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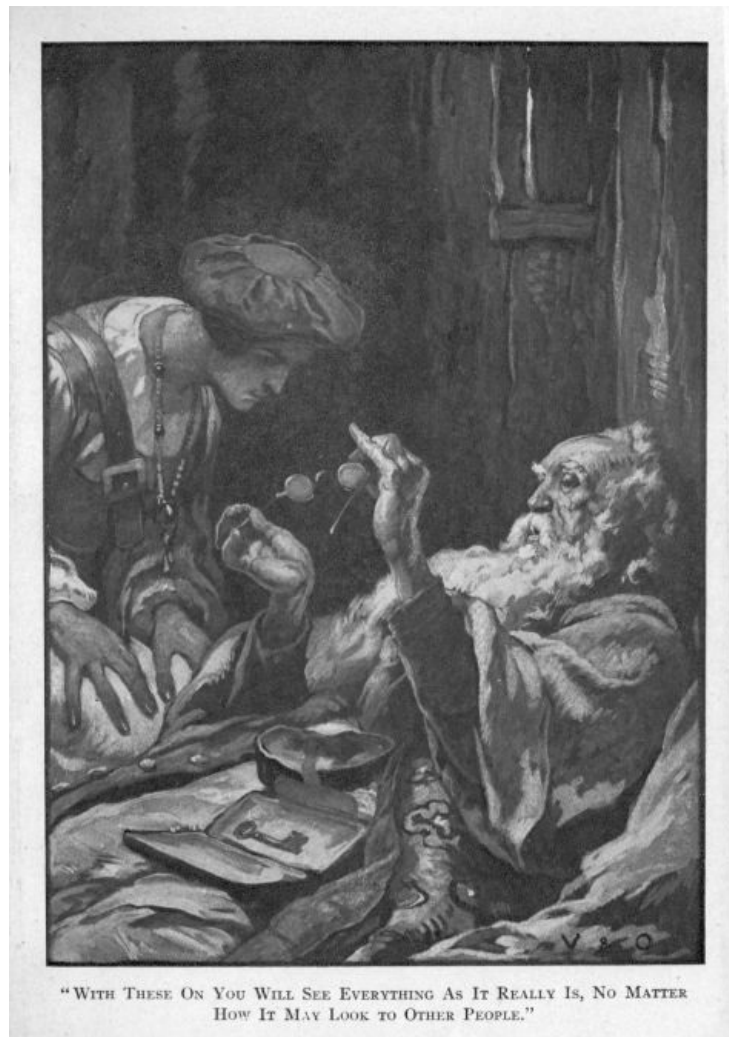
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ENCHANTED ISLAND ***



**"With these on you will see everything as it really is,
no matter how it may look to other people."**

THE ENCHANTED ISLAND

BY

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ILLUSTRATIONS

"With these on you will see everything as it really is, no matter how it may look to other people" . . . *Frontispiece*

The toucan . . . seized the basket by the handle and flew away

Up sprang the lid, and there behold! were the wonderful big pellets

He was trying to induce her to make an effort to pass the dead tigers

THE ENCHANTED ISLAND

CHAPTER I

Once upon a time many years ago there lay five islands in the South Pacific ocean where the weather was always fine.

Four of them were set in a kind of square, but the fifth, which was much smaller than any of the others, stood in the center of the group so that it was nearer to each island than they were to each

other, for they were all so many miles apart that they could not see each other's shores.

The little island in the middle was not inhabited, but was surrounded by very dangerous reefs. It was called the Island of Despair, though nobody seemed to know how it got its name, and was supposed to be haunted.

It had not always been there, and that was another reason why it was looked upon as an uncanny place, for all the grandmothers and grandfathers could remember when there had been nothing but the great sea between the four islands, and then suddenly one morning a ship had come upon the small island and nearly wrecked itself on the great rocks about it. After that of course it was put on all the charts, but even so, many a ship had since gone on the rocks in a storm and been lost.

Each of the four big islands was a separate kingdom, and had nothing to do with the others. The largest of all was called the Island of Sunne because it was the nicest and had the finest weather. It never rained there in the day time, but only at night, which you must admit was very convenient.

However, every place has disadvantages, and instead of mothers telling their children that it was not fine enough to go for a picnic they often said it was too fine, which meant that the very bright sunshine and blue sky would be apt to dazzle them, and then they would have to sit in a dark room every day for a week before they would be able to see anything again.

The King of Sunne was a good, kind man, who never made war with any of the other kingdoms, and was quite satisfied with all that he had. The Queen was very nice too, and gave a great deal of money to the poor, so it was not to be wondered at that the country was very prosperous, and the people thought their rulers the best in the world.

The King and Queen had only one son, who was called Daimur. When Prince Daimur was sixteen years of age his father gave him the most beautiful horse he could find in the kingdom, and the Prince was so delighted with his present that he used to ride all day long in the forests, sometimes with his servants, and sometimes alone.

One day, as he was returning from a long ride, he passed a small hut deep in a wood, which he did not remember ever having seen there before. He dismounted, and going up to the door asked for a drink of water.

An old man opened the door and asked him to come in. He did so, and the old man got him a pitcher of water from the well, but did not offer him anything to eat. The Prince wondered at this, as it was nearly noontime, and the people of the forest were extremely hospitable.

"You are wondering, my dear young Prince," said he, "why I have no dinner cooking. It is because I am so poor that I have nothing to eat in the house, and I do not know what is to become of me."

Thereupon the Prince pulled out of his knapsack a package of meat, some bread and butter, cakes, and a big piece of fine cheese.

"Poor old man," he cried, "take this food, which I will not need, and I will send you some more tomorrow."

The old man thanked him with tears in his eyes, and the Prince rode away.

Next day, when Daimur was again setting out to ride he called some of his servants and bade them fill up several baskets with food and provisions of various kinds, which he intended to give to the old man at the cottage.

When all was ready they set out, and soon reached the wood, but what was Daimur's surprise to find the cottage door broken down and the poor old man lying upon the floor.

Daimur ran forward and attempted to raise him.

"Tell me what has happened, my poor old friend," he cried, "who has done this?"

"Alas, my enemy has found me," whispered the old man, "and I am dying."

Then he motioned to Daimur to send the servants away from the room, as he had something he wished to tell him. As soon as Daimur had shut the door the old man said:

"Prince Daimur, I am not merely the old man you see lying here; I am also a fairy, and am called the Good Old Man of Sunne. By my powers I have been able to keep away all evil and unhappiness from this island, and at one time from all the other islands in this Land of Brightness. But I have had for the last two hundred years a very powerful enemy who is known as the Evil Man of Despair. He makes his home now upon the Island of Despair, and wicked men consult him when they have deeds of treachery to do.

"He has a great many chemical secrets which he learned in foreign lands, and as I am older than he and not so clever he has outwitted me many times upon the other islands, and evil times have followed, with wars and bloodshed. I have always lived upon this island, and of late took refuge in your father's wood, as I had a warning that he was going to seek me out and kill me.

"Last night when it was very dark a tremendous wind sprang up and the fury of it burst my door open. I knew it was he, although he did not speak, but in a moment the cottage was filled with a sweet smell of spices which soon became overpowering and I lay like one stupefied, too weak to move. I heard him moving around searching for my treasures. He did not find them, however, and I am going to give them to you, as in a few moments I will be dead, and then I do not know what will become of this Land of Sunne. Alas! Alas!"

Prince Daimur was greatly moved, and tried to tell him that he might get better if he sent back and fetched the Court doctor, who was very wise, but the old man shook his head feebly.

"No, it is of no use," he said, "I am very old, and the poison has killed me. My brain is already growing numb, and I must act quickly, Look on that nail behind the door and you will find the door key. Bring it to me."

Daimur did so, and the old man pinched it. It split in two and there could be seen a smaller key resting in a groove in the middle.

"Now," said the old man, "put this in the lock which you will find in the under side of the window sill and turn it. Bring me what you see."

Daimur did as he was told, and after fitting the little key into the lock and turning it, he found that a piece of the window sill rose up and disclosed a small black morocco case like a pocketbook lying in the cavity. This he carried to the old man, who grasped it eagerly in his feeble hands.

"This," he said, "contains my greatest treasures. In this case is a small black velvet cap. It is a poor, worn-looking one, but whoever wears it knows all things, and will be able to act wisely. Inside the cap you will find a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles. With these on you will see everything as it really is, no matter how it may look to other people. You must, however, be careful, as the Evil Magician has always coveted these treasures and if he finds out that you have them he will do his best to get them from you. Let no one know that you possess them, and always keep them concealed about you. As the Magician will no doubt come back to search the cottage I advise you to burn it up as soon as I am gone. See, you had better take the magic key too, as it will open any lock, however large or small. Beware of evil times, my poor Prince, as my good influence will no longer be felt in this kingdom."

With these words the old man began to shrink thinner and thinner, narrower and narrower, until Daimur could see through him, and finally he was just a streak of pale sunlight upon the floor, which wavered and faded, and at last went out completely.

Daimur was so surprised that he sat quite still for a time. Then rising to his feet and putting the key into the black case with the spectacles, he hid it in his bosom, and went out to call his servants. He told them that the old man was dead and would not need the food, and sent them on with it to the home of a poor farmer who had a sick wife, telling them to ride around by the high road and meet him, as he was going to ride that way.

As soon as they were out of sight he built a little pile of chips and dry leaves under the edge of the house, and set fire to it. What was his astonishment to see the flames leap up at once over the whole cottage, which burnt like paper. In a moment there was nothing left but a little pile of ashes, which the light wind took up into the air, where it formed a white cloud that sailed off into the sky, leaving a perfectly green space where the cottage had been, with no marks of fire at all.

Prince Daimur rode slowly out of the forest, thinking of all the good old man had said, and wondering very much, as he had never heard before of the Evil Magician of Despair, although he had heard his father say that a good fairy had always presided over the fortunes of his kingdom, but Daimur had thought it only a saying.

He longed to put on the magic cap and spectacles, but was afraid the Evil Magician might be hovering around, so he made up his mind that he would wait until some need arose before he took them from their case again.

CHAPTER II

It was not long before, as the Good Old Man had foretold, evil days came upon the kingdom of Sunne.

The King's brother, who until this time had apparently been very well satisfied to live peacefully in his castle and mind his own affairs, which, were quite important enough to suit almost anyone, now began to stir up trouble in the kingdom.

He made speeches, traveling from place to place, and told the nobles how foolish they were to be satisfied to stay in the Island of Sunne and work so hard collecting rents when they might go to war and win some of the other islands and take possession of all the silver and gold, fine castles and estates

there.

After a while he made some of them very dissatisfied with their lot, and the King had to threaten to put him in prison if he did not stop it. I do not know how it would have ended if a dreadful accident had not occurred which threw the whole kingdom into the deepest gloom.

The King and Queen with some of the Court were one day out for a sail on the bay, when a sudden squall arose which upset the boat, and all were drowned.

The people of Sunne were greatly grieved and very much alarmed as well, for the Prince was still quite young, and could not be expected to know much about ruling a country. They, however, did not have very much to say in the matter, as the dissatisfied uncle at once proposed to reign as King Regent until Daimur was eighteen years of age.

As most of the best statesmen and all the King's close advisers had been drowned, there was nobody in particular to disagree with him, and he immediately took possession of the palace and began ordering everyone around.

Soon people hated him, and he made the taxes so high that it took nearly all the money they could earn to pay them. This was to keep up an immense army which he had formed with the intention of making war against the other islands as soon as he had built a large fleet.

When Daimur was eighteen all the people of the kingdom demanded that he should be crowned king.

Daimur wanted to be crowned at once too, so that he could put back all the good laws his father had made, and save his country from going to war, but his uncle begged him to wait for a couple of months.

One night shortly after his birthday, Daimur had gone to his apartment and was sitting at his window thinking sadly of his troubled kingdom, when suddenly his door was opened and before he could say a word a gag was thrust into his mouth, his hands and feet were tied, and he was carried quickly downstairs, out of doors and down the garden path to the sea, where he was dumped into a boat that was anchored at the little wharf there. The night was very dark, and Daimur could not see because they had thrown a cloak over him and fastened it over his head, but he could tell that it was a small boat by the way it rocked when they moved about. The men ran up a couple of sails and pushed off to sea. The boat raced swiftly through the waves, but Daimur thought the journey would never end as he lay bound in the bow of the boat, and half smothered by the cloak. They sailed all night. The sun came up and it was a very warm day, but still they kept on, and it was not until the middle of the afternoon that they came at last to land and ran onto a sandy beach. Here the men pulled the poor Prince out of the boat more dead than alive, set him free, and putting off a large jug of fresh water and a big bag of biscuits, sailed away again and left him.

In vain Daimur cried after them to return, not to leave him there alone. They paid not the slightest attention.

After watching them for some time he saw in the distance a large sailing barge running towards the small boat, which he recognized as his uncle's, so how he felt certain that his uncle had caused him to be left upon the Island of Despair in order to take possession of the Kingdom of Sunne.

CHAPTER III

After a while poor Daimur gave up staring blankly at the sea, and taking up his jug of water and his bag of biscuits walked slowly up the shore to a shady place and sat down to eat and drink a portion, for he was nearly dead of hunger and thirst.

He had been sitting there only a few minutes when he heard a strange noise overhead, and looking up he saw a large hawk pursuing a beautiful brown dove. The dove flew this way and that, squeaking piteously, and at last fluttered to the ground at Daimur's feet, while the hawk swooped down to seize it; but Daimur jumped to his feet, and waving his arms beat it off and it flew away in fright.

When it was gone Daimur turned to look at the brown dove, which was lying quite still on the grass with its eyes closed.

"Poor thing," thought he, "I wonder if water would revive it," and he poured out a little in his hand and dropped some of it into the bird's beak.

In a few seconds the dove opened its eyes, and to Daimur's surprise spoke.

"Thank you, brave young man," it said. "You have saved my life, and I cannot tell you how grateful I am. The reason I am so weak is that I am nearly dead of hunger and thirst."

"Unfortunate creature," exclaimed Daimur, as he gave it a few drops more of the water, "I have some biscuits which you shall share," and so saying he proceeded to crumble one of the biscuits, which the dove seemed to hesitate to take.

"Unhappy young man," it said in a sorrowful voice, "I cannot take your last morsel, for this is the last pure food and fresh water you will ever get while you stay on this island."

"That may be quite true," replied Daimur, "but I cannot eat any of it while I feel that another creature is more in need of it than I," and after some pressing the dove hungrily ate up the biscuit.

When he had finished he was apparently much stronger, and hopped upon Daimur's knee.

"Look at me," he said, "and tell me what I am."

"You are a very beautiful brown dove with a golden crest," said Daimur.

"I am more than that," said the dove with a sigh; "I am Cyril, King of the Island of Shells, one of those which surround this Island of Despair, and you, I am sure, are a Prince or a King also, who has been put here to be out of the way."

"Yes," answered Daimur, "I am Prince Daimur of the Island of Sunne, and my wicked uncle has sent me here to starve, so that he may be made King in my stead."

"I thought it was something like that," said the dove.

"But that is not the worst of it," he went on. "You are wondering how I came to take the form of a dove. As you can see for yourself, I am enchanted. I was brought here with my wife the Queen and one little daughter, the Princess Maya, who is now seventeen years old. We too were given a bag of food and some water, but naturally I began to search for other food to eat when that was gone.

"I found that all the trees upon this island were fruit trees of different kinds and bore the most tempting and luscious fruits. There was also a well of clear water in the middle of the island, all neatly stoned around, which was fed by a small shallow stream flowing from the hill at the north side. You can imagine my relief. I had no fears of starvation anyway.

"We immediately began eating the fruit, and found it so delicious and satisfying that we threw the biscuits into the sea. What was my alarm in two days' time to find that I was growing stupid. I could not get enough sleep. The Queen was the same, and as for the Princess, when she was not eating fruit she was sleeping. We thought it must be the sea air, but on the third day we could hardly open our eyes at all, and as soon as we had eaten some fruit for breakfast we fell sound asleep, and when I woke I looked around in vain for my wife and little daughter.

"They were nowhere to be seen. Only beside me were a grey dove and a white one sitting on a branch sound asleep. Then on looking down I saw that I too was sitting on the branch, and that I was a brown dove, and I knew immediately that this was the work of the Evil Magician of Despair, and that it was through eating the charmed fruit that we had become changed into birds.

"It was not long before we found that there were many others here, who like ourselves had been sent out of their country. And to make it more horrible I discovered that the longer they stayed and the more fruit they ate the more stupid they became. Some of the older ones could not remember anything at all, and did nothing all day long but eat, drink and sleep.

"I do not eat more than will keep me alive, and I try to keep the Queen and our daughter from eating much too, knowing that we also are in danger of losing our minds. I have gone about imploring the others on the island to be careful, in hope of our being at some future time able to escape, but to very little purpose. Of course they must eat the fruit or starve, and most of them prefer losing their minds to going hungry."

Prince Daimur listened to the tale with a shiver, for he did not in the least want to be enchanted and lose his mind.

"Have you ever seen the Magician?" he asked after a pause. "I have been told he knows many secrets of chemistry."

"No," answered the dove. "We have never seen him. We feel that he is coming sometimes by the great wind that goes sweeping by, but as it is always coming and going in the path to the shore I think he must go back and forth a great deal from this island to some of the others. We know that he has a house on the hill on the north side somewhere, but have never been able to get close enough to see it, as the wind is always so strong around the hill that we cannot fly against it."

Now all this talk of wind made Daimur think of the day he had found the Good Old Man of Sunne in his cottage with the door blown in, and when he put his hand in his bosom, there safe and sound was his little case with his cap, spectacles and key, which in his distress he had entirely forgotten.

He opened the case and putting on the spectacles looked at the dove.

What he saw before him was not a dove, but a tall, splendid looking man, very thin, with a sad, pale face. He was clad in a rich suit of brown velvet, and wore a gold crown on his head, and he looked at

Daimur in some surprise as the Prince next drew on the cap.

Now he knew all things. He knew that the Magician had been called away suddenly by his uncle, and that his uncle intended to have the Magician construct some tale whereby he could make the people believe that Daimur had died a natural death.

He turned to the dove, or King Cyril, as he really was, and said:

"You may think it strange for me to put on these articles at this particular time, but by them I am enabled to see and to know all things, and I must ask you to swear that you will tell no one I have them, for the Evil Magician is looking for these very treasures, and their possession would make him a hundredfold stronger than he is.

"I am able through this cap to know that he is now at Sunne with my wicked uncle, and will not be back until to-morrow night, so come, let us walk about, and I will look for something to eat besides this enchanted fruit."

King Cyril promised solemnly that he would tell no one about Daimur's treasures, not even the Queen, for fear he should be overheard, and then they set forth on their way. King Cyril flying slowly in front and giving Daimur time to look about.

CHAPTER IV

They had gone but a short distance and had come to an opening in the trees, when Daimur said.

"I see a field of potatoes on that slope about two miles away."

"Potatoes!" exclaimed Cyril. "How can you see so far?"

"Oh, it is quite easy with these spectacles on," said Daimur. "Let us go and see them."

They set out, and after a long and tiresome walk through tangled underbrush Daimur found himself on the edge of the potato field. King Cyril resting on a branch beside him.

"Now, if I only had a spade," said Daimur, as he fell to looking about for a sharp stick or anything which would dig up the earth. After quite a search he found, half buried in sand and dead leaves, an old spade with part of the handle gone.

"What good luck!" he exclaimed, as he seized it and commenced digging up a hill of potatoes, and he soon had a large mound of them on the ground.

Then the question was where to put them, as it would never do to let the Evil Magician suspect that Daimur was not going to eat the charmed fruit, but was taking his potatoes instead.

After searching about for half an hour they suddenly broke through the trees and found themselves on a shore, the like of which they had never seen before. It was wild and rocky and barren, and some of the rocks were of very curious shapes. A few were high and conical, like caves, and had smooth flat floors.

They began to look for a cave in the rocks near the shore, and at last found one at the foot of a great tree which overshadowed it. This cave had an opening in front looking out to the sea.

King Cyril flew into the air as high as he could and looked for the hill where they knew the Magician lived. He was quite breathless when he came down, but he said that the hill was away at the other end of the island, and that they were facing the south.

"Then we must be looking towards the Island of Laurel," said Daimur, "and these must be some of the rocks on which ships are often wrecked."

"Do you think," he continued as he looked about him, "that if we were to make a fire in the cave the Magician could see the smoke?"

"I do not know," answered King Cyril, "it might be very risky to try; but anyway let us see if there is not another entrance to the cave."

He flew around it carefully, pulling away the bushes which grew close to it with his beak, and at last called Daimur to come and see the nice back door he had discovered, for the cave ran for some distance into the earth, and at the end of it, behind some shrubs, was another opening about five feet high.

"Now," said Daimur, "we can come and go from this end and there will be no danger of the Magician seeing us."

With grateful hearts they went back to get their potatoes.

CHAPTER V

After Daimur had carried all the potatoes into the cave and piled them up in a heap he took King Cyril on his shoulder and went back for the biscuits and water, as he was feeling very hungry and thirsty.

"Can you not call the Queen and the Princess," asked Daimur, "so that they may share some of this food?"

"You are very kind," said King Cyril, "but I am afraid they are both asleep yet. They were so hungry this morning that they ate more fruit than usual, but I will go and see," and off he flew, leaving Daimur to wonder how long it would be before he could get away from this strange and dreadful island.

In a short time King Cyril flew back, followed by a beautiful grey dove, the Queen, whom Daimur perceived through his wonderful spectacles to be a handsome woman dressed in a grey satin gown, and wearing a small crown of gold set with diamonds and sapphires.

Beside her flew a little white dove, the Princess Maya, and Daimur could see that she was a golden-haired young girl, all dressed in white frilly lace.

He asked them to be seated and have some biscuits and water, which though poor fare was at least wholesome and nourishing.

The Queen wept at the sight of a human being again after such a long time, and the Princess stared at him as much as good manners would let her, and thought him extremely handsome (as indeed he was), for she had seen nothing but doves for the last four years.

King Cyril then told them how Daimur was going to do them a good deal of good, and had already found a hill of potatoes and a cave where they could live so that they might have no fear of animals or birds of prey.

Queen Emily was very much overjoyed, and extremely grateful to Daimur for saving her husband from the hawk, about which he had just told her, and as soon as they had had sufficient to eat she asked to see the cave. Daimur picked up the balance of the biscuits and the jug of water, and they all went to look at it.

The Queen and Princess thought it a lovely place, and volunteered to stay and gather bits of moss and leaves for Daimur to sleep on at night, while he and King Cyril continued their search for food.

Accordingly they set out again, Daimur still wearing his cap and spectacles, the King on his shoulder.

After walking for some time Daimur, who was carrying the old spade, set it down suddenly.

"There are yams here," he said, "lots and lots of them," as he looked about at a mass of slender vines which twined about the trees and climbed towards the light. He set to work with his spade, and in a few minutes had about a dozen nice big ones lying on the ground.

"We will leave them here for the present," he said to King Cyril, "while we see whether we can discover anything else."

A short distance farther on Daimur stopped again to examine some more vines.

"Why these are peanut plants," he said to King Cyril (though he had never seen peanuts growing in his life before), "we must have some of these," and he dug up enough to fill all his pockets.

Again they continued their walk, and Daimur now began examining the trees. Certainly they were very fine ones, some of them reaching away up into the sky, and taller than the tallest buildings in the Island of Sunne.

They were all hanging full of the most luscious fruits. Monstrous oranges, beautiful peaches, cherries as big as plums, and plums bigger than anything you ever saw, bananas, cocoanuts, dates, figs, breadfruits, and grape vines bearing heavy clusters of black, red, and white grapes, grew in abundance, and although Daimur felt very much tempted to pick some of the lovely things he saw, he did not, as his spectacles showed plainly that they were all poisoned.

"It seems to me," said Daimur, "that everything which grows above the ground is poison, but that everything that grows in the ground is good to eat.

"So you see," he continued, addressing King Cyril, who was fluttering about him in a great state of

excitement, "we need not starve after all. Now let us go back to the cave, as it is beginning to grow dusk, and besides I am very thirsty. And good gracious! That reminds me that we have not found any pure water yet, and we have very little left."

They hastened back to where they had left the yams, and taking off his coat Daimur threw them into it and they started off towards the cave.

When they drew near it the Queen and Princess came flying to meet them, and crying that they had found a great treasure.

"What have you found?" asked Daimur in surprise, hoping it was not another of the Evil Magician's wicked devices.

"Water," replied the Queen. "It is just outside the cave and bubbles up from between two rocks. It must be a natural spring as it tastes quite pure and fresh."

Daimur went with the Princess to look at it, and found it was indeed as they had said. Between the cave wall and a rock which jutted from the bank a little spring bubbled up and trickled into a small rocky basin, which it overflowed and so ran into the sea sand.

Daimur knew by his cap that it was pure, and they were all much relieved to think they had been so lucky as to find both pure food and pure water in such a short time.

"Thank goodness," said Daimur, "we are safe for the present at least."

"We found something else, which I am sure will be nice," said the little Princess.

"What is it?" asked Daimur.

"Come and I will show you," she said. "Mother and I discovered them while looking for leaves for your bed, but we could not carry them."

A little distance up the sand the Princess led him to where there was a large nest of turtles' eggs, which Daimur joyfully dug out of the sand and carried to the cave.

"Now we will have a splendid feast," they said.

They waited until it was quite dark and then dug a hole inside the opening at the back of the cave, and made a fire. Luckily Daimur had a little silver box of matches with him. They roasted the potatoes and yams in the coals, toasted the peanuts, and baked the turtle eggs on a hot stone, and thoroughly enjoyed their supper.

Then, as they were all very tired, Daimur jammed some branches across one corner of the cave for the doves to sleep on, and gratefully threw himself down on the nice soft bed which the Queen and the Princess had prepared for him, and they all slept soundly until morning.

CHAPTER VI

Next morning they ate some of the food which they had put aside for breakfast, took a drink of water from their little spring, and then Daimur put on his cap and spectacles, shouldered his spade and filled his pockets with potatoes and peanuts and some of the biscuits.

"Now," he said to the three doves, "I want King Cyril to come with me and see if we cannot locate something like a boat near the Magician's hill so that we may get away from this place."

Queen Emily and the Princess begged to go too, so they all set out together.

It was a long way across the island, but finally they came to the poisoned spring which flowed near the Magician's hill, and there they saw many doves of all colors drinking and splashing around in the shallow well, while others sat stupidly on the branches of the trees devouring fruit.

The poor King and Queen shuddered at the sight and kept close to Daimur, who was so busy thinking that he hardly noticed them.

"By my cap," he said to himself, "I know there is a stair to the Magician's house from the shore on the other side of this hill, and the house is a strong stone one built into the hill. I wonder," he thought, "if we can find the stair."

They walked, or rather Daimur walked and the doves flew slowly towards the hill, but soon came to a great wall of rock that jutted out for half a mile, and over which they could see by the tree tops a terrific wind was blowing.

Daimur announced his intention of trying to scale the wall, but even as he spoke a sudden gust of wind swept down upon them, causing the trees to scatter fruit in all directions, and almost upsetting the three doves.

"What did I tell you?" said King Cyril. "We do not get much of it here, but look how the treetops are bending above us. It is of no use to try to climb up."

Feeling rather disconsolate Daimur turned around and started following the great wall of rock which ran away around the hill, winding in and out until it ran right into the sea.

"This wall is the same on the other side of the island," said the King, "it runs into the sea on that side also, so that the Magician's dwelling is completely shut off from the rest of the island."

They went on, keeping close beside the wall, until they came to the place where it crossed the sand of the seashore, and Daimur stood lost in thought, gazing at the rough stones which towered above his head. Then with a sudden exclamation he took his spade from his shoulder and commenced digging in the sand at the foot of the wall.

He soon found that it was only buried about three feet in the sand, and in a few minutes he had succeeded in making a hole under it wide enough to crawl through on his hands and knees, the doves immediately following him.

Once inside, the shore looked very much the same as it did elsewhere, and the only wind was the natural breeze, fresh and briny, which blew in from the sea.

They crept along, keeping close to the ground, under the shade of the trees, and after a while came up close to the hill, which at this side seemed to be of solid rock, and ran very close to the water.

Built against the hill was a long, low house of white stone, with a flight of marble steps leading up to the door, while directly in front of it running out a short distance was a wide landing, seemingly composed of one immense slab of white stone.

They crept close to the house, but Daimur was afraid to mount the stair for fear of being seen from one of the windows which faced the sea on each side of the door. He was very anxious to know who was in the house, but to his surprise his cap could not tell him anything about it.

The Princess eagerly volunteered to go.

"I am white like the gulls that are flying about," she said, "and will not likely be noticed."

Up she flew and alighted on the window sill, which was open, and after looking carefully in, she disappeared inside.

The King and Queen and Daimur waited in the greatest suspense for more than half an hour. At the end of that time she reappeared, looking very frightened.

"There is a witch in there," she whispered. "Let us go back at once."

They said nothing further, but all hurried away as fast as they could, crawled under the stone wall, and Daimur threw back the sand against it, and smoothed it down. They did not stop until they had reached the cave. Then they all sat down, very tired, and the Princess told them what she had seen.

"I went in at the window," she began, "and was in a great kitchen. At the far end of it I saw a room with a window in the end of it, so as there seemed to be no one about I cautiously slipped into the other room, which from the bottles and pots on the shelves I thought must be a sort of chemist's work-room.

"I hopped up on the window sill and looked out, and saw a beautiful large ship with three masts tied up in a small bay at the end of the house. I was then coming away, when I heard a noise and looking around, saw coming through the kitchen a very ugly old crone hobbling towards me, muttering to herself.

"I crept into a large box that stood empty in a corner, and saw her go up to a big wicker basket near the window out of which I had just been looking. She opened the basket and out came a long green snake, which fastened itself around her neck. I quite quivered with terror.

"How are you to-day, my daughter?" asked the old crone.

"Oh, much better, thank you," said the reptile, in a horrible rattling voice. "Did you find the magic tablets yet, mother?"

"Alas, my dear," replied the witch, "I found hundreds of them. They are on a shelf behind the cupboard, in a dark corner, but are locked up in a glass box. I am afraid the Magician carries the key with him, and I dare not break the lock."

"Oh, dear, how much longer must I wait to get out of this horrid shape? I wish I had not touched his old bottles and made him angry," said the snake, and it began to shed streams of tears which ran down and made little green lizards that crawled about on the floor.

"Not much longer, dear," replied the witch. "The Magician is coming back to-night, and nothing can be done now, but he is going away again on a special journey in five days' time, to hunt for some treasures which he says he must have, so I will go out across the fields as soon as he is gone and consult my old cat as to what is best to be done."

"The Witch then put the snake back in the basket, fastened down the lid, and went away, so after a while, not seeing anything more of her, I crept out of my hiding place, determined to get some of the tablets which will give us back our human shapes."

"Did you see them?" asked the Queen quite breathlessly.

"I did," replied the Princess, "I got in behind the cupboard, which has a piece gone out of the back, hopped up on the shelf, and found them quite easily. They are locked up in a strong glass box, and are as big as corn kernels."

"Well, well," said Daimur, after a pause. "Why, I have a key here that will unlock anything. We shall go back when the Magician goes away next time, and see if we cannot get some of the magic tablets."

Feeling very cheerful indeed they then went with Daimur while he dug a great many more potatoes, nuts and yams, and helped him to make a fire afterwards to cook them for supper. While the fire was getting hot Daimur went out along the shore to see what he could find. The tide was out, and he went looking about for clams. He was not disappointed, for he soon found a great many nice big ones, and you may be sure they tasted very delicious when baked in their shells.

Long after they had had their supper, when it was quite dark, they heard a great wind blowing, and Daimur, putting on his cap knew that it was the Magician coming home.

CHAPTER VII

All the next day the King and Queen and little Princess Maya went about quietly among the doves in the woods and told them about Daimur, and about the tablets they hoped to get to release them from their enchantment, and begged them if they valued their lives to leave the fruit they were eating and come and live in the cave with them.

They soon had nearly all the brightest doves fluttering excitedly to the cave, so anxious were they to seize any chance that might set them free.

The very stupid ones were harder to rouse, but by dint of coaxing and driving they managed to get them all into the cave, where pure food and fresh water soon began to clear their poisoned brains, and in a few days' time they were nearly all as bright and wide awake as when they came to the island.

The cave at night now was full of chattering and whispering, and Daimur had put up a great many more branches for them to sleep on.

He had plenty to do, for there was now a large number of doves to provide for, and they ate a surprising quantity of food, and for fear the Magician should see him he had to go for potatoes and other provisions at night.

It was thought best for the birds to fly through the island occasionally in the day time, so that the Magician might not be suspicious.

The first night, after they were all inside and had finished supper, Daimur told them of the ship which was anchored at the Magician's door, and they immediately cried out, "It is the one he stole from Prince Redmond," and Prince Redmond, a big black dove with a huge red ruff and red crest, nodded, and said he knew it must be his.

Then they talked about the magic tablets, and Daimur told them he felt sure his little key would open the glass box.

Now Daimur was naturally very much interested to know who these doves were and from which of the islands they came, so they decided that each should tell his own story.

King Cyril was the first one called upon, and after Daimur had stirred up the fire he began:

"I am, as most of you know, Cyril, King of the Island of Shells.

"My father was a kind, gentle man, who was more interested in study than in governing his kingdom. He had only two sons, my brother Arnolde and myself, and we grew up together and were the greatest friends until I married.

"As my father was getting very old, and I was the elder son, I soon had to devote a good deal of my time to the management of the kingdom, and my brother, who was three years younger than I, and who

took absolutely no interest in matters of state, was now left very much to himself.

"One day he announced to my father that he was about to marry a charming young lady who was living with her aunt, a duchess, in another part of the kingdom. My father was naturally displeased that he should have chosen for his wife some one who was not very high in rank, but upon making inquiries he found to his horror that the young lady was the daughter of a magician who had never liked our family.

"My father did everything in his power to try and persuade my brother to give up the idea of marrying the lady, saying that she would no doubt have some of her father's secrets and might be dangerous, but my brother would not listen, and was married almost immediately, taking his bride to a castle of his own which was near the royal palace.

"In a short time the new Princess began to show what she was. Not that she was ever disagreeable, but she was too nice. My wife and I began to suspect her of magic at once, and were quite sure of it when we saw her effect on my brother. He became so unfriendly that he actually would not speak to me at all, and gradually many of the ministers were the same. My father was so broken-hearted over the affair that he died inside of a year, and I ascended the throne.

"Hardly had the Queen and I been crowned when there began to be strange murmurings among the nobles. They said that my brother was such a clever fellow, and I so stupid, that he should be reigning in my stead. As he had always been noted throughout the kingdom as a very athletic young man, who found learning a great trouble, I was convinced that my sister-in-law was at the bottom of this opinion.

"By accident I found out how she accomplished her evil purpose. She had a little gold snuff box full of a magic powder, which when thrown into people's eyes made them see everything just as she wished they should.

"One day the Queen was seated in the garden reading, and I was walking towards her, when I saw my sister-in-law creep noiselessly across the lawn behind the Queen's chair, open a little gold box, and take out a pinch of something, which she was just in the act of throwing into the Queen's eyes when I screamed at her. In her fright she dropped the snuff box and ran away, and upon opening it we found that it contained a rose-colored powder. We guessed what it was for, and walking to the river bank we threw box and all into the stream, but the incident you may be sure made us very uneasy.

"After that my sister-in-law did not try to hide her hatred for us, and it was only a few weeks later, when we were one day out driving, that we were set upon by a large band of men in disguise, among whom I recognized my own brother and many of the gentlemen of my court.

"We were seized, bound, tied up in sacking, and hidden away in a cellar until night, when we were brought out here and left on the shore, more dead than alive. Here we have been for four years, living in a state of enchantment, until now Prince Daimur has come to bring us the hope of freedom."

Everybody sympathized with King Cyril and the Queen and Princess, and Daimur assured him that as soon as he had taken his own kingdom from his wicked uncle he would go with him and help him to win back his country from his brother and witch of a sister-in-law.

Then as it was quite dark Daimur took his shovel and went off to get as many potatoes as he could before going to bed.

CHAPTER VIII

The next night after everyone was inside and supper was over, it was decided to be Prince Redmond's turn to tell his story. He accordingly began, everyone listening attentively:

"I am the youngest of three brothers. My father was King of Laurels and loved us very dearly. I cannot remember my mother, as she died when I was quite young.

"My eldest brother Tasmir was a fearless fellow, who did a great deal of riding, and was always on the lookout for adventure. I was very fond of him and often went with him, as I liked riding and adventure too, while my second brother Sadna, who detested any kind of outdoor exercise, stayed at home holding receptions and going to balls. He was a vain fellow, fond of fine clothes and flattery, and we used to laugh at him.

"Sometimes he would say 'Oh, never mind, my good brothers, I shall get ahead of you both one of these days,' which answer we always took good-naturedly.

"It so happened when my father was quite advanced in years that he slipped one day and fell, and was so badly injured that he became an invalid and could only sit in a chair and be wheeled about.

"He was very fond of flowers, and we had an immense conservatory where he spent most of his time. It was his wish to possess a flowering plant from every part of the world. Each ship which came in brought some new specimen, until there remained but a single little spot on earth which had not contributed a plant. As this place was surrounded by a desert which no one would venture across, it did not seem as if my father would get the 'Wonder Plant' as it was called. He was very anxious to possess it and offered a large sum of money to anyone who would find it and bring it back, but in vain.

"Then Tasmir asked permission to go and seek it, and promised that he would return within a year. After much consideration the King consented to let him go, and Tasmir was overjoyed. I was very much cast down at the thought of being alone but Sadna seemed to be secretly glad.

"Before departing my brother gave me a locket of silver which he said I was to wear about my neck constantly until he returned. If it remained bright I would know he was alive and well, but should it turn black I would know that he was dead, and it would be of no use searching for him.

"I wore the silver locket, and at the end of the year it was still bright, although Tasmir had not come home. Up to this time my father had been patiently waiting for Tasmir's return, but now he became very anxious and wanted my brother Sadna to set out in search of him.

"This Sadna refused to do, saying that he knew quite well Tasmir was dead, and it served him right for going on such a foolish errand in a wild country, which so upset my father that he at once summoned all the magicians and wise men in the kingdom to see if they could tell him what had become of Tasmir. None of them could tell him anything, excepting the Evil Magician, who had come with the others, and he said Tasmir was dead.

"Then my poor father believed it, although I tried to make both him and my brother understand that it was not true, as my locket was still bright. They would not listen to me.

"Sadna immediately seized the King and locked him up in a large unused wing of the castle, giving out the news to our subjects that his father was out of his mind and unfit to reign, and that he, Sadna, wished to be crowned at once.

"I was horribly disappointed with my brother, and taking all the money I had in the world, I bought a good ship, which I manned with fifty of the best sailors in the kingdom, and started out to look for Tasmir.

"We had gone only a short distance out to sea when a terrific storm arose. It lasted all night, and in the morning we found ourselves stranded high on the flat reefs to the south of this island, and were obliged to take refuge on shore, as we feared the ship might go to pieces in the storm.

"We came inland, brought some food with us, and when in the evening we went back to the shore we found the sea calm enough, but the ship had completely disappeared, as had also our small boats. Not a timber or a splinter remained. We knew that the ship could not have sunk, as it lay in shallow water and it would be impossible to break up and not leave some wreckage on the shore.

"I did not know what to think, but finally agreed with some of the sailors that pirates had stolen the ship and also our small boats during the day. As we had no possible means of escape we were obliged for the meantime to seek food and shelter in the interior of the island, believing that perhaps before long we would be able to hail some passing boat.

"We soon found our way to the fruit trees, you may be sure, with the result that in three days we had all been transformed into birds, which shape we had no hope of changing for our own again until you, Prince Daimur, came to rescue us."

"And your brother Tasmir," asked Daimur, "do you still believe him to be alive?"

"Indeed," replied Prince Redmond sadly, "I do not know. My locket, being a charmed one, could not be transformed with me, and is still around my neck, but it seems to be turning darker every day. Wherever Tasmir is I fear he is dying."

"Well," said Daimur, "do not give up hope. Just as soon as you are delivered from this place you will be able to go and seek him, and I will give you every assistance in my power. In the meantime I will try and find out something about him."

So they retired to rest with hopeful hearts, each to dream of freedom.

CHAPTER IX

The next evening, after supper was over, some of the doves brought forward a very plain-looking old dove, who wore suspended around her neck on a thin chain a little gold key.

They all begged her to tell Daimur her story, and after some hesitation she began:

"I am not a Queen," she said, "I am only the Duchess of Rose Petals, but through my misfortune I am causing a great deal of misery to my dear, dear niece, Queen Amy of the Island of Roses." Here she shed a few tears, then shaking her feathers, she continued her story.

"When my cousin, the late King Richard, died he left no heir. In his will, however, he named his successor. He said that whichever of his nieces (his two brothers each had one daughter) should grow up more beautiful and more clever than the other should be crowned Queen on her eighteenth birthday, and that until then the Prime Minister should manage the affairs of the country.

"As the girls were both in their sixteenth year at the time there were two years to wait.

"We all thought it a silly plan, and that it would have been much better to name one of the girls as Queen and be done with it, but of course the King's wishes had to be observed, and the people settled down to wait.

"The two Princesses after that were very seldom seen, each being kept busy by her respective parents learning all manner of things which she would need to know if she became Queen, and at the same time building up her beauty.

"Princess Amy was always my favorite niece. She was a dear good-hearted little thing with pretty golden hair, a fine pink-and-white complexion, and the kindest blue eyes in the world.

"Princess Bethel was neither good-looking nor sweet-tempered, and no one thought she had any chance of being chosen Queen, especially as she was known to be rather stupid. I really felt sorry for her, as I knew she could not manage to change her looks altogether in two years, but she had a surprise in store for us.

"Her father was a studious man, fond of making scientific experiments, and I used to hear that she spent a great deal of her time in the laboratory watching the making of strange mixtures, but I did not pay much attention to this, as it was nothing new.

"Nobody ever saw her excepting heavily veiled, and her mother said that they were trying a new treatment for her complexion and that the sun must not touch her skin.

"The two years passed away, and at last a day was named in May when the choice of Queen should be made.

"For days the roads were full of people traveling towards the Palace gates, and when the great day dawned bright and clear the square in front of the Palace looked as though a large army had encamped there. Flags were flying everywhere, and inside, the Palace all preparations had been made to crown the chosen Queen and have a great feast.

"The first thing the two Princesses had to do was to appear at nine o'clock in the morning before seven of the greatest college professors in the kingdom and write examinations on seven different subjects, the result of which would be announced before the assembled multitude.

"At seven o'clock it was given out that Princess Amy had made very high marks in all subjects and had come away ahead of Princess Bethel. At this loud cheers were heard for Princess Amy, and it was murmured about that she would be Queen.

"At midday all the Court were assembled, and the two Princesses, each with her parents, walked slowly into the great ballroom.

"A murmur of admiration arose, for indeed they both looked exceedingly beautiful in their white satin dresses, richly trimmed with lace.

"I noted with pride that Princess Amy's golden hair and blue eyes were brighter than ever, her complexion more delicately pink and white, but what was my surprise on turning my eyes towards Princess Bethel to see that her complexion was a great deal finer, and her hair most wonderful.

"In place of the straggly brown locks she used to possess she now had the most beautiful masses of shining hair, falling to the floor in waves and ringlets. It was of a very pale yellow, but the charm of it lay in the way it seemed to change color, sparkling with every beautiful shade around it as she walked. It was most fascinating.

"We were all amazed, and after the first glance nobody saw Princess Amy at all. The two girls walked down the hall, and every eye was fixed on Princess Bethel and her wonderful glistening hair.

"It was only a few moments before it was announced from the Palace to the people assembled outside that the beautiful Princess Bethel had been chosen Queen,—everybody had forgotten about the examination for cleverness,—and the crowning immediately took place, after which the new Queen and Princess Amy appeared on the balcony and bowed to the people, who were waiting to see them, and who professed themselves completely satisfied with the choice of Princess Bethel as Queen.

"The news quickly spread throughout the kingdom, and many people traveled from the other side of the island just to get a look at the new Queen and her wonderful hair.

"I was sorry for Princess Amy; not that she seemed to mind not being chosen—she was too sweet-tempered to be jealous—but she certainly had not been treated fairly. I felt too that there was something peculiar about the Queen's hair, and after considerable thought and a number of quiet inquiries I determined to see for myself if she really had such hair, and such a fine complexion.

"Queen Bethel's mother spent a great deal of her time at the Palace with her daughter, and I became very friendly with her and used to visit her there a great deal. I had to wait my chance, but at last it came.

"One afternoon I drove to the Palace alone, and was told that the Queen was taking a nap and must not be disturbed, and that her mother was taking an airing, but would be back in an hour.

"I said I would wait in the Queen's private drawing room until her mother came in, and was shown upstairs, but the moment I was alone I hurried swiftly and softly to the Queen's apartments. Just as I thought, the door was locked. I went to a linen closet a short distance down the hall where I knew I could get a small step-ladder, and mounting this I got into the room through the transom.

"I let myself down by stepping on the door handle, and found I was in the Queen's boudoir. I could hear someone snoring in the next room quite loudly, so after making sure that nobody was about I tiptoed gently to the door.

"On the bed, looking very pale and homely, lay the Queen, and there upon the dresser was her beautiful hair. Beside the hair was a queer looking pot marked

PERFECT COMPLEXION DYE
One Application warranted to stand
two washings.

"I could have laughed for joy, but I had no time to waste, and quickly putting both the complexion dye and the hair into my large pocket I crept back to the boudoir.

"Here of course I had no difficulty in unlocking the door and getting out into the hall, and after pushing the key under the door, closing the transom and carefully putting the stepladder back into the linen closet, I left the Palace, saying that I could not wait any longer.

"I flew home and sent for Princess Amy's mother and father. I showed them the wig and the dye. They were speechless with indignation and surprise at the way their daughter had been imposed upon. At my request they agreed to take possession of the articles until we could have arrangements made for settling the matter.

"We then called upon the Prime Minister and told him the whole story, and he called a special meeting for twelve o'clock next day, at which all members of Government were ordered to attend, and it was added that they might bring their wives with them. Somehow or other the news went around that the meeting was to be over the new Queen, and at twelve o'clock next day the long table which ran the whole length of the great assembly room was crowded, and most of the ladies had to sit in groups about the room.

"'Call the Queen,' said the Prime Minister.

"The Queen's mother hurried in in a terrible flutter, and said that the Queen had a frightful headache and begged to be excused.

"The Prime Minister replied that he was sorry, but if she was not able to come down we would have to go upstairs to her and hold the meeting.

"That settled it. In a few moments the Queen appeared, very pale indeed, and with her head tied up in a lace scarf. She looked anything but beautiful without her fine hair and lovely complexion, and her small green eyes flew around the room as if looking for a means of escape. I could see that everybody was shocked at sight of her.

"The Prime Minister came immediately to the point. He told the Queen that reports were circulating to the effect that her beautiful hair was not real. At this she flew into a perfect rage and stamped her foot at him, crying that it was real.

"'Well, well, then,' said the Prime Minister, 'kindly remove your lace scarf and let us see for ourselves.'

"This of course she refused to do, whereupon the Prime Minister held out his hand for a bag which Princess Amy's father was carrying, and drew out first the complexion dye and then the wig, which he passed around for inspection. When he laid the Queen's beautiful hair on the table everybody jumped up with an exclamation of amazement and looked at Bethel, who gave a scream and tried to snatch it, but her mother drew her back.

"'What is it made of?' was the question they all asked. I knew, I had guessed it for quite a long time, but had not felt certain until I had it in my hands.

"'It is made of spun looking-glass, colored a delicate yellow,' I said, 'and was made by Princess

Bethel's father, who, as you all know, is very clever. See, here is a doll's wig that he made for Princess Amy several years ago. You will note that it is not colored, that it is made of clear glass, and is coarser, but the idea is the same. If you need any further proof I have three witnesses whose testimony I think you will be willing to accept.'

"Wonderful, wonderful,' they all exclaimed, as they still examined the wig.

"Who told you anything about it?' screamed the Queen. 'What do you mean prying into my affairs? I'll pay you well for this, Aunt Sophie.'

"But nobody paid any attention to her. The Prime Minister was asking what should be done with her, and various things were suggested. One old Baroness would keep calling out, 'Have her beheaded, have her beheaded,' and several members of Parliament felt that she ought to be imprisoned for life, and also her father and mother.

"No doubt they would have been imprisoned for at least a number of years had not Amy's father risen and said that his daughter asked that for her sake they would not punish either Bethel or her parents, but let them go home, as she thought the shame of all this exposure would certainly be punishment enough. Most of the ladies thought so too, and finally it was agreed to do as Amy had asked.

"So Princess Bethel was ordered to leave the palace at once, and it was said that her father and mother had a dreadful time trying to live with her for many a long day afterwards, but we all agreed that it served them right.

"That very day Princess Amy was crowned Queen, and nobody was more happy than I, for I knew that she would rule wisely and well.

"I was not mistaken, for she soon began to make new laws and change the old ones for the good of her subjects.

"I was one day with her in the cellars under the Palace looking through some old chests of books, when we came upon one very large chest made of solid steel, which stood in a small room alone. The key, a tiny golden one, was in the lock and we opened it. The chest was lined with gold, but had nothing in it but one gold coin in the bottom.

"Why, what a splendid bank this would make,' said Queen Amy, 'I believe I shall start one.'

"That very day she began saving gold in the big chest, and continued putting by as much as she could spare to use it in a time when the crops might be poor, or war threatened.

"There were very few banks in the kingdom, and it was not long before poor people were bringing their savings to the Palace to be put in the chest. She had a great number of little glass boxes made, which fitted into trays, and each box bore the name of the depositor. The key of the chest she carried on a fine strong chain about her neck night and day.

"One evening word came that the Princess Bethel's mother was very ill and wished to see her niece. The Queen instantly called for her carriage, and ordered a company of guards to accompany her, then as she had to drive through a wood and was a little afraid of highwaymen she took the gold key from her neck and fastened the chain around mine, telling me not to remove it until she returned.

"I watched her drive away, and then went for a walk over the lawn towards the water. I reached the little pier and stood for a few moments looking at a small row boat which was tied there, wondering whether I should go out for a few minutes on the bay, but as the night was rather chilly I turned to go back for a wrap.

"I had not taken six steps before I was seized in a kind of whirlwind which sprang up from the water and almost choked me. In my hurry to get away I turned in the wrong direction and stepped off the pier into the boat, striking my head.

"I can remember clutching the key as I fell, and after that I knew nothing until I awoke and found myself lying on the sands of this island. Here I have been for two years, and in that time who knows what may have happened to my poor Amy, for without this key she cannot open the treasure chest."

Here the dove stopped and heaved a great sigh. "Fear not," said Daimur, "you shall go back in a very short time to your beloved niece if all goes as well as we hope."

Then as it was very late they all settled themselves for the night and were soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER X

Early in the morning Daimur was up and astir, and after breakfast he went for a walk alone. As he

went along he thought of the stories he had heard, but most of all he thought of Prince Tasmir and wondered if he were still alive.

He had come to a clear space in the depths of the wood, and being rather tired, he leaned against a large tree, and looking up at the sky through the branches said aloud to himself:

"I wonder where Tasmir is?"

"I am here," said a faint voice immediately back of him.

Quite startled, Daimur turned sharply around and looked behind him. There was no one in sight. He looked into the branches of the tree against which he was leaning, thinking it might have been the voice of a dove, but there was nothing to be seen. But he noticed that the leaves of the tree were dropping, and what was still more strange on that island, it was a laurel tree, and not a fruit tree.

"Tasmir," he murmured in a low tone, "where are you?"

"I am here," came the voice again, "in this tree, and more dead than alive."

Immediately Daimur put on his spectacles, and standing back looked at the tree. He could see imprisoned in the center of the trunk a young man with a pale, thin face. His eyes were wild and his hair long, and he looked back at Daimur with such a sad expression.

"Poor, poor fellow," said Daimur, "your plight is worse than your brother's. This is more of the Evil Magician's work."

"Yes, he has enchanted me, and I am slowly dying," answered Tasmir in a weak voice. "You can see that the leaves of my tree are dropping."

"What can I do to save you?" cried Daimur.

"You must make a hole in the side of the tree and let the sap run out. When it has all run away the tree will dry up in a day, and I will be able to break through the wood, as it will be brittle like dried-up egg shell. You will have to do it at once, however, as I cannot last much longer than another day. I am nearly drowned now with sap."

Daimur hastily drew out his knife, and finding a place where some bushes grew close against the tree he pulled them back and began cutting a hole in the bark. He worked for more than an hour before he had penetrated through to the pith. Then the sap burst forth and ran out in a stream, sinking into the earth at the root.

"It will not be dry until night," said the poor prisoner, "and then perhaps I will be able to break my way out."

Daimur, who had been consulting his cap, now found that the Magician was moving around the island, so he left the sap to drain away and hurried back to the cave where he lay hidden for the rest of the day.

After supper Daimur called Prince Redmond to one side.

"Redmond," said he, "I have news of your brother Tasmir; he is still living."

At this Redmond was so overjoyed that he almost fainted, but after a moment recovered himself and asked Daimur to tell where his brother was and what he knew of him.

Then Daimur told him about his walk in the forest that morning, and how he had heard Tasmir's voice come out of the tree. When he had finished Redmond was in a great flutter of excitement and happiness, and wanted to go at once and see if the sap had all drained away.

Daimur put on his cap again, and having ascertained that the Magician was safe in his house, he led the way to the great laurel tree, where they could see by the light of the moon that the sap had ceased to run. The tree was drying up.

"Is it dry enough yet?" he called softly to Tasmir.

"No, not yet," came the faint answer from the tree, "but it is drying fast."

Daimur sat down on the ground to wait, and Prince Redmond perched in a neighboring tree, so excited at the prospect of seeing his dearly loved brother alive that he could hardly keep his hold on the branch.

After a while they heard a faint cracking noise like the breaking of glass, and Daimur immediately jumped to his feet.

"Can I not help you?" he called softly.

"Yes," answered Tasmir, "you must cut the bark. I am so weak I will not be able to break that. Cut a slit in it right up the tree."

This Daimur did, slitting it for above five feet up from the root. No sooner had he stepped back than there was a great rending sound, the bark flew open, and out staggered the poor thin young prince, so weak and faint from his efforts that he could not stand, but had to lie for a while on the grass. His brother Redmond at once fluttered to his side and cried out how glad he was to see him, and that he had never expected to behold him again alive.

"Is it you, dear Redmond?" asked Tasmir. "I never expected to be able to speak to you again. I knew you, although you did not know me, and often watched you flying past. I tried to call you, but you never heard me. I would have been dead in a few hours' time had it not been for this good young man," he said, and he turned gratefully towards Daimur, who was pushing together the bark on the tree so that the slit would not be noticed.

They waited until Prince Tasmir had taken some of the biscuits and water, and a few of the nuts that they had brought with them, and felt strong enough to walk, and then they made their way slowly back to the cave, where much excitement prevailed at the appearance of Tasmir and the story of his rescue.

He was made to lie down and rest, and more food was pressed upon him, and the food and the fresh sea breeze which blew into the cave soon revived him.

They told him all about themselves and their plans, and it was agreed that he would be of great assistance to Daimur in helping to make their escape.

After a while when Tasmir had become quite rested, he turned to Redmond and said:

"My dear brother, I know that you are anxious to hear how I came into the Evil Magician's hands, and I now feel well enough to tell you my story."

All chatter immediately ceased, and everyone sat listening attentively for Tasmir to begin.

CHAPTER XI

"You will remember," he said, "that I took passage on a ship called the 'Seafoam,' which was bound for Aeda Land, where the great desert lay which I would have to cross to get the Wonderful Plant.

"This ship was recommended as being safe and fast, and Sadna said the Captain was a fine honest man who would do his best to make me comfortable.

"It was a long, low boat, built apparently for speed, as it did not seem to have much room for cargo, and what cargo was being loaded aboard I noticed consisted mostly of oil and gunpowder. However, I was well pleased enough with the accommodation offered me, and in due time the ship set sail.

"After we had been out a few days I began to notice the crew. They were the most murderous looking crowd of ruffians I had ever seen, and seemed to be continually quarreling among themselves.

"The Captain too I thought anything but honest looking.

"One evening while it was yet very early I told the Captain I would go to my cabin, for the weather being rough I was feeling rather seasick; but after reaching my stateroom I decided that fresh air would do me more good than sleep, so went up on deck and stood at the side of the cabin looking out at the sea, and trying to make out by the stars which direction we were following.

"It was quite dark, for the time of year was late fall and the evenings closed in quickly. As I stood there in the shadow of the cabin two people came towards me, talking in low tones.

"'When?' asked one voice, which I recognized as that of the first mate.

"'To-morrow night,' said the Captain's rough bass. 'We'll run up the merry old skull and crossbones as soon as it gets dark, change our name, and get out the guns. We ought to meet the Hesperus before morning, and she carries a full cargo of Spanish gold.'

"'But what will we do with the Prince,' asked the first mate. 'Kill him and throw him overboard?'

"'Oh, make him walk the plank at midnight, after we are all ready. We'll tell him the ship's been captured. He'll never know he's aboard the "Maneater." He has a tidy sum of gold with him, and that we'll divide, you and I.'

"They passed out of hearing and left me rooted to the spot with horror.

"I was aboard a pirate ship, and the 'Maneater' at that, for years the terror of all travelers on the high seas!

"How could I escape? That was the one thought which filled my mind. You may be sure I did not sleep at all that night, and early next day had laid my plans.

"I went first and inspected the small boats. The Captain's gig was the smallest and lightest, and hung near the bow ready to launch. I watched my chance and when the cook was busy elsewhere stole a big package of ship's biscuits and a pail of fresh water. These I stowed away in the gig under the tarpaulin that covered it. Then I cut the ropes nearly through so that with much added weight it would drop into the water some twelve feet below.

"I waited impatiently for nightfall, and when supper time came told the Captain that as I still felt rather seasick I thought I had better retire to my stateroom.

"I waited until I knew that the crew were all at supper, and then stole out to the stern of the ship, raised one of the hatches carefully, and spreading some oakum on the top of a tar barrel set it afire and laid the hatch on again, after which I hurried back to my stateroom to await the result.

"An hour passed. I began to fear that the fire had smothered for want of air, and wished I had left the hatch open a little. Eight o'clock came, and I heard the crew beginning to run about, and the Captain's voice shouting orders. I could tell by the creaking of the ropes in the pulleys that the flag of Sunne was being hauled down and the black flag hoisted.

"Then there was a rumbling of heavy guns being pulled about the decks, and after that the sound of hammering, and I knew they were changing the name plate.

"Fearing they would lock me in my stateroom I packed as much gold into my purse as it would hold, distributed the rest throughout my clothing, and stole out of the cabin to the little passageway, where I lay crouched behind the stair leading to the deck.

"All at once I heard a cry of 'Fire, fire,' and then a rush of feet towards the stern.

"Now was my chance. With a bound I rushed on deck, pulled the tarpaulin cover off the gig and sprang in. It dropped with a splash into the water. Fortunately the sea was comparatively calm, and the boat did not upset. I seized the oars and rowed away. I could see the flames shooting to a height of perhaps twenty feet, and judged from the space over which they spread that my fire must have crept through part of the hold. The powder was all loaded in the bow, and was in no great danger.

"Sharply outlined against the flames the men ran to and fro hauling water in buckets from the sea. I rowed on and on, thinking only of getting away from the pirates before they got the fire under control and missed me, but as I watched I saw that the fire was getting beyond them and soon I saw that nearly the whole ship was in flames. Suddenly there was a distant booming sound, and the flames shot into the sky in all directions, and when the black smoke had cleared away there were little dots of flame all over the sea, where pieces of the burning vessel were floating about.

"I was now about two miles away, and could not tell whether any of the crew had escaped or not. Indeed I do not care, as they had all murdered scores of innocent men and women in the years they had been scouring the seas. It seemed to me a fitting thing that they should have lost their lives by the very powder with which they intended to kill others.

"By and by all the flaming specks disappeared, and I was alone on the dark sea, for all I knew, miles away from land."

CHAPTER XII

"I kept on rowing until daylight, when ahead of me I saw a streak of land. It was a great way off, so I rested and ate before recommencing my rowing. I was afraid to stop for fear a storm should spring up and wreck my small craft.

"It was early evening when I finally reached land, which was a rocky shore backed by high cliffs and mountains.

"I landed on the barren shore very stiff and weary, with my hands blistered and bleeding, and stumbled a short distance up the steep mountain path.

"I had not gone far before I met two shepherds who were eating their evening meal at the door of a little hut at one side of the path. I must have looked rather ill, for they both got up and took me into the hut and were very kind to me. They gave me a big bowl of warm broth, some oaten cakes, and made me stay the night with them. I tried to tell them of my adventure, but as they spoke a strange tongue they could not understand me. I made up my mind that I had better stay with them until I could find out where I was.

"The chief business of that mountainous country is sheep raising and weaving baskets from a very

pliable kind of shrub that grows on the slopes of the mountains. I hired as a shepherd to a sheep rancher, and also began to learn to weave baskets to while away the time as I watched the sheep. Before long I learned the language, which is a very simple one, and found that I was in Aeda Land, but that the desert I sought lay far to the south, through the mountain passes. It was already winter high up in the mountains, and the passes were full of snow, so I would be obliged to wait until spring before going on.

"I settled down to wait and soon became so skilful at weaving that I could make more baskets in a couple of days than many of the older weavers could make in a week.

"Early in the spring the merchant ships arrived for their annual cargo of wool and baskets, and after I had sold my baskets I found that I had added quite a nice little sum in silver to my store of gold.

"The snow had now all melted in the mountain passes, so I said good-bye to my kind friends the shepherds, giving each of them a tiny basket as a keepsake, in which I had hidden some gold pieces, packed a knapsack, and set off on foot for the desert country.

"It was a long walk up the steep mountain path, but after two days' journey I reached the top and could look down into the valley. Miles away stretched the yellow sands of the desert, perfectly bare, excepting for a sort of island of trees in the middle. All around the desert lay the mountains excepting to the west, where the sandy valley extended to the sea. Villages and peach orchards lay just at the foot of the mountains, and extended part way up to slopes, but the largest village appeared to be on the seacoast, and to that one I directed my steps.

"As I descended the steep winding path the air became warmer, and when I reached the valley I found that it was already midsummer there, and the fruit was ripening on the trees.

"I came at last to the town on the edge of the sea, where I put up at an inn, and after a much-needed rest I sought out the inn-keeper and asked for information about the Wonderful Plant.

"Nobody, he told me, had ever crossed the desert, though hundreds had tried to do so, for everyone knew that it was in the very center of the oasis that the Wonderful Plant grew. He had never been able to find out why it was a Wonderful Plant; some said it had a flower that never died, the perfume of which would keep off trouble, others said that its leaves, crushed and eaten, would cure all ills, and yet others thought that if planted in an orchard it would ensure a wonderful fruit crop forever afterwards.

"However, nobody really knew, because there were great creatures that guarded the oasis and chased travelers. Giants they were, with dreadful twisted features, and sometimes they rode horrible twisted horses, and sometimes awful camels. Nobody had ever been killed by them, for all had been wise enough to return as quickly as possible when the giants approached.

"Sometimes indeed travelers had been attacked and chased by a huge toucan which lived on the oasis, and which knocked them down and battered them with its wings, but they had managed to escape with their lives. Nobody, he added, had tried to cross for a long time now; it was altogether too impossible.

"I was very much interested, especially in the toucan, and asked what manner of bird it was.

"'It is a terrible creature,' answered the inn-keeper, 'and the terror of the countryside. It is at least ten feet in length and has an enormous beak. It delights to steal our peaches, and in spite of all we can do ruins a good many crops every year. Scarecrows, be they ever so large, do not frighten it, and it will eat all the fruit from a dozen trees in an hour. It merely stands on the ground, shakes the tree with its beak until the fruit falls, and then gobbles it up.'

"I asked him what it lived on when there were no peaches to eat, but he did not know. It did not matter, he added gloomily, it did damage enough, and had just the day before cleaned off two of his very best trees.

"For the next few days I wandered about, going to the edge of the desert and wondering how I was going to get across the yellow sands over which no traveler had ever journeyed far.

"One day as I sat under a tree on a favorite stone meditating I noticed a large dark object coming through the air towards me. It was the toucan. I kept still and watched him. He stopped over a peach tree which grew at the bottom of an orchard not far off, and alighting on the ground walked over and deliberately shook the tree. Down fell the delicious fruit in a shower. Harder and harder he shook until not a peach that was at all ripe remained. Then he walked around and leisurely swallowed the peaches as a chicken swallows corn kernels.

"He had not finished before the farmer came running out with his wife and sons, all beating tin pans and shouting. The toucan let them approach quite close, and then made a sudden dive at them with his wings down, rose in the air right over their heads and flew away with a loud chuckling kind of noise that sounded like a laugh. The farmer and his family fell over each other in their fright, and when they had recovered their feet the bird was far away.

"It was all so funny that I had to laugh, and then I thought of a scheme for getting across the desert."

CHAPTER XIII

That afternoon I went up the mountain sides for a short distance and found some good reeds that would make a basket. It took me several days to weave what I wanted. I made a basket five feet long by two and a half feet wide, and put a false bottom in it, leaving a compartment underneath deep enough for me to crawl into. I put a hinge on the side of this bottom compartment so that I could let the side up and down, and lock it from the inside. When the basket was finished I wove a strong openwork cover for the top, leaving spaces just a little smaller than a peach, and fastened it securely to the basket.

"I took my basket to the edge of the desert, hid it in a tree, and went to purchase peaches enough from the nearest farmer to fill it. I carried several pails before it was full, taking care to put the most luscious ones on top, and after fastening the cover with the clamps I had put on it, crawled into the bottom compartment, fastened up my side opening and lay still to await results.

"It must have been two hours, and I was beginning to feel very much cramped when I heard a whirring of great wings, and then the toucan alighted on the ground beside me. He had evidently spied the basket and was curious to know what it was. He came over and then I could feel him pecking at the peaches through the woven covering.

"It was only a moment before somebody saw him, for every farmer had a boy watching, and the cry rang out, 'The toucan, the toucan!' I could see people running hurriedly towards us waving shovels, scythes, hoes, and various other implements. The toucan did just what I had hoped he would. He seized the basket by the handle and flew away over the desert with it, and I lay in the bottom looking down at the desert sands below, and thinking of what a dreadful death I should have if he dropped me.



The toucan . . . seized the basket by the handle and flew away.

"On we sailed, leaving the village far behind. I turned my head and looked towards the center of the desert. We were nearing the oasis, and I could see great trees with something silvery shining between them which I supposed must be a lake. Nearer and nearer we drew, and now I could see quite plainly the tree tops waving in the wind, but no water. The top of the wall appeared under me suddenly. Then we were quite a distance past the wall and settling down among trees upon a green space. The toucan alighted on the grass, put the basket down and again began pecking at the peaches through the cover. I opened my side fastening, crawled out and jumped to my feet sword in hand, supposing the toucan would attack me, but I evidently startled him, as he gave a loud clack, seized the basket again and flew with it over a tall hedge a short distance away.

"I looked about me then, and found myself on a beautiful lawn under magnificent trees, with here and there a wide avenue leading among gardens of gorgeous flowers and fountains of splashing water bordered by flower beds. There were many comfortable seats under the trees, and hammocks hung here and there in a most inviting manner. I walked along the nearest avenue which led under the trees, and came out upon a broad stretch of lawn in the center of which stood the most beautiful building I had ever seen. It was long and low, and all of carved white marble, decorated here and there with black marble facings. Many windows and glass doors stood open, and lacy white curtains swayed in the breeze. There was no one in sight, and I walked on towards the hedge over which I had seen the toucan disappear.

"Suddenly I heard a woman's voice say, 'Bowser, Bowser, what have you there? Oh, you wicked bird, you've stolen somebody's washing.' A pause and then the voice went on:

"'Why, it's a peach basket! What a strange contrivance! Go away, Bowser. Oh, Richard, come and see what Bowser has brought home.'

"Another pause, and then a man's voice.

"'My dear, that's been made for something else besides peaches. Look at the opening at the bottom. Why a man could hide in there quite easily, and good gracious! Here's a man's handkerchief, with T on the corner.' (I felt myself turning pale.) 'Do you suppose there is somebody in our stronghold, Mary? Good Bowser, where is the tramp? That's it. Bowser get him, old boy! Bring him here.'

"I shrunk away from the hedge, and was just turning to look for a place where I could hide, for I had no mind to be dragged forth in this unceremonious way, when a dark form appeared over me, seized me around the middle, and the next moment I was lifted through the air and laid in a heap on the other side of the hedge.

"I jumped to my feet, not knowing who or what I should see, drawing my sword as I did so, but when I caught a glimpse of a nice motherly looking woman and a mild-looking old gentleman standing before me apparently very much alarmed, I hastily stepped forward and made a low bow, begging their pardon for having intruded in this unseemly fashion. I explained my errand, told them who I was, and how I had contrived to get there, and when I had finished they both looked much relieved.

"'That is quite all right, Prince Tasmir,' said the old gentleman, 'and now if you will come into the house and partake of some refreshment I will tell you about the Wonderful Plant which you have come so far to seek.'

"'First, may I ask,' I said, 'does Bowser bite?'

"'No,' said the old gentleman, 'he is quite good natured, and besides he has no teeth.'

"'Well,' I said, 'I am rather grateful to him for carrying me safely here, and I should like to give him those peaches, but did not wish him to bite me in two while I was doing it.'

"So saying I went to the peach basket, where Bowser was vainly endeavoring to get the peaches out, and opened the fastenings, while he hopped around me on his huge legs and uttered his strange chuckling laugh. I picked out a few dozen of the ripest for the old lady, and let Bowser have the rest, which we left him swallowing greedily.

"They took me around to a spacious veranda, where a dark-skinned maid served us with delicious iced drinks, fruit and small cakes, and then the old gentleman told me about the Wonderful Plant."

CHAPTER XIV

"'You are no doubt wondering,' he said with a smile, 'who we are and what manner of oasis this is, and I am going to tell you about ourselves first.

"'To begin with, we are not fairies, but quite ordinary mortals, and we live here alone. We have no children, and no pets but Bowser, but we are never lonesome. Now Bowser is just a common toucan, and I found him on the ground under a big tree one morning, where a bad storm the night before had tossed him out of the nest. We brought him in and my wife cared for him, and the only reason he is so big is that he has such a voracious appetite and eats ten meals a day. In fact he is eating practically all the time, and I believe is still growing. I suppose his brothers and sisters might be as large as he if they could get enough to satisfy their appetites the way Bowser does. He would eat most families out of house and home, but as our store-room never gives out it does not matter. But although we do our best to feed him enough to satisfy his appetite we cannot cure him of stealing peaches. We are very sorry for the poor farmers whose orchards he raids, but in one sense it is rather a good thing, as it serves to keep people afraid of him, and he is our only watchdog.

"This desert around us was not always here. The whole valley was once much higher than now, and

was a happy little kingdom where we all dwelt in peace and prosperity until the unlucky day when the Evil Magician came this way and swept the whole kingdom out to sea, drowning everyone, including the king and queen and their little son and daughter, and leaving nothing here but bare sand.

"We were absent from home when it happened. I was a merchant, and had gone to buy a new supply of goods, and my wife accompanied me, otherwise we would have met the same fate as our friends and neighbors.

"You can imagine the sight which met our eyes when on our return we came out at the head of the pass on yonder mountain and looked over the valley. At first we thought we must surely have lost our way and come upon some strange barren place, but on looking about we saw certain familiar landmarks which made it clear to us that a hurricane must have swept our kingdom away, and of course all our possessions.

"We rode on, trying to find some trace of our house, but nothing could be seen on the bare sands but a clump of bushes and a few small trees which had somehow escaped the force of wind and water.

"On reaching this spot we thought it better to stay and camp for the night, as the day was fast fading and we would have to wait until daylight to go back through the mountains.

"Fortunately we had plenty of food left, and after tying our horses and giving them their supper I went to gather some dead twigs to make a fire while my wife unpacked our camp outfit.

"While we were thus engaged I thought I heard a sound of crying. We both listened, and it came again. Leaving our tasks we followed the sound and behind a scrubby willow tree came upon a most beautiful young woman crouched on the ground weeping and moaning, and at the same time digging into the earth with a small wand as if in search of something. She did not appear to heed our approach.

"What have you lost, my dear? Is it money?" asked my wife, thinking that she like ourselves was homeless on account of the storm. She jumped and looked at us in a startled manner, then rising to her feet answered sadly:

"No, it is not money, but something much more precious. It is a little black seed, and I am afraid I shall not find it again."

"Oh, if that is all, perhaps you can get another," I said, thinking that misfortune had probably affected their reason.

"Come," I continued, "we will have to remain here to-night, but in the morning we will help you to find it if it can be found," and I left my wife to comfort her while I went back to see to my fire. We soon had our kettle boiling and supper laid out, and the strange young lady seemed very grateful for our hospitality. After supper she sat and looked into the flames for a long time in silence while we discussed our plans for the future.

"By and by we too became quiet, and then she spoke.

"I am not a mortal like yourselves," she said, "I am the fairy who is called 'Peaceful,' and my home is in the island of Laurels, far from here. Your good Queen was my very dear friend, and I was on my way to pay her a visit and show her a precious seed which I had just brought with me from a distant land when I came upon this scene of desolation.

"The seed I carried was a present from an owl who is over a thousand years old, and wiser than any fairy I know. It was the seed of the Wonderful Plant. Wherever it grows there it will remain for all time. It cannot be dislodged, and the owner of it will be rich and influential forever. Its flowers are of the purest gold, and can be taken off and sold to the goldsmith. I was going to take the seed to my home and plant it in my garden, so that I would have at least one spot on earth where the Evil Magician could not endanger my good influence. He is the terror of my life, and I see that he has been even here, for it was he that swept your kingdom out to sea, and this little clump of earth and bushes is only a fragment that broke off one corner.

"I heard about it from the eagle that dwells on that high mountain top. When I reached this spot to-day my distress was so great that I dropped my precious seed, and now I must leave it here for I know I will not find it."

"I tried to comfort her by saying we would help her to look for it as soon as it was light, but she shook her head.

"No," she said, "it is of no use to look further. The seed sprouts immediately if the ground is damp, as this is. It will be sprouted by morning, and I must protect it here."

"She said no more, and as our own troubles filled our minds we fell to talking again and making plans and did not notice that she disappeared.

"We must have fallen asleep shortly afterwards, as we were both awakened by a sound of swishing and neighing. We jumped to our feet. The blackness of the night surrounded us. Our fire had died down to ashes. Suddenly the noise came again, and our two horses dashed past us at a gallop as if being chased. "Horse thieves," we whispered, and turned to follow, but after running for several minutes over

the sand we found ourselves entering what seemed to be a dense wood, as we came into rather sharp contact with large trunks and heavy branches of trees.

"How we had got there, we did not know, and visions of mountain robbers filled our minds. We threaded our way between the trees as well as we could and ran on over smooth turf until we came to an avenue, down which a light shone brokenly through the trees. Here we could run much faster, and turning a corner, saw our horses trotting quietly some distance ahead. The light showed brighter, and then as we emerged from the trees we found that it came from the windows of a long low building. As we stood, dazzled by the brightness, and wonderstruck, a voice beside us made us turn in alarm. It was the fairy, who we now remembered, had not been with us since early in the evening.

"Do not be afraid," said she, "I could not rest until I had safely protected my Wonderful Plant, so I have built this house around it and enclosed the grounds with a high brick wall. There is a good stable at the back and I have just shut your horses in for the rest of the night. Come now and I will show you the house."

"She took us in at the front door and showed us through the house. It was magnificently finished and beautifully furnished, as you shall see for yourself presently, and my wife and I declared that we had never seen anything to equal it. When she had finished she said:

"I have a proposition to make. I cannot remain in this country. I must go home at once, as I am needed. You have lost your home and all you possessed. Will you not stay in this beautiful house and tend my Wonderful Plant? It must be watered and carefully pruned each day in order to keep it at its best, and someone must remain here to gather the seeds as they ripen and hide them, lest at any time the Evil Magician or his emissaries come and steal one. The plant they cannot touch, and only myself can pluck the blossoms, but the seeds, which are so precious, may be taken by anyone.

"This oasis is now a pleasant place surrounded by fine lawns and planted with beautiful trees, and I will give you plenty of servants, a cellar full of provisions which will never run out, a library full of books, and all sorts of amusements. You will have everything but human companionship. No stranger must ever enter these gates, for I must guard against any possibility of having a seed stolen. What do you say, will you accept my offer?"

"We considered a few moments. Our friends and possessions were gone, and we stood indeed alone in the world and quite destitute. The thought of seeing no human being did not affect us, as we had each other, so we very gratefully accepted the good fairy's offer, and when she had given us a few more instructions and told us that she would visit us twice a year she departed. Here then we have lived ever since in peace and comfort.'

"But the Wonderful Plant, where is it? May I see it?' I asked, 'or am I to meet with some misfortune for having dared to enter upon this oasis?'

"The old gentleman laughed.

"You are not to meet with anything here but good fortune, my dear Prince,' said he, 'for the last time the fairy paid us a visit she told us you were looking for a seed of the Wonderful Plant for your father, and that if you succeeded in reaching this spot alone I was to give you one. To tell you the truth we did not think much more about it, as we did not believe anyone would ever reach here. Now you shall see the plant itself.'

"He and the little old lady led the way into the great front hall and through a long passage. Stopping at a heavily carved door he took a small key from his pocket and unlocked it. The door swung open and we stepped out."

CHAPTER XV

"We stood in a spacious court, the blue sky overhead, velvety grass underfoot and the windows of the house all around us. Most of these were open and in some of them were caged birds singing gloriously, and against all the sills were window-boxes full of flowers. Flowering ivy and climbing roses trailed here and there up the sides of the building, and there were so many rose bushes about in the gardens that the scent of them was quite heavy in the air. A small fountain stood at either end of the enclosure, in which curious small silver fish jumped and splashed about in the late afternoon sun.

"In the exact center of the court stood a large shrub about eight feet tall. It was beautifully trimmed and perfectly conical in form. The thick foliage was a dark, bright green, and the whole bush was covered with pure yellow flowers. They looked very much like velvety yellow pansies. I walked over and touched one. It was stiff and hard and shone with a metallic luster. It had evidently been on the bush for some time, as the buds and new blossoms were as soft as any flower.

"If my father could but see it,' I murmured. 'If he had even a tiny plant I am sure it would prolong his life.'

"You shall have a seed, dear Prince," said the old gentleman, "and it will grow very quickly, you shall see. Perhaps I did not tell you that only one seed is formed every seven years and that from the blossoms which comes out first on the seventh day of the seventh month, the day when the plant begins its yearly period of bloom. The seed which I have saved for you ripened only a few days ago, so you are very fortunate."

"He went back into the house and returned with a small golden box from which he took a gold ring set with a valuable black diamond. He pressed a spring and the stone lifted, disclosing a small seed lying in the cavity. He shut the spring down again.

"Put this on your finger," he said, "and do not open it until you are safely at home and in your father's conservatory. Plant it in an unpretentious pot at night, and do not tell anyone what it is, but watch it every day yourself. The fairy too will watch it and pick the blossoms for you, as no mortal can do that. She will pick the seed flower as soon as it blooms, so that the Evil Magician may not secure the seed."

"I thanked him with tears in my eyes and hoped that I might see the good fairy when I reached home.

"The old gentleman then took me over the house, which was indeed as magnificent as he had said, and after that we went to see the grounds and the immense wall.

"We will have to ride," said he, and led the way to the stables where stood his two horses, fine sleek animals. A colored boy, who of course like the other servants, was a fairy, harnessed them, and after riding through the park and past the lovely gardens we came to a great gateway in the high wall.

"The old gentleman reached down and touched a button at the side and the gates swung slowly open, closing again as soon as we had passed out.

"Out there were more trees set well apart and at some distance from the wall, and beyond that the yellow desert sands stretched away in the distance. We rode along beside the wall, which on this side faced the west. I was surprised to see that the whole wall was set with mirrors of magnifying glass, now reflecting the gorgeous colors of the sunset as it glowed in between the trees. It would have been beautiful had it not been for the frightful reflections of ourselves and the horses. They loomed large and distorted before us, and the old gentleman explained to me that he never had blinders on the horses excepting when they were riding beside the wall. He had tried riding without the blinders one day, but his horse had bolted in fright, and he had great difficulty in getting him inside again.

"Now I can understand," I said, "why I thought I saw a lake when I was traveling towards this oasis. And now too I know what kind of giants chase all those who attempt to cross the desert."

"Yes," answered the old gentleman smiling, "it is a wise precaution of the fairy's, and very harmless, but I should like to hear what the travelers tell."

"The mirrors stretched right across the oasis, which was of a very irregular shape, and by the time we arrived again at the main gate and entered the grounds it was nearly dark.

"Dinner was ready, and after it was over the old gentleman told me I had better leave about midnight so as to be back in the village before it was light enough for anyone to see me.

"But how am I to get back so quickly?" I asked.

"The way you came," replied the old gentleman.

"But what if Bowser will not carry the basket?" I cried. "He has eaten all the peaches now, and I have no more."

"Yes," he replied, "but this time you will be on Bowser's back, and I can promise you he will take you over in very quick time, for he has been shut up in his cage without any supper and by midnight will be so hungry that he will not lose any time in reaching the nearest peach orchard. I am sorry to think that some poor farmer will suffer, but it is the only way you can get safely back."

"I thanked him for this further evidence of his kindness and the evening passed very quickly in conversation. I had to do most of the talking, as the two old people had heard no news of the world since the fairy's last visit, and listened intently to all I could tell them."

CHAPTER XVI

"It was nearly midnight when I finally arose and prepared to depart. The old gentleman led the way to Bowser's cage. It was a room at the end of the kitchen, and Bowser was evidently expecting his supper, as he uttered odd noises and came towards us with his neck stretched out. I marveled that he

was not asleep on his perch in the corner.

"He never goes to sleep until he has eaten a great deal of supper,' said the old gentleman, 'and as he is growing very impatient you had better mount him at once while I open the door.'

"But how am I to ride him?' I cried.

"Get up on that stepladder,' said the old gentleman, indicating one that stood against the wall, 'and when he comes near enough let yourself down on his back and throw your arms around his neck. I will open the door the instant you are seated and he will dart out.'

"It seemed rather a risky way to ride, but after all, I reflected, much safer than the way I had come, for he could not drop me unless I let go my hold, so I obediently got upon the stepladder.

"Bowser came towards me, thinking I might have something for him, and as he turned his head at the creaking of the door I threw myself on his back and grasped him firmly around the neck. The big door swung open, Bowser ran forward, and as soon as he was outside rose into the air. We soared away, straight towards the village which lay nearest the sea.

"Bowser's flight proved how hungry he was, for the village lights drew nearer very rapidly, and we were going so fast over the sands that I did not dare look down for fear of getting dizzy.

"In what seemed but a few minutes Bowser began to descend and glancing down I saw that we were directly over a peach orchard. He alighted, and at the same moment I slid off his back and ran as fast as I could for some distance. When I reached the fence which enclosed the place I looked back, and could see him gobbling all around a tree, so he had already shaken the peaches off one at least. He had not bothered about me at all, as I was afraid he would.

"I walked to the inn and went to bed in a very thankful state of mind, determined to start for home next day.

"But the next day I found it was not as easy as I thought. The only boat leaving port was a peach boat, bound for a port only a few miles away. However, I went by that, and on reaching the port had to wait two days to get a passage on a boat loaded with iron which was bound for the Island of Laurels.

"The weather was fine when we set out, and the wind good, so in spite of the heavy cargo we were making fair progress. On the fourth night we ran into a dense fog. After running carefully for some hours the Captain thought it advisable to lie to until morning, as we were within a few miles of the Island of Despair and some very dangerous reefs.

"I went to my cabin and lay down to read. I fell asleep and slept for some time, when I was awakened by a tremendous blow under the ship which jerked me out on the floor. Running to the deck I found the whole crew assembled getting ready to drop the life-boats. In place of the dead calm which had prevailed earlier in the evening a terrible storm now raged, and the gale had driven the ship on the dreaded reefs.

"To add to the danger the iron loaded in the hold had become loose and we could hear it pounding around in the hold as the ship lurched about on the rocks. It was only a matter of a few moments before the ship would go to pieces.

"I stood ready to help the Captain and some of his men to lower his gig, and we waited to see the others off. There were six boats, and five of them were launched successfully. The other swamped in the heavy sea. I do not know whether any of them reached the shore or not, as I never saw them again.

"We launched our boat successfully, and pulled in the direction in which the Captain indicated the Island lay. When we had got within fifty feet of the land our boat seemed to strike a whirlpool. It went around very rapidly five or six times, and finally dived bow first, throwing all the occupants but myself into the water. I had taken a long breath, expecting the dive, and was crouched on my seat holding tightly with both hands, so that when the boat shot to the surface again I had just strength enough to clamber over the side as it turned bottom up. I lay there half drowned while the boat floated in to shore. I do not know how long it was before I heard voices close at hand. One was a man's and one an old woman's. The woman's voice said:

"Are you sure he had it on his finger when he left port?'

"Of course,' answered the man gruffly. 'Don't I tell you I flew over the ship yesterday and saw it on his hand?'

"Well, he must be here somewhere,' said the old woman, 'and we'll soon have it.'

"Although I was half dazed I knew it must be my ring with the precious seed that they were talking about. I tried to rise, but had not sufficient strength, so with an effort I pulled it from my finger and dropped it into the water beside the boat, rather than let them take it.

"The voices came nearer.

"Ah,' said the man, 'here he is; now let us see if I am not right.'

"I must have fainted then, as I do not remember anything until I awoke to find myself imprisoned in the laurel tree.

"Late in the morning when the sun was high the Evil Magician, for of course it was he, and an old crone came past me on their way to the shore, but they did not find the ring, for the Evil Magician came back after a long time in a terrible rage and threatened me with instant death if I did not tell him where I had hidden it.

"I declared I had not hidden it. After promising me my freedom if I would tell him where it was, and trying every argument in his power to either coax or threaten me into letting him have it, he became furious, declared I should remain enchanted forever until I slowly drowned, and went off. I did not see him again.

"You may imagine my despair, and my boundless gratitude to Prince Daimur for releasing me from my enchantment."

"Rather," said Prince Daimur, "let us be thankful to the kind old fairy who gave me this wonderful cap and spectacles, for without them I should doubtless have been as helpless as yourself."

"But what do you suppose became of the ring?" asked Prince Redmond. "Do you think he could have found it after all?"

"I do not know, I am sure," answered his brother. "I do not see how it could have been hidden, for the water was shallow where I dropped it and it must have shown clearly in the sunlight. I heard them say they had searched under every stone for it."

Here the little white dove, Princess Maya, left her mother's side and came over to where Prince Tasmir sat.

"Prince Tasmir," she said, "I believe I have your ring. Early one morning my mother and I were flying from tree to tree and feeling rather brighter than usual, as we had not eaten any fruit since the day before.

"After a while we found ourselves very near the shore, and alighted on a low branch directly overhanging the water. A life-boat lay bottom up on the sands of the small beach, and while we were deploring the fact that some ship must have been wrecked on the reefs very lately I noticed just beside the boat's side, on a flat stone hardly covered with water, a fine gold ring. I let myself down on the stone and picked the ring up and we carried it off to show my father. He said it was very valuable, and that the Evil Magician must not have it, so we hid it, and we have kept it ever since. We have never left it long in one place, and if somebody will come with me I will get it now."

Prince Redmond and half a dozen other doves eagerly followed the Princess, while exclamations of wonder and surprise filled the cave.

In five minutes the Princess was back carrying a ring in her mouth. Prince Tasmir gave a cry of joy as he opened it and found his precious seed safe inside.

"I was afraid that perhaps the water had leaked in and sprouted it," he said, as they all crowded around to see, "but thank goodness it is perfectly sound," and he slipped it on his finger.

After congratulating the little Princess on finding the ring and keeping it out of the Evil Magician's possession, and hoping they might have the best of luck on the morrow they all went to sleep, very confident indeed that all would yet come right.

CHAPTER XVII

The next day was spent in flying thoroughly over the island to see that no dove had been overlooked, as they did not want to leave anyone behind.

Only one old grey one was found sleeping in a tree, which Prince Redmond identified as an old sailor who had been one of his crew. He seemed willing to go to the cave at once, and towards night he began to revive.

Immediately after dark they heard a great wind sighing about the island, which Daimur, who had on his cap and spectacles said was the Magician leaving his castle for the Island of Sunne, where he was going to search for the very treasures that Daimur then wore.

Soon Daimur announced that he could see the witch going out to find her cat, and when he knew she was well away they all fluttered out of the cave and led by Daimur, Prince Redmond and King Cyril, made their way to where the Magician's wall crossed the sea sand. Here Daimur again dug a hole under the wall and all passed through safely, Tasmir remaining behind for a moment to fill up the gap

again with sand.

They went forward very quietly until they came to the steps of the Magician's castle.

"Wait here," said Daimur, "while the Princess and I go inside and find the tablets."

The door was not locked, and Daimur pushed it open softly, and led by Princess Maya walked through the kitchen to the room where the glass box was kept.

This he picked up carefully and carried outside, taking care to shut the door behind him.

By the dim light of the moon half hidden behind clouds he drew forth his little key and tried it in the lock. The doves were grouped in front of him, and every eye was fixed on the key as he turned it carefully. Would it really fit? Around it went. Up sprang the lid, and there behold! were the wonderful big pellets which might break the enchantment.



Up sprang the lid, and there behold! were the wonderful big pellets.

Daimur passed the box, first to the Queen, Princess Maya, and the Duchess, and the other royal personages, and then around to everybody.

In a moment a strange assemblage of people stood where but a few seconds before had been only a flock of doves.

What a murmur of delight arose! King Cyril embraced his wife and daughter, the Duchess clung to Daimur in a spasm of joy, Prince Redmond and his brother wept in each other's arms, while Prince Redmond's fifty sailors all crowded around them, swearing they would follow their prince through fire and water.

Prince Daimur fearing that they might alarm the witch, ascended the steps, and holding up his hand begged them to remember that their safe deliverance lay in making no noise, but getting away as quickly as they could.

Then he instructed them to follow the Princess Maya, who led them all around to the end of the Magician's house, where in the little bay lay Prince Redmond's ship, safely moored.

Immediately, at a word from Prince Redmond, the sailors jumped to their places, hoisted the sails and made ready to leave the dock, while Daimur and Prince Tasmir helped the ladies aboard.

There was a good breeze, and in five minutes the sails had filled and they were drawing away from the island, when they heard a loud hissing sound. Looking towards the castle they saw coiled on the dock they had just left a monstrous rattlesnake.

"It is the witch's daughter," cried Princess Maya, "we have awakened her and she has come out

through the window."

At that moment the snake shook its rattles. They made an extremely loud, shrill sound, and in a flash, from nowhere apparently, the old witch appeared on the dock with her cat on her shoulder.

When she saw them she screamed and ran into the house.

"For mercy's sake, have you any guns?" cried Daimur to Prince Redmond. "We shall surely need them now, for she is going to call back the Magician."

"Yes," said Redmond, "unless they have been taken away, or have rusted," and hastily giving a few orders to some of the sailors he commanded the others to follow him and ran to the cabin. On looking into the armory he found that the guns were all there, as bright and shining as when he saw them last, and calling upon everyone to help him he began to distribute them about.

When they again reached the deck they found that Daimur had been right about the witch, for she had climbed to the roof of the Magician's house and was standing on the tallest chimney-pot.

As they looked she waved her arms, and at once a blue flame sprang from her, waving and dancing in the air, sometimes shooting to a great height, and again breaking out in all directions over the sea.

The wind had in the meantime been steadily blowing them on, and by this time the ship was some distance from the shore and heading for the Island of Sunne.

"The Magician will be here in a moment," cried Daimur. "Stand close together here and obey me, for I can see him the moment he arrives."

Hardly had the men collected about him than a sudden squall struck the ship. It quivered with the shock, and the sails were nearly torn away as the ship heeled over on its side, while great waves dashed right over the deck.

"Do not be afraid," cried Daimur. "I see him, we shall yet be saved if you will obey me."

In front of them rose a wave higher than all the rest. It seemed as tall as a mountain, and it would certainly swamp the ship the moment it struck it. On the top of the wave was a great white crest, in which Daimur knew was the Magician.

"Now," he shouted above the roar of the wind, "aim at the highest crest of the wave." They all did so.

"Fire."

Off went the guns.

There were so many of them that they made a deafening roar, and immediately the ship stood still. As soon as the smoke cleared away they saw why.

The big wave had burst, and the sea was completely calm again, and there floating towards them was the Evil Magician himself, quite dead.

As they looked at him they could see that he seemed to be surrounded by a myriad of queer greenish lights. These grew and spread over the surface of the water, until as he floated closer they could see that he was melting like a piece of soap and washing away in green bubbles. They watched him, quite fascinated, until the last bubble had floated away and he had completely disappeared.

"Oh," said the Queen, with a shudder, while the Duchess wept with fright, "how horrible! I do wish the wind would come up again and blow us away from this dreadful place, We are safe now from the Magician, but perhaps the witch will pursue us."

"No fear of that; she is afraid of us," said Daimur, who had been watching the castle through his spectacles. He had seen the witch dance with rage when they killed the Magician, and a few moments afterwards he could see that she was closing the shutters and darkening the house.

The breeze came gradually up again, and in half an hour's time they were sailing quickly toward the Island of Sunne.

"If this wind continues," said Daimur, "we will reach land early in the morning, and I think we had better leave the ship armed in case we meet with any resistance. I am, however, not much afraid of my uncle, for he is quite powerless without the Evil Magician."

CHAPTER XVIII

Just after the sun had risen the ship touched the wharf at Daimur's native city, and Daimur, who was the first ashore, stood by to assist the ladies to land and to welcome them to his kingdom.

There was not a soul in sight as they formed a double line, with Prince Redmond's sailors as guards, and marched towards the palace, which was only a few blocks distant.

As they neared the gates they saw that nobody was astir but a few of the Royal bodyguard, who as soon as they caught sight of Prince Daimur at the head of this strange procession rushed towards him and threw themselves at his feet with exclamations of astonishment and joy that he was still alive.

They told Daimur that his wicked uncle had already been crowned king, having proved by the aid of false witnesses that Daimur had fallen from a precipice while out riding and been instantly killed, and that his body was washed away in the swift-flowing river at the bottom.

At the conclusion of the tale Daimur called out all the guards and ordered them to arrest his uncle and his followers immediately, and convey them to a strong prison in the interior of the kingdom.

Before they could move to obey him, however, Daimur's uncle himself appeared with a few of his friends. They had been aroused from their sleep by the sound of voices and had dressed hastily.

"What is the meaning of this commotion?" roared the false King, addressing the guards. "Back to your posts immediately."

He turned as he spoke and his eye fell on Daimur and his little company, whose guns were all pointed directly at him, as, strange to say, were those of the Palace guard. He glanced in every direction, but everywhere he saw hard unsympathetic faces, and the round muzzles of guns.

He grew pale and his knees knocked together as he looked about in vain for a means of escape. Then suddenly his face cleared, and he drew a whistle from a cord at his neck and blew three loud blasts upon it.

Daimur, who still wore his cap and spectacles, turned to his company.

"That is to summon the Magician," he explained. They all laughed, and Daimur announced to his uncle that it was of no use calling or help from the Evil Magician, as he was dead and gone.

This of course his uncle declared quite impossible, and it was not until King Cyril, the Princess, and indeed the whole party had assured him it was the truth, added to the fact that the Magician did not seem to be coming to his aid, that he believed it.

After that he was very humble. He cringed before Daimur and hoped he would spare his old uncle's life. This Daimur said he was willing to do, but that he would have to go with his fine friends to the state prison farm as a laborer for the rest of his days. His uncle seemed so relieved that he was not to lose his head that he went away with the guards quietly enough.

Now that he was rid of his uncle Daimur proceeded into the Palace, where he was welcomed with the greatest enthusiasm and loyalty by the servants, and his guests were soon enjoying a splendid breakfast.

Prince Daimur begged them to remain with him until he had been crowned king and had made arrangements to accompany them to their respective homes.

This they consented to do, and soon great preparations were under way for the coronation.

Daimur told his story throughout the kingdom, and his people flocked about him wherever he went, declaring their allegiance, and rejoicing greatly that he had delivered them all from the Evil Magician's influence.

At last the day of the coronation came, and all who were rich enough to travel were present.

Never before had so many distinguished guests graced a coronation ceremony in the Kingdom of Sunne. Daimur's subjects felt highly honored as they gazed upon the noble King Cyril, Queen Emily, and the young Princess of Shells, the distinguished Duchess of Rose Petals, and the two splendid Princes of Laurels. All the other kingdoms were here represented.

They made a very magnificent appearance, for Daimur had insisted upon the Court dressmakers and tailors making each of them a proper wardrobe, as, of course, they had no clothes with them for the occasion.

After the coronation ceremony there was a great feast and when all the company were assembled Daimur told them of his plans for accompanying his guests to their respective kingdoms. His subjects were willing that he should go and promised to defend the kingdom against any possible enemies while he was away, and they agreed upon a very old and wise friend of Daimur's to act as Regent until his return.

In a few days the preparations for his going were complete, and King Daimur's largest warship lay at anchor in the harbor in readiness to sail.

The bands played and a great crowd stood on the wharf as Daimur and his royal guests drove down and boarded the ship, and they sailed out of the harbor amid many cheers and wishes for a safe and speedy voyage.

CHAPTER XIX

Their course was set for the Island of Shells, where King Cyril's brother was ruling in his stead.

The wind was good, and they expected to reach port sometime the next day. Morning dawned bright and sunny, and after some hours of fast sailing Daimur was surprised to have a message brought to him that the Captain had sighted something from the bridge that he wished King Daimur to see.

Daimur went up at once, accompanied by King Cyril, to whom he had been talking.

On reaching the Captain's side they saw at once what the trouble was.

In front of them, about six miles distant, lay the Island of Shells, and between them and it the only entrance to the harbor, a narrow winding passage between very dangerous reefs, which in places stood high out of the water.

It was, however, not the reefs that drew their attention.

Directly in front of them, and completely surrounding the passage through the reefs, lay a dark streak upon the water. It seemed to be at least half a mile in width and stretched away on either side as far as one could see.

Although the water all around it was quite rough and choppy this streak lay perfectly calm, glistening in the sun with peculiar purple and gold colors.

The Captain had ordered some of the sails reefed, but even so the ship was going at a good rate of speed and in a few seconds they had run into it.

It was as though they had struck a bank of soft mud, and so indeed they thought it at first, though they could not understand how it could have got there, as the sea was known to be very deep outside the reefs.

The sails, well filled, tried to carry the ship forward, but only succeeded in getting them a little further into the dark mass.

"What can it be?" cried King Cyril, as everybody rushed to the ship's sides to see what had stopped their progress.

"It looks and smells like tar," said the Captain, "and now how in the world are we to get out of it? I've never seen anything like it in my life, and I've been sailing for forty-seven years."

By this time Daimur had adjusted his magic cap and spectacles and was surveying the dark sticky streak. He gave way to an exclamation of dismay.

"What is it?" gasped King Cyril, thoroughly alarmed at seeing Daimur so affected.

"This stuff is tar," said Daimur, "mixed with various gums and a terrible acid that is eating into the hull of our ship and will destroy it within two hours if we cannot succeed in getting it out."

"This is the work of your sister-in-law," he continued, addressing King Cyril, "assisted by the witch of Despair. They do not intend to let us in if they can help it. Now let us think what we must do."

Not a word was spoken as Daimur stood consulting his magic cap and gazing out over the sea.

In a few moments he turned to the Captain.

"Have you any coal-oil?" he asked.

"A little, your majesty, about nine barrels, I think," answered the Captain, as he sent a sailor to see how many there were. The man came back to say that there were ten.

"Good," said Daimur. "Now have all the barrels brought up to the deck, for we must pour the oil over the bow; it is the only thing that will cut this vile mixture."

The barrels were brought up as quickly as possible, and Daimur himself stood in the bow and directed the sailors. Four men held a barrel of oil on each side of the bow, and at the instant they commenced to pour it down the Captain ordered the remaining sails let out to the wind.

As the oil struck the tar mixture it first spread over the surface, and then foamed up like soda water, and as the foam subsided the water could be seen underneath.

With every sail filled the ship slowly made its way through the sticky foaming mass, and when at the end of half an hour they were clear of it, and the ship began to cut ahead through the water again, a big cheer of relief went up.

All was not over, however, as they were now within the narrow passage, and the Captain was very nervous. He had never been through it before without a pilot, and although he had the wheel himself he was not sure that he knew the course.

King Cyril now stepped forward and offered to take the wheel, as he had often steered his own yacht through the channel, and knew it perfectly, so in case some other trap had been laid for them Daimur gave him his magic cap and glasses to wear until they should be safely in the harbor.

In and out among the black reefs they wound, and shortly after two o'clock in the afternoon cast anchor in the harbor, and were soon ashore.

As the usurping Prince and his witch of a wife had felt very safe behind their ring of magic tar they had set no guards about, and consequently Daimur and his friends, with his marines as guards, were marching up the city street towards the palace before you could say "Jack Robinson," with nobody to stop them.

There were a good many people out in the streets, as it was market day, and in a few moments a crowd had gathered to see the procession. Of course they at once recognized their rightful King and Queen, and with shouts of "Long live our noble King Cyril, he has been restored to us," "Long live Queen Emily," "Long live Princess Maya," they joined in the procession which was winding along to the palace.

For you must know that the wicked Princess could not possibly throw rose-colored powder into the eyes of all King Cyril's subjects, and did not care at all about them as long as she could reach everyone in authority; so that all the common people of his kingdom still loved their rightful king as much as ever, and hated his brother Arnolde and his wife, who they knew quite well cared nothing for them excepting when they wanted more taxes.

The visitors looked about them curiously as they advanced. None of them had ever visited the Island of Shells before and they greatly admired the beautiful houses which were built entirely of pink, white or blue shells, with pale pink or amber-colored shells for windows, and the shell fences to match which enclosed the grounds.

The streets were paved with huge clam shells, and the sidewalks were of periwinkle shells cemented together.

It was a beautiful city, they all agreed.

Soon as they turned a corner the high shell turrets of the Palace and Parliament buildings came in sight, glittering pink and silver in the sunshine.

Now Arnolde was just then holding Parliament, and hearing the shouting he rose to his feet and looked out of the window. When he saw the procession headed by his brother Cyril he started violently and his eyes almost popped out of his head.

Turning to the nobles assembled about he cried, "To arms. An enemy advances upon us."

In a moment every man's sword was drawn, and following Arnolde they all dashed out of the building into the street to oppose the progress of King Cyril.

On they rushed towards Daimur's army, but were soon stopped and overpowered by the marines, who were in command of Prince Redmond.

Daimur, who in this perilous land was again wearing his cap and spectacles, approached the prisoners and examined the eyes of several of them.

Through his glasses he could see that the rose-colored powder had spread out and made a thin covering over each eye, and his magic cap told him that nothing could remove it but the tears of the victims themselves.

He told this to King Cyril.

"Can't you think of anything that would induce them to weep?" asked Daimur.

"Indeed I cannot," answered King Cyril, as he looked at their scowling, unfriendly faces.

Just then Prince Tasmir came forward.

"Why not make each man peel a peck of good strong onions?" he said with a smile.

At this they all laughed, but the idea seemed a good one, and quickly explaining what they wanted

to his crowds of subjects King Cyril soon had people running from all directions with onions in pails, pans, bags and baskets, until the street looked like an onion market.

The prisoners in the meanwhile eyed the proceedings impatiently, talking among themselves, and were utterly disgusted and horrified when a knife and a great heap of onions were placed on the ground beside each of them.

Prince Redmond, at a sign from Daimur, stepped forward and ordered them to peel the onions. This of course they flatly refused to do, and it was only after threatening them with instant death that they sat down on the ground and unwillingly commenced.

Such a sniffing then began! Such tears poured forth! Not one of them was allowed to stop until he had finished his share, and by that time the tears were running in streams down their faces.

It was a very odd sight, and the people crowded around laughing quietly to themselves, and wondering what it was for.

"Rise," commanded Prince Redmond, "and wipe your eyes."

They all obeyed.

"Now," said Daimur stepping forward. "Three cheers for your rightful ruler, King Cyril, who has, with the Queen and your Princess, been restored to you."

For a moment there was a dead silence while Prince Arnolde and his followers gazed at King Cyril with eyes that were clear for the first time in four years. Then, raising their swords, they cheered lustily, while Prince Arnolde rushed forward and fell on his brother's neck, begging forgiveness, and declaring that he must have been crazy to act so wickedly.

Together the whole procession wended its way to the palace gates, which King Cyril once more entered as the rightful ruler of his kingdom.

The false Queen was sitting on the lawn under the trees doing crochet work in a new shell pattern that she had just invented and talking with some of the Court ladies, and she did not notice the procession approaching until the tramp of many feet made her turn her head.

She arose and came forward in some alarm, but at the sight of King Cyril, Queen Emily and Princess Maya, with her husband walking beside them talking in the most unfriendly manner, she flew into a terrible rage.

She danced up and down and round and round, faster and faster, growing smaller every second, until at last she was nothing but her real self, an ugly shriveled witch running round and round on a broomstick. With a loud shrill scream she mounted into the air and was away out of sight in an instant, leaving everybody staring open mouthed at the sky.

"She has gone to the Island of Despair to join the old witch and her daughter," said Daimur who had a creepy feeling down his back.

The people all shuddered and looked at one another in awe, and poor Prince Arnolde was trembling in every limb.

They were all very glad when King Cyril ordered refreshments served at once in the great dining hall.

Daimur remained for a week in the Island of Shells to see that all went well. He was afraid of the witches returning, as of course now they had so many of the Evil Magician's secrets that they might cause a great deal of trouble.

Prince Tasmir was very glad to be a few days more in the company of Princess Maya, with whom he had fallen desperately in love, and took this opportunity of asking King Cyril's consent to their marriage as soon as he had regained his kingdom, which King Cyril readily gave.

The witches did not return, and as the King, assisted by his now devoted brother, was rapidly getting everything into good order, Daimur announced his intention of leaving, and he, the Duchess of Rose Petals, and the two Princes departed from the Island of Shells after a great ceremony, at which Daimur was presented with a gold sword in token of the gratitude of King Cyril's subjects for the restoration of their King.

CHAPTER XX

Daimur directed the Captain to steer to the Island of Laurels, which lay nearest to them, and after two uneventful days of good weather the island came into view. Late in the afternoon, when they were

within a couple of miles of the harbor they passed a very large warship, very new and shining, which was flying the flag of Laurels.

"That must be a new ship that Sadna has built," said Prince Redmond. "He was always talking about a better navy."

The large vessel paid no attention to them, but as they did not know whether it was coming back or not they drew off and did not enter the harbor until after dark. They cast anchor and decided not to leave the ship until morning.

They breakfasted at sunrise and went up on deck to view the city while the boats were being lowered.

It appeared to be a busy place. On the long wharves a great number of men were working loading and unloading vessels. Three big warships, all new, the prince declared, rode at anchor in the bay, but nobody seemed to pay any attention to the sudden appearance of a strange warship in their harbor.

To the princes this seemed very queer, and thinking there might be some plan to attack them unexpectedly they took every man that could be spared from the ship, only leaving behind enough to man the guns and to guard the Duchess of Rose Petals, who preferred staying on board.

Forming in fours they marched up the street under great laurel trees, of such a size as Daimur had never seen anywhere before. Although the sun was already very hot every street was cool and shady. On they went, but nobody even turned around to look at them. No crowd collected, no faces appeared in the windows or doors, and what people they met looked stupid and sleepy.

"Why, this is most uncanny," exclaimed Daimur, who was marching beside Prince Tasmir at the head of the marines. "What's the matter with everybody?"

"I cannot imagine," answered Prince Redmond. "It is a shocking surprise to me; why they act as if they were all half asleep and do not seem to recognize us at all."

They passed through a beautiful park, and on the other side the palace, surrounded by laurel hedges and backed by a very high wooded hill, appeared to their view.

Two guards were stationed at the palace gates. They drew their swords in a dazed kind of way and refused to let anyone pass.

"I am your Crown Prince," said Tasmir, "and here is my brother Redmond. You must let us pass instantly."

The guards looked at them stupidly and shook their heads.

"We have no princes," said one, "our King is not married."

"Where is he?" asked Redmond.

"Don't know," answered the guard sleepily, as his head nodded forward a couple of times. "Went away on the new ship."

"But when will he return?" asked Tasmir, shaking the man to wake him up, for he was certainly going to sleep.

"Don' know, don' know," returned the guard, shaking his head slowly. He kept on shaking it, and although they asked him several other questions he did not seem to hear them at all.

The other guard was even worse, for all he could say was, "Who goes there?" whenever they addressed him.

"Don't bother with them," said Prince Redmond impatiently, "let us go into the palace and see if father is still alive."

Daimur ordered the marines to advance, and as the two guards did nothing but blink at them, and no other defenders appeared it only took them a few seconds to reach the palace door.

Prince Tasmir bounded up the steps, turned the big handle and dashed into the hall with Prince Redmond and Daimur close at his heels. They met with no opposition from the servants, who appeared to be as sleepy as the guards, and immediately began a search for the poor old King. Upstairs and down they went and even into the dungeons, but could find no trace of him.

Prince Redmond at length stopped and began to weep, for they all felt that he was dead, and had perhaps been murdered.

Daimur tried to comfort the princes by telling them that they must search the kingdom through before thinking the worst and suggested that they go out into the city again and see if his cap would not tell him something about it.

They left the palace and walked over the lawn and past the Royal gardens, and finally crossed a

rustic bridge over a pretty stream which wound in and out through the grounds.

"Where does that river flow?" asked Daimur, stopping suddenly. He had on his cap.

"Oh, that," said Tasmir, "is the Laurel River. It flows right through the kingdom, down to the sea on the other side of the island."

"Does anybody drink its waters?" asked Daimur, taking out his spectacles and putting them on.

"Why of course," said Prince Redmond proudly. "It is the source of water supply for nearly the whole of the kingdom. There isn't purer water anywhere in the world."

"Purer," said Daimur, who was stooping to examine the waters through his spectacles, "why, it's poisoned!"

"Poisoned!" exclaimed both the princes, looking at each other incredulously. "Impossible!"

"I tell you it is," said Daimur, "the poison is an oily substance which covers the surface of the water. It may not be deadly; I cannot tell."

"Then that's what ails our subjects," cried Tasmir. "They must be drinking this poison every day."

"Where is the source of this river?" asked Daimur.

Prince Redmond turned and pointed to the highest hill behind them. "In Mirror Lake, on that hilltop," he said.

"Let us go there at once then," said Daimur, and leaving his marines on guard duty around the palace he followed the two princes, who had taken a path that led along the stream. This grew rough and stony as they came to higher ground, and they soon were clinging to rocks and bushes as they climbed up the steep hillside.

At length after a great deal of scrambling and some tearing of their clothes on the thorns and brambles, they managed to reach the top, and followed a narrow winding path which led to the lake. After half an hour of quick walking they came upon it very suddenly. It was quite small, and completely surrounded by trees. The water was as blue as the sky and reflected every little cloudlet perfectly. Daimur, however, at once noticed vast quantities of laurel leaves floating about, coming apparently from a little cove at the far end of the lake.

"It is those leaves that are poisoning the water," he cried excitedly, "I can see the poisonous oil oozing from them."

"But, Daimur," said Redmond, "how can that be, they are only ordinary laurel leaves?"

But Daimur was already making his way along the shore towards the cove from which the leaves seemed to come, and the princes followed him.

At the end of the cove and hidden among the other trees they came upon a tall willowy laurel tree which, overhanging the water, continually dropped leaves and shook and moaned as if in a great wind, although all the other trees were still.

The princes looked at it in awe, which deepened when Daimur, after surveying it intently for some moments, announced that it must be cut down as it contained some enchanted creature, which, he said, as his cap and spectacles could tell him no more, he hoped might not prove to be another witch or an evil Magician.

They had no axe, but Prince Redmond volunteered to go back to a woodman's hut which they had passed on their way, and borrow one. He soon returned with a large sharp axe, and set to work to cut down the tree. He struck with all his might, but the axe made no impression on it, beyond a mere scratch on the bark.

Prince Tasmir then tried, but with no better success.

At last Daimur, who through his spectacles, had been examining the trunk of the tree close to the ground, asked for the axe, and after scraping the earth away he began to chop at the roots.

He managed with hard work to cut some of them through, and then gave the axe to Redmond. Thus they all three persevered until the last root was severed, and the tree fell to the earth with a loud moaning sound.

Immediately a grey mist rose before their eyes, and when it had cleared away a beautiful fairy clothed in white stood before them in place of the tree.

"Do not be alarmed," she said, smiling at their startled faces. "You have nothing to fear. I am the fairy Peaceful and was enchanted by the Evil Magician because I had rescued your father from his hands, and was working against him in other ways in this kingdom.

"The leaves you saw upon the waters were my sorrows, and as my unhappiness increased I was

compelled to drop more and more leaves. These poisoned the water and kept Prince Sadna's people in a kind of stupor.

"But," she continued, stepping towards the lake, "I can now restore the water to its natural purity."

She waved her wand over it as she spoke, and Daimur could see that the oily substance seemed to evaporate immediately.

"Oh, tell us, good fairy, is our father still alive?" cried Prince Redmond.

"He is," answered the fairy, "though very feeble. He will not live much longer. Thank goodness I had him safely hidden away before the Evil Magician pounced upon me on this lonely hilltop. If you will follow me you may see him."

She led the way to what appeared to be a wall of solid rock a short distance from the lake shore. Reaching up she tapped the wall with her wand, and instantly a passage appeared. They followed her through it, and on the other side found themselves in a long green valley, completely surrounded on all sides by overhanging cliffs and tree tops. In the center of the valley stood a long low white thatched cottage, almost covered with honeysuckle and climbing roses, while about it were gardens, and plenty of trees where birds sang sweetly.

"This is my own secret bower," the fairy explained with a smile. "It is hidden from mortal eyes, and on account of my Wonderful Plant the Evil Magician could not disturb it."

They walked along a pretty path, and turning around a hedge came upon the aged King, seated in an easy chair under a peach tree. Directly in front of him stood a Wonderful Plant, fully as large as that which Tasmir had seen on the oasis, and quite full of golden flowers.

The King was in the act of sipping a glass of milk and eating some fruit which a maid had just brought him, and looked very bright and comfortable.

He turned his head at the sound of voices, and at the sight of his sons arose with a cry of joy, and came slowly forward leaning on his cane. Tasmir and Redmond wept with happiness as they kissed him, and turning to the fairy asked what they might do to show their gratitude.

"Only allow me to live in your palace," she said, "coming and going as I please, and I can help you to keep evil from your kingdom."

This they gladly agreed to.

Then, as the day was growing late, and they had had nothing to eat since morning, Daimur said that they had better go back at once.

"How shall we carry the King down the hillside," asked Prince Tasmir of Daimur. But the words were no sooner spoken than the fairy reached out and touched each of them with her wand. In the twinkling of an eye they were all in the King's private sitting-room in the palace, with the King in his own armchair. The fairy smiled at them as they thanked her.

"I shall now remove the spell from your people," she said, and vanished.

Tasmir and Redmond immediately sent out messengers all over the kingdom, and it was not long before people began to pour in at the palace gates, not stupid now, but rejoicing at the restoration of their good old King and their favorite princess.

None of the nobles seemed to know anything about Prince Sadna, excepting that he had sailed away a few days before in his latest and largest warship.

The following day began with a great public reception, and after a formal luncheon to the nobles and members of Government, there were several cabinet meetings, at which Daimur was asked as a matter of courtesy to attend. In the evening the princes were to address the populace from the palace balcony.

Early in the evening the streets were adorned with colored lights and huge torches, and people already crowded around the palace doors, hoping to get a glimpse of the King. Everywhere there was the wildest excitement.

Daimur walked out into the gardens, through the lawns, and over the little bridge which spanned the Laurel River, now clear as crystal and quite pure again. He stopped to watch it rippling in the moonlight.

Suddenly the fairy Peaceful stood beside him.

"King Daimur," said she, "I know you are good and kind. I have known you ever since you were born, although you did not know me. The fairy who gave you your magic cap and spectacles was my uncle. I am deeply indebted to you for killing the Evil Magician and also for breaking the enchantment which made me a force for evil in the world instead of good.

"You are going to be exposed to grave danger while the Old Witch of Despair is alive, as she knows

you have the two great treasures which the Evil Magician sought. In order to help you to escape all harm I am going to give you this little bugle."

She drew from her pocket as she spoke a tiny silver bugle which was attached to a long chain, fine and strong.

"Wear this around your neck constantly," she said, "and if ever you are in need of assistance blow three times upon it and three servants of mine will come immediately to you. Command them and they will obey."

Daimur thanked her warmly and clasped the chain about his neck, and the good fairy disappeared.

Daimur went back to the palace and joined in the festivities, but as a great storm was coming up he sent a carriage to fetch the Duchess of Rose Petals, who was still on the warship, as he feared she would be afraid if she stayed on board.

She was very glad indeed to be brought to the palace, and she and the old King enjoyed each other's company very much, and found it very consoling to relate their troubles together.

Very late that night, after all the people had gone home, the storm broke and lasted for hours. It was most terrific, and the fury of the wind broke many trees on the hill behind the palace, and did considerable damage throughout the city.

CHAPTER XXI

It was not until late the next day that the sea began to be calm again, though the sun had been shining since morning.

Daimur lost no time in getting ready for his departure to the Island of Roses, and after bidding good-bye to the Old King and Prince Tasmir, who made him promise to come to his wedding with the Princess Maya, which was to take place shortly, he embarked again with his marines, accompanied by the Duchess of Rose Petals and the faithful Prince Redmond, who declared that he would not leave Daimur until he had finished his task.

They soon found that the storm of the night before had been much worse on sea than on land, as the sea was covered with parts of wrecked ships, pieces of wood, boxes, articles of furniture and great timbers.

Towards noon they sighted a large vessel half sunk on a dangerous reef, but they could not get near enough to it to read the name. Apparently there was no one left aboard. A mile further on they passed a half broken life-boat nearly full of water, on the bow of which was painted H. M. S. "Sadna." There was nothing in it.

Then Prince Redmond felt certain that it was his brother's ship which they had passed caught on the reef, and that he had perished in the storm with all hands.

They proceeded on their course, and in a few hours more reached the chief city of the Kingdom of Roses.

Nobody made any attempt to stop their landing, so they all marched up the street, this time the Duchess leading the procession with Daimur. She was overjoyed to be at home again, and people began at once to recognize her and came running after them with shouts of welcome until a crowd had collected. It was noticeable that they were all very poor and fagged looking.

The strangers exclaimed with wonder at the beauty of the roses which bloomed everywhere. They climbed over the houses, over fences and up great stone buildings to the very roofs. Rose trees stood in all the parks. Rose bushes made all the hedges. Roses of all colors met the eye at every turn, and the air was quite heavy with their perfume. It was truly a magnificent sight.

No doubt they would have been still more impressed had they known that in prosperous times people had fresh rose petals to sleep on every night instead of feather beds or Ostermoor mattresses; that the pigs were fed on roses until their skins grew to be so fine and transparent that they were as clear as wax and the pigs themselves were red, white or yellow or pink, according to the color of the roses they ate; that housewives made rose petals into pies, cakes and candy, and even bread, and stewed them with sugar and lemons for jam. Of course this was only done with the surplus, as the real business of the kingdom was making perfume from them.

On went our friends, the Duchess leading the way, until at last they came in sight of the palace. As they entered the grounds they were surprised to see that all the blinds were down and nobody seemed to be guarding the gates, or the door of the palace. In fact, the gates hung ajar, and one of them was off its hinges. The grass on the lawn was tall and rank. The gardens, or as little of them as they could see,

were full of tall weeds, and everything was going to decay.

The poor Duchess stood and wept at the sight, but Daimur cried, "Cheer up, cheer up, my dear Duchess, everything may be quite all right yet," and ordering the marines to keep everyone out he and Redmond led the weeping Duchess up to the great entrance and loudly rang the door bell.

They could hear it echoing far inside, but no one came. They looked through the windows, but inside all was empty and dusty.

The Duchess was by this time in a perfect sea of tears and Daimur had given up trying to comfort her.

"Well, we'll try the back," he said, and taking the Duchess again by the arm he led the way around the wide drive towards the rear of the palace. As it was an immense building and very rambling it took them some time to reach a high gate in a wall, which, the Duchess moaned out, led to the kitchen.

Inside was a courtyard all paved with red bricks, very neat-looking, no doubt, when kept in proper order, but now the weeds were growing up through the crevices in the bricks and the place looked very neglected.

They walked across the courtyard to the kitchen door, and after knocking several times and getting no response Daimur tried it, and to his surprise found that it was not locked.

He pushed it open and they entered the great kitchen. There was not a soul in sight.

They walked on through the rooms and found them almost bare. Carpets had been taken up, furniture removed, all of the best silver was missing, and the Royal Rose china was completely gone,—so the Duchess said.

What could it mean? And where was Queen Amy, her court and her servants?

It was the same throughout the whole palace. Everything that had any value had been removed, even the embroidered satin bedspreads.

They descended to the cellar and went towards the little room where the Duchess declared had stood the steel treasure chest. The door of the little room stood open and to tell the truth they expected to find the place empty, but what was their surprise to see the chest standing there perfectly solid looking.

"Of course it is empty," said the Duchess with a sniff, as she stooped and fitted the little key into the lock.

Daimur and Redmond lifted the lid, and behold! IT WAS FULL OF GOLD TO THE VERY BRIM!

It was all packed carefully in glass boxes bound with steel and each box was labeled with the owner's name.

The largest box bore Queen Amy's name, and the royal coat of arms.

They were so astonished that they did not say a word but stood staring at the gold as if fascinated.

Suddenly they were startled by a slight noise behind them, and both Daimur and Prince Redmond involuntarily drew their swords as they turned quickly around.

What they beheld was a frightened looking little creature who gazed at them from behind a large empty packing case in a corner.

"Come here," said Daimur rather sternly. "Who are you and what are you doing here? Are there any other people about?"

The little thing advanced trembling, and then they saw that she was a fair-haired young girl of about eighteen or twenty, but so thin and pale that at first glance she appeared to be a child. She was dreadfully dirty too, and clad in various garments that seemed to have belonged to someone else much larger.

"Don't frighten her, Daimur," said Prince Redmond as he stepped over beside the poor little thing.

"Tell us who you are, and what you are doing here," he said, addressing her kindly. "We will do you no harm."

"I am Princess Helda of Oaklands," she said in a very timid voice.

"And where may that be?" asked Daimur, thinking she was probably out of her head, as so far as he knew no such place existed.

"Alas," said the Princess. "Oaklands is now the Island of Despair," and she wrung her hands with a hopeless gesture.

At this answer Daimur was so amazed that he could not say a word, and it was Prince Redmond

who asked the Princess to tell them her story, and whether she knew anything of Queen Amy. The Duchess had dried her eyes and stood waiting in silence for every word.

The Princess began in her quiet voice.

"When I was only fourteen years old, my parents, who were King and Queen of Oaklands and very much beloved by their subjects, one day quite by accident, offended the Evil Magician, who had been traveling through the kingdom disguised as a juggler, and entertaining crowds in the streets with his skilful tricks.

"In revenge the Evil Magician enchanted the whole kingdom, tearing our island up from the eastern sea and setting it down in this western one. He turned my father and mother and their subjects into stones and built a house and wall of them, and changed our beautiful cities into a dense forest.

"Me he could not change, as I wear upon my arm a bracelet placed there by a good fairy at my birth, which guards me from enchantment and harm.

"I lived then in the Magician's house, and his old witch of a housekeeper and her ugly daughter made me do all manner of rough work, and many a time would have beaten me had it not been for my magic bracelet. At any rate they half starved me. I lived in the cellar when I was not working in the kitchen."

"My dear," said the Duchess, "how can you expect us to believe such a story? You say you were fourteen when all this happened. You cannot be more than twenty now, and yet the Island of Despair has been where it is for over seventy years."

"Yes," said the Princess, "that is true, but the Evil Magician does not measure years as you do. On his kitchen wall hangs the year clock. It has only one hand, and the figures on its face run from one to fifteen. Each figure represents one of your years, but the hand of the clock has to go completely around the dial and reach the figure fifteen before the Magician counts a year. In therefore what has been five years to us in the Magician's house has been seventy-five years to you. That is the reason why the Magician and the witch seem so old to you, who know that they have been living for hundreds of years. They are really not very old after all."

"But how did you get here?" asked Prince Redmond, who was becoming very much interested in the small Princess.

"One day," answered the Princess, "I overheard the Evil Magician telling the old witch to prepare a bed in the cellar for a Queen."

"Good mercy," cried the Duchess. "My dear niece in that dreadful place. Oh, what shall I do?" And she began to weep afresh, but Daimur was so interested in the story that he hardly heard her.

"What happened next?" he asked breathlessly.

"The next day the Queen arrived, so beautiful and so sad. I loved her at once, and was happy to be with her when I might. She told me that she had a chest full of gold in her palace, but that her aunt had the key to it, and that she had mysteriously disappeared. She was afraid she had been murdered. A foreign king, a kind of pirate, had been threatening to invade her kingdom for more than a year, and she had been able to keep him off for a time, but at last she had no more soldiers to oppose against him and he would have taken the kingdom had not the Evil Magician, in the form of a young and handsome knight, offered to lend her as much gold as was in the treasure chest until such time as she could get another key, for she had found that the chest was a magic one and could neither be broken into nor moved from where it stood.

"The pirate king took the money and went away, but in a few months the Evil Magician came back and demanded payment for his gold or that the Queen would marry him at once.

"The Queen refused to marry him and could not pay him, so he took her prisoner to the Island of Despair, as you call it, where he said he would keep her until she consented to marry him and would sign over to him all right to her throne. There she still is if she is alive.

"As for me, the Evil Magician soon found that I was Queen Amy's friend, and fearing that I might help her to escape he had me brought here, where I have been ever since.

"As soon as Queen Amy was captured her cousin Bethel took the throne, and it was to her that I was sent as a servant. How she treated me you can see for yourselves. I have had to do the meanest work, live in this cellar, wear what clothes she threw to me, and eat what I could get from the cook, who on days when she was very cross would give me nothing at all."

"Poor child, poor child," said Prince Redmond.

"And where is Princess Bethel now?" asked Daimur.

"And what has happened to the furniture, and all the plate and china, my dear?" asked the Duchess in a teary voice.

"I am just coming to that part, if you please, madam," answered the Princess.

"At night, when the servants were talking in the kitchen I used to sit behind the cellar door and then I heard all that was said. One night they whispered to each other that the pirate king had come back and that he threatened instant invasion if he did not get more money. Princess Bethel had sent him all she had in the palace and he went away.

"That kept him off for a time, but before long he came again and then kept on coming more and more frequently until there was scarcely an article of value in the palace that had not been sent to him, or sold to get money to keep him quiet. Princess Bethel was very miserable indeed, and taxed her subjects until they were all reduced to beggary in order to get the money to give him.

"I could not help feeling rather sorry for her, it was such a dreadful existence. The servants had to be dismissed one after another until there was no one to wait upon her but me, and my! How she did scold!

"At last the pirate came just a few nights ago and marching up to the palace gates demanded the chest of gold, which he had evidently just heard about.

"Bethel would gladly have given it to him if she could have moved it, and told him so, at which he and a great many rough sailors tramped into the palace and down these stairs and tried their best to pry it up with crowbars, but with no success of course. When he found he really could not take it, he was so angry that he kidnapped Princess Bethel, saying he would keep her in a dungeon until she found the key for him.

"I was in the darkest corner when the pirates came and kept hidden until they went away. Since then I have not dared to go any further than to the kitchen for some bread and water."

"Dear me, that is very poor fare," said Prince Redmond, "it is no wonder you are so thin. We will have to try and make up for all this bad treatment," and to anyone with two eyes it was quite evident that he had fallen in love with her.

The Duchess too was very sympathetic, though greatly worried about her niece, Queen Amy, and Daimur told the new Princess that the Evil Magician was now dead and that they would try and deliver her parents and Queen Amy from enchantment.

At this moment the roar of many voices from outside caused them all to hurry upstairs as fast as they could and they ran out of the palace to see what was going on. They were just in time to see a great crowd pouring down the street towards the water, all shouting and gesticulating.

"What is the meaning of this commotion?" asked Daimur of those of his men who were guarding the palace gates.

"They say," answered one, "that the pirates who have been raiding this shore for so long are drowned and some of them have been washed ashore."

Hastily sending the Duchess and Princess Helda back to the palace, Daimur followed Prince Redmond, who was already making his way through the crowd towards the shore.

They reached the beach, and there stretched lifeless on the sand beside his overturned life-boat lay Prince Sadna, and beside him a young officer, whom Redmond recognized as a distant cousin.

It may well be imagined how very sad Prince Redmond felt over his brother's disgraceful life, and now at the sight of him lying there dead, a dreaded pirate to the people crowding around, instead of a friendly king as he should have been, the Prince burst into tears.

Daimur stood beside him feeling very sorry for his friend, and remembering that after all Sadna had been a royal prince, he decided to have him buried at sea with all honors befitting his rank, and motioning to a few of his men who had come to the shore with him, he had Prince Sadna's body removed to his ship.

Redmond was very grateful indeed to Daimur for his kindness, and after the funeral was over they came back to the city and called together the elders. They explained why they had come and took them to see the Duchess of Rose Petals at the palace, who by this time had had some tea and was feeling much refreshed.

The elders were all delighted to see her, but when she told them that she still had the key of the magic chest and that they could now have their savings as they needed them, they wept for joy, and falling on their knees vowed undying allegiance to her, and begged her to be their queen, as they were sure Queen Amy was dead.

The Duchess refused this honor, as she told them her niece was still alive, and Daimur then came forward and related what Princess Helda had told them of Queen Amy's capture and that he was going to rescue her and bring her back, and in the meantime that the Duchess would act as Queen Regent.

CHAPTER XXII

Only waiting to see the Duchess settled in the palace with a few servants and enough furniture to make her comfortable, Daimur prepared for his voyage to the Island of Despair. Prince Redmond insisted upon accompanying him, and little Princess Helda begged to be allowed to go too, as she was sure she could help them, and she wished so much to see her parents even if they were stones.

The Duchess at last consented to her going, and sent an old friend, Lady Clara Rosered, to look after her. By this time the Princess looked like a real Princess, for the Duchess had bought her the most beautiful new clothes, and since she was getting enough to eat for the first time in years she was beginning to look very pretty.

Prince Redmond was head over heels in love with her and would have asked her to marry him at once if he had had a kingdom to offer her, or any prospects at all.

Early one bright morning they set sail, and after sailing all day came within a few miles of the Island of Despair, when Daimur donned his cap and spectacles in order to steer the ship into the harbor in safety. They lay in the lee of a high cliff until dark, and then when the wind was strong enough ran the ship up into the small sheltered cove beside the Magician's house, and made it fast to the wharf with as little noise as possible.

There was nobody in sight as they cautiously crept up the path, and Redmond remarked that the witch must be away on some errand of mischief.

After waiting for an hour and seeing no one, the three adventurers went up the steps to the door of the house. They tried the handle, but it was locked.

Only then did Daimur remember that he had left his magic key in the box of magic tablets on the window sill the night they made their escape. So much had happened he had not once thought of it since, and it gave him a great shock to realize how careless he had been, for now he needed it again.

The Princess Helda, who of course knew nothing of the magic key, was already fumbling at the lock with a hairpin, and after poking at it for several minutes it flew back with a snap.

"It's a good thing I knew that lock's defects," she whispered, "or we should never have got in this way," and she turned the handle and walked into the kitchen.

With their hands on their swords Redmond and Daimur followed her.

It was quite dark in the kitchen, the only light coming from a solitary candle on a high shelf, which threw long shadows everywhere. The fire in the fireplace was out and there was no sign of life.

Motioning to the others to follow Princess Helda led the way across the kitchen to a door, which she opened and began to descend a flight of stone stairs.

The stairs led down to a wide stone flagged hall with rooms opening from it, and narrow passages running in all directions into the distance.

Here and there high up near the roof a smoky lantern burned dimly.

Across the wide hall went Helda and down one of the long narrow passages until she reached a door at the very end.

She knocked softly upon it three times. There was no answer. She knocked again, and then opened the door. There was no lock on it on the inside, only a big bolt on the outside. She glanced in. The room was completely bare.

"She is not here," she whispered to Daimur and Redmond, who followed her into the room. Lighting some matches they looked into all the rooms adjoining, but found them deserted too.

They went back up the narrow passage.

"What shall we do?" asked Prince Redmond. "Where shall we look now?"

"We must look in all of the rooms," said Helda. "They have moved her, but she is here somewhere. If we separate we shall perhaps get along better. There is no danger of getting lost as all the passages open into the wide hall."

So they separated, Prince Redmond following Princess Helda and Daimur going alone in the opposite direction, as he thought perhaps his magic cap and spectacles might help him in his quest.

Up and down the narrow passages they went, opening all the doors and looking into all the rooms, until they grew a long way apart, for these underground passages extended away into the hill and covered a much longer area than the house above.

At last Daimur opened a little door in a dark corner. It was so low that he had to stoop to get in, but once inside the ceiling was high enough.

"Oh," he said to himself, "she is not in here, I am sure."

But to his surprise his cap, which up to that time had not been able to tell him anything, suddenly told him that she was in there.

He stepped forward into the room cautiously and tried to look about, but it was so dark that he could only dimly see some articles of furniture that were very close to him.

On the further side, however, on the floor he saw a streak of light, and making his way over to it found that it came under a door. This door was not locked either, and he opened it far enough to see that the light was shining down a long hallway from a door at the other end of it. Seeing and hearing nothing, he crept down the hall until he came to the other door, which was even lower than the first. The door was open, but was hung with heavy curtains. He peered in, but could not see anyone. The room was very comfortable looking, with easy chairs, books and a piano, and on a small table lay some needlework in a basket.

While he stood considering whether he dare venture into the lighted room he heard the sound of voices, and then advancing through the room he beheld the Old Witch herself, accompanied by the witch who had been Queen of Shells.

Instantly he turned and fled down the long hall and back into the little dark room, where he felt his way into the furthest corner and lay still hardly daring to breathe.

In a minute or two he heard them coming down the hall. They were talking in a language he could not understand.

"What if they should have a light," thought Daimur. "All would be lost, for in this place they could easily make me a prisoner."

They entered the room. As they did so the Old Witch hesitated, and Daimur noticed her voice change, but all she did was to close the door leading into the hall. Then still talking the two made their way in the dark across the room and out of the other door.

When their footsteps had ceased to echo down the corridor, for they walked noisily, Daimur came out of his corner and tried the door leading into the long passage. It was locked. Then he tried the door which led to the main hall, but that too was locked.

He was trapped.

Just at that moment a faint spicy smell came to his nostrils. He stood still, wondering what it could be. It grew stronger and stronger and sweeter and sweeter, until he could feel himself growing sleepy. Alas, he knew now that the witches had seen him.

In vain he looked around for some means of escape. There was none. His cap could tell him nothing. He beat upon the doors, but his strength soon failed him, and he fell down in a stupor.

How long he lay there he did not know, but when he awoke at length a faint light was shining into the room from a small iron grating close up to the ceiling, and the spicy smell was gone.

The first thing he did was to feel for his cap and spectacles which he had had on when he fell asleep.

THEY WERE GONE.

Poor Daimur. For the first time since the beginning of his adventure he felt completely helpless, and with a very dejected countenance indeed he sat down to await the next happening.

He had not been sitting there for more than half an hour when a light step sounded in the inner hall and stopped at the door.

A key was turned in the lock and a voice said: "Oh, bother this lock." The key rattled again, the door opened rather suddenly, and there entered—not a witch as Daimur expected—but the loveliest lady he had ever seen.

She had big blue eyes, a lovely complexion, though it was a trifle pale as if from being indoors a long time, and golden hair that hung over her shoulders in long ringlets. Her gown was of a deep blue silk that almost matched her eyes. At sight of Daimur she stood still in astonishment, then came quickly towards him.

"Oh, poor young man," she cried. "Surely you are not a prisoner too."

"I am afraid I am," answered Daimur sadly, as he gazed at the beautiful lady, "but tell me, do you know whether Queen Amy is here? I must find her."

"I am that unhappy Queen," answered the lady. "Can it be that my faithful subjects have sent you to seek me, sir?"

"Rather I have come because I wished to undo in a small measure the mischief that the Evil

Magician did," and Daimur hurriedly told her something of his adventure, and finished by wishing he had his cap and spectacles back, as he was afraid without them they would have great difficulty in escaping.

Daimur at first had hopes that Princess Helda and Redmond might find them and perhaps be able to open the door, as it was only bolted on the outside, but then he remembered that the day was now well advanced and that they must either have been trapped themselves long before this or had crept back to the ship while it was still dark.

"Is there no other way of escape but by this door?" he asked Queen Amy, after some reflection.

"No," said she. "No other way excepting through the door in my sitting-room which leads into the witches' sitting-room, and that opens into the main hall. There is generally one witch stationed in their sitting-room to keep watch over me. They still hope to get my chest of gold, you see, and that is why I am kept a prisoner here."

Daimur drew his sword and announced his intention of trying to get out to the main hall if Queen Amy was willing to go with him, to which she replied that she would indeed take any risk to get out of that dungeon and back to her dear people.

She turned at once and led the way bade through her apartment to the door which was to decide their fortunes. It was a swinging door, and Daimur pushed it open and looked in. What he saw was a great bare room with cupboards all around it, and a few plain old kitchen rockers here and there. A number of the cupboard doors were open and there could be seen on the shelves dozens of bottles, boxes, tins and pots, while over the fire in a large black pot some vile-smelling mixture was cooking.

Beside the fire on a mat, lay the old witch's black cat, apparently asleep. There was no one in the room.

"Now is your chance," whispered Daimur, and sword in hand he went softly across the floor, closely followed by Queen Amy.

As they passed the cat he opened one of his green eyes and looked at them, but they did not notice him. As soon as they were out of the room and into the hall he sat up on the mat and began to yowl in a most blood-curdling manner.

"We are lost," said the Queen, wringing her hands. "Listen to that cat. We must have awakened him. He is calling the Old Witch I am sure."

"Run," said Daimur, and seizing Queen Amy by the hand he almost dragged her along the wide hall towards the staircase. But they were too late.

Down the stairs came the Old Witch, followed by her daughter and the other witch from Shells.

At the sight of Daimur with his sword drawn and the terrified Queen Amy shrinking at his side the Old Witch gave a howl of rage and said something quickly to the others.

Instantly three great tigers were bounding towards them, their teeth showing in a dreadful manner, and their deep growls filling the whole hall.

Thrusting Queen Amy behind him Daimur clutched his sword in despair and set his teeth with a determination to kill them all if possible—when suddenly he thought of the tiny silver bugle which he had had around his neck all the time.

Raising it quickly to his lips he blew three times upon it. The faint sound it made was not heard amid the terrible roaring of the tigers, but before he had finished the last blast there stood in front of him three giants, so tall that their heads almost touched the high ceiling, and that was more than ten feet. They were dressed like Roman soldiers and each carried a huge flat sword.

"The tigers. Kill the tigers!" cried Daimur.

It all happened so suddenly that the tigers did not have time to stop their rush, and in a second the giants were upon them and you may be sure soon cut their heads off. Then before Daimur could even say "Thank you," they had disappeared again.

The three witches lay dead at their feet and they were free.

Daimur turned towards Queen Amy and found her leaning against the wall in a half-fainting condition, and while he was trying to induce her to make an effort to pass the dead tigers and get away upstairs there suddenly rang out a loud cry of "Fire! Fire!"



HE WAS TRYING TO INDUCE HER TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO PASS
THE DEAD TIGERS.

He was trying to induce her to make an effort to pass the dead tigers.

Daimur recognized Prince Redmond's voice. Doors banged overhead and footsteps scurried across the floor. Daimur waited for no more. Picking up the Queen in his arms he almost flew towards the staircase and up the stairs. As he reached the top a puff of smoke came from an inner room and half blinded him. He rushed across the kitchen and at the door almost ran into Prince Redmond and Princess Helda, who were coming in again shouting his name at the top of their voices.

"Here I am," said Daimur breathlessly. "Help me to carry the Queen out."

"To the ship instantly," shouted Prince Redmond, as he seized Queen Amy from Daimur's arms and ran towards the shore. Daimur snatched Helda's hand and they hurried after him.

Shouting orders to the sailors Prince Redmond boarded the ship. Up went the sails, and as there was a good breeze the boat began to move out. It was not a moment too soon.

They were not more than a hundred feet away when a long flame burst through the roof of the Evil Magician's castle and in a moment the whole building was burning.

"What happened?" cried Daimur.

"We accidentally set the place on fire," said Prince Redmond.

"Last night," he continued, "after wandering about those long passages without finding the Queen, and seeing no sign of you, we crawled through a small window in the coal cellar and came back to the ship. Then as you did not come we grew very much alarmed, and at daybreak went back the way we had come, intending to search for you.

"Anxious not to miss finding you we even mounted a stair which led up to a long half-dark room, quite off by itself. It was full of mysterious-looking bottles and pots, many of them marked 'poison,' but the queerest thing of all was a tiny well in one corner, on the cover of which was printed in large black letters 'Enchanting Oil.'

"We lifted the cover and peered in. It was so dark in there that we could see nothing, so I lit a match and by the light of it we looked down a terrible depth and could see the oil shining dimly at the bottom.

"Just then Princess Helda accidentally touched the handle of the little brass bucket which was drawn up to the top, knocking the match out of my fingers. It fell into the bucket, which contained a few drops of the oil. Immediately a flame leaped into our very faces and shot up nearly to the ceiling. We turned and ran down the stairs again, and up another flight near it which Helda knew would take us to one of the living-rooms. There we ran about like mad shouting 'Fire,' and thinking that you and the Queen would surely perish. We knew that some of the fire must soon drop into the oil well, and when

that happens I am sure it will explode."

He had hardly said the words when a terrific roar shook the earth. The flaming house suddenly scattered into a million burning pieces which dropped into the sea, and some of which fell on the ship and had to be thrown overboard.

A column of black smoke rose into the air and hid the island entirely from view.

They lay to all morning, waiting for the smoke to clear away, but it was not until mid afternoon that it began to disappear.

They sailed slowly nearer to the island, wondering what damage had been done besides the burning of the house. As they came closer they seemed to see houses by the waterside through the haze of smoke, which was steadily growing thinner, and then what appeared to be streets.

Their wonder grew when they carefully steered back to the cove and found that they were in a harbor that was lined with stone docks. Some ships lay at anchor, packages of goods were piled up on the wharves, workmen went back and forth loading and unloading the vessels, piling goods into long warehouses, and the scene was a busy one.

The first thought that sprang to Daimur's mind was that they had made a mistake and in some manner got to one of the other islands again.

It was Princess Helda who first spoke as she stepped out on the quay.

"The enchantment is broken," she cried, holding out her hands. "Welcome to Oaklands."

Nobody would have recognized in the beautiful kingdom of Oaklands the Island of Despair of rank undergrowth and poisoned fruit trees.

The afternoon sun shone down upon wide streets, clean and well kept, faced by rows of fine houses and lined with tall oak trees. The smoke had apparently drifted upwards until it was now only a small black cloud in the western sky. On the hill where had been the Magician's house there now stood a tall and stately castle built of shining white marble. There could be no doubt it was the palace.

They walked towards it and were surprised to find that they were expected, as a guard of honor stood waiting at the entrance to the grounds to conduct them to the presence of the King and Queen.

They were taken to the drawing room, and at sight of her father and mother Princess Helda burst into tears and rushed towards them. It was a touching scene.

Words could not express the gratitude of their majesties to King Daimur and Prince Redmond for their deliverance, both of whom they remembered, for having then been the stones that formed the window sill and the door sill respectively they had heard every word that was said, and had witnessed the escape from the island.

Helda's father was very anxious to have them stay and pay him a visit, even if only for a few days, but Daimur, who wanted to restore Queen Amy to her throne at once, declined, saying, however, that he had a proposal to make before leaving.

He then asked the King of Oaklands to bestow on Prince Redmond the hand of his daughter Helda, declaring that it was to Prince Redmond that they owed the breaking of the enchantment, and not to himself.

This the King was very willing to do, and Prince Redmond's joy was unbounded, for with no fortune and no throne to offer her he would never have dared to ask the Princess to marry him, and they would both have been very unhappy to the end of their lives.

It was arranged that the wedding should take place as soon as the Princess could get her trousseau made, and as Prince Redmond had decided to accept the King's invitation and stay for a few days' visit Daimur and Queen Amy said good-bye and prepared to depart, but not before they had been presented with two beautiful armchairs, each carved from a single piece of oak, which the King of Oaklands prized very much. Even Lady Clara Rosered, who had accompanied Princess Helda, was not forgotten, but received a handsome lace shawl.

Their voyage back to the Island of Roses was rather slow, owing to the poor wind, but it was very quiet and restful, and they arrived to find a large crowd gathered on the dock to meet them, all very anxious to see whether Queen Amy was aboard.

In an open space surrounded by some of the Royal Guard, who stood on either side making a long avenue right down to the edge of the quay, sat the Duchess of Rose Petals in the state carriage.

When Queen Amy appeared on the deck, looking a little pale, but otherwise as well as ever, loud shouts went up and flowers were flung at her feet as she walked up the avenue made by the Guards, King Daimur walking at her side.

"Long live our Queen. Long live noble King Daimur," resounded on every side, while rockets were sent into the air and all the bells in the kingdom were rung.

A great procession of carriages followed the Queen to the palace, where the Duchess had arranged a luncheon and a splendid reception, at which Daimur received nearly as much attention as Queen Amy.

When it was all over Daimur felt that, as he had now fulfilled his promises, he, should return at once to his own kingdom, but first he went to Queen Amy and told her that he was going away. She looked at him with tears in her eyes and begged him to let her know what she could first bestow on him as a small token of her undying gratitude. "I want nothing less than your own heart and hand," declared Daimur, and he told her that he had fallen in love with her the moment he had first seen her, but could not, of course, say anything about it until she was safely at home.

Queen Amy blushed, and acknowledged that she also loved him very dearly, so then and there they decided to be married at the same time as Prince Redmond and Princess Helda.

And so it happened. Daimur went back to his kingdom, where his faithful subjects were so proud of him that they built a magnificent new palace and presented it to him as a wedding gift.

In due time the triple marriage was celebrated at Queen Amy's palace, for Tasmir and Princess Maya, on hearing the news, insisted upon being married at the same time.

In the midst of the ceremony the good fairy appeared and gave each of them a small gold ring, which she said would bring them good luck as long as they lived.

So ended all the enchantments and wicked plots of Evil Magician, and ever after peace and happiness reigned over the Islands of Sunshine.

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ENCHANTED ISLAND ***

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