

## THE TERRIBLE RED DWARF AND THE CAVE HE LIVED IN.



OW I am sure that you must be wondering why the people did not rise up against this cruel Dwarf and put an end to him and his wicked ways. Farmer Hasty had burnt out my very a wasp's nest; why in the world did he not take a wisp of straw to this cave and set a light to it and kill the Dwarf and all his swarm? Or Jack, the widow's son, who was as brave and strong and active as his namesake the Giant-killer—why did he not take his stout stick and lay it about the Dwarf and all his band until they promised to behave themselves? Or Harry, the clever carpenter; why, with a couple of boards and half-a-dozen screws he could have shut up that Dwarf and all belonging to him, couldn't he? What were all the people about? And you wonder if this can *really* be a true story.

Ay, ay, good readers, it is all true enough, and nothing of it is truer than this, that Farmer Hasty, and young Jack, and clever Harry, and all the villagers *might* each have done a great deal. But it is true, too, that they didn't. *Why* they didn't is the real wonder of the world: the great mystery that men have been puzzling their-heads about for hundreds of years. I wonder now if *you* know anybody who *might* always be good, and kind, and pleasant, and unselfish? And it is so nice to be all this; it makes everybody so happy. Then why doesn't that somebody be so? Farmer Hasty, and young Jack, and Harry ask you, Why not? And what do *you* say?

"O, but shutting up a tiny dwarf like this is so different from being kind and pleasant, and is so much easier, too!"

Not so very different, as you will find out if you have ears to hear my story, and eyes to see its meaning.

Yes, they might have done a great deal, I have said. But all of them put together could not shut up that Dwarf. As for fire, he was a very Salamander, and delighted in it. Nor could any beams of timber fasten him in. Chains could no more hold him than the green withs could hold Samson. Cudgels and blows only set him going on worse than before. The old, wise men who had lived longest in the place said that the only thing was to leave him alone, and to keep out of his way as well as you could. There was no cure, they said. He had plagued the land ever since they could remember, and in their fathers' time before

them. He was hundreds of years old, and would live, they knew, for years to come. So there was no hope of getting rid of him anyhow. And as to curing him of his bad ways, they shook their heads and said that it was a thing that many great and wise men had tried their hands at, but the Dwarf was just as bad as ever. They had bribed and flattered him—they had threatened and abused him; but there he lay in his cave, not caring a bit for any of them, ready to break out in a minute with his swarms and their spears and firebrands.

But the old wise men of the place did not know all about it. That must be the next chapter of my story.

### CHAPTER III.

AWAY in the interior of the country in which all this happened there lived a mighty King. He was the one of whom I told you at the beginning; the one person in all the realm who was stronger than the Dwarf. The fact was that the Dwarf, terrible as he was, could only do what this King bade him. He was the King's slave, and such a slave was he that he could do nothing for himself but by the King's leave; could not even think for himself or speak for himself. So that the mischief he got credit for was not his fault; he really could not help himself. It was all this mighty King. When the stinging hosts flew out with arrow and spear it was the great King that set them a-going. Night and day the Dwarf had to wait for his Majesty's order and could do nothing at all but what his Royal Master commanded.

Now it chanced that one day one of the old, wise men of the village happened to find a strange and wonderful Book that explained to him very many mysteries over which he pored as he sat at his work. It was a very old book, printed in strange old type, and with strange old pictures. It was bound in dark brown leather, somewhat worm-eaten, and was held together by a great brass clasp. The shoemaker had picked it up at a bookstall in the neighbouring market town, but little guessing what a treasure it would prove to him. It was 'a *Book of Magic*,' that told him all the secrets of life,—how to be rich, and how to be wise,—how to kill your enemies, and how to rule countries. Then it told the fortunes of people, what they would come to—how poor folks might become princes, and very paupers might come to live in a palace. It was 'a *Book of Fate*,' too, that foretold all that should happen years hence.

(To be Continued.)