

At the mention of her father's name a change passed over Elise; for this same Parpon, when all men else were afraid, had saved Jean Malboir's life at a log chute in the hills. When he died, Parpon was nearer to him than the priest, and he loved to hear the dwarf chant his wild rhythms of the Little Good Folk of the Scarlet Hills, more than to listen to holy prayers. Elise, who had a warm, impulsive nature, in keeping with her black eyes and tossing hair, who was all fire and sun and heart and temper, ran over and caught the dwarf round the neck, and kissed him on the cheek, dashing the tears out of her eyes, as she said,—

"I'm a cat, I'm a bad-tempered thing, Parpon; I hate myself."

He laughed, shook his shaggy head, and pushed her away the length of his long, strong arms. "Bosh!" said he; "you're a puss and no cat, and I like you better for the claws. If you hate yourself, you'll get a big penance. Hate the ugly like Parpon, not the pretty like you. The one's no sin, the other is."

She was beside the open door of the oven;