

Andersen Hans Christian

What the Moon Saw: and Other Tales



Andersen Hans
What the Moon Saw:
and Other Tales

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23153947

What the Moon Saw: and Other Tales:

Содержание

PREFACE	5
WHAT THE MOON SAW	7
INTRODUCTION	7
First Evening	9
Second Evening	11
Third Evening	12
Fourth Evening	14
Fifth Evening	16
Sixth Evening	18
Seventh Evening	20
Eighth Evening	23
Ninth Evening	24
Tenth Evening	27
Eleventh Evening	29
Twelfth Evening	31
Thirteenth Evening	34
Fourteenth Evening	36
Fifteenth Evening	38
Sixteenth Evening	41
Seventeenth Evening	42
Eighteenth Evening	44
Nineteenth Evening	46
Twentieth Evening	48

Twenty-first Evening	50
Twenty-second Evening	52
Twenty-third Evening	53
Twenty-fourth Evening	56
Twenty-fifth Evening	58
Twenty-sixth Evening	59
Twenty-seventh Evening	61
Twenty-eighth Evening	62
Twenty-ninth Evening	63
Thirtieth Evening	64
Thirty-first Evening	66
Thirty-second Evening	67
THE STORY OF THE YEAR	69
SHE WAS GOOD FOR NOTHING	82
"THERE IS A DIFFERENCE."	93
EVERYTHING IN ITS RIGHT PLACE	98
THE GOBLIN AND THE HUCKSTER	110
IN A THOUSAND YEARS	116
THE BOND OF FRIENDSHIP	119
JACK THE DULLARD	132
SOMETHING	139
UNDER THE WILLOW TREE	149
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	151

Andersen Hans Christian

What the Moon Saw: and Other Tales

PREFACE

The present book is put forth as a sequel to the volume of Hans C. Andersen's "Stories and Tales," published in a similar form in the course of 1864. It contains tales and sketches various in character; and following, as it does, an earlier volume, care has been taken to intersperse with the children's tales stories which, by their graver character and deeper meaning, are calculated to interest those "children of a larger growth" who can find instruction as well as amusement in the play of fancy and imagination, though the realm be that of fiction, and the instruction be conveyed in a simple form.

The series of sketches of "What the Moon Saw," with which the present volume opens, arose from the experiences of Andersen, when as a youth he went to seek his fortune in the capital of his native land; and the story entitled "Under the Willow Tree" is said likewise to have its foundation in fact; indeed, it seems redolent of the truth of that natural human love and suffering which is so truly said to "make the whole world

kin."

On the preparation and embellishment of the book, the same care and attention have been lavished as on the preceding volume. The pencil of Mr. Bayes and the graver of the Brothers Dalziel have again been employed in the work of illustration; and it is hoped that the favour bestowed by the public on the former volume may be extended to this its successor.

H. W. D.

WHAT THE MOON SAW

INTRODUCTION

It is a strange thing, that when I feel most fervently and most deeply, my hands and my tongue seem alike tied, so that I cannot rightly describe or accurately portray the thoughts that are rising within me; and yet I am a painter: my eye tells me as much as that, and all my friends who have seen my sketches and fancies say the same.

I am a poor lad, and live in one of the narrowest of lanes; but I do not want for light, as my room is high up in the house, with an extensive prospect over the neighbouring roofs. During the first few days I went to live in the town, I felt low-spirited and solitary enough. Instead of the forest and the green hills of former days, I had here only a forest of chimney-pots to look out upon. And then I had not a single friend; not one familiar face greeted me.

So one evening I sat at the window, in a desponding mood; and presently I opened the casement and looked out. Oh, how my heart leaped up with joy! Here was a well-known face at last – a round, friendly countenance, the face of a good friend I had known at home. In, fact it was the Moon that looked in upon me. He was quite unchanged, the dear old Moon, and had the same face exactly that he used to show when he peered down

upon me through the willow trees on the moor. I kissed my hand to him over and over again, as he shone far into my little room; and he, for his part, promised me that every evening, when he came abroad, he would look in upon me for a few moments. This promise he has faithfully kept. It is a pity that he can only stay such a short time when he comes. Whenever he appears, he tells me of one thing or another that he has seen on the previous night, or on that same evening. "Just paint the scenes I describe to you" – this is what he said to me – "and you will have a very pretty picture-book." I have followed his injunction for many evenings. I could make up a new "Thousand and One Nights," in my own way, out of these pictures, but the number might be too great, after all. The pictures I have here given have not been chosen at random, but follow in their proper order, just as they were described to me. Some great gifted painter, or some poet or musician, may make something more of them if he likes; what I have given here are only hasty sketches, hurriedly put upon the paper, with some of my own thoughts interspersed; for the Moon did not come to me every evening – a cloud sometimes hid his face from me.

First Evening

"Last night" – I am quoting the Moon's own words – "last night I was gliding through the cloudless Indian sky. My face was mirrored in the waters of the Ganges, and my beams strove to pierce through the thick intertwining boughs of the bananas, arching beneath me like the tortoise's shell. Forth from the thicket tripped a Hindoo maid, light as a gazelle, beautiful as Eve. Airy and ethereal as a vision, and yet sharply defined amid the surrounding shadows, stood this daughter of Hindostan: I could read on her delicate brow the thought that had brought her hither. The thorny creeping plants tore her sandals, but for all that she came rapidly forward. The deer that had come down to the river to quench their thirst, sprang by with a startled bound, for in her hand the maiden bore a lighted lamp. I could see the blood in her delicate finger tips, as she spread them for a screen before the dancing flame. She came down to the stream, and set the lamp upon the water, and let it float away. The flame flickered to and fro, and seemed ready to expire; but still the lamp burned on, and the girl's black sparkling eyes, half veiled behind their long silken lashes, followed it with a gaze of earnest intensity. She knew that if the lamp continued to burn so long as she could keep it in sight, her betrothed was still alive; but if the lamp was suddenly extinguished, he was dead. And the lamp burned bravely on, and she fell on her knees, and prayed. Near her in the

grass lay a speckled snake, but she heeded it not – she thought only of Bramah and of her betrothed. 'He lives!' she shouted joyfully, 'he lives!' And from the mountains the echo came back upon her, 'he lives!'"

Second Evening

"Yesterday," said the Moon to me, "I looked down upon a small courtyard surrounded on all sides by houses. In the courtyard sat a clucking hen with eleven chickens; and a pretty little girl was running and jumping around them. The hen was frightened, and screamed, and spread out her wings over the little brood. Then the girl's father came out and scolded her; and I glided away and thought no more of the matter.

"But this evening, only a few minutes ago, I looked down into the same courtyard. Everything was quiet. But presently the little girl came forth again, crept quietly to the hen-house, pushed back the bolt, and slipped into the apartment of the hen and chickens. They cried out loudly, and came fluttering down from their perches, and ran about in dismay, and the little girl ran after them. I saw it quite plainly, for I looked through a hole in the hen-house wall. I was angry with the wilful child, and felt glad when her father came out and scolded her more violently than yesterday, holding her roughly by the arm: she held down her head, and her blue eyes were full of large tears. 'What are you about here?' he asked. She wept and said, 'I wanted to kiss the hen and beg her pardon for frightening her yesterday; but I was afraid to tell you.'

"And the father kissed the innocent child's forehead, and I kissed her on the mouth and eyes."

Third Evening

"In the narrow street round the corner yonder – it is so narrow that my beams can only glide for a minute along the walls of the house, but in that minute I see enough to learn what the world is made of – in that narrow street I saw a woman. Sixteen years ago that woman was a child, playing in the garden of the old parsonage, in the country. The hedges of rose-bush were old, and the flowers were faded. They straggled wild over the paths, and the ragged branches grew up among the boughs of the apple trees; here and there were a few roses still in bloom – not so fair as the queen of flowers generally appears, but still they had colour and scent too. The clergyman's little daughter appeared to me a far lovelier rose, as she sat on her stool under the straggling hedge, hugging and caressing her doll with the battered pasteboard cheeks.

"Ten years afterwards I saw her again. I beheld her in a splendid ball-room: she was the beautiful bride of a rich merchant. I rejoiced at her happiness, and sought her on calm quiet evenings – ah, nobody thinks of my clear eye and my silent glance! Alas! my rose ran wild, like the rose bushes in the garden of the parsonage. There are tragedies in every-day life, and to-night I saw the last act of one.

"She was lying in bed in a house in that narrow street: she was sick unto death, and the cruel landlord came up, and tore away

the thin coverlet, her only protection against the cold. 'Get up!' said he; 'your face is enough to frighten one. Get up and dress yourself, give me money, or I'll turn you out into the street! Quick – get up!' She answered, 'Alas! death is gnawing at my heart. Let me rest.' But he forced her to get up and bathe her face, and put a wreath of roses in her hair; and he placed her in a chair at the window, with a candle burning beside her, and went away.

"I looked at her, and she was sitting motionless, with her hands in her lap. The wind caught the open window and shut it with a crash, so that a pane came clattering down in fragments; but still she never moved. The curtain caught fire, and the flames played about her face; and I saw that she was dead. There at the open window sat the dead woman, preaching a sermon against *sin*— my poor faded rose out of the parsonage garden!"

Fourth Evening

"This evening I saw a German play acted," said the Moon. "It was in a little town. A stable had been turned into a theatre; that is to say, the stable had been left standing, and had been turned into private boxes, and all the timber work had been covered with coloured paper. A little iron chandelier hung beneath the ceiling, and that it might be made to disappear into the ceiling, as it does in great theatres, when the *ting-ting* of the prompter's bell is heard, a great inverted tub had been placed just above it.

"*Ting-ting!*" and the little iron chandelier suddenly rose at least half a yard and disappeared in the tub; and that was the sign that the play was going to begin. A young nobleman and his lady, who happened to be passing through the little town, were present at the performance, and consequently the house was crowded. But under the chandelier was a vacant space like a little crater: not a single soul sat there, for the tallow was dropping, drip, drip! I saw everything, for it was so warm in there that every loophole had been opened. The male and female servants stood outside, peeping through the chinks, although a real policeman was inside, threatening them with a stick. Close by the orchestra could be seen the noble young couple in two old arm-chairs, which were usually occupied by his worship the mayor and his lady; but these latter were to-day obliged to content themselves with wooden forms, just as if they had been ordinary citizens; and

the lady observed quietly to herself, 'One sees, now, that there is rank above rank;' and this incident gave an air of extra festivity to the whole proceedings. The chandelier gave little leaps, the crowd got their knuckles rapped, and I, the Moon, was present at the performance from beginning to end."

Fifth Evening

"Yesterday," began the Moon, "I looked down upon the turmoil of Paris. My eye penetrated into an apartment of the Louvre. An old grandmother, poorly clad – she belonged to the working class – was following one of the under-servants into the great empty throne-room, for this was the apartment she wanted to see – that she was resolved to see; it had cost her many a little sacrifice, and many a coaxing word, to penetrate thus far. She folded her thin hands, and looked round with an air of reverence, as if she had been in a church.

"'Here it was!' she said, 'here!' And she approached the throne, from which hung the rich velvet fringed with gold lace. 'There,' she exclaimed, 'there!' and she knelt and kissed the purple carpet. I think she was actually weeping.

"'But it was not *this very* velvet!' observed the footman, and a smile played about his mouth. 'True, but it was this very place,' replied the woman, 'and it must have looked just like this.' 'It looked so, and yet it did not,' observed the man: 'the windows were beaten in, and the doors were off their hinges, and there was blood upon the floor.' 'But for all that you can say, my grandson died upon the throne of France. Died!' mournfully repeated the old woman. I do not think another word was spoken, and they soon quitted the hall. The evening twilight faded, and my light shone doubly vivid upon the rich velvet that covered the throne

of France.

"Now, who do you think this poor woman was? Listen, I will tell you a story.

"It happened, in the Revolution of July, on the evening of the most brilliantly victorious day, when every house was a fortress, every window a breastwork. The people stormed the Tuileries. Even women and children were to be found among the combatants. They penetrated into the apartments and halls of the palace. A poor half-grown boy in a ragged blouse fought among the older insurgents. Mortally wounded with several bayonet thrusts, he sank down. This happened in the throne-room. They laid the bleeding youth upon the throne of France, wrapped the velvet around his wounds, and his blood streamed forth upon the imperial purple. There was a picture! the splendid hall, the fighting groups! A torn flag lay upon the ground, the tricolor was waving above the bayonets, and on the throne lay the poor lad with the pale glorified countenance, his eyes turned towards the sky, his limbs writhing in the death agony, his breast bare, and his poor tattered clothing half hidden by the rich velvet embroidered with silver lilies. At the boy's cradle a prophecy had been spoken: 'He will die on the throne of France!' The mother's heart dreamt of a second Napoleon.

"My beams have kissed the wreath of *immortelles* on his grave, and this night they kissed the forehead of the old grandame, while in a dream the picture floated before her which thou mayest draw – the poor boy on the throne of France."

Sixth Evening

"I've been in Upsala," said the Moon: "I looked down upon the great plain covered with coarse grass, and upon the barren fields. I mirrored my face in the Tyris river, while the steamboat drove the fish into the rushes. Beneath me floated the waves, throwing long shadows on the so-called graves of Odin, Thor, and Friga. In the scanty turf that covers the hill-side names have been cut.¹ There is no monument here, no memorial on which the traveller can have his name carved, no rocky wall on whose surface he can get it painted; so visitors have the turf cut away for that purpose. The naked earth peers through in the form of great letters and names; these form a network over the whole hill. Here is an immortality, which lasts till the fresh turf grows!

"Up on the hill stood a man, a poet. He emptied the mead horn with the broad silver rim, and murmured a name. He begged the winds not to betray him, but I heard the name. I knew it. A count's coronet sparkles above it, and therefore he did not speak it out. I smiled, for I knew that a poet's crown adorns his own name. The nobility of Eleanora d'Este is attached to the name of Tasso. And I also know where the Rose of Beauty blooms!"

Thus spake the Moon, and a cloud came between us. May no

¹ Travellers on the Continent have frequent opportunities of seeing how universally this custom prevails among travellers. In some places on the Rhine, pots of paint and brushes are offered by the natives to the traveller desirous of "immortalising" himself.

cloud separate the poet from the rose!

Seventh Evening

"Along the margin of the shore stretches a forest of firs and beeches, and fresh and fragrant is this wood; hundreds of nightingales visit it every spring. Close beside it is the sea, the ever-changing sea, and between the two is placed the broad high-road. One carriage after another rolls over it; but I did not follow them, for my eye loves best to rest upon one point. A Hun's Grave² lies there, and the sloe and blackthorn grow luxuriantly among the stones. Here is true poetry in nature.

"And how do you think men appreciate this poetry? I will tell you what I heard there last evening and during the night.

"First, two rich landed proprietors came driving by. 'Those are glorious trees!' said the first. 'Certainly; there are ten loads of firewood in each,' observed the other: 'it will be a hard winter, and last year we got fourteen dollars a load' – and they were gone. 'The road here is wretched,' observed another man who drove past. 'That's the fault of those horrible trees,' replied his neighbour; 'there is no free current of air; the wind can only come from the sea' – and they were gone. The stage coach went rattling past. All the passengers were asleep at this beautiful spot. The postillion blew his horn, but he only thought, 'I can play capitolly. It sounds well here. I wonder if those in there like it?'

² Large mounds similar to the "barrows" found in Britain, are thus designated in Germany and the North.

– and the stage coach vanished. Then two young fellows came galloping up on horseback. There's youth and spirit in the blood here! thought I; and, indeed, they looked with a smile at the moss-grown hill and thick forest. 'I should not dislike a walk here with the miller's Christine,' said one – and they flew past.

"The flowers scented the air; every breath of air was hushed: it seemed as if the sea were a part of the sky that stretched above the deep valley. A carriage rolled by. Six people were sitting in it. Four of them were asleep; the fifth was thinking of his new summer coat, which would suit him admirably; the sixth turned to the coachman and asked him if there were anything remarkable connected with yonder heap of stones. 'No,' replied the coachman, 'it's only a heap of stones; but the trees are remarkable.' 'How so?' 'Why, I'll tell you how they are very remarkable. You see, in winter, when the snow lies very deep, and has hidden the whole road so that nothing is to be seen, those trees serve me for a landmark. I steer by them, so as not to drive into the sea; and you see that is why the trees are remarkable.'

"Now came a painter. He spoke not a word, but his eyes sparkled. He began to whistle. At this the nightingales sang louder than ever. 'Hold your tongues!' he cried testily; and he made accurate notes of all the colours and transitions – blue, and lilac, and dark brown. 'That will make a beautiful picture,' he said. He took it in just as a mirror takes in a view; and as he worked he whistled a march of Rossini. And last of all came a poor girl. She laid aside the burden she carried, and sat down to

rest upon the Hun's Grave. Her pale handsome face was bent in a listening attitude towards the forest. Her eyes brightened, she gazed earnestly at the sea and the sky, her hands were folded, and I think she prayed, 'Our Father.' She herself could not understand the feeling that swept through her, but I know that this minute, and the beautiful natural scene, will live within her memory for years, far more vividly and more truly than the painter could portray it with his colours on paper. My rays followed her till the morning dawn kissed her brow."

Eighth Evening

Heavy clouds obscured the sky, and the Moon did not make his appearance at all. I stood in my little room, more lonely than ever, and looked up at the sky where he ought to have shown himself. My thoughts flew far away, up to my great friend, who every evening told me such pretty tales, and showed me pictures. Yes, he has had an experience indeed. He glided over the waters of the Deluge, and smiled on Noah's ark just as he lately glanced down upon me, and brought comfort and promise of a new world that was to spring forth from the old. When the Children of Israel sat weeping by the waters of Babylon, he glanced mournfully upon the willows where hung the silent harps. When Romeo climbed the balcony, and the promise of true love fluttered like a cherub toward heaven, the round Moon hung, half hidden among the dark cypresses, in the lucid air. He saw the captive giant at St. Helena, looking from the lonely rock across the wide ocean, while great thoughts swept through his soul. Ah! what tales the Moon can tell. Human life is like a story to him. To-night I shall not see thee again, old friend. To-night I can draw no picture of the memories of thy visit. And, as I looked dreamily towards the clouds, the sky became bright. There was a glancing light, and a beam from the Moon fell upon me. It vanished again, and dark clouds flew past; but still it was a greeting, a friendly good-night offered to me by the Moon.

Ninth Evening

The air was clear again. Several evenings had passed, and the Moon was in the first quarter. Again he gave me an outline for a sketch. Listen to what he told me.

"I have followed the polar bird and the swimming whale to the eastern coast of Greenland. Gaunt ice-covered rocks and dark clouds hung over a valley, where dwarf willows and barberry bushes stood clothed in green. The blooming lychnis exhaled sweet odours. My light was faint, my face pale as the water lily that, torn from its stem, has been drifting for weeks with the tide. The crown-shaped Northern Light burned fiercely in the sky. Its ring was broad, and from its circumference the rays shot like whirling shafts of fire across the whole sky, flashing in changing radiance from green to red. The inhabitants of that icy region were assembling for dance and festivity; but, accustomed to this glorious spectacle, they scarcely deigned to glance at it. 'Let us leave the souls of the dead to their ball-play with the heads of the walruses,' they thought in their superstition, and they turned their whole attention to the song and dance. In the midst of the circle, and divested of his furry cloak, stood a Greenlander, with a small pipe, and he played and sang a song about catching the seal, and the chorus around chimed in with, '*Eia, Eia, Ah.*' And in their white furs they danced about in the circle, till you might fancy it was a polar bear's ball.

"And now a Court of Judgment was opened. Those Greenlanders who had quarrelled stepped forward, and the offended person chanted forth the faults of his adversary in an extempore song, turning them sharply into ridicule, to the sound of the pipe and the measure of the dance. The defendant replied with satire as keen, while the audience laughed, and gave their verdict. The rocks heaved, the glaciers melted, and great masses of ice and snow came crashing down, shivering to fragments as they fell: it was a glorious Greenland summer night. A hundred paces away, under the open tent of hides, lay a sick man. Life still flowed through his warm blood, but still he was to die – he himself felt it, and all who stood round him knew it also; therefore his wife was already sowing round him the shroud of furs, that she might not afterwards be obliged to touch the dead body. And she asked, 'Wilt thou be buried on the rock, in the firm snow? I will deck the spot with thy *kayak*, and thy arrows, and the *angekokk* shall dance over it. Or wouldst thou rather be buried in the sea?' 'In the sea,' he whispered, and nodded with a mournful smile. 'Yes, it is a pleasant summer tent, the sea,' observed the wife. 'Thousands of seals sport there, the walrus shall lie at thy feet, and the hunt will be safe and merry!' And the yelling children tore the outspread hide from the window-hole, that the dead man might be carried to the ocean, the billowy ocean, that had given him food in life, and that now, in death, was to afford him a place of rest. For his monument, he had the floating, ever-changing icebergs, whereon the seal sleeps, while

the storm bird flies round their gleaming summits!"

Tenth Evening

"I knew an old maid," said the Moon. "Every winter she wore a wrapper of yellow satin, and it always remained new, and was the only fashion she followed. In summer she always wore the same straw hat, and I verily believe the very same grey-blue dress.

"She never went out, except across the street to an old female friend; and in later years she did not even take this walk, for the old friend was dead. In her solitude my old maid was always busy at the window, which was adorned in summer with pretty flowers, and in winter with cress, grown upon felt. During the last months I saw her no more at the window, but she was still alive. I knew that, for I had not yet seen her begin the 'long journey,' of which she often spoke with her friend. 'Yes, yes,' she was in the habit of saying, 'when I come to die, I shall take a longer journey than I have made my whole life long. Our family vault is six miles from here. I shall be carried there, and shall sleep there among my family and relatives.' Last night a van stopped at the house. A coffin was carried out, and then I knew that she was dead. They placed straw round the coffin, and the van drove away. There slept the quiet old lady, who had not gone out of her house once for the last year. The van rolled out through the town-gate as briskly as if it were going for a pleasant excursion. On the high-road the pace was quicker yet. The coachman looked nervously round every now and then – I fancy he half expected to see her

sitting on the coffin, in her yellow satin wrapper. And because he was startled, he foolishly lashed his horses, while he held the reins so tightly that the poor beasts were in a foam: they were young and fiery. A hare jumped across the road and startled them, and they fairly ran away. The old sober maiden, who had for years and years moved quietly round and round in a dull circle, was now, in death, rattled over stock and stone on the public highway. The coffin in its covering of straw tumbled out of the van, and was left on the high-road, while horses, coachman, and carriage flew past in wild career. The lark rose up carolling from the field, twittering her morning lay over the coffin, and presently perched upon it, picking with her beak at the straw covering, as though she would tear it up. The lark rose up again, singing gaily, and I withdrew behind the red morning clouds."

Eleventh Evening

"I will give you a picture of Pompeii," said the Moon. "I was in the suburb in the Street of Tombs, as they call it, where the fair monuments stand, in the spot where, ages ago, the merry youths, their temples bound with rosy wreaths, danced with the fair sisters of Laïs. Now, the stillness of death reigned around. German mercenaries, in the Neapolitan service, kept guard, played cards, and diced; and a troop of strangers from beyond the mountains came into the town, accompanied by a sentry. They wanted to see the city that had risen from the grave illumined by my beams; and I showed them the wheel-ruts in the streets paved with broad lava slabs; I showed them the names on the doors, and the signs that hung there yet: they saw in the little courtyard the basins of the fountains, ornamented with shells; but no jet of water gushed upwards, no songs sounded forth from the richly-painted chambers, where the bronze dog kept the door.

"It was the City of the Dead; only Vesuvius thundered forth his everlasting hymn, each separate verse of which is called by men an eruption. We went to the temple of Venus, built of snow-white marble, with its high altar in front of the broad steps, and the weeping willows sprouting freshly forth among the pillars. The air was transparent and blue, and black Vesuvius formed the background, with fire ever shooting forth from it, like the stem of the pine tree. Above it stretched the smoky cloud in

the silence of the night, like the crown of the pine, but in a blood-red illumination. Among the company was a lady singer, a real and great singer. I have witnessed the homage paid to her in the greatest cities of Europe. When they came to the tragic theatre, they all sat down on the amphitheatre steps, and thus a small part of the house was occupied by an audience, as it had been many centuries ago. The stage still stood unchanged, with its walled side-scenes, and the two arches in the background, through which the beholders saw the same scene that had been exhibited in the old times – a scene painted by nature herself, namely, the mountains between Sorento and Amalfi. The singer gaily mounted the ancient stage, and sang. The place inspired her, and she reminded me of a wild Arab horse, that rushes headlong on with snorting nostrils and flying mane – her song was so light and yet so firm. Anon I thought of the mourning mother beneath the cross at Golgotha, so deep was the expression of pain. And, just as it had done thousands of years ago, the sound of applause and delight now filled the theatre. 'Happy, gifted creature!' all the hearers exclaimed. Five minutes more, and the stage was empty, the company had vanished, and not a sound more was heard – all were gone. But the ruins stood unchanged, as they will stand when centuries shall have gone by, and when none shall know of the momentary applause and of the triumph of the fair songstress; when all will be forgotten and gone, and even for me this hour will be but a dream of the past."

Twelfth Evening

"I looked through the windows of an editor's house," said the Moon. "It was somewhere in Germany. I saw handsome furniture, many books, and a chaos of newspapers. Several young men were present: the editor himself stood at his desk, and two little books, both by young authors, were to be noticed. 'This one has been sent to me,' said he. 'I have not read it yet; what think *you* of the contents?' 'Oh,' said the person addressed – he was a poet himself – 'it is good enough; a little broad, certainly; but, you see, the author is still young. The verses might be better, to be sure; the thoughts are sound, though there is certainly a good deal of commonplace among them. But what will you have? You can't be always getting something new. That he'll turn out anything great I don't believe, but you may safely praise him. He is well read, a remarkable Oriental scholar, and has a good judgment. It was he who wrote that nice review of my 'Reflections on Domestic Life.' We must be lenient towards the young man.'

""But he is a complete hack!" objected another of the gentlemen. 'Nothing is worse in poetry than mediocrity, and he certainly does not go beyond this.'

""Poor fellow,' observed a third, 'and his aunt is so happy about him. It was she, Mr. Editor, who got together so many subscribers for your last translation.'

""Ah, the good woman! Well, I have noticed the book briefly.

Undoubted talent – a welcome offering – a flower in the garden of poetry – prettily brought out – and so on. But this other book – I suppose the author expects me to purchase it? I hear it is praised. He has genius, certainly; don't you think so?"

"'Yes, all the world declares as much,' replied the poet, 'but it has turned out rather wildly. The punctuation of the book, in particular, is very eccentric.'

"'It will be good for him if we pull him to pieces, and anger him a little, otherwise he will get too good an opinion of himself.'

"'But that would be unfair,' objected the fourth. 'Let us not carp at little faults, but rejoice over the real and abundant good that we find here: he surpasses all the rest.'

"'Not so. If he is a true genius, he can bear the sharp voice of censure. There are people enough to praise him. Don't let us quite turn his head.'

"'Decided talent,' wrote the editor, 'with the usual carelessness. That he can write incorrect verses may be seen in page 25, where there are two false quantities. We recommend him to study the ancients, etc.'

"I went away," continued the Moon, "and looked through the windows in the aunt's house. There sat the be-praised poet, the *tame* one; all the guests paid homage to him, and he was happy.

"I sought the other poet out, the *wild* one; him also I found in a great assembly at his patron's, where the tame poet's book was being discussed.

"'I shall read yours also,' said Mæcenas; 'but to speak honestly

– you know I never hide my opinion from you – I don't expect much from it, for you are much too wild, too fantastic. But it must be allowed that, as a man, you are highly respectable.'

"A young girl sat in a corner; and she read in a book these words:

"In the dust lies genius and glory,
But ev'ry-day talent will *pay*.
It's only the old, old story,
But the piece is repeated each day."

Thirteenth Evening

The Moon said, "Beside the woodland path there are two small farmhouses. The doors are low, and some of the windows are placed quite high, and others close to the ground; and whitethorn and barberry bushes grow around them. The roof of each house is overgrown with moss and with yellow flowers and houseleek. Cabbage and potatoes are the only plants cultivated in the gardens, but out of the hedge there grows a willow tree, and under this willow tree sat a little girl, and she sat with her eyes fixed upon the old oak tree between the two huts.

"It was an old withered stem. It had been sawn off at the top, and a stork had built his nest upon it; and he stood in this nest clapping with his beak. A little boy came and stood by the girl's side: they were brother and sister.

"'What are you looking at?' he asked.

"'I'm watching the stork,' she replied: 'our neighbours told me that he would bring us a little brother or sister to-day; let us watch to see it come!'

"'The stork brings no such things,' the boy declared, 'you may be sure of that. Our neighbour told me the same thing, but she laughed when she said it, and so I asked her if she could say 'On my honour,' and she could not; and I know by that that the story about the storks is not true, and that they only tell it to us children for fun.'

"But where do the babies come from, then?" asked the girl.

"Why, an angel from heaven brings them under his cloak, but no man can see him; and that's why we never know when he brings them."

"At that moment there was a rustling in the branches of the willow tree, and the children folded their hands and looked at one another: it was certainly the angel coming with the baby. They took each other's hand, and at that moment the door of one of the houses opened, and the neighbour appeared.

"Come in, you two," she said. "See what the stork has brought. It is a little brother."

"And the children nodded gravely at one another, for they had felt quite sure already that the baby was come."

Fourteenth Evening

"I was gliding over the Lüneburg Heath," the Moon said. "A lonely hut stood by the wayside, a few scanty bushes grew near it, and a nightingale who had lost his way sang sweetly. He died in the coldness of the night: it was his farewell song that I heard.

"The morning dawn came glimmering red. I saw a caravan of emigrant peasant families who were bound to Hamburgh, there to take ship for America, where fancied prosperity would bloom for them. The mothers carried their little children at their backs, the elder ones tottered by their sides, and a poor starved horse tugged at a cart that bore their scanty effects. The cold wind whistled, and therefore the little girl nestled closer to the mother, who, looking up at my decreasing disc, thought of the bitter want at home, and spoke of the heavy taxes they had not been able to raise. The whole caravan thought of the same thing; therefore, the rising dawn seemed to them a message from the sun, of fortune that was to gleam brightly upon them. They heard the dying nightingale sing: it was no false prophet, but a harbinger of fortune. The wind whistled, therefore they did not understand that the nightingale sung, 'Fare away over the sea! Thou hast paid the long passage with all that was thine, and poor and helpless shalt thou enter Canaan. Thou must sell thyself, thy wife, and thy children. But your griefs shall not last long. Behind the broad fragrant leaves lurks the goddess of Death, and her welcome kiss

shall breathe fever into thy blood. Fare away, fare away, over the heaving billows.' And the caravan listened well pleased to the song of the nightingale, which seemed to promise good fortune. Day broke through the light clouds; country people went across the heath to church: the black-gowned women with their white head-dresses looked like ghosts that had stepped forth from the church pictures. All around lay a wide dead plain, covered with faded brown heath, and black charred spaces between the white sand hills. The women carried hymn books, and walked into the church. Oh, pray, pray for those who are wandering to find graves beyond the foaming billows."

Fifteenth Evening

"I know a Pulcinella,"³ the Moon told me. "The public applaud vociferously directly they see him. Every one of his movements is comic, and is sure to throw the house into convulsions of laughter; and yet there is no art in it all – it is complete nature. When he was yet a little boy, playing about with other boys, he was already Punch. Nature had intended him for it, and had provided him with a hump on his back, and another on his breast; but his inward man, his mind, on the contrary, was richly furnished. No one could surpass him in depth of feeling or in readiness of intellect. The theatre was his ideal world. If he had possessed a slender well-shaped figure, he might have been the first tragedian on any stage: the heroic, the great, filled his soul; and yet he had to become a Pulcinella. His very sorrow and melancholy did but increase the comic dryness of his sharply-cut features, and increased the laughter of the audience, who showered plaudits on their favourite. The lovely Columbine was indeed kind and cordial to him; but she preferred to marry the Harlequin. It would have been too ridiculous if beauty and ugliness had in reality paired together.

"When Pulcinella was in very bad spirits, she was the only one who could force a hearty burst of laughter, or even a smile from

³ The comic or grotesque character of the Italian ballet, from which the English "Punch" takes his origin.

him: first she would be melancholy with him, then quieter, and at last quite cheerful and happy. 'I know very well what is the matter with you,' she said; 'yes, you're in love!' And he could not help laughing. 'I and Love!' he cried, 'that would have an absurd look. How the public would shout!' 'Certainly, you are in love,' she continued; and added with a comic pathos, 'and I am the person you are in love with.' You see, such a thing may be said when it is quite out of the question – and, indeed, Pulcinella burst out laughing, and gave a leap into the air, and his melancholy was forgotten.

"And yet she had only spoken the truth. He *did* love her, love her adoringly, as he loved what was great and lofty in art. At her wedding he was the merriest among the guests, but in the stillness of night he wept: if the public had seen his distorted face then, they would have applauded rapturously.

"And a few days ago, Columbine died. On the day of the funeral, Harlequin was not required to show himself on the boards, for he was a disconsolate widower. The director had to give a very merry piece, that the public might not too painfully miss the pretty Columbine and the agile Harlequin. Therefore Pulcinella had to be more boisterous and extravagant than ever; and he danced and capered, with despair in his heart; and the audience yelled, and shouted '*bravo, bravissimo!*' Pulcinella was actually called before the curtain. He was pronounced inimitable.

"But last night the hideous little fellow went out of the town, quite alone, to the deserted churchyard. The wreath of flowers on

Columbine's grave was already faded, and he sat down there. It was a study for a painter. As he sat with his chin on his hands, his eyes turned up towards me, he looked like a grotesque monument – a Punch on a grave – peculiar and whimsical! If the people could have seen their favourite, they would have cried as usual, '*Bravo, Pulcinella; bravo, bravissimo!*'"

Sixteenth Evening

Hear what the Moon told me. "I have seen the cadet who had just been made an officer put on his handsome uniform for the first time; I have seen the young bride in her wedding dress, and the princess girl-wife happy in her gorgeous robes; but never have I seen a felicity equal to that of a little girl of four years old, whom I watched this evening. She had received a new blue dress, and a new pink hat, the splendid attire had just been put on, and all were calling for a candle, for my rays, shining in through the windows of the room, were not bright enough for the occasion, and further illumination was required. There stood the little maid, stiff and upright as a doll, her arms stretched painfully straight out away from the dress, and her fingers apart; and oh, what happiness beamed from her eyes, and from her whole countenance! 'To-morrow you shall go out in your new clothes,' said her mother; and the little one looked up at her hat, and down at her frock, and smiled brightly. 'Mother,' she cried, 'what will the little dogs think, when they see me in these splendid new things?'"

Seventeenth Evening

"I have spoken to you of Pompeii," said the Moon; "that corpse of a city, exposed in the view of living towns: I know another sight still more strange, and this is not the corpse, but the spectre of a city. Whenever the jetty fountains splash into the marble basins, they seem to me to be telling the story of the floating city. Yes, the spouting water may tell of her, the waves of the sea may sing of her fame! On the surface of the ocean a mist often rests, and that is her widow's veil. The bridegroom of the sea is dead, his palace and his city are his mausoleum! Dost thou know this city? She has never heard the rolling of wheels or the hoof-tread of horses in her streets, through which the fish swim, while the black gondola glides spectrally over the green water. I will show you the place," continued the Moon, "the largest square in it, and you will fancy yourself transported into the city of a fairy tale. The grass grows rank among the broad flagstones, and in the morning twilight thousands of tame pigeons flutter around the solitary lofty tower. On three sides you find yourself surrounded by cloistered walks. In these the silent Turk sits smoking his long pipe, the handsome Greek leans against the pillar and gazes at the upraised trophies and lofty masts, memorials of power that is gone. The flags hang down like mourning scarves. A girl rests there: she has put down her heavy pails filled with water, the yoke with which she has carried

them rests on one of her shoulders, and she leans against the mast of victory. That is not a fairy palace you see before you yonder, but a church: the gilded domes and shining orbs flash back my beams; the glorious bronze horses up yonder have made journeys, like the bronze horse in the fairy tale: they have come hither, and gone hence, and have returned again. Do you notice the variegated splendour of the walls and windows? It looks as if Genius had followed the caprices of a child, in the adornment of these singular temples. Do you see the winged lion on the pillar? The gold glitters still, but his wings are tied – the lion is dead, for the king of the sea is dead; the great halls stand desolate, and where gorgeous paintings hung of yore, the naked wall now peers through. The *lazzarone* sleeps under the arcade, whose pavement in old times was to be trodden only by the feet of high nobility. From the deep wells, and perhaps from the prisons by the Bridge of Sighs, rise the accents of woe, as at the time when the tambourine was heard in the gay gondolas, and the golden ring was cast from the *Bucentaur* to Adria, the queen of the seas. Adria! shroud thyself in mists; let the veil of thy widowhood shroud thy form, and clothe in the weeds of woe the mausoleum of thy bridegroom – the marble, spectral Venice."

Eighteenth Evening

"I looked down upon a great theatre," said the Moon. "The house was crowded, for a new actor was to make his first appearance that night. My rays glided over a little window in the wall, and I saw a painted face with the forehead pressed against the panes. It was the hero of the evening. The knightly beard curled crisply about the chin; but there were tears in the man's eyes, for he had been hissed off, and indeed with reason. The poor Incapable! But Incapables cannot be admitted into the empire of Art. He had deep feeling, and loved his art enthusiastically, but the art loved not him. The prompter's bell sounded; '*the hero enters with a determined air*,' so ran the stage direction in his part, and he had to appear before an audience who turned him into ridicule. When the piece was over, I saw a form wrapped in a mantle, creeping down the steps: it was the vanquished knight of the evening. The scene-shifters whispered to one another, and I followed the poor fellow home to his room. To hang one's self is to die a mean death, and poison is not always at hand, I know; but he thought of both. I saw how he looked at his pale face in the glass, with eyes half closed, to see if he should look well as a corpse. A man may be very unhappy, and yet exceedingly affected. He thought of death, of suicide; I believe he pitied himself, for he wept bitterly, and when a man has had his cry out he doesn't kill himself.

"Since that time a year had rolled by. Again a play was to be acted, but in a little theatre, and by a poor strolling company. Again I saw the well-remembered face, with the painted cheeks and the crisp beard. He looked up at me and smiled; and yet he had been hissed off only a minute before – hissed off from a wretched theatre, by a miserable audience. And to-night a shabby hearse rolled out of the town-gate. It was a suicide – our painted, despised hero. The driver of the hearse was the only person present, for no one followed except my beams. In a corner of the churchyard the corpse of the suicide was shovelled into the earth, and nettles will soon be growing rankly over his grave, and the sexton will throw thorns and weeds from the other graves upon it."

Nineteenth Evening

"I come from Rome," said the Moon. "In the midst of the city, upon one of the seven hills, lie the ruins of the imperial palace. The wild fig tree grows in the clefts of the wall, and covers the nakedness thereof with its broad grey-green leaves; trampling among heaps of rubbish, the ass treads upon green laurels, and rejoices over the rank thistles. From this spot, whence the eagles of Rome once flew abroad, whence they 'came, saw, and conquered,' our door leads into a little mean house, built of clay between two pillars; the wild vine hangs like a mourning garland over the crooked window. An old woman and her little granddaughter live there: they rule now in the palace of the Cæsars, and show to strangers the remains of its past glories. Of the splendid throne-hall only a naked wall yet stands, and a black cypress throws its dark shadow on the spot where the throne once stood. The dust lies several feet deep on the broken pavement; and the little maiden, now the daughter of the imperial palace, often sits there on her stool when the evening bells ring. The keyhole of the door close by she calls her turret window; through this she can see half Rome, as far as the mighty cupola of St. Peter's.

"On this evening, as usual, stillness reigned around; and in the full beam of my light came the little granddaughter. On her head she carried an earthen pitcher of antique shape filled with water.

Her feet were bare, her short frock and her white sleeves were torn. I kissed her pretty round shoulders, her dark eyes, and black shining hair. She mounted the stairs; they were steep, having been made up of rough blocks of broken marble and the capital of a fallen pillar. The coloured lizards slipped away, startled, from before her feet, but she was not frightened at them. Already she lifted her hand to pull the door-bell – a hare's foot fastened to a string formed the bell-handle of the imperial palace. She paused for a moment – of what might she be thinking? Perhaps of the beautiful Christ-child, dressed in gold and silver, which was down below in the chapel, where the silver candlesticks gleamed so bright, and where her little friends sung the hymns in which she also could join? I know not. Presently she moved again – she stumbled; the earthen vessel fell from her head, and broke on the marble steps. She burst into tears. The beautiful daughter of the imperial palace wept over the worthless broken pitcher; with her bare feet she stood there weeping, and dared not pull the string, the bell-rope of the imperial palace!"

Twentieth Evening

It was more than a fortnight since the Moon had shone. Now he stood once more, round and bright, above the clouds, moving slowly onward. Hear what the Moon told me.

"From a town in Fezzan I followed a caravan. On the margin of the sandy desert, in a salt plain, that shone like a frozen lake, and was only covered in spots with light drifting sand, a halt was made. The eldest of the company – the water gourd hung at his girdle, and on his head was a little bag of unleavened bread – drew a square in the sand with his staff, and wrote in it a few words out of the Koran, and then the whole caravan passed over the consecrated spot. A young merchant, a child of the East, as I could tell by his eye and his figure, rode pensively forward on his white snorting steed. Was he thinking, perchance, of his fair young wife? It was only two days ago that the camel, adorned with furs and with costly shawls, had carried her, the beauteous bride, round the walls of the city, while drums and cymbals had sounded, the women sang, and festive shots, of which the bridegroom fired the greatest number, resounded round the camel; and now he was journeying with the caravan across the desert.

"For many nights I followed the train. I saw them rest by the well-side among the stunted palms; they thrust the knife into the breast of the camel that had fallen, and roasted its flesh by

the fire. My beams cooled the glowing sands, and showed them the black rocks, dead islands in the immense ocean of sand. No hostile tribes met them in their pathless route, no storms arose, no columns of sand whirled destruction over the journeying caravan. At home the beautiful wife prayed for her husband and her father. 'Are they dead?' she asked of my golden crescent; 'Are they dead?' she cried to my full disc. Now the desert lies behind them. This evening they sit beneath the lofty palm trees, where the crane flutters round them with its long wings, and the pelican watches them from the branches of the mimosa. The luxuriant herbage is trampled down, crushed by the feet of elephants. A troop of negroes are returning from a market in the interior of the land: the women, with copper buttons in their black hair, and decked out in clothes dyed with indigo, drive the heavily-laden oxen, on whose backs slumber the naked black children. A negro leads a young lion which he has bought, by a string. They approach the caravan; the young merchant sits pensive and motionless, thinking of his beautiful wife, dreaming, in the land of the blacks, of his white fragrant lily beyond the desert. He raises his head, and – " But at this moment a cloud passed before the Moon, and then another. I heard nothing more from him this evening.

Twenty-first Evening

"I saw a little girl weeping," said the Moon; "she was weeping over the depravity of the world. She had received a most beautiful doll as a present. Oh, that was a glorious doll, so fair and delicate! She did not seem created for the sorrows of this world. But the brothers of the little girl, those great naughty boys, had set the doll high up in the branches of a tree, and had run away.

"The little girl could not reach up to the doll, and could not help her down, and that is why she was crying. The doll must certainly have been crying too; for she stretched out her arms among the green branches, and looked quite mournful. Yes, these are the troubles of life of which the little girl had often heard tell. Alas, poor doll! it began to grow dark already; and suppose night were to come on completely! Was she to be left sitting there alone on the bough all night long? No, the little maid could not make up her mind to that. 'I'll stay with you,' she said, although she felt anything but happy in her mind. She could almost fancy she distinctly saw little gnomes, with their high-crowned hats, sitting in the bushes; and further back in the long walk, tall spectres appeared to be dancing. They came nearer and nearer, and stretched out their hands towards the tree on which the doll sat; they laughed scornfully, and pointed at her with their fingers. Oh, how frightened the little maid was! 'But if one has not done anything wrong,' she thought, 'nothing evil

can harm one. I wonder if I have done anything wrong?' And she considered. 'Oh, yes! I laughed at the poor duck with the red rag on her leg; she limped along so funnily, I could not help laughing; but it's a sin to laugh at animals.' And she looked up at the doll. 'Did you laugh at the duck too?' she asked; and it seemed as if the doll shook her head."

Twenty-second Evening

"I looked down upon Tyrol," said the Moon, "and my beams caused the dark pines to throw long shadows upon the rocks. I looked at the pictures of St. Christopher carrying the Infant Jesus that are painted there upon the walls of the houses, colossal figures reaching from the ground to the roof. St. Florian was represented pouring water on the burning house, and the Lord hung bleeding on the great cross by the wayside. To the present generation these are old pictures, but I saw when they were put up, and marked how one followed the other. On the brow of the mountain yonder is perched, like a swallow's nest, a lonely convent of nuns. Two of the sisters stood up in the tower tolling the bell; they were both young, and therefore their glances flew over the mountain out into the world. A travelling coach passed by below, the postillion wound his horn, and the poor nuns looked after the carriage for a moment with a mournful glance, and a tear gleamed in the eyes of the younger one. And the horn sounded faint and more faintly, and the convent bell drowned its expiring echoes."

Twenty-third Evening

Hear what the Moon told me. "Some years ago, here in Copenhagen, I looked through the window of a mean little room. The father and mother slept, but the little son was not asleep. I saw the flowered cotton curtains of the bed move, and the child peep forth. At first I thought he was looking at the great clock, which was gaily painted in red and green. At the top sat a cuckoo, below hung the heavy leaden weights, and the pendulum with the polished disc of metal went to and fro, and said 'tick, tick.' But no, he was not looking at the clock, but at his mother's spinning wheel, that stood just underneath it. That was the boy's favourite piece of furniture, but he dared not touch it, for if he meddled with it he got a rap on the knuckles. For hours together, when his mother was spinning, he would sit quietly by her side, watching the murmuring spindle and the revolving wheel, and as he sat he thought of many things. Oh, if he might only turn the wheel himself! Father and mother were asleep; he looked at them, and looked at the spinning wheel, and presently a little naked foot peered out of the bed, and then a second foot, and then two little white legs. There he stood. He looked round once more, to see if father and mother were still asleep – yes, they slept; and now he crept *softly, softly*, in his short little nightgown, to the spinning wheel, and began to spin. The thread flew from the wheel, and the wheel whirled faster and faster. I kissed his fair hair and his

blue eyes, it was such a pretty picture.

"At that moment the mother awoke. The curtain shook, she looked forth, and fancied she saw a gnome or some other kind of little spectre. 'In Heaven's name!' she cried, and aroused her husband in a frightened way. He opened his eyes, rubbed them with his hands, and looked at the brisk little lad. 'Why, that is Bertel,' said he. And my eye quitted the poor room, for I have so much to see. At the same moment I looked at the halls of the Vatican, where the marble gods are enthroned. I shone upon the group of the Laocoon; the stone seemed to sigh. I pressed a silent kiss on the lips of the Muses, and they seemed to stir and move. But my rays lingered longest about the Nile group with the colossal god. Leaning against the Sphinx, he lies there thoughtful and meditative, as if he were thinking on the rolling centuries; and little love-gods sport with him and with the crocodiles. In the horn of plenty sat with folded arms a little tiny love-god, contemplating the great solemn river-god, a true picture of the boy at the spinning wheel – the features were exactly the same. Charming and life-like stood the little marble form, and yet the wheel of the year has turned more than a thousand times since the time when it sprang forth from the stone. Just as often as the boy in the little room turned the spinning wheel had the great wheel murmured, before the age could again call forth marble gods equal to those he afterwards formed.

"Years have passed since all this happened," the Moon went on to say. "Yesterday I looked upon a bay on the eastern coast

of Denmark. Glorious woods are there, and high trees, an old knightly castle with red walls, swans floating in the ponds, and in the background appears, among orchards, a little town with a church. Many boats, the crews all furnished with torches, glided over the silent expanse – but these fires had not been kindled for catching fish, for everything had a festive look. Music sounded, a song was sung, and in one of the boats the man stood erect to whom homage was paid by the rest, a tall sturdy man, wrapped in a cloak. He had blue eyes and long white hair. I knew him, and thought of the Vatican, and of the group of the Nile, and the old marble gods. I thought of the simple little room where little Bertel sat in his night-shirt by the spinning wheel. The wheel of time has turned, and new gods have come forth from the stone. From the boats there arose a shout: 'Hurrah, hurrah for Bertel Thorwaldsen!'"

Twenty-fourth Evening

"I will now give you a picture from Frankfort," said the Moon. "I especially noticed one building there. It was not the house in which Goëthe was born, nor the old Council House, through whose grated windows peered the horns of the oxen that were roasted and given to the people when the emperors were crowned. No, it was a private house, plain in appearance, and painted green. It stood near the old Jews' Street. It was Rothschild's house.

"I looked through the open door. The staircase was brilliantly lighted: servants carrying wax candles in massive silver candlesticks stood there, and bowed low before an old woman, who was being brought downstairs in a litter. The proprietor of the house stood bare-headed, and respectfully imprinted a kiss on the hand of the old woman. She was his mother. She nodded in a friendly manner to him and to the servants, and they carried her into the dark narrow street, into a little house, that was her dwelling. Here her children had been born, from hence the fortune of the family had arisen. If she deserted the despised street and the little house, fortune would also desert her children. That was her firm belief."

The Moon told me no more; his visit this evening was far too short. But I thought of the old woman in the narrow despised street. It would have cost her but a word, and a brilliant house

would have arisen for her on the banks of the Thames – a word, and a villa would have been prepared in the Bay of Naples.

"If I deserted the lowly house, where the fortunes of my sons first began to bloom, fortune would desert them!" It was a superstition, but a superstition of such a class, that he who knows the story and has seen this picture, need have only two words placed under the picture to make him understand it; and these two words are: "A mother."

Twenty-fifth Evening

"It was yesterday, in the morning twilight" – these are the words the Moon told me – "in the great city no chimney was yet smoking – and it was just at the chimneys that I was looking. Suddenly a little head emerged from one of them, and then half a body, the arms resting on the rim of the chimney-pot. 'Ya-hip! ya-hip!' cried a voice. It was the little chimney-sweeper, who had for the first time in his life crept through a chimney, and stuck out his head at the top. 'Ya-hip! ya-hip!' Yes, certainly that was a very different thing to creeping about in the dark narrow chimneys! the air blew so fresh, and he could look over the whole city towards the green wood. The sun was just rising. It shone round and great, just in his face, that beamed with triumph, though it was very prettily blacked with soot.

"'The whole town can see me now,' he exclaimed, 'and the moon can see me now, and the sun too. Ya-hip! ya-hip!' And he flourished his broom in triumph."

Twenty-sixth Evening

"Last night I looked down upon a town in China," said the Moon. "My beams irradiated the naked walls that form the streets there. Now and then, certainly, a door is seen; but it is locked, for what does the Chinaman care about the outer world? Close wooden shutters covered the windows behind the walls of the houses; but through the windows of the temple a faint light glimmered. I looked in, and saw the quaint decorations within. From the floor to the ceiling pictures are painted, in the most glaring colours, and richly gilt – pictures representing the deeds of the gods here on earth. In each niche statues are placed, but they are almost entirely hidden by the coloured drapery and the banners that hang down. Before each idol (and they are all made of tin) stood a little altar of holy water, with flowers and burning wax lights on it. Above all the rest stood Fo, the chief deity, clad in a garment of yellow silk, for yellow is here the sacred colour. At the foot of the altar sat a living being, a young priest. He appeared to be praying, but in the midst of his prayer he seemed to fall into deep thought, and this must have been wrong, for his cheeks glowed and he held down his head. Poor Soui-hong! Was he, perhaps, dreaming of working in the little flower garden behind the high street wall? And did that occupation seem more agreeable to him than watching the wax lights in the temple? Or did he wish to sit at the rich feast, wiping his mouth with silver

paper between each course? Or was his sin so great that, if he dared utter it, the Celestial Empire would punish it with death? Had his thoughts ventured to fly with the ships of the barbarians, to their homes in far distant England? No, his thoughts did not fly so far, and yet they were sinful, sinful as thoughts born of young hearts, sinful here in the temple, in the presence of Fo and the other holy gods.

"I know whither his thoughts had strayed. At the farther end of the city, on the flat roof paved with porcelain, on which stood the handsome vases covered with painted flowers, sat the beautiful Pu, of the little roguish eyes, of the full lips, and of the tiny feet. The tight shoe pained her, but her heart pained her still more. She lifted her graceful round arm, and her satin dress rustled. Before her stood a glass bowl containing four gold-fish. She stirred the bowl carefully with a slender lacquered stick, very slowly, for she, too, was lost in thought. Was she thinking, perchance, how the fishes were richly clothed in gold, how they lived calmly and peacefully in their crystal world, how they were regularly fed, and yet how much happier they might be if they were free? Yes, that she could well understand, the beautiful Pu. Her thoughts wandered away from her home, wandered to the temple, but not for the sake of holy things. Poor Pu! Poor Soui-hong!

"Their earthly thoughts met, but my cold beam lay between the two, like the sword of the cherub."

Twenty-seventh Evening

"The air was calm," said the Moon; "the water was transparent as the purest ether through which I was gliding, and deep below the surface I could see the strange plants that stretched up their long arms towards me like the gigantic trees of the forest. The fishes swam to and fro above their tops. High in the air a flight of wild swans were winging their way, one of which sank lower and lower, with wearied pinions, his eyes following the airy caravan, that melted farther and farther into the distance. With outspread wings he sank slowly, as a soap bubble sinks in the still air, till he touched the water. At length his head lay back between his wings, and silently he lay there, like a white lotus flower upon the quiet lake. And a gentle wind arose, and crisped the quiet surface, which gleamed like the clouds that poured along in great broad waves; and the swan raised his head, and the glowing water splashed like blue fire over his breast and back. The morning dawn illuminated the red clouds, the swan rose strengthened, and flew towards the rising sun, towards the bluish coast whither the caravan had gone; but he flew alone, with a longing in his breast. Lonely he flew over the blue swelling billows."

Twenty-eighth Evening

"I will give you another picture of Sweden," said the Moon. "Among dark pine woods, near the melancholy banks of the Stoxen, lies the old convent church of Wreta. My rays glided through the grating into the roomy vaults, where kings sleep tranquilly in great stone coffins. On the wall, above the grave of each, is placed the emblem of earthly grandeur, a kingly crown; but it is made only of wood, painted and gilt, and is hung on a wooden peg driven into the wall. The worms have gnawed the gilded wood, the spider has spun her web from the crown down to the sand, like a mourning banner, frail and transient as the grief of mortals. How quietly they sleep! I can remember them quite plainly. I still see the bold smile on their lips, that so strongly and plainly expressed joy or grief. When the steamboat winds along like a magic snail over the lakes, a stranger often comes to the church, and visits the burial vault; he asks the names of the kings, and they have a dead and forgotten sound. He glances with a smile at the worm-eaten crowns, and if he happens to be a pious, thoughtful man, something of melancholy mingles with the smile. Slumber on, ye dead ones! The Moon thinks of you, the Moon at night sends down his rays into your silent kingdom, over which hangs the crown of pine wood."

Twenty-ninth Evening

"Close by the high-road," said the Moon, "is an inn, and opposite to it is a great waggon-shed, whose straw roof was just being re-thatched. I looked down between the bare rafters and through the open loft into the comfortless space below. The turkey-cock slept on the beam, and the saddle rested in the empty crib. In the middle of the shed stood a travelling carriage; the proprietor was inside, fast asleep, while the horses were being watered. The coachman stretched himself, though I am very sure that he had been most comfortably asleep half the last stage. The door of the servants' room stood open, and the bed looked as if it had been turned over and over; the candle stood on the floor, and had burnt deep down into the socket. The wind blew cold through the shed: it was nearer to the dawn than to midnight. In the wooden frame on the ground slept a wandering family of musicians. The father and mother seemed to be dreaming of the burning liquor that remained in the bottle. The little pale daughter was dreaming too, for her eyes were wet with tears. The harp stood at their heads, and the dog lay stretched at their feet."

Thirtieth Evening

"It was in a little provincial town," the Moon said; "it certainly happened last year, but that has nothing to do with the matter. I saw it quite plainly. To-day I read about it in the papers, but there it was not half so clearly expressed. In the taproom of the little inn sat the bear leader, eating his supper; the bear was tied up outside, behind the wood pile – poor Bruin, who did nobody any harm, though he looked grim enough. Up in the garret three little children were playing by the light of my beams; the eldest was perhaps six years old, the youngest certainly not more than two. 'Tramp, tramp' – somebody was coming upstairs: who might it be? The door was thrust open – it was Bruin, the great, shaggy Bruin! He had got tired of waiting down in the courtyard, and had found his way to the stairs. I saw it all," said the Moon. "The children were very much frightened at first at the great shaggy animal; each of them crept into a corner, but he found them all out, and smelt at them, but did them no harm. 'This must be a great dog,' they said, and began to stroke him. He lay down upon the ground, the youngest boy clambered on his back, and bending down a little head of golden curls, played at hiding in the beast's shaggy skin. Presently the eldest boy took his drum, and beat upon it till it rattled again; the bear rose upon his hind legs, and began to dance. It was a charming sight to behold. Each boy now took his gun, and the bear was obliged to have one too, and he

held it up quite properly. Here was a capital playmate they had found; and they began marching – one, two; one, two.

"Suddenly some one came to the door, which opened, and the mother of the children appeared. You should have seen her in her dumb terror, with her face as white as chalk, her mouth half open, and her eyes fixed in a horrified stare. But the youngest boy nodded to her in great glee, and called out in his infantile prattle, 'We're playing at soldiers.' And then the bear leader came running up."

Thirty-first Evening

The wind blew stormy and cold, the clouds flew hurriedly past; only for a moment now and then did the Moon become visible. He said, "I looked down from the silent sky upon the driving clouds, and saw the great shadows chasing each other across the earth. I looked upon a prison. A closed carriage stood before it; a prisoner was to be carried away. My rays pierced through the grated window towards the wall: the prisoner was scratching a few lines upon it, as a parting token; but he did not write words, but a melody, the outpouring of his heart. The door was opened, and he was led forth, and fixed his eyes upon my round disc. Clouds passed between us, as if he were not to see my face, nor I his. He stepped into the carriage, the door was closed, the whip cracked, and the horses galloped off into the thick forest, whither my rays were not able to follow him; but as I glanced through the grated window, my rays glided over the notes, his last farewell engraved on the prison wall – where words fail, sounds can often speak. My rays could only light up isolated notes, so the greater part of what was written there will ever remain dark to me. Was it the death-hymn he wrote there? Were these the glad notes of joy? Did he drive away to meet death, or hasten to the embraces of his beloved? The rays of the Moon do not read all that is written by mortals."

Thirty-second Evening

"I love the children," said the Moon, "especially the quite little ones – they are so droll. Sometimes I peep into the room, between the curtain and the window frame, when they are not thinking of me. It gives me pleasure to see them dressing and undressing. First, the little round naked shoulder comes creeping out of the frock, then the arm; or I see how the stocking is drawn off, and a plump little white leg makes its appearance, and a white little foot that is fit to be kissed, and I kiss it too.

"But about what I was going to tell you. This evening I looked through a window, before which no curtain was drawn, for nobody lives opposite. I saw a whole troop of little ones, all of one family, and among them was a little sister. She is only four years old, but can say her prayers as well as any of the rest. The mother sits by her bed every evening, and hears her say her prayers; and then she has a kiss, and the mother sits by the bed till the little one has gone to sleep, which generally happens as soon as ever she can close her eyes.

"This evening the two elder children were a little boisterous. One of them hopped about on one leg in his long white nightgown, and the other stood on a chair surrounded by the clothes of all the children, and declared he was acting Grecian statues. The third and fourth laid the clean linen carefully in the box, for that is a thing that has to be done; and the mother sat by

the bed of the youngest, and announced to all the rest that they were to be quiet, for little sister was going to say her prayers.

"I looked in, over the lamp, into the little maiden's bed, where she lay under the neat white coverlet, her hands folded demurely and her little face quite grave and serious. She was praying the Lord's prayer aloud. But her mother interrupted her in the middle of her prayer. 'How is it,' she asked, 'that when you have prayed for daily bread, you always add something I cannot understand? You must tell me what that is.' The little one lay silent, and looked at her mother in embarrassment. 'What is it you say after *our daily bread*?' 'Dear mother, don't be angry: I only said, *and plenty of butter on it*.'"

THE STORY OF THE YEAR

It was far in January, and a terrible fall of snow was pelting down. The snow eddied through the streets and lanes; the window-panes seemed plastered with snow on the outside; snow plumped down in masses from the roofs: and a sudden hurry had seized on the people, for they ran, and flew, and fell into each others' arms, and as they clutched each other fast for a moment, they felt that they were safe at least for that length of time. Coaches and horses seemed frosted with sugar. The footmen stood with their backs against the carriages, so as to turn their faces from the wind. The foot passengers kept in the shelter of the carriages, which could only move slowly on in the deep snow; and when the storm at last abated, and a narrow path was swept clean alongside the houses, the people stood still in this path when they met, for none liked to take the first step aside into the deep snow to let the other pass him. Thus they stood silent and motionless, till, as if by tacit consent, each sacrificed one leg, and stepping aside, buried it in the deep snow-heap.

Towards evening it grew calm. The sky looked as if it had been swept, and had become more lofty and transparent. The stars looked as if they were quite new, and some of them were amazingly bright and pure. It froze so hard that the snow creaked, and the upper rind of snow might well have grown hard enough to bear the sparrows in the morning dawn. These little birds hopped

up and down where the sweeping had been done; but they found very little food, and were not a little cold.

"Piep!" said one of them to another; "they call this a new year, and it is worse than the last! We might just as well have kept the old one. I'm dissatisfied, and I've a right to be so."

"Yes; and the people ran about and fired off shots to celebrate the new year," said a little shivering sparrow; "and they threw pans and pots against the doors, and were quite boisterous with joy, because the old year was gone. I was glad of it too, because I hoped we should have had warm days; but that has come to nothing – it freezes much harder than before. People have made a mistake in reckoning the time!"

"That they have!" a third put in, who was old, and had a white poll; "they've something they call the calendar – it's an invention of their own – and everything is to be arranged according to that; but it won't do. When spring comes, then the year begins, and I reckon according to that."

"But when will spring come?" the others inquired.

"It will come when the stork comes back. But his movements are very uncertain, and here in town no one knows anything about it: in the country they are better informed. Shall we fly out there and wait? There, at any rate, we shall be nearer to spring."

"Yes, that may be all very well," observed one of the sparrows, who had been hopping about for a long time, chirping, without saying anything decided. "I've found a few comforts here in town, which I am afraid I should miss out in the country. Near this

neighbourhood, in a courtyard, there lives a family of people, who have taken the very sensible notion of placing three or four flower-pots against the wall, with their mouths all turned inwards, and the bottom of each pointing outwards. In each flower-pot a hole has been cut, big enough for me to fly in and out at it. I and my husband have built a nest in one of those pots, and have brought up our young family there. The family of people of course made the whole arrangement that they might have the pleasure of seeing us, or else they would not have done it. To please themselves they also strew crumbs of bread; and so we have food, and are in a manner provided for. So I think my husband and I will stay where we are, although we are very dissatisfied – but we shall stay."

"And we will fly into the country to see if spring is not coming!" And away they flew.

Out in the country it was hard winter, and the glass was a few degrees lower than in the town. The sharp winds swept across the snow-covered fields. The farmer, muffled in warm mittens, sat in his sledge, and beat his arms across his breast to warm himself, and the whip lay across his knees. The horses ran till they smoked again. The snow creaked, and the sparrows hopped about in the ruts, and shivered, "Piep! when will spring come? it is very long in coming!"

"Very long," sounded from the next snow-covered hill, far over the field. It might be the echo which was heard; or perhaps the words were spoken by yonder wonderful old man, who sat in

wind and weather high on the heap of snow. He was quite white, attired like a peasant in a coarse white coat of frieze; he had long white hair, and was quite pale, with big blue eyes.

"Who is that old man yonder?" asked the sparrows.

"I know who he is," quoth an old raven, who sat on the fence-rail, and was condescending enough to acknowledge that we are all like little birds in the sight of Heaven, and therefore was not above speaking to the sparrows, and giving them information. "I know who the old man is. It is Winter, the old man of last year. He is not dead, as the calendar says, but is guardian to little Prince Spring, who is to come. Yes, Winter bears sway here. Ugh! the cold makes you shiver, does it not, you little ones?"

"Yes. Did I not tell the truth?" said the smallest sparrow: "the calendar is only an invention of man, and is not arranged according to nature! They ought to leave these things to us, who are born cleverer than they."

And one week passed away, and two passed away. The frozen lake lay hard and stiff, looking like a sheet of lead, and damp icy mists lay brooding over the land; the great black crows flew about in long rows, but silently; and it seemed as if nature slept. Then a sunbeam glided along over the lake, and made it shine like burnished tin. The snowy covering on the field and on the hill did not glitter as it had done; but the white form, Winter himself, still sat there, his gaze fixed unswervingly upon the south. He did not notice that the snowy carpet seemed to sink as it were into the earth, and that here and there a little grass-green patch appeared,

and that all these patches were crowded with sparrows.

"Kee-wit! kee-wit! Is spring coming now?"

"Spring!" The cry resounded over field and meadow, and through the black-brown woods, where the moss still glimmered in bright green upon the tree trunks; and from the south the first two storks came flying through the air. On the back of each sat a pretty little child – one was a girl and the other a boy. They greeted the earth with a kiss, and wherever they set their feet, white flowers grew up from beneath the snow. Then they went hand in hand to the old ice man, Winter, clung to his breast embracing him, and in a moment they, and he, and all the region around were hidden in a thick damp mist, dark and heavy, that closed over all like a veil. Gradually the wind rose, and now it rushed roaring along, and drove away the mist with heavy blows, so that the sun shone warmly forth, and Winter himself vanished, and the beautiful children of Spring sat on the throne of the year.

"That's what I call spring," cried each of the sparrows. "Now we shall get our rights, and have amends for the stern winter."

Wherever the two children turned, green buds burst forth on bushes and trees, the grass shot upwards, and the corn-fields turned green and became more and more lovely. And the little maiden strewed flowers all around. Her apron, which she held up before her, was always full of them; they seemed to spring up there, for her lap continued full, however zealously she strewed the blossoms around; and in her eagerness she scattered a snow of blossoms over apple trees and peach trees, so that they stood

in full beauty before their green leaves had fairly come forth.

And she clapped her hands, and the boy clapped his, and then flocks of birds came flying up, nobody knew whence, and they all twittered and sang, "Spring has come."

That was beautiful to behold. Many an old granny crept forth over the threshold into the sunshine, and tripped gleefully about, casting a glance at the yellow flowers which shone everywhere in the fields, just as they used to do when she was young. The world grew young again to her, and she said, "It is a blessed day out here to-day!"

The forest still wore its brown-green dress, made of buds; but the thyme was already there, fresh and fragrant; there were violets in plenty, anemones and primroses came forth, and there was sap and strength in every blade of grass. That was certainly a beautiful carpet on which no one could resist sitting down, and there accordingly the young spring pair sat hand in hand, and sang and smiled, and grew on.

A mild rain fell down upon them from the sky, but they did not notice it, for the rain-drops were mingled with their own tears of joy. They kissed each other, and were betrothed as people that should marry, and in the same moment the verdure of the woods was unfolded, and when the sun rose, the forest stood there arrayed in green.

And hand in hand the betrothed pair wandered under the fresh pendent ocean of leaves, where the rays of the sun gleamed through the interstices in lovely, changing hues. What virgin

purity, what refreshing balm in the delicate leaves! The brooks and streams rippled clearly and merrily among the green velvety rushes and over the coloured pebbles. All nature seemed to say, "There is plenty, and there shall be plenty always!" And the cuckoo sang and the lark carolled: it was a charming spring; but the willows had woolly gloves over their blossoms: they were desperately careful, and that is wearisome.

And days went by and weeks went by, and the heat came as it were whirling down. Hot waves of air came through the corn, that became yellower and yellower. The white water-lily of the north spread its great green leaves over the glassy mirror of the woodland lakes, and the fishes sought out the shady spots beneath; and at the sheltered side of the wood, where the sun shone down upon the walls of the farmhouse, warming the blooming roses, and the cherry trees, which hung full of juicy black berries, almost hot with the fierce beams, there sat the lovely wife of Summer, the same being whom we have seen as a child and as a bride; and her glance was fixed upon the black gathering clouds, which in wavy outlines – blue-black and heavy – were piling themselves up, like mountains, higher and higher. They came from three sides, and growing like a petrified sea, they came swooping towards the forest, where every sound had been silenced as if by magic. Every breath of air was hushed, every bird was mute. There was a seriousness – a suspense throughout all nature; but in the highways and lanes, foot passengers, and riders, and men in carriages were hurrying

on to get under shelter. Then suddenly there was a flashing of light, as if the sun were burst forth – flaming, burning, all-devouring! And the darkness returned amid a rolling crash. The rain poured down in streams, and there was alternate darkness and blinding light; alternate silence and deafening clamour. The young, brown, feathery reeds on the moor moved to and fro in long waves, the twigs of the woods were hidden in a mist of waters, and still came darkness and light, and still silence and roaring followed one another; grass and corn lay beaten down and swamped, looking as though they could never raise themselves again. But soon the rain fell only in gentle drops, the sun peered through the clouds, the water-drops glittered like pearls on the leaves, the birds sang, the fishes leaped up from the surface of the lake, the gnats danced in the sunshine, and yonder on the rock, in the salt, heaving sea water, sat Summer himself – a strong man with sturdy limbs and long dripping hair – there he sat, strengthened by the cool bath, in the warm sunshine. All nature round about was renewed, everything stood luxuriant, strong and beautiful; it was summer, warm, lovely summer.

And pleasant and sweet was the fragrance that streamed upwards from the rich clover-field, where the bees swarmed round the old ruined place of meeting: the bramble wound itself around the altar stone, which, washed by the rain, glittered in the sunshine; and thither flew the queen-bee with her swarm, and prepared wax and honey. Only Summer saw it, he and his strong wife; for them the altar table stood covered with the offerings of

nature.

And the evening sky shone like gold, shone as no church dome can shine; and in the interval between the evening and the morning red, there was moonlight: it was summer.

And days went by, and weeks went by. The bright scythes of the reapers gleamed in the corn-fields; the branches of the apple trees bent down, heavy with red-and-yellow fruit. The hops smelt sweetly, hanging in large clusters; and under the hazel bushes where hung great bunches of nuts, rested a man and woman – Summer and his quiet consort.

"What wealth!" exclaimed the woman: "all around a blessing is diffused, everywhere the scene looks homelike and good; and yet – I know not why – I long for peace and rest – I know not how to express it. Now they are already ploughing again in the field. The people want to gain more and more. See, the storks flock together, and follow at a little distance behind the plough – the bird of Egypt that carried us through the air. Do you remember how we came as children to this land of the North? We brought with us flowers, and pleasant sunshine, and green to the woods; the wind has treated them roughly, and they have become dark and brown like the trees of the South, but they do not, like them, bear fruit."

"Do you wish to see the golden fruit?" said the man: "then rejoice." And he lifted his arm, and the leaves of the forest put on hues of red and gold, and beauteous tints spread over all the woodland. The rose bush gleamed with scarlet hips; the elder

branches hung down with great heavy bunches of dark berries; the wild chestnuts fell ripe from their dark husks; and in the depths of the forests the violets bloomed for the second time.

But the Queen of the Year became more and more silent, and paler and paler. "It blows cold," she said, "and night brings damp mists. I long for the land of my childhood."

And she saw the storks fly away, one and all; and she stretched forth her hands towards them. She looked up at the nests, which stood empty. In one of them the long-stalked cornflower was growing; in another, the yellow mustard-seed, as if the nest were only there for its protection and comfort; and the sparrows were flying up into the storks' nests.

"Piep! where has the master gone? I suppose he can't bear it when the wind blows, and that therefore he has left the country. I wish him a pleasant journey!"

The forest leaves became more and more yellow, leaf fell down upon leaf, and the stormy winds of autumn howled. The year was far advanced, and the Queen of the Year reclined upon the fallen yellow leaves, and looked with mild eyes at the gleaming star, and her husband stood by her. A gust swept through the leaves; they fell again in a shower, and the Queen was gone, but a butterfly, the last of the season, flew through the cold air.

The wet fogs came, an icy wind blew, and the long dark nights drew on apace. The Ruler of the Year stood there with locks white as snow, but he knew not it was his hair that gleamed so

white – he thought snow-flakes were falling from the clouds; and soon a thin covering of snow was spread over the fields.

And then the church bells rang for the Christmas time.

"The bells ring for the new-born," said the Ruler of the Year. "Soon the new king and queen will be born; and I shall go to rest, as my wife has done – to rest in the gleaming star."

And in the fresh green fir wood, where the snow lay, stood the Angel of Christmas, and consecrated the young trees that were to adorn his feast.

"May there be joy in the room, and under the green boughs," said the Ruler of the Year. In a few weeks he had become a very old man, white as snow. "My time for rest draws near, and the young pair of the year shall now receive my crown and sceptre."

"But the might is still thine," said the Angel of Christmas; "the might and not the rest. Let the snow lie warmly upon the young seed. Learn to bear it, that another receives homage while thou yet reignest. Learn to bear being forgotten while thou art yet alive. The hour of thy release will come when spring appears."

"And when will spring come?" asked Winter.

"It will come when the stork returns."

And with white locks and snowy beard, cold, bent, and hoary, but strong as the wintry storm, and firm as ice, old Winter sat on the snowy drift on the hill, looking towards the south, where he had before sat and gazed. The ice cracked, the snow creaked, the skaters skimmed to and fro on the smooth lakes, ravens and crows contrasted picturesquely with the white ground, and not a

breath of wind stirred. And in the quiet air old Winter clenched his fists, and the ice was fathoms thick between land and land.

Then the sparrows came again out of the town, and asked, "Who is that old man yonder?" And the raven sat there again, or a son of his, which comes to quite the same thing, and answered them and said, "It is Winter, the old man of last year. He is not dead, as the almanack says, but he is the guardian of Spring, who is coming."

"When will spring come?" asked the sparrows. "Then we shall have good times, and a better rule. The old one was worth nothing."

And Winter nodded in quiet thought at the leafless forest, where every tree showed the graceful form and bend of its twigs; and during the winter sleep the icy mists of the clouds came down, and the ruler dreamed of his youthful days, and of the time of his manhood; and towards the morning dawn the whole wood was clothed in glittering hoar frost. That was the summer dream of winter, and the sun scattered the hoar frost from the boughs.

"When will spring come?" asked the sparrows.

"The spring!" sounded like an echo from the hills on which the snow lay. The sun shone warmer, the snow melted, and the birds twittered, "Spring is coming!"

And aloft through the air came the first stork, and the second followed him. A lovely child sat on the back of each, and they alighted on the field, kissed the earth, and kissed the old silent man, and he disappeared, shrouded in the cloudy mist. And the

story of the year was done.

"That is all very well," said the sparrows; "it is very beautiful too, but it is not according to the almanack, and therefore it is irregular."

SHE WAS GOOD FOR NOTHING

The mayor stood at the open window. His shirt-frill was very fine, and so were his ruffles; he had a breast-pin stuck in his frill, and was uncommonly smooth-shaven – all his own work; certainly he had given himself a slight cut, but he had stuck a bit of newspaper on the place. "Hark 'ee, youngster!" he cried.

The youngster in question was no other than the son of the poor washerwoman, who was just going past the house; and he pulled off his cap respectfully. The peak of the said cap was broken in the middle, for the cap was arranged so that it could be rolled up and crammed into his pocket. In his poor, but clean and well-mended attire, with heavy wooden shoes on his feet, the boy stood there, as humble and abashed as if he stood opposite the king himself.

"You're a good boy," said Mr. Mayor. "You're a civil boy. I suppose your mother is rinsing clothes down yonder in the river? I suppose you are to carry that thing to your mother that you have in your pocket? That's a bad affair with your mother. How much have you got in it?"

"Half a quartern," stammered the boy, in a frightened voice.

"And this morning she had just as much," the mayor continued.

"No," replied the boy, "it was yesterday."

"Two halves make a whole. She's good for nothing! It's a sad

thing with that kind of people! Tell your mother that she ought to be ashamed of herself; and mind you don't become a drunkard – but you will become one, though. Poor child – there, go!"

Accordingly the boy went on his way. He kept his cap in his hand, and the wind played with his yellow hair, so that great locks of it stood up straight. He turned down by the street corner, into the little lane that led to the river, where his mother stood by the washing bench, beating the heavy linen with the mallet. The water rolled quickly along, for the flood-gates at the mill had been drawn up, and the sheets were caught by the stream, and threatened to overturn the bench. The washerwoman was obliged to lean against the bench, to support it.

"I was very nearly sailing away," she said. "It is a good thing that you are come, for I have need to recruit my strength a little. For six hours I've been standing in the water. Have you brought anything for me?"

The boy produced the bottle, and the mother put it to her mouth, and took a little.

"Ah, how that revives one!" she said: "how it warms! It is as good as a hot meal, and not so dear. And you, my boy! you look quite pale. You are shivering in your thin clothes – to be sure it is autumn. Ugh! how cold the water is! I hope I shall not be ill. But no, I shall not be that! Give me a little more, and you may have a sip too, but only a little sip, for you must not accustom yourself to it, my poor dear child!"

And she stepped up to the bridge on which the boy stood, and

came ashore. The water dripped from the straw matting she had wound round her, and from her gown.

"I work and toil as much as ever I can," she said, "but I do it willingly, if I can only manage to bring you up honestly and well, my boy."

As she spoke, a somewhat older woman came towards them. She was poor enough to behold, lame of one leg, and with a large false curl hanging down over one of her eyes, which was a blind one. The curl was intended to cover the eye, but it only made the defect more striking. This was a friend of the laundress. She was called among the neighbours, "Lame Martha with the curl."

"Oh, you poor thing! How you work, standing there in the water!" cried the visitor. "You really require something to warm you; and yet malicious folks cry out about the few drops you take!" And in a few minutes' time the mayor's late speech was reported to the laundress; for Martha had heard it all, and she had been angry that a man could speak as he had done to a woman's own child, about the few drops the mother took: and she was the more angry, because the mayor on that very day was giving a great feast, at which wine was drunk by the bottle – good wine, strong wine. "A good many will take more than they need – but that's not called drinking. *They* are good; but *you* are good for nothing!" cried Martha, indignantly.

"Ah, so he spoke to you, my child?" said the washerwoman; and her lips trembled as she spoke. "So he says you have a mother who is good for nothing? Well, perhaps he's right, but he should

not have said it to the child. Still, I have had much misfortune from that house."

"You were in service there when the mayor's parents were alive, and lived in that house. That is many years ago: many bushels of salt have been eaten since then, and we may well be thirsty;" and Martha smiled. "The mayor has a great dinner party to-day. The guests were to have been put off, but it was too late, and the dinner was already cooked. The footman told me about it. A letter came a little while ago, to say that the younger brother had died in Copenhagen."

"Died!" repeated the laundress – and she became pale as death.

"Yes, certainly," said Martha. "Do you take that so much to heart? Well, you must have known him years ago, when you were in service in the house."

"Is he dead? He was such a good, worthy man! There are not many like him." And the tears rolled down her cheeks. "Good heavens! everything is whirling around me – it was too much for me. I feel quite ill." And she leaned against the plank.

"Good heavens, you are ill indeed!" exclaimed the other woman. "Come, come, it will pass over presently. But no, you really look seriously ill. The best thing will be for me to lead you home."

"But my linen yonder – "

"I will take care of that. Come, give me your arm. The boy can stay here and take care of it, and I'll come back and finish

the washing; that's only a trifle."

The laundress's limbs shook under her. "I have stood too long in the cold water," she said faintly, "and I have eaten and drunk nothing since this morning. The fever is in my bones. O kind Heaven, help me to get home! My poor child!" and she burst into tears. The boy wept too, and soon he was sitting alone by the river, beside the damp linen. The two women could make only slow progress. The laundress dragged her weary limbs along, and tottered through the lane and round the corner into the street where stood the house of the mayor; and just in front of his mansion she sank down on the pavement. Many people assembled round her, and Lane Martha ran into the house to get help. The mayor and his guests came to the window.

"That's the washerwoman!" he said. "She has taken a glass too much. She is good for nothing. It's a pity for the pretty son she has. I really like the child very well; but the mother is good for nothing."

Presently the laundress came to herself, and they led her into her poor dwelling, and put her to bed. Kind Martha heated a mug of beer for her, with butter and sugar, which she considered the best medicine; and then she hastened to the river, and rinsed the linen – badly enough, though her will was good. Strictly speaking, she drew it ashore, wet as it was, and laid it in a basket.

Towards evening she was sitting in the poor little room with the laundress. The mayor's cook had given her some roasted potatoes and a fine fat piece of ham, for the sick woman, and

Martha and the boy discussed these viands while the patient enjoyed the smell, which she pronounced very nourishing.

And presently the boy was put to bed, in the same bed in which his mother lay; but he slept at her feet, covered with an old quilt made up of blue and white patches.

Soon the patient felt a little better. The warm beer had strengthened her, and the fragrance of the provisions pleased her also. "Thanks, you kind soul," she said to Martha. "I will tell you all when the boy is asleep. I think he has dropped off already. How gentle and good he looks, as he lies there with his eyes closed. He does not know what his mother has suffered, and Heaven grant he may never know it. I was in service at the councillor's, the father of the mayor. It happened that the youngest of the sons, the student, came home. I was young then, a wild girl, but honest, that I may declare in the face of Heaven. The student was merry and kind, good and brave. Every drop of blood in him was good and honest. I have not seen a better man on this earth. He was the son of the house, and I was only a maid, but we formed an attachment to each other, honestly and honourably. And he told his mother of it, for she was in his eyes as a Deity on earth; and she was wise and gentle. He went away on a journey, but before he started he put his gold ring on my finger; and directly he was gone my mistress called me. With a firm yet gentle seriousness she spoke to me, and it seemed as if Wisdom itself were speaking. She showed me clearly, in spirit and in truth, the difference there was between him and me.

"'Now he is charmed with your pretty appearance,' she said, 'but your good looks will leave you. You have not been educated as he has. You are not equals in mind, and there is the misfortune. I respect the poor,' she continued; 'in the sight of God they may occupy a higher place than many a rich man can fill; but here on earth we must beware of entering a false track as we go onward, or our carriage is upset, and we are thrown into the road. I know that a worthy man wishes to marry you – an artisan – I mean Erich the glovemaker. He is a widower without children, and is well to do. Think it over.'

"Every word she spoke cut into my heart like a knife, but I knew that my mistress was right, and that knowledge weighed heavily upon me. I kissed her hand, and wept bitter tears, and I wept still more when I went into my room and threw myself on my bed. It was a heavy night that I had to pass through. Heaven knows what I suffered and how I wrestled! The next Sunday I went to the Lord's house, to pray for strength and guidance. It seemed like a Providence, that as I stepped out of church Erich came towards me. And now there was no longer a doubt in my mind. We were suited to each other in rank and in means, and he was even then a thriving man. Therefore I went up to him, took his hand, and said, 'Are you still of the same mind towards me?' 'Yes, ever and always,' he replied. 'Will you marry a girl who honours and respects, but who does not love you – though that may come later?' I asked again. 'Yes, it will come!' he answered; and upon this we joined hands. I went home to my mistress. I

wore the gold ring that the son had given me at my heart. I could not put it on my finger in the daytime, but only in the evening when I went to bed. I kissed the ring again and again, till my lips almost bled, and then I gave it to my mistress, and told her the banns were to be put up next week for me and the glovemaker. Then my mistress put her arms round me and kissed me. *She* did not say that I was good for nothing; but perhaps I was better then than I am now, though the misfortunes of life had not yet found me out. In a few weeks we were married; and for the first year the world went well with us: we had a journeyman and an apprentice, and you, Martha, lived with us as our servant."

"Oh, you were a dear, good mistress," cried Martha. "Never shall I forget how kind you and your husband were!"

"Yes, those were our good years, when you were with us. We had not any children yet. The student I never saw again. — Yes, though, I saw him, but he did not see me. He was here at his mother's funeral. I saw him stand by the grave. He was pale as death, and very downcast, but that was for his mother; afterwards, when his father died, he was away in a foreign land, and did not come back hither. I know that he never married; I believe he became a lawyer. He had forgotten me; and even if he had seen me again, he would not have known me, I look so ugly. And that is very fortunate."

And then she spoke of her days of trial, and told how misfortune had come as it were swooping down upon them.

"We had five hundred dollars," she said; "and as there was a

house in the street to be bought for two hundred, and it would pay to pull it down and build a new one, it was bought. The builder and carpenter calculated the expense, and the new house was to cost ten hundred and twenty! Erich had credit, and borrowed the money in the chief town, but the captain who was to bring it was shipwrecked, and the money was lost with him."

"Just at that time my dear sweet boy who is sleeping yonder was born. My husband was struck down by a long heavy illness: for three quarters of a year I was compelled to dress and undress him. We went back more and more, and fell into debt. All that we had was sold, and my husband died. I have worked, and toiled, and striven, for the sake of the child, and scrubbed staircases, washed linen, clean and coarse alike, but I was not to be better off, such was God's good will. But He will take me to Himself in His own good time, and will not forsake my boy." And she fell asleep.

Towards morning she felt much refreshed, and strong enough, as she thought, to go back to her work. She had just stepped again into the cold water, when a trembling and faintness seized her: she clutched at the air with her hand, took a step forward, and fell down. Her head rested on the bank, and her feet were still in the water: her wooden shoes, with a wisp of straw in each, which she had worn, floated down the stream, and thus Martha found her on coming to bring her some coffee.

In the meantime a messenger from the mayor's house had been dispatched to her poor lodging to tell her "to come to the mayor

immediately, for he had something to tell her." It was too late! A barber-surgeon was brought to open a vein in her arm; but the poor woman was dead.

"She has drunk herself to death!" said the mayor.

In the letter that brought the news of his brother's death, the contents of the will had been mentioned, and it was a legacy of six hundred dollars to the glovemaker's widow, who had once been his mother's maid. The money was to be paid, according to the mayor's discretion, in larger or smaller sums, to her or to her child.

"There was some fuss between my brother and her," said the mayor. "It's a good thing that she is dead; for now the boy will have the whole, and I will get him into a house among respectable people. He may turn out a reputable working man."

And Heaven gave its blessing to these words.

So the mayor sent for the boy, promised to take care of him, and added that it was a good thing the lad's mother was dead, inasmuch as she had been good for nothing.

They bore her to the churchyard, to the cemetery of the poor, and Martha strewed sand upon her grave, and planted a rose tree upon it, and the boy stood beside her.

"My dear mother!" he cried, as the tears fell fast. "Is it true what they said: that she was good for nothing?" "No, she was good for much!" replied the old servant, and she looked up indignantly. "I knew it many a year ago, and more than all since last night. I tell you she was worth much, and the Lord in heaven

knows it is true, let the world say as much as it chooses, 'She was good for nothing.'"

"THERE IS A DIFFERENCE."

It was in the month of May. The wind still blew cold, but bushes and trees, field and meadow, all alike said the spring had come. There was store of flowers even in the wild hedges; and there spring carried on his affairs, and preached from a little apple tree, where one branch hung fresh and blooming, covered with delicate pink blossoms that were just ready to open. The apple tree branch knew well enough how beautiful he was, for the knowledge is inherent in the leaf as well as in the blood; and consequently the branch was not surprised when a nobleman's carriage stopped opposite to him on the road, and the young countess said that an apple branch was the loveliest thing one could behold, a very emblem of spring in its most charming form. And the branch was most carefully broken off, and she held it in her delicate hand, and sheltered it with her silk parasol. Then they drove to the castle, where there were lofty halls and splendid apartments. Pure white curtains fluttered round the open windows, and beautiful flowers stood in shining transparent vases; and in one of these, which looked as if it had been cut out of fresh-fallen snow, the apple branch was placed among some fresh light twigs of beech. It was charming to behold.

But the branch became proud; and this was quite like human nature.

People of various kinds came through the room, and

according to their rank they might express their admiration. A few said nothing at all, and others again said too much, and the apple tree branch soon got to understand that there was a difference among plants. "Some are created for beauty, and some for use; and there are some which one can do without altogether," thought the apple branch; and as he stood just in front of the open window, from whence he could see into the garden and across the fields, he had flowers and plants enough to contemplate and to think about, for there were rich plants and humble plants – some very humble indeed.

"Poor despised herbs!" said the apple branch. "There is certainly a difference! And how unhappy they must feel, if indeed that kind can feel like myself and my equals. Certainly there is a difference, and distinctions must be made, or we should all be equal."

And the apple branch looked down with a species of pity, especially upon a certain kind of flower of which great numbers are found in the fields and in ditches. No one bound them into a nosegay, they were too common; for they might be found even among the paving-stones, shooting up everywhere like the rankest weeds, and they had the ugly name of "dandelion," or "dog-flower."

"Poor despised plants!" said the apple branch. "It is not your fault that you received the ugly name you bear. But it is with plants as with men – there must be a difference!"

"A difference?" said the sunbeam; and he kissed the blooming

apple branch, and saluted in like manner the yellow dandelions out in the field – all the brothers of the sunbeam kissed them, the poor flowers as well as the rich.

Now the apple branch had never thought of the boundless beneficence of Providence in creation towards everything that lives and moves and has its being; he had never thought how much that is beautiful and good may be hidden, but not forgotten; but that, too, was quite like human nature.

The sunbeam, the ray of light, knew better; and said, "You don't see far, and you don't see clearly. What is the despised plant that you especially pity?"

"The dandelion," replied the apple branch. "It is never received into a nosegay; it is trodden under foot. There are too many of them; and when they run to seed, they fly away like little pieces of wool over the roads, and hang and cling to people's dress. They are nothing but weeds – but it is right there should be weeds too. Oh, I'm really very thankful that I was not created one of those flowers."

But there came across the fields a whole troop of children; the youngest of whom was so small that it was carried by the rest, and when it was set down in the grass among the yellow flowers it laughed aloud with glee, kicked out with its little legs, rolled about and plucked the yellow flowers, and kissed them in its pretty innocence. The elder children broke off the flowers with their tall stalks, and bent the stalks round into one another, link by link, so that a whole chain was made; first a necklace,

and then a scarf to hang over their shoulders and tie round their waists, and then a chaplet to wear on the head: it was quite a gala of green links and yellow flowers. The eldest children carefully gathered the stalks on which hung the white feathery ball, formed by the flower that had run to seed; and this loose, airy wool-flower, which is a beautiful object, looking like the finest snowy down, they held to their mouths, and tried to blow away the whole head at one breath: for their grandmother had said that whoever could do this would be sure to get new clothes before the year was out. So on this occasion the despised flower was actually raised to the rank of a prophet or augur.

"Do you see?" said the sunbeam. "Do you see the beauty of those flowers? do you see their power?"

"Yes, over children," replied the apple branch.

And now an old woman came into the field, and began to dig with a blunt shaftless knife round the root of the dandelion plant, and pulled it up out of the ground. With some of the roots she intended to make tea for herself; others she was going to sell for money to the druggist.

"But beauty is a higher thing!" said the apple tree branch. "Only the chosen few can be admitted into the realm of beauty. There is a difference among plants, just as there is a difference among men."

And then the sunbeam spoke of the boundless love of the Creator, as manifested in the creation, and of the just distribution of things in time and in eternity.

"Yes, yes, that is your opinion," the apple branch persisted.

But now some people came into the room, and the beautiful young countess appeared, the lady who had placed the apple branch in the transparent vase in the sunlight. She carried in her hand a flower, or something of the kind. The object, whatever it might be, was hidden by three or four great leaves, wrapped around it like a shield, that no draught or gust of wind should injure it; and it was carried more carefully than the apple bough had ever been. Very gently the large leaves were now removed, and lo, there appeared the fine feathery seed crown of the despised dandelion! This it was that the lady had plucked with the greatest care, and had carried home with every precaution, so that not one of the delicate feathery darts that form its downy ball should be blown away. She now produced it, quite uninjured, and admired its beautiful form, its peculiar construction, and its airy beauty, which was to be scattered by the wind.

"Look, with what singular beauty Providence has invested it," she said. "I will paint it, together with the apple branch, whose beauty all have admired; but this humble flower has received just as much from Heaven in a different way; and, various as they are, both are children of the kingdom of beauty."

And the sunbeam kissed the humble flower, and he kissed the blooming apple branch, whose leaves appeared covered with a roseate blush.

EVERYTHING IN ITS RIGHT PLACE

It is more than a hundred years ago.

Behind the wood, by the great lake, stood the old baronial mansion. Round about it lay a deep moat, in which grew reeds and grass. Close by the bridge, near the entrance-gate, rose an old willow tree that bent over the reeds.

Up from the hollow lane sounded the clang of horns and the trampling of horses; therefore the little girl who kept the geese hastened to drive her charges away from the bridge, before the hunting company should come gallopping up. They drew near with such speed that the girl was obliged to climb up in a hurry, and perch herself on the coping-stone of the bridge, lest she should be ridden down. She was still half a child, and had a pretty light figure, and a gentle expression in her face, with two clear blue eyes. The noble baron took no note of this, but as he gallopped past the little goose-herd, he reversed the whip he held in his hand, and in rough sport gave her such a push in the chest with the butt-end, that she fell backwards into the ditch.

"Everything in its place," he cried; "into the puddle with you!" And he laughed aloud, for this was intended for wit, and the company joined in his mirth: the whole party shouted and clamoured, and the dogs barked their loudest.

Fortunately for herself, the poor girl in falling seized one of the hanging branches of the willow tree, by means of which she kept herself suspended over the muddy water, and as soon as the baron and his company had disappeared through the castle-gate, the girl tried to scramble up again; but the bough broke off at the top, and she would have fallen backward among the reeds, if a strong hand from above had not at that moment seized her. It was the hand of a pedlar, who had seen from a short distance what had happened, and who now hurried up to give aid.

"Everything in its right place," he said, mimicking the gracious baron; and he drew the little maiden up to the firm ground. He would have restored the broken branch to the place from which it had been torn, but "everything in its place" cannot always be managed, and therefore he stuck the piece in the ground. "Grow and prosper till you can furnish a good flute for them up yonder," he said; for he would have liked to play the "rogue's march" for my lord the baron, and my lord's whole family. And then he betook himself to the castle, but not into the ancestral hall, he was too humble for that! He went to the servants' quarters, and the men and maids turned over his stock of goods, and bargained with him; and from above, where the guests were at table, came a sound of roaring and screaming that was intended for song, and indeed they did their best. Loud laughter, mingled with the barking and howling of dogs, sounded through the windows, for there was feasting and carousing up yonder. Wine and strong old ale foamed in the jugs and glasses,

and the dogs sat with their masters and dined with them. They had the pedlar summoned upstairs, but only to make fun of him. The wine had mounted into their heads, and the sense had flown out. They poured wine into a stocking, that the pedlar might drink with them, but that he must drink quickly; that was considered a rare jest, and was a cause of fresh laughter. And then whole farms, with oxen and peasants too, were staked on a card, and won and lost.

"Everything in its right place!" said the pedlar, when he had at last made his escape out of what he called "the Sodom and Gomorrah up yonder." "The open high-road is my right place," he said; "I did not feel at all happy there." And the little maiden who sat keeping the geese nodded at him in a friendly way, as he strode along beside the hedges.

And days and weeks went by; and it became manifest that the willow branch which the pedlar had stuck into the ground by the castle moat remained fresh and green, and even brought forth new twigs. The little goose-girl saw that the branch must have taken root, and rejoiced greatly at the circumstance; for this tree, she said, was now her tree.

The tree certainly came forward well; but everything else belonging to the castle went very rapidly back, what with feasting and gambling – for these two things are like wheels, upon which no man can stand securely.

Six years had not passed away before the noble lord passed out of the castle-gate, a beggared man, and the mansion was bought

by a rich dealer; and this purchaser was the very man who had once been made a jest of there, for whom wine had been poured into a stocking; but honesty and industry are good winds to speed a vessel; and now the dealer was possessor of the baronial estate. But from that hour no more card-playing was permitted there. "That is bad reading," said he: "when the Evil One saw a Bible for the first time, he wanted to put a bad book against it, and invented card-playing."

The new proprietor took a wife; and who might that be but the goose-girl, who had always been faithful and good, and looked as beautiful and fine in her new clothes as if she had been born a great lady. And how did all this come about? That is too long a story for our busy time, but it really happened, and the most important part is to come.

It was a good thing now to be in the old mansion. The mother managed the domestic affairs, and the father superintended the estate, and it seemed as if blessings were streaming down. Where rectitude enters in, prosperity is sure to follow. The old house was cleaned and painted, the ditches were cleared and fruit trees planted. Everything wore a bright cheerful look, and the floors were as polished as a draught board. In the long winter evenings the lady sat at the spinning-wheel with her maids, and every Sunday evening there was a reading from the Bible, by the Councillor of Justice himself – this title the dealer had gained, though it was only in his old age. The children grew up – for children had come – and they received the best education, though

all had not equal abilities, as we find indeed in all families.

In the meantime the willow branch at the castle-gate had grown to be a splendid tree, which stood there free and self-sustained. "That is our genealogical tree," the old people said, and the tree was to be honoured and respected – so they told all the children, even those who had not very good heads.

And a hundred years rolled by.

It was in our own time. The lake had been converted to moorland, and the old mansion had almost disappeared. A pool of water and the ruins of some walls, this was all that was left of the old baronial castle, with its deep moat; and here stood also a magnificent old willow, with pendent boughs, which seemed to show how beautiful a tree may be if left to itself. The main stem was certainly split from the root to the crown, and the storm had bowed the noble tree a little; but it stood firm for all that, and from every cleft into which wind and weather had carried a portion of earth, grasses and flowers sprang forth: especially near the top, where the great branches parted, a sort of hanging garden had been formed of wild raspberry bush, and even a small quantity of mistletoe had taken root, and stood, slender and graceful, in the midst of the old willow which was mirrored in the dark water. A field-path led close by the old tree.

High by the forest hill, with a splendid prospect in every direction, stood the new baronial hall, large and magnificent, with panes of glass so clearly transparent, that it looked as if there were no panes there at all. The grand flight of steps that

led to the entrance looked like a bower of roses and broad-leaved plants. The lawn was as freshly green as if each separate blade of grass were cleaned morning and evening. In the hall hung costly pictures; silken chairs and sofas stood there, so easy that they looked almost as if they could run by themselves; there were tables of great marble slabs, and books bound in morocco and gold. Yes, truly, wealthy people lived here, people of rank: the baron with his family.

All things here corresponded with each other. The motto was still "Everything in its right place;" and therefore all the pictures which had been put up in the old house for honour and glory, hung now in the passage that led to the servants' hall: they were considered as old lumber, and especially two old portraits, one representing a man in a pink coat and powdered wig, the other a lady with powdered hair and holding a rose in her hand, and each surrounded with a wreath of willow leaves. These two pictures were pierced with many holes, because the little barons were in the habit of setting up the old people as a mark for their cross-bows. The pictures represented the Councillor of Justice and his lady, the founders of the present family.

"But they did not properly belong to our family," said one of the little barons. "He was a dealer, and she had kept the geese. They were not like papa and mamma."

The pictures were pronounced to be worthless; and as the motto was "Everything in its right place," the great-grandmother and great-grandfather had been sent into the passage that led to

the servants' hall.

The son of the neighbouring clergyman was tutor in the great house. One day he was out walking with his pupils, the little barons and their eldest sister, who had just been confirmed; they came along the field-path, past the old willow, and as they walked on the young lady bound a wreath of field flowers, "Everything in its right place," and the flowers formed a pretty whole. At the same time she heard every word that was spoken, and she liked to hear the clergyman's son talk of the power of nature and of the great men and women in history. She had a good hearty disposition, with true nobility of thought and soul, and a heart full of love for all that God hath created.

The party came to a halt at the old willow tree. The youngest baron insisted on having such a flute cut for him from it as he had had made of other willows. Accordingly the tutor broke off a branch.

"Oh, don't do that!" cried the young baroness; but it was done already. "That is our famous old tree," she continued, "and I love it dearly. They laugh at me at home for this, but I don't mind. There is a story attached to this tree."

And she told what we all know about the tree, about the old mansion, the pedlar and the goose-girl, who had met for the first time in this spot, and had afterwards become the founders of the noble family to which the young barons belonged.

"They would not be ennobled, the good old folks!" she said. "They kept to the motto 'Everything in its right place;' and

accordingly they thought it would be out of place for them to purchase a title with money. My grandfather, the first baron, was their son: he is said to have been a very learned man, very popular with princes and princesses, and a frequent guest at the court festivals. The others at home love him best; but, I don't know how, there seems to me something about that first pair that draws my heart towards them. How comfortable, how patriarchal it must have been in the old house, where the mistress sat at the spinning-wheel among her maids, and the old master read aloud from the Bible!"

"They were charming, sensible people," said the clergyman's son; and with this the conversation naturally fell upon nobles and citizens. The young man scarcely seemed to belong to the citizen class, so well did he speak concerning the purpose and meaning of nobility. He said,

"It is a great thing to belong to a family that has distinguished itself, and thus to have, as it were, in one's blood, a spur that urges one on to make progress in all that is good. It is delightful to have a name that serves as a card of admission into the highest circles. Nobility means that which is great and noble: it is a coin that has received a stamp to indicate what it is worth. It is the fallacy of the time, and many poets have frequently maintained this fallacy, that nobility of birth is accompanied by foolishness, and that the lower you go among the poor, the more does everything around shine. But that is not my view, for I consider it entirely false. In the higher classes many beautiful and kindly traits are found. My

mother told me one of this kind, and I could tell you many others.

"My mother was on a visit to a great family in town. My grandmother, I think, had been housekeeper to the count's mother. The great nobleman and my mother were alone in the room, when the former noticed that an old woman came limping on crutches into the courtyard. Indeed, she was accustomed to come every Sunday, and carry away a gift with her. 'Ah, there is the poor old lady,' said the nobleman: 'walking is a great toil to her;' and before my mother understood what he meant, he had gone out of the room and run down the stairs, to save the old woman the toilsome walk, by carrying to her the gift she had come to receive.

"Now, that was only a small circumstance, but, like the widow's two mites in the Scripture, it has a sound that finds an echo in the depths of the heart in human nature; and these are the things the poet should show and point out; especially in these times should he sing of it, for that does good, and pacifies and unites men. But where a bit of mortality, because it has a genealogical tree and a coat of arms, rears up like an Arabian horse, and prances in the street, and says in the room, 'People out of the street have been here,' when a commoner has been – that is nobility in decay, and become a mere mask – a mask of the kind that Thespis created; and people are glad when such an one is turned into satire."

This was the speech of the clergyman's son. It was certainly rather long, but then the flute was being finished while he made

it.

At the castle there was a great company. Many guests came from the neighbourhood and from the capital. Many ladies, some tastefully, and others tastelessly dressed, were there, and the great hall was quite full of people. The clergymen from the neighbourhood stood respectfully congregated in a corner, which made it look almost as if there were to be a burial there. But it was not so, for this was a party of pleasure, only that the pleasure had not yet begun.

A great concert was to be performed, and consequently the little baron had brought in his willow flute; but he could not get a note out of it, nor could his papa, and therefore the flute was worth nothing. There was instrumental music and song, both of the kind that delight the performers most – quite charming!

"You are a performer?" said a cavalier – his father's son and nothing else – to the tutor. "You play the flute and make it too – that's genius. That should command, and should have the place of honour!"

"No indeed," replied the young man, "I only advance with the times, as every one is obliged to do."

"Oh, you will enchant us with the little instrument, will you not?" And with these words he handed to the clergyman's son the flute cut from the willow tree by the pool, and announced aloud that the tutor was about to perform a solo on that instrument.

Now, they only wanted to make fun of him, that was easily seen; and therefore the tutor would not play, though indeed

he could do so very well; but they crowded round him and importuned him so strongly, that at last he took the flute and put it to his lips.

That was a wonderful flute! A sound, as sustained as that which is emitted by the whistle of a steam engine, and much stronger, echoed far over courtyard, garden, and wood, miles away into the country; and simultaneously with the tone came a rushing wind that roared, "Everything in its right place!" And papa flew as if carried by the wind straight out of the hall and into the shepherd's cot; and the shepherd flew, not into the hall, for there he could not come – no, but into the room of the servants, among the smart lacqueys who strutted about there in silk stockings; and the proud servants were struck motionless with horror at the thought that such a personage dared to sit down to table with them.

But in the hall the young baroness flew up to the place of honour at the top of the table, where she was worthy to sit; and the young clergyman's son had a seat next to her; and there the two sat as if they were a newly-married pair. An old count of one of the most ancient families in the country remained untouched in his place of honour; for the flute was just, as men ought to be. The witty cavalier, the son of his father and nothing else, who had been the cause of the flute-playing, flew head-over-heels into the poultry-house – but not alone.

For a whole mile round about the sounds of the flute were heard, and singular events took place. A rich banker's family,

driving along in a coach and four, was blown quite out of the carriage, and could not even find a place on the footboard at the back. Two rich peasants who in our times had grown too high for their corn-fields, were tumbled into the ditch. It was a dangerous flute, that: luckily, it burst at the first note, and that was a good thing, for then it was put back into the owner's pocket. "Everything in its right place."

The day afterwards not a word was said about this marvellous event; and thence has come the expression "pocketing the flute." Everything was in its usual order, only that the two old portraits of the dealer and the goose-girl hung on the wall in the banqueting hall. They had been blown up yonder, and as one of the real connoisseurs said they had been painted by a master's hand, they remained where they were, and were restored. "Everything in its right place."

And to that it will come; for *hereafter* is long – longer than this story.

THE GOBLIN AND THE HUCKSTER

There was once a regular student: he lived in a garret, and nothing at all belonged to him; but there was also once a regular huckster: he lived on the ground floor, and the whole house was his; and the goblin kept with him, for on the huckster's table on Christmas Eve there was always a dish of plum porridge, with a great piece of butter floating in the middle. The huckster could accomplish that; and consequently the goblin stuck to the huckster's shop, and that was very interesting.

One evening the student came through the back door to buy candles and cheese for himself. He had no one to send, and that's why he came himself. He procured what he wanted and paid for it, and the huckster and his wife both nodded a "good evening" to him; and the woman was one who could do more than merely nod – she had an immense power of tongue! And the student nodded too, and then suddenly stood still, reading the sheet of paper in which the cheese had been wrapped. It was a leaf torn out of an old book, a book that ought not to have been torn up, a book that was full of poetry.

"Yonder lies some more of the same sort," said the huckster: "I gave an old woman a little coffee for the books; give me two groschen, and you shall have the remainder."

"Yes," said the student, "give me the book instead of the cheese: I can eat my bread and butter without cheese. It would be a sin to tear the book up entirely. You are a capital man, a practical man, but you understand no more about poetry than does that cask yonder."

Now, that was an insulting speech, especially towards the cask; but the huckster laughed and the student laughed, for it was only said in fun. But the goblin was angry that any one should dare to say such things to a huckster who lived in his own house and sold the best butter.

When it was night, and the shop was closed and all were in bed, the goblin came forth, went into the bedroom, and took away the good lady's tongue; for she did not want that while she was asleep; and whenever he put this tongue upon any object in the room, the said object acquired speech and language, and could express its thoughts and feelings as well as the lady herself could have done; but only one object could use it at a time, and that was a good thing, otherwise they would have interrupted each other.

And the goblin laid the tongue upon the cask in which the old newspapers were lying.

"Is it true," he asked, "that you don't know what poetry means?"

"Of course I know it," replied the cask: "poetry is something that always stands at the foot of a column in the newspapers, and is sometimes cut out. I dare swear I have more of it in me than the student, and I'm only a poor tub compared to the huckster."

Then the goblin put the tongue upon the coffee-mill, and, mercy! how it began to go! And he put it upon the butter-cask, and on the cash-box: they were all of the waste-paper cask's opinion, and the opinion of the majority must be respected.

"Now I shall tell it to the student!" And with these words the goblin went quite quietly up the back stairs to the garret, where the student lived. The student had still a candle burning, and the goblin peeped through the keyhole, and saw that he was reading in the torn book that he had carried up out of the shop downstairs.

But how light it was in his room! Out of the book shot a clear beam, expanding into a thick stem, and into a mighty tree, which grew upward and spread its branches far over the student. Each leaf was fresh, and every blossom was a beautiful female head, some with dark sparkling eyes, others with wonderfully clear blue orbs; every fruit was a gleaming star, and there was a glorious sound of song in the student's room.

Never had the little goblin imagined such splendour, far less had he ever seen or heard anything like it. He stood still on tiptoe, and peeped in till the light went out in the student's garret. Probably the student blew it out, and went to bed; but the little goblin remained standing there nevertheless, for the music still sounded on, soft and beautiful – a splendid cradle song for the student who had lain down to rest.

"This is an incomparable place," said the goblin: "I never expected such a thing! I should like to stay here with the student." And then the little man thought it over – and he was a sensible

little man too – but he sighed, "The student has no porridge!" And then he went down again to the huckster's shop: and it was a very good thing that he got down there again at last, for the cask had almost worn out the good woman's tongue, for it had spoken out at one side everything that was contained in it, and was just about turning itself over, to give it out from the other side also, when the goblin came in, and restored the tongue to its owner. But from that time forth the whole shop, from the cash-box down to the firewood, took its tone from the cask, and paid him such respect, and thought so much of him, that when the huckster afterwards read the critical articles on theatricals and art in the newspaper, they were all persuaded the information came from the cask itself.

But the goblin could no longer sit quietly and contentedly listening to all the wisdom down there: so soon as the light glimmered from the garret in the evening he felt as if the rays were strong cables drawing him up, and he was obliged to go and peep through the keyhole; and there a feeling of greatness rolled around him, such as we feel beside the ever-heaving sea when the storm rushes over it, and he burst into tears! He did not know himself why he was weeping, but a peculiar feeling of pleasure mingled with his tears. How wonderfully glorious it must be to sit with the student under the same tree! But that might not be, he was obliged to be content with the view through the keyhole, and to be glad of that. There he stood on the cold landing-place, with the autumn wind blowing down from the loft-hole: it was

cold, very cold; but the little mannikin only felt that when the light in the room was extinguished, and the tones in the tree died away. Ha! then he shivered, and crept down again to his warm corner, where it was homely and comfortable.

And when Christmas came, and brought with it the porridge and the great lump of butter, why, then he thought the huckster the better man.

But in the middle of the night the goblin was awaked by a terrible tumult and beating against the window shutters. People rapped noisily without, and the watchman blew his horn, for a great fire had broken out – the whole street was full of smoke and flame. Was it in the house itself, or at a neighbour's? Where was it? Terror seized on all. The huckster's wife was so bewildered that she took her gold earrings out of her ears and put them in her pocket, that at any rate she might save something; the huckster ran for his share-papers; and the maid for her black silk mantilla, for she had found means to purchase one. Each one wanted to save the best thing they had; the goblin wanted to do the same thing, and in a few leaps he was up the stairs, and into the room of the student, who stood quite quietly at the open window, looking at the conflagration that was raging in the house of the neighbour opposite. The goblin seized upon the wonderful book which lay upon the table, popped it into his red cap, and held the cap tight with both hands. The great treasure of the house was saved; and now he ran up and away, quite on to the roof of the house, on to the chimney. There he sat, illuminated by the flames of the

burning house opposite, both hands pressed tightly over his cap, in which the treasure lay; and now he knew the real feelings of his heart, and knew to whom it really belonged. But when the fire was extinguished, and the goblin could think calmly again, why, then...

"I must divide myself between the two," he said; "I can't quite give up the huckster, because of the porridge!"

Now, that was spoken quite like a human creature. We all of us visit the huckster for the sake of the porridge.

IN A THOUSAND YEARS

Yes, in a thousand years people will fly on the wings of steam through the air, over the ocean! The young inhabitants of America will become visitors of old Europe. They will come over to see the monuments and the great cities, which will then be in ruins, just as we in our time make pilgrimages to the tottering splendours of Southern Asia. In a thousand years they will come!

The Thames, the Danube, and the Rhine still roll their course, Mont Blanc stands firm with its snow-capped summit, and the Northern Lights gleam over the lands of the North; but generation after generation has become dust, whole rows of the mighty of the moment are forgotten, like those who already slumber under the hill on which the rich trader whose ground it is has built a bench, on which he can sit and look out across his waving corn-fields.

"To Europe!" cry the young sons of America; "to the land of our ancestors, the glorious land of monuments and fancy – to Europe!"

The ship of the air comes. It is crowded with passengers, for the transit is quicker than by sea. The electro-magnetic wire under the ocean has already telegraphed the number of the aerial caravan. Europe is in sight: it is the coast of Ireland that they see, but the passengers are still asleep; they will not be called till they are exactly over England. There they will first step on European

shore, in the land of Shakespeare as the educated call it; in the land of politics, the land of machines, as it is called by others.

Here they stay a whole day. That is all the time the busy race can devote to the whole of England and Scotland. Then the journey is continued through the tunnel under the English Channel, to France, the land of Charlemagne and Napoleon. Moliere is named: the learned men talk of the classic school of remote antiquity: there is rejoicing and shouting for the names of heroes, poets, and men of science, whom our time does not know, but who will be born after our time in Paris, the crater of Europe.

The air steamboat flies over the country whence Columbus went forth, where Cortez was born, and where Calderon sang dramas in sounding verse. Beautiful black-eyed women live still in the blooming valleys, and the oldest songs speak of the Cid and the Alhambra.

Then through the air, over the sea, to Italy, where once lay old, everlasting Rome. It has vanished! The Campagna lies desert: a single ruined wall is shown as the remains of St. Peter's, but there is a doubt if this ruin be genuine.

Next to Greece, to sleep a night in the grand hotel at the top of Mount Olympus, to say that they have been there; and the journey is continued to the Bosphorus, to rest there a few hours, and see the place where Byzantium lay; and where the legend tells that the harem stood in the time of the Turks, poor fishermen are now spreading their nets.

Over the remains of mighty cities on the broad Danube, cities which we in our time know not, the travellers pass; but here and there, on the rich sites of those that time shall bring forth, the caravan sometimes descends, and departs thence again.

Down below lies Germany, that was once covered with a close net of railways and canals, the region where Luther spoke, where Goëthe sang, and Mozart once held the sceptre of harmony! Great names shine there, in science and in art, names that are unknown to us. One day devoted to seeing Germany, and one for the North, the country of Oersted and Linnæus, and for Norway, the land of the old heroes and the young Normans. Iceland is visited on the journey home: the geysers burn no more, Hecla is an extinct volcano, but the rocky island is still fixed in the midst of the foaming sea, a continual monument of legend and poetry.

"There is really a great deal to be seen in Europe," says the young American, "and we have seen it in a week, according to the directions of the great traveller" (and here he mentions the name of one of his contemporaries) "in his celebrated work, 'How to See all Europe in a Week.'"

THE BOND OF FRIENDSHIP

We have just taken a little journey, and already we want to take a longer one. Whither? To Sparta, to Mycene, to Delphi? There are a hundred places at whose names the heart beats with the desire of travel. On horseback we go up the mountain paths, through brake and through brier. A single traveller makes an appearance like a whole caravan. He rides forward with his guide, a pack-horse carries trunks, a tent, and provisions, and a few armed soldiers follow as a guard. No inn with warm beds awaits him at the end of his tiring day's journey: the tent is often his dwelling-place. In the great wild region the guide cooks him a pillan of rice, fowls, and curry for his supper. A thousand gnats swarm round the tent. It is a boisterous night, and to-morrow the way will lead across swollen streams; take care you are not washed away!

What is your reward for undergoing these hardships? The fullest, richest reward. Nature manifests herself here in all her greatness; every spot is historical, and the eye and the thoughts are alike delighted. The poet may sing it, the painter portray it in rich pictures; but the air of reality which sinks deep into the soul of the spectator, and remains there, neither painter nor poet can produce.

In many little sketches I have endeavoured to give an idea of a small part of Athens and its environs; but how colourless the

picture seems! How little does it exhibit Greece, the mourning genius of beauty, whose greatness and whose sorrow the stranger never forgets!

The lonely herdsman yonder on the hills would, perhaps, by a simple recital of an event in his life, better enlighten the stranger who wishes in a few features to behold the land of the Hellenes, than any picture could do.

"Then," says my Muse, "let him speak." A custom, a good, peculiar custom, shall be the subject of the mountain shepherd's tale. It is called

THE BOND OF FRIENDSHIP

Our rude house was put together of clay; but the door-posts were columns of fluted marble found near the spot where the house was erected. The roof reached almost down to the ground. It was now dark brown and ugly, but it had originally consisted of blooming olive and fresh laurel branches brought from beyond the mountain. Around our dwelling was a narrow gorge, whose walls of rock rose steeply upwards, and showed naked and black, and round their summits often hung clouds, like white living figures. Never did I hear a singing bird there, never did the men there dance to the sound of the bagpipe; but the spot was sacred from the old times: even its name reminded of this, for it was called Delphi! The dark solemn mountains were all covered with snow; the highest, which gleamed the longest in the red light of

evening, was Parnassus; the brook which rolled from it near our house was once sacred also. Now the ass sullies it with its feet, but the stream rolls on and on, and becomes clear again. How I can remember every spot in the deep holy solitude! In the midst of the hut a fire was kindled, and when the hot ashes lay there red and glowing, the bread was baked in them. When the snow was piled so high around our hut as almost to hide it, my mother appeared most cheerful: then she would hold my head between her hands, and sing the songs she never sang at other times, for the Turks our masters would not allow it. She sang:

"On the summit of Olympus, in the forest of dwarf firs, lay an old stag. His eyes were heavy with tears; he wept blue and even red tears; and there came a roebuck by, and said, 'What ails thee, that thou weapest those blue and red tears?' And the stag answered, 'The Turk has come to our city: he has wild dogs for the chase, a goodly pack.' 'I will drive them away across the islands,' cried the young roebuck, 'I will drive them away across the islands into the deep sea!' But before evening sank down the roebuck was slain, and before night the stag was hunted and dead."

And when my mother sang thus, her eyes became moist, and on the long eyelashes hung a tear; but she hid it, and baked our black bread in the ashes. Then I would clench my fist and cry, "We will kill the Turks!" but she repeated from the song the words, "I will drive them across the islands into the deep sea. But before evening sank down the roebuck was slain, and before the

night came the stag was hunted and dead."

For several days and nights we had been lonely in our hut, when my father came home. I knew he would bring me shells from the Gulf of Lepanto, or perhaps even a bright gleaming knife. This time he brought us a child, a little half-naked girl, that he brought under his sheepskin cloak. It was wrapped in a fur, and all that the little creature possessed when this was taken off, and she lay in my mother's lap, were three silver coins, fastened in her dark hair. My father told us that the Turks had killed the child's parents; and he told so much about them, that I dreamed of the Turks all night. He himself had been wounded, and my mother bound up his arm. The wound was deep, and the thick sheepskin was stiff with frozen blood. The little maiden was to be my sister. How radiantly beautiful she looked! Even my mother's eyes were not more gentle than hers. Anastasia, as she was called, was to be my sister, because her father had been united to mine by the old custom which we still keep. They had sworn brotherhood in their youth, and chosen the most beautiful and virtuous girl in the neighbourhood to consecrate their bond of friendship. I often heard of the strange good custom.

So now the little girl was my sister. She sat in my lap, and I brought her flowers and the feathers of the mountain birds: we drank together of the waters of Parnassus, and dwelt together for many a year under the laurel roof of the hut, while my mother sang winter after winter of the stag who wept red tears. But as yet I did not understand that it was my own countrymen whose

many sorrows were mirrored in those tears.

One day there came three Frankish men. Their dress was different from ours. They had tents and beds with them on their horses, and more than twenty Turks, all armed with swords and muskets, accompanied them; for they were friends of the pacha, and had letters from him commanding an escort for them. They only came to see our mountains, to ascend Parnassus amid the snow and the clouds, and to look at the strange black steep rock near our hut. They could not find room in it, nor could they endure the smoke that rolled along the ceiling and found its way out at the low door; therefore they pitched their tents on the small space outside our dwelling, roasted lambs and birds, and poured out strong sweet wine, of which the Turks were not allowed to partake.

When they departed, I accompanied them for some distance, carrying my little sister Anastasia, wrapped in a goatskin, on my back. One of the Frankish gentlemen made me stand in front of a rock, and drew me, and her too, as we stood there, so that we looked like one creature. I never thought of it; but Anastasia and I were really one. She was always sitting in my lap or riding in the goatskin at my back; and when I dreamed, she appeared in my dreams.

Two nights afterwards, other men, armed with knives and muskets, came into our tent. They were Albanians, brave men, my mother told me. They only stayed a short time. My sister Anastasia sat on the knee of one of them, and when they were

gone she had not three, but only two silver coins in her hair. They wrapped tobacco in strips of paper and smoked it. I remember they were undecided as to the road they were to take.

But they had to make a choice. They went, and my father went with them. Soon afterwards we heard the sound of firing. The noise was renewed, and soldiers rushed into our hut, and took my mother, and myself, and my sister Anastasia prisoners. They declared that the robbers had been entertained by us, and that my father had acted as the robbers' guide, and therefore we must go with them. Presently I saw the corpses of the robbers brought in; I saw my father's corpse too. I cried and cried till I fell asleep. When I awoke, we were in prison, but the room was not worse than ours in our own house. They gave me onions to eat, and musty wine poured from a tarry cask, but we had no better fare at home.

How long we were kept prisoners I do not know; but many days and nights went by. When we were set free it was the time of the holy Easter feast. I carried Anastasia on my back, for my mother was ill, and could only move slowly, and it was a long way till we came down to the sea, to the Gulf of Lepanto. We went into a church that gleamed with pictures painted on a golden ground. They were pictures of angels, and very beautiful; but it seemed to me that our little Anastasia was just as beautiful. In the middle of the floor stood a coffin filled with roses. "The Lord Christ is pictured there in the form of a beautiful rose," said my mother; and the priest announced, "Christ is risen!" All

the people kissed each other: each one had a burning taper in his hand, and I received one myself, and so did little Anastasia. The bagpipes sounded, men danced hand in hand from the church, and outside the women were roasting the Easter lamb. We were invited to partake, and I sat by the fire; a boy, older than myself, put his arms round my neck, kissed me, and said, "Christ is risen!" and thus it was that for the first time I met Aphtanides.

My mother could make fishermen's nets, for which there was a good demand here in the bay, and we lived a long time by the side of the sea, the beautiful sea, that tasted like tears, and in its colours reminded me of the song of the stag that wept – for sometimes its waters were red, and sometimes green or blue.

Aphtanides knew how to manage our boat, and I often sat in it, with my little Anastasia, while it glided on through the water, swift as a bird flying through the air. Then, when the sun sank down, the mountains were tinted with a deeper and deeper blue, one range seemed to rise behind the other, and behind them all stood Parnassus with its snow-crowned summit. The mountain-top gleamed in the evening rays like glowing iron, and it seemed as though the light came from within it; for long after the sun had set, the mountain still shone through the clear blue air. The white water birds touched the surface of the sea with their wings, and all here was as calm and quiet as among the black rocks at Delphi. I lay on my back in the boat, Anastasia leaned against me, and the stars above us shone brighter than the lamps in our church. They were the same stars, and they stood exactly in the

same positions above me, as when I had sat in front of our hut at Delphi; and at last I almost fancied I was there. Suddenly there was a splash in the water, and the boat rocked violently. I cried out in horror, for Anastasia had fallen into the water: but in a moment Aphtanides had sprung in after her, and was holding her up to me! We dried her clothes as well as we could, remaining on the water till they were dry; for no one was to know what a fright we had had for our little adopted sister, in whose life Aphtanides now had a part.

The summer came. The sun burned so hot that the leaves turned yellow on the trees. I thought of our cool mountains, and of the fresh water they contained; my mother, too, longed for them; and one evening we wandered home. What peace, what silence! We walked on through the thick thyme, still fragrant though the sun had scorched its leaves. Not a single herdsman did we meet, not one solitary hut did we pass. Everything was quiet and deserted; but a shooting star announced that in heaven there was yet life. I know not if the clear blue air gleamed with light of its own, or if the radiance came from the stars; but we could see the outlines of the mountains quite plainly. My mother lighted a fire, roasted some roots she had brought with her, and I and my little sister slept among the thyme, without fear of the ugly Smidraki,⁴ from whose throat fire spurts forth, or of the wolf and jackal; for my mother sat beside us, and I considered

⁴ According to the Greek superstition, this is a monster generated from the unopened entrails of slaughtered sheep, which are thrown away in the fields.

her presence protection enough for us.

We reached our old home; but the hut was a heap of ruins, and a new one had to be built. A few women lent my mother their aid, and in a few days walls were raised, and covered with a new roof of olive branches. My mother made many bottle cases of bark and skins; I kept the little flock of the priests,⁵ and Anastasia and the little tortoises were my playmates.

Once we had a visit from our beloved Aphtanides, who said he had greatly longed to see us, and who stayed with us two whole happy days.

A month afterwards he came again, and told us that he was going in a ship to Corfu and Patras, but must bid us good-bye first; and he had brought a large fish for our mother. He had a great deal to tell, not only of the fishermen yonder in the Gulf of Lepanto, but also of kings and heroes, who had once possessed Greece, just as the Turks possess it now.

I have seen a bud on a rose-bush gradually unfold in days and weeks, till it became a rose, and hung there in its beauty, before I was aware how large and beautiful and red it had become; and the same thing I now saw in Anastasia. She was now a beautiful grown girl, and I had become a stout stripling. The wolf-skins that covered my mother's and Anastasia's bed, I had myself taken from wolves that had fallen beneath my shots.

Years had gone by, when one evening Aphtanides came in,

⁵ A peasant who can read often becomes a priest; he is then called "very holy Sir," and the lower orders kiss the ground on which he has stepped.

slender as a reed, strong and brown. He kissed us all, and had much to tell of the fortifications of Malta, of the great ocean, and of the marvellous sepulchres of Egypt. It sounded strange as a legend of the priests, and I looked up to him with a kind of veneration.

"How much you know!" I exclaimed; "what wonders you can tell of!"

"But you have told me the finest thing, after all," he replied. "You told me of a thing that has never been out of my thoughts – of the good old custom of the bond of friendship, a custom I should like to follow. Brother, let you and I go to church, as your father and Anastasia's went before us: your sister Anastasia is the most beautiful and most innocent of girls; she shall consecrate us! No people has such grand old customs as we Greeks."

Anastasia blushed like a young rose, and my mother kissed Aphtanides.

A couple of miles from our house there, where loose earth lies on the hill, and a few scattered trees give a shelter, stood the little church; a silver lamp hung in front of the altar.

I had put on my best clothes: the white fustanella fell in rich folds around my hips, the red jacket fitted tight and close, the tassel on my fez cap was silver, and in my girdle gleamed a knife and my pistols. Aphtanides was clad in the blue garb worn by Greek sailors; on his chest hung a silver plate with the figure of the Virgin Mary; his scarf was as costly as those worn by rich lords. Every one could see that we were about to go through

a solemn ceremony. We stepped into the little simple church, where the evening sunlight, streaming through the door, gleamed on the burning lamp and the pictures on golden ground. We knelt down on the altar steps, and Anastasia came before us. A long white garment hung loose over her graceful form; on her white neck and bosom hung a chain, covered with old and new coins, forming a kind of collar. Her black hair was fastened in a knot, and confined by a head-dress made of silver and gold coins that had been found in an old temple. No Greek girl had more beautiful ornaments than she. Her countenance glowed, and her eyes were like two stars.

We all three prayed silently; and then she said to us, "Will you be friends in life and in death?" "Yes," we replied. "Will you, whatever may happen, remember this – my brother is a part of myself. My secret is his, my happiness is his. Self-sacrifice, patience – everything in me belongs to him as to me?" And we again answered, "Yes."

Then she joined our hands and kissed us on the forehead, and we again prayed silently. Then the priest came through the door near the altar, and blessed us all three; and a song, sung by the other holy men, sounded from behind the altar screen, and the bond of eternal friendship was concluded. When we rose, I saw my mother standing by the church door weeping heartily.

How cheerful it was now, in our little hut, and by the springs of Delphi! On the evening before his departure, Aphtanides sat thoughtful with me on the declivity of a mountain; his arm was

flung round my waist, and mine was round his neck: we spoke of the sorrows of Greece, and of the men whom the country could trust. Every thought of our souls lay clear before each of us, and I seized his hand.

"One thing thou must still know, one thing that till now has been a secret between myself and Heaven. My whole soul is filled with love! with a love stronger than the love I bear to my mother and to thee!"

"And whom do you love?" asked Aphtanides, and his face and neck grew red as fire.

"I love Anastasia," I replied – and his hand trembled in mine, and he became pale as a corpse. I saw it; I understood the cause; and I believe *my* hand trembled. I bent towards him, kissed his forehead, and whispered, "I have never spoken of it to her, and perhaps she does not love me. Brother, think of this: I have seen her daily; she has grown up beside me, and has become a part of my soul!"

"And she shall be thine!" he exclaimed, "thine! I may not deceive thee, nor will I do so. I also love her; but to-morrow I depart. In a year we shall see each other once more, and then you will be married, will you not? I have a little gold of my own: it shall be thine. Thou must, thou shalt take it."

And we wandered home silently across the mountains. It was late in the evening when we stood at my mother's door.

Anastasia held the lamp upwards as we entered; my mother was not there. She gazed at Aphtanides with a beautifully

mournful gaze. "To-morrow you are going from us," she said: "I am very sorry for it."

"Sorry!" he repeated, and in his voice there seemed a trouble as great as the grief I myself felt. I could not speak, but he seized her hand and said, "Our brother yonder loves you, and he is dear to you, is he not? His very silence is a proof of his affection."

Anastasia trembled and burst into tears. Then I saw no one but her, thought of none but her, and threw my arms round her, and said, "I love thee!" She pressed her lips to mine, and flung her arms round my neck; but the lamp had fallen to the ground, and all was dark around us – dark as in the heart of poor Aphtanides.

Before daybreak he rose, kissed us all, said farewell, and went away. He had given all his money to my mother for us. Anastasia was my betrothed, and a few days afterwards she became my wife.

JACK THE DULLARD

AN OLD STORY TOLD ANEW

Far in the interior of the country lay an old baronial hall, and in it lived an old proprietor, who had two sons, which two young men thought themselves too clever by half. They wanted to go out and woo the king's daughter; for the maiden in question had publicly announced that she would choose for her husband that youth who could arrange his words best.

So these two geniuses prepared themselves a full week for the wooing – this was the longest time that could be granted them; but it was enough, for they had had much preparatory information, and everybody knows how useful that is. One of them knew the whole Latin dictionary by heart, and three whole years of the daily paper of the little town into the bargain; and so well, indeed, that he could repeat it all either backwards or forwards, just as he chose. The other was deeply read in the corporation laws, and knew by heart what every corporation ought to know; and accordingly he thought he could talk of affairs of state, and put his spoke in the wheel in the council. And he knew one thing more: he could embroider braces with roses and other flowers, and with arabesques, for he was a tasty, light-

fingered fellow.

"I shall win the princess!" So cried both of them. Therefore their old papa gave to each a handsome horse. The youth who knew the dictionary and newspaper by heart had a black horse, and he who knew all about the corporation laws received a milk-white steed. Then they rubbed the corners of their mouths with fish-oil, so that they might become very smooth and glib. All the servants stood below in the courtyard, and looked on while they mounted their horses; and just by chance the third son came up. For the proprietor had really three sons, though nobody counted the third with his brothers, because he was not so learned as they, and indeed he was generally known as "Jack the Dullard."

"Hallo!" said Jack the Dullard, "where are you going? I declare you have put on your Sunday clothes!"

"We're going to the king's court, as suitors to the king's daughter. Don't you know the announcement that has been made all through the country?" And they told him all about it.

"My word! I'll be in it too!" cried Jack the Dullard; and his two brothers burst out laughing at him, and rode away.

"Father dear," said Jack, "I must have a horse too. I do feel so desperately inclined to marry! If she accepts me, she accepts me; and if she won't have me, I'll have her; but she *shall* be mine!"

"Don't talk nonsense," replied the old gentleman. "You shall have no horse from me. You don't know how to speak – you can't arrange your words. Your brothers are very different fellows from you."

"Well," quoth Jack the Dullard, "if I can't have a horse, I'll take the billy-goat, who belongs to me, and he can carry me very well!"

And so said, so done. He mounted the billy-goat, pressed his heels into its sides, and galloped down the high street like a hurricane.

"Hei, houp! that was a ride! Here I come!" shouted Jack the Dullard, and he sang till his voice echoed far and wide.

But his brothers rode slowly on in advance of him. They spoke not a word, for they were thinking about all the fine extempore speeches they would have to bring out, and all these had to be cleverly prepared beforehand.

"Hallo!" shouted Jack the Dullard. "Here am I! Look what I have found on the high-road." And he showed them what it was, and it was a dead crow.

"Dullard!" exclaimed the brothers, "what are you going to do with that?"

"With the crow? why, I am going to give it to the princess."

"Yes, do so," said they; and they laughed, and rode on.

"Hallo, here I am again! Just see what I have found now: you don't find that on the high-road every day!"

And the brothers turned round to see what he could have found now.

"Dullard!" they cried, "that is only an old wooden shoe, and the upper part is missing into the bargain; are you going to give that also to the princess?"

"Most certainly I shall," replied Jack the Dullard; and again the brothers laughed and rode on, and thus they got far in advance of him; but —

"Hallo – hop rara!" and there was Jack the Dullard again. "It is getting better and better," he cried. "Hurrah! it is quite famous."

"Why, what have you found this time?" inquired the brothers.

"Oh," said Jack the Dullard, "I can hardly tell you. How glad the princess will be!"

"Bah!" said the brothers; "that is nothing but clay out of the ditch."

"Yes, certainly it is," said Jack the Dullard; "and clay of the finest sort. See, it is so wet, it runs through one's fingers." And he filled his pocket with the clay.

But his brothers galloped on till the sparks flew, and consequently they arrived a full hour earlier at the town-gate than could Jack. Now at the gate each suitor was provided with a number, and all were placed in rows immediately on their arrival, six in each row, and so closely packed together that they could not move their arms; and that was a prudent arrangement, for they would certainly have come to blows, had they been able, merely because one of them stood before the other.

All the inhabitants of the country round about stood in great crowds around the castle, almost under the very windows, to see the princess receive the suitors; and as each stepped into the hall, his power of speech seemed to desert him, like the light of a candle that is blown out. Then the princess would say, "He is of

no use! away with him out of the hall!"

At last the turn came for that brother who knew the dictionary by heart; but he did not know it now; he had absolutely forgotten it altogether; and the boards seemed to re-echo with his footsteps, and the ceiling of the hall was made of looking-glass, so that he saw himself standing on his head; and at the window stood three clerks and a head clerk, and every one of them was writing down every single word that was uttered, so that it might be printed in the newspapers, and sold for a penny at the street corners. It was a terrible ordeal, and they had moreover made such a fire in the stove, that the room seemed quite red hot.

"It is dreadfully hot here!" observed the first brother.

"Yes," replied the princess, "my father is going to roast young pullets to-day."

"Baa!" there he stood like a baa-lamb. He had not been prepared for a speech of this kind; and had not a word to say, though he intended to say something witty. "Baa!"

"He is of no use!" said the princess. "Away with him."

And he was obliged to go accordingly. And now the second brother came in.

"It is terribly warm here!" he observed.

"Yes, we're roasting pullets to-day," replied the princess.

"What – what were you – were you pleased to ob – " stammered he – and all the clerks wrote down, "pleased to ob – "

"He is of no use!" said the princess. "Away with him!"

Now came the turn of Jack the Dullard. He rode into the hall

on his goat.

"Well, it's most abominably hot here."

"Yes, because I'm roasting young pullets," replied the princess.

"Ah, that's lucky!" exclaimed Jack the Dullard, "for I suppose you'll let me roast my crow at the same time?"

"With the greatest pleasure," said the princess. "But have you anything you can roast it in? for I have neither pot nor pan."

"Certainly I have!" said Jack. "Here's a cooking utensil with a tin handle." And he brought out the old wooden shoe, and put the crow into it.

"Well, that *is* a famous dish!" said the princess. "But what shall we do for sauce?"

"Oh, I have that in my pocket," said Jack: "I have so much of it, that I can afford to throw some away;" and he poured some of the clay out of his pocket.

"I like that!" said the princess. "You can give an answer, and you have something to say for yourself, and so you shall be my husband. But are you aware that every word we speak is being taken down, and will be published in the paper to-morrow? Look yonder, and you will see in every window three clerks and a head clerk; and the old head clerk is the worst of all, for he can't understand anything." But she only said this to frighten Jack the Dullard: and the clerks gave a great crow of delight, and each one spurted a blot out of his pen on to the floor.

"Oh, those are the gentlemen, are they?" said Jack; "then I

will give the best I have to the head clerk." And he turned out his pockets, and flung the wet clay full in the head clerk's face.

"That was very cleverly done," observed the princess. "I could not have done that; but I shall learn in time."

And accordingly Jack the Dullard was made a king, and received a crown and a wife, and sat upon a throne. And this report we have wet from the press of the head clerk and the corporation of printers – but they are not to be depended upon in the least!

SOMETHING

"I want to be something!" said the eldest of five brothers. "I want to do something in the world. I don't care how humble my position may be in society, if I only effect some good, for that will really be something. I'll make bricks, for they are quite indispensable things, and then I shall truly have done something."

"But that *something* will not be enough!" quoth the second brother. "What you intend doing is just as much as nothing at all. It is journeyman's work, and can be done by a machine. No, I would rather be a bricklayer at once, for that *is* something real; and that's what I will be. That brings rank; as a bricklayer one belongs to a guild, and is a citizen, and has one's own flag and one's own house of call. Yes, and if all goes well, I will keep journeymen. I shall become a master bricklayer, and my wife will be a master's wife – that is what *I* call something."

"That's nothing at all!" said the third. "That is beyond the pale of the guild, and there are many of those in a town that stand far above the mere master artizan. You may be an honest man; but as a 'master' you will after all only belong to those who are ranked among common men. I know something better than that. I will be an architect, and will thus enter into the territory of art and speculation. I shall be reckoned among those who stand high in point of intellect. I shall certainly have to serve up from the pickaxe, so to speak; so I must begin as a carpenter's

apprentice, and must go about as an assistant, in a cap, though I am accustomed to wear a silk hat. I shall have to fetch beer and spirits for the common journeymen, and they will call me 'thou,' and that is insulting! But I shall imagine to myself that the whole thing is only acting, and a kind of masquerade. To-morrow – that is to say, when I have served my time – I shall go my own way, and the others will be nothing to me. I shall go to the academy, and get instructions in drawing, and shall be called an architect. *That's something!* I may get to be called 'sir,' and even 'worshipful sir,' or even get a handle at the front or at the back of my name, and shall go on building and building, just as those before me have built. That will always be a thing to remember, and that's what I call something!"

"But I don't care at all for *that* something," said the fourth. "I won't sail in the wake of others, and be a copyist. I will be a genius; and will stand up greater than all the rest of you together. I shall be the creator of a new style, and will give the plan of a building suitable to the climate and the material of the country, for the nationality of the people, for the development of the age – and an additional storey for my own genius."

"But supposing the climate and the material are bad," said the fifth, "that would be a disastrous circumstance, for these two exert a great influence! Nationality, moreover, may expand itself until it becomes affectation, and the development of the century may run wild with your work, as youth often runs wild. I quite realise the fact that none of you will be anything real, however

much you may believe in yourselves. But, do what you like, I will not resemble you: I shall keep on the outside of things, and criticise whatever you produce. To every work there is attached something that is not right – something that has gone wrong; and I will ferret that out and find fault with it; and *that* will be doing *something*!"

And he kept his word; and everybody said concerning this fifth brother, "There is certainly something in him; he has a good head; but he does nothing." And by that very means they thought *something* of him!

Now, you see, this is only a little story; but it will never end so long as the world lasts.

But what became of the five brothers? Why, this is *nothing*, and not *something*.

Listen, it is a capital story.

The eldest brother, he who manufactured bricks, soon became aware of the fact that every brick, however small it might be, produced for him a little coin, though this coin was only copper; and many copper pennies laid one upon the other can be changed into a shining dollar; and wherever one knocks with such a dollar in one's hand, whether at the baker's, or the butcher's, or the tailor's – wherever it may be, the door flies open, and the visitor is welcomed, and gets what he wants. You see that is what comes of bricks. Some of those belonging to the eldest brother certainly crumbled away, or broke in two, but there was a use even for these.

On the high rampart, the wall that kept out the sea, Margaret, the poor woman, wished to build herself a little house. All the faulty bricks were given to her, and a few perfect ones into the bargain, for the eldest brother was a good-natured man, though he certainly did not achieve anything beyond the manufacture of bricks. The poor woman put together the house for herself. It was little and narrow, and the single window was quite crooked. The door was too low, and the thatched roof might have shown better workmanship. But after all it was a shelter; and from the little house you could look far across the sea, whose waves broke vainly against the protecting rampart on which it was built. The salt billows spurted their spray over the whole house, which was still standing when he who had given the bricks for its erection had long been dead and buried.

The second brother knew better how to build a wall, for he had served an apprenticeship to it. When he had served his time and passed his examination he packed his knapsack and sang the journeyman's song:

"While I am young I'll wander, from place to place I'll roam,
And everywhere build houses, until I come back home;
And youth will give me courage, and my true love won't
forget:

Hurrah then for a workman's life! I'll be a master yet!"

And he carried his idea into effect. When he had come home and become a master, he built one house after another in the

town. He built a whole street; and when the street was finished and became an ornament to the place, the houses built a house for him in return, that was to be his own. But how can houses build a house? If you ask them they will not answer you, but people will understand what is meant by the expression, and say, 'certainly, it was the street that built his house for him.' It was little, and the floor was covered with clay; but when he danced with his bride upon this clay floor, it seemed to become polished oak; and from every stone in the wall sprang forth a flower, and the room was gay, as if with the costliest paper-hanger's work. It was a pretty house, and in it lived a happy pair. The flag of the guild fluttered before the house, and the journeymen and apprentices shouted hurrah! Yes, he certainly was *something*! And at last he died; and *that* was something too.

Now came the architect, the third brother, who had been at first a carpenter's apprentice, had worn a cap, and served as an errand boy, but had afterwards gone to the academy, and risen to become an architect, and to be called "honoured sir." Yes, if the houses of the street had built a house for the brother who had become a bricklayer, the street now received its name from the architect, and the handsomest house in it became his property. *That* was something, and *he* was something; and he had a long title before and after his name. His children were called *genteel* children, and when he died his widow was "a widow of rank," and *that* is something! – and his name always remained at the corner of the street, and lived on in the mouth of every one as

the street's name – and *that* was something!

Now came the genius of the family, the fourth brother, who wanted to invent something new and original, and an additional storey on the top of it for himself. But the top storey tumbled down, and he came tumbling down with it, and broke his neck. Nevertheless he had a splendid funeral, with guild flags and music; poems in the papers, and flowers strewn on the paving-stones in the street; and three funeral orations were held over him, each one longer than the last, which would have rejoiced him greatly, for he always liked it when people talked about him; a monument also was erected over his grave. It was only one storey high, but still it was *something*.

Now he was dead like the three other brothers; but the last, the one who was a critic, outlived them all: and that was quite right, for by this means he got the last word, and it was of great importance to him to have the last word. The people always said he had a good head of his own. At last his hour came, and he died, and came to the gates of Paradise. There souls always enter two and two, and he came up with another soul that wanted to get into Paradise too; and who should this be but old dame Margaret from the house upon the sea wall.

"I suppose this is done for the sake of contrast, that I and this wretched soul should arrive here at exactly the same time!" said the critic. "Pray who are you, my good woman?" he asked. "Do you want to get in here too?"

And the old woman curtsied as well as she could: she thought

it must be St. Peter himself talking to her.

"I'm a poor old woman of a very humble family," she replied. "I'm old Margaret that lived in the house on the sea wall."

"Well, and what have you done? what have you accomplished down there?"

"I have really accomplished nothing at all in the world: nothing that I can plead to have the doors here opened to me. It would be a real mercy to allow me to slip in through the gate."

"In what manner did you leave the world?" asked he, just for the sake of saying something; for it was wearisome work standing there and saying nothing.

"Why, I really don't know how I left it. I was sick and miserable during my last years, and could not well bear creeping out of bed, and going out suddenly into the frost and cold. It was a hard winter, but I have got out of it all now. For a few days the weather was quite calm, but very cold, as your honour must very well know. The sea was covered with ice as far as one could look. All the people from the town walked out upon the ice, and I think they said there was a dance there, and skating. There was beautiful music and a great feast there too; the sound came into my poor little room, where I lay ill. And it was towards the evening; the moon had risen beautifully, but was not yet in its full splendour; I looked from my bed out over the wide sea, and far off, just where the sea and sky join, a strange white cloud came up. I lay looking at the cloud, and I saw a little black spot in the middle of it, that grew larger and larger; and now I knew what

it meant, for I am old and experienced, though this token is not often seen. I knew it, and a shuddering came upon me. Twice in my life I have seen the same thing; and I knew there would be an awful tempest, and a spring flood, which would overwhelm the poor people who were now drinking and dancing and rejoicing – young and old, the whole city had issued forth – who was to warn them, if no one saw what was coming yonder, or knew, as I did, what it meant? I was dreadfully alarmed, and felt more lively than I had done for a long time. I crept out of bed, and got to the window, but could not crawl farther, I was so exhausted. But I managed to open the window. I saw the people outside running and jumping about on the ice; I could see the beautiful flags that waved in the wind. I heard the boys shouting 'hurrah!' and the servant men and maids singing. There were all kinds of merriment going on. But the white cloud with the black spot! I cried out as loud as I could, but no one heard me; I was too far from the people. Soon the storm would burst, and the ice would break, and all who were upon it would be lost without remedy. They could not hear me, and I could not come out to them. Oh, if I could only bring them ashore! Then kind Heaven inspired me with the thought of setting fire to my bed, and rather to let the house burn down, than that all those people should perish so miserably. I succeeded in lighting up a beacon for them. The red flame blazed up on high, and I escaped out of the door, but fell down exhausted on the threshold, and could get no farther. The flames rushed out towards me, flickered through the window,

and rose high above the roof. All the people on the ice yonder beheld it, and ran as fast as they could, to give aid to a poor old woman who, they thought, was being burned to death. Not one remained behind. I heard them coming; but I also became aware of a rushing sound in the air; I heard a rumbling like the sound of heavy artillery; the spring-flood was lifting the covering of ice, which presently cracked and burst into a thousand fragments. But the people succeeded in reaching the sea-wall – I saved them all! But I fancy I could not bear the cold and the fright, and so I came up here to the gates of Paradise. I am told they are opened to poor creatures like me – and now I have no house left down upon the rampart: not that I think this will give me admission here."

Then the gates of heaven were opened, and the angel led the old woman in. She left a straw behind her, a straw that had been in her bed when she set it on fire to save the lives of many; and this straw had been changed into the purest gold – into gold that grew and grew, and spread out into beauteous leaves and flowers.

"Look, this is what the poor woman brought," said the angel to the critic. "What dost *thou* bring? I know that thou hast accomplished nothing – thou hast not made so much as a single brick. Ah, if thou couldst only return, and effect at least so much as that! Probably the brick, when thou hadst made it, would not be worth much; but if it were made with good-will, it would at least be *something*. But thou canst not go back, and I can do nothing for thee!"

Then the poor soul, the old dame who had lived on the dyke,

put in a petition for him. She said,

"His brother gave me the bricks and the pieces out of which I built up my house, and that was a great deal for a poor woman like me. Could not all those bricks and pieces be counted as a single brick in his favour? It was an act of mercy. He wants it now; and is not this the very fountain of mercy?"

Then the angel said:

"Thy brother, him whom thou hast regarded as the least among you all, he whose honest industry seemed to thee as the most humble, hath given thee this heavenly gift. Thou shalt not be turned away. It shall be vouchsafed to thee to stand here without the gate, and to reflect, and repent of thy life down yonder; but thou shalt not be admitted until thou hast in real earnest accomplished *something*."

"I could have said that in better words!" thought the critic, but he did not find fault aloud; and for him, after all, that was "something!"

UNDER THE WILLOW TREE

The region round the little town of Kjöge is very bleak and bare. The town certainly lies by the sea shore, which is always beautiful, but just there it might be more beautiful than it is: all around are flat fields, and it is a long way to the forest. But when one is very much at home in a place, one always finds something beautiful, and something that one longs for in the most charming spot in the world that is strange to us. We confess that, by the utmost boundary of the little town, where some humble gardens skirt the streamlet that falls into the sea, it must be very pretty in summer; and this was the opinion of the two children from neighbouring houses, who were playing there, and forcing their way through the gooseberry bushes, to get to one another. In one of the gardens stood an elder tree, and in the other an old willow, and under the latter the children were especially very fond of playing; they were allowed to play there, though, indeed, the tree stood close beside the stream, and they might easily have fallen into the water. But the eye of God watches over the little ones; if it did not, they would be badly off. And, moreover, they were very careful with respect to the water; in fact, the boy was so much afraid of it, that they could not lure him into the sea in summer, when the other children were splashing about in the waves. Accordingly, he was famously jeered and mocked at, and had to bear the jeering and mockery as best he could. But

once Joanna, the neighbour's little girl, dreamed she was sailing in a boat, and Knud waded out to join her till the water rose, first to his neck, and afterwards closed over his head, so that he disappeared altogether. From the time when little Knud heard of this dream, he would no longer bear the teasing of the other boys. He might go into the water now, he said, for Joanna had dreamed it. He certainly never carried the idea into practice, but the dream was his great guide for all that.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.