DREAMS

BY

FRENCH FIRESIDES.

LEANDER

TRANSLATED BY JESSIE RALEIGH

David Millar Craig

Christmas 1890

A. R.

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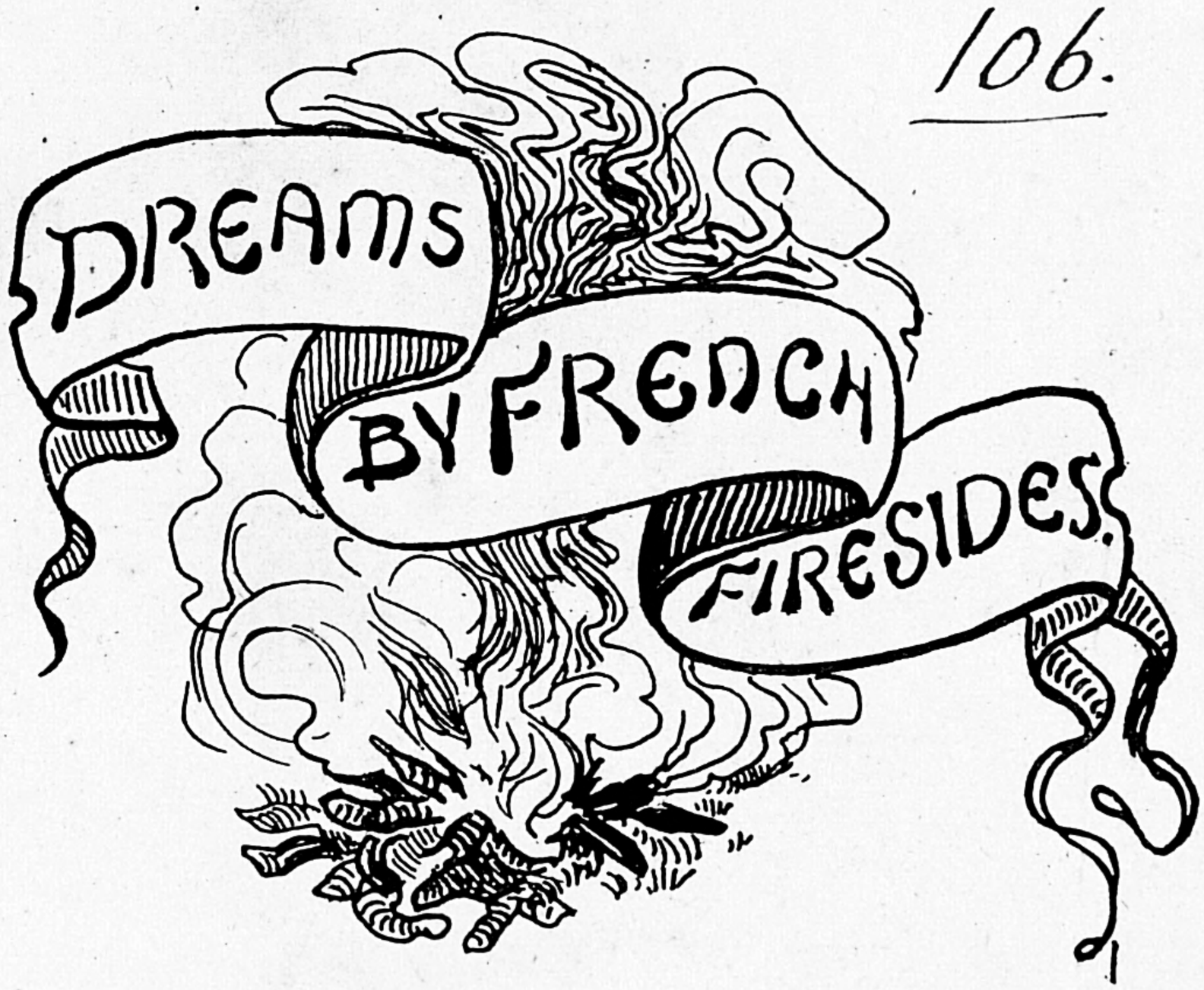
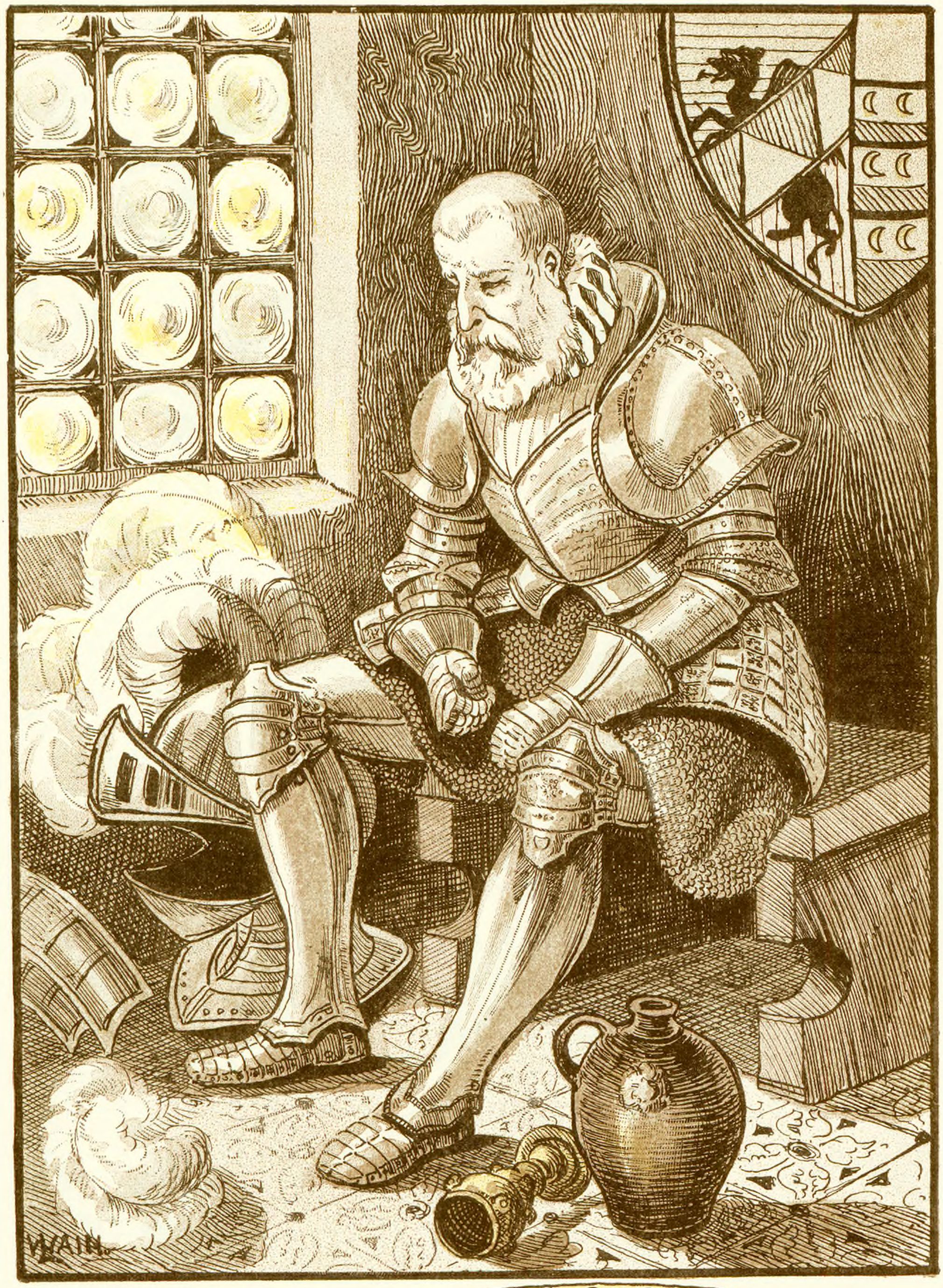




THE RUSTY KNIGHT.

DREAMS BY THE FIRESIDE.

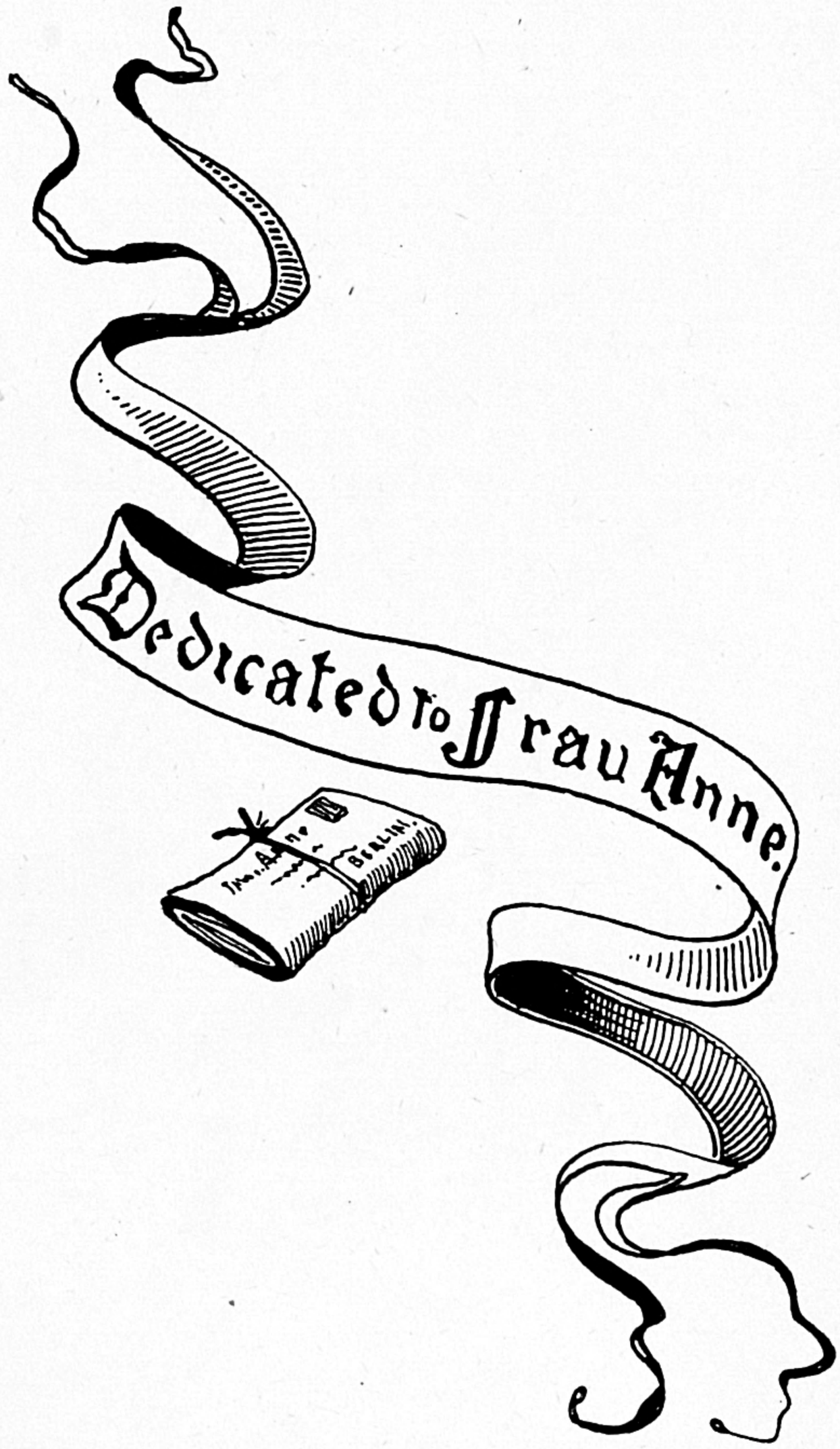
STORIES BY RICHARD LEANDER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL GERMAN BY J. RALEIGH

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY LOUIS WAIN.

EDINBURGH
ADAM AND CHARLES
BLACK.
MDCCCXC

Louis Wain.


Dedicated to Frau Anne.
BERLIN.

JUST as a terrible storm with its peals of resounding thunder is followed by a gloomy, ceaseless, settled rain, so for us the great battles of the first weeks of the Franco-German war were followed by the monotonous siege of Paris.

And just as the traveller, who was glad to break off his journey during the first fury of the storm, and take shelter under a hospitable roof, yet when the last peal of thunder has died away, goes again and again to the window and gazes out on the gray rain-shrouded landscape, impatient that the storm will not have done, so did we wait and long for the hour that should send us back to the hearths of home, in the shining rays of the sun of peace.

But week after week, month after month, slipped

away, and still no white flag of truce was to be seen on the walls of the forts. And when the day's work was done, and evening came down over the gentle heights that surround the city of the Seine, we sat lonely by the firesides of the forsaken French villas and castles. And when the flames crackled and the sparks flew up, many of us were visited by old and strange fancies. They would come out, visibly and bodily, from behind the great dark hangings and bright chintz curtains, and force themselves upon the dreamer's sight. And when, wondering, he looked them in the face, lo! they were old, long-forgotten acquaintances — come all the way from childhood. For you would never believe all the things that a German soldier can dream by French firesides. '*Specialité de rêveries Allemandes! Allez donc!*'

And it was so with the writer. And now and then, when the flakes of snow were falling outside, he would take up his pen and try with hurried strokes to put his dream-figures on paper. And the camp post carried the slight sketches faithfully home to her to whom this little book is dedicated. And when at last he returned to the German Fatherland—to his

own hearth surrounded by children—he saw with astonishment that the single sheets he had sent away were transformed into a little volume.

So now the little book shall go out into the world as a memorial of that great and glorious time, although the only modest connection with that time that it can claim for itself is this: that it has grown up out of love of that for which we fought and struggled; out of love for the German nation and German life.

God bless our glorious Fatherland!

RICHARD LEANDER.

LEIPZIG, *Easter*, 1871.

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Written at the Headquarters of the General in command of the IV. Army Corps at Soisy before Paris in December 1870 *and January* 1871.

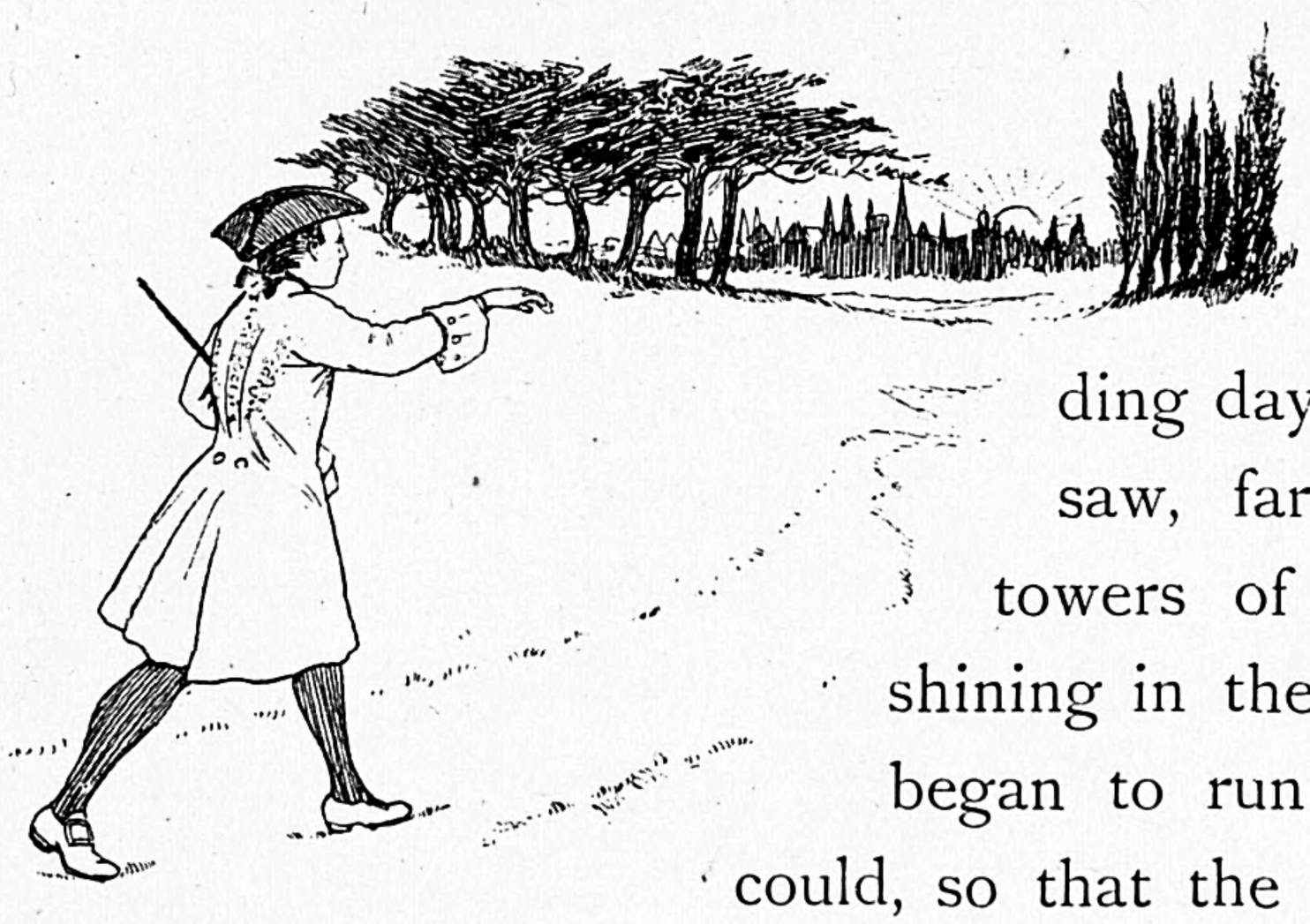
I

The Wonderful Organ.

ONCE upon a time, many, many years ago, there was a young organ builder, very skilful and learned, who had made a great many organs; and each organ that he built was always better than the one before. At last he made one so wonderful, that it would begin to play of its own accord every time that a bride and bride-groom in whom God was well pleased came into the church. When this beautiful organ was quite finished, the young builder looked at the young maidens of the country, one after another, chose out the most religious and beautiful of them all,

and made ready for his own wedding. But as he stepped across the threshold of the church with his bride, followed by a long procession of friends and kinsfolk, each with flowers in his hand or in his button-hole, his heart was filled with pride and ambition. He did not think of his bride, he did not think of God, but only of what a great man he was, how no one else could be compared to him, and how all the people would be astonished and would admire him when the organ began to play of its own accord. So he came into the church with his beautiful bride;—but the organ was dumb. At this the young organ builder's heart was filled with bitterness, for he thought in his pride that the fault must be with his betrothed, and that she was not true to him. He said not a single word to her the whole day long, but at night he secretly packed up his possessions and left her. When he had wandered away many hundred miles, he settled down at last in a strange land, where no one knew him and where he could never be discovered. For ten years he lived there, quiet and solitary, but at the end of that time he was seized with a nameless longing for his home and his forsaken bride. Day and night he was haunted by the thought of how beautiful and good she was, and of how cruelly

he had left her. After he had tried in many ways to conquer this longing, but all in vain, he resolved to return home and ask her to forgive him. He walked day after day, and night after night, until the soles of his feet were bleeding, and the nearer he drew to his home, the stronger became his longing, and the greater his anxiety to find out if she would still be as sweet and loving to him as she had been on their wedding day. And at last he saw, far, far away, the towers of his native city shining in the sun. Then he began to run as hard as he could, so that the people he passed shook their heads and said, 'There goes either a madman or a thief.' But as he went in at the city gates he met a long funeral procession, and behind the coffin a great multitude of people walking, and weeping bitterly.



'Who is to be buried, good people,' he said, 'for whom you mourn so grievously?' And they answered: 'Alas! it is the young organ builder's beautiful wife,

who was deserted by her wicked husband; and all her life she did so much good and so many kindnesses to the whole town that she is to be buried in the church.'

When the young man heard this he said never a word, but he went quietly and with bent head up to the coffin, and helped to carry it. No one recognised him, and when they heard him begin to weep and sob they left him unmolested, thinking, 'He must be one of the many poor people to whom the dead was kind whilst she lived.'

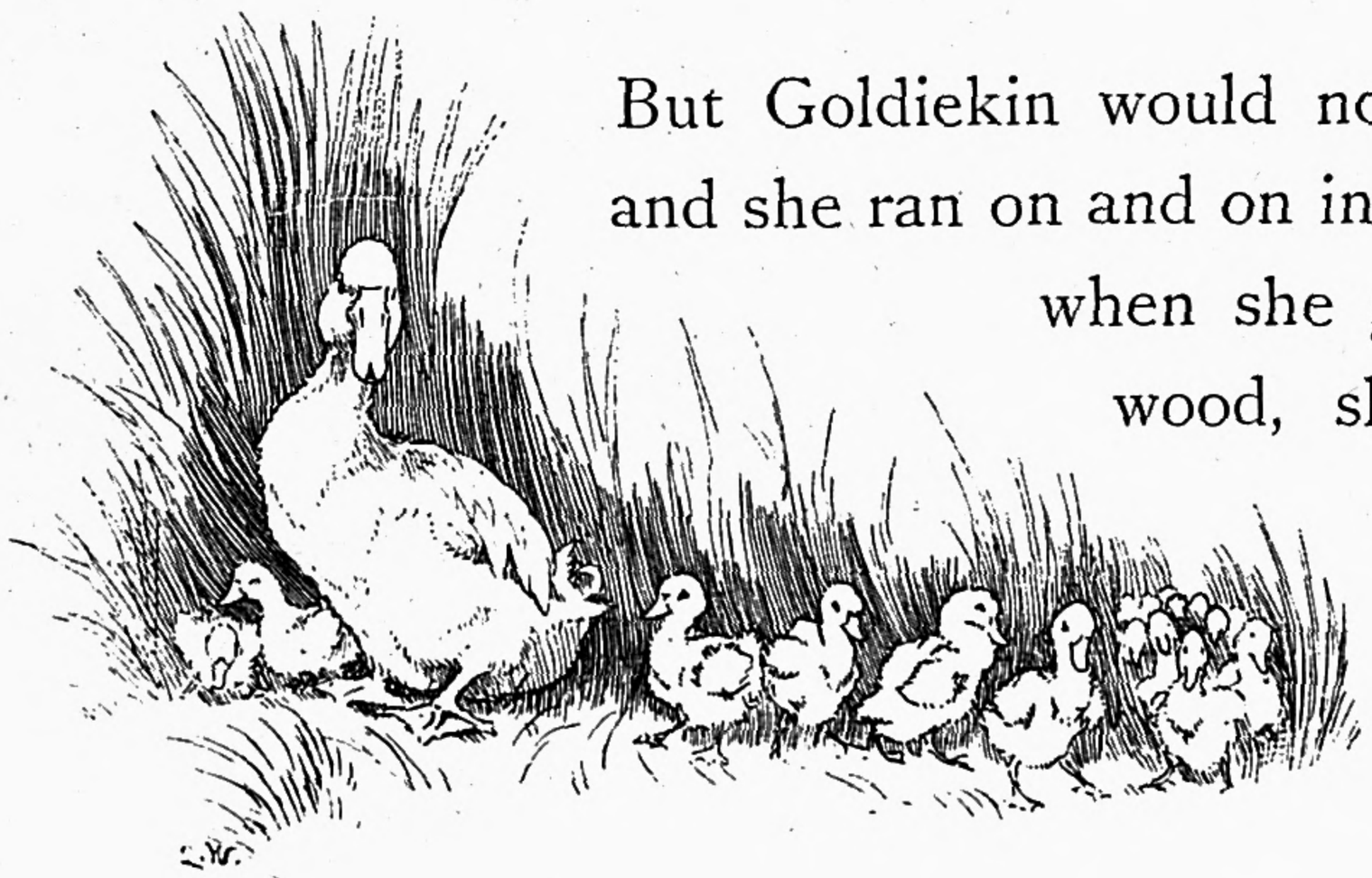
At length the procession reached the church, and as the bearers of the coffin crossed the threshold, the great organ began to play, and more beautifully than ever organ played before. They set the coffin down before the altar, and the organ builder leaned silently against a pillar close by, listening to the tones of the organ, which rose more and more powerfully,—so powerfully that the foundations of the church shook and trembled. His eyes closed, for he was very weary with his long journey, but his heart was glad, for he knew now that God had forgiven him, and as the last note of the organ sounded, he fell dead on the stone pavement. Then the people lifted up his corpse, and when they looked at him and saw who he was, they opened the coffin and laid him beside his bride. And

as they closed the coffin again, the organ began to play again very softly. At last it was silent, and it has never played of its own accord since that day.

JUST outside the town gates, close to the green fields, stood a little house, and in the house there lived two people, a husband and wife, who had one only child, a very little girl. They called her Goldiekin. She was a dear round little thing, and as quick as a weasel. One morning the mother went into the kitchen to fetch milk, and the little thing clambered out of bed and stood at the door in its little shift. Now it was a very lovely summer morning, and as Goldiekin stood there at the house-door she thought to herself: 'Perhaps it will rain to-morrow; I had better go out for a walk to-day.' No sooner said than done; out she ran behind the house into the meadow,

and from the meadow into the wood. When she reached the wood, the hazel-bushes waved their branches at her in a very serious way, and called out :

'Froggie, what are you doing there?
Drest in a shift in the open air?
With never a skirt, never a shoe,
One stocking instead of two ;—
If you've lost one of these
One leg will surely freeze:
Haste, haste home,
Never more to roam!'



But Goldiekin would not stop to listen, and she ran on and on into the wood, and when she got through the wood, she came to the pond. There upon the bank stood the Duck, with full fifteen young ones, all as yellow as the yolk of an egg, and she began to quack dreadfully, ran up to Goldiekin, opened her beak wide, and made as if she would eat her up. But Goldiekin was not at all frightened, and she went straight up to the Duck and said :

'Duck, Duck, chatterbox Duck,
Quacking for folly, quiet for luck!'

'Ah,' said the Duck, 'is it you, Goldiekin? I hardly recognised you at first, so you must not be offended—No, of course, *you* will do us no harm! And how does the world go on with you? How is my Lord your father, and Madam your mother? And how delightful it is to see you here, paying us a visit at last—and what a great honour for us! You must surely have made a very early start. Perhaps you would care to look round our pond;—a most charming neighbourhood, is it not?'

As the Duck prattled on in this way, Goldiekin asked her: 'Tell me, Duck, where did you get all these little canary-birds?'

'Canary-birds, indeed!' said the Duck; 'I beg your pardon, these are my young ones!'

'But they sing so nicely, and they have no feathers, only hairs. What do your little canary-birds have to eat?'

'They drink clear water and eat fine sand.'

'They can hardly grow fat on that fare.'

'Ah, you would wonder,' said the Duck; 'the Lord blesses it to them; and besides that, every now and then they do find a root in the

sand, and perhaps a worm or a snail in the water.'

'And have you no bridge here?' asked Goldiekin after a little.

'No,' said the Duck; 'a bridge is unfortunately just what we have not got. But if you wish to go over the pond, I shall be delighted to take you across.' And with this the Duck went into the water, broke off a large water-lily leaf, set Goldiekin upon it, took the long stalk in her beak, and drew the leaf and the little girl across. And the little ducklings swam merrily around her.

'Many thanks, Duck!' said Goldiekin, when she had reached the other side.

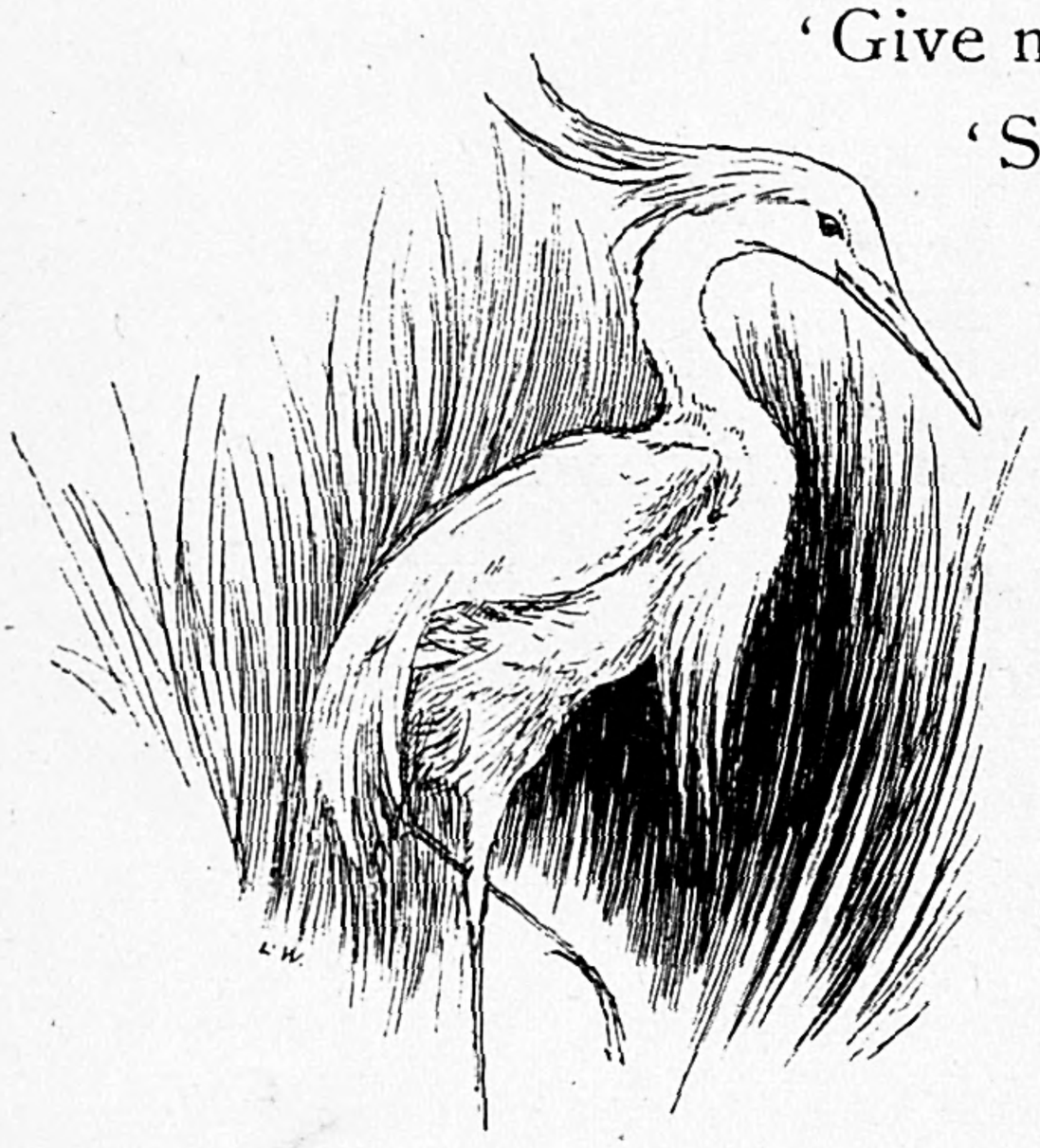
'Don't mention it,' said the Duck. 'If you should want me again, I should be enchanted to be of use to you. My kindest regards to your parents. Farewell! Farewell!'

On the other side of the pond lay another wide green meadow, and in this meadow little Goldiekin wandered happily on. In a little while she saw a Stork, and at once ran up to him.

'Good morning, Stork!' she said. 'Why, what are you eating? it is all dapple-green, and it croaks.'

'Sprawl-salad,' said the Stork. 'Sprawl-salad, Goldiekin.'

'Give me some too, I am hungry.'



'Sprawl-salad is no breakfast for you!' said the Stork: and he went to the brook, dived deep into the water with his long beak, and brought out,—first, a golden cup full of milk, and then a sweet roll. Then he lifted up one wing, and dropped out a packet of candy. Goldiekin did not wait to be asked twice, but sat down on the ground and ate and drank. When she was satisfied, she said:

'Many thanks, many thanks!
I wish you good health your whole life long!'

And then she ran on farther, and presently a little blue butterfly came flitting past. 'Little blue creature,' said Goldiekin, 'shall we play at hide and seek for a little while?'

'I am willing,' said the Butterfly, 'but you must not snatch at me, or I shall be hurt.'

So they played merrily at hide and seek all round the

meadow until it was evening. When it began to grow dusk Goldiekin sat down on the ground and thought: 'Now I must rest for a little, and then I will go home.'

But as she sat there she noticed that the flowers in the grass were all quite tired already and wanted to go to sleep. The little daisy nodded its head very drowsily; then it would pull itself straight up, look all round it with glassy eyes, and then nod again. A white aster grew near by (perhaps it was the Daisy's mother); and the Aster said:

'Little Daisy at close of day,
Hardly his head on his stalk will stay!'

'Go to sleep, my child!' And the Daisy ducked down and fell asleep. And its little white cap shut up round its head, so that the ends fell all over its face: and then the Aster went to sleep too.

When Goldiekin saw that everything else was going to sleep, her own eyes closed too. There she lay in the meadow and slept, and meanwhile her

mother was running all over the house looking for her and crying. She went into every room and looked in every corner, under all the beds and under the stairs. Then she went out into the meadow as far as the wood, and through the wood to the pond. 'She could never have got across the pond,' she thought; and she went back again, and looked again in all the nooks and corners and under all the beds and under the stairs. When she had done that, she went back again into the meadow, and through the wood, and up to the pond, and she did this all day long, and the longer she did it the more she cried. But her husband went through the whole town asking if no one had seen Goldiekin.

When it had grown quite dark, one of the twelve angels who fly over all the world every evening to see if any little child has gone astray, and to bring it back to its mother, came flying over the green meadow. When he saw Goldiekin lying there asleep, he lifted her carefully up without waking her, flew away over the town, and looked about for any house where the light was still burning. 'That must be the house where she belongs,' he said, when he saw Goldiekin's father's cottage, with the candle still burning in the sitting-room. He looked in quietly at the window,

and there sat the father and mother at the two ends of the little table, weeping; and under the table they were holding each other's hands. Then he opened the house-door very softly, laid the child down under the stairs, and flew away.

And the parents still sat at the table. Then the mother got up, lit another candle, and went once again to look in all the nooks and corners and under the beds. 'Wife,' said the father sadly, 'you have looked in all the nooks and corners so often already, and under the stairs too, but all in vain. Go to bed. Our Goldiekin must have fallen into the pond and been drowned.'

But the wife would not listen or stop seeking, and as she held the light under the stairs, there lay the child asleep! Then she screamed out so loud for joy that her husband came running to the stairs, and she came to meet him beaming with delight, with the child in her arms. She was fast asleep, for she had run about till she was quite tired out.

'Where was she? where was she?' cried the father.

'She was lying asleep below the stairs,' answered the wife, 'and yet I had looked below the stairs so often to-day!' Then the husband shook his head and

said: 'There is something very strange and uncanny about it, mother; but let us thank God that we have got our Goldiekin back again!'

III

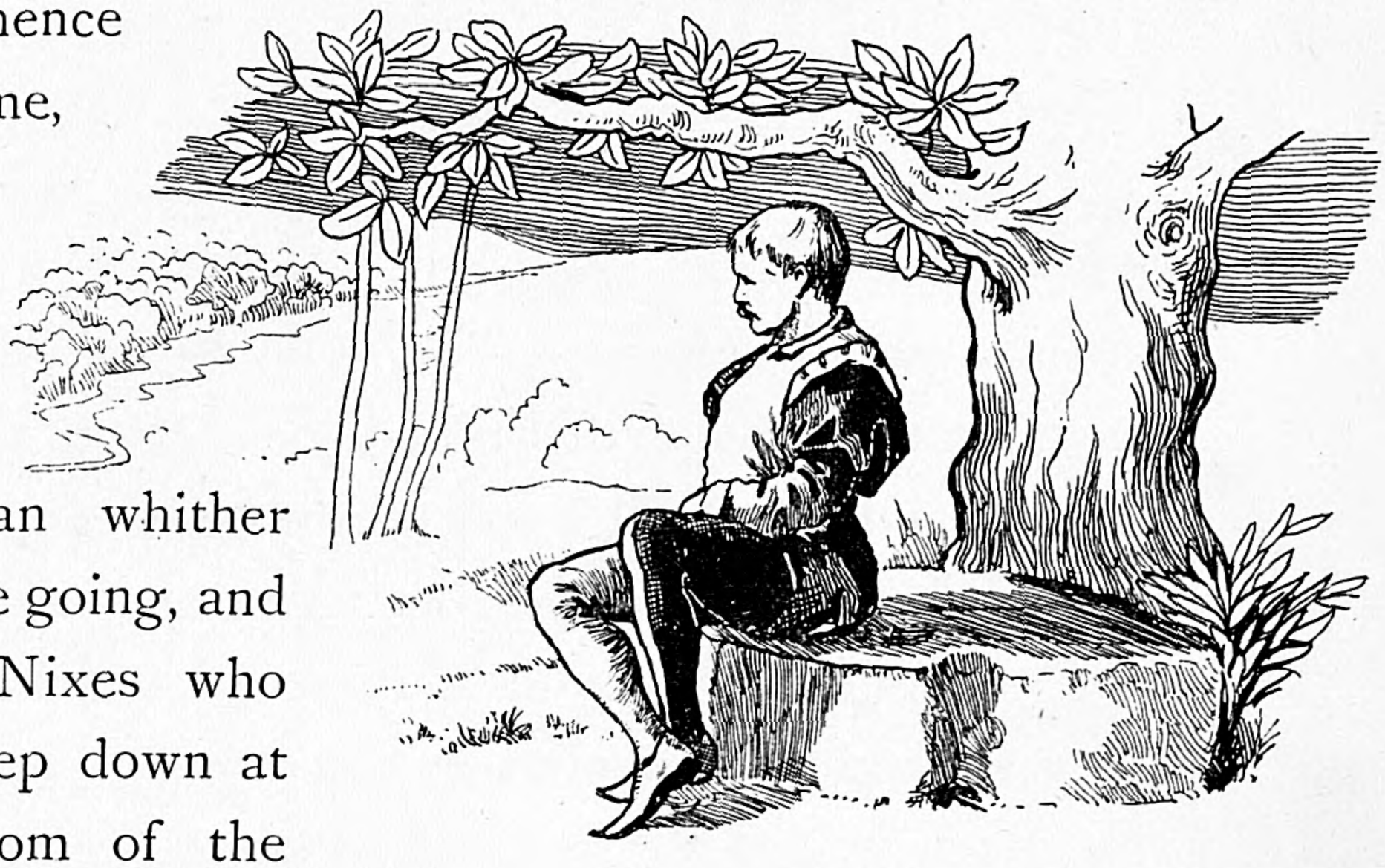
The Invisible Kingdom.

In a little house, standing quite away from the rest of the village, half-way up the hill, there lived once a young peasant with his old father. His name was John. Several acres of land belonged to the house, so they wanted for nothing, and neither father nor son was burdened by fears for the future. Just behind the house lay the wood, which was full of old oaks and beeches,

so old that the grandchildren of the men who had planted them had already been dead for more than a century; and just in front of it lay an old broken millstone—no one knew how it had come there. Any one who sat down on it could have a wonderful view of the valley, of the river flowing through the valley, and the hills rising on each side of the river. Here, in the evening, when he had done his work in the fields, John would often sit for hours, dreaming, with his elbows propped on his knees, and his head in his hands: and as he troubled himself very little about the village people, but usually went about silent and abstracted, like one whose thoughts are far away, the people laughed at him, and nicknamed him 'John-a-Dreams.' However, he was quite indifferent to this.

But as he grew older he became more silent than ever, and when at last his father died and was buried under a great oak-tree, John hardly ever spoke at all. And now when he sat, as he did oftener than ever, upon the old broken millstone, and gazing down into the beautiful valley, saw how the evening mists crept in at one end and slowly gathered round the hills, and watched it growing darker and darker, until the moon and the stars rose in all their splendour, his heart was filled with wonder and joy. For the waters of the river

would then begin to sing, very softly at first, but soon quite clearly and sweetly,—and they sang of the mountains whence they came, and of the ocean whither they were going, and of the Nixes who dwelt deep down at the bottom of the river. Then the trees in the wood would begin to rustle very differently from ordinary trees, and would tell the most wonderful stories, especially the old oak-tree which stood over his father's grave, and knew much more than the other trees. And the stars shining far up in the sky seemed seized with a strong desire to fall down into the green forest and the blue stream, and glimmered and quivered as if they could not bear to be still a moment longer. But the angels who stand, one behind each star, held them fast every time they tried to move, saying: 'Now, my good star, don't do anything so ridiculous! you are



far too old for this sort of nonsense—many thousand years old and more! stay in your proper place where you are well off!'

It was a wonderful valley. But it was only John-a-Dreams who heard and saw all this. The village people knew nothing about it, for they were quite commonplace everyday folk. Now and again they would cut down one of the old giant trees, saw it into lengths and chop it up, and when they had piled up a fine stack of firewood they would say: 'This will boil our coffee-pots for quite a respectable time!' And they washed their clothes in the river; it was exceedingly convenient for that. And when the stars shone out brilliantly, they only said: 'It will be very cold to-night; I hope our potatoes will not freeze.' And if poor John-a-Dreams ever tried to suggest any other ideas to them, they laughed him to scorn. Certainly, they were thoroughly sensible, everyday people.

One day, as John was sitting on the old millstone, thinking that he was utterly alone in the wide world, he fell asleep. He dreamed that a golden swing hung down from the sky by two silver cords; each cord was fastened to a star; and in the swing sat a charming Princess, and swung herself so high that she flew down from heaven to earth, and up again from earth to

heaven. Each time the swing came down the Princess clapped her hands for joy, and threw John a rose. But suddenly the cords broke, and the swing with the Princess flew away into the sky, farther and farther, until at last he could see her no more. Then he woke up, and when he looked round, there on the millstone beside him lay a great bunch of roses.

The next day he fell asleep again, and dreamed the same thing. When he awoke, there lay the roses again.

So it went on through the whole week. Then John-a-Dreams said to himself that as this dream returned so many times there must surely be something true at the bottom of it; and he shut up his house and set off to seek the Princess.

After he had travelled many days he saw on the horizon a country where the clouds hung low over the earth. He walked slowly towards it, and came into a great forest. Suddenly he heard a terrible groaning and crying, and when he ran to the place whence the sounds came, he saw a venerable old man with a silver-gray beard lying on the ground. Two hideously ugly fellows, both stark naked, were kneeling upon him and trying to throttle him. John-a-Dreams looked round for a weapon, but as he could see none, in his fury he

tore down a great branch of a tree. Hardly had he seized it when it turned into a strong halberd; he rushed with it upon the two monsters and ran them through the body, so that they released the old man and ran off howling aloud.

John-a-Dreams raised the old man, consoled him, and asked him why the two naked fellows had wished to throttle him.

So the old man told him that he was the King of Dreams, and that by an unfortunate mistake he had gone a little out of his way into the kingdom of his deadliest foe, the King of Reality. As soon as the King of Reality had noticed this, he had had him way-laid by two of his servants, that they might utterly make an end of him.

'Then have you ever done any harm to the King of Reality?' asked John-a-Dreams.

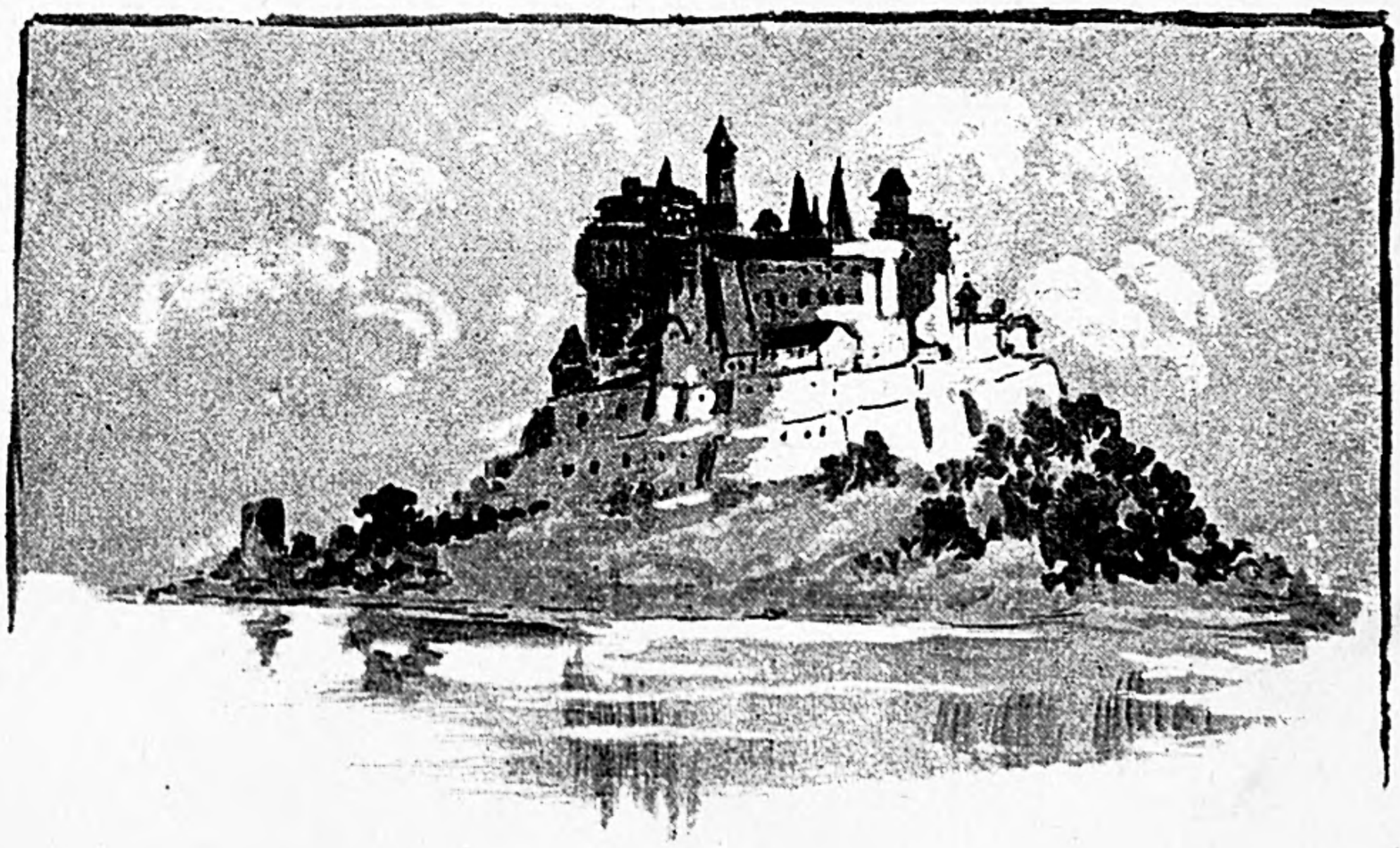
'God forbid!' answered the old King. 'But he gets very easily irritated with other people. That is

one of his characteristics,—and me in particular he hates like poison!'

'But the two fellows he sent to throttle you were both quite naked.'

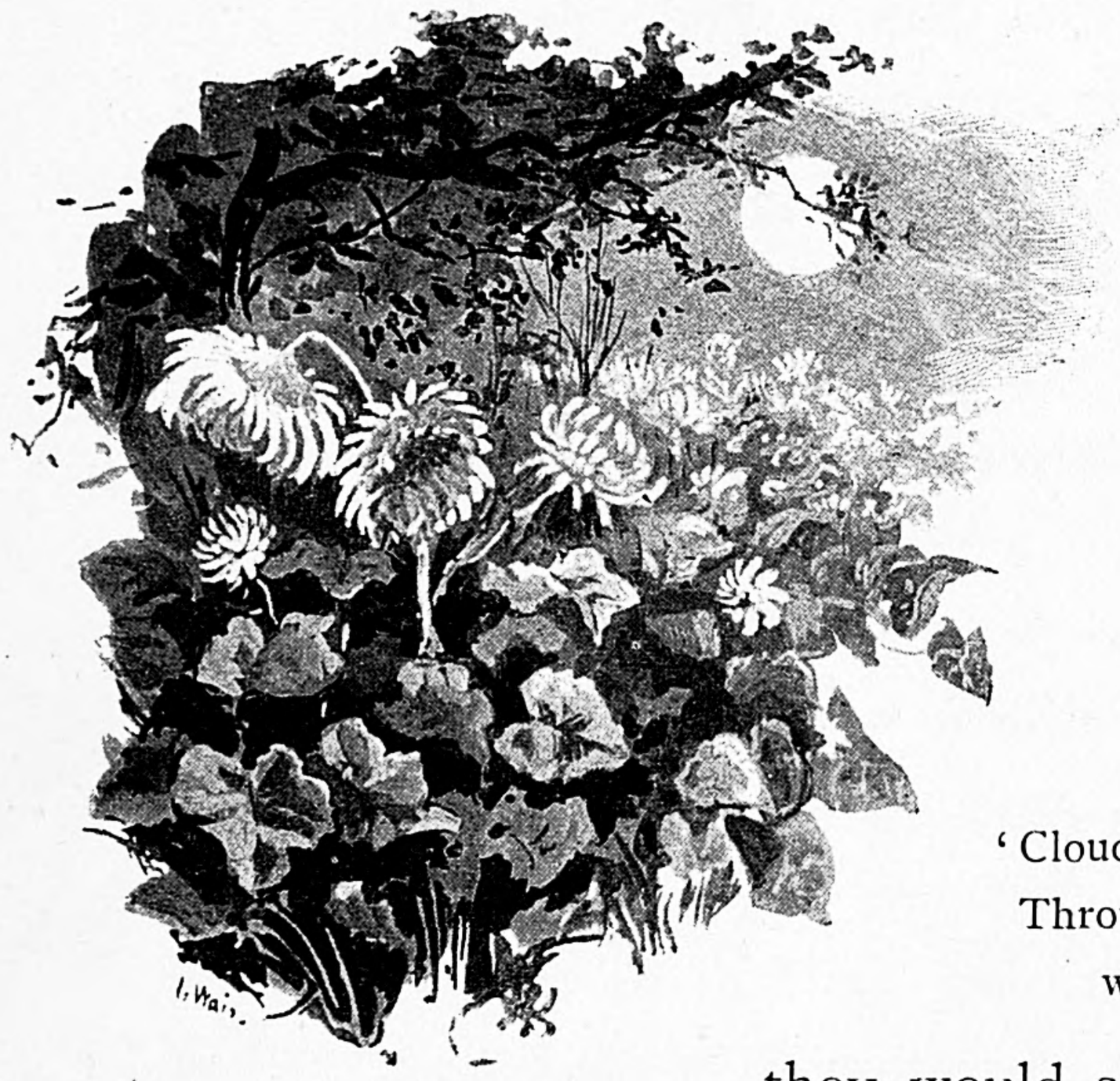
'So they were,' said the King: 'stark staring naked, for that is the fashion in the country of Reality. Everybody there goes naked, even the King, and they are not in the least ashamed of it. It is an abominable kingdom!—But now as you have saved my life, I will prove my gratitude by showing you my kingdom. It is the most splendid country in the whole world, and all the Dreams are my subjects!'

With this the King of Dreams went forward and John followed him. When they came where the clouds hung low over the earth, the King showed him a trap-door so hidden away among the bushes that it could only be discovered by some one who knew where to look for it. He lifted it up, and led his companion down five hundred steps into a brilliantly illuminated



grotto, which spread out for miles around them in marvellous splendour. It was unspeakably beautiful. There were castles built on islands lying in great lakes, and the islands floated about like ships. If you wanted to go into one of the castles you had only to stand on the shore and call out :

'Island castle, float to me,
All your marvels let me see!'



and it would float to the shore of its own accord. And there were other castles on the clouds, that sailed slowly along in the air; but if you said :

'Cloudland castle, come below,
Through your doors I fain would go!'

they would sink slowly down to your feet. Besides these, there were gardens with flowers that gave out perfume by day and bloomed at night, many-coloured birds that told fairy tales, and a multitude of other wonderful things. John-

a-Dreams's surprise and admiration knew no bounds.

'Now I must show you my subjects the Dreams,' said the King. 'They are of three kinds: good Dreams for good people, bad Dreams for wicked people, and then there are the Dream-kobolds. I sometimes play a trick with this last kind, for now and again, you know, even a King must have his joke!'

So he took John into one of the castles, which was built in such a quaint and curious shape that it almost made one laugh. 'Here the Dream-kobolds live,' he said; 'a little impudent hoaxing race. They delight in tricks, but they never hurt any one. Come along here, little fellow!' he called out to one of the kobolds, 'and see if you can behave properly for one minute!' Then he turned to John-a-Dreams and said: 'Do you know what this rascal does when once in a way I allow him to go up to earth? He runs into the nearest house, picks up the first man he sees out of his feather-bed, sound asleep, carries him up to the top of the church tower and throws him over head first. Then he leaps down the tower stairs like lightning, reaches the bottom first, catches him, carries him back home, and flings him into his bed so that the bed cracks and he wakes up. Then he rubs his eyes, looks about in great

surprise, and says: "Good gracious, I felt exactly as if I were falling down from the top of the church tower. How very lucky that it was only a dream!"'

'So that's he!' cried John-a-Dreams. 'He has paid me one visit already, but if he comes back and I catch him let him look out!' Just as he said this another Dream-kobold jumped out from under the table. He looked

almost like a little dog, had on a very ragged jacket, and kept his tongue out. 'And he is not much better,' said the Dream King. 'He barks like a dog, and he has the strength of a giant. When people are terrified in their dreams he holds their arms and legs fast, so that they cannot get away.'

'I know him too,' said John-a-Dreams. 'When you want to get away, you feel as stiff and rigid as a piece of wood. If you try to lift your arm, it is no use, and if you try to move your feet, you can't do it. But very often he is not a dog, but a bear, or a robber, or even something worse.'

'I will never permit them to visit you again, John-a-Dreams,' the King assured him. 'Now you must come to the bad Dreams, but do not be afraid of them,

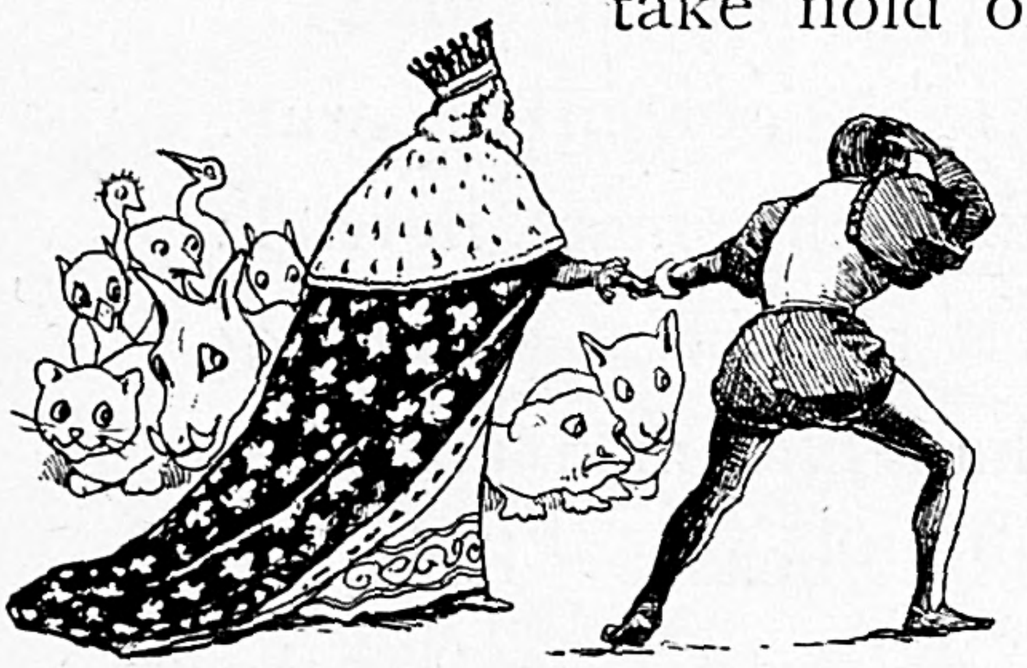
for they can do you no harm: they are only for wicked people.'

They went into an enormous room surrounded by a high wall, and closed by an iron door in the wall. Here were all crowded together the most horrible monsters and dreadful shapes of all kinds. Many of them looked like men, some half like men and half like beasts, and some altogether like beasts. Terrified, John-a-Dreams shrank back to the iron door, but the King spoke to him encouragingly, and said: 'Come, and look more closely at these things that evil men must needs dream.' And he signed to a Dream that stood near: it was a frightful giant, who carried a mill-wheel under each arm.

'Tell what you are going to do to-night,' the King commanded him.

Then the monster drew his head down between his shoulders, and stretched his mouth from ear to ear, shook his sides as if he were very much amused, and said, grinning: 'I am going to the rich man who left his father to starve. Once, when the old man sat down on the stone steps before his son's house and asked for bread, the son came out and said to his servants: "Come and drive this old bag of bones away!" So now I go to him at night, and grind him between

my two millstones until all his bones are broken into little pieces, and when he is all twisted and supple I take hold of him by the collar and shake him and say: "Ha, ha! just hear how you rattle, you bag of bones!" Then he wakes up with his teeth chattering and says: "O wife, I am freezing: give me another blanket!" And as soon as he goes to sleep I do it all over again.'



When John-a-Dreams heard this, he forced his way hurriedly out at the door, dragging the King after him and crying out: 'I won't stay here with these bad Dreams a moment longer! It is too horrible!'

Then the King took him into a beautiful garden, where the paths were of silver, the flower-beds of gold, and the flowers of polished jewels; and in this garden the good Dreams were roaming about. The first Dream he saw was like a young pale lady, who carried a box of bricks under one arm and a Noah's ark under the other.

'Who is that?' asked John-a-Dreams.

'She goes every evening to a little sick boy whose mother is dead. All the day long he is quite alone,

and nobody takes any trouble about him, but towards evening this Dream goes to him, plays with him, and stays the whole night. He always falls asleep very soon, and that is why she goes so early. The other Dreams go much later. But come this way now, for if you want to see everything we must make haste.'

And they went farther on among the good Dreams in the garden. There were men, women, old men and children, all with sweet and lovely faces, and dressed in the most beautiful clothes. And in their hands they carried the prettiest things—all the most delightful things that heart could wish. All of a sudden John-a-Dreams stood still, and called out so loud that the Dreams all looked round at him.

'What is the matter?' asked the King.

'Why!' cried John, quite overcome with delight, 'there is my Princess, who appeared to me so often and gave me the roses!'

'You are right,' answered the King. 'You are perfectly right; that is she, and you must confess that I always sent you a very pretty Dream; why, she is almost the prettiest I have.'

John ran up to the Princess, who was sitting in her little golden swing swinging herself, and as soon as she saw him coming she jumped out of the swing right into his arms. He took her by the hand and led her to a golden seat, and there they sat together, and began telling each other how delightful it was to meet once more, and when they had done telling it they always began all over again at the very beginning. Meanwhile the King of Dreams, with his hands behind his back, walked up and down on the wide path that led right through the garden, and never stopped once, only every now and then he took out his watch to see how late it was, for it seemed as if John-a-Dreams and the Princess would never have done, they had so much to say to one another. At last he went back to them and said, 'Now children, that's enough! You, John-a-Dreams, have a long way to go before you get home, and I cannot offer to keep you here over night, for I have no beds, because the Dreams never sleep but spend the nights among the human beings on earth: and as for you, Princess, you must get ready directly for your night's work. Dress yourself all in rose-colour this evening, and then come to me, and I will tell you whose visitor you are to be for this night, and what you are to say to him.'

When John heard this his heart grew hotter within him than it had ever been in all his life before. He stood up, and said in a firm voice: 'My Lord King, I can never be parted from my Princess again. You must either keep me down here, or you must let her come up to earth with me, for I love her far too well to be able to live without her.'

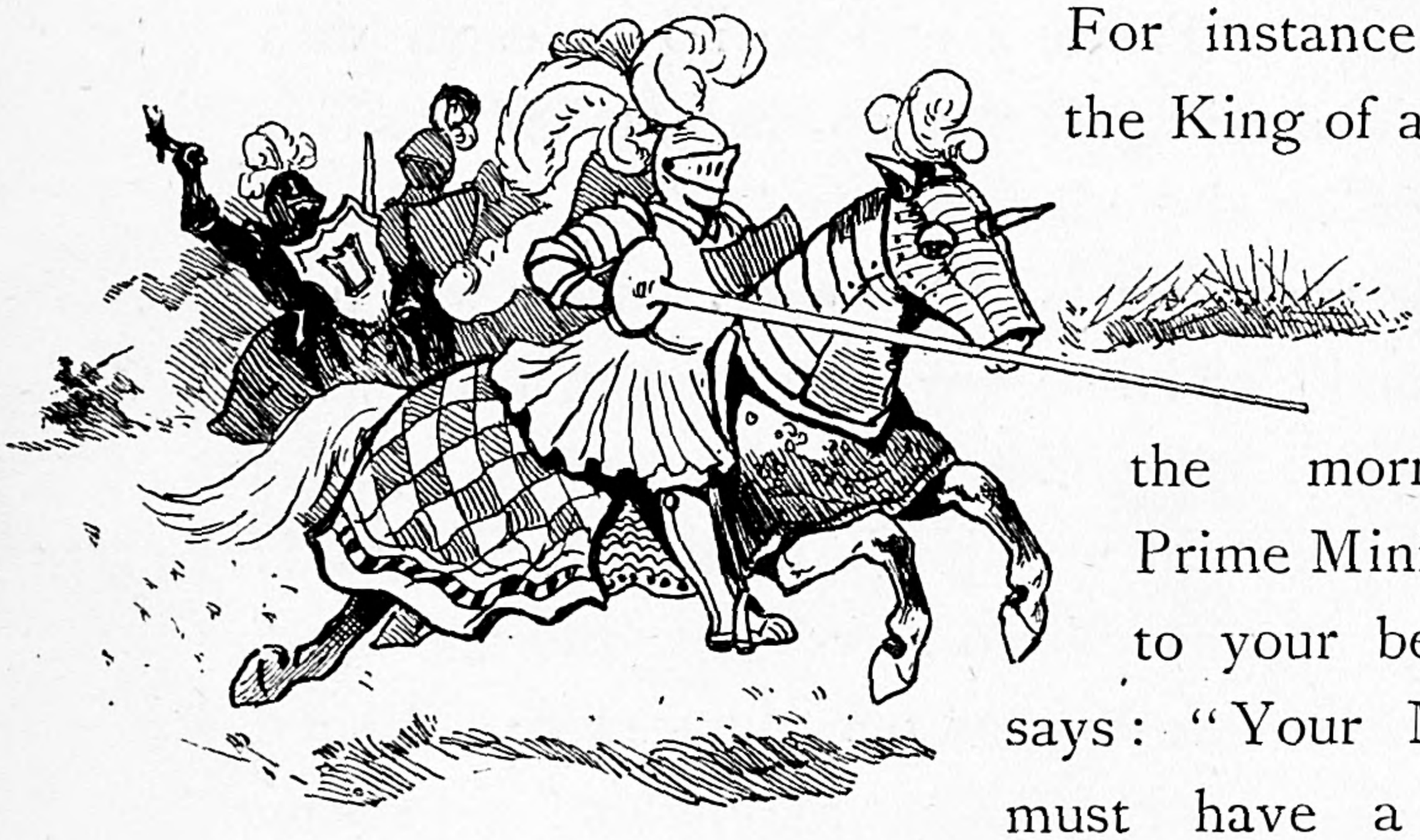
And into each of his eyes there came a tear as big as a hazel-nut.

'But, oh dear me, John!' said the King, 'she is the very prettiest Dream I have. However, it is a fact that you saved my life, so you shall have her. Take your Princess and go up to earth with her, and as soon as you get up there, take her silver veil off her head and throw it back to me, down through the trap-door. Then your Princess will turn into flesh and blood like any other human being; for you know she is still nothing but a Dream.'

John thanked him with all his heart, and said: 'Dear King, you have been so very good to me that I must venture to ask you for one thing more. I have got a Princess, but I still want a kingdom, and surely there cannot be such a thing as a Princess without a kingdom; so can you not give me one, even if it should be quite a little one?'

And to this the King answered: 'Visible kingdoms, John-a-Dreams, I have none to give; all my kingdoms are invisible; but you shall have one of this latter kind, and it shall be one of the largest and most beautiful that I possess.'

Then John asked what the characteristics of an invisible kingdom might be, and the King told him that he would soon learn all about them and get over his first astonishment, for an invisible kingdom was a most delightful and beautiful thing. 'Why,' he said, 'in the ordinary visible kind of kingdom things are sometimes very disagreeable. For instance; you are the King of an ordinary kingdom, say, and early in the morning the Prime Minister comes to your bedside and says: "Your Majesty, I must have a thousand florins for State affairs." Then you open the State coffers, and find never a farthing inside them! What is to be done then? Or again, you go to war and are



beaten, and the other King who has conquered you marries your Princess, but he shuts you up tight in a tower! Now things of that sort can never happen in an invisible kingdom.'

'But if we can never see it,' said John-a-Dreams, still somewhat perplexed, 'what use will our kingdom be to us?'

'You foolish fellow,' said the King, and he touched John's forehead with his forefinger.—'You see it already, both you and your Princess. You see the castles and the gardens quite distinctly, and all the fields and woods that belong to the kingdom; you can live in it, walk about in it, and do anything you like with it; it is only other people who cannot see it!'

Then John-a-Dreams was very much pleased, for he had begun already to feel rather afraid that the village people might be jealous of him if he were to bring a Princess back with him and become a King. He took a reluctant farewell of the King of Dreams, went up the five hundred steps with the Princess, took off the silver veil from her head and threw it down. Then he tried to shut the trap-door, but it was too heavy for him to hold, and he was obliged to let it fall. It gave a tremendous crash, as loud as the report from a great many cannon all fired off at once, and for a

moment he lost consciousness. When he came to himself again he was sitting on the old millstone in front of his little house, with his Princess seated by his side, and she was of flesh and blood like an ordinary human being. She took hold of his hand and stroked it, saying: 'You dear good foolish fellow, why did you never dare to tell me, all that long time, how much you loved me? Were you afraid of me?'

And the moon rose and shone on the river, the waves rippled sweetly on the banks, and the trees in the wood rustled, but still they sat there talking. Then all of a sudden it seemed as if a little black cloud came before the moon, and something that looked like a great cloth all folded together fell down at their feet, and then the moon shone out again in all her splendour. They lifted up the cloth and spread it out. It was very fine, and folded together many hundred times, so that it took a long time to lay it out flat. When they had unfolded and spread it, it looked like a great map. In the middle flowed a river and on its banks there lay cities, forests, and lakes. Then they understood that it was a kingdom, and that the good Dream King had let it fall down to them from heaven; and now when they looked at their little house it was changed into a wonderful castle, with crystal staircases,

marble walls, velvet carpets, and pointed towers with blue-slated roofs. They took each other by the hand and went into the castle, and as they went in all their subjects were already assembled to greet them, and bowed very low. Drums and trumpets sounded, and pages went before them scattering flowers, for they were King and Queen.

The next morning the news ran like wildfire through the village that John-a-Dreams had come back and had brought a wife with him. 'And a very sensible thing to do, too!' said the people. 'I have seen her already,' said one of the peasants; 'early this morning, as I was going into the wood. She was standing beside him at the door. She is just an ordinary kind of person, rather small and slender, nothing in the least remarkable about her: and as for her clothes, they were quite shabby. I should like to know how the marriage will turn out, for he has got nothing, so in all probability she has got nothing either!'

So they chattered, the stupid people, for they could not see that she was a Princess. And in their

simplicity they never noticed that the little cottage was changed into a great and wonderful castle, for you know it was an invisible kingdom that had fallen down to John-a-Dreams out of heaven. And for this very reason he never troubled himself about the foolish village people at all, but lived splendidly and happily in his kingdom with his beloved Princess. And he had six children, each one prettier than the last, and they were all Princes and Princesses. But nobody in the village knew anything about it, for they were quite commonplace everyday people, and far too simple to understand it.

IV

HOW THE DEVIL FELL INTO HOLY WATER.

EVERY one knows that the Devil is often unlucky. Indeed it is so common that any one who has the toothache, or who has to break stones on the road in winter with worn-out boots, or who receives a letter from his sweetheart on his birthday, in which instead of wishing him many happy returns she bids

him an eternal farewell; all these would be called 'poor devils.'

One day as the Devil was going snuffing about in Cologne Cathedral, perhaps hoping to carry off a fat monk or a bigoted old lady, all of a sudden he stumbled, and—splash!—he fell right into the basin of holy water. Then you ought to have seen the faces he made, how he sputtered and struggled, and how quickly he scrambled out again! And how he shook himself afterwards, and slunk away like a soaked poodle! And besides, it was Christmas time, so that his teeth chattered with cold as he stood before the Cathedral door, for he had sneaked out in a great hurry,—he was afraid the pious people inside might have noticed, and would laugh at him.

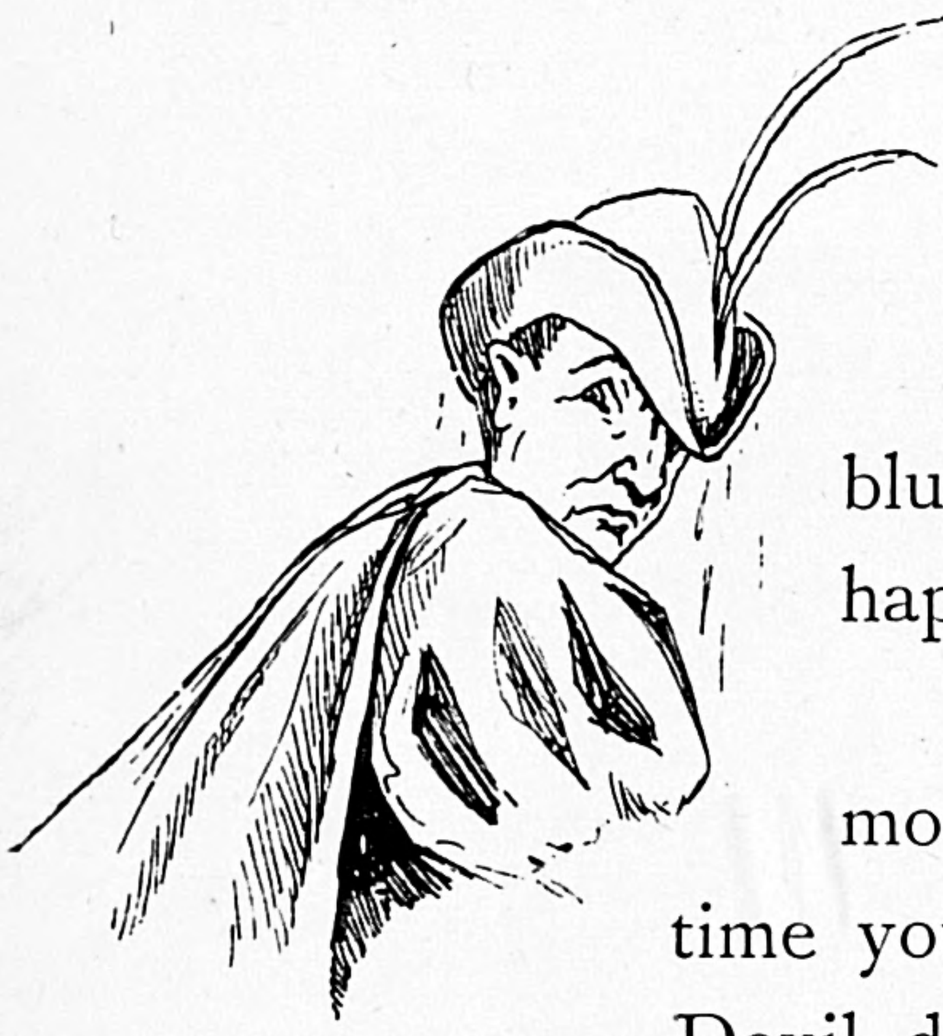
'What am I to do now?' he said, and looked at himself from top to toe. 'I certainly won't trust myself at home in Hell; my grandmother would read me a fine lecture. I think I'll just go for a couple of hours to the blackamoors' country; it is warm there, and I can dry my clothes. Besides, they are going to slaughter some prisoners there to-day. Have I got my opera-glasses with me?'

So he went to the blackamoors' country and watched the slaughter going on there, applauded

loudly when he was pleased, and when his coat was quite dry trundled himself cheerfully home to Hell.

But no sooner had he come into the room, and no sooner had his grandmother set eyes on him, than she turned sky-blue in the face, and then brimstone-yellow,

and then sky-blue again, and cried out: 'Oh, what a sight you are, you rascal; and, good gracious! what a horrible smell! Have you been poking about in the church again?'



Then the Devil, stammering and blushing, told her everything that had happened to him.

'Take off your coat!' the grandmother ordered him; 'and in the meantime you can just get into bed.' And the Devil did as he was bid, and pulled the red and blue checked quilt so high up over his ears that his black toes peeped out at the foot of the bed, for he was desperately ashamed of himself. The grandmother put out two fingers, and took up the coat by its outermost lappet, just as the cook lifts a dead mouse by the tail.

'Ugh-h-h!' she said, and shook herself with disgust. 'What a sight!' Then she took it to the gutter, where all the thick mud and dish-water of Hell runs away, dipped it in twice, steeped it carefully, and washed it in the gutter. Then she hung it over a chair at the fire to dry.

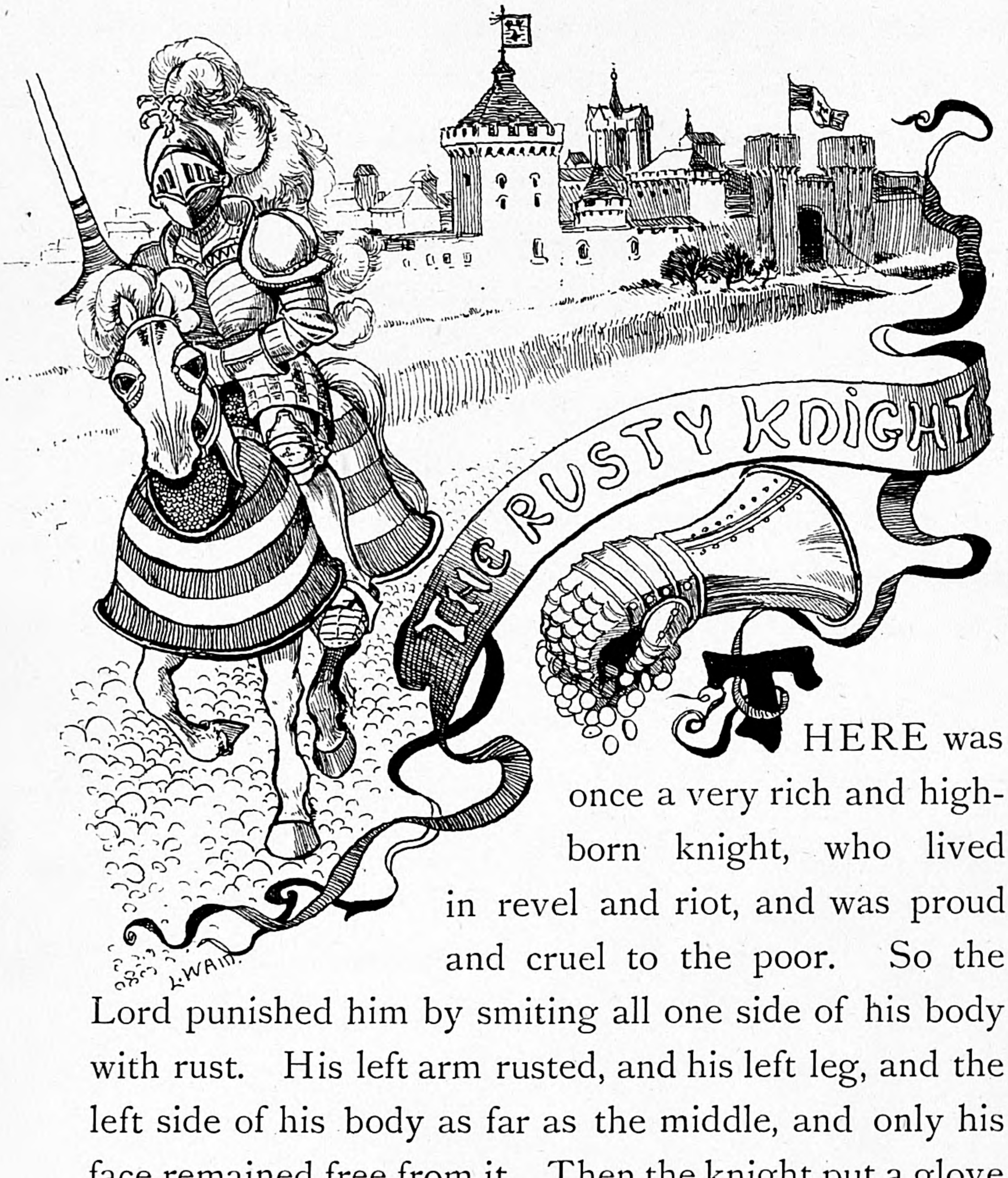
When it was quite dry, and the Devil, who

wanted to get up and put it on, was just putting one leg out of bed, she took the coat up again and smelt it.

'Faugh!' she said, and sneezed. 'How terribly hard it is to get rid of a church smell!' And she fetched a coal-pan, scattered a couple of handfuls of dogs' hair chopped fine and shavings of horses' hoofs upon it, and when it began to smell strongly of singeing she held the coat over it.

'There!' she said to the Devil; 'now your coat is clean, and you are fit to be seen again in respectable society. But I distinctly request that this may not occur again! Do you understand me?'

V



HERE was once a very rich and high-born knight, who lived in revel and riot, and was proud and cruel to the poor. So the Lord punished him by smiting all one side of his body with rust. His left arm rusted, and his left leg, and the left side of his body as far as the middle, and only his face remained free from it. Then the knight put a glove on his left hand, had it fastened firmly round his wrist, and never took it off day or night, so that no one could

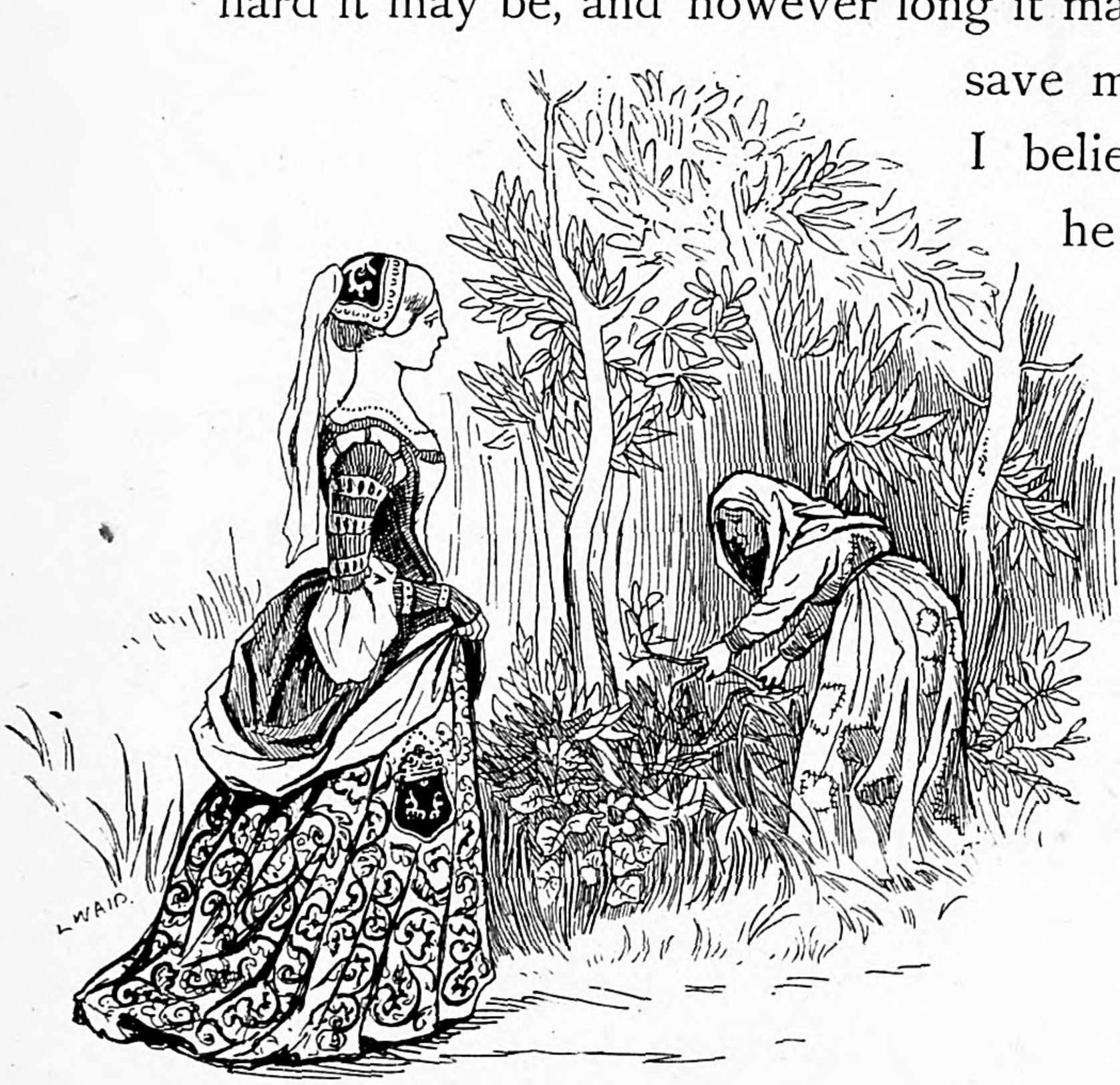
see that he was covered with rust. Then he turned his thoughts inward, and tried to begin a new way of life. He dismissed his old friends and boon companions, and married a good and beautiful wife. She had heard much evil of the knight, but as his face was quite untouched by the rust, she only believed half of it when she was alone and thought about him, and when he was beside her and talking to her gently, she did not believe any of it at all. So at last she accepted him. But the first night after the wedding she found out why he never took the glove off his left hand, and was very much terrified. However, she said nothing about it, but the next morning she asked her husband if she might go into the forest to pray in a little chapel that stood there. Now there was a cell near the chapel where an old hermit dwelt, who had lived for many years in Jerusalem, long before, and who was so holy that the people made pilgrimages to him from far and wide. Of him she intended to ask counsel.

When she had told the hermit everything, he went into the chapel, prayed for a long time there to the Virgin Mary, and when he came out at last he said:

'It is possible for you to save your husband, but it will be very difficult. If you begin the work and are not able to finish it, you yourself will also be stricken

with rust. Your husband has done much evil in his life, and he has been proud and cruel to the poor; but if you will go and beg, for his sake, barefoot and in rags like the poorest of beggar-women, until you have begged a hundred golden guilders, your husband will be saved. Then take him by the hand, go with him into the church, and put the hundred golden guilders into the box for the poor. If you can do that, God will forgive your husband's sins, the rust will vanish, and he will be as white and sound as he was before.'

'I will do it,' said the knight's young wife, 'however hard it may be, and however long it may take. I will save my husband, for I believe firmly that he is only rusted outwardly, and not in his heart.'



So she went away deep into the forest, and in a little while she met an

old woman who was looking for brushwood. She had on a ragged dirty gown, and a cloak over it made up of as many patches as the Holy Roman Empire used to be, and as for the colour of the patches, that was almost impossible to discover, for the rain and the sun had made havoc of the poor old cloak.

'Will you give me your gown and cloak, old mother?' said the knight's lady. 'If you will, I will give you all the money I have in my pocket, and my silk clothes too, for I long to be poor.'

The old woman looked at her in amazement, and said: 'Gladly, gladly, my pretty damsel, if you are in earnest. I have seen much of the world in my day, and have met many who longed to be rich, but I never yet saw any one who longed to be poor. It will suit you ill enough too—with your silken hands and sweet little face!'

But the knight's lady had already begun to undress herself, and looked so earnest and so sad that the old woman could see very well that she was not in jest. So she gave her her gown and cloak, helped her to put them on, and then asked her:

'What shall you do now, my pretty lady?'

'Beg, mother,' answered the knight's wife.

'Beg? Well, you need not look sad about that,

for it is no disgrace. There are many who have never learned to beg here below, who may yet need to do it at the gate of heaven. But first I must teach you the beggar's song :

‘“To beg and to whine
Through shower and shine,
Through hunger and thirst
We beggars are nursed.

‘“Have pity, ye wealthy,
And grant me a dole,
Bread in the wallet,
Or soup in the bowl.

‘“With wallets of leather,
And clothes patched together,
Hailstorms may beat on us,
Winds may dishevel,
But when we are lucky
Then ho for a revel!”

‘A pretty song, isn't it?’ said the old woman. Then she threw the silk clothes round her, sprang into the bushes and soon disappeared.

But the knight's lady wandered on through the forest; and in a little while she met a farmer who had come out to look for a servant-maid, for it was harvest-time and hands were needed. The knight's lady stood still, held out her hand, and said :

'Have pity, ye wealthy,
Grant me a dole.'

But she did not say the rest of the verses, for they did not please her. The farmer looked at

her, and when he saw that in spite of her ragged clothes she looked neat and strong, he asked her if she would be his servant-maid. 'I will give you a cake at Easter, a goose at Martinmas, and at Christmas a florin and a new gown. Will that content you?'

'I cannot,' answered the knight's lady. 'I must go a-begging, for such is the Lord's will.'

At this the farmer grew very angry, and began to abuse and revile her, saying scoffingly:

'So that's the Lord's will, is it, eh? I suppose

you dined with Him to-day? What did you have—lentils and sausages, eh? Or perhaps you are His aunt, since you know so well what He wants. You should be driven to work with a stick, you miserable creature, the stocks are far too good for you!'

Then he went on his way and left her there without giving her anything. And the knight's lady saw that a beggar's was indeed a hard life.

Nevertheless she went on farther, and again after some time she came to a place where the roads parted, and where two stones lay. A beggar with a crutch was sitting on one of them, and as she was very weary, she thought she would sit down on the vacant stone to rest herself a little. But no sooner had she done this than the beggar aimed a blow at her with his crutch, crying: 'Get along with you, you shameless slut? Do you want to steal all my custom with your rags and your sugary face? I have hired this corner, so be off, or you shall see what a fine fiddle-bow my crutch can make, with your shoulders for a crazy fiddle!'

The knight's lady sighed, rose up, and walked on as far as her feet would carry her. At last she came to a great city where she had never been before. Here she stopped, and sat down in the church porch

to beg, and at night she slept in the shelter of the church doorway. So she lived from day to day, and sometimes one would give her a penny, and another a halfpenny; but many gave her nothing at all, and even scoffed at her as the farmer had done. The hundred golden guilders were long in coming; when she had begged for nine months she had only saved one guilder. And just as this first guilder was completed she bore a beautiful boy, and called him Star-of-Hope, for she still hoped that she would save her husband. She tore off a strip from the bottom of her cloak, a good yard wide, so that the cloak now only reached her knees; wrapped the child up in it, took it on her lap and began to beg again. And when the baby was wakeful, she would rock it in her arms, and sing:

'Hush thee, baby, on my arm,
Sleep, my little homeless child;
Though thy father's halls are warm,
Here the wind is loud and wild.

'He is clad in silk and gold,
Drinks red wine and eats white bread;
Could he see us starved and cold,
Grief would surely strike him dead.

'Cold and hunger bring us rest,
We are happier far than he:
Hush thee, baby, on my breast,
Jesu, save my lord for me!'

And now the people would often stand still to look at the poor young beggar-woman and her lovely child, and they gave her more than before. And she was comforted and wept no longer, for she felt sure that if she could only persevere she would be able to save her husband.

Meanwhile the knight in his castle was very sorrowful when his wife did not come home, for he said to himself: 'She has found out everything, and has left me because of it.' He went first into the forest to the hermit to discover whether she had been to the chapel to pray there. But the hermit was very short and stern with him, and said:

'Have you not lived in revel and riot? Have you not been proud and cruel to the poor? Has not God punished you by smiting you with rust? Your wife did quite right to leave you. Sound and rotten apples ought not to lie in the same chest, lest the sound should grow rotten too.'

Then the knight sat down on the ground, took off his helmet, and wept bitterly.

When the hermit saw this, he spoke more gently,

and said: 'Since I see that your heart is not rusted like your body, I will give you counsel; do good and give alms, and go and pray in all the churches, and you will find your wife again.'

So the knight left his castle and rode through all the world. Wherever he found poor people he gave them alms, and when he saw a church he went into it and prayed; but he did not find his wife. When nearly a year had passed in this way he came one day into the very town where his wife was sitting begging at the church porch, and he went straight towards the church. While he was still a long way off his wife recognised him, for he was tall and stately, and wore a golden helmet with an eagle's claw on the crest, which shone and sparkled in the sun from far away. Then she was afraid, for she had only collected two golden guilders, so she could not save him yet. She drew her cloak right over her head, that he might not recognise her, and crouched down as low as she could, lest he should see her snow-white feet, for the cloak only reached down to her knees since she had torn off a strip for the child. But as the knight went by he heard her sobbing softly, and when he saw her patched and ragged cloak, and the lovely child on her lap all wrapped up in rags too, his heart was filled with compassion. He

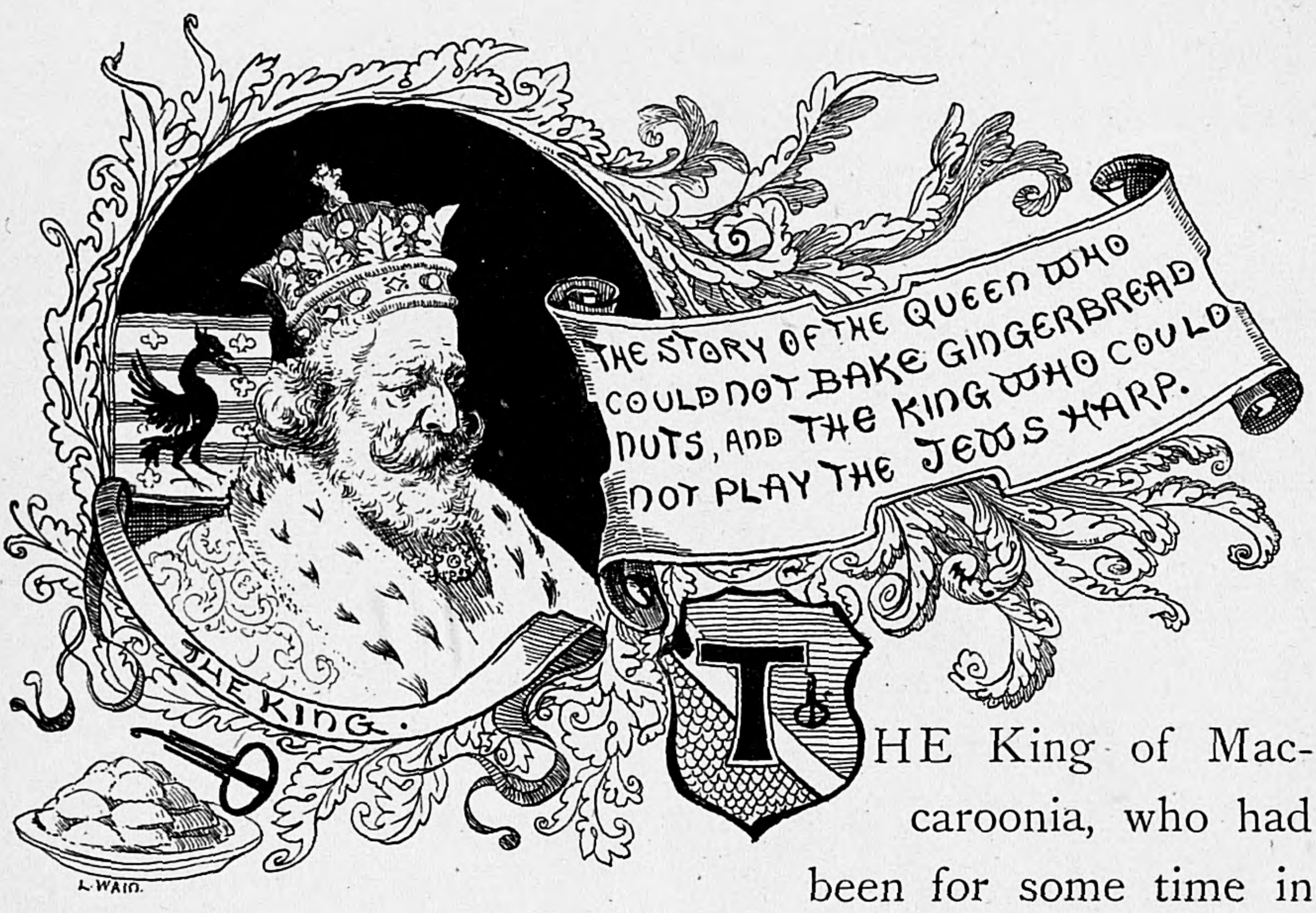
went up to her and asked her what was the matter, but she answered nothing, and her sobs came still faster, though she tried hard to suppress them. Then the knight took out his purse, in which there was a great deal more than a hundred golden guilders, laid it down on her lap, and said: 'I give you all I have, even though I should have to beg my way home again.'

Then suddenly, although she did not touch it, the lady's cloak fell down from her head, and the knight saw that he had given the money to his own dear wedded wife. In spite of her rags he took her in his arms and kissed her, and when he heard that the child was his son he kissed and embraced it too. Then the knight's lady took her husband by the hand, led him into the church, and put the golden guilders into the box for the poor. And she said: 'I wanted to save you, but you have saved yourself.'

And so it was, for when the knight came out of the church, the curse was lifted from off him, and the rust which had covered his whole left side had vanished completely away. He set his wife and child upon his horse and walked himself by their side, and they went back together to his castle, where he lived happily with her for many years, and did so much good that every one praised him.

And he hung the beggar's rags that his wife had worn in a costly cabinet, and every morning as soon as he rose he went to the cabinet to look at the rags, saying: 'This is my morning prayer, and the Lord will not reject it, for He knows what I mean by it; and that I go to church afterwards as well.'

VI



THE King of Maccaroonia, who had been for some time in the prime of manhood, had just got up, and was sitting undressed on the chair by his bed. The Prime Minister stood before him, and handed him his stockings, and one of them had a great hole in the heel. Now although he had turned the heel downwards with the greatest care, so that the King might not notice the hole, and although the King usually cared a great deal more about well-made boots than about whole stockings, nevertheless this time the hole did not escape the royal observation. Horror-struck, the King took the stocking out of the Minister's hand, put his

forefinger through the hole so that it stuck out as far as the knuckle, and said with a sigh: 'What is the good of my being a King when I have no Queen? What should you think of my taking a wife?'

'Your Majesty,' answered the Prime Minister, 'it is a sublime idea; an idea that might most submissively have arisen in my own mind, had I not felt that your Majesty might possibly condescend to-day to express it yourself.'

'Good!' replied the King. 'But do you think I shall find a wife to suit me without much difficulty?'

'Pah!' said the Minister. 'By the dozen!'

'You must remember that I expect a great deal. If a Princess is to please me, she must be both wise and beautiful. And there is another point on which I lay great stress; you know how exceedingly fond I am of gingerbread nuts. There is not a single person in my whole kingdom who knows how to bake them,—at least to bake them properly, not too hard and not too soft, but just crisp;—and so above all things my wife must be able to bake gingerbread nuts!'

When the Prime Minister heard this he was rather alarmed. But he quickly recollected himself and said:

'Without doubt, sire, a King like your Majesty

will be able to find a Princess who can bake gingerbread nuts.'

'Well then, we must take a look about us,' said the King, and the very same day, accompanied by his Minister, he began to pay a round of visits upon all those of his various neighbours who had Princesses to dispose of. But there were only three Princesses beautiful and wise enough to please the King, and not one of these could bake gingerbread nuts.

'I cannot bake gingerbread nuts, to be sure,' said the first Princess when the King asked her; 'but I can bake the most delicious little almond cakes. Wouldn't you be content with those?'

'No, no!' answered the King. 'I really *must* have gingerbread nuts; they are of more consequence to me than anything else!'

The second Princess, when he asked her the same question, tossed her head and said pettishly: 'Pray don't talk such ridiculous nonsense to me! There are no Princesses who can bake gingerbread nuts!'

But the King fared worst of all with the third Princess, although she was both the prettiest and the wisest, for she did not even let him get to his question. Before he could introduce the subject, she asked the King if he could play the Jews'-harp! And when he

said no, she at once refused him, saying, however, that she was exceedingly sorry, for she liked him very well, but as she liked the Jews'-harp better than anything else in the world, she had resolved never to take a husband who could not play it.

So the King and the Minister went home again, and as he got out of the carriage, in very low spirits, he said: 'After all, perhaps, it would not have mattered as much as I thought!'

But whatever happens, a King must have a Queen; and after a long time he sent for the Minister again, and informed him that he had given up hoping to find a wife who could bake gingerbread nuts, and had decided to marry the Princess they had visited first. 'It is the one who can bake little almond cakes,' he added. 'Go and ask her if she will be my wife.'

But the next day the

Prime Minister came back and told him that this Princess was no longer free. She had married the King of the country where the almonds grow.

'Then go at once to the second Princess!' But the Minister came back once more with his errand unfulfilled, for the Princess's father had said he was extremely sorry, but his daughter had unfortunately died, so he was unable to bestow her on the King.

Upon this the King grew thoughtful, but as he was quite determined to have a Queen, he told the Prime Minister to go once more to the third Princess, for perhaps she might have thought better of her resolution in the meantime. And the Minister was obliged to go, although he heartily disliked the errand, and although his wife told him that it would be quite useless. But the King awaited his return with the utmost anxiety, for he remembered the question about the Jews'-harp, and the thought of it annoyed him very much indeed.

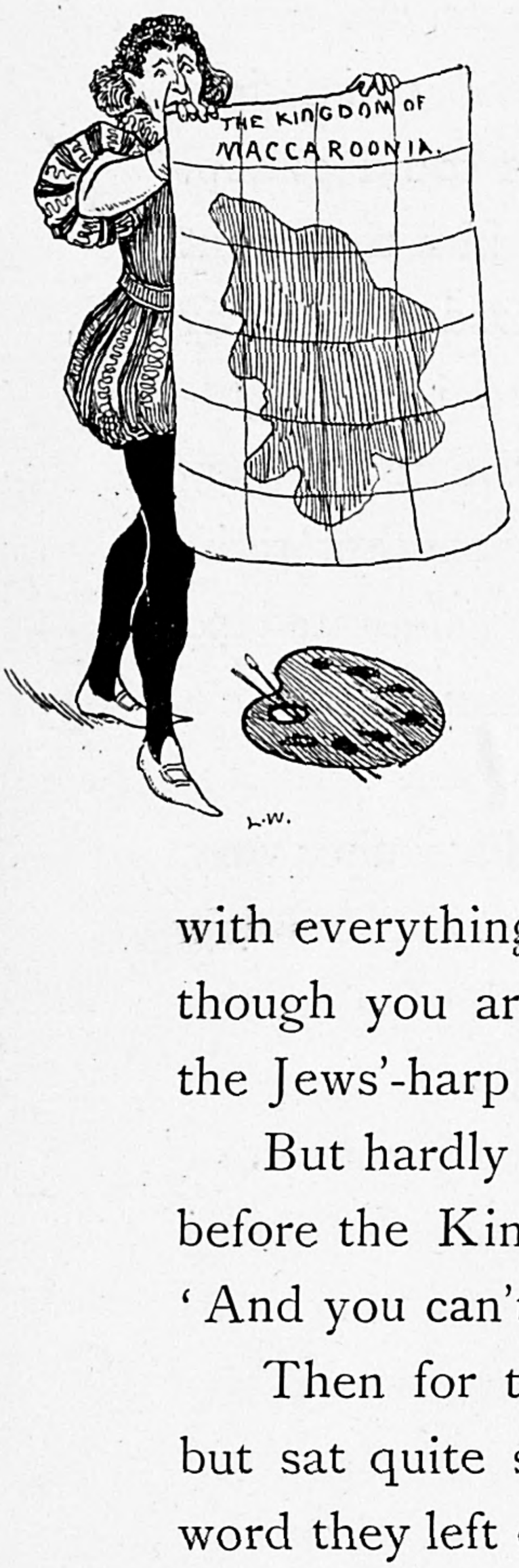
But the third Princess received the Minister very graciously, and told him it was true that she had firmly resolved never to take a husband who could not play the Jews'-harp. But dreams are like morning mist, and especially the dreams of youth! She saw now that her wish could never be fulfilled, and as the King

pleased her very well in all other respects, she would consent to take him for her husband. So the Prime Minister went home as fast as his horse could gallop, and the King embraced him and gave him the great Toady Order with its Insignia; the Order to wear round his neck and the Insignia above it. Bright-coloured banners were hung out in the town, garlands were festooned from one house to another right across the streets, and the wedding was celebrated so splendidly that the people talked of nothing else for a whole fortnight.

The King and the young Queen lived together very merrily and happily for more than a year. The King had quite forgotten the Jews'-harp, and the Queen the gingerbread nuts.

But one morning the King unfortunately got out of bed on the wrong side, and in consequence of this everything went wrong. It rained all day long; the imperial globe fell down and the little cross on the top of it was broken off; then the court painter came and brought the new map of the kingdom, and when the King looked at it, the country was coloured blue instead of red as he had ordered; and finally, the Queen had a headache.

So it happened that the royal couple quarrelled for



the first time, but what reason they had for quarrelling they themselves did not know the next morning, or if they did know they would not say. In short, the King was out of temper and the Queen was snappish, and would always have the last word. After they had disputed for a long time, the Queen shrugged her shoulders and said contemptuously: 'I did hope that you were going to be quiet at last, and stop finding fault with everything that is done for you. And after all, though you are so exacting, you yourself can't play the Jews'-harp!'

But hardly had the words slipped out of her mouth before the King interrupted her, and said in a rage: 'And you can't bake gingerbread nuts!'

Then for the first time the Queen made no reply, but sat quite silent, and without exchanging another word they left one another, and went away to their own rooms. And there the Queen sat down in the sofa-corner and wept, thinking, 'Oh, what a foolish woman I am! Where were my wits when I said that? Never in all my life before have I been so stupid!'

But the King walked up and down in his room, rubbed his hands, and said to himself: 'It is a piece of the greatest good luck that my wife cannot bake gingerbread nuts. If she could, what on earth could I have answered when she threw it in my teeth that I could not play the Jews'-harp?'

When he had said this three or four times at least, he grew more and more cheerful and better tempered. He began to whistle his favourite airs, looked at the great picture of the Queen which hung in his room. climbed on a chair to brush away a cobweb with his handkerchief that hung just over the Queen's nose; and at last he said: 'She was quite vexed about it, the poor little soul. I must go and see what she is about.'

So he went out of his room into the long corridor upon which all the doors opened. But as everything had gone wrong to-day, of course the footman had forgotten to light the lamps, although it was already eight o'clock at night and pitch dark. So the King stretched his hands out before him that he might not hurt himself, and felt his way carefully along by the wall. Suddenly he felt something soft.

'Who is there?' he asked.

'It's me!' said the Queen.

'What do you want, Sweetheart?'

'I was coming to beg your pardon,' answered the Queen; 'because I was so unkind to you.'

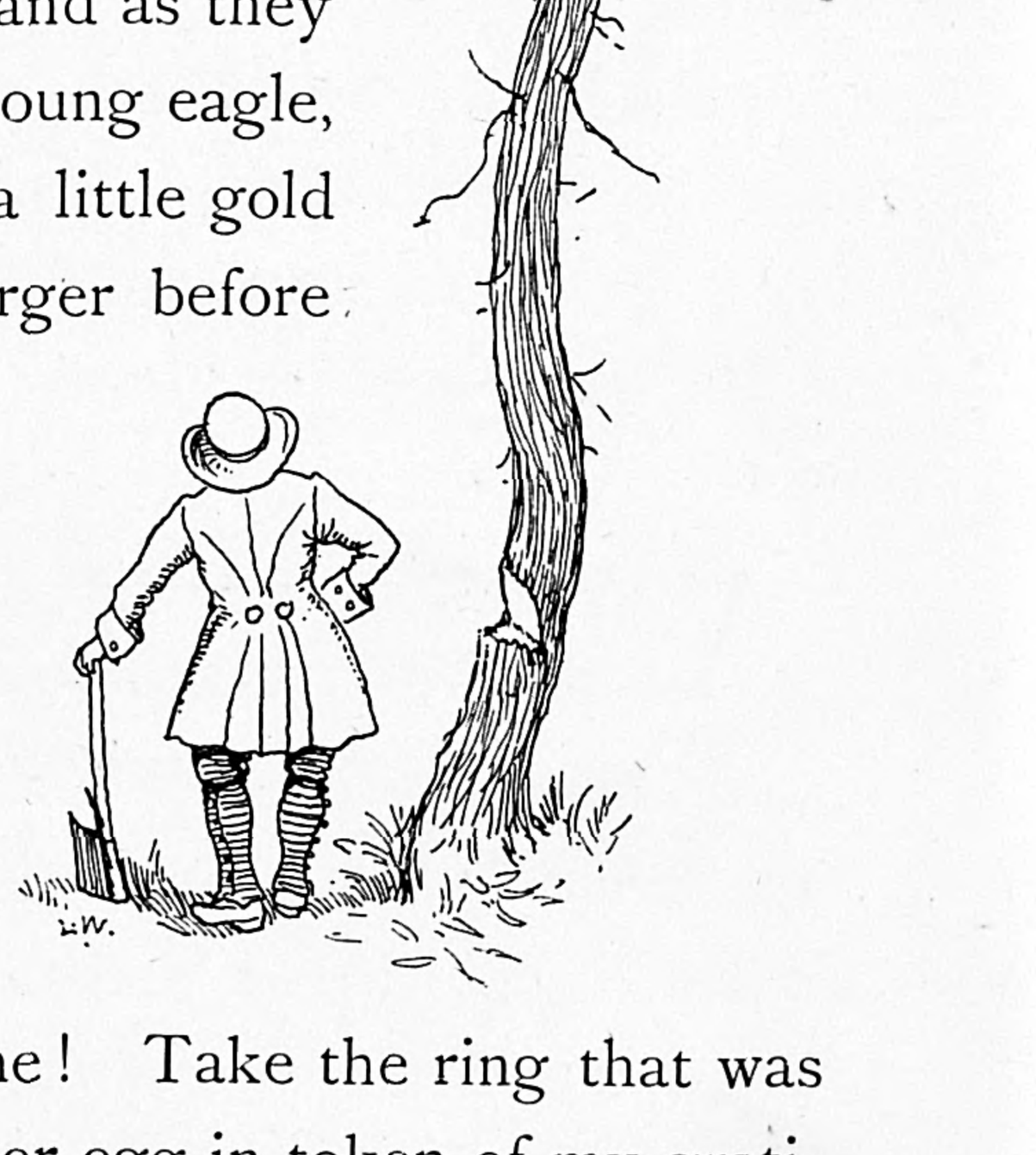
'That you shall never do,' said the King, as he took her in his arms and kissed her. 'I was more to blame than you, so let it all be forgotten. But do you know, there are two words that shall be forbidden in our kingdom upon pain of death—Jews'-harp and——'

'And gingerbread nuts!' interrupted the Queen, and she laughed, but at the same time she secretly wiped away two tears from her eyes;—and here the story comes to an end.

VII

A YOUNG farmer, whose affairs were not in a very flourishing condition, sat down one day upon his plough to rest for a moment, while he wiped the sweat from his face. As he sat there an old witch came creeping past, and called out to him: 'Why do you toil and moil yourself to death, and all for nothing? Do as I tell you: walk straight before you for two days, until you come to a great fir-tree that stands alone in the forest, and is taller than all the other trees; if you cut that tree down, your fortune is made.'

The farmer did not wait to be told twice, but took his axe and set out on his way. After walking for two days he found the fir-tree. He set to work at once to cut it down, and just at the moment when it toppled over and fell with a crash on the ground, a nest with two eggs in it fell out of its highest branches. The eggs rolled out on the ground and broke, and as they broke, out of one came a young eagle, and out of the other fell a little gold ring. The eagle grew larger before the young farmer's eyes, until it was half the height of a man, flapped its wings as if it wanted to try them, hovered a little above the ground, and cried out:



'You have released me! Take the ring that was in the other egg in token of my gratitude. It is a wishing ring; and if you turn it round on your finger and utter your wish at

the same moment, it will be fulfilled at once. But there is only one wish in the ring; when that is granted it loses all its power, and becomes nothing but a common little ring again. So you had better reflect carefully before you utter your wish, lest you should repent afterwards.'

And with this the eagle mounted high into the air, hovered above the farmer's head for a long time in wide circles, and then shot like an arrow towards the East.

The farmer took the ring, put it on his finger, and set out on his homeward journey. When evening came he reached a town. There stood the goldsmith in his shop, and he had a great many valuable rings on his counter for sale. The farmer showed him his ring and asked him what it was worth.

'A mere trifle,' answered the goldsmith.

Then the farmer laughed aloud, and told him that it was a wishing ring, and worth more than all the rings in his shop put together. Now the goldsmith was a cunning and an envious man. He invited the farmer to stay with him overnight, saying: 'It brings luck to entertain such a fortunate man as you, with such jewels in your possession; so pray stay with me for one night.'

He entertained him most hospitably, and plied him with wine and smooth words; but at night when his guest was asleep he drew off the ring unobserved from his finger, and put on instead a plain gold ring exactly like it.

The next day the goldsmith could hardly wait for the farmer to be gone; he awoke him very early in the morning, and said: 'You have a long journey before you, so it will be better to start in good time.'

Directly the farmer was gone the goldsmith went hastily into his own room, shut the shutters lest any one should look in, bolted the door behind him, placed himself in the middle of the room, turned the ring round on his finger, and called out: 'I wish for a hundred thousand florins instantly!'

Hardly had he said the words before florins began to rain down, hard, bright florins, as thick as if they were being poured out of troughs, and they hit and bruised him on his head, arms, and shoulders. He began to shriek lamentably, and tried to get out at the door, but before he could get it unbolted he fell down on the ground all covered with blood. But the rain of florins continued to fall, until at last the floor broke through with the weight, and the goldsmith and the money were precipitated into the deepest cellar. And

still the florins rained down, until at last, when the hundred thousand were complete, the goldsmith lay dead in the cellar with all the money piled on the top of him. The neighbours came hurrying in at the noise, and when they found the goldsmith lying dead under the florins they said: 'Tis a sad misfortune when blessings fall too thickly.' And then the heirs came and divided the money amongst them.

Meanwhile the young farmer went cheerfully home and showed the ring to his wife. 'Now we can never come to poverty, dear wife,' he said. 'Our fortune is made. But we must consider very carefully before wishing for anything.'

But the wife knew very well what to advise. 'What should you think,' she said, 'of wishing for a little more land? We have so very little. And there

is that corner of ground that runs right in between our fields; let us wish for that.'

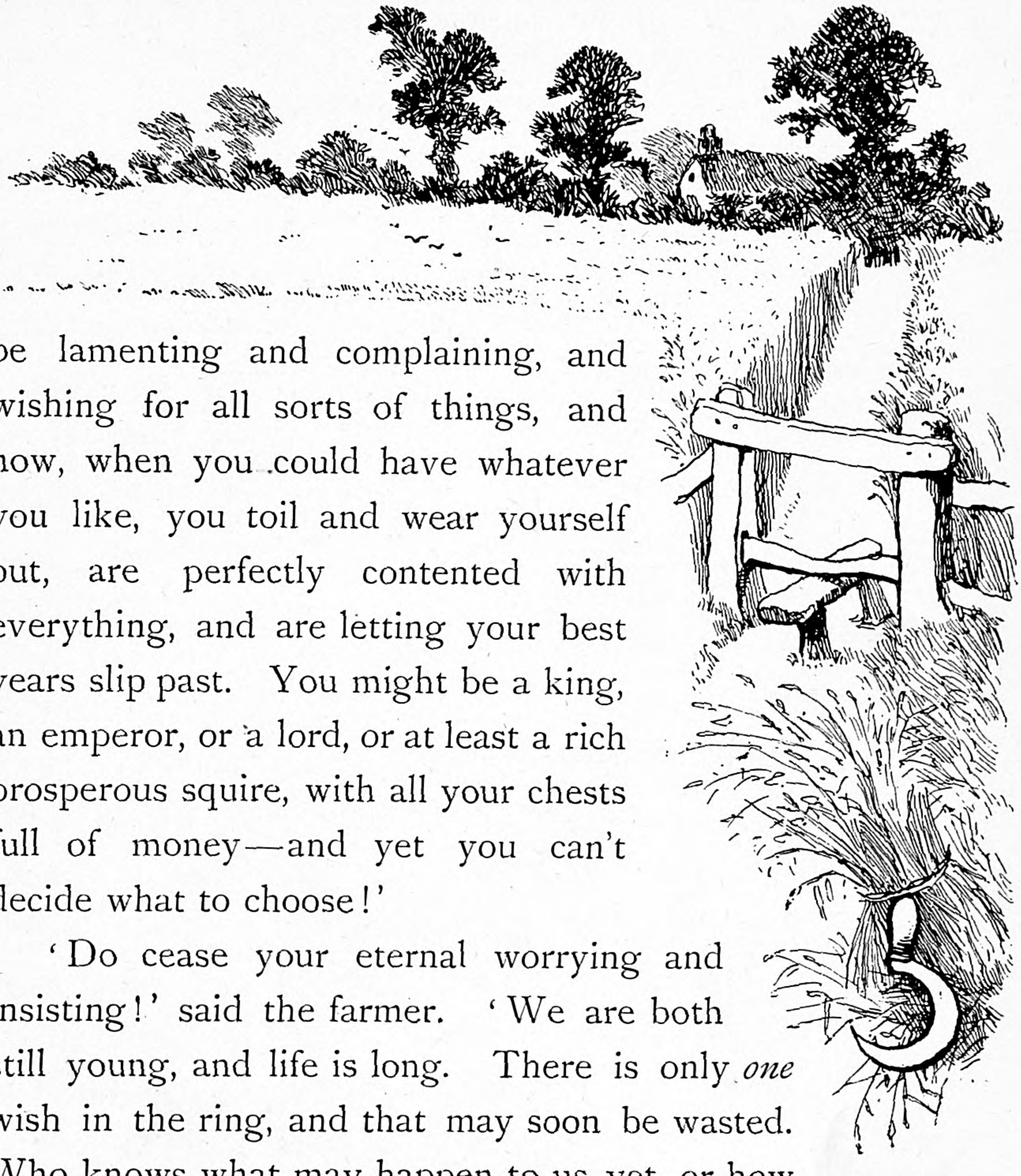
'That would be well worth while, indeed!' replied the man. 'Why, if we work hard for a year and are reasonably lucky, we can perhaps buy it.'

So the farmer and his wife worked for a whole year with all diligence, and that autumn their harvest was more abundant than ever before, so that they bought the corner of land and still had some money over. 'Now do you see?' said the husband; 'we have got the corner, and we can still have our wish.'

Then the wife said it would be a good thing to wish for another cow and a horse.

'Wife,' answered the man again, as he jingled the money in his trousers' pocket; 'why should we waste our wish on such trumpery? We can get the cow and the horse for ourselves in the same way.'

And so it fell out, for in another year the cow and the horse were easily earned. Then the husband was quite overjoyed, rubbed his hands, and said: 'Here we have saved our wish for another year still, and yet we have got all we wanted. How lucky we are!' But the wife seriously advised her husband to utter his wish at last. 'I should never take you for the same man!' she said angrily. 'You used always to



be lamenting and complaining, and wishing for all sorts of things, and now, when you could have whatever you like, you toil and wear yourself out, are perfectly contented with everything, and are letting your best years slip past. You might be a king, an emperor, or a lord, or at least a rich prosperous squire, with all your chests full of money—and yet you can't decide what to choose!'

'Do cease your eternal worrying and insisting!' said the farmer. 'We are both still young, and life is long. There is only *one* wish in the ring, and that may soon be wasted. Who knows what may happen to us yet, or how much we may need the ring! Have we not all we want just now? Have we not been so prosperous since I got the ring that all the world wonders at

us? Now do be reasonable; you can always be thinking meanwhile what we shall choose.'

So there was an end of the matter for the time being. And it really did seem as if a blessing had come into the house with the ring, for the barns and storehouses grew fuller year by year, and after a long course of years had gone by the poor unfortunate man had become a rich and prosperous farmer, who toiled all day long, and laboured with the farm-servants as if he wanted to earn the whole world, but after vespers

he sat contented and comfortable before his own door, and every one that passed wished him good-evening.

So year after year passed away. Now and then when they were quite alone, and no one could overhear them, the wife would remind her husband of the ring again, and make all kinds of propositions. But as he always answered that there was still plenty of time, and that people's best ideas generally came last, she did it less and less often, and so at last it came about that the ring was hardly ever mentioned at all, and although the farmer himself would turn the ring round on his finger and look at it twenty times a day, he always took great care to utter no wish as he did it.

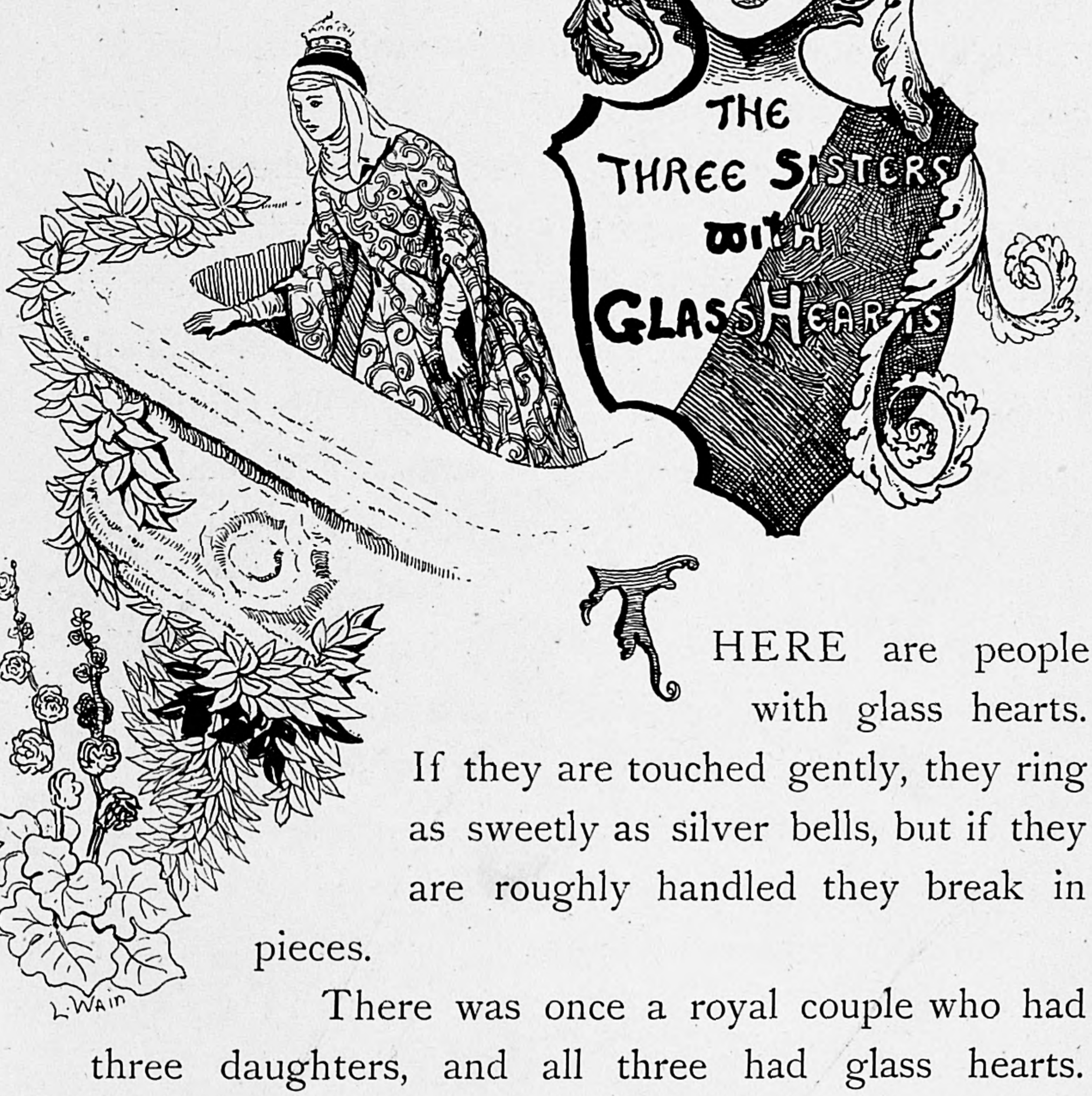
And thirty years passed, and forty years, and the farmer and his wife grew old and white-haired, and the wish was not yet decided on. Then God was gracious to them, and granted to them both to die peacefully on the same night.

Children and grandchildren stood round the two coffins and wept, and when one of them would have taken off the ring and kept it, the eldest son said: 'Let our father take his ring to the grave with him. In his lifetime there was some secret connected with it; it must be a beloved keepsake. And our mother too

used often to look at the ring; perhaps she gave it to our father in their young days.'

So the old farmer was buried with the ring that ought to have been a wishing ring and was not one; and yet had brought as much happiness into the house as any one could have wished for. For true and false are sometimes strangely mingled in this world, and a bad thing in good hands is always worth much more than a good thing in bad ones.

VIII



HERE are people with glass hearts. If they are touched gently, they ring as sweetly as silver bells, but if they are roughly handled they break in pieces.

There was once a royal couple who had three daughters, and all three had glass hearts. 'Children,' the Queen would say, 'take great care of your hearts, for they are fragile ware.' And they did so.

But one day the eldest sister leaned out of the window over the parapet, and looked down into the garden to watch the bees and butterflies flitting round the gillyflowers. And she pressed on her heart: 'kling!' it went, just as if something were breaking in pieces, and she fell down dead.

A little while after this the second daughter drank a cup of coffee that was too hot. And again there was a 'kling!' just as if glass were breaking, only not as loud as the first time, and she too fell down. Then her mother lifted her up and looked at her, and she soon saw, to her great joy, that she was not dead, but that her heart was only cracked, and still held together.

'What shall we do now with our daughter?' the King and Queen consulted together. 'She has a crack in her heart, and although it is but a small one, the heart may very easily break in two. We must take great care of her.'

But the Princess said: 'Only leave me alone; for often a thing that has been cracked lasts all the longer afterwards.'

Meanwhile the King's youngest daughter had grown up too, and she was so good, wise, and beautiful that kings' sons came in crowds from all sides to woo

her. But the old King had learnt wisdom by experience, and he said: 'I have only one unbroken daughter left, and even she has a glass heart. So if I give her to any one, it shall be to a king who is a glazier too, and understands how to deal with such brittle ware.'

But among all the wooers there was not one who had learnt glazing, so they were all obliged to go away again.

Now among the pages in the King's castle there was one who had almost finished his page's service. When he had carried the youngest Princess's train three times more he would be a knight. Then the King would congratulate him, and say to him: 'You have ended your service, and are a knight. I thank you. You may go.'

Now when he carried the Princess's train the first time he noticed that she had a very queenly gait. The second time he carried it the Princess said: 'Leave my train for a moment, give me your hand, and lead me up the stairs; but do it very reverentially, for that is becoming in a page who leads a King's daughter.' And as he did this he noticed that she had a very queenly hand. But she too noticed something—what it was I will not yet say. At last

when he carried her train for the third time, the Princess turned round and said to him: 'How charmingly you carry my train! No one else ever carried it so charmingly.' Then the page noticed that she had also a very queenly voice. And now he had ended his service and was a knight; and the King thanked him and congratulated him, and said he might now go.

But as he went, the King's daughter was standing at the garden door, and said to him: 'You carried my train more charmingly than any other. If only you were a glazier and a king!' And he answered that he would try with all his power to become both king and glazier, and that if she would wait for him he would certainly come back.

So he went to a glazier and asked him if he wanted an apprentice. 'Yes, I do,' answered the glazier; 'but you must remain with me for four years. The first year you will have to fetch the rolls from the baker, wash the children, comb their hair, and dress them. The second year you shall learn to smear the chinks with cement, the third to cut and put in glass, and in the fourth you will be a master glazier.'

Then he asked the glazier if he could not begin at

the end, because in that way he should get on much faster. But the glazier assured him that a respectable glazier always began at the beginning, or nothing good would come of it. So with that he had to be contented. The first year he fetched the rolls from the baker, washed the children, combed their hair, and dressed them. The second year he smeared the chinks with cement; the third he learnt to cut glass and put it in, and in the fourth he became a master glazier. Then he put on his knight's clothes again, said farewell to his master, and began to consider how he could manage to become a king.

As he was walking along the street, lost in thought, and gazing down on the pavement, a man came up to him and asked if he had lost anything, as he seemed to be looking for something on the ground. He answered that he had not lost anything, but was nevertheless looking for something, namely, a kingdom; and he asked the man if he could tell him what he ought to do in order to become a king.

'If you were only a glazier, now,' said the man, 'I could soon tell you how.'

'Why, that is exactly what I am,' he answered; 'and I have just finished my apprenticeship.'

Upon this the man told him the history of the three sisters with the glass hearts, and how the old King absolutely refused to marry his daughter to any but a glazier.

'At first,' he said, 'there was a condition that the glazier who was to have her must be a king as well, or at least, a king's son: but as no one can be found who is both king and glazier, he has yielded in a measure, as a wise man should always do, and has substituted two other conditions. But it is still absolutely necessary that any one who is to marry her should be a glazier.'

'Then what are the two conditions?' asked the young knight.

'He must please the Princess, and must have velvet palms. So now if a glazier should come who can please the Princess and who has velvet palms, the King will give him his daughter, and afterwards, when he is dead, make him King. A great many glaziers have been up to the castle already, but none of them could please the Princess. And besides, none of them had velvet palms, but rough coarse hands; which of course is only to be expected in ordinary glaziers.'

When the young knight heard this he went into

the castle, discovered himself to the King, reminded him that he had been one of his pages, and told him that he had become a glazier for love of his daughter, and now wished to marry her and to become King after his death.

Then the King had the Princess summoned, and he asked her if the young knight pleased her, and when she said yes (for she recognised him at once), the King added that he must now take off his gloves and show whether he had velvet palms or not. But the Princess said that it was not at all necessary for him to take them off, for she knew quite well already that he really had velvet palms. She had noticed it in the days when he used to carry her train.

So both the conditions were fulfilled, and as the Princess had a glazier with velvet palms for her husband, he took the very greatest care of her heart, and it remained quite whole until the end of her happy life.

And the second sister, whose heart was cracked, became the aunty, and the very best aunty in the whole world; and this was the opinion not only of the children that the young knight and the Princess had, but of every one else as well. She taught the little

Princesses to read, to say their prayers, and to make dolls' clothes; and she always looked at the little Princes' reports.

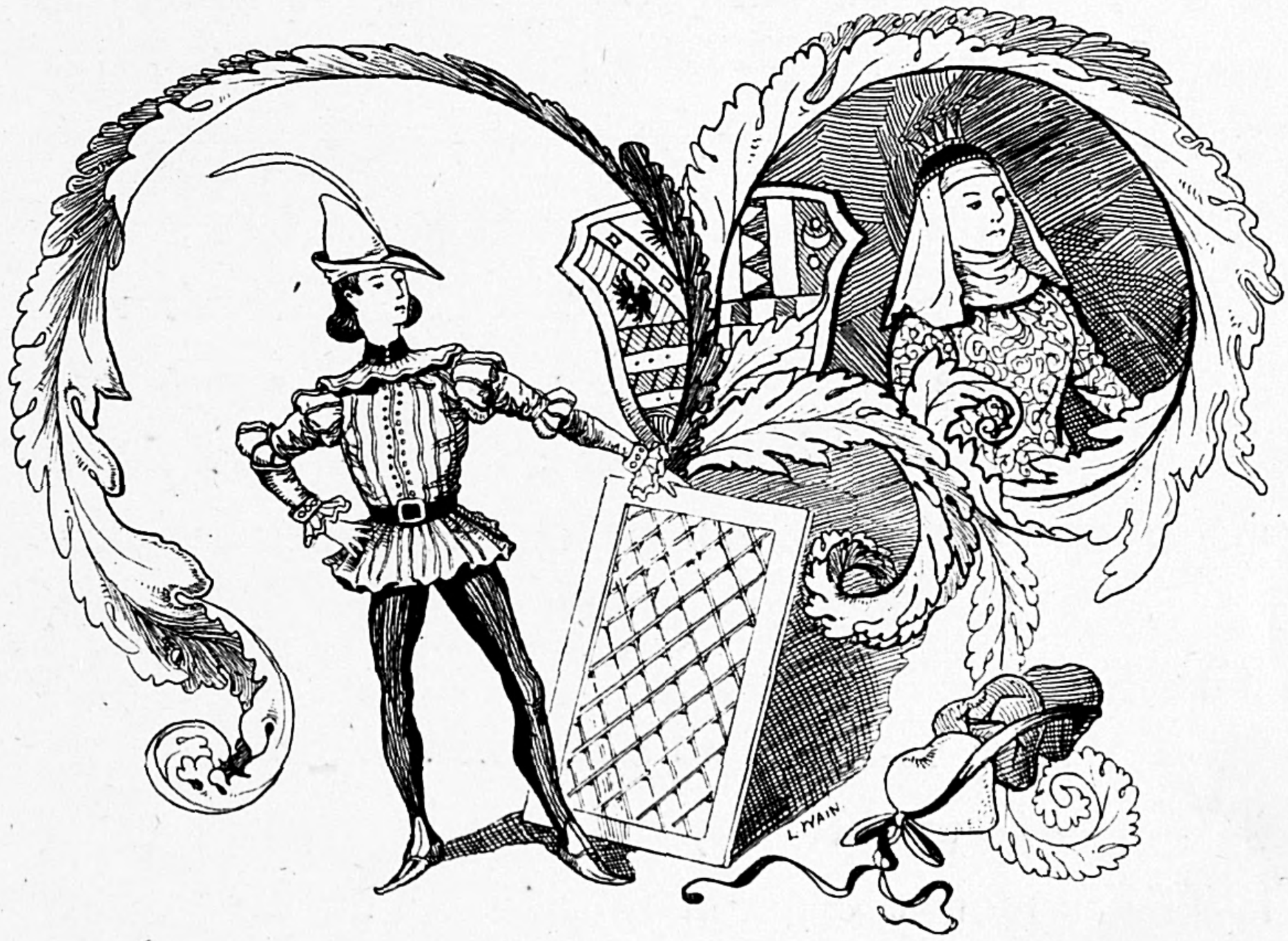
Whoever had a good report was praised, and received a present, but if one of them had a bad report, she would give him a box on the ear and say: 'Now just tell me what you are looking forward to, my fine prince! What do you expect to be when you grow up? Out with it now! Come, quick!'

And when he sobbed and said, 'Ki-ki-ki-king!' she would laugh, and say: 'King? King Midas then. High and mighty King Midas with two long asses' ears!' And then the little Prince that had the bad report would be very much ashamed.

And this second Princess lived to be very old, although her heart had a crack in it. And if any one wondered at this, she always said: 'If a thing is cracked in youth, and yet does not break, it often holds together afterwards all the longer.'

And that is certainly true. For my mother has an old cream-jug, white, and spotted all over with little bunches of coloured flowers, that has been cracked as

long as I can remember, and yet it still holds together; and since my mother has had it, so many new cream-jugs have been bought and broken directly that no one could count them.



IX

MY story to-day is to be about two little children who used to play in a certain churchyard that lay far up on the green hillside. The little village to which the churchyard belonged was itself high enough above the wooded valley to be often hidden by clouds from the eyes of the people who sailed past upon the blue river beneath. But the churchyard lay still higher up, far above the village, so that its numberless black crosses stood right out against the blue sky.

The road from the village was steep and stony, until it came to the green meadow in which the churchyard lay, so that it was difficult for the village people to carry their dead up to the churchyard; but they did it gladly. For mountaineers cannot bear to be in the valley; they feel as gloomy and wretched there as we should feel in a deep cellar; and their dead like it even less. They must be buried up on the mountain-side, so that they can see far away over the country, and down into the valley where the ships sail.

Away in the corner of the churchyard there was a neglected grave. Nothing but grass grew upon it, and a few little white and blue wild flowers that no one had planted, quite hidden in the grass. For in the grave lay an old bachelor, who had left behind him neither wife nor child, nor any one who cared for him. He had come from a foreign country, and where it lay no one knew. He used to climb to the top of the hill every morning and sit there for hours. But soon he died and they buried him. Of course he must have had a name, but no one knew what it was, not even the grave-digger. In the church register there were only three crosses, and opposite to them was written: 'An old bachelor, a stranger, died on such a day, in the year of Our Lord so-and-so.'

This was certainly not much to know, but the grave-digger's two little children, of whom I am going to tell you, were very fond of the neglected old grave in the churchyard corner; for they were allowed to play on it and run about over it as much as they liked, although they might not touch the other graves. The other graves were kept very carefully in order; the grass was freshly cut and as thick as velvet, and all kinds of flowers bloomed on them, which the grave-digger watered assiduously every day; and he was obliged to carry all the water up from the well in the village, which was a great deal of trouble. And wreaths of flowers and bright ribbons lay on many of the graves.

'Trinchen,' said the little boy, who was kneeling before the neglected grave, looking contentedly at the hole he had dug out in its side with his two little hands; 'Trinchen, our house is ready. I have paved it with coloured stones, and scattered flower-petals all over it, and now I am the father and you are the mother. Good morning, Mother; what are our children about this morning?'

'Hans,' answered the little girl; 'you must not play so fast. I have got no children yet, but I shall soon have some.' Then she ran about among the

graves and bushes, and came back with both hands full of snails.

'See, Father, I have got seven children already, seven beautiful snail-children!'

'Then let us put them to bed at once, for it is getting late.'

They picked off green leaves, put them in the hole, laid the coloured snail-shells upon them, and covered each one up with another green leaf.

'Now do be quiet, Hans!' cried the little girl. 'I must sing my children to sleep; and I must do it alone. The father never sings too. You can go back to your work in the meantime.'

And little Hans ran away, while Trinchen sang with all her voice:

'O slumber sweetly, slumber sound,
My children seven so small and round,
Without a thought of guilt:
All seven together sweetly sleep,
For not one little leg must peep
Out beneath the quilt!'

But one leaf began to move, and one of the snails poked out its head and its little slender horns from beneath it. Then the little girl tapped its head gently with her finger, and said: 'Now, Augusta, you are

always the naughtiest! Only this morning you would not have your hair brushed. Go back to bed directly!'
And she sang once more:

'All seven together sweetly sleep,
For not one little leg must peep
Out beneath the quilt!

'Then when you've shut your wakeful eyes,
Into the room an angel flies,
Looks at all the seven.
Your children are all red and white,
But are they good by day and night?
Asks the Lord in heaven.

'My children are all sweet and good,
They thank God for their daily food,
And wish to go to heaven.
Pray tell the Lord that in their sleep
Not one small leg shall slyly peep
Out, of all the seven!'

When she stopped singing the seven snails had all gone to sleep, at least they lay quite still; and as Hans did not come back, the little girl ran round the churchyard again looking for more snails. She collected a great many in her pinafore and went back with them to the grave. There was Hans, sitting waiting.

'Father,' she called to him, 'I have got a hundred more children!'

'Now just listen, wife,' answered the little boy.

'A hundred children are far too many. We have only got one doll's plate and two dolls' forks. What are the children to eat with? And besides, no mother ever has really a hundred children. There are not a hundred names. How could we christen all our children? Take them away again!'

'No, Hans,' said the little girl, 'a hundred children are very nice. I need them all.'

Just then the grave-digger's young wife came up with two great slices of bread and butter, for the vesper bell had rung. She kissed both the children, lifted them up, set them on the grave, and said: 'Take great care of your new pinafores.' So there they sat and ate, as silent as two sparrows.

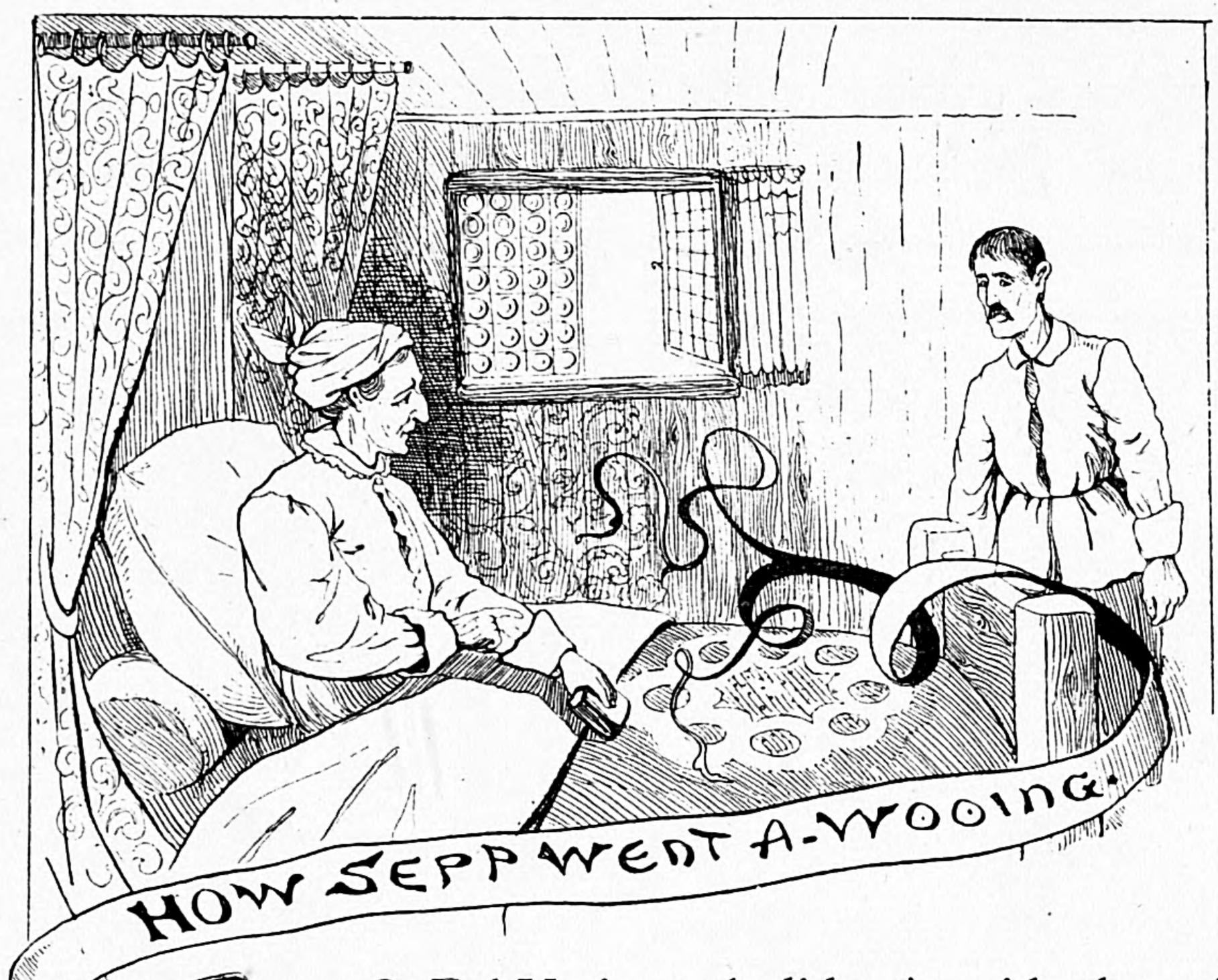
But the old bachelor in his lonely grave had heard it all, for the dead hear quite clearly all that is said near their graves. He thought of the time when he was a little boy, for then he too had known a little girl, and they had played together, built houses, and had been husband and wife. And then he thought of the later days when he had seen the little girl again, and she was quite grown up. But he had never heard anything of her since, for he had gone his own way, and it cannot have been a very pleasant way, for the more he thought of it, and the more the children over his head

chattered, the sadder he grew. He began to weep at last, and his tears flowed faster and faster. And when the grave-digger's wife put the children on his grave, and they sat there just above his breast, he wept more bitterly still. He tried to stretch out his arms, for he felt as if he must press the children to his heart, but it was no use, for six feet of earth lay upon him, and six feet of earth are heavy, very heavy. So he only wept still more, and he was still weeping long after the grave-digger's wife had fetched the children and put them to bed.

But the next morning, when the grave-digger went through the churchyard, a spring had bubbled up out of the old neglected grave. Its waters were the tears the old bachelor had wept. They rippled up so clearly from the green hillock of the grave, and came right out of the hole where the two children had dug their little house. Then the grave-digger was glad, for now he would not be obliged to carry the water for watering the flowers all the way up from the village any longer. He made a proper channel for the little spring and bordered it with large stones. And from this time he watered all the graves in the churchyard with water from the new spring, and the flowers upon them bloomed more beautifully than ever before. Only

he never watered the grave where the old bachelor lay, for it was an old neglected grave that no one asked about. But in spite of that the wild mountain flowers grew there more luxuriantly than anywhere else, and the two children often sat beside the spring, building mills and sailing paper boats upon it.

X



HOW SEPP WENT A-WOOING.

'TO-DAY is a holiday,' said the old peasant woman, who had lain palsied in bed for five years, as she sat up, and carefully tied a large handkerchief round her head with her trembling hands, tying and untying it again so often that at last a great bow stood up straight above her forehead like the four sails of a windmill: 'To-day is a holiday, Sepp, and you will have to go to the dance alone again to-night, like last year, and the year before that, and every year. Did you not promise me faithfully that you would take a wife this year? But as long as I

live you don't do it, and after I die you won't do it either! Ah, if your father had but lived to see it! Do you want to be an old bachelor? Don't you know what the girls sing:

'"Old bachelor slippers-and-hood,
Go to the forest and seek for wood,
Dry wood from the green trees,
Lest in winter you should freeze,—
Summer swiftly passes.
Ask the beggar boys to-night
If the wood will burn aright,
Or fall straight to ashes!"'

Her son answered, in downcast tones, that all the girls in the village pleased him alike, and that he did not know which to choose.

'Then go into the village,' said his mother, 'look at all the girls that you think might suit you, and notice very carefully what they are doing, and then come back and tell me.'

So Sepp went.

'Well,' said his mother when he came back; 'how did you get on? and where have you been?'

'First I saw Ursel; she was coming out of church, and she had a beautiful dress on and new ear-rings.'

Then the mother sighed, and said: 'If she goes

to church so often, she will soon learn to forget the Lord. The miller never notices the clapping of the mill. She is not for you, my son. Where did you go next?'

'To Catherine, mother.'

'What was she doing?'

'Standing in the kitchen, putting away all the pots and dishes.'

'How did the pots look?'

'Black.'

'And her fingers?'

'White.'

'Lick, slick, quick!' said the mother.

'"Broth and mutton,
A dainty glutton:
Who bakes sweet cakes and sets ale to brew,
Forgets the cattle and children too!"

Let her go, Sepp!'

'After that I went to Barbara. She was sitting in the garden making three wreaths. One was of violets, one of roses, and one of pinks. She asked me which she should wear to-night at the holiday dance.'

Then the mother was silent for a little, and said at last:

'Husband of silver,
And fair fool of gold,
Brings marriage of copper,
And sorrows untold.

Go on, my son!'

'The fourth I came to was Gretel. She was standing before the house door in the street, giving bread and butter to the poor.'

Then the mother shook her head and said: 'If she does something for every one to look at to-day, another day she will do something for nobody to look at. If she stands before the door by day, you may be sure that at night she has often stood behind it. When the master comes into the field at mid-day, while the men are eating, it is only the bad servants who spring up to mow; those who are really industrious sit still. Be an old bachelor, Sepp, rather than take *her!* Did you go to no one else?'

'Last of all I went to Anna.'

'What was she doing?'

'Nothing at all, mother!'

'But she must have been doing something?' asked the old peasant woman again. 'Nothing is easy work, Sepp.'

'So help me God,' answered the son, 'she was doing nothing at all; you can take my word for it.'

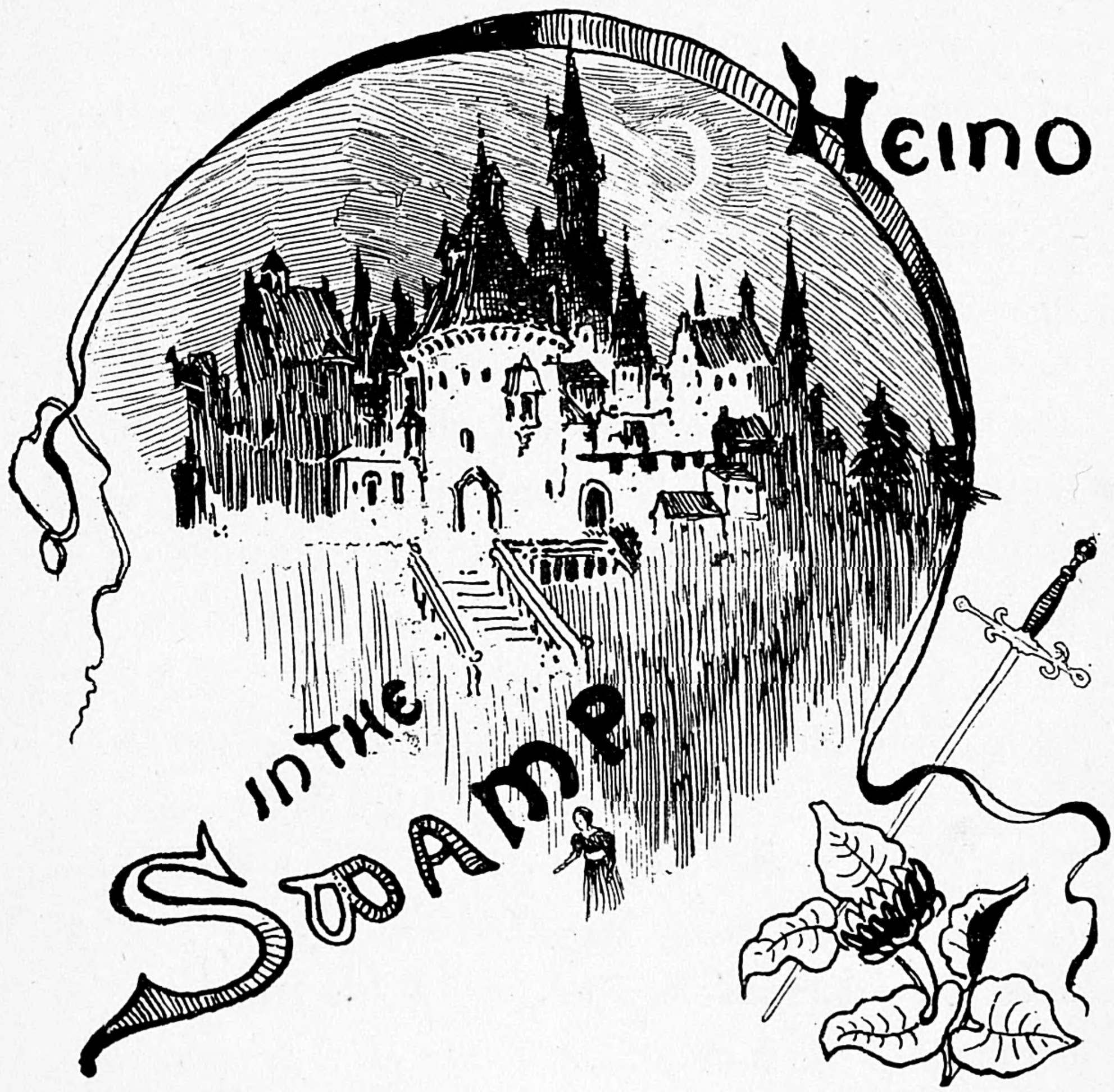
'Then take Anna, my son! Those maidens make the best wives who do nothing at all that young men can talk about!'

And Sepp took Anna, and was as happy as the day is long, and he often said afterwards to his mother: 'Mother, you were right with your advice.

'"Ursel and Kate,
Barbara and Gret,
Do all that they can,
They're worth altogether
Not half of my Ann!"

And *now* I could tell you a great many things that she does if I liked, but I won't.'

XI



'OUR son is a great hunter,' said the old King. 'He rides into the forest with his cross-bow every day. But however much game he kills, he never brings any home with him, for he gives all he shoots away to the poor. He is a very good man!'

So the old King said to the Queen. But the deer in the wood thought quite differently. They were not at all afraid of Heino, for they had known him a long time, and knew very well that he would never do anything to hurt them. He always rode straight through the wood to the other side, and on the other side of it stood a little cottage, half buried in flowers and bushes, with its door and windows all but hidden by ivy and honeysuckle. And before the door stood Blue-Eyes, and when she saw the King's son coming, her great blue eyes shone like two stars for joy, and lighted up her whole face.

But time after time Heino brought no game home; and he always liked to ride into the wood alone; and if his father rode with him he never hit anything. At last the old King began to feel sure that there must be something strange about his hunting. So he made a servant follow Heino secretly, and from this man he learned everything. Then he was bitterly mortified, and grew very angry, for Heino was his only son, and he wished to marry him to the daughter of a great king. So he called two of his huntsmen, showed them a nugget of gold as big as a man's head, and promised to give it to them if they would kill Blue-Eyes.

But Blue-Eyes had a snow-white dove that perched every day on the highest tree in the wood, and looked over to the castle. When Heino mounted his horse to ride to Blue-Eyes, it would fly quickly before him, beat with its wings on the window, and cry :

'The bushes are shaken,
For hither he strides ;
Dear Blue-Eyes awaken !
Hark where he rides !'

Then Blue-Eyes would come to the house door to wait for Heino. Now when the white dove saw the two huntsmen, towards evening, slipping into the wood, she foreboded some evil. She flew swiftly to the castle to Heino's window, beat upon the panes till he came and opened to her, and told him what she had seen. Then he rushed in breathless haste through the wood, and when he reached the little cottage the huntsmen had already bound Blue-Eyes, and were consulting how they should kill her. Then he cut off both their heads, carried them back home, and laid them on the threshold of his father's room.

That night the old King could not sleep, and all night long he heard a continual soft whimpering and groaning at his door. When the morning dawned he rose and went to see what the sounds were. There

lay the two heads of the huntsmen on the threshold, and between them lay a letter from Heino, in which he wrote that he never wished to hear of either father or mother again; that every night he would lie across the threshold of Blue-Eyes' cottage, with his naked sword by his side, and if any one came to harm her, he would cut off his head as he had done to the two huntsmen, even if it should be the King himself.

When the old King read the letter he was much perplexed. He went to the Queen and told her all. But she blamed him for sending the huntsmen to murder Blue-Eyes, and said: 'You have spoilt the whole thing. Always trying to have everything killed!—You men are really too ridiculous, and one just like another. It's always the same,—"bend or break"! This very day six of your shirts came home from the wash, and the collar-strings were torn off every one of the six. And where are they now? You tore them all off because you had got them into a knot, instead of untying them patiently, and Heino is just like you; so now I suppose I must put this business right again.'

'Well, well, well!' answered the King, who felt that the Queen was right. 'Only do be quiet and stop scolding, for that can do no good.'

All that night the Queen lay tossing to and fro in her bed, thinking of what she could do. As soon as it was light she went out to the garden and dug up a little plant by the roots; a plant that was poisonous and bore black berries. She took it into the wood, and planted it in the very middle of the path. When she came back the King asked her what she had done, and she answered: 'I have planted an herb in his path upon which grows a red flower, and he who plucks it will forget the one he loves best.'

Next morning, as Heino was going through the wood, there stood the plant right in his way; and it had put forth a beautiful red flower that shone in the sun and exhaled such a strong perfume that it almost confused his senses; but although a very heavy dew had fallen that night the plant as well as the blossom was quite dry. Then Heino said:

'What plant is this so strange and new,
Whose leaves are never wet with dew?'

And the flower answered:

'A plant that's found by none
Save by a monarch's son.'

Then he asked again:

'And shall I pluck thee, say?
Thou flower upon my way.'

And the flower answered:

'Then should I bloom more brightly,
Thou haughty monarch's son!'

Then Heino could refrain no longer, and he plucked the flower; and when he had done it he forgot the one he loved best, and went back to his parents in the castle. When his mother saw him coming, he had stuck the red flower in his belt, so she knew that her plan had been successful, and she went to call the King. The King came out to receive his son, gave him a golden helmet and golden armour, and said: 'I am old and weak: but you, my son, are young, and must go into the world and see how matters go there. When you come back after two years I will give you the kingdom.'

So Heino chose thirty squires, travelled with them from one kingdom to another, and saw the glories of the world. But when he did not return to the cottage, Blue-Eyes understood that he had forsaken her. Every morning she sent out the white dove to fly all round the world until she found Heino. And every evening the dove came back and told Blue-Eyes where Heino was and what he was doing. Blue-Eyes would say:

'How fares by field and flood
My hero of royal blood?'

And the dove answered :

'His hand is strong, his heart is stout,
Gaily he rides the world about.'

'And does he never think of me,
And all my grief and pain ?'

'Alas, he never thinks of thee,
By day or night, on land or sea,
In sunshine nor in rain !'

Two years had passed away when the white dove came back one evening with a spot of blood on her wing. Then Blue-Eyes asked :

'How fares by field and flood
My hero of royal blood ?'

But then she saw the spot of blood on the dove's wing, and she became very sad. 'Is he dead ?' she asked.

'Would God he were,
'Twere better far !'

cooed the dove.

'Deep in the Marsh-fire Swamp he lies,
Deep in the Swamp with blinded eyes,
—Bewitched he lingers
Where reeds grow green,—
May God have pity !—
In the white arms of the Marsh-fire Queen !'

Then Blue-Eyes took the dove on her shoulder to

show her the way, and set out to seek Heino. When she had wandered for three days she came to the Marsh-fire Swamp where Heino lay enchanted, and she sat down quietly on the roadside and waited till it was evening. As soon as it grew dark the sky clouded over, and the clouds chased each other across the heavens; the rain rattled down furiously among the alders, and Blue-Eyes began to see the first blue fires hovering far away over the Swamp. Then she girded up her skirts, went bravely down among the reeds and toiled onwards, fixing her undazzled gaze steadily on the distant Will-o'-the-wisps. It was difficult walking, for she soon sank over the ankles in the marsh, the wind blew her hair all about her shoulders, so that she had to stop and tie it together in a great knot in her neck, and the rain beat in her face and ran down her cheeks. The Swamp grew deeper and deeper, and the blue flames which appeared on all sides now, in far greater numbers, seemed to try to mock her, for when they had appeared to stand still for some time or even to approach, so that she thought she would soon reach them, all of a sudden they would flit back again to the middle of the Swamp, or would suddenly vanish, to appear again still farther off. And now Blue-Eyes sank almost to the knees, and could not take more than two or three steps without stopping to

rest. But suddenly the storm ceased, the slender crescent moon shone out between the clouds, and right before her, in the midst of a wide dark pool, rose the enchanted castle of the Marsh-fire Queen.

A flight of pure white steps led up from the silent death-like water into a great open hall, supported by numberless pillars of blue and green crystal, with golden capitals, and in the hall a countless multitude of Will-o'-the-wisps were dancing, in a shimmering, many-coloured confusion, around a marvellously clear and leaping flame, which rose high and bright in the midst of them. Suddenly a number of Will-o'-the-wisps separated themselves from the throng, and forming two circles, rushed whirling out of the hall. And whilst one circle remained just in front of the castle staircase, the other rapidly approached Blue-Eyes, who could soon distinguish twelve pale but very lovely damsels, wearing on their foreheads golden diadems with little hollow shells raised in front, in which blue flames were leaping. They swept round Blue-Eyes in a wild dance, and circling about her, while a magic music rang out from the castle, they sang :

'In our ring,
In our ring,
Sister Blue-Eyes, O come as we sing!

Come and see,
Come and see,
For a lover is signing to thee!
See, he shines!
See, he signs!
He loves thee, he calls thee, he signs!
Forget all on earth that was dear,
Sweet Blue-Eyes, be one of us here!'

But Blue-Eyes looked at the spirits quietly and steadfastly with her great clear eyes, and said: 'I fear you not, you can have no influence over me. Only God in Heaven knows whether I shall get back out of this swamp alive, but even if I must die here, I shall never be in your power!'

Then the damsels fled in all directions far back into the Swamp. But in their stead the second circle of Will-o'-the-wisps, which till now had been dancing to and fro before the staircase of the castle, came whirling round her. They were twelve youths, very beautiful, but as pale as death, with blue flames above their foreheads like the damsels. They formed a circle about Blue-Eyes and danced slowly round her, while they alternately lifted their white arms high above their heads and pointed backwards to the castle. And one of them in particular drew nearer and nearer to Blue-Eyes, as if he would embrace her, and

when she looked at him more closely, it was Heino.

Then she felt her heart pierced as if an ice-cold sword had gone through it, and she cried aloud: 'Heino, God help you in your great need!'

Hardly had the cry escaped her when a violent gust of wind came over the Swamp, and the lights of the Will-o'-the-wisps went out. The quiet surface of the pond was agitated, and black waves beat against the white steps of the castle, which sank slowly and silently into the depths, while in its place stood four posts of rotten wood, the remains of an old heathen fisher's hut. But just in front of Blue-Eyes, sunk up to the girdle in the deep swamp, stood Heino in human form, as he had been in past days, but pale and woe-begone. His hair hung tangled over his forehead, and his helmet and armour were covered with rust.

'Is it you, Blue-Eyes?' he asked mournfully.

'Yes, Heino, it is I.'

'Leave me,' he said, 'for I am a lost soul!'

But she gave him her hand and cheered him with brave words, and he tried to make a few steps forward. Then he stood still and said:

'Ah, Blue-Eyes, I am down!
Ah, Blue-Eyes, I shall drown!'

But she held him the more firmly, and answered:

'Nay, Heino, thou art not down;
Nay, Heino, thou shalt not drown.
Only hold fast to me,
And soon shalt thou be free!'

So step by step she helped him on, and ever and again he would stand still and say:

'Ah, Blue-Eyes, I am down!
Ah, Blue-Eyes, I shall drown!'

And she always encouraged him again, and said:

'Nay, Heino, thou art not down,
Nay, Heino, thou shalt not drown.
Only hold fast to me,
And soon shalt thou be free!'

With indescribable efforts they had at last got so far that they could see the boundary of the Swamp and the road, a long way off. Then Heino stood still and cried out: 'Blue-Eyes, I can go no farther; you must go back alone, and greet my dear mother from me. It will be easy for you to escape, for your feet do not sink deeply in the bog, but I can never get away, for the Swamp almost reaches up to my heart.'

Then he turned round and looked back to the place where the castle had sunk.

'Do not look back!' cried Blue-Eyes in anguish. But hardly had she uttered the words before a single blue flame came flitting towards them from the middle of the Swamp. It approached quickly, and the Queen of the Marsh-fire Swamp stood before them. She had a garland of white water-lilies on her head, and her diadem was a golden serpent, which writhed softly through her hair and round her brow. She gazed at Heino with her glowing eyes as if she would look into his heart; then she laid her hand on his shoulder, and murmured pleadingly: 'Come back, Heino!' And he stood and gazed at her, uncertain and wavering.

Then Blue-Eyes tore his sword from his side, and brandished it against the Marsh-fire Queen. But the Queen only laughed and said: 'O foolish child, what wouldst thou do to me? I am not made of flesh and blood.' And she seized Heino and drew him violently towards her, so that her black hair fell over his face. Then Blue-Eyes cried out in her bitter anguish:

'If thou art not of flesh or blood, thou fearful woman, he at least is human whom I would save from thy hands!'

And she drew the sword again, and as the Marsh-

fire Queen made another attempt to drag Heino away with her, for she had grasped his right hand, Blue-Eyes cried: 'It will not hurt you, Heino!' and with one blow she cut through his arm close to the wrist.

Then the flames on the Queen's head sank and went out; and she herself vanished like a dissolving view: but the white dove, which had sat until now on Blue-Eyes' shoulder, flew on to Heino's shoulder.

'Now you are saved, Heino,' cried Blue-Eyes when she saw this. 'Come, it is only a little way to the road. Gather up all your strength; for, see, you do not sink so deeply now!'

And they went on again, but Heino often stood still and said:

'Blue-Eyes, my arm aches sore!'

And she answered:

'Heino, my heart aches more!'

But all the last part of the way she was forced almost to carry him; and when he had taken the last step out of the Swamp he sank down upon the road utterly exhausted, and fell asleep. Then Blue-Eyes took her veil and bound up his arm so that the blood

ceased to flow. And when she saw that he was sleeping quietly and peacefully, she took the ring that he had given her off her finger, put it on his hand, and set out for home.

As soon as she reached home she went to the old King and said, while she looked at him joyfully with her great blue eyes: 'I have saved your son: he will soon return to you. May God protect you!—but me you will never see again!'

But the old King drew her to his heart and said: 'Blue-Eyes, my daughter, you can wear a crown as proudly as any king's child. If you will forgive Heino, and take a one-armed man for a husband, you shall be Queen all your life long.'

And as he said this he opened the door, and Heino walked in and clasped Blue-Eyes in his arms. Then there was great joy in all the land, and everybody was anxious to see the beautiful and pious maiden who had saved the King's son.

But when they stood before the altar and were about to exchange rings, Heino forgot that his right hand was gone, and he stretched out the stump to the priest. Then a marvellous thing happened, for when the priest touched the stump, a new hand grew out of

it, like a white flower out of a brown branch. But round the wrist ran a red streak, slender as a scarlet thread, and the streak remained there as long as Heino lived.

XII

Luckless and Fortunate.

IN a small town, not far from the place where I live, there dwelt once a young man who was unlucky in everything he did. His father's name had been Luckless, so he too was called Luckless. Both his parents had died young, and a tall thin old aunt had taken him to live with her, and she used to beat him every time she came home from mass. Now she went to mass every day, so he was beaten every day too. And he was unlucky in every way; for if he was carrying a glass he always dropped it, and when he cried and picked up the pieces he always cut his fingers.

It was just the same in everything. It is true that

his old aunt died one day, and he planted so many trees and shrubs round her grave that you would have thought he wanted to cut as many sticks off them as she had broken across his shoulders; but notwithstanding this his bad luck seemed to increase every year. At last a great melancholy took possession of him, and he resolved to go out into the wide world. 'Things can never be worse,' he thought, 'and perhaps they may improve.' So he put all his money in his pocket and walked out at the town gates.

He stood still for some time on the stone bridge just outside the gates, leaning over the parapet, and looking down into the water that went foaming and rushing past the pillars, and he grew very sad at heart. It seemed to him as if it were almost a sin to leave the town where he had lived so long. And perhaps he would have stood still in this way for hours if the wind had not suddenly whisked his hat off his head and carried it into the stream. Then he awoke out of his dreams, but the hat had sailed away under the bridge, and was dancing about in the middle of the stream on the other side; and every time a wave lifted it up it seemed to call mockingly out to him: 'Farewell, Luckless! I shall travel; you can stay at home if you like!'

So Luckless went on his way without a hat. Merry young fellows would often go past him, singing and shouting, and they would invite him to journey with them. But he always shook his head sadly, and said: 'I should not suit you, and I should only bring you bad luck. For my very name is Luckless!' And as soon as they heard his name, the gay young lads would look grave and embarrassed, and would quickly take themselves off. And at night when he was very weary, if he came to an inn, and sat down at a quiet corner of the sideboard, his head propped on his hand, and the tin pitcher of wine (which he never emptied) standing before him, perhaps the landlord's pretty daughter would come up to him quietly, tap him on the shoulder, and ask him why he looked so sad. But if he told her his history and his name, she would shake her head, go back to her spinning-wheel, and leave him to sit alone and give himself up to his sad thoughts.

After Luckless had wandered on for several weeks without knowing where, he came one day to a wonderful large garden, surrounded by a high gilded railing. Through the railing fine old trees were to be seen, and shrubberies, broken up by wide grassy lawns. A little brook wound in and out among them, and it was

crossed by several little bridges. Tame harts and roes were roaming about on the paths of yellow sand, and some of them came up to the trelliswork, put out their heads, and took bread out of Luckless's hand. In the centre of the garden he could see a stately castle rising up from the trees; its silver roofs shone in the sun, and bright flags and banners were waving on its turrets. He went along by the railing, and at last he came to a wide gate standing open, from which a long shady avenue led right up to the castle. In the garden itself all was still; there was nothing human either to be seen or heard, but a notice-board hung upon the gate.

'Aha!' thought Luckless, 'it's the usual thing! Whenever one passes by a really lovely garden where the gates are standing temptingly wide open, there is sure to be a board hanging close by with a notice on it that trespassing is strictly prohibited.' But, to his great surprise, he saw that for once he was mistaken, for on the board there was nothing written but this: 'Weeping not allowed here.'

'Dear me!' he said; 'what an absurd regulation!' but he pulled out his handkerchief and rubbed his eyes a little, for he was not quite sure that a half tear might not have been left in one of the corners. Then he

went into the garden. The great broad walk which led as straight as an arrow up to the castle made him feel nervous, so he preferred to take a side path that ran between high hedges of roses and jasmine. He followed it and came into a little copse, and from the copse another path went winding up to a little hill. And just as he turned the last corner, there lay the hill right before him, and on the top of it, down in the grass, sat a most lovely maiden.

She had a golden crown on her lap, and she breathed upon it, then took up her silk apron, and rubbed the crown with it, and when she saw that it turned quite bright again, she clapped her hands for joy, pushed her long hair back behind her ears, and put the crown on again.

At sight of her a strange terror overcame poor Luckless, and his heart beat as if it would break to pieces. He went behind a bush and crouched down to hide himself. But it was a barberry bush, and a little twig hung right across his face, and as the wind moved the bush gently to and fro a thorn tickled the end of his nose, so that he was obliged to sneeze loudly. The maiden with the crown turned round, startled, and saw Luckless crouching behind the bush.

'Why are you hiding?' she cried; 'do you want to do me some harm, or are you afraid of me?'

Then Luckless came out from behind the bush, trembling like an aspen leaf.

'Oh, I can see *you* won't hurt me!' she said laughing. 'Come here and sit beside me for a little while, for my playfellows have all run away and left me alone. You may tell me some pretty story, but it must be something that will make me laugh. Do you hear? But you look so sad; what is the matter with you? Why, you would be quite handsome if only you did not pull such a long face!'

'If you will have it so,' answered Luckless, 'I will sit down beside you for a minute. But who are you? I have never seen anything so wonderful and beautiful as you in my whole life.'

'I am the Princess Fortunate, and this is my father's garden.'

'And what are you doing here all alone?'

'I am feeding my roes and harts and rubbing up my crown.'

'And after that?'

'After that I shall feed my goldfishes.'

'And when you have done that?'

'Oh, then my playfellows will come back, and we shall laugh and dance and sing.'

'Ah, what a happy life you lead! And is it like that every day?'

'Yes, every day. But now tell me who you are, and what your name is.'

'Ah, most beautiful Princess, do not ask me my name! I am the most unfortunate man under the sun, and I have the most hideous name.'

'Fie!' she said. 'An ugly name is a bad thing. In my father's kingdom there is a man who is called "Duck-Weed," and another whose name is "Grease-Spot," I suppose your name is not anything like that?'

'No,' he answered; 'my name is not Duck-Weed, nor is it Grease-Spot. My name is much worse. I am called Luckless.'

'Luckless? Why, it makes one die of laughing! And can you not get any other name? Now listen,—I will think of a really pretty name for you, and then I will beg my father to let you have it; and my father can do anything he likes, for he is the King. But I shall only do it on condition that you put on a more cheerful face. Take away your hand from your face; you mustn't be always pulling your nose like that! You have got quite a nice nose, and if you treat it in

that way you will soon spoil it. Put your hair back from your forehead. That's it! Now you look a little more presentable. But do tell me why you are so very melancholy? for I am always happy, and every-body I talk to is always happy too. You are the only person I have ever seen who persists in looking sad.'

'Why am I so melancholy? Because I have been melancholy and unfortunate all my life. And you are always happy—how do you manage it?'

'When I was christened, a fairy, for whom my father had once been able to do a great kindness, held me up for the sacred rite. She took me on her arm, kissed me on the forehead, and said to me: "You shall always be joyful, and make every one else joyful, and if a very melancholy man even looks at you, he shall forget all his sorrow. You shall be called Fortunate." I suppose no good fairy ever kissed you?'

'No, no!' he answered hurriedly, 'never.'

Then the Princess began to look grave and thoughtful, and she gazed at him so strangely with her great blue eyes that he felt ice-cold all down his back. Then she began again: 'I wonder if it must always be a fairy. Even a Princess might be something. Come here, and kneel down, for you are too tall for me.'

Then she came up to him, gave him a kiss, and ran laughing away.

Before Luckless could collect his senses she had vanished. He got up slowly, for he felt as if he were awaking from a dream, and yet he was sure that it could not be a dream, for a wonderful happiness had come into his heart.

'If only I had my hat!' he said, 'that I might throw it up into the air; I believe it would begin to trill and fly like a lark! I feel just like that myself; I do really believe I am merry. That would be too extraordinary!'

He picked himself a great bunch of flowers in the garden, and wandered singing along the road.

When he came to the nearest town he bought a crimson velvet jacket with satin slashings, and a cap with a long white feather, looked at himself in the glass, and said: 'Is Luckless my name? we will just see if I can't get another name: but the loveliest name of all—that one I will not take.'

Then he mounted a horse, gave him the spur, so that he galloped away bravely, and set out on his travels.

But Princess Fortunate, after she had given Luckless the kiss, ran away as fast as she could. But

by degrees she went slower and slower, until at last she sat down on a seat not far from the castle and began to cry bitterly; and when her playfellows came back and found her she was still crying. They tried to console her, but all in vain. Then they ran in to the King in great distress, and called out: 'For Heaven's sake come, my Lord King! A misfortune for the whole country! Princess Fortunate is sitting in the garden crying, and no one can comfort her!'

When the King heard this he grew pale with terror, and ran hurriedly down the stairs into the garden. There sat the Princess on the seat crying, her crown on her lap, and so many tears had fallen upon it that it shone in the sun as if it were set with a thousand diamonds. The King took his daughter in his arms and consoled her and talked to her; but she went on crying. He took her into the castle, and had all the most beautiful and costly things in the whole country brought to her, but nothing could conquer her melancholy, and when he begged her to tell him what heavy sorrow had befallen her, she answered nothing at all. But the King kept on asking her, until at last she had to tell him, and she told him how she had been sitting in the garden, and how a young man had come up who looked so dreadfully miserable, and

how she had kissed him to see if it would make him happier.

Then the King held up his hands in amazement. 'A strange wandering man: most likely a common workman! With old clothes on, and not even a hat on his head! It is incredible!'

'I was so sorry for him.'

'A pretty reason for a Princess to kiss the first tramp she comes across! And his name is Luckless? Unheard of! But I must catch the fellow, and when he is caught he shall be beheaded, and he may think himself lucky to get off so cheaply.'

And the King ordered his horsemen to range through the country in all directions and search for poor Luckless.

'If you find a young scamp who looks as if the mice had eaten away his beard, and who has no hat on his head, that is the fellow. And bring him here at once.'

And the horsemen scattered themselves like chaff that the wind carries away, and ranged through the whole country, and many of them passed close by Luckless, who sat proudly on his horse in his fine clothes, but they never dreamed it was he. So most of them returned to the castle with their errand un-

fulfilled, and the King received them angrily, and rated them for useless awkward fellows who were no good at anything. But the Princess was as melancholy as ever, and came to dinner every day with red eyes, and the King could do nothing but look at his beautiful woebegone daughter, so that the soup and roast-meat grew quite cold.

So week after week went by. But one day there was suddenly a great noise in the castle courtyard. Everybody came running up, and before the King had time to go to the window to see what was the matter, two horsemen dragged poor Luckless into his room. They had tied his hands behind his back, yet his face beamed as if nothing more delightful had ever happened to him in all his life. He bowed very low to the King, and then stood up straight and proud, waiting to hear what was to be done with him.

'We have found the miserable creature, your Majesty,' said the older of the two horsemen. 'He must have pilfered enough to fill his pockets since he was here, for your description does not fit him at all, and we should never have found him if the stupid fool had not told us the whole story himself one day when we chanced to meet him in an inn. And what do you suppose he did after we had caught and bound him?

Nothing but laugh and sing! And when we had set him on his horse, taken it between our own horses, and were bringing him here, what does your Majesty suppose he did? He scolded and complained because we were riding too slowly, as if he could not wait a moment to be beheaded! If this is the most melancholy man in all Christendom, your Majesty, we should like to see the merriest! he must surely pull off his own legs and dip them in his coffee for breakfast, for this fellow has done everything short of that on our way here!'

When the King heard this he came up to Luckless with folded arms, and said sternly: 'So you are the man who had the insolence to let the Princess kiss you.'

'Yes, indeed, my Lord King; and since then I have been the happiest man in the whole world.'

'Throw him into the tower,' said the King; 'and to-morrow he shall be beheaded.'

Upon this the horsemen led Luckless away into the tower; but the King went striding up and down his room with very long steps. 'This is a bad business,' he said. 'I have got him safe enough, and of course he shall be beheaded, but my Fortunate will not be happy again because of that.' Then he went quietly

to his daughter's room, looked through the keyhole, shook his head, walked up and down again for a long time; and at last he went to his Privy Councillor.

When the Councillor had heard the whole story, he meditated for a time, and then said: 'I cannot tell you if my plan will be of any use, but we can but try. It is certain that this Luckless was melancholy once, and now he is merry; and it is just as certain that our dear Princess used to be joyful, and now she is always in tears; so it is extremely probable that the kiss was at the bottom of it. Therefore Luckless must give the kiss back to the Princess. Your Majesty, here you have my very humble opinion.'

'That is quite impossible,' said the King angrily, 'and runs counter to all the customs of my House.'

'Your Majesty must look upon the matter as an affair of State, and then all will be right, and no one can possibly object to it.'

The King considered the proposal for some time, and at last he said: 'Very well, it shall be tried. Call all the lords and gentlemen into the throne-room, and let the prisoner be brought out.'

Then the King put on his robes of State and took his seat upon the throne. The Princess stood by his

side, but he had not dared to tell her why she had been summoned; and the whole court stood all round, in a large circle, all distinguished noblemen with gold-embroidered clothes and stars and scarves. All was quite silent. Then the doors opened and Luckless was brought in.

'To-morrow your head shall be cut off,' the King said to him, 'but first you will instantly, and before all these noble and illustrious gentlemen, give my daughter back the kiss which she so inconsiderately bestowed upon you.'

'Since you permit it, your Majesty,' answered Luckless, 'I will do it with all my heart, and if it is possible for a man to be happier than I am already, this is the one thing in the world that could effect it.'

'We shall soon see that,' the King interrupted him roughly: 'this time you may have reckoned without your host.'

Then Luckless went up to the Princess, embraced her tenderly, and gave her a kiss. She took his hand and looked up at him very lovingly, and there they both stood in front of the throne.

'Are you happy again now, my beloved daughter?' asked the King.

'A little happier, my lord and father,' she answered; 'but I know it will not last long.'

'Ah no!' said the King sadly; 'I see that already, for he has not become melancholy again, which he ought to have done if all were right. There he still stands smiling, with his shameless cheerful countenance! What is to be done now?'

Then the Princess dropped her eyes and said softly: 'I know, father, and I will tell you, but only in your ear.'

So the King went with the Princess into the ante-room, and when they came back again he took Luckless's hand, laid it in the Princess's, and said to all the assembled lords and gentlemen: 'I see it cannot be helped, so may God's will be done! This is my dear son, who shall be king when I die.'

So Luckless became a prince, and afterwards a king. He lived in the golden castle, and gave the Princess so many kisses that she grew much more joyful than ever. And Princess Fortunate gave him the most beautiful names in exchange for his ugly one,—a different name every day. Only now and then, when she was in a quite ridiculously merry mood, she would say to him: 'Do you still remember

what you used to be called?' and then she would nearly die of laughing, while Luckless covered her mouth with his hand and whispered: 'Hush! what would people think if they heard you? I should lose all their respect!'

EAR Apolda in Thuringia stands the Old Women's Mill. It looks something like a great coffee mill, only it is turned from below instead of from above. Two great beams stick out underneath, and two men take hold of them and turn the mill with them. Up above the old women are put in, humpbacked and wrinkled, without hair or teeth, and underneath they come out again quite young, as trim and rosy-cheeked as ripe apples. One turn of the mill does it all: crack, crash! it goes, so that it seems to go through the marrow of one's bones. But if you ask any one who has gone through

it, and come out young again, whether it did not hurt her dreadfully, she will answer: 'Nothing of the sort! it is perfectly delightful. Something like what you feel when you wake up early after a sound sleep, and the sun is shining into the room, and the birds singing outside, and the trees rustling, and you turn over and stretch yourself in bed; for then your bones sometimes crack too.'

Very far away from Apolda there lived once an old woman, and she had heard of the mill. As she very much wished to become young again she made a resolve to go, and one day quite suddenly she decided to set off on her journey. It was a slow and weary business; she often had to stop and cough, but she got on in time, and at last she arrived at her destination.

'I wish to be ground in the mill and grow young again,' she said to one of the men, who was sitting on the seat before the mill with his hands in his pockets, blowing rings of smoke out of his pipe up into the blue sky: 'Good Heavens! what a long journey it is to Apolda!'

'What is your name?' asked the man yawning.

'Old Mother Redclapper.'

'Sit down on the seat for a bit, Mother Redclapper,'

said the man, and he went into the mill, opened a great book, and came back with a long sheet of paper.

'Is that the bill, my lad?' asked the old woman.

'Oh dear no!' said the man, 'the grinding costs nothing, but you must sign this paper.'

'Sign that!' repeated the old woman. 'Sign away my poor soul to the Devil! No, indeed, that I will never do. I am a pious woman and hope some day to go to Heaven.'

'Not so bad as that,' laughed the man. 'It is only that all the follies you have ever committed in your whole life are noted down upon this sheet, all quite correctly and in their proper order, with the date and the hour. Before you are ground in the mill you must pledge yourself, when once you are made young again, to commit all the follies over again, and all exactly in the same order, just as they stand upon the paper.'

Then he looked at the paper and said, chuckling: 'To be sure this is pretty bad, Mother Redclapper,—pretty bad, certainly! From sixteen to six-and-twenty one every day, and two on Sundays! It gets a little better after that, but at the beginning of the forties,

good gracious! how thick they come again! Towards the end they are not quite so many.'

Then the old woman sighed and said: 'So after all, my lad, it is hardly worth while to be ground in the mill!'

'Truly,' said the man, 'it is not worth while for most people. And so we have a very easy time of it, seven holidays in the week; for the mill is always standing still, at least of late years. Some time back business was better.'

'Then is it quite impossible to scratch anything out of the paper?' asked the old woman again, and she stroked the man's cheeks. 'Just three things, my lad, and then, if it must be so, I will commit all the others again.'

'No,' answered the man, 'that is quite impossible. All or nothing!'

'Then take your paper back again!' said the old woman, after a moment's thought. 'I don't care any longer for your stupid old mill!' and she set out again on her way home.

But when she reached home, and the neighbours looked at her in surprise and said: 'But, Mother Red-clapper, you have come back just as old as you went away! Then there is nothing in the mill after all, I

suppose?' she coughed and answered: 'Oh yes, there is *something* in it, certainly, but I was too timid to have it done; and then after all, Good Heavens! why should one cling so to this short and passing life?'

EVERYBODY knows why the turnspit dog's legs are so short, and that he ran himself right off them. But how the stork got his long legs—that is quite another matter.

Three days before the stork brings a little child he comes and knocks with his red beak at the window of the people who are to have it, and calls out:

'Make ready a cradle,
Some pap and pap-ladle,
A curtain for flies,
And sheets of small size,
A frock small and bright,
And a jacket of white,
As quickly as may be,
For I bring a new baby!'

Then the people know just where they are. But sometimes when he has a very great deal to do he forgets to give the warning; and then there is a terrible bustle, for nothing is ready. And this was just what happened to two poor people who lived in a little hut in the village,—the stork forgot to tell them, and when he came with the child no one was at home. Both husband and wife had gone out to work in the fields, and had shut all the doors and windows, and there was not even a flight of steps before the house where the stork could lay the baby down. So he flew up to the roof, and clapped with his beak until the whole village came running up, and an old woman ran off to the fields as fast as she could to fetch the people.

'Goodman! Goodwife! Goodman! Goodwife!' she cried out to them from a long way off, quite out of breath: 'For Heaven's sake come! the stork is sitting on your roof and has brought you a little child, and no one is there to open the window for him. If you don't come at once he may let it drop, and that would be a dreadful misfortune. Up at the miller's he let one fall three years ago, and the poor little wretch is still hump-backed.'

Then they both ran headlong back to the house.

and took the child from the stork. When they looked at it, it was a most lovely little boy, and both husband and wife were nearly crazy with delight. But the stork was so angry at having had to wait so long that he made a firm resolution never to bring another child to these two people. When at last they did come he looked at them very angrily out of the corners of his eyes, and as he flew away he said: 'I shall be late to-day again; Heaven knows when I shall get back to my wife Mistress Stork, in the swamp. I have still twelve children to distribute, and I am dreadfully behindhand already. Really, life on these terms is hardly worth having!'

But the two people, in their great delight, had not noticed that the stork was so exceedingly annoyed. And certainly it was entirely his own fault that he had had to wait so long, for it was he who had forgotten to give them notice in time. And as the child grew, and grew prettier every day, the wife said one morning: 'If only we could give some present to the good stork, who brought us our lovely child,—something that would really please him: but I can't think of anything suitable. Can you suggest something?'

'Well, it will be difficult to manage,' answered

the husband, 'for he has got everything he wants already.'

But the next morning he came to his wife and said: 'Do you think it would do if I were to get the joiner to make a pair of really handsome stilts for the stork? He has to go constantly into the great pond behind the village where he finds the little babies, and into the marsh too, to catch frogs, so he must very often get his feet wet and catch cold. I remember thinking he was clapping quite hoarsely when he came to us that time.'

'That is a capital idea,' answered the wife. 'But the joiner must varnish the stilts very nicely with red, so that they may go well with his beak.'

'Dear me!' said the man; 'do you really think they should be red? I thought of green——'

'My dear creature,' interrupted the wife, 'how could you imagine green would do? You men know nothing about colours, and what goes well together. Of course they must be red!' And as the man was very sensible and always listened to his wife, he really did order red stilts, and as soon as they were finished, he went to the swamp and gave them to the stork.

The stork was very much pleased, tried them on

at once, and said: 'At first I was very angry with you because you kept me waiting so long that time. But as you are such nice people and have given me these beautiful red stilts, I will come back again and bring you a little girl. This day four weeks I shall arrive. But mind and be sure to be at home: and I shall not give you the usual formal announcement; I shall spare myself that journey. Do you hear?'

'No, no!' answered the man; 'we will be sure to be at home; you shall have nothing to complain of this time.'

When the four weeks had passed the stork came duly flying along and brought a little girl, who was even prettier than the little boy, so now the little couple were complete. And both the children were pretty and healthy, and the parents too, so that it was quite delightful.

But there lived in the village a rich farmer who had only one little boy, and even that one was not at all pretty, and the farmer wished for a girl too. So when he heard what the poor people had done, he thought to himself that he would follow their example. He went to the joiner and ordered another pair of stilts, far finer than the pair the poor people had had made. They had gold knobs at the top and

bottom, and were green in the middle striped with blue and yellow. When they were ready they certainly did look very splendid. Then he put on his best coat, took the stilts under his arm, and went away to the swamp, where he soon found the stork.

'Your Honour's most obedient servant!' he said to him, and made a low bow.

'Do you mean me?' asked the stork, who was standing comfortably in the water on his long red stilts.

'If I may venture to say so, I do mean you,' said the farmer.

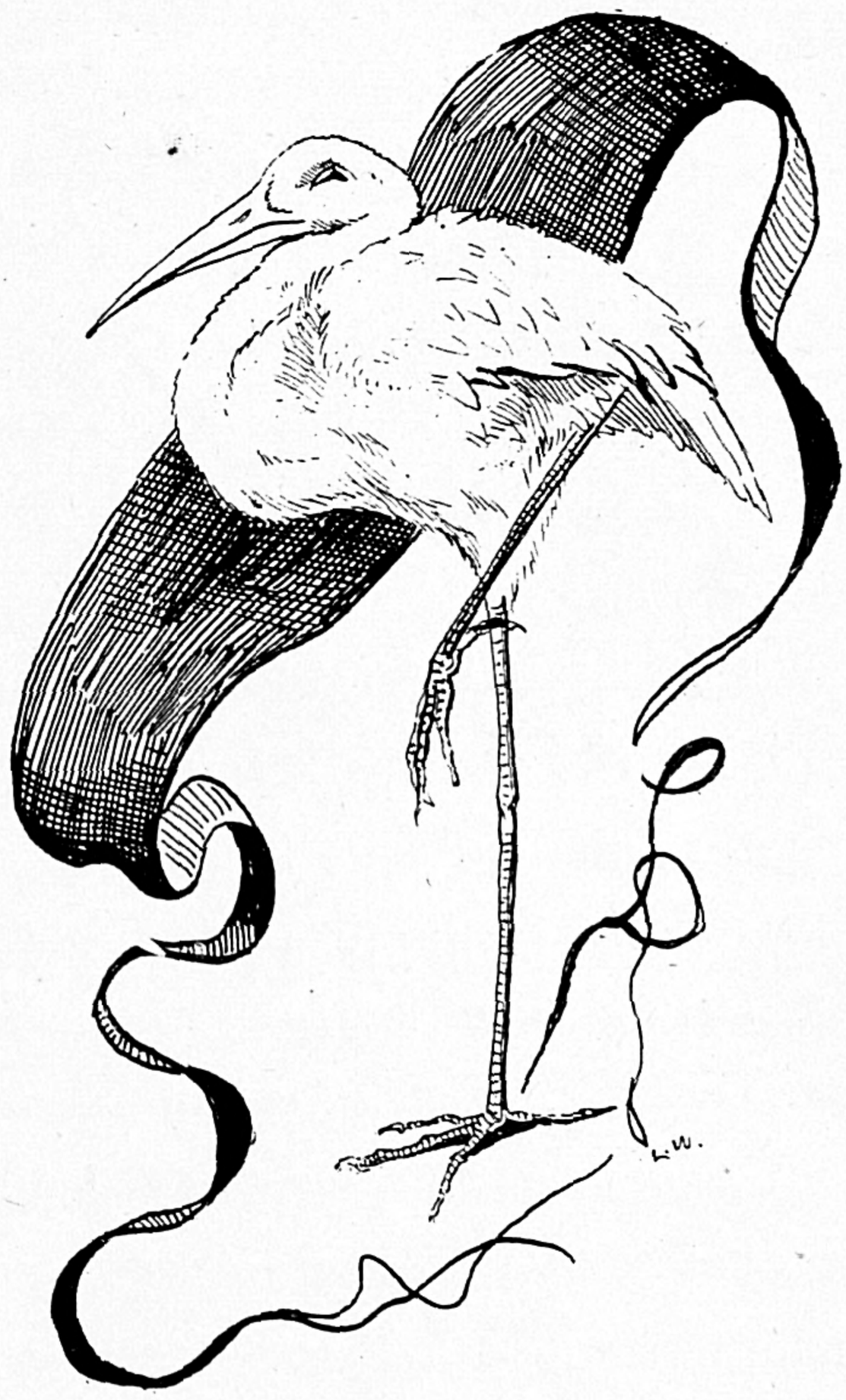
'Well, what do you want?'

'I am so very anxious to have a little girl, and so my wife has suggested that we should make your Grace a little present. A pair of stilts—a very humble offering.'

'Then you may just get back home again!' answered the stork, as he turned round on one leg without even looking at the farmer again. 'You can't have a little girl; and I don't want your stilts either. I have got two beautiful red ones already, and as a general thing I only need to use them one at a time, so they ought to last me for years and years.

Besides, your stilts are perfectly hideous! Ugh! striped green, blue, and yellow like a jack pudding! I should never dare to let my wife see me with such things.'

So the rich farmer had to go home again with his splendid stilts, and he never had a little girl all his life long.



ONE day, a good while ago now, the Lord said to the Angel Gabriel (as He often did): 'You, Gabriel, just lift up the trap-door and look down. I think I hear something crying!'

Gabriel did as the Lord told him, shaded his eyes with his hand, for the light was very dazzling, looked everywhere all round, and said at last: 'Down below there is a long green meadow, at one end Barbara is sitting keeping the geese, and at the other Christopher keeping the pigs, and both of them are crying as if they would break their hearts.'

'Dear, dear!' said the Lord; 'get out of the way, Long-legs,[1] so that I can look myself.'

[1] Every one knows that the Angel Gabriel is very tall.

When He looked down Himself He found that it was just as Gabriel said.

Now the reason Christopher and Barbara were both crying so lamentably was this: Christopher and Barbara were very fond of each other; and they were very well suited too, for the one kept the geese, and the other the pigs, so there was no difficulty as to position. So they resolved to get married, and they thought that it was reason enough for this that they were so fond of each other. But their employers were of a different opinion, so they were obliged to content themselves with being betrothed. And as order is good in everything, and as kissing is a very important business to betrothed people, they had come to the conclusion that seven kisses in the morning and seven at night was the proper number. And for some time things had gone smoothly, and the seven kisses were always ready and completed at the proper time. But on the morning of the day of which this story tells, just as they were coming to the seventh kiss, Barbara's favourite goose and Christopher's favourite pig quarrelled over their breakfast, fell upon each other and nearly made an end of each other. So they had to leave the number incomplete and go and settle the dispute; and now, as they sat at the two ends of the

meadow, so lonely and so far away from each other, it occurred to them that it was a very sad business, and they began to cry, and went on crying until the Lord Himself observed it.

At first the Lord thought their grief would abate of its own accord in time; but when their tears flowed more and more bitterly, and even Barbara's favourite goose and Christopher's favourite pig began to get melancholy and pull long faces, He said: 'I will help them. Whatever they wish for to-day shall be granted them.'

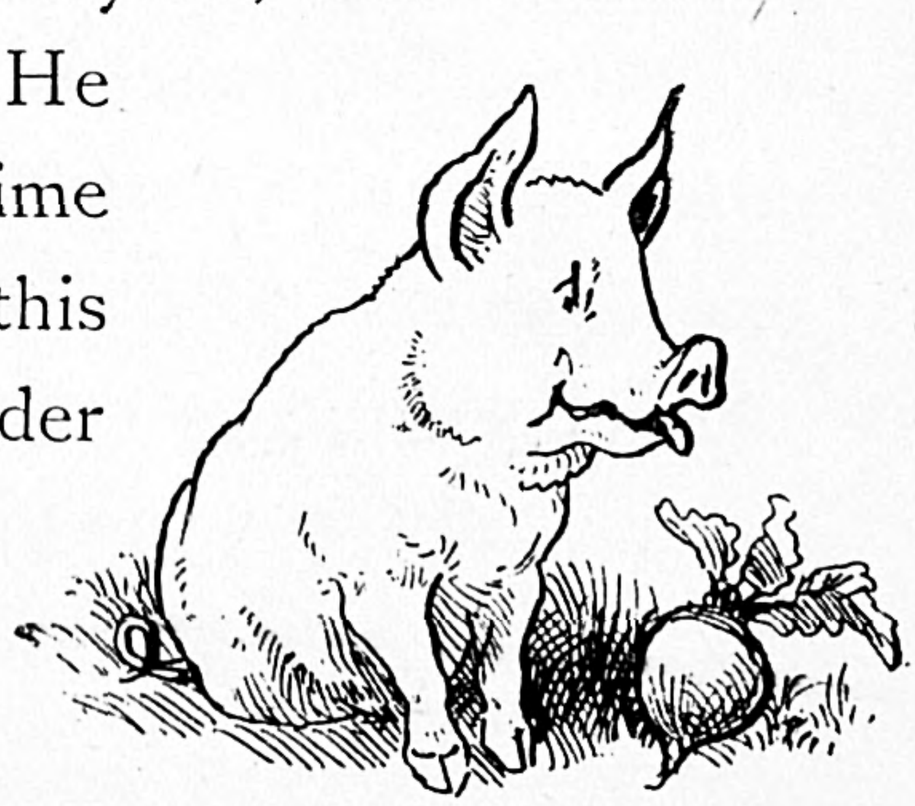
But the two had the same wish in their minds, for as they kept gazing towards each other, and yet could not see each other (for the field was long and there was a bush in the middle), Christopher thought: 'Oh, if I were only over there with the geese!' and Barbara sighed: 'Ah, if I were only with the pigs!'

And all of a sudden Christopher found himself actually sitting among the geese; and Barbara among the pigs; and yet they were not together, and the mistake in the number of kisses could not yet be put right.

Then Christopher thought: 'Barbara must have gone to look for me;' and Barbara thought: 'Why, Christopher must have gone round to me the other way!'—'Ah, if I were only with my geese!'—'Ah, if I were only with my pigs!'

And there sat Barbara again with her geese, and Christopher with his pigs; and so it went on from bad to worse the whole day long, because their wishes always crossed each other. So the seventh morning kiss for that day is not paid yet. True, Christopher wished to make it up the same evening when they both came home, tired to death with cross-wishing, but Barbara thought it was too late to be of any use, and that the irregularity could now never be rectified.

But when the Lord saw that their wishes always crossed each other in this way, He said: 'Well, I have made a nice mess of it! But what I have said I have said, so now there is no help for it!' And so He resolved never again to let lovers' wishes be granted unconditionally, but always to find out first what it was they really wanted. And later He said to Gabriel in confidence, that it was a great pity that their wishes were so seldom of a kind that He could venture to grant; and once, long, long ago, when I was in similar circumstances myself, and turned to Him, He behaved just as if He did not hear me. Some time afterwards Gabriel told me this story, so that I could not wonder at it any longer.



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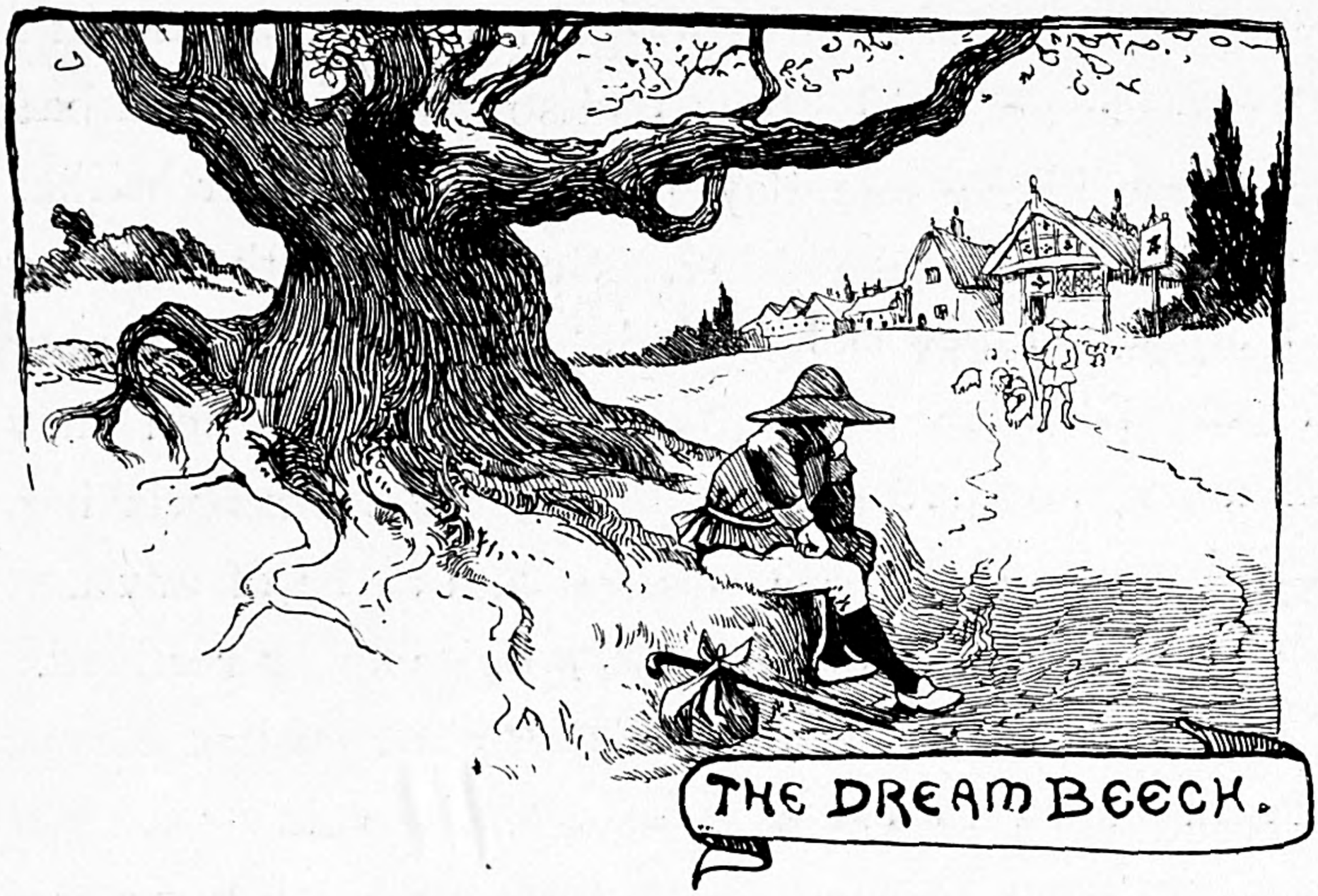


A HUNDRED years or more have already passed away since the lightning struck it and split it from top to bottom, and ever since that time the plough has gone over the place where it grew: but once upon a time, long, long ago, there stood upon a green and grass-clad hill, about a hundred paces from the first house in the village, an old and mighty beech-tree—such a tree as we never see nowadays, for men and beasts, trees and plants, grow smaller and smaller, and more and more miserable, as the centuries pass. The peasants said the beech had stood there since heathen times, and that a holy apostle had been slain under it by treacherous pagans. The roots of the tree had drunk up the

apostle's blood, and it was since the blood had flowed through its trunk and branches that the tree had grown so large and strong. Who knows whether the story was true or not? At all events, there was a curious thing about the tree, and that the whole village knew, great and small. If any one fell asleep under it and dreamed, his dream was sure to come true. And therefore it had been called from time immemorial the Dream Beech, and no one ever called it anything else. There was a curious condition attached to this power too, for if any one lay down to sleep under the Dream Beech he must not think of what he might dream. If he did, he would dream nothing but confused nonsense—hotch-potch for which no rational man could be any the wiser. It was certainly a difficult condition to keep, for most men are a great deal too curious, and therefore most of those who tried it failed; and at the time when the events of this story happened, there was not in the whole village a single person, man or woman, who had ever been successful at all. Nevertheless the Dream Beech was to be trusted, that was a certainty.

One hot summer's day, when not a breath of air was stirring, a poor travelling journeyman, who had been in foreign lands for many years, and had suffered

great misfortunes, came slowly along the road. When he reached the village he felt in all his pockets, which he had often done before, but it was quite useless, for they were all alike empty. 'What can I do?' he thought to himself. 'I am tired to death, but no landlord will take me in for nothing, and begging is too hard a trade.' Then he observed the splendid Beech tree on the grassy hill in front of him, and as it stood but a few steps away from the road, he lay down beneath it on the grass to rest for a little. But the tree rustled strangely, and as its branches moved gently to and fro they let a slender glittering sunbeam slip through them, now here and now there, or a little bit of blue sky shine through them, now here and now there, so that his eyes gradually closed, and he fell asleep.

When he was fast asleep the Beech threw down a twig with three leaves on it, and it fell right on his breast. Then he dreamed that he was sitting in a pleasant room at a table, and the table belonged to him, and the room too, and even the whole house. And before the table stood a young woman leaning upon it with both hands, and looking at him very lovingly, and she was his wife. And a child sat on his knee, and he fed it with his soup, and because the soup was too

hot he blew on the spoon; and then his wife said: 'What a good nurse you are, dearest!' and laughed. And another child was playing about the room, a plump round-cheeked urchin, who had tied a piece of string to a large carrot, and was pulling it behind him crying, 'Gee-up!' and 'Gee-wo!' as if he were a fiery horse. And both the children were his own too. So he dreamed, and the dream must have made him happy, for he laughed in his sleep all over his face.

When he awoke it was almost evening, and the shepherd with his sheep was standing near him knitting. He sprang up refreshed, yawned, and stretched himself, and said: 'Ah me! if it would only really happen! But at least it is pleasant to know what it would be like.'

Then the shepherd came up to him and asked him where he came from and where he was going, and whether the tree had told him anything in his sleep. But when he found that he was as ignorant of the tree's power as a new-born babe, he cried: 'You are in luck! for I could easily see by your face that you were dreaming something nice; I looked at you for a long time as you lay there!' Then he told him of the tree's mysterious gift. 'Whatever you have dreamed will come true; that is as certain as that this is a sheep, and that a goat. Just you ask the

village people if I am not right! And now do just tell me what you dreamed.'

'No, no!' answered the travelling journeyman, smiling, 'only a country bumpkin would let himself be pumped like that, old fellow. I shall keep my beautiful dream to myself, and you certainly can't blame me for that. But as for its coming true—that is not very likely!' And he did not say this in jest, but in all seriousness, for as he went towards the village he said to himself: "'Fiddle-de-dee, superstitious stuff! I should like to know where the tree could get such knowledge.'

When he reached the village he saw a long pole projecting from the gable of the third house, and a golden crown was hanging to the pole, while just below it, in front of the door, stood the landlord of the Crown. He was in a very good temper just at that moment, for he had had his supper and was satisfied with all the world—it was his best time. The journeyman took off his hat very civilly, and asked if he would take him in for the night in charity. The landlord eyed the tall journeyman in his dusty torn clothes from top to toe. Then he nodded kindly, and said: 'Sit down here in the balcony near the door, there is sure to be a piece of bread and a pitcher of wine left

over; and meanwhile you can be making yourself a bed of straw.'

And he went in, and sent his daughter with bread and wine, and she sat down beside the journeyman and asked him to tell her about foreign countries. Then she told him all she knew about the village; how the wheat crop was looking, and how the neighbour's wife had had twins, and when there was next to be a dance at the Crown.

All of a sudden she stood up, leaned across the table to him and said: 'What are those three leaves you have got in your coat?'

The journeyman looked, and found the twig with the three leaves which had fallen down on him while he slept. He stuck it in his button-hole. 'They must be from the great Beech just at the end of the village,' he said. 'I took a little nap underneath it.'

Then the maiden listened curiously to hear what he was going to say. But as he said nothing, she began to sound him carefully till she was sure that he had really slept under the Dream Beech; and then she went round about the subject as gingerly as a cat goes round hot broth, until she thought she had made quite sure that he did not know the strange power of the Dream Beech; for he was a sly fellow, and made as

though he knew nothing about it. So when she had found out all she could, she brought him another flagon of wine, pressed him to drink, told him all kinds of things that she had dreamed, and said what a pity it was that none of them should ever have come true.

Just then the shepherd came back from the fields, driving his flock through the village street. As he passed by the Crown and saw the young girl sitting on the balcony with the journeyman, talking eagerly, he stood still for a minute and said: 'Yes, yes; he will tell *you* his pretty dream; though he won't tell *me* anything!' And he drove his sheep further on.

Then the maiden became more curious still, and as he still said nothing about his dream, she could resist no longer, but asked him point-blank what he had dreamed as he lay asleep under the Beech.

Then the travelling journeyman, who was a sly fellow, and had been strung up into a presumptuously happy mood by his beautiful dream, gave her an arch look, and his eyes twinkled as he said: 'I did have a glorious dream, but I don't dare to tell you what it was.' But she pressed him more and more, and tormented him to tell her, so at last he came close up to her and said earnestly: 'Only think, I

dreamed that I should marry the landlord of the Crown's daughter, and that some day I should myself be landlord of the Crown!'

At this the young girl turned as white as chalk, and then grew crimson, and she went away into the house. After a little while she came back and asked him if he had really dreamed it, and if he were speaking seriously.

'Indeed I did dream it,' he said; 'and she who appeared to me in my dream looked exactly like you.'

Then the young girl went back into the house and did not come out again. She went to her own room; and thoughts began to stream over her heart like water over a dam: always more and more new ones, and yet always the same over again, so that there was no end to it. 'He knew nothing about the tree,' she said; 'he dreamed it. I may wish for it or not, it will come all the same. It cannot be altered.'

Then she lay down on her bed, and all night long she dreamed of the travelling journeyman. When she awoke the next morning she had seen his face in her dreams so often in the night that she knew it by heart—and, to tell the truth, it was the face of a handsome fellow.

The journeyman had slept wonderfully well upon his straw, and had quite forgotten dream, Dream Beech, and all that he had said to the landlord's daughter the night before. He was standing at the door of the inn parlour, and was just giving his hand to the landlord to bid him farewell when she came in; and as she saw him standing there ready to set out, she was seized with a sudden anguish, as if she could not let him go away.

'Father,' she said, 'the wine is not yet tapped, and the young man has nothing to do; if he could stay here for a day or two he might earn his keep, and a little money for his journey over and above.' And the landlord of the Crown made no objection, for he had had his breakfast and his morning draught, and was satisfied, so that it was his best time.

But the tapping took a long time, and the landlord's daughter was always finding something for the travelling journeyman to do, for which he had to be fetched out of the cellar. And when at last the cask was empty and the bottles filled, she thought it would be a good thing for him to help in the fields; and when that was done, she found there were a great many little things to be done in the garden that no one had ever thought of before. So week after week went by, and

every night she dreamed about him. And in the evenings she sat with him in the balcony before the house, and when he told her of all the troubles and sorrows he had suffered in foreign lands, a fly or a hair always got into her eyes, so that she had to wipe them with her apron.

And after a year had gone by the journeyman was still in the house ; and everything had been scoured and scrubbed, all the rooms had been strewed with white sand with little fir-twigs sprinkled on the top of it, and the whole village kept holiday. For the young journeyman was to be married to the landlord's daughter, and everybody was glad, or if there was any envious fellow who was not glad, at least he made believe he was.

Soon after this the landlord of the Crown was sitting one day fast asleep in his arm-chair, his snuff-box in his lap, and he was satisfied with the whole world, so that it was his best time. But he did not wake up again, and when they tried to wake him he was dead—stone dead. So now the young journeyman was really landlord, just as he had said in jest, and in other ways everything happened exactly as he had dreamed under the Beech. For very soon he had two children, and he must once have taken one of them upon his knee and fed it, blowing upon the spoon, and the

other boy must have been playing about the room with the carrot at the same time, although the person from whom I heard this story did not tell me so, and I forgot to ask him about it particularly. But so it must have been, for whatever one dreamed under the Dream Beech always came true, down to the least detail.

It might have been about four years after the wedding, and the young landlord of the Crown, for such he was now, was sitting one day in the inn parlour. His wife came in, and coming to his side she said: 'Only think, yesterday afternoon one of our mowers went to sleep under the Dream Beech without thinking of it, and do you know what he dreamt? He dreamt he was very rich. And who do you think it was? Why, poor old Casper, who is so stupid that one is quite sorry for him, and we only keep him on out of pity. What will he do with all that money?'

Then the husband laughed and said: 'How can you still believe in that absurd stuff, and you such a sensible woman? Now just think of it—how can a tree, however old and beautiful it may be, foretell the future?'

The wife looked at her husband with great eyes, shook her head, and said earnestly: 'Dear husband, do not be sinful; you should not joke about such things.'

'I am not joking, wife,' answered her husband. The wife was silent for a little, as if she did not understand him, and then she said: 'Why do you talk like that? I thought you had every reason to be grateful to the holy old tree. Has not everything happened just as you dreamed?'

When she said this her husband gave her a very loving glance, and said: 'God knows that I am grateful—God knows it, and you know it. Ah, it was a beautiful dream! It seems to me as if it had all happened yesterday, I remember it so vividly. And yet the reality has been a thousand times better, and you are a thousand times dearer and lovelier than the young woman I saw in my dream.' And as his wife looked at him again with great eyes, he went on: 'As to the tree and the dream, heart's dearest, here is what I think: "It is easy to pipe to him who wants to dance;" and "What is shouted in the wood is heard in the field." I had endured grief and trouble among strangers for so many years, that it was no wonder I should dream of love and happiness.'

'But you dreamed that you would marry me!'

'I never dreamed that; I only saw a young woman and two children, and she was not nearly as pretty as you, nor the children either.'

'Nonsense!' answered his wife. 'Will you believe neither me nor the tree? Did you not tell me the first day we ever saw each other—it was in the evening, on the balcony,—did you not tell me that you had dreamed you would marry me, and be landlord of the Crown?'

Then for the first time he remembered the little trick he had played on her who was now his wife, and he said: 'It can't be helped, dearest. I didn't really dream of you, and if I said so, it was only a joke. I wanted to tease you, you were so curious.'

Then the wife burst into tears and went away. In a little while he went after her. She was standing beside the well in the courtyard, weeping; and although he tried to console her, it was all in vain.

'You stole my love and deceived my heart!' she said; 'I can never be happy again.'

He asked her if she did not love him better than any other man in the world, and if they had not lived happily and contentedly together, more than any one in the village, and she was obliged to allow that it was true, but she was just as sorrowful as before, in spite of all he could say.

Then he thought, 'Let her have her cry out! At night other thoughts will come, and to-morrow she

will be the same as ever.' But he was mistaken, for the next morning, although she did not cry any more, she was grave and mournful and avoided her husband. Every attempt to comfort her failed, just like the evening before: during the greater part of the day she sat in a corner meditating, and if her husband came in she shrank away from him. When this had lasted for several days without any change, a great sadness came over him too, for he feared he had lost his wife's love for ever. He went about the house quietly, trying to think of a remedy, but to no purpose. At last he went out one morning to the village and sauntered through the fields. It was a hot July day, without a cloud in the sky; the ripe corn rippled like a golden lake, and the birds sang, but his heart was full of trouble. He saw far away the old Dream Beech, and it towered high in the air like a queen among the trees. It seemed to beckon to him with its green branches, and call to him like a faithful old friend. He went and sat down beneath it, and thought of bygone days. Very nearly five years had passed since he, a poor wanderer, had rested under it for the first time and dreamed so beautifully. Ah, so beautifully! and the dream had lasted five years, and now—All was over! All was over? for ever?

The Beech began to rustle again just as it did five years ago, and moved its mighty branches. And just as before, as they moved, they let a glittering slender sunbeam slip through them, now here and now there, or a little bit of blue sky shine through them, now here and now there. His heart grew lighter and he fell asleep, for care had kept him awake many nights. And before long he dreamed the same dream as five years before, but the wife at the table and the merry children had the well-known and beloved faces of his own wife and his own children. And his wife looked at him lovingly—ah, so lovingly!

Then he woke up, and when he found that it was only a dream he grew sadder than before. He broke off a little green twig from the Beech, went home, and put it in his hymn-book. And next day, when his wife was going to church,—for it was Sunday,—the twig fell out. Then the husband, who was standing near, flushed up, bent down, and tried to put it in his pocket. But his wife saw it and asked what it was.

'It is from the Dream Beech, who is kinder to me than you are,' answered the husband. 'For when I was out yesterday and sat down beneath it I fell asleep. It must have wanted to comfort me, for I dreamed that we were friends again, and you had forgotten

and forgiven everything. But that is not true, and the poor old Beech is of no use; it is a splendid and beautiful tree, but it knows nothing of the future.'

His wife gazed at him, and a look like a sunbeam came into her face. 'Husband, did you truly dream that?'

'Yes,' he answered firmly, and she saw that it was true, for his face worked as if he were trying not to weep.

'And I was truly your wife?'

When he said Yes to this too, his wife threw herself into his arms, and kissed him so often that he could hardly breathe. 'God be praised!' she said; 'now everything is right again. I love you so much, so much, far more than you know; and I have been in such misery all these days lest I ought not to love you, and lest God had not destined us for each other. For you did steal my heart, wicked husband, and at first you did deceive me; but now I know that it made no difference, and that although you stole it away from me it would have been yours just the same without that.' She was silent for a little, and said at last: 'Now you will never speak evil of the Dream Beech again, will you?'

'No, never; for I believe in it most firmly—perhaps not in quite the same way as you do, but none the less firmly for that—you may trust me. And look, we will put the twig here, just at the beginning of the hymn-book, that it may never be lost.'

XVII

THE LITTLE HUMPBACK.

THERE was once a woman who had an only daughter, and she was very small and pale, and different from other children. For when the woman took her out for a walk, the people would often stand still looking after the child and whispering to each other. But when the little maiden asked her mother why the people looked at her so curiously, the mother always answered: 'Because you have got such a

beautiful new dress on.' And the little girl was quite content with this answer. But when they came home again, the mother would take her little daughter in her arms, kiss her over and over again, and say: 'You dear sweet little cherub, what will become of you when I die? No one else knows what a dear little angel you are, not even your father!'

After a time the mother suddenly fell sick, and on the ninth day she died. Then the father of the little girl threw himself upon her deathbed in despair, and longed to be buried with his wife. But his friends talked to him, and consoled him; and he listened to them; and in a year's time he took another wife, prettier, younger, and richer than the first, but she was not nearly so good.

And the little daughter, ever since her mother had died, had sat all day long, from morning till evening, upon the window-seat in the parlour; for now there was no one who would go out with her. She was paler than ever, and had not grown any taller during the whole year.

Now when the new mother came into the house the little girl thought: 'Now I shall go out to walk again in the sunshine, on the green shady roads beyond the town where the bushes and the beautiful flowers

grow, and the people are all walking about in their best clothes.' For she lived in a narrow little street where the sun seldom shone, and when she sat on the window-seat she could only see a little bit of blue sky as big as a pocket-handkerchief. And the new mother went out every day, in the morning and in the afternoon too. And every time she went out she put on a beautiful coloured dress, much finer than any dress the old mother had ever possessed. Yet she never took the little girl with her.

So at last the little maiden plucked up courage, and begged her very earnestly one day to take her with her. But the new mother refused her point-blank, saying: 'How foolish you are, child! What would the people think if they saw you with me? Why, you are a humpback, and humpbacked children never go out for a walk; they ought to stay quietly at home.'

At this the little girl was silent, and as soon as the new mother had left the house she climbed up on a chair and looked at herself in the looking-glass,—and it was quite true, she was a humpback, a real humpback! So she went back to her window-seat, and sat down again, and looked out into the street; and she thought about her dear old mother, who used to

take her out with her every day, although she was a humpback. Then she thought about her hump again: 'What can there be inside it?' she said to herself, 'for certainly there must be something inside a great hump like that!'

And the summer passed, and when winter came the little maiden was paler than ever, and had grown so weak that she could no longer sit in the window-seat, but was obliged to lie in bed all day. And one night, just when the snowdrops were beginning to thrust up their first little green spikes, the old dear mother came to her and told her how golden and glorious heaven was. And the next morning the little maiden was dead!

'Do not weep, husband,' said the new mother. 'It is best so for the poor child herself!' And the father answered nothing, but nodded his head silently.

But when the little girl was buried, an angel with great white swan's wings came flying down from heaven, sat down near the grave, and knocked at it as if it were a door. And straightway the little maiden came out of the grave, and the angel told her he had come to take her to her mother in heaven. Then the little girl asked timidly if humpbacked children could go to heaven. She could hardly believe that it was

possible, for everything in heaven was so beautiful and so proper.

But the angel answered: 'You dear good child, you are no longer humpbacked!' He touched her shoulders with his white hand, and the ugly old hump fell off like a great hollow shell. And what was there inside it?

Two splendid white angel's wings! She spread them out, just as if she had always been able to fly, and flew with the angel through the warm sunshine right up into the blue sky. And in the highest place in heaven sat her dear old mother, and stretched out her arms towards her. And she flew straight to her breast.[1]

[1] The subject of this story is not my own. I have been familiar with it from my childhood, but I cannot discover its origin.

THE LITTLE BIRD.

THERE were once a husband and wife who lived in a pretty little house, and were in want of nothing that could make them happy. Behind the house there was a garden with fine old trees in it, and here the wife cultivated rare plants and flowers. One day the husband went out to walk in the garden, and as he was enjoying the delightful perfume that exhaled from the flowers, he thought to himself: 'What a happy man I am, and what a good, clever, beautiful wife I have got!'

And just as he was thinking this, something moved at his feet. The man, who was very shortsighted,

bent down, and saw a little bird that had evidently fallen out of the nest, and could not yet fly.

He picked it up, looked at it, and took it in to his wife.

'Dearest wife!' he called out to her, 'I have caught a little bird, and I believe it is a nightingale!'

'Nothing of the kind!' answered the wife without so much as looking at the bird. 'How should a young nightingale get into our garden? There are no nightingales' nests in our trees.'

'Depend upon it, it is a nightingale. Besides, I did once hear one sing in our garden. How delightful it will be when it gets big and begins to sing! I love the song of the nightingale so dearly.'

'It is not a nightingale,' reasserted the wife, while still she never looked at it, for she was busy knitting stockings, and had just dropped a stitch.

'Yes it is,' said the man, 'I can see now quite distinctly that it is a nightingale;' and he held the bird close up under his nose.

Then his wife came up to look, laughed aloud, and cried out: 'My dear husband, it is nothing in the world but a sparrow!'

'Wife,' answered the man, who was getting a little angry; 'how can you imagine that I should mistake a

sparrow—the commonest bird there is—for a nightingale? You know nothing whatever about natural history, while I had a collection of butterflies and beetles when I was a boy.'

'But, my dear husband, do just look,—did ever a nightingale have such a broad beak, and such a thick head?'

'Certainly they have; and this is a nightingale.'

'But I tell you it is not; hark, how it chirps!'

'Young nightingales do chirp.'

And so it went on, until at last they quarrelled in earnest. At last the husband went angrily out of the room and fetched a little cage.

'Don't put the horrid creature here in the sitting-room!' the wife called out to him as he stood in the doorway. 'I won't have it!'

'We'll see whether I am still master in my own house or not!' answered the husband; and he put the bird into the cage, and brought ants' eggs for it to eat, which the little bird enjoyed very much. But at supper the husband and wife sat at opposite corners of the table and never spoke to each other.

Very early the next morning the wife went to her husband's bedside, and said earnestly: 'Dear husband, you were very foolish and very unkind to me yesterday.

I have just been to look at the little bird again, and I am quite certain it is a young sparrow, so pray allow me to let it out.'

'Mind you don't touch my nightingale!' cried the man angrily, and did not vouchsafe his wife so much as a look.

In this way a fortnight passed, and peace and happiness seemed to be gone for ever from the little house. The husband grumbled, and when the wife did not grumble she wept. But the little bird grew bigger and bigger on its ants' eggs, and its feathers grew longer, and looked as if it would soon be fledged. It hopped about in the cage, sat down in the sand on the cage floor, drew back its head and plumed its feathers, while it shook itself and chirped —chirped exactly like a sparrow. And every time it chirped the sound went like a dagger to the wife's heart.

One day her husband had gone out, and she sat weeping alone in the room, and thought how happily they used to live, how contented they were from morning till night, and how her husband had loved her; and now everything was changed since the accursed bird had come into the house.

Suddenly she sprang up as if she had taken a

hasty resolution, took the bird out of the cage, and let it hop through the window into the garden.

Just then her husband came home.

'Dear husband,' said the wife, while she did not dare to look at him; 'a terrible misfortune has taken place; the cat has eaten up the little bird.'

'The cat eaten it!' said the man, and he grew quite stiff with rage. 'The cat eaten it! It's not true! you have let the nightingale out on purpose. I would never have believed you would do such a thing. You are a bad wife: and now our love is at an end for ever!' Then he turned quite pale, and tears came into his eyes.

When his wife saw this, she suddenly realised that she had done very wrong to let the bird out, and she hurried out into the garden, sobbing bitterly, to see if she could not find it and catch it. And there, right in the middle of the path, she saw the little bird hopping and fluttering about, for it could not fly properly yet.

Then the wife rushed after it to catch it, but the bird whisked into a flower-bed, and from the bed into a bush, and from the bush under another bush, while she ran after it in great distress. She trod down her flowers and flower-beds without caring in the least, and hunted the bird about the garden for quite half an

hour. At last she caught it, and she came back into the room with her face all flushed and her hair loosened. Her eyes were sparkling with joy, and her heart beat violently. 'Dearest husband,' she said, 'I have caught the nightingale again; do not be angry any longer. It was perfectly abominable of me!'

Then the husband looked at her kindly for the first time, and as he gazed at her he thought she had never looked so pretty in her life. He took the little bird out of her hand, held it up again close under his nose, looked at it on all sides, shook his head, and said at last: 'My dear child, you were right after all; I see now for the first time that it is really nothing but a sparrow. It is a most extraordinary thing how completely one may deceive oneself!'

'Husband,' answered the wife, 'you only say that out of consideration for me; but to-day the bird really looks to me exactly like a nightingale.'

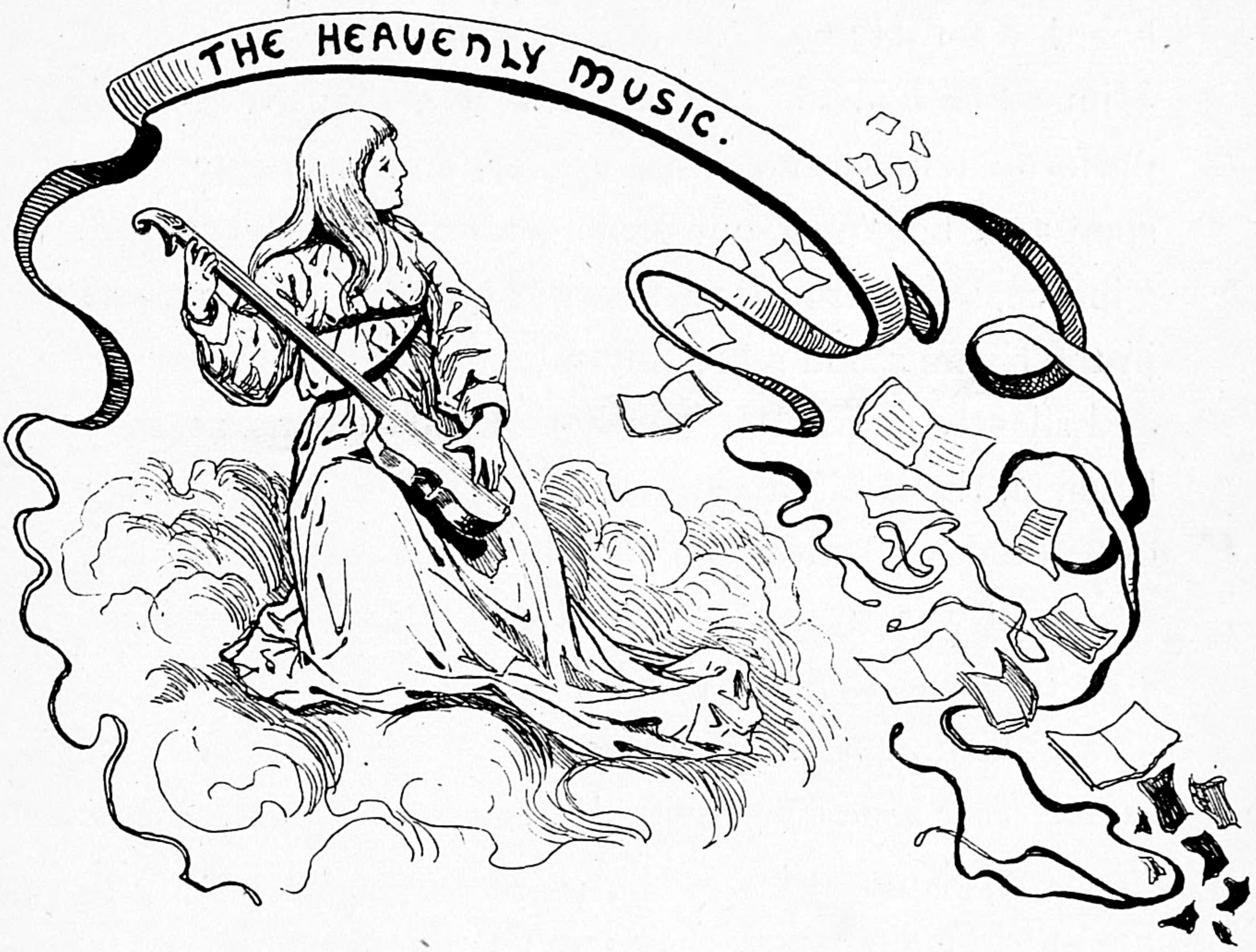
'No, no,' the man interrupted her, while he looked at the bird again and laughed aloud. 'It is nothing but a common yellow-beak.'

Then he gave his wife a heartfelt kiss and went on: 'Take it back into the garden, and let it fly away,—a stupid sparrow, that has made us unhappy for a whole fortnight!'

'No,' answered his wife, 'that would be cruel. It is not full-fledged, and the cat might really get it. We will take care of it for several days still, until its feathers are grown, and then,—then we will let it fly!'

But the moral of the story is this: If any one has caught a sparrow, and thinks it is a nightingale, be sure not to contradict him, for it will only make him very angry; and besides, in a little while he is sure to find it out for himself.

XIX



LONG ago, in the golden age, when the angels used to play with the peasant children upon the sand-heaps, the gates of Heaven stood wide open, and the golden light of Heaven fell through them like rain down on the earth. Men could look up from this world into the open Heavens; they could see the blessèd dead walking to and fro among the stars; they could send greetings up to them, and the blessèd dead could send greetings back. But the most beautiful thing of all was the wonderful music which could be

heard from Heaven in those days. The dear Lord Himself had written the score, and a thousand angels performed it, with drums, violins, and trumpets. As soon as it began to sound all grew still upon earth; the wind ceased murmuring, and the water in the sea and in the rivers stood still; but men nodded to each other, and silently pressed each other's hands. And as they listened, they felt a wonderful happiness, that cannot even be described to the poor human hearts of to-day.

So it was in those days; but it did not last long. For one day the Lord had the gates of Heaven shut as a punishment, and said to the angels: 'Cease your music, for I am sorrowful.' Then the angels were grieved too, and they sat down upon a cloud, each with his music sheet; and they cut up the sheets of music with their little golden scissors into tiny morsels, and let them flutter down to earth. Then the wind caught them up, carried them like snowflakes over hills and valleys, and scattered them over the whole world. And the children of men each snatched a morsel,—one caught a large piece and another a small, and they kept them carefully, and valued the little pieces very highly, for each piece contained something of the heavenly music that had sounded so beautiful. But in time they began to quarrel and fall out, for each one

thought he had caught the best piece ; and at last each one maintained that what he had was the only heavenly music, and that what the others had was vain imitation and falsehood. Any one who wished to be very wise—and there were many such—invented long variations before and after his piece, and made something very remarkable of it. One would sing A, and another whistle B ; one played in the minor, and another in the major ; no one could understand any one else. In short, there was as much noise and confusion as there is in a Jews' school ! And so it has gone on until this very day !

But when the Last Day shall come, when the stars shall fall down to earth, and the sun into the sea, and men shall press up to the gates of Heaven like children on Christmas Eve, when the door is to be opened for the Christmas tree,—then the Lord will make the angels collect all the little morsels of paper out of His heavenly music-book, the small as well as the great, even the very tiniest pieces upon which there is only a single note. The angels will fit the pieces together again, and then the gates will fly open, and the heavenly music will ring out as beautifully as before. And the children of men will stand there astonished and ashamed, listening, and saying to one another : 'That was yours ! This was mine ! but now it all

sounds quite different. How wonderful it is! and how beautiful! for at last all the parts are together again, and in their right places!'

Ah, yes; so it will be, and you may be quite sure of it.

THERE was once a poor little blackamoor who was as black as a coal, and yet his blackness was not quite genuine, for it used to come off. At night his shirt collar was always quite black, and if he caught hold of his mother the marks of all his five fingers were left on her dress. But that was a thing she would not endure, and she always pushed and shoved him away if he came near her. And other people treated him still worse.

When he was fourteen years old his parents said that it was high time he should learn something, so as to earn his own bread. So he begged them to send him out into the wide world and let him be a musician, for he could not put his heart into anything else.

But his father thought music was a very poor trade, and his mother grew angry, and would only say: 'You poor stupid creature, you can only be something black.'

At last they decided that he should be a chimney-sweep. So they took him to a master sweep, and as they were ashamed to confess that he was a blackamoor, they said they had only just blacked him to see how it would suit him.

So now the little blackamoor was a chimney-sweep, and day after day he had to creep up into the chimneys. And the chimneys were often so narrow that he was afraid he might stick in them, but he always got out safely again upon the roof, although he often felt as if his skin and his hair had been left behind. Then when he sat high up on the chimney, breathing the free air of heaven again, and watching the swallows fly round his head, his heart seemed to swell as if it would burst, and he would wave his broom and cry aloud, 'Ho-i-do; Ho-i-do!' as chimney-sweeps do, so that

the people in the street would stop and say: 'Just look at that little black image, and just hear what a voice he has got!'

When he had finished his apprenticeship, his master told him to go up to his own room and wash and dress himself nicely and neatly. He would release him from his apprenticeship, and then he would be a journeyman chimney-sweep.

Then the poor little blackamoor felt very wretched, for he said to himself: 'Now it will all come out!'

And it did come out, for when he went back in his best array into the master's room, where all the apprentices and journeymen were assembled, he was still very black, though here and there a white spot shone through, where he had scraped off the black in the chimney. Then they all saw how the case stood, and were all duly horrified. The master declared that he could certainly never be a journeyman, for he was not even an ordinary Christian; and the apprentices fell upon him, pulled off his clothes and dragged him out into the courtyard. There, in spite of his struggles, they put him under the pump, pumped upon him vigorously, and rubbed him with wisps of straw and sand until their arms were tired. When at last they saw that in spite of all their trouble very little of the

black came off, they covered him with abuse, and pushed him out at the courtyard gate.

So there stood the poor little blackamoor in the middle of the street, quite helpless, and just as God had made him; and he did not know what to do. But just then, by good luck, a man came by, who looked at him from head to foot, and seeing him to be a blackamoor, he said that he himself was a distinguished gentleman, and would take him into his service. His duty would only be to stand behind his carriage when he went out driving with his wife, so that all the world might see that distinguished people were coming by.

The little blackamoor did not hesitate, but went with him straightway, and at first all went well. For the gentleman's wife grew quite fond of him, and every time she went past she would caress him, and that was a thing that had never happened to him in his life before.

But one day when they went out to drive as usual, and he stood up behind, a terrible storm came on, and the rain poured down in torrents. When they reached home the distinguished gentleman saw that the drops that fell from the back of the carriage were black, and he asked the little blackamoor harshly what it meant.

He was very much frightened, and as nothing better occurred to him he answered that the clouds had been quite black, and so he supposed the rain had been black too.

'Fiddle-de-dee!' said the gentleman, and as he suspected something already, he took out his pocket-handkerchief, wetted one corner of it, and rubbed it across the little blackamoor's brow, and the corner grew quite black.

'It is just as I thought!' he cried. 'You are an impostor! This is a pretty discovery! Find yourself another place, for I have no further use for you.'

Then the poor little blackamoor cried, packed up his things, and made ready to go. But the distinguished gentleman's wife called him back, and said she was very sorry that her husband should have found him out, but that she herself had known it a long time. It was certainly a great misfortune to be a blackamoor, and especially one whose colour came off, but he must not lose heart, but be honest and good, and in time he would become as white as other people. Then she gave him a fiddle, and a mirror in which he was to look at himself every week.

So the little blackamoor went out into the world

and became a musician. He had no master to teach him, but he listened to what the birds sang, and to what the bushes and streams murmured, and played it after them. And soon he found out that the stars in the dark night and the flowers in the wood made a strange music too, although a very soft one, that not every one could hear, and that it was certainly much harder to reproduce. But in the end he learned the hardest thing of all—to play as the hearts of men beat. But he had wandered far and wide and suffered and experienced much before he learnt that.

And sometimes things went well with him, and sometimes badly. If he stopped before some house in the shades of evening, played a sweet air and begged for a night's lodging, the people would often let him in. But next morning, when they found out how black he was, and that it was better not to touch him because his colour came off, there would be a perfect rain of sharp words or even of blows. Nevertheless he did not lose heart, but thought of what the distinguished man's wife had told him, and fiddled on from town to town, and from one country to another. Every Sunday he took out the mirror and looked to see how much black was gone. There was certainly very little difference from one Sunday to another, for

the black stuck very fast, but still it was something, and by the time he had wandered about for five years the whiteness underneath the black could be seen shining through everywhere. And by this time he had become such a master of the fiddle that wherever he went young and old came crowding round him to listen to his playing.

One day he came to a very strange city, where a Gold Princess reigned; she had hair of gold, and a face of gold, and hands and feet of gold. She ate with a golden knife and a golden fork off a golden plate, drank golden wine, and wore golden clothes. For the rest, she was proud and haughty beyond all description, and although her subjects wished very much that she would take some prince for a husband (for they thought petticoat government was not to be depended upon) yet no one was handsome or distinguished enough to content her.

Every morning six Princes, who had arrived the night before with the mail, presented themselves before her as suitors, for there was nothing talked of far and wide but the Gold Princess and her beauty.

The six Princes had then to place themselves in a row before her throne, while she looked at them on all

sides. But in the end she always turned up her nose at them and said:

'The first is too stout,
The second's a lout,
The third has no hair,
The fourth is too spare,
The fifth is too white,
And the sixth is a fright!
The trial is o'er.
Chase me the whole six out at the door!'

And immediately twelve gigantic men-at-arms would appear, with birch-rods six feet long, and drive the whole company out of the town; and this had happened every day for several years.

But when the little blackamoor heard how lovely the Princess was, he could think of nothing else. He went to her palace, sat down on the flight of steps, took his fiddle in his hand, and began to play his sweetest air. 'Perhaps she will look out of the window,' he thought, 'and so I may get to see her.'

In a little while the Gold Princess told her three maids of honour to look out and see who it was that was playing so beautifully. They came back and told her that it was a man with a face of the most extraordinary colour they had ever seen. The first said that he was gray like a mouse, the second that he was gray

like a fish, and the third that he was gray like an ass. So the Princess said she must see for herself, and told them to bring the man up.

Then the maids of honour went down again and brought him up, and when he saw the Princess, and saw that she was really golden all over and shone like the sun, he was at first so dazzled that he had to shut his eyes. But when he summoned up courage to look at her again, he could contain himself no longer, but fell down before her on his knees, and said: 'O beautiful Gold Princess, you never can know how lovely you are; for even if you think you do know it, you are a hundred thousand times lovelier than you can possibly imagine! I am only a little blackamoor, but I am growing whiter every day, and the tune I have just played is not the prettiest I know by a long way. And you must have some kind of a husband; and if you would marry me, I should be so happy that I would jump over the table with both feet together!'

When the Princess heard this, she first made a face like a duck at thunder, for she was not particularly sensible in spite of all her beauty, and then she began to laugh so consumedly that she had to hold her sides with both hands. And the three maids of honour thought they must laugh too, and all of a sudden the

twelve men-at-arms came in, and when they saw the little blackamoor kneeling before the Gold Princess, they burst out laughing too, so that the noise resounded through the whole town.

Then a great terror seized upon the little blackamoor, for he saw very well that he had said something absurd. He caught up his fiddle, flung the door open, and went down the stair in three jumps, ran right through the town without looking behind him, across the fields and into the nearest wood. There he threw himself down in the grass, utterly exhausted, and wept as if he would weep himself to death.

But at last he grew quiet again, and said to himself: 'When the driver is drunk, the horses run away. Am I a wise man or a fool? Did I want to marry the Gold Princess? I am a great fool, and I ought not to wonder if people laugh at me.'

And with this he hung his fiddle at his back again, whistled to himself and wandered away, travelling as before from town to town, and from one country to another. And year by year he grew whiter and whiter, and the people came to love him dearly, for the airs he composed were more and more beautiful, and no one could compare with him as a fiddler. And when he got tall and grew into a man, he was quite white, whiter

and fairer than most people. Nobody would believe that he had once been a blackamoor.

It so happened that he came one day to a place where a fair was going on. There he saw a booth with a red curtain that might have been new once, but now it was ragged and covered with stains. In front of the booth stood a rough-looking fellow in a coloured jacket, blowing a trumpet, and calling to the people to come in and see the greatest wonders of the world; a calf with two heads, that had two mouths to eat with and only one stomach to digest with; a learned pig that could play at cards and tell fortunes; and the beautiful and world-renowned Gold Princess, about whom all the nations of the earth had quarrelled.

'Surely it cannot be my Gold Princess,' he said, but nevertheless he went in.

Then he felt as if he should sink into the earth with horror, for it was indeed she. But the gold was almost all gone, and he saw that underneath she was only made of tin.

'Good Heavens!' he cried, 'how did you come here? and why do you look like this?'

'Dear me, what are you making such a fuss about?' she answered, as if everything were right. But when she heard that he had once seen her, long before, when

she was still all golden, she said angrily: 'Do you imagine that any one can last for ever, you silly coxcomb? Attend to your own affairs!'

Then he almost felt inclined to laugh, for he saw that she did not recognise him. But he was very sorry for her, and so he asked her gently if she did not know who he was. He was the little blackamoor she had once laughed at so dreadfully, long ago.

Now it was her turn to sit quiet and feel ashamed, and with many sobs she told him how the gold had worn away, first only in one or two places, but at last almost everywhere; how she had concealed it from her subjects for a long time, but how at last they had found it out and had driven her away. And now she went round to all the fairs, but she was very tired of it, and if he were still of the same mind she would be very glad to marry him.

But to this he answered very gravely that he pitied her from the bottom of his heart, but that he was too wise to marry a tin princess, and that he hoped to get a much better wife than she could ever be. And with this he went out of the booth and left the Tin Princess behind, although she nearly burst with rage, and called after him as he went away, "Blackamoor! Blackamoor! Coal-black blackamoor, whose

colour comes off!' and so forth. But no one knew what she meant, for he had not had so much as a speck of black on him for a long time now.

So he went quietly away without looking round, and all his life long he never heard anything more of this detestable person, for which he was very thankful. For some time he carried on his old wandering life, but when he had seen nearly all the world and was beginning to grow tired of roaming about, it so happened that the King heard of his playing and sent for him. He had to play one air after another to him, until quite late at night, and at last the King came down from his throne, embraced him warmly, and asked him to be his best friend. And when he agreed to this, the King had him drawn through the town in a golden carriage, and gave him a house, and so much money that he had plenty for all his life. And he got a wife too. Certainly she was no princess, and still less was she gold all over, but she had a heart of pure gold. And he lived happy and honoured with her all the days of his long life.

But the Tin Princess grew more unpresentable from day to day, and when the last morsel of gold was gone she was knocked about so much that she was nothing but humps and hollows. At last she came

into the possession of a huckster, and there she remains to this day, in the corner, among all kinds of rubbish and lumber; and there she has time to reflect that many things vanish away in this life, beauty as well as ugliness, and that everything depends upon what is underneath them.

XXI

JUST at the time when the world is most beautiful, and it seems hardest to man to die, (for the elder-trees were already in blossom, and the rose-buds were beginning to blow), two travellers were walking along the road to Heaven,—a poor man and a rich man. On earth they had lived close beside each other in the same street, the rich man in a large and splendid house, and the poor man in a little hut. But as Death makes no distinctions, it had so happened that they had both died at the same hour. So now they had met again on the road to Heaven, and walked along side by side in silence.

But the road grew steeper and steeper, and the rich man began to find it very tiring, for he was stout and short of breath, and had never walked so far in all his life. So it fell out that the poor man soon got a good start, and he arrived at the gate of Heaven first. But as he did not dare to knock, he sat down quietly before the door, and thought: 'I will wait till the rich man comes; perhaps he will knock.' At last, after a long time, the rich man arrived too, and when he found that the gate was shut, and that no one came at once to open it, he began to shake it violently, and beat upon it with his fist. Then St. Peter came up in a great hurry, opened the gate, looked at the two men, and said to the rich man: 'I suppose it was you who made all that noise. Could you not have waited a minute? I should have thought it would be wiser in you not to make yourself so conspicuous; we have not heard so very much good of you up here while you lived on the earth!'

At this the rich man's courage sank considerably, but St. Peter took no further notice of him; he held out his hand to the poor man to help him up, and said: 'You can both come into the ante-chamber; and what is to follow will soon be made manifest.'

And they went in, but not straight into Heaven,—

only into a great wide hall with an immense number of doors all round it, shut fast; and with benches standing against the walls.

'You can rest here for a little,' St. Peter said; 'and wait till I come back; but make good use of your time, for while I am away you must be considering what you would like to have up here. You can each have exactly what you like. So make up your minds, and when I come back say what you want at once, without keeping me waiting; but be sure you forget nothing, for afterwards it will be too late.'

And with this he went away. When he came back after a little while, and asked them if they had made up their minds, and chosen what they would have for Eternity, the rich man sprang up from the bench, and said that he would like to have a great golden castle, finer than any the Emperor had; and the nicest things to eat every day. Chocolate the first thing in the morning, and for dinner, one day after another, roast veal with apple marmalade, and sausages with rice and milk; and fruit pudding for a second course. These were his favourite dishes. And for supper, something different every day. And besides this, he would like to have a very large and beautiful

arm-chair, and a green silk dressing-gown, and St. Peter must not forget the newspaper every day, that he might know what was going on.

Then St. Peter looked at him compassionately, and said nothing for some time, but at last he asked: 'And do you wish for nothing else?'

'Oh yes!' broke in the rich man quickly; 'money —quantities of money, all the cellars full,—so much that no one could count it!'

'All this you shall have,' answered St. Peter: 'come, follow me!' And he opened one of the doors and led the rich man into a splendid golden castle, with everything in it exactly as he had wished. After he had showed him everything he went out, and shot a great iron bolt across the door of the castle. And the rich man put on his green silk dressing-gown, sat down in his great arm-chair, ate and drank and enjoyed himself, and when he had had enough he read the newspaper. And once every day he went down into the cellar to look at his money.

And twenty years passed, and fifty years, and fifty more after that, so that it was a hundred years—and that is only a very small part of Eternity,—and the rich man began to find his splendid gold castle so

tedious already that he could hardly endure it any longer.

'The roast veal and the sausages get worse and worse,' he said; 'they are not at all nice now.' But this was not true, only he was tired of them. 'And I have not read the newspaper for a long time,' he added; 'it is all the same to me what happens down on the earth. I don't know a single human being there now. All my acquaintances are dead long ago, and the men who are living now play such absurd tricks and chatter such ridiculous nonsense that it makes one giddy to read about them.' Then he was silent, and gaped, for he was very dull, and after a time he said again: 'And I don't know what to do with all my money. What on earth is the use of it? One can't buy anything here. How can a man be so foolish as to wish for money in Heaven?' Then he stood up, opened the window and looked out. But although it was bright light everywhere inside the castle, outside it was pitch dark; so dark that one could not see one's hand before one's face, pitch dark, year in year out, and as silent as a churchyard. So he shut the window and sat down again in his great arm-chair, and every day he got up once or twice and looked out. But it was always just the same. And always chocolate the

first thing, and for dinner, one day after another, roast veal and apple marmalade, and sausages with rice and milk, and fruit pudding for a second course, always the same, always the same, one day just like another.

But when a thousand years had passed, the great iron bolt at the door clattered, and St. Peter came in. 'Well,' he said, 'how are you getting on?'

Then the rich man was very angry. 'How am I getting on? I am getting on miserably, as miserably as possible. Just as miserably as one must get on in a worthless castle like this! How could you possibly imagine that any one could endure being here for a thousand years? Nothing to hear, nothing to see; nobody takes the least notice of one! It is all nothing but lies—your much vaunted Heaven and your eternal happiness! It is a perfectly pitiable contrivance!'

Then St. Peter looked at him in astonishment, and said: 'Then you do not know where you are? You are in Hell. You yourself chose to come to Hell. This castle belongs to Hell.'

'In Hell!' answered the rich man quite terrified. 'Surely this cannot be Hell? Why, where is the Devil, and the fire, and the cauldrons?'

'You think, then,' replied St. Peter, 'that sinners are still roasted as they used to be? That has not

been the case for a long time now. Nevertheless you are in Hell, and quite deep down in it too, so that you are indeed very much to be pitied. In time you will come to understand it thoroughly.'

Then the rich man, horror-struck, fell backwards into his great arm-chair, covered his face with his hands, and sobbed: 'In Hell, in Hell! Poor miserable man that I am, what will become of me?'

But St. Peter opened the door and went out, and as he shot the iron bolt again from outside, he heard the rich man still sobbing: 'In Hell, in Hell! Poor wretched man that I am, what will become of me?'

And again a hundred years passed, and another hundred, and the time seemed more terribly long to the rich man than any one can imagine. And when the second thousand came to an end, St. Peter came in again.

'Ah!' the rich man cried out to him, 'I have so longed to see you. I am very miserable! And will it always be like this?—all through Eternity?' And after a minute he asked: 'Holy St. Peter, how long is Eternity?'

Then St. Peter answered: 'When ten thousand more years shall have passed, Eternity will be only beginning!'

When the rich man heard this, his head sank on his breast, and he began to weep bitterly.

But St. Peter stood behind his chair and secretly counted his tears, and when he saw that they were so many that the Lord would certainly pardon him, he said: 'Come, and I will show you something very beautiful. Up there in the loft I know of a knot-hole in the wall, and we can look through it a little way into Heaven.' So he led him up the garret stairs, and through all sorts of rubbish into a little chamber. When they went in, a golden ray of light fell right on the holy St. Peter's brow, so that it looked as if flames were burning upon it.

'Is that really from Heaven?' said the rich man, trembling.

'Yes,' answered St. Peter; 'and now look through the hole.' But the knot-hole was rather high up in the wall, and the rich man was not very tall, so that he could hardly reach up to it.

'You must stretch yourself up and stand on your tiptoes,' said St. Peter. Then the rich man strained every nerve, and when at last he stretched up to the knot-hole and looked through it he really saw into Heaven. There sat the Lord on His throne among the clouds and stars, in His wonderful glory and

beauty, and around Him were all the angels and saints.

'Ah!' he cried out, 'how glorious it is—how beautiful! No one upon earth could possibly imagine it! But tell me who that is with his back to me—he is sitting at the Lord's feet.'

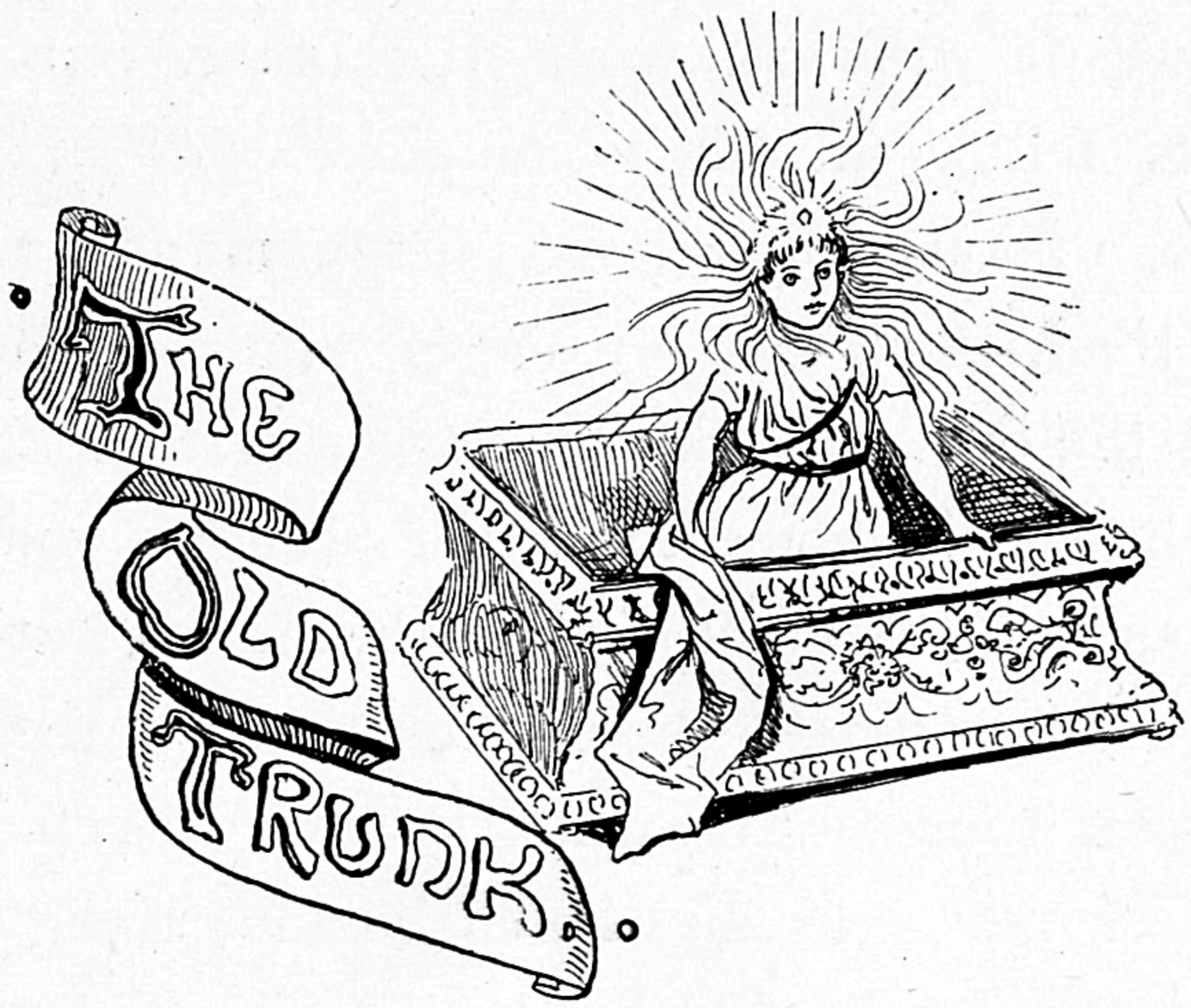
'That is the poor man who lived near you upon earth, and who accompanied you up here. When I charged you both to consider what you would have for Eternity, he only wished for a footstool, that he might sit down at the feet of God for ever. And that he received, just as you received your castle.'

As St. Peter said this he went away quietly, and the rich man never observed it. For he was standing quite still on his tiptoes, and gazing into Heaven as if he could never gaze enough. It was very difficult for him to do it, for the hole was very high up, and he was obliged to stand on tiptoe the whole time; but he did it gladly, for all that he saw was so marvellously beautiful.

And after another thousand years, St. Peter came back for the last time. There stood the rich man still in the garret, on tiptoe beside the wall, gazing steadfastly in at Heaven, and he was so absorbed in gazing that he never noticed St. Peter come in. At last St.

Peter put his hand on his shoulder, and when he turned round said: 'Come with me; for you have been standing there long enough now. Your sins are forgiven you; I am to fetch you to Heaven. And just think how much happier you might have been all this long time, if you had only chosen!'

XXII



THERE was once an old gentleman who was a great traveller, and he possessed a trunk. Handsome certainly the trunk was not, but exceedingly ugly, for it was covered with ragged sealskin and had iron bands and corners. Parts of the sealskin were moth-eaten, and the iron fittings were all rusty, and very much bent and scratched with wear. 'This one can stand hard knocks,' the porters would say, when they took it out of the carriage. Bump! and they threw it down so violently that it cracked. And that was certainly not the way to improve the old trunk's temper, which was bad enough before. It pushed and knocked every one who came in its way with its iron corners. 'You had better not come too

near me,' it growled, when the other trunks who were its fellow-travellers complained of it, 'unless you are anxious to find out the exact state of my bristles!'

But the owner of the trunk was a strange fellow. When he was at home the trunk always stood in his room, beneath the great gilt mirror, although it looked quite ridiculous there—the ugly old trunk in the beautiful elegant room. And when he was travelling, and put up for the night anywhere, the first thing he did was to have the trunk brought in and put beside his bed. 'There must certainly be money in the trunk, since he never lets it out of his sight,' the people thought. But they were on quite a wrong track. To be sure there was *something* inside it, but was it money? No, it was anything but money!

But when the old gentleman was quite alone in the room, he would press upon a secret spring, and Snap! up went the lid, and what was inside? A splendid casket, firmly locked, covered with crimson velvet, and ornamented all over with gold lace and cords. But directly any one else came into the room, Snap! down went the lid.

Now the old gentleman's maid-servant was very cunning, and one day she left her shoes standing out-

side the door, slipped into the room in her stocking soles, and went softly up to the trunk, which was standing wide open. She came close up to it, but when she saw something all red and gold shining in the trunk she forgot herself, and cried: 'Goodness, the old trunk is quite beautiful inside!' And the trunk noticed that some stranger was there; and Snap! it slammed itself violently down, and almost pinched her fingers off, for she was feeling inside to find out if it was really velvet and soft. 'Phew!' she said in a fright—'what a horrible old trunk; one hardly dares to touch it!' And afterwards, if any one asked her about the trunk that her master kept so secretly, and whether there were not something strange inside it, she would answer that the old trunk was of no consequence at all, and still less was there anything of consequence inside it. Every one had his peculiarities, and especially old bachelors; her master had chosen to set his heart on the bristly old trunk, and that was all about it.

Nevertheless there *was* something strange in the trunk. For every now and then the old man would bolt the doors very carefully, press upon the secret spring, so that the lid flew open,—then he would listen again to hear if everything was quiet outside, and if he

heard no one moving, he would lift the crimson velvet casket out of the trunk and set it on the table before him. Then he would press a second hidden spring in the casket, and the red velvet lid would fly open too.

And what was there inside?

Incredible, but true! A charming little fairy Princess, with two long plaits of hair hanging down her back, and high-heeled red shoes. She jumped out of the casket directly with both feet together, sat down on the top of it, and let her feet dangle down—and that made her look perfectly bewitching—and then began to tell the loveliest fairy stories you can imagine. And the old gentleman sat in the arm-chair, and listened to her most attentively.

One day, when she had just finished one, she said: 'Now I have told you a great many beautiful fairy stories; and I believe you forget them as fast as I tell them. Could you not write them down?'

'Oh yes!' answered the old man; 'I could easily write them down, at least after a fashion, though of course not so charmingly as you tell them by a long way; but no one must know how I hear them, and especially no one must know that you live in the old trunk. For I must have you all to myself. Otherwise everybody will come and stare at you, and want to feel

you all over with their clumsy fingers. The velvet on the casket would soon be quite spoilt.'

'No, indeed, for Heaven's sake!' said the little fairy Princess. 'But the people would be finely astonished if they knew who lived in the old trunk!' And she laughed.

'Hush!' said the old gentleman suddenly; 'some one is knocking at the door. Creep back quickly into the casket!' And then he hastily put the casket back into the trunk. Snap! down went the lid with the sealskin cover, and when the maid-servant, for it was she, came in with the tea, the old trunk was standing just as usual beneath the mirror, quite bristly and morose. And as she passed it she secretly, and without her master noticing, gave it a kick and muttered: 'You nasty old trunk, yesterday you almost pinched my fingers off!'

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DREAMS

TRANSLATED BY

JESSIE RALEIGH

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