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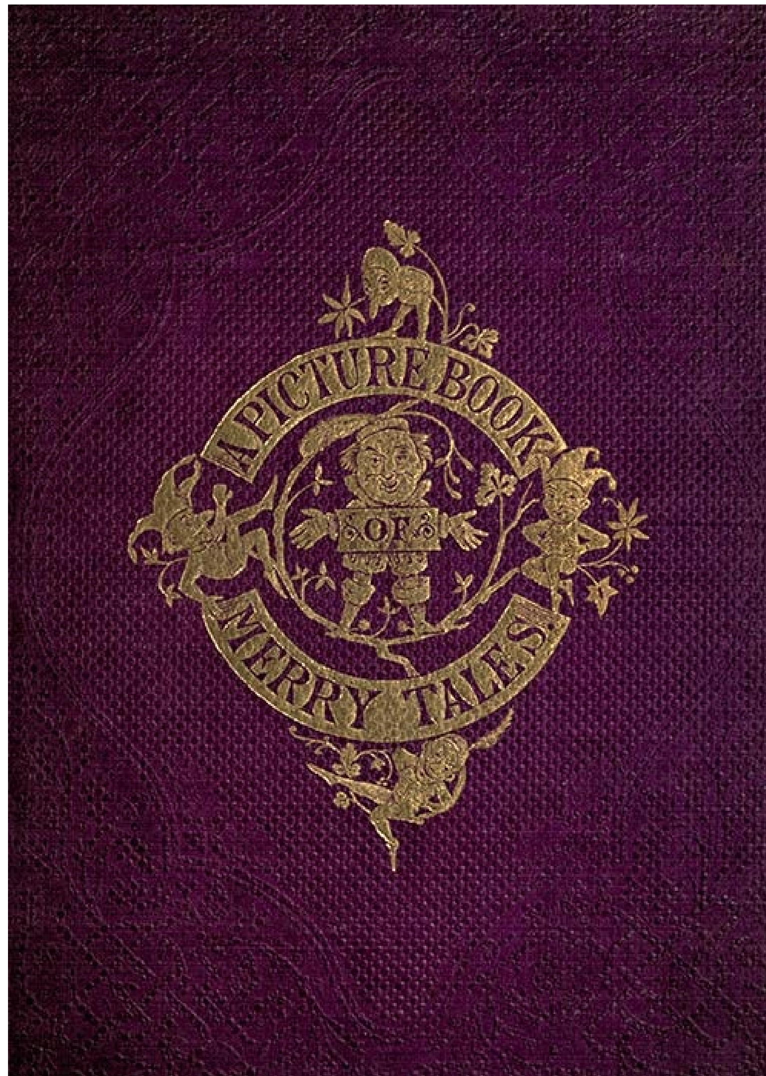
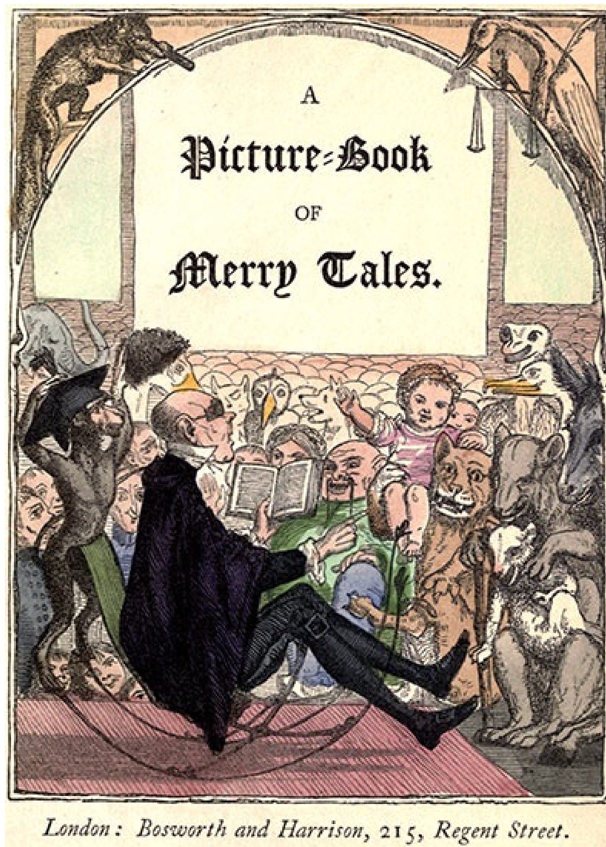


A PICTURE-BOOK OF MERRY TALES.

The Dwarfs’ Capers.



A

Picture-Book

OF

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I.

The Birth of Owlglass, and how he was thrice baptized.

IN the Duchy of Brunswick is a forest called Seib, and in this lies the village of Kneitlingen, where the good child Owlglass was born.

The life of this child does not confirm the old saying, "like father like son," for his father, by name Elaus Owlglass, was a quiet respectable man, and his mother, Anna, was the very model of a woman, for she was meek and a woman of few words. No particular circumstance attending the birth of our hero is handed down to us, and it therefore was, probably, not very different to other births; but it is recorded that he enjoyed the benefit of three distinct Baptisms.

There does not seem to have been any Church in the village where he was born, for when the time came for him to be christened he was sent by his parents to the village of Amptlen, where he received the name of Tyll Owlglass. The place is still remembered as the scene of this ceremony; but also because close by there stood once a castle of the same name, destroyed, as a nest of robbers, by the good people of Magdeburgh, with the help of their neighbours.

At the time we are speaking of it was the custom of the land that the godfathers and godmothers, together with the nurse and child, should adjourn, immediately after the

christening, to an alehouse, there to enjoy themselves; and that part of the ceremony was not forgotten or neglected on this occasion. Now it was a long way from the Church to the ale-house, and the day was very hot, so that the party indulged rather freely in the refreshing beverage, delaying their homeward journey as long as possible.

At length, however, they had to get on their way; and the nurse, whose head was rather giddy and legs not over-steady, had very unpleasant visions of a narrow footpath with ground sloping down into a muddy ditch, and she had serious forebodings of how that part of the journey would be accomplished. The nearer she drew to the dreaded spot the more her nervousness increased, and young Tyll, whether that she clutched him more firmly to her, or whether he too had forebodings of danger, began to kick and struggle in her arms, so that her stopping on the brink of danger, to gather steadiness and courage, was of no manner of use, for just as one foot rested on a loose stone a violent plunge of the child threw her fairly off her legs, and threw himself over her head into the ditch below. But weeds are not easily extirpated; so no harm happened to the child excepting that he was covered with mud and slime. Then he was taken home and washed.

[3]
[4]

Owlglass's Second Baptism.

Thus Owlglass was, on one and the same day, thrice baptized. First, in all proper order and due form, then in the muddy ditch, and lastly, in warm water to cleanse him from the dirt. This was symbolic of the many mishaps of his future life, for evil is sure to fall back upon its perpetrator.

[5]

II.

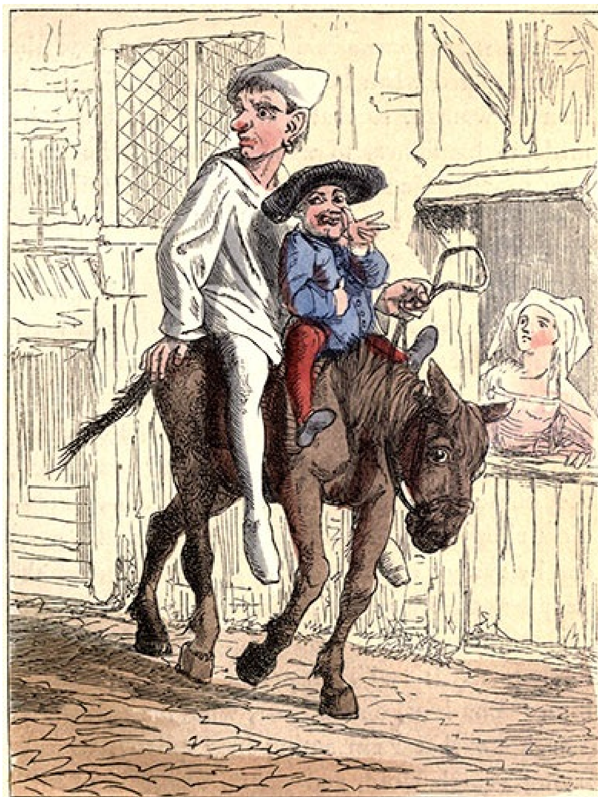
How all the People of the Village, both Men and Women, made complaints of young Owlglass; and how, whilst on horseback with his Father, without his knowledge, he made game of them all.

UR young acquaintance, Tyll, began at an early age to show signs of a decidedly marked character. He was full of life and spirits, as the other children of the village found out to their cost, for no sooner could he crawl amongst them than he played all manner of tricks. In truth he was more like a monkey than the child of respectable Christian parents, and when he had reached the age of four years he became daily more mischievous. He played his companions as many tricks daily as he was inches high, and, as "ill weeds grow apace," he soon became almost unbearable; but yet they could not do without him, so quick was his invention at all games, which, however, he so contrived that they were sure to end in a quarrel, taking care to get out of it himself before the blows came; and he would afterwards mock and laugh at those who had got hurt. He was even more dangerous away than with them, for he was then most certainly planning mischief. He would find out holes in the ground, which he carefully covered with sticks and grass, and then foremost in the race to a mark he had set up a little beyond the hole, he would stop short, in time to watch the others tumble one over the other into the trap he had set them.

[6]

Neither were the girls spared. Unknown to them he would fasten their petticoats together with thorns, as they sat on the ground, and then frighten them, so as to make them jump up suddenly, when he did not fail to point out the rents in their dresses, and laugh at them for the scolding and beating they would get at home. A hundred different tricks he played them, so that every day some were sure to be sent home crying and complaining.

True, he got many a thrashing from boys bigger and stronger than himself; but so sure was he to repay them tenfold, in one way or another, that both big and small were afraid of him. Nor were the parents spared when he could safely do mischief to man or woman, so that constant complaints were made to his father, to whom, however, he knew how to defend and excuse himself so artfully that the good simple man thought his dear child shamefully ill-used. [7] [8]



Young Owlglass mocking the Villagers.

Tired, at length, of these daily complaints, his father determined to take him out with him when he knew the street would be full, in order to show the people how well and soberly his boy could behave; so, taking him behind him on his horse, having first impressed upon him that he must be very good, they started off together. Now what did this obedient child do? He put his finger up to his nose, and by various other insulting gestures mocked the people as they passed, till there was a general outcry against the mischievous little imp. His father was sorely puzzled; and Tyll, pretending to cry, said to him, “You hear, dear Father, what the people say. You know that I am sitting here quietly, without saying a single word, and yet all complain of me.” His father hereupon places his dear child before him. Young hopeful, now seated before his father, could do nothing but make faces and put out his tongue at the people, who again were loud in their complaints. The poor man, who could see no fault in his darling, said, “Do not fret, my own dear Boy. We will go and live somewhere else, and get away from these evil-minded people.” He did, indeed, move to a distance, and not many years after died, leaving wife and child in great poverty. Now young Tyll, though sixteen years old, had learnt no business, nor anything useful or good, but with years had increased in all malice and mischief. [9]

[10]

III.

How Owlglass crept into a Beehive; and how, when two Thieves came in the night to steal it, he managed to set them quarrelling, so that they came to blows and left the Hive behind them.

E pass over a few years of Owlglass’s life during which he continued to thrive in body, but we are sorry to say gave no signs of moral improvement. However, in the adventure we are about to

relate, he was not so much to blame, the sufferers being scarcely better than himself, and in no way deserving of our sympathy.

He went one day, with his mother, to a feast in a neighbouring village, where, having eaten and drunk as much as he could bear for the time, he looked about him for a convenient place to sleep. He found some beehives, four of which were empty, and creeping into one of these he thought he would have an hour’s quiet rest, but slept from mid-day to mid-night, so that his mother thought he had gone back home. Now in that night two thieves [11] came to steal one of the beehives, and having heard that the heaviest was always the best, they tried the weight of each; and finding that one the heaviest in which Owlglass was, they settled between them that that was the one they would take, and walked off with it. The night was as dark as pitch, so that there was no seeing at all; but Owlglass was awake, and had heard them consulting with each other. The motion was not unpleasant as they carried him along; but yet he thought he could do better than sleep, and after short consideration he stretched out one hand, and with his finger first slightly touched the neck of the man before him, then he touched his nose, chin, cheeks, and forehead. At each touch of the finger the thief thought one of the bees had settled on him, till he fancied his face covered with them, and dreaded every moment to feel their sting. He dared not speak nor move a muscle of his face, but trembled with fear till the perspiration streamed down him. At length, however, scarcely moving his jaws, he ventured to mutter to his companion, “I say, Jack,” he said, “have you anything on your face?” “Yes,” growled [12] his companion, who was not in the best of humours, for he began to find the hive heavy, “I have a nose on my face, and pray what have you to say against it?” “It is not that I mean,” said the first speaker; “but have you ever heard that bees swarm in the dark, for I am covered with them?” “You are a fool,” was Jack’s only reply. After a minute Owlglass again put out his hand; and this time gave the front man a sharp tug by the hair, who, thinking his companion had done it, began to complain and swear. The other cried, “How is it possible I could pull your hair? Do I not want both my hands to carry this abominable hive? You must be mad or drunk; but let us have no more of your nonsense, or it will be the worse for you.”

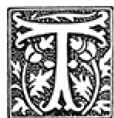
Owlglass laughed in his sleeve, enjoying this fine sport; and, after they had gone on a little further, he caught hold of the fellow’s hair at the back, giving his head such a pull forward that he scraped his nose against the hive. The fellow’s rage now knew no bounds. “You scoundrel,” he cried, “first you say I pull your hair and now you pull mine; but wait, you shall catch it.” Whereupon he let go of the hive, and the other doing the like, they fell upon each other, and a [13] furious fight began. At length they both came to the ground, and, rolling one over the other down [14] a steep bank, they became separated, and in the great darkness neither knew where to find the other nor the beehive.

Owlglass in the Beehive.

Owlglass, seeing it was still dark, went to sleep again in the hive; and the next morning, not knowing where he was, went on his way whither chance might lead him.

IV.

How Owlglass ate a roasted Fowl off the spit, and did only half Work.



HE first village Owlglass came to he went straight to the Priest’s house. Here he was hired, the Priest telling him that he should live as well as he and his cook, and do only half the work.

Owlglass agreed, promising himself to the very letter to act up to what had been said. The cook, who had but one eye, put two chickens to the fire to roast, bidding him turn the spit. This he readily did, thinking all the while of the Priest’s words, that he should live as well as he and his cook; and, when the chickens were well roasted, took one of them off the spit, and ate it then and there.

When dinner-time had come the cook went to the fire to baste the chickens, and seeing only one, said to Owlglass, “What has become of the other fowl?” To this he answered, “Open your [16] other eye, my good Woman, and you will see the two.” She flew into a passion at having her defect of the loss of one eye thus thrown in her teeth, and straightway went to her master, to whom she complained of the insult offered to her, and how that his new servant understood cooking so well that two chickens dwindled down into one. The Priest thereupon went into the kitchen, and said, “Why is it, Owlglass, that you have mocked my servant? I see that there is only one fowl on the spit, whereas there were two; what has become of the other?” Owlglass answered, “Open both your eyes, and you will see that the other fowl is on the spit. I only said the same to your cook, when she grew angry.” The Priest laughed, and said, “My cook cannot open both eyes since she has only one.” Owlglass replied, “That you say, I do not say so.” The Priest continued, “With all this, there is but one fowl.” Owlglass said, “The other I have eaten, for you said I should live as well as you and your cook, and therefore one chicken was for me, and the other for you two. I should have been grieved that what you said were not true, and thus I took [17] [18] my share beforehand.” “Well, well, my good Fellow,” his master said, “it matters little about the eaten fowl, only you do in future what my cook tells you.” Owlglass said, “Yes, my dear Master, as you told me so will I do.” Now, at the hiring, the Priest had said Owlglass should do half the work which the cook would tell him, so that he only did the half of what she told him to do.

Owlglass eats the Priest’s Fowl.

When told to fetch a pail full of water, he brought it only half full, and when he was to put two logs of wood on the fire, he only put one on. The cook saw well enough that all this was done to vex her, and said to her master that if he kept such a perverse fellow in his house she would leave it. Owlglass defended himself, saying, it was quite natural that having only one eye she should see the work only half done. At this the Priest laughed; but to appease his cook was obliged to dismiss his man, promising, however, that he would be a friend to him.

[19]

V.

How Owlglass was forbidden the Duchy of Luneburgh, and bought himself Land of his own.

OWLGLASS had played so many pranks in the Duchy of Luneburgh that he was forbidden the land, the Duke giving orders that if found there he should be hanged. Nevertheless, he continued to pass through the Duchy whenever his road led that way; but one day, as he was riding along devoid of care, he saw the Duke himself coming with several followers. Then he said to himself, “If I fly I shall be pursued and cut down, and, if I remain as I am, the Duke will come up in great anger and have me hanged on the nearest tree;” and most provokingly one stood close by. There was not much time for consideration, and none to be lost, so, jumping off his horse, he killed the animal, and, ripping it open, took his stand in its inside. Now when the Duke came up to him he was astonished at his impudence, and still more so [20] at his extraordinary position. “Did I not promise you,” he said, “that, if found in my territory, you should be surely hanged? What have you to say for yourself?” Owlglass answered, “I put my trust in your Grace’s goodness, and that you will not carry your threat into execution, seeing that I have not done anything to deserve hanging.” “Well,” said the Duke, “let me hear what you have to say in your defence, or rather, tell me why you are standing inside your horse?” Owlglass answered, “I sorely feared your Grace’s displeasure, and thought I had better be found in my own property, where I ought to be safe.” The Duke laughed, and said, “As long as you remain where you are you shall be safe,” and then rode away.

Owlglass made the best of his way over the frontier; but it was not long before he had occasion again to be in the Duchy of Luneburgh, and hearing that the Duke was coming to the neighbourhood where he was, he straightway got a cart and horse, and going up to a peasant, whom he saw digging in a field, he asked whose land it was. The peasant said it was his own, for [21] [22] he had lately inherited it. Hereupon Owlglass asked for how much he would sell him his cart full of earth. They agreed for a shilling; and Owlglass paying the money, filled his cart with earth, in which he buried himself up to his arm-pits, and drove leisurely on his way.

Owlglass Rides on his own Land.

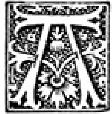
It was not long before he met the Duke, who, seeing him sitting thus in the cart, stopped, and, with difficulty restraining his laughter, said, “Owlglass, have I not forbidden you my land on pain of death?” To this Owlglass answered, “I am not in your Grace’s land, but sitting in my own, which I purchased from a peasant whose inheritance it was.” The Duke replied, “Though sitting

in your own land, your cart and horse are on mine; but this once more I will let you go in safety; beware, however, that you do not come again, for then nothing shall save you.” Owlglass then immediately sprang upon his horse and rode off, leaving the cart behind.

[23]

VI.

Of the Manner in which Owlglass paints a Picture for the Count of Hessen, and how he persuades him that those of base birth could not see the Painting.

FTER Owlglass had wandered all over Saxony, and was so well known that his trickery and scheming were no longer of any avail, he went to Hessen to the Count’s court. The Count asked him what he could do, to which he answered, “Noble Sir, I am a painter such as is not to be found far and wide, for my work far surpasses all other.” The Count then said, “Let me see some of your work.” Whereupon Owlglass produced some curiously painted cloth which he had bought in Flanders. The Count was well pleased, and said, “What must I pay you to paint the walls of the grand saloon, representing the origin of the Counts of Hessen, and how they have held on in friendship and enmity with the kings of Hungary, and other princes up to the present time?” [24]

Owlglass said for that he must have two hundred pounds; which the Count agreed to pay if he did the work well. Owlglass stipulated for one hundred pounds to be paid in advance, that he might buy colours and hire assistants, and also that no one but his assistants should enter the saloon during the progress of the work, so that he might not be hindered. All being agreed to, he hired three assistants, with whom he settled that they were not to do any work; but he nevertheless paid them their wages, and they employed themselves mostly playing at cards and dice. A month passed by, and then the Count desired to know what progress had been made with the work, and also to be allowed to enter the saloon. Owlglass now said, “Noble Sir, there is one thing I must tell you, namely, that the base born cannot see my work.”

Owlglass shows his Picture to the Count.

The Count was rejoiced on hearing this, thinking how he could prove the birth of all by whom he was surrounded, for he was mightily proud. They then entered the saloon; and Owlglass partly drawing back a cloth, which he had stretched across the side of the room he was supposed to be painting, said, pointing at the same time with his mahlstick, which he held in his hand, “Here you behold the first Count of Hessen, in whose noble bearing I trust you recognize the great founder of your noble house; by his side you see his wife, daughter of Justinian, afterwards Emperor of Bavaria: they had issue Adolphus, from whom descended, in a direct line, William the Brave, Lewis the Good, and so on up to your own noble self. You will not fail to appreciate how skilfully I have brought into my composition each worthy personage, occupied in a manner best suited to his character. The drawing I know is faultless, and I hope you admire the richness of the colours.” Now the Count said nothing to all this, and he said to himself, “Can it be possible that I [25] [26]

am base born, for I see nothing but the white wall?” However, for the sake of his own honour, he expressed himself well pleased, adding that his want of knowledge of art prevented his doing full justice to the great talent displayed; whereupon he left the room. As soon as the Countess saw him she anxiously inquired how he liked the painting, for she had her doubts of Owlglass, who [27] appeared to her a rogue. The Count said he was well satisfied; and on her expressing a wish to see it, said she might, with the painter’s permission. She immediately sent for Owlglass, and requested permission to see his work. Owlglass answered that he should be most happy to have her opinion of what he considered his masterpiece, telling her, as he had told the Count, the peculiarity about his work, that it was invisible to the base born.

The Countess went to the saloon with eight attendants, one of whom, a distant relation of her own, was rather weak-minded. Owlglass drew back the cloth, as he had done before, and explained his painting in the same words as to the Count. The Countess stared at the wall and then at him, and at the wall again, but did not make one single observation. The attendants were equally mute, excepting the weak-minded one, who looked at the wall and her companions in astonishment, and then exclaimed, that base born or not, she could see nothing but a white wall, and was convinced there was no more painting on it than on the back of her hand.

[28] The Countess went straight to her husband, and told him that she was as well satisfied as he had been; but that her weak-minded relative maintained that there was no painting whatever on the wall, and that Owlglass was an impostor who was making fools of the whole Court.

The Count was vexed at this, and scarcely knew what to think; but determined to see whether any one else would make similar observations, he sent word to Owlglass to have everything ready on the following day to receive a visit from himself and his whole Court. On receiving this message Owlglass immediately dismissed his assistants, and went to the treasurer and begged to be paid the hundred pounds that were still due to him. He got the money without difficulty, and the following day was no longer at the Court, nor anywhere in Hessen.

[29]

VII.

How, at Erfurt, Owlglass taught a Donkey to read.

HAVING had such signal success in the arts, Owlglass determined to try science and letters; and therefore, when he came to Prague, in Bohemia, he had notices stuck up, on the church and college doors, stating that he could solve the most difficult questions. His answers, here, puzzled the learned more than they had puzzled him with their questions; and thus made bolder in impudence, he went to Erfurt, where he gave out that he could teach any animal to read and write.

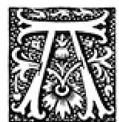
Now, at Erfurt there was a celebrated university, and all the learned doctors met together and discussed what they should propose to Owlglass, so that they might disgrace him, and come off with greater honor, themselves, than their brethren of Prague. As soon as they had come to a [30] satisfactory conclusion, they had Owlglass called before them, and the head of the university said that they had determined to put a donkey to school with him, if he would undertake to teach it to read. Owlglass agreed to do this without hesitation, adding that, as a donkey was naturally a dull animal, they must allow him a reasonable time and a sufficient sum for the support of his scholar during the course of his instruction. After conferring among themselves, the learned doctors proposed that twenty years should be allowed for the accomplishment of the task, together with a sum of money which Owlglass thought sufficient; and having received part of the money in advance, he led his scholar off to a stall he had constructed on purpose for him. He felt no difficulty in his position, for he would be freed from all responsibility by the death of his pupil, which, at any time, could be brought about, but for the time being determined to have some sport. He took an old book, which he laid in the donkey’s crib, having strewed some oats between the leaves, and when the animal found this out, it turned the leaves over with its tongue to get at the oats. Now, when it no longer found any it cried out, “E-aw! E-aw!” which Owlglass noticing, [31] [32] at once went to the head of the university and said, “Learned Doctor, would you not like to see how my pupil is getting on?” “Does he improve?” the Doctor asked; to which Owlglass replied, “He is naturally uncouth and difficult to be taught, but by great care and perseverance I have brought him on so far that he pronounces some letters.” Several of the dignitaries of the university assembled at the donkey’s stable, and as soon as Owlglass placed a book before the poor creature, which had been kept fasting all day, it eagerly turned over the leaves, looking for the oats, and not finding any, cried with a loud voice, “E-aw! E-aw!” “You hear, my worthy Sirs,” Owlglass said, “that he already pronounces a vowel and a diphthong pretty distinctly, and I have every hope that his progress will now be more rapid.” After this exhibition, Owlglass one night fastened a notice up at the college door to the effect that the donkey, his scholar, was now fully competent to be at the head of the university, and to instruct the other donkeys of Erfurt, whom he therefore left to his charge. Owlglass that night disappeared from the town, not forgetting to take with him the money he had so deservedly earned.

Owlglass's learned Donkey.

[33]

VIII.

How Owlglass brought it about that the Watch of Nurenberg fell into the Water.

FTER leaving Erfurt, Owlglass dressed himself as a priest, and, travelling about different parts, levied contributions wherever he found ignorance and credulity, of which there was no lack. He carried a death's head about with him, which he pretended was the skull of Saint Brandonis, possessing miraculous virtue for the cure of all manner of illnesses. He also pretended that he was collecting subscriptions for building a church in honour of Saint Brandonis, and that all who brought an offering would, by the intercession of the Saint, find it restored to them a hundredfold before the year was over. When he arrived at any town or village he sought to find out any prevailing vice or sin, and would then give out that, from persons addicted to this particular vice or sin, he could not accept any offering for the Saint. [34] By these means the offerings flowed in more abundantly than had ever been collected, for those who felt themselves most guilty were most eager, by their offerings, to prove their innocence. Thus Owlglass got his pockets well filled and went to Nurenberg, where he determined to rest for a time from his labours, and enjoy himself as long as his money would last. After being there some time, and knowing all the in's and out's of the place, he grew tired of idleness, and nothing could satisfy him but a piece of mischief. During his wanderings he had noticed that, in the evening, the town watchmen assembled together in a cellar under the town-hall, and that to get from the town-hall to the pig-market a small wooden bridge had to be passed, which crossed the river called the Pegnetz. Bearing all this in mind, he waited one night till the whole town was quiet, then, after breaking three planks of the bridge, he went up to the town-hall and set up a furious bellowing and shouting, at the same time striking the paved road with an iron spiked stick till the sparks flew on all sides. This roused the watch, and as he ran away, they chased him [35] [36] towards the pig-market. Owlglass jumped over that part of the bridge where he had broken the planks, and stopped on the other side, shouting to his pursuers, "O! O! you pig-headed timber-toed rogues, is that the way you run? I see I must needs wait for you!" This enraged the men, and all together they rushed on the bridge, which giving way where he had broken the planks, they fell one over the other into the Pegnitz. There he left them, and turned his back upon the town of Nurenberg.

The Watchmen of Nurenberg.

[37]

IX.

How Owlglass appears as Dentist and Doctor.

OWLGLASS visited Schomberg, where he had notices posted that he was a celebrated dentist and doctor; that he could not only cure the toothache without extracting the tooth, but that the most inveterate disease would immediately yield to his remedies.

He met with a wag who was willing to join him in cheating the good people of Schomberg, afterwards to share the plunder with him; and for this purpose his accomplice pretended to suffer intolerable pain from toothache, but immediately that Owlglass had administered a pill to him, which was nothing more than simple bread, he professed to be perfectly cured.

This wonderful cure took place before all the people, whereat they were greatly astonished, and they crowded to him to be cured of every imaginable pain; but Owlglass appointed all to meet him on the following day, at a stated time, for he was in treaty to restore the patients of the hospital to health, and that before that great work was accomplished, he could not undertake any fresh case. The master of the hospital, on hearing Owlglass's announcement that he could cure all diseases, had applied to him, for he had the hospital full of patients, and was most anxious to be rid of as many as possible. He agreed to pay fifty pounds, Owlglass engaging that the next day the hospital should be free of patients. [38]

Now this is the way he set about the serious task. He went to the hospital and asked each patient separately what ailed him or her, after which he said:—

"You must now solemnly swear that you will not reveal to any living being what I am about to tell you." And having received the required promise, he continued:—"The only way in which I can cure you is by taking one of your number, and burning him to powder, give a portion to each of the others. Therefore, I shall take that one amongst you who is most seriously affected, in order that the others may be saved. Now to find out which is most hopelessly ill, I shall place the master of the hospital at the door, who will cry with a loud voice, 'Let those who are well come out;' and then the one that remains behind I shall burn to powder. Do not forget what I now tell you, for I should be sorry to have you sacrificed." [39] [40]

Owlglass administers a Pill.

The following morning he said to the master:—

“All the patients are now cured, the truth of which you will find; for if you stand at the door and cry out, ‘Let all those who are well come forth,’ you shall see that not one will remain behind.” It happened, indeed, as he said, and the hospital was left empty, whereupon he received the promised fifty pounds, besides many thanks. After this he received all who sought relief, whatever their sufferings might be; and giving each one of his bread pills, for which he took a small sum, he promised a perfect cure in three hours’ time.

Before this time had elapsed, however, Owlglass left the town with his illgotten earnings.

[41]

X.

How Owlglass sells his Horse to a Jew, and on what Terms.

OWLGLASS stopped one day at a roadside inn, for he had ridden a long way, and both he and his horse were tired. On entering the kitchen, which served as travellers’ room, he found a Jew and two or three countrymen, who had watched him as he rode up, and were joking about his and his horse’s appearance.

As I said, he had ridden a long way, and his horse, which was none of the handsomest, jaded and covered with dust as it was, cut but a sorry appearance, his own not being much better. The countrymen thought themselves rather wags, and one said, turning to Owlglass, “That is a handsome animal of yours.” “And it must be allowed,” the other added, “that the gentleman sat the spirited creature well. I should not have liked my sweetheart to see him as he came along.” The Jew was glad to put in his joke, too; and, when it appeared he could do so with safety, said:— [42]

“Is the shentleman willing to part with his handsome beast? For if so I shall be happy to deal with him, as it would just suit a great nobleman, a particular friend of mine, for whom I have been looking out for a horse; but he is very particular, and up to the present I have not been able to find one good enough for him.”

The countrymen laughed boisterously at this sally of the Jew’s, but Owlglass, appearing to take it seriously, answered:—

“My horse is, indeed, a splendid animal; but as I intend to rest myself here for some days I shall not need it, and am therefore willing to deal with you, my good Friend. I have sworn, however, not to part with it for any sum of money, however great, and I cannot break my oath; but you can have the horse for your friend, if you agree to my terms. These are, that, after I shall have given you six stripes on your bare back, the animal is yours.”

Miserable as the creature was the Jew was ready enough to have it without paying any money, so agreed to the proposal. [43] [44]

The Jew’s Bargain.

Whilst the Jew was stripping his shoulders Owlglass said, “These two gentlemen are witnesses that the horse is not to be yours till I have given you six stripes.” The countrymen, anxious for the fun, said they would be witnesses; and the Jew having bared his back, Owlglass tied his hands to a staple in the door-post, and clutching his whip firmly gave him such a cut that the poor Jew danced again. At the second stroke he fairly howled; and after giving him a third Owlglass said, “I see, my Friend, that you are not able to complete the bargain now, so I will keep my horse till some future time, when I shall have paid you the remaining three stripes.” The countrymen were convulsed with laughter, and the Jew had the worst of the bargain.

XI.

How Owlglass sells an Old Hat for more than its Weight in Gold.

OWLGLASS having determined to give himself a few days’ rest, put up at an inn where he had noticed that the landlady was a very lively intelligent woman, for he thought that if an opportunity for a good piece of mischief occurred, she would be quite ready to second him. He remarked that amongst the daily visiters there were two particularly stupid who just on that account thought themselves superior to the rest, and gave themselves considerable airs.

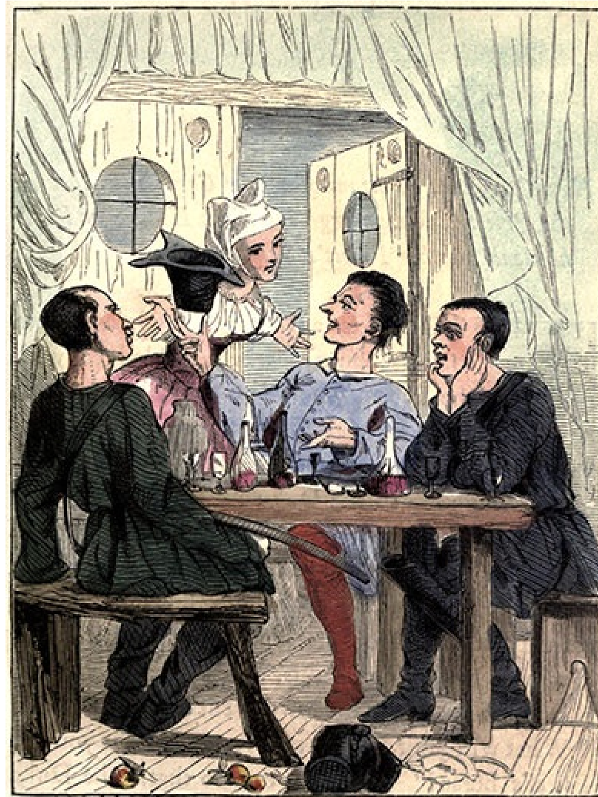
Owlglass could not resist the temptation to play these a trick; and, having taken the landlady into his confidence, he invited them to sup with him. He told them many curious stories and adventures; and after he had prepared their minds to take in anything, however wonderful, he took down his hat, which was hanging against the wall, and which happened to be a very old one, saying, “You will scarcely believe that this hat is worth fifty times its weight in gold; but the fact is, it has the extraordinary power of making any one to whom I owe money believe I have paid them, when I hold it in a particular manner.”

Fools as his guests were, this was more than they could believe; but Owlglass engaged to give them proof of it that very moment, and that they should see the landlady would say she was paid. He rang the bell, and when the landlady appeared, he asked her how much he owed her for the supper, and she said five shillings. Whereupon he continued, holding his old hat in a peculiar manner, on the tips of his fingers, “Have I not paid you for the supper?” To which she answered, “Yes;” adding that she was very much obliged to him.

At this they marvelled; and when he said he was willing to sell it for fifty pounds, there was a dispute between them which should buy it, when it was at length agreed they should buy it

between them. When Owlglass received the money he made his accomplice a handsome present and went on his way, leaving the purchasers to try the virtue of the hat.

[47]

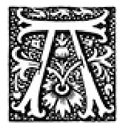


Owlglass paying the Landlady.

[48]

XII.

How Owlglass, by means of a false Confession, cheated the Priest of Riesenburgh out of his Horse; and how he steals another Priest's Snuff-box.

FTER this adventure, Owlglass went to Riesenburgh, where he lodged with the Priest, whom he knew, having been there several times before. This priest had a very pretty maid-servant and a beautiful little horse, which horse the Duke of Brunswick much wished to have, and offered a considerable sum of money for its possession; but though the offer was often repeated the Priest as often refused, for he was scarcely less fond of his horse than of his maid. Owlglass having heard this, and soon after hearing that the Duke was in the town, went to him, and said, "What will your Highness give me if I get you the Priest's horse?" "If you can do that," the Duke answered, "I will give you the coat I now have on." Now this coat was of scarlet velvet, ornamented with pearls. [49]

After this Owlglass pretended to be ill; and taking to his bed, moaned and sighed so piteously that both the Priest and his maid were much grieved, and knew not what to do. As he daily seemed to grow worse, the Priest admonished him to confess, as he had many sins to answer for. Owlglass answered, that he was anxious to confess himself, for though he did not feel guilty of any grievous sin, yet there was one which weighed heavily on his mind, but that he could not confess to him, and therefore earnestly begged he would fetch him another priest. When the Priest heard this, there seemed something strange in it, and his curiosity being strongly excited, he said, "Dear Owlglass, I should have to go a long way for another confessor, and if in the meantime you should die unabsolved we should both have much to answer for, therefore speak, my Son, and your sin shall be forgiven you." "Be it so then," Owlglass said, "but my sin is not so great, as that I fear offending you, for it concerns you." This excited the Priest's curiosity still more, and he said, "Speak without hesitation, for I forgive you beforehand; besides, my anger need not matter, for I dare not divulge your confession." [50] "Oh, my dear, good Friend," Owlglass answered, "I know I shall much anger and offend you; but since I feel that my end is near I will no longer delay. I grieve to say that I have kissed your maid more than once." The Priest inquired how often that had happened; and being told five times, he hastily absolved his penitent, and going out called his servant to him. He accused her of having allowed herself to be kissed by Owlglass; and though she denied it, he took a stick and beat her till she was black and blue. Owlglass laughed when he heard the maid cry, and thought to himself, now the business is settled; so after remaining in bed one more day and night he got up, declaring himself to be quite well. After settling with his host for his board and lodging, he said, "I am now going to

Halberstadt to the Bishop, to denounce you for having divulged the secrets of the confessional.” The poor Priest, who a moment before had felt quite happy at the prospect of getting rid of so dangerous a visiter, was now taken quite aback, when he saw ruin staring him in the face, and he begged most earnestly that he would not betray him, for it was in anger. He added that he would give him twenty pounds to purchase his secrecy, but Owlglass declared that he would not take fifty. Thereupon the Priest begged his maid to intercede, and ascertain what Owlglass would accept; and he, after making much difficulty, said he would not take anything but the Priest’s horse. Now the Priest would rather have parted with anything than his horse; but there was no help for it, so he gave him the animal. Owlglass mounted the horse and rode off to Wolfenbuttel, where he found the Duke standing on the bridge. As he came near, the Duke took off his coat, saying, “You see, Owlglass, that as you have performed your part of the agreement I am ready to perform mine. There, take the coat I promised you.” Owlglass then had to relate by what means he obtained the horse from the Priest; at which the Duke laughed heartily, and besides the coat gave him another horse.

[51]
[52]

Owlglass’s Confession.

This was not the only priest whom Owlglass tricked, as you shall hear.

[53]

WHILST staying in the house where the adventure just told you occurred, he had become acquainted with a priest who came there several times, and there were two things he did not fail to note. Firstly, this Priest was very heavy with sleep every day after dinner, so that it seemed impossible to him to keep his eyes open; and secondly, he had a handsome silver snuff-box, which it was his habit to lay down by his side after taking a pinch from it. He lived in a town at no great distance from Riesenburgh; and thither Owlglass went to stay a day or two, the very first opportunity he had.

Choosing the time when he knew the Priest had dined, he went to the confessional, and by means of a rambling story soon sent his friend asleep, his snuff-box lying by his side as usual. Owlglass then put the box in his own pocket, and having waked the Priest, said, “There is one thing weighs very heavily on my mind, for I have committed the mean crime of theft, and I must beg of you to accept the stolen article.”

[54]

This the Priest refused to do, advising him to restore it to its real owner; but Owlglass said, “He refuses to accept it.”

“Under those circumstances keep it, my Son, and I give you full absolution for having committed the great sin of stealing.”

Owlglass then took the box out of his pocket, saying, “This is the box, and it was from you I stole it; when urged by remorse I wished to make restoration, but you refused to accept it, giving me full absolution.”

After this he left the confessional, and shortly after the town.

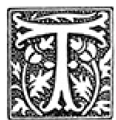
[55]

Owlglass takes the Priest’s Snuff-box.

[56]

XIII.

How a Bootmaker of Brunswick larded Owlglass’s Boots; and how he was paid for doing so.

HE weather having turned wet, Owlglass thought it well to have his boots greased, that his feet might be kept dry during his frequent wanderings; so, going to a bootmaker of the name of Christopher, in the marketplace of Brunswick, he gave him the boots, and said, “Let these be well larded, and have them ready by to-morrow morning.” When he had left the shop, the bootmaker’s foreman said, “Master, that is Owlglass, who plays every one some ugly trick or another, so be very careful what you do, or your turn will have come.” The Master asked, “What did he tell us to do?” “He told you to lard his boots, meaning to grease them,” the Foreman answered; “and if I were you I would act up to the letter of what he said; I should not grease them, but lard them as one lards meat.” “Well, we will do as he bids us,” [57] the Master said; and cutting up a piece of bacon into small strips, he larded the boots as if they were a joint of meat. Owlglass called the following morning to ask whether the boots were ready; and the bootmaker, pointing to them as they hung against the wall, answered, “Yes, there they are.” Owlglass, seeing his boots thus larded, burst out laughing, and said, “Now you are the sort of tradesman I like, for you have conscientiously done as I ordered; how much do I owe you?” “A shilling,” was the answer. As he paid the money, Owlglass said, “You are much too moderate in your charges, but I shall not consider that with one miserable shilling I have paid you. Rest assured, my good Friend, that I will not forget you.” Then taking his boots he departed, the Master and his Foreman, looking after him, said, “He is the last man to whom such a thing should have happened.” And as they talked it over they chuckled that the trickster, in his turn, had been tricked. Their merriment, however, was of but short duration, for suddenly Owlglass’s head and shoulders appeared through the shop window, the glass flying in all directions about the place. [58] “Pray, my Friend,” he said, “have the goodness to tell me whether my boots are larded with sow’s or boar’s bacon.” When the bootmaker had recovered a little from his surprise, he exclaimed, “Get out of that, you scoundrel, or you will have my last at your head.” “Do not be angry, my good Sir,” Owlglass said, “for I only wish to know what bacon that is with which you have larded my boots; whether it is from a boar or a sow?”

The bootmaker’s rage increased, and he abused him in the vilest terms for breaking his window; but Owlglass said coolly, “If you will not tell me what bacon it is, I must go and ask some one else;” and drawing back his head and shoulders, contriving at the same time to break the windows still further, he disappeared. Then the bootmaker was in a rage with his man, and said, “You gave me advice before; now advise me what I am to do to make my window whole again. Pack yourself off at once, and the wages due to you I shall apply to repairing the mischief your wisdom has caused.”

[59]

Owlglass returns with the Boots.

[60]

XIV.

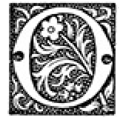
How Owlglass hires himself to a Tailor; and how well he executes his Master's Orders.

WHEN Owlglass found his pockets empty, he hired himself to a Tailor, who said to him, "Sew neatly, so that no one can see it, as a good workman should do." So Owlglass took a needle and some pieces of cloth, and having crept under the cutting board, with his face turned to the wall, he laid the work across his knees and began to sew in the dark. When the Master beheld this proceeding, he said, "What are you doing there, my man? That is a most extraordinary way of working." Owlglass answered, "Master, you told me to work so that no one could see it, and as you yourself cannot see what I am doing, so can no one else see my work, and therefore I am strictly executing your orders." The Tailor, who was a quiet, easy man, then said, "That was not what I meant; come out there, and sew in such a manner that every one may see how fine your work is." Thus they went on for a matter of three days, when, one evening, the Tailor, feeling sleepy, threw a half-finished rough peasant's coat over to Owlglass, and said, "There, make up that wolf for me, and then you can go to bed, as I am now going to do." You must know, that that particular sort of coat was called a wolf. As soon as the Tailor had left the workshop, Owlglass cut up the coat, and with the pieces first made the head, and then the body and legs of a wolf. He stood it up by means of sticks, and then went to bed. When, on the following morning, the Master went into the shop, he started back in a fright, but Owlglass just then coming in, he saw how it was, and said, "What have you been doing here?" Owlglass answered, "I have made a wolf, as you bid me." And the Tailor saying that he did not mean a wolf of that sort, but the peasant's rough coat, he continued, "My dear Master, I wish I had understood your meaning, for I would rather have made a coat than a wolf." With this the Master was satisfied, and they went on comfortably together for three or four days more, when one evening he again felt sleepy; but thinking it too early for his man to go to bed, he gave him a coat which was finished all but putting in the sleeves, and said, "Whip the sleeves to this coat, and then you can go to rest." Owlglass hung the coat up on a hook, and having laid the sleeves near it, he lighted two candles, and, with a whip he then made, whipped the sleeves all through the night. When the Tailor came in, in the morning, he exclaimed, "What tomfoolery is this?" "It is no tomfoolery," Owlglass answered, "I have done as you told me; but though I have stood here all night whipping the sleeves, I could not get them to stick to the coat. It would have been better you had let me go to bed than make me waste my time in this way." "It is not my fault," the Tailor said, "how could I know you understood it this way, when I meant you to sew the sleeves into the coat?" Owlglass answered, "I wish you would not say one thing when you mean another; but now you may do the work, for I must go to bed." This the Tailor would no way agree to, so they quarrelled; and Owlglass leaving him, went his way.

[61] [62] [63]

XV.

How Owlglass caused Three Tailors to fall from their Work-board, and persuaded the People that the Wind had blown them down.

WLGLASS took a lodging at Bamberg, near to the market-place, where he remained about a fortnight, and next door to him there lived a tailor who had three workmen. These men sat on a board, supported by four posts, outside the window, and they laughed at Owlglass, and threw pieces of rag or cloth at him whenever he passed. Owlglass bore all in silence, biding his time to pay them back with interest; and this he determined should be on a fair day, when the market-place would be full of people. The night before the day of the fair he had sawed the posts nearly through which supported the board on which the three tailors sat, and in the morning they placed the board on them as usual, seated themselves on it and began their sewing. Now, when the swineherd blew his horn all the people [64] let out their pigs, and the tailor’s pigs also came out of his house, and went, as Owlglass well knew they would, under the board, rubbing themselves against the posts, which, giving way, the three journeymen tailors were thrown into the gutter. Owlglass, who had been on the watch, now cried out, “See how light three tailors are, for a gust of wind has blown them all at once into the street, as if they were but three feathers! How easily a tailor can fly!” And this he cried so loud that he could be heard all over the marketplace. All the people came running to the spot to see the fun, and mocked and laughed at the poor tailors, who knew not what to do for very shame. They could not tell how it was their board fell; but they found out at last, and guessed that it was Owlglass who had played them that trick. They put up fresh posts, but did not again venture to make game of Owlglass.

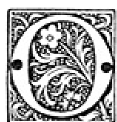
[65]

Downfall of the Tailors.

[66]

XVI.

How Owlglass tells a Truth to a Smith, to his Wife, his Assistant, and his Maidservant, for which he gets his Horse shod.

WLGLASS now being in funds, he rode about the country like a gentleman, and one day came to a small town, where he saw a very neat woman, with her servant maid, standing at the door of a smithy, and judged her to be the smith’s wife. He put up at an inn just opposite, and during the night pulled the four shoes off his horse. On the following morning he led his horse to the smithy; and as soon as it was known that it

was Owlglass, the wife and maidservant came out to see what had brought him there. Owlglass asked the Smith whether he would shoe his horse; to which he at once agreed, for he was glad of an opportunity to have some talk with a man of whom he had heard so much. After much talk on both sides, the Smith said, “If you will tell me a truth that is really true, I will put one shoe on [67] [68] your horse without any charge.” To this Owlglass answered, “If you have iron and coals, and there is plenty of wind in the bellows, the fault will be yours if the forge does not go on well.” “That is undoubtedly true,” said the Smith; and he gave him the promised horseshoe. The assistant, as he was putting on the shoe, said that if he would tell him a truth that applied to him, he would put another shoe on his horse. In answer, Owlglass said, “A smith’s assistant must work hard and not spare himself if he expects to please his master.” “That is true enough,” was the answer, and the horse had a second shoe. Then the wife and the servant wanted a truth told them, for which each promised his horse a shoe. Owlglass whispered his answer in the ear of each of these. To the mistress he said, “When a servant apes her mistress’s dress, she would be mistress not only in dress alone.” The Mistress marked his glances as well as his words, and said, “That is true enough;” so there was a third shoe for the horse. And to the maid he said, “When a servant is better looking than her mistress, she will find it difficult to please her in anything.” [69] The Maid said, “That I know to be true.” So the horse got its fourth shoe, and Owlglass rode further on his way.

Owlglass in the Smithy.

[70]

XVII.

How Owlglass hired himself to a Merchant as Cook and Coachman.

IN the town of Windsheim there lived a rich merchant, who was walking one day outside the town, when he saw Owlglass lying on the grass, and stopping, he asked him what his calling was. Owlglass answered that he was a cook; whereupon the Merchant said, “You are just the man I want, that is, if you understand your business; for my wife is not at all satisfied with her present cook, and we have some of the first people of the town to dine with us to-morrow, to whom we would like to give a good dinner.” Owlglass said that he would serve him faithfully, and that he felt confident of giving satisfaction; so the merchant engaged him, stipulating that he should also serve as coachman, and took him home with him at once. [71] As soon as the merchant’s wife saw Owlglass, she said, “Who is this fellow whom you have brought home with you, for I do not like the look of him at all?” Her husband answered, “Never mind his look, my Dear, for he is a first-rate cook, and we will serve up a dinner to-morrow that

shall be the envy of the whole town.” Early the next morning the Merchant gave Owlglass full instructions as to the dinner, telling him what soup, meat, and vegetables to get, and how he liked everything done. “As for game,” he added, “Professor Guzzle is particularly fond of roast hare, so we cannot do better than let him have his favourite puss; but, mind, let it be the finest that can be got in the whole town.” Owlglass promised that all his instructions should be strictly attended to; and the Merchant, having business of importance to attend to, went out in easy confidence in his new servant. The Merchant got home only just in time to receive his guests, so that he could not visit the kitchen before dinner, and his wife was too fine a lady to attend to such matters. However, the dinner went off very well, and the hare, in particular, was declared to be the finest that had been seen that year; so that all the company were in high spirits. At dessert [72] the conversation turned upon cats; and one of the ladies, addressing the mistress of the house, said she had heard that she had the finest one in the whole town. The Merchant’s wife was very proud of her cat, and gave orders that it should be brought into the room; but it could not be found anywhere; and now the servants remembered that they had not seen it since the morning, when one of them saw Owlglass carry it from the kitchen to an outhouse. Owlglass was now sent for into the dining-room, before all the guests, and questioned as to what had become of the cat. Without being in the slightest degree disconcerted, he said his master had told him that Professor Guzzle was very fond of roast hare, and that they could not do better than let him have his favourite puss, and therefore he, Owlglass, was to be sure and get the very finest in the town; that he had searched the whole town through, but there were none to compare to the one in the house, and he was sure his master would not begrudge it his guests; therefore he had killed and roasted it, and the company had just eaten it. Horror was depicted upon most of the countenances, whilst one or two of the guests tried to joke about it; but these the very first [73] showed symptoms of distress, and one after another of the company had to leave the room pale as death, and not one returned. The mistress insisted upon Owlglass being at once sent away; but the Merchant said, “I want him to drive me and the priest to Goslar to-morrow, and when we get back I will immediately send him about his business.” That evening he told Owlglass to get the carriage ready for the morrow, and to grease it well. As soon as all had gone to bed, Owlglass took some cart grease and greased the carriage outside and in, but particularly the seats. Early the next morning the Merchant ordered the horses to be put to the carriage, and he and the priest getting in, they drove off in high spirits. They had not gone far, however, when they found they were gradually slipping off the seats; and the Priest exclaimed, “What is all this grease? I held on with my hands to check the jolting, and I am all grease.” They ordered Owlglass to stop, and they found they were covered with grease; so that they had to buy a bundle of straw from a farmer and rub themselves and the carriage well. The Merchant had now lost all patience, and he [74] cried out to Owlglass, “I find out now that you are a professed wag, and of the most mischievous class; but you are in the right road, go on, my good Friend, straight to the gallows, and there your journey will be at an end.” Owlglass did as he was bid, for, turning off the road, he drove straight to a gallows which stood at no great distance, and stopping there began to take the horses out of the carriage. “What are you doing now, you rascal?” the Merchant exclaimed. Owlglass answered, “You told me to go straight to the gallows, and that there my journey would be at an end, so I naturally thought that we were to stop here.” The Merchant looked out of the carriage, and seeing that they were indeed under the gallows, could not help laughing. He said, “You have delayed us so long on the road with your foolery that I am afraid we shall not reach Goslar in time for our business, so now, my good Fellow, I pray you get on as fast as you can. Do not look behind you, but mind only the road before you.” Owlglass now again mounted his horse, having first loosened the pin connecting the front wheels, and set off as fast as the horses could [75] [76] gallop. He had not gone far when the pin fell out; but, without looking behind him, he galloped on, carrying off the pole and front wheels, and leaving the body of the carriage far behind. In vain the Priest and Merchant shouted to him to stop. On he went; so they had to jump out of the carriage, and by scrambling through hedges and running across fields they were, fortunately, able to overtake him. Complaint was useless; and as they found they could not now reach Goslar in time, even if their coachman could be trusted to take them there, they determined upon returning home. The homeward journey was accomplished without any further accident; and when the Merchant found himself safe in his own house, he called Owlglass to him and said, “It is but too evident that all the mischief you have done since you have been with me has been done purposely. What have you to say to this?” Owlglass answered, “I do everything strictly to the letter, as I am told, and if I do wrong, the fault is therefore not mine, but the fault of those who give the orders. You do not seem satisfied, so, if you pay me my wages, I would rather look for [77] justice elsewhere.” The Merchant thinking it better to avoid further, and perhaps worse, mischief by getting rid of him at once, paid him, and they parted.

Owlglass's "skilful" Coachmanship.

[78]

XVIII.

How Owlglass cheated a Horse-dealer at Wismar, and afterwards cheated the Public.

OWLGLASS next went to Wismar, a town much frequented by horse-dealers, and one of these had a habit of pulling the tail of any horse he thought of buying. This he did from a notion that, if the hair were firm in the tail, the horse was strong, and would live long; but if, on the contrary, the hair came out freely, that the animal would not last long, and he would therefore have nothing to do with it. Owlglass knew of this habit, and determined to make some profit of it, so he bought a horse without a tail, which he got very cheap on that account, and most artfully he fastened a beautifully flowing tail to the bare stump, by means of blood and gum. With this horse he went to Wismar, and asked so high a price that no one would bid for it, until the dealer came whose habit it was to pull the horses' tails, and him he [79] asked a very low price. Before striking a bargain, the Horse-dealer, as usual, caught hold of the tail, and having formed a favourable opinion of the animal, gave it, perhaps, a harder tug than customary, when, lo and behold, the tail remained in his hands, and he measured his length upon the ground. A shout of laughter arose on all sides; but that was not enough for Owlglass, who cried out, at the highest pitch of his voice, "See here! the villain has ruined my horse, for, beautiful creature that it is, who would have it without a tail?" The people drew nearer and took part with Owlglass, so that the Horse-dealer had to pay him ten pounds for the damage done to his horse, and Owlglass laughed more heartily than any one, though only to himself.

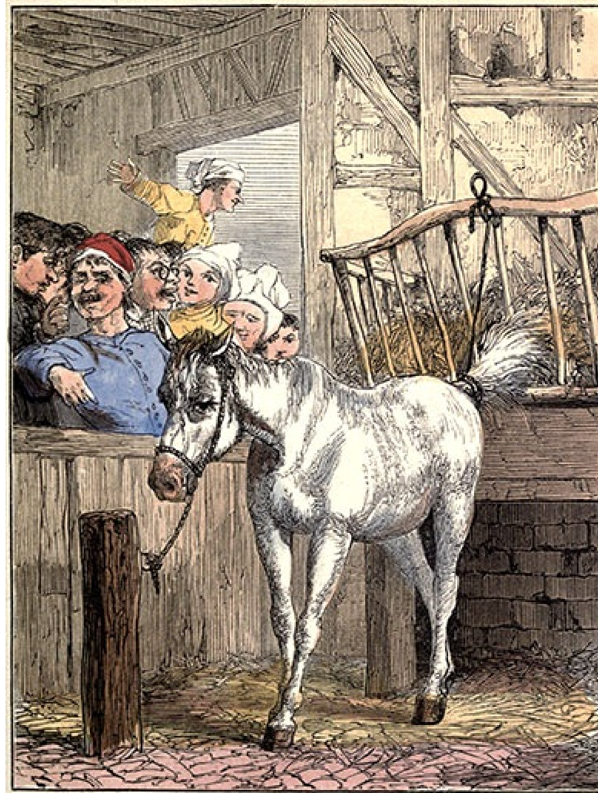
He rode out of Wismar in high spirits, his trick having succeeded so well; and as soon as he was outside the town he fastened the tail on again, intending to sell the horse in the next town. As he rode along, however, he thought of some other way how to make money by his horse, before finally parting with it. In pursuance of the plan he had formed, he stopped at an inn two or three [80] miles distant from the town, where he intended to put his plan into execution. Here he remained till it had grown dark, so that he might enter the town unseen; which having done, he hired a stable, and having put up his horse, and attended to it himself, he locked the stable-door, putting the key in his pocket.

The next morning he had it cried through the town that there was a horse to be shown with its tail where its head should be, stating a certain hour at which only it could be seen. Before the appointed time he made all necessary preparations in the stable, when he again locked the door

and then stood before it, waiting the arrival of the curious. Now, as curiosity was pretty general in the town, there was a numerous attendance; and when Owlglass judged that all the company to be expected had arrived, he collected the admission price from each, and then threw the door open.

There was a general rush, followed by laughter from some, and indignant complaints from others, as they saw the horse, no different in itself to other horses, but fastened with its tail to the manger instead of its head.

[81]

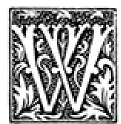


The Horse's Tail where his Head should be.

[82]

XIX.

How Owlglass sowed Rogues.

E next meet with Owlglass in a town where he remained so long that he knew all the secrets of the place. By turns he took up his abode in twelve different inns, so that what had escaped him in one he was sure to hear in another, and it was little good he heard in either. For a long while he puzzled his brain what he could best do to suit the good people among whom he had the honour of living, when, at length, he hit upon a novel fancy, and, going into the market-place, he began sowing, up and down, sideways and crossways, the seed being represented by small pebbles. The people came in crowds, and to their questions what he was sowing, answered that he was sowing rogues. The people cried out, "Those are not wanted here, for we have more than enough of them; and, pray, why do you not sow honest men as well?" He answered, "Those will not grow here." These words were reported to the Town Council, who had him called before them, and ordered him to pick up his seed again, and then leave the town. His seed he could not well pick up; but he left the town, and after travelling about ten miles, came to another. Here, however, the report of his wonderful seed had reached before him, so that he was not allowed to stop there, but had to pass through as quickly as possible. There was no help for it, so, escorted by the town authorities, he went down to the side of a river, which flowed through the town, and there hired a boat to carry him and his seed. He jumped into the boat, but when the boatman raised his bag to lift that in, it burst and all the seed fell out. Owlglass pushed off the boat, crying out to the astonished spectators that he left them his seed, for he was sure that in such a highly virtuous town a few rogues were required to keep up a proper balance; and when he reached the opposite side, leaving the boat to the mercy of the stream, he ran on his way. Whether the seed took root or not is not said; but to judge by the quantity of rogues in the world, it would seem it did, and that Owlglass sowed some of the same sort in other parts of the world.

[83]
[84]

Owlglass sowing Rogues.

[85]

XX.

How Owlglass hired himself to a Barber, and entered his House through the Window.

ONCE upon a time Owlglass went to the city of Hamburg, and having reached the market-place he there stood still and looked about him. Whilst he was standing there a man came up to him and asked what he was looking out for. Owlglass saw at once, by his questioner’s appearance, what business he followed, answered that he was a barber and was seeking employment. “Well met then,” his new acquaintance said, “for I just happen to be in want of a barber’s assistant, and I dare say we shall be able to come to a satisfactory arrangement together. I live in that high house just opposite. You see those windows that reach down to the ground. Go in there, and I will follow you presently.” Owlglass answered, “Yes.” Then crossing the road walked straight through the window, with a terrific crash, and made a polite bow to those within the room. [86] The barber’s wife sat there spinning, and, being much frightened, cried out for help, saying, “Here is a madman come through the window.” Owlglass said to her, “My good Lady, pray be not angry, for the master bid me come in here, having just hired me as his assistant.” “May the foul fiend take you,” the lady answered, for she was not possessed of the most even temper, “a pretty assistant you are. Was the door not wide enough for you, that you must needs come in through the window?” Owlglass answered, “My dear Madam, must not an assistant do as his master bids him?” Just then the Barber entered, and seeing all the destruction around him, exclaimed, “What does all this mean?” Owlglass addressed him thus, “You said to me, you see those windows that reach down to the ground—go in there, and I will follow you presently. Now this good lady is angry that I have broken the window, but how could I help doing so, as it was not open? It seems to me that I have the most reason to complain, for I might have cut myself to pieces in doing what I was told to do; but I hope [87] [88] whatever may be the danger I shall never shrink from doing my duty. Now, excuse me to the lady I beseech you, my dear Master, for you see I could not avoid causing the mischief that has happened.”

Owlglass walks through the Barber’s Window.

The poor Barber knew not what to say, so thought he might as well not say anything; besides, he wanted his assistance, and was in hopes he might be induced to accept more reasonable terms in consideration of the damage he had done. He now gave Owlglass some razors to sharpen, and as they were somewhat rusty at the backs, he said, “Brighten up the backs; indeed, make them quite like the edge.” Owlglass took the razors and made the backs as sharp as the edges, so that the Barber, when he went to see what he was doing, exclaimed, “This is not right!” “How not right?” Owlglass said; “are the backs not sharp enough? But have a little patience and they shall be quite like the edges, as you told me to make them. You see they had got very blunt at the backs, but after a little more sharpening you will be satisfied with them.” “Are you an idiot?” the Master cried in a rage; “or is all this mischief done intentionally? Leave the sharpening and pack yourself off back to where you came from.” “Well,” Owlglass said, “I see we should not be happy together for all our lives, so I may as well go at once;” and he walked out through the window as he had gone in. The Barber was still more enraged at this, and ran after him to have him seized and locked up till he paid for the broken window; but Owlglass was too quick for him, reached a ship that was just about to sail, and was off. [89]

[90]

XXI.

How Owlglass frightened an Innkeeper at Eisleben with a dead Wolf.

IN the depth of winter Owlglass put up at an inn at Eisleben, where one evening there also arrived three merchants from Saxony on their way to Nurenberg. They related how they had been attacked by a wolf, against which they had much difficulty in defending themselves, and that this disagreeable adventure had considerably delayed them. The host, who was a bragging sarcastic sort of a person, joked them much about their adventure, declaring that it was a shame they should allow themselves to be delayed by a miserable wolf; that, for his part, if he were attacked by two wolves, he would soon drive them off, but here three were frightened by one wolf. This continued all the evening till the merchants went to bed, Owlglass in the mean time remaining silent, but turning it over in his mind how he could best play mine host some trick to pay him off for his bragging. [91] The merchants and Owlglass shared the same bed-room; and when the former discussed among themselves how they could repay the mocking of the Innkeeper, Owlglass said he had been thinking it over, and that if they would leave it to him he would engage that they should hear no more about the wolf. The merchants readily agreed, promising a handsome reward if he paid their tormentor off well; and

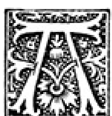
Owlglass then proposed that they should continue their journey, and all meet again there on their return. Early the next morning the merchants paid the reckoning for Owlglass, as well as for themselves, and rode on their way, mine host calling after them to beware lest a wolf should cross their path. Owlglass also took his departure and went on the chase after a wolf. He succeeded in killing one, which he left out in the cold till it was frozen quite stiff, and when the merchants returned he put his prize in a sack, and, taking it with him, joined them at the inn as agreed upon. The Innkeeper again teased his guests about the wolf, talking very big of how he would act. When the merchants went to their bed-room Owlglass joined them, and said, “My good [92] Friends, keep your candle burning, and do not go to bed yet, for we will have some sport this night.” Now, as soon as all the household had gone to bed, Owlglass fetched the dead wolf, which was hard frozen, and taking it to the kitchen placed it near the hearth, supporting it with sticks so that it stood upright, at the same time opening its jaws in which he put a child’s shoe. Then, quietly returning to his room, he called loudly for something to drink. When the Innkeeper heard this he grumbled at being disturbed, and calling up the maid told her to get some beer for his guests. The maid went to the fire in the kitchen to light a candle, and seeing the wolf with its jaws wide open, rushed out into the yard, thinking the brute had surely devoured the children. Owlglass and the merchants continued to call for drink, and the Innkeeper, thinking the maid had gone to sleep again, called the man. He went to the fire to light a candle, and when he saw the wolf, thought it had made away with the maid, so he too ran out into the yard. The shouting for drink still continuing, the Innkeeper thought the man must be asleep as well as the maid, and, [93] [94] grumbling like a bear, he himself got up. As soon as he had lighted a candle he saw the wolf with the shoe in its jaws, and running to the merchant’s room, trembling with terror, cried out, “Come and help me, my dear Friends, for there is a frightful monster in the kitchen, which has devoured my children, maid, and man servant.” They went with him; the girl and the man came from the yard, and the wife brought the children. All were alive. Owlglass then went up to the wolf, which he turned over with his foot, and it did not stir; then turning to the Innkeeper, said, “What an arrant coward you are! It is not long ago that you said you were ready to fight two wolves, and just now you ran away, trembling and shouting, from a dead one.” The Merchants made rare fun of mine host, and the next morning, after paying the bill, took their departure with Owlglass.

The Frightful Monster.

[95]

XXII.

The Grateful Animals.

 GOOD many years ago some boys in a village were having rare sport with a mouse which they had quite surrounded, so that the poor little thing could nowhere escape, for to which ever side it turned, a heavy shoe, or a stick, threatened it with instant death. The poor animal thought this no sport at all, but the boys shouted with laughter as they saw it scamper and jump to avoid the blows aimed at it. Activity alone saved it from its

tormentors; but this was beginning to fail, when, fortunately, a man came that way.

This man had more kindness in his heart than money in his pockets; but with this he had one great fault, for he was somewhat restless and fickle-minded, which, however, on this occasion proved fortunate for the poor little mouse, and eventually so for himself. His restless disposition had driven him to travel, poor as he was, and thus he came to the village, where witnessing the [96] little creature's distress he released it, by giving the boys a few half-pence, and it instantly took refuge in a hole close by.

In his wanderings he came to another village where he saw a crowd of boys, and, I am sorry to say, there were girls as well, tormenting an inoffensive donkey, which he saved from further molestation by again parting with a little of his scanty stock of money.

Further on he reached another village, where he released a bear from like persecution by giving more money.

Not long after these adventures this good man himself got into trouble, and was condemned by a cruel judge to be put into a box with only a jug of water and one loaf of bread, and thus thrown into the river, though I assure you he was quite innocent.

You may imagine his distress, for he was not very comfortable in his box, nor could he see where he was being carried to, when all at once he felt the box grating against the ground, and then heard a nibbling at the lock, which, after awhile, gave way, and when he raised the lid was delighted to see his three friends, the Mouse, the Ass, and the Bear, who now helped him in [97] [98] return for his kindness to them.

Friends in Grave Consultation.

They were not satisfied with merely saving his life, for they knew that he was poor, and had, moreover, spent some of his money to save them; so they were consulting together what they could do for him, when the bear espied a white stone come floating along. "Nothing could happen more fortunate," the Bear cried, "for here comes the lucky stone, and whoever has that will have all his wishes fulfilled on the instant."

The man, hearing this, seized the stone as it was passing, and wished himself in a palace with every comfort and luxury, surrounded by beautiful grounds; and the next instant all was as he had wished. Now, dazzled by so much splendour, and happy beyond anything he had ever dreamt of, he forgot his friends, the Mouse, the Ass, and the Bear, though, I have no doubt, he would have thought of them sooner or later and wished them with him; but before this fault was remedied misfortune came upon him.

It so happened that some merchants passed that way, and seeing a magnificent palace, where [99] before there had only been barren land, they were seized with wonder and curiosity, so they went in and asked the owner how he had worked such a truly wonderful change. "I had only to wish for it," was the answer. They marvelled at this, as well they might; and being told that it was by means of the lucky stone his wish had been fulfilled, they offered all their merchandize for the stone.

Our friend, whose head, it must be confessed, was not as good as his heart, seeing so many beautiful things, agreed to the bargain at once, without thinking that he need only wish and he could have all those and more beautiful things. He gave the merchants the stone; and it was no sooner out of his hands than he found himself in his former position, which was rendered worse when he compared all the splendour and comfort he had lost to his ugly comfortless box, with

only a jug of water and one loaf.

His friends, however, did not desert him in his distress, but this time they could not open the box; and, after consulting, the Bear said, “I see we cannot do any good without the lucky stone, so let us go to the palace where the merchants now live and try to get it.” This was agreed upon; [100] and when they got there they held another council. The bear seems to have had the wisest head, for he was again spokesman, and said, “It is useless for us to expect to be let in here; but you, my friend Mrs. Mouse, you can creep through anywhere—see, there is just a little hole at the bottom of the door. Go in, and, as only one of the merchants is now at home, worry him in every possible way, for you can always manage to escape; and when you have worked him into a perfect fury lead him here to the door, and no doubt he will open it to rush out after you. Then we two will go in and easily master him between us. Only you take care to find out where he keeps the stone.”

The mouse got through the hole in the door without difficulty; and, after finding out where the stone was, went in search of the merchant, whom she found in bed. She crept in at the bottom and began nibbling at his toes. The merchant jumped up in a fright, but when he saw the mouse his fright turned to rage, and he made a snatch at it; but the little thing was too quick for him: [101] [102] and now began a chase all round the bed-room, round every table and chair, and into every corner of the next room, and, finally, into the hall, where, jumping up and biting him in the calf of the leg, in order to exasperate him still more, she slipped through the hole she had got in at.

The Merchant’s Rough Handling.

The merchant threw open the door, and the bear, who was ready, greeted him with the closest embrace. They rolled down together, but the bear soon hugged all the breath out of him, and leaving him in charge of the donkey went with the mouse to fetch the stone. No sooner had they this in their possession than the three went off, regardless of the confusion they left behind them.

They soon reached the water-side; but the box was floating in deep water, and the Donkey said, in despair—

“We shall never get at it.”

The Bear, however, cried, “Nonsense, leave that to me, I can swim well enough, so you, Donkey, just put your fore-feet round my neck, and take the stone in your mouth, but mind you don’t swallow it; and you, my little Friend, can make yourself snug somewhere in my long hair.” [103]

All being satisfactorily arranged, off they set, but were destined to meet with a misfortune on their voyage; for the bear, who was rather fond of hearing himself talk, could not refrain from expatiating on the past adventure.

“We managed that pretty well, I flatter myself. What is your opinion, my long-eared Friend?” And as the donkey made no answer he continued—

“How is this? I was always taught that a civil question deserves a civil answer; but this does not seem to enter into your notions of politeness. Who taught you manners, my Friend?”

The donkey could stand it no longer, but opened his mouth, and out fell the stone “plop” into the water.

“There, you see what comes of your talking. Could you not wait till our work was finished? How could I open my mouth without losing the stone? And now it is gone, and with it all hope of helping our friend.”

“Well, well, my good Fellow,” the Bear interrupted him, for he was not anxious to hear any [104] more, as he felt himself in the wrong, “a moment’s action is better than an hour’s regret. I have a

bright idea that will put all right again. Let us go back, and I’ll set about it at once.”

On the way back the bear called up all the frogs that were in those parts, and said to them, “Fetch me up as many stones as possible from the bottom of the water, for I have an idea of building you a place of refuge in case of danger.”

A loud croaking was immediately heard, which called the frogs from all parts; and they set about collecting stones without loss of time.

It was not long before the lucky stone was added to the heap, which the bear immediately seized; and telling the frogs that there were now stones enough, the three friends started off again.

They soon reached the box, which now opened without difficulty, and the poor prisoner was relieved; but only just in time, for the loaf of bread was consumed, and he began to suffer from want.

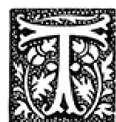
As soon as he had the stone in his hand he wished himself back in the palace, which he found just as he had left it. This time he did not forget his friends, and they lived happily together to the [105] end of their days.

Now, does not this story prove that an act of kindness meets with its reward, and that the ungrateful are worse than the brute beasts, for our three good animals effectually showed their gratitude?

[106]

XXIII.

Tim Jarvis.

IM Jarvis was as decent and hardworking a man as any one could wish to know, till the evil spirit got astride his imagination. Tim was not only a decent, hardworking man, but recollected his early lessons, that the evil one should be resisted with might and main.

Nor was it during the day that the enemy, at first, attempted to gain any advantage; but it was at night that he mainly worked upon his mind by means of dreams.

Night after night he dreamed of treasures of gold and precious stones that were to be found, first in one place and then in another, till it grew too much for him, and his waking hours were scarcely different to dreaming. He was now found digging anywhere but in his garden or potatoe field; and indeed his dreams led him all the way from Ireland to London-bridge, with his spade [107] across his shoulder.

Now, when poor Tim was on London-bridge he felt himself more puzzled than ever he had been in his life; he was quite bewildered by the confusion and noise, and being pushed from one side to another; but after a while he began to recover himself; and as he walked up and down, first on one side and then on the other, he tried the ground with his spade, but quite accidentally like, or as if it were a walking-stick, for he was wide awake.

“For sure,” he said to himself, “I’m not going to let so many people suspect what treasure is lying under their feet.”

He was encouraged by the hollowness of the sound; but then again his spirits sank, for he found no spot where his spade could make the slightest impression, nay, he doubted whether he could stick a pin in anywhere, so hard were the stones.

When it had grown dark, and the bridge was still crowded, he began to fear that all the people were there for the same purpose as himself; but he was determined that he would tire them out; [108] and indeed the numbers did gradually decrease.

St. Paul’s had just struck twelve, when a stranger, stopping just in front of our friend, said—

“Well, Tim, you have come a long way, but you might have done better nearer home. You know, Tim, the lane that runs at the back of your cabin, and you know the old wall, for I’ve seen you digging under that many a night. Well, Tim, you were in the right road, but too near home. I’ve seen you turn sharp round that wall, and, crossing the big bog, look longingly at the heap of stones behind the furze-bush in Terry O’Toole’s field.”

“Yes,” sighed Tim; “but it would have been more than my life was worth to dig there, for though Terry knows well that his whole field is nothing but ugly stones, he would murther man, woman, or child who stuck a spade in any part of the ground—the big baste.”

“True for you, Tim,” the stranger said, “but the gold is there.” After these words the stranger was gone as suddenly as he had appeared, and poor Tim was left, more puzzled than ever.

[109] “May be,” he said to himself, “its desaiving me he is, that he may have the digging of Lunnon-bridge all to hisself, but then sorrow a spadeful of earth could any one throw up here, in all his life. No, it was to meet the sthrainger that I came all the way here without knowing it, so now I’ll go back to ould Ireland.”

Tim did go back, and, after selling his potatoe-field, bought the waste bit of land, which O’Toole was pleased to call a field.

What did Tim care, when all the neighbours called him mad, or even when his wife threatened

him because he sold the bed from under her to buy a new spade and pick, for he knew it was troublesome ground he had to work in, and no mistake.

When night came, after he had all ready, Tim went to his new property, and, hard as the work was, did not rest till the first grey of morning began to appear. Just then, through a crack in the ground, he thought he heard voices below. He listened, scarcely drawing his breath, when all the breath was frightened out of him, for he plainly heard—

“We’ll give Tim a nice dance when he comes for our gold.”

[110] When he had recovered himself a bit, he scrambled out of the hole as fast as possible, and went home, where he met with no over-pleasant reception from his wife.

A strange day that was which Tim spent, divided between rejoicing and trembling, for he knew now for certain that gold was there; but he knew, too, that there were some sort of beings to be dealt with; and what were those beings? His hair stood on end as he pictured some frightful monsters to himself; but yet all must be risked to gain possession of the gold, and he said, “It’s mighty polite I’ll be to the gintlemen, and sure they won’t harm a poor man.”

Over and over again he repeated what he should say to the “gintlemen,” and thus the day passed; the most anxious day of his life. He took care to arm himself with more than natural courage, in the shape of a bottle of potheen, of which he took a sup, and then another, and then a still longer one, before he jumped into the hole.

In the darkness, for night had come on, he plainly saw a light shining through the crack in the ground, [111] as the night before, so he immediately set to work; and he had not thrown up many spades of earth, when the ground gave way, and he sank down, he never knew how low, nor could he ever recollect more than that he found himself surrounded by the strangest little beings, who were all jabbering at once, and seemed very angry.

He remembered that he made them his best of bows, and gave them his fairest words, when the tallest of them, stepping forward, addressed Tim thus:—

“Tim, we see that you are a decent, well-spoken, and polite gentleman, and in your case we will overlook our privacy being intruded on, which you must look upon as a great favour.”

“And ’tis very much obleged that I am to your honer and the other gintlemen, and sure ’tis I that will never forget it; but might I not make so bold as to tell you that I am a poor man, and ask your honour whether you could not help me with a thrifle?”

There was a loud shout of laughter, and then the same little fellow that had addressed him before, [112] said, “Well, Tim, we have plenty of the rubbish you all think so much of. There, take as much of the gold as you can carry.”

Tim saw that the ground was covered with guineas, which he set to picking up as fast as he could stow them away, and when he could not find room for one more, he took both his hands full, sighing that he must leave so many behind.

Then the little people cried out, “Go home, Tim Jarvis; but shut your eyes close, or some mischief will happen to you.”

He did as he was told, and felt himself whisked through the air quicker than lightning. Some time after he knew that he no longer moved, he ventured to open his eyes, for he felt a mighty tugging at his hair. He found himself by the side of the hole he had been digging, and his wife, who had grown tired of his strange ways of late, was shaking him rather roughly.

Tim Jarvis and his Wife.

“Lave the breath in me,” he cried, “and I will fill your apron with golden guineas.” He put his hand in his pocket, but only pulled out a few yellow furze-blossoms. When he saw this Tim was quite dejected, and did not venture to answer a word to his wife’s reproaches, but allowed himself to be led home.

From that night he left off dreaming; and taking again to his industrious, hardworking habits, soon made up for his past neglect, and was not only able to buy back his potatoe-field, but became a happy, flourishing man.

His wife used to say that it was only a dream about the little people and the gold, for that certainly she had found him asleep; but Tim shook his head.

XXIV.

The Shoemaker and the Dwarfs.

HY do we read of so many shoemakers that were poor? Surely they must have lived in Ireland; but, be that as it may, we have to tell of another, who, though he was most anxious to fit all the world, could find no customers, till at last he had nothing left but just leather enough to make one pair of shoes.

He had been running about all day, longingly looking at all the feet, and wishing he might measure some one for this last pair of shoes, but he returned, having only worn out his own. However, with all his poverty, he had a light heart and a good wife, who was always ready to cheer him; so he determined to make up the shoes in the very best style, and, putting them in his window, trust to a purchaser.

He cut them out, intending to begin his work early the next morning, and went to bed, soon falling asleep. Imagine the good man’s astonishment when, on the following morning, he found the shoes already made, and in such a manner that he could not take his eyes off them.

He put them in his window, though he could hardly make up his mind to part with them, and, half hoping to frighten purchasers away, he set twice as high a price upon them as it had been his custom to charge.

However, a customer was soon found; and though it was with regret he parted with those master-pieces of work, yet, when he held so much money in his hand, he was delighted, for not only could he buy leather to make two pairs of shoes, but he could get his wife a few necessaries she had been long obliged to dispense with.

That evening he cut out two pairs of shoes, ready for the next morning, when, on getting up, he found those finished, with workmanship no less excellent than that of the night before.

For these, also, customers were speedily found, at equally good prices as the previous pair; and that night the Shoemaker cut out four pairs of shoes, which he again found made to perfection the following morning. Thus it went on, the work that was prepared at night being finished by the morning, so that our good friend soon became a flourishing man; but he and his wife remained as simple in their habits as of old, preferring to spend what they could spare on their more needy neighbours.

Curiosity seems part of a woman’s nature, and the Shoemaker’s wife certainly felt very curious to see who their friends were that did the work so beautifully; so she proposed to her husband that they should hide themselves, and, leaving a candle burning, watch for their nightly visitors.

They did so, and at midnight saw two Dwarfs come in, who immediately set to at the work left for them, stitching and hammering away so fast that the Shoemaker felt quite bewildered by their rapidity. Not one moment did they stop, but worked on till all was finished, and disappeared long before daylight.

Now, if the Shoemaker’s wife was curious, she was kind-hearted as well, and was much grieved to see that such good, industrious little fellows should be so neglected by their families and friends, for they had not a stitch of clothes on, when it was winter too. Had they no wives or no sisters to look after their comfort? And she proposed to make them a decent suit of clothes each.

The good man was delighted at the proposal; so she bought the stuff, and gave herself but little rest till she had made them a coat, waistcoat, and a pair of trowsers each, as near their shape and size as she could guess.

As soon as finished, the clothes were left for them instead of the customary work, and the shoemaker and his wife again watched their coming.

About midnight they appeared; and when they found the clothes in place of their usual work, they stood for a moment irresolute, and then took up each article, examining it on all sides. They then began to try on the things, not without making several mistakes, for one of the little fellows had got his arms into the legs of the trowsers, whilst the other was putting on the waistcoat over the coat. But at length they were dressed; and having examined each other, and then themselves, they were so delighted that they set to capering and dancing about the room, and playing all manner of antics, jumping over the chairs and tumbling over head and heels, till at last they

danced out of the room hand-in-hand.

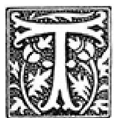
The Dwarfs' Capers.

They did not appear again; but the Shoemaker continued to prosper, and became a rich man; he and his wife being respected and loved by all who knew them.

[121]

XXV.

The Countryman and the Jew.

HERE was once a Farmer, a great miser, and he had a servant as simple as he himself was close, for he had served his master, three years without being offered any wages, or asking for any.

After the three years, however, the man thought he would not work any longer without pay, so he said to his master, "I have worked for you diligently and faithfully, and hope you will now give me a fair reward for my services."

Knowing that his man was a great simpleton, the farmer gave him three-pence, saying, "I not only reward you fairly, but splendidly—here is a penny for each year; but, now that you are rich, do not squander your money and get into idle habits."

The poor fellow thought that he was rich indeed, so determined that he would not work and slave any longer, but travel and enjoy himself. [122]

With his fortune in his purse, and his purse safely in his pocket, he set out; and as he was going along, singing merrily, a little dwarf came up and asked him why he was so merry.

"Why should I not be merry," he answered, "for I am rich and have nothing to do but to enjoy myself? I have worked hard for three years, and saved all my earnings."

"And how much might they be?" the little man asked. When told that the amount was three-pence, he said he was very poor, and begged hard for the money. The Countryman did not make him ask long, and cheerfully gave him his three-pence, when the little fellow said—

"You have a kind, generous heart, and shall not suffer for your liberality. You shall have three wishes, which shall be granted you—one for each penny."

The Countryman was highly rejoiced, and said, "Many thanks, my good Friend, for your offer; and, first of all, I would like to have a gun which will bring down everything that I shoot at; and, secondly, I choose a fiddle, to which, when I play, every one must dance, whether he will or no. These will satisfy me, so I will not trouble you with a third wish at present." [123]

“Your wishes are soon granted,” said the Dwarf, and gave him the desired gun and fiddle; after which he went his way.

Our friend was happy before, but now his happiness knew no bounds; and he only wanted an opportunity to try his fiddle, for the gun he had already tried several times as he walked along.

The desired opportunity was not long wanting, for he soon met a Jew; and just where they met stood a tree, on one of the branches of which sat a plump wood-pigeon.

“I wish I had that bird,” said the Jew; “could you not shoot it for me, my Friend?”

“That is easily done,” was the answer; and the same instant the bird fell amongst some thorn-bushes at the foot of the tree. The Jew crept in among the bushes to pick it up; and no sooner was he in the middle than the Countryman took his fiddle and played the sprightliest of jigs. [124]

The first sound no sooner reached the Jew’s ears than he began to dance; and, as the tune went on, he jumped and capered higher and higher, at every leap he took leaving a piece of his clothes hanging to the thorns. The thorns soon began to enter his flesh, and, in pain, he cried out—

“For heaven’s sake, leave off playing! What have I done to deserve this?”

“What have you done?” said the Countryman. “How many a poor wretch have you not ruined! And the duty to avenge them has fallen upon me, so I will just play you another tune, and mind you dance well to it.”

The Jew then offered him money to give over; but, as his offer did not rise high enough, he had to dance on till, in despair and worn out by fatigue and pain, he said he would give a hundred pieces of gold, which he had in his purse. As the purse was thrown down the Countryman’s heart was softened; so he gave over playing, took up the purse and went his way, highly delighted with his day’s work.

[125]

The Jew’s Dance.

[126] No sooner had he gone than the Jew crept out from among the thorns, half naked, and his heart full of bitterness and revenge. The loss of his money smarted even more intolerably than the wounds in his flesh, and he hastened to the nearest judge, to whom he complained how he had been robbed and ill-treated, giving a description of his tormentor.

The judge could not refuse justice to the Jew; so he sent out his officers, who soon caught the Countryman, and, brought back, he was put upon his trial.

The Jew’s evidence, and the sorry plight he was in, were too convincing to be got over, though the defence was that the money had been given of his own account and not taken from him.

The Countryman was condemned to be hanged. He was led off to the gallows at once; but just as the rope was about to be put round his neck he said—

“My Lord Judge, I cannot complain of the sentence passed upon me, since my accuser swears that I robbed and ill-treated him, and I only ask to have one favour granted me before I die.”

“Anything excepting your life,” was the answer.

“I do not ask my life, but only that you will order my fiddle to be restored to me, and allow me to play once more upon it.” [127]

“No! no! for heaven’s sake, no!” cried the Jew. “Don’t let him have that infernal fiddle, my Lord, or misfortune will come upon the whole of us.” But the judge said his word had been given; so he ordered the fiddle to be given to the prisoner.

The Countryman no sooner had the instrument in his hands than he struck up a dance, and at

the very first note even the judge’s feet began to shuffle about as he sat in his chair, and as for the others they fairly danced.

In vain the Jew caught hold of the clerk’s desk, for his legs flew out on either side; and as the height of his capers was checked they only became the more frequent.

The judge’s clerk, the officers of the court, the hangman, as well as all the spectators, were dancing with all their might, and soon the judge himself danced out of his chair into the midst of them.

At first all seemed good humour and enjoyment, and no one, excepting the Jew, wished to check the general merriment; but as it went on there were no bounds to the capers, and there were cries of pain, as one alighted on another’s toes, and cuffs and blows were exchanged as one jostled the other. [128]

The Jew, who had broken away from his hold of the desk, was the maddest in his capers, and he shrieked for mercy; the others soon joining in the cry, begged the player to leave off, but he fiddled away faster and faster till the judge promised him a free pardon.

The Countryman said, “I already once earned the hundred pieces of gold, and I deserve them now again for the dance I have played; so pray, my Lord, order the money to be restored to me, or I must think that you are not yet satisfied.”

The judge then said the money should be given him; but the Countryman, without leaving off playing, addressed all the other dancers thus, “You all hear how handsomely his Lordship rewards me, and I expect that each of you will show your gratitude, for the amusement I have afforded you, by a present; each according to his means.”

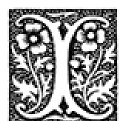
So anxious were all to put an end to the dance that every one offered what he could afford, but the Countryman said, “I did not hear the Jew’s voice. Now, of him I have to request a full confession of how he came by the hundred pieces of gold; and till he has made this confession I must trouble you all to continue the dance.” [129]

All threatened the Jew with instant death if he did not confess; so the rogue was forced to condemn himself by confessing that he stole the hundred pieces of gold; for which he was punished with as many stripes, when the dance was over.

[130]

XXVI.

My Watch.



MUST tell you my story myself, that is the story of my watch, and bad luck to it, for it was small comfort to me; and what have I now left of it, but to tell the trouble it brought upon me?

One day of the year eighteen hundred and thirty-three, Tim Looney, the parish schoolmaster, a mighty learned man, from whom I got my learning, went up to Dublin, to get his lease renewed with ’Squire Beamish, who is now dead and gone, rest his soul. Well, as I was saying, Tim Looney went up to Dublin, and had just come back, when of course all the neighbours came to hear the news from the big city, and Molly Mahone, as you can imagine, thrust herself before them all, saying—

“Come, you auld pictur card, when are you goin’ to tell us the news? What is the good of you, you auld worm, if you canna even speak?” [131]

You know Moll is rather hasty.

“Och, and it’s more wonders I have to tell than one of you will believe. I saw the great Boneparte riding on a flea, and the Dook of Wellington by his side, quite friendly like.” “And was Boneparte a very big man?” said I.

“I don’t know,” said Tim; “I’ve heard say he was a little man, but they call him the great Boneparte for all that.”

“He was a great man,” said Moll to me, “just as you are a great fool, so hauld yer tongue, will ye, and let Tim go on.”

Tim did go on, and told us many other great wonders; but it’s of myself I want to speak. Well, then, after Tim had told us all he had seen, he gave me such a fine large silver watch, and a thirty shilling note, which my sister, Biddy, had sent from Merica, for me to buy a new fiddle with, for she had heard that I was great in music. I put the watch in my pocket to keep it safe, and then I examined the note all over, thinking all the while how beautiful I would play on my new fiddle; but Tim soon stopped me by asking me what o’clock it was. [132]

After looking at the sun, which he himself had taught me, I told him it must be about two; when he said, “And why can’t you look at the watch, and tell me the exact minute it is?”

I didn’t look at my watch, for I thought it was making game of me he was, but I said, “And how should she tell me the time of day? Can she speak?”

“You are a big fool, Paul,” he said; “look at her face, and see where her hands point to.” That she should be able to tell me the time, and have a face and hands, with which she points, was too

much, so I burst out laughing, but I took her out of my pocket.

"There," Tim said, "don't you see something sticking out on her face? Those are her hands, and you see they point to numbers; but may be it's your numbers you don't know, after all my teaching."

This provoked me, so I looked at what he called her face, and saw the numbers, sure enough, and the things he called the hands too. "Well," Tim went on, "and what number does the short [133] hand point to?" "None," said I, "for it points just half way between the two and the three." "Then the long hand points to six, and it's half-past two it is," Tim said. "And how does all this happen?" I asked, for I was sorely puzzled, Tim knowing too where the long hand pointed, without my telling him.

"Put her up to your ear," he said, "and she will tell you how she works."

I did as I was told, and heard her go "tick-a-tick, tick-a-tick." As I listened to her a mighty fear came over me, and I flung her from me, crying out, "The crittur does talk some unnatural language, and perhaps she'll bite too."

Tim caught her, and exclaimed, "What a fool you are, Paul!" for he was now quite angry; "if I had not caught her she would have been done for entirely." After he had held her some time in his hands, seeing there was no harm in her, I took her again and went home. I was half afraid of her, so did not look at her again till night, when the big varmint, Pat Molloy, came in, shouting fit to frighten the life out of one.

"Is it a watch I hear you've got, Paul?"

[134] "Those ugly long ears of yours heard right," I answered, for I did not much like Pat. "And may be then you'll be after telling one the time it is." With that I pulled out the watch, and looked at her; but I had clean forgotten what Tim had told me, though I recollected something about her hands pointing to a number, so seeing something pointing to seven, I said at once, "It's near seven o'clock," for I did not like to be looking too long, to be laughed at by that fellow.

"And it's near seven, it is," Pat said. "You're a fine fellow to have a watch. It's a turnip you might as well have in your pocket, for it's long past eight, it is." The pride of the O'Moors and of the O'Doughertys was taken out of me entirely quite by that rascal, for I felt it rush from the soles of my feet into my head, but I wouldn't get into a passion, for him to see that I was in the wrong, so I said, "And if you know the time so well, why do you ask me?"

Pat only burst into a hoarse laugh, and ran out of the cabin to tell every one, he could show his [135] ugly face to. I went to bed to drown my troubles, but it was one long night-mare I had; first the watch and then the fiddle dancing on my chest, grinning at me all the while, with Pat Molloy looking on.

My first thought on waking in the morning was my watch, and looking up to her, for I had hung her on a nail, as I had been told, I said, "Good morning to you, how are you this morning, my dear?" for I thought it best to be civil to her, but no answer did she make me. I spoke to her again, and as she was still silent I took her down from the nail and held her to my ear.

"Och, it's dead she is," I cried, as she still gave no signs of life, and I rushed across to Tim's. I knocked at his window, shouting, "Are you awake?" "No," he said; "why should I be awake at this time o'morning?"

"Then," said I, "you must listen to me in your sleep, for it's dead she is, and what will I do at all?" "I hope she had the benefit of the Clergy," Tim cried, starting up and coming to the window. "It's not that I mean, it's not my mother at all, it's the watch that's dead," I explained.

[136] "Leave me in peace then," he said, going back to his bed; but as I would not leave him in peace, but kept crying out, "What will I do?" he growled, "Wind her up, you fool; she's not dead at all; but give her here, and the key, or it's ruin her you will."

So I gave him the watch and the barn-door key, which I happened to have in my pocket. It was well for me that I turned my head on one side, as I thought I heard some one coming, for just then the key came whizzing past my ear.

"I wish it had broken your lubberly head," Tim cried, in the biggest rage I ever saw him. "It's the little key I want; the one with the bit of red tape I gave you yesterday."

I fortunately found the funny little thing in my pocket, but it was not a bit like a key. As soon as I gave it him he twisted and twirled it about in her, till I heard her cry, and then he said—

"There, take her away, for she is all right again, and mind you don't let me see you for a whole week, or surely it's murder you I will."

Now, mind this and you'll see how strangely things come about. If it had not been for this what [137] [138] Tim said, I should not have had to tell you the story of my watch, or it would not have ended as it now must. If Tim had told me about winding her up the night before I should not have disturbed him in the morning, and he would not have been so angry, and would not have told me not to see him again for a week. He has since said that he did not mean a word of that; and, had I but known it, that tarnation Pat could not have cheated me; however I will tell you how it happened.

The Death of the Watch.

Directly after I left Tim, whom should I meet but Pat, who spoke quite civil, saying, “Well, Paul, and how’s the watch? I’ve been thinking since I heard her ‘glucking’ last night that it’s to lay she wants, and that if she had a nest you’d have some young watches in a day or two.”

“Do you think so?” said I.

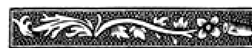
“I’m sure of it,” said he; so we went along to the barn together and made her a nice comfortable nest of hay.

“Now,” he said, as he laid her in it, and covered her up quite warm and snug, “you must not go near or disturb her for five days, or it’s desert her nest she will, and you’ll have no younguns.”

[139] Well, to finish with my story, after five days I went to the nest, and what do you think I found? No younguns, nor the old watch neither, but a big turnip. I ran to Pat’s, but he had gone off to America. I never saw my watch again; but up to this day the boys call out, when they are out of my reach—

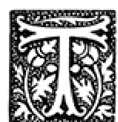
“Paul, tell us what o’clock it is.”

[140]



XXVII.

Fittletetot.

HERE was a good woman of Kittleroopit, but where Kittleroopit is exactly I cannot tell you; so it’s of no use pretending to more than one knows. Her husband was a vagabondizing sort of a body, and he went to a fair one day, from which he not only never returned, but never was anything more heard of him.

Some said that he enlisted, and others that he had fallen into the hands of the press-gang; certain it is, anyhow, that the press-gang was about the country ready to snap up anyone, for our good dame’s eldest brother, Sandy, was all but smothered in the meal-tub, hiding from these man-stealers; and after they had gone he was pulled out from the meal wheezing and sneezing, and was as white as any ghost. His mother had to pick the meal out of his mouth with the handle of a spoon.

[141] Well, when her husband was gone the good woman of Kittleroopit had little left but her baby, and there was not much of that; for it was only a wee thing of a few weeks old. Everybody said they were sorry for her, but no one helped her, which is a case of constant occurrence, as you know. The good woman, however, had still something left, which was a sow; and it was, moreover, near littering time.

But we all know that fortune is uncertain; for one day, when the dame went into the sty to fill the trough, what should she find but the sow lying on her back groaning and grunting, and ready to give up the ghost.

This was a blow to the poor woman, so she sat down with the child on her knee and fretted more sorely than ever she had done for the loss of her husband.

I must tell you that the cottage of Kittleroopit was built on the slope of a hill, with a small fir-wood behind it; and as the good woman happened to look down the hill she saw an old woman coming up the footpath, dressed almost like a lady. She had on a green dress, and wore a black velvet hood and steeple-crowned hat. She carried a staff in her hand as long as herself—the sort [142] of staff that old men and old women used to help themselves along with long ago. They seem to be out of fashion now.

Well, when the good woman saw the green lady near her she rose up and began courtesying, and said, “Madam, I am one of the most misfortunate women alive, for I have lost—” But the green woman interrupted her, saying—

“I don’t wish to hear piper’s news and fiddler’s tales, my good woman. I know that you have lost the good man of the house, but that is no such great loss; and I know that your sow is very ill, which is worse; but that can be remedied. Now, what will you give me if I cure your sow?”

“Anything your good Ladyship likes,” answered the good Woman, for she little knew whom she had to deal with.

“Let’s shake hands on that bargain,” said the green Lady; so they shook hands, and madam then marched into the sty.

She looked peeringly at the sow, and then began to mutter something which the good woman could not well understand, but she said it sounded like— [143]

“Pitter patter,
Holy water.”

Then she took a little bottle out of her pocket, with something like oil in it, and rubbed the sow about the snout and on the tip of the tail. “Get up, beast,” said the green woman; and no sooner said than done, for up jumps the sow with a grunt and goes off to the trough for her breakfast.

The good woman of Kittleroopit was now as happy as need be, and would have kissed the very hem of the green madam’s gown-tail, but she wouldn’t let her, and said, “I’m not fond of any such nonsense; but now that I have set your sick beast on its legs again let us settle our agreement. You’ll not find me over unreasonable. I like to do a good turn for a small reward. Now all I ask, and will have, is the baby at your breast!”

The good woman of Kittleroopit, who now knew her customer, gave a scream like a screech-owl, and falls to begging and praying, but it wouldn’t do. “You may spare yourself all this trouble and screeching as if I were as deaf as a door-post; but this I’ll tell you, by our laws I cannot take [144] your child till the third day from this day, and not then if you can tell me my right name.” Hereupon the green lady goes her way, round the back of the pig-sty, and the good woman fell down in a swoon where she stood.

That night she could not sleep for fretting, and the next day she could do nothing but hug her baby, that she nearly squeezed the breath out of it; but the second day she thought a walk would do her good, so she went into the fir-wood I told you of. She walked on far among the trees, with her baby in her arms, till she came to an old quarry hole all over-grown with grass. Before she came close up to it she heard the “bizzing” of a spinning-wheel and a voice singing, so she crept quietly among the bushes and peeped down into the hole.

What should she see, but the green Fairy spinning away as fast as possible and singing awhile—

“Little knows the good old dame
That Fittletetot is my name.”

“Ah, ha!” laughed our good Woman, and she was fit to jump for joy, when she thought how the green old Fairy would be cheated.

[145]

The good Woman discovering the Fairy.

[146] She was a merry woman when there was nothing to weigh too heavily on her heart, so she determined to have some sport with the Fairy when she came the next day, as she little doubted she would. That night she slept well, and found herself laughing in the morning when she woke.

When she saw the green Fairy coming up the hill, neither lazy nor lame this time, she put the baby under her stool on which she sat so as to hide it, and turning one leg over the other she put her elbow on her knee, resting her head in her hand as if she were fretting.

Up came the old Fairy, and said, “You know what I have come for, so let us waste no time.” The good woman pretends to grieve more than ever, and wringing her hands as she fell on her knees, “Good, kind Madam,” she cried, “spare my only child, and take the old sow.”

“The foul fiend take the sow,” the Fairy said; “I came not here for swine flesh. Now don’t be troublesome, but give me the child at once.”

“Oh! my good Lady,” the good Woman again said, “leave my dear child and take myself.”

[147] “What does the old jade mean?” the Fairy cried, this time in a passion. “Why, you old fool, who do you think would have anything to do with the like of you, you ugly old cat?”

This, I promise you, put the good dame’s back up; for though she had blear eyes, and a long red nose, she thought herself no less engaging than the vainest; so up she jumped, and making a courtesy down to the ground, she said—

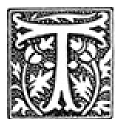
“We cannot all be as beautiful as your own sweet self, and I might have known that I should not be thought fit to tie even the shoes of the high and mighty Princess Fittletetot.”

The old Fairy could not have jumped higher if she had been blown up; but down she came again, and roaring with rage ran down the hill, followed by the laughter of the good dame of Kittleroopit.

[148]

XXVIII.

The wee Bannock.



THERE was an old man who had an old wife, and they lived by the side of a hill. They had two cows, five hens and a cock, a cat and two kittens. The old man looked after the cows whilst the old woman knitted stockings for him, and when she let her ball of yarn fall the kittens sprang upon it, and after it as it rolled away, till it got twisted round all the legs of the chairs and of the table, so that the old woman had plenty to do without knitting the stockings.

One day, after breakfast, she thought she would have a bannock, so she made two oatmeal bannocks and put them to the fire to bake. After a while the old man came in and sat down by the side of the fire, and when he saw the bannocks he took up one and snapped it through the middle. No sooner did the other see this than off it ran as fast as it could, and the old woman [149] after it; but the wee bannock ran away and out of sight, and ran till it came to a pretty large

thatched house, into which it ran boldly up to the fire-side. There were three tailors sitting on a table, and when they saw the wee bannock come in they jumped up and off the table, and ran behind the good wife who was carding tow on the other side of the fire.

"Be not afraid," she cried, "it's only a wee bannock. Catch it, and I'll give you a basin of milk with it."

Up she gets with the tow-cards, and the tailor with the goose, and the two apprentices: the one with the shears and the other with the sleeve-board, but it eluded them all. The one apprentice made a snap at it with the shears, but he fell into the ash-pit. The tailor threw the goose and his wife the tow-cards; but it wouldn't do; the bannock got away and ran till it came to a little house by the road-side, into which it ran. There was a weaver sitting on his loom, and his wife was winding a skein of yarn.

"Kitty," said he, "what's that?" "Oh," said she, "it's a wee bannock." "It's welcome," said he, "for our pottage was rather thin to-day. Catch hold of it, my Girl; catch it." "Yes, that I will," said she. "How now! why that's a clever bannock. Stop it, Willie; stop it, Man." But it wouldn't be stopped, and away it went over the hillock and ran into the nearest house, straight up to the fire-side. There was the good wife churning, and she said, "Come along, my wee Bannock. I have cream, but no bread." However the bannock dodged round the churn, and she after it, till she nearly upset the churn, and before she could steady it the wee bannock was off, down by the side of the stream into the mill.

The miller was sifting meal; but when he looked up and saw the bannock, he said, "It's a sign of plenty when you're running about like that and no one to look after you. But I like a bannock and cheese, so come here, and I'll give you a night's lodging." But the bannock wouldn't trust itself with the miller and his cheese, so it turned and ran out again, and the miller didn't trouble himself about it.

This time it rolled on gently till it came to a smithy, and in it ran up to the anvil. The smith, who was making horse-nails, said, "I like a stoup of good ale and a well-toasted bannock, so you are just the thing for me." But the bannock was frightened when it heard him talk of the ale, so it ran off as hard as it could split, and the smith after it, but all to no purpose; for it was out of sight in a crack, and it ran on till it came to a farm-house. In it went up to the fire-side, where the farmer was plaiting straw ropes. "Why, Janet," he cried, "here's a bannock. I'll have the half of't." "Well, John, and I the other half." But neither could get hold of it, and off it was, up one side of the hill and down the other, to the nearest house, and in it went up to the fire.

The good folks were just sitting down to supper. "Shut the door," cried the good woman, "for here's a wee bannock come in to warm itself by our fire, and it's just in time for supper."

When the bannock heard this it ran all about the house, and got out at last, when it ran faster and faster till it got to another house. As it ran in the folk were just going to bed. The goodman was taking off his breeches, and his wife raking out the fire.

"What's that?" cried he. "It's a wee bannock," said his wife. "I could eat the half of it for all the supper I had," said he. "Catch hold of it," cried she, "and I'll have a bit too. Throw your breeches at it—there, stop it—stop it!" The goodman threw his breeches at it and nearly buried it, but it got away and out of the house. The goodman ran after it; and now a regular chase began, round the house, through the garden, across the fields on to a common among the furze, where he lost it, and he had to trot home again half naked.

It had now grown quite dark, and the wee bannock could not see an inch before it, so by mistake it got into a fox's hole.

Now the fox had had no meat for two days, so it made a snap at the bannock and it was gone in an instant.

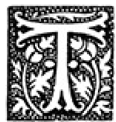
It would seem as if there were little use in the wee bannock having escaped so many dangers, but not so, for all its pursuers could do very well without it, whereas the poor fox had fasted two days and must have been really hungry.

The Bannock Hunt.

[154]

XXIX.

Jock and his Mother.

HERE was once a widow who had a son, and she called him Jock. Now, one day she said to him, “You are a lazy fellow, but now you must go out and earn something in order to help me.”

“I’ll do that willingly,” said Jock. So away he went, and fell in with a pedler, who said to him, “If you’ll carry my pack all day, I’ll give you a needle at night.” He carried the pack all day, receiving the needle at night; and as he went on his way home to his mother, he cut a bundle of rushes and put the needle in the middle of them.

When he got home his Mother said to him, “What have you done, and brought home to-day?” “I met with a pedler,” said Jock, “and carried his pack for him, for which I received a needle, which you may look for among the rushes.”

“Out upon you, for a blockhead,” said his Mother, “you should have stuck it in your cap.” “I’ll mind that another time,” said Jock. [155]

The next day he overtook a man carrying plough-shares, and the man said to him, “If you’ll help me to carry my plough-shares during the day, I’ll give you one for yourself at night.” “Agreed,” said Jock. So at night he gets a plough-share, which he sticks in his cap. On his way home he was thirsty, so he went down to the river to have a drink, and as he stooped the plough-share fell out of his cap and was lost in the water. He then went home, and his Mother said to him, “Well, Jock, what have you been doing to-day?” And when he told her she cried out, “How stupid you are, Jock! you should have tied a piece of string to it and trailed it after you along the ground.” “Well, I’ll mind that another time,” said Jock.

Off he started the next morning and fell in with a butcher. “If you’ll be my servant for the day,” he said, “I’ll give you a leg of mutton at night.” “That is a bargain,” said Jock. And after serving his day out he got a leg of mutton, to which he tied a piece of string and dragged it after him [156] through all the dust and dirt. When his Mother saw him she exclaimed, “Will you never grow wise? You should have carried the leg of mutton on your shoulder.” “Well, Mother, another time I shall know better,” was his answer.

The next day he went out as usual, and he met a horse-dealer. He said, “If you will help me with my horses during the day, I’ll give you one at night.” “I’ll do that,” said Jock. So after serving him he received a horse as his day’s wages. He tied the animal’s feet together, but was not able to lift it up; so he left it and went home to his mother, whom he told how he had tried to do as she bid him, but that he could not lift the horse on to his shoulder to carry it. “Oh, you born idiot!” she cried; “could you not have jumped on its back and ridden it home?” “I’ll not forget that the next time,” he promised.

The next day he overtook a drover driving some cattle to a neighbouring town, and the drover

said to him, “If you’ll help me safely to the town with my cattle, I’ll give you a cow for your trouble.” This Jock agreed to; and when he got his promised cow he jumped on to its back, and taking its tail over his shoulder, he galloped along, in high glee, towards home. [157] [158]

Jock’s Cure for Melancholy.

Now there was a very rich man who had an only daughter, and she had such fits of melancholy that it was sad to see her; so that, after trying every remedy and consulting all the quacks in the country, he had it publicly announced that whoever could make her laugh should have her for his wife.

Though she was young and beautiful no one had been found to cure her, and she was sitting in a very melancholy state, at the window, when Jock came galloping along on his cow, which seemed so highly ridiculous to her that she burst out laughing.

Well, according to her father’s promise, she was married to Jock, and a grand wedding it was, and a grand supper was prepared for the guests; but of all the delicacies Jock was most pleased with some honey he had eaten.

Now, after all the company had departed, excepting the old priest that had married them, and who had fallen asleep by the kitchen fire, Jock, who could not forget the honey, said to his bride, “Is there any more of that delicious honey we had for supper?” “Yes,” she answered, “you will find plenty more in jars in the kitchen cupboard.” So he went into the kitchen, where the lights had been put out, and all had gone to bed, excepting the priest, who was sleeping by the fire; and he found the honey jars. [159]

He thrust his hand into one of the jars to get at some of the honey, but his hand would not come out again, and he did not know what he should do, when he bethought him of breaking the jar on the hearth-stone.

Now, as already said, the kitchen was in darkness; and Jock, mistaking a large white wig, which the priest wore, for the hearth-stone, gave the poor man such a whack on the head with the honey jar that he screamed out murder; and Jock, frightened out of his senses, ran out and hid himself among the bee-hives.

That very night, as luck would have it, some thieves came to steal the bee-hives, which they bundled into a large plaid, and Jock with them without knowing it. Off the thieves ran with their booty on their backs, and when they came to the brook where Jock had dropped the plough-share, one of them kicking his foot against it, cried out, “Here’s a plough-share in the water.” “That is mine,” Jock cried from out of the plaid; and the thieves thinking it was a ghost on their backs, let the plaid, with its contents, fall into the water, and it being tied up Jock could not get out, so was drowned with all the bees. [160]

[161]

XXX.

The Irish Highwayman.

IT was before the introduction of railways, into Ireland at any rate, that a certain Irish Bishop had occasion to visit Dublin. There was, no doubt, a public conveyance of some sort or another of which the good Bishop might have availed himself, but his lordship was a portly gentleman and fond of his ease; besides which his wife and daughter wished to make the journey with him, and they never would for a moment have listened to travelling in a dirty car or coach, so their own comfortable carriage was got ready. I said the Bishop was portly and fond of his ease, but by that I did not mean to infer that all bishops are stout, for I knew one who was a very lean man; nor did I mean that portly personages are all fond of their ease, that is, not more so than the rest of us are; nor do I now mean that a lean man does not appreciate comfort. Be that as it may, the Bishop in question had a handsome comfortable [162] carriage which he thought he might as well use; and, indeed, as his lady and daughter were going with him, he had no choice, so the carriage was used and his lordship's horses too; and to save both, as well as the ladies, the journey was performed in easy stages.

Now the Bishop was an advocate for a moderate amount of exercise, and for this reason, as well as to spare his horses as much as possible, he made a point of alighting from his carriage at the foot of the hills, and walking up to the top, unless, indeed, the hill proved too steep.

On one occasion he had loitered behind admiring the scenery, which was particularly wild and beautiful, and the carriage had got out of sight. However, as it always waited for him at the top of the hill, that did not trouble him as long as he had only the difficulties of the road to contend with; but soon danger appeared in the shape of an ugly looking fellow, who, suddenly starting up from behind a heap of stones, stood right in front of him, effectually stopping his progress, which was particularly vexatious. From the appearance of the stranger the Bishop felt very much [163] [164] inclined to quicken his pace.

The Bishop and the Highwayman.

"What can I do for you, my good Man?" said the Bishop very civilly, and in his softest voice, for he did not like the look of the man, nor of a dangerous looking club he held in his hand.

"As your Honour is so civil as to ask," the fellow said, "you may first of all give me your money, for I'm sartain sure so kind a gintleman would not like to see a poor fellow in distress, when you can relieve him by only putting your hand in your pocket."

Civilly as he spoke he was a determined looking rascal, with whom it would evidently be of no use to argue, so the Bishop gave him what silver he had about him, hoping to get off with that; but he was mistaken, for the fellow had no sooner put it into his coat pocket than he said—

"Your Honour has made a mistake, for it's sure I am a thorough gintleman like you could not intend to give only a few paltry shillings. But I beg your Riverence's pardon, for I see now that you are an ornament of the blessed Church. It's some gold pieces you intended to give me; but it will save your Riverence trouble if you give me your purse." This was accompanied by a scarcely [165] perceptible movement of the club, which however seemed a very convincing argument, for his lordship immediately produced his purse, which as quickly followed the silver into the capacious

pocket.

“I’m sorry to trouble your Honour, your Riverence I mane, any further, for I see you’re in a hurry, and it’s beg your pardon I do for the same; but I judge you’re going to Dublin, and you can have everything in the big city for the asking; but here nothing can be got for love or money, and you see that I want a new coat and hat. Now I’m sure so kind a gintleman won’t mind changing yours with me.”

“This is too much, my good Man,” the Bishop said, driven to resistance by this extraordinary demand. “Recollect that you are breaking the laws of God and man, and think of the punishment in this world and the next. Be satisfied, for you have taken all my money, and my clothes I will not part with.”

[166] “Now, sure,” was the answer, “your Honor’s Riverence makes a mistake, for you gave me that bit of money, and it is that very kindness makes me not believe that you mane to refuse me now. Pray consider, and I’ll wait with pleasure for another answer, for I know you’ll be sorry.” He stepped back a few paces, and, as if to while away the time whilst waiting for the answer, he flourished his cudgel about, first over his head, then on one side and then on the other.

What was to be done? The poor Bishop saw that help was hopeless and resistance equally so, and, after a few moments’ hesitation, he took off his coat and hat, laying them on the heap of stones by his side.

“Now, bless your Riverence,” the fellow said, “I knew you would not refuse me; but after all your kindness I cannot allow you to be without a coat and hat. It would be neither comfortable nor dacent, and, therefore, just put on my coat. Indeed I’ll not take a refusal,” he continued, as the Bishop hesitated, and he helped his lordship on with his tattered garment. He then removed his unresisting victim’s wig and placed his old hat on his head.

“Now I hope you intend to let me go,” the Bishop said.

[167] “I have one more favour to ask, and then I will bid your Riverence a very good morning. I must beg the loan of your watch till I have the honor of seeing you again, for there is no watch or clock for miles around, and it is very awkward, for I don’t know when to be at my work, and I’m afraid of cheating my employer out of some of the time due to him. Your Honor can easily get another.”

“Will you never be satisfied? But beware of keeping me any longer, for there is my carriage close by, and the servants, whom I have only to call to my help.” This the Bishop said in despair, pointing along the road as he spoke, but he had a quick reply.

“Don’t trouble yourself to call, for I saw your Riverence’s carriage pass, and it is far out of hearing.” This his lordship knew well, so he gave up his watch, and was at length allowed to depart. He hurried on, for he was afraid of another demand being made upon him, and it was not long before he reached his carriage.

Much astonishment was caused by his extraordinary appearance, and after he had related his adventure his wife said to him: [168] “Throw off that filthy coat, my Dear, for we shall soon reach a town where you can buy something more befitting you to wear.”

“Not so easily, my Dear,” was his reply, “for I have not a shilling of money left.”

“Well, never mind,” his wife said, “take off the nasty thing, for positively you cannot come into the carriage that figure. I’ll give you my cloak to cover your shoulders.”

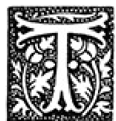
The good man was not used to resist his wife, so he took off the coat, throwing it upon the road. As he did so some silver fell out, which induced him to make his servant examine it, and to his joy and relief all his property was found in the pocket.

The party reached Dublin without any further adventure, and a few days after received intelligence of the capture of the Highwayman.

[169]

XXXI.

Fiddling Jackey.

HERE was once a little boy, who led a very unhappy life, for his father was tipsy from morning till night, and he had no mother to soothe and console him when he had met with ill-treatment, which happened almost daily.

I cannot tell you exactly how long ago this was, but it must be a long, long time, for there were fairies then, and the birds, trees, and flowers sang and spoke, which you know has not happened within your recollection, at all events.

Jackey’s father, for Jackey was the little boy’s name, was village musician, and had once played the violin remarkably well, but since he had taken to drinking had grown so careless that his scraping was a horror to all who could hear at all, that the dogs even howled in disgust, and probably in pain, for the noise they made was piteous in the extreme. [170]

Now, when the drunken fiddler reeled home at night, accompanied by the most dissolute of the village, the shouting of these, the horrid scraping of the fiddle, and the discordant chorus of some twenty or thirty dogs, made the more steady and respectable portion of the community tremble in their beds, with some undefined fear.

All this, you must know, happened in Germany, where in every cottage of the villages there is, at least, one dog, and where the watchman, who is generally the swineherd as well, no doubt was not over sober himself, and more likely to add to the noise than stop it.

Though the fiddler was a sad reprobate, and his playing of the worst description, he was tolerated; for the fact is that the most of the elder portion of the villagers cared only for drinking,

and the younger ones thought of nothing but dancing; so he was good enough for them after all.

His disorderly life and cruelty had killed his poor wife, Jackey’s mother, who would have looked upon death as a real blessing, had she not feared for the future of her young son; however, [171] Jackey, who was eight years old, had the thoughtlessness of youth and good health to support him, though, it is true, he cried bitterly after his father had been beating him, and felt sorrowful enough when he had not enough to eat, which happened but too often.

Jackey still remembered the time when, though at rare intervals, his father played really well; and the sweet sounds of music had so entered his very soul that he felt a secret consolation within him, amidst all his troubles.

This love of music, though it consoled him, occasionally caused him more bitter sorrow than the most cruel beatings; for when he looked at the violin, hanging against the wall, neglected and covered with mud, he thought of the sweet sounds that were still within it, though there was no one to bring them out.

Now, one day, when Jackey had been staring longer than usual at the violin, and his mind was filled with sad thoughts, his father happened to come in, and the poor boy, mustering up all his courage, said—

“My dear Father, do not be angry if I ask what the poor fiddle has done to you that you neglect [172] it so? Take care or it will die too, as my dear good mother did, of a broken heart.”

The only answer to this was a sound thrashing; and, as the beating had been more severe than usual, so Jackey cried longer and more bitterly, all by himself, for his father had gone again; but, as the pain grew less, his crying was not so violent nor loud; then he thought he heard a voice, like sobbing, come from the wall.

There was no mistaking it, the sobbing proceeded from the violin, and Jackey’s tears burst forth afresh; but there must be an end to all things, and when he had become calmer, he got on a chair, so as to be nearer the instrument, and whispered—

“My dear Fiddle, you pity me, and now I have a friend in the place of my good lost mother. But you, too, I am afraid, are not more happy than she was. Tell me if I can do anything for you.”

“I do pity you,” the violin answered, “for you are a good boy, and I wish to console you for the loss of your mother, and make you forget all the hardships you have to suffer. At the same time, [173] [174] you can do me a very great service. Take me down, and when you have cleaned me and put me in proper order, I will teach you how to make me sing again, better than ever I used to do. Then I shall be happy, and you, my poor Boy, will forget your sorrow, for I know that sweet sounds will console you in all your troubles.”

The neglected Fiddle repining.

Jackey said, sorrowfully, “Oh, how I wish to make you happy! But if I take you down, my father will beat me, and, what is worse, perhaps, in his passion, throw you against the wall, and dash you to pieces.”

“Be not afraid, but do as I tell you,” the violin answered; “you know that your father is at the tavern all day long till dusk, when he comes to fetch me, and if, by chance, he does come in, he never notices anything. I promise you no harm shall happen to you; so take me down and carry me, with the bow, into the forest, where, by the side of the stream, I will teach you how to make me bring forth sweet sounds.”

“You know better than I do what is safe to do, so I will take you to the forest, as you tell me.”

[175] As he said this, Jackey took down the violin, and having cleaned and tuned it, according to its own directions, he carried it and the bow into the forest, where he seated himself by the side of the rivulet.

The breeze played between the leaves and branches of the trees, the leaves and branches rustled, the birds sang sweetly, the stream murmured softly, and all seemed to say—

“Welcome, Jackey! welcome to the forest!”

“Oh, how delightful it is here!” Jackey cried; “and now, my dear Fiddle, teach me to imitate all these sweet sounds.”

The violin told him how to hold the bow and where to place his fingers; and all the birds came round him, first one whistling a note till he could imitate it, and then another giving him the next note, and so on; the rivulet, too, and the wind assisted; and then came the nightingale and taught him how to join the different notes together, that they might harmonize and form sounds agreeable to the ear.

[176] Jackey was so attentive, and did all so well, that the trees, the flowers, the stream, and all the birds cried out—

“Bravo, Jackey!”

As soon as evening began to draw near Jackey put up his fiddle and prepared to go home, when all the voices, with one accord, cried—

“Come again soon, and we will sing together.”

Jackey went the very next day, and every succeeding day, and he made the flowers join in the universal harmony. His dear fiddle seconded him in all his endeavours, so that very shortly he imitated all the voices of the forest with the greatest accuracy.

It happened about this time that the landlord of the village inn died, leaving a widow, who wished for nothing better than to give him a successor as speedily as possible; but though she was rich, and the business most thriving, yet no suitors appeared.

Jackey’s father, in his drunken moments, thought he would propose to the widow, for he said to himself that, when master of the inn, he could have as much drink as he liked without paying for it; but when a little more sober his courage failed him, for she was the veriest shrew, and the [177] charms of her person were no more engaging than those of her character.

Her hair was neither red, brown, nor black, but a sort of dirty coloured mixture of the three, and each hair seemed to go a different way. Her nose was very, very long, not projecting, but hanging down, like the beak of some of the small tribes of parrots. I think the love-birds have such beaks, but I can scarcely compare her to those, for certainly she had nothing of the love about her. Well, her nose, anyhow, was like a parrot’s beak, but flattened down, and that on one side, or else it would have covered her mouth, which would have been no great harm, for that was as ugly a feature as any other, and not improved by having only half the due number of teeth, which, unlike the nose, stuck out instead of hanging down. Her eyes were like those of a cat, and one squinted awfully. Shaggy eyebrows and a pointed hairy chin complete her portrait. Her figure was long, lank, and shapeless—shapeless not meaning no shape at all, but an ugly shape.

[178] Most people have some redeeming qualities, or quality at least, but no one had yet discovered hers, and no one had been found bold enough to propose to the interesting widow, though she let it be clearly understood that she wished to remain a widow no longer.

Jackey’s father had so often made up his mind to make her an offer that at last his mind became familiarized to the horror, and if not in love with the widow, he was decidedly so with her beer and spirits; so one evening, having screwed up his courage to the highest pitch, he, in a few words, offered himself as a husband.

The widow took but a few minutes to consider, that, though he was a drunken, worthless fellow, he was better than no husband at all; so she did not give him time to draw back, but accepted him with all his faults.

The wedding followed with the least possible loss of time, and the guests drank deeply to the health and happiness of the bride and bridegroom, but the happy husband drank more than any of them. This was a happy beginning; but how short-lived is happiness, for to his this was not only the beginning but also the end.

[179] How changed was everything the very next day! Beer and spirits were carefully locked up, and the poor fiddler was put under the water-cure treatment, and this was the first of a series of strictly sober days. He did not resign himself to petticoat government without a struggle, but in every way she was more than his match.

Adversity is the bitterest of all medicines, but frequently acts most beneficially on the soul, if not on the body. So it proved with the fiddler, for though, during the first few days of his new life, his temper was sourer than ever, by degrees his spirit was broken, and the outbursts of passion became less frequent. Passion was of no avail, for it never gained him his object, and his amiable spouse still remained his better half.

Example had its effect also, for as he daily suffered from his wife’s intolerable temper, her unamiability, which at first roused his anger, now caused disgust and horror, and occasionally he could not help reflecting that in many respects he had been like her. As yet the improvement in [180] his character was involuntary, forced upon him, as it were, and failed to soothe his mind and feelings; but Jackey, being treated with less harshness, began to feel for the first time that he had a father.

The good boy, looking on his father now without fear, saw the dejection he was constantly labouring under, and, as much as he had dreaded and almost abhorred the harsh brutal man, he now pitied his suffering father, so that he took every opportunity to get near to him, sometimes venturing a remark; and one day, when he saw him in a particularly desponding mood, he fetched

the violin and played the voices of the forest to him.

Jackey’s father was at first bewildered by the tender emotions to which his heart had so long been a stranger, but as the sweet sounds continued, it seemed as if his nature were changed and a new life dawned upon him. He clasped his son to his breast and burst into tears. When he became a little calm, he said—

“How beautifully you play, Jackey! How did you learn? But why inquire? You have always been a good boy, and kinder, better spirits than those of the earth, seeing you so neglected by your unnatural father, have taken compassion on you. I have led a bad life, but now I see my faults, [181] and I will be always kind to you, my Son. Oh, Jackey, your good mother will forgive me for all my past cruelty when she sees how I watch over her dear child!”

“Dear Father,” Jackey said, “my dear, good mother, who is in heaven, forgives you now. Oh, if she were but here to share our happiness!”

“Play me that tune once more,” his Father said, “and then we will go to your step-mother, and I will beg and pray of her to send you to school, for I can do nothing, my poor Boy.”

They went to that amiable lady, with whom, however, all prayers were in vain. She said she would not spend a farthing of her money on father or son, but that Jackey should be a shoemaker; that she would send him to her brother, who was a shoemaker in a neighbouring village, where he would soon be broken of his idle habits. Jackey said he would not be a shoemaker; whereupon she gave him a slap on the face, which made his ears sing and bright spots dance before his eyes, promising at the same time to break his fiddle over his head.

[182] Jackey, however, was none the less determined not to be a shoemaker, and his only trouble was how to keep the dear fiddle out of her way. The next morning very early he was waked by a kiss from his father, who said—

“Get up quickly, my Boy, and dress yourself, for I cannot do anything for you here, not even protect you, and it will be better to trust to the kindness of strangers than go to that cruel woman’s brother, who no doubt is as bad as herself. We must part, my dear Jackey, but I do not fear for you, for wherever you play the airs you played me yesterday, you will be sure to find friends. Take your fiddle then, and wander forth into the world, and if you remain a good boy, as you have hitherto been, God will watch over you and protect you. Make haste; and in the meantime I will see what I can find to eat for you to take with you.”

Jackey was ready when his father returned with some provisions done up in a bag. “Now follow me,” he said, “and take care that you do not make any noise, so that no one may hear us.” They got out safely and went straight to the forest, where Jackey’s Father stopping, said to him, “You [183] are now safe out of the clutches of your wicked stepmother, and we must part; but, my dear Boy, we will put our trust in Providence, and, if my life is spared a few years longer, I shall see you again, for when you prosper in the world, and prosper you will, my Son, you will not forget your old father.”

“Let me remain with you, my dear Father,” Jackey said, “for you are not happy, and I will try to cheer you with my fiddle. I do not mind my stepmother’s cruelty.”

“No, my Child, it must not be,” his Father answered, “I have deserved my fate, and will try and bear it with resignation; but fortune awaits you in the world, far from here. Do not cry; and now, with my blessing on you, we must part.” He pressed his son to his breast, and turned back without uttering another word.

Jackey watched him till he was out of sight, and then sadly went on his way into the forest, he knew and cared not whither. After a time he reached the very spot, by the side of the rivulet, where he had first sat with the violin and listened to the voices of the forest; and as he seated [184] himself, the rustling in the trees and the murmuring of the stream joined with the different notes of the birds in forming the harmony of music. The sadness of his heart gradually became softened, and, taking the violin out of the bag in which he always kept it, he again imitated the various sounds he heard, the birds vieing with each other to teach him something new.

Returning cheerfulness and the freshness of the air reminded Jackey that he had not yet eaten anything, so he made a good breakfast off the provisions put up by his father, not forgetting to give some crumbs to the birds that gathered about him; and with a light heart he continued his journey deeper into the forest. He thus wandered on all day, and neither found the time long, nor was he weary; for there was constantly something new to see, and hear, and imitate upon his dear fiddle. The sun had sunk below the horizon, tingeing a few feathery clouds with a beautiful pink, and the little wanderer saw no end to the forest; but that did not trouble him, and he chose a soft mossy spot for a bed, on which he lay down, and was soon fast asleep, forgetful of time and [185] everything else.

Nothing disturbed his quiet slumbers till about midnight, when a sudden light flashing across his eyes awakened him. He started up, and saw it as light as day all around. Yet it was not daylight; it was more like the light of the moon, but milder and warmer. He looked through some bushes, where the light seemed strongest, and stood transfixed with amazement at what he saw. Hundreds of the most lovely beings were dancing in a circle, whilst thousands of others seemed to fill the air around. Some were sitting, swinging backwards and forwards, on the different flowers, whilst others, in countless numbers, appeared gliding up and down the rays of light. He thought he had never seen anything so beautiful as the little aerial beings before him. Though so very small—for they were not nearly the size of Jackey—their forms were fully developed, and of the most exquisite elegance and grace. The maidens in particular, who seemed all of the age of seventeen or eighteen, were lovely in the extreme.

[186] Jackey knew they must be fairies; and two of the number who were a little taller, and, if possible, more beautiful than the rest, besides that they wore silver crowns, he judged to be the king and the queen. Dazzled by the light and the beauty of the scene before him, he was for a

time lost in admiration; but gradually the sweet tones, as the fairies sang, gained the ascendancy, and all the other senses seemed absorbed by that of hearing. As the fairies danced, they sang, and were joined by thousands of other voices—in sounds, now of the most lively merriment, then softly till they became solemn, when again they burst forth in the wildest strains. The dance never ceased; but as some withdrew from the ring their places were taken by others, who began the song anew.

Jackey had no knowledge of time, whether the music continued for minutes only or for hours; however, it became fainter and fainter till it melted away, and he found himself in darkness; but long, long after he lay down again it seemed as if he still heard the fairy song, and when he awoke in the morning it still sounded in his ears.

[187]

The Sight Jackey saw.

[188] "How lovely!" Jackey exclaimed; "oh, could I but imitate those sweet sounds!" "Try," the violin said from its bag. "Well thought," Jackey cried; and taking it out, immediately began to play the fairy song. He played it over and over again, and each time better, till at length he said, kissing his dear violin, "Well done, Fiddle, we can do it now." Then Jackey ate his breakfast, and having tried the song once more, he resumed his wanderings through the forest. He stopped several times to play the fairy song again, trying also his other tunes, to see that they had not been driven out of his memory by these still sweeter sounds; and having had his breakfast very early, had made a finish of his stock of provisions, but that did not trouble him, though there seemed no end to the forest.

About mid-day, however, he began to feel hungry again, and hastened his steps, in hopes of finding some outlet from the forest, or at least some woodman's hut. He began to feel some anxiety for the future; but he did not despair, for he was a good boy, and put his trust in Providence. [189] The birds sang merrily, as if to cheer him; and soon he saw that the forest became lighter, nor was it long before he found himself on the highway, and at no great distance stood a village.

Anxious as he was to reach some human habitations, when he was outside the forest he turned round to bid it farewell, and thank his dear birds for their kindness to him. A farewell sounded back, and cheerfully he went on his way to the village. He remembered his father having said that wheresoever he played he would be sure to find friends; and no sooner did he reach the first houses, than he took out his violin and began to play. First he played the voices of the forest, and soon all the people were at their windows and their doors, listening to him; but when he played the fairy song, they came out and surrounded him, and he had to begin again and again.

There was now a contest amongst the principal inhabitants of the village who should take the wonderful boy to their home, when the clergyman and his wife carried him off.

[190] Jackey would not accept their kindness without telling them that he could not stay long, for his father had sent him to seek his fortune in the world, that his father was not happy at home, and that he was going back to fetch him as soon as he had made his fortune.

The good people promised that they would not keep him longer than he felt inclined to remain with them. They were, however, so kind that week after week still found him there, and he was so intelligent and docile that every one loved him. Living now with people of good education, Jackey soon felt his ignorance, and applied himself so diligently to his studies, in which he was assisted both by the clergyman and his wife, that he made rapid progress.

He did not neglect his music, and frequently went back into the forest—no one interfering with his wanderings. Neither did he forget his father, nor give up the intention of seeking his fortune in the world, though he was delayed by the persuasion of his kind protectors, who, however, gave their consent to his departure after he had been with them about a year, providing him with every necessary for his journey, as also with a small supply of money.

[191] Jackey had improved as much in person as in mind, but retained his former innocent simplicity of heart and kindly feelings, so that his feathered friends loved him still, and he was as happy as the day was long.

He visited one country after another, passing from village to village, and from town to town; and wherever he played, both old and young surrounded him, and every one was ready to befriend him. Thus year after year passed away, and Jackey had grown to be a tall, handsome youth of about nineteen, with flowing black hair, large dark eyes, and an expression of cheerfulness and good humour. His playing was celebrated far and wide, but, more particularly, when he played the fairy song every one was carried away by admiration and surprise.

In each country he visited many inducements had been held out to detain him; but a secret impulse drew him on till he came to a large and powerful kingdom, which he found plunged in the deepest mourning; for not only had the queen just died, but the most beautiful of princesses, her daughter, was brought to the very verge of death by grief at the loss of her beloved mother. [192]

Her royal father, whose only child she was, in the utmost despair, had promised half his kingdom to the physician who should save her; but the only remedy the most learned could propose was any excitement that would distract her from her grief, for it was that alone that was consuming her. This remedy was beyond their art, and the king proclaimed that whoever cured the princess should be the inheritor of his throne and the husband of his daughter, if she consented to marry him.

Jackey, on hearing this proclamation, determined to try what his art could do to cure the princess, since all that was required was to enliven her, and make her forget her grief. He trusted that, with the help of Providence, he should succeed; and that, if even the princess would not marry him, which he scarcely dared to hope, he might still receive a reward sufficient to secure his old father's future happiness, besides having the consolation of saving the life of a young lady universally beloved.

[193] [194] He went boldly to the palace, where he was immediately admitted, on stating what his errand was; for the king had given orders not to refuse admittance to any one, however humble, who came to cure his daughter.

Jackey playing to the Princess.

The king was much surprised and disappointed when he saw Jackey; but after he had received an explanation of the means intended to be employed, he became more reconciled, and ordered him to be conducted to the princess's apartment.

Jackey gazed with admiration at the beautiful form before him; and to the interest he before felt was added pity, for the princess lay in bed with closed eyes and so pale as if death had already laid its icy hand upon her. He felt that he would willingly lay down life itself to restore colour and animation to that lovely face, and determined to exert his utmost skill in her behalf.

First he played the voices of the forest—the soft breeze gliding through the leaves, the low murmur of the stream, and the gentle warbling of the birds; then, as the princess's attention was

attracted, he made his violin speak louder and louder, and the Princess exclaimed, “How came I into the forest? Oh! how delightful it is! Sing on, you darling birds!” At length she opened her eyes, and sitting up in the bed, looked about her in amazement. [195]

Jackey now played the fairy song; and when he had finished, she said—“Go on, gentle Youth, I entreat you. You have been sent by heaven to call me back to life.” She sank back upon her pillow, and as Jackey continued to play, she fell into a soft sleep, with a smile on her lovely face.

The king, having been informed of all that had happened, hastened to his daughter’s room; and the calm expression of her features, together with the assurance of the head physician that all danger had now passed over, made him, for the moment, forget all his sorrow; and embracing Jackey, he assured him of his everlasting gratitude.

The next day the princess awoke, restored to health; and when her preserver was presented to her by the king, she received him with the sweetest smile, and thanked him in the kindest terms. But that was not all Jackey’s reward; for when the princess was told of the promise made by her royal father to whoever should save her life, she declared herself ready to fulfil that promise, as soon as the time of mourning for her departed mother had passed. [196]

They were, however, betrothed before the whole court, and the king publicly proclaimed that, next to himself, Jackey should be the first in the land. An establishment in every way befitting a prince of the royal blood was appointed him, and he lived in the closest intimacy with the king and his amiable daughter.

Jackey, however, in all his splendour, and by the side of his future bride, did not forget his old father, nor the promise he had made him; so he begged permission of the king to go and visit him, which was immediately granted.

He set out on his journey to the village where he was born, attended by a numerous retinue, travelling day and night till he reached the forest where he had learned the first notes of music, the foundation of all his fortune. He remembered all the trees, but the whole generation of birds that had known him had long since died. In his heart, however, he thanked them for their kindness, and in remembrance of them he passed on in silence, having left his attendants at the beginning of the forest. [197]

His heart beat with anxiety and fear, lest his father should no longer be living, for it was more than ten years since he had left his home; but when he reached the stream where he had first sat in the forest he saw an old man sitting by its side. Jackey immediately recognized his father, but the old man did not see him, for he was plunged in sorrow.

Wiping a tear from his eyes, he said, “Am I never to see my dear Jackey again? For how many years have I come here every day, till gradually all his friends have died off—and he, too, I am afraid, must be dead; and I am the cause of his death, for it was I persuaded him to go out into the world.”

Jackey now took out his violin, which he had carried with him, and played the tune with which he had first soothed his father’s grief. The old man recognized the notes, and he cried out, “That is my own Jackey! Come to my arms, my dear Boy!”

It was long before either could find words; but then the old man told him that his stepmother was dead; and Jackey related all his adventures, and his present happiness and splendour. Jackey went with his father to the village; but the next day he had him removed to where he had left his followers, and they all returned, without loss of time, to the king, and Jackey’s future wife. [198]

Jackey and his father were received with great rejoicings, and when the time of mourning for the late queen was over, Jackey was married to the lovely princess, with whom he spent a long life of happiness and peace, reigning with justice and wisdom over the kingdom after the king and his own old father were dead.

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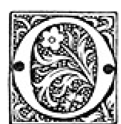
XXXII.

*Teeny-Tiny.**



NCE upon a time there was a teeny-tiny woman, who lived in a teeny-tiny house in a teeny-tiny village. Now one day this teeny-tiny woman put on her teeny-tiny bonnet, and went out of her teeny-tiny house to take a teeny-tiny walk. And when this teeny-tiny woman had gone a teeny-tiny way she came to a teeny-tiny gate, and went into a teeny-tiny church-yard.

And when this teeny-tiny woman had got into the teeny-tiny churchyard she saw a teeny-tiny bone on a teeny-tiny grave, and the teeny-tiny woman said to her teeny-tiny self, “This teeny-tiny bone will make me some teeny-tiny soup for my teeny-tiny supper.” So the teeny-tiny woman put the teeny-tiny bone into her teeny-tiny pocket, and went home to her teeny-tiny house. [200]

Now when the teeny-tiny woman got home to her teeny-tiny house she was a teeny-tiny tired; so she went up her teeny-tiny stairs to her teeny-tiny bed, and put the teeny-tiny bone into a teeny-tiny cupboard. And when this teeny-tiny woman had been to sleep a teeny-tiny time she

was awakened by a teeny-tiny voice from the teeny-tiny cupboard, which said—“Give me my bone!”

At this the teeny-tiny woman was a teeny-tiny frightened, so she hid her teeny-tiny head under the teeny-tiny clothes, and went to sleep again.

And when she had been asleep a teeny-tiny time the teeny-tiny voice again cried out from the teeny-tiny cupboard a teeny-tiny louder—“Give me my bone!”

This made the teeny-tiny woman a teeny-tiny more frightened, and she hid her teeny-tiny head a teeny-tiny further under the teeny-tiny clothes. And when the teeny-tiny woman had been to sleep again a teeny-tiny time the teeny-tiny voice from the teeny-tiny cupboard said again a teeny-tiny louder—“Give me my bone!” [201] [202]

The Teeny-tiny Woman’s Fright.

And this teeny-tiny woman was a teeny-tiny bit more frightened, but she put her teeny-tiny head out of the teeny-tiny clothes, and said in her loudest teeny-tiny voice—“Take it!”

* From Halliwell’s “Nursery Stories.”

[203]

XXXIII.

The Cannibal Cow.

IT was in the year ——. But why should I insult you by being more particular in date than that it was during the Irish rebellion, when, one dreadfully stormy night, old Goff, with his wife, daughter, and only son, Tim, were sitting in the kitchen, which not only served as general sitting-room, but was also the old couple’s bed-room? The wind howled and blew in gusts, shaking the windows and doors as one without, in a hurry to get in, amongst whose virtues patience could not be numbered.

“This is a fearful night,” old Goff said, “and fearful work, may be, is going on just now; for I heard from neighbour Flanagan that the red-coats have been seen in the neighbourhood. Go, Tim, and see that all the doors are well fastened; and when the old woman has given us our supper, we’ll get to bed, for that is the safest place these times.” [204]

The old man had no sooner spoken than there was a tap at the door—at first, gentle; as, however, neither father nor son moved, but sat staring at each other in fear and trembling, the knocking grew louder and louder. At length Tim whispered, “Hadn’t you best go to the door, Father, for that will impose upon them more, if it’s thaves they are, and show more respect, like, if it’s the red-coats?”

“No, no, my Son!” the old man whispered back, “you go; for then they will see that you are safely at home, like a steady lad, and not out with those wild boys, who are the cause of all these troubles. Go, my Son; but don’t open the door, for the life of ye, but ask the gintlemen, civil, Who might be there, and what they might be wanting?”

There was no help for it, so poor Tim crept to the door, and, after listening whether he heard the cocking of pistols or the clanking of swords, mustered courage to ask who was there.

“And who should it be, sure,” was answered from without, “but Paddy, auld Paddy the Piper? Och! then let me in, darlint, that I may warm and dry mesel’, for it’s caulder than the ‘Squire’s greetin’, and as damp as the say itsel’.” [205] [206]

A Terror-stricken Household.

Without answering him, Tim ran back to his father, who, in the mean time, had put out the light, and had got as far as the kitchen-door to listen. Now Tim, in his hurry, rushed upon the old man, who went rolling down, and Tim, to save himself, caught hold of the table, which he upset, and he himself fell sprawling upon the floor. Not being hurt, he went to help his father, who was shouting thieves and murder, and it was some time before his son could convince him that the place was not full of thieves, but that it was only Paddy the Piper who wanted to come in.

“Nay, lave me in pace,” he said, as Tim tried to raise him up, “for I’m dead, sure!”

“But what about Paddy?” Tim asked.

“And are ye sure it’s Paddy it is, and that it is by himself he is?” And then the old man added—“If it’s the Piper himself, I think bad not to give him the bit and the sup; but ye mustn’t let him in, Tim, for sure it’s Paddy has a baddish name, and if he’s found here we shall all swing for’t. But take the kay, my Boy, and let him into Katty’s shed, where he can be as comfortable, like, as the priest himself in his own bed, and he shall not go without his supper.” [207]

Now Katty, you must know, was old Goff’s best and favourite cow, and as such had a shed to herself, to which Tim led the Piper; and when Paddy had a good large mug of whisky, he forgot that he was wet and cold. We will not assist at old Goff’s recovery from being “murthered quite,” but suppose him, as well as the others, safely in bed; and as we shall be busy with the Piper we will not disturb them till the morning.

Paddy was so warm and comfortable after his supper, but more particularly after the whisky, that he felt one drop more would make him the happiest man in all Ireland; but he dared not risk offending old Goff by disturbing him again, for he always found a good friend in him when his wanderings took him that way. What was to be done? He tried to sleep, but it would not do; though it was not the want of a bed that troubled him, for it was little Paddy knew of that, except by name, and, indeed, Katty gave him the best of accommodation; but yet the comfort was fast oozing out of him. [208]

Now Paddy had a friend who, quietly and quite in private, distilled the best of spirit, and there was no fear of his being in bed—at least, not at night. True, he lived full four miles off, and most of the way lay across a dreary bog; but now that Paddy was once with him in imagination he found less rest than ever.

Tim had carefully locked Katty’s door; but, though old, the Piper was still active, so made nothing of clambering up to a hole in the roof—for where is the shed or cabin to be found in Ireland that has not a hole in the roof? if, indeed, what should be the roof is not one big hole. In dear old Ireland everything is old, excepting the hearts and spirits of its people. Once outside the

shed, Paddy made the best of his way towards his friend’s; and expectation giving strength and activity to his legs, he ran briskly on, when, all at once, he was brought to a stand—not because he was out of breath from running, but from astonishment at the fruit borne by a sturdy old tree [209] he had just reached.

A man, well and securely hanged, was dangling from a branch of the tree, with his toes most provokingly just beyond reach of the ground.

Paddy peered at him through the dark, to see which of his friends it was, and then addressed him thus:—“Och! Murphy, me lad! and is it yerself I run my nose agin here in the dark? but I forgie yer for not gettin’ out o’ the way, seeing that yer movements are not quite yer own. Now tell me what has brought yer here in this ugly fix? But how’s this?” he continued, examining his friend still more closely—“and was it for this dance yer put on them iligant boots? Why, Murphy, I shouldn’t know yer if I didn’t see that it’s yerself! But now,” Paddy continued, talking to himself, “his dance is over, and what will he be wanting with his boots? I’m sartain he won’t mind if I borrow them, for sure me own brogues are none of the best. But why, my auld Friend,” he said, again addressing the hanging man, “why didn’t yer put on yer Sunday best intirely, for yer no [210] better than a scarecrow dangling there?”

Paddy examined himself from head to foot, and then, shaking his head, he muttered—“No, I canna better mesel’, ’cepting with the boots, which I’ll make bold to take, trusting poor Murphy won’t feel his feet cauld.” After thus alternately soliloquising and addressing his friend, Paddy set himself to work to pull off the dead man’s boots, but they resisted all his efforts. He took it good-humouredly and out of humour, but with equally bad success, and at length went on his way; but he could not make up his mind to resign such a splendid piece of good fortune, so he returned after he had gone a few steps, and made another attempt.

The boots, however, remained immoveable, and losing all patience, he exclaimed, “Bad luck to them!” and taking out a large knife he carried with him, cut off the legs just above the boots, thinking that, more at his leisure, he would be able to clear them out.

His plans were now altered, and instead of going on to his friend, he returned to Katty’s shed, [211] carefully carrying his new acquisition under his arm.

He found no difficulty in getting back into the shed, but the difficulty of freeing the boots from the feet and portion of the legs that remained in them was increased rather than lessened; and at length Paddy fell asleep over his unaccomplished task. When he awoke day was already beginning to dawn, and as he wanted to be early at a small town, some six miles off, where there was to be a fair, he had no time to lose; so he quickly got out of the shed, leaving the boots behind him as useless—his friend Murphy’s feet pertinaciously keeping possession of them.

Not long after, Tim went to fetch him to breakfast, to make up for the inhospitality of the previous night; for with returning light the courage of the family was restored, and, as is frequently the case with weak minds, day gave an appearance of security to that which night had shrouded in danger.

What was his surprise to see the shed occupied by Katty alone; for he had found the door locked as he had left it the night before, and yet Paddy was nowhere to be seen.

He never once thought of the hole in the roof, and was puzzled beyond measure. Paddy must be [212] somewhere; so he looked in all the four corners of the shed, under the straw, and even under Katty herself, who was comfortably lying down. He now saw the boots, and was more puzzled than ever. He scratched his head, as people will do when the understanding is at fault, and during that process a horrible light burst upon him.

He rushed out of the shed back to the kitchen, where, to the amazement of all, he let himself fall into old Goff’s, just then, vacant chair, his mouth open, his hair erect, and his eyes nearly starting from his head.

All exclaimed with one voice, “What in heaven’s name has happened! What is the matter with you, Tim?” After gasping several times for breath Tim cried out, “Och, the unnatural baste! Och, the blood-thirsty cannibal! Poor Paddy! Och, the murthering brute!”

“In the name of all the saints tell us what has happened!” his Father said; and after a few more incoherent sentences, Tim related how on going into the shed he could not find the Piper, though [213] [214] he could not have got out, for he had locked the door the night before, and found it still locked; how that, after looking all about, he had discovered the boots, but that Katty had eaten up poor Paddy.

Tim’s Dismay at Katty’s Cannibalism.

An exclamation of horror burst from all.

“Every bit of him,” Tim continued. “The blood-thirsty baste has eaten every bit of him. Not a morsel of poor Paddy is left but the boots.” The rest were quite as much horrified as Tim himself, and not a word was uttered till his Sister, who first recovered something like self-possession, said, “Let us go and look once more, for it is almost too horrible to believe that Katty could do such a thing; she has always been such a good, gentle beast.”

“Och, the cannibal!” Tim muttered, with a shudder.

“Tim,” old Goff said, “I’ve heard that a cannibal is one man that eats another, and if so, perhaps Katty is not a cannibal; but, mind me, I’m not going to defend the unnatural baste if she has eaten the Piper. Did you say his pipes and all are gone? Take care and don’t go too near the crittur, but take the pitchfork with you. Oh, that I should ever live to hear the like!” [215]

Most unwillingly Tim went back to the shed; but as his sister led the way he was ashamed to remain behind. However, when they got there Katty began bellowing with all her might, for she was unused to being neglected, and felt herself ill used that Tim should have been in without taking her her morning’s food, and now finding herself again disappointed, she stared wildly at them.

Both started back, and Tim cried, “See there, how wicked she looks! Is that the baste you say is so gentle? Sure she’s dangerous, let’s go back.” The sister ventured in and took the boots, which she carried to the house.

These told the tale but too clearly, and poor Katty had not a single voice raised in her favour. It was now discussed what should be done with the animal, for keeping her was out of the question. Who would drink the milk of such a beast! Besides, it was dangerous to go near her; and it was therefore settled that Tim should take her to the fair, which fortunately was held that very day, and sell her at any price.

[216] Suddenly they were startled by a loud bellowing from the shed, for during this time no one had thought of feeding the poor beast, and the next moment all were seized with the utmost consternation, for Katty appeared at the shed door and walked straight up towards the house.

The kitchen was now a scene of the wildest confusion, for in their eagerness to seize upon any article of furniture that might serve as a weapon of defence, they rushed against each other; but Katty stopped at some fresh grass that was in a cart near the house, which indeed had attracted her. As soon, however, as she had taken the edge off her morning appetite she went to the window, for she was a sociable beast, and had always been accustomed to be noticed; but all the inmates of the kitchen were huddled together at the further end, and their terror is indescribable when she pushed the window open, for it had not been properly fastened.

She, however, stood so quiet, and looked so gentle and mild, that after a time old Goff mustered courage to say, “Now that she has filled herself with grass she will perhaps not bite, so now is the time to secure her. Take the rope that is hanging up there, Tim, make a noose, and slip it quickly over her nose.” [217] As Tim hesitated, his Sister said, “I will go with you;” and then he did as he was directed, till, as he was about to slip the rope over her nose, she opened her mouth, thinking it was something for her to eat.

Tim started back so suddenly that, losing his balance, he fell flat upon the floor, shouting for help, but his sister, catching hold of the rope, put it round Katty’s nose; and when Tim saw that

there was no danger he finished the work for her, tying the rope at least half-a-dozen times round the unresisting creature’s jaws. Nothing now remained to be done but for Tim to get on his Sunday clothes, which did not take long, and poor Katty was led off, receiving much rougher treatment than she had been accustomed to.

For a time Tim and Katty had the road to themselves, and were not over-pleasant companions, for to poor Katty all seemed strange; besides that she received many a blow from her guide, who was in anything but a good humour; and when they were joined by any one it made it none the more pleasant for Tim, who now found out all the difficulties he had to contend with, for he was not prepared with an answer when asked what was the reason why Katty was to be sold, or why her mouth was fastened up so. What could he answer, for, as he said to himself, “If I tell the truth who would buy the unnatural baste? And I won’t let the people think we want money.” His pride revolted at this; but it was evident he must be prepared with a more satisfactory answer than he had hitherto given, namely, that he did not know why his father intended to part with his cow, for he heard two farmers, who had lately joined the others, talking thus together. [218]

The one said, “Why, that is old Goff’s favourite cow, sure it can’t be it’s selling her he is, for I heard that he was offered twelve pounds for her no longer than a fortnight ago, but he wouldn’t sell her at any price.”

“May be it’s gone dry she is,” said the other.

“No, she doesn’t look like that.”

“Then it’s money he wants. May be the rint isn’t paid, and—”

“No, it’s not that,” the first speaker interrupted him, “for old Goff is too close an old fist not to have plenty of money; but mark me, Neighbour, there’s something wrong with her, sleek and fresh as she looks, and it isn’t I that would be buying her at any price.” [219]

Poor Tim was sadly puzzled, for it was impossible he could escape being asked all manner of questions, and he knew no more than his heels what to say. Then, too, he feared that no one would have her, and what should he do with her then. His worst fears were soon to be realized, for a new comer, who had heard the end of the conversation of the last two speakers, now said to him—

“Well, Tim, and what has the darling of your house done that you want to sell her? Is it fits she has, for there is something wild in her eye? Or it’s vicious she is? Speak, Man, what is the matter with her?”

To avoid unpleasant questions, Tim said, “It’s too much trouble to my sister to attend to her, for it’s my sister’s cow she is.”

“And is it washing her face of a morning that’s too much trouble to your sister?” Tim was now asked; “or perhaps combing her hair is troublesome, or may be it’s cutting her corns your sister doesn’t like; but come, Tim, that won’t do, Man, for why is Katty more trouble than the other cows? Let me look at her, that I may see what ails her.” He examined her all over; and, to Tim’s horror, taking the rope from round her nose, looked into her mouth, but he could not discover one single fault in her, which only excited his suspicion the more. “May be you’d take five pounds for her?” And, as Tim eagerly assented, he continued, “You’ll take five pounds for her, and your father just a day or two ago refused twelve. There’s something in all this I can’t make out, so go on with her, for I’ll none of her. I’m not going to be tricked by you.” [220]

Tim was now in utter despair. He saw plainly he must say that it was money they wanted. But would even that do, for his father had other cows, and why sell the one which everybody knew was the favourite? His only chance was to get rid of her to some one who did not know him, and he therefore hurried her on to the market.

The market was very full, and, when he found himself surrounded by strange faces, he felt more at ease; however, no purchaser was found, and Tim began to feel not only impatient, but seriously uneasy, for Katty looked about her in a very suspicious manner, and he dreaded the consequences should she grow very hungry. He shuddered as he thought of the fate of poor Paddy, and, oh horror! just then he thought he saw Paddy himself in the distance. He could not take his eyes from the spot where he had seen the horrid apparition, though he trembled at the possibility of its reappearance. [221]

There it was again, beckoning to him.

This was more than poor Tim could bear, and he rushed wildly out of the market, down the nearest turning, and out of the town. On he ran, not knowing where, pursued in imagination by poor Paddy’s ghost, till out of breath, when he ventured to look back. He could run no more, for he was now transfixed to the spot by horror. Katty, with her mouth open, came full gallop after him, and quicker than the wind followed Paddy’s ghost. He stood motionless till they were close upon him, and then fell senseless to the ground. [222]

When he recovered he found Paddy holding a pocket flask of whisky to his lips, whilst Katty was looking at him with the mildest expression of concern.

“What were you doing in the market with Katty? And what, in heaven’s name, induced you to run away as if possessed by a thousand devils?” Paddy said. “What does all this mean, Tim? Have you gone clean mad?”

“And is it you, Paddy?” Tim asked; “or is it your ghost? For if it’s your ghost I beg your honor ten thousand pardons for all the trouble I’ve given you, in making your honor run after me so far. And I beg your honor to forgive my auld father and mother, and my dear sister, and to forgive me too. And I humbly beg your honor will not haunt us, for it will be the bodily death of us all; but if we can do anything to give your blessid soul rest, tell me what it is and it shall be done. Where shall we bury your blessid feet? It was not our fault that this blood-thirsty baste, bad luck to it, ate you up last night, all but your honor’s feet, bless them. Directly we found out the misfortune that had happened to your honor, for I went early to fetch you to the most iligant breakfast my [223]

mother could get ready, we all settled that the cannibal brute should no longer be one of our family, and I brought her to the market to sell. This is every word the blessid truth. So I beg your honor to forgive us, and may your soul rest in peace!”

“Stop,” Paddy cried, “or yer’ll be the rale death o’ me.” It was now Paddy’s turn to fall, and he rolled about on the ground convulsed with laughter, for he now saw what a mistake Murphy’s boots had led to. When he had recovered himself enough to be able to speak, he told Tim how all had happened, and advised him to take Katty home again directly, which he did, and Katty became even a greater favourite with the whole family than ever she had been.

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XXXIV.

The Three Men of Gotham on Nottingham Bridge.

OU, of course, know that the good people of Gotham have been particularly noted for their wisdom; but if, by chance, this should not form one of the items of your varied knowledge, the stories I am about to relate will leave no doubt on your minds as to the justice of the report.

Whether it may be something in the air that has made these people so peculiarly gifted I cannot tell, for I must confess that I have never been at Gotham, and know absolutely nothing of the geological properties of the soil, or indeed of the neighbourhood in any way, excepting that Nottingham is the principal city of that part of the country.

You probably know, as well as I can tell you, what Nottingham is noted for, so I will say nothing about it, particularly as what I might and could say would in no way help us in clearing up the [225] mystery, namely, why the inhabitants of one particular place should be mentally gifted beyond others. If, indeed, we were considering Nottingham itself I might attempt some sort of an explanation, by telling you that a great part of the business of the town being shoemaking would perhaps account for a contemplative turn of its citizens, for shoemakers are supposed to be men of deep thought. Why this should be so is another mystery requiring to be cleared up, which I will leave to others to do, and only just remark, that there can be no doubt several cases of men of thought and talent among that class might be cited. I will only mention the German shoemaker, of whom perhaps you have heard, who wrote up over his shop,—

> “Hans Saxs shoe
> Maker and poet too.”

That’s not bad, particularly for a German.

But to return to Gotham, with which a consideration of Nottingham has nothing to do. We all know particular individuals who are shining stars, and even families of stars we know, but still that does not tell us how and why there should be a whole community of such extraordinary [226] lights. We have confessed our inability to explain this in the case of Gotham, and therefore let us take a liberal view of the matter, and suppose that from generation to generation the children inherited from their parents such a happy development of brain, that it was utterly impossible they could be anything but wise. It might be worth a phrenologist’s while to go down there. But mind, I am only speaking of what the people of Gotham were, for, as I said, I know, personally, nothing of the place, and at the present day all may be materially altered.

I cannot tell you exactly when it happened, but on a certain day, in a certain year, two men of Gotham met on Nottingham bridge. “Well met, Neighbour,” said the one man, “whither are you going?” “I have just come from the market at Nottingham, and am going home to fetch my wife and child, whom I forgot,” was the answer; “and pray where are you going, Neighbour?”

“I’m going to the market at Nottingham to buy sheep,” said the first man.

[227] “And which way do you intend to bring the sheep home?” asked the man who had come from Nottingham.

“Over this bridge,” answered he who was going thither.

“But you cannot,” said the one.

“But I must,” said the other.

“But you shall not, Neighbour,” said the man who was on his way home to fetch his wife and child.

“And why shall I not, Neighbour?” asked he who was going to Nottingham to buy sheep.

“You see,” said the one, “that there is not room for my wife and child to pass, so keep them back, Man.”

“I care not,” said the other, “my sheep shall pass, so let your wife and child stand back.”

“They shall not pass.”

“But they shall pass.”

“Woo! Woo! back there,” shouted the one man, spreading out his arms and legs, as is done to keep sheep back.

[228] “Woo! Woo! get on there,” shouted the other, flourishing his stick, and striking the ground first on one side and then on the other.

“Take care, or you will drive them over my wife. But if she is hurt you shall pay the doctor’s bill.”

“I will not pay the doctor’s bill. But you take care, for if you make my sheep jump over the side

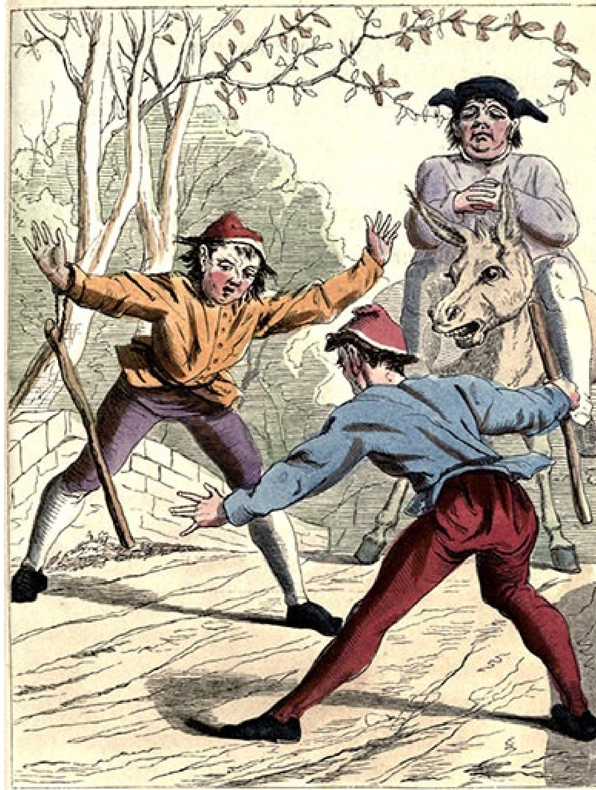
of the bridge and they are drowned you shall pay for them."

"I will not pay for them."

"But you must pay for them."

Whilst this dispute was going on another man of Gotham had ridden up, with a sack of meal behind him on his donkey, and hearing the quarrel between his neighbours about the one's wife, whom he had just seen safe at home, and about the other's sheep, when there were no sheep there, he got off his donkey and called to the two disputants to lift the sack of meal upon his shoulders. When they had done so, first untying the mouth of the sack, he emptied the meal over the side of the bridge into the river. Then, holding up the sack with the mouth down, before his astonished neighbours, he said,—

"Will you tell me how much meal there is in this sack?" [229] [230]



The Three Wise Gothamites.

"Why, none," both said, "since you have just emptied it out."

"Well," he answered, "just so much wit is in your two heads when you dispute about wife and sheep, and neither wife nor sheep are here."

Now which was the wisest of the three?

[231]

XXXV.

The Man of Gotham and his Cheeses.

ONE hot summer's day a man of Gotham was on his way to Nottingham market to sell his cheeses, which he carried in a bag slung across his shoulder. He found the heat oppressive, and his load so troublesome, that he could not help bewailing his lot in the following words—"Unfortunate man that I am, why have I not a cart like neighbour Dobbins, or even a barrow like old Mathews? My good woman will make so many cheeses that I have no rest any market day. But now I have it; she is a shrewd woman, and I will propose to her to make the cheeses so that they can walk to market, and then I need only walk by the side of them, to see that they do not loiter or play by the way. I wonder she never thought of that."

This bright idea consoled him and made him forget even his load for a time, but it weighed so heavily upon him that he was soon recalled to his misfortunes, and as he trudged along he constantly changed the bag from one shoulder to the other. Now with these frequent changes the mouth of the bag had got loose, and just as he reached the top of the hill, looking down upon the [232]

bridge and Nottingham in the distance, one of the cheeses fell out and rolled down the hill.

He watched it for a time, and as it kept so well to the road, neither turning to one side nor the other, but jumping over the stones that lay in its way, he exclaimed in delight, “Well done, well done, keep on like that, my good friend, and you’ll soon be at your journey’s end! It was foolish of my old woman not to tell me that they could run by themselves, but now that I have found it out, I’m not going to carry the lazy things a step farther.”

Having come to this wise resolution he bundled the cheeses out of the bag, and, as they rolled down the hill, cried after them, “There, follow your companion; but you need not run so fast, for I shall rest myself a bit and then walk leisurely after you. Now, mind you all meet me in the market-place.” He watched them with the greatest satisfaction as they ran down the hill and over the bridge, when, the road turning suddenly, they were lost to his sight; and then, too, they all left the road, some running into one bush and some into another, whilst the rest got no further than the ditch by the roadside. [233] [234]

The Gothamite and his Cheeses.

After a short rest the worthy man went on his way to Nottingham, without troubling his mind about the cheeses, as he fully expected to find them waiting for him in the market-place; but when he got there he was somewhat astonished to find that they had not yet arrived. “No doubt,” he said to himself, “as soon as they were out of my sight they got to some of their games in some field or another. That is always the way, but they’ll be here soon.” When, however, the market time was nearly over, and the cheeses had not appeared, he inquired of the market people whether they had seen them. No one had seen his cheeses, and when he was asked who brought them he said,—

“No one brought them. Sure they were quite able to come by themselves, as you would say if you had seen them running along the road; but now I think of it, they were going at such a rate that they are no doubt half way on their road to York by now.” So he hired a horse and rode off towards York to try and overtake them, but strange to say he did not overtake them, nor indeed did he ever see them again, nor hear any tidings of them. [235]

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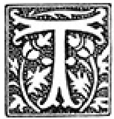
XXXVI.

Twelve Men of Gotham go out Fishing together.

WELVE men of Gotham settled to go out fishing together; and, as the anticipation of pleasure is nearly worth the pleasure itself, they fixed the time a fortnight off, and each day during the



interval made some preparation for the great day. The appointed day came in due time, and it was cold and drizzling; but the twelve met, for what true sportsman would allow weather to stop him? They were all in the highest spirits, and their conversation was of the wittiest and most brilliant description, as you will judge it must have been when you know more of the men. I do not attempt to give it you here, being well aware that I could not possibly do it justice.

When they got to the river-side, after a lengthy consultation, they settled that the fish would feel shy of coming to them, seeing so many together; and it was therefore agreed they should separate, all to meet again at the same place in five hours' time. After they had fairly divided their provisions into twelve parts, each took his share, and went whither his fancy guided him. [237]

Exact to the time, the twelve again assembled together, and adjourned to a tavern, where it had been arranged the day should be finished in conviviality. They were cold and wet to the skin, but all declared they had had a delightful day, each reserving his adventures till they were comfortably seated together.

Most extraordinary adventures they had all had; for one related how, immediately that he had thrown his line, well baited with a worm, he hooked the most wonderful fish he had ever seen; for though it only appeared on the top of the water for a moment at a time, he could plainly discover that it was hairy, and had a long tail. He had given the creature line enough to play, but, when he had followed it more than a mile, the line unfortunately broke—for the beast was strong, being quite as large as a cat.

[238] "That is extraordinary," another then cried, "for I, too, followed a hairy fish, such as I never saw before. You must know, as I went along looking for a likely spot, I frightened the creature from the bank, and it swam across the river. As quick as possible, I threw my worm just before its nose, but it would not bite, so, like a shot, I was in the water, and waded across after it. It took refuge in a hole, and when I put in my hand to catch it, it bit me so that I have not been able to use that hand all day, and no doubt that is the reason I have not hooked a single fish. The beast appeared, for all the world, like a rat."

A third then told his companions how he had wandered along the side of a river till he came to a mill, where, by the bubbles under the wheel, he could see that the water was swarming with fish. He threw in his bait, and almost immediately had a bite. He felt convinced that he must have hooked several large fish at the same time, for no single one could have pulled the line with such force. The line was strong, so that it did not break, and at length the rod itself was fairly dragged out of his hands, and for a moment disappeared under the water. [239] The fish, however, must have broken away, for the rod appeared again entangled in the wheel, and was whirled round till it was dashed to pieces. Finishing the account of his startling adventure, he said, "I am sure, my Friends, that at that spot there will be plenty of sport for the whole twelve of us together; and had it not been for that unlucky accident of losing my rod, I should have brought fish enough for all our suppers."

Various were the adventures narrated, several of them having narrowly escaped drowning, as they said—only that the water was not deep enough. Amongst the whole twelve only one fish was produced—a small one, which its fortunate captor had found floating, dead, upon the water.

When the last of the twelve had finished his account, he said, "I am sure, my good Friends and Neighbours, that no twelve men ever had such an extraordinary day's fishing as we have had; and, had we not met with these unfortunate accidents, we should have brought home such strange fish, and in such quantities, that the account of our day's sport would have been inserted [240] in all the newspapers. But, my dear Brethren, we have been in many great dangers, and I shudder when I think of it, that perhaps one of us has been drowned. Let us count, and see whether the whole twelve of us are safely here."

"Yes, let us count!" all exclaimed; "for perhaps one of our dear brothers is drowned, and what will his unfortunate widow do?"

Each of the twelve counted in turn, and each only counted eleven, omitting himself; and then all cried out, "It is but too true that one of our dear brothers is lost! Who shall carry the sad news to his widow? But first let us go back to the river, and look for the body."

These twelve wise men went down to the river, and searched every place where, during the day, either of them had been, but no body was found, which they bitterly bewailed, as it was deprived of Christian burial. They then drew lots which of them should inform the unfortunate widow of her dreadful loss; and when he on whom the lot fell inquired of the others to whose widow he should go, and no one could tell him, they bewailed still more bitterly that they could not discover which of their dear brothers was lost. [241] [242]

The Lost Fisherman found.

It happened that at this time a gentleman from the Court was passing, and seeing them in such distress, asked the cause.

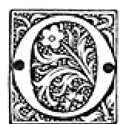
They said, “This morning twelve of us came down to the river to fish, and one is missing, whom we cannot find.”

Then the Gentleman said, “What will you give me if I find your missing companion?” To which they answered, that they would gladly give all the money they had if he could restore their lost brother to them.

He then made them stand in a row, and riding along the back of them gave each such a smart cut with his whip that they cried aloud with pain, and as they did so he numbered them; but when he came to the twelfth he thrashed him till he and all his companions cried out for mercy for him; and the Gentleman said, “This is the twelfth of you!” whereupon they thanked him for restoring their lost brother to them.

XXXVII.

The Cobbler’s Wager.

NE fine summer’s day a strong, active young man was sauntering along the Exeter road, with apparently no immediate object in view but to pass away the time, for he certainly seemed in no hurry to reach the place of his destination—if, indeed, such a thing was in his thoughts, as it undoubtedly should have been, for he was carrying home a pair of shoes he had taken the greater part of the week to mend.

You will guess by this that he was a cobbler by trade, and from the way he was going on we may, perhaps, form an idea how it is that cobblers are proverbially so little to be depended upon in the performance of a promise—at least, when that promise refers to their work.

The young man we are talking of was not fond of work, but, being a merry, jovial fellow, was much liked in the neighbourhood where he lived, more particularly as he was always ready to give a helping hand to any one who required the assistance of a strong arm, and never hesitated to neglect his own business to help others.

Perhaps, too, that sort of occupation was more profitable than mending boots and shoes, for he always seemed to have money to spare when he met any companions of his own stamp at the different road-side inns. He was now coming near to such a house, and was trying to find a good excuse to turn in—for the landlord, according to his words, was a man of the right sort—when a butcher, in his cart, carrying a calf he had just bought, whom he knew well, overtook him.

No excuse was, of course, required now to drop in at Tom Turner’s, the landlord just mentioned, if even he had not been standing at his door, where, however, he was, ready to welcome them.

The three were soon merry enough over a jug of foaming ale; and the butcher, in particular, was in high spirits, for he had not only made a good bargain, but one he prided himself upon. The

[245] Landlord said to him, “I’m sure you’ve been playing your pranks off on some one, or that you’ve overreached some poor wretch in a bargain, makes you in such high glee this morning.”

“Well, I’ve not done so badly, I think,” the Butcher answered, rubbing his hands. “A little mother’s wit in one’s head is worth having, and where’s the good if one doesn’t use it? You must know I particularly wanted a calf this morning—indeed, I couldn’t do without it, whatever price I had to give; and as I happened to hear yesterday that old farmer Hagan had some very fine ones, I went to him. Now I didn’t tell him that I wanted a calf—leave me alone for that—but I said I wanted some sheep, which I knew he just happened not to have. He told me that he hadn’t any, and, as I expected, then said he had some first-rate calves which he wished me to see.

“‘I am very sorry to hear it, Neighbour,’ I said; ‘for calves are falling down to nothing in value since the celebrated Doctor Tweedle came into these parts. You know that he has declared veal to be the most unwholesome meat there is, and that eating it is little short of eating poison; [246] so that no one will touch it. I have two of the most beautiful calves you ever saw, which I am but too happy to be able to get rid of at thirty shillings each—just half what I gave for them. A friend of mine has occasion for three, which he is going to send off to a distance; so I am glad to be able to do you a good turn, if you are willing to part with one of yours on the same terms; but it must be a good ’un.’

“Old Hagan was loath to part with one of his calves at such a price, but was so frightened by what I had told him, that he let me have the one that is outside in my cart, saying, ‘I know, Neighbour, that you are not a man likely to be over-reached, and that you would not sell at such a price if you saw a chance of getting a better one.’

“Now,” the Butcher continued, “does either of you think he could make as good a bargain as that?” And he chuckled, again rubbing his hands, as they both confessed that they gave in to him.

Shortly after, the cobbler rose to go, saying, as the butcher offered to give him a lift in his cart, that he was going another way; and as he went out, he made a sign to the landlord to follow him. [247] When they were outside together he whispered, “I should like to play our boasting friend a good trick.” “I wish, with all my heart, you could,” the Landlord answered; “but he is a cunning fellow.” “Cunning as he is, I’ve a great mind to steal the calf he’s so proud of having cheated old Hagan out of, and then sell it him again, but at double the price,” the Cobbler said. “He’s too deep for you,” said the Landlord; “you can’t do it.” “What will you bet?” the Cobbler asked. “Anything you like!” was the answer. “Well, then,” the Cobbler again said, “let it be a gallon of your very best ale. Now you go back, and manage—as if without any particular motive—to tell our friend that you have a calf (that can be easily done as he is getting into his cart), when you may as well say that it is just like the one he has. You do this, and leave the rest to me.”

“I hope, with all my heart, that you’ll succeed,” the Landlord said, as he went back into the house; and the cobbler hastened along the road which he knew was the butcher’s way. When he had got some distance from the house, he dropped one of the shoes he was carrying home by the [248] side of the road, where it would be sure to be seen, and then ran on some distance further, where he dropped the other shoe, choosing the spot close by an opening in the hedge by the road-side.

Shortly after, the butcher came the same way, still chuckling over his morning’s bargain, and when he saw the shoe, drew in his horse. He was about to get out, when he thought better of it, saying, “There’s some of that careless cobbler’s work. He evidently has come this way, and dropped one of the shoes I saw him carrying—but I’m not going to take the trouble to carry it after him. Let him come back, and that will teach him not to refuse a civil offer again. If he had but dropped the pair, I should not mind getting out to pick them up—though certainly it would not be to give them to him, but to keep them myself.”

With these friendly thoughts he drove on, and, before long, saw the other shoe. “Hallo!” he said; “why, that lazy rascal of a cobbler, rather than go back when he discovered the loss of the one shoe, has thrown the other away as useless; but I’ll not be such a fool, and won’t begrudge a [249] little trouble for the sake of a good pair of shoes.” So saying, he jumped out of his cart and picked up the shoe, and, finding it was a good one, ran back for the other, leaving his cart standing in the road.

No sooner had he turned a corner in the road, than the cobbler jumped out from behind the hedge where he had hidden himself, and having lifted the calf out of the cart, took it on his shoulders, and hurried back with his load, as fast as possible, a short cut to Tom Turner’s house.

Tom received him with an acclamation of joy; and as soon as they had stowed the calf away in a shed, he produced some of his very best ale, over which they discussed what was further to be done. The Cobbler said, “As soon as the butcher finds that his calf has disappeared, and that there are no signs of it, he will be sure to come back to you, having heard you had one; but be sure you do not let him have it a farthing under three pounds, for you know that was the price named by himself, and that he said he must have one to-day at any price. [250] When we have had our joke out, we will give him back his money, making him pay the amount of our wager, and another gallon to boot. But he is a slippery rogue, so mind you do not part with the calf without receiving the money down. And now, what will you bet that I do not steal this very calf again?”

The landlord, enjoying the joke, betted another gallon, and his companion continued, “To prepare for another sale, tell him, as he is driving off—tell him you have another calf, the twin brother to this one, and so like it that no one can tell one from the other.”

After all that had been arranged, the cobbler related every circumstance of the past adventure —not forgetting the butcher’s soliloquy—to Tom’s infinite amusement, and added, “Take particular notice whether he says anything about finding the shoes; for if he intends to act dishonestly we may alter our determination about giving him back his money.” He had scarcely finished when they saw the butcher’s cart at the door, so he hastened away to his former hiding-place.

[251]

The Cobbler carrying off the Calf.

The next moment the butcher was in the house, and he cried out, “Tom! you must positively let me have that calf of yours, for mine has played me an infernal trick, and has run off! I saw the brute, and ran after it. But it doesn’t matter, for I know where it is, and can easily catch it again. But I’m in a hurry, so I thought it better to come back for yours.” [252]

“How did it happen?” Tom asked.

“Why, my horse got a stone in its hoof, and as I had to go a few yards off to get a dry stick to pick it out with, the brute took advantage of my being away, jumped out of the cart and got into a field by the side of the road. When I got back, though I saw it, it had the start of me, and I was not inclined to run far after it. But, now, I’m in a hurry; so tell me at once, Tom, what you want for your calf.”

Tom answered, “You know that I do not quite believe in veal being poison, in spite of the great Doctor’s opinion; but, to accommodate a friend, I don’t mind parting with it cheap, though I really can’t take less than three pounds.”

The butcher, finding that his own words were used against him, made no difficulty, but, paying the money, carried off the calf, Tom calling after him that if he lost that he had his twin brother for him. He congratulated himself, as he drove along, that, though he paid dearly for the calf, he had, at least, got a good pair of shoes for nothing. To make up for lost time he put his horse to its best trot, but drew in suddenly when he got to the spot of his misfortune, for he heard a sound like the bleating of a calf. He listened for a moment, and then exclaimed, in glee, “Oh! it’s you is it, my runaway? Now, take my word for it, you shall suffer for this.” [253]

He jumped out of the cart and got into the field, but the bleating seemed to proceed from the next field, and when he got there from another, till he was led on to a considerable distance from his cart.

The cobbler, who had imitated the bleating of a calf, when he had led on the butcher till he got confused, hurried back to where the cart was, and hastily taking out the calf, got safely back with it to Tom Turner’s.

Tom, who had scarcely expected success this time, was fit to split his sides with laughter, when he heard an account of this last adventure, and in his turn told what had passed between him and the butcher. [254]

“Why, the rascal!” exclaimed the Cobbler, who was a honest fellow himself, “so he intends to steal the shoes, for he knows well enough that they belong to me. We’ll give him another chance when he comes back, for I’ll tell him that I lost the shoes; but if then he does not restore them, why I’ll sell them to him for his calf and the money we get out of him. Don’t you think it will serve him right?” The landlord agreed, that if he persisted in dishonestly keeping the shoes, he would deserve to pay dearly for them, adding,—

“If we could manage it, it would be well to let him have his calf this time for nothing.” But the Cobbler, who was very indignant at the fellow’s shuffling dishonesty, said, “No, no, he deserves no manner of consideration, but I hope he won’t prove quite as bad as I think him.”

The butcher soon returned, and this time told the truth of the manner in which he had lost the calf; but when the cobbler told him of his loss he was far from confessing that he had found the shoes, and that they were then in his cart, hidden under some straw. He was out of humour at his own losses, and said, rather brutally, “You are so careless that your loss serves you right. What is [255]

your loss to mine? I have now paid four pounds ten for a calf, and still haven't got one for my customers. Come, Tom, my good Friend, you must be merciful this time, and let me have your other calf a little cheaper. If you'll let me have it for two pounds here's the money, but if not I must go back to old Hagan's for one."

Whilst this bargain was being concluded the cobbler went out, and looking in the butcher's cart soon found the shoes, which he took, replacing the straw as he found it.

Tom accepted the two pounds that were offered him, and the butcher was this time allowed to get his dearly-bought calf safely home; but I'm sorry to say the owner of the shoes had to wait another day for them, as the cobbler spent the remainder of that one with his friend, and merrily they spent it.

[256]

XXXVIII.

The Miller and his Donkey.

HERE was a miller, never mind in what part of the country, who had a tall, gawky son; but their combined wit had not proved sufficient to keep their business in a flourishing condition, for the poor man got poorer and poorer, selling one thing after another that was not absolutely required to keep the mill going, when, indeed, there was work for it to do, till the turn came for the donkey to be sold.

This donkey had been a faithful servant to the miller, who looked upon it as a friend, and being a kind feeling man, it was with a heavy heart he made up his mind to take it to the fair to sell—but there is no resisting necessity.

On the day of the fair, having some distance to go, he started early, and took his son with him, that they might both see the last of their friend.

[257] The donkey walked on in front, thoughtfully and demurely, as donkeys are wont to do, whilst the father and son followed sorrowfully. They soon got into the high road, which was crowded with people going to the fair, and the two poor simple fellows soon became the butt of the different wits. "That is a hopeful son of yours," one would say to the father; "you must feel proud of him I should think." And another would say to the son, pointing with his thumb to his father, "The old 'un looks a tartar; does he whip you much?" Many of the like remarks we made to father and son, loud enough to be heard by both, though pretended to be in a whisper; but the principal shafts were shot at them in conversations carried on round about, not a word of which could they fail to hear.

"Did you ever see such an old fool as that," said one, "to be walking along this hot road, and his donkey going on in front with nothing to carry?" "Oh," another said, "that's the donkey behind, for he in front is much the wiser of the two." "I wonder," another joined in, "the old fellow doesn't take more care of himself at his time of life, if not for his own sake, at least for his baby's, for [258] what would become of the poor child if anything were to happen to him?"

Stung by these remarks the old man got on to the donkey, though he regretted giving the poor beast such a load to carry, and he sought to lighten it by partly walking, for his long legs easily reached the ground. This made matters worse, for he soon heard one of his tormentors say, "Look there, was there ever such an old brute? He's taking it easy, and lets his poor boy toil along as best he can. Such an interesting child, too! Oh, if its mother did but know how cruelly her darling child is being treated."

Hearing this the miller made his son take his place, and wondered, as he walked by his side, whether he was now doing right.

He was as far from it as ever, poor man, for he very shortly heard an exclamation, and this time from an old man, whose opinion should carry some weight. "Well, this is too bad; what will the world come to next? Here's a big lout of a fellow riding whilst his old father's walking. It's disgraceful, that it is, for if even the fellow's lame, at any rate he should make room for the old [259] [260] man. The donkey's strong enough to carry the two."

The Burdened Beast.

Now the miller got on the donkey in front of his son, to whom he whispered not to weigh too heavily on the poor beast’s back, and they got on for some distance in peace. But it was not to last long, for when the donkey happened to stumble, from kicking against a stone, there was a general outcry: “They want to kill the poor beast. Is there no one to interfere? But it’s one comfort that cruelty to animals can be punished. Who’ll inform against these two big brutes? Why either of them is strong enough to carry the poor little thing, instead of breaking its back, as they are doing with their weight.”

“When shall we do what’s right?” said the poor Miller. “Get off, my Son, and so will I, and we’ll carry the donkey between us. Surely then we shall not be blamed.”

The Beast a Burden.

Having borrowed a strong pole, they tied the donkey’s four legs to it, and each taking an end of

the pole across his shoulder, they managed, though with great difficulty, to carry it; but it seemed impossible to please the people. [261] [262] There was a general shout of laughter as the two poor fellows toiled along, nearly weighed down by the load they were carrying; but that was not enough, for the most insulting epithets were showered upon them, till worried and distressed beyond endurance, the Old Man exclaimed, in despair, “I see there is no doing right, but as long as we remain together fault will be found, so we must part, my old friend;” and as they just then came to a bridge, with his son’s help, he threw the donkey over the side into the river below.

[263]

XXXIX.

Doctor Dobbs, and his Horse Nobbs.

DOCTOR Daniel Dobbs, of Doncaster, had a nag that was called Nobbs. One day, in the middle of winter, the Doctor having been summoned to attend a patient at some distance from his dwelling, and being anxious to return home before it was dark, rode poor Nobbs very hard. On his arrival, not finding his man in the way, the Doctor fastened Nobbs by his bridle to a rail in the yard, and went into his parlour, where he sat down to warm himself by a good fire. It had happened that the Doctor’s dairy-maid had brewed a barrel of strong beer, which had been drawn off into the cooler; and the dairy-maid having been called away to milk her cows, she had carelessly left the door of the brewhouse open. [264] The steam of the beer proved wonderfully inviting to poor Nobbs, who had been hard rode, and now stood in the cold extremely thirsty. After sundry efforts he got loose from the rail, and repairing to the brewhouse, drank so heartily of the beer, that, before he was aware of it, he fell down dead drunk. The Doctor’s man coming home, ran into the yard to convey Nobbs to the stable; not finding him at the rail, he looked about, and at length discovered him stretched upon the ground, cold and insensible. Bursting into the parlour, where the Doctor was seated with Mrs. Dobbs, he communicated to them the news of poor Nobby’s decease. The Doctor and Mrs. Dobbs were both good-natured people, and of course were much concerned; but as the Doctor never suffered misfortunes to get the better of his discretion, he immediately gave orders that Nobbs should without delay be flayed, and that his skin should be taken next morning to the currier.

The Doctor’s man accordingly set to work: poor Nobbs was dragged to the dunghill, his skin was stripped off, and he was left to be eaten by the hounds. He had not, however, lain long before the novelty of his situation had a considerable effect upon him. [265] [266] As he had lost his skin, of course the coldness of the night operated with double activity in dissipating the fumes of the beer which he had swallowed; and at length he awoke, got upon his legs, and trotted away to the stable-door, which happened to be close by the parlour. Not finding it open, and being both cold and hungry, he began to whinny for assistance. The Doctor and his wife had just done supper, and happened at that moment to be talking of the accident which had befallen their nag, over a hot bowl of brandy-punch. No sooner had Nobbs whinnied, than Mrs. Dobbs turned pale, and exclaimed, “Doctor Dobbs! as sure as I live, that is Nobb’s voice—I know him by his whinny!”

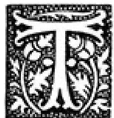
“My Dear,” said the Doctor, “it is Nobb’s whinny sure enough; but, poor thing, he is dead, and has been flayed.” He had hardly said this before Nobbs whinnied again—up jumps the Doctor, takes a candle in his hand, and runs into the yard. The first thing he saw was Nobbs himself without his skin. The Doctor summoned all his servants, ordered six sheep to be killed, and clapped their skins upon poor Nobbs. [267] To make a long story short, Nobbs recovered, and did his work as well as ever. The sheep-skin stuck fast, and answered his purpose as well as his own skin ever did. But what is most remarkable, the wool grew rapidly; and when the shearing season came, the Doctor had Nobbs sheared. Every year he gave the Doctor a noble fleece, for he carried upon his back, you know, as much as six sheep; and as long as Nobbs lived, all the Doctor’s stockings, and all Mrs. Dobbs’ flannel petticoats, were made of his wool.

Doctor Dobbs on his Horse Nobbs.

[268]

XL.

The Brownie.

HERE was once a farmer whose name was John Burdon, a kindly, industrious man, who lived happily with his wife and children, in an old house, where his father had lived before him.

His five children were thriving and merry, with no more quarrelling than is usual amongst children, and altogether there was a quiet in the old house, in spite of the games that were going on within. Of a sudden all this changed, and every thing seemed to go wrong.

Whatever the game might be, one of the children was sure to be hurt. If they were playing at ball, the ball would be sure to strike one or the other on the nose or in the eye, on which a bellowing followed; or if the game was puss-in-the-corner, or blind-man's-buff, two or more of the children were certain to run their heads together, or tear their clothes, so that the good dame, whose boast it had always been that they never got into mischief, had now enough to do to repair the daily damage. [269] [270]

The farmer, now hearing constant complaints, said some evil spirit must have crept into the house; and he was right enough.

A brownie or goblin had taken up his abode there, and not finding the quiet within which the outside promised, bestowed his ill-humour upon the inmates, and daily invented some new scheme for tormenting the children.

In one corner of the kitchen in which they generally played there was a closet, where the brownie had located himself; and that he might watch them, and see at what moment he could best torment them, he had thrust out a knot that was in the closet door, thus making himself a little window.

Now, it happened one day that the eldest boy had the shoe-horn in his hand, and merely in play stuck it in the knot-hole, whence it was immediately ejected, striking the boy on the head.

The Brownie’s revengeful Pranks.

As often as this was repeated so often it darted out, such good aim being taken that it invariably struck one of them on the head, and generally the one who had put it there. [271]

Though one always suffered, it was sport to the others, and therefore the horn was frequently stuck in the hole, so that the brownie became more and more irritated, not confining his pranks to the children, but making the parents suffer in various ways.

There would be noises in the night, and things that were in daily use would all at once be mislaid, and, after ever so much trouble and worry, found in places where they had already been a dozen times looked for. There could be no doubt this was the brownie’s doing, and there could be still less doubt when the chair was moved back, just at the moment when one of the old couple was going to sit down, and he or she went rolling on the floor, for then a laugh was heard proceeding from the moved chair.

This trick was played them more particularly when they had anything in their hands, such as a cup of tea, which would be emptied in the falling one’s face, and the laughing on such occasions was louder and longer.

At length, unable to bear it, the farmer determined to leave a house where there was no longer any comfort, and, if possible, to let it. [272]

The last load of the furniture was being removed, and the Farmer, following with his wife, said—

“I’m heavy at heart at leaving the old house, where, for years, we were so happy, and perhaps we shall not find the new one half as convenient.”

“The new one will not be half as convenient,” was uttered in a strange, squeaky voice, which seemed to be in an old tub at the back of the cart.

“Oh! oh! are you there?” cried the poor Farmer, “then we may as well turn back.”

“Yes! turn back,” said the squeaky voice.

They did, in fact, turn back, and from that day peace was restored to the house, for the brownie no longer tormented any of its inmates, nor, indeed, gave any signs of being there, excepting by immediately darting the shoe-horn out whenever it was put in the knot-hole.

THE END.

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Transcriber’s note

A few punctuation errors have been corrected silently, and an extraneous space was removed. Otherwise the original was preserved, including inconsistent spelling and hyphenation. For example: the river Pegnitz is also spelled as Pegnetz, this has not been changed.

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