LANG ANDREW

THE LILAC FAIRY BOOK

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Содержание

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PREFACE

'What cases are you engaged in at present?' 'Are you stopping many teeth just now?' 'What people have you converted lately?' Do ladies put these questions to the men – lawyers, dentists, clergymen, and so forth – who happen to sit next them at dinner parties?

I do not know whether ladies thus indicate their interest in the occupations of their casual neighbours at the hospitable board. But if they do not know me, or do not know me well, they generally ask 'Are you writing anything now?' (as if they should ask a painter 'Are you painting anything now?' or a lawyer 'Have you any cases at present?'). Sometimes they are more definite and inquire 'What are you writing now?' as if I must be writing something – which, indeed, is the case, though I dislike being reminded of it. It is an awkward question, because the fair being does not care a bawbee what I am writing; nor would she be much enlightened if I replied 'Madam, I am engaged on a treatise intended to prove that Normal is prior to Conceptional Totemism' – though that answer would be as true in fact as obscure in significance. The best plan seems to be to answer that I have entirely abandoned mere literature, and am contemplating a book on 'The Causes of Early Blight in the Potato,' a melancholy circumstance which threatens to deprive us of our chief esculent root. The inquirer would never be undeceived. One nymph who, like the rest, could not keep off the horrid topic of my occupation, said 'You never write anything but fairy books, do you?' A French gentleman, too, an educationist and expert in portraits of Queen Mary, once sent me a newspaper article in which he had written that I was exclusively devoted to the composition of fairy books, and nothing else. He then came to England, visited me, and found that I knew rather more about portraits of Queen Mary than he did.

In truth I never did write any fairy books in my life, except 'Prince Prigio,' 'Prince Ricardo,' and 'Tales from a Fairy Court' – that of the aforesaid Prigio. I take this opportunity of recommending these fairy books – poor things, but my own – to parents and guardians who may never have heard of them. They are rich in romantic adventure, and the Princes always marry the right Princesses and live happy ever afterwards; while the wicked witches, stepmothers, tutors and governesses are *never* cruelly punished, but retire to the country on ample pensions. I hate cruelty: I never put a wicked stepmother in a barrel and send her tobogganing down a hill. It is true that Prince Ricardo *did* kill the Yellow Dwarf; but that was in fair fight, sword in hand, and the dwarf, peace to his ashes! *died in harness*.

The object of these confessions is not only that of advertising my own fairy books (which are not 'out of print'; if your bookseller says so, the truth is not in him), but of giving credit where credit is due. The fairy books have been almost wholly the work of Mrs. Lang, who has translated and adapted them from the French, German, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, and other languages.

My part has been that of Adam, according to Mark Twain, in the Garden of Eden. Eve worked, Adam superintended. I also superintend. I find out where the stories are, and advise, and, in short, superintend. *I do not write the stories out of my own head.* The reputation of having written all the fairy books (an European reputation in nurseries and the United States of America) is 'the burden of an honour unto which I was not born.' It weighs upon and is killing me, as the general fash of being the wife of the Lord of Burleigh, Burleigh House by Stamford Town, was too much for the village maiden espoused by that peer.

Nobody really *wrote* most of the stories. People told them in all parts of the world long before Egyptian hieroglyphics or Cretan signs or Cyprian syllabaries, or alphabets were invented. They are older than reading and writing, and arose like wild flowers before men had any education to quarrel

over. The grannies told them to the grandchildren, and when the grandchildren became grannies they repeated the same old tales to the new generation. Homer knew the stories and made up the 'Odyssey' out of half a dozen of them. All the history of Greece till about 800 B.C. is a string of the fairy tales, all about Theseus and Heracles and Oedipus and Minos and Perseus is a *Cabinet des Fées*, a collection of fairy tales. Shakespeare took them and put bits of them into 'King Lear' and other plays; he could not have made them up himself, great as he was. Let ladies and gentlemen think of this when they sit down to write fairy tales, and have them nicely typed, and send them to Messrs. Longman & Co. to be published. They think that to write a new fairy tale is easy work. They are mistaken: the thing is impossible. Nobody can write a *new* fairy tale; you can only mix up and dress up the old, old stories, and put the characters into new dresses, as Miss Thackeray did so well in 'Five Old Friends.' If any big girl of fourteen reads this preface, let her insist on being presented with 'Five Old Friends.'

But the three hundred and sixty-five authors who try to write new fairy tales are very tiresome. They always begin with a little boy or girl who goes out and meets the fairies of polyanthuses and gardenias and apple blossoms: 'Flowers and fruits, and other winged things.' These fairies try to be funny, and fail; or they try to preach, and succeed. Real fairies never preach or talk slang. At the end, the little boy or girl wakes up and finds that he has been dreaming.

Such are the new fairy stories. May we be preserved from all the sort of them!

Our stories are almost all old, some from Ireland, before that island was as celebrated for her wrongs as for her verdure; some from Asia, made, I dare say, before the Aryan invasion; some from Moydart, Knoydart, Morar and Ardnamurchan, where the sea streams run like great clear rivers and the saw-edged hills are blue, and men remember Prince Charlie. Some are from Portugal, where the golden fruits grow in the Garden of the Hesperides; and some are from wild Wales, and were told at Arthur's Court; and others come from the firesides of the kinsmen of the Welsh, the Bretons. There are also modern tales by a learned Scandinavian named Topelius.

All the stories were translated or adapted by Mrs. Lang, except 'The Jogi's Punishment' and 'Moti,' done by Major Campbell out of the Pushtoo language; 'How Brave Walter hunted Wolves,' which, with 'Little Lasse' and 'The Raspberry Worm,' was done from Topelius by Miss Harding; and 'The Sea King's Gift,' by Miss Christie, from the same author.

It has been suggested to the Editor that children and parents and guardians would like 'The Grey True Ghost-Story Book.' He *knows* that the children would like it well, and he would gladly give it to them; but about the taste of fond anxious mothers and kind aunts he is not quite so certain. Before he was twelve the Editor knew true ghost stories enough to fill a volume. They were a pure joy till bedtime, but then, and later, were not wholly a source of unmixed pleasure. At that time the Editor was not afraid of the dark, for he thought, 'If a ghost is here, we can't see him.' But when older and better informed persons said that ghosts brought their own light with them (which is too true), then one's emotions were such as parents do not desire the young to endure. For this reason 'The Grey True Ghost-Story Book' is never likely to be illustrated by Mr. Ford.

THE SHIFTY LAD

In the land of Erin there dwelt long ago a widow who had an only son. He was a clever boy, so she saved up enough money to send him to school, and, as soon as he was old enough, to apprentice him to any trade that he would choose. But when the time came, he said he would not be bound to any trade, and that he meant to be a thief.

Now his mother was very sorrowful when she heard of this, but she knew quite well that if she tried to stop his having his own way he would only grow more determined to get it. So all the answer she made was that the end of thieves was hanging at the bridge of Dublin, and then she left him alone, hoping that when he was older he might become more sensible.

One day she was going to church to hear a sermon from a great preacher, and she begged the Shifty Lad, as the neighbours called him from the tricks he played, to come with her. But he only laughed and declared that he did not like sermons, adding:

'However, I will promise you this, that the first trade you hear named after you come out from church shall be my trade for the rest of my life.'

These words gave a little comfort to the poor woman, and her heart was lighter than before as she bade him farewell.

When the Shifty Lad thought that the hour had nearly come for the sermon to be over, he hid himself in some bushes in a little path that led straight to his mother's house, and as she passed along, thinking of all the good things she had heard, a voice shouted close to her ear 'Robbery! Robbery! Robbery!' The suddenness of it made her jump. The naughty boy had managed to change his voice, so that she did not know it for his, and he had concealed himself so well that, though she peered about all round her, she could see no one. As soon as she had turned the corner the Shifty Lad came out, and by running very fast through the wood he contrived to reach home before his mother, who found him stretched out comfortably before the fire.

'Well, have you got any news to tell me?' asked he.

'No, nothing; for I left the church at once, and did not stop to speak to anyone.'

'Oh, then no one has mentioned a trade to you?' he said in tones of disappointment.

'Ye – es,' she replied slowly. 'At least, as I walked down the path a voice cried out "Robbery! Robbery! Robbery!" but that was all.'

'And quite enough too,' answered the boy. 'What did I tell you? That is going to be my trade.'

'Then your end will be hanging at the bridge of Dublin,' said she. But there was no sleep for her that night, for she lay in the dark thinking about her son.

'If he is to be a thief at all, he had better be a good one. And who is there that can teach him?' the mother asked herself. But an idea came to her, and she arose early, before the sun was up, and set off for the home of the Black Rogue, or Gallows Bird, who was such a wonderful thief that, though all had been robbed by him, no one could catch him.

'Good-morning to you,' said the woman as she reached the place where the Black Gallows Bird lived when he was not away on his business. 'My son has a fancy to learn your trade. Will you be kind enough to teach him?'

'If he is clever, I don't mind trying,' answered the Black Gallows Bird; 'and, of course, if *any* one can turn him into a first-rate thief, it is I. But if he is stupid, it is no use at all; I can't bear stupid people.'

'No, he isn't stupid,' said the woman with a sigh. 'So to-night, after dark, I will send him to you.'

The Shifty Lad jumped for joy when his mother told him where she had been.

'I will become the best thief in all Erin!' he cried, and paid no heed when his mother shook her head and murmured something about 'the bridge of Dublin.'

Every evening after dark the Shifty Lad went to the home of the Black Gallows Bird, and many were the new tricks he learned. By and bye he was allowed to go out with the Bird and watch him at work, and at last there came a day when his master thought that he had grown clever enough to help in a big robbery.

'There is a rich farmer up there on the hill, who has just sold all his fat cattle for much money and has bought some lean ones which will cost him little. Now it happens that, while he has received the money for the fat cattle, he has not yet paid the price of the thin ones, which he has in the cowhouse. To-morrow he will go to the market with the money in his hand, so to-night we must get at the chest. When all is quiet we will hide in the loft.'

There was no moon, and it was the night of Hallowe'en, and everyone was burning nuts and catching apples in a tub of water with their hands tied, and playing all sorts of other games, till the Shifty Lad grew quite tired of waiting for them to get to bed. The Black Gallows Bird, who was more accustomed to the business, tucked himself up on the hay and went to sleep, telling the boy to wake him when the merry-makers had departed. But the Shifty Lad, who could keep still no longer, crept down to the cowshed and loosened the heads of the cattle which were tied, and they began to kick each other and bellow, and made such a noise that the company in the farmhouse ran out to tie them up again. Then the Shifty Lad entered the room and picked up a big handful of nuts, and returned to the loft, where the Black Rogue was still sleeping. At first the Shifty Lad shut his eyes too, but very soon he sat up, and, taking a big needle and thread from his pocket, he sewed the hem of the Black Gallows Bird's coat to a heavy piece of bullock's hide that was hanging at his back.

By this time the cattle were all tied up again, but as the people could not find their nuts they sat round the fire and began to tell stories.

'I will crack a nut,' said the Shifty Lad.

'You shall not,' cried the Black Gallows Bird; 'they will hear you.'

'I don't care,' answered the Shifty Lad. 'I never spent Hallowe'en yet without cracking a nut'; and he cracked one.

'Some one is cracking nuts up there,' said one of the merry-makers in the farmhouse. 'Come quickly, and we will see who it is.'

He spoke loudly, and the Black Gallows Bird heard, and ran out of the loft, dragging the big leather hide after him which the Shifty Lad had sewed to his coat.

'He is stealing my hide!' shouted the farmer, and they all darted after him; but he was too swift for them, and at last he managed to tear the hide from his coat, and then he flew like a hare till he reached his old hiding-place. But all this took a long time, and meanwhile the Shifty Lad got down from the loft, and searched the house till he found the chest with the gold and silver in it, concealed behind a load of straw and covered with loaves of bread and a great cheese. The Shifty Lad slung the money bags round his shoulders and took the bread and the cheese under his arm, then set out quietly for the Black Rogue's house.

'Here you are at last, you villain!' cried his master in great wrath. 'But I will be revenged on you.'

'It is all right,' replied the Shifty Lad calmly. 'I have brought what you wanted'; and he laid the things he was carrying down on the ground.

'Ah! you are the better thief,' said the Black Rogue's wife; and the Black Rogue added:

'Yes, it is you who are the clever boy'; and they divided the spoil, and the Black Gallows Bird had one half and the Shifty Lad the other half.

A few weeks after that the Black Gallows Bird had news of a wedding that was to be held near the town; and the bridegroom had many friends and everybody sent him a present. Now a rich farmer who lived up near the moor thought that nothing was so useful to a young couple when they first began to keep house as a fine fat sheep, so he bade his shepherd go off to the mountain where the flock were feeding, and bring him back the best he could find. And the shepherd chose out the largest

and fattest of the sheep and the one with the whitest fleece; then he tied its feet together and put it across his shoulder, for he had a long way to go.

That day the Shifty Lad happened to be wandering over the moor, when he saw the man with the sheep on his shoulder walking along the road which led past the Black Rogue's house. The sheep was heavy and the man was in no hurry, so he came slowly and the boy knew that he himself could easily get back to his master before the shepherd was even in sight.

'I will wager,' he cried, as he pushed quickly through the bushes which hid the cabin – 'I will wager that I will steal the sheep from the man that is coming before he passes here.'

'Will you indeed?' said the Gallows Bird. 'I will wager you a hundred silver pieces that you can do nothing of the sort.'

'Well, I will try it, anyway,' replied the boy, and disappeared in the bushes. He ran fast till he entered a wood through which the shepherd must go, and then he stopped, and taking off one of his shoes smeared it with mud and set it in the path. When this was done he slipped behind a rock and waited.

Very soon the man came up, and, seeing the shoe lying there, he stopped and looked at it.

'It is a good shoe,' he said to himself, 'but very dirty. Still, if I had the fellow, I would be at the trouble of cleaning it'; so he threw the shoe down again and went on.

The Shifty Lad smiled as he heard him, and, picking up the shoe, he crept round by a short way and laid the other shoe on the path. A few minutes after the shepherd arrived, and beheld the second shoe lying on the path.

'Why, that is the fellow of the dirty shoe!' he exclaimed when he saw it. 'I will go back and pick up the other one, and then I shall have a pair of good shoes,' and he put the sheep on the grass and returned to fetch the shoe. Then the Shifty Lad put on his shoes, and, picking up the sheep, carried it home. And the Black Rogue paid him the hundred marks of his wager.

When the shepherd reached the farmhouse that night he told his tale to his master, who scolded him for being stupid and careless, and bade him go the next day to the mountain and fetch him a kid, and he would send *that* as a wedding gift. But the Shifty Lad was on the lookout, and hid himself in the wood, and the moment the man drew near with the kid on his shoulders began to bleat like a sheep, and no one, not even the sheep's own mother, could have told the difference.

'Why, it must have got its feet loose, and have strayed after all,' thought the man; and he put the kid on the grass and hurried off in the direction of the bleating. Then the boy ran back and picked up the kid, and took it to the Black Gallows Bird.

The shepherd could hardly believe his eyes when he returned from seeking the sheep and found that the kid had vanished. He was afraid to go home and tell the same tale that he had told yesterday; so he searched the wood through and through till night was nearly come. Then he felt that there was no help for it, and he must go home and confess to his master.

Of course, the farmer was very angry at this second misfortune; but this time he told him to drive one of the big bulls from the mountain, and warned him that if he lost *that* he would lose his place also. Again the Shifty Lad, who was on the watch, perceived him pass by, and when he saw the man returning with the great bull he cried to the Black Rogue:

'Be quick and come into the wood, and we will try and get the bull also.'

'But how can we do that?' asked the Black Rogue.

'Oh, quite easily! You hide yourself out there and baa like a sheep, and I will go in the other direction and bleat like a kid. It will be all right, I assure you.'

The shepherd was walking slowly, driving the bull before him, when he suddenly heard a loud baa amongst the bushes far away on one side of the path, and a feeble bleat answering it from the other side.

'Why, it must be the sheep and the kid that I lost,' said he. 'Yes, surely it must'; and tying the bull hastily to a tree, he went off after the sheep and the kid, and searched the wood till he was tired.

Of course by the time he came back the two thieves had driven the bull home and killed him for meat, so the man was obliged to go to his master and confess that he had been tricked again.

After this the Black Rogue and the Shifty Lad grew bolder and bolder, and stole great quantities of cattle and sold them and grew quite rich. One day they were returning from the market with a large sum of money in their pockets when they passed a gallows erected on the top of a hill.

'Let us stop and look at that gallows,' exclaimed the Shifty Lad. 'I have never seen one so close before. Yet some say that it is the end of all thieves.'

There was no one in sight, and they carefully examined every part of it.

'I wonder how it feels to be hung,' said the Shifty Lad. 'I should like to know, in case they ever catch me. I'll try first, and then you can do so.'

As he spoke he fastened the loose cord about his neck, and when it was quite secure he told the Black Rogue to take the other end of the rope and draw him up from the ground.

'When I am tired of it I will shake my legs, and then you must let me down,' said he.

The Black Rogue drew up the rope, but in half a minute the Shifty Lad's legs began to shake, and he quickly let it down again.

'You can't imagine what a funny feeling hanging gives you,' murmured the Shifty Lad, who looked rather purple in the face and spoke in an odd voice. 'I don't think you have ever tried it, or you wouldn't have let me go up first. Why, it is the pleasantest thing, I have ever done. I was shaking my legs from sheer delight, and if you had been there you would have shaken your legs too.'

'Well, let me try, if it is so nice,' answered the Black Rogue. 'But be sure you tie the knot securely, for I don't want to fall down and break my neck.'

'Oh, I will see to that!' replied the Shifty Lad. 'When you are tired, just whistle, and I'll let you down.'

So the Black Rogue was drawn up, and as soon as he was as high as the rope would allow him to go the Shifty Lad called to him:

'Don't forget to whistle when you want to come down; but if you are enjoying yourself as I did, shake your legs.'

And in a moment the Black Rogue's legs began to shake and to kick, and the Shifty Lad stood below, watching him and laughing heartily.

'Oh, how funny you are! If you could only see yourself! Oh, you *are* funny! But when you have had enough, whistle and you shall be let down'; and he rocked again with laughter.

But no whistle came, and soon the legs ceased to shake and to kick, for the Black Gallows Bird was dead, as the Shifty Lad intended he should be.

Then he went home to the Black Rogue's wife, and told her that her husband was dead, and that he was ready to marry her if she liked. But the woman had been fond of the Black Rogue, thief though he was, and she shrank from the Shifty Lad in horror, and set the people after him, and he had to fly to another part of the country where none knew of his doings.

Perhaps if the Shifty Lad's mother knew anything of all this, she may have thought that by this time her son might be tired of stealing, and ready to try some honest trade. But in reality he loved the tricks and danger, and life would have seemed very dull without them. So he went on just as before, and made friends whom he taught to be as wicked as himself, till they took to robbing the king's storehouses, and by the advice of the Wise Man the king sent out soldiers to catch the band of thieves.

For a long while they tried in vain to lay hands on them. The Shifty Lad was too clever for them all, and if they laid traps he laid better ones. At last one night he stole upon some soldiers while they were asleep in a barn and killed them, and persuaded the villagers that if *they* did not kill the other soldiers before morning they would certainly be killed themselves. Thus it happened that when the sun rose not a single soldier was alive in the village.

Of course this news soon reached the king's ears, and he was very angry, and summoned the Wise Man to take counsel with him. And this was the counsel of the Wise Man – that he should

invite all the people in the countryside to a ball, and among them the bold and impudent thief would be sure to come, and would be sure to ask the king's daughter to dance with him.

'Your counsel is good,' said the king, who made his feast and prepared for his ball; and all the people of the countryside were present, and the Shifty Lad came with them.

When everyone had eaten and drunk as much as they wanted they went into the ballroom. There was a great throng, and while they were pressing through the doorway the Wise Man, who had a bottle of black ointment hidden in his robes, placed a tiny dot on the cheek of the Shifty Lad near his ear. The Shifty Lad felt nothing, but as he approached the king's daughter to ask her to be his partner he caught sight of the black dot in a silver mirror. Instantly he guessed who had put it there and why, but he said nothing, and danced so beautifully that the princess was quite delighted with him. At the end of the dance he bowed low to his partner and left her, to mingle with the crowd that was filling the doorway. As he passed the Wise Man he contrived not only to steal the bottle, but to place two black dots on his face, and one on the faces of twenty other men. Then he slipped the bottle back in the Wise Man's robe.

By and bye he went up to the king's daughter again, and begged for the honour of another dance. She consented, and while he was stooping to tie the ribbons on his shoe she took out from her pocket another bottle, which the Wizard had given her, and put a black dot on his cheek. But she was not as skilful as the Wise Man, and the Shifty Lad felt the touch of her fingers; so as soon as the dance was over he contrived to place a second black dot on the faces of the twenty men and two more on the Wizard, after which he slipped the bottle into her pocket.

At length the ball came to an end, and then the king ordered all the doors to be shut, and search made for a man with two black dots on his cheek. The chamberlain went among the guests, and soon found such a man, but just as he was going to arrest him and bring him before the king his eye fell on another with the same mark, and another, and another, till he had counted twenty – besides the Wise Man – on whose face were found spots.

Not knowing what to do, the chamberlain hurried back with his tale to the king, who immediately sent for the Wise Man, and then for his daughter.

'The thief must have stolen your bottle,' said the king to the Wizard.

'No, my lord, it is here,' answered the Wise Man, holding it out.

'Then he must have got yours,' he cried, turning to his daughter.

'Indeed, father, it is safe in my pocket,' replied she, taking it out as she spoke; and they all three looked at each other and remained silent.

'Well,' said the king at last, 'the man who has done this is cleverer than most men, and if he will make himself known to me he shall marry the princess and govern half my kingdom while I am alive, and the whole of it when I am dead. Go and announce this in the ballroom,' he added to an attendant, 'and bring the fellow hither.'

So the attendant went into the ballroom and did as the king had bidden him, when, to his surprise, not one man, but twenty, stepped forward, all with black dots on their faces.

'I am the person you want,' they all exclaimed at once, and the attendant, as much bewildered as the chamberlain had been, desired them to follow him into the king's presence.

But the question was too difficult for the king to decide, so he called together his council. For hours they talked, but to no purpose, and in the end they hit upon a plan which they might just as well have thought of at the beginning.

And this was the plan. A child was to be brought to the palace, and next the king's daughter would give her an apple. Then the child was to take the apple and be led into a room where the twenty men with the black dots were sitting in a ring. And to whomsoever the child gave the apple, that man should marry the king's daughter.

'Of course,' said the king, 'it may not be the right man, after all, but then again it *may* be. Anyhow, it is the best we can do.'

The princess herself led the child into the room where the twenty men were now seated. She stood in the centre of the ring for a moment, looking at one man after another, and then held out the apple to the Shifty Lad, who was twisting a shaving of wood round his finger, and had the mouthpiece of a bagpipe hanging from his neck.

'You ought not to have anything which the others have not got,' said the chamberlain, who had accompanied the princess; and he bade the child stand outside for a minute, while he took away the shaving and the mouthpiece, and made the Shifty Lad change his place. Then he called the child in, but the little girl knew him again, and went straight up to him with the apple.

'This is the man whom the child has twice chosen,' said the chamberlain, signing to the Shifty Lad to kneel before the king. 'It was all quite fair; we tried it twice over.' In this way the Shifty Lad won the king's daughter, and they were married the next day.

A few days later the bride and bridegroom were taking a walk together, and the path led down to the river, and over the river was a bridge.

'And what bridge may this be?' asked the Shifty Lad; and the princess told him that this was the bridge of Dublin.

'Is it indeed?' cried he. 'Well, now, many is the time that my mother has said, when I played her a trick that my end would be that I should hang on the bridge of Dublin.'

'Oh, if you want to fulfil her prophecies,' laughed the princess, 'you have only to let me tie my handkerchief round your ankle, and I will hold you as you hang over the wall of the bridge.'

'That would be fine fun,' said he; 'but you are not strong enough to hold me up.'

'Oh yes, I am,' said the princess; 'just try.' So at last he let her bind the handkerchief round his ankle and hang him over the wall, and they both laughed and jested at the strength of the princess.

'Now pull me up again,' called he; but as he spoke a great cry arose that the palace was burning. The princess turned round with a start, and let go her handkerchief, and the Shifty Lad fell, and struck his head on a stone, and died in an instant.

So his mother's prophecy had come true, after all.

West Highland Tales

THE FALSE PRINCE AND THE TRUE

The king had just awakened from his midday sleep, for it was summer, and everyone rose early and rested from twelve to three, as they do in hot countries. He had dressed himself in cool white clothes, and was passing through the hall on his way to the council chamber, when a number of young nobles suddenly appeared before him, and one amongst them stepped forward and spoke.

'Sire, this morning we were all playing tennis in the court, the prince and this gentleman with the rest, when there broke out some dispute about the game. The prince lost his temper, and said many insulting things to the other, who was playing against him, till at length the gentleman whom you see there struck him violently in the face, so that the blood ran from his mouth and nose. We were all so horrified at the sight, that we should most likely have killed the man then and there, for daring to lay hands on the prince, had not his grandfather the duke stepped between and commanded us to lay the affair before you.'

The king had listened attentively to the story, and when it was ended he said:

'I suppose the prince had no arms with him, or else he would have used them?'

'Yes, sire, he had arms; he always carries a dagger in his belt. But when he saw the blood pouring from his face, he went to a corner of the court and began to cry, which was the strangest thing of all.'

On hearing this the king walked to the window and stood for a few minutes with his back to the room, where the company of young men remained silent. Then he came back, his face white and stern.

'I tell you,' he said, 'and it is the solemn truth, that I would rather you had told me that the prince was dead, though he is my only son, than know that he would suffer such an injury without attempting to avenge it. As for the gentleman who struck him, he will be brought before my judges, and will plead his own cause, but I hardly think he can escape death, after having assaulted the heir to the crown.'

The young man raised his head as if to reply, but the king would not listen, and commanded his guards to put him under arrest, adding, however, that if the prisoner wished to visit any part of the city, he was at liberty to do so properly guarded, and in fifteen days he would be brought to trial before the highest judges in the land.

The young man left the king's presence, surrounded by soldiers, and accompanied by many of his friends, for he was a great favourite. By their advice he spent the fourteen days that remained to him going about to seek counsel from wise men of all sorts, as to how he might escape death, but no one could help him, for none could find any excuse for the blow he had given to the prince.

The fourteenth night had come, and in despair the prisoner went out to take his last walk through the city. He wandered on hardly knowing where he went, and his face was so white and desperate that none of his companions dared speak to him. The sad little procession had passed some hours in this manner, when, near the gate of a monastery, an old woman appeared round a corner, and suddenly stood before the young man. She was bent almost double, and was so wizened and wrinkled that she looked at least ninety; only her eyes were bright and quick as those of a girl.

'Sir,' she said, 'I know all that has happened to you, and how you are seeking if in any wise you can save your life. But there is none that can answer that question save only I myself, if you will promise to do all I ask.'

At her words the prisoner felt as if a load had all at once been rolled off him.

'Oh, save me, and I will do anything!' he cried. 'It is so hard to leave the world and go out into the darkness.'

'You will not need to do that,' answered the old woman, 'you have only got to marry me, and you will soon be free.'

'Marry you?' exclaimed he, 'but – but – I am not yet twenty, and you – why, you must be a hundred at least! Oh, no, it is quite impossible.'

He spoke without thinking, but the flash of anger which darted from her eyes made him feel uncomfortable. However, all she said was:

'As you like; since you reject me, let the crows have you,' and hurried away down the street.

Left to himself, the full horror of his coming death rushed upon the young man, and he understood that he had thrown away his sole chance of life. Well, if he must, he must, he said to himself, and began to run as fast as he could after the old crone, who by this time could scarcely be seen, even in the moonlight. Who would have believed a woman past ninety could walk with such speed? It seemed more like flying! But at length, breathless and exhausted, he reached her side, and gasped out:

'Madam, pardon me for my hasty words just now; I was wrong, and will thankfully accept the offer you made me.'

'Ah, I thought you would come to your senses,' answered she, in rather an odd voice. 'We have no time to lose – follow me at once,' and they went on silently and swiftly till they stopped at the door of a small house in which the priest lived. Before him the old woman bade the prisoner swear that she should be his wife, and this he did in the presence of witnesses. Then, begging the priest and the guards to leave them alone for a little, she told the young man what he was to do, when the next morning he was brought before the king and the judges.

The hall was full to overflowing when the prisoner entered it, and all marvelled at the brightness of his face. The king inquired if he had any excuse to plead for the high treason he had committed by striking the heir to the throne, and, if so, to be quick in setting it forth. With a low bow the youth made answer in a clear voice:

'O my lord and gracious king, and you, nobles and wise men of the land, I leave my cause without fear in your hands, knowing that you will listen and judge rightly, and that you will suffer me to speak to the end, before you give judgment.

'For four years, you, O king, had been married to the queen and yet had no children, which grieved you greatly. The queen saw this, and likewise that your love was going from her, and thought night and day of some plan that might put an end to this evil. At length, when you were away fighting in distant countries, she decided what she would do, and adopted in secret the baby of a poor quarryman, sending a messenger to tell you that you had a son. No one suspected the truth except a priest to whom the queen confessed the truth, and in a few weeks she fell ill and died, leaving the baby to be brought up as became a prince. And now, if your highness will permit me, I will speak of myself.'

'What you have already told me,' answered the king, 'is so strange that I cannot imagine what more there is to tell, but go on with your story.'

'One day, shortly after the death of the queen,' continued the young man, 'your highness was hunting, and outstripped all your attendants while chasing the deer. You were in a part of the country which you did not know, so seeing an orchard all pink and white with apple-blossoms, and a girl tossing a ball in one corner, you went up to her to ask your way. But when she turned to answer you, you were so struck with her beauty that all else fled from your mind. Again and again you rode back to see her, and at length persuaded her to marry you. She only thought you a poor knight, and agreed that, as you wished it, the marriage should be kept secret.

'After the ceremony you gave her three rings and a charm with a cross on it, and then put her in a cottage in the forest, thinking to hide the matter securely.

'For some months you visited the cottage every week; but a rebellion broke out in a distant part of the kingdom, and called for your presence. When next you rode up to the cottage, it was empty, and none could inform you whither your bride had gone. That, sire, I can now tell you,' and the young man paused and looked at the king, who coloured deeply. 'She went back to her father the old duke, once your chamberlain, and the cross on her breast revealed at once who you were. Fierce was his anger when he heard his daughter's tale, and he vowed that he would hide her safely from you, till the day came when you would claim her publicly as your queen.

'By and bye I was born, and was brought up by my grandfather in one of his great houses. Here are the rings you gave to my mother, and here is the cross, and these will prove if I am your son or not.'

As he spoke the young man laid the jewels at the feet of the king, and the nobles and the judges pressed round to examine them. The king alone did not move from his seat, for he had forgotten the hall of justice and all about him, and saw only the apple-orchard as it was twenty years ago, and the beautiful girl playing at ball. A sudden silence round him made him look up, and he found the eyes of the assembly fixed on him.

'It is true; it is he who is my son, and not the other,' he said with an effort, 'and let every man present swear to acknowledge him as king, after my death.'

Therefore one by one they all knelt before him and took the oath, and a message was sent to the false prince, forbidding him ever again to appear at court, though a handsome pension was granted him.

At last the ceremony was over, and the king, signing to his newly found son to follow him, rose and went into another room.

'Tell me how you knew all that,' he said, throwing himself into a carved chair filled with crimson cushions, and the prince told of his meeting with the old woman who had brought him the jewels from his mother, and how he had sworn before a priest to marry her, though he did not want to do it, on account of the difference in their ages, and besides, he would rather receive a bride chosen by the king himself. But the king frowned, and answered sharply:

'You swore to marry her if she saved your life, and, come what may, you must fulfil your promise.' Then, striking a silver shield that hung close by, he said to the equerry who appeared immediately:

'Go and seek the priest who lives near the door of the prison, and ask him where you can find the old woman who visited him last night; and when you have found her, bring her to the palace.'

It took some time to discover the whereabouts of the old woman, but at length it was accomplished, and when she arrived at the palace with the equerry, she was received with royal honours, as became the bride of the prince. The guards looked at each other with astonished eyes, as the wizened creature, bowed with age, passed between their lines; but they were more amazed still at the lightness of her step as she skipped up the steps to the great door before which the king was standing, with the prince at his side. If they both felt a shock at the appearance of the aged lady they did not show it, and the king, with a grave bow, took her hand, and led her to the chapel, where a bishop was waiting to perform the marriage ceremony.

For the next few weeks little was seen of the prince, who spent all his days in hunting, and trying to forget the old wife at home. As for the princess, no one troubled himself about her, and she passed the days alone in her apartments, for she had absolutely declined the services of the ladies-in-waiting whom the king had appointed for her.

One night the prince returned after a longer chase than usual, and he was so tired that he went up straight to bed. Suddenly he was awakened by a strange noise in the room, and suspecting that a robber might have stolen in, he jumped out of bed, and seized his sword, which lay ready to his hand. Then he perceived that the noise proceeded from the next room, which belonged to the princess, and was lighted by a burning torch. Creeping softly to the door, he peeped through it, and beheld her lying quietly, with a crown of gold and pearls upon her head, her wrinkles all gone, and her face, which was whiter than the snow, as fresh as that of a girl of fourteen. Could that really be his wife – that beautiful, beautiful creature?

The prince was still gazing in surprise when the lady opened her eyes and smiled at him.

'Yes, I really *am* your wife,' she said, as if she had guessed his thoughts, 'and the enchantment is ended. Now I must tell you who I am, and what befell to cause me to take the shape of an old woman.

'The king of Granada is my father, and I was born in the palace which overlooks the plain of the Vega. I was only a few months old when a wicked fairy, who had a spite against my parents, cast

a spell over me, bending my back and wrinkling my skin till I looked as if I was a hundred years old, and making me such an object of disgust to everyone, that at length the king ordered my nurse to take me away from the palace. She was the only person who cared about me, and we lived together in this city on a small pension allowed me by the king.

'When I was about three an old man arrived at our house, and begged my nurse to let him come in and rest, as he could walk no longer. She saw that he was very ill, so put him to bed and took such care of him that by and bye he was as strong as ever. In gratitude for her goodness to him, he told her that he was a wizard and could give her anything she chose to ask for, except life or death, so she answered that what she longed for most in the world was that my wrinkled skin should disappear, and that I should regain the beauty with which I was born. To this he replied that as my misfortune resulted from a spell, this was rather difficult, but he would do his best, and at any rate he could promise that before my fifteenth birthday I should be freed from the enchantment if I could get a man who would swear to marry me as I was.

'As you may suppose, this was not easy, as my ugliness was such that no one would look at me a second time. My nurse and I were almost in despair, as my fifteenth birthday was drawing near, and I had never so much as spoken to a man. At last we received a visit from the wizard, who told us what had happened at court, and your story, bidding me to put myself in your way when you had lost all hope, and offer to save you if you would consent to marry me.

'That is my history, and now you must beg the king to send messengers at once to Granada, to inform my father of our marriage, and I *think*,' she added with a smile, 'that he will not refuse us his blessing.'

Adapted from the Portuguese

THE JOGI'S PUNISHMENT

Once upon a time there came to the ancient city of Rahmatabad a jogi[1] of holy appearance, who took up his abode under a tree outside the city, where he would sit for days at a time fasting from food and drink, motionless except for the fingers that turned restlessly his string of beads. The fame of such holiness as this soon spread, and daily the citizens would flock to see him, eager to get his blessing, to watch his devotions, or to hear his teaching, if he were in the mood to speak. Very soon the rajah himself heard of the jogi, and began regularly to visit him to seek his counsel and to ask his prayers that a son might be vouchsafed to him. Days passed by, and at last the rajah became so possessed with the thought of the holy man that he determined if possible to get him all to himself. So he built in the neighbourhood a little shrine, with a room or two added to it, and a small courtyard closely walled up; and, when all was ready, besought the jogi to occupy it, and to receive no other visitors except himself and his queen and such pupils as the jogi might choose, who would hand down his teaching. To this the jogi consented; and thus he lived for some time upon the king's bounty, whilst the fame of his godliness grew day by day.

Now, although the rajah of Rahmatabad had no son, he possessed a daughter, who as she grew up became the most beautiful creature that eye ever rested upon. Her father had long before betrothed her to the son of the neighbouring rajah of Dilaram, but as yet she had not been married to him, and lived the quiet life proper to a maiden of her beauty and position. The princess had of course heard of the holy man and of his miracles and his fastings, and she was filled with curiosity to see and to speak to him; but this was difficult, since she was not allowed to go out except into the palace grounds, and then was always closely guarded. However, at length she found an opportunity, and made her way one evening alone to the hermit's shrine.

Unhappily, the hermit was not really as holy as he seemed; for no sooner did he see the princess than he fell in love with her wonderful beauty, and began to plot in his heart how he could win her for his wife. But the maiden was not only beautiful, she was also shrewd; and as soon as she read in the glance of the jogi the love that filled his soul, she sprang to her feet, and, gathering her veil about her, ran from the place as fast as she could. The jogi tried to follow, but he was no match for her; so, beside himself with rage at finding that he could not overtake her, he flung at her a lance, which wounded her in the leg. The brave princess stooped for a second to pluck the lance out of the wound, and then ran on until she found herself safe at home again. There she bathed and bound up the wound secretly, and told no one how naughty she had been, for she knew that her father would punish her severely.

Next day, when the king went to visit the jogi, the holy man would neither speak to nor look at him.

'What is the matter?' asked the king. 'Won't you speak to me to-day?'

'I have nothing to say that you would care to hear,' answered the jogi.

'Why?' said the king. 'Surely you know that I value all that you say, whatever it may be.'

But still the jogi sat with his face turned away, and the more the king pressed him the more silent and mysterious he became. At last, after much persuasion, he said:

'Let me tell you, then, that there is in this city a creature which, if you do not put an end to it, will kill every single person in the place.'

The king, who was easily frightened, grew pale.

'What,' he gasped – 'what is this dreadful thing? How am I to know it and to catch it? Only counsel me and help me, and I will do all that you advise.'

'Ah!' replied the jogi, 'it is indeed dreadful. It is in the shape of a beautiful girl, but it is really an evil spirit. Last evening it came to visit me, and when I looked upon it its beauty faded into

[1] A Hindu holy man.

hideousness, its teeth became horrible fangs, its eyes glared like coals of fire, great claws sprang from its slender fingers, and were I not what I am it might have consumed me.'

The king could hardly speak from alarm, but at last he said:

'How am I to distinguish this awful thing when I see it?'

'Search,' said the jogi, 'for a lovely girl with a lance wound in her leg, and when she is found secure her safely and come and tell me, and I will advise you what to do next.'

Away hurried the king, and soon set all his soldiers scouring the country for a girl with a lance wound in her leg. For two days the search went on, and then it was somehow discovered that the only person with a lance wound in the leg was the princess herself. The king, greatly agitated, went off to tell the jogi, and to assure him that there must be some mistake. But of course the jogi was prepared for this, and had his answer ready.

'She is not really your daughter, who was stolen away at her birth, but an evil spirit that has taken her form,' said he solemnly. 'You can do what you like, but if you don't take my advice she will kill you all.' And so solemn he appeared, and so unshaken in his confidence, that the king's wisdom was blinded, and he declared that he would do whatever the jogi advised, and believe whatever he said. So the jogi directed him to send him secretly two carpenters; and when they arrived he set them to make a great chest, so cunningly jointed and put together that neither air nor water could penetrate it. There and then the chest was made, and, when it was ready, the jogi bade the king to bring the princess by night; and they two thrust the poor little maiden into the chest and fastened it down with long nails, and between them carried it to the river and pushed it out into the stream.

As soon as the jogi got back from this deed he called two of his pupils, and pretended that it had been revealed to him that there should be found floating on the river a chest with something of great price within it; and he bade them go and watch for it at such a place far down the stream, and when the chest came slowly along, bobbing and turning in the tide, they were to seize it and secretly and swiftly bring it to him, for he was now determined to put the princess to death himself. The pupils set off at once, wondering at the strangeness of their errand, and still more at the holiness of the jogi to whom such secrets were revealed.

It happened that, as the next morning was dawning, the gallant young prince of Dilaram was hunting by the banks of the river, with a great following of wazirs, attendants, and huntsmen, and as he rode he saw floating on the river a large chest, which came slowly along, bobbing and turning in the tide. Raising himself in his saddle, he gave an order, and half a dozen men plunged into the water and drew the chest out on to the river bank, where every one crowded around to see what it could contain. The prince was certainly not the least curious among them; but he was a cautious young man, and, as he prepared to open the chest himself, he bade all but a few stand back, and these few to draw their swords, so as to be prepared in case the chest should hold some evil beast, or djinn, or giant. When all were ready and expectant, the prince with his dagger forced open the lid and flung it back, and there lay, living and breathing, the most lovely maiden he had ever seen in his life.

Although she was half stifled from her confinement in the chest, the princess speedily revived, and, when she was able to sit up, the prince began to question her as to who she was and how she came to be shut up in the chest and set afloat upon the water; and she, blushing and trembling to find herself in the presence of so many strangers, told him that she was the princess of Rahmatabad, and that she had been put into the chest by her own father. When he on his part told her that he was the prince of Dilaram, the astonishment of the young people was unbounded to find that they, who had been betrothed without ever having seen one another, should have actually met for the first time under such strange circumstances. In fact, the prince was so moved by her beauty and modest ways that he called up his wazirs and demanded to be married at once to this lovely lady who had so completely won his heart. And married they were then and there upon the river bank, and went home to the prince's palace, where, when the story was told, they were welcomed by the old rajah, the prince's father, and the remainder of the day was given over to feasting and rejoicing. But when

the banquet was over, the bride told her husband that now, on the threshold of their married life, she had more to relate of her adventures than he had given her the opportunity to tell as yet; and then, without hiding anything, she informed him of all that happened to her from the time she had stolen out to visit the wicked jogi.

In the morning the prince called his chief wazir and ordered him to shut up in the chest in which the princess had been found a great monkey that lived chained up in the palace, and to take the chest back to the river and set it afloat once more and watch what became of it. So the monkey was caught and put into the chest, and some of the prince's servants took it down to the river and pushed it off into the water. Then they followed secretly a long way off to see what became of it.

Meanwhile the jogi's two pupils watched and watched for the chest until they were nearly tired of watching, and were beginning to wonder whether the jogi was right after all, when on the second day they spied the great chest coming floating on the river, slowly bobbing and turning on the tide; and instantly a great joy and exultation seized them, for they thought that here indeed was further proof of the wonderful wisdom of their master. With some difficulty they secured the chest, and carried it back as swiftly and secretly as possible to the jogi's house. As soon as they brought in the chest, the jogi, who had been getting very cross and impatient, told them to put it down, and to go outside whilst he opened the magic chest.

'And even if you hear cries and sounds, however alarming, you must on no account enter,' said the jogi, walking over to a closet where lay the silken cord that was to strangle the princess.

And the two pupils did as they were told, and went outside and shut close all the doors. Presently they heard a great outcry within, and the jogi's voice crying aloud for help; but they dared not enter, for had they not been told that whatever the noise, they must not come in? So they sat outside, waiting and wondering; and at last all grew still and quiet, and remained so for such a long time that they determined to enter and see if all was well. No sooner had they opened the door leading into the courtyard than they were nearly upset by a huge monkey that came leaping straight to the doorway and escaped past them into the open fields. Then they stepped into the room, and there they saw the jogi's body lying torn to pieces on the threshold of his dwelling!

Very soon the story spread, as stories will, and reached the ears of the princess and her husband, and when she knew that her enemy was dead she made her peace with her father.

From Major Campbell, Feroshepore

THE HEART OF A MONKEY

A long time ago a little town made up of a collection of low huts stood in a tiny green valley at the foot of a cliff. Of course the people had taken great care to build their houses out of reach of the highest tide which might be driven on shore by a west wind, but on the very edge of the town there had sprung up a tree so large that half its boughs hung over the huts and the other half over the deep sea right under the cliff, where sharks loved to come and splash in the clear water. The branches of the tree itself were laden with fruit, and every day at sunrise a big grey monkey might have been seen sitting in the topmost branches having his breakfast, and chattering to himself with delight.

After he had eaten all the fruit on the town side of the tree the monkey swung himself along the branches to the part which hung over the water. While he was looking out for a nice shady place where he might perch comfortably he noticed a shark watching him from below with greedy eyes.

'Can I do anything for you, my friend?' asked the monkey politely.

'Oh! if you only *would* throw me down some of those delicious things, I should be so grateful,' answered the shark. 'After you have lived on fish for fifty years you begin to feel you would like a change. And I am so very, very tired of the taste of salt.'

'Well, I don't like salt myself,' said the monkey; 'so if you will open your mouth I will throw this beautiful juicy kuyu into it,' and, as he spoke, he pulled one off the branch just over his head. But it was not so easy to hit the shark's mouth as he supposed, even when the creature had turned on his back, and the first kuyu only struck one of his teeth and rolled into the water. However, the second time the monkey had better luck, and the fruit fell right in.

'Ah, how good!' cried the shark. 'Send me another, please,' and the monkey grew tired of picking the kuyu long before the shark was tired of eating them.

'It is getting late, and I must be going home to my children,' he said at length, 'but if you are here at the same time to-morrow I will give you another treat.'

'Thank you, thank you,' said the shark, showing all his great ugly teeth as he grinned with delight; 'you can't guess how happy you have made me,' and he swam away into the shadow, hoping to sleep away the time till the monkey came again.

For weeks the monkey and the shark breakfasted together, and it was a wonder that the tree had any fruit left for them. They became fast friends, and told each other about their homes and their children, and how to teach them all they ought to know. By and bye the monkey became rather discontented with his green house in a grove of palms beyond the town, and longed to see the strange things under the sea which he had heard of from the shark. The shark perceived this very clearly, and described greater marvels, and the monkey as he listened grew more and more gloomy.

Matters were in this state when one day the shark said: 'I really hardly know how to thank you for all your kindness to me during these weeks. Here I have nothing of my own to offer you, but if you would only consent to come home with me, how gladly would I give you anything that might happen to take your fancy.'

'I should like nothing better,' cried the monkey, his teeth chattering, as they always did when he was pleased. 'But how could I get there? Not by water. Ugh! It makes me ill to think of it!'

'Oh! don't let that trouble you,' replied the shark, 'you have only to sit on my back and I will undertake that not a drop of water shall touch you.'

So it was arranged, and directly after breakfast next morning the shark swam close up under the tree and the monkey dropped neatly on his back, without even a splash. After a few minutes – for at first he felt a little frightened at his strange position – the monkey began to enjoy himself vastly, and asked the shark a thousand questions about the fish and the sea-weeds and the oddly-shaped things that floated past them, and as the shark always gave him some sort of answer, the monkey never guessed that many of the objects they saw were as new to his guide as to himself.

The sun had risen and set six times when the shark suddenly said, 'My friend, we have now performed half our journey, and it is time that I should tell you something.'

'What is it?' asked the monkey. 'Nothing unpleasant, I hope, for you sound rather grave?'

'Oh, no! Nothing at all. It is only that shortly before we left I heard that the sultan of my country is very ill, and that the only thing to cure him is a monkey's heart.'

'Poor man, I am very sorry for him,' replied the monkey; 'but you were unwise not to tell me till we had started.'

'What do you mean?' asked the shark; but the monkey, who now understood the whole plot, did not answer at once, for he was considering what he should say.

'Why are you so silent?' inquired the shark again.

'I was thinking what a pity it was you did not tell me while I was still on land, and then I would have brought my heart with me.'

'Your heart! Why, isn't your heart here?' said the shark, with a puzzled expression.

'Oh, no! Of course not. Is it possible you don't know that when we leave home we always hang up our hearts on trees, to prevent their being troublesome? However, perhaps you won't believe that, and will just think I have invented it because I am afraid, so let us go on to your country as fast as we can, and when we arrive you can look for my heart, and if you find it you can kill me.'

The monkey spoke in such a calm, indifferent way that the shark was quite deceived, and began to wish he had not been in such a hurry.

'But there is no use going on if your heart is not with you,' he said at last. 'We had better turn back to the town, and then you can fetch it.'

Of course, this was just what the monkey wanted, but he was careful not to seem too pleased.

'Well, I don't know,' he remarked carelessly, 'it is such a long way; but you may be right.'

'I am sure I am,' answered the shark, 'and I will swim as quickly as I can,' and so he did, and in three days they caught sight of the kuyu tree hanging over the water.

With a sigh of relief the monkey caught hold of the nearest branch and swung himself up.

'Wait for me here,' he called out to the shark. 'I am so hungry I must have a little breakfast, and then I will go and look for my heart,' and he went further and further into the branches so that the shark could not see him. Then he curled himself up and went to sleep.

'Are you there?' cried the shark, who was soon tired of swimming about under the cliff, and was in haste to be gone.

The monkey awoke with a start, but did not answer.

'Are you *there*?' called the shark again, louder than before, and in a very cross voice.

'Oh, yes. I am here,' replied the monkey; 'but I wish you had not wakened me up. I was having such a nice nap.'

'Have you got it?' asked the shark. 'It is time we were going.'

'Going *where*?' inquired the monkey.

'Why, to my country, of course, with your heart. You *can't* have forgotten!'

'My dear friend,' answered the monkey, with a chuckle, 'I think you must be going a little mad. Do you take me for a washerman's donkey?'

'Don't talk nonsense,' exclaimed the shark, who did not like being laughed at. 'What do you mean about a washerman's donkey? And I wish you would be quick, or we may be too late to save the sultan.'

'Did you *really* never hear of the washerman's donkey?' asked the monkey, who was enjoying himself immensely. 'Why, he is the beast who has no heart. And as I am not feeling very well, and am afraid to start while the sun is so high lest I should get a sunstroke, if you like, I will come a little nearer and tell you his story.'

'Very well,' said the shark sulkily, 'if you won't come, I suppose I may as well listen to that as do nothing.'

So the monkey began.

'A washerman once lived in the great forest on the other side of the town, and he had a donkey to keep him company and to carry him wherever he wanted to go. For a time they got on very well, but by and bye the donkey grew lazy and ungrateful for her master's kindness, and ran away several miles into the heart of the forest, where she did nothing but eat and eat and eat, till she grew so fat she could hardly move.

'One day as she was tasting quite a new kind of grass and wondering if it was as good as what she had had for dinner the day before, a hare happened to pass by.

'"Well, that *is* a fat creature," thought she, and turned out of her path to tell the news to a lion who was a friend of hers. Now the lion had been very ill, and was not strong enough to go hunting for himself, and when the hare came and told him that a very fat donkey was to be found only a few hundred yards off, tears of disappointment and weakness filled his eyes.

'"What is the good of telling me that?" he asked, in a weepy voice; "you know I cannot even walk as far as that palm."

'"Never mind," answered the hare briskly. "If you can't go to your dinner your dinner shall come to you," and nodding a farewell to the lion she went back to the donkey.

'"Good morning," said she, bowing politely to the donkey, who lifted her head in surprise. "Excuse my interrupting you, but I have come on very important business."

'"Indeed," answered the donkey, "it is most kind of you to take the trouble. May I inquire what the business is?"

'"Certainly," replied the hare. "It is my friend the lion who has heard so much of your charms and good qualities that he has sent me to beg that you will give him your paw in marriage. He regrets deeply that he is unable to make the request in person, but he has been ill and is too weak to move."

'"Poor fellow! How sad!" said the donkey. "But you must tell him that I feel honoured by his proposal, and will gladly consent to be Queen of the Beasts."

'"Will you not come and tell him so yourself?" asked the hare.

'Side by side they went down the road which led to the lion's house. It took a long while, for the donkey was so fat with eating she could only walk very slowly, and the hare, who could have run the distance in about five minutes, was obliged to creep along till she almost dropped with fatigue at not being able to go at her own pace. When at last they arrived the lion was sitting up at the entrance, looking very pale and thin. The donkey suddenly grew shy and hung her head, but the lion put on his best manners and invited both his visitors to come in and make themselves comfortable.

'Very soon the hare got up and said, "Well, as I have another engagement I will leave you to make acquaintance with your future husband," and winking at the lion she bounded away.

'The donkey expected that as soon as they were left alone the lion would begin to speak of their marriage, and where they should live, but as he said nothing she looked up. To her surprise and terror she saw him crouching in the corner, his eyes glaring with a red light, and with a loud roar he sprang towards her. But in that moment the donkey had had time to prepare herself, and jumping on one side dealt the lion such a hard kick that he shrieked with the pain. Again and again he struck at her with his claws, but the donkey could bite too, as well as the lion, who was very weak after his illness, and at last a well-planted kick knocked him right over, and he rolled on the floor, groaning with pain. The donkey did not wait for him to get up, but ran away as fast as she could and was lost in the forest.

'Now the hare, who knew quite well what would happen, had not gone to do her business, but hid herself in some bushes behind the cave, where she could hear quite clearly the sounds of the battle. When all was quiet again she crept gently out, and stole round the corner.

'"Well, lion, have you killed her?" asked she, running swiftly up the path.

'"Killed her, indeed!" answered the lion sulkily, "it is she who has nearly killed me. I never knew a donkey could kick like that, though I took care she should carry away the marks of my claws."

'"Dear me! Fancy such a great fat creature being able to fight," cried the hare. "But don't vex yourself. Just lie still, and your wounds will soon heal," and she bade her friend good bye, and returned to her family.

'Two or three weeks passed, and only bare places on the donkey's back showed where the lion's claws had been, while, on his side, the lion had recovered from his illness and was now as strong as ever. He was beginning to think that it was almost time for him to begin hunting again, when one morning a rustle was heard in the creepers outside, and the hare's head peeped through.

'"Ah! there is no need to ask how you are," she said. "Still you mustn't overtire yourself, you know. Shall *I* go and bring you your dinner?"

'"If you will bring me that donkey I will tear it in two," cried the lion savagely, and the hare laughed and nodded and went on her errand.

'This time the donkey was much further than before, and it took longer to find her. At last the hare caught sight of four hoofs in the air, and ran towards them. The donkey was lying on a soft cool bed of moss near a stream, rolling herself backwards and forwards from pleasure.

'"Good morning," said the hare politely, and the donkey got slowly on to her legs, and looked to see who her visitor could be.

'"Oh, it is *you*, is it?" she exclaimed. "Come in and have a chat. What news have you got?"

'"I mustn't stay," answered the hare; "but I promised the lion to beg you to pay him a visit, as he is not well enough to call on you."

'"Well, I don't know," replied the donkey gloomily, "the last time we went he scratched me very badly, and really I was quite afraid."

'"He was only trying to kiss you," said the hare, "and you bit him, and of course that made him cross."

'"If I were sure of *that*," hesitated the donkey.

'"Oh, you may be quite sure," laughed the hare. "I have a large acquaintance among lions. But let us be quick," and rather unwillingly the donkey set out.

'The lion saw them coming and hid himself behind a large tree. As the donkey went past, followed by the hare, he sprang out, and with one blow of his paw stretched the poor foolish creature dead before him.

'"Take this meat and skin it and roast it," he said to the hare; "but my appetite is not so good as it was, and the only part I want for myself is the heart. The rest you can either eat for yourself or give away to your friends."

'"Thank you," replied the hare, balancing the donkey on her back as well as she was able, and though the legs trailed along the ground she managed to drag it to an open space some distance off, where she made a fire and roasted it. As soon as it was cooked the hare took out the heart and had just finished eating it when the lion, who was tired of waiting, came up.

'"I am hungry," said he. "Bring me the creature's heart; it is just what I want for supper."

'"But there is no heart," answered the hare, looking up at the lion with a puzzled face.

'"What nonsense!" said the lion. "As if every beast had not got a heart. What do you mean?"

'"This is a washerman's donkey," replied the hare gravely.

'"Well, and suppose it is?"

'"Oh, fie!" exclaimed the hare. "You a lion and a grown-up person, and ask questions like that. If the donkey had had a heart would she be here now? The first time she came she knew you were trying to kill her, and ran away. Yet she came back a second time. Well, if she had had a heart would she have come back a second time? Now *would* she?"

'And the lion answered slowly, "No, she would not."

'So you think I am a washerman's donkey?' said the monkey to the shark, when the story was ended. 'You are wrong; I am not. And as the sun is getting low in the sky, it is time for you to begin

your homeward journey. You will have a nice cool voyage, and I hope you will find the sultan better. Farewell!' And the monkey disappeared among the green branches, and was gone.

From 'Swahili Tales,' by Edward Steere, LL.D

THE FAIRY NURSE

There was once a little farmer and his wife living near Coolgarrow. They had three children, and my story happened while the youngest was a baby. The wife was a good wife enough, but her mind was all on her family and her farm, and she hardly ever went to her knees without falling asleep, and she thought the time spent in the chapel was twice as long as it need be. So, friends, she let her man and her two children go before her one day to Mass, while she called to consult a fairy man about a disorder one of her cows had. She was late at the chapel, and was sorry all the day after, for her husband was in grief about it, and she was very fond of him.

Late that night he was wakened up by the cries of his children calling out, 'Mother! mother!' When he sat up and rubbed his eyes, there was no wife by his side, and when he asked the little ones what was become of their mother, they said they saw the room full of nice little men and women, dressed in white and red and green, and their mother in the middle of them, going out by the door as if she was walking in her sleep. Out he ran, and searched everywhere round the house, but neither tale nor tidings did he get of her for many a day.

Well, the poor man was miserable enough, for he was as fond of his woman as she was of him. It used to bring the salt tears down his cheeks to see his poor children neglected and dirty, as they often were, and they'd be bad enough only for a kind neighbour that used to look in whenever she could spare time. The infant was away with a nurse.

About six weeks after – just as he was going out to his work one morning – a neighbour, that used to mind women when they were ill, came up to him, and kept step by step with him to the field, and this is what she told him.

'Just as I was falling asleep last night, I heard a horse's tramp on the grass and a knock at the door, and there, when I came out, was a fine-looking dark man, mounted on a black horse, and he told me to get ready in all haste, for a lady was in great want of me. As soon as I put on my cloak and things, he took me by the hand, and I was sitting behind him before I felt myself stirring. "Where are we going, sir?" says I. "You'll soon know," says he; and he drew his fingers across my eyes, and not a ray could I see. I kept a tight grip of him, and I little knew whether he was going backwards or forwards, or how long we were about it, till my hand was taken again, and I felt the ground under me. The fingers went the other way across my eyes, and there we were before a castle door, and in we went through a big hall and great rooms all painted in fine green colours, with red and gold bands and ornaments, and the finest carpets and chairs and tables and window curtains, and grand ladies and gentlemen walking about. At last we came to a bedroom, with a beautiful lady in bed, with a fine bouncing boy beside her. The lady clapped her hands, and in came the Dark Man and kissed her and the baby, and praised me, and gave me a bottle of green ointment to rub the child all over.

'Well, the child I rubbed, sure enough; but my right eye began to smart, and I put up my finger and gave it a rub, and then stared, for never in all my life was I so frightened. The beautiful room was a big, rough cave, with water oozing over the edges of the stones and through the clay; and the lady, and the lord, and the child weazened, poverty-bitten creatures – nothing but skin and bone – and the rich dresses were old rags. I didn't let on that I found any difference, and after a bit says the Dark Man, "Go before me, to the hall door, and I will be with you in a few moments, and see you safe home." Well, just as I turned into the outside cave, who should I see watching near the door but poor Molly. She looked round all terrified, and says she to me in a whisper, "I'm brought here to nurse the child of the king and queen of the fairies; but there is one chance of saving me. All the court will pass the cross near Templeshambo next Friday night, on a visit to the fairies of Old Ross. If John can catch me by the hand or cloak when I ride by, and has courage not to let go his grip, I'll be safe. Here's the king. Don't open your mouth to answer. I saw what happened with the ointment."

'The Dark Man didn't once cast his eye towards Molly, and he seemed to have no suspicion of me. When we came out I looked about me, and where do you think we were but in the dyke of the Rath of Cromogue. I was on the horse again, which was nothing but a big rag-weed, and I was in dread every minute I'd fall off; but nothing happened till I found myself in my own cabin. The king slipped five guineas into my hand as soon as I was on the ground, and thanked me, and bade me good-night. I hope I'll never see his face again. I got into bed, and couldn't sleep for a long time; and when I examined my five guineas this morning, that I left in the table drawer the last thing, I found five withered leaves of oak – bad luck to the giver!'

Well, you may all think the fright, and the joy, and the grief the poor man was in when the woman finished her story. They talked and they talked, but we needn't mind what they said till Friday night came, when both were standing where the mountain road crosses the one going to Ross.

There they stood, looking towards the bridge of Thuar, in the dead of the night, with a little moonlight shining from over Kilachdiarmid. At last she gave a start, and 'By this and by that,' says she, 'here they come, bridles jingling and feathers tossing!' He looked, but could see nothing; and she stood trembling and her eyes wide open, looking down the way to the ford of Ballinacoola. 'I see your wife,' says she, 'riding on the outside just so as to rub against us. We'll walk on quietly, as if we suspected nothing, and when we are passing I'll give you a shove. If you don't do *your* duty then, woe be with you!'

Well, they walked on easy, and the poor hearts beating in both their breasts; and though he could see nothing, he heard a faint jingle and trampling and rustling, and at last he got the push that she promised. He spread out his arms, and there was his wife's waist within them, and he could see her plain; but such a hullabulloo rose as if there was an earthquake, and he found himself surrounded by horrible-looking things, roaring at him and striving to pull his wife away. But he made the sign of the cross and bid them begone in God's name, and held his wife as if it was iron his arms were made of. Bedad, in one moment everything was as silent as the grave, and the poor woman lying in a faint in the arms of her husband and her good neighbour. Well, all in good time she was minding her family and her business again; and I'll go bail, after the fright she got, she spent more time on her knees, and avoided fairy men all the days of the week, and particularly on Sunday.

It is hard to have anything to do with the good people without getting a mark from them. My brave nurse didn't escape no more than another. She was one Thursday at the market of Enniscorthy, when what did she see walking among the tubs of butter but the Dark Man, very hungry-looking, and taking a scoop out of one tub and out of another. 'Oh, sir,' says she, very foolish, 'I hope your lady is well, and the baby.' 'Pretty well, thank you,' says he, rather frightened like. 'How do I look in this new suit?' says he, getting to one side of her. 'I can't see you plain at all, sir,' says she. 'Well, now?' says he, getting round her back to the other side. 'Musha, indeed, sir, your coat looks no better than a withered dock-leaf.' 'Maybe, then,' says he, 'it will be different now,' and he struck the eye next him with a switch.

Friends, she never saw a glimmer after with that one till the day of her death.

'Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts,' by Patrick Kennedy

A LOST PARADISE

In the middle of a great forest there lived a long time ago a charcoal-burner and his wife. They were both young and handsome and strong, and when they got married, they thought work would never fail them. But bad times came, and they grew poorer and poorer, and the nights in which they went hungry to bed became more and more frequent.

Now one evening the king of that country was hunting near the charcoal-burner's hut. As he passed the door, he heard a sound of sobbing, and being a good-natured man he stopped to listen, thinking that perhaps he might be able to give some help.

'Were there ever two people so unhappy!' said a woman's voice. 'Here we are, ready to work like slaves the whole day long, and no work can we get. And it is all because of the curiosity of old mother Eve! If she had only been like *me*, who never want to know anything, we should all have been as happy as kings to-day, with plenty to eat, and warm clothes to wear. Why – ' but at this point a loud knock interrupted her lamentations.

'Who is there?' asked she.

'I!' replied somebody.

'And who is "I"?'

'The king. Let me in.'

Full of surprise the woman jumped up and pulled the bar away from the door. As the king entered, he noticed that there was no furniture in the room at all, not even a chair, so he pretended to be in too great a hurry to see anything around him, and only said, 'You must not let me disturb you, I have no time to stay, but you seemed to be in trouble. Tell me; are you very unhappy?'

'Oh, my lord, we can find no work and have eaten nothing for two days!' answered she. 'Nothing remains for us but to die of hunger.'

'No, no, you shan't do that,' cried the king, 'or if you do, it will be your own fault. You shall come with me into my palace, and you will feel as if you were in Paradise, I promise you. In return, I only ask one thing of you, that you shall obey my orders exactly.'

The charcoal-burner and his wife both stared at him for a moment, as if they could hardly believe their ears; and, indeed, it was not to be wondered at! Then they found their tongues, and exclaimed together:

'Oh, yes, yes, my lord! we will do everything you tell us. How could we be so ungrateful as to disobey you, when you are so kind?'

The king smiled, and his eyes twinkled.

'Well, let us start at once,' said he. 'Lock your door, and put the key in your pocket.'

The woman looked as if she thought this was needless, seeing it was quite, quite certain they would never come back. But she dared not say so, and did as the king told her.

After walking through the forest for a couple of miles, they all three reached the palace, and by the king's orders servants led the charcoal-burner and his wife into rooms filled with beautiful things such as they had never even dreamed of. First they bathed in green marble baths where the water looked like the sea, and then they put on silken clothes that felt soft and pleasant. When they were ready, one of the king's special servants entered, and took them into a small hall, where dinner was laid, and this pleased them better than anything else.

They were just about to sit down to the table when the king walked in.

'I hope you have been attended to properly,' said he, 'and that you will enjoy your dinner. My steward will take care you have all you want, and I wish you to do exactly as you please. Oh, by the bye, there is one thing! You notice that soup-tureen in the middle of the table? Well, be careful on no account to lift the lid. If once you take off the cover, there is an end of your good fortune.' Then bowing to his guests, he left the room.

'Did you hear what he said?' inquired the charcoal-burner in an awe-stricken voice. 'We are to have what we want, and do what we please. Only we must not touch the soup-tureen.'

'No, of course we won't,' answered the wife. 'Why should we wish to? But all the same it is rather odd, and one can't help wondering what is inside.'

For many days life went on like a beautiful dream to the charcoal-burner and his wife. Their beds were so comfortable, they could hardly make up their minds to get up, their clothes were so lovely they could scarcely bring themselves to take them off; their dinners were so good that they found it very difficult to leave off eating. Then outside the palace were gardens filled with rare flowers and fruits and singing birds, or if they desired to go further, a golden coach, painted with wreaths of forget-me-nots and lined with blue satin, awaited their orders. Sometimes it happened that the king came to see them, and he smiled as he glanced at the man, who was getting rosier and plumper each day. But when his eyes rested on the woman, they took on a look which seemed to say 'I knew it,' though this neither the charcoal-burner nor his wife ever noticed.

'Why are you so silent?' asked the man one morning when dinner had passed before his wife had uttered one word. 'A little while ago you used to be chattering all the day long, and now I have almost forgotten the sound of your voice.'

'Oh, nothing; I did not feel inclined to talk, that was all!' She stopped, and added carelessly after a pause, 'Don't you ever wonder what is in that soup-tureen?'

'No, never,' replied the man. 'It is no affair of ours,' and the conversation dropped once more, but as time went on, the woman spoke less and less, and seemed so wretched that her husband grew quite frightened about her. As to her food, she refused one thing after another.

'My dear wife,' said the man at last, 'you really *must* eat something. What in the world is the matter with you? If you go on like this you will die.'

'I would rather die than not know what is in that tureen,' she burst forth so violently that the husband was quite startled.

'Is *that* it?' cried he; 'are you making yourself miserable because of *that*? Why, you know we should be turned out of the palace, and sent away to starve.'

'Oh no, we shouldn't. The king is too good-natured. Of course he didn't mean a little thing like this! Besides, there is no need to lift the lid off altogether. Just raise one corner so that I may peep. We are quite alone: nobody will ever know.'

The man hesitated: it *did* seem a 'little thing,' and if it was to make his wife contented and happy it was well worth the risk. So he took hold of the handle of the cover and raised it very slowly and carefully, while the woman stooped down to peep. Suddenly she started back with a scream, for a small mouse had sprung from the inside of the tureen, and had nearly hit her in the eye. Round and round the room it ran, round and round they both ran after it, knocking down chairs and vases in their efforts to catch the mouse and put it back in the tureen. In the middle of all the noise the door opened, and the mouse ran out between the feet of the king. In one instant both the man and his wife were hiding under the table, and to all appearance the room was empty.

'You may as well come out,' said the king, 'and hear what I have to say.'

'I know what it is,' answered the charcoal-burner, hanging his head. 'The mouse has escaped.'

'A guard of soldiers will take you back to your hut,' said the king. 'Your wife has the key.'

'Weren't they *silly*?' cried the grandchildren of the charcoal-burners when they heard the story. 'How we wish that *we* had had the chance! *We* should never have wanted to know what was in the soup-tureen!'

From 'Littérature Orale de l'Auvergne,' par P. Sébillot

HOW BRAVE WALTER HUNTED WOLVES

A little back from the high road there stands a house which is called 'Hemgard.' Perhaps you remember the two beautiful mountain ash trees by the reddish-brown palings, and the high gate, and the garden with the beautiful barberry bushes which are always the first to become green in spring, and which in summer are weighed down with their beautiful berries.

Behind the garden there is a hedge with tall aspens which rustle in the morning wind, behind the hedge is a road, behind the road is a wood, and behind the wood the wide world.

But on the other side of the garden there is a lake, and beyond the lake is a village, and all around stretch meadows and fields, now yellow, now green.

In the pretty house, which has white window-frames, a neat porch and clean steps, which are always strewn with finely-cut juniper leaves, Walter's parents live. His brother Frederick, his sister Lotta, old Lena, Jonas, Caro and Bravo, Putte and Murre, and Kuckeliku.

Caro lives in the dog house, Bravo in the stable, Putte with the stableman, Murre a little here and a little there, and Kuckeliku lives in the hen house, that is his kingdom.

Walter is six years old, and he must soon begin to go to school. He cannot read yet, but he can do many other things. He can turn cartwheels, stand on his head, ride see-saw, throw snowballs, play ball, crow like a cock, eat bread and butter and drink sour milk, tear his trousers, wear holes in his elbows, break the crockery in pieces, throw balls through the windowpanes, draw old men on important papers, walk over the flower-beds, eat himself sick with gooseberries, and be well after a whipping. For the rest he has a good heart but a bad memory, and forgets his father's and his mother's admonitions, and so often gets into trouble and meets with adventures, as you shall hear, but first of all I must tell you how brave he was and how he hunted wolves.

Once in the spring, a little before Midsummer, Walter heard that there were a great many wolves in the wood, and that pleased him. He was wonderfully brave when he was in the midst of his companions or at home with his brothers and sister, then he used often to say 'One wolf is nothing, there ought to be at least *four*.'

When he wrestled with Klas Bogenstrom or Frithiof Waderfelt and struck them in the back, he would say: 'That is what I shall do to a wolf!' and when he shot arrows at Jonas and they rattled against his sheepskin coat he would say 'That is how I should shoot you if you were a wolf!'

Indeed, some thought that the brave boy boasted a little; but one must indeed believe him since he said so himself. So Jonas and Lena used to say of him 'Look, there goes Walter, who shoots the wolves.' And other boys and girls would say: 'Look, there goes brave Walter who is brave enough to fight with four.'

There was no one so fully convinced of this as Walter himself, and one day he prepared himself for a real wolf hunt. He took with him his drum, which had holes in one end, since the time he had climbed up on it to reach a cluster of rowan berries, and his tin sabre, which was a little broken because he had with incredible courage fought his way through a whole unfriendly army of gooseberry bushes.

He did not forget to arm himself quite to the teeth with his pop-gun, his bow, and his air-pistol. He had a burnt cork in his pocket to blacken his moustache, and a red cock's feather to put in his cap to make himself look fierce. He had besides in his trouser pocket a clasp-knife with a bone handle, to cut off the ears of the wolves as soon as he had killed them, for he thought it would be cruel to do that while they were still living.

It was such a good thing that Jonas was going with corn to the mill, for Walter got a seat on the load, while Caro ran barking beside them. As soon as they came to the wood Walter looked cautiously around him to see perchance there was a wolf in the bushes, and he did not omit to ask Jonas if wolves were afraid of a drum. 'Of course they are' (that is understood) said Jonas. Thereupon Walter began to beat his drum with all his might while they were going through the wood.

When they came to the mill Walter immediately asked if there had been any wolves in the neighbourhood lately.

'Alas! yes,' said the miller, 'last night the wolves have eaten our fattest ram there by the kiln not far from here.'

'Ah!' said Walter, 'do you think that there were many?'

'We don't know,' answered the miller.

'Oh, it is all the same,' said Walter. 'I only asked so that I should know if I should take Jonas with me.

'I could manage very well alone with *three*, but if there were more, I might not have time to kill them all before they ran away.'

'In Walter's place I should go quite alone, it is more manly,' said Jonas.

'No, it is better for you to come, too,' said Walter. 'Perhaps there are many.'

'No, I have not time,' said Jonas, 'and besides there are sure not to be more than three. Walter can manage them very well alone.'

'Yes,' said Walter, 'certainly I could; but, you see, Jonas, it might happen that one of them might bite me in the back, and I should have more trouble in killing them. If I only knew that there were not more than two I should not mind, for then I should take one in each hand and give them a good shaking, like Susanna once shook me.'

'I certainly think that there will not be more than two,' said Jonas, 'there are never more than two when they slay children and rams; Walter can very well shake them without me.'

'But, you see Jonas,' said Walter, 'if there are two, it might still happen that one of them escapes and bites me in the leg, for you see I am not so strong in the left hand as in the right. You can very well come with me, and take a good stick in case there are really two. Look, if there is only one, I shall take him so with both my hands and throw him living on to his back, and he can kick as much as he likes, I shall hold him fast.'

'Now, when I really think over the thing,' said Jonas, 'I am almost sure there will not be more than one. What would two do with one ram? There will certainly not be more than one.'

'But you should come with me all the same, Jonas,' said Walter. 'You see I can very well manage one, but I am not quite accustomed to wolves yet, and he might tear holes in my new trousers.'

'Well, just listen,' said Jonas, 'I am beginning to think that Walter is not so brave as people say. First of all Walter would fight against four, and then against three, then two, and then one, and now Walter wants help with one. Such a thing must never be; what would people say? Perhaps they would think that Walter is a coward?'

'That's a lie,' said Walter, 'I am not at all frightened, but it is more amusing when there are two. I only want someone who will see how I strike the wolf and how the dust flies out of his skin.'

'Well, then, Walter can take the miller's little Lisa with him. She can sit on a stone and look on,' said Jonas.

'No, she would certainly be frightened,' said Walter, 'and how would it do for a girl to go wolf-hunting? Come with me, Jonas, and you shall have the skin, and I will be content with the ears and the tail.'

'No, thank you,' said Jonas, 'Walter can keep the skin for himself. Now I see quite well that he is frightened. Fie, shame on him!'

This touched Walter's pride very near. 'I shall show that I am not frightened,' he said; and so he took his drum, sabre, cock's feather, clasp-knife, pop-gun and air-pistol, and went off quite alone to the wood to hunt wolves.

It was a beautiful evening, and the birds were singing in all the branches. Walter went very slowly and cautiously. At every step he looked all round him to see if perchance there was anything lurking behind the stones. He quite thought something moved away there in the ditch. Perhaps it was a wolf. It is better for me to beat the drum a little before I go there, thought Walter.

Br-r-r, so he began to beat his drum. Then something moved again. Caw! caw! a crow flew up from the ditch. Walter immediately regained courage. 'It was well I took my drum with me,' he thought, and went straight on with courageous steps. Very soon he came quite close to the kiln, where the wolves had killed the ram. But the nearer he came the more dreadful he thought the kiln looked. It was so grey and old. Who knew how many wolves there might be hidden there? Perhaps the very ones which killed the ram were still sitting there in a corner. Yes, it was not at all safe here, and there were no other people to be seen in the neighbourhood. It would be horrible to be eaten up here in the daylight, thought Walter to himself; and the more he thought about it the uglier and grayer the old kiln looked, and the more horrible and dreadful it seemed to become the food of wolves.

'Shall I go back and say that I struck one wolf and it escaped?' thought Walter. 'Fie!' said his conscience, 'Do you not remember that a lie is one of the worst sins, both in the sight of God and man? If you tell a lie to-day and say you struck a wolf, to-morrow surely it will eat you up.'

'No, I will go to the kiln,' thought Walter, and so he went. But he did not go quite near. He went only so near that he could see the ram's blood which coloured the grass red, and some tufts of wool which the wolves had torn from the back of the poor animal.

It looked so dreadful.

'I wonder what the ram thought when they ate him up,' thought Walter to himself; and just then a cold shiver ran through him from his collar right down to his boots.

'It is better for me to beat the drum,' he thought to himself again, and so he began to beat it. But it sounded horrid, and an echo came out from the kiln that seemed almost like the howl of a wolf. The drum-sticks stiffened in Walter's hands, and he thought now they are coming… !

Yes, sure enough, just then a shaggy, reddish-brown wolf's head looked out from under the kiln!

What did Walter do now? Yes, the brave Walter who alone could manage four, threw his drum far away, took to his heels and ran, and ran as fast as he could back to the mill.

But, alas! the wolf ran after him. Walter looked back; the wolf was quicker than he and only a few steps behind him. Then Walter ran faster. But fear got the better of him, he neither heard nor saw anything more. He ran over sticks, stones and ditches; he lost drum-sticks, sabre, bow, and air-pistol, and in his terrible hurry he tripped over a tuft of grass. There he lay, and the wolf jumped on to him..

It was a gruesome tale! Now you may well believe that it was all over with Walter and all his adventures. That would have been a pity. But do not be surprised if it was not quite so bad as that, for the wolf was quite a friendly one. He certainly jumped on to Walter, but he only shook his coat and rubbed his nose against his face; and Walter shrieked. Yes, he shrieked terribly!

Happily Jonas heard his cry of distress, for Walter was quite near the mill now, and he ran and helped him up.

'What has happened?' he asked. 'Why did Walter scream so terribly?'

'A wolf! A wolf!' cried Walter, and that was all he could say.

'Where is the wolf?' said Jonas, 'I don't see any wolf.'

'Take care, he is here, he has bitten me to death,' groaned Walter.

Then Jonas began to laugh; yes, he laughed so that he nearly burst his skin belt.

Well, well, was that the wolf? Was that the wolf which Walter was to take by the neck and shake and throw down on its back, no matter how much it struggled? Just look a little closer at him, he is your old friend, your own good old Caro. I quite expect he found a leg of the ram in the kiln. When Walter beat his drum, Caro crept out, and when Walter ran away, Caro ran after him, as he so often does when Walter wants to romp and play.

'Down, Caro, you ought to be rather ashamed to have put such a great hero to flight!'

Walter got up feeling very foolish.

'Down, Caro!' he said, both relieved and annoyed.

'It was only a dog, then if it had been a wolf I certainly should have killed him..'

'If Walter would listen to my advice, and boast a little less, and do a little more,' said Jonas, consolingly. 'Walter is not a coward is he?'

'I! You shall see Jonas when we next meet a bear. You see I like so much better to fight with bears.'

'Indeed!' laughed Jonas. 'Are you at it again?'

'Dear Walter, remember that it is only cowards who boast; a really brave man never talks of his bravery.'

From Z. Topelius

THE KING OF THE WATERFALLS

When the young king of Easaidh Ruadh came into his kingdom, the first thing he thought of was how he could amuse himself best. The sports that all his life had pleased him best suddenly seemed to have grown dull, and he wanted to do something he had never done before. At last his face brightened.

'I know!' he said, 'I will go and play a game with the Gruagach. Now the Gruagach was a kind of wicked fairy, with long curly brown hair, and his house was not very far from the king's house.

But though the king was young and eager, he was also prudent, and his father had told him on his deathbed to be very careful in his dealings with the 'good people,' as the fairies were called. Therefore before going to the Gruagach, the king sought out a wise man of the country side.

'I am wanting to play a game with the curly-haired Gruagach,' said he.

'Are you, indeed?' replied the wizard. 'If you will take my counsel, you will play with someone else.'

'No; I will play with the Gruagach,' persisted the king.

'Well, if you must, you must, I suppose,' answered the wizard; 'but if you win that game, ask as a prize the ugly crop-headed girl that stands behind the door.'

'I will,' said the king.

So before the sun rose he got up and went to the house of the Gruagach, who was sitting outside.

'O king, what has brought you here to-day?' asked the Gruagach. 'But right welcome you are, and more welcome will you be still if you will play a game with me.'

'That is just what I want,' said the king, and they played; and sometimes it seemed as if one would win, and sometimes the other, but in the end it was the king who was the winner.

'And what is the prize that you will choose?' inquired the Gruagach.

'The ugly crop-headed girl that stands behind the door,' replied the king.

'Why, there are twenty others in the house, and each fairer than she,' exclaimed the Gruagach.

'Fairer they may be, but it is she whom I wish for my wife, and none other,' and the Gruagach saw that the king's mind was set upon her, so he entered his house, and bade all the maidens in it come out one by one, and pass before the king.

One by one they came; tall and short, dark and fair, plump and thin, and each said, 'I am she whom you want. You will be foolish indeed if you do not take me.'

But he took none of them, neither short nor tall, dark nor fair, plump nor thin, till at the last the crop-headed girl came out.

'This is mine,' said the king, though she was so ugly that most men would have turned from her. 'We will be married at once, and I will carry you home.' And married they were, and they set forth across a meadow to the king's house. As they went, the bride stooped and picked a sprig of shamrock, which grew amongst the grass, and when she stood upright again her ugliness had all gone, and the most beautiful woman that ever was seen stood by the king's side.

The next day, before the sun rose, the king sprang from his bed, and told his wife he must have another game with the Gruagach.

'If my father loses that game, and you win it,' said she, 'accept nothing for your prize but the shaggy young horse with the stick saddle.'

'I will do that,' answered the king, and he went.

'Does your bride please you?' asked the Gruagach, who was standing at his own door.

'Ah! does she not!' answered the king quickly, 'otherwise I should be hard indeed to please. But will you play a game to-day?'

'I will,' replied the Gruagach, and they played, and sometimes it seemed as if one would win, and sometimes the other, but in the end the king was the winner.

'What is the prize that you will choose?' asked the Gruagach.

'The shaggy young horse with the stick saddle,' answered the king, but he noticed that the Gruagach held his peace, and his brow was dark as he led out the horse from the stable. Rough was its mane and dull was its skin, but the king cared nothing for that, and throwing his leg over the stick saddle, rode away like the wind.

On the third morning the king got up as usual before dawn, and as soon as he had eaten food he prepared to go out, when his wife stopped him. 'I would rather,' she said, 'that you did not go to play with the Gruagach, for though twice *you* have won yet some day *he* will win, and then he will put trouble upon you.'

'Oh! I *must* have one more game,' cried the king; 'just this one,' and he went off to the house of the Gruagach.

Joy filled the heart of the Gruagach when he saw him coming, and without waiting to talk they played their game. Somehow or other, the king's strength and skill had departed from him, and soon the Gruagach was the victor.

'Choose your prize,' said the king, when the game was ended, 'but do not be too hard on me, or ask what I cannot give.'

'The prize I choose,' answered the Gruagach, 'is that the crop-headed creature should take thy head and thy neck, if thou dost not get for me the Sword of Light that hangs in the house of the king of the oak windows.'

'I will get it,' replied the young man bravely, but as soon as he was out of sight of the Gruagach, he pretended no more, and his face grew dark and his steps lagging.

'You have brought nothing with you to-night,' said the queen, who was standing on the steps awaiting him. She was so beautiful that the king was fain to smile when he looked at her, but then he remembered what had happened, and his heart grew heavy again.

'What is it? What is the matter? Tell me thy sorrow that I may bear it with thee, or, it may be, help thee!' Then the king told her everything that had befallen him, and she stroked his hair the while.

'That is nothing to grieve about,' she said when the tale was finished. 'You have the best wife in Erin, and the best horse in Erin. Only do as I bid you, and all will go well.' And the king suffered himself to be comforted.

He was still sleeping when the queen rose and dressed herself, to make everything ready for her husband's journey, and the first place she went to was the stable, where she fed and watered the shaggy brown horse and put the saddle on it. Most people thought this saddle was of wood, and did not see the little sparkles of gold and silver that were hidden in it. She strapped it lightly on the horse's back, and then led it down before the house, where the king waited.

'Good luck to you and victories in all your battles,' she said, as she kissed him before he mounted. 'I need not be telling you anything. Take the advice of the horse, and see you obey it.'

So he waved his hand and set out on his journey, and the wind was not swifter than the brown horse – no, not even the March wind which raced it, and could not catch it. But the horse never stopped nor looked behind, till in the dark of the night he reached the castle of the king of the oak windows.

'We are at the end of the journey,' said the horse, 'and you will find the Sword of Light in the king's own chamber. If it comes to you without scrape or sound, the token is a good one. At this hour the king is eating his supper, and the room is empty, so none will see you. The sword has a knob at the end, and take heed that when you grasp it, you draw it softly out of its sheath. Now go! I will be under the window!'

Stealthily the young man crept along the passage, pausing now and then to make sure that no man was following him, and entered the king's chamber. A strange white line of light told him where the sword was, and crossing the room on tiptoe, he seized the knob, and drew it slowly out of the sheath. The king could hardly breathe with excitement lest it should make some noise and bring all the people in the castle running to see what was the matter. But the sword slid swiftly and silently

along the case till only the point was left touching it. Then a low sound was heard, as of the edge of a knife touching a silver plate, and the king was so startled that he nearly dropped the knob.

'Quick! quick!' cried the horse, and the king scrambled hastily through the small window, and leapt into the saddle.

'He has heard and he will follow,' said the horse; 'but we have a good start.' And on they sped, on and on, leaving the winds behind them.

At length the horse slackened its pace. 'Look and see who is behind you,' it said, and the young man looked.

'I see a swarm of brown horses racing madly after us,' he answered.

'We are swifter than those,' said the horse, and flew on again.

'Look again, O king! Is anyone coming now?'

'A swarm of black horses, and one has a white face, and on that horse a man is seated. He is the king of the oak windows.'

'That is my brother, and swifter still than I,' said the horse, 'and he will fly past me with a rush. Then you must have your sword ready, and take off the head of the man who sits on him, as he turns and looks at you. And there is no sword in the world that will cut off his head, save only that one.'

'I will do it,' replied the king, and he listened with all his might, till he judged that the white-faced horse was close to him. Then he sat up very straight and made ready.

The next moment there was a rushing noise as of a mighty tempest, and the young man caught a glimpse of a face turned toward him. Almost blindly he struck, not knowing whether he had killed or only wounded the rider. But the head rolled off, and was caught in the brown horse's mouth.

'Jump on my brother, the black horse, and go home as fast as you can, and I will follow as quickly as I may,' cried the brown horse; and leaping forward the king alighted on the back of the black horse, but so near the tail that he almost fell off again. But he stretched out his arm and clutched wildly at the mane and pulled himself into the saddle.

Before the sky was streaked with red he was at home again, and the queen was sitting waiting till he arrived, for sleep was far from her eyes. Glad was she to see him enter, but she said little, only took her harp and sang softly the songs which he loved, till he went to bed, soothed and happy.

It was broad day when he woke, and he sprang up saying,

'Now I must go to the Gruagach, to find out if the spells he laid on me are loose.'

'Have a care,' answered the queen, 'for it is not with a smile as on the other days that he will greet you. Furiously he will meet you, and will ask you in his wrath if you have got the sword, and you will reply that you have got it. Next he will want to know how you got it, and to this you must say that but for the knob you had not got it at all. Then he will raise his head to look at the knob, and you must stab him in the mole which is on the right side of his neck; but take heed, for if you miss the mole with the point of the sword, then my death and your death are certain. He is brother to the king of the oak windows, and sure will he be that the king must be dead, or the sword would not be in your hands.' After that she kissed him, and bade him good speed.

'Didst thou get the sword?' asked the Gruagach, when they met in the usual place.

'I got the sword.'

'And how didst thou get it?'

'If it had not had a knob on the top, then I had not got it,' answered the king.

'Give me the sword to look at,' said the Gruagach, peering forward; but like a flash the king had drawn it from under his nose and pierced the mole, so that the Gruagach rolled over on the ground.

'Now I shall be at peace,' thought the king. But he was wrong, for when he reached home he found his servants tied together back to back, with cloths bound round their mouths, so that they could not speak. He hastened to set them free, and he asked who had treated them in so evil a manner.

'No sooner had you gone than a great giant came, and dealt with us as you see, and carried off your wife and your two horses,' said the men.

'Then my eyes will not close nor will my head lay itself down till I fetch my wife and horses home again,' answered he, and he stooped and noted the tracks of the horses on the grass, and followed after them till he arrived at the wood when the darkness fell.

'I will sleep here,' he said to himself, 'but first I will make a fire.' And he gathered together some twigs that were lying about, and then took two dry sticks and rubbed them together till the fire came, and he sat by it.

The twigs crackled and the flame blazed up, and a slim yellow dog pushed through the bushes and laid his head on the king's knee, and the king stroked his head.

'Wuf, wuf,' said the dog. 'Sore was the plight of thy wife and thy horses when the giant drove them last night through the forest.'

'That is why I have come;' answered the king, and suddenly his heart seemed to fail him and he felt that he could not go on.'

'I cannot fight that giant,' he cried, looking at the dog with a white face. 'I am afraid, let me turn homewards.'

'No, don't do that,' replied the dog. 'Eat and sleep, and I will watch over you.' So the king ate and lay down, and slept till the sun waked him.

'It is time for you to start on your way,' said the dog, 'and if danger presses, call on me, and I will help you.'

'Farewell, then,' answered the king; 'I will not forget that promise,' and on he went, and on, and on, till he reached a tall cliff with many sticks lying about.

'It is almost night,' he thought; 'I will make a fire and rest,' and thus he did, and when the flames blazed up, the hoary hawk of the grey rock flew on to a bough above him.

'Sore was the plight of thy wife and thy horses when they passed here with the giant,' said the hawk.

'Never shall I find them,' answered the king, 'and nothing shall I get for all my trouble.'

'Oh, take heart,' replied the hawk, 'things are never so bad but what they might be worse. Eat and sleep and I will watch thee,' and the king did as he was bidden by the hawk, and by the morning he felt brave again.

'Farewell,' said the bird, 'and if danger presses call to me, and I will help you.'

On he walked, and on, and on, till as the dusk was falling he came to a great river, and on the bank there were sticks lying about.

'I will make myself a fire,' he thought, and thus he did, and by and bye a smooth brown head peered at him from the water, and a long body followed it.

'Sore was the plight of thy wife and thy horses when they passed the river last night,' said the otter.

'I have sought them and not found them,' answered the king, 'and nought shall I get for my trouble.'

'Be not so downcast,' replied the otter; 'before noon to-morrow thou shalt behold thy wife. But eat and sleep and I will watch over thee.' So the king did as the otter bid him, and when the sun rose he woke and saw the otter lying on the bank.

'Farewell,' cried the otter as he jumped into the water, 'and if danger presses, call to me and I will help you.'

For many hours the king walked, and at length he reached a high rock, which was rent in two by a great earthquake. Throwing himself on the ground he looked over the side, and right at the very bottom he saw his wife and his horses. His heart gave a great bound, and all his fears left him, but he was forced to be patient, for the sides of the rock were smooth, and not even a goat could find foothold. So he got up again, and made his way round through the wood, pushing by trees, scrambling over rocks, wading through streams, till at last he was on flat ground again, close to the mouth of the cavern.

His wife gave a shriek of joy when he came in, and then burst into tears, for she was tired and very frightened. But her husband did not understand why she wept, and he was tired and bruised from his climb, and a little cross too.

'You give me but a sorry welcome,' grumbled he, 'when I have half-killed myself to get to you.'

'Do not heed him,' said the horses to the weeping woman, 'put him in front of us, where he will be safe, and give him food for he is weary.' And she did as the horses told her, and he ate and rested, till by and bye a long shadow fell over them, and their hearts beat with fear, for they knew that the giant was coming.

'I smell a stranger,' cried the giant, as he entered, but it was dark inside the chasm, and he did not see the king, who was crouching down between the feet of the horses.

'A stranger, my lord! no stranger ever comes here, not even the sun!' and the king's wife laughed gaily as she went up to the giant and stroked the huge hand which hung down by his side.

'Well, I perceive nothing, certainly,' answered he, 'but it is very odd. However, it is time that the horses were fed'; and he lifted down an armful of hay from a shelf of rock and held out a handful to each animal, who moved forward to meet him, leaving the king behind. As soon as the giant's hands were near their mouths they each made a snap, and began to bite them, so that his groans and shrieks might have been heard a mile off. Then they wheeled round and kicked him till they could kick no more. At length the giant crawled away, and lay quivering in a corner, and the queen went up to him.

'Poor thing! poor thing!' she said, 'they seem to have gone mad; it was awful to behold.'

'If I had had my soul in my body they would certainly have killed me,' groaned the giant.

'It was lucky indeed,' answered the queen; 'but tell me, where is thy soul, that I may take care of it?'

'Up there, in the Bonnach stone,' answered the giant, pointing to a stone which was balanced loosely on an edge of rock. 'But now leave me, that I may sleep, for I have far to go to-morrow.'

Soon snores were heard from the corner where the giant lay, and then the queen lay down too, and the horses, and the king was hidden between them, so that none could see him.

Before the dawn the giant rose and went out, and immediately the queen ran up to the Bonnach stone, and tugged and pushed at it till it was quite steady on its ledge, and could not fall over. And so it was in the evening when the giant came home; and when they saw his shadow, the king crept down in front of the horses.

'Why, what have you done to the Bonnach stone?' asked the giant.

'I feared lest it should fall over, and be broken, with your soul in it,' said the queen, 'so I put it further back on the ledge.

'It is not there that my soul is,' answered he, 'it is on the threshold. But it is time the horses were fed'; and he fetched the hay, and gave it to them, and they bit and kicked him as before, till he lay half dead on the ground.

Next morning he rose and went out, and the queen ran to the threshold of the cave, and washed the stones, and pulled up some moss and little flowers that were hidden in the crannies, and by and bye when dusk had fallen the giant came home.

'You have been cleaning the threshold,' said he.

'And was I not right to do it, seeing that your soul is in it?' asked the queen.

'It is not there that my soul is,' answered the giant. 'Under the threshold is a stone, and under the stone is a sheep, and in the sheep's body is a duck, and in the duck is an egg, and in the egg is my soul. But it is late, and I must feed the horses'; and he brought them the hay, but they only bit and kicked him as before, and if his soul had been within him, they would have killed him outright.

It was still dark when the giant got up and went his way, and then the king and the queen ran forward to take up the threshold, while the horses looked on. But sure enough! just as the giant had said, underneath the threshold was the flagstone, and they pulled and tugged till the stone gave way.

Then something jumped out so suddenly, that it nearly knocked them down, and as it fled past, they saw it was a sheep.

'If the slim yellow dog of the greenwood were only here, he would soon have that sheep,' cried the king; and as he spoke, the slim yellow dog appeared from the forest, with the sheep in his mouth. With a blow from the king, the sheep fell dead, and they opened its body, only to be blinded by a rush of wings as the duck flew past.

'If the hoary hawk of the rock were only here he would soon have that duck,' cried the king; and as he spoke the hoary hawk was seen hovering above them, with the duck in his mouth. They cut off the duck's head with a swing of the king's sword, and took the egg out of its body, but in his triumph the king held it carelessly, and it slipped from his hand, and rolled swiftly down the hill right into the river.

'If the brown otter of the stream were only here, he would soon have that egg,' cried the king; and the next minute there was the brown otter, dripping with water, holding the egg in his mouth. But beside the brown otter, a huge shadow came stealing along – the shadow of the giant.

The king stood staring at it, as if he were turned into stone, but the queen snatched the egg from the otter and crushed it between her two hands. And after that the shadow suddenly shrank and was still, and they knew that the giant was dead, because they had found his soul.

Next day they mounted the two horses and rode home again, visiting their friends the brown otter and the hoary hawk and the slim yellow dog by the way.

From 'West Highland Tales.'

A FRENCH PUCK

Among the mountain pastures and valleys that lie in the centre of France there dwelt a mischievous kind of spirit, whose delight it was to play tricks on everybody, and particularly on the shepherds and the cowboys. They never knew when they were safe from him, as he could change himself into a man, woman or child, a stick, a goat, a ploughshare. Indeed, there was only one thing whose shape he could not take, and that was a needle. At least, he *could* transform himself into a needle, but try as he might he never was able to imitate the hole, so every woman would have found him out at once, and this he knew.

Now the hour oftenest chosen by this naughty sprite (whom we will call Puck) for performing his pranks was about midnight, just when the shepherds and cowherds, tired out with their long day's work, were sound asleep. Then he would go into the cowsheds and unfasten the chains that fixed each beast in its own stall, and let them fall with a heavy clang to the ground. The noise was so loud that it was certain to awaken the cowboys, however fatigued they might be, and they dragged themselves wearily to the stable to put back the chains. But no sooner had they returned to their beds than the same thing happened again, and so on till the morning. Or perhaps Puck would spend his night in plaiting together the manes and tails of two of the horses, so that it would take the grooms hours of labour to get them right in the morning, while Puck, hidden among the hay in the loft, would peep out to watch them, enjoying himself amazingly all the time.

One evening more than eighty years ago a man named William was passing along the bank of a stream when he noticed a sheep who was bleating loudly. William thought it must have strayed from the flock, and that he had better take it home with him till he could discover its owner. So he went up to where it was standing, and as it seemed so tired that it could hardly walk, he hoisted it on his shoulders and continued on his way. The sheep was pretty heavy, but the good man was merciful and staggered along as best he could under his load.

'It is not much further,' he thought to himself as he reached an avenue of walnut trees, when suddenly a voice spoke out from over his head, and made him jump.

'Where are you?' said the voice, and the sheep answered:

'Here on the shoulders of a donkey.'

In another moment the sheep was standing on the ground and William was running towards home as fast as his legs would carry him. But as he went, a laugh, which yet was something of a bleat, rang in his ears, and though he tried not to hear, the words reached him, 'Oh, dear! What fun I have had, to be sure!'

Puck was careful not always to play his tricks in the same place, but visited one village after another, so that everyone trembled lest he should be the next victim. After a bit he grew tired of cowboys and shepherds, and wondered if there was no one else to give him some sport. At length he was told of a young couple who were going to the nearest town to buy all that they needed for setting up house. Quite certain that they would forget something which they could not do without, Puck waited patiently till they were jogging along in their cart on their return journey, and changed himself into a fly in order to overhear their conversation.

For a long time it was very dull – all about their wedding day next month, and who were to be invited. This led the bride to her wedding dress, and she gave a little scream.

'Just think! Oh! how *could* I be so stupid! I have forgotten to buy the different coloured reels of cotton to match my clothes!'

'Dear, dear!' exclaimed the young man. 'That *is*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.