

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY.

From Tom Hood's Fairy Realm.

In that strange region, dim and grey,
Which lies so very far away,
Whose chronicles in prose or rhyme
Are dated "Once upon a time,"
There was a land where silence reigned
So deep,—the ear it almost pained
To hear the gnats' shrill clarion blow,
Though he Sleep's herald is we know,
Scarce would you deem that calm profound,
Unbroken by the ghost of sound,
Had, like a sudden curtain, dropt
Upon a revel, instant stop,—
That laugh and shout and merry rout
And hunting song had all died out,
Stricken to silence at a touch—
A single touch! It was not much!
I'll tell you how it came about.

What scouring out of rooms
With mops and brooms!
What scouring to and fro of hurried grooms!
No leisure, not the least,
For man or beast,
Because His Majesty had fixed a feast—
Across of tables and seas of ale,
A banquet that should make all others pale.
E'en those of Hologabalus, deceased—
To celebrate the day his child was quite
Beyond the malice of old Fairy Spite!
It was a scene of bustle and intrusion,
And vast profusion—
No wonder the Princess, so meek and quiet,
Should run away from all the dust and riot,
No wonder the Princess—no soul aware,
Even of those who had her in their care—
Stole from her room, and up a winding stair,
Up to the highest turret's tipmost top,
Without or lot or stop,
Went to enjoy the scenery and air!
In a room at the top of the tower that day
Merrily, merrily turned the wheel!
An old dame span, with never a stay,
Merrily, merrily turned the wheel!
The wool was as white as the driven snow,
Merrily, merrily turned the wheel!
And she sang, "Merrily, merrily, oh!"
Merrily turn the wheel!
The Princess looked in at the door and said—
Merrily, merrily turned the wheel!—
" What bonny white wool, and what bonny white thread!"
Merrily, merrily turned the wheel!
" Come hither, then, fair one, and make the wheel go!"
Merrily, merrily turned the wheel!
Said ugly old Spite, who sang, "Merrily, oh!"
Merrily turn the wheel!"
She turns the wheel and wakes its busy hum,
She twists the white wool with her white fingers;
She hears them call her, but she will not come;
Charmed with the toy, in that small room she lingers.
The wheel runs swiftly and the distaff full,
She takes the spindle—heedless of who calls her.
Two tiny drops of blood fall on the wool,
And all that cruel Spite foretold befalls her!

Past grooms as unawakened as sad sinners,
Past screws of hunters sound as Derby winners,
Past hounds as fast—no less—
As the express,
Through Bedfordshire into the land of Nod,
The young Prince trod.
And ever and anon,
As he passed on,
In room, in hall, on stair,
Here, there, and everywhere,
He came on sleepers sleeping with the air
Of folks at active work by sleep o'ertaken,
Whom nothing could awaken;
Not even being—like physic with a sediment—
That to its being swallowed's an impediment—
Well shaken!