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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK WONDER-BOX
TALES ***

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The EDITHA SERIES

WONDER-BOX TALES

By JEAN INGELow

**With Illustrations by
Diantha W. Horne**

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WONDER-BOX TALES

THE OUPHE^[1] OF THE WOOD

"An Ouphe!" perhaps you exclaim, "and pray what might that be?"

An Ouphe, fair questioner,—though you may never have heard of him,—was a creature well known (by hearsay, at least) to your great-great-grandmother. It was currently reported that every forest had one within its precincts, who ruled over the woodmen, and exacted tribute from them in the shape of little blocks of wood ready hewn for the fire of his underground palace,—such blocks as are bought at shops in these degenerate days, and called in London "kindling."

It was said that he had a silver axe, with which he marked those trees that he did not object to have cut down; moreover, he was supposed to possess great riches, and to appear but seldom above ground, and when he did to look like an old man in all respects but one, which was that he always carried some green ash-keys about with him which he could not conceal, and by which he might be known.

Do I hear you say that you don't believe he ever existed? It matters not at all to my story whether you do or not. He certainly does not exist now. The Commissioners of Woods and Forests have much to answer for, if it was they who put an end to his reign; but I do not think they did; it is more likely that the spelling-book used in woodland districts disagreed with his constitution.

After this short preface please to listen while I tell you that once in a little black-timbered cottage, at the skirts of a wood, a young woman sat before the fire rocking her baby, and, as she did so, building a castle in the air: "What a good thing it would be," she thought to herself, "if we were rich!"

It had been a bright day, but the evening was chilly; and, as she watched the glowing logs that were blazing on her hearth, she wished that all the lighted part of them would turn to gold.

She was very much in the habit—this little wife—of building castles in the air, particularly when she had nothing else to do, or her husband was late in coming home to his supper. Just as she was thinking how late he was there was a tap at the door, and an old man walked in, who said:

"Mistress, will you give a poor man a warm at your fire?"

"And welcome," said the young woman, setting him a chair.

So he sat down as close to the fire as he could, and spread out his hands to the flames.

**"SO HE SAT DOWN AS CLOSE TO THE FIRE AS HE
COULD, AND SPREAD OUT HIS HANDS TO THE
FLAMES."**

He had a little knapsack on his back, and the young woman did not doubt that he was an old soldier.

"Maybe you are used to the hot countries," she said.

"All countries are much the same to me," replied the stranger. "I see nothing to find fault with in this one. You have fine hawthorn-trees hereabouts; just now they are as white as snow; and then you have a noble wood behind you."

"Ah, you may well say that," said the young woman. "It is a noble wood to us; it gets us bread. My husband works in it."

"And a fine sheet of water there is in it," continued the old man. "As I sat by it to-day it was pretty to see those cranes, with red legs, stepping from leaf to leaf of the water-lilies so lightly."

As he spoke he looked rather wistfully at a little saucepan which stood upon the hearth.

"Why, I shouldn't wonder if you were hungry," said the young woman, laying her baby in the cradle, and spreading a cloth on the round table. "My husband will be home soon, and if you like to stay and sup with him and me, you will be kindly welcome."

The old man's eyes sparkled when she said this, and he looked so very old and seemed so weak that she pitied him. He turned a little aside from the fire, and watched her while she set a brown loaf on the table, and fried a few slices of bacon; but all was ready, and the kettle had been boiling some time before there were any signs of the husband's return.

"I never knew Will to be so late before," said the stranger. "Perhaps he is carrying his logs to the saw-pits."

"Will!" exclaimed the wife. "What, you know my husband, then? I thought you were a stranger in these parts."

"Oh, I have been past this place several times," said the old man, looking rather confused; "and so, of course, I have heard of your husband. Nobody's stroke in the wood is so regular and strong as his."

"And I can tell you he is the handiest man at home," began his wife.

"Ah, ah," said the old man, smiling at her eagerness; "and here he comes, if I am not mistaken."

At that moment the woodman entered.

"Will," said his wife, as she took his bill-book from him, and hung up his hat, "here's an old soldier come to sup with us, my dear." And as she spoke, she gave her husband a gentle push toward the old man, and made a sign that he should speak to him.

"Kindly welcome, master," said the woodman. "Wife, I'm hungry; let's to supper."

The wife turned some potatoes out of the little saucepan, set a jug of beer on the table, and they all began to sup. The best of everything was offered

by the wife to the stranger. The husband, after looking earnestly at him for a few minutes, kept silence.

"And where might you be going to lodge to-night, good man, if I'm not too bold?" asked she.

The old man heaved a deep sigh, and said he supposed he must lie out in the forest.

"Well, that would be a great pity," remarked his kind hostess. "No wonder your bones ache if you have no better shelter." As she said this, she looked appealingly at her husband.

"My wife, I'm thinking, would like to offer you a bed," said the woodman; "at least, if you don't mind sleeping in this clean kitchen, I think that we could toss you up something of that sort that you need not disdain."

"Disdain, indeed!" said the wife. "Why, Will, when there's not a tighter cottage than ours in all the wood, and with a curtain, as we have, and a brick floor, and everything so good about us—"

The husband laughed; the old man looked on with a twinkle in his eye.

"I'm sure I shall be humbly grateful," said he.

Accordingly, when supper was over, they made him up a bed on the floor, and spread clean sheets upon it of the young wife's own spinning, and heaped several fresh logs on the fire. Then they wished the stranger good night, and crept up the ladder to their own snug little chamber.

"Disdain, indeed!" laughed the wife, as soon as they shut the door. "Why, Will, how could you say it? I should like to see him disdain me and mine. It isn't often, I'll engage to say, that he sleeps in such a well-furnished kitchen."

The husband said nothing, but secretly laughed to himself.

"What are you laughing at, Will?" said his wife, as she put out the candle.

"Why, you soft little thing," answered the woodman, "didn't you see that bunch of green ash-keys in his cap; and don't you know that nobody would

dare to wear them but the Ouphe of the Wood? I saw him cutting those very keys for himself as I passed to the sawmill this morning, and I knew him again directly, though he has disguised himself as an old man."

"Bless us!" exclaimed the little wife; "is the Wood Ouphe in our cottage? How frightened I am! I wish I hadn't put the candle out."

The husband laughed more and more.

"Will," said his wife, in a solemn voice, "I wonder how you dare laugh, and that powerful creature under the very bed where you lie!"

"And she to be so pitiful over him," said the woodman, laughing till the floor shook under him, "and to talk and boast of our house, and insist on helping him to more potatoes, when he has a palace of his own, and heaps of riches! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"Don't laugh, Will," said the wife, "and I'll make you the most beautiful firmity^[2] you ever tasted to-morrow. Don't let him hear you laughing."

"Why, he comes for no harm," said the woodman. "I've never cut down any trees that he had not marked, and I've always laid his toll of the wood, neatly cut up, beside his foot-path, so I am not afraid. Besides, don't you know that he always pays where he lodges, and very handsomely, too?"

"Pays, does he?" said the wife. "Well, but he is an awful creature to have so near one. I would much rather he had really been an old soldier. I hope he is not looking after my baby; he shall not have him, let him offer ever so much."

The more the wife talked, the more the husband laughed at her fears, till at length he fell asleep, whilst she lay awake, thinking and thinking, till by degrees she forgot her fears, and began to wonder what they might expect by way of reward. Hours appeared to pass away during these thoughts. At length, to her great surprise, while it was still quite dark, her husband called to her from below:

"Come down, Kitty; only come down to see what the Ouphe has left us."

As quickly as possible Kitty started up and dressed herself, and ran down the ladder, and then she saw her husband kneeling on the floor over the knapsack, which the Ouphe had left behind him. Kitty rushed to the spot, and saw the knapsack bursting open with gold coins, which were rolling out over the brick floor. Here was good fortune! She began to pick them up, and count them into her apron. The more she gathered, the faster they rolled, till she left off counting, out of breath with joy and surprise.

"What shall we do with all this money?" said the delighted woodman.

They consulted for some time. At last they decided to bury it in the garden, all but twenty pieces, which they would spend directly. Accordingly they dug a hole and carefully hid the rest of the money, and then the woodman went to the town, and soon returned laden with the things they had agreed upon as desirable possessions; namely, a leg of mutton, two bottles of wine, a necklace for Kitty, some tea and sugar, a grand velvet waistcoat, a silver watch, a large clock, a red silk cloak, and a hat and feather for the baby, a quilted petticoat, a great many muffins and crumpets, a rattle, and two new pairs of shoes.

How enchanted they both were! Kitty cooked the nice things, and they dressed themselves in the finery, and sat down to a very good dinner. But, alas! the woodman drank so much of the wine that he soon got quite tipsy, and began to dance and sing. Kitty was very much shocked; but when he proposed to dig up some more of the gold, and go to market for some more wine and some more blue velvet waistcoats, she remonstrated very strongly. Such was the change that had come over this loving couple, that they presently began to quarrel, and from words the woodman soon got to blows, and, after beating his little wife, lay down on the floor and fell fast asleep, while she sat crying in a corner.

The next day they both felt very miserable, and the woodman had such a terrible headache that he could neither eat nor work; but the day after, being pretty well again, he dug up some more gold and went to town, where he bought such quantities of fine clothes and furniture and so many good things to eat, that in the end he was obliged to buy a wagon to bring them home in, and great was the delight of his wife when she saw him coming home on the top of it, driving the four gray horses himself.

"COMING HOME ON TOP OF IT, DRIVING THE FOUR GRAY HORSES HIMSELF."

They soon began to unpack the goods and lay them out on the grass, for the cottage was far too small to hold them.

"There are some red silk curtains with gold rods," said the woodman.

"And grand indeed they are!" exclaimed his wife, spreading them over the onion bed.

"And here's a great looking-glass," continued the woodman, setting one up against the outside of the cottage, for it would not go in the door.

So they went on handing down the things, and it took nearly the whole afternoon to empty the wagon. No wonder, when it contained, among other things, a coral and bells for the baby, and five very large tea-trays adorned with handsome pictures of impossible scenery, two large sofas covered with green damask, three bonnets trimmed with feathers and flowers, two glass tumblers for them to drink out of,—for Kitty had decided that mugs were very vulgar things,—six books bound in handsome red morocco, a mahogany table, a large tin saucepan, a spit and silver waiter, a blue coat with gilt buttons, a yellow waistcoat, some pictures, a dozen bottles of wine, a quarter of lamb, cakes, tarts, pies, ale, porter, gin, silk stockings, blue and red and white shoes, lace, ham, mirrors, three clocks, a four-post bedstead, and a bag of sugar candy.

These articles filled the cottage and garden; the wagon stood outside the paling. Though the little kitchen was very much encumbered with furniture, they contrived to make a fire in it; and, having eaten a sumptuous dinner, they drank each other's health, using the new tumblers to their great satisfaction.

"All these things remind me that we must have another house built," said Kitty.

"You may do just as you please about that, my dear," replied her husband, with a bottle of wine in his hand.

"My dear," said Kitty, "how vulgar you are! Why don't you drink out of one of our new tumblers, like a gentleman?"

The woodman refused, and said it was much more handy to drink it out of the bottle.

"Handy, indeed!" retorted Kitty; "yes, and by that means none will be left for me."

Thereupon another quarrel ensued, and the woodman, being by this time quite tipsy, beat his wife again. The next day they went and got numbers of workmen to build them a new house in their garden. It was quite astonishing even to Kitty, who did not know much about building, to see how quick these workmen were; in one week the house was ready. But in the meantime the woodman, who had very often been tipsy, felt so unwell that he could not look after them; therefore it is not surprising that they stole a great many of his fine things while he lay smoking on the green damask sofa which stood on the carrot bed. Those articles which the workmen did not steal the rain and dust spoilt; but that they thought did not much matter, for still more than half the gold was left; so they soon furnished the new house. And now Kitty had a servant, and used to sit every morning on a couch dressed in silks and jewels till dinner-time, when the most delicious hot beefsteaks and sausage pudding or roast goose were served up, with more sweet pies, fritters, tarts, and cheese-cakes than they could possibly eat. As for the baby, he had three elegant cots, in which he was put to sleep by turns; he was allowed to tear his picture-books as often as he pleased, and to eat so many sugar-plums and macaroons that they often made him quite ill.

The woodman looked very pale and miserable, though he often said what a fine thing it was to be rich. He never thought of going to his work, and used generally to sit in the kitchen till dinner was ready, watching the spit. Kitty wished she could see him looking as well and cheerful as in old days,

though she felt naturally proud that her husband should always be dressed like a gentleman, namely, in a blue coat, red waistcoat, and top-boots.

He and Kitty could never agree as to what should be done with the rest of the money; in fact, no one would have known them for the same people; they quarrelled almost every day, and lost nearly all their love for one another. Kitty often cried herself to sleep—a thing she had never done when they were poor; she thought it was very strange that she should be a lady, and yet not be happy. Every morning when the woodman was sober they invented new plans for making themselves happy, yet, strange to say, none of them succeeded, and matters grew worse and worse. At last Kitty thought she should be happy if she had a coach; so she went to the place where the knapsack was buried, and began to dig; but the garden was so trodden down that she could not dig deep enough, and soon got tired of trying. At last she called the servant, and told her the secret as to where the money was, promising her a gold piece if she could dig it up. The servant dug with all her strength, and with a great deal of trouble they got the knapsack up, and Kitty found that not many gold pieces were left. However, she resolved to have the coach, so she took them and went to the town, where she bought a yellow chariot, with a most beautiful coat of arms upon it, and two cream-colored horses to draw it.

In the meantime the maid ran to the magistrates, and told them she had discovered something very dreadful, which was, that her mistress had nothing to do but dig in the ground and that she could make money come—coined money: "which," said the maid, "is a very terrible thing, and it proves that she must be a witch."

The mayor and aldermen were very much shocked, for witches were commonly believed in in those days; and when they heard that Kitty had dug up money that very morning, and bought a yellow coach with it, they decided that the matter must be investigated.

When Kitty drove up to her own door, she saw the mayor and aldermen standing in the kitchen waiting for her. She demanded what they wanted, and they said they were come in the king's name to search the house.

Kitty immediately ran up-stairs and took the baby out of his cradle, lest any of them should steal him, which, of course, seemed a very probable thing

for them to do. Then she went to look for her husband, who, shocking to relate, was quite tipsy, quarrelling and arguing with the mayor, and she actually saw him box an alderman's ears.

"The thing is proved," said the indignant mayor; "this woman is certainly a witch."

Kitty was very much bewildered at this; but how much more when she saw her husband seize the mayor—yes, the very mayor himself—and shake him so hard that he actually shook his head off, and it rolled under the dresser! "If I had not seen this with my own eyes," said Kitty, "I could not have believed it—even now it does not seem at all real."

All the aldermen wrung their hands.

"Murder! murder!" cried the maid.

"Yes," said the aldermen, "this woman and her husband must immediately be put to death, and the baby must be taken from them and made a slave."

In vain Kitty fell on her knees; the proofs of their guilt were so plain that there was no hope for mercy; and they were just going to be led out to execution when—why, then she opened her eyes, and saw that she was lying in bed in her own little chamber where she had lived and been so happy; her baby beside her in his wicker^[3] cradle was crowing and sucking his fingers.

"So, then, I have never been rich, after all," said Kitty; "and it was all only a dream! I thought it was very strange at the time that a man's head should roll off."

And she heaved a deep sigh, and put her hand to her face, which was wet with the tears she had shed when she thought that she and her husband were going to be executed.

"I am very glad, then, my husband is not a drunken man; and he does *not* beat me; but he goes to work every day, and I am as happy as a queen."

Just then she heard her husband's good-tempered voice whistling as he went down the ladder.

"Kitty, Kitty," said he, "come, get up, my little woman; it's later than usual, and our good visitor will want his breakfast."

"Oh, Will, Will, do come here," answered the wife; and presently her husband came up again, dressed in his fustian jacket, and looking quite healthy and good-tempered—not at all like the pale man in the blue coat, who sat watching the meat while it roasted.

"Oh, Will, I have had such a frightful dream," said Kitty, and she began to cry; "we are not going to quarrel and hate each other, are we?"

"Why, what a silly little thing thou art to cry about a dream," said the woodman, smiling. "No, we are not going to quarrel as I know of. Come, Kitty, remember the Ouphe."

"Oh, yes, yes, I remember," said Kitty, and she made haste to dress herself and come down.

"Good morning, mistress; how have you slept?" said the Ouphe, in a gentle voice, to her.

"Not so well as I could have wished, sir," said Kitty.

The Ouphe smiled. "*I* slept very well," he said. "The supper was good, and kindly given, without any thought of reward."

"And that is the certain truth," interrupted Kitty: "I never had the least thought what you were till my husband told me."

The woodman had gone out to cut some fresh cresses, for his guest's breakfast.

"I am sorry, mistress," said the Ouphe, "that you slept uneasily—my race are said sometimes by their presence to affect the dreams of you mortals. Where is my knapsack? Shall I leave it behind me in payment of bed and board?"

"Oh, no, no, I pray you don't," said the little wife, blushing and stepping back; "you are kindly welcome to all you have had, I'm sure: don't repay us so, sir."

"What, mistress, and why not?" asked the Ouphe, smiling. "It is as full of gold pieces as it can hold, and I shall never miss them."

"No, I entreat you, do not," said Kitty, "and do not offer it to my husband, for maybe he has not been warned as I have."

Just then the woodman came in.

"I have been thanking your wife for my good entertainment," said the Ouphe, "and if there is anything in reason that I can give either of you—"

"Will, we do very well as we are," said his wife, going up to him and looking anxiously in his face.

"I don't deny," said the woodman, thoughtfully, "that there are one or two things I should like my wife to have, but somehow I've not been able to get them for her yet."

"What are they?" asked the Ouphe.

"One is a spinning-wheel," answered the woodman; "she used to spin a good deal when she was at home with her mother."

"She shall have a spinning-wheel," replied the Ouphe; "and is there nothing else, my good host?"

"Well," said the woodman, frankly, "since you are so obliging, we should like a hive of bees."

"The bees you shall have also; and now, good morning both, and a thousand thanks to you."

So saying, he took his leave, and no pressing could make him stay to breakfast.

"Well," thought Kitty, when she had had a little time for reflection, "a spinning-wheel is just what I wanted; but if people had told me this time yesterday morning that I should be offered a knapsack full of money, and should refuse it, I could not possibly have believed them!"

THE FAIRY WHO JUDGED HER NEIGHBORS

There was once a Fairy who was a good Fairy, on the whole, but she had one very bad habit; she was too fond of finding fault with other people, and of taking for granted that everything must be wrong if it did not appear right to her.

One day, when she had been talking very unkindly of some friends of hers, her mother said to her: "My child, I think if you knew a little more of the world, you would become more charitable. I would therefore advise you to set out on your travels; you will find plenty of food, for the cowslips are now in bloom, and they contain excellent honey. I need not be anxious about your lodging, for there is no place more delightful for sleeping in than an empty robin's nest when the young have flown. And if you want a new gown, you can sew two tulip leaves together, which will make you a very becoming dress, and one that I should be proud to see you in."

The young Fairy was pleased at this permission to set out on her travels; so she kissed her mother, and bade good-by to her nurse, who gave her a little ball of spiders' threads to sew with, and a beautiful little box, made of the egg-shell of a wren, to keep her best thimble in, and took leave of her, wishing her safe home again.

The young Fairy then flew away till she came to a large meadow, with a clear river flowing on one side of it, and some tall oak-trees on the other. She sat down on a high branch in one of these oaks, and, after her long flight, was thinking of a nap, when, happening to look down at her little feet, she observed that her shoes were growing shabby and faded. "Quite a disgrace, I declare," said she. "I must look for another pair. Perhaps two of the smallest flowers of that snapdragon which I see growing in the hedge would fit me. I think I should like a pair of yellow slippers." So she flew down, and, after a little trouble, she found two flowers which fitted her very neatly, and she was just going to return to the oak-tree, when she heard a deep sigh beneath her, and, peeping out from her place among the hawthorn

blossoms, she saw a fine young Lark sitting in the long grass, and looking the picture of misery.

"What is the matter with you, cousin?" asked the Fairy.

"Oh, I am so unhappy," replied the poor Lark; "I want to build a nest, and I have got no wife."

"Why don't you look for a wife, then?" said the Fairy, laughing at him. "Do you expect one to come and look for you? Fly up, and sing a beautiful song in the sky, and then perhaps some pretty hen will hear you; and perhaps, if you tell her that you will help her to build a capital nest, and that you will sing to her all day long, she will consent to be your wife."

"Oh, I don't like," said the Lark, "I don't like to fly up, I am so ugly. If I were a goldfinch, and had yellow bars on my wings, or a robin, and had red feathers on my breast, I should not mind the defect which now I am afraid to show. But I am only a poor brown Lark, and I know I shall never get a wife."

"I never heard of such an unreasonable bird," said the Fairy. "You cannot expect to have everything."

"Oh, but you don't know," proceeded the Lark, "that if I fly up my feet will be seen; and no other bird has feet like mine. My claws are enough to frighten any one, they are so long; and yet I assure you, Fairy, I am not a cruel bird."

"Let me look at your claws," said the Fairy.

So the Lark lifted up one of his feet, which he had kept hidden in the long grass, lest any one should see it.

"It looks certainly very fierce," said the Fairy. "Your hind claw is at least an inch long, and all your toes have very dangerous-looking points. Are, you sure you never use them to fight with?"

"No, never!" said the Lark, earnestly; "I never fought a battle in my life; but yet these claws grow longer and longer, and I am so ashamed of their being seen that I very often lie in the grass instead of going up to sing, as I could wish."

"I think, if I were you, I would pull them off," said the Fairy.

"That is easier said than done," answered the poor Lark. "I have often got them entangled in the grass, and I scrape them against the hard clods; but it is of no use, you cannot think how fast they stick."

"Well, I am sorry for you," observed the Fairy; "but at the same time I cannot but see that, in spite of what you say, you must be a quarrelsome bird, or you would not have such long spurs."

"That is just what I am always afraid people will say," sighed the Lark.

"For," proceeded the Fairy, "nothing is given us to be of no use. You would not have wings unless you were to fly, nor a voice unless you were to sing; and so you would not have those dreadful spurs unless you were going to fight. If your spurs are not to fight with," continued the unkind Fairy, "I should like to know what they *are* for?"

"I am sure I don't know," said the Lark, lifting up his foot and looking at it. "Then you are not inclined to help me at all, Fairy? I thought you might be willing to mention among my friends that I am not a quarrelsome bird, and that I should always take care not to hurt my wife and nestlings with my spurs."

"Appearances are very much against you," answered the Fairy; "and it is quite plain to me that those spurs are meant to scratch with. No, I cannot help you. Good morning."

So the Fairy withdrew to her oak bough, and the poor Lark sat moping in the grass while the Fairy watched him. "After all," she thought, "I am sorry he is such a quarrelsome fellow, for that he is such is fully proved by those long spurs."

While she was so thinking, the Grasshopper came chirping up to the Lark, and tried to comfort him.

"I have heard all that the Fairy said to you," he observed, "and I really do not see that it need make you unhappy. I have known you some time, and have never seen you fight or look out of temper; therefore I will spread a

report that you are a very good-tempered bird, and that you are looking out for a wife."

The Lark upon this thanked the Grasshopper warmly.

"At the same time," remarked the Grasshopper, "I should be glad if you could tell me what is the use of those claws, because the question might be asked me, and I should not know what to answer."

"Grasshopper," replied the Lark, "I cannot imagine what they are for—that is the real truth."

"Well," said the kind Grasshopper, "perhaps time will show."

So he went away, and the Lark, delighted with his promise to speak well of him, flew up into the air, and the higher he went the sweeter and the louder he sang. He was so happy, and he poured forth such delightful notes, so clear and thrilling, that the little ants who were carrying grains to their burrow stopped and put down their burdens to listen; and the doves ceased cooing, and the little field-mice came and sat in the openings of their holes; and the Fairy, who had just begun to doze, woke up delighted; and a pretty brown Lark, who had been sitting under some great foxglove leaves, peeped out and exclaimed, "I never heard such a beautiful song in my life—never!"

"It was sung by my friend, the Skylark," said the Grasshopper, who just then happened to be on a leaf near her. "He is a very good-tempered bird, and he wants a wife."

"Hush!" said the pretty brown Lark. "I want to hear the end of that wonderful song."

For just then the Skylark, far up in the heaven, burst forth again, and sang better than ever—so well, indeed, that every creature in the field sat still to listen; and the little brown Lark under the foxglove leaves held her breath, for she was afraid of losing a single note.

"Well done, my friend!" exclaimed the Grasshopper, when at length he came down panting, and with tired wings; and then he told him how much his friend the brown Lark, who lived by the foxglove, had been pleased with his song, and he took the poor Skylark to see her.

The Skylark walked as carefully as he could, that she might not see his feet; and he thought he had never seen such a pretty bird in his life. But when she told him how much she loved music, he sprang up again into the blue sky as if he was not at all tired, and sang anew, clearer and sweeter than before. He was so glad to think that he could please her.

He sang several songs, and the Grasshopper did not fail to praise him, and say what a cheerful, kind bird he was. The consequence was, that when he asked the brown Lark to overlook his spurs and be his wife, she said:

"I will see about it, for I do not mind your spurs particularly."

"I am very glad of that," said the Skylark. "I was afraid you would disapprove of them."

"Not at all," she replied. "On the contrary, now I think of it, I should not have liked you to have short claws like other birds; but I cannot exactly say why, for they seem to be of no use in particular."

This was very good news for the Skylark, and he sang such delightful songs in consequence, that he very soon won his wife; and they built a delightful little nest in the grass, which made him so happy that he almost forgot to be sorry about his long spurs.

The Fairy, meanwhile, flew about from field to field, and I am sorry to say that she seldom went anywhere without saying something unkind or ill-natured; for, as I told you before, she was very hasty, and had a sad habit of judging her neighbors.

She had been several days wandering about in search of adventures, when one afternoon she came back to the old oak-tree, because she wanted a new pair of shoes, and there were none to be had so pretty as those made of the yellow snapdragon flower in the hedge hard by.

While she was fitting on her shoes, she saw the Lark's friend.

"WHILE SHE WAS FITTING ON HER SHOES, SHE SAW THE LARK'S FRIEND."

"How do you do, Grasshopper?" asked the Fairy.

"Thank you, I am very well and very happy," said the Grasshopper; "people are always so kind to me."

"Indeed!" replied the Fairy. "I wish I could say that they were always kind to me. How is that quarrelsome Lark who found such a pretty brown mate the other day?"

"He is not a quarrelsome bird indeed," replied the Grasshopper. "I wish you would not say that he is."

"Oh, well, we need not quarrel about that," said the Fairy, laughing; "I have seen the world, Grasshopper, and I know a few things, depend upon it. Your friend the Lark does not wear those long spurs for nothing."

The Grasshopper did not choose to contend with the Fairy, who all this time was busily fitting yellow slippers to her tiny feet. When, however, she had found a pair to her mind—

"Suppose you come and see the eggs that our pretty friend the Lark has got in her nest," asked the Grasshopper. "Three pink eggs spotted with brown. I am sure she will show them to you with pleasure."

Off they set together; but what was their surprise to find the poor little brown Lark sitting on them with rumpled feathers, drooping head, and trembling limbs.

"Ah, my pretty eggs!" said the Lark, as soon as she could speak, "I am so miserable about them—they will be trodden on, they will certainly be found."

"What is the matter?" asked the Grasshopper. "Perhaps we can help you."

"Dear Grasshopper," said the Lark, "I have just heard the farmer and his son talking on the other side of the hedge, and the farmer said that to-morrow morning he should begin to cut this meadow."

"That is a great pity," said the Grasshopper. "What a sad thing it was that you laid your eggs on the ground!"

"Larks always do," said the poor little brown bird; "and I did not know how to make a fine nest such as those in the hedges. Oh, my pretty eggs!—my heart aches for them! I shall never hear my little nestlings chirp!"

So the poor Lark moaned and lamented, and neither the Grasshopper nor the Fairy could do anything to help her. At last her mate dropped down from the white cloud where he had been singing, and when he saw her drooping, and the Grasshopper and the Fairy sitting silently before her, he inquired in a great fright what the matter was.

So they told him, and at first he was very much shocked; but presently he lifted first one and then the other of his feet, and examined his long spurs.

"He does not sympathize much with his poor mate," whispered the Fairy; but the Grasshopper took no notice of the speech.

Still the Lark looked at his spurs, and seemed to be very deep in thought.

"If I had only laid my eggs on the other side of the hedge," sighed the poor mother, "among the corn, there would have been plenty of time to rear my birds before harvest time."

"My dear," answered her mate, "don't be unhappy." And so saying, he hopped up to the eggs, and laying one foot upon the prettiest, he clasped it with his long spurs. Strange to say, it exactly fitted them.

"Oh, my clever mate!" cried the poor little mother, reviving; "do you think you can carry them away for me?"

"To be sure I can," replied the Lark, beginning slowly and carefully to hop on with the egg in his right foot; "nothing more easy. I have often thought it was likely that our eggs would be disturbed in this meadow; but it never occurred to me till this moment that I could provide against this misfortune. I have often wondered what my spurs could be for, and now I see." So

saying, he hopped gently on till he came to the hedge, and then got through it, still holding the egg, till he found a nice little hollow place in among the corn, and there he laid it and came back for the others.

"Hurrah!" cried the Grasshopper, "Larkspurs forever!"

The Fairy said nothing, but she felt heartily ashamed of herself. She sat looking on till the happy Lark had carried the last of his eggs to a safe place, and had called his mate to come and sit on them. Then, when he sprang up into the sky again, exulting and rejoicing and singing to his mate that now he was quite happy, because he knew what his long spurs were for, she stole gently away, saying to herself, "Well, I could not have believed such a thing. I thought he must be a quarrelsome bird as his spurs were so long; but it appears that I was wrong, after all."

THE PRINCE'S DREAM

If we may credit the fable, there is a tower in the midst of a great Asiatic plain, wherein is confined a prince who was placed there in his earliest infancy, with many slaves and attendants, and all the luxuries that are compatible with imprisonment.

Whether he was brought there from some motive of state, whether to conceal him from enemies, or to deprive him of rights, has not transpired; but it is certain that up to the date of this little history he had never set his foot outside the walls of that high tower, and that of the vast world without he knew only the green plains which surrounded it; the flocks and the birds of that region were all his experience of living creatures, and all the men he saw outside were shepherds.

And yet he was not utterly deprived of change, for sometimes one of his attendants would be ordered away, and his place would be supplied by a new one. The prince would never weary of questioning this fresh companion, and of letting him talk of cities, of ships, of forests, of merchandise, of kings; but though in turns they all tried to satisfy his curiosity, they could not succeed in conveying very distinct notions to his mind; partly because there was nothing in the tower to which they could compare the external world, partly because, having chiefly lived lives of seclusion and indolence in Eastern palaces, they knew it only by hearsay themselves.

At length, one day, a venerable man of a noble presence was brought to the tower, with soldiers to guard him and slaves to attend him. The prince was glad of his presence, though at first he seldom opened his lips, and it was manifest that confinement made him miserable. With restless feet he would wander from window to window of the stone tower, and mount from story to story; but mount as high as he would there was still nothing to be seen but the vast, unvarying plain, clothed with scanty grass, and flooded with the glaring sunshine; flocks and herds and shepherds moved across it sometimes, but nothing else, not even a shadow, for there was no cloud in

the sky to cast one. The old man, however, always treated the prince with respect, and answered his questions with a great deal of patience, till at length he found a pleasure in satisfying his curiosity, which so much pleased the poor young prisoner, that, as a great condescension, he invited him to come out on the roof of the tower and drink sherbet with him in the cool of the evening, and tell him of the country beyond the desert, and what seas are like, and mountains, and towns.

"I have learnt much from my attendants, and know this world pretty well by hearsay," said the prince, as they reclined on the rich carpet which was spread on the roof.

The old man smiled, but did not answer; perhaps because he did not care to undeceive his young companion, perhaps because so many slaves were present, some of whom were serving them with fruit, and others burning rich odors on a little chafing-dish that stood between them.

"But there are some words to which I never could attach any particular meaning," proceeded the prince, as the slaves began to retire, "and three in particular that my attendants cannot satisfy me upon, or are reluctant to do so."

"What words are those, my prince?" asked the old man. The prince turned on his elbow to be sure that the last slave had descended the tower stairs, then replied:

"O man of much knowledge, the words are these—Labor, and Liberty, and Gold."

"Prince," said the old man, "I do not wonder that it has been hard to make thee understand the first, the nature of it, and the cause why most men are born to it; as for the second, it would be treason for thee and me to do more than whisper it here, and sigh for it when none are listening; but the third need hardly puzzle thee; thy hookah^[4] is bright with it; all thy jewels are set in it; gold is inlaid in the ivory of thy bath; thy cup and thy dish are of gold, and golden threads are wrought into thy raiment."

"That is true," replied the prince, "and if I had not seen and handled this gold, perhaps I might not find its merits so hard to understand; but I possess

it in abundance, and it does not feed me, nor make music for me, nor fan me when the sun is hot, nor cause me to sleep when I am weary; therefore when my slaves have told me how merchants go out and brave the perilous wind and sea, and live in the unstable ships, and run risks from shipwreck and pirates, and when, having asked them why they have done this, they have answered, 'For gold,' I have found it hard to believe them; and when they have told me how men have lied, and robbed, and deceived; how they have murdered one another, and leagued together to depose kings, to oppress provinces, and all for gold; then I have said to myself, either my slaves have combined to make me believe that which is not, or this gold must be very different from the yellow stuff that this coin is made of, this coin which is of no use but to have a hole pierced through it and hang to my girdle, that it may tinkle when I walk."

"Notwithstanding this," said the old man, "nothing can be done without gold; for it is better than bread, and fruit, and music, for it can buy them all, since all men love it, and have agreed to exchange it for whatever they may need."

"How so?" asked the prince.

"If a man has many loaves he cannot eat them all," answered the old man; "therefore he goes to his neighbor and says, 'I have bread and thou hast a coin of gold—let us exchange;' so he receives the gold and goes to another man, saying, 'Thou hast two houses and I have none; lend me one of thy houses to live in, and I will give thee my gold;' thus again they exchange."

"It is well," said the prince; "but in time of drought, if there is no bread in a city, can they make it of gold?"

"Not so," answered the old man, "but they must send their gold to a city where there is food, and bring that back instead of it."

"But if there was a famine all over the world," asked the prince, "what would they do then?"

"Why, then, and only then," said the old man, "they must starve, and the gold would be nought, for it can only be changed for that which *is*; it cannot make that which is not."

"And where do they get gold?" asked the prince. "Is it the precious fruit of some rare tree, or have they whereby they can draw it down from the sky at sunset?"

"Some of it," said the old man, "they dig out of the ground."

Then he told the prince of ancient rivers running through terrible deserts, whose sands glitter with golden grains and are yellow in the fierce heat of the sun, and of dreary mines where the Indian slaves work in gangs tied together, never seeing the light of day; and lastly (for he was a man of much knowledge, and had travelled far), he told him of the valley of the Sacramento in the New World, and of those mountains where the people of Europe send their criminals, and where now their free men pour forth to gather gold, and dig for it as hard as if for life; sitting up by it at night lest any should take it from them, giving up houses and country, and wife and children, for the sake of a few feet of mud, whence they dig clay that glitters as they wash it; and how they sift it and rock it as patiently as if it were their own children in the cradle, and afterward carry it in their bosoms, and forego on account of it safety and rest.

"But, prince," he went on, seeing that the young man was absorbed in his narrative, "if you would pass your word to me never to betray me, I would procure for you a sight of the external world, and in a trance you should see those places where gold is dug, and traverse those regions forbidden to your mortal footsteps."

Upon this, the prince threw himself at the old man's feet, and promised heartily to observe the secrecy required, and entreated that, for however short a time, he might be suffered to see this wonderful world.

Then, if we may credit the story, the old man drew nearer to the chafing-dish which stood between them, and having fanned the dying embers in it, cast upon them a certain powder and some herbs, from whence as they burnt a peculiar smoke arose. As their vapors spread, he desired the prince to draw near and inhale them, and then (says the fable) assured him that when he should sleep he would find himself, in his dream, at whatever place he might desire, with this strange advantage, that he should see things in their truth and reality as well as in their outward shows.

"THEN HE RECLINED BESIDE THE CHAFING-DISH AND INHALED THE HEAVY PERFUME."

So the prince, not without some fear, prepared to obey; but first he drank his sherbet, and handed over the golden cup to the old man by way of recompense; then he reclined beside the chafing-dish and inhaled the heavy perfume till he became overpowered with sleep, and sank down upon the carpet in a dream.

The prince knew not where he was, but a green country was floating before him, and he found himself standing in a marshy valley where a few wretched cottages were scattered here and there with no means of communication. There was a river, but it had overflowed its banks and made the central land impassable, the fences had been broken down by it, and the fields of corn laid low; a few wretched peasants were wandering about there; they looked half-clad and half-starved. "A miserable valley, indeed!" exclaimed the prince; but as he said it a man came down from the hills with a great bag of gold in his hand.

"This valley is mine," said he to the people; "I have bought it for gold. Now make banks that the river may not overflow, and I will give you gold; also make fences and plant fields, and cover in the roofs of your houses, and buy yourselves richer clothing." So the people did so, and as the gold got lower in the bag the valley grew fairer and greener, till the prince exclaimed, "O gold, I see your value now! O wonderful, beneficent gold!"

But presently the valley melted away like a mist, and the prince saw an army besieging a city; he heard a general haranguing his soldiers to urge them on, and the soldiers shouting and battering the walls; but shortly, when the city was well-nigh taken, he saw some men secretly giving gold among the soldiers, so much of it that they threw down their arms to pick it up, and said that the walls were so strong that they could not throw them down. "O powerful gold!" thought the prince; "thou art stronger than the city walls!"

After that it seemed to him that he was walking about in a desert country, and in his dream he thought, "Now I know what labor is, for I have seen it, and its benefits; and I know what liberty is, for I have tasted it; I can wander where I will, and no man questions me; but gold is more strange to me than ever, for I have seen it buy both liberty and labor." Shortly after this he saw a great crowd digging upon a barren hill, and when he drew near he understood that he was to see the place whence the gold came.

He came up and stood a long time watching the people as they toiled ready to faint in the sun, so great was the labor of digging up the gold.

He saw some who had much and could not trust any one to help them to carry it, binding it in bundles over their shoulders, and bending and groaning under its weight; he saw others hide it in the ground, and watch the place clothed in rags, that none might suspect that they were rich; but some, on the contrary, who had dug up an unusual quantity, he saw dancing and singing, and vaunting their success, till robbers waylaid them when they slept, and rifled their bundles and carried their golden sand away.

"All these men are mad," thought the prince, "and this pernicious gold has made them so."

After this, as he wandered here and there, he saw groups of people smelting the gold under the shadow of the trees, and he observed that a dancing, quivering vapor rose up from it which dazzled their eyes, and distorted everything that they looked at; arraying it also in different colors from the true one. He observed that this vapor from the gold caused all things to rock and reel before the eyes of those who looked through it, and also, by some strange affinity, it drew their hearts toward those who carried much gold on their persons, so that they called them good and beautiful; it also caused them to see darkness and dulness in the faces of those who had carried none. "This," thought the prince, "is very strange;" but not being able to explain it, he went still farther, and there he saw more people. Each of these had adorned himself with a broad golden girdle, and was sitting in the shade, while other men waited on them.

"What ails these people?" he inquired of one who was looking on, for he observed a peculiar air of weariness and dulness in their faces. He was answered that the girdles were very tight and heavy, and being bound over

the regions of the heart, were supposed to impede its action, and prevent it from beating high, and also to chill the wearer, as, being of opaque material, the warm sunshine of the earth could not get through to warm them.

"Why, then, do they, not break them asunder," exclaimed the prince, "and fling them away?"

"Break them asunder!" cried the man; "why, what a madman you must be; they are made of the purest gold!"

"Forgive my ignorance," replied the prince; "I am a stranger."

So he walked on, for feelings of delicacy prevented him from gazing any longer at the men with the golden girdles; but as he went he pondered on the misery he had seen, and thought to himself that this golden sand did more mischief than all the poisons of the apothecary; for it dazzled the eyes of some, it strained the hearts of others, it bowed down the heads of many to the earth with its weight; it was a sore labor to gather it, and when it was gathered the robber might carry it away; it would be a good thing, he thought, if there were none of it.

After this he came to a place where were sitting some aged widows and some orphan children of the gold-diggers, who were helpless and destitute; they were weeping and bemoaning themselves, but stopped at the approach of a man whose appearance attracted the prince, for he had a very great bundle of gold on his back, and yet it did not bow him down at all; his apparel was rich, but he had no girdle on, and his face was anything but sad.

"Sir," said the prince to him, "you have a great burden; you are fortunate to be able to stand under it."

**"'I COULD NOT DO SO,' HE REPLIED, 'ONLY THAT AS I
GO ON I KEEP LIGHTENING IT.'"**

"I could not do so," he replied, "only that as I go on I keep lightening it;" and as he passed each of the widows, he threw gold to her, and, stooping down, hid pieces of it in the bosoms of the children.

"You have no girdle," said the prince.

"I once had one," answered the gold-gatherer; "but it was so tight over my breast that my heart grew cold under it, and almost ceased to beat. Having a great quantity of gold on my back, I felt almost at the last gasp; so I threw off my girdle, and being on the bank of a river, which I knew not how to cross, I was about to fling it in, I was so vexed! 'But no,' thought I, 'there are many people waiting here to cross besides myself. I will make my girdle into a bridge, and we will cross over on it.'"

"Turn your girdle into a bridge!" said the prince, doubtfully, for he did not quite understand.

The man explained himself.

"And, then, sir, after that," he continued, "I turned one-half of my burden into bread, and gave it to these poor people. Since then I have not been oppressed by its weight, however heavy it may have been; for few men have a heavier one. In fact, I gather more from day to day."

As the man kept speaking, he scattered his gold right and left with a cheerful countenance, and the prince was about to reply, when suddenly a great trembling under his feet made him fall to the ground. The refining fires of the gold-gatherers sprang up into flames, and then went out; night fell over everything on the earth, and nothing was visible in the sky but the stars of the southern cross.

"It is past midnight," thought the prince, "for the stars of the cross begin to bend."

He raised himself upon his elbow, and tried to pierce the darkness, but could not. At length a slender blue flame darted out, as from ashes in a chafing-dish, and by the light of it he saw the strange pattern of his carpet and the cushions lying about. He did not recognize them at first, but presently he knew that he was lying in his usual place, at the top of his tower.

"Wake up, prince," said the old man.

The prince sat up and sighed, and the old man inquired what he had seen.

"O man of much learning!" answered the prince, "I have seen that this is a wonderful world; I have seen the value of labor, and I know the uses of it; I have tasted the sweetness of liberty, and am grateful, though it was but in a dream; but as for that other word that was so great a mystery to me, I only know this, that it must remain a mystery forever, since I am fain to believe that all men are bent on getting it; though, once gotten, it causeth them endless disquietude, only second to their discomfort that are without it. I am fain to believe that they can procure with it whatever they most desire, and yet that it cankers their hearts and dazzles their eyes; that it is their nature and their duty to gather it; and yet that, when once gathered, the best thing they can do is to scatter it!"

The next morning, when he awoke, the old man was gone. He had taken with him the golden cup. And the sentinel was also gone, none knew whither. Perhaps the old man had turned his golden cup into a golden key.

THE WATER-LILY

My father and mother were gone out for the day, and had left me charge of the children. It was very hot, and they kept up a continual fidget. I bore it patiently for some time, for children will be restless in hot weather, but at length I requested that they would get something to do.

"Why don't you work, or paint, or read, Hatty?" I demanded of my little sister.

"I'm tired of always grounding those swans," said Harriet, "and my crochet is so difficult; I seem to do it quite right, and yet it comes wrong."

"Then why don't you write your diary?"

"Oh, because Charlie won't write his."

"A very bad reason; his not writing leaves you the more to say; besides, I thought you promised mamma you would persevere if she would give you a book."

"And so we did for a long time," said Charlie; "why, I wrote pages and pages of mine. Look here!"

So saying, he produced a copy-book with a marbled cover, and showed me that it was about half-full of writing in large text.

"If you wrote all that yourself, I should think you might write more."

"Oh, but I am so tired of it, and besides, this is such a very hot day."

"I know that, and to have you leaning on my knee makes me no cooler; but I have something for you to do just now, which I think you will like."

"Oh, what is it, sister? May we both do it?"

"Yes, if you like. You may go into the field to gardener, and ask him to get me a water-lily out of the stream; I want one to finish my sketch with."

"You really do want one? you are not pretending, just to give us something to do?"

"No, I really want one; you see these in the glass begin to wither."

"Make haste then, Hatty. Sister, you shall have the very best lily we can find."

Thereupon they ran off, leaving me to inspect the diary. Its first page was garnished with the resemblance of a large swan with curly wings; from his beak proceeded the owner's name in full, and underneath were his lucubrations. The first few pages ran as follows:

"Wednesday. To-day mamma said, as all the others were writing diaries, I might do one too if I liked, so I said I should, and I shall write it every day till I am grown up. I did a long division sum, a very hard one. We dined early to-day, and we had a boiled leg of mutton and an apple pudding, but I shall not say another time what we had for dinner, because I shall have plenty of other things to say."

"Friday. Gardener has been mending the palings; he gave me five nails; they were very good ones, such as I like. He said if any boy that he knew was to pull nails out of his wall trees when *he'd* done them, he should certainly tell their papa of them. Aunt Fanny came and took away Sophy to spend a fortnight. Uncle Tom came too; he said I was a fine boy, and gave me a shilling."

"Saturday. My half-holiday. Hurrah! I went and bought two hoop-sticks for me and Hatty; they cost fourpence each."

"Sunday. On Sunday I went to church."

"Monday. To-day I had a cold, and after school I was just going to bowl my hoop when Orris said to mamma it rained, and ma said she couldn't think of my going out in the rain, and so I couldn't go. After that Orris called me to come into her room, and gave me a fourpenny piece and two pictures, so now I've got eightpence. Orris is very kind, but sometimes she thinks she ought to command, because she is the eldest."

"Tuesday. I shall not write my diary every day, unless I like."

"*Wednesday*. I dined late with papa and mamma and the elder ones: it rained. If the others won't tell me what to say, of course I don't know."

"*Friday*. I went to the shop and bought some tin *tax*. I don't like writing diaries particularly. It will be a good thing to leave off till the holidays."

I had only got so far when the children ran in with a beautiful water-lily. They had scarcely deposited it in my hand when they both exclaimed in a breath:

"And what are we to do now?"

"You may bring me a glass of water to put it in."

This was soon done, and then the question was repeated. I saw there was but one chance of quiet, so I resolved to make a virtue of necessity, and say that if they would each immediately begin some ordinary occupation, I would tell them a story. What child was ever proof against a story?

"But we are to choose what it shall be about?" said one of them.

"Why?"

"Oh, never mind why. Shall we tell her, Harriet? Well, it's because you tell cheating stories: you say, 'I'll tell you a story about a girl, or a cottage, or a thimble, or anything you like,' and it really is something about us."

"You may choose, then."

"Then it shall be about the lily we got for you."

"Give me ten minutes to think about it, and collect your needles and pencils."

Upon this they brought together a heap of articles which they were not at all likely to want, and after altering the position of their stools and discussing what they would do, and changing their minds many times, declared at length that they were quite ready.

"LIVED ON THE BORDERS OF ONE OF THE GREAT AMERICAN FORESTS."

"Now begin, please. *There was once*—" So I accordingly began. "There was once a boy who was very fond of pictures. There were not many pictures for him to look at, for his mother, who was a widow, lived on the borders of one of the great American forests. She had come out from England with her husband, and now that he was dead, the few pictures hanging on her walls were almost the only luxuries she possessed.

"Her son would often spend his holidays in trying to copy them, but as he had very little application, he often threw his half-finished drawings away, and once he was heard to say that he wished some kind-hearted fairy would take it in hand and finish it for him.

"Child,' said the mother, 'for my part I don't believe there are any such things as fairies. I never saw one, and your father never did; but by all accounts, if fairies there be, they are a jealous and revengeful race. Mind your books, my child, and never mind the fairies.'

"Very well, mother,' said the boy.

"It makes me sad to see you stand gazing at the pictures,' said his mother, coming up to him and laying her hand on his curly head; 'why, child, pictures can't feed a body, pictures can't clothe a body, and a log of wood is far better to burn and warm a body.'

"All that is quite true, mother,' said the boy.

"Then why do you keep looking at them, child?"

"The boy hesitated, and then answered, 'I don't know, mother.'

"You don't know! nor I neither. Why, child, you look at the dumb things as if you loved them. Put on your cap and run out to play.'

"So the boy went out, and wandered toward the forest till he came to the brink of a sheet of water. It was too small to be called a lake, but it was deep, clear, and overhung with crowds of trees. It was evening, and the sun was getting low. There was a narrow strip of land stretching out into the water. Pine-trees grew upon it; and here and there a plane-tree or a sumach dipped its large leaves over, and seemed intent on watching its own clear reflection.

"The boy stood still, and thought how delightful it was to see the sun red and glorious between the black trunks of the pine-trees. Then he looked up into the abyss of clear sky overhead, and thought how beautiful it was to see the little frail clouds folded over one another like a belt of rose-colored waves. Then he drew still nearer to the water, and saw how they were all reflected down there among the leaves and flowers of the lilies; and he wished he were a painter, for he said to himself, 'I am sure there are no trees in the world with such beautiful leaves as these pines; I am sure there are no other clouds in the world so lovely as these; I know this is the sweetest piece of water in the world, and, if I could paint it, every one else would know it too.' He stood still for awhile, watching the water-lilies as they closed their leaves for the night, and listening to the slight sound they made when they dipped their heads under water. 'The sun has been playing tricks with these lilies as well as with the clouds,' he said to himself, 'for when I passed by in the morning they swayed about like floating snowballs, and now there is not a bud of them that has not got a rosy side. I must gather one, and see if I cannot make a drawing of it.' So he gathered a lily, sat down with it in his hand, and tried very hard to make a correct sketch of it in a blank leaf of his copy-book. He was far more patient than usual, but he succeeded so little to his own satisfaction, that at length he threw down the book, and, looking into the cup of his lily, said to it, in a sorrowful voice, 'Ah, what use is it my trying to copy anything so beautiful as you are? How much I wish I were a painter!'

"As he said these words he felt a slight quivering in the flower; and, while he looked, the cluster of stamens at the bottom of the cup floated upward, and glittered like a crown of gold; the dewdrops which hung upon them changed into diamonds before his eyes; the white petals flowed together; the tall pistil was a golden wand; and the next moment a beautiful little

creature stood upon his hand, clad in a robe of the purest white, and scarcely taller than the flower from which she sprung.

**"THE NEXT MOMENT A BEAUTIFUL LITTLE
CREATURE STOOD UPON HIS HAND."**

"Struck with astonishment, the boy kept silence. She lifted up her face, and opened her lips more than once. He expected her to say some wonderful thing; but, when at length she did speak, she only said, 'Child, are you happy?'

"'No,' said the boy, in a low voice, 'because I want to paint, and I cannot.'

"'How do you know that you cannot?' asked the fairy.

"'Oh, fairy,' replied the boy, 'because I have tried a great many times. It is of no use trying any longer.'

"'What if I were to help you?' said the fairy.

"'There would then indeed be some pleasure in the work and some chance of success,' said the boy.

"'I was just closing my leaves for the night,' answered the fairy, 'when you drew me out of the water; and I should have made you feel the effects of my resentment if it had not happened that you are the favorite of our race. Under the water, at the bottom of this lake, are our palaces and castles; and when, after visiting the upper world, we wish to return to them, we close one of these lilies over us, and sink in it to our home. The wish that I heard you utter just now induced me to appear to you. I know a powerful charm which will ensure your success and the accomplishment of your highest wishes; but it is one which requires a great deal of care and patience in the working, and I cannot put you in possession of it unless you will promise the most implicit obedience to my directions.'

"'Spirit of a water-lily!' said the boy, 'I promise with all my heart.'

"'Go home, then,' continued the fairy, 'and you will find lying on the threshold a little key: take it up.'

"'I will,' answered the boy; 'and what then shall I do?'

"'Carry it to the nearest pine-tree,' said the fairy, 'strike the trunk with it, and a keyhole will appear. Do not be afraid to unlock that magic door. Slip in your hand, and you will bring out a wonderful palette. I have not time now to tell you half its virtues, but they will soon unfold themselves. You must be very careful to paint with colors from that palette every day. On this depends the success of the charm. You will find that it will soon give grace to your figures and beauty to your coloring; and I promise you that, if you do not break the spell, you shall not only in a few years be able to produce as beautiful a copy of these flowers as can be wished, but your name shall become known to fame, and your genius shall be honored, and your pictures admired on both sides the Atlantic.'

"'Can it be possible?' said the boy; and the hand trembled on which stood the fairy.

"'It shall be so, if only you do not break the charm,' said the fairy; 'but lest, like the rest of your ungrateful race, you should forget what you owe to me, and even when you grow older begin to doubt whether you have ever seen me, the Lily you gathered will never fade till my promise is accomplished.'

"So saying, she gathered around her the folds of her robe, crossed her arms, and dropping her head on her breast, trembled slightly; and, before the boy could remark the change, he had nothing in his hand but a flower.

"He looked up. All the beautiful rosy flowers were faded to a shady gray. The gold had disappeared from the water, and the forest was dense and gloomy. He arose with the lily in his hand, went slowly home, laid it in a casket to protect it from injury, and then proceeded to search for the palette, which he shortly found; and, lest he should break the spell, he began to use it that very night.

"Who would not like to have a fairy friend? Who would not like to work with a magic palette? Every day its virtues become more apparent. He

worked very hard, and it was astonishing how soon he improved. His deep, heavy outlines soon became light and clear; and his coloring began to assume a transparent delicacy. He was so delighted with the fairy present that he even did more than was required of him. He spent nearly all his leisure time in using it, and often passed whole days beside the sheet of water in the forest. He painted it when the sun shone, and it was spotted all over with the reflection of fleeting white clouds; he painted it covered with water-lilies rocking on the ripples; by moonlight, when two or three stars in the empty sky shone down upon it; and at sunset, when it lay trembling like liquid gold.

"But the fairy never came to look at his work. He often called to her when he had been more than usually successful; but she never made him any answer, nor took the least notice of his entreaties that he might see her again.

"So a long time—several years—passed away. He was grown up to be a man, and he had never broken the charm; he still worked every day with his magic palette.

"No one in these parts cared at all for his pictures. His mother's friends told him he would never get his bread by painting; his mother herself was sorry that he chose to waste his leisure so; and the more because the pictures on her walls were brighter far than his, and had clouds and trees of far clearer color, not like the common clouds and misty hills that he was so fond of painting, and his faintly colored distant forest, with uncertain and variable hues, such as she could see any day when she looked out at her window.

"It made the young man unhappy to hear all this fault found with his proceedings, but it never made him leave off using the fairy's palette, though about this time he himself began to doubt whether he should ever be a painter. One evening he sat at his easel, trying in vain to give the expression he wished to an angel's face, which seemed to get less and less like the face in his heart with every touch he gave it. On a sudden he threw down his brush, and with a feeling of bitter disappointment upbraided himself for what he now thought his folly in listening to the fairy, and accepting her delusive gift. What had he got by it hitherto? Nothing but his mother's regrets and the ridicule of his companions. He threw himself on his

bed. It grew dark; he could no longer be vexed with the sight of his unfinished angel; and presently he fell asleep and forgot his sorrow.

"In the middle of the night he suddenly awoke. His chamber was full of moonlight. The lid of the casket where he kept the lily had sprung open, and his fairy friend stood near it.

"'American painter,' she said, in a reproachful voice, 'since you think I have been rather a foe than a friend to you, I am ready to take back my gift.'

"But sleep had now cooled the young painter's mind, and softened his feelings of vexation, so that he did not find himself at all willing to part with the palette. While he hesitated how to excuse himself, she further said, 'But if you still wish to try what it can do for you, take this ring which *my sister* sends you; wear it, and it will greatly assist the charm.'

"The youth held out his hand and took the ring. As he cast his eyes upon it, the fairy vanished. He turned it to the moonlight, and saw that it was set with a stone of a transparent blue color. It had the property of reflecting everything bright that came near it; and there was a word engraven upon it. He thought—he could not be sure—but he thought the word was 'Hope.'

"After this, and during a long time, I can tell you no more about him: whether he finished the angel's face, and whether it pleased him at last, I do not know. I only know that, in process of time, his mother died—that he came to Europe—and that he was quite unknown and very poor.

"The next thing recorded of him is this, that on a sudden he became famous. The world began to admire his works, and to seek his company. He was considered a great man, and wealth and honors flowed in upon him. It happened to him that one day in travelling he came to a great city, where there was a large collection of pictures. He went to see them, and among them he saw many of his own pictures; some of them he had painted before he had left his forest home; others were of more recent date. All the people and all the painters praised them. But there was one that they liked better than the others; and when he heard them call it his masterpiece, he went and sat down opposite to it, that he might think over again some of the thoughts that he had had when he painted it.

"It was a picture of a little child, holding in its hands several beautiful water-lilies; and the crowd that gathered round it praised the lightness of the drapery, the beauty of the infant form, the soft light shed down upon it, and, above all, the innocent expression of the baby features.

"He was pleased, but not elated. He called to mind the words of his fairy benefactress, and acknowledged to himself that at length they were certainly fulfilled.

"And then it drew toward evening, and the people one by one disappeared, till he was left alone with his masterpiece. The excitement of the day had made him anxious for repose. He was thinking of leaving the place, when suddenly he fell asleep, and dreamed that he was standing behind the sheet of water in his native country, and lingering, as of old, to watch the rays of the setting sun as they melted away from its surface. He thought, too, that his beautiful lily was in his hand, and that while he looked at it the leaves withered and fell at his feet. Then followed a confused recollection of his conversation with the fairy; and after that his thoughts became clearer, and, though still asleep, he remembered where he was, and in what place he was sitting. His impressions became more vivid. He dreamed that something lightly touched his hand. He looked up, and his fairy benefactress was at his side, standing on the arm of his chair.

"O wonderful enchantress!" said the dreaming painter, 'do not vanish before I have had time to thank you for your magic gift. I have nothing to offer you but my gratitude in return; for the diamonds of this world are too heavy for such an ethereal being, and the gold of this world is useless to you who have no wants that it can supply. The fame I have acquired I cannot impart to you, for few of my race believe in the existence of yours. What, then, can I do? I can only thank you for your goodness. But tell me at least your name, if you have a name, that I may cut it on a ring, and wear it always on my finger.'

"My name,' replied the fairy, 'is Perseverance.'"

"Well!" said the children, looking at each other, "she has cheated us after all!"

A LOST WAND

More than a hundred years ago, at the foot of a wild mountain in Norway, stood an old castle, which even at the time I write of was so much out of repair as in some parts to be scarcely habitable.

In a hall of this castle a party of children met once on Twelfth-night to play at Christmas games and dance with little Hulda, the only child of the lord and lady.

The winters in Norway are very cold, and the snow and ice lie for months on the ground; but the night on which these merry children met it froze with more than ordinary severity, and a keen wind shook the trees without, and roared in the wide chimneys like thunder.

Little Hulda's mother, as the evening wore on, kept calling on the servants to heap on fresh logs of wood, and these, when the long flames crept around them, sent up showers of sparks that lit up the brown walls, ornamented with the horns of deer and goats, and made it look as cheerful and gay as the faces of the children. Hulda's grandmother had sent her a great cake, and when the children had played enough at all the games they could think of, the old gray-headed servants brought it in and set it on the table, together with a great many other nice things such as people eat in Norway—pasties made of reindeer meat, and castles of the sweet pastry sparkling with sugar ornaments of ships and flowers and crowns, and cranberry pies, and whipped cream as white as the snow outside; but nothing was admired so much as the great cake, and when the children saw it they set up a shout which woke the two hounds who were sleeping on the hearths, and they began to bark, which roused all the four dogs in the kennels outside who had not been invited to see either the cake or the games, and they barked, too, shaking and shivering with cold, and then a great lump of snow slid down from the roof, and fell with a dull sound like distant thunder on the pavement of the yard.

"Hurrah!" cried the children, "the dogs and the snow are helping us to shout in honor of the cake."

All this time more and more nice things were coming in—fritters, roasted grouse, frosted apples, and buttered crabs. As the old servants came shivering along the passages, they said, "It is a good thing that children are not late with their suppers; if the confections had been kept long in the larder they would have frozen on the dishes."

Nobody wished to wait at all; so, as soon as the supper was ready, they all sat down, more wood was heaped on to the fire, and when the moon shone in at the deep casements, and glittered on the dropping snowflakes outside, it only served to make the children more merry over their supper to think how bright and warm everything was inside.

This cake was a real treasure, such as in the days of the fairies, who still lived in certain parts of Norway, was known to be of the kind they loved. A piece of it was always cut and laid outside in the snow, in case they should wish to taste it. Hulda's grandmother had also dropped a ring into this cake before it was put into the oven, and it is well known that whoever gets such a ring in his or her slice of cake has only to wish for something directly, and the fairies are bound to give it, *if they possibly can*. There have been cases known when the fairies could not give it, and then, of course, they were not to blame.

On this occasion the children said: "Let us all be ready with our wishes, because sometimes people have been known to lose them from being so long making up their minds when the ring has come to them."

"Yes," cried the eldest boy. "It does not seem fair that only one should wish. I am the eldest. I begin. I shall wish that Twelfth-night would come twice a year."

"They cannot give you that, I am sure," said Friedrich, his brother, who sat by him.

"Then," said the boy, "I wish father may take me with him the next time he goes out bear-shooting."

"I wish for a white kitten with blue eyes," said a little girl whose name was Therese.

"I shall wish to find an amber necklace that does not belong to any one," said another little girl.

"I wish to be a king," said a boy whose name was Karl. "No, I think I shall wish to be the burgomaster, that I may go on board the ships in the harbor, and make their captains show me what is in them. I shall see how the sailors make their sails go up."

"I shall wish to marry Hulda," said another boy; "when I am a man I mean. And besides that, I wish I may find a black puppy in my room at home, for I love dogs."

"But that is not fair," said the other children. "You must only wish for one thing, as we did."

"But I really wish for both," said the boy.

"If you wish for both perhaps you will get neither," said little Hulda.

"Well, then," answered the boy, "I wish for the puppy."

And so they all went on wishing till at last it came to Hulda's turn.

"What do you wish for, my child?" said her mother.

"Not for anything at all," she answered, shaking her head.

"Oh, but you must wish for something!" cried all the children.

"Yes," said her mother, "and I am now going to cut the cake. See, Hulda, the knife is going into it. Think of something."

"Well, then," answered the little girl, "I cannot think of anything else, so I shall wish that you may all have your wishes."

Upon this the knife went crunching down into the cake, the children gave three cheers, and the white waxen tulip bud at the top came tumbling on the table, and while they were all looking it opened its leaves, and out of the middle of it stepped a beautiful little fairy woman, no taller than your finger. She had a white robe on, a little crown on her long yellow hair; there were two wings on her shoulders, just like the downy brown wings of a

butterfly, and in her hand she had a little sceptre sparkling with precious stones.

"Only one wish," she said, jumping down on to the table, and speaking with the smallest little voice you ever heard. "Your fathers and mothers were always contented if we gave them one wish every year."

As she spoke, Hulda's mother gave a slice of cake to each child, and, when Hulda took hers, out dropped the ring, and fell clattering on her platter.

"Only one wish," repeated the fairy. And the children were all so much astonished (for even in those days fairies were but rarely seen) that none of them spoke a word, not even in a whisper. "Only one wish. Speak, then, little Hulda, for I am one of that race which delights to give pleasure and to do good. Is there really nothing that you wish, for you shall certainly have it if there is?"

"There was nothing, dear fairy, before I saw you," answered the little girl, in a hesitating tone.

"But now there is?" asked the fairy. "Tell it me, then, and you shall have it."

"I wish for that pretty little sceptre of yours," said Hulda, pointing to the fairy's wand.

The moment Hulda said this the fairy shuddered and became pale, her brilliant colors faded, and she looked to the children's eyes like a thin white mist standing still in her place. The sceptre, on the contrary, became brighter than ever, and the precious stones glowed like burning coals.

"Dear child," she sighed, in a faint, mournful voice, "I had better have left you with the gift of your satisfied, contented heart, than thus have urged you to form a wish to my destruction. Alas! alas! my power and my happiness fade from me, and are as if they had never been. My wand must now go to you, who can make no use of it, and I must flutter about forlornly and alone in the cold world, with no more ability to do good, and waste away my time—a helpless and defenceless thing."

"Oh, no, no!" replied little Hulda. "Do not speak so mournfully, dear fairy. I did not wish at first to ask for it. I will not take the wand if it is of value to

you, and I should be grieved to have it against your will."

"Child," said the fairy, "you do not know our nature. I have said whatever you wished should be yours. I cannot alter this decree; it *must* be so. Take my wand; and I entreat you to guard it carefully, and never to give it away lest it should get into the hands of my enemy; for if once it should, I shall become his miserable little slave. Keep my wand with care; it is of no use to you, but in the course of years it is possible I may be able to regain it, and on Midsummer night I shall for a few hours return to my present shape, and be able for a short time to talk with you again."

"Dear fairy," said little Hulda, weeping, and putting out her hand for the wand, which the fairy held to her, "is there nothing else that I can do for you?"

"Nothing, nothing," said the fairy, who had now become so transparent and dim that they could scarcely see her; only the wings on her shoulders remained, and their bright colors had changed to a dusky brown. "I have long contended with my bitter enemy, the chief of the tribe of the gnomes—the ill-natured, spiteful gnomes. Their desire is as much to do harm to mortals as it is mine to do them good. If now he should find me I shall be at his mercy. It was decreed long ages ago that I should one day lose my wand, and it depends in some degree upon you, little Hulda, whether I shall ever receive it again. Farewell."

And now nothing was visible but the wings; the fairy had changed into a moth, with large brown wings freckled with dark eyes, and it stood trembling upon the table, till at length, when the children had watched it some time, it fluttered toward the window and beat against the panes, as if it wished to be released, so they opened the casement and let it out in the wind and cold.

Poor little thing! They were very sorry for it; but after a while they nearly forgot it, for they were but children. Little Hulda only remembered it, and she carefully enclosed the beautiful sceptre in a small box. But Midsummer day passed by, and several other Midsummer days, and still Hulda saw nothing and heard nothing of the fairy. She then began to fear that she must be dead, and it was a long time since she had looked at the wand, when one day in the middle of the Norway summer, as she was playing on one of the

deep bay windows of the castle, she saw a pedlar with a pack on his back coming slowly up the avenue of pine-trees, and singing a merry song.

"Can I speak to the lady of this castle?" he said to Hulda, making at the same time a very low bow.

Hulda did not much like him, he had such restless black eyes and such a cunning smile. His face showed that he was a foreigner; it was as brown as a nut. His dress also was very strange; he wore a red turban, and had large earrings in his ears, and silver chains wound round and round his ankles.

Hulda replied that her mother was gone to the fair at Christiana, and would not be back for several days.

"Can I then speak with the lord of the castle?" asked the pedlar.

"My father is gone out to fish in the fiord," replied little Hulda; "he will not return for some time, and the maids and the men are all gone to make hay in the fields; there is no one left at home but me and my old nurse."

The pedlar was very much delighted to hear this. However, he pretended to be disappointed.

"It is very unfortunate," he said, "that your honored parents are not at home, for I have got some things here of such wonderful beauty that nothing could have given them so much pleasure as to have feasted their eyes with the sight of them—rings, bracelets, locketts, pictures—in short, there is nothing beautiful that I have not got in my pack, and if your parents could have seen them they would have given all the money they had in the world rather than not have bought some of them."

"Good pedlar," said little Hulda, "could you not be so very kind as just to let me have a sight of them?"

The pedlar at first pretended to be unwilling, but after he had looked all across the wide heath and seen that there was no one coming, and that the hounds by the doorway were fast asleep in the sun, and the very pigeons on the roof had all got their heads under their wings, he ventured to step across the threshold into the bay window, and begin to open his pack and display

all his fine things, taking care to set them out in the sunshine, which, made them glitter like glowworms.

Little Hulda had never seen anything half so splendid before. There were little glasses set round with diamonds, and hung with small tinkling bells which made delightful music whenever they were shaken; ropes of pearls which had a more fragrant scent than bean-fields or hyacinths; rings, the precious stones of which changed color as you frowned or smiled upon them; silver boxes that could play tunes; pictures of beautiful ladies and gentlemen, set with emeralds, with devices in coral at the back; little golden snakes, with brilliant eyes that would move about; and so many other rare and splendid jewels that Hulda was quite dazzled, and stood looking at them with blushing cheeks and a beating heart, so much she wished that she might have one of them.

"Well, young lady," said the cunning pedlar, "how do you find these jewels? Did I boast too much of their beauty?"

"Oh, no!" said Hulda, "I did not think there had been anything so beautiful in the world. I did not think even our queen had such fine jewels as these. Thank you, pedlar, for the sight of them."

"Will you buy something, then, of a poor man?" answered the pedlar. "I've travelled a great distance, and not sold anything this many a day."

"I should be very glad to buy," said little Hulda, "but I have scarcely any money; not half the price of one of these jewels, I am sure."

Now there was lying on the table an ancient signet-ring set with a large opal.

"Maybe the young lady would not mind parting with this?" said he, taking it up. "I could give her a new one for it of the latest fashion."

"Oh, no, thank you!" cried Hulda, hastily, "I must not do so. This ring is my mother's, and was left her by my grandmother."

The pedlar looked disappointed. However, he put the ring down, and said, "But if my young lady has no money, perhaps she has some old trinkets or toys that she would not mind parting with—a coral and bells, or a silver

mug, or a necklace, or, in short, anything that she keeps put away, and that is of no use to her?"

"No," said the little girl, "I don't think I have got anything of the kind. Oh, yes! to be sure, I have got somewhere up-stairs a little gold wand, which I was told not to give away; but I'm afraid she who gave it me must have been dead a long while, and it is of no use keeping it any longer."

Now this pedlar was the fairy's enemy. He had long suspected that the wand must be concealed somewhere in that region, and near the sea, and he had disguised himself, and gone out wandering among the farmhouses and huts and castles to try if he could hear some tidings of it, and get it if possible into his power. The moment he heard Hulda mention her gold wand, he became excessively anxious to see it. He was a gnome, and when his malicious eyes gleamed with delight they shot out a burning ray, which scorched the hound who was lying asleep close at hand, and he sprang up and barked at him.

"Peace, peace, Rhan!" cried little Hulda; "lie down, you unmannerly hound!" The dog shrank back again growling, and the pedlar said in a careless tone to Hulda:

"Well, lady, I have no objection just to look at the little gold wand, and see if it is worth anything."

"But I am not sure that I could part with it," said Hulda.

"Very well," replied the pedlar, "as you please; but I may as well look at it. I should hope these beautiful things need not go begging." As he spoke he began carefully to lock up some of the jewels in their little boxes, as if he meant to go away.

"Oh, don't go," cried Hulda. "I am going up-stairs to fetch my wand. I shall not be long; pray wait for me."

""OH, DON'T GO,' CRIED HULDA. 'I AM GOING UP-STAIRS TO FETCH MY WAND.'"

Nothing was further from the pedlar's thought than to go away, and while little Hulda was running up to look for the wand he panted so hard for fear that after all he might not be able to get it that he woke the other hound, who came up to him, and smelt his leg.

"What sort of a creature is this?" said the old hound to his companion, speaking, of course, in the dogs' language.

"I'm sure I can't say," answered the other. "I wonder what he is made of,—he smells of mushrooms! quite earthy, I declare! as if he had lived underground all his life."

"Let us stand one on each side of him, and watch that he doesn't steal anything."

So the two dogs stood staring at him; but the pedlar was too cunning for them. He looked out of the window, and said, "I think I see the master coming," upon which they both turned to look across the heath, and the pedlar snatched up the opal ring, and hid it in his vest. When they turned around he was folding up his trinkets again as calmly as possible. "One cannot be too careful to count one's goods," he said, gravely. "Honest people often get cheated in houses like these, and honest as these two dogs look, I know where one of them hid that leg-of-mutton bone that he stole yesterday!" Upon hearing this the dogs sneaked under the table ashamed of themselves. "I would not have it on my conscience that I robbed my master for the best bone in the world," continued the pedlar, and as he said this he took up a little silver horn belonging to the lord of the castle, and, having tapped it with his knuckle to see whether the metal was pure, folded it up in cotton, and put it in his pack with the rest of his curiosities.

Presently Hulda came down with a little box in her hand, out of which she took the fairy's wand.

The pedlar was so transported at the sight of it that he could scarcely conceal his joy; but he knew that unless he could get it by fair means it would be of no use to him.

"How dim it looks!" said little Hulda; "the stones used to be so very bright when first I had it."

"Ah! that is a sign that the person who gave it you is dead," said the deceitful pedlar.

"I am sorry to hear she is dead," said Hulda, with a sigh. "Well, then, pedlar, as that is the case, I will part with the wand if you can give me one of your fine bracelets instead of it."

The pedlar's hand trembled with anxiety as he held it out for the wand, but the moment he had got possession of it all his politeness vanished.

"There," he said, "you have got a very handsome bracelet in your hand. It is worth a great deal more than the wand. You may keep it. I have no time to waste; I must be gone." So saying, he hastily snatched up the rest of his jewels, thrust them into his pack, and slung it over his shoulder, leaving Hulda looking after him with the bracelet in her hand. She saw him walk rapidly along the heath till he came to a gravel-pit, very deep, and with overhanging sides. He swung himself over by the branches of the trees.

"What can he be going to do there?" she said to herself. "But I will run after him, for I don't like this bracelet half so well as some of the others."

So Hulda ran till she came to the edge of the gravel-pit, but was so much surprised that she could not say a word. There were the great footmarks made by the pedlar down the steep sides of the pit; and at the bottom she saw him sitting in the mud, digging a hole with his hands.

"Hi!" he said, putting his head down. "Some of you come up. I've got the wand at last. Come and help me down with my pack."

"I'm coming," answered a voice, speaking under the ground; and presently up came a head, all covered with earth, through the hole the pedlar had made. It was shaggy with hair, and had two little bright eyes, like those of a mole. Hulda thought she had never seen such a curious little man. He was

dressed in brown clothes, and had a red-peaked cap on his head; and he and the pedlar soon laid the pack at the bottom of the hole, and began to stamp upon it, dancing and singing with great vehemence. As they went on the pack sank lower and lower, till at last, as they still stood upon it, Hulda could see only their heads and shoulders. In a little time longer she could only see the top of the red cap; and then the two little men disappeared altogether, and the ground closed over them, and the white nettles and marsh marigolds waved their heads over the place as if nothing had happened.

Hulda walked away sadly and slowly. She looked at the beautiful bracelet, and wished she had not parted with the wand for it, for she now began to fear that the pedlar had deceived her. Nevertheless, who would not be delighted to have such a fine jewel? It consisted of a gold hoop, set with turquoise, and on the clasp was a beautiful bird, with open wings, all made of gold, and which quivered as Hulda carried it. Hulda looked at its bright eyes—ruby eyes, which sparkled in the sunshine—and at its crest, all powdered with pearls, and she forgot her regret.

"My beautiful bird!" she said, "I will not hide you in a dark box, as the pedlar did. I will wear you on my wrist, and let you see all my toys, and you shall be carried every day into the garden, that the flowers may see how elegant you are. But stop! I think I see a little dust on your wings. I must rub it off." So saying, Hulda took up her frock and began gently rubbing the bird's wings, when, to her utter astonishment, it opened its pretty beak and sang:

"My master, oh, my master,
The brown hard-hearted gnome,
He goes down faster, faster,
To his dreary home.
Little Hulda sold her
Golden wand for me,
Though the fairy told her
That must never be—
Never—she must never
Let the treasure go.
Ah! lost forever,

Woe! woe! woe!"

The bird sang in such a sorrowful voice, and fluttered its golden wings so mournfully, that Hulda wept.

"Alas! alas!" she said, "I have done very wrong. I have lost the wand forever! Oh, what shall I do, dear little bird? Do tell me."

But the bird did not sing again, and it was now time to go to bed. The old nurse came out to fetch Hulda. She had been looking all over the castle for her, and been wondering where she could have hidden herself.

In Norway, at midsummer, the nights are so short that the sun only dips under the hills time enough to let one or two stars peep out before he appears again. The people, therefore, go to bed in the broad sunlight.

"Child," said the old nurse, "look how late you are—it is nearly midnight. Come, it is full time for bed. This is Midsummer day."

"Midsummer day!" repeated Hulda. "Ah, how sorry I am! Then this is a day when I might have seen the fairy. How very, very foolish I have been!"

Hulda laid her beautiful bracelet upon a table in her room, where she could see it, and kissed the little bird before she got into bed. She had been asleep a long time when a little sobbing voice suddenly awoke her, and she sat up to listen. The house was perfectly still; her cat was curled up at the door, fast asleep; her bird's head was under its wing; a long sunbeam was slanting down through an opening in the green window-curtain, and the motes danced merrily in it.

"What could that noise have been?" said little Hulda, lying down again. She had no sooner laid her head on the pillow than she heard it again; and, turning round quickly to look at the bracelet, she saw the little bird fluttering its wings, and close to it, with her hands covering her face, the beautiful, long lost fairy.

"Oh, fairy, fairy! what have I done!" said Hulda. "You will never see your wand again. The gnome has got it, and he has carried it down under the ground, where he will hide it from us forever."

The fairy could not look up, nor answer. She remained weeping, with her hands before her face, till the little golden bird began to chirp.

"Sing to us again, I pray you, beautiful bird!" said Hulda; "for you are not friendly to the gnome. I am sure you are sorry for the poor fairy."

"Child," said the fairy, "be cautious what you say—that gnome is my enemy; he disguised himself as a pedlar the better to deceive you, and now he has got my wand he can discover where I am; he will be constantly pursuing me, and I shall have no peace; if once I fall into his hands, I shall be his slave forever. The bird is not his friend, for the race of gnomes have no friends. Speak to it again, and see if it will sing to you, for you are its mistress."

"Sing to me, sweet bird," said Hulda, in a caressing tone, and the little bird quivered its wings and bowed its head several times; then it opened its beak and sang:

"Where's the ring?
Oh the ring, my master stole the ring,
And he holds it while I sing,
In the middle of the world.
Where's the ring?
Where the long green Lizard curled
All its length, and made a spring
Fifty leagues along.
There he stands,
With his brown hands,

And sings to the Lizard a wonderful song.
And he gives the white stone to that Lizard fell,
For he fears it—and loves it passing well."

"What!" said Hulda, "did the pedlar steal my mother's ring—that old opal ring which I told him I could not let him have?"

"Child," replied the fairy, "be not sorry for his treachery; this theft I look to for my last hope for recovering the wand."

"How so?" asked Hulda.

"It is a common thing among mortals," replied the fairy, "to say the thing which is not true, and do the thing which is not honest; but among the other races of beings who inhabit this world the penalty of mocking and imitating the vices of you, the superior race, is, that if ever one of us can be convicted of it, that one, be it gnome, sprite, or fairy, is never permitted to appear in the likeness of humanity again, nor to walk about on the face of the land which is your inheritance. Now the gnomes hate one another, and if it should be discovered by the brethren of this my enemy that he stole the opal ring, they will not fail to betray him. There is, therefore, no doubt, little Hulda, that he carries both the ring and the wand about with him wherever he goes, and if in all your walks and during your whole life you should see him again, and go boldly up to him and demand the stolen stone, he will be compelled instantly to burrow his way down again into the earth, and leave behind him all his ill-gotten gains."

"There is, then, still some hope," said Hulda, in a happier voice; "but where, dear fairy, have you hidden yourself so long?"

"I have passed a dreary time," replied the fairy. "I have been compelled to leave Europe and fly across to Africa, for my enemy inhabits that great hollow dome which is the centre of the earth, and he can only come up in Europe; but my poor little brown wings were often so weary in my flight across the sea that I wished, like the birds, I could drop into the waves and die; for what was to me the use of immortality when I could no longer soothe the sorrow of mortals? But I cannot die; and after I had fluttered across into Egypt, where the glaring light of the sun almost blinded me, I was thankful to find a ruined tomb or temple underground, where great marble sarcophagi were ranged around the walls, and where in the dusky light I could rest from my travels, in a place where I only knew the difference between night and day by the redness of the one sunbeam which stole in through a crevice, and the silvery blue of the moonbeam that succeeded it.

"In that temple there was no sound but the rustling of the bats' wings as they flew in before dawn, or sometimes the chirping of a swallow which had lost its way, and was frightened to see all the grim marble faces gazing at it. But

the quietness did me good, and I waited, hoping that the young King of Sweden would marry, and that an heir would be born to him (for I am a Swedish fairy), and then I should recover my liberty according to an ancient statute of the fairy realm, and my wand would also come again into my possession; but alas! he is dead, and the reason you see me to-day is, that, like the rest of my race, I am come to strew leaves on his grave and recount his virtues. I must now return, for the birds are stirring; I hear the cows lowing to be milked, and the maids singing as they go out with their pails. Farewell, little Hulda; guard well the bracelet; I must to my ruined temple again. Happy for me will be the day when you see my enemy (if that day ever comes); the bird will warn you of his neighborhood by pecking your hand.

"One moment stay, dear fairy," said Hulda. "Where am I most likely to see the gnome?"

"In the south," replied the fairy, "for they love hot sunshine. I can stay no longer. Farewell."

So saying, the fairy again became a moth and fluttered to the window. Little Hulda opened it, the brown moth settled for a moment upon her lips as if it wished to kiss her, and then it flew out into the sunshine, away and away.

Little Hulda watched her till her pretty wings were lost in the blue distance; then she turned and took her bracelet, and put it on her wrist, where, from that day forward, she always wore it night and day.

Hulda now grew tall, and became a fair young maiden, and she often wished for the day when she might go down to the south, that she might have a better chance of seeing the cruel gnome, and as she sat at work in her room alone she often asked the bird to sing to her, but he never sang any other songs than the two she had heard at first.

And now two full years had passed away, and it was again the height of the Norway summer, but the fairy had not made her appearance.

As the days began to shorten, Hulda's cheeks lost their bright color, and her steps their merry lightness; she became pale and wan. Her parents were grieved to see her change so fast, but they hoped, as the weary winter came on, that the cheerful fire and gay company would revive her; but she grew

worse and worse, till she could scarcely walk alone through the rooms where she had played so happily, and all the physicians shook their heads and said, "Alas! alas! the lord and lady of the castle may well look sad: nothing can save their fair daughter, and before the spring comes she will sink into an early grave."

The first yellow leaves now began to drop, and showed that winter was near at hand.

"My sweet Hulda," said her mother to her one day, as she was lying upon a couch looking out into the sunshine, "is there anything you can think of that would do you good, or any place we can go to that you think might revive you?"

"I had only one wish," replied Hulda, "but that, dear mother, I cannot have."

"Why not, dear child?" said her father. "Let us hear what your wish was."

"I wished that before I died I might be able to go into the south and see that wicked pedlar, that if possible I might repair the mischief I had done to the fairy by restoring her the wand."

"Does she wish to go into the south?" said the physicians. "Then it will be as well to indulge her, but nothing can save her life; and if she leaves her native country she will return to it no more."

"I am willing to go," said Hulda, "for the fairy's sake."

So they put her on a pillion, and took her slowly on to the south by short distances, as she could bear it. And as she left the old castle, the wind tossed some yellow leaves against her, and then whirled them away across the heath to the forest. Hulda said:

"Yellow leaves, yellow leaves,
Whither away?
Through the long wood paths
How fast do ye stray!"

The yellow leaves answered:

"We go to lie down
Where the spring snowdrops grow,
Their young roots to cherish
Through frost and through snow."

Then Hulda said again to the leaves:

"Yellow leaves, yellow leaves,
Faded and few,
What will the spring flowers
Matter to you?"

And the leaves said:

"We shall not see them,
When gaily they bloom,
But sure they will love us
For guarding their tomb."

Then Hulda said:

"The yellow leaves are like me: I am going away from my place for the sake of the poor fairy, who now lies hidden in the dark Egyptian ruin; but if I am so happy as to recover her wand by my care, she will come back glad and white, like the snowdrops when winter is over, and she will love my memory when I am laid asleep in my tomb."

So they set out on their journey, and every day went a little distance toward the south, till at last, on Christmas Eve, they came to an ancient city at the foot of a range of mountains.

"What a strange Christmas this is!" said Hulda, when she looked out the next morning. "Let us stay here, mother, for we are far enough to the south. Look how the red berries hang on yonder tree, and these myrtles on the porch are fresh and green, and a few roses bloom still on the sunny side of the window."

It was so fine and warm that the next day they carried Hulda to a green bank where she could sit down. It was close by some public gardens, and

the people were coming and going. She fell into a doze as she sat with her mother watching her, and in her half-dream she heard the voices of the passers-by, and what they said about her, till suddenly a voice which she remembered made her wake with a start, and as she opened her frightened eyes, there, with his pack on his back, and his cunning eyes fixed upon her, stood the pedlar.

"Stop him!" cried Hulda, starting up. "Mother, help me to run after him!"

"After whom, my child?" asked her mother.

"After the pedlar," said Hulda. "He was here but now, but before I had time to speak to him, he stepped behind that thorn-bush and disappeared."

"So that is Hulda," said the pedlar to himself, as he went down the steep path into the middle of the world. "She looks as if a few days more would be all she has to live. I will not come here any more till the spring, and then she will be dead, and I shall have nothing to fear."

But Hulda did not die. See what a good thing it is to be kind. The soft, warm air of the south revived her by degrees—so much, that by the end of the year she could walk in the public garden and delight in the warm sunshine; in another month she could ride with her father to see all the strange old castles in that neighborhood, and by the end of February she was as well as ever she had been in her life; and all this came from her desire to do good to the fairy by going to the south.

"And now," thought the pedlar, "there is no doubt that the daisies are growing on Hulda's grave by this time, so I will go up again to the outside of the world, and sell my wares to the people who resort to those public places."

So one day when in that warm climate the spring flowers were already blooming on the hillsides, up he came close to the ruined walls of a castle, and set his pack down beside him to rest after the fatigues of his journey.

"This is a cool, shady place," he said, looking round, "and these dark yew-trees conceal it very well from the road. I shall come here always in the middle of the day, when the sun is too hot, and count over my gains. How hard my mistress, the Lizard, makes me work! Who would have thought she

would have wished to deck her green head with opals down there, where there are only a tribe of brown gnomes to see her? But I have not given her that one out of the ring which I stole, nor three others that I conjured out of the crozier of the priest as I knelt at the altar, and they thought I was rehearsing a prayer to the Virgin."

After resting some time, the pedlar took up his pack and went boldly on to the gardens, never doubting but that Hulda was dead; but it so happened that at that moment Hulda and her mother sat at work in a shady part of the garden under some elder-trees.

"What is the matter, my sweet bird?" said Hulda, for the bird pecked her wrist, and fluttered its wings, and opened its beak as if it were very much frightened.

"Let us go, mother, and look about us," said Hulda.

So they both got up and wandered all over the gardens; but the pedlar, in the meantime, had walked on toward the town, and they saw nothing of him.

"Sing to me, my sweet bird," said Hulda that night as she lay down to sleep. "Tell me *why* you pecked my wrist."

Then the bird sang to her:

"Who came from the ruin, the ivy-clad ruin,
With old shaking arches, all moss overgrown,
Where the flitter-bat hideth,
The limber snake glideth,
And chill water drips from the slimy green stone?"

"Who did?" asked Hulda. "Not the pedlar, surely? Tell me, my pretty bird." But the bird only chirped a little and fluttered its golden wings, so Hulda ceased to ask it, and presently fell asleep, but the bird woke her by pecking her wrist very early, almost before sunrise, and sang:

"Who dips a brown hand in the chill shaded water,
The water that drips from a slimy green stone?
Who flings his red cap
At the owlets that flap

Their white wings in his face as he sits there alone?"

Hulda, upon hearing this, arose in great haste and dressed herself; then she went to her father and mother, and entreated that they would come with her to the old ruin. It was now broad day, so they all three set out together. It was a very hot morning, the dust lay thick upon the road, and there was not air enough to stir the thick leaves of the trees which hung overhead.

They had not gone far before they found themselves in a crowd of people, all going toward the castle ruin, for there, they told Hulda, the pedlar, the famous pedlar from the north, who sold such fine wares, was going to perform some feats of jugglery of most surprising cleverness.

"Child," whispered Hulda's mother, "nothing could be more fortunate for us; let us mingle with the crowd and get close to the pedlar."

Hulda assented to her mother's wish, but the heat and dust, together with her own intense desire to rescue the lost wand, made her tremble so that she had great difficulty in walking. They went among gypsies, fruit-women, peasant girls, children, travelling musicians, common soldiers, and laborers; the heat increased, and the dust and the noise, and at last Hulda and her parents were borne forward into the old ruin among a rush of people running and huzzaing, and heard the pedlar shout to them:

"Keep back, good people; leave a space before me; leave a large space between me and you."

So they pressed back again, jostling and crowding each other, and left an open space before him from which he looked at them with his cunning black eyes, and with one hand dabbling in the cold water of the spring.

The place was open to the sky, and the broken arches and walls were covered with thick ivy and wall flowers. The pedlar sat on a large gray stone, with his red cap on and his brown fingers adorned with splendid rings, and he spread them out and waved his hands to the people with ostentatious ceremony.

"Now, good people," he said, without rising from his seat, "you are about to see the finest, rarest, and most wonderful exhibition of the conjuring art ever known!"

"Stop!" cried a woman's voice from the crowd, and a young girl rushed wildly forward from the people, who had been trying to hold her back.

"I impeach you before all these witnesses!" she cried, seizing him by the hand. "See justice done, good people. I impeach you, pedlar. Where's the ring—my mother's ring—which you stole on Midsummer's day in the castle?"

"Good people," said the pedlar, pulling his red cap over his face, and speaking in a mild, fawning voice, "I hope you'll protect me. I hope you won't see me insulted."

"My ring, my ring!" cried Hulda; "he wore it on his finger but now!"

"Show your hand like a man!" said the people. "If the lady says falsely, can't you face her and tell her so? Never hold it down so cowardly!"

The pedlar had tucked his feet under him, and when the people cried out to him to let the rings on his hand be seen, he had already burrowed with them up to his knees in the earth.

"THE PEDLAR HAD NOW SUNK UP TO HIS WAIST."

"Oh, he will go down into the earth!" cried Hulda. "But I will not let go! Pedlar, pedlar, it is useless! If I follow you before the Lizard, your mistress, I will not let go!"

The pedlar turned his terrified, cowardly eyes upon Hulda, and sank lower and lower. The people were too frightened to move.

"Stop, child," cried her mother. "Oh, he will go down and drag thee with him."

But Hulda would not and could not let go. The pedlar had now sunk up to his waist. Her mother wrung her hands, and in an instant the earth closed upon them both, and, after falling in the dark down a steep abyss, they found themselves, not at all the worse, standing in a dimly lighted cave with a large table in it piled with mouldy books. Behind the table was a smooth and perfectly round hole in the wall about the size of a cartwheel.

Hulda looked that way, and saw how intensely dark it was through this hole, and she was wondering where it led to when an enormous green Lizard put its head through into the cave, and gazed at her with its great brown eyes.

"What is thy demand, fine child of the daylight?" said the Lizard.

"Princess," replied Hulda, "I demand that this thy servant should give up to me a ring which he stole in my father's castle when I was a child."

The pedlar no sooner heard Hulda boldly demand her rights than he fell on his knees and began to cry for mercy.

"Mercy rests with this maiden," said the Lizard. At the same time she darted out her tongue, which was several yards in length and like a scarlet thread, and with it stripped the ring from the gnome's finger and gave it to Hulda.

"Speak, maiden, what reparation do you demand of this culprit, and what shall be his punishment?"

"Great princess," replied Hilda, "let him restore to me a golden wand which I sold to him, for it belongs to a fairy whom he has long persecuted."

"Here it is, here it is!" cried the cowardly gnome, putting his hand into his bosom and pulling it out, shaking all the time, and crying out most piteously, "Oh, don't let me be banished from the sunshine!"

"After this double crime no mercy can be shown you," said the Lizard, and she twined her scarlet tongue round him, and drew him through the hole to herself. At the same instant it closed, and a crack came in the roof of the cave, through which the sunshine stole, and as Hulda looked up in flew a brown moth and settled on the magic bracelet. She touched the moth with the wand, and instantly it stood upon her wrist—a beautiful and joyous

fairy. She took her wand from Hulda's hand, and stood for a moment looking gratefully in her face without speaking. Then she said to the wand:

"Art thou my own again, and wilt thou serve me?"

"Try me," said the wand.

So she struck the wall with it, and said, "Cleave, wall!" and a hole came in the wall large enough for Hulda to creep through, and she found herself at the foot of a staircase hewn in the rock, and, after walking up it for three hours, she came out in the old ruined castle, and was astonished to see that the sun had set. The moment she appeared her father and mother, who had given her over for lost, clasped her in their arms and wept for joy as they embraced her.

"My child," said her father, "how happy thou lookest, not as if thou hadst been down in the dark earth!"

Hulda kissed her parents and smiled upon them; then she turned to look for the fairy, but she was gone. So they all three walked home in the twilight, and the next day Hulda set out again with her parents to return to the old castle in Norway. As for the fairy, she was happy from that day in the possession of her wand; but the little golden bird folded its wings and never sang any songs again.

THE END.

[1] *Ouphe*, pronounced "oof," is an old-fashioned word for goblin or elf.

[2] *Firmity*: generally written *frumenty*; wheat boiled in milk with sugar and fruit.

[3] *Wicker*: made of willow twigs like a basket.

[4] *Hookah*: a kind of pipe for smoking tobacco, used in Eastern Europe and Asia.

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