

The Pale Queen.

E. Archer.

Illustrated by D. Wiltshire.

ONCE upon a time in the heart of an oak forest there lived a swineherd. He was a very odd fellow. People said that he was not in his right mind. I wonder what they meant by that! He would sit playing on a little pipe made of reeds, and singing songs to himself that seemed to have no beginning and no end. His voice had a strange sound in it. It was like the heart of the forest and your own heart, too. He was dressed in rags almost, but he was very strong and independent. He could swim and climb and run with the best, and he did not know what fear meant.

Once a year he went to Court to give an account of his pigs to the steward, and the Court servants had a merry time with him.

"Now you shall hear real music," they said, and they took him behind the door to hear the Court band.

The Court band at that time played

nothing but coronation marches and dances turn by turn.

"Oh, is that music?" said the swineherd, in a bewildered sort of way.

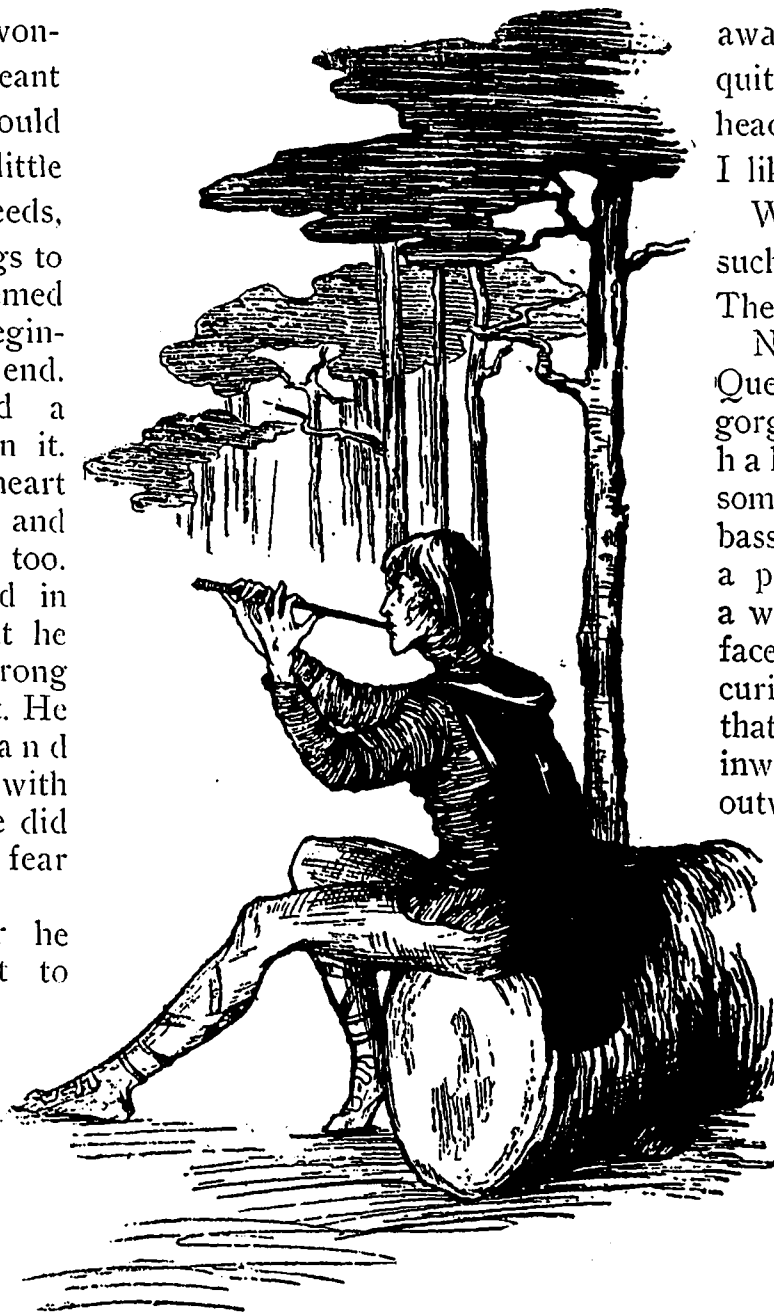
"Really? Let me go away. It gives me quite a pain in my head. I don't think I like real music."

Was there ever such a simpleton? The Court band!

Now one day the Queen sat in her gorgeous banqueting hall entertaining some foreign Ambassadors. She was a pale Queen, with a weary look on her face, and she had curious dim eyes that seemed to look inwards instead of outwards. She wore her costly robes of state, and the royal crown on her head.

It was a beautiful crown, but it was very heavy, and so was the royal sceptre. It often dropped out of her long white fingers.

The Queen was tired of the banquet and the foreign Ambassadors. She was often tired.



"He would sit playing on a pipe made of reeds."