

**ROBERT
HENDERSON
KENNETH**

THE MARVELLOUS
ADVENTURES AND RARE
CONCEITS OF MASTER
TYLL OWLGLASS

Robert Henderson Mackenzie Kenneth
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Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie

The Marvellous Adventures and Rare Conceits of Master Tyll Owlglass / Newly collected, chronicled and set forth, in our English tongue

PREFACE

*“Wit, an’t be thy will, put me into good fooling! Those wits that think they have thee do very oft prove fools; and I that am sure I lack thee, may pass for a wise man: For what says Quinapalus? Better a witty fool than a foolish wit.”
Clown in “Twelfth Night,” Act I., Scene 5.*

Among the folkbooks of the German nation, not one has obtained so general a circulation as that now presented in an English form. It has been deemed worthy, as by the Appendix may be perceived, of being translated into French, Dutch, Danish, Polish, nay, even Hebrew, and honoured by being reprinted on every kind of paper, good and bad. A favourite among the young for its amusing and quaint adventures, and a study among those who strive, by the diligent comparison of different eras of national literature, to arrive at a due appreciation of national character, Eulenspiegel, or Owlglass the boor (peasant), possesses a peculiar value for the old. I well remember how, as a very little child, I first made the friendship of the lithe though clumsy hero; and to the present time do not feel that I can say I have lost my interest in the humorous quips and quiddities of the strolling vagabond. I little thought, when I then read the German book, that it would be my privilege to introduce him to other readers in my own language.

The Gil Blas of German mediæval story, there is deep instruction in the pungent jests and literal ways of the man who held up his mirror for owls to look in, and each of whose tricks might form the groundwork of a moral reflection. And for the early times in which it appeared, there was not a little courage in the author of it. Strange to say, this person appears to have been a Franciscan friar, Thomas Murner, who, in other matters, made not a little stir in his own day. He visited this country, and wrote a book in defence of our good King Hal the Bluff against that famous monk, Luther; and he received some assistance in a substantial gift from that monarch. An account of him will be found in the Appendix; we have here only to deal with the significance of the book itself.

Like the deep searching work of Rabelais, the book is a satire, not upon human life only, but upon special and dangerous topics. Very early editions contain the story of how Eulenspiegel procured an old skull from a churchyard, and turned the passion for worshipping relics to profitable account;¹ and the priests and would-be learned men of his time continually appear in ludicrous, undignified, or humiliating positions. Rank was not respected, nor was vice in high places passed by with (so-called) discreet silence. Yet with all the graver objects in the book, the immediate aim of amusement was never forgotten; and, letting us into the secrets of peasant life in Germany at an era when peasants had little to rejoice over, we almost imagine that we can hear the shouts of laughter with which the blunt outspoken jokes of this sly clown were received. But Mr. Hallam does justice to a higher appreciation of this kind of literature among the better classes of the time.

“They had a literary public, as we may call it,” says this distinguished writer,² “not merely in their courts and universities, but in their respectable middle class, the burghers of the free cities,

¹ See Adventure the 36th, p. 63.

² Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol. i. p. 235 (Library ed.); vol. i. p. 240 (Cabinet ed.).

and perhaps in the artizans whom they employed. Their reading was almost always with a serious end: but no people so successfully cultivated the art of moral and satirical fable. These in many instances spread with great favour through Cisalpine Europe. Among the works of this kind, in the fifteenth century, two deserve mention; the *Eulenspiegel*, popular afterwards in England by the name of Howleglass, and a superior and better known production,³ the *Narrenschiff*, or Ship of Fools, by Sebastian Brandt of Strasburg.... It is a metrical satire on the follies of every class, and may possibly have suggested to Erasmus his *Encomium Moriae*. But the idea was not absolutely new; the theatrical company established at Paris under the name of *Enfans de Sans Souci*, as well as the ancient office of jester or fool in our courts and castles, implied the same principle of satirising mankind with ridicule so general, that every man should feel more pleasure from the humiliation of his neighbours than pain from his own.... The influence such books of simple fiction and plain moral would possess over a people, may be judged by the delight they once gave to children, before we had learnt to vitiate the healthy appetite of ignorance by premature refinements and stimulating variety.”⁴

Yet with all the repute which the book must have had among the boors and country louts of what people choose, with doubtful taste or insight, to call the “dark ages,” Owlglass, if it had not contained within itself great vitality, might have lain in the obscurity which surrounds many a contemporary work. Of the three great philosophers then extant, I have somewhere read a kind of parallel, that Rabelais in his work satirised fantastically, and with peculiar reference to the more educated and scholarly readers of his time. Erasmus, on the other part, struck at the monks with vigorous hand in other fashion; while both Brandt and Murner took a more popular form in their compositions: yet, while Brandt is now scarce remembered, *Eulenspiegel* remains, a striking and applicable book, setting forth, indeed, in a good light, the truth everywhere, that “the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life.” In this may be found the reason of its wonderful popularity in Germany—in this is the secret of its constant reproduction in so many languages.

The fool in idle hour claims our attentive ear, charms, instructs, enchains the mind, when the sonorous voice and weighty arguments of the preacher would have no greater effect than the production of a yawn, or, at most, a fugitive repentance. The fact of the subjection of the letter to the spirit must be borne in mind throughout. Mighty times were those when, by sturdy hands and wise pates, the world was ridding itself of the rule of monks and literal interpreters of the universe and of the duties of society. Yet Murner, as has been mentioned, fought against Luther; nor, indeed, could Rabelais or Erasmus perceive, save somewhat dimly, whither their words tended. Perhaps, in secret, they saw, in fitful glimpses, the truth that history proceeds according to progressive laws of development; and when the monks, who at one time had done good service, were no longer useful to mankind, they decayed from inherent fitlessness, and so vanished, overcome by the light of such lamps as these.

A remarkable feature in the adventures of Owlglass must not be passed over without notice, viz., the very few allusions anywhere made to the occult sciences, or to similar subjects. In the story of the invisible picture there is one slight reference to alchymy; and in that where he is led forth to the gallows, the multitude regard Owlglass as a magician, who will rescue himself by the aid of demons. But so real is the character everywhere, that not even by the many editors has any tale been introduced connecting the hero with such matters. Yet the absence of such a colouring displays a greater skill and a deeper purpose in the author; from the tendency of the age in which it was written, any mention of occult science would have been excusable, nay, almost natural. If we remember that the era of its

³ Matter of doubt to the present writer whether it be thus superior; in any case, it would be scarcely so interesting to people now-a-days. But see the Appendix.

⁴ Bouterwek, in his “History of German Poetry and Eloquence” (*Geschichte der deutschen Poesie und Beredsamkeit*), vol. ix. p. 336, confirms the observations of Hallam, and lends additional testimony to the popularity of the *Eulenspiegel*. Adolf Rosen von Kreutzheim, in the Preface to his poem, the *Esel-König* (Ass-King), alludes to the general dispersion of *Eulenspiegel*, Marcolphus, Katziporo, and other works, and abuses them in set terms as shameful, mischievous, and dangerous.

publication was rife with magicians, astrologers, and alchemists; that Cornelius Agrippa very shortly afterwards found it necessary to protest against the abuse of such subjects in his treatise “Of the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Sciences and Arts,” that Trithemius was then Abbot of the Benedictine Monastery of Spanheim: all these considerations would have caused no surprise at the introduction of scenes of enchantment, or, at least, an employment of them allusively or by implication. But no; true to its mission of a folk-book, filled with the manners and customs of its time, Owlglass is thoroughly worldly, and for us, therefore, possesses greater interest and value.

It may be interesting for a moment to set side by side the jester exhibited in the pages of Shakspeare and the good Master Owlglass. Historical Owlglass there certainly was at some time of the fourteenth century, his tomb yet standing at Möllen, as will be seen; but the pranks of many excellent jesters were all centred in the book telling of Owlglass; so that he has been overlaid with jokes, not in his own power to perform. Indeed, in the present edition, from a respect I have for chronology, I have been obliged to extrude two or three which would have involved anachronisms. However, they were somewhat dull, and therefore need not be regretted.

The first English version of Owlglass (as to which see the Appendix, p. 220) having been published early in the sixteenth century, in a “little dumpy quarto,” by Master William Copland, its fame might, without much difficulty, have infiltrated the country parts of England; and, if we regard the clowns of Shakspeare, Touchstone, in “As You Like It,” for example, it might appear that Shakspeare had seen this Black Letter of William Copland: yet, while the humour of Owlglass consists in his stolid performance of the exact words commanded him, there is clearly a quite other appreciation of wit in the English writer. It is, in fact, the polished foil beside the homely cudgel—both effective weapons, but one of them far more glittering, swift, and murderous. The cudgel may be warded off by a less skilful hand, the glancing steel hath made a wound, and been withdrawn in the very flash of its own rapidity. Dogberry and Verges, Costard perhaps, nay, even Sir Toby Belch, have points of character more resembling Owlglass than do the clowns of our great poet. The Fool in King Lear, has some kin to him, but is infinitely wiser. Indeed, we might perhaps rather class Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym, humourists in their way, with Master Owlglass than the subtle wits Shakspeare brings upon the stage. Yet has Owlglass an existence beyond and outside all question of contrast, all opinion of similarity. Gervinus, in his comprehensive History of German Fiction⁵ has well defined Owlglass to be “the personified quip and crank” (*der personificirte Schwank*). In fact, he is a Gothic Diogenes set in a Teutonic frame, living, moving, and having his being in an atmosphere as peculiarly distinct in its grotesque and massive proportions, as was the earlier Hellenic age, in its union of elegance and power. No previous time could have produced such an out-birth, and, with all our modern tendencies towards humour, fostered by the constant study of our quaint dramatists, another Owlglass would be a distortion, if not an impossibility.

That, even in grave England, and with quaint Ben Jonson, Master Owlglass was a favourite, we may see from two allusions which he makes to him; one in the “Poetaster,” Act the Third, Scene the Fourth, where Tucca exclaims: “What, do you laugh, Owlglass?” And again in the “Masque of the Fortunate Isles,” produced in 1626, Ben Jonson introduces Howleglass; and Johphiel says to Merefool:—

Or what do you think
Of Howleglass instead of him?

Merefool.—No him
I have a mind to.

⁵ History of German Fiction, vol. ii. p. 298.

Johphiel.—O, but Ulen-spiegle,
Were such a name—but you shall have your longing.

And later on, the remark is made:—

Whether you would present him with an Hermes
Or with an Howleglass?

Skelton.—An Howleglass
To come to pass
On his father's ass;
There never was,
By day, nor night,
A finer sight,
With feathers upright
In his horned cap,
And crooked shape,
Much like an ape,
With owl on fist.
And glass at his wrist.⁶

A most unjustifiable libel, by the way, is committed here, for Owlglass was always a “proper” gentleman, having no crook-back or ape-like appearance.⁷

One of the most thoughtful and philosophic writers of our day, Mr. Carlyle, has a few noteworthy sentences regarding this strange book, which we shall do well to transfer to these pages:—

“Lastly, in a third class, we find in full play that spirit of broad drollery, of rough saturnine humour, which the Germans claim as a special characteristic; among these, we must not omit to mention the *Schiltbürger* correspondent to our own *Wise Men of Gotham*; still less the far-famed *Tyll Eulenspiegel* (Tyll Owlglass), whose rogueries and waggeries belong in the fullest sense to this era.

“This last is a true German work; for both the man, Tyll Eulenspiegel, and the book which is his history, were produced there. Nevertheless, Tyll's fame has gone abroad into all lands; thus, the narrative of his exploits has been published in innumerable editions, even with all manner of learned glosses, and translated into Latin, English, French, Dutch, Polish; nay, in several languages, as in his own, an *Eulenspiegelerei* and *Espiéglerie*, or dog's trick, so named after him, still by consent of lexicographers, keeps his memory alive. We may say, that to few mortals has it been granted to earn such a place in universal history as Tyll; for now, after five centuries, when Wallace's birth-place is unknown even to the Scots; and the admirable Crichton still more rapidly is grown a shadow; and Edward Longshanks sleeps unregarded save by a few antiquarian English, Tyll's native village is pointed out with pride to the traveller, and his tombstone, with a sculptured pun on his name,—namely, an Owl and a Glass,—still stands, or pretends to stand, at Möllen, near Lübeck, where, since 1350, his once nimble bones have been at rest. Tyll, in the calling he had chosen, naturally led a wandering life, as place after place became too hot for him; by which means he saw into many things with his own eyes; having been not only over all Westphalia and Saxony, but even in Poland, and as far as Rome. That in his old days, like other great men, he became an autobiographer, and in trustful winter evenings, not on paper, but on air, and to the laughter-lovers of Möllen, composed this work himself, is purely a hypothesis; certain only that it came forth originally in the dialect of this region,

⁶ Jonson's Works, p. 650.

⁷ An Howleglass is mentioned as being in the library of a Captain Cox. On which, see the Appendix, p. 221.

namely, the *Platt-Deutsch*; and was therefrom translated, probably about a century afterwards, into its present High German, as Lessing conjectures, by one Thomas Murner, who, on other grounds, is not unknown to antiquaries. For the rest, write it who might, the book is here, 'abounding,' as a wise critic remarks, 'in inventive humour, in rough merriment, and broad drollery, not without a keen rugged shrewdness of insight; which properties must have made it irresistibly captivating to the popular sense; and with all its fantastic extravagancies, and roguish crotchets, in many points instructive.'"⁸

Mr. Carlyle then cites one adventure, that of the Easter Play, which has not been included in the present version; for although it illustrates well enough the interior of a parson's household of the fourteenth century, there is a smack of profanity about it which it is well to avoid. And, indeed, it is due to the reader of this volume, to inform him, that our present chronicle differs in one material point from all former editions. While it has been my object everywhere to tell the story of Owlglass in a quaint and simple manner, modern good taste required a special duty at the chronicler's hands: viz., that of purification and modification, for it may readily be believed that a book written *of* the fourteenth century, *for* the sixteenth century, would abound with homely wit, not quite consonant with the ideas of the nineteenth. Therefore several stories of a somewhat indelicate, and generally pointless, character have been omitted, and their place supplied with matter obtained by a collation of several editions in the German, French, and Flemish languages.

And another aim which I have had in view has been, where good taste and opportunity admitted, to apply, in a veiled manner, the axioms and quips of our knight-errant of roguery, to subjects and follies not banished from our own more polite age. The reader will thus be able to judge in how far this modern Owlglass differs from its predecessors. In no instance, however, have I permitted myself to lose sight of the object in view, which was to give as good a picture of the original as might be, and that in spirit rather than in letter. This spirit has been so justly estimated by M. Robin, a clever and dashing French critic, whose sad death may still be remembered by a few, that, at the risk of adding too much to this preface, I subjoin an epitome of his remarks:—

"It is quite true," says he, "that glory is nothing but vanity. I have seen in the sepulchral silence of libraries, names quite unknown, on the backs of gigantic volumes, the librarians could tell me nothing of these, except that they were the authors of these books. I have seen, on the pavement of ancient churches, pompous epitaphs, and heraldic arms, and the nails of the peasant's shoe tread them under foot. Be then in life a man of learning, knowing every language, be a noble of Spain, a Knight of the Golden Fleece, Viceroy of Mexico or Peru, say you have the right of keeping your hat on in the presence of the King, yet it will scarcely be known that you have lived, while a *vaurien*, a man who had neither hearth nor home, a practical joker, a drunkard, having the devil in his purse, living from hand to mouth, sleeping to-day in the streets, and to-morrow in the bed of his host, whom he never pays, and understanding too well the buffoonery of life ever to have thought of glory; as soon as this man is dead, and ignobly buried, he enters at once into immortality, bequeathing to the people a name which they will never forget, and, to the Attic language of the moderns, a word of which they stood much in need. Who can boast of having invented a word? Very few of the greatest writers can arrogate to themselves this most rare glory. But to leave one's name to the most grave and self-sufficient language in Europe, to force it to say *espiègle*, because one's name was Ulenspiegel; and to pass fifty years in practical joking and laughter; to be able to call oneself the father of the great family of Mystificators, surely this is no common fate, and doubtless the contemplator of it will cry out: 'Where doth Immortality dwell? Poor author, it was well worth thy pains to wear out thy brain in writing folios! Unfortunate hidalgo, it was well worth the trouble of being puffed up with pride at a long name unpronounceable in a breath, that this name should be forgotten, and that the name of a boorish jester should be transmitted almost intact to the most distant posterity.'"

⁸ Carlyle, *Miscellaneous Essays*, Edition 1857, Vol. II. pp. 287–288.

The best test of the worth of a book, whether it be several centuries old, or, as it were, a production of our own day, is the proportion of times that it has been reproduced or imitated. Singularly enough, while, in most continental languages, such translations and imitations have been frequent, in two instances only has this celebrated folk-book appeared in an English dress; first, as has been already stated, in *Black Letter*, in 1528–1530, and again in a modified form in 1720. With a description of these two editions I will not trouble the reader here, as in the Appendix at the end an accurate account of them will be found; and I will merely add, in this place, that of the *Black Letter* translation only two copies are known to exist, both in the British Museum; and that of the second, a copy of which is now in my own possession, I have only been able to find one other, which is in the Douce Collection in the Bodleian.

It was originally in contemplation to reprint the scarce *Black Letter* edition; but, on a careful examination, I found this an impossibility, as the contents, for reasons already hinted at, would have shocked good taste; nor, in point of fact, would that edition have offered so great a variety as in this volume has been presented; which may be understood when it is explained, that of all kinds of stories, good and bad, the *Black Letter* gives but forty-eight; while in the present chronicle there are—such questionable adventures being omitted—no less than one hundred and eleven. Although the idea of such reprint was thus abandoned, there appeared no reason, however, why the old-fashioned form should not be adopted in the telling of the tale. For this and any other faults which the reader may detect I hold myself responsible; and I may mention, that so careful have I been to imitate the style of the time in which it is supposed to be written, that I have even followed the confusion between the use of the “thee” and “thou” and “you” and “ye” common in early books, especially at the transition era of the Stuarts.

The edition which I have adopted as a guide or clue-line, is the Low German original of 1519 in the excellent and exhaustive work of Dr. Lappenberg; and I need not here especially refer to any other, save that of M. Octave Delepierre, long time a zealous antiquary, who argues for a Flemish origin for our hero, an origin in which, giving every meed of praise to that gentleman for the singular ingenuity and complete localization which his book exhibits, I need scarcely say that I cannot coincide. Nay, it may even be suspected that he himself is but in jest with his argument.

I have also to draw the notice of the reader to the Appendices at the end of this volume, which enter into the bibliographical and other history of the book, and to mention that I am greatly indebted to the Rev. Dr. Bandinel, the venerable Librarian of the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and also to my friends, the Rev. Alfred Hackman, M.A., Precentor of Christ Church, and the Rev. John S. Sidebotham, M.A., Chaplain of New College, and Preacher at St. Martin’s, Carfax, Oxford, for much valuable assistance in searching for Eulenspiegel literature amidst the treasures contained in that valuable library.

This is all, I think, which need here be said touching the task I have here completed; for the reader need not be asked to appreciate the artistic skill of my friend and coadjutor, Mr. Alfred Crowquill. If the reader does but experience in the perusal of this singular book—practically the first English edition of it—one tithe of the pleasure I have had in preparing it, all that was to be accomplished will have been duly fulfilled.

Kenneth Robert Henderson Mackenzie.

35, Bernard Street, Russell Square, W.C.

October 3, 1859.

The Introduction touching Master Tyll Owlglass

With what joy and inward content do I not greet ye, my masters, bringing with me for your sweet delectation and delightful comfort the history, the which I have most diligently written, and out of many learned and wise books gathered together, and which indeed telleth of the merry jests, rare conceits, and subtile cony-catching of that renowned Master Tyll Owlglass, who in the Brunswick land was born. And i' faith, ye do owe me not a little grace and thankfulness for that which I have now finished,—but an if my pains had been a thousandfold greater than they have been, I would not have spared myself. This is mine answer unto ye. And my desire hath been, that ye shall most merrily sit ye round the fire and laugh until that your sides shall ache, and your inner man be shaken with the continual reverberation of your delighted spirit. For an ill heart is such an one that doth never rejoice, but trembleth ever and anon at the wonders with the which we be encompassed, so do ye now, without any other speech from me, accept this little book, and therein read, and ponder well the deeds of this noble master, who from low estate and boorish condition rose to be the companion of princes and dukes, and, by his infinitude of rare parts, remaineth well known and beloved of all men in divers countries and lands all over the fair domain of Christendom. And now do I bid ye farewell, and leave ye with a companion less tedious than am I, and in the reading of his life will ye not lose your labour, that know I well.

The First Adventure

How Tyll Owlglass was born and was in one day three times christened

As verily all creatures must have a beginning of their lives, so that they may come into this world to abide therein, so also must it be with the famous Master Owlglass, who lived in Germany many years, and of whom many notable adventures are told and noised about all over that country. In the land of Brunswick, in the deep wood named Melme, lieth a village named Kneitlingen, and there was born the pious child Owlglass. And the name of his father was Nicolaus, commonly said Claus, Owlglass, and his mother's name was Anna Wertbeck. It fortun'd, that when the child was born that they made a great feast, and sent the child to be christened in the village of Amptlen; hard by the castle of Amptlen, which was after destroyed by the people of Magdeburg. And when the child was baptised, he was called Tyll Owlglass. Truly, however, after that the feast had come to an end, the godfathers and godmothers of the child having eaten and drunken right lustily (for it was the custom of that place most heartily to do these things), set forth on their way homeward, and the sun being hot, they were tired and they minded not their steps to be careful of them, and so it came to pass, that one of them carrying the child caught her foot upon a stone and fell into a ditch, so child and all were quickly covered with mud. But as weeds cannot so easily come to harm, the child was not hurt, but only thus christened in the mire.

When they got home, the child was washed clean in hot water. Thus was Owlglass in one day three times christened, first in the church, then in the mud of the ditch, and at last in warm water. So is it always shown with great and famous persons, that, in their infancy, strange and most wonderful things do foreshow their future greatness.

The Second Adventure

**How that Owlglass when that he was a child did give
a marvellous answer to a man that asked the way**



Upon a time went the father and mother of Owlglass forth, and left Owlglass within the house. Then came a man riding by, and he rode his horse half into the house in the doorway, and asked: "Is there nobody within?" Then answered the child: "Yea, there is a man and a half, and the head of a horse." Then asked the man: "Where is thy father?" and the child made answer and said: "My father is of ill making worse; and my mother is gone for scathe or shame." And the man said to the child: "How understandest thou that?" And then the child said: "My father is making of ill worse, for he plougheth the field and maketh great holes, that men should fall therein when they ride. And

my mother is gone to borrow bread, and when she giveth it again and giveth less it is a shame, and when she giveth it and giveth more it is scathe.” Then said the man: “Which is the way to ride?” And the child answered and said: “There where the geese go.” And then rode the man his way to the geese, and when he came to the geese they flew into the water; then wist he not whither to ride, but turned again to the child and said: “The geese be flown into the water, and thus wot I not what to do nor whither to ride.” Then answered the child: “Ye must ride where the geese go and not where they swim.” Then departed the man and rode his way, and marvelled of the answer of the child. Thus from the mouths of babes cometh forth wisdom and ready conceit.

The Third Adventure

How all the boors did cry out shame upon Owlglass for his knavery; and how he rode upon a horse behind his father

Now when Owlglass had come to an age to run about, he began playing divers tricks and knavish actions among the boys of his village; and he fought and tumbled about upon the grass, that he looked more like a monkey than a boy. But when it came to pass that he was four years old, his malice waxed greater and greater, so that his father was ever being disputed with by the neighbours, who cried out shame upon Owlglass, as being so great a knave; and though it happened that his father did scold him with many words, Owlglass did always excuse himself by knavish answers. Thereat the father thought he would quickly learn the verity of these sayings of the neighbours, and at a time when the boors were all walking in the streets, he did set his son Owlglass behind him on his horse. Then, also, he commanded Owlglass that he should be most quiet and silent. What, then, did the pious and good child? He did silently play tricks and mocked the people, whereon they did most loudly cry out upon Owlglass: “Fie upon the little malicious knave!”

Now as Owlglass spake never a word in all this time, his father did not know how it came to pass that the people did cry out so loudly; and Owlglass complained to him, and said: “Hearest thou, father! Here sit I silently behind thee upon thy horse and say no word, and yet the people cry out against me for my knavery.” Then the father sayeth but little, and taketh Owlglass and setteth him upon the horse in front of him. Then did Owlglass open his mouth wide, and did stretch forth his tongue, in mockery of the people. And the people did run forth, crying: “Out upon the little knave!” Yet did not the father see the knavery, but said: “Alas for thee, that thou shouldst have been born in an unhappy hour!” So much did he love Owlglass, that he then departed out of the land of Brunswick, and he did abide in the land of Magdeburg, hard by the river Saale.

In a little time thereafter, so sorrowful was he, that he gave up the ghost, and left his wife and child in great poverty. Thus it is that great men are often persecuted and smitten with many blows in their own land, nor do they find good comfort therein! Owlglass, although he knew not any handicraft, did grow up and wax older in knavery; and when that he was sixteen years old, did excel in tricks, quips, and quiddities.

The Fourth Adventure

How Owlglass did learn to dance upon a rope, and did fall therefrom into the river Saale

It hath been said of old time, by the wise and cunning: “When that the cat is out of the house, then play the mice.” Thus fared it with Owlglass after that his father was dead. His mother had become old and full of years, and she could no longer have the mastery over Owlglass, and he did learn many greatly knavish conceits. And his mother was sorely troubled of Owlglass, and bore not with his knavery.

Now it fortun'd, that the house where Owlglass and his mother did live, lay hard by the river Saale, and Owlglass did go up into the garret of the house, and there did learn to dance upon a rope, until that his mother did find him going to and fro upon the rope, and did so belabour him with a cudgel, that he fled through the window of the garret on to the roof, where she could not follow him. And this often came to pass, until he grew older, and she became weak and of no strength to have power over him. Then thought he, it was time that he should in open day render it manifest unto all, how great was his perfection in the art of dancing upon the rope, and he did stretch the rope across the river Saale, from one house even unto a house which lay over against them on the other side. And when that the people beheld such unwonted sport, they did run together, old and young, in a great crowd, and did marvel much that Owlglass should go hither and thither in so sure a manner upon the rope.

Happiness is, however, but for the few, and seldom doth evil fortune fail to sow sorrowful seeds in the midst of joyous doings; and thus fortun'd it, that the mother of Owlglass did hear the shouting of the people at the feats of Owlglass, and that she might reprove with heavy punishment the knavery of her son, she hastened to the place where the rope was tied, and cut it through with a knife secretly. Then did good Master Owlglass plump into the water with much mockery and despite; and all the people did laugh greatly thereat, and Owlglass was vexed, so that he could speak no word; nor did he fear the bath and the peril of drowning as much as the jests of the people, who ran after him, blessing the bath with much outcry. Thus did Master Owlglass come evilly off in his first undertaking.

The Fifth Adventure

How Owlglass did move two hundred young people, that they did give unto him their shoes, with the which he made rare sport upon his rope

In no long space of time thereafter, Owlglass did desire to avenge him, concerning the mockery which befel him after the bath, therefore did he tie the rope across unto another house, and once again told the people that he would dance to and fro upon the rope. Soon did the people come together in great multitude, and there were in that place both old and young; then Owlglass spake unto the young people, and said that he would show unto them a most rare device upon the rope with their shoes. Then did they believe him, and with that put their shoes off their feet and gave them unto Owlglass, and he did put them all together upon a string and went up on to the rope; and all the people thought that he was going to make some wonderful stroke therewith. But the boys were sad, and would fain have received their shoes again.

When, therefore, Owlglass was sitting upon the rope and had ended his trickery, he cried out with a loud voice and spake these words: "Be ye now every one in readiness, and let him seek his shoes again;" and he cut the string and threw all the shoes upon the ground, in such wise that one shoe fell upon another into a great heap, and none could be distinguished. Then did the people, old and young, come in great crowds, and caught a shoe here and another there; and one spake and said this was his shoe, whereat another did make answer that it was his; and then fell they to fisticuffs, and with great blows they pulled out the hairs from their heads: one lay on the ground, and the other belaboured him with sturdy strokes; and one wept with a loud voice while another did laugh, and a third screamed like a peacock. Thus went things forward, until the old men began also to give many stripes to the crowd.

But Owlglass, sitting upon his rope, laughed until his stomach shook again, and cried out: "Right merry may ye be! Seek ye your shoes again in that wise in which I sought my way forth from the bath." Then did he come down from his rope, and left them in contention; nor did he again come forth, for fear of the people, but abode at home with his mother. Thereover did his mother greatly rejoice, and thought that now he was a wise and gentle person, and soon, therefore, would things go better with them all. Yet knew she not of his knavery, and wherefore he dared not go out. But the wisdom of Owlglass was great; for it is better to abide in darkness with a whole skin, than live in a palace of light and be beaten with many stripes. Thus did, therefore, our great example of wit and judgment.

The Sixth Adventure

How that Owlglass his mother did move him that he should learn a handicraft

The mother of Owlglass was right glad that her son was so still, and chid him only for that he would learn no handicraft. Yet answered he never a word unto all her reproofs, the which she was never tired of bestowing upon him. At last he opened his mouth and spake unto her, saying: “Dear mother, as it happeneth that one beginneth action, so also is the ending thereof.” For he knew in his wisdom, that if he had begun with knavish doings, and should turn therefrom and live honestly, yet in the world would no one give heed unto him, but the rather regard him as a greater knave than before, esteeming him to be a hypocrite as well as a knave. “That believe I right truly,” answered his mother; “and thus have I seen no bread in my house these four weeks gone by, nor have I had thereof any.” “That toucheth not my speech,” said Owlglass. “But with Saint Nicolaus must the poor man fast upon his even; and if perchance he should have bread, he may feast right merrily with Saint Martin on his day. Therefore will we also eat.”

The Seventh Adventure

How Owlglass did deceive a baker at Strasfurt, and gat bread for his mother

Then thought Owlglass: “God help us, how shall I compass it that my mother may be rendered quiet? Where shall I get me bread for her needs?” Thus went he forth from the village where they abode, and departed on the way towards the town of Strasfurt, and there beheld he a baker’s shop. Then went he in unto the baker, and asked him, saying: “Would he for a crown send bread unto his lord?” Then named he the name of a lord who abode in that town, and also the place where he lay, that the baker might send with Owlglass a boy to carry the bread and receive the money therefor.

Thereat answered the baker, that he would do everything that he commanded, and Owlglass gave him a sack wherein to count the loaves; but this sack had a secret hole, not to be seen. The baker sent with him a lad to receive the money.

Now when Owlglass had gat him a bow-shot from the house of the baker, he privily let a wheaten loaf fall down into the mire, and thereat set he the bag down and said unto the baker’s lad: “Alas! the bread which is thus made dirty I can never bring in unto my lord. Run quickly home and get for it another loaf, and I will wait here till that thou dost come again.” Then hasted the good lad to his master’s house, and did get another loaf for him; but Owlglass secretly hid himself in a house outside the town until that a cart came by, which did receive him and his bag; and he returned unto the house of his mother.

When that the lad came back unto the place where Owlglass had let the loaf fall, he found that he was beguiled; and he went back and told his master, who speedily ran unto the inn where lay the worshipful lord of whom Owlglass spake, and he asked the serving-men of that lord for Owlglass; but they knew him not. Then the baker perceived that he was cheated of his bread, and so returned home. But Owlglass gave the bread to his mother, and bade her to feast with Saint Martin. Thus can a great man ever overcome the besetting evils of life.

The Eighth Adventure

How Owlglass with other children, was forced to eat fat soup, and gat blows likewise

There was in the village where Owlglass lived with his mother, a custom that when anyone killed a pig, the neighbour's children came to him in his house to eat a soup or broth, which was called the butcher-broth. Now there lived in this village a farmer who was avaricious, and yet he dared not to refuse the children the soup; then thought he of a cunning way by which he might make them sick of the soup-eating; and he cut into it the sour crumb of the bread.

When the boys and girls came, Owlglass also was among them, and he let them come in, and closed the doors and poured out the soup, and the broth was more than the children could eat; when one of them was full and was going away, the farmer had a rod with the which he struck him, so that each child was forced to eat more than it wished. The host knew well of the knavery of Owlglass, and therefore when that he was beating another child he always bestowed some hearty strokes upon him. And this did he for so long, as that they had ended all the eating, and that they felt like the dogs after grass-grazing. Thereafter would no one go unto the stingy farmer's house to eat the butcher-broth.

The Ninth Adventure

How Owlglass brought it about that the stingy farmer's poultry drew for baits

The next day, when he that had beaten the children went forth, Owlglass met him, and he said unto Owlglass: "Dear Owlglass, when wilt thou come again to eat the butcher-soup at my house?" "Yea, that will I," answered Owlglass, "when thy poultry draw for baits, and four and four together fight for a little bread." Then said the other: "Wilt thou be so long?" But Owlglass said: "An if I came ere the time of the fat soup hath come?" Then he went on his way and thought over it until the time that the man's poultry ran about the streets; then had Owlglass some twenty strings tied together at the midst, and at either end of the string was a morsel of bread hanging. These took he and threw to the poultry. When then the fowls here and there picked up and swallowed the bread, they could not keep hold, for at the other end another fowl was pulling, so that they were contending, and thus from the size of the bread they could not get rid of it, and so stood more than thirty fowls one over against the other and in throttling ran a wager.

The Tenth Adventure

How Owlglass was again moved of his mother to depart to a foreign land, that he might learn a handicraft

After that Owlglass had played a bitter knavery somewhere, so that he might not dare show himself, he sat at home with his mother; and she, with many words, continually chid him, in that he would learn no craft to get money thereby. And she spake unto him saying, that he should depart into a foreign land, that he might there profit somewhat. But his mother had just killed a pig and so long as our good master Owlglass knew that any of it remained he would not quit. The mother of Owlglass thereat scolded him, until that he agreed to set forth, and made a small bundle of clothes and food, and, at length, went his way. Soon our wise master felt hungry, and thereat took forth from his wallet the provision he had, and did eat until there was none left. Thereafter did he not tarry long on thought, but when that it was dark, came again to the house of his mother. Then went he up to the garret and lay among the straw, where he slept lustily until the day had broken, then wake he up by reason of a noise he did hear in the neighbour's court. And Owlglass did look forth, and beheld a fox stealing the poultry from the roosting place. Then could Owlglass no longer keep silent, but cried with a loud voice: "Alas! thou cunning thief, an if I were not in a far country from this, it would go hard with thee but I would kill thee." Then heard the mother of Owlglass what he said, and came and marvelled not a little at beholding him.

The Eleventh Adventure

How Owlglass crept into a bee-hive, how two thieves came by night to steal honey, what honey they did steal, and how Owlglass made it to come to pass, that the thieves did fight one with the other, and did leave the bee-hive standing

Upon a time went Owlglass with his mother to the dedication of the church.⁹ And at the feast there he drank so much, did our good Owlglass, that he was tired, and he sought a place where he might lie down to sleep in peace. Then found he a yard where stood many bee-hives, and some were empty, and into one of these crept he privily and thought to sleep awhile; behold he slept from midday till midnight, and his mother thought surely that he had departed homeward again, as she nowhere could see him. That same night came two thieves and they had it in mind to steal a hive of honey, and they conferred together, in that they heard it said that the heaviest is also the best.

⁹ Feasts of the Dedication. These feasts, common in Germany, were also not uncommon, even to the present century, in parts of England. They were held in the churchyard on the anniversary of the day of the parish church being dedicated for divine service. See in *Tom Brown's School Days* (p. 30), a recent eloquent country-book, for a mention of this as applying to Berkshire.



HOW OWLGLASS CATCHETH THE THIEVES.

Then did they lift up one after the other to see the which might be the most heavy, and at last came they to the one in which lay good master Owlglass; and it was the heaviest of all. Then spake the one to the other, saying: "Here is the best among the bee-hives." So took they that one and carried it away, but wist not what good burden they bare. Good Master Owlglass, feeling the motion, thereupon awoke up, and heard what they said about stealing honey; and he rejoiced in himself to think what honey they had stolen. It was now so dark that ye could not see your hand before ye, an if ye even held it up to your eyes. Then put Owlglass his hand from out of the bee-hive, and caught hold of the foremost thief by the hair and pulled it until he roared. And the thief was very angry at the one who was behind, and thought it was he who had plucked him by the hair. Then spake the one who was behind him, saying: "Dost thou dream, or goest thou to sleep? How could I pluck thee by the hair?"

Hardly, is it possible for me to hold the bee-hive with both my hands.” Then laughed Owlglass within himself at what the thief said, and thought that the game would go better in a while after, and waited till they had got a fine distance further forward. Then put he out his hand again, and plucked the hindmost smartly by the hair; and the hindmost man became yet more angry and said: “Thou sayest I pluck thee by the hair and I bear the bee-hive till I break my neck, and now thou pluckest me by the hair thyself.” Then answered the foremost: “I pull thee by the hair? thou liest in thy throat. I cannot see my way before my face, and yet sayest thou: I pluck thine hair, quotha!” Thus with many revilings did they carry the hive along. And, as they were thus quarreling the one with the other in great choler and wrath, Owlglass plucked the foremost one by the hair again, and that so hard that he knocked his head against the hive. Thereat grew he angry, and let down the hive, and took his fellow by the head. That did also the other, and did manfully resist the blows of his comrade. Then fought they until they fell down in the dark and neither of them could behold the other, for the darkness continued very thick. Thus lost they their way and fled asunder with a great cry, and the bee-hive stood in the place where they had left it. Then Owlglass lay down again at ease to sleep until dawn; and when that it was light he thanked his stars that by this adventure it was shown him that he should see the world. And then gat he up from out of the bee-hive and did take a road, which lay before him, having a good heart that by his wit, wisdom, and knavery, he would live a merry and happy life in his time, and not die unhonoured of those that should come after him.

The Twelfth Adventure

How Owlglass for little money did have a singing bird for his dinner

In no long time thereafter, came Owlglass to Würzburg and there entered he into a good inn. Now the host of the inn had a singing bird hanging up in the house by the which he set great price, for it could sing divers merry ditties and songs of marvellous choiceness. Then said Owlglass unto him: “What take ye for this bird!” Then the host, who was of a miserly mind, answered him a great sum, the which Owlglass would not give him, yet at last they agreed that Owlglass should have the bird for four shillings. Then spake Owlglass: “Take ye the bird and roast it for my dinner, I would fain have a bit of him.” Thereat marvelled the host, and did much pity the bird; but his miserly love overcame him. Then was the bird killed, plucked, and made ready. When that it was roasted, the landlord brought it on a dish to Owlglass; then spake Owlglass, and commanded the host that he should cut him therefrom a piece for six pennies; for he had not said he would pay for a whole bird, but only for a part thereof which he was fain to eat. Thereat marvelled the host still more, yet what could he say thereupon. He that is wise sayeth but little when the beguiler is nigh at hand, so the host held his tongue and the knave Owlglass departed thence in haste.

The Thirteenth Adventure

How Owlglass did eat the roasted chicken from off the spit

In the land of Brunswick there lieth a village, within the government of Magdeburg, and the name of it is called Budenstadt; thither came Owlglass and did present himself unto the priest there, and the priest, thinking our wise and pious master Owlglass a good and proper fellow, did then hire him for a servant in his house, but little did he know him. And the priest spake unto him, saying that he should have a good time of it and a good service. Also should he have meat and drink as good as his maid-servant, and all that he did should be done with half labour. Then did Master Owlglass agree with him, and said that he would do according to his word. Then he saw that the cook had but one eye. On that day took she two young chickens and she put them on the spit to roast over the fire. And she bade Owlglass turn, and so he did; and when the chickens were roasted, he brake one away off from the spit, and did eat it without any bread, for he remembered well what the priest had told him as to faring as well as himself and the maid-servant, and he thought it might be that he would lose his part of the dinner. And when that it was dinner-time, there came into the kitchen the one-eyed cook-maid to baste the chickens. Then beheld she but one chicken on the spit. Then spake she to Owlglass: "Behold, there were two chickens on the spit, and now there is but one, and tell me now where is the fellow that was beside it." Then answered Owlglass: "Woman, do but open your other eye, and you will behold the other chicken on the spit." Now when he thus spake of the want of her eye, she waxed wroth, and ran unto the priest, and said unto him that he might look how his new serving-man was doing. That she had put two chickens on the spit, and lo! there was but one at this time. And she said: "Then he mocked me, and said that I had but one eye." Thereat went the priest into the kitchen, and spake unto Owlglass, saying: "Hearest thou, Owlglass! wherefore didst thou mock my serving-maid? I see well that only one chicken is now upon the spit, and yet know I truly that there were two. Where then is now the other?" Then said Owlglass: "It is yet thereon; open both your eyes, and you will well see that there be the twain upon the spit. So said I also to thy maid, and thereat grew she quite angry and wroth." Then the priest laughed, and said: "The serving-maid cannot open both her eyes, for in good truth she hath but one." Owlglass made answer to the priest, saying: "That sayest thou, not I." But then said the priest: "Yet it is so; but the one chicken is in any wise gone." Owlglass spake then and said: "That chicken have I eaten myself, according unto thy words. For ye said unto me that I should fare as well as your maid-servant; and much grief would it have caused me had ye eaten the chickens without me, and made your words vain and a lie. Therefore for your honour's sake have I eaten the chicken, that ye might not fall into evil reputation for speaking that which is untruth." Then the priest was content and said: "Dear serving-man, I care not for the roasted chicken; but after this time do ye always according to the will of my cook." And Owlglass said: "Yea, holy father and worshipful master, be it so done as you will." Then whatsoever the cook-maid commanded Owlglass that he should do, that did he but in the half. An if she did bid him to bring a pail of water from the well, he brought but the half thereof, and if he should fetch two faggots from the wood pile then brought he but one. And so did he, and she saw well that it was all performed in that she might be spited thereat. Then spake the priest once again unto him, and said: "Lo, my well beloved serving-man Owlglass, let me tell ye that my maid doth complain right grievously of thee." Thereat said Owlglass: "Yea, master, yet have I never done except according unto thy words. For thou didst say, that all I did should be done with but half labour. Well would your serving maid desire to see with both eyes and yet hath she but one—which is but half-seeing, and therefore did I but half-labour." And thereat was the priest right merry, and laughed much; but his servant was full of wrath,

and said: “Master, an if ye keep yon knavish rogue any longer then will I depart from ye.” Thus came it that the priest was fain to send Owlglass away, yet forgat he him not; and it fortunèd that the parish clerk died, so he made Owlglass clerk in his room. Thus, by foolishness and little knaveries, do men come in this world to dignities and honours.

The Fourteenth Adventure

How that Owlglass did publish abroad that he would fly from off the roof of the town-house at Magdeburg

After that Owlglass had some time been clerk of the parish at Budenstadt, came he into the great and famous town of Magdeburg, and there did he fix upon the church doors letters of great import, so that the name of Owlglass became well known and noised abroad through the streets of that city of Magdeburg; and it was in the mouths of all the gossips, that the noble Master Owlglass did purpose the doing of some marvellous strange feat. And so it came to pass, that when the people were all full of great wonder, that Owlglass spake unto them, saying: "I will flee down through the air from the roof of the town-house." Thereat was there a great outcry through the city; and both young and old did in great multitude crowd unto the market-place, that by them might this most marvellous wonder be seen; for, in the memory of man, had not any person ever done so strange a thing before, nor had without wings so fled down through the air from that high place.

Then came Owlglass and stood upon the roof of the town-house, and did make motion with his arms, waving them hither and thither, as if he would flee down. And all the people gazed at his motion in great marvel, for they thought he would flee down presently. Thereat laughed Owlglass right merrily, and said unto the people: "Truly thought I, that nowhere in the world was there a fool so great as am I. Yet here in this city do I well see that ye are almost every one of ye fools; for when that ye did say that I could flee down from where I stand, then believed I ye not. I am not a goose, nor a bird, nor have I either feathers or wings to flee with, without the which can nobody flee. Therefore manifestly now do ye well see, that it is a deceit and a lie."

Then came he down away from the roof of the town-house in the same manner that he had gone up, and left the people standing. And some of them laughed, and others said: "Although he is both knave and fool, yet hath he spoken the truth." Thus is it with many besides the people of Magdeburg, who rush eagerly to believe that the which they might see is most plainly untrue; while what is possible and within their means to make them good sport, and serve them with good service, that neglect they with great scorn and contempt.

The Fifteenth Adventure

How Owlglass did cure the sick folks in the hospital at Nürnberg in one day, and what came thereafter

On a time came Owlglass to Nürnberg, where he did again set upon the church doors letters of great import, in the which he did publish abroad that he was a learned physician, more learned than in the world had yet been known; and that in all sicknesses, whosoever should turn to him should have content and his health again.

Now in the hospital at the town were there a multitude of people, who lay sick unto death, and of them did the master of that house crave in great truth to be relieved. Right verily would this benevolent man have given them their health and made them whole, and, if he could, have got ridden of them in the house. Then went he unto Owlglass, the learned physician, and spake with him, asking him whether he could, as in his letters he set forth, work such marvellous cures. And Owlglass answered and said: “Yea, if that the hospital-master would give unto him two hundred pieces.” Then upon that conference did the master agree and promise him the money; and Owlglass said unto him, that he would not receive from him one penny, if the people did not all, within a few days, leave the hospital of their own desiring and action. Thereat was the master of the hospital very content, and gave unto Owlglass twenty pieces as a hansell.

Thereafter went Owlglass into the hospital, and took with him two servants; and he asked of each person that was sick, what it was that he lay sick of, and they answered. And at the last he said unto each, that he should not betray the secret which he should then tell unto them, and that swore they all. Then he spake unto each secretly, saying: “If that I should make ye whole, and give back unto all health and strength, then must I needs burn one of ye into powder, the which to mingle with your drink and give you to swallow, and with that will ye be made whole. Now I will take from among ye the one that is most sick, and him will I burn to powder. And I will stand at the door of the hospital, with the master of the hospital near at hand, and I will cry with a loud voice: ‘He that is not sick, let him now go forth from the house quickly.’ And that one which is last within the hospital door, him will I take. Forget ye not that in your sleep.”

Thus it came to pass, that all did remember his words; and when he stood with the master at the door, the sick and lame, and halt and dying, all came forth in haste, for none would be that one who should be burned in fire. So the hospital was quite empty, for many which had not for ten years arisen from their beds, now found their legs and departed thence.

Then did Owlglass demand from the master of the hospital that he should receive his reward, and the master with gracious thanks did present it unto him; then rode he forth from that city, and returned not again. In three days thereafter, came all the sick folk back again unto the hospital, and complained sorely of their sickness. Then said the master: “What will ye? Have I not brought unto ye a physician of skill, who did marvellously make you whole, that ye could all depart hence?” Then the sick folk discovered to the master the knavery that Owlglass had done, in that he had threatened them, that the last that should depart should be burned. So the master of the hospital perceived that he had been beguiled of Owlglass, and the sick folk abode in the house: yet was the money lost. Owlglass still was a great physician, for he had for three days cured them; and how many learned doctors are there who cure not in any wise?



HOW OWLGLASS TURNETH DOCTOR.

The Sixteenth Adventure

How Owlglass bought bread according to the proverb: “To him that hath bread is bread given.”

Trusty faith giveth bread. And now that Owlglass had deceived the hospital-master, came he unto Halberstadt, and went round about the market, and saw that it was cold and winter time. Thought he, cold and hard is the winter, thereto bloweth a strong wind, and thou hast often heard that to him that hath bread is bread given. Then for a few pence buyeth Owlglass bread, borroweth also a table, and sitteth down in the front of St. Stephen’s Dome. There held he up his knavery so long until a dog came by, the which caught me up a loaf from the table, and ran toward the cathedral court. While Owlglass ran after the dog, there passed by a sow with ten young pigs; these overthrew the table, and each, seizing a loaf, departed.

Then laughed Owlglass and said: “Now do I see that the words are not true: ‘To him that hath bread is bread given;’ for mine is taken.” Thereat he departed from Halberstadt unto Brunswick.

The Seventeenth Adventure

How Owlglass became a doctor, and did cure many folk

The City of Frankfort is a great and handsome city, and in it do dwell many worshipful burghers, whose riches are many, and they eat and drink much, as is the custom with citizens; thus it fortunes that they are often ill. No marvel therefore that in Frankfort abide many doctors, who gain much money. Owlglass when that he came there, by his ready wit soon perceived the better part to take, and hired himself to be a doctor's man, and soon it was meet that he should go with his master to visit the patients. The good Owlglass would much have desired to know something of the names on the bottles which stood in the house of his master; but that could he not do, and therefore of all that his master did he could learn nothing but that when people were sick, they should drink warm water and be blooded. It fortun'd in no long time thereafter, that his master had on a sudden to take a journey, in such wise that he had no time to tell the patients thereof. Then spake he unto Owlglass saying: "Go thou about the city unto the sick, and say unto them that in no long time shall I return unto them."



Yet the cunning Master Owlglass followed not his master's saying, but put on his head the wig of his master, and on his shoulders he bare his mantle. Then, with a grave and noble demeanour, he departed unto the houses of the sick patients who sent for him. When that he arrived, he sat gravely down with a serious face, felt their pulses, and after much heavy thought, he ordered them always to be blooded and to drink warm water. Thereafter he departed from them.

Then, marvellous to tell, all his patients grew wondrously well in no long time, and they paid him much money for his pains. When that his master returned, the knavery of Owlglass was soon discovered, and he was fain to depart. Yet such was the wisdom of good Master Owlglass, that it is related that his master thereafter followed no other art than had been thus invented by Owlglass; and after that time the doctor became famous, and wrote a large book upon the virtue of warm water and blood-letting.

The Eighteenth Adventure

How that Owlglass became a drawer of teeth and cured all by a wondrous pill

As Owlglass was going along the road, he met upon the highway, a man whose face was overcome with misery. Owlglass thereat gazed upon him for a season, and after some time spake unto him these words: “Worthy fellow! thou dost seem so wrapped in melancholic humour, would’st tell me what aileth thee?” “Everything in the wide world,” the other made answer: “for I have no money, which is the joy of all worldly business; for it maketh learned, maketh noble, maketh lovely, and merry. Also, maketh it an end of hunger and thirst which now sorely assail me.” Then Owlglass bethought himself for a while, and presently took up from the next field some clay, whereof he made little pills, which he then wrapped in pieces of paper, and said to his comrade: “Be of good cheer, friend! Soon will we have money. Lo, in yonder city, the towers of which we can now see, are there fools in number great. Enter thou in before me, and there go forward till thou seest the best inn in the town, and therein do thou stay. At dinner stay thou as long as thou canst and be merry; yet after a while do thou cry out in great agony, as if thou hadst the tooth-ache. Then will I not be far from thee; and when I come in, be thou ready, and make answer to everything I say: ‘Yea.’ But do not thou let it be perceived that thou knowest me.”

Then did the twain go forward into the town, and as Owlglass had commanded, so all things came to pass. Owlglass told the people that he was a dentist of great skill, and they called him to the man who was ill. Then took he from his pocket the pills which he had made of the clay, and laid one in the man’s mouth. “Art not thou well now”? said he unto him. “Yea, truly,” answered the other, “all the pain is gone.” Then all the people in the inn came round the doctor in great multitude, and demanded that he should sell unto them his pills. And Owlglass sold what he had for a great sum of money, and an he had had clay enough he could have sold many more. Then shared he the gain with his comrade, and they departed hastily from that place.

The Nineteenth Adventure

How that Owlglass did at Brunswick hire him to a baker, and did there bake owls and monkeys

It fortun'd upon a time that Owlglass came into Brunswick city, and unto an inn where bakers met together; and hard by lived a baker, who called upon Owlglass to enter into his house, and made inquiry of him, as to the business he might follow. Then answered Owlglass to the baker, and spake, for our noble and well beloved master of jests was wily, and, indeed, all things unto all men: "I am a baker's man." Thereat said the baker: "Even now have I not any man in my house to serve me; wilt thou come to me, for I have need of thee?" Owlglass at that answered: "Yea." And when that he had been with him two days, the baker commanded him to bake at eventide, for that he could not help him until the morning. Then said Owlglass: "But what would ye have me to bake?" Thereat waxed the baker wroth, for he was a man soon hot i' the head, and he made answer in scorn, and said: "Art a baker's man, and askest thou what ye should bake? What do ye bake? Owls and monkeys bake ye?" And thereafter gat he him to bed.



Then departed Owlglass into the bake-room, and made the dough into nought but the shape of owls and monkeys, and these did he bake in the oven. At morning time arose the master baker, and went into the bake-room to aid his man. Then cometh he, and findeth neither rolls nor loaves, but rather a goodly mass of owls and monkeys. And he opened his mouth in great rage and said unto Owlglass: “What is it that thou hast baken?” And Owlglass did answer him and said: “Verily have I done that which thou didst tell me to do.” And the baker, in great wroth, said: “What shall I do with this foolish knave? Such bread will no one have?” And therewith took he him by the head, and said unto him: “Pay me for the dough thou hast spoiled!” Then said Owlglass: “And if I pay ye for the dough, will the goods be mine?” And the master answered: “What care I for such bread?” So Owlglass paid the baker for his dough, and he took the owls and monkeys in a basket, and he carried them away unto the inn, the sign of which was the Wild Man. And Owlglass thought within himself: “Thou hast

often heard it said, that to Brunswick canst thou bring nothing novel or strange, but therefrom mayst thou draw great profit for thy pains.” And it was Saint Nicholas’ even. Then stood Owlglass with his store hard by the church gate; and he sold all his owls and monkeys at great price, and therefrom drew he a much greater profit than what he had paid unto the baker for his dough. This was noised about, and soon came it heard of the baker, who waxed very angry thereupon, and he ran unto Saint Nicolas’ Church, and would have demanded either his share, or the charges of baking. But Owlglass had already departed with the money, and the baker might look far and wide for him. This feat of our good exemplar showeth plainly, that there is nothing so vain or foolish in this world, but that it hath profit contained within it for those who study to arrive thereat.

The Twentieth Adventure

How Owlglass did again hire him unto a baker, and how he bolted meal in the moon's light

Thereafter departed Owlglass, and wandered hither and thither in the land; and at last came he toward Oltzen, and entered into the village there. And when he was besought of the people to say what trade he exercised, he told them that he was a baker. Then did a master baker in the village hire him; and when that Owlglass was with him present in his house, his master did make ready that he should bake, and he spake unto Owlglass, and did enjoin him that he should bolt the meal, so that it might be prepared against the morning. Then Owlglass answered, and said: "Master, I would fain have a candle, that I may see with, and so diligently do your bidding." "Nay," answered the baker; "but that will I not do. No candle shalt thou have, nor have I at any time given unto my serving-men any such candle. Always did they bolt the meal in the moon's light, and verily must thou likewise do this. And this charge I thee to do." And Owlglass made answer, saying: "An if your former servants did bolt the meal in the moon's light, truly then will I also do it." At that was the master content, and he gat him to bed for a short while.

Thereafter taketh good Master Owlglass the bag, and he openeth the window and putteth forth the bag, until the moon's light doth shine thereupon, and then letteth he all the meal fall out on the ground where that the moon shone. And in the morning cometh the master, who desireth to bake, and he findeth Owlglass still casting out the meal. And the baker marvelled much when that he beheld Owlglass, for Owlglass was white with the meal. Then said the master, who was full of anger: "What do ye here, ye knave? Think ye that yon meal cost me nought, that ye throw it in the dirt there?"

Then answered Owlglass: "Did not ye command me that I should, without a candle, bolt the meal in the moon's shine, and have not I fulfilled this according to your words?" Then said the baker: "I said you should bolt the meal by the moon's light." And Owlglass answered him: "Be then of good cheer, master; verily thy meal is bolted both in and by the moon's light, and with much pains and weariness have I done this labouring. Nor is there much lost thereby; scarce a handful. Soon will I gather it up again, and the meal will not be in any wise made the worse." Thereat sayeth the baker: "In that time that thou dost gather up the meal, will it grow too late to make the dough, and then fall to baking." Then said Owlglass: "Behold, master, I know a piece of counsel, how we may bake as soon as our neighbour yonder. His dough lieth ready in the trough, and I will go thither and quickly fetch it, and carry our meal thither in place thereof." Thereat grew the master of Owlglass right angry, and said unto him: "May the evil one have thee! Get thee to the gallows-tree, thou knave, and fetch thee thence the first thing that thou dost find; and let the neighbour's dough lie where it be." "Yea," answered Owlglass.

Then departed he out of the house and went unto the gallows-tree, and there lay the skull of a thief, which had fallen down. This took Owlglass and bare it unto his master, and brought it into his house and said: "Here bring I from the gallows-tree the first thing that I did find. Wherefore would ye have this? Of a truth know I not what may be the best thing it is fit for." And then the baker spake in anger, and said: "Lo! bringest thou me nothing more than this?" Then Owlglass answered and said: "If that any other thing had been there, I would also have brought it for thee; but no other thing was lying there." Then waxed the baker more wroth, and said unto Owlglass: "Behold, thou hast robbed the law and the gallows; that will I tell unto the burghmaster, and thou shalt answer it."

And the baker departed from out of the house to the market-place, and Owlglass followed him. So hastily, howsoever, went the baker, that he looked not round, and knew not that Owlglass was

following him. Then stood the baker before the burghmaster, who was on the market-place, and he began to make complaint against Owlglass. And Owlglass was lithe and nimble, and when that the baker began his words, he stood hard by and opened his eyes very wide. And when the baker beheld Owlglass, he clean forgat, in his anger, what it might be that he would make complaint of, and said to Owlglass, with great malice: "What wilt thou have?" Owlglass made answer to him: "I desire not to have anything, than that I should behold what complaint you make against me to the burghmaster. And that I might see your words, do I open mine eyes very wide, for words are most difficult to see." Then said the baker: "Get out of my sight, thou knavish beguiler, I desire nought else!" Owlglass then said: "If that I should get out of thy sight, then needs must I get my body into thine eyes; and if ye shut your eyes, must I come through thy nostrils." Then went the burghmaster on his way, for he perceived that it was but foolishness; and he left them both standing. And when Owlglass saw that, he followed the baker, and spake unto him, saying: "Master, when shall we bake? It is time now, for the sun shineth no more." Then departed he, and left the baker standing in the market-place.

The Twenty and First Adventure

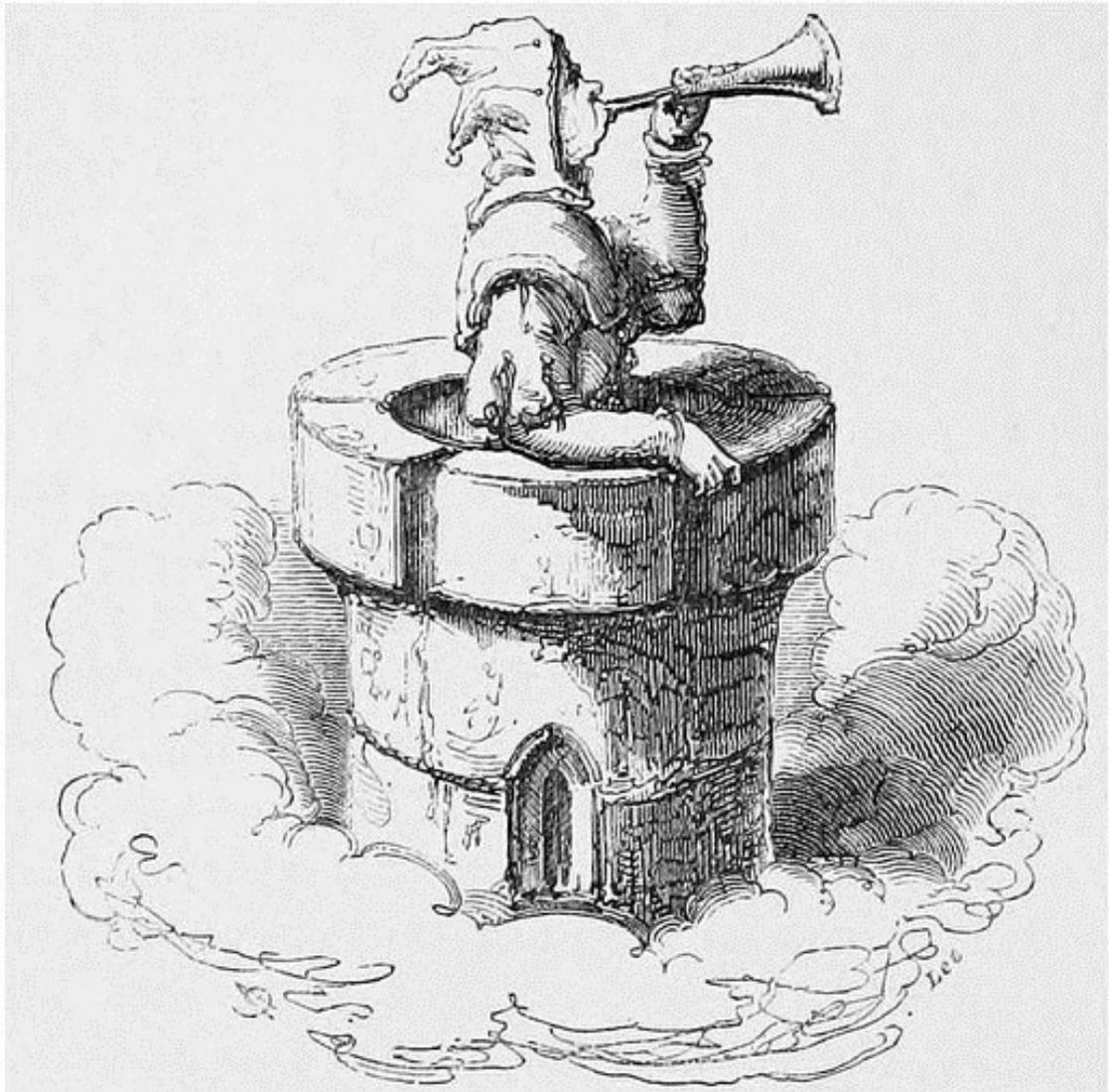
Telleth of what manner of thinking was Owlglass, and how he formed his life according unto principles of virtue and goodness

Of our most noble and beloved Master Owlglass, have I now told ye not a few truthful and diverting histories and adventures; but, yet have I not said any word in respect of his ways of thinking, gathered by great experience out of many lands, in his continual travel to and fro, up and down in his country. Now he loved much to be always among friends and in company, and as long as he lived were there three things, which with great avoidance he did always run from and leave undone. The first thing was, that he never did ride a horse which was gray, but at all times a bay horse, for the gray horse did mind him of an ass, the which animal held he in great scorn. The second thing which he could not bear to be with him was the company of little children, for that wheresoever he found them, there was more care taken of them than of his own noble person. The third thing was, that he would never lie in an inn where that he found an old mild host; for a host that was old and mild held Owlglass in but little esteem, and was thereto also for the most part nought but a fool.

Every morn when that he rose up from his bed, he blessed himself against healthy victual, great happiness, and strong drink, in which three blessings none can deny that he was a wise man. And when it fortuneth that he passed by an apothecary's house, did he bless himself against healthy victual, for it mote truly be a healthy place whence victual might issue; yet it was a sign of sickness before. Good fortune was it when a stone fell from the house top and struck him not down; for then might he of a truth cry, with great praise: "If that I had myself been standing on that place, so would it have fallen upon me and killed me;" and such fortune would he most willingly not have. The strong drink against which he blessed himself, was water, for it be so strong as soon to drive round great mill-wheels, and to the good fellow that drinketh thereof cometh death. It was also told of Owlglass that he wept always when that he did go down a hill, and he laughed when he climbed one. For truly wist he, in the descending, that soon would he come again unto a mountain, while in climbing knew he that soon would he come again to the top, whence to pass down into the valley. In fine weather, or at a time when summer began, then did he also weep with many tears, and when that winter approached, laughed he. And ye that read herein may, in your wisdom, answer the reason why he did this thing.

The Twenty and Second Adventure

How that Owlglass did hire him to the Count of Anhalt to blow the horn on a tower, and when that enemies did approach, then blew he not; and when that they came not, then blew he



Not long thereafter, came Owlglass unto the Count of Anhalt, and he did hire him unto the count as a tower watchman. And the count at that time had enemies in great multitude, so that he had with him in number not small, both horsemen and foot folk, unto whom he must needs give meat and drink every day. And Owlglass sat up on the tower, and he was clean forgot of them that should give him provision. And on that day it came to pass, that the enemy did, in strong force, come unto the town and castle of the count's grace, and they took therefrom all the cattle, and drave them off. Owlglass then lay still upon the tower, and he looked through the window and made not any outcry, either in that he blew, or in that he did cry aloud. But it did come unto the ears of the count that he heard the enemy, and with his folk he quickly gat him forth, and pursued them and drave them

before his face. Then saw some of the folk, that Owlglass lay in the window of the tower, and laughed. Thereat did the count cry out unto him: “Wherefore liest thou on the tower and art so still?” And Owlglass made answer unto the count, saying: “Ere dinner time do I not with grace and comfort ever delight in crying out.” Then cried the count back unto him: “Wilt thou, when the enemy cometh, blow thy horn?” Thereat said Owlglass: “Enemies dare I not blow, or would the field be full, and with the cows would they depart. And if I blew enemies a second time, in such multitude would they come, that they would fight with thee, and overcome thee even in thine own gate.” Therewith ended they their conference. Then departed the count in great haste after his enemies, and contended with them with much strife; and Owlglass was again forgotten as he lay upon his tower.

But the count was greatly content with his prowess, and with him brought back from the field of battle a goodly heap of pork, the which did they thereafter cut up, and some roasted they and other did they boil. And Owlglass would most willingly have had thereof as he sat on his tower. Then did he begin to plan how that he might get thereof, and he did watch when that it should be dinner time. And when that it had become dinner time, he began to blow his horn, and to cry with a loud voice: “The foe cometh! The foe cometh!” Then the count gat him up with his arms, and put on his harness, and took his weapons, and departed quickly forth from the castle into the field. Thereat rejoiced our noble Master Owlglass, and quickly did he get him down from the tower, and came unto the count’s table, and took therefrom boiled and roast, in the which delighted he, and he returned back on his steps, and gat him to the tower. And, when that the horsemen and foot folk came again unto the castle, and of enemies had found not a hair, then murmured they one to the other, saying: “This hath the watchman done to mock us with great scorn and knavery.” And the count cried aloud unto Owlglass, and said unto him: “Wherefore hast thou become foolish and mad?” And Owlglass said: “If that hunger and thirst drive mad, then do I not marvel at my madness.” Thereat said the count: “Why didst thou blow on thy horn for enemies, and there were none?” Then spake Owlglass, and made answer unto the count, saying: “Whereas it fortuneth that no enemies were present, I thought in my mind that it would be well to blow on my horn, for that they might come.” Then said the count unto him: “Thou goest about to deceive us with knavish beguiling. When that the enemy cometh, thou wilt not blow; yet when no enemy is nigh at hand, then blowest thou. Of a truth, it is a matter of treachery.” Therewith relieved he Owlglass of lying in the tower, and appointed thereunto another watchman.

Then came it to pass, that Owlglass should run with the foot folk to strive in battle with the enemy. And thereat was good Master Owlglass moved to anger, and cast about in his mind to discover how he might be relieved, and obtain other service. And when the count’s folk departed out from the castle to fight with the foe, then was Owlglass always the last man; and when they returned back unto the castle, was he truly likewise the first man to enter therein. Then spake the count unto him, saying: “How shall I understand this thing? Wherefore art thou always last to depart from the castle, and the first to return back again?” And Owlglass answered and said: “Let not thine anger fall upon me, noble lord; for when that thou and all thy people sat and ate and drank, with great feasting, then lay I upon the tower and fasted so that I fainted thereby, and lost much strength. If therefore ye should be minded, that I should be the first in the field to encounter the foe, I pray thee that ye do let me eat now that with strength may I be filled, and then will I do it, and ye shall perceive that I shall be the first against the enemy and the last to depart from him.” “I mark well,” spake the count, “that thou wilt be a long time in doing this thing, and as long as thou didst sit on the tower.” Thereat said Owlglass: “That which belongeth of right unto a man do others take from him most willingly.” And the count said: “Long shalt thou not be my servant,” and therewith gave him leave to depart. And thereat rejoiced Owlglass, for he cared not every day to fight with the enemy.

The Twenty and Third Adventure

How that Owlglass did have golden shoes struck unto his horse's feet

Owlglass was one of those men that the fame of his holy doings came unto the ears of many great lords. The princes, also, loved him much, and did give unto him garments, horses, money, and provision. And he came unto the King of Denmark, who said unto him, that he should do for him a wondrous strange thing, having his horse shod with the best shoes that could be found. Then answered Owlglass to the king, and spake unto him and asked him: "If that he should believe him?" And the king answered and said: "Yea, and if he did according unto his word, it should come to pass as he had promised him." Then Owlglass did ride his horse unto the goldsmith's house, and there had golden shoes, with nails of silver, struck unto his horse's feet, and gat him home again unto the king's presence, and asked him if that he would pay for the shoeing of his horse? The king said: "Yea, that would be right truly;" and said unto his treasurer, and commanded him, that he should pay for the shoeing of the horse of Owlglass. The treasurer thought that it had been done by a blacksmith. And Owlglass led him unto the goldsmith's house, and the goldsmith demanded of him one hundred golden marks therefor. The treasurer would not pay this; but went and told the king thereof. Then sent the king for Owlglass, and said unto him: "Owlglass, how dear hast thou made this horse shoeing to be? If that all my horses were shod as thou hast had thine, soon should I have to sell my country and my people!" Then Owlglass answered and spake unto him: "My gracious lord and king, thou didst say I should have my horse to be shod with the best shoes, and have I not done according unto thy words, for would ye have better shoeing than silver and gold." Then said the king: "Thou art my dearest servant, thou dost that I tell thee to do." And the king laughed at the merry jest, and did pay the hundred marks. Then Owlglass brake off the golden shoes from his horse's feet, and had shoes of iron struck on, and he abode with the king unto the day of his death.

The Twenty and Fourth Adventure

How that Owlglass did have a great contention before the King of Poland with two other fools

While that the noble Prince Casimir, King of Poland, yet lived, there came unto him at his court, good Master Owlglass. And Casimir (blessed be his memory!) did have two fools there, who, in knavery, could not be overcome. And the king of Poland had heard much said of Owlglass, that, in truth, he was not in any way to be quipped or deceived. Nor did Owlglass agree with the fools of the king, and that beheld the king right soon. Then spake the king unto Owlglass and the two fools, saying: “Behold! unto that one of ye the which can wish the greatest wish will I give a coat and twenty gold pieces thereto, and this shall be within my presence.” Then said the first fool: “I would have that heaven were nothing but paper, and the sea nothing but ink, that therewith might I in figures write down how much money I would have, and that it came unto me.” The second spake, saying: “I would have as many towers and castles as there be stars in heaven, so that therein might I hold all the money that my fellow here would have.” Then was it time that Owlglass should speak, and the king thought that in truth he could not wish anything greater. But Owlglass opened his mouth and spake, saying: “I, in truth, would desire that after ye two have made me your heir, that the king would yet on this day hang ye both.” Thereat laughed the king right merrily, and Owlglass won the coat and the twenty gold pieces, with the which he departed in joy.

The Twenty and Fifth Adventure

How Owlglass did make confession to a priest, and took from him a silver box

On a time it happened that Owlglass thought to go to confession, for his sins were many, and therewith was his soul sore laden, so that he meditated much on the badness of his ways. Then came he to the church, where sate the priest in the confessional, and before him stood a silver box, by which he set great store. Then Owlglass began a long speech, in the which he told the good priest his heavy sins, so great in number; and at last, the saying of Owlglass was so long, that the priest did lean back and slept, for he was weary of the knaveries of Owlglass. Then Owlglass took the box away, and did put it in pouch.

When that the priest again awoke he did rub his eyes with his fingers, and spake unto Owlglass, saying: "Where stood we, my son?" Then answered Owlglass, and said unto the priest: "We stood at the eighth commandment, father." Then said the priest: "Speak on, my son; fear not, nor in any wise conceal what lieth upon thy conscience." Then continued Owlglass, saying: "Alas! holy father, on a time I did steal a silver box from a person, and I will now give it unto thee." Then said the priest: "Nay, my son, stolen goods will I not have; give the box unto him that owneth it." "That would I already do," answered Owlglass; "but he refused me, saying that he would not receive it." Thereat spake the priest, and said: "Then canst thou keep it with a good conscience; go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Then Owlglass departed, and sold the box unto a Jew for several pieces of silver. But the priest slept not again in confession; and thus Owlglass gat for others more sins forgiven than before, which did great good unto all men.

The Twenty and Sixth Adventure

How that Owlglass was forbidden the dukedom of Lunenburg, and how he did cut open his horse and stand therein

In the land of Lunenburg, near unto Zell, did Owlglass work some great knavery on a time. Therefore did the Duke of Lunenburg forbid him the land; and he gave commandment to his servants, if that Owlglass should be found therein they should seize him, and, without any mercy or shrift, hang him up. Yet did not Owlglass in any manner forsake the land, or in his journeyings avoid it, so as to come round through any other country; but when that it came in his way to be convenient to pass through Lunenburg, did he nevertheless ride or walk through it when he would.

Thus it came to pass on a time, that Owlglass had much reason to ride through Lunenburg, and it fortuned that as he was riding along, he saw the duke with many folk riding the same way. Then thought he within himself: “Lo! it is the duke; and if that thou dost hasten away to fly from before his face, then with their horses will they soon come up with thee, and they will take thee; then will the duke with great anger come and command them to hang thee up unto a tree.” Then did he confer within himself what thing it were best that he should do; and he gat him down from his horse, and took a knife, and quickly cut open the horse’s belly, casting forth the entrails, and then gat he in and stood within the four legs in the midst. Then when the duke came riding by with his horsemen, and gat to the place where sat Owlglass in his horse’s belly, then the servants of the duke spake unto him, saying: “Behold, gracious lord, here sitteth Owlglass within his horse.” Thereat did the duke ride up to Owlglass, and say unto him: “Art thou there, Owlglass? What bringeth thee into my country when that I did warn thee with great punishment not to come thither? Did I not say, if ye came therein I would have thee hanged on a tree?” Then said Owlglass to the duke: “Noble and gracious lord, I pray thee that thou wilt be pleased to spare my life, for I have not done so evilly as to be punished with death.” Then said the duke unto Owlglass: “Come thee hither unto me, and do thou make thy innocence plain unto me, or what meanest thou that thou dost so stand in the belly of thy horse?” And Owlglass answered, and said: “Most high and gracious lord! have I not heard it always said of all that from old time between his own four posts is a man safe? Now do I stand in such wise between my four posts, as ye can see; for I feared the displeasure with the which I knew in my heart that ye would visit me.” Then did the duke laugh right merrily, and said unto Owlglass: “Yea, this time will I excuse thee. But wilt thou henceforward stay far away from my land, nor enter it at any time?” And Owlglass answered and said: “Gracious lord, so mote it be as ye would have.” Thereat rode the duke away from him, saying: “Stay as ye now be.” But Owlglass leaped quickly forth from his horse’s skin, and spake unto the dead horse: “I thank thee, my good beast, for thou hast preserved my neck from great danger of the halter, and through thy death am I made alive. From a hunted donzel hast thou changed me into a gentleman; therefore, lie thou there, for it is better that the crows eat thee than that they should tear me.” Then departed he out of the land on foot.

The Twenty and Seventh Adventure

How that Owlglass did buy an inheritance in land from a boor, and how he sate therein in a cart

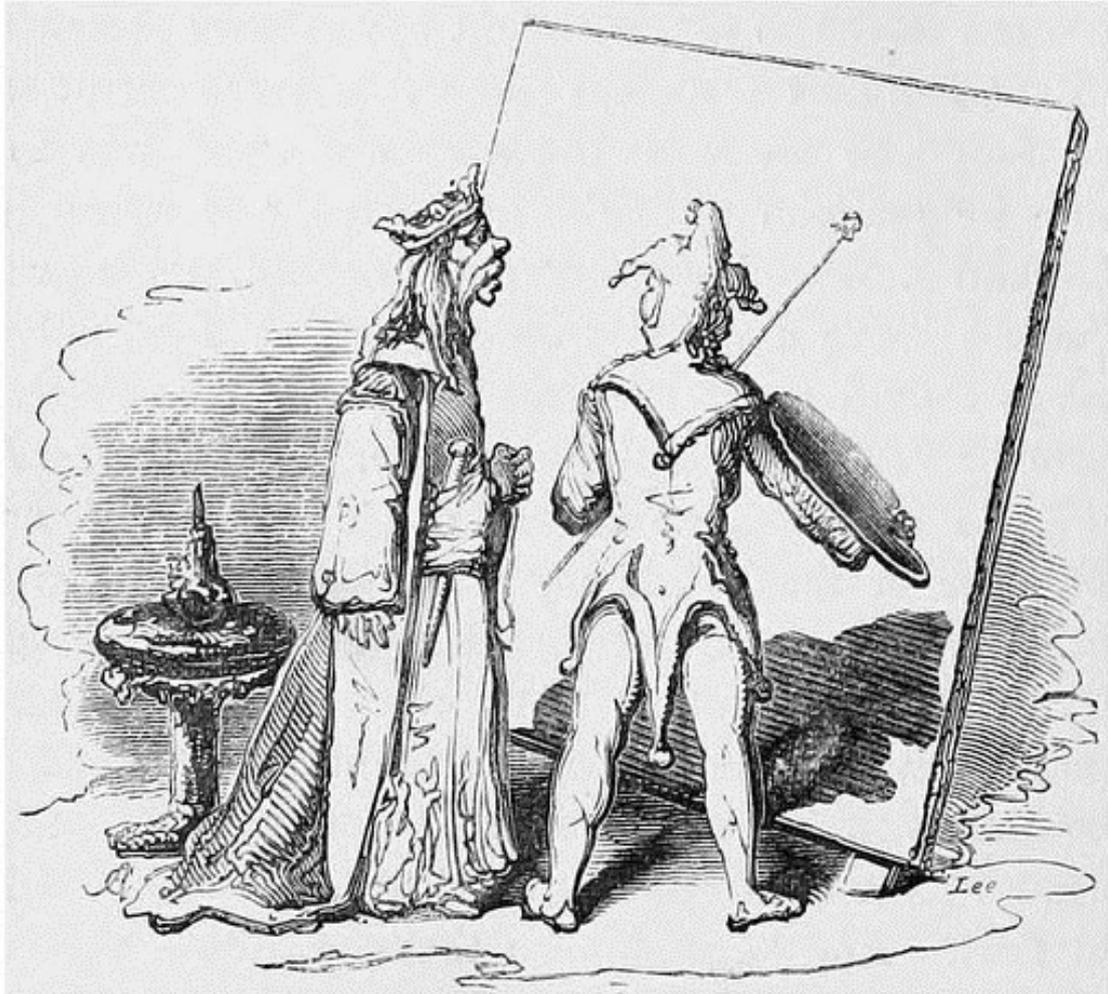
In no long time thereafter came Owlglass again into the land of Lunenburg, and he tarried in a village near unto Zell, until the time came in the which the Duke should again ride that way. And it came to pass that a boor did come by Owlglass as he went along to plough his land. And by that time had Owlglass gotten him another horse, and a cart therewith, and he came unto the boor, and spake unto him, saying: “Whose land is this that thou plougest?” Then answered the boor and said: “Truly is it mine, and I did have it in inheritance from my forbears.” Thereat said Owlglass unto the boor: “What money wilt thou have for as much earth as would fill my cart?” Then said the boor: “Truly will I have a shilling therefor.” And Owlglass gave unto him what he demanded, and filled his cart therewith, and crept into it, and drove his cart into Zell unto the castle there, unto the Aller water. And when that it came to pass that the duke rode by, did he behold Owlglass as he sate in the cart with the earth up to his shoulders. Then spake the duke unto Owlglass, and said unto him: “How comest thou here again? Have I not forbidden thee to come into my land, and did not I say thou shouldst suffer death? And now, after that I pardoned thee when thou didst stand in thy horse, thou dost again tempt my wrath with thee?” Then spake Owlglass unto the duke in answer, saying: “My gracious lord, I am not in your land but in mine own, wherein do I sit; and I bought it of a boor for a shilling, and rightfully could he sell it, for from his forbears hath he inherited it. So is this truly my land.” Then spake the duke, and laughed the while: “Depart ye now straightway with thy land out of my land, and come not again, or will I have thee hung up, with thy horse and thy cart beside.” Then leaped Owlglass on to his horse from out of the cart, and left the cart with his land standing before the castle.

The Twenty and Eighth Adventure

How that Owlglass painted the forbears of the Landgrave of Hessen, and told him that an if he were ignobly born, he might not behold his painting

Many marvellous things did Owlglass bring to pass in the land of Hessen. After that he had journeyed up and down in the country of Saxony, and his fame had spread so abroad that no longer dare he work his knaveries and beguilings in that land, came our worshipful Master forth from Saxony, and did enter into the land of Hessen, and came therein unto Marburg, unto the Landgrave where that he kept his court. Then inquired the landgrave of Owlglass, what manner of man he was and what he could do. Then answered Owlglass, and said: “Lord, I know the arts, and that manner of man am I, and your humble servant.” Thereat rejoiced the landgrave greatly, for he thought that Owlglass was an alchymist, and in alchymy had the landgrave much delight. Then spake he unto him, saying: “Art thou an alchymist?” And Owlglass answered: “Nay, that am I not, in good sooth, for of dross make not I gold, but rather quite the other thing. Yet am I a painter, the equal unto whom can be nowhere found in any country, for my work is far better than the work of any other painter.” Then said the landgrave: “Come, let us now look upon some of thy work.” And Owlglass said: “Yea, my lord.” And he had with him some paintings cunningly devised, the which he had brought out of Flanders. These took he from his wallet, and displayed them before that prince. These pleased the lord much, and he said unto Owlglass: “Worshipful sir painter, what money will ye have if that ye would paint on the wall of our castle hall the story of the family of the landgraves of Hessen, and how that through them I became friendly unto and with the King of Hungary, and other lords and princes, and how long the land of Hessen hath been established? And that must ye tell me in the wise that will be most costly and precious.” Then answered Owlglass: “Behold, most gracious prince, if that ye would have it so rarely done, it might truly cost not less than four hundred marks.” Then answered the landgrave, and said unto Owlglass: “Master, an if you do but make it rarely, the money shall not fail, nor will we forget to reward thee as ye shall deserve.” Then did Owlglass consent to become the painter of the picture; and thereat gave the landgrave unto Owlglass one hundred marks so that he might buy colours therewith.

But when that Owlglass came with three servants he had found, to see what the work was which was to be done, he gat him unto the landgrave, and spake unto him, and entreated him, saying: “Behold, noble prince, I would crave a grace from ye, which I would ask that ye should grant unto me.” Then spake the landgrave: “Yea, that I will grant thee. Speak on.” And Owlglass answered, and said: “The grace I crave from thee is, that, while my work is going forward, no one shall enter without that they ask of me whether they may enter therein.” And therewith the landgrave granted Owlglass the grace he desired. Then conferred Owlglass with his men, and said unto them, that they must take an oath unto him not to betray him; and so did they. And he said unto them, that they need not do any kind of labour, but they might play at tables and chess and other merry pastimes. And thereat were the men content; nor was it greatly marvellous that in such wise they should be, for Owlglass did promise to pay them for serving him after this manner.



Then it came to pass, after some three or four weeks had gone by, that the landgrave craved much to see in what measure the painting of Owlglass was ready, and whether, of a truth, it did resemble the ensamples which Owlglass had shewn unto him, which were so goodly and fair. Thereat gat he him to Owlglass, and said unto him: "Alas, most worshipful master, I would fain come into the hall and see in what measure my picture doth grow ready." Then Owlglass spake unto the landgrave, and answered him, and said: "Yea, and that shall ye also do. But I must tell unto thee a marvellous secret which doth touch all my painting, in that no one, if he be ignobly born, or not according unto the ordinance of Holy Church, can behold my painting to see it." The landgrave said thereafter: "Truly that is a marvellous thing." Yet, my masters, ye may perceive in that the landgrave was an alchymist, so had he also more belief in such affairs than cometh unto the lot of all men. And then went he with Owlglass into the hall, and there had Owlglass hanged up a white cloth, that he should have painted. And with a white wand did he point to the wall when that he had with his hand put the cloth somewhat aside, and then spake he to the landgrave, and said unto him: "Most noble landgrave, look upon this painting, so marvellous well done and with fair colours, and behold here in this corner he that was first lord of Hessen and earl of the land. And here perceive ye one that was an earl of Rome thereunto, and he had a princess and a wife, who was duchess of Bavaria and a daughter of the mild and good Justinian, who afterwards became emperor. And look ye, noble lord; of them was born Adolphus. And of Adolphus came William the Swart; and this William had a son Ludwig, who was named the Pious; and so forward until that we come down unto your lordship's grace. And I know well that there is no person living that can reprove my work, so curiously have I made it, and with such fair and goodly colours." Yet saw the lord nought before his face but the white wall, and he

thought unto himself: “Though I see nothing but the wall, yet will I say nought unto the master, else will he know full well that I am not nobly born, but basely and vilely.” Therefore said the landgrave unto Owlglass: “Learned and cunning master painter, your work pleaseth me marvellously well, yet is my understanding very small therein.” Therefore departed he out of the hall.

And when that he did come unto the princess his wife, she spake unto him, and asked him, saying: “How goeth it with the master painter? Ye have seen his work and devices, and how are ye pleased therewith? Truly have I but small belief in him; for he seemeth unto me a rare and most cunning knave and beguiler.” And the landgrave answered her: “I have shrewd trust in him; and therein is displayed great cunning and mastery: I like it well. Would it please thee also to look thereon?” And she said: “Yea, that it would.” And the landgrave said: “Then, with the master’s consent, shall ye do it.” Then sent she for Owlglass, and said unto him, that she did desire to behold his painting. And that did Owlglass grant unto her; but he told her likewise the marvellous secret which did hang upon his painting. And they entered in, and with the princess came eight maidens of her women and her woman-fool, which did everywhere be in her company. And Owlglass put back the cloth with his hand, and with his wand told them the same story which he had told unto the landgrave. Yet perceived they nothing; but being ashamed, spake not any word, neither praising nor blaming the picture. But then did the woman-fool open her mouth, and spake, and said unto Owlglass: “Worshipful master, an if it be that I am basely born, yet see I nothing of thy device upon the wall.” And Owlglass thought: “Now goeth the matter not so rarely on as before; for if the fools speak truth, then truly must I depart hence:” and laughed thereat within himself.

Thereafter departed the princess, and went unto her lord and husband, and he spake unto her, and asked her how that the work liked¹⁰ her. And she answered and said: “Most gracious lord, it liketh me as well as it did you, and truly is most rare. But my woman-fool it liketh not; and she saith that she cannot see any painting there at all. And she and my maidens think that there lieth hid some knavish practice therein.” Thereat began the landgrave to take counsel within himself, if it might be that he was beguiled; but he sent word unto Owlglass that he should make ready his work, for that all his court was coming to behold the picture, and that if any among them fortunated to be base-born, then should their lands be escheated unto the landgrave. Thereat gat him Owlglass unto his fellows and discharged them, and gave them money, and they departed. And then went he unto the treasurer, and of him gat he other hundred marks; and then went he forth from the castle, and so departed on his way.

And it came to pass that on the morrow the landgrave demanded where that his painter might be—but he had departed. Thereat went he with all his lords into the hall where that the master had exercised his cunning device, but there saw they no painting; so they spake no words, but kept their mouths shut. Thereat said the landgrave, for he beheld the sign which Owlglass did always write where that he had worked any knavery, which was that he wrote up the device of an owl and a glass: “Now do we know that we are beguiled; and with Owlglass have we but little for to be moved, but rather for the two hundred marks, but the loss thereof can we likewise bear. But a great knave is he, and must henceforth remain far from our lands.”

Thus did our noble Master Owlglass everywhere teach wisdom unto the lieges; but from Marburg had he gat him forth, nor would he again have to do with the painter’s mastery.

¹⁰ *i.e.* Pleased.

The Twenty and Ninth Adventure

How that Owlglass was for little money well entertained of two innkeepers

It fortuned that in a village were there two innkeepers, who did with great hatred pursue each other, and they could not bear to live in friendship, or as neighbours should. And if it came to pass, that the one did have in his house more custom than the other, then was there much anger and envy therefrom, and they grew ever more enemies thereafter.

On a time it came to pass, that Owlglass came thither, although thereby he ran great danger. And he entered into the house of one of these twain, and he spake unto the host, and asked of him, whether for twelve pennies he might have wine? “Yea,” answered the host, “that he might in good truth;” and went and brought him speedily a measure of wine. Thereafter asked Owlglass again, whether he might for twelve pennies have beef and salad? “Yea,” said the host; and brought beef and salad, the which did Owlglass eat with rare enjoyment. And as he was eating, the cook carried a fowl by on a plate, and Owlglass saw it, and he called for the host, and asked him, if for twelve pennies he might have a part thereof? “Most truly,” said the host. And behold his measure of wine was empty, and Owlglass moreover called the host unto him, and said: “Can I for twelve pennies again have wine?” “Yea,” answered the host, and rejoiced in his good visitor, and brought him a fresh measure of wine. And Owlglass was full and fairly provisioned within, and he prepared to depart, and rose up, and he laid twelve pennies on the table, and then he would have departed out of the door. Thereat the host held him back, and said unto him, that the money was not enough, and that he must pay four times as much. “What mean ye?” said Owlglass. “Did not I ask ye every time, if that I might have for twelve pennies that which I required? And now would ye have much more? How mean ye? There is my debt, and is it to be laid unto my charges that ye have not understood me?” Then saw the host that it was most plain he had been beguiled; and he spake unto Owlglass, that he would forgive him the debt and add thereto the present of a piece of money, if that he would go unto his neighbour hard by and there work the same thing. Then Owlglass put the piece of money in his doublet, and laughed, and said unto the host: “Verily have I already done thus at your neighbour’s house, and he it was that did give me a piece of money an if I would but come to you.” And therewith departed our well beloved brother Owlglass, and the host marvelled with great marvel.

The Thirtieth Adventure

How that Owlglass did tell his master how he might scape giving pork unto his neighbours

On a time Owlglass was servant unto a boor, who was a man of great avarice, and did never like to give unto others anything he might have. Now it fortuneth that he killed a pig, and as he had received from others pieces of bacon when that they killed, so now would they expect that he would give unto them in return. Then he spake unto Owlglass, saying: “Truly art thou of a quick wit and ready invention. Tell me how shall I escape giving unto my neighbours.” Thereat said Owlglass: “In truth, nothing is more easy. Behold, when it is night-time hang thy pig without thy door upon a hook, and when that it cometh unto midnight take it secretly away, and make great complaint that it hath been stolen.” And the boor did according unto the words of Owlglass, for he was content.

When that he came in the night to take his pig secretly away, he found it not, and did cry out woundily that robbers had taken it. And truly our good Master Owlglass had conveyed the pig away himself. And when he heard the boor cry, he came up to him, and asked what might have happened. And the boor answered Owlglass, and said: “The thieves have come and taken away my pig.” Then answered Owlglass: “Excellently spake! So tell thou unto all thy neighbours.” But the other said: “Nay; but the matter hath not ended as I desired. The pig hath truly been stolen.” And Owlglass answered him: “An if ye speak thus well, all the town will believe you. Most excellent, by my halidom!” And although the boor would have persuaded Owlglass of the truth, did that great master only laugh. And thereafter did he tell unto the neighbours what he had advised; and no one would believe the boor.

The Thirty and First Adventure

How that Owlglass conferred with the rector and masters of the University of Prague in Bohemia, and how he did make answer unto their questions, and therein came off most wisely

And Owlglass departed and came unto the city of Prague in Bohemia, and there he set letters upon the church-doors, and therein said unto all that might read, that of a truth was he a most famous master, and one that could make answer unto all questions. And the rector and masters of the university heard that this learned man had come; and they were troubled thereat, and they took counsel how that they might put such questions unto him as he could not resolve, and thus might they cause him to be cast forth from the town with much mockery and shame. And so did they agree. And they sent the bedell of the university unto the inn where Owlglass lay, and charged the host that he should bring his guest into the chamber of the rector and masters; and he promised to do this thing. And they charged Owlglass that the next day he should give answers unto the questions which they had writ down, and if he could not answer, then should he be declared unworthy. And Owlglass answered, and said: “Tell the most learned rector and masters that I will do it straightway as they do require of me; and I trust to prove myself a pious man as from old time have I done.”

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