

favorite with his readers, he went on inventing new tales. After this, one or two new stories came out every Christmas. "Before long no Christmas tree could exist without my stories." It became the fashion for actors to tell them from the stage, and "The Constant Tin Soldier," "The Top and the Ball," and "The Swineherd" were told in the Royal Theatre and well received.

"They met with open doors and open hearts in Denmark; everybody read them, and they were received with the greatest favour. I felt a real anxiety in consequence, a fear of not being able to justify afterwards such an honorable award of praise. A refreshing sunshine streamed into my heart; I felt courage and joy."

The stories were translated into most European languages, and wherever Andersen went, in Germany, France, Italy, Austria, England—he found that they were known and loved. Sometimes he heard them read aloud in a foreign language, and often he was called upon to tell them himself, more than once before kings and queens. Once while travelling in Germany a friend took him into a strange house where there were a number of children. As soon as Andersen's name was mentioned the children gathered round him. He told them one story and then was hurried away.

"Only think," said his friend proudly, "the children are full of Andersen and his stories; he suddenly makes his appearance among them, tells one of them himself and then is gone! vanished! That is of itself like a fairy tale to the children, that will remain vividly in their remembrance."

It was not only children who heard his recitals and readings with pleasure. It was said that the "Wonder Stories" were set in the best light when he read them himself. The first time that he read them in public in Copenhagen, he spoke a few words that show us how seriously he considered them:

"In England, in the royal navy, through all the rigging, small and great ropes, there runs a red thread, signifying that it belongs to the crown; through all men's lives there runs also a thread, invisible indeed, that shows we belong to God.

"To find this thread in small and great, in our own life and in all about us, the poet's art helps us, and it comes in many shapes.

"In the earliest times the poet's art dealt most with what are called Wonder Stories; the Bible itself has inclosed truth and wisdom in what we call parables and allegories. Now we know all of us that the allegory is not to be taken literally by the words, but according to the signification that lies in them, by the invisible thread that runs through them.

"We know that when we hear the echo from the wall, from the rock, or the heights, it is not the wall, the rock, or the heights that speak, but a re-sounding from ourselves; and so we also should see in the parable, in the

allegory, that we find ourselves—find the meaning, the wisdom and happiness we can get out of them.

"So the poet's art places itself by the side of science, and opens our eyes for the beautiful, the true, and the good; and so we will now read here a few Wonder Stories."

Among the many friends that Andersen made in his travels two of the most famous were Jenny Lind the great singer, and Charles Dickens.

He met Dickens on his first visit to England, in 1847, and they were friends at once. When Andersen returned to Copenhagen he wrote a little book of seven short stories and dedicated it to Dickens, who wrote in return:

"Your book made my Christmas hearth very happy. We are all enchanted by it. The little boy, the old man, and the Tin-soldier are especially my favorites. I have repeatedly read that story, and read it with the most unspeakable pleasure.

"Come again to England, soon! But whatever you do, do not stop writing, because we cannot bear to lose a single one of your thoughts."

Ten years later, Andersen visited Dickens at his home in England, where, he says, the happy days fled all too quickly. He loved England, and the kindness he received there was grateful to him. Once in Rome he read the story of "The Ugly Duckling" to some English and American children, "with unpardonable boldness, in English, which I did not know at all well."

On that same visit to Rome, he met Mrs. Browning and the Norwegian poet Björnson, and they both wrote verses in his praise. Björnson says:

"A traveller from that wonder land,
Thou bringest tidings in thy hand
Of winter dreams by northern lights
The pranks of the woods in their fancy flights;
Aye, of a place so far away
That folks and beasts together play,
And the veriest flower
Will talk by the hour
So plain that a child its meaning can say."

The later years of Andersen's life were especially happy. He wrote, travelled, and everywhere received admiration and affection. And when he was getting to be an old man, the wise woman's words came true, and Odense was illuminated in his honor. He was presented with the honorary citizenship of the city, and all the people united to welcome and applaud him. He looked back with gratitude on the days when he had left his native town to begin the struggle of life. He said, "This festival comes to me as a wonder story; but I have indeed learned that life itself is the most beautiful wonder story."

He died in Copenhagen, August 4th, 1875.