

RAG AND TAG.

BY MRS. EDMUND WHITTAKER,
(Author of "Hilda and Hildebrand," "The
Return from India," "Little Nellie," &c.)

"All right, Tag, eat away. 'Ere we are agin. I took my own a'vice, and 'tempter' is there," jerking her head in the direction of where it lay in its usual prominent position.

"Well, you are a——" But what she was Rag never heard, for Tag's mouth was too full to express himself properly.

"Now let's half the loaf, and what we can't eat, stow away. I'll only eat that there," and Rag broke off a rather small piece, "for I do want so bad a piece of yer beautiful stuff there, and I'll soon be having no room for it."

"Well, 'ere's a bit for you," and Tag broke it in half; "but take my a'vice this time—stow it away, after you've taken a real small bit, in that frock of yours; we'll be wantin' somethin' to eat sooner than yer think for at this moment p'raps."

"Why?" and Rag opened her eyes wider than usual. "We can allers get somethin' off the board; it's only our soldgers as gets the worst if we've discivered."

"P'raps we mayn't allers 'ave a board 'afore us to prig off," remarked Tag, slowly and significantly.

Rag opened her eyes still wider, and stopped in the act of putting a morsel of the much-coveted plum-pudding into her mouth.

"Shut yer eyes, or they'll stick fast for ever, and be ever so uncomfor'able. I wonder why ye stare so when I say anythin' to-day."

"But, Tag, yer niver said anythin' like that afore. Is the 'dreadful ones' a-going to sell up, or what?"

"Rag, can you keep a secret?" Rag's little thin lips screwed up so tight you could see no red line at all. The expression of her face said as plainly as words could, "Try me."

"Yes, you'll do. I'll tell you soon, but we must finish our work to-day first. Don't you wonder, though, how ever I got all that there?" pointing to the remains of the loaf and plum-pudding which they were each "stowing" away as best they could amongst their rags and tatters.

"I was too empty at first to ask; how was it?"

"Light up a piece more paper, just to warm us a bit, and I'll tell yer. You'll laugh when I tell yer. Just as I was agoin' down the street to the little shop at the end where broken vittals are sold—you 'member it?" Rag shook her head.

"Yes, you knows it—but never mind. Well, as I was goin' along; I sees in front of me an old gen'elman—the same as you shot the old fig at. He was a reg'lar old soft 'un; I see'd it at once by the way he jumped when it came so nigh him, and I know'd it for sartin and sure when I see'd his fine silk hankircher a trailin' from his pocket!"

boy. Are you 'ungry?' 'Starvin', sir.' 'Poor boy,' says he; 'come in here.' So he takes me into the little shop, gives me a loaf and the plum-puddin', and—look, Rag—this 'ere besides."

Rag bent forward her head eagerly, and there in the palm of Tag's hand lay what she had never seen in her life before—a large, round, shining half-crown. At first she could not speak; then with a long-drawn breath she exclaimed, "Tag, Tag, there's shillin's and shillin's and shillin's in that, and we are rich for ever—ain't we?"

"Rag, in all this large round thing there's only two shillin's an' a 'alf," said Tag, rather sadly.

Rag's face fell. "Then I'd rather have the two shillin's

herrings were bought and paid for by the owner of the shrill voice. The old pair of "gim-cracky" shoes went next, for twopence-halfpenny; all the figs for a penny; half the apples for twopence. What was Tag about, letting things go at this price, when they ought to have got "'eaps and 'eaps more money?" Thus thought Rag to herself, but she obediently went on following the nods and winks of approbation or disapproval which she received from Tag. Such a sale of their goods they had never had before; for quickness and cheapness it was unrivalled. Tag seemed quite like a new creature; he kept urging the buyers to take this lot in the "'eap just as it stood."

Also "that lot over there, and he would throw in these birdcages down here." So excited did he get, that crawling on to the board himself, there he sat tailor-fashion, exclaiming, "Now's yer time, ladies and gen'elmens—make 'ay whilst the sun shines. Lots o' people want our goods, but we wants you to get first chice. 'Ere you are, mum: this little tay-pot is the werry thin' as you wor fixin' yer eyes on. Sixpence was the price—threepence you shall 'ave it for. Take it 'ome, mum—it's a real good 'un, and no cheat. The money to the missis, mum—at this moment I'm hengaged," and on he went rattling away, and getting rid of the "old rubbish" until the board was almost cleared.



FAIRY LORE IN THE KITCHEN.

Rag began to laugh.

"Yer know it all now, don't yer?"

Rag nodded.

"No yer don't, then. What was it as I did?"

"Nipped it up, and pawned it! But, Tag, you should a' got more——"

"Yer wrong, Rag, werry wrong. I wor virtuos; it pays best, Rag. I nipped it from his pocket werry, werry quick, and runnin' in front, I pulled my hair werry 'ard—like this, only I can't get much hold on it. So I pertended, and I said—'Please, sir, look 'ere.' Oh! didn't he grabble his hankircher quick, and off he went; and I thought as I'd niver be virtuos no more. But all of a sudden he stopt. I ran alongside—to keep him in mind like. 'Boy—yer a good

and the 'alf; for we can't cut that in two, and the other way I could a' had a shillin' and you a shillin', and the 'alf of the 'alf atween us."

"But we'll do that yet, Rag. I allus meant to share it. We goes shares in ev'rythin'. We have no 'un to care for us but ourselves, Rag. We must stick to each other, mustn't we, Rag?"

"Rather!" said Tag, putting her little hand in his.

"Any 'errings to-day for sale?" called a shrill voice from the pavement into the cellar. "Stir about, and don't keep a body waiting all day."

"Comin' mum, comin'," screamed out Tag and Rag together, as they bustled up with their board; and now commenced business in earnest. The "tempter" with six other

"Tag, Tag," whispered Rag, "are you quite well? What are you a-thinking of! What ever will the 'dreadful ones' say? I'm getting so afeard, Tag, so afeard; 'member soldgers—I can feel 'em a'ready."

"Let us alone, Rag; you stick to me and I'll stick to you; that's our bargain, ain't it?"

"Yes, in course—I'll stick; but oh! Rag, I'm shakin' with fright. What will they say when they gets 'ome! and it won't be so long now."

"Leave it to me, it's all right—don't be afeard. I'll tell you somethin' soon;" then in a loud voice, "'Tend to your dooty, missis; there's a party over there as is a-wantin' somethin'. Now what are yer arter, sir, a-rummagin' like that amongst our things?"