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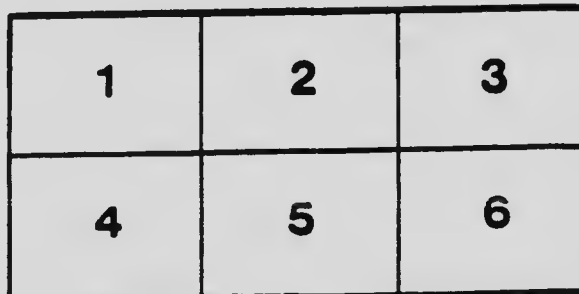
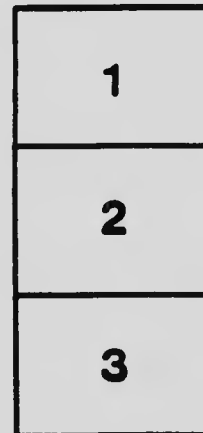
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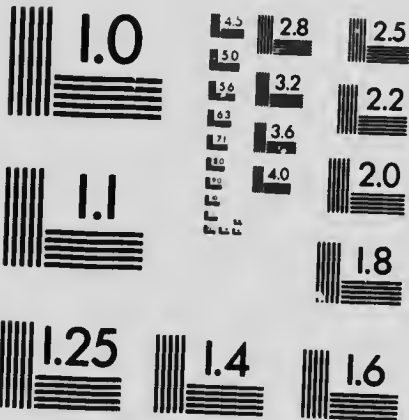
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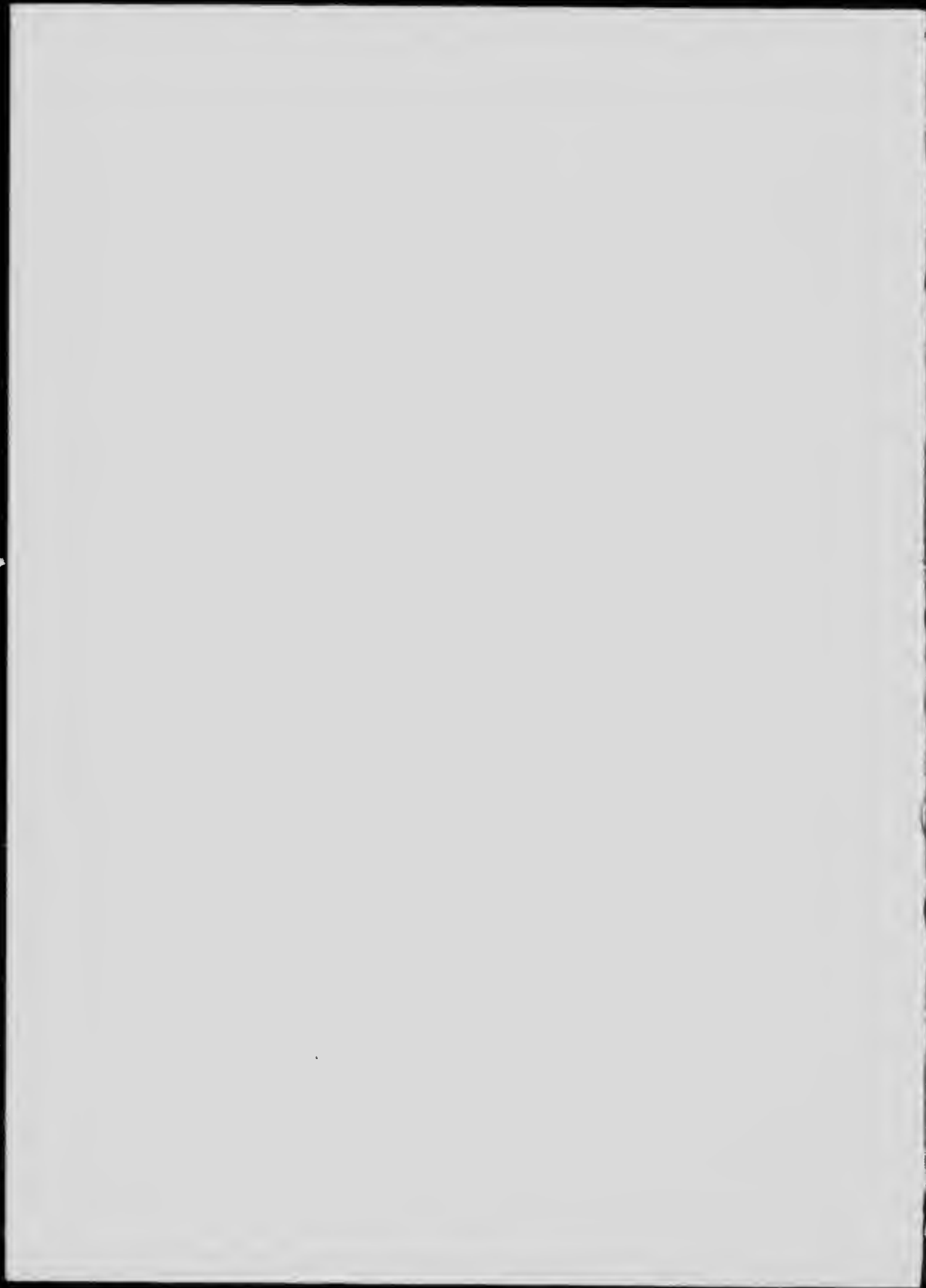
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The Princess Elizabeth
and Other Stories

By L. H.

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1913

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To My Mother

*"Thy soul was as a star, and dwelt apart.
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the
sea,
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free;
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on itself did lay."*



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Princess Elizabeth

HIGH on a hill above a lovely valley stands the Royal Castle. Below the summit of the hill there is a plateau shut in on three sides by high ground. In this sheltered spot was the garden of the Castle. On the West the plateau sloped gently down into the valley below.

In this Castle on All Hallows Eve, at twelve o'clock of the night, was born the Princess Elizabeth. All day long the West Wind had blown strong and fresh through the valley; now it would die away among the trees with fitful sighs and then would rally and come tearing about the old Castle until every casement and door was shaken by its violence. Towards night its wild frolicsomeness increased, and shortly after the Princess was born it burst open the casement of her room. The old nurse who watched by the cradle hastened to secure the latch, and sighed as she muttered: "Who knows but some of the wee folk got in?"

In this lovely place the Princess grew from a babe into a winsome child. She loved the garden and spent many hours in it. One day when she was playing there she heard somebody singing a sweet song. She called out: "Who is there?" but all was silent. "Strange," she murmured, "I was sure I heard somebody singing," and she went home and told her nurse.

When the nurse heard about it she clasped the child in her arms and murmured: "Ah! Ah! I knew it. All Hallows Eve she was born." Then she said: "Listen to your nurse, my Princess; if ever you see any very small people in the garden, be not afraid, they will not harm you. Many, many years ago the place belonged to them, and they still love to haunt these grounds."

The Princess said: "I shall not be afraid. Often have I heard voices speaking to me in the grounds."

Next day was her birthday and she received many gifts, but none gave her greater surprise and pleasure than a pair of dainty, golden shoes, wrought in the most delicate patterns and light as thistledown. Nobody

seemed to know where they had come from. They were found by her bed. Late that afternoon she ran down to the garden to get some flowers, and as she was just about gathering some roses she heard the sound of somebody crying. Then it stopped, and a shrill voice called out:—

“I have lost my song, my beautiful song.”

The little Princess looked all round her, and suddenly spied a queer little man sitting on the stump of a tree.

“Pardon, my Princess,” he said, jumping down and taking off his red cap, “I am afraid I have disturbed you, but the fact is, I am feeling very badly, I have lost my song.”

“Your what?” asked the Princess in surprise.

“My song,” repeated the little man. “I had just finished it and had put it on a flat stone to dry, and when I came a few minutes later it was gone.”

“I will help you to look for it,” said the Princess; “perhaps we may find it.”

“Alas! gracious one, your help comes too late, the West Wind has carried it off to the Isle of Voices.”

“Oh!” said the Princess, more bewildered than ever.

“You see,” went on the funny little man, “it was a very pretty song, and the West Wind came along and took a fancy to it, and raced off with it to his favourite Isle. Perhaps you may have heard him trying it over?”

“Was it low and sweet? For now you speak of it I do remember hearing a pretty air.”

“Yes! Yes! That was my song,” cried the little man, getting excited.

“But I never knew that the West Wind stole songs?”

“That he does. Have you never wondered where all his beautiful airs come from? I have often seen you listening to them.”

“Yes. I love the West Wind. And when he blows along the valley he tells me many

things. Sometimes he tells me pretty stories about far-off lands, where the spices grow and the orange trees blossom. To-day he is laughing. See how he sends the leaves on a mad frolic; it makes me long to fly away with him along the valley."

"Well, so you can. You can do anything you like to-day and on Midsummer Eve. But, tell me, how do you like your shoes?"

This abrupt question somewhat startled the Princess, for she had forgotten that she was wearing them.

"They are lovely," she said; and then she saw that the funny little man had on a pair also, but not nearly as pretty as hers.

"I made them for you. Last year I worked at them so as to have them ready for your birthday. Take care of them, for never will there be another such pair of shoes."

"But if my feet should grow too large for them?"

"Have no fear. Your feet will grow no larger than they are now. When you wear your shoes they will make visible to you

many things before invisible. Ah!" said he, as he made a grab at his hat, "here comes the West Wind, now you will see him."

From the willow grove came a great rustling, and all the tall pines began to murmur and sway their long branches; roused from their slumbers they began to whisper.

"Lie still and listen, listen to my song," called the blackbirds, but the pines went on with their whispering. And now all the woods awakened and strange sounds and scents were borne through the air. Then there came a great white cloud, borne rapidly along, and on this cloud sat the West Wind. As he passed, Elizabeth had a brief glance at that wonderful being, while far-off echoes came to her of musical calls that made her pulse leap with joy and gladness.

"See!" cried the little man, pointing to the distant sea, just where it passed the river which flowed through the valley, "he has already reached the Isle of Voices."

"It is strange," said the Princess, as she looked in the direction he pointed and saw a lovely island, "I never knew there was an island there."

“Ah! that was because you had no golden shoes then. It is veiled in mists, and nobody knows there is one there. If they did, they would be sure to want to go to picnics or turn it into golf links and make a regular hurdy-gurdy of it. As it is, it is the lovely Isle of Voices, where the West Wind only brings his choicest airs, and that is where my song has gone,” and the little man sighed.

“Oh, how I wish I could go and see the Island!” exclaimed the Princess.

“And so you shall. To-day I am at your bidding. Down by the old mill there is a boat, we shall take it and go to the Isle of Voices.”

Together they raced down to the old mill by the river and found the boat. The current was swift and carried it down the river in a very short time to the Island. They ran the boat ashore on the yellow sand and landed close to a wide path bounded with gay flowers. Scarcely had they landed when from the woods there came dancing down the path a number of quaint little figures, skipping and singing a gay roundelay.

“Do not be afraid,” said the little man, as the Princess shrank away from the crowd, “they are all too much occupied trying new airs to take any notice of us.”

So up the path the two wandered to the wood—such a wood, how is it possible to describe it? Flitting through the woods were more quaint little figures all humming and singing in clear bell-like voices, so that the babel they made was quaintly sweet. Sometimes one would break away from the crowd and go off to try a new air alone. Just as one of these singers came near, singing in a high, clear voice, the little man shouted in great excitement:—

“That’s my song!” and darted in pursuit. After him ran Elizabeth, but before they could overtake the singer she had darted down a path banked on each side with a high hedge. Away in the distance they could hear her singing.

“Oh! If we could only catch her,” cried the little man; but in vain did they turn this way and that. “It is the magic maze we are in,” exclaimed the little man, “we shall never find her!”

“Oh, yes, we shall,” said the Princess, and off she ran again. Backwards and forwards, the maddest, merriest chase she ever had had. Her shoes were so light she skimmed over the ground. But not once could she catch a glimpse of the singer. Up and down, in and out, this way and that way; here a long lane ended in an abrupt turn which seemed to go nowhere, till hot and panting from fatigue Elizabeth threw herself down, exclaiming, “I’m so tired, little man, I cannot run another step; and oh! so sleepy!” and the last she remembered was an exclamation from the little man:—

“There she is, singing my song again; make haste, we shall catch her yet!”

But the Princess had no sooner closed her eyes than she fell fast asleep. How she slept! with never a blink of an eyelid. “Tra, la, la,” sang the brook, close to where she was lying; “Tra, la, la,” sang all the birds.

Elizabeth awoke with a start and sat upright. The sun had long ago disappeared, and the moon, the glorious, bright moonlight, was flooding the whole place with its mellow light.

“Oh! Where am I?” cried the Princess.

“Tra, la, la,” sang the brook, louder than ever; “Tra, la, la,” answered the birds. Elizabeth, now quite awake, listened in growing wonderment. The whole place was filled with the melody of sound.

“Why, it is the very air I never could sing.”

Now, the brook at these words sang louder than ever, ‘Tra, la, la,’ ‘Tra, la, la,’ and the birds trilled themselves hoarse with “Tra, la, la.”

Up jumped the Princess, and with a joyful cry—“I have got it,” joined in singing, “Tra, la, la,” “Tra, la, la,” and again the melody of sound floated far across the woods.

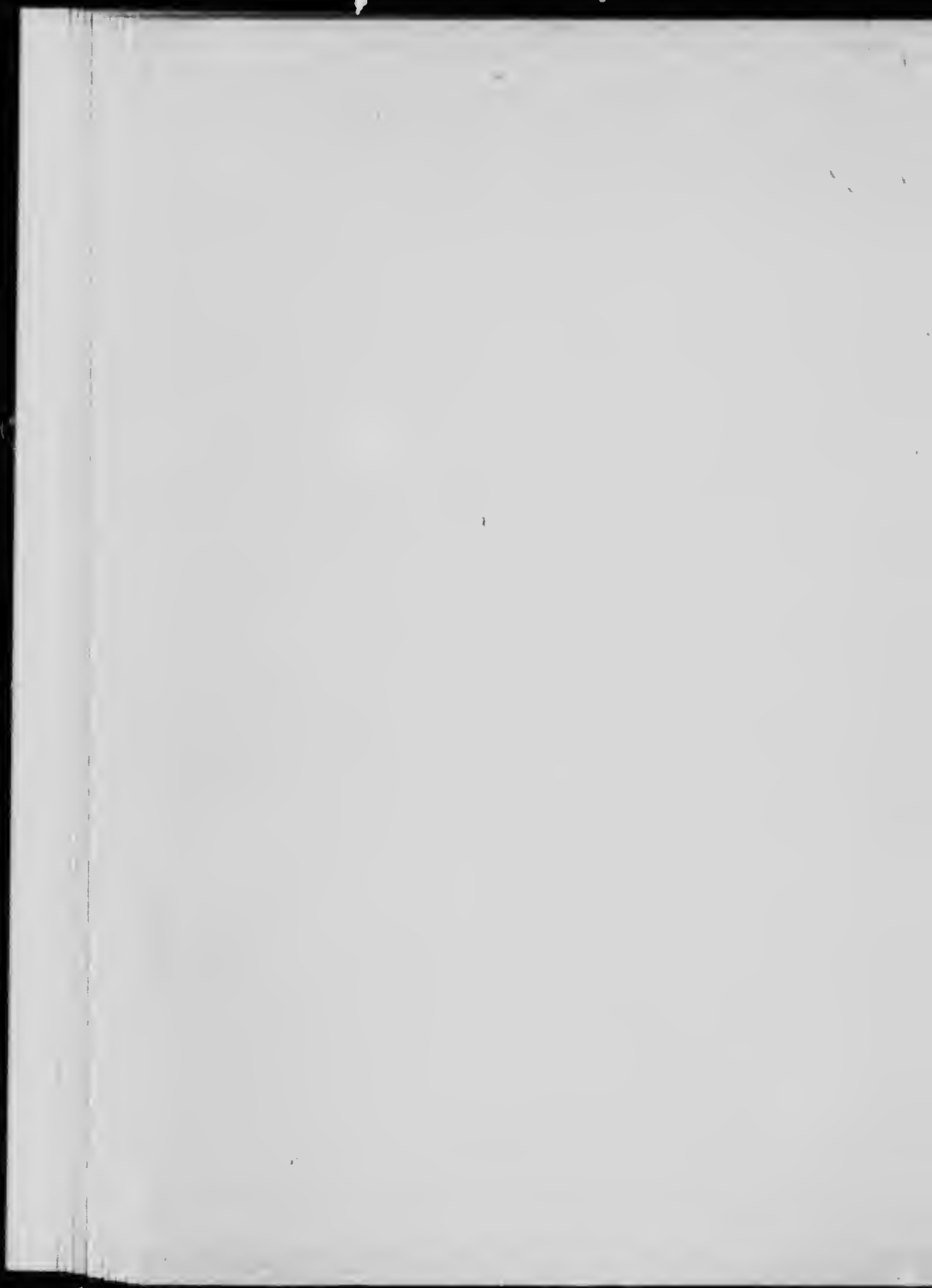
Close to the entrance to the maze stood a spell-bound traveller. All over the world he had roved in search of the maid who could sing this song. And he had found her at last. All breathless from his vain chase of the one who had his song, came the little man in time to hear Elizabeth, the brook and the wild birds singing their quaint song. He

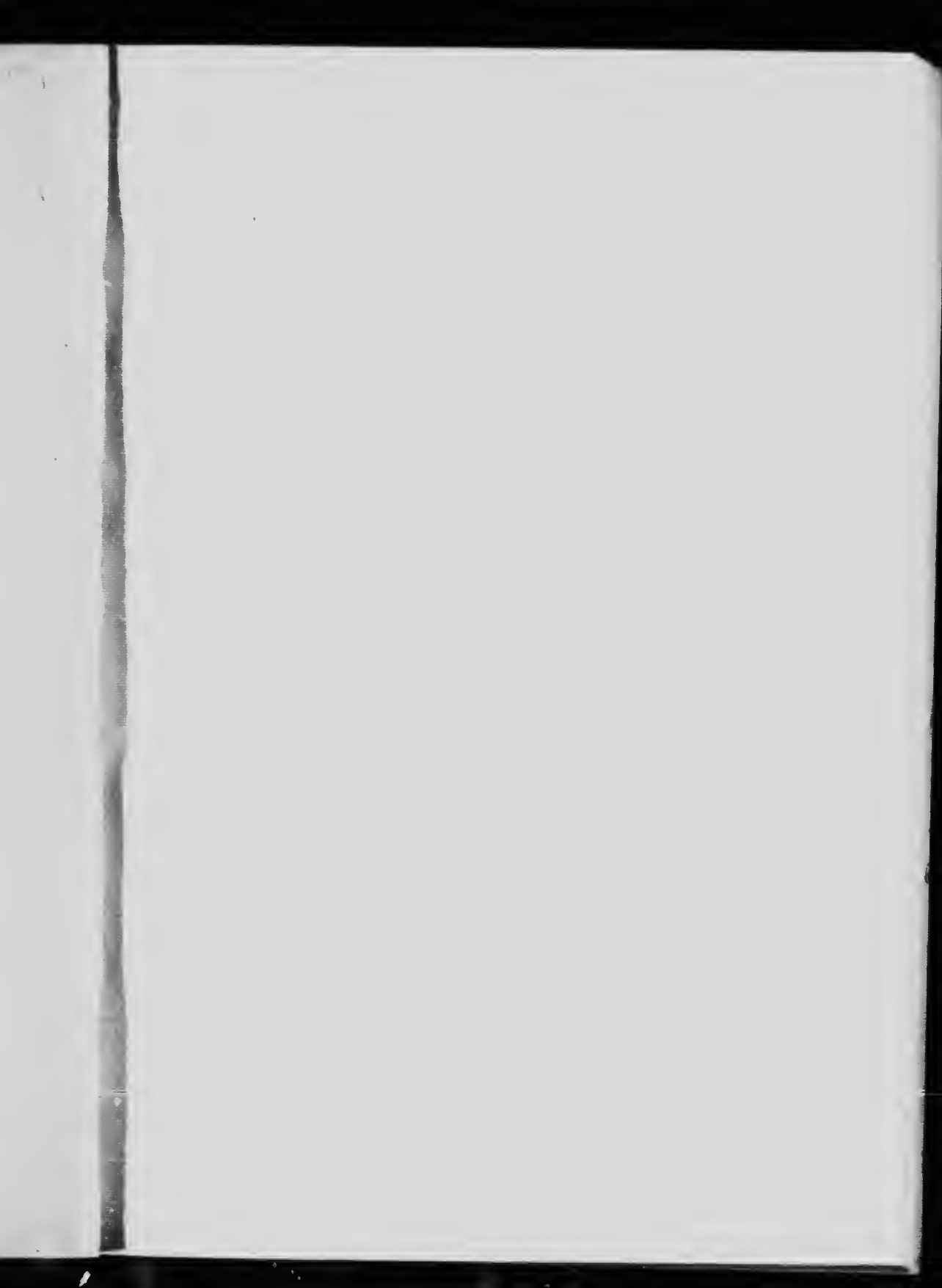
would have spoken, but the spell-bound traveller held up a warning finger.

Suddenly there sounded over the Island a long, clear note of penetrating sweetness. Instantly all sounds were hushed. It came again: strange, mysterious, wild and thrilling. The spell-bound traveller vanished, and the little man ran and called to Elizabeth to follow. Down to the sands they went, found their boat and rowed away from the Isle of Voices.

“Did you find your song?” asked Elizabeth.

“No, I could not find the one who sang my song; but, my Princess, they can keep my song, for now I have another, and I shall sing it to you.”







The Spirit of The Wood

Midsummer Eve

An Enchanted Castle

IT was high noon, and the air was drowsy; every wild bird's note was hushed, even the bumble-bees had ceased their sportive dancing from flower to flower, and had hied themselves to shady nooks.

Elizabeth wandered off to a pool which she knew of, deep in the woods. Lying down by the edge of the pool she watched the minnows at play. Suddenly there came to her a gentle whispering, like the West Wind from far off, murmuring some sweet tune. Elizabeth sprang to her feet and listened; again the sound came, a faint breathing of sweet notes.

“What can it be?” she cried; “not the wind, for not a breath stirred the trees.” As she stood lost in wonderment it came again. It grew in volume and filled the woods with a sobbing refrain; then the sound changed to a wild thrilling of flute-

like notes, which stirred Elizabeth with wild longings and set her nerves tingling with a delicious excitement. Spell-bound the haunting tune held her. "Oh! Somebody must be making more sweet songs," she cried, and away she ran, fairly flew, for this being Midsummer Eve she wore her wonderful golden shoes.

On and on she raced with lightsome gladness, and ever the music stirred her to a wild joy. Of a sudden she came to a marshy stream, and here the music died away into a plaintive piping of notes. It came from a great pollard-willow stump, from whose thick, twisted branches waved a banner of green leaves. Now the bubbling notes glided into a lullaby and sang of the quiet rest to be found in the willow stump.

Elizabeth sprang into the midst of the green leaves with a sigh of content. Scarce had she done so when off the stump floated down the stream. Cranes feeding in the sedgy stream left their feeding to follow in the wake of the enchanting music; wood chucks watching for little fish gave up their fishing and, chattering like mad, scampered along the shore.

The pollard-willow floated on past tall sedges till it came to a narrow channel, where the water ran clear. This opened into a pool surrounded by high rocks, except in one place, where the rocks ended and a grassy path led into the woods. Elizabeth caught sight of three laughing nymphs ere they ran from the pool and fled down the path in the wood. To this opening the pollard-willow floated and now the music rang out shrill and clear and seemed to say to her, "Elizabeth! Elizabeth! follow me and you will come to a wondrous, strange and enchanting region!"

"What! More beautiful things to be seen? What a delightful time I am having!" and she ran up the path. Thick branches brushed her as she passed, but nowhere could she see the three nymphs. Presently she came to the entrance of a winding alley; here the trees grew even thicker, and the path wandered in and out like a ribbon. Sometimes she paused to look at the beautiful fairy tables, cream and golden coloured, spread with table cloth of wondrous lace designs. She never called them toad-stools; to her they were always fairy tables.

At the entrance of one of these winding paths stood a beautiful fawn. He came to Elizabeth and rubbed his head against her hands. Then running ahead he brought her without warning into the presence of the Spirit of the Wood. She was sitting near a rocky embankment which was covered with a grape-vine. In her hands she held a crystal bowl from which the fawn drank.

As the calm, beautiful eyes of the Spirit of the Wood met Elizabeth's astonished gaze, she smiled, and in an instant her eyes lost their look of brooding mystery and drew Elizabeth to her.

"Welcome, Princess Elizabeth," said the Spirit of the Wood. "Here have I waited for you, to lead you to the game of our woodland nymphs," and rising from her seat she placed the bowl on the ground, and taking the Princess by the hand, led her down a path to a wide, open glen.

As the Spirit of the Wood took Elizabeth's hand in hers, the Princess felt a deep sense of peace and happiness steal over her, and as she looked at the flower-like face,

calm and majestic in its repose, she had a clear insight into the mysteries of nature. Away in the distance Elizabeth heard a shrill note, as a call, then came several more. Then the notes changed into a gay, lilting measure, and with that there came a group of nymphs dancing down the glen, all carrying garlands of flowers. They greeted the Spirit of the Wood with low courtesies and murmured words of welcome.

“I leave you here, Princess, to join in the many pastimes of my nymphs, perchance they may also have work for you to do,” and with that the Spirit of the Wood glided away.

All the nymphs with merry laughter gathered near Elizabeth, and forming a circle around her, danced to the music, throwing their garlands to the Princess. As they danced the music piped faster and faster, till of a sudden it ceased. Then one of the nymphs sang, “There bloomed the strawberry of the Wilderness,” and another called out, “Wild strawberries, here, there and everywhere; now gather them for the feast of Midsummer Eve.” As she ceased

she handed Elizabeth a basket made from sweet-scented hay, and said: "We will help you to gather the berries."

Elizabeth was soon searching for the alluring red berries; some she found on long, slender stalks, tipped at the end with clusters of berries; near a great rock she came across a bed of these tall-stemmed plants. Then off they all ran to the edge of the woods, amidst the high bracken; there they grew low, but oh, so sweet! bell-shaped and a vivid scarlet in their elfin-haunted retreat, the special favourites of the wee people. Then they came to the Queen's garden, where the ferns grew tall and of a delicate green. Silver and stately tamaracks tempered the rays of the sun to a delightful coolness. The garden was surrounded by a thick fringe of spruce trees, and only those who knew the secret opening could penetrate beyond. As they entered this garden there was a rustling, as the sound of moving wings, a fluttering, and above their heads rose a flock of birds.

As Elizabeth wandered through this garden, she came to an immense spruce tree,

with its branches swaying to the ground. Lifting up one of these branches she found herself standing upon a carpet of pine needles, and in the centre of this gigantic nest lay a beautiful egg. She put it in her basket to show the nymphs, but when she came out from beneath the trees she found herself alone. Away in the distance she heard their gay laughter and ran from the garden hoping to see them.

Down the glen she ran, on and on, till she came to a mountain stream which dashed noisily down its rocky bed. Elizabeth threw herself down and bathed her hot face. She felt tired, and soon was fast asleep "in drowsy slumber dreams." Through the great trees little beams of sunlight sifted down. A great dragon-fly skimmed above the dashing waters, and on its gauzy wings the sunlight flashed. Presently the bushes parted, and there appeared three nymphs from the woods, and one held in her hand a ring of singular beauty. Kneeling down by Elizabeth she slipped the ring on her finger, murmuring as she did so, "This is the ring of power which, when worn by a maid of courage, gives her great power; but should

her spirits fail her, beware, for the sea will then have its own." Just as the nymph uttered these words the dragon-fly flew with its wet wings across Elizabeth's face. The nymphs uttered an exclamation of alarm and drew back, for Elizabeth's eyelids had quivered for a moment. But soon she was quiet again, and the same nymph who had slipped the ring on her finger knelt down and whispered magic words to her, and then they all vanished as silently as they had come.

Elizabeth suddenly awoke. "Surely, I heard the wood nymphs calling me!" she cried, springing to her feet. "Why, where am I?" "Oh! Now I remember, I am to go to the Enchanted Castle and break the spell."

She followed the torrent till she came to a bridge, and over this she went, and hurrying through the woods came to an open space where her way was barred by a high iron gate. Looking through the gate she saw a charming vista of terraces and gardens. On the highest terrace stood a castle. Coming down one of the paths was a man with a

telescope. He opened the gates and greeted the Princess, "Midsummer Eve to you, Princess Elizabeth."

Elizabeth bowed and murmured, "Midsummer Eve to you."

"I was looking through the telescope and saw you coming. Have you come to break the spell?"

"Yes," answered Elizabeth, "I have come to break the spell."

"How are you going to do it?"

Elizabeth hesitated, for she was quite at a loss to know how the spell was to be broken.

"I see you need my help. But come and see the Castle." The man with the telescope brought Elizabeth to the wide open door of the Castle, and with a hurried, "I shall see you later," disappeared down one of the garden paths. So she had to enter the Castle alone.

She stepped into a lofty hall. At one side was a broad stairway with a curiously carved bannister; on every interstice was a life-sized figure. The first was that of a

grave divine holding a book; then a squire, and next came a dashing cavalier. Midway on the stairway stood a charming little lady, who held up her riding gown in one hand and in the other her gloves. Next came a demure maid with my lady's cloak over her arm. Then came more cavaliers and squires. Lastly a bay with a ger-falcon. So life-like did these figures look in the gloaming of the hall that they startled the Princess. But regaining her courage she went up the mysterious stairway, up and up till she came to a corridor into which opened many doors. As she stood looking down the corridor there sounded the shrill call of a trumpet from the grounds, and from the hall came the sound of much laughing and talking. The Princess sped back to the stairway and looked down, and she saw a crowd of ladies and knights, all wearing masks, coming in from outside. Doors began to open along the corridors, and out came more people, all gaily talking and passed down the stairway to join those below.

But what was Elizabeth's surprise to find that all the figures on the stairway had vanished. While she was lost in wonder-

ment somebody said: "Here is your mask," and turning round she saw a footman holding out a mask to her. She put it on and went downstairs, where dancing had commenced.

As Elizabeth reached the hall a tall man wearing a mask came to her and said, "This way," and led her into a small room off the hall, which opened into the grounds.

"Do you know who I am?" he said, as they entered the room.

"Yes," said Elizabeth; "you are the man with the telescope."

"Dear me, how did you know?"

"Because," answered Elizabeth, "your telescope is sticking out of your pocket."

"You don't say so! Deary me! This will never do. You see I am not supposed to be known; I wear a mask. This, in fact, is a masked ball."

"Then how did you know me?" asked the Princess; "I also wear a mask."

"Oh! I know you by your long golden hair and your golden shoes. But nobody else knows who you are. But come with me to

the rose gardens. I should like you to see a beautiful bud which is just about to open."

"Rose gardens!" exclaimed the Princess as she followed her guide; "I love roses."

They came to a place in the grounds where bloomed a bower of roses; all sizes, all colours, from a deep red to the palest pink. But somewhat apart stood a tall bush, and from a stem hung a cluster of pure white buds. Elizabeth uttered a cry of delight, and bending over the half-open bud she kissed it with loving lips. "Oh, you beauty!" and she gazed at it with rapture and, unconsciously, her ring touched the petals, and before she could realize it the bud lay in her hand.

"I am so sorry, I have broken off the lovely bud!" cried Elizabeth.

"Oh, that bud is for you to put in your basket. There goes the signal for the feast," he added. "Come and see the table; it is spread on the lower terrace near the lake."

Elizabeth carefully placed her lovely rose in her basket and followed the man with the telescope down to the lake, and there saw a number of attendants busily laying a long

Speechless and overcome with fear, he gazed after the vanishing forms. "It is a vision I have seen," he said to himself, "and now I call to mind it is the eve of St. Nicholas, which I have forgotten in my troubles."

The night was far spent before sleep came to Nicholas, and it was but a little time he slept, when he awoke with a start, thinking some one had called him.

"Who called me?" There was no answer. Again he asked the question. Still no answer, but as he turned his head he saw a bright light shining out of the darkness at the end of the cave. He went to it, half dazed with sleep, and saw a beautiful crystal lamp. Wondering, he took up the lamp, and as he did so he saw a wide opening in the wall of rock.

"It is clear I was called, and I am awake. Where this will lead me to I know not, but I go." So he took the lamp, and passed through the opening in the wall.

He found himself in a lofty passage, rough hewn from the rock. The floor was rough and uneven, and the passage twisted and

turned, but always descended. After he had gone a long way, the passage turned abruptly to the right, and away in the distance Nicholas saw a faint light. As he approached nearer to the light it became more brilliant, and suddenly, without warning, Nicholas found himself at the entrance of an immense chamber lit by a thousand crystal lamps.

At the end of the great chamber he saw graven on the wall a picture of a shepherd leading his flock, and the face of the shepherd was like unto his own. As he gazed in wonder, a clear voice arose in the still air, as if it were the voice of an angel chanting this beautiful song:—

Guided by an unseen power,
We approach the yearned-for hour!
Lo! he comes, expected long,
Heralded by magic song;
As its notes so sweetly sound,
He for whom he sought is found!

Lo! the scene so long foretold—
Sheep and shepherd and sheepfold!
Is not this the eve of Yule,
This the Cave and yon the Pool?
All the mystic signs we see:
Shepherd, monarch, hail to thee!

Hail! O King, ordained of yore,
Our dear city to restore,
Till its strength and charm exel
All that holy poets tell
Of the towns of ages gone --
Thebes, or Tyre or Babylon!

The voice ceased. Nicholas fell upon his knees in wonder and worship of the heavenly harmony. The voice began again, but in tones of command:—

“Bathe in the pool and dress in the garments you shall find by the side of the pool. At the outer entrance a horse awaits your coming; mount and begin your quest. On a Christmas day shall you begin your quest, and ended must it be on the same day. Alone you must go, with no one to show the way.”

Nicholas arose and saw a hollow basin dug out of the rock. This was filled with clear water which bubbled up from beneath. Quickly he cast off his old garments, patched and mended by himself, and slid gratefully into the water. After he had bathed he put on soft linen garments, and over them a rich robe of white velvet wonderfully wrought with a strange design. He drew on high

boots of leather and put by his side a sword whose handle was set with rare gems.

Nicholas did not linger, but set off on his quest. Leaving the chamber he found himself, once more, in a long, narrow passage, but the path was no longer rough, but smooth, as though worn by many feet. As he went along a cool wind began to blow up on the path, and through many an opening in the rock walls, daylight came. So, he knew he was coming to an end of the way. This he presently did, and found himself looking through a high arched opening down into a new world.

The early morning mists were rolling upwards, from a little valley, wooded on all sides. Above him towered lofty peaks, while beyond the valley, spread range upon range of low-lying hills, mostly wooded. The air was dry and bracing, but no snow was there. A trail led down from the height where he stood, and difficult though it appeared, it was an easy matter for him to descend.

At the bottom of the trail he found a horse tied to a tree. The saddle-cloth of scarlet was richly worked in gold embroid-

table, which stretched a great length along the terrace. The end where she stood near was slightly raised with a canopy overhead.

Down from the Castle came a gay crowd; leading them was a lady whose hand was held by a cavalier. Elizabeth caught her breath, for in spite of the mask she recognized the lady as the one who had stood on the stairway, and with her was the cavalier of the stairway. The cavalier seated her on the raised seat and took his place beside her, while all the rest of the company seated themselves. Down the path came a man holding aloft a great dish, and on either side two pages carried tall candles. At sight of this all gay laughter was hushed and a profound stillness reigned

Solemnly the man and the pages walked to the raised seat where sat the lady and the cavalier, and placed the covered dish before the lady while the two pages holding high the lighted candles stood one on each side of her seat.

Then the trumpet sounded and the cavalier said in a loud, clear voice: "Three things must we have at this feast of Midsummer

Eve, and if these are not on the table the spell remains for another year.”

Elizabeth started with alarm at the mention of the word “spell.” She had quite forgotten, in the wonderful things which had been happening around her, to remember that she was there to break the spell. But how? she wondered. Suddenly she missed her basket, and was just about to tell the man with the telescope when the cavalier commenced to speak again.

“These three things are: a bowl of wild strawberries gathered in the secret places of the woods; the egg laid by the golden pheasant in the Queen’s garden, and the rose which contains the face of a child.”

He had hardly finished speaking when the man with the telescope, holding Elizabeth by the hand and carrying her basket, advanced to the table and placed the basket before the little lady, and said:—

“In the basket you will find all the things required to break the spell, even to the face in the rose,” and he held up the beautiful rose, which had now fully opened, and lo! Elizabeth saw her own face there.

Eve of Saint Nicholas

or

The Quest for the Lost City

IT was the eve of St. Nicholas and the time between daylight and dusk, when a farmer came riding along a road which led past The Hills which guarded a great Mountain Range beyond.

The snow had been falling softly all day and as the farmer trotted along, the horse scattered the light, powdery flakes in all directions. There was but little frost in the air, so that the stream which came tumbling down from the hills was not frozen and its waters gave a musical note in the deep stillness.

The farmer drew rein, so that his horse might drink, when he saw sailing down a quaint little craft. It was formed from the pollard willow and birch trees, and in it was a Babe of three years or thereabouts. Greatly wondering the farmer lifted the

child out of his strange craft, and as he did so, through the stillness came one long, clear note of exquisite sweetness. The farmer looked around, but no one was in sight. Wondering the while, he lifted the Babe to his saddle, and carried him to his farm which was but a short distance away.

As the years slipped by, all those about the farm learned to know that nothing pleased the Boy so much as to be allowed to wander over the hills and fields. So when he was old enough, they gave him charge of the flock of sheep which the farmer had.

The Boy loved his work, as it took him out all day long, sometimes, indeed, for days together in the summer no living thing being near him except his sheep.

The pasture-land lay along the foot-hills, and there upon a little hill, was built a shelter against bad weather. Many a summer night Nicholas would lie upon his back at the open door of his hut watching the clouds drifting across the vast expanse of blue. Strange shapes did these clouds take. Sometimes they would appear to him like great flocks of sheep.

The beauty of these summer nights was more wonderful to him than the joys of the day. All kinds of pleasant sounds seemed to hover about the hill. Soft breezes came down from the hills laden with exquisite scents of forest woods, while the music of a softly falling stream soothed him into deep slumber.

During the day he and his sheep roamed the hills, but when night came he brought them to the fold. One by one they passed into their shelter, and if there came one with bruises, the Boy would take his ointment and anoint the bruises, while the rest stood patiently waiting their turn; for none might enter the fold weary or bruised without the watchful eye of the young shepherd seeing their hurts.

Now, it so happened that, once in his wanderings, he left the foot-hills far behind and came to a Plateau above, even to the very base of the Great Mountain Range which stretched across the country and ended no man knew where. On his way he spied an old ruined cabin built against a precipitous cliff. The place was wild and lonesome, and

he greatly wondered at finding this deserted abode, where he had thought that no human being ever went.

He asked his master about it, but he had never heard of a cabin being there, and he warned the Boy not to go far away, as the district was wild, and at times wolves and other strange animals came down from the wooded heights.

Thus did the Boy pass his days pleasantly and contentedly. It was no great hardship to serve such a good master as the farmer. Moreover, there was a bond of sympathy between the two which made service an easy matter. But at length the farmer died, and evil days came to Nicholas when the new owner of the farm put another in his place to tend the flock.

The lonely hut far up on the hills now stood out clear as a beacon light to him in his sore distress, so he took the five beautiful sheep which the farmer had given him and his dog and started for his future home.

The time was summer, and the weather was mild and pleasant. The first night he slept at the foot of the hills, and next morn-

ing he reached the deserted cabin, where his first care was to build a shelter for his sheep. Over this he laboured long so as to make it safe from all attack, for he remembered what the farmer had told him about the wild beasts living in the depths of the mountain. His next care was the cabin, and this he found easy to repair, for it had been well built, and was not so bad as it looked.

All that summer he worked with a light heart, he even made an attempt at breaking the ground, and sowed a few seeds, promising himself that by next spring he would plant corn and vegetables.

The pasture was exceedingly good, and Nicholas had an abundance of water from a spring in the rock. It was easy work to dig a trench in front of the rock and form a drinking pool for his sheep.

He grew tall and strong—a goodly youth, fair of skin, except where the weather had somewhat tanned him. His hair was the colour of yellow gold. Of courage he had plenty, and feared not to live in that lonesome place far from the abode of man.

But at length there came a long summer of drought, followed by a very severe winter. The cruel, biting cold carried off several of his flock, and the cabin was shaken by the fierceness of the many storms. Nicholas suffered bitterly, and he was forced to go up far into the woods seeking feeding ground for his flock.

One day he came upon a good bed of grass sheltered in a little dell, and here he brought his flock to feed. It was not far from the Great Mountain Range, which was ever a source of mystery and awe to him. He would gaze up at the great height and wonder what lay beyond these Mountains. He knew that in their depths lurked wild animals and he did not like to approach too near the Range for fear of the safety of his flock.

On this day, just as he was ready to start homewards, he missed a lamb. Leaving his dog to watch the flock, he set out in search. He kept calling as he went. At last, a far-away bleat answered him, and with a sigh of relief he hastened on. The mournful bleats came ever nearer and nearer, and presently

as he turned a projecting crag he found the lost lamb firmly caught in a thicket of thorns.

Her sides were torn by the sharp thorns, as she had vainly endeavoured to free herself. As Nicholas lifted her in his arms she ceased her piteous bleating and nestled close to him. Tired as Nicholas was, he durst not linger for fear that harm might come to his flock, and the way was long to their shelter, and darkness fell early. A few soft, feathery flakes of snow drifted down and Nicholas looked up anxiously at the sky and noted with uneasiness that the clouds were rolling up from the valley below and massing over the mountains. Just then a long, dismal cry came to him on the wind, which had commenced to blow in keen, fitful gusts.

Nicholas caught his breath, stopped and listened. Again it came. Once before he had heard that long, wailing cry, and once heard it was unforgettable. He set off running as he had never run before. Would he be in time was the one thought clear in his mind. Oh, how long the way seemed! Ah, that is the dog barking fiercely, as one in dire straits!

Nicholas stopped to get his breath, and then sent a ringing shout to encourage his dog; one glad bark answered him, and then the fierce ones were renewed.

With panting breath he ran on until he reached the turn where he could see the dell where he had left his flock. The sheep were no longer quietly feeding, but were rushing wildly about. Nicholas called to them, as he leaped down the hill. Instantly they ceased their mad running to and fro. Again he called and the sheep, although trembling with fright, obeyed his voice, and gathered close together, and formed themselves into a mass. Closer and closer they pressed, and the foe, the fierce wolf, which had got into their midst while they were running about, was now a prisoner.

One quick leap and Nicholas was among them. His knife flashed on high and the next moment it plunged into the wolf. Then he ran to the assistance of his brave dog, which was hard beset by a third monstrous beast, while another lay dead at his feet. Hard, indeed, had it gone with the dog but for his master's help. With an unerring

aim he plunged the knife into the wolf's side, and with a fierce cry it turned from the dog, leaped upon the boy, right for his throat, and threw him to the ground. For one awful moment that fierce face gleamed over him with its red, lolling tongue and great fangs ready to tear him to pieces. But the knife had done its work, and with a groan the wolf fell dead on its side.

The dog crawled to his master and began to lick his hand. It was only then that Nicholas saw that the dog's face was torn, and he bound it up as well as he could.

All this time the snow was falling faster and faster. Nicholas looked anxiously around. He saw no more wolves and felt for the present he was safe from that danger. He collected his flock and taking the lamb once more in his arms he hastened to descend from the upper valley and reach, if possible, a rough shelter he had made at the foot-hills, for he knew it would be impossible to reach his home before the storm broke.

For some time he made headway, and was half-way down the mountain side, when the

wind began to blow strongly and a whirling mist of snowflakes shut valley, hills, and mountain from his sight. Nicholas pressed anxiously on, calling every few moments encouragingly to his tired flock. The dog, suffering though he was, had taken his position at the end of the line of sheep, so that none might lag behind. Every now and then Nicholas heard him giving a warning bark to some sheep which was inclined to linger. Stumbling blindly through the snow, Nicholas at last lost all idea of direction. In vain he groped this way and that for sign of his shelter. The dreadful thought came to him at last, that he would never find it, that he was hopelessly lost in the hills. The cold was becoming more piercing every moment, and the wind was chilling him to the heart. He no longer cried to his flock, and the poor dog had ceased to bark.

Every moment the wind seemed to gather fresh fury, and the forest trees groaned and moaned as the wind tore through their tops. Now and again Nicholas could feel some of his poor sheep close to him, pressing against his legs, and he would take courage that they were still following and struggling on. He

knew it would be certain death to falter on his way. So long as he could keep moving, there was no danger of being frozen to death. But what a hopeless task it was! If only these dancing, whirling snowflakes would cease to blind and sting him, and he could see where he was! Once he stumbled and found it difficult to get up again. Walls of snow were beginning to form in places. As he scrambled at last to his feet, a feeble bleat came to him from the cliff into which he had fallen. He had forgotten the poor lamb which was nearly smothered in the snow. Guided by the cry, Nicholas succeeded in reaching her, and once more painfully got to his feet. But his arms were so benumbed with the cold that it was with difficulty he managed to hold the little creature.

Suddenly a black mass of rock and earth loomed straight ahead of him. Here the fierceness of the wind was abated, and Nicholas, utterly worn out, leaned against some thick bushes clustered at the base of the dark rock which towered above him. The next moment he felt the bushes give way, and he felt himself sliding a long way down; then he lost his senses.

Nicholas awoke with a start and sat upright with that vague, frightened feeling one so often experiences on awakening suddenly in some strange place. He felt confusedly around wondering where he was. His hand fell upon something soft and warm close by his side. Again, that feeling of something strange and mysterious passed over him. He who had so seldom known what fear was, felt it taking complete possession of him. Long he sat there. How long he never knew, but it seemed ages to him. Presently his memory came back and all things once more became clear. He remembered falling into space. Where now could he be? He had been cold. Oh! so bitterly cold. Now he was warm. He struck a light. It flared, and in that moment he saw that he was in an immense cave whose sides were lost in deepest gloom. He saw a lantern on the ground close to him. He lit it, and held it high above his head. The light flashed through the darkness around him, and with a thankful heart he saw his flock safely sheltered in this strange cave.

Close to him was the lamb he had touched on regaining consciousness, while at his feet

was stretched his faithful dog, fast asleep. He found the entrance by which he had descended into the cave. It sloped gently upwards, and was partly choked with snow and the branches which he had torn away in his descent. He made his way out of the hole and found that the storm had greatly abated, but it was still bitterly cold, and he was glad to creep back into the warm shelter of the cave. The poor dog was so worn out, that he could only look his gratitude out of his brown eyes, as with loving hands Nicholas bathed his wounds and bound them afresh with the healing salve which he always carried. As he tended the dog Nicholas murmured words of praise to him.

His next care was for his sheep. One by one he looked them over, and save for a few bruises and cuts, found them all well. He was deeply thankful and amazed, for he little thought they would have come safely through such a storm.

He then went further into the cave; for up to this time he and his flock were near the entrance. He could see when he held up the lantern that it was very vast. As he went further he found to his great joy a great pile

of sweet-smelling hay, in a corner. He quickly pulled some down and made a warm, soft bed for his dog. Then he brought some for his sheep to eat, and they bleated joyously, for little had they to eat for a long time past.

He now began to explore with eager curiosity wondering what next he should find in this wonderful cave. The floor was covered with a fine, sparkling sand, and the air was pure and pleasantly warm. Suddenly he saw a small box on the jutting ledge of the rocky sides. This he hastened to open, and found, rolled in a white cloth, cheese and a hard kind of biscuit, enough to last him for several days. This seemed to the famished boy a gift for a king. The biscuit tasted sweet, and unlike anything he had ever eaten. The cheese! never was there such a delicious cheese! Nibbling a little to appease his hunger, for all he had that day was but a crust of bread, he gathered together a few dry sticks and lit a fire. Carefully breaking the bread he made a potage for his dog, who eagerly lapped it up.

Nicholas went to the end of the cave, but found nothing further. Then, tired out, he

made a bed for himself in the hay, and fell asleep, and slept far into the next day.

When he awoke he found that it was still snowing. Long before this his poor little shelter would have been completely snowed in. Even his little house would have been all but covered, while the bitter wind would have found its way through the many chinks. But here, in this beautiful cave, he was warm and comfortable.

Towards evening it ceased snowing, and Nicholas went out once more to see if he could find out where he was. At first he saw nothing but walls of snow piled high around him. Then he saw, towering above him, the Great Mountain. He had never been so near it before, and could not but wonder at how far he had strayed.

Miles away in the valley below the moon was rising above a bank of snowy-white clouds. He watched her, and never before had he seen her look so beautiful. Above was the clear blue of the heavens, and myriads of bright stars shone. As he looked a meteor shot across the heavens and fell into the valley below. Now, all was solemnly

sweet and quiet. To obtain a better view of the moonlit valley, he went some distance from the cave and stood on a knoll swept clear of snow by the wind.

Alone he stood in that vast solitude, gazing on that beautiful scene. So changed was the whole aspect that he could scarcely realize that it was but a short time ago that he had all but lost his life in a raging snowstorm. Nicholas took his shepherd's pipe from his pocket and began to sound a few sweet musical notes which floated off into the still air—the call, as it were, of a lone spirit breathing the beauty of the night. Suddenly he was answered by a melody of song which seemed to fill the air all around with its joyous gladness. Higher and higher it soared. Quaint words he caught all about the finding of the Shepherd of the Mountains, and the coming of a King.

Then the voices died away, floated past him far into the valley below, and as one awakening from a trance, he turned and saw five stately figures disappearing into the darkness of the cave. A flash like a bright star shone for a moment from within and a voice called to him, "Nicholas."

ery, with the same design as that of his cloak.

He mounted the horse, and riding forth from the valley he came to a hilly country. As he ascended one of the hills, he came upon the shores of a lonely lake, where a number of wild fowl were feeding. As he approached, three sheep jumped up and made off into the woods, followed by his dog. They were very large sheep, with long curled horns, quite unlike his own.

“Now,” said Nicholas to himself, “I shall follow these sheep and see what comes of it.” So he rode after them, and had not gone far when he saw a narrow trail. He turned into it and rode along through the wild wood-way and so came out of the wood upon a place well watered, and with an abundance of grass. There were a number of herds feeding at the farther end, and near to the woods were groups of houses built from the forest trees. This he saw but briefly, for he heard ahead of him the clatter of hoofs drawing nigh, and looking up the path, saw a horseman. No sooner did this horseman catch sight of Nicholas, than he

gave a loud shout and, drawing his sword, bore down on him. With that Nicholas drew his sword in turn and waited. But as the horseman came close to him, he got down from his horse and, sheathing his sword, ran to Nicholas, and hailed him as the Deliverer, the King, and was as one who could scarce contain himself for joy.

“Is this, then, the Lost City?” Nicholas enquired.

“Nay,” answered the other, “but you will find our city for us.”

“Tell me what place this is, and who you are,” Nicholas demanded.

“Here in this wild wood, dwell all that is left of a once mighty race. Banished from our City by our own evil doings, we brought punishment upon ourselves. We had flocks and herds, and were rich in the fruits of the earth. But there were those among us who bartered their possession for the accursed gold. ‘Gold! gold!’ became their cry. They lost touch with the land. They went abroad and dwelt in other lands. Some returned and brought with them

strange women for their wives. For much gold had these women, and then our troubles began. The fever of this gold-greed spread among us, till we could think of nothing else. We were warned again and again that disaster would fall upon us; that, unless we forsook our evil ways and came again in contact with the land, we should lose our City. And even so it came about. Suddenly from over the seas the enemy came and found us unprepared and fell upon us with much slaughter.

“We fled before the foe, unable to resist them, for we had become soft and cowardly, until we came to this valley, known to no man, and here we have dwelt. Fain would I have you rest with us, but the day begins to lengthen and you have far to go. And yet, it may not be so far as we think. We have tried—many of us—to find our City, and have wandered far and wide, but never have we seen or heard aught of her.”

When he had made an end of his tale, Nicholas said, “Here am I, but a poor shepherd lad, who has led a flock of sheep—and now you would exalt me, if I find your lost City, to the highest place in your land!”

“Nay,” answered the other, “I do but speak the words which have been foretold. I know not where you come from, or how you found your way here, or how it was you came by the dress and design of our ancient house.”

With this, Nicholas wonderingly interrupted, “What! Is it not known to you how I came by these?”—pointing to his clothes and horse. And then Nicholas told him his tale. And while he spoke the man listened with growing wonder, but when he came to that part which told of the voice in the Great Chamber, the man broke forth into burning words: “Then he lives, the leader of our people, and his four Councilors? We had thought they had been put to death by the enemy. In truth, none but they knew of this Great Chamber. Now, haste you, our Deliverer, and find for us our lost City.”

Said Nicholas, with kindling eye and flushed cheeks: “So be it. I accept the quest, and what I can do, I shall do,” and without more words he turned and made and came to an open place where there were but few trees. In the centre of this open place

towered a rock covered with moss and stunted bushes, and from the rock a stream burst with great force and ran southwards through the forest.

Nicholas led his horse to drink at the stream, and threw himself on the ground, thinking to rest for a few moments, being utterly wearied by the long way he had come. But, before he knew it, he fell asleep. While he slept he dreamed that instead of going through the forest as he had been doing, he rode by the side of the stream, on, and on, till he came to the Lost City. With this he awakened and found it was growing dark.

Up he rose and quickly got on his horse, being wroth with himself for having slept so long. He took the path again, and scarce had he ridden a yard when he called to mind his dream. He turned in his saddle and saw that it was even as he dreamed. On one side the underbrush grew all in a tangle close to the edge of the water, but on the other side there was room for a rider between the bush and the water. So he turned about and rode without more ado down the stream, "for," said he, "it seems to me that I can but try this path."

He rode a long way. The stream ran straight through the forest, nor widened till it came to a place where the trees grew farther apart, and there was no underbrush. There the stream spread itself and ran merrily along. Nicholas had no longer to ride slowly, for the path was wide enough for three horsemen. Presently he came to the end of the wood, and found himself in a long, narrow valley, but with grass and plenty.

Keeping close to the stream, he pushed rapidly ahead. Night had fallen, but the moon was coming up, and made the way much lighter than it had been. So far, he had met nothing but a few deer in the forest, and had heard not a single sound, except the running water. But no sooner had he left the forest behind than the air seemed alive with sound. As he neared the end of the valley, the sun set in a crimson sky, which touched the water with brilliant colour. He drew rein to rest his horse, and led him down to drink at the stream. Night had now fallen, but the twilight lingered, and the whole place seemed strangely beautiful to Nicholas after the cold, bitter days in his lonely home on the mountain.

Leaving the lovely valley behind, the stream now turned into a wood, but in no wise as dense as the forest. The moon had now risen and shone through the trees and on the water, but whereas the river had run straight enough, it now twisted and turned so often that it made following difficult. Still he followed, for always there was room enough for his horse between the trees and water. Suddenly his horse stopped, lifted his head, and began to sniff the air.

Nicholas, whose thoughts had been straying, now took heed to his horse, and wondered at his action. He tried to urge him on, but he would not stir, but turned aside into a small stream which branched off and disappeared into the woods. There the horse stood stock-still, and Nicholas could feel him trembling. He got off and turned back, and went along the path to see what it was that had frightened him.

"Some peril must lie ahead!" said Nicholas as he stood still and listened. He could not see, for here the trees were thick, and but little light came from the moon. So he cautiously crept along, and presently there came to his ear a faint noise like distant thun-

der. Still he could see nothing but the stream running on ahead. The noise grew louder, and the path suddenly ceased, and Nicholas, looking down into the water, saw to his surprise that it was no longer quietly flowing, but was rushing with great speed. He listened intently, and then the meaning of the noise flashed upon him. He was close to the brink of a precipice, and it was the noise of the waters falling far below that he heard. He quickly retraced his steps and got upon his horse with a prayer of thankfulness for his escape from so great a peril.

The horse splashed through the shallow water of the stream, for there was now no other path, and Nicholas let him go as he willed. The way grew lighter, for here there were but few trees, but much brushwood, so he kept to the stream till they were out of the wood. Before him lay high rocks seemingly shutting in the woods on all sides. There was but a short distance to cover before he would reach the wall of rock, and this was flooded with moonlight, so that everything stood out clear and sharp. As he gazed at these walls of rock he saw a dark spot at the far end. So he turned his horse's

head and rode in that direction, and found what he thought a narrow opening in the wall of rock. This led up a steep way, so steep and narrow, and so rough with great boulders that he had to lead his horse. Stumbling, and at times slipping back, he toiled painfully on till he came to what seemed to be the top of the pass. No sooner had he gained the top than there came a warm wind laden with a sweet invigorating smell of something strange to him. His tired horse raised his head and sniffed in the air, and gave a low whinny of pleasure, and turned and rubbed his head on Nicholas' arm, showing in every way his joy.

Then Nicholas' heart grew light, for said he, "The horse is nearing his home, and there is still time for me to find the Lost City," and he patted his horse, who had carried him so well, and said, "I, too, smell the air of another country, and it seems wonderfully sweet and pleasant."

Being rested, Nicholas began to descend the other side of the pass, and came to a meadow which led to a wooded hill. The way, though steep, was easy, there being no

stones. Higher up he went, and the air grew sweeter and warmer.

Just as he reached the top of the pass, the sound of a great bell rang out upon the stillness, and Nicholas counted eleven strokes. "'Tis an hour before midnight, there is still time," and he hastened his horse and rode beyond the wood, and lo! there at his feet was the Long Lost City, and flashing in the moonlight rolled the great ocean in its vastness, which he saw for the first time, and it spoke to him with its mysterious voice.

Motionless, horse and rider stood upon the brow of the hill. It seemed to Nicholas that never could there be another such glorious view.

The great ocean came rolling in and broke upon a long stretch of smooth, glistening sand. For miles and miles without a rock or promontory to mar its long straight line, the sand stretched. Back of the beach was a fair country, and westerly, at the bottom of the hill, a city. A little beyond the city on a slight elevation stood a stately building, and the whole building was flooded with light. At first Nicholas thought it was the

effect of the moonlight upon the windows, but he soon saw it was not the moon, but lights.

“Strange,” he murmured, “the whole city is desolate, and yet the lights in this one building speak of habitation.” With that he rode down the hill and entered a wide street, which led straight up to the great place. No sound did his horse make upon the street, for all the city was overgrown with grass. As he rode, the way became blocked with fallen stones. So he got off his horse, and tying him to a door of a half-ruined house, went the rest of the way on foot. As he approached the building he saw that here, everything was in perfect order—the one bright spot in the desolate city. A broad walk led up to the magnificent entrance. The door stood wide open. He entered and found himself in a lofty passage with doors opening on either side. He hesitated for a moment not knowing what to do, when, suddenly, a burst of glorious melody rung out upon the intense stillness which seemed to brood over the desolate city.

Nicholas hastened down the passage in the direction of the music, and entered a

noble room, lofty and large. Down the centre ran a table, spread as for a feast.

Nicholas barely noticed what was in the room, for his gaze was immediately rivetted upon a large silver brazier which stood at one end of the room, and from it a tiny column of smoke ascended, filling the air with a pleasant aromatic odour. As he drew near, he saw that from the pierced sides of the brazier a number of slender, round sticks, about a quarter of an inch in thickness, were emitting columns of smoke. As he gazed he lost consciousness of all else, for strange and wonderful pictures were forming before his eyes as the smoke wreaths mingled and then floated away in groups.

The first picture was that of a fair land surrounding a city of great beauty, not over crowded, with here and there shops and factories for the "making of necessities." All around the land was under cultivation. In the broad fields many were at work. The people went about their work with eager interest and joyous looks. As he gazed at this fair scene, it melted suddenly away, and another picture began to slowly form itself.

It was the same place as before, but how altered! No longer did he look upon waving fields of grain and wheat, and orchards laden with fruits of all kinds, for the blight of desolation lay upon all things, while all the roads leading to the city were blocked with people hastening thitherward. Then he saw the City, beautiful as ever, but the people were altered. They were no longer happy and full of the joyousness of life, but had grown discontented and careless. This passed, and from out of the blur of smoke there shone a night scene of the City wrapped in slumber. No guards were at their post. This picture gave place to another, which showed the ocean with great ships upon it. On they came, sailing fast towards the doomed City, and presently he saw vast hordes of men, well armed, but short of stature, swarming over the sides of the ships into small boats which conveyed them to shore, and so they fell upon the City with great ferocity. Presently he saw five men, taller than the others, rallying a little band at the far end of the City. Here they made a stand and fought with such heroic courage that a number of people in the doomed City were enabled to make their

escape to the woods. When this little band could no longer resist the horde of men who were falling upon them, the leader led the way to a narrow pass in the rocks which skirted the mountain, and they made their escape.

Nicholas gazed upon this awful slaughter as one dazed. Suddenly there grew clear the picture of the Great Cave, with its thousand lights. And in the Cave stood five tall men, clothed in long, white garments, and they were pointing to the picture on the wall. Pressing around them, with eager, burning gaze fixed upon the picture, was a band of a hundred men. Brave, valiant men they looked, and their faces shone with the purpose of those who had dedicated their lives to a noble Cause.

The smoke now became greatly troubled and agitated, and Nicholas could no longer see anything distinctly. Suddenly there came a roar of voices and the clang of war-like weapons, and there came rushing in at doors and windows a great army of men. As Nicholas looked upon their faces he saw they were the same as those who fell upon the sleeping City in the smoke pictures.

Right in their midst he stood like some fair God, so that none of those wild men touched him, but stood staring in amazement at what they had found. As they stood thus a great bell began to ring out clearly and sweetly the midnight. At the sound of the bell the wild horde burst into an uproar till he, who was their leader, shouted for silence.

“Away to the Bell Tower, and see who dares sound for the second time that bell, and you, who are you?” he demanded of Nicholas.

There was by this time but little distance between Nicholas and the horde, but as yet none had dared lay hands on him.

He stood with his back to the brazier, and the smoke rolled up in a great white cloud above him. In his hand he held his naked sword, ready for the attack which he saw must soon come, for ever the horde crept pressing nearer and nearer. Ah! a sudden rush, but valiantly he defended himself with his wonderful sword, and one, two, three, of the enemy fell to the ground. Like lightning the blade glanced here and there, and again

he stood alone. "We will spare him," said the leader, "for he is brave and strong, and not like the cowards our people drove from this City many years ago. We will spare him and make him our slave. Now, yield thy sword," he shouted. But Nicholas laughed loud and clear, and waved his sword above his head, till the great gems in its hilt flashed with a hundred changing lights.

"Who art thou," cried the leader, "that darest defy us?"

And there came a voice high and clear from above: "He is our King, our chosen King, who shall lead us back to our home. Flee, flee, you pirates of the Sea, for the days of your doom are come."

Dumb with terror, all eyes were turned upwards whence the Voice came.

As Nicholas looked with eager hope he thought he caught a glimpse of a tall white figure gliding from the balcony above.

But now the horde, beside themselves with rage and terror, flung themselves upon Nicholas, eager for his death. High above the clamour came the shrill call of a

trumpet. A door behind Nicholas burst open, and led by five tall men, there came a band of warriors, who fell upon the horde. Backwards they drove them down the hill, and ever in the front was Nicholas, who did valiant deeds.

Those of the enemy who could escape flew to their boats, and so back to their ships, and so great was the terror upon them that they put to sea and never returned.

Standing by the sea shore, the valiant little band surrounded their chosen King, and did homage to him and swore to be faithful to him. Then swift runners were sent to bring the glad tidings to those who were waiting in their forest home for news of their lost City. And, now, my tale draws to an end, and there is naught else to say, except that these people who dwelt by the sea were loyal to their King, and ever bore in mind that the greed of gold had almost brought about the ruin of their country.

