was quite contented; for Wopole was so sure that

it was bewitched, that he moved his clothes and things out of it, and never came near it again.

And the Princess had decidedly the best of it; for Wopole slept all day and watched all night, and she kept awake all day and slept all night just as usual. So the time passed away, and every night the moon got larger and larger as they got nearer and nearer, until it was quite close.

They had been a fortnight and three days out before they came to the edge of the sea, but it was eight o'clock in the evening, and the moon had just left the water, as it flew into the air like a large—a very large—white bird.

'What a confounded nuisance!' Ernalie heard Wopole say. 'Now I shall have to wait the whole of another day for it to rise above the sea; and then it's so jolly dangerous.'

The Princess couldn't help wondering why it was so jolly dangerous;

and how, if it were dangerous, it could be jolly. So she asked—quite without thinking that she was invisible:

'Why?'

'Why, you dunderhead!' retorted Wopole; 'because we're quite near the edge of the world, and if a strong wind should rise we should be blown right over it, and then we should fall right into the sun. See, stupid?'

The Princess replied meekly:

'I thank you.'

'I should think you ought to thank me,' Wopole retorted angrily. 'It's bad enough to have spirits on board a temperance ship without having to talk to them.'

'But I'm not a spirit,' said Ernalie.

'Then who are you?'

'I'm——' But she thought it best not to tell him more.

'Oh, you are, are you?' he replied. 'Thanks for the information. I'm sure it wasn't necessary for you to tell me so much, and I don't want

to know any more about you. Only, look here, I don't know whether you want to be roasted?'

'Of course not,' answered the Princess.

'Well, then, if a storm comes up it will blow us right over the world's end into the sun; so look out. If the anchor holds, we are safe.'

'What does the anchor hold?' asked Ernalie.

'The ground, of course. If it doesn't, we shall have to hoist the sails and try to beat against the wind.'

'I suppose you beat against the wind to make it run away?' said Ernalie.

But Wopole replied gruffly:

'No puns allowed on board. Now, if we have to beat against the wind, I shall have to manage the sails, so you must go to the helm.'

'What is the helm?' she asked.

'That's it,' said Wopole, pointing to it.

'Oh, that's the helm; and what am I to do with it?'

'Do what I tell you.'

'Very well.'

'That's all.'

So the Princess, not seeing anything better to do, went down below to bed.

The night passed safely, and nearly the whole of the next day; but towards evening the wind began to get up. Wopole was on deck, and as he did not seem to wish to talk she let him alone. About seven the moon was to rise, and at about half-past five Ernalie went down to her cabin to get a book. She selected a small one that she had not noticed before. It was called 'The Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of Hull, Mariner, who——' But before she had half finished the title-page—which, by the bye, is rather long—a sudden

reeling of the vessel threw her right over to one corner of the room, and at the same time from above there sounded a shrieking as of ten thousand demons.

'What on earth is that?' she thought as well as she could, for she was lying in one corner of the room among chairs and various other articles of furniture. However, she got out of it as quickly as she could, and ran on deck, or at least she tried to run, for the vessel was rolling and pitching, and the shrieking continued to resound from above. At last she did reach the deck; but she rather wished she had stopped below, for the wind was so biting it nearly bit her hair off, and this same wind behaved so badly to the ropes of the vessel that they shrieked in their pain as the blast cut past them, causing the strange sounds that the Princess had heard below.

It was nearly as difficult to stand on deck as it had been in the cabin, and

the spray that came dashing over the boat made it very difficult to see, for it got into her eyes and half blinded her.

However, she managed to steady herself by holding on to a rope, and in a few minutes she was able to see Wopole standing in the bow of the boat, and looking over the side. So she went towards him as well as she could, for the wind and spray came from over the bows. Nevertheless, she reached him somehow. He was leaning quietly against the bulwarks over the hawser-hole watching the straining cable, just as calm as if there were nothing in particular depending on whether the anchor held or not.

As soon as she could find her breath she touched him on the shoulder and shouted in his ear as loud as she could:

'Will the rope break?' But it was no use trying to out-roar the tempest —at least for her.

When Wopole felt something touch him on the shoulder he looked round.

'Oh, it's you, is it?' she heard him cry. But the wind was still too high for her to answer. She only nodded; but she might have spared herself the trouble.

Presently, after she had waited some minutes in silence, the wind fell, almost as suddenly as it had risen.

'Thank goodness! It's over now,' she said, and it was so quiet that Wopole overheard her easily.

'Don't hulloa till you're out of the wood,' he said. 'Look there!'

The Princess did look, and she saw that the horizon was hidden by masses of white foam that rose and fell as if the sea were one great cauldron full of boiling water.

'That's the storm coming down again,' Wopole went on. 'Hurry to the helm and put it hard down when I hoist the sail, for the cable will snap like thread before it. Quick—quick!'

The Princess ran like lightning along the deck, for the sea was quite quiet, and the vessel hardly pitched at all, and she reached the helm in a very few minutes.

When she got there she stood still and listened. Everything was quiet and still; the vessel only rolled slightly, and the cordage creaked uneasily, as if it feared the coming strain that it would have to stand. From where the sea boiled a noise came—so low and grumbling that it might have been the faint growl of an angry cat before it makes a spring.

Just then Wopole looked towards the helm:

'Mind and put it hard down!' he shouted.

'I wonder why he wants me to put it down,' she thought.

But before she could ask the storm was upon them again. Swifter than the arrow leaps from the bow it came, and the churned sea fled from the

attack of the wind like a mighty white horse. The flying scud and rain beat mercilessly against her face; but she held bravely to the tiller, and stemmed the storm as well as she could, with her eyes shut and her teeth set.

The noise the storm made would have frightened Neptune himself; but high over it she heard Wopole shout:

'The cable's parted! Hard down!'

And she pressed on the tiller as hard as she could; but the stubborn bar refused to go down, and though she leant her whole weight on it, it only fell away to one side, and she had only strength to lie against it in vain hope of putting it down. Just then the sail began to raise itself, and the vessel seemed to feel its influence, for it was turning slowly round. Suddenly she saw Wopole appear in the mist of rain.

'Let me have the tiller!' he shouted; and she let go. Instantly he seized it and pushed it the other way with all his might.

But at this critical moment a disaster happened, that made it look as if everything had conspired against them. The tiller broke in half under the strong hands of Wopole, and before they could wink the vessel had turned its back to the wind, and they were carried at racing speed towards the end of the world. They had but a mile or so to go, and a mile is soon covered.

The last part of the journey was through a thick mist; but it didn't much matter to Ernalie.

'Anyhow, Wopole won't be able to cut the strings,' she thought.

Just then the fog began to get lighter, as if some great fire were just outside it, and in a few seconds they burst through the veil of mist into a light so blinding that the Princess could not keep her eyes open.

'This must be the sun we've fallen into,' she thought. 'But it doesn't seem very hot.' Then there was a

bump, as if the boat had run into a lump of mud, and then a greasy slide, and then Ernalie fainted.

. . . . .

When she came to herself, she heard voices close to her. One sounded like the voice of an old man, and the other, she was quite sure, was that of Wopole; but she had never heard him so polite before. They had evidently only just met, for Wopole was saying:

'I am very happy to make your acquaintance, sir. May I trouble you to tell me your name?'

'It's a great deal of trouble,' grumbled the other; 'but I'll tell you. I'm the Man.'

'How strange—I too happen to be a man.'

'You're only *a* man. I'm *the* Man.'

'The Man in the Moon, I should think?' said Wopole.

'Exactly,' answered the voice.

'Why, we must be in the moon,' thought the Princess; and it was the

case, for the ship had run right over the edge of the world on to the moon, which had been hidden behind the clouds.

'I'll just go and look at him,' she said to herself, and so she sat up to look where the voices came from. 'They seem to be behind the sail,' she went on. So she walked to the sail, and peeped round the corner, and there sure enough he was.

I daresay you've often seen the Man in the Moon—at all events, you ought to have. Perhaps you mayn't have; if so, this is what the Princess saw.

He was a very old man, and looked very much as if he was in his second childhood, and he carried an enormous lanthorn, which made him even more bent than he might have been if he had not carried it so often. On his shoulders he carried a bundle of thorns, which appeared to prick him and cause him a good deal of uneasiness generally; and besides this he had an ugly little

dog by his side, which made continual attacks on Wopole's shins, and it made such a noise with its barking that the old man in a temper aimed a vicious kick at it; but he missed his mark, and the weight of the lanthorn overbalancing him he sat down rather suddenly, and during the rest of the evening he remained there.

But the conversation proceeded just as if nothing in particular had happened.

'Being the Man in the Moon, perhaps you would be so kind as to direct me to the place where the Misses Parker reside?' Wopole said.

'That I won't,' said the Man. 'Why should I?'

'I thought that you might be so good as to direct me, and I had intended presenting you with a loaf of bread. However, that does not matter. Good-day. I daresay I shall find the house by myself,' and Wopole made preparations for getting over the side of the vessel.

But the Man no sooner heard the word 'bread' than he became very eager to help him on the way.

'Oh, wait a minute,' he said; and Wopole accordingly waited.

'If you'll give me two loaves I'll show you,' he went on.

'I'll give you one now, and the other when I have paid my visit and am safely back on the ship.'

'Well, that'll do. Give me the one, and I'll show you at once.'

So Wopole went to the hatch which covered the pantry and took out a large loaf, which he handed to the old Man.

'Now trot,' he said; and the Man hurried to the side of the vessel and scrambled down as well as he could, followed by Wopole and the Princess.

It was curious how bright it was when they got over the side; for although it was past nine o'clock P.M. by the Princess's watch, the ground itself seemed to shoot out light, and

what was still more funny, they threw no shadows, although that was easily explained; for as the moon itself provided the light, it would be rather difficult to throw a shadow on the moon.

They plodded on for some time in silence; but although the old Man hobbled very much he managed to get along very fast, almost too fast for the Princess, for the walking was very heavy.

Presently Wopole said:

'How soft the ground is; is it all the same about here?'

'Of course it is. It's all cheese; and you don't want hard cheese.'

'I don't want cheese at all,' said Wopole.

'You'd want it if you were me,' remarked the old Man.

'Why?' asked Wopole.

'Because it's all there is to eat in the moon, and if it were hard I shouldn't be able to eat it.'

'Oh, I see; but why don't you come to the earth? You'd make your fortune in a show.'

The Man shook his head sadly.

'I did try once; but I got my mouth burnt, and I shan't try again.'

'Why, how was that?' asked Wopole.

'Don't you know the song?' said the old Man in astonishment.

'Not I.'

'Then I'll sing it.'

And forthwith he began to sing:

'The Man in the Moon
Came down too soon
And asked his way to Norwich, O;
He got sent to the south
And burnt his mouth
With eating cold plum-porridge, O.'

The Man's voice itself was about as melodious as that of a peacock; but in the final 'O' of the song he was joined by his dog and Wopole, who both sang—or rather bawled—

a wrong note; and as each was proud of his voice the 'O' was prolonged indefinitely, and it might have been kept up till doomsday, only, just at that moment, they happened to turn the corner of a heap of cheese and came in sight of a cottage at some distance off.

'That's the cottage where they live,' said the old Man.

And no sooner did the Princess hear his words than she started off at a run towards it.

'I must get there before him,' she said; and so she went as fast as she could over the soft cheese. She really needn't have hurried so much, for Wopole and the old man had stopped, and it might have saved her a world of trouble if she had listened to what they said; but she didn't.

When she reached the cottage she stopped a moment to gain breath; but that was soon done, and she went to the door and tapped. No

answer came; so she lifted the latch gently and walked in as quietly as she could.

'There goes that door,' she heard an ill-tempered voice say.

'I shouldn't take the trouble to close it again if I were you. It's the fifth time it's blown open to-day.' This was in another voice.

It was impossible for the Princess to see where the voice came from, for the cottage was so dark after the light outside that for some moments it was quite as black as night. However, gradually her eyes became accustomed to the twilight, for the open door did let in a good deal of light.

What she did see, however, did not please her eyes much, for the three sisters, to whom Wopole gave the name of Parker—they are called the Parcae generally—were about as ugly as they make them; and as they were twins—that is, triplets—there

was not much to choose between them.

The room in the cottage was very large, and at the wall at one end a large number of frames stood on which were nailed reels, and from every reel came a silver thread, and over every reel a small placard was placed on which was written a name—the name of the owner of the thread.

Behind the frames stood one of the Fates, who took off used-up reels and placed new ones in their stead; though how she did it the Princess could not tell, for the Fates, as well as Love, are blind. Yet she did it.

Between the reels and the last of the three sisters sat one clothed in black, who held in her hand scissors wherewith she severed certain of the threads—threads of those that die on earth. Last of the three sat one who twisted all the threads into one great rope that ran from her hands down a fathomless pit to the earth.

And so they all sat silently working busily, with no other sound than the clipping of the scissors as their owner cut remorselessly here and there, surely and safely—she needed no eyes.

But the Princess heeded little of this, for she was seeking out two names. The names were arranged in townships, so she had but little difficulty in finding them; and she changed the names that stood over the strings. Over Wopole's she put the name of Treblo, and over Treblo she put Wopole's name.

'It is the only way to stop him killing Treblo. As for the others, Abbonamento and Araminta, if Wopole cuts his own string and dies, he will not be able to cut theirs; but if he die not instantly and cut the other strings, I will knot them together again quickly. And I will alsc knot together Wopole's own thread, for he has done me no harm,

and once he saved my life; only, he must not kill Treblo.'

When she had got thus far, the light that came through the door was interrupted for a moment, and Wopole entered.

He stopped for a few minutes to accustom his eyes to the faint light. Then the Princess heard him mutter:

'Lucky for me the old ladies are blind and deaf. Here are his own scissors to cut his own thread. That is to fight him with his own tools—and I shall win.'

And then he walked towards the sets of threads.

In a few moments he had found the thread marked 'Treblo,' and reaching out the scissors he cut it through. But he dropped the scissors almost instantly.

'What a pain I have in my side,' he said. 'I won't cut any more threads if it's to hurt me like this each time. Old Abbonamento and

Araminta won't last long after their son; and as for the lovely Princess, Mumkie promised her to me, so I won't cut your string, Ernalie.'

'Thank you,' said Ernalie herself, so quietly that Wopole did not notice it, and he left the house in somewhat of a hurry.

'I'll just join his thread, and then I'll join him again; and so there's not much harm done.'

But it was not quite so easy to join the threads as it looked, for part of the thread that went towards the earth moved on, while that which came from the reel stood still. However, she pulled the thread rapidly from the reel, and she managed to tie the two parts together before they reached the lady with the scissors, and so the thread passed on its way without notice.

'That's all right,' said she thankfully, and she left the house to follow Wopole.

He, however, had already passed the

turning and was out of sight, so she followed; but when she too had turned the corner he was nowhere to be seen. However, she was quite sure of the road, so she went leisurely on; but each hillock was so like the other, and there was no mark to guide her, for no trees grew on the cheese. And so little by little she began to feel convinced that she had lost her way, and though she wandered on for hours and hours she came to no trace of anything that would guide her to the vessel.

But at last she came to some footsteps in the cheese, and she was now quite sure of being in the right track. So she ran on as fast as she could, and she really was on the right path, and soon she came in sight of the sea, and then she saw the vessel, but it was sailing away from her as fast as it could, and although she shouted and cried to Wopole to come back and fetch her, he took no notice.

'Wopole! Wopole!' she shrieked;

but the wind carried her voice away, and did not bring back Wopole.

Again she called:

'Wopole!'

'What *is* the use of making all that noise?' said a voice that came from close to her side, and when she looked round she saw the Man, sitting on his bundle of sticks, eating the bread ravenously, and scooping up pieces of the moon-cheese from his side.

'What is the use of making all that noise?' he said again, bad-temperedly.

'I want Wopole to come back and fetch me,' said the Princess.

'I daresay he'd feel flattered if he knew; but he doesn't. It's no use howling. By the bye, I forgot to tell you—"This lanthorn doth the horned moon present."'

'But what *has* that got to do with my getting home?' said the Princess.

'I don't know; but it's my home. Look, the sea's rising.'

The Princess looked round in alarm, for she was afraid of getting her feet wet; but though the sea was rising, it did not hurt the moon at all, for, you see, the water belonged to the earth, and so, while the moon sank lower and lower, the water remained like a solid wall above them, but did not close over them. The light of the moon attracted the fishes and strange monsters of the deep, and the Princess saw them as calmly as if they had been part of a large aquarium. She looked at them for some time; but a strange sound behind her made her turn round:

'I am about to sing a serenade,' said the Man.

'Please don't,' said the Princess.

'I'm sure you'd like to hear it. "I'll sing you songs of Araby,"' he said.

'But I don't care about Araby.'

'You really must listen. Come, now, do hear.'

And he began waving his arms to and fro, roaring:

'When moonlight o'er the azure seas
In soft effulgence swells!'

But he sang it to the tune of the moonlight sonata.

The Princess did not wait to hear. She put her fingers in her ears, and ran off as fast as she could; but still she heard the burden:

'Ah, Angeline! ah, lady mine!'

And he seemed to keep it up for a long while. However, after she had gone some miles the sound died away in the distance, and all was quiet.

The Princess now sat down to rest, and to look at the earth, for the moon had dipped underneath it by this time, and she could see Australia and New Zealand and various of the other lands of the Antipodes.

Her attention was drawn away from the earth to the moon by a sound that seemed like the rolling of wheels. It was still distant, but approached rapidly, and in a few moments a chariot, drawn by two milk-white stags with golden horns, dashed past close to her, and rolled over a hill near by, as easily as if they had been bubbles blown by the wind.

But the Princess did not look much at the stags or the chariot; the thing that took her attention was the driver. A woman you could hardly have called her; for, though she was clad in the garb of a huntress, it was easy to see who she was, for who but Diana carried a silver bow?

'Dear me!' said Ernalie, 'this must be the Goddess of the moon. I'll go to her and tell her everything, and ask her to take me back to the earth when she goes. For she must go to the earth sometimes since she's the Goddess of the chase; there's nothing to hunt

here except cheese-mites, and they're not great sport for such a mighty huntress.'

So she followed as fast as she was able to the top of the hill over which the chariot had disappeared; but it had gone so fast that it had passed out of sight over another range of hills. However, the hoof and wheel marks were plainly shown on the white surface of the cheese. So she went on and on, following the tracks, until, just as she was beginning to despair, she came to the brow of a hill, and in a valley beneath she saw a large building, in appearance something like a Grecian temple, except that instead of stone it was made of cheese.

In front of the building was a large heap of skins of various animals, piled up so high that they made a sort of couch on which the Goddess was lying up to dinner; for it was the fashion among the gods to lie up or rather down, instead of sitting up to table.

The two white stags which had been harnessed to the chariot were playfully butting at each other with their golden horns, and the chariot itself was tilted on its back, just as you would see an ordinary two-wheeled cart nowadays.

But the Princess was not particularly interested in this — to tell the truth, she was feeling remarkably hungry and thirsty, for she had been already for some hours without tasting anything at all.

'I wonder if I'm invisible to the gods as well as to man,' she thought. 'I'll just try if I am, at all events.'

So she went towards the Goddess, who was eating the food that lay on the table in front of the couch; but Diana did not appear to notice her, and she advanced more boldly until she was quite close to the table.

'She doesn't seem to have much

variety,' thought the Princess, at least she meant to think.

'Do you think so?' said Diana, looking up in some astonishment to where the voice came from. 'And who asked you to say so? and who are you, and where are you, and why can't I see you? Tell me, or I'll shoot you.'

'I don't exactly see how you can,' said the Princess.

The Goddess seized her bow and looked for her quiver; but even as she reached out her hand to take it, it vanished, for Ernalie was too fast for her.

Diana looked more and more astonished and annoyed.

'Who are you?' she said. 'Are you a mortal?'

'Certainly I am,' said Ernalie.

'Then how is it I can't see you?' asked the Goddess.

'Because of the feather, I suppose,' said the Princess.

'You don't mean to say you've got the feather? Tell me how you got it?'

The Princess did as she was told, for she saw no use in making the Goddess angry.

When she had finished, Diana said:

'You have been lucky, whoever you are. The feather belonged to one of Jupiter's eagles, and this eagle got angry and flew at Jove because he gave its brother eagle more than its share of food. So he banished the eagle to the earth, and it got shot. I would give anything for the feather.'

'But I wouldn't part with it for any price,' said Ernalie.

'I'll give you anything you like for it, you know,' said the Goddess.

'But I won't part with it,' said Ernalie. 'Besides, I've got your arrows, and I won't give them back to you for nothing.'

'What a plague you are! What do you want for the arrows?'

'First, you must promise not to steal the feather from me.'

'Well, I'll promise that,' said the Goddess.

'Then promise not to do me any harm.'

'Very well.'

'And lastly, take me safely back to the earth.'

'I should be only too glad if you had never come near me,' said the Goddess. 'However, I promise them all. Now give me the arrows.'

The Princess gave the arrows back, for the word of Diana was not to be doubted.

'I wish you would show yourself to me,' the Goddess went on; 'I should like to see you very much. I wonder what sort of a person you are? Do show yourself.'

So the Princess took off the cap in which she wore the feather, but as soon as it was off Diana vanished; for, you see, it was the feather touching

her head that gave Ernalie the power of seeing without being seen, and a goddess is naturally invisible. But the Princess did not think of that.

'It must be some trick,' she thought. So she put the feather back in a hurry, but the Goddess had not moved. She was smiling quietly.

'Can't you trust me, child?' she said; 'for you aren't much more than a child, you know.'

'I'm grown up, at any rate,' said the Princess indignantly. 'I'm nineteen years old, so I'm not so very young.'

'And I'm nineteen thousand years old,' said the Goddess, 'and I don't look so very old, do I?'

'You certainly don't. But then, you see, you're a goddess and I'm a mortal, and it makes a difference.'

'It does,' said Diana. 'But do show yourself to me again.'

'But if I make myself visible, you disappear,' said Ernalie.

'Oh, I had forgotten that. However, I'll make myself visible too.'

So when Ernalie took the feather away this time Diana was easily visible.

'And you want to go back to the earth, do you?' asked Diana.

'I do, very much,' answered the Princess.

'And why?'

'Because the moon has got so little to eat on it.'

'Really!' said the Goddess. 'There's plenty of cheese, isn't there?'

'But I don't like cheese, and especially green cheese. I hate it.'

'Do you, really? What a pity it is you're not a mouse,' said the Goddess.

'But I'm not,' said Ernalie, 'and that settles it.'

'She might offer me some of her food,' she thought to herself.

'You wouldn't be able to eat it if you had it,' said the Goddess, who seemed to hear what she thought just as well as what she said.

'Why shouldn't I?' asked Ernalie.

'Because it's ambrosia; and if you once ate any of it you'd never be able to eat any other kind of food, which would be rather awkward for you.'

'Why?' asked the Princess.

'You're always asking "Y." Why don't you use some other letter—"Z" for instance; it gets so monotonous. Now tell me who you are, and all about yourself.'

So the Princess did as she was told.

'It would never do to offend her if she's going to take me back to the earth,' she thought, and the Goddess remarked:

'Quite right.'

When she had finished, the Goddess said:

'You shouldn't have interfered with the Fates. Even Jupiter daren't do that, and I'd as soon go near them as I would pat Cerberus.'

'But what could I do? I didn't want Wopole to kill himself.'

'I don't see why not,' said the Goddess. 'Why did you come at all? If Wopole and the other chose to fall out I don't see why you should meddle to save him.'

'But I couldn't let Wopole kill Treblo.'

'Why not?' asked the Goddess.

'Because he was my foster-brother, and he was going to marry me, and I'm sure I didn't want my husband to be liable to drop down dead at any moment.'

The Goddess looked angry at this.

'Why shouldn't he? He's only a man, and I hate men — nasty, vulgar things! And you were going to marry him? If I'd known that I'd never have spoken a word to you. Don't you know I'm the Goddess of Chastity, and I've sworn never to marry? The sooner you go the better.'

'But I can't go. I've got nowhere to go to; and besides, you promised to take me back to the earth,' said Ernalie.

'I suppose I did,' said the Goddess. 'Besides, I don't want to have you always here. Well, the moon will begin to rise in half an hour, and then I'll take you in my chariot, that's the only thing to do; so you can help me to harness the stags.'

This was soon done, and the Goddess went into the house to put away the remains of the food on which she had been dining. When she came out again Ernalie noticed that she had made a considerable change in her costume. What the change was I don't exactly know, but she said to Ernalie:

'You see I have to dress lightly to follow the chase easily. However, if you're ready, I am.'

So saying, she slung her quiver full of arrows over her back, and taking

the silver bow in her hand, got into the chariot.

'Get up,' she said to Ernalie, for the stags were already pawing the ground in their eagerness to be off. Ernalie jumped in quickly, and the stags darted off at an immense pace. They went so smoothly, however, that the Princess was not at all shaken or jolted. On over hills and through valleys, until it almost made her head swim at the way in which the scenery shot past. However, in a few minutes the roar of the waves sounded in her ears, and they came over the hill-top to the sea-beach. Just then the Goddess drew the reins in, and the stags stopped short.

'What on earth is that?' she said.

Now that the chariot had stopped, the Princess too could hear the sound that came faintly borne on the breeze:

'When moonlight o'er the azure seas.'

'Why, it's the Man,' she said.

'So it is,' said Diana angrily. 'I recognise his voice. He calls it "mezzo-soprano." It's dreadful. I told him never to sing unless he had somebody to sing to. Of course I thought no one would ever come to the moon. I wonder whom he's singing to?'

'I rather imagine he thinks he's singing to me,' said the Princess hesitatingly. 'I begged him not to sing; but he insisted. So I ran away, and I suppose he thinks I'm still there, for, you see, he can't see me.'

'Oh, he thinks you're still there, does he?' said Diana. 'Just make yourself invisible, and I'll do the same, and we'll go a little closer.'

The Princess did as she was told, and Diana urged the stags in the direction of the voice.

The rattling of the wheels was quite drowned in the noise of the Man's voice, as he sang:

'And you'll remember me . . e . . e,
And you'll remember me.'

'You've improved a good deal in that last line,' said the Goddess. 'I wish you'd sing it over again.'

'You *are* there then?' said the Man. 'I thought you had gone away. I couldn't get you to answer when I spoke to you.'

'Ah! that was because I was too enchanted for words to express. Now, *do* sing the last line again. Only the last line; it *is* so fine,' said Diana.

The Man drew in a long breath:

'And you'll remember, re. member me. e. e.'

At the sound of his voice the Princess put her hands to her ears, and Diana had the greatest difficulty in keeping the stags from turning tail and bolting right away. However, she managed to quieten them, and took a good grip of her whip handle, and the consequence was that the last line came out:

'And you'll remember me . . e . . ow—ow!'

for the whip stung a good deal.

'I hope you'll remember me—ow—

ow,' said the Goddess calmly, as she suddenly appeared to him, turning the chariot towards the sea.

'You don't mind getting a little wet?' she continued, turning to the Princess. 'We're going over the water.'

And she gave the reins to the stags, who sprang wildly down the steep slope into the sea. For a moment the Princess thought that there might be rather too much of a good thing, even if that good thing were riding in a chariot along with a goddess; for the chariot plunged deep into a high wave, and it seemed to the Princess as if it never did intend to come to the surface again. However, it did come up, and that was some comfort, although the Princess was dripping all over with the sea-water.

But the stags were once more darting onwards, for the chariot ran as lightly over the waves as over the land, and they went at such a rate that although the great breakers chased

them, and even curled right over them, they were never so much as touched by the spray that the wind blew from off the crests of the waves.

So they dashed on through the blue water that coiled up over the front of the chariot but fell back when it saw the Goddess. On and on they went, and as they got farther out the waves became steeper and steeper, until it seemed as if they were going over very mountainous land indeed, for they rose over every wave.

Suddenly the Goddess said :

'This is a little too much,' and drew the stags in.

The great waves rolled on like angry hounds hungering for their prey ; but the Goddess motioned with her hand :

'Down, down!' she cried. 'Know ye me?'

And the waves sank, like hounds to whom their master shows his whip, and instantly it fell a deep calm over the whole sea. Then the Goddess

lashed on the deer again, and once more they sped on over the sea, and the chariot wheels cut two deep white furrows in the deep blue, and in the moonlight Ernalie could see the two straight white lines glistening right away to the horizon—for they went so quickly that there was no time for the foam to die away, before it was out of sight. So they kept on for a long while, and gradually the moon rose in the sky, and then fell lower and lower, and still they journeyed on. Then the moon set, the stars gradually faded from sight, and the hot rays of the morning sun began to turn the eastern sky yellow.

Suddenly the Goddess pulled up the stags.

'There's the land,' she said, pointing to a low blue line on the horizon. 'We must rise into the air now, for we are getting near the place where ships ply to and fro on the sea, and if the sailors saw the two white trails of the

chariot wheels they would say it was the sea-serpent, and I don't want to be called a snake—it's most insulting. So if you're inclined to be giddy you'd better sit in the bottom of the car.'

But the Princess said:

'Oh no. I'm never giddy, however great the height may be.'

So Diana gave the word to the stags, and they began to rise from the water in a spiral line upwards as an eagle soars in chase of a swan.

When they had reached a sufficiently great height, the Goddess once more let loose the reins, and the deer bounded forward again like an arrow released from a bow.

Swiftly they neared the land; but from where they were nothing could be seen of the things on it. Everything was blurred into one mass, as if it had been a map spread out below them.

So they sped on again for a time,

and the fresh morning air blew cool on Ernalie's face, and almost made her shiver, though by this time her garments were dry again, and blew out like a cloud behind her, as if they had been of thin gauze, though they were really of far thicker and heavier material.

Suddenly a thought struck Ernalie.

'Where are you going to take me?' she asked as well as she could, for the wind blew her words down her throat.

The Goddess smiled somewhat maliciously, Ernalie thought, and checked the course of the stags that she might speak with greater ease.

'You shall see,' she said.

'But I should like to know beforehand.'

'I only promised to take you back to the earth,' said Diana.

'But you promised to do me no harm,' said Ernalie dismally, 'and if you leave me in the middle of

a desert you'll do me a lot of harm.'

'But I'm not going to put you down into the middle of a desert,' said Diana. 'Look, we are descending. Now, see if you recognise the country you pass over.'

The Princess looked over the edge of the chariot, and she saw that the stags were descending in great spiral curves, and at each curve the earth flew up nearer and nearer to meet them. As they got lower down Ernalie could see what was below more clearly, as if she had been looking through an opera glass, and was only just commencing to get the right focus. When they were quite close the Goddess stopped the descent of the chariot.

'Now, do you recognise where you are?' she asked.

But Ernalie shook her head.

'I only see that we are over the tops of a range of mountains that have

snow on their peaks,' she said. 'But I was never here before—that I am quite certain of.'

The Goddess shook the reins, and again the stags flew forward; but this time not so fast as they had gone before.

'You have been here before,' she said. 'And at just this height, and at just this speed, only you were going in the opposite direction.'

'Why,' said Ernalie, 'I must be in my own country. Oh, how cruel of you to take me away from my Prince, and you promised to do me no harm.'

'I am doing you no harm,' said the Goddess. 'To prevent you marrying is not harm—it is good.'

But the Princess said:

'No! no! it is harm. I would give anything to be back with him.'

'Would you give your feather?' said the Goddess eagerly.

'No, not that,' said the Princess.

'I will give you anything you like for it,' said the Goddess. 'Anything——'

But the Princess said scornfully:

'Not so, Goddess. I will get back to my love in spite of you. If I can do nothing better I will pray to Venus and offer her the feather.'

The Goddess looked angrily at her, and it almost seemed as if her eyes shot fire.

'If it were not for my promise,' she said, 'I would hurl you from the car; but as it is, I will put you safely down.'

But the Princess smiled in spite of herself.

'Do you, then, hate Venus so much, great Goddess?' she asked. 'Well, you have really done me much good, and therefore I promise never to give the feather to any other goddess save you alone.'

Diana looked very much relieved; for, to tell the truth, the goddesses in

those days were very jealous of one another, and Diana could not bear the thought that any one else should have the feather if she could not get it.

So for a few minutes she was silent; and then suddenly she drew in the stags.

'I am going to set you down here,' she said, and they plunged into the darkness below. For you must know that though they were high up, and the rays of the sun, still below the horizon, fell on them, yet, beneath them, everything was dark in the shadow of the mountains.

The chariot sank slowly until it rested on the ground, but it was still so dark that the Princess could see nothing.

'Get out,' said Diana; 'you are quite safe here.' And the Princess obeyed. 'Now remember,' the Goddess went on, 'I have kept my promises. Remember to keep yours. Give the feather to no one except to

me, unless I send Iris for it. To her alone give it, for she is the messenger of the goddesses.'

The Princess once more promised, and Diana shook the reins, and the chariot once more darted up through the air and out of the lower darkness into the sunlight, until it was so high that it vanished altogether from her sight.

So the Princess looked wearily down again, and the earth around her seemed doubly dark by contrast.

'I wonder where on earth I am,' she said, and then she took two or three steps forward, but she came against a stone parapet or wall, or something. 'I wonder what this is,' she said to herself. 'I think I shall stop where I am till daylight; it won't be very long now, and I'm safe here at any rate.'

So she leant on the wall and waited; but even though the dawn was near it seemed long in coming.

But presently over the mountains in the east a yellow light stole, changing the silence of darkness for the clamorous speech of light, and the river flowing placidly in front was turned to liquid gold with the yellow of the dawn, and a sense of yellow-fringed gray mist was on everything, and forms erstwhile veiled discovered themselves.

'Why, wherever am I?' said Ernalie, rubbing her eyes in astonishment. 'I seem to have been here before! Yes, there's the fountain and the rose-bushes, and—why, this must be the terrace of my father's Palace! Just where I was when the eagle carried me off. I wonder if the swans are still here,' and she walked to the other side of the terrace and looked over the marble parapet into the water.

'Yes, there they are.' And on the marble steps that led down to the water the swans were asleep, each on one leg, with its neck coiled up on

its back, and head under its wing. On hearing the footsteps of the Princess one of them looked lazily up as if it had been waked too soon, and then it shook its head, yawned, put down its other leg and waddled slowly to the water, into which it jumped with a splash that woke the others up; and they followed dreamily, being unused to the chill of the water so early.

A cock crowed, and his challenge was answered from far and near, and woke up the sparrows, who came down to the fountain for a shower-bath in the sparkling spray. They were followed by the pigeons, who, after cooing a little, stretched their wings and circled away on their morning flight. So, by degrees, the world awoke as the day took a firmer grasp on the land and the light grew stronger.

'I wish they'd open the doors and let me get in,' the Princess said. But

as yet there seemed no sign of any one waking up.

'Ah, well,' she said resignedly, 'I've waited six years to come home—I suppose I can wait a few more hours.'

So she quietly walked to the rose-bushes and plucked one or two of the great red damask roses, and chafing the petals off between her hands, threw the handfuls of them at the swans, who hissed and snapped as the mass of red leaves fell over them. It was some time since they had been subjected to such treatment; however, they seemed to get used to it again pretty easily.

Thus the Princess managed to while away about half an hour, and then she noticed smoke coming out of one of the chimneys.

'They must be up in the kitchen,' she thought. 'I'll just go and knock at the door and get let in.'

Accordingly she went and knocked

softly at the door, and an angry voice shouted out :

'Come in, do! and don't stand knocking there. I've got the King's boots to black, and his eggs and bacon to cook, and I've only got three hours to do it in. I haven't got time.'

So the Princess lifted the latch and walked in.

'Is the King up, cook?' she asked.

'No, he's not! lazy old man as he is,' said the cook, looking up angrily. 'But where are you? Come out from behind that door.'

'Oh! I had forgotten,' said the Princess.

She meant, of course, she had forgotten about the feather, but the cook didn't know that.

'You'd forgotten, had you?' she exclaimed. 'I'll teach you to forget if I catch you!'

'But you won't, my dear cook,' said the Princess sweetly.

'You'll catch it if you don't look out!' howled the cook, as she rose from the floor where she had been cleaning the boots, and in doing so she knocked over an enormous pot of liquid blacking.

'That's your doing!' she cried, as she made a dash at the door.

But the Princess evaded her easily, and she ran outside fully expecting to find the invisible questioner there. But the Princess meanwhile walked through the kitchen and up the back-stairs to her own room.

The room was just as she had left it when she went away, except that the bed seemed to have grown rather small for her, or rather she had grown too large for the bed.

However, she went in, and locking the door, laid herself down on the bed, and soon dropped off to sleep; for, as you may imagine, she was rather tired, for she had not slept for nearly two days—that is,

ever since she had first reached the moon.

It did not seem that she had slept three minutes before she was awakened by a tremendous noise below-stairs.

'I wonder what that is,' she said. 'I think I'll get up and see.'

And she went to the wash-hand stand to wash the sea-water off her face, but the soap, from long want of use, had cracked in all directions, and she had to content herself with the water that was in the jug. Then she brushed her hair, which was full of salt, and after that tried to brush the salt off her dress; for the sea-water had dried on it, and had left it shining all over with the salt. Before she had quite finished, however, the noise that had waked her sounded again. It seemed as if some one were running downstairs very hard.

So the Princess took her hat off, not wishing to be invisible any more, for a time at least, and then,

opening the door, she walked quietly downstairs.

There seemed to be no one about, and except that a terrible hurly-burly proceeded from the whereabouts of the kitchen, one would never have told that any one in the whole house was awake.

However, just then the clock in the hall struck eight, and a page came rushing downstairs.

'Breakfast! breakfast!' he shouted, quite without noticing the Princess, and he almost passed her before he saw her; but she stopped him.

'Where is the King?' she said.

'The King is in his counting—that is, I mean the breakfast-room. But you can't see him.'

'But I must,' said the Princess.

'Well, of course, if you must——'

The Princess interrupted him.

'Don't you know who I am?' she said.

'No, I don't; and I don't want

to,' said the page. 'Perhaps you're the person who brings home the washing, or the kitchen-maid. If you are, I wouldn't like to be in your shoes. The King is so jolly wild about his eggs and bacon being late that——'

But the Princess didn't wait to hear any more; she walked straight towards the door of the breakfast-room. At the door two guards were stationed; but as they were old and crusted—that is, trusted—they remembered the Princess, and only saluted with their swords, wishing her 'good-morning'—for they were far too well bred to express surprise or joy at sight of her. One of them opened the door for her, and said in a loud voice:

'The Princess, your Majesty.'

The King was seated in a chair with his back to the door, and did not seem to hear what the man said. He only nodded, and did not look up from the papers he was reading.

So the Princess stole quietly up

behind him, and put her fingers over his eyes—she always was rather irreverent.

'Guess who I am,' she said to the struggling monarch.

'I won't,' he spluttered, for he was rather enraged.

'Think a minute, papa,' she said encouragingly.

'I never should have thought of being assaulted in such a way,' said the King, who had given up struggling, finding it no use.

So the Princess drew her hands away, and kissed him on the top of his bald head.

The King darted away out of the chair as soon as he was released, and that so violently that he fell right on to the floor in a sitting posture.

'Why, who the——' he was beginning; but his eye happening to fall on Ernalie, he ejaculated:

'Good gracious! How did you come here?'

'I walked downstairs from my room to bid you good-morning, papa, and you recoiled when I touched you as if I were a snake, instead of your loving daughter. But wouldn't you like me to help you up? It must be rather uncomfortable sitting there.'

'Yes, I think it would be as well,' the King said, after reflecting a moment. 'I shouldn't like any one to see me in such a posture—it's rather undignified for a king.'

So the Princess bent over and began to help him up; but it was a labour of some time, for the King was rather stiff, and just as she had got him half up a page entered and announced the breakfast. It was the same page that had met the Princess on the staircase, and when he saw the Princess assisting the King to rise, he rushed forward, shouting:

'Help! help! She's murdering the King.'

And catching the Princess by the

arm, he pulled her away so roughly that she had to let go of the King, who recoiled at the shock, and rolled under the table on his back.

Alarmed at the page's cries for help, a large number of people had rushed in, and he turned to them expecting to be commended for his bravery; but he saw that every one either looked as if he had put his foot in it, or else was trying hard not to laugh. The Princess herself could hardly help laughing at his perplexed face.

'I think, sir, you were a little too vigorous in your help,' she said coldly. 'You may leave us now.'

'And you can all go,' said the King from under the table.

The whole lot trooped out, shutting the door, and as soon as they were outside shouts of laughter filled the air for some minutes.

The King meanwhile scrambled out from under the table and got up, this time declining his daughter's help.

'It's always the way,' he said, as soon as the laughter had died away. 'Whenever I do anything ridiculous and undignified there's always a lot of people to see it. Why, only last Thursday—no, last Tuesday, I think —anyhow, it was the day of the last state banquet, my crown tumbled into the soup-tureen, and then I was so nervous that, when I was raising my wine-glass to propose a toast, my hand shook so much that I dropped the wine down the Duchess of Carabas's neck; and then she fainted, and I helped to carry her out of the room, and as soon as I got outside they all laughed so loud that the chandelier fell into the middle of them. It broke right on a duke's head, and he never apologised for breaking it. However, I shall get over it now you've come back. We really must get into more regular habits. I've actually never had more than ten pages to serve my breakfast since you've been

away, and, by the bye, we've not *had* breakfast; and I've forgotten altogether to have the bells rung in your honour. Just knock that gong there on the table—it's cracked, but I can't afford a new one, and it's quite good enough for the guards outside to hear.'

So the Princess knocked the gong, and it certainly *was* cracked; it sounded a good deal more like knocking an old pot than a respectable royal gong.

At the sound one of the guards outside entered and saluted.

'Let the breakfast be brought,' the King said.

The guard withdrew, and presently the door opened, and a page appeared with the royal coffee-pot on a cushion of cloth of gold. Next came another page with the cream-jug on a similar cushion, and then another with the slop-basin, and another with the sugar, and another with the tongs, until the

table was completely furnished. Last of all came, with a loud fanfare of trumpets, four men, staggering under the weight of an enormous silver dish with an equally enormous silver cover. When this was placed on the table, amid another flourish of trumpets, the royal butler entered, and said:

'Breakfast is served, your Majesty,' although the King could see it very well himself. But that was the custom.

'You may remove the cover,' the King said.

And the butler did so, discovering the breakfast. I say discovering, for the breakfast was so small that it seemed almost lost in the centre of the great dish. The twelve pages had ranged themselves in lines of six on each side of the table, and although they were very well bred, on the whole they could not help smiling, whereupon all simultaneously drew out their handkerchiefs and began to cough, and then

they looked at the windows, as if to see where the draught came from.

But the King did not take any notice, and as soon as he could make himself heard, he said:

'Ah! and what is this?'

'It is the breakfast, your Majesty,' said the butler.

'Yes, I can see that,' said the King. 'But what is the dish called?'

'Oh, the dish, your Majesty,' said the butler apologetically. 'It's the ordinary silver dish that your Majesty has with the breakfast. I think it's the fiddle pattern — no, that's for spoons; but——'

'You're an ass,' said the King, interrupting him angrily.

'Thank you, your Majesty. Anything else?'

'Send for the cook.'

'Yes, your Majesty. Anything else?'

'Yes; go away, and don't come back.'

'Yes, your Majesty. You're quite sure there's nothing——'

'If you don't go,' said the King threateningly. But he had gone.

In a few minutes heavy footsteps were heard outside, and the door burst open violently, and a very fat person entered. She seemed a perfect mass of blacking and dust.

'Who are you?' said the King in astonishment.

'I am the lady that does the cooking for you,' said the cook solemnly.

'Oh, you are,' said the King; 'and will your ladyship allow me to ask what that is?' and he pointed to the breakfast.

The cook went forward and, taking a fork from the table, tried to pick the breakfast up, but it slid off the fork; so, without more ado, she took it up in her fingers and examined it carefully, as if to see that it had not changed since she sent it up. When she had done, she looked up and said:

'Why, it's as nice an egg as can be bought for money, only it's a bit addled; and I dropped it in the blacking, but I wiped it on my own apron—look there.'

And she lifted up her apron to look at; and it certainly looked as if a good many eggs had been wiped on it.

However, the King did not notice that.

'Oh, it's an egg, is it?' he said; 'I didn't know. I thought it was a piece of coal, and——'

But at this point the cook broke in.

'Call my eggs a coal! It's a crying shame! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, an old man like you, too. Here have I been working for three hours this very morning at that egg, and he calls it a coal; and me that plagued too with demons! Why, only this morning one of 'em came and banged at the door so hard that it broke, and then it came in. It was a blue one, with red eyes and

a long green tail with a fork at the end; and it stuck the fork in the egg, and then put the egg in the blacking and threw it all over the kitchen; and then it kicked the blacking pot over and flew out at the door before I could say "Gemini"; and I saw it with my own eyes, and it was as ugly a little——'

But this was more than the Princess could stand.

'Oh, what a—an untruth that is! Look at me. Am I a blue demon with red eyes and a tail?'

But the cook was off again.

'Oh, it was you, was it? And you ought to be ashamed of *your*self, a-frightening a poor lone-lorn woman. Call yourself a Princess? I call you a——'

This was too much for the King.

'That is enough,' he said. 'Take a month's warning.'

To which the cook replied contemptuously:

'You give *me* a month's warning? Not a bit of it. I give you a minute's warning! it's quite enough for the likes of you.'

'Oh, very well,' said the King. 'Of course, if you go off without warning, I don't pay your month's wages.'

'Call yourself a King?' roared the cook. 'Why, you're meaner than——'

'I don't know what I call myself,' said the King mildly, 'but if you don't go I'll call a policeman and have your head cut off instead of your wages.'

But the cook was not to be daunted.

'That's what the likes of you does with your old and faithful servants. Here have I been, day in, day out, work, work, work, like a nigger slave-driver, and this is my reward!'

The King did not listen to the rest. He beckoned to one of the pages and said:

'Just run and bring a sack and throw it over her head. Be quick!'

The page left the room.

'There you go,' said the irrepressible cook. 'That's it, send for the police, ye oppressors of the poor. Ugh!'

And she began a fresh volley of abuse. She seemed as if she would never lose her breath. But after a few minutes—it seemed ages to the unfortunate King—the page returned; and although he did not enter very quietly, yet the cook was making such a noise that she did not hear him, and the page, who seemed to enter entirely into the spirit of the thing, dropped the sack quietly over her head, and stopped her flow of language.

'Now, take her outside and put her out at the back door, and mind and shut the door securely after her,' remarked the King, with a sigh of relief.

Six of the pages immediately caught hold of her and dragged her out, and the other six were about to follow to

see the sport when the King stopped them.

'Can any one of you cook at all?' he said.

One of the pages stood out and professed to be able to do a little in that way.

'Well, then,' said the King decidedly, 'all six of you go to the kitchen and see what you can find there; and mind you, if I don't have a breakfast in five minutes, I'll—well, *I'll* see about it.'

When the pages had gone, he turned to the Princess and said:

'That's what I always have to put up with. Only the other day the man who cleans the library windows flung his towel in my face and refused to work any more for me, and all because I told him that his coat wasn't in the fashion.'

'But wasn't that rather an unwise proceeding, papa?' asked Ernalie, dubiously.

'Do you think so?' asked the King. 'If I said that the cut of your dress was rather outlandish—and it is, by the bye—you wouldn't fling something at me, would you?'

'No; but then I'm your dutiful daughter, you see.'

'Well, but he ought to be my dutiful son, for I'm the father of my country.'

'Well, but then, you see, sons are not always dutiful—daughters always are.'

'Or they ought to be,' said his Majesty.

'It's the same thing, isn't it?'

'Do you think so?' said the King, in a tone that showed he doubted it.

Just at this moment the pages entered, bringing the breakfast; and they sat down to it.

I needn't say it was much better than the first one, although I don't remember exactly what it consisted of; however, they did good justice to it, for Ernalie was rather hungry.

Just as they had finished, the King threw down his knife and fork and looked as if he had just remembered something dreadful.

'What *is* the matter, papa?' asked the Princess in alarm.

And the King burst out:

'There, now! I knew I'd forgotten something!' he said. 'Run out, all six of you,' he went on, addressing the pages, 'and set the joy-bells pealing, and send messengers throughout the land. Quick!'

But when they had gone, he calmed down and said:

'Now, Ernalie, tell me where you've been.'

So she began and told it all through, and the King listened quietly till she had finished. Then he said:

'Ah! You've had some wonderful adventures, and you've come back safe out of them—only, I should very much like to see this wonderful feather.'

So the Princess showed him the

feather in her hat, which she had laid on a chair; the King looked at it very carefully, and then he said:

'H'm. Looks a very ordinary feather. How does it work? I should like to see.'

'You won't see much,' said the Princess with a smile, as she put it on and vanished.

The King looked astonished.

'Why, where are you?' he said.

'I'm just where I was before, papa,' answered the Princess.

'But I don't believe it,' the King said, and he looked under the table. 'You've hidden yourself behind something—or some other trick.'

He was rather too startled to think of what his words meant exactly.

'You are a sceptical old papa for any one to have to do with; but I'll soon prove it to you.'

And she walked quietly behind his chair, and blew in his ear, which was

a rather rude thing to do, on the whole.

'Perhaps that will blow the disbelief out of your head,' she said, laughing to see how her unfortunate father shook his head in surprise.

'Oh yes,' he replied, 'I'm quite convinced, and I don't need any more; and I'd much rather see what you're up to, so just take the feather off, there's a good girl.'

And the Princess did as she was told, and the King said:

'Ah! there you are. Don't put it on again; I've had quite enough of it. Now I can understand how it was that you did it all. But I can't understand why you didn't let the young man save himself. You might just as well have lent him the feather, and let him go and get drowned.'

'But I didn't want him to get drowned,' said the Princess.

'Why not?' said the King.

'Because his father and mother took

me in, and saved me from Wopole, and it wouldn't have been a great return for their kindness to let their only son be killed, and besides I——' But her Royal Highness stopped.

'You what?' said her father.

'I mean he——' and she stopped again.

'Oh, it's him this time, is it? What's the matter with you?' he said in astonishment. 'You don't mean to say that you're in love with one another? Now I call that too bad. Here have I promised you to three dukes, and you've gone and fallen in love with a Prince. Now I shall have no end of a nuisance with them.'

'I won't marry them, at any rate,' said Ernalie energetically.

'I don't want you to marry *them*—one's quite enough at a time.'

'But I won't marry one of them, and I'm the principal person concerned.

And the Princess began to cry,

and that of course softened the heart of her father.

'There, there,' he said, as if he were soothing a baby. 'Don't cry; you shall marry the Prince, if you can get him—only it's rather awkward for me. I can't tell the dukes that you're engaged to a Prince that can't be got at. I'm afraid the only thing to do will be to have all their heads cut off. That'll keep them quiet, at any rate. If I were you I'd send this young man a letter to tell him where you are.'

'But I'm afraid it wouldn't reach him,' said the Princess.

'Then I don't see what's to be done,' said the King perplexedly. 'However, I shall give a grand ball to-morrow, and if I were you I should go and have a dress made at once. Send for the Court dressmaker, and tell her that if the dress isn't ready by then you'll turn her out of her place; and then when you've done that go

into the library, and take a book and read. I've got a whole lot of work to do this morning; but I shall have finished by one, and then I shall have the day to myself.'

'But can't I stay with you while you work? I will be very quiet.'

But the King shook his head.

'No—there's a good girl. I've got a whole lot of people to give audience to, and they'll take up such a lot of time congratulating you that I shall not get a stroke of work done.'

So the Princess went and was measured for her ball-dress, and then into the library, and looked about for a book.

Most of them looked very dry and uninteresting, so the Princess took one at a venture.

It was called *The Canterbury Tales*, by Geoffrey Chaucer.

'Chaucer,' said the Princess to herself, 'I've heard of him. I'll just take it on to the terrace and read it in the

arbour. It's better than sitting in this stuffy old library.'

So she opened one of the windows that led on to the steps of the terrace, and taking the book with her, stepped out of the room.

On the terrace a peacock was airing itself with some pea-hens, and when it saw the Princess it raised its great fan-like tail to display itself to greater advantage, then it quivered all over until the feathers of its tail rattled one against the other, and the hens looked admiringly at him, and then sideways at one another, nodding their heads and clucking, as if to say:

'Ha! what a fine fellow our master is, and what a splendid tail he's got. Much better than that poor human being's yellow stuff, which only moves when the wind blows it.' And then they looked contemptuously at the Princess's golden hair, and clucked to each other again, and followed the

peacock, which was strutting away to another part of the terrace.

So the Princess went and looked for the swans; but they were busily engaged right over at the other side of the lake, turning bottom upwards in a very undignified manner, and they refused to come for any amount of calling.

As there was nothing else to do, she went and sat down in a shady nook in the white marble wall, and began to look at her book.

'I shall skip the "Introduction" and the "Prologue"—that's always dry. Yes, let's see, this will do—"The Knightes Tale." It hasn't got any apostrophe to "Knightes." That's bad grammar, I'm sure. However, I'll go on.'

So she settled herself in a comfortable position with the book on her lap, and began again:

'Whilom as olde stories tellen us
A certeyn duk highte Theseus.'

Here she stopped.

'This man may be a good poet, but he spells awfully badly. Fancy "certain" spelt with an "e-y-n," and "duke" without an "e." It sounds like "duck." And then, what was the "height of Theseus"? I can't understand it at all.'

However, she read on, skipping pages here and there, for it was almost impossible for her to understand it. Now it happened that as she turned the pages over listlessly—for she was thinking of something else—her eye happened to fall on the name of 'Dian.'

'Why, that must be Diana! only they've forgotten the "a." I'll look a little farther and see what it says about her.'

So she ran her eye down the page, and sure enough she came upon the name.

'Why, it's spelt with a "y" now,' she said. 'Chaucer evidently doesn't

know his own mind in the matter of spelling. I'll write to him, and ask him about it. Now, let's see what it says. Why, it appears to be a prayer, or an invocation, or something.'

So she read:

'O chaste goddes of the woodes greene
To whence bothe heven and erthe are seene
Queen of the regne of Pluto dark and lowe
Goddes of maydens that myn hert has knowe
Ful many a yeer ye woot what I desire
As keep me fro the vengeans of thilk yre
That Actæon aboughte trewely . . . '

Just at this point she heard the rattling of chariot wheels, and Diana appeared to her.

'Well, what do you want now?' she said.

'I don't want anything in particular,' said Ernalie in astonishment.

'Then why did you go on praying to me like that?'

'I wasn't praying, I was reading.'

'It doesn't matter to me. It was a very funny prayer. Whoever was it by? He must have been a stupid man.'

'He was the father of English poetry,' the Princess said reproachfully.

'I should have thought he was a great-great-grandfather when he wrote that.'

'Why?' said the Princess in astonishment.

'It seems uncommonly like the writing of a man in his second childhood. However, that does not matter. About the feather now. What can I do in exchange for it? I will give you anything you want.'

The Princess looked at the Goddess.

'Why do you want the feather so much?' she asked. 'Are you not invisible enough already?'

The Goddess looked at her sneeringly:

'I *am* invisible to dull mortals; but

we gods can see each other well enough, invisible or not. If I had this feather, though, it would be different, and I should be able to laugh at Venus and that set.'

'Then I'm sure I won't give it you, for as Venus is the Goddess of Beauty she might make me ugly, and that would not be nice for me.'

Diana laughed.

'You evidently don't consider yourself bad-looking,' she said; and she was just going on to say something else when an enormous wolf, without a muzzle too, appeared coming round the side of the Palace.

'There's Mars,' said Diana.

'I don't see him. I only see a horrible wolf, and——'

But the Goddess interrupted her.

'Why, you stupid, that's Mars's wolf, and where it is Mars is sure to be, or he isn't far off.'

'But what does he want here?' asked Ernalie.

'He's going to escort me to Jupiter's ball, and he'll be awfully impatient. However, he can wait. Now think, is there nothing?'

The Princess reflected a moment.

'If I give it to you,' she said, 'you must do several things for it, and those quickly.'

The Goddess nodded.

'First, you must make a road across the mountains into the country beyond.'

'That is easy enough,' said the Goddess.

'Then you must kill the dragon.'

'He died last week of sheer starvation. So that's done. Next.'

'You must bring Treblo here.'

'Do you mean that he's to marry you? That's too bad, considering that you know I detest marriages. However, it can't be helped. Is that all? Because if there's much more you had better write it down.'

'There's nothing more, except that

it must all be done by half-past six to-morrow evening.'

'Oh! is that all? You shall have it all done before then,' said the Goddess, very much relieved that the tasks that were to be done had been set.

'Then, if you're here to-morrow evening I'll give it to you.'

Just then Mars appeared round the corner, looking very bad-tempered.

'If you *are* coming at all, you'd better come at once.'

So Diana said:

'Very well, to-morrow evening I shall be here.'

And she drove her chariot towards the God of War, and when he had got in they turned the corner of the house and disappeared.

Just then the King came into the garden from the library window.

'What have you been doing?' he asked her. 'I've been watching you for some minutes from the window, and you've been going on in the

most extraordinary manner, talking and laughing, just as if you had been speaking to some one.'

The Princess brushed back her hair from her face.

'Oh! I didn't know you could see me,' she said. 'It's nothing—only a little surprise I've been preparing for you.'

'Indeed, you surprise me,' the King said.

'Ah, well! if I do that so easily perhaps I shall do it often,' she said.

'What have you been doing all the morning?' the King asked.

'All the morning?' said the Princess in astonishment. 'It's not late, is it?'

The King pulled out his watch and looked at it.

'It's half-past five by my watch; but I don't think that's quite right—in fact it stopped three days ago. Ah! I thought so—there's the dinner-gong.

You needn't wash your hands, or you'll be late.'

So they went in together, and the rest of the day passed off quietly, except that every now and then one of the enthusiastic nobles insisted on coming in and welcoming the Princess, although the King had given strict orders that no one should be admitted, as he wanted to be alone for the day. In spite of this, every now and then an elderly duchess *would* rush into the royal presence, and offer her congratulations.

At last, just as they hoped that the last of them had come and gone, the door opened, and an elderly man—he would have been offended at being called old—rushed in and clasped the Princess in his arms.

'My adored Duchess——' he was just beginning.

But the Princess boxed his ears suddenly, and he let go.

'What on earth does this mean?'

she said, turning to the King. 'First I am inundated with duchesses until I'm quite tired of the name, and then this old fright rushes in and calls me *his* duchess, when I'm not a duchess at all. What does he mean, papa?'

The King looked rather embarrassed.

'It's one of them,' he said meaningly.

'Oh! it's one of them, is it?' she said. 'Well, sir'—turning to the Duke—'what do *you* mean by forcing your way here against the royal orders?'

'I thought,' said the Duke, looking rather foolish, 'that as you are going to——'

'But I'm not,' said Ernalie suddenly, 'after such rudeness. You may go, and don't come back again.'

And the Duke went.

'That's got rid of one of them, at any rate,' the King said, with a sigh of relief.

'I'll do my best to get rid of them all,' said the Princess.

'How?' the King began. Then he

stopped. 'Wait a moment. I have an idea,' he went on.

'Indeed, you surprise me,' said the Princess.

But the King did not notice her impertinent remark. He went to a drawer, and took out a large piece of paper, and wrote on it as large as he could:

'NOTICE.

'During the next twenty-four hours, any one found kissing, embracing, congratulating, or suing for the hand of the Princess—or King—will be submerged three times in the Palace draw-well.

'(Signed) CARET, etc. etc.'

'That ought to do it,' said the King, surveying his handiwork approvingly.

Just then the door opened, and two more old gentlemen—each wearing a ducal coronet—tottered in as fast as they could.

'My dear Princess,' 'My darling wife,' they duetted in feeble tones, showing as much joy as their faces were capable of, which made them look about as pleasant as a pair of Japanese masks.

'Allow me to congratulate you,' 'Allow me to offer my congratulations,' they went on.

'Now you've done it,' said the King. 'Look here!' And he showed them the notice.

The two Dukes turned each a different shade of yellow.

'But, your Majesty,' one of them began.

'But, your Majesty,' said the other suddenly; 'as I'm——'

'As I'm——' the other put in.

Each of them stopped and looked angrily at the other.

'As the son-in-law elect of the King,' the first one began.

'As the affianced husband of the Princess,' said the other.

'I think I have the right to speak first,' they both said angrily.

But the King said, coolly:

'My lords, the case is very clear. You have each of you offended against the law by congratulating the Princess, and as one of you, if not both, intends to marry my daughter and become King, it is as well to teach you from the beginning that the law must be abided by. Therefore, you will be ducked — "submerged," the notice says—until one of you expires; the other will then marry Ernalie, and in course of time—if he does not die of the effects in the meantime—he will ascend the throne, having learnt a useful lesson.'

As the Dukes got greener and greener at this, the King went on:

'The sentence had better be executed at once, so come along to the courtyard.'

'But, your Majesty,' said one of them, 'I am subject to rheumatism,

and I should not be fit to reign if this immersion in cold water should make it so bad that I was unable to move.'

'That's just the case with me,' said the other.

'Ah, well, if that is so,' said the King, 'perhaps you would like to give up your pretensions to my daughter's hand. In that case, I should let you off, because there would be no need to give you such a practical exemplification of the majesty of the law.'

The Dukes looked perplexedly at one another.

'I think,' said one of them, 'that, under the circumstances, I will give up my pretensions to the Princess's hand.'

Here he looked regretfully at her right hand.

'And I too,' said the other sadly, looking at her left hand.

'How *very* gallant of you,' the Princess said ironically. 'And now,

as you've got rid of me so easily, perhaps you will be so kind as to leave us for a time. Good-day.'

'Good-day,' duetted the Dukes.

And they huddled out as well as they could, each trying to get behind the other.

'I think that's got rid of all the suitors for to-day,' the King said when the door closed behind them. 'I'll just go and have the notice hung on the door, and I'll be back in a minute.'

And he went, too.

Now really, he thought he had let the Dukes off too easily, and he intended to catch them up and fine them, but they had made off so uncommonly fast that they had disappeared before he got to the street door.

Meanwhile the Princess waited quietly for him; but hearing a noise of wheels outside the window, she went to see what was the cause of it.

'Why, it's him!' she said delightedly, and with utter disregard of English grammar.

Opening the window she called out, 'Treblo! Treblo!' and, running down the steps towards him, threw herself into his arms.

For a moment she was too much out of breath to say anything at all, and Treblo too surprised to do anything but just hold her in his arms; and the King, who had just returned from the search after the Dukes, was far too taken aback to do anything but stand with his mouth and eyes wide open.

'I call this too bad,' he said in a low voice; and then raising it, he called out:

'Young man, I say, have you seen the notice?'

Treblo looked annoyed.

'What is the notice to me, you old fool?' he said.

The King looked more and more astonished.

'This is too much,' he said. 'Ernalie, when you've done kissing that young man perhaps you'll tell me who he is. You see, it's no use my putting up notices about other people embracing you if you go and perform on some one immediately afterwards. Now just tell me who it is.'

'Why, it's him, papa,' said Ernalie, who had by this time disengaged herself.

'Oh, it's a *him*, is it?' the King said. 'That's what the three others said they were, but they wouldn't suit you.'

'But they were so very old; besides, this is *the* him, papa.'

'Ah, I see,' said the papa, laughing. 'It's a case of "Ancient and Modern Hymns," and you prefer the modern. But what about the notice?'

'What *is* the notice?' asked Treblo, rather puzzled; 'and what has it got to do with me?'

'More than you think,' said the King. 'It's worth reading, I can tell you, especially during the next twenty-four hours. I should advise you to learn it by heart—that is, if you intend. However, I'll go and fetch it, and you will be able to see for yourself.'

And the King went off to look for his notice.

When he had gone, the Princess said:

'But how did you get here? I thought the mountains could not be crossed.'

'I don't know anything about the mountains, or how I came here either, for that matter. All I know is that I was suddenly caught up in a thick mist which hid me from every one, and every one from me too, and before I knew anything I was whirled off here in about a minute and a half, and then you came running down the steps — and that's all I know.

Now perhaps you'll tell me where I am, for I haven't the faintest idea?'

'Why, you're in the middle of the kingdom of Aoland, and that was my father, and this is my home—and it's all right.'

'Yes, it's all right now, but you wouldn't have said it was all right if you had been carried like me.'

'But you should feel yourself highly honoured and not injured. Why, you stupid fellow, it was a goddess who was carrying you like the heroes of Homer.'

'A goddess!' said the Prince, laughing. 'Why, you must have been the goddess, Ernalie, and you're quite——'

But the Princess stopped him.

'What's the use of saying that if you won't believe me? It really was a goddess; and if you would like to know her name, it was Diana.'

'Diana!' said the Prince. 'Why did she carry me off like this?'

'Because I told her to, of course.'

The Prince shook his head.

'Come, I say, Ernalie,' he said, 'this is too much, you know. I suppose you want me to believe that?'

'Of course I do. Why should I have told you if I hadn't wanted you to?'

'Yes, that's all very well,' said the unbelieving Prince; 'but how do you do it?'

'I just make myself invisible, and then I make people do everything I like; they have to do it, or else I tease them till they do. But let's come into the house and I'll tell you all about it. But why are you holding me so tightly?'

'I am afraid that you will suddenly vanish as you did once before, and I don't want that—you've been away from me long enough.'

'Oh, but I won't leave you again, Treblo,' she said, 'I promise that—that is, if you don't want me to.'

'Then you won't leave me, dear?' he said; 'for I shall never want to lose sight of you again.'

So they went in, and the Princess told him what you know already—if you haven't skipped it. But all the same he did not leave go of her, and I don't think it was from mistrust.

Ernalie finished relating her story, and the Prince was beginning:

'My dearest Ernalie, how can I ——' when the door opened, and the King came in.

'I've had such a job,' he said, wiping his forehead. 'There were about three thousand people assembled reading the notice, and they jeered and hooted so much that I had to make them a speech before they'd go away. However, here's the notice.'

The Prince read it through carefully, and when he had finished he looked at the King and said:

'Well?'

'That's just it,' said the King; 'the Palace draw-*well*.'

'But as I'm the affianced bride of — I mean, as Ernalie's my future husband——'

'That's just what the other two said—at least they said, and more correctly, that they were my sons-in-law elect; only that didn't help them.'

By this time the Prince was looking more puzzled than ever.

'Who are these other two?' he said, turning to the Princess.

('Beware of the green-eyed monster,' the King said parenthetically.)

'Oh, they're only three dukes that papa had promised my hand to—only I wouldn't have them.'

'You mean they wouldn't have you,' said the King, correcting her.

'I don't mean anything of the sort,' said the Princess.

'Oh, very well, my dear,' said the King. 'Of course, if you say so,

it's all right. But how about the notice?'

'I think we'll tear that up,' said Ernalie. 'It's done its duty, and it will be rather in the way now.'

'Indeed, you surprise me,' remarked the King.

'Ernalie is quite right,' said the Prince.

'Oh! is she?' said the King. 'Then I suppose I'd better tear it up.' And he did.

When he had finished, and had thrown the fragments into the waste-paper basket, he said:

'Now I suppose you want me to consent to your marrying each other, and I suppose I'd better, or else I shall have Ernalie pitching into me like anything — only, I really don't know who you are, young man, except that Ernalie says you are "him" (she ought to say he), and so I suppose you are Treblo, the Prince of the neighbouring kingdom?'

'I am,' said the Prince. 'And I suppose you are the King of this country?'

The King was just about to say 'I am,' when another voice sounded through the room so clear and commanding that each of them looked towards the window from which it came; but nothing was to be seen there.

'The road is made,' it said, 'and now perhaps you'll give me the feather.'

'Certainly,' said the Princess. 'Here it is,' and she held it out in the direction of the Goddess. 'Only, you might let us see you before you go for ever.'

'Oh, certainly,' said the Goddess, for, to tell the truth, Diana—like others besides goddesses—was very fond of being admired; and immediately she appeared in the middle of the room with her silver bow and quiver slung over her back, and the star that she

always wore shining on her forehead.

She took the feather and, smiling, put it to her hair, and on the moment passed away; so that, where she had seemed to be, they saw the thin circlet of the moon hanging silvery and pale over the flush of the sun's departure.

. . . .

'It really was Diana,' Treblo said.

'Yes, of course it was, you sceptical boy,' Ernalie answered; and then, with a little sigh, 'I wish I had the feather still, it makes me feel just like any other girl being without it.'

'But you're not—not a bit—there's no one like you in the world!' Treblo said hotly.

'Why, I believe you're right—upon my word I do,' the King said suddenly, looking up from a book in which he had seemed immersed. '*I* never knew any one like her—for obstinacy.'

'Let's go into the garden, Treblo,' the Princess said.

'You'll catch your deaths of cold,' the King remarked.

But somehow, although they quietly ignored his prudent observation, which was really wrong of them, they never caught cold. And that is all the stranger, because the evening was falling very rapidly, with a feeling of cool dew after the heat of the day, with a faint scent of roses and honeysuckle, and no sound on the air but the splash of a fish as it jumped for a moment out of the smooth river, or the short, shrill shriek of a bat that was circling in the air above them. They sat in a marble niche in the wall that had roses running up it and hanging down like a net in front of them—sat and talked till it grew so dark that he could no longer see the golden threads in her brown hair; until he could no longer see that her eyes were hazel-gray and long-lashed,

or even that her face was a long, sweet, serious oval. So, you see, it must have been *quite* a long time that they sat and talked thus.

But from this you are not to imagine that their example is to be emulated—not by any means; because I am perfectly certain that if any one were foolish enough to do it nowadays, they'd have perfectly miserable colds-in-the-head at the very least, not to mention rheumatic pains, so I should really advise you not to try any such tricks; very likely the Prince and Princess had something especial to keep them warm, or perhaps they sat rather close together—it's just possible.

However, next morning the Prince and Princess set out together for the court of King Abbonamento.

They arrived safely at the Palace, and were received with joy by every one—except Mumkie, who was already making preparations to make himself

King again, for he was quite sure that the Prince had been carried off for good. So, when he saw the Prince returning, safe and sound, he was seized with such a fit of rage that he jumped into the sea, and swam right out of sight. Wopole having, moreover, committed the fatal mistake of setting sail from the moon when it set, had unfortunately chosen the wrong side of the earth. And from that day to this neither he nor Mumkie has ever been heard more of.

But in a very short time the Prince and Princess were married, and it is needless to say—because, since we live in the nineteenth century, no one will believe it, but still, if you'll take my word for it—they lived happily ever afterwards.

THE END

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