# The Magic Crook or the Stolen Baby

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or

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CURDIE AND JONAS

# The Magic Crook

## or the Stolen Baby

A Fairy Story

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Illustrated by Arthur Hughes.

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# Dedications

## To Miss Katharine King, aged 14

I WROTE this tale, sweet Maid, for your delight—
  A fairy tale, wherein a child may see
  How joy and pain are roses on one tree,
Though one be sweet, the other cramped with blight.
It tells of fairy play and goblin spite,
  How greed spoils everything, how love sets free
  The joy of lamb and bird and honey-bee,
And tunes the music of their hearts aright.

Your Mother's truthful eyes give light to bear
  The grief and havoc wrought by things unkind ;
  Your Father's purposeful and steadfast mind
Braves dragons that make weaker knights despair :
  Kitty ! these God-sent gifts they gave to you :
  Be happy, gentle, strong ; be fearless, true !

## To Curdie, the Old-English Sheep-dog, an important Person in the Story, and belonging to Miss Katharine King

CURDIE ! once teaching the grass-cropping sheep
With baas and sweet bells their bounds for to keep,
Or watching the lambs—such an innocent spy !—
When fed by their mothers, or leaping on high :
  Curdie ! beloved of fairy and maid—
  One eye white-clouded like moon's ambuscade,
  The other brown, starry, of nothing afraid—
  Seeking and finding the lambs that are strayed !

Curdie ! thou wise dog of winsomest ways,
Asking 'fore all things thy mistress's praise,
Yet wild for a scampering night on the doon,
When fairy folk summon to starlight or moon :
  Curdie, thou wag ! but with never a tail,
  Never a hope that can weary or fail,
  Calling thy mistress with musical wail,
  Pounding thy paws in beseeching assail !

Curdie ! thy mother, a kind shaggy bear,
Cuddled her puppies in wild rocky lair ;
Thy father, a prince among faëry hounds,
Leapt all the gates of humanity's bounds.
  Curdie ! right busy with black and pink nose,
  Sniffing Puck's secrets wherever wind blows,
  Finding lost sheep tumble-tangled in woes—
  And rabbits in dozens—though nobody knows !

Curdie ! just tell us a tale built on truth—
Let it be moonshine, or nonsense, forsooth !
Tell us a tale of thy own doggie creed--
Of Love, the brave fairy in every kind deed :—
  But Curdie just answers—with never a brag,
  Lifting his wise head as proud as a stag,
  Or solemn Crusader unfurling his flag—
  " I'd tell *such* a tale if I had one to wag ! "

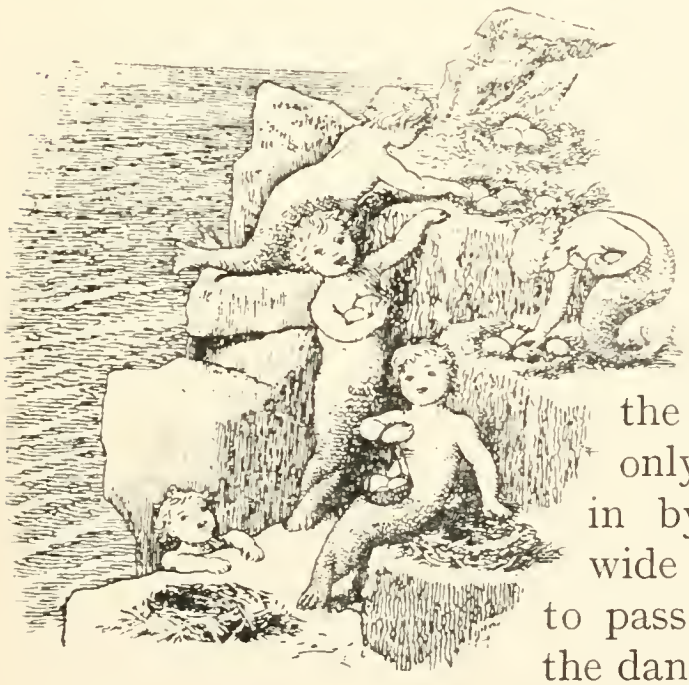
# Contents

# The Magic Crook

## CHAPTER I

About myself and the People I belong to—including Curdie the Sheep-dog and the Baby who is stolen.

AT the mouth and on the western side of a peaceful harbour in the south of England, where I spent many summers of my early boyhood, stands Gull's Island. It is but a rock surmounted by a dwarf lighthouse. It is beloved by ten thousand sea-birds as a safe meeting-place, although, they say, on moonlit nights young mermaids may be seen stealing eggs. On one side of it there is wide and safe passage to the harbour; on the other only a narrow channel, walled in by precipitous rocks, yet wide enough for small craft to pass at high tide in spite of the dangerous currents. Towering above this channel, in the red cliffs of the mainland, is a terrible rock, which, from the open sea, looks like a face.



The low brow, the deep-set eye, the hook-nose almost meeting the upturned lip, and the receding chin suggest such a degree of wickedness that it is known both by landsman and sailor as the Rock-devil.

On fine nights my father would often take us fishing with a friendly old fisherman; and, though I loved these expeditions, their chief joy perhaps, when coming home in the early dawn, was to feel my father's arm about me as protection against the Rock-devil's malevolence. At high tide we would sail through the narrow channel, and the roar of the wind added much to the horror as we shot beneath the spell of that wicked face. Suddenly both it and the roar would be left behind us, and our cottage, with its gay garden and great red roof, would come into sight on the near shore as we made for the little jetty beyond. Though the rock looked innocent enough from the land side, where the short yellow-green grass straggled almost to its summit, the consciousness of the evil thing beyond often held me fast. I felt sure also that, but for the hate in that face, the little mermaids would seek for eggs in the daytime as well as upon moonlit nights. On dark or stormy nights I dreamed of the rock; and even in the day, however happy I might be, there was often a dim background of the possible fear. Yet, child-like, I never spoke of my fear.

I shall never forget a certain hot evening in July, when the open sea lay still in fine, dancing sparkles and the tiny wavelets in the harbour scarcely ruffled the stretch of sand at the foot of our garden. My two elder brothers, intent upon a bathe, launched our little boat and jumped in after me. The tide was at its ebb. Making our way round a little rocky promontory, we came in sight of the Rock-

devil's hoof, planted in the sand and just touching the narrow channel of dark water that lay between it and the island. The boys made for this channel and took no notice of a little face that must have been at once white with fear and its eyes big with excitement. The sun was setting over the sea, so that the hateful rock cast its shadow right across the island, the lighthouse even standing in its gloom. Our little boat, therefore, shot out of the hot sunlight into cool shade, which my brothers found sweet enough for their dip. My mother had forbidden my bathing at sundown, though my brothers were, my father would say, the most sedate of water-dogs. So, while they were diving into the dark green water from a favourite rock on Gull's Island, or quietly swimming thence into the still sunny harbour, the boat lay with its nose fast in the sand by the side of the hoof. Though in much fear of that hoof, I picked my way between rocks and pools and patches of sand, round the huge rock and out from its shadow, so that I looked upon the open sea and right into the red setting sun. Thence, having found courage in the light, I dared peep up at the face which, from immediately below, looked quite meaningless. As I raised my eyes, I saw what I had never noticed before—a tiny waterfall gushing out from the side of the hated rock about as high above me as the eaves of our cottage. It fell nearly straight down, only twice broken by projecting edges of rock. I put my mouth to the little torrent and drank, in spite of the drenching I got. The sweet, cold water, I remember, was wonderful! I took a deep breath after it, and felt that I was somehow a different boy and no longer afraid. I went back into the shadow and lay down full length by a deep pool into which penetrated sideways a ray of red sunshine; so that, with my

back to the sun, I could see clearly into the still water. It was now illuminate with wonder. I saw on a steep hillside a red and green forest of seaweeds, the toy tree-tops now catching the light, now hidden in green darkness. I saw strange beings of ghostly pallor—shrimps, indeed—darting through the branches of the little sea-trees ; and, crawling sideways on the hill, a little flat crab with red spots on its shell. There were also two entrancing sea-anemones, their blue and red tentacles gently waving. Perhaps I fell asleep and dreamed ; for I remember walking into a great land of shining wonders, a crystal city full of busy fairy people, and a gloomy place thronged by chattering goblins. Then suddenly I knew my brothers were calling me : indeed, they were already in their clothes again.

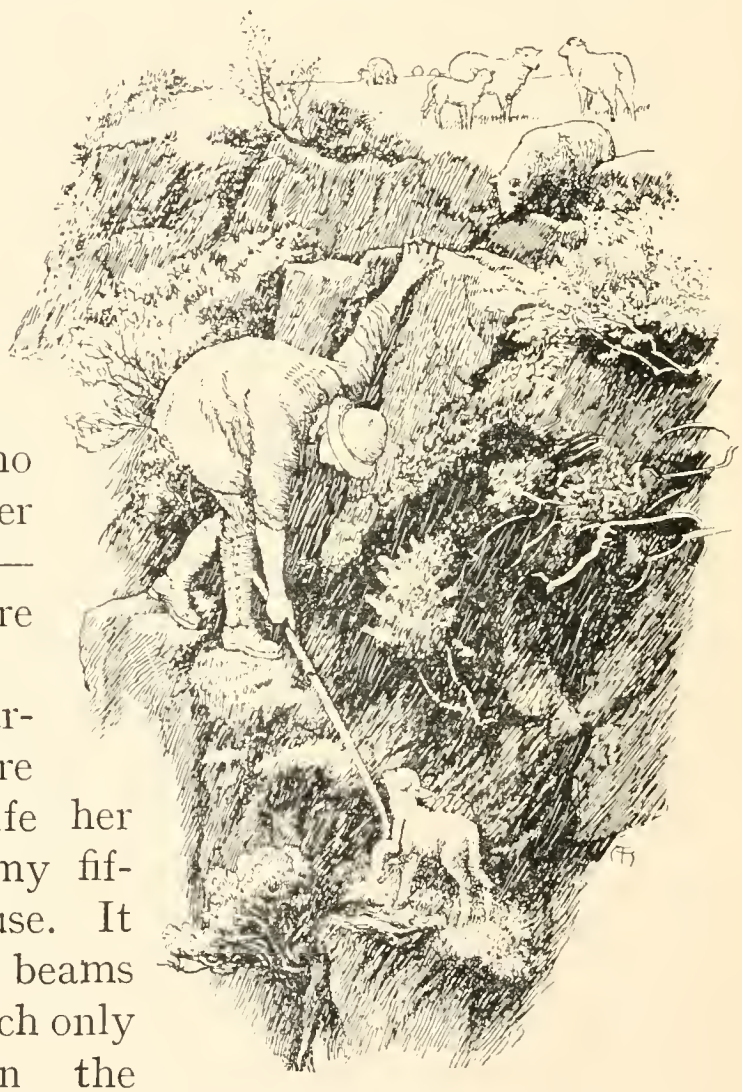
I felt as if I had been many hours away on a journey in Fairyland. Dream or reality, it left an impression upon me that had much to do with my seeking that same Fairyland in after years whenever I was in trouble. Curiously, I could barely remember where I had been ; though on starlit nights on the Downs, after my sheep were folded, I would occasionally recall certain incidents of such a journey into Fairyland. But somehow I could never feel quite sure I had not been dreaming, until I met with the adventures told in this story-book.

A few explanations are necessary before I proceed with my tale ; for, although the writing of it was undertaken only for my wife's and our children's sake, others may be interested, and indeed helped, should like strange things and adventures come to them. Briefly I must state what kind of man I am. My father was from Edinburgh ; he came south and prospered. My mother was Scot also, but

pure Celt from Sutherlandshire. Her people were of humble but proud origin. They numbered in their annals a few soldiers of fortune, some of distinction, many ministers, and even more shepherds. In my very earliest childhood I had discovered a passionate love for sheep, so that again and again I had come home with a broken heart because I had seen in the London streets thirsty and footsore sheep being cruelly driven to a shocking death. Once, when only six years old, I had flown at a blue-bloused butcher, who, with merciless stick, was helping the drover; and I kicked him with my heavy little boots till I fell sobbing with anger upon the flagstones. I was too delicate to thrive in London, and was always well upon the hills. Once in the early springtime my parents took me with them on a visit to my mother's people. Among these was a shepherd, my uncle. He had a croft on the bleak hills, and, like many a Highland shepherd, was more prosperous than the smaller farmers. I was very fond of him; and as my health improved amazingly while under his skies and roof, and as my cousins—five boys and girls, all older than myself—made much of me, it was decided to leave me there during the summer. At the end of the autumn I wrote home begging to stay the winter and help with the sheep till lambing was over. I had improved so wonderfully in health that it was decided to let me have my way, in spite of the roughness of the life.

One consequence of my visit was that nothing thereafter would satisfy me but to become a shepherd. My father assented to this, and took every pains that I should learn all about sheep and the ways of shepherds in different parts of the country. Much time I spent upon the Sussex Downs, and indeed worked as hard as any shepherd-lad among them

all till I was two-and-twenty. Upon a certain glorious June morning at five o'clock, high up on the lonely Downs, I found one who now loves to say she had been waiting there for me, she thinks, for eighteen years: that was her age when I met her. The freshness of a soft west wind unknown in other hour or place than these; the brilliant sky; the luminous blue sea at our feet as we stood upon the edge of the great white cliffs; the air we drank together out of one wide and glorious cup: these things nor she nor I will ever forget. In three weeks I married her and brought her home to my amazed mother, who instantly took her in her arms and wept over her—to my exclusion and entire joy.



We had not been married many months before there came to my wife her ancestral home—a roomy fifteenth-century farm-house. It was framed in black oak beams of that gracious line which only their original duty in the sailing-ship's frame could give. Acquiring an almost stony hardness in their unbending submission to time and weather, these beams gave strength and beauty to the oft-patched

brickwork and upheld the mossy roof of heavy Sussex flags. With the house came over two hundred acres of rich arable land, with rights almost boundless for the sheep to wander and feed over wonderful downlands. My wife's family was of oldest yeoman stock, and her father used to rejoice, she told me, in its pure Saxon origin. She herself has the broad, happy brow, the shining blue eye, the full and firm mouth which speak of charity and the un-aging heart of childhood. In the course of years children came to us. The three eldest are boys, the youngest a baby girl.

The boys at the time of my story were eight, six, and four and a half years old. The eldest's name is Kit, the pet name for Christopher. The full name we use only when he has to be severely spoken to. The second is Davie, or David in severity. The third is in all cases Robin. The baby is a real princess, though she is not old enough for her own name to count for much. It

is Susan. But Kit named her Princess Honey-pot, because, as he declared, the bumble-bees and butterflies come flying about her directly she is taken out into the sun. Then there is Trystie, who came to us from out of the story, and so never lets us doubt that it is a true one. Lastly we have four old English sheep-dogs, wise creatures with no tails. The dearest of them is named Curdie, after the fine boy in the fairy story *The Princess and the Goblin*, which all wise children love. This dog knows so much about things that Kirstie says he is half fairy. We love him dearly. He goes all through this story, even when he disappears for a time.

I doubt if more happiness was possible than came to me. Yet, as with so many shepherds, I was a very silent man and sometimes gloomy. This weakness in my character and a certain difficulty in giving words to my thoughts and feelings would often hurt my dear wife; so that I began to feel there was a little cloud

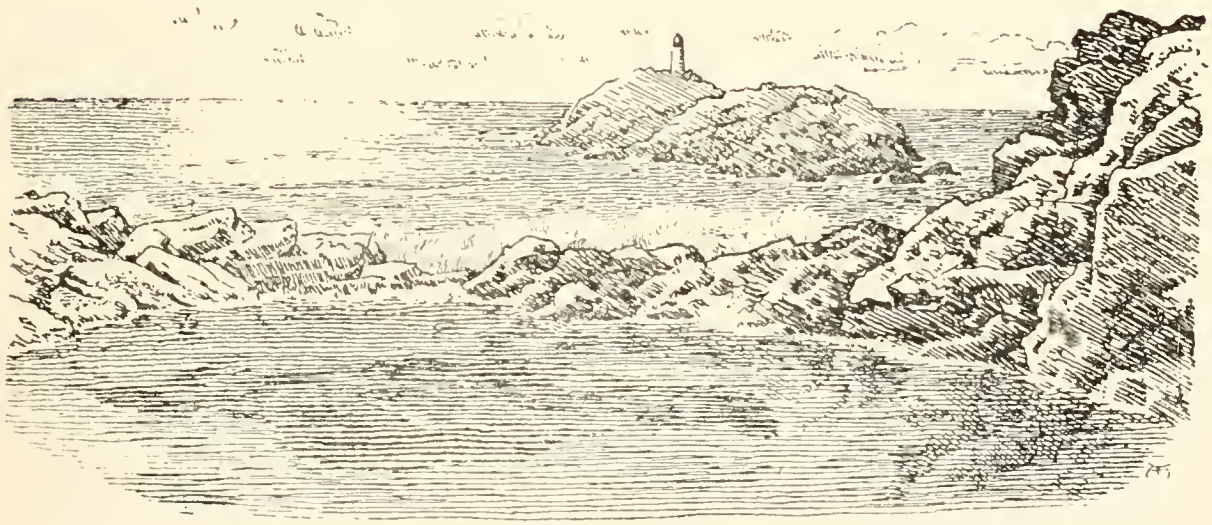
settling over the light of her eyes. This gloominess would sometimes assail me for days together. It was largely dependent upon my vivid imagination; whereby every sort of disaster that could possibly befall my wife and the children assumed real proportions. But for the most part my disposition was quite happy. Of this fear, I may add, I was quite cured after the adventures here related. And now for my story.

There had been a great north wind blowing through the May night. The clouds rushed in angry gusts across the full moon, so that the steep-sloping Downs upon which our farm-house looked were at moments quite invisible and then again flooded with silver light. I could get no sleep; so, crook in hand, I went out and called Curdie. There was no answer to my call; but up the hill before me I saw him racing away to the west of our beech wood as if he had scent of a lost sheep. But he shone like silver in the moonlight. Then a great load of thick clouds was flung by the wind across the moon's face, and all was black; at the same moment one of our chimneys fell with a great crash, but fortunately clear of the roof. The whole house was awake. Candles soon were alight, and, as I went indoors, my wife in her nightdress rushed to me asking what I had done with the baby! She had disappeared without a cry, and no one knew anything. All I could tell was that I had seen Curdie tearing away and refusing my call.

The trouble to us all can be well imagined. It was terrible. The fact that Curdie was gone too made it more extraordinary. However, Kirstie—an elderly woman from the Ross-shire Highlands who told wonderful fairy stories to the children, and loved them as if they were her own—

felt no great concern. She always believed in fairies, and was sure they had kidnapped the baby. She knew something would happen some day, she had once said, because there were no mountain-ashes growing near the house. Yet she insisted that the fairies in these parts had kind hearts. She spoke with so much assurance that my wife was somehow a little comforted and tried to believe that in a few days the child would be restored again.

But the whole of the next day I was of no use; and when the wind rose again the following night, my fears—this time not groundless—took such hold upon me that once again, although I wanted to be near my anguished wife, I could not resist the impulse to go forth and meet my fear, in hope that in this way I should find the child.

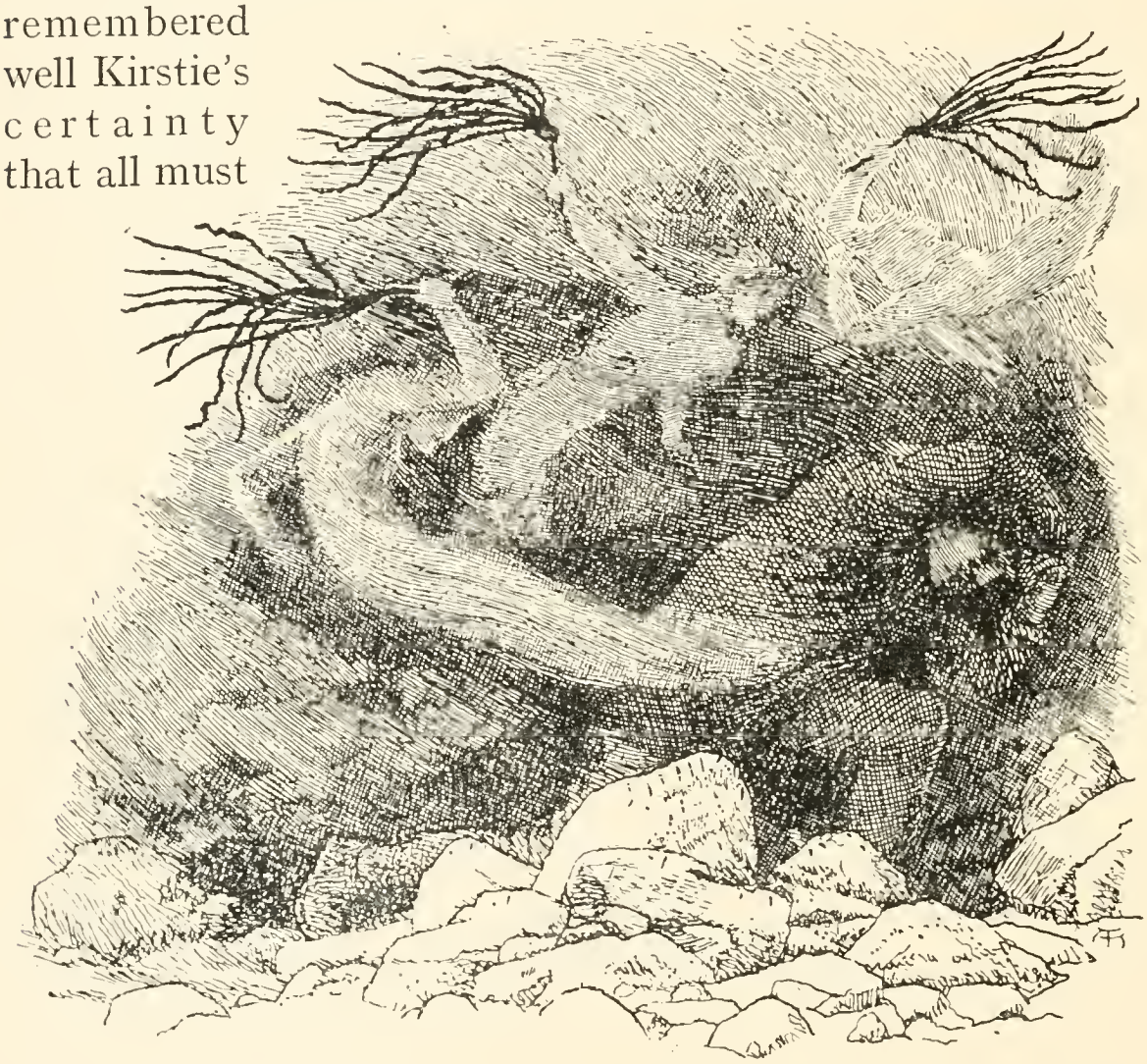


## CHAPTER II

My Adventures begin, and Curdie begs leave to join in them.

THE story is all about the journey I then took. Yet in writing it I was always beset with the difficulty that I could remember nothing of my doings in Fairyland, except on clear starlit nights on the Downs. As it was quite necessary that my wife and children should know all about my adventures, I began to write them down the first favourable night after my return. I had to tell how Curdie helped me to find the Princess. I wanted to tell all about a certain pearly necklace she brought back with her ; and how Trystie, who has so much to do with the story and whom we came to love so dearly, gave me her faithful companionship. So I would take a notebook and pencil with me on to the great star-watched Downs above sea and earth, and write all I could remember. It took many such nights. Curdie would generally keep me company ; less often my wife ; now and again Kit and Trystie. We would sit beneath a clump of white-beam, the leaves of which reflected some light from the stars, as did even more the bright iron of my favourite shepherd's crook : it always glittered in the starshine, and had much to do with my adventures. It was in this way that I wrote down all that follows.

On the stormy night when I left the farm, my old enemy Fear had a worse grip upon me than ever before, because, as I have said, he had better reason. The crushing anxiety about the baby blotted out all less miseries. I remembered well Kirstie's certainty that all must



be well with the little fifteen-months child; and though her assurance had comforted somewhat the mother with her trustful Saxon eyes, it made me angry.

It must not be thought that I was in ordinary senses a coward. I know I was not that, and had often done things counted brave, but which a man does because he can't do

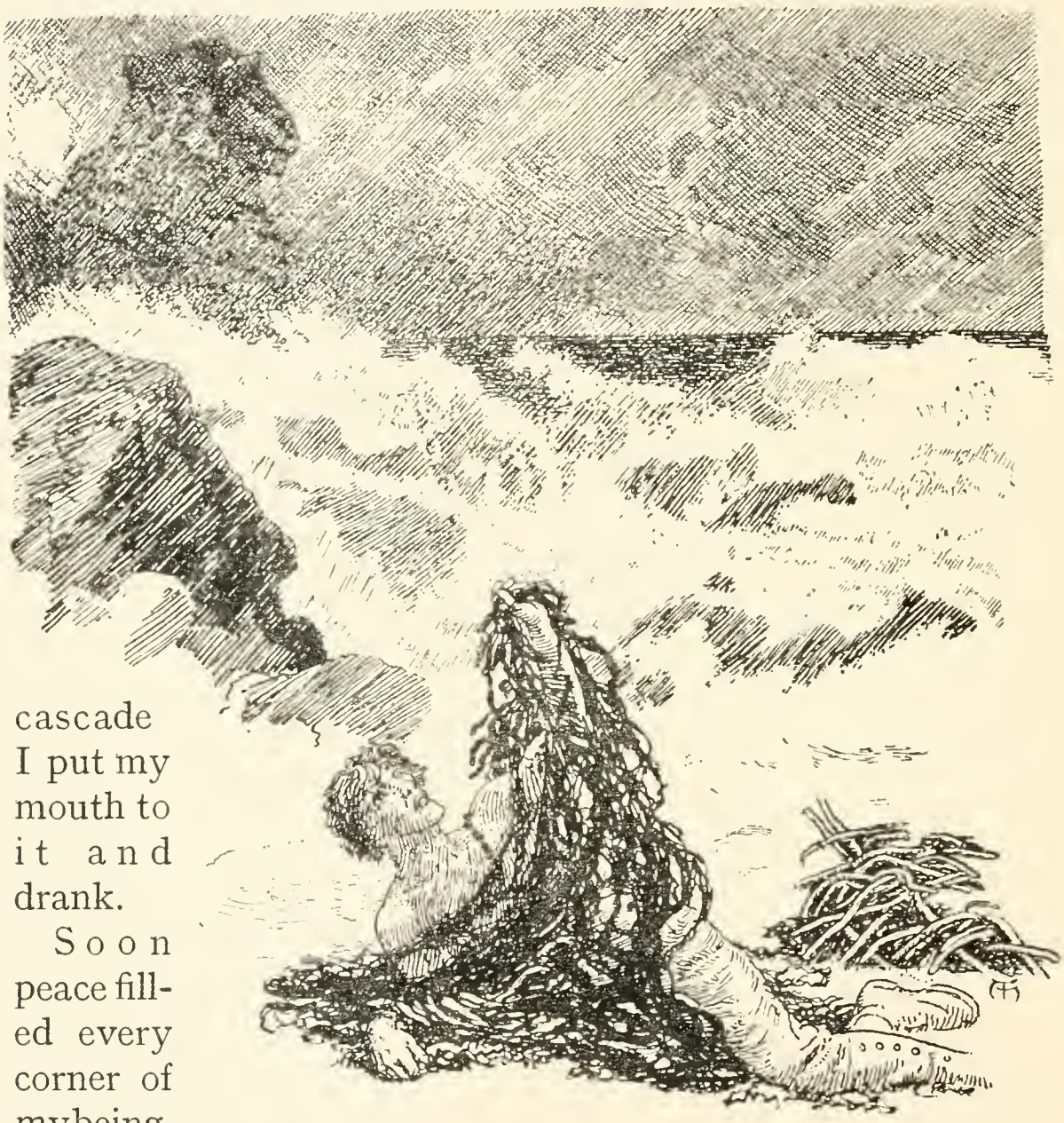
otherwise. It was in my heart that I lacked courage, fearing, as I have said, that dreadful things might happen to those I loved. Nowadays I have more faith, and am sure that harm never happens to child or sparrow without loving care being taken of them.

As it had often been with me before, when misery had hold upon me, I had no choice but to find the Devil-rock of my childhood, though it was a full hundred miles away. I must find the great hoof planted in the sand and quench my thirst at the little waterfall. I then should reach the fairy country in the deep rocky pool, and should come back home a more trustful man. Now, too, I had a vague but strong feeling that this was the way I must go if I would find the wee Princess again. How such an idea took possession of me I do not know. Perhaps it was Kirstie's doing, after all. Anyhow, I set out.

I began with two long nights on the seashore in strife with sea-furies, who, with great ribbands of wet seaweed, lashed my face. White foamy ghosts shrieked into my ears; stones, briars and brambles, gorse and wet clods of earth were flung at me from the high cliffs and coombs to stop my going. My consciousness was filled with misery and yet with a need to go forwards. Two nights, I am sure, I spent thus; because between them I remember one day of peace, during which I lay on the highest point of a steep red cliff, looking out upon a quiet, glittering sea, while breezes, redolent of balsamic grasses and wild thyme, mothered me to sleep.

At the end of the second night, in the chilly dawn, I was crawling on hands and knees, entangled in dripping coils of brown seaweed. The first thing to show clearly was the face of the Rock-devil; but I had been so abjectly

beaten that it no longer made me afraid. I must get to the stream of sweet water and drink. I found the little



cascade I put my mouth to it and drank.

Soon peace filled every corner of my being. I opened my eyes. My entanglements were gone. Warm and dry, I lay on the gentle slope of a hill-side. A great tree rose above me with a red flattened stem. It spread out into the most intricate branches, which, like the leaves,

were as crimson as Norwegian maples in autumn. Then I saw other trees of different form, the leaves many shades of greens, some stiff and nearly black, some feathery and drooping to the ground. The atmosphere itself was bluish in tint. Everything near me stood out bright and clear; but the misty blue air hid any distant hills or lands.

It was quite plain to me that I had once again got into Fairyland—that portion of it within the waters of the sea. Yet there was nothing like water about me as we know it at home. Even my clothes were dry. The water had become the element in which I breathed just as easily as do the fishes. The fishes never think of the water as being wet: rather it is the air which is wet, for they drown in it when they are taken out of the water. The queerest thing about Fairyland is that many things which drown or hurt at home, do not matter at all, or matter in quite a different way.[1]

Great doings seemed to be a-foot and a-wing in these woods. I heard whisperings of musical sweetness. I felt as if to this strange land some messenger was come to tell of the better things towards which all creation is travelling. I myself seemed part of a mystery and promise. Soon the mystery seemed to take form in a gentle singing that came to my ears. The voices were quite near to me, though I could not see to whom they belonged.

[1] Everyone with experience of any part of Fairyland knows how little important is mere size. If a traveller there has drunk of magic water, he may suddenly find himself as enormous as a mouse; or, on the other hand, as diminutive as an elephant! In my own case, when I drank of the little waterfall, I could not say whether I became small or the fairy creatures big. It did not matter which.

There were two of them, or perhaps more, in conversation :—

" Whence comes this sad shepherd ?
Is he come to stay ?
I his heavy step heard
On our fairy way."

" He is come a-seeking
What he thinks is lost :
Sea-ghosts wild with shriekin
Drove him to our coast."

" Does he think we're stealing
Princess Honeypot ? "
" All is honest dealing
When good fairies plot."

" Does he think us cruel
To the mother dear ?
Are we adding fuel
To his burning fear ? "

" Patience ! he is one who
Cannot understand
How we sorrow shun, who
Live in Fairyland :

" Baby-dreams we brighten,
Dance with butterflies ;
Nurses bad we frighten
In a goblin's guise.

" If an anxious mother
Chases us away,
We give heaps of bother,
Make her rue the day !

" Babes are our belonging;
We will bear the blame:
Fairies do no wronging
In a happy game ! "

Then the voices died away, but the song somehow comforted me and made me feel that I was actually brought into Fairyland to find my baby. I had hope too that, as Kirstie had declared, the fairies were kind, though some of them evidently had but a poor sense of right and wrong, and could not realize how necessary its own mother is to a baby, however foolish she may be.

The air was wonderful. Every breath of it seemed to make the limbs stronger and the understanding clearer. I lay still and looked upwards. I saw creatures floating and rushing among the tops of the red trees, or diving headlong into the dark blue valley beneath me. I saw none of them come up again. They were all the colours of the rainbow. Their movements were so rapid or twisty, and their substance so transparent, that I could not and cannot now describe their shape. I afterwards learned that they were all children of one or other of the seven rainbow colours.

I got upon my feet. At first I could get no grip of the soft mossy soil on which I trod. But there was no real difficulty in going wherever I would. In many places also, sometimes for considerable distances, the ground was rocky, with levels of brilliant pebbles or of golden sand. I found many kinds of living things. Particularly lovely were certain great castles or palaces, and little cottages all built in a lace-like tracery, sometimes of crystal, at others of chalk or horn. They were covered by a soft sub-

stance, looking like a greenish veil, through which glowed, even in the daytime, a curious light within. I felt sure these buildings belonged to life, because of the constant flow of the rainbow spirits in at their window. With one of these castles I had much to do before I left Fairy-land.[1]

There were certain soft, green cushions often by the way. They had feathery fringes in their centre, green and red and blue, upright and gently waving in the breeze. They seemed to invite me to rest at any moment when I felt tired.[2] I threw myself upon one of them. The fringes instantly closed over me and dragged me down into my own misery: the winds howled about me once more, sea-weeds lashed my face, white furies laughed into my ears, saying, "He shall never, never find his baby!" The old fear held me once more. But I could not destroy the old need of going on, and I struggled to my feet; I caught sight for one moment of my enemy the Rock-devil, and tried my hardest to reach its hoof. There also I saw Curdie. His grey coat shone out of the darkness. I saw and even heard him lapping the water which flowed from the rock and fell in the little cascade. Then the wind scattered it into the finest rain. The sun broke through the dark clouds behind me and lit up a glorious rainbow in the spray. I was looking at it, as it seemed, from far away, spell-bound by its radiance, when I saw that the bow was but the aureole, and the waterfall below it but the garment of a beautiful lady. To her Curdie lifted his right paw.

[1] It is quite clear, and will become more so when the mode of work inside these buildings is described, that they mostly belong to the great class of glass-sponges, such as the well-known Venus's Flower Basket (*Euplectella aspergillum*).

[2] These of course, were sea-anemones.

She took it in her hand and raised him into his begging attitude.

"May I go now and help Master, dear Queen?" asked the dog, sitting quite still with his shaggy head lifted to the lady. "The lambs and ewes are all folded, and we are in great trouble at home. Your Princess Honeypot is stolen; Master is gone to find her. The mother of us is so white and her eyes all red and black. Master Kit wants to come too: may I fetch him?"

"Yes, good Curdie," answered the Queen; "go to your master. But Kit must stay at home and comfort his mother. Go and tell your master you know many ways in and out of Fairyland, and then go back home and fetch him his magic crook."

Clearly this was a sort of vision, an incident at which I was an onlooker without being really there. This is why I was able to understand Curdie's talk.[1] I heard and saw no more; for the sun was again hidden, the rainbow disappeared, and with it the lady. I closed my eyes as if to hide my disappointment.

When I opened my eyes again I found myself standing beneath the shade of a great red tree and looking down at the soft cushion I had got out of, its fringes torn and broken.

A few more things must yet be told before I can relate

[1] Here again a word of explanation may be needed. As with the size of things, so it is with distance and nearness in Fairyland: they are of so little importance that they hardly exist at all, and you can almost be in two places at the same time. Correspondingly, you never know, when you go through a door or a wood or a sea-anemone, where you will find yourself. The deeper I got into Fairyland, however, the less often did I unexpectedly get out of it; though, when I became a prisoner, I never knew in what precise place I should find myself on any one of the many occasions when I was able to leave my dungeon.

my more exciting adventures, if these are to be understood.

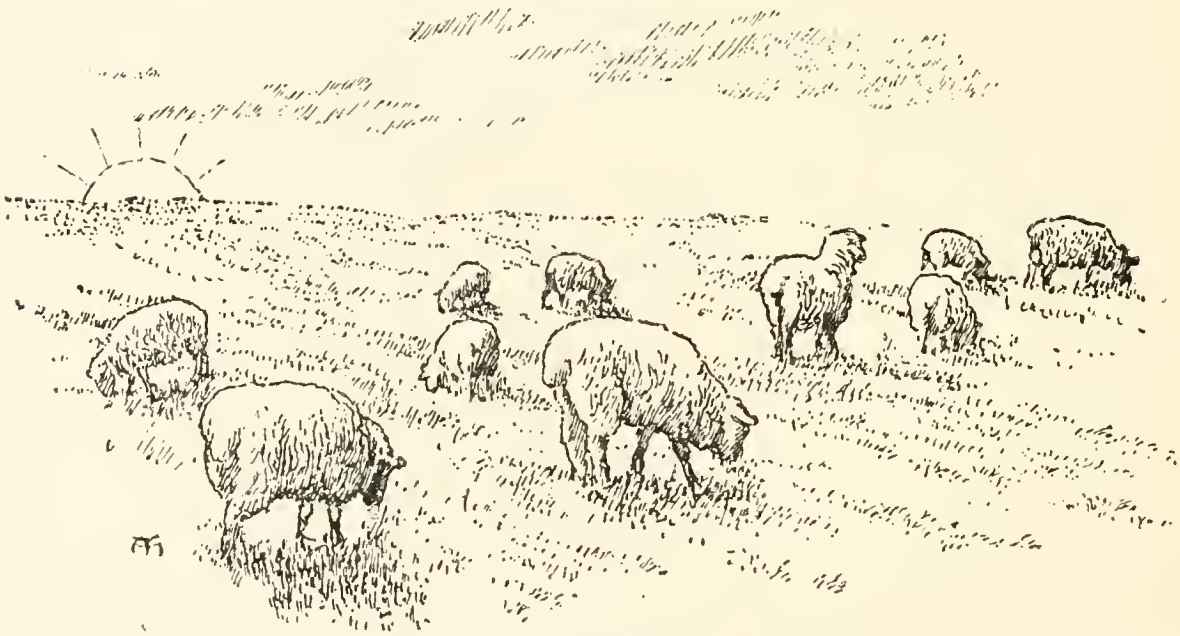
The rainbow spirits seemed to be of great importance, not so much to themselves as to all living things in Fairyland. Some shot into the soft ground about the roots of the trees. A great crowd of them disappeared at my feet; whereupon a tuneful rustle swept through the leaves of the tree above me, and white starry flowers suddenly shone out and almost hid the leaves. But I had no sooner let my eyes fill with this momentary delight than the flowers vanished, while there fell about me small berries, yellow, red, and blue, like tiny plums and wild raspberries, and big, sweet whortleberries. I ate them, of course, and they instantly gave my weary limbs new strength and courage. As I was enjoying my meal, another shoal of the spirits swept down and disappeared among the broken fringes of the cushion that had swallowed me. Over them closed the fringe. For a few seconds the green cushion shrank. Then it expanded again into its original beauty, throwing out once more its fringes, perfect, glowing in reds and blues, and looking more entrancing even than when it first tempted me to rest.

Some sense of real happiness now took hold of me. I cannot describe it exactly as joy. It was rather a conviction that everything and everybody were worth more than they could understand, and that all I loved—my wife and our four little ones, Kit, Davie, Robin, Baby Susan, and Curdie—were necessary to each other and to this Fairyland I was in; and even that the Fairyland was necessary to them. Then I remembered that this was the sort of thing Kirstie meant when she had told us we ought to have mountain-ash trees, or *rowans*, as she called them, near the

house, to let the good fairies know they were welcome in the nursery.

The creatures of this Fairyland seemed very curious and often absurd until I got to know them. For the most part they appeared to find me, rather than myself to find them ; and what was stranger, they accepted me as quite ordinary. Thus I was soon to be discovered by certain flat, crab-like creatures, with six long, hard, two-fingered legs, green and black-hairy. Somehow they suggested to me that they were doing their best to look like sheep, though nothing could be more unlike. They fed together in flocks, but were at once more independent and more helpless even than sheep. They seemed to suffer continual sorrow because they could never get anything whatever by going straightforwards, although when they ran sideways they grieved even more because they found always what they did not want and had to accept it. Their black, hard eyes on stalks seemed to be useless unless they squinted. I got quite tired of being discovered and ill-used by these silly things. The mode of ill-usage was this : they ran sideways into me, tripped me up, and then carried me further down the hill-side on their flat backs—though they did not seem to like me any better for getting me—and ran into everything that did *not* stand in their way ! I was glad of this, because they repeatedly ran against trees while trying to avoid them ; so that I tumbled off pretty comfortably. Once, however, I was thrown against one of the crystal buildings in the sand, and was badly scratched by the little glass-like arrows and barbed hooks with which they bristled. I had small chance of removing these sharp things because of the incessant attentions of the crab-sheep. Yet I was soon tumbled off once again, and this time, to my great fear,

into another gay-fringed cushion. But here a new experience awaited me. As before, the fringes covered me over, drawing me downwards; but now I had a sense of great peace, as if I lay upon my own Downs, perhaps with Curdie watching not far away.



## CHAPTER III

How Kit saved the Lamb from breaking its little heart.

IT must have been about half-past four in the morning when I awoke. Glad enough I was to lie on common earth again, even though I had been finding my journey very interesting. But, in spite of the surprise and wonder, the poignant fear for the baby had been uppermost, though it had greatly lessened after I drank the sweet water and got into Fairyland. So peaceful now seemed everything inside me, that I was quite content not to open my eyes,

but to drink into my very heart the rich, pure scent of the bluebells, which I knew were all about me. When at last I did open my eyes, I found I was lying in a small wood of huge beeches, high up on the Downs and not far from home. The old trees shot up in columns as straight and clean and smooth and solemn as an old cathedral's, and spread a green-windowed roof far above me, through which broke the blue of the morning sky. I was lying on the springy, dead leaves of countless years. Here and there a brave bracken uncurled his crook through the brown carpet, or a foxglove would be making ready for the pageant of June. I lay at the edge of a quiet pool of bluebells, towards which the ground sloped down from all sides. The pool was seemingly replenished by streamlets of the same flowers flowing down from a thicket of Spanish chestnuts and young birches beyond, and spreading as they came. The beauty of the outward scene, the rest within, the flickering red sunlight dancing sideways through the beeches, all made me feel as if my fear were gone ; that I was actually come into that Fairyland whither my child was taken ; that I should soon find her and bring her home.

But I must be up and doing. There is no other way, indeed, back into Fairyland but by the road that leads to the thing which must be done next. This, clearly, was to race down the hills to my home—a full two miles from the wood where I lay. I must tell my wife that old Fear had left me, and that I would leave her but once again—and this time not in dread, but in sure hope of finding our lost Princess. So I left the wood and soon was looking over the weald at the feet of the Downs. But the whole world below me was covered with a white sea-fog, on the top of which the sun was shining, making it look like a still, grey sea.

The mist lay very low ; and I saw just one thing standing through it—the steeple-belfry of our little old church, grey-shingled, with its golden cock, which, in place of crowing, shone brilliant in the morning sun. This made me happy. I thought how the bird of the morning had flown above the grey mist of my fears, to give me hope for the coming quest.

I went to my farm nearly as straight as that cock would have flown had he feathers instead of gilded copper for his wings. The mist was fast dispersing. I opened the little gate which leads up the flagged path, bordered by lupins, columbines, wallflowers, aubretias, and alyssum, with yellow broom and lilac bushes overlooking them. To my surprise at this early hour—about half-past five o'clock—I saw the heavy old oak door being cautiously pulled open from within. Then Kit in his little smock came out, looking wise and solemn, and gently shutting the door behind him. He carried the small shepherd's crook I had made for him, and indeed looked wiser than all his eight years of life could account for. He was barefoot and so made no noise as he came down the path towards me. Strangely enough, he did not see me : either he or I was not in the ordinary world of things. Perhaps I was still in Fairyland and he at home ; perhaps he was there and I at home. It did not matter which, seeing that we were not then quite together in the precisely same world. Somehow, too, I did not need to speak to or touch him : I was quite with him, yet looking on from afar. I followed him, without any desire that he should see me, or fear that he might see me. Curdie, the only one of our dogs who is free of the house, crept after him, not even leaping with the joy of going out so early with his little master, but seeming to

understand the need of silence. However, he seldom barked except at the sheep.

Having shut the gate, also very softly, Kit turned to the sun and began to run as quickly as he could, never looking behind or to right or left. Clearly he had no fear of being followed; quite as clearly, he was intent upon something that had to be done.

Immediately eastwards from the farm, our land slopes gently down to the river. It is tidal and feeds a valley of rich meadows cut up by channels for drainage. In these channels grow sedges and great white mallows, with here and there an alder tree; and their banks are gay with marjoram, redolent with sea-wormwood. The cattle and sheep thrive finely in these lush lands. The season had been unusually dry, and the pasture on the Downs was as yet poor. So, in this particular May, the lambs being weaned and their tails cut off, we take the ewes on to the Downs in the early morning, leaving the lambs to fatten on the more nourishing pastures. We help them to do without their mother's milk with mangolds to sharpen their tender pink teeth upon. We give them lamb's food —cake and bean stuff—in the long cradle-like troughs. It is, of course, as necessary to wean lambs as babies, or they would never learn to do for themselves.

As I heard afterwards, Kit had been folding the ewes the night before with Jonas, the head shepherd, and Curdie. The child loved this work because of the sheep-bells' music. Here on these low meadows some eighty or ninety sheep were kept in a fold bounded by wattles on three sides; but the fourth was held by one of the deep, narrow channels of water. On the other side of this ditch the lambs were gathered together in another fold. But here,

where the lambs' fold was bounded by the ditch, a line of wattles was pitched through which the lambs could scarcely see their mothers. This was a device of the tender-hearted Jonas, who, old man as he was—with straggling grey beard and a bent neck, so red and scraggy and crinkled by sun and wind and hard work that it always fascinated the small boy—could never listen to the bleatings of ewes and lambs for one another without grieving. On this particular evening Jonas and Kit came home later than usual, because they had been obliged to wait while Curdie was sent back to the Downs to fetch seven sheep he had left behind—a rare bit of carelessness in this prince of sheep-dogs. So Kit had to go to bed at once. His mother knelt beside him as he said his little prayers, not forgetting the stolen baby-sister and the bleating lambs. Then he sang his hymn. As she tucked him up and was leaving him,

"Mother, mother!" he called her back, with a catch in his voice, which meant he was on the verge of tears.

"What is it, Kit?" she asked, kissing him once more, as if that was what he needed. But he hardly responded to the caress.

"Mother, why must the lambs be weaned when it hurts their hearts? Why can't the ewes comfort them when they're weaned? One little lamb *would* look through a hole in the wattle, when Curdie brought the flock in, and bleated and grat"—a word he had from Kirstie—"ever so, till a big ewe came and stood opposite him across the ditch. Then she nearly cried too. Jonas said it was old Patty—he knows all their names better than they do themselves—and I do believe they'll go on crying for each other all night long. Oh, mother, what *shall* I do?"

The child broke down crying, and his mother, knowing no words of comfort to meet such tragic grief as her own and Patty's, sat by him till he fell fast asleep.

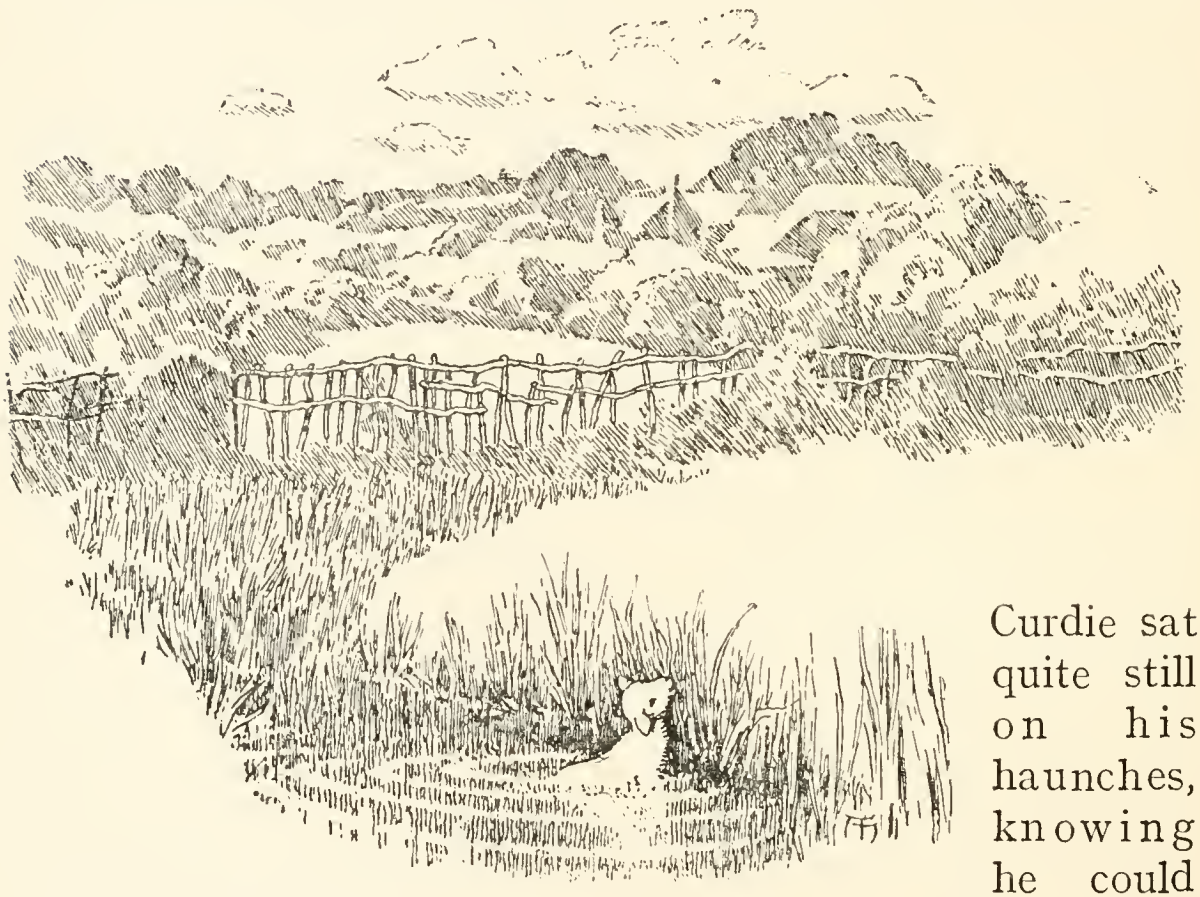
The next morning Kit—that is when I found him barefooted and racing to the folds—was with the sheep before Jonas. He ran the whole mile and more to the meadows. I followed, not knowing, of course, what business he was after. The child stopped at the first fold, holding his hand to his side. There had been a thunder-storm and a great rain in the night, so that the water-channels were now full. Curdie looked up into the child's face, asking as plainly as if he had spoken in words : " What's up, Master Kit ? Is it work or play ? " Then, as Kit stood still till the stitch in his side got mended, the big dog lay down as if waiting for a wattle to be shifted before clearing the sheep out and taking them, baaing and bell-tinkling, on to the Downs. He would have taken his orders as readily from his young master as from Jonas or myself. But Kit did not shift a wattle—only unfastened and pulled it aside to let himself in. The sheep all lay about, chewing the cud quite contentedly, and mostly recovered from the grief of weaning. But sure enough there stood old Patty at the same place as last night, looking across the ditch and watching a hole in the hurdle, through which was poked the lamb's black head, still bleating for its mother.

To Kit, wherever action was possible, action must be. Out of the fold he came, fastened the wattle and hastened away. Curdie followed. They ran a hundred yards upstream where for many weeks there had been scarcely any water, though now it was awkwardly full for the business in hand. Here Kit crossed the ditch by a rickety sluice, or *pen-stock,* as we call it. The dog leaped over. Then

down-stream again they went on the other side, and into the lamb's fold. Neither sheep nor lamb ever feared Kit or ran from him. Indeed, from his babyhood, I never saw any creature afraid of him. In winter he would lie still with open, outstretched hand till the robins and sparrows came and fed from it. In summer on the Downs the wheat-ears and starlings and even peewits would flutter down and hop about quite near him ; and once, when a sparrow-hawk was above us, they seemed to lose their fear in being near the child, just as starlings find safety among the sheep.

So Kit went straight up to the bleating lamb, took it up in his arms, and carried it, though almost too heavy for him, up the valley far beyond the sluice he had crossed, to a spot where the ditch was wider and shallower. He knew he could not get across the sluice again with his insecure burden. He was a big and strong child for his age, or he could never have done it. Here he waded across. How he managed to keep his footing on the slippery bank I cannot think. Straight into the cold, muddy water he went with the lamb in his arms. Curdie waded with him, though jumping had been simpler. The lamb, which at first did not struggle, had ceased its complaining directly the boy took it up. But now it got frightened, wriggled furiously, and fell with a great splash into the water. It swam down-stream into deeper water, where the banks were so steep that it could not get footing to climb up. Kit scrambled up the easier bit of bank where he had gone into the water. He tried to help the lamb with his little crook, but the silly woolly thing swam across to the other bank. Here it was just as steep. Then Kit went up-stream again and waded across ; but the lamb was now in still

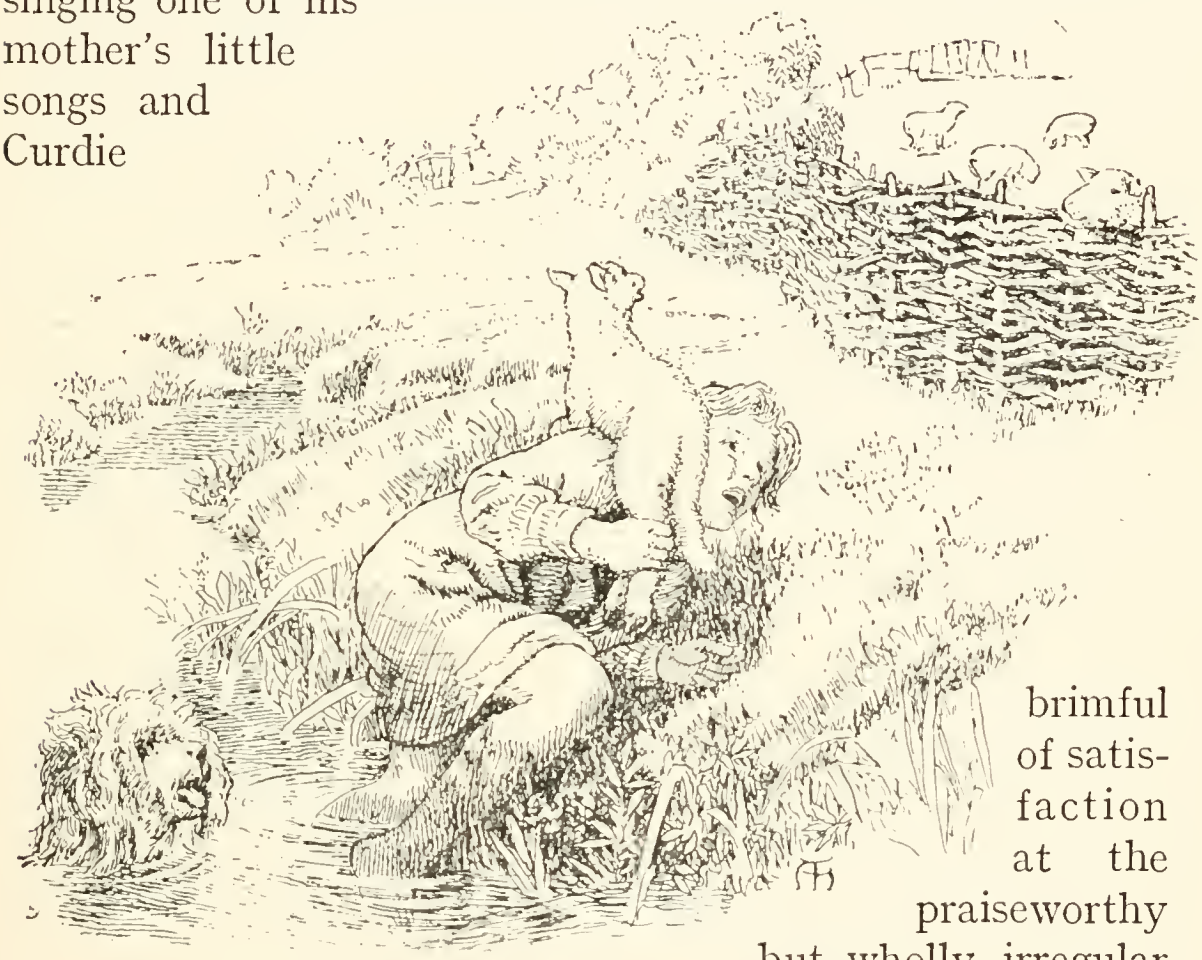
deeper water and swam back yet again when Kit came near it. Nothing daunted, the child once again waded across. He then crawled flat on his stomach to where the creature was trying in vain to get foothold. Now at last it seemed to understand; for it let Kit hook his crook under one fore-leg and pull it on to the bank. All this time



Curdie sat quite still on his haunches, knowing he could not help. Kit held the lamb securely now; he carried it back to the shallower water and slowly crept down the bank. The water nearly reached the child's waist; but he lifted the lamb higher, pushing it on to his right shoulder and holding it fast by its hind-legs. Climbing up the bank again, he slipped and fell, and was covered with splashes of brackish water and black mud. But the lamb was safe; and, hearing again its mother's call, it made straight for

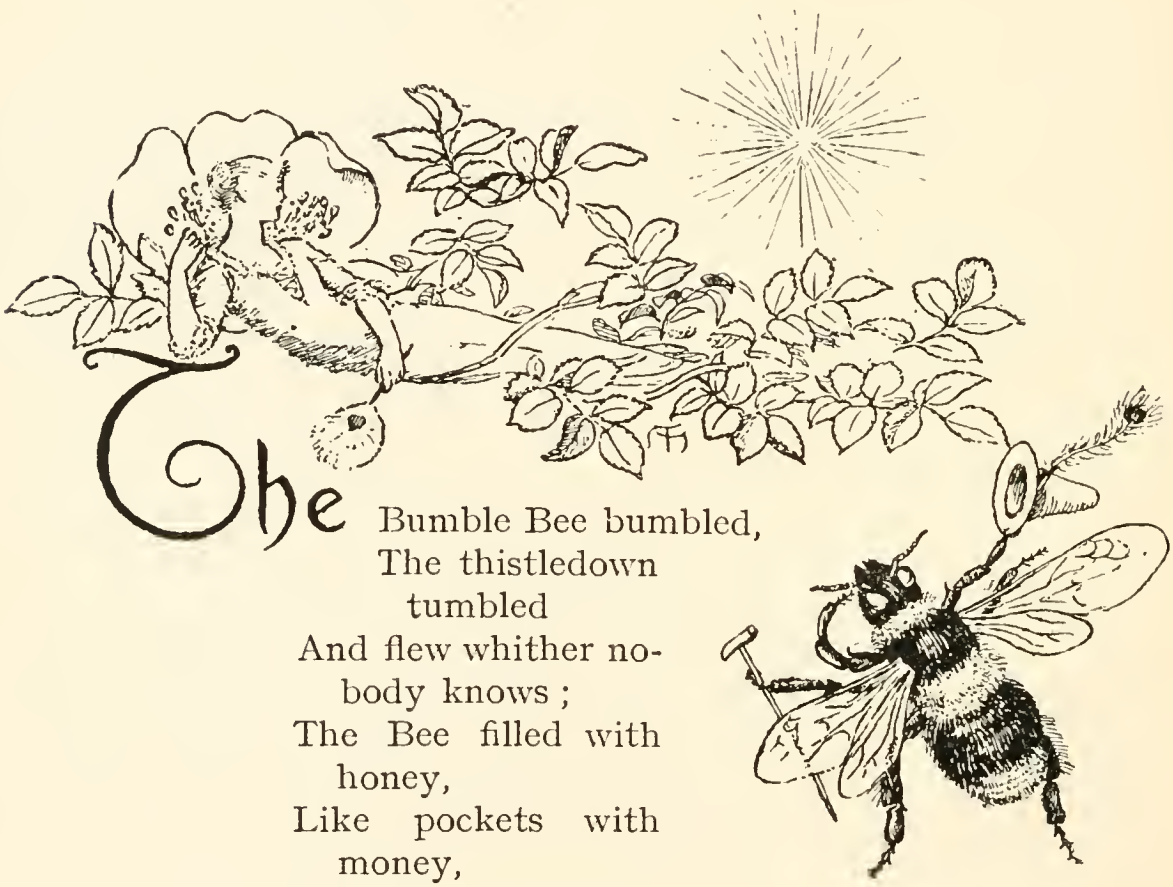
the ewe-fold, patiently waiting there till Kit and Curdie ran up to let it in. Then the complaining changed to joyful sounds of bleat and baa as the lamb rushed and fiercely poked its little black muzzle into its comforted mother.

Then the child and the dog scampered home again, Kit singing one of his mother's little songs and Curdie



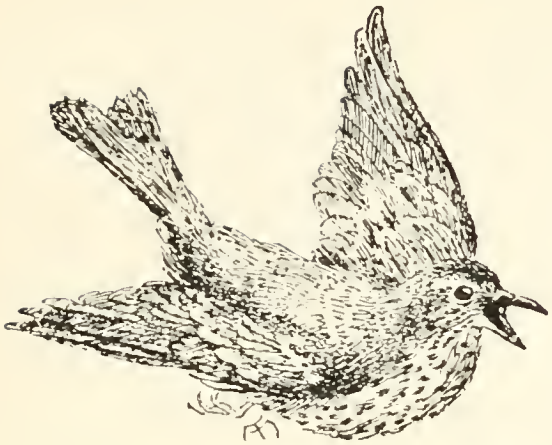
brimful of satisfaction at the praiseworthy but wholly irregular thing they had done. The chief point in Kit's joy, perhaps, was that his little crook had really saved a lamb; and perhaps the chief point in Curdie's was the discovery that his playmate was really a little shepherd. So abundantly happy were the two of them, that they danced along rather than ran, stopping now and again for a more intimate word

or caress. As soon as they reached the high road Kit started singing one of his mother's little songs. She has as facile a hand at making these as it is apt at her spinning-wheel. But what distaff feeds her singing-wheel I cannot say! This was the song which he addressed pointedly to Curdie, who did his best to impersonate the bumble-bee :—



The Bumble Bee bumbled,
The thistledown tumbled
And flew whither nobody knows;
The Bee filled with honey,
Like pockets with money,
Is welcomed wherever he goes.

"The Bee loved and bumbled;
But O, he was humbled
When courting a Rose that I know:
Said she, 'You're too weighty
To be my dear matey,
So tumble, you Bumble Bee, go!



" But brave the Bee bumbled ;
Yet apology mumbled
At sight of the thrush's wide beak :
' O sing away, trilling
Your cooing and billing,
Nor gobble an insect so meek ! '

" The Bee hid and bumbled ;
The pollen, all crumbled,
He stole to replenish his larder :
But black growled the thunder,
The rain soaked his plunder,
And damped every spark of his ardour.

" The Bee crawled and bumbled,
He grovelled and grumbled,
As limp as a tramp in the rain :
The rose shook her petals,
And even the nettles
Declined to invite him again ! "

I kept close to the child, rejoicing with him in his happy deed, though I knew how wrong it was to interfere in the management of the sheep. The two had spent a full hour over their mission and were nearing home, when Jonas, accompanied by another dog, came striding towards us. As soon as Curdie caught sight of the old shepherd he went up to him, crawling stealthily and wagging his whole body for lack of a tail, as if in some fear. Jonas was, for a most rare thing, out of temper, having perhaps been searching for Curdie in vain. He called the poor dog an ugly name—one Kit might not use—and asked the child angrily where they had been. Kit looked fearlessly into the cross old bearded face

and the crinkled red neck, and told him. Then I was like the child for trouble. I being not all there, and Kit being too eager with his sense of aboriginal justice, neither of us could explain to poor Jonas how right a thing this wrong thing was. To Jonas, in spite of his tender heart and his real love for the sheep, it was all wrong ; and with a sharp word he sent the child home to his mother, asking how he could treat her so ill when she was in such trouble, even adding that he must have forgotten Miss Susan. Then Kit wept and ran. But Curdie turned his shaggy head to and fro, irresolute whether to follow where his heart invited or where his duty bade. Jonas looking back at him in no forgiving mien, the shaggy dog turned finally and lumbered after the old man.

For full half a mile Kit raced and wept, longing for justice or forgiveness—he cared not which. Home at last, he stumbled into the dairy where he knew his mother would be at work ; and, his little smock soiled with slush, his face with tears, and his feet caked with mud, he threw himself upon her, weeping passionately and quite regardless of her clean apron.

" What is it, Kit, what is it ? " she cried in loving consolation.

" I'm not—not—not—Kit—I'm—I'm—oh—I'm Christopher ! " And he burst into a fresh torrent of tears.

That was the child's confession of something which had come to him to do as a thing that had to be done. He could not understand—that was impossible—but his little heart feared, or thought it knew, he was to be Christopher all through a long and tragic day.

At last my wife—perfect mother that she was—coaxed and cherished the child into telling her the whole story.

It rushed out quickly—almost fiercely—and ended, in a defiant sob, with the question :

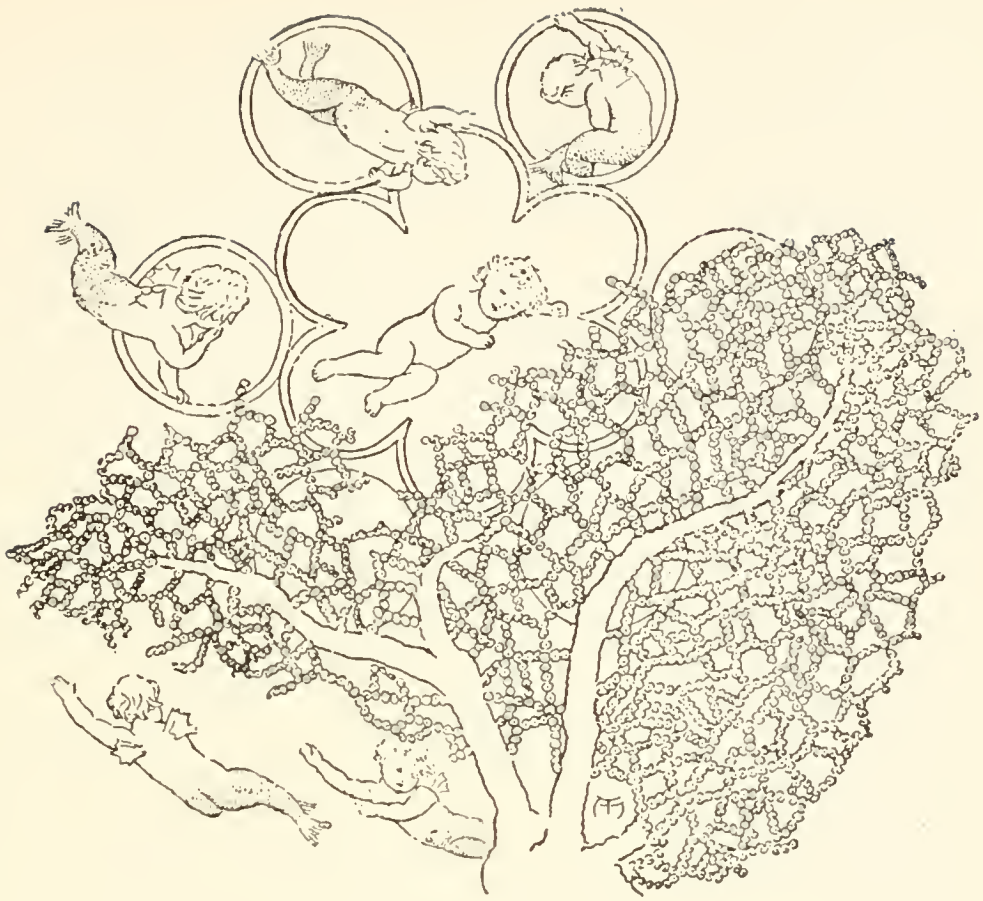
" And I s'pose I've got to be Christopher ? "

But his mother answered :

" Yes, darling boy ; I think you *are* Christopher, but with a difference. Did I never tell you about *Saint* Christopher ? "

He did not understand, of course, and burst out weeping afresh.

" No, no, Kit ! He wasn't a naughty boy, and neither are you ; but always now, Father's and my own Kit ! " And in her heart she said, " Little Saint Kit ! "



## CHAPTER IV

The Wonderful Midnight. I see the Fairy work, and Curdie finds me. We reach the Valley.

I HAVE no memory of how I left the mother and boy. When I next found myself I was lying on green moss beside the cushion into which I had fallen. But it was night-time: and such a night!—not of darkness, rather of a penetrating soft light that gave me sight into the innermost nature of each living thing from which it shone.

It would take too long to tell of all the things I saw. Nor are there words in our own tongue that will fit them. Everything was full of wonder and wise ordering. I saw into the business of the living things, their patient work guided by some secret purpose, the light by which they worked being perhaps the out-shining of that purpose. I understood how those great fringed cushions were alive, and why it was quite right that one should have given me misery and another healing. I saw into the crystalline things that had arrows and barbs for wounding those who ran against them. I saw they were fairy homes, some castles, some cottages, in which lived and worked happy and good little people. It was in the finest of these castles that, many days later, I saw our wee Princess. All I could be sure about the people at present was that they were busily at work upon something most important. All the industry, too, was accompanied by sweet and very soft music, like the music of bees about the lime-blossoms, though it took more definite rhythm and melody. Little snatches of songs, some happy, some sad, would come to me—though I could hardly say I heard them. Even now I have sense of how they should read in our tongue. One of them ran like this :—

" Though we work in love and promise,
No one understands ;
All our lamps are fed by kindness
In these Fairylands.

" We are waiting till the sunshine
Finds our unknown deep ;
Hand in hand we cling together,
Work and eat and sleep.

" We are always busy building
Crystal walls and towers :
Hidden plays the Baby Susan
In our sweetest bowers.

" Safe and laughing in our keeping
Waits the little maid,
Feeds on dolphins' milk and butter,
Gulls' eggs newly laid.

" Fishes watch her, wise and solemn ;
Mermaids laugh and sing,
Comb her curly locks at bedtime
With a goldfish wing.

" Not her father, not her mother,
Only Curdie knows
Which the castle where is hidden
She who laughs and crows.

" Will he some day bring the shepherd,
With his magic crook ?
Will they mount the mystic stairway,
Never backward look ?

" Will the child then gladly leave us,
Leave our loving care ?
Yet the children's Sun awaits us
In some otherwhere."

I feel sure these words come very near what I heard, though I had to piece the verses together afterwards. I

felt happy in such bits of song because they took away much of my anxiety about the baby. But how I wished I could get home and tell her mother she was safe and well! I am not sure that I should have told her about the little one's diet, as my wife is so very particular, and might have her doubts about the milk and butter and eggs of Fairyland. Baby always had a rather delicate stomach.

The night, I repeat, was full of wonder. Though I could not travel, because of the impossibility of avoiding the beautiful shining things—castles and towers and coral trees and shell-built bridges close about me everywhere, not to mention the extraordinary and not always friendly creatures—I could see into things quite easily. Getting about as best I could, I peered into every sort of habitation, if perchance I could anywhere find my lost child. I was the less puzzled to know what the song meant about Curdie and the shepherd's crook, because of the conversation I had heard between the fairies. Yet, though scarcely believing that the baby could be shut up in any of the castles about me, I looked eagerly into all I could come near. It was quite evident that much business was doing in every one I looked into, yet I could not clearly see the people nor what their work was. Some seemed to be sweeping, some quietly waiting, some carrying food about in baskets. Others were lying down as if to sleep or to die, one on top of another and in long courses, the hands of one clasping the feet of another, and all their arms interlocked. Later I found out what it all meant. But, though I could no-

where get sight of the little baby, I was somehow, I say, much comforted in the assurance the songs gave me ; and I was convinced that every shining place must harbour kindness.

I was soon so tired that I could go no further. I lay down beneath a great tree, along whose branches the phosphorescence of life rippled and sparkled and fell about me like blossoming meteors, sometimes as if drenching me with spray, sometimes even making me feel that my own tired heart was also moonily aglow with living hope. For there came to me a sureness that everything beautiful means something so good that it cannot be told in words. This night was no mere pageant of wonder—no passing show : it was a portion of an everlasting meaning. Here was no interference one thing with another ; no conflict, no standing before. Every creature was contributing to and sharing in the general light by which things live. It was kindness that made everything shine with light.

I might have been content to remain where I lay quite indefinitely, but that a touch or push upon my shoulder frequently reminded me that I must be up and doing. I was too dreamy to regard it seriously ; and somehow whenever I felt this touch, I seemed to be lying on the Downs, looking up at the stars in the deep blue sky and waiting for the dawn. Soon the phosphorescent light that shone from the living things waned, and the work in the fairy houses seemed to cease. The reddish sunshine was coming down the hill-side, and I saw the topmost trees reflecting the morning's sun in brilliant coppery shining. Something again stirred on my shoulder : something wet—the first really wet thing that had touched me in this land—poked itself into my neck. I looked round and could have laughed for joy ; for there was my dear Curdie !

How the good dog had found me I do not know, but I remembered my vision of him lapping the magic waterfall. He now seemed quite at home with adventure, and was very soon seeking with his nose things to be friendly with. Never was so human, so loving a dog! He brought with him, from somewhere beyond the earth into which he was born, a queer belief that "everything that lives is holy," *bar cats;* somewhere where manners are so faithful that to any living being, *except cats,* he would lift his paw to shake hands. The crabs puzzled him, however, just because, from their way of browsing and lying together, they looked absurdly like sheep. Often one would suddenly get up and run about as if seeking nothing, yet finding only what it did not want; then it would start browsing again quietly. Curdie would go up to them, smiling in his funny way,[1] and lift his off fore-paw. One charged him sideways so roughly that he was carried off upon its knotty back, barking for all he was worth in delight at the game and wagging himself as if he had a tail like anybody else. But he soon found the inconvenience of a game led by squinting eyes, and came racing back to me.

Now in the dog's company and care, things became more ordinary. The lower down the hill we went, the more the vegetation resembled that of our own earth. The trees grew harder of trunk, and the arrangement of boughs and leaves was certainly less unusual. Yet every few minutes brought some strange experience to me, though Curdie never seemed surprised at anything, rather expecting things to be absurd.

[1] Curdie is the only bob-tail sheep-dog I have ever seen who can smile. Irish terriers do it oftenest and fox-terriers sometimes. I think it is a beautiful trick learned from human beings. Shepherds, as a class, do not smile often; and this perhaps is the reason why sheep-dogs so rarely smile.

We soon found ourselves upon level ground and in a wide valley. The light was, if anything, even dimmer than upon the hill-side, though the near things were clearer to see. Here it seemed to be the season of harvest and ripening fruit. I was now very hungry, and eagerly ate the great golden figs and ruby-coloured grapes that grew wild in great profusion. Curdie found work for his white teeth upon certain banana-shaped nuts with bivalve shells. He cracked the shells and bolted the kernels as if brought up to the business; and he gave me no peace till I too had found how good they were. Never in this country did the dog hunt or devour any living thing: though twice, as I have already hinted and shall later tell, he had some serious business to settle with certain cats, and at the last helped me to kill the monstrous creatures that we were soon to meet. Crops of maize were all about me, but the fields were hedged and ditched in such regular lines that they looked like uninteresting copy-books. This made me feel as if the valley's beauty was only tidiness, and the goodness only orderly behaviour. Orchards there were also; and, but for the too regular planting and too rigid pruning of the trees, they had been very beautiful with their many-hued and various-shaped fruits. I felt that things were getting all wrong, and that if we were still in Fairyland the people here must be more clever than good. We came to meadows where browsed ungainly, legless, and very lazy greenish-black and shiny cattle. Each had two great tusks and strong black whiskers. The tusks they used as legs, sticking them deep into the soft ground and dragging their heavy yet supple bodies after them—every effort being accompanied by a rasping grunt, whether caused by grumbling, or satisfaction, or rheumatism, I

could not think. But Curdie found it quite useless to offer these creatures his paw: so that I knew they could not have kind hearts.[1]

The strangest thing about the whole of this land was this: with the exception of Curdie's nose, the magic waterfall, and —for some who were almost out of Fairyland—the beginning of tears, there was no water: never rain; never any running streams down the hill-sides; never any ponds, lakes, or rivers. Yet I quite understood that all this Fairyland, as well as the goblin places I was to find, were at the bottom of the sea, where the water was become, as I have explained, just air to breathe. So if the water was all air, there could be no water—except the wetness of Curdie's nose, which he brought from dry land.

Presently our way led into a wide, clean thoroughfare, with high walls on each side that hid the fields from view. They appeared to be built of coral—very pretty in its colours—pink, white, red, and black—but in wearisome regularity. There seemed to be no need for such high walls, unless to hide away the country-side and the hills. Here and there in the walls were heavy wooden doors with great metal locks, and on the doors were signs that might stand for the owners' names. One door I saw open. It led to a vast vault, lit up from the eyes of a multitude of birds. The eyes, with an aureole of shimmering red feathers, were full of light; yet they queerly suggested sadness, and would have made a child cry

[1] On thinking it over, it seems quite clear that the creatures which resembled those of our land the least were the kindest, and those whose names are taken from our creatures are not altogether good. Thus the real fairy people in the Midnight Village were not at all like us except in kindness; while sea-horses were so rough, and sea-cows so stupid, and sea-cats so snaky, that, though more like earthy animals, they were not nearly so nice.

with pity for them. The birds waddled rather than walked on their claw feet. They had great drooping wings and draggled tails, shining in yellows and browns, while their necks were covered with soft, iridescent greens. They looked exactly like worn-out pheasants. Trunks of trees supported the roof, which was moulded and painted to look like the boughs of beeches in summer glory. For one moment I thought I was back in the great park near my home ; but the close air that assailed us made both me and Curdie rush to the other side of the road. Later I knew what this vault was used for.

We were now clearly arrived in a part of Fairyland where things were by no means mostly good and kind. Indeed, I felt sure that we had been gradually coming nearer and nearer to bad ways of life. Curdie, perhaps, understood my feeling, for he would scarcely leave me for some miles. There were now many strange creatures about. Some darted without wings above us ; some crawled without legs on the road ; all were shining and dapple-hued, with ugly pointed mouths and flat short tails, which they seemed to use either to crawl or to fly or to leap with. Curdie would often run a few yards ahead to welcome one or another of these with lifted paw ; but he would run back to me almost immediately and rub one of his ears against my leg. This was a frequent and pretty trick of his. None of my other dogs used it ; so that he could not have learned it, and must have brought it with him from somewhere where manners are nature.

## CHAPTER V

The Enchanted City. Curdie is wiser than his Master. The Drowning Smoke. I get a peep at my Children.

QUITE suddenly the end of the road came upon us. The dog had got wind of it for a mile or more, I think, because he grew increasingly restless, looking up so often into my face that I am sure he wanted to tell me something. Like many other dogs, whenever Curdie wants to tell something he stands quite still, pointing his nose to his master's face; if he wants to ask for something, he wags himself and leaps in proportion to his desire. With

dogs, to ask is to be happy ; to give—which they are less used to and perhaps do not quite understand—is solemn, almost religious.

" What is it, old boy ? " I asked him. " Do you think I'm coming away from our Princess ? Do you think I've forgotten the little darling ? "

He understood me perfectly. Most dogs understand more than we give them credit for. Fairy-dogs—like Curdie—understand more than we give ourselves the credit for.

" No, Master, I don't," he answered, in words made up partly by the shine in his eyes, partly by the way he sat down and looked steadfastly up at me, and partly by not wagging the tail he did not possess. Fairy-dogs can do just as they please with many things they do not seem to own : a very different thing from using things that do not belong to you ! " No, Master," said Curdie, " I know you can't forget Miss Susan. It's no good our walking all day and night about the fairy castles. We shan't find the right one that way. We've got to go on : it's the only way to get back to the midnight village and the castle it holds. We shall soon see where we must go to get help. We've got to find somebody—a little girl, *I* think—who will do what can't be done without her, if we are to bring the Princess home again."

" Good old boy," I said ; " I understand. Come along and find what is coming to us."

Presently I saw, far above and before me, several very high, tapering spires or poles, which indistinctly seemed to be bending and waving towards me. Almost they might have been enormous live eels, tails upwards, yet too thick where they were fixed and too thin at their free ends. Yet the moment I saw them quite clearly, they appeared

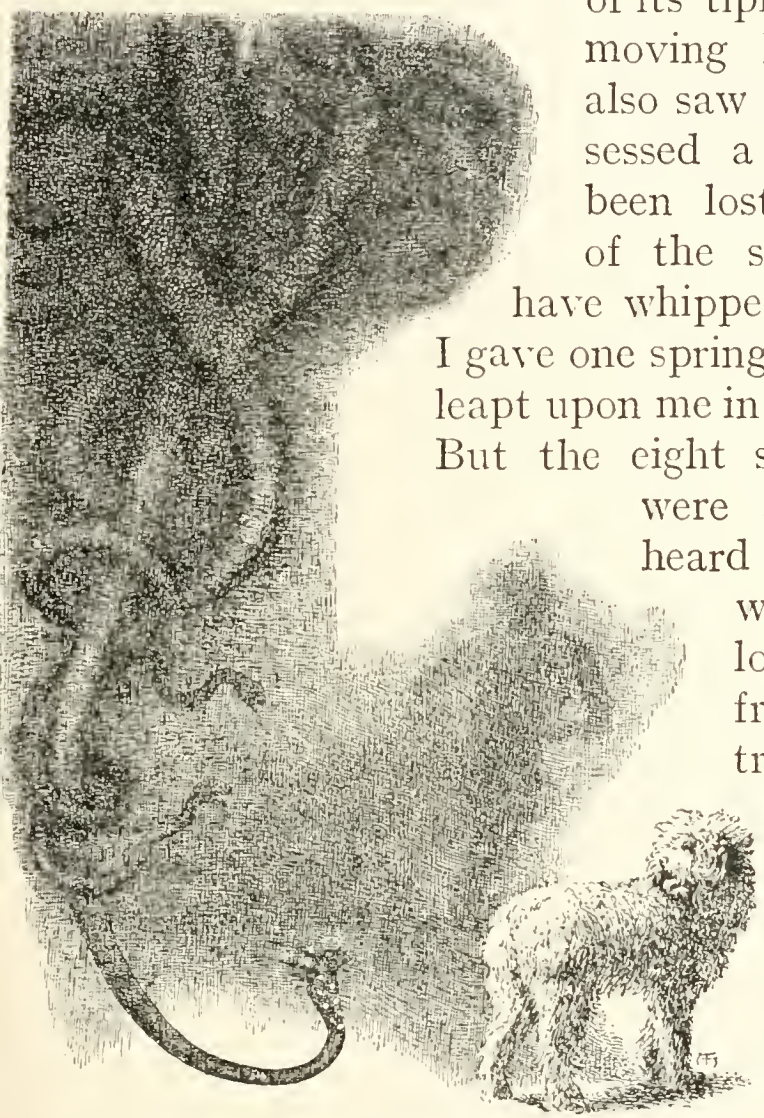
to be quite rigid, like erect spires of stone, as if they had never swerved an inch from the upright since the day they were built. Getting nearer, I saw they belonged to two great towers in front of me, one on each side of two gates. These were almost transparent, because glazed with some pearly material shot with dull colours. Coming close up, I tried to look through them. What I seemed to see was quite different, I afterwards learned, from the real things inside. For the present the two towers demanded all my attention. The main part of each was shaped like a rather slender barrel. Immediately above their foundation was a trap-door. Nearly at the top of the tower were two extraordinary windows, horizontal, oval, pointed at the corners, and on a level with each other. They were seemingly glazed with the same pearly substance as the gates, though right in their centre was a round opening into deep blackness. These windows seemed to be looking piercingly upon myself, even following my footsteps. I could hardly take my eyes off them. For all the world, they looked like a pair of the hatefullest eyes man ever saw. I found myself expecting shutters to fall over them from above, and hoped I might then find it easier to look away. But there were no shutters to those windows; and I was soon quite sure that they were live eyes with no eyelids! Close above their level rose on each tower eight spires, shooting erect into the air for a distance quite thrice that of the towers' height. Nor cross, nor weather-vane, nor any sign whatever surmounted them. The only difference I could see between the two towers was that that on my left had one spire adorned with thick spiral gold bands, each fashioned like a snake with a wolf's head and its tail in its mouth. It was with this particular tower that my subsequent adventures

were so much concerned. The outer sides of all the spires appeared to be tiled like fish-scales, and in colour were dirty-greenish, blood-reddish, or black; but on their inner side—that is, where the spires looked towards one another—each was closely studded with a double row of saucer-shaped disks, red and shiny, but looking—I saw it quite plainly—as if the flat, circular surface of each was moving in anticipation of fastening upon and sucking something too weak to resist it. But the next moment I imagined my eyes had been mistaken and that these red disks were perhaps not suckers, but ugly ornament. In this conclusion I was quite wrong. Before I had been long in the city it became clear to me that these towers were huge living cuttle-fish, or squids, as some enormous kinds are called.[1]

At last the four eyes of the two towers seemed to direct themselves upon the distance. Their horrid fascination left me, and I turned to the gates. Over them I saw a legend, though in what language I cannot recall: THE GOBLIN TOWN OF ENCHANTMENT. Again I looked up at the towers, and read upon them the words: THE GUARDIAN TOWERS OF TYRANNY. I could not imagine what it meant. I looked through the opaquely transparent gates and caught sight of some loveliness so entrancing that I wanted nothing but to go and live in the city and be freed from all my cares and difficulties. For a moment I must have forgotten what I was come for, as I went eagerly through the gates. They were slowly closing behind me, when I was brought to myself by a pitiful howl from Curdie. I looked back and realized instantly that his refusal to follow me

[1] The precise species here described has not found a place in the school-books of natural history. But then the people who write them have never been in Fairyland or they would know better!

was inspired by terrible anxiety on my behalf. I was just in time to go back again before the gates closed; just in time also to see one of the spires bending down, in a twisting sneakiness, so as to seize my dog from behind. Four of its tipmost red suckers were moving like greedy lips. I also saw that had Curdie possessed a tail he would have been lost; for the thin end of the spire would certainly have whipped him up by the tail. I gave one spring towards him, and he leapt upon me in delight. I looked up. But the eight spires on each tower were again quite rigid. I heard the sound of a tearing wind at my feet. I looked down. Rushing from the towers' great trap-doors was the blackest smoke that ever was belched, so black and thick that in any other place I should have called it ink: [1] which, however, it could not be, as here in this land was no water of any sort. It rushed like a torrent about us, foamed in whirlpools and rose with



[1] Common cuttle-fish actually produce and store inside them an inky fluid which they shoot out from them when escaping from an enemy, so that they are hidden and cannot be pursued.

awful speed. Curdie was soon lost in it. It grew thicker as it rose, and my own legs, body, and hands were soon fast in its clutches. It rose to my neck. I looked up as if to let at least my eyes escape: there above me were the sixteen spires all twisting and thrusting and embracing one another in loathsome satisfaction. The country about me became black also. I was swept away, and thought I must drown in that roaring blackness.

. . . . . .

Would the moon never again rise? Had I been ten years on that stormy shore, with a ton of misery weighing me down? Would the furies never cease lashing my face and torturing my helpless arms? Yet through the tumult I heard a piercing cry: "Shepherd!"—only one person ever called me by that name—"Help us! The children are torn from me and gone down. Help me, Shepherd, help!" The voice was close to my ears, as my wife fell across me, knowing not that I was so near. She was dead, I thought, and somehow I didn't seem to care. The dawn at last rose in fury. With it I too rose, but hardly looked at my dead wife. I stumbled along the shore, tightly dragging her heavy body by the hand, lest the breakers should tear it from me. One streak of red sunlight shot over the sea. I looked round and saw the red face of the Rock-devil before me, malignant, exulting. Towards it I stumbled with my burden. I fell at the foot of the wicked rock and felt sweet healing water fall over us both.

. . . . . .

Then I opened my eyes and found myself lying in the low branches of the biggest apple tree in our old orchard,

the pink and white blossoms shining in glorious profusion all about me. Close at hand my little family was sitting at the garden-table with its white homespun cloth and the dinner set upon it. Kirstie was as usual with the boys, and their mother was standing at her place looking, with her eyes closed, straight into my apple tree. Her face was pale and sad; but the look upon it was a shining one. Kit held a little reddish fox-cub in his arms. They were singing their grace before beginning their dinner :—

" Hungry boy and birdie
  Thank Thee for their food—
Cows and lambs and Curdie,
  Happy brotherhood!

" Tiny suns go dancing
  Hide and seek in trees;—
Baby winds come prancing
  On the backs of bees.

" But when stars are shaking
  Frosty dew around,
Comfort Thou lambs quaking
  On the wintry ground.

" When we play in sorrow,
  For the rain it pours,
Safe Thou keep'st to-morrow
  Joyful in Thy doors.

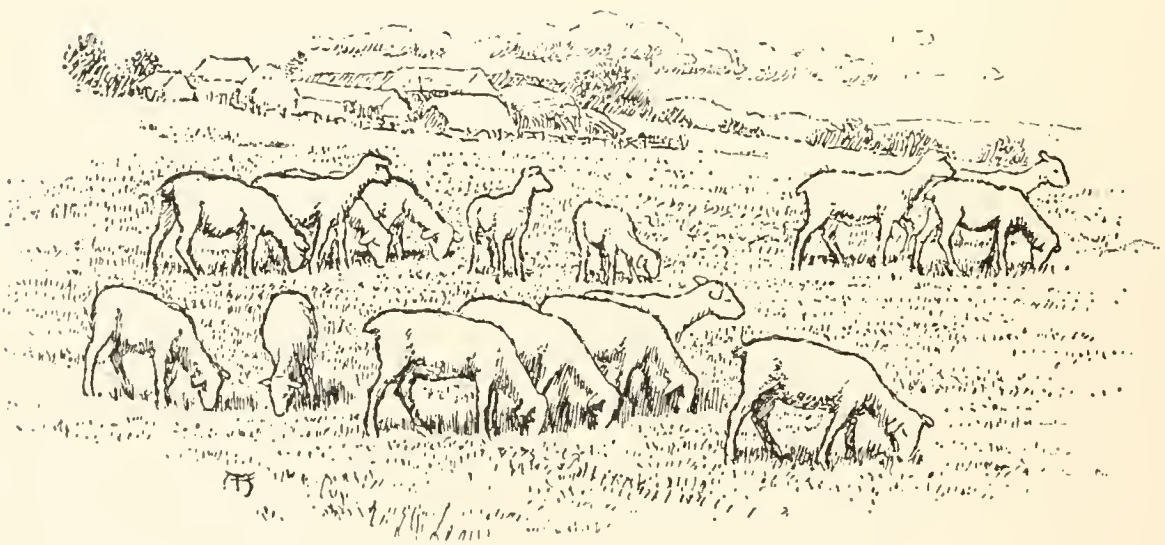
" Feed sad hearts with honey,
  Strengthen love with bread,
Make the old face sunny,
  Wise the little head!"

The children's little bird-pipes, Kirstie's strange croon-

ing of her share, and my wife's voice rising strong, in spite of its entanglement with forbidden tears, lifted me quite out of myself, and indeed, away out of the apple tree.

. . . . . .

Yet I lay for many minutes in rest and peace, unwilling to open my eyes, not sure that I had not but dreamed. Perhaps the unsureness kept me from making quite sure. I knew I held something warm and soft in my hand as it lay crossed over my body: what could it be but the hand by which I had dragged my wife over the rocks, but now warm and living? Yet—but—yes! this thing I held was too small—and was furry.



## CHAPTER VI

Arrival of the Magic Crook. The Goblin Gardens.

I OPENED my eyes. There stood Curdie before me—his paw in my hand, his eyes shining like stars, his shaggy grey coat clinging close to his thin body as if it were wet—sedately wagging himself. I knew not whether to weep, because, after all, the dear hand was not in mine, or whether to laugh with happiness at finding Curdie again. At first I supposed the black smoke had merely subsided after giving me an awful dream ; but soon I knew that something very strange had happened, and that Curdie at least had been over the rocks and back to my home. For there, lying across my legs, was my favourite shepherd's crook !

It still seemed to be the dawn of day. Curdie and I were all alone upon a little hill, which stood in a carefully tended garden. About us lay masses of gorgeous flowers, arranged like figures in the geometry books ; but their colours were constantly changing like shot silk, or even more like polished abalone shells. Beyond the garden were low buildings of various sizes, without doors or windows. Some were like domes, and some like pyramids. We were evidently inside the pearly gates. Was I come, I wondered, of my own free will ? Or had—O, horrible thought !—those grasping spires seized me and thrown me over the walls ? Were we victims of the city's enchant-

ment? These were dreadful thoughts; but I held on to one hope, namely, that Curdie, after finding me and going away again to bring me my crook, must know also how to get me out of the enchantment if necessary. That we were beset by disaster, I felt quite sure; and, when I remembered the name of the town, I was convinced that we were in the wicked part of Fairyland. Could it be here that we should find the little girl who, Curdie had said, was to help us in rescuing our Princess?

The buildings about us, I soon found, were but the caps or roofs of stair-houses down which the people went into the streets. The only things that rose to any height were the walls of the city. These walls were enormous, built of great blocks of honeycombed stone and closely guarded at frequent intervals by the barrel-shaped towers, every one of which was surmounted by eight tapering steeples. From the inside of the city no eye-windows on the towers could be seen; and the more closely I watched the steeples for any sign of movement, the surer was I that they were rigid. It was only when my attention was directed elsewhere that I saw, out of the tail of my eye, an occasional and horrible bending of one or more steeples. Whenever, too, this was seen, it brought over me a feeling of sickness, as if the ground heaved under me. Curdie seemed to be affected in the same way, for now and again he would roll over helplessly. But he would instantly jump up again and look steadfastly at the tower in question, just in the way he would point at a lost sheep in the ditch before running back for me to rescue it.

As I have said, I am more shepherd than anything else, and have the shepherd's silence—so often called taciturnity. Shepherds seldom ask questions—because, I often think,

the great questions of Dame Nature are so constantly before our eyes that our own are too small for utterance. Correspondingly we do not often see any need for answering questions put to us. Jonas, my oldest shepherd—he who, next to my Highland uncle, had taught me nearly all I know of sheep—says that really important questions cannot be answered at all—unless quite incorrectly; and that "if you do answer a question true, most people won't believe you till you humbug 'em about it"! Hence, like my shepherd ancestry, I am quite willing to accept everything that comes to me without asking how it *can* be: I am quite willing to wonder and keep on wondering at the mystery of things. So the dog and I went on our way accepting all that came to us, though we helped one another to understand whenever we could.

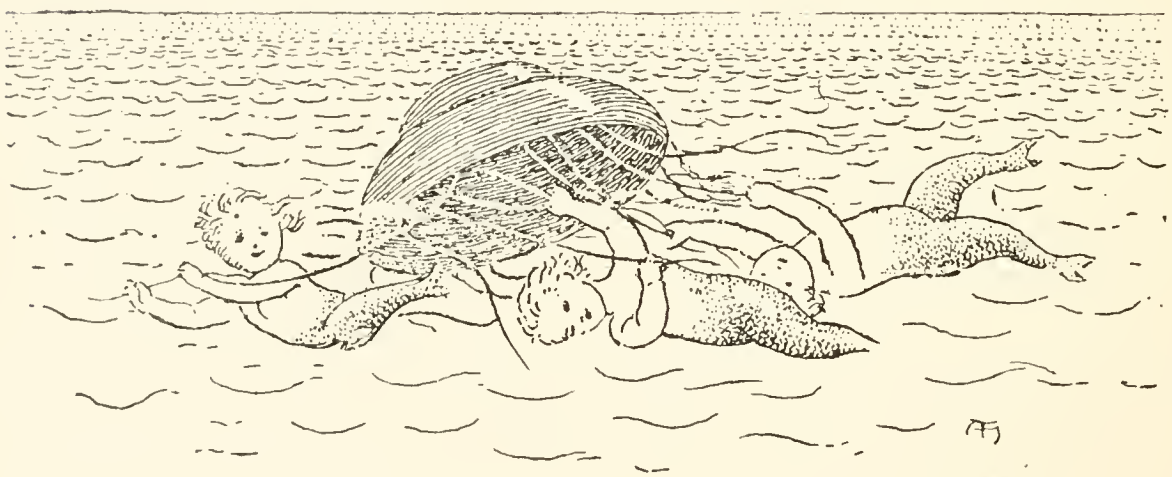
We got upon our feet, stretched ourselves, and set out upon our way. As Curdie picked up my crook and gave it me with his body rigidly still, I felt new confidence come into my mind and my limbs. Whereupon the whole scene stood out more sharply. Things seemed generally less strange, and I went happily ahead because, in getting accustomed to the things about me, the misery of my horrid dream became less real. I had a feeling too that I was actually not very far away from my little children, nor from their mother. Their singing grace rang in my ears for many hours afterwards.

Everything was quite still, except that occasionally the smooth domes and pyramids would lift a little sideways. That something alive then looked out into the morning was quite certain, because Curdie went up to every one that lifted and offered his paw, although each roof-lid was rudely shut down in his face as soon as he did so. Then,

giving up the game, he looked up at me with puzzled eyes and a little twist of his hind-quarters.

"When I am properly polite to people at home," he said, "they laugh and think me funny. But when people are rude to me, I think it much funnier, though somehow I can't laugh at them!"

Though Curdie did not end in a tail, I am sure he was no end of a wag!



## CHAPTER VII

The Sea-Cats. The Goblin People live downstairs and do not like my Crook.

AT this early hour it was invariable, as I learned before many days were over, for the shoals of rainbow colours I had met near the summit of the hill to shoot down into the valley whenever the day was sunny. They seemed quite necessary to the growing things. It was these fairy spirits that gave the early morning its own sweet freshness. They came quite as freely to the evil as to the good parts of Fairyland. Just now we found ourselves in the midst of them; so that we seemed to be surrounded by a shining rain, the drops of which were spindle-shaped and sparkled with colours like those of loose snowflakes falling in sunshine. The goblins, I learned later, dreaded this *moonshine weather*—as they called the rainbow showers—and so shut down tightly the roofs of their houses.

As soon as the shower was over, I looked about me for some evidence of the spirits' kindliness; but the only differences I could see were that the flowers were fresher, while, all about me, the smooth mossy ground was roughened by innumerable little elevations, closely ranged side by side, and looking like tiny graves in a churchyard, but without headstones. I suppose when there was no work for the little rainbow spirits—children, as they were, of the heavenly Rainbow—they must sleep in the earth awhile until the time came for them to get up again.

Well, no sooner had these little mounds appeared than the roofs lifted all over the city. From under them crawled a swarm of cats spotted like leopards, each with a bright silver collar round its neck. Their eyes were greener than any cats' I have ever seen, and their whiskers were very fierce and actually gilded. They somehow looked very foolish as they slowly walked over the gardens, stopping constantly to scratch over the little graves. This done, they had a grand scamper and played like kittens, their long, thick tails lashing about in fun, and their glossy coats looking as soft as if they belonged to creatures altogether kind.[1]

Curdie's astonishment at the cats was delightful! The aloofness of his short nose, pointed up and turned a little away from them, was the attitude he always adopted towards our own tabby at home. But a flock of cats! It was contrary to nature! Sitting on his haunches, he would quickly run his eye over them as if they were sheep, and then, as if suddenly remembering they were the hatefullest of living things, up would go his nose in the air, as if ignoring their existence. If one came near him, it would stop to spit at him and then seemed to shiver and crawl stealthily away. But so good a dog was Curdie, that not even when three at once stopped to spit at him did he take the smallest notice of them. Later in the course of our

[1] It is not at all surprising that cats should be found at the bottom of the sea. Every one has heard of sea-mews; so why not sea-cats? Of course they were nothing like catfish, which don't live in Fairyland, and are like any other fish, except that they purr when taken out of the water. All sorts of land-creatures have their counterpart in the Fairyland at the bottom of the sea: everybody has heard of sea-dogs and sea-horses and sea-serpents and sea-urchins and sea-saws. Children learning music have hard tussles sometimes with sea-majors and sea-miners and sea-sharps and sea-flats; indeed, these people are so crotchety and quavery, and so uncertain in their ups and downs, that they are much harder to understand than sea-cats.

adventures he had important matters to settle with them; and that more than once.

As soon as the creatures' game was ended, they set up a caterwauling. Then the roofs all lifted and the

creatures scampered away under them once more. This incident, I afterwards found, was repeated regularly every morning before the goblin citizens would dare go for their morning walk.

The cats being safely housed, the white domes and pyramids, one by one, were again raised, and this time several feet from the ground; the pyramids being supported by a central pillar, the domes by several uprights at the circumference. When lifted, the domes became pearly and transparent, though they were not very solid. But the pyramids were opaque and rough.[1]

[1] The roofs of these goblin houses were evidently formed by enormous jelly-fish and limpet-shells.

From beneath these roofs the people soon began to throng the roads and the gardens. Chatter seemed to be quite necessary to their walking. If one of them stood still, he stopped talking and looked unhappy. The faster he went the louder grew his chatter, so that his walking seemed machine-like, and his talking like the noise of his works. They were uncommonly strange people—though not extraordinarily different from some folk I have now and again seen in London. Some were more like fishes than men, though all had swollen heads. Some were lean and seemed to strut in front of themselves, their aliveness being fixed on their twitching noses. Some being very fat, more modestly lagged behind themselves, as if they carried their valour in a rucksack. Very few walked straight. Indeed, they trotted rather than walked, as their legs were so short : a very curious thing to see, as their waists were rather higher up than with us, and their legs should have been correspondingly long. Like the crab-sheep, all of them had the unhappy look of never getting what they sought, through always seeking something they could not need. They were all ugly in face and proportions. With us, people are sometimes conscious of their defects and try to hide them ; but these sought to exaggerate them. I believe that in any part of the world these people would be known as goblins. It was, at any rate, quite clear that weakness of character, complaining, fretting, timidness, untrustfulness, greed, were all admired as indicating refinement of character. The people thought it better to be always wanting new things than to be so happy that they could do without them. It flashed upon me that the weakness of the individual natures corresponded exactly with the shocking towers they had set up in their walls

to defend them; the poorer the soul, the more horrible the armour.[1]

The people were undersized, and, as if to make up for their shortcomings, were very richly dressed and overladen with ornaments. If a lady had ugly hands she would cover her fingers with rings; a man very big and round in front would wear a gaudy waistcoat and huge gold chains. If one was very thin he would strut about chattering of his invincibility and conquests. If a young lady was very stout she would pretend to be shy, and decorate herself with little birds' and butterflies' wings. The people must have destroyed quantities of butterflies and birds merely to hide their ugliness. Most of them looked at Curdie and me with contempt, then gathered their robes close about them as if they felt cold, and passed on. The men, all of whom had very long cloaks or coats, tried to look taller when they passed us, as if to reassure themselves. Their feet were very stumpy, and they took great care to hide them. Occasionally they would knock their feet together with a metallic noise, and once or twice I got a peep at what looked like hoofs shod with gold.

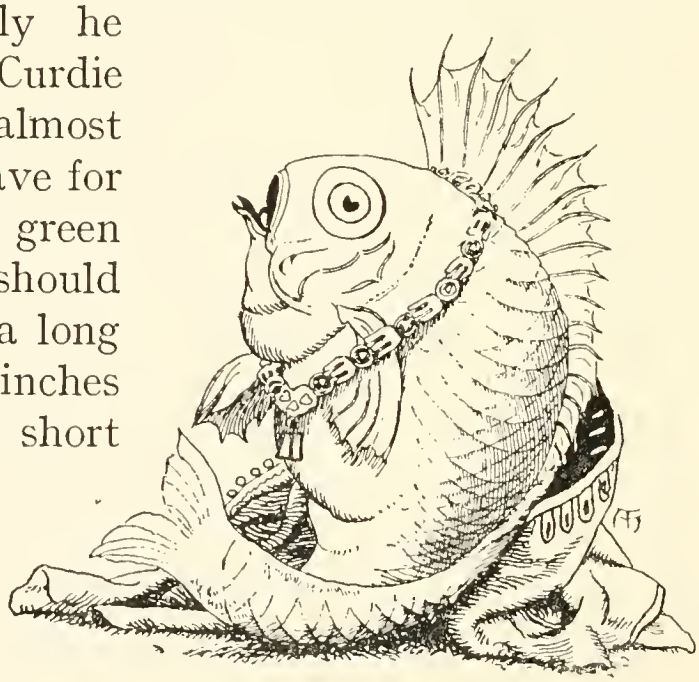
Some of the people seemed to be rather kindly. Because I was different from themselves they at first pitied me. In this they were quite different from the two fairies whom I heard singing when I first arrived on the hill-side. These had understood me at once, so far as they saw I was a sorrowful man seeking some dear thing I had lost. Their difference from me had

[1] Children and some of their parents will remember the oft-quoted lines of Shakespeare's *King Henry VI.*:—

> "Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just;
> And he but naked, though locked up in steel,
> Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."

been only in thinking it quite right to steal babies if they loved them. But these goblins seemed to pity me because I was poor; for many of them came up to me and offered me gold coins. I quite politely smiled and shook my head; Curdie just shut his eyes, as if to suggest that *he* wasn't a blind man's dog.

It was now that I found my crook to be really a magic one. A red-faced and portly gentleman somehow stumbled as he offered me money, and to save himself, caught hold of my crook; immediately he changed to my eyes, and Curdie growled; for he stood almost quite naked before us, save for his own skin of thick green scales. I saw that what should have been his legs was a long tail, dividing a dozen inches above its end into two short legs and shapeless hoofs. Then I understood that they were goblin mermen and mer-women. Instantly the portly gentleman let go his hold of the crook as though it had cut him. Immediately he was clothed again as before; but his face was now drawn and quite colourless, his hands were blue, and he shivered so terribly that he could hardly button his cloak about him.



Curdie had very soon given up all attempts at friendliness; but, while I watched the crowd, he stood looking into my face, probably waiting for me to lift my hand as sign that he was to gather them together to change pasture

or fold them. Whenever he saw wrong things, his one idea seemed to be that what they needed was a change of pasture.

After this trifling event the people gave me a wider berth. Though I was wicked enough occasionally to offer my crook, the ladies particularly avoided it, and the men looked angrily at the dog as they trotted by me. They offered me no more money. Clearly they were the rich gentry of the city. Though I belonged to another race and country, they, with their class-instinct, knew I belonged to a lower order. They were kind and charitable to me until they realized I had independence of character and would not be treated as a pauper. I saw no poor people about. Obviously, if there were any, they were not allowed to walk in the gardens.

I could not understand why they came into the gardens. It was not to breathe the fresher air, for they were afraid of chills. It was not for the beauty of the flowers, since they took no notice of them. There were no toyshops or confectioners or trees or music-bands to attract them; and I came to the conclusion that they got some pleasure in contemplating the height of the walls and the security afforded by the ugly towers, even though they held these in great dread. Of two things I became quite sure: they were a very sickly people, for they never smiled; and they never went nearer to the city walls than half a mile. Indeed, for this distance from the walls, as I found later, no domes or gardens were to be seen—only a waste of land adorned with little heaps of white bones.

When this daily custom of inspecting the walls from a safe distance was ended, the people quickly disappeared as if anxious to get home. Only a few went together beneath the smaller roofs, as these belonged to the very fine houses. Most of the people went down under the

larger domes which led to the streets, but some into certain dark tunnels I had not seen at first. Compelled by an alien's shyness not to mix closely with the people, Curdie and I waited till the last, and only just managed to get under a large roof before it closed down for the day. Indeed, we so nearly missed our chance that once again I realized the advantage to a dog, when in Fairyland, of not having any tail.

## CHAPTER VIII

The Magic Crook as Interpreter. The Underground City. We are arrested. The Goblin Shops.

FOR the first few minutes after the roof was shut down upon us, I seemed to be buried in darkness. All I could see were two starry points of light shining from Curdie's eyes as he kept them fixed upon my face. I felt sure he could see. Indeed, I think he was not altogether strange to the place, and that he kept so close to me throughout this day to take care of me. While I stood feeling about me with my crook, I heard the clatter and chatter of retreating footsteps hastening down a stony stairway till they were lost in the deep distance. No sooner had the last echo vanished than I saw a curved ray of blue light before me, moving up and down in response to any change in the position of my arm ; and, as I felt about me with the point of my crook, the bent ray of light came quite close to my face. I then saw that it was the bright iron of the crook that shone. Thinking its light must be reflected from somewhere, I looked behind and above to see whence it came. There was, however, no light anywhere else, save in Curdie's eyes. Then I knew that the light really came out of the iron itself. I took it in my hand. It was cold to the touch ; but it shone through my hand, making it glow with my own blood-colour. Then the truth became quite

simple to understand. The light of the crook was a fairy light; the thing, whose work it was to help the weak and foolish and fallen, could throw light upon all things. More than this: when I recalled the effect of its touch upon the portly gentleman, I knew that its light would show up anything false and ugly in spite of fine clothes, as well as shine through my own hand.

I was scarcely surprised. I had often remarked to my wife that this particular crook was always brighter and bluer than any of my others, and that, even when left in a damp place for many days, it never turned rusty. I remembered, too, that my wife had found its iron in the hay-loft. It lay at the bottom of an oak coffer, as old as Richard Cœur de Lion's days, among papers which were so badly worm-eaten that they had become quite illegible. Yet the coffer itself was black and shining, with never a worm-hole in the wood and never a speck of rust on the hinges; and on its lid were roughly carved a little lamb and a big bobtail sheep-dog, with a shepherd's crook above them and stars scattered everywhere. I had often noticed that this bright iron on winter mornings would reflect the first gleam of dawn long before my eyes could discern any change in the sky. On a clear starlit night it glittered quite brilliantly. When a thunder-storm was brewing, and the sky was enough overcast to darken the earth, I used to see tiny flashes of lightning sparkle round the curled iron.

Now also in this under-sea darkness the crook was giving out light; and I believe it was owing to its virtue that I was able to understand my adventures. I began to feel sure also that Curdie had fetched me the crook because he knew that only its light could get me out of the foul

smoke. For himself he always had something of fairy light in his eyes.

Although I now began to see better, I was rather anxious, and thought we ought to go back into the light and air and pleasanter aspects of the town before adventuring its deeps. But, by some mechanical contrivance, it was made impossible to retrace one's footsteps at an hour when the law of the city ordained that the stairways were to be used only for coming down. As soon as the last person had passed, the steps folded up upon one another behind him, and he had no alternative but to go downwards. This accordingly we did, Curdie going before me, but at every few steps looking up into my face as if he were a father helping a small child. Indeed, when I put the iron of my crook near him, I saw that each time he looked up he lifted his paw in encouragement. The lower we got, the wider and easier became the spiral stairway; and when we stepped out into a wide street at the bottom, I looked up at the building we had left and saw how its shape agreed with the spiral within. It looked like a monster whelk-shell, standing at least sixty feet high.

News of our arrival seemed to have spread; for, as we came out of the stair-house, a little fish-man—looking quite goblin-like, so huge was his head—accosted us in official politeness, touching the point of his nose with his thumb and spreading out his fingers in salutation. Clearly nothing rude was intended—quite the reverse! Curdie raised his paw and I touched my hat. The official spoke some words which I could not understand, till, resting my crook against the stair-house for a moment while I tied my boot-string, it chanced that the iron shone partly behind him. Then, of course, the man's words became quite intelligible to me,

and seemingly mine to him. After that I had no great difficulty in understanding the language. The little man did not seem aware of the crook's power. Nor had he a notion that I saw dimly through his clothes that his skin was scaly like a green fish's, and that, though he had two feet looking like hoofs shod with brass, he had only one leg—and that actually a tail! He was dressed in tight-fitting dark blue clothes with great pearl buttons arranged spirally round his body and continued down his one trouser like a corkscrew, though branching into two tendrils on his ankles. The buttons were engraved with the picture of an eight-armed, squint-eyed squid—evidently the emblem of the state. Over his shoulder he carried a strange pink bundle in the way the Roman lictors used to carry their *fasces*. The official said he was instructed, much against his personal will, to request my passport, or, if I had it not, to arrest me and destroy my animal. I told him I had no passport, but saw no reason why the authorities should object to me, as I was a very peaceable person, and that my dog was a friend to all living things—except cats. The official then explained that the danger lay in our being, most probably, infectious. Such a danger had not happened for two hundred years, he said ; not, indeed, since they had got free from the infectious superstitions of Fairyland.

" What sort of superstitions ? " I asked, as the fellow appeared to be kindly and communicative.

" Everything you can't catch," he answered. " You *can* catch fish—fishes is reel. You can't catch fairies—fairies is superstition. You *can* catch infection—infection is reel. You can't catch rainbows—nor yet their spirits. Why ? 'Cos they're moonshine. There's one more thing you *can* catch for bringing infection here."

"What's that?" I asked.

"You'll catch *it*, my man," he answered quite solemnly, "you'll catch it finely! There's no superstition about that! *They'll* make a bone-heap of you! What's left of you then, nobody will catch: it'll be only superstition and moonshine! So please to come along to the Magistrate!"

It did not appear to him that I might refuse to follow him. I told him that I had nothing the matter with me; that I was no sort of enemy; and that I wanted to be useful, if possible. He seemed quite puzzled.

"Useful?" he asked, as if thinking. "Useful? What is that? You don't go by internal combustion, do you? What does *useful* mean, unless you're a machine?"

I was at a loss to explain so simple a word, till I thought of the portly gentleman and how my crook had saved him from falling. "That was useful," I said.

"O, now I understand," he replied, greatly relieved. "We have all heard of that. He is the Mayor, and has gone home shivering, same as if he'd seen a live fairy. They say your infection has caught him. Is that what useful means?"

I cite this, as it was the first of many such difficulties, showing that, although one may understand a language perfectly, it may be impossible to make himself understood.

Following our guard as a matter of course—for I felt that I had no alternative but to submit—we soon found ourselves in a wide street with shops on both sides. The houses were all like huge shells of every shape and size, but absolutely uniform in the grey light with which they shone. Most of them resembled whelk-shells. The people were still, I supposed, within doors, perhaps breakfasting, for

few were about. Thus I was able to look at the shops. They all stood open, without glass or other safeguards against thieves. The goods were displayed on tiers extending right into the wide street, giving the shops an oriental appearance. There was much variety in the merchandise, although the goods displayed were mostly luxuries rather than necessaries. Chiefly they were grand clothes, thick rugs, grown-up toys, jewellery, and strange clockwork go-carts for one or two people. The colours of the cloths and silks were in great variety and quite gorgeous, so that they shone into the gloomy street. There was no light at all except what came from the things on sale and the shell-houses. I afterwards learned that all dress materials were, as with us, made from things once living —silk, wool, flax, leather, feathers, and so on: they had kept some of the light which in Fairyland shines from all good and kind life. Pearls and shells gave out some light of their own. Metals, which were used largely for adornment, as well as precious stones, had no light of their own, reflecting merely that which shone upon them: in this they were different from my crook.

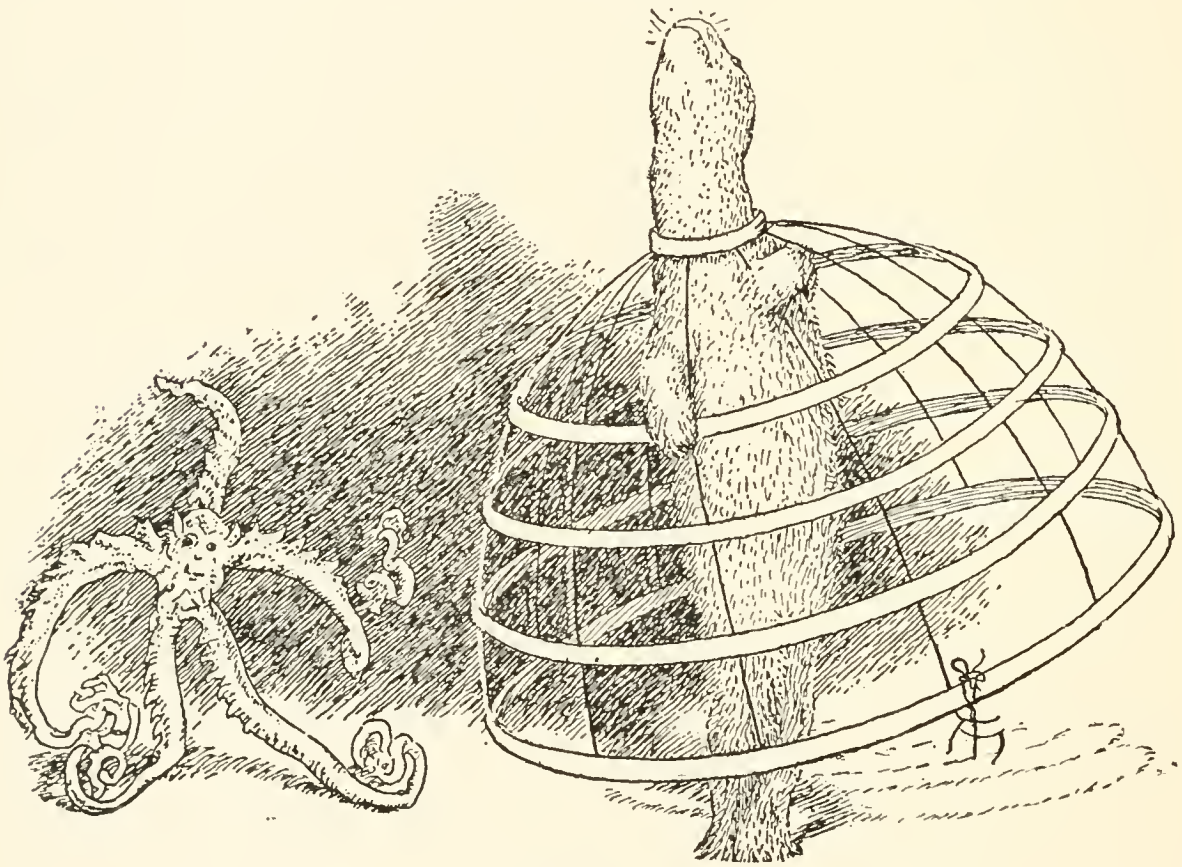
One point particularly worthy of note was the mode in

which all articles for sale were priced. The prices were affixed not only to show how much was to be given for the things, but in order that buyers might be spared the trouble of judging value for themselves. The food was all chemically flavoured, so that only by the price could one judge of wholesomeness. Clothes and toys, I discovered later, were all made by machines owned by the Grandees. The awful wheels roared all through the day and night, poisoning the air and everything. The workers had no choice but to tend the machines or starve. So that, though every man had by right two votes and women as many as they pleased, all workers were slaves. How different from my home, where hand-spinning and wood-carving make happy hearts as well as lovely things!

Of course I could not understand the figures with which the things were marked until I managed to put my crook behind them. Then I saw that a great bale of silk had its ticket marked with signs to suggest a goblin man with bent back, a goblin woman kneeling, and a goblin child crying. Where we say pounds, shillings, pence, they said men, women, children. A finely cut diamond had a label that meant a hundred broken-backed goblins and two hundred others in a prison. A gorgeous warm cloak decorated with iridescent feathers was priced at one goblin bound in chains, five little grieving goblins, and a thousand birds with broken wings. The birds were the smallest coin, two standing for one farthing. Each set of figures was framed in a circle representing a whip, the handle of which was like a wolf's open mouth.

Presently the fine ladies and gentlemen began to parade the street in great numbers. It was strange to see them turning over the goods, laughing and chattering, with no

thought whatever of the tickets' real meaning, though they were quite affectionate to one another. Curdie looked up into my face with rigid body and steadfast eye, as if he wanted to give me something to think about. In a flash I saw what he meant; and I asked myself whether it was or was not better that prices in our own land should be told in coins, the meaning of which, however different they



seem from the figures used in this goblin land, stand often for much the same thing.

There were many creatures so strangely shaped that they could not possibly wear clothes of any sort—creatures all curly legs with only a comic face for body; creatures so vain that the only garments to please them were skeleton crinolines; creatures whose bones were all hairy, like

herrings', and so needed hardly flesh or fashion to cover them. But the true Goblin people were nearly all over-dressed, though somehow the beautiful silks and warm-coloured wools made none of them look quite decent. This perhaps accounted for their constant anxiety about their clothes and their perpetual discarding of frocks but little worn and the buying of new ones. It seemed to be quite a law of nature that, the more expensively dressed were the people, the clearer was revealed any inherent ugliness. It was pitiful enough, for some of the ladies looked as though they would be really rather pretty if nicely dressed.

There were very few children. They were always in the charge of nurses who were simply clad and walked as if they had longer legs than their mistresses. When my crook came near either small children or their nurses, it made no difference beyond this : that a gentler look came into their eyes as they caught sight of the shining iron. Again Curdie looked fixedly and anxiously into my face, as if asking whether these little children *must* grow up into people like their parents ?

## CHAPTER IX

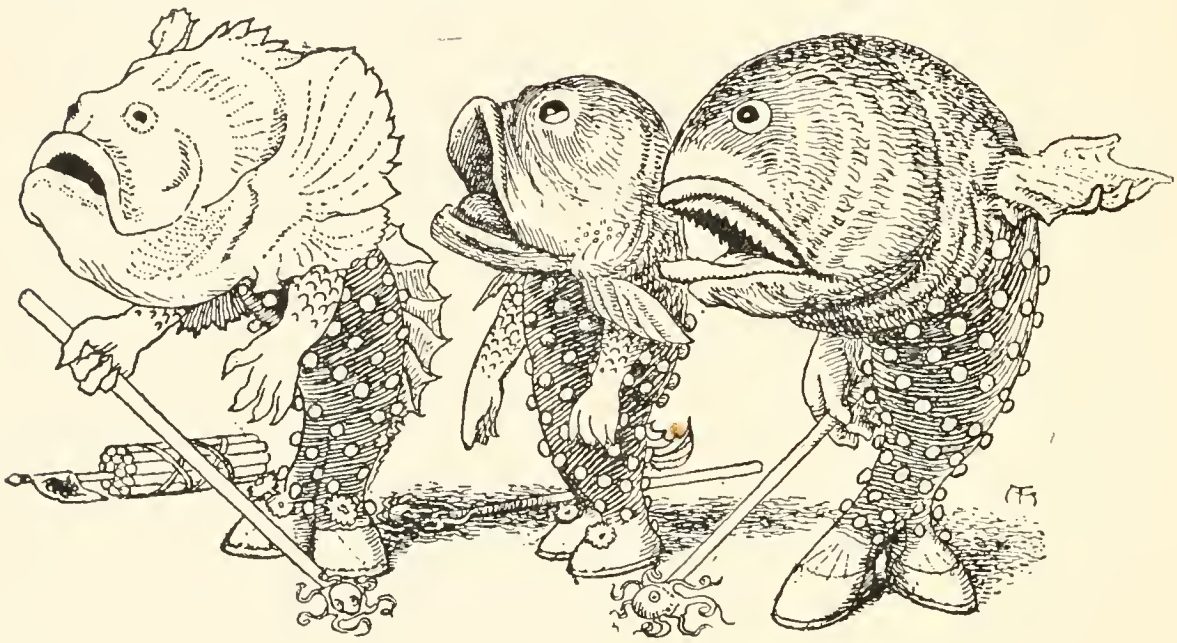
The Goblin Grandees attack me, but Curdie routs them. The Fairy Queen. Curdie leaves me and the Black Butterfly sings to me.

IT must seem surprising that our guard allowed us to linger and examine things as he did. Beyond the fact that I followed where he led, I should not have known that I was under arrest. Soon, however, I realized how things stood. Two more guards exactly like the one in charge of us came trotting up, chattering, of course, as they ran, and pushed through the crowd. But they stopped dead short, both in hoof and tongue-action, when they reached us. Then I saw that what looked like lictors' *fasces*[1] were really bundles of sealing-wax bound together with quantities of red tape. Projecting from the bundle, instead of the Roman axe, was a tin flag, and painted on it the picture of a squid. The people then began to stare at and crowd about us. Curdie kept his eyes upon me as if waiting for the order to chase them all home. Rumour had evidently spread concerning the danger with which we threatened the community. The people had lost their kindliness and were now all very angry: but for the fact that they held

[1] The *fasces* of ancient Rome were bundles of birch-rods tied up with an axe projecting from the middle of them. The lictors marched before the chief magistrates, and carried these symbols of the State's rights over the life and limb of every citizen. The bundles suggested also that, though the individuals might be weak, united as a state they were strong.

the dog in greater dread than myself, they would, I think, have laid hands upon me. The presence of the two additional guards gave courage to their anger, and they only waited to see what these would do before becoming actively unpleasant.

The two began like machines to ask questions of the other as they pushed their way towards us:



"Why don't he give himself in charge? Why don't you bring him along? Count Kraken's got a hungry eye on you, my man; so you'd better look spry!"

"What am I to do?" he answered them querulously. "He *won't* come! He ain't eddicated: he don't seem to understand that an officer can nohow be resisted. I've never seen anything like it before. Of course he daren't *reelly* resist—not after I've cautioned him: no one ever resists a guard like me!" (His head visibly swelled a bit more as he said this.) "But, all the same, I *can't* get him along. He looks at their grandeeships same as if he was

a equal, though I know he ain't 'cause he don't want to buy nothing. But he's dangerous. If you go near that there pikestaff of his, you're sure to catch something. It's nature—that's what's the *matter* with him! They can't have no laws where *he* comes from—not half a ounce! He's a natural—that's it! He belongs to his animal, he does!"

The man's stupid words gave me much information as to how I stood with them. It looked as though I had but to refuse their way to get my own. Clearly also they were afraid of me as well as of Curdie. The three guards seemed quite at a loss what to do; the resources of their boasted authority were at an end. They had no weapon, except a wriggling star-fish stuck on a stick. It was plain from their stumpy arms and legs that they were not strong. The whole of their stock-in-trade lay in their red tape and sealing-wax. Presently the three men looked steadfastly at me and shouted together "Follow!" But they did not move. I stood still and laughed to myself at the utter absurdity of the situation.

Then Curdie wagged himself all over and leaped upon me in eager appeal to be allowed to solve the difficulty in his own way. The people fell back a little, chattered and looked happy: they thought I was going to be destroyed by my own beast! But on realizing that his violence was but a caress, that I loved it, and that I could no longer help openly laughing at them, they grew angrier and angrier. More and more people trotted out carrying blunderbusses and wearing helmets. The three guards held their ground, but did not know what to do.

"Take them away!" the people shouted frantically. "Torture them! Kill them by slow inches and be quick

about it! They are paupers; they are infectious!" Still the guards made no move, and I saw there could be but one ending to Curdie and me unless I took affairs into my own hands. The dog, though he knew better than I what could be done, even now would not move without my word. What he meant by *Authority* was something quite different from what these poor will-less people meant.

Curdie meant something made up of two things: love of his master and a set of beautiful teeth. He looked eagerly at me, the star-shine in his brown eyes so extraordinarily bright that I knew his thoughts were true and wise.

Then one man clutched my crook: he fell in a flapping fit at my feet. Another tried, and he fell too. Then that crowd of finely dressed lords and ladies became hoarse with anger, mad with fear. I lifted my crook and pointed with

its bright iron over their heads to the distance, as if they had been a flock of sheep. Those furthest had begun to push through the others to get at me. But now Curdie's spirit was released. He rushed round and round the circle in the centre of which we were standing. He barked and leaped upon the silly grandees, tearing their clothes, yet never hurting them. Immediately only their backs were to be seen. They fell, they screamed, they trampled and flapped upon one another, they tore at their own wigs and one another's clothes ; they littered the road with feathers and silks and chains and bracelets—not to mention words naughtier than even Curdie had ever heard ! Those further away were running pell-mell, the nearer ones following as best they could. Soon perfect silence reigned. The half-naked, scaly people lay about, either singly or in ungainly heaps, perfectly still, except for an occasional flap of their tail-legs, like dying fishes out of water. Yet a goblin and his wife near me I saw feebly reach out for one another's finny hands ; then he turned a little, covered up her naked hoofs with his own cloak, and fell back as if in a last flap of life.

For a moment's rest, Curdie sat down and looked wickedly funny through the shaggy hair all over his eyes. He said to me, as plainly as eyes can speak :

" Master dear ! a dog like me can wag well enough without the tail he ought to have. But these silly grandees don't know how to wag even the tail they ought not to have ! "

Then it was that, their masters and mistresses being all seemingly dead, the big cats began stealthily to crawl out of the houses in hundreds. They picked their way most carefully among the quiet bodies, utterly regardless of the

fact that they had been their protectors. In spite of their flat heads and ears, they looked extraordinarily like spotted conger-eels, crawling almost on their bellies and lashing their thick, glossy tails. It seemed as if these animals—their ferocious gilded whiskers looking red-hot and their green eyes flashing malice—meant to attack us ; for without any hesitation, and from all sides, they came crawling and writhing and leaping towards us, increasing their speed as they came nearer. But this was more than Curdie could stand. Here was the one thing for which he asked no orders : he was both field-marshal and army too. Wisely he did not wait for them to come near enough to spit and scratch. He barked for all he was worth and rushed into the middle of them, regardless of the goblins that littered the way. Round and round the dog ran till all the cats had vanished. They could not get in at the doors of their homes fast enough and had to swarm up the sloping walls of the houses. Then he came back to me and dropped at my feet panting, with his tongue hanging out.

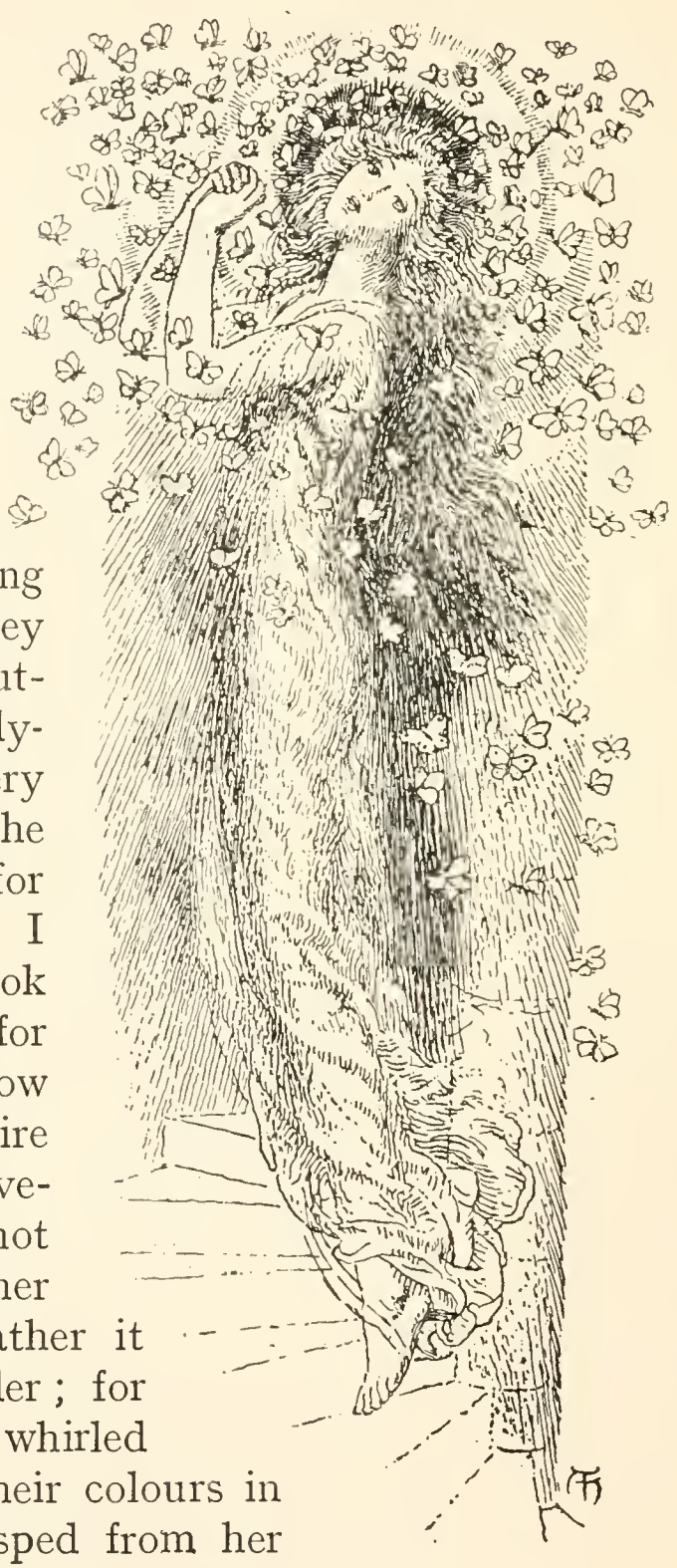
I was filled with dismay at what we had done. But I was soon relieved. The three guards got upon their feet with a flap-leap and stood stock still as if nothing had happened. Curdie ran to each of them in turn and lifted his paw. Getting no response, he sat upon his hind-legs as if asking pardon ; but they dared not touch him.

Presently from one of the ascending stairways a hundred or more yards away appeared a quite different form, which filled me with a longing to get away from all this nonsense and back to my little ones at home. It was a beautiful lady, with a halo all about her shining so very brightly that it was impossible to see her clearly. The halo was like a rainbow about her head ; but the shimmer of it was all in

her hair, which fell in ripples nearly to her feet, hiding her gracious form. Each of the seven colours in the bow was all movement, while every hue that woman's hair ever had came in turn from its depths. Gold and silver, brown, red, and raven-blue black, rippled and sparkled with a loveliness that, though quite restful, dazzled my eyes and refused me sight of her face. When she came nearer I saw she was dressed quite differently from the other people—just simply and beautifully. Though her clothes and her waving hair hid her, they let me know how beautiful she was. Curdie caught sight of her as soon as, if not sooner than, I did. He ran to her full tilt ; but, when a dozen yards from her, his pace had to slacken because the joy which had animated his legs now must spend itself in wagging his hind-quarters as if they could not contain themselves for delight. When he reached her he did not leap, but lay prone on the ground, his nose, perhaps, resting upon one of her feet, though I could not see. She stooped right down to him in intimate caress, and when he sat up on his hind-legs, holding up to her his thick, woolly paw, she either kissed his head or whispered some message into his ears. Whereupon he left her and came racing back to me, standing quite still and looking straight into my face.

The rainbow lady hardly took notice of the heaps of people and the littered clothes. She seemed to walk over without touching them. A wonderful uplifting came upon me as she approached ; and then, as soon as I thought I was to get sight of her face, a little cloud came from somewhere—was it from my own self ?—and hindered clearer seeing. Involuntarily I stretched my hands towards her and with them my crook. She took hold of its blue-shining iron. Instantly my cloud dispersed, and before me I saw the

rainbow all alive in its colours. Minute butterflies in seven colours fluttered up and down the stairways of their own particular strands, while others hovered among them in gold and silver. These last also were dancing about her whole body, seemingly in wild yet most orderly joy, and in such numbers that now all hope of seeing her face was gone. They covered even her outstretched arm, a body-guard to protect her every finger. She let go the crook after holding it for but one moment; yet I stood still, with my crook outstretched, waiting for something—I do not know what, though the desire was like that for forgiveness. The vision did not lessen in beauty when her hand left the iron; rather it was intensified in wonder; for the butterflies then whirled round her, mixing all their colours in a rapture of play, and sped from her



in a cloud of shooting and falling meteors. They settled upon the people and clothes that littered the roadway, and seemed to disappear beneath them. But still, though many times more of the gorgeous wings had flown from the lady than could have been crowded upon her when she first touched the crook, there were no fewer still left upon her. Her face and person remained hidden by them from my eyes.[1]

I have no exact memory of what happened next. The last I then saw of her was but as she was leaving me, to disappear in the same stairway-door whence she was come. Curdie was placidly walking behind her, his coat shining like white and grey silver. The light slowly faded from the doorway as they went up the spiral stair. Then came the twilight. I know I had stood looking after her until the last ray of light disappeared from the doorway. Then I saw my crook shining more brilliantly than ever before, and upon it was perched one raven-black butterfly, fluttering its wings as if it hardly knew how to stay behind the others. I brought the crook to my lips: the butterfly hovered and fluttered about my ear, making minute and sad music for my heart. At the time I was enabled to know its meaning: and when it fled away to the same stair-doorway with lightning speed, there was left in my ears a little song:—

[1] The vision recalled to me one I had seen a month earlier on the Downs. A cherry tree smothered in blossom and bending over a gentle declivity at its feet, where the last of the primroses and a wealth of bluebells were rejoicing in her protection, was suddenly and roughly embraced by a little whirlwind from the west. The blossoms flew round and round the tree like a cloud of snowflakes, finally rushing away after the wind, and leaving her at peace, seemingly full as before of her lavish blossoms.

"Go, seek for an unopened flower—
A child to give help in thy quest:
Then tell her of rainbow and shower,
Of sun and of tears that are blest.

"And thou, for thy guerdon, shalt fearless
Leave Fairyland tattered and torn,
But heart full of starshine and tearless,
Thy faith not a banner forlorn.

"Dog Curdie, our friend, shall not fail thee;
Our fairies thy baby shall tend;
Though monsters and goblins assail thee,
Brave love to thee courage shall lend.

"So doubt not: thy crook and its splendour,
Long lost in a goblin's dark lair,
In battle shall be thy defender,
And point thee the crystalline stair."

Quite regardless of guards and people—who were, thanks to the butterflies' ministrations, now all active again, and because of their disreputable appearance were, with flappings and hobblings, helping one another into the shops to buy new things—I buried my face on my arm as I held on to my crook for support, and, strong man though I am, actually for a moment wept. Nor could I tell why. I longed to find my baby and see the gladness in her mother's eyes. I longed for my wife's praise. I longed to wipe out the reproach of me from her heart. I now knew why I had desired speech of the rainbow lady—because she would know how I was to get quit of this wicked place; because she might tell me how to find my baby; because she might know how my wife was faring in her grief, and how the boys were helping her; because, in a word, I was quite sure

she was the Fairy Queen. But I had let her go ; and Curdie had followed her. I had for one minute seen something in this foolish place that was wise and lovely. Curdie was glorified by the vision and could follow. I must remain where I was. Yet there was both hope and comfort in the butterfly's song.

## CHAPTER X

I am down-hearted and make acquaintance with the Magistrate. He is very foolish. How the Children are brought up. Trystie becomes my friend.

YET I was very unhappy. Only two minutes before I had known that I ought not and need not submit to the absurd claims the goblin guards were making upon me. Yet now I saw no reason for refusing to follow wherever I might be taken. Hope seemed to be dead in me; and I think it was bad temper as much as sorrow that laid it low. I told myself that the Queen held me less important than the absurd goblin people whom she had brought to life again by sending her gay-winged creatures to them. I felt that I too needed healing. If they had only come to me instead of to those cowards! But she had turned her back upon me; and Curdie, glorified in her presence, had forgotten and left me. My only consolation was fresh reason for self-pity. The black butterfly had indeed hummed music into my ears. But the words, although they were for myself alone and full of encouragement, told of heroic things to be done before I could find the baby. Why did I not turn from my guards and race after Curdie? Somehow I could not or would not, and I excused my weakness of will by saying it was the dog's duty to follow me, and not mine to go after him.

Anyhow, I followed my guards so like a dog with a

sulky tail that I took little notice of the things I passed. Yet I kept tight hold of my crook, the more so because it now shone less brightly, and I was afraid that, if I was not careful, it also would be lost to me. I was almost too sure of one thing, however. I could not believe anyone would dare take it from me, and supposed that if anyone tried, it would set him shivering so badly that he would instantly drop it. Yet many days later, as the butterfly warned me, it actually was taken away from me.

I fell more into the habit of the dreadful city and began to feel as if I had no will of my own. Correspondingly the place and the people grew more commonplace, and I almost came to imagine I had lived there many years. I even wondered why everything had at first seemed so absurd; and I began to fear it was I, with my rough smock, my big, thick hands, my heavy boots, not to mention my brown, shabby leggings—which so accentuated the two-ness of my legs—who was absurd. Then, in shame at being ashamed of my shepherd's dress, I looked up at my crook. To double my misery, I could see hardly a shimmer about its head. I then remembered the butterfly's words about my crook lying "lost in a goblin's dark lair." I hugged it to my heart and covered it with my coat, as if to shield it from the evil atmosphere of the place. Then I looked at it again: my heart leaped because it was once more bright and starry.

I began to understand. I was in the city where the people depend entirely upon the things outside themselves, and have lost faith in what they themselves are and what they can do; where they submit to outsides, such as clothes and houses and cruel machines, and put their trust in Towers of Tyranny; where they have nearly for-

gotten about kindness and mother-love and strength to do right. I understood how a person coming newly into the city would also be in danger of protection by those horrible towers, and would fall under their evil enchantment. He would quickly come, as I was doing, to think that correct behaviour and obedience meek as machinery are more necessary to social order than loving kindness, sweetness of thought, or liberty to choose between good and bad. Though I used to believe that beautiful things were lovely because of their hearts rather than their clothes, I now found myself looking at the ugliness of the people as if it were quite natural. I had even begun to think it necessary that the shops should sell things which were priced by the lives destroyed in their making. Yet, although I was beginning to understand, I said to myself, out loud :

" I suppose, after all, whatever is, is right."

Then I remembered having once said as much to my wife, and how the saddest look I had ever seen filled her eyes. I then saw how I had fallen ; for it was her tears as much as her words that answered me.

" Can anything," she had asked, " be right if some righter thing is still possible ? "

In this memory of a sweet chastising I was humbled. It was my crook, I know, that recalled me and saved me from adding one more to the hundred thousand sillies in the city. I knew I had not yet quite lost the light within which lights all men, if they will only remember it.

So, holding my crook close to me, I followed my guards. I had no reason or thought of doing otherwise, my only hope being that I should do nothing actually wrong at the bidding of these people.

They took me before one of their Magistrates. He looked almost as wise as he proved to be foolish. Yet the expression on his face was very like a codfish's, in spite of his owl-like eyes. The air of the court was horribly close and fishy, so that I could hardly breathe.

I will not write all the stupidities of the Magistrate's opinions. Never before, he declared, had anyone come into his court complaining of the air, which, he said, was as pure as any sensible person could desire. What was good enough for him was good enough—a lot too good!—for a barbarian. If the air was fishy, fishy was Nature. He explained to the people in court that in their own superb city everything and everybody were just Nature: neither fresh or stale, glad or sorry, kind or unkind. They were all ruled by the stern decrees of Nature: which meant, he added, "Take things as you find them, and don't try and make them better." If anybody tried to act or think, or sniff the air differently from anybody else, he was a Krank.[1] Then, without hearing any evidence, he summed up my crimes:—

(1) I had offered help to a person of importance when he fell: whereas it was one of the laws that if anybody was stupid enough to stumble he must suffer. He was sorry to say that, even in this enlightened age, people retained some old feelings and superstitions that interfered with Nature's decrees.

(2) Like all Kranks, I had made people feel naked, though nothing could ever justify this, even if they *were* naked. To make matters worse, he added, the person of importance

[1] This was the goblin word for criminal. It was spelt with a *K* to show the contempt in which it was held.

was His Honour the Mayor. It was most unseemly that the nakedness of a grandee should ever be exposed !

(3) By making their grandeeships feel naked I had given them an infection. A Krank, he said, always *is* infectious.

What strange ideas they had of Nature ! To me it was a happy word that made me think of the windy Downs, the sheep with their tinkling bells, my brave boys !

So I was found guilty of being a Krank. The only thing was to get rid of me ; and the right way of doing this was to use me in the interest of everybody else. How this would be done soon became apparent. The Law of the City was upheld only in one way—namely, by the Towers of Tyranny. These, being living squids, very dainty in their appetites, could be fed only by one sort of food—*the men and women of the town they protected.* Clearly also the victims would be selected from among those whose lives were least worth having, namely, those less well provided with jewellery, houses, and clothes. The rich goblins agreed that another reason why the poor people's lives could not be worth having was because they had so many children. The rich goblins had but few and always sent them to the State Dormitories to be taken care of. The stupidest and grandest people kept little crab-lambs, baby squids, and sea-kittens for pets. These were more easily got rid of when they became inconvenient than children, who needed such unnatural things as affection and toys and lessons to bring them up properly.

So I was doomed to be food for the Towers. Yet, chiefly for the reason that the larders were all overstocked at present, and later for a more ridiculous reason, my execution was delayed. I was shut up in a little solitary cell, like a sea-snail's, at night ; but in the day I was allowed a good deal

of liberty, and I had plenty of food. I made many attempts, first open then secret, to escape up one or other of the spiral stairways. But only at certain hours were they practicable, because of the mechanism I had discovered when we first came down; and at these hours the place was swarming with people and guards who all knew and watched me. So I had to bide my time till I came face to face with the living towers.

Many things happened before this could be, and even more before I had my terrible fight with the squid-monsters for the Princess Honeypot and the brave child who helped us both to win our freedom. Much, too, must first be told; and particularly about the children, if we are to understand Trystie's story.

Strictly speaking, there were three classes of people in the Goblin Town. The first comprised their grandeeships, the world of fashion, and the second their hungryships, the common people. The third class included all the Children. Whether their parents were grand or hungry, the children formed a class of their own, because they had legs quite as long as other children's, and nice feet with five toes apiece. But, sure enough, when they came to be twelve years old, their legs began to grow together, lower and lower with every birthday; so that when they were quite grown up they were separate only from just above the ankles. Then, as if to make these stumpy legs longer, they had to walk on tiptoe. Next the five toes grew together and became a hoof. The lords shod their hoofs with gold, the guards with brass, and the poor people went bare-hoofed. But the children had proper boots and shoes, these being necessary, the Magistrates thought, to hide the ugliness of feet with fringes of five pink toes. They thought

if the toes were all the same size and even in number the feet would not be quite so unsightly !

But now an extraordinary event had taken place in this Goblin Town of Enchantment, and one that might change their whole history, as will be understood before the story is ended. The Magic Crook had come into it. The Grandees hated it, because it made them shiver. The people were suspicious of it, because it made them wonder if they were quite fairly treated by their masters. The Towers, before their story ended, found its magic quite terrible. Only one set of the people seemed happy to get near it. These were the children.

They ran after me in crowds. They came up one by one, touched my Crook, and went away with the flicker of a smile on their faces—smiles not having been seen anywhere in that city, its Magistrates boasted, for over two hundred years. The children came back and back, each time smiling less timidly, I thought.

During the many weeks I had to spend in the poor part of the city with an empty shell-house for my own, wondering how soon my turn was to come, the children would often come up to me in a crowd, eagerly saying, one after the other : " Tell us ; O, tell us ! " What, I would ask, was I to tell ? But the only answer I ever got was in the same words : " Tell us ; do tell us ! " more beseechingly and almost tearfully, though tears were as much things of the past as smiles. Then I would tell them a story.

Now we come to the little girl named Trystie. She was eleven years old. Like most of the children, she was an orphan. It seemed she was not much worse off in consequence, because there was nothing I could ever see of real love shown to the children. Mothers looked sadder and

sighed when they had to do things for their little ones: I think they longed to love them, if only they knew how. Nearly all the children lived in buildings called the State Dormitories. These were managed by the Magistrates, who took the greatest pains that the children should never waste time in playing games, or nursing dolls, or making useless things. Also they gave them only wholesome food, poor dears—no chocolates, not even acid drops!—and

thought that no lessons were good unless they were so dry that our children would have used tears to moisten them with. Of course the Magistrates thought they were doing the best for the children. They were beautifully washed every morning by wonderful machine-hands, which did the work gently, but so quickly that nearly always the soap got in the eyes, yet without bringing any tears. The machine brushes and combs could hardly have done their work with so little pain, except that even the girls' long hair was obedient and

never got into tangles. Then at night they slept in wonderful beds which kept themselves tidy by clockwork; and the last thing, before the lights were switched off, was the Magistrate's coming into the dormitory to turn a little handle beside the door. This made all the machine-beds at the same moment tuck the children up so tightly that the beds were quite as tidy when the get-up bell rang in the morning as when the tucking up was done. Trystie told me afterwards that it was horrid if the tucking up began before you were quite in bed; and what made everything much worse—the soap in the eyes, the brushing and combing, the possibility of having your clothes put on hind-side-before and your stockings upside-down, or, lastly, of being tucked up while only your shoulders had got on to the pillow—was that you couldn't cry! There are many more miserable things than a good cry; and the ticking of clockwork is one of them. Trystie, when she told me this, had got away from the dreadful place, and had learned not only to laugh and to cry, but to know what a beautiful thing quiet is. The Goblin Town boasted that its noise never ceased, day or night.

It is a wonder that these children were even wise enough to be hungry. They were, of course, taught heaps of lessons—all ready-learned by somebody else before they were stuffed into their minds—just like the food, which was all made nasty by being digested by chemical things before it was given them. There was nothing they might do that they wanted. Why, all over the dormitory walls were hung framed pictures, with just one word, and the same word again and again—in French and German and Italian and Latin and English and Goblin-gibberish; and the word was just "*MUSTN'T!*" But the one thing they never

succeeded in learning was what this word really meant; because, you see, there was nothing left that they might do, since their little *choose-keys* were taken away. What the *choose-keys* were will presently be seen.

So the children's appetites were never very good; but they certainly knew somehow that there must be many things they ought to know and be hungry for, even though they did not know what they were. Thus they were always asking me to tell them something, though at first I did not find out what it was they needed so badly.

But Trystie knew more than the others, and perhaps she brought more with her, somehow, when she came into this sad world. She would linger behind, or come back once again to touch the crook, after the bell had rung for them to go home. She again and again very nearly disobeyed the bell, so that it seemed to me she was the only one of them all who had goodness coming awake in her. Yet I always urged her to run fast and catch the others up, lest she should be shut out. It terrified me to think what would happen to her—and I knew!—if the door was ever shut upon her.

So the children would sit down on the stony open place in front of my shell-house. They were determined, it seemed, that I should *tell* them. Trystie would always creep close up to me and sit right in front, with her big black eyes fixed upon me, and her long black hair all about her, *almost* untidy. She was always waiting, waiting, it seemed. Sometimes I would lay my crook down, or let the children hold it. But when it was out of my hand I never felt quite happy, unless Trystie was taking charge of it.

In my first attempts at giving them what they wanted

I had told them about the things on the big hill which I had seen—the living cushions, the crab-sheep, the rainbow spirits. But none of these things were what they needed. They listened patiently and in hope, but still whispered so often: "Tell us; *do* tell us!" Somehow deep in their hearts were coming alive memories of a world more real than this in which they must live without love, without games, without the chance of growing good and strong and obedient. Something in them let them feel that obedience and good behaviour forced upon them—so that it was impossible to be disobedient and naughty—was not real. They could not put these feelings into words. But they wanted, I think, the chance of being naughty, so that they could be really good by choosing not to be naughty. They wanted also to play with one another, and perhaps to have strong, big fathers and mothers to help and do things for.

I found out later from Trystie about a curious custom which explained much. With ourselves the little children are all christened, to let their parents understand that the babies have come into the world with their little hearts full of treasure-seeds, as well as to let the children know, when they grow up, that the christening was a sign of their need to tend these treasure-seeds and make them grow into goodness. But in this Goblin City all the babies are born with a tiny pearl key around their necks, which the mothers ought to take care of for them till they are old enough to use it. It is called the *choose-key*. Instead of christening the babies in church or chapel, they are taken to the Home Office, where a sort of service is performed upon the tiny innocents. But it does both the children and the parents nothing but harm. Instead of christening

them they *quench* them. This ceremony consists in drenching the little babies' faces with something that is not water, because there is none, and taking away from them their choose-keys. These are then labelled and put away in a great iron coffer kept in the Home Office. The Magistrates would destroy the keys, if it could be done; but they are magic, and nothing will ever quite destroy them. As soon as the babies have been quenched they stop both crowing and crying. No beautiful and loving thoughts can grow in their hearts, because the seeds of them are locked up there, and only the choose-keys can find them. So also the children are never really naughty, because without the key they cannot *choose* to be; and they are never really good for the same reason.

Trystie told me that once a beautiful lady came to see her in the night after she was tucked up. She had butterflies flying all about her, so that the child could not see her face. How she came into the dormitory Trystie could not imagine, as all doors and windows were so tightly locked. The Magistrates, though they took away the children's rights to their own little keys, used much bigger ones of their own to lock them up with! But the lady—who was just like a rainbow, Trystie told me later, after she had learned what rain and sunshine were—came up to her bedside, and told her that before she was quenched her mother had taken off her key and hidden it away, so that it could not be put into the iron coffer by the Magistrates. Trystie's mother, partly for this wise and loving act and partly because she had never succeeded in growing into a mer-goblin, had to suffer what the law provided for all who acted or grew differently from everybody else: she was sent to the hungry towers. But, the Rainbow Lady

had said, Trystie would some day find her own choose-key and would know it for her own, because it would unlock everything—even the doors of the dormitory. She must always hold it in her right hand, where it could never be in the way, but would always help her. She must never part with it, even though to do so might save her from the towers. Then the child had asked her where she would find it, and the lady had only said: "Ah, God-child, that I cannot say. Indeed I do not know. All I am sure of is that you will somehow find it when you are not looking for it." Trystie said the strange word *God-child* had rung like music in her ears ever since and made her long for her mother. "Will you, please," she added, "call me that when I'm good?"

"But, Trystie child, you can't know what *good* means if you have no key," I said inquiringly, wishing to know if she was really beginning to understand.

"O, yes, I do know. *Good* means you; and it means my mother and the Butterfly Lady; and—and—it's beginning—I think—a tiny, weenie bit, to mean me!"

"Forgive me, little one," I answered. "But I will not call you *God-child*, because that belongs to the Rainbow Lady, who must be your God-mother. I will call you just Trystie—to my ears such a sweet and pretty name!"

Trystie's eyes opened in wonder that her name was sweet and pretty.

But to return. On this particular day I felt I must somehow find out what they wanted to be told. So I kept my crook in my hand. Trystie stood leaning up against my arm as I sat before the crowd of children. There were fifty-seven of them to-day, she told me—more than ever

before. They all looked like our own children, except for the sad, waiting-for-something look in their eyes, and their horribly prim tidiness, poor darlings! "Trystie," I said, "what *am* I to tell you? None of the stories I have told you seem right, and yet you all seem to think that I know what you want. Can't you help me, Trystie?"

Trystie's eyes got bigger and her face paler, so that for the first time in this horrid city I saw some light shining from a living creature besides Curdie and the Queen. The something deep in her heart was coming alive and bringing her very near understanding my difficulty.

"I know, I know!" she exclaimed after a few seconds' pause, during which she looked as if she were far away from herself. She came close up to me, lifted her face, and whispered, as if too shy to speak of the secret aloud, "*I* know. Tell us about *It*."

But what was It, about which I was to tell? Something, perhaps, that was more than anything else to me. Then I saw what I must do. I could only tell these hungry little ones what I knew best about—only this way could I make them understand and be satisfied. I also knew in a flash—as if something had gone from the child's heart into mine—that the only things I knew well enough to tell, so that they would be understood, were the things that I loved—and loved so deeply that they had grown to be part of my own self. Then I found that my crook was shining and indeed flashing.

In a word, I must tell them about three boys and a baby girl. I must tell my story exactly as I should to children of my own country, although I knew that they could not understand many things—the names of animals and flowers,

the sun, the moon, the stars, the meanings of play and pity. Yet I felt sure there was something in every one of them that would be stirred at a tale of life that was sweeter, more pitiful than anything their own young lives had ever experienced.

So I asked them all to sit down as near me as possible. The younger ones mostly fixed their eyes upon the Crook: and, before I had done, many of the little faces were beginning to shine with a solemn happiness, as if, after all, there was something in them not utterly killed by their machine education and enforced obedience.

## CHAPTER XI

How Kit takes his little Brothers to visit the Fox-cubs and Bunnies. He is bitten for being kind, but isn't punished for being naughty.

THIS is the story I told them. I give also some of the children's interruptions, because they help to explain the poor little things' minds. But I shall not set down all my answers, as they were necessary only to the children.

"Kit, Davie, and Robin are my three boys. There's a baby girl too, though she was too tiny to go with them when they had the adventure I am going to tell you about. The baby is lost," I added very quietly to Trystie; "and I

want you to help me find her." The child flushed as happy children do the world over—but very rarely in this and some other dark towns. "They all four," I continued, "belong to me and their dear mother, and we belong to them."

"What's *belong?*" asked several of the children.

"*Belong* means that they all lived together at home," I explained.

"What's *home?*" they again interrupted. "Is it the Office? Is it a dormitory?"

A big girl with very short legs called out severely, "Asking questions is a *Mustn't.*"

"Home is just the dearest place in the world," I answered, disregarding the big girl. But at this rate I saw I should never get to my story; and so I asked them to let me explain afterwards all the things they could not understand. I would not *bid* them be silent, because their rigid obedience was a painful thing to me: I only *asked* them to wait. Yet they still interrupted occasionally.

"Kit," I proceeded, "is the eldest and was eight years old at the time of my story. He always takes care of the other two, who were five and three. Sometimes he gets them into scrapes" ("What's *scrapes?*" from a big boy); "then we call him Christopher, which is severe for Kit, and he doesn't like it. Mostly he is very good, and we nearly always call him Kit. Davie and Robin love scrapes, and call him Kit quite always.

"Their mother" ("Have they really got a mother, really, truly?") "likes them to have lots of time in Kit's care. You see, they have never been *quenched*, which in our land we think is not so good as christening them; and so they keep their little choose-keys and find out things for

themselves." ("What's *find out?*") "So Kit took them for a walk after tea last autumn, when the days were beginning to shorten, and a big harvest moon would dreamily rise before the sunset colours had left the sky. Kit wanted to show them something that Jonas, a big, kind old shepherd, had taken him to see the evening before. It had been Kit's birthday, and the old man wanted to give the child a treat. But Kit thought that only very small children could see it, and so did not tell his mother that he was going to keep his brothers out of doors after the moon rose when they ought to be in bed. Besides, he was really eight now!"

"They'll get tucked up too soon, I know they will!" a little girl began to whine in anxiety. I felt glad at this interruption, because I knew they were beginning to be interested in my children.

"Kit, too, knew he would be Christopher for some days afterwards, and that his mother's gentle hands wouldn't tuck him up till he was sorry."

The little girl in front who had last spoken looked so strangely at this, and her eyes got very big. She was thinking, I suppose, how heavenly it would be for gentle hands to tuck her up.

"And he didn't mean to be sorry, never, never, Kit told himself, not even though he had to cry himself to sleep! He'd just *got* to take Davie and Robin to see something, and he couldn't help it!"

I had already told them about tears and laughter, crying and smiles. It had puzzled them very much, though they had perhaps a glimmering of understanding—enough, at any rate, to prevent their interrupting me too often.

"So the three toddled off together, as soon as tea was over, up on to the smooth, sweet Downs, through the beech

woods, sometimes stopping to pick the big, ripe blackberries or the red raspberries. They were always hungry for these sweet fruits, which may be had without any asking."

"Did they bring plates with them?" asked a little girl, who could not imagine food without plates to put it on.

"No," I answered, "they picked them off the bushes with their fingers and then popped them into each other's mouths."

"That's a *Mustn't*," she replied, quite shocked. But I continued my story.

"There was very little path to guide them. But Kit knew the way well, and carried both Davie and Robin one by one over the prickly brambles lest they should scratch their red, fat legs. It was uphill all through the wood; and when they were out of it there was still some climbing to do, through long green grass with bright flowers in it—blue campanulas, bugloss, red centaury, mauve devil's-bit scabious, and yellow buttercups—all to make it gay. Up this hill Kit carried Robin pickaback, all the time telling them a wonderful tale about Mr. Fox and Mrs. Rabbit living on a farm, with squirrels for cows and bumble-bees for sheep and adders for pigs; and how there were three boys and one baby; how no one knew whether they would grow up into little foxes or little rabbits, and so Mr. Fox and Mrs. Rabbit couldn't decide which school they ought to go to, the one for foxes or the one for rabbits; and how they didn't grow up into anything at all, only three good little boys named Kit and Davie and Robin—and a baby called Princess Honeypot.

"So the three soon got on to the smooth, firm turf of the Downs, smelling so sweet and making their little souls eager for the wonderful things Kit had promised to show

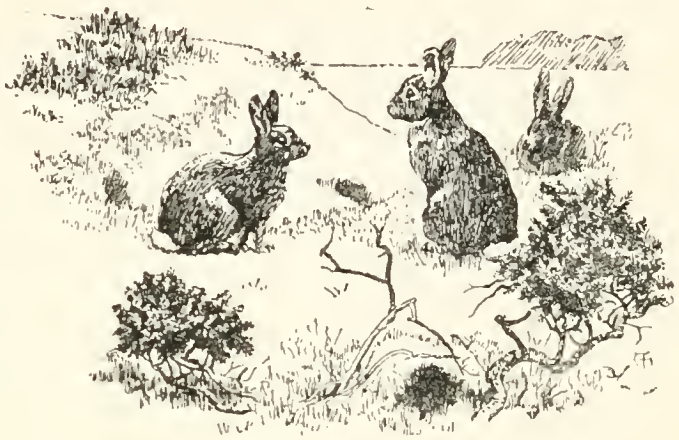
them. The great red sun was just beginning to sink down behind the world when the travellers reached the place they sought. Kit, like the true shepherd he was, knew many things. He could watch and wait and be silent, though he chattered a great deal when he wanted nothing else. He found a comfortable spot on the side of a little sloping hill where they could sit and watch. It was behind a clump of white-beam and gorse bushes and bracken. Through the edges of this shelter they could peep, and yet be hidden from any little people who might come to the hill-side. A gentle wind was blowing across the little hill towards the children; so it could not betray by carrying any scent of them. There were lots of white stones and flints and—strange enough in this place, so far away from where they were grown—three round swedes, nibbled all over. These round roots stood together at the top of the sloping ground, and rabbit-holes were scattered about the hill-side. Just at the bottom of the slope was a spinney of low shrubs, white-beam, raspberries, hollies, and brambles, with stunted thorns shaved smooth on top by the wind from over the sea; and away again from the spinney were great beech woods. Kit's only fear was adders; not for himself, for he would handle these little snakes as fearlessly as any other wild animals. Jonas had taught him how to do it so that they would not bite. But Kit knew their teeth were dangerous, and that silly sheep got bitten by them on their noses sometimes and died. So he searched all about the gorse bushes to make sure there were none; he knew, too, that if they all three sat quite still, as they would have to do for perhaps an hour, no adder would touch them.

"They sat as silent and still and watched as keenly as a cat lies and watches for a mouse. Nothing distracted

the patience of even little Robin—not even a bevy of little white moths which hovered and danced to and fro before them, as if to tempt them from their stillness, nor the zig-zag shootings of a belated dragon-fly. There was plenty to look at. At their feet were harebells, pimpernels, ruby-tipped daisies, and quantities of gold-powdered bedstraw. Scattered about were lowly milkworts, looking for all the world like fairy blue-birds asleep in their nests. Far away, about the feet of the hills, harvesting was not yet quite over. They could see their home nestling behind their own coomb and its beech wood. Beyond it there was the last wain-load of wheat slowly going home, drawn by six great, patient, black oxen, with their big horns curling forwards. They were yoked in pairs, mere specks in the distance, yet sharp enough to these young eyes. The children watched all these things—the moths, the oxen, the flowers—saying never a word or moving a finger—true shepherd-boys all—yet thinking the whole time of what they waited for.

"The red sun went to bed wide awake in front of the children, and the big yellow moon got up half asleep behind them; and still the three sat patient and moved never a foot or a hand. A cool evening wind came from the east to settle down beside them and the bushes, to wait with them for something. The moonshine grew stronger and whiter, so that the chalky flints and stones shone like silver, and the green of the grass and the yellow of the bird-trefoil and buttercups, the gorse and golden bedstraw vanished away. Then they watched the daisies at their feet close the silver and rosy-tipped petals over their yellow heads; and the silence was so big that you could almost hear the daisies whispering tiny prayers. One daisy, close to Davie's side,

had a little ground-snail sitting so tight on his yellow close-cropped head that he could neither pray nor sleep. Davie gently picked off the snail, and then the flower slept.



"Presently out of the holes on the sloping turf peeped rabbit after rabbit, first one, then three or four, then seven, and then dozens and scores. They looked out to see that all was safe; then they would take a short scamper, flicking up the whites of their tails in delight at their freedom, then sit down again and look about them as if they were expecting some friends to tea. Most of the bunnies were children, and heaps of them were tiny babies, though they could scamper about and play even better than their fathers and mothers.

"While the bunny-people were playing so happily, the children, still quiet as mice who did not mean to be caught, heard coming from the spinney little complaining sounds, 'Yap! yap! yap!' the cry indeed of fox-cubs when they hear their mother coming back to them after she has been away marketing. Then there were some minutes of silence. Presently there peeped out from the spinney the sharp nose and then the red head of a vixen, the name of a mother-fox. She sniffed the air, turning her head and her twitching black nose in all directions so as to be sure that nothing could be smelt except friendly rabbits. Then her white furry shirt-front appeared, and she crept out of cover with a little sharp bark. It was quite clear

that she would not have barked if she wanted to be unkind and catch rabbits for supper ; and it was just as clear that the rabbits all knew that the bark was a friendly one. Really it was to tell her children that all was safe and that they must come after her. So out of the spinney she came, her coat so red that even in the moonlight you could tell its colour ; and after her ran seven yellow little foxes, with seven long brushes waving behind them. They ran up the slope in a flash, and at the top of it their mother demurely sat down beside the swedes to watch the little ones play.

" Then began the wildest fun you ever saw. Round and round, rabbit-children and fox-children ran after each other. Often a rabbit would double so quickly that he had to jump right over the back of the fox-cub who was after him lest he be caught. All their happiness seemed to shine from their tails, the rabbits twitching their little white stumps as fast as possible, and the little foxes waving their brushes round and round like flags to show what good things were life and play and foxes and rabbits and mothers and moonlight.

" This great game had not been long a-doing when another mother-fox with her litter of five cubs came out of the spinney also, and did just as the others had done. She sat on the edge of the slope by the swedes, a little way off the other old fox ; and, while the two families played with the bunnies, the two mothers, I suppose, talked soberly about the weather, their troublesome cubs, the newest shade in furs, the dry-cleaning of shirt-fronts, and so on.

" Presently the mother of the five cubs gave three sharp barks, and they scampered up beside her, one after the other. Then she gave one of the swedes a push and set

it rolling down the sloping ground. Instantly both families, twelve cubs in all, were after it. They ran round and round it, over and over it, tumbling each

other about, their brushes going like flails, and thus gradually let it roll down to the bottom. There they left it and scampered up to their mothers again. Then the other two swedes were started

and the fun would begin and end again, just as before. In this game the young rabbits did not join, not understanding it, and perhaps feeling sorry that the roots which they had been nibbling at contentedly should be used as playthings. So they sat quietly about with their long ears hanging down, sorely wanting another romp with the young foxes. Now and again one or other of the mother-foxes would take a scamper round and chase a mother-rabbit, then double and let the pursued one chase her back or round and round. But the mother-fox would not stay away long from the place where they watched the youngsters. Kit afterwards told me he was sure the mothers took the swedes to the top of the slope again every morning, because when Jonas, the old shepherd, had taken him there the night before and left him to watch the games, the swedes were on the top.

"Soon, when all three swedes were at the bottom and the little foxes could roll them about no longer, they all joined once more with the rabbits and renewed their games with them. But presently something dreadful happened which Kit had not seen before. A loud whining yelp came somewhere from a little cub, and squeals from little bunnies. The two vixens barked and ran into cover again, one of them followed by her seven children, but the other by only four. One had been left behind somewhere!

"All the rabbits, dozens and scores of them, big and little, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters and cousins, grannies and babies, had all disappeared in a moment's flash of white tails into their burrows. The children were left alone with the crying of little creatures caught somewhere. Kit jumped up with a very white face, I know, Davie and Robin following him and beginning to cry. They ran to the far end of the sloping ground, and there

discovered the little creatures held fast in cruel snares. There was one big rabbit and three very small bunnies, besides one baby-fox angrily yapping for its mother, though she had had to run away with the others as fast as possible lest something should happen to them also.

"Kit knew all about the setting of snares and how to undo them. So, with shaking hands but deft fingers, and hardly able to keep from joining Davie and Robin in their crying, he set to work to free the struggling creatures. The big rabbit had already strangled itself by pulling at the noose in which it was caught behind the ears. Perhaps it had been there much longer than the others. One bunny, too, was quite dead. But the two smallest ones were still struggling, one caught with a leg as well as his neck through the wire, and the other in his middle, having almost got through. Fortunately, Kit had in his pocket the new pocket-knife his mother had given him the day before. There were tools in it as well as a big blade, and among them a strong pick. With this Kit managed to loosen the thin brass wire and extricate the tiny creatures. Taking it for granted that the big dead rabbit was the little ones' mother, he put the two soft wriggling things as well as the little dead one into his big pockets inside his little smock. His mother had just made these pockets for his birthday to hold horse-chestnuts and hazel-nuts and precious stones and string and the new big knife; not to mention such things as lizards and shrews and hedgehogs, which the boy was constantly bringing home. Now he meant to take the rabbits and cub home for me, his father, to mend in case they had broken anything; because he knew, if he left them there without their mother, they would be caught by owls or sparrow-hawks or stoats, or even by foxes when

they were out marketing and not wanting to play games.

"Then he went to the little fox, who was much bigger than the bunnies, as big indeed as an almost grown-up kitten; but the cub was angry and frightened and could not believe that so big a little boy could be kind. Kit thought it had broken a leg also. It jumped about and tried harder and harder to pull its hurt leg out of the noose that caught it. So Kit had to lay hold of him to keep him still while he got his leg free. But the wire was so tightly pressed into his little leg that the boy could not loosen it without more hurt to the cub. Then it was that the creature turned quickly and set its small, sharp teeth into Kit's thumb. But the boy, so Davie told me, never cried out, but held on to the cub till he had loosened the snare, though the cub bit him again before he succeeded. Caring nothing for his own hurt, he popped the cub into his left-hand pocket, first taking out the dead bunny and putting it carefully into the side-pocket of his loose-hanging little shorts. Then all four creatures lay still. With sad yet pitiful hearts the boys ran home as fast as Robin could follow; for now, with his precious burdens, Kit could not carry the little one without risk to the wounded animals. Kit had also much to think about, wondering who had set the snares. The truth is that Jonas, the night before, when he left Kit to watch till the rabbits came out to play, was seeing to this business of his.

"The children arrived home long after bed-time. Their mother was looking so sad, as if she had been crying. I had just got back after searching the wood: the children had indeed heard me calling; but, tired with running and stumbling and tears, they could not call back so as to be

heard. Curdie, my big dog, was busy later than usual bringing the sheep down from the hills to fold them for the night or he would have gone to find them. Their mother said not a word of welcome, but called Kirsty to give the little ones their bath quickly, then some warm milk and tuck them up in bed, when she would come to them. But she took Kit into the parlour and shut the door and stood before him.

"'Oh, Christopher, Christopher!' She said it so sadly and gravely that the boy stood hardly able to keep from weeping, in spite of his obstinate determination to keep on believing that he was a good boy. 'Oh, Christopher, can I never quite trust you again?' This was almost past bearing. Generally at such a reproof he would have broken down and thrown himself on the floor in a passion of mixed anger and grief. But he was kept in check by the sense of his important mission—to get the live treasures in his pockets mended quickly. So he burst into a great howl, yet immediately checked it into a smothered sob, as he put his right hand into his knickerbockers pocket and brought out the dead rabbit.

"'They're all orphans!' he half sobbed in a tragic whisper, as if fearing the bereft creatures might hear the dreadful news.

"Then the child's mother saw that both the little beast and the little hand were covered with blood. Her face turned pale and she sat down. Kit put the creature into her lap.

"'Christopher, what have you been doing?' she asked, not noticing the plea, and held by a keen fear, thinking for one brief moment of the new knife and that the boy was naughtier than she could believe. But then she saw it was

the boy's thumb that bled and was angry with herself instantly. 'Kit!' she exclaimed, and the tears filled her eyes. She would have pulled him to her and forgiven him, if only because of his hurt. But he drew back from her, and, as he did so, took out of one pocket inside his smock the two other rabbits, and out of the other pocket the fox-cub, too cowed by his imprisonment to bite his saviour's hand again. He put the rabbits into his mother's lap, and the yellow cub into Davie's little green and red wheelbarrow which stood by, as if afraid it might bite the bunnies too. 'The cub's leg is broken, I do believe,' said the child; and then for the first time he seemed to see his bleeding thumb, which he held out to his mother and burst out weeping in her bosom. Instantly she understood.

"'Kit, my darling Kit! and you took them from the cruel snares! Good Kit! I will trust you again, Kit—and always, always, always!' She looked at the thumb, then rose, gathering her frock about the little animals. She opened the door, Kit still clinging to her, and called aloud, 'Shepherd, Shepherd! Kit's a good boy, and has brought these bunnies home and a fox-cub with a broken leg, and the little fox has bitten him badly.'

"Then I went to them and took the wounded thumb to see how much it was really hurt. But he would not let me trouble about it. 'He's a good cub, father, I know he is, and he didn't mean to bite. He pulled so dreffle hard to get away and I had to hold him tight, ever so; and he thought I was the snare and *wouldn't* listen to me telling. And the teeth didn't hurt. Mend him, father, quick, quick!'

"Then the young fox jumped out of the wheelbarrow and scampered away as if to show he was really unhurt. I

picked him up, meaning to let my brave boy keep him. One of the rabbits was quite dead. One of the other two had a broken fore-leg, which I bandaged up, before I looked to the child's hurt.

"We kept the rabbits for Davie and Robin, though one, because of its damaged leg, won't ever jump straight again. Kit's thumb got well. But I am afraid I was quite unsuccessful in making him understand that though it was Christopher who took his brothers so far without first telling where they were going, it was Kit who saved and brought the little beasties home; nor, I imagine, could he see why his little cub punished him for being good, while his big mother didn't punish him for being naughty."

And so the story ended; and it was the last I had any chance of telling the children.

## CHAPTER XII

I am arrested again for telling Fairy Stories. In Court once more. I read some of the *Mustn'ts* in the *Book of Safety*. Through my folly I lose the Fairy Crook.

AS the story drew near its end I noticed that my audience was increasing in numbers. Older children, lads and lassies, were staying to listen. These were not pleasant to look at, for they were beginning to take shorter footsteps. Though still like the children of our own country, they were thicker and duller, beginning to look like their weak and foolish parents. The older people were collecting also; less ugly perhaps in this part of the town than those in the fashionable quarters, they yet looked stupider. Nor is it much wonder, as they had no hope in life beyond getting plenty of food, and no destiny beyond feeding the Towers.

But now the older folk, who had listened patiently enough till I was done, got some animation into their faces; but it was that of anger.

"It's lies—all lies!" they shouted to the children. "Don't you believe him, or you'll be shut out and we shall all see the last of you. It's a fairy story he's telling you—all fudge and make-believe."

"Indeed, indeed," said I, trying to make myself heard above the excited hubbub; "indeed, I have been telling them what's quite true—every word of it."

"O, I dare say," said one; "but the *Book of Safety* says that when a barbarian tries hardest to speak the truth he tells the biggest fairy stories."

The *Book of Safety*, which they often quoted, was a collection of worldly-wise sayings that scoffed at beautiful and true things. All the *Mustn'ts* were written down in it. Before I left the court I got an opportunity of reading one page of them: they were both silly and wicked, though it now makes me laugh sometimes to remember them. The book was written by the Magistrates to save people from what was held to be a dangerous habit of thinking for themselves.

"I'm going after the Magistrate," said a schoolmistress, one of those who looked after the bed-making machinery and taught the children their *Mustn'ts*. Off she trotted, as if her fishy legs were the boniest and thinnest ever made. I thought I had caught sight of my Magistrate friend on the outskirts of the crowd; but he was gone now.

"Let's throw stones at him," said a big boy, whose legs had grown together down to the knees.

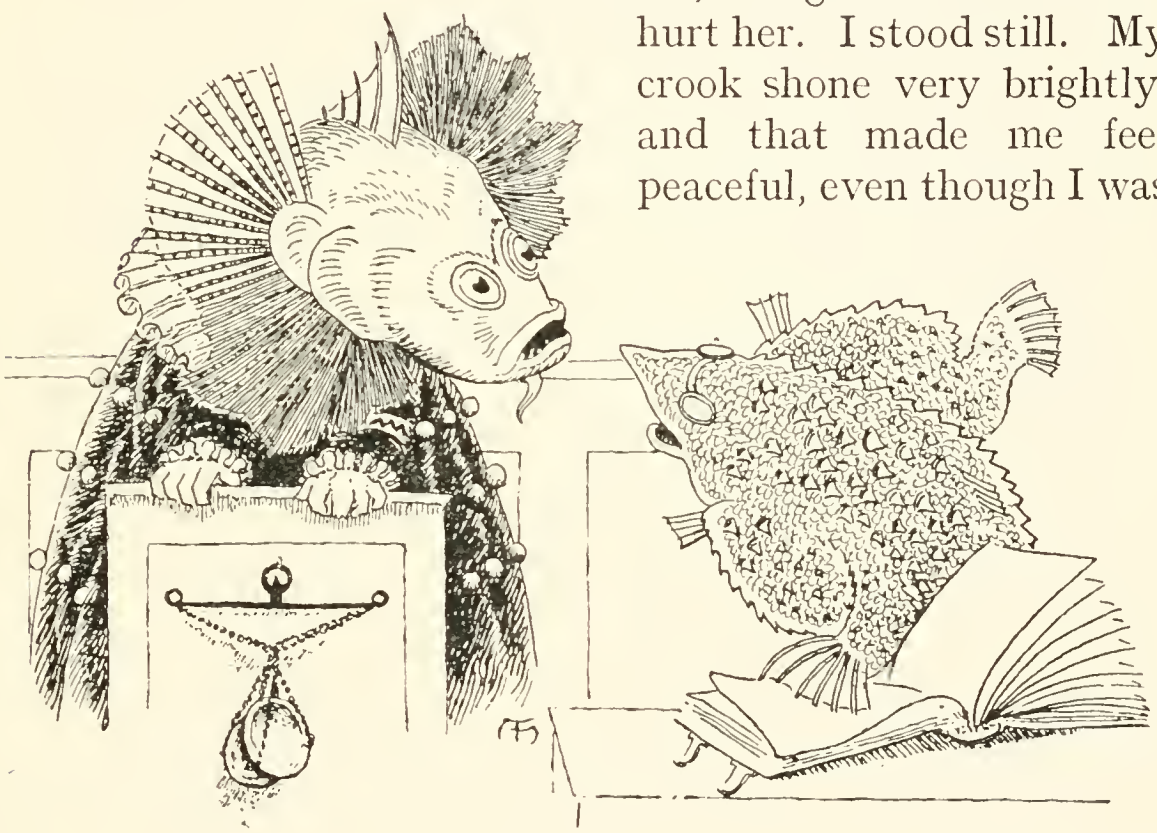
> "'Cakes for fat friends who often feed you:
> Stones for thin strangers who only need you.'"

"That's in the Book!"

I thought of my own boy Kit, who once, when he was only four, said he loved tramps better than ladies because ladies wasn't *never* hungry. His little heart was so full of love and pity for unhappy people!

Then they began pelting me. But the children had never played at any games and could not throw. The stones, though they fell like rain, seldom hit me, and seldom hurt much. The people were all so weak from disuse of their own

strength that their muscles were very soft and tender. This, to be sure, pleased the hungry Towers. Some of the bigger children then began to run or rather waddle away, but a few of the smaller ones, with Trystie—who, as I have said, was eleven, and who could still walk and run with a fine stride—came the closer about me in spite of the stones. Trystie caught many of the stones in her hands to shield me, though some must have hurt her. I stood still. My crook shone very brightly, and that made me feel peaceful, even though I was



attacked. The boys, seeing I was not made angry, soon got tired of the stones, but waited just to see the fun when the guards came to carry me off.

A posse soon arrived. They were dressed in the same blue uniform as the other guards, with the huge buttons arranged spirally down their tail-legs. One of them arrested me. I had by this time so little fear of the awful authority that

I followed him quite cheerfully to the Magistrate's Court. I hoped I should be brought before a different person this time, as I was anxious to see if any of them had a sense of law and justice. But the same elderly person, chiefly head like a codfish's with owl eyes, was to try me. His clerk, a very old goblin, looking as if his huge spectacles were his only necessity in life, sat by his side behind an enormous black book. I could see when its leaves were turned that very little was written in it. The air was horribly stale and fishy.

"What is it?" asked the Magistrate, opening his mouth as if to devour the evidence.

"Telling fairy stories, your worship, which is contrairy to nature and ag'in the Book."

"Holy Hoofs!" replied the Magistrate, clinking his gold shoes together emphatically; "a most extraordinary thing! Fairy stories are—well—stories, I suppose; and stories are lies; and Kranks mustn't tell lies."

He seemed to look at me through his open mouth, as if expecting me to say something.

"Who may, your honour?" I asked.

"It's contrary to nature to ask questions unless you can answer them," he replied.

I looked at the bright shining of my crook and shut my eyes for one moment. In that small bit of time I was back home again, Kit and Robin holding each a hand, as we looked at a little calf and its mother in the cow-byre, and they plied me with questions so big out of their small hearts that there were no answers to them—at least, not any I had ever heard of. My eyes opened themselves again, and my ears heard the Magistrate still talking:

"But as you're so exceptionally ignorant, I'll tell you.

Everybody knows that the only people who may tell lies are the grand people. It's natural for them and quite safe, because nobody believes them. In this noble city we won't have any other sorts of stories."

He waited again for me to speak.

"Is a prisoner allowed a word in his own defence?" I asked.

"There never is any defence," was the answer, "except our lordly Towers. Here nobody does anything wrong except contradicting the *Book of Safety*. It's against its laws to tell lies about boxes and funnies."

"Foxes and bunnies, your worship," meekly interrupted the Clerk.

"If I said boxes and funnies, that's what they are! Don't contradict authority, or I'll have you eaten. Runnies and babbits indeed! Vixes and foxens! I heard all your silly story. There are no such fishes in all the world. Go and look in our museum. Everything that isn't there is superstition: the way you *spell* the giddy things makes no difference, so long as their *nature's* all wrong."

"But, your honour," I said, "they are very important creatures in my world. I often see them; and I think——"

"Don't think in my presence!" the Magistrate interrupted angrily. "If you ever did see such creatures, then I'm sorry for you, living in such a silly world," and he cast up his owl-eyes piously. "If there were such creatures—and there aren't: haven't I said so?—the funnies would soon eat up all the boxes, and then they'd have nothing to live upon and would die. That's logic. Now will you believe that *your* lies are all fairy stories? Not even grandees tell fairy stories—they couldn't if they would."

"But, sir," I put in rather hotly, "I *know* about the things I told them, and——"

"Don't tell me in this court what you *know*," he added, as if to give me no chance of speaking the truth. Then, turning to the old goblin, "Look up *know* and *believe*," he said, "and read them out. Holy Hoofs! Perhaps he *believes* in rabbits!"

The clerk read thus from the half-empty book:—

> "'Whoso says he thinks or he knows
> Only the seeds of error sows;
> Whoso cherishes what he believes
> Feeds superstitions and snakes and thieves.
> Believe in nothing: education
> Spares us all such rumination.'"

"He reads from the official *Book of Safety*," the Magistrate continued. "Look here, you barbarian: the *Book of Safety* tells everything to spare a wise man the dangers of thinking and believing. Thinking's infectious: it undermines the constitution. Lying is infectious too: it undermines what it lies on. He! he! he!" He could not speak for some minutes because of his laughter at his own joke. He rolled his fat cod-head round and round on the desk before him, and clapped his gold-shod hoofs together in applause. When he recovered himself, he continued in judicial solemnity, "Take him away for my lord the Count Kraken's supper!"

"But, please your worship," replied the guard, "his lordship is still suffering from his lordship's ache—what *sort* of double-up ache it would be indelicate in me to mention concerning his lordship. If his lordship wore a pinafore it would be easier to localize the nature of his lord-

ship's distinguished indisposition. In fact, his lordship is sadly behindhand with his lordship's victuals: even with his lordship's devotion to duty, not even his lordship can't digest a fortnight's meals in less than seven days. His lordship does, I am sure, better than his lordship's best! It ain't his fault that the larders are too full: even squids have their feelings."

"Let me quote," said the Magistrate:—

"'He who has swallowed full three times his weight
Grumbles and rails at an unkind fate;
That child was far wiser who fell off his chair
When jam-roll he'd eaten full double his share.[1]
No child in his senses will own he's had plenty,
And a squid gorges still though he's eaten for twenty.'

"That's more safety-words from the Book. Guard! bring the Krank to me this afternoon when I go shooting. Holy Hoofs! Perhaps his fairy stories and that ornamental hook of his will teach him how to put salt on my pheasants' tails!" He laughed again and bade the guard take me away.

I thought I would make one more appeal and see if he had any spark of kindness in him.

"One word more, please, your worship," I said. "Would it not satisfy the laws of Nature if I were put outside the city walls? It was by no will of my own that I came in. I have a wife and three small boys in great grief because we have lost our baby. She is called Princess Honeypot.

[1] Does this couplet about the *wise* child unaccountably refer to a touching, if shocking incident in the career of the writer of this book? If so, it was, as far as he *remembers*, a high chair; and he wore a bib. So the little lady, to whom the book is humbly dedicated, has no call to put him to shame so often on account of it! She should spoil the rod and spare the child.

Our home is very dear to us, and I came to Fairyland to find the little one. Let me go and find her and take her home!"

"What a strange prehistoric creature it is!" said the Magistrate, opening his eyes so wide in astonishment that they seemed to spread all over his face. "Tell him out of the Book what a *dear* home is, Clerk."

So the clerk looked up the index, found what the Magistrate wanted, and read these words:—

"No home can be dear if you get your grub gratis:
It's cheap at the price, though there's nothing but 'taties;
Squids find it dear when they roast their tough mummies,
For the price will be paid by pore penitent tummies!"

The Magistrate's white face grew red with anger. He turned to the clerk and kicked him.

"How dare you," he roared, as the clerk looked himself all over with his spectacles to see if he was hurt; "how dare you read *that* to a barbarian when it's language is vulgar. Correct it by another."

Then the clerk turned up this silly verse:—

"'An angel is spoiled by a bee in her bonnet;
A rose is quite ruined by dew lying on it;
Jove's darkest decree, if on slang it should stumble,
May zigzag its lightning, but dies in a rumble.'"

Once more my crook seemed to close my eyes and let me dream of my sweet home—the little corner of heaven that every real home truly is, where boys and girls and mother and father make each other happy by loving and helping and obeying and taking into the hearts of them

anyone who is hungry or weary or sad. I saw how life was made good by belonging. In at the open window of our kitchen the scent of the morning was rushing; and I thought of how the dew belonged to the rose and the rose to the dew, and how each gave the other its sweetness. It was only a moment's dream; but an acorn holds the oak in its heart, and a moment can give wonderful strength.

The Court broke up and got away as quickly as possible after this. They didn't like words of wisdom. I was left standing in the dock by the side of the *Book of Safety*. It lay open at a page headed "*Mustn'ts for the Children.*" I read and remember some of them: they were quite as absurd and wicked as everything else.

"MUSTN'T drink just because you are thirsty, but only if you can find somebody thirstier.

"MUSTN'T say, *No, Thank You,* just because you can't eat another mouthful, nor so long as somebody else can.

"MUSTN'T bolt your food, unless you bolt the door first.

"MUSTN'T eat your head off: try somebody else's.

"MUSTN'T *fall* asleep: you might hurt yourself.

"MUSTN'T go to sleep either: stop in bed.

"MUSTN'T let your nose run: it might go faster than you can follow.

"MUSTN'T fish: you might catch something.

"MUSTN'T try and be obedient: you can't be disobedient if you try.

"MUSTN'T look before you leap, because you

"MUSTN'T leap.

"MUSTN'T do what you must, but

"MUSTN'T say you MUSTN'T.

"MUSTN'T cut your toes off to spite your feet: they'll be hoofs soon enough.

"MUSTN'T think toes nicer than hoofs: try kicking.

"MUSTN'T hit a smaller child back again: do it first and harder."

I had no time to read more, for the guard returned for me. We left the Court House together. Then I saw that my crook was shining very brightly; and I could not help feeling sure, in spite of my arrest, that somehow I should slip away one night soon to the Midnight Village and rescue my baby.

I tried to make friends with my cod-head guard, who was in constant dread of my crook touching him, and dodged whenever I moved it. I urged him to take it and use it as a staff, telling him that he would then lose all fear of it. Curiously, in spite of my crimes, the little man believed me and took the crook from my hand.

Instantly I knew I had done wrong.

The guard held it fast. The shine of its head was gone. I asked him to give it to me again. He refused. I lost my peaceful mind and got irritable. I said, in my country we should put an ugly word upon his conduct, and call him a thief.

"O," said he, "there is no such thing here—not by half a ounce! Everything here just happens. If a party acts correct—well, it's instinct, same as nature. If he acts incorrect—well, it's a little heap: that's all! There ain't no thieves here, nor yet no charity. You may take it from me," he added confidentially and smiling villainously, "I've only *borrowed* your hook to relieve you of it. You're a slave and have no rights in anything."

"It is no *hook*," I answered him hotly, "but the exact opposite, a *crook*."

"What's the odds?" he sneered.

"The difference is the same," I said, "as that between a slave and a man. A hook pulls a thing down, a crook sets it up."

"What's the odds between setting of it up and upsetting of it? Wrong ag'in!" and he grinned fatuously.

"Well, well," I interrupted; "I'm glad you're going to give it back to me."

"Ah, there you're wrong again, Mr. Krankignoramus," he jeered at me. "To borrow anything you want is correct; to give it back is charity. And charity is contrairy to nature; it's folly; it's moonshine. Therefore I should be ag'in the law if I gave back what I want myself: I don't care about feeding with *my* carcass their blessed squidships—not half a ounce."

Was there no such thing as right and wrong in this horrible city?

And now all power for good seemed to have left me. As long as I had my crook I could at least do something kind—if only to tell the children stories. But now I had lost it there seemed nothing left but to get angry. I hit the guard an awful blow on the head; but it was so shamefully swelled it could not be hurt! I tried to seize him by the throat; but he had none! I tried to knock him over: but there was no more result than if I had tried to upset a fish under water! I was so utterly at a loss that I followed the fellow once more quite meekly. He bore me no enmity apparently, the only difference being that he kept on smiling more villainously than ever. I very nearly became the slave he called me: not quite, however, for I never lost

hope of getting my crook back and bringing my baby home.

Finding me now quite manageable, the man became communicative. He told me I should to-morrow perhaps be taken to prison, where I should be kept many days till I was tender enough for the Count Kraken. He told me how unfortunate it was that there were at present no vacant dungeons, because he would have to look after me himself.

"You see," he said, "his most blessed squidship, the Count Kraken, has graciously overeaten hisself—his squidship's self, I ought to say. He's got that thin, and his bracelets rattle up and down his gracious arms. Consequentially, for a time the supply of fresh meat is greater than the demand. It's rough on you—but a deal rougher on me."

"Just give me my crook," I said, "and I promise not to leave you or to use it for shivering the people or to help me tell stories."

"What's *promise?*" he replied, with a sneer that looked quite at home on his huge cod-like face. "It means nothing here—not half a ounce. Borrowing's keepings. That's the safe thing and the law made by our blessed Counts. What they borrows, they keeps—every ounce, except the bones!

> "'Only fat squids have a right to be greedy,
> Only the starved any need to be needy;
> Superstition it is to pay what you borrow—
> The lender alone will think of to-morrow.'

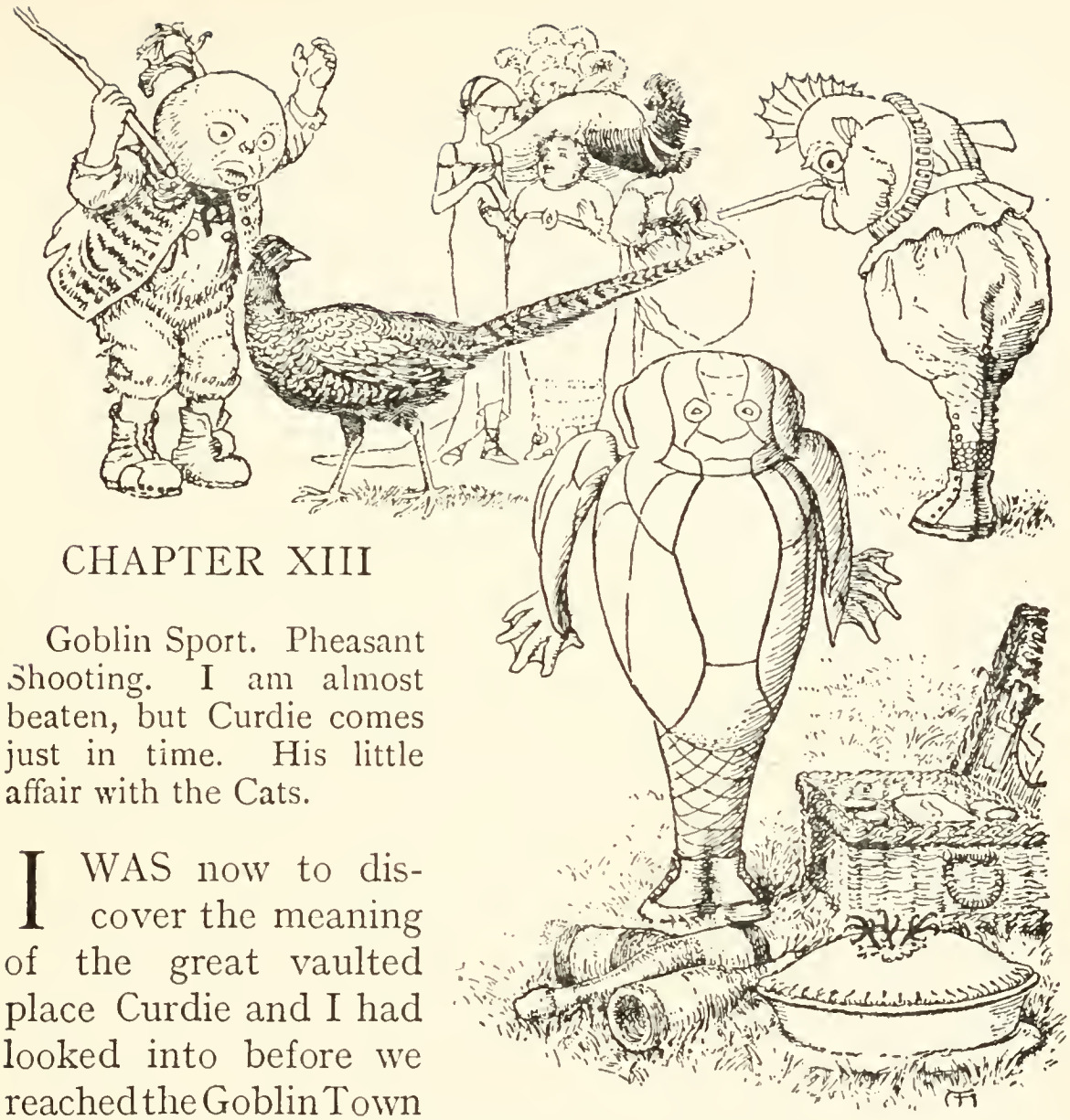
And *that's* in the Book!"

Really the wicked *Book of Safety* deliberately turned

every good idea into ridicule. Yet it seemed to me that the Magistrates who wrote it must have known what was really good and right, or they would not have been at such pains to sneer at kindness and home and honesty.

How different the Goblin Town was from the ways of the Midnight Village! I felt miserable to think how near my baby was to this wicked place with its machine-like orderliness, making right unnecessary and wrong impossible. She was, indeed, in more danger even than I imagined. To make matters worse, now that I had lost my crook, nothing looked very clear to me, and I could no longer close my eyes and get peeps at my beloved ones.

Thereafter I held my peace. The guard took me back to my solitary whelk-house, shut and barred the door, and left me till the afternoon, when the Magistrate would need my services.



## CHAPTER XIII

Goblin Sport. Pheasant Shooting. I am almost beaten, but Curdie comes just in time. His little affair with the Cats.

I WAS now to discover the meaning of the great vaulted place Curdie and I had looked into before we reached the Goblin Town —the place where the birds with shining eyes were kept prisoners, although the door stood open. I thought this must be the place where I was to meet the Magistrate; and I had hoped we should go up one of the spiral stairways into the gardens, and so get sight of the tower named Kraken. I thought it would be interesting to see how he bore his ache! But I was disappointed. It was only in the early morning that anyone went into the open. Everybody was afraid of fresh air, and pre-

ferred not to see their city's protectors. The gardens were planted and kept in order only to make pleasanter these morning excursions—which had to be undertaken by their grandeeships to please the rapacious Towers.[1]

I was left quite alone for some hours. But it was not quite so dreary as it might have been in the dark hole. For now and again a little sort of caterpillar would wriggle under the door, stay a few minutes, and then wriggle out again. But it would stay long enough to let me see that it carried two glow-lamps, and that they were not on its tail like a glow-worm, but on its head: they were, indeed, its two big eyes. It seemed to keep quite still with these bright bluish little globes fixed steadfastly upon me. The little creature comforted me greatly, because it made me realize that even in this Town of Goblins there were still some good living things. It was a little brown furry worm. It came back three or four times, and seemed to leave a little light behind it. The quiet and solitude and the pair of tiny lamps made me think about many things. I wondered particularly how it was that my own eyes—which I hoped did not belong to one so bad as most of the people here—gave out not a glimmer of light to let me see the walls of my house. Later, when I spent so many days in Kraken's dungeon, I feared that the absence of light in myself meant that I had not enough love in me. But before long I learned that even the most shining things in this Fairyland often do not find their own light of any use to themselves,

[1] I think there is no doubt about this. The Towers were not devoid of affection, and loved to watch their food alive and daily promenading in expensive clothes. In this they were not less refined than ourselves, perhaps; for we deck the flayed bodies of our herds with bright ribbons, and hang them by the heels in pitiless array to honour the most sacred day in all the year.

however much it may light up the world for other people.

It was only a few minutes before the guard came back that I saw, also coming in from under the door, a company of the rainbow spirits. They came straight towards me, and seemed to disappear in me. They quickly got brighter and larger—so large indeed that they began to have wings, and soon looked like very small and transparent butterflies. Were they, I wondered, some messages from the Fairy Queen? Was she perhaps never very far away?

At last, on the day I am telling of, the door was opened and my foolish guard was awaiting me. He had not brought my crook with him. I asked him where it was.

"Oh, wouldn't you like to know!" he said tauntingly. "P'raps it's burnt." (By the way, I had never seen any fire or flame or felt any heat anywhere in the city, although they *quenched* the children.) "P'raps it's with the bones giving 'em fits. He! he! he! But it don't matter to you."

I made no reply, though I determined not to rest till I had found it.

We walked fast through miles of terribly narrow streets. There was seldom room for two to pass comfortably. Often the only way of making any progress, when two people met each other, was for one to lie down and let the other walk over him. There was no trouble about it, even this difficulty being arranged for by law. The weaker or smaller person must always lie down flat, while the stronger or bigger walked over him. Naturally, the guard was one of the stronger, and but for his protection, and in spite of my size, I might have been one of the down-trodden. Of course, I was very careful to pick my way so as not to tread upon those underneath. When one of the grandees

came along in his clockwork go-cart, everybody lay down, even the guard and myself. It might be thought it was not very comfortable for the person in the go-cart to go bumping along over people; but these go-carts were made with such delicate springs that it was all the same to the person inside whether he went over his fellow-creatures or not. The goblins were wonderful inventors.

The houses here, though very small, were terribly worn and tumbledown. Few stood quite upright. There were holes and cracks all over the walls; and wherever there was a hole or crack, one or two tousled heads would be poking out, looking as though they had nothing to do but get soft and fat and miserable.

"Are these the Count's dungeons?" I asked, unable to believe that these people would live here by choice, or had any real work to do.

"Not by half a ounce," was his silly rejoinder. "They're only on their way."

"But they're so miserable-looking!" I exclaimed.

"That's their artfulness. They like it. It's all nature; that's what's the *matter* with 'em; nature."

"Have they no work to do?"

"Not what you barbarians call work—not by half a ounce. They're grinding their bones all day, *they* are, to make bread for their grandeeships—and jew'ls and chains, and sich-like. They like it or they wouldn't do it. It's nature."

"What do they live on themselves, that they grow so fat?"

"They don't know what they eat—and don't you go and tell 'em. They eat their own hearts out!"

"How awful—terrible—goblinish!" I exclaimed, with a shudder of horror.

"O, goblin is as goblin does! They don't mind *much*. They rather like it. The grand folk do all they can to improve their condition. They build lovely sick-homes for them, with lots of hot gruel and science and that. They build dormitories and make them send the children there. They pay *us* to keep them in order: if that ain't kind, what is? They subscribe to hoof-ball clubs to amuse the masses. They pay preachers to teach 'em that grape-juice is p'ison; but they're kind too and sells 'em the juice, because it keeps them from fretting; and it *pays*. Reelly, my lords and ladies do the best they can. Don't they give 'em votes free? You can't alter nature—not by half a ounce!"

But I shall never get on to the things that concern my story if I tell all the extraordinary arrangements of this city, where everything worked so like machinery that the people believed they had done away with right and wrong, love and unkindness, charity and thieving, and so had got quit of all anxieties and worries. Yet it seemed that none of their endeavours after betterment really succeeded. There was a sore place, I think, in the grandees' hearts that would not heal, because, like unwise doctors, they tried only to hide it and stop the pain instead of going to the root of the trouble.[1]

There were very fine streets with rich shops also leading to the pheasant park; but it was against the law that the poor people—much less a condemned Krank like me—should walk in them. Of course, there were no walls or towers to the underground part of the city, because here

[1] If the reader is old enough to think, and would know where to find this root, he might read Tolstoy's *What Shall We Do?* (Free Age Press). Children would not understand this wonderful book. I believe Tolstoy himself would tell the goblin grandees—and he knew some of them—that the root of all the trouble lay in this, that they did not love their poor neighbours enough.

there was no fear of attack. It was only above in the pure air that the people were afraid of imaginary enemies.

At last we came out on to the great main street. Here there were many very tall spiral buildings looking very like church-steeples. These were, of course, stairways. Up a wide one the grand people were going. It was decorated all over with carvings of crab-sheep and cats. I think they symbolized the refinements of country and town harmoniously blended. The crab-sheep were painted emerald-green with pearls for their stalk-eyes, and the cats magenta with gold-wire whiskers standing out fiercely. It was ugly and stupid. We were not allowed to go up this gaudy stairway, but must use a plain one adjoining.

When half-way up the dark stair, we went through a door, and found ourselves in the middle of a wide and grassy glade, over which were scattered noble beech trees. It was surrounded by thick woods of the same trees. Those in the glade had the gracious down-sweeping branches which beeches always grow wherever they have room to invite children to climb and swing. The scene was curiously familiar to me, and at first sight I could have imagined myself in the great park on the Downs to the south-west of my farm. But there was something different. It was indeed the same vault Curdie and I had entered when we first came along the high road to the city. The scene was a strange admixture of the real and the imitation. The near trees seemed real enough, though when I got a little further from them they looked like stage scenery.[1]

[1] As is well known by people most intimate with Fairyland, things quite real and true and beautiful there often look altogether artificial, because people think they need to put on special kinds of spectacles to see them. But it is less often realised that in Goblin Land things looking at first sight good and real are seen to be hollow, or naked, or flat, when we get far enough away from them to be quit of their evil influence.

The same birds were listlessly crawling about the grass and along the branches of the trees: not hopping or running or flying. They looked very like pheasants with all the pride knocked out of them. A few were trying to hide in the beeches, looking as if first their wings had been clipped and then they had been given a hot bath with plenty of soap. Of course they were something different from our pheasants, being, as every child will understand, only sea-pheasants. The light, though there was enough for the sport in hand, came from nowhere but the poor pheasants' eyes.

All the goblin-gentlemen carried very light guns, and in most unsportsmanlike fashion. They looked as though they had just stepped out of goblin fashion-plates, and as if they would fall to pieces if you undid them. They wore, of course, no ornaments or jewels: these would have been unsportsmanlike. But it was evidently correct for the ladies to wear round their necks a number of little labels, each fastened on to a fine gold chain that seemed to be welded on so as never to come off. Instead of dogs, they had cats in leash, whose eyes shone green and wicked.

Presently the Magistrate discovered and beckoned me. He was standing by a tree, against which twenty or thirty of the light guns were stacked. My duty was to keep them loaded; so I had good opportunity of seeing the sport. There were three other servants who kept running to and fro with the guns to the Magistrate as fast as their short legs could manage. Their running was the queerest gymnastics imaginable. It was done by a slap of their tail on the ground and a little jump forwards, their feet working to and fro all the time, so as to keep up the pace directly they touched the ground again.

The gunpowder was a patent kind. It was almost smokeless and quite noiseless—indeed so superior to our own in every respect that it was also quite harmless! The birds, at least, did not seem to mind it. After each shot a minute cloud of quite white smoke appeared which sometimes reached a bird, but often fell short to the ground. What extraordinary cartridges they must be! I broke one open. The powder was white and crystalline and there were no shot! I put the powder cautiously to my tongue. Good gracious! it was common salt, without a doubt! And—O yes, of course!—the sport consisted in putting salt on the birds' tails! The birds regarded the performance with absolute calm. They never moved unless the salt got in their poor eyes. Then flashes of red light shot from them and they tucked their heads under their wings; but the light of their eyes still shone dimly through the wing-feathers.

When all the cartridges were used up the cats were loosed to fetch the birds which had been shot. They brought them back to their owners with great speed. The gentlemen then took the birds, still alive, and wrung their necks. Then they threw them into heaps. It did not seem very sportsmanlike, to be sure! Presently, by the light still shining from the pheasants' eyes, the goblin party all sat down in groups to feed. They seemed to have nothing to say, though they chattered a great deal, repeating the same remarks again and again. They were all this sort of thing:

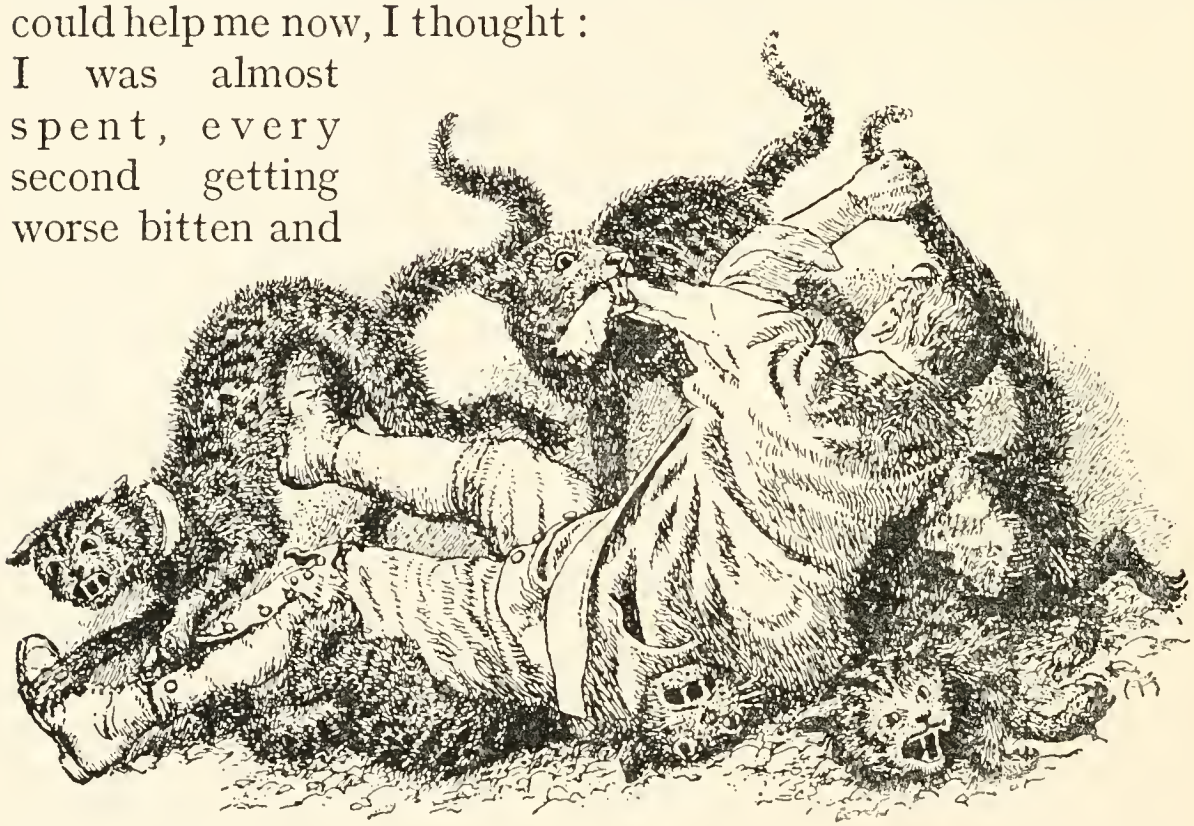
"What splendid sport we have had! How wild the birds were! Every year you're a keener sportsman! What a sweet hat! Where did you get those darling feathers? I'm going to have a new coat made all of pheasants' necks. Did you see me salt two tails with one powder?"

And so on, over and over, as they gobbled, with the utmost refinement, their lunch or tea or whatever they called it. I was now waiting upon them and could read the labels chained round their necks. They were the price-labels of the valuable things they had bought. They wore them, I think, as proof of their refinement.

But in another moment I became aware of the dreadful fact that the pheasants were by no means all dead; and worse, that the cats were rummaging them with their claws and tearing the live feathers from their necks. In a fury of anger I began to kick the cats off. I picked up the wretched birds and, whether living or dead, wrung their necks once more. But the cats were too much for me. They rushed at me. They tore at my gaiters and my legs with tooth and claw. They swarmed up my smock. One after another, I gripped them by the throat and flung them from me. One, I saw, hit the cod-face Magistrate with such force that he fell howling. I lost my footing and came down. Some cats squealed underneath me, but others clawed over me, tearing my hands and even reaching my face. But I am quick in action, and for some minutes—terrible and fearful enough—I was able to keep the beasts off my eyes. But their numbers increased. The gentlemen goblins were roaring with laughter at my plight: they even hounded—or catted, should I say?—the creatures on. I was getting exhausted. There must have been a couple of dozen of these huge cats on my person at a time. My hands and neck and at last even my lips were torn; but I managed to keep them from my eyes.

Throughout the fight I was conscious of an increasing caterwauling in the distance, though the creatures upon

me were silent in their fury, except for an occasional howl-miou from those I succeeded in hurting badly. I could still see well enough to be aware that all the trees at a little distance were getting filled with little green lamps in pairs: the cats, whose eyes they were, were now howling furiously and clearly taking refuge in the trees. What was happening? Nothing that could help me now, I thought: I was almost spent, every second getting worse bitten and



clawed. But the lights in the trees increased and the row of the cats' screaming came nearer and nearer. Then many of the swarm nearest me took up the cries and fled also up the trees. For there was amongst them a big, silvery-shining creature rushing to and fro with such fury that I could not see what it was, nor hear because of the caterwauling. Then a head I thought I knew set his teeth into the back of a cat whose jaws were

fixed upon my neck. She let go her hold and dropped limp at my feet with a broken spine. Yes, there was no doubt now, it *was* Curdie! Just in time had he come to save my life. Then he left me, without waiting for a sign of recognition, because here and there the cats were beginning to crawl cautiously down the trees again, and he meant to keep them where he had sent them.

I sat down. The light was gone from the pheasants' eyes by this time; they were all dead, though now their feathers gleamed the more brightly. I wiped my face, and found it was covered with claw and tooth wounds, my shoulders and legs being badly torn and aching terribly. The silly grandees and their servants were now looking on at me savagely, but starting again their clockwork chatter. I caught a few phrases, such as:

"Served him right! Most unsportsmanlike bounder! Wringing their necks a second time like a butcher and spoiling their feathers! Never believe a Krank can be a sportsman! That's the same beast of his that knocked us all down in the street, so you'd better not go too near. Holy Hoofs! where's his guard?"

And so on, over and over again. But if my guard was forthcoming, so also was Curdie, who now came back and sat down gazing up at me in the utmost consternation. He moaned quietly to himself, and seemed afraid to jump up at me or lick even my hands. I thought he too was badly hurt. His poor black and pink nose was sadly scratched and his left ear was torn. I examined him as well as my own hurts would allow, but could discover nothing wrong. On the contrary, I found his coat in the most perfect state of cleanliness and softness, shining too, particularly about his ruff, very silvery and moony. I

found a new collar round his neck. It was made of tiny shells, gleaming like pearls. Evidently he had been most wonderfully washed and combed. I hoped he had enjoyed it better than at home, where, I must confess, the wash-tub was the one thing in the world he could not look happy over. Plainly he had been dearly loved. It flashed upon me, too, that he must have been in the same hands as my baby and that most likely she was getting quite as careful tending. The thought revived me wonderfully, though I wished he could tell me whether he considered dolphins' milk and gulls' eggs proper food for a fifteen-months' baby. He knew most things!

I had taken no notice of the people for some minutes, so absorbed was I with my dear dog. But then I saw they had all got some twenty or thirty yards away from us with their guns, and were firing at Curdie for all they were worth, trying to put salt on *his* tail! And he hadn't one —not even an apologetic stump! When he turned his back to them to keep the salt out of his eyes, they seemed to understand the difficulty and stopped firing. Curdie sat down again, asking for orders to do something or other with them. But I was too much exhausted to take any interest.

The people were slinking away now through the woods, and I suppose down the stairways. The cats crawled cautiously down the trees, looking like long, thick, and very sulky black-spotted snakes, in spite of their four legs. They followed their masters and mistresses.

I must have fainted or slept for a few minutes. When I opened my eyes again Curdie was gone. It was almost quite dark, though a few pheasants' eyes were shining from the upper branches of the beeches. Down a long path, stretching away and away into the

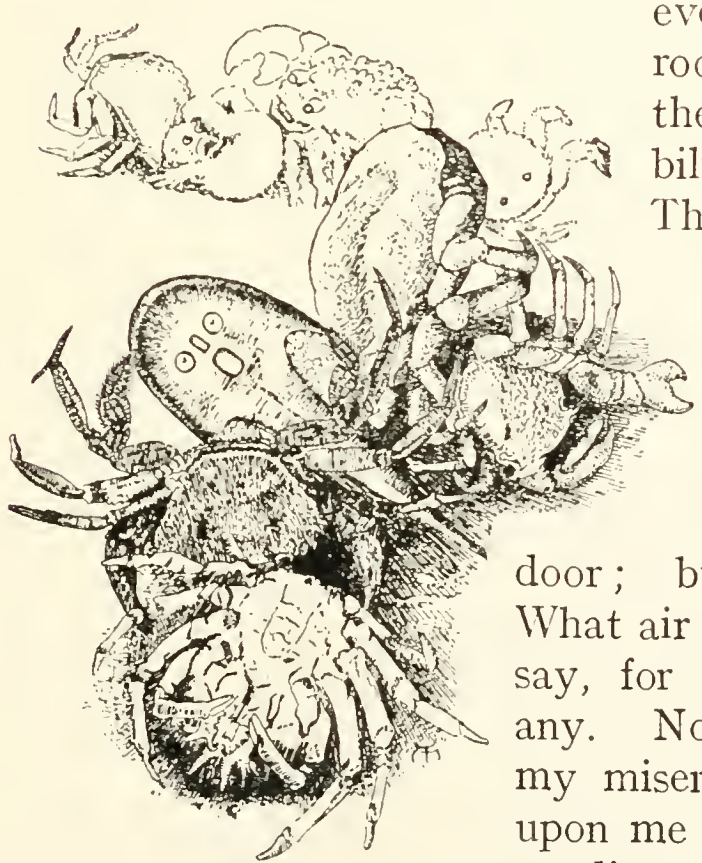
woods—or into an underground passage, I could not see which it was—I saw a glimmer of silver shimmering getting bigger and brighter as it came nearer and nearer. Soon I saw that above the light was a halo of iridescent colours, also gleaming more brilliantly as the light rushed out of the darkness towards me. Then it looked like dancing rainbow colours. It came nearer. I began to hope it was Curdie. I then saw it was indeed Curdie coming back to me as fast as he could race with his funny bear-like leap ; and he was surrounded by hundreds and thousands of the Fairy Queen's butterflies, sorely put to it to keep up with the shining dog's pace. Then he dropped at my feet panting. The butterflies covered me over so that I felt as if I were in the heart of a living rainbow. They shed healing rain upon my wounds and aching limbs ; they poured new red life into my heart and soothed me as a mother her baby. I fell asleep—perhaps for hours.

When at last I awoke, I found I was in prison again, but now in a narrow, damp dungeon. My wounds however were quite healed.

## CHAPTER XIV

The Goblins serenade me. The difference between trying and doing. The Black Butterfly again.

I WAS now in sorry plight. It was quite dark for the first time in Fairyland. I was crouching down on hands and knees. Whenever I put my hand out I felt walls on every side of me, and the roof so close above me that there seemed to be no possibility of raising my head. The touch of them too was cold, slippery, and yet scaly, so that they gave me the impression of some monster snake's skin. I felt the walls to see if there were any door; but I could find none. What air I breathed I could not say, for there was no space for any. Nor did I live on hope, for my misery was clutched so fast upon me that my only wish was to die. Still I lived—and, as it seemed, through ages of remorse. For I knew it was through my own carelessness that I had lost my crook and perhaps my only chance of finding the



baby. Curdie had forsaken me. I had been fooled. Had I but believed that I could not do without my crook's light, had I let it shine through that thief of a guard, I should never have parted with my treasure. And now, though I had done the right thing by the birds, darkness assailed my very soul. I knew I was at last in Kraken's dungeon. I was chained by my feet to a rough plank-bed, though my arms and body were free. I thought I should soon be but a heap of white bones. Nor did it seem to matter.

I was aroused from my depression by the sound of harsh, nasal singing outside my prison, accompanied by some very metallic, twanging instrument. The words obviously had reference to myself :—

" In dungeon dank, no longer swank,[1]
Let's prod him till he waken ;
Nor pinch, nor spank, can harm a Krank,
But soften him for Kraken.

" Be sure a Krank with broken shank
May be quite safely shaken :
A bruiséd flank tastes well, O Krank,
When boiled with beans for Kraken.

" ' The court was crank ! We goblins stank ! '
He said, when he was taken :
E'en rose-clad bank offends a Krank,
If grown for gentle Kraken !'

" He's lean and lank, in grief he's sank,
By Curdie he's forsaken ;
He's now, we thank, condemned a Krank—
To-night he dines with Kraken !

[1] It interested me for a moment to discover that the goblin language had affinities with Scotch and German. I remembered that *swank* in the former means *agile* and that in the latter *schwank* means *pliant*.

"His chains clink-clank; with hunger slank [1]
No drink his thirst can slaken;
A splintered plank may rest the Krank—
Or leave the rest to Kraken!

"Now, good men frank, your savings bank!
Like Pigs, save fat for bacon!
He's drawn a blank: then flay the Krank,
And dish him up for Kraken!"

But I was too wretched to see how the cruel jeering of the song, with its faulty words, grammar, and rhyming, might, in happier conditions, be really funny. It was clearly intended to annoy me, but had a different effect. Something of my old pluck revived within me; whatever the horrible place might be, I would face it upright. I rose upon my feet in spite of my chains, and most surprisingly found that I did not knock my head against the roof of the cell, though I had felt it but a minute before with my hands. Puzzled, yet with a gleam of hope that I might do something yet, I felt the walls to see if they also would yield; but they were still fast about me.

Then it occurred to me that perhaps in Fairyland no one must wonder whether he can do a thing, but just go and do it: he must not feel about to see if the way is clear, but, if he ought to go forward, he must go. I felt sure I was right in this; yet the conviction was hard to act upon, seeing that, when I put a foot forward as if to walk, I could not forget that I was also feeling with my foot how far the chains would let me go and whether the walls would stop me. To go out, I had to forget both chains and walls. This seemed quite impossible, even though I could now

[1] Here again was etymological interest. *Schlank* in German means *thin*, and *slank* is a Scotch word with the same meaning.

lift my head as often as I pleased. There was obviously but one chance for me: to fall asleep and then wake up in hopeful mood and walk out, before I remembered the forbidding tyranny of chains and walls. So, being utterly weary, I lay down on my plank to sleep. All was now quiet outside. I slept without dreaming, and woke so refreshed that, though in utter darkness, I thought only of stepping out. I did so. I left both chains and walls behind me. A dim light shone ahead.

By which light I then saw my clothes were in tatters, hanging about me in such strips and gaping holes that I was afraid of being seen—even by the goblins. I thought the butterflies, when they had done such surgical wonders for my flesh and bones, might just have tacked together the worst rents in my clothes! I suppose, being such beautiful creatures themselves, they had no eyes for unimportant things like clothes—clothes being among the many kinds of outside tyranny which good people ought to think less about, and be less dependent upon. But I soon forgot my false shame. For Curdie came running towards me out of the darkness and the great raven-winged butterfly following close after him. As if fearing a scolding for leaving me, he crawled slower and slower as he came near, and then, when quite close to my feet, rolled over on his back. There is nothing more touching than this abject submission of a loving dog in his most defenceless attitude. There was he, a hairy person full of shining light, cringing before me, a ragged creature shamefully imprisoned only two minutes before! I knelt and put my face to his, and kissed him. Then up he leapt, all over me: never was such a to-do between dog and man!

Now, although I was still without my crook, some energy

came back. The thought of my children and their dear mother swept through my heart, and a longing to find the lost one. There were now no walls to be seen : we were far outside the city. I told Curdie we must immediately find the way up the hill-side to the Midnight Village and fetch the Princess home : whereat the shining head-half of him wagged the darker tail-half so wildly that they almost came undone !

I was now as full of hope as if I were an unarmed knight in rags seeking a dragon to kill, and knowing that I alone could save the captive maiden. But, just as we started, the raven-winged butterfly, who had been hovering on Curdie's white ruff, fluttered on to my shoulder. A message again came into my ears in music of sadness, yet of hope. Its words ran like this :—

" Not yet art thou free
From the dungeon walls ;
Not yet can that be
Till the old Fear falls !

" The jail is thy heart
And the darkness thine,
Till the dank walls part
And let the sun shine.

" While slave of a thing
That walls a man round,
Though clad like a king,
In chains he is bound.

" The demon so loathed,
Fear, binds thee no more !
In rags thou art clothed—
But wide stands the door !

" Go, Shepherd, and find
The village of light,
Where fairies, though blind,
Make day of the night.

" Lead love from its dream,
Bright-armed for the fray,
Thy Babe to redeem,
And the monster to slay."

" But how can I get quit of my self, my prison? How can I bring love out of dreams when the things about me are so real and horrible? " I asked in anguish. Curdie set up one of his most musical and pathetic howls. The butterfly answered :—

" Truly dost think that thy dreaming
Is only the thing that it seems ?
Is not our love always proving
Stronger than ever its dreams ?

" Faith from thy dreamlands forth bringing,
Love thy sad spirit must sway :
Like as the star-clad Aurora
Out from the night leads the day.

" Rags and high faith are thy armour !
Swordless but sure is thy hand !
Trust ! for the heart's fearless dreaming
Strength gives to strike and withstand ! "

" Gentle Spirit, tell me," I cried, still afraid that I must meet my enemy without even my crook, though she sang only of my being swordless ; " tell me how I can get back my crook."

But the only answer I had was a moment's sight of the

butterfly perched on the edge of Curdie's flattened ear. And then she flew away and was lost in the dark night.

What did it mean ? I was in the dungeon still, and yet I must follow Curdie away to the hill-side and the midnight castles ! What contradiction ! How absurd ! I put out my hands and felt the slimy walls : my feet dragged at their chains : yet, there was Curdie shambling away before me ! I followed him.

## CHAPTER XV

The Fairy Village. I find my Baby in the Queen's Palace. The Fairies at work.

IT was difficult in this part of the Fairy World to know the time of day, particularly in the deep valley standing between Goblin Land and the country of kind fairies. On the hills, however, where all the creatures were, without exception, believed by the goblin folk to be savage and dangerous at night, the difference was quite plain. In the day-time the light came only from the sky above; in night-time only from everything that was alive. Indeed, it became ever clearer to me that the kinder the creatures were, the more light they gave, and that the stupider they were, the more dully they shone. The crab-sheep had scarcely any light at all, so that we were always in danger of running against them, perhaps of falling on to them and being carried away. Fortunately most of them slept at night: it was only the stupider ones who could not sleep. As long as Curdie was by my side, however, his shining ruff gave enough light for avoiding all dangers. But now and then he would run from me, his nose intent upon business unknown to me; and then I would have some uncomfortable differences with the crab-sheep. Fortunately I had already learned the trick of rolling off their backs again. They were glad enough of this, for although they seemed very like busybodies in taking people out of their way, they were really happy only when alone with themselves.

There was no doubt whatever as to the road we must go. Even without Curdie's help I could understand that much. For in one direction, far away up the hill, was a softly shining white light with an aureole of rainbow colours, constantly and rhythmically interchanging, as if the many co-ordinate colours were, like notes of music, dancing a stately tune. As we got nearer we saw that these colours seemed to be flowing from all sides into the shining centre of the place ; though at the same time the pure white light was going out from it. When we got close enough to see the castles and towers standing upon the hill a few hundred yards ahead of us, all shining brightly and yet so softly that our eyes were not dazzled, I saw that a gentle flow of rainbow spirits was proceeding from all sides right into the village. I understood now how it was that these spiritual colours flowing into the castles enabled them to give forth the white light. When I knew more about the ways of the village, I knew that the living colours were all necessary to the fairy workers, but that the white light which shone from the buildings themselves was necessary even more to the world beyond Fairyland.

Soon we reached the great village : for such it was, rather than a city. There were no walls or defences ; and though the buildings were arranged in some order, the spaces were all so wide and full of gardens, that the plan was not very obvious. There certainly were no actual streets, but avenues and wide garden places and fountains from which light and not water flowed or rushed into the air. The trees were red and green, all gay with softly shining flowers or fruits ; and when we came close up to them we could see the dim silvery streams of sap slowly travelling up the trunks, along the branches, right into the leaves

and flowers, then back again and so down into the roots. The leaves glowed dimly, the flowers sparkled; and the rainbow spirits were constantly disappearing among them. The gardens were full of entrancing flowers, very like those of the horrible city in the valley, except that, all here being free to seed and arrange themselves, there was no formalism beyond orderliness.

Yet, enchanting as the trees and flowers were to our eyes, the castles and cottages where the people lived were even more unlike anything we know of in our opaque world. No people were out of doors, all being at work. What happened in the day-time I could never find out; for then one could see nothing of any doings of any sort, and I doubt if even my crook could have helped. At night they were the busiest people—always working, always happy, always keeping up the brightness within and the light which shone out from them into the darkness. There were no distinctions of rich and poor, no shops; the cottage gave light as bright as the castle's, and so it was quite equal in everything that mattered. In every good part of the Fairy World mere size counts for nothing whatever.

The buildings differed in shape as well as size. Some of the more important palaces had many smaller ones attached to them, as if the families were always increasing and needing new homes. Some were castles quite clearly, and had armoured works to protect them from any blundering monster that might come flying through the air and damage their walls. The biggest had vast stairways outside, looking more as if they served for buttresses than leading to entrance-doors. The really important stairways were inside. It was in the biggest of these castles I was soon to see my child—though only for a minute. In one point only

were they all alike. Each, palace or cottage, was a work-home. The work they were all doing was of two kinds. The first was the building up and enlarging of the home; the second was the production of light to shine into the darkness of distant lands which the fairy people themselves know little about. All this I realized only fully afterwards, when I understood better the music and language of the little people.

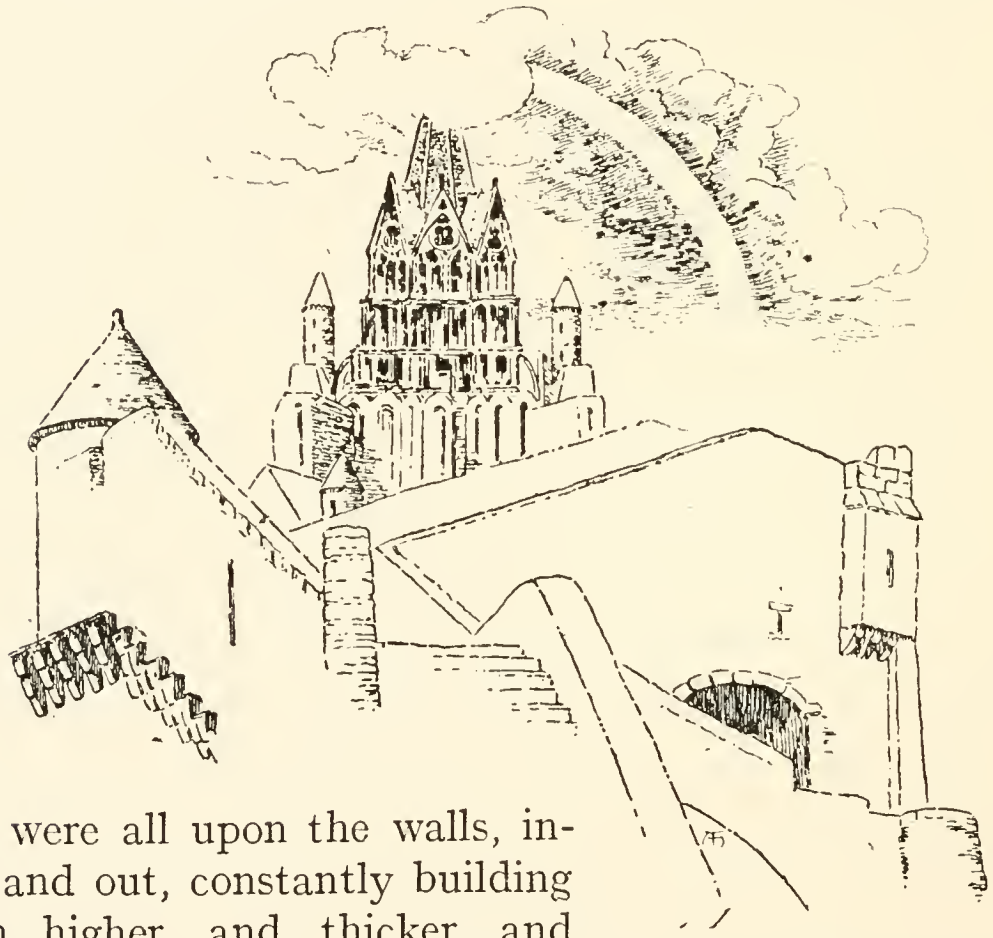
The wonder of the scene did not for a moment take my thoughts away from my quest, though it did fill my heart with a quiet certainty that the child was happy, yet waiting for me to take her home to her mother. Curdie now seemed to be quite at home, so far as knowing how to go about and how to avoid the sharp armourings of the castle walls. His only difficulty lay in this, that he would go sniffing about with his black and pink nose too close up to the walls; and, as they were covered with minute sharp spikes —like scimitars, or straight and barbed like arrows, or like truncheons with sharp spikes in the heads of them—he would get this poor nose of his sadly scratched; and he was constantly running to me to have a fresh barb plucked out of his nose. Curiously, the little wounds they made healed instantly, so that he forgot his lesson all too quickly for his own comfort.

What arrangement of road there was, clearly led spirally towards some centre where one would have expected in our land to find either a church or a castle. Here, sure enough, stood the biggest of the castles, and on the highest point of ground. From all sides flowed into its myriad windows a constant supply of colours; while, from its large doors, streamed away into the distant darkness pure white light in gentle waves. Here I supposed lived the Queen Fairy.

As we got close up to the walls we found ourselves in the midst of rainbow spirits. I think many sank into Curdie's heart and into mine; for he sat down suddenly on his hind-legs and looked up into my face, keeping perfectly still, as I have said he would do when he wanted to tell me something. He found me in this, his own fairy world, quite stupid, I am afraid. Yet wonderful thoughts came into me from somewhere, and old hopes long forgotten sprang into life. I am sure, also, that after this I could always see more clearly. I seemed to rejoice in life for one minute and then quickly to remember that I was perhaps still within the dungeon walls. For a few dark seconds the brilliant castle vanished, and I could feel the thick, slimy walls about me. But at this very moment Curdie uttered his most piercing howl; when, as the walls of Jericho fell at the sound of the trumpets, those of my dungeon vanished and I stood again before the castle.

It was surrounded by a gay garden. I cannot say how big the castle was, nor can I describe its architecture: it was not like a steep-walled Scotch castle, nor Warwick, nor Windsor, It was all doors and windows and galleries, and yet, though I went round it again and again, I could not find the entrance. I realized later that this could not be found until the doors were thrown open for some expected guest. The walls were a perfect lacework of windows and arches. At regular and frequent intervals small bastions stood out, each of them surmounted at its salient angle by a great crystalline rose of prismatic colourings, always changing with each change in the dominant atmospheric hue. It stood on a slender stalk too weak to resist any attack, I was sure. At like intervals projected from the walls little turrets, the pointed roofs of which had

similar glossy flowers for adornment. The whole edifice seemed to be covered by a phosphorescent veil, closely clinging to the crystal structure, so that one could not see clearly through the surface. I found, when I had learned to use my eyes better, that what looked like a veil was really made up of the fairy workers themselves,



who were all upon the walls, inside and out, constantly building them higher and thicker and stronger. Frequent repair also was required because of damage done in the day-time by crab-sheep, flying dragons, and such-like things who had forgotten how to behave and consequently how to look beautiful. It was upon this castle that the Count Kraken made his awful attack trying to get at the baby and—well, I won't yet say who it was !

But it was not yet midnight, so that the colours about

us and the light from the castle were steadily getting brighter. I stood still at one spot, Curdie clearly finding this the likeliest for getting some information, and watched steadily. Just opposite the point where we were looking, some catastrophe had evidently happened : the veil seemed to be torn away and the framework of many adjoining windows was shattered. In the castle garden was planted a tall tree of pink coral, only the very tips of its branches being alive with flowers. It was almost as high as the castle itself—full fifty or more feet. Up its trunk had been cut a rough stairway leading spirally into the branches. I climbed up it, hoping to get a view through the broken castle walls. I was rewarded. I saw quite clearly into some of the rooms—though what I saw was so unusual a sight that I could not for a while determine what it might be.

Each room was full of tiny people looking exactly like baby mermaids, all close together in rows round each room, and one row above another, as if standing on shelves. There were seven rows in every room, each row having a different colour. Every few minutes they would change colours and then a flash of white light momentarily filled the room. The fairy creatures all held on to each other by their tails, the tails being forked, and curling round the next neighbour's tail. Each carried in her hands a long broom or fan—I am not sure which it should be called—and every one without ceasing swept or fanned the rainbow spirits into the deeper rooms of the castle. It was clearly by the untiring work of these fairy mermaids that the constant stream of rainbow spirits always set inwards. It also seemed clear enough that the streams of white light which poured out from the larger arches resulted from

the same sweeping: if you go on sweeping things inwards, they must come out somewhere. I then understood that the work of the castle was the spinning of rainbow colours and the weaving of them together into pure white light. Yet the light, as I have already said, was certainly not only for the fairy people's own use, but for the use of others—perhaps of those who dwelt in dark, opaque countries beyond the Fairy World.

Presently the mermaids rested for a moment. Then I saw quite clearly through these transparent workrooms into a large chamber in the middle of the castle. There sat on the floor our Princess Honeypot, laughing and clapping her tiny fat hands at the gay creatures who were playing with her. She must have thriven amazingly: for who ever heard of a fifteen-months baby clapping her hands? What the creatures were I had no time to see, but they looked just like the very gayest of butterflies. All I was sure of was that Baby Susan was glowing with health and had not a scrap of clothing on her, only a necklace of brilliant pearly shells, like those Curdie now wore for his collar. Just as work was beginning again and the vision of my child began to fade, there shot out from this happy nursery my old friend, the raven-winged butterfly. He flew and sat for a moment on Curdie's ruff, and then came to my ear. I heard no words or message: only I knew that somehow it was because of my own dungeon walls that I could not yet reach my child. The misery had not lasted many minutes before a ringing howl from Curdie once more shattered the walls, and I again was holding on to a branch of the coral tree before the shining castle. But its light was now fading, it being long past midnight. Curdie went down the rough stair. I followed.

## CHAPTER XVI

The Mother tells how Princess Honeypot came home and the Boys welcomed her.

FOR the sake of other people than my own who may possibly read these adventures, I think it wise to set down here my wife's account of how things fared at home during my absence, if only because they puzzled her greatly at the time and were only partly explained afterwards. When we compared notes, her own story seemed to her quite to confirm my own, though certain points may look contradictory to people who cannot believe in the unusual. So here is her story, and exactly as she wrote it for me before I had read to her my own adventures.

"Somehow I do not think I could ever go myself into the Fairy World with you, Shepherd, though perhaps, like Curdie, I might somehow go after you. I am not at all sure I was not with you sometimes as I watched beside Baby's cot. Kirstie says she is sure I was out of this thick world sometimes, when for a minute or two she could get no answer to her questions. Certainly I have no memory of ever being out of my own world. Perhaps upon some starry night on the Downs—if I am ever there quite alone—I too shall remember things.

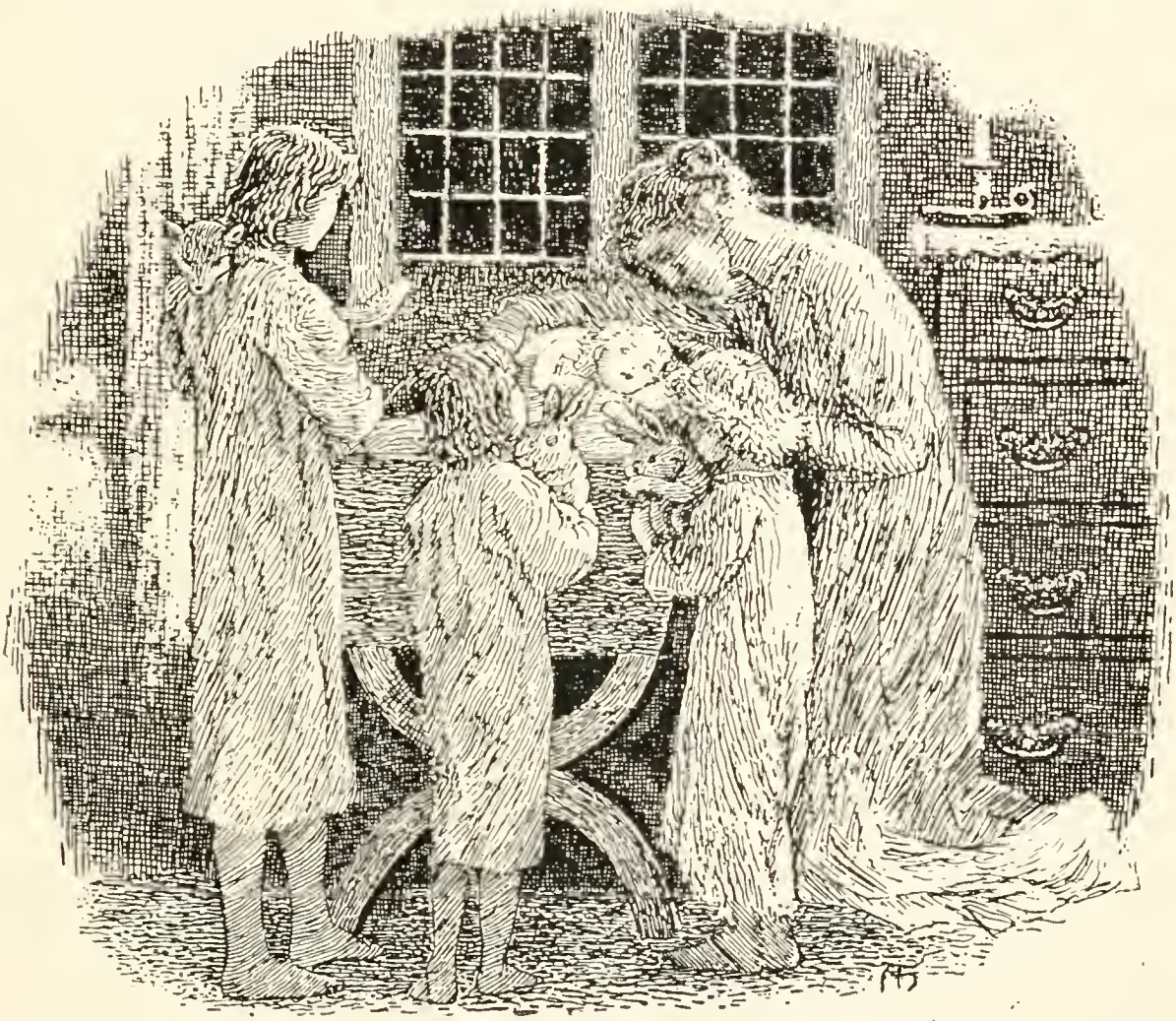
"What, more than anything, makes me believe that I have some fairy sense in me is this, that after the first night's misery at the loss of Baby, I did not feel the same

awful anxiety that I should and must have felt if she had been stolen in an ordinary way. Somehow I was convinced that Nurse knew more than she could tell: not that she knew where Baby was, but that she knew she was well and happy and that you would soon bring her home again. At times I argued with myself and said I ought not to be so trustful. I even tried to be angry with myself for believing what, I said, were only a Highland woman's fancies without any reason in them. But, though I was unhappy, and every minute of the day wanted you and Baby back again, I was not the abject woman I should have been if I had thought Baby was really lost or uncared for.

"I don't know how long I could have kept in this patient frame of mind; but the suspense did not last. The night following the storm and your going away, I went to bed so lonely that, although I really believed you and Baby and Curdie would come home again, I cried and cried as though I should never stop. The long day I had been going about with the dogs and the men, going or sending to every house and cottage, interviewing the policeman, and doing all the things I should have done had I believed Baby was stolen in the common way. I was very, very tired: that, I think, was why I cried, and not because I was really afraid. At last I fell asleep. But it could not have been for long, because I suddenly woke at the memory, as it seemed, that I had left the front door standing wide open when I came upstairs. I had been the last, as usual, and had meant to go down again, but changed my mind. Now I suddenly remembered, and I jumped up.

"The candle which you know I always leave burning in the window when you are away was just over Baby's cot. In a moment I saw she was lying there fast asleep, as

though nothing whatever had happened ! Though my joy set me crying again—and as if I had never wept before, I think—yet I would not wake her. I fetched Kirstie, and even woke up the other children to come and see her.



They sleepily toddled in in their homespun nightgowns, but stopped to take from the cages their pet animals. They were soon wide awake with happiness ; and, though as quiet as three shepherds worshipping at the Holy Manger, Baby woke up too : her little smile came first, and then her blue eyes opened, and then her fat arms and legs stretched up

to me. But her nightgown was gone! She was quite naked, and O, so rosy! and round her fat neck was a string of the most exquisite and tiny shells like pearls in lustre. O, then it was a happy time we had! Baby soon fell asleep again in my arms; so I put a nightgown on her and laid her in her manger-like cot again. Then Kirstie got milk and biscuits, and the children, standing by the cot, sang with me their little hymn.

"Then, Shepherd, we went to bed again; and once more I cried myself to sleep because you were not with us.

"But the next day I was puzzled, though still quite happy, expecting you to come home. Jonas declared he had seen Curdie when he went out to the sheep in the morning, and that he looked as if butter wouldn't melt in his innocent mouth. Kirstie, too, vows she heard him yelp just before I came to wake her. But no one else saw him all the day. What puzzled me most was that Baby slept the whole day through, taking her milk hungrily while still asleep, and often seeming as though she were coming awake, to judge from the happy smile that would often flicker over her face. All that day I could not leave her. I often fell asleep in my chair. Once I dreamed that she was playing with great numbers of gorgeous butterflies, and once that you were shut in some dark, damp place, and that Curdie was alternately leaping and howling outside in frantic desire to get at you. I wonder whether anything you have written of your adventures will account for these little bits of dreams? They were very vivid, and seemed unlike most of my dreams, which vanish so quickly out of my memory.

"During all the many days that you were gone, Baby still slept. She was so well, and Kirstie was so sure she would wake up when you had found her—whatever she meant

by that !—that we would not get the doctor. If Baby had not kept so well I don't think I could have borne your long absence. But I would not leave the house and the children for as much as five minutes : they were yours in a way they had never been before, and I must watch them for you. But O, Shepherd ! Shepherd ! Never leave me again like this !

" I could not feel happy. Kirstie worried me too with her nonsense. Though Baby was safe in the cradle, quite well and often smiling so happily, Kirstie would be constantly telling me in one way or another that ' the bairnie could na come hame wantin' her nightgoon.' She even misdoubted herself but the kittle fairy folk would fetch her away again. But that I was determined, if I never closed my eyes again, should not be. So I watched, but could *not* be at peace.

" I think you *must* plant some mountain ashes near the house, although it seems silly : Kirstie will give you no peace till it is done. She will have it that only when the fairies see a rowan tree do they feel welcome in the nursery. She says the rowan also keeps witches away. She thinks fairies can't believe a baby is happy if they are not welcome, and so the best of them will sometimes carry a child off—or change it."

## CHAPTER XVII

Curdie and I visit the Downs. The Sheep-bells and Church-bells sing Carols. We go home and hear the Children singing; but I enter my Prison again.

MANY days and nights I had yet to spend in the slimy dungeon. But now I had more hope, knowing that my going out depended largely upon myself, though perhaps much also upon Curdie. He never came into the dungeon with me: there never seemed to be room for anyone but myself. I believe he watched outside for hours together, though he must often have been away upon some important business. Possibly he knew that my escape, as well as the baby's and Trystie's safety, depended upon the discovery of my crook, and so was trying to find it.

Sometimes I would leave the dungeon without any hindrance. But if I then began to doubt the reality of the dungeon, I was almost sure to find myself walking straight in at its ugly slit of a door, sometimes even pushing it aside to let me enter easily. But never by any effort of will could I get outside, the very determination not to doubt my ability increasing my self-consciousness and fear. Indeed, I had but small hope of my own will. On the other hand, I became increasingly certain that Curdie would not forget me, and that whenever he might call me, quite as certainly would the dungeon door open. Or perhaps it was only that

he had become a master-dog and I an obedient man ; and that, as formerly he would always come when I whistled, now I instantly left my prison the moment he howled for me. But such was our love for each other that it was really of small consequence which was dog and which was master. For the present it was quite certain that he came and went as he pleased, while I generally remained behind though I didn't please at all. I cannot possibly recall the exact sequence of events any more than I can tell how many days my imprisonment lasted.

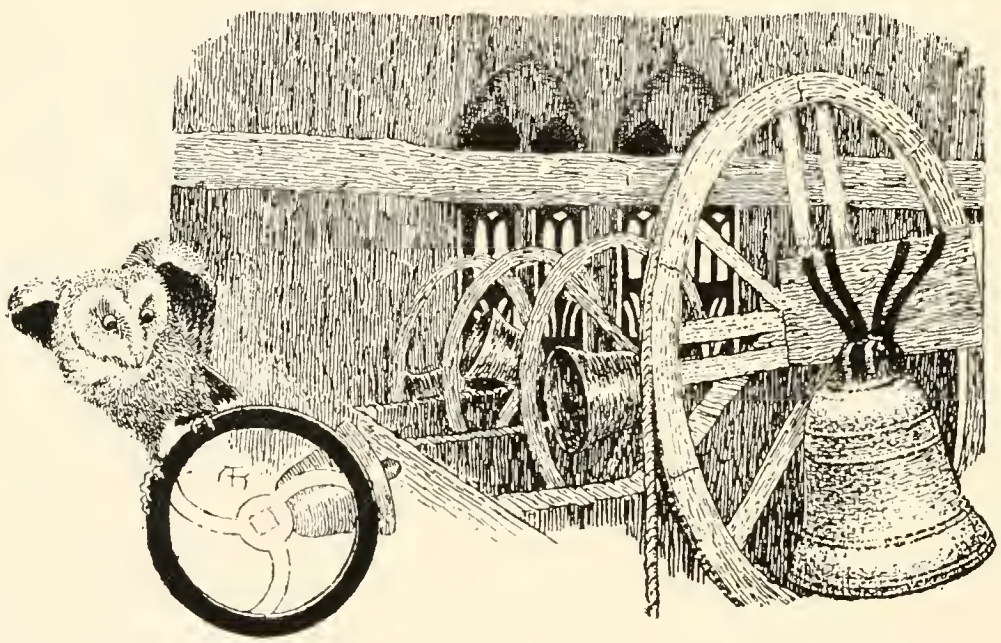
One whole night I was pacing to and fro close inside the town walls and trying to keep clear of the heaps of bones which lay about. Yet I constantly found myself stumbling against such a heap ; and whenever this happened a strange cry would pierce my heart and course through the gardens and domes till it died away. At last, in desperation, I ran after one of these cries till it vanished in at one of the translucent domes. I followed, and found myself once again in my dungeon.

At other times Curdie would call me in the day-time and I would walk with him among the orchards outside the city. Then we would feast and get courage. As surely, also, as my spirits were raised, his ruff would become whiter and shinier, as if to remind me that he was a most exceptionally wise and good dog, and knew all about the butterflies, the Fairy Queen, and our Princess. Yet do what I would, I never in the night-time could get to the Midnight Village. The more deliberately I tried to get out and find it, the more surely I failed. To add to my difficulties, so long as I was in the prison I never knew whether it was night or day.

One night's adventure was so exceptional and sweet that

it deserves a lengthier relation. Curdie called me with his most musical yelp and howl. I stepped from my prison right on to my own Downs! I could not at first identify the spot. The sheep were all about us. They lifted their heads when they saw us and made their bells tinkle, as if to let us hear them. But what on earth was Jonas about, I thought, leaving them to spend the night on the Downs, when they ought all to be folded? Yet the situation was evidently to them quite ordinary. Some were still chewing the cud, but most of them were sleeping. It was a frosty night; but a gentle north wind was all about us and blew away the old cobwebs from my soul. No more than a handful of clouds was in the sky, and those hid a waning moon which was only now risen. It was a magnificent display of stars that filled the dark sky with light, so that the sheep stood out as clearly as the sound of their bells. Far off where the flock was scattered thinner I saw arise from a hillock, higher than where we stood, a shepherd with a crook. He gazed ahead of him towards the east and suddenly called aloud, pointing with his crook towards the hill beyond. Just then the pale, thin moon brushed aside her misty curtain, and we saw another and then a third shepherd rise from the ground. Their dogs came running towards them too. Although the light was the moon's, I remember that one was reddish yellow and the other two brown but white underneath. One of them limped. They did not belong to any breed I knew. In a minute the three crooks were all pointing towards some spot on the edge of the Down which rose quite steeply before them. Curdie and I hastened towards them and soon saw what they looked at—an extraordinarily brilliant star like a slow-travelling meteor, leaving a trail of thin light behind it. It looked as

though it were slowly coming nearer the earth, while still leading further away. Evidently it was as wonderful a sight to the three shepherds and their dogs as to Curdie and me, for they had set off running before we reached them. But Curdie stood still. I waited also, content to watch the star, as if I would know where it would rest, and whether the three shepherds would reach it. I lay down on the grass and watched. I was now on the highest point of the Downs. The country was so clear in the frosty night



that I could easily see the wooden belfry of our little church, its shingles frosted and shining in the dim moonlight. Then I heard the bells ringing—we had a fine peal for so small a church—though I wondered at hearing them so loud at that distance. I wondered also why they should ring at this time of night and so merrily. Then I heard more bells—far more than ever our church possessed, and they seemed to increase in number and in the harmony of their jubilant music. A great bell-song was surging through the

night and over the Downs, full of meaning and melody. This was how it went :—

" O, how our bells and clappers sing !
O, how our roof and rafters ring !—
For now is born a little King
Who loves the beasts and birds on wing :
Ding dong,
Swing strong,
Ding dong,
Sing a song !

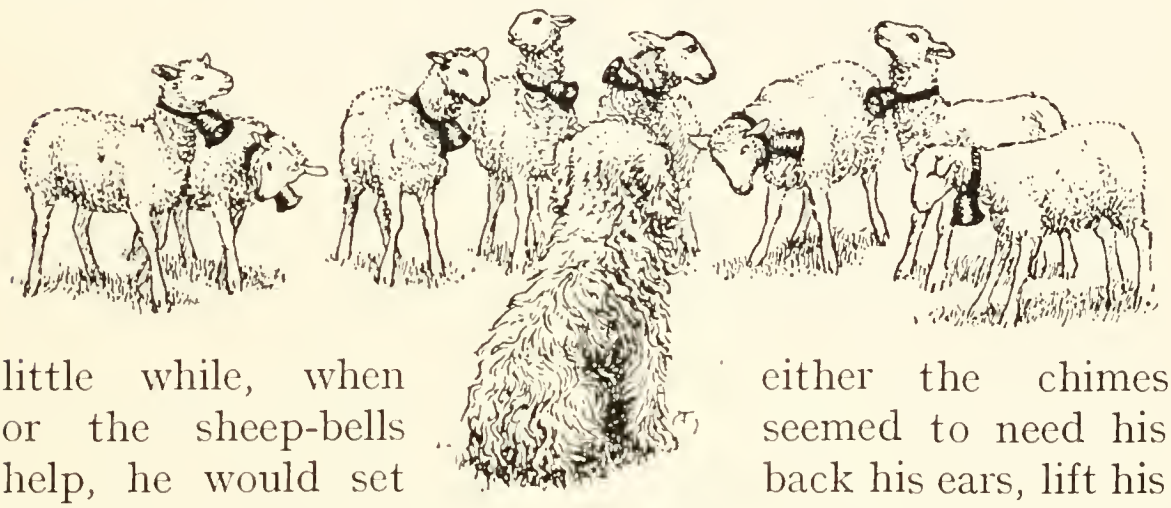
" O, yes, we Bells must all sing true !
Uplift your head, O gloomy yew !
O organ pipes, praise God anew,
And window-saints in red and blue :
Ding dong,
Swing strong,
Ding dong,
Sing a song !

" Now, you old owls, forget your screeching !
Praise the Child instead of preaching !

He is come to mend the teaching ;
Old and young His love is reaching :
Ding dong,
Swing strong,
Ding dong,
Sing a song ! "

At its beginning I had looked behind me and had seen Curdie busy, as it appeared, among the sheep and waking them up one by one. Then I saw my own brand on the sheep. They had no fear of the dog, but now stood up one by one. Few flocks have so many or such various-sized bells as my own, for my wife and the children love them ; and now, with Curdie as choir-master, they seemed to be using their bells no longer haphazard, but so as to join in the song of

the church bells. As soon as he had got all the sheep in orderly ringing of their bells, some shaking their uplifted heads in solemn ecstasy, some being needed with their heavy-toned notes only for a shake now and again, Curdie sat down close by me on his haunches.[1] Every



little while, when either the chimes or the sheep-bells seemed to need his help, he would set back his ears, lift his nose into the air, and join in with his most musical and accurately chromatic howl—not at all unlike the descending octave of the chimes.

I never heard such music. As I listened, I saw the great star was come to a standstill—and somewhere very near my home, though at this distance I could not be sure of the exact spot. The three shepherds and their dogs were out of sight. I did not follow, for the music held me. As I listened, the tune and chords of harmony unfolded themselves and blossomed, as it were, into words of song. Again I cannot remember them precisely ; this memory of them which I here set down is but crude and feeble. Yet, as I listened, I felt them to be quite strong and beautiful

[1] It may be noted here that the dog always sat quite close up to me in Fairyland, though in our daily work he generally sat a few paces off. Even when I was eating he would seldom come up and ask for scraps as most dogs will. But in Fairyland we always fed together like equals.

because of the conviction they brought me of their meaning :—

" Sing of the glad beginning,
Sing of the good begun,
Sing of the joy they are winning
Whose race to the Manger is run.

" Ring we, our heads uplifting,
Ring with our tinkling bells,
Ring we, till carols are drifting
Over the meadows and dells.

" Sing with the church-bells' chiming,
Sing with the chattering brook,
Sing to the starling's timing,
Sing of the shepherd and crook.

" Ring to our little lambs' bleating,
Ring with the skylark's song,
Ring to the springtime of meeting,
Ring to the dying of wrong.

" Sing of the Babe's lowly stable,
Sing of the Star overhead,
Sing out the truth of the fable,
Sing of the motherless fed.

" Ring with the woolly lambs' laughter,
Ring with the peewit's call,
Ring to the starry rafter,
Ring in the heavenly hall."

This is the second of the sheep-bell songs :—

" The Child is born,
And fear forlorn
Has fled like a ghost to the sea ;
This wintry morn,
With its piercing thorn,
Will blossom in joy for me.

" The Child of all Love
Is come from above,
And bids us, as cropping we go,
To sing on the hill,
And in harmony thrill
With the chimes in the valley below.

" The Star is aglow ;
The frost is below
Bespangled in jewels of light ;
The ox's old stall,
With its poor wooden wall,
Will shelter our King for this night.

" The Manger is there,
And Angels a stair
Have built from the Star to the Shed ;
Each sheep with her bell
The Gospel may tell,
When our shepherds to worship are sped."

As the music filled the air it seemed impossible to leave it. It held me spellbound in worship. Curdie lay alongside of me, his head resting on my arm and his eyes fixed upon my face. I was lying so that I kept looking upon the star. It was now so low down in the valley that it shone through the top branches of the very copse in front of our farm.

I had at first thought it to be winter, so piercing was the cold wind. But now I realized that it must be late spring-time, just as it had been when I had left home. I had almost forgotten the three shepherds and their dogs, though, but for the sheep-bell carols, I am sure I should have raced after them. Now I was content to lie gazing at the star, feeling, I think, that I could not, dare not, go home till I was, once and for all, so free of my prison that I should

never by any chance enter it again. I must moreover first find my child. Yet, while my eyes were fixed upon the star, I felt as if I was sharing in the wonderful peace that mothers the sheep, and the grass upon which they tread, and the tinkling bells, and the bleat of lambs. I think I fell asleep. I cannot be sure how it was. Nor does it much signify whether my next experience was with or without my body's consent. The thing was quite real.

Curdie got up and gave me his paw, as if to bid me farewell while he went home to see how things were going. Afraid of losing him again, I followed. He made straight for the farm, which presently, in our descent, was hidden from view. Indeed, we were soon in the widening and beech-set coombe and should not see the farm again till we reached the lower level. Yet, during the length of that two-mile walk, I seemed to see some brightness shining where my home should be. Clouds had now been brought up by the freshening wind, so that the moon and most of the stars were hidden ; and, by the time we got into the copse, the night was very dark. Curdie was far ahead of me ; but I never lost sight of his silvery ruff as he made his way zigzag through the trees. So dark indeed was it that even when almost clear of the trees I could not see the farm-buildings ; but certainly the shining star was ahead of me. Yet soon it was no star, but only a bright candle-light from a window—the window of my wife's bedroom—yet how dazzling to the eye coming out of the dark wood !

Curdie went straight in at the door ; for it stood open —a strange thing so late at night. I followed quite noiselessly in spite of my heavy boots. Not a stair creaked, and I could not hear even the patter of the dog's feet. At

the turn of the stair I heard the children softly singing the evening hymn which their mother had made and taught them. I stood and listened :—

" Guard our darling father
Folding all the sheep ;
Teach our gentle Curdie
Patient watch to keep.

" Bless our little Baby
Sent us from above ;
Bless the cows and donkeys
With Thy holy love.

" Once in stable manger
Lay our little King,
He whose Father made us,
Sheep, and everything.

" We may find the manger
If obedient boys,
Bring Him pink-eyed bunnies,
Bring Him bells and toys.

' Every living creature
Is the Baby's care,
Be they wrapped in swaddlings,
Feathers, wool or hair.

" Some are good and loving,
Some are silly geese,
Some in wind must shiver,
Spite of curly fleece.

" Some lambs love and cuddle,
Others cry in pain
When in ditch they're fallen,
Wet with mud and rain.

" When we little shepherds
Grow quite strong and brave,
We will go with Father,
Fallen sheep to save."

I went silently up the stair. The door stood open. A burning candle stood in the window at the head of the little cot. Our baby lay fast asleep in it. Her mother sat between the candle and the cot facing me, so that she almost hid the light, had it not shone through her hair like a dim, holy aureole. The three boys, Kit with his fox-cub, Davie and Robin with their brown and white bunnies in their arms, stood at the side of the cot singing in their piping voices, but so gently lest they should wake the baby. I thought again of the bright star and the three shepherds with their dogs who had followed it, one limping. I stood at the door in my rags, unseen and unheard. Curdie was at his mistress's side—unseen also. I turned and went down the stair again, the tears filling my eyes for gladness and for humbleness. " If that mother and those children are mine," I said, " there must be some good even in me. That dungeon must have been a dream ! "

I walked straight back into the wood, pushed aside a sapling that stood in my path—to find myself shut once more in my black dungeon.

## CHAPTER XVIII

Trystie escapes from the Goblin City. The Goblins pursue her, and a Butterfly protects her. She finds her Choose-key.

TRULY I was back in my dungeon again; but now there was no question in my mind concerning the reality of my having been for once, at least, quite out and away from it. I had been in the midst of those great doings on the Downs. I had heard the sheep-bells make glad with the church-bells, so that all the world should know of their share in the daily and everlasting Joy—the joy understood by all simple hearts, shepherds, sheep-dogs, and more, far more, by simple mothers and little children. So sure was I of the happiness Curdie and I had been seeing, that I felt equally sure I was not yet, and had never been, quite free of my dungeon. I understood how, while I was shut in the dark place, I was yet out on the Downs, where first my sheep with their bells, and later my little boys with their hymn, drew me from my loneliness and doubtingness.[1]

I was ever so much happier now. I felt sure some loving Power was taking good care of me, and that I should get quite free before long. I felt sure also that either through my own efforts, or some better than mine, the Princess would get back to her mother and little brothers. Indeed,

[1] How it is ever possible to be in two places at the same time cannot be explained in words; nor can it be explained how a child may do wrong while taken care of by so sweet a thing as his mother's love. Many things are just so real that they can't be explained.

I lay quite restfully in my cell, sometimes even sleeping, but quite ready to rise and go out of it as soon as some summons should tell me the hour for action was come. I had now altogether lost my chains. Curdie was scouting for me, I knew, and I thought he would not rest till he had found the crook for me. But what about my little Trystie ? How I wished I could have taken her with me to see and hear the gospel night on the Downs !

As I have said, I had no sense of time in my dungeon : indeed, I think time is of but small account in Fairyland ; though in the goblin country they think punctuality is a law of nature, and taking a long time to do a small thing well is a *Mustn't !* Here, however, I lay in my rags. The people thought I was getting tender for their horrible monster ; for I would still sometimes hear them chattering about me outside, and saying how much better his squidship was looking ; and so on. But they gave me no more of their serenading. Somehow I felt I was getting stronger for the work I had to do.

At last I heard Curdie's summons. At home we call it, very stupidly, a howl, though it is speaking always. Now I understand it plainly.

" I am here again, dear Master," so he said ; " we must be off. There is something to be done, though I am not quite sure what it is."

So up I jumped with a delicious sense of new strength, and with an entire disregard for my disreputable clothes. Immediately I was outside in the still dim light : after the darkness it was ample. It came iridescently from the garden flowers, and I saw we were on the top of the city, inside the walls. A red-green glow—a bad colour—seemed to be shining from the outer side of the Towers over the distant

country—a light I had not seen before. It must shine from the squids' terrible, lidless eyes, and seemed to suggest that some new excitement was stirring up their wickedness. The Towers themselves were slowly and slightly swaying backwards and forwards ; and it looked as if they might be on the point of starting out on some expedition. Far away on the hill-side I saw the midnight shining of the Fairy Village.

It had before this occurred to me that, in all probability, the dungeon I was in was actually part of, or, if not that, then attached to, the monster who was to devour me, because I never knew, when I walked out of it, where I should find myself. This made me suspect that, although the towers always appeared to be immovable from their places, they were yet able to go wherever they pleased. The conviction added much to the sense of their wickedness. I now thought of my baby, and an awful fear seized me : *what if any of the monsters went up the hill ?* I had heard that they loved young and innocent food. Then fear took hold of me again : in a moment I was lying once more in my prison : in another Curdie's leap brought me out again. He was licking my face. I rose and went after him towards the zone of bone-heaps close to the walls where the goblin people never went.

As we got nearer to it we heard a child crying and sobbing in the distance. We ran, Curdie ahead, his ruff now shining brilliantly and lighting the way before me. The weeping grew louder and nearer : then it ceased. But I could see only the heaps of bones and the huge swaying body of a Tower in front of me, one of its eight spires adorned with gold bracelets. Curdie ran straight up to one of the heaps and pointed. It was different from the other heaps—not bones, but more like a rounded rock. I went nearer to the

heap, and saw it was a child sitting huddled up, her face on her knees, and these clasped by her hands, one folded over and protecting the other, which was tightly shut. Curdie's attitude, so still and reverent, made me approach on tiptoe lest I should interrupt. For the look of the child did not suggest anguish so much as a peace or sleep following upon tears. For many minutes Curdie and I stood waiting till we were needed. I felt, as I always did feel now, useless without my crook. But Curdie's ruff was giving out its light quite wonderfully.

Presently the child became aware of our presence and looked up. So sweet was her tear-stained face and so shining were her eyes, that for a moment I did not recognize her. Yet it was indeed Trystie ! She jumped up and rushed into my arms, *laughing and crying* to make up, as it were, for never having really done either before ! It was quite a few minutes before she could lift up her head. Then she looked at my ragged clothes with a motherly tenderness in her eyes. In a moment I saw that the woman was come alive in the child. Still sobbing quietly she tied together two strips of my torn smock, thus fastening up its worst rent. Then she saw Curdie, sitting up begging with lifted paw, ready to shake hands directly he was wanted. Though Trystie had never seen him before—or any other creature more like him than cats—she knew he was good and took his paw in her left hand. Her right one she kept tightly closed.

In these few minutes the tower above us began swaying to and fro in seeming anger, and his hideous arms bent down and twisted about in the most sickly contortions. But he did not touch us. It was Kraken, of course. Perhaps he had not yet recovered his appetite, or was still suffering from his august ache. But I think his anger was against the child

for laughing and crying, and that, because she had found this gift, he was afraid of her and would not touch her. I think also he held Curdie in great dread.

It was many minutes before Trystie could get quite free of her sobs. But I held her closely, gently patting her head and smoothing her tangled hair. Curdie sat and kept his eyes steadfastly, fearlessly, fixed upon the Tower. At last she told her story, though many of the points I did not learn till some weeks later.

The child had waited behind the others after the bedtime bell had rung, in the hope that I should come back to her when they let me out of the Magistrate's Court. She wanted to ask me herself whether the adventure of the boys was a fairy story, and what was the difference between a true story and a fairy story and a lie story. She waited so long that she knew she was locked out without going back to see. She knew also what would happen to her if she now went back: it had happened to her mother. Then a strong and quite strange feeling took hold upon her, that she wanted her mother and her mother wanted her. She did not ask what the feeling meant, but obeyed it. She did not wonder how it was that a child could have such a feeling in this place: had she done so, she might have known it was because she had never been properly *quenched,* like all the others. She did not know, moreover, how different she was from all the other children, nor that, just because her choose-key had never been locked up, she was said to be "not quite all there." Now she had a big new idea which made the hunger for her mother. She remembered the coming of the Rainbow Lady to the dormitory, and felt that she had to find her choose-key as well as her mother.

Then Trystie had started running as fast as her legs would

carry her: this, as she had never been really quenched, was faster than any other child in the whole city, and far faster, of course, than any grown-up goblins. She ran miles and miles, she said, down the wide streets, which now, because the shops were shut, were quite dark except for the tiny lantern-eyes of the little worms creeping out for the quiet night. One of these, brown and furry, wriggled so fast before her that she had sense to follow it. It brought her to the stair-tower carved with cats and crab-sheep. Then it lay still at the foot of the stair and its light went out. For the first time the child did not know what to do next. To go up the grand stairway was a *Mustn't;* and she could not leave the little worm, she said, in case it was dead. She sat down on the lowest step and cried; but with no tears, for they had not found her yet. She took up the worm in her fingers. It was stiff and cold and had lost its fur. She pitied and kissed the little thing, although kissing was a *Mustn't.* Then she thought it moved a little. She could see it quite plainly now, for it began to glow dimly, though its lamps were not alight. It seemed to wriggle inside itself and then it looked as though it was breaking in two, longways. Out of it suddenly rose a flame of colour, with unfolded wings. They were gold and green and silver and blue with the jewel-sparks of raindrops when the sun is making merry with them. It rested for a few minutes on the arch of the stairway, and Trystie saw its wings growing bigger and brighter. All about it there soon shone a moony halo of white light—just strong enough to let a child see where she ought to go. Then Trystie felt as she had never felt before—so glad indeed that she could *not* understand it.

The gorgeous butterfly flew softly, yet with a little song, round and round her head, gently hovering on her lips or

stroking her eyelashes with its wings. Trystie never thought of touching it with her hands; she wanted only to follow and be kissed by it. Up and up the wide stairway she went, the butterfly circling round and round her head and leading her. She now perhaps understood that a good *Must* is stronger to be obeyed than a foolish *Mustn't*. Long afterwards Trystie gave my wife the butterfly's song as she remembered it. She sang it in a sweet, low and tremulous tune as if it could hardly breathe and live outside of the heart which had so reverently cherished and rocked it. The mother-sense must have been already, and even before she found her choose-key, strong in Trystie's heart, ripening her child-mind to its understanding :—


"Love, a little creeping worm,
Love, two shining eyes;
Love, whose might the stars affirm,
Love, all sweet and wise.

"Love, that brings and bears the pain,
Love, that opens doors;
Love, the sunrise; love, the rain;
Love, the winter stores.



"Love, the life in quiet sleep,
Love, a grassy grave;
Love, the little child a-weep,
Love, a faith to save.


"Love, that toils in patient deed,
Love, that makes things grow;
Love, the worth in every weed,
Love, the rake and hoe.


"Love, who wants, who yet can wait,
Love, the quiet heart;
Love, too wise to come too late,
Love, too strong to part.

"Love, a leaping quenchless flame,
Love, who bravely sings;
Love, the loving mother-name,
Love, the gift of wings.



"Love, that treads the trodden way,
Love, that mounts the stair;
Love, that wins the glory-day:—
Love reigns everywhere!"

They passed several doorways on the stair. The butterfly did not lead her through the one giving upon the beech-glade where my fight with the cats had taken place. Trystie said it seemed as if the going up would never end; but it was all so lovely with the butterfly's song and shining light all about her and right in her! Soon, however, she heard footsteps racing up the stairway after them; yet she was not afraid. She even thought it would not matter much if

she were turned into a bone-heap: indeed that no real harm could come to her because she would change into something like the singing butterfly. Yet she did so ardently want to find her choose-key! The footsteps came nearer and nearer, and now the machine-like chatter of the goblin people was heard with them. The butterfly stopped singing and began to fly faster ahead, though always circling round and round Trystie's head, as if to keep fear from her. The butterfly stopped at a low door—not much higher than would have admitted one of the large cats. She rested a moment on the latch. It lifted, and the door swung into a pitch-dark hole. Trystie was for passing it by, especially as her guardian did not fly into it, but only sped round and round her head again, just brushing her cheeks and lips and eyelids. Trystie thought it quite impossible to go through the doorway, and then felt for the first time afraid. The next things happened in a very few moments. A dozen or more cats with awful green eyes and gilded whiskers shot up the stair, rushed past her and then turned, as if daring her to go higher. Up hopped with clatter and chatter the guards in their cork-screw-buttoned uniforms. She was hemmed in. She never thought she could get through the cat-door. But, just in time, she seemed to know what the loving butterfly wanted her to do. She crept on hands and knees, crawling almost flat as she squeezed herself through the hole. Inside there was a little more room and Trystie could turn her head and look behind her, though she could not sit up. She heard the door shut, and with its thud came a terrible cat-shriek. She looked round. Shut in the door was a cat's head, held tight by its neck. Its green eyes were bulging, a red light mixing with its green, and its gilded whiskers lashing about in torture and anger. But the butterfly's light was serene

and much stronger than the cat's eyes. The butterfly was now perched upon the upper edge of the door, which could not shut quite close because of the cat's head; and it looked as though, somehow or other, the butterfly was holding the door against their enemies. Indeed, it soon began to sway to and fro with a surging pressure on the other side. Trystie did not know what she must do. She dared not leave the butterfly. The butterfly dared not leave the door. So closely was the child packed in the darkness that she could not turn to give any help: indeed, she felt as if the butterfly was equal to her task. The glorious creature actually began to hum a song again, slowly beating the rhythm with its wings, as it hovered or perched on the top of the door :—

"Love grows strong
When the wrong
Mighty claims to be;
Tho' the throng
Belabour long,
Love will never flee.

"Trust the light!
Give the right
Leave to count no cost!
Never might
Can be right
If all love be lost!

"Child of mine,
With hope divine
Search and find thy key;
Light will shine
In darkest mine
For the eyes that see."

Then Trystie, knowing that she could not turn to help

the butterfly, felt quite sure the strong-hearted creature meant her to go forwards into the dark passage.[1] So she began by crawling like her little worm ; then she crept like a stealthy cat ; then she went upright on all fours ; and at last she was able to stand on her feet alone and even to run. But all the time she was holding fast in her left hand something. She could not remember what it was : she only knew that she must not yet open her hand. Soon she saw a dim iridescent light far ahead of her. It grew wider and plainer as she ran. Presently she found herself coming out from the long, dark lane or tunnel, and standing where she had never been before, with bluey greeny pinky flowers shining all about her and giving light enough to show huge walls not far away, and overhead a vast dome of blue light. But, as she stood just outside the dark tunnel, she heard the goblin sounds again behind her, getting louder, more boastful, and seeming, as they drew near, to fall upon her ears with a metallic beat :—

" Chatter and clatter,
  Hoofs in brass shoes !
Patter and flatter,
  Music and mews !

" Mothers who lose keys
  Fall in a heap ;
Children—their choose-keys
  Never shall keep.

" Chatter and scatter
  Yellings and hoots :
Catch her, you ratter !
  Hoof her with boots !

[1] In Fairyland—and Goblin Land is, of course, only Fairyland in rebellion against the Fairy Queen—every narrow way is wide enough if it is the only way ; and, quite as certainly, it widens so as to fit the traveller's needs in proportion to the courage he shows when he has to undertake what he does not understand.

" Worms, lantern bearing,
Die every day;
But—drat 'em for daring—
Their wings find a way!

" Spit at, bespatter
Mud, you cat-brutes!
Wings we will shatter,
Drown songs in hoots.

" The babes, we must quench 'em,
Lest they should choose!
Trust us, we'll drench 'em—
Pinch 'em and bruise!

" Chatter and blatter,
Howlings and hoots!
Catch her, smash flatter
Five toes in her boots!"

Trystie seemed paralysed with fear and could not move further than a few steps away from the tunnel's entrance. She put her hands up to her ears to stop the hurricane of hideous noises behind her. In doing so she opened her left hand and saw four minute white eggs fall to the ground and settle down together in front of her. They were shining with a pearly light. Her eyes became fixed upon them as she stood stock still, fearing every moment that she would be struck down. The darling butterfly, she thought, had been at last unable to hold the door longer and must have been caught by one of the cats. Yet the hullabaloos gradually ceased: this was because the creatures dared not go out into the fresh air at night-time for fear of the Towers; and what their masters dared not, the cats had no stomach for. So, one by one, the hoots and the rhymes ceased, and she could

hear the goblins slinking away back into the tunnel as if trying to keep their brass-shod hoofs quiet in a sick-room.

But Trystie's eyes were still set upon the four little eggs, wondering where she had got them and what would happen now she had let them fall. In a few seconds they all broke in pieces. Out of each crawled a little brown, furry worm with two glowing eye-lamps. Each turned its head towards Trystie, to catch her eye, and then began to wriggle and crawl away from her.

Then the child understood. The good butterfly who had sung to her so sweetly must have put four of her own eggs into her hand to keep until she needed them. Trystie felt sure the butterfly would not have left her hold upon the door on the stairway until she was safe. She followed the four little people; and it was quite clear they knew where they were going, as they kept close together, one or other occasionally looking back to see that she was following.

They led her across the garden, but never passed over the flowers. They made for the bare zone of bone-heaps. They went straight for the one particular heap which lay almost against a huge tower, with bracelets on one arm, glittering in the dim light. It frightened the child terribly, because, although she had never seen one of these august defenders of the city, she knew all about them from her schoolmistress. Yet she obeyed—brave child!—and followed her creeping leaders.

Into that bone-heap the four furry worms burrowed, and she saw them no more. She sat down by the side of it for a long time, and at last took to weeping tears as salt, I think, and bitter, as any ever wept in our own happier land. At last peace came into her soul, and she still sat as she had wept and as I found her—her face on her knees, her hands

clasped below them, the left holding fast the right, which was tightly closed. She could not stir lest she miss the singing that came from where the little worms were gone. The singing had such sweetness and light in it as she has never since heard or dreamed of; and it has never been forgotten. Often words came with it—often there were none, only the sound of flowers growing and of wings rejoicing.

" Darkness draws her curtain
Over starry flowers;
Night-time, sweet and certain,
Stills the dancing hours.

" Lantern worms will slumber
In their cloudy coil,
Till joy disencumber
Wings no cloud can foil.

" Mother-love is waiting,
Burning ever bright:
Ne'er can wrong and hating
Quench or dim its light.

" Fairy love is holding
Every patient seed!
So my arms are folding
Strength about thy need!

" Trystie! win by giving
Love to things that cry!
Give them gifts of living
Love that cannot die!

" Darling child! who, fearless,
Fled the darkness through,
Take thy key, and, tearless,
Find thy freedom too."

Trystie could not remember more of the words. But she was sure her mother was telling her that she would go far away into a new land quite near, where she might forget all about the Goblin City and the *Mustn'ts* and her butterfly-mother and the little sister worms and the great cats. She told her that never, never must she part with her choose-key, not even if she were told it would save someone's life; and that, if she kept it safely, she would some day come back to Fairyland and the Goblin City. Then she would open with her own key the great iron coffer where the Magistrates hid all the children's choose-keys when they were quenched. She would give each child his or her own key, and teach them to laugh and to cry, to grow strong and happy by doing kind things.

So Trystie's story ended.

Then Curdie, nose on ground, started walking ahead of us, and brought us up to the great lattice gates of pearl, by which I had first come into the city. The morning light was around us. The red trees on the tops of the distant hills were reflecting the sun's light into the valley. The towers were at rest, their arms upright and still as church-spires. Trystie opened her right hand for the first time. There in her palm lay a key, gleaming with star-shine just like my own crook, though far brighter. She put it into the great lock of the gates and turned it. They opened. Curdie led the way through, Trystie followed. I turned round in a moment's hesitation as to whether I ought to leave the city until I had found my crook. But a long, cold arm was whipped round me, jangling its gold bracelets. It held me fixed in a spiral coil of crushing weight. The gates closed. I was parted from the brave child and my loving dog.

## CHAPTER XIX

I am left behind and Kraken seizes me. The Queen delivers me. I reach the Castle and understand the Fairy singing. Kraken breaks into the Castle. The Baby is cutting a tooth, but Trystie comforts her.

NOW I thought I had lost my chance. I was rightly punished for looking back, as I well knew that when any danger is near you in Fairyland the only safe course is to look and go ahead. Still I did not believe I was really in hopeless plight, even though one of the Count's eight arms was gripping me so tightly that I could hardly breathe: still less could I think. I heard my joints and bones crack, and felt as though my eyes were being forced out of my head. But, when the pain was almost past bearing, there came to me, as if through the gates, the Fairy Queen. To see her was always a joy, if only because it made me realize that not even the most shocking things in goblin ways could harm the true and beautiful. The rainbow aureole was, as usual, round about her, though now the butterflies were almost motionless. I was being lifted up—almost dead, I think—in Kraken's grip, when she came and stood before me. Then the larger butterflies began to rush from her in their multitudes; and the glorious creatures, like winged flames of every glowing colour, sped to settle on the scaly arm that held me. It was soon covered. Still gripping me, it felt as if a shiver passed through it, giving me a fresh shoot of pain; and then its hold began to relax.

As it uncoiled itself and dropped me, I saw the butterflies leave it and go back to their Queen. I saw also that Kraken's arm was now covered with the same minute crystalline darts and arrows which I had seen in the walls of the crystal castles : clearly they were hurting so badly that his august rapacity had to leave, for this time, his breakfast untasted. As the large butterflies returned, a cloud of other very small ones came speeding to me with a big black one leading them. While they were covering me from head to foot, I saw that each had in the length of its back and across its wings a red cross. The touch of them was soft and healing, so that I felt as if my own beloved mother had found me, her little baby, nearly dead, and was giving me again the life I first got at her hands. Sleep came to me. The last I remember of this incident is the Queen as she passed towards the barren zone of bone-heaps, with my red-cross butterflies flying after her. My old friend the Black Butterfly remained with me.

Was I yet again in the dungeon? But the Black Butterfly was with me. Her colours were glowing with a depth and beauty I had never seen before. This, I am sure, was because my own spirit was stronger, and I was abler to see through dark things into the deeper light of them. If I was in the dungeon, its darkness was become translucent. The Black Butterfly hummed this song to me :—

" Hope is thy healing, a balm to make whole
  Thy wounds in miraculous sleep—
Hope, the sweet milk for the cradled soul,
  And laughter for babies who creep.
Courage ! big Brother, courage take !
Hope in thy weakness ; thy manhood's at stake !

" Hope is uplifting for heaviest heart,
Is sword in the flag-tattered fight,
Finds for the weakling his own little part
In the battle of wrong and right.
Courage ! big Brother, courage take !
Hope out of weakness endurance will make.

" Hope has brave secrets, though foolish men doubt
If Hope ever tells them aright—
Secrets of joy and of stains washed out,
Secrets all sunny and bright.
Courage ! big Brother, courage take !
Hope from thy failure will victory make.

" Hope sits and weaves at her wonderful loom
The threads of the Seven who spin—
Their distaffs a-shine with the butterflies' bloom,
With thistledown flighty and thin :—
'Tis Courage, big Brother, all for thy sake,
'Tis Courage Hope weaves, the old demon to break."

I rose a sound man, for I knew that at last action was needed. I had also new strength, thanks to the help given me by little things accounted worthless by many —little things, such as songs and worms and butterflies and dogs and children. These had been my salvation.

The butterfly sped away: was it through the walls? I followed after her ; and, I hoped, left my prison for ever. I found myself not far from the great walls, but outside them. Yet I could see nothing of the two to whom I belonged. I knew Trystie and Curdie must have gone up the hill to the Midnight Village. I felt sure, too, they would have waited till I joined them, unless Curdie had news that they were wanted elsewhere. I had no notion how long my healing sleep had occupied, but I judged by the waning light that it

must have taken the greater part of the day. I was, too, desperately hungry. But I found plenty of figs and grapes and took my fill of them, while I walked or ran along the high road. It was nearly quite dark when I reached the hill. This was fortunate; for without the brilliant light which shone from the village at night, I could never have found it.

I hastened all I could, notwithstanding the wonders that surrounded me. I had now no fears; though I knew I might fail, if what I was to undertake proved impossible. But, with Trystie's and Curdie's help, I was quite happy about the baby. Of course, I still lacked my crook, which I believed was essential to my success. But the Black Butterfly's song had left me convinced that I should somehow find it again and that with its help I should overcome and kill Kraken. That he was the one danger threatening the baby, as well as Trystie and Curdie and myself, I was quite certain. O for my crook! Yet I knew better now than to turn back for it. I should find it—or perhaps it would find me—by going onwards. I was quite sure Curdie would not forget my need of it.

I reached the village without any difficulty. But how plainly I now understood all the music that was surging around me! Although myriad songs must have been in utterance at the same time, no one interfered with or jarred upon another: I could listen to any one of them individually. Now I could see quite plainly the work that the fairy people were all so busy about in the cottages and castles, which they were constantly building, enlarging, or mending into many sorts of form, but all with the same meanings. Indeed, I soon discovered that the one supreme law was obedience to their Queen. I often got sight of her for a moment as she walked about visiting every crystal

castle and horny cottage. Whenever she stood before any one of them, the music and light within increased into joyful intensity. Sometimes the castles towered fifty feet above her ; sometimes the cottages were so small that she looked down into their windows. To her and her butterflies all seemed to be of equal importance.

But I could not yet find the great castle where I had seen my baby. I began to wonder whether I had not lit upon some other great village in the same neighbourhood. I never was able to come quite near the Queen, or I would have dared ask her ; but I managed to keep her in view, and hoped she would lead me soon to the castle I sought. Though in the meantime I wasted no energy or time, I could not but hear the music and songs. While I was looking into one stately castle, hoping to find in it the child I sought, I heard this song :—

" Glad butterflies dance as the mistlethrush sings,
Big bumble-bees wander away,
But we, who have never a use for their wings,
Must sleep through the sunniest day.

" O, patient wise worms through the dark earth crawl
And knead the moist sod into food ;
The wild flowers bloom, the dying leaves fall,
When fairy folk dance in the wood.

" But we never crawl or wander or skip,
We never the star-rays may reap :
We never sail forth on a moonlight trip
Rejoicing, nor even may weep.

" Yet light we can weave for the glow-worm's star,
And hope for the lover who woos ;
The lanterns of seekers who travel afar
Get oil from our bottomless cruse.

" O, well they all need us—the stars and the moon,
The shimmering Milky Way ;
O, well they all feed us—the rainbows of noon—
With colours of promise and play.

" The children too need us for laughter and tear ;
They need us, the flocks and the herds :
And one day, O some day—and one day quite near—
Our souls will get wings like the birds'."

Then I caught sound of the Queen's voice, and perforce I listened. It was ringing and happy and strong, quite unlike any of the other voices, all small and piping and sweet. This is what she sang :—

" Baby mermaids through the night
Gather rainbow hues,
Spin into the starry light
Reds and greens and blues.

" How they do it, no one knows,
Why, they never ask ;
Distaff pulls or shuttle throws—
Each one loves her task.

" Never do they hear my voice,
Yet they love my will ;
All in serving me rejoice,
All so small and still.

" Never yet they see my face,
Though they love my way,
Patient each one guards her place,
Waits the sunny day."

Then I heard another from within the castle, and this in a simple harmony. I wished my wife could hear them all,

as she would have remembered every note of the music. Here is the second fairies' song I heard :—

" O, we have no spinning-wheels,
Yet we spin all night ;
O, we need nor looms nor reels,
Yet we weave the light.

" Gathering the sun-dyed flax
From the rainbow throng ;
Each is given all she lacks
For her spinning-song."

Then yet another came from the Queen, whom I could not see, but whose voice I easily followed as she sang :—

" Fairy nurses wash and comb,
Fairy nurses sweep :
Stolen babies cry for home,
Stolen babies weep.

" Fairies spin but never think,
Fairies are not wise :
Babies solemn eat and drink,
Laugh with butterflies !

" When my fairies find their sight,
Feel the baby's woe,
They will know the wrong from right,
And let the baby go."

This song led me at last to the castle I wanted. It stood high above all the others. I had just caught sight of it and was running up the road that wound up to it, when, from between the branches of the tree of coral growing close to the castle, shot an enormous, scaly, tapering arm with red suckers in double row and gold bracelets adorning it. It

lashed at the side of the castle, which, huge as the monster was, towered above him I knew the arm was Kraken's, though it was now so thin that its bracelets had all slipped on to the thickest part and clinked together like a rattlesnake's rings. It tore a great hole in the crystal walls, pulling down many bastions with their rose-turrets, and laying open many of the rooms, great and small. Instantly the arm was withdrawn, and the most awful howl swamped the sweet fairy singing and sent horrible echoes careering through the peaceful night.

The demon must have been terribly hurt by the arrows and barbs and sharp clubs which stuck out all over the walls—and he was not used to any feelings but those that made him smack his beaky lips. The blow was not at present repeated. I wondered if the other Counts would hear the howl and come to help him. But nothing more happened. I ran to the foot of the coral tree, hoping to do something to protect the child. I could see Kraken nowhere. The music had almost ceased and the brilliancy of the atmosphere was dimmed. Had the fairy people been terrified into staying their work? Hand over hand and foot after foot I climbed up the stairway some thirty feet or more. Then I had to rest. The great and really terrible silence was soon broken by the Queen's glorious voice :—

" Walls and bastions stately rise,
Built in happy strife ;
Humble, loving, each one dies—
Dies to find his life.

" Fairy masons happy change
Flesh and blood to stone :
Fairy ways are nothing strange,
When the way is known.

" Arms encircling one and each—
Strength their sole intent :
Bodies fill each hole and breach—
Love the strong cement.

" One above the other lying,
Hand in brother's hand,—
Castles rise by love and dying
In my Fairyland.

" Soft my word of love is spoken,
Walls they build me strong :
Love recalls to life the broken,
Undoes every wrong."

Then, looking down from the branch on which I sat, I saw the gracious Queen serenely singing up into the great hole in her walls. Her rainbow halo was more glorious in the rush of its butterflies than I had ever seen it. Her greatness of heart was shown in the urging of her people to their work again as if nothing had gone amiss. The Queen there, and her butterflies all so busy, I knew my baby was perfectly safe, and that if she had been hurt by the accident, the butterflies would soon swarm over her with healing.

I saw more and more clearly, but no sign of the child. I saw that the fairy masons, in shimmering little shirts of rainbow hues, all had blind eyes and no ears at all. Yet they ran leapingly, as if in a happy game, to the edge of the great cavern-hole in the wall. Each knew where he was wanted. Each lay down one above another, happily twining his arms into the legs of a brother above, or in front, or behind. Then to them ran other fairies, with cups full of magic water—liquid crystal, I think it must have been—and gave a draught to each of the little martyr masons. It must have been sweet, good drink, for they drank it eagerly. Then they smiled just as a sweet child smiles on waking from a happy sleep. Then they turned quite pale and transparent; and they never moved again. I understood the Queen's song.

Soon the light began to increase, and I knew that, nothing daunted, the whole village had resumed its work and happy singing. One more song I remember :—

"Mortals do so many things,
We do fewer, far—
Spin our light and weave it wings
For the lonely star.

"Spinning, singing, are the same;
Love must dance her joys,
Make of life a merry game,
Good for girls and boys.

"Working for the unknown sun,
Soon will give us eyes;
Working each for other one,
All shall win the prize;

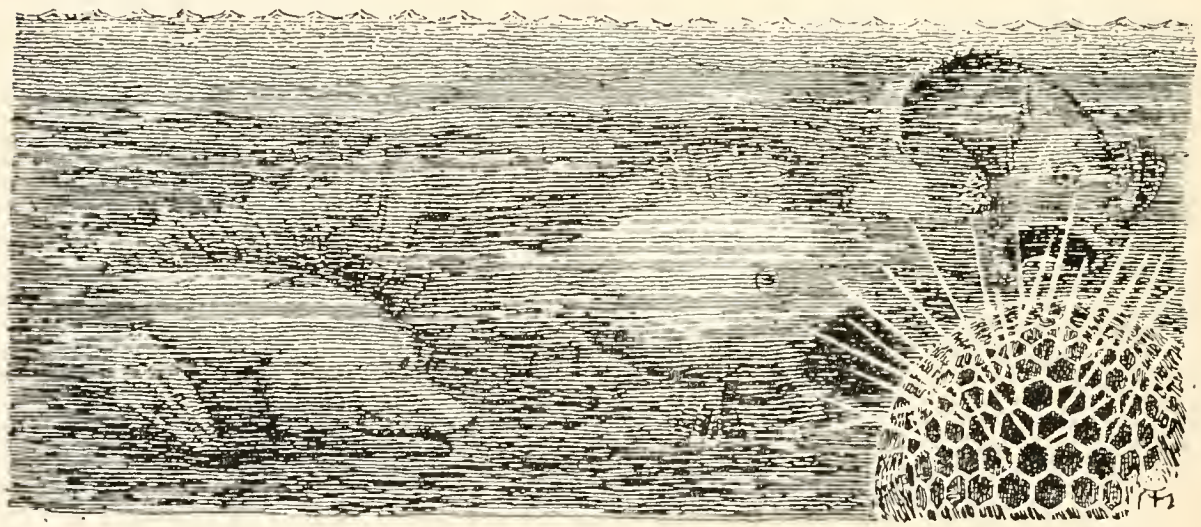
"Soon shall see the castle bright,
Built by our own hands,
See how threads of love weave light
In these Fairylands."

Hardly, however, had the light reached its brightest, when I heard a sobbing and crying. Just as the music had instantly ceased when Kraken howled, so now, as if to listen to this little piteous cry, every living creature, except the baby, stayed its singing. Yet the light was growing clearer. The rainbow spirits were again rushing into the castle walls, which became more and more transparent as I climbed higher into the coral tree. Presently I saw into a deep chamber through the upper part of the breach in the walls. In the middle of the castle was the great spiral staircase ascending from the foundations up to this chamber and onwards beyond it.

Then a sight, joyful and bright as day, was before me. In the middle of the room I saw Trystie, holding our tiny Princess in her arms and rocking her to and fro to stop her crying. Soon, as if tired, the child sat down on a tortoise-shell stool and took the baby on her lap. The baby was now in her nightgown again. The string of pearl-shells was still round her neck, and hanging from it was a little twig of red coral. With this Trystie set to work gently rubbing the baby's poor gums. Somehow Trystie knew that the trouble was a tooth which would not come through. The baby, indeed, looked sadly and tearful enough; but I was greatly comforted, because, seeing Trystie look so serenely happy, I saw also what a perfect nurse her natural power of love was màking of her.

Trystie told me long afterwards that on their way to the castle, Curdie bringing her there quite directly, she had

broken off the twig of red coral from the very tree wherein I now was sitting, because she felt sure it would be useful for something or other. But when she discovered the natural use for it, she could not help thinking, she said, what a waste it was to have a huge tree of coral and only one tiny baby cutting one tiny tooth to use it ! She told me, too, how her God-mother, the Rainbow Lady, had opened the great door of the castle for her and had kissed her ; how she then went up the great crystal stairs and found the little crying baby quite naked ; and how the little one held up her arms to her and fell asleep.



The fairy nurses and mermaids, Trystie said, were standing about making a great fuss because they were at their wits' ends to know what ought to be done. They didn't seem even to know that teeth were there to be cut ; or what red coral was for, though they had such lots of it ; or that babies were anything but playthings. It made her quite cross, and she wondered how any God-mother could allow it. But, she added, when she remembered how the Rainbow Lady had kissed her, she was quite sure she did not *allow* it and was

helping all she could to get Baby back to her mother for fear her choose-key should be taken away. The fairy nurses, Trystie thought, seemed very sweet, but very silly.

Then Trystie told me how she found the little nightgown carefully folded up in a great pink scallop-shell; and how she put it on at once, because queer faces *would* look in at the windows; and how the fairy mermaids, she found, had been combing her hair with the gold-fish's wing; and how they brought her very nice milk, if rather fishy, and little grey-green, brown-streaked eggs quite fresh and lightly boiled; lastly, how the butterflies came to dance and sing the little one to sleep, so that she was quite happy but for the tooth that wouldn't come through. The butterflies seemed unable to make the painful course of nature easier, but only to heal wounds and sicknesses.

To go back to my first finding of the two children: Trystie had caught the singing fashion of the fairy village, and soon put the baby to sleep with this queer doggerel:—

"Little tooth, you hurt my gums!
Yet I want you through:
I will suck my baby thumbs
And my big toe too!

"You shall play and you shall work,
Little tooth of pearl:
Quick! no more your duty shirk,
Lazy little churl!

"I want you all, my little teeth,
Though my gums are sore!
But, I fear, you underneath
Will hurt even more!

" Peaceful come, though you fall out !
Cut and come again !
Pearly laughter tears shall rout,
Rainbows smile in rain ! "

I remember well the quaint little song, though Trystie has quite forgotten it. It served its purpose. I left them and climbed down my tree softly. I knew there was something at last for me to do.

SHEEP-SHEARING

## CHAPTER XX

The Mother describes how the Baby was stolen a second time.

AGAIN I have asked the Baby's mother to set down in her own words how a fresh grief took hold of her and lasted two nights and the day between, till the great happiness came at last which ended these terribly anxious times. I have made her put in the two songs that she used often to sing as she put the baby to sleep. My wife thinks they are not worth writing down ; but they are worth more than this to me. The baby, too, is highly appreciative of good music and poetry ; and when her mother begins singing either of these two, she goes to sleep sooner than for any others ! So they must be part of our fairy story.

" During the whole week," she writes, " following Baby's return she gave practically no trouble at all. She slept almost continuously day and night. She woke regularly for her food and took it hungrily. I should have been, as I have already said, anxious enough, except that she was obviously well and happy. I watched her almost ceaselessly,

and sometimes felt quite happy myself because the little one would so often smile in her sweet baby fashion, even now and again giving a little kick and a crowing laugh. There never was distress of any sort. I felt sure that something quite unusual was happening and that nothing was really *the matter*. So I agreed with Kirstie that it would be absurd to send for the doctor. She has a very poor opinion of him because he believes more in liquorice powder than fairies. Sometimes I think I do too ; but not by any means always ! When I watched Baby smiling in her sleep I could easily believe that fairies were playing with her.

" I was very keen on the Friday night to get my bit of spinning done, as Kirstie wanted to send our last batch to her sister for the tweed she is weaving for you. So we brought Baby and her cot down into the parlour, where, as the night was curiously cold for May, we had made a big log fire. Kirstie demurred to bringing her down :

" ' A bit fire o' birk-wood [*birch*] on a summer nicht aye maks the fairies unco [*fearfully*] trickie [*mischievous*]. A-weel ! The spinning's the thing : they canna do muckle wrang wi' the wheel an' the sang thegither. Aiblins [*perhaps*] the bairnie 'ull be nane the war [*none the worse*] wi' a veesit fro' the wee gentry. But, wae's me ! they've keepit her ower lang a'ready. As I tellt ye afore, Mem, it's no for naething they've keepit her bit goonie ; we will na' get her a' hame a' thegither till they lat the nichtgoon come wi' her. An' the goonie canna come awa' wantin' its ain legs. I misdoobt the wee bairnie maun be tynt [*lost*] ance mair afore she can bide.' [1]

[1] Kirstie, though pure Highland, has the speech of a Lowlander, as often happens. She generally speaks plain enough English to the children, though, when deeply moved or telling them her fairy tales, she often slips into broad Scotch. It was astonishing, too, how well they understood it.

"We sat down to our wheels. There's no occupation like spinning for an anxious mother; with its help she can do so many things at once—work, rock the cradle, think about her husband, and plan for the children's clothes—not to mention singing songs and watching the baby's breathing! And yet, Shepherd, you say that when women do anything better than a man it is only because they can't think of two things—let alone half a dozen—at a time!

"The evening was somehow quite queer and timid. It was about eight o'clock. The last of the sun's red garments were fading and trailing after him, leaving only a few tatters of pink hovering in the pale green sky. The twilight darkened, it seemed, very rapidly, as though a storm-cloud had risen; but the sky was clear and the stars were finding their places wonderfully quickly. Our low-ceilinged parlour was now lit only by an occasional flicker-flame from the fire, and the black oak rafters seemed to come lower down than ever. The stillness and quiet were extraordinary, for the hum of the spinning-wheel never counts. The stillness gave me an all-overish sort of feeling I had never known before—as if something more real than the old house had set it tingling and was making its walls so unsubstantial that they were taking in all Downland! And yet when I looked at my granny's samplers in their frames and the china figures on the mantel, they looked quite ordinary. Then the flames fluttered in the funniest way, as though they were dancing across the fire heap instead of leaping straight up.

"Baby began to cry. I was rather surprised, because a few minutes before she had seemed so happy, and because she had never cried once since she came back. Now, however, her face was flushed, and I felt sure the tooth I had been

suspicious of was troubling her. I sang her favourite song, as she wanted soothing. Because of the strange silence in the air, I sang very softly indeed :—

"'The chicks of the blackbird they gape and they peep,
The lambs in their frolic they dance and they leap ;
But the Baby mine,
O, love-gift divine,
With Mother's strong help she will crawl and will creep.

"'Its ten fluffy balls from the mother hen run,
They scatter and scamper by one and by one ;
But Baby, my dear,
She gladly waits here :
Her loving and thinking are capital fun !

"'The kittens go romping or playing at ball—
It's leaping and climbing with never a fall ;
But Baby, my sweet,
With her hands and her feet,
She clutches and kicks at, O, nothing at all !

"'The puppy may yap and may bite at a stick
With teeth set in rows all so white and so thick ;
But my Baby's mouth,
With the peep of one tooth,
Just ripples with joy at the little dog's trick.

"'O Dad loves his boys and his home and his sheep ;
And I in my bower his heart safely keep ;
But Baby, my rose,
Her laughter and crows
Must hide in my bosom when he is asleep.

"'The shepherd's bright crook, when a lambkin is strayed,
The Downland will search and the ditches will wade ;
But, Baby, your eyes
Are come from blue skies
To brighten my sorrow—you wise little maid !'

"But there was no making the baby happy to-night. She did not cry outright, but gently and very pathetically whimpered, though she liked her gums rubbed. I put her into the cot again, and this time she was quieted by the lullaby I sang her :—

"'Close thy darling eyes—
Lullaby!
Though thy mother sighs—
Lullaby!

"'Fingers clutched in palm—
Lullaby!
Ripples in a calm—
Lullaby!

"'Shapely little lips—
Lullaby!
Daisy's rosy tips—
Lullaby!

"'Curly open ears—
Lullaby!
Heed not Mother's tears—
Lullaby!

"'Dimple on thy chin—
Lullaby!
All love's world to win—
Lullaby!

"'Roses on thy cheek—
Lullaby!
Brave thy heart and meek—
Lullaby!

"'Father gone afar—
Lullaby!
Thou his little star—
Lullaby!

"'Fairies, one, two, three—
Lullaby!
Dream, my Sweet, and see—
Lullaby!

"'Play their pretty pranks—
Lullaby!
No one gives them thanks!
Lullaby!

"'Fairies, four, five, six—
Lullaby!
Play such silly tricks—
Lullaby!

"'Cannot steal my dove—
Lullaby!
From her Mother's love—
Lullaby!'

"This particular little song, you know, is always more or less impromptu. The last four verses now came of themselves. After the first of these last ones Kirstie whispered hoarsely to me:

"'Mem! They'll be angert at ye!'

"I sang the second.

"'Hoot! Mem! I wonner at ye!' again exclaimed Kirstie.

"I sang the third and the last.

"'Mem! Ye maunna', ye maunna'! I canna' lat ye thraw your mou' at Providence!'

"But Baby at last slept quite peacefully, and the wheels spun out the silence.

"'Mem! D'ye no hear a skirling [*shrieking*] aboon the brae [*upon the hill-side*]?'

"Then there came a heart-breaking howl from a dog. Kirstie covered her head with her apron and rocked herself to and fro. I ran to the door and opened it. Curdie pushed past me, seeming to bring light into the room. He stood up at the side of the cot for one second and then rushed past me again, out into the night. He disappeared up the coombe. I looked after him, thinking nothing of any fresh trouble: rather was I rejoiced at the dog's return, though greatly astonished at his conduct. Then I went back into the parlour. Kirstie was still rocking herself by the side of her wheel, her head covered by her apron. I went to the cot. Baby was gone!

"Curdie had suspected it, I think, and had come to make sure. Then he had fled after her.

"Baby was gone! It was more than I could bear again. I need not write what followed. Some will know. Those who would not know, need hardly be told.

"When, after a sleepless night, I went into the orchard at sunrise, there, hanging on the clothes-line, was Baby's nightgown! I knew at once it was the same she had been wearing the night before, partly because it was Monday and there were no other clothes drying, and partly because of a tear in the sleeve which she had got from Kirstie's horrid brooch just when she put her into her cot. But the tear was most exquisitely mended, and, when I first saw it, it looked as if it were darned over with sun-rays. Now, you know, it looks just like my own or Kirstie's best mending and the threads no longer shine.

"I no longer doubted that Kirstie was right and that Baby had to be taken away again, if only to get the nightgown she had left behind in Fairyland. But the beautiful darning made me now quite sure that the fairies were good nurses, even though they were wicked little thieves."

## CHAPTER XXI

At last I face my Enemy. I am given a Magic Lamp. My Fight in Kraken's Sty. The Butterfly Army prepares for a great Battle.

CONTENT as far as the children's immediate safety was concerned, and sure that the Queen would not fail me, I pulled myself together. I realized that it was impossible for the busy people to restore the gap in the castle walls before Kraken would return, and that it was now quite easy for the creature to thrust an arm into the nursery and seize both the children without further hurt to himself. I think I loved Trystie by this time nearly as well as if she were our own child; and I felt much happier now that she was mothering the baby.

I climbed down the coral tree and reached the ground safely. I looked up at the castle: except for the gap in the walls, it looked as impregnable and busy as ever. The singing still continued happily; but there was now a more definite beat of time in martial strain, as if a consciousness of purpose and courage were behind the spinning and weaving songs. Clearly big things were a-doing, though the chief work of the village could not cease.

I knew I must find Kraken. I could not wait for attack. I must go and meet the enemy. I dared not stop to think how I should attack him.

Behind the coral tree it was very dark. The only light came from the fallen and crushed walls of castles and cottages. They were still alive with their little people, who

sang softly, and just a tiny bit sobbingly, as they set to work again. They were using the fallen walls as foundations for new homes. Kraken and his brothers had been over the ground: they had destroyed the homes, but could not damage the hearts. Many of the cottages lay trampled almost into dust. The flow of rainbow spirits into them was feeble, because, I suppose, but little spinning could be done beneath shattered roofs and walls. I was picking my way through the ruins, when there swept down upon us a bevy of the Queen's butterflies. They hovered for one moment, then covered over everything broken and gave forth their healing. In a few seconds they sped away again, as if needed elsewhere. Once more the singing of the broken homes grew strong and sweet, the rainbow spirits came in great numbers, and I knew the little people were happy again in renewing their work.[1] This heartened me wonderfully.

I got beyond the village. By the broken trees I had no difficulty in tracking the enemy. The trees were not equal to giving out kind light in the presence of these cruel beings, and it was almost quite dark. I followed, however, a distant gleam, and soon found it came from the mouth of a cave penetrating a cliff of red rock. I felt as if I had been there often before and looked up to its summit. There I beheld the old Rock-devil, with its mean eyes, its long hook-nose, its upcurling lip, its miserable chin. A quick pang of fear shot through my heart; but it was a fear of bygone days and could not touch my soul. As if to remind me, also in the old way, that all dangers, no less than this fear of my boyhood, must be boldly and willingly met, I saw at the side of the rock the little waterfall sparkling with its own

[1] There is a miraculous purpose behind both the work and play of Fairy-land—a purpose so glorious that the worst tragedies are turned into triumphs perhaps nobler than could be without the wrecking and grief.

light. It was the first water I had seen in this Fairyland. It was living water or it had not shone so brightly. I put my mouth to it and drank deeply. Immediately my eyes were strengthened so that I could see into every corner of the dark night. This was so remarkable that I looked down at my person. My very rags were lit up by something shining in my bosom—a lantern whose form I could not see because of the bright, small light shining within it. I was elate with joy ; and the more so when I saw and heard the Black Butterfly hovering around it. As I now write, her song comes back to me :—

" Thy armour all torn
  Is nothing the worse for its tatters :
Thy hope, not forlorn,
  Is the one only weapon that matters.

" Thy lantern ablaze
  Shines piercing where danger is nearest ;
And keen points its rays
  To faith, of all duties the clearest.

" For naught that's behind
  Is worthy the effort of seeing
Let mere monsters find
  An infamous safety in fleeing.

" Then count not the cost—
  The battle is won by much losing ;
Least be it, or most,
  Thou winnest the prize of thy choosing."

Then I turned towards the mouth of the cave. I just caught sight of a great scaly tapering arm in the act of curling up and disappearing within. Its gold bracelets rattled. I looked intently into the great hole, though my

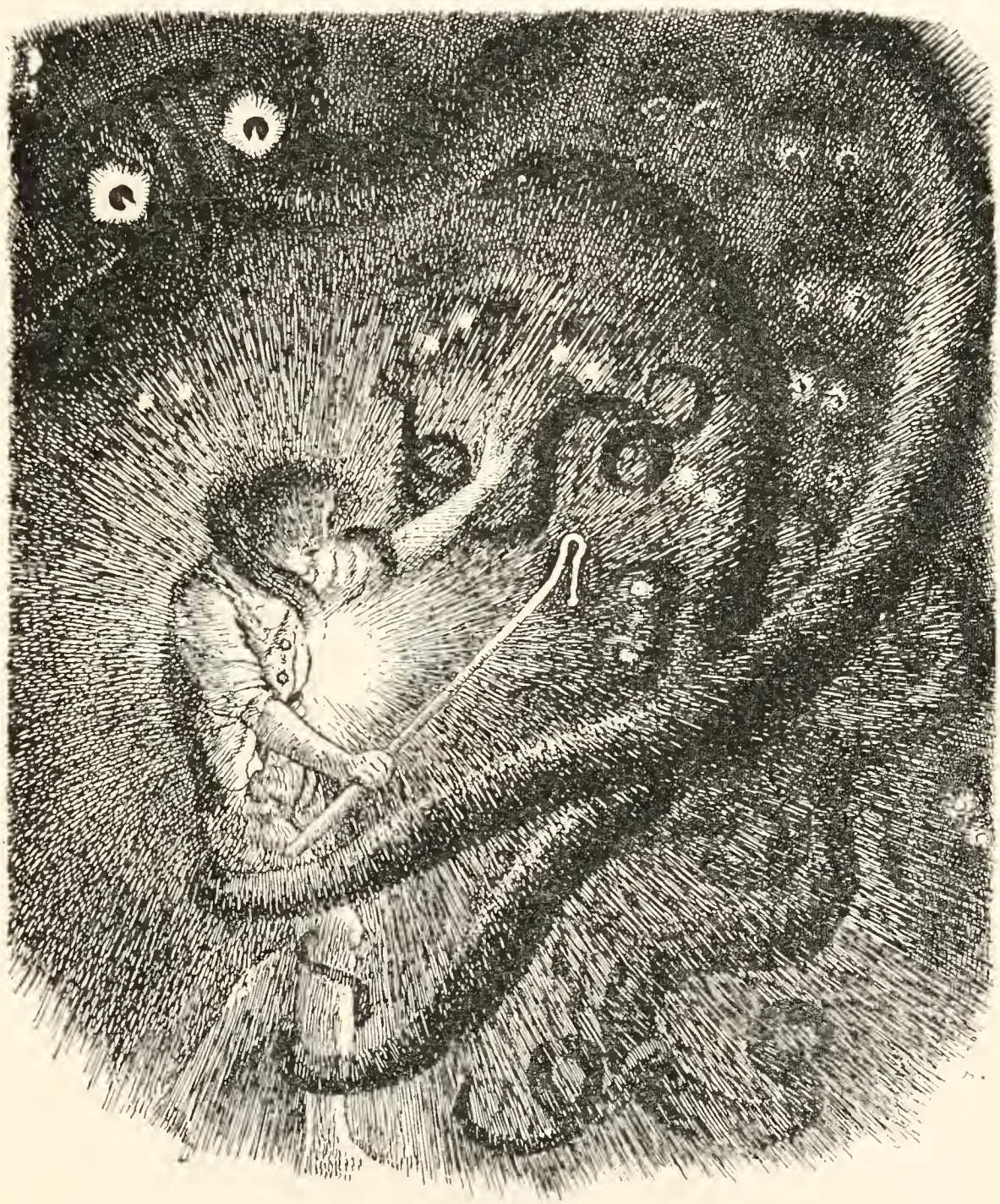
lantern lit upon nothing but darkness. But the Butterfly had said it would give more light as the danger grew nearer. Obviously I must go into the cave after the monster's arm. I think it needed some real courage to go into that dark hole.

No sooner was I within the cave than there was as much light as I needed. The cave seemed quite limitless. Around me, wherever I looked, were pairs of dull opalescent eyes with pupils blacker even than the cave's darkness ; and the eyes were lidless, and staring and shifting about, up and down, from side to side. Immediately upon my entrance one pair moved across the narrow entrance of the cave, so that I was hemmed in and no retreat was possible. I heard the rattle again and knew the eyes were Kraken's. But for this rattle, the monsters moved in slimy silence. Other eyes, too, in dozens, crept up into the dark above me, and I knew the squids were crawling by their arms up on to the vast roof. From all sides these eyes were greedy for me. From the shapeless heads that held these eyes, the eightfold arms in scores were assailing me in all the wrath of hatred.

At present my work was clearly to keep the enemy busy here in the cave. I quickly faced each monstrous pair of eyes in turn as their owner thrust out his awful tentacles to embrace me. Yet every time my lantern lit them up for a moment, they instantly withdrew as if stung. Then other arms would be thrust at me from above and behind, though the moment they reached far enough in front of me to be seen, I wheeled about and my lantern compelled their retreat.

Outwardly, I think I was quite calm, though I felt as if this fight was no less than the everlasting one of good against evil: indeed that it was being fought in my own very soul. Without arms or armour, there

was a light shining from me quite terrible to my foes. The most wonderful of all these events in the black cave was a sense of my Crook's presence in my hand. I could see it



always before me, and as if it were one with the light of my lantern—indeed as if it were part of my own life. But I could strike no blow with it. My duty was to keep the enemy in full strength shut up in their fearful sty long enough to give the singing fairies and the Queen time to prepare for battle.

But now the time was come for more active measures, and I must get the enemy out of the cave. I must compel Kraken to leave it before me by torturing his eyes with my lantern. Yet whenever I attempted this, arms would shoot at me from behind or above, so that I was compelled to turn in order to avoid my own destruction. Consequently, by the time I was assured of the only way to escape, I was equally sure I could not yet use it: there was no tiring these monsters.

But help came—as always when it is needed. The Queen's emissary, the Black Butterfly, suddenly flew into the cave from above Kraken's eyes and through his arms. She had had, I think, a terrible task given her by the Queen; for she perched on the top of my lantern with folded wings as if sleeping for two or three minutes, before she could speak to me. Her presence was invigoration. I was assured by it that my utmost fortitude was necessary to some scheme in the pending battle. Soon her wings began to flutter and to flame. She flew up and hummed a message to my ear, but still panting a little.

"In ardent array
The butterflies stay
Athirst for to fight for their Queen;
All fairies to-day
Have forgotten their play
And the weaving of shimmer and sheen.

"With arrow and bow
And jav'lin to throw
They swarm on the bastioned walls;
Above and below,
In row upon row,
They'll die ere the brave shepherd falls!

"Uplifted on wing
Right bravely they sing
Of rainbows and sunny to-morrows;
The wounded they bring
The healingest thing
That grows in the garden of sorrows.

"With lullaby song
They out-sing the wrong
When tears refuse sleep to the baby;
The wild fairy throng
Grow wiser and strong
When love into *must* changes *may-be!*"

I think I was right in assuming that the song was a message for me, so that I might know what great doings were in preparation, and that the brave butterfly army was as well content to sing songs to the baby as to shoot arrows at the enemy from the turrets and bastions of the castle. I took the message also to mean that I must somehow or other get the enemy out of their stronghold.

If this had to be done, clearly it must be done. Yet difficulties increased. No sooner had the butterfly given her message—which never for a moment lessened my vigilance—than the thick air of the cave was swarming with dark-brown flying things, looking like very small bats with vulture beaks, about twice as big as the Black Butterfly.

They flew round and round us in increasing numbers, trying their best to grab my little friend, who seemed to defy and keep them at bay by the humming of her wings. These bats filled the air with smoke, smelling like singed fur, and making it difficult to see them clearly. But I was sure that one had come from the head of each monster—was thrown out perhaps from its vulture-jaws. I afterwards found that these bats were the squids' *mock-souls*. Now that the Black Butterfly had reached me, the enemy knew they must actually risk something to defeat the Fairy Queen; and they were more willing to endanger their souls than their bodies. So they sent them out to fight for them. These *mock-souls* had some sort of voices when set free, but their best words were more shocking than even the worst language we ever use. Trystie was soon to hear some of their bestial thoughts.

Her song ended, the Black Butterfly rose in the air and sped to the level of Kraken's eyes, which now stood out from his head like round balls. The bats pursued her, and the rank stench of them seemed to me the hardest thing I had yet been called upon to bear. Still I watched and turned my lantern to this or that side, in front or behind, as was needed. In momentary glimpses I could see that the butterfly kept the bats at bay while she crept on her wings nearer to the monster's eyes, which were now rolling round and round to keep in view the doings of his friends. Suddenly I lost sight of my beautiful friend, and as suddenly the place was filled with sounds like hens' cluck-clucking laughter. Kraken's arms waved and twisted and shot straight at me with fresh vigour, his bracelets rattled, and the mock-souls sped round and round me in whirling speed. I knew these were signs of rejoicing and

knew what they must mean : Kraken or his mock-soul must have caught the butterfly !

There was now no doubt as to what I must do, if she was to be saved : Kraken must be tortured. I stood still before him, so that my light, now shining with dazzling brightness, gave the creature intolerable pain. Snaky arms came close about me from behind and slowly curled in front ; but Kraken's fell paralysed and hung limp about his head. Then for the first time I saw his hideous vulture-beak standing up in the midst of his arms. Others of the monsters had gripped me and were trying to pull me back, so as to free their chief from my attacking light. But the light had taken fast hold of Kraken, holding me immovable also, as if we were fastened together by a grappling-iron. I saw Kraken's beak suddenly open wide and the Black Butterfly rise upwards from it slowly, painfully ; and a black tongue, studded with teeth, shot after her. The breath was being squeezed out of my body. Things spun round me. Stars filled the air, and amongst them I saw in the distance a bevy of butterflies, looking like gold-red crosses, speeding away with a clucking swarm of the mock-souls after them. I knew that I had been just in time to save my winged friend, and that the Queen's ambulance corps had fetched her away. I was helpless, though still clear-headed enough to realize that these monsters were as well off without their souls as with them ! My last point of hope was that the archers would once again be sent to attack the arms that held me. Yet it did not seem now to matter what happened, because I knew that I was lovingly cared for ; and I would rather lose the battle fighting for my friends than win it any other way.

## CHAPTER XXII

The Great Battle of True Souls in Little Bodies against Mock Souls in Big Bodies. The Mock Souls attack Trystie and the Princess. The Battle is almost lost when Somebody brings help.

DURING my helpless plight events were going none too happily for my friends. I had hoped that other forces than the butterfly battalion would be summoned to help the Queen. But though on the hill-side we were in the centre of Fairyland, most of the inhabitants, fairies or lower animals, were somewhat indifferent to the obligations of their high station. They were wise enough to know that the goblin folk, in choosing to live in the deep valley at the bottom of the fairy hill, had departed for ever from the paths of fairy respectability ; yet, having but small love for their Queen, they feared they might get the worst of it if they had to fight for her. It seemed to be only those fairy folk who had souls bigger and stronger than their bodies who took part in the fight.[1] The terrible thing was this, that they were pitted against an enemy whose bodies were bigger and stronger than their souls. One might not be sure which side were the better equipped for mortal combat, though it was quite clear which would win in the immortal strife.

[1] These especially were the butterflies, whose only desire was to do their Queen's will, and the fairy people who were inspired to their work by some need larger than their understanding. It was these who built castles and cottages in simple obedience. Whether they would ever see the fulfilment of their devotion did not trouble their hearts.

I have no very definite account to give of the battle's plan or succession of events. I can tell only what I saw myself and what Trystie related to me afterwards.

The child told me how the first warning she had that something serious was a-doing outside the castle was the change of tone in the singing. It began to beat like marching, so that she felt she must be up and helping somebody. The baby too stopped her whimpering, and the butterflies sped away and left them alone. They flew out of the great hole and perched with upfolded wings on its broken edges. Then others came and stood guard over the children. The masons too were busier than ever; and Trystie felt sure that many baby-mermaids left their sweeping-chambers to take share in the work of carrying arrows and barbs to the butterflies. One great bastion could be seen from the nursery; it was covered all over by butterflies in regimental array, so that bands of rainbow colours seemed to hold the walls together. Constantly whole brigades would suddenly dart from the walls, their places being immediately filled by others from within. Trystie could not help thinking that the little sweeping mermaids were but the chrysalids of butterflies, and that their twisty tails opened into wings as soon as they were needed. But not one of the butterfly brigades ever came back—so far as Trystie could see.

Yet, in spite of the quick relays, before long the butterflies had all left the children. Then hundreds of small brown bats came fluttering nearer and nearer the castle walls, so that Trystie could scarcely see for the fog they exuded. One bat flew jerkily into the nursery. The baby screamed as if struck. Then dozens and hundreds followed. Trystie said she had begun to feel terrified just before this, but that

the cry made her so angry that she had no room for any fear. She felt she had just to hold tight the child and hold tight her little key. The bats swarmed about them, dancing zigzag up and down, so as to make it seem that the whole castle was floundering and falling and getting up again in jerks. The baby buried her face in Trystie's bosom, holding on to her frock as tightly as would a two-year-old. Trystie by this time had learned from the baby what sweet and good laughter meant, and she said the bats sang wicked things like sham laughing :—

" O ! clickety cluck
And clippety clap !
They're stickety stuck
Two brats in a trap !
Fe-ty, Fi-ty, Fo-ty fum,
A Trystie crust and a baby plum !

" O ! clickety cluck,
A stew and a fry—
It's lickety luck
For a lovely pie.
Fe-ty, Fi-ty, Fo-ty, fum,
A Trystie crust and a baby plum ! "

Whereat they all dropped on to the floor, and spun round on their tails. Then one of them wobbled forwards and spoke, though after every few words it put its head under its wing as though it couldn't help laughing in its sleeve, as the saying is :—

" We'll carry her off to their highness the squids ;
They'll play with her sweetly till hunger forbids ;
They'll cuddle her tight in their corkscrewy claws,
And tuck her quite safe in their motherly maws :
Unless, unless, my sweet pretty maid,
With the gift of thy choose-key Kraken is paid.

" We'll pinch your white arms till they're indigo-blue ;
Our counts with their skewers will riddle you through ;
They'll chop up your body, you long-hairy gaby,
And serve you with sobs of the pink little baby :
Unless, unless, my kind little maid,
With thy pearl of a key the debt be paid.

" O, you shall go free, but, fity-fo-fums !
The baby's big toes and her little pink thumbs
Shall garnish the dish of the prettiest pie
That ever could brighten a lidless eye :
Then let go the baby, and give up the key,
On the word of a mock-soul, *you* shall go free ! "

Then they took their jerky dancing in mid-air again.

At one moment Trystie was tempted to fling her key to them—so disgusting were they—on the bare chance of their keeping their word. But the baby clung so tightly that Trystie knew she could no more release her than her own hand which held the key. Then, too, she remembered her mother's warning not to give away this treasure even if somebody's life were promised in exchange.

The bats quickly realized that they could not cajole Trystie into giving up either the child or the key. They dropped their foolish antics and rhymes, and began the business they were sent for. In a thick grey cloud, smelling most evilly of singed hair, they tried to suffocate the two children by driving their own badness into the nostrils of their victims. Trystie at first wondered they did not bite or scratch ; but she soon realized that they were but very venomous souls, and could not attack living flesh except by using themselves as poison. She understood that she had only to avoid breathing the stench of their wings to prevent their harming her. She could not, however, make

the baby hold her breath. Moreover she was now in a deep sleep, and got so heavy that the brave child had to sit down. The floor seemed to swim up and down, and almost to tip her out at the great hole in the wall. The darkness got thicker, and Trystie could no longer keep the offensive singeing out of her nostrils. She felt too sick and sleepy to know what was happening; but she still held fast to the heavy baby in her arms and the little key in her hand, even after she had lost consciousness and fallen upon her back.

Meantime the counts triumphantly crawled out of their black hole. They moved by fixing their arms on anything above them, and using them like legs. The fresh air revived me, though I was squeezed in the coil of Kraken's arm, and I no longer saw shining before me the ghostly magic of my crook, which had heartened me in the cave. Clearly it was not his intention to kill me yet. I saw the great castle before me glowing in bands of rainbow colours wound round it, the colours being made of myriad butterflies. The monsters surrounded the castle completely, though each one took up his position behind a tree or a smaller castle for protection. The smaller castles were now shining very dimly, and the martial music seemed to come only from the Queen's own castle where my baby was. Kraken, who still held me, crept behind the coral tree; consequently I saw much of what was going on in the nursery. The coral tree did not give him much protection, but he was willing to risk his own safety, I think, to get first grab at the baby. I looked for all I was worth into the nursery, but could see only the swarm of brown bats fluttering in zigzag dance.

Then the battle began. Long arms shot out from all sides to strike the castle. Millions of arrows met them.

Howls, shocking and coward-like, filled the air. Then regiments and battalions fled from the castle and covered the slimy arms with rainbow colours. The butterflies quickly disappeared, though, as far as I could see, they never went back to the castle. Yet its walls were still covered with its gay and singing defenders in rainbow ranks. This mode of attack continued ; this mode of counter-attack was hardly varied ; and the battle raged with howls on the one side, sweet happy songs and martial hymns on the other.

Still held in Kraken's braceleted grasp, I looked down to the lowest part of the castle. Then I saw for the first time the great doors standing wide open and in front of them the Queen. So few of her bodyguard were about her that I could at last see her face. She looked up at me to give me courage, I think : it was a countenance too wonderful for words to tell.

But things were going badly in the fight. The howls were changing, gradually becoming more like horrid laughter. The butterflies were fewer. Yet they still sang devotedly, though the music was soon almost inaudible in the din. The Queen stood serene, though none of the enemy seemed to see her. Presently a great silver butterfly shot from her bosom and disappeared in at the great doors. The defenders of the walls were now so thinned in number that I could see right into the transparent castle ; I saw the silver butterfly rise through the great spiral stairway. As she flew in her ascent, the walls below her became covered once more ; but now with silver wings, so that the light was quite radiant again. The butterfly flew round and round, up and up, till she reached the nursery. Then the mock-souls fell away and clung to the walls, their heads hanging down in bat fashion.

I saw Trystie lying on her back, but holding fast the baby, who looked quite white and dead.

At the same moment that I saw these doings inside, the silver butterflies rushed from the castle walls and settled on the heads and over the lidless eyes of the monsters. The laughter ceased, the howling grew terrible again, and I was gripped till my bones cracked within me ; but my head was free, and I could still look around me to see whence help was coming next. I was sure it would come, because the Queen still stood serene, and was looking straight into my soul. Even though I thought that my baby was dead, I yet somehow knew that she and my wife and the boys and the million heroic butterflies were cared for, and that the battle was part of the everlasting need.

It now began to look as if the Queen's resources were nearing their end. The silver butterflies were fading away. The demon laughter again grew uproarious. The bats in the nursery left the walls and shadowed once more the children. The light grew dim ; the doors of the castle were shut ; the Queen was gone. I thought the great transformation, which we call death, was come upon me and mine.

But a new sound rang out above the vile laughter. It was sharp, commanding, full of assurance. It was repeated right below me. Kraken shivered. I looked down. Then light appeared about the foot of the coral tree—a silvery light. It seemed to be coming up the tree—swarming up the rough stairway, often stopping dead as if something got in its way ; sometimes slipping back and starting afresh. Could it—could it be Curdie? No, there was a long straight tail behind it ; it couldn't be my dear tailless dog. Yet the tail was so straight and got so

queerly in the creature's way! It even caught in the branches, so that its owner had much ado to get up at all. But he did come, and it wasn't a tail, but a long straight stick he carried in his mouth. It *was* my Curdie. And O yes, blessed, blessed dog! he had found and brought my Magic Crook—perhaps yet in time! Its iron glistered as I had never known it to shine before. With utmost care he crawled along the branch to which I was tethered by the thin end of the arm twisted round it. When Curdie reached the arm, it shivered and began to loosen, so that I breathed more easily. I wrenched my right arm free; I patted his head for one moment and took the crook as he wagged his hind quarters so wildly that he nearly fell off the smooth branch. Then he set his teeth with an angry growl into the scaly flesh of Kraken's arm. Instantly it uncoiled and shot straight into the air, Curdie holding fast with his teeth. I caught the branch with my left hand just in time, and as instantly flung up the crook in my right to lay hold of something. It caught the horrid arm, held for one moment, and then cut straight through it!

The next moment we were all on the ground, Curdie wrestling with the arm, which writhed like a snake. The great squid had not one drop of blood in him—only black smoke, which instantly rushed away as if driven by a fierce wind. With one terrific hiss, as if water had been thrown into a fiery pit, Kraken fell on his side. Four of his arms doubled under him, the other three still twisted in corkscrew agonies, and the amputated eighth had Curdie's teeth set fast in it. Then I saw the squid's vulture-beak set itself viciously into the ground, as if glutting itself with a last bite of revenge upon the bosom of Mother Earth. He died quickly, opened his beak wide, and rolled over.

Then there flew to him, back from the castle, his own mock-soul. It crept into the open beak—and nothing more happened that I could see either to the huge abominable body or its little evil-smelling mock-soul.

But the arm I had cut off had now got Curdie in a tight-curled vice, and the poor dog was crying to me for help, though his teeth were still fast in the snaky thing. I laid the iron of my crook on the thickest part of the coil. It fell in two pieces, which, untwisting themselves, vanished into the earth, leaving the gold bracelets on the ground. Curdie lay on his side, and I thought his back was broken. But a corps of red-cross butterflies rushed upon him and covered him for ten seconds. Then they sped away. Curdie got up again, stretched himself, shook himself, yawned as if very tired, and then sat up on his hind legs, begging to carry my crook. I gave it to him, and he immediately leapt again, full of his happy life.

Then I had time to examine my own condition. I was none the worse except that I had lost my boots. I think the coil of the beast's arm must have torn them off at the last untwisting. Perhaps he devoured them, thinking that, after all, he had got a bite of me!

But the greater part of our work was yet to be done. The other monsters were slowly crowding upon us, their arms lashing about in fury. Directly they came near enough the fight began. My lantern would have kept the enemy off me but for their blind rage. As the arms were shot down at us one after another, my crook just cut them off. Curdie seized each as it fell—but dropped it again instantly: he had learned his lesson, and one bite was enough. The arms wriggled away and disappeared in the earth. Body after body of the monsters fell with a hiss like blasphemy.

Every one of them set his jaws into the earth and bit the dust; to each, the moment he was dead, flew back his own mock-soul to be devoured. Thus I felt sure the bats were one by one leaving the two children, perhaps yet in time. Yet what became of the arms that wriggled away like snakes and buried themselves I never knew till many years afterwards. It was Trystie and Kit that found out all about them.

I cannot say how many of the monsters we slew. We had no help from the butterflies: the work was such as Curdie and the crook and I alone could accomplish. Yet my lantern was so powerful that its rays were shot forth like blows, cutting holes out of the darkness to let us see the hideous things within it. All through the long night we fought. Curdie and I were worn out. My lantern went out. Yet there was light in plenty—more, indeed, than came from Curdie's ruff, now torn and hanging about him like any unkempt sheep dog's. It was not yet morning: the music and light were rising again in the castle.

There was but one more thing to do: we must fetch away the bodies of the two children from the castle, where they could not be wanted now.

Every cottage was now shining brightly again. The great hole in the walls of the Queen's castle was nearly mended. New turrets were bravely reaching out, and fresh crystal roses were springing from their angles. The singing now was all about things I could not understand. But once more the Black Butterfly came to us—now full of deep strong colour, her wings grandly sweeping, because she was happy in a great thing accomplished. Again she sang:—

" If the light of his lantern has dwindled,
The darkness has died away,
New stars in his heart are kindled,
For the shepherd has won his day.

" The strength of his life is uplifted,
For his hand has slain the old fears ;
The storm into sunrise has drifted,
And the night has forgotten its tears.

" The glow of the humble crook's serving
Now reigns in the soul of the man ;
His lantern now swings, without swerving,
Up aloft from the rainbow's span.

" The fear and the gloom and the quaking
Lie buried with skull and bone :
The daisies and Downs are upwaking,
For the Wind cannot leave them alone."

. . . . . .

" O Shepherd ! thy magic crook leads thee
To the mystic stair thou must tread :
Each step is the next thing that needs thee—
The means of thy daily bread.

" And thy bread is the joy of thy dearest—
The little uplifted eyes,
The strong arms of her thou art nearest,
And love, thy unmerited prize.

" For ever, the stairway ascending,
Thou risest above the slave ;
And ever, each broke thing amending,
Thou breakest the bonds of the grave."

We ran—and I know I began to sing as I ran, though I

could not tell why, and, unlike my wife, I am not a person for songs. We reached the further side of the castle. There I found the gates standing open, and the Queen waiting for us. Her countenance was again hidden; but something far keener of sight than my eyes saw through the veil of living colours. That something, I truly believe, was a new light in my heart. It saw her beauty and the meaning of it, face to face. Neither have since left me, but will become, I am sure, clearer and truer, as the years pass through me, every time I look into my wife's blue eyes, or upon a pool of bluebells or up into the deep blue sky on a May morning.

The Queen was holding open one of the two gates. I knelt beside her with bowed head. Curdie sat up on his hind-legs and lifted his two fore-paws before him. In that minute I think the Queen's hands were laid upon my head. I raised it to look at her. She was gone. The stairway rose before us. Each step glowed as if built of rainbow flames, and its surface waved like a cornfield when the wind passes over it. The ascent took no time to accomplish—only some period of eternity. We were led by that stairway into the nursery, though the stair still went upwards. The children lay sleeping with a smile upon their faces as if they were wide awake somewhere. Trystie was holding my baby close to her with her left arm, her hand lightly grasping the nightgown below and behind the little one's bent knees, as if to ensure its safety while they were asleep. I could see no fairy nurses or butterflies with them; but, as we entered, the singing began to sound all about us, growing quickly louder and more harmonious, so that Trystie was awakened. She sprang to her feet, still holding the little one in her left arm and clutching the nightgown.

Her right hand was tightly closed ; and I knew it was because she still held her choose-key that the baby and herself were unharmed. I often wonder how the day would have gone with me and Curdie, if she had been less faithful to the trust that had been put into her hand and her heart.

Trystie showed no surprise at seeing us : she just smiled for one moment with a tender, motherly sweetness and yet with a look of sadness that could not lessen her sureness in what she was to do. She came towards me, as if she were not yet quite awake. She looked up at me, then hugged the baby closer and kissed the little mouth, then gave me back my own. I took the baby. Again we went up the stair together, I with the little one, still sleeping, held to my bosom ; Trystie beside me with her left hand holding fast the nightgown, her right the starry key ; and Curdie faithfully at our side, carrying the blessed crook.

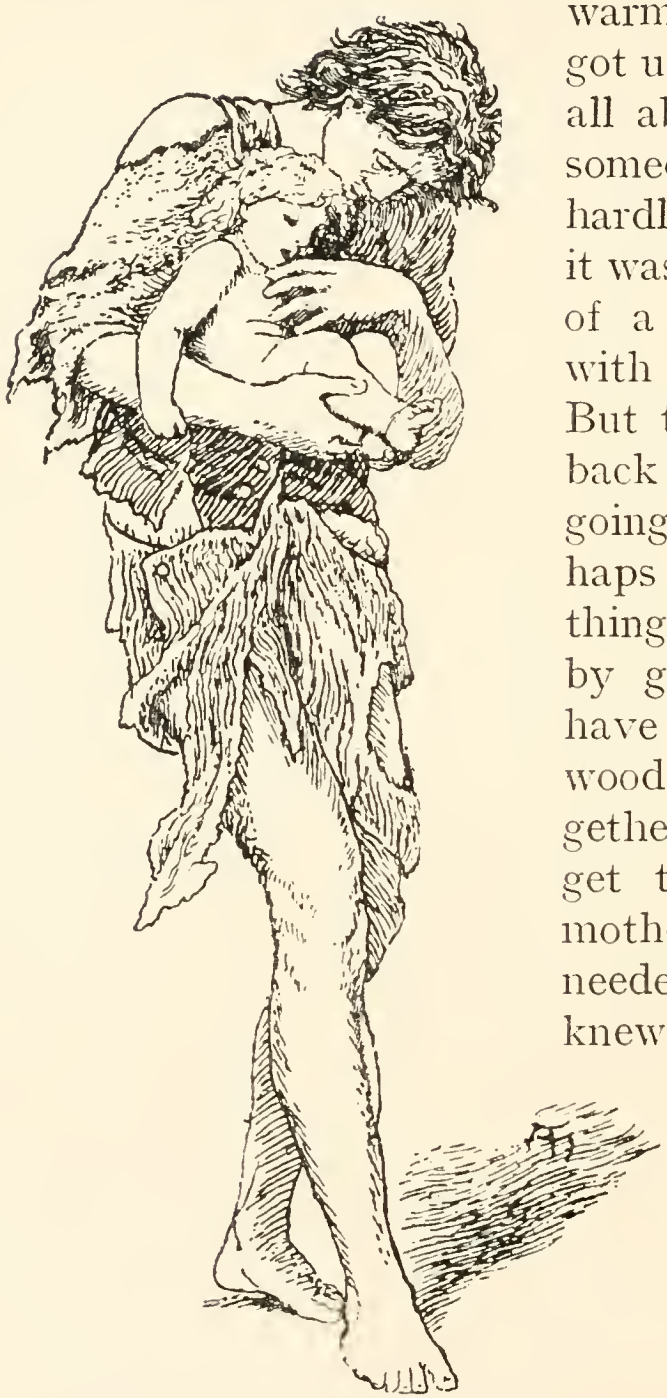
How long or how high we went up that stairway, I do not know. I am not yet quite sure that we are not still going up its fairy steps, all the others with us, and the sheep with their bells and the cattle with their horns and the larks singing songs above us.

* * * * * *

I opened my eyes. I was lying on the carpet of bluebells in the aisle of the green cathedral built of beech trees. It was again the very early morning. The baby was in my arms. Curdie sat close by us, the crook at his feet.[1] The nightgown was safe upon the child and her necklet of pearly shells ; but the red coral was gone. I thought the little one

[1] From that time Curdie always sat quite close to me : a thing he would curiously never do before our journeys into Fairyland.

must be cold, but found both hands and feet were quite warm. She was fast asleep. I got up in a moment, but looked all about us for something or someone we needed. I could hardly remember what or who it was. I had a curious feeling of a poignant sadness mixed with an overwhelming joy. But the sadness meant going back somewhere, the gladness going forwards. Then I perhaps understood that all good things lost will be found again by going onwards. I would have stayed to search the woods and my memory together; but I knew I must get the baby home to her mother quickly—both of us needed her so badly! Yet I knew I was leaving something, someone, behind whom we could not do without. I knew also that no going back can be managed anyhow by those who have left fear behind them. But, for the life of me, I could not think how I had come up on to the Downs with the baby—and with only her nightgown on her!



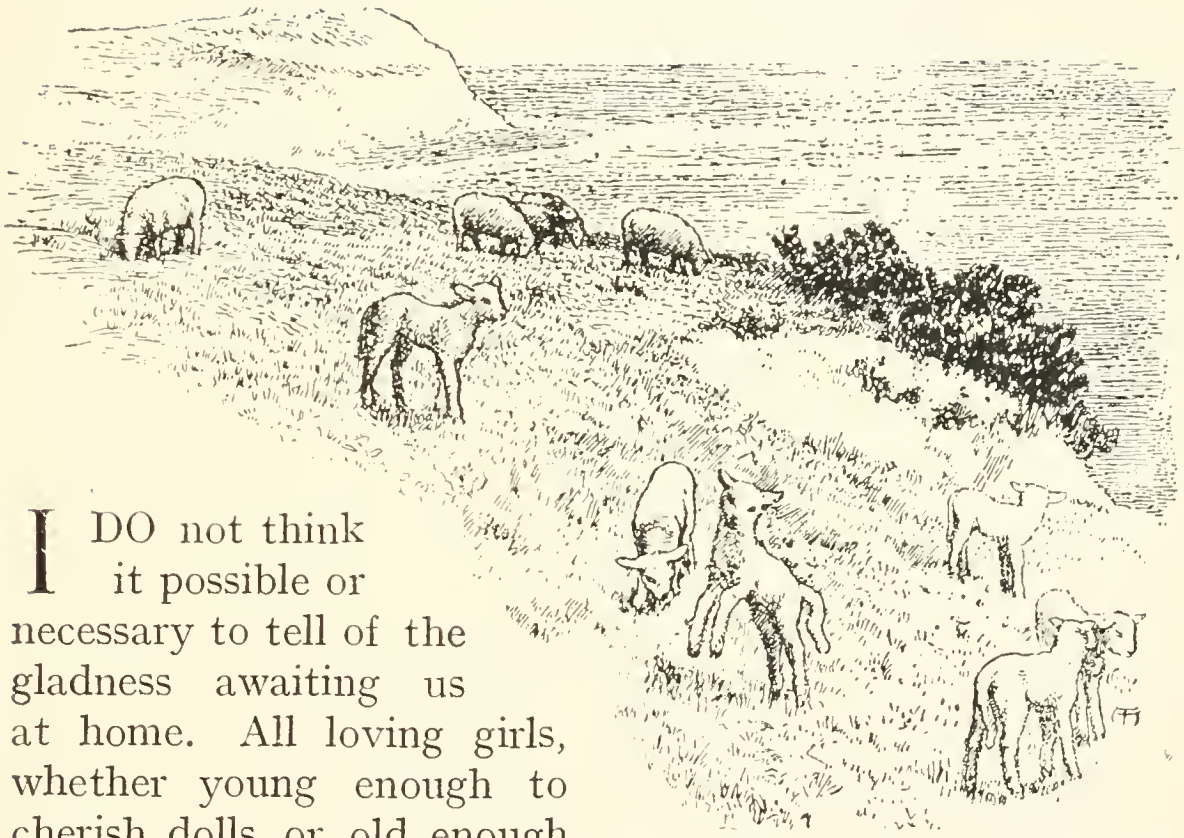
I took off my smock with some difficulty because of its tattered state, and wrapped it about the child. Then I set off running.

Soon I saw lying beneath us the home I love so well and the dear land that gives us labour and fellowship and bread. In the east was the risen sun, towards the west a distant storm of rain ; between them, with one foot set somewhere behind my own homestead, stood a glorious rainbow.

How glad the whole world was ! How Curdie's ruff shone in the sunshine, and my crook, and the necklet of pearly shells ! But how the baby had come by this necklet I could not remember, though somehow I knew it was her own and utterly precious.

# CHAPTER XXIII

The last and best.



I DO not think it possible or necessary to tell of the gladness awaiting us at home. All loving girls, whether young enough to cherish dolls or old enough to have real babies of their own,. will feel what it was like. But boys, who are not quite so clever in these ways, will want to be told ; or if they don't they ought.

Some minutes before we got through the coomb in front of the farm, the mother came running to us. Somehow she knew. With never a word—one look from her eyes gave me my welcome—she took her child from me still wrapped

in my tattered smock. Finding the little hands and feet were now icy cold, she quickly wrapped her dress all about the baby. Then she ran home with her. Curdie ran after, leaping and barking in wildest glee. He had dropped the crook for me to take, and I followed close behind them.

No one was yet about in the house but Kirstie, as it was barely five o'clock. She also knew somehow what was a-doing, and had hot water and the bath all waiting. The little Princess, the moment her mother got indoors, woke up and began to crow as if just out of her usual happy sleep. It took but a few seconds to get a warm blanket about her, and very few more to bath her, give her milk and tuck her up in her cot. There she very soon fell asleep again ; and so naturally that her mother lost all fear for her safety. She would not take the pearly necklet from the little throat. Indeed, there is no fastening to it. We doubt if it ever will come off.

Perfectly happy now, the mother ran down—she has the lightest of feet !—to me, waiting in the parlour for my turn. She hardly saw what rags I was in, though even my shirt was in ribbands. We had many things to tell before a tattered shirt and bare feet had any importance. At present, however, the only news I could give her were told by my rags and my rather gaunt frame. She said I had lost every ounce of fat, but looked strong and well and as though some weight had been taken off my soul for ever. Indeed, she wept for the joy of getting me home ; and then, seeing how I ate everything she put before me—a whole loaf of brown bread, a great coil of her golden butter, and the creamiest milk I ever tasted—she put her head down on the deal table and wept yet again ! But for the present I had

no memory of my adventures. I knew that everything would come back to me when the stars were shining ; and my wife waited for it contentedly.

I wanted to get into sound clothes before the boys saw me. But their mother was for fetching them as soon as I had eaten, because she would have them realize, she said, the terrible work and fight their daddy had gone through to bring Baby Susan home again. She was quite sure, she said, they were awful beasts I had fought, because of the extraordinary marks all over the crook, though its iron was wonderful in its polish and shimmering light.

So the boys came down to me in the parlour, each holding his pet in his arms, and looking just as I had last seen them when singing their hymn around the baby's cot. This I remembered perfectly. Kit dropped his cub and just rushed at me : he flung his arms round my legs and buried his face, as if to ensure my never going away again. Davie began pulling at me to go and see the new litter of pigs. Robin began to howl because, I suppose, he hardly knew me in my torn clothes. But soon there was the jolliest rampage of kissings and laughings and dancings on one leg ! Throughout that day the farm was the happiest place in all the big world. The only being in it who behaved as though things were quite ordinary was the Princess. To one person, nevertheless, there was in the background of his heart—that part of him where memory lay, for the time being, fast asleep—a veil of sadness ; a sadness, however, softened by the constant expectation of its withdrawal. My wife, too, knew that some unexplained anxiety was there ; for often at our happiest moments, I would rise suddenly and go to the door or window, as if looking over the Downs for someone.

"What is it, dearest Shepherd, what is it?" she would ask me wistfully.

"Something, someone, I have lost: something that needs us; someone, I think, who gave Baby to me. But I don't quite know what I mean."

Then she looked at me in a twofold anxiety, half of it, perhaps, in a moment's pale fear that I would be away again to someone in Fairyland who could help me better than she could; half that my wits were wandering. But then immediately the rosy light crept over her face again, and she said to me:

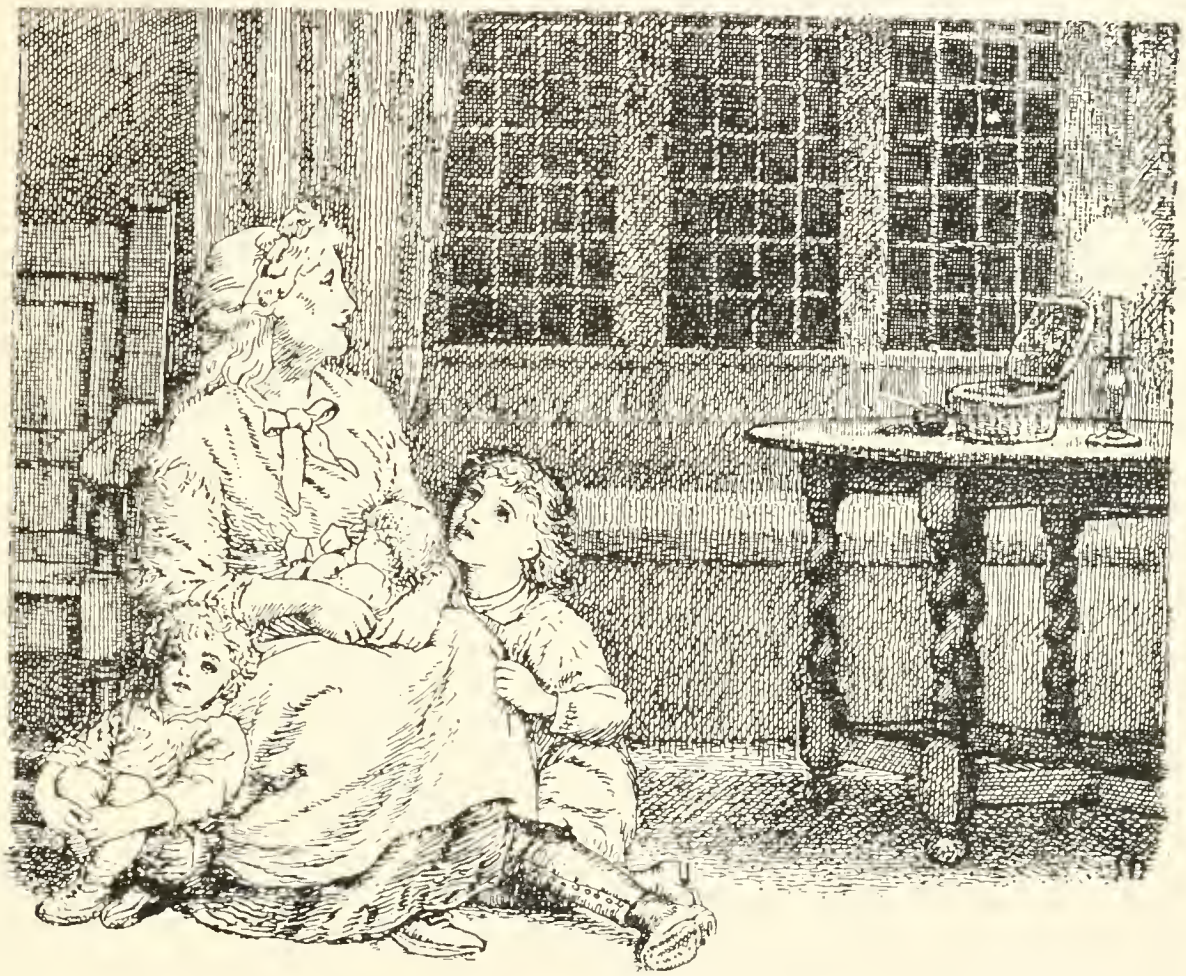
"That Someone must be quickly found, Shepherd! I shall help if I can—and may. I will wait and never fret till you can remember everything."

After supper that evening—and the boys were allowed to stay up for it—we two walked up to the Downs and found the beech wood with the sweet-scented bluebell waters. The sun set and the evening star twinkled through the twilight and the young green of the beeches. Then in a flash I remembered that someone was left behind on a rainbow stairway. I even thought I heard her crying. I seemed to see her sitting with her arms clasping her knees, her head bowed on to them, her left hand folded over her right which tightly held something. I ran to the edge of the wood to see the star more clearly. But a black cloud, looking like a tower with several rickety spires on its summit, swept across and hid it. I put my arm quickly round my wife's waist:

"We must get home quickly, quickly!" I said. "I have remembered something—we must get home, I know."

Silently and swiftly we went down the hill again and straight home. The door stood open, and we heard Kirstie's

low crooning voice which she always used when telling the children her fairy stories. We crept into the chimney corner without disturbing them, and sat down to wait for what would come. Kirstie was seated on the low creepie-stool looking over the hills towards the last remnants of



sunset. Kit and Davie were sitting on a rush-mat in front of her, their heads resting on her knees; Robin was fast asleep in her lap. She was rocking to and fro just a little and as if keeping time with her crooning chant. She was ending some tale or talk as we came in, with these words:

"An' the fairy folk have as good a richt to their ain bairn as her ain mither."

Then Kit's voice piped in very slow and thoughtful:

"Kirstie, I *know* Baby was there and here at the same 'dentical time, but I can't, I can't *understand* she was."

"An' I would na have ye *understand* it, my doo (*dove*)," answered Kirstie, sympathetic with Kit's difficulty, "sae lang as ye mind that guid bairnies canna help but find themsel', noo an' awa', in twa places at ance, or, mebbe, twa-three (*more than two*). A laverock (*lark*), ye ken, has twa braw wings; and sae 'tis easy to unnerstan' his ubeequity: his hert will be in the wee nestie, his boady will be scrievin' (*gliding swiftly*) in the caller lift (*the fresh sky*), an' his een will be cannily (*gently*) blinkin' afore his maister, the muckle sun. An' that's mair nor an auld wifie's claivers (*nonsense*). Sae, by ilka rizzon (*every reason*), ye hae no need to speir (*ask*) how a bairnie, wi' a cantraip (*spell*) upon her, can be in her ain bit cradle an' her ain fairy lan' thegither. The hale warld 'ld be a bit sweeter gin it had wings to cairry 't oop till the douce (*wise*) Kingdom aboon us a', just when it's maist tied doon to the grousum (*loathsome*) pit aneath us. Dinna fash (*trouble*) yer heid (head) aboot it, ma bairnie."

"But, Kirstie dear," persisted Kit, who seemed always to think that troubling his head about things was as good an occupation for a boy as digesting his dinner, "if the fairies are good, why *do* they be kind to themselves when it's unkind to us?"

"Kit, my bairn," she answered very solemnly, "naething *they* could do til us would be ill, gin we war aye kin' to the bairnies. An' the maist onkind thing a mither can do is to fleg (*frighten*) the wee fairy folk awa' when they forgather in the gloamin' (*twilight*). They hae, I tell ye, ilka richt

til their ain. Gin yer douce father wad plant twa-three rowan-trees (*mountain ashes*) afore the hoose, the fairies would na be fashed ony mair to come at their ain, ohn (*without*) snoovin' (*sneaking*) an' reavin' (*stealing*)."

"But, Kirstie dear," again persisted Kit; but his question never found utterance. It was now quite dark, and the children ought to have been in their beds long ago. The evening star was peeping very curiously in at the west window; and once again, as my wife described it, the room seemed both too small to hold us, and yet as if embracing all downland. Kit's question was, in fact, stopped by a soft sobbing outside the house. His mother ran to the door and looked into the night. I followed and took up my crook which was standing in the porch.

Curdie was sitting outside quite still looking at something, his ruff shining like moonshine. By its light we saw just beyond the porch the figure of a child, squatting on the brick path. Her knees were clasped in her arms, her head bowed upon her knees, her left hand folded over her right, which was tightly closed. Some faint memory took hold of me—was this some child who long ago had given me back the baby?

My wife went up to her, stooped low and lifted her head—she has that gentle strong hand which, I think, is found only in women who work. The child rose quickly. She was shivering with cold, bare-footed, bare-headed, but with a whole headful of straight dark hair falling all about her and down to her knees. The mother led her into the parlour, where Kirstie had now lit a candle. The child's eyes were open and had been weeping, but they seemed to see nothing.

"What is it, little one?" asked my wife, holding her to

her side and stroking her hair. "Where are you come from? Where is your mother?"

But the child slipped down on to the floor and started crying afresh. Kit went up to her and put his arms about her:

"Are you hungry? Are you an orphan? Our Mother and our Daddy and Kirstie and Curdie love orphans —all of them!"

But still she wept as though her young heart were quite broken. Kirstie brought her some milk, and tried by gently patting her shoulders to make her drink it. I stood beside her also, feeling utterly stupid and puzzled, but keeping hold upon my crook. Then I put my hand upon the little girl's head. The sobbing ceased and she looked up at me. I put my other hand round her with the crook still in it, and lifted her up.

"Wife," I said, with sudden conviction, yet not knowing why I said it, "let us take her to see the Princess."

Upstairs the three of us went softly. The boys followed with Kirstie, who held the candle. Curdie came behind, bringing moonshine with him.

No sooner were we in the nursery than the stranger child seemed to be at home. She went straight to the manger-like cot and dropped on her knees beside it. Then, as if unaware of our presence, she turned down the coverlet, touched the little necklet of shells, and felt her nightgown. It seemed as if she was then satisfied, because, as we afterwards thought, her beloved baby was safe at home again and keeping what she had brought with her from Fairyland. Careful not to wake her, she just kissed ever so lightly the little hand that the baby had thrust outside her coverings when her necklace was touched. The stranger child still

moved as if in a dream, but I could not see whether her eyes were open or shut. She then went towards the door, as if she did not belong to us.

Curdie then came straight in front of me. His eyes shone like big stars. He stood quite still, and looked into my eyes.

"Wife, wife!" I called out, "keep her. I know now. It is—it is—it is—yes—Trystie—who kept the wicked mock-souls off baby all through the awful battle, and gave her to me again safe and sound. It was Trystie I had to find but could not. So she has found us!"

Then my wife took the child in her arms to hug her again and again.

But Trystie could never tell us how she had found her way to us. That mattered nothing, because she never wanted to leave us.

The first clear starlit night after our home-coming I went up on to the Downs with Curdie and my crook and remembered everything. Then I began writing these adventures, continuing the task on every such night as often as it came. Often my wife came too, and sometimes Kit and Trystie with her. Then it was that Kit's questionings made Trystie

remember many of the things I have here set down. It was also when with Kit that she knew she must some day make her way back to the Goblin City and find for all the quenched children their choose-keys. Kit made up his mind to go with her, and never forgot it.

Her own key Tristie cherishes. Her right hand is always tightly closed when she has no work for it to do. No one of us has ever seen her key.

Trystie is our own child always. She wonders whether the baby's mother has not always been her own. Once she began to ask her about the four little eggs and the furry worms that found her key for her. But she stopped short in her questioning with the far-away look in her eyes.

Curdie is a happier dog than ever. The crook shines whenever it is needed. Baby's necklet of pearly shells is still about her neck, and seems to grow bigger so as to keep pace with its owner. "Twa-three" mountain ashes now thrive in the hedge before our garden, and I hope the fairies find playmates in the nursery whenever they are tired of spinning and weaving starlight.

# POSTSCRIPT

(For the parents only)

IF the Philosophers are right when they tell us that Beauty is the expression of Truth, we may be sure that all good imagery has like office. More than this, the poetic becomes the only way of telling certain things too deeply true for logic to compass or for the text-book to explain.

In the preceding pages the attempt is made to present certain truths commonly missed in school-book relation. The story is told of the sponge-colony's life in such device that, although the bare facts may be incorrect according to the merely scientific standard, the child should gain a truer insight into the mystery of life's unity than the biologist pretends to fathom. To some who love children it seems more important to let them feel the magic of truth than to demonstrate facts independently of such magic. No one need fear that truth will invite contempt of facts; but there is abundant evidence that vulgar scholarship does blind the imaginative vision of things told only to the heart. A modern child of seven once declared to the writer that he did not like *The Jungle Book*: it was "too awfully fairy!" The sweet pea is more important than Mendelism; and in these days of schoolroom science it is necessary to discover to the child the fairy who, he will not unwillingly believe, dwells therein.

As the sponge-inhabitants once revealed to the writer, thanks to the teaching of the great Huxley, the secret of a mystic Purpose in their humble lives, so, as years passed, it became clear to him—as indeed to multitudes of others—that human life without its transcendental Purpose, however little accredited, must lead to disaster. The description given in the story of those fairy palaces which are known in natural history as glass-sponges (e.g. *Euplectella aspergillum*, etc.) is wholly consistent with the writer's desire for truthful relation. After the little inhabitants have arranged their bodies in the precise places required for building the walls, they give up their lives and turn their bodies into glass. Others, lining the walls of certain little chambers, spend their time in sweeping food and building-material through them into the deeper parts of the palace to serve unknown fellow-workers. Some yet again devote themselves to motherhood, or to service as messengers, scavengers and watchers. All of these specialized duties are done without limbs or sense-organs or nervous system. Such doings can be explained only on the imaginative supposition that the little servants are inspired thereto by some impersonal consciousness of the palace's design and purpose; in which they are profoundly concerned—even though they may never enjoy the fulfilment of their labours. These things are facts; yet they are aglow with a mystic truth which it seems all important that the child should not miss, and which must therefore be told as best it can.

It appeared also that this story of the Fairy Village could not be related truly, in its bearing upon the even greater mystery of human life, without the narrative of the Goblin Town. Much of the latter, necessarily satire, will probably and quite rightly have been *skipped* by any who found it difficult,

though it will perhaps be accepted by older children, and some of their elders, as essential in the fairy tale.

The writer trusts his accuracy will not be impugned whenever he has dealt with simple realities. The description of the animal play in Chapter XIII is substantially correct. An account of the provision made by vixens for the entertainment of their cubs is found in Mr. W. H. Hudson's delightful book, *A Shepherd's Life* (1910), p. 120, where also may be found a description of fox-cubs and rabbits playing together. Prince Kropotkin, in his important work, *Mutual Aid* (1902), tells us (p. 46) of a fox taking a hare for playmate. To both authorities the writer would express his indebtedness. The child's adventure with the weaned lamb in Chapter III is based on personal observation.

FINIS

MACDONALD Greville. FAN

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