

## THE TERRIBLE RED DWARF AND THE CAVE HE LIVED IN.



He told of giants also, and of the way to slay them, about the arms you had to take with you, and how you could lay spells upon them, and charm them, and make them serve you day and night. I cannot stay to tell you all that the old man found in the wonderful Book—how wise he got, until all the people came to consult him. How rich he was nobody knew, but nobody helped the poor neighbours so bountifully as this old shoemaker did. And he found out a greater secret still—how to be always happy. There was not another man in the country who had such a bright, merry, sunshiny face as that old man got from his Book of Magic. Now as he turned over the pages and read on slowly chapter after chapter, what should he light upon one day but an account of this terrible Red Dwarf that plagued the village. He pushed up his great silver spectacles and laid down his work for a few minutes, that he might think about it the better. He had found out the secret—all about the King, and this poor little slave that could only obey the King's orders.

"So then," said the old man, taking up his work again, "if we could only get another king, things might be very different. If we had but a good, wise, generous king, then this Dwarf would be just as much of a blessing as he has been a plague and a curse."

Not long after, the wise old shoemaker sat hammering away at his work one fine morning, thinking about the wonderful things he had read in his wonderful book. Suddenly there came such a merry crash of bells from the old church tower near by that he started up from his stool quite frightened, knocking off his big spectacles and almost sending his big lapstone on to his corns. Of course, he must needs hurry away to the nearest neighbour to ask what the bells were ringing for. So he rolled his apron around his waist, thinking within himself that the Squire's daughter must be married, and he made for the door. He caught sight at once of a little crowd that was gathered at the door of the *Blue Bar*, and in their midst a stranger stood eagerly talking. Then in a moment he heard the news: "*The old King was dead, and a good job too,*" said the old folks, nodding to each other. "So a merry peal for the new King."

Then the old shoemaker looked very knowing through his big spectacles, and shook his wise old head. "Ay, ring a merry peal good neighbours," said he; "for well ye may. If the old King is dead the terrible Red Dwarf will be terrible no more."

"Why, whatever can that have to do with it, old friend?" cried Harry the carpenter, as he stood at the door of his favourite haunt; and turning to the neighbours he expected them to laugh with him: "What can the new King have to do with our Dwarf?"

"Well, well, you'll see, good folks," said the wise old shoemaker, as he hobbled away to his work.

Just then up came Farmer Hasty to hear the news. He was going to grumble out something about "What should they ring the bells for? They paid taxes all the same, didn't they? Whatever difference did it make to them?" He was going to; but he didn't. He said, (true he bungled over it, but he said it for all that,) "God save his Majesty, and long may he live!" And he not only said it, but put such hearty good-will into it that the neighbours turned round to make sure that it really was the Farmer himself, and even the dog looked up in his face, and actually wagged its tail. As it was near dinner-time, Harry started off homeward with all the news for Bessie. He opened the door and began. But Bessie stood in amazement, yet without hearing a word that he said. She only heard the old, sweet music of years ago, for Harry's voice somehow had all its former tenderness, and the words rang with the love of years ago:

"—And he says that now the terrible Red Dwarf will not be terrible any more," Harry went on; "I did laugh at him; but the old fellow only shook his head and said: 'You'll see.'—Why Bessie, what's the matter, my ass?"

And Harry took her hand tenderly.

"Harry, lad, forgive me," said she, and the old light of her eyes shone through her tears. "Forgive the past; by God's help the Red Dwarf shall be terrible no more."

That very day Harry began to whistle as if to make up for lost time, and the curly shavings flew from the plane with such music as the carpenter's shop hadn't heard for many a long day.

"You'll see," the old shoemaker had said

And before long the old widow saw. It was only a letter from her boy Jack. But why did she say, "bless him" so often? And why need she take off her spectacles and rub them with her gown as if to make sure that she saw right? "Could this really be her Jack, who never would own himself