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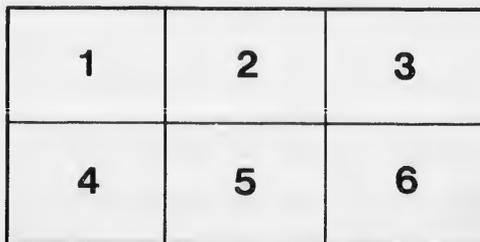
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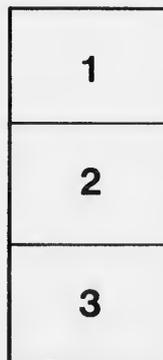
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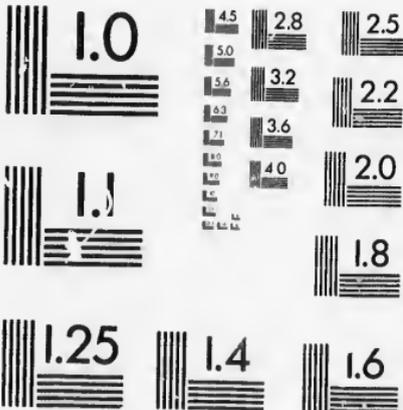
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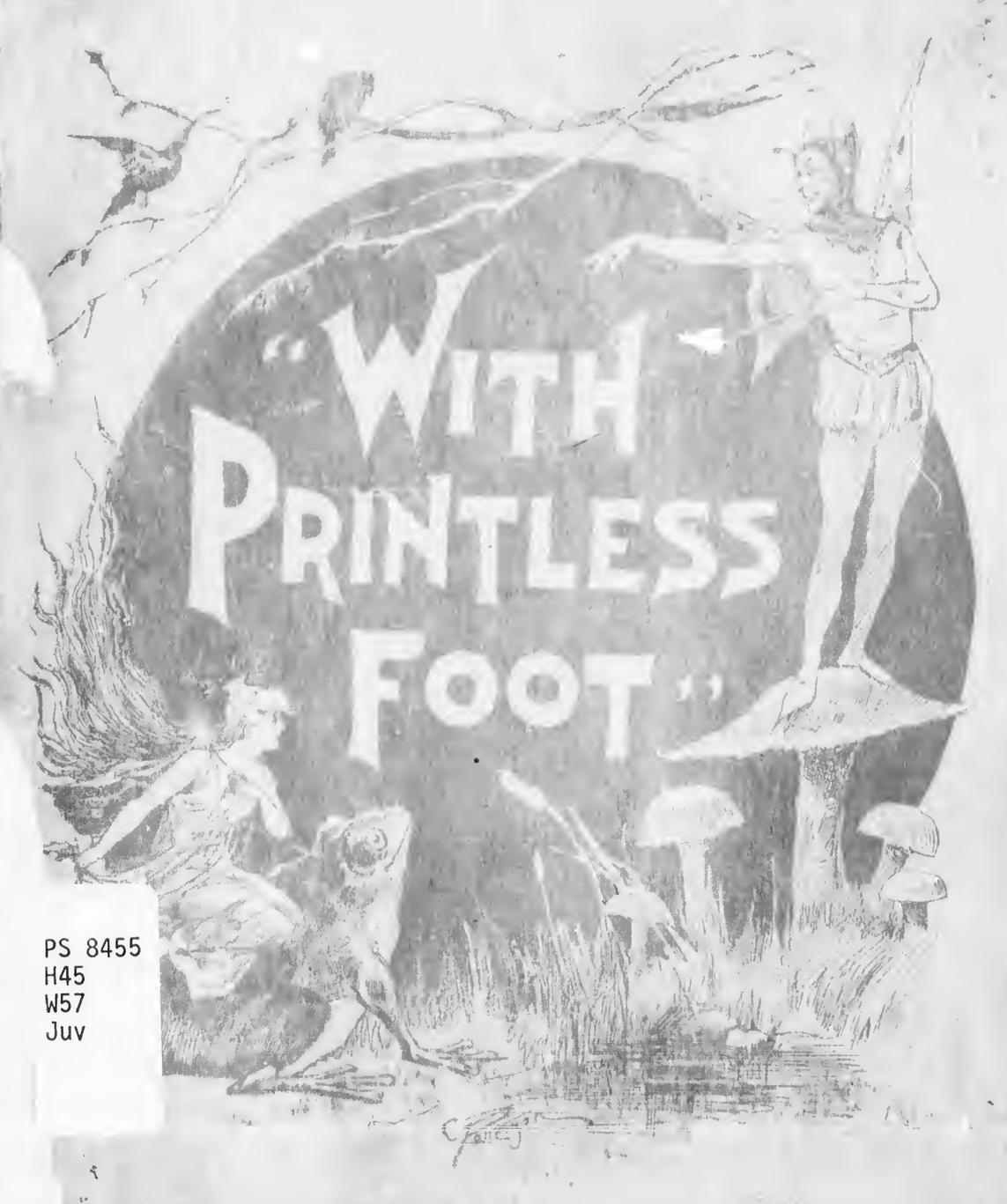
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“WITH PRINTLESS FOOT.”

A HOLIDAY BOOK

OF

FAIRY TALES

BY

M. R. CHARLTON AND C. A. FRASER.

“Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves ;
And ye, that on the sands with printless foot,
Do chase the ebbing Neptune.”

Entered according to Act of the Parliament of Canada in the year 1894, by The Sabiston Litho.
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PREFACE

REALISM is the unlovely harpy of our generation. Not content with being our everlasting familiar in our daily toil and moil, the ugly harridan has invaded the very realms of imagination, and devastated our pleasures, until most of us would fain cry:—Give us something back!—even if it be only one poor old superstition.

But now and then, for a brief hour, we flee, like very truants, from the sway of her crooked arm, and wander, far away, into No-Man's-Land, where Oberon, the lean and jealous, and that "rash wanton," Queen Titania, still cry:

"My gentle Puck —"

Therefore it is that while the tales comprised in this book have been written mainly to please the young, it is yet boldly hoped that they will amuse others who would better be if younger.

THE AUTHORS.



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“WHAT NIGHT-RULE NOW ABOUT THIS HAUNTED GROVE?”

Midsummer Night's Dream, Act III., Scene II.

FROM a rock perched high on a green bank fell in one straight sheet of water a magnificent fall. Away, on either side of this bank, stretched sunny meadows dotted here and there with groves of trees. Truly it was a most delightful place to pass one's time in. The birds evidently thought so, for they flocked thither in large numbers, and the woods were filled with their sweet sounds of song at sunrise and sunset. At noon, when all nature was drowsy with the heat, the splashing of the waters was all that was heard; but if one stood near to the fall and listened intently, a soft sighing as of some one in distress could also be heard. It came from Bebette, who sat in an arm chair carved out of the rock at the back of the fall. Poor Bebette, she sighed because she was homesick for Fairyland, whence she had been banished, as she was always saying that she was of no use to anybody and that nobody wanted her, which was very silly of her, for everybody is wanted by somebody. So to punish her she was sent away to sit beneath the waterfall and mend her broken wing, which had a great rent in it, caused by her sighing so much. But,

alas! Bebette could not mend her wing; she had sighed so much that she no longer could help it, and every time she sighed she broke the thin cobweb thread with which she was mending her torn wing.

One day, just before sunrise, she noticed an unusual stir among the birds, and as one of them just then came to get a drink at the fall, she asked him what it was about. "We are going to give a concert in honour of the unearthly beauty of the boy."

"What boy?" asked Bebette.

"Ah! that is just the question—'What boy?'" answered the bird, as he flew away.

All that morning the birds were busy practising their different parts, and, as it made them feel thirsty, they kept coming to the fall for drinks. Bebette asked each in turn whom it was the concert was given for, but none of them could tell her. They all answered that it was for the Boy, but who the "Boy" was, none knew, except that it was for the Boy whom everybody was talking about.

"I am sure I did not hear anything about him," sighed Bebette.

"That is because you hear nothing but your own sighs," said one of the birds, rather crossly. He was feeling cross, for some of the birds had said he ought not to sing at the concert as his voice was cracked.

Just as the sun dipped low in the horizon, a burst of melody rang over the meadows. "The concert has commenced," said Bebette, and as she listened she heard the birds sing this refrain :

"Come ye hither, who would know
An antidote for care and woe;
When this Beauteous Boy you see,
And unfold the mystery
Of his coming, you shall joy
And bid farewell to all annoy."

"Why, that is the very thing for me!" cried Bebette, starting in her seat. "Oh! if I could only see this Boy and find out all about him, then my sighs would cease and I should wend my way. Now I wonder if they will sing any more about him." But though she listened intently, she heard nothing more about the Boy; in fact, the concert broke up in a free fight. The second number on the programme was a duet by the Whip-poor-Will, and the Bobolink. At first they sang their parts very prettily, and it would have been a great success if Bobolink had not taken it into his foolish little head to wink at pretty Miss Bobolink; who sat in the front row of the dress circle. Unfortunately, the Whip-poor-Will saw him. "And, if Miss Bobolink isn't smiling back at him," he muttered wrathfully; "and I that parted with my last fifty cents to buy her a ticket," and the Whip-poor-Will so far forgot himself as to rush at Bobolink and begin pecking at him, before the whole audience, till Bobolink cried for mercy.

"Such goings on," cried the classical ones; "we will withdraw."

To make the confusion worse, some disorderly ones commenced singing, "After the opera is over." In the midst of all this hubbub, who should arrive but the Turtle, who lived by the sea. He had heard there was to be a concert, and being very fond of music, had come to attend it.

"I thought this was to be a classical concert," said the Turtle, in an aggrieved tone to Bebette.

"It was classical at first," she answered, "but I think something went wrong, and all the classical ones left in a body. But dear Turtle, can you tell me anything about the Boy in whose honour it was held? If I could but see him and find where he comes from, I am sure my sighing would cease. Listen, and I will tell you what I heard the birds singing;" and Bebette sang the refrain.



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"I know but little about the Boy," answered the Turtle. "I only know that he has been seen by some; but I will tell you what we will do, Bebette. We will get directions from the birds and you shall ride upon my back and we will search for him."

Bebette was very much pleased with this idea and thanked the Turtle for his kind offer. They then went and asked the birds for directions.

Some said, "Fly towards the sunrise, for the sun is the source of beauty." Others said, "Fly towards the south;" and the humming birds said, "Oh, look among the honeysuckle."

So they thanked the birds and started on their journey. But though they searched in all these places, nowhere could they find the Boy. Then they asked a frog, who was sunning himself on the bank of the stream, but he said that the doctor had ordered him not to think, he was only to take sun baths.

"Well, you can sell them a ticket, can't you? that's not thinking," muttered a second Frog, lifting his head out of the water.

"Trouble me not," murmured the first Frog, closing his eyes sleepily.

"What is the ticket for?" inquired the Turtle.

"For our Charity Concert; we have been practising months for it, and it promises to be a great success; better buy a ticket; only a few left."

"What kind of music will you have, classical?"

"Oh, classical, of course. We don't go in for any of your light trashy stuff. classical is what suits us frogs."

"I don't know if we can stay," began the Turtle, hesitatingly.

"You see this lady and I are——"

"Oh, yes, do remain, Turtle; you certainly must not miss this concert on my account," interrupted Bebette.

"I would like to attend it, Bebette, if you do not mind waiting," said the Turtle.

"Not in the least, dear Turtle; you were disappointed in not hearing the Birds' Concert, and as this is to be classical, by all means let us remain."

"When does it commence?" asked the Turtle.

"At moon-rise. See! here comes the notice. The frogs are going to put it on that tree, so that every body can see it."

Bebette and the Turtle looked and saw four frogs carrying between them a large piece of bark, and written on it, in large green letters, was the announcement :

YE CONCERT OF YE SEASON WILL BE GIVEN BY
MOON-RISE BY YE FROGS.

Soon a crowd collected and made various remarks.

"A concert given by the frogs! Well, I never! Such conceit!" cried a pert little Squirrel, peering at the notice with his bright eyes.

"It is going to be a grand concert, and you had better come," answered a Hedgehog. "I have tickets for all my family. The frogs are to be assisted by the elves."

"I am glad to hear that," whispered the Turtle to Bebette. "I do so like elfin music. The sweetness of their playing on their reeds and fifes surpasses any thing I have ever heard."

When the moon's soft light began to flood the heavens and the shadows softly crept through the woods, there was heard a loud clamouring close by, and presently frogs appeared scrambling up out of the water. The frogs who were to take part in the concert, grinned with delight, when they saw how many had come to hear

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them, and hopped to their places with alacrity. Then the leader brought forth and distributed portfolios of music. The Turtle gave a sigh of satisfaction when he saw written on the outside of one of them, "Music by Wagner."

"We are sure to have something nice and creepy," he sighed softly to Bebette.

The frogs are
 e it."
 frogs carrying
 in large green

Just as the frogs arranged themselves in a circle around their leader a weird strain of music was heard, and whirling through the air in a joyous band came the elves, some with reeds, some with fifes, and some with tambourines.

GIVEN BY

ach conceit!"
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One mischievous elf, with wings of butterfly beauty, pushed the frog leader off the large toadstool on which he was sitting and said that *he* would lead the concert. Froggie, very good-naturedly smiled and took his place with the rest. Then the elfin music rang out clear and sweet. And, oh, how the froggies did sing! Suddenly, during a lull in the music, there came a plaintive voice from a tree:

"Nobody has collected the tickets."

s bright eyes.
 better come,"
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"Dear, dear, I quite forgot," said the Frog who had sold the tickets to the Turtle, "and it's a Charity Concert!" So away he hopped to gather in the tickets.

Bebette. "I
 on their reeds

This made a little confusion; several who had slipped in without tickets had to be put out; but on the whole the concert proved a great success. "And was quite classical, too," said the Turtle to Bebette, as they once more started on their quest.

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As they were passing through a wood, a shower of saw-dust fell on them. "Halloo! what's that?" asked the Turtle.

"Only a woodpecker boring a tree," answered Bebette.

"What a deal of harm they do to our trees," said the Turtle.

"Oh, no, Turtle, they do not hurt the trees."

"That is so," cried the Woodpecker, who had overheard them. "We are always getting blamed for destroying the trees, when we only do good to them. Two or three taps will soon tell us if the tree is sound; if it is, we leave it, for our food will not be found in a sound tree."

"Why! I thought you ate sawdust," interrupted the Turtle.

"No such thing! Sawdust, indeed!"

Bebette, seeing that the Turtle was giving offence by his remarks, hastened to smooth matters over by saying: "I believe you only bore into trees whose life is being sapped by insects."

"Well, you are sensible," and the Woodpecker looked admiringly at Bebette.

Seeing he was restored to good humor, she asked him if he knew anything about the Boy.

"Oh, yes, I saw him alight on our earth. It was late one evening, and I was just thinking of going to sleep, when I saw a flash of light come from Mars, and down came the boy on a comet; but where he is now I cannot say, perhaps he may have returned to Mars. But your best plan will be to visit the Weather Prophet, he lives quite near, and he will tell you more about it."

Very much delighted, the two set off, and presently came to where the Weather Prophet was looking at Mars through his telescope.

"No, I have not seen the Boy," he answered in reply to their question. "I have seen no one so far, only a few chimney-pots, but if you would like to come with me to Mars I will take you up in my balloon. I have just ordered one from the Gnomes, and intend to start shortly."

While they were waiting for the Gnomes to bring the balloon, the Weather Prophet asked them to look through the telescope and tell what they saw.

The Turtle said he could see nothing at all.

"That's because you are looking with both eyes. You must use only one at a time."

"Only use one eye, when I have two to see with ; no, no, Mr. Weather Prophet ! as long as I have two eyes I intend to use them : no one-eye business for me. Come along, Bebette, I don't like this plan of one eye ; come away, I am sure no good will come of it."

But Bebette would not listen. She had by this time, with some little difficulty, managed to fix one eye at the telescope and was now lost in wonder at what she saw.

"What do you see ?" eagerly asked the Weather Prophet, as Bebette continued to peer into the telescope.

"Wonderful ! Wonderful !" was all she answered.

"Do you see houses, men, streets ?" asked the Prophet, getting much excited.

"Wonderful ! wonderful !" was all the answer he got.

"Come, Bebette, come away," said the Turtle. "I am sure you see nothing at all."

Just then up came the Gnomes with the balloon.

"Now, get in, if you want to come and find the Boy," called out the Weather Prophet, as he took his seat ; and Bebette immediately followed.

Seeing that she had made up her mind to go, the Turtle also got in, but only after a solemn protest from him. The Gnomes, grinning with delight, let go the ropes and away they went, up, up, till they were far above the trees.

"At this rate, we shall soon be there," said the Weather Prophet, rubbing his hands with delight.

Scarcely had he uttered the words, when—*bang!* Away went the balloon into ribbons, and with a roar the gas escaped, and all three were pitched out. Fortunately, they fell into a swamp and so came down safely.

"My best clothes ruined! utterly ruined!" shrieked the Weather Prophet, as he scrambled out of the swamp and began dancing about on the grass.

"You shouldn't have your best clothes on when you go sailing away in such soap bubbles; I believe you are nothing but a fraud; and there, just look at poor Bebette! A nice state you have got her into!

"My hat, where's my hat? All the gloss gone, oh! What will my wife say!" groaned the Weather Prophet, as he vainly tried to brush his hat clean. Then he looked round for his telescope, and not finding it renewed his cries till the Turtle, out of all patience with him, seized him by the leg, pulled him down and sat upon him.

"Now I will keep you quiet," said the Turtle, in a triumphant tone. "Come, Bebette, and see how funny he looks."

"I cannot; my foot is caught in a hole;" and Bebette gave a great sigh, for she was very uncomfortable.

"Oh, Turtle! dear Turtle! do let me up," groaned the Weather Prophet, with what little breath there was left in him.

"Stay where you are, humbug; you must be punished for playing us such a trick. Don't sigh so, Bebette, I will come and help you out; but I must sit upon this humbug a little longer; you have no idea how funny he looks."

"Believe me, I entreat you, Turtle, I never thought that wretched balloon would burst; and I was making straight for Mars. I really was not fooling you. Oh, do let me up, you are so heavy, and

A peal of merry laughter interrupted the Weather Prophet and a voice cried out, "Oh, dear! oh, dear! what a sight: nothing to be seen but a pair of little legs on one side, and a head with staring eyes on the other." Here peal after peal of laughter was heard, then the bushes parted and out came a boy.

"The Boy! the Boy!" cried Bebette; "I know it, I feel it; yes, Turtle, my sighs have ceased," and with a glad cry Bebette pulled her foot out of the hole and came running towards them.

"The Boy, indeed," murmured the Turtle, as he got up off the Weather Prophet, who bounded up like a ball, and disappeared as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

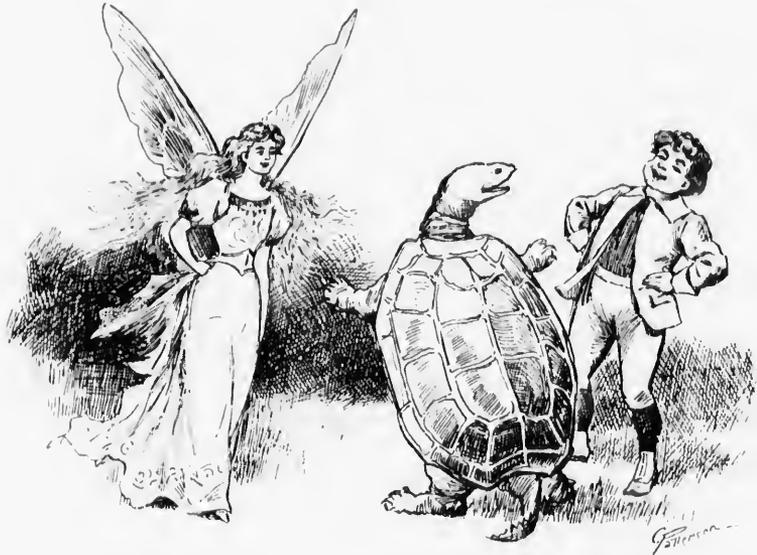
"Let him go," said the Boy, as the Turtle darted forward to detain him; "his wife is waiting for him with a fine new birch!" and again the Boy went off into peals of laughter in which the Turtle and Bebette joined. In fact, Bebette laughed so long, that the Turtle became alarmed and begged the Boy to thump her gently on the back; but the Boy said to leave her alone, as she was making up for the lost time spent in repining. The fact was that the sound of her laughter was so pleasing to Bebette, that she went on laughing just for the pleasure of it. Then the Boy and the Turtle laughed in pure sympathy with her, till all three were exhausted and had to stop.

In the meanwhile, Bebette had been looking at the Boy and found that the reason he appeared so beautiful was, that his countenance shone with such a look of happiness, that it attracted all to him.

"No sighs there," she said. Then she became alarmed lest at the thought of a sigh hers would return. But no; she was delighted to find that she had no wish to sigh; but went to work on her broken

"WITH PRINTLESS FOOT."

wing and very soon had it mended. And now came the time for the three to part — the Boy, to return to his far-away home, his mission, which has nothing to do with this story, being completed; the Turtle to his home by the sea; and Bebette to Fairyland.



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“ COME UNTO THESE VELLOW SANDS.”

The Tempest, Act I., Scene II.

“ A sound of song
Beneath the vault of heaven is blown !
Sweet notes of love, the speaking tones
Of this bright day, sent down to say
That Paradise on earth is known.”

As the Councillor uttered these words half to himself and half to his companion, he stopped in his walk and looked over the island. He was standing near the summit of a mountain, and as he gazed at the scene beneath him he slowly repeated the verse, dwelling on each word with a loving intonation. Eagerly his gaze wandered here and there, and then he drew a deep breath of joy ; for was not existence glorious on such a day, and was there ever a fairer scene for the eye to feast upon. Out from the bed of the ocean rose the island like a living thing of beauty. From the margin of the ocean it rose in a series of undulations till they culminated in the mountain upon

which stood the Councillor. Above he saw the blue vault of heaven, across whose wide expanse light, fleecy clouds gambolled. Sometimes, joining hands, they would with daring effrontery try to veil the face of the sun, but with a laugh, that scattered them in all directions he would shine once more upon the island, penetrating to the shady spots where some fragile blossom lay half-hidden in Mother Earth's bosom, afraid to venture further till it felt the loving rays of the sun.

From island and sky wandered the Councillor's gaze till it rested on the ocean. Neither boat nor ship appeared upon that great expanse, nor view of distant land to tell of some neighbouring isle; nothing but the ocean, calm and smiling as though it had naught to do with stormy waves. But as the Councillor looked at those calm waters he thought of the time when, lashed into a furious storm, they had engulfed the ship upon which he was, and how all had perished excepting himself and Polly.

Polly, who had been waiting patiently by his side, now broke in upon the Councillor's thoughts. "East or West, home is best."

"Well said, Poll," laughed the Councillor; "but wait a bit, we must see the sunset; it promises to be grand this evening."

The Councillor was right, the sunset was grand, and it was not till the last faint streaks had disappeared that the two descended the mountain and made their way homewards.

Night, swiftly hurrying up, let fall her dark mantle over the island as though jealous of the day's glorious reign. A few faint stars struggled bravely to show their light, rebelling against night's wish to end the day with such a display of gloom. In vain, for darker and darker it became, while the low moaning of the wind among the trees told of a storm's near approach.

When the Councillor came out to his door that night before going to bed he was surprised at the change in the weather.

"A storm brewing, Polly," he said, as he returned to the house.
 "Who would have thought it, after such a day of sunshine?"

"Laugh when it rains,
 Only folly complains,
 Joy when 'tis hot,
 Polly fretteth not."

answered Polly.

"True, most wise Poll, but I was not fretting."

Little rest did the Councillor get that night, for as the hours sped on, the storm increased in violence. Never, during all his stay on the island, had he remembered one so violent. The little house which he had built with such difficulty threatened every moment to tumble down. The noise of the surf breaking upon the shore was like the roar of artillery.

"Ho! Ho!" shrieked the Storm-King, as he lashed the billows into greater fury; "Ho! Ho! it's a very fine night," and he tore up the great trees by their roots and flung them far and wide.

The Councillor shuddered as he listened to the roar of the tempest. "God have mercy upon those who ride the waves this awful night," he murmured again and again, and it was not till morning that his tired eyes closed in sleep.

But not for long did he sleep; he was roused by Polly pulling him by the sleeve. Jumping up he followed her as she flew down to the beach, and there, just beyond the reach of the boiling foam, lashed to a mast of a ship, were a little girl and boy. Down upon his knees sank the Councillor and with trembling fingers undid the fastenings which bound the two little things. Then gathering them to his arms he hurried back to the house. Life was still fluttering in their little forms, and with care they might live. So he

watched over them and was at last rewarded by seeing them drop into a peaceful slumber. Not till then did he venture to leave them and search the shore again in case there might be other poor shipwrecked people ; but though he searched long, none other did he see, only fragments of the wreck of what must have been a large ship.

"God help them !" he sighed, "all must have perished except these two babes." Tenderly did he care for the children and they grew taller and stronger day by day. He questioned them about the ship and where they had come from, but strange to say, neither could remember anything which had happened to them before the storm, although when he mentioned it, the two little faces would grow pale and they would run and cling to him and look frightened, so he ceased to question them. "Perhaps, some day," thought the Councillor, "they will remember who they were and where they came from." They were not brother and sister, for though they had forgotten everything else, they remembered their names when he called them by what he found written upon their clothes, "Lily Daw" and "Guy Perey." In this way did Lily and Guy come to the Councillor.

What merry times these two Sea-Waifs had together ; while the older they grew the more did they cling to each other. Hand in hand they would ramble about the island, sometimes in the woods gathering flowers, but oftener to be found by the shore, where there were so many beautiful things to play with. And one evening, just as the sun was dipping into the ocean, the Councillor told them this story about the sea.

"Once there was a beautiful Sea-Nymph who was loved by the Sea-King, but the Storm-King said she must marry him because he wanted just such a sweet little wife to soothe him when he should come blustering home after a storm. But the Nymph said, 'No,' she would have nothing to do with such a fierce wooer. Then the

Storm-King worked himself into a dreadful passion and said she must marry him.

“But the Nymph answered, ‘How can I marry you when I do not love you? I love the Sea-King, and him only will I marry.’

“‘Marry him then!’ shrieked the Storm-King, ‘but remember I will punish you,’ and he looked fiercely at the Nymph to frighten her, but she was brave and looked him steadily in the face and said, ‘I will marry my love for all your threats.’

“There was great rejoicing when the Sea-King took his beautiful bride home and all went well for a long time, till one night there came a dreadful storm, and when at last it ceased, their babe was nowhere to be found. Then the Sea-Queen remembered the threats of the Storm-King and knew he had stolen her babe.

“They searched the great ocean but could not find him. Their messengers were sent far and wide to all the seas and oceans asking if aught had been heard of the babe. But no one had seen him.

“Then from the ocean came the wailing cry of the poor mother calling her babe by name, ‘Foam-of-the-Sea, Foam-of-the-Sea.’



And all the sea-nymphs wept when they heard the lone cry, and prayed that their queen might be comforted.

"Now it so happened that one day as two nymphs were seeking for Foam-of-the-Sea they came to a lovely little island resting in mid-ocean, and being weary with their long search they sank upon the sand and were soon fast asleep. As they slept they dreamt that the sister of the Storm-King came to them and said, 'Well, my pretty Nymphs, what do you here? Seeking for Foam-of-the-Sea, are you? Go back to your queen and tell her that I have changed her babe into a sweet boy who delights in nothing so much as when his quiver is full of darts which he scatters far and wide among the people of the earth. Open your eyes and see for yourself what a charming boy I have made of him.' The nymphs awoke with a start and looked eagerly about them to see who had been speaking to them whilst they slept, but no one was in sight. Yet, stay, was not that a boy sitting on a rock? They shielded their eyes from the sun and looked again. Yes, surely, there sat, smiling at them, a boy with wonderfully bright eyes and a roguish smile. He held in his hand a bow, and a quiver full of darts lay by his side. 'Foam-of-the-Sea,' they murmured to each other, and then they called him by name again and again, entreating him to come with them, but he only smiled the more and shook his head. Then they moved to go to him, but instantly he set a dart and aimed it at them, and stricken with sudden fright, and yet not knowing why, the nymphs plunged into the sea and swam away, and the boy with a merry, mischievous laugh spread his little wings and flew far away over the ocean; while the nymphs carried home the sad news to the Queen.

"When the King heard the news, he shook his head and said, 'Foam-of-the-Sea will never more return; the witch has changed him into a cupid, and his name now is Love.'

"And what did the poor Queen do?" asked Lily in great distress.

"Oh, don't you know!" said Guy, taking up a pretty shell and holding it to Lily's ear.

"I know! I know!" she cried; "the Queen told her sorrow to the shells, and they ever after murmured, 'Foam-of-the-Sea will come back some day,' and this comforted her."

"Out from empty pot or pan,
Never since the world began,
Bread nor milk, nor porridge ran,"

announced Polly with a very grave air, for she was beginning to feel hungry. "Come, children, that's a hint from Polly that we ought to be going home; and see the sun has dyed the sky with beautiful colors, but they are fading away, and soon will come night." The two little ones followed the Councillor, Lily and Guy whispering to each other how much they loved the story the Councillor had told them, and how they would never, never forget it.

Months came and went, till one day a ship came sailing by the island. The Councillor was greatly excited, for this was the first which had ever passed that way since his stay there. He signalled to them and they sent a boat ashore. He found that it was a trading vessel and that a passage would gladly be given them.

The Councillor's heart was sore when he bade farewell to what had long been a delightful home, but he concluded that he had acted wisely in seeking a home, where if anything happened to him, others would be around to protect and look after the children.

Poor little Lily hid her face in the Councillor's arms and wept bitterly, for she had no time to bid her friends good-bye, and would they not think it very unkind of her. There were her favorite flowers, and the birds, and her dear crabs, who always came up the

shore to see her, and all the beautiful shells. "But only look at this beauty I brought away for you," whispered Guy to her, holding up a shell so delicately tinted that Lily gave a cry of joy and dried her tears, at sight of which, Polly, who had been much disturbed by the strangeness of things around her, called out, much to the sailors' amusement :

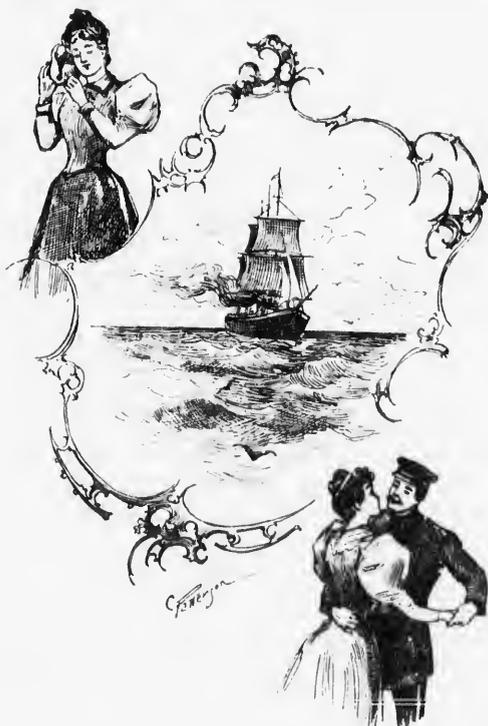
"Hasten not, nor make a din,
Fuss and flutter seldom win."

The ship bore them away to a strange country, and the old pleasant life became changed. No longer did the two children wander hand in hand through the thick woods, loving, yet trembling to explore their deepest parts, and breathing more freely when the dim light of the woods was left behind, and the solemn sighing of the wind among the trees was exchanged for the roar and tumble of the waves upon the long stretch of golden sand, where they would race up and down with many a joyous shout.

Now partially fledged, like the little birds of their island home, they were to be launched on the sea of life to take up the burden of responsibility. And wisely had their dear Councillor prepared them for this perilous time. Before their coming to the island he had taught Polly words of wisdom. How much more did he love to nourish their opening minds. A walk with the Councillor then meant the unfolding of the priceless treasures of Nature rejoicing in the sunlight. And at night, when their gaze was directed upwards and the joyous spirits born of air and sunlight were awed by the grandeur of the heavens, he taught them of the wonders to be found there.

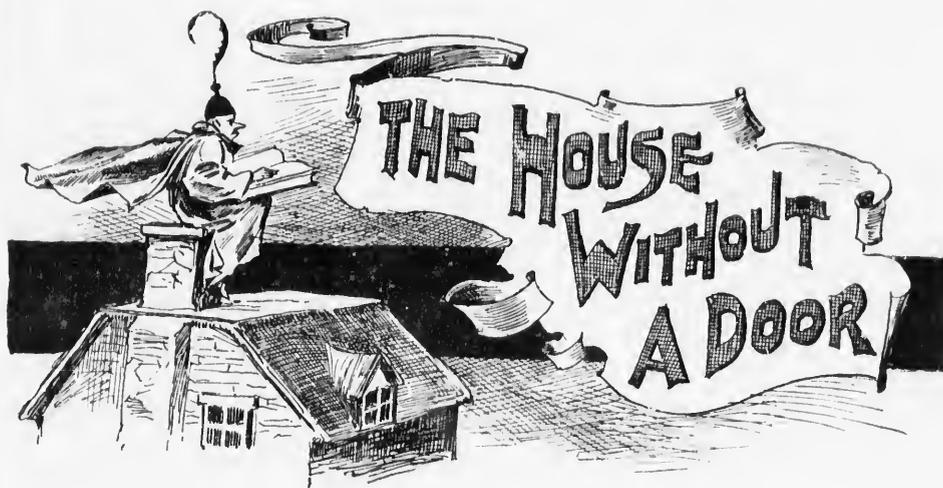
Thus did the Sea-Waifs enter life with Nature's lessons deep in their hearts. School-life passed, Guy left home to follow the sea. From time to time he paid flying visits to his home, and when he could not visit the two loved ones at home, he would send beautiful

presents from the far-off lands where his ship touched. And one never-to-be-forgotten day came a letter saying that Guy was now a captain of a fine ship and that he was coming home for a long visit. As the Councillor read the letter, Lily's eyes grew brighter and her smile sweeter than ever, and the Councillor, as he looked at her, hushed the sigh that lay dangerously near his lips, instead of which he asked, "Will the Sea-Queen make the Sea-King happy when he comes home?" And Lily, with a smiling nod, ran up to her room and taking up the shell which Guy had given her on their departure from the island, held it to her ear, and it sang so sweetly to her over again the story of Foam-of-the-Sea. And as she listened she said softly to herself, "I, too, will marry the one I love."



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“ WHAT HEMPEN HOMESPUNS HAVE WE SWAGGERING HERE,
SO NEAR THE CRADLE OF THE FAIRY QUEEN ? ”

Midsummer Night's Dream, Act III., Scene I.

In a country so far away from here that it borders on Fairyland, there is a great, wide, treeless moor. A single road winds across it, and dotted about in clusters are small dwellings in which live simple-minded people who herd sheep and cultivate little patches of ground. They lead peaceable lives, and are all very friendly together, visiting each other and telling, over and over again, stories of strange doings in the unknown realm which lies so near them. It has sometimes happened that the mysteries and revels of that magic world have overlapped the border line, and very curious things have been seen and heard by the dwellers on the moor. But at the time of my story's commencement nothing of the kind had occurred for many a year, and the tales were looked upon as belonging to olden times.

One day a stranger came among them. He arrived all alone, carrying his luggage in bundles. These he laid upon the ground

whilst he laboured at the building of his house, which was really only a hut, for it was very small. He seemed to be very unhappy, although he was wonderfully handsome, and wore a bright sword. The friendly people wanted to help him, but he would have none of them, and only seemed to desire that they would let him alone. So they ceased to speak with him, and just watched him as he worked. They walked around his bundles and wondered what they held, and one man said that he was nearly as sure as sure could be that he saw, peeping out through a rent in the handkerchief that held it, a golden crown set with glittering gems.

And so it came to pass that the stranger was left to build his dwelling by himself, and not being, as anyone might see, in the least accustomed to labour with his hands, the framework of his house had many faults; and indeed he had almost finished his task before he bethought himself that it had no door! This was a serious blunder. The sides of the house were so nicely finished and strong that it really would have seemed a shame to make a hole in one of them, so it ended in his putting on the thatched roof and leaving no place at which he could get in or out except the chimney! His neighbours, when they saw it, wished more than ever to be on visiting terms with him, for they thought that to knock with one's foot at the chimney would be a new social sensation. But they felt more strongly than before that friendly intercourse was out of the question, "For," they said sadly, "he must wish that we would never visit him when he builds in this manner."

They opened wide their eyes indeed when he unrolled his bundles, and they saw that these he!d little else than books, which he threw one by one down the chimney, the more curious of the rabble peering meanwhile through the latticed window.

And after that, he could be seen by those who cared to peep, day by day, aye, and by night also, poring over his books.

"He must be a hermit," they said, "And yet he has a princely look. 'Tis a pity." And as they did not know his name, they gave him one and called him Eremos the Lonely, and as time went on, he became known also as the Hermit of the Moor.

And, indeed, his mode of life was very hermit-like, seeing that all day long he read, only appearing for a little while about sundown on the roof of his inhospitable abode to take the air. There he would sit upon the chimney ledge, which was in a sense his door step.

Well, one moonlight night a very curious thing happened as he sat there later than usual gazing dreamily into the summer air where one would expect to see nothing more important than fireflies or moths. The House without a Door was somewhat apart from its neighbours, and no one else was near to observe a very odd-looking, crooked little figure that suddenly alighted on the roof. Where this person came from, the Hermit could never tell. He had not seen his approach, nor had he heard him scrambling up the wall, and he was startled enough at the strange appearance, and still more when the intruder, in harsh and strident accents, asked :

"Whom have you got down in that hole, eh?" and pointed a long and mis-shapen finger at the chimney.

"I have got no one there," replied Eremos.

"No one, eh?" repeated the odd little man suspiciously, "and what is the hole for? Where dungeons are, prisoners must be," and he put his head to one side, and wore a most unpleasant leer.

Eremos had arisen with the intention of bidding his strange visitor to depart, but the little man just skipped past him, and seizing hold of the ledge, swung himself down by one ear into the room below.

The Hermit gazed down the chimney after him, and saw him groping about in the dimly lighted corners as if searching for something. It was quite too dark for him to see, and with an angry ex-

clamation, he caught hold of a straggling moonbeam which had entered by the window, and twisted and jerked it about so as to lighten in turn each nook and cranny. He even, still holding it, got down upon his knees and threw the pale glare under the table, while his bright eyes scanned that hiding place severely. The way in which he handled the moonbeam, brought home to the mind of Eremos very vividly the fact, at which he had been guessing, that his weird visitor was a fay or goblin of some kind. He was slightly hump-backed, very ugly, but as active and lithe as a squirrel. When the search was concluded, he flung his uncanny torch aside, and blew on and licked his fingers as if to cool them. Then with a jump, a jerk, and a scramble he regained the thatch.

"You seem to understand the management of moonlight," Eremos could not help saying.

"Eh? Oh, yes, 'fairy moonlight,' you know, ha, ha! But I can't waste time listening to your clack now; tell me, and truly, mind you," and here he pointed a finger threateningly, "mind you speak the truth—has any one passed by this way to-night before me?"

"Not to my knowledge," replied the Hermit, and he thought to himself that even if some poor fugitive had taken that route in flying from the horrible little goblin, he would not help the pursuer.

"No one, eh?" repeated the creature, "Not a damsel with star-like eyes, eh? Answers to the name of Jessamine. Have not seen her, eh?"

And when Eremos shook his head, the goblin slid nimbly down to the ground, and moving off was soon lost to view in the increasing gloom.

The night air grew chill, and the hermit went into his dwelling and sat down upon the three-legged stool which he had made, along with the table, out of the wood that was left from building the house. He usually sat there at this hour and read, but on this night he did

not open a book. For once he seemed roused to interest in other things. He looked under the table, and into the corners as the goblin had done, as though he too expected to find someone there. But he held no fairy torchlight in his hand, and all was darkness. He repeated to himself the name that he had heard.

“Jessamine, Jessamine,” he repeated softly, “It is a pretty name. I would that she escape this goblin.”

And then he started, for he thought that something tapped upon the lattice. It was a gentle and timid little rapping, and he was not quite sure that he heard it. He waited, but all was still, and then he sighed. The sigh was because, for the first time, he felt lonely, and had almost hoped that the sound might betoken another visitor. And as he sighed he said again :

“Jessamine, Jessamine.”

“It is I, Jessamine,” said a voice at the window ; such a sweet little voice. It would have been silvery, only that it was so sorrowful ; it sounded like falling tears.

Eremos sprang to the window and opened it wide. There, out in the darkness, shivering in the chill night breeze, stood a little figure, clothed in white gossamer. He could not see her plainly, for she stood where the house cast a shadow in the moonlight, but in the darkness her two eyes shone with starry beauty, and Eremos remembered what his first visitor had said. He leaned out, and taking her cold, trembling hands, he drew her up to the window and lifted her inside.

Oh, such a forlorn little damsel had surely never strayed from Fairyland before. Her gossamer robes were draggled ; her hands and her lovely bare feet were torn and bleeding.

“I am Jessamine,” she said, piteously, “you called to me, and I came.”

“And you shall bid me serve you,” said Eremos, and as he

spoke he glanced for the first time in many a day at his sword which hung idly on the wall. "Most lovely Jessamine, I will do your bidding whatever it be."

"But you are the Hermit of the Moor," she said, "the Hermit who never leaves off to study."

"True," said Eremos, heavily, and he wondered a little how she knew so much about him; and then, because his heart had opened before the beauty of her eyes—as a flower folded all through the dark night expands in haste at daydawn—he forgot his silence and patient sorrow, and told to her the secret of his strange manner of life.

"I am a King," said he, "but a King who has never sat upon his throne, because when the day arrived for me to do so, I failed to pass my examination; was plucked, in short, through a tardy memory, and nothing remained but, with my crown and my books, to fly into this solitude, where, by reading day and night, I may yet be enabled to conquer this difficulty. I brought my crown," he explained, "to prevent any usurper from taking the place thus temporarily vacant."

Jessamine, in spite of her sorrows, was interested.

"But will they not easily make another crown?" she asked.

"No," replied Eremos, "they have no pattern. They are capable of attempting it, but I am satisfied that they cannot succeed. But no matter for my crown, I have here my sword, and with it I will slay anyone who dares to molest you, for I have ever been mightier with sword than with book or pen, and, had my examination been trial of strength or agility, I had not been so easily vanquished. I can kick harder and higher than anyone I know," he added, thoughtfully, and then in more business-like manner, he asked: "Your enemy is a dark-faced little goblin, is he not? A hunchback, who wears a wicked leer?"

In reply the beautiful Jessamine covered her face with her hands and sank shivering to the floor, and it was some time before she was sufficiently recovered to explain her emotion.

"He is a goblin," she said, "into whose hands I fell whilst abroad on a mission for my liege lady, the Queen of the Fairies, of whose retinue I am. He has endeavoured by cruel imprisonment to compel me to divulge the secrets of her court. This I have not done, although I despaired of regaining my liberty. To-night an opportunity occurred to escape him, and I fled. Alas, and alas, am I better off? My wings he has clipped, and I cannot safely stray, nor may I send any message to my friends in the farthest segment of Fairyland, because I cannot date a letter here, being so far from any dial which truly tells how the shadows pass."

"But we can tell the time of day here," cried Eremos, "and we know also the day of the week, the month, and the year."

But Jessamine shook her head and smiled sadly.

"Such dates as these would never do," she replied, "the postal regulations with us are so strict and thorough that most letters never reach their destination at all. A letter dated as you suggest would have no chance. The only way, if you, kind Hermit, will let me remain here awhile, will be to await the possible arrival of some other fay, who will tell me the latest date. We are oftener here-about than you fancy," she continued, "and I have frequently, in happier days, in company with blithesome sprites, watched you as you pored over your books."

"But I know a better way out of this difficulty than your plan, fair Jessamine," exclaimed Eremos. "Bid me go hence to ascertain this date for you. I will penetrate far into Fairyland, and brave for so sweet a sake any perils that can offer. Only tell me what course to follow."

This seemed so much the best way, that with mingled tears and

rejoicings they at once bade one another adieu, and Jessamine, as she fastened on the sword of her royal envoy, said :

"When you cross the border, and are within the precincts of Fairyland, remember that you are within a circle. A circle is the shape of an apple pie, and the magic land is divided into portions by lines which meet in the centre."

"That is again like an apple pie," said Eremos, brightly. He was clever enough when he was not at an official examination.

"So it is," replied Jessamine. "Well, you must follow any line that leads to the centre, where the Great Magic Sundial stands, which makes known the date by the flight of Shadows. This observe, and return to me."

Eremos willingly undertook to follow these directions, and set out without more delay on his chivalrous enterprise.

He was not long of finding the border, over which no dweller of the moor was ever willing to cross. It was marked by a hedge, and generally when an errant sheep or turkey strayed beyond it, the owner was willing rather to lose it than to follow. Eremos gaily vaulted over the slight defence. His spirits had risen, and he seemed another person since he had quitted his books. He whistled as he went, for even kings are jolly of heart at times.

Seen from the moor, the country which he now traversed had appeared flat, bare and uninteresting ; but, curiously enough, as soon as he breathed its atmosphere, a change came over all that he saw. It was as if he now wore coloured spectacles, and rose-coloured at that, for everything had become delightfully pink, and he felt elated with the charm of it. He seemed to breathe enchanted air, and looked about him for some cause of it all, but only great butterflies flew about in the sunshine, and flowers bloomed at his feet.

But presently he noticed that these same sweet and quiet blossoms differed from any that he had known. He stood still to gaze

upon them, and lo, and behold, the plants grew as he looked, and following them with the eye, he saw that they reached the rainbows that spanned the sky above. About these beautiful arches the plants twined their tendrils, and he saw that he was really walking about in an immense arbour. It was all very strange. A rainbow seen at night-time is, in itself, a very remarkable thing.

Eremos looked about him for a dividing line, such as Jessamine had bade him seek, but nowhere could he see any sign of such. A thought struck him and he looked overhead, where the glorious bands of colour were seen through waving wreaths of vines and flowers that were interwoven among them. As he gazed he became certain his idea was right, and that the rainbows met and crossed one another, right overhead, in the middle of the sky.

"These are the lines," he exclaimed aloud, "and I must find the tag end of a rainbow, and climb to the centre."

To this end he now struck out boldly for the horizon and walked with energy for a long, long time, only to find that as he advanced, the horizon receded from him, and the central and loftiest part of the sky, where the rainbows met, continued to be directly overhead. He felt bewildered.

"Does the whole world move with me?" in despair he asked aloud. "Am I the North Pole?"

So awful a thought, joined with the loneliness of the place, might have driven him mad in time, had not fatigue, at this very moment, so overcome him, that he was forced to succumb, and hardly had his head touched the bundle of grass which he hastily bound together for a pillow, than he gained respite from torturing disquiet by sinking into a deep slumber.

Now, Eremos liked when he slept that his head should be very high, so to make himself more comfortable he had, in lying down placed his hastily made cushion upon a leafy little plant which grew

there. But in that wonderful land neither plants nor anything else are to be trusted for a moment ; one never knows what they will do, and it is always the unexpected that happens. So it turned out that Eremos, who had thought only of snatching a little repose, was, whilst he slept, borne aloft upon this plant, which spread in such rapid wise that he had hardly begun to dream ere he was higher up in the air than the top of any elm or maple tree you have ever seen. Its branches stretched out, so that not only his head, but his whole body was well supported. Up, up he sped ; the plant was growing so fast that it actually creaked. Upwards, and further yet, until the world below was lost to view and the fleecy white clouds were about him.

Just as the waving boughs of the immense tree reached the rainbows and began to wreath and twine about them, Eremos awoke. His astonishment was so great that he had very nearly rolled over and off his strange bed, for naturally it was full of gaps that might easily have let him through, but he perceived his danger in time, and laying firm hold of a twig near at hand, he remained still until he was able to step out upon a landing place.

He found himself in a country stranger than anyone ever dreamed of. It might most truly be said of it that it was all the colours of the rainbow. He stood near the centre where the beautiful bows met, and they stretched away on every hand. And the flooring between them was wonderful, too. It was transparent, and so bright that it reflected everything like a mirror, and Eremos could see his own form quite distinctly, only, of course, he appeared to be head downwards. And the leaves and flowers were seen there, too, as were also the glittering butterflies and gaily-plumaged birds that darted about in the air. And amid all this revelry of colour, one tint seemed to prevail, and it was the hue of a June rose, and

Eremos guessed now why the world below had been tinged with so lovely a blush. The tint had shone through the transparent floor and bathed all beneath it in beauty. All was so pink and so charming that Eremos felt very happy, and exclaimed aloud :

“This is the true Fairyland ! This is the home of Jessamine !”

Speaking her name made him remember his mission, which the surprise of his singular arrival had almost put out of remembrance. He was, as we have seen, quite near the centre, where the Magic Sundial was to be sought, but in the confusion of the moment he forgot this part of his instructions, and set out along a flower-decked road that seemed to cross the rainbows and lead into regions out of sight. It was in the memory-subjects that he had been plucked in the examination that had cost him, temporarily, the use and comfort of a throne.

Well, he had not gone far on his way when he discovered a band of sprites, who wore a very dejected appearance, and were hard at work repainting a faded space in one of the rainbows. They were chained together by a coral string, and were evidently a gang of culprits. Eremos came upon them suddenly, and when they saw him, their tear-stained faces brightened, and they flung aside their paint-brushes, and springing to their feet, cried :

“An intruder ! An intruder ! Let him pay the penalty !”

Then all the band clapped their hands, and they flocked around him, clamouring to him to sever the chain which bound them. Scarcely knowing what he did, and bewildered by their number and persistency, he undid the coral band, and had no sooner accomplished this than he saw his error, for, seizing the chain, they, one and all, laid hold on him and bound him hand and foot. He remonstrated meanwhile, but uselessly, and it was not until they had him fully secured and they paused for breath, that one replied to his demands for an explanation of their behaviour.

"We are in disgrace," said this fay, "and are undergoing punishment. We were not to be freed until we had painted this tedious arch, or *found someone else to do it!* Ha, ha, ha!"

And the sprites laughed long and loud.

"But I cannot do it," said Eremos, "I am no artist, and besides, I am pressed for time, and the task is long."

"Oh, yes, it is long," laughed the heartless little creatures, "it is as long as the endless song of a mountain torrent, and we wish you joy of it!"

And they busied themselves in trimmimg their wings for flight. The one who was latest in taking his departure said :

"You had better labour well at the task, for, ere long, the Queen will pass this way, and if the work be not done you will be handed over to be Stung by Bees."

And in a twinkling this one too was gone, and Eremos found himself alone and in a bad plight indeed, for the selfish little creatures, in their haste to be away, had stupidly tied his hands behind him, and his feet together.

"What shall I do?" he groaned, "if the dreadful warning be true, and I really suffer unguessed torment from some malignant insects? For what do I know of Bees in Fairyland? They are, doubtless, of monstrous size and shape!"

And he had but time to finish the groan with which he ended his speech, when, coming towards him, he espied a gorgeous train of beings, richly attired, and lovely as a summer's day. The throng was led by one who wore a crown and carried a sceptre or wand. These creatures were as different as possible from the rascally little elves who had placed Eremos in his present grave predicament. Their beauty made him think of Jessamine, and he felt sure that they were her companions."

They stopped when they reached the spot where he stood, and

the face of the Fairy Queen grew stern as she looked upon the scattered paint pots, brushes, and pallettes which lay in confusion as the absconding fays had left them. Holding out her wand towards Eremos, she said :

“What means this disorder? I commanded that certain erring subjects repair this damaged rainbow; how then do I find on my arrival this wild disorder, and in the midst of it a trespasser on my demesne, whilst they who should have done my behest are nowhere in view?”

“Most royal Lady,” replied Eremos, “I am in no way to blame for their default. Know that I am here to do the bidding of one more worthy than they, and likewise your subject; the lovely Jessamine in my lonely house in yonder moor awaits my return with
—with—with—”

Alas, and alas, the royal Hermit's memory, never reliable, had most inopportunately given way, and he could not in the least remember what it was that Jessamine had bade him discover; and as he hesitated and stammered, the fairy band looked at one another significantly, and the Queen's eyes grew dark with displeasure.

It was really dreadful; he could not think of the word “date,” and this was very strange, because he had always been so fond of eating dates that he might be supposed to have that word of all others at ready command. He rubbed his eyes and knitted his brows in vain. His treacherous memory simply would not work, while, most unluckily, that other part of his head, called the Bump for Association of Ideas, was in first rate order, and going like a mill with all the power turned on. And so it happened that all he could think of was Dried Fruits! And every kind of dried fruits except dates! And, horror upon horrors, he finally blurted out :

“A Fig, may it please your royal Grace!”

“A Fig, indeed!” murmured the fairies. “Would Jessamine

have sent hither this knavish intruder on so trivial an errand? We have never known Jessamine to value figs so highly!"

And said the Queen, deeply incensed:

"It pleases my royal Grace that you, most audacious trespasser, be instantly transformed into a Will o' Wisp, vagrant forever!"

"Mercy, most powerful Queen!" cried Eremos, only prevented by the chain which fastened his feet from falling upon his knees before her, as she raised in air her magic wand; "Mercy, if not for my sake, for Jessamine, whose behest I obey."

"Go," commanded the Queen, turning to one of her followers, "go to the dwelling of the Hermit of the Moor, for this is he, and see if he have there our lost Jessamine in cruel captivity. Invest yourself with fullest magical powers that you may undo his spells;" and as her attendant disappeared to do her bidding, the Queen, extending her sceptre touched the unfortunate Eremos upon the brow, and instantly he vanished, and from the spot where he had been, there rose a flickering flame that danced, and faded, and shone again, all in the space of a minute. And if it paused for a moment you could see the form and lineaments of Eremos, that most miserable of kings.

"Begone," said the Fairy Queen, "and perform your aimless gambols upon earth; serve as a torchlight to fugitive lovers, and terrify the unwary who molest them, thus may you yet have your uses."

And earthward he went, and though he seemed to go like a comet, so swiftly and so sure, yet his course was so fantastic and capricious that he made slow progress, after all, and it was long ere he reached and crossed the hedge row and found himself once more upon the open moor. He spun and danced along gaily enough to outward seeming, but a certain nucleus in the flame, which really

was its heart, glowed with bitterest anger, and ached with disappointment, for even a Will o' Wisp has its feelings.

A loiterer said to his companions :

"Look, that is the brightest Will o' Wisp that I have ever seen. It must be going to rain before morning."

The loiterer said this, not because he had ever really observed that such dancing lights foretold wet weather, but because he was in the habit of thinking that everything out of doors was a sign of rain.

It was night-time. A Will o' Wisp sleeps by day, and is never seen then. This is the way with everything that pertains to Fairyland, for there night and day change places. Fairies and elves ramble forth by night and this is the real reason why it is good to go early to bed, and not, as is so often erroneously told, in order that one may be up to catch worms at sunrise. Who wants to catch worms, late or early ?

Well, late on this night, when the dwellers of the Moor, who knew well the danger of being abroad, were sound asleep in their beds, there were strange doings about the House Without a Door. Upon the roof, close to the chimney, sat Jessamine, once more tearful and lamenting. Kneeling around her, and hovering in the air above were the beautiful creatures whom Eremos had seen in their rainbow-circled home. They besought her with endearments and with arguments to leave that desolate place and return with them. And below in the dewy grass there danced merrily a Will o' Wisp. But as he bounded up and down so lightly, ah me, how the bright heart of him glowed !

The fairies sang :—

"Come, Jessamine, from vain regrets,
So vain regrets,
From grief that thy sweet bosom frets,

To happier hours
 In our bright world where joys ne'er close,
 Where life is all *couleur de rose* ;
 In rainbow bowers
 The changeless flowers,
 With perfumed souls, thy sun-born kin
 Do mourn and weep for Jessamine."

But Jessamine only wept the more.

The Will o' Wisp was bounding higher than ever such an one essayed before, but his most daring flight did not reach the edge of the roof. And he could not be still; it was not in his nature. Dance he must, so he circled round and round the House Without a Door, and the circles grew ever wider, so that as he danced he receded further into the gloom of the night-bound Moor.

And still the Fairies pleaded with the lovely and disconsolate Jessamine, and entreated that she would likewise sing; but she could not, and with tears she besought of them to leave her.

"He is now a Wandering Light," she said, "an Illuminated Tramp! And it was in serving me that this fate o'ertook him! Shall I betake myself to a rosy existence such as I once enjoyed, whilst he wanders over the treeless Moor? No, while the flowers bloom and fade again, here will I wait his return. Go hence, and tell our Liege Lady that here I pine until she loose from him I love her cruel spell."

And the fairy band was fain to depart, for they had been long with her, and in the east a faint light gave warning of the approach of day.

Now a fairy can, in ordinary circumstances—that is, if you can in any case call the circumstances that surround such a being ordinary—a fairy can render herself invisible at any time if she so

please, but, you see, Jessamine was not in full possession of her magical powers. She was not, so to say, in good condition, owing to the clipping of her wings. So it fell out that the good people of the Moor very soon discovered that a lovely damsel whom they, of course, judged to be mortal like themselves, inhabited the House Without a Door, and also that Eremos was no longer there. They were full of surmisings and said :

“ Depend upon it, this is his bride, and he has gone away to fetch a gigantic wedding-cake, and it will be frosted all over, and adorned with favours and flowers and tapers.”

And one and another added to the tale, until they forgot that it was at the first but an idle conjecture; and they used to gaze up the road and watch for the arrival of the cake.

“ It will be drawn by horses,” they said, “ and guarded by a retinue, for Eremos was a person of renown and distinction. We have always known that.”

Yes, there they were right, they had always guessed at his rank, but as they gossipped thus, and awaited the arrival of a royal bridegroom, surrounded by pomp and cake, there danced and whirled, wearily, wearily, in the farthest stretches of the Moor, a homeless Will o' Wisp !

Gradually the people drew near to Jessamine. They could not make formal calls, because she sat always upon the outside of her house, and was therefore, as anyone might see, very much Not At Home. But they seated themselves upon the ground, and seeing that the height of the building was so inconsiderable, they were able to converse quite nicely.

“ Do you look for his speedy return, Mistress ? ” asked one who was the Reeve, one evening.

“ I do nothing else day or night, but look for it,” replied the sad Jessamine.

"Ah," said a little Shepherdess, "how fond and faithful is love!"

"It must be that they cannot get the oven heated sufficiently for so large a cake, and so it will not bake," said another. "Surely nothing else would detain him so long."

"Is that it, think you, Mistress?" asked the Reeve.

"It is the spell," replied Jessamine, wearily, for their talk sometimes wearied her.

"The spell!" they all echoed in one breath, and then were silent, wondering what it meant.

"I cannot spell well myself," began the Reeve, "but I never let it stand in my way."

At this the people laughed loud and long, for it was notorious that the Reeve was very badly educated, and had really won his position by his good nature alone.

When the crowd ceased their laughing, Jessamine, who had not understood what it all meant, asked:

"Can you then conquer spells so that they do not stand in your way?"

The Reeve grew red at this, because his friends and neighbors laughed more merrily than ever.

"What is it you want spelled, Mistress?" he asked, "Put it to the crowd, and let us see how many of them can give it since they are so smart."

"'Tis a Will o' Wisp," began Jessamine, and got no further for the clatter which arose.

All the people desiring greatly the fun of hearing the Reeve blunder over this word with its two capital letters and apostrophe, insisted, with much noisy mirth, that he attempt it. He stood rubbing his head, and looking very foolish, indeed, in the fine predicament which his tongue had got him into, when the little

Shepherdess, who was very kind-hearted and could feel for him because she also was not learned, stepped up behind him and whispered the only thing that she could think of.

"First catch your Will o' Wisp," was what she said.

"Ay, ay, and let him spell it," cried the Reeve. "Thank you, my good girl. Look here, mistress," he continued, addressing the sad Jessamine, "I'll spell the word easy enough for you to-morrow. 'Tis too late now, the word is an uncanny one, and who knows what may be about at this hour? We live too near the border here to spell out name of fay or goblin after sundown."

This sobered the spirits of the mob at once. They had not noticed before how late it was, and they, one and all, hastened home to bolt their doors, draw their window curtains, and go to bed.

But the Reeve lingered behind, and beckoned the Shepherdess, "When and how shall I find the Will o' Wisp?" he asked.

The Shepherdess shivered with fright, for she did not like speaking of such things late in the evening, either, and she only answered hastily :

"One danced by here only a few nights ago. I watched him from my window. But I would not follow him, were I you. I would not do it for a king's ransom. Ugh, look yonder," and she screamed, "there he comes," and she drew her shawl over her head, and ran to her home as fast as she could.

And sure enough, when the Reeve looked in the direction towards which she had nodded her head, he saw, a good distance off, but coming towards him, a pale light that danced and bounded, although there seemed no real merriment in its gambols. It was more like an unhappy spectre tossed in the breeze than a light-hearted dancer.

Now the Reeve was no coward, so although his teeth chattered in his head, he pulled himself together and went forward to meet the

goblin light. Just to stay the beating of his heart and keep his mind occupied, he talked to himself as he walked, although he was only able to say over and over the same words that he had just heard from the Shepherdess. It sounded like gibberish.

"I would not follow him, I would not follow him, follow, follow him, not for a king's ransom. Oh, dear, how hot it is; I am streaming with perspiration, not for a king's ransom, oh, no, not for a king's ransom; A KING'S RANSOM, A KING'S RANSOM."

His voice had risen to a shriek, and his hair was standing straight on end. The pale flame with its glittering heart was approaching at an awful pace. But not even then did the Reeve give out, although his knees knocked together so that he could hear them, and he felt as though, whilst his feet were going through a form of taking steps, yet he made no progress. He really looked as awful as a very shy young man entering a drawing-room.

"A KING'S RANSOM! A KING'S RANSOM!" he shouted, as he met the phantom face to face.

And "Oh, ransom and save me; I am the king," came faintly from the flame, and, horrified as he was, in that moment the Reeve perceived that the weird light had human form, and his heart smote him when the changed and tremulous tones recalled to his mind the voice of the Hermit of the Moor.

"And we chattering of wedding-cake whilst he was abroad in this scrape!" thought he.

His goodness of heart was so great that, overcoming his terror, he extended his arms to stay the motion of the light, but uselessly. Who ever hindered the movements of a Will o' Wisp!

"Stand steady, sir," cried the Reeve, who had removed his hat, for he had taken note of the fact that the Will o' Wisp had declared himself to be a king. "Stand as steady as you can, and give me my orders. They shall be obeyed, and speedily, or I am not the

Reeve of this Moor. "This is some fairy's doing, I'll be bound, sir."

"Save me, save me," came faintly again from the flame as it rose higher in air, and, then descending, it wailed "Pierce, oh pierce my heart!"

"But how can I do that, sir?" asked the Reeve, and as soon as he uttered the question, the whisper of the Shepherdess came back to his mind most aptly.

"First catch your Will o' Wisp," he said aloud, "Aye, that must I do, ere I think of saving or killing, please your majesty. Well," he went on, addressing the dancing phantom which piteously waved its arms towards him, "Well, I take it that you can't give any assistance towards the catching, yourself, and therefore this enterprise devolves entirely on me."

Now, it is a very strange thing, but I cannot really tell how often I have read of very great men who could never learn to spell. It is quite as if an inability to spell were one of the signs of genius. I always look with pleased suspicion on anyone who writes to me: "I am knot a Tending skool at prezunt," or who calls me his "deer frend." The possybillytees B4 sutch pepel ar grate. Certain it is that the Reeve was of this gifted many, and it is equally sure that at a moment when every circumstance seemed too formidable for contest, he invented a plan of rescue which was so simple, and yet so satisfactory, that he could not refrain from clapping his hands. It was nothing else than this: Eremos was the Will o' Wisp, the Will o' Wisp was fire—a thin cotton garment catches fire readily if it only touch flame! So, shouting to the royal Hermit to hold as still as he might for a brief space, the Reeve ran for home as hard as he could.

Arrived there he twitched the sheets off his bed, and rolled them loosely around him, twisting also a pillow-slip about his head. Thus arrayed, off he set on his hazardous mission. And here he showed

how truly clever he was. His steps were directed first towards the church, for in its steeple hung the fire-bell. He gave the bell a good pull, and laughed as he ran onward, for it continued to vibrate, and mingling with its loud clang, he could hear bolts withdrawn from his neighbors' doors and windows, whilst night-capped heads were thrust out to ask where the conflagration was.

In but a few minutes more all the dwellers on the Moor were out and running with common consent to the engine house, for these good people had long been equipped for surprises of this kind, and had a fire brigade which was a credit to the Moor. Nearly all the men and boys belonged to it.

It was easy enough to get on their brass helmets, and draw out the bravely shining engine, but where to go was another story. They had no horses, and the engine and reels were drawn by the firemen themselves. These looked eagerly in every direction for darting tongues of flame, or even smoke to appear, and were beginning to fear that it was a mistake, when a cry arose from the outskirts of the crowd, and ere anyone had time to ask what it was, a blazing column of fire rushed past, and made in the direction of the House Without a Door.

But the little Shepherdess, as it passed her, gave a scream.

"It is the Reeve," she said, "the Goblin Light has got him!" and she sobbed and wrung her hands, for she remembered that in an idle moment she had bade him catch the Will o' Wisp. Poor little Shepherdess, she was like to be trampled by the rushing people, for she was too greatly distressed to get out of the way. "How fond and faithful is love!"

And the brigade was in pursuit, and the laity, that is, the people who were not firemen, were after the brigade, and in this wise they reached the House of the Hermit.

Up the wall scrambled the blazing figure. It was an awful

sight. A weird and horrid scuffle seemed to be taking place; a brawny form, seen through the flaming sheets that enveloped it, appeared to hold itself back, struggling against the power of the vague shape of fire which drew it on. The stalwart figure was the Reeve, nobly unwilling to draw near to the hapless Jessamine, lest the contact set her gossamer robe alight, and the force that bade him onward against his will was Eremos, whose eyes, uplifted for a moment, had beheld in the air above the radiant form of the Fairy Queen.

High in air she watched over the safety of her best loved maid of honour, whose faculties were so benumbed with grief that she was all unconscious that so powerful a friend hovered near.

The Will o' Wisp gathered his nearly-spent energies together, and in a prolonged wail, which, after all, was so faint that it sounded to the mortals on the ground below like the sighing of the night-wind, he said:

“Oh, cruel Queen, pity, and undo this horrible and undeserved punishment!”

“Most insolent mortal,” replied the queen, “it is thy fault that Jessamine, refusing my endearments, mourns here. And I know, also, that by thy machinations, thou hast nearly compassed the ruin of this foolish fellow, whom they call the Reeve. Him I will rescue and restore to his kin.”

The Queen's accusation was, of course, quite unjust. The fact was that she had been so much disturbed about Jessamine's unhappy plight, that she had not really been observing lately what was taking place in Fairyland, or in the Moor, and was rather guessing at things. When she had spoken she extended her hand and gently touched the sheeted form, and behold, in an instant the flaming drapery fell away, and the Reeve stood suddenly revealed to the gaze of the astonished populace. And not a moment too soon, for a stream of water was just ready to play on him.

He was about to address himself to Jessamine, when the Fairy Queen, perceiving his intention, applied her sceptre more roughly than before, and sent him toppling to the ground. Of course a great commotion ensued, and messengers were despatched in haste for an ambulance, and their attention being so fully taken up, the Dwellers on the Moor failed to see a very strange scene on the roof, stranger indeed than had ever been told in their fire-side tales. And it was a very pretty sight, too. The lovely Jessamine, with outstretched arms, knelt suppliant before her Liege Lady, beseeching pity for the unhappy Eremos, who, waving arms of flame in frantic gestures, joined his petition to hers. In vain! The Queen continued stern and unyielding.

"Mercy, oh, my Queen," cried Jessamine, "Mercy, for the sake of happy hours wherein I have delighted to serve you."

And "Pity! oh, pity!" breathed the flame.

"Burn for a year and a day," commanded the unrelenting Queen. "Burn and dance for a twelve-month to come."

"And I, also," cried Jessamine, her tears streaming like rain, "for a year and a day I will suffer with him."

And extending her gossamer robe, she rushed towards him, and in another moment would have been ablaze, had not her action compelled the Queen to lay, just in time, her magic wand upon the Will o' Wisp. It was done to save her beloved Jessamine, but the rescue of Eremos, whom she had so cruelly persecuted, was, in that moment, complete! The touch, light, and swift as it was, had worked the transformation, and when the people, who had just obliged the Reeve, much against his will, to get into the ambulance, looked up to the roof once more, they gave one great shout of pleasure and surprise, for there stood upon the edge of the thatch, smiling and happy, Eremos and Jessamine, together!

"Hurrah!" shouted the crowd, "hurrah! the Wedding Cake has come!"

"Come with me hence where comrades wait
Thy blithe return to fairy state;
They mourned thee long, their star-eyed mate."

So sang the Fairy Queen, but Jessamine heard not a word, for her eyes and ears were only for Eremos, whose happiness was so great that he was ready to forget the misery which he had known.

And whilst the Queen pleaded above, and the people below shouted their merry congratulations so loudly that the Reeve got out of the ambulance again to see what it all was about, the happy pair talked together.

"You cannot come with me to my Rainbow Country," said Jessamine, "since you have incurred so deeply the anger of the Queen."

The royal Hermit's face grew sad.

"But I cannot leave you, Eremos," said Jessamine then; "it was for me that you endured so much."

"You will dwell here," said Eremos, "until we can travel forth to claim my throne, which holds two easily. Until then this is your home, if so bright and beautiful a being will deign to find content here."

The Queen overhead gave a bitter laugh.

"This bare hovel the home of the star-eyed darling of Fairy land!" she cried, "I will make a speedy end of your bridal mansion."

Once again she raised her evil-working wand, but held it poised in air whilst she hesitated, undecided into what shape she would change the House Without a Door. As she thus pondered, the excited people who had never noticed her presence at all, began to cry out clamorously:

"Where is it? Where is the Cake? The Wedding Cake?"

The Queen caught at the words. Down came the wand at the same moment that she pronounced the sentence,

" Be you, oh hovel, a Wedding Cake, giving indigestion to all who partake of you, breeding nightmares, and ill dreams, and discords !"

And the astonished beholders rubbed their eyes when they saw before them a marvellous Wedding Cake as large as the house which a moment since had vanished ! The Cake was frosted all over and trimmed with coloured sugars in the most exquisite devices. There is nothing in any art gallery in the world to compare with it. Its sides glistened in the starlight, while flags and favours and wax tapers adorned each of its several stories. And right on top, crowning the whole, stood Eremos and Jessamine, bowing and smiling to the gaping people. The Queen had gone away, and they were so very happy.

But they had now no house. The Reeve was the first to think of this, because he was so practical and so good-hearted. He now with his neighbours encouraged and assisted the happy pair to descend the slippery sides of their Wedding Cake, and being very much afraid that he would himself be expected to re-enter the ambulance, he insisted that they regard it as a triumphal car and allow themselves to be drawn in it by the chiefs of the fire brigade to a suitable place of shelter.

" And on the morrow," said he, " we will gather here and build for Eremos the King of Somewhere, and Mistress Jessamine his bride, a House With a Door !"

" And, if you do," said Jessamine, " you shall dine off the cake, each one of you."

It is not usual to cut a wedding cake before the ceremony takes place, but Jessamine did not know this, and really it did not matter, for there was enough of it to last for weeks. And it is on record that next day when the new house was finished building, the jolliest picnic that has ever been known was held, all the guests seating

themselves on the grass around the wonderful Cake, and attacking it so bravely with their knives that ere they rose they had hollowed out a cavern in its huge sides, into which Eremos entered to discover the cause of a certain glitter within its recesses, and found— his Crown!

It was quite uninjured, possibly because the gold of which it was made was so very pure. The people shouted to him to put it on, but instead the Royal Hermit walked to where the Reeve sat upon an enormous fragment of frosting which had broken off from the Cake, and upon the good man's head its owner placed the crown!

"It is yours henceforth," declared Eremos, "I owe all to you."

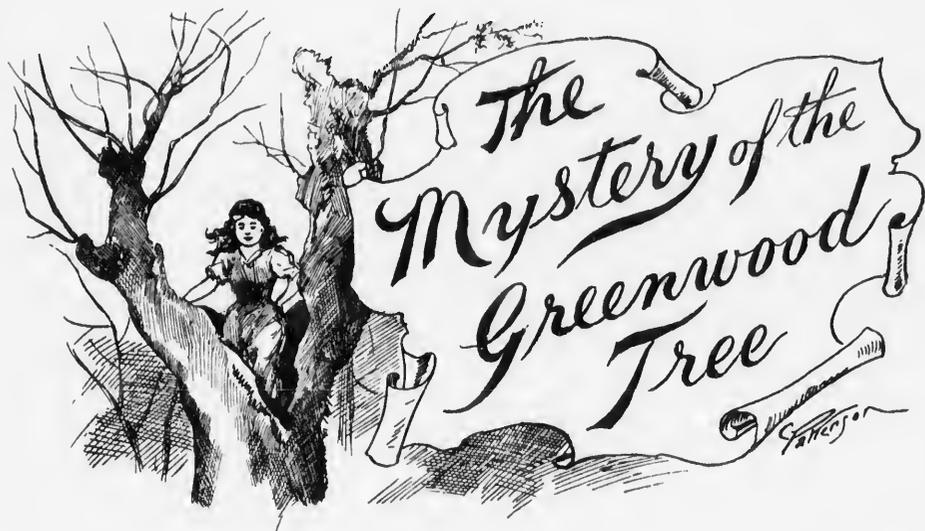
And the Reeve put on the golden and jewelled crown at once, for the wedding of Eremos and Jessamine took place there and then, and it devolved on him to give away the bride.

But Eremos took a pattern of the crown in paper, and this he treasured carefully.

And everybody lived happy, etc., etc.



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“AND YOU WHOSE PASTIME IS TO MAKE MIDNIGHT MUSHROOMS.”

The Tempest, ACT. V., SCENE I.

A fair-haired child named Doris lived with an old woman in a cosy cabin, which stood beside a great rock that sheltered it from the north wind. Three tall oak trees towered above it, and in their pleasant shade, Doris had worked and sported from the time when she learned to walk. She had been only a little baby when Goody Bell found her one morning on the pathway near-by, and the kind old woman had taken her in and reared her to the best of her ability. The little girl was very good, and, of course, was happy also. The only unsatisfied wish that her life had known was for a companion of her own age, and at the time when my story begins, it seemed as if this boon was also to be hers, for in her rambles she had met a child called Poppie, whom little Doris could not help loving, although she knew and felt that there were many points on which

she must disagree with her new friend, in order to do justice to the training she had received from honest Goody Bell.

Well, one afternoon Goody bade her to take her little tin pail, and go into the pasture-land which they knew, to gather mushrooms. The little girl went willingly enough, for it was in this very place that she had first fallen in with Poppie, and of course there were many chances of meeting her there again. But when she was come to the spot where the mushrooms grew, no person was to be seen, and she gathered them alone with a little feeling of disappointment in her heart. The place was on the edge of a forest, and after she had filled her pail, she stood and looked into the darkness between the big tree trunks, whose shadows spread themselves on the ground around her. The grass did not grow on this part of the pasture for it was where the cattle slept at night and they had worn the sod bare. Doris called it her garden, and although it was a lonely spot, she liked it, and used to notice every little change that occurred in it.

As she looked this day her eye was suddenly attracted by what she took to be a very strange and beautiful mushroom growing somewhat apart by itself. It appeared to be neatly scalloped around and there were scarlet and blue dots worked on it. Doris had never, she thought, found anything so pretty before, and she picked it carefully and placed it on top of the others in her pail.

Hardly had she done this when the little girl who had been in her thoughts darted from the greenwood and stood before her. She was of the same height as Doris but her unkempt hair was darker, and her brown feet were bare. Bits of moss and twig were in her curls and burrs had fastened themselves to the ends and frayed edges of her scant and ragged skirts. Her eyes danced merrily, however, and she stood on one foot, the other clasped in her hand, and with

her head on one side, looked good little Doris in the face as though she challenged her to speak.

And indeed she had not to wait, for the good little girl exclaimed joyfully the minute that she saw her :

“ Poppie ! oh, Poppie ! is it you ? ”

The ragged child, whose movements were very rapid, let go of her foot at this and with her arms extended performed, a dance on her toes whilst she sang :

“ Poppie, Poppie, is it you ?
 Yes, and it is Doris too ;
 Here together heart to heart,
 Meet we who were torn apart
 By a foe, whose purpose fell
 Wrought on us a cruel spell,
 And from home and parents dear
 Bade us wander far and near.”

Before Doris could ask what this song meant, Poppie, peering cautiously at the tin pail, asked :

“ Got many mushrooms ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Doris, “ there are always plenty about here. The pail is full, and, oh, Poppie, I found such a pretty one. Look here,” and she lifted the lid and showed the gay mushroom to her friend.

Poppie bent her head over it in silence for a moment, then she said :

“ Perhaps it will not taste as well as the plain ones. Things that are too pretty often turn out that way. You better give it to me for a keepsake. Come, do.”

But Doris hung her head

“ Why do you want it so much, Poppie ? ” she asked. “ Let

me take it home first, for I have never had a secret from Goody Bell, nor have I ever seen anything that I have not shown to her. I am sure that I could not sleep to-night if she knew nothing of my finding the embroidered mushroom."



Poppie thought for a moment or two, and then,
"It is because you are so very good that you feel that way?"
"I suppose so," said little Doris, humbly, for she feared that the ragged little girl did not admire her for being so good. But Poppie went on :

"Well, if you are so very good, you ought not to take that mushroom at all, for it is mine. I planted it."

"You! oh, Poppie! Did you, really?"

"Yes, and so it really is mine, but there is nothing mean about me, and I will let you take it home, and show it to Goody, if you promise that, when I rap on your window to-night after you go to bed, you will get up and give it to me. I know your window well enough. I have often watched you asleep, and I have looked in, too, when you and Goody were late at supper, and laughed till I nearly fell off the sill to see her burn her fingers with hot porridge. Oh, I know you and Goody Bell, and all your tiresome, humdrum ways. But I love you, too," she added, hastily, afraid that she had given offence. "I love you better than I can tell."

"Have you got any of the seed, Poppie, for growing such mushrooms as these?" asked Doris.

"No," replied the other, glibly, "I just planted a button that fell from the coat of a Trow from the North, and this grew."

When Poppie spoke of the Trow, Doris shivered, for she was very sensible, and she knew that it was not well to speak of strange beings of that kind in lonely places, especially here, so close to the Greenwood, which was so full of elves and fays that it really had quite a bad name. She only said, however:

"Of course you shall have it, Poppie, and it is very kind of you to let me take it home first. And I would not touch buttons that you find hereabouts, Poppie, if I were you."

At this Poppie winked and laughed, and Doris, who liked her very much and felt sorry that her manners were not better, turned away, and trudged along on her way home.

In Goody Bell's little cabin, there was, of course, no up-stairs, and the window of Doris' bedroom was quite near to the ground. On this night she fastened the white curtain back and opened the

window wide, so that it would be easy to speak to Poppie when she came, and then she went herself to bed. She could not sleep, for she was feeling very, very sorry because of something that had happened since she parted from her little friend at the mushroom patch, and she knew that she must tell this bad news to her. So she just laid still and waited.

The stars were out when she heard the promised signal on the pane.

"Oh, Poppie," she exclaimed, sitting up at once, "have you come?"

"Yes," answered Poppie, "Where is the mushroom? Quick!"

"Oh, Poppie, I am so sorry, but neither of us can ever have the embroidered mushroom again. Whilst I went for the cows this evening, Goody Beli forgot what I told her of its being your mushroom, and she sold it along with the rest to the King's cook, who came wanting them for the King's breakfast."

At this Poppie gave a little scream of dismay, and slid off the window ledge where she had been perched. Doris went to the window. She had only on her little night-gown and night-cap, and the air was cool, but she did not mind, for she was afraid that Poppie was grieving for the loss of her gaudy mushroom.

But when she looked out, the ragged little girl was only standing quite still, and evidently thinking hard, with a very grave and startled face. It was strange to see Poppie standing on both feet at once, and not laughing in the least, and the sight dismayed Doris.

"Oh, what is the matter, Poppie?" she said.

"Matter enough," replied the other, "that mushroom was a toadstool, as anybody might know, and it will poison anyone who eats it."

Doris screamed.

"Whist," said Poppie rudely, "You will waken the old woman,

and one of you is quite enough. Oh, you are well enough," she added when she saw that Doris seemed hurt, "But you, both of you, know so little. Well, the best thing for me to do is to run to town, and somehow, by hook or by crook, get hold of this morsel before the King eats it. It is my fault after all, for being so silly as to let you have that toadstool at all. "You see," she continued, "it wasn't really mine. They make them in my home, and a woman whom I know, called Beldame Bleary, wanted this one to put into her kettle of broth. She raised it herself from seed that she dug from the earth, and pretty deep down too, I can tell you," and Poppie wagged her head knowingly. "I took it," she went on, "because it was so pretty, and I wanted you to see it. I planted it there, and I watched you whilst you picked it."

"Oh, Poppie," said Doris, "and you told me that you raised it from a button which you sowed!"

"Well, what if I did?" demanded the wild little girl, "I may plant such a button some day, for I have one, and who knows what may grow from it? So it was quite true after all. But never mind all that; the business on hand just now is to get back that toadstool before it kills the King, for I cannot explain it, Doris, but I have always loved the King just in the same way that I love you."

"And I, too," declared Doris, "I have always loved him, also. It is very strange, for I have never seen him. Go in haste, Poppie, before this harm happens to him."

And without more ado, Poppie took to her heels and sped her way to the town.

Now, the King of that country was mad. His was a very sad story, indeed; his wife and two babes had vanished away one summer day, years before, and had never been heard of again, and grief and anxiety had so told on him that he was now a mental

wreck, and lived alone in a room at the top of a very high tower. He had many palaces, but he preferred this residence, because he could, from so lofty a height, keep a constant look-out for the missing ones for whom every newspaper in the town was advertising. The only occupation that interested him was correcting the printers' proofs of these, and some people said that this pursuit had a great deal to do with his madness; but you cannot remonstrate with a king, and so he just took his own way. He had also one solace, which was nothing else than the affection shown to him by a magnificent cat, which had appeared in the royal kitchen on the day when the queen and her babes so mysteriously disappeared. This cat attracted a great deal of attention, both because of the king's favour for her, and because she wore on her left paw a gold band, which, many said, looked just like the wedding-ring of her late majesty, while around her neck was a very handsome collar, which the king had fastened with his own best collar-button. On account of these adornments, people spoke of this animal as the Jewelled Cat. Besides all this, it was really a very fine cat, with a snow-white coat of the silkiest fur ever seen.

It was nearly daybreak when Poppie arrived at the king's kitchen door, but early as it was, the cook was astir and had kindled her fire. She had just finished sweeping the litter of shavings which she had made, out over the steps, when she noticed, standing there, the ragged and sunburned little girl. The cook was kind-hearted enough, but she did not like very well to encourage strangers about the premises for fear of anarchists and dynamite, so she was about to close the door again when Poppie whined piteously:

"Oh, please give me a bit of bread. I have had nothing but cake for days."

The cook had looked pitiful at the commencement of this speech, but she burst out a-laughing when she heard it all.

"You're not very badly off for a beggar, child," she said, "if too much sweets is all that you complain of. Still you don't look over hearty, so come in and get a bit of bread."

So into the kitchen Poppie went, where the King's big white cat with the gold ring and jewelled collar, watched the crackling fire. The good-natured woman brought from the pantry a bowl of milk and a loaf of bread, which, when the little girl saw, what did she do but throw her ragged apron over her head and sob and cry as though her heart would break. Of course the cook enquired what the matter was, and Poppie stopped her weeping long enough to reply that her family physician had forbidden her to eat anything in the morning unless a mushroom formed part of the meal.

"It is to counteract my tendency to grow," she explained.

"Dear Suz!" said the cook, "I would have thought that a mushroom must act just the other way. They beat all to grow, you know, and are as big as they will ever be by sunrise."

"Like cures like," said Poppie.

"Sure enough, so I've heard," said the cook, "but I'm afraid that you will go without your breakfast, for mushrooms are too scarce for me to be giving them away to beggars, and the King only yesterday asking for them. Get out Puss, let the child alone." (This the cook said because the cat was acting very strangely indeed, walking round and round Poppie as though greatly excited). "You see, child," she continued, "it was his own fancy. I was glad enough to hear the poor man say that he hankered after anything at all, so when he came into the kitchen and said: 'Mrs. Cook, will you send an aide-de-camp to the fields to search for some mushrooms, for I think that I could eat them,' I was glad enough, and I said, 'Please your majesty, I'll go myself, for the aides-de-camp and the military generally are no use without a band,' and before he left the kitchen, I had on my black

silk bonnet and was starting out at that door, and as good-luck would have it, I came upon a little cabin where lived an old woman who was as pleased as pleased could be to sell me a small pailful of as pretty mushrooms as ever I saw, and if I only had a nice new tin to cook them in, I would serve a lovely dish of them for the King's breakfast."

"Oh, well, ma'am," said Poppie, "I will go, for fear that if I stay longer, the bread and milk may tempt me to disobedience."

And she lifted the latch and walked away.

Once out of sight of the cook, however, she dropped her melancholy air, and going in all haste to a secluded corner behind some currant bushes, she bathed her face and hands in the dew which at this hour lay thickly on the grass, all the time saying over and over in an undertone, strange words that very few have ever heard, and none care to repeat. Ever and anon she came back to a refrain that ran:

"To other face and other form
Let me now this spell transform."

And in some strange manner, as she wrought, a marvellous change came over her; you could not tell in what moment it happened, but the ragged, bright-eyed little Poppie disappeared altogether, and in her place was an odd-looking man with a pack on his back, which jingled and rattled so that you could easily guess that it held tins.

This pedlar went and rapped at the kitchen door, and when the cook opened it he said:

"Tins for sale, ma'am, bright and new, six for a penny; bright kettles and dippers, and tin plates, and pans for cooking mushrooms in twelve for a penny, ma'am, if you buy them now; and I will come and help you cook the King's breakfast in them. Will you buy them, ma'am, twenty-four mushroom pans for a penny?"

"Indeed, and I'll buy none of them," declared the cook. "Twenty-four pans for a penny, indeed, and the price changed three times in a breath? It's stolen they are, when you are so willing to lose them, and if you do not make haste away from here, I'll call the King's guards."

"Buy my tins, ma'am," began the pedlar again, "the whole lot for nothing and a song thrown—"

But the good woman was now quite indignant.

"Begone!" she cried. "My old griddle is better than stolen goods. I have no time to be hindered by such as you, when I have before me the job of embroidering all these mushrooms to look like the pattern one. Come away, Pussy. What has come over the cat, to be so ready to take to every stranger?"

On this the pedlar withdrew, and retiring behind the currant bushes, he also bathed his face and hands in dew, and muttered to himself as he did so; and lo, he, too, vanished from sight, and in his place arose a neat and smiling sempstress, who carried in her hand a workbag.

To the kitchen door went the sempstress, and when she tapped the cook said "Come in," without rising, because she was now quite engrossed with her embroidery.

The pleasant-faced sempstress stepped lightly in, and taking a thimble from her bag said, "Just in time to bear a hand, I see, Mrs. Cook, and there is nothing I like so much as sewing on mushrooms."

"Well, if that's the case, I'm glad to see you," said the good woman, drawing a chair over for her visitor; "I'm not much accustomed to a needle myself, and I have a sore finger, to say nothing of the way I have been bothered by beggars and pedlars, and what not."

"Leave them to me," said the sempstress obligingly, "and by the time you have the pepper and salt fetched, and the griddle heated, they will all be ready to your hand."

And she stitched busily, whilst the Jewelled Cat purred close beside her, and the cook stirred her fire and set her griddle over the coals. But when the honest woman went into the pantry for the things that she needed, the sempstress flung her needle aside, and quick as a thought, slipping the pattern mushroom into her pocket, jumped out of the window and ran away as nimbly as you please. And much the strangest thing about her flight was that out of the window after her sprang the King's cat, and the sempstress was going so fast that at first she never noticed that she was followed, and in the cook's vexation at the turn taken by events, she failed also to observe it for many hours, and then it was a great deal too late, as Puss was nowhere to be seen.

Now, as may be supposed, the Jewelled Cat was quite a favourite in the town, and the cook was not at first uneasy, for she said :

"Some one will be sure to fetch her back, when they see the King's collar-button."

But no one brought her, and as the collar-button was one of the crown jewels, there was a great hue and cry when the loss got about. The radical newspapers made great things out of it, saying that the King had no business to make a plaything of the collar-button, as it really belonged to the nation, and, of course, there was something in what they said, and the affair actually did shake the throne more than it ought.

The parliament took it up, and was quite as hard on the cook as on the King, so that the poor creature one day put on her shawl and bonnet, and set out to see if she could not discover the King's lost pet. She tried to remember all that had happened on the day when the cat strayed, and, of course, the mushrooms came into her mind at once, and she said :

"There might be no harm in going to the old woman who sold

me those mushrooms. Who knows but she might have seen the cat, as no one else has?

So, over the hills and fields she trudged, and came presently to the cosy cabin beside the great rock where the three oak trees grew. There, in the doorway, was Goody Bell, spinning, and Doris sat on the step and knitted.

"Oh, good day to you, Goody," said the cook panting, "May I sit down and rest me, while I tell you what brought me this long way," and she went into the cabin and sank into the chair which Doris placed for her.

"Well, you may remember, Goody," she went on, "that you sold me, some weeks ago, a little tin pail of mushrooms, and one very fine one was on top of the lot. Well, what must I do but undertake to trim the whole pailful to look like that gay one, and the task was beyond me, and beyond a young sempstress who helped me too, for she just up and ran the minute my back was turned, taking the pattern with her too, the minx. But the worst of it was, that what with the vexation of trying to do the embroidery, and of being bothered with strange visitors, of whom I had no less than three, counting the sempstress, I must needs forget the King's cat, and she has never been seen since that day, and worst of all, she wears the King's collar-button and the late Queen's wedding-ring, though no one ever knew how she got hold of it. Well, off she is, anyway, and such a fuss as there is about it is enough to make one crazy. And that is why I am here, first looking in one place and then another for Puss. There is rare trouble in store for whoever is harbouring the animal, for, as it wears one of the crown jewels, the offence is called Treason, and the upshot will be pretty bad, I can tell you. Well, have you seen anything of the Jewelled Cat, hereabouts?"

Goody Bell was able to answer straightway that she never had seen

even a hair of such a cat, but little Doris hung her head, and laying her knitting down, got up from the step and walked away by herself.

"What is the matter with the child?" asked the cook sharply.

"Oh, nothing," replied Goody; "she has moped a good deal of late, but there is no need to worry about her, for she is so good a child that she has never in her life been in any scrape at all, and she never knows anything that she does not tell to me."

"Humph," said the cook, "sometimes that sort get into the worst scrapes of all."

In the meantime little Doris had taken her way to the place where the mushrooms grew. There were tears on her cheeks, and she looked very unhappy as she walked. When she reached the spot, she shaded her eyes, and looked on all sides for her little friend. But, except the field mice and chipmunks and sparrows, nothing living was in sight. Then she looked at the dark wood. It was very dismal in there, and besides, Doris had heard so many strange tales of odd creatures who haunted its shades, that it really was no wonder if she were timid about entering. But she plucked up all her courage, for she had a purpose before her, and with as brave a front as she could put on while her heart trembled, she walked in beneath the thick and spreading boughs.

The dry leaves rustled under her feet, and little twigs snapped as she stepped on them; birds twittered overhead, and squirrels peeped from hiding places at her; and every little sound made her start and quake as though she were doing something naughty, which, indeed, was not at all the case, as her reason for being in the wood at this time, at all, was to do a kindness to Poppie.

No Poppie did she meet however, and she bethought herself presently that she must call her name. It seemed very awful in that dark and lonely place to hear her own scared little voice, sounding shrilly in the stillness.

"Poppie, Poppie," she cried.

She would stop every little while and repeat the cry, and then listen, but there was never any response, and she only got deeper, and deeper into the wood.

At length, she came to an open space where were no trees. This space was circular, and the grass that grew upon it was of a more vivid green than Doris had ever seen before, while it was bounded by a wide ring of a darker shade. The whole appearance of the spot would have warned an older and wiser person not to linger there.

"O'er all there hung the shadow of fear ;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted."*

The very good, especially if they are also young, are not suspicious of evil, however, and as Doris stepped gladly upon the pretty sward, she only thought how nice it was. In the very centre of the green ring stood a tall tree-trunk. It bore no leaves, and looking upward, the little girl saw that it was withered and dead. The bark had fallen off it long before. Well, as Doris gazed up to its summit, what of all things should she see but a head, suddenly appearing as though its owner were inside the tree, which, indeed, turned out to be the case, for the very next moment the sharp shoulders and soiled apron, and torn skirts of Poppie herself came to view. She looked into the upturned face of little Doris, and then whistled loud and long. Poppie was undoubtedly a very ill-bred child.

"Oh, come down, Poppie," cried good Doris, "I have come to tell you something dreadful, and there is no time to lose."

"Somebody looking for the cat, I suppose," rejoined Poppie,

* Hood.

coolly. "Well, how do they propose to find her? Tell me that, will you?"

"Oh, Poppie," said Doris, piteously, "it is Treason, and the upshot will be——"

"What is Treason," demanded Poppie, interruptedly.

"Oh, harbouring cats, I suppose," wailed Doris.

"I don't like that about the Upshot," remarked Poppie, after a pause, "and so I won't stay longer in sight. You better come up here to me, and I will take you down to where I live in Downbolo. They did not say anything about a Downshot, did they?" she asked anxiously.

"No," replied Doris, "I don't think so, but I cannot go up there to you."

You see Doris was so good that she had never tried to climb a tree in her life, and as this was a very difficult one to begin with, the situation was a grave one, for she very much desired to reach Poppie and show her how dangerous it was, as well as wrong, to have the royal cat in her possession. But how to get up was the question.

It was solved by Poppie herself, who was looking nervously about for policemen armed with guns pointed upwards at her, for she had never before heard the word "upshot," and mis-understood it. She now called impatiently:

"Make haste, I believe I hear them. Come close to the tree, and right down there in the moss at its foot you can see a bird's nest. It looks empty, but lift its lining and you will find a key."

Doris did as she was told, and, sure enough, under the silky down that lined the deserted nest, lay a curious looking crooked key. This she took, and Poppie, whose head was hanging as far as was safe over the edge of the tree, called to her to fit it into the keyhole. Doris walked slowly around the great withered trunk looking vainly for any sign of a door.

"What are you doing?" called Poppie, sharply; "Can't you see the keyholes, any number of them all over the tree?"

"Oh!" said Doris, "I thought those were what the woodpeckers made;" and she placed the key in one of the numerous borings with which the old trunk was covered, and found to her surprise that it fitted at once, and turned quite easily. This action was not followed, however, as she half expected, by the opening of a door. Instead of that, an odd change came over the appearance of the dry trunk, a flight of steps becoming suddenly visible. They were uneven and rough and did not at all ascend regularly, but wound about, while here and there gaps occurred. It was such a stairway as one sometimes sees hewn out in a rocky hill-side, and Doris, who, first putting the key into her pocket, at once began the ascent, found it pretty breathless work, and could not, until she reached the top, make any attempt to reply to Poppie, who was grumbling loudly over her slowness, and what she called her stupidity, in failing to find the keyhole for herself.

"Well, you see, Poppie," she said, when she finally reached her side, "You see it is so different from our door. We have only one keyhole."

Poppie stared.

"Why?" she asked, "What is the use of saving keyholes? And on a dark night, how can you find it? A door ought to be covered with keyholes."

As she was so positive, Doris did not like to say more, and followed her down the inside of the tree in silence. The steps were much better there, which was a very good thing, as it was quite dark. Doris could not help wondering how they would be able to see their way when they got down, if it was so gloomy already.

Just before they reached the bottom, Poppie waited for her com-

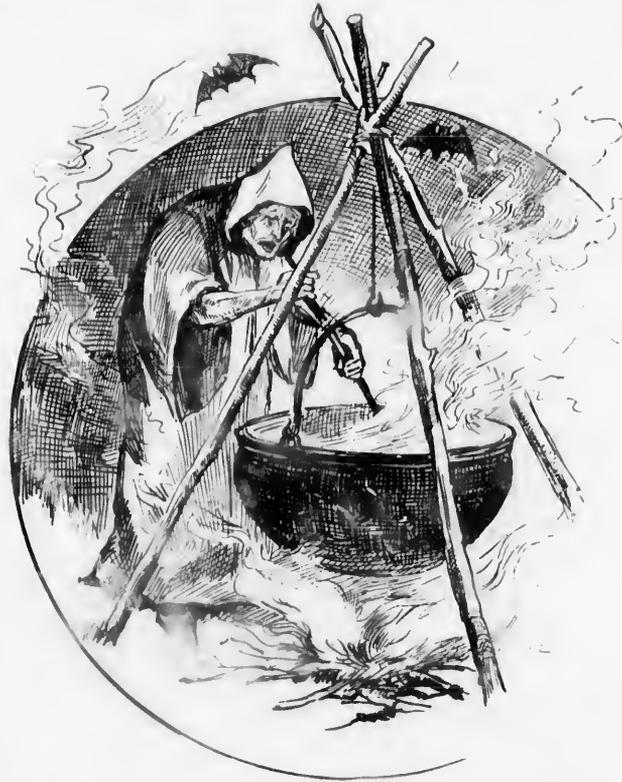
panion to come up with her, and laying a warning finger on Doris' arm, she whispered :

" Now, keep quiet. If you do not speak to anybody, it is not likely that anybody will speak to you. And don't be frightened if Beldame Bleary, the Witch, sees you. Just you hold fast by me. But if you are sensible, it is not likely that she or any one else will notice us."

And Poppie tossed her wild little head, and quite swaggered as she stepped down into a vast, and badly lighted chamber. It was full of stir ; groups of little woodmen, whom Doris knew only too well to be Brownies, were seated about in groups, busily engaged, some in stripping the bark from the limbs of trees that lay on the earthen floor, others in removing the outer husks from nuts, while some were filling pillow-cases with pine needles. And such a hubbub as there was ! Poppie might well have said that they could easily escape notice, that is, if there had been none about but these noisy and mischievous little gnomes. But, unfortunately, there were many more. There were grimy men with hoofs who piled fuel on the huge bonfires, whose flames cast an uneven glare over the scene. Curious little beings sat crossed-legged in rows, stitching at mushroom-rooms and toadstools. Great, gaunt spectres floated about like shadows on the wall, and it was very difficult, indeed, for Doris to keep from screaming when their sad eyes were fixed on her. And weird-looking huntsmen were seated apart, polishing their bugle horns. And there were also pretty fays with wings, who added to the confusion by flying excitedly about, although these were really quite idle. And above all the din, could be heard the roaring and crackling of the fires. Doris remembered stories that Goody Bell had told her of robbers' caves in far-off lands where the police are not up to the mark, and she wondered much to think what a dreadful home her little friend Poppie had.

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She followed Poppie now as quickly as she could, and they threaded their way among the motley crowd. Now and then Doris felt her heart come really right up into her mouth, when a green Huntsman said, as she tip-toed past him: "Ha, ha, whom have we here? Maid Marian, by all that's funny!" Or, a flying



fay, whose foot was caught in one of the little girl's flaxen curls, peered curiously into her eyes, and at once began to sing a song about Doris and Poppie. It was a curious song, and in it "Goody Bell" was made to rhyme with "spell," and Doris

remembered that Poppie had once sung a song that had this feature also. However, at present it seemed to annoy Poppie very much, probably because it might draw attention, and she detached the fairy from Doris' hair quickly, and sent it off with a slap.

"Walk faster," she said. "We are going to my own little den, and we have to pass Beldame Bleary. She *is* wicked, let me tell you! Keep close to me."

And sure enough, at the next turn they came upon a most ugly woman, who sat upon a three-legged stool, close to a fire, over which hung a huge pot, which she stirred, muttering to herself as she did so, and throwing in herbs from a heap at her side. She had great teeth that showed themselves cruelly. Her hands were hard and bony, and her hooked nose looked like the beak of some fierce bird. She had the hood of her cloak drawn over her head.

She stopped her stirring and muttering when the little girls came up, and roughly bade Poppie to stand, while her evil eye fixed upon the shivering little Doris, and nearly froze her with terror.

Said the witch, hoarsely :

"Whom is it thou bringest here
To this darksome den of fear?
Who so heedless that would know
The grim Cavern Downbolo?"

Burn my fire, and pottage boil,
Recompense me for my toil."

As she addressed the fire and the bubbling broth, she shook the embers fiercely, and stirred the pot with the thick pudding-stick which she grasped. Sparks from the fire flew in all directions, and Doris shrank back, which made the hag croak more fiercely than before :

"Sparks shall fly, and flames shall die,
Live again, and time out-vie,
Ere you wander from this place
Or behold a mortal face.

Burn my fire and pottage boil,
Recompense me for my toil."

Poppie gave a little scream, and seizing hold of Doris' arm she thrust her back from the woman. Doris knew by the touch of her hand that Poppie was afraid, but the bold little girl spoke up as sharply as ever:

"This is but a new disguise of one of the fays," she said, "who is got up to look like Goody Bell's foster child. It is a trick which we mean to play on the morrow."

"Plot me no plots, the fire burns,
The pottage boils, my vengeance yearns:
The mother and her children twain
Shall in this chaldron meet again!

Burn my fire, and pottage boil,
Recompense me for my toil."

As she finished croaking this fearful song, she darted her long, skinny arm and had almost seized Doris, who was now shrieking with affright. But Poppie was too quick for the hag, and, darting forward, had almost over-turned the huge pot by thrusting into it one of the blazing faggots. This caused the wicked woman to turn her attention to saving her horrible broth, and with a shrill and triumphant laugh Poppie fled, dragging Doris after her.

They ran until they found themselves in a smaller and darker

cave which held none but themselves, and there they stopped to take breath.

" Oh, Poppie," gasped Doris, " are we safe?"

" No," replied Poppie, " we are a long way off from safe, I can tell you. I thought that I could get you past the Witch without her seeing you, but she knows you, and something must be done, or you and I will perish in the pot."

" Why, oh, why, Poppie, did you bring me here?" Doris screamed.

Poppie looked her full in the face in a very curious way for a minute before she answered,

" If I were to tell you why, you would not believe me, and if you did believe it, you would be too much frightened to do anything but scream, so I will just tell you that you and I are pretty close to our fortunes just now, and to our parents whom we have never known. But we are close, also to the, danger of being thrown into Beldame Bleary's boiling pot; so what we have got to do is to get ahead of that Witch. Her pot is boiling fast, and her fire is brisk, but I shall bring the victims of her cruel plot together and make them move more quickly than either. It is a race, Doris; quit your crying and help me. You and I are running a race with the Witch's fire. We must get there before her fire is ready. She wants it to be many degrees hotter.

" Where are we racing to?" said Doris, as she tried to dry her eyes.

" Ah," answered Poppie sagely, " that I don't know; I have been puzzling over it ever since I can remember. I have only found out a few things. You are my sister, Doris, and that is why I have always loved you, and it is through this witch that we have been stolen away. She, by means of her wicked broth, works spells that harm all whom she hates. She took us away from our home when we

were babes, and she dropped you from her bundle, on her way here. But it is against the Jewelled Cat that she breathes the most hate, and it is very odd, but I love that cat more than I have ever loved anything else except you and the King. I feel as though I cannot give her up. Come now and see if you do not love her too. She is the most beautiful and the wisest and the best thing that lives."

Doris wondered very much to hear Poppie speak in so extravagant a manner of a cat, even if Puss did wear jewels, but she followed her willingly enough through a dark and winding passage, so narrow and low that in some parts they had to creep on hands and knees.

The place in which the King's cat was confined was a small cell, very different from the bright and cheerful kitchen which she had forsaken. You would expect her to be quite unhappy about the change in her circumstances, but, on the contrary, she came purring to the grated door, and seemed in very good spirits indeed.

"Oh," said Poppie, "if only we had the key that lies in the bird's nest! It will open any door at all."

"I have it, I have it," cried Doris, taking it from her pocket. "Make haste, Poppie, for I love Pussy too, so much that I can hardly wait to kiss her."

Poppie unlocked the grimy door forthwith, and the two children rushed in. They hugged Pussy to their heart's content, while in every way possible to a cat, she tried to show her delight in their caresses.

Their happiness was, all too soon, cut short in a very awful manner. Sounds of someone coming through the narrow passage could easily have been heard, but they were so much taken up with Puss that they paid no attention to anything else. The first thing that awakened them and a sense of their danger was the hoarse echo of Beldame Bleary's dreadful song:

" The mother and her children twain
Within the pot shall meet again."

Doris shrieked, the cat arched her back, while her eyes glowed like the eyes of a tigress when its cubs are threatened.

But clever Poppie, bright and quick as ever, sprang to the door, banged it shut, and locked it with the magical key.

To the grating came the Witch, and oh, how she yelled and how uselessly she shook the door! And safe behind the bars stood Poppie on one leg, and laughed and sang :

" Spare, oh Beldame, spare your ire ;
Better go and mend your fire !"

The words seemed to suggest a horrid thought to the Witch, and she laughed a laugh that made the blood run cold.

" Fire and flame with blood-red glow
May enter where I cannot go,
In deepest vaults of Downbolo."

And when she had uttered these dark words, she turned and took her way back as she had come.

For an instant Poppie considered, then as the full meaning of the Witch's song became plain to her, she screamed. It seemed to Doris very awful to see Poppie, who was usually so brave and skilful, thus quite overcome with fright, and she clasped her own little hands and shivered.

" Doris, Doris," shrieked Poppie, " she has gone for fire to thrust in here upon us !"

" Let us unlock the door and run," exclaimed Doris. And this they would have done had it not been for the Jewelled Cat, who thrust herself between them and the door, and standing up on her

hind legs, actually fought to prevent Poppie from putting the key into the lock. In the scuffle, the key was dropped, which seemed at the time to be a great mishap, because in the darkness it would be no easy matter for the little girls to discover it. But cats can see in the dark, and quick almost as lightning, Pussy picked it up in her mouth, and darted away back into the dark recesses of the chamber with it. They could hear her mew for them to follow, and they could tell where she was by the glitter of her two eyes, but they hesitated to move. They believed that the door was their only safety.

Just then came the Witch panting along, dragging the boiling pot from which clouds of steam arose, while in the other hand she bore aloft a huge and glaring torch, and, amid the flame, and smoke and steam, the hag's gaunt form looked loathly indeed. The two poor terrified children, clinging to each other, rushed from their place of danger, but, to their astonishment, the cat, now coming boldly forward, stationed herself directly where the torchlight, streaming through the bars, lighted up a space on the earthen floor. The Witch gave a howl of dreadful joy, and dipping her hand into the boiling broth, she splashed it through the grating, and the children saw with wonder that the Jewelled Cat, instead of trying to escape the scalding shower, stood on her hind legs to receive it, stretching out her forepaws as if to welcome the burning drops. And as the liquid fell upon the animal, the Witch muttered:

“Ere I burn you in this place,
Take your wonted form and face,
Stand erect, my hated Queen—
Then burn, and never more be seen.”

And, lo, before the astonished gaze of the little girls, there arose, as if from the earth where the cat stood, a most lovely lady wearing

a golden crown, and on her extended hand they saw the ring that had been on the paw of the Jewelled Cat, but the cat they never saw again.

Without waiting one idle moment, the crowned lady grasped a hand of each child, and hurried along the route which the cat had taken when she mewed for them to follow. And they were none too soon, for the blazing faggot was being thrust piecemeal through the grating, and the flames, which were unlike any that we know, seemed to spread and roar hungrily and follow them. The cave was small, and escape seemed impossible, when the lady, suddenly letting go their hands, felt on the rough wall as though she sought something, and the children saw then that she held the key, which the cat had taken from them.

"Is it a keyhole you seek, Madam?" asked Poppie. "Is this it?"

"And sure enough it was, and one turn of the magical key changed the whole appearance of the wall in a moment. An opening became visible, and passing through this, they found a stairway, up which they clambered in breathless haste, never pausing until they emerged at the top, and found themselves in the open pasture field where Doris had gathered mushrooms. If anyone had been about, it would of course have seemed very extraordinary to see three people ascend out of the earth, and it might have got into the newspapers, but there was no living thing there except the cows and sheep, and they only blinked their eyes for a moment and said to each other :

"What will human beings do next? This is almost as strange as the way they cut the horses' tails."

And the beautiful lady said :

"It is very satisfactory, no one being about. There is nothing I dislike so much as publicity."

It was evening, and she walked across the pasture, wearing the golden crown on her head, and leading by each hand a little girl.

"Come to my home," said Doris, "that I may tell Goody Bell to come with us, for I shall never leave your side nor be parted from Poppie again."

And to Goody Bell's cabin they went. The old woman was standing in the doorway when they came in view, weeping a little, for Doris had been gone many hours, and Goody was very anxious. The good little girl ran to her :

"Oh, dear Goody," she said, "here I am, and not hurt at all, and here is the lady who brought Poppie and me out of Downbolo."

But the old woman did not hear her, for at first sight of the crowned lady, she had hastened forward, and courtseyed very low.

"It is the lost Queen," she said.

"Yes," replied the beautiful lady, "it is the Queen, suddenly rescued from nameless misery, and restored in the same moment to my two dear children. You, Goody Bell, I shall reward, for you have sheltered my Doris from harm. Come with us now and share our happiness, for you cannot live here alone. You shall have a home in the Palace."

It would make this story a great deal too long to tell the rejoicings that arose when the Queen, her children, and Goody Bell entered the town, and followed by the crowd walked up to the chief entrance of the Tower and rapped at the door. It is said that the King, who, from his lookout at the top, had seen their arrival, was so excited, that he forgot his dignity and slid down the whole way on the bannister, reaching the door in time to open it before the Home Secretary, whose office it was, had dusted his salver. One thing that is known for certain is that His Majesty recovered his reason in that hour, and the next day made a speech at the great banquet that was held, which fully explained to everyone the mys-

teries that had so thickly clung about his household. It was all so very wonderful that there were no more speeches, each man looking at his neighbours, open-eyed and open-mouthed, and exclaiming "Well, I never!" or "Did you ever!"

And all the soldiers went next day to search for that awful place called Downbolo, with orders to fell the tree, and dig down and utterly destroy all that they found, but they never found anything, not even when the young Princesses Poppia and Dorinda accompanied them. No sign nor trace of the magic green ring or the hollow tree was ever discovered, any more than the opening in the ground, by which the Queen and her children had emerged into the day. But the royal family lived happily ever after.



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