



Farmer Brown's Wonderful Adventures In the Moon

By MORDUE

CHAPTER III.

THE AMBER PALACE.

Their way lay through woods luxuriant in the richest vegetation, gigantic trees of untold ages towered aloft, clumps of exquisite ferns grew beneath their shades, while flowers of rare beauty and fragrance peeped at them as they passed by.

Farmer Brown's fear vanished as he gazed with wonderment on the many beautiful things.

"I never thought it was half so beautiful here, the people below were always saying it was a barren, dreary place, and nobody could live in it. But I was very fond of looking at the moon and fancying that I could see mountains and valleys, and I am sure Your Majesty, that I have seen you looking at me sometimes."

"No doubt," answered the Man-in-the-Moon, nodding and smiling at him. "But see! here come my light-bearers." As he spoke, there appeared a flock of birds of brilliant plumage, so brilliant as to dazzle the eye.

"They are very beautiful," murmured Farmer Brown, wondering what he meant by calling them light-bearers. Just then their path through the woods was brought to an abrupt end by an immense mountain towering thousands of feet above them, and thickly covered with trees and brushwood.

"Oh dear!" thought Farmer Brown, "how ever are we going to climb the mountain when I can't even see a path."

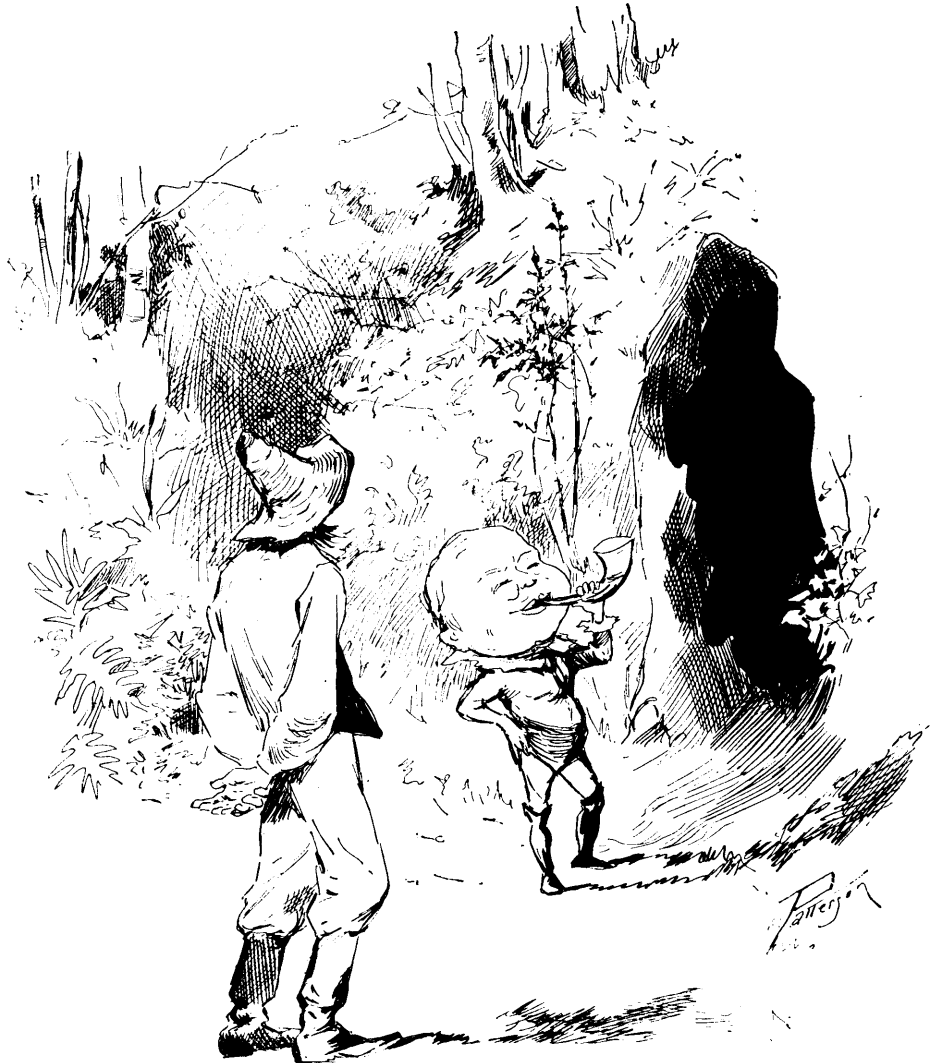
"Don't be alarmed, we are not going to climb it, but pass through it," said the Man-in-the-Moon, as he noticed the troubled look on Farmer Brown's face. "See!" and he pointed to a large arched opening in the side of the mountain. Then, taking a horn which hung by his side he blew several quick notes which were immediately answered by the birds with a succession of chirps, followed by a rapid flight towards the opening into which they disappeared in two regularly formed lines. "Now" said the Man-in-the-Moon, "we will follow, but let me warn you on no account to speak; no matter what you see, preserve silence."

Passing through the arched way, they entered a small stone chamber with a couple of seats roughly hewn from the rock. From this, a flight of stone steps led down into a black abyss. Groping his way, Farmer Brown followed the rest through what seemed a narrow passage with many windings, and then there burst upon his view a vision of wonderful enchantment and loveliness. A broad and lofty passage paved with the softest of green moss; while from the walls and roof hung strange fantastic stalactites sparkling and glowing with many a beautiful colour, and over all was shed a soft, mellow light, not unlike the light of the moon, and as the wondering eyes of Farmer Brown drank in the scene he saw that this light came from the birds who lined either side of the way. Their whole breast seemed to be a living flame of light. In his surprise and wonderment Farmer Brown forgot the warning he had received and uttered an exclamation of delight; hardly had he done so, when the sound was reverberated again and again with a roar like mighty thunder, the birds uttering shrill cries of fright, dashed madly about and the whole place was plunged into dense darkness.

Suddenly in the midst of the confusion a long, clear note from a horn was heard. Immediately the birds ceased their struggles and returned to their places, and in a few moments quiet and light were restored. Continuing on their way for sometime longer they at last gained the open air much to Farmer Brown's delight who had been dreadfully frightened at what he had done.

"How was it you forgot my warning?" asked the Man-in-the-Moon, "but I suppose I should have impressed it more strongly on you. But see! yonder is my palace, what think you of it?"

"Think, Your Majesty. I am beyond thinking,



everything is so wonderful, but oh, this is the greatest sight of all." And well might he exclaim. From where they stood a gentle slope led down to a beautiful lake, in the middle of which was a small island rising abruptly to a height of a thousand feet, and on the summit was the summer palace of His Majesty; a long low building of clear amber beautifully ornamented with trimmings of emeralds and pearls. It was approached by terraces rising one above the other; round each terrace ran a white marble balustrade, while numerous fountains threw aloft delicately perfumed waters.

Waiting for them by the side of the lake were a number of little boats, made out of huge mother-of-

pearl shells and daintily cushioned. But His Majesty's surpassed them all for beauty. It was in the form of one of the birds which had lighted them through the mountain. The brilliant colours of the plumage were represented by precious stones and in the centre of the bird's forehead blazed an enormous diamond. Each of the boats was manned by two rowers dressed in sea-green tights with a jaunty little cap perched on their heads.

"Dear me!" thought Farmer Brown, "I can never get into one of those little things." Now he was very much afraid of the water and when the Man-in-the-Moon asked him if he could swim he shuddered at the idea and made haste to say "No Your Majesty I can't swim a stroke." "That is awkward, for I do not see how we are to get you over. Ah, I have it! you can cross on the turtle's back. I'll tell them to bring him over." With that he sounded his horn, and in a short while an immense thing was seen moving through the water guided by a little creature dressed like the rowers. It was so large it made a good sized raft. But it seemed terrible to Farmer Brown to cross over on the back of such a creature. "Suppose it should turn over or make a dive ough! the thought was enough." Still he did not like to refuse when he was asked to step aboard.

At first the turtle moved steadily through the water, but ere the middle of the lake was reached, it showed signs of restlessness and presently it be-

gan to plunge about so violently that Farmer Brown could scarce hang on.

"Oh dear! oh dear! I shall be drowned, I know I shall, oh please Mr. Sailor help me, oh, oh," and down he rolled on his face as the turtle gave another flop.

"What are you rolling about like that for," cried the sprite with a chuckle, can't you sit steady, you see how you are frightening the turtle, I wouldn't be surprised if he made for the bottom, ah, he is going! hold on!" And sure enough, down went the turtle to the bottom of the lake, where, after quietly swimming about he rose again with his rider, but alas! no Farmer Brown was visible.

(To be continued.)