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THE SILVER CROWN

Another Book of Fables

BY
LAURA E. RICHARDS

Author of "Captain January," "The Golden Windows,"
"The Joyous Story of Toto," etc.

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TO MY SISTER

A WINTER THOUGHT

*Hast thou e'er a grief, dear?
 Lock it in thy heart!
 Keep it, close it,
 Sacred and apart;
 Lest another, at thy sigh,
 Hear his sorrow stir and cry.
 Wakeful watch doth sorrow keep:
 Hush it! hide it! bid it sleep!*

*Hast thou e'er a joy, love?
 Bind it on thy brow!
 Vaunt it, flaunt it,
 All the world to know.
 Where the shade lies dim and gray,
 Turn its glad and heartsome ray.
 Does thy sad-browed neighbor smile?
 So thy life was worth the while!*

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THE SILVER CROWN

A BOOK OF FABLES

THE SILVER CROWN



"And shall I be a king?" asked the child, "and shall I wear a crown?"

"You shall surely wear a crown," said the Angel, "and a kingdom is waiting for you."

"Oh, joy!" said the child. "But tell me, how will it come about? for now I am only a little child, and the crown would hardly stay on my curls."

"Nay! that I may not tell," said the Angel. "Only ride and run your best, for the way is long to your kingdom, and the time short."

So the child rode and ran his best, crossing hills and valleys, broad streams and foaming torrents. Here and there he saw people at work or at play, and on these he looked eagerly.

"Perhaps, when they see me," he said, "they will run to meet me, and will crown me with a golden crown, and lead me to their palace and throne me there as king!"

But the folk were all busy with their tasks or their sport, and none heeded him, or left their business for him; and still he must fare forward alone, for the Way called him.

Also, he came upon many travellers like himself, some coming toward him, others passing him by. On these, too, he looked earnestly, and would stop now one, now another, and question him.

"Do you know," he asked, "of any kingdom in these parts where the crown is ready and the folk wait for a king?"

Then one would laugh, and another weep, and another jeer, but all alike shook their heads.

"I am seeking crown and kingdom for myself," cried one; "is it likely that I can be finding one for you, too? Each one for himself, and the Way for all!"

Another said: "You seek in vain. There are no crowns, only fools' caps with asses' ears and bells that jingle in them."

But others, and these they who had been longest on the way, only looked on him, some sadly, some kindly, and made no answer; and still he fared onward, for the Way called him.

Now and then he stopped to help some poor soul who had fallen into trouble, and when he did that the way lightened before him, and he felt the heart light within him; but at other times the hurry was strong on him, so that he would turn away his face, and shut his ears to the cries that rang in them; and when he did that, the way darkened, and oftentimes he stumbled himself, and fell into pits and quagmires, and must cry for help, sometimes on those to whom he had refused it.

By and by he forgot about the crown and the kingdom; or if he thought of them, it was but as a far-off dream of dim gold, such as one sees at morning when the sun breaks through the mist. But still he knew that the way was long and the time short, and still he rode and ran his best.

At the last he was very weary, and his feet could carry him no further, when, looking up, he saw that the way came to an end before him, and there was a gate, and one in white sitting by it, who beckoned to him. Trembling, yet glad, the child drew near, and knew the Angel who had spoken to him at the beginning.

"Welcome!" said the Angel, "you come in good time. And what of the Way?"

"I came as fast as I could," said the child, "but many things hindered me, and now I am weary, and can go no further."

"But what did you find on the way?" asked the Angel.

"Oh! I found joy and sorrow," said the child, "good measure of both; but never a crown, such as you promised me, and never a kingdom."

"Oh, dear, foolish child," said the Angel. "You are wearing your crown. It is of purest silver, and shines like white frost; and as for your kingdom, the name of it is Rest, and here the entrance to it."

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THE GRUMPY SAINT



Once upon a time there was a Grumpy Saint, who thought that all the world were sinners, himself included. He lived in a little cabin by the roadside, and his life was a burden to him on account of the passers-by.

They gave him no peace. Now it was a poor man asking for food.

"Go along with you!" said the Grumpy Saint. "It is an abomination to feed sturdy beggars like you."

And he gave the man his dinner, and went hungry.

Again, it was an old woman, creeping along the road, bent double under a heavy burden.

"Shame on you!" said the Grumpy Saint. "Why are you not at home, tending your fire, instead of gadding along the road in this fashion?"

And he took the burden, and carried it all the way to the woman's house, and came back grumbling.

Still again it was a child, who had lost its way and came crying to his door.

"Please take me home!" said the child.

"You should not have come out!" said the Saint. "Where is your home?"

"Miles away!" said the child. "And I am tired; please carry me!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the Saint. "Don't talk to me!"

And he wrapped the child in his own coat (for it was winter), and carried him miles through the snow to his home; and then trudged back again, but without the coat, for the folk were poor.

And so it went on.

One day the Grumpy Saint died, and went to Heaven, a place in which he had never believed. As he entered that country, the first person he met was an Angel, with a bright gold aureole round her head, and in her hand a staff of lilies.

"Welcome!" said the Angel. "Welcome, dear and great saint! I am sent to greet you, and lead you to the feast that is making in your honor."

"Some mistake!" said the Grumpy Saint. "I don't know what you are talking about, and I don't like play-acting. What place is this?"

"This is Heaven!" said the Angel.

"Nonsense!" said the Saint. "I don't believe in Heaven."

"Yes, but you *are* in it," said the Angel, "which is of more consequence."

"And who may you be?" asked the Saint. "I seem to know your face."

"Yes!" said the Angel. "I am the old woman you helped with the burden; don't you remember? the rest are waiting inside, all the people whom you loved and helped. Come with me!"

"I don't know what you are talking about!" said the Saint. "But if I am to go with you, first take off that ridiculous object on your head! I don't like play-acting, I tell you, and I have never believed in this kind of thing."

The Angel smiled; and leading him to a clear pool that lay beside the road, bade him look in. He looked, and saw two white-clad figures bending over the water, and round the head of each the shining circle.

"Bless my soul!" cried the Grumpy Saint. "I've got one too!"

"To be sure!" said the Angel.

"Preposterous!" said the Grumpy Saint.

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THE HOUSEKEEPER



One day Love went to and fro in his house, looked from door and window, and had no rest.

"I am weary," he said, "of this little house. Strait are the walls of it, and narrow the windows, and from them always the same things to see. I must be free; I must fly, or of what use are my wings?"

So he took his red robe about him and flew out, leaving door and window streaming wide to the cold wind.

But when he was gone came one in a little gown of green, (green for hope, Sweetheart; green for hope!) and entered the house, and shut door and window; swept the hearth clean and mended the fire, and then set herself down and sang, and minded her seam. Ever when the flame burned low she built it up, and now and then she looked out of window to see if any one were coming; but mostly she sat and sang, and kept the house tidy and warm.

Now by and by Love was weary with flying hither and yon; cold he was, too, and night coming on; and as the dusk fell, he saw a light shining bright on the edge of the wold.

"Where there is light there will be warmth!" said Love; and he flew near, and saw that it was his own little house.

"Oh! who keeps my house alight?" cried Love.

He opened the door, and the air came warm to greet him.

"Oh! who keeps my house warm?" cried Love. And he looked, and saw one in a little gown of green, (green for hope, Sweetheart; oh! green for hope!) mending the fire, and singing as she worked.

"Who are you, who keep my house?" asked Love.

"Kindness is my name!" said the little housekeeper.

"Outside it is cold and empty," said Love, "and the wind blows over the waste; may I come in and warm me by the fire?"

"Oh! and welcome!" said Kindness. "It was for you I kept it."

"My red robe is torn and draggled," said Love. "May I wrap me in the gown you are making?"

"Oh! and welcome," said Kindness. "It is for you it was making, and now it is finished."

Love bent over the fire and warmed his poor cold hands.

"Oh!" he cried; "now that I am back in my house I would never leave it again. But what of my wings, lest they put the flight in me once more?"

"Suppose I clip them," said Kindness, "with my little scissors!"

"How are your scissors called, dear?"

"Peace-and-Comfort is their name!" said Kindness.

So Kindness clipped the wings of Love; and this one swept the hearth, and that one mended the fire, and all went well while they kept the house together.

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BROTHER BARNABAS



One came to Brother Barnabas seeking consolation.

"Ah!" said the good Brother. "My heart bleeds for you. You are in affliction, bereft of some one dearer, it may be, than life itself. My sympathy—"

"No!" said the man. "My friends, such as they are, are all living."

"I see!" said Brother Barnabas. "Bodily pain has set its sharp tooth in you; that is indeed hard to bear. Let me—"

"No!" said the man. "I am in good health, so far as that goes."

"Alas!" said Brother Barnabas. "My poor brother, then it is sin that weighs upon you, the cruellest burden of all. Truly, I grieve for you."

"What do you mean?" said the man. "I have never broken a commandment in my life."

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"Ah!" said Brother Barnabas. "I begin to perceive—"

"I was sure you would!" said the man. "I am misunderstood—"

"*Not by me!*" said Brother Barnabas. "Begone!" and he shut the door on him.

THE FATES

14



The high Fates sat weaving, weaving at their loom, and I, poor soul, came crying at the door, asking a boon at their hands.

Those great ladies did not turn their heads, nor stint the flying shuttle; but one of them spoke, and she the youngest, and her voice was like the wind over the sea.

"What would you?" she said.

And I said, "That which you had of me yesterday."

"Is it your sin, that turned your cup blood red?"

"Nay; for I drained the cup, and washed it clean with my tears."

"Is it your sorrow, that changed the green world to black about you?"

"Nay; for I wrapped me in it as in a mantle, and now I should go cold without it."

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"What then?" she asked; and ever as she spoke, back and forth, back and forth, the shuttle flew.

"Oh, what but my blunder! when I would make a path for my Love's white feet, and set instead a snare for them, to her hurt?"

Then those high ladies spoke all together; cold, sweet, steadfast were the voices of them, and the shuttle humming through.

"Even now the shuttle is threaded with your fault, and naught may stay its way. Go, poor soul, empty and crying as you came; yet take one comfort with you. Even of this, even of this, the Web had need!"

THE STEPS

16



"When you come to the city, seek out the House of Wisdom, for it is the best house, and there you shall do well."

That was what the old people said to the boy when he started on his journey, and he kept the saying well in mind.

"How shall I know the house?" he had asked them; and they answered, "By the look of the steps before the door, and by the number of people who go in and out. More we may not tell you."

The boy pondered these sayings as he journeyed.

"It will be a fine house, no doubt," he said. "I shall know it by its size and splendor; but as for what they said of the steps, I make little of that part."

By and by he came to the city, and looked about him eagerly for the House of Wisdom. Presently, on his right, he saw a house of plain yet stately aspect. Clear were its windows and high, and from one a face looked at him of a reverend man, calm and kind.

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"Might that be Wisdom?" thought the boy. Then he looked at the steps, and saw them high and steep, and shining white, as if they had little use. The door stood open wide, but few came or went through it.

"This cannot be the House of Wisdom!" said the boy. "I must seek farther."

So he went farther. And presently he saw on his left a house rich and gay of aspect, shining with gold, and all the windows flung up to the air; and from one window a face of a fair woman laughed on him, and beckoned, and waved a tinsel scarf with bells that tinkled sweetly on his ear.

"Oh," said the boy, "if this might but be the House of Wisdom! but what of the steps before the door?"

He looked at the steps; and they were wide and shallow, and trodden into holes and valleys by many feet; and up those steps, and through the open door, a throng was constantly passing, laughing and singing, and pelting one another with flowers and spangles.

"Ah," said the boy, "this is, indeed, the House of Wisdom! for true it is that I can tell by the steps, and by the people who go in and out."

And he entered the House of Folly.

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THE GLASS

19



"This is extremely interesting!" said the man. "You say that I am not one being but many, and that your glass will show me my component parts as separate entities?"

"Precisely!" said the Wandering Magician.

The man looked in the glass.

"Here I see several beings!" he said. "Some of them are distinguished-looking, that one on horseback, for example, and the one with the lyre. But others have a frivolous air, and there is one with positively a low expression; and yet he is attractive too, when I look closer, and I seem to know him. What are these creatures?"

"These are your tastes!" said the Wandering Magician.

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"Oh!" said the man. "Well, some of them are certainly elegant and refined. But whom have we here? what strange pigmies are these?"

"Your virtues!" said the Magician.

"Dear me!" said the man. "Yes, to be sure, I recognize them. But what makes them so small?"

"This is not a magnifying glass!" said the Magician.

"But they are pretty!" said the man. "Beautiful, I may say. That little fellow with the twinkle in his eye and his coat out at elbows; he is charming, if I do say it. But what is going on now? here comes a crowd of big, hulking, ruffianly fellows, jostling the little people and driving them to the wall. What a villainous-looking set! Their faces are wholly strange to me; what are they?"

"Your vices!" said the Wandering Magician.

But when the man would have fallen upon him, he was gone.

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IN THE SHADED ROOM



The shaded room was still; the doctor and the nurse sat watching by the bedside; the firelight crept into the corners and whispered to the shadows; there was no other sound.

"You think you are ready to go?" asked the Angel-who-attends-to-things.

"Yes!" said the man. "I have drained the Cup from brim to bitter lees; I have read the Book from cover to cover. I am ready."

"Humph!" said the Angel-who-attends-to-things. "Well, come along!" and he led the man out, but did not shut the door after him.

The man had lived in state and splendor, and he had thought that some ceremony would attend his departure, but there was nothing of the sort. The only change was, that as he went along the Angel seemed to be growing very tall, and he very little, so that he had to reach up to hold the

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strong white hand, and his feet were well-nigh taken from under him by the sweep of the great white robes; also he felt afraid and foolish, he knew not why.

So they came at last to a gate, through which many children were passing with glad faces, carrying tablets of amber and pearl; and beside the gate sat another Angel, writing in a book; and when a child passed in, this Angel nodded and smiled to him, and wrote a word in his book.

Now the Angel of the Gate looked up, and saw the Angel-who-attends-to-things, and beside him the man, holding fast to his hand, and feeling afraid and foolish.

"From the Primary Department?" asked the Angel of the Gate.

"Yes!" said the other, who never wasted words.

The Angel of the Gate looked the man over carefully. "His hands are dirty!" he said at length.

"Yes!" said the Angel-who-attends-to-things; "he has not learned to keep them clean."

"And there is mud on his feet!"

"Yes, he will walk in the mire."

"And his clothes are torn, and stained with blood."

"Yes, he has been quarrelling with his brother and beating him."

At this the man found his voice and cried out, though he felt more afraid and foolish than ever, and his voice sounded high and thin, like that of a tiny child.

"I have no brother!" said the man.

The two Angels looked at each other.

"You see!" said the Angel-who-attends-to-things. "I knew how it would be."

Then he turned to the man. "Run along back," he said, "and try to do better next time. I left the door open for you."

And in the shaded room, while the firelight whispered to the shadows in the corners, the doctor rose from the bedside, and spoke softly to the nurse.

"The crisis is past," he said, "he will live."

23

HELL GATE

24



Hell Gate clanged behind the youth, and those without stood and looked one upon another.

First came his friend, and said to the keeper of the gate:

"Let him out! he is young, and his work still to do. Who knows but he may amend, and do it yet?"

Next came his Love, and clasped the bars, and wept upon them.

"Let him out!" she cried. "We are too young to die, and without him I cannot live."

Last came his mother, for she had a long way to come.

"What is all this ado?" she said. "Let me in to him!" and she broke the bars and entered.

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THE THORN



When the youth started, he passed through the Forbidden Wood, and wandered there, plucking and tasting the fruit, smelling the flowers, evil and sweet; and as he plucked and smelled, it chanced that a thorn entered his breast, for it lay open. He took little heed, for he was young, and the life strong in him; so the thorn made its way in, and presently was buried in the flesh; and he forgot it, for it gave him no hurt.

By and by he came out of that wood, and shook the dust of it from his feet, and set

his face toward the mountains, for a voice told him that there he should find his life and his Love. And so it fell, for as he fared on, his Love came to meet him, and he knew her, and she him. Then each held out arms of longing, and embraced the other tenderly, speaking fond words; but when the maiden pressed her arms about the man, a pang shot through his breast, bitter as death; and he trembled, for he knew it for the piercing of the thorn.

The man set his teeth, that he might make no outcry, and then he looked at his Love: and see! she was snow-pale, and held her heart with both hands, as if in pain.

"What is it?" cried the man. "What hurts my Love?" and she answered, "I know not; a pang shot through my heart, bitter as death."

"Oh, Love, what like was the pang?" cried the man; and heard her words before she spoke; for she said, "Like the piercing of a thorn!"

THE SERPENT



Three boys were playing together in a field; and as they played, one passing by called to them: "Beware! in the corner of that field is a poisonous serpent, whose bite is death."

"Alas!" said one child. "How terrible, to think that anything evil should be in a place so lovely. Let me flee from it!" and he wept, and ran from the place.

"Why," said the second child, "should such a thing be here? what is the reason of it?" and he found him a safe place, and sat down to ponder on the matter.

The third child picked up a stone. "Show it to me!" he said.

IF THIS SHOULD BE

I



In the Place of Spirits, where many come seeking a home, and all who earn shall find one, a band of child-spirits played about their door, singing, and crowning one another with flowers. And as they played, there drifted by a gray Shape, and stayed beside the gate, and wrung its shadowy hands.

Said the eldest child to the Angel who was their guardian; "Dear, there is one seeking a home; shall we call her in?"

"Oh, hush! oh, hush!" said the Angel. "You may not speak to her."

"But," said the second child, "she stops at our gate, and gazes at us with mournful eyes. Let us call her in!"

"Oh, hush! oh, hush!" said the Angel. "You may not look at her."

"Nay!" cried the youngest; "but she holds out her arms, and makes a moan like the wind at night. Why may we not call her in?"

Then the Angel wept, for she had been a woman.

"Must I tell you?" she cried. "It is she who should have been your mother, and she would not."

The children gazed, with calm, bright eyes. "What is a mother?" they asked.

"Alas! alas!" said the Angel; and her tears fell down like rain.

"Alas! alas!" moaned the gray Shape at the gate, and beat the shadow that was her breast, and trailed away in the gathering dusk.

IF THIS SHOULD BE

II



When the Little Sister went away, it was in such haste that she left her convent robes behind; and this troubled her so that she spoke of it to the Angel at the Gate. "You see," she said, "I had no idea that I was coming; I fell asleep in my cell, and woke up in this beautiful homelike place. But these white garments are not suitable for me; could I find a black robe, do you think?"

"Oh no!" said the Angel; "we all wear white here, and it is so much prettier and more becoming. Besides, you must make haste, for they have been waiting long for you."

"Who have been waiting?" asked the Little Sister in wonder.

"The children, to be sure!" said the Angel. "See! there they come, running to meet you."

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The Little Sister looked, and there came hastening toward her a lovely band, little children and older ones, with floating locks and starry eyes, and all the eyes fixed on her with looks of love, and all the arms stretched out to her with gestures of longing.

"Oh, the darling, darling children!" cried the Little Sister. "Oh, the little angels! Now I know that this is heaven indeed."

She fell on her knees, and the children clustered round her, caressing her, and murmuring sweet words in her ear; and all in a moment the hunger that had been at her heart through the years was stilled, and she opened her arms and gathered the children to her breast and wept; happy tears were those!

"Sweethearts," cried the Little Sister; "dear loves, tell me, whose light and joy and blessing are you?"

"Yours, of course!" answered the children.

32

THE FEAST



The little Prince was coming; and in the dim, rich house that was his, some children were making ready a feast for him. They strewed sweet flowers, and lighted the candles, and made ready the table, white and fair, with the gold and silver service.

"It should stand here!" said one.

"Nay!" said another; "this is the place for it; and the candles must be over yonder." And he moved them.

"That I will never consent to!" said the first. "Let me do things properly, while you go and change your dress for a suitable one."

"I shall not change my dress!" said the second child.

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"Oh, shame!" said the first.

While they wrangled, the children of the wood peeped in at the door, ragged and rosy and bright-eyed, and laughed, and ran away.

"Let us make a feast too," they said, "even if we have no fine things."

They set them down under a great oak tree that grew beside the way, and one gathered acorn cups, and another pulled burdock leaves and laid them for a cloth, and a third plucked the wild strawberries that shone like rubies in the grass.

"Here is a fine feast!" cried the wood children.

Just then along came the little Prince, and they called to him, "Come and play with us, and share our feast!"

"With all my heart!" said the little Prince. "But are there not other children in the house yonder who would like to join us?"

"Nay, they are busy quarrelling!" said the wood children.

"Then we do not want them!" said the little Prince. He sat down with them under the oak tree, and they all ate and drank and were right merry.

But the children in the dim, rich house pulled the table this way and that, and moved the lights hither and yon, and looked at their delicate robes and sighed: "The little Prince is long in coming!" they said.

34

THE SPIRIT



A man was toiling, seeking, toiling, by hot sun and cold moon, with pickaxe and with spade; and as he toiled there came a bright Spirit, and looked him in the face, and smiled.

"Who are you, fair Spirit?" asked the man. And the other answered, "My name is Truth!"

Then the man threw down his pick and spade, and ran, and brought costly robes and wrapped the Spirit in them; and set him on a throne, and bound him fast with chains of gold, and covered his face with a veil of precious web, and fell down and worshipped him. Happy man was he!

Now by and by as he worshipped a traveller came by that way, and stopped to look.

"Fair answer to your prayers, brother!" said the traveller. "What God do you worship?"

And the man said, "The Spirit of Truth."

"Nay!" said the other; "how can that be? I met that spirit but now upon the road. Gipsying along he was, light-foot, light-clad, and over his shoulder pickaxe and spade."

Then the man cried out in terror, and ran to the throne, and pulled the veil away, and tore the robes apart: and lo! the veil holding empty air, and the great robes folded in upon themselves, and the gold chains binding them.

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THE ROOTS



A child found in its garden a plant. Fair and stately it was, full of rosy buds, with green leaves strong and luminous. The child admired it greatly.

"How fair it is!" he said. "How full of light and fragrance! but how does it grow? One should know that."

He looked down, and saw that the plant came up out of the ground.

"This is strange!" he said. "How should so fair a thing come up out of this black and dirty soil? I must look to this!"

He dug away the soil, and found the roots of the plant, bare and twisted, clinging to the soil and dark with the touch of it.

"Ah!" said the child, "this is terrible. Has that fair crown of rose and green drawn its life from so foul a source as this? Oh, sorrow and shame!" and he wept, and wrung his hands.

As he sorrowed, the Angel of the Garden passed by, with her arms full of flowers and fruit.

"Little one," she said, "have you anything for me?"

"Alas!" said the child. "Look! I had this fair plant, the sweetest in the world, but I find that its life grows out of the black and ugly mould; its roots are black with it. Look! the flower begins to droop!"

"Yes," said the Angel. "Oh, the pity! you have killed it."

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38



In the early morning, when the dew was bright on the grass, a child passed along the highway, and sang as he went. It was spring, and the ferns were unrolling their green bundles, and the hepatica showed purple under her gray fur. The child looked about him with eager, happy eyes, rejoicing in all he saw, and answering the birds' songs with notes as gay as their own. Now and then he dropped a seed here or there, for he had a handful of them; sometimes he threw one to the birds; again he dropped one for the squirrels; and still again he would toss one into the air for very play, for that was what he loved best.

Now it chanced that he passed by a spot where the earth lay bare, with no tree or plant to cover its brown breast.

40

"Oh!" said the child. "Poor place, will nothing grow in you? here is a seed for you, and now I will plant it properly."

So he planted the seed properly, and smoothed the earth over it, and went his way singing, and looking at the white clouds in the sky and at the green things unfolding around him.

It was a long, long journey the child had to go. Many perils beset his path, many toils he had to overpass, many wounds and bruises he got on the way. When he returned, one would hardly have known, to look at him, that he was still a child. The day had been cruelly hot, and still the afternoon sun beat fiercely down on the white road. His clothes were torn and dusty; he toiled on, and sighed as he went, longing for some spot of shade where he might sit down to rest.

Presently he saw in the distance a waving of green, and a cool shadow stretching across the white glowing road: and he drew near, and it was a tree, young and vigorous, spreading its arms abroad, mantled in green leaves that whispered and rustled.

41

Thankfully the child threw himself down in the pleasant shade, and rested from his weary journey; and as he rested, he raised his eyes to the green whispering curtain above him, and blessed the hand that planted the tree.

The little green leaves nodded and rustled, and whispered to one another:

"Yes! yes! it is himself he is blessing. But he does not know, and that is the best of all!"

THE GRAVE DIGGERS

42



A youth stood in the doorway of his house and looked out upon the road he was to travel.

"Alas!" he said. "It is a rough and stony road, and I am far from strong: also my feet are tender, and I cannot bear pain. How shall I take this hard journey?"

Then, as he sighed and looked, he was ware of two coming towards him with pick and mattock on their shoulders. Swiftly they came, and soon they were at his side, fawning on him, and speaking in soft, wheedling voices. Their faces were eager and servile, their eyes bright as flame.

"Dear youth," they said, "we are come to smooth the road for you. It is our trade; look, we have our tools with us! Give us but leave and we will work for you gladly, and ask no pay."

"What men are ye?" asked the youth.

43

"We are called Temptation and Opportunity," they answered; "but what matters this name or that? we seek but to serve you. Rest you still, and soon the way shall be clear before you."

So the youth went back into his house and set him down, and watched how all day long the two toiled apart with mattock and pick, smoothing and levelling, lifting stones out of the way, and hewing down brambles and tangled trees. But at night he laid him down and slept: and then those two ran speedily together, and with fierce looks and eager hands they dug and howked a grave in the earth. Deep it was, and lay straight across the road; yet so cunningly placed that it could not be seen till one was close upon it.

Morning came, and the youth stood at his door again, and saw the way clear and smooth before him, and the two bowing low, with smiling faces and fawning hands stretched out.

"Come, good Master!" they cried. "Come, dear youth, and let us bring you on your way!"

THE SICK CHILD



The sick child sat at his window and looked out on the summer world. He was sad at heart, for pain racked him, and weakness held him still; but yet he smiled, because that pleased his mother.

"I am of no use in the world," said the child to himself; "I am of less worth than yonder broken bough that lies on the ground, for that at least gives trouble to no one, and by and by it will make a fire to warm some poor soul. But still I must smile, lest my mother should be sad."

Presently the old field mouse who lived over the way came out of her house, with a tiny brown velvet bundle in her mouth. It was one of her eight young ones, and she was taking it to a new place, for the mole who was their landlord had turned them out. She had taken five of the little ones to the new house, but now she was weary, and her jaws ached sadly with holding the heavy little creatures.

"I cannot carry them all!" she said. "The rest must die, since it cannot be helped."

Just then she looked up, and saw the child smiling at the window.

"Look!" she said to herself. "That child has been watching me. He smiles with pleasure at the beauty of my young ones, but he has not seen the prettiest one yet. It will never do to give up now; I must try again, and let him see that there are eight, all the handsomest of their family."

So she tried again, and brought all the eight in safety to their new home.

By and by a horse came along the road, dragging a heavy load. He was old, and his bones ached, and the collar hurt his neck.

"Why should I not give up," he said to himself, "and refuse to go on? my master could only beat me, and he does that as it is. If I were dead, I should not feel the blows; why should I struggle further with this burden?"

Just then he happened to lift his eyes, and saw the child smiling at the window.

"Ah!" he said, "that child is smiling at me. He sees that I was once a fine animal; he knows good blood when he sees it. Ah! if he had seen me in my youth! But I can still show him something." And he arched his neck proudly, and stepped out bravely, tossing his head, and the load came more easily after him.

By and by a man passed by, walking slowly, with bent head and sorrowful look. He had lost the treasure of his heart, and the whole world was black about him. "Why should I live longer?" he said to himself. "I have nothing to live for in this world of misery. Let me lie down and die; in death I can at least forget my pain and the pain of others."

As he spoke, he lifted his eyes by chance, and saw the child smiling at the window.

"Come!" said the man. "There at least is one happy heart; and he smiles, as if he were glad to see me pass. He is a sick child, too, pale and thin; I must not cast a shadow on his cheerful day. And indeed, the sun is bright and warm, even if my joy be cold."

He smiled and nodded to the child, and the child nodded to him, and waved his hand, and the man went on, carrying the smile warm at his heart, and took up the burden of life again.

Now it was evening. The child was weary. His head drooped on his bosom, and his eyes closed. Then his mother came, and lifted him from his chair, and laid him in his little bed.

"God bless him!" she said softly. "He has had a happy day, for he is smiling even in his sleep."

AT LONG LAST



"Heart-of-mine, are you come at last?"

"At long, long last, Beloved!"

"Was it so long?"

"Long as grief, cold as the stone above your grave, empty as the noonday sky!"

"Oh! how was it empty, when I left the cup brimming over for you? Heart-of-mine, whom met you by the way?"

"Only a man, crippled in the mire, cursing as he struggled. I shut my ears against his foul speech and passed on."

"Oh! if it were my brother, whom you should have helped! whom else?"

"Only a woman, bowed under a burden; my own was more than I could bear, and I let her be."

"Alas! if it were my sister, and in her pack the balm that should have healed you! Whom else again?"

"None else, save children: they cried about my path, but how could I stay for them while you waited?"

"Alas! if among the children were those I might not bear to you! And fare you well, Heart-of-mine, for I must be gone, and now the time is long indeed."

"Oh! whither, Beloved of my soul, from my arms that clasp yet cannot hold you?"

"Heart-of-mine, where but back to earth, to do the work you left undone, to gather up, with patience and with toil, the sheaves you left behind!"

49

GILLYFLOWER GENTLEMAN

50



"Why do you play alone, dear," asked the Play Angel, "and look so sadly over your shoulder at the other children?"

"Because they are so selfish!" said the child. "They will not play with me."

"Oh, the pity!" said the Angel. "Tell me all about it."

"I want to play one game, and they all want to play another!" said the child. "It is very unkind of them."

"Did you ever play Gillyflower Gentleman?" asked the Angel.

"No!" said the child. "What is it?"

"You shall see!" said the Angel. "Let us ask the others if they know it."

The other children did not know it, but they were eager to learn, and soon they were all playing Gillyflower Gentleman; they played till all their breath was gone, and they had to sit down on the haycocks to rest.

51

"That was a great game!" said the first child. "I will play yours now, if you wish me to."

"We were just going to tell you that we would play yours!" said the other children. So they played both, and the Play Angel went back to her work.

THE JUDGMENT

52



"Of judgment, because the Prince of this World is judged."—

Now came the day when the Prince should be brought to judgment. Slowly he came, under the weight of his fetters, that clanged about his wrists and feet. His head was low on his breast, and his eyes heavy; so he stood before the judgment seat, and spoke not, nor raised his eyes.

The little Judge looked on him, and sighed, and spoke.

"It was you who saw me hungry and naked and cold, and drew your furs round you and passed by."

"Yea!" said the Prince.

"It was you who set me cruel tasks, and smote me when I fainted under them."

"Yea!" said the Prince.

"It was you who cast me into prison, into darkness and bitterness as of death."

"Yea!" said the Prince.

53

"Alas!" said the little Judge. "Poor soul, did you know no better?"

When the Prince heard that a great sob burst from him, and he fell on his face before the judgment seat, and his fetters clanged loud on the stone.

Oh! then came little feet pattering down the steps, and little hands lifted him, and he rose to his feet; but the chains lay where they fell.

"Come, Brother!" said the little Judge. "We will go back, and begin again together!"

54

THE BLIND CHILD



"Mother," said the blind child, "what a pity it is that everybody in this village, except you, is so ugly!"

"Bless your heart, my darling," said the mother; "why do you say that?"

"I was sitting by the fountain," said the blind child, "listening to the falling water, and the neighbors came to fill their pitchers, and I heard them talking. It was terrible! it seems that every one in the whole village is either bald or cross-eyed, wrinkled or misshapen. All save you, mother!"

"Bless your heart," said the mother; and she looked at her gray, worn face in the little glass that hung on the wall.

"They did not like to praise your beauty before me!" cried the blind child. "They spoke your name, and then said, 'Oh! hush, there is the child!' Was it not foolish of them, mother? as if I did not know!"

55

"Bless your heart!" said the mother.

56

THE CAKE



Once a Cake would go seek his fortune in the world, and he took his leave of the Pan he was baked in.

"I know my destiny," said the Cake. "I must be eaten, since to that end I was made; but I am a good cake, if I say it who should not, and I would fain choose the persons I am to benefit."

"I don't see what difference it makes to you!" said the Pan.

"But imagination is hardly your strong point!" said the Cake.

"Huh!" said the Pan.

The Cake went on his way, and soon he passed by a cottage door where sat a woman spinning, and her ten children playing about her.

"Oh!" said the woman, "what a beautiful cake!" and she put out her hand to take him.

57

"Be so good as to wait a moment!" said the Cake. "Will you kindly tell me what you would do with me if I should yield myself up to you?"

"I shall break you into ten pieces," said the woman, "and give one to each of my ten children. So you will give ten pleasures, and that is a good thing."

"Oh, that would be very nice, I am sure," said the Cake; "but if you will excuse me for mentioning it, your children seem rather dirty, especially their hands, and I confess I should like to keep my frosting unsullied, so I think I will go a little further."

"As you will!" said the woman. "After all, the brown loaf is better for the children."

So the Cake went further, and met a fair child, richly dressed, with coral lips and eyes like sunlit water. When the child saw the Cake, he said like the woman, "Oh, what a beautiful Cake!" and put out his hand to take it.

58

"I am sure I should be most happy!" said the Cake. "And you will not take it amiss, I am confident, if I ask with whom you will share me."

"I shall not share you with any one!" said the child. "I shall eat you myself, every crumb. What do you take me for?"

"Good gracious!" cried the Cake. "This will never do. Consider my size,—and yours! You would be very ill!"

"I don't care!" said the child. "I'd rather be ill than give any away." And he fixed greedy eyes on the Cake, and stretched forth his hand again.

"This is really terrible!" cried the Cake. "What is one's frosting to this? I will go back to the woman with the ten children."

He turned and ran back, leaving the child screaming with rage and disappointed greed. But as he ran, a hungry Puppy met him, and swallowed him at a gulp, and went on licking his chops and wagging his tail.

"Huh!" said the Pan.

59

THE SERMON



The minister had just finished his great sermon. The air still quivered with his burning words, and the people sat erect, disturbed, embarrassed; yet still he lingered a moment in his place.

"Is there," he asked, "one here in whose breast these words strike like a barbed arrow, for the truth that is in them?" and he sat down.

"That was hard on John," said old James; "but he deserves it, every word."

"A blow from the shoulder for James!" said old John; "time he got one too, if it is not too late."

"I wonder if either of those two old sinners will take his medicine and be helped by it," said old William.

60

But the little saint, the little saint, hurried home, and knelt by her little bed, and cried aloud in her anguish: "My God, my God, have mercy on me, and give me for this stone a heart of flesh!"

61

THE TANGLED SKEIN



"My dear child," said the Angel-who-attends-to-things, "why are you crying so very hard?"

"Oh dear! oh dear!" said the child. "No one ever had such a dreadful time before, I do believe, and it all comes of trying to be good. Oh dear! Oh dear! I wish I was bad; then I should not have all this trouble."

"Yes, you would," said the Angel; "a great deal worse. Now tell me what is the matter!"

"Look!" said the child. "Mother gave me this skein to wind, and I promised to do it. But then father sent me on an errand, and it was almost school-time, and I was studying my lesson and going on the errand and winding the skein, all at the same time, and now I have got all tangled up in the wool, and I cannot walk either forward or back, and oh! dear me, what ever *shall* I do?"

62

"Sit down!" said the Angel.

"But it is school-time!" said the child.

"Sit down!" said the Angel.

"But father sent me on an errand!" said the child.

"SIT DOWN!" said the Angel; and he took the child by her shoulders and set her down.

"Now sit still!" he said, and he began patiently to wind up the skein. It was wofully tangled, and knotted about the child's hands and feet; it was a wonder she could move at all; but at last it was all clear, and the Angel handed her the ball.

"I thank you so very much!" said the child. "I was not naughty, was I?"

"Not naughty, only foolish; but that does just as much harm sometimes."

"But I was doing right things!" said the child.

"But you were doing them in the wrong way!" said the Angel. "It is good to do an errand, and it is good to go to school, but when you have a skein to wind you must sit still."

63

64

THE NURSLING



Yesterday, the kind nurse, Yesterday, the wise old woman, sat by the fire with her nursling on her knee.

"Still, my babe, be still!" she said. "Listen now, till I sing you a song!"

"Oh! I know all your songs," said the child. "I know them by heart, the sleepy bed-time songs. But the lovely lady yonder, who smiles at me from the doorway, sings a new song, new and strange, and sweet, sweet. If I listen to her, may be I shall learn it."

"Nay! listen not to her, the gipsy!" said Yesterday. "Bide here by the fire with me, my babe, and I will tell you a story shall do you good to hear."

"Oh! I know all your stories," said the child, "know them every word, and some of them are false, and all are dull. But the lovely lady who beckons me from the doorway murmurs strange words, in a new tongue, yet clear as light; if I go with her, may be I shall learn it."

65

"Child, child," said the old nurse, "listen not to her gipsy talk; it is full of peril, and these new words have wicked meanings. Come with me, my darling, and I will show you my garden, full of sweet flowers and delicate fruits and precious herbs. See! they have grown from all time, and I gathered them from the four ways of the world, and all for you."

The child laughed, and his laugh rang cruel clear, as when a bird sings loud and merry over a new-made grave.

"Your flowers are faded," he said. "I have tasted your fruits, every one, and your precious herbs are but a handful of dry leaves and stalks. But the lovely lady who holds out her hands to me from the doorway tells me of things unknown, dim lands of furthest dawn, seas that no bark has ever sailed. I will go with her and see them, and live my life."

66

"Nay now, my child, my darling; stay with me by the fire, in the warm sheltered room;" said Yesterday the nurse, the wise old woman.

But the child was already gone, with To-morrow, the lovely lady with sunrise in her eyes, laughter on her lips, and the knife hidden in her hand.

67

WORMWOOD



All the morning the child ran about his field, smelling the sweet, tasting the sweet, plucking the bright and gay; and as he plucked and smelled and tasted, he found among the strawberries a dusky leaf that was bitter in his mouth. "What is this?" he asked of the Angel beside him; and the Angel said, "It is wormwood!"

"Pluck it all up!" cried the child. "It is bitter and hateful; I will have nought in my field but strawberries and roses."

And the Angel smiled, with folded hands.

Noon came, and afternoon, with long rays sloping westward; and the child walked in his field with slow and thoughtful steps. There were no flowers now in the grass, but everywhere a dusky leaf with dusky berries; and the air was full of the fragrance of them, sweet and yet bitter; bitter, yet oh, how sweet!

68

"What is this," the child asked, "that is bitter, and yet sweeter than aught else in the world?"

And the Angel said, "It is wormwood!"

THE PIT



"Though I make my bed in Hell..."

It was dark in the Pit. The air was heavy with poisonous vapors; the walls were foul with the slime of uncounted generations; under foot was the horror of the ages; yet still the man slept, for he was used to the place, and his brain sodden with the fumes of it. But by and by, as he slept, a sound crept into his ears, a weary, crying voice that went on and on and would not still; till the man stirred uneasily in his sleep, and awoke with the sound in his ears.

"Who is this," he said, "that breaks my slumber?"

He hearkened, and the voice went crying on:

"Oh! the blackness and the horror! oh! the dreadful, dreadful place! will none help me out?"

"What ails you at the place?" asked the man. "One sleeps well enough, if folk would but be quiet."

And the voice went clamoring on; the piteousness of it might have stirred the dead things under foot.

"Oh! for one breath of God's pure air! for one glimpse of God's good sunshine! Oh! the horror of it, to die in the foul dark! will none help me out?"

Then the man looked, for his eyes were used to the mirk of the Pit, and saw beside him the face of a youth, glimmering white as the dead moon at midday, and shining with tears and sweat of agony; and the lad was tearing at the walls, trying to make a way out; but his hands slipped on the slimy stones, and he fell back moaning and crying.

"Here is a great ado!" said the man. "But if it goes so ill with you, I will find a way out, if way there be."

He rose from the wallow where he lay, and with his strong hands felt along the walls, and found a crack between two great stones, and set his strength to rend them apart; but they clung together like the lips of Death. Long he struggled, yet could not stir them; and ever the doleful voice beat like a bell in his ears, till it seemed to him that he must give his life, so but that lad might go free.

Suddenly he felt a touch upon him, and in that same moment the stones moving under his hand: and looking, he was ware through the glimmering dark of another hand laid on the stone, and of one toiling beside him, striving even as he strove. Then the man set all the strength that was in him, and the great stones crumbled apart, and through the opening the fresh wind blew and the sun shone.

Then those two, the man and he who had toiled beside him, lifted the youth between them and brought him out into the open day; and the lad cried out once more, sobbing now for pure joy, and kissed their hands that had brought him out, and went singing on his way.

But the man stayed, and looked on that one who had toiled beside him. "Oh!" he said, "it was you!"

"Who else?" said the other.

"But how came you there?" asked the man.

And the other answered, "I went in with you!"

70

71

72

73

HOSPITALITY



"I hear," said the hospitable man, "that my friend has come from over seas. Now therefore let us do thus and so, for he is the man of all men whom I delight to honor."

So the hospitable man hurried to and fro all day, gathering this that was rich, and that that was costly, and the other that was delicate; and bidding his acquaintance come and help him do honor to his friend.

Next day he met another friend, who was a physician.

"Whither away so fast?" asked the hospitable man.

"Do not stay me!" said the physician. "The case is urgent. I am going to So-and-So." And he named the friend from over seas.

74

"You distress me infinitely!" cried the hospitable man. "Is So-and-So ill?"

"Some rascal poisoned him last night," said the physician. "A bad business. I doubt if he recovers."

"Good God!" cried the hospitable man. "He dined with me last night."

"Oh! was it you?" said the physician.

THE POT

75



The great Pot boiled and bubbled over the crackling flames. Fat and lean, sweet and bitter, had gone to fill it, and all seethed merrily together. "Hubble bubble!" said the Pot.

Now it came to pass after a time that a certain part of what was within rose to the top, and mantled there, frothing and eddying.

"I am the cream!" it said. "This is my proper place, the top of the Pot. Under me the mass seethes darkling, and from it I rise to light and air. My glory rejoices; this is as it should be!"

Now came the Cook, and lifted the lid of the Pot and looked in. "Ah!" he said. "The scum has risen, and must be taken off, lest the meat be spoiled." And he took it off.

"Hubble bubble!" said the Pot.

THE BODY

76



"But you don't understand!" said the Soul. "It is my body that makes all the trouble. Its nerves are all atwist, its brain does not work properly, its heart is too small. I am all right: if I could have another chance, in a decently furnished body, you would see what a different creature I should be."

"Very well!" said the Angel-who-attends-to-things. "I know several other souls who are wishing for a change; you may try their bodies, and see if you can suit yourself."

The Soul thanked the Angel joyfully, and flew in the direction he pointed out. Presently he came to the body of a fair woman, clad in white, with roses in its hands.

77

"This is beautiful!" said the Soul. "This is exactly what I want." He crept in, and flowed through the white body, and it moved and rose up with him, and went to and fro.

But soon the Soul cried out: "Oh! this body pinches me; it is too tight. Besides, it has the habit of fasting, and mortification, and I am used to a body that smokes. This will never do!" And he crept out again, and went further.

Presently he came to a stalwart body of a man, with bones and sinews knit of iron.

"Ah!" said the Soul. "Beauty is after all a slight thing. Strength is what one needs; this is the body for me." And he slipped in, and flowed through the body, and it moved, and rose up with him, and walked with swift and powerful strides.

"Good heavens!" cried the Soul. "This will never do. This body is far too big for me; I feel it all loose, and full of cold draughts. I shall certainly get the rheumatism. And I don't care about these things it is doing, hewing wood and carrying water for other people. I have made a mistake; let me correct it before it is too late!" and he crept out.

78

Going further, he came upon a body sunk in an easy-chair, clad in loose and easy garb of a man, and by it a table with glasses and bottles: and the Soul yearned toward it. "Ah!" cried the Soul. "After all, there is nothing like one's own!" And he crept into the body, and flowed through and through it; and the body stretched itself with a long, long sigh, and put its hand out to the bottle, and drank, and chuckled to itself.

"But how about those others who wanted a change?" asked the Soul of the Angel-who-attends-to-things. "I trust I am not disappointing any of them in taking up this dear old comfortable body again?"

"Oh no!" said the Angel. "They did not like its looks at all, and decided to go on to another world."

79

THE RULER.



When it was time for the Child to have lessons, the Teacher-Angel gave him a sheet of paper, smooth and white, and a pencil, and a ruler.

"Write as well as you can," he said; "and mind you keep the lines straight!"

The Child admired the ruler greatly; "I will put it up on the wall," he said, "where I can see it always." So he put it up on the wall, and the sunbeams, hardly brighter than itself, sparkled on it.

"It must be pure gold," said the Child; "there is nothing else so beautiful in the world." And then he began his task.

By and by the lesson time was over, and the Teacher-Angel came to see what had been done. The Child showed him the paper on which he had written his task. Up and down went the lines, here and there, from side to side of the sheet, which was covered with sprawling, straggling letters. There were smudges, too, where he had tried to rub something out; it was not a pretty page.

80

"What is this?" asked the Teacher-Angel. "Where is your ruler?"

"There it is," said the Child. "Up on the wall. It was so beautiful, I put it up there where I could see it always. See where it hangs! But methinks it is not so bright as it was."

"No!" said the Teacher-Angel. "It would have been brighter if you had used it."

"But I admired it greatly," said the Child.

"But your lines are crooked!" said the Angel.

81

THE TORCH-BEARER



A voice came ringing down the way: "Room! room for the Torch-bearer! room for the keeper of the gates of To-morrow! room!"

"Ah! yes," I said. "It is he, the great sage, who has lightened the world-shadows this many a year. Who should bear the torch but he?"

I looked, and the sage passed, his arms folded on his breast, his calm eyes bent forward, seeing many things: but no torch was in his hand.

And still the cry came ringing down the world's way: "Room for the Torch-bearer! make way! make way for the keeper of the gates of To-morrow!"

"Ah!" I said. "It will be the mighty leader, then; he who so long has marshalled our hearts, and led us whithersoever he would with a wave of his hand. Hail to him, hail to the Master of Armies!"

82

But as I looked, the Master passed, and his truncheon hung low by his side, and his eyes looked downward, remembering; and no torch was in his hand.

Yet still, as I marvelled, came that great cry ringing down the world's way, and now it sounded loud in my ears.

"Room! room! make way, give place! the Torch-bearer comes. Make way for the keeper of the gates of God!"

And once more I looked.

Ah! bare and dusty were her feet, the little woman; and she went bowed, and stumbled on the rough stones, for the great torch hung heavy in her hand, and heavy the babe on her arm: but he sat there as on a throne, and laughed and leaped as he sat, and clutched the living torch and shook it, flinging the blaze abroad, and the world-way lightened before him.

THE STONE BLOCKS



"Why is your little sister crying, dear?" asked the Play Angel. "I thought you were taking care of her."

"So I am, taking beautiful care of her," said the child. "But the more beautiful care I take, the more she cries. She does not like care to be taken of her."

"Let me see!" said the Play Angel; and she sat down on the nursery floor. "Now show me what you have done."

"Look!" said the child. "First I showed her all my dolls, and then all my new dresses; and now I have given her my new stone blocks to play with, but she will not play, only puts them in her mouth and cries."

"Perhaps she is hungry!" said the Play Angel. She took a piece of bread from the folds of her robe and gave it to the baby; and the baby stopped crying, and ate the bread, and laughed and crowded.

"See!" said the Angel. "Now she is happy. Remember, dear, that when babies are hungry, stone blocks do them no good."

"You are a very clever angel to know that!" said the child.

"You are a rather foolish child," said the Angel, "or you would have found it out for yourself."

THE POTTER



A potter wrought at his wheel, singing as he wrought, turning out crocks and pipkins of red clay. They were clumsy of shape and rude in the making, yet they served to hold meal and milk, and the poor folk bought of him. But ever, as he shaped the clay, the potter said to himself: "Some day, some day, I will make a cup of gold for the Prince's drinking!"

Now and again, when he was well paid for his pots, he would get a bit of gold and put it by. This small hoard was precious to him as sunlight, and bit by bit, little coin by little coin, it grew, till one day he had enough. Then he left his clay, and with care and loving pains, his lathe turning to the beat of his heart, he fashioned a little cup of gold.

"It is small," he said, "but it will hold wine for a single draught." And he set it in the sun among his pots, where it could be seen of the passers-by.

Presently rode by the Prince and his court, and saw the pots, and on one the sun shining.

"Look!" said one of the courtiers, "if the potter have not gilded one of his clay pipkins!"

THE NEIGHBOUR



"What can you tell me of your neighbour?" asked the Angel-who-looks-into-things.

"Oh, an excellent person!" said the Busy Man. "Full of wisdom and virtue; merry, too, withal; in short, a delightful companion."

"You have been much together, then?" said the Angel-who-looks-into-things.

"Well, scarcely that," replied the Busy Man; "in fact, I have been so excessively busy that I have seen nothing of him for a long time. But now I have every intention of doing so; indeed, I think I will ask him to dine with me to-night."

"You can hardly do that!" said the Angel.

"Why not?"

"Because he died this morning."

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THE WOUND



Once an Angel found a child crying bitterly, and stopped to comfort him.

"What is the matter, dear?" asked the Angel.

"Oh, I have hurt myself dreadfully!" said the child. "Dreadfully! see!" and he showed his wound.

"Yes, that must have hurt very much, I know," said the Angel; "but cheer up! I knew another child who was wounded in the same place, and he got over it in good time."

"Ah! but it was not so bad a wound as mine!" said the child.

"Yes, it was," said the Angel; "every bit as bad."

"But it did not hurt him so much!" said the child.

"How do you know that?" asked the Angel.

"Because he wasn't me!" said the child.

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THE WHITE FIRE

I



Three men came to Love the Lord, asking a gift of his white fire, and the gift was not denied. "Take it, keep it, use it!" said Love the Lord; and they answered joyfully, "Yea, Lord, this will we do!"

Then the three fared forth on their way, the old way, and the new way, and the only way; yet they went not together, but each by himself alone.

Presently one came to a dark valley, full of men who groped with their hands, seeking the way, and finding it not, for they had no light; and they moaned, and cried, "Oh! that we had light, to show us the way!"

Then that man answered aloud, "Yea, and there shall be light!"

And he took the fire that was given him of Love the Lord, and made of it a torch, and held it aloft, and it flashed through the darkness like a sword, and showed the way; and he leading, they following, they came safe through that place into the light of day.

The second man went by another path of the way, and it led him over a bleak moor, where the wind blew bitter keen, and the rocks stood like frozen iron; and here were men shivering with cold, huddling together for warmth, yet finding none, for they had no fire. And they moaned, and cried, "Ah! if we had but fire to keep the life in us, for we perish!"

And the man said, "Yea, there shall be fire!"

And he took the fire that he had of Love the Lord, and spread it out, and set faggots to it, and it blazed up broad and bright; and the folk gathered round it, and held out their hands and warmed themselves at it, and forgot the bitter wind.

Now the third man went his way also; and as he went he said to himself, "How shall I keep my fire safe, that no fierce wind blow it out, and no foul vapor stifle it? I know what I will do; I will hide it in my heart, and so no harm can come to it." And he hid the fire in his heart, and carried it so, and went on.

Now by and by those three came to the end of the way, and there waited for them one in white, and his face veiled. He said to the first man, "What of your fire?"

And the man said, "I found folk struggling in darkness, and I made a torch of my fire, and showed them the way; now is it well-nigh wasted, yet still it burns."

And he in white said, "It is well; this fire shall never die."

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Then came the second, and of him, too, that one asked, "What of your fire?"

And he said, "I found men shivering, with nought to warm them, and I gave my fire, that they might live, and not die."

And he in white answered again, "It is well; this fire too shall never die."

Then came the third, and answered boldly, and said, "I have brought my fire safe, through peril and through strife; lo, see it here in my heart!"

Then that one in white put aside his veil; and it was Love the Lord himself. "Alas!" he said; "what is this you have done?"

And he opened the man's heart; and inside it was a black char, and white ashes lying in it.

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THE WHITE FIRE

II

This one Love the Lord called to him, and waited no asking, but put the gift in her hands, the white gift of fire.



"What shall I do with it, Lord?" she asked: and he said, "Lighten the darkness!"

"Yea, Lord," she answered, "as I may!" and took the gift meekly and went. But as she went, she met one strong and silent, who took her in his arms, and bore her to a high tower, and kept her there in ward. The name of that strong one was Pain, and he was faithful as Night and Death, and they two dwelt together.

But she in the tower tended ever the white fire, and wept over it, saying, "How, in this tower, shall I do the will of Love the Lord, seeing here are only my fellow Pain and I? and the tower is full of seams and cracks, so that the wind blows cold upon my fire, and would fain quench it; and in no case can I lighten any darkness save my own."

But still she tended the fire and kept it alive; pure and white was the flame of it, and she and her fellow Pain sat beside it and kept them warm.

But Love the Lord looked from the clearness where he dwelt, and smiled; well pleased was he. For he saw through the seams and rents in that doleful tower the light stream clear and radiant: and in the darkness toward which his high heart yearned he saw men struggling forward, and heard them cry to one another joyfully, "Look up! take heart! yonder shines a light to guide us on the way."

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FOR YOU AND ME



"I have come to speak to you about your work," said the Angel-who-attends-to-things. "It appears to be unsatisfactory."

"Indeed!" said the man. "I hardly see how that can be. Perhaps you will explain."

"I will!" said the Angel. "To begin with, the work is slovenly."

"I was born heedless," said the man. "It is a family failing which I have always regretted."

"It is ill put together, too;" said the Angel. "The parts do not fit."

"I never had any eye for proportion," said the man; "I admit it is unfortunate."

"The whole thing is a botch," said the Angel. "You have put neither brains nor heart into it, and the result is ridiculous failure. What do you propose to do about it?"

"I credited you with more comprehension," said the man. "My faults, such as they are, were born with me. I am sorry that you do not approve of me, but this is the way I was made; do you see?"

"I see!" said the Angel. He put out a strong white hand, and taking the man by the collar, tumbled him neck and crop into the ditch.

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"What is the meaning of this?" cried the man, as he scrambled out breathless and dripping. "I never saw such behavior. Do you see what you have done? you have ruined my clothes, and nearly drowned me beside."

"Oh yes!" said the Angel: "this is the way *I* was made."

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THE PICTURE BOOK

"Brother," said the little boy, "show me a pretty picture book!"



"Nay!" said the brother. "I would rather show you this book with the ugly pictures, so that when you come to see ugly things you may know what they are. Look! see this, how hateful it is; and this, how hideous; and here again, this, enough to turn one cold with horror."

"Oh!" said the child; and he shuddered. "They are horrible indeed; show me more!"

Next day the brother found the child before a mirror, twisting his face this way and that, squinting, and making a thousand horrible grimaces.

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"My dear little boy," cried the brother, "why are you making yourself so hideous?"

"I want to see if I can look like the pictures in the book!" said the child.

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THE FLOWER OF JOY



The white frost struck my garden, and blighted my flower of joy. Oh! it was fair, and all the sweetness of the spring breathed from its cup; but now it lay blackened and withered, and my heart with it.

Then, as I stood mourning, I heard another crying voice; and looking up I saw my neighbour in her garden, bending over her stricken plants and weeping sore. I hastened to her. "Take courage!" I said. "It may be they are not quite dead: for, look! here lingers a little green along the leaves. Look here again, the sap flows. Take heart, and we will work together, you and I."

So I labored, and she with me, binding up, tending and watering, night and day; till at last life came back to her plants, first faltering, then flowing free, and they held up their heads and drank the sunshine, and opened fair and sweet to the day.

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Then, with her blessing warm at my heart, I turned me homeward: and oh! and oh! in the ruined garden where all lay black and prone, a thread of green creeping, a tiny bud peeping, a breath of spring upon the air. Glad woman, I fell upon my knees, and stretched out trembling hands to where, faint and feeble, yet alive, bloomed once more my flower of joy.

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THE BURNING HOUSE



Some neighbours were walking together in the cool of the day, watching the fall of the twilight, and talking of this and that; and as they walked, they saw at a little distance a light, as it were a house on fire.

"From the direction, that must be our neighbour William's house," said one. "Ought we not to warn him of the danger?"

"I see only a little flame," said another; "perchance it may go out of itself, and no harm done."

"I should be loth to carry ill news," said a third; "it is always a painful thing to do."

"William is not a man who welcomes interference," said a fourth. "I should not like to be the one

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to intrude upon his privacy; probably he knows about the fire, and is managing it in his own way." While they were talking, the house burned up.

THE PLANT



A plant grew up in the spring, and spread its leaves and looked abroad, rejoicing in its life.

"To grow!" said the plant. "To be beautiful, and gladden the eyes of those who look on me: this is life. The Giver of it be praised!"

Now the plant budded and blossomed: lovely the blossoms were, and sweet, and men plucked them joyfully.

"This is well!" said the plant. "To send beauty and fragrance hither and thither, to sweeten the world even a little, this is life: the Giver of it be praised!"

Autumn came, and the plant stood lonely, yet at peace. "One cannot always be in blossom!" it said. "One has done what one could, and a little is part of the whole."

By and by came a gatherer of herbs, and cut the green leaves from the plant. "They are good for bruises," he said; "or distilled, their juice may heal an inward wound."

The plant heard and rejoiced. "To heal!" it said. "That is even better than to gladden the eyes. The Giver of this too be praised!"

Now it was winter. The dry stalk stood in the field, and crackled with the frost, its few remaining leaves clinging black and shrivelled about it.

"All is over now," said the plant. "There must be an end to everything."

But now came a poor soul shivering with the cold, and took the dry plant and carried it to his home; and breaking it in pieces, laid the fragments on his naked hearth and set fire to them. Puff! the dry stalks crackled into flame and blazed up merrily, filling the room with light and warmth.

"And is this death?" said the plant. "The Giver of all be praised!"

Transcriber's Note

1. Original drop capitals beginning each chapter retained as images, with represented letter included in text.

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