

When as yet there were but few inhabitants upon the isle it chanced that a dreadful plague broke out amongst them. Day by day they sickened and died, until but a few of the strongest who could wrestle with the dread disease survived, and only two escaped altogether.

These two were the Prince of the isle and his beautiful bride—the loveliest of all the lovely women (for these people are a noble race; the men tall, strong, and active, with regular features and olive complexion; the women fairer, beautifully formed, and graceful).

Now when the plague broke out all was desolation and fear, for, not only was the disease deadly, but it was contagious!

Parents scarcely dared give their dying little ones the water they craved. Old men and women were left to gasp out their last moments alone. Husbands and wives, nearest and dearest, left one another to die in loneliness, unattended, and unwept.

The Prince and his lovely bride went from hut to hut—they were the only ones who were not overwhelmed with fear. Here the young wife took a dying child from its dead mother's arms, and did all in her power to soothe its last agonies. There the Prince strove to induce those just seized by the disease to leave the stifling huts for the fresh air. Vain their efforts in most cases, but in a hut on the outskirts of the village they found a man kneeling beside his dying wife.

Distracted with fear and grief, the poor wretch allowed the Prince to help him carry the woman out into the air, where she in a great measure revived.

Then it was that the Princess remembered a long and lovely glade in the forest, where the breeze blew softly from the sea. Hither the Prince helped the poor man to carry his wife, whilst the Princess led the way, holding to her gentle, pitying heart a little dying baby.

Scarcely had they reached the glade before the baby showed signs of recovery, and the sick woman sank into a peaceful sleep when they laid her on the soft grass.

Leaving the Princess in charge of the woman and child, the Prince induced the man to return, and help him rescue others from the doomed village.

All day long they went backwards and forwards, cheered by seeing each poor suffering creature fall into a health-giving sleep, as soon as the poor fever racked limbs touched the cool grass; and the gentle breeze from the sea seemed to whisper of better things to come.

When evening closed in, the Prince and his companion still worked on; and as they carried the last poor dying creature and laid him amongst the rest where the deep shades beneath the trees almost hid one from another, they noticed a star of surpassing loveliness rising above the trees.

Higher and higher it rose until it seemed nearly overhead, pouring down a very flood of light, so that the shadows melted away, and lo! beneath it, glorified and illumined by its rays, standing in an unoccupied spot in the middle of the glade, with the poor, plague-stricken creatures lying all around, stood a little child!

Clad in a pure white robe, a star gleamed on the child's forehead and another upon its breast, but brighter than both beamed the child's eyes as they rested upon the sufferers around. Slowly the child moved forward—were they dreaming, or did the Star move too, ever shining straight above the little white figure? Reaching the side of the man just laid upon the grass, the child laid one little white hand upon the sufferer's heart, and with a low cry of gratitude the old man sprang up well, and strong and young again!

Passing quickly on, the child again laid the little white hand on the head of an aged woman. Again a cry, and the woman stood erect, her health, beauty and strength restored. Hither and thither the child went, touching each poor creature until all were healed.

Then from the Star shone a bright, two-fold radiance, and a feeling of deep, unutterable gratitude and awe filled the hearts of all, as, with one consent, they bowed their faces to the ground in mute adoration of the Star Child.

Gradually the radiance faded away, leaving only a pale, soft light lingering behind. The Princess thought the light grew brighter around her for a moment ere it began to fade, and fancied she felt a caressing touch upon her bent head; but when she and the people rose to their feet the Star was fading away from their sight as the dawn crept slowly over earth and sea, and the child was gone.

No missionaries have yet reached this lonely star-shaped isle. No settlers have come to curse these simple folk with civilization and brandy. They cherish their legend, handing it down from father to son; and they still worship in the forest, and lead harmless, happy lives, ever looking forward gladly to that day when, as they think, the child will again visit them, coming with blessings from the Evening Star.

QUEER EARS.

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Sir John Lubbock and other modern naturalists have decided that crickets, bees, ants, and other little animals shall not keep their sense-organs a secret from us any longer; and although these are often in the least suspected places, still by careful experiments they are sure to be discovered, as was the cricket's ear. Some grasshoppers have no ears in their legs, and as a rule these cannot sing.—*St. Nicholas for October.*

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