

Boys and Girls.

[For the 'Northern Messenger.'

The Castle of Dipso in the Land of the Stulti.

By John Underhill.

There is a Fairy Land that lies far away beyond mortal ken; a land of wonders far surpassing the visions of Arabian Nights; a land of beings far more extraordinary than those met with by Gulliver; a land of mysteries, beside which all that Rip Van Winkle beheld in Stoney Hollow would seem mere fable; a land of histories, where the real and the ideal blend, like the day and the night in the grey of twilight; a land where tales are told that not even the venturesome Baron Munchausen would have dared to relate. To the fairy land I would invite the young; and when from out its mass of legends I have chosen and unfolded one for them, I desire that they store it away in

of the Dismal Swamps,' we must leave behind us:—

'The dark tarn of Auber,
And the misty, mid-region of Weir,'
into which, with Psyche, his soul, poor Poë once travelled,
'In his most immemorial year.'

I will tell the story I have chosen in the language of one who lived in that land, who knew its people, and who visited many times the grim Castle of Dipso. I met him by the sea shore one bright summer evening; he was a lonely man and walked slowly to and fro for long hours; like 'Eugene Aram,' he seemed to avoid all human society, and like the 'Prisoner of Chillon,' his hair was grey, but not with years. I pitied the young-old man in his solitary sadness; so, with a desire to cheer him, I joined in his walk. At first he seemed anxious to avoid me, but finally seeing that I intended

to send me to school. It was several miles from our peaceful home to the place where school was kept; two roads led thither. Strange to say, I was only shown one of these roads; it was a narrow and winding

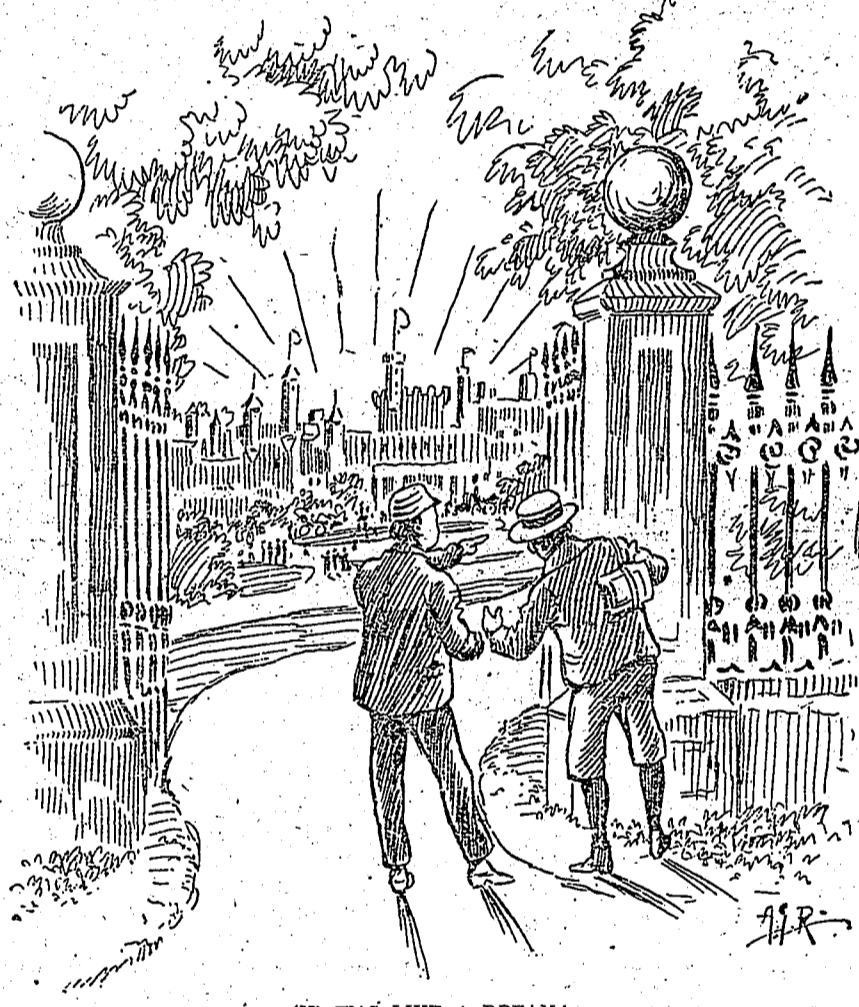


path through the woods, very lonely, but gaily bedecked with flowers and crossed, here and there, by little silver streams. The other was seemingly a wider, more travelled, and (as I thought) a shorter way. Yet for several years I went and came by the sylvan path, and although I used to hear my companions at school talk about the fine residences, the gay scenes along the highway, still I never once disobeyed my parents, but kept to my little flower-strewn woodland path. So often had I gone and returned by my own way that it seemed to me as if the blue birds in the bushes and the rooks in the tall elms knew me, and knowing my hours, were always prepared to welcome me with their twitter or their loud cawing; the nimble squirrel would hop along the branches and as I went by, perched away above me, with a nut between his tiny paws and his bushy tail over his back, would chatter a salutation; the hare would make a few zig-zag leaps from my path, and from a mossy knoll, seated upon his long hind legs, wagging his pointed ears, would watch me with his little black eyes; all nature, animate and inanimate, afforded me companions and friends, and I enjoyed their company as I never since enjoyed that of other beings.

Curiosity! thou sly deceiver; how many and many hast thou not led astray and lured to destruction! One day I asked a school-fellow to tell me about the famous Dipso Castle, for I loved—like all children—the wonderful, and I had heard much of late about this strange place. He looked at me in real astonishment, and merely replied that I must know as much as he did about it, since I had to pass it daily on the highway going home. I then informed him that I never yet had come or gone by the highway. At this piece of news he was still



more surprised; and, then and there, he proposed that we should return that evening by the main road, and he would point me out the grand ivory and gilded doors, the



— 'IT WAS LIKE A DREAM.'

their memories, and that years hence, when they become men—and I shall be forgotten—they will recall the story of the Castle of Dipso, and repeat it for their children. Perchance they may now be amused with this quaint tale of the Stulti people; then, most assuredly, they will be able to solve it as a problem and read it with the spectacles of life's experience instead of the wondering eyes of childhood's imagination.

To tell them who the inhabitants of that fairy land are would be useless; suffice to say that their name is legion, and that they are of all ages, creeds, colors, sizes and sexes—just as the people of any country we know, America we will say—and they are called, why, I cannot tell, the 'Stulti.' For the children that land is far, far away; and it is to be hoped that—save in the pages of story—they may never know it. May their path never lead to the great, grand, gloomy Castle of Dipso! For the others, that invisible land, that ghoul-like people, and that many-chambered castle, are all nearer than they think. To go down to that region we must now pass by the 'Lake

no intrusion, he allowed me to keep him company. By degrees we became more confidential, and at last, seated on a rock, with the tide plashing at our feet, the sea-breeze bestirring our hair, the sun slowly setting in the west, the moon calmly rising in the east, immensity above us, immensity around, he told me—in that deep, solemn tone of his, a tone once heard never to be forgotten, the following story of the 'Land of the Stulti and the haunted Castle of Dipso.'

THE LONE MAN'S STORY.

When I was a boy—thus spake the storyteller—I lived with my parents, father and mother, and one sister, in a pleasant little cottage situated amidst lofty, grand, old woods and by the shore of a mirror-like lake, in a land that you have never seen and which I shall never revisit. Few were our neighbors and fewer my young companions. My first education was imparted to me by my mother; but when I grew older and began to pass from childhood to what may be called youth, my good parents resolved