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Illustrator: Edna F. Hart

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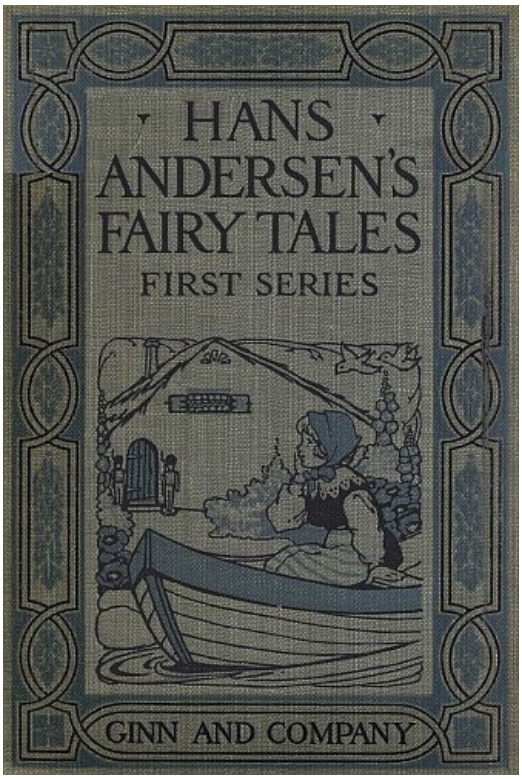

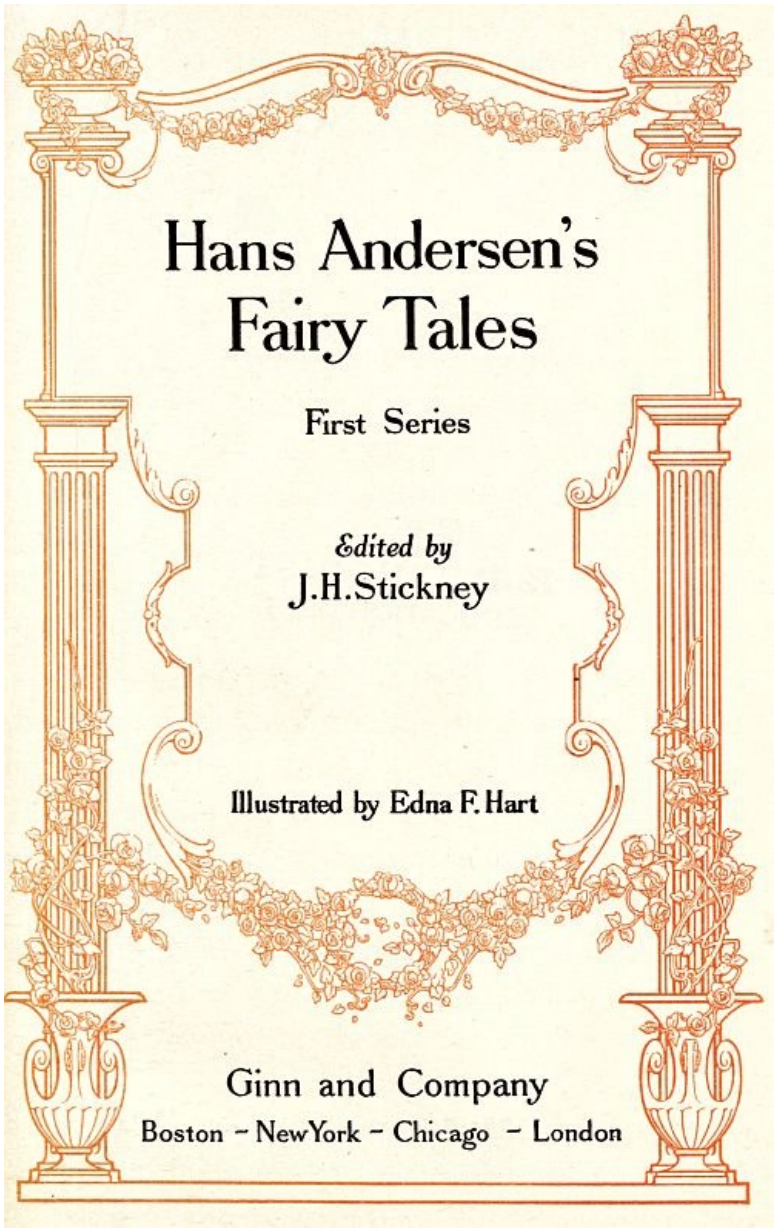

Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales

First Series

Edited by
J. H. Stickney

Illustrated by Edna F. Hart

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PREFACE

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The Hans Andersen Fairy Tales will be read in schools and homes as long as there are children who love to read. As a story-teller for children the author has no rival in power to enlist the imagination and carry it along natural, healthful lines. The power of his tales to charm and elevate runs like a living thread through whatever he writes. In the two books in which they are here presented they have met the tests and held an undiminishing popularity among the best children's books. They are recognized as standards, and as juvenile writings come to be more carefully standardized, their place in permanent literature will grow wider and more secure. A few children's authors will be ranked among the Immortals, and Hans Andersen is one of them.

Denmark and Finland supplied the natural background for the quaint fancies and growing genius of their gifted son, who was story-teller, playwright, and poet in one. Love of nature, love [iv] of country, fellow-feeling with life in everything, and a wonderful gift for investing everything with life wrought together to produce in him a character whose spell is in all his writings. "The Story of My Life" is perhaps the most thrilling of all of them. Recognized in courts of kings and castles of nobles, he recited his little stories with the same simplicity by which he had made them familiar in cottages of the peasantry, and endeared himself alike to all who listened. These attributes, while they do not account for his genius, help us to unravel the charm of it. The simplest of the stories meet Ruskin's requirement for a child's story—they are sweet and sad.

From most writers who have contributed largely to children's literature only a few selected gems are likely to gain permanence. With Andersen the case is different. While there are such gems, the greater value lies in taking these stories as a type of literature and living in it a while, through the power of cumulative reading. It is not too much to say that there is a temper and spirit in Andersen which is all his own—a simple philosophy which continuous reading is sure to impart. For this reason these are good books for a child to own; an occasional re-reading will [v] inspire in him a healthy, normal taste in reading. Many of the stories are of value to read to very young children. They guide an exuberant imagination along natural channels.

The text of the present edition is a reprint of an earlier one which was based upon a sentence-by-sentence comparison of the four or five translations current in Europe and America. It has been widely commended as enjoyable reading, while faithful to the letter and spirit of the Danish original. A slight abridgment has been made in two of the longer stories. The order of the selections adapts the reading to the growing child—the First Series should be sufficiently easy for children of about eight or nine years old.

J. H. STICKNEY

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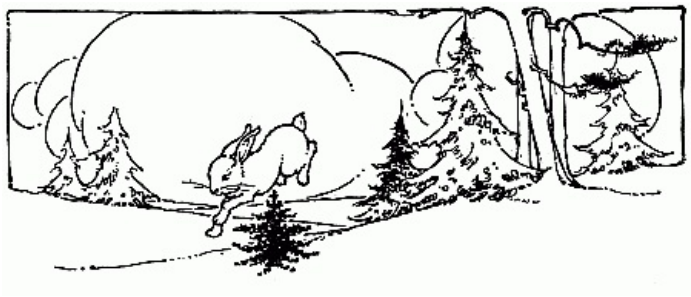
They danced merrily ... around the tree.



[1]

HANS ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

THE FIR TREE

FAR away in the forest, where the warm sun and the fresh air made a sweet resting place, grew a pretty little fir tree. The situation was all that could be desired; and yet the tree was not happy, it wished so much to be like its tall companions, the pines and firs which grew around it.

The sun shone, and the soft air fluttered its leaves, and the little peasant children passed by, prattling merrily; but the fir tree did not heed them.

[2] Sometimes the children would bring a large basket of raspberries or strawberries, wreathed on straws, and seat themselves near the fir tree, and say, "Is it not a pretty little tree?" which made it feel even more unhappy than before.

And yet all this while the tree grew a notch or joint taller every year, for by the number of joints in the stem of a fir tree we can discover its age.

Still, as it grew, it complained: "Oh! how I wish I were as tall as the other trees; then I would spread out my branches on every side, and my crown would overlook the wide world around. I should have the birds building their nests on my boughs, and when the wind blew, I should bow with stately dignity, like my tall companions."

So discontented was the tree, that it took no pleasure in the warm sunshine, the birds, or the rosy clouds that floated over it morning and evening.

Sometimes in winter, when the snow lay white and glittering on the ground, there was a little hare that would come springing along, and jump right over the little tree's head; then how mortified it would feel.

[3] Two winters passed; and when the third arrived, the tree had grown so tall that the hare was obliged to run round it. Yet it remained unsatisfied and would exclaim: "Oh! to grow, to grow; if I could but keep on growing tall and old! There is nothing else worth caring for in the world."

In the autumn the woodcutters came, as usual, and cut down several of the tallest trees; and the young fir, which was now grown to a good, full height, shuddered as the noble trees fell to the earth with a crash.

After the branches were lopped off, the trunks looked so slender and bare that they could scarcely be recognized. Then they were placed, one upon another, upon wagons and drawn by horses out of the forest. Where could they be going? What would become of them? The young fir tree wished very much to know.

So in the spring, when the swallows and the storks came, it asked: "Do you know where those trees were taken? Did you meet them?"

The swallows knew nothing; but the stork, after a little reflection, nodded his head and said: "Yes, I think I do. As I flew from Egypt, I met several new ships, and they had fine masts that [4] smelt like fir. These must have been the trees; and I assure you they were stately; they sailed right gloriously!"

"Oh, how I wish I were tall enough to go on the sea," said the fir tree. "Tell me what is this sea, and what does it look like?"

"It would take too much time to explain—a great deal too much," said the stork, flying quickly away.

"Rejoice in thy youth," said the sunbeam; "rejoice in thy fresh growth and in the young life that is in thee."

And the wind kissed the tree, and the dew watered it with tears, but the fir tree regarded them not.

Christmas time drew near, and many young trees were cut down, some that were even smaller and younger than the fir tree, who enjoyed neither rest nor peace for longing to leave its forest home. These young trees, which were chosen for their beauty, kept their branches, and they, also, were laid on wagons and drawn by horses far away out of the forest. [5]

"Where are they going?" asked the fir tree. "They are not taller than I am; indeed, one is not so tall. And why do they keep all their branches? Where are they going?"

"We know, we know," sang the sparrows; "we have looked in at the windows of the houses in the town, and we know what is done with them. Oh! you cannot think what honor and glory they receive. They are dressed up in the most splendid manner. We have seen them standing in the middle of a warm room, and adorned with all sorts of beautiful things—honey cakes, gilded apples, playthings, and many hundreds of wax tapers."

"And then," asked the fir tree, trembling in all its branches, "and then what happens?"

"We did not see any more," said the sparrows; "but this was enough for us."

"I wonder whether anything so brilliant will ever happen to me," thought the fir tree. "It would be better even than crossing the sea. I long for it almost with pain. Oh, when will Christmas be here? I am now as tall and well grown as those which were taken away last year. O that I were [6] now laid on the wagon, or standing in the warm room with all that brightness and splendor around me! Something better and more beautiful is to come after, or the trees would not be so decked out. Yes, what follows will be grander and more splendid. What can it be? I am weary with longing. I scarcely know what it is that I feel."

"Rejoice in our love," said the air and the sunlight. "Enjoy thine own bright life in the fresh air."

But the tree would not rejoice, though it grew taller every day, and winter and summer its dark-green foliage might be seen in the forest, while passers-by would say, "What a beautiful tree!"

A short time before the next Christmas the discontented fir tree was the first to fall. As the ax cut sharply through the stem and divided the pith, the tree fell with a groan to the earth, conscious of pain and faintness and forgetting all its dreams of happiness in sorrow at leaving its home in the forest. It knew that it should never again see its dear old companions the trees, nor the little bushes and many-colored flowers that had grown by its side; perhaps not even the birds. [7] Nor was the journey at all pleasant.

The tree first recovered itself while being unpacked in the courtyard of a house, with several other trees; and it heard a man say: "We only want one, and this is the prettiest. This is beautiful!"

Then came two servants in grand livery and carried the fir tree into a large and beautiful apartment. Pictures hung on the walls, and near the tall tile stove stood great china vases with lions on the lids. There were rocking-chairs, silken sofas, and large tables covered with pictures; and there were books, and playthings that had cost a hundred times a hundred dollars—at least so said the children.

Then the fir tree was placed in a large tub full of sand—but green baize hung all round it so

that no one could know it was a tub—and it stood on a very handsome carpet. Oh, how the fir tree trembled! What was going to happen to him now? Some young ladies came, and the servants helped them to adorn the tree. [8]

On one branch they hung little bags cut out of colored paper, and each bag was filled with sweetmeats. From other branches hung gilded apples and walnuts, as if they had grown there; and above and all around were hundreds of red, blue, and white tapers, which were fastened upon the branches. Dolls, exactly like real men and women, were placed under the green leaves, —the tree had never seen such things before,—and at the very top was fastened a glittering star made of gold tinsel. Oh, it was very beautiful. "This evening," they all exclaimed, "how bright it will be!"

"O that the evening were come," thought the tree, "and the tapers lighted! Then I shall know what else is going to happen. Will the trees of the forest come to see me? Will the sparrows peep in at the windows, I wonder, as they fly? Shall I grow faster here than in the forest, and shall I keep on all these ornaments during summer and winter?" But guessing was of very little use. His back ached with trying, and this pain is as bad for a slender fir tree as headache is for us. [9]

At last the tapers were lighted, and then what a glistening blaze of splendor the tree presented! It trembled so with joy in all its branches that one of the candles fell among the green leaves and burned some of them. "Help! help!" exclaimed the young ladies; but no harm was done, for they quickly extinguished the fire.

After this the tree tried not to tremble at all, though the fire frightened him, he was so anxious not to hurt any of the beautiful ornaments, even while their brilliancy dazzled him.

And now the folding doors were thrown open, and a troop of children rushed in as if they intended to upset the tree, and were followed more slowly by their elders. For a moment the little ones stood silent with astonishment, and then they shouted for joy till the room rang; and they danced merrily round the tree while one present after another was taken from it.

"What are they doing? What will happen next?" thought the tree. At last the candles burned down to the branches and were put out. Then the children received permission to plunder the tree. [10]

Oh, how they rushed upon it! There was such a riot that the branches cracked, and had it not been fastened with the glistening star to the ceiling, it must have been thrown down.

Then the children danced about with their pretty toys, and no one noticed the tree except the children's maid, who came and peeped among the branches to see if an apple or a fig had been forgotten.

"A story, a story," cried the children, pulling a little fat man towards the tree.

"Now we shall be in the green shade," said the man as he seated himself under it, "and the tree will have the pleasure of hearing, also; but I shall only relate one story. What shall it be? Ivede-Avede or Humpty Dumpty, who fell downstairs, but soon got up again, and at last married a princess?"

"Ivede-Avede," cried some; "Humpty Dumpty," cried others; and there was a famous uproar. But the fir tree remained quite still and thought to himself: "Shall I have anything to do with all this? Ought I to make a noise, too?" but he had already amused them as much as they wished and [11] they paid no attention to him.

Then the old man told them the story of Humpty Dumpty—how he fell downstairs, and was raised up again, and married a princess. And the children clapped their hands and cried, "Tell another, tell another," for they wanted to hear the story of Ivede-Avede; but this time they had only "Humpty Dumpty." After this the fir tree became quite silent and thoughtful. Never had the birds in the forest told such tales as that of Humpty Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and yet married a princess.

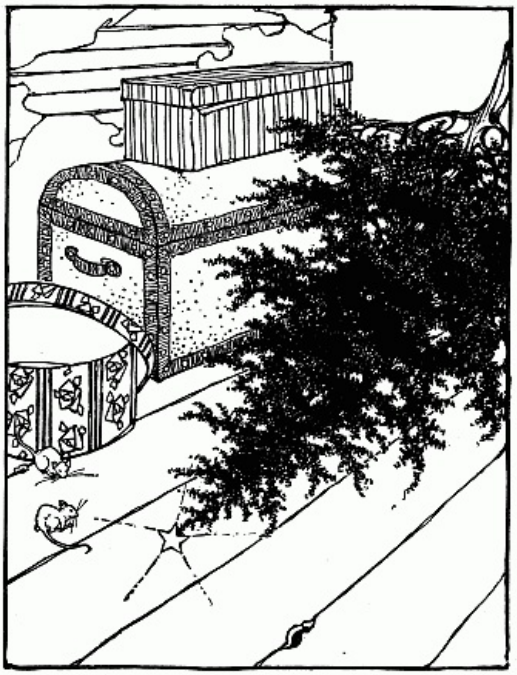
"Ah, yes! so it happens in the world," thought the fir tree. He believed it all, because it was related by such a pleasant man.

"Ah, well!" he thought, "who knows? Perhaps I may fall down, too, and marry a princess;" and he looked forward joyfully to the next evening, expecting to be again decked out with lights and playthings, gold and fruit. "To-morrow I will not tremble," thought he; "I will enjoy all my splendor, and I shall hear the story of Humpty Dumpty again, and perhaps of Ivede-Avede." And [12] the tree remained quiet and thoughtful all night.

In the morning the servants and the housemaid came in. "Now," thought the fir tree, "all my splendor is going to begin again." But they dragged him out of the room and upstairs to the garret and threw him on the floor in a dark corner where no daylight shone, and there they left him. "What does this mean?" thought the tree. "What am I to do here? I can hear nothing in a place like this;" and he leaned against the wall and thought and thought.

And he had time enough to think, for days and nights passed and no one came near him; and when at last somebody did come, it was only to push away some large boxes in a corner. So the

tree was completely hidden from sight, as if it had never existed.



Threw him on the floor . . . . . and there they left him .

"It is winter now," thought the tree; "the ground is hard and covered with snow, so that people cannot plant me. I shall be sheltered here, I dare say, until spring comes. How thoughtful and kind everybody is to me! Still, I wish this place were not so dark and so dreadfully lonely, with [14] not even a little hare to look at. How pleasant it was out in the forest while the snow lay on the ground, when the hare would run by, yes, and jump over me, too, although I did not like it then. Oh! it is terribly lonely here."

"Squeak, squeak," said a little mouse, creeping cautiously towards the tree; then came another, and they both sniffed at the fir tree and crept in and out between the branches.

"Oh, it is very cold," said the little mouse. "If it were not we should be very comfortable here, shouldn't we, old fir tree?"

"I am not old," said the fir tree. "There are many who are older than I am."

"Where do you come from?" asked the mice, who were full of curiosity; "and what do you know? Have you seen the most beautiful places in the world, and can you tell us all about them? And have you been in the storeroom, where cheeses lie on the shelf and hams hang from the ceiling? One can run about on tallow candles there; one can go in thin and come out fat."

"I know nothing of that," said the fir tree, "but I know the wood, where the sun shines and the [15] birds sing." And then the tree told the little mice all about its youth. They had never heard such an account in their lives; and after they had listened to it attentively, they said: "What a number of things you have seen! You must have been very happy."

"Happy!" exclaimed the fir tree; and then, as he reflected on what he had been telling them, he said, "Ah, yes! after all, those were happy days." But when he went on and related all about Christmas Eve, and how he had been dressed up with cakes and lights, the mice said, "How happy you must have been, you old fir tree."

"I am not old at all," replied the tree; "I only came from the forest this winter. I am now checked in my growth."

"What splendid stories you can tell," said the little mice. And the next night four other mice came with them to hear what the tree had to tell. The more he talked the more he remembered, and then he thought to himself: "Yes, those were happy days; but they may come again. Humpty Dumpty fell downstairs, and yet he married the princess. Perhaps I may marry a princess, too." [16] And the fir tree thought of the pretty little birch tree that grew in the forest; a real princess, a beautiful princess, she was to him.

"Who is Humpty Dumpty?" asked the little mice. And then the tree related the whole story; he could remember every single word. And the little mice were so delighted with it that they were ready to jump to the top of the tree. The next night a great many more mice made their appearance, and on Sunday two rats came with them; but the rats said it was not a pretty story at all, and the little mice were very sorry, for it made them also think less of it.

"Do you know only that one story?" asked the rats.

"Only that one," replied the fir tree. "I heard it on the happiest evening in my life; but I did not know I was so happy at the time."

"We think it is a very miserable story," said the rats. "Don't you know any story about bacon or tallow in the storeroom?"

"No," replied the tree.

"Many thanks to you, then," replied the rats, and they went their ways. [17]

The little mice also kept away after this, and the tree sighed and said: "It was very pleasant when the merry little mice sat round me and listened while I talked. Now that is all past, too. However, I shall consider myself happy when some one comes to take me out of this place."

But would this ever happen? Yes; one morning people came to clear up the garret; the boxes were packed away, and the tree was pulled out of the corner and thrown roughly on the floor; then the servants dragged it out upon the staircase, where the daylight shone.

"Now life is beginning again," said the tree, rejoicing in the sunshine and fresh air. Then it was carried downstairs and taken into the courtyard so quickly that it forgot to think of itself and could only look about, there was so much to be seen.

The court was close to a garden, where everything looked blooming. Fresh and fragrant roses hung over the little palings. The linden trees were in blossom, while swallows flew here and there, crying, "Twit, twit, twit, my mate is coming"; but it was not the fir tree they meant. [18]

"Now I shall live," cried the tree joyfully, spreading out its branches; but alas! they were all withered and yellow, and it lay in a corner among weeds and nettles. The star of gold paper still stuck in the top of the tree and glittered in the sunshine.

Two of the merry children who had danced round the tree at Christmas and had been so happy were playing in the same courtyard. The youngest saw the gilded star and ran and pulled it off the tree. "Look what is sticking to the ugly old fir tree," said the child, treading on the branches till they crackled under his boots.

And the tree saw all the fresh, bright flowers in the garden and then looked at itself and wished it had remained in the dark corner of the garret. It thought of its fresh youth in the forest, of the merry Christmas evening, and of the little mice who had listened to the story of Humpty Dumpty.

"Past! past!" said the poor tree. "Oh, had I but enjoyed myself while I could have done so! but now it is too late."

Then a lad came and chopped the tree into small pieces, till a large bundle lay in a heap on the [19]
ground. The pieces were placed in a fire, and they quickly blazed up brightly, while the tree sighed so deeply that each sigh was like a little pistol shot. Then the children who were at play came and seated themselves in front of the fire, and looked at it and cried, "Pop, pop." But at each "pop," which was a deep sigh, the tree was thinking of a summer day in the forest or of some winter night there when the stars shone brightly, and of Christmas evening, and of Humpty Dumpty,—the only story it had ever heard or knew how to relate,—till at last it was consumed.

The boys still played in the garden, and the youngest wore on his breast the golden star with which the tree had been adorned during the happiest evening of its existence. Now all was past; the tree's life was past and the story also past—for all stories must come to an end at some time or other.

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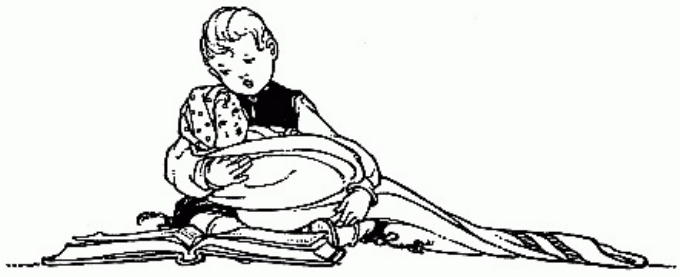


LITTLE TUK

LITTLE TUK! An odd name, to be sure! However, it was not the little boy's real name. His real name was Carl; but when he was so young that he could not speak plainly, he used to call himself Tuk. It would be hard to say why, for it is not at all like "Carl"; but the name does as well as any, if one only knows it.

Little Tuk was left at home to take care of his sister Gustava, who was much younger than himself; and he had also to learn his lesson. Here were two things to be done at the same time, and they did not at all suit each other. The poor boy sat with his sister in his lap, singing to her all the songs he knew, yet giving, now and then, a glance into his geography, which lay open beside him. By to-morrow morning he must know the names of all the towns in Seeland by heart, [21]

and be able to tell about them all that could be told.

His mother came at last, and took little Gustava in her arms. Tuk ran quickly to the window and read and read till he had almost read his eyes out—for it was growing dark, and his mother could not afford to buy candles.

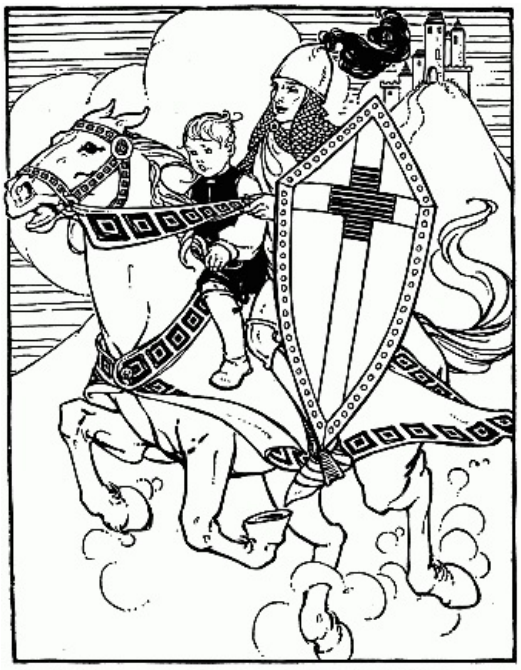
"There goes the old washerwoman down the lane," said the mother, as she looked out of the window. "She can hardly drag herself along, poor thing; and now she has to carry that heavy pail from the pump. Be a good boy, little Tuk, and run across to help the poor creature, will you not?" And little Tuk ran quickly and helped to bear the weight of the pail. But when he came back into the room, it was quite dark. Nothing was said about a candle, and it was of no use to wish for one; he must go to his little trundle-bed, which was made of an old settle.

There he lay, still thinking of the geography lesson, of Seeland, and of all that the master had said. He could not read the book again, as he should by rights have done, for want of a light. So [22]
he put the geography-book under his pillow. Somebody had once told him that would help him wonderfully to remember his lesson, but he had never yet found that one could depend upon it.

There he lay and thought and thought, till all at once he felt as though some one were gently sealing his mouth and eyes with a kiss. He slept and yet did not sleep, for he seemed to see the old washerwoman's mild, kind eyes fixed upon him, and to hear her say: "It would be a shame, indeed, for you not to know your lesson to-morrow, little Tuk. You helped me; now I will help you, and our Lord will help us both."

All at once the leaves of the book began to rustle under little Tuk's head, and he heard something crawling about under his pillow.

"Cluck, cluck, cluck!" cried a hen, as she crept towards him. (She came from the town of Kjöge.) "I'm a Kjöge hen," she said. And then she told him how many inhabitants the little town contained, and about the battle that had once been fought there, and how it was now hardly worth mentioning, there were so many greater things. [23]



All in a moment he was on horseback, and on he went, gallop, gallop!

Scratch, scratch! kribbley crabbley! and now a great wooden bird jumped down upon the bed. [24]
It was the popinjay from the shooting ground at Præstö. He had reckoned the number of inhabitants in Præstö, and found that there were as many as he had nails in his body. He was a proud bird. "Thorwaldsen lived in one corner of Præstö, close by me. Am I not a pretty bird, a merry popinjay?"

And now little Tuk no longer lay in bed. All in a moment he was on horseback, and on he went, gallop, gallop! A splendid knight, with a bright helmet and waving plume,—a knight of the olden time,—held him on his own horse; and on they rode together, through the wood of the ancient city of Vordingborg, and it was once again a great and busy town. The high towers of the king's castle rose against the sky, and bright lights were seen gleaming through the windows. Within were music and merrymaking. King Waldemar was leading out the noble ladies of his court to dance with him.

Suddenly the morning dawned, the lamps grew pale, the sun rose, the outlines of the buildings [25]
faded away, and at last one high tower alone remained to mark the spot where the royal castle had stood. The vast city had shrunk into a poor, mean-looking little town. The schoolboys, coming out of school with their geography-books under their arms, said, "Two thousand inhabitants"; but that was a mere boast, for the town had not nearly so many.

And little Tuk lay in his bed. He knew not whether he had been dreaming or not, but again there was some one close by his side.

"Little Tuk! little Tuk!" cried a voice; it was the voice of a young sailor boy. "I am come to bring you greeting from Korsör. Korsör is a new town, a living town, with steamers and mail coaches. Once people used to call it a low, ugly place, but they do so no longer.

"'I dwell by the seaside,' says Korsör; 'I have broad highroads and pleasure gardens; and I have given birth to a poet, a witty one, too, which is more than all poets are. I once thought of sending a ship all round the world; but I did not do it, though I might as well have done so. I dwell so pleasantly, close by the port; and I am fragrant with perfume, for the loveliest roses bloom round about me, close to my gates.'" [26]

And little Tuk could smell the roses and see them and their fresh green leaves. But in a moment they had vanished; the green leaves spread and thickened—a perfect grove had grown up above the bright waters of the bay, and above the grove rose the two high-pointed towers of a glorious old church. From the side of the grass-grown hill gushed a fountain in rainbow-hued streams, with a merry, musical voice, and close beside it sat a king, wearing a gold crown upon his long dark hair. This was King Hroar of the springs; and hard by was the town of Roskilde (Hroar's Fountain). And up the hill, on a broad highway, went all the kings and queens of Denmark, wearing golden crowns; hand in hand they passed on into the church, and the deep music of the organ mingled with the clear rippling of the fountain. For nearly all the kings and queens of Denmark lie buried in this beautiful church. And little Tuk saw and heard it all.

"Don't forget the towns," said King Hroar. [27]

Then all vanished; though where it went he knew not. It seemed like turning the leaves of a book.

And now there stood before him an old peasant woman from Sorö, the quiet little town where grass grows in the very market place. Her green linen apron was thrown over her head and back, and the apron was very wet, as if it had been raining heavily.

"And so it has," she said. And she told a great many pretty things from Holberg's comedies, and recited ballads about Waldemar and Absalon; for Holberg had founded an academy in her native town.

All at once she cowered down and rocked her head as if she were a frog about to spring. "Koax!" cried she; "it is wet, it is always wet, and it is as still as the grave in Sorö." She had changed into a frog. "Koax!" and again she was an old woman. "One must dress according to the weather," she said.

"It is wet! it is wet! My native town is like a bottle; one goes in at the cork, and by the cork one must come out. In old times we had the finest of fish; now we have fresh, rosy-cheeked boys at the bottom of the bottle. There they learn wisdom—Greek, Greek, and Hebrew! Koax!" [28]

It sounded exactly as if frogs were croaking, or as if some one were walking over the great swamp with heavy boots. So tiresome was her tone, all on the same note, that little Tuk fell fast asleep; and a very good thing it was for him.

But even in sleep there came a dream, or whatever else it may be called. His little sister Gustava, with her blue eyes and flaxen ringlets, was grown into a tall, beautiful girl, who, though she had no wings, could fly; and away they now flew over Seeland—over its green woods and blue waters.

"Hark! Do you hear the cock crow, little Tuk? 'Cock-a-doodle-do!' The fowls are flying hither from Kjöge, and you shall have a farmyard, a great, great poultry yard of your own! You shall never suffer hunger or want. The golden goose, the bird of good omen, shall be yours; you shall become a rich and happy man. Your house shall rise up like King Waldemar's towers and be richly decked with statues like those of Thorwaldsen at Præstö. [29]

"Understand me well; your good name shall be borne round the world, like the ship that was to sail from Korsör, and at Roskilde you shall speak and give counsel wisely and well, little Tuk, like King Hroar; and when at last you shall lie in your peaceful grave you shall sleep as quietly—"

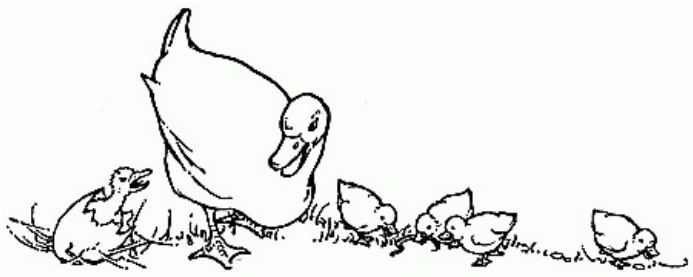
"As if I lay sleeping in Sorö," said Tuk, and he woke. It was a bright morning, and he could not remember his dream, but it was not necessary that he should. One has no need to know what one will live to see.

And now he sprang quickly out of bed and sought his book, that had lain under his pillow. He read his lesson and found that he knew the towns perfectly well.

And the old washerwoman put her head in at the door and said, with a friendly nod: "Thank you, my good child, for yesterday's help. May the Lord fulfill your brightest and most beautiful dreams! I know he will."

Little Tuk had forgotten what he had dreamed, but it did not matter. There was One above who knew it all.

[30]



THE UGLY DUCKLING

IT was so beautiful in the country. It was the summer time. The wheat fields were golden, the oats were green, and the hay stood in great stacks in the green meadows. The stork paraded about among them on his long red legs, chattering away in Egyptian, the language he had learned from his lady mother.

All around the meadows and cornfields grew thick woods, and in the midst of the forest was a deep lake. Yes, it was beautiful, it was delightful in the country.

In a sunny spot stood a pleasant old farmhouse circled all about with deep canals; and from the walls down to the water's edge grew great burdocks, so high that under the tallest of them a little child might stand upright. The spot was as wild as if it had been in the very center of the thick wood. [31]

In this snug retreat sat a duck upon her nest, watching for her young brood to hatch; but the pleasure she had felt at first was almost gone; she had begun to think it a wearisome task, for the little ones were so long coming out of their shells, and she seldom had visitors. The other ducks liked much better to swim about in the canals than to climb the slippery banks and sit under the burdock leaves to have a gossip with her. It was a long time to stay so much by herself.

At length, however, one shell cracked, and soon another, and from each came a living creature that lifted its head and cried "Peep, peep."

"Quack, quack!" said the mother; and then they all tried to say it, too, as well as they could, while they looked all about them on every side at the tall green leaves. Their mother allowed them to look about as much as they liked, because green is good for the eyes.

"What a great world it is, to be sure," said the little ones, when they found how much more room they had than when they were in the eggshell. [32]

"Is this all the world, do you imagine?" said the mother. "Wait till you have seen the garden. Far beyond that it stretches down to the pastor's field, though I have never ventured to such a distance. Are you all out?" she continued, rising to look. "No, not all; the largest egg lies there yet, I declare. I wonder how long this business is to last. I'm really beginning to be tired of it;" but for all that she sat down again.

"Well, and how are you to-day?" quacked an old duck who came to pay her a visit.

"There's one egg that takes a deal of hatching. The shell is hard and will not break," said the fond mother, who sat still upon her nest. "But just look at the others. Have I not a pretty family? Are they not the prettiest little ducklings you ever saw? They are the image of their father—the good for naught! He never comes to see me."

"Let me see the egg that will not break," said the old duck. "I've no doubt it's a Guinea fowl's egg. The same thing happened to me once, and a deal of trouble it gave me, for the young ones are afraid of the water. I quacked and clucked, but all to no purpose. Let me take a look at it. Yes, [33] I am right; it's a Guinea fowl, upon my word; so take my advice and leave it where it is. Come to the water and teach the other children to swim."

"I think I will sit a little while longer," said the mother. "I have sat so long, a day or two more won't matter."

"Very well, please yourself," said the old duck, rising; and she went away.

At last the great egg broke, and the latest bird cried "Peep, peep," as he crept forth from the shell. How big and ugly he was! The mother duck stared at him and did not know what to think. "Really," she said, "this is an enormous duckling, and it is not at all like any of the others. I wonder if he will turn out to be a Guinea fowl. Well, we shall see when we get to the water—for into the water he must go, even if I have to push him in myself."

On the next day the weather was delightful. The sun shone brightly on the green burdock leaves, and the mother duck took her whole family down to the water and jumped in with a [34] splash. "Quack, quack!" cried she, and one after another the little ducklings jumped in. The water closed over their heads, but they came up again in an instant and swam about quite prettily, with their legs paddling under them as easily as possible; their legs went of their own accord; and the

ugly gray-coat was also in the water, swimming with them.

"Oh," said the mother, "that is not a Guinea fowl. See how well he uses his legs, and how erect he holds himself! He is my own child, and he is not so very ugly after all, if you look at him properly. Quack, quack! come with me now. I will take you into grand society and introduce you to the farmyard, but you must keep close to me or you may be trodden upon; and, above all, beware of the cat."

When they reached the farmyard, there was a wretched riot going on; two families were fighting for an eel's head, which, after all, was carried off by the cat. "See, children, that is the way of the world," said the mother duck, whetting her beak, for she would have liked the eel's head herself. "Come, now, use your legs, and let me see how well you can behave. You must bow [35] your heads prettily to that old duck yonder; she is the highest born of them all and has Spanish blood; therefore she is well off. Don't you see she has a red rag tied to her leg, which is something very grand and a great honor for a duck; it shows that every one is anxious not to lose her, and that she is to be noticed by both man and beast. Come, now, don't turn in your toes; a well-bred duckling spreads his feet wide apart, just like his father and mother, in this way; now bend your necks and say 'Quack!'"

The ducklings did as they were bade, but the other ducks stared, and said, "Look, here comes another brood—as if there were not enough of us already! And bless me, what a queer-looking object one of them is; we don't want him here"; and then one flew out and bit him in the neck.

"Let him alone," said the mother; "he is not doing any harm."

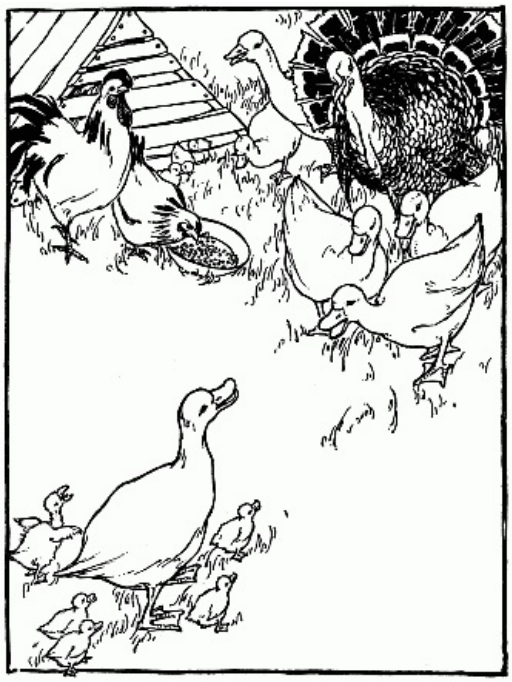
"Yes, but he is so big and ugly. He's a perfect fright," said the spiteful duck, "and therefore he must be turned out. A little biting will do him good." [36]

"The others are very pretty children," said the old duck with the rag on her leg, "all but that one. I wish his mother could smooth him up a bit; he is really ill-favored."

"That is impossible, your grace," replied the mother. "He is not pretty, but he has a very good disposition and swims as well as the others or even better. I think he will grow up pretty, and perhaps be smaller. He has remained too long in the egg, and therefore his figure is not properly formed;" and then she stroked his neck and smoothed the feathers, saying: "It is a drake, and therefore not of so much consequence. I think he will grow up strong and able to take care of himself."

"The other ducklings are graceful enough," said the old duck. "Now make yourself at home, and if you find an eel's head you can bring it to me."

And so they made themselves comfortable; but the poor duckling who had crept out of his shell last of all and looked so ugly was bitten and pushed and made fun of, not only by the ducks but by all the poultry. [37]



Bless me, what a queer-looking object one of them is..

"He is too big," they all said; and the turkey cock, who had been born into the world with spurs [38] and fancied himself really an emperor, puffed himself out like a vessel in full sail and flew at the duckling. He became quite red in the head with passion, so that the poor little thing did not know where to go, and was quite miserable because he was so ugly as to be laughed at by the whole farmyard.

So it went on from day to day; it got worse and worse. The poor duckling was driven about by every one; even his brothers and sisters were unkind to him and would say, "Ah, you ugly creature, I wish the cat would get you" and his mother had been heard to say she wished he had never been born. The ducks pecked him, the chickens beat him, and the girl who fed the poultry pushed him with her feet. So at last he ran away, frightening the little birds in the hedge as he flew over the palings. "They are afraid because I am so ugly," he said. So he flew still farther, until he came out on a large moor inhabited by wild ducks. Here he remained the whole night, feeling very sorrowful. [39]

In the morning, when the wild ducks rose in the air, they stared at their new comrade. "What sort of a duck are you?" they all said, coming round him.

He bowed to them and was as polite as he could be, but he did not reply to their question. "You are exceedingly ugly," said the wild ducks; "but that will not matter if you do not want to marry one of our family."

Poor thing! he had no thoughts of marriage; all he wanted was permission to lie among the rushes and drink some of the water on the moor. After he had been on the moor two days, there came two wild geese, or rather goslings, for they had not been out of the egg long, which accounts for their impertinence. "Listen, friend," said one of them to the duckling; "you are so ugly that we like you very well. Will you go with us and become a bird of passage? Not far from here is another moor, in which there are some wild geese, all of them unmarried. It is a chance for you to get a wife. You may make your fortune, ugly as you are."

"Bang, bang," sounded in the air, and the two wild geese fell dead among the rushes, and the [40] water was tinged with blood. "Bang, bang," echoed far and wide in the distance, and whole flocks of wild geese rose up from the rushes.

The sound continued from every direction, for the sportsmen surrounded the moor, and some were even seated on branches of trees, overlooking the rushes. The blue smoke from the guns rose like clouds over the dark trees, and as it floated away across the water, a number of sporting dogs bounded in among the rushes, which bent beneath them wherever they went. How they terrified the poor duckling! He turned away his head to hide it under his wing, and at the same moment a large, terrible dog passed quite near him. His jaws were open, his tongue hung from his mouth, and his eyes glared fearfully. He thrust his nose close to the duckling, showing his sharp teeth, and then "splash, splash," he went into the water, without touching him.

"Oh," sighed the duckling, "how thankful I am for being so ugly; even a dog will not bite me."

And so he lay quite still, while the shot rattled through the rushes, and gun after gun was fired [41] over him. It was late in the day before all became quiet, but even then the poor young thing did not dare to move. He waited quietly for several hours and then, after looking carefully around him, hastened away from the moor as fast as he could. He ran over field and meadow till a storm arose, and he could hardly struggle against it.

Towards evening he reached a poor little cottage that seemed ready to fall, and only seemed to remain standing because it could not decide on which side to fall first. The storm continued so violent that the duckling could go no farther. He sat down by the cottage, and then he noticed that the door was not quite closed, in consequence of one of the hinges having given way. There was, therefore, a narrow opening near the bottom large enough for him to slip through, which he did very quietly, and got a shelter for the night. Here, in this cottage, lived a woman, a cat, and a hen. The cat, whom his mistress called "My little son," was a great favorite; he could raise his back, and purr, and could even throw out sparks from his fur if it were stroked the wrong way. [42] The hen had very short legs, so she was called "Chickie Short-legs." She laid good eggs, and her mistress loved her as if she had been her own child. In the morning the strange visitor was discovered; the cat began to purr and the hen to cluck.

"What is that noise about?" said the old woman, looking around the room. But her sight was not very good; therefore when she saw the duckling she thought it must be a fat duck that had strayed from home. "Oh, what a prize!" she exclaimed. "I hope it is not a drake, for then I shall have some ducks' eggs. I must wait and see."

So the duckling was allowed to remain on trial for three weeks; but there were no eggs.

Now the cat was the master of the house, and the hen was the mistress; and they always said, "We and the world," for they believed themselves to be half the world, and by far the better half, too. The duckling thought that others might hold a different opinion on the subject, but the hen would not listen to such doubts. [43]

"Can you lay eggs?" she asked. "No." "Then have the goodness to cease talking." "Can you raise your back, or purr, or throw out sparks?" said the cat. "No." "Then you have no right to express an opinion when sensible people are speaking." So the duckling sat in a corner, feeling very low-spirited; but when the sunshine and the fresh air came into the room through the open door, he began to feel such a great longing for a swim that he could not help speaking of it.

"What an absurd idea!" said the hen. "You have nothing else to do; therefore you have foolish fancies. If you could purr or lay eggs, they would pass away."

"But it is so delightful to swim about on the water," said the duckling, "and so refreshing to feel it close over your head while you dive down to the bottom."

"Delightful, indeed! it must be a queer sort of pleasure," said the hen. "Why, you must be crazy! Ask the cat—he is the cleverest animal I know; ask him how he would like to swim about on the water, or to dive under it, for I will not speak of my own opinion. Ask our mistress, the old [44] woman; there is no one in the world more clever than she is. Do you think she would relish swimming and letting the water close over her head?"

"I see you don't understand me," said the duckling.

"We don't understand you? Who can understand you, I wonder? Do you consider yourself more clever than the cat or the old woman?—I will say nothing of myself. Don't imagine such nonsense, child, and thank your good fortune that you have been so well received here. Are you not in a warm room and in society from which you may learn something? But you are a chatterer, and your company is not very agreeable. Believe me, I speak only for your good. I may tell you unpleasant truths, but that is a proof of my friendship. I advise you, therefore, to lay eggs and learn to purr as quickly as possible."

"I believe I must go out into the world again," said the duckling.

"Yes, do," said the hen. So the duckling left the cottage and soon found water on which it could [45] swim and dive, but he was avoided by all other animals because of his ugly appearance.

Autumn came, and the leaves in the forest turned to orange and gold; then, as winter approached, the wind caught them as they fell and whirled them into the cold air. The clouds, heavy with hail and snowflakes, hung low in the sky, and the raven stood among the reeds, crying, "Croak, croak." It made one shiver with cold to look at him. All this was very sad for the poor little duckling.

One evening, just as the sun was setting amid radiant clouds, there came a large flock of beautiful birds out of the bushes. The duckling had never seen any like them before. They were swans; and they curved their graceful necks, while their soft plumage shone with dazzling whiteness. They uttered a singular cry as they spread their glorious wings and flew away from those cold regions to warmer countries across the sea. They mounted higher and higher in the air, and the ugly little duckling had a strange sensation as he watched them. He whirled himself in the water like a wheel, stretched out his neck towards them, and uttered a cry so strange that [46] it frightened even himself. Could he ever forget those beautiful, happy birds! And when at last they were out of his sight, he dived under the water and rose again almost beside himself with excitement. He knew not the names of these birds nor where they had flown, but he felt towards them as he had never felt towards any other bird in the world.

He was not envious of these beautiful creatures; it never occurred to him to wish to be as lovely as they. Poor ugly creature, how gladly he would have lived even with the ducks, had they only treated him kindly and given him encouragement.

The winter grew colder and colder; he was obliged to swim about on the water to keep it from freezing, but every night the space on which he swam became smaller and smaller. At length it froze so hard that the ice in the water crackled as he moved, and the duckling had to paddle with his legs as well as he could, to keep the space from closing up. He became exhausted at last and lay still and helpless, frozen fast in the ice. [47]

Early in the morning a peasant who was passing by saw what had happened. He broke the ice in pieces with his wooden shoe and carried the duckling home to his wife. The warmth revived the poor little creature; but when the children wanted to play with him, the duckling thought they would do him some harm, so he started up in terror, fluttered into the milk pan, and splashed the milk about the room. Then the woman clapped her hands, which frightened him still more. He flew first into the butter cask, then into the meal tub and out again. What a condition he was in! The woman screamed and struck at him with the tongs; the children laughed and screamed and tumbled over each other in their efforts to catch him, but luckily he escaped. The door stood open; the poor creature could just manage to slip out among the bushes and lie down quite exhausted in the newly fallen snow.

It would be very sad were I to relate all the misery and privations which the poor little duckling endured during the hard winter; but when it had passed he found himself lying one morning in a [48] moor, amongst the rushes. He felt the warm sun shining and heard the lark singing and saw that all around was beautiful spring.

Then the young bird felt that his wings were strong, as he flapped them against his sides and rose high into the air. They bore him onwards until, before he well knew how it had happened, he found himself in a large garden. The apple trees were in full blossom, and the fragrant elders bent their long green branches down to the stream, which wound round a smooth lawn. Everything looked beautiful in the freshness of early spring. From a thicket close by came three beautiful white swans, rustling their feathers and swimming lightly over the smooth water. The duckling saw these lovely birds and felt more strangely unhappy than ever.

"I will fly to these royal birds," he exclaimed, "and they will kill me because, ugly as I am, I dare to approach them. But it does not matter; better be killed by them than pecked by the ducks, beaten by the hens, pushed about by the maiden who feeds the poultry, or starved with hunger in the winter." [49]

Then he flew to the water and swam towards the beautiful swans. The moment they espied the

stranger they rushed to meet him with outstretched wings.

"Kill me," said the poor bird and he bent his head down to the surface of the water and awaited death.

But what did he see in the clear stream below? His own image—no longer a dark-gray bird, ugly and disagreeable to look at, but a graceful and beautiful swan.

To be born in a duck's nest in a farmyard is of no consequence to a bird if it is hatched from a swan's egg. He now felt glad at having suffered sorrow and trouble, because it enabled him to enjoy so much better all the pleasure and happiness around him; for the great swans swam round the newcomer and stroked his neck with their beaks, as a welcome.

Into the garden presently came some little children and threw bread and cake into the water.

The new one is the most beautiful of all . . .

"See," cried the youngest, "there is a new one;" and the rest were delighted, and ran to their father and mother, dancing and clapping their hands and shouting joyously, "There is another swan come; a new one has arrived." [51]

Then they threw more bread and cake into the water and said, "The new one is the most beautiful of all, he is so young and pretty." And the old swans bowed their heads before him.

Then he felt quite ashamed and hid his head under his wing, for he did not know what to do, he was so happy—yet he was not at all proud. He had been persecuted and despised for his ugliness, and now he heard them say he was the most beautiful of all the birds. Even the elder tree bent down its boughs into the water before him, and the sun shone warm and bright. Then he rustled his feathers, curved his slender neck, and cried joyfully, from the depths of his heart, "I never dreamed of such happiness as this while I was the despised ugly duckling."

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[52]

LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS

"MY POOR flowers are quite faded!" said little Ida. "Only yesterday evening they were so pretty, and now all the leaves are drooping. Why do they do that?" she asked of the student, who sat on the sofa. He was a great favorite with her, because he used to tell her the prettiest of stories and cut out the most amusing things in paper—hearts with little ladies dancing in them, and high castles with doors which one could open and shut. He was a merry student. "Why do the

flowers look so wretched to-day?" asked she again, showing him a bouquet of faded flowers.

"Do you not know?" replied the student. "The flowers went to a ball last night, and are tired. That's why they hang their heads." [53]

"What an idea," exclaimed little Ida. "Flowers cannot dance!"

"Of course they can dance! When it is dark, and we are all gone to bed, they jump about as merrily as possible. They have a ball almost every night."

"And can their children go to the ball?" asked Ida.

"Oh, yes," said the student; "daisies and lilies of the valley, that are quite little."

"And when is it that the prettiest flowers dance?"

"Have you not been to the large garden outside the town gate, in front of the castle where the king lives in summer—the garden that is so full of lovely flowers? You surely remember the swans which come swimming up when you give them crumbs of bread? Believe me, they have capital balls there."

"I was out there only yesterday with my mother," said Ida, "but there were no leaves on the trees, and I did not see a single flower. What has become of them? There were so many in the summer." [54]

"They are inside the palace now," replied the student. "As soon as the king and all his court go back to the town, the flowers hasten out of the garden and into the palace, where they have famous times. Oh, if you could but see them! The two most beautiful roses seat themselves on the throne and act king and queen. All the tall red cockscombs stand before them on either side and bow; they are the chamberlains. Then all the pretty flowers come, and there is a great ball. The blue violets represent the naval cadets; they dance with hyacinths and crocuses, who take the part of young ladies. The tulips and the tall tiger lilies are old ladies,—dowagers,—who see to it that the dancing is well done and that all things go on properly."

"But," asked little Ida, "is there no one there to harm the flowers for daring to dance in the king's castle?"

"No one knows anything about it," replied the student. "Once during the night, perhaps, the old steward of the castle does, to be sure, come in with his great bunch of keys to see that all is right; but the moment the flowers hear the clanking of the keys they stand stock-still or hide [55] themselves behind the long silk window curtains. Then the old steward will say, 'Do I not smell flowers here?' but he can't see them."

"That is very funny," exclaimed little Ida, clapping her hands with glee; "but should not I be able to see the flowers?"

"To be sure you can see them," replied the student. "You have only to remember to peep in at the windows the next time you go to the palace. I did so this very day, and saw a long yellow lily lying on the sofa. She was a court lady."

"Do the flowers in the Botanical Garden go to the ball? Can they go all that long distance?"

"Certainly," said the student; "for the flowers can fly if they please. Have you not seen the beautiful red and yellow butterflies that look so much like flowers? They are in fact nothing else. They have flown off their stalks high into the air and flapped their little petals just as if they were wings, and thus they came to fly about. As a reward for always behaving well they have leave to fly about in the daytime, too, instead of sitting quietly on their stalks at home, till at last the [56] flower petals have become real wings. That you have seen yourself.

"It may be, though, that the flowers in the Botanical Garden have never been in the king's castle. They may not have heard what frolics take place there every night. But I'll tell you; if, the next time you go to the garden, you whisper to one of the flowers that a great ball is to be given yonder in the castle, the news will spread from flower to flower and they will all fly away. Then should the professor come to his garden there won't be a flower there, and he will not be able to imagine what has become of them."

"But how can one flower tell it to another? for I am sure the flowers cannot speak."

"No; you are right there," returned the student. "They cannot speak, but they can make signs. Have you ever noticed that when the wind blows a little the flowers nod to each other and move all their green leaves? They can make each other understand in this way just as well as we do by talking."

"And does the professor understand their pantomime?" asked Ida. [57]

"Oh, certainly; at least part of it. He came into his garden one morning and saw that a great stinging nettle was making signs with its leaves to a beautiful red carnation. It was saying, 'You are so beautiful, and I love you with all my heart!' But the professor doesn't like that sort of thing, and he rapped the nettle on her leaves, which are her fingers; but she stung him, and since then he has never dared to touch a nettle."

"Ha! ha!" laughed little Ida, "that is very funny."

"How can one put such stuff into a child's head?" said a tiresome councilor, who had come to pay a visit. He did not like the student and always used to scold when he saw him cutting out the droll pasteboard figures, such as a man hanging on a gibbet and holding a heart in his hand to show that he was a stealer of hearts, or an old witch riding on a broomstick and carrying her husband on the end of her nose. The councilor could not bear such jokes, and he would always say, as now: "How can any one put such notions into a child's head? They are only foolish fancies." [58]

But to little Ida all that the student had told her was very entertaining, and she kept thinking it over. She was sure now that her pretty yesterday's flowers hung their heads because they were tired, and that they were tired because they had been to the ball. So she took them to the table where stood her toys. Her doll lay sleeping, but Ida said to her, "You must get up, and be content to sleep to-night in the table drawer, for the poor flowers are ill and must have your bed to sleep in; then perhaps they will be well again by to-morrow."

And she at once took the doll out, though the doll looked vexed at giving up her cradle to the flowers.

Ida laid the flowers in the doll's bed and drew the coverlet quite over them, telling them to lie still while she made some tea for them to drink, in order that they might be well next day. And she drew the curtains about the bed, that the sun might not shine into their eyes.

All the evening she thought of nothing but what the student had told her; and when she went to bed herself, she ran to the window where her mother's tulips and hyacinths stood. She [59] whispered to them, "I know very well that you are going to a ball to-night." The flowers pretended not to understand and did not stir so much as a leaf, but that did not prevent Ida from knowing what she knew.

When she was in bed she lay for a long time thinking how delightful it must be to see the flower dance in the king's castle, and said to herself, "I wonder if my flowers have really been there." Then she fell asleep.

In the night she woke. She had been dreaming of the student and the flowers and the councilor, who told her they were making game of her. All was still in the room, the night lamp was burning on the table, and her father and mother were both asleep.

"I wonder if my flowers are still lying in Sophie's bed," she thought to herself. "How I should like to know!" She raised herself a little and looked towards the door, which stood half open; within lay the flowers and all her playthings. She listened, and it seemed to her that she heard [60] some one playing upon the piano, but quite softly, and more sweetly than she had ever heard before.

"Now all the flowers are certainly dancing," thought she. "Oh, how I should like to see them!" but she dared not get up for fear of waking her father and mother. "If they would only come in here!" But the flowers did not come, and the music went on so prettily that she could restrain herself no longer, and she crept out of her little bed, stole softly to the door, and peeped into the room. Oh, what a pretty sight it was!

There was no night lamp in the room, still it was quite bright; the moon shone through the window down upon the floor, and it was almost like daylight. The hyacinths and tulips stood there in two rows. Not one was left on the window, where stood the empty flower pots. On the floor all the flowers danced gracefully, making all the turns, and holding each other by their long green leaves as they twirled around. At the piano sat a large yellow lily, which little Ida remembered to have seen in the summer, for she recollected that the student had said, "How like she is to Miss Laura," and how every one had laughed at the remark. But now she really thought that the lily was very like the young lady. It had exactly her manner of playing—bending its long yellow face, now to one side and now to the other, and nodding its head to mark the time of the beautiful music. [62]

A tall blue crocus now stepped forward, sprang upon the table on which lay Ida's playthings, went straight to the doll's cradle, and drew back the curtains. There lay the sick flowers; but they rose at once, greeted the other flowers, and made a sign that they would like to join in the dance. They did not look at all ill now.

Suddenly a heavy noise was heard, as of something falling from the table. Ida glanced that way and saw that it was the rod she had found on her bed on Shrove Tuesday, and that it seemed to wish to belong to the flowers. It was a pretty rod, for a wax figure that looked exactly like the councilor sat upon the head of it.

The rod began to dance, and the wax figure that was riding on it became long and great, like the councilor himself, and began to exclaim, "How can one put such stuff into a child's head?" It was very funny to see, and little Ida could not help laughing, for the rod kept on dancing, and the councilor had to dance too,—there was no help for it,—whether he remained tall and big or became a little wax figure again. But the other flowers said a good word for him, especially those that had lain in the doll's bed, so that at last the rod left it in peace. [63]

At the same time there was a loud knocking inside the drawer where Sophie, Ida's doll, lay with many other toys. She put out her head and asked in great astonishment: "Is there a ball here? Why has no one told me of it?" She sat down upon the table, expecting some of the flowers to ask her to dance with them; but as they did not, she let herself fall upon the floor so as to make a great noise; and then the flowers all came crowding about to ask if she were hurt, and they were very polite—especially those that had lain in her bed.

She was not at all hurt, and the flowers thanked her for the use of her pretty bed and took her into the middle of the room, where the moon shone, and danced with her, while the other flowers formed a circle around them. So now Sophie was pleased and said they might keep her bed, for she did not mind sleeping in the drawer the least in the world. [64]

But the flowers replied: "We thank you most heartily for your kindness, but we shall not live long enough to need it; we shall be quite dead by to-morrow. But tell little Ida she is to bury us out in the garden near the canary bird's grave; and then we shall wake again next summer and be even more beautiful than we have been this year."

"Oh, no, you must not die," said Sophie, kissing them as she spoke; and then a great company of flowers came dancing in. Ida could not imagine where they could have come from, unless from the king's garden. Two beautiful roses led the way, wearing golden crowns; then followed wallflowers and pinks, who bowed to all present. They brought a band of music with them. Wild hyacinths and little white snowdrops jingled merry bells. It was a most remarkable orchestra. Following these were an immense number of flowers, all dancing—violets, daisies, lilies of the valley, and others which it was a delight to see. [65]

At last all the happy flowers wished one another good night. Little Ida, too, crept back to bed, to dream of all that she had seen.

When she rose next morning she went at once to her little table to see if her flowers were there. She drew aside the curtains of her little bed; yes, there lay the flowers, but they were much more faded to-day than yesterday. Sophie too was in the drawer, but she looked very sleepy.

"Do you remember what you were to say to me?" asked Ida of her.

But Sophie looked quite stupid and had not a word to say.

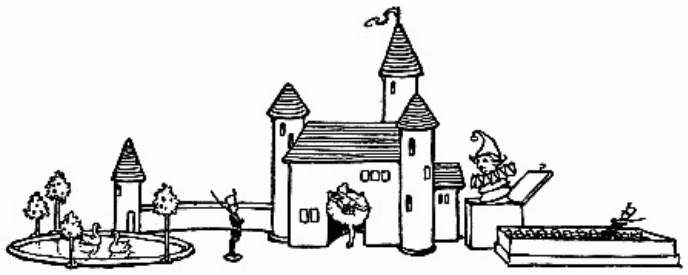
"You are not kind at all," said Ida; "and yet all the flowers let you dance with them."

Then she chose from her playthings a little pasteboard box with birds painted on it, and in it she laid the dead flowers.

"That shall be your pretty casket," said she; "and when my cousins come to visit me, by and by, they shall help me to bury you in the garden, in order that next summer you may grow again and be still more beautiful." [66]

The two cousins were two merry boys, Gustave and Adolphe. Their father had given them each a new crossbow, which they brought with them to show to Ida. She told them of the poor flowers that were dead and were to be buried in the garden. So the two boys walked in front, with their bows slung across their shoulders, and little Ida followed, carrying the dead flowers in their pretty coffin. A little grave was dug for them in the garden. Ida first kissed the flowers and then laid them in the earth, and Adolphe and Gustave shot with their crossbows over the grave, for

they had neither guns nor cannons.



[67]

THE STEADFAST TIN SOLDIER

THERE were once five and twenty tin soldiers. They were brothers, for they had all been made out of the same old tin spoon. They all shouldered their bayonets, held themselves upright, and looked straight before them. Their uniforms were very smart-looking—red and blue—and very splendid. The first thing they heard in the world, when the lid was taken off the box in which they lay, was the words "Tin soldiers!" These words were spoken by a little boy, who clapped his hands for joy. The soldiers had been given him because it was his birthday, and now he was putting them out upon the table.

Each was exactly like the rest to a hair, except one who had but one leg. He had been cast last of all, and there had not been quite enough tin to finish him; but he stood as firmly upon his one [68] leg as the others upon their two, and it was he whose fortunes became so remarkable.

On the table where the tin soldiers had been set up were several other toys, but the one that attracted most attention was a pretty little paper castle. Through its tiny windows one could see straight into the hall. In front of the castle stood little trees, clustering round a small mirror which was meant to represent a transparent lake. Swans of wax swam upon its surface, and it reflected back their images.

All this was very pretty, but prettiest of all was a little lady who stood at the castle's open door. She too was cut out of paper, but she wore a frock of the clearest gauze and a narrow blue ribbon over her shoulders, like a scarf, and in the middle of the ribbon was placed a shining tinsel rose. The little lady stretched out both her arms, for she was a dancer, and then she lifted one leg so high that the Soldier quite lost sight of it. He thought that, like himself, she had but one leg.

"That would be just the wife for me," thought he, "if she were not too grand. But she lives in a [69] castle, while I have only a box, and there are five and twenty of us in that. It would be no place for a lady. Still, I must try to make her acquaintance." A snuffbox happened to be upon the table and he lay down at full length behind it, and here he could easily watch the dainty little lady, who still remained standing on one leg without losing her balance.

When the evening came all the other tin soldiers were put away in their box, and the people in the house went to bed. Now the playthings began to play in their turn. They visited, fought battles, and gave balls. The tin soldiers rattled in the box, for they wished to join the rest, but they could not lift the lid. The nutcrackers turned somersaults, and the pencil jumped about in a most amusing way. There was such a din that the canary woke and began to speak—and in verse, too. The only ones who did not move from their places were the Tin Soldier and the Lady Dancer. She stood on tiptoe with outstretched arms, and he was just as persevering on his one leg; he never once turned away his eyes from her. [70]

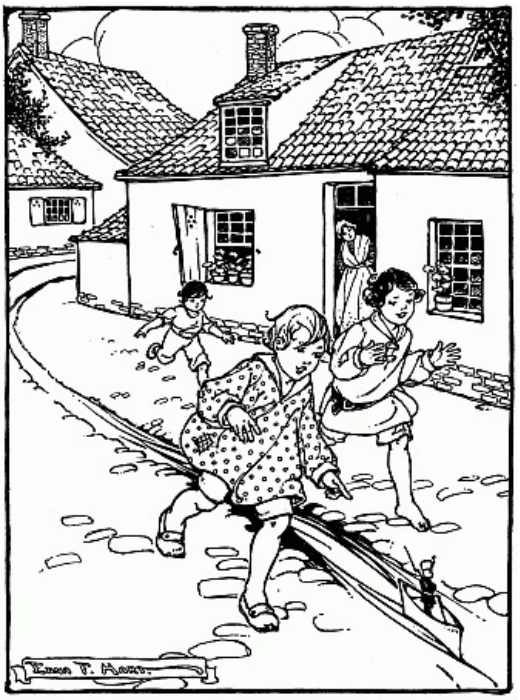
Twelve o'clock struck—crash! up sprang the lid of the snuffbox. There was no snuff in it, but a little black goblin. You see it was not a real snuffbox, but a jack-in-the-box.

"Tin Soldier," said the Goblin, "keep thine eyes to thyself. Gaze not at what does not concern thee!"

But the Tin Soldier pretended not to hear.

"Only wait, then, till to-morrow," remarked the Goblin.

Next morning, when the children got up, the Tin Soldier was placed on the window sill, and, whether it was the Goblin or the wind that did it, all at once the window flew open and the Tin Soldier fell head foremost from the third story to the street below. It was a tremendous fall! Over and over he turned in the air, till at last he rested, his cap and bayonet sticking fast between the paving stones, while his one leg stood upright in the air.



Away he sailed .. down the gutter ..

The maidservant and the little boy came down at once to look for him, but, though they nearly trod upon him, they could not manage to find him. If the Soldier had but once called "Here am I!" [72] they might easily enough have heard him, but he did not think it becoming to cry out for help, being in uniform.

It now began to rain; faster and faster fell the drops, until there was a heavy shower; and when it was over, two street boys came by.

"Look you," said one, "there lies a tin soldier. He must come out and sail in a boat."

So they made a boat out of an old newspaper and put the Tin Soldier in the middle of it, and away he sailed down the gutter, while the boys ran along by his side, clapping their hands.

Goodness! how the waves rocked that paper boat, and how fast the stream ran! The Tin Soldier became quite giddy, the boat veered round so quickly; still he moved not a muscle, but looked straight before him and held his bayonet tightly.

All at once the boat passed into a drain, and it became as dark as his own old home in the box. "Where am I going now?" thought he. "Yes, to be sure, it is all that Goblin's doing. Ah! if the little lady were but sailing with me in the boat, I would not care if it were twice as dark." [73]

Just then a great water rat, that lived under the drain, darted suddenly out.

"Have you a passport?" asked the rat. "Where is your passport?"

But the Tin Soldier kept silence and only held his bayonet with a firmer grasp.

The boat sailed on, but the rat followed. Whew! how he gnashed his teeth and cried to the sticks and straws: "Stop him! stop him! He hasn't paid toll! He hasn't shown his passport!"

But the stream grew stronger and stronger. Already the Tin Soldier could see daylight at the point where the tunnel ended; but at the same time he heard a rushing, roaring noise, at which a bolder man might have trembled. Think! just where the tunnel ended, the drain widened into a great sheet that fell into the mouth of a sewer. It was as perilous a situation for the Soldier as sailing down a mighty waterfall would be for us.

He was now so near it that he could not stop. The boat dashed on, and the Tin Soldier held himself so well that no one might say of him that he so much as winked an eye. Three or four [74] times the boat whirled round and round; it was full of water to the brim and must certainly sink.

The Tin Soldier stood up to his neck in water; deeper and deeper sank the boat, softer and softer grew the paper; and now the water closed over the Soldier's head. He thought of the pretty little dancer whom he should never see again, and in his ears rang the words of the song:

Wild adventure, mortal danger,
Be thy portion, valiant stranger.

The paper boat parted in the middle, and the Soldier was about to sink, when he was swallowed by a great fish.

Oh, how dark it was! darker even than in the drain, and so narrow; but the Tin Soldier retained his courage; there he lay at full length, shouldering his bayonet as before.

To and fro swam the fish, turning and twisting and making the strangest movements, till at last he became perfectly still.

Something like a flash of daylight passed through him, and a voice said, "Tin Soldier!" The fish had been caught, taken to market, sold and bought, and taken to the kitchen, where the cook had cut him with a large knife. She seized the Tin Soldier between her finger and thumb and took him to the room where the family sat, and where all were eager to see the celebrated man who had traveled in the maw of a fish; but the Tin Soldier remained unmoved. He was not at all proud. [75]

They set him upon the table there. But how could so curious a thing happen? The Soldier was in the very same room in which he had been before. He saw the same children, the same toys stood upon the table, and among them the pretty dancing maiden, who still stood upon one leg. She too was steadfast. That touched the Tin Soldier's heart. He could have wept tin tears, but that would not have been proper. He looked at her and she looked at him, but neither spoke a word.

And now one of the little boys took the Tin Soldier and threw him into the stove. He gave no reason for doing so, but no doubt the Goblin in the snuffbox had something to do with it. [76]

The Tin Soldier stood now in a blaze of red light. The heat he felt was terrible, but whether it proceeded from the fire or from the love in his heart, he did not know. He saw that the colors were quite gone from his uniform, but whether that had happened on the journey or had been caused by grief, no one could say. He looked at the little lady, she looked at him, and he felt himself melting; still he stood firm as ever, with his bayonet on his shoulder. Then suddenly the door flew open; the wind caught the Dancer, and she flew straight into the stove to the Tin Soldier, flashed up in a flame, and was gone! The Tin Soldier melted into a lump; and in the ashes the maid found him next day, in the shape of a little tin heart, while of the Dancer nothing remained save the tinsel rose, and that was burned as black as a coal.

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[77]

LITTLE THUMBELINA

THERE was once a woman who wished very much to have a little child. She went to a fairy and said: "I should so very much like to have a little child. Can you tell me where I can find one?"

"Oh, that can be easily managed," said the fairy. "Here is a barleycorn; it is not exactly of the same sort as those which grow in the farmers' fields, and which the chickens eat. Put it into a flowerpot and see what will happen."

"Thank you," said the woman; and she gave the fairy twelve shillings, which was the price of the barleycorn. Then she went home and planted it, and there grew up a large, handsome flower, somewhat like a tulip in appearance, but with its leaves tightly closed, as if it were still a bud. [78]

"It is a beautiful flower," said the woman, and she kissed the red and golden-colored petals; and as she did so the flower opened, and she could see that it was a real tulip. But within the flower, upon the green velvet stamens, sat a very delicate and graceful little maiden. She was scarcely half as long as a thumb, and they gave her the name of Little Thumb, or Thumbelina, because she was so small.

A walnut shell, elegantly polished, served her for a cradle; her bed was formed of blue violet leaves, with a rose leaf for a counterpane. Here she slept at night, but during the day she amused herself on a table, where the peasant wife had placed a plate full of water.

Round this plate were wreaths of flowers with their stems in the water, and upon it floated a large tulip leaf, which served the little one for a boat. Here she sat and rowed herself from side to side, with two oars made of white horsehair. It was a very pretty sight. Thumbelina could also sing so softly and sweetly that nothing like her singing had ever before been heard. [79]

One night, while she lay in her pretty bed, a large, ugly, wet toad crept through a broken pane of glass in the window and leaped right upon the table where she lay sleeping under her rose-leaf quilt.

"What a pretty little wife this would make for my son," said the toad, and she took up the walnut shell in which Thumbelina lay asleep, and jumped through the window with it, into the garden.

In the swampy margin of a broad stream in the garden lived the toad with her son. He was uglier even than his mother; and when he saw the pretty little maiden in her elegant bed, he could only cry "Croak, croak, croak."

"Don't speak so loud, or she will wake," said the toad, "and then she might run away, for she is as light as swan's-down. We will place her on one of the water-lily leaves out in the stream; it will be like an island to her, she is so light and small, and then she cannot escape; and while she is there we will make haste and prepare the stateroom under the marsh, in which you are to live when you are married." [80]

Far out in the stream grew a number of water lilies with broad green leaves which seemed to float on the top of the water. The largest of these leaves appeared farther off than the rest, and the old toad swam out to it with the walnut shell, in which Thumbelina still lay asleep.

The tiny creature woke very early in the morning and began to cry bitterly when she found where she was, for she could see nothing but water on every side of the large green leaf, and no way of reaching the land.

Meanwhile the old toad was very busy under the marsh, decking her room with rushes and yellow wildflowers, to make it look pretty for her new daughter-in-law. Then she swam out with her ugly son to the leaf on which she had placed poor Thumbelina. She wanted to bring the pretty bed, that she might put it in the bridal chamber to be ready for her. The old toad bowed low to her in the water and said, "Here is my son; he will be your husband, and you will live happily together in the marsh by the stream."

"Croak, croak, croak," was all her son could say for himself. So the toad took up the elegant [81]
little bed and swam away with it, leaving Thumbelina all alone on the green leaf, where she sat and wept. She could not bear to think of living with the old toad and having her ugly son for a husband. The little fishes who swam about in the water beneath had seen the toad and heard what she said, so now they lifted their heads above the water to look at the little maiden.

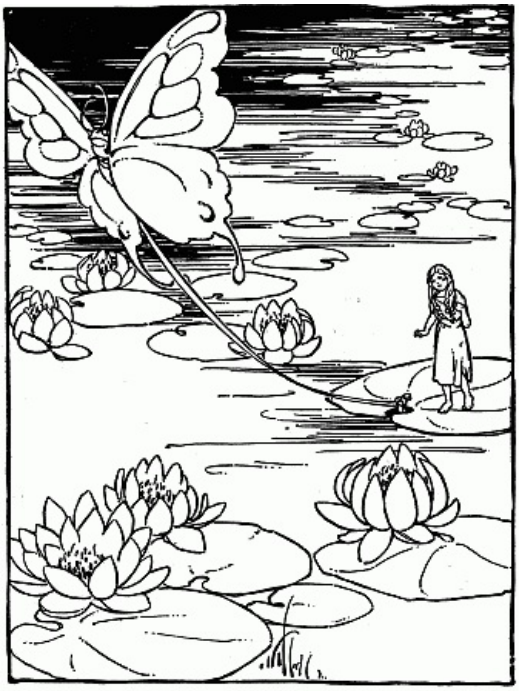
As soon as they caught sight of her they saw she was very pretty, and it vexed them to think that she must go and live with the ugly toads.

"No, it must never be!" So they gathered together in the water, round the green stalk which held the leaf on which the little maiden stood, and gnawed it away at the root with their teeth. Then the leaf floated down the stream, carrying Thumbelina far away out of reach of land.

Thumbelina sailed past many towns, and the little birds in the bushes saw her and sang, "What a lovely little creature." So the leaf swam away with her farther and farther, till it brought her to other lands. A graceful little white butterfly constantly fluttered round her and at last alighted on the leaf. The little maiden pleased him, and she was glad of it, for now the toad could not possibly [82]
reach her, and the country through which she sailed was beautiful, and the sun shone upon the water till it glittered like liquid gold. She took off her girdle and tied one end of it round the butterfly, fastening the other end of the ribbon to the leaf, which now glided on much faster than before, taking Thumbelina with it as she stood.

Presently a large cockchafer flew by. The moment he caught sight of her he seized her round her delicate waist with his claws and flew with her into a tree. The green leaf floated away on the brook, and the butterfly flew with it, for he was fastened to it and could not get away.

Oh, how frightened Thumbelina felt when the cockchafer flew with her to the tree! But especially was she sorry for the beautiful white butterfly which she had fastened to the leaf, for if he could not free himself he would die of hunger. But the cockchafer did not trouble himself at all about the matter. He seated himself by her side, on a large green leaf, gave her some honey from the flowers to eat, and told her she was very pretty, though not in the least like a cockchafer. [83]



Glided on much faster than before . . . .

After a time all the cockchafers who lived in the tree came to pay Thumbelina a visit. They [84]
stared at her, and then the young lady cockchafers turned up their feelers and said, "She has only two legs! how ugly that looks." "She has no feelers," said another. "Her waist is quite slim. Pooh! she is like a human being."

"Oh, she is ugly," said all the lady cockchafers. The cockchafer who had run away with her believed all the others when they said she was ugly. He would have nothing more to say to her, and told her she might go where she liked. Then he flew down with her from the tree and placed her on a daisy, and she wept at the thought that she was so ugly that even the cockchafers would have nothing to say to her. And all the while she was really the loveliest creature that one could imagine, and as tender and delicate as a beautiful rose leaf.

During the whole summer poor little Thumbelina lived quite alone in the wide forest. She wove herself a bed with blades of grass and hung it up under a broad leaf, to protect herself from the rain. She sucked the honey from the flowers for food and drank the dew from their leaves every [85]
morning.

So passed away the summer and the autumn, and then came the winter—the long, cold winter. All the birds who had sung to her so sweetly had flown away, and the trees and the flowers had withered. The large shamrock under the shelter of which she had lived was now rolled together and shriveled up; nothing remained but a yellow, withered stalk. She felt dreadfully cold, for her clothes were torn, and she was herself so frail and delicate that she was nearly frozen to death. It began to snow, too; and the snowflakes, as they fell upon her, were like a whole shovelful falling upon one of us, for we are tall, but she was only an inch high. She wrapped herself in a dry leaf, but it cracked in the middle and could not keep her warm, and she shivered with cold.

Near the wood in which she had been living was a large cornfield, but the corn had been cut a long time; nothing remained but the bare, dry stubble, standing up out of the frozen ground. It was to her like struggling through a large wood. [86]

Oh! how she shivered with the cold. She came at last to the door of a field mouse, who had a little den under the corn stubble. There dwelt the field mouse in warmth and comfort, with a whole roomful of corn, a kitchen, and a beautiful dining room. Poor Thumbelina stood before the door, just like a little beggar girl, and asked for a small piece of barleycorn, for she had been without a morsel to eat for two days.

"You poor little creature," said the field mouse, for she was really a good old mouse, "come into my warm room and dine with me."

She was pleased with Thumbelina, so she said, "You are quite welcome to stay with me all the winter, if you like; but you must keep my rooms clean and neat, and tell me stories, for I shall like to hear them very much." And Thumbelina did all that the field mouse asked her, and found herself very comfortable.

"We shall have a visitor soon," said the field mouse one day; "my neighbor pays me a visit once a week. He is better off than I am; he has large rooms, and wears a beautiful black velvet coat. If you could only have him for a husband, you would be well provided for indeed. But he is blind, so [87]
you must tell him some of your prettiest stories."

Thumbelina did not feel at all interested about this neighbor, for he was a mole. However, he came and paid his visit, dressed in his black velvet coat.

"He is very rich and learned, and his house is twenty times larger than mine," said the field mouse.

He was rich and learned, no doubt, but he always spoke slightingly of the sun and the pretty flowers, because he had never seen them. Thumbelina was obliged to sing to him, "Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home," and many other pretty songs. And the mole fell in love with her because she had so sweet a voice; but he said nothing yet, for he was very prudent and cautious. A short time before, the mole had dug a long passage under the earth, which led from the dwelling of the field mouse to his own, and here she had permission to walk with Thumbelina whenever she liked. But he warned them not to be alarmed at the sight of a dead bird which lay in the passage. [88] It was a perfect bird, with a beak and feathers, and could not have been dead long. It was lying just where the mole had made his passage. The mole took in his mouth a piece of phosphorescent wood, which glittered like fire in the dark. Then he went before them to light them through the long, dark passage. When they came to the spot where the dead bird lay, the mole pushed his broad nose through the ceiling, so that the earth gave way and the daylight shone into the passage.

In the middle of the floor lay a swallow, his beautiful wings pulled close to his sides, his feet and head drawn up under his feathers—the poor bird had evidently died of the cold. It made little Thumbelina very sad to see it, she did so love the little birds; all the summer they had sung and twittered for her so beautifully. But the mole pushed it aside with his crooked legs and said: "He will sing no more now. How miserable it must be to be born a little bird! I am thankful that none of my children will ever be birds, for they can do nothing but cry 'Tweet, tweet,' and must always die of hunger in the winter." [89]

"Yes, you may well say that, as a clever man!" exclaimed the field mouse. "What is the use of his twittering if, when winter comes, he must either starve or be frozen to death? Still, birds are very high bred."

Thumbelina said nothing, but when the two others had turned their backs upon the bird, she stooped down and stroked aside the soft feathers which covered his head, and kissed the closed eyelids. "Perhaps this was the one who sang to me so sweetly in the summer," she said; "and how much pleasure it gave me, you dear, pretty bird."

The mole now stopped up the hole through which the daylight shone, and then accompanied the ladies home. But during the night Thumbelina could not sleep; so she got out of bed and wove a large, beautiful carpet of hay. She carried it to the dead bird and spread it over him, with some down from the flowers which she had found in the field mouse's room. It was as soft as wool, and she spread some of it on each side of the bird, so that he might lie warmly in the cold earth. [90]

"Farewell, pretty little bird," said she, "farewell. Thank you for your delightful singing during the summer, when all the trees were green and the warm sun shone upon us." Then she laid her head on the bird's breast, but she was alarmed, for it seemed as if something inside the bird went "thump, thump." It was the bird's heart; he was not really dead, only benumbed with the cold, and the warmth had restored him to life. In autumn all the swallows fly away into warm countries; but if one happens to linger, the cold seizes it, and it becomes chilled and falls down as if dead. It remains where it fell, and the cold snow covers it.

Thumbelina trembled very much; she was quite frightened, for the bird was large, a great deal larger than herself (she was only an inch high). But she took courage, laid the wool more thickly over the poor swallow, and then took a leaf which she had used for her own counterpane and laid it over his head.

The next night she again stole out to see him. He was alive, but very weak; he could only open his eyes for a moment to look at Thumbelina, who stood by, holding a piece of decayed wood in [91] her hand, for she had no other lantern. "Thank you, pretty little maiden," said the sick swallow; "I have been so nicely warmed that I shall soon regain my strength and be able to fly about again in the warm sunshine."

"Oh," said she, "it is cold out of doors now; it snows and freezes. Stay in your warm bed; I will take care of you."

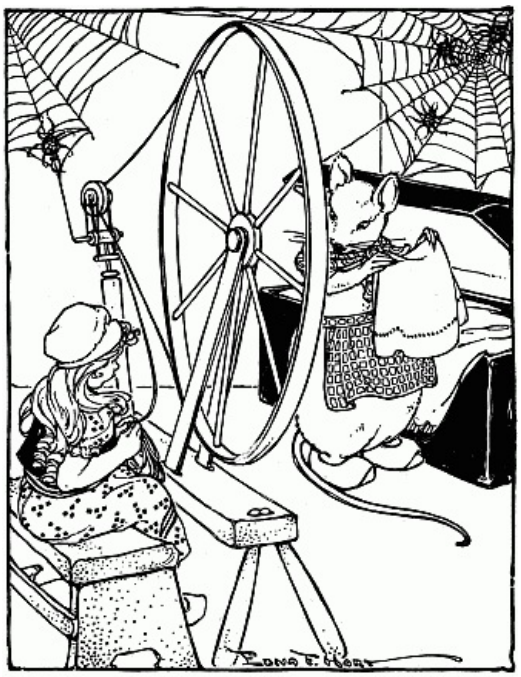
She brought the swallow some water in a flower leaf, and after he had drunk, he told her that he had wounded one of his wings in a thornbush and could not fly as fast as the others, who were soon far away on their journey to warm countries. At last he had fallen to the earth, and could remember nothing more, nor how he came to be where she had found him.

All winter the swallow remained underground, and Thumbelina nursed him with care and love. She did not tell either the mole or the field mouse anything about it, for they did not like swallows. Very soon the springtime came, and the sun warmed the earth. Then the swallow bade farewell to Thumbelina, and she opened the hole in the ceiling which the mole had made. The sun [92] shone in upon them so beautifully that the swallow asked her if she would go with him. She could sit on his back, he said, and he would fly away with her into the green woods. But she knew it would grieve the field mouse if she left her in that manner, so she said, "No, I cannot."

"Farewell, then, farewell, you good, pretty little maiden," said the swallow, and he flew out into the sunshine.

Thumbelina looked after him, and the tears rose in her eyes. She was very fond of the poor swallow.

"Tweet, tweet," sang the bird, as he flew out into the green woods, and Thumbelina felt very sad. She was not allowed to go out into the warm sunshine. The corn which had been sowed in the field over the house of the field mouse had grown up high into the air and formed a thick wood to Thumbelina, who was only an inch in height.



Nothing must be wanting when you are the wife of the mole . . .

"You are going to be married, little one," said the field mouse. "My neighbor has asked for you. [94]
What good fortune for a poor child like you! Now we will prepare your wedding clothes. They must be woolen and linen. Nothing must be wanting when you are the wife of the mole."

Thumbelina had to turn the spindle, and the field mouse hired four spiders, who were to weave day and night. Every evening the mole visited her and was continually speaking of the time when the summer would be over. Then he would keep his wedding day with Thumbelina; but now the heat of the sun was so great that it burned the earth and made it hard, like stone. As soon as the summer was over the wedding should take place. But Thumbelina was not at all pleased, for she did not like the tiresome mole.

Every morning when the sun rose and every evening when it went down she would creep out at the door, and as the wind blew aside the ears of corn so that she could see the blue sky, she thought how beautiful and bright it seemed out there and wished so much to see her dear friend, the swallow, again. But he never returned, for by this time he had flown far away into the lovely green forest. [95]

When autumn arrived Thumbelina had her outfit quite ready, and the field mouse said to her, "In four weeks the wedding must take place."

Then she wept and said she would not marry the disagreeable mole.

"Nonsense," replied the field mouse. "Now don't be obstinate, or I shall bite you with my white teeth. He is a very handsome mole; the queen herself does not wear more beautiful velvets and furs. His kitchens and cellars are quite full. You ought to be very thankful for such good fortune."

So the wedding day was fixed, on which the mole was to take her away to live with him, deep under the earth, and never again to see the warm sun, because *he* did not like it. The poor child was very unhappy at the thought of saying farewell to the beautiful sun, and as the field mouse had given her permission to stand at the door, she went to look at it once more.

"Farewell, bright sun," she cried, stretching out her arm towards it; and then she walked a short distance from the house, for the corn had been cut, and only the dry stubble remained in the fields. "Farewell, farewell," she repeated, twining her arm around a little red flower that grew [96]
just by her side. "Greet the little swallow from me, if you should see him again."

"Tweet, tweet," sounded over her head suddenly. She looked up, and there was the swallow himself flying close by. As soon as he spied Thumbelina he was delighted. She told him how unwilling she was to marry the ugly mole, and to live always beneath the earth, nevermore to see the bright sun. And as she told him, she wept.

"Cold winter is coming," said the swallow, "and I am going to fly away into warmer countries. Will you go with me? You can sit on my back and fasten yourself on with your sash. Then we can

fly away from the ugly mole and his gloomy rooms—far away, over the mountains, into warmer countries, where the sun shines more brightly than here; where it is always summer, and the flowers bloom in greater beauty. Fly now with me, dear little one; you saved my life when I lay frozen in that dark, dreary passage."

"Yes, I will go with you," said Thumbelina; and she seated herself on the bird's back, with her [97] feet on his outstretched wings, and tied her girdle to one of his strongest feathers.

The swallow rose in the air and flew over forest and over sea—high above the highest mountains, covered with eternal snow. Thumbelina would have been frozen in the cold air, but she crept under the bird's warm feathers, keeping her little head uncovered, so that she might admire the beautiful lands over which they passed. At length they reached the warm countries, where the sun shines brightly and the sky seems so much higher above the earth. Here on the hedges and by the wayside grew purple, green, and white grapes, lemons and oranges hung from trees in the fields, and the air was fragrant with myrtles and orange blossoms. Beautiful children ran along the country lanes, playing with large gay butterflies; and as the swallow flew farther and farther, every place appeared still more lovely.

At last they came to a blue lake, and by the side of it, shaded by trees of the deepest green, stood a palace of dazzling white marble, built in the olden times. Vines clustered round its lofty pillars, and at the top were many swallows' nests, and one of these was the home of the swallow [98] who carried Thumbelina.

"This is my house," said the swallow; "but it would not do for you to live there—you would not be comfortable. You must choose for yourself one of those lovely flowers, and I will put you down upon it, and then you shall have everything that you can wish to make you happy."

"That will be delightful," she said, and clapped her little hands for joy.

A large marble pillar lay on the ground, which, in falling, had been broken into three pieces. Between these pieces grew the most beautiful large white flowers, so the swallow flew down with Thumbelina and placed her on one of the broad leaves. But how surprised she was to see in the middle of the flower a tiny little man, as white and transparent as if he had been made of crystal! He had a gold crown on his head, and delicate wings at his shoulders, and was not much larger than was she herself. He was the angel of the flower, for a tiny man and a tiny woman dwell in every flower, and this was the king of them all. [99]

"Oh, how beautiful he is!" whispered Thumbelina to the swallow.

The little prince was at first quite frightened at the bird, who was like a giant compared to such a delicate little creature as himself; but when he saw Thumbelina he was delighted and thought her the prettiest little maiden he had ever seen. He took the gold crown from his head and placed it on hers, and asked her name and if she would be his wife and queen over all the flowers.

This certainly was a very different sort of husband from the son of the toad, or the mole with his black velvet and fur, so she said Yes to the handsome prince. Then all the flowers opened, and out of each came a little lady or a tiny lord, all so pretty it was quite a pleasure to look at them. Each of them brought Thumbelina a present; but the best gift was a pair of beautiful wings, which had belonged to a large white fly, and they fastened them to Thumbelina's shoulders, so that she might fly from flower to flower.

Then there was much rejoicing, and the little swallow, who sat above them in his nest, was asked to sing a wedding song, which he did as well as he could; but in his heart he felt sad, for he [100] was very fond of Thumbelina and would have liked never to part from her again.

"You must not be called Thumbelina any more," said the spirit of the flowers to her. "It is an ugly name, and you are so very lovely. We will call you Maia."

"Farewell, farewell," said the swallow, with a heavy heart, as he left the warm countries, to fly back into Denmark. There he had a nest over the window of a house in which dwelt the writer of fairy tales. The swallow sang "Tweet, tweet," and from his song came the whole story.

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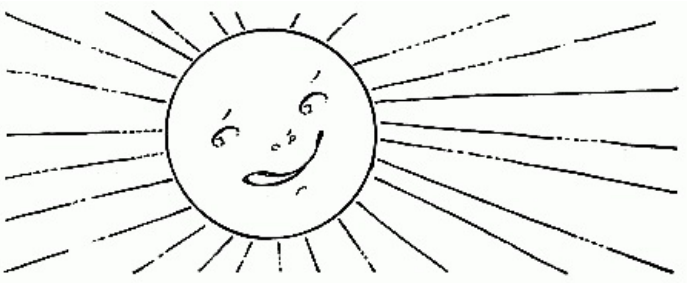
[101]



"I AM going to tell a story," said the Wind.

"I beg your pardon," said the Rain, "but now it is my turn. Have you not been howling round the corner this long time, as hard as ever you could?"

"Is this the gratitude you owe me?" said the Wind; "I, who in honor of you turn inside out—yes, even break—all the umbrellas, when the people won't have anything to do with you."

"I will speak myself," said the Sunshine. "Silence!" and the Sunshine said it with such glory and majesty that the weary Wind fell prostrate, and the Rain, beating against him, shook him, as she said:

"We won't stand it! She is always breaking through—is Madame Sunshine. Let us not listen to her; what she has to say is not worth hearing." And still the Sunshine began to talk, and this is what she said: [102]

"A beautiful swan flew over the rolling, tossing waves of the ocean. Every one of its feathers shone like gold; and one feather drifted down to the great merchant vessel that, with sails all set, was sailing away.

"The feather fell upon the light curly hair of a young man, whose business it was to care for the goods in the ship—the supercargo he was called. The feather of the bird of fortune touched his forehead, became a pen in his hand, and brought him such luck that he soon became a wealthy merchant, rich enough to have bought for himself spurs of gold—rich enough to change a golden plate into a nobleman's shield, on which," said the Sunshine, "I shone."

"The swan flew farther, away and away, over the sunny green meadow, where the little shepherd boy, only seven years old, had lain down in the shade of the old tree, the only one there was in sight. [103]

"In its flight the swan kissed one of the leaves of the tree, and falling into the boy's hand, it was changed to three leaves—to ten—to a whole book; yes, and in the book he read about all the wonders of nature, about his native language, about faith and knowledge. At night he laid the book under his pillow, that he might not forget what he had been reading.

"The wonderful book led him also to the schoolroom, and thence everywhere, in search of knowledge. I have read his name among the names of learned men," said the Sunshine.

"The swan flew into the quiet, lonely forest, and rested awhile on the deep, dark lake where the lilies grow, where the wild apples are to be found on the shore, where the cuckoo and the wild pigeon have their homes.

"In the wood was a poor woman gathering firewood—branches and dry sticks that had fallen. She bore them on her back in a bundle, and in her arms she held her little child. She too saw the golden swan, the bird of fortune, as it rose from among the reeds on the shore. What was it that glittered so? A golden egg that was still quite warm. She laid it in her bosom, and the warmth remained. Surely there was life in the egg! She heard the gentle pecking inside the shell, but she thought it was her own heart that was beating. [104]

"At home in her poor cottage she took out the egg. 'Tick! tick!' it said, as if it had been a gold watch, but it was not; it was an egg—a real, living egg.

"The egg cracked and opened, and a dear little baby swan, all feathered as with the purest gold, pushed out its tiny head. Around its neck were four rings, and as this woman had four boys—three at home, and this little one that was with her in the lonely wood—she understood at once that there was one for each boy. Just as she had taken them the little gold bird took flight.

"She kissed each ring, then made each of the children kiss one of the rings, laid it next the child's heart awhile, then put it on his finger. I saw it all," said the Sunshine, "and I saw what happened afterward.

"One of the boys, while playing by a ditch, took a lump of clay in his hand, then turned and [106] twisted it till it took shape and was like Jason, who went in search of the Golden Fleece and found it.

"The second boy ran out upon the meadow, where stood the flowers—flowers of all imaginable colors. He gathered a handful and squeezed them so tightly that the juice flew into his eyes, and some of it wet the ring upon his hand. It cribbled and crawled in his brain and in his hands, and after many a day and many a year, people in the great city talked of the famous painter that he was.

"The third child held the ring in his teeth, and so tightly that it gave forth sound—the echo of a song in the depth of his heart. Then thoughts and feelings rose in beautiful sounds,—rose like singing swans,—plunged, too, like swans, into the deep, deep sea. He became a great musical composer, a master, of whom every country has the right to say, 'He was mine, for he was the world's.'

"And the fourth little one—yes, he was the 'ugly duck' of the family. They said he had the pip and must eat pepper and butter like a sick chicken, and that was what was given him; but of me [107] he got a warm, sunny kiss," said the Sunshine. "He had ten kisses for one. He was a poet and was first kissed, then buffeted all his life through.

"But he held what no one could take from him—the ring of fortune from Dame Fortune's golden swan. His thoughts took wing and flew up and away like singing butterflies—emblems of an immortal life."

"That was a dreadfully long story," said the Wind.

"And so stupid and tiresome," said the Rain. "Blow upon me, please, that I may revive a little."

And while the Wind blew, the Sunshine said: "The swan of fortune flew over the lovely bay where the fishermen had set their nets. The very poorest one among them was wishing to marry —and marry he did.

"To him the swan brought a piece of amber. Amber draws things toward itself, and this piece drew hearts to the house where the fisherman lived with his bride. Amber is the most wonderful of incense, and there came a soft perfume, as from a holy place, a sweet breath from beautiful [108] nature, that God has made. And the fisherman and his wife were happy and grateful in their peaceful home, content even in their poverty. And so their life became a real Sunshine Story."

"I think we had better stop now," said the Wind. "I am dreadfully bored. The Sunshine has talked long enough."

"I think so, too," said the Rain.

And what do we others who have heard the story say?

We say, "Now the story's done."

THE DARNING-NEEDLE

THERE was once a Darning-needle who thought herself so fine that she came at last to believe that she was fit for embroidery.

"Mind now that you hold me fast," she said to the Fingers that took her up. "Pray don't lose me. If I should fall on the ground I should certainly be lost, I am so fine."

"That's more than you can tell," said the Fingers, as they grasped her tightly by the waist.

"I come with a train, you see," said the Darning-needle, as she drew her long thread after her; but there was no knot in the thread.

The Fingers pressed the point of the Needle upon an old pair of slippers, in which the upper leather had burst and must be sewed together. The slippers belonged to the cook. [110]

"This is very coarse work!" said the Darning-needle. "I shall never get through alive. There, I'm breaking! I'm breaking!" and break she did. "Did I not say so?" said the Darning-needle. "I'm too delicate for such work as that."

"Now it's quite useless for sewing," said the Fingers; but they still held her all the same, for the cook presently dropped some melted sealing wax upon the needle and then pinned her neckerchief in front with it.

"See, now I'm a breastpin," said the Darning-needle. "I well knew that I should come to honor; when one is something, one always comes to something. Merit is sure to rise." And at this she laughed, only inwardly, of course, for one can never see when a Darning-needle laughs. There she sat now, quite at her ease, and as proud as if she sat in a state carriage and gazed upon all about her.

"May I take the liberty to ask if you are made of gold?" she asked of the pin, her neighbor. "You have a splendid appearance and quite a remarkable head, though it is so little. You should do what you can to grow—of course it is not every one that can have sealing wax dropped upon her." [111]

And the Darning-needle drew herself up so proudly that she fell out of the neckerchief into the sink, which the cook was at that moment rinsing.

"Now I'm going to travel," said the Darning-needle, "if only I don't get lost."

But that was just what happened to her.

"I'm too delicate for this world," she said, as she found herself in the gutter. "But I know who I am, and there is always some little pleasure in that!" It was thus that the Darning-needle kept up her proud bearing and lost none of her good humor. And now all sorts of things swam over her—chips and straws and scraps of old newspapers.

"Only see how they sail along," said the Darning-needle to herself. "They little know what is under them, though it is I, and I sit firmly here. See! there goes a chip! It thinks of nothing in the world but itself—of nothing in the world but a chip! There floats a straw; see how it turns and twirls about. Do think of something besides yourself or you may easily run against a stone. There [112] swims a bit of a newspaper. What's written upon it is forgotten long ago, yet how it spreads itself out and gives itself airs! I sit patiently and quietly here! I know what I am, and I shall remain the same—always."

One day there lay something beside her that glittered splendidly. She thought it must be a diamond, but it was really only a bit of broken glass from a bottle. As it shone so brightly the Darning-needle spoke to it, introducing herself as a breastpin.

"You are a diamond, I suppose," she said.

"Why, yes, something of the sort."

So each believed the other to be some rare and costly trinket; and they began to converse together upon the world, saying how very conceited it was.

"Yes," said the Darning-needle, "I have lived in a young lady's box; and the young lady happened to be a cook. She had five fingers upon each of her hands, and anything more conceited and arrogant than those five fingers, I never saw. And yet they were only there that they might take me out of the box or put me back again." [113]

"Were they of high descent?" asked the Bit of Bottle. "Did they shine?"

"No, indeed," replied the Darning-needle; "but they were none the less haughty. There were five brothers of them—all of the Finger family. And they held themselves so proudly side by side, though they were of quite different heights. The outermost, Thumbling he was called, was short and thick set; he generally stood out of the rank, a little in front of the others; he had only one joint in his back, and could only bow once; but he used to say that if he were cut off from a man, that man would be cut off from military service. Foreman, the second, put himself forward on all occasions, meddled with sweet and sour, pointed to sun and moon, and when the fingers wrote, it was he who pressed the pen. Middleman, the third of the brothers, could look over the others' heads, and gave himself airs for that. Ringman, the fourth, went about with a gold belt about his waist; and little Playman, whom they called Peter Spielman, did nothing at all and was proud of that, I suppose. There was nothing to be heard but boasting, and that is why I took myself away." [114]

"And now we sit here together and shine," said the Bit of Bottle.

At that very moment some water came rushing along the gutter, so that it overflowed and carried the glass diamond along with it.

"So he is off," said the Darning-needle, "and I still remain. I am left here because I am too slender and genteel. But that's my pride, and pride is honorable." And proudly she sat, thinking many thoughts.

"I could almost believe I had been born of a sunbeam, I'm so fine. It seems as if the sunbeams were always trying to seek me under the water. Alas, I'm so delicate that even my own mother cannot find me. If I had my old eye still, which broke off, I think I should cry—but no, I would not; it's not genteel to weep."

One day a couple of street boys were paddling about in the gutter, hunting for old nails, pennies, and such like. It was dirty work, but they seemed to find great pleasure in it.

"Hullo!" cried one of them, as he pricked himself with the Darning-needle; "here's a fellow for you!" [115]

"I'm not a fellow! I'm a young lady!" said the Darning-needle, but no one heard it.

The sealing wax had worn off, and she had become quite black; "but black makes one look slender, and is always becoming." She thought herself finer even than before.

"There goes an eggshell sailing along," said the boys; and they stuck the Darning-needle into the shell.

"A lady in black, and within white walls!" said the Darning-needle; "that is very striking. Now every one can see me. I hope I shall not be seasick, for then I shall break."

But the fear was needless; she was not seasick, neither did she break.

"Nothing is so good to prevent seasickness as to have a steel stomach and to bear in mind that one is something a little more than an ordinary person. My seasickness is all over now. The more genteel and honorable one is, the more one can endure."

Crash went the eggshell, as a wagon rolled over both of them. It was a wonder that she did not break. [116]

"Mercy, what a crushing weight!" said the Darning-needle. "I'm growing seasick, after all. I'm going to break!"

But she was not sick, and she did not break, though the wagon wheels rolled over her. She lay at full length in the road, and there let her lie.

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[117]

THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL

T was dreadfully cold; it was snowing fast, and was almost dark, as evening came on—the last evening of the year. In the cold and the darkness, there went along the street a poor little girl, bareheaded and with naked feet. When she left home she had slippers on, it is true; but they were much too large for her feet—slippers that her mother had used till then, and the poor little girl lost them in running across the street when two carriages were passing terribly fast. When

she looked for them, one was not to be found, and a boy seized the other and ran away with it, saying he would use it for a cradle some day, when he had children of his own.

So on the little girl went with her bare feet, that were red and blue with cold. In an old [118] apron that she wore were bundles of matches, and she carried a bundle also in her hand. No one had bought so much as a bunch all the long day, and no one had given her even a penny.

Poor little girl! Shivering with cold and hunger she crept along, a perfect picture of misery.

The snowflakes fell on her long flaxen hair, which hung in pretty curls about her throat; but she thought not of her beauty nor of the cold. Lights gleamed in every window, and there came to her the savory smell of roast goose, for it was New Year's Eve. And it was this of which she thought.

In a corner formed by two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sat cowering down. She had drawn under her her little feet, but still she grew colder and colder; yet she dared not go home, for she had sold no matches and could not bring a penny of money. Her father would certainly beat her; and, besides, it was cold enough at home, for they had only the house-roof above them, and though the largest holes had been stopped with straw and rags, there were left many through which the cold wind could whistle. [119]

Where the light fell upon the wall it became transparent.

And now her little hands were nearly frozen with cold. Alas! a single match might do her good [120] if she might only draw it from the bundle, rub it against the wall, and warm her fingers by it. So at last she drew one out. Whisht! How it blazed and burned! It gave out a warm, bright flame like a little candle, as she held her hands over it. A wonderful little light it was. It really seemed to the little girl as if she sat before a great iron stove with polished brass feet and brass shovel and tongs. So blessedly it burned that the little maiden stretched out her feet to warm them also. How comfortable she was! But lo! the flame went out, the stove vanished, and nothing remained but the little burned match in her hand.

She rubbed another match against the wall. It burned brightly, and where the light fell upon the wall it became transparent like a veil, so that she could see through it into the room. A snow-white cloth was spread upon the table, on which was a beautiful china dinner-service, while a roast goose, stuffed with apples and prunes, steamed famously and sent forth a most savory smell. And what was more delightful still, and wonderful, the goose jumped from the dish, with [121] knife and fork still in its breast, and waddled along the floor straight to the little girl.

But the match went out then, and nothing was left to her but the thick, damp wall.

She lighted another match. And now she was under a most beautiful Christmas tree, larger and far more prettily trimmed than the one she had seen through the glass doors at the rich merchant's. Hundreds of wax tapers were burning on the green branches, and gay figures, such as she had seen in shop windows, looked down upon her. The child stretched out her hands to them; then the match went out.

Still the lights of the Christmas tree rose higher and higher. She saw them now as stars in heaven, and one of them fell, forming a long trail of fire.

"Now some one is dying," murmured the child softly; for her grandmother, the only person who had loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that whenever a star falls a soul mounts up to God. [122]

She struck yet another match against the wall, and again it was light; and in the brightness there appeared before her the dear old grandmother, bright and radiant, yet sweet and mild, and happy as she had never looked on earth.

"Oh, grandmother," cried the child, "take me with you. I know you will go away when the match burns out. You, too, will vanish, like the warm stove, the splendid New Year's feast, the beautiful Christmas tree." And lest her grandmother should disappear, she rubbed the whole bundle of matches against the wall.

And the matches burned with such a brilliant light that it became brighter than noonday. Her grandmother had never looked so grand and beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and both flew together, joyously and gloriously, mounting higher and higher, far above the earth; and for them there was neither hunger, nor cold, nor care—they were with God.

But in the corner, at the dawn of day, sat the poor girl, leaning against the wall, with red cheeks and smiling mouth—frozen to death on the last evening of the old year. Stiff and cold she [123] sat, with the matches, one bundle of which was burned.

"She wanted to warm herself, poor little thing," people said. No one imagined what sweet visions she had had, or how gloriously she had gone with her grandmother to enter upon the joys of a new year.

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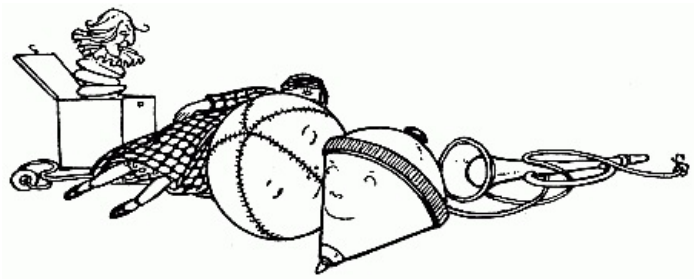
[124]



THE LOVING PAIR

A WHIPPING Top and a Ball lay close together in a drawer among other playthings. One day the Top said to the Ball, "Since we are living so much together, why should we not be lovers?"

But the Ball, being made of morocco leather, thought herself a very high-bred lady, and would hear nothing of such a proposal. On the next day the little boy to whom the playthings belonged came to the drawer; he painted the Top red and yellow, and drove a bright brass nail right through the head of it; it looked very smart indeed as it spun around after that.

"Look at me," said he to the Ball. "What do you say to me now; why should we not make a match of it, and become man and wife? We suit each other so well!—you can jump and I can [125] dance. There would not be a happier pair in the whole world!"

"Do you think so?" said the Ball. "Perhaps you do not know that my father and mother were morocco slippers, and that I have a Spanish cork in my body!"

"Yes, but then I am made of mahogany," said the Top; "the Mayor himself turned me. He has a turning lathe of his own, and he took great pleasure in making me."

"Can I trust you in this?" asked the Ball.

"May I never be whipped again, if what I tell you is not true," returned the Top.

"You plead your cause well," said the Ball; "but I am not free to listen to your proposal. I am as good as engaged to a swallow. As often as I fly up into the air, he puts his head out of his nest, and says, 'Will you?' In my heart I have said Yes to him, and that is almost the same as an engagement; but I'll promise never to forget you."

"A deal of good that will do me," said the Top, and they left off speaking to each other. [126]

Next day the Ball was taken out. The Top saw it fly like a bird into the air—so high that it passed quite out of sight. It came back again; but each time that it touched the earth, it sprang higher than before. This must have been either from its longing to mount higher, like the swallow, or because it had the Spanish cork in its body. On the ninth time the little Ball did not return. The boy sought and sought, but all in vain, for it was gone.

"I know very well where she is," sighed the Top. "She is in the swallow's nest, celebrating her wedding."

The more the Top thought of this the more lovely the Ball became to him; that she could not be his bride seemed to make his love for her the greater. She had preferred another rather than

himself, but he could not forget her. He twirled round and round, spinning and humming, but always thinking of the Ball, who grew more and more beautiful the more he thought of her. And thus several years passed,—it came to be an old love,—and now the Top was no longer young!

One day he was gilded all over; never in his life had he been half so handsome. He was now a [127] golden top, and bravely he spun, humming all the time. But once he sprang too high—and was gone!

They looked everywhere for him,—even in the cellar,—but he was nowhere to be found. Where was he?

He had jumped into the dustbin, and lay among cabbage stalks, sweepings, dust, and all sorts of rubbish that had fallen from the gutter in the roof.

"Alas! my gay gilding will soon be spoiled here. What sort of trumpery can I have got among?" And then he peeped at a long cabbage stalk which lay much too near him, and at something strange and round, which appeared like an apple, but was not. It was an old Ball that must have lain for years in the gutter, and been soaked through and through with water.

"Thank goodness! at last I see an equal; one of my own sort, with whom I can talk," said the Ball, looking earnestly at the gilded Top. "I am myself made of real morocco, sewed together by a young lady's hands, and within my body is a Spanish cork; though no one would think it now. I [128] was very near marrying the swallow, when by a sad chance I fell into the gutter on the roof. I have lain there five years, and I am now wet through and through. You may think what a wearisome situation it has been for a young lady like me."

The Top made no reply. The more he thought of his old love, and the more he heard, the more sure he became that this was indeed she.

Then came the housemaid to empty the dustbin. "Hullo!" she cried; "why, here's the gilt Top." And so the Top was brought again to the playroom, to be used and honored as before, while nothing was again heard of the Ball.

And the Top never spoke again of his old love—the feeling must have passed away. And it is not strange, when the object of it has lain five years in a gutter, and been drenched through and through, and when one meets her again in a dustbin.

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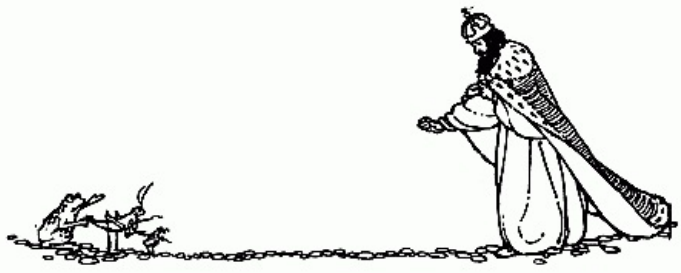
[129]



THE LEAPING MATCH

THE Flea, the Grasshopper, and the Frog once wanted to see which of them could jump the highest. They made a festival, and invited the whole world and every one else besides who liked to come and see the grand sight. Three famous jumpers they were, as all should say, when they met together in the room.

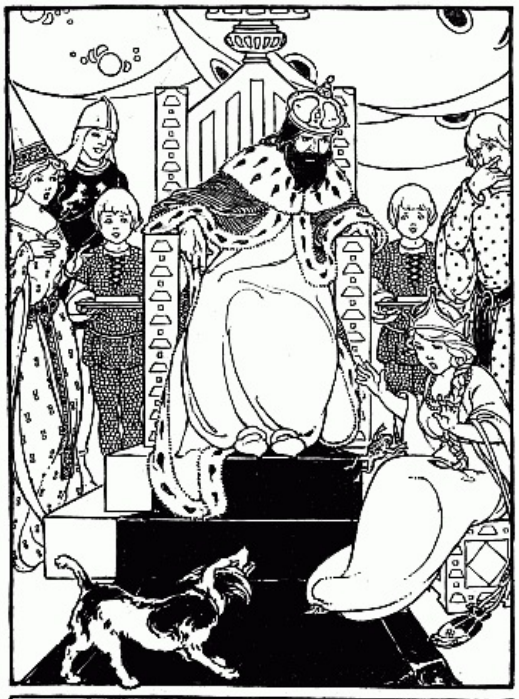
"I will give my daughter to him who shall jump highest," said the King; "it would be too bad for you to have the jumping, and for us to offer no prize."

The Flea was the first to come forward. He had most exquisite manners, and bowed to the company on every side; for he was of noble blood, and, besides, was accustomed to the society of man, and that, of course, had been an advantage to him. [130]

Next came the Grasshopper. He was not quite so elegantly formed as the Flea, but he knew perfectly well how to conduct himself, and he wore the green uniform which belonged to him by right of birth. He said, moreover, that he came of a very ancient Egyptian family, and that in the house where he then lived he was much thought of.

The fact was that he had been just brought out of the fields and put in a card-house three stories high, and built on purpose for him, with the colored sides inwards, and doors and windows cut out of the Queen of Hearts. "And I sing so well," said he, "that sixteen parlor-bred crickets, who have chirped from infancy and yet got no one to build them card-houses to live in, have fretted themselves thinner even than before, from sheer vexation on hearing me."

It was thus that the Flea and the Grasshopper made the most of themselves, each thinking himself quite an equal match for the princess.



He made a sideways jump into the lap of the princess.

The Leapfrog said not a word; but people said that perhaps he thought the more; and the housedog who snuffed at him with his nose allowed that he was of good family. The old councilor, [132] who had had three orders given him in vain for keeping quiet, asserted that the Leapfrog was a prophet, for that one could see on his back whether the coming winter was to be severe or mild, which is more than one can see on the back of the man who writes the almanac.

"I say nothing for the present," exclaimed the King; "yet I have my own opinion, for I observe everything."

And now the match began. The Flea jumped so high that no one could see what had become of him; and so they insisted that he had not jumped at all—which was disgraceful after all the fuss he had made.

The Grasshopper jumped only half as high; but he leaped into the King's face, who was disgusted by his rudeness.

The Leapfrog stood for a long time, as if lost in thought; people began to think he would not jump at all.

"I'm afraid he is ill!" said the dog and he went to snuff at him again; when lo! he suddenly made a sideways jump into the lap of the princess, who sat close by on a little golden stool. [133]

"There is nothing higher than my daughter," said the King; "therefore to bound into her lap is the highest jump that can be made. Only one of good understanding would ever have thought of that. Thus the Frog has shown that he has sense. He has brains in his head, that he has."

And so he won the princess.

"I jumped the highest, for all that," said the Flea; "but it's all the same to me. The princess may have the stiff-legged, slimy creature, if she likes. In this world merit seldom meets its reward. Dullness and heaviness win the day. I am too light and airy for a stupid world."

And so the Flea went into foreign service.

The Grasshopper sat without on a green bank and reflected on the world and its ways; and he too said, "Yes, dullness and heaviness win the day; a fine exterior is what people care for nowadays." And then he began to sing in his own peculiar way—and it is from his song that we have taken this little piece of history, which may very possibly be all untrue, although it does stand printed here in black and white.

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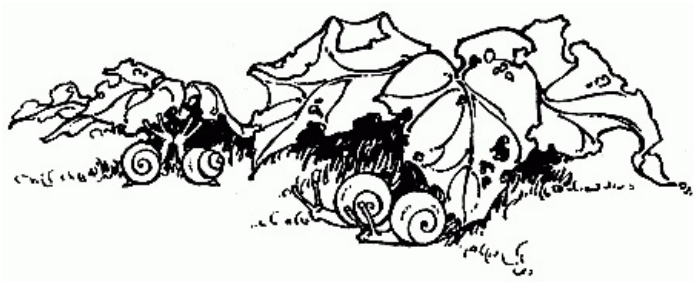
[134]



THE HAPPY FAMILY

THE largest green leaf in this country is certainly the burdock. Put one in front of your waist, and it is just like an apron; or lay it upon your head, and it is almost as good as an umbrella, it is so broad.

Burdock never grows singly; where you find one plant of the kind you may be sure that others grow in its immediate neighborhood. How magnificent they look!

And all this magnificence is food for snails—the great white snails, which grand people in olden times used to have dished up as fricassees, and of which, when they had eaten, they would say, "H'm, how nice!" for they really fancied them delicious. These snails lived on burdock leaves, and that was why burdock was planted. [135]

Now there was an old estate where snails were no longer considered a delicacy. The snails had therefore died out, but the burdock still flourished. In all the alleys and in all the beds it had grown and grown, so that it could no longer be checked; the place had become a perfect forest of burdock.

Here and there stood an apple or plum tree to serve as a kind of token that there had been once a garden, but everything, from one end of the garden to the other, was burdock, and beneath the shade of the burdock lived the last two of the ancient snails.

They did not know themselves how old they were, but they well remembered the time when there were a great many of them, that they had descended from a family that came from foreign lands, and that this forest in which they lived had been planted for them and theirs. They had never been beyond the limits of the garden, but they knew that there was something outside their forest, called the castle, and that there one was boiled, and became black, and was then laid upon a silver dish—though what happened afterward they had never heard, nor could they exactly fancy how it felt to be cooked and laid on a silver dish. It was, no doubt, a fine thing, and [136] exceedingly genteel.

Neither the cockchafer, nor the toad, nor the earthworm, all of whom they questioned on the matter, could give them the least information, for none of them had ever been cooked and served upon silver dishes.

The old white snails were the grandest race in the world; of this they were well aware. The forest had grown for their sake, and the castle or manor house too had been built expressly that in it they might be cooked and served.

Leading now a very quiet and happy life and having no children, they had adopted a little common snail, and had brought it up as their own child. But the little thing would not grow, for he was only a common snail, though his foster mother pretended to see a great improvement in him. She begged the father, since he could not perceive it, to feel the little snail's shell, and to her great joy and his own, he found that his wife was right.

One day it rained very hard. "Listen!" said the Father Snail; "hear what a drumming there is on [137] the burdock leaves—rum-dum-dum, rum-dum-dum!"

"There are drops, too," said the Mother Snail; "they come trickling down the stalks. We shall presently find it very wet here. I'm glad we have such good houses, and that the youngster has his also. There has really been more done for us than for any other creatures. Every one must see that we are superior beings. We have houses from our very birth, and the burdock forest is planted on our account. I should like to know just how far it reaches, and what there is beyond."

"There is nothing better than what we have here," said the Father Snail. "I wish for nothing beyond."

"And yet," said the mother, "I should like to be taken to the castle, and boiled, and laid on a silver dish; that has been the destiny of all our ancestors, and we may be sure it is something quite out of the common way."

"The castle has perhaps fallen to ruin," said the Father Snail, "or it may be overgrown with burdock, so that its inmates are unable to come out. There is no hurry about the matter. You are always in such a desperate hurry, and the youngster there begins to take after you. He's been [138] creeping up that stem yonder these three days. It makes me quite dizzy to look at him."

"But don't scold him," said the mother. "He creeps carefully. We old people have nothing else

to live for, and he will be the joy of our old age. Have you thought how we can manage to find a wife for him? Do you not think that farther into the forest there may be others of our own species?"

"I dare say there may be black snails," said the old father, "black snails, without a house at all; and they are vulgar, though they think so much of themselves. But we can employ the black ants, who run about so much—hurrying to and fro as if they had all the business of the world on their hands. They will certainly be able to find a wife for our young gentleman."

"I know the fairest of the fair," said one of the ants; "but I'm afraid it would not do, for she's a queen."

"She's none the worse for that," said both the old snails. "Has she a house?"

"She has a palace," answered the ants; "the most splendid ant castle, with seven hundred galleries." [139]

"Thank you!" said the Mother Snail. "Our boy shall not go to live in an ant hill. If you know of nothing better, we will employ the white gnats, who fly both in rain and sunshine and know all the ins and outs of the whole burdock forest."

"We have found a wife for him," said the gnats. "A hundred paces from here there sits, on a gooseberry bush, a little snail with a house. She is all alone and is old enough to marry. It is only a hundred human steps from here."

"Then let her come to him," said the old couple. "He has a whole forest of burdock, while she has only a bush."

So they went and brought the little maiden snail. It took eight days to perform the journey, but that only showed her high breeding, and that she was of good family.

And then the wedding took place. Six glow-worms gave all the light they could, but in all other respects it was a very quiet affair. The old people could not bear the fatigue of frolic or festivity. The Mother Snail made a very touching little speech. The father was too much overcome to trust himself to say anything. [140]

They gave the young couple the entire burdock forest, saying what they had always said, namely, that it was the finest inheritance in the world, and that if they led an upright and honorable life, and if their family should increase, without doubt both themselves and their children would one day be taken to the manor castle and be boiled black and served as a fricassee in a silver dish.

And after this the old couple crept into their houses and never came out again, but fell asleep. The young pair now ruled in the forest and had a numerous family. But when, as time went on, none of them were ever cooked or served on a silver dish, they concluded that the castle had fallen to ruin and that the world of human beings had died out; and as no one contradicted them, they must have been right.

And the rain continued to fall upon the burdock leaves solely to entertain them with its drumming, and the sun shone to light the forest for their especial benefit, and very happy they were—they and the whole snail family—inexpressibly happy!

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[141]

THE GREENIES

A ROSE TREE stood in the window. But a little while ago it had been green and fresh, and now it looked sickly—it was in poor health, no doubt. A whole regiment was quartered on it and was eating it up; yet, notwithstanding this seeming greediness, the regiment was a very decent and respectable one. It wore bright-green uniforms. I spoke to one of the "Greenies." He was but three days old, and yet he was already a grandfather. What do you think he said? It is all true—he spoke of himself and of the rest of the regiment. Listen!

"We are the most wonderful creatures in the world. At a very early age we are engaged, and immediately we have the wedding. When the cold weather comes we lay our eggs, but the little [142] ones lie sunny and warm. The wisest of the creatures, the ant,—we have the greatest respect for him!—understands us well. He appreciates us, you may be sure. He does not eat us up at once;

he takes our eggs, lays them in the family ant hill on the ground floor—lays them, labeled and numbered, side by side, layer on layer, so that each day a new one may creep out of the egg. Then he puts us in a stable, pinches our hind legs, and milks us till we die. He has given us the prettiest of names—'little milch cow.'

"All creatures who, like the ant, are gifted with common sense call us by this pretty name. It is only human beings who do not. They give us another name, one that we feel to be a great affront—great enough to embitter our whole life. Could you not write a protest against it for us? Could you not rouse these human beings to a sense of the wrong they do us? They look at us so stupidly or, at times, with such envious eyes, just because we eat a rose leaf, while they themselves eat every created thing—whatever grows and is green. And oh, they give us the most humiliating of names! I will not even mention it. Ugh! I feel it to my very stomach. I cannot even pronounce it— [143]
at least not when I have my uniform on, and that I always wear.

"I was born on a rose leaf. I and all the regiment live on the rose tree. We live off it, in fact. But then it lives again in us, who belong to the higher order of created beings.

"The human beings do not like us. They pursue and murder us with soapsuds. Oh, it is a horrid drink! I seem to smell it even now. You cannot think how dreadful it is to be washed when one was not made to be washed. Men! you who look at us with your severe, soapsud eyes, think a moment what our place in nature is: we are born upon the roses, we die in roses—our whole life is a rose poem. Do not, I beg you, give us a name which you yourselves think so despicable—the name I cannot bear to pronounce. If you wish to speak of us, call us 'the ants' milch cows—the rose-tree regiment—the little green things.'"

"And I, the man, stood looking at the tree and at the little Greenies (whose name I shall not mention, for I should not like to wound the feelings of the citizens of the rose tree), a large family [144]
with eggs and young ones; and I looked at the soapsuds I was going to wash them in, for I too had come with soap and water and murderous intentions. But now I will use it for soap bubbles. Look, how beautiful! Perhaps there lies in each a fairy tale, and the bubble grows large and radiant and looks as if there were a pearl lying inside it.

The bubble swayed and swung. It flew to the door and then burst, but the door opened wide, and there stood Dame Fairytale herself! And now she will tell you better than I can about (I will not say the name) the little green things of the rosebush.

"Plant lice!" said Dame Fairytale. One must call things by their right names. And if one may not do so always, one must at least have the privilege of doing so in a fairy tale.

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[145]

OLE-LUK-OIE THE DREAM GOD

THERE is nobody in the whole world who knows so many stories as Ole-Luk-Oie, or who can relate them so nicely.

In the evening while the children are seated at the tea table or in their little chairs, very softly he comes up the stairs, for he walks in his socks. He opens the doors without the slightest noise and throws a small quantity of very fine dust in the little ones' eyes (just enough to prevent them from keeping them open), and so they do not see him. Then he creeps behind them and blows softly upon their necks till their heads begin to droop.

But Ole-Luk-Oie does not wish to hurt them. He is very fond of children and only wants them to be quiet that he may tell them pretty stories, and he knows they never are quiet until they are in [146]
bed and asleep. Ole-Luk-Oie seats himself upon the bed as soon as they are asleep. He is nicely dressed; his coat is made of silken stuff, it is impossible to say of what color, for it changes from green to red and from red to blue as he turns from side to side. Under each arm he carries an umbrella. One of them, with pictures on the inside, he spreads over good children, and then they dream the most charming stories. But the other umbrella has no pictures, and this he holds over the naughty children, so that they sleep heavily and wake in the morning without having dreamed at all.

Now we shall hear how Ole-Luk-Oie came every night during a whole week to a little boy named Hjalmar, and what it was that he told him. There were seven stories, as there are seven

days in the week.

MONDAY

"Now pay attention," said Ole-Luk-Oie in the evening, when Hjalmar was in bed, "and I will decorate the room." [147]

Immediately all the flowers in the flowerpots became large trees with long branches reaching to the ceiling and stretching along the walls, so that the whole room was like a greenhouse. All the branches were loaded with flowers, each flower as beautiful and as fragrant as a rose, and had any one tasted them he would have found them sweeter even than jam. The fruit glittered like gold, and there were cakes so full of plums that they were nearly bursting. It was incomparably beautiful.

At the same time sounded dismal moans from the table drawer in which lay Hjalmar's schoolbooks.

"What can that be now?" said Ole-Luk-Oie, going to the table and pulling out the drawer.

It was a slate, in such distress because of a wrong figure in a sum that it had almost broken itself to pieces. The pencil pulled and tugged at its string as if it were a little dog that wanted to help but could not.

And then came a moan from Hjalmar's copy book. Oh, it was quite terrible to hear! On each leaf stood a row of capital letters, every one having a small letter by its side. This formed a copy. [148] Under these were other letters, which Hjalmar had written; they fancied they looked like the copy, but they were mistaken, for they were leaning on one side as if they intended to fall over the pencil lines.

"See, this is the way you should hold yourselves," said the copy. "Look here, you should slope thus, with a graceful curve."

"Oh, we are very willing to do so," said Hjalmar's letters, "but we cannot, we are so wretchedly made."

"You must be scratched out, then," said Ole-Luk-Oie.

"Oh, no!" they cried, and then they stood up so gracefully that it was quite a pleasure to look at them.

"Now we must give up our stories, and exercise these letters," said Ole-Luk-Oie. "One, two—one, two—" So he drilled them till they stood up gracefully and looked as beautiful as a copy could look. But after Ole-Luk-Oie was gone, and Hjalmar looked at them in the morning, they were as wretched and awkward as ever. [149]

TUESDAY

As soon as Hjalmar was in bed Ole-Luk-Oie touched with his little magic wand all the furniture in the room, which immediately began to chatter. And each article talked only of itself.

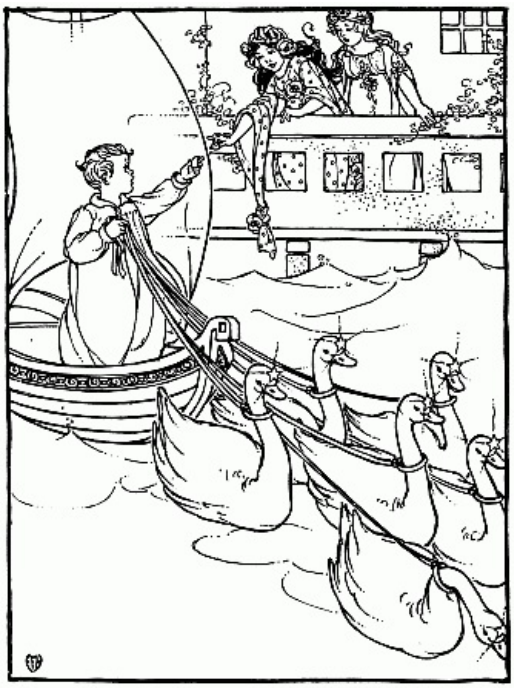
Over the chest of drawers hung a large picture in a gilt frame, representing a landscape, with fine old trees, flowers in the grass, and a broad stream which flowed through the wood past several castles far out into the wild ocean.

Ole-Luk-Oie touched the picture with his magic wand, and immediately the birds began to sing, the branches of the trees rustled, and the clouds moved across the sky, casting their shadows on the landscape beneath them.

Then Ole-Luk-Oie lifted little Hjalmar up to the frame and placed his feet in the picture, on the high grass, and there he stood with the sun shining down upon him through the branches of the trees. He ran to the water and seated himself in a little boat which lay there, and which was painted red and white. [150]

The sails glittered like silver, and six swans, each with a golden circlet round its neck and a bright, blue star on its forehead, drew the boat past the green wood, where the trees talked of robbers and witches, and the flowers of beautiful little elves and fairies whose histories the butterflies had related to them.

Brilliant fish with scales like silver and gold swam after the boat, sometimes making a spring and splashing the water round them; while birds, red and blue, small and great, flew after him in two long lines. The gnats danced round them, and the cockchafers cried "Buzz, buzz." They all wanted to follow Hjalmar, and all had some story to tell him. It was a most delightful sail.



On the balconies stood princesses.

Sometimes the forests were thick and dark, sometimes like a beautiful garden gay with sunshine and flowers; he passed great palaces of glass and of marble, and on the balconies stood princesses, whose faces were those of little girls whom Hjalmar knew well and had often played with. One of the little girls held out her hand, in which was a heart made of sugar, more beautiful than any confectioner ever sold. As Hjalmar sailed by he caught hold of one side of the sugar [152] heart and held it fast, and the princess held fast too, so that it broke in two pieces. Hjalmar had one piece and the princess the other, but Hjalmar's was the larger.

At each castle stood little princes acting as sentinels. They presented arms and had golden swords and made it rain plums and tin soldiers, so that they must have been real princes.

Hjalmar continued to sail, sometimes through woods, sometimes as it were through large halls, and then by large cities. At last he came to the town where his nurse lived, who had carried him in her arms when he was a very little boy and had always been kind to him. She nodded and beckoned to him and then sang the little verses she had herself composed and sent to him:

How many, many hours I think on thee,
  My own dear Hjalmar, still my pride and joy!
How have I hung delighted over thee,
  Kissing thy rosy cheeks, my darling boy!

Thy first low accents it was mine to hear,
  To-day my farewell words to thee shall fly.
Oh, may the Lord thy shield be ever near
  And fit thee for a mansion in the sky!

And all the birds sang the same tune, the flowers danced on their stems, and the old trees [153] nodded as if Ole-Luk-Oie had been telling them stories, as well.

WEDNESDAY

How the rain did pour down! Hjalmar could hear it in his sleep, and when Ole-Luk-Oie opened the window the water flowed quite up to the window sill. It had the appearance of a large lake outside, and a beautiful ship lay close to the house.

"Wilt thou sail with me to-night, little Hjalmar?" said Ole-Luk-Oie. "Then we shall see foreign countries, and thou shalt return here in the morning."

All in a moment there stood Hjalmar, in his best clothes, on the deck of the noble ship, and immediately the weather became fine.

They sailed through the streets, round by the church, while on every side rolled the wide, great sea.

They sailed till the land disappeared, and then they saw a flock of storks who had left their own [154] country and were traveling to warmer climates. The storks flew one behind another and had already been a long, long time on the wing.

One of them seemed so tired that his wings could scarcely carry him. He was soon left very far behind. At length he sank lower and lower, with outstretched wings, flapping them in vain, till his

feet touched the rigging of the ship, and he slid from the sails to the deck and stood before them. Then a sailor boy caught him and put him in the henhouse with the fowls, the ducks, and the turkeys, while the poor stork stood quite bewildered among them.

"Just look at that fellow," said the chickens.

Then the turkey cock puffed himself out as large as he could and inquired who he was, and the ducks waddled backwards, crying, "Quack, quack!"

The stork told them all about warm Africa—of the pyramids and of the ostrich, which, like a wild horse, runs across the desert. But the ducks did not understand what he said, and quacked amongst themselves, "We are all of the same opinion; namely, that he is stupid." [155]

"Yes, to be sure, he is stupid," said the turkey cock, and gobbled.

Then the stork remained quite silent and thought of his home in Africa.

"Those are handsome thin legs of yours," said the turkey cock. "What do they cost a yard?"

"Quack, quack, quack," grinned the ducks; but the stork pretended not to hear.

"You may as well laugh," said the turkey, "for that remark was rather witty, but perhaps it was above you. Ah, ah, is he not clever? He will be a great amusement to us while he remains here." And then he gobbled, and the ducks quacked: "Gobble, gobble"; "Quack, quack!"

What a terrible uproar they made while they were having such fun among themselves!

Then Hjalmar went to the henhouse and, opening the door, called to the stork. He hopped out on the deck. He had rested himself now, and he looked happy and seemed as if he nodded to Hjalmar as if to thank him. Then he spread his wings and flew away to warmer countries, while the hens clucked, the ducks quacked, and the turkey cock's head turned quite scarlet. [156]

"To-morrow you shall be made into soup," said Hjalmar to the fowls; and then he awoke and found himself lying in his little bed.

It was a wonderful journey which Ole-Luk-Oie had made him take this night.

THURSDAY

"What do you think I have here?" said the Dream Man. "Do not be frightened, and you shall see a little mouse." And then he held out his hand, in which lay a lovely little creature. "It has come to invite you to a wedding. Two little mice are going to be married to-night. They live under the floor of your mother's storeroom, and that must be a fine dwelling place."

"But how can I get through the little mouse-hole in the floor?" asked the little boy.

"Leave me to manage that," said the Dream Man. "I will soon make you small enough." And then he touched the boy with his magic wand, upon which he became smaller and smaller until at last he was no longer than a little finger. "Now you can borrow the dress of your tin soldier. I [157] think it will just fit you. It looks well to wear a uniform when you go into company."

"Yes, certainly," said the boy, and in a moment he was dressed as neatly as the neatest of all tin soldiers.

"Will you be so good as to seat yourself in your mamma's thimble," said the little mouse, "that I may have the pleasure of drawing you to the wedding?"

"Will you really take so much trouble, young lady?" said he. And so in this way he rode to the mouse's wedding.

First they went under the floor, and then through a long passage which was scarcely high enough to allow the thimble to drive under, and the whole passage was lit up with the light of rotten wood.

"Does it not smell delicious?" asked the mouse, as she drew him along. "The wall and the floor have been smeared with bacon rind; nothing could be nicer."

Very soon they arrived at the bridal hall. On the right stood all the little lady mice, whispering and giggling as if they were making game of each other. To the left were the gentlemen mice, [158] stroking their whiskers with their forepaws. And in the center of the hall could be seen the bridal pair, standing side by side in a hollow cheese rind and kissing each other while all eyes were upon them.

More and more friends kept coming, till the mice were in danger of treading each other to death; for the bridal pair now stood in the doorway, and none could pass in or out.

The room had been rubbed over with bacon rind like the passage, which was all the refreshment offered to the guests. But for dessert a pea was passed around, on which a mouse had bitten the first letters of the names of the betrothed pair. This was something quite uncommon. All the mice said it was a very beautiful wedding, and that they had been very agreeably entertained.

After this Hjalmar returned home. He had certainly been in grand society, but he had been

obliged to creep under a room and to make himself small enough to wear the uniform of a tin soldier. [159]

FRIDAY

"It is incredible how many old people there are who would be glad to have me at night," said Ole-Luk-Oie, "especially those who have done something wrong.

"'Good old Ole,' say they to me, 'we cannot close our eyes, and we lie awake the whole night and see all our evil deeds sitting on our beds like little imps and sprinkling us with scalding water. Will you come and drive them away, that we may have a good night's rest?' and then they sigh so deeply and say: 'We would gladly pay you for it. Good night, Ole-Luk, the money lies in the window.' But I never do anything for gold."

"What shall we do to-night?" asked Hjalmar.

"I do not know whether you would care to go to another wedding," replied Ole-Luk-Oie, "although it is quite a different affair from the one we saw last night. Your sister's large doll, that is dressed like a man and is called Herman, intends to marry the doll Bertha. It is also the dolls' birthday, and they will receive many presents." [160]

"Yes, I know that already," said Hjalmar; "my sister always allows her dolls to keep their birthdays or to have a wedding when they require new clothes. That has happened already a hundred times, I am quite sure."

"Yes, so it may; but to-night is the hundred-and-first wedding, and when that has taken place it must be the last; therefore this is to be extremely beautiful. Only look."

Hjalmar looked at the table, and there stood the little cardboard dolls' house, with lights in all the windows, and drawn up before it were the tin soldiers, presenting arms.

The bridal pair were seated on the floor, leaning against the leg of the table, looking very thoughtful and with good reason. Then Ole-Luk-Oie, dressed up in grandmother's black gown, married them.

As soon as the ceremony was concluded all the furniture in the room joined in singing a beautiful song which had been composed by the lead pencil, and which went to the melody of a military tattoo:

"Waft, gentle breeze, our kind farewell
To the tiny house where the bride folks dwell.
With their skin of kid leather fitting so well, [161]
They are straight and upright as a tailor's ell.
Hurrah! hurrah! for beau and belle.
Let echo repeat our kind farewell."

And now came the presents; but the bridal pair had nothing to eat, for love was to be their food.

"Shall we go to a country house, or travel?" asked the bridegroom.

They consulted the swallow, who had traveled so far, and the old hen in the yard, who had brought up five broods of chickens.

And the swallow talked to them of warm countries where the grapes hang in large clusters on the vines and the air is soft and mild, and about the mountains glowing with colors more beautiful than we can think of.

"But they have no red cabbage such as we have," said the hen. "I was once in the country with my chickens for a whole summer. There was a large sand pit in which we could walk about and scratch as we liked. Then we got into a garden in which grew red cabbage. Oh, how nice it was! I cannot think of anything more delicious." [162]

"But one cabbage stalk is exactly like another," said the swallow; "and here we often have bad weather."

"Yes, but we are accustomed to it," said the hen.

"But it is so cold here, and freezes sometimes."

"Cold weather is good for cabbages," said the hen; "besides, we do have it warm here sometimes. Four years ago we had a summer that lasted more than five weeks, and it was so hot one could scarcely breathe. And then in this country we have no poisonous animals, and we are free from robbers. He must be a blockhead, who does not consider our country the finest of all lands. He ought not to be allowed to live here." And then the hen wept very much and said: "I have also traveled. I once went twelve miles in a coop, and it was not pleasant traveling at all."

"The hen is a sensible woman," said the doll Bertha. "I don't care for traveling over mountains, just to go up and come down again. No, let us go to the sand pit in front of the gate and then take a walk in the cabbage garden."

And so they settled it. [163]

[164]

SATURDAY

"Am I to hear any more stories?" asked little Hjalmar, as soon as Ole-Luk-Oie had sent him to sleep.

"We shall have no time this evening," said he, spreading out his prettiest umbrella over the child. "Look at these Chinese people." And then the whole umbrella appeared like a large china bowl, with blue trees and pointed bridges upon which stood little Chinamen nodding their heads.

"We must make all the world beautiful for to-morrow morning," said Ole-Luk-Oie, "for it will be a holiday; it is Sunday. I must now go to the church steeple and see if the little sprites who live there have polished the bells so that they may sound sweetly; then I must go into the fields and see if the wind has blown the dust from the grass and the leaves; and the most difficult task of all which I have to do is to take down all the stars and brighten them up. I have to number them first before I put them in my apron, and also to number the places from which I take them, so that they may go back into the right holes, or else they would not remain and we should have a number of falling stars, for they would all tumble down one after another."

[165]

"Hark ye, Mr. Luk-Oie!" said an old portrait which hung on the wall of Hjalmar's bedroom. "Do you know me? I am Hjalmar's great-grandfather. I thank you for telling the boy stories, but you must not confuse his ideas. The stars cannot be taken down from the sky and polished; they are spheres like our earth, which is a good thing for them."

"Thank you, old great-grandfather," said Ole-Luk-Oie. "I thank you. You may be the head of the family, as no doubt you are, and very old, but I am older still. I am an ancient heathen. The old Romans and Greeks named me the Dream God. I have visited the noblest houses,—yes, and I continue to do so,—still I know how to conduct myself both to high and low, and now you may tell the stories yourself"; and so Ole-Luk-Oie walked off, taking his umbrellas with him.

"Well, well, one is never to give an opinion, I suppose," grumbled the portrait. And it woke Hjalmar.

[166]

SUNDAY

"Good evening," said Ole-Luk-Oie.

Hjalmar nodded, and then sprang out of bed and turned his great-grandfather's portrait to the wall so that it might not interrupt them as it had done yesterday. "Now," said he, "you must tell me some stories about five green peas that lived in one pod, or of the chickseed that courted the chickweed, or of the Darning-needle who acted so proudly because she fancied herself an embroidery needle."

"You may have too much of a good thing," said Ole-Luk-Oie. "You know that I like best to show you something, so I will show you my brother. He is also called Ole-Luk-Oie, but he never visits any one but once, and when he does come he takes him away on his horse and tells him stories as they ride along.

"He knows only two stories. One of these is so wonderfully beautiful that no one in the world can imagine anything at all like it, but the other it would be impossible to describe."

Then Ole-Luk-Oie lifted Hjalmar up to the window. "There, now you can see my brother, the other Ole-Luk-Oie; he is also called Death. You see he is not so bad as they represent him in picture books. There he is a skeleton, but here his coat is embroidered with silver, and he wears the splendid uniform of a hussar, and a mantle of black velvet flies behind him over the horse. Look, how he gallops along." [167]

Hjalmar saw that as this Ole-Luk-Oie rode on he lifted up old and young and carried them away on his horse. Some he seated in front of him and some behind, but always inquired first, "How stands the record book?"

"Good," they all answered.

"Yes, but let me see for myself," he replied, and they were obliged to give him the books. Then all those who had "Very good" or "Exceedingly good" came in front of the horse and heard the beautiful story, while those who had "Middling" or "Fairly good" in their books were obliged to sit behind. They cried and wanted to jump down from the horse, but they could not get free, for they seemed fastened to the seat.

"Why, Death is a most splendid Luk-Oie," said Hjalmar. "I am not in the least afraid of him." [168]

"You need have no fear of him," said Ole-Luk-Oie; "but take care and keep a good conduct book."

"Now I call that very instructive," murmured the great-grandfather's portrait. "It is useful sometimes to express an opinion." So he was quite satisfied.

These are some of the doings and sayings of Ole-Luk-Oie. I hope he may visit you himself this evening and relate some more.

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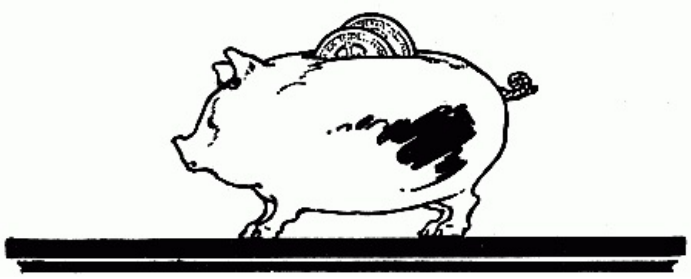
[169]



THE MONEY BOX

IN a nursery where a number of toys lay scattered about, a money box stood on the top of a very high wardrobe. It was made of clay in the shape of a pig and had been bought of the potter. In the back of the pig was a slit, and this slit had been enlarged with a knife so that dollars, or even crown pieces, might slip through—and indeed there were two in the box, besides a number of pence. The money-pig was stuffed so full that it could no longer rattle, which is the highest state of perfectness to which a money-pig can attain.

There he stood upon the cupboard, high and lofty, looking down upon everything else in the room. He knew very well that he had enough inside himself to buy up all the other toys, and this gave him a very good opinion of his own value. [170]

The rest thought of this fact also, although they did not express it, there were so many other things to talk about. A large doll, still handsome (though rather old, for her neck had been mended) lay inside one of the drawers, which was partly open. She called out to the others, "Let us have a game at being men and women; that is something worth playing at."

Upon this there was a great uproar; even the engravings which hung in frames on the wall turned round in their excitement and showed that they had a wrong side to them, although they had not the least intention of exposing themselves in this way or of objecting to the game.

It was late at night, but as the moon shone through the windows, they had light at a cheap rate. And as the game was now to begin, all were invited to take part in it, even the children's wagon, which certainly belonged among the coarser playthings. "Each has its own value," said the wagon; "we cannot all be noblemen; there must be some to do the work."

The money-pig was the only one who received a written invitation. He stood so high that they were afraid he would not accept a verbal message. But in his reply he said if he had to take a part he must enjoy the sport from his own home; they were to arrange for him to do so. And so they did. [171]

The little toy theater was therefore put up in such a way that the money-pig could look directly into it. Some wanted to begin with a comedy and afterwards to have a tea party and a discussion for mental improvement, but they began with the latter first.

The rocking-horse spoke of training and races; the wagon, of railways and steam power—for

these subjects belonged to each of their professions, and it was right they should talk of them. The clock talked politics—"Tick, tick." He professed to know what was the time of the day, but there was a whisper that he did not go correctly. The bamboo cane stood by, looking stiff and proud (he was vain of his brass ferrule and silver top), and on the sofa lay two worked cushions, pretty but stupid.

When the play at the little theater began, the rest sat and looked on; they were requested to applaud and stamp, or crack, whenever they felt gratified with what they saw. The riding whip [172] said he never cracked for old people, only for the young—those who were not yet married. "I crack for everybody," said the nutcracker.

"Yes, and a fine noise you make," thought the audience as the play went on.

It was not worth much, but it was very well played, and all the actors turned their painted sides to the audience, for they were made to be seen only on one side. The acting was wonderful, excepting that sometimes the actors came out beyond the lamps, because the wires were a little too long.

The doll whose neck had been mended was so excited that the place in her neck burst, and the money-pig declared he must do something for one of the players as they had all pleased him so much. So he made up his mind to mention one of them in his will as the one to be buried with him in the family vault, whenever that event should happen.

They enjoyed the comedy so much that they gave up all thoughts of the tea party and only carried out their idea of intellectual amusement, which they called playing at men and women. [173] And there was nothing wrong about it, for it was only play. All the while each one thought most of himself or of what the money-pig could be thinking. The money-pig's thoughts were on (as he supposed) a very far-distant time—of making his will, and of his burial, and of when it might all come to pass.

Certainly sooner than he expected; for all at once down he came from the top of the press, fell on the floor, and was broken to pieces. Then all the pennies hopped and danced about in the most amusing manner. The little ones twirled round like tops, and the large ones rolled away as far as they could, especially the one great silver crown piece, who had often wanted to go out into the world. And he had his wish as well as all the rest of the money. The pieces of the money-pig were thrown into the dustbin, and the next day there stood a new money-pig on the cupboard, but it had not a farthing inside it yet, and therefore, like the old one, could not rattle.

This was the beginning with him, and with us it shall be the end of our story.

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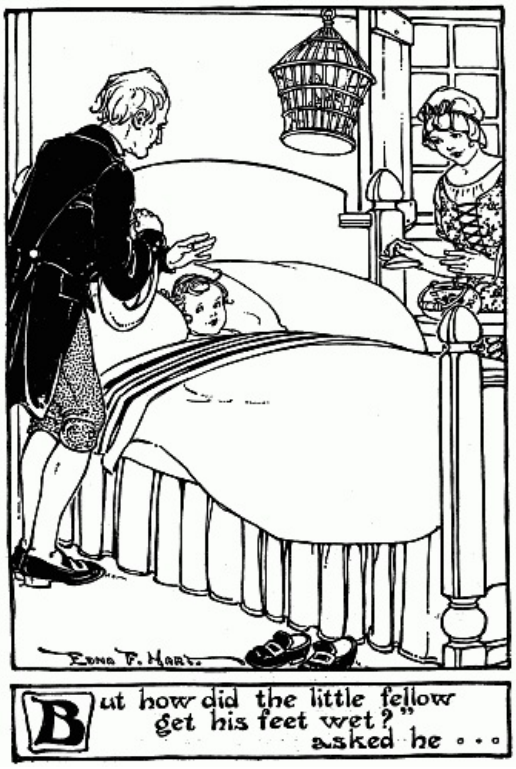
[174]

ELDER-TREE MOTHER

THERE was once a little boy who had taken cold by going out and getting his feet wet. No one could think how he had managed to do so, for the weather was quite dry. His mother undressed him and put him to bed, and then she brought in the teapot to make him a good cup of elder tea, which is so warming.

At the same time the friendly old man who lived all alone at the top of the house came in at the door. He had neither wife nor child, but he was very fond of children and knew so many fairy tales and stories that it was a pleasure to hear him talk. "Now, if you drink your tea," said the mother, "very likely you will have a story in the meantime." [175]



"Yes, if I could think of a new one to tell," said the old man. "But how did the little fellow get his feet wet?" asked he. [176]

"Ah," said the mother, "that is what we cannot make out."

"Will you tell me a story?" asked the boy.

"Yes, if you can tell me exactly how deep the gutter is in the little street through which you go to school."

"Just halfway up to my knee," said the boy, promptly; "that is, if I stand in the deepest part."

"It is easy to see how we got our feet wet," said the old man. "Well, now I suppose I ought to tell a story, but really I don't know any more."

"You can make up one, I know," said the boy. "Mother says that you can turn everything you look at into a story, and everything, even, that you touch."

"Ah, but those tales and stories are worth nothing. The real ones come of themselves; they knock at my forehead and say, 'Here we are!'"

"Won't there be a knock soon?" asked the boy. And his mother laughed as she put elder flowers in the teapot and poured boiling water over them. "Oh, do tell me a story." [177]

"Yes, if a story comes of itself, but tales and stories are very grand; they only come when it pleases them. Stop," he cried all at once, "here we have it; look! there is a story in the teapot now."

The little boy looked at the teapot and saw the lid raise itself gradually and long branches stretch out, even from the spout, in all directions till they became larger and larger, and there appeared a great elder tree covered with flowers white and fresh. It spread itself even to the bed and pushed the curtains aside, and oh, how fragrant the blossoms were!

In the midst of the tree sat a pleasant-looking old woman in a very strange dress. The dress was green, like the leaves of the elder tree, and was decorated with large white elder blossoms. It was not easy to tell whether the border was made of some kind of stuff or of real flowers.

"What is that woman's name?" asked the boy.

"The Romans and Greeks called her a dryad," said the old man, "but we do not understand that name; we have a better one for her in the quarter of the town where the sailors live. They call her Elder-flower Mother, and you must pay attention to her now, and listen while you look at the beautiful tree. [178]

"Just such a large, blooming tree as this stands outside in the corner of a poor little yard, and under this tree, one bright sunny afternoon, sat two old people, a sailor and his wife. They had great-grandchildren, and would soon celebrate the golden wedding, which is the fiftieth anniversary of the wedding day in many countries, and the Elder Mother sat in the tree and looked as pleased as she does now.

"'I know when the golden wedding is to be,' said she, but they did not hear her; they were talking of olden times. 'Do you remember,' said the old sailor, 'when we were quite little and used to run about and play in the very same yard where we are now sitting, and how we planted little

twigs in one corner and made a garden?'

"'Yes,' said the old woman, 'I remember it quite well; and how we watered the twigs, and one of them was a sprig of elder that took root and put forth green shoots, until in time it became the great tree under which we old people are now seated.' [179]

"'To be sure,' he replied, 'and in that corner yonder stands the water butt in which I used to swim my boat that I had cut out all myself; and it sailed well too. But since then I have learned a very different kind of sailing.'

"'Yes, but before that we went to school,' said she, 'and then we were prepared for confirmation. How we both cried on that day! But in the afternoon we went hand in hand up to the round tower and saw the view over Copenhagen and across the water; then we went to Fredericksburg, where the king and queen were sailing in their beautiful boat on the canals.'

"'But I had to sail on a very different voyage elsewhere and be away from home for years on long voyages,' said the old sailor.

"'Ah yes, and I used to cry about you,' said she, 'for I thought you must be lying drowned at the bottom of the sea, with the waves sweeping over you. And many a time have I got up in the night to see if the weathercock had turned; it turned often enough, but you came not. How well I [180] remember one day the rain was pouring down from the skies, and the man came to the house where I was in service to take away the dust. I went down to him with the dust box and stood for a moment at the door,—what shocking weather it was!—and while I stood there the postman came up and brought me a letter from you.

"'How that letter had traveled about! I tore it open and read it. I laughed and wept at the same time, I was so happy. It said that you were in warm countries where the coffee berries grew, and what a beautiful country it was, and described many other wonderful things. And so I stood reading by the dustbin, with the rain pouring down, when all at once somebody came and clasped me round the waist.'

"'Yes, and you gave him such a box on the ears that they tingled,' said the old man.

"'I did not know that it was you,' she replied; 'but you had arrived as quickly as your letter, and you looked so handsome, and, indeed, so you are still. You had a large yellow silk handkerchief in [181] your pocket and a shiny hat on your head. You looked quite fine. And all the time what weather it was, and how dismal the street looked!'

"'And then do you remember,' said he, 'when we were married, and our first boy came, and then Marie, and Niels, and Peter, and Hans Christian?'

"'Indeed I do,' she replied; 'and they are all grown up respectable men and women, whom every one likes.'

"'And now their children have little ones,' said the old sailor. 'There are great-grandchildren for us, strong and healthy too. Was it not about this time of year that we were married?'

"'Yes, and to-day is the golden-wedding day,' said Elder-tree Mother, popping her head out just between the two old people; and they thought it was a neighbor nodding to them. Then they looked at each other and clasped their hands together. Presently came their children and grand*-children, who knew very well that it was the golden-wedding day. They had already wished them joy on that very morning, but the old people had forgotten it, although they remembered so well all that had happened many years before. And the elder tree smelled sweet, and the setting sun [182] shone upon the faces of the old people till they looked quite ruddy. And the youngest of their grandchildren danced round them joyfully, and said they were going to have a feast in the evening, and there were to be hot potatoes. Then the Elder Mother nodded in the tree and cried 'Hurrah!' with all the rest."

"But that is not a story," said the little boy who had been listening.

"Not till you understand it," said the old man. "But let us ask the Elder Mother to explain it."

"It was not exactly a story," said the Elder Mother, "but the story is coming now, and it is a true one. For out of truth the most wonderful stories grow, just as my beautiful elder bush has sprung out of the teapot." And then she took the little boy out of bed and laid him on her bosom, and the blooming branches of elder closed over them so that they sat, as it were, in a leafy bower, and the bower flew with them through the air in the most delightful manner.

Then the Elder Mother all at once changed to a beautiful young maiden, but her dress was still [183] of the same green stuff, ornamented with a border of white elder blossoms such as the Elder Mother had worn. In her bosom she wore a real elder flower, and a wreath of the same was entwined in her golden ringlets. Her large blue eyes were very beautiful to look at. She was of the same age as the boy, and they kissed each other and felt very happy.

They left the arbor together, hand in hand, and found themselves in a beautiful flower garden which belonged to their home. On the green lawn their father's stick was tied up. There was life in this stick for the little ones, for no sooner did they place themselves upon it than the white knob changed into a pretty neighing head with a black, flowing mane, and four long, slender legs sprung forth. The creature was strong and spirited, and galloped with them round the grassplot.

"Hurrah! now we will ride many miles away," said the boy; "we'll ride to the nobleman's estate, where we went last year."

Then they rode round the grassplot again, and the little maiden, who, we know, was Elder-tree Mother, kept crying out: "Now we are in the country. Do you see the farmhouse, with a great [184] baking oven standing out from the wall by the road-side like a gigantic egg? There is an elder spreading its branches over it, and a cock is marching about and scratching for the chickens. See how he struts!

"Now we are near the church. There it stands on the hill, shaded by the great oak trees, one of which is half dead. See, here we are at the blacksmith's forge. How the fire burns! And the half-clad men are striking the hot iron with the hammer, so that the sparks fly about. Now then, away to the nobleman's beautiful estate!" And the boy saw all that the little girl spoke of as she sat behind him on the stick, for it passed before him although they were only galloping round the grassplot. Then they played together in a side walk and raked up the earth to make a little garden. Then she took elder flowers out of her hair and planted them, and they grew just like those which he had heard the old people talking about, and which they had planted in their young days. They walked about hand in hand too, just as the old people had done when they were children, but they did not go up the round tower nor to Fredericksburg garden. No; but the little [185] girl seized the boy round the waist, and they rode all over the whole country (sometimes it was spring, then summer; then autumn and winter followed), while thousands of images were presented to the boy's eyes and heart, and the little girl constantly sang to him, "You must never forget all this." And through their whole flight the elder tree sent forth the sweetest fragrance.

They passed roses and fresh beech trees, but the perfume of the elder tree was stronger than all, for its flowers hung round the little maiden's heart, against which the boy so often leaned his head during their flight.

"It is beautiful here in the spring," said the maiden, as they stood in a grove of beech trees covered with fresh green leaves, while at their feet the sweet-scented thyme and blushing anemone lay spread amid the green grass in delicate bloom. "O that it were always spring in the fragrant beech groves!"

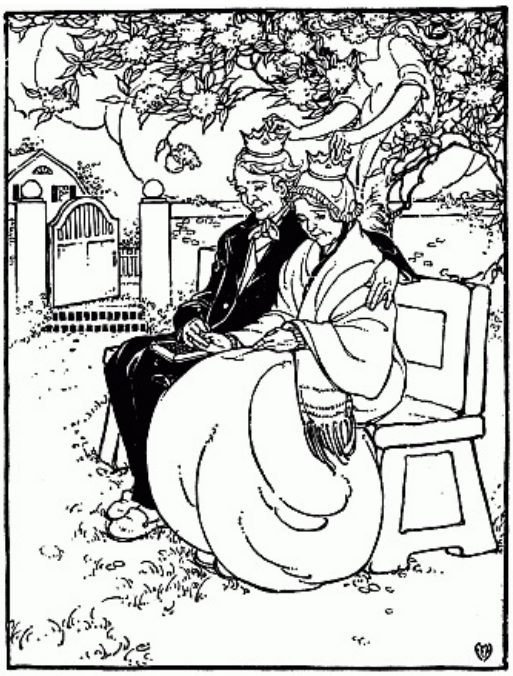
"Here it is delightful in summer," said the maiden, as they passed old knights' castles telling of days gone by and saw the high walls and pointed gables mirrored in the rivers beneath, where [186] swans were sailing about and peeping into the cool green avenues. In the fields the corn waved to and fro like the sea. Red and yellow flowers grew amongst the ruins, and the hedges were covered with wild hops and blooming convolvulus. In the evening the moon rose round and full, and the haystacks in the meadows filled the air with their sweet scent. These were scenes never to be forgotten.

"It is lovely here also in autumn," said the little maiden, and then the scene changed again. The sky appeared higher and more beautifully blue, while the forest glowed with colors of red, green, and gold. The hounds were off to the chase, and large flocks of wild birds flew screaming over the Huns' graves, where the blackberry bushes twined round the old ruins. The dark blue sea was dotted with white sails, and in the barns sat old women, maidens, and children picking hops into a large tub. The young ones sang songs, and the old ones told fairy tales of wizards and witches. There could be nothing more pleasant than all this. [187]

"Again," said the maiden, "it is beautiful here in winter." Then in a moment all the trees were covered with hoarfrost, so that they looked like white coral. The snow crackled beneath the feet as if every one had on new boots, and one shooting star after another fell from the sky. In warm rooms there could be seen the Christmas trees, decked out with presents and lighted up amid festivities and joy. In the country farmhouses could be heard the sound of a violin, and there were games for apples, so that even the poorest child could say, "It is beautiful in winter."

And beautiful indeed were all the scenes which the maiden showed to the little boy, and always around them floated the fragrance of the elder blossom, and ever above them waved the red flag with the white cross, under which the old seaman had sailed. The boy—who had become a youth, and who had gone as a sailor out into the wide world and sailed to warm countries where the coffee grew, and to whom the little girl had given an elder blossom from her bosom for a keepsake, when she took leave of him—placed the flower in his hymn book; and when he opened it in foreign lands he always turned to the spot where this flower of remembrance lay, and the [188] more he looked at it the fresher it appeared. He could, as it were, breathe the homelike fragrance of the woods, and see the little girl looking at him from between the petals of the flower with her clear blue eyes, and hear her whispering, "It is beautiful here at home in spring and summer, in autumn and in winter," while hundreds of these home scenes passed through his memory.

Many years had passed, and he was now an old man, seated with his old wife under an elder tree in full blossom. They were holding each other's hands, just as the great-grandfather and grandmother had done, and spoke, as they did, of olden times and of the golden wedding. The little maiden with the blue eyes and with the elder blossoms in her hair sat in the tree and nodded to them and said, "To-day is the golden wedding."



As she placed them on the heads of the old people, each flower became a golden crown.

And then she took two flowers out of her wreath and kissed them, and they shone first like silver and then like gold, and as she placed them on the heads of the old people, each flower became a golden crown. And there they sat like a king and queen under the sweet-scented tree, [190] which still looked like an elder bush. Then he related to his old wife the story of the Elder-tree Mother, just as he had heard it told when he was a little boy, and they both fancied it very much like their own story, especially in parts which they liked the best.

"Well, and so it is," said the little maiden in the tree. "Some call me Elder Mother, others a dryad, but my real name is Memory. It is I who sit in the tree as it grows and grows, and I can think of the past and relate many things. Let me see if you have still preserved the flower."

Then the old man opened his hymn book, and there lay the elder flower, as fresh as if it had only just been placed there, and Memory nodded. And the two old people with the golden crowns on their heads sat in the red glow of the evening sunlight and closed their eyes, and—and—the story was ended.

The little boy lay in his bed and did not quite know whether he had been dreaming or listening to a story. The teapot stood on the table, but no elder bush grew out of it, and the old man who [191] had really told the tale was on the threshold and just going out at the door.

"How beautiful it was," said the little boy. "Mother, I have been to warm countries."

"I can quite believe it," said his mother. "When any one drinks two full cups of elder-flower tea, he may well get into warm countries"; and then she covered him up, that he should not take cold. "You have slept well while I have been disputing with the old man as to whether it was a real story or a fairy legend."

"And where is the Elder-tree Mother?" asked the boy.

"She is in the teapot," said the mother, "and there she may stay."

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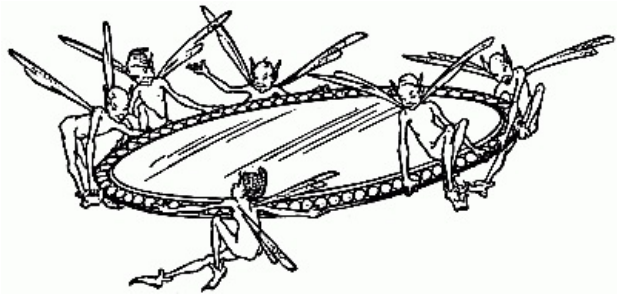
[192]



THE SNOW QUEEN

STORY THE FIRST

WHICH DESCRIBES A LOOKING-GLASS AND ITS BROKEN FRAGMENTS

YOU must attend to the beginning of this story, for when we get to the end we shall know more than we now do about a very wicked hobgoblin; he was one of the most mischievous of all sprites, for he was a real demon.

One day when he was in a merry mood he made a looking-glass which had the power of making everything good or beautiful that was reflected in it shrink almost to nothing, while everything that was worthless and bad was magnified so as to look ten times worse than it really was. [193]

The most lovely landscapes appeared like boiled spinach, and all the people became hideous and looked as if they stood on their heads and had no bodies. Their countenances were so distorted that no one could recognize them, and even one freckle on the face appeared to spread over the whole of the nose and mouth. The demon said this was very amusing. When a good or holy thought passed through the mind of any one a wrinkle was seen in the mirror, and then how the demon laughed at his cunning invention.

All who went to the demon's school—for he kept a school—talked everywhere of the wonders they had seen, and declared that people could now, for the first time, see what the world and its inhabitants were really like. They carried the glass about everywhere, till at last there was not a land nor a people who had not been looked at through this distorted mirror.

They wanted even to fly with it up to heaven to see the angels, but the higher they flew the more slippery the glass became, and they could scarcely hold it. At last it slipped from their hands, fell to the earth, and was broken into millions of pieces. [194]

But now the looking-glass caused more unhappiness than ever, for some of the fragments were not so large as a grain of sand, and they flew about the world into every country. And when one of these tiny atoms flew into a person's eye it stuck there, unknown to himself, and from that moment he viewed everything the wrong way, and could see only the worst side of what he looked at, for even the smallest fragment retained the same power which had belonged to the whole mirror.

Some few persons even got a splinter of the looking-glass in their hearts, and this was terrible, for their hearts became cold and hard like a lump of ice. A few of the pieces were so large that they could be used as windowpanes; it would have been a sad thing indeed to look at our friends through them. Other pieces were made into spectacles, and this was dreadful, for those who wore them could see nothing either rightly or justly. At all this the wicked demon laughed till his sides shook, to see the mischief he had done. There are still a number of these little fragments of glass floating about in the air, and now you shall hear what happened with one of them. [195]

SECOND STORY

A LITTLE BOY AND A LITTLE GIRL

In a large town full of houses and people there is not room for everybody to have even a little garden. Most people are obliged to content themselves with a few flowers in flowerpots.

In one of these large towns lived two poor children who had a garden somewhat larger and better than a few flowerpots. They were not brother and sister, but they loved each other almost as much as if they had been. Their parents lived opposite each other in two garrets where the roofs of neighboring houses nearly joined each other, and the water pipe ran between them. In each roof was a little window, so that any one could step across the gutter from one window to the other.

The parents of each of these children had a large wooden box in which they cultivated kitchen vegetables for their own use, and in each box was a little rosebush which grew luxuriantly.

After a while the parents decided to place these two boxes across the water pipe, so that they reached from one window to the other and looked like two banks of flowers. Sweet peas drooped over the boxes, and the rosebushes shot forth long branches, which were trained about the windows and clustered together almost like a triumphal arch of leaves and flowers. [196]

The boxes were very high, and the children knew they must not climb upon them without permission; but they often had leave to step out and sit upon their little stools under the rosebushes or play quietly together.

In winter all this pleasure came to an end, for the windows were sometimes quite frozen over. But they would warm copper pennies on the stove and hold the warm pennies against the frozen pane; then there would soon be a little round hole through which they could peep, and the soft, bright eyes of the little boy and girl would sparkle through the hole at each window as they looked at each other. Their names were Kay and Gerda. In summer they could be together with one jump from the window, but in winter they had to go up and down the long staircase and out through the snow before they could meet. [197]

"See! there are the white bees swarming," said Kay's old grandmother one day when it was snowing.

"Have they a queen bee?" asked the little boy, for he knew that the real bees always had a queen.

"To be sure they have," said the grandmother. "She is flying there where the swarm is thickest. She is the largest of them all and never remains on the earth, but flies up to the dark clouds. Often at midnight she flies through the streets of the town and breathes with her frosty breath upon the windows; then the ice freezes on the panes into wonderful forms that look like flowers and castles."

"Yes, I have seen them," said both the children; and they knew it must be true.

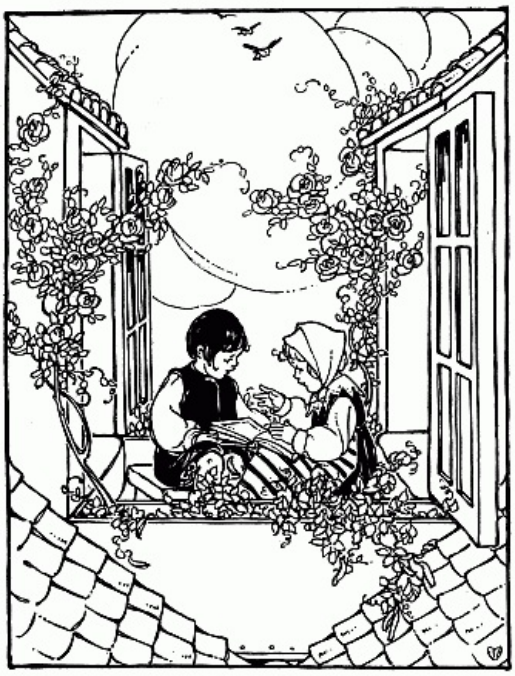
"Can the Snow Queen come in here?" asked the little girl.

"Only let her come," said the boy. "I'll put her on the warm stove, and then she'll melt."

The grandmother smoothed his hair and told him more stories.

That same evening when little Kay was at home, half undressed, he climbed upon a chair by [198] the window and peeped out through the little round hole. A few flakes of snow were falling, and one of them, rather larger than the rest, alighted on the edge of one of the flower boxes. Strange to say, this snowflake grew larger and larger till at last it took the form of a woman dressed in garments of white gauze, which looked like millions of starry snowflakes linked together. She was fair and beautiful, but made of ice—glittering, dazzling ice. Still, she was alive, and her eyes sparkled like bright stars, though there was neither peace nor rest in them. She nodded toward the window and waved her hand. The little boy was frightened and sprang from the chair, and at the same moment it seemed as if a large bird flew by the window.

On the following day there was a clear frost, and very soon came the spring. The sun shone; the young green leaves burst forth; the swallows built their nests; windows were opened, and the children sat once more in the garden on the roof, high above all the other rooms.



The children sat once more in the garden on the roof

How beautifully the roses blossomed this summer! The little girl had learned a hymn in which [200] roses were spoken of. She thought of their own roses, and she sang the hymn to the little boy, and he sang, too:

"Roses bloom and fade away;
The Christ-child shall abide alway.
Blessed are we his face to see
And ever little children be."

Then the little ones held each other by the hand, and kissed the roses, and looked at the bright sunshine, and spoke to it as if the Christ-child were really there. Those were glorious summer days. How beautiful and fresh it was out among the rosebushes, which seemed as if they would never leave off blooming.

One day Kay and Gerda sat looking at a book of pictures of animals and birds. Just then, as the clock in the church tower struck twelve, Kay said, "Oh, something has struck my heart!" and soon after, "There is certainly something in my eye."

The little girl put her arm round his neck and looked into his eye, but she could see nothing.

"I believe it is gone," he said. But it was not gone; it was one of those bits of the looking-glass,

—that magic mirror of which we have spoken,—the ugly glass which made everything great and good appear small and ugly, while all that was wicked and bad became more visible, and every little fault could be plainly seen. Poor little Kay had also received a small splinter in his heart, which very quickly turned to a lump of ice. He felt no more pain, but the glass was there still. "Why do you cry?" said he at last. "It makes you look ugly. There is nothing the matter with me now. Oh, fie!" he cried suddenly; "that rose is worm-eaten, and this one is quite crooked. After all, they are ugly roses, just like the box in which they stand." And then he kicked the boxes with his foot and pulled off the two roses. [201]

"Why, Kay, what are you doing?" cried the little girl; and then when he saw how grieved she was he tore off another rose and jumped through his own window, away from sweet little Gerda.

When afterward she brought out the picture book he said, "It is only fit for babies in long clothes," and when grandmother told stories he would interrupt her with "but"; or sometimes when he could manage it he would get behind her chair, put on a pair of spectacles, and imitate her very cleverly to make the people laugh. By and by he began to mimic the speech and gait of persons in the street. All that was peculiar or disagreeable in a person he would imitate directly, and people said, "That boy will be very clever; he has a remarkable genius." But it was the piece of glass in his eye and the coldness in his heart that made him act like this. He would even tease little Gerda, who loved him with all her heart. [202]

His games too were quite different; they were not so childlike. One winter's day, when it snowed, he brought out a burning glass, then, holding out the skirt of his blue coat, let the snowflakes fall upon it.

"Look in this glass, Gerda," said he, and she saw how every flake of snow was magnified and looked like a beautiful flower or a glittering star.

"Is it not clever," said Kay, "and much more interesting than looking at real flowers? There is not a single fault in it. The snowflakes are quite perfect till they begin to melt."

Soon after, Kay made his appearance in large, thick gloves and with his sledge at his back. He called upstairs to Gerda, "I've got leave to go into the great square, where the other boys play and ride." And away he went. [203]

In the great square the boldest among the boys would often tie their sledges to the wagons of the country people and so get a ride. This was capital. But while they were all amusing themselves, and Kay with them, a great sledge came by; it was painted white, and in it sat some one wrapped in a rough white fur and wearing a white cap. The sledge drove twice round the square, and Kay fastened his own little sledge to it, so that when it went away he went with it. It went faster and faster right through the next street, and the person who drove turned round and nodded pleasantly to Kay as if they were well acquainted with each other; but whenever Kay wished to loosen his little sledge the driver turned and nodded as if to signify that he was to stay, so Kay sat still, and they drove out through the town gate.

Then the snow began to fall so heavily that the little boy could not see a hand's breadth before him, but still they drove on. He suddenly loosened the cord so that the large sledge might go on without him, but it was of no use; his little carriage held fast, and away they went like the wind. Then he called out loudly, but nobody heard him, while the snow beat upon him, and the sledge flew onward. Every now and then it gave a jump, as if they were going over hedges and ditches. The boy was frightened and tried to say a prayer, but he could remember nothing but the multiplication table. [204]

The snowflakes became larger and larger, till they appeared like great white birds. All at once they sprang on one side, the great sledge stopped, and the person who had driven it rose up. The fur and the cap, which were made entirely of snow, fell off, and he saw a lady, tall and white; it was the Snow Queen.

"We have driven well," said she; "but why do you tremble so? Here, creep into my warm fur." Then she seated him beside her in the sledge, and as she wrapped the fur about him, he felt as if he were sinking into a snowdrift.

"Are you still cold?" she asked, as she kissed him on the forehead. The kiss was colder than ice; it went quite through to his heart, which was almost a lump of ice already. He felt as if he were going to die, but only for a moment—he soon seemed quite well and did not notice the cold all around him. [205]

"My sledge! Don't forget my sledge," was his first thought, and then he looked and saw that it was bound fast to one of the white birds which flew behind him. The Snow Queen kissed little Kay again, and by this time he had forgotten little Gerda, his grandmother, and all at home.

"Now you must have no more kisses," she said, "or I should kiss you to death."

Kay looked at her. She was so beautiful, he could not imagine a more lovely face; she did not now seem to be made of ice as when he had seen her through his window and she had nodded to him.

In his eyes she was perfect, and he did not feel at all afraid. He told her he could do mental arithmetic as far as fractions, and that he knew the number of square miles and the number of inhabitants in the country. She smiled, and it occurred to him that she thought he did not yet

know so very much. [206]

He looked around the vast expanse as she flew higher and higher with him upon a black cloud, while the storm blew and howled as if it were singing songs of olden time. They flew over woods and lakes, over sea and land; below them roared the wild wind; wolves howled, and the snow crackled; over them flew the black, screaming crows, and above all shone the moon, clear and bright—and so Kay passed through the long, long winter's night, and by day he slept at the feet of the Snow Queen.

THIRD STORY

THE ENCHANTED FLOWER GARDEN

But how fared little Gerda in Kay's absence?

What had become of him no one knew, nor could any one give the slightest information, excepting the boys, who said that he had tied his sledge to another very large one, which had driven through the street and out at the town gate. No one knew where it went. Many tears were shed for him, and little Gerda wept bitterly for a long time. She said she knew he must be dead, that he was drowned in the river which flowed close by the school. The long winter days were very dreary. But at last spring came with warm sunshine. [207]

"Kay is dead and gone," said little Gerda.

"I don't believe it," said the sunshine.

"He is dead and gone," she said to the sparrows.

"We don't believe it," they replied, and at last little Gerda began to doubt it herself.

"I will put on my new red shoes," she said one morning, "those that Kay has never seen, and then I will go down to the river and ask for him."

It was quite early when she kissed her old grandmother, who was still asleep; then she put on her red shoes and went, quite alone, out of the town gate, toward the river.

"Is it true that you have taken my little playmate away from me?" she said to the river. "I will give you my red shoes if you will give him back to me."

And it seemed as if the waves nodded to her in a strange manner. Then she took off her red shoes, which she liked better than anything else, and threw them both into the river, but they fell near the bank, and the little waves carried them back to land just as if the river would not take from her what she loved best, because it could not give her back little Kay. [208]

But she thought the shoes had not been thrown out far enough. Then she crept into a boat that lay among the reeds, and threw the shoes again from the farther end of the boat into the water; but it was not fastened, and her movement sent it gliding away from the land. When she saw this she hastened to reach the end of the boat, but before she could do so it was more than a yard from the bank and drifting away faster than ever.

Little Gerda was very much frightened. She began to cry, but no one heard her except the sparrows, and they could not carry her to land, but they flew along by the shore and sang as if to comfort her: "Here we are! Here we are!"

The boat floated with the stream, and little Gerda sat quite still with only her stockings on her feet; the red shoes floated after her, but she could not reach them because the boat kept so much in advance. [209]

There came a very old woman out of the house

The banks on either side of the river were very pretty. There were beautiful flowers, old trees, [210] sloping fields in which cows and sheep were grazing, but not a human being to be seen.

"Perhaps the river will carry me to little Kay," thought Gerda, and then she became more cheerful, and raised her head and looked at the beautiful green banks; and so the boat sailed on for hours. At length she came to a large cherry orchard, in which stood a small house with strange red and blue windows. It had also a thatched roof, and outside were two wooden soldiers that presented arms to her as she sailed past. Gerda called out to them, for she thought they were alive; but of course they did not answer, and as the boat drifted nearer to the shore she saw what they really were.

Then Gerda called still louder, and there came a very old woman out of the house, leaning on a crutch. She wore a large hat to shade her from the sun, and on it were painted all sorts of pretty flowers.

"You poor little child," said the old woman, "how did you manage to come this long, long [211] distance into the wide world on such a rapid, rolling stream?" And then the old woman walked into the water, seized the boat with her crutch, drew it to land, and lifted little Gerda out. And Gerda was glad to feel herself again on dry ground, although she was rather afraid of the strange old woman.

"Come and tell me who you are," said she, "and how you came here."

Then Gerda told her everything, while the old woman shook her head and said, "Hem-hem"; and when Gerda had finished she asked the old woman if she had not seen little Kay. She told her he had not passed that way, but he very likely would come. She told Gerda not to be sorrowful, but to taste the cherries and look at the flowers; they were better than any picture book, for each of them could tell a story. Then she took Gerda by the hand, and led her into the little house, and closed the door. The windows were very high, and as the panes were red, blue, and yellow, the daylight shone through them in all sorts of singular colors. On the table stood some beautiful cherries, and Gerda had permission to eat as many as she would. While she was eating them the [212] old woman combed out her long flaxen ringlets with a golden comb, and the glossy curls hung down on each side of the little round, pleasant face, which looked fresh and blooming as a rose.

"I have long been wishing for a dear little maiden like you," said the old woman, "and now you must stay with me and see how happily we shall live together." And while she went on combing little Gerda's hair the child thought less and less about her adopted brother Kay, for the old woman was an enchantress, although she was not a wicked witch; she conjured only a little for her own amusement, and, now, because she wanted to keep Gerda. Therefore she went into the garden and stretched out her crutch toward all the rose trees, beautiful though they were, and they immediately sank into the dark earth, so that no one could tell where they had once stood. The old woman was afraid that if little Gerda saw roses, she would think of those at home and then remember little Kay and run away.

Then she took Gerda into the flower garden. How fragrant and beautiful it was! Every flower [213] that could be thought of, for every season of the year, was here in full bloom; no picture book could have more beautiful colors. Gerda jumped for joy, and played till the sun went down behind the tall cherry trees; then she slept in an elegant bed, with red silk pillows embroidered with colored violets, and she dreamed as pleasantly as a queen on her wedding day.

The next day, and for many days after, Gerda played with the flowers in the warm sunshine. She knew every flower, and yet, although there were so many of them, it seemed as if one were missing, but what it was she could not tell. One day, however, as she sat looking at the old woman's hat with the painted flowers on it, she saw that the prettiest of them all was a rose. The old woman had forgotten to take it from her hat when she made all the roses sink into the earth. But it is difficult to keep the thoughts together in everything, and one little mistake upsets all our arrangements.

"What! are there no roses here?" cried Gerda, and she ran out into the garden and examined all the beds, and searched and searched. There was not one to be found. Then she sat down and [214] wept, and her tears fell just on the place where one of the rose trees had sunk down. The warm tears moistened the earth, and the rose tree sprouted up at once, as blooming as when it had sunk; and Gerda embraced it, and kissed the roses, and thought of the beautiful roses at home, and, with them, of little Kay.

"Oh, how I have been detained!" said the little maiden. "I wanted to seek for little Kay. Do you know where he is?" she asked the roses; "do you think he is dead?"

And the roses answered: "No, he is not dead. We have been in the ground, where all the dead lie, but Kay is not there."

"Thank you," said little Gerda, and then she went to the other flowers and looked into their little cups and asked, "Do you know where little Kay is?" But each flower as it stood in the sunshine dreamed only of its own little fairy tale or history. Not one knew anything of Kay. Gerda heard many stories from the flowers, as she asked them one after another about him. [215]

And then she ran to the other end of the garden. The door was fastened, but she pressed against the rusty latch, and it gave way. The door sprang open, and little Gerda ran out with bare feet into the wide world. She looked back three times, but no one seemed to be following her. At last she could run no longer, so she sat down to rest on a great stone, and when she looked around she saw that the summer was over and autumn very far advanced. She had known nothing of this in the beautiful garden where the sun shone and the flowers grew all the year round.

"Oh, how I have wasted my time!" said little Gerda. "It is autumn; I must not rest any longer," and she rose to go on. But her little feet were wounded and sore, and everything around her looked cold and bleak. The long willow leaves were quite yellow, the dewdrops fell like water, leaf after leaf dropped from the trees; the sloe thorn alone still bore fruit, but the sloes were sour and set the teeth on edge. Oh, how dark and weary the whole world appeared! [216]

FOURTH STORY

THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS

Gerda was obliged to rest again, and just opposite the place where she sat she saw a great crow come hopping toward her across the snow. He stood looking at her for some time, and then he wagged his head and said, "Caw, caw, good day, good day." He pronounced the words as plainly as he could, because he meant to be kind to the little girl, and then he asked her where she was going all alone in the wide world.

The word "alone" Gerda understood very well and felt how much it expressed. So she told the crow the whole story of her life and adventures and asked him if he had seen little Kay.

The crow nodded his head very gravely and said, "Perhaps I have—it may be."

"No! Do you really think you have?" cried little Gerda, and she kissed the crow and hugged him almost to death, with joy.

"Gently, gently," said the crow. "I believe I know. I think it may be little Kay; but he has certainly forgotten you by this time, for the princess." [217]

"Does he live with a princess?" asked Gerda.

"Yes, listen," replied the crow; "but it is so difficult to speak your language. If you understand the crows' language, then I can explain it better. Do you?"

"No, I have never learned it," said Gerda, "but my grandmother understands it, and used to speak it to me. I wish I had learned it."

"It does not matter," answered the crow. "I will explain as well as I can, although it will be very badly done"; and he told her what he had heard.

"In this kingdom where we now are," said he, "there lives a princess who is so wonderfully clever that she has read all the newspapers in the world—and forgotten them too, although she is so clever.

"A short time ago, as she was sitting on her throne, which people say is not such an agreeable seat as is often supposed, she began to sing a song which commences with these words:

Why should I not be married?

'Why not, indeed?' said she, and so she determined to marry if she could find a husband who [218]
knew what to say when he was spoken to, and not one who could only look grand, for that was so tiresome. She assembled all her court ladies at the beat of the drum, and when they heard of her intentions they were very much pleased.

"'We are so glad to hear of it,' said they. 'We were talking about it ourselves the other day.'

"You may believe that every word I tell you is true," said the crow, "for I have a tame sweetheart who hops freely about the palace, and she told me all this."

Of course his sweetheart was a crow, for "birds of a feather flock together," and one crow always chooses another crow.

"Newspapers were published immediately with a border of hearts and the initials of the princess among them. They gave notice that every young man who was handsome was free to visit the castle and speak with the princess, and those who could reply loud enough to be heard when spoken to were to make themselves quite at home at the palace, and the one who spoke best would be chosen as a husband for the princess. [219]

"Yes, yes, you may believe me. It is all as true as I sit here," said the crow.

"The people came in crowds. There was a great deal of crushing and running about, but no one succeeded either on the first or the second day. They could all speak very well while they were outside in the streets, but when they entered the palace gates and saw the guards in silver uniforms and the footmen in their golden livery on the staircase and the great halls lighted up, they became quite confused. And when they stood before the throne on which the princess sat they could do nothing but repeat the last words she had said, and she had no particular wish to hear her own words over again. It was just as if they had all taken something to make them sleepy while they were in the palace, for they did not recover themselves nor speak till they got back again into the street. There was a long procession of them, reaching from the town gate to the palace.

"I went myself to see them," said the crow. "They were hungry and thirsty, for at the palace they did not even get a glass of water. Some of the wisest had taken a few slices of bread and [220]
butter with them, but they did not share it with their neighbors; they thought if the others went in to the princess looking hungry, there would be a better chance for themselves."

"But Kay! tell me about little Kay!" said Gerda. "Was he among the crowd?"

"Stop a bit; we are just coming to him. It was on the third day that there came marching cheerfully along to the palace a little personage without horses or carriage, his eyes sparkling like yours. He had beautiful long hair, but his clothes were very poor."

"That was Kay," said Gerda, joyfully. "Oh, then I have found him!" and she clapped her hands.

"He had a little knapsack on his back," added the crow.

"No, it must have been his sledge," said Gerda, "for he went away with it."

"It may have been so," said the crow; "I did not look at it very closely. But I know from my tame sweetheart that he passed through the palace gates, saw the guards in their silver uniform and the servants in their liveries of gold on the stairs, but was not in the least embarrassed. [221]

"'It must be very tiresome to stand on the stairs,' he said. 'I prefer to go in.'

"The rooms were blazing with light; councilors and ambassadors walked about with bare feet, carrying golden vessels; it was enough to make any one feel serious. His boots creaked loudly as he walked, and yet he was not at all uneasy."

"It must be Kay," said Gerda; "I know he had new boots on. I heard them creak in grandmother's room."

"They really did creak," said the crow, "yet he went boldly up to the princess herself, who was sitting on a pearl as large as a spinning wheel. And all the ladies of the court were present with their maids and all the cavaliers with their servants, and each of the maids had another maid to wait upon her, and the cavaliers' servants had their own servants as well as each a page. They all stood in circles round the princess, and the nearer they stood to the door the prouder they looked. The servants' pages, who always wore slippers, could hardly be looked at, they held themselves up so proudly by the door." [222]

"It must be quite awful," said little Gerda; "but did Kay win the princess?"

"If I had not been a crow," said he, "I would have married her myself, although I am engaged. He spoke as well as I do when I speak the crows' language. I heard this from my tame sweetheart. He was quite free and agreeable and said he had not come to woo the princess, but to hear her wisdom. And he was as pleased with her as she was with him."

"Oh, certainly that was Kay," said Gerda; "he was so clever; he could work mental arithmetic and fractions. Oh, will you take me to the palace?"

"It is very easy to ask that," replied the crow, "but how are we to manage it? However, I will speak about it to my tame sweetheart and ask her advice, for, I must tell you, it will be very

difficult to gain permission for a little girl like you to enter the palace."

"Oh, yes, but I shall gain permission easily," said Gerda, "for when Kay hears that I am here he will come out and fetch me in immediately."

"Wait for me here by the palings," said the crow, wagging his head as he flew away. [223]

It was late in the evening before the crow returned. "Caw, caw!" he said; "she sends you greeting, and here is a little roll which she took from the kitchen for you. There is plenty of bread there, and she thinks you must be hungry. It is not possible for you to enter the palace by the front entrance. The guards in silver uniform and the servants in gold livery would not allow it. But do not cry; we will manage to get you in. My sweetheart knows a little back staircase that leads to the sleeping apartments, and she knows where to find the key."

Then they went into the garden, through the great avenue, where the leaves were falling one after another, and they could see the lights in the palace being put out in the same manner. And the crow led little Gerda to a back door which stood ajar. Oh! how her heart beat with anxiety and longing; it was as if she were going to do something wrong, and yet she only wanted to know where little Kay was.

"It must be he," she thought, "with those clear eyes and that long hair."

She could fancy she saw him smiling at her as he used to at home when they sat among the [224] roses. He would certainly be glad to see her, and to hear what a long distance she had come for his sake, and to know how sorry they had all been at home because he did not come back. Oh, what joy and yet what fear she felt!

They were now on the stairs, and in a small closet at the top a lamp was burning. In the middle of the floor stood the tame crow, turning her head from side to side and gazing at Gerda, who curtsied as her grandmother had taught her to do.

"My betrothed has spoken so very highly of you, my little lady," said the tame crow. "Your story is very touching. If you will take the lamp, I will walk before you. We will go straight along this way; then we shall meet no one."

"I feel as if somebody were behind us," said Gerda, as something rushed by her like a shadow on the wall; and then it seemed to her that horses with flying manes and thin legs, hunters, ladies and gentlemen on horseback, glided by her like shadows.

"They are only dreams," said the crow; "they are coming to carry the thoughts of the great people out hunting. All the better, for if their thoughts are out hunting, we shall be able to look at [225] them in their beds more safely. I hope that when you rise to honor and favor you will show a grateful heart."

"You may be quite sure of that," said the crow from the forest.

They now came into the first hall, the walls of which were hung with rose-colored satin embroidered with artificial flowers. Here the dreams again flitted by them, but so quickly that Gerda could not distinguish the royal persons. Each hall appeared more splendid than the last. It was enough to bewilder one. At length they reached a bedroom. The ceiling was like a great palm tree, with glass leaves of the most costly crystal, and over the center of the floor two beds, each resembling a lily, hung from a stem of gold. One, in which the princess lay, was white; the other was red. And in this Gerda had to seek for little Kay.

She pushed one of the red leaves aside and saw a little brown neck. Oh, that must be Kay! She called his name loudly and held the lamp over him. The dreams rushed back into the room on [226] horseback. He woke and turned his head round—it was not little Kay! The prince was only like him; still he was young and pretty. Out of her white-lily bed peeped the princess, and asked what was the matter. Little Gerda wept and told her story, and all that the crows had done to help her.

"You poor child," said the prince and princess; then they praised the crows, and said they were not angry with them for what they had done, but that it must not happen again, and that this time they should be rewarded.

"Would you like to have your freedom?" asked the princess, "or would you prefer to be raised to the position of court crows, with all that is left in the kitchen for yourselves?"

Then both the crows bowed and begged to have a fixed appointment; for they thought of their old age, and it would be so comfortable, they said, to feel that they had made provision for it.

The prince and princess themselves helped her into the coach.

And then the prince got out of his bed and gave it up to Gerda—he could not do more—and she lay down. She folded her little hands and thought, "How good everybody is to me, both men and animals"; then she closed her eyes and fell into a sweet sleep. All the dreams came flying back again to her, looking like angels now, and one of them drew a little sledge, on which sat Kay, who nodded to her. But all this was only a dream. It vanished as soon as she awoke. [228]

The following day she was dressed from head to foot in silk and velvet and invited to stay at the palace for a few days and enjoy herself; but she only begged for a pair of boots and a little carriage and a horse to draw it, so that she might go out into the wide world to seek for Kay.

And she obtained not only boots but a muff, and was neatly dressed; and when she was ready to go, there at the door she found a coach made of pure gold with the coat of arms of the prince and princess shining upon it like a star, and the coachman, footman, and outriders all wearing golden crowns upon their heads. The prince and princess themselves helped her into the coach and wished her success.

The forest crow, who was now married, accompanied her for the first three miles; he sat by Gerda's side, as he could not bear riding backwards. The tame crow stood in the doorway flapping her wings. She could not go with them, because she had been suffering from headache ever since the new appointment, no doubt from overeating. The coach was well stored with sweet cakes, and under the seat were fruit and gingerbread nuts. [229]

"Farewell, farewell," cried the prince and princess, and little Gerda wept, and the crow wept; and then, after a few miles, the crow also said farewell, and this parting was even more sad. However he flew to a tree and stood flapping his black wings as long as he could see the coach, which glittered like a sunbeam.

FIFTH STORY

THE LITTLE ROBBER GIRL

The coach drove on through a thick forest, where it lighted up the way like a torch and dazzled the eyes of some robbers, who could not bear to let it pass them unmolested.

"It is gold! it is gold!" cried they, rushing forward and seizing the horses. Then they struck dead the little jockeys, the coachman, and the footman, and pulled little Gerda out of the carriage. [230]

"She is plump and pretty. She has been fed with the kernels of nuts," said the old robber woman, who had a long beard, and eyebrows that hung over her eyes. "She is as good as a fatted lamb; how nice she will taste!" and as she said this she drew forth a shining knife, that glittered horribly. "Oh!" screamed the old woman at the same moment, for her own daughter, who held her back, had bitten her in the ear. "You naughty girl," said the mother, and now she had not time to kill Gerda.

"She shall play with me," said the little robber girl. "She shall give me her muff and her pretty dress, and sleep with me in my bed." And then she bit her mother again, and all the robbers laughed.

"I will have a ride in the coach," said the little robber girl, and she would have her own way, for she was self-willed and obstinate.

She and Gerda seated themselves in the coach and drove away over stumps and stones, into the depths of the forest. The little robber girl was about the same size as Gerda, but stronger; she [231] had broader shoulders and a darker skin; her eyes were quite black, and she had a mournful look. She clasped little Gerda round the waist and said:

"They shall not kill you as long as you don't make me vexed with you. I suppose you are a princess."

"No," said Gerda; and then she told her all her history and how fond she was of little Kay.

The robber girl looked earnestly at her, nodded her head slightly, and said, "They shan't kill you even if I do get angry with you, for I will do it myself." And then she wiped Gerda's eyes and put her own hands into the beautiful muff, which was so soft and warm.

The coach stopped in the courtyard of a robber's castle, the walls of which were full of cracks from top to bottom. Ravens and crows flew in and out of the holes and crevices, while great bulldogs, each of which looked as if it could swallow a man, were jumping about; but they were not allowed to bark. [232]

In the large old smoky hall a bright fire was burning on the stone floor. There was no chimney, so the smoke went up to the ceiling and found a way out for itself. Soup was boiling in a large cauldron, and hares and rabbits were roasting on the spit.

"You shall sleep with me and all my little animals to-night," said the robber girl after they had had something to eat and drink. So she took Gerda to a corner of the hall where some straw and carpets were laid down. Above them, on laths and perches, were more than a hundred pigeons that all seemed to be asleep, although they moved slightly when the two little girls came near them. "These all belong to me," said the robber girl, and she seized the nearest to her, held it by the feet, and shook it till it flapped its wings. "Kiss it," cried she, flapping it in Gerda's face.

"There sit the wood pigeons," continued she, pointing to a number of laths and a cage which had been fixed into the walls, near one of the openings. "Both rascals would fly away directly, if they were not closely locked up. And here is my old sweetheart 'Ba,'" and she dragged out a [233] reindeer by the horn; he wore a bright copper ring round his neck and was tethered to the spot. "We are obliged to hold him tight too, else he would run away from us also. I tickle his neck every evening with my sharp knife, which frightens him very much." And the robber girl drew a long knife from a chink in the wall and let it slide gently over the reindeer's neck. The poor animal began to kick, and the little robber girl laughed and pulled down Gerda into bed with her.

"Will you have that knife with you while you are asleep?" asked Gerda, looking at it in great fright.

"I always sleep with the knife by me," said the robber girl. "No one knows what may happen. But now tell me again all about little Kay, and why you went out into the world."

Then Gerda repeated her story over again, while the wood pigeons in the cage over her cooed, and the other pigeons slept. The little robber girl put one arm across Gerda's neck, and held the knife in the other, and was soon fast asleep and snoring. But Gerda could not close her eyes at [234] all; she knew not whether she was to live or to die. The robbers sat round the fire, singing and drinking. It was a terrible sight for a little girl to witness.

Then the wood pigeons said: "Coo, coo, we have seen little Kay. A white fowl carried his sledge, and he sat in the carriage of the Snow Queen, which drove through the wood while we were lying in our nest. She blew upon us, and all the young ones died, excepting us two. Coo, coo."

"What are you saying up there?" cried Gerda. "Where was the Snow Queen going? Do you know anything about it?"

"She was most likely traveling to Lapland, where there is always snow and ice. Ask the reindeer that is fastened up there with a rope."

"Yes, there is always snow and ice," said the reindeer, "and it is a glorious place; you can leap and run about freely on the sparkling icy plains. The Snow Queen has her summer tent there, but her strong castle is at the North Pole, on an island called Spitzbergen."

"O Kay, little Kay!" sighed Gerda.

"Lie still," said the robber girl, "or you shall feel my knife." [235]

In the morning Gerda told her all that the wood pigeons had said, and the little robber girl looked quite serious, and nodded her head and said: "That is all talk, that is all talk. Do you know where Lapland is?" she asked the reindeer.

"Who should know better than I do?" said the animal, while his eyes sparkled. "I was born and brought up there and used to run about the snow-covered plains."

"Now listen," said the robber girl; "all our men are gone away; only mother is here, and here she will stay; but at noon she always drinks out of a great bottle, and afterwards sleeps for a little while; and then I'll do something for you." She jumped out of bed, clasped her mother round the neck, and pulled her by the beard, crying, "My own little nanny goat, good morning!" And her mother pinched her nose till it was quite red; yet she did it all for love.

When the mother had gone to sleep the little robber maiden went to the reindeer and said: "I should like very much to tickle your neck a few times more with my knife, for it makes you look so funny, but never mind—I will untie your cord and set you free, so that you may run away to [236] Lapland; but you must make good use of your legs and carry this little maiden to the castle of the Snow Queen, where her playfellow is. You have heard what she told me, for she spoke loud enough, and you were listening."

The reindeer jumped for joy, and the little robber girl lifted Gerda on his back and had the forethought to tie her on and even to give her her own little cushion to sit upon.

"Here are your fur boots for you," said she, "for it will be very cold; but I must keep the muff, it is so pretty. However, you shall not be frozen for the want of it; here are my mother's large warm mittens; they will reach up to your elbows. Let me put them on. There, now your hands look just like my mother's."

But Gerda wept for joy.

"I don't like to see you fret," said the little robber girl. "You ought to look quite happy now. And here are two loaves and a ham, so that you need not starve."

These were fastened upon the reindeer, and then the little robber maiden opened the door, [237] coaxed in all the great dogs, cut the string with which the reindeer was fastened, with her sharp knife, and said, "Now run, but mind you take good care of the little girl." And Gerda stretched out her hand, with the great mitten on it, toward the little robber girl and said "Farewell," and away flew the reindeer over stumps and stones, through the great forest, over marshes and plains, as quickly as he could. The wolves howled and the ravens screamed, while up in the sky quivered red lights like flames of fire. "There are my old northern lights," said the reindeer; "see how they flash!" And he ran on day and night still faster and faster, but the loaves and the ham were all eaten by the time they reached Lapland.

SIXTH STORY

THE LAPLAND WOMAN AND THE FINLAND WOMAN

They stopped at a little hut; it was very mean looking. The roof sloped nearly down to the ground, and the door was so low that the family had to creep in on their hands and knees when [238] they went in and out. There was no one at home but an old Lapland woman who was dressing fish by the light of a train-oil lamp.

The reindeer told her all about Gerda's story after having first told his own, which seemed to him the most important. But Gerda was so pinched with the cold that she could not speak.

"Oh, you poor things," said the Lapland woman, "you have a long way to go yet. You must travel more than a hundred miles farther, to Finland. The Snow Queen lives there now, and she burns Bengal lights every evening. I will write a few words on a dried stockfish, for I have no paper, and you can take it from me to the Finland woman who lives there. She can give you better information than I can."

So when Gerda was warmed and had taken something to eat and drink, the woman wrote a few words on the dried fish and told Gerda to take great care of it. Then she tied her again on the back of the reindeer, and he sprang high into the air and set off at full speed. Flash, flash, went the beautiful blue northern lights the whole night long. [239]

And at length they reached Finland and knocked at the chimney of the Finland woman's hut, for it had no door above the ground. They crept in, but it was so terribly hot inside that the woman wore scarcely any clothes. She was small and very dirty looking. She loosened little Gerda's dress and took off the fur boots and the mittens, or Gerda would have been unable to bear the heat; and then she placed a piece of ice on the reindeer's head and read what was written on the dried fish. After she had read it three times she knew it by heart, so she popped the fish into the soup saucepan, as she knew it was good to eat, and she never wasted anything.

The reindeer told his own story first and then little Gerda's, and the Finlander twinkled with her clever eyes, but said nothing.

"You are so clever," said the reindeer; "I know you can tie all the winds of the world with a piece of twine. If a sailor unties one knot, he has a fair wind; when he unties the second, it blows hard; but if the third and fourth are loosened, then comes a storm which will root up whole forests. Cannot you give this little maiden something which will make her as strong as twelve [240] men, to overcome the Snow Queen?"

"The power of twelve men!" said the Finland woman. "That would be of very little use." But she went to a shelf and took down and unrolled a large skin on which were inscribed wonderful characters, and she read till the perspiration ran down from her forehead.

But the reindeer begged so hard for little Gerda, and Gerda looked at the Finland woman with such tender, tearful eyes, that her own eyes began to twinkle again. She drew the reindeer into a corner and whispered to him while she laid a fresh piece of ice on his head: "Little Kay is really with the Snow Queen, but he finds everything there so much to his taste and his liking that he believes it is the finest place in the world; and this is because he has a piece of broken glass in his heart and a little splinter of glass in his eye. These must be taken out, or he will never be a

human being again, and the Snow Queen will retain her power over him."

"But can you not give little Gerda something to help her to conquer this power?" [241]

"I can give her no greater power than she has already," said the woman; "don't you see how strong that is? how men and animals are obliged to serve her, and how well she has gotten through the world, barefooted as she is? She cannot receive any power from me greater than she now has, which consists in her own purity and innocence of heart. If she cannot herself obtain access to the Snow Queen and remove the glass fragments from little Kay, we can do nothing to help her. Two miles from here the Snow Queen's garden begins. You can carry the little girl so far, and set her down by the large bush which stands in the snow, covered with red berries. Do not stay gossiping, but come back here as quickly as you can." Then the Finland woman lifted little Gerda upon the reindeer, and he ran away with her as quickly as he could.

"Oh, I have forgotten my boots and my mittens," cried little Gerda, as soon as she felt the cutting cold; but the reindeer dared not stop, so he ran on till he reached the bush with the red berries. Here he set Gerda down, and he kissed her, and the great bright tears trickled over the [242] animal's cheeks; then he left her and ran back as fast as he could.

There stood poor Gerda, without shoes, without gloves, in the midst of cold, dreary, ice-bound Finland. She ran forward as quickly as she could, when a whole regiment of snowflakes came round her. They did not, however, fall from the sky, which was quite clear and glittered with the northern lights. The snowflakes ran along the ground, and the nearer they came to her the larger they appeared. Gerda remembered how large and beautiful they looked through the burning glass. But these were really larger and much more terrible, for they were alive and were the guards of the Snow Queen and had the strangest shapes. Some were like great porcupines, others like twisted serpents with their heads stretching out, and some few were like little fat bears with their hair bristled; but all were dazzlingly white, and all were living snowflakes.

Little Gerda repeated the Lord's Prayer, and the cold was so great that she could see her own breath come out of her mouth like steam, as she uttered the words. The steam appeared to [243] increase as she continued her prayer, till it took the shape of little angels, who grew larger the moment they touched the earth. They all wore helmets on their heads and carried spears and shields. Their number continued to increase more and more, and by the time Gerda had finished her prayers a whole legion stood round her. They thrust their spears into the terrible snowflakes so that they shivered into a hundred pieces, and little Gerda could go forward with courage and safety. The angels stroked her hands and feet, so that she felt the cold less as she hastened on to the Snow Queen's castle.

But now we must see what Kay is doing. In truth he thought not of little Gerda, and least of all that she could be standing at the front of the palace.

SEVENTH STORY

OF THE PALACE OF THE SNOW QUEEN AND WHAT HAPPENED THERE AT LAST

The walls of the palace were formed of drifted snow, and the windows and doors of cutting winds. There were more than a hundred rooms in it, all as if they had been formed of snow blown [244] together. The largest of them extended for several miles. They were all lighted up by the vivid light of the aurora, and were so large and empty, so icy cold and glittering!

There were no amusements here; not even a little bear's ball, when the storm might have been the music, and the bears could have danced on their hind legs and shown their good manners. There were no pleasant games of snapdragon, or touch, nor even a gossip over the tea table for the young-lady foxes. Empty, vast, and cold were the halls of the Snow Queen.

The flickering flames of the northern lights could be plainly seen, whether they rose high or low in the heavens, from every part of the castle. In the midst of this empty, endless hall of snow was a frozen lake, broken on its surface into a thousand forms; each piece resembled another, because each was in itself perfect as a work of art, and in the center of this lake sat the Snow Queen when she was at home. She called the lake "The Mirror of Reason," and said that it was the best, and indeed the only one, in the world. [245]

In the center of the lake
sat the Snow Queen

Little Kay was quite blue with cold,—indeed, almost black,—but he did not feel it; for the Snow [246]
Queen had kissed away the icy shiverings, and his heart was already a lump of ice. He dragged some sharp, flat pieces of ice to and fro and placed them together in all kinds of positions, as if he wished to make something out of them—just as we try to form various figures with little tablets of wood, which we call a "Chinese puzzle." Kay's figures were very artistic; it was the icy game of reason at which he played, and in his eyes the figures were very remarkable and of the highest importance; this opinion was owing to the splinter of glass still sticking in his eye. He composed many complete figures, forming different words, but there was one word he never could manage to form, although he wished it very much. It was the word "Eternity."

The Snow Queen had said to him, "When you can find out this, you shall be your own master, and I will give you the whole world and a new pair of skates." But he could not accomplish it.

"Now I must hasten away to warmer countries," said the Snow Queen. "I will go and look into [247]
the black craters of the tops of the burning mountains, Etna and Vesuvius, as they are called. I shall make them look white, which will be good for them and for the lemons and the grapes." And away flew the Snow Queen, leaving little Kay quite alone in the great hall which was so many miles in length. He sat and looked at his pieces of ice and was thinking so deeply and sat so still that any one might have supposed he was frozen.

Just at this moment it happened that little Gerda came through the great door of the castle. Cutting winds were raging around her, but she offered up a prayer, and the winds sank down as if they were going to sleep. On she went till she came to the large, empty hall and caught sight of Kay. She knew him directly; she flew to him and threw her arms around his neck and held him fast while she exclaimed, "Kay, dear little Kay, I have found you at last!"

But he sat quite still, stiff and cold.

Then little Gerda wept hot tears, which fell on his breast, and penetrated into his heart, and thawed the lump of ice, and washed away the little piece of glass which had stuck there. Then he [248]
looked at her, and she sang:

"Roses bloom and fade away,
But we the Christ-child see alway."

Then Kay burst into tears. He wept so that the splinter of glass swam out of his eye. Then he recognized Gerda and said joyfully, "Gerda, dear little Gerda, where have you been all this time, and where have I been?" And he looked all around him and said, "How cold it is, and how large and empty it all looks," and he clung to Gerda, and she laughed and wept for joy.

It was so pleasing to see them that even the pieces of ice danced, and when they were tired and went to lie down they formed themselves into the letters of the word which the Snow Queen had said he must find out before he could be his own master and have the whole world and a pair of new skates.

Gerda kissed his cheeks, and they became blooming; and she kissed his eyes till they shone like her own; she kissed his hands and feet, and he became quite healthy and cheerful. The Snow [249]
Queen might come home now when she pleased, for there stood his certainty of freedom, in the word she wanted, written in shining letters of ice.

Then they took each other by the hand and went forth from the great palace of ice. They spoke

of the grandmother and of the roses on the roof, and as they went on the winds were at rest, and the sun burst forth. When they arrived at the bush with red berries, there stood the reindeer waiting for them, and he had brought another young reindeer with him, whose udders were full, and the children drank her warm milk and kissed her on the mouth.

They carried Kay and Gerda first to the Finland woman, where they warmed themselves thoroughly in the hot room and had directions about their journey home. Next they went to the Lapland woman, who had made some new clothes for them and put their sleighs in order. Both the reindeer ran by their side and followed them as far as the boundaries of the country, where the first green leaves were budding. And here they took leave of the two reindeer and the Lapland woman, and all said farewell. [250]

Then birds began to twitter, and the forest too was full of green young leaves, and out of it came a beautiful horse, which Gerda remembered, for it was one which had drawn the golden coach. A young girl was riding upon it, with a shining red cap on her head and pistols in her belt. It was the little robber maiden, who had got tired of staying at home; she was going first to the north, and if that did not suit her, she meant to try some other part of the world. She knew Gerda directly, and Gerda remembered her; it was a joyful meeting.

"You are a fine fellow to go gadding about in this way," said she to little Kay. "I should like to know whether you deserve that any one should go to the end of the world to find you."

But Gerda patted her cheeks and asked after the prince and princess.

"They are gone to foreign countries," said the robber girl.

"And the crow?" asked Gerda.

"Oh, the crow is dead," she replied. "His tame sweetheart is now a widow and wears a bit of black worsted round her leg. She mourns very pitifully, but it is all stuff. But now tell me how you [251] managed to get him back."

Then Gerda and Kay told her all about it.

"Snip, snap, snurre! it's all right at last," said the robber girl.

She took both their hands and promised that if ever she should pass through the town, she would call and pay them a visit. And then she rode away into the wide world.

But Gerda and Kay went hand in hand toward home, and as they advanced, spring appeared more lovely with its green verdure and its beautiful flowers. Very soon they recognized the large town where they lived, and the tall steeples of the churches in which the sweet bells were ringing a merry peal, as they entered it and found their way to their grandmother's door.

They went upstairs into the little room, where all looked just as it used to do. The old clock was going "Tick, tick," and the hands pointed to the time of day, but as they passed through the door into the room they perceived that they were both grown up and become a man and woman. The roses out on the roof were in full bloom and peeped in at the window, and there stood the little [252] chairs on which they had sat when children, and Kay and Gerda seated themselves each on their own chair and held each other by the hand, while the cold, empty grandeur of the Snow Queen's palace vanished from their memories like a painful dream.

The grandmother sat in God's bright sunshine, and she read aloud from the Bible, "Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God." And Kay and Gerda looked into each other's eyes and all at once understood the words of the old song:

Roses bloom and fade away,
But we the Christ-child see alway.

And they both sat there, grown up, yet children at heart, and it was summer—warm, beautiful summer.

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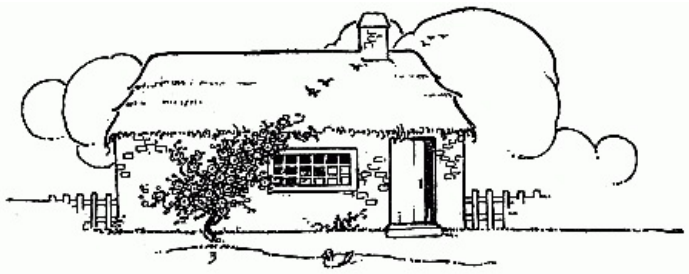
[253]



THE ROSES AND THE SPARROWS

T really appeared as if something very important were going on by the duck pond, but this was not the case.

A few minutes before, all the ducks had been resting on the water or standing on their heads—for that they can do—and then they all swam in a bustle to the shore. The traces of their feet could be seen on the wet earth, and far and wide could be heard their quacking. The water, so lately clear and bright as a mirror, was in quite a commotion.

But a moment before, every tree and bush near the old farmhouse—and even the house itself with the holes in the roof and the swallows' nests and, above all, the beautiful rosebush covered with roses—had been clearly reflected in the water. The rosebush on the wall hung over the water, which resembled a picture only that everything appeared upside down, but when the [254] water was set in motion all vanished, and the picture disappeared.

Two feathers, dropped by the fluttering ducks, floated to and fro on the water. All at once they took a start as if the wind were coming, but it did not come, so they were obliged to lie still, as the water became again quiet and at rest. The roses could once more behold their own reflections. They were very beautiful, but they knew it not, for no one had told them. The sun shone between the delicate leaves, and the sweet fragrance spread itself, carrying happiness everywhere.

"How beautiful is our existence!" said one of the roses. "I feel as if I should like to kiss the sun, it is so bright and warm. I should like to kiss the roses too, our images in the water, and the pretty birds there in their nests. There are some birds too in the nest above us; they stretch out their heads and cry 'Tweet, tweet,' very faintly. They have no feathers yet, such as their father and mother have. Both above us and below us we have good neighbors. How beautiful is our life!" [255]

The young birds above and the young ones below were the same; they were sparrows, and their nest was reflected in the water. Their parents were sparrows also, and they had taken possession of an empty swallow's nest of the year before, occupying it now as if it were their own.

"Are those ducks' children that are swimming about? asked the young sparrows, as they spied the feathers on the water.

"If you must ask questions, pray ask sensible ones," said the mother. "Can you not see that these are feathers, the living stuff for clothes, which I wear and which you will wear soon, only ours are much finer? I should like, however, to have them up here in the nest, they would make it so warm. I am rather curious to know why the ducks were so alarmed just now. It could not be from fear of us, certainly, though I did say 'tweet' rather loudly. The thick-headed roses really ought to know, but they are very ignorant; they only look at one another and smell. I am heartily tired of such neighbors."

"Listen to the sweet little birds above us," said the roses; "they are trying to sing. They cannot [256] manage it yet, but it will be done in time. What a pleasure it will be, and how nice to have such lively neighbors!"

Suddenly two horses came prancing along to drink at the water. A peasant boy rode on one of them; he had a broad-brimmed black hat on, but had taken off the most of his clothes, that he might ride into the deepest part of the pond; he whistled like a bird, and while passing the rosebush he plucked a rose and placed it in his hat and then rode on thinking himself very fine. The other roses looked at their sister and asked each other where she could be going, but they did not know.

"I should like for once to go out into the world," said one, "although it is very lovely here in our home of green leaves. The sun shines warmly by day, and in the night we can see that heaven is more beautiful still, as it sparkles through the holes in the sky."

She meant the stars, for she knew no better.

"We make the house very lively," said the mother sparrow, "and people say that a swallow's nest brings luck, therefore they are pleased to see us; but as to our neighbors, a rosebush on the [257] wall produces damp. It will most likely be removed, and perhaps corn will grow here instead of it. Roses are good for nothing but to be looked at and smelt, or perhaps one may chance to be stuck in a hat. I have heard from my mother that they fall off every year. The farmer's wife preserves them by laying them in salt, and then they receive a French name which I neither can nor will pronounce; then they are sprinkled on the fire to produce a pleasant smell. Such you see is their life. They are only formed to please the eye and the nose. Now you know all about them."

As the evening approached, the gnats played about in the warm air beneath the rosy clouds, and the nightingale came and sang to the roses that *the beautiful* was like sunshine to the world, and that *the beautiful* lives forever. The roses thought that the nightingale was singing of herself, which any one indeed could easily suppose; they never imagined that her song could refer to them. But it was a joy to them, and they wondered to themselves whether all the little sparrows in the nest would become nightingales. [258]

"We understood that bird's song very well," said the young sparrows, "but one word was not clear. What is *the beautiful?*"

"Oh, nothing of any consequence," replied the mother sparrow. "It is something relating to appearances over yonder at the nobleman's house. The pigeons have a house of their own, and every day they have corn and peas spread for them. I have dined there with them sometimes, and so shall you by and by, for I believe the old maxim—'Tell me what company you keep, and I will tell you what you are.' Well, over at the noble house there are two birds with green throats and

crests on their heads. They can spread out their tails like large wheels, and they reflect so many beautiful colors that it dazzles the eyes to look at them. These birds are called peacocks, and they belong to *the beautiful;* but if only a few of their feathers were plucked off, they would not appear better than we do. I would myself have plucked some out had they not been so large."

"I will pluck them," squeaked the youngest sparrow, who had as yet no feathers of his own. [259]

In the cottage dwelt two young married people, who loved each other very much and were industrious and active so that everything looked neat and pretty around them. Early on Sunday mornings the young wife came out, gathered a handful of the most beautiful roses, and put them in a glass of water, which she placed on a side table.

"I see now that it is Sunday," said the husband, as he kissed his little wife. Then they sat down and read in their hymn books, holding each other's hands, while the sun shone down upon the young couple and upon the fresh roses in the glass.

"This sight is really too wearisome," said the mother sparrow, who from her nest could look into the room; and she flew away.

The same thing occurred the next Sunday; and indeed every Sunday fresh roses were gathered and placed in a glass, but the rose tree continued to bloom in all its beauty. After a while the young sparrows were fledged and wanted to fly, but the mother would not allow it, and so they were obliged to remain in the nest for the present, while she flew away alone. It so happened that [260] some boys had fastened a snare made of horsehair to the branch of a tree, and before she was aware, her leg became entangled in the horsehair so tightly as almost to cut it through. What pain and terror she felt! The boys ran up quickly and seized her, not in a very gentle manner.

"It is only a sparrow," they said. However they did not let her fly, but took her home with them, and every time she cried they tapped her on the beak.

In the farmyard they met an old man who knew how to make soap for shaving and washing, in cakes or in balls. When he saw the sparrow which the boys had brought home and which they said they did not know what to do with, he said, "Shall we make it beautiful?"

A cold shudder passed over the sparrow when she heard this. The old man then took a shell containing a quantity of glittering gold leaf from a box full of beautiful colors and told the youngsters to fetch the white of an egg, with which he besmeared the sparrow all over and then laid the gold leaf upon it, so that the mother sparrow was now gilded from head to tail. She [261] thought not of her appearance, but trembled in every limb. Then the soap maker tore a little piece out of the red lining of his jacket, cut notches in it, so that it looked like a cock'scomb, and stuck it on the bird's head.

"Now you shall see gold-jacket fly," said the old man, and he released the sparrow, which flew away in deadly terror with the sunlight shining upon her. How she did glitter! All the sparrows, and even a crow, who is a knowing old boy, were startled at the sight, yet they all followed it to discover what foreign bird it could be. Driven by anguish and terror, she flew homeward almost ready to sink to the earth for want of strength. The flock of birds that were following increased and some even tried to peck her.

"Look at him! look at him!" they all cried. "Look at him! look at him!" cried the young ones as their mother approached the nest, for they did not know her. "That must be a young peacock, for he glitters in all colors. It quite hurts one's eyes to look at him, as mother told us; 'tweet,' this is *the beautiful*." And then they pecked the bird with their little beaks so that she was quite unable [262] to get into the nest and was too much exhausted even to say "tweet," much less "I am your mother." So the other birds fell upon the sparrow and pulled out feather after feather till she sank bleeding into the rosebush.

"You poor creature," said the roses, "be at rest. We will hide you; lean your little head against us."

The sparrow spread out her wings once more, then drew them in close about her and lay dead among the roses, her fresh and lovely neighbors.

"Tweet," sounded from the nest; "where can our mother be staying? It is quite unaccountable. Can this be a trick of hers to show us that we are now to take care of ourselves? She has left us the house as an inheritance, but as it cannot belong to us all when we have families, who is to have it?"

"It won't do for you all to stay with me when I increase my household with a wife and children," remarked the youngest.

"I shall have more wives and children than you," said the second. [263]

"But I am the eldest," cried a third.

Then they all became angry, beat each other with their wings, pecked with their beaks, till one after another bounced out of the nest. There they lay in a rage, holding their heads on one side and twinkling the eye that looked upward. This was their way of looking sulky.

They could all fly a little, and by practice they soon learned to do so much better. At length they agreed upon a sign by which they might be able to recognize each other in case they should meet in the world after they had separated. This sign was to be the cry of "tweet, tweet," and a scratching on the ground three times with the left foot.

The youngster who was left behind in the nest spread himself out as broad as ever he could; he was the householder now. But his glory did not last long, for during that night red flames of fire burst through the windows of the cottage, seized the thatched roof, and blazed up frightfully. The whole house was burned, and the sparrow perished with it, while the young couple fortunately escaped with their lives. [264]

When the sun rose again, and all nature looked refreshed as after a quiet sleep, nothing remained of the cottage but a few blackened, charred beams leaning against the chimney, that now was the only master of the place. Thick smoke still rose from the ruins, but outside on the wall the rosebush remained unhurt, blooming and fresh as ever, while each flower and each spray was mirrored in the clear water beneath.

"How beautifully the roses are blooming on the walls of that ruined cottage," said a passer-by. "A more lovely picture could scarcely be imagined. I must have it."

And the speaker took out of his pocket a little book full of white leaves of paper (for he was an artist), and with a pencil he made a sketch of the smoking ruins, the blackened rafters, and the chimney that overhung them and which seemed more and more to totter; and quite in the foreground stood the large, blooming rosebush, which added beauty to the picture; indeed, it was for the sake of the roses that the sketch had been made. Later in the day two of the sparrows who had been born there came by. [265]

"Where is the house?" they asked. "Where is the nest? Tweet, tweet; all is burned down, and our strong brother with it. That is all he got by keeping the nest. The roses have escaped famously; they look as well as ever, with their rosy cheeks; they do not trouble themselves about their neighbors' misfortunes. I won't speak to them. And really, in my opinion, the place looks very ugly"; so they flew away.

On a fine, bright, sunny day in autumn, so bright that any one might have supposed it was still the middle of summer, a number of pigeons were hopping about in the nicely kept courtyard of the nobleman's house, in front of the great steps. Some were black, others white, and some of various colors, and their plumage glittered in the sunshine. An old mother pigeon said to her young ones, "Place yourselves in groups! place yourselves in groups! it has a much better appearance."

"What are those little gray creatures which are running about behind us?" asked an old pigeon with red and green round her eyes. "Little gray ones, little gray ones," she cried. [266]

"They are sparrows—good little creatures enough. We have always had the character of being very good-natured, so we allow them to pick up some corn with us; they do not interrupt our conversation, and they draw back their left foot so prettily."

Sure enough, so they did, three times each, and with the left foot too, and said "tweet," by which we recognize them as the sparrows that were brought up in the nest on the house that was burned down.

"The food here is very good," said the sparrows; while the pigeons strutted round each other, puffed out their throats, and formed their own opinions on what they observed.

"Do you see the pouter pigeon?" asked one pigeon of another. "Do you see how he swallows the peas? He takes too much and always chooses the best of everything. Coo-oo, coo-oo. How the ugly, spiteful creature erects his crest." And all their eyes sparkled with malice. "Place yourselves in groups, place yourselves in groups. Little gray coats, little gray coats. Coo-oo, coo-oo." [267]

So they went on, and it will be the same a thousand years hence.

The sparrows feasted bravely and listened attentively; they even stood in ranks like the pigeons, but it did not suit them. So having satisfied their hunger, they left the pigeons passing their own opinions upon them to each other and slipped through the garden railings. The door of a room in the house, leading into the garden, stood open, and one of them, feeling brave after his good dinner, hopped upon the threshold crying, "Tweet, I can venture so far."

"Tweet," said another, "I can venture that, and a great deal more," and into the room he hopped.

The first followed, and, seeing no one there, the third became courageous and flew right across the room, saying: "Venture everything, or do not venture at all. This is a wonderful place—a man's nest, I suppose; and look! what can this be?"

Just in front of the sparrows stood the ruins of the burned cottage; roses were blooming over it, and their reflection appeared in the water beneath, and the black, charred beams rested against the tottering chimney. How could it be? How came the cottage and the roses in a room in [268] the nobleman's house? And then the sparrows tried to fly over the roses and the chimney, but they only struck themselves against a flat wall. It was a picture—a large, beautiful picture which the artist had painted from the little sketch he had made.

"Tweet," said the sparrows, "it is really nothing, after all; it only looks like reality. Tweet, I suppose that is *the beautiful*. Can you understand it? I cannot."

Then some persons entered the room and the sparrows flew away. Days and years passed. The pigeons had often "coo-oo-d"—we must not say quarreled, though perhaps they did, the naughty things! The sparrows had suffered from cold in the winter and lived gloriously in summer. They were all betrothed, or married, or whatever you like to call it. They had little ones, and each considered its own brood the wisest and the prettiest.

One flew in this direction and another in that, and when they met they recognized each other by saying "tweet" and three times drawing back the left foot. The eldest remained single; she had [269] no nest nor young ones. Her great wish was to see a large town, so she flew to Copenhagen.

Close by the castle, and by the canal, in which swam many ships laden with apples and pottery, there was to be seen a great house. The windows were broader below than at the top, and when the sparrows peeped through they saw a room that looked to them like a tulip with beautiful colors of every shade. Within the tulip were white figures of human beings, made of marble—some few of plaster, but this is the same thing to a sparrow. Upon the roof stood a metal chariot and horses, and the goddess of victory, also of metal, was seated in the chariot driving the horses.

It was Thorwaldsen's museum. "How it shines and glitters," said the maiden sparrow. "This must be *the beautiful*,—tweet,—only this is larger than a peacock." She remembered what her mother had told them in her childhood, that the peacock was one of the greatest examples of *the beautiful*. She flew down into the courtyard, where everything also was very grand. The walls were painted to represent palm branches, and in the midst of the court stood a large, blooming [270] rose tree, spreading its young, sweet, rose-covered branches over a grave. Thither the maiden sparrow flew, for she saw many others of her own kind.

"Tweet," said she, drawing back her foot three times. She had, during the years that had passed, often made the usual greeting to the sparrows she met, but without receiving any acknowledgment; for friends who are once separated do not meet every day. This manner of greeting was become a habit to her, and to-day two old sparrows and a young one returned the greeting.

"Tweet," they replied and drew back the left foot three times. They were two old sparrows out of the nest, and a young one belonging to the family. "Ah, good day; how do you do? To think of our meeting here! This is a very grand place, but there is not much to eat; this is *the beautiful*. Tweet!"

A great many people now came out of the side rooms, in which the marble statues stood, and approached the grave where rested the remains of the great master who carved them. As they [271] stood round Thorwaldsen's grave, each face had a reflected glory, and some few gathered up the fallen rose leaves to preserve them. They had all come from afar; one from mighty England, others from Germany and France. One very handsome lady plucked a rose and concealed it in her bosom. Then the sparrows thought that the roses ruled in this place, and that the whole house had been built for them—which seemed really too much honor; but as all the people showed their love for the roses, the sparrows thought they would not remain behindhand in paying their respects.

"Tweet," they said, and swept the ground with their tails, and glanced with one eye at the roses. They had not looked at them very long, however, before they felt convinced that they were old acquaintances, and so they actually were. The artist who had sketched the rosebush and the ruins of the cottage had since then received permission to transplant the bush and had given it to the architect, for more beautiful roses had never been seen. The architect had planted it on the grave of Thorwaldsen, where it continued to bloom, the image of *the beautiful*, scattering its [272] fragrant, rosy leaves to be gathered and carried away into distant lands in memory of the spot on which they fell.

"Have you obtained a situation in town?" then asked the sparrows of the roses.

The roses nodded. They recognized their little brown neighbors and were rejoiced to see them again.

"It is very delightful," said the roses, "to live here and to blossom, to meet old friends, and to see cheerful faces every day. It is as if each day were a holiday."

"Tweet," said the sparrows to each other. "Yes, these really are our old neighbors. We remember their origin near the pond. Tweet! how they have risen, to be sure. Some people seem to get on while they are asleep. Ah! there's a withered leaf. I can see it quite plainly."

And they pecked at the leaf till it fell, but the rosebush continued fresher and greener than ever. The roses bloomed in the sunshine on Thorwaldsen's grave and thus became linked with his immortal name.

THE OLD HOUSE

A VERY old house once stood in a street with several others that were quite new and clean. One could read the date of its erection, which had been carved on one of the beams and surrounded by scrolls formed of tulips and hop tendrils; by this date it could be seen that the old house was nearly three hundred years old. Entire verses too were written over the windows in old-fashioned letters, and grotesque faces, curiously carved, grinned at you from under the cornices. One story projected a long way over the other, and under the roof ran a leaden gutter with a dragon's head at the end. The rain was intended to pour out at the dragon's mouth, but it ran out of his body instead, for there was a hole in the gutter.

All the other houses in the street were new and well built, with large windowpanes and smooth [274] walls. Any one might see they had nothing to do with the old house. Perhaps they thought: "How long will that heap of rubbish remain here, to be a disgrace to the whole street? The parapet projects so far forward that no one can see out of our windows what is going on in that direction. The stairs are as broad as the staircase of a castle and as steep as if they led to a church tower. The iron railing looks like the gate of a cemetery, and there are brass knobs upon it. It is really too ridiculous."

Opposite to the old house were more nice new houses, which had just the same opinion as their neighbors.

At the window of one of them sat a little boy with fresh, rosy cheeks and clear, sparkling eyes, who was very fond of the old house in sunshine or in moonlight. He would sit and look at the wall, from which the plaster had in some places fallen off, and fancy all sorts of scenes which had been in former times—how the street must have looked when the houses had all gable roofs, open [275] staircases, and gutters with dragons at the spout. He could even see soldiers walking about with halberds. Certainly it was a very good house to look at for amusement.

An old man lived in it who wore knee breeches, a coat with large brass buttons, and a wig which any one could see was a real one. Every morning there came an old man to clean the rooms and to wait upon him, otherwise the old man in the knee breeches would have been quite alone in the house. Sometimes he came to one of the windows and looked out; then the little boy nodded to him, and the old man nodded back again, till they became acquainted, and were friends, although they had never spoken to each other; but that was of no consequence.

The little boy one day heard his parents say, "The old man is very well off, but he must be terribly lonely." So the next Sunday morning the little boy wrapped something in a paper, and took it to the door of the old house, and said to the attendant who waited upon the old man: "Will you please to give this from me to the gentleman who lives here? I have two tin soldiers, and this [276] is one of them, and he shall have it, because I know he is terribly lonely."

The old attendant nodded and looked very much pleased, and then he carried the tin soldier into the house.

Afterwards he was sent over to ask the little boy if he would not like to pay a visit himself. His parents gave him permission, and so it was that he gained admission to the old house.

The brass knobs on the railings shone more brightly than ever, as if they had been polished on account of his visit; and on the doors were carved trumpeters standing in tulips, and it seemed as if they were blowing with all their might, their cheeks were so puffed out: "Tanta-ra-ra, the little boy is coming. Tanta-ra-ra, the little boy is coming."

Then the door opened. All round the hall hung old portraits of knights in armor and ladies in silk gowns; and the armor rattled, and the silk dresses rustled. Then came a staircase which went up a long way, and then came down a little way and led to a balcony which was in a very ruinous state. There were large holes and long cracks, out of which grew grass and leaves; indeed the [277] whole balcony, the courtyard, and the walls were so overgrown with green that they looked like a garden.

In the balcony stood flowerpots on which were heads having asses' ears, but the flowers in them grew just as they pleased. In one pot, pinks were growing all over the sides,—at least the green leaves were,—shooting forth stalk and stem and saying as plainly as they could speak, "The air has fanned me, the sun has kissed me, and I am promised a little flower for next Sunday—really for next Sunday!"

Then they entered a room in which the walls were covered with leather, and the leather had golden flowers stamped upon it.

"Gilding wears out with time and bad weather,
But leather endures; there's nothing like leather,"

said the walls. Chairs handsomely carved, with elbows on each side and with very high backs, stood in the room; and as they creaked they seemed to say: "Sit down. Oh dear! how I am creaking; I shall certainly have the gout like the old cupboard. Gout in my back, ugh!"

And then the little boy entered the room where the old man sat. [278]

"Thank you for the tin soldier, my little friend," said the old man, "and thank you also for coming to see me."

"Thanks, thanks"—or "Creak, creak"—said all the furniture.

There was so much furniture that the pieces stood in each other's way to get a sight of the little boy. On the wall near the center of the room hung the picture of a beautiful lady, young and gay, dressed in the fashion of the olden times, with powdered hair and a full, stiff skirt. She said neither "thanks" nor "creak," but she looked down upon the little boy with her mild eyes, and he said to the old man,

"Where did you get that picture?"

"From the shop opposite," he replied. "Many portraits hang there. No one seems to know any of them or to trouble himself about them. The persons they represent have been dead and buried long since. But I knew this lady many years ago, and she has been dead nearly half a century." [279]

Thank you for the tin soldier, my little friend," said the old man

Under a glass beneath the picture hung a nosegay of withered flowers, which were, no doubt, half a century old too, at least they appeared so. [280]

And the pendulum of the old clock went to and fro, and the hands turned round, and as time passed on everything in the room grew older, but no one seemed to notice it.

"They say at home," said the little boy, "that you are very lonely."

"Oh," replied the old man, "I have pleasant thoughts of all that is past recalled by memory, and now you too are come to visit me, and that is very pleasant."

Then he took from the bookcase a book full of pictures representing long processions of wonderful coaches such as are never seen at the present time, soldiers like the knave of clubs, and citizens with waving banners. The tailors had a flag with a pair of scissors supported by two lions, and on the shoemakers' flag there were not boots but an eagle with two heads, for the shoemakers must have everything arranged so that they can say, "This is a pair." What a picture book it was! And then the old man went into another room to fetch apples and nuts. It was very pleasant, certainly, to be in that old house. [281]

"I cannot endure it," said the tin soldier, who stood on a shelf; "it is so lonely and dull here. I have been accustomed to live in a family, and I cannot get used to this life. I cannot bear it. The whole day is long enough, but the evening is longer. It is not here as it was in your house opposite, when your father and mother talked so cheerfully together, while you and all the dear children made such a delightful noise. Do you think he gets any kisses? Do you think he ever has

friendly looks or a Christmas tree? He will have nothing now but the grave. Oh! I cannot bear it."

"You must not look on the sorrowful side so much," said the little boy. "I think everything in this house is beautiful, and all the old, pleasant thoughts come back here to pay visits."

"Ah, but I never see any, and I don't know them," said the tin soldier; "and I cannot bear it."

"You must bear it," said the little boy. Then the old man came back with a pleasant face, and brought with him beautiful preserved fruits as well as apples and nuts, and the little boy thought [282] no more of the tin soldier.

How happy and delighted the little boy was! And after he returned home, and while days and weeks passed, a great deal of nodding took place from one house to the other, and then the little boy went to pay another visit. The carved trumpeters blew: "Tanta-ra-ra, there is the little boy. Tanta-ra-ra." The swords and armor on the old knights' pictures rattled, the silk dresses rustled, the leather repeated its rhyme, and the old chairs that had the gout in their backs cried "Creak"; it was all exactly like the first time, for in that house one day and one hour were just like another.

"I cannot bear it any longer," said the tin soldier; "I have wept tears of tin, it is so melancholy here. Let me go to the wars and lose an arm or a leg; that would be some change. I cannot bear it. Now I know what it is to have visits from one's old recollections and all they bring with them. I have had visits from mine, and you may believe me it is not altogether pleasant. I was very nearly jumping from the shelf. I saw you all in your house opposite, as if you were really present. [283]

"It was Sunday morning, and you children stood round the table, singing the hymn that you sing every morning. You were standing quietly with your hands folded, and your father and mother were looking just as serious, when the door opened, and your little sister Maria, who is not two years old, was brought into the room. You know she always dances when she hears music and singing of any sort, so she began to dance immediately, although she ought not to have done so; but she could not get into the right time because the tune was so slow, so she stood first on one foot and then on the other and bent her head very low, but it would not suit the music. You all stood looking grave, although it was very difficult to do so, but I laughed so to myself that I fell down from the table and got a bruise, which is still there. I know it was not right to laugh. So all this, and everything else that I have seen, keeps running in my head, and these must be the old recollections that bring so many thoughts with them. Tell me whether you still sing on Sundays, and tell me about your little sister Maria, and how my old comrade is, the other tin [284] soldier. Ah, really he must be very happy. I cannot endure this life."

"You are given away," said the little boy; "you must stay. Don't you see that?" Then the old man came in with a box containing many curious things to show him. Rouge-pots, scent-boxes, and old cards so large and so richly gilded that none are ever seen like them in these days. And there were smaller boxes to look at, and the piano was opened, and inside the lid were painted landscapes. But when the old man played, the piano sounded quite out of tune. Then he looked at the picture he had bought at the broker's, and his eyes sparkled brightly as he nodded at it and said, "Ah, she could sing that tune."

"I will go to the wars! I will go to the wars!" cried the tin soldier as loud as he could, and threw himself down on the floor. Where could he have fallen? The old man searched, and the little boy searched, but he was gone and could not be found. "I shall find him again," said the old man. But he did not find him; the tin soldier had fallen through a crack between the boards and lay there now as in an open grave. [285]

The day went by, and the little boy returned home; the week passed, and many more weeks. It was winter, and the windows were quite frozen, so that the little boy was obliged to breathe on the panes and rub a hole to peep through at the old house. Snowdrifts were lying in all the scrolls and on the inscriptions, and the steps were covered with snow as if no one were at home. And indeed nobody was at home, for the old man was dead.

In the evening the old man was to be taken to the country to be buried there in his own grave; so they carried him away. No one followed him, for all his friends were dead, and the little boy kissed his hand to his old friend as he saw him borne away.

A few days after, there was an auction at the old house, and from his window the little boy saw the people carrying away the pictures of old knights and ladies, the flowerpots with the long ears, the old chairs, and the cupboards. Some were taken one way, some another. *Her* portrait, which had been bought at the picture dealer's, went back again to his shop, and there it remained, for [286] no one seemed to know her or to care for the old picture.

In the spring they began to pull the house itself down; people called it complete rubbish. From the street could be seen the room in which the walls were covered with leather, ragged and torn, and the green in the balcony hung straggling over the beams; they pulled it down quickly, for it looked ready to fall, and at last it was cleared away altogether. "What a good riddance," said the neighbors' houses.

Afterward a fine new house was built, farther back from the road. It had lofty windows and smooth walls, but in front, on the spot where the old house really stood, a little garden was planted, and wild vines grew up over the neighboring walls. In front of the garden were large iron railings and a great gate which looked very stately. People used to stop and peep through the railings. The sparrows assembled in dozens upon the wild vines and chattered all together as

loud as they could, but not about the old house. None of them could remember it, for many years had passed by; so many, indeed, that the little boy was now a man, and a really good man too, [287] and his parents were very proud of him. He had just married and had come with his young wife to reside in the new house with the garden in front of it, and now he stood there by her side while she planted a field flower that she thought very pretty. She was planting it herself with her little hands and pressing down the earth with her fingers. "Oh, dear, what was that?" she exclaimed as something pricked her. Out of the soft earth something was sticking up.

It was—only think!—it was really the tin soldier, the very same which had been lost up in the old man's room and had been hidden among old wood and rubbish for a long time till it sank into the earth, where it must have been for many years. And the young wife wiped the soldier, first with a green leaf and then with her fine pocket handkerchief, that smelt of a beautiful perfume. And the tin soldier felt as if he were recovering from a fainting fit.

"Let me see him," said the young man, and then he smiled and shook his head and said, "It can scarcely be the same, but it reminds me of something that happened to one of my tin soldiers [288] when I was a little boy." And then he told his wife about the old house and the old man and of the tin soldier which he had sent across because he thought the old man was lonely. And he related the story so clearly that tears came into the eyes of the young wife for the old house and the old man.

"It is very likely that this is really the same soldier," said she, "and I will take care of him and always remember what you have told me; but some day you must show me the old man's grave."

"I don't know where it is," he replied; "no one knows. All his friends are dead. No one took care of him or tended his grave, and I was only a little boy."

"Oh, how dreadfully lonely he must have been," said she.

"Yes, terribly lonely," cried the tin soldier; "still it is delightful not to be forgotten."

"Delightful indeed!" cried a voice quite near to them. No one but the tin soldier saw that it came from a rag of the leather which hung in tatters. It had lost all its gilding and looked like wet [289] earth, but it had an opinion, and it spoke it thus:

"Gilding wears out with time and bad weather,
But leather endures; there's nothing like leather."

But the tin soldier did not believe any such thing.

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[290]

THE CONCEITED APPLE BRANCH

IT WAS the month of May. The wind still blew cold, but from bush and tree, field and flower, came the welcome sound, "Spring is come."

Wild flowers in profusion covered the hedges. Under the little apple tree Spring seemed busy, and he told his tale from one of the branches, which hung fresh and blooming and covered with delicate pink blossoms that were just ready to open.

The branch well knew how beautiful it was; this knowledge exists as much in the leaf as in the blood. I was therefore not surprised when a nobleman's carriage, in which sat the young countess, stopped in the road just by. The apple branch, she said, was a most lovely object, an [291] emblem of spring in its most charming aspect. The branch was broken off for her, and she held it in her delicate hand and sheltered it with her silk parasol.

Then they drove to the castle, in which were lofty halls and splendid drawing-rooms. Pure white curtains fluttered before the open windows, and beautiful flowers stood in transparent vases. In one of them, which looked as if it had been cut out of newly fallen snow, the apple branch was placed among some fresh light twigs of beech. It was a charming sight. And the branch became proud, which was very much like human nature.

People of every description entered the room, and according to their position in society so dared they to express their admiration. Some few said nothing, others expressed too much, and the apple branch very soon got to understand that there was as much difference in the characters of human beings as in those of plants and flowers. Some are all for pomp and parade, others have

a great deal to do to maintain their own importance, while the rest might be spared without much loss to society. So thought the apple branch as he stood before the open window, from which he [292] could see out over gardens and fields, where there were flowers and plants enough for him to think and reflect upon—some rich and beautiful, some poor and humble indeed.

"Poor despised herbs," said the apple branch; "there is really a difference between them and such as I am. How unhappy they must be if they can feel as those in my position do! There is a difference indeed, and so there ought to be, or we should all be equals."

And the apple branch looked with a sort of pity upon them, especially on a certain little flower that is found in fields and in ditches. No one bound these flowers together in a nosegay, they were too common,—they were even known to grow between the paving stones, shooting up everywhere like bad weeds,—and they bore the very ugly name of "dog flowers," or "dandelions."

"Poor despised plants," said the apple bough, "it is not your fault that you are so ugly and that you have such an ugly name, but it is with plants as with men—there must be a difference." [293]

"A difference!" cried the sunbeam as he kissed the blooming apple branch and then kissed the yellow dandelion out in the fields. All were brothers, and the sunbeam kissed them—the poor flowers as well as the rich.

The apple bough had never thought of the boundless love of God which extends over all the works of creation, over everything which lives and moves and has its being in Him. He had never thought of the good and beautiful which are so often hidden, but can never remain forgotten by Him, not only among the lower creation, but also among men. The sunbeam, the ray of light, knew better.

"You do not see very far nor very clearly," he said to the apple branch. "Which is the despised plant you so specially pity?"

"The dandelion," he replied. "No one ever places it in a nosegay; it is trodden under foot, there are so many of them; and when they run to seed they have flowers like wool, which fly away in little pieces over the roads and cling to the dresses of the people; they are only weeds—but of course there must be weeds. Oh, I am really very thankful that I was not made like one of these [294] flowers."

There came presently across the fields a whole group of children, the youngest of whom was so small that he had to be carried by the others; and when he was seated on the grass, among the yellow flowers, he laughed aloud with joy, kicked out his little legs, rolled about, plucked the yellow flowers and kissed them in childlike innocence.

The elder children broke off the flowers with long stems, bent the stalks one round the other to form links, and made first a chain for the neck, then one to go across the shoulders and hang down to the waist, and at last a wreath to wear about the head; so that they looked quite splendid in their garlands of green stems and golden flowers. But the eldest among them gathered carefully the faded flowers, on the stem of which were grouped together the seeds, in the form of a white, feathery coronal.

These loose, airy wool-flowers are very beautiful, and look like fine, snowy feathers or down. The children held them to their mouths and tried to blow away the whole coronal with one puff of [295] the breath. They had been told by their grandmothers that whoever did so would be sure to have new clothes before the end of the year. The despised flower was by this raised to the position of a prophet, or foreteller of events.

"Do you see," said the sunbeam, "do you see the beauty of these flowers? Do you see their powers of giving pleasure?"

"Yes, to children," said the apple bough.

By and by an old woman came into the field and, with a blunt knife without a handle, began to dig round the roots of some of the dandelion plants and pull them up. With some she intended to make tea for herself, but the rest she was going to sell to the chemist and obtain money.

"But beauty is of higher value than all this," said the apple-tree branch; "only the chosen ones can be admitted into the realms of the beautiful. There is a difference between plants, just as there is a difference between men."

Then the sunbeam spoke of the boundless love of God as seen in creation and over all that lives, and of the equal distribution of His gifts, both in time and in eternity. [296]

"That is your opinion," said the apple bough.

Then some people came into the room and among them the young countess—the lady who had placed the apple bough in the transparent vase, so pleasantly beneath the rays of sunlight. She carried in her hand something that seemed like a flower. The object was hidden by two or three great leaves which covered it like a shield so that no draft or gust of wind could injure it, and it was carried more carefully than the apple branch had ever been.

Very cautiously the large leaves were removed, and there appeared the feathery seed crown of the despised yellow dandelion. This was what the lady had so carefully plucked and carried home so safely covered, so that not one of the delicate feathery arrows of which its mistlike shape was

so lightly formed should flutter away. She now drew it forth quite uninjured and wondered at its beautiful form, its airy lightness and singular construction so soon to be blown away by the wind.

"See," she exclaimed, "how wonderfully God has made this little flower. I will paint it in a picture with the apple branch. Every one admires the beauty of the apple bough, but this humble flower has been endowed by Heaven with another kind of loveliness, and although they differ in appearance both are children of the realms of beauty." [297]

Then the sunbeam kissed both the lowly flower and the blooming apple branch, upon whose leaves appeared a rosy blush.

NOTES [299]

LITTLE TUK

PAGE 21. *Seeland:* one of the islands of Denmark, the country in which little Tuk lived.
PAGE 22. *Kjöge* (ke ē gĕh): a town about which Tuk was to learn.
PAGE 24. *Præstö* (præs´tē): another town about which Tuk was to learn.

popinjay (pŏp´ĭn jāy): an image of a parrot.

Thorwaldsen (tôr vàl sen): one of the greatest of modern sculptors. Supposed to have been a native of Denmark.

Vordingborg (vōr´dĭng bŏrk): in ancient times this was a place of great importance. Now it is an insignificant town; only a single lonely tower remains where once a noble castle stood.

PAGE 25. *Korsör* (kôr´sor): before the time of steamers this used to be called the most tiresome town in Denmark. Travelers had to wait for a favorable wind. The poet mentioned in the story was Baggeson.
PAGE 26. *Roskilde* (rôs gĕl lē): once the capital of Denmark.
PAGE 27. *Sorö* (so´rē): a very quiet little town, in a beautiful situation, surrounded by forests and lakes. Holberg, one of Denmark's greatest poets, founded a celebrated academy here. Other noted poets also had their homes here, and taught in the academy.

LITTLE THUMBELINA

PAGE 88. Decaying wood sometimes gives out a faint light called *phosphorescence*.

SUNSHINE STORIES [300]

PAGE 106. For the story of the Golden Fleece, see Kingsley's "Greek Heroes."

OLE-LUK-OIE, THE DREAM GOD

PAGE 145. *Ole-Luk-Oie* (ō´le l͡ook´oi): the Danish name for the sandman.

ELDER-TREE MOTHER

PAGE 179. *Copenhagen* (kō pĕn hā´gĕn): the capital of Denmark.

Fredericksburg (frĕd´ĕr ĭcks bûrg): twenty-one miles from Copenhagen; the summer residence of the royal family.

THE SNOW QUEEN

FOURTH STORY
THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS

PAGE 217. Children have a kind of language, or gibberish, which is sometimes called *crows' language*. It is formed by adding letters or syllables to every word.

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Page 24, "Thorvaldsen" changed to "Thorwaldsen" (Thorwaldsen lived in one)

Page 299-300, Notes, some of the words were missing the stressing

accent. This was retained.

Some of the diacritical marks represented in the Notes section may not be available in all browsers. For the reader's convenience, the original page images have been made available for comparison of these two pages. Click on the page number in the margin to see these images.

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