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ANDREW**

THE RED FAIRY
BOOK

Andrew Lang

The Red Fairy Book

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Содержание

PREFACE	5
THE TWELVE DANCING PRINCESSES	6
I	6
II	7
III	8
IV	9
V	10
VI	11
VII	12
VIII	13
IX	14
X	15
XI	16
XII	17
XIII	18
XIV	19
XV	20
XVI	21
THE PRINCESS MAYBLOSSOM	22
SORIA MORIA CASTLE	31
THE DEATH OF KOSHCHEI THE DEATHLESS	37
THE BLACK THIEF AND KNIGHT OF THE GLEN	43
THE MASTER THIEF	49
BROTHER AND SISTER	57
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	59

The Red Fairy Book

PREFACE

IN a second gleaning of the fields of Fairy Land we cannot expect to find a second Perrault. But there are good stories enough left, and it is hoped that some in the Red Fairy Book may have the attraction of being less familiar than many of the old friends. The tales have been translated, or, in the case of those from Madame d'Aulnoy's long stories, adapted, by Mrs. Hunt from the Norse, by Miss Minnie Wright from Madame d'Aulnoy, by Mrs. Lang and Miss Bruce from other French sources, by Miss May Sellar, Miss Farquharson, and Miss Blackley from the German, while the story of 'Sigurd' is condensed by the Editor from Mr. William Morris's prose version of the 'Volsunga Saga.' The Editor has to thank his friend, M. Charles Marelles, for permission to reproduce his versions of the 'Pied Piper,' of 'Drakestail,' and of 'Little Golden Hood' from the French, and M. Henri Carnoy for the same privilege in regard to 'The Six Sillies' from La Tradition.

Lady Frances Balfour has kindly copied an old version of 'Jack and the Beanstalk,' and Messrs. Smith and Elder have permitted the publication of two of Mr. Ralston's versions from the Russian.

A. L.

THE TWELVE DANCING PRINCESSES

I

ONCE upon a time there lived in the village of Montignies-sur-Roc a little cow-boy, without either father or mother. His real name was Michael, but he was always called the Star Gazer, because when he drove his cows over the commons to seek for pasture, he went along with his head in the air, gaping at nothing.

As he had a white skin, blue eyes, and hair that curled all over his head, the village girls used to cry after him, 'Well, Star Gazer, what are you doing?' and Michael would answer, 'Oh, nothing,' and go on his way without even turning to look at them.

The fact was he thought them very ugly, with their sun-burnt necks, their great red hands, their coarse petticoats and their wooden shoes. He had heard that somewhere in the world there were girls whose necks were white and whose hands were small, who were always dressed in the finest silks and laces, and were called princesses, and while his companions round the fire saw nothing in the flames but common everyday fancies, he dreamed that he had the happiness to marry a princess.

II

One morning about the middle of August, just at mid-day when the sun was hottest, Michael ate his dinner of a piece of dry bread, and went to sleep under an oak. And while he slept he dreamt that there appeared before him a beautiful lady, dressed in a robe of cloth of gold, who said to him: 'Go to the castle of Beloeil, and there you shall marry a princess.'

That evening the little cow-boy, who had been thinking a great deal about the advice of the lady in the golden dress, told his dream to the farm people. But, as was natural, they only laughed at the Star Gazer.

The next day at the same hour he went to sleep again under the same tree. The lady appeared to him a second time, and said: 'Go to the castle of Beloeil, and you shall marry a princess.'

In the evening Michael told his friends that he had dreamed the same dream again, but they only laughed at him more than before. 'Never mind,' he thought to himself; 'if the lady appears to me a third time, I will do as she tells me.'

The following day, to the great astonishment of all the village, about two o'clock in the afternoon a voice was heard singing:

'Raleo, raleo, How the cattle go!'

It was the little cow-boy driving his herd back to the byre.

The farmer began to scold him furiously, but he answered quietly, 'I am going away,' made his clothes into a bundle, said good-bye to all his friends, and boldly set out to seek his fortunes.

There was great excitement through all the village, and on the top of the hill the people stood holding their sides with laughing, as they watched the Star Gazer trudging bravely along the valley with his bundle at the end of his stick.

It was enough to make anyone laugh, certainly.

III

It was well known for full twenty miles round that there lived in the castle of Beloeil twelve princesses of wonderful beauty, and as proud as they were beautiful, and who were besides so very sensitive and of such truly royal blood, that they would have felt at once the presence of a pea in their beds, even if the mattresses had been laid over it.

It was whispered about that they led exactly the lives that princesses ought to lead, sleeping far into the morning, and never getting up till mid-day. They had twelve beds all in the same room, but what was very extraordinary was the fact that though they were locked in by triple bolts, every morning their satin shoes were found worn into holes.

When they were asked what they had been doing all night, they always answered that they had been asleep; and, indeed, no noise was ever heard in the room, yet the shoes could not wear themselves out alone!

At last the Duke of Beloeil ordered the trumpet to be sounded, and a proclamation to be made that whoever could discover how his daughters wore out their shoes should choose one of them for his wife.

On hearing the proclamation a number of princes arrived at the castle to try their luck. They watched all night behind the open door of the princesses, but when the morning came they had all disappeared, and no one could tell what had become of them.

IV

When he reached the castle, Michael went straight to the gardener and offered his services. Now it happened that the garden boy had just been sent away, and though the Star Gazer did not look very sturdy, the gardener agreed to take him, as he thought that his pretty face and golden curls would please the princesses.

The first thing he was told was that when the princesses got up he was to present each one with a bouquet, and Michael thought that if he had nothing more unpleasant to do than that he should get on very well.

Accordingly he placed himself behind the door of the princesses' room, with the twelve bouquets in a basket. He gave one to each of the sisters, and they took them without even deigning to look at the lad, except Lina the youngest, who fixed her large black eyes as soft as velvet on him, and exclaimed, 'Oh, how pretty he is – our new flower boy!' The rest all burst out laughing, and the eldest pointed out that a princess ought never to lower herself by looking at a garden boy.

Now Michael knew quite well what had happened to all the princes, but notwithstanding, the beautiful eyes of the Princess Lina inspired him with a violent longing to try his fate. Unhappily he did not dare to come forward, being afraid that he should only be jeered at, or even turned away from the castle on account of his impudence.

V

Nevertheless, the Star Gazer had another dream. The lady in the golden dress appeared to him once more, holding in one hand two young laurel trees, a cherry laurel and a rose laurel, and in the other hand a little golden rake, a little golden bucket, and a silken towel. She thus addressed him:

‘Plant these two laurels in two large pots, rake them over with the rake, water them with the bucket, and wipe them with the towel. When they have grown as tall as a girl of fifteen, say to each of them, “My beautiful laurel, with the golden rake I have raked you, with the golden bucket I have watered you, with the silken towel I have wiped you.” Then after that ask anything you choose, and the laurels will give it to you.’

Michael thanked the lady in the golden dress, and when he woke he found the two laurel bushes beside him. So he carefully obeyed the orders he had been given by the lady.

The trees grew very fast, and when they were as tall as a girl of fifteen he said to the cherry laurel, ‘My lovely cherry laurel, with the golden rake I have raked thee, with the golden bucket I have watered thee, with the silken towel I have wiped thee. Teach me how to become invisible.’ Then there instantly appeared on the laurel a pretty white flower, which Michael gathered and stuck into his button-hole.

VI

That evening, when the princesses went upstairs to bed, he followed them barefoot, so that he might make no noise, and hid himself under one of the twelve beds, so as not to take up much room.

The princesses began at once to open their wardrobes and boxes. They took out of them the most magnificent dresses, which they put on before their mirrors, and when they had finished, turned themselves all round to admire their appearances.

Michael could see nothing from his hiding-place, but he could hear everything, and he listened to the princesses laughing and jumping with pleasure. At last the eldest said, 'Be quick, my sisters, our partners will be impatient.' At the end of an hour, when the Star Gazer heard no more noise, he peeped out and saw the twelve sisters in splendid garments, with their satin shoes on their feet, and in their hands the bouquets he had brought them.

'Are you ready?' asked the eldest.

'Yes,' replied the other eleven in chorus, and they took their places one by one behind her.

Then the eldest Princess clapped her hands three times and a trap door opened. All the princesses disappeared down a secret staircase, and Michael hastily followed them.

As he was following on the steps of the Princess Lina, he carelessly trod on her dress.

'There is somebody behind me,' cried the Princess; 'they are holding my dress.'

'You foolish thing,' said her eldest sister, 'you are always afraid of something. It is only a nail which caught you.'

VII

They went down, down, down, till at last they came to a passage with a door at one end, which was only fastened with a latch. The eldest Princess opened it, and they found themselves immediately in a lovely little wood, where the leaves were spangled with drops of silver which shone in the brilliant light of the moon.

They next crossed another wood where the leaves were sprinkled with gold, and after that another still, where the leaves glittered with diamonds.

At last the Star Gazer perceived a large lake, and on the shores of the lake twelve little boats with awnings, in which were seated twelve princes, who, grasping their oars, awaited the princesses.

Each princess entered one of the boats, and Michael slipped into that which held the youngest. The boats glided along rapidly, but Lina's, from being heavier, was always behind the rest. 'We never went so slowly before,' said the Princess; 'what can be the reason?'

'I don't know,' answered the Prince. 'I assure you I am rowing as hard as I can.'

On the other side of the lake the garden boy saw a beautiful castle splendidly illuminated, whence came the lively music of fiddles, kettle-drums, and trumpets.

In a moment they touched land, and the company jumped out of the boats; and the princes, after having securely fastened their barques, gave their arms to the princesses and conducted them to the castle.

VIII

Michael followed, and entered the ball-room in their train. Everywhere were mirrors, lights, flowers, and damask hangings.

The Star Gazer was quite bewildered at the magnificence of the sight.

He placed himself out of the way in a corner, admiring the grace and beauty of the princesses. Their loveliness was of every kind. Some were fair and some were dark; some had chestnut hair, or curls darker still, and some had golden locks. Never were so many beautiful princesses seen together at one time, but the one whom the cow-boy thought the most beautiful and the most fascinating was the little Princess with the velvet eyes.

With what eagerness she danced! leaning on her partner's shoulder she swept by like a whirlwind. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkled, and it was plain that she loved dancing better than anything else.

The poor boy envied those handsome young men with whom she danced so gracefully, but he did not know how little reason he had to be jealous of them.

The young men were really the princes who, to the number of fifty at least, had tried to steal the princesses' secret. The princesses had made them drink something of a philtre, which froze the heart and left nothing but the love of dancing.

IX

They danced on till the shoes of the princesses were worn into holes. When the cock crowed the third time the fiddles stopped, and a delicious supper was served by negro boys, consisting of sugared orange flowers, crystallised rose leaves, powdered violets, cracknels, wafers, and other dishes, which are, as everyone knows, the favourite food of princesses.

After supper, the dancers all went back to their boats, and this time the Star Gazer entered that of the eldest Princess. They crossed again the wood with the diamond-spangled leaves, the wood with gold-sprinkled leaves, and the wood whose leaves glittered with drops of silver, and as a proof of what he had seen, the boy broke a small branch from a tree in the last wood. Lina turned as she heard the noise made by the breaking of the branch.

‘What was that noise?’ she said.

‘It was nothing,’ replied her eldest sister; ‘it was only the screech of the barn-owl that roosts in one of the turrets of the castle.’

While she was speaking Michael managed to slip in front, and running up the staircase, he reached the princesses’ room first. He flung open the window, and sliding down the vine which climbed up the wall, found himself in the garden just as the sun was beginning to rise, and it was time for him to set to his work.

X

That day, when he made up the bouquets, Michael hid the branch with the silver drops in the nosegay intended for the youngest Princess.

When Lina discovered it she was much surprised. However, she said nothing to her sisters, but as she met the boy by accident while she was walking under the shade of the elms, she suddenly stopped as if to speak to him; then, altering her mind, went on her way.

The same evening the twelve sisters went again to the ball, and the Star Gazer again followed them and crossed the lake in Lina's boat. This time it was the Prince who complained that the boat seemed very heavy.

'It is the heat,' replied the Princess. 'I, too, have been feeling very warm.'

During the ball she looked everywhere for the gardener's boy, but she never saw him.

As they came back, Michael gathered a branch from the wood with the gold-spangled leaves, and now it was the eldest Princess who heard the noise that it made in breaking.

'It is nothing,' said Lina; 'only the cry of the owl which roosts in the turrets of the castle.'

XI

As soon as she got up she found the branch in her bouquet. When the sisters went down she stayed a little behind and said to the cow-boy: 'Where does this branch come from?'

'Your Royal Highness knows well enough,' answered Michael.

'So you have followed us?'

'Yes, Princess.'

'How did you manage it? we never saw you.'

'I hid myself,' replied the Star Gazer quietly.

The Princess was silent a moment, and then said:

'You know our secret! – keep it. Here is the reward of your discretion.' And she flung the boy a purse of gold.

'I do not sell my silence,' answered Michael, and he went away without picking up the purse.

For three nights Lina neither saw nor heard anything extraordinary; on the fourth she heard a rustling among the diamond-spangled leaves of the wood. That day there was a branch of the trees in her bouquet.

She took the Star Gazer aside, and said to him in a harsh voice:

'You know what price my father has promised to pay for our secret?'

'I know, Princess,' answered Michael.

'Don't you mean to tell him?'

'That is not my intention.'

'Are you afraid?'

'No, Princess.'

'What makes you so discreet, then?'

But Michael was silent.

XII

Lina's sisters had seen her talking to the little garden boy, and jeered at her for it.

'What prevents your marrying him?' asked the eldest, 'you would become a gardener too; it is a charming profession. You could live in a cottage at the end of the park, and help your husband to draw up water from the well, and when we get up you could bring us our bouquets.'

The Princess Lina was very angry, and when the Star Gazer presented her bouquet, she received it in a disdainful manner.

Michael behaved most respectfully. He never raised his eyes to her, but nearly all day she felt him at her side without ever seeing him.

One day she made up her mind to tell everything to her eldest sister.

'What!' said she, 'this rogue knows our secret, and you never told me! I must lose no time in getting rid of him.'

'But how?'

'Why, by having him taken to the tower with the dungeons, of course.'

For this was the way that in old times beautiful princesses got rid of people who knew too much.

But the astonishing part of it was that the youngest sister did not seem at all to relish this method of stopping the mouth of the gardener's boy, who, after all, had said nothing to their father.

XIII

It was agreed that the question should be submitted to the other ten sisters. All were on the side of the eldest. Then the youngest sister declared that if they laid a finger on the little garden boy, she would herself go and tell their father the secret of the holes in their shoes.

At last it was decided that Michael should be put to the test; that they would take him to the ball, and at the end of supper would give him the philtre which was to enchant him like the rest.

They sent for the Star Gazer, and asked him how he had contrived to learn their secret; but still he remained silent.

Then, in commanding tones, the eldest sister gave him the order they had agreed upon.

He only answered:

‘I will obey.’

He had really been present, invisible, at the council of princesses, and had heard all; but he had made up his mind to drink of the philtre, and sacrifice himself to the happiness of her he loved.

Not wishing, however, to cut a poor figure at the ball by the side of the other dancers, he went at once to the laurels, and said:

‘My lovely rose laurel, with the golden rake I have raked thee, with the golden bucket I have watered thee, with a silken towel I have dried thee. Dress me like a prince.’

A beautiful pink flower appeared. Michael gathered it, and found himself in a moment clothed in velvet, which was as black as the eyes of the little Princess, with a cap to match, a diamond aigrette, and a blossom of the rose laurel in his button-hole.

Thus dressed, he presented himself that evening before the Duke of Beloeil, and obtained leave to try and discover his daughters’ secret. He looked so distinguished that hardly anyone would have known who he was.

XIV

The twelve princesses went upstairs to bed. Michael followed them, and waited behind the open door till they gave the signal for departure.

This time he did not cross in Lina's boat. He gave his arm to the eldest sister, danced with each in turn, and was so graceful that everyone was delighted with him. At last the time came for him to dance with the little Princess. She found him the best partner in the world, but he did not dare to speak a single word to her.

When he was taking her back to her place she said to him in a mocking voice:

'Here you are at the summit of your wishes: you are being treated like a prince.'

'Don't be afraid,' replied the Star Gazer gently. 'You shall never be a gardener's wife.'

The little Princess stared at him with a frightened face, and he left her without waiting for an answer.

When the satin slippers were worn through the fiddles stopped, and the negro boys set the table. Michael was placed next to the eldest sister, and opposite to the youngest.

They gave him the most exquisite dishes to eat, and the most delicate wines to drink; and in order to turn his head more completely, compliments and flattery were heaped on him from every side.

But he took care not to be intoxicated, either by the wine or the compliments.

XV

At last the eldest sister made a sign, and one of the black pages brought in a large golden cup. 'The enchanted castle has no more secrets for you,' she said to the Star Gazer. 'Let us drink to your triumph.'

He cast a lingering glance at the little Princess, and without hesitation lifted the cup.

'Don't drink!' suddenly cried out the little Princess; 'I would rather marry a gardener.'

And she burst into tears.

Michael flung the contents of the cup behind him, sprang over the table, and fell at Lina's feet. The rest of the princes fell likewise at the knees of the princesses, each of whom chose a husband and raised him to her side. The charm was broken.

The twelve couples embarked in the boats, which crossed back many times in order to carry over the other princes. Then they all went through the three woods, and when they had passed the door of the underground passage a great noise was heard, as if the enchanted castle was crumbling to the earth.

They went straight to the room of the Duke of Beloeil, who had just awoke. Michael held in his hand the golden cup, and he revealed the secret of the holes in the shoes.

'Choose, then,' said the Duke, 'whichever you prefer.'

'My choice is already made,' replied the garden boy, and he offered his hand to the youngest Princess, who blushed and lowered her eyes.

XVI

The Princess Lina did not become a gardener's wife; on the contrary, it was the Star Gazer who became a Prince: but before the marriage ceremony the Princess insisted that her lover should tell her how he came to discover the secret.

So he showed her the two laurels which had helped him, and she, like a prudent girl, thinking they gave him too much advantage over his wife, cut them off at the root and threw them in the fire. And this is why the country girls go about singing:

Nous n'irons plus au bois,
Les lauriers sont coupes,'

and dancing in summer by the light of the moon.

THE PRINCESS MAYBLOSSOM

ONCE upon a time there lived a King and Queen whose children had all died, first one and then another, until at last only one little daughter remained, and the Queen was at her wits' end to know where to find a really good nurse who would take care of her, and bring her up. A herald was sent who blew a trumpet at every street corner, and commanded all the best nurses to appear before the Queen, that she might choose one for the little Princess. So on the appointed day the whole palace was crowded with nurses, who came from the four corners of the world to offer themselves, until the Queen declared that if she was ever to see the half of them, they must be brought out to her, one by one, as she sat in a shady wood near the palace.

This was accordingly done, and the nurses, after they had made their curtsy to the King and Queen, ranged themselves in a line before her that she might choose. Most of them were fair and fat and charming, but there was one who was dark-skinned and ugly, and spoke a strange language which nobody could understand. The Queen wondered how she dared offer herself, and she was told to go away, as she certainly would not do. Upon which she muttered something and passed on, but hid herself in a hollow tree, from which she could see all that happened. The Queen, without giving her another thought, chose a pretty rosy-faced nurse, but no sooner was her choice made than a snake, which was hidden in the grass, bit that very nurse on her foot, so that she fell down as if dead. The Queen was very much vexed by this accident, but she soon selected another, who was just stepping forward when an eagle flew by and dropped a large tortoise upon her head, which was cracked in pieces like an egg-shell. At this the Queen was much horrified; nevertheless, she chose a third time, but with no better fortune, for the nurse, moving quickly, ran into the branch of a tree and blinded herself with a thorn. Then the Queen in dismay cried that there must be some malignant influence at work, and that she would choose no more that day; and she had just risen to return to the palace when she heard peals of malicious laughter behind her, and turning round saw the ugly stranger whom she had dismissed, who was making very merry over the disasters and mocking everyone, but especially the Queen. This annoyed Her Majesty very much, and she was about to order that she should be arrested, when the witch – for she was a witch – with two blows from a wand summoned a chariot of fire drawn by winged dragons, and was whirled off through the air uttering threats and cries. When the King saw this he cried:

‘Alas! now we are ruined indeed, for that was no other than the Fairy Carabosse, who has had a grudge against me ever since I was a boy and put sulphur into her porridge one day for fun.’

Then the Queen began to cry.

‘If I had only known who it was,’ she said, ‘I would have done my best to make friends with her; now I suppose all is lost.’

The King was sorry to have frightened her so much, and proposed that they should go and hold a council as to what was best to be done to avert the misfortunes which Carabosse certainly meant to bring upon the little Princess.

So all the counsellors were summoned to the palace, and when they had shut every door and window, and stuffed up every keyhole that they might not be overheard, they talked the affair over, and decided that every fairy for a thousand leagues round should be invited to the christening of the Princess, and that the time of the ceremony should be kept a profound secret, in case the Fairy Carabosse should take it into her head to attend it.

The Queen and her ladies set to work to prepare presents for the fairies who were invited: for each one a blue velvet cloak, a petticoat of apricot satin, a pair of high-heeled shoes, some sharp needles, and a pair of golden scissors. Of all the fairies the Queen knew, only five were able to come on the day appointed, but they began immediately to bestow gifts upon the Princess. One promised that she should be perfectly beautiful, the second that she should understand anything – no matter

what – the first time it was explained to her, the third that she should sing like a nightingale, the fourth that she should succeed in everything she undertook, and the fifth was opening her mouth to speak when a tremendous rumbling was heard in the chimney, and Carabosse, all covered with soot, came rolling down, crying:

‘I say that she shall be the unluckiest of the unlucky until she is twenty years old.’

Then the Queen and all the fairies began to beg and beseech her to think better of it, and not be so unkind to the poor little Princess, who had never done her any harm. But the ugly old Fairy only grunted and made no answer. So the last Fairy, who had not yet given her gift, tried to mend matters by promising the Princess a long and happy life after the fatal time was over. At this Carabosse laughed maliciously, and climbed away up the chimney, leaving them all in great consternation, and especially the Queen. However, she entertained the fairies splendidly, and gave them beautiful ribbons, of which they are very fond, in addition to the other presents.

When they were going away the oldest Fairy said that they were of opinion that it would be best to shut the Princess up in some place, with her waiting-women, so that she might not see anyone else until she was twenty years old. So the King had a tower built on purpose. It had no windows, so it was lighted with wax candles, and the only way into it was by an underground passage, which had iron doors only twenty feet apart, and guards were posted everywhere.

The Princess had been named Mayblossom, because she was as fresh and blooming as Spring itself, and she grew up tall and beautiful, and everything she did and said was charming. Every time the King and Queen came to see her they were more delighted with her than before, but though she was weary of the tower, and often begged them to take her away from it, they always refused. The Princess’s nurse, who had never left her, sometimes told her about the world outside the tower, and though the Princess had never seen anything for herself, yet she always understood exactly, thanks to the second Fairy’s gift. Often the King said to the Queen:

‘We were cleverer than Carabosse after all. Our Mayblossom will be happy in spite of her predictions.’

And the Queen laughed until she was tired at the idea of having outwitted the old Fairy. They had caused the Princess’s portrait to be painted and sent to all the neighbouring Courts, for in four days she would have completed her twentieth year, and it was time to decide whom she should marry. All the town was rejoicing at the thought of the Princess’s approaching freedom, and when the news came that King Merlin was sending his ambassador to ask her in marriage for his son, they were still more delighted. The nurse, who kept the Princess informed of everything that went forward in the town, did not fail to repeat the news that so nearly concerned her, and gave such a description of the splendour in which the ambassador Fanfaronade would enter the town, that the Princess was wild to see the procession for herself.

‘What an unhappy creature I am,’ she cried, ‘to be shut up in this dismal tower as if I had committed some crime! I have never seen the sun, or the stars, or a horse, or a monkey, or a lion, except in pictures, and though the King and Queen tell me I am to be set free when I am twenty, I believe they only say it to keep me amused, when they never mean to let me out at all.’

And then she began to cry, and her nurse, and the nurse’s daughter, and the cradle-rocker, and the nursery-maid, who all loved her dearly, cried too for company, so that nothing could be heard but sobs and sighs. It was a scene of woe. When the Princess saw that they all pitied her she made up her mind to have her own way. So she declared that she would starve herself to death if they did not find some means of letting her see Fanfaronade’s grand entry into the town.

‘If you really love me,’ she said, ‘you will manage it, somehow or other, and the King and Queen need never know anything about it.’

Then the nurse and all the others cried harder than ever, and said everything they could think of to turn the Princess from her idea. But the more they said the more determined she was, and at last they consented to make a tiny hole in the tower on the side that looked towards the city gates.

After scratching and scraping all day and all night, they presently made a hole through which they could, with great difficulty, push a very slender needle, and out of this the Princess looked at the daylight for the first time. She was so dazzled and delighted by what she saw, that there she stayed, never taking her eyes away from the peep-hole for a single minute, until presently the ambassador's procession appeared in sight.

At the head of it rode Fanfaronade himself upon a white horse, which pranced and caracoled to the sound of the trumpets. Nothing could have been more splendid than the ambassador's attire. His coat was nearly hidden under an embroidery of pearls and diamonds, his boots were solid gold, and from his helmet floated scarlet plumes. At the sight of him the Princess lost her wits entirely, and determined that Fanfaronade and nobody else would she marry.

'It is quite impossible,' she said, 'that his master should be half as handsome and delightful. I am not ambitious, and having spent all my life in this tedious tower, anything – even a house in the country – will seem a delightful change. I am sure that bread and water shared with Fanfaronade will please me far better than roast chicken and sweetmeats with anybody else.'

And so she went on talk, talk, talking, until her waiting-women wondered where she got it all from. But when they tried to stop her, and represented that her high rank made it perfectly impossible that she should do any such thing, she would not listen, and ordered them to be silent.

As soon as the ambassador arrived at the palace, the Queen started to fetch her daughter.

All the streets were spread with carpets, and the windows were full of ladies who were waiting to see the Princess, and carried baskets of flowers and sweetmeats to shower upon her as she passed.

They had hardly begun to get the Princess ready when a dwarf arrived, mounted upon an elephant. He came from the five fairies, and brought for the Princess a crown, a sceptre, and a robe of golden brocade, with a petticoat marvellously embroidered with butterflies' wings. They also sent a casket of jewels, so splendid that no one had ever seen anything like it before, and the Queen was perfectly dazzled when she opened it. But the Princess scarcely gave a glance to any of these treasures, for she thought of nothing but Fanfaronade. The Dwarf was rewarded with a gold piece, and decorated with so many ribbons that it was hardly possible to see him at all. The Princess sent to each of the fairies a new spinning-wheel with a distaff of cedar wood, and the Queen said she must look through her treasures and find something very charming to send them also.

When the Princess was arrayed in all the gorgeous things the Dwarf had brought, she was more beautiful than ever, and as she walked along the streets the people cried: 'How pretty she is! How pretty she is!'

The procession consisted of the Queen, the Princess, five dozen other princesses her cousins, and ten dozen who came from the neighbouring kingdoms; and as they proceeded at a stately pace the sky began to grow dark, then suddenly the thunder growled, and rain and hail fell in torrents. The Queen put her royal mantle over her head, and all the princesses did the same with their trains. Mayblossom was just about to follow their example when a terrific croaking, as of an immense army of crows, rooks, ravens, screech-owls, and all birds of ill-omen was heard, and at the same instant a huge owl skimmed up to the Princess, and threw over her a scarf woven of spiders' webs and embroidered with bats' wings. And then peals of mocking laughter rang through the air, and they guessed that this was another of the Fairy Carabosse's unpleasant jokes.

The Queen was terrified at such an evil omen, and tried to pull the black scarf from the Princess's shoulders, but it really seemed as if it must be nailed on, it clung so closely.

'Ah!' cried the Queen, 'can nothing appease this enemy of ours? What good was it that I sent her more than fifty pounds of sweetmeats, and as much again of the best sugar, not to mention two Westphalia hams? She is as angry as ever.'

While she lamented in this way, and everybody was as wet as if they had been dragged through a river, the Princess still thought of nothing but the ambassador, and just at this moment he appeared before her, with the King, and there was a great blowing of trumpets, and all the people shouted

louder than ever. Fanfaronade was not generally at a loss for something to say, but when he saw the Princess, she was so much more beautiful and majestic than he had expected that he could only stammer out a few words, and entirely forgot the harangue which he had been learning for months, and knew well enough to have repeated it in his sleep. To gain time to remember at least part of it, he made several low bows to the Princess, who on her side dropped half-a-dozen curtseys without stopping to think, and then said, to relieve his evident embarrassment:

‘Sir Ambassador, I am sure that everything you intend to say is charming, since it is you who mean to say it; but let us make haste into the palace, as it is pouring cats and dogs, and the wicked Fairy Carabosse will be amused to see us all stand dripping here. When we are once under shelter we can laugh at her.’

Upon this the Ambassador found his tongue, and replied gallantly that the Fairy had evidently foreseen the flames that would be kindled by the bright eyes of the Princess, and had sent this deluge to extinguish them. Then he offered his hand to conduct the Princess, and she said softly:

‘As you could not possibly guess how much I like you, Sir Fanfaronade, I am obliged to tell you plainly that, since I saw you enter the town on your beautiful prancing horse, I have been sorry that you came to speak for another instead of for yourself. So, if you think about it as I do, I will marry you instead of your master. Of course I know you are not a prince, but I shall be just as fond of you as if you were, and we can go and live in some cosy little corner of the world, and be as happy as the days are long.’

The Ambassador thought he must be dreaming, and could hardly believe what the lovely Princess said. He dared not answer, but only squeezed the Princess’s hand until he really hurt her little finger, but she did not cry out. When they reached the palace the King kissed his daughter on both cheeks, and said:

‘My little lambkin, are you willing to marry the great King Merlin’s son, for this Ambassador has come on his behalf to fetch you?’

‘If you please, sire,’ said the Princess, dropping a curtsey.

‘I consent also,’ said the Queen; ‘so let the banquet be prepared.’

This was done with all speed, and everybody feasted except Mayblossom and Fanfaronade, who looked at one another and forgot everything else.

After the banquet came a ball, and after that again a ballet, and at last they were all so tired that everyone fell asleep just where he sat. Only the lovers were as wide-awake as mice, and the Princess, seeing that there was nothing to fear, said to Fanfaronade:

‘Let us be quick and run away, for we shall never have a better chance than this.’

Then she took the King’s dagger, which was in a diamond sheath, and the Queen’s neck-handkerchief, and gave her hand to Fanfaronade, who carried a lantern, and they ran out together into the muddy street and down to the sea-shore. Here they got into a little boat in which the poor old boatman was sleeping, and when he woke up and saw the lovely Princess, with all her diamonds and her spiders’ – web scarf, he did not know what to think, and obeyed her instantly when she commanded him to set out. They could see neither moon nor stars, but in the Queen’s neck-handkerchief there was a carbuncle which glowed like fifty torches. Fanfaronade asked the Princess where she would like to go, but she only answered that she did not care where she went as long as he was with her.

‘But, Princess,’ said he, ‘I dare not take you back to King Merlin’s court. He would think hanging too good for me.’

‘Oh, in that case,’ she answered, ‘we had better go to Squirrel Island; it is lonely enough, and too far off for anyone to follow us there.’

So she ordered the old boatman to steer for Squirrel Island.

Meanwhile the day was breaking, and the King and Queen and all the courtiers began to wake up and rub their eyes, and think it was time to finish the preparations for the wedding. And the Queen asked for her neck-handkerchief, that she might look smart. Then there was a scurrying hither and

thither, and a hunting everywhere: they looked into every place, from the wardrobes to the stoves, and the Queen herself ran about from the garret to the cellar, but the handkerchief was nowhere to be found.

By this time the King had missed his dagger, and the search began all over again. They opened boxes and chests of which the keys had been lost for a hundred years, and found numbers of curious things, but not the dagger, and the King tore his beard, and the Queen tore her hair, for the handkerchief and the dagger were the most valuable things in the kingdom.

When the King saw that the search was hopeless he said:

‘Never mind, let us make haste and get the wedding over before anything else is lost.’ And then he asked where the Princess was. Upon this her nurse came forward and said:

‘Sire, I have been seeking her these two hours, but she is nowhere to be found.’ This was more than the Queen could bear. She gave a shriek of alarm and fainted away, and they had to pour two barrels of eau-de-cologne over her before she recovered. When she came to herself everybody was looking for the Princess in the greatest terror and confusion, but as she did not appear, the King said to his page:

‘Go and find the Ambassador Fanfaronade, who is doubtless asleep in some corner, and tell him the sad news.’

So the page hunted hither and thither, but Fanfaronade was no more to be found than the Princess, the dagger, or the neck-handkerchief!

Then the King summoned his counsellors and his guards, and, accompanied by the Queen, went into his great hall. As he had not had time to prepare his speech beforehand, the King ordered that silence should be kept for three hours, and at the end of that time he spoke as follows:

‘Listen, great and small! My dear daughter Mayblossom is lost: whether she has been stolen away or has simply disappeared I cannot tell. The Queen’s neck-handkerchief and my sword, which are worth their weight in gold, are also missing, and, what is worst of all, the Ambassador Fanfaronade is nowhere to be found. I greatly fear that the King, his master, when he receives no tidings from him, will come to seek him among us, and will accuse us of having made mince-meat of him. Perhaps I could bear even that if I had any money, but I assure you that the expenses of the wedding have completely ruined me. Advise me, then, my dear subjects, what had I better do to recover my daughter, Fanfaronade, and the other things.’

This was the most eloquent speech the King had been known to make, and when everybody had done admiring it the Prime Minister made answer:

‘Sire, we are all very sorry to see you so sorry. We would give everything we value in the world to take away the cause of your sorrow, but this seems to be another of the tricks of the Fairy Carabosse. The Princess’s twenty unlucky years were not quite over, and really, if the truth must be told, I noticed that Fanfaronade and the Princess appeared to admire one another greatly. Perhaps this may give some clue to the mystery of their disappearance.’

Here the Queen interrupted him, saying, ‘Take care what you say, sir. Believe me, the Princess Mayblossom was far too well brought up to think of falling in love with an Ambassador.’

At this the nurse came forward, and, falling on her knees, confessed how they had made the little needle-hole in the tower, and how the Princess had declared when she saw the Ambassador that she would marry him and nobody else. Then the Queen was very angry, and gave the nurse, and the cradle-rocker, and the nursery-maid such a scolding that they shook in their shoes. But the Admiral Cocked-Hat interrupted her, crying:

‘Let us be off after this good-for-nothing Fanfaronade, for with out a doubt he has run away with our Princess.’

Then there was a great clapping of hands, and everybody shouted, ‘By all means let us be after him.’

So while some embarked upon the sea, the others ran from kingdom to kingdom beating drums and blowing trumpets, and wherever a crowd collected they cried:

‘Whoever wants a beautiful doll, sweetmeats of all kinds, a little pair of scissors, a golden robe, and a satin cap has only to say where Fanfaronade has hidden the Princess Mayblossom.’

But the answer everywhere was, ‘You must go farther, we have not seen them.’

However, those who went by sea were more fortunate, for after sailing about for some time they noticed a light before them which burned at night like a great fire. At first they dared not go near it, not knowing what it might be, but by-and-by it remained stationary over Squirrel Island, for, as you have guessed already, the light was the glowing of the carbuncle. The Princess and Fanfaronade on landing upon the island had given the boatman a hundred gold pieces, and made him promise solemnly to tell no one where he had taken them; but the first thing that happened was that, as he rowed away, he got into the midst of the fleet, and before he could escape the Admiral had seen him and sent a boat after him.

When he was searched they found the gold pieces in his pocket, and as they were quite new coins, struck in honour of the Princess’s wedding, the Admiral felt certain that the boatman must have been paid by the Princess to aid her in her flight. But he would not answer any questions, and pretended to be deaf and dumb.

Then the Admiral said: ‘Oh! deaf and dumb is he? Lash him to the mast and give him a taste of the cat-o’-nine-tails. I don’t know anything better than that for curing the deaf and dumb!’

And when the old boatman saw that he was in earnest, he told all he knew about the cavalier and the lady whom he had landed upon Squirrel Island, and the Admiral knew it must be the Princess and Fanfaronade; so he gave the order for the fleet to surround the island.

Meanwhile the Princess Mayblossom, who was by this time terribly sleepy, had found a grassy bank in the shade, and throwing herself down had already fallen into a profound slumber, when Fanfaronade, who happened to be hungry and not sleepy, came and woke her up, saying, very crossly:

‘Pray, madam, how long do you mean to stay here? I see nothing to eat, and though you may be very charming, the sight of you does not prevent me from famishing.’

‘What! Fanfaronade,’ said the Princess, sitting up and rubbing her eyes, ‘is it possible that when I am here with you you can want anything else? You ought to be thinking all the time how happy you are.’

‘Happy!’ cried he; ‘say rather unhappy. I wish with all my heart that you were back in your dark tower again.’

‘Darling, don’t be cross,’ said the Princess. ‘I will go and see if I can find some wild fruit for you.’

‘I wish you might find a wolf to eat you up,’ growled Fanfaronade.

The Princess, in great dismay, ran hither and thither all about the wood, tearing her dress, and hurting her pretty white hands with the thorns and brambles, but she could find nothing good to eat, and at last she had to go back sorrowfully to Fanfaronade. When he saw that she came empty-handed he got up and left her, grumbling to himself.

The next day they searched again, but with no better success.

‘Alas!’ said the Princess, ‘if only I could find something for you to eat, I should not mind being hungry myself.’

‘No, I should not mind that either,’ answered Fanfaronade.

‘Is it possible,’ said she, ‘that you would not care if I died of hunger? Oh, Fanfaronade, you said you loved me!’

‘That was when we were in quite another place and I was not hungry,’ said he. ‘It makes a great difference in one’s ideas to be dying of hunger and thirst on a desert island.’

At this the Princess was dreadfully vexed, and she sat down under a white rose bush and began to cry bitterly.

‘Happy roses,’ she thought to herself, ‘they have only to blossom in the sunshine and be admired, and there is nobody to be unkind to them.’ And the tears ran down her cheeks and splashed on to the rose-tree roots. Presently she was surprised to see the whole bush rustling and shaking, and a soft little voice from the prettiest rosebud said:

‘Poor Princess! look in the trunk of that tree, and you will find a honeycomb, but don’t be foolish enough to share it with Fanfaronade.’

Mayblossom ran to the tree, and sure enough there was the honey. Without losing a moment she ran with it to Fanfaronade, crying gaily:

‘See, here is a honeycomb that I have found. I might have eaten it up all by myself, but I had rather share it with you.’

But without looking at her or thanking her he snatched the honey comb out of her hands and ate it all up – every bit, without offering her a morsel. Indeed, when she humbly asked for some he said mockingly that it was too sweet for her, and would spoil her teeth.

Mayblossom, more downcast than ever, went sadly away and sat down under an oak tree, and her tears and sighs were so piteous that the oak fanned her with his rustling leaves, and said:

‘Take courage, pretty Princess, all is not lost yet. Take this pitcher of milk and drink it up, and whatever you do, don’t leave a drop for Fanfaronade.’

The Princess, quite astonished, looked round, and saw a big pitcher full of milk, but before she could raise it to her lips the thought of how thirsty Fanfaronade must be, after eating at least fifteen pounds of honey, made her run back to him and say:

‘Here is a pitcher of milk; drink some, for you must be thirsty I am sure; but pray save a little for me, as I am dying of hunger and thirst.’

But he seized the pitcher and drank all it contained at a single draught, and then broke it to atoms on the nearest stone, saying with a malicious smile: ‘As you have not eaten anything you cannot be thirsty.’

‘Ah!’ cried the Princess, ‘I am well punished for disappointing the King and Queen, and running away with this Ambassador about whom I knew nothing.’

And so saying she wandered away into the thickest part of the wood, and sat down under a thorn tree, where a nightingale was singing. Presently she heard him say: ‘Search under the bush Princess; you will find some sugar, almonds, and some tarts there But don’t be silly enough to offer Fanfaronade any.’ And this time the Princess, who was fainting with hunger, took the nightingale’s advice, and ate what she found all by herself. But Fanfaronade, seeing that she had found something good, and was not going to share it with him, ran after her in such a fury that she hastily drew out the Queen’s carbuncle, which had the property of rendering people invisible if they were in danger, and when she was safely hidden from him she reproached him gently for his unkindness.

Meanwhile Admiral Cocked-Hat had despatched Jack-the-Chatterer-of-the-Straw-Boots, Courier in Ordinary to the Prime Minister, to tell the King that the Princess and the Ambassador had landed on Squirrel Island, but that not knowing the country he had not pursued them, for fear of being captured by concealed enemies. Their Majesties were overjoyed at the news, and the King sent for a great book, each leaf of which was eight ells long. It was the work of a very clever Fairy, and contained a description of the whole earth. He very soon found that Squirrel Island was uninhabited.

‘Go,’ said he, to Jack-the-Chatterer, ‘tell the Admiral from me to land at once. I am surprised at his not having done so sooner.’ As soon as this message reached the fleet, every preparation was made for war, and the noise was so great that it reached the ears of the Princess, who at once flew to protect her lover. As he was not very brave he accepted her aid gladly.

‘You stand behind me,’ said she, ‘and I will hold the carbuncle which will make us invisible, and with the King’s dagger I can protect you from the enemy.’ So when the soldiers landed they could see nothing, but the Princess touched them one after another with the dagger, and they fell insensible

upon the sand, so that at last the Admiral, seeing that there was some enchantment, hastily gave orders for a retreat to be sounded, and got his men back into their boats in great confusion.

Fanfaronade, being once more left with the Princess, began to think that if he could get rid of her, and possess himself of the carbuncle and the dagger, he would be able to make his escape. So as they walked back over the cliffs he gave the Princess a great push, hoping she would fall into the sea; but she stepped aside so quickly that he only succeeded in overbalancing himself, and over he went, and sank to the bottom of the sea like a lump of lead, and was never heard of any more. While the Princess was still looking after him in horror, her attention was attracted by a rushing noise over her head, and looking up she saw two chariots approaching rapidly from opposite directions. One was bright and glittering, and drawn by swans and peacocks, while the Fairy who sat in it was beautiful as a sunbeam; but the other was drawn by bats and ravens, and contained a frightful little Dwarf, who was dressed in a snake's skin, and wore a great toad upon her head for a hood. The chariots met with a frightful crash in mid-air, and the Princess looked on in breathless anxiety while a furious battle took place between the lovely Fairy with her golden lance, and the hideous little Dwarf and her rusty pike. But very soon it was evident that the Beauty had the best of it, and the Dwarf turned her bats' heads and flickered away in great confusion, while the Fairy came down to where the Princess stood, and said, smiling, 'You see Princess, I have completely routed that malicious old Carabosse. Will you believe it! she actually wanted to claim authority over you for ever, because you came out of the tower four days before the twenty years were ended. However, I think I have settled her pretensions, and I hope you will be very happy and enjoy the freedom I have won for you.'

The Princess thanked her heartily, and then the Fairy despatched one of her peacocks to her palace to bring a gorgeous robe for Mayblossom, who certainly needed it, for her own was torn to shreds by the thorns and briars. Another peacock was sent to the Admiral to tell him that he could now land in perfect safety, which he at once did, bringing all his men with him, even to Jack-the-Chatterer, who, happening to pass the spit upon which the Admiral's dinner was roasting, snatched it up and brought it with him.

Admiral Cocked-Hat was immensely surprised when he came upon the golden chariot, and still more so to see two lovely ladies walking under the trees a little farther away. When he reached them, of course he recognised the Princess, and he went down on his knees and kissed her hand quite joyfully. Then she presented him to the Fairy, and told him how Carabosse had been finally routed, and he thanked and congratulated the Fairy, who was most gracious to him. While they were talking she cried suddenly:

'I declare I smell a savoury dinner.'

'Why yes, Madam, here it is,' said Jack-the-Chatterer, holding up the spit, where all the pheasants and partridges were frizzling. 'Will your Highness please to taste any of them?'

'By all means,' said the Fairy, 'especially as the Princess will certainly be glad of a good meal.'

So the Admiral sent back to his ship for everything that was needful, and they feasted merrily under the trees. By the time they had finished the peacock had come back with a robe for the Princess, in which the Fairy arrayed her. It was of green and gold brocade, embroidered with pearls and rubies, and her long golden hair was tied back with strings of diamonds and emeralds, and crowned with flowers. The Fairy made her mount beside her in the golden chariot, and took her on board the Admiral's ship, where she bade her farewell, sending many messages of friendship to the Queen, and bidding the Princess tell her that she was the fifth Fairy who had attended the christening. Then salutes were fired, the fleet weighed anchor, and very soon they reached the port. Here the King and Queen were waiting, and they received the Princess with such joy and kindness that she could not get a word in edgewise, to say how sorry she was for having run away with such a very poor spirited Ambassador. But, after all, it must have been all Carabosse's fault. Just at this lucky moment who should arrive but King Merlin's son, who had become uneasy at not receiving any news from his Ambassador, and so had started himself with a magnificent escort of a thousand horsemen, and thirty body-guards in

gold and scarlet uniforms, to see what could have happened. As he was a hundred times handsomer and braver than the Ambassador, the Princess found she could like him very much. So the wedding was held at once, with so much splendour and rejoicing that all the previous misfortunes were quite forgotten.¹

¹ La Princesse Printaniere. Par Mme. d'Aulnoy.

SORIA MORIA CASTLE

THERE was once upon a time a couple of folks who had a son called Halvor. Ever since he had been a little boy he had been unwilling to do any work, and had just sat raking about among the ashes. His parents sent him away to learn several things, but Halvor stayed nowhere, for when he had been gone two or three days he always ran away from his master, hurried off home, and sat down in the chimney corner to grub among the ashes again.

One day, however, a sea captain came and asked Halvor if he hadn't a fancy to come with him and go to sea, and behold foreign lands. And Halvor had a fancy for that, so he was not long in getting ready.

How long they sailed I have no idea, but after a long, long time there was a terrible storm, and when it was over and all had become calm again, they knew not where they were, for they had been driven away to a strange coast of which none of them had any knowledge.

As there was no wind at all they lay there becalmed, and Halvor asked the skipper to give him leave to go on shore to look about him, for he would much rather do that than lie there and sleep.

'Dost thou think that thou art fit to go where people can see thee?' said the skipper; 'thou hast no clothes but those rags thou art going about in!'

Halvor still begged for leave, and at last got it, but he was to come back at once if the wind began to rise.

So he went on shore, and it was a delightful country; whithersoever he went there were wide plains with fields and meadows, but as for people, there were none to be seen. The wind began to rise, but Halvor thought that he had not seen enough yet, and that he would like to walk about a little longer, to try if he could not meet somebody. So after a while he came to a great highway, which was so smooth that an egg might have been rolled along it without breaking. Halvor followed this, and when evening drew near he saw a big castle far away in the distance, and there were lights in it. So as he had now been walking the whole day and had not brought anything to eat away with him, he was frightfully hungry. Nevertheless, the nearer he came to the castle the more afraid he was.

A fire was burning in the castle, and Halvor went into the kitchen, which was more magnificent than any kitchen he had ever yet beheld. There were vessels of gold and silver, but not one human being was to be seen. When Halvor had stood there for some time, and no one had come out, he went in and opened a door, and inside a Princess was sitting at her wheel spinning.

'Nay!' she cried, 'can Christian folk dare to come hither? But the best thing that you can do is to go away again, for if not the Troll will devour you. A Troll with three heads lives here.'

'I should have been just as well pleased if he had had four heads more, for I should have enjoyed seeing the fellow,' said the youth; 'and I won't go away, for I have done no harm, but you must give me something to eat, for I am frightfully hungry.'

When Halvor had eaten his fill, the Princess told him to try if he could wield the sword which was hanging on the wall, but he could not wield it, nor could he even lift it up.

'Well, then, you must take a drink out of that bottle which is hanging by its side, for that's what the Troll does whenever he goes out and wants to use the sword,' said the Princess.

Halvor took a draught, and in a moment he was able to swing the sword about with perfect ease. And now he thought it was high time for the Troll to make his appearance, and at that very moment he came, panting for breath.

Halvor got behind the door.

'Hutetu!' said the Troll as he put his head in at the door. 'It smells just as if there were Christian man's blood here!'

'Yes, you shall learn that there is!' said Halvor, and cut off all his heads.

The Princess was so rejoiced to be free that she danced and sang, but then she remembered her sisters, and said: 'If my sisters were but free too!'

'Where are they?' asked Halvor.

So she told him where they were. One of them had been taken away by a Troll to his castle, which was six miles off, and the other had been carried off to a castle which was nine miles farther off still.

'But now,' said she, 'you must first help me to get this dead body away from here.'

Halvor was so strong that he cleared everything away, and made all clean and tidy very quickly. So then they ate and drank, and were happy, and next morning he set off in the grey light of dawn. He gave himself no rest, but walked or ran the livelong day. When he came in sight of the castle he was again just a little afraid. It was much more splendid than the other, but here too there was not a human being to be seen. So Halvor went into the kitchen, and did not linger there either, but went straight in.

'Nay! do Christian folk dare to come here?' cried the second Princess. 'I know not how long it is since I myself came, but during all that time I have never seen a Christian man. It will be better for you to depart at once, for a Troll lives here who has six heads.'

'No, I shall not go,' said Halvor; 'even if he had six more I would not.'

'He will swallow you up alive,' said the Princess.

But she spoke to no purpose, for Halvor would not go; he was not afraid of the Troll, but he wanted some meat and drink, for he was hungry after his journey. So she gave him as much as he would have, and then she once more tried to make him go away.

'No,' said Halvor, 'I will not go, for I have not done anything wrong, and I have no reason to be afraid.'

'He won't ask any questions about that,' said the Princess, 'for he will take you without leave or right; but as you will not go, try if you can wield that sword which the Troll uses in battle.'

He could not brandish the sword; so the Princess said that he was to take a draught from the flask which hung by its side, and when he had done that he could wield the sword.

Soon afterwards the Troll came, and he was so large and stout that he was forced to go sideways to get through the door. When the Troll got his first head in he cried: 'Hutetu! It smells of a Christian man's blood here!'

With that Halvor cut off the first head, and so on with all the rest. The Princess was now exceedingly delighted, but then she remembered her sisters, and wished that they too were free. Halvor thought that might be managed, and wanted to set off immediately; but first he had to help the Princess to remove the Troll's body, so it was not until morning that he set forth on his way.

It was a long way to the castle, and he both walked and ran to get there in time. Late in the evening he caught sight of it, and it was very much more magnificent than either of the others. And this time he was not in the least afraid, but went into the kitchen, and then straight on inside the castle. There a Princess was sitting, who was so beautiful that there was never anyone to equal her. She too said what the others had said, that no Christian folk had ever been there since she had come, and entreated him to go away again, or else the Troll would swallow him up alive. The Troll had nine heads, she told him.

'Yes, and if he had nine added to the nine, and then nine more still, I would not go away,' said Halvor, and went and stood by the stove.

The Princess begged him very prettily to go lest the Troll should devour him; but Halvor said, 'Let him come when he will.'

So she gave him the Troll's sword, and bade him take a drink from the flask to enable him to wield it.

At that same moment the Troll came, breathing hard, and he was ever so much bigger and stouter than either of the others, and he too was forced to go sideways to get in through the door.

'Hutetu! what a smell of Christian blood there is here!' said he.

Then Halvor cut off the first head, and after that the others, but the last was the toughest of them all, and it was the hardest work that Halvor had ever done to get it off, but he still believed that he would have strength enough to do it.

And now all the Princesses came to the castle, and were together again, and they were happier than they had ever been in their lives; and they were delighted with Halvor, and he with them, and he was to choose the one he liked best; but of the three sisters the youngest loved him best.

But Halvor went about and was so strange and so mournful and quiet that the Princesses asked what it was that he longed for, and if he did not like to be with them. He said that he did like to be with them, for they had enough to live on, and he was very comfortable there; but he longed to go home, for his father and mother were alive, and he had a great desire to see them again.

They thought that this might easily be done.

‘You shall go and return in perfect safety if you will follow our advice,’ said the Princesses.

So he said that he would do nothing that they did not wish.

Then they dressed him so splendidly that he was like a King’s son; and they put a ring on his finger, and it was one which would enable him to go there and back again by wishing, but they told him that he must not throw it away, or name their names; for if he did, all his magnificence would be at an end, and then he would never see them more.

‘If I were but at home again, or if home were but here!’ said Halvor, and no sooner had he wished this than it was granted. Halvor was standing outside his father and mother’s cottage before he knew what he was about. The darkness of night was coming on, and when the father and mother saw such a splendid and stately stranger walk in, they were so startled that they both began to bow and curtsy.

Halvor then inquired if he could stay there and have lodging for the night. No, that he certainly could not. ‘We can give you no such accommodation,’ they said, ‘for we have none of the things that are needful when a great lord like you is to be entertained. It will be better for you to go up to the farm. It is not far off, you can see the chimney-pots from here, and there they have plenty of everything.’

Halvor would not hear of that, he was absolutely determined to stay where he was; but the old folks stuck to what they had said, and told him that he was to go to the farm, where he could get both meat and drink, whereas they themselves had not even a chair to offer him.

‘No,’ said Halvor, ‘I will not go up there till early to-morrow morning; let me stay here to-night. I can sit down on the hearth.’

They could say nothing against that, so Halvor sat down on the hearth, and began to rake about among the ashes just as he had done before, when he lay there idling away his time.

They chattered much about many things, and told Halvor of this and of that, and at last he asked them if they had never had any child.

‘Yes,’ they said; they had had a boy who was called Halvor, but they did not know where he had gone, and they could not even say whether he were dead or alive.

‘Could I be he?’ said Halvor.

‘I should know him well enough,’ said the old woman rising. ‘Our Halvor was so idle and slothful that he never did anything at all, and he was so ragged that one hole ran into another all over his clothes. Such a fellow as he was could never turn into such a man as you are, sir.’

In a short time the old woman had to go to the fireplace to stir the fire, and when the blaze lit up Halvor, as it used to do when he was at home raking up the ashes, she knew him again.

‘Good Heavens! is that you, Halvor?’ said she, and such great gladness fell on the old parents that there were no bounds to it. And now he had to relate everything that had befallen him, and the old woman was so delighted with him that she would take him up to the farm at once to show him to the girls who had formerly looked down on him so. She went there first, and Halvor followed her. When she got there she told them how Halvor had come home again, and now they should just see how magnificent he was. ‘He looks like a prince,’ she said.

‘We shall see that he is just the same ragamuffin that he was before,’ said the girls, tossing their heads.

At that same moment Halvor entered, and the girls were so astonished that they left their kirtles lying in the chimney corner, and ran away in nothing but their petticoats. When they came in again they were so shamefaced that they hardly dared to look at Halvor, towards whom they had always been so proud and haughty before.

‘Ay, ay! you have always thought that you were so pretty and dainty that no one was equal to you,’ said Halvor, ‘but you should just see the eldest Princess whom I set free. You look like herds-women compared with her, and the second Princess is also much prettier than you; but the youngest, who is my sweetheart, is more beautiful than either sun or moon. I wish to Heaven they were here, and then you would see them.’

Scarcely had he said this before they were standing by his side, but then he was very sorrowful, for the words which they had said to him came to his mind.

Up at the farm a great feast was made ready for the Princesses, and much respect paid to them, but they would not stay there.

‘We want to go down to your parents,’ they said to Halvor, ‘so we will go out and look about us.’

He followed them out, and they came to a large pond outside the farm-house. Very near the water there was a pretty green bank, and there the Princesses said they would sit down and while away an hour, for they thought that it would be pleasant to sit and look out over the water, they said.

There they sat down, and when they had sat for a short time the youngest Princess said, ‘I may as well comb your hair a little, Halvor.’

So Halvor laid his head down on her lap, and she combed it, and it was not long before he fell asleep. Then she took her ring from him and put another in its place, and then she said to her sisters: ‘Hold me as I am holding you. I would that we were at Soria Moria Castle.’

When Halvor awoke he knew that he had lost the Princesses, and began to weep and lament, and was so unhappy that he could not be comforted. In spite of all his father’s and mother’s entreaties, he would not stay, but bade them farewell, saying that he would never see them more, for if he did not find the Princess again he did not think it worth while to live.

He again had three hundred dollars, which he put into his pocket and went on his way. When he had walked some distance he met a man with a tolerably good horse. Halvor longed to buy it, and began to bargain with the man.

‘Well, I have not exactly been thinking of selling him,’ said the man, ‘but if we could agree, perhaps –’

Halvor inquired how much he wanted to have for the horse.

‘I did not give much for him, and he is not worth much; he is a capital horse to ride, but good for nothing at drawing; but he will always be able to carry your bag of provisions and you too, if you walk and ride by turns.’ At last they agreed about the price, and Halvor laid his bag on the horse, and sometimes he walked and sometimes he rode. In the evening he came to a green field, where stood a great tree, under which he seated himself. Then he let the horse loose and lay down to sleep, but before he did that he took his bag off the horse. At daybreak he set off again, for he did not feel as if he could take any rest. So he walked and rode the whole day, through a great wood where there were many green places which gleamed very prettily among the trees. He did not know where he was or whither he was going, but he never lingered longer in any place than was enough to let his horse get a little food when they came to one of these green spots, while he himself took out his bag of provisions.

So he walked and he rode, and it seemed to him that the wood would never come to an end. But on the evening of the second day he saw a light shining through the trees.

‘If only there were some people up there I might warm myself and get something to eat,’ thought Halvor.

When he got to the place where the light had come from, he saw a wretched little cottage, and through a small pane of glass he saw a couple of old folks inside. They were very old, and as grey-headed as a pigeon, and the old woman had such a long nose that she sat in the chimney corner and used it to stir the fire.

‘Good evening! good evening!’ said the old hag; ‘but what errand have you that can bring you here? No Christian folk have been here for more than a hundred years.’

So Halvor told her that he wanted to get to Soria Moria Castle, and inquired if she knew the way thither.

‘No,’ said the old woman, ‘that I do not, but the Moon will be here presently, and I will ask her, and she will know. She can easily see it, for she shines on all things.’

So when the Moon stood clear and bright above the tree-tops the old woman went out. ‘Moon! Moon!’ she screamed. ‘Canst thou tell me the way to Soria Moria Castle?’

‘No,’ said the Moon, ‘that I can’t, for when I shone there, there was a cloud before me.’

‘Wait a little longer,’ said the old woman to Halvor, ‘for the West Wind will presently be here, and he will know it, for he breathes gently or blows into every corner.’

‘What! have you a horse too?’ she said when she came in again. ‘Oh! let the poor creature loose in our bit of fenced-in pasture, and don’t let it stand there starving at our very door. But won’t you exchange him with me? We have a pair of old boots here with which you can go fifteen quarters of a mile at each step. You shall have them for the horse, and then you will be able to get sooner to Soria Moria Castle.’

Halvor consented to this at once, and the old woman was so delighted with the horse that she was ready to dance. ‘For now I, too, shall be able to ride to church,’ she said. Halvor could take no rest, and wanted to set off immediately; but the old woman said that there was no need to hasten. ‘Lie down on the bench and sleep a little, for we have no bed to offer you,’ said she, ‘and I will watch for the coming of the West Wind.’

Ere long came the West Wind, roaring so loud that the walls creaked.

The old woman went out and cried:

‘West Wind! West Wind! Canst thou tell me the way to Soria Moria Castle? Here is one who would go thither.’

‘Yes, I know it well,’ said the West Wind. ‘I am just on my way there to dry the clothes for the wedding which is to take place. If he is fleet of foot he can go with me.’

Out ran Halvor.

‘You will have to make haste if you mean to go with me,’ said the West Wind; and away it went over hill and dale, and moor and morass, and Halvor had enough to do to keep up with it.

‘Well, now I have no time to stay with you any longer,’ said the West Wind, ‘for I must first go and tear down a bit of spruce fir before I go to the bleaching-ground to dry the clothes; but just go along the side of the hill, and you will come to some girls who are standing there washing clothes, and then you will not have to walk far before you are at Soria Moria Castle.’

Shortly afterwards Halvor came to the girls who were standing washing, and they asked him if he had seen anything of the West Wind, who was to come there to dry the clothes for the wedding.

‘Yes,’ said Halvor, ‘he has only gone to break down a bit of spruce fir. It won’t be long before he is here.’ And then he asked them the way to Soria Moria Castle. They put him in the right way, and when he came in front of the castle it was so full of horses and people that it swarmed with them. But Halvor was so ragged and torn with following the West Wind through bushes and bogs that he kept on one side, and would not go among the crowd until the last day, when the feast was to be held at noon.

So when, as was the usage and custom, all were to drink to the bride and the young girls who were present, the cup-bearer filled the cup for each in turn, both bride and bridegroom, and knights and servants, and at last, after a very long time, he came to Halvor. He drank their health, and then

slipped the ring which the Princess had put on his finger when they were sitting by the waterside into the glass, and ordered the cup-bearer to carry the glass to the bride from him and greet her.

Then the Princess at once rose up from the table, and said, 'Who is most worthy to have one of us – he who has delivered us from the Trolls or he who is sitting here as bridegroom?'

There could be but one opinion as to that, everyone thought, and when Halvor heard what they said he was not long in flinging off his beggar's rags and arraying himself as a bridegroom.

'Yes, he is the right one,' cried the youngest Princess when she caught sight of him; so she flung the other out of the window and held her wedding with Halvor.²

² From P. C. Asbjornsen.

THE DEATH OF KOSHCHEI THE DEATHLESS

IN a certain kingdom there lived a Prince Ivan. He had three sisters. The first was the Princess Marya, the second the Princess Olga, the third the Princess Anna. When their father and mother lay at the point of death, they had thus enjoined their son: 'Give your sisters in marriage to the very first suitors who come to woo them. Don't go keeping them by you!'

They died, and the Prince buried them, and then, to solace his grief, he went with his sisters into the garden green to stroll. Suddenly the sky was covered by a black cloud; a terrible storm arose.

'Let us go home, sisters!' he cried.

Hardly had they got into the palace, when the thunder pealed, the ceiling split open, and into the room where they were came flying a falcon bright. The Falcon smote upon the ground, became a brave youth, and said:

'Hail, Prince Ivan! Before I came as a guest, but now I have come as a wooer! I wish to propose for your sister, the Princess Marya.'

'If you find favour in the eyes of my sister, I will not interfere with her wishes. Let her marry you, in God's name!'

The Princess Marya gave her consent; the Falcon married her and bore her away into his own realm.

Days follow days, hours chase hours; a whole year goes by. One day Prince Ivan and his two sisters went out to stroll in the garden green. Again there arose a storm-cloud, with whirlwind and lightning.

'Let us go home, sisters!' cries the Prince. Scarcely had they entered the palace when the thunder crashed, the roof burst into a blaze, the ceiling split in twain, and in flew an eagle. The Eagle smote upon the ground and became a brave youth.

'Hail, Prince Ivan! Before I came as a guest, but now I have come as a wooer!'

And he asked for the hand of the Princess Olga. Prince Ivan replied:

'If you find favour in the eyes of the Princess Olga, then let her marry you. I will not interfere with her liberty of choice.'

The Princess Olga gave her consent and married the Eagle. The Eagle took her and carried her off to his own kingdom.

Another year went by. Prince Ivan said to his youngest sister:

'Let us go out and stroll in the garden green!'

They strolled about for a time. Again there arose a storm-cloud, with whirlwind and lightning.

'Let us return home, sister!' said he.

They returned home, but they hadn't had time to sit down when the thunder crashed, the ceiling split open, and in flew a raven. The Raven smote upon the floor and became a brave youth. The former youths had been handsome, but this one was handsomer still.

'Well, Prince Ivan! Before I came as a guest, but now I have come as a wooer! Give me the Princess Anna to wife.'

'I won't interfere with my sister's freedom. If you gain her affections, let her marry you.'

So the Princess Anna married the Raven, and he bore her away into his own realm. Prince Ivan was left alone. A whole year he lived without his sisters; then he grew weary, and said:

'I will set out in search of my sisters.'

He got ready for the journey, he rode and rode, and one day he saw a whole army lying dead on the plain. He cried aloud, 'If there be a living man there, let him make answer! Who has slain this mighty host?'

There replied unto him a living man:

'All this mighty host has been slain by the fair Princess Marya Morevna.'

Prince Ivan rode further on, and came to a white tent, and forth came to meet him the fair Princess Marya Morevna.

‘Hail, Prince!’ says she; ‘whither does God send you? and is it of your free will or against your will?’

Prince Ivan replied, ‘Not against their will do brave youths ride!’

‘Well, if your business be not pressing, tarry awhile in my tent.’

Thereat was Prince Ivan glad. He spent two nights in the tent, and he found favour in the eyes of Marya Morevna, and she married him. The fair Princess, Marya Morevna, carried him off into her own realm.

They spent some time together, and then the Princess took it into her head to go a warring. So she handed over all the house-keeping affairs to Prince Ivan, and gave him these instructions:

‘Go about everywhere, keep watch over everything; only do not venture to look into that closet there.’

He couldn’t help doing so. The moment Marya Morevna had gone he rushed to the closet, pulled open the door, and looked in – there hung Koshchei the Deathless, fettered by twelve chains. Then Koshchei entreated Prince Ivan, saying:

‘Have pity upon me and give me to drink! Ten years long have I been here in torment, neither eating nor drinking; my throat is utterly dried up.’

The Prince gave him a bucketful of water; he drank it up and asked for more, saying:

‘A single bucket of water will not quench my thirst; give me more!’

The Prince gave him a second bucketful. Koshchei drank it up and asked for a third, and when he had swallowed the third bucketful, he regained his former strength, gave his chains a shake, and broke all twelve at once.

‘Thanks, Prince Ivan!’ cried Koshchei the Deathless, ‘now you will sooner see your own ears than Marya Morevna!’ and out of the window he flew in the shape of a terrible whirlwind. And he came up with the fair Princess Marya Morevna as she was going her way, laid hold of her and carried her off home with him. But Prince Ivan wept full sore, and he arrayed himself and set out a-wandering, saying to himself, ‘Whatever happens, I will go and look for Marya Morevna!’

One day passed, another day passed; at the dawn of the third day he saw a wondrous palace, and by the side of the palace stood an oak, and on the oak sat a falcon bright. Down flew the Falcon from the oak, smote upon the ground, turned into a brave youth, and cried aloud:

‘Ha, dear brother-in-law! how deals the Lord with you?’

Out came running the Princess Marya, joyfully greeted her brother Ivan, and began inquiring after his health, and telling him all about herself. The Prince spent three days with them; then he said:

‘I cannot abide with you; I must go in search of my wife, the fair Princess Marya Morevna.’

‘Hard will it be for you to find her,’ answered the Falcon. ‘At all events leave with us your silver spoon. We will look at it and remember you.’ So Prince Ivan left his silver spoon at the Falcon’s, and went on his way again.

On he went one day, on he went another day, and by the dawn of the third day he saw a palace still grander than the former one and hard by the palace stood an oak, and on the oak sat an eagle. Down flew the Eagle from the oak, smote upon the ground, turned into a brave youth, and cried aloud:

‘Rise up, Princess Olga! Hither comes our brother dear!’

The Princess Olga immediately ran to meet him, and began kissing him and embracing him, asking after his health, and telling him all about herself. With them Prince Ivan stopped three days; then he said:

‘I cannot stay here any longer. I am going to look for my wife, the fair Princess Marya Morevna.’

‘Hard will it be for you to find her,’ replied the Eagle. ‘Leave with us a silver fork. We will look at it and remember you.’

He left a silver fork behind, and went his way. He travelled one day, he travelled two days; at daybreak on the third day he saw a palace grander than the first two, and near the palace stood an oak, and on the oak sat a raven. Down flew the Raven from the oak, smote upon the ground, turned into a brave youth, and cried aloud:

‘Princess Anna, come forth quickly! our brother is coming.’

Out ran the Princess Anna, greeted him joyfully, and began kissing and embracing him, asking after his health and telling him all about herself. Prince Ivan stayed with them three days; then he said:

‘Farewell! I am going to look for my wife, the fair Princess Marya Morevna.’

‘Hard will it be for you to find her,’ replied the Raven. ‘Anyhow, leave your silver snuff-box with us. We will look at it and remember you.’

The Prince handed over his silver snuff-box, took his leave, and went his way. One day he went, another day he went, and on the third day he came to where Marya Morevna was. She caught sight of her love, flung her arms around his neck, burst into tears, and exclaimed:

‘Oh, Prince Ivan! why did you disobey me and go looking into the closet and letting out Koshchei the Deathless?’

‘Forgive me, Marya Morevna! Remember not the past; much better fly with me while Koshchei the Deathless is out of sight. Perhaps he won’t catch us.’

So they got ready and fled. Now Koshchei was out hunting. Towards evening he was returning home, when his good steed stumbled beneath him.

‘Why stumblest thou, sorry jade? Scentest thou some ill?’ The steed replied:

‘Prince Ivan has come and carried off Marya Morevna.’ ‘Is it possible to catch them?’

‘It is possible to sow wheat, to wait till it grows up, to reap it and thresh it, to grind it to flour, to make five pies of it, to eat those pies, and then to start in pursuit – and even then to be in time.’ Koshchei galloped off and caught up Prince Ivan.

‘Now,’ says he, ‘this time I will forgive you, in return for your kindness in giving me water to drink. And a second time I will forgive you; but the third time beware! I will cut you to bits.’

Then he took Marya Morevna from him, and carried her off. But Prince Ivan sat down on a stone and burst into tears. He wept and wept – and then returned back again to Marya Morevna. Now Koshchei the Deathless happened not to be at home.

‘Let us fly, Marya Morevna!’

‘Ah, Prince Ivan! he will catch us.’

‘Suppose he does catch us. At all events we shall have spent an hour or two together.’

So they got ready and fled. As Koshchei the Deathless was returning home, his good steed stumbled beneath him.

‘Why stumblest thou, sorry jade? Scentest thou some ill?’

‘Prince Ivan has come and carried off Marya Morevna.’

‘Is it possible to catch them?’

‘It is possible to sow barley, to wait till it grows up, to reap it and thresh it, to brew beer, to drink ourselves drunk on it, to sleep our fill, and then to set off in pursuit – and yet to be in time.’

Koshchei galloped off, caught up Prince Ivan:

‘Didn’t I tell you that you should not see Marya Morevna any more than your own ears?’

And he took her away and carried her off home with him.

Prince Ivan was left there alone. He wept and wept; then he went back again after Marya Morevna. Koshchei happened to be away from home at that moment.

‘Let us fly, Marya Morevna!’

‘Ah, Prince Ivan! he is sure to catch us and hew you in pieces.’

‘Let him hew away! I cannot live without you.’

So they got ready and fled.

Koshchei the Deathless was returning home when his good steed stumbled beneath him.

‘Why stumblest thou? Scentest thou any ill?’

‘Prince Ivan has come and has carried off Marya Morevna.’

Koshchei galloped off, caught Prince Ivan, chopped him into little pieces, put them into a barrel, smeared it with pitch and bound it with iron hoops, and flung it into the blue sea. But Marya Morevna he carried off home.

At that very time the silver articles turned black which Prince Ivan had left with his brothers-in-law.

‘Ah!’ said they, ‘the evil is accomplished sure enough!’

Then the Eagle hurried to the blue sea, caught hold of the barrel, and dragged it ashore; the Falcon flew away for the Water of Life, and the Raven for the Water of Death.

Afterwards they all three met, broke open the barrel, took out the remains of Prince Ivan, washed them, and put them together in fitting order. The Raven sprinkled them with the Water of Death – the pieces joined together, the body became whole. The Falcon sprinkled it with the Water of Life – Prince Ivan shuddered, stood up, and said:

‘Ah! what a time I’ve been sleeping!’

‘You’d have gone on sleeping a good deal longer if it hadn’t been for us,’ replied his brothers-in-law. ‘Now come and pay us a visit.’

‘Not so, brothers; I shall go and look for Marya Morevna.’

And when he had found her, he said to her:

‘Find out from Koshchei the Deathless whence he got so good a steed.’

So Marya Morevna chose a favourable moment, and began asking Koshchei about it. Koshchei replied:

‘Beyond thrice nine lands, in the thirtieth kingdom, on the other side of the fiery river, there lives a Baba Yaga. She has so good a mare that she flies right round the world on it every day. And she has many other splendid mares. I watched her herds for three days without losing a single mare, and in return for that the Baba Yaga gave me a foal.’

‘But how did you get across the fiery river?’

‘Why, I’ve a handkerchief of this kind – when I wave it thrice on the right hand, there springs up a very lofty bridge, and the fire cannot reach it.’

Marya Morevna listened to all this, and repeated it to Prince Ivan, and she carried off the handkerchief and gave it to him. So he managed to get across the fiery river, and then went on to the Baba Yaga’s. Long went he on without getting anything either to eat or to drink. At last he came across an outlandish bird and its young ones. Says Prince Ivan:

‘I’ll eat one of these chickens.’

‘Don’t eat it, Prince Ivan!’ begs the outlandish bird; ‘some time or other I’ll do you a good turn.’

He went on farther and saw a hive of bees in the forest.

‘I’ll get a bit of honeycomb,’ says he.

‘Don’t disturb my honey, Prince Ivan!’ exclaims the queen-bee; ‘some time or other I’ll do you a good turn.’

So he didn’t disturb it, but went on. Presently there met him a lioness with her cub.

‘Anyhow, I’ll eat this lion cub,’ says he; ‘I’m so hungry I feel quite unwell!’

‘Please let us alone, Prince Ivan!’ begs the lioness; ‘some time or other I’ll do you a good turn.’

‘Very well; have it your own way,’ says he.

Hungry and faint he wandered on, walked farther and farther, and at last came to where stood the house of the Baba Yaga. Round the house were set twelve poles in a circle, and on each of eleven of these poles was stuck a human head; the twelfth alone remained unoccupied.

‘Hail, granny!’

‘Hail, Prince Ivan! wherefore have you come? Is it of your own accord, or on compulsion?’

‘I have come to earn from you an heroic steed.’

‘So be it, Prince! You won’t have to serve a year with me, but just three days. If you take good care of my mares, I’ll give you an heroic steed. But if you don’t – why, then you mustn’t be annoyed at finding your head stuck on top of the last pole up there.’

Prince Ivan agreed to these terms. The Baba Yaga gave him food and drink, and bade him set about his business. But the moment he had driven the mares afield, they cocked up their tails, and away they tore across the meadows in all directions. Before the Prince had time to look round they were all out of sight. Thereupon he began to weep and to disquiet himself, and then he sat down upon a stone and went to sleep. But when the sun was near its setting the outlandish bird came flying up to him, and awakened him, saying:

‘Arise, Prince Ivan! The mares are at home now.’

The Prince arose and returned home. There the Baba Yaga was storming and raging at her mares, and shrieking:

‘Whatever did ye come home for?’

‘How could we help coming home?’ said they. ‘There came flying birds from every part of the world, and all but pecked our eyes out.’

‘Well, well! to-morrow don’t go galloping over the meadows, but disperse amid the thick forests.’

Prince Ivan slept all night. In the morning the Baba Yaga says to him:

‘Mind, Prince! if you don’t take good care of the mares, if you lose merely one of them – your bold head will be stuck on that pole!’

He drove the mares afield. Immediately they cocked up their tails and dispersed among the thick forests. Again did the Prince sit down on the stone, weep and weep, and then go to sleep. The sun went down behind the forest. Up came running the lioness.

‘Arise, Prince Ivan! The mares are all collected.’

Prince Ivan arose and went home. More than ever did the Baba Yaga storm at her mares and shriek:

‘Whatever did ye come back home for?’

‘How could we help coming back? Beasts of prey came running at us from all parts of the world, and all but tore us utterly to pieces.’

‘Well, to-morrow run off into the blue sea.’

Again did Prince Ivan sleep through the night. Next morning the Baba Yaga sent him forth to watch the mares.

‘If you don’t take good care of them,’ says she, ‘your bold head will be stuck on that pole!’

He drove the mares afield. Immediately they cocked up their tails, disappeared from sight, and fled into the blue sea. There they stood, up to their necks in water. Prince Ivan sat down on the stone, wept, and fell asleep. But when the sun had set behind the forest, up came flying a bee, and said:

‘Arise, Prince! The mares are all collected. But when you get home, don’t let the Baba Yaga set eyes on you, but go into the stable and hide behind the mangers. There you will find a sorry colt rolling in the muck. Do you steal it, and at the dead of night ride away from the house.’

Prince Ivan arose, slipped into the stable, and lay down behind the mangers, while the Baba Yaga was storming away at her mares and shrieking:

‘Why did ye come back?’

‘How could we help coming back? There came flying bees in countless numbers from all parts of the world, and began stinging us on all sides till the blood came!’

The Baba Yaga went to sleep. In the dead of the night Prince Ivan stole the sorry colt, saddled it, jumped on its back, and galloped away to the fiery river. When he came to that river he waved the handkerchief three times on the right hand, and suddenly, springing goodness knows whence, there hung across the river, high in the air, a splendid bridge. The Prince rode across the bridge and

waved the handkerchief twice only on the left hand; there remained across the river a thin, ever so thin a bridge!

When the Baba Yaga got up in the morning the sorry colt was not to be seen! Off she set in pursuit. At full speed did she fly in her iron mortar, urging it on with the pestle, sweeping away her traces with the broom. She dashed up to the fiery river, gave a glance, and said, 'A capital bridge!' She drove on to the bridge, but had only got half-way when the bridge broke in two, and the Baba Yaga went flop into the river. There truly did she meet with a cruel death!

Prince Ivan fattened up the colt in the green meadows, and it turned into a wondrous steed. Then he rode to where Marya Morevna was. She came running out, and flung herself on his neck, crying:

'By what means has God brought you back to life?'

'Thus and thus,' says he. 'Now come along with me.'

'I am afraid, Prince Ivan! If Koshchei catches us you will be cut in pieces again.'

'No, he won't catch us! I have a splendid heroic steed now; it flies just like a bird.' So they got on its back and rode away.

Koshchei the Deathless was returning home when his horse stumbled beneath him.

'What art thou stumbling for, sorry jade? Dost thou scent any ill?'

'Prince Ivan has come and carried off Marya Morevna.'

'Can we catch them?'

'God knows! Prince Ivan has a horse now which is better than I.'

'Well, I can't stand it,' says Koshchei the Deathless. 'I will pursue.'

After a time he came up with Prince Ivan, lighted on the ground, and was going to chop him up with his sharp sword. But at that moment Prince Ivan's horse smote Koshchei the Deathless full swing with its hoof, and cracked his skull, and the Prince made an end of him with a club. Afterwards the Prince heaped up a pile of wood, set fire to it, burnt Koshchei the Deathless on the pyre, and scattered his ashes to the wind. Then Marya Morevna mounted Koshchei's horse and Prince Ivan got on his own, and they rode away to visit first the Raven, and then the Eagle, and then the Falcon. Wherever they went they met with a joyful greeting.

'Ah, Prince Ivan! why, we never expected to see you again. Well, it wasn't for nothing that you gave yourself so much trouble. Such a beauty as Marya Morevna one might search for all the world over – and never find one like her!'

And so they visited, and they feasted; and afterwards they went off to their own realm.³

³ Ralston.

THE BLACK THIEF AND KNIGHT OF THE GLEN

IN times of yore there was a King and a Queen in the south of Ireland who had three sons, all beautiful children; but the Queen, their mother, sickened unto death when they were yet very young, which caused great grief throughout the Court, particularly to the King, her husband, who could in no wise be comforted. Seeing that death was drawing near her, she called the King to her and spoke as follows:

‘I am now going to leave you, and as you are young and in your prime, of course after my death you will marry again. Now all the request I ask of you is that you will build a tower in an island in the sea, wherein you will keep your three sons until they are come of age and fit to do for themselves; so that they may not be under the power or jurisdiction of any other woman. Neglect not to give them education suitable to their birth, and let them be trained up to every exercise and pastime requisite for king’s sons to learn. This is all I have to say, so farewell.’

The King had scarce time, with tears in his eyes, to assure her she should be obeyed in everything, when she, turning herself in her bed, with a smile gave up the ghost. Never was greater mourning seen than was throughout the Court and the whole kingdom; for a better woman than the Queen, to rich and poor, was not to be found in the world. She was interred with great pomp and magnificence, and the King, her husband, became in a manner inconsolable for the loss of her. However, he caused the tower to be built and his sons placed in it, under proper guardians, according to his promise.

In process of time the lords and knights of the kingdom counselled the King (as he was young) to live no longer as he had done, but to take a wife; which counsel prevailing, they chose him a rich and beautiful princess to be his consort – a neighbouring King’s daughter, of whom he was very fond. Not long after, the Queen had a fine son, which caused great feasting and rejoicing at the Court, insomuch that the late Queen, in a manner, was entirely forgotten. That fared well, and King and Queen lived happy together for several years.

At length the Queen, having some business with the hen-wife, went herself to her, and, after a long conference passed, was taking leave of her, when the hen-wife prayed that if ever she should come back to her again she might break her neck. The Queen, greatly incensed at such a daring insult from one of her meanest subjects, demanded immediately the reason, or she would have her put to death.

‘It was worth your while, madam,’ says the hen-wife, ‘to pay me well for it, for the reason I prayed so on you concerns you much.’

‘What must I pay you?’ asked the Queen.

‘You must give me,’ says she, ‘the full of a pack of wool, and I have an ancient crock which you must fill with butter, likewise a barrel which you must fill for me full of wheat.’

‘How much wool will it take to the pack?’ says the Queen.

‘It will take seven herds of sheep,’ said she, ‘and their increase for seven years.’

‘How much butter will it take to fill your crock?’

‘Seven dairies,’ said she, ‘and their increase for seven years.’

‘And how much will it take to fill the barrel you have?’ says the Queen.

‘It will take the increase of seven barrels of wheat for seven years.’

‘That is a great quantity,’ says the Queen; ‘but the reason must be extraordinary, and before I want it, I will give you all you demand.’

‘Well,’ says the hen-wife, ‘it is because you are so stupid that you don’t observe or find out those affairs that are so dangerous and hurtful to yourself and your child.’

‘What is that?’ says the Queen.

‘Why,’ says she, ‘the King your husband has three fine sons he had by the late Queen, whom he keeps shut up in a tower until they come of age, intending to divide the kingdom between them, and let your son push his fortune; now, if you don’t find some means of destroying them; your child and perhaps yourself will be left desolate in the end.’

‘And what would you advise me to do?’ said she; ‘I am wholly at a loss in what manner to act in this affair.’

‘You must make known to the King,’ says the hen-wife, ‘that you heard of his sons, and wonder greatly that he concealed them all this time from you; tell him you wish to see them, and that it is full time for them to be liberated, and that you would be desirous he would bring them to the Court. The King will then do so, and there will be a great feast prepared on that account, and also diversions of every sort to amuse the people; and in these sports,’ said she, ‘ask the King’s sons to play a game at cards with you, which they will not refuse. Now,’ says the hen-wife, ‘you must make a bargain, that if you win they must do whatever you command them, and if they win, that you must do whatever they command you to do; this bargain must be made before the assembly, and here is a pack of cards,’ says she, ‘that I am thinking you will not lose by.’

The Queen immediately took the cards, and, after returning the hen-wife thanks for her kind instruction, went back to the palace, where she was quite uneasy until she got speaking to the King in regard of his children; at last she broke it off to him in a very polite and engaging manner, so that he could see no muster or design in it. He readily consented to her desire, and his sons were sent for to the tower, who gladly came to Court, rejoicing that they were freed from such confinement. They were all very handsome, and very expert in all arts and exercises, so that they gained the love and esteem of all that had seen them.

The Queen, more jealous with them than ever, thought it an age until all the feasting and rejoicing was over, that she might get making her proposal, depending greatly on the power of the hen-wife’s cards. At length this royal assembly began to sport and play at all kinds of diversions, and the Queen very cunningly challenged the three Princes to play at cards with her, making bargain with them as she had been instructed.

They accepted the challenge, and the eldest son and she played the first game, which she won; then the second son played, and she won that game likewise; the third son and she then played the last game, and he won it, which sorely grieved her that she had not him in her power as well as the rest, being by far the handsomest and most beloved of the three.

However, everyone was anxious to hear the Queen’s commands in regard to the two Princes, not thinking that she had any ill design in her head against them. Whether it was the hen-wife instructed her, or whether it was from her own knowledge, I cannot tell; but she gave out they must go and bring her the Knight of the Glen’s wild Steed of Bells, or they should lose their heads.

The young Princes were not in the least concerned, not knowing what they had to do; but the whole Court was amazed at her demand, knowing very well that it was impossible for them ever to get the steed, as all that ever sought him perished in the attempt. However, they could not retract the bargain, and the youngest Prince was desired to tell what demand he had on the Queen, as he had won his game.

‘My brothers,’ says he, ‘are now going to travel, and, as I understand, a perilous journey wherein they know not what road to take or what may happen them. I am resolved, therefore, not to stay here, but to go with them, let what will betide; and I request and command, according to my bargain, that the Queen shall stand on the highest tower of the palace until we come back (or find out that we are certainly dead), with nothing but sheaf corn for her food and cold water for her drink, if it should be for seven years and longer.’

All things being now fixed, the three princes departed the Court in search of the Knight of the Glen’s palace, and travelling along the road they came up with a man who was a little lame, and seemed to be somewhat advanced in years; they soon fell into discourse, and the youngest of the

princes asked the stranger his name, or what was the reason he wore so remarkable a black cap as he saw on him.

‘I am called,’ said he, ‘the Thief of Sloan, and sometimes the Black Thief from my cap;’ and so telling the prince the most of his adventures, he asked him again where they were bound for, or what they were about.

The prince, willing to gratify his request, told him their affairs from the beginning to the end. ‘And now,’ said he, ‘we are travelling, and do not know whether we are on the right road or not.’

‘Ah! my brave fellows,’ says the Black Thief, ‘you little know the danger you run. I am after that steed myself these seven years, and can never steal him on account of a silk covering he has on him in the stable, with sixty bells fixed to it, and whenever you approach the place he quickly observes it and shakes himself; which, by the sound of the bells, not only alarms the prince and his guards, but the whole country round, so that it is impossible ever to get him, and those that are so unfortunate as to be taken by the Knight of the Glen are boiled in a red-hot fiery furnace.’

‘Bless me,’ says the young prince, ‘what will we do? If we return without the steed we will lose our heads, so I see we are ill fixed on both sides.’

‘Well,’ says the Thief of Sloan, ‘if it were my case I would rather die by the Knight than by the wicked Queen; besides, I will go with you myself and show you the road, and whatever fortune you will have, I will take chance of the same.’

They returned him sincere thanks for his kindness, and he, being well acquainted with the road, in a short time brought them within view of the knight’s castle.

‘Now,’ says he, ‘we must stay here till night comes; for I know all the ways of the place, and if there be any chance for it, it is when they are all at rest; for the steed is all the watch the knight keeps there.’

Accordingly, in the dead hour of the night, the King’s three sons and the Thief of Sloan attempted the Steed of Bells in order to carry him away, but before they could reach the stables the steed neighed most terribly and shook himself so, and the bells rung with such noise, that the knight and all his men were up in a moment.

The Black Thief and the King’s sons thought to make their escape, but they were suddenly surrounded by the knight’s guards and taken prisoners; where they were brought into that dismal part of the palace where the knight kept a furnace always boiling, in which he threw all offenders that ever came in his way, which in a few moments would entirely consume them.

‘Audacious villains!’ says the Knight of the Glen, ‘how dare you attempt so bold an action as to steal my steed? See, now, the reward of your folly; for your greater punishment I will not boil you all together, but one after the other, so that he that survives may witness the dire afflictions of his unfortunate companions.’

So saying he ordered his servants to stir up the fire: ‘We will boil the eldest-looking of these young men first,’ said he, ‘and so on to the last, which will be this old champion with the black cap. He seems to be the captain, and looks as if he had come through many toils.’

‘I was as near death once as the prince is yet,’ says the Black Thief, ‘and escaped; and so will he too.’

‘No, you never were,’ said the knight; ‘for he is within two or three minutes of his latter end.’

‘But,’ says the Black Thief, ‘I was within one moment of my death, and I am here yet.’

‘How was that?’ says the knight; ‘I would be glad to hear it, for it seems impossible.’

‘If you think, sir knight,’ says the Black Thief, ‘that the danger I was in surpasses that of this young man, will you pardon him his crime?’

‘I will,’ says the knight, ‘so go on with your story.’

‘I was, sir,’ says he, ‘a very wild boy in my youth, and came through many distresses; once in particular, as I was on my rambling, I was benighted and could find no lodging. At length I came to an old kiln, and being much fatigued I went up and lay on the ribs. I had not been long there when I

saw three witches coming in with three bags of gold. Each put their bags of gold under their heads, as if to sleep. I heard one of them say to the other that if the Black Thief came on them while they slept, he would not leave them a penny. I found by their discourse that everybody had got my name into their mouth, though I kept silent as death during their discourse. At length they fell fast asleep, and then I stole softly down, and seeing some turf convenient, I placed one under each of their heads, and off I went, with their gold, as fast as I could.

‘I had not gone far,’ continued the Thief of Sloan, ‘until I saw a grey-hound, a hare, and a hawk in pursuit of me, and began to think it must be the witches that had taken the shapes in order that I might not escape them unseen either by land or water. Seeing they did not appear in any formidable shape, I was more than once resolved to attack them, thinking that with my broad sword I could easily destroy them. But considering again that it was perhaps still in their power to become alive again, I gave over the attempt and climbed with difficulty up a tree, bringing my sword in my hand and all the gold along with me. However, when they came to the tree they found what I had done, and making further use of their hellish art, one of them was changed into a smith’s anvil and another into a piece of iron, of which the third soon made a hatchet. Having the hatchet made, she fell to cutting down the tree, and in the course of an hour it began to shake with me. At length it began to bend, and I found that one or two blows at the most would put it down. I then began to think that my death was inevitable, considering that those who were capable of doing so much would soon end my life; but just as she had the stroke drawn that would terminate my fate, the cock crew, and the witches disappeared, having resumed their natural shapes for fear of being known, and I got safe off with my bags of gold.

‘Now, sir,’ says he to the Knight of the Glen, ‘if that be not as great an adventure as ever you heard, to be within one blow of a hatchet of my end, and that blow even drawn, and after all to escape, I leave it to yourself.’

‘Well, I cannot say but it is very extraordinary,’ says the Knight of the Glen, ‘and on that account pardon this young man his crime; so stir up the fire, till I boil this second one.’

‘Indeed,’ says the Black Thief, ‘I would fain think he would not die this time either.’

‘How so?’ says the knight; ‘it is impossible for him to escape.’

‘I escaped death more wonderfully myself,’ says the Thief of Sloan, ‘than if you had him ready to throw into the furnace, and I hope it will be the case with him likewise.’

‘Why, have you been in another great danger?’ says the knight. ‘I would be glad to hear the story too, and if it be as wonderful as the last, I will pardon this young man as I did the other.’

‘My way of living, sir,’ says the Black Thief, ‘was not good, as I told you before; and being at a certain time fairly run out of cash, and meeting with no enterprise worthy of notice, I was reduced to great straits. At length a rich bishop died in the neighbourhood I was then in, and I heard he was interred with a great deal of jewels and rich robes upon him, all which I intended in a short time to be master of. Accordingly that very night I set about it, and coming to the place, I understood he was placed at the further end of a long dark vault, which I slowly entered. I had not gone in far until I heard a foot coming towards me with a quick pace, and although naturally bold and daring, yet, thinking of the deceased bishop and the crime I was engaged in, I lost courage, and ran towards the entrance of the vault. I had retreated but a few paces when I observed, between me and the light, the figure of a tall black man standing in the entrance. Being in great fear and not knowing how to pass, I fired a pistol at him, and he immediately fell across the entrance. Perceiving he still retained the figure of a mortal man, I began to imagine that it could not be the bishop’s ghost; recovering myself therefore from the fear I was in, I ventured to the upper end of the vault, where I found a large bundle, and upon further examination I found that the corpse was already rifled, and that which I had taken to be a ghost was no more than one of his own clergy. I was then very sorry that I had the misfortune to kill him, but it then could not be helped. I took up the bundle that contained everything belonging to the corpse that was valuable, intending to take my departure from this melancholy abode; but just as I came to the mouth of the entrance I saw the guards of the place coming towards me, and distinctly

heard them saying that they would look in the vault, for that the Black Thief would think little of robbing the corpse if he was anywhere in the place. I did not then know in what manner to act, for if I was seen I would surely lose my life, as everybody had a look-out at that time, and because there was no person bold enough to come in on me. I knew very well on the first sight of me that could be got, I would be shot like a dog. However, I had not time to lose. I took and raised up the man which I had killed, as if he was standing on his feet, and I, crouching behind him, bore him up as well as I could, so that the guards readily saw him as they came up to the vault. Seeing the man in black, one of the men cried that was the Black Thief, and, presenting his piece, fired at the man, at which I let him fall, and crept into a little dark corner myself, that was at the entrance of the place. When they saw the man fall, they ran all into the vault, and never stopped until they were at the end of it, for fear, as I thought, that there might be some others along with him that was killed. But while they were busy inspecting the corpse and the vault to see what they could miss, I slipped out, and, once away, and still away; but they never had the Black Thief in their power since.'

'Well, my brave fellow,' says the Knight of the Glen, 'I see you have come through many dangers: you have freed these two princes by your stories; but I am sorry myself that this young prince has to suffer for all. Now, if you could tell me something as wonderful as you have told already, I would pardon him likewise; I pity this youth and do not want to put him to death if I could help it.'

'That happens well,' says the Thief of Sloan, 'for I like him best myself, and have reserved the most curious passage for the last on his account.'

'Well, then,' says the knight, 'let us hear it.'

'I was one day on my travels,' says the Black Thief, 'and I came into a large forest, where I wandered a long time, and could not get out of it. At length I came to a large castle, and fatigue obliged me to call in the same, where I found a young woman and a child sitting on her knee, and she crying. I asked her what made her cry, and where the lord of the castle was, for I wondered greatly that I saw no stir of servants or any person about the place.'

"It is well for you," says the young woman, "that the lord of this castle is not at home at present; for he is a monstrous giant, with but one eye on his forehead, who lives on human flesh. He brought me this child," says she, "I do not know where he got it, and ordered me to make it into a pie, and I cannot help crying at the command."

'I told her that if she knew of any place convenient that I could leave the child safely I would do it, rather than it should be killed by such a monster.'

'She told me of a house a distance off where I would get a woman who would take care of it. "But what will I do in regard of the pie?"

"Cut a finger off it," said I, "and I will bring you in a young wild pig out of the forest, which you may dress as if it was the child, and put the finger in a certain place, that if the giant doubts anything about it you may know where to turn it over at the first, and when he sees it he will be fully satisfied that the pie is made of the child."

'She agreed to the scheme I proposed, and, cutting off the child's finger, by her direction I soon had it at the house she told me of, and brought her the little pig in the place of it. She then made ready the pie, and after eating and drinking heartily myself, I was just taking my leave of the young woman when we observed the giant coming through the castle gates.'

"Bless me," said she, "what will you do now? Run away and lie down among the dead bodies that he has in the room (showing me the place), and strip off your clothes that he may not know you from the rest if he has occasion to go that way."

'I took her advice, and laid myself down among the rest, as if dead, to see how he would behave. The first thing I heard was him calling for his pie. When she set it down before him he swore it smelled like swine's flesh, but knowing where to find the finger, she immediately turned it up, which fairly convinced him of the contrary. The pie only served to sharpen his appetite, and I heard him sharpening his knife and saying he must have a collop or two, for he was not near satisfied. But what

was my terror when I heard the giant groping among the bodies, and, fancying myself, cut the half of my hip off, and took it with him to be roasted. You may be certain I was in great pain, but the fear of being killed prevented me from making any complaint. However, when he had eaten all he began to drink hot liquors in great abundance, so that in a short time he could not hold up his head, but threw himself on a large creel he had made for the purpose, and fell fast asleep. When I heard him snoring, as I was I went up and caused the woman to bind my wound with a handkerchief; and, taking the giant's spit, reddened it in the fire, and ran it through the eye, but was not able to kill him.

'However, I left the spit sticking in his head, and took to my heels; but I soon found he was in pursuit of me, although blind; and having an enchanted ring he threw it at me, and it fell on my big toe and remained fastened to it.

'The giant then called to the ring, where it was, and to my great surprise it made him answer on my foot; and he, guided by the same, made a leap at me which I had the good luck to observe, and fortunately escaped the danger. However, I found running was of no use in saving me, as long as I had the ring on my foot; so I took my sword and cut off the toe it was fastened on, and threw both into a large fish-pond that was convenient. The giant called again to the ring, which by the power of enchantment always made him answer; but he, not knowing what I had done, imagined it was still on some part of me, and made a violent leap to seize me, when he went into the pond, over head and ears, and was drowned. Now, sir knight,' says the Thief of Sloan, 'you see what dangers I came through and always escaped; but, indeed, I am lame for the want of my toe ever since.'

'My lord and master,' says an old woman that was listening all the time, 'that story is but too true, as I well know, for I am the very woman that was in the giant's castle, and you, my lord, the child that I was to make into a pie; and this is the very man that saved your life, which you may know by the want of your finger that was taken off, as you have heard, to deceive the giant.'

The Knight of the Glen, greatly surprised at what he had heard the old woman tell, and knowing he wanted his finger from his childhood, began to understand that the story was true enough.

'And is this my deliverer?' says he. 'O brave fellow, I not only pardon you all, but will keep you with myself while you live, where you shall feast like princes, and have every attendance that I have myself.'

They all returned thanks on their knees, and the Black Thief told him the reason they attempted to steal the Steed of Bells, and the necessity they were under in going home.

'Well,' says the Knight of the Glen, 'if that's the case I bestow you my steed rather than this brave fellow should die; so you may go when you please, only remember to call and see me betimes, that we may know each other well.'

They promised they would, and with great joy they set off for the King their father's palace, and the Black Thief along with them.

The wicked Queen was standing all this time on the tower, and, hearing the bells ringing at a great distance off, knew very well it was the princes coming home, and the steed with them, and through spite and vexation precipitated herself from the tower and was shattered to pieces.

The three princes lived happy and well during their father's reign, and always keeping the Black Thief along with them; but how they did after the old King's death is not known.⁴

⁴ The Hibernian Tales.

THE MASTER THIEF

THERE was once upon a time a husbandman who had three sons. He had no property to bequeath to them, and no means of putting them in the way of getting a living, and did not know what to do, so he said that they had his leave to take to anything they most fancied, and go to any place they best liked. He would gladly accompany them for some part of their way, he said, and that he did. He went with them till they came to a place where three roads met, and there each of them took his own way, and the father bade them farewell and returned to his own home again. What became of the two elder I have never been able to discover, but the youngest went both far and wide.

It came to pass, one night, as he was going through a great wood, that a terrible storm came on. It blew so hard and rained so heavily that he could scarcely keep his eyes open, and before he was aware of it he had got quite out of the track, and could neither find road nor path. But he went on, and at last he saw a light far away in the wood. Then he thought he must try and get to it, and after a long, long time he did reach it. There was a large house, and the fire was burning so brightly inside that he could tell that the people were not in bed. So he went in, and inside there was an old woman who was busy about some work.

‘Good evening, mother!’ said the youth.

‘Good evening!’ said the old woman.

‘Hutetu! it is terrible weather outside to-night,’ said the young fellow.

‘Indeed it is,’ said the old woman.

‘Can I sleep here, and have shelter for the night?’ asked the youth.

‘It wouldn’t be good for you to sleep here,’ said the old hag, ‘for if the people of the house come home and find you, they will kill both you and me.’

‘What kind of people are they then, who dwell here?’ said the youth.

‘Oh! robbers, and rabble of that sort,’ said the old woman; ‘they stole me away when I was little, and I have had to keep house for them ever since.’

‘I still think I will go to bed, all the same,’ said the youth. ‘No matter what happens, I’ll not go out to-night in such weather as this.’

‘Well, then, it will be the worse for yourself,’ said the old woman.

The young man lay down in a bed which stood near, but he dared not go to sleep: and it was better that he didn’t, for the robbers came, and the old woman said that a young fellow who was a stranger had come there, and she had not been able to get him to go away again.

‘Did you see if he had any money?’ said the robbers.

‘He’s not one to have money, he is a tramp! If he has a few clothes to his back, that is all.’

Then the robbers began to mutter to each other apart about what they should do with him, whether they should murder him, or what else they should do. In the meantime the boy got up and began to talk to them, and ask them if they did not want a man-servant, for he could find pleasure enough in serving them.

‘Yes,’ said they, ‘if you have a mind to take to the trade that we follow, you may have a place here.’

‘It’s all the same to me what trade I follow,’ said the youth, ‘for when I came away from home my father gave me leave to take to any trade I fancied.’

‘Have you a fancy for stealing, then?’ said the robbers.

‘Yes,’ said the boy, for he thought that was a trade which would not take long to learn.

Not very far off there dwelt a man who had three oxen, one of which he was to take to the town to sell. The robbers had heard of this, so they told the youth that if he were able to steal the ox from him on the way, without his knowing, and without doing him any harm, he should have leave to be their servant-man. So the youth set off, taking with him a pretty shoe with a silver buckle that was

lying about in the house. He put this in the road by which the man must go with his ox, and then went into the wood and hid himself under a bush. When the man came up he at once saw the shoe.

‘That’s a brave shoe,’ said he. ‘If I had but the fellow to it, I would carry it home with me, and then I should put my old woman into a good humour for once.’

For he had a wife who was so cross and ill-tempered that the time between the beatings she gave him was very short. But then he bethought himself that he could do nothing with one shoe if he had not the fellow to it, so he journeyed onwards and let it lie where it was. Then the youth picked up the shoe and hurried off away through the wood as fast as he was able, to get in front of the man, and then put the shoe in the road before him again.

When the man came with the ox and saw the shoe, he was quite vexed at having been so stupid as to leave the fellow to it lying where it was, instead of bringing it on with him.

‘I will just run back again and fetch it now,’ he said to himself, ‘and then I shall take back a pair of good shoes to the old woman, and she may perhaps throw a kind word to me for once.’

So he went and searched and searched for the other shoe for a long, long time, but no shoe was to be found, and at last he was forced to go back with the one which he had.

In the meantime the youth had taken the ox and gone off with it. When the man got there and found that his ox was gone, he began to weep and wail, for he was afraid that when his old woman got to know she would be the death of him. But all at once it came into his head to go home and get the other ox, and drive it to the town, and take good care that his old wife knew nothing about it. So he did this; he went home and took the ox without his wife’s knowing about it, and went on his way to the town with it. But the robbers they knew it well, because they got out their magic. So they told the youth that if he could take this ox also without the man knowing anything about it, and without doing him any hurt, he should then be on an equality with them.

‘Well, that will not be a very hard thing to do,’ thought the youth.

This time he took with him a rope and put it under his arms and tied himself up to a tree, which hung over the road that the man would have to take. So the man came with his ox, and when he saw the body hanging there he felt a little queer.

‘What a hard lot yours must have been to make you hang yourself!’ said he. ‘Ah, well! you may hang there for me; I can’t breathe life into you again.’

So on he went with his ox. Then the youth sprang down from the tree, ran by a short cut and got before him, and once more hung himself up on a tree in the road before the man.

‘How I should like to know if you really were so sick at heart that you hanged yourself there, or if it is only a hobgoblin that’s before me!’ said the man. ‘Ah, well! you may hang there for me, whether you are a hobgoblin or not,’ and on he went with his ox.

Once more the youth did just as he had done twice already; jumped down from the tree, ran by a short cut through the wood, and again hanged himself in the very middle of the road before him.

But when the man once more saw this he said to himself, ‘What a bad business this is! Can they all have been so heavy-hearted that they have all three hanged themselves? No, I can’t believe that it is anything but witchcraft! But I will know the truth,’ he said; ‘if the two others are still hanging there it is true but if they are not it’s nothing else but witchcraft.’

So he tied up his ox and ran back to see if they really were hanging there. While he was going, and looking up at every tree as he went, the youth leapt down and took his ox and went off with it. Any one may easily imagine what a fury the man fell into when he came back and saw that his ox was gone. He wept and he raged, but at last he took comfort and told himself that the best thing to do was to go home and take the third ox, without letting his wife know anything about it, and then try to sell it so well that he got a good sum of money for it. So he went home and took the third ox, and drove it off without his wife knowing anything about it. But the robbers knew all about it, and they told the youth that if he could steal this as he had stolen the two others, he should be master of the whole troop. So the youth set out and went to the wood, and when the man was coming along with the ox

he began to bellow loudly, just like a great ox somewhere inside the wood. When the man heard that he was right glad, for he fancied he recognised the voice of his big bullock, and thought that now he should find both of them again. So he tied up the third, and ran away off the road to look for them in the wood. In the meantime the youth went away with the third ox. When the man returned and found that he had lost that too, he fell into such a rage that there was no bounds to it. He wept and lamented, and for many days he did not dare to go home again, for he was afraid that the old woman would slay him outright. The robbers, also, were not very well pleased at this, for they were forced to own that the youth was at the head of them all. So one day they made up their minds to set to work to do something which it was not in his power to accomplish, and they all took to the road together, and left him at home alone. When they were well out of the house, the first thing that he did was to drive the oxen out on the road, whereupon they all ran home again to the man from whom he had stolen them, and right glad was the husbandman to see them. Then he brought out all the horses the robbers had, and loaded them with the most valuable things which he could find – vessels of gold and of silver, and clothes and other magnificent things – and then he told the old woman to greet the robbers from him and thank them from him, and say that he had gone away, and that they would have a great deal of difficulty in finding him again, and with that he drove the horses out of the courtyard. After a long, long time he came to the road on which he was travelling when he came to the robbers. And when he had got very near home, and was in sight of the house where his father lived, he put on a uniform which he had found among the things he had taken from the robbers, and which was made just like a general's, and drove into the yard just as if he were a great man. Then he entered the house and asked if he could find a lodging there.

‘No, indeed you can’t!’ said his father. ‘How could I possibly be able to lodge such a great gentleman as you? It is all that I can do to find clothes and bedding for myself, and wretched they are.’

‘You were always a hard man,’ said the youth, ‘and hard you are still if you refuse to let your own son come into your house.’

‘Are you my son?’ said the man.

‘Do you not know me again then?’ said the youth.

Then he recognised him and said, ‘But what trade have you taken to that has made you such a great man in so short a time?’

‘Oh, that I will tell you,’ answered the youth. ‘You said that I might take to anything I liked, so I apprenticed myself to some thieves and robbers, and now I have served my time and have become Master Thief.’

Now the Governor of the province lived by his father's cottage, and this Governor had such a large house and so much money that he did not even know how much it was, and he had a daughter too who was both pretty and dainty, and good and wise. So the Master Thief was determined to have her to wife, and told his father that he was to go to the Governor, and ask for his daughter for him. ‘If he asks what trade I follow, you may say that I am a Master Thief,’ said he.

‘I think you must be crazy,’ said the man, ‘for you can’t be in your senses if you think of anything so foolish.’

‘You must go to the Governor and beg for his daughter – there is no help,’ said the youth.

‘But I dare not go to the Governor and say this. He is so rich and has so much wealth of all kinds,’ said the man.

‘There is no help for it,’ said the Master Thief; ‘go you must, whether you like it or not. If I can’t get you to go by using good words, I will soon make you go with bad ones.’

But the man was still unwilling, so the Master Thief followed him, threatening him with a great birch stick, till he went weeping and wailing through the door to the Governor of the province.

‘Now, my man, and what’s amiss with you?’ said the Governor.

So he told him that he had three sons who had gone away one day, and how he had given them permission to go where they chose, and take to whatsoever work they fancied. ‘Now,’ he said, ‘the

youngest of them has come home, and has threatened me till I have come to you to ask for your daughter for him, and I am to say that he is a Master Thief,' and again the man fell a-weeping and lamenting.

'Console yourself, my man,' said the Governor, laughing. 'You may tell him from me that he must first give me some proof of this. If he can steal the joint off the spit in the kitchen on Sunday, when every one of us is watching it, he shall have my daughter. Will you tell him that?'

The man did tell him, and the youth thought it would be easy enough to do it. So he set himself to work to catch three hares alive, put them in a bag, clad himself in some old rags so that he looked so poor and wretched that it was quite pitiable to see him, and in this guise on Sunday forenoon he sneaked into the passage with his bag, like any beggar boy. The Governor himself and every one in the house was in the kitchen, keeping watch over the joint. While they were doing this the youth let one of the hares slip out of his bag, and off it set and began to run round the yard.

'Just look at that hare,' said the people in the kitchen, and wanted to go out and catch it.

The Governor saw it too, but said, 'Oh, let it go! it's no use to think of catching a hare when it's running away.'

It was not long before the youth let another hare out, and the people in the kitchen saw this too, and thought that it was the same. So again they wanted to go out and catch it, but the Governor again told them that it was of no use to try.

Very soon afterwards, however, the youth let slip the third hare, and it set off and ran round and round the courtyard. The people in the kitchen saw this too, and believed that it was still the same hare that was running about, so they wanted to go out and catch it.

'It's a remarkably fine hare!' said the Governor. 'Come and let us see if we can get hold of it.' So out he went, and the others with him, and away went the hare, and they after it, in real earnest.

In the meantime, however, the Master Thief took the joint and ran off with it, and whether the Governor got any roast meat for his dinner that day I know not, but I know that he had no roast hare, though he chased it till he was both hot and tired. At noon came the Priest, and when the Governor had told him of the trick played by the Master Thief there was no end to the ridicule he cast on the Governor.

'For my part,' said the Priest, 'I can't imagine myself being made a fool of by such a fellow as that!'

'Well, I advise you to be careful,' said the Governor, 'for he may be with you before you are at all aware.'

But the Priest repeated what he had said, and mocked the Governor for having allowed himself to be made such a fool of.

Later in the afternoon the Master Thief came and wanted to have the Governor's daughter as he had promised.

'You must first give some more samples of your skill,' said the Governor, trying to speak him fair, 'for what you did to-day was no such very great thing after all. Couldn't you play off a really good trick on the Priest? for he is sitting inside there and calling me a fool for having let myself be taken in by such a fellow as you.'

'Well, it wouldn't be very hard to do that,' said the Master Thief. So he dressed himself up like a bird, and threw a great white sheet over himself; broke off a goose's wings, and set them on his back; and in this attire climbed into a great maple tree which stood in the Priest's garden. So when the Priest returned home in the evening the youth began to cry, 'Father Lawrence! Father Lawrence! for the Priest was called Father Lawrence.'

'Who is calling me?' said the Priest.

'I am an angel sent to announce to thee that because of thy piety thou shalt be taken away alive into heaven,' said the Master Thief. 'Wilt thou hold thyself in readiness to travel away next Monday night? for then will I come and fetch thee, and bear thee away with me in a sack, and thou must

lay all thy gold and silver, and whatsoever thou may 'st possess of this world's wealth, in a heap in thy best parlour.'

So Father Lawrence fell down on his knees before the angel and thanked him, and the following Sunday he preached a farewell sermon, and gave out that an angel had come down into the large maple tree in his garden, and had announced to him that, because of his righteousness, he should be taken up alive into heaven, and as he thus preached and told them this everyone in the church, old or young, wept.

On Monday night the Master Thief once more came as an angel, and before the Priest was put into the sack he fell on his knees and thanked him; but no sooner was the Priest safely inside it than the Master Thief began to drag him away over stocks and stones.

'Oh! oh! 'cried the Priest in the sack. 'Where are you taking me?'

'This is the way to heaven. The way to heaven is not an easy one,' said the Master Thief, and dragged him along till he all but killed him.

At last he flung him into the Governor's goose-house, and the geese began to hiss and peck at him, till he felt more dead than alive.

'Oh! oh! oh! Where am I now?' asked the Priest.

'Now you are in Purgatory,' said the Master Thief, and off he went and took the gold and the silver and all the precious things which the Priest had laid together in his best parlour.

Next morning, when the goose-girl came to let out the geese, she heard the Priest bemoaning himself as he lay in the sack in the goose-house.

'Oh, heavens! who is that, and what ails you?' said she.

'Oh,' said the Priest, 'if you are an angel from heaven do let me out and let me go back to earth again, for no place was ever so bad as this – the little fiends nip me so with their tongues.'

'I am no angel,' said the girl, and helped the Priest out of the sack. 'I only look after the Governor's geese, that's what I do, and they are the little fiends which have pinched your reverence.'

'This is the Master Thief's doing! Oh, my gold and my silver and my best clothes!' shrieked the Priest, and, wild with rage, he ran home so fast that the goose-girl thought he had suddenly gone mad.

When the Governor learnt what had happened to the Priest he laughed till he nearly killed himself, but when the Master Thief came and wanted to have his daughter according to promise, he once more gave him nothing but fine words, and said, 'You must give me one more proof of your skill, so that I can really judge of your worth. I have twelve horses in my stable, and I will put twelve stable boys in it, one on each horse. If you are clever enough to steal the horses from under them, I will see what I can do for you.'

'What you set me to do can be done,' said the Master Thief, 'but am I certain to get your daughter when it is?'

'Yes; if you can do that I will do my best for you,' said the Governor.

So the Master Thief went to a shop, and bought enough brandy to fill two pocket flasks, and he put a sleeping drink into one of these, but into the other he poured brandy only. Then he engaged eleven men to lie that night in hiding behind the Governor's stable. After this, by fair words and good payment, he borrowed a ragged gown and a jerkin from an aged woman, and then, with a staff in his hand and a poke on his back, he hobbled off as evening came on towards the Governor's stable. The stable boys were just watering the horses for the night, and it was quite as much as they could do to attend to that.

'What on earth do you want here?' said one of them to the old woman.

'Oh dear! oh dear! How cold it is!' she said, sobbing, and shivering with cold. 'Oh dear! oh dear! it's cold enough to freeze a poor old body to death!' and she shivered and shook again, and said, 'For heaven's sake give me leave to stay here and sit just inside the stable door.'

'You will get nothing of the kind! Be off this moment! If the Governor were to catch sight of you here, he would lead us a pretty dance,' said one.

‘Oh! what a poor helpless old creature!’ said another, who felt sorry for her. ‘That poor old woman can do no harm to anyone. She may sit there and welcome.’

The rest of them thought that she ought not to stay, but while they were disputing about this and looking after the horses, she crept farther and farther into the stable, and at last sat down behind the door, and when once she was inside no one took any more notice of her.

As the night wore on the stable boys found it rather cold work to sit still on horseback.

‘Hutetu! But it is fearfully cold!’ said one, and began to beat his arms backwards and forwards across his breast.

‘Yes, I am so cold that my teeth are chattering,’ said another.

‘If one had but a little tobacco,’ said a third.

Well, one of them had a little, so they shared it among them, though there was very little for each man, but they chewed it. This was some help to them, but very soon they were just as cold as before.

‘Hutetu!’ said one of them, shivering again.

‘Hutetu!’ said the old woman, gnashing her teeth together till they chattered inside her mouth; and then she got out the flask which contained nothing but brandy, and her hands trembled so that she shook the bottle about, and when she drank it made a great gulp in her throat.

‘What is that you have in your flask, old woman?’ asked one of the stable boys.

‘Oh, it’s only a little drop of brandy, your honour,’ she said.

‘Brandy! What! Let me have a drop! Let me have a drop!’ screamed all the twelve at once.

‘Oh, but what I have is so little,’ whimpered the old woman. ‘It will not even wet your mouths.’

But they were determined to have it, and there was nothing to be done but give it; so she took out the flask with the sleeping drink and put it to the lips of the first of them; and now she shook no more, but guided the flask so that each of them got just as much as he ought, and the twelfth had not done drinking before the first was already sitting snoring. Then the Master Thief flung off his beggar’s rags, and took one stable boy after the other and gently set him astride on the partitions which divided the stalls, and then he called his eleven men who were waiting outside, and they rode off with the Governor’s horses.

In the morning when the Governor came to look after his stable boys they were just beginning to come to again. They were driving their spurs into the partition till the splinters flew about, and some of the boys fell off, and some still hung on and sat looking like fools. ‘Ah, well,’ said the Governor, ‘it is easy to see who has been here; but what a worthless set of fellows you must be to sit here and let the Master Thief steal the horses from under you!’ And they all got a beating for not having kept watch better.

Later in the day the Master Thief came and related what he had done, and wanted to have the Governor’s daughter as had been promised. But the Governor gave him a hundred dollars, and said that he must do something that was better still.

‘Do you think you can steal my horse from under me when I am out riding on it?’ said he.

‘Well, it might be done,’ said the Master Thief, ‘if I were absolutely certain that I should get your daughter.’

So the Governor said that he would see what he could do, and then he said that on a certain day he would ride out to a great common where they drilled the soldiers.

So the Master Thief immediately got hold of an old worn-out mare, and set himself to work to make a collar for it of green withies and branches of broom; bought a shabby old cart and a great cask, and then he told a poor old beggar woman that he would give her ten dollars if she would get into the cask and keep her mouth wide-open beneath the tap-hole, into which he was going to stick his finger. No harm should happen to her, he said; she should only be driven about a little, and if he took his finger out more than once, she should have ten dollars more. Then he dressed himself in rags, dyed himself with soot, and put on a wig and a great beard of goat’s hair, so that it was

impossible to recognise him, and went to the parade ground, where the Governor had already been riding about a long time.

When the Master Thief got there the mare went along so slowly and quietly that the cart hardly seemed to move from the spot. The mare pulled it a little forward, and then a little back, and then it stopped quite short. Then the mare pulled a little forward again, and it moved with such difficulty that the Governor had not the least idea that this was the Master Thief. He rode straight up to him, and asked if he had seen anyone hiding anywhere about in a wood that was close by.

‘No,’ said the man, ‘that have I not.’

‘Hark you,’ said the Governor. ‘If you will ride into that wood, and search it carefully to see if you can light upon a fellow who is hiding in there, you shall have the loan of my horse and a good present of money for your trouble.’

‘I am not sure that I can do it,’ said the man, ‘for I have to go to a wedding with this cask of mead which I have been to fetch, and the tap has fallen out on the way, so now I have to keep my finger in the tap-hole as I drive.’

‘Oh, just ride off,’ said the Governor, ‘and I will look after the cask and the horse too.’

So the man said that if he would do that he would go, but he begged the Governor to be very careful to put his finger into the tap-hole the moment he took his out.

So the Governor said that he would do his very best, and the Master Thief got on the Governor’s horse.

But time passed, and it grew later and later, and still the man did not come back, and at last the Governor grew so weary of keeping his finger in the tap-hole that he took it out.

‘Now I shall have ten dollars more!’ cried the old woman inside the cask; so he soon saw what kind of mead it was, and set out homewards. When he had gone a very little way he met his servant bringing him the horse, for the Master Thief had already taken it home.

The following day he went to the Governor and wanted to have his daughter according to promise. But the Governor again put him off with fine words, and only gave him three hundred dollars, saying that he must do one more masterpiece of skill, and if he were but able to do that he should have her.

Well, the Master Thief thought he might if he could hear what it was.

‘Do you think you can steal the sheet off our bed, and my wife’s night-gown?’ said the Governor.

‘That is by no means impossible,’ said the Master Thief. ‘I only wish I could get your daughter as easily.’

So late at night the Master Thief went and cut down a thief who was hanging on the gallows, laid him on his own shoulders, and took him away with him. Then he got hold of a long ladder, set it up against the Governor’s bedroom window, and climbed up and moved the dead man’s head up and down, just as if he were some one who was standing outside and peeping in.

‘There’s the Master Thief, mother!’ said the Governor, nudging his wife. ‘Now I’ll just shoot him, that I will!’

So he took up a rifle which he had laid at his bedside.

‘Oh no, you must not do that,’ said his wife; ‘you yourself arranged that he was to come here.’

‘Yes, mother, I will shoot him,’ said he, and lay there aiming, and then aiming again, for no sooner was the head up and he caught sight of it than it was gone again. At last he got a chance and fired, and the dead body fell with a loud thud to the ground, and down went the Master Thief too, as fast as he could.

‘Well,’ said the Governor, ‘I certainly am the chief man about here, but people soon begin to talk, and it would be very unpleasant if they were to see this dead body; the best thing that I can do is to go out and bury him.’

‘Just do what you think best, father,’ said his wife.

So the Governor got up and went downstairs, and as soon as he had gone out through the door, the Master Thief stole in and went straight upstairs to the woman.

‘Well, father dear,’ said she, for she thought it was her husband. ‘Have you got done already?’

‘Oh yes, I only put him into a hole,’ said he, ‘and raked a little earth over him; that’s all I have been able to do to-night, for it is fearful weather outside. I will bury him better afterwards, but just let me have the sheet to wipe myself with, for he was bleeding, and I have got covered with blood with carrying him.’

So she gave him the sheet.

‘You will have to let me have your night-gown too,’ he said, ‘for I begin to see that the sheet won’t be enough.’

Then she gave him her night-gown, but just then it came into his head that he had forgotten to lock the door, and he was forced to go downstairs and do it before he could lie down in bed again. So off he went with the sheet, and the night-gown too.

An hour later the real Governor returned.

‘Well, what a time it has taken to lock the house door, father!’ said his wife, ‘and what have you done with the sheet and the night-gown?’

‘What do you mean?’ asked the Governor.

‘Oh, I am asking you what you have done with the night-gown and sheet that you got to wipe the blood off yourself with,’ said she.

‘Good heavens!’ said the Governor, ‘has he actually got the better of me again?’

When day came the Master Thief came too, and wanted to have the Governor’s daughter as had been promised, and the Governor dared do no otherwise than give her to him, and much money besides, for he feared that if he did not the Master Thief might steal the very eyes out of his head, and that he himself would be ill spoken of by all men. The Master Thief lived well and happily from that time forth, and whether he ever stole any more or not I cannot tell you, but if he did it was but for pastime.⁵

⁵ From P. C. Asbjornsen.

BROTHER AND SISTER

BROTHER took sister by the hand and said: 'Look here; we haven't had one single happy hour since our mother died. That stepmother of ours beats us regularly every day, and if we dare go near her she kicks us away. We never get anything but hard dry crusts to eat – why, the dog under the table is better off than we are. She does throw him a good morsel or two now and then. Oh dear! if our own dear mother only knew all about it! Come along, and let us go forth into the wide world together.'

So off they started through fields and meadows, over hedges and ditches, and walked the whole day long, and when it rained sister said:

'Heaven and our hearts are weeping together.'

Towards evening they came to a large forest, and were so tired out with hunger and their long walk, as well as all their trouble, that they crept into a hollow tree and soon fell fast asleep.

Next morning, when they woke up, the sun was already high in the heavens and was shining down bright and warm into the tree. Then said brother:

'I'm so thirsty, sister; if I did but know where to find a little stream, I'd go and have a drink. I do believe I hear one.' He jumped up, took sister by the hand, and they set off to hunt for the brook.

Now their cruel stepmother was in reality a witch, and she knew perfectly well that the two children had run away. She had crept secretly after them, and had cast her spells over all the streams in the forest.

Presently the children found a little brook dancing and glittering over the stones, and brother was eager to drink of it, but as it rushed past sister heard it murmuring:

'Who drinks of me will be a tiger! who drinks of me will be a tiger!'

So she cried out, 'Oh! dear brother, pray don't drink, or you'll be turned into a wild beast and tear me to pieces.'

Brother was dreadfully thirsty, but he did not drink.

'Very well,' said he, 'I'll wait till we come to the next spring.'

When they came to the second brook, sister heard it repeating too:

'Who drinks of me will be a wolf I who drinks of me will be a wolf!'

And she cried, 'Oh! brother, pray don't drink here either, or you'll be turned into a wolf and eat me up.'

Again brother did not drink, but he said:

'Well, I'll wait a little longer till we reach the next stream, but then, whatever you may say, I really must drink, for I can bear this thirst no longer.'

And when they got to the third brook, sister heard it say as it rushed past:

'Who drinks of me will be a roe! who drinks of me will be a roe!'

And she begged, 'Ah! brother, don't drink yet, or you'll become a roe and run away from me.'

But her brother was already kneeling by the brook and bending over it to drink, and, sure enough, no sooner had his lips touched the water than he fell on the grass transformed into a little Roebuck.

Sister cried bitterly over her poor bewitched brother, and the little Roe wept too, and sat sadly by her side. At last the girl said:

'Never mind, dear little fawn, I will never forsake you,' and she took off her golden garter and tied it round the Roe's neck.

Then she plucked rushes and plaited a soft cord of them, which she fastened to the collar. When she had done this she led the Roe farther and farther, right into the depths of the forest.

After they had gone a long, long way they came to a little house, and when the girl looked into it she found it was quite empty, and she thought 'perhaps we might stay and live here.'

So she hunted up leaves and moss to make a soft bed for the little Roe, and every morning and evening she went out and gathered roots, nuts, and berries for herself, and tender young grass for the fawn. And he fed from her hand, and played round her and seemed quite happy. In the evening, when sister was tired, she said her prayers and then laid her head on the fawn's back and fell sound asleep with it as a pillow. And if brother had but kept his natural form, really it would have been a most delightful kind of life.

They had been living for some time in the forest in this way, when it came to pass that the King of that country had a great hunt through the woods. Then the whole forest rang with such a blowing of horns, baying of dogs, and joyful cries of huntsmen, that the little Roe heard it and longed to join in too.

'Ah!' said he to sister, 'do let me go off to the hunt! I can't keep still any longer.'

And he begged and prayed till at last she consented.

'But,' said she, 'mind you come back in the evening. I shall lock my door fast for fear of those wild huntsmen; so, to make sure of my knowing you, knock at the door and say, "My sister dear, open; I'm here." If you don't speak I shan't open the door.'

So off sprang the little Roe, and he felt quite well and happy in the free open air.

The King and his huntsmen soon saw the beautiful creature and started in pursuit, but they could not come up with it, and whenever they thought they were sure to catch it, it bounded off to one side into the bushes and disappeared. When night came on it ran home, and knocking at the door of the little house cried:

'My sister dear, open; I'm here.' The door opened, and he ran in and rested all night on his soft mossy bed.

Next morning the hunt began again, and as soon as the little Roe heard the horns and the 'Ho! ho!' of the huntsmen, he could not rest another moment, and said:

'Sister, open the door, I must get out.'

So sister opened the door and said, 'Now mind and get back by nightfall, and say your little rhyme.'

As soon as the King and his huntsmen saw the Roe with the golden collar they all rode off after it, but it was far too quick and nimble for them. This went on all day, but as evening came on the huntsmen had gradually encircled the Roe, and one of them wounded it slightly in the foot, so that it limped and ran off slowly.

Then the huntsman stole after it as far as the little house, and heard it call out, 'My sister dear, open; I'm here,' and he saw the door open and close immediately the fawn had run in.

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