

mind not been set with all its faculties to catch the fairy song. Then the fairy who stood in the middle waved her wand and the little song rose up scarcely louder than the voice of the midges, yet so distinct that Hans Fingerhut's frog-ears caught every word of it. This was the song they sang—the song of the water drops; for Hans used often to repeat it afterwards, and all the good children in the town knew it well :—

By silent forest and field and mossy stone
We come from the wooded hill and we go to the sea;
We labor and sing sweet songs, but we never mourn,
For our mother the sea is calling us cheerily:
We have heard her calling us many and many a day,
From the cool grey stones and the white sand far away.

The way is long, and winding and slow is the track:
The sharp rocks fret us: the eddies work us delay;
But we sing sweet songs to our mother and answer her back,

Sweetly we answer our mother, gladly repay.
Oh, we hear her, we hear her, singing, wherever we roam,
Far far away in the silence calling us home.

Poor mortal, your ears are dull and you cannot hear:
But we, we hear it, the breast of our mother about,
Low, far away, sweet and solemn and clear,
Under the hush of the night, under the noontide heat.

Gladly we sing for our mother, for so we shall please her best,
Songs of beauty and peace, freedom and infinite rest.

We sing and sing through the grass and the stones and the reeds.

And we never grow tired though we journey ever and aye,
Dreaming and dreaming, wherever the long way leads,

Of the far cool rocks and the rush of the wind and the spray.

Under the sun and the stars we glitter and dance and are free

For we dream and dream of our mother, the width of the sheltering sea.

As the last echoes of the song died away the fairy ring faded off into the quiet moonshine. Only the larger fairy remained in the middle, and it was no longer the fairy, but the little elf of the thistle, looking more beautiful and wise than ever. "Do you know now the stream-song," said he, and no frog's voice ever sounded so sweetly as Hans Fingerhut's as he repeated word for word the fairy song of the stream. "Was I not right," said the elf, "when I said that the water drops sing forever as you too once sang imperfectly in your youth? Night and day, as they journey, they feel the far off strength and grandeur of the sea, calling and beckoning them on, and the song that they sing is neither weary nor sad, but perfectly happy and peaceful. So everything in the world has something great and noble to strive towards. You, too, Hans Fingerhut, gifted above most men, have your sea to seek without ceasing—a wondrous and absorbing sea of strength and beauty and

peace. You can never come to it, but you can approach ever nearer and nearer. If you understand this rightly the troubles and vexations of life, all its toils and difficulties, will no longer fret you, but only arm you with the wider knowledge and power." So saying, the elf once more pricked Hans Fingerhut on the nose with his thistle-staff, and he became a man.

All night long Hans sat by the stream in the moonlight, very quiet and thoughtful, listening to the eternal ripple of the water. It seemed to him that he could render now the sweet, joyous voice distinctly into words, and the murmur ever seemed to say :—

"Oh, we hear her, we hear her, singing, wherever we roam,
Far, far away, in the silence, calling us home."

At last the dawn came and Hans Fingerhut went down to the stream and bathed his face and hands, taking the utmost care never to disturb its clearness, and he blessed the stream and turned away homeward through the forest. The voices of the birds came soft and muffled out of the cool trees, and the bells of the waking cattle sounded fitfully across the far off fields. As he passed out of the woods the sun rose, and the birds broke into full chorus; the laborers began to go afield and anon the grasshoppers piped in the warm grass. All these things no longer made Hans Fingerhut angry, but only seemed to him so many different versions of the stream song. They seemed to say to him, "Ah, Hans Fingerhut, you are changed and become like us again. We are all happy and peaceful, for we have all something noble and beautiful to work for. We long to hear you sing." So Hans came to the town, and the noise and stir of the streets were become quite pleasant to him. He no longer walked with his usual defiant stride, downcast face and scowling brow. The portly figures and round faces of the busy burghers, and the well-filled purses at their girdles no longer made him fierce and envious, but he greeted them all with a quiet and pleasant "good morning."

All that day, and many days, he sat in his stall and sewed and stitched dilligently and sang so many glad, beautiful songs at his work that the little children, instead of making a long circuit to escape his door, as they had been wont to do, came and gathered round him now and listened to his singing with delight and wonder in