



THE UGLY DUCKLING

AND OTHER STORIES

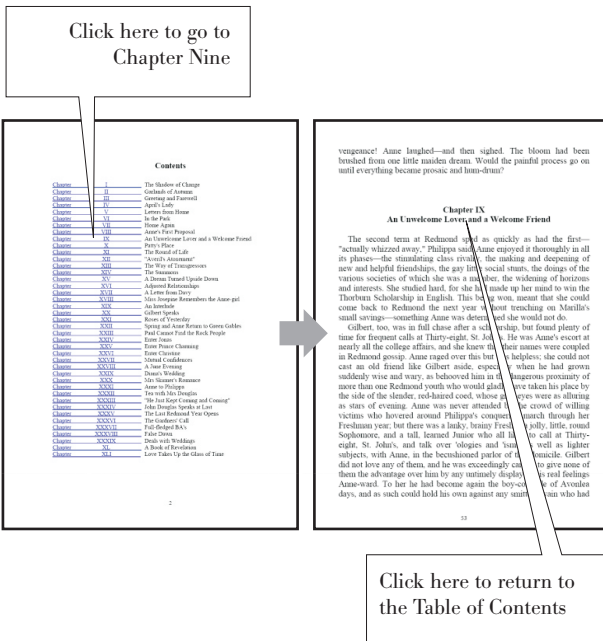
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The Ugly Duckling

IT was lovely summer weather in the country, and the golden corn, the green oats, and the haystacks piled up in the meadows looked beautiful. The stork walking about on his long red legs chattered in the Egyptian language, which he had learnt from his mother. The corn-fields and meadows were surrounded by large forests, in the midst of which were deep pools. It was, indeed, delightful to walk about in the country. In a sunny spot stood a pleasant old farm-house close by a deep river, and from the house down to the water side grew great burdock leaves, so high, that under the tallest of them a little child could stand upright. The spot was as wild as the centre of a thick wood. In this snug retreat sat a duck on her nest, watching for her young brood to hatch; she was beginning to get tired of her task, for the little ones were a long time coming out of their shells, and she seldom had any visitors. The other ducks liked much better to swim about in the river than to climb the slippery banks, and sit under a burdock leaf, to have a gossip with her. At length one shell cracked, and then another, and from each egg came a living creature that lifted its head and cried, "Peep, peep." "Quack, quack," said the mother, and then they all quacked as well as they could, and looked about them on every side at the large green leaves. Their mother allowed them to look as much as they liked, because green is good for the eyes. "How large the world is," said the young ducks, when they found how much more room they now had than while they were inside the egg-shell. "Do you imagine this is the whole world?" asked the mother; "Wait till you have seen the garden; it stretches far beyond that to the parson's field, but I have never ventured to such a distance. Are you all out?" she continued, rising; "No, I declare, the largest egg lies there still. I wonder how long this is to last, I am quite tired of it;" and she seated herself again on the nest.

"Well, how are you getting on?" asked an old duck, who paid her a visit.

"One egg is not hatched yet," said the duck, "it will not break. But just look at all the others, are they not the prettiest little ducklings you ever saw? They are the image of their father, who is so unkind, he never comes to see."

“Let me see the egg that will not break,” said the duck; “I have no doubt it is a turkey’s egg. I was persuaded to hatch some once, and after all my care and trouble with the young ones, they were afraid of the water. I quacked and clucked, but all to no purpose. I could not get them to venture in. Let me look at the egg. Yes, that is a turkey’s egg; take my advice, leave it where it is and teach the other children to swim.”

“I think I will sit on it a little while longer,” said the duck; “as I have sat so long already, a few days will be nothing.”

“Please yourself,” said the old duck, and she went away.

At last the large egg broke, and a young one crept forth crying, “Peep, peep.” It was very large and ugly. The duck stared at it and exclaimed, “It is very large and not at all like the others. I wonder if it really is a turkey. We shall soon find it out, however when we go to the water. It must go in, if I have to push it myself.”

On the next day the weather was delightful, and the sun shone brightly on the green burdock leaves, so the mother duck took her young brood down to the water, and jumped in with a splash. “Quack, quack,” cried she, and one after another the little ducklings jumped in. The water closed over their heads, but they came up again in an instant, and swam about quite prettily with their legs paddling under them as easily as possible, and the ugly duckling was also in the water swimming with them.

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

When they reached the farmyard, there was a great disturbance, two families were fighting for an eel’s head, which, after all, was carried off by the cat. “See, children, that is the way of the world,” said the mother duck, whetting her beak, for she would have liked the eel’s head herself. “Come, now, use your legs, and let me see how well you can behave. You must bow your heads prettily to that old duck yonder; she is the highest born of them all, and has Spanish blood, therefore, she is well

off. Don't you see she has a red flag tied to her leg, which is something very grand, and a great honor for a duck; it shows that every one is anxious not to lose her, as she can be recognized both by man and beast. Come, now, don't turn your toes, a well-bred duckling spreads his feet wide apart, just like his father and mother, in this way; now bend your neck, and say 'quack.'"

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

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

"Yes, but he is so big and ugly," said the spiteful duck "and therefore he must be turned out."

"The others are very pretty children," said the old duck, with the rag on her leg, "all but that one; I wish his mother could improve him a little."

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

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

And so they made themselves comfortable; but the poor duckling, who had crept out of his shell last of all, and looked so ugly, was bitten and pushed and made fun of, not only by the ducks, but by all the poultry. "He is too big," they all said, and the turkey cock, who had been born into the world with spurs, and fancied himself really an emperor, puffed himself out like a vessel in full sail, and flew at the duckling, and became quite red in the head with passion, so that the poor little thing did not know where to go, and was quite miserable because he was so ugly

and laughed at by the whole farmyard. So it went on from day to day till it got worse and worse. The poor duckling was driven about by every one; even his brothers and sisters were unkind to him, and would say, "Ah, you ugly creature, I wish the cat would get you," and his mother said she wished he had never been born. The ducks pecked him, the chickens beat him, and the girl who fed the poultry kicked him with her feet. So at last he ran away, frightening the little birds in the hedge as he flew over the palings.

"They are afraid of me because I am ugly," he said. So he closed his eyes, and flew still farther, until he came out on a large moor, inhabited by wild ducks. Here he remained the whole night, feeling very tired and sorrowful.

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

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

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

"Pop, pop," sounded in the air, and the two wild geese fell dead among the rushes, and the water was tinged with blood. "Pop, pop," echoed far and wide in the distance, and whole flocks of wild geese rose up from the rushes. The sound continued from every direction, for the sportsmen surrounded the moor, and some were even seated on branches of trees, overlooking the rushes. The blue smoke from the guns rose like clouds over the dark trees, and as it floated away across the water, a number of sporting dogs bounded in among the rushes, which bent

beneath them wherever they went. How they terrified the poor duckling! He turned away his head to hide it under his wing, and at the same moment a large terrible dog passed quite near him. His jaws were open, his tongue hung from his mouth, and his eyes glared fearfully. He thrust his nose close to the duckling, showing his sharp teeth, and then, “splash, splash,” he went into the water without touching him, “Oh,” sighed the duckling, “how thankful I am for being so ugly; even a dog will not bite me.” And so he lay quite still, while the shot rattled through the rushes, and gun after gun was fired over him. It was late in the day before all became quiet, but even then the poor young thing did not dare to move. He waited quietly for several hours, and then, after looking carefully around him, hastened away from the moor as fast as he could. He ran over field and meadow till a storm arose, and he could hardly struggle against it. Towards evening, he reached a poor little cottage that seemed ready to fall, and only remained standing because it could not decide on which side to fall first. The storm continued so violent, that the duckling could go no farther; he sat down by the cottage, and then he noticed that the door was not quite closed in consequence of one of the hinges having given way. There was therefore a narrow opening near the bottom large enough for him to slip through, which he did very quietly, and got a shelter for the night. A woman, a tom cat, and a hen lived in this cottage. The tom cat, whom the mistress called, “My little son,” was a great favorite; he could raise his back, and purr, and could even throw out sparks from his fur if it were stroked the wrong way. The hen had very short legs, so she was called “Chickie short legs.” She laid good eggs, and her mistress loved her as if she had been her own child. In the morning, the strange visitor was discovered, and the tom cat began to purr, and the hen to cluck.

“What is that noise about?” said the old woman, looking round the room, but her sight was not very good; therefore, when she saw the duckling she thought it must be a fat duck, that had strayed from home. “Oh what a prize!” she exclaimed, “I hope it is not a drake, for then I shall have some duck’s eggs. I must wait and see.” So the duckling was allowed to remain on trial for three weeks, but there were no eggs. Now the tom cat was the master of the house, and the hen was mistress, and

they always said, “We and the world,” for they believed themselves to be half the world, and the better half too. The duckling thought that others might hold a different opinion on the subject, but the hen would not listen to such doubts. “Can you lay eggs?” she asked. “No.” “Then have the goodness to hold your tongue.” “Can you raise your back, or purr, or throw out sparks?” said the tom cat. “No.” “Then you have no right to express an opinion when sensible people are speaking.” So the duckling sat in a corner, feeling very low spirited, till the sunshine and the fresh air came into the room through the open door, and then he began to feel such a great longing for a swim on the water, that he could not help telling the hen.

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

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

“Delightful, indeed!” said the hen, “why you must be crazy! Ask the cat, he is the cleverest animal I know, ask him how he would like to swim about on the water, or to dive under it, for I will not speak of my own opinion; ask our mistress, the old woman- there is no one in the world more clever than she is. Do you think she would like to swim, or to let the water close over her head?”

“You don’t understand me,” said the duckling.

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

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

“Yes, do,” said the hen. So the duckling left the cottage, and soon found water on which it could swim and dive, but was avoided by all other animals, because of its ugly appearance. Autumn came, and the leaves in the forest turned to orange and gold. Then, as winter approached, the wind caught them as they fell and whirled them in the cold air. The clouds, heavy with hail and snow-flakes, hung low in the sky, and the raven stood on the ferns crying, “Croak, croak.” It made one shiver with cold to look at him. All this was very sad for the poor little duckling. One evening, just as the sun set amid radiant clouds, there came a large flock of beautiful birds out of the bushes. The duckling had never seen any like them before. They were swans, and they curved their graceful necks, while their soft plumage shone with dazzling whiteness. They uttered a singular cry, as they spread their glorious wings and flew away from those cold regions to warmer countries across the sea. As they mounted higher and higher in the air, the ugly little duckling felt quite a strange sensation as he watched them. He whirled himself in the water like a wheel, stretched out his neck towards them, and uttered a cry so strange that it frightened himself. Could he ever forget those beautiful, happy birds; and when at last they were out of his sight, he dived under the water, and rose again almost beside himself with excitement. He knew not the names of these birds, nor where they had flown, but he felt towards them as he had never felt for any other bird in the world. He was not envious of these beautiful creatures, but wished to be as lovely as they. Poor ugly creature, how gladly he would have lived even with the ducks had they only given him encouragement. The winter grew colder and colder; he was obliged to swim about on the water to keep it from freezing, but every night the space on which he swam became smaller and smaller. At length it froze so hard that the ice in the water crackled as he moved, and the duckling had to paddle with his legs as well as he could, to keep the space from closing up. He became exhausted at last, and lay still and helpless, frozen fast in the ice.

Early in the morning, a peasant, who was passing by, saw what had happened. He broke the ice in pieces with his wooden shoe, and carried the duckling home to his wife. The warmth revived the poor little creature; but when the children wanted to play with him, the duckling

thought they would do him some harm; so he started up in terror, fluttered into the milk-pan, and splashed the milk about the room. Then the woman clapped her hands, which frightened him still more. He flew first into the butter-cask, then into the meal-tub, and out again. What a condition he was in! The woman screamed, and struck at him with the tongs; the children laughed and screamed, and tumbled over each other, in their efforts to catch him; but luckily he escaped. The door stood open; the poor creature could just manage to slip out among the bushes, and lie down quite exhausted in the newly fallen snow.

It would be very sad, were I to relate all the misery and privations which the poor little duckling endured during the hard winter; but when it had passed, he found himself lying one morning in a moor, amongst the rushes. He felt the warm sun shining, and heard the lark singing, and saw that all around was beautiful spring. Then the young bird felt that his wings were strong, as he flapped them against his sides, and rose high into the air. They bore him onwards, until he found himself in a large garden, before he well knew how it had happened. The apple-trees were in full blossom, and the fragrant elders bent their long green branches down to the stream which wound round a smooth lawn. Everything looked beautiful, in the freshness of early spring. From a thicket close by came three beautiful white swans, rustling their feathers, and swimming lightly over the smooth water. The duckling remembered the lovely birds, and felt more strangely unhappy than ever.

“I will fly to those royal birds,” he exclaimed, “and they will kill me, because I am so ugly, and dare to approach them; but it does not matter: better be killed by them than pecked by the ducks, beaten by the hens, pushed about by the maiden who feeds the poultry, or starved with hunger in the winter.”

Then he flew to the water, and swam towards the beautiful swans. The moment they espied the stranger, they rushed to meet him with outstretched wings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Emperor's New Clothes

MANY years ago, there was an Emperor, who was so excessively fond of new clothes, that he spent all his money in dress. He did not trouble himself in the least about his soldiers; nor did he care to go either to the theatre or the chase, except for the opportunities then afforded him for displaying his new clothes. He had a different suit for each hour of the day; and as of any other king or emperor, one is accustomed to say, "he is sitting in council," it was always said of him, "The Emperor is sitting in his wardrobe."

Time passed merrily in the large town which was his capital; strangers arrived every day at the court. One day, two rogues, calling themselves weavers, made their appearance. They gave out that they knew how to weave stuffs of the most beautiful colors and elaborate patterns, the clothes manufactured from which should have the wonderful property of remaining invisible to everyone who was unfit for the office he held, or who was extraordinarily simple in character.

"These must, indeed, be splendid clothes!" thought the Emperor. "Had I such a suit, I might at once find out what men in my realms are unfit for their office, and also be able to distinguish the wise from the foolish! This stuff must be woven for me immediately." And he caused large sums of money to be given to both the weavers in order that they might begin their work directly.

So the two pretended weavers set up two looms, and affected to work very busily, though in reality they did nothing at all. They asked for the most delicate silk and the purest gold thread; put both into their own knapsacks; and then continued their pretended work at the empty looms until late at night.

"I should like to know how the weavers are getting on with my cloth," said the Emperor to himself, after some little time had elapsed; he was, however, rather embarrassed, when he remembered that a simpleton, or one unfit for his office, would be unable to see the manufacture. To be sure, he thought he had nothing to risk in his own person; but yet, he would prefer sending somebody else, to bring him intelligence about the weavers, and their work, before he troubled himself in the affair. All the people throughout the city had heard of the

wonderful property the cloth was to possess; and all were anxious to learn how wise, or how ignorant, their neighbors might prove to be.

“I will send my faithful old minister to the weavers,” said the Emperor at last, after some deliberation, “he will be best able to see how the cloth looks; for he is a man of sense, and no one can be more suitable for his office than he is.”

So the faithful old minister went into the hall, where the knaves were working with all their might, at their empty looms. “What can be the meaning of this?” thought the old man, opening his eyes very wide. “I cannot discover the least bit of thread on the looms.” However, he did not express his thoughts aloud.

The impostors requested him very courteously to be so good as to come nearer their looms; and then asked him whether the design pleased him, and whether the colors were not very beautiful; at the same time pointing to the empty frames. The poor old minister looked and looked, he could not discover anything on the looms, for a very good reason, viz: there was nothing there. “What!” thought he again. “Is it possible that I am a simpleton? I have never thought so myself; and no one must know it now if I am so. Can it be, that I am unfit for my office? No, that must not be said either. I will never confess that I could not see the stuff.”

“Well, Sir Minister!” said one of the knaves, still pretending to work. “You do not say whether the stuff pleases you.”

“Oh, it is excellent!” replied the old minister, looking at the loom through his spectacles. “This pattern, and the colors, yes, I will tell the Emperor without delay, how very beautiful I think them.”

“We shall be much obliged to you,” said the impostors, and then they named the different colors and described the pattern of the pretended stuff. The old minister listened attentively to their words, in order that he might repeat them to the Emperor; and then the knaves asked for more silk and gold, saying that it was necessary to complete what they had begun. However, they put all that was given them into their knapsacks; and continued to work with as much apparent diligence as before at their empty looms.

The Emperor now sent another officer of his court to see how the men were getting on, and to ascertain whether the cloth would soon be

ready. It was just the same with this gentleman as with the minister; he surveyed the looms on all sides, but could see nothing at all but the empty frames.

“Does not the stuff appear as beautiful to you, as it did to my lord the minister?” asked the impostors of the Emperor’s second ambassador; at the same time making the same gestures as before, and talking of the design and colors which were not there.

“I certainly am not stupid!” thought the messenger. “It must be, that I am not fit for my good, profitable office! That is very odd; however, no one shall know anything about it.” And accordingly he praised the stuff he could not see, and declared that he was delighted with both colors and patterns. “Indeed, please your Imperial Majesty,” said he to his sovereign when he returned, “the cloth which the weavers are preparing is extraordinarily magnificent.”

The whole city was talking of the splendid cloth which the Emperor had ordered to be woven at his own expense.

And now the Emperor himself wished to see the costly manufacture, while it was still in the loom. Accompanied by a select number of officers of the court, among whom were the two honest men who had already admired the cloth, he went to the crafty impostors, who, as soon as they were aware of the Emperor’s approach, went on working more diligently than ever; although they still did not pass a single thread through the looms.

“Is not the work absolutely magnificent?” said the two officers of the crown, already mentioned. “If your Majesty will only be pleased to look at it! What a splendid design! What glorious colors!” and at the same time they pointed to the empty frames; for they imagined that everyone else could see this exquisite piece of workmanship.

“How is this?” said the Emperor to himself. “I can see nothing! This is indeed a terrible affair! Am I a simpleton, or am I unfit to be an Emperor? That would be the worst thing that could happen—Oh! the cloth is charming,” said he, aloud. “It has my complete approbation.” And he smiled most graciously, and looked closely at the empty looms; for on no account would he say that he could not see what two of the officers of his court had praised so much. All his retinue now strained

their eyes, hoping to discover something on the looms, but they could see no more than the others; nevertheless, they all exclaimed, "Oh, how beautiful!" and advised his majesty to have some new clothes made from this splendid material, for the approaching procession. "Magnificent! Charming! Excellent!" resounded on all sides; and everyone was uncommonly gay. The Emperor shared in the general satisfaction; and presented the impostors with the riband of an order of knighthood, to be worn in their button-holes, and the title of "Gentlemen Weavers."

The rogues sat up the whole of the night before the day on which the procession was to take place, and had sixteen lights burning, so that everyone might see how anxious they were to finish the Emperor's new suit. They pretended to roll the cloth off the looms; cut the air with their scissors; and sewed with needles without any thread in them. "See!" cried they, at last. "The Emperor's new clothes are ready!"

And now the Emperor, with all the grandees of his court, came to the weavers; and the rogues raised their arms, as if in the act of holding something up, saying, "Here are your Majesty's trousers! Here is the scarf! Here is the mantle! The whole suit is as light as a cobweb; one might fancy one has nothing at all on, when dressed in it; that, however, is the great virtue of this delicate cloth."

"Yes indeed!" said all the courtiers, although not one of them could see anything of this exquisite manufacture.

"If your Imperial Majesty will be graciously pleased to take off your clothes, we will fit on the new suit, in front of the looking glass."

The Emperor was accordingly undressed, and the rogues pretended to array him in his new suit; the Emperor turning round, from side to side, before the looking glass.

"How splendid his Majesty looks in his new clothes, and how well they fit!" everyone cried out. "What a design! What colors! These are indeed royal robes!"

"The canopy which is to be borne over your Majesty, in the procession, is waiting," announced the chief master of the ceremonies.

"I am quite ready," answered the Emperor. "Do my new clothes fit well?" asked he, turning himself round again before the looking glass, in order that he might appear to be examining his handsome suit.

The lords of the bedchamber, who were to carry his Majesty's train felt about on the ground, as if they were lifting up the ends of the mantle; and pretended to be carrying something; for they would by no means betray anything like simplicity, or unfitness for their office.

So now the Emperor walked under his high canopy in the midst of the procession, through the streets of his capital; and all the people standing by, and those at the windows, cried out, "Oh! How beautiful are our Emperor's new clothes! What a magnificent train there is to the mantle; and how gracefully the scarf hangs!" in short, no one would allow that he could not see these much-admired clothes; because, in doing so, he would have declared himself either a simpleton or unfit for his office. Certainly, none of the Emperor's various suits, had ever made so great an impression, as these invisible ones.

"But the Emperor has nothing at all on!" said a little child.

"Listen to the voice of innocence!" exclaimed his father; and what the child had said was whispered from one to another.

"But he has nothing at all on!" at last cried out all the people. The Emperor was vexed, for he knew that the people were right; but he thought the procession must go on now! And the lords of the bedchamber took greater pains than ever, to appear holding up a train, although, in reality, there was no train to hold.

The Princess and the Pea

ONCE upon a time there was a prince who wanted to marry a princess; but she would have to be a real princess. He travelled all over the world to find one, but nowhere could he get what he wanted. There were princesses enough, but it was difficult to find out whether they were real ones. There was always something about them that was not as it should be. So he came home again and was sad, for he would have liked very much to have a real princess.

One evening a terrible storm came on; there was thunder and lightning, and the rain poured down in torrents. Suddenly a knocking was heard at the city gate, and the old king went to open it.

It was a princess standing out there in front of the gate. But, good gracious! what a sight the rain and the wind had made her look. The water ran down from her hair and clothes; it ran down into the toes of her shoes and out again at the heels. And yet she said that she was a real princess.

“Well, we’ll soon find that out,” thought the old queen. But she said nothing, went into the bed-room, took all the bedding off the bedstead, and laid a pea on the bottom; then she took twenty mattresses and laid them on the pea, and then twenty eider-down beds on top of the mattresses.

On this the princess had to lie all night. In the morning she was asked how she had slept.

“Oh, very badly!” said she. “I have scarcely closed my eyes all night. Heaven only knows what was in the bed, but I was lying on something hard, so that I am black and blue all over my body. It’s horrible!”

Now they knew that she was a real princess because she had felt the pea right through the twenty mattresses and the twenty eider-down beds.

Nobody but a real princess could be as sensitive as that.

So the prince took her for his wife, for now he knew that he had a real princess; and the pea was put in the museum, where it may still be seen, if no one has stolen it.

There, that is a true story.

Little Fir Tree

OUT in the woods stood a nice little Fir Tree. The place he had was a very good one: the sun shone on him: as to fresh air, there was enough of that, and round him grew many large-sized comrades, pines as well as firs. But the little Fir wanted so very much to be a grown-up tree.

He did not think of the warm sun and of the fresh air; he did not care for the little cottage children that ran about and prattled when they were in the woods looking for wild-strawberries. The children often came with a whole pitcher full of berries, or a long row of them threaded on a straw, and sat down near the young tree and said, "Oh, how pretty he is! What a nice little fir!" But this was what the Tree could not bear to hear.

At the end of a year he had shot up a good deal, and after another year he was another long bit taller; for with fir trees one can always tell by the shoots how many years old they are.

"Oh! Were I but such a high tree as the others are," sighed he. "Then I should be able to spread out my branches, and with the tops to look into the wide world! Then would the birds build nests among my branches: and when there was a breeze, I could bend with as much stateliness as the others!"

Neither the sunbeams, nor the birds, nor the red clouds which morning and evening sailed above him, gave the little Tree any pleasure.

In winter, when the snow lay glittering on the ground, a hare would often come leaping along, and jump right over the little Tree. Oh, that made him so angry! But two winters were past, and in the third the Tree was so large that the hare was obliged to go round it. "To grow and grow, to get older and be tall," thought the Tree—"that, after all, is the most delightful thing in the world!"

In autumn the wood-cutters always came and felled some of the largest trees. This happened every year; and the young Fir Tree, that had now grown to a very comely size, trembled at the sight; for the magnificent great trees fell to the earth with noise and cracking, the branches were lopped off, and the trees looked long and bare; they were hardly to be recognised; and then they were laid in carts, and the horses dragged them out of the wood.

Where did they go to? What became of them?

In spring, when the swallows and the storks came, the Tree asked them, “Don’t you know where they have been taken? Have you not met them anywhere?”

The swallows did not know anything about it; but the Stork looked musing, nodded his head, and said, “Yes; I think I know; I met many ships as I was flying hither from Egypt; on the ships were magnificent masts, and I venture to assert that it was they that smelt so of fir. I may congratulate you, for they lifted themselves on high most majestically!”

“Oh, were I but old enough to fly across the sea! But how does the sea look in reality? What is it like?”

“That would take a long time to explain,” said the Stork, and with these words off he went.

“Rejoice in thy growth!” said the Sunbeams. “Rejoice in thy vigorous growth, and in the fresh life that moveth within thee!”

And the Wind kissed the Tree, and the Dew wept tears over him; but the Fir understood it not.

When Christmas came, quite young trees were cut down: trees which often were not even as large or of the same age as this Fir Tree, who could never rest, but always wanted to be off. These young trees, and they were always the finest looking, retained their branches; they were laid on carts, and the horses drew them out of the wood.

“Where are they going to?” asked the Fir. “They are not taller than I; there was one indeed that was considerably shorter; and why do they retain all their branches? Whither are they taken?”

“We know! We know!” chirped the Sparrows. “We have peeped in at the windows in the town below! We know whither they are taken! The greatest splendor and the greatest magnificence one can imagine await them. We peeped through the windows, and saw them planted in the middle of the warm room and ornamented with the most splendid things, with gilded apples, with gingerbread, with toys, and many hundred lights!

“And then?” asked the Fir Tree, trembling in every bough. “And then? What happens then?”

“We did not see anything more: it was incomparably beautiful.”

“I would fain know if I am destined for so glorious a career,” cried the Tree, rejoicing. “That is still better than to cross the sea! What a longing do I suffer! Were Christmas but come! I am now tall, and my branches spread like the others that were carried off last year! Oh! were I but already on the cart! Were I in the warm room with all the splendor and magnificence! Yes; then something better, something still grander, will surely follow, or wherefore should they thus ornament me? Something better, something still grander must follow—but what? Oh, how I long, how I suffer! I do not know myself what is the matter with me!”

“Rejoice in our presence!” said the Air and the Sunlight. “Rejoice in thy own fresh youth!”

But the Tree did not rejoice at all; he grew and grew, and was green both winter and summer. People that saw him said, “What a fine tree!” and towards Christmas he was one of the first that was cut down. The axe struck deep into the very pith; the Tree fell to the earth with a sigh; he felt a pang—it was like a swoon; he could not think of happiness, for he was sorrowful at being separated from his home, from the place where he had sprung up. He well knew that he should never see his dear old comrades, the little bushes and flowers around him, anymore; perhaps not even the birds! The departure was not at all agreeable.

The Tree only came to himself when he was unloaded in a court-yard with the other trees, and heard a man say, “That one is splendid! We don’t want the others.” Then two servants came in rich livery and carried the Fir Tree into a large and splendid drawing-room. Portraits were hanging on the walls, and near the white porcelain stove stood two large Chinese vases with lions on the covers. There, too, were large easy-chairs, silken sofas, large tables full of picture-books and full of toys, worth hundreds and hundreds of crowns—at least the children said so. And the Fir Tree was stuck upright in a cask that was filled with sand; but no one could see that it was a cask, for green cloth was hung all round it, and it stood on a large gaily-colored carpet. Oh! how the Tree quivered! What was to happen? The servants, as well as the young ladies, decorated it. On one branch there hung little nets cut out of colored paper, and each net was filled with sugarplums; and among the other

boughs gilded apples and walnuts were suspended, looking as though they had grown there, and little blue and white tapers were placed among the leaves. Dolls that looked for all the world like men—the Tree had never beheld such before—were seen among the foliage, and at the very top a large star of gold tinsel was fixed. It was really splendid—beyond description splendid.

“This evening!” they all said. “How it will shine this evening!”

“Oh!” thought the Tree. “If the evening were but come! If the tapers were but lighted! And then I wonder what will happen! Perhaps the other trees from the forest will come to look at me! Perhaps the sparrows will beat against the windowpanes! I wonder if I shall take root here, and winter and summer stand covered with ornaments!”

He knew very much about the matter—but he was so impatient that for sheer longing he got a pain in his back, and this with trees is the same thing as a headache with us.

The candles were now lighted—what brightness! What splendor! The Tree trembled so in every bough that one of the tapers set fire to the foliage. It blazed up famously.

“Help! Help!” cried the young ladies, and they quickly put out the fire.

Now the Tree did not even dare tremble. What a state he was in! He was so uneasy lest he should lose something of his splendor, that he was quite bewildered amidst the glare and brightness; when suddenly both folding-doors opened and a troop of children rushed in as if they would upset the Tree. The older persons followed quietly; the little ones stood quite still. But it was only for a moment; then they shouted that the whole place re-echoed with their rejoicing; they danced round the Tree, and one present after the other was pulled off.

“What are they about?” thought the Tree. “What is to happen now!” And the lights burned down to the very branches, and as they burned down they were put out one after the other, and then the children had permission to plunder the Tree. So they fell upon it with such violence that all its branches cracked; if it had not been fixed firmly in the ground, it would certainly have tumbled down.

The children danced about with their beautiful playthings; no one looked at the Tree except the old nurse, who peeped between the branches; but it was only to see if there was a fig or an apple left that had been forgotten.

“A story! A story!” cried the children, drawing a little fat man towards the Tree. He seated himself under it and said, “Now we are in the shade, and the Tree can listen too. But I shall tell only one story. Now which will you have; that about Ivedy-Avedy, or about Humpty-Dumpty, who tumbled downstairs, and yet after all came to the throne and married the princess?”

“Ivedy-Avedy,” cried some; “Humpty-Dumpty,” cried the others. There was such a bawling and screaming—the Fir Tree alone was silent, and he thought to himself, “Am I not to bawl with the rest? Am I to do nothing whatever?” for he was one of the company, and had done what he had to do.

And the man told about Humpty-Dumpty that tumbled down, who notwithstanding came to the throne, and at last married the princess. And the children clapped their hands, and cried. “Oh, go on! Do go on!” They wanted to hear about Ivedy-Avedy too, but the little man only told them about Humpty-Dumpty. The Fir Tree stood quite still and absorbed in thought; the birds in the wood had never related the like of this. “Humpty-Dumpty fell downstairs, and yet he married the princess! Yes, yes! That’s the way of the world!” thought the Fir Tree, and believed it all, because the man who told the story was so good-looking. “Well, well! who knows, perhaps I may fall downstairs, too, and get a princess as wife! And he looked forward with joy to the morrow, when he hoped to be decked out again with lights, playthings, fruits, and tinsel.

“I won’t tremble to-morrow!” thought the Fir Tree. “I will enjoy to the full all my splendor! To-morrow I shall hear again the story of Humpty-Dumpty, and perhaps that of Ivedy-Avedy too.” And the whole night the Tree stood still and in deep thought.

In the morning the servant and the housemaid came in.

“Now then the splendor will begin again,” thought the Fir. But they dragged him out of the room, and up the stairs into the loft: and here, in a dark corner, where no daylight could enter, they left him. “What’s the

meaning of this?" thought the Tree. "What am I to do here? What shall I hear now, I wonder?" And he leaned against the wall lost in reverie. Time enough had he too for his reflections; for days and nights passed on, and nobody came up; and when at last somebody did come, it was only to put some great trunks in a corner, out of the way. There stood the Tree quite hidden; it seemed as if he had been entirely forgotten.

"'Tis now winter out-of-doors!" thought the Tree. "The earth is hard and covered with snow; men cannot plant me now, and therefore I have been put up here under shelter till the spring-time comes! How thoughtful that is! How kind man is, after all! If it only were not so dark here, and so terribly lonely! Not even a hare! And out in the woods it was so pleasant, when the snow was on the ground, and the hare leaped by; yes—even when he jumped over me; but I did not like it then! It is really terribly lonely here!"

"Squeak! Squeak!" said a little Mouse, at the same moment, peeping out of his hole. And then another little one came. They snuffed about the Fir Tree, and rustled among the branches.

"It is dreadfully cold," said the Mouse. "But for that, it would be delightful here, old Fir, wouldn't it?"

"I am by no means old," said the Fir Tree. "There's many a one considerably older than I am."

"Where do you come from," asked the Mice; "and what can you do?" They were so extremely curious. "Tell us about the most beautiful spot on the earth. Have you never been there? Were you never in the larder, where cheeses lie on the shelves, and hams hang from above; where one dances about on tallow candles: that place where one enters lean, and comes out again fat and portly?"

"I know no such place," said the Tree. "But I know the wood, where the sun shines and where the little birds sing." And then he told all about his youth; and the little Mice had never heard the like before; and they listened and said,

"Well, to be sure! How much you have seen! How happy you must have been!"

“I!” said the Fir Tree, thinking over what he had himself related. “Yes, in reality those were happy times.” And then he told about Christmas-eve, when he was decked out with cakes and candles.

“Oh,” said the little Mice, “how fortunate you have been, old Fir Tree!”

“I am by no means old,” said he. “I came from the wood this winter; I am in my prime, and am only rather short for my age.”

“What delightful stories you know,” said the Mice: and the next night they came with four other little Mice, who were to hear what the Tree recounted: and the more he related, the more he remembered himself; and it appeared as if those times had really been happy times. “But they may still come—they may still come! Humpy-Dumpy fell downstairs, and yet he got a princess!” and he thought at the moment of a nice little Birch Tree growing out in the woods: to the Fir, that would be a real charming princess.

“Who is Humpy-Dumpy?” asked the Mice. So then the Fir Tree told the whole fairy tale, for he could remember every single word of it; and the little Mice jumped for joy up to the very top of the Tree. Next night two more Mice came, and on Sunday two Rats even; but they said the stories were not interesting, which vexed the little Mice; and they, too, now began to think them not so very amusing either.

“Do you know only one story?” asked the Rats.

“Only that one,” answered the Tree. “I heard it on my happiest evening; but I did not then know how happy I was.”

“It is a very stupid story! Don’t you know one about bacon and tallow candles? Can’t you tell any larger stories?”

“No,” said the Tree.

“Then good-bye,” said the Rats; and they went home.

At last the little Mice stayed away also; and the Tree sighed: “After all, it was very pleasant when the sleek little Mice sat round me, and listened to what I told them. Now that too is over. But I will take good care to enjoy myself when I am brought out again.”

But when was that to be? Why, one morning there came a quantity of people and set to work in the loft. The trunks were moved, the tree was

pulled out and thrown—rather hard, it is true—down on the floor, but a man drew him towards the stairs, where the daylight shone.

“Now a merry life will begin again,” thought the Tree. He felt the fresh air, the first sunbeam—and now he was out in the courtyard. All passed so quickly, there was so much going on around him, the Tree quite forgot to look to himself. The court adjoined a garden, and all was in flower; the roses hung so fresh and odorous over the balustrade, the lindens were in blossom, the Swallows flew by, and said, “Quirre-vit! My husband is come!” but it was not the Fir Tree that they meant.

“Now, then, I shall really enjoy life,” said he exultingly, and spread out his branches; but, alas, they were all withered and yellow! It was in a corner that he lay, among weeds and nettles. The golden star of tinsel was still on the top of the Tree, and glittered in the sunshine.

In the court-yard some of the merry children were playing who had danced at Christmas round the Fir Tree, and were so glad at the sight of him. One of the youngest ran and tore off the golden star.

“Only look what is still on the ugly old Christmas tree!” said he, trampling on the branches, so that they all cracked beneath his feet.

And the Tree beheld all the beauty of the flowers, and the freshness in the garden; he beheld himself, and wished he had remained in his dark corner in the loft; he thought of his first youth in the wood, of the merry Christmas-eve, and of the little Mice who had listened with so much pleasure to the story of Humpty-Dumpy.

“‘Tis over—’tis past!” said the poor Tree. “Had I but rejoiced when I had reason to do so! But now ‘tis past, ‘tis past!”

And the gardener’s boy chopped the Tree into small pieces; there was a whole heap lying there. The wood flamed up splendidly under the large brewing copper, and it sighed so deeply! Each sigh was like a shot.

The boys played about in the court, and the youngest wore the gold star on his breast which the Tree had had on the happiest evening of his life. However, that was over now—the Tree gone, the story at an end. All, all was over—every tale must end at last.

The Red Shoes

THERE was once a little girl who was very pretty and delicate, but in summer she was forced to run about with bare feet, she was so poor, and in winter wear very large wooden shoes, which made her little insteps quite red, and that looked so dangerous!

In the middle of the village lived old Dame Shoemaker; she sat and sewed together, as well as she could, a little pair of shoes out of old red strips of cloth; they were very clumsy, but it was a kind thought. They were meant for the little girl. The little girl was called Karen.

On the very day her mother was buried, Karen received the red shoes, and wore them for the first time. They were certainly not intended for mourning, but she had no others, and with stockingless feet she followed the poor straw coffin in them.

Suddenly a large old carriage drove up, and a large old lady sat in it: she looked at the little girl, felt compassion for her, and then said to the clergyman:

“Here, give me the little girl. I will adopt her!”

And Karen believed all this happened on account of the red shoes, but the old lady thought they were horrible, and they were burnt. But Karen herself was cleanly and nicely dressed; she must learn to read and sew; and people said she was a nice little thing, but the looking-glass said: “Thou art more than nice, thou art beautiful!”

Now the queen once travelled through the land, and she had her little daughter with her. And this little daughter was a princess, and people streamed to the castle, and Karen was there also, and the little princess stood in her fine white dress, in a window, and let herself be stared at; she had neither a train nor a golden crown, but splendid red morocco shoes. They were certainly far handsomer than those Dame Shoemaker had made for little Karen. Nothing in the world can be compared with red shoes.

Now Karen was old enough to be confirmed; she had new clothes and was to have new shoes also. The rich shoemaker in the city took the measure of her little foot. This took place at his house, in his room; where stood large glass-cases, filled with elegant shoes and brilliant boots. All this looked charming, but the old lady could not see well, and

so had no pleasure in them. In the midst of the shoes stood a pair of red ones, just like those the princess had worn. How beautiful they were! The shoemaker said also they had been made for the child of a count, but had not fitted.

“That must be patent leather!” said the old lady. “They shine so!”

“Yes, they shine!” said Karen, and they fitted, and were bought, but the old lady knew nothing about their being red, else she would never have allowed Karen to have gone in red shoes to be confirmed. Yet such was the case.

Everybody looked at her feet; and when she stepped through the chancel door on the church pavement, it seemed to her as if the old figures on the tombs, those portraits of old preachers and preachers’ wives, with stiff ruffs, and long black dresses, fixed their eyes on her red shoes. And she thought only of them as the clergyman laid his hand upon her head, and spoke of the holy baptism, of the covenant with God, and how she should be now a matured Christian; and the organ pealed so solemnly; the sweet children’s voices sang, and the old music-directors sang, but Karen only thought of her red shoes.

In the afternoon, the old lady heard from everyone that the shoes had been red, and she said that it was very wrong of Karen, that it was not at all becoming, and that in future Karen should only go in black shoes to church, even when she should be older.

The next Sunday there was the sacrament, and Karen looked at the black shoes, looked at the red ones—looked at them again, and put on the red shoes.

The sun shone gloriously; Karen and the old lady walked along the path through the corn; it was rather dusty there.

At the church door stood an old soldier with a crutch, and with a wonderfully long beard, which was more red than white, and he bowed to the ground, and asked the old lady whether he might dust her shoes. And Karen stretched out her little foot.

“See, what beautiful dancing shoes!” said the soldier. “Sit firm when you dance”; and he put his hand out towards the soles.

And the old lady gave the old soldier alms, and went into the church with Karen.

And all the people in the church looked at Karen's red shoes, and all the pictures, and as Karen knelt before the altar, and raised the cup to her lips, she only thought of the red shoes, and they seemed to swim in it; and she forgot to sing her psalm, and she forgot to pray, "Our Father in Heaven!"

Now all the people went out of church, and the old lady got into her carriage. Karen raised her foot to get in after her, when the old soldier said,

"Look, what beautiful dancing shoes!"

And Karen could not help dancing a step or two, and when she began her feet continued to dance; it was just as though the shoes had power over them. She danced round the church corner, she could not leave off; the coachman was obliged to run after and catch hold of her, and he lifted her in the carriage, but her feet continued to dance so that she trod on the old lady dreadfully. At length she took the shoes off, and then her legs had peace.

The shoes were placed in a closet at home, but Karen could not avoid looking at them.

Now the old lady was sick, and it was said she could not recover. She must be nursed and waited upon, and there was no one whose duty it was so much as Karen's. But there was a great ball in the city, to which Karen was invited. She looked at the old lady, who could not recover, she looked at the red shoes, and she thought there could be no sin in it; she put on the red shoes, she might do that also, she thought. But then she went to the ball and began to dance.

When she wanted to dance to the right, the shoes would dance to the left, and when she wanted to dance up the room, the shoes danced back again, down the steps, into the street, and out of the city gate. She danced, and was forced to dance straight out into the gloomy wood.

Then it was suddenly light up among the trees, and she fancied it must be the moon, for there was a face; but it was the old soldier with the red beard; he sat there, nodded his head, and said, "Look, what beautiful dancing shoes!"

Then she was terrified, and wanted to fling off the red shoes, but they clung fast; and she pulled down her stockings, but the shoes seemed to

have grown to her feet. And she danced, and must dance, over fields and meadows, in rain and sunshine, by night and day; but at night it was the most fearful.

She danced over the churchyard, but the dead did not dance—they had something better to do than to dance. She wished to seat herself on a poor man's grave, where the bitter tansy grew; but for her there was neither peace nor rest; and when she danced towards the open church door, she saw an angel standing there. He wore long, white garments; he had wings which reached from his shoulders to the earth; his countenance was severe and grave; and in his hand he held a sword, broad and glittering.

“Dance shalt thou!” said he. “Dance in thy red shoes till thou art pale and cold! Till thy skin shrivels up and thou art a skeleton! Dance shalt thou from door to door, and where proud, vain children dwell, thou shalt knock, that they may hear thee and tremble! Dance shalt thou—!”

“Mercy!” cried Karen. But she did not hear the angel's reply, for the shoes carried her through the gate into the fields, across roads and bridges, and she must keep ever dancing.

One morning she danced past a door which she well knew. Within sounded a psalm; a coffin, decked with flowers, was borne forth. Then she knew that the old lady was dead, and felt that she was abandoned by all, and condemned by the angel of God.

She danced, and she was forced to dance through the gloomy night. The shoes carried her over stack and stone; she was torn till she bled; she danced over the heath till she came to a little house. Here, she knew, dwelt the executioner; and she tapped with her fingers at the window, and said, “Come out! Come out! I cannot come in, for I am forced to dance!”

And the executioner said, “Thou dost not know who I am, I fancy? I strike bad people's heads off; and I hear that my axe rings!”

“Don't strike my head off!” said Karen. “Then I can't repent of my sins! But strike off my feet in the red shoes!”

And then she confessed her entire sin, and the executioner struck off her feet with the red shoes, but the shoes danced away with the little feet across the field into the deep wood.

And he carved out little wooden feet for her, and crutches, taught her the psalm criminals always sing; and she kissed the hand which had wielded the axe, and went over the heath.

“Now I have suffered enough for the red shoes!” said she. “Now I will go into the church that people may see me!” And she hastened towards the church door: but when she was near it, the red shoes danced before her, and she was terrified, and turned round. The whole week she was unhappy, and wept many bitter tears; but when Sunday returned, she said, “Well, now I have suffered and struggled enough! I really believe I am as good as many a one who sits in the church, and holds her head so high!”

And away she went boldly; but she had not got farther than the churchyard gate before she saw the red shoes dancing before her; and she was frightened, and turned back, and repented of her sin from her heart.

And she went to the parsonage, and begged that they would take her into service; she would be very industrious, she said, and would do everything she could; she did not care about the wages, only she wished to have a home, and be with good people. And the clergyman’s wife was sorry for her and took her into service; and she was industrious and thoughtful. She sat still and listened when the clergyman read the Bible in the evenings. All the children thought a great deal of her; but when they spoke of dress, and grandeur, and beauty, she shook her head.

The following Sunday, when the family was going to church, they asked her whether she would not go with them; but she glanced sorrowfully, with tears in her eyes, at her crutches. The family went to hear the word of God; but she went alone into her little chamber; there was only room for a bed and chair to stand in it; and here she sat down with her Prayer-Book; and whilst she read with a pious mind, the wind bore the strains of the organ towards her, and she raised her tearful countenance, and said, “O God, help me!”

And the sun shone so clearly, and straight before her stood the angel of God in white garments, the same she had seen that night at the church door; but he no longer carried the sharp sword, but in its stead a splendid green spray, full of roses. And he touched the ceiling with the spray, and the ceiling rose so high, and where he had touched it there gleamed a

golden star. And he touched the walls, and they widened out, and she saw the organ which was playing; she saw the old pictures of the preachers and the preachers' wives. The congregation sat in cushioned seats, and sang out of their Prayer-Books. For the church itself had come to the poor girl in her narrow chamber, or else she had come into the church. She sat in the pew with the clergyman's family, and when they had ended the psalm and looked up, they nodded and said, "It is right that thou art come!"

"It was through mercy!" she said.

And the organ pealed, and the children's voices in the choir sounded so sweet and soft! The clear sunshine streamed so warmly through the window into the pew where Karen sat! Her heart was so full of sunshine, peace, and joy, that it broke. Her soul flew on the sunshine to God, and there no one asked after the RED SHOES.

The Steadfast Tin Soldier

THERE were once five-and-twenty tin soldiers, who were all brothers, for they had been made out of the same old tin spoon. They shouldered arms and looked straight before them, and wore a splendid uniform, red and blue. The first thing in the world they ever heard were the words, "Tin soldiers!" uttered by a little boy, who clapped his hands with delight when the lid of the box, in which they lay, was taken off. They were given him for a birthday present, and he stood at the table to set them up. The soldiers were all exactly alike, excepting one, who had only one leg; he had been left to the last, and then there was not enough of the melted tin to finish him, so they made him to stand firmly on one leg, and this caused him to be very remarkable.

The table on which the tin soldiers stood, was covered with other playthings, but the most attractive to the eye was a pretty little paper castle. Through the small windows the rooms could be seen. In front of the castle a number of little trees surrounded a piece of looking-glass, which was intended to represent a transparent lake. Swans, made of wax, swam on the lake, and were reflected in it. All this was very pretty, but the prettiest of all was a tiny little lady, who stood at the open door of the castle; she, also, was made of paper, and she wore a dress of clear muslin, with a narrow blue ribbon over her shoulders just like a scarf. In front of these was fixed a glittering tinsel rose, as large as her whole face. The little lady was a dancer, and she stretched out both her arms, and raised one of her legs so high, that the tin soldier could not see it at all, and he thought that she, like himself, had only one leg. "That is the wife for me," he thought; "but she is too grand, and lives in a castle, while I have only a box to live in, five-and-twenty of us altogether, that is no place for her. Still I must try and make her acquaintance." Then he laid himself at full length on the table behind a snuff-box that stood upon it, so that he could peep at the little delicate lady, who continued to stand on one leg without losing her balance. When evening came, the other tin soldiers were all placed in the box, and the people of the house went to bed. Then the playthings began to have their own games together, to pay visits, to have sham fights, and to give balls. The tin soldiers rattled in their box; they wanted to get out and join the amusements, but they could

not open the lid. The nut-crackers played at leap-frog, and the pencil jumped about the table. There was such a noise that the canary woke up and began to talk, and in poetry too. Only the tin soldier and the dancer remained in their places. She stood on tiptoe, with her legs stretched out, as firmly as he did on his one leg. He never took his eyes from her for even a moment. The clock struck twelve, and, with a bounce, up sprang the lid of the snuff box; but, instead of snuff, there jumped up a little black goblin; for the snuff-box was a toy puzzle.

“Tin soldier,” said the goblin, “don’t wish for what does not belong to you.” But the tin soldier pretended not to hear.

“Very well; wait till to-morrow, then,” said the goblin.

When the children came in the next morning, they placed the tin soldier in the window. Now, whether it was the goblin who did it, or the draught, is not known, but the window flew open, and out fell the tin soldier, heels over head, from the third story, into the street beneath. It was a terrible fall; for he came head downwards, his helmet and his bayonet stuck in between the flagstones, and his one leg up in the air. The servant maid and the little boy went down stairs directly to look for him; but he was nowhere to be seen, although once they nearly trod upon him. If he had called out, “Here I am,” it would have been all right, but he was too proud to cry out for help while he wore a uniform.

Presently it began to rain, and the drops fell faster and faster, till there was a heavy shower. When it was over, two boys happened to pass by, and one of them said, “Look, there is a tin soldier. He ought to have a boat to sail in.”

So they made a boat out of a newspaper, and placed the tin soldier in it, and sent him sailing down the gutter, while the two boys ran by the side of it, and clapped their hands. Good gracious, what large waves arose in that gutter! and how fast the stream rolled on! for the rain had been very heavy. The paper boat rocked up and down, and turned itself round sometimes so quickly that the tin soldier trembled; yet he remained firm; his countenance did not change; he looked straight before him, and shouldered his musket. Suddenly the boat shot under a bridge which formed a part of a drain, and then it was as dark as the tin soldier’s box.

“Where am I going now?” thought he. “This is the black goblin’s fault, I am sure. Ah, well, if the little lady were only here with me in the boat, I should not care for any darkness.”

Suddenly there appeared a great water-rat, who lived in the drain. “Have you a passport?” asked the rat, “give it to me at once.” But the tin soldier remained silent and held his musket tighter than ever. The boat sailed on and the rat followed it. How he did gnash his teeth and cry out to the bits of wood and straw, “Stop him, stop him; he has not paid toll, and has not shown his pass.” But the stream rushed on stronger and stronger. The tin soldier could already see daylight shining where the arch ended. Then he heard a roaring sound quite terrible enough to frighten the bravest man. At the end of the tunnel the drain fell into a large canal over a steep place, which made it as dangerous for him as a waterfall would be to us. He was too close to it to stop, so the boat rushed on, and the poor tin soldier could only hold himself as stiffly as possible, without moving an eyelid, to show that he was not afraid. The boat whirled round three or four times, and then filled with water to the very edge; nothing could save it from sinking. He now stood up to his neck in water, while deeper and deeper sank the boat, and the paper became soft and loose with the wet, till at last the water closed over the soldier’s head. He thought of the elegant little dancer whom he should never see again, and the words of the song sounded in his ears—

“Farewell, warrior! ever brave, Drifting onward to thy grave.”

Then the paper boat fell to pieces, and the soldier sank into the water and immediately afterwards was swallowed up by a great fish. Oh how dark it was inside the fish! A great deal darker than in the tunnel, and narrower too, but the tin soldier continued firm, and lay at full length shouldering his musket. The fish swam to and fro, making the most wonderful movements, but at last he became quite still. After a while, a flash of lightning seemed to pass through him, and then the daylight approached, and a voice cried out, “I declare here is the tin soldier.” The fish had been caught, taken to the market and sold to the cook, who took him into the kitchen and cut him open with a large knife. She picked up

the soldier and held him by the waist between her finger and thumb, and carried him into the room. They were all anxious to see this wonderful soldier who had travelled about inside a fish; but he was not at all proud. They placed him on the table, and—how many curious things do happen in the world!—there he was in the very same room from the window of which he had fallen, there were the same children, the same playthings, standing on the table, and the pretty castle with the elegant little dancer at the door; she still balanced herself on one leg, and held up the other, so she was as firm as himself. It touched the tin soldier so much to see her that he almost wept tin tears, but he kept them back. He only looked at her and they both remained silent. Presently one of the little boys took up the tin soldier, and threw him into the stove. He had no reason for doing so, therefore it must have been the fault of the black goblin who lived in the snuff-box. The flames lighted up the tin soldier, as he stood, the heat was very terrible, but whether it proceeded from the real fire or from the fire of love he could not tell. Then he could see that the bright colors were faded from his uniform, but whether they had been washed off during his journey or from the effects of his sorrow, no one could say. He looked at the little lady, and she looked at him. He felt himself melting away, but he still remained firm with his gun on his shoulder. Suddenly the door of the room flew open and the draught of air caught up the little dancer, she fluttered like a sylph right into the stove by the side of the tin soldier, and was instantly in flames and was gone. The tin soldier melted down into a lump, and the next morning, when the maid servant took the ashes out of the stove, she found him in the shape of a little tin heart. But of the little dancer nothing remained but the tinsel rose, which was burnt black as a cinder.

Little Tiny, or Thumbelina

THERE was once a woman who wished very much to have a little child, but she could not obtain her wish. At last she went to a fairy, and said, "I should so very much like to have a little child; can you tell me where I can find one?"

"Oh, that can be easily managed," said the fairy. "Here is a barleycorn of a different kind to those which grow in the farmer's fields, and which the chickens eat; put it into a flower-pot, and see what will happen."

"Thank you," said the woman, and she gave the fairy twelve shillings, which was the price of the barleycorn. Then she went home and planted it, and immediately there grew up a large handsome flower, something like a tulip in appearance, but with its leaves tightly closed as if it were still a bud. "It is a beautiful flower," said the woman, and she kissed the red and golden-colored leaves, and while she did so the flower opened, and she could see that it was a real tulip. Within the flower, upon the green velvet stamens, sat a very delicate and graceful little maiden. She was scarcely half as long as a thumb, and they gave her the name of "Thumbelina," or Tiny, because she was so small. A walnut-shell, elegantly polished, served her for a cradle; her bed was formed of blue violet-leaves, with a rose-leaf for a counterpane. Here she slept at night, but during the day she amused herself on a table, where the woman had placed a plateful of water. Round this plate were wreaths of flowers with their stems in the water, and upon it floated a large tulip-leaf, which served Tiny for a boat. Here the little maiden sat and rowed herself from side to side, with two oars made of white horse-hair. It really was a very pretty sight. Tiny could, also, sing so softly and sweetly that nothing like her singing had ever before been heard. One night, while she lay in her pretty bed, a large, ugly, wet toad crept through a broken pane of glass in the window, and leaped right upon the table where Tiny lay sleeping under her rose-leaf quilt. "What a pretty little wife this would make for my son," said the toad, and she took up the walnut-shell in which little Tiny lay asleep, and jumped through the window with it into the garden.

In the swampy margin of a broad stream in the garden lived the toad, with her son. He was uglier even than his mother, and when he saw the

pretty little maiden in her elegant bed, he could only cry, “Croak, croak, croak.”

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

Far out in the stream grew a number of water-lilies, with broad green leaves, which seemed to float on the top of the water. The largest of these leaves appeared farther off than the rest, and the old toad swam out to it with the walnut-shell, in which little Tiny lay still asleep. The tiny little creature woke very early in the morning, and began to cry bitterly when she found where she was, for she could see nothing but water on every side of the large green leaf, and no way of reaching the land. Meanwhile the old toad was very busy under the marsh, decking her room with rushes and wild yellow flowers, to make it look pretty for her new daughter-in-law. Then she swam out with her ugly son to the leaf on which she had placed poor little Tiny. She wanted to fetch the pretty bed, that she might put it in the bridal chamber to be ready for her. The old toad bowed low to her in the water, and said, “Here is my son, he will be your husband, and you will live happily in the marsh by the stream.”

“Croak, croak, croak,” was all her son could say for himself; so the toad took up the elegant little bed, and swam away with it, leaving Tiny all alone on the green leaf, where she sat and wept. She could not bear to think of living with the old toad, and having her ugly son for a husband. The little fishes, who swam about in the water beneath, had seen the toad, and heard what she said, so they lifted their heads above the water to look at the little maiden. As soon as they caught sight of her, they saw she was very pretty, and it made them very sorry to think that she must go and live with the ugly toads. “No, it must never be!” so they assembled together in the water, round the green stalk which held the leaf on which the little maiden stood, and gnawed it away at the root with their teeth. Then the leaf floated down the stream, carrying Tiny far away out of reach of land.

Tiny sailed past many towns, and the little birds in the bushes saw her, and sang, "What a lovely little creature;" so the leaf swam away with her farther and farther, till it brought her to other lands. A graceful little white butterfly constantly fluttered round her, and at last alighted on the leaf. Tiny pleased him, and she was glad of it, for now the toad could not possibly reach her, and the country through which she sailed was beautiful, and the sun shone upon the water, till it glittered like liquid gold. She took off her girdle and tied one end of it round the butterfly, and the other end of the ribbon she fastened to the leaf, which now glided on much faster than ever, taking little Tiny with it as she stood. Presently a large cockchafer flew by; the moment he caught sight of her, he seized her round her delicate waist with his claws, and flew with her into a tree. The green leaf floated away on the brook, and the butterfly flew with it, for he was fastened to it, and could not get away.

Oh, how frightened little Tiny felt when the cockchafer flew with her to the tree! But especially was she sorry for the beautiful white butterfly which she had fastened to the leaf, for if he could not free himself he would die of hunger. But the cockchafer did not trouble himself at all about the matter. He seated himself by her side on a large green leaf, gave her some honey from the flowers to eat, and told her she was very pretty, though not in the least like a cockchafer. After a time, all the cockchafers turned up their feelers, and said, "She has only two legs! how ugly that looks." "She has no feelers," said another. "Her waist is quite slim. Pooh! she is like a human being."

"Oh! she is ugly," said all the lady cockchafers, although Tiny was very pretty. Then the cockchafer who had run away with her, believed all the others when they said she was ugly, and would have nothing more to say to her, and told her she might go where she liked. Then he flew down with her from the tree, and placed her on a daisy, and she wept at the thought that she was so ugly that even the cockchafers would have nothing to say to her. And all the while she was really the loveliest creature that one could imagine, and as tender and delicate as a beautiful rose-leaf. During the whole summer poor little Tiny lived quite alone in the wide forest. She wove herself a bed with blades of grass, and hung it up under a broad leaf, to protect herself from the rain. She sucked the

honey from the flowers for food, and drank the dew from their leaves every morning. So passed away the summer and the autumn, and then came the winter,— the long, cold winter. All the birds who had sung to her so sweetly were flown away, and the trees and the flowers had withered. The large clover leaf under the shelter of which she had lived, was now rolled together and shrivelled up, nothing remained but a yellow withered stalk. She felt dreadfully cold, for her clothes were torn, and she was herself so frail and delicate, that poor little Tiny was nearly frozen to death. It began to snow too; and the snow-flakes, as they fell upon her, were like a whole shovelful falling upon one of us, for we are tall, but she was only an inch high. Then she wrapped herself up in a dry leaf, but it cracked in the middle and could not keep her warm, and she shivered with cold. Near the wood in which she had been living lay a corn-field, but the corn had been cut a long time; nothing remained but the bare dry stubble standing up out of the frozen ground. It was to her like struggling through a large wood. Oh! how she shivered with the cold. She came at last to the door of a field-mouse, who had a little den under the corn-stubble. There dwelt the field-mouse in warmth and comfort, with a whole roomful of corn, a kitchen, and a beautiful dining room. Poor little Tiny stood before the door just like a little beggar-girl, and begged for a small piece of barley-corn, for she had been without a morsel to eat for two days.

“You poor little creature,” said the field-mouse, who was really a good old field-mouse, “come into my warm room and dine with me.” She was very pleased with Tiny, so she said, “You are quite welcome to stay with me all the winter, if you like; but you must keep my rooms clean and neat, and tell me stories, for I shall like to hear them very much.” And Tiny did all the field-mouse asked her, and found herself very comfortable.

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

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

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

He was rich and learned, no doubt, but he always spoke slightly of the sun and the pretty flowers, because he had never seen them. Tiny was obliged to sing to him, “Lady-bird, lady-bird, fly away home,” and many other pretty songs. And the mole fell in love with her because she had such a sweet voice; but he said nothing yet, for he was very cautious. A short time before, the mole had dug a long passage under the earth, which led from the dwelling of the field-mouse to his own, and here she had permission to walk with Tiny whenever she liked. But he warned them not to be alarmed at the sight of a dead bird which lay in the passage. It was a perfect bird, with a beak and feathers, and could not have been dead long, and was lying just where the mole had made his passage. The mole took a piece of phosphorescent wood in his mouth, and it glittered like fire in the dark; then he went before them to light them through the long, dark passage. When they came to the spot where lay the dead bird, the mole pushed his broad nose through the ceiling, the earth gave way, so that there was a large hole, and the daylight shone into the passage. In the middle of the floor lay a dead swallow, his beautiful wings pulled close to his sides, his feet and his head drawn up under his feathers; the poor bird had evidently died of the cold. It made little Tiny very sad to see it, she did so love the little birds; all the summer they had sung and twittered for her so beautifully. But the mole pushed it aside with his crooked legs, and said, “He will sing no more now. How miserable it must be to be born a little bird! I am thankful that none of my children will ever be birds, for they can do nothing but cry, ‘Tweet, tweet,’ and always die of hunger in the winter.”

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

Tiny said nothing; but when the two others had turned their backs on the bird, she stooped down and stroked aside the soft feathers which

covered the head, and kissed the closed eyelids. "Perhaps this was the one who sang to me so sweetly in the summer," she said; "and how much pleasure it gave me, you dear, pretty bird."

The mole now stopped up the hole through which the daylight shone, and then accompanied the lady home. But during the night Tiny could not sleep; so she got out of bed and wove a large, beautiful carpet of hay; then she carried it to the dead bird, and spread it over him; with some down from the flowers which she had found in the field-mouse's room. It was as soft as wool, and she spread some of it on each side of the bird, so that he might lie warmly in the cold earth. "Farewell, you pretty little bird," said she, "farewell; thank you for your delightful singing during the summer, when all the trees were green, and the warm sun shone upon us." Then she laid her head on the bird's breast, but she was alarmed immediately, for it seemed as if something inside the bird went "thump, thump." It was the bird's heart; he was not really dead, only benumbed with the cold, and the warmth had restored him to life. In autumn, all the swallows fly away into warm countries, but if one happens to linger, the cold seizes it, it becomes frozen, and falls down as if dead; it remains where it fell, and the cold snow covers it. Tiny trembled very much; she was quite frightened, for the bird was large, a great deal larger than herself,—she was only an inch high. But she took courage, laid the wool more thickly over the poor swallow, and then took a leaf which she had used for her own counterpane, and laid it over the head of the poor bird. The next morning she again stole out to see him. He was alive but very weak; he could only open his eyes for a moment to look at Tiny, who stood by holding a piece of decayed wood in her hand, for she had no other lantern. "Thank you, pretty little maiden," said the sick swallow; "I have been so nicely warmed, that I shall soon regain my strength, and be able to fly about again in the warm sunshine."

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

Then she brought the swallow some water in a flower-leaf, and after he had drunk, he told her that he had wounded one of his wings in a thorn-bush, and could not fly as fast as the others, who were soon far away on their journey to warm countries. Then at last he had fallen to the

earth, and could remember no more, nor how he came to be where she had found him. The whole winter the swallow remained underground, and Tiny nursed him with care and love. Neither the mole nor the field-mouse knew anything about it, for they did not like swallows. Very soon the spring time came, and the sun warmed the earth. Then the swallow bade farewell to Tiny, and she opened the hole in the ceiling which the mole had made. The sun shone in upon them so beautifully, that the swallow asked her if she would go with him; she could sit on his back, he said, and he would fly away with her into the green woods. But Tiny knew it would make the field-mouse very grieved if she left her in that manner, so she said, "No, I cannot."

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

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

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

"You are going to be married, Tiny," said the field-mouse. "My neighbor has asked for you. What good fortune for a poor child like you. Now we will prepare your wedding clothes. They must be both woollen and linen. Nothing must be wanting when you are the mole's wife."

Tiny had to turn the spindle, and the field-mouse hired four spiders, who were to weave day and night. Every evening the mole visited her, and was continually speaking of the time when the summer would be over. Then he would keep his wedding-day with Tiny; but now the heat of the sun was so great that it burned the earth, and made it quite hard, like a stone. As soon, as the summer was over, the wedding should take place. But Tiny was not at all pleased; for she did not like the tiresome mole. Every morning when the sun rose, and every evening when it went down, she would creep out at the door, and as the wind blew aside the ears of corn, so that she could see the blue sky, she thought how beautiful and bright it seemed out there, and wished so much to see her dear

swallow again. But he never returned; for by this time he had flown far away into the lovely green forest.

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

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

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

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

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

"Tweet, tweet," sounded over her head suddenly. She looked up, and there was the swallow himself flying close by. As soon as he spied Tiny, he was delighted; and then she told him how unwilling she felt to marry the ugly mole, and to live always beneath the earth, and never to see the bright sun any more. And as she told him she wept.

"Cold winter is coming," said the swallow, "and I am going to fly away into warmer countries. Will you go with me? You can sit on my back, and fasten yourself on with your sash. Then we can fly away from the ugly mole and his gloomy rooms,—far away, over the mountains, into warmer countries, where the sun shines more brightly—than here; where it is always summer, and the flowers bloom in greater beauty. Fly

now with me, dear little Tiny; you saved my life when I lay frozen in that dark passage.”

“Yes, I will go with you,” said Tiny; and she seated herself on the bird’s back, with her feet on his outstretched wings, and tied her girdle to one of his strongest feathers.

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

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

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

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

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

was the angel of the flower; for a tiny man and a tiny woman dwell in every flower; and this was the king of them all.

“Oh, how beautiful he is!” whispered Tiny to the swallow.

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

This certainly was a very different sort of husband to the son of a toad, or the mole, with my black velvet and fur; so she said, “Yes,” to the handsome prince. Then all the flowers opened, and out of each came a little lady or a tiny lord, all so pretty it was quite a pleasure to look at them. Each of them brought Tiny a present; but the best gift was a pair of beautiful wings, which had belonged to a large white fly and they fastened them to Tiny’s shoulders, so that she might fly from flower to flower. Then there was much rejoicing, and the little swallow who sat above them, in his nest, was asked to sing a wedding song, which he did as well as he could; but in his heart he felt sad for he was very fond of Tiny, and would have liked never to part from her again.

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

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

The Little Match Girl

IT was very, very cold; it snowed and it grew dark; it was the last evening of the year, New Year's Eve. In the cold and dark a poor little girl, with bare head and bare feet, was walking through the streets. When she left her own house she certainly had had slippers on; but what could they do? They were very big slippers, and her mother had used them till then, so big were they. The little maid lost them as she slipped across the road, where two carriages were rattling by terribly fast. One slipper was not to be found again, and a boy ran away with the other. He said he could use it for a cradle when he had children of his own.

So now the little girl went with her little naked feet, which were quite red and blue with the cold. In an old apron she carried a number of matches, and a bundle of them in her hand. No one had bought anything of her all day; no one had given her a copper. Hungry and cold she went, and drew herself together, poor little thing! The snowflakes fell on her long yellow hair, which curled prettily over her neck; but she did not think of that now. In all the windows lights were shining, and there was a glorious smell of roast goose out there in the street; it was no doubt New Year's Eve. Yes, she thought of that!

In a corner formed by two houses, one of which was a little farther from the street than the other, she sat down and crept close. She had drawn up her little feet, but she was still colder, and she did not dare to go home, for she had sold no matches, and she had not a single cent; her father would beat her; and besides, it was cold at home, for they had nothing over the them but a roof through which the wind whistled, though straw and rags stopped the largest holes.

Her small hands were quite numb with the cold. Ah! a little match might do her good if she only dared draw one from the bundle, and strike it against the wall, and warm her fingers at it. She drew one out. R-r-atch! how it spluttered and burned! It was a warm bright flame, like a little candle, when she held her hands over it; it was a wonderful little light! It really seemed to the little girl as if she sat before a great polished stove, with bright brass feet and a brass cover. The fire burned so nicely; it warmed her so well, — the little girl was just putting out her feet to

warm these, too, — when out went the flame; the stove was gone; — she sat with only the end of the burned match in her hand.

She struck another; it burned; it gave a light; and where it shone on the wall, the wall became thin like a veil, and she could see through it into the room where a table stood, spread with a white cloth, and with china on it; and the roast goose smoked gloriously, stuffed with apples and dried plums. And what was still more splendid to behold, the goose hopped down from the dish, and waddled along the floor, with a knife and fork in its breast; straight to the little girl he came. Then the match went out, and only the thick, damp, cold wall was before her.

She lighted another. Then she was sitting under a beautiful Christmas tree; it was greater and finer than the one she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant's. Thousands of candles burned upon the green branches, and colored pictures like those in the shop windows looked down upon them. The little girl stretched forth both hands toward them; then the match went out. The Christmas lights went higher and higher. She saw that now they were stars in the sky: one of them fell and made a long line of fire.

“Now some one is dying,” said the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only person who had been good to her, but who was now dead, had said: “When a star falls a soul mounts up to God.”

She rubbed another match against the wall; it became bright again, and in the light there stood the old grandmother clear and shining, mild and lovely.

“Grandmother!” cried the child. “Oh, take me with you! I know you will go when the match is burned out. You will go away like the warm stove, the nice roast goose, and the great glorious Christmas tree!”

And she hastily rubbed the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to hold her grandmother fast. And the matches burned with such a glow that it became brighter than in the middle of the day; grandmother had never been so large or so beautiful. She took the little girl up in her arms, and both flew in the light and the joy so high, so high! and up there was no cold, nor hunger, nor care — they were with God.

But in the corner by the house sat the little girl, with red cheeks and smiling mouth, frozen to death on the last evening of the Old Year. The

New Year's sun rose upon the little body, that sat there with the matches, of which one bundle was burned. She wanted to warm herself, the people said. No one knew what fine things she had seen, and in what glory she had gone in with her grandmother to the New Year's Day.

The Nightingale

IN China, you know, the emperor is a Chinese, and all those about him are Chinamen also. The story I am going to tell you happened a great many years ago, so it is well to hear it now before it is forgotten. The emperor's palace was the most beautiful in the world. It was built entirely of porcelain, and very costly, but so delicate and brittle that whoever touched it was obliged to be careful. In the garden could be seen the most singular flowers, with pretty silver bells tied to them, which tinkled so that every one who passed could not help noticing the flowers. Indeed, everything in the emperor's garden was remarkable, and it extended so far that the gardener himself did not know where it ended. Those who travelled beyond its limits knew that there was a noble forest, with lofty trees, sloping down to the deep blue sea, and the great ships sailed under the shadow of its branches. In one of these trees lived a nightingale, who sang so beautifully that even the poor fishermen, who had so many other things to do, would stop and listen. Sometimes, when they went at night to spread their nets, they would hear her sing, and say, "Oh, is not that beautiful?" But when they returned to their fishing, they forgot the bird until the next night. Then they would hear it again, and exclaim "Oh, how beautiful is the nightingale's song!"

Travellers from every country in the world came to the city of the emperor, which they admired very much, as well as the palace and gardens; but when they heard the nightingale, they all declared it to be the best of all. And the travellers, on their return home, related what they had seen; and learned men wrote books, containing descriptions of the town, the palace, and the gardens; but they did not forget the nightingale, which was really the greatest wonder. And those who could write poetry composed beautiful verses about the nightingale, who lived in a forest near the deep sea. The books travelled all over the world, and some of them came into the hands of the emperor; and he sat in his golden chair, and, as he read, he nodded his approval every moment, for it pleased him to find such a beautiful description of his city, his palace, and his gardens. But when he came to the words, "the nightingale is the most beautiful of all," he exclaimed, "What is this? I know nothing of any

nightingale. Is there such a bird in my empire? and even in my garden? I have never heard of it. Something, it appears, may be learnt from books.”

Then he called one of his lords-in-waiting, who was so high-bred, that when any in an inferior rank to himself spoke to him, or asked him a question, he would answer, “Pooh,” which means nothing.

“There is a very wonderful bird mentioned here, called a nightingale,” said the emperor; “they say it is the best thing in my large kingdom. Why have I not been told of it?”

“I have never heard the name,” replied the cavalier; “she has not been presented at court.”

“It is my pleasure that she shall appear this evening,” said the emperor; the whole world knows what I possess better than I do myself.”

“I have never heard of her,” said the cavalier; “yet I will endeavor to find her.”

But where was the nightingale to be found? The nobleman went up stairs and down, through halls and passages; yet none of those whom he met had heard of the bird. So he returned to the emperor, and said that it must be a fable, invented by those who had written the book. “Your imperial majesty,” said he, “cannot believe everything contained in books; sometimes they are only fiction, or what is called the black art.”

“But the book in which I have read this account,” said the emperor, “was sent to me by the great and mighty emperor of Japan, and therefore it cannot contain a falsehood. I will hear the nightingale, she must be here this evening; she has my highest favor; and if she does not come, the whole court shall be trampled upon after supper is ended.”

“Tsing-pe!” cried the lord-in-waiting, and again he ran up and down stairs, through all the halls and corridors; and half the court ran with him, for they did not like the idea of being trampled upon. There was a great inquiry about this wonderful nightingale, whom all the world knew, but who was unknown to the court.

At last they met with a poor little girl in the kitchen, who said, “Oh, yes, I know the nightingale quite well; indeed, she can sing. Every evening I have permission to take home to my poor sick mother the scraps from the table; she lives down by the sea-shore, and as I come back I feel tired, and I sit down in the wood to rest, and listen to the

nightingale's song. Then the tears come into my eyes, and it is just as if my mother kissed me."

"Little maiden," said the lord-in-waiting, "I will obtain for you constant employment in the kitchen, and you shall have permission to see the emperor dine, if you will lead us to the nightingale; for she is invited for this evening to the palace." So she went into the wood where the nightingale sang, and half the court followed her. As they went along, a cow began lowing.

"Oh," said a young courtier, "now we have found her; what wonderful power for such a small creature; I have certainly heard it before."

"No, that is only a cow lowing," said the little girl; "we are a long way from the place yet."

Then some frogs began to croak in the marsh.

"Beautiful," said the young courtier again. "Now I hear it, tinkling like little church bells."

"No, those are frogs," said the little maiden; "but I think we shall soon hear her now:" and presently the nightingale began to sing.

"Hark, hark! there she is," said the girl, "and there she sits," she added, pointing to a little gray bird who was perched on a bough.

"Is it possible?" said the lord-in-waiting, "I never imagined it would be a little, plain, simple thing like that. She has certainly changed color at seeing so many grand people around her."

"Little nightingale," cried the girl, raising her voice, "our most gracious emperor wishes you to sing before him."

"With the greatest pleasure," said the nightingale, and began to sing most delightfully.

"It sounds like tiny glass bells," said the lord-in-waiting, "and see how her little throat works. It is surprising that we have never heard this before; she will be a great success at court."

"Shall I sing once more before the emperor?" asked the nightingale, who thought he was present.

"My excellent little nightingale," said the courtier, "I have the great pleasure of inviting you to a court festival this evening, where you will gain imperial favor by your charming song."

“My song sounds best in the green wood,” said the bird; but still she came willingly when she heard the emperor’s wish.

The palace was elegantly decorated for the occasion. The walls and floors of porcelain glittered in the light of a thousand lamps. Beautiful flowers, round which little bells were tied, stood in the corridors: what with the running to and fro and the draught, these bells tinkled so loudly that no one could speak to be heard. In the centre of the great hall, a golden perch had been fixed for the nightingale to sit on. The whole court was present, and the little kitchen-maid had received permission to stand by the door. She was not installed as a real court cook. All were in full dress, and every eye was turned to the little gray bird when the emperor nodded to her to begin. The nightingale sang so sweetly that the tears came into the emperor’s eyes, and then rolled down his cheeks, as her song became still more touching and went to every one’s heart. The emperor was so delighted that he declared the nightingale should have his gold slipper to wear round her neck, but she declined the honor with thanks: she had been sufficiently rewarded already. “I have seen tears in an emperor’s eyes,” she said, “that is my richest reward. An emperor’s tears have wonderful power, and are quite sufficient honor for me;” and then she sang again more enchantingly than ever.

“That singing is a lovely gift;” said the ladies of the court to each other; and then they took water in their mouths to make them utter the gurgling sounds of the nightingale when they spoke to any one, so that they might fancy themselves nightingales. And the footmen and chambermaids also expressed their satisfaction, which is saying a great deal, for they are very difficult to please. In fact the nightingale’s visit was most successful. She was now to remain at court, to have her own cage, with liberty to go out twice a day, and once during the night. Twelve servants were appointed to attend her on these occasions, who each held her by a silken string fastened to her leg. There was certainly not much pleasure in this kind of flying.

The whole city spoke of the wonderful bird, and when two people met, one said “nightin,” and the other said “gale,” and they understood what was meant, for nothing else was talked of. Eleven peddlers’ children were named after her, but not of them could sing a note.

One day the emperor received a large packet on which was written "The Nightingale." "Here is no doubt a new book about our celebrated bird," said the emperor. But instead of a book, it was a work of art contained in a casket, an artificial nightingale made to look like a living one, and covered all over with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. As soon as the artificial bird was wound up, it could sing like the real one, and could move its tail up and down, which sparkled with silver and gold. Round its neck hung a piece of ribbon, on which was written "The Emperor of China's nightingale is poor compared with that of the Emperor of Japan's."

"This is very beautiful," exclaimed all who saw it, and he who had brought the artificial bird received the title of "Imperial nightingale-bringer-in-chief."

"Now they must sing together," said the court, "and what a duet it will be." But they did not get on well, for the real nightingale sang in its own natural way, but the artificial bird sang only waltzes.

"That is not a fault," said the music-master, "it is quite perfect to my taste," so then it had to sing alone, and was as successful as the real bird; besides, it was so much prettier to look at, for it sparkled like bracelets and breast-pins. Three and thirty times did it sing the same tunes without being tired; the people would gladly have heard it again, but the emperor said the living nightingale ought to sing something. But where was she? No one had noticed her when she flew out at the open window, back to her own green woods.

"What strange conduct," said the emperor, when her flight had been discovered; and all the courtiers blamed her, and said she was a very ungrateful creature.

"But we have the best bird after all," said one, and then they would have the bird sing again, although it was the thirty-fourth time they had listened to the same piece, and even then they had not learnt it, for it was rather difficult. But the music-master praised the bird in the highest degree, and even asserted that it was better than a real nightingale, not only in its dress and the beautiful diamonds, but also in its musical power. "For you must perceive, my chief lord and emperor, that with a real nightingale we can never tell what is going to be sung, but with this

bird everything is settled. It can be opened and explained, so that people may understand how the waltzes are formed, and why one note follows upon another.”

“This is exactly what we think,” they all replied, and then the music-master received permission to exhibit the bird to the people on the following Sunday, and the emperor commanded that they should be present to hear it sing. When they heard it they were like people intoxicated; however it must have been with drinking tea, which is quite a Chinese custom. They all said “Oh!” and held up their forefingers and nodded, but a poor fisherman, who had heard the real nightingale, said, “it sounds prettily enough, and the melodies are all alike; yet there seems something wanting, I cannot exactly tell what.”

And after this the real nightingale was banished from the empire, and the artificial bird placed on a silk cushion close to the emperor’s bed. The presents of gold and precious stones which had been received with it were round the bird, and it was now advanced to the title of “Little Imperial Toilet Singer,” and to the rank of No. 1 on the left hand; for the emperor considered the left side, on which the heart lies, as the most noble, and the heart of an emperor is in the same place as that of other people.

The music-master wrote a work, in twenty-five volumes, about the artificial bird, which was very learned and very long, and full of the most difficult Chinese words; yet all the people said they had read it, and understood it, for fear of being thought stupid and having their bodies trampled upon.

So a year passed, and the emperor, the court, and all the other Chinese knew every little turn in the artificial bird’s song; and for that same reason it pleased them better. They could sing with the bird, which they often did. The street-boys sang, “Zi-zi-zi, cluck, cluck, cluck,” and the emperor himself could sing it also. It was really most amusing.

One evening, when the artificial bird was singing its best, and the emperor lay in bed listening to it, something inside the bird sounded “whizz.” Then a spring cracked. “Whir-r-r-r” went all the wheels, running round, and then the music stopped. The emperor immediately sprang out of bed, and called for his physician; but what could he do?

Then they sent for a watchmaker; and, after a great deal of talking and examination, the bird was put into something like order; but he said that it must be used very carefully, as the barrels were worn, and it would be impossible to put in new ones without injuring the music. Now there was great sorrow, as the bird could only be allowed to play once a year; and even that was dangerous for the works inside it. Then the music-master made a little speech, full of hard words, and declared that the bird was as good as ever; and, of course no one contradicted him.

Five years passed, and then a real grief came upon the land. The Chinese really were fond of their emperor, and he now lay so ill that he was not expected to live. Already a new emperor had been chosen and the people who stood in the street asked the lord-in-waiting how the old emperor was; but he only said, "Pooh!" and shook his head.

Cold and pale lay the emperor in his royal bed; the whole court thought he was dead, and every one ran away to pay homage to his successor. The chamberlains went out to have a talk on the matter, and the ladies'-maids invited company to take coffee. Cloth had been laid down on the halls and passages, so that not a footstep should be heard, and all was silent and still. But the emperor was not yet dead, although he lay white and stiff on his gorgeous bed, with the long velvet curtains and heavy gold tassels. A window stood open, and the moon shone in upon the emperor and the artificial bird. The poor emperor, finding he could scarcely breathe with a strange weight on his chest, opened his eyes, and saw Death sitting there. He had put on the emperor's golden crown, and held in one hand his sword of state, and in the other his beautiful banner. All around the bed and peeping through the long velvet curtains, were a number of strange heads, some very ugly, and others lovely and gentle-looking. These were the emperor's good and bad deeds, which stared him in the face now Death sat at his heart.

"Do you remember this?" "Do you recollect that?" they asked one after another, thus bringing to his remembrance circumstances that made the perspiration stand on his brow.

"I know nothing about it," said the emperor. "Music! music!" he cried; "the large Chinese drum! that I may not hear what they say." But they still went on, and Death nodded like a Chinaman to all they said.

“Music! music!” shouted the emperor. “You little precious golden bird, sing, pray sing! I have given you gold and costly presents; I have even hung my golden slipper round your neck. Sing! sing!” But the bird remained silent. There was no one to wind it up, and therefore it could not sing a note.

Death continued to stare at the emperor with his cold, hollow eyes, and the room was fearfully still. Suddenly there came through the open window the sound of sweet music. Outside, on the bough of a tree, sat the living nightingale. She had heard of the emperor’s illness, and was therefore come to sing to him of hope and trust. And as she sung, the shadows grew paler and paler; the blood in the emperor’s veins flowed more rapidly, and gave life to his weak limbs; and even Death himself listened, and said, “Go on, little nightingale, go on.”

“Then will you give me the beautiful golden sword and that rich banner? and will you give me the emperor’s crown?” said the bird.

So Death gave up each of these treasures for a song; and the nightingale continued her singing. She sung of the quiet churchyard, where the white roses grow, where the elder-tree wafts its perfume on the breeze, and the fresh, sweet grass is moistened by the mourners’ tears. Then Death longed to go and see his garden, and floated out through the window in the form of a cold, white mist.

“Thanks, thanks, you heavenly little bird. I know you well. I banished you from my kingdom once, and yet you have charmed away the evil faces from my bed, and banished Death from my heart, with your sweet song. How can I reward you?”

“You have already rewarded me,” said the nightingale. “I shall never forget that I drew tears from your eyes the first time I sang to you. These are the jewels that rejoice a singer’s heart. But now sleep, and grow strong and well again. I will sing to you again.”

And as she sung, the emperor fell into a sweet sleep; and how mild and refreshing that slumber was! When he awoke, strengthened and restored, the sun shone brightly through the window; but not one of his servants had returned- they all believed he was dead; only the nightingale still sat beside him, and sang.

“You must always remain with me,” said the emperor. “You shall sing only when it pleases you; and I will break the artificial bird into a thousand pieces.”

“No; do not do that,” replied the nightingale; “the bird did very well as long as it could. Keep it here still. I cannot live in the palace, and build my nest; but let me come when I like. I will sit on a bough outside your window, in the evening, and sing to you, so that you may be happy, and have thoughts full of joy. I will sing to you of those who are happy, and those who suffer; of the good and the evil, who are hidden around you. The little singing bird flies far from you and your court to the home of the fisherman and the peasant’s cot. I love your heart better than your crown; and yet something holy lingers round that also. I will come, I will sing to you; but you must promise me one thing.”

“Everything,” said the emperor, who, having dressed himself in his imperial robes, stood with the hand that held the heavy golden sword pressed to his heart.

“I only ask one thing,” she replied; “let no one know that you have a little bird who tells you everything. It will be best to conceal it.” So saying, the nightingale flew away.

The servants now came in to look after the dead emperor; when, lo! there he stood, and, to their astonishment, said, “Good morning.”

The Little Mermaid

FAR out in the ocean, where the water is as blue as the prettiest cornflower, and as clear as crystal, it is very, very deep; so deep, indeed, that no cable could fathom it: many church steeples, piled one upon another, would not reach from the ground beneath to the surface of the water above. There dwell the Sea King and his subjects. We must not imagine that there is nothing at the bottom of the sea but bare yellow sand. No, indeed; the most singular flowers and plants grow there; the leaves and stems of which are so pliant, that the slightest agitation of the water causes them to stir as if they had life. Fishes, both large and small, glide between the branches, as birds fly among the trees here upon land. In the deepest spot of all, stands the castle of the Sea King. Its walls are built of coral, and the long, gothic windows are of the clearest amber. The roof is formed of shells, that open and close as the water flows over them. Their appearance is very beautiful, for in each lies a glittering pearl, which would be fit for the diadem of a queen.

The Sea King had been a widower for many years, and his aged mother kept house for him. She was a very wise woman, and exceedingly proud of her high birth; on that account she wore twelve oysters on her tail; while others, also of high rank, were only allowed to wear six. She was, however, deserving of very great praise, especially for her care of the little sea-princesses, her grand-daughters. They were six beautiful children; but the youngest was the prettiest of them all; her skin was as clear and delicate as a rose-leaf, and her eyes as blue as the deepest sea; but, like all the others, she had no feet, and her body ended in a fish's tail. All day long they played in the great halls of the castle, or among the living flowers that grew out of the walls. The large amber windows were open, and the fish swam in, just as the swallows fly into our houses when we open the windows, excepting that the fishes swam up to the princesses, ate out of their hands, and allowed themselves to be stroked. Outside the castle there was a beautiful garden, in which grew bright red and dark blue flowers, and blossoms like flames of fire; the fruit glittered like gold, and the leaves and stems waved to and fro continually. The earth itself was the finest sand, but blue as the flame of burning sulphur. Over everything lay a peculiar blue radiance, as if it were surrounded by

the air from above, through which the blue sky shone, instead of the dark depths of the sea. In calm weather the sun could be seen, looking like a purple flower, with the light streaming from the calyx. Each of the young princesses had a little plot of ground in the garden, where she might dig and plant as she pleased. One arranged her flower-bed into the form of a whale; another thought it better to make hers like the figure of a little mermaid; but that of the youngest was round like the sun, and contained flowers as red as his rays at sunset. She was a strange child, quiet and thoughtful; and while her sisters would be delighted with the wonderful things which they obtained from the wrecks of vessels, she cared for nothing but her pretty red flowers, like the sun, excepting a beautiful marble statue. It was the representation of a handsome boy, carved out of pure white stone, which had fallen to the bottom of the sea from a wreck. She planted by the statue a rose-colored weeping willow. It grew splendidly, and very soon hung its fresh branches over the statue, almost down to the blue sands. The shadow had a violet tint, and waved to and fro like the branches; it seemed as if the crown of the tree and the root were at play, and trying to kiss each other. Nothing gave her so much pleasure as to hear about the world above the sea. She made her old grandmother tell her all she knew of the ships and of the towns, the people and the animals. To her it seemed most wonderful and beautiful to hear that the flowers of the land should have fragrance, and not those below the sea; that the trees of the forest should be green; and that the fishes among the trees could sing so sweetly, that it was quite a pleasure to hear them. Her grandmother called the little birds fishes, or she would not have understood her; for she had never seen birds.

“When you have reached your fifteenth year,” said the grand-mother, “you will have permission to rise up out of the sea, to sit on the rocks in the moonlight, while the great ships are sailing by; and then you will see both forests and towns.”

In the following year, one of the sisters would be fifteen: but as each was a year younger than the other, the youngest would have to wait five years before her turn came to rise up from the bottom of the ocean, and see the earth as we do. However, each promised to tell the others what she saw on her first visit, and what she thought the most beautiful; for

their grandmother could not tell them enough; there were so many things on which they wanted information. None of them longed so much for her turn to come as the youngest, she who had the longest time to wait, and who was so quiet and thoughtful. Many nights she stood by the open window, looking up through the dark blue water, and watching the fish as they splashed about with their fins and tails. She could see the moon and stars shining faintly; but through the water they looked larger than they do to our eyes. When something like a black cloud passed between her and them, she knew that it was either a whale swimming over her head, or a ship full of human beings, who never imagined that a pretty little mermaid was standing beneath them, holding out her white hands towards the keel of their ship.

As soon as the eldest was fifteen, she was allowed to rise to the surface of the ocean. When she came back, she had hundreds of things to talk about; but the most beautiful, she said, was to lie in the moonlight, on a sandbank, in the quiet sea, near the coast, and to gaze on a large town nearby, where the lights were twinkling like hundreds of stars; to listen to the sounds of the music, the noise of carriages, and the voices of human beings, and then to hear the merry bells peal out from the church steeples; and because she could not go near to all those wonderful things, she longed for them more than ever. Oh, did not the youngest sister listen eagerly to all these descriptions? and afterwards, when she stood at the open window looking up through the dark blue water, she thought of the great city, with all its bustle and noise, and even fancied she could hear the sound of the church bells, down in the depths of the sea.

In another year the second sister received permission to rise to the surface of the water, and to swim about where she pleased. She rose just as the sun was setting, and this, she said, was the most beautiful sight of all. The whole sky looked like gold, while violet and rose-colored clouds, which she could not describe, floated over her; and, still more rapidly than the clouds, flew a large flock of wild swans towards the setting sun, looking like a long white veil across the sea. She also swam towards the sun; but it sunk into the waves, and the rosy tints faded from the clouds and from the sea.

The third sister's turn followed; she was the boldest of them all, and she swam up a broad river that emptied itself into the sea. On the banks she saw green hills covered with beautiful vines; palaces and castles peeped out from amid the proud trees of the forest; she heard the birds singing, and the rays of the sun were so powerful that she was obliged often to dive down under the water to cool her burning face. In a narrow creek she found a whole troop of little human children, quite naked, and sporting about in the water; she wanted to play with them, but they fled in a great fright; and then a little black animal came to the water; it was a dog, but she did not know that, for she had never before seen one. This animal barked at her so terribly that she became frightened, and rushed back to the open sea. But she said she should never forget the beautiful forest, the green hills, and the pretty little children who could swim in the water, although they had not fish's tails.

The fourth sister was more timid; she remained in the midst of the sea, but she said it was quite as beautiful there as nearer the land. She could see for so many miles around her, and the sky above looked like a bell of glass. She had seen the ships, but at such a great distance that they looked like sea-gulls. The dolphins sported in the waves, and the great whales spouted water from their nostrils till it seemed as if a hundred fountains were playing in every direction.

The fifth sister's birthday occurred in the winter; so when her turn came, she saw what the others had not seen the first time they went up. The sea looked quite green, and large icebergs were floating about, each like a pearl, she said, but larger and loftier than the churches built by men. They were of the most singular shapes, and glittered like diamonds. She had seated herself upon one of the largest, and let the wind play with her long hair, and she remarked that all the ships sailed by rapidly, and steered as far away as they could from the iceberg, as if they were afraid of it. Towards evening, as the sun went down, dark clouds covered the sky, the thunder rolled and the lightning flashed, and the red light glowed on the icebergs as they rocked and tossed on the heaving sea. On all the ships the sails were reefed with fear and trembling, while she sat calmly on the floating iceberg, watching the blue lightning, as it darted its forked flashes into the sea.

When first the sisters had permission to rise to the surface, they were each delighted with the new and beautiful sights they saw; but now, as grown-up girls, they could go when they pleased, and they had become indifferent about it. They wished themselves back again in the water, and after a month had passed they said it was much more beautiful down below, and pleasanter to be at home. Yet often, in the evening hours, the five sisters would twine their arms round each other, and rise to the surface, in a row. They had more beautiful voices than any human being could have; and before the approach of a storm, and when they expected a ship would be lost, they swam before the vessel, and sang sweetly of the delights to be found in the depths of the sea, and begging the sailors not to fear if they sank to the bottom. But the sailors could not understand the song, they took it for the howling of the storm. And these things were never to be beautiful for them; for if the ship sank, the men were drowned, and their dead bodies alone reached the palace of the Sea King.

When the sisters rose, arm-in-arm, through the water in this way, their youngest sister would stand quite alone, looking after them, ready to cry, only that the mermaids have no tears, and therefore they suffer more. "Oh, were I but fifteen years old," said she: "I know that I shall love the world up there, and all the people who live in it."

At last she reached her fifteenth year. "Well, now, you are grown up," said the old dowager, her grandmother; "so you must let me adorn you like your other sisters;" and she placed a wreath of white lilies in her hair, and every flower leaf was half a pearl. Then the old lady ordered eight great oysters to attach themselves to the tail of the princess to show her high rank.

"But they hurt me so," said the little mermaid.

"Pride must suffer pain," replied the old lady. Oh, how gladly she would have shaken off all this grandeur, and laid aside the heavy wreath! The red flowers in her own garden would have suited her much better, but she could not help herself: so she said, "Farewell," and rose as lightly as a bubble to the surface of the water. The sun had just set as she raised her head above the waves; but the clouds were tinted with crimson and gold, and through the glimmering twilight beamed the evening star in all

its beauty. The sea was calm, and the air mild and fresh. A large ship, with three masts, lay becalmed on the water, with only one sail set; for not a breeze stirred, and the sailors sat idle on deck or amongst the rigging. There was music and song on board; and, as darkness came on, a hundred colored lanterns were lighted, as if the flags of all nations waved in the air. The little mermaid swam close to the cabin windows; and now and then, as the waves lifted her up, she could look in through clear glass window-panes, and see a number of well-dressed people within. Among them was a young prince, the most beautiful of all, with large black eyes; he was sixteen years of age, and his birthday was being kept with much rejoicing. The sailors were dancing on deck, but when the prince came out of the cabin, more than a hundred rockets rose in the air, making it as bright as day. The little mermaid was so startled that she dived under water; and when she again stretched out her head, it appeared as if all the stars of heaven were falling around her, she had never seen such fireworks before. Great suns spurted fire about, splendid fireflies flew into the blue air, and everything was reflected in the clear, calm sea beneath. The ship itself was so brightly illuminated that all the people, and even the smallest rope, could be distinctly and plainly seen. And how handsome the young prince looked, as he pressed the hands of all present and smiled at them, while the music resounded through the clear night air.

It was very late; yet the little mermaid could not take her eyes from the ship, or from the beautiful prince. The colored lanterns had been extinguished, no more rockets rose in the air, and the cannon had ceased firing; but the sea became restless, and a moaning, grumbling sound could be heard beneath the waves: still the little mermaid remained by the cabin window, rocking up and down on the water, which enabled her to look in. After a while, the sails were quickly unfurled, and the noble ship continued her passage; but soon the waves rose higher, heavy clouds darkened the sky, and lightning appeared in the distance. A dreadful storm was approaching; once more the sails were reefed, and the great ship pursued her flying course over the raging sea. The waves rose mountains high, as if they would have overtopped the mast; but the ship dived like a swan between them, and then rose again on their lofty,

foaming crests. To the little mermaid this appeared pleasant sport; not so to the sailors. At length the ship groaned and creaked; the thick planks gave way under the lashing of the sea as it broke over the deck; the mainmast snapped asunder like a reed; the ship lay over on her side; and the water rushed in. The little mermaid now perceived that the crew were in danger; even she herself was obliged to be careful to avoid the beams and planks of the wreck which lay scattered on the water. At one moment it was so pitch dark that she could not see a single object, but a flash of lightning revealed the whole scene; she could see every one who had been on board excepting the prince; when the ship parted, she had seen him sink into the deep waves, and she was glad, for she thought he would now be with her; and then she remembered that human beings could not live in the water, so that when he got down to her father's palace he would be quite dead. But he must not die. So she swam about among the beams and planks which strewed the surface of the sea, forgetting that they could crush her to pieces. Then she dived deeply under the dark waters, rising and falling with the waves, till at length she managed to reach the young prince, who was fast losing the power of swimming in that stormy sea. His limbs were failing him, his beautiful eyes were closed, and he would have died had not the little mermaid come to his assistance. She held his head above the water, and let the waves drift them where they would.

In the morning the storm had ceased; but of the ship not a single fragment could be seen. The sun rose up red and glowing from the water, and its beams brought back the hue of health to the prince's cheeks; but his eyes remained closed. The mermaid kissed his high, smooth forehead, and stroked back his wet hair; he seemed to her like the marble statue in her little garden, and she kissed him again, and wished that he might live. Presently they came in sight of land; she saw lofty blue mountains, on which the white snow rested as if a flock of swans were lying upon them. Near the coast were beautiful green forests, and close by stood a large building, whether a church or a convent she could not tell. Orange and citron trees grew in the garden, and before the door stood lofty palms. The sea here formed a little bay, in which the water was quite still, but very deep; so she swam with the handsome prince to

the beach, which was covered with fine, white sand, and there she laid him in the warm sunshine, taking care to raise his head higher than his body. Then bells sounded in the large white building, and a number of young girls came into the garden. The little mermaid swam out farther from the shore and placed herself between some high rocks that rose out of the water; then she covered her head and neck with the foam of the sea so that her little face might not be seen, and watched to see what would become of the poor prince. She did not wait long before she saw a young girl approach the spot where he lay. She seemed frightened at first, but only for a moment; then she fetched a number of people, and the mermaid saw that the prince came to life again, and smiled upon those who stood round him. But to her he sent no smile; he knew not that she had saved him. This made her very unhappy, and when he was led away into the great building, she dived down sorrowfully into the water, and returned to her father's castle. She had always been silent and thoughtful, and now she was more so than ever. Her sisters asked her what she had seen during her first visit to the surface of the water; but she would tell them nothing. Many an evening and morning did she rise to the place where she had left the prince. She saw the fruits in the garden ripen till they were gathered, the snow on the tops of the mountains melt away; but she never saw the prince, and therefore she returned home, always more sorrowful than before. It was her only comfort to sit in her own little garden, and fling her arm round the beautiful marble statue which was like the prince; but she gave up tending her flowers, and they grew in wild confusion over the paths, twining their long leaves and stems round the branches of the trees, so that the whole place became dark and gloomy. At length she could bear it no longer, and told one of her sisters all about it. Then the others heard the secret, and very soon it became known to two mermaids whose intimate friend happened to know who the prince was. She had also seen the festival on board ship, and she told them where the prince came from, and where his palace stood.

“Come, little sister,” said the other princesses; then they entwined their arms and rose up in a long row to the surface of the water, close by the spot where they knew the prince's palace stood. It was built of bright yellow shining stone, with long flights of marble steps, one of which

reached quite down to the sea. Splendid gilded cupolas rose over the roof, and between the pillars that surrounded the whole building stood life-like statues of marble. Through the clear crystal of the lofty windows could be seen noble rooms, with costly silk curtains and hangings of tapestry; while the walls were covered with beautiful paintings which were a pleasure to look at. In the centre of the largest saloon a fountain threw its sparkling jets high up into the glass cupola of the ceiling, through which the sun shone down upon the water and upon the beautiful plants growing round the basin of the fountain. Now that she knew where he lived, she spent many an evening and many a night on the water near the palace. She would swim much nearer the shore than any of the others ventured to do; indeed once she went quite up the narrow channel under the marble balcony, which threw a broad shadow on the water. Here she would sit and watch the young prince, who thought himself quite alone in the bright moonlight. She saw him many times of an evening sailing in a pleasant boat, with music playing and flags waving. She peeped out from among the green rushes, and if the wind caught her long silvery-white veil, those who saw it believed it to be a swan, spreading out its wings. On many a night, too, when the fishermen, with their torches, were out at sea, she heard them relate so many good things about the doings of the young prince, that she was glad she had saved his life when he had been tossed about half-dead on the waves. And she remembered that his head had rested on her bosom, and how heartily she had kissed him; but he knew nothing of all this, and could not even dream of her. She grew more and more fond of human beings, and wished more and more to be able to wander about with those whose world seemed to be so much larger than her own. They could fly over the sea in ships, and mount the high hills which were far above the clouds; and the lands they possessed, their woods and their fields, stretched far away beyond the reach of her sight. There was so much that she wished to know, and her sisters were unable to answer all her questions. Then she applied to her old grandmother, who knew all about the upper world, which she very rightly called the lands above the sea.

“If human beings are not drowned,” asked the little mermaid, “can they live forever? do they never die as we do here in the sea?”

“Yes,” replied the old lady, “they must also die, and their term of life is even shorter than ours. We sometimes live to three hundred years, but when we cease to exist here we only become the foam on the surface of the water, and we have not even a grave down here of those we love. We have not immortal souls, we shall never live again; but, like the green sea-weed, when once it has been cut off, we can never flourish more. Human beings, on the contrary, have a soul which lives forever, lives after the body has been turned to dust. It rises up through the clear, pure air beyond the glittering stars. As we rise out of the water, and behold all the land of the earth, so do they rise to unknown and glorious regions which we shall never see.”

“Why have not we an immortal soul?” asked the little mermaid mournfully; “I would give gladly all the hundreds of years that I have to live, to be a human being only for one day, and to have the hope of knowing the happiness of that glorious world above the stars.”

“You must not think of that,” said the old woman; “we feel ourselves to be much happier and much better off than human beings.”

“So I shall die,” said the little mermaid, “and as the foam of the sea I shall be driven about never again to hear the music of the waves, or to see the pretty flowers nor the red sun. Is there anything I can do to win an immortal soul?”

“No,” said the old woman, “unless a man were to love you so much that you were more to him than his father or mother; and if all his thoughts and all his love were fixed upon you, and the priest placed his right hand in yours, and he promised to be true to you here and hereafter, then his soul would glide into your body and you would obtain a share in the future happiness of mankind. He would give a soul to you and retain his own as well; but this can never happen. Your fish’s tail, which amongst us is considered so beautiful, is thought on earth to be quite ugly; they do not know any better, and they think it necessary to have two stout props, which they call legs, in order to be handsome.”

Then the little mermaid sighed, and looked sorrowfully at her fish’s tail. “Let us be happy,” said the old lady, “and dart and spring about during the three hundred years that we have to live, which is really quite

long enough; after that we can rest ourselves all the better. This evening we are going to have a court ball.”

It is one of those splendid sights which we can never see on earth. The walls and the ceiling of the large ball-room were of thick, but transparent crystal. May hundreds of colossal shells, some of a deep red, others of a grass green, stood on each side in rows, with blue fire in them, which lighted up the whole saloon, and shone through the walls, so that the sea was also illuminated. Innumerable fishes, great and small, swam past the crystal walls; on some of them the scales glowed with a purple brilliancy, and on others they shone like silver and gold. Through the halls flowed a broad stream, and in it danced the mermen and the mermaids to the music of their own sweet singing. No one on earth has such a lovely voice as theirs. The little mermaid sang more sweetly than them all. The whole court applauded her with hands and tails; and for a moment her heart felt quite gay, for she knew she had the loveliest voice of any on earth or in the sea. But she soon thought again of the world above her, for she could not forget the charming prince, nor her sorrow that she had not an immortal soul like his; therefore she crept away silently out of her father’s palace, and while everything within was gladness and song, she sat in her own little garden sorrowful and alone. Then she heard the bugle sounding through the water, and thought—“He is certainly sailing above, he on whom my wishes depend, and in whose hands I should like to place the happiness of my life. I will venture all for him, and to win an immortal soul, while my sisters are dancing in my father’s palace, I will go to the sea witch, of whom I have always been so much afraid, but she can give me counsel and help.”

And then the little mermaid went out from her garden, and took the road to the foaming whirlpools, behind which the sorceress lived. She had never been that way before: neither flowers nor grass grew there; nothing but bare, gray, sandy ground stretched out to the whirlpool, where the water, like foaming mill-wheels, whirled round everything that it seized, and cast it into the fathomless deep. Through the midst of these crushing whirlpools the little mermaid was obliged to pass, to reach the dominions of the sea witch; and also for a long distance the only road lay right across a quantity of warm, bubbling mire, called by the witch her

turfmoor. Beyond this stood her house, in the centre of a strange forest, in which all the trees and flowers were polypi, half animals and half plants; they looked like serpents with a hundred heads growing out of the ground. The branches were long slimy arms, with fingers like flexible worms, moving limb after limb from the root to the top. All that could be reached in the sea they seized upon, and held fast, so that it never escaped from their clutches. The little mermaid was so alarmed at what she saw, that she stood still, and her heart beat with fear, and she was very nearly turning back; but she thought of the prince, and of the human soul for which she longed, and her courage returned. She fastened her long flowing hair round her head, so that the polypi might not seize hold of it. She laid her hands together across her bosom, and then she darted forward as a fish shoots through the water, between the supple arms and fingers of the ugly polypi, which were stretched out on each side of her. She saw that each held in its grasp something it had seized with its numerous little arms, as if they were iron bands. The white skeletons of human beings who had perished at sea, and had sunk down into the deep waters, skeletons of land animals, oars, rudders, and chests of ships were lying tightly grasped by their clinging arms; even a little mermaid, whom they had caught and strangled; and this seemed the most shocking of all to the little princess.

She now came to a space of marshy ground in the wood, where large, fat water-snakes were rolling in the mire, and showing their ugly, drab-colored bodies. In the midst of this spot stood a house, built with the bones of shipwrecked human beings. There sat the sea witch, allowing a toad to eat from her mouth, just as people sometimes feed a canary with a piece of sugar. She called the ugly water-snakes her little chickens, and allowed them to crawl all over her bosom.

“I know what you want,” said the sea witch; “it is very stupid of you, but you shall have your way, and it will bring you to sorrow, my pretty princess. You want to get rid of your fish’s tail, and to have two supports instead of it, like human beings on earth, so that the young prince may fall in love with you, and that you may have an immortal soul.” And then the witch laughed so loud and disgustingly, that the toad and the snakes fell to the ground, and lay there wriggling about. “You are but just in

time,” said the witch; “for after sunrise to-morrow I should not be able to help you till the end of another year. I will prepare a draught for you, with which you must swim to land tomorrow before sunrise, and sit down on the shore and drink it. Your tail will then disappear, and shrink up into what mankind calls legs, and you will feel great pain, as if a sword were passing through you. But all who see you will say that you are the prettiest little human being they ever saw. You will still have the same floating gracefulness of movement, and no dancer will ever tread so lightly; but at every step you take it will feel as if you were treading upon sharp knives, and that the blood must flow. If you will bear all this, I will help you.”

“Yes, I will,” said the little princess in a trembling voice, as she thought of the prince and the immortal soul.

“But think again,” said the witch; “for when once your shape has become like a human being, you can no more be a mermaid. You will never return through the water to your sisters, or to your father’s palace again; and if you do not win the love of the prince, so that he is willing to forget his father and mother for your sake, and to love you with his whole soul, and allow the priest to join your hands that you may be man and wife, then you will never have an immortal soul. The first morning after he marries another your heart will break, and you will become foam on the crest of the waves.”

“I will do it,” said the little mermaid, and she became pale as death.

“But I must be paid also,” said the witch, “and it is not a trifle that I ask. You have the sweetest voice of any who dwell here in the depths of the sea, and you believe that you will be able to charm the prince with it also, but this voice you must give to me; the best thing you possess will I have for the price of my draught. My own blood must be mixed with it, that it may be as sharp as a two-edged sword.”

“But if you take away my voice,” said the little mermaid, “what is left for me?”

“Your beautiful form, your graceful walk, and your expressive eyes; surely with these you can enchain a man’s heart. Well, have you lost your courage? Put out your little tongue that I may cut it off as my payment; then you shall have the powerful draught.”

“It shall be,” said the little mermaid.

Then the witch placed her cauldron on the fire, to prepare the magic draught.

“Cleanliness is a good thing,” said she, scouring the vessel with snakes, which she had tied together in a large knot; then she pricked herself in the breast, and let the black blood drop into it. The steam that rose formed itself into such horrible shapes that no one could look at them without fear. Every moment the witch threw something else into the vessel, and when it began to boil, the sound was like the weeping of a crocodile. When at last the magic draught was ready, it looked like the clearest water. “There it is for you,” said the witch. Then she cut off the mermaid’s tongue, so that she became dumb, and would never again speak or sing. “If the polypi should seize hold of you as you return through the wood,” said the witch, “throw over them a few drops of the potion, and their fingers will be torn into a thousand pieces.” But the little mermaid had no occasion to do this, for the polypi sprang back in terror when they caught sight of the glittering draught, which shone in her hand like a twinkling star.

So she passed quickly through the wood and the marsh, and between the rushing whirlpools. She saw that in her father’s palace the torches in the ballroom were extinguished, and all within asleep; but she did not venture to go in to them, for now she was dumb and going to leave them forever, she felt as if her heart would break. She stole into the garden, took a flower from the flower-beds of each of her sisters, kissed her hand a thousand times towards the palace, and then rose up through the dark blue waters. The sun had not risen when she came in sight of the prince’s palace, and approached the beautiful marble steps, but the moon shone clear and bright. Then the little mermaid drank the magic draught, and it seemed as if a two-edged sword went through her delicate body: she fell into a swoon, and lay like one dead. When the sun arose and shone over the sea, she recovered, and felt a sharp pain; but just before her stood the handsome young prince. He fixed his coal-black eyes upon her so earnestly that she cast down her own, and then became aware that her fish’s tail was gone, and that she had as pretty a pair of white legs and tiny feet as any little maiden could have; but she had no clothes, so she

wrapped herself in her long, thick hair. The prince asked her who she was, and where she came from, and she looked at him mildly and sorrowfully with her deep blue eyes; but she could not speak. Every step she took was as the witch had said it would be, she felt as if treading upon the points of needles or sharp knives; but she bore it willingly, and stepped as lightly by the prince's side as a soap-bubble, so that he and all who saw her wondered at her graceful-swaying movements. She was very soon arrayed in costly robes of silk and muslin, and was the most beautiful creature in the palace; but she was dumb, and could neither speak nor sing.

Beautiful female slaves, dressed in silk and gold, stepped forward and sang before the prince and his royal parents: one sang better than all the others, and the prince clapped his hands and smiled at her. This was great sorrow to the little mermaid; she knew how much more sweetly she herself could sing once, and she thought, "Oh if he could only know that! I have given away my voice forever, to be with him."

The slaves next performed some pretty fairy-like dances, to the sound of beautiful music. Then the little mermaid raised her lovely white arms, stood on the tips of her toes, and glided over the floor, and danced as no one yet had been able to dance. At each moment her beauty became more revealed, and her expressive eyes appealed more directly to the heart than the songs of the slaves. Every one was enchanted, especially the prince, who called her his little foundling; and she danced again quite readily, to please him, though each time her foot touched the floor it seemed as if she trod on sharp knives.

The prince said she should remain with him always, and she received permission to sleep at his door, on a velvet cushion. He had a page's dress made for her, that she might accompany him on horseback. They rode together through the sweet-scented woods, where the green boughs touched their shoulders, and the little birds sang among the fresh leaves. She climbed with the prince to the tops of high mountains; and although her tender feet bled so that even her steps were marked, she only laughed, and followed him till they could see the clouds beneath them looking like a flock of birds travelling to distant lands. While at the prince's palace, and when all the household were asleep, she would go

and sit on the broad marble steps; for it eased her burning feet to bathe them in the cold sea-water; and then she thought of all those below in the deep.

Once during the night her sisters came up arm-in-arm, singing sorrowfully, as they floated on the water. She beckoned to them, and then they recognized her, and told her how she had grieved them. After that, they came to the same place every night; and once she saw in the distance her old grandmother, who had not been to the surface of the sea for many years, and the old Sea King, her father, with his crown on his head. They stretched out their hands towards her, but they did not venture so near the land as her sisters did.

As the days passed, she loved the prince more fondly, and he loved her as he would love a little child, but it never came into his head to make her his wife; yet, unless he married her, she could not receive an immortal soul; and, on the morning after his marriage with another, she would dissolve into the foam of the sea.

“Do you not love me the best of them all?” the eyes of the little mermaid seemed to say, when he took her in his arms, and kissed her fair forehead.

“Yes, you are dear to me,” said the prince; “for you have the best heart, and you are the most devoted to me; you are like a young maiden whom I once saw, but whom I shall never meet again. I was in a ship that was wrecked, and the waves cast me ashore near a holy temple, where several young maidens performed the service. The youngest of them found me on the shore, and saved my life. I saw her but twice, and she is the only one in the world whom I could love; but you are like her, and you have almost driven her image out of my mind. She belongs to the holy temple, and my good fortune has sent you to me instead of her; and we will never part.”

“Ah, he knows not that it was I who saved his life,” thought the little mermaid. “I carried him over the sea to the wood where the temple stands: I sat beneath the foam, and watched till the human beings came to help him. I saw the pretty maiden that he loves better than he loves me;” and the mermaid sighed deeply, but she could not shed tears. “He says the maiden belongs to the holy temple, therefore she will never return to

the world. They will meet no more: while I am by his side, and see him every day. I will take care of him, and love him, and give up my life for his sake.”

Very soon it was said that the prince must marry, and that the beautiful daughter of a neighboring king would be his wife, for a fine ship was being fitted out. Although the prince gave out that he merely intended to pay a visit to the king, it was generally supposed that he really went to see his daughter. A great company were to go with him. The little mermaid smiled, and shook her head. She knew the prince’s thoughts better than any of the others.

“I must travel,” he had said to her; “I must see this beautiful princess; my parents desire it; but they will not oblige me to bring her home as my bride. I cannot love her; she is not like the beautiful maiden in the temple, whom you resemble. If I were forced to choose a bride, I would rather choose you, my dumb foundling, with those expressive eyes.” And then he kissed her rosy mouth, played with her long waving hair, and laid his head on her heart, while she dreamed of human happiness and an immortal soul. “You are not afraid of the sea, my dumb child,” said he, as they stood on the deck of the noble ship which was to carry them to the country of the neighboring king. And then he told her of storm and of calm, of strange fishes in the deep beneath them, and of what the divers had seen there; and she smiled at his descriptions, for she knew better than any one what wonders were at the bottom of the sea.

In the moonlight, when all on board were asleep, excepting the man at the helm, who was steering, she sat on the deck, gazing down through the clear water. She thought she could distinguish her father’s castle, and upon it her aged grandmother, with the silver crown on her head, looking through the rushing tide at the keel of the vessel. Then her sisters came up on the waves, and gazed at her mournfully, wringing their white hands. She beckoned to them, and smiled, and wanted to tell them how happy and well off she was; but the cabin-boy approached, and when her sisters dived down he thought it was only the foam of the sea which he saw.

The next morning the ship sailed into the harbor of a beautiful town belonging to the king whom the prince was going to visit. The church

bells were ringing, and from the high towers sounded a flourish of trumpets; and soldiers, with flying colors and glittering bayonets, lined the rocks through which they passed. Every day was a festival; balls and entertainments followed one another.

But the princess had not yet appeared. People said that she was being brought up and educated in a religious house, where she was learning every royal virtue. At last she came. Then the little mermaid, who was very anxious to see whether she was really beautiful, was obliged to acknowledge that she had never seen a more perfect vision of beauty. Her skin was delicately fair, and beneath her long dark eye-lashes her laughing blue eyes shone with truth and purity.

“It was you,” said the prince, “who saved my life when I lay dead on the beach,” and he folded his blushing bride in his arms. “Oh, I am too happy,” said he to the little mermaid; “my fondest hopes are all fulfilled. You will rejoice at my happiness; for your devotion to me is great and sincere.”

The little mermaid kissed his hand, and felt as if her heart were already broken. His wedding morning would bring death to her, and she would change into the foam of the sea. All the church bells rung, and the heralds rode about the town proclaiming the betrothal. Perfumed oil was burning in costly silver lamps on every altar. The priests waved the censers, while the bride and bridegroom joined their hands and received the blessing of the bishop. The little mermaid, dressed in silk and gold, held up the bride’s train; but her ears heard nothing of the festive music, and her eyes saw not the holy ceremony; she thought of the night of death which was coming to her, and of all she had lost in the world. On the same evening the bride and bridegroom went on board ship; cannons were roaring, flags waving, and in the centre of the ship a costly tent of purple and gold had been erected. It contained elegant couches, for the reception of the bridal pair during the night. The ship, with swelling sails and a favorable wind, glided away smoothly and lightly over the calm sea. When it grew dark a number of colored lamps were lit, and the sailors danced merrily on the deck. The little mermaid could not help thinking of her first rising out of the sea, when she had seen similar festivities and joys; and she joined in the dance, poised herself in the air

as a swallow when he pursues his prey, and all present cheered her with wonder. She had never danced so elegantly before. Her tender feet felt as if cut with sharp knives, but she cared not for it; a sharper pang had pierced through her heart. She knew this was the last evening she should ever see the prince, for whom she had forsaken her kindred and her home; she had given up her beautiful voice, and suffered unheard-of pain daily for him, while he knew nothing of it. This was the last evening that she would breathe the same air with him, or gaze on the starry sky and the deep sea; an eternal night, without a thought or a dream, awaited her: she had no soul and now she could never win one. All was joy and gayer on board ship till long after midnight; she laughed and danced with the rest, while the thoughts of death were in her heart. The prince kissed his beautiful bride, while she played with his raven hair, till they went arm-in-arm to rest in the splendid tent. Then all became still on board the ship; the helmsman, alone awake, stood at the helm. The little mermaid leaned her white arms on the edge of the vessel, and looked towards the east for the first blush of morning, for that first ray of dawn that would bring her death. She saw her sisters rising out of the flood: they were as pale as herself; but their long beautiful hair waved no more in the wind, and had been cut off.

“We have given our hair to the witch,” said they, “to obtain help for you, that you may not die to-night. She has given us a knife: here it is, see it is very sharp. Before the sun rises you must plunge it into the heart of the prince; when the warm blood falls upon your feet they will grow together again, and form into a fish’s tail, and you will be once more a mermaid, and return to us to live out your three hundred years before you die and change into the salt sea foam. Haste, then; he or you must die before sunrise. Our old grandmother moans so for you, that her white hair is falling off from sorrow, as ours fell under the witch’s scissors. Kill the prince and come back; hasten: do you not see the first red streaks in the sky? In a few minutes the sun will rise, and you must die.” And then they sighed deeply and mournfully, and sank down beneath the waves.

The little mermaid drew back the crimson curtain of the tent, and beheld the fair bride with her head resting on the prince’s breast. She

bent down and kissed his fair brow, then looked at the sky on which the rosy dawn grew brighter and brighter; then she glanced at the sharp knife, and again fixed her eyes on the prince, who whispered the name of his bride in his dreams. She was in his thoughts, and the knife trembled in the hand of the little mermaid: then she flung it far away from her into the waves; the water turned red where it fell, and the drops that spurted up looked like blood. She cast one more lingering, half-fainting glance at the prince, and then threw herself from the ship into the sea, and thought her body was dissolving into foam. The sun rose above the waves, and his warm rays fell on the cold foam of the little mermaid, who did not feel as if she were dying. She saw the bright sun, and all around her floated hundreds of transparent beautiful beings; she could see through them the white sails of the ship, and the red clouds in the sky; their speech was melodious, but too ethereal to be heard by mortal ears, as they were also unseen by mortal eyes. The little mermaid perceived that she had a body like theirs, and that she continued to rise higher and higher out of the foam. "Where am I?" asked she, and her voice sounded ethereal, as the voice of those who were with her; no earthly music could imitate it.

"Among the daughters of the air," answered one of them. "A mermaid has not an immortal soul, nor can she obtain one unless she wins the love of a human being. On the power of another hangs her eternal destiny. But the daughters of the air, although they do not possess an immortal soul, can, by their good deeds, procure one for themselves. We fly to warm countries, and cool the sultry air that destroys mankind with the pestilence. We carry the perfume of the flowers to spread health and restoration. After we have striven for three hundred years to all the good in our power, we receive an immortal soul and take part in the happiness of mankind. You, poor little mermaid, have tried with your whole heart to do as we are doing; you have suffered and endured and raised yourself to the spirit-world by your good deeds; and now, by striving for three hundred years in the same way, you may obtain an immortal soul."

The little mermaid lifted her glorified eyes towards the sun, and felt them, for the first time, filling with tears. On the ship, in which she had

left the prince, there were life and noise; she saw him and his beautiful bride searching for her; sorrowfully they gazed at the pearly foam, as if they knew she had thrown herself into the waves. Unseen she kissed the forehead of her bride, and fanned the prince, and then mounted with the other children of the air to a rosy cloud that floated through the aether.

“After three hundred years, thus shall we float into the kingdom of heaven,” said she. “And we may even get there sooner,” whispered one of her companions. “Unseen we can enter the houses of men, where there are children, and for every day on which we find a good child, who is the joy of his parents and deserves their love, our time of probation is shortened. The child does not know, when we fly through the room, that we smile with joy at his good conduct, for we can count one year less of our three hundred years. But when we see a naughty or a wicked child, we shed tears of sorrow, and for every tear a day is added to our time of trial!”

The Garden of Paradise

THERE was once a king's son; nobody had so many or such beautiful books as he had. He could read about everything which had ever happened in this world, and see it all represented in the most beautiful pictures. He could get information about every nation and every country; but as to where the Garden of Paradise was to be found, not a word could he discover, and this was the very thing he thought most about. His grandmother had told him, when he was quite a little fellow and was about to begin his school life, that every flower in the Garden of Paradise was a delicious cake, and that the pistils were full of wine. In one flower history was written, in another geography or tables; you had only to eat the cake and you knew the lesson. The more you ate, the more history, geography and tables you knew. All this he believed then; but as he grew older and wiser and learnt more, he easily perceived that the delights of the Garden of Paradise must be far beyond all this.

'Oh, why did Eve take of the tree of knowledge? Why did Adam eat the forbidden fruit? If it had only been I it would not have happened! never would sin have entered the world!'

This is what he said then, and he still said it when he was seventeen; his thoughts were full of the Garden of Paradise.

He walked into the wood one day; he was alone, for that was his greatest pleasure. Evening came on, the clouds drew up and it rained as if the whole heaven had become a sluice from which the water poured in sheets; it was as dark as it is otherwise in the deepest well. Now he slipped on the wet grass, and then he fell on the bare stones which jutted out of the rocky ground. Everything was dripping, and at last the poor Prince hadn't got a dry thread on him. He had to climb over huge rocks where the water oozed out of the thick moss. He was almost fainting; just then he heard a curious murmuring and saw in front of him a big lighted cave. A fire was burning in the middle, big enough to roast a stag, which was in fact being done; a splendid stag with its huge antlers was stuck on a spit, being slowly turned round between the hewn trunks of two fir trees. An oldish woman, tall and strong enough to be a man dressed up, sat by the fire throwing on logs from time to time.

‘Come in, by all means!’ she said; ‘sit down by the fire so that your clothes may dry!’

‘There is a shocking draught here,’ said the Prince, as he sat down on the ground.

‘It will be worse than this when my sons come home!’ said the woman. ‘You are in the cavern of the winds; my sons are the four winds of the world! Do you understand?’

‘Who are your sons?’ asked the Prince.

‘Well that’s not so easy to answer when the question is stupidly put,’ said the woman. ‘My sons do as they like; they are playing rounders now with the clouds up there in the great hall,’ and she pointed up into the sky.

‘Oh indeed!’ said the Prince. ‘You seem to speak very harshly, and you are not so gentle as the women I generally see about me!’

‘Oh, I daresay they have nothing else to do! I have to be harsh if I am to keep my boys under control! But I can do it, although they are a stiff-necked lot! Do you see those four sacks hanging on the wall? They are just as frightened of them as you used to be of the cane behind the looking-glass. I can double the boys up, I can tell you, and then they have to go into the bag; we don’t stand upon ceremony, and there they have to stay; they can’t get out to play their tricks till it suits me to let them. But here we have one of them.’ It was the Northwind who came in with an icy blast; great hailstones peppered about the floor and snowflakes drifted in. He was dressed in bearskin trousers and jacket, and he had a sealskin cap drawn over his ears. Long icicles were hanging from his beard, and one hailstone after another dropped down from the collar of his jacket.

‘Don’t go straight to the fire,’ said the Prince. ‘You might easily get chilblains!’

‘Chilblains!’ said the Northwind with a loud laugh. ‘Chilblains! they are my greatest delight! What sort of a feeble creature are you? How did you get into the cave of the winds?’

‘He is my guest,’ said the old woman, ‘and if you are not pleased with that explanation you may go into the bag! Now you know my opinion!’

This had its effect, and the Northwind told them where he came from, and where he had been for the last month.

‘I come from the Arctic seas,’ he said. ‘I have been on Behring Island with the Russian walrus-hunters. I sat at the helm and slept when they sailed from the north cape, and when I woke now and then the stormy petrels were flying about my legs. They are queer birds; they give a brisk flap with their wings and then keep them stretched out and motionless, and even then they have speed enough.’

‘Pray don’t be too long-winded,’ said the mother of the winds. ‘So at last you got to Behring Island!’

‘It’s perfectly splendid! There you have a floor to dance upon, as flat as a pancake, half-thawed snow, with moss. There were bones of whales and Polar bears lying about; they looked like the legs and arms of giants covered with green mould. One would think that the sun had never shone on them. I gave a little puff to the fog so that one could see the shed. It was a house built of wreckage and covered with the skins of whales; the flesh side was turned outwards; it was all red and green; a living Polar bear sat on the roof growling. I went to the shore and looked at the birds’ nests, looked at the unfledged young ones screaming and gaping; then I blew down thousands of their throats and they learnt to shut their mouths. Lower down the walruses were rolling about like monster maggots with pigs’ heads and teeth a yard long!’

‘You’re a good story-teller, my boy!’ said his mother. ‘It makes my mouth water to hear you!’

‘Then there was a hunt! The harpoons were plunged into the walruses’ breasts, and the steaming blood spurted out of them like fountains over the ice. Then I remembered my part of the game! I blew up and made my ships, the mountain-high icebergs, nip the boats; whew! how they whistled and how they screamed, but I whistled louder. They were obliged to throw the dead walruses, chests and ropes out upon the ice! I shook the snow-flakes over them and let them drift southwards to taste the salt water. They will never come back to Behring Island!’

‘Then you’ve been doing evil!’ said the mother of the winds.

‘What good I did, the others may tell you,’ said he. ‘But here we have my brother from the west; I like him best of all; he smells of the sea and brings a splendid cool breeze with him!’

‘Is that the little Zephyr?’ asked the Prince.

‘Yes, certainly it is Zephyr, but he is not so little as all that. He used to be a pretty boy once, but that’s gone by!’

He looked like a wild man of the woods, but he had a padded hat on so as not to come to any harm. He carried a mahogany club cut in the American mahogany forests. It could not be anything less than that.

‘Where do you come from?’ asked his mother.

‘From the forest wildernesses!’ he said, ‘where the thorny creepers make a fence between every tree, where the water-snake lies in the wet grass, and where human beings seem to be superfluous!’

‘What did you do there?’

‘I looked at the mighty river, saw where it dashed over the rocks in dust and flew with the clouds to carry the rainbow. I saw the wild buffalo swimming in the river, but the stream carried him away; he floated with the wild duck, which soared into the sky at the rapids; but the buffalo was carried over with the water. I liked that and blew a storm, so that the primæval trees had to sail too, and they were whirled about like shavings.’

‘And you have done nothing else?’ asked the old woman.

‘I have been turning somersaults in the Savannahs, patting the wild horse, and shaking down cocoanuts! Oh yes, I have plenty of stories to tell! But one need not tell everything. You know that very well, old woman!’ and then he kissed his mother so heartily that she nearly fell backwards; he was indeed a wild boy.

The Southwind appeared now in a turban and a flowing bedouin’s cloak.

‘It is fearfully cold in here,’ he said, throwing wood on the fire; ‘it is easy to see that the Northwind got here first!’

‘It is hot enough here to roast a polar bear,’ said the Northwind.

‘You are a polar bear yourself!’ said the Southwind.

‘Do you want to go into the bag?’ asked the old woman. ‘Sit down on that stone and tell us where you have been.’

‘In Africa, mother!’ he answered. ‘I have been chasing the lion with the Hottentots in Kaffirland! What grass there is on those plains! as green as an olive. The gnu was dancing about, and the ostriches ran races with me, but I am still the fastest. I went to the desert with its yellow sand. It looks like the bottom of the sea. I met a caravan! They were killing their last camel to get water to drink, but it wasn’t much they got. The sun was blazing above, and the sand burning below. There were no limits to the outstretched desert. Then I burrowed into the fine loose sand and whirled it up in great columns—that was a dance! You should have seen how despondently the dromedaries stood, and the merchant drew his caftan over his head. He threw himself down before me as if I had been Allah, his god. Now they are buried, and there is a pyramid of sand over them all; when I blow it away, sometime the sun will bleach their bones, and then travellers will see that people have been there before, otherwise you would hardly believe it in the desert!’

‘Then you have only been doing harm!’ said the mother. ‘Into the bag you go!’ And before he knew where he was she had the Southwind by the waist and in the bag; it rolled about on the ground, but she sat down upon it and then it had to be quiet.

‘Your sons are lively fellows!’ said the Prince.

‘Yes, indeed,’ she said; ‘but I can master them! Here comes the fourth.’

It was the Eastwind, and he was dressed like a Chinaman.

‘Oh, have you come from that quarter?’ said the mother. ‘I thought you had been in the Garden of Paradise.’

‘I am only going there to-morrow!’ said the Eastwind. ‘It will be a hundred years to-morrow since I have been there. I have just come from China, where I danced round the porcelain tower till all the bells jingled. The officials were flogged in the streets, the bamboo canes were broken over their shoulders, and they were all people ranging from the first to the ninth rank. They shrieked “Many thanks, Father and benefactor,” but they didn’t mean what they said, and I went on ringing the bells and singing “Tsing, tsang, tsu!”’

‘You’re quite uproarious about it!’ said the old woman. ‘It’s a good thing you are going to the Garden of Paradise to-morrow; it always has a

good effect on your behaviour. Mind you drink deep of the well of wisdom, and bring a little bottleful home to me.'

'That I will,' said the Eastwind, 'But why have you put my brother from the south into the bag? Out with him. He must tell me about the phoenix; the Princess always wants to hear about that bird when I call every hundred years. Open the bag! then you'll be my sweetest mother, and I'll give you two pockets full of tea as green and fresh as when I picked it!'

'Well, for the sake of the tea, and because you are my darling, I will open my bag!'

She did open it and the Southwind crept out, but he was quite crestfallen because the strange Prince had seen his disgrace.

'Here is a palm leaf for the Princess!' said the Southwind. 'The old phoenix, the only one in the world, gave it to me. He has scratched his whole history on it with his bill, for the hundred years of his life, and she can read it for herself. I saw how the phoenix set fire to his nest himself and sat on it while it burnt, like the widow of a Hindoo. Oh, how the dry branches crackled, how it smoked, and what a smell there was! At last it all burst into flame; the old bird was burnt to ashes, but his egg lay glowing in the fire; it broke with a loud bang and the young one flew out. Now it rules over all the birds, and it is the only phoenix in the world. He bit a hole in the leaf I gave you; that is his greeting to the Princess.'

'Let us have something to eat now!' said the mother of the winds; and they all sat down to eat the roast stag, and the Prince sat by the side of the Eastwind, so they soon became good friends.

'I say,' said the Prince, 'just tell me who is this Princess, and where is the Garden of Paradise?'

'Oh ho!' said the Eastwind, 'if that is where you want to go you must fly with me to-morrow. But I may as well tell you that no human being has been there since Adam and Eve's time. You know all about them I suppose from your Bible stories?'

'Of course,' said the Prince.

'When they were driven away the Garden of Eden sank into the ground, but it kept its warm sunshine, its mild air, and all its charms. The queen of the fairies lives there. The Island of Bliss, where death never

enters, and where living is a delight, is there. Get on my back to-morrow and I will take you with me; I think I can manage it! But you mustn't talk now, I want to go to sleep.'

When the Prince woke up in the early morning, he was not a little surprised to find that he was already high above the clouds. He was sitting on the back of the Eastwind, who was holding him carefully; they were so high up that woods and fields, rivers and lakes, looked like a large coloured map.

'Good morning,' said the Eastwind. 'You may as well sleep a little longer, for there is not much to be seen in this flat country below us, unless you want to count the churches. They look like chalk dots on the green board.'

He called the fields and meadows 'the green board.'

'It was very rude of me to leave without saying good-bye to your mother and brothers,' said the Prince.

'One is excused when one is asleep!' said the Eastwind, and they flew on faster than ever. You could mark their flight by the rustling of the trees as they passed over the woods; and whenever they crossed a lake, or the sea, the waves rose and the great ships dipped low down in the water, like floating swans. Towards evening the large towns were amusing as it grew dark, with all their lights twinkling now here, now there, just as when one burns a piece of paper and sees all the little sparks like children coming home from school. The Prince clapped his hands, but the Eastwind told him he had better leave off and hold tight, or he might fall and find himself hanging on to a church steeple.

The eagle in the great forest flew swiftly, but the Eastwind flew more swiftly still. The Kossack on his little horse sped fast over the plains, but the Prince sped faster still.

'Now you can see the Himalayas!' said the Eastwind. 'They are the highest mountains in Asia; we shall soon reach the Garden of Paradise.'

They took a more southerly direction, and the air became scented with spices and flowers. Figs and pomegranates grew wild, and the wild vines were covered with blue and green grapes. They both descended here and stretched themselves on the soft grass, where the flowers nodded to the wind, as much as to say, 'Welcome back.'

‘Are we in the Garden of Paradise now?’ asked the Prince.

‘No, certainly not!’ answered the Eastwind. ‘But we shall soon be there. Do you see that wall of rock and the great cavern where the wild vine hangs like a big curtain? We have to go through there! Wrap yourself up in your cloak, the sun is burning here, but a step further on it is icy cold. The bird which flies past the cavern has one wing out here in the heat of summer, and the other is there in the cold of winter.’

‘So that is the way to the Garden of Paradise!’ said the Prince.

Now they entered the cavern. Oh, how icily cold it was; but it did not last long. The Eastwind spread his wings, and they shone like the brightest flame; but what a cave it was! Large blocks of stone, from which the water dripped, hung over them in the most extraordinary shapes; at one moment it was so low and narrow that they had to crawl on hands and knees, the next it was as wide and lofty as if they were in the open air. It looked like a chapel of the dead, with mute organ pipes and petrified banners.

‘We seem to be journeying along Death’s road to the Garden of Paradise!’ said the Prince, but the Eastwind never answered a word, he only pointed before them where a beautiful blue light was shining. The blocks of stone above them grew dimmer and dimmer, and at last they became as transparent as a white cloud in the moonshine. The air was also deliciously soft, as fresh as on the mountain-tops and as scented as down among the roses in the valley.

A river ran there as clear as the air itself, and the fish in it were like gold and silver. Purple eels, which gave out blue sparks with every curve, gambolled about in the water; and the broad leaves of the water-lilies were tinged with the hues of the rainbow, while the flower itself was like a fiery orange flame, nourished by the water, just as oil keeps a lamp constantly burning. A firm bridge of marble, as delicately and skilfully carved as if it were lace and glass beads, led over the water to the Island of Bliss, where the Garden of Paradise bloomed.

The Eastwind took the Prince in his arms and bore him over. The flowers and leaves there sang all the beautiful old songs of his childhood, but sang them more wonderfully than any human voice could sing them.

Were these palm trees or giant water plants growing here? The Prince had never seen such rich and mighty trees. The most wonderful climbing plants hung in wreaths, such as are only to be found pictured in gold and colours on the margins of old books of the Saints or entwined among their initial letters. It was the most extraordinary combination of birds, flowers and scrolls.

Close by on the grass stood a flock of peacocks with their brilliant tails outspread. Yes, indeed, it seemed so, but when the Prince touched them he saw that they were not birds but plants. They were big dock leaves, which shone like peacocks' tails. Lions and tigers sprang like agile cats among the green hedges, which were scented with the blossom of the olive, and the lion and the tiger were tame. The wild dove, glistening like a pearl, beat the lion's mane with his wings; and the antelope, otherwise so shy, stood by nodding, just as if he wanted to join the game.

The Fairy of the Garden now advanced to meet them; her garments shone like the sun, and her face beamed like that of a happy mother rejoicing over her child. She was young and very beautiful, and was surrounded by a band of lovely girls, each with a gleaming star in her hair.

When the Eastwind gave her the inscribed leaf from the Phoenix her eyes sparkled with delight. She took the Prince's hand and led him into her palace, where the walls were the colour of the brightest tulips in the sunlight. The ceiling was one great shining flower, and the longer one gazed into it the deeper the calyx seemed to be. The Prince went to the window, and looking through one of the panes saw the Tree of Knowledge, with the Serpent, and Adam and Eve standing by.

'Are they not driven out?' he asked, and the Fairy smiled, and explained that Time had burned a picture into each pane, but not of the kind one usually sees; they were alive, the leaves on the trees moved, and people came and went like the reflections in a mirror.

Then he looked through another pane, and he saw Jacob's dream, with the ladder going straight up into heaven, and angels with great wings were fluttering up and down. All that had ever happened in this

world lived and moved on these window panes; only Time could imprint such wonderful pictures.

The Fairy smiled and led him into a large, lofty room, the walls of which were like transparent paintings of faces, one more beautiful than the other. These were millions of the Blessed who smiled and sang, and all their songs melted into one perfect melody. The highest ones were so tiny that they seemed smaller than the very smallest rosebud, no bigger than a pinpoint in a drawing. In the middle of the room stood a large tree, with handsome drooping branches; golden apples, large and small, hung like oranges among its green leaves. It was the Tree of Knowledge, of whose fruit Adam and Eve had eaten. From every leaf hung a shining red drop of dew; it was as if the tree wept tears of blood.

‘Now let us get into the boat,’ said the Fairy. ‘We shall find refreshment on the swelling waters. The boat rocks, but it does not move from the spot; all the countries of the world will pass before our eyes.’

It was a curious sight to see the whole coast move. Here came lofty snow-clad Alps, with their clouds and dark fir trees. The horn echoed sadly among them, and the shepherd yodelled sweetly in the valleys. Then banyan trees bent their long drooping branches over the boat, black swans floated on the water, and the strangest animals and flowers appeared on the shore. This was New Holland, the fifth portion of the world, which glided past them with a view of its blue mountains. They heard the song of priests, and saw the dances of the savages to the sound of drums and pipes of bone. The pyramids of Egypt reaching to the clouds, with fallen columns, and Sphynxes half buried in sand, next sailed past them. Then came the Aurora Borealis blazing over the peaks of the north; they were fireworks which could not be imitated. The Prince was so happy, and he saw a hundred times more than we have described.

‘Can I stay here always?’ he asked.

‘That depends upon yourself,’ answered the Fairy. ‘If you do not, like Adam, allow yourself to be tempted to do what is forbidden, you can stay here always.’

‘I will not touch the apples on the Tree of Knowledge,’ said the Prince. ‘There are thousands of other fruits here as beautiful.’

‘Test yourself, and if you are not strong enough, go back with the Eastwind who brought you. He is going away now, and will not come back for a hundred years; the time will fly in this place like a hundred hours, but that is a long time for temptation and sin. Every evening when I leave you I must say, “Come with me,” and I must beckon to you, but stay behind. Do not come with me, for with every step you take your longing will grow stronger. You will reach the hall where grows the Tree of Knowledge; I sleep beneath its fragrant drooping branches. You will bend over me and I must smile, but if you press a kiss upon my lips Paradise will sink deep down into the earth, and it will be lost to you. The sharp winds of the wilderness will whistle round you, the cold rain will drop from your hair. Sorrow and labour will be your lot.’

‘I will remain here!’ said the Prince.

And the Eastwind kissed him on the mouth and said: ‘Be strong, then we shall meet again in a hundred years. Farewell! Farewell!’ And the Eastwind spread his great wings; they shone like poppies at the harvest time, or the Northern Lights in a cold winter.

‘Good-bye! good-bye!’ whispered the flowers. Storks and pelicans flew in a line like waving ribbons, conducting him to the boundaries of the Garden.

‘Now we begin our dancing!’ said the Fairy; ‘at the end when I dance with you, as the sun goes down you will see me beckon to you and cry, “Come with me”, but do not come. I have to repeat it every night for a hundred years. Every time you resist, you will grow stronger, and at last you will not even think of following. To-night is the first time. Remember my warning!’

And the Fairy led him into a large hall of white transparent lilies, the yellow stamens in each formed a little golden harp which echoed the sound of strings and flutes. Lovely girls, slender and lissom, dressed in floating gauze, which revealed their exquisite limbs, glided in the dance, and sang of the joy of living—that they would never die—and that the Garden of Paradise would bloom for ever.

The sun went down and the sky was bathed in golden light which gave the lilies the effect of roses; and the Prince drank of the foaming wine handed to him by the maidens. He felt such joy as he had never

known before; he saw the background of the hall opening where the Tree of Knowledge stood in a radiancy which blinded him. The song proceeding from it was soft and lovely, like his mother's voice, and she seemed to say, 'My child, my beloved child!'

Then the Fairy beckoned to him and said so tenderly, 'Come with me,' that he rushed towards her, forgetting his promise, forgetting everything on the very first evening that she smiled and beckoned to him.

The fragrance in the scented air around grew stronger, the harps sounded sweeter than ever, and it seemed as if the millions of smiling heads in the hall where the Tree grew nodded and sang, 'One must know everything. Man is lord of the earth.' They were no longer tears of blood which fell from the Tree; it seemed to him that they were red shining stars.

'Come with me, come with me,' spoke those trembling tones, and at every step the Prince's cheeks burnt hotter and hotter and his blood coursed more rapidly.

'I must go,' he said, 'it is no sin; I must see her asleep; nothing will be lost if I do not kiss her, and that I will not do. My will is strong.'

The Fairy dropped her shimmering garment, drew back the branches, and a moment after was hidden within their depths.

'I have not sinned yet!' said the Prince, 'nor will I'; then he drew back the branches. There she lay asleep already, beautiful as only the Fairy in the Garden of Paradise can be. She smiled in her dreams; he bent over her and saw the tears welling up under her eyelashes.

'Do you weep for me?' he whispered. 'Weep not, beautiful maiden. I only now understand the full bliss of Paradise; it surges through my blood and through my thoughts. I feel the strength of the angels and of everlasting life in my mortal limbs! If it were to be everlasting night to me, a moment like this were worth it!' and he kissed away the tears from her eyes; his mouth touched hers.

Then came a sound like thunder, louder and more awful than any he had ever heard before, and everything around collapsed. The beautiful Fairy, the flowery Paradise sank deeper and deeper. The Prince saw it sink into the darkness of night; it shone far off like a little tiny twinkling

star. The chill of death crept over his limbs; he closed his eyes and lay long as if dead.

The cold rain fell on his face, and the sharp wind blew around his head, and at last his memory came back. ‘What have I done?’ he sighed. ‘I have sinned like Adam, sinned so heavily that Paradise has sunk low beneath the earth!’ And he opened his eyes; he could still see the star, the far-away star, which twinkled like Paradise; it was the morning star in the sky. He got up and found himself in the wood near the cave of the winds, and the mother of the winds sat by his side. She looked angry and raised her hand.

‘So soon as the first evening!’ she said. ‘I thought as much; if you were my boy, you should go into the bag!’

‘Ah, he shall soon go there!’ said Death. He was a strong old man, with a scythe in his hand and great black wings. ‘He shall be laid in a coffin, but not now; I only mark him and then leave him for a time to wander about on the earth to expiate his sin and to grow better. I will come some time. When he least expects me, I shall come back, lay him in a black coffin, put it on my head, and fly to the skies. The Garden of Paradise blooms there too, and if he is good and holy he shall enter into it; but if his thoughts are wicked and his heart still full of sin, he will sink deeper in his coffin than Paradise sank, and I shall only go once in every thousand years to see if he is to sink deeper or to rise to the stars, the twinkling stars up there.’

The Tinder Box

THERE came a soldier marching down the high road-*one, two! one, two!* He had his knapsack on his back and his sword at his side as he came home from the wars. On the road he met a witch, an ugly old witch, a witch whose lower lip dangled right down on her chest.

“Good evening, soldier,” she said. “What a fine sword you’ve got there, and what a big knapsack. Aren’t you every inch a soldier! And now you shall have money, as much as you please.”

“That’s very kind, you old witch,” said the soldier.

“See that big tree.” The witch pointed to one near by them. “It’s hollow to the roots. Climb to the top of the trunk and you’ll find a hole through which you can let yourself down deep under the tree. I’ll tie a rope around your middle, so that when you call me I can pull you up again.”

“What would I do deep down under that tree?” the soldier wanted to know.

“Fetch money,” the witch said. “Listen. When you touch bottom you’ll find yourself in a great hall. It is very bright there, because more than a hundred lamps are burning. By their light you will see three doors. Each door has a key in it, so you can open them all.

“If you walk into the first room, you’ll see a large chest in the middle of the floor. On it sits a dog, and his eyes are as big as saucers. But don’t worry about that. I’ll give you my blue checked apron to spread out on the floor. Snatch up that dog and set him on my apron. Then you can open the chest and take out as many pieces of money as you please. They are all copper.

“But if silver suits you better, then go into the next room. There sits a dog and his eyes are as big as mill wheels. But don’t you care about that. Set the dog on my apron while you line your pockets with silver.

“Maybe you’d rather have gold. You can, you know. You can have all the gold you can carry if you go into the third room. The only hitch is that there on the money-chest sits a dog, and each of his eyes is as big as the Round Tower of Copenhagen. That’s the sort of dog he is. But never you mind how fierce he looks. Just set him on my apron and he’ll do you no harm as you help yourself from the chest to all the gold you want.”

“That suits me,” said the soldier. “But what do you get out of all this, you old witch? I suppose that you want your share.”

“No indeed,” said the witch. “I don’t want a penny of it. All I ask is for you to fetch me an old tinder box that my grandmother forgot the last time she was down there.”

“Good,” said the soldier. “Tie the rope around me.”

“Here it is,” said the witch, “and here’s my blue checked apron.”

The soldier climbed up to the hole in the tree and let himself slide through it, feet foremost down into the great hall where the hundreds of lamps were burning, just as the witch had said. Now he threw open the first door he came to. Ugh! There sat a dog glaring at him with eyes as big as saucers.

“You’re a nice fellow,” the soldier said, as he shifted him to the witch’s apron and took all the coppers that his pockets would hold. He shut up the chest, set the dog back on it, and made for the second room. Alas and alack! There sat the dog with eyes as big as mill wheels.

“Don’t you look at me like that.” The soldier set him on the witch’s apron. “You’re apt to strain your eyesight.” When he saw the chest brimful of silver, he threw away all his coppers and filled both his pockets and knapsack with silver alone. Then he went into the third room. Oh, what a horrible sight to see! The dog in there really did have eyes as big as the Round Tower, and when he rolled them they spun like wheels.

“Good evening,” the soldier said, and saluted, for such a dog he had never seen before. But on second glance he thought to himself, “This won’t do.” So he lifted the dog down to the floor, and threw open the chest. What a sight! Here was gold and to spare. He could buy out all Copenhagen with it. He could buy all the cake-woman’s sugar pigs, and all the tin soldiers, whips, and rocking horses there are in the world. Yes, *there* was really money!

In short order the soldier got rid of all the silver coins he had stuffed in his pockets and knapsack, to put gold in their place. Yes sir, he crammed all his pockets, his knapsack, his cap, and his boots so full that he scarcely could walk. Now he was made of money. Putting the dog

back on the chest he banged out the door and called up through the hollow tree:

“Pull me up now, you old witch.”

“Have you got the tinder box?” asked the witch.

“Confound the tinder box,” the soldier shouted. “I clean forgot it.”

When he fetched it, the witch hauled him up. There he stood on the highroad again, with his pockets, boots, knapsack and cap full of gold.

“What do you want with the tinder box?” he asked the old witch.

“None of your business,” she told him. “You’ve had your money, so hand over my tinder box.”

“Nonsense,” said the soldier. “I’ll take out my sword and I’ll cut your head off if you don’t tell me at once what you want with it.”

“I won’t,” the witch screamed at him.

So he cut her head off. There she lay! But he tied all his money in her apron, slung it over his shoulder, stuck the tinder box in his pocket, and struck out for town.

It was a splendid town. He took the best rooms at the best inn, and ordered all the good things he liked to eat, for he was a rich man now because he had so much money. The servant who cleaned his boots may have thought them remarkably well worn for a man of such means, but that was before he went shopping. Next morning he bought boots worthy of him, and the best clothes. Now that he had turned out to be such a fashionable gentleman, people told him all about the splendors of their town—all about their King, and what a pretty Princess he had for a daughter.

“Where can I see her?” the soldier inquired.

“You can’t see her at all,” everyone said. “She lives in a great copper castle inside all sorts of walls and towers. Only the King can come in or go out of it, for it’s been foretold that the Princess will marry a common soldier. The King would much rather she didn’t.”

“I’d like to see her just the same,” the soldier thought. But there was no way to manage it,

Now he lived a merry life. He went to the theatre, drove about in the

King’s garden, and gave away money to poor people. This was to his credit, for he remembered from the old days what it feels like to go

without a penny in your pocket. Now that he was wealthy and well dressed, he had all too many who called him their friend and a genuine gentleman. That pleased him

But he spent money every day without making any, and wound up with only two coppers to his name. He had to quit his fine quarters to live in a garret, clean his own boots, and mend them himself with a darning needle. None of his friends came to see him, because there were too many stairs to climb.

One evening when he sat in the dark without even enough money to buy a candle, he suddenly remembered there was a candle end in the tinder box that he had picked up when the witch sent him down the hollow tree. He got out the tinder box, and the moment he struck sparks from the flint of it his door burst open and there stood a dog from down under the tree. It was the one with eyes as big as saucers.

“What,” said the dog, “is my lord’s command?”

“What’s this?” said the soldier. “Have I got the sort of tinder box that will get me whatever I want? Go get me some money,” he ordered the dog. *Zip!* The dog was gone. *Zip!* He was back again, with a bag full of copper in his mouth.

Now the soldier knew what a remarkable tinder box he had. Strike it once and there was the dog from the chest of copper coins. Strike it twice and here came the dog who had the silver. Three times brought the dog who guarded gold.

Back went the soldier to his comfortable quarters. Out strode the soldier in fashionable clothes. Immediately his friends knew him again, because they liked him so much.

Then the thought occurred to him, “Isn’t it odd that no one ever gets to see the Princess? They say she’s very pretty, but what’s the good of it as long as she stays locked up in that large copper castle with so many towers? Why can’t I see her? Where’s my tinder box?” He struck a light and, *zip!* came the dog with eyes as big as saucers.

“It certainly is late,” said the soldier. “Practically midnight. But I do want a glimpse of the Princess, if only for a moment.”

Out the door went the dog, and before the soldier could believe it, here came the dog with the Princess on his back. She was sound asleep,

and so pretty that everyone could see she was a Princess. The soldier couldn't keep from kissing her, because he was every inch a soldier. Then the dog took the Princess home.

Next morning when the King and Queen were drinking their tea, the Princess told them about the strange dream she'd had-all about a dog and a soldier. She'd ridden on the dog's back, and the soldier had kissed her.

"Now that was a fine story," said the Queen. The next night one of the old ladies of the court was under orders to sit by the Princess's bed, and see whether this was a dream or something else altogether. The soldier was longing to see the pretty Princess again, so the dog came by night to take her up and away as fast as he could run. But the old lady pulled on her storm boots and ran right after them. When she saw them disappear into a large house she thought, "Now I know where it is," and drew a big cross on the door with a piece of chalk. Then she went home to bed, and before long the dog brought the Princess home too. But when the dog saw that cross marked on the soldier's front door, he got himself a piece of chalk and cross-marked every door in the town. This was a clever thing to do, because now the old lady couldn't tell the right door from all the wrong doors he had marked.

Early in the morning along came the King and the Queen, the old lady, and all the officers, to see where the Princess had been.

"Here it is," said the King when he saw the first cross mark.

"No, my dear. There it is," said the Queen who was looking next door.

"Here's one, there's one, and yonder's another one!" said they all. Wherever they looked they saw chalk marks, so they gave up searching.

The Queen, though, was an uncommonly clever woman, who could do more than ride in a coach. She took her big gold scissors, cut out a piece of silk, and made a neat little bag. She filled it with fine buckwheat flour and tied it on to the Princess's back. Then she pricked a little hole in it so that the flour would sift out along the way, wherever the Princess might go.

Again the dog came in the night, took the Princess on his back, and ran with her to the soldier, who loved her so much that he would have been glad to be a Prince just so he could make his wife.

The dog didn't notice how the flour made a trail from the castle right up to the soldier's window, where he ran up the wall with the Princess. So in the morning it was all too plain to the King and Queen just where their daughter had been.

They took the soldier and they put him in prison. There he sat. It was dark, and it was dismal, and they told him, "Tomorrow is the day for you to hang." That didn't cheer him up any, and as for his tinder box he'd left it behind at the inn. In the morning he could see through his narrow little window how the people all hurried out of town to see him hanged. He heard the drums beat and he saw the soldiers march. In the crowd of running people he saw a shoemaker's boy in a leather apron and slippers. The boy galloped so fast that off flew one slipper, which hit the wall right where the soldier pressed his face to the iron bars.

"Hey there, you shoemaker's boy, there's no hurry," the soldier shouted. "Nothing can happen till I get there. But if you run to where I live and bring me my tinder box, I'll give you four coppers. Put your best foot foremost."

The shoemaker's boy could use four coppers, so he rushed the tinder box to the soldier, and-well, now we shall hear what happened!

Outside the town a high gallows had been built. Around it stood soldiers and many hundred thousand people. The King and Queen sat on a splendid throne, opposite the judge and the whole council. The soldier already stood upon the ladder, but just as they were about to put the rope around his neck he said the custom was to grant a poor criminal one last small favor. He wanted to smoke a pipe of tobacco-the last he'd be smoking in this world.

The King couldn't refuse him, so the soldier struck fire from his tinder box, once-twice-and a third time. *Zip!* There stood all the dogs, one with eyes as big as saucers, one with eyes as big as mill wheels, one with eyes as big as the Round Tower of Copenhagen.

"Help me. Save me from hanging!" said the soldier. Those dogs took the judges and all the council, some by the leg and some by the nose, and tossed them so high that they came down broken to bits.

“Don’t!” cried the King, but the biggest dog took him and the Queen too, and tossed them up after the others. Then the soldiers trembled and the people shouted, “Soldier, be our King and marry the pretty Princess.”

So they put the soldier in the King’s carriage. All three of his dogs danced in front of it, and shouted “Hurrah!” The boys whistled through their fingers, and the soldiers saluted. The Princess came out of the copper castle to be Queen, and that suited her exactly. The wedding lasted all of a week, and the three dogs sat at the table, with their eyes opened wider than ever before.

Great Claus and Little Claus

IN a village there lived two men who had the self-same name. Both were named Claus. But one of them owned four horses, and the other owned only one horse; so to distinguish between them people called the man who had four horses Great Claus, and the man who had only one horse Little Claus. Now I'll tell you what happened to these two, for this is a true story.

The whole week through, Little Claus had to plow for Great Claus and lend him his only horse. In return, Great Claus lent him all four of his horses, but only for one day a week and that had to be Sunday.

Each Sunday how proudly Little Claus cracked his whip over all the five horses, which were as good as his own on that day. How brightly the sun shone. How merry were the church bells that rang in the steeple. How well dressed were all the people who passed him with hymn books tucked under their arms. And as they went their way to church, to hear the parson preach, how the people did stare to see Little Claus plowing with all five horses. This made him feel so proud that he would crack his whip and hollo, "Get up, all my horses."

"You must not say that," Great Claus told him. "You know as well as I do that only one of those horses is yours." But no sooner did another bevy of churchgoers come by than Little Claus forgot he mustn't say it, and holloed, "Get up, all my horses."

"Don't you say that again," Great Claus told him. "If you do, I'll knock your horse down dead in his traces, and that will be the end of him."

"You won't catch me saying it again," Little Claus promised. But as soon as people came by, nodding to him and wishing him "Good morning," he was so pleased and so proud of how grand it looked to have five horses plowing his field, that he holloed again, "Get up, all my horses!"

"I'll get up your horse for you," Great Claus said, and he snatched up a tethering mallet, and he knocked Little Claus's one and only horse on the head so hard that it fell down dead.

"Now I haven't any horse at all," said Little Claus, and he began to cry. But by and by he skinned his dead horse and hung the hide to dry in

the wind. Then he crammed the dry skin in a sack, slung it up over his shoulder, and set out to sell it in the nearest town.

It was a long way to go, and he had to pass through a dark, dismal forest. Suddenly a terrible storm came up, and he lost his way. Before he could find it again, evening overtook him. The town was still a long way off, and he had come too far to get back home before night.

Not far from the road he saw a large farmhouse. The shutters were closed, but light showed through a crack at the top of the windows. "Maybe they'll let me spend the night here," Little Claus thought, as he went to the door and knocked.

The farmer's wife opened it, but when she heard what he wanted she told him to go away. She said her husband wasn't home, and she wouldn't have any strangers in the house.

"Then I'll have to sleep outside," Little Claus decided, as she slammed the door in his face.

Near the farmhouse stood a large haystack, leading up to the thatched roof of a shed which lay between it and the house. "That's where I'll sleep," said Little Claus when he noticed the thatch. "It will make a wonderful bed. All I hope is that the stork doesn't fly down and bite my legs." For a stork was actually standing guard on the roof where it had a nest.

So Little Claus climbed to the roof of the shed. As he turned over to make himself comfortable, he discovered that the farmhouse shutters didn't come quite to the top of the windows, and he could see over them. He could see into a room where a big table was spread with wine and roast meat and a delicious fish. The farmer's wife and the sexton were sitting there at the table, all by themselves. She kept helping him to wine, and he kept helping himself to fish. He must have loved fish.

"Oh, if only I could have some too," thought Little Claus. By craning his neck toward the window he caught sight of a great, appetizing cake. Why, they were feasting in there!

Just then he heard someone riding down the road to the house. It was the farmer coming home. He was an excellent man except for just one thing. He could not stand the sight of a sexton. If he so much as caught a glimpse of one, he would fly into a furious rage, which was the reason

why the sexton had gone to see the farmer's wife while her husband was away from home, and the good woman could do no less than set before him all the good things to eat that she had in the house. When she heard the farmer coming, she trembled for the sexton, and begged him to creep into a big empty chest which stood in one corner of the room. He lost no time about it, because he knew full well that her poor husband couldn't stand the sight of a sexton. The woman quickly set aside the wine and hid the good food in her oven, because if her husband had seen the feast he would have asked questions hard to answer.

"Oh dear!" Up on the shed Little Claus sighed to see all the good food disappearing.

"Who's up there?" the farmer peered at Little Claus. "Whatever are you doing up there? Come into the house with me." So Little Claus came down. He told the farmer how he had lost his way, and asked if he could have shelter for the night.

"Of course," said the farmer, "but first let's have something to eat."

The farmer's wife received them well, laid the whole table, and set before them a big bowl of porridge. The farmer was hungry and ate it with a good appetite, but Little Claus was thinking about the good roast meat, that fish and that cake in the oven. Beside his feet under the table lay his sack with the horsehide, for as we know he was on his way to sell it in the town. Not liking the porridge at all, Little Claus trod on the sack, and the dry hide gave a loud squeak.

"Sh!" Little Claus said to his sack, at the same time that he trod on it so hard that it squeaked even louder.

"What on earth have you got in there?" said the farmer.

"Oh, just a conjuror," said Little Claus. "He tells me we don't have to eat porridge, because he has conjured up a whole oven-full of roast meat, fish, and cake for us."

"What do you say?" said the farmer. He made haste to open the oven, where he found all the good dishes. His wife had hidden them there, but he quite believed that they had been conjured up by the wizard in the sack. His wife didn't dare open her mouth as she helped them to their fill of meat, fish and cake.

Then Little Claus trod upon the sack to make it squeak again.

“What does he say now?” asked the farmer.

“He says,” Little Claus answered, “that there are three bottles of wine for us in the corner by the oven.”

So the woman had to bring out the wine she had hidden. The farmer drank it till he grew merry, and wanted to get himself a conjuror just like the one Little Claus carried in his sack.

“Can he conjure up the devil?” the farmer wondered. “I’m in just the mood to meet him.”

“Oh, yes,” said Little Claus. “My conjuror can do anything I tell him. Can’t you?” he asked and trod upon the sack till it squeaked. “Did you hear him answer? He said ‘Yes.’ He can conjure up the devil, but he’s afraid we won’t like the look of him.”

“Oh, I’m not afraid. What’s he like?”

“Well, he looks an awful lot like a sexton.”

“Ho,” said the farmer, “as ugly as that? I can’t bear the sight of a sexton. But don’t let that stop us. Now that I know it’s just the devil I shan’t mind it so much. I’ll face him, provided he doesn’t come near me.”

“Wait, while I talk with my conjuror.” Little Claus trod on the sack and stooped down to listen.

“What does he say?”

“He says for you to go and open that big chest in the corner, and there you’ll find the devil doubled up inside it. But you must hold fast to the lid, so he doesn’t pop out.”

“Will you help me hold it?” said the farmer. He went to the chest in which his wife had hidden the sexton—once frightened, now terrified. The farmer lifted the lid a little, and peeped in.

“Ho!” he sprang back. “I saw him, and he’s the image of our sexton, a horrible sight!” After that they needed another drink, and sat there drinking far into the night.

“You must sell me your conjuror,” said the farmer. “You can fix your own price. I’d pay you a bushel of money right away.”

“Oh, I couldn’t do that,” Little Claus said. “Just think how useful my conjuror is.”

“But I’d so like to have him.” The farmer kept begging to buy it.

“Well,” said Little Claus at last, “you’ve been kind enough to give me a night’s lodging, so I can’t say no. You shall have my sack for a bushel of money, but it must be full to the brim.”

“You shall have it,” said the farmer. “But you must take that chest along with you too. I won’t have it in the house another hour. He might still be inside it. You never can tell.”

So Little Claus sold his sack with the dried horsehide in it, and was paid a bushel of money, measured up to the brim. The farmer gave him a wheelbarrow too, in which to wheel away the money and the chest.

“Fare you well,” said Little Claus, and off he went with his money and his chest with the sexton in it. On the further side of the forest was a deep, wide river, where the current ran so strong that it was almost impossible to swim against it. A big new bridge had been built across the river, and

When Little Claus came to the middle of it he said, very loud so the sexton could hear him:

“Now what would I be doing with this silly chest? It’s as heavy as stone, and I’m too tired to wheel it any further. So I’ll throw it in the river, and if it drifts down to my house, well and good, but if it sinks I haven’t lost much.” Then he tilted the chest a little, as if he were about to tip it into the river.

“Stop! Don’t!” the sexton shouted inside. “Let me get out first.”

“Oh,” said Little Claus pretending to be frightened, “is he still there? Then I’d better throw him into the river and drown him.”

“Oh no, don’t do that to me!” the sexton shouted. “I’d give a bushel of money to get out of this.”

“Why, that’s altogether different,” said Little Claus, opening the chest. The sexton popped out at once, pushed the empty chest into the water and hurried home to give Little Claus a bushel of money. What with the farmer’s bushel and the sexton’s bushel, Little Claus had his wheelbarrow quite full.

“I got a good price for my horse,” he said when he got home and emptied all the money in a heap on the floor of his room. “How Great Claus will fret when he finds out that my one horse has made me so rich,

but I won't tell him how I managed it." Then he sent a boy to borrow a bushel measure from Great Claus.

"Whatever would he want with it?" Great Claus wondered, and smeared pitch on the bottom of the bushel so that a little of what he measured would stick to it. And so it happened that when he got his measure back he found three newly minted pieces of silver stuck to it.

"What's this?" Great Claus ran to see Little Claus. "Where did you get so much money?"

"Oh, that's what I got for the horsehide I sold last night."

"Heavens above! How the price of hides must have gone up." Great Claus ran home, took an ax, and knocked all four of his horses on the head. Then he ripped their hides off, and set out to town with them.

"Hides, hides! Who'll buy hides?" he bawled, up and down the streets. All the shoemakers and tanners came running to ask what their price was. "A bushel of money apiece," he told them.

"Are you crazy?" they asked. "Do you think we spend money by the bushel?"

"Hides, hides! Who'll buy hides?" he kept on shouting, and to those who asked how much, he said, "A bushel of money."

"He takes us for fools," they said. The shoemakers took their straps, and the tanners their leather aprons, and they beat Great Claus through the town.

"Hides, hides!" they mocked him. "We'll tan your hide for you if you don't get out of town." Great Claus had to run as fast as he could. He had never been beaten so badly.

"Little Claus will pay for this," he said when he got back home. "I'll kill him for it."

Now it so happened that Little Claus's old grandmother had just died. She had been as cross as could be-never a kind word did she have for him-but he was sorry to see her die. He put the dead woman in his own warm bed, just in case she came to life again, and let her lie there all night while he napped in a chair in the corner, as he had done so often before.

As he sat there in the night, the door opened and in came Great Claus with an ax. He knew exactly where Little Claus's bed was, so he went

straight to it and knocked the dead grandmother on the head, under the impression that she was Little Claus.

“There,” he said, “You won’t fool me again.” Then he went home.

“What a wicked man,” said Little Claus. “Why, he would have killed me. It’s lucky for my grandmother that she was already dead, or he’d have been the death of her.”

He dressed up his old grandmother in her Sunday best, borrowed a neighbor’s horse, and hitched up his cart. On the back seat he propped up his grandmother, wedged in so that the jolts would not topple her over, and away they went through the forest.

When the sun came up they drew abreast of a large inn, where Little Claus halted and went in to get him some breakfast. The innkeeper was a wealthy man, and a good enough fellow in his way, but his temper was as fiery as if he were made of pepper and snuff.

“Good morning,” he said to Little Claus. “You’re up and dressed mighty early.”

“Yes,” said Little Claus. “I am bound for the town with my old grandmother, who is sitting out there in the cart. I can’t get her to come in, but you might take her a glass of mead. You’ll have to shout to make her hear you, for she’s deaf as a post.”

“I’ll take it right out.” The innkeeper poured a glass full of mead and took it to the dead grandmother, who sat stiffly on the cart.

“Your grandson sent you a glass of mead,” said the innkeeper, but the dead woman said never a word. She just sat there.

“Don’t you hear me?” the innkeeper shouted his loudest. “Here’s a glass of mead from your grandson.”

Time after time he shouted it, she didn’t budge. He flew into such a rage that he threw the glass in her face. The mead splashed all over her as she fell over backward, for she was just propped up, not tied in place.

“Confound it!” Little Claus rushed out the door and took the innkeeper by the throat. “You’ve gone and killed my grandmother. Look! There’s a big hole in her forehead.”

“Oh, what a calamity!” The innkeeper wrung his hands. “And all because of my fiery temper. Dear Little Claus, I’ll give you a bushel of money, and I’ll bury your grandmother as if she were my very own. But

you must hush this thing up for me, or they'll chop off my head-how I'd hate it."

So it came about that Little Claus got another bushel of money, and the landlord buried the old grandmother as if she'd been his own.

Just as soon as Little Claus got home, he sent a boy to borrow a bushel measure from Great Claus.

"Little Claus wants to borrow it?" Great Claus asked. "Didn't I kill him? I'll go and see about that." So he himself took the measure over to Little Claus.

"Where did you get all that money?" he asked when he saw the height of the money pile.

"When you killed my grandmother instead of me," Little Claus told him, "I sold her for a bushel of money,"

"Heavens above! That was indeed a good price," said Great Claus. He hurried home, took an ax, and knocked his old grandmother on the head. Then he put her in a cart, drove off to town, and asked the apothecary if he wanted to buy a dead body.

"Whose dead body?" asked the apothecary. "Where'd you get it?"

"It's my grandmother's dead body. I killed her for a bushel of money," Great Claus told him.

"Lord," said the apothecary. "Man, you must be crazy. Don't talk like that or they'll chop off your head." Then he told him straight he had done a wicked deed, that he was a terrible fellow, and that the worst of punishments was much too good for him. Great Claus got frightened. He jumped in his cart, whipped up the horses, and drove home as fast as they would take him. The apothecary and everyone else thought he must be a madman, so they didn't stand in his way.

"I'll see that you pay for this," said Great Claus when he reached the highroad. "Oh, won't I make you pay for this, Little Claus!" The moment he got home he took the biggest sack he could find, went to see Little Claus, and said:

"You've deceived me again. First I killed my four horses. Then I killed my old grandmother, and it's all your fault. But I'll make sure you don't make a fool of me again." Then he caught Little Claus and put him

in the sack, slung it up over his back and told him, “Now I shall take you and drown you.”

“It was a long way to the river, and Little Claus was no light load. The road went by the church, and as they passed they could hear the organ playing and the people singing very beautifully. Great Claus set down his sack just outside the church door. He thought the best thing for him to do was to go in to hear a hymn before he went any further. Little Claus was securely tied in the sack, and all the people were inside the church. So Great Claus went in too.

“Oh dear, oh dear!” Little Claus sighed in the sack. Twist and turn as he might, he could not loosen the knot. Then a white-haired old cattle drover came by, leaning heavily on his staff. The herd of bulls and cows he was driving bumped against the sack Little Claus was in, and overturned it.

“Oh dear,” Little Claus sighed, “I’m so young to be going to Heaven.”

“While I,” said the cattle drover, “am too old for this earth, yet Heaven will not send for me.”

“Open the sack!” Little Claus shouted. “Get in and take my place. You’ll go straight to Heaven.”

“That’s where I want to be, said the drover, as he undid the sack. Little Claus jumped out at once. “You must look after my cattle,” the old man said as he crawled in. As soon as Little Claus fastened the sack, he walked away from there with all the bulls and cows.

Presently Great Claus came out of church. He took the sack on his back and found it light, for the old drover was no more than half as heavy as Little Claus.

“How light my burden is, all because I’ve been listening to a hymn,” said Great Claus. He went on to the deep wide river, and threw the sack with the old cattle drover into the water.

“You’ll never trick me again,” Great Claus said, for he thought he had seen the last splash of Little Claus.

He started home, but when he came to the crossroads he met Little Claus and all his cattle.

“Where did you come from?” Great Claus exclaimed. “Didn’t I just drown you?”

“Yes,” said Little Claus. “You threw me in the river half an hour ago.”

“Then how did you come by such a fine herd of cattle?” Great Claus wanted to know.

“Oh, they’re sea cattle,” said Little Claus. “I’ll tell you how I got them, because I’m obliged to you for drowning me. I’m a made man now. I can’t begin to tell you how rich I am.

“But when I was in the sack, with the wind whistling in my ears as you dropped me off the bridge into the cold water, I was frightened enough. I went straight to the bottom, but it didn’t hurt me because of all the fine soft grass down there. Someone opened the sack and a beautiful maiden took my hand. Her clothes were white as snow, and she had a green wreath in her floating hair. She said, ‘So you’ve come, Little Claus. Here’s a herd of cattle for you, but they are just the beginning of my presents. A mile further up the road another herd awaits you.’

“Then I saw that the river is a great highway for the people who live in the sea. Down on the bottom of the river they walked and drove their cattle straight in from the sea to the land where the rivers end. The flowers down there are fragrant. The grass is fresh, and fish flit by as birds do up here. The people are fine, and so are the cattle that come grazing along the roadside.”

“Then why are you back so soon?” Great Claus asked. “If it’s all so beautiful, I’d have stayed there.”

“Well,” said Little Claus, “I’m being particularly clever. You remember I said the sea maiden told me to go one mile up the road and I’d find another herd of cattle. By ‘road’ she meant the river, for that’s the only way she travels. But I know how the river turns and twists, and it seemed too roundabout a way of getting there. By coming up on land I took a short cut that saves me half a mile. So I get my cattle that much sooner.”

“You *are* a lucky man,” said Great Claus, “Do you think I would get me some cattle too if I went down to the bottom of the river?”

“Oh, I’m sure you would,” said Little Claus. “Don’t expect me to carry you there in a sack, because you’re too heavy for me, but if you walk to the river and crawl into the sack, I’ll throw you in with the greatest of pleasure.”

“Thank you,” said Great Claus, “but remember, if I don’t get a herd of sea cattle down there, I’ll give you a thrashing, believe me.”

“Would you really?” said Little Claus.

As they came to the river, the thirsty cattle saw the water and rushed to drink it. Little Claus said, “See what a hurry they are in to get back to the bottom of the river.”

“Help me get there first,” Great Claus commanded, “or I’ll give you that beating right now.” He struggled into the big sack, which had been lying across the back of one of the cattle. “Put a stone in, or I’m afraid I shan’t sink,” said Great Claus.

“No fear of that,” said Little Claus, but he put a big stone in the sack, tied it tightly, and pushed it into the river.

Splash! Up flew the water and down to the bottom sank Great Claus.

“I’m afraid he won’t find what I found!” said Little Claus as he herded all his cattle home.

The Swineherd

THERE was once a poor Prince, who had a kingdom. His kingdom was very small, but still quite large enough to marry upon; and he wished to marry.

It was certainly rather cool of him to say to the Emperor's daughter, "Will you have me?" But so he did; for his name was renowned far and wide; and there were a hundred princesses who would have answered, "Yes!" and "Thank you kindly." We shall see what this princess said.

Listen!

It happened that where the Prince's father lay buried, there grew a rose tree—a most beautiful rose tree, which blossomed only once in every five years, and even then bore only one flower, but that was a rose! It smelt so sweet that all cares and sorrows were forgotten by him who inhaled its fragrance.

And furthermore, the Prince had a nightingale, who could sing in such a manner that it seemed as though all sweet melodies dwelt in her little throat. So the Princess was to have the rose, and the nightingale; and they were accordingly put into large silver caskets, and sent to her.

The Emperor had them brought into a large hall, where the Princess was playing at "Visiting," with the ladies of the court; and when she saw the caskets with the presents, she clapped her hands for joy.

"Ah, if it were but a little pussy-cat!" said she; but the rose tree, with its beautiful rose came to view.

"Oh, how prettily it is made!" said all the court ladies.

"It is more than pretty," said the Emperor, "it is charming!"

But the Princess touched it, and was almost ready to cry.

"Fie, papa!" said she. "It is not made at all, it is natural!"

"Let us see what is in the other casket, before we get into a bad humor," said the Emperor. So the nightingale came forth and sang so delightfully that at first no one could say anything ill-humored of her.

"Superbe! Charmant! exclaimed the ladies; for they all used to chatter French, each one worse than her neighbor.

"How much the bird reminds me of the musical box that belonged to our blessed Empress," said an old knight. "Oh yes! These are the same tones, the same execution."

“Yes! yes!” said the Emperor, and he wept like a child at the remembrance.

“I will still hope that it is not a real bird,” said the Princess.

“Yes, it is a real bird,” said those who had brought it. “Well then let the bird fly,” said the Princess; and she positively refused to see the Prince.

However, he was not to be discouraged; he daubed his face over brown and black; pulled his cap over his ears, and knocked at the door.

“Good day to my lord, the Emperor!” said he. “Can I have employment at the palace?”

“Why, yes,” said the Emperor. “I want some one to take care of the pigs, for we have a great many of them.”

So the Prince was appointed “Imperial Swineherd.” He had a dirty little room close by the pigsty; and there he sat the whole day, and worked. By the evening he had made a pretty little kitchen-pot. Little bells were hung all round it; and when the pot was boiling, these bells tinkled in the most charming manner, and played the old melody,

“Ach! du lieber Augustin,
Alles ist weg, weg, weg!”

(“Ah! dear Augustine!
All is gone, gone, gone!”)

But what was still more curious, whoever held his finger in the smoke of the kitchen-pot, immediately smelt all the dishes that were cooking on every hearth in the city—this, you see, was something quite different from the rose.

Now the Princess happened to walk that way; and when she heard the tune, she stood quite still, and seemed pleased; for she could play “Lieber Augustine”; it was the only piece she knew; and she played it with one finger.

“Why there is my piece,” said the Princess. “That swineherd must certainly have been well educated! Go in and ask him the price of the instrument.”

So one of the court-ladies must run in; however, she drew on wooden slippers first.

“What will you take for the kitchen-pot?” said the lady.

“I will have ten kisses from the Princess,” said the swineherd.

“Yes, indeed!” said the lady.

“I cannot sell it for less,” rejoined the swineherd.

“He is an impudent fellow!” said the Princess, and she walked on; but when she had gone a little way, the bells tinkled so prettily

“Ach! du lieber Augustin, Alles ist weg, weg, weg!”

“Stay,” said the Princess. “Ask him if he will have ten kisses from the ladies of my court.”

“No, thank you!” said the swineherd. “Ten kisses from the Princess, or I keep the kitchen-pot myself.”

“That must not be, either!” said the Princess. “But do you all stand before me that no one may see us.”

And the court-ladies placed themselves in front of her, and spread out their dresses—the swineherd got ten kisses, and the Princess—the kitchen-pot.

That was delightful! The pot was boiling the whole evening, and the whole of the following day. They knew perfectly well what was cooking at every fire throughout the city, from the chamberlain’s to the cobbler’s; the court-ladies danced and clapped their hands.

“We know who has soup, and who has pancakes for dinner to-day, who has cutlets, and who has eggs. How interesting!”

“Yes, but keep my secret, for I am an Emperor’s daughter.”

The swineherd—that is to say—the Prince, for no one knew that he was other than an ill-favored swineherd, let not a day pass without working at something; he at last constructed a rattle, which, when it was swung round, played all the waltzes and jig tunes, which have ever been heard since the creation of the world.

“Ah, that is superb!” said the Princess when she passed by. “I have never heard prettier compositions! Go in and ask him the price of the instrument; but mind, he shall have no more kisses!”

“He will have a hundred kisses from the Princess!” said the lady who had been to ask.

“I think he is not in his right senses!” said the Princess, and walked on, but when she had gone a little way, she stopped again. “One must encourage art,” said she, “I am the Emperor’s daughter. Tell him he shall, as on yesterday, have ten kisses from me, and may take the rest from the ladies of the court.”

“Oh—but we should not like that at all!” said they. “What are you muttering?” asked the Princess. “If I can kiss him, surely you can. Remember that you owe everything to me.” So the ladies were obliged to go to him again.

“A hundred kisses from the Princess,” said he, “or else let everyone keep his own!”

“Stand round!” said she; and all the ladies stood round her whilst the kissing was going on.

“What can be the reason for such a crowd close by the pigsty?” said the Emperor, who happened just then to step out on the balcony; he rubbed his eyes, and put on his spectacles. “They are the ladies of the court; I must go down and see what they are about!” So he pulled up his slippers at the heel, for he had trodden them down.

As soon as he had got into the court-yard, he moved very softly, and the ladies were so much engrossed with counting the kisses, that all might go on fairly, that they did not perceive the Emperor. He rose on his tiptoes.

“What is all this?” said he, when he saw what was going on, and he boxed the Princess’s ears with his slipper, just as the swineherd was taking the eighty-sixth kiss.

“March out!” said the Emperor, for he was very angry; and both Princess and swineherd were thrust out of the city.

The Princess now stood and wept, the swineherd scolded, and the rain poured down.

“Alas! Unhappy creature that I am!” said the Princess. “If I had but married the handsome young Prince! Ah! how unfortunate I am!”

And the swineherd went behind a tree, washed the black and brown color from his face, threw off his dirty clothes, and stepped forth in his princely robes; he looked so noble that the Princess could not help bowing before him.

“I am come to despise thee,” said he. “Thou would’st not have an honorable Prince! Thou could’st not prize the rose and the nightingale, but thou wast ready to kiss the swineherd for the sake of a trumpery plaything. Thou art rightly served.”

He then went back to his own little kingdom, and shut the door of his palace in her face. Now she might well sing,

“Ach! du lieber Augustin,
Alles ist weg, weg, weg!”

The Snow Queen

First Story: Which Deals with a Mirror and its Fragments

NOW we are about to begin, and you must attend; and when we get to the end of the story, you will know more than you do now about a very wicked hobgoblin. He was one of the worst kind; in fact he was a real demon. One day he was in a high state of delight because he had invented a mirror with this peculiarity, that every good and pretty thing reflected in it shrank away to almost nothing. On the other hand, every bad and good-for-nothing thing stood out and looked its worst. The most beautiful landscapes reflected in it looked like boiled spinach, and the best people became hideous, or else they were upside down and had no bodies. Their faces were distorted beyond recognition, and if they had even one freckle it appeared to spread all over the nose and mouth. The demon thought this immensely amusing. If a good thought passed through any one's mind, it turned to a grin in the mirror, and this caused real delight to the demon. All the scholars in the demon's school, for he kept a school, reported that a miracle had taken place: now for the first time it had become possible to see what the world and mankind were really like. They ran about all over with the mirror, till at last there was not a country or a person which had not been seen in this distorting mirror. They even wanted to fly up to heaven with it to mock the angels; but the higher they flew, the more it grinned, so much so that they could hardly hold it, and at last it slipped out of their hands and fell to the earth, shivered into hundreds of millions and billions of bits. Even then it did more harm than ever. Some of these bits were not as big as a grain of sand, and these flew about all over the world, getting into people's eyes, and, once in, they stuck there, and distorted everything they looked at, or made them see everything that was amiss. Each tiniest grain of glass kept the same power as that possessed by the whole mirror. Some people even got a bit of the glass into their hearts, and that was terrible, for the heart became like a lump of ice. Some of the fragments were so big that they were used for window panes, but it was not advisable to look at one's friends through these panes. Other bits were made into spectacles, and it was a bad business when people put on these spectacles meaning to be just. The bad demon laughed till he split his sides; it tickled him to see

the mischief he had done. But some of these fragments were still left floating about the world, and you shall hear what happened to them.

Second Story: About a Little Boy and a Little Girl

IN a big town crowded with houses and people, where there is no room for gardens, people have to be content with flowers in pots instead. In one of these towns lived two children who managed to have something bigger than a flower pot for a garden. They were not brother and sister, but they were just as fond of each other as if they had been. Their parents lived opposite each other in two attic rooms. The roof of one house just touched the roof of the next one, with only a rain-water gutter between them. They each had a little dormer window, and one only had to step over the gutter to get from one house to the other. Each of the parents had a large window-box, in which they grew pot herbs and a little rose-tree. There was one in each box, and they both grew splendidly. Then it occurred to the parents to put the boxes across the gutter, from house to house, and they looked just like two banks of flowers. The pea vines hung down over the edges of the boxes, and the roses threw out long creepers which twined round the windows. It was almost like a green triumphal arch. The boxes were high, and the children knew they must not climb up on to them, but they were often allowed to have their little stools out under the rose-trees, and there they had delightful games. Of course in the winter there was an end to these amusements. The windows were often covered with hoar-frost; then they would warm coppers on the stove and stick them on the frozen panes, where they made lovely peep-holes, as round as possible. Then a bright eye would peep through these holes, one from each window. The little boy's name was Kay, and the little girl's Gerda.

In the summer they could reach each other with one bound, but in the winter they had to go down all the stairs in one house and up all the stairs in the other, and outside there were snowdrifts.

'Look! the white bees are swarming,' said the old grandmother.

'Have they a queen bee, too?' asked the little boy, for he knew that there was a queen among the real bees.

‘Yes, indeed they have,’ said the grandmother. ‘She flies where the swarm is thickest. She is biggest of them all, and she never remains on the ground. She always flies up again to the sky. Many a winter’s night she flies through the streets and peeps in at the windows, and then the ice freezes on the panes into wonderful patterns like flowers.’

‘Oh yes, we have seen that,’ said both children, and then they knew it was true.

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

‘Just let her come,’ said the boy, ‘and I will put her on the stove, where she will melt.’

But the grandmother smoothed his hair and told him more stories.

In the evening when little Kay was at home and half undressed, he crept up on to the chair by the window, and peeped out of the little hole. A few snow-flakes were falling, and one of these, the biggest, remained on the edge of the window-box. It grew bigger and bigger, till it became the figure of a woman, dressed in the finest white gauze, which appeared to be made of millions of starry flakes. She was delicately lovely, but all ice, glittering, dazzling ice. Still she was alive, her eyes shone like two bright stars, but there was no rest or peace in them. She nodded to the window and waved her hand. The little boy was frightened and jumped down off the chair, and then he fancied that a big bird flew past the window.

The next day was bright and frosty, and then came the thaw—and after that the spring. The sun shone, green buds began to appear, the swallows built their nests, and people began to open their windows. The little children began to play in their garden on the roof again. The roses were in splendid bloom that summer; the little girl had learnt a hymn, and there was something in it about roses, and that made her think of her own. She sang it to the little boy, and then he sang it with her—

‘Where roses deck the flowery vale,
There, Infant Jesus, we thee hail!’

The children took each other by the hands, kissed the roses, and rejoiced in God’s bright sunshine, and spoke to it as if the Child Jesus

were there. What lovely summer days they were, and how delightful it was to sit out under the fresh rose-trees, which seemed never tired of blooming.

Kay and Gerda were looking at a picture book of birds and animals one day—it had just struck five by the church clock—when Kay said, ‘Oh, something struck my heart, and I have got something in my eye!’

The little girl put her arms round his neck, he blinked his eye; there was nothing to be seen.

‘I believe it is gone,’ he said; but it was not gone. It was one of those very grains of glass from the mirror, the magic mirror. You remember that horrid mirror, in which all good and great things reflected in it became small and mean, while the bad things were magnified, and every flaw became very apparent.

Poor Kay! a grain of it had gone straight to his heart, and would soon turn it to a lump of ice. He did not feel it any more, but it was still there.

‘Why do you cry?’ he asked; ‘it makes you look ugly; there’s nothing the matter with me. How horrid!’ he suddenly cried; ‘there’s a worm in that rose, and that one is quite crooked; after all, they are nasty roses, and so are the boxes they are growing in!’ He kicked the box and broke off two of the roses.

‘What are you doing, Kay?’ cried the little girl. When he saw her alarm, he broke off another rose, and then ran in by his own window, and left dear little Gerda alone.

When she next got out the picture book he said it was only fit for babies in long clothes. When his grandmother told them stories he always had a but—, and if he could manage it, he liked to get behind her chair, put on her spectacles and imitate her. He did it very well and people laughed at him. He was soon able to imitate every one in the street; he could make fun of all their peculiarities and failings. ‘He will turn out a clever fellow,’ said people. But it was all that bit of glass in his heart, that bit of glass in his eye, and it made him tease little Gerda who was so devoted to him. He played quite different games now; he seemed to have grown older. One winter’s day, when the snow was falling fast, he brought in a big magnifying glass; he held out the tail of his blue coat, and let the snow flakes fall upon it.

‘Now look through the glass, Gerda!’ he said; every snowflake was magnified, and looked like a lovely flower, or a sharply pointed star.

‘Do you see how cleverly they are made?’ said Kay. ‘Much more interesting than looking at real flowers. And there is not a single flaw in them; they are perfect, if only they would not melt.’

Shortly after, he appeared in his thick gloves, with his sledge on his back. He shouted right into Gerda’s ear, ‘I have got leave to drive in the big square where the other boys play!’ and away he went.

In the big square the bolder boys used to tie their little sledges to the farm carts and go a long way in this fashion. They had no end of fun over it. Just in the middle of their games a big sledge came along; it was painted white, and the occupant wore a white fur coat and cap. The sledge drove twice round the square, and Kay quickly tied his sledge on behind. Then off they went, faster, and faster, into the next street. The driver turned round and nodded to Kay in the most friendly way, just as if they knew each other. Every time Kay wanted to loose his sledge the person nodded again, and Kay stayed where he was, and they drove right out through the town gates. Then the snow began to fall so heavily that the little boy could not see a hand before him as they rushed along. He undid the cords and tried to get away from the big sledge, but it was no use, his little sledge stuck fast, and on they rushed, faster than the wind. He shouted aloud, but nobody heard him, and the sledge tore on through the snow-drifts. Every now and then it gave a bound, as if they were jumping over hedges and ditches. He was very frightened, and he wanted to say his prayers, but he could only remember the multiplication tables.

The snow-flakes grew bigger and bigger, till at last they looked like big white chickens. All at once they sprang on one side, the big sledge stopped and the person who drove got up, coat and cap smothered in snow. It was a tall and upright lady all shining white, the Snow Queen herself.

‘We have come along at a good pace,’ she said; ‘but it’s cold enough to kill one; creep inside my bearskin coat.’

She took him into the sledge by her, wrapped him in her furs, and he felt as if he were sinking into a snowdrift.

‘Are you still cold?’ she asked, and she kissed him on the forehead. Ugh! it was colder than ice, it went to his very heart, which was already more than half ice; he felt as if he were dying, but only for a moment, and then it seemed to have done him good; he no longer felt the cold.

‘My sledge! don’t forget my sledge!’ He only remembered it now; it was tied to one of the white chickens which flew along behind them. The Snow Queen kissed Kay again, and then he forgot all about little Gerda, Grandmother, and all the others at home.

‘Now I mustn’t kiss you any more,’ she said, ‘or I should kiss you to death!’

Kay looked at her, she was so pretty; a cleverer, more beautiful face could hardly be imagined. She did not seem to be made of ice now, as she was outside the window when she waved her hand to him. In his eyes she was quite perfect, and he was not a bit afraid of her; he told her that he could do mental arithmetic, as far as fractions, and that he knew the number of square miles and the number of inhabitants of the country. She always smiled at him, and he then thought that he surely did not know enough, and he looked up into the wide expanse of heaven, into which they rose higher and higher as she flew with him on a dark cloud, while the storm surged around them, the wind ringing in their ears like well-known old songs.

They flew over woods and lakes, over oceans and islands; the cold wind whistled down below them, the wolves howled, the black crows flew screaming over the sparkling snow, but up above, the moon shone bright and clear—and Kay looked at it all the long, long winter nights; in the day he slept at the Snow Queen’s feet.

Third Story: The Garden of the Woman Learned in Magic

BUT how was little Gerda getting on all this long time since Kay left her? Where could he be? Nobody knew, nobody could say anything about him. All that the other boys knew was, that they had seen him tie his little sledge to a splendid big one which drove away down the street and out of the town gates. Nobody knew where he was, and many tears were shed; little Gerda cried long and bitterly. At last, people said he was

dead; he must have fallen into the river which ran close by the town. Oh, what long, dark, winter days those were!

At last the spring came and the sunshine.

‘Kay is dead and gone,’ said little Gerda.

‘I don’t believe it,’ said the sunshine.

‘He is dead and gone,’ she said to the swallows.

‘We don’t believe it,’ said the swallows; and at last little Gerda did not believe it either.

‘I will put on my new red shoes,’ she said one morning; ‘those Kay never saw; and then I will go down to the river and ask it about him!’

It was very early in the morning; she kissed the old grandmother, who was still asleep, put on the red shoes, and went quite alone, out by the gate to the river.

‘Is it true that you have taken my little playfellow? I will give you my red shoes if you will bring him back to me again.’

She thought the little ripples nodded in such a curious way, so she took off her red shoes, her most cherished possessions, and threw them both into the river. They fell close by the shore, and were carried straight back to her by the little wavelets; it seemed as if the river would not accept her offering, as it had not taken little Kay.

She only thought she had not thrown them far enough; so she climbed into a boat which lay among the rushes, then she went right out to the further end of it, and threw the shoes into the water again. But the boat was loose, and her movements started it off, and it floated away from the shore: she felt it moving and tried to get out, but before she reached the other end the boat was more than a yard from the shore, and was floating away quite quickly.

Little Gerda was terribly frightened, and began to cry, but nobody heard her except the sparrows, and they could not carry her ashore, but they flew alongside twittering, as if to cheer her, ‘We are here, we are here.’ The boat floated rapidly away with the current; little Gerda sat quite still with only her stockings on; her little red shoes floated behind, but they could not catch up the boat, which drifted away faster and faster.

The banks on both sides were very pretty with beautiful flowers, fine old trees, and slopes dotted with sheep and cattle, but not a single person.

‘Perhaps the river is taking me to little Kay,’ thought Gerda, and that cheered her; she sat up and looked at the beautiful green banks for hours.

Then they came to a big cherry garden; there was a little house in it, with curious blue and red windows, it had a thatched roof, and two wooden soldiers stood outside, who presented arms as she sailed past. Gerda called out to them; she thought they were alive, but of course they did not answer; she was quite close to them, for the current drove the boat close to the bank. Gerda called out again, louder than before, and then an old, old woman came out of the house; she was leaning upon a big, hooked stick, and she wore a big sun hat, which was covered with beautiful painted flowers.

‘You poor little child,’ said the old woman, ‘how ever were you driven out on this big, strong river into the wide, wide world alone?’ Then she walked right into the water, and caught hold of the boat with her hooked stick; she drew it ashore, and lifted little Gerda out.

Gerda was delighted to be on dry land again, but she was a little bit frightened of the strange old woman.

‘Come, tell me who you are, and how you got here,’ said she.

When Gerda had told her the whole story and asked her if she had seen Kay, the woman said she had not seen him, but that she expected him. Gerda must not be sad, she was to come and taste her cherries and see her flowers, which were more beautiful than any picture-book; each one had a story to tell. Then she took Gerda by the hand, they went into the little house, and the old woman locked the door.

The windows were very high up, and they were red, blue, and yellow; they threw a very curious light into the room. On the table were quantities of the most delicious cherries, of which Gerda had leave to eat as many as ever she liked. While she was eating, the old woman combed her hair with a golden comb, so that the hair curled, and shone like gold round the pretty little face, which was as sweet as a rose.

‘I have long wanted a little girl like you!’ said the old woman. ‘You will see how well we shall get on together.’ While she combed her hair Gerda had forgotten all about Kay, for the old woman was learned in the magic art; but she was not a bad witch, she only cast spells over people for a little amusement, and she wanted to keep Gerda. She therefore went

into the garden and waved her hooked stick over all the rose-bushes, and however beautifully they were flowering, all sank down into the rich black earth without leaving a trace behind them. The old woman was afraid that if Gerda saw the roses she would be reminded of Kay, and would want to run away. Then she took Gerda into the flower garden. What a delicious scent there was! and every imaginable flower for every season was in that lovely garden; no picture-book could be brighter or more beautiful. Gerda jumped for joy and played till the sun went down behind the tall cherry trees. Then she was put into a lovely bed with rose-coloured silken coverings stuffed with violets; she slept and dreamt as lovely dreams as any queen on her wedding day.

The next day she played with the flowers in the garden again—and many days passed in the same way. Gerda knew every flower, but however many there were, she always thought there was one missing, but which it was she did not know.

One day she was sitting looking at the old woman's sun hat with its painted flowers, and the very prettiest one of them all was a rose. The old woman had forgotten her hat when she charmed the others away. This is the consequence of being absent-minded.

'What!' said Gerda, 'are there no roses here?' and she sprang in among the flower-beds and sought, but in vain! Her hot tears fell on the very places where the roses used to be; when the warm drops moistened the earth the rose-trees shot up again, just as full of bloom as when they sank. Gerda embraced the roses and kissed them, and then she thought of the lovely roses at home, and this brought the thought of little Kay.

'Oh, how I have been delayed,' said the little girl, 'I ought to have been looking for Kay! Don't you know where he is?' she asked the roses. 'Do you think he is dead and gone?'

'He is not dead,' said the roses. 'For we have been down underground, you know, and all the dead people are there, but Kay is not among them.'

'Oh, thank you!' said little Gerda, and then she went to the other flowers and looked into their cups and said, 'Do you know where Kay is?'

But each flower stood in the sun and dreamt its own dreams. Little Gerda heard many of these, but never anything about Kay.

And what said the Tiger lilies?

‘Do you hear the drum? rub-a-dub, it has only two notes, rub-a-dub, always the same. The wailing of women and the cry of the preacher. The Hindu woman in her long red garment stands on the pile, while the flames surround her and her dead husband. But the woman is only thinking of the living man in the circle round, whose eyes burn with a fiercer fire than that of the flames which consume the body. Do the flames of the heart die in the fire?’

‘I understand nothing about that,’ said little Gerda.

‘That is my story,’ said the Tiger lily.

‘What does the convolvulus say?’

‘An old castle is perched high over a narrow mountain path, it is closely covered with ivy, almost hiding the old red walls, and creeping up leaf upon leaf right round the balcony where stands a beautiful maiden. She bends over the balustrade and looks eagerly up the road. No rose on its stem is fresher than she; no apple blossom wafted by the wind moves more lightly. Her silken robes rustle softly as she bends over and says, ‘Will he never come?’

‘Is it Kay you mean?’ asked Gerda.

‘I am only talking about my own story, my dream,’ answered the convolvulus.

What said the little snowdrop?

‘Between two trees a rope with a board is hanging; it is a swing. Two pretty little girls in snowy frocks and green ribbons fluttering on their hats are seated on it. Their brother, who is bigger than they are, stands up behind them; he has his arms round the ropes for supports, and holds in one hand a little bowl and in the other a clay pipe. He is blowing soap-bubbles. As the swing moves the bubbles fly upwards in all their changing colours, the last one still hangs from the pipe swayed by the wind, and the swing goes on. A little black dog runs up, he is almost as light as the bubbles, he stands up on his hind legs and wants to be taken into the swing, but it does not stop. The little dog falls with an angry

bark; they jeer at it; the bubble bursts. A swinging plank, a fluttering foam picture—that is my story!’

‘I daresay what you tell me is very pretty, but you speak so sadly and you never mention little Kay.’

What says the hyacinth?

‘They were three beautiful sisters, all most delicate, and quite transparent. One wore a crimson robe, the other a blue, and the third was pure white. These three danced hand-in-hand, by the edge of the lake in the moonlight. They were human beings, not fairies of the wood. The fragrant air attracted them, and they vanished into the wood; here the fragrance was stronger still. Three coffins glide out of the wood towards the lake, and in them lie the maidens. The fire-flies flutter lightly round them with their little flickering torches. Do these dancing maidens sleep, or are they dead? The scent of the flower says that they are corpses. The evening bell tolls their knell.’

‘You make me quite sad,’ said little Gerda; ‘your perfume is so strong it makes me think of those dead maidens. Oh, is little Kay really dead? The roses have been down underground, and they say no.’

‘Ding, dong,’ tolled the hyacinth bells; ‘we are not tolling for little Kay; we know nothing about him. We sing our song, the only one we know.’

And Gerda went on to the buttercups shining among their dark green leaves.

‘You are a bright little sun,’ said Gerda. ‘Tell me if you know where I shall find my playfellow.’

The buttercup shone brightly and returned Gerda’s glance. What song could the buttercup sing? It would not be about Kay.

‘God’s bright sun shone into a little court on the first day of spring. The sunbeams stole down the neighbouring white wall, close to which bloomed the first yellow flower of the season; it shone like burnished gold in the sun. An old woman had brought her arm-chair out into the sun; her granddaughter, a poor and pretty little maid-servant, had come to pay her a short visit, and she kissed her. There was gold, heart’s gold, in the kiss. Gold on the lips, gold on the ground, and gold above, in the early morning beams! Now that is my little story,’ said the buttercup.

‘Oh, my poor old grandmother!’ sighed Gerda. ‘She will be longing to see me, and grieving about me, as she did about Kay. But I shall soon go home again and take Kay with me. It is useless for me to ask the flowers about him. They only know their own stories, and have no information to give me.’

Then she tucked up her little dress, so that she might run the faster; but the narcissus blossoms struck her on the legs as she jumped over them, so she stopped and said, ‘Perhaps you can tell me something.’

She stooped down close to the flower and listened. What did it say?

‘I can see myself, I can see myself,’ said the narcissus. ‘Oh, how sweet is my scent. Up there in an attic window stands a little dancing girl half dressed; first she stands on one leg, then on the other, and looks as if she would tread the whole world under her feet. She is only a delusion. She pours some water out of a teapot on to a bit of stuff that she is holding; it is her bodice. “Cleanliness is a good thing,” she says. Her white dress hangs on a peg; it has been washed in the teapot, too, and dried on the roof. She puts it on, and wraps a saffron-coloured scarf round her neck, which makes the dress look whiter. See how high she carries her head, and all upon one stem. I see myself, I see myself!’

‘I don’t care a bit about all that,’ said Gerda; ‘it’s no use telling me such stuff.’

And then she ran to the end of the garden. The door was fastened, but she pressed the rusty latch, and it gave way. The door sprang open, and little Gerda ran out with bare feet into the wide world. She looked back three times, but nobody came after her. At last she could run no further, and she sat down on a big stone. When she looked round she saw that the summer was over; it was quite late autumn. She would never have known it inside the beautiful garden, where the sun always shone, and the flowers of every season were always in bloom.

‘Oh, how I have wasted my time,’ said little Gerda. ‘It is autumn. I must not rest any longer,’ and she got up to go on.

Oh, how weary and sore were her little feet, and everything round looked so cold and dreary. The long willow leaves were quite yellow. The damp mist fell off the trees like rain, one leaf dropped after another from the trees, and only the sloe-thorn still bore its fruit; but the sloes

were sour and set one's teeth on edge. Oh, how grey and sad it looked, out in the wide world.

Fourth Story: Prince and Princess

GERDA was soon obliged to rest again. A big crow hopped on to the snow, just in front of her. It had been sitting looking at her for a long time and wagging its head. Now it said, 'Caw, caw; good-day, good-day,' as well as it could; it meant to be kind to the little girl, and asked her where she was going, alone in the wide world.

Gerda understood the word 'alone' and knew how much there was in it, and she told the crow the whole story of her life and adventures, and asked if it had seen Kay.

The crow nodded its head gravely and said, 'May be I have, may be I have.'

'What, do you really think you have?' cried the little girl, nearly smothering him with her kisses.

'Gently, gently!' said the crow. 'I believe it may have been Kay, but he has forgotten you by this time, I expect, for the Princess.'

'Does he live with a Princess?' asked Gerda.

'Yes, listen,' said the crow; 'but it is so difficult to speak your language. If you understand "crow's language,"¹ I can tell you about it much better.'

'No, I have never learnt it,' said Gerda; 'but grandmother knew it, and used to speak it. If only I had learnt it!'

'It doesn't matter,' said the crow. 'I will tell you as well as I can, although I may do it rather badly.'

Then he told her what he had heard.

'In this kingdom where we are now,' said he, 'there lives a Princess who is very clever. She has read all the newspapers in the world, and forgotten them again, so clever is she. One day she was sitting on her throne, which is not such an amusing thing to do either, they say; and she began humming a tune, which happened to be

"Why should I not be married, oh why?"

“Why not indeed?” said she. And she made up her mind to marry, if she could find a husband who had an answer ready when a question was put to him. She called all the court ladies together, and when they heard what she wanted they were delighted.

“I like that now,” they said. “I was thinking the same thing myself the other day.”

‘Every word I say is true,’ said the crow, ‘for I have a tame sweetheart who goes about the palace whenever she likes. She told me the whole story.’

Of course his sweetheart was a crow, for ‘birds of a feather flock together,’ and one crow always chooses another. The newspapers all came out immediately with borders of hearts and the Princess’s initials. They gave notice that any young man who was handsome enough might go up to the Palace to speak to the Princess. The one who spoke as if he were quite at home, and spoke well, would be chosen by the Princess as her husband. Yes, yes, you may believe me, it’s as true as I sit here,’ said the crow. ‘The people came crowding in; there was such running, and crushing, but no one was fortunate enough to be chosen, either on the first day, or on the second. They could all of them talk well enough in the street, but when they entered the castle gates, and saw the guard in silver uniforms, and when they went up the stairs through rows of lackeys in gold embroidered liveries, their courage forsook them. When they reached the brilliantly lighted reception-rooms, and stood in front of the throne where the Princess was seated, they could think of nothing to say, they only echoed her last words, and of course that was not what she wanted.

‘It was just as if they had all taken some kind of sleeping-powder, which made them lethargic; they did not recover themselves until they got out into the street again, and then they had plenty to say. There was quite a long line of them, reaching from the town gates up to the Palace.

‘I went to see them myself,’ said the crow. ‘They were hungry and thirsty, but they got nothing at the Palace, not even as much as a glass of tepid water. Some of the wise ones had taken sandwiches with them, but they did not share them with their neighbours; they thought if the others

went in to the Princess looking hungry, that there would be more chance for themselves.'

'But Kay, little Kay!' asked Gerda; 'when did he come? was he amongst the crowd?'

'Give me time, give me time! we are just coming to him. It was on the third day that a little personage came marching cheerfully along, without either carriage or horse. His eyes sparkled like yours, and he had beautiful long hair, but his clothes were very shabby.'

'Oh, that was Kay!' said Gerda gleefully; 'then I have found him!' and she clapped her hands.

'He had a little knapsack on his back!' said the crow.

'No, it must have been his sledge; he had it with him when he went away!' said Gerda.

'It may be so,' said the crow; 'I did not look very particularly; but I know from my sweetheart, that when he entered the Palace gates, and saw the life-guards in their silver uniforms, and the lackeys on the stairs in their gold-laced liveries, he was not the least bit abashed. He just nodded to them and said, "It must be very tiresome to stand upon the stairs. I am going inside!" The rooms were blazing with lights. Privy councillors and excellencies without number were walking about barefoot carrying golden vessels; it was enough to make you solemn! His boots creaked fearfully too, but he wasn't a bit upset.'

'Oh, I am sure that was Kay!' said Gerda; 'I know he had a pair of new boots, I heard them creaking in grandmother's room.'

'Yes, indeed they did creak!' said the crow. 'But nothing daunted, he went straight up to the Princess, who was sitting on a pearl as big as a spinning-wheel. Poor, simple boy! all the court ladies and their attendants; the courtiers, and their gentlemen, each attended by a page, were standing round. The nearer the door they stood, so much the greater was their haughtiness; till the footman's boy, who always wore slippers and stood in the doorway, was almost too proud even to be looked at.'

'It must be awful!' said little Gerda, 'and yet Kay has won the Princess!'

'If I had not been a crow, I should have taken her myself, notwithstanding that I am engaged. They say he spoke as well as I could

have done myself, when I speak crow-language; at least so my sweetheart says. He was a picture of good looks and gallantry, and then, he had not come with any idea of wooing the Princess, but simply to hear her wisdom. He admired her just as much as she admired him!

‘Indeed it was Kay then,’ said Gerda; ‘he was so clever he could do mental arithmetic up to fractions. Oh, won’t you take me to the Palace?’

‘It’s easy enough to talk,’ said the crow; ‘but how are we to manage it? I will talk to my tame sweetheart about it; she will have some advice to give us I daresay, but I am bound to tell you that a little girl like you will never be admitted!’

‘Oh, indeed I shall,’ said Gerda; ‘when Kay hears that I am here, he will come out at once to fetch me.’

‘Wait here for me by the stile,’ said the crow, then he wagged his head and flew off.

The evening had darkened in before he came back. ‘Caw, caw,’ he said, ‘she sends you greeting. And here is a little roll for you; she got it out of the kitchen where there is bread enough, and I daresay you are hungry! It is not possible for you to get into the Palace; you have bare feet; the guards in silver and the lackeys in gold would never allow you to pass. But don’t cry, we shall get you in somehow; my sweetheart knows a little back staircase which leads up to the bedroom, and she knows where the key is kept.’

Then they went into the garden, into the great avenue where the leaves were dropping, softly one by one; and when the Palace lights went out, one after the other, the crow led little Gerda to the back door, which was ajar.

Oh, how Gerda’s heart beat with fear and longing! It was just as if she was about to do something wrong, and yet she only wanted to know if this really was little Kay. Oh, it must be him, she thought, picturing to herself his clever eyes and his long hair. She could see his very smile when they used to sit under the rose-trees at home. She thought he would be very glad to see her, and to hear what a long way she had come to find him, and to hear how sad they had all been at home when he did not come back. Oh, it was joy mingled with fear.

They had now reached the stairs, where a little lamp was burning on a shelf. There stood the tame sweetheart, twisting and turning her head to look at Gerda, who made a curtsy, as grandmother had taught her.

‘My betrothed has spoken so charmingly to me about you, my little miss!’ she said; ‘your life, “*Vita*,” as it is called, is most touching! If you will take the lamp, I will go on in front. We shall take the straight road here, and we shall meet no one.’

‘It seems to me that some one is coming behind us,’ said Gerda, as she fancied something rushed past her, throwing a shadow on the walls; horses with flowing manes and slender legs; huntsmen, ladies and gentlemen on horseback.

‘Oh, those are only the dreams!’ said the crow; ‘they come to take the thoughts of the noble ladies and gentlemen out hunting. That’s a good thing, for you will be able to see them all the better in bed. But don’t forget, when you are taken into favour, to show a grateful spirit.’

‘Now, there’s no need to talk about that,’ said the crow from the woods.

They came now into the first apartment; it was hung with rose-coloured satin embroidered with flowers. Here again the dreams overtook them, but they flitted by so quickly that Gerda could not distinguish them. The apartments became one more beautiful than the other; they were enough to bewilder anybody. They now reached the bedroom. The ceiling was like a great palm with crystal leaves, and in the middle of the room two beds, each like a lily hung from a golden stem. One was white, and in it lay the Princess; the other was red, and there lay he whom Gerda had come to seek—little Kay! She bent aside one of the crimson leaves, and she saw a little brown neck. It was Kay. She called his name aloud, and held the lamp close to him. Again the dreams rushed through the room on horseback—he awoke, turned his head—and it was not little Kay.

It was only the Prince’s neck which was like his; but he was young and handsome. The Princess peeped out of her lily-white bed, and asked what was the matter. Then little Gerda cried and told them all her story, and what the crows had done to help her.

‘You poor little thing!’ said the Prince and Princess. And they praised the crows, and said that they were not at all angry with them, but they must not do it again. Then they gave them a reward.

‘Would you like your liberty?’ said the Princess, ‘or would you prefer permanent posts about the court as court crows, with perquisites from the kitchen?’

Both crows curtsied and begged for the permanent posts, for they thought of their old age, and said ‘it was so good to have something for the old man,’ as they called it.

The Prince got up and allowed Gerda to sleep in his bed, and he could not have done more. She folded her little hands, and thought ‘how good the people and the animals are’; then she shut her eyes and fell fast asleep. All the dreams came flying back again; this time they looked like angels, and they were dragging a little sledge with Kay sitting on it, and he nodded. But it was only a dream; so it all vanished when she woke.

Next day she was dressed in silk and velvet from head to foot; they asked her to stay at the Palace and have a good time, but she only begged them to give her a little carriage and horse, and a little pair of boots, so that she might drive out into the wide world to look for Kay.

They gave her a pair of boots and a muff. She was beautifully dressed, and when she was ready to start, there before the door stood a new chariot of pure gold. The Prince’s and Princess’s coat of arms were emblazoned on it, and shone like a star. Coachman, footman, and outrider, for there was even an outrider, all wore golden crowns. The Prince and Princess themselves helped her into the carriage and wished her joy. The wood crow, who was now married, accompanied her for the first three miles; he sat beside Gerda, for he could not ride with his back to the horses. The other crow stood at the door and flapped her wings; she did not go with them, for she suffered from headache since she had become a kitchen pensioner—the consequence of eating too much. The chariot was stored with sugar biscuits, and there were fruit and ginger nuts under the seat. ‘Good-bye, good-bye,’ cried the Prince and Princess; little Gerda wept, and the crow wept too. At the end of the first few miles the crow said good-bye, and this was the hardest parting of all. It flew up

into a tree and flapped its big black wings as long as it could see the chariot, which shone like the brightest sunshine.

Fifth Story: The Little Robber Girl

THEY drove on through a dark wood, where the chariot lighted up the way and blinded the robbers by its glare; it was more than they could bear.

‘It is gold, it is gold!’ they cried, and darting forward, seized the horses, and killed the postilions, the coachman, and footman. They then dragged little Gerda out of the carriage.

‘She is fat, and she is pretty; she has been fattened on nuts!’ said the old robber woman, who had a long beard, and eyebrows that hung down over her eyes. ‘She is as good as a fat lamb, and how nice she will taste!’ She drew out her sharp knife as she said this; it glittered horribly. ‘Oh!’ screamed the old woman at the same moment, for her little daughter had come up behind her, and she was biting her ear. She hung on her back, as wild and as savage a little animal as you could wish to find. ‘You bad, wicked child!’ said her mother, but she was prevented from killing Gerda on this occasion.

‘She shall play with me,’ said the little robber girl; ‘she shall give me her muff, and her pretty dress, and she shall sleep in my bed.’ Then she bit her mother again and made her dance. All the robbers laughed and said, ‘Look at her dancing with her cub!’

‘I want to get into the carriage,’ said the little robber girl, and she always had her own way because she was so spoilt and stubborn. She and Gerda got into the carriage, and then they drove over stubble and stones further and further into the wood. The little robber girl was as big as Gerda, but much stronger; she had broader shoulders, and darker skin, her eyes were quite black, with almost a melancholy expression. She put her arm round Gerda’s waist and said—

‘They shan’t kill you as long as I don’t get angry with you; you must surely be a Princess!’

‘No,’ said little Gerda, and then she told her all her adventures, and how fond she was of Kay.

The robber girl looked earnestly at her, gave a little nod, and said, 'They shan't kill you even if I am angry with you. I will do it myself.' Then she dried Gerda's eyes, and stuck her own hands into the pretty muff, which was so soft and warm.

At last the chariot stopped: they were in the courtyard of a robber's castle, the walls of which were cracked from top to bottom. Ravens and crows flew in and out of every hole, and big bulldogs, which each looked ready to devour somebody, jumped about as high as they could, but they did not bark, for it was not allowed. A big fire was burning in the middle of the stone floor of the smoky old hall. The smoke all went up to the ceiling, where it had to find a way out for itself. Soup was boiling in a big caldron over the fire, and hares and rabbits were roasting on the spits.

'You shall sleep with me and all my little pets to-night,' said the robber girl.

When they had something to eat and drink they went along to one corner which was spread with straw and rugs. There were nearly a hundred pigeons roosting overhead on the rafters and beams. They seemed to be asleep, but they fluttered about a little when the children came in.

'They are all mine,' said the little robber girl, seizing one of the nearest. She held it by the legs and shook it till it flapped its wings. 'Kiss it,' she cried, dashing it at Gerda's face. 'Those are the wood pigeons,' she added, pointing to some laths fixed across a big hole high up on the walls; 'they are a regular rabble; they would fly away directly if they were not locked in. And here is my old sweetheart Be,' dragging forward a reindeer by the horn; it was tied up, and it had a bright copper ring round its neck. 'We have to keep him close too, or he would run off. Every single night I tickle his neck with my bright knife, he is so frightened of it.' The little girl produced a long knife out of a hole in the wall and drew it across the reindeer's neck. The poor animal laughed and kicked, and the robber girl laughed and pulled Gerda down into the bed with her.

'Do you have that knife by you while you are asleep?' asked Gerda, looking rather frightened.

‘I always sleep with a knife,’ said the little robber girl. ‘You never know what will happen. But now tell me again what you told me before about little Kay, and why you went out into the world.’ So Gerda told her all about it again, and the wood pigeons cooed up in their cage above them; the other pigeons were asleep. The little robber girl put her arm round Gerda’s neck and went to sleep with the knife in her other hand, and she was soon snoring. But Gerda would not close her eyes; she did not know whether she was to live or to die. The robbers sat round the fire, eating and drinking, and the old woman was turning somersaults. This sight terrified the poor little girl. Then the wood pigeons said, ‘Coo, coo, we have seen little Kay; his sledge was drawn by a white chicken, and he was sitting in the Snow Queen’s sledge; it was floating low down over the trees, while we were in our nests. She blew upon us young ones, and they all died except we two; coo, coo.’

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

‘She was most likely going to Lapland, because there is always snow and ice there! Ask the reindeer who is tied up there.’

‘There is ice and snow, and it’s a splendid place,’ said the reindeer. ‘You can run and jump about where you like on those big glittering plains. The Snow Queen has her summer tent there, but her permanent castle is up at the North Pole, on the island which is called Spitzbergen!’

‘Oh Kay, little Kay!’ sighed Gerda.

‘Lie still, or I shall stick the knife into you!’ said the robber girl.

In the morning Gerda told her all that the wood pigeons had said, and the little robber girl looked quite solemn, but she nodded her head and said, ‘No matter, no matter! Do you know where Lapland is?’ she asked the reindeer.

‘Who should know better than I,’ said the animal, its eyes dancing. ‘I was born and brought up there, and I used to leap about on the snowfields.’

‘Listen,’ said the robber girl. ‘You see that all our men folks are away, but mother is still here, and she will stay; but later on in the morning she will take a drink out of the big bottle there, and after that she will have a nap—then I will do something for you.’ Then she jumped

out of bed, ran along to her mother and pulled her beard, and said, 'Good morning, my own dear nanny-goat!' And her mother filliped her nose till it was red and blue; but it was all affection.

As soon as her mother had had her draught from the bottle and had dropped asleep, the little robber girl went along to the reindeer, and said, 'I should have the greatest pleasure in the world in keeping you here, to tickle you with my knife, because you are such fun then; however, it does not matter. I will untie your halter and help you outside so that you may run away to Lapland, but you must put your best foot foremost, and take this little girl for me to the Snow Queen's palace, where her playfellow is. I have no doubt you heard what she was telling me, for she spoke loud enough, and you are generally eavesdropping!'

The reindeer jumped into the air for joy. The robber girl lifted little Gerda up, and had the forethought to tie her on, nay, even to give her a little cushion to sit upon. 'Here, after all, I will give you your fur boots back, for it will be very cold, but I will keep your muff, it is too pretty to part with. Still you shan't be cold. Here are my mother's big mittens for you, they will reach up to your elbows; here, stick your hands in! Now your hands look just like my nasty mother's!'

Gerda shed tears of joy.

'I don't like you to whimper!' said the little robber girl. 'You ought to be looking delighted; and here are two loaves and a ham for you, so that you shan't starve.'

These things were tied on to the back of the reindeer; the little robber girl opened the door, called in all the big dogs, and then she cut the halter with her knife, and said to the reindeer, 'Now run, but take care of my little girl!'

Gerda stretched out her hands in the big mittens to the robber girl and said good-bye; and then the reindeer darted off over briars and bushes, through the big wood, over swamps and plains, as fast as it could go. The wolves howled and the ravens screamed, while the red lights quivered up in the sky.

'There are my old northern lights,' said the reindeer; 'see how they flash!' and on it rushed faster than ever, day and night. The loaves were eaten, and the ham too, and then they were in Lapland.

Sixth Story: The Lapp Woman and the Finn Woman

THEY stopped by a little hut, a very poverty-stricken one; the roof sloped right down to the ground, and the door was so low that the people had to creep on hands and knees when they wanted to go in or out. There was nobody at home here but an old Lapp woman, who was frying fish over a train-oil lamp. The reindeer told her all Gerda's story, but it told its own first; for it thought it was much the most important. Gerda was so overcome by the cold that she could not speak at all.

'Oh, you poor creatures!' said the Lapp woman; 'you've got a long way to go yet; you will have to go hundreds of miles into Finmark, for the Snow Queen is paying a country visit there, and she burns blue lights every night. I will write a few words on a dried stock-fish, for I have no paper. I will give it to you to take to the Finn woman up there. She will be better able to direct you than I can.'

So when Gerda was warmed, and had eaten and drunk something, the Lapp woman wrote a few words on a dried stock-fish and gave it to her, bidding her take good care of it. Then she tied her on to the reindeer again, and off they flew. Flicker, flicker, went the beautiful blue northern lights up in the sky all night long;—at last they came to Finmark, and knocked on the Finn woman's chimney, for she had no door at all.

There was such a heat inside that the Finn woman went about almost naked; she was little and very grubby. She at once loosened Gerda's things, and took off the mittens and the boots, or she would have been too hot. Then she put a piece of ice on the reindeer's head, and after that she read what was written on the stock-fish. She read it three times, and then she knew it by heart, and put the fish into the pot for dinner; there was no reason why it should not be eaten, and she never wasted anything.

Again the reindeer told his own story first, and then little Gerda's. The Finn woman blinked with her wise eyes, but she said nothing.

'You are so clever,' said the reindeer, 'I know you can bind all the winds of the world with a bit of sewing cotton. When a skipper unties one knot he gets a good wind, when he unties two it blows hard, and if he

undoes the third and the fourth he brings a storm about his head wild enough to blow down the forest trees. Won't you give the little girl a drink, so that she may have the strength of twelve men to overcome the Snow Queen?'

'The strength of twelve men,' said the Finn woman. 'Yes, that will be about enough.'

She went along to a shelf and took down a big folded skin, which she unrolled. There were curious characters written on it, and the Finn woman read till the perspiration poured down her forehead.

But the reindeer again implored her to give Gerda something, and Gerda looked at her with such beseeching eyes, full of tears, that the Finn woman began blinking again, and drew the reindeer along into a corner, where she whispered to it, at the same time putting fresh ice on its head.

'Little Kay is certainly with the Snow Queen, and he is delighted with everything there. He thinks it is the best place in the world, but that is because he has got a splinter of glass in his heart and a grain of glass in his eye. They will have to come out first, or he will never be human again, and the Snow Queen will keep him in her power!'

'But can't you give little Gerda something to take which will give her power to conquer it all?'

'I can't give her greater power than she already has. Don't you see how great it is? Don't you see how both man and beast have to serve her? How she has got on as well as she has on her bare feet? We must not tell her what power she has; it is in her heart, because she is such a sweet innocent child. If she can't reach the Snow Queen herself, then we can't help her. The Snow Queen's gardens begin just two miles from here; you can carry the little girl as far as that. Put her down by the big bush standing there in the snow covered with red berries. Don't stand gossiping, but hurry back to me!' Then the Finn woman lifted Gerda on the reindeer's back, and it rushed off as hard as it could.

'Oh, I have not got my boots, and I have not got my mittens!' cried little Gerda.

She soon felt the want of them in that cutting wind, but the reindeer did not dare to stop. It ran on till it came to the bush with the red berries. There it put Gerda down, and kissed her on the mouth, while big shining

tears trickled down its face. Then it ran back again as fast as ever it could. There stood poor little Gerda, without shoes or gloves, in the middle of freezing icebound Finmark.

She ran forward as quickly as she could. A whole regiment of snow-flakes came towards her; they did not fall from the sky, for it was quite clear, with the northern lights shining brightly. No; these snow-flakes ran along the ground, and the nearer they came the bigger they grew. Gerda remembered well how big and ingenious they looked under the magnifying glass. But the size of these was monstrous. They were alive; they were the Snow Queen's advanced guard, and they took the most curious shapes. Some looked like big, horrid porcupines, some like bundles of knotted snakes with their heads sticking out. Others, again, were like fat little bears with bristling hair, but all were dazzling white and living snow-flakes.

Then little Gerda said the Lord's Prayer, and the cold was so great that her breath froze as it came out of her mouth, and she could see it like a cloud of smoke in front of her. It grew thicker and thicker, till it formed itself into bright little angels, who grew bigger and bigger when they touched the ground. They all wore helmets, and carried shields and spears in their hands. More and more of them appeared, and when Gerda had finished her prayer she was surrounded by a whole legion. They pierced the snow-flakes with their spears and shivered them into a hundred pieces, and little Gerda walked fearlessly and undauntedly through them. The angels touched her hands and her feet, and then she hardly felt how cold it was, but walked quickly on towards the Palace of the Snow Queen.

Now we must see what Kay was about. He was not thinking about Gerda at all, least of all that she was just outside the Palace.

Seventh Story: What Happened in the Snow Queen's Palace and Afterwards

THE Palace walls were made of drifted snow, and the windows and doors of the biting winds. There were over a hundred rooms in it, shaped just as the snow had drifted. The biggest one stretched for many miles. They were all lighted by the strongest northern lights. All the rooms were immensely big and empty, and glittering in their iciness. There was never any gaiety in them; not even so much as a ball for the little bears, when the storms might have turned up as the orchestra, and the polar bears might have walked about on their hind legs and shown off their grand manners. There was never even a little game-playing party, for such games as 'touch last' or 'the biter bit'—no, not even a little gossip over the coffee cups for the white fox misses. Immense, vast, and cold were the Snow Queen's halls. The northern lights came and went with such regularity that you could count the seconds between their coming and going. In the midst of these never-ending snow-halls was a frozen lake. It was broken up on the surface into a thousand bits, but each piece was so exactly like the others that the whole formed a perfect work of art. The Snow Queen sat in the very middle of it when she sat at home. She then said that she was sitting on 'The Mirror of Reason,' and that it was the best and only one in the world.

Little Kay was blue with cold, nay, almost black; but he did not know it, for the Snow Queen had kissed away the icy shiverings, and his heart was little better than a lump of ice. He went about dragging some sharp, flat pieces of ice, which he placed in all sorts of patterns, trying to make something out of them; just as when we at home have little tablets of wood, with which we make patterns, and call them a 'Chinese puzzle.'

Kay's patterns were most ingenious, because they were the 'Ice Puzzles of Reason.' In his eyes they were first-rate and of the greatest importance: this was because of the grain of glass still in his eye. He made many patterns forming words, but he never could find out the right way to place them for one particular word, a word he was most anxious to make. It was 'Eternity.' The Snow Queen had said to him that if he

could find out this word he should be his own master, and she would give him the whole world and a new pair of skates. But he could not discover it.

‘Now I am going to fly away to the warm countries,’ said the Snow Queen. ‘I want to go and peep into the black caldrons!’ She meant the volcanoes Etna and Vesuvius by this. ‘I must whiten them a little; it does them good, and the lemons and the grapes too!’ And away she flew.

Kay sat quite alone in all those many miles of empty ice halls. He looked at his bits of ice, and thought and thought, till something gave way within him. He sat so stiff and immovable that one might have thought he was frozen to death.

Then it was that little Gerda walked into the Palace, through the great gates in a biting wind. She said her evening prayer, and the wind dropped as if lulled to sleep, and she walked on into the big empty hall. She saw Kay, and knew him at once; she flung her arms round his neck, held him fast, and cried, ‘Kay, little Kay, have I found you at last?’

But he sat still, rigid and cold.

Then little Gerda shed hot tears; they fell upon his breast and penetrated to his heart. Here they thawed the lump of ice, and melted the little bit of the mirror which was in it. He looked at her, and she sang:

‘Where roses deck the flowery vale,
There, Infant Jesus, we thee hail!’

Then Kay burst into tears; he cried so much that the grain of glass was washed out of his eye. He knew her, and shouted with joy, ‘Gerda, dear little Gerda! where have you been for such a long time? And where have I been?’ He looked round and said, ‘How cold it is here; how empty and vast!’ He kept tight hold of Gerda, who laughed and cried for joy. Their happiness was so heavenly that even the bits of ice danced for joy around them; and when they settled down, there they lay! just in the very position the Snow Queen had told Kay he must find out, if he was to become his own master and have the whole world and a new pair of skates.

Gerda kissed his cheeks and they grew rosy, she kissed his eyes and they shone like hers, she kissed his hands and his feet, and he became well and strong. The Snow Queen might come home whenever she liked, his order of release was written there in shining letters of ice.

They took hold of each other's hands and wandered out of the big Palace. They talked about grandmother, and about the roses upon the roof. Wherever they went the winds lay still and the sun broke through the clouds. When they reached the bush with the red berries they found the reindeer waiting for them, and he had brought another young reindeer with him, whose udders were full. The children drank her warm milk and kissed her on the mouth. Then they carried Kay and Gerda, first to the Finn woman, in whose heated hut they warmed themselves and received directions about the homeward journey. Then they went on to the Lapp woman; she had made new clothes for them and prepared her sledge. Both the reindeer ran by their side, to the boundaries of the country; here the first green buds appeared, and they said 'Good-bye' to the reindeer and the Lapp woman. They heard the first little birds twittering and saw the buds in the forest. Out of it came riding a young girl on a beautiful horse, which Gerda knew, for it had drawn the golden chariot. She had a scarlet cap on her head and pistols in her belt; it was the little robber girl, who was tired of being at home. She was riding northwards to see how she liked it before she tried some other part of the world. She knew them again, and Gerda recognised her with delight.

'You are a nice fellow to go tramping off!' she said to little Kay. 'I should like to know if you deserve to have somebody running to the end of the world for your sake!'

But Gerda patted her cheek, and asked about the Prince and Princess.

'They are travelling in foreign countries,' said the robber girl.

'But the crow?' asked Gerda.

'Oh, the crow is dead!' she answered. 'The tame sweetheart is a widow, and goes about with a bit of black wool tied round her leg. She pities herself bitterly, but it's all nonsense! But tell me how you got on yourself, and where you found him.'

Gerda and Kay both told her all about it.

‘Snip, snap, snurre, it’s all right at last then!’ she said, and she took hold of their hands and promised that if she ever passed through their town she would pay them a visit. Then she rode off into the wide world. But Kay and Gerda walked on, hand in hand, and wherever they went they found the most delightful spring and blooming flowers. Soon they recognised the big town where they lived, with its tall towers, in which the bells still rang their merry peals. They went straight on to grandmother’s door, up the stairs and into her room. Everything was just as they had left it, and the old clock ticked in the corner, and the hands pointed to the time. As they went through the door into the room they perceived that they were grown up. The roses clustered round the open window, and there stood their two little chairs. Kay and Gerda sat down upon them, still holding each other by the hand. All the cold empty grandeur of the Snow Queen’s palace had passed from their memory like a bad dream. Grandmother sat in God’s warm sunshine reading from her Bible.

‘Without ye become as little children ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.’

Kay and Gerda looked into each other’s eyes, and then all at once the meaning of the old hymn came to them.

‘Where roses deck the flowery vale,
There, Infant Jesus, we thee hail!’

And there they both sat, grown up and yet children, children at heart; and it was summer—warm, beautiful summer.

The End