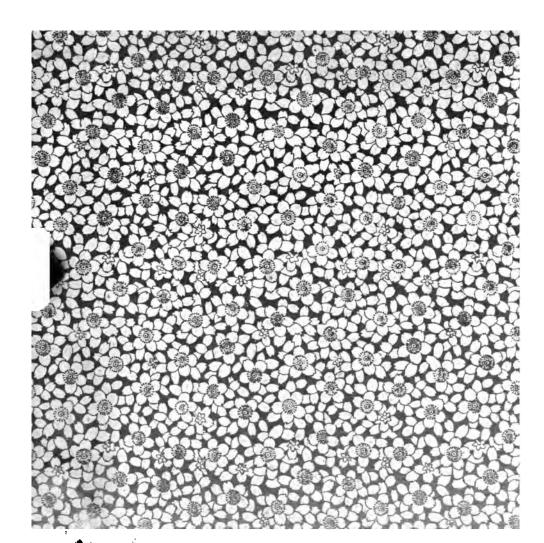
UNDER

THE

SUNSET





UNDER THE SUNSET







## UNDER THE SUNSET

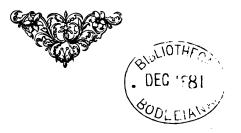
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# BRAM STOKER

M. A.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

W. FITZGERALD AND W. V. COCKBURN



#### LONDON

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TO

### MY SON

WHOSE ANGEL DOTH BEHOLD THE FACE

O**F** 

THE KING



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#### UNDER THE SUNSET.

AR, far away, there is a beautiful Country which no human eye has ever seen in waking hours. Under the Sunset it lies, where the distant horizon bounds the day, and where the clouds, splendid with light and colour, give a promise of the glory and beauty which encompass it.

Sometimes it is given to us to see it in dreams.

Now and again come, softly, Angels who fan with their great white wings the aching brows, and place cool hands upon the sleeping eyes. Then soars away the spirit of the sleeper. Up from the dimness and murkiness of the night season it springs. Away through the purple clouds it sails. It hies through the vast expanse of light and air. Through the deep blue of heaven's vault it flies; and sweeping over the far-off horizon, rests in the fair Land Under the Sunset.

This Country is like our own Country in many ways. It has men and women, kings and queens, rich and poor; it has houses, and trees, and fields, and birds, and flowers. There is day there and night also; and heat and cold, and sickness and health. The hearts of men and women, and boys and girls, beat as they do here. There are the same sorrows and the same joys; and the same hopes and the same fears.

If a child from that Country was beside a child here you could not tell the difference between them, save that the clothes alone are different. They talk the same language as we do ourselves. They do not know that they are different from us; and we do not know that we are different from them. When they come to us in their dreams we do not know they are strangers; and when we go to their Country in our dreams we seem to be at home. Perhaps this is because good people's homes are in their hearts; and wheresoever they may be they have peace.

The Country Under the Sunset was for long ages a wondrous and pleasant Land. Nothing there was which was not beautiful and sweet and pleasant. It was only when sin came that things there began to lose their perfect beauty. Even now it is a wondrous and pleasant land.

As the sun is strong there, by the sides of every road are planted great trees which spread out their thick branches. So the travellers have shelter as they pass.

The milestones are fountains of sweet cold water, so clear and bright that when the wayfarer comes to one he sits down on the carved stone seat beside it and gives a sigh of relief, for he knows that there is rest.

When it is sunset here, it is the middle of the day there. The clouds gather and shade the Land from the great heat. Then for a little while everything goes to sleep.

This sweet, peaceful hour is called the Rest Time.

When it comes the birds stop their singing, and lie close under the wide eaves of the houses, or in the branches of the trees where they join the stems. The fishes stop darting about in the water, and lie close under the stones, with their fins and tails as still as if they were dead. The sheep and the cattle lie under the trees. The men and women get into hammocks slung between trees or under the verandahs of their houses. Then, when the sun has ceased to glare so fiercely and the clouds have melted away, the living things all wake up.

The only living things that are not asleep in the Rest Time are the dogs. They lie quite quiet, only half asleep, with one eye open and one ear cocked; keeping watch all the time. Then if any stranger comes during the hour of Rest, the dogs rise up and look at him, softly, without barking, lest they should disturb anyone. They know if the new comer is harmless; and if it be so they lie down again, and the stranger lies down too till the Rest Time is over.

But if the dogs think that the stranger is come to do any harm, they bark loudly and growl. The cows begin to low and the sheep to bleat, and the birds to chirp and sing their loudest notes, but without any music in them; and even the fishes begin to dart about and splash the water. The men awake and jump out of their hammocks, and seize their weapons. Then it is an evil time for the intruder. Straightway he is brought into the Court and tried, and if found guilty sentenced, and either put into prison or banished.

Then the men go back to their hammocks, and all living things retire again till the Rest Time is over.

It is the same in the night as in the Rest Time, if an intruder comes to do harm. In the night only the dogs are awake, and the sick people and their nurses.

No one can leave the Country Under the Sunset except in one direction. Those who go there in dreams, or who come in dreams to our world, come and go they know not how; but if an inhabitant tries to leave it, he cannot except by one way. If he tries any other way he goes on and on, turning without knowing it, till he comes to the one place where only he can depart.

This place is called the Portal, and there the Angels keep guard.

Exactly in the middle of the Country is the palace of the King, and the roads stretch away from it on every side. When the King stands on the top of the tower, which rises to a great height from the middle of his palace, he can look along the roads, which are all quite straight.

They seem to become narrower and narrower as they get further, till at last they are lost altogether in the mere distance.

Round the King's palace are gathered the houses of the great nobles, each being close in proportion to the rank of its owner. Outside these again come the houses of the lesser nobles; and then those of all the other people, getting smaller and smaller as they get further.

Every house, big and little, stands in the middle of a garden, which has a fountain and a stream of water in it, and big trees, and beds of beautiful flowers.

Farther off, away towards the Portal, the country gets wilder and wilder. Beyond this there are dense forests and great mountains full of deep caverns, as dark as night. Here wild animals and all cruel things have their home.

Then come bogs and fens and deep shaky morasses, and thick jungles. Then all becomes so wild that the road gets lost altogether.

In the wild places beyond this no man knows what dwells. Some say that the Giants who still exist, live there, and that all poisonous plants there grow. They say that there is a wicked wind there that brings out the seeds of all evil things and scatters them over the earth. Some there are who say that the same wicked wind brings out also the Diseases and Plagues that there

exist. Others say that Famine lives there in the marshes, and that he stalks out when men are wicked—so wicked that the Spirits who guard the land are weeping so bitterly that they do not see him pass.

It is whispered that Death has his kingdom in the Solitudes beyond the marshes, and lives in a castle so awful to look at that no one has ever seen it and lived to tell what it is like. Also it is told that all the evil things that live in the marshes are the disobedient Children of Death who have left their home and cannot find their way back again.

But no man knows where the Castle of King Death is. All men and women, boys and girls, and even little wee children should so live that when they have to enter the Castle and see the grim King, they may not fear to behold his face.

For long, Death and his Children stayed without the Portal and all within was joy.

But there came a time when all was changed. The hearts of men grew cold and hard with pride in their prosperity, and they heeded not the lessons which they had been taught. Then when within there was coldness and indifference and disdain, the Angels on guard saw in the terrors that stood without, the means of punishment and the lesson which could do good.

The good lessons came—as good things very often do—after pain and trial, and they taught much. The story of their coming has a lesson for the wise.

At the Portal two Angels for ever kept watch and guard. These angels were so great and so watchful, and were always so steadfast in their guardianship, that there was only one name for them both. Either or both of them would, if spoken to, have been called by the whole name. One of them knew as much as the other did about anything which could have anything known about it. This was not so strange, for they both knew everything. Their name was Fid-Def.

Fid-Def stood on guard at the Portal. Beside them was a Child-Angel, fairer than the light of the sun. The outline of its beautiful form was so soft that it ever seemed to be melting into the air; it seemed a holy living light.

It did not stand as the other Angels did, but floated up and down and all around. Sometimes it was but a tiny speck, and then it would suddenly, without seeming to be making any change, be bigger than the great Guardian Spirits that were the same for ever.

Fid-Def loved the Child-Angel, and as it rose now and again, they spread their great white wings, and it would sometimes stand on them. Its own beautiful soft wings would gently fan their faces as they turned to speak.

But the Child-Angel never went over the threshold. It looked out into the wilderness beyond; but it never put even the tip of its wing over the Portal.

It was asking questions of Fid-Def, and seemed to

want to know what was without, and how all there differed from all within.

The questions and the answers of the Angels were not like our questions and answers, for no speech was needed. The moment a thought occurred of wanting to know anything, the question was asked and the answer given. But still the question was given by the Child-Angel and answered by Fid-Def; and if we knew the no-language that the Angels were not-speaking we would have heard thus. Fid-Def was talking to Fid-Def:

- "Is not Chiaro beautiful?"
- "He is very beautiful. He will be a new power in the Land."

Here Chiaro, who was standing with one foot on the plume of Fid-Def's wing, said:

"Tell me, Fid-Def, what are those dreadful-looking Beings beyond the Portal?"

Fid-Def answered:

- "They are Children of King Death. That dreadfullest one of all, enwrapt in gloom, is Skooro, an Evil Spirit."
  - "How horrible they look!"
- "Very horrible, dear Chiaro; and these Children of Death want to pass through the Portal and enter the Land."

Chiaro, at the terrible news, soared up aloft, and got so big that the whole of the Country Under the Sunset was made bright. Soon, however, he grew smaller and smaller till he was only a speck, like the coloured ray seen in a dark room when the sun comes in through a chink. He asked of the Angels of the Portal:

- "Tell me, Fid-Def, why do the Children of Death want to get in?"
- "Because, dear Child, they are wicked, and wish to corrupt the hearts of the dwellers in the Land."
- "But tell me, Fid-Def, can they get in? Surely, if the All-Father says, No! they must stay ever without the Land."

After a pause came the answer of the Angels of the Portal:

"The All-Father is wiser than even the Angels can conceive. He overthroweth the wicked with their own devices, and he trappeth the hunter in his own snare. The Children of Death when they enter—as they are about to do—shall do much good in the Land, which they wish to harm. For lo! the hearts of the people are corrupt. They have forgotten the lessons which they have been taught. They do not know how thankful they should be for their happy lot, for of sorrow they wot not. Some pain or grief or sadness must be to them, that so they may see the error of their ways."

As they spoke, the Angels wept in sorrow for the misdeeds of the people and the pain they must endure.

The Child-Angel answered in awe:

"Then this most horrible Being, too, is to enter the Land. Woe! woe!"

"Dear Child," said the Guardian Spirits, as the Child-Angel crept into their bosoms, "on you devolves a great duty. The Children of Death are about to enter. To you has been entrusted the watching of this dread Being, Skooro. Wheresoever he goeth, there must you be also; and so naught of harm can happen—save only what is intended and allowed."

The Child-Angel, awed by the greatness of the trust, resolved that his duty should be well done. Fid-Def went on:

"You must know, dear Child, that without darkness is no fear of the unseen; and not even the darkness of night can fright if there be light within the soul. To the good and pure there is no fear either of the evil things of the earth or of the Powers that are unseen. To you is trusted to guard the pure and true. Skooro will encompass them with his gloom; but to you is given to steal into their hearts and by your own glorious light to make the gloom of the Child of Death unseen and unknown.

"But from evil-doers—from the wicked, and the ungrateful, and the unforgiving, and the impure, and the untrue you will keep afar off; and so when they look for you to comfort them—as they must ever—they will not see you. They will see only the gloom which your far-off light will make seem darker still, for the shadow will be in their very souls.

"But oh, Child, our Father is kind beyond belief. He orders that should any that are evil repent, you will on the instant fly to them, and comfort them, and help them, and cheer them, and drive the shadow afar off. Should they only pretend to repent, meaning to be again wicked when the danger is past; or should they only act from fear, then will you hide your brightness so that the gloom may grow darker still over them. Now, dear Chiaro, become unseen. The time approaches when the Child of Death is to be allowed to enter the Land. He will try to steal in, and we shall let him, for we must work unseen and unknown, that we may do our duty."

Then the Child-Angel faded slowly away, so that no eye—not even the eye of Fid-Def—could see him; and the Guardian Spirits stood as ever beside the Portal.

The Rest Time came; and all was quiet in the Land. When the Children of Death afar off in the marshes saw that nothing was stirring, save that the Angels stood as ever on guard, they determined to make another effort to gain entrance to the Land.

Accordingly they resolved themselves into many parts. Each part took a different form, but all together they moved on towards the Portal. Thus the Children of Death drew a-nigh the threshold of the Land.

On the wings of a passing bird they came; on a cloud that drifted slowly in the sky; in the snakes that crawled on the earth—in the worms, and mice, and moles that crept under it; in the fishes that swam and the insects that flew. By earth and water and air they came.

So without let or hindrance, and in many ways, the Children of Death entered the country Under the Sunset; and from that hour all in that fair Land was changed.

Not all at once did the Children of Death make themselves known. One by one the bolder spirits amongst them, stalking with fell footsteps through the Land, filled all hearts with terror as they came.

However, each and all of them left a lesson for good in the hearts of the dwellers in the Land.





#### THE ROSE PRINCE.

LONG, long time ago—so long ago that if one tries to think ever so far back, it is farther than that again—King Mago reigned in the Country Under the Sunset.

He was an old king, and his white beard had grown so long that it almost touched the ground; and all his reign had been passed in trying to make his people happy.

He had one son, of whom he was very fond. This son, Prince Zaphir, was well worthy of all his father's fondness, for he was as good as can be.

He was still only a boy, and he had never seen his beautiful sweet-faced mother, who had died when he was only a baby. It often made him very sad that he had no mother, when he thought other boys had tender mothers, at whose knees they learned to pray, and who came and kissed them in their beds at night. He felt that it was strange that many of the poor people in his father's dominions had mothers, whilst he, the prince, had none.



When he thought thus it made him very humble; for he knew that neither power, nor riches, nor youth, nor beauty will save any one from the doom of all mortals, and that the only beautiful thing in the world whose beauty lasts for ever is a pure, fair soul. He always remembered, however, that if he had no mother he had a father who loved him very dearly, and so was comforted and content.

He used to muse much on many things; and often even in the bright rest-time, when all the people slept, he would go out into the wood, close to the palace, and think and think on all that was beautiful and true, whilst his faithful dog Gomus would crouch at his feet and sometimes wag his tail, as much as to say—

"Here I am, prince; I am not asleep either."

Prince Zaphir was so good and so kind that he never hurt any living thing. If he saw a worm crawling over the road before him he would step over it carefully lest it should be injured. If he saw a fly fallen in the water he would lift it tenderly out and send it forth again, free of wing, into the glorious bright air: so kind was he that all the animals that had once seen him knew him again, and when he went to his favourite seat in the wood there would arise a glad hum from all the living things. Those bright insects, whose colours change hour by hour, would put on their brightest colours, and bask about in the gleams of sunlight that came slanting down between the branches of the trees. The noisy insects put on their mufflers so that they would not disturb him; and the little birds resting on the trees would open their round bright eyes, and come out and blink and wink in the light, and pipe little joyous songs of welcome with all their sweetest notes.

So is it ever with tender, loving people; the living things that have voices as sweet as man's or woman's, and who have languages of their own, although we cannot understand them, all talk to them in joyous notes and bid them welcome in their own pretty ways.

King Mago was proud of his brave, good, handsome boy, and liked him to dress beautifully; and all the people loved to see his bright face and his gay clothing. The King made the great merchants search far and near till they got the largest and finest feather that had ever been seen. This feather he had put in the front of a beautiful cap, the colour of a ruby, and fastened with a brooch made of a great diamond. He gave this cap to Zaphir on his birthday.

As Prince Zaphir walked through the streets, the people saw the great white plume nodding from far away. All were glad when they saw it, and ran to their windows and doors and stood bowing and smiling and waving their hands as their beautiful prince went by. Zaphir always bowed and smiled in return; and he loved his people and gloried in the love that they had for him.

In the Court of King Mago was a companion for Zaphir whom he loved very much. This was the Princess Bluebell. She was the daughter of another king who had been wrongfully deprived of his dominion by a cruel and treacherous enemy, and who had come to King Mago to ask for help and had died in his Court after living there for many, many years. But King Mago had taken his little orphan daughter and had her brought up as his own child.

A great vengeance had come upon the wicked usurper. The Giants had come upon his dominions and had slain him and all his family, and had killed all the people in the land, and had even destroyed all the animals, except those wild ones that were like the Giants themselves. Then the houses began to tumble down from age and decay, and the beautiful gardens to become wild and neglected; and so when after many long years the Giants grew tired and went back to their home in the wilderness, the country that Princess Bluebell owned was such a vast desolation that no one going into it would know that people had ever dwelt there.

Princess Bluebell was very young and very, very beautiful. She, like Prince Zaphir, had never known a mother's love, for her mother, too, had died whilst she was young. She loved King Mago very much, but she loved Prince Zaphir more than all the rest of the world. They had always been companions, and there was not a thought of his heart that she did not know almost before it came there. Prince Zaphir loved her too, more dearly than words can tell, and for her sake he would have done anything, no matter how full of danger. He hoped when he was a man and she a woman that she would

marry him, and that they would help King Mago to rule his kingdom justly and wisely, and that there would be no pain or want in the whole country, if they could help it.

King Mago had two little thrones made, and when he sat in state on his great throne the two children sat one on each side of him, and learned how to be King and Queen.

Princess Bluebell had a robe of ermine like a Queen's, and a little sceptre and a little crown, and Prince Zaphir had a sword as bright as a flash of lightning, and it hung in a golden scabbard.

Behind the King's throne the courtiers used to gather; and there were many of these who were great and good, and there were others who were only vain and self-seeking.

There was Phlosbos, the Prime Minister, an old, old man with a long beard like white silk, and he carried a white wand with a gold ring on it.

There was Janisar, the Captain of the Guard, with fierce moustachios and a suit of heavy armour.

Then there was Tufto, an old courtier, a silly old man who did nothing but hang about the great nobles and pay them deference, and every one, high and low, despised him much. He was fat, and had no hair on all his face or head, not even eyebrows, and he looked—oh! so funny, with his big bald head quite white and smooth.

There was Sartorius, a foolish young courtier, who

thought that dress was the most important thing in the world; and who accordingly dressed in the finest clothes he could possibly get. But people only smiled at him and sometimes laughed, for there is no honour due to fine clothes, but only to what is in the man himself who wears them. Sartorius always tried to push himself into the front place everywhere, in order to show off his fine clothes; and he thought that because the other courtiers did not try to push him aside in the same way, they acknowledged his right to be first. It was not so, however; they only despised him and would not do what he did.

There was also Skarkrou, who was just the opposite to Sartorius, and who thought—or pretended to think—that untidiness was a good thing; and was as proud or prouder of his rags than Sartorius was of his fine clothes. He too was despised, for he was vain, and his vanity made him ridiculous.

Then there was Gabbleander, who did nothing but talk from morning till night; and who would have talked from night till morning if he could have got any one to listen to him. He too was laughed at, for people cannot always talk sense if they talk much. The foolish things are remembered, but the wise ones are forgotten; and so these talkers of too many things come to be considered foolish.

But no one must think that all the Court of the good King Mago were like these people. No! there were many, many good, and great, and noble, and brave men; but such is life in every country, even the Country Under the Sunset, that there are fools as well as wise men, and cowards as well as brave men, and mean men as well as good men.

Children who wish to become good and great men or good and noble women, should try to know well all the people whom they meet. Thus they will find that there is no one who has not much of good; and when they see some great folly, or some meanness, or some cowardice, or some fault or weakness in another person, they should examine themselves carefully. Then they will see that, perhaps, they too have some of the same fault in themselves—although perhaps it does not come out in the same way—and then they must try to conquer that fault. So they will become more and more good as they grow up; and others will examine them, and when these find they have not the faults, they will love and honour them.

Well, one day King Mago sat on his throne in his robes and his crown, and holding his sceptre in his hand.

At his right hand sat Princess Bluebell, with her robe and crown and sceptre, and with her little dog Smg beside her.

This dog was a great favourite. At first it was called Sumog, because Zaphir's dog was Gomus, and this was the name spelled backwards. But then it was called

Smg because this was a name that could not be shouted out, but could only be spoken in a whisper. Bluebell had no need for more than this, for Smg was never far away, but always stayed close to his mistress and watched her.

At the King's left sat Prince Zaphir, on his little throne, with his bright sword and his mighty feather.

Mago was making laws for the good of his people. Round him were gathered all the courtiers, and many people stood in the hall and many more in the street without.

Suddenly there was a loud sound heard—the cracking of a whip and the blowing of a horn—and it came nearer and nearer, and the people in the street began to murmur. Loud cries arose, the King stopped to listen, and the people turned their heads to see who was coming. The crowd opened, and a messenger booted and spurred and covered with dust, rushed into the hall and knelt on one knee before the King, and held out a paper which King Mago took and read eagerly. The people waited in silence to hear the news.

The King was deeply moved, but he knew his people were anxious, so he spoke to them, standing up as he did so:—

"My people, a grievous peril has come upon our Land. We learn from this despatch from the province of Sub-Tegmine, that a terrible Giant has come out of the marshes beyond No-Man's-Land, and is devastating the country. But be not in fear, my people, for to-night many soldiers shall go forth with their arms, and by sunset to-morrow the Giant will have fallen, we trust."

The people bowed their heads with murmured thanks, and all went quietly away to their homes.

That night a body of picked soldiers went out with brave hearts to fight the Giant, and the people cheered them on their way.

All next day and next night the people as well as the King were very anxious; and the second morning they expected news that the Giant was overthrown.

But no news came till nightfall; and then one weary man, covered with dust and blood, and wounded unto death, crawled into the town.

The people made way for him, and he came before the throne and bent low and said—

"Alas! King, I have to tell you that your soldiers have been slain—all save myself. The Giant triumphs and advances towards the city."

Having said so, the pain of his wounds grew so great that he cried out several times and fell down; and when they lifted him up he was dead.

At the sad news which he told a low wail arose from the people. The widows of the slain soldiers cried loudly a little cry, and came and threw themselves before the King's throne, and raised their hands on high and said"Oh, King! Oh, King!" and they could say no more with weeping.

Then the King's heart was very, very sore, and he tried to comfort them, but his best comfort was in his tears—for the tears of friends help to make trouble light; and he spoke to the people and said—

"Alas! our soldiers were too few. To-night we will send an army, and perchance the Giant will fall."

That night a gallant army, with many great engines of war and with flags flying and bands playing, went forth against the Giant.

At the head of the army rode Janisar, the captain, with his armour of steel inlaid with gold shining in the glow of the sunset. The scarlet and white trappings of his great black charger looked splendid. At his side, for some distance on his way, rode Prince Zaphir on his white palfrey.

The people all gathered to wish the army success on their departure; and a lot of foolish people who believed in luck threw old shoes after them. One of these shoes struck Sartorius, who was as usual pushing into the front to show himself off, and blackened his eye, and the black of the shoe came off on his new dress and spoiled it. Another shoe—a heavy one with an iron heel—struck Tufto, who was talking to Janisar—on the top of his bald head, and cut it, and then all the people laughed.

Just fancy how a man is despised when people laugh when he is hurt. Old Tufto danced about and got quite angry, and then the people laughed all the more; for nothing is funnier than when a person is so angry that he loses all self-control.

All the people cheered as the army went off. Even the poor widows of the slain soldiers cheered; and the men going away looked at them and resolved that they would conquer or die, like brave soldiers doing their duty.

Princess Bluebell went with King Mago to the top of the tower of the palace, and together they watched the soldiers as they marched away. The king went in soon, but Bluebell stayed on, looking at the helmets glittering and flashing in the sunset till the sun sank down over the horizon.

Just then Prince Zaphir, who had returned, joined her. Then in the twilight on the top of the tower, with many thousand eager, anxious hearts beating in the city below them, and with the beautiful sky overhead, the two children knelt down and prayed for the success of the army on the morrow.

There was no sleep in the city that night.

Next day the people were filled with anxiety; and as the day wore on and there was no news they grew more anxious still.

Towards the evening they heard the sound of a great tumult far away. They knew that a battle was on; and so they waited and waited for news, They did not go to bed that night at all; but all through the city watch-fires were lighted and everyone stayed awake waiting for the news.

But no news came.

Then the fear became so great that the faces of men and women grew as white as snow, and their hearts as cold. For a long, long time they were silent, for no man dared to speak.

At last one of the widows of the slain soldiers rose up and said—

"I shall arise and go down to the battle-field, and see how fares it there; and shall bring back the news to quiet your poor beating hearts."

Then many men rose and said—

"No! it must not be. We shall go. It were shame to our City if a woman went where men could not. We shall go."

But she answered them with a sad smile—

"Alas! I have no fear of death since my brave husband was killed. I do not wish to live. You must defend the city, I shall go."

Straightway she walked out of the city in the chill grey dawn towards the battle-field. As she moved away and faded in the distance, she seemed to the anxious people like a phantom of Hope passing away from them.

The sun rose and grew bright in the heavens till the

rest time came; but men heeded it not, watching and waiting ever.

Presently they saw afar off the figure of a woman running. They ran to meet her and found it was the widow. She came amongst them and cried—

"Woe! woe! Alas! for our army is scattered; our mighty ones are fallen in the pride of their strength. The Giant triumphs, and I fear me all is lost."

There came a great wail from the people; and a hush fell on them, so great was their fear.

Then the King assembled all his Court and people, and took counsel what was best to be done. Many seemed to think that a new army should go forth of all those who were willing to die, if need be, for the good of the Country; but there was much perplexity.

Whilst they were discussing, Prince Zaphir sat silent on his little throne; and his eyes more than once filled with tears at the thought of the sufferings of his beloved people. Now he arose and stood before the throne.

There was silence till he should speak.

As the Prince stood, cap in hand, before the King, there was in his face a look of such high resolve that those who saw it could not help having a new hope. The Prince spoke—

"Oh, King, Father, before you decide further, hear me. It is right that if there be danger in the Land, the first to meet it is the Prince whom the people trust. If there is pain to be felt, who should feel it before him? If death is to come to any, surely it should first strike over his corpse. King, Father, pause but one day. Let



me go to-morrow against the Giant. This widow hath told you that now he sleeps after his combat. To-morrow I shall meet him in fight. If I fall, then will be

time to risk the lives of your people; and if it should be that he falls, then all is well."

King Mago knew that the Prince had spoken well; and although it grieved him to see his beloved son running into such danger, he did not try to stop him, but said:

"Oh, son, worthy to be a king, thou hast well spoken! Be it even as thou wilt."

Then the people left the Hall, and King Mago and Bluebell kissed Zaphir. Bluebell said to him:

"Zaphir, you have done right," and she looked at him proudly.

Presently the prince went to bed, that he might sleep, and so be strong for the morrow.

All that night the smiths and armourers and the craftsmen of jewels worked hard and fast. Till daylight the furnaces glowed and the anvils rang; and all hands cunning at artifice plied hard.

In the morning they brought into the Hall, and laid before the throne as a present for Prince Zaphir, a suit of armour such as never before had been seen.

It was wrought of steel and gold, and was all in scales. Each scale was like a different leaf; and it was all burnished and bright as the sun. Between the leaves were jewels, and many more jewels were fastened on them like drops of dew. Thus the armour shone in the light till it dazzled the eyes of whosoever saw it—for the cunning armourers meant that when the Prince fought, his

enemy might be half blinded with the glare and so miss his blows.

The helmet was like to a flower, and the Prince's crest was wrought upon it, and the feather and the big diamond in his cap were fastened in front.

When the Prince was equipped, he looked so noble and brave that the people cried out with shouts that he must conquer; and they had new and great hopes.

Then his father, the King, blessed him, and Princess Bluebell kissed him and cried a few tears and gave him a lovely rose, which he fastened on his helmet.

Amid shouting of the people, Prince Zaphir went out to fight the Giant.

His dog, Gomus, wanted to go, but he could not be taken. So Gomus was shut up and howled, for he knew that his dear master was in danger and wanted to be with him.

When Prince Zaphir was gone, Princess Bluebell went to the top of the tower and looked after him till he got so far away that she could no longer see the flashing of his beautiful armour in the sunlight. At first, when she was saying good bye to Zaphir—and she knew that it might be good bye for ever—she did not shed a tear, lest she should pain her beloved Prince, for she knew that he was going into battle, and would need all his bravery and all his firmness. So the last look Zaphir saw on his Bluebell's face was a loving, hopeful, trustful smile. Thus he went into the battle strengthened by the thought

that her heart went with him, and that, although her body was far away, her spirit was close to him.

When he was gone, really gone, far away out of sight, and she stood on the top of the tower alone, Bluebell shed many tears; and the great fear of her heart that Zaphir might be killed made her sad unto death. She thought that it might be that he would be killed by the wicked Giant who had already slain two armies, and that then she would never see him again—never see the love in his dear, true eyes—never hear the tones of his tender, sweet voice—never feel the beating of his great, generous heart again.

And so she wept, oh! so bitterly. But as she wept the thought came to her that life does not lie in the power of men, or even of giants; and so she dried her tears, and knelt down and prayed with an humble heart, and rose up comforted, as people always do when they pray earnestly.

Then she went down to the great hall; but King Mago was not there. She looked for him to comfort him, for she knew that his heart must be bleeding for his son in danger.

She found him in his chamber, and he, too, was praying. She knelt beside him, and they put their arms round each other—the old King and the orphan child—and they prayed together; and so they both got comfort.

Together they waited, and waited patiently, for the



.  return of their beloved one. All the city waited too; and neither by day nor night was there sleep in the Country Under the Sunset, for all were waiting for the return of the Prince.

When Zaphir left the city, he went on and on in the direction of the Giant, till the sun grew bright in the heavens, so bright that his golden armour glowed like fire; and then he walked under the shelter of the trees, and he did not pause even in the rest-time, but went ever onward.

Towards evening he heard and saw strange things.

Far off the ground seemed to shake, and a dull rumbling arose of rocks being levelled, and forests being broken down. These were the sounds of the Giant's footsteps, as he came onwards to the city. But Prince Zaphir, although the sounds were very terrible, had no fear, and went bravely onward. Then he began to meet many living things, which swept by him at full speed—for they were the swiftest of their kind, and so had run from the Giant faster than the rest.

On they came, in hundreds and thousands, their numbers getting more and more as the time wore on, and as the Prince and the Giant drew nearer.

There were all the beasts of the field, and all the fowls of the air, and all the insects that fly and crawl. Lions and tigers, and horses and sheep, and mice and cats and rats, and cocks and hens, and foxes and geese and turkeys, all were mixed together, big and little, and

all were so frightened at the Giant that they forgot to be afraid of one another. Thus there ran together, cats and mice, wolves and lambs, foxes and geese; and the weak ones did not fear, nor did the strong ones wish to harm.

As they came on, however, all the living things seemed to know that Prince Zaphir was braver than they were, and made room for him to pass. The weakest things, and those most afraid, did not go further in their flight, but tried to get as near the Prince as possible; and many followed him back towards the Giant rather than not be near him.

Further on, in a little while, he met all the old animals that could not come so fast as the rest, and all the poor wounded living things, and all those that were slow of pace. These, too, did not try to go further, for they knew that they were safer near a brave man than in helpless flight.

Then Prince Zaphir saw something, still far off, that looked like a mighty mountain.

It was moving towards him, and his heart beat high, partly with the thought of his coming battle, and partly with hope.

The Giant came closer and closer. His footsteps crushed the rocks, and with his mighty club he swept the forests from his path.

The living things behind Prince Zaphir quailed with fear, and hid their faces in the dust. Some animals,

like some foolish people, think that if they do not see anything that they do not want to see, that therefore it ceases to exist.

It is very silly of them.

Then, as the Giant drew near, Prince Zaphir felt that the hour of battle had come.



When he was face to face with a foe more mighty than aught he had ever seen, Zaphir felt as he never felt before. It was not that he was afraid of the Giant, for he felt so brave that, for the good of his people, he could gladly have died then the most painful death. It was that he realized how small a thing he was in the great world.

He saw more clearly than he had ever seen that he was only a speck—a mere atom—in the great living world; and in one moment he knew that if the victory came to him it was not because his arm was strong or his heart brave, but that because it was willed by the One that rules the universe.

Then, in his humility, Prince Zaphir prayed for strength. He doffed his splendid armour, which shone like a sun on earth, he took off the splendid helmet, and he laid by the flashing sword; and they lay in a lifeless heap beside him.

It was a fair sight, that young boy kneeling by the discarded armour. The glittering heap lay all beautiful, glowing in the bright sunset with millions of coloured flashes, till it looked like even unto a living thing. Yet it was sad, and poor, and pitiful beside the boy. There he knelt praying humbly, with his deep earnest eyes lit by the truth and trust that lay in his clean heart and pure soul.

The glittering armour looked like the work of man's hands—as it was, and the work of the hands of good true men; but the beautiful boy kneeling in trust and faith was the work of the hands of God.

As he prayed, Prince Zaphir saw all his life in the past, from the day he could first remember till even then as he was, face to face with the Giant. There was not an unworthy thought that he had ever had, not a cross word he had ever spoken, not an angry look that

had ever given another pain, that did not come back to his mind. It grieved him much that there were so many; for they crowded on so thick and fast that he was amazed at their very number.

It is ever thus that the things which we do wrong—although they may seem little at the time, and though from the hardness of our hearts we pass them lightly by—come back to us with bitterness, when danger makes us think how little we have done to deserve help, and how much to deserve punishment.

Prince Zaphir's heart was purified by repentance for all wrongs done in the past, and by high resolves to be good in the future; and when his humble prayer was finished, he rose up, and he felt in his arms a strength that he wot not of. He knew that it was not his own strength, but that he was the humble instrument of saving his beloved people; and in his heart he was very thankful.

The Giant saw presently the glitter of the golden armour, and knew that another enemy had come anigh him.

He gave a great roar of rage and anger, that sounded like the echo of a thunder-clap. On the distant hills it echoed, and it rolled through the far-off valleys, and sunk into mutterings and low growlings, as of wild beasts, in the caves and the mountain fastnesses.

With such sound the Giant ever began his fighting, that so he might terrify his enemies; but the brave

heart of the Prince shook not with fear. He became braver than ever as he heard the sound; for he knew that there was the more need for courage, lest his people, and even the King his father, and Bluebell, should fall into the power of the Giant.

Whilst amongst the rocks and forests the footsteps of the Giant crashed, and whilst there uprose around his feet the dust of the desolation which he made, Prince Zaphir gathered from the brook some round pebbles.

He fitted one in the sling which he carried.

As he lifted his arm to whirl the sling round his head, the Giant saw him, and laughed, and pointed in scorn at him with his great hands, which were more savage than tiger's claws. The laugh which the Giant thundered forth was so terrible—so harsh and grim and dreadful, that the living things that had raised their timid eyes to watch the fray buried their heads in the dust again, and quaked with fear.

But even as he laughed his enemy to scorn, the Giant's doom was spoken.

Round Prince Zaphir's head swung the sling, and the whistling pebble flew. It struck the Giant fair in the temple; and even with the scornful laughter on his lips, and with his outstretched hand pointing in derision, he fell prone.

As he fell he gave a single cry, but a cry so loud that it rolled away over the hills and valleys like a



peal of thunder. At the sound the living things cowered again, and sagged with fear.

Afar off the people in the City heard the mighty sound; but they knew not what it meant.

As the Giant's great body fell prone, the earth trembled with the shock for many a mile around; and as his great club dropped from his hand, it laid many tall trees of the forest low.

Then Prince Zaphir fell on his knees and prayed with fervent thankfulness for his victory.

Quickly he arose, and, as he knew of the bitter anxiety of the King and people, he never stopped to gather up his armour, but fled fast to the City to bring the joyful tidings.

The night had now fallen and the way was dark; but Prince Zaphir had trust, and he went onward into the darkness with a brave and hopeful heart.

Soon the living things that were noble came around him in their gratitude; and all they that could followed him closely. Many noble animals there were,—lions and tigers and bears, as well as tamer beasts; and their great fiery eyes seemed like lamps, and helped him on his way.

However, as they drew near to the City the wild animals began to stop, for though they trusted Zaphir they feared other men. They growled a low growl of regret and stopped; and Prince Zaphir went on alone.

All night long the city had been awake. In the court King Mago and Princess Bluebell waited and watched together hand in hand. The people in the streets sat around their watch-fires, and they only dared to talk in whispers.

So the long night wore away.

At last the eastern sky began to pale; and then a streak of red fire shot up over the horizon; and the sun rose in his glory; and it was day. The people, when they saw the light and heard the fresh singing of the birds, had hope; and they looked anxiously for the coming of the Prince.

Neither King Mago nor Princess Bluebell dared to go aloft to the tower, but waited patiently in the hall; and their faces were pale as death.

The watchmen of the city and those who joined them looked down the long roadway, expecting ever and anon to see Prince Zaphir's golden armour shining in the bright morning light, and his great white plume, that they knew so well, nodding in the breeze. They knew that they could see it afar off, and so they only glanced now and again into the distance.

Suddenly there was a shout from all the people—and then a sudden stillness.

They rose to their feet, and with one accord waited for the news.

For oh, joy! there among them—shorn of his bright armour and his nodding plume, but hale—stood their beloved Prince.

VICTORY was in his look.

He smiled on them, raising his hands as if blessing; and pointed to the King's palace, as though to say:

"Our king! his is the right to hear the earliest tidings."

He passed into the hall, all the people following him.

When King Mago and Princess Bluebell heard the shout and felt the stillness that followed, their hearts began to beat, and they waited in great dread.

Princess Bluebell shuddered and cried a little, and drew closer to the King, and leaned her face on his breast.

As she leaned with her face hidden, she felt the King start. She looked up quickly, and there—oh, joy of joys!—was her own beloved Zaphir entering the hall, with all the people following him.

The King stepped down from his throne and took him in his arms, and kissed him; and Bluebell, too, put her arms round him, and kissed him on the mouth.

Prince Zaphir spoke and said:

"Oh King my Father, and oh People!—God has been good to us, and His arm has given us the victory. Lo, the Giant has fallen in the pride of his strength!"

Then such a shout went up from the people that the roof rang again; and the noise went out over the City on the wings of the wind. The glad multitude shouted again and again, till the sound rolled in waves over the whole Dominion, and Under the Sunset that hour there

was naught but joy. The King called Zaphir his Brave Son; and Princess Bluebell kissed him again, and called him her Hero.

At that very time, far away in the forest, the Giant lay fallen in the pride of his strength—the foulest thing in all the land—and over his dead body ran the foxes and the stoats. The snakes crawled around his body; and thither, too, crept all the meaner living things that had fled from him when he lived.

From afar off gathered the vultures for their prey.

Close to the slain Giant, shining in the light, lay the golden armour. The great white plume rose from the helmet and even now nodded in the breeze.

When the people came out to see the dead Giant, they found that rank weeds had grown up already where his blood had fallen, but that round the armour that the Prince had doffed had grown a ring of lovely flowers. Fairest of all was a rose tree in bloom, for the rose that Princess Bluebell had given him had taken root, and had blossomed afresh and made a crown of living roses round the helmet and lay against the stem of the plume.

Then the people took reverently home the golden armour; but Prince Zaphir said that not such armour, but a true heart was the best protection, and that he would not dare to put it on again.

So they hung it up in the Cathedral amongst the grand old flags and the helmets of the old knights, as a memorial of the victory over the Giant. Prince Zaphir took from the helmet the feather that the King his father had given him of old and he wore it again in his cap. The rose that had blossomed was planted in the centre of the palace garden; and it grew so great that many people could sit under it, and be sheltered from the sun by its wealth of flowers.



When Prince Zaphir's birthday came, the people had made in secret a great preparation.

When he rose in the morning to go to the Cathedral, the whole people had assembled and lined the way on every side. Each person, old and young, held one rose. Those who had many roses brought them for those who had none; and each person had only one that all might be equal in the sight of the Prince whom they loved.

They had taken off all the thorns from the stems that the Prince's feet might not be hurt. As he passed they threw their roses in the way, till all the long street was a mass of flowers.

As the Prince went by, they stooped and gathered up the roses that his feet had touched; and they treasured them very dearly.

At each birthday of the Prince they did the same for all their lives long. When Zaphir and Bluebell were married, they strewed their path with roses in the same way, for the people loved them much.

Long and happily lived THE ROSE PRINCE—for so they called him—and his beautiful wife Princess Bluebell.

When in the fulness of time King Mago died—as all men must—they ruled as King and Queen. They ruled well and unselfishly, ever denying themselves and striving to make others good and happy.

They were blessed with peace.





## THE INVISIBLE GIANT.

IME goes on in the Country Under the Sunset much as it does here.

Many years passed away: and they wrought much change. And now we find a time when the people that lived in good King Mago's time would hardly have known their beautiful Land if they had seen it again.

It had sadly changed indeed. No longer was there the same love or the same reverence towards the king,—no longer was there perfect peace. People had become more selfish and more greedy, and had tried to grasp all they could for themselves. There were some very rich and there were many poor. Most of the beautiful gardens were laid waste. Houses had grown up close round the palace; and in some of these dwelt many persons who could only afford to pay for part of a house.

All the beautiful Country was sadly changed, and changed was the life of the dwellers in it. The people had almost forgotten Prince Zaphir, who was dead many, many years ago; and no more roses were spread on the pathways. Those who lived now in the Country Under the Sunset laughed at the idea of more Giants, and they did not fear them because they did not see them. Some of them said,

"Tush! what can there be to fear? Even if there ever were giants there are none now."

And so the people sang and danced and feasted as before, and thought only of themselves. The Spirits that guarded the Land were very, very sad. Their great white shadowy wings drooped as they stood at their posts at the Portals of the Land. They hid their faces, and their eyes were dim with continuous weeping, so that they heeded not if any evil thing went by them. They tried to make the people think of their evil-doing; but they could not leave their posts, and the people heard their moaning in the night season, and said,

"Listen to the sighing of the breeze; how sweet it is!"

So is it ever with us also, that when we hear the wind sighing and moaning and sobbing round our houses in the lonely nights, we do not think that our Angels may be sorrowing for cur misdeeds, but only that there is a storm coming. The Angels wept evermore, and they felt the sorrow of dumbness—for though they could speak, those they spoke to would not hear.

Whilst the people laughed at the idea of Giants, there was one old old man who shook his head, and made answer to them, when he heard them, and said:

"Death has many chi'dren, and there are Giants in the marshes still. You may not see them, perhaps but they are there, and the only bulwark of safety is in a land of patient, faithful hearts."

The name of this good old man was Knoal, and he lived in a house built of great blocks of stone, in the middle of a wild place far from the city.

In the city there were many great old houses, storcy upon storey high; and in these houses lived much poor people. The higher you went up the great steep stairs the poorer were the people that lived there, so that in the garrets were some so poor, that when the morning came they did not know whether they should have anything to eat the whole long day. This was very, very sad, and gentle children would have wept if they had seen their pain.

In one of these garrets there lived all alone a little maiden called Zaya. She was an orphan, for her father had died many years before, and her poor mother, who had toiled long and wearily for her dear little daughter—her only child—had died also not long since.

Poor little Zaya had wept so bitterly when she saw her dear mother lying dead, and she had been so sad and sorry for a long time, that she quite forgot that she had no means of living. However, the poor people who lived in the house had given her part of their own food, so that she did not starve.

Then after a while she had tried to work for herself and earn her own living. Her mother had taught her to make flowers out of paper; so she made a lot of flowers, and when she had a full basket she took them into the street and sold them. flowers of many kinds, roses and lilies, and violets, and snowdrops, and primroses, and mignonette, and many beautiful sweet flowers that only grow in the Country Under the Sunset. Some of them she could make without any pattern, but others she could not, so when she wanted a pattern she took her basket of paper and scissors, and paste, and brushes, and all the things she used, and went into the garden which a kind lady owned, where there grew many beautiful flowers. There she sat down and worked away, looking at the flowers she wanted.

Sometimes she was very sad, and her tears fell thick and fast as she thought of her dear dead mother. Often she seemed to feel that her mother was looking down at her, and to see her tender smile in the sunshine on the water; then her heart was glad, and she sang so sweetly that the birds came around her and stopped their own singing to listen to her.

She and the birds grew great friends, and sometimes when she had sung a song they would all cry out together, as they sat round her in a ring, in a few notes that seemed to say quite plainly:

"Sing to us again. Sing to us again."
So she would sing again. Then she would ask them



to sing, and they would sing till there was quite a concert. After a while the birds knew her so well that they would come into her room, and they even built their nests there, and they followed her wherever she went. The people used to say:

"Look at the girl with the birds; she must be half a

bird herself, for see how the birds know and love her." From so many people coming to say things like this, some silly people actually believed that she was partly a bird, and they shook their heads when wise people laughed at them, and said:

"Indeed she must be; listen to her singing; her voice is sweeter even than the birds."

So a nickname was applied to her, and naughty boys called it after her in the street, and the nickname was "Big Bird." But Zaya did not mind the name; and although often naughty boys said it to her, meaning to cause her pain, she did not dislike it, but the contrary, for she so gloried in the love and trust of her little sweet-voiced pets that she wished to be thought like them.

Indeed it would be well for some naughty little boys and girls if they were as good and harmless as the little birds that work all day long for their helpless baby birds, building nests and bringing food, and sitting so patiently hatching their little speckled eggs.

One evening Zaya sat alone in her garret very sad and lonely. It was a lovely summer's evening, and she sat in the window looking out over the city. She could see over the many streets towards the great cathedral whose spire towered aloft into the sky higher by far even than the great tower of the king's palace. There was hardly a breath of wind, and the smoke went up straight from the chimneys, getting fainter and fainter till it was lost altogether.



Zaya was very sad. For the first time for many days her birds were all away from her at once, and she did not know where they had gone. It seemed to her as if they had deserted her, and she was so lonely, poor little maid, that she wept bitter tears. She was thinking of the story which long ago her dead mother had told her, how Prince Zaphir had slain the Giant, and she wondered what the prince was like, and thought how happy the people must have been when Zaphir and Bluebell were king and queen. Then she wondered if there were any hungry children in those good days, and if, indeed, as the people said, there were no more Giants. So she thought and thought, as she went on with her work before the open window.

Presently she looked up from her work and gazed across the city. There she saw a terrible thing—something so terrible that she gave a low cry of fear and wonder, and leaned out of the window, shading her eyes with her hand to see more clearly.

In the sky beyond the city she saw a vast shadowy Form with its arms raised. It was shrouded in a great misty robe that covered it, fading away into air so that she could only see the face and the grim, spectral hands.

The Form was so mighty that the city below it seemed like a child's toy. It was still far off the city.

The little maid's heart seemed to stand still with fear as she thought to herself, "The Giants, then, are not dead. This is another of them."

Quickly she ran down the high stairs and out into the street. There she saw some people, and cried to them,

"Look! look! the Giant, the Giant!" and pointed towards the Form which she still saw moving slowly onwards to the city.

The people looked up, but they could not see anything, and they laughed and said,

"The child is mad."

Then poor little Zaya was more than ever frightened, and ran down the street crying out still,

"Look! look! the Giant, the Giant!" But no one heeded her, and all said, "The child is mad," and they went on their own ways.

Then the naughty boys came around her and cried out,

"Big Bird has lost her mates. She sees a bigger bird in the sky, and she wants it." And they made rhymes about her, and sang them as they danced round.

Zaya ran away from them; and she hurried right through the city, and out into the country beyond it, for she still saw the great Form before her in the air.

As she went on, and got nearer and nearer to the Giant, it grew a little darker. She could see only the clouds; but still there was visible the form of a Giant hanging dimly in the air.

A cold mist closed around her as the Giant appeared to come onwards towards her. Then she thought of all the poor people in the city, and she hoped that the Giant would spare them, and she knelt down before him and lifted up her hands appealingly, and cried aloud:

"Oh, great Giant! spare them, spare them!"

But the Giant moved onwards still as though he never heard. She cried aloud all the more,

"Oh, great Giant! spare them, spare them!" And she bowed down her head and wept, and the Giant still, though very slowly, moved onward towards the city.

There was an old man not far off standing at the door of a small house built of great stones, but the little maid saw him not. His face wore a look of fear and wonder, and when he saw the child kneel and raise her hands, he drew nigh and listened to her voice. When he heard her say, "Oh, great Giant!" he murmured to himself,

"It is then even as I feared. There are more Giants, and truly this is another." He looked upwards, but he saw nothing, and he murmured again,

"I see not, yet this child can see; and yet I feared, for something told me that there was danger. Truly knowledge is blinder than innocence."

The little maid, still not knowing there was any human being near her, cried out again, with a great cry of anguish:

"Oh, do not, do not, great Giant, do them harm. If someone must suffer, let it be me. Take me. I am willing to die, but spare them. Spare them, great Giant; and do with me even as thou wilt." But the giant heeded not.

And Knoal—for he was the old man—felt his eyes fill with tears, and he said to himself,

"Oh, noble child, how brave she is, she would sacrifice herself!" And, coming closer to her, he put his hand upon her head.

Zaya, who was again bowing her head, started and looked round when she felt the touch. However, when she saw that it was Knoal, she was comforted, for she knew how wise and good he was, and felt that if any person could help her, he could. So she clung to him, and hid her face in his breast; and he stroked her hair and comforted her. But still he could see nothing.

The cold mist swept by, and when Zaya looked up, she saw that the Giant had passed by, and was moving onward to the city.

"Come with me, my child," said the old man; and the two arose, and went into the dwelling built of great stones.

When Zaya entered, she started, for lo! the inside was as a tomb. The old man felt her shudder, for he still held her close to him, and he said:

"Weep not, little one, and fear not. This place reminds me and all who enter it, that to the tomb we must all come at the last. Fear it not, for it has grown to be a cheerful home to me."

Then the little maid was comforted, and began to

examine all around her more closely. She saw all sorts of curious instruments, and many strange and many common herbs and simples hung to dry in bunches on the walls. The old man watched her in silence till her fear was gone, and then he said:

"My child, saw you the features of the Giant as he passed?"

She answered, "Yes."

"Can you describe his face and form to me?" he asked again.

Whereupon she began to tell him all that she had seen. How the Giant was so great that all the sky seemed filled. How the great arms were outspread, veiled in his robe, till far away the shroud was lost in air. How the face was as that of a strong man, pitiless, yet without malice; and that the eyes were blind.

The old man shuddered as he heard, for he knew that the Giant was a very terrible one; and his heart wept for the doomed city where so many would perish in the midst of their sin.

They determined to go forth and warn again the doomed people; and making no delay, the old man and the little maid hurried towards the city.

As they left the small house, Zaya saw the Giant before them, moving still towards the city. They hurried on; and when they had passed through the cold mist, Zaya looked back, and saw the Giant behind them.

Presently they came to the city.

It was a strange sight to see that old man and that little maid flying to tell the people of the terrible Plague that was coming upon them. The old man's long white beard and hair and the child's golden locks were swept behind them in the wind, so quick they came. The faces of both were white as death. Behind them, seen only to the eyes of the pure-hearted little maid when she looked back, came ever onward at slow pace the spectral Giant that hung a dark shadow in the evening air.

But those in the city never saw the Giant; and when the old man and the little maid warned them, still they heeded not, but scoffed and jeered at them, and said,

"Tush! there are no Giants now;" and they went on their way, laughing and jeering.

Then the old man came and stood on a raised place amongst them, on the lowest step of the great fountain with the little maid by his side, and he spake thus:

"Oh, people, dwellers in this Land, be warned in time. This pure-hearted child, round whose sweet innocence even the little birds that fear men and women gather in peace, has this night seen in the sky the form of a Giant that advances ever onward menacingly to our city. Bclieve, oh, believe; and be warned, whilst ye may. To myself even as to you the sky is a blank; and yet see that I believe. For listen to me: all unknowing that

another Giant had invaded our land, I sat pensive in my dwelling; and, without cause or motive, there came into my heart a sudden fear for the safety of our city. I arose and looked north and south and east and west, and on high and below, but never a sign of danger could I see. So I said to myself,

"'Mine eyes are dim with a hundred years of watching and waiting, and so I cannot see.' And yet, oh people, dwellers in this land, though that century has dimmed mine outer eyes, still it has quickened mine inner eyes—the eyes of my soul. Again I went forth, and lo! this little maid knelt and implored a Giant, unseen by me, to spare the city; but he heard her not, or, if he heard, answered her not, and she fell prone. So hither we come to warn you. Yonder, says the maid, he passes onward to the city. Oh, be warned! be warned in time."

Still the people heeded not; but they scoffed and jeered the more, and said,

"Lo, the maid and the old man both are mad;" and they passed onwards to their homes—to dancing and feasting as before.

Then the naughty boys came and mocked them, and said that Zaya had lost her birds, and had gone mad; and they made songs, and sang them as they danced round.

Zaya was so sorely grieved for the poor people that she heeded not the cruel boys. Seeing that she did not heed them, some of them got still more rude and wicked; they went a little way off, and threw things at them, and mocked them all the more.

Then, sad of heart, the old man arose, and took the little maid by the hand, and brought her away into the wilderness; and lodged her with him in the house built with great stones. That night Zaya slept with the sweet smell of the drying herbs all around her; and the old man held her hand that she might have no fear.

In the morning Zaya arose betimes, and awoke the old man, who had fallen asleep in his chair.

She went to the doorway and looked out, and then a thrill of gladness came upon her heart; for outside the door, as though waiting to see her, sat all her little birds, and many many more. When the birds saw the little maid they sang a few loud joyous notes, and flew about foolishly for very joy—some of them fluttering their wings and looking so funny that she could not help laughing a little.

When Knoal and Zaya had eaten their frugal breakfast and given to their little feathered friends, they set out with sorrowful hearts to visit the city, and to try once more to warn the people. The birds flew around them as they went, and to cheer them sang as joyously as they could, although their little hearts were heavy.

As they walked they saw before them the great shadowy Giant; and he had now advanced to the very confines of the city.

Once again they warned the people, and great crowds





came around them, but only mocked them more than ever; and naughty boys threw stones and sticks at the little birds and killed some of them. Poor Zaya wept bitterly, and Knoal's heart was very sad. After a time, when they had moved from the fountain, Zaya looked up and started with joyous surprise, for the great shadowy Giant was nowhere to be seen. She cried out in joy, and the people laughed, and said,

"Cunning child! she sees that we will not believe her, and she pretends that the Giant has gone."

They surrounded her, jeering, and some of them said,

"Let us put her under the fountain and duck her, as a lesson to liars who would frighten us." Then they approached her with menaces. She clung close to Knoal, who had looked terribly grave when she had said she did not see the Giant any longer, and who was now as if in a dream, thinking. But at her touch he seemed to wake up; and he spoke sternly to the people, and rebuked them. But they cried out on him also, and said that as he had aided Zaya in her lie he should be ducked also, and they advanced closer to lay hands on them both.

The hand of one who was a ringleader was already outstretched, when he gave a low cry, and pressed his hand to his side; and, whilst the others turned to look at him in wonder, he cried out in great pain, and screamed horribly. Even whilst the people looked, his

face grew blacker and blacker, and he fell down before them, and writhed a while in pain, and then died.

All the people screamed out in terror, and ran away, crying aloud,

"The Giant! the Giant! he is indeed amongst us!"



They feared all the more that they could not see him.

But before they could leave the market-place, in the centre of which was the fountain, many fell dead, and their corpses lay.

There in the centre knelt the old man and the little

maid, praying; and the birds sat perched around the fountain, mute and still, and there was no sound heard save the cries of the people far off. Then their wailing sounded louder and louder, for the Giant—Plague—was amongst and around them, and there was no escaping, for it was now too late to fly.

Alas! in the Country Under the Sunset there was much weeping that day; and when the night came there was little sleep, for there was fear in some hearts and pain in others. None were still except the dead, who lay stark about the city, so still and lifeless that even the cold light of the moon and the shadows of the drifting clouds moving over them could not make them seem as though they lived.

And for many a long day there was pain and grief and death in the Country Under the Sunset.

Knoal and Zaya did all they could to help the poor people, but it was hard indeed to aid them, for the unseen Giant was amongst them, wandering through the city to and fro, so that none could tell where next he would lay his ice-cold hand.

Some people fled away out of the city; but it was little use, for go how they would and fly never so fast they were still within the grasp of the unseen Giant. Ever and anon he turned their warm hearts to ice with his breath and his touch, and they fell dead.

Some, like those within the city, were spared, and of these some perished of hunger, and the rest crept sadly back to the city and lived or died amongst their friends. And it was all, oh! so sad, for there was nothing but grief and fear and weeping from morn till night.

Now, see how Zaya's little bird friends helped her in her need.

They seemed to see the coming of the Giant when no one—not even the little maid herself—could see anything, and they managed to tell her when there was danger just as well as though they could talk.

At first Knoal and she went home every evening to the house built of great stones to sleep, and came again to the city in the morning, and stayed with the poor sick people, comforting them and feeding them, and giving them medicine which Knoal, from his great wisdom, knew would do them good. Thus they saved many precious human lives, and those who were rescued were very thankful, and henceforth ever after lived holier and more unselfish lives.

After a few days, however, they found that the poor sick people needed help even more at night than in the day, and so they came and lived in the city altogether, helping the stricken folk day and night.

At the earliest dawn Zaya would go forth to breathe the morning air; and there, just waked from sleep, would be her feathered friends waiting for her. They sang glad songs of joy, and came and perched on her shoulders and her head, and kissed her. Then, if she went to go towards any place where, during the night, the Plague had laid his deadly hand, they would flutter before her, and try to impede her, and scream out in their own tongue,

"Go back! go back!"

They pecked of her bread and drank of her cup before she touched them; and when there was danger for the cold hand of the Giant was placed everywhere they would cry,

"No, no!" and she would not touch the food, or let anyone else do so. Often it happened that, even whilst it pecked at the bread or drank of the cup, a poor little bird would fall down and flutter its wings and die; but all they that died, did so with a chirp of joy, looking at their little mistress, for whom they had gladly perished. Whenever the little birds found that the bread and the cup were pure and free from danger, they would look up at Zaya jauntily, and flap their wings and try to crow, and seemed so saucy that the poor sad little maiden would smile.

There was one old bird that always took a second, and often a great many pecks at the bread when it was good, so that he got quite a hearty meal; and sometimes he would go on feeding till Zaya would shake her finger at him and say,

"Greedy!" and he would hop away as if he had done nothing.

There was one other dear little bird—a robin, with a

breast as red as the sunset—that loved Zaya more than one can think. When he tried the food and found that it was safe to eat, he would take a little tiny piece in his bill, and fly up and put it in her mouth.

Every little bird that drank from Zaya's cup and



found it good raised its head to say grace; and ever since then the little birds do the same, and they never forget to say their grace—as some thankless children do.

Thus Knoal and Zaya lived, although many around them died, and the Giant still remained in the city. So many people died that one began to wonder that so many were left; for it was only when the town began to get thinned that people thought of the vast numbers that had lived in it.

Poor little Zaya had got so pale and thin that she looked like a shadow, and Knoal's form was bent more with the sufferings of a few weeks than it had been by his century of age. But although the two were weary and worn, they still kept on their good work of aiding the sick.

Many of the little birds were dead.

One morning the old man was very weak—so weak that he could hardly stand. Zaya got frightened about him, and said,

"Are you ill, father?" for she always called him father now.

He answered her in a voice alas! hoarse and low, but very, very tender:

"My child, I fear the end is coming: take me home, that there I may die."

At his words Zaya gave a low cry and fell on her knees beside him, and buried her head in his bosom and wept bitterly, whilst she hugged him close. But she had little time for weeping, for the old man struggled up to his feet, and, seeing that he wanted aid, she dried her tears and helped him.

The old man took his staff, and with Zaya helping to support him, got as far as the fountain in the midst of the market-place; and there, on the lowest step, he sank down as though exhausted. Zaya felt him grow cold as ice, and she knew that the chilly hand of the Giant had been laid upon him.

Then, without knowing why, she looked up to where she had last seen the Giant as Knoal and she had stood beside the fountain. And lo! as she looked, holding Knoal's hand, she saw the shadowy form of the terrible Giant who had been so long invisible growing more and more clearly out of the clouds.

His face was stern as ever, and his eyes were still blind.

Zaya cried to the Giant, still holding Knoal tightly by the hand:

"Not him, not him! Oh, mighty Giant! not him! not him!" and she bowed down her head and wept.

There was such anguish in her heart that to the blind eyes of the shadowy Giant came tears that fell like dew on the forehead of the old man. Knoal spake to Zaya:

"Grieve not, my child. I am glad that you see the Giant again, for I have hope that he will leave our city free from woe. I am the last victim, and I gladly die."

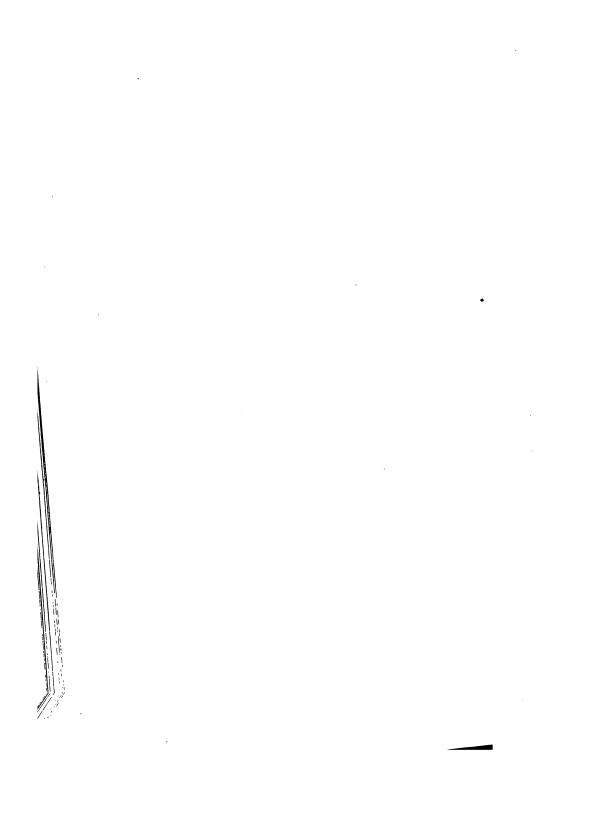
Then Zaya knelt to the Giant, and said:

"Spare him! oh! spare him and take me! but spare him! spare him!"

The old man raised himself upon his elbow as he lay, and spake to her:

"Grieve not, little one, and repine not. Sooth I know that you would gladly give your life for mine.





But we must give for the good of others that which is dearer to us than our lives. Bless you, my little one, and be good. Farewell! farewell!"

As he spake the last word he grew cold as death, and his spirit passed away.

Zaya knelt down and prayed; and when she looked up she saw the shadowy Giant moving away.

The Giant turned as he passed on, and Zaya saw that his blind eyes looked towards her as though he were trying to see. He raised the great shadowy arms, draped still in his shroud of mist, as though blessing her; and she thought that the wind that came by her moaning bore the echo of the words:

"Innocence and devotion save the land."

Presently she saw far off the great shadowy Giant Plague moving away to the border of the Land, and passing between the Guardian Spirits out through the Portal into the deserts beyond—for ever.





## THE SHADOW BUILDER.

HE lonely Shadow Builder watches ever in his lonely abode.

The walls are of cloud, and round and through them, changing ever as they come, pass the dim shades of all the things that have been.

This endless, shadowy, wheeling, moving circle is called The Procession of the Dead Past. In it everything is just as it has been in the great world. There is no change in any part; for each moment, as it passes, sends its shade into this dim Procession. Here there are moving people and events—cares—thoughts—follies—crimes—joys—sorrows—places—scenes—hopes and fears, and all that make the sum of life with all its lights and shadows. Every picture in nature where shadow dwells—and that is every one—has here its dim phantom.



Here are all pictures that are most fair and most sad to see—the passing gloom over a sunny cornfield when with the breeze comes the dark sway of the full ears as they bend and rise; the ripple on the glassy surface of a summer sea; the dark expanse that lies beyond and without the broad track of moonlight on the water; the lacework of glare and gloom that flickers over the road as one passes in autumn when the moonlight is falling through the naked branches of overhanging trees; the cool, restful shade under the thick trees in summer time when the sun is flaming down on the haymaker at work; the dark clouds that flit across the moon, hiding her light, which leaps out again hollowly and coldly; the gloom of violet and black that rises on the horizon when rain is near in summer time; the dark recesses and gloomy caverns where the waterfall hurls itself shrieking into the pool below,—all these shadow pictures, and a thousand others that come by night and day, circle in the Procession among the things that have been.

Here, too, every act that any human being does, every thought—good and bad—every wish, every hope—everything that is secret—is pictured, and becomes a lasting record which cannot be blotted out; for at any time the Shadow Builder may summon with his spectral hand any one—sleeping or waking—to behold what is pictured of the Dead Past, in the dim, mysterious distance which encompasses his lonely abode.

In this ever-moving Procession of the Dead Past

there is but one place where the circling phantoms are not, and where the cloudy walls are lost. There is here a great blackness, dense and deep, and full of gloom, and behind which lies the great real world without.

This blackness is called THE GATE OF DREAD.

The Procession afar off takes from it its course, and when passing on its way it circles again towards the darkness, the shadowy phantoms melt again into the mysterious gloom.

Sometimes the Shadow Builder passes through the vapoury walls of his abode and mingles in the ranks of the Procession; and sometimes a figure summoned by the wave of his spectral hand, with silent footfall stalks out of the mist and pauses beside him. Sometimes from a sleeping body the Shadow Builder summons a dreaming soul; then for a time the quick and the dead stand face to face, and men call it a dream of the Past. When this happens, friend meets friend or foe meets foe; and over the soul of the dreamer comes a happy memory long vanished, or the troubled agony of remorse. But no spectre passes through the misty wall, save to the Shadow Builder alone; and no human being—even in a dream—can enter the dimness where the Procession moves along.

So lives the lonely Shadow Builder amid his gloom; and his habitation is peopled by a spectral past.

His only people are of the past; for though he creates shadows they dwell not with him. His children go out at once to their homes in the big world, and he knows



them no more till, in the fulness of time, they join the Procession of the Dead Past, and reach, in turn, the misty walls of his home.

For the Shadow Builder there is not night nor day, nor season of the year; but for ever round his lonely dwelling passes the silent Procession of the Dead Past.

Sometimes he sits and muses with eyes fixed and



staring, and seeing nothing; and then out at sea there is a cloudless calm or the black gloom of night. Towards the far north or south for long months together he never looks, and then the stillness of the arctic night reigns alone. When the dreamy eyes again become conscious, the hard silence softens into the sounds of life and light.

Sometimes, with set frown on his face and a hard

look in the eyes, which flash and gleam dark lightnings, the Shadow Builder sways resolute to his task, and round the world the shadows troop thick and fast. Over the sea sweeps the blackness of the tempest; the dim lights flicker in the cots away upon the lonely moors; and even in the palaces of kings dark shadows pass and fly and glide over all things—yea, through the hearts of the kings themselves—for the Shadow Builder is then dread to look upon.

Now and again, with long whiles between, the Shadow Builder as he completes his task lingers over the work as though he loves it. His heart yearns to the children of his will; and he fain would keep even one shadow to be a companion to him in his loneliness. But the voice of the Great Present is ever ringing in his ears at such times, enjoining him to haste. The giant voice booms out,

## "Onwards, onwards."

Whilst the words ring in the ears of the Shadow Builder the completed shadow fades from beneath his hands, and passing unseen through the Gate of Dread, mingles in the great world without, in which it is to play its part. When, in the fulness of time, this shadow comes into the ranks of the Procession of the Dead Past, the Shadow Builder knows it and remembers it; but in his dead heart there is no gleam of loving remembrance, for he can only love the Present, that slips ever from his grasp.

And oh! it is a lonely life which the Shadow Builder lives; and in the weird, sad, solemn, mysterious, silent gloom which encompasses him, he toils on ever at his lonely task.

But sometimes too the Shadow Builder has his joys. Baby shadows spring up, and sunny pictures, alight with sweetness and love, glide from under his touch, and are gone.

Before the Shadow Builder at his task lies a space wherein is neither light nor darkness, neither joy nor gloom. Whatsoever touches it fades away as sand heaps melt before the incoming tide, or like words writ on water. In it all things lose their being and become part of the great *Is-Not*; and this terrible line of mystery is called The Threshold. Whatsoever passes into it disappears; and whatsoever emerges from it is complete as it comes and passes into the great world as a thing to run its course. Before the Threshold the Shadow Builder himself is as naught; and in its absorbing might there is that which he cannot sway or rule.

When at his task he summons; and out of the impalpable nothingness of the Threshold there comes the object of his will. Sometimes the shadow bursts full and freshly and is suddenly lost in the gloom of the Gate of Dread; and sometimes it grows softly and faintly, getting fuller as it comes, and so melts away into the gloom.

The lonely Shadow Builder is working in his lonely

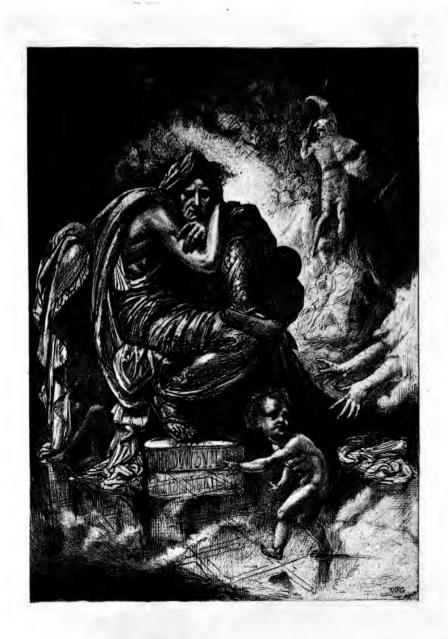
abode; around him, beyond the vapoury walls, pressing onward as ever, is the circling Procession of the Dead Past. Storm and calm have each been summoned from the Threshold, and have gone; and now in this calm, wistful moment the Shadow Builder pauses at his task, and wishes and wishes till, to his lonely longing wistfulness, the nothingness of The Threshold sends an answer.

\* Forth from it grows the shadow of a Baby's foot, stepping with tottering gait out towards the world; then follows the little round body and the big head, and the Baby shadow moves onwards, swaying and balancing with uncertain step. Swift behind it come the Mother's hands stretched out in loving helpfulness, lest it should fall. One step—two—it totters, and is falling; but the Mother's arms are swift, and the gentle hands bear it firmly up. The Child turns and toddles again into its Mother's arms.

Again it strives to walk; and again the Mother's watchful hands are ready. This time it needs not the help; but when the race is over, the shadow Child turns again lovingly to its Mother's breast.

Once again it strives, and it walks boldly and firmly; but the Mother's hands quiver as they hang by her side, whilst a tear sweeps down the cheek, although that cheek is gladdened by a smile.

The Baby shadow turns, and goes a little way off. Then over the misty Nothing on which the shadows fall,



flits the flickering shadow of a tiny hand waving; and onward, with firm tread, the shadow of the little feet moves out into the misty gloom of the Gate of Dread, and passes away.

But the Mother's shadow moves not. The hands are pressed to the heart, the loving face is upturned in prayer, and down the cheeks roll great tears. Then her head bows lower as the little feet pass beyond her ken; and lower and lower bends the weeping Mother till she lies prone. Even as he looks, the Shadow Builder sees the shadows fade away, away, and the terrible nothingness of the Threshold only is there.

Then presently in the Procession of the Dead Past circle round the misty walls the shadows that had been—the Mother and the Child.

Now from out the Threshold steps a Youth with brave and buoyant tread; and as on the misty veil his shadow falls, the dress and bearing proclaim him a sailor lad. Close to this shadow comes another—the Mother's. Older and thinner she is, as if with watching, but still the same. The old loving hands array prettily the knotted kerchief hanging loosely on the open throat; and the Boy's hands reach out, take the Mother's face between them, and draw it forward for a kiss. The Mother's arms fly round her Son, and in a close embrace they cling.

The Mother kisses her Boy again and again; and

together they stand, as though to part were impossible.

Suddenly the Boy turns as though he heard a call. The Mother clings closer. He seems to remonstrate tenderly; but the loving arms hold tighter, till with gentle force he tears himself away. The Mother takes a step forward, and holds out the thin hands trembling in an agony of grief. The Boy stops; to one knee he bends, then, dashing away his tears, he waves his cap, and hurries on, while once again the Mother sinks to her knees, and weeps.

And so, slowly, once again, the shadows of the Mother and the Child grown greater in the fulness of time, pass out through the Gate of Dread, and circle among the phantoms in the Procession of the Dead Past—the Mother following hard upon the speeding footsteps of her Son.

In the long pause that follows, whilst the Shadow Builder watches, all seems changed. Out from the Threshold comes a mist, such as hangs sometimes over the surface of a tropic sea.

By little and little the mist rolls away, and forth advances, black and great, the prow of a mighty vessel. The shadows of the great sails lie faintly in the cool depths of the sea, as the sails flap idly in the breezeless air. Over the bulwark lean listless figures waiting for a wind to come. The mist on the sea melts slowly away; and by the dark shadows of men sheltering from the sunny glare and fanning themselves with their broad sailor hats, it is plain that the heat is terrible.

Now from far off, behind the ship, comes up over the horizon a black cloud no bigger than a man's hand, but sweeping on with terrible speed. Also, from far away, before her course, rises the edge of a coral reef, scarcely seen above the glassy water, but darkling the depths below.

Those on board see neither of these things, for they shelter under their awnings, and sigh for cool breezes.

Quicker and quicker comes the dark cloud, sweeping faster and faster, and growing blacker and blacker and vaster and vaster as it comes.

Then those on board seem to know the danger. Hurried shadows fly along the decks; up the shadows of the ladders hurry shadows of men. The flapping of the great sails ceases as one by one the willing hands draw. them in.

But quicker than the hands of men can work sweeps the tempest.

Onwards it rushes, and terrible things come close behind; black darkness—towering waves that break in fury and fly aloft—the spume of the sea swept heavenwards—the great clouds wheeling in fury;—and in the centre of these flying, whirling, maddening shadows, rocks the shadow of the ship.

As the black darkness of the heavens encompasses all, the rush of shadowy storm sweeps through the Gate of Dread.

As he waits and looks and sees the cyclone whirling amongst the shadows in the Procession of the Dead Past, the Shadow Builder, even in his dead heart, feels a weight of pain for the brave Sailor Boy tossed on the deep, and the anxious Mother sitting lonely at home.

Again from the Threshold passes a shadow, growing deeper as it comes, but very, very faint at first; for here the sun is strong, and there is but little room for shadows on the bare rock which seems to rise from the glare and the glitter of the sea deeps round.

On the lonely rock a Sailor Boy stands; thin and gaunt he is, and his clothing is but a few rags. Sheltering his eyes with his hand, he looks out to sea, where, afar off, the cloudless sky sinks to meet the burning sea; but no speck over the horizon—no distant glitter of a white sail—gives him a ray of hope.

Long, long he peers, till, wearied out, he sits down on the rock and bows his head as if in despair for a time. As the sea falls, he gathers from the rock the shellfish which has come during the tide.

So the day wears on, and the night comes; and in the tropic sky the stars hang like lamps.

In the cool silence of the night the forlorn Sailor Boy rests—sleeps, and dreams. His dreams are of home—of



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loving arms stretched out to meet him—of banquets spread—of green fields and waving branches, and the sheltering happiness of his mother's love. For in his sleep the Shadow Builder summons his dreaming soul, and shows him all these blessings passing ceaselessly in the Procession of the Dead Past, and so comforts him lest he should despair and die.

Thus wear on many weary days; and the sailor-boy lingers on the lonely rock.

Afar off he can just see a hill that seems to rise over the water. One morning when the blackening sky and the sultry air promise a storm, the distant mountain seems nearer; and he thinks that he will try to reach it by swimming.

Whilst he is thus resolving, the storm rushes up over the horizon and sweeps him from the lonely rock. He swims with a bold heart; but just as his strength is done, he is cast by the fury of the storm on a beach of soft sand. The storm passes on its way and the waves leave him high and dry. He goes inland, where, in a cave in the rock, he finds shelter, and sinks to sleep.

The Shadow Builder, as he sees all this happen in the shadows on the clouds, and land, and sea, rejoices in his dead heart that the lonely mother perhaps will not wait in vain.

So time wears on, and many, many weary days

pass. The Boy becomes a young Man, living in the lonely island; his beard has grown, and he is clothed



in a dress of leaves. All day long, save when he is not working to get food to eat, he watches from the mountain top for a ship to come. As he stands looking out

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over the sea, the sun casts his shadow down the hillside, so that at evening, as it sinks low in the waters, the shadow of the lonely Sailor grows longer and longer, till at the last it makes a dark streak down the hill side, even to the water's edge.

The lonely Man's heart grows heavier and heavier as he waits and watches, whilst the weary time passes and the countless days and nights come and go.

Time comes when he begins to get feebler and feebler. At last he grows sick to death, and lingers long a-dying. Then these shadows pass away.

Out from the Threshold grows the shadow of an old woman, thin and worn, sitting in a lonely cottage on a jutting cliff. In the window a lamp burns in the night time to welcome the Lost One should he ever return, and to guide him to his Mother's home. By the lamp the Mother watches, till, wearied out, she sinks to sleep.

As she sleeps the Shadow Builder summons her sleeping soul with the wave of his spectral hand.

She stands beside him in the lonely abode, whilst round them through the misty walls passes onward the Procession of the Dead Past.

As she looks, the Shadow Builder lifts his spectral hand to point to the vision of her Son.

But the Mother's eyes are quicker than even the spec-

tral hand that evokes all the shadows of the rushing storm, and ere the hand is raised she sees her Son among the Shadows of the Past. The Mother's heart is filled with unspeakable joy, as she sees him alive and hale, although a prisoner amongst the tropic seas.

But alas! she knows not that in the dim Procession pass only the things that have been; and that although in the past the lonely Sailor lived, in the present—even at the moment—he may be dying or dead.

The Mother stretches out her arms to her Boy; but even as she does, her sleeping soul loses sight of the dim Procession and vanishes from the Shadow Builder's lonely abode. For when she knows that her Boy is alive, there follows a great pain that he is lonely and waits and watches for help; and the quick heart of the Mother is overcome with grief, and she wakes with a bitter cry.

Then as she rises and looks past the dying lamp out into the dawn, the Mother feels that she has seen a vision of her son in sleep, and that he lives and waits for help; and her heart glows with a great resolve.

Quickly then from the threshold float many shadows.—

A lonely Mother speeding with flying feet to a distant city.

Grave men refusing, but not unkindly, a kneeling woman making an appeal with uplifted hands.

Hard men spurning a praying Mother from their doors.

A wild rabble of bad and thoughtless boys and girls hounding through the streets a hurrying woman.

A shadow of pain on a Mother's heart.

The upcoming of a black cloud of despair, but which hangs far off—for it cannot advance into the bright sunlight of the Mother's resolve.

Weary days with their own myriad shadows.

Lonely nights—black want—cold—hunger and pain; and through all these darkening shadows the swift moving shadow of the Mother's flying feet.

A long long line of such pictures come ever anigh in the Procession, till the dead heart of the Shadow Builder grows icy, and his burning eyes look out savagely on all who give pain and trial to the Mother's faithful heart.

And so all these shadows float out into a black mist, and are lost in the gloom of the Gate of Dread.

Another shadow grows out of the mist.—

An Old Man sits in his armchair. The firelight flickering throws his image, quaintly dancing, on the wall of the room. He is old, for the great shoulders are bowed, and the grand strong face is lined with years. There is another shadow in the room; it is the Mother's—she is

standing by the table, and is telling her story; her thin hands point away where in the distance she knows her Son is a prisoner in the lonely seas.

The Old Man rises; the enthusiasm of the Mother's heart has touched him, and back to his memory rush the old love and energy and valour of his youth. The great hand rises, closes, and strikes the table with a mighty blow, as though declaring a binding promise. The Mother sinks to her knees,—she seizes the great hand and kisses it, and stands erect.

Other men come in—they receive orders—they hurry out.

Then come many shadows whose movement and swiftness and firm purpose mean life and hope.

At sunset, when the masts make long shadows on the harbour water, a big ship moves out on her journey to the tropic seas. Men's shadows quickly flit up and down the rigging and along the decks.

As the shadows wheel round the capstan bar the anchor rises; and into the sunset passes the great vessel.

In the bow, like a figure of Hope, stands the Mother, gazing with eager eyes on the far-off horizon.

Then this shadow fades.

A great ship sweeps along with white sails swelling to the breeze; at the bow stands the Mother, gazing ever out into the distance before her. Storms come and the ship flies before the blast; but she swerves not, for the Mother, with outstretched hand, points the way, and the helmsman swaying beside his wheel obeys the hand.

So this shadow also passes.

The shadows of days and nights come on in quick succession; and the Mother seeks ever for her Son.

So the records of the prosperous journey melt into a faint, dim, misty shadow through which one figure alone stands clear—the watching Mother at the vessel's prow.

Now from the Threshold grow the shadows of the mountain island and of the ship drawing nigh. In the prow the Mother kneels, looking out and pointing. A boat is lowered. Men spring on board with eager feet; but before them all is the Mother. The boat nears the island; the water shallows, and on the hot white beach the men spring to land.

But in the boat's prow still the Mother sits. In her long anxious hours of agony she has seen in her dreams her Son standing afar off and watching; she has seen him wave his arms with a great joy as the ship rises over the horizon's edge; she has seen him standing on the beach waiting; she has seen him rushing through the surf so that the first thing that the lonely Sailor Boy should touch would be his Mother's loving hands.

But alas! for her dreams. No figure with joyous waving arms stands on the summit of the mountain—no eager figure stands at the water's edge or dashes to meet her through the surf. Her heart grows cold and chill with fear.

Has she indeed come too late?

The men leave the boat, comforting her as they go with shakings of the hand and kindly touches upon the shoulder. She motions them to haste and remains kneeling.

The time goes on. The men ascend the mountain; they search, but they find not the lost Sailor Boy, and with slow, halting feet they return to the boat.

The Mother hears them coming afar and rises to meet them. They hang their heads. The Mother's arms go up, tossed aloft in the anguish of despair, and she sinks swooning in the boat.

The Shadow Builder in an instant summons her spirit from her senseless clay, and points to a figure passing, without movement, in the Procession of the Dead Past.

Then quicker than light the Mother's soul flies back full of new-found joy.

She rises from the boat—she springs to land. The men follow wondering.

She rushes along the shore with flying feet; the sailors come close behind.

She stops opposite the entrance to a cave obscured with trailing brambles. Here, without turning, she motions to the men to wait. They pause and she passes within.

For a few moments grim darkness pours from the Threshold; and then one sad, sad vision grows and passes.—

A dim, dark cave—a worn man lying prone, and a Mother in anguish bending over the cold clay. On the icy breast she lays her hand; but alas! she cannot feel the beat of the heart she loves.

With a wild, heart-stricken gesture, she flings herself upon the body of her Son and holds it close, close—as though the clasp of a Mother were stronger than the grasp of Death.

The dead heart of the Shadow Builder is alive with pain as he turns away from the sad picture, and with anxious eyes looks where from behind the Gate of Dread, the Mother and Child must come to join the ever-swelling ranks of the Procession of the Dead Past.

Slowly, slowly comes the shadow of the clay cold Mariner passing on.

But swifter than light come the Mother's flying feet. The arms so strong with love are stretched out—the thin hands grasp the passing shadow of her Son and

## 100 The Strength of Mother's Love.

tear him back beyond the Gate of Dread—to life—and liberty—and love.

The lonely Shadow Builder knows now that the Mother's arms are stronger than the grasp of Death.





## HOW 7 WENT MAD.

N the bank of the river that flows through the Land there stands a beautiful palace, where one of the great men dwells.

The bank rises steep from the rushing water; and the great trees growing on the slope rise so high that their branches wave level with the palace turrets. It is a beautiful spot, where the grass is crisp and short and close like velvet, and as green as emerald. There the daisies shine like stars that have fallen, and lie scattered over the sward.

Many children have lived and grown to be men and women in the old palace, and they have had many pets. Amongst their pets have been many birds—for birds of all kinds love the place. In one corner is a spot which is called the Birds' Burying Ground. Here all the pets are laid when they die; and the grass grows greenly here, and many flowers spring up among the monuments.

One of the boys that had here dwelt had once, as a pet, a raven. He found the bird, whose leg had been wounded, and took it home and nursed it till it grew well again; but the poor thing was lame.

Tineboy was the youth's name; and the bird was called Mr. Daw. As you may imagine, the raven loved the boy and never left him. There was a cage for it in his bedroom, and there the bird went every night to roost when the sun went down. Birds go to bed quite regularly of their own accord; and if you wished to punish a bird you would make him get up. Birds are not like boys and girls. Just fancy punishing boys or girls by not letting them go to bed at sunset, or by preventing them getting up very early in the morning.

Well, when morning came this bird would get up and stretch himself, and wink his eyes, and give a good shake all over, and then feel quite awake and ready to begin the day.

A bird has a much easier time of it in getting up than a boy or a girl. Soap cannot get into its eye; or the comb will not stick in knots of hair, and its shoe-laces never get into black knots. This is because it does not use soap, or combs, or shoe-laces; if it did, perhaps it also would suffer.

When Mr. Daw had quite finished his own dressing, he would hop on the bed and try and wake his master and make him get up; but of the two to wake him was

the easier task. When the boy went to school the bird would fly along the road beside him, and would sit near



on a tree till school was over, and then would follow him home again in the same way.

Tineboy was very fond of Mr. Daw and he used sometimes to try to make him come into the schoolroom

during school-hours. But the bird was very wise, and would not.

One day Tineboy was at his sums, and instead of attending to what he was doing, he kept trying to make Mr. Daw come in. The sum was "multiply 117,649 by 7." Tineboy and Mr. Daw kept looking at one another. Tineboy made signals to the bird to come in. Mr. Daw, however, would not stir; he sat outside in the shade, for the day was very hot, and put his head on one side and looked in knowingly.

- "Come in, Mr. Daw," said Tineboy, "and help me to do this sum." Mr. Daw only croaked.
- "Seven times nine are seventy-seven, seven times nine are seventy-nine—no ninety-seven. Oh, I don't know—I wish number 7 had never been invented," said Tineboy.
  - "Croak," said Mr. Daw.

The day was very hot and Tineboy was very sleepy. He thought that perhaps he would be able to do the sum better if he rested a little while, just to think; and so he put his head down on the table. He was not quite comfortable, for his forehead was on the 7, at least he thought it was; so he shifted it till it hung right down over the edge of the desk. Then, after a while, somehow, very queer things began to happen.

The Teacher was just going to tell them a story.

The scholars had all settled themselves down to listen; the Raven sat on the sill of the open window, put his head on one side, closed one eye—the eye nearest the school-room—so that they might think him asleep, and listened away harder than any of them.

The pupils were all happy—all except three. One because his leg went to sleep; another because she had her pocket full of curds and wanted to eat them, and



couldn't without being found out, and the curds were melting away; and the third, who was awfully sleepy, and awfully anxious to hear the story, and couldn't do either because of the other.

The schoolmaster then began his story.

## HOW POOR 7 WENT MAD.

"The Alphabet Doctor-"

Here he was interrupted by Tineboy, who said-

- "What is an Alphabet Doctor?"
- "An Alphabet Doctor," said the schoolmaster, "is the doctor who attends to the sicknesses and diseases of the letters of the Alphabet."
- "How have Alphabets diseases and sicknesses?" asked Tineboy.
- "Oh, they have plenty. Do you never make a crooked o or a capital A with a lame leg, or a T that is not straight in its back?"

There was a chorus from all the class, "He does. He does often." Ruffin, the biggest boy, said after all the others, "Very often. In fact always."

"Very well, then there must be some one to put them straight again, must there not?"

None of the children could say that there was not. Tineboy alone was heard to mutter to himself, " I don't believe it."

The schoolmaster began again—

"The Alphabet Doctor was sitting down to his tea. He was very tired, for he had been out attending cases all day." Tineboy again interrupted, "What cases?"

- "I can tell you. He had to put in an i which had been omitted, and to alter the leg of an R which had been twisted into a B.
- "Well, just as he was beginning his tea a hurried knock came to the door. He went to the door, opened it, and a groom rushed into the room, breathless with running, and said—
- "'Oh, Doctor, do come quick; there is a frightful calamity down at our place.'
  - "" What is our place?" said the doctor.
  - "'Oh, you know. The Number Stables.'"
- "What are the Number Stables?" said Tineboy, again interrupting.
- "The Number Stables," said the Teacher, "are the stables where the numbers are kept."
  - "Why are they kept in stables?" said Tineboy.
  - "Because they go so fast."
  - " How do they go fast?"
- "You take a sum and work it and you will see at once. Or look at your multiplication table; it starts with twice one are two, and before you get down the page you are at twelve times twelve. Is that not fast going?
- "Well, they have to keep the numbers in stables, or else they would run away altogether and never be heard of again. At the end of the day they all come home and

change their shoes, and get tied up and have their supper.

- "The Groom from the Number Stables was very impatient.
  - "" What is wrong?' said the Doctor.
  - "'Oh, poor 7, sir.'
  - "' What of him?'
- "'He is mortal bad. We don't think he'll ever get through it.'
  - "'Through what?' said the Doctor.
  - "'Come and see,' said the Groom.
- "The Doctor hurried away, taking the lantern with him, for the night was dark, and soon got to the Stables.
- "As he got close there was a very curious sound heard—a sound of gasping and choking, and yelling and coughing, and laughing, and a wild, unearthly screech all in one.
  - "'Oh, do come quick!' said the Groom.
- "When the Doctor entered the stables there was poor No. 7 with all the neighbours round him, and he was in a very bad way. He was foaming at the mouth and apparently quite mad. The Nurse from the Grammar Village was holding him by the hand, trying to bleed him. All the neighbours were wringing either their hands or their necks, or were helping to hold him. The Footsmith,—the man," explained the teacher, seeing from the

look on Tineboy's face that he was going to ask a question, "the man who puts the feet on the letters and numbers to make them able to stand upright without wearing out, —was holding down the poor demented number.

- " The Nurse, trying to quiet him, said:
- "'There now, there now, deary—don't go and make a noise. Here comes the good Alphabet Doctor, who will make you unmad.'
  - "'I won't be made unmad,' said 7, loudly.
- "'But, my good sir,' said the Doctor, 'this cannot go on. You surely are not mad enough to insist on being mad?'
  - "'Yes, I am,' said 7, loudly.
- "'Then,' said the Doctor blandly, 'if you are mad enough to insist on being mad, we must try to cure your madness or being mad, and then you will be unmad enough to wish to be unmad, and we will cure that too.'"
  - " I don't understand that," said Tineboy.
  - "Hush!" said the class.
- "The Doctor took out his stethoscope, and his telescope, and his microscope, and his horoscope, and began to use them on poor mad 7.
- "First he put the stethoscope to the sole of his foot, and began to talk into it.
- "'That is not the way to use that,' said the Nurse; 'you ought to put it to his chest and listen to it.'

- "'Not at all, my dear madam,' said the bland Doctor, that is the way with sane people; but, of course, when one is insane, the fact of the disease necessitates an opposite method of treatment.' Then he took the telescope and looked at him to see how near he was, and the microscope to look how small; and then he drew his horoscope."
  - "Why did he draw it?" said Tineboy.
- "Because, my dear child," said the Teacher, "do you not see that by right a horoscope is cast; but as the poor man was mad the horoscope had to be drawn."
  - "What is a horrorscope?" said Tineboy.
- "It is not horrorscope, my child; it is horoscope—a very different thing."
  - " Well, what is horoscope?"
- "Look in your dictionary, my dear child," said the Teacher.
- "Well, when the doctor had used all the instruments, he said, 'I use all these in order to find the scope of the disease. I shall now proceed to find the cause. In the first instance, I shall interrogate the patient.'
- "'Now, my good sir, why do you insist on being mad?'
  - "'Because I choose."
- "'Oh, my dear sir, that is not a polite answer. Why do you choose?'
  - "' I can't say why,' said 7, 'unless I make a speech.'

- "' Well, make a speech.'
- "'I can't speak till I am set free; how can I make a speech with all these people holding me?'
- "' We are afraid to let you go,' said the Nurse, ' you will run away.'
  - "'I will not."
  - "'You promise that?' said the doctor.
  - "' I promise,' said 7.
- "' Let him go,' said the Doctor, and accordingly they put a piece of carpet under him, and the Footsmith sat on his head, the way they do when horses fall down in the street. Then they all got clear away, and the Footsmith got away too; and after a long struggle 7 got to his feet.
  - "' Now make the speech,' said the Doctor.
- "'I can't begin,' said 7, 'till I get a glass of water on a table. Who ever heard of any one making a speech without a glass of water!'
  - "So they brought a glass of water.
  - "' Ladies and Gentlemen—' began 7, and then stopped.
  - "' What are you waiting for?' said the Doctor.
- "' For the applause, of course,' said 7. 'Who ever heard of a speech without applause?'
  - "They all applauded.
- "'I am mad,' said 7, 'because I choose to be mad; and I never shall, will, might, could, should, would, or ought to be anything but mad. The treatment that I get is enough to make me mad.'

- "' Dear me, dear me!' said the Doctor. 'What treatment?'
- "' Morning, noon, and night am I treated worse than any slave. There is not in the whole range of learning any one thing that has so much to bear as I have. I work hard all the time. I never grumble. I am often a multiple; often a multiplicand. I am willing to bear my share of being a result, but I cannot stand the treatment I get. I am wrong added, wrong divided, wrong subtracted, and wrong multiplied. Other numbers are not treated as I am; and, besides, they are not orphans like me.'
- "'Orphans?' asked the Doctor; 'what do you mean?'
- "' I mean that the other numbers have lots of relations. But I have neither kith nor kin -except old Number I, and he does not count for much; and, besides, I am only his great-great-great-grandson.'
  - "" How do you mean?" asked the Doctor.
- "'Oh, he is an old chap that is there all the time. He has all his children round him, and I only come six generations down.'
  - "'Humph!' said the doctor.
- "'Number 2,' went on 7, 'never gets into any trouble, and 4, 6, and 8 are his cousins. Number 3 is close to 6 and 9. No. 5 is half a decimal and he never gets into trouble. But as for me, I am miserable, ill-

treated, and alone.' Here poor 7 began to cry, and bending down his head sobbed bitterly."

When the Teacher got thus far there was an interruption, for here little Tineboy began to cry too.

- "Why are you crying?" said Ruffin, the bully boy.
- "I am not crying," said Tineboy, and he cried away faster than ever.

The Teacher went on with the story.

- "The Alphabet Doctor tried to cheer poor 7.
- "' Hear, hear!' said he.
- "7 stopped crying and looked at him. 'No,' said he, 'you should say "speak, speak," it is I that should say "hear, hear."
- "'Certainly,' said the Doctor, 'you would say that if you were sane; but then, you see, you are not sane, and being mad you say what you should not say.'
  - " 'That is false,' said 7.
- "'I understand,' said the Doctor, 'but do not stop to argue the point. If you were sane you would say "that is true," but you do say "that is false," meaning that you agree with me.'
  - "7 looked pleased at being so understood.
  - "'No,' said he-meaning 'yes.'
- "'Then,' continued the Doctor, 'if you say "speak, speak," when a sane man would say "hear, hear," of

course, I should say "hear, hear," when I mean "speak, speak," because I am talking to a madman.'

- "'No, no,' said 7-meaning, 'yes, yes.'
- "Go on with your speech,' said the Doctor.
- " No 7 took out his handkerchief and wept.
- "'Ladies and Gentlemen,' he went on, 'once more I must plead the cause of the poor ill-used number—that is me—this orphan number—this number without kin——'"

Here Tineboy interrupted the Teacher, "How had he no skin?"

- "Kin, my child. Kin, not skin," said the Teacher.
- "What is the difference between kin and skin?" asked Tineboy.
- "There will be but a small difference," said the Teacher, between this cane and your skin if you interrupt." So Tineboy was quiet.
- "Well," said the teacher, "poor 7 went on—'I implore your pity for this forlorn number. Oh, you boys and girls, think of a poor desolate number, who has no home, no friends, no father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, son, daughter, or cousin, and is desolate and alone."

Tineboy here set up a terrible howl.

- "What are you crying for?" said the Teacher.
- "I want poor old 7 to be more happy. I will give him some of my lunch and a share of my bed."

The Teacher turned to the Monitor.

"Tineboy is a good child," he said, "let him for the next week learn 7 times o up, and perhaps that will comfort him."

The Raven, sitting in the window, winked his eye to himself and hopped about with a suppressed merry croak, shook his wings, and seemed hugging himself and laughing. Then he hopped softly away, and stole up and hid on the top of the book-case.

The Schoolmaster went on with his story.

- "Well, children, after a while poor 7 got better and promised that he would get unmad. Before the Doctor went home again all the Alphabet and Number Children came and shook poor Number 7's hand, and promised that they would be more kind to him in future.
  - " Now, children, what do you think of the story?"

They all said that they liked it, that it was beautiful, and that they too would try to be more kind to poor 7 for the future. At last Ruffin the bully boy said:

- "I don't believe it. And if it is true I wish he had died; we would be better without him."
  - "Would we?" asked the teacher, "how?"
- "Because we would not be troubled with him," said Ruffin.

As he said it there was a sort of queer croak heard from the Raven, but nobody minded, except Tineboy, who said:—

" Mr. Daw, you and I love poor 7, at all events."

The Raven hated Ruffin because he always threw stones at him, and he had tried to pull the feathers out of his tail, and when Ruffin spoke, his croak seemed to mean, "Just you wait." When no one was looking Mr. Daw stole up and hid in the rafters.

Then presently school broke up, and Tineboy went home; but he was not able to find Mr. Daw. He thought he was lost, and was very miserable, and went to bed crying.

In the meantime, when the school was locked up empty, Mr. Daw came down from the rafters very, very quietly—hobbled over to the door, and putting his head down, listened; then he flew and scrambled up on the handle of the door, and looked out through the keyhole. There was nothing to see and nothing to hear.

Then he got up on the Master's desk, flapped his wings, and began to crow like a cock, only very softly, for fear he should be heard.

Presently he went over all the room, flying up to the big sheets of multiplication table, and turning over the pages of the books with his claws, and picking up Something with his sharp beak.

One would hardly believe it, but he was stealing all the Number Sevens in the place; he picked the Seven off the clock, rubbed it off the slates, and brushed it with his wings off the blackboard.

Mr. Daw knew that if once you can get the whole

of any number out of a schoolroom no one else can use it without asking your leave.

Whilst he was picking out all the Sevens he was swelling out very much; and when he had got them all he was exactly Seven times his natural size.

He was not able to do this all at once. It took him the whole night, and when he got back to his corner in the rafters it was nearly time for school to open.

He was now so big that he was only just able to squeeze into the corner and no more.

The school time came, but there was no Master, and there were no Scholars. A whole hour passed; and then the Master came, and the Ushers, and all the Boys and Girls.

When they were all in the Master said—

- "You are all very late."
- "Please, sir, we could not help it," they all answered together.
  - "Why could you not help it?"

They all answered at once—

- "I wasn't called in time."
- "What time are you called at every morning?"

They all seemed about to speak, but all were silent.

"Why don't you answer?" asked the Teacher.

They made motions with their mouths like speaking, but no one said anything.

The Raven up in his corner croaked a quiet laugh all to himself.

- "Why don't you answer?" asked the Teacher again.

  "If I have not my question answered at once, I shall keep you all in."
  - " Please, sir, we can't," said one.
  - "Why not?"
  - " Because "-

Here Tineboy interrupted, "Why were you so late, sir?"

- "Well, my boy, I am sorry to say I was late; but the fact is, my servant did not knock at my door at the usual hour."
  - "What hour, sir?" asked Tineboy.

The Teacher seemed as if he was going to speak, but stopped.

"This is very queer," he said, after a long pause.

Ruffin said, in a sort of swaggering way, "We are not late at all. You are here and we are here—that is all."

- "No, it is not all," said the Teacher. "Ten is the hour, and it is now eleven—we have lost an hour."
  - "How have we lost it?" asked one of the Scholars.
- "Well, that is what puzzles me. We must only wait a little and see."

Here Tineboy said suddenly, "Perhaps some one stole it!"

- "Stole what?" said the scholars.
- " I don't know," said Tineboy.

They all laughed.

"You need not laugh, something is stolen; look at my

lesson!" said Tineboy, and he held up the book. Here is what they saw—

— I are —
— 2 ,, I4
— 3 ,, 2I
— 4 ,, 28
— 5 ,, 35
— 6 ,, 42
— — ,, 49
— 8 ,, 56
— 9 ,, 63
— 10 ,, —0

All the Scholars crowded round Tineboy to look at the book. Ruffin did not, for he was looking at the school clock.

"The clock has lost something," said he, and sure enough it did not look all right.

The Teacher looked up—for he was leaning with his head on his desk, groaning.

- "What is wrong with it?" he asked.
- "Something is missing."
- "There is a number out; there are only eleven figures," said the Teacher.
  - "No, no," said the Scholars.
  - "Count them out, Ruffin," said the Master.
  - "1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9 10 11 12."
- "Quite right," said the Teacher, "you see there are twelve. No there are not—yes there are—no—yes—no,

yes—what is it all about?" and he looked round the room, and then leaned his head on the desk again and groaned.

In the meantime the Raven had crept along the rafters till he had got over the Teacher's desk; and then he got a good heavy Seven and dropped it right on the little bald spot on the top of the Teacher's head. It bounded off the head and fell on the desk before him. The instant the Teacher saw it he knew what was wanting all the time. He covered over the Seven with a piece of blotting paper. He then called up Ruffin.

- "Ruffin, you told me that something was missing—are you sure?"
  - "Yes, of course."
- "Very well. Do you remember that you said yesterday, that you wished a certain Number had died in a madhouse?"
  - "Yes, I do; and I wish it still."
- "Well, that Number has been stolen by some one during the night."
- "Hurrah!" said Ruffin, and he threw his book up to the ceiling. It hit poor Mr. Daw, who had another Seven in his beak ready to drop it, and knocked the Seven down. It fell into Tineboy's cap, which he held in his hand. He took it out, and stooped and petted it.
  - " Poor 7," said Tineboy.
  - "Give me the Number," said Ruffin.
  - "I shan't. It belongs to me."

- "Then I'll make you," said Ruffin; and he caught hold of Tineboy—even before the Master's face.
- "Let me go. I'll not give you my poor Seven," said Tineboy, and he began to scream and cry.
  - "Ruffin, stand out," said the Master.

Ruffin did so.

"Seven times seven?" asked the Master.

Ruffin did not answer. He could not, for he had not got a Seven.

- " I know," said Tineboy.
- "Oh, yes," said Ruffin, with a sneer; "he knows because he has a Number."
  - "Forty-nine," said Tineboy.
  - "Right," said the Master; "go up, Tineboy."

So Tineboy went up to the top of the class, and Ruffin went down.

"Seven times forty-nine?" asked the Master.

They were all silent.

- "Come, answer!" said the Master.
- "What is it, yourself?" said Tineboy.
- "Well, my boy, I am sorry to say I cannot say. Dear me, it is very queer," and the Master put down his head on the desk again, and groaned louder than ever.

Just then Mr. Daw took another seven and dropped it down on the floor before Tineboy.

"Three hundred and forty-three," said Tineboy, quickly; for he could answer as he had another Seven.

The Teacher looked up and laughed loudly.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" said he.

When the third Seven fell the Raven began to swell.

He got seven times as big as he was, so that he began to lift the slates off the roof.

The Scholars all looked up; Ruffin had his mouth open, and Mr. Daw, anxious to get rid of the Sevens, dropped one into it.

"Two thousand three, hundred and one," Ruffin spluttered out.

Mr. Daw dropped another Seven into his mouth, and he spluttered out again worse than ever, "Sixteen thousand eight hundred and seven."

The Raven began hurling Sevens at him as fast as he could; and each time he threw one he grew smaller and smaller, till he got to just his natural size.

Ruffin kept spluttering out and gasping numbers as hard as ever he could, till he grew black in the face and fell down in a fit just as he had come to "Seventy-nine thousand seven hundred and ninety-two billion, two hundred and sixty-six thousand two hundred and ninety-seven million six hundred and twelve thousand and one."

Suddenly Tineboy woke up, and found that he had been dreaming with his head down.



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## LIES AND LILIES.

LARIBEL lived in peace and happiness with her father and mother, from the time she was a little baby till when, at ten years old, she went to school.

Her parents were good, kind people, who loved truth and tried ever to walk in the paths of the just. They taught Claribel all good things, and her mother, Fridolina, used to bring her when every day she went to visit and comfort the sick.

When Claribel went to school, she was even happier, for not only had she her home as it was ever, but there were many new friends also who were of her own age and whom she came to know and love. The school-mistress was very good and very nice and very old, with beautiful white hair and a sweet gentle face that never looked hard or stern, except when some one told a lie.

Then the smile would fade from her face; and it was like the change in the sky when the sun has gone down, and she would look grave, and cry silently. If the child who had been wicked came and confessed the fault and promised never never to tell a lie again, the smile would come back like sunshine. But if the child persisted in the lie her face would look stern, and afterwards the stern look would be in the memory of the liar, even when she was not there.

Every day she told all the children of the beauty of Truth and how a lie was so black and terrible a thing. She would also tell them stories from the Great Book; and one that she loved, and that they loved too, was of the Beautiful City where the good people shall live hereafter.

The children never tired of hearing of that City, like a jasper stone clear as crystal, with its twelve gates with names written thereon, and they used to ask the Mistress questions about the Angel who measured the City with a golden reed. Always towards the end of the story, the Mistress's voice would become very grave, and a hush would steal over the children and they would draw closer together in awe as she told them that outside that beautiful city were for ever condemned to stand "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

Then the good Mistress would tell them what a terrible thing it would be to stand there without, and lose all the beauty and eternal glory that lay within. And

all for a fault which no human being need ever commit—for telling a lie. People are not very much angry even when a fault has been done, when the truth is told at once; but if a fault is made worse by a lie then everyone is justly angry. If men and women, even fathers and mothers who love their little children very tenderly, are angry, how much more will God be angry against whom the sin of a lie is made.

Claribel loved this story and often cried as she thought of the poor people who will have to stand without the Beautiful City for ever, but she never thought that she would tell a lie herself. Indeed, she never did till temptation came. When people think themselves very good they are in danger of sin, for if we are not ever on the watch against evil we surely do some wrong thing; and as Claribel feared no evil, she was easily led into sin.

The children were all at their sums. A few of them knew their arithmetic and got out their answers and proved them; but some could not get out the answer right, and others stuck and could not get out any answer at all. A couple of naughty ones did not even try to get out the answers, but drew pictures on their slates and wrote their names. Claribel tried to do her sum, but she could not remember 9 times 7, and instead of beginning at "twice one are two" and going on up, she grew idle and lazy and gave up the sum and drew the beginnings of pictures and gave them up too. She

looked up at the window thinking of something to draw and saw on the lower panes coloured flowers painted there so as to prevent the children looking at the people



outside during lesson time. Claribel fixed on one of these flowers, a lily, and began to draw it.

Skooro saw her looking up and began his evil work.

In order to help her to do what she ought not to do he took the shape of a lily and lay on the slate very faintly, so that she had only to draw round his edges and then there was a lily drawn. Now it is not a wrong thing to draw a lily, and if Claribel had drawn it well at a proper time she would have got praise; but a good thing may become a bad thing if it is wrongly done—and so it was with Claribel's lily.

Presently the Mistress asked for the slates. When Claribel brought hers up she knew that she had done wrong and was sorry; but she was only sorry because she was afraid of being punished. When the Mistress asked for the answer she hung down her head and said she could not get it.

- "Did you try?" asked the Mistress.
- "Yes," she answered, feeling that she had tried for a while.
- "Did you idle?" she was asked, "Did you do anything but your sum?" Then she knew that she would get into trouble for idling if she told it; and so forgetting all about the Jasper City and those who are doomed to stand without its beautiful gates, she answered that she had done nothing else but sums. The mistress took her word—for she had always been truthful—and said:
- "You were puzzled, I suppose, dear child; let me help you," and she kindly showed her how to work the sum.

As she was going back to her seat, Claribel hung her head, for she knew that she had told a lie, and although it need now never be found out, she was sorrowful, and felt as if she were standing outside the shining City. Even then if she had rushed up to the mistress and said:

"I have done wrong; but I will be a better child again," all would have been well; but she did not, and every minute that passed made such a thing harder to do.

Soon after school was over, and Claribel went sadly home. She did not care to play, for she had told a lie, and her heart was heavy.

When bed-time came she lay down weary, but could not sleep; and she cried very bitterly, for she could not pray. She was sorry that she had told a lie, and she thought it rather hard that her sorrow was not enough to make her happy again; but her conscience said—

- "Will you confess to-morrow?" But she thought that it would not be necessary, for the sin was over and she had not done harm to anyone. But all the time she knew that she was wrong. Had the mistress spoken of this, she would have said—
- "It is ever thus, dear children. A sin cannot be wiped away till the shame comes first; for without the shame and the acknowledgment of guilt the heart cannot be cleansed from the sin."

At last Claribel sobbed herself to sleep.

Then when she slept, the Child Angel stole into the room and passed over her eyelids, so that even in her

sleep she saw the beautiful light, and she thought of the City like a jasper stone, clear as crystal, with its twelve gates with names written thereon. She dreamed that she saw the Angel with the golden reed measuring the city, and Claribel was so happy that she forgot all about



her sin. The Child Angel knew all her thoughts, and he grew less and less till his light all died away; and to Claribel in her dream all seemed to grow dark, and she knew that she was standing without the gate of the Beautiful City. The Angel, who held the measuring reed of

gold, stood on the battlements of the city, and in a terrible voice said—

"Claribel, stand thou without; thou makest and lovest a lie."

"Oh, no," said Claribel, "I do not love it."

"Then why not confess thy fault?"

Claribel was silent; but she would not confess her sin, for her heart was hard, and the Angel lifted the golden reed, and lo! it blossomed a beautiful lily. Then the Angel said—

"The lilies grow only for the pure, who live within the city; thou must stand without among the liars."

Claribel saw the jasper walls before her towering up and up, and she knew that they were an eternal barrier to her, and that she must ever stand without the Beautiful City; and in the anguish and horror she felt how deep was her sin, and longed to confess it.

Skooro saw that she was repenting, for he, too, could see into her thoughts, and with the darkness of his presence he tried to blot out the whole dream of the Beautiful City.

But the Child Angel crept into her heart and made it light, and the seed of repentance grew and blossomed.

Claribel woke early, and rose and went and told her mistress of her sin, and was happy once more.

All her life long she loved the lilies; for she thought of her lie and of her repentance for it, and that the lilies grow within the Jasper City, which is for the pure alone.



## THE CASTLE OF THE KING.

HEN they told the poor Poet that the One he loved best was lying sick in the shadow of danger, he was nigh distraught.

For weeks past he had been alone; she, his Wife, having gone afar to her old home to see an aged grand-sire ere he died.

The Poet's heart had for some days been oppressed with a strange sorrow. He did not know the cause of it; he only knew with the deep sympathy which is the poet's gift, that the One he loved was sick. Anxiously had he awaited tidings. When the news came, the shock, although he expected a sad message, was too much for him, and he became nigh distraught.

In his sadness and anxiety he went out into the gar-

den which long years he had cultured for Her. There, amongst the bright flowers, where the old statues stood softly white against the hedges of yew, he lay down in the long uncut summer grass, and wept with his head buried low.

He thought of all the past—of how he had won his Wife and how they loved each other; and to him it seemed a sad and cruel thing that she was afar and in danger, and he not near to comfort her or even to share her pain.

Many many thoughts came back to him, telling the story of the weary years whose gloom and solitude he had forgotten in the brightness of his lovely home.—

How in youth they twain had met and in a moment loved. How his poverty and her greatness had kept them apart. How he had struggled and toiled in the steep and rugged road to fame and fortune.

How all through the weary years he had striven with the single idea of winning such a place in the history of his time, that he should be able to come and to her say, "I love you," and to her proud relations, "I am worthy, for I too have become great."

How amid all this dreaming of a happy time which might come, he had kept silent as to his love. How he had never seen her or heard her voice, or even known her habitation, lest, knowing, he should fail in the purpose of his life.

How time - as it ever does to those who work with

honesty and singleness of purpose—crowned the labours and the patience of his life.

How the world had come to know his name and reverence and love it as of one who had helped the weak and weary by his example; who had purified the thoughts of all who listened to his words; and who had swept away baseness before the grandeur and simpleness of his noble thoughts.

How success had followed in the wake of fame.

How at length even to his heart, timorous with the doubt of love, had been borne the thought that he had at last achieved the greatness which justified him in seeking the hand of her he loved.

How he had come back to his native place, and there found her still free.

How when he had dared to tell her of his love she had whispered to him that she, too, had waited all the years, for that she knew that he would come to claim her at the end.

How she had come with him as his bride into the home which he had been making for her all these years. How, there, they had lived happily; and had dared to look into the long years to come for joy and content without a bar.

How he thought that even then, when though somewhat enfeebled in strength by the ceaseless toil of years and the care of hoping, he might look to the happy time to come.

But, alas! for hope; for who knoweth what a day may bring forth? Only a little while ago his Dear One had left him hale, departing in the cause of duty; and now she lay sick and he not nigh to help her.

All the sunshine of his life seemed passing away. All the long years of waiting and the patient continuance in well-doing which had crowned their years with love, seemed as but a passing dream, and was all in vain—all, all in vain.

Now with the shadow hovering over his Beloved One, the cloud seemed to be above and around them, and to hold in its dim recesses the doom of them both.

"Why, oh why," asked the poor Poet to the viewless air, "did love come to us? Why came peace and joy and happiness, if the darkening wings of peril shadow the air around her, and leave me to weep alone?"

Thus he moaned, and raved, and wept; and the bitter hours went by him in his solitude.

As he lay in the garden with his face buried in the long grass, they came to him and told him with weeping, that tidings—sad, indeed—had come.

As they spoke he lifted his poor head and gazed at them; and they saw in the great, dark, tender eyes that now he was quite distraught. He smiled at them sadly, as though not quite understanding the import of their words. As tenderly as they could they tried to tell him that the One he loved best was dead.



They said :--

"She has walked in the Valley of the Shadow;" but he seemed to understand them not.

They whispered,

"She has heard the Music of the Spheres," but still he comprehended not.

Then they spoke to him sorrowfully and said:

"She now abides in the Castle of the King."

He looked at them eagerly, as if to ask:

"What castle? What king?"

They bowed their heads; and as they turned away weeping they murmured to him softly—

"The Castle of the King of Death."

He spake no word; so they turned their weeping faces to him again. They found that he had risen and stood with a set purpose on his face. Then he said sweetly:

"I go to find her, that where she abideth, I too may there abide."

They said to him:

"You cannot go. Beyond the Portal she is, and in the Land of Death."

Set purpose shone in the Poet's earnest, loving eyes as he answered them for the last time:

"Where she has gone, there go I too. Through the Valley of the Shadow shall I wend my way. In these ears also shall ring the Music of the Spheres. I shall seek, and I shall find my Beloved in the Halls of the

Castle of the King. I shall clasp her close—even before the dread face of the King of Death."

As they heard these words they bowed their heads again and wept, and said:

"Alas! alas!"

The poet turned and left them; and passed away. They fain would have followed; but he motioned them that they should not stir. So, alone, in his grief he went.

As he passed on he turned and waved his hand to them in farewell. Then for a while with uplifted hand he stood, and turned him slowly all around.

Suddenly his outstretched hand stopped and pointed. His friends looking with him saw, where, away beyond the Portal, the idle wilderness spread. There in the midst of desolation the mist from the marshes hung like a pall of gloom on the far off horizon.

As the Poet pointed there was a gleam of happiness—very very faint it was—in his poor sad eyes, distraught with loss, as if afar he beheld some sign or hope of the Lost One.

Swiftly and sadly the Poet fared on through the burning day.

The Rest Time came; but on he journeyed. He paused not for shade or rest. Never, even for an instant did he stop to cool his parched lips with an icy draught from the crystal springs.

The weary wayfarers resting in the cool shadows beside the fountains raised their tired heads and looked at him with sleepy eyes as he hurried. He heeded them not; but went ever onward with set purpose in his eyes, as though some gleam of hope bursting through the mists of the distant marshes urged him on.

So he fared on through all the burning day, and all the silent night. In the earliest dawn, when the promise of the still unrisen sun quickened the eastern sky into a pale light, he drew anigh the Portal. The horizon stood out blackly in the cold morning light.

There, as ever, stood the Angels who kept watch and ward, and oh, wondrous! although invisible to human eyes, they were seen of him.

As he drew nigh they gazed at him pityingly and swept their great wings out wide, as if to shelter him. He spake; and from his troubled heart the sad words came sweetly through the pale lips:

"Say, Ye who guard the Land, has my Beloved One passed hither on the journey to the Valley of the Shadow, to hear the Music of the Spheres, and to abide in the Castle of the King?"

The Angels at the Portal bowed their heads in token of assent; and they turned and looked outward from the Land to where, far off in the idle wilderness, the dank mists crept from the lifeless bosom of the marsh.

They knew well that the poor lonely Poet was in quest

of his Beloved One; so they hindered him not, neither urged they him to stay. They pitied him much for that much he loved.

They parted wide, that through the Portal he might pass without let.

So, the Poet went onwards into the idle desert to look for his Beloved One in the Castle of the King.

For a time he went through gardens whose beauty was riper than the gardens of the Land. The sweetness of all things stole on the senses like the odours from the Isles of the Blest.

The subtlety of the King of Death, who rules in the Realms of Evil, is great. He has ordered that the way beyond the Portal be made full of charm. Thus those straying from the paths ordained for good see around them such beauty that in its joy the gloom and cruelty and guilt of the desert are forgotten.

But as the Poet passed onwards the beauty began to fade away.

The fair gardens looked as gardens do when the hand of care is taken off, and when the weeds in their hideous luxuriance choke, as they spring up, the choicer life of the flowers.

From cool alleys under spreading branches, and from crisp sward which touched as soft as velvet the Wanderer's aching feet, the way became a rugged stony path, full open to the burning glare. The flowers began to lose their odour, and to dwarf to stunted growth. Tall

hemlocks rose on every side, infecting the air with their noisome odour.

Great fungi grew in the dark hollows where the pools of dank water lay. Tall trees, with branches like skeletons, rose—trees which had no leaves, and under whose shadow to pause were to die.

Then huge rocks barred the way. These were only passed by narrow, winding passages, overhung by the ponderous cliffs above, which ever threatened to fall and engulph the Sojourner.

Here the night began to fall; and the dim mist rising from the far-off marshes, took weird shapes of gloom. In the distant fastnesses of the mountains the wild beasts began to roar in their cavern lairs. The air became hideous with the fell sounds of the night season.

But the poor Poet heeded not ill sights or sounds of dread. Onward he went ever—unthinking of the terrors of the night. To him there was no dread of darkness—no fear of death—no consciousness of horror. He sought his Beloved One in the Castle of the King; and in that eager quest all natural terrors were forgot.

So fared he onward through the livelong night. Up the steep defiles he trod. Through the shadows of the huge rocks he passed unscathed. The wild animals came around him roaring fiercely—their great eyes flaming like fiery stars through the blackness of the night.

From the high rocks great pythons crawled and hung to seize their prey. From the crevices of the mountain steeps, and from cavernous rifts in the rocky way poisonous serpents glided and rose to strike.

But close though the noxious things came, they all refrained to attack; for they knew that the lonely Sojourner was bound for the Castle of their King.

Onward still, onward he went—unceasing—pausing not in his course—but pressing ever forward in his quest.

When daylight broke at last, the sun rose on a sorry sight. There toiling on the rocky way, the poor lonely Poet went ever onwards, unheeding of cold or hunger or pain.

His feet were bare, and his footsteps on the rockstrewn way were marked by blood. Around and behind him, and afar off keeping equal pace on the summits of the rocky ridges, came the wild beasts that looked on him as their prey, but that refrained from touching him because he sought the Castle of their King.

In the air wheeled the obscene birds who follow ever on the track of the dying and the lost. Hovered the bare-necked vultures with eager eyes, and hungry beaks. Their great wings flapped lazily in the idle air as they followed in the Wanderer's track. The vulture are a patient folk, and they await the falling of the prey.

From the cavernous recesses in the black mountain gorges crept, with silent speed, the serpents that there lurk. Came the python, with his colossal folds and endless coils, whence looked forth cunningly the small flat head. Came the boa and all his tribe, which seize their

prey by force and crush it with the dread strictness of their embrace. Came the hooded snakes and all those which with their venom destroy their prey. Here, too, came those serpents most terrible of all to their quarry—which fascinate with eyes of weird magic and by the slow gracefulness of their approach.

Here came or lay in wait, subtle snakes, which take the colour of herb, or leaf, or dead branch, or slimy pool, amongst which they lurk, and so strike their prey unsuspecting.

Great serpents there were, nimble of body, which hang from rock or branch. These griping tight to their distant hold, strike downward with the rapidity of light as they hurl their whip-like bodies from afar upon their prey.

Thus came forth all these noxious things to meet the Questing Man, and to assail him. But when they knew he was bound for the dread Castle of their King, and saw how he went onward without fear, they abstained from attack.

The deadly python and the boa towering aloft, with colossal folds, were passive, and for the nonce, became as stone. The hooded serpents drew in again their venomous fangs. The mild, deep earnest eyes of the fascinating snake became lurid with baffled spleen, as he felt his power to charm was without avail. In its deadly descent the hanging snake arrested its course, and hung a limp line from rock or branch.

# 146 The Golden Gate called Truth.

Many followed the Wanderer onwards into the desert wilds, waiting and hoping for a chance to destroy.

Many other perils also were there for the poor Wanderer in the desert idleness. As he went onward the rocky way got steeper and darker. Lurid fogs and deadly chill mists arose.

Then in this path along the trackless wilderness were strange and terrible things.

Mandrakes—half plant, half man—shrieked at him with despairing cry, as, helpless for evil, they stretched out their ghastly arms in vain.

Giant thorns arose in the path; they pierced his suffering feet and tore his flesh as onward he trod. He felt the pain, but he heeded it not.

In all the long, terrible journey he had but one idea other than his eager search for his Beloved One. He thought that the children of men might learn much from the journey towards the Castle of the King, which began so fair, amidst the odorous gardens and under the cool shadow of the spreading trees. In his heart the Poet spake to the multitude of the children of men; and from his lips the words flowed like music, for he sang of the Golden Gate which the Angels call TRUTH.

"Pass not the Portal of the Sunset Land!
Pause where the Angels at their vigil stand.
Be warned! and press not though the gates lie wide,
But rest securely on the hither side.

Though odorous gardens and cool ways invite, Beyond are darkest valleys of the night. Rest! Rest contented.—Pause whilst undefiled, Nor seek the horrors of the desert wild."

Thus treading down all obstacles with his bleeding feet, passed ever onwards, the poor distraught Poet, to seek his Beloved One in the Castle of the King.

Even as onward he went the life that is of the animals seemed to die away behind him. The jackals and the more cowardly savage animals slunk away. The lions and tigers, and bears, and wolves, and all the braver of the fierce beasts of prey which followed on his track even after the others had stopped, now began to halt in their career.

They growled low and then roared loudly with uplifted heads; the bristles of their mouths quivered with passion, and the great white teeth champed angrily together in baffled rage. They went on a little further; and stopped again roaring and growling as before. Then one by one they ceased, and the poor Poet went on alone.

In the air the vultures wheeled and screamed, pausing and halting in their flight, as did the savage beasts. These too ceased at length to follow in air the Wanderer in his onward course.

Longest of all kept up the snakes. With many a writhe and stealthy onward glide, they followed hard

upon the footsteps of the Questing Man. In the blood marks of his feet upon the flinty rocks they found a joy and hope, and they followed ever.

But time came when the awful aspect of the places where the Poet passed checked even the serpents in their track—the gloomy defiles whence issue the poisonous winds that sweep with desolation even the dens of the beasts of prey—the sterile fastnesses which march upon the valleys of desolation. Here even the stealthy serpents paused in their course; and they too fell away. They glided back, smiling with deadliest rancour, to their obscene clefts.

Then came places where plants and verdure began to cease. The very weeds became more and more stunted and inane. Farther on they declined into the sterility of lifeless rock. Then the most noxious herbs that grew in ghastly shapes of gloom and terror lost even the power to harm, which outlives their living growth. Dwarfed and stunted even of evil, they were compact of the dead rock. Here even the deadly Upas tree could strike no root into the pestiferous earth.

Then came places where, in the entrance to the Valley of the Shadow, even solid things lost their substance, and melted in the dank and cold mists which swept along.

As he passed, the distraught Poet could feel not solid earth under his bleeding feet. On shadows he walked, and amid them, onward through the Valley of

the Shadow to seek his Beloved One in the Castle of the King.

The Valley of the Shadow seemed of endless expanse. Circled by the teeming mist, no eye could pierce to where rose the great mountains between which the Valley lay.

Yet they stood there—Mount Despair on the one hand, and the Hill of Fear upon the other.

Hitherto the poor bewildered brain of the Poet had taken no note of all the dangers, and horrors, and pains which surrounded him—save only for the lesson which they taught. But now, lost as he was in the shrouding vapour of the Valley of the Shadow, he could not but think of the terrors of the way. He was surrounded by griesly phantoms that ever and anon arose silent in the mist, and were lost again before he could catch to the full their dread import.

Then there flashed across his soul a terrible thought— Could it be possible that hither his Beloved One had travelled? Had there come to her the pains which shook his own form with agony? Was it indeed necessary that she should have been appalled by all these surrounding horrors?

At the thought of her, his Beloved One, suffering such pain and dread, he gave forth one bitter cry that rang through the solitude—that cleft the vapour of the Valley, and echoed in the caverns of the mountains of Despair and Fear.

The wild cry prolonged with the agony of the Poet's soul rang through the Valley, till the shadows that peopled it woke for the moment into life-in-death. They flitted dimly along, now melting away and anon springing again into life—till all the Valley of the Shadow was for once peopled with quickened ghosts.

Oh, in that hour there was agony to the poor distraught Poet's soul.

But presently there came a calm. When the rush of his first agony passed, the Poet knew that to the Dead came not the horrors of the journey that he undertook. To the Quick alone is the horror of the passage to the Castle of the King. With the thought came to him such peace that even there—in the dark Valley of the Shadow—stole soft music that sounded in the desert gloom like the Music of the Spheres.

Then the poor Poet remembered what they had told him; that his Beloved One had walked through the Valley of the Shadow, that she had known the Music of the Spheres, and that she abode in the Castle of the King. So he thought that as he was now in the Valley of the Shadow, and as he heard the Music of the Spheres, that soon he should see the Castle of the King where his Beloved One abode. Thus he went on in hope.

But alas! that very hope was a new pain that ere this he wot not of.

Hitherto he had gone on blindly, recking not of

where he went or what came a-nigh him, so long as he pressed onward on his quest; but now the darkness and the peril of the way had new terrors, for he thought of how they might arrest his course. Such thoughts made the way long indeed, for the moments seemed an age with hoping. Eagerly he sought for the end to come, when, beyond the Valley of the Shadow through which he fared, he should see rising the turrets of the Castle of the King.

Despair seemed to grow upon him; and as it grew there rang out, ever louder, the Music of the Spheres.

Onward, ever onward, hurried in mad haste the poor distraught Poet. The dim shadows that peopled the mist shrank back as he passed, extending towards him warning hands with long gloomy fingers of deadly cold. In the bitter silence of the moment, they seemed to say:

"Go back! Go back!"

Louder and louder rang now the Music of the Spheres. Faster and faster in mad, feverish haste rushed the Poet, amid the shrinking Shadows of the gloomy valley. The peopling shadows as they faded away before him, seemed to wail in sorrowful warning:

"Go back! Go back!"

Still in his ears rang ever the swelling tumult of the music.

Faster and faster he rushed onward; till, at last, wearied nature gave way and he fell prone to earth, senseless, bleeding, and alone.

After a time—how long he could not even guess—he awoke from his swoon.

For awhile he could not think where he was; and his scattered senses could not help him.

All was gloom and cold and sadness. A solitude reigned around him, more deadly than aught he had ever dreamt of. No breeze was in the air; no movement of a passing cloud. No voice or stir of living thing in earth, or water, or air. No rustle of leaf or sway of branch—all was silent, dead, and deserted. Amid the eternal hills of gloom around, lay the valley devoid of aught that lived or grew.

The sweeping mists with their multitude of peopling shadows had gone by. The fearsome terrors of the desert even were not there. The Poet, as he gazed around him, in his utter loneliness, longed for the sweep of the storm or the roar of the avalanche to break the dread horror of the silent gloom.

Then the Poet knew that through the Valley of the Shadow had he come; that scared and maddened though he had been, he had heard the Music of the Spheres. He thought that now hard by the desolate Kingdom of Death he trod.

He gazed all around him, fearing lest he should see anywhere the dread Castle of the King, where his Beloved One abode; and he groaned as the fear of his heart found voice:

"Not here! oh not here, amid this awful solitude."

Then amid the silence around, upon distant hills his words echoed:

"Not here! oh not here," till with the echoing and reechoing rock, the idle wilderness was peopled with voices. Suddenly the echo voices ceased.

From the lurid sky broke the terrible sound of the thunder peal. Along the distant skies it rolled. Far away over the endless ring of the grey horizon it swept—going and returning—pealing—swelling—dying away. It traversed the æther, muttering now in ominous sound as of threats, and anon crashing with the voice of dread command.

In its roar came a sound as of a word:

"Onward."

To his knees the Poet sank and welcomed with tears of joy the sound of the thunder. It swept away as a Power from Above the silent desolation of the wilderness. It told him that in and above the Valley of the Shadow rolled the mighty tones of Heaven's command.

Then the Poet rose to his feet, and with new heart went onwards into the wilderness.

As he went the roll of the thunder died away, and again the silence of desolation reigned alone.

So time wore on; but never came rest to the weary feet. Onwards, still onwards he went, with but one memory to cheer him—the echo of the thunder roll in his ears, as it pealed out in the Valley of Desolation:

#### "Onward! Onward!"

Now the road became less and less rocky, as on his way he passed. The great cliffs sank and dwindled away, and the ooze of the fens crept upward to the mountain's feet.

At length the hills and hollows of the mountain fastnesses disappeared. The Wanderer took his way amid mere trackless wastes, where was nothing but quaking marsh and slime.

On, on he wandered; stumbling blindly with weary feet on the endless road.

Over his soul crept ever closer the blackness of despair. Whilst amid the mountain gorges he had been wandering, some small cheer came from the hope that at any moment some turn in the path might show him his journey's end. Some entry from a dark defile might expose to him, looming great in the distance—or even anigh him—the dread Castle of the King. But now with the flat desolation of the silent marsh around him, he knew that the Castle could not exist without his seeing it.

He stood for a while erect, and turned him slowly round, so that the complete circuit of the horizon was swept by his eager eyes. Alas! never a sight did he see. Nought was there but the black line of the horizon, where the sad earth lay against the level sky. All, all was compact of a silent gloom.

Still on he tottered. His breath came fast and la-

boured. His weary limbs quivered as they bore him feebly up. His strength—his life—was ebbing fast.

On, on, he hurried, ever on, with one idea desperately fixed in his poor distraught mind—that in the Castle of the King he should find his Beloved One.

He stumbled and fell. There was no obstacle to arrest his feet; only from his own weakness he declined.

Quickly he arose and went onward with flying feet. He dreaded that should he fall he might not be able to arise again.

Again he fell. Again he rose and went on his way desperately, with blind purpose.

So for a while went he onwards, stumbling and falling; but arising ever and pausing not on his way. His quest he followed, of his Beloved One abiding in the Castle of the King.

At last so weak he grew that when he sank he was unable to rise again.

Feebler and feebler he grew as he lay prone; and over his eager eyes came the film of death.

But even then came comfort; for he knew that his race was run, and that soon he would meet his Beloved One in the Halls of the Castle of the King.

To the wilderness his thoughts he spoke. His voice came forth with a feeble sound, like the moaning before a storm of the wind as it passes through reeds in the grey autumn:

"A little longer. Soon I shall meet her in the Halls

of the King; and we shall part no more. For this it is worth to pass through the Valley of the Shadow and to listen to the Music of the Spheres with their painful hope. What boots it though the Castle be afar? Quickly speed the feet of the dead. To the fleeting spirit all distance is but a span. I fear not now to see the Castle of the King; for there, within its chiefest Hall, soon shall I meet my Beloved—to part no more.

Even as he spoke he felt that the end was nigh.

Forth from the marsh before him crept a still, spreading mist. It rose silently, higher—higher—enveloping the wilderness for far around. It took deeper and darker shades as it arose. It was as though the Spirit of Gloom were hid within, and grew mightier with the spreading vapour.

To the eyes of the dying Poet the creeping mist was as a shadowy castle. Arose the tall turrets and the frowning keep. The gateway with its cavernous recesses and its beetling towers took shape as a skull. The distant battlements towered aloft into the silent air. From the very ground whereon the stricken Poet lay, grew, dim and dark, a vast causeway leading into the gloom of the Castle gate.

The dying Poet raised his head and looked. His fast failing eyes, quickened by the love and hope of his spirit, pierced through the dark walls of the keep and the gloomy terrors of the gateway.

There, within the great Hall where the grim King of



Terrors himself holds his court, he saw her whom he sought. She was standing in the ranks of those who wait in patience for their Beloved to follow them into the Land of Death.

The Poet knew that he had but a little while to wait, and he was patient—stricken though he lay, amongst the Eternal Solitudes.

Afar off, beyond the distant horizon, came a faint light as of the dawn of a coming day.

As it grew brighter the Castle stood out more and more clearly; till in the quickening dawn it stood revealed in all its cold expanse.

The dying Poet knew that the end was at hand. With a last effort he raised himself to his feet, that standing erect and bold, as is the right of manhood, he might so meet face to face the grim King of Death before the eyes of his Beloved One.

The distant sun of the coming day rose over the horizon's edge.

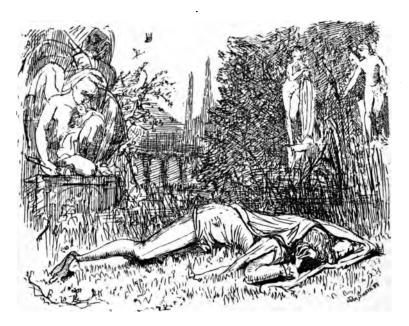
A ray of light shot upward.

As it struck the summit of the Castle keep the Poet's Spirit in an instant of time swept along the causeway. Through the ghostly portal of the Castle it swept, and met with joy the kindred Spirit that it loved before the very face of the King of Death.

Quicker then than the lightning's flash the whole Castle melted into nothingness; and the sun of the coming day shone calmly down upon the Eternal Solitudes.

# 158 What the Sun saw.

In the Land within the Portal rose the sun of the coming day. It shone calmly and brightly on a fair garden, where, among the long summer grass lay the Poet, colder than the marble statues around him.





## THE WONDROUS CHILD.



AR away on the edge of a great creek, that stretched inland from the endless sea, there lay a peaceful village.

Here the husbandmen lcd a happy, prosperous life. They rose early, so that in the cool grey morn they heard the lark, all invisible in the height of the dawn, singing the morning hymn that he never forgets.

As sunset came stealing on, they returned to their homes, glad of the rest that nightfall brought to them.

In the autumn, when the harvesting was to be done, they worked late, as they were able to do; for at that time the kind Sun and his wife the Moon have a compact that they will help those who work at the harvest. So the sun stays up a little longer, and the moon gets out of her bed

in the horizon a little earlier, and thus there is always light to work by.

The red, broad, full-faced moon that looks down on the husbandmen at work is called the Harvest Moon.

The Lord of the Manor of this peaceful village was a very good, kind man, that helped the poor always. At meal-time the door of his mansion stood open; and all who were hungry could enter if they chose, and take seats at the table, and be welcome guests.

This Lord of the Manor had three children, Sibold and May, and one little Baby Boy just come home who had no name as yet.

Sibold had just reached his eighth birthday, and May was within two months of her sixth. They were very fond of each other—as brother and sister should be—and had all their plays together. May thought that Sibold was very big and strong, and whatever he wished to do she always agreed to.

Sibold loved finding things and exploring; and at different times the two children had been over all the domain of their father.

They had certain secret haunts that nobody knew of except themselves. Some of these were very queer, delightful places.

One was in the centre of a hollow Oak tree, where so many squirrels lived that the branches were quite like the streets of a town, with their going to and fro.

Another place was the top of a rock, which was only

reached by a narrow path between high bushes of ivy. Here there was a sort of great chair made in the rock, which just held the two; and here they often brought their lunch, and sat half the day looking out over the tree tops to where, far away in the distance, the white edge of the horizon lay on the glittering sea.

Then they would tell each other what they thought about, and what they would like to do, and what they would try to do when they grew up.

There was also another place, which was their favourite of all.

It was under a great Weeping Willow. This was a mighty tree, many hundreds of years old, which towered aloft above the other trees which dotted the sward. The long branches fell downwards so thickly, that even in winter, when the leaves had fallen and the branches were bare, one could hardly see into the hollow that lay within.

When the new spring clothes came home, the whole tree, from its high top even to the mossy ground from which it rose, was a mass of solid green; and it was difficult to get within even if one knew the way.

In one place one of the trailing branches had, a long time ago, been broken in a great storm, which had laid low many forest trees; but the branches which hung next to this sent forth new green shoots to fill the empty space, and so the opening was covered with thin twigs instead of strong branches.

In summer the leaves covered all with a mass of green;

but those who knew the opening could push the twigs aside, and so enter into the bower.

It was a most beautiful bower. No matter how strong the sun glared without, it was within cool and pleasant. From the ground even up to the top, till the very roof where the dark branches meeting made a black mass, all was a delicate green, for the light without came through the leaves softly and gently.

Sibold and May thought that so the sea must look to the Mermaids, who sing and comb their long hair with golden combs down in the cool depths of the ocean.

In the sward around this great tree were many beds of Asters, with their wide faces of many beautiful flowers. colours, staring up straight at the sun without ever winking, and round and over which flitted the gorgeous butterflies, with their wings like rainbows or peacocks or sunsets, or aught that is most beautiful. Sweet Mignonette, where the bees hovered with grateful hum. Pansies, with their delicate big faces trembling on their slender stalks. Tulips, opening their mouths to the sun and the rain; for the Tulip is a greedy flower, that opens his mouth till at last he opens it so wide that his head falls all to pieces and Hyacinths, with their many bells clustered on one stalk—like a big family party. Great Sunflowers, whose drooping faces shone like children of the parent Sun himself.

There were also great Poppies, with spreading, careless leaves, thick juicy stalks, and grand scarlet flowers, which

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rise and droop just as they please, and look so free and careless and independent.

Both Sibold and May loved these Poppies, and went every day to look at them. In the beds in the mossy sward, from which the great Willow rose, they grew to an enormous size; so high that when Sibold and May stood hand in hand beside the bed, the great Poppies towered over them till Sibold, standing on tiptoe, could not reach the scarlet flowers.

One day after breakfast, Sibold and May took their lunch with them, and went out to spend the day together wandering about among the woods, for it was a holiday with them. A little tiny Boy brother had arrived in the house, and everybody was busy getting things for him. The children had just seen him for an instant.

Hand in hand Sibold and May went round all their favourite spots. They looked at the cave in the Oak tree, and said "How do you do?" to all the squirrels that lived in the tree, and told them of the new Baby that had come home. Then they went to the rock, and sat together in the seat, and looked away over the sea.

There they sat for a while in the hot sunlight, and talked together of the dear little baby brother that they had seen. They wondered where he came from, and they made up a plan that they would look and look till they found a baby too. Sibold said that he must have come over the sea, and been laid in the parsley-bed by the Angels, so that nurse might find him there and bring

him to comfort their poor sick mother. Then they wondered how they would be able to get away over the sea, and they planned that some day Sibold's boat would be made bigger, and they would get into it and sail away over the sea, and search for another little baby all for themselves.

After a while they got tired of sitting in the hot sun; so they left the place, and, hand in hand, wandered on till they came to the level sward where the great Willow tree rose, and where the beds of flowers made the air seem full of colours and perfume.

Hand in hand they walked on, looking at the butterflies, and the bees, and the birds, and the beautiful flowers.

In one bed they found a new flower had come out. Sibold knew it, and told May it was a Tiger-lily; she was afraid to go near it till he told her it could not hurt her, as it was only a flower.

As they went on Sibold picked some flowers from every bed, and gave them to his sister; when they were going away from the Tiger-lily he pulled the flower, and as May was afraid to carry it, he took it himself.

At last they came to the great bed of Poppies. The flowers looked so bright and cool for all their flaming colour, and so careless, that May and Sibold both together thought that they would like to take a lot with them into the Willow Bower; for they were going to eat their lunch there, and they wished the place to be as gay and pretty as possible.

But first they went back to the Oak tree to gather a lot of leaves, for Sibold suggested that they would make the new baby brother the King of the Feast, and that they would make for him a crown of oak. As he would not be there himself, they would put the crown where they could see it well.

When they got to the Oak tree May called out, "Oh look, Sibold, look, look!"

Sibold looked, and saw that on nearly every branch were a whole lot of squirrels sitting two and two, with their bushy tails over their backs, eating nuts as hard as ever they could.

When the squirrels saw them they were not frightened, for the children had never done them any harm. They gave a sort of queer croak all together, and a funny little skip. Sibold and May began to laugh, but they did not like to disturb them, so they gathered as many oak leaves as they wanted, and went back to the Poppy bed.

"Now, Sibold, dear," said May, "we must get lots of Poppies, for the dear Ba is very very fond of them."

"How do you know?" said Sibold.

"Because he ought to be," she answered. "You and I are, and he is our brother, so of course he is."

So Sibold pulled a lot of the Poppies, and some he took with many of the cool green leaves attached, till they had each an armful of them. Then they gathered up all the other flowers, and entered the Willow Bower to eat their lunch. Sibold went to the spring

that rose in the garden, and that ran through it down to the sea. There he filled his cap with water, and brought it back as steadily as he could, so as not to spill much; and returned to the bower. May held open the leafy branches as he came, and when he passed in she let them fall again. As the leafy curtain hung all round them, the two children were alone in the Willow Bower.

Then they set to work to deck their leafy tent with the flowers. They twisted them round the hanging branches, and made a wreath, which they put round the trunk of the tree. Everywhere they put the Poppies as high as they could reach, and then Sibold held up May while she stuck the Tiger-lily in a cleft in the treetrunk above all the other flowers.

Then the children sat down to their lunch. They were very tired and very hungry, and they enjoyed the rest and the food very much. There was only one thing which they wanted, and that was the new little Baby Brother, so that they might make him the king of the feast.

When lunch was finished, they felt very tired, so they lay down together with their heads on each other's shoulders and their arms twined; and there they went to sleep with the scarlet Poppies nodding all round them.

After a time they were not asleep. It did not seem to be any later in the day, but to be the early morning. Neither of them felt the least sleepy or tired; on the contrary they both wanted to go on a longer expedition than ever.

"Come down to the creek," said Sibold, "and let us get out my boat."

May arose, and they opened the leafy door and went out. They went down to the creek; and there they found Sibold's boat with all its white sails set.

- "Let us get in," said Sibold.
- "Why?" asked May.
- "Because then we can have a sail," he answered.
- "But it will not hold us; it is too small," said May, who was rather afraid to go sailing, but did not like to say so.
- "Let us try," said her brother. He took hold of the cord that tied the boat to the bank, and drew it in. The line seemed very long, and Sibold appeared to be pulling it in for a great while. However, the boat came in at last. As it drew nearer, it got bigger and bigger, till when it touched the bank, they saw that it was just large enough to hold them both.
  - "Come, let us get in," said Sibold.

Somehow May did not feel afraid now. She got into the boat and found that in it there were silken cushions of the colour of the Poppy flowers. Then Sibold got in, and pulled away the rope that tied the boat to shore. He sat in the stern, and held the tiller in his hand; May sat on a cushion in the bottom of the boat, and held on to the sides. The white sails swelled out with a gentle breeze, and they began to move away from the shore; the tiny waves rippled from the bow of the boat. May heard the lap, lap, lap, as they touched the prow, and then fell away.

The sun shone very brightly. The water was as blue as the sky, and so clear that the children could see down into its depths, where the fishes were darting about. There, too, the plants and trees that grow under the water were opening and closing their branches; and the leaves were moving about as those of land trees do when the wind is blowing.

For a little while the boat went straight away from land till they lost sight of the tall Willow tree which rose above the others. Then it seemed to come near to the shore again, and moved on, always so close that the children could see all that was there very plainly.

The shore was very varied; and each moment showed something new and beautiful—

Now it was a jutting rock all covered with trailing plants whose flowers almost touched the water.

Now it was a beach, where the white sand glittered and glistened in the light, and where the waves made a pleasant humming sound as they ran up the shore and down again—as if playing at "touch" with themselves.

Now dark trees with dense foliage overhung the water; but through their gloom shone bright patches far away as the sun streamed down, through some opening, into the glade. Again there were places where grass as green as emerald sloped right down to the water's edge, and where the Cowslips and Buttercups that grew on the marge as they leant over almost kissed the little waves that rose to meet them.

Then there were places where great trees of Lilac made the air sweet for far around with the breath of their clusters of pink and white blossom, and where the Laburnums seemed to shower endless streams of gold from the wealth of flowers which hung from their twisted green branches.

There were also great Palm-trees with their wide leaves making a cool shadow on the earth beneath. Great Cocoa-nut trees up whose stems troops of monkeys kept running to gather the cocoa-nuts which they pulled and threw down below. Aloes with great stalks laden with flowers of purple and gold—for this was the hundredth year when alone the Aloe blooms.

There were Poppies as large as trees; and Lilies whose flowers were bigger than tents.

The children liked all these places, but presently they come to a spot where there was a patch of emerald grass shaded over with giant trees. Around rose or hung or clustered every flower that grows. Tall Sugarcanes sprang from the edge of a tiny stream which ran over a bed of bright stones like jewels. Palms reared their lofty heads, and plants with great leaves rose and made shadows even in the shade. Close by was a

crystal spring which bubbled into the tiny stream whence the Sugar-canes rose.

When they saw this place both the children cried out, "Oh, how beautiful! Let us stop here."

The boat seemed to understand their wishes, for without the helm even being touched, it turned and drifted in gently to the shore.

Sibold got out and lifted May to land. He intended to moor the boat; but the moment May got out all the sails folded themselves of their own accord, the anchor jumped overboard, and before it was possible to do anything the boat was anchored close to the shore.

Sibold and May took each other's hands, and they went round the place together, looking at everything.

Presently May said, in a whisper:

- "Oh, Sibold, this place is so nice, I wonder if there is any Parsley here."
  - "Why do you want Parsley?" he asked.
- "Because if there was a nice bed of Parsley we might be able to find a Baby—And oh, Sibold, I do so want a Baby."
- "Very well then, let us look," said her brother. "There seems to be every kind of plant here; and if there is *every* kind of plant, you know there *must* be Parsley." For Sibold was very logical.

So the two children went all round the grassy dell searching; and presently, sure enough, under the spread-

ing leaves of a Citron they found a great bed of Parsley
—bigger Parsley than they had ever seen before.

Sibold was quite pleased with it, and said, "This is something like Parsley. Do you know, May, it always puzzled me how a Baby who is so much bigger than the Parsley can be hidden by it; and it must be hidden in it,



for I often go out to look in the bed at home, and I never can find one, although nurse always finds one whenever she looks. But she does not look nearly often enough. I know if I was as lucky as she is, I would be always looking."

May found the longing to find a baby grow so strong upon her that she said again:

## 174 What happened from quarrelling.

"Oh, Sibold, I do so long for a Baby; I hope we will find one."

As she spoke there was a queer kind of sound heard—a sort of very, very soft laugh—like a smile set to music.

May was surprised, and, for a moment, did not think of doing anything; she merely pointed, and said:

"Look, look!"

Sibold ran forward, and lifted up the leaf of an enormous Parsley plant; and there—oh, joy of joys!—was lying the dearest little Baby Boy that ever was seen.

May knelt down beside him, and lifted him up, and began to rock him, and sing "Hush a bye, baby," whilst Sibold looked on complacently. However, after a while he got impatient, and said:

- "Look here, you know, I found that Baby; he belongs to me."
- "Oh, please," said May, "I heard him first. He is mine."
- "He is mine," said Sibold; "He is mine," said May; and both began to get a little angry.

Suddenly they heard a low groan—a sort of sound like as if a tune had a toothache. Both children looked down in alarm, and saw that the poor Baby was dead

They were both horro-struck, and began to cry; and both asked the other to forgive them, and promised that never, never again they would be angry. When they had done this, the Child opened its eyes, looked at them gravely, and said:

"Now never quarrel or be angry. If you get angry again, either of you, I shall be dead, aye, and buried too, before you can say 'trapsticks.'".

"Indeed, Ba," said May, "I shall never, never be angry again. At least, I shall try not to be."

Said Sibold:

- "I assure you, sir, that under no provocation, resulting from whatever concatenation of circumstances, shall I be guilty of the *malfaisance* of anger."
- "How pretty he speaks," said May; and the Baby nodded his head to him familiarly, as much as to say:
  - "All right, old man, we understand each other."

Then for a while they were all quite quiet. Presently the Baby turned its blue eyes up to May, and said:

- "Please, little mother, will you sing to me?"
- "What would you like, Ba?" said May.
- "Oh, any little trifle; something pathetic," he answered.
  - "Any particular style?" asked May.
- "No, thank you; anything that comes handy. I prefer something simple—some little elementary trifle, as, for instance, any little tune beginning with a chromatic scale in consecutive fifths and octaves, pianissimo—rallentando—excellerando—crescendo—up to an inharmonic change on the dominant of the diminished flat ninth."

"Oh, please, Ba," said May, very humbly, "I do not know anything about that yet. I am only in scales, and, if you please, I do not know what it is all about."

"Look, and you will see," said the Child, and he took a piece of stick and wrote some music on the sand.



"I do not know yet," said May.

Just then a small yellowish-brown animal appeared in the glade chasing a rat. When it came opposite them it suddenly went off like the sound of a pistol.

- "Do you know now?" asked the Child.
- "No, dear Ba, but it does not matter," she answered.
- "Very well, dear," said the Child, kissing her, "anything you please, only let it come straight from your loving little heart;" and he kissed her again.

Then May sang something very sweet and pretty—so sweet and pretty that it made her cry, and Sibold also, and the Baby. She did not know the words, and she did not know the tune, and she had only a vague sort of idea what it was all about; but it was very, very pretty. All the time she was singing she kept nursing the Baby, and he put his dear little fat arms round her neck, and loved her very much.

When she was done singing, the Child said:

- "Chlap, Chlap, Chlap, M-chlap!"
- "What does he mean?" she asked Sibold, in distress, for she saw that the Baby wanted something.

Just then a beautiful Cow put its head over the bushes, and said, "Moo-oo-oo." The Beautiful Child clapped his hands; so did May, who said:

"Oh, I know now. He wants to be fed."

The Cow walked in without being invited; and Sibold said:

- "I suppose, May, I had better milk him."
- "Please do, dear," said May; and she began cuddling the Baby again, and kissing, and nursing him, and telling him that he would soon be fed now.

Whilst she was thus engaged, she was sitting with her

back to Sibold; but the Baby was looking on at the milking operation, with his blue eyes dancing with glee. All at once he began to laugh, so much that May looked round to see what he was laughing at. There was Sibold trying to milk the Cow by pulling its tail.

The Cow did not seem to mind him, but went on grazing.

"Chay, Lady," said Sibold. The Cow began to frisk about.

"Oh, I say," said Sibold, "do hurry up now, and give us some milk; the Ba wants some."

The Cow answered him:

"The dear Ba must not want for aught."

May thought it very strange that the Cow could talk; but as Sibold did not seem to think it strange, she held her tongue.

Sibold began to argue with the Cow: "But really now, Mister Cow, if he must not want for anything, why do you make him want?"

The Cow answered: "Don't blame me. It is your own fault. Try some other way;" and it began to laugh as hard as it could.

Its laugh was very funny, very loud at first, but gradually getting more and more like the Child's laugh, till May could not tell one from the other. Then the Cow stopped laughing, but the Child went on.

"What are you laughing at, Ba?" May asked, for she did not remember to know anything about milking, any

more than Sibold. She thought this very funny, for she knew that she had often seen the cows milked at home.

The Baby spoke, "That is not the way to milk a cow."



Then Sibold began to work the Cow's tail up and down like the handle of a pump; but the Baby laughed more than ever.

All at once, without knowing how it came to pass,

she felt herself pouring milk out of a watering-pot all over the Baby, who lay on the ground, with Sibold holding down its head. The Baby was crowing and laughing like mad; and when the watering-pot was all emptied, he said:

"Thank you both so much. I never enjoyed dinner so much in my life."

"This is a very queer dear Ba!" said May, in a whisper.

"Very," said Sibold.

Whilst they were talking there came a dreadful sound among the trees, very very far away at first, but getting nearer and nearer every moment. It was like cats who were trying to imitate thunder. The noise came booming through the trees.

"Meiau-u-boom-r-p-s-s-s. Yarkhow-iau-p-s-s."

May was very much frightened. So also was Sibold, but he would not say so; he felt that he had to protect his little Sister and the Baby, so he got between them and the place the sound came from. May hugged the Child close, and said to him, "Do not fear, dear Ba. We will not let it touch you."

"What is 'it?'" said the Baby.

"I do not know, Ba," she answered. "I wish I did. There it comes now;" for just at that moment a great angry Tiger bounded over the tops of the highest trees, and stood glaring at them out of its great green flaming eyes.

May looked on this terrible thing with her eyes dis-

tended with terror; but still she clasped the Baby closer and closer. She kept looking at the Tiger, and saw that he was eyeing not her nor Sibold, but the Baby. This made her more frightened than ever, and she clasped him closer. As she looked, however, she saw that the Tiger's eyes got less and less angry every moment, till at last they were as gentle and tame as those of her own favourite tabby.

Then the Tiger began to purr. The purring was like a cat's purr, but so loud that it sounded like drums. However, she did not mind it, for although loud it seemed as if it meant to be gentle and caressing. Then the Tiger came close, and crouched before the Wondrous Child, and licked his little fat hands with its great rough red tongue, but very gently. The Baby laughed, and patted the Tiger's great nose, and pulled the long bristling whiskers, and said:

"Gee, gee."

The Tiger went on behaving most funnily. It lay down on its back, and rolled over and over, and then stood up and purred louder than ever. Its great tail rose straight into the air, with the top moving about and knocking to and fro a great bunch of grapes that hung down from the tree above. It seemed overwhelmed with joy, and came and crouched again before the Child, and purred round him in the greatest state of happiness. Finally it lay down, smiling and purring, and watching over the Child as if on guard.

Presently there came from the distance another terrible sound. It was like a great Giant hissing; and was louder than steam, and more multitudinous than a flock of geese. There was also the sound of breaking branches, of the crushing of the undergrowth; and there was a terrible dragging noise like nothing else they had ever heard.

Again Sibold stood out between the sound and May, who once more held the Baby to protect him from harm.

The Tiger rose and arched his back like an angry cat, and got ready to spring on whatsoever should come.

Then there appeared over the tops of the trees the head of an enormous Serpent, with small eyes that shone like sparks of fire, and two great open jaws. were so big that it really seemed as if the beast's whole head opened in two; and between them appeared a great forked tongue which seemed to spit venom. Behind this monstrous head appeared enormous coils of the Serpent's body moving endlessly. The Tiger growled as if about to spring; but suddenly the Serpent lowered its head submissively. It was gazing at the Wondrous Child; and May looking, also saw that the wee Baby was pointing down as if commanding the Serpent to his feet. the Tiger, with a low growl and afterwards a contented purr, went back to its place to watch and guard; the great Serpent came gently and coiled itself in the glade, and it also seemed as if keeping watch and guard over the Wondrous Child.

Again there came another terrible sound. This time

it was in the air. Great wings seemed to flap louder than thunder; and from far away the air was darkened by a mighty Bird of Prey that made a shadow over the land with its outspread wings.

As the Bird of Prey swooped down, the Tiger rose again and arched his back as though about to spring to meet it, and the Serpent raised his mighty coils and opened his great jaws as if about to strike.

But when the Bird saw the Child it too became less fierce, and hung in mid air with its head drooped as though making submission. Presently the Serpent coiled itself and lay as before, the Tiger went back to watch and guard, and the Bird of Prey alit in the glade and watched and guarded too.

May and Sibold began to look with wonder on the Beautiful Boy, before whom these monsters made obeisance; but they could not see anything strange.

Again there was another terrible sound—this time out to sea—a rushing and swishing as if some giant thing was lashing the water.

Looking round, the children saw two monsters coming. These were a Shark and a Crocodile. They rose out of the sea and came up on land. The Shark was jumping along, with its tail beating about and its triple rows of great teeth grinding together. The Crocodile was crawling along with its big feet and short bent legs; and its terrible mouth was opening and shutting, snapping its big teeth together.

When these two got near, the Tiger and the Serpent and the Bird of Prey all rose to guard the Child; but when the new comers saw the Baby, they too made submission, and they also kept watch and guard—the Crocodile crawling on the beach, and the Shark moving up and down in the water—just like sentries.

Again May and Sibold looked at the Beautiful Child and wondered.

Once more there was a terrible noise, more awful than had yet been.

The earth seemed to shake, and a deep rumbling sound came from far below. Then, a little way off, a mountain suddenly rose; its top opened, and forth burst, with a sound louder than a storm, fire and smoke. Great volumes of black vapour rose and hung, a dark cloud, overhead. Red-hot stones of enormous size were shot aloft and fell again into the crater, and were lost. Down the sides of the mountain rolled torrents of burning lava, and springs of fiercely-boiling water burst forth on every side.

Sibold and May were more frightened than ever, and May clasped the dear Baby closer to her breast.

The thunder of the burning mountain grew louder and louder, the fiery lava poured thick and fast, and from the crater rose the head of a fiery Dragon, with eyes like burning coals and teeth like tongues of flame.

Then the Tiger and the Serpent and the Bird of Prey,

and the Crocodile and the Shark, all prepared to defend the Wondrous Child.

But when the fiery Dragon saw the Boy it, too, was quelled; and it crawled humbly out from the burning crater.

Then the fiery mountain sunk again into the earth, the burning lava disappeared; and the Dragon remained with the others to watch and guard.

Sibold and May were more amazed than ever, and looked at the Baby more curiously still. Suddenly May said to her brother:

"Sibold, I want to whisper you something."

Sibold bent his head, and she whispered very softly into his ear:

"I think the Ba is an Angel!"

Sibold looked at him in awe as he answered:

"I think so, too, dear. What are we to do?"

"I do not know," said May; "I hope he will not be angry with us for calling him 'Ba.'"

"I hope not," said Sibold.

May thought for a moment, and then her face lit up with a glad smile as she said:

"He will not be angry, Sibold. You know we entertained him unawares."

"Quite true," said Sibold.

Whilst they were talking, all sorts of animals and birds and fishes were coming into the glade, walking arm in arm, as well as they could—for none of them had arms. A Lion and a Lamb came first, and these two bowed to the Child, and then went and lay down together. Then came a Fox and a Goose; and then a Hawk and a Pigeon; and then a Wolf and another Lamb; then a Dog and a Cat; and then another Cat and a Mouse; and then another Fox and a Stork; and a Hare and a Tortoise; and a Pike and a Trout; and a Sparrow and a Worm; and many, many others, till all the glade was full of living things all at peace with one another.

They all sat round the glade in pairs, and they all looked at the Wondrous Child.

May whispered again to Sibold:

"I think if he is an Angel we ought to be very respectful to him."

Sibold nodded, showing that he agreed with her; so she cuddled up the Baby closer and said:

"Please, Mister Ba, do not they all look nice and pretty sitting around like that?"

The Beautiful Child smiled sweetly as he answered:

"Beautiful and sweet they look."

May said again:

"I wish they would always be like that, and never fight nor disagree at all, dear Ba. Oh! I beg your pardon. I mean, Mister Ba."

The Child asked her:

"Why do you beg my pardon?"

"Because I called you Ba, instead of Mister Ba."

The Boy asked again:

"Why should you call me Mister Ba?"

May did not like to say, "Because you are an Angel," as she would like to have said, so she cuddled the Child closer and whispered into his little pink ear:

"You know."

The Child put his little arms round her neck and kissed her, and said, very low and very sweetly, words that all her life long she never forgot:

"I do know. Be always loving and sweet, dear child, and even the Angels will know your thoughts and will listen to your words."

May felt very happy. She looked at Sibold, who bent over and kissed her, and called her "sweet little sister;" and all the animals in pairs, and all the terrible ones on guard, said all together like a cheer:

"Right!"

Then they stopped and made all together each of the noises in turn that any of them used to show they were happy. First they all purred, and then they all crowed, and then cackled, and squeaked, and flapped their wings and wagged their tails.

"Oh, how pretty!" said May again, "look, dear Ba!"

She was just going to say Mister when the Child held up its finger, so she only said "Ba."

The Child smiled and said:

## "Right, you must call me only Ba."

Again all the animals said together like a shout:

"Right, you must say only Ba," and then they all went through the same ways of showing their joy as before.

May said to the Child—and somehow her voice seemed very, very loud although she did not mean it, but only to whisper.

"Oh, dear Ba, I do so wish they would always continue happy and at peace like this. Is there no way of doing it?"

The Beautiful Child opened its mouth to speak, and all the living things put up their claws, or their wings, or their fins to their ears, to listen attentively.

He spake, and his words seemed full of sound but very soft, like the echo of distant thunder coming over far waters on the wings of music.

"Know, dear children, and know ye all that list—there shall be peace on earth between all living things when the children of men are for one hour in perfect love and harmony with each other. Strive, oh! strive, each and all of you, that it may be so."

As he spoke there came over all a solemn hush, and they were very still.

Then the Wondrous Child seemed to float out of May's arms and to move down toward the sea. All the living things instantly hurried to make a great double line between which he passed.

May and Sibold followed him hand in hand. He waited for them at the marge of the sea and then kissed them both.

Whilst he was kissing them, the boat came close to shore; the anchor climbed on board; the white sails ran aloft, and a fresh breeze began to blow towards home.

The Wondrous Child moved on to the prow, and there rested. Sibold and May went on board, and took their old place; and after kissing their hands to all the living things—who were by this time dancing all together in the glade—they kept their eyes fixed on the Beautiful Boy.

As they sat hand in hand, the boat moved along gently, but very swiftly. The shore, with its many beautiful places, seemed gliding into a dim mist as they swept along.

Presently they saw their own creek, and the great Willow towering over all the other trees on shore.

The boat came to land. The Wondrous Child, floating in the air, moved onward towards the Willow Bower. Sibold and May followed.

He entered the Bower; they came close after.

As the leafy curtain fell behind them, the figure of the Wondrous Child got dimmer and dimmer; till at last, looking at them lovingly, and waving his tiny hands, as if blessing them, he seemed to melt away into the air.

Sibold and May sat for a long time, hand in hand, thinking. Then both feeling sleepy, they put their arms round each other, and lay down to rest.

In this position they again fell asleep, with the Poppies all around them.



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