Fairy Tales From the German Forests

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FAIRY TALES FROM THE GERMAN FORESTS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

"The Meadows of Play"

(With an Introduction by G. K. Chesterton;
Illustrated by Edith Calvert.)

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FAIRY TALES *from the* GERMAN FORESTS

by

FRAU ARNDT

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TO MY DAUGHTERS
MARGARET AND BARBARA,
AND TO MY NEPHEWS
CHARLES AND STEPHEN JOHNSON,
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

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INTRODUCTORY POEM

"The stories that the fairies told
I learnt in English lanes of old,
Where honeysuckle, wreathing high,
Twined with the wild rose towards the sky,
Or where pink-tinged anemones
Grew thousand starred beneath the trees.
I saw them, too, in London town,
But sly and cautious, glancing down,
Where in the grass the crocus grow
And ladies ride in Rotten Row,
St James's Park's a garden meet
For tiny babes and fairy feet.
But since I came to Germany,
The good folk oftener talk to me;
I find them in their native home

When through the forest depths I roam,
When through the trees blue mountains shine,
The heart of fairyland is mine."

WHAT'S THE USE OF IT?

A CHRISTMAS STORY

In a village that was close to the great forest, though it had already become the suburb of a large town, lived a little girl named Hansi Herzchen. She was the seventh child of a family of seven, and she lived at No 7 —— Street. So you see she was a lucky child, for seven is always a lucky number; but nothing had happened to prove her luck as yet.

Her father was a clerk in the post office at the neighbouring town. He would have found it hard to make two ends meet with seven little mouths to fill, but that his wife had brought him substantial help. She was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer peasant and had a considerable dowry when she married. Moreover she was extremely thrifty and industrious. She never spent a halfpenny without carefully considering if a farthing would not do as well. Better £1 in the pocket than 19s. 11½d., she used to say. She drove wonderful bargains at the market. She had no eyes for the artistic and ornamental, though her house was so spick and span, that it was good to look at in its cleanliness and order. She had stored up everything she had possessed since her early youth, and was said to use pins that were at least twenty years old. She managed to put everything to use, and the boys' knickers were sometimes made of queer materials.

One expression little Hansi often heard at home and that was the word "*useful*." When she brought in a fresh bunch of darling, pink-tipped daisies and wanted to find a corner for them and a tiny drop of water to put them in, the whole family would exclaim: "Throw them away, what do you want with those half-dead weeds; they're of no use." If one of the neighbours gave her a ball or toy, it was the same

story: "We've no room for such rubbish here." Each child possessed a money-box, and every coin was immediately put in. They had never had a penny to *spend* in their lives.

The garden was planted solely with vegetables and potatoes and herbs of the most useful character. The scarlet beans in summer, however, would brighten it up, and field poppies and dandelions sprang up in a quite miraculous way to Hansi's delight. For in each flower was a jolly little fairy, who talked to her and told her stories, because of her being a seventh child and living at No. 7. Perhaps, too, because Hansi's natural disposition made her look out for wonders, and her loving heart included the field flowers among her friends.

Christmas was coming on; a pig had been killed. Hansi's father and mother and big brother Paul stayed up all night making sausages, and the children had sausage soup for dinner during the next week.

In preparation for Christmas, Hansi's mother baked large cakes (called Stollen) of a plain quality, with currants few and far between. Food had become very expensive during the last few years, and no one could deny that seven children were a handful.

She went in to town and returned by electric tram, with the useful things that were intended for Christmas presents for the children, namely:

A pair of boots for Paul,
A school-cape for Marie,
Handkerchiefs for Fritz with his name
embroidered on them in red cotton,
Stockings for Emma,
A warm hood for Gretchen,
An oilcloth pinafore for Karlchen,
who had a special talent for getting dirty,
And lastly a new pinafore for Hansi.

"Now we might be said to have everything ready for Christmas," said Mrs Herzchen, on her return home, "if it were not for the Christmas tree. I suppose we shall have to pay at least one and six for it, and then there are the candles and apples, balls and sweets. It does seem absurd to waste good money on such rubbish. What can be the use of it?"

She talked away in this manner, until she made up her mind to do without the tree for once.

"Your father has no time to see about it," she said to the children. "He is taken up with looking after other people's rubbishing letters and parcels, and I can't be bothered—so put the idea out of your heads, you won't get a tree this year."

The seven children felt very indignant; for it is almost a disgrace in Germany to have no tree; it is worse than going without a pudding on Christmas Day in England. The very poorest families manage somehow to have their tree to light on Christmas Eve. Still they were trained to implicit obedience and respect for their mother, and did not dare grumble much openly.

Mrs Herzchen did not consult her husband about it; so he expected his tree as usual. The good woman felt rather uncomfortable, as if she had either done something wrong, or omitted doing what was right; but she justified herself by saying continually to herself "What's the use of it?"

Hansi dreamt that night of a beautiful Christmas tree that reached up to the sky and was covered with shining silver, like cobwebs in the frost, and lit by real stars. She determined that somehow or other they should have their Christmas tree as usual.

When she came out of school at eleven o'clock, she trotted along in the opposite way to home, along the wide high road leading to the woods, with the twisted apple-trees on either side. She made a little bobbing curtsy, and said "good day" to everyone she met who noticed her at all; for she had been taught to be polite and friendly.

The ground was frozen and sparkled brightly; the air brought the fresh colour into her cheeks. She had on a warm hood and cape and a woollen scarf—for her mother was kind-hearted at the bottom and looked well after their material comforts. Hansi's pretty fair curls peeped out from under the red hood, her blue eyes with their dark lashes were more starry than usual from excitement.

The fir woods looked purple-black against the white fields, and as she came near, she saw the fir-trees covered with silver hoar frost "almost like the tree in my dream," she thought. Her heart beat faster for a moment as she entered the shade of the solemn evergreen trees, but she did not feel naughty to be running away from home. She felt rather as if she were fulfilling a mission that had been laid upon her.

Meanwhile her mother was worrying and wondering what could have happened that her little girl did not return at the usual time. Then she remembered that Hansi often went home with her friend Barbara Arndt, and then they did their lessons together before dinner. That doubtless accounted for her non-appearance.

Hansi wandered on and on, and the woods seemed deserted. She picked up fir cones and beech nuts and acorns and filled her pinafore with them, also frosted fern leaves and dry grasses exquisitely outlined with hoar frost went into her apron.

At last she stopped before a little fir-tree. This was just the beautiful little tree she wanted. It spread out its branches symmetrically on all sides, and was slender and straight at the top. "That will just do for me! If only I could get it home," she thought. She tugged at it with her little hands, dropping some of her treasures, but of course it would not

move. Just then she heard something stir, and looking round she saw a squirrel peeping at her from behind a big oak-tree near by. This was a wonder in itself if she had known; for squirrels are usually fast asleep in the cold weather, and only wake once or twice to eat some of their store of nuts.

"O, Mr Squirrel, can't you help me," Hansi said. Off he went, round and round the trunk, and then suddenly, with a great spring and his tail spread out for a sail, he alighted on Hansi's tree. He stared at her in a friendly way, and then stretched out one of his dear little paws and offered her a nut, politely cracking it for her first with his sharp teeth which had grown very long whilst he was asleep. She ate it at once, but looked anxious. "O, Mr Squirrel, do cut down this tree for me, and help me to carry it home," she said, "or else we shall have no Christmas tree, and that would be *dreadful*!"

Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke. Mr Squirrel looked at her with his bright eyes, twisted round suddenly, like a cat trying to catch its own tail, and offered her another nut.

"O, Mr Squirrel, *do*," she said again.

He offered her a third nut, and then he whistled shrilly; it sounded more like a baby crying than a whistle. Then to her surprise, as she looked down the wood path, Hansi saw a troop of little men, such as you see on Christmas cards in Germany, with red caps and green jackets and wooden shoes turned up at the toes. "Real Heinzelmen and no mistake," thought Hansi delightedly, "they can help me, if anyone can." She counted them, they were seven in number, like Snowdrop's dwarfs. They made quite a noise as they marched up in order, whistling a merry tune. When they saw Hansi, they took off their red caps, and their white hair flew about them like a mist, till Hansi could hardly see them any more. The squirrel screamed and shouted at them, and they answered him; but Hansi could not understand at first what it was all about. She thought they must be talking English; she knew a lady who lived near them, and who could only talk English, poor thing. All of a sudden the earth trembled—was it an earthquake?

Hansi held tight on to the fir-tree, though its needles hurt her hands. All she saw was the seven little men disappearing into the ground down a long slide such as firemen use, when they are called suddenly from sleep, and are carried by a new mechanical apparatus direct from one floor to the other. The earth closed up again, and Hansi thought it must be all a dream; but in two seconds they were back again with silver hatchets and silver pails. With the hatchets they immediately began to hack away at the tree. They made tremendous efforts, and became quite red in the face. The last moment before it was finally felled, the squirrel bounded off, and tossed a nut to Hansi, who caught it cleverly in her pinafore.

"Dear little men," she said, "may I have the tree? Will you bring it home for me, and I will give you all my Christmas cake? But I have nothing to hang on it, and make it pretty," she continued. The dwarfs began to chatter again like so many girls, all trying to say the same thing at once. Then they marched along, dragging the tree with them.

"O, Mr Dwarf, that's the wrong way home, I'm sure," said Hansi. But she followed them all the same. They came to where a crystal stream leapt over a little group of rocks. The dwarfs held their buckets under the cascade, and caught some drops. The drops turned into silver fish, each with a little loop on the end of its tail, all ready to hang on the tree.

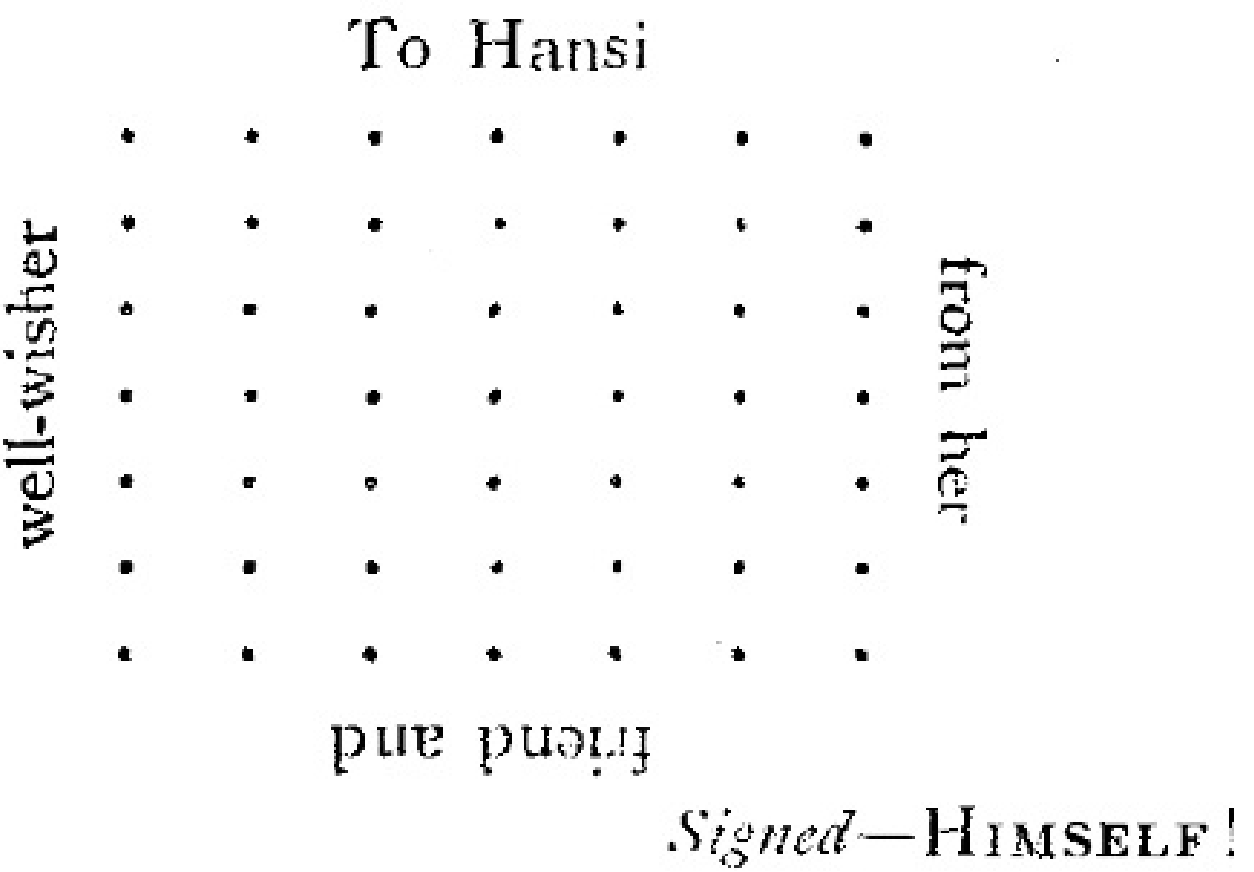
They then took Hansi's pine cones and ferns and grasses, and even collected the frozen cobwebs from the bushes and let the spray from the waters fall on them, and lo and behold the most exquisite gems were ready for the decoration of the Christmas tree.

"You live at No 7, and you are seven years old," said the eldest of the dwarfs, addressing Hansi. ("However *could* he have known that?" she thought.) "Perhaps you can tell me what seven times seven makes?"

Hansi considered a moment. "No, we have not got so far as that in our arithmetic," she replied. "*Twice* seven is fourteen, that I know."

"Seven times seven is forty-nine and is the square of seven," said the dwarf. "Always remember that, for it is a most important fact in magic!"

Rummaging in his pocket, he took out a note-book and handed a leaf to her with this diagram and inscription on it



"Thank you *very* much," said Hansi, feeling duly impressed, and she never forgot this difficult fact in the multiplication table again, although she didn't quite understand the diagram, and in fact lost it on the way home.

The dwarfs set up the tree on a clear part of the path, and made a little stand for it of boughs cleverly intertwined and moss between. With many a hop, skip and jump of delight, they hung the silver fish and cones and nuts on it; the cobwebs spread themselves out all over the tree. Then they took red holly berries, and stuck them on the

boughs where they turned into red candles. All red and silver was this loveliest of Christmas trees!

When it was finished, there was a momentary thrill, and they all cried "Ah!" in tones of wonder.

Then Hansi noticed that a noble herd of deer had approached; the gentle creatures were looking on with the deepest interest.

The woodbirds came flying from all directions, and sang as if it were summer.

"Dear little men, I think I really ought to be going home," said Hansi anxiously.

"Come along then," said Himself. "*You* must go back along the high road as you came; we are going to play hide-and-seek; but don't be afraid, you shall have your tree all right, even if it disappears sometimes."

They now marched along in the homeward direction; but as soon as they came to the road leading out of the woods they vanished without a word of leave-taking. However, Hansi had not gone far down the road, when she saw a Christmas tree that appeared to be walking by itself across the fields. Other people noticed it too, from the road, and thought how queer it looked. "But *of course*, there is someone behind carrying it," they said to themselves, and thought no more of the matter. People expect the usual before the unusual, naturally enough, and yet sometimes the unusual is the most probable, as in this case.

Hansi was late for dinner, and had a fine scolding.

"At all events, I suppose you have done your lessons," said her mother.

"No, mother, I'm afraid not."

"Well, I never, playing again, I suppose? Now, what *can* be the use

of playing, I should like to know?"

This was an exceptionally stupid question; for most people know that little folk cannot grow mentally without play, any more than flowers can grow without sunshine. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," is not only a proverb, but it is true as well.

It was Christmas Eve. Hansi trembled with excitement. "What's the use of getting so lively, Hansi?" said her big brother Paul despondently. "You know quite well that we are not to have any tree this year. I shall get a new pair of boots, and you a pinafore; these we should have to have anyway. That's not what I call a merry Christmas."

"But the bells are ringing, don't you hear them? and don't you think you can see just a glimmer of silver through the door?" said Hansi.

The children looked—well, really, perhaps there was a tree there after all.

Just then their father came in tired, but jolly. "Is everything ready? It is late, I have been detained so long," he said. "Can we go in at once?"

"I haven't got a tree this year," whispered his wife in an anxious voice. "I thought we couldn't afford it. What's the use of a Christmas tree? We can spend our money in a more practical way!"

"What nonsense. No Christmas tree! but of course you are joking," said her husband. "I will slip in, and light the candles." And with these words he disappeared into the inner room, now so mysterious to the waiting children.

Poor Mrs Herzchen nearly began to cry. If only she had not been so

silly! Never, never would she neglect to get a tree again! She ought to have considered other people's prejudices, and Christmas—O well, Christmas only comes once a year.

"I've got a surprise for mother," whispered Gretel, aged ten. "I am going to recite a Christmas poem." "And I am going to tell the Christmas story from the Bible," said Hansi. "I have made a letter-box for father," said Fritz.

"Hush, hush! the bells are ringing—don't you hear them across the snow?" the children whispered to one another. "But what is that other bell, so soft, so musical and clear!" "That is the summons for us all to enter," said Paul.

The door flew open, and there stood the most lovely Christmas tree they had ever seen or imagined, all dazzling with silver; silver cones, silver fish, silver nuts and acorns, and red candles, and over all an exquisitely spun cobweb of frost. "That's my surprise for you all," said Hansi, who could hardly contain herself for joy. "I found the tree, and the dear, darling Heinzelmen brought it home for me."

Mrs Herzchen was speechless with astonishment, and her husband not less so. "How very extravagant," they said, "but how elegant and beautiful! Who can have given it to us?"

But now the children began to sing the sweet German carol sung in every house on Christmas Eve: "O peaceful night, O holy night," and then, in her earnest, childish way, Hansi told the story of the birth of the Christ-child in the Manger of Bethlehem.

Gretel then stood up eagerly to recite the carol she had learnt at school.

THE CHILDREN'S KING.

"Dear children come
On Christmas night,
Put on your gowns
Of purest white.

Speak not a word
Until you see
The sweet Christ child
On Mary's knee.

There lies the Babe
An Infant frail.
Is this the King
Whom nations hail?

A helpless King!
His mother's arm
Must hold him safe
From threatened harm.

A tender King,
Most young and sweet,
With dimpled hands
And tiny feet!

A Baby King:
Yet cherubim
Veil their bright eyes
To look on Him.

A mighty King!
For God above
Has crowned Him Lord
And King of Love.

Come kneel and pray,
Ye children dear,
The children's King
Is lying here!"

A glow of warmth and happiness illumined the whole family, and they felt nearer to one another than ever before. The tears actually came into their mother's eyes, when she realised that they had so nearly missed this moment of supreme joy.

She felt a little ashamed of her presents, and for once in a way suspected herself of having been *too* sensible. "We are not so very poor after all," she thought. "I might have bought a few toys that would have delighted the children's hearts, and not have cost much money. But now it is too late!"

But to her surprise, she did not see her presents at all. For each child there was a gingerbread cake with his or her name on it, and then the most lovely surprises—a beautiful doll for Hansi with real eyelashes, fretwork tools for Paul, a doll's kitchen for Gretel, and so on. For every one of the family there was some delightful gift.

"Thank you, thank you, dear Heinzelmen," said Hansi, clasping her hands in ecstasy.

There was a big paper parcel addressed to Mrs Herzchen in a very queer handwriting. She opened it with much excitement, thinking it would contain a silk dress, at least. But lo and behold, all the presents that she had intended for her children, tied together with red tape and a card between, on which this verse was written:

"Useful things
For little folk
Are sensible,
But not a joke."
Signed Himself!

How the children laughed! and even Mrs Herzchen laughed too, though she felt silly and a little disappointed. "It is all very well to play tricks on me," she said. "Just look at the Müller children next door. They have plenty of toys and are always sucking sweets; but they never have comfortable, warm clothes on, and they look half fed."

"Of course, mother, you are right," said the children, "and you were really joking about the tree. We have never had one *half* so lovely!"

Mrs Herzchen felt rather embarrassed at this praise. She called her husband's attention to the things on the tree. "They can't be made of chocolate," she said, trying to bite off the corner of a fir cone. It was quite hard. "I do believe they are all solid silver!" she said.

On closer examination, they found a little lion imprinted on each which proved them without doubt to be of real silver.

"I shall sell them at once, or they may vanish away," she said.

"I should strongly advise you not to do so," her husband replied, and the children said, "Oh Mother, do let us keep them always, they are so beautiful?"

"But of what use are they?" said the incorrigible mother who, you see, was not yet quite cured.

Meanwhile the story was noised abroad that Hansi had found a treasure in the forest.

The very next day, Christmas Day, as they were eating their goose, stuffed with apples, there was a ring at the bell—in walked a very pompous Prussian policeman with fierce moustaches.

"Mrs Herzchen here?" he asked abruptly.

"What do *you* want?" asked that lady, much indignant at being disturbed during her Christmas dinner.

"Young person answering to the name of Hansi Herzchen here?"

"Yes, sir. Please, sir, that's me," said Hansi, rising and curtsying, and growing very red.

The policeman produced a paper in which he entered all sorts of memoranda.

"*Age and date of birth?*" he demanded of Hansi.

"Seven years old, *of course*," answered Hansi. "My birthday is on February 27th, if you want to know. It was on a Sunday last year."

"That's beside the question." He looked severe.

"February 27th, 1897," said Hansi, prompted by her mother.

Residence—temporary or otherwise ——.

Baptism —— date of ——.

Vaccinated ——.

All these facts Hansi's mother supplied at once. They are so constantly demanded in Germany that she had them always ready at hand, tied up in seven different packets for each child.

Married or single?

Here Hansi giggled, and he entered solemnly the word "*spinster*."

"Is that something *horrid*?" asked Hansi anxiously.

"No, it only means unmarried," said Paul laughing. "*What* a fool he is!"

Occupation?

"Please sir, I go to school and learn my lessons, but I play a good deal too."

"We will write 'spinster,'" he said, frowning fiercely.

"Now listen to me, child, if you do not wish to go to prison." The whole family shuddered with horror.

"Take all those silver things off the tree. They are 'found treasure,' and belong to the State. You ought to have declared them at once, and saved me all this trouble," he said.

Hansi began to cry.

Mrs Herzchen was very angry, "Why don't you mind your own business?" she said. "These things are our property. You will come and demand the clothes off our backs next."

"Be thankful that I do not accuse you of *stealing* these valuables," answered the fellow in a terrible voice.

"But are you sure they are not chocolate after all?" he said. "They look remarkably like it, covered with silver paper, you know."

He examined them carefully and ejaculating, "Well, I never," tossed them all into a leather wallet that he had brought with him.

Mrs Herzchen poured forth such a storm of abuse, that he threatened her with an action for libel; but she literally turned him out of doors. Her parting words were: "Get out! Go along and make a fool of yourself if you like."

Some days afterwards, the man took his treasures to the office and gave them up with a self-important flourish, only to be laughed at for his pains. The cones were just common, ordinary fir cones, and the silver fish had turned into little dead trout, smelling very unpleasant.

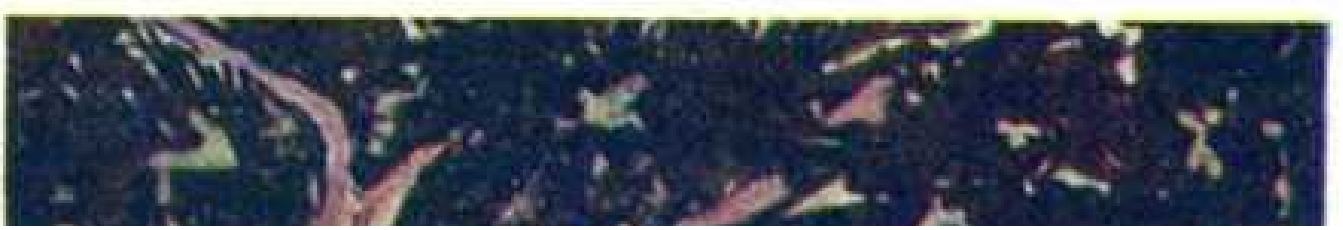
He chucked them all away in the street, and this was an episode in

his dignified career that he did not like to be reminded of.

Although Hansi's mother still always preferred useful things to artistic and ornamental ones, still she realised that the useful and ornamental may often be combined, and as she dearly loved her children, and saved up money merely on their account, she determined that they should have a merry Christmas every year, without any special help from the kind little Heinzelmen.

And did Hansi give the cake to her dwarf friends as she had promised to do? Why, of course, she did. The children went all together to the forest on New Year's Eve, and found the actual spot where the tree had stood. They placed a large piece of cake on the old stump. But they did not see the Heinzelmen or even the squirrel, although they repeated seven times seven is forty-nine in the hope of attracting them.

Now a dear little Heinzelman, whom I met out for a walk, told me this story "himself"; but he vanished at this point, and so must I. I wish Hansi and all her brothers and sisters a very merry Christmas, and so, I am sure, do you.



"The Dwarf."

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THE ENGINEER AND THE DWARFS

A tunnel had been dug through a crag which had hitherto been considered as a serious obstacle in the railway route; the light now shone through at the farther end. There was a shout of joy from the tired workmen. The air had been stifling in the tunnel; the work was hard and dangerous; several men had been killed in detaching portions of rock that had been loosened by dynamite. It was a great relief to have got through. Now the walls would have to be made smooth with cement—indeed the men had already begun this work at the other end—and the tunnel tested for greater security. Then the express train could run through directly, instead of being obliged to shunt backwards and forwards in a way that made it very uncomfortable for people who did not like sitting with their backs to the engine.

The young engineer, Karl Hammerstein, who had been supervising the men's work, was glad enough to find himself in the fresh air. His head ached violently, the oppression of the atmosphere had well-nigh overpowered him.

The mountain was clothed on this side with tall forest trees; the drooping firs offered an inviting shade. It was seven o'clock in the evening, the men were packing up their tools to go home. They would be obliged to march back through the tunnel; for there was no way round, except through the wildest forest with a tangled undergrowth of brambles and ferns. But they had their lamps, and did not mind the tunnel; it was familiar enough to them, who had worked in it for months.

Meanwhile Karl, who was dead-beat, stretched himself out under the trees, covered himself with his cloak, and fell fast asleep, meaning

only to rest a minute or two, before he also set off home.

It was late when he awoke; the full moon was shining. He felt quite dazed. Where could he be?

He had slept in many queer little rooms when he was travelling; but they always had a window and a door. Where was the window? Ugh —he shivered—it was cold. Then an unreasoning terror took hold of him: he was only half-awake as yet. What could that dreadful gap be in the wall of his room, blacker than the darkness? Surely it was a bogey hole leading down to the bottomless pit? The next minute he laughed at his fears, as we usually do when we come safely out of nightmare land and feel the earth—or bed beneath us again.

He saw that it was the mouth of the tunnel, and glancing up he saw the giant fir-tree under which he had been sleeping with outstretched arms above him in the light of the moon.

"Well—I never! what a dunderhead I am!" he said to himself —"fancy sleeping like that, why such a thing has never happened to me before! I had meant to go to have supper and stay the night at the new hotel in Elm. I have heard the landlord's daughter is an uncommonly pretty girl!"

"Heigho!" he went on, stretching himself, "there's nothing for it, but to walk home. I might wait a long time before a motor-car came to pick me up here!"

Then he remembered with a sudden start that there was only one possible way back to Elm, and that was through the tunnel. It was not a very pleasant idea to walk back alone through the dark, oppressive tunnel at midnight; luckily he had his lantern with him.

"How could I have been such an idiot!" he muttered to himself again. He found some bread and cheese in his pocket, which he ate with a good appetite. His headache had gone, and he felt much refreshed after his sleep. Then he put on his cloak, lighted the lantern,

and set out cheerfully to walk through the tunnel.

He had not gone far into the black darkness, when he thought he heard voices whispering and talking not far away from him; then he distinctly felt something or somebody brush past him.

"Hullo, who's there?" he called out. Complete silence. He was not easily frightened; but his heart began to beat quicker than usual. "Well, if it's robbers or tramps, they won't find much to rob on me," he thought; for he had only a few shillings in his pocket for his night's lodging.

It was probably a bat that had strayed in at the opening, he decided. Suddenly he came to a standstill. Right across the way was a mass of freshly fallen earth and rock that quite obstructed his further progress. "Well this is a pretty fix to be in. How aggravating!" he said to himself, and leant for a moment against the wall of the tunnel, to consider what would be best to do. The wall instantly gave way, he stumbled, bruised his arm against a sharp corner of the rock, and his lantern went out. At the same time he heard a sound resembling the slamming of a door. "Donnerwetter!" he exclaimed—a mild German swear which means literally "thunder-weather!"—"whatever shall I do now?" He had a box of matches in his pocket and soon succeeded in relighting the lantern.

"There is nothing for it, but to go back again to where I started from, and wait for daybreak," he thought.

By this time he had become confused, and had lost the sense of direction; but there *could* be only one way back. So he tramped along a long winding passage that he took to be the excavated tunnel. "How curious, I could have been certain that the tunnel was much wider, and more direct than this. Can I be still dreaming?" he thought.

Suddenly he was startled and astonished to come on a flight of steps leading downwards. There had certainly been no stairs in the tunnel! He saw too that the walls were painted in a decorative way like

some of the Catacombs in Rome; only these were far more elaborate. "I'm in for an adventure, I must be lost in the heart of the mountain," he thought. "Perhaps I shall come upon a robber's cave, or gipsies may be hiding in these rocks; it is a good thing that I have this pretty little fellow with me," and he touched the revolver in his breast pocket. He then observed in front of him a faint light, other than that of his lantern and whistled softly with astonishment, as he saw that the way opened out into a cave or vault. A few steps more, and he found himself in an exquisite, though tiny hall, with an arched ceiling supported by pillars of red granite. The walls and ceiling were beautifully inlaid with mosaic work in gold and coloured stones, like the interior of St Mark's, Venice, and seemed to be of great antiquity, though of this he could not be certain.

The light was so dim that what might have been the brilliant effect of the whole, was lost, and the young engineer thought to himself involuntarily: "This ought to be lit up by electric light—it would look quite different then!" As he was deliberating how electric light might be laid on, a door in the wall opened, and a number of little dwarf men trooped in. They did not see him at first; for he was standing behind a pillar. They settled themselves down on benches that were arranged in a semicircle, and one of them with an important air mounted a raised dais facing them. He was just beginning to speak with the words: "Gentlemen of the Committee," when they caught sight of the stranger standing in the centre of the hall, lantern in hand. They gave a cry of alarm, and were just going to scuttle away like frightened rabbits, when Karl called out, "Hi—Ho there—Gentlemen of the Committee—good Sirs—don't run away. I won't harm you —*Christmas Tree*."

Now Christmas Tree is the most solemn oath among the dwarfs—it is equivalent to swearing on the Bible with us. How Karl knew this, he did not know; it came to him on the inspiration of the minute. Perhaps his grandmother had told him stories in his childhood about the dwarf men, in which it occurred.

It had an instantaneous effect on the dwarfs who stood still at once.

"But you are one of the bad men who are building the tunnel," they cried out. "Aha—we can spoil your little game, my good fellow, we can smash you and your snorting old dragon who is coming here to devour us, into pieces. We can throw rocks on the line—Aha!"

"We have often watched you—though you were not aware of our presence," said the chairman. "We had just called a committee meeting to decide what is to be done about this matter of the tunnel."

"Now you know it is all nonsense about the dragon," said Karl persuasively, as if he were talking to children. "You have heard of trains, haven't you? You are not so behind the times as all that!"

"*Some* of us have seen the dragon and even ridden in him," said Mr Chairman. "There is a famous story about that; but the majority still look upon the railway with suspicion and even distrust. We only ask to be let alone, and not be interfered with by meddling mortals," he said in a gruff voice. "What do we need with you? Our civilization and our history are more ancient even than that of India or Egypt, and from us the human race is descended."

"I tell you what," said Karl, "I could put you up to a thing or two for all that. We live in Modern Europe, you know, and not in ancient Egypt. Now, for instance, why is this beautiful hall, a perfect work of art in its way, so badly illuminated!"

"Badly illuminated! Why, what do you mean?" cried the little men indignantly. "Do you not see our glow-worms hanging in festoons on the walls?"

"O, I say, *glow-worms*! in the twentieth century, that's rather strong, you know! what you want, is electric light."

"What's that?" said the dwarfs curiously.

"You have only to press a little button on the wall, like this," he pressed his thumb on the wall—"and the whole place is lit up almost

as if it were day."

"We don't believe it—we don't believe it," said the little men.

"But it's true, I assure you, *Christmas Tree*," said Karl.

"Wouldn't it make our eyes blink?" said one thin little fellow.

Karl noticed that the dwarfs' eyes were small and their faces pale. Most of them had quite white beards and hair.

"That comes of living so long underground, it is a loss of pigment," thought Karl. "Like a geranium that has been kept in the cellar! Now I could fix it up for you," said the young engineer, always keenly on the look-out for a job. "We are going to have it laid on in the tunnel."

"How much would it cost?" inquired the dwarfs.

"O, a thousand pounds or so!" said Karl carelessly. He had heard that dwarfs were very rich, and he was a good man of business, and had his eyes open to his interests.

"That's a great deal of money, a great deal of money!" said the little men in chorus.

"O, as for that I am sure we could come to an agreement," said Karl. "By the way," he went on—"do you happen to have a telephone here? I should like to 'phone to a friend of mine and tell him where I am. It would be such a joke."

"What's a telephone?" asked the dwarfs.

"You don't know what a telephone is! Himmel! you *are* old-fashioned down here—you are only half civilised!"

"Half civilised, half civilised!" repeated the dwarfs angrily, "let us repeat our civilisation——"

"I'll tell you what a telephone is," said Karl, interrupting this burst of eloquence. "It is a little tube connected with a wire, you put one part of it to your ear, and then you put your mouth to the tube and say: 'No. 1280,' and then listen, and your friend will speak to you from miles and miles away, and you can answer him."

"We don't believe it, we don't believe it!" said the unbelieving dwarfs.

"It's true for all that, *Christmas Tree*," said Karl. "I could fix that up for you too, if you have any connection with the outer air. You must have," he continued, sniffing, "for the air is nice and fresh here, quite different to that in the tunnel. Have you a ventilating shaft?"

"O yes," said the little men, "we can show you that!" And they led him out of the hall. In the passage outside was a great cleft or crevice in the rocks such as we call in England a chine. Above it the moon shone full and bright. A waterfall rushed down on one side; he saw ferns and dear little plants leaning over the water, growing between the cracks of the rocks. There were also glow-worms cunningly arranged in groups that looked like fairy stars. On the other side, he observed to his joy rough steps leading upwards cut in the solid rock. He sighed a sigh of relief, here at least was the way out.

He regarded the pretty sight with the eye of the professional engineer, rather than that of the artist. "That must be a stiff climb for you little men up there," he said. "Now if you had a lift!"

"What's that?" asked the dwarfs eagerly.

"It's a little room that goes up and down when you pull a wire rope."

"We don't believe it, we don't believe it," said the sceptical gnomes again.

"It's true nevertheless; now wouldn't it be fun to have a ride in it? I could fix that up too, you know, if you gave me time and helped a bit

yourselves," said Karl.

"Really you poor things," he went on, "You do not seem to have heard much of modern technical progress down here in this rabbit-burrow. I beg your pardon I'm sure"—as they looked displeased again —"Now I am really curious to know—have you heard of Zeppelin?"

"Zeppelin, no!—is he the King of Germany?" said the dwarf who had been in the chair.

"Ha! ha!—King of Germany—well he *is* nearly, in some people's eyes," said Karl. "He has built an airship; it is the most wonderful of all new inventions, it floats in the air like a boat does in the water."

"Close by it passes, by soft breezes fanned,
Like a great steamboat straight from fairyland."

he went on in an enthusiastic way. "You can go for a ride in it any day in Frankfurt, providing the weather is fine and you can afford to pay £15!"

"Just listen to him, just listen to him!" said the dwarfs. "We don't believe a word you have said. You are imposing on our credulity, you bad man," and thereupon they flew at him and began to beat him with their clubs, which were heavily weighted, and to pinch him with their long fingers.

It might have gone hardly with him, but quick as thought Karl flashed out the little revolver from his pocket. They seemed to know the meaning of that modern toy; for they crouched back trembling, and not daring to move.

"Now stop it, will you," he said, "or I shall have to shoot you, and take you home with me to be stuffed or put into the National Anthropological Museum. They would give me a good price for you," he said musingly—"they would think you were The Missing Link."

"O please, Mr Hammerstein, don't shoot us—("however did the little chaps find out my name!" thought Karl) we will believe all you say, even if it seems the greatest nonsense to us. After all birds fly, bats fly and fairies fly, why should not ships and trains fly?" said the spokesman, who, I must tell you, was a relation of King Reinhold in the Taunus Mountains and was proud of belonging to a royal family.

Karl called him Mr Query, because he was so fond of asking questions, but so slow to take in a new fact, as indeed were all the dwarfs.

"You promised us *Christmas Tree* not to harm us," said Mr Query, reproachfully.

"Well, I didn't hurt anyone, did I, but how about your treatment of me? That wasn't in the contract either," said Karl.

Meanwhile Karl looked about him curiously. He had never been to dwarfland before, and might never have the chance of visiting it again, and he did not wish to lose the opportunity of seeing all he could.

"Are there any more of you?" he asked the dwarfs.

"I should think so," they answered. "Hundreds and thousands of us live under this mountain."

Karl noticed passages running in all directions, and low caves which seemed to be dwellings, many of them richly ornamented and furnished. In one of these caves he observed a looking-glass, and wondered which of the dwarf men trimmed his beard before it. He met a great many little men scurrying about, who cast anxious glances at the giant who had strayed among them. Karl had frequently to stoop; the ceilings seemed very low to him, although they were high enough compared to the dwarf men.

"Where are the female dwarfs?" he asked abruptly.

"Dwarfs have no womenfolk," Mr Query replied. "We did away with them long, long ago!"

"That was rather rough on them, eh?" said Karl.

"Well it happened so many centuries ago that we have forgotten all about it, and so are unable to gratify your curiosity. Perhaps if you care for antiquities and were to study the pictures on the walls, you might find out."

"Not my line," said Karl shortly.

"As we have no women," Mr Query continued, "we never quarrel and have no differences of opinion."

"I expect no lady would care to live down here with you in this dark hole," said Karl, thoughtfully. "But to whom does the looking-glass belong?"

"A fairy comes to visit us occasionally; she makes herself useful and tidies up the place a bit for us," said the dwarf. "She's here now—would you like to see her?"

"Of course I should," said Karl, his heart beating fast at the thought of meeting a real fairy—perhaps she was a princess in disguise, and he might be chosen to win her.

The dwarf drew back the curtain that hung before a beautifully furnished cave, and there Karl saw a young girl who was busy dusting and arranging handsome gold vases on a carved bracket. Even by the pale light of the glow-worms and the lantern which he had not yet extinguished, he could see that she was very beautiful. She had a mass of red-brown hair, that waved in tiny curls about her forehead, and hazel eyes with dark eyelashes. As to her figure, she was small and slight, so that she did not look quite so monstrous in that little world as Karl did. She had a big holland apron on, with a gaily embroidered border. When she saw Karl, she laughed. "To think of meeting a young man in this old hole—how funny," she exclaimed.

"Are you a fairy?" said Karl, bewildered by her beauty.

"Do I look like one?" she answered with a toss of her bronze curls.

"Not exactly," said Karl, "but then I have never seen a fairy; you are

pretty enough for one!"

She made a little curtsy in acknowledgment of the compliment. "I'll have finished my work soon," she said, "and then we will go home together."

"That will be delightful," said Karl.

The dwarfs were looking on.

"You may go," said Mr Query. "You have worked enough for to-day." He handed her several pieces of gold. Her eyes sparkled with glee as she pocketed the coins; she was proud of having earned some money.

"Follow me," she said to Karl, "and I will show you the way home. You would never be able to find it alone."

"The dwarfs have burrowed here like moles," said Karl aside to the girl, "and I believe they are almost as blind and ignorant."

"Do not speak disrespectfully of moles," said a dwarf who had overheard the last part of this remark. "They belong to the most intelligent of all creatures; who can build a fortress like the mole?"

"Norah," said the dwarfs, "Norah, when are you coming again?"

"Very soon," she said, "I'll bring some metal polish with me, and make your vases shine!"

"Norah," thought Karl, "so that is her name. I wonder where she lives?"

Norah led the way back through intricate passages until they came to the open space where there was the staircase leading up to the

outside world. "Good morning," she said to the dwarfs.

Karl pulled out his watch—yes—the night was already past, it was four o'clock.

"I'll drop in again soon, and see about your little commissions," he said to the dwarfs. "Electric light you want, telephone and lift, it will be rather a big job."

"And what about the airship?" asked Mr Query.

"O I can't rig that up for you; you must go to Frankfurt and see that for yourselves. Good morning," and he turned to follow Norah, who was already some way up the stone staircase. From a distance she really looked like a fairy. The light of dawn shone on her wonderful hair; she had taken off her apron, and had on a white dress trimmed with gold, that fluttered as she mounted the steps. At the top she waited to take breath, and Karl easily caught her up. They gazed down into the depths beneath them, but no trace of dwarfland could they see. Even the glow-worms had vanished, and the rough steps looked like natural niches in the rock. They were on the top of the mountain. Near by stood a grove of firs, the trees were so gnarled and stunted from their exposed position that they looked like a dwarf forest, and seemed appropriate growing there.

"Your name is 'Norah'," said Karl boldly, "but that is all I know about you!"

"I am no fairy princess, alas," said Norah, "but only a poor landlord's daughter. My father and I have the new hotel in Elm!"

"O you must be the pretty innkeeper's daughter then of whom I have heard so much," said Karl. "Now isn't it funny, I had meant to stay the night at your hotel on the chance of seeing you, and now we meet

under the earth in dwarfland—romantic I call that! Why do you work for those little beggars?" he continued.

"For the same reason that you have proposed doing so," she answered, "to earn money. I was picking bilberries on the mountains and strayed into their land by chance one day. I found them busy at work spring cleaning, and helped them a bit, and that was my first introduction to the dwarfs. They pay me well for little work, and starting an hotel costs a great deal of money you must know. I am glad to be able to help my father."

"You do not come from this part of Germany, you speak quite differently to us," said the young man inquiringly.

"My home is over the seas," said Norah. "My father is an Irishman; but we found it hard to get on there, and meant to emigrate to America. Then father changed his mind, and we came to Germany. My mother died some years ago," she said sadly.

"Poor child," said Karl in a deep, sympathetic voice, "there must be a good deal of responsibility on your young shoulders."

"I should just think so," said Norah with a sigh, "but our hotel is going to be a tremendous success!" As she spoke, she led the way through a little narrow path, that crossed a heath where heather grew, and great masses of yellow starred ragwort. "Ah! me beloved golden flower," she cried, pointing the plant out to Karl, who had passed it by a thousand times as a common weed, but to whom it seemed from this day forth to be alive and full of meaning. "We call it fairy-horses in Ireland," she said, with a rapt look on her face, "sure and I can see my native mountains when I pluck it"—and her eyes filled with tears.

She wanted no consoling however, her mood changed quickly enough. "Do come here," she called out to Karl, "and see what I've

found now!" She showed him a clump of pure white heather; "it is tremendously lucky," she said, "and you shall have a bit too." So saying she stuck a piece of white heather in his buttonhole—real white heather, not the faded flowers which children sometimes mistake for it. Karl treasured the spray carefully.

"And how did you come to be among the dwarfs?" said Norah. But their further conversation was checked by a little brook that ran straight across the path. Now Norah usually took off her shoes and stockings and waded over this stream; but she did not like to do so with Karl looking on. Karl would have liked to pick her up in his arms and carry her across like a true hero of romance; but he was shy of proposing it. So he fetched some large flat stones, placed them dexterously in the stream, and sprang across himself, then he held out a hand to Norah who stepped over as quickly and gracefully as a young deer.

"Now I will tell you how it was you found me in dwarfland," said Karl as they walked on together. "I was at work on the new tunnel——"

"You'll not be telling me that you are a working man?" said Norah.

"No I am an engineer. I was on duty looking after the men, then, somehow or other I fell against the wall of the tunnel and hurt my arm"; he showed her his torn coat as a proof of the story.

"Poor thing," she interrupted, "did you bind it up properly?"

"O, it was a mere nothing," said Karl. "Well—I found myself in a strange winding passage that led right down into the central hall of the dwarfs." He did not wish to say that he had been asleep; he thought that would sound so silly. "Queer little fellows they are, those dwarfs," he continued, "awfully ignorant too. Now will you believe it they had never heard of the Zeppelin airship?"

"We'll really have to give them lessons," said Norah, laughing, "but perhaps they are not so stupid as they make themselves out to be!"

Climbing over boulders and stones, laughing and talking the while like two children just out of school, they reached the bottom of the mountain and saw the village. It could hardly be called a town as yet, though Norah's father hoped that the new railway station would speedily convert it into one.

"Do you know where our hotel is?" said Norah. "It is at the other end of the village; we will go round through the fields; the village folk stare so; they are up at five o'clock to do their field-work.

"There it is!" she called out proudly, pointing to a large white house with green shutters on which the words "Hôtel Fancy" were written in large gold letters.

"What a queer name for an hotel!" said Karl.

"Yes, don't you think it is original and attractive?" said Norah. "There are so many hotels called Hôtel Hohenzollern'—or 'The German Emperor' and so I thought we would have a change."

"It is a splendid idea," said Karl, who was over head and ears in love with Norah by this time and thought that everything she did and said, was perfect. Still, like a prudent German, he wondered to himself if she would make a good housewife. He knew she must be good at cleaning or the dwarfs would hardly have employed her, but her dainty little hands did not look like cooking.

"What would it matter, if the dinner were burnt sometimes," he thought, "if I could have such a pretty, fascinating little girl to marry me?"

"Will you come in and have some breakfast?" said Norah as they approached Hôtel Fancy.

"Rather," he said, "I must own that I am famished. I only had a dry bit of bread and cheese for supper, and that is a long while ago."

It was early still, Norah's father was not yet up; so she set to work and lit the fire, and soon had the water boiling for coffee. She set a fine breakfast before him, ham and eggs and sausage and rolls. I am bound in strict veracity to say that love did not prevent his consuming a large amount. He changed his mind about her cooking, and thought that she could do everything well and was a model of perfection.

"Do have some, too, yourself," he said, and Norah soon joined him with a hearty appetite.

Mr O'Brian, for that was the name of Norah's father, was astonished to find them at breakfast when he entered the comfortably furnished parlour.

"An early guest, father," said Norah. "He is going to put up here for the present; he is an engineer at work on the tunnel; good thing for us"; she whispered the last sentence. "I will see about getting your room ready," she said, turning to Karl.

"Please do not trouble," said he. "I'm due at the tunnel again at 7 a.m. and it is 6 o'clock now. I hope to return to-night about 8 o'clock; then I shall be glad of a room," he said, with a hardly suppressed yawn. "Pray excuse me, I had rather a bad night," he added with a twinkle in his eyes that only Norah perceived.

As soon as he was gone, Norah handed some gold pieces to her father.

"And do you think that I am doing right in taking this money from

you, Norah?" he asked.

"Why of course father! I'm telling you that it's fairy gold, and will bring us luck," she replied.

The Irish have a great respect for luck and omens; many of them still believe in the good folk, and Mr O'Brian, who was of a very easygoing disposition, was quite satisfied with this explanation.

Some weeks passed. Karl and Norah became better friends every day. All Karl's previous notions of the universe had been knocked on the head by his visit to dwarfland. He had thought that he knew almost everything that there was to be known, but now he was always on the look-out for surprises. Moreover his love for Norah had opened his eyes. Every bush seemed ablaze with fire, and the roses and pinks in the gardens smelt as they had never smelt before.

Norah was like a fairy princess; she was not easy to win, she loved her freedom, and wished to call no man lord and master. Because she was such a wild bird and of a poetic and dreamy temperament, Karl's practical mind appealed to her. He possessed that which she and her father lacked. She was tired of her father's promises and castles in the air, which usually ended in bitter disappointment. How many guests had they had since Hôtel Fancy had been opened? She could almost count them on her fingers. The peasants frequented the old inn that they were accustomed to in the village, and very few strangers came their way.

"I will play waiter on Sunday and help you," said Karl one Saturday

evening when he had returned from his work.

"Indeed and you'll not need to," said Norah with a pretty Irish lilt in her voice, "it's not many people that will be coming! It will be different of course when the new station is built; then we shall be flourishing," she continued.

It was a fine Sunday afternoon. Karl and Norah sat in the garden under the plane-trees which made a chequered pattern in shadow on the ground, and sipped glasses of Apfelwein or cider in German fashion.

"It was a queer thing that we two should meet in the little people's land. It seems as if we were meant to pull together, doesn't it?" said Karl with an effort.

Norah jumped up immediately, saying that she must see if the water was boiling for coffee.

"No, no," said Karl catching her by the hand; "you are not going to run away like that; you've just got to listen to me, Norah; for I can't keep it in any longer. You are my fairy princess—I love you with all my heart, and I want you to promise me to be my little wife—will you?"

"You don't know me yet," said Norah blushing like a rose. "I've got a most awful temper!"

"I'll risk it," said Karl laughing, and they plighted their troth under the trees in the garden with no one but the empty chairs and tables looking on, that were spread in anticipation of the guests who had not

arrived.

So Karl and Norah were engaged to be married and were as happy as ever it is possible to be in this world! They did not celebrate the event in the usual ceremonious German fashion; for Norah's friends and relations were in Ireland and she had only a few acquaintances in Germany as yet. Karl's mother was a widow, and lived with her married daughter in Pomerania; so she could not come so far south for anything less than a wedding or a funeral.

Now Karl began to consider the material side of the question. "Will the love that we are rich in, light the fire in the kitchen, and the little god of love turn the spit O!" What had they to live on? He was a young man, and his income was very small; it takes many years in Germany to make a career as engineer, unless you are exceptionally lucky and have influential friends.

Hôtel Fancy was rather like its name and did not pay at all as yet. Now Karl had not forgotten the dwarfs, and Norah began to miss the gold pieces which had disappeared fast enough in the last few weeks.

"I tell you what," she said, "we will go together to dwarfland. You can arrange about the electric light, and I will do some metal polishing; we will meet afterwards and come home again together, it will be splendid fun!"

"How can we get there?" asked Karl somewhat dubiously.

"Why, the same way as we came out—through the rocky gap; I know the way as well as anything, I have been there frequently," said Norah.

It was early autumn; the evenings had begun to close in. Karl had

managed to get off earlier than usual; still it was almost dusk as the two set out to go to dwarfland. The sun was setting and threw a wonderful golden glow over the world that was reflected in the hearts of the young lovers.

"My stones must be there still," said Karl as they came to the little brook, "for who could have taken them away?" Yet to his surprise there were no stones there; neither were any to be found in the neighbourhood. There was nothing for it, but to carry Norah over. He did not feel so shy and embarrassed this time, as he picked up his little sweetheart laughing and struggling in his arms.

"You are as light as a feather," he said as he set her down again.

"A feather bed, you mean," she said, "and they are a pretty fair weight. I shall never get used to German feather beds," she continued. "I can't even get them to look right when I make them and shake them!"

"You need to be born and brought up to them to appreciate them," he replied, "but never mind, what does it matter, what is a feather bed in comparison with our love?" They laughed for pure joy and good humour as they walked along; ah how quickly time passes when one is so happy! The sunlight gilded the rocks before them, till they looked as if they contained streaks of gold ore. They crossed the little moor, and clambered over the rocks till they reached the stunted fir-grove.

Looking back they saw that the sky had become a glowing red as it often does just before the light dies out; seen through the dark, twisted trees the wood appeared to be on fire. The lovers sat down and gazed for a few moments in silence till the glory faded from the sky.

"Now for it, Norah," said Karl getting up and offering her a hand,

"the way down into dwarfland must be quite near here!"

"Of course I know, I can find it at once," she answered.

They searched carefully around for the great crack in the rocks, but could find nothing in the least resembling it.

"How absurd; how *can* we miss it when it is certainly not more than a yard or two away," said Norah.

"The steps were not so easily recognisable, if I remember rightly," said Karl, "but we are sure to find them in a minute."

It grew darker and darker; the mountain was covered with boulders of stone, juniper bushes and stunted trees; but no trace of the great rent in the mountain-side could they discover.

"Did we dream it all?" said Karl.

"Impossible, why I have been down there many times," said Norah beginning to feel bitterly disappointed.

"Supposing I were to fetch some of my men here and blow up the rocks with dynamite; we must be able to get in then, for the mountain is as full of dwarfs as bees in a hive," said Karl, who was getting in a temper.

"And do you think they would reward you handsomely for your services," said Norah sarcastically, "and O the poor little men, they always treated me with the utmost kindness and politeness, and gave me far more money than ever I bargained for!"

"They nearly pinched me black and blue, till I frightened them with my revolver," said Karl.

"The wretches!" said Norah, "but why?"

"Because I was silly enough to tell them about the airship, and they thought I was humbugging them."

"How absurd!" Norah exclaimed. "But what are we to do now, Karl?" she continued in a doleful voice. "I *must* have some money; we are still in debt for the greater part of our furniture; and the house is heavily mortgaged."

"If I could only get a good post!" said Karl sighing deeply. "I had reckoned on those dwarf chaps!"

"We shall never be able to marry," said Norah, now in the depths of despair; "our house will have to be given up, and our things sold by auction, and I, O I shall have to marry a horrid, rich old peasant who will treat me as a servant, and father will be obliged to work in the fields." With this she burst into tears.

It was quite dark now save for the new moon whose pale crescent shone in the sky. Norah observed it in spite of her tears.

"The new moon!" she exclaimed. "O do let us turn all the money that we have in our pockets. How much have you got Karl?"

"About 10 shillings," he replied.

"O you are richer than I am; I have only 8d. in my purse; nevertheless let us turn what we have, and it will be sure to bring us a fortune."

Karl laughed. "You little fairy," he said, and looked at her with admiration; then involuntarily his eyes strayed in the direction of the fir-grove. He thought he could see something moving there. Norah looked too. "Karl," she said excitedly, "I do believe it is the dwarf men

after all; who else could it be?"

At the same moment they caught sight of a queer form with a turned-up nose and peaked cap clearly outlined against the sky, and recognised Mr Query.

"Hullo!" said Karl.

"[text missing in original] to you," he said in a droll manner.

"Now, Mr Dwarf," said Karl, anxious to proceed to business, "what about our little agreement as to electric light, etc.?"

"The committee has decided against it," said Mr Query emphatically. "What do we want with your new-fangled inventions; you would bring your workmen with you; they would discover our treasures, and turn the whole place into a mine, and of course we should be obliged to decamp."

"Well, there is something in what you say," said Karl to whom this idea had already occurred, "but we could avoid that catastrophe!"

"As for you," continued the dwarf turning to Norah, "we have discovered that you are a human being also, and no fairy; therefore we shall not require your services any longer."

"What a horrid way to give me notice, as if I could help not being a fairy!" said poor Norah weeping bitterly.

The little fellow was much distressed; he could not make out what was the matter with her.

"Don't cry, little Fräuleinchen," he said, "I am sure we never thought you were so fond of us as all that; it is very gratifying, but it is too late now to alter our decision; the way down into our kingdom is sealed for

ever!"

"I could soon open it again," said Karl wrathfully.

"As for that, it would not be quite such an easy matter as you think," said Mr Query mockingly. "However we are willing to offer you terms," he continued, "if you will leave us alone and protect our secrets."

"What terms?" said Karl and Norah eagerly.

"You shall see," said the dwarf, "follow me to the fir-trees." So saying he sprang down from the stone on which he had been sitting and came up and shook hands with them.

"We are going to be married! what do you think of that?" they informed him.

"Humph! Your taste, not mine," said Mr Query. "However Norah will be able to clean your gold and silver dishes capitally; that's a comfort for you."

"We haven't got any gold and silver dishes to clean, alas!" said Norah.

"Poor things," said Mr Query, "well we'll see." He proceeded to the fir-trees where the Gentlemen of the Committee were again assembled, standing in a solemn semicircle. "If you will sign this contract, we are willing to give you a reward. I speak in the name of the Gentlemen of the Committee," said Mr Query, and the little men nodded their heads in assent. He drew out a roll of parchment from a bag he carried with him and handed it to Karl. Norah looked over his shoulder.

On the parchment was written the following:

We,

Karl Hammerstein,
Norah O'Brian,

pledge our solemn oath *Christmas Tree*, that we will not attempt to visit dwarfland again, or molest the dwarfs in any way, by offering them modern inventions for which they have no use, etc., etc., or by revealing their secret chambers to the glaring light of day.

Signed.....
.....

"We are willing enough to sign," said Karl, "but what are your terms, old man; we want to know that first. You offered us a bribe, you know."

"All in good time," said Mr Query. "Gentlemen of the Committee, display the treasure!" The dwarf men formed themselves into a ring, in the centre of which Norah and Karl could see masses of what looked like solid gold. "You may take as much of this as you like," they said, "and we warrant you on our solemn word of honour *Christmas Tree* that it is pure, unalloyed gold."

"We'll sign anything you like, dear little men," said Norah, joyfully, "and I invite you all to my wedding!"

"Three weeks from to-day," said Karl.

But Norah was too excited to notice what he was saying.

"I shall always believe in the new moon," she repeated again and again. "How shall we carry it?" she exclaimed suddenly. "I have not even got a basket with me."

"My men shall trundle it along for you in wheelbarrows," said Mr Query. "No please, do not say 'thank you.' I have a great objection to being thanked."

Karl and Norah now signed the document with joyful hearts. Norah professed herself very sorry not to see her dwarf friends again. She had a real affection for the droll little men.

"You may come across us sometime again, who knows," said Mr Query. "We make excursions into your world from time to time. It is improbable but not impossible that we may meet again. Good-bye!" A brilliant flash as of lightning shot from under the ground; the earth trembled and shook. Norah clung to Karl in terror; for she thought that the earth would swallow them up too. Then Mr Query and the dwarfs disappeared underground calling out as they did so: "You see we have our lift and our electric light too, Mr Engineer—ha! ha!—we are not quite so behind the times as you thought us—ha! ha!"

Norah and Karl stood still in speechless astonishment; then they looked anxiously for their gold, fearing that the dwarfs might have played them a trick after all. But no, there were two jolly strong-looking little fellows with wheelbarrows. "We've got the gold all right," they said. "Don't you be afraid. We've put some dirty old potatoes at the top," they continued with a cunning expression on their faces, "just in case we meet anyone on the way you know—we should have to hop skip and jump—one, two, three and off, and it might look awkward for you."

"I am sure it's very kind of you," said Norah, "and we can never thank you enough," and off they all set down the mountain. It was a troublesome job to get the heavy wheelbarrow over the stream. Norah declared afterwards that some of the gold was lost there; but they found no trace of it again if it were so. They did not feel safe until they reached the gate of Hôtel Fancy.

"Shall we put it in the back yard or in the stable?" said the little fellows in a hoarse whisper.

"Put it in the corner of the stable," said Norah, "as we have not got a horse no one goes in there. We will manage the rest, *thank you* so much."

"*Please* don't thank us," said the little men, "dwarfs are not used to that, and it hurts their feelings."

"Well, here is something for your labours," said Karl, and he gave the little men a handful of silver. They turned it over and over and seemed to regard it as a great curiosity. Then they heard a movement in the house, and quick as lightning they were off before Karl and Norah could say good-bye.

Mr O'Brian was pacing up and down in a great state of agitation; it was nearly midnight and he feared they might have met with an accident. "There's no depending on the fairies," he said to himself, "and dwarfs are said to be treacherous," so you see he knew something of what Norah was up to.

His joy was the greater when Norah and Karl rushed in and dragging him to the stables showed him the pile of gold. "I'll be for taking it to the bank at once," he said, "you never know but what it may melt away, or turn into a heap of leaves, I've read stories like that."

"Our wedding shall be next week," said Karl, joyfully.

"And aren't you going to give me any time to get my trousseau?" said Norah with a dancing light in her eyes that made her look more enchanting than ever. "Sure and I'll be wanting the finest trousseau

that ever a princess had."

"We'll turn Hôtel Fancy into a palace," said Mr O'Brian.

The wedding was celebrated three weeks from this date, as they had agreed. Norah wore an exquisitely soft cream silk gown, embroidered with real gold; it was said that the embroidery was a present from the dwarfs. Certain it is too that she wore an old pearl necklace of such marvellous workmanship that the like was never seen before.

The tale was whispered that a little deformed man had been seen to slip a parcel containing the necklace into the letter-box.

Norah's relations came over from Ireland to be present at the wedding, and you may be sure that Karl's mother arrived too all the way from Pomerania to share the festivities and the cake. Hôtel Fancy was crammed with guests; every available room was occupied; there was some talk already of enlarging the house.

One of the presents that the bride had from her husband, was a looking-glass, set with precious stones. People thought that it was a curious wedding-present, and wondered if Norah were exceptionally vain. But Karl declared that if it had not been for a looking-glass he might never have known his wife, a remark which sounded more mysterious than ever.

Many conjectures were made concerning it, but none of them were half so strange as the truth. Another present was a brooch set in diamonds in the shape of a crescent moon.

As they were now wealthy, Karl was able to indulge his passion for mechanical inventions, and Hôtel Fancy was full of the most delightful surprises: fountains in unexpected places in the spray of which little

balls danced up and down, a rare gramophone that played the most soft and pleasant music, every variety of electric light and so on.

Norah was a little disappointed that her friends the dwarfs did not come to the wedding; but what could she expect if her mother-in-law and uncles and aunts and cousins were all asked as well! Could she expect that the dignified Mr Query would condescend to become an object of general curiosity? I have heard that the little men called and left their cards some days after the wedding, when Norah and Karl were away on their honeymoon, and that Mr O'Brian treated them as royal visitors, and that they left charmed with his hospitality, and astounded at the many entertaining and marvellous things that were to be seen in Hôtel Fancy.

KÄTHCHEN AND THE KOBOLD

Half-way up the long steep hill that leads from Soden to Königstein, a rough road branches off to the left, plunging suddenly into a valley, and passing through the little village of Altenhain. As you walk down this steep rocky incline, the Taunus Mountains rise up grand and high in ever-changing panorama.

At the bottom of the hill lies Altenhain, an ordinary enough Taunus village, save for the beautiful shrine that stands on the high road. There a Crucifix hangs between two enormous poplar trees, one of the most beautiful natural altars in the world. The trees are tall and pointed like church spires, the trunks venerable with age. May the lightning spare these grand old trees, and the winds play gently through their boughs!

In this village lived a schoolmaster with his wife and family consisting of a daughter, twelve years old, and a baby boy. They were not really poor; for, besides their income, they had a piece of land to grow potatoes and vegetables; also a strip of vineyard and fine strawberry fields on the Dachberg, the produce of which they sold in Frankfurt for a good price. Moreover, they kept pigs and chickens and geese, and two dear little goats that gave them milk.

On a fine September day Käthchen (that was the daughter's name) was on the Dachberg, helping her parents to gather up the potatoes for the winter. Two sacks stood already full, looking from a distance like funny old peasants. Käthe liked to watch the potato fires that are lit to burn the refuse of the plants, smouldering and crackling in the dry autumn air, and the smoke curling up in the clear sky.

It was now about five o'clock, and as she had worked all day, she was tired and began to groan and grumble. So her mother said: "Hurry up and go home now, child, before it gets dark. Fetch the baby (the neighbours had taken charge of it for the day), light the fire, put on the kettle, and peel and boil the potatoes for supper."

Käthe was only too glad to be let off; her tiredness soon vanished as she flew down the steep, grassy slope of the Dachberg, slipping and tumbling every minute. The sun was low, and glowed through the pines and larches, which stand here together, making a wonderful contrast.

Käthe found her way across the wet emerald field coloured with patches of exquisite lilac from the autumn crocuses growing there in thousands, hanging out their cheeky little orange tongues. She sang and shouted for joy, and a feeling half sadness, half exhilaration, that comes to us often at the twilight, came over her. She wore a little red skirt and loose cotton blouse, and a tidy pinafore put on in order to cover her soiled frock on the way home. Her hair was ash blonde, and braided in two plaits round her head. Her eyes were dark and deep-set, and were a strange contrast to her hair. She passed over the tiny bridge where the brook crosses the field, and gathered a bunch of wild flowers, meadowsweet and harebells, water forget-me-nots and ragged robin, and made a pretty nosegay. She also picked a graceful spray of hops, the leaves slightly tinged with red, and wound it in and out of her hair. She had forgotten the baby and the supper and all the things for which she was responsible, and was just a little maiden living in her own enchanted land.

Now the path wound close by the pine woods, and the air seemed to grow chillier and more solemn. She saw great white clouds resting on the Dachberg above her. She seemed so far away, down in this valley and so alone. But she knew that her father and mother were near, probably watching her from the hill-top; it was silly to be

frightened, she knew the way so well.

Suddenly something sprang out of the bushes on to the path in front of her. She gave a great jump, but then so did he and she saw that it was only an old green frog. He cheered her up at once, and she began to poke at him with a stick and to sing:

"The frog sits in the rushes,
The funny fat old man,
And sings his evening ditties
As sweetly as he can,
Quark—Quark—Quark."

But as suddenly as he had appeared on the scene, the frog vanished again with a leap and a bound into the dark waters of the little brook that ran along by the side of the way.

Then she heard a rustling of the bushes and saw a little red squirrel peering at her with his bright, inquisitive eyes. Round and round the tree-trunk he went, enjoying himself thoroughly, and making fun of Käthchen, playing peep-bo like a baby.

The sun glowed through the tree trunks. It must be about six o'clock. "I must hurry up or supper will not be ready when my father and mother come home," she thought.

She then became aware of the sound of footsteps coming towards her along the path.

"Probably a peasant from Altenhain," she thought, and was pleased to think of meeting a friend. But the footsteps sounded strange and light, more like the pattering of raindrops through leaves, and then for a moment, she turned giddy; it seemed to her as if the trees were really rushing past her, as they seem to do when we look at them out

of a railway carriage. One of the young oak trees seemed to be running towards her down the path; but as she looked more closely, and her head became steadier, she saw that it was a boy a little older than herself, who came running towards her, and very queer he looked.

He had a great mass of brown curly hair tumbling about his head; green ears—it seemed to her, *could* it be possible? No, it must be that he had stuck oak leaves into his curly locks for ornament, pretty oak leaves tinged with soft red. Moreover he had the bluest and strangest eyes she had ever seen. They shone like wonderful jewels at one moment, and then turned dull and opaque and looked almost dead. He had on rough green trousers, and a white shirt with yellow embroidered braces; his feet were bare and very brown. When he saw Käthe, he gave a wild kind of Indian whoop, and danced round and round her, much to the poor child's dismay, his eyes flashing all sorts of colours. Her heart beat fast, but not a word or sound would come out of her mouth.

The boy then made a deep bow, and took her by the hand. Soon he had his long arms round her waist and was trying to kiss her.

Käthe began to cry with fear and indignation, "You rude, naughty boy," she said, "I will tell my mother of you."

The imp seemed much surprised, caught one of her tears on his finger, held it up to the light and then sucked it, making funny faces all the time. Käthe could not help laughing, and then she dried her tears with a corner of her apron. She sat down on a tree-trunk for a moment and tried to think.

Immediately the boy sat by her, and begged her to give him a kiss. He looked quite nice and pretty for the moment, and Käthe thought she had better do as he wished, or he might begin his antics again.

So she gave him a motherly kiss, just as she would give to her baby brother, smack! on the cheek. Immediately the queer look went out of his eyes, and a more human expression took its place.

"Käthe," he said, "Käthe, I am but a lonely little imp of the forest, but I love you, Käthe, and I want you to marry me, and live with me always, and be my own little wife. Will you, O will you? O *do, do*, do," he said, dancing up and down in wild excitement.

"O goodness gracious me, you are certainly quite crazy," said Käthe, "I will tell my mother of you!" She began to cry again, and smacked him whenever he tried to come near her.

Then he seized her by the hand and dragged her after him into the wild woods, till they were lost in the forest.

"O dear, O dear, whatever *shall* I do? what will mother say when she finds no Käthe, no supper, and no baby. Boo-o-o-o!"

"Never mind," said our imp consolingly, "you can't help it now, you have run away with me you see."

"I didn't, indeed I didn't," interrupted Käthe indignantly.

"I will send a moonshine Käthchen to take your place for the night. You *are* fond of dreaming, aren't you?"

"O yes, mother often calls me 'Träum Lies' (Dreaming Liese)."

"Well then, it's all right, she will not notice anything, and you and I will have fine times together. If you won't marry me, at least, we can get *engaged* you know, that will be fine fun."

"Hum——" said Käthe, "that *would* be amusing. We might *play* at being engaged! that would not matter."

"Have you a gold ring for me?"

"O we will go and buy one at the flower shop," said he.

"At the *flower* shop, that is a funny place to buy rings at," said Käthe.

"Buttercups and dandelions melted to a yellow heat make splendid fairy gold," he replied.

"Ah, then you really *are* a fairy!" said the little girl.

"Why of course, did you think I was a human child like you? What *did* they teach you at school?"

"Reading, writing and arithmetic, history and geography and scripture and sewing," said Käthe.

"But not how to know a fairy when you see one, O my stars!" said our hero.

"What is the good of learning
  To read and write and sew,
To count and do addition
  If fairies you don't know?

How do you know a fairy?
  O by his glittering eye,
And by his light, light footsteps
  You know when he goes by.

O what are school and lessons,
  My little maiden, pray,
If to the land of fairy
  They do not show the way?"

So he sang, and Käthchen thought to herself: "I've always suspected that we did not learn *everything* at school."

By this time her little head was completely turned; she thought no more of supper or mother or baby, but only wondered with round eyes what would happen next.

The moon shone brilliantly through the branches, and she noticed that the trees began to move, and some of them quickly changed places.

"Have you ever seen the trees dance?" said our hero. We will call him Green Ears; for I had forgotten to say that being a tree-imp, his ears were shaped like oak leaves, and were green tinged with pinky red. It was peculiar of course, but not so very noticeable on account of his thick curly hair. He was able to move them if anything startled him, to prick up his ears in very truth; then you saw that they really *belonged* to him.

The trees did not wait for Käthe to reply; they formed themselves in long avenues and began a stately dance, something like a quadrille.

A soft fairy music was played by an invisible band. Squirrels sprang at intervals from one tree to another, spreading out their bushy tails and uttering strange cries like new-born babies.

Birds flew in and out singing and keeping time to the music and rhythm of the dance. It was a strange sight, grotesque yet beautiful; the trees took half human forms and faces; it was funny to see how they joined hands (or branches) from time to time in the dance. After they had watched for some time and the sport had become monotonous, Green Ears took Käthe to the top of the hill, and there they saw the beautiful peaked mountain called the Rossert, bathed in the moonlight.

"Well, children, enjoying yourselves on this fine night, I hope?" said a woman of tall and commanding presence. "Will you come home and have supper with me? I am sure Green Ears has forgotten to offer you anything to eat."

Here she chucked him under his pointed chin.

The two children, fairy and human, turned and followed her, they felt that she was a person of authority and must be obeyed. Her fair hair fell in waving masses almost to her feet, it was covered with soft feathers, as if she had recently been filling feather beds.

The children saw a lighted cottage before them, with red roof and black-beamed walls like so many in the Taunus. A strong smell of honeysuckle was wafted towards them.

"This is my wood cottage, it is quite close to the Rossert, as you see. Some people call me the wood-woman, others Frau Holle," she

said. "The Old King (the mountain called Altkönig) is my brother; Olle (slang in German for *old*) or Holle, it is all the same, we are all relations in the Taunus, you must know!"

In front of the house was a dear little garden. The moonlight shone brightly on the flower-beds. The fairies were awake and peeped out with the greatest interest as the children entered.

Over the door was written in letters made of light, like those beautiful advertisements of beer and chocolate which so adorn the city of London by night:

THIS WAY TO FAIRYLAND.

Käthe felt that she was learning more in one night than in all her life before of that strange dream-world on the borders of which we live.

The house was so neat and tidy, that it looked as if it had just been spring-cleaned; the windows stood wide open, the moonlight streamed in. A little table was laid for supper.

Frau Holle invited them to sit down and they did so at once.

Green Ears sat opposite to Käthe staring at her with a wistful expression of adoration and love in his eyes.

A chocolate pudding with cream and sugar and a bilberry jelly stood on the table, also rolls which were thickly buttered and spread with various kinds of fairy sausage purely vegetarian in character. Mugs of delicious-looking milk were ready for each child.

But the supper reminded Käthe of her home and she felt a little uneasy.

However she had *at the bottom of all* a comfortable feeling that all was right. This is the way with many of our self-imposed troubles, big people's as well as little people's. We groan and grumble, and express our views that everything is very wrong, and the world is soon going to the dogs, but *at the bottom of all*, we know that it is all right, and that all things work together for good.

Green Ears began to fidget; he was like a little girl I know, and *could* not sit still for more than one minute.

"Frau Holle," he said, "Frau Holle, Gracious Lady, we want to get engaged."

Frau Holle burst out laughing: "A mortal child and a Kobold of the forest! nonsense, it's impossible!"

Käthchen lifted up her brown eyes. "We might play at it," she said. "It would be a beautiful game."

Frau Holle chuckled so much at this that she nearly upset the milk jug.

"How *do* people get engaged?" said Käthe. "I have often thought about it, but I never could imagine how they do it?"

"Didn't they teach you that at school either?" said Green Ears. "My stars! What *did* they teach you at school?"

"Children," said the wood-woman, "children, do you mean it?"

"Certainly," said Green Ears.

"I think so," said Käthe.

"Do you wish to buy rings?"

"O yes," decidedly from both children.

"Now listen; there is a passage from my house leading to the shops, most convenient I assure you," said Frau Holle. "Everything delivered punctually on the premises within one minute of purchasing it. No lifts or motor-cars necessary. You see I know the ways of the world." So saying she opened the back door, and they passed into a lane lighted by many lamp-posts. These lamp-posts gave a very bright light and had queer faces like the man in the moon. They grinned and winked as Green Ears and Käthchen went by.

It was a lovely fair; a fair in fairyland you may imagine how gorgeous that must be!

There were stalls on which lay all sorts of tempting things, cakes, sweet and toys. Käthe felt sorry that she had no money.

At the flower stall they paused; the flowers were exquisitely arranged, and out of each peeped a little Fee.

In big gold letters was written:

CONDENSED FLOWERS FOR SALE.

As Green Ears asked boldly for engagement rings, a fairy who stood behind the stall, handed him two little gold rings made to fit any finger; they were a new patent and self-adapting, the fairy said.

Green Ears was so pleased that he turned head over heels again and again for joy, a funny proceeding for a would-be husband.

"Do you know *how* to get engaged," he said to the fairy.

"Why no, not exactly, but I have heard it is very simple," said she. "Mother Holle (here she made a deep curtsy), Mother Holle knows all about it."

Käthe looked out of the corner of her eyes at her lover, and wished he would behave with more dignity. Now he was cramming his mouth with sweeties.

"Aren't you going to give me *any*?" she said.

"O my stars!" he said again, surprised; it had never struck him. Imps are usually egoists; that is to say they think *first* of themselves. There are exceptions, but this is the rule.

He went rapidly from stall to stall and returned with his arms full of parcels done up in pink paper which he presented to Käthchen with a low bow. She accepted them with much delight and they fell to munching chocolate together; it was a real bond of union, and they were not the first sweethearts who discovered it.

They reached the end of the street and suddenly found themselves alone once more on the slopes of the Altenhainer Thal or Valley.

Green Ears sat down by Käthchen, and squeezed himself up closely to her.

"Give me your pretty little hand," he said. "*Do* you know which is the right finger?"

"O yes!" Käthchen knew that quite well, though I have heard that it is a disputed point in Germany.

She stuck out her little hard-worked fingers, and he put the gold ring

on the third finger of the left hand. It fitted exactly and with a cry of joy Käthchen put the other on his long brown finger.

Then both the children laughed and clapped their hands, and danced merrily about. "Now we are engaged," they cried, "really engaged to be married!"

They made such a noise that the squirrels were cross and threw sticks at them for disturbing their early-morning sleep.

Then, goodness knows why—let us call it reaction—Käthe began to cry again, great, big drops.

Green Ears was much puzzled.

"You *are* clever, now I can't do that," he said. "You must stay with me always, and live with me in the woods, and be my own little sweetheart."

"O no," said Käthe, "I should never be allowed to do that; I must go to school every day, and then I have my exercises to do, and to help mother with the housework; the baby to mind; and—O I am always so busy."

"I will come and help you," said Green Ears.

"But you *can't*, you are not *real*, you know," said Käthe and began to cry again.

"Käthchen," said Green Ears, and he looked quite serious and thinky all at once. "Listen to me. I will go to the Old King; he is the ruler of all the fairies here, and I will beg him to teach me how to become human. It may be years before we meet again, for the way into your world is very hard for me to find. Yes it is easier for you to find the way into our world, than for us to enter yours; but cheer up, I will dare it and

do it for your sake! but O sweetheart wait for me; O wait for me!"

"Wait for me, my little sweetheart,
  Till I come to you again,
Win the world for you, my sweetheart,
  With its joy and with its pain.

Wait for me, my little sweetheart,
  For when falling on the ground
I beheld those curious dewdrops
  To your heart my heart was bound.

All my fairy life is nothing,
  All my fairy joy I give,
Just to hold your hands, my sweetheart,
  In your world with you to live.

Wait for me, my little sweetheart:
  I will find the way to you,
As a grown man I will seek you,
  Seek and find you ever true."

So singing they walked arm in arm through the long winding valley, till the dawn approached like a golden bird opening its great wings to fly.

Käthchen reached her cottage door. All was silent within. "Good-bye," she said, and their eyes met in one last farewell.

"Auf Wiedersehen!" said Green Ears (that pretty German farewell greeting which means so much more than good-bye), and then he stole back down the stony street, kissing his hands again and again to the little girl.

In some strange way Käthchen passed *through* the door of her little cottage; she had become for the time incorporeal; through the touch of a fairy her body and soul had become *loose*, that is to say, and she was able to enter the house as silently as a person in a dream. She went through the kitchen and up the steep wooden stairs. It seemed to her as if her feet did not touch the ground, she floated rather than walked. She reached her own little attic, and saw the room as if it were a picture, the square window-frame, the branches of the trees outside, the old pictures on the walls that she was so fond of.

But what was her surprise to see *herself* curled up asleep in her big wooden bed!

The horror of it made her faint, and she remembered no more until she found herself in her own bed under her own big feather sack. In order that she should not forget her night's adventures, or think it was all merely a dream, she found a ring of yellow grass wound tightly round her third finger. From that hour, though the ring fell to pieces, the mark of it was clearly to be seen on her finger. It *was* a fairy ring, you see.

Her mother apparently had not missed her, and the baby was as jolly as ever.

"What *was* the matter with you last night, Käthe?" said her mother. "You were dreamier than ever; not a word could we get out of you. You *must* have been tired out, you poor child!"

"But everything was all right, wasn't it, mother, the potatoes were boiled and the supper ready?"

"Why of course you managed very nicely. Now hurry up and let us have breakfast."

Now I feel sure that all the children who read this story will want to know what happened to Käthchen and Green Ears later on.

Did he really come back to visit her as a grown man?

Did they marry and live happy ever after?

Had he green ears as a mortal?

But alas the fairies who told me this story, have left these questions unanswered, at all events for the present, so I can only guess at the conclusion.

I think myself that Green Ears was pretty sure to succeed in his quest, because if you want a thing intensely enough, you can usually get it.

They would make a rather funny married couple, that is true, and we will hope that Green Ears did not turn head over heels on his marriage day.

But the fairies assure me that the trials necessary to pass through in order to become a mortal, have a very sobering effect on the character, and so we can think of Green Ears as quite different, though still fascinating and charming.

I would have liked to be present at their wedding, wouldn't you?

"O joy when on this solid earth
Is heard the sound of fairy mirth!
O joy, when under earthly things
Is heard the sound of fairy wings,
When the impossible is true,
When I come back and marry you!"

THE OLD KING

Walter had been playing with his kite in the garden. Somehow or other it would never mount properly, unless his father was there to help him. It was apt to fly up a little way, and then to fall into a bush or fence, and there to perch like a big bird, until Walter and his friends rescued it with difficulty. But on a windy day when his father took him into the open fields, away the kite would sail, until Walter grew anxious lest it should disappear altogether in cloudland.

It was a fine afternoon, about three o'clock, a lazy, sleepy time of day. A queer jumble of all the fairy stories that the boy knew, passed through his head as he sat on the lawn, day-dreaming, while his kite flapped its wings on the ground beside him.

Now you must know that it happened to be Midsummer Eve, the summer fête day of the fairies. Walter stared at the mountains whose great purple heads he could see in the far distance across the green plain. How they changed from moment to moment, as the clouds cast their shadows on them, till the sun shone out bright again and chased away the shadows. As Walter looked intently at his favourite peak, a mountain called the Old King, he saw a shining cloud on the summit against the sky, that he had never noticed there before. As he gazed and gazed, the cloud seemed to form itself into a wonderful castle. Each turret and tower was of an exquisite hue like the clouds at sunset. Grey mists wreathed round it, and made a soft, mysterious background: the castle became more vivid and shone like gold.

How should Walter reach this fairy palace? For reach it he felt that he must! His kite had an answer ready. It jumped up from the ground, and looked at him with a queerly human expression, and seemed to

say: "Sail me!"

Walter gave but one touch to unwind the string, and up, up it mounted like the Parzival airship, bearing the little boy with it, who held tight to the end of the cord. He felt rather giddy and frightened at first, but soon found out that by holding the cord in his hands to give him confidence, and making movements in the air, similar to those of swimming, he could fly quite easily.

Most of us have experienced this delightful sensation in our dreams, and I have heard children declare that when they were small, they used to fly downstairs without even touching the banisters. Perhaps flying may be a forgotten art: or perhaps we have not yet learned to discover, and to use our wings.

To Walter it came quite naturally; on, on they flew over the trees, and over the houses, over the windings of the Nidda. Walter could hear the tinkle tinkle of sheep bells below, or was it possible that he could already hear the bells of fairyland ringing? Over the church spire of a little village they soared, and all the children shouted: "Zeppelin! Zeppelin!" because you see all this happened in modern times, when even the children no longer believe in the supernatural.

As the kite flew nearer to the mountains Walter could see the well-known tower of the Feldberg, and the inns kept by the landlords Storm and Monster; he could see the castle of Cronberg, and the interesting village of Falkenstein.

But where was the beautiful palace on the Altkönig? Here was nothing to be seen but trees, trees, trees. He would have thought it all a dream, were it not for his wonderful flight through the air. The kite now dropped gradually, and set Walter on the ground. Then it began to flap about undecidedly, and behave queerly, like a dog seeking for a trail. At last it set off again up a narrow path leading straight into the

green woods.

Walter followed, still holding tight by its tail, no longer soaring but skimming the ground. Once or twice the poor kite was entangled in the branches, Walter freed it, and off it set again at a fine pace up the mountain-side.

Walter began to feel hungry; for there is nothing like flying to give you an appetite, as Mr Euler would surely tell you, but the kite allowed him no time even to gather a few raspberries on the way. At last they came to a place where several paths crossed. Here the woods took another character: dark firs grew in the place of beeches and oaks. These firs were covered with a silver lichen that looked like hoar frost.

A little hut made of rough logs of woods stood at this crossing. At the door stood a little old woman. She had neither red eyes nor a hooked nose; so Walter thought to himself: "She cannot be a wicked old witch like the one who caught Hänsel and Gretel." She had a friendly, grandmotherly face, and invited Walter to come into her hut.

"You must be so hungry, you poor little man," she said. "Come in, come in, the coffee is all hot and waiting for you!" Then she turned to the kite which was turning head over heels, and making grimaces on the ground. "Be off with you," she said, "we shall not need you any more!"

"Good-bye, good-bye, dear kite," said Walter, "thank you very much for bringing me here."

The kite grinned and made a funny bow; then he mounted up of his own accord, and sailed away home over the tree-tops.

On a rough wooden table was spread a delicious repast. Rolls and butter, coffee and milk, Streuselkuchen and Butterkuchen such as

German children love, and also cakes called Bubenschenkel—or little boy's legs. Walter did not quite like the name of these cakes; it made him think of witches again; but they tasted quite harmless.

Whilst he was eating his cake, there was a knock at the door of the hut, and in came a smart fox, wearing a red cap with green feather, and a jaunty coat and waistcoat.

"Heigho! How fine you are, Mr Fox," said the old woman, "I suppose you are going to the ball to-night?"

"O yes, of course, I am going to be there early. Miss Bushy Tail has promised to be my partner for the Polonaise," he said. "I hope you have a cup of coffee ready for me." He then sat down, and peered at Walter with his bright, inquisitive eyes. Now everyone knows that the foxes dance on the Feldberg on May Day. On one of the biggest fir-trees there hangs a picture of two foxes dancing, and these cross-roads have thence derived their name Fuchstanz. But they do not only dance on May Day, but on many other occasions such as the present. Walter had often wished that he could see them at their sports.

Presently there was a scratching at the window, and in came a squirrel in a great hurry with a bag of nuts slung over his shoulder. He disturbed the great black cat who was asleep on the window-sill, and she bristled with rage, and swore at him; but he took no notice, and was off again in a jiffy, after having drunk a tiny little glass of milk which stood all ready for him on the table. The squirrels were very busy; for a great many nuts were required for the feast, and they had been turning out their store cupboards.

A little hare peeped shyly in at the door. "Hullo!" he said. "Fine doings at the castle to-night. I am carrying up a basket or so of Easter Eggs. They are sure to please the Old King," and off he went.

"Is he really the Easter Hare?" asked Walter; but no one answered his question.

The old woman smiled mysteriously. When Walter had finished his coffee, she said: "Now my little dear, you must be off as well, or you will be late at the castle. It is a great privilege for you to be invited; it is long since the Old King has sent for a mortal child."

"But did he send for me?" said Walter, astonished.

"Why of course, or how could you have got here alone," said the fairy. "But be very polite and answer nicely when spoken to, or the Old King might be angry, and when he is angry the whole mountain shakes, and I crouch and tremble in my little hut. But now let us see if I have not got something fine for you," so speaking she pulled out a sack of toys that stood in a dark corner and gave Walter a cart and horse. At first it was quite small; but when she set it on the floor, it grew and grew until it was large enough for a seven year's old boy to ride in. And O marvel, the wooden horse began to prance as if it were alive!

Walter sprang into the cart; the door of the hut stood wide open, and out he drove.

"Good-bye, good-bye," said the fairy of Fuchstanz. She gave him a bag of gingerbread nuts, beautifully ornamented, as the peasants in the Odenwald know how to make them. One had on it:

"For a good boy."

It was an invitation from the Old King and was worded as follows:

Audience with His Majesty, 10-11.
Amusements Varied.

Supper and Dancing, 12.
Crying forbidden.
Old King.

"Good-bye, I will come to see you again very soon," said Walter, and he drove up the mountain in fine style.

It was now getting quite dark; for he had stayed longer than he was aware of in the little hut; the firs stood black and deep on either hand; he would have been frightened perhaps, but he was tired; he closed his eyes and played at being asleep in his little bed at home. When he opened his eyes again, he saw bright lights flitting through the gloomy fir-trees like so many luminous butterflies. One flew towards him, and settled on the side of his cart, and he saw that it was a lovely elf with a crown of gold on his head. "King Oberon himself," thought Walter, and the elf answered, as all fairies do, to his *thought*:

"Yes I am Oberon, King of the fairies," he said in a voice in a high key like the hum of insects. "I have come to look at you, it is so long since I have spoken to a mortal child. Mortals care no longer for us; they like true stories—that is stories about their own stupid little lives; 'fairies do not exist,' they say, Ha, ha, ha! we pinch their silly little toes, and send them bad dreams, and hide their toys, and blot their copy-books, and then we do not exist, Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I care very much," said Walter eagerly. "O won't you come home with me and live with me always and sleep in my bed, you beautiful little Elf-man." And he put out his hand to catch the fairy as a child might grasp at a butterfly. But—puff!—he was off like a seed of the thistledown, and a peal of fairy laughter sounded in his ears. Then all was still and dark again.

Suddenly a sound of bells broke the stillness ling, lang, ding dong. These were the foxgloves, and the balsams popped like tiny pistols,

and from the tall mosses came sudden explosions and the scattering of illuminated spores. All this in honour of the night.

Suddenly Walter became aware of a huge rock in front of him. Towering up black and high on its summit was the wonderful castle that he had seen from the distant plain. White and grey were its cloudy walls, rose and lemon and emerald its towers and turrets; its roof was the sky studded with a thousand diamond-rayed stars.

The horse could go no farther; his mission was accomplished. The boy bade his dear steed farewell with many fond regrets, and set out with a brave heart to scale the rock alone. It was a difficult and dangerous climb in the dark night; but, however, he managed with the help of bushes and shrubs to reach nearly to the top. But alas the last step was too steep for the little boy; it was a sheer, perpendicular wall. Our hero looked round in despair; big drops gathered in his eyes; but he *would* not let them fall. He stood quite still, clinging to the rock and unable to move either forward or backward. It seemed like the climax of a bad dream. Suddenly he saw a bright cloud approaching him, and the air was full of a multitude of tiny elves. They seized hold of him by his coat and knickers and boots and even by his curly hair, and bore him upwards singing:

"Fairies seek and fairies save
Children who are bold and brave."

So they supported him up the last step and they floated off as they had come, looking in the distance like a cloud of bright fireflies.

Walter now found himself in a dark, mysterious garden. The bushes and trees took strange forms and seemed alive. One shrub that looked like a big black bear gave a low growl, as he passed by. He was really frightened and his little heart beat fast, in spite of all the fairies had said in praise of his bravery. But he soon reached a lovely

lighted avenue leading straight up to the entrance of the castle. The doors were open wide. Two large white owls stood on either side as sentinels. A stream of light poured out of the hall and dazzled Walter's eyes, so that he could not see distinctly at first. Graceful wood nymphs stood chatting in groups. A statue of Siegfried slaying the dragon was in the centre of the hall. Small fountains played round it. It seemed as if he were expected at the castle as his arrival created no surprise. Two fairies advanced and took him by the hand. Walter thought they were the loveliest ladies he had ever seen. One was fair and dressed in cloudy gauze which changed in colour from blue to green and mauve like opalescent waters; the other was dark and wore a dress of rose colour that changed into orange and red like leaping flames of fire. These were the geniuses of water and fire. Walter did not know this at the time; at least he only guessed it; he was too young to speculate as to the nature of the strange sights he saw. He found himself suddenly in a Court suit of white woollen material, beautifully embroidered and lined with silver.

"Now you are a cloud with a silver lining," his fairy friends said to him smiling. "You are sure to please the Old King."

Wonderful fairy creatures, nixies and gnomes and goblins arrived every minute as guests for the castle. The hare came in quite breathless with a basket which he delivered up to an attendant, saying: "Eggs for His Majesty."

The fox from Fuchstanz seemed to feel himself very important; he swaggered about, knocking people with his bushy tail. He stuck out a paw condescendingly for Walter to shake as he went by, and stared at him more inquisitively than ever.

An elderly woman who would have been very neat and tidy, save that her hair was white with snowflakes (no, it could not be snow, it was little feathers as soft as down) came in smiling with a pot of

bilberry jam under her arm. She had come from the Rossert Mountain, and the jam had been cooked as was her custom on the Holle Stone, that mysterious stone on the slopes of the Rossert, so neatly marked on the Taunus map, but so impossible for the curious mortal to find.

Gradually all these strange guests began to form into a long procession, and to march round the hall to the sound of fairy music.

One side of the wall was draped with a green curtain; this began to sway and draw itself aside. A fresh, invigorating mountain air blew in their faces; they marched on to a larger and loftier room. The ceiling was the sky; the light was the light of thousands of stars, the same stars that we know, but shining with greater brilliancy for the fairies on Midsummer Eve. The floor was carpeted with the softest moss. Walter's feet sank into it. They marched through green arches made by skilfully interlaced trees. Pines and larches were arranged as pillars, and were adorned by festoons of wild roses, forming garlands from one to the other.

At the far end of the room stood two tall poplar trees, and between them seated on a cloudy throne was a majestic being with flowing white beard, and a crown of gold on his head. As Walter approached the throne, the poplar leaves shook and shivered as before a thunderstorm. Then a great wind arose, a mist rose up, the fairy procession bowed down before the Old King—the Ruler of the Mountain. Then there was a sound like the rumbling of thunder, and the Old King spoke. Walter had some difficulty at first in catching the words, but by nudges, pinches, and pokes, the company gave him to understand that they were addressed to him.

"What is your name? mortal child," said the Old King.

"Walter, please Your Majesty," said Walter with a deep bow, feeling his courage going into his boots.

"Walter—a good old German name," said the Old King. "Doubtless you are a poet?"

"Oh!" said our hero valiantly, "when I am a man I mean to write story poems like Schiller and Uhland."

"That is right," said the Old King. "Real poets are rare in these days. Even if I appear to them in all my splendour the stupid people merely remark 'a curious cloud formation,' and think they know all about it. You are young"—he went on—"you will forget all that you have seen here; but the feeling will remain that the heavens are near you. Who knows but what you may be a real poet in the future, a poet who shall open men's eyes once more to the invisible world which lies so near them. Remember your beautiful costume and show always the cloud with the silver lining in your poems."

"Which do you like best, work or play?" continued His Majesty in a voice like distant rolls of thunder.

"Play, please Your Majesty," said Walter, tremulously.

"Quite right, quite right, play play all the day—good folk say—good folk say! Do you cry much? My children are all such cry babies, and though I scold them and lecture them every day, they will not learn to behave better."

Walter had no time to answer; for clouds came rolling up and almost hid him from view.

"These are my troublesome children," said the Old King.

Some of the clouds were dear little cuddly babies, others looked like great white poodles, others like huge black bears or crocodiles. With outstretched arms and wingèd helmets strange forms rode by on

swift horses with floating manes resembling the Walküre of old; the lightning played across the sky as they passed. Truly they were a strange family with much originality.

"Now, children, be off with you, and whatever you do, *don't cry*," said the Old King. But even as he spoke, one little cloud dissolved in raindrops and wetted the fine clothes of the company.

Presently a push and a bustle began. Long, narrow tables were brought into the hall, and in a short space of time they were covered with the most wonderful dainties in the way of sweets and cakes, jellies, puddings and fruit.

Walter sat down hastily: a fine plate of Easter eggs and nuts was before him. He helped himself plentifully, and even filled his pockets, which was not quite good manners you know, but seemed to excite no notice.

A venerable water-sprite rose presently and proposed the health of the Old King. Wine-glasses were filled to the brim with golden or crimson wine; as the glasses clinked together, the vibrations sounded sweet yet sad like some high violin note, as it dies on the string. Then a wind arose, summer lightning played round the room, illuminating vividly the faces of that strange company; a roar of thunder shook the castle. Brunhilde's fire sprang up suddenly round the outer walls, so that the scene was brighter than daylight. The tables were cleared away, and the wildest revels began. The Old King faded into the distance like a mountain-peak. A goblin seized hold of Walter and tore him round in the maddest fashion.

The foxes had a corner to themselves; their dancing was evidently much admired. Especially our friend and his sweetheart Miss Bushy Tail distinguished themselves by the elegance of their steps.

Mother Holle seemed to keep a certain amount of order, but the revels became wilder and wilder and Walter grew strangely sleepy and tired; he felt himself a part of some mad dream. As he dreamed, great clouds came rolling up, and all was lost in mist. When the mist cleared, Walter stood once more before the throne of the Old King.

"Come my little fleecy," the Old King was saying to a little girl cloud who came tumbling down before him. "Be the best of daughters and take this little boy home; you know the way. But mind, no tears!"

"Adieu," he said to Walter. Walter murmured adieu, and, in another moment, he was flying with his arm round the neck of the baby cloud, flying, flying, flying.

He knew no more till he found himself in his garden at home, feeling rather queer and sleepy. He got up, and stretched himself, and found that he was quite wet; for the little cloud had dissolved in tears at parting from him. On the ground lay his kite looking quite innocent.

He went indoors, and found it was tea-time, and everything was just as usual.

"Why, child, you are quite wet! Why did you not come in during the shower?" he heard his mother's voice saying to him.

He found a huge walnut in his pocket and when he cracked it out crawled a wonderful beetle with green body streaked with gold. As Walter put out his hand to secure his treasure, it flew away from him looking very much like King Oberon himself. Walter thought that he

heard a peal of fairy laughter, but it might have been only his fancy.

The next day was his birthday, and what do you think he had as a present? Why the very same cart and horse that had carried him to the castle, big enough to ride in. But he never told anyone—even his mother—the whole story of his adventures. Perhaps he did not remember them clearly himself; for the fairies protect their secrets well, and draw in sleep the veil of forgetfulness over much that we have seen in our dreams.

And did Walter become a great poet? He is a friend of mine, so I can tell you. The world has not heard of him as yet. He tells me that he often hears a little voice near him, singing, singing; sometimes he can distinguish the words and the melodies. They make him feel sad at times, he says, with longing for a world that is more beautiful than ours, but oftener they make him feel exhilarated and happy.

He thinks that he knows many secret things that would make the world happier if he could only get people to believe them. But these secrets are not about high explosives or torpedoes or aeroplanes, or motor-cars that can do the distance between Paris and Berlin at the very shortest record. They are secrets that can only be breathed in music and poetry.

Be on the look-out for him, children; for the songs he sings will be full of wonder, like Kubla Khan, and the melodies will be those of fairyland. Did he not hear them himself on the Old King's Mountain, when he attended the Midsummer fête of the fairies?

THE DRAGON'S TAIL

I wonder if the girls and boys who read these stories, have heard of the charming and romantic town of Eisenach? I suppose not, for it is a curious fact that few English people visit the place, though very many Americans go there. Americans are well known to have a special interest in old places with historical associations, because they have nothing of the sort in America; moreover many of them are Germans by birth, and have heard stories of the Wartburg, that beautiful old castle, which from the summit of a hill, surrounded by woods, overlooks the town of Eisenach.

The Wartburg is quaintly built with dear little turrets and gables, and high towers, a long curving wall with dark beams like the peasant cottages, and windows looking out into the forest. It belongs at present to the Grand duke of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach.

Every stone and corner of the Wartburg is connected with some old story or legend.

For instance there is the hall with the raised dais at one end and beautiful pillars supporting the roof where minnesingers of old times used to hold their great "musical festivals" as we should say nowadays. There was keen competition for the prizes that were offered in reward for the best music and songs.

In the castle are also the rooms of St Elizabeth, that sweet saint who was so good to the poor, and who suffered so terribly herself in parting from her husband and children.

Then there is the lion on the roof who could tell a fine tale if he

chose; the great banqueting hall and the little chapel.

On the top of the tower is a beautiful cross that is lit up at night by electric light and can be seen from a great distance in the country round. This is of course a modern addition.

But the most interesting room in the castle is that where Dr Martin Luther spent his time translating the Bible. A reward had been offered to anyone who should kill this arch-heretic; so his friends brought him disguised as a knight to the Wartburg, and very few people knew of his whereabouts.

As you look through the latticed windows of that little room, the exquisite blue and purple hills of the Thüringen-Wald stretch away in the distance, and no human habitation is to be seen. There too you may see the famous spot on the wall where Luther threw the inkpot at the devil. To be correct you can see the hole where the ink-stain used to be; for visitors have cut away every trace of the ink, and even portions of the old wooden bedstead. There is the writing-desk with the translation of the Bible, and the remarkable footstool that consisted of the bone of a mammoth.

Those were the days in which a man risked his life for his faith; but they were the days also, we must remember, of witchcraft and magic.

One other story of the Wartburg I must narrate in order to give you some idea of the interest that still surrounds the place, and influences the children who grow up there. It was in the days of the old Emperor Barbarossa (Redbeard).

The sister of the Emperor whose name was Jutta, was married to the Landgraf Ludwig of Thüringen, and they lived at the Wartburg.

One day when Barbarossa came to visit them, he observed that the

castle had no outer walls round it, as was usual in those days.

"What a pity," he said, "that such a fine castle should be unprotected by walls and ramparts, it ought to be more strongly fortified."

"Oh," said Landgraf Ludwig, "if that is all the castle needs, it can soon have them."

"How soon?" said the Emperor, mockingly.

"In the space of three days," answered his brother-in-law.

"That could only be possible with the aid of the devil," said Barbarossa, "otherwise it could not be done."

"Wait and see for yourself," said the Landgraf.

On the third day of his visit, Ludwig said to the Emperor: "Would you care to see the walls? They are finished now."

Barbarossa crossed himself several times, and prepared for some fearful manifestation of black magic; but what was his surprise to see a living wall round the castle of stout peasants and burghers, ready armed, with weapons in their hands; the banners of well-known knights and lords waved their pennants in the wind where battlements should have been.

The Emperor was much astonished, and called out: "Many thanks, brother-in-law, for your lesson; stronger walls I have never seen, nor better fitted together."

"Rough stones they may some of them be," said the Landgraf, "yet I can rely on them, as you see."

Now as you may imagine, the children who grow up in this town, must have their heads full of these tales, and many poets and artists have been inspired by the beauties of Eisenach. The natural surroundings of the town are so wonderful, that they also provide rich material for the imagination.

Helmut was a boy who lived in Eisenach. He was eight years old, and went to a day school. He lived outside the town, not far from the entrance to the forest. He was a pale, fair-haired little boy, and did not look the tremendous hero he fancied himself in his dreams; not even when he buckled on helmet, breast-plate and sword, and marched out into the street to take his part in the warfare that went on constantly there, between the boys of this neighbourhood, and the boys who belonged to another part of the town.

Now the Dragon's Gorge is a most marvellous place; it is surrounded on all sides by thick forests, and you come on it suddenly when walking in the woods. It is a group of huge green rocks like cliffs that stand picturesquely piled close together, towering up to the sky. There is only a very narrow pathway between them.

Helmut had often been there with his father and mother or with other boys. After heavy rain or thawing snow it became impassable; at the best of times it was advisable for a lady not to put on her Sunday hat, especially if it were large and had feathers; for the rocks are constantly dripping with water. The great boulders are covered with green moss or tiny ferns; and in the spring time, wood sorrel grows on them in great patches, the under side of the leaves tinged an exquisite violet or pink colour. The entrance to the Dragon's Gorge is through these rocks; they narrow and almost meet overhead, obscuring the sky, till it seems as if one were walking under the sea. Two persons cannot walk side by side here. In some parts, indeed, one can only just squeeze through; the way winds in and out in the most curious manner; there are little side passages too, that you

could hardly get into at all.

In some places you can hear the water roaring under your feet; then the rocks end abruptly and you come out into the forest again, and hear the birds singing and see the little brook dancing along by the side of the way. Altogether it is the most fascinating, wet and delightful walk that you could imagine.

Helmut had long been planning an expedition to these rocks in company with other boy friends, in order to slay the dragon. He dreamt of it day and night, until he brought home a bad mark for "attention" in his school report. He told his mother about it; she laughed and said he might leave the poor old fellow alone; there were plenty of dragons to slay at home, self-will, disobedience, inattention, and so on! She made a momentary impression on the little boy, who always wanted to be good but found it difficult at times, curious to say, to carry out his intention.

He looked thoughtful and answered: "Of course, mother, I know; but this time I want to slay a 'really and truly' dragon, may I? Will you let me go with the other boys, it would be such fun?"

The Dragon's Gorge was not far off, and mother did not think that Helmut could do himself any harm, except by getting wet and dirty, and that he might do as well in the garden at home.

"If you put on your old suit and your thick boots, I think you may go. Keep with the other boys and promise me not to get lost!"

"Oh, I say, won't it be fine fun! I'll run off and tell the other fellows. Hurrah!" and Helmut ran off into the street. Soon four heads were to be seen close together making plans for the next day.

"We'll start quite early at six o'clock," they said, "and take our

second breakfast with us." (In Germany eleven o'clock lunch is called *second* breakfast.) However it was seven o'clock a.m. before the boys had had their first breakfast, and met outside the house.

How mother and father laughed to see the little fellows, all dressed in the most warlike costumes like miniature soldiers, armed with guns and swords.

Mother was a little anxious and hoped they would come to no harm; but she liked her boy to be independent, and knew how happy children are if left to play their pretence games alone. She watched the four set off at a swinging march down the street. Soon they had recruits, for it was a holiday, and there were plenty of boys about.

Helmut was commanding officer; the boys shouldered their guns, or presented arms as he directed. They passed the pond and followed the stream through the woods, until they came to the Dragon's Gorge, where the rocks rise up suddenly high and imposing looking. Here they could only proceed in single file. Helmut headed the band feeling as courageous as in his dreams; his head swam with elation. Huge walls towered above them; the rocks dropped water on their heads. As yet they had seen or heard nothing of the dragon. Yet as they held their breath to listen, they could hear something roaring under their feet.

"Don't you tell me that that is only water," said Helmut, "A little brook can't make such a row as that—that's the dragon."

The other boys laughed, they were sceptical as to the dragon, and were only pretending, whereas Helmut was in earnest.

"I'm hungry," said one boy, "supposing we find a dry place and have our lunch!"

They came to where the path wound out again into the open air, and sat down on some stones, which could hardly be described as dry. Here they ate bread and sausage, oranges and bananas.

"Give me the orange peel, you fellows. Mother hates us to throw it about; it makes the place so untidy." So saying Helmut pushed his orange peel right into a crevice of the rock and covered it with old leaves. But the other boys laughed at him, and chucked theirs into the little stream, which made Helmut very angry.

"I won't be your officer any more, if you do not do as I say," he said, and they began to quarrel.

"We're not going to fight your old dragon, we're going home again to play football, that will be far better fun," said the boys who had joined as recruits, and they went off home, till only Helmut's chums were left. They were glad enough to get rid of the other boys.

"We have more chance of seeing the dragon without those stupid fellows," they said.

They finished their lunch, shouldered their guns again, and entered the second gorge, which is even more picturesque and narrow than the first.

Suddenly Helmut espied something round, and slimy, and long lying on the path before him like a blind worm, but much thicker than blind worms generally are. He became fearfully excited, "Come along you fellows, hurry up," he said, "I do believe it is the dragon's tail!"

They came up close behind him and looked over his shoulders; the gorge was so narrow here that they could not pass one another.

"Good gracious!" they said, "whatever shall we do now?"

They all felt frightened at the idea of a real dragon, but they stood to their guns like men, all but the youngest, Adolf, who wanted to run away home; but the others would not let him.

"Helmut catch hold of it, quick now," whispered Werner and Wolf, the other two boys.

Helmut stretched out his hand courageously; perhaps it was only a huge, blind worm after all; but as he tried to catch it, the thing slipped swiftly away. They all followed it, running as fast as they could through the narrow gorge, bumping themselves against the walls, scratching themselves and tearing their clothes, but all the time Helmut never let that tail (if it was a tail) out of his sight.

"If we had some salt to put on it," said he, "we might catch it like a dicky bird."

"It would be a fine thing to present to a museum," said Wolf.

Well, that thing led them a fine dance. It would stop short, and then when they thought they had got it, it started off again, until they were all puffing and blowing.

"We've got to catch it somehow," said Helmut, who thought the chase fine sport. At that moment the gorge opened out again into the woods, and the tail gave them the slip; for it disappeared in a crevice of the rock where there was no room for a boy to follow it.

"It *was* a blind worm you see," said Werner.

Presently, however, they heard a noise as of thunder, and looking down the path they saw a head glaring at them out of the rocks, undeniably a dragon's head, with a huge jaw, red tongue, and rows of jagged teeth.

The boys stared aghast: they were in for an adventure this time, and no mistake. Slowly the dragon raised himself out of the rocks, so that they saw his whole scaly length, like a huge crocodile. Then he began to move along the path away from them. He moved quite slowly now, so there was no difficulty in keeping up with him; but his tail was so slimy and slippery that they could not keep hold of it; moreover it wriggled dreadfully whenever they tried to seize it. But Helmut had inherited the cool courage of the Wartburg knights, and he was not going to be overcome by difficulties.

With a wild Indian whoop he sprang on the dragon's back, and all the other boys followed his example, except little Adolf who was timid and began to set up a howl for his mother, I'm sorry to say. No sooner were the boys on his back than the dragon set off at a fine trot up and down the Dragon's Gorge, they had to hold on tight and to duck whenever the rock projected overhead, or when they went sharply round a corner.

"Hurrah," cried Helmut waving a flag, "this is better than a motor ride. Isn't he a jolly old fellow?"

At this remark the jolly old fellow stopped dead and began to snort out fire and smoke, that made the boys cough and choke.

"Now stop that, will you!" said Helmut imperatively, "or we shall have to slay you after all, that's what we came out for you know." He pointed his gun at the head of the dragon as he spoke like a real hero.

The dragon began to tremble, and though they could only see his profile, they thought he turned pale.

"Where's that other little boy?" he asked in a hollow voice. "If you will give him to me for my dinner, I will spare you all."

Helmut laughed scornfully, "Thanks, old fellow," he said—"you're very kind, I'm sure Adolf would be much obliged to you. I expect he's run home to his mother long ago; he's a bit of a funk, we shan't take him with us another time."

"He looked so sweet and juicy and tender," said the dragon sighing, "I never get a child for dinner nowadays! Woe is me," he sniffed.

"You are an old cannibal," said the boys horrified, and mistaking the meaning of the word cannibal. "Hurry up now and give us another ride, it's first-rate fun this!"

The dragon groaned and seemed disinclined to stir, but the boys kicked him with their heels, and there was nothing for it but to gee-up.

After he had been up and down several times, and the boys' clothes were nearly torn to pieces, he suddenly turned into a great crevice in the rocks that led down into a dark passage, and the boys felt really frightened for the first time. Daylight has a wonderfully bracing effect on the nerves.

In a moment, however, a few rays of sunshine penetrated the black darkness, and they saw that they were in a small cave. The next thing they experienced was that the dragon shook himself violently, and the small boys fell off his back like apples from a tree on to the wet and sloppy floor. They picked themselves up again in a second, and there they saw the dragon before them, panting after his exertions and filling the cavern with a poisonous-smelling smoke. Helmut and Wolf and Werner stood near the cracks which did the duty of windows, and held their pistols pointed at him. Luckily he was too stupid to know that they were only toy guns, and when they fired them off crack-crack, they soon discovered that he was in a terrible fright.

"What have I done to you, young sirs?" he gasped out. "What have I done to you, that you should want to shoot me? Yet shoot me! yes, destroy me if you will and end my miserable existence!" He began to groan until the cavern reverberated with his cries.

"What's the matter now, old chappie?" said Helmut, who, observing the weakness of the enemy, had regained his courage.

"I am an anachronism," said the dragon, "don't you know what that is?—well, I am one born out of my age. I am a survival of anything but the fittest. *You* are the masters now, you miserable floppy-looking race of mankind. *You* can shoot me, you can blow me up with dynamite, you can poison me, you can stuff me—Oh, oh—you can put me into a cage in the Zoological Gardens, you have flying dragons in the sky who could drop on me suddenly and crush me. You have the power. We great creatures of bygone ages have only been able to creep into the rocks and caves to hide from your superior cleverness and your wily machinations. We must perish while you go on like the brook for ever." So saying he began to shed great tears, that dropped on the floor splash, splash, like the water from the rocks.

The boys felt embarrassed: this was not their idea of manly conduct, and considerably lowered their opinion of dragons in general.

"Do not betray me, young sirs," went on the dragon in a pathetic and weepy voice, "I have managed so far to lie here concealed though multitudes of people have passed this way and never perceived me."

"I tell you what," said Helmut touched by the dragon's evident terror, "let's make friends with him, boys; he's given us a nice ride for nothing; we will present him with the flag of truce."

Turning to the dragon he said: "Allow us to give you a banana and a roll in token of our friendship and esteem."

"O," said the dragon brightening up, "I like bananas. People often throw the skins away here. I prefer them to orange peel. I live on such things, you must know, the cast-off refuse of humanity," he said, becoming tragic again.

They presented him with the banana, and he ate it skin and all, it seemed to give him an appetite. He appeared to recover his spirits, and the boys thought it would be better to look for the way out. The cavern seemed quite smooth and round, except for the cracks through which the daylight came; they could not discover the passage by which they had entered. The dragon's eyes were beginning to look bloodthirsty; remembrances of his former strength shot across his dulled brains. He could crush and eat these little boys after all and nobody would be the wiser. Little boys tasted nicer than bananas even.

Meanwhile Wolf and Werner had stuck their flags through the holes in the rocks, so that they were visible from the outside.

Now little Adolf had gone straight home, and had told awful tales of the games the others were up to, and he conducted the four mothers to the Dragon's Gorge where they wandered up and down looking for their boys. Adolf observed the flags sticking up on the rocks, and drew attention to them. The Dragon's Gorge resounded with the cries of "Helmut! Wolf! Werner!"

The dragon heard the voices as well; his evil intentions died away; the chronic fear of discovery came upon him again. He grew paler and paler; clouds of smoke came from his nostrils, until he became invisible. At the same moment Helmut groping against the wall that lay in shadow, found the opening of the passage through which they had

come. Through this the three boys now crawled, hardly daring to breathe, for fear of exciting the dragon again. Soon a gleam of light at the other end told of their deliverance. Their tender mothers fell on their necks, and scolded them at the same time. Truly, never did boys look dirtier or more disreputable.

"We feel positively ashamed to go home with you," their mothers said to them.

"Well, for once I was jolly glad you did come, mother," said Helmut. "That treacherous old dragon wanted to turn on us after all; he might have devoured us, if you had not turned up in the nick of time. Not that I believe that he *really* would have done anything of the sort, he was a coward you know, and when we levelled our guns at him he was awfully frightened. Still he *might* have found out that our guns were not properly loaded, and then it would have been unpleasant."

Mother smiled, she did not seem to take the story quite so seriously as Helmut wished.

"We had a gorgeous ride on his back, mother dear; would you like to see him? You have only to lie down flat and squeeze yourself through that crack in the rocks till you come to his cave."

"No thank you," said mother, "I think I can do without seeing your dragon."

"Oh, we have forgotten our flags!" called out Wolf and Werner, "wait a minute for us," and they climbed up over the rocks and rescued the flags. "He's still in there," they whispered to Helmut in a mysterious whisper.

"Mother," said Helmut that evening when she came to wish him good night, "do you know, if you stand up to a dragon like a man, and

are not afraid of him, he is not so difficult to vanquish after all."

"I'm glad you think so," said mother, "'Volo cum Deo'—there is a Latin proverb for you; it means, that with God's help, will-power is the chief thing necessary; this even dragons know. Thus a little boy can conquer even greater dragons than the monsters vast of ages past."

"Hum!" said Helmut musingly, "mother, dear, I was a real hero to-day, I think you would have been proud of me; but I must confess between ourselves, that the old dragon was a bit of a fool!"

THE EASTER HARE

It is curious how little children of one country know about the lives and interests of the children of another. Perhaps if English people would send their children over to Germany, instead of their journalists, singers, etc., the danger of an International war would be lessened. The children would be sure to fall in love with Germany; for it is the land above all others that appeals to children. Women are said to come first in America, children are certainly the first consideration in Germany. Froebel's motto: "Come let us live with our children," is nowhere better carried out.

A little English girl, named Patsie, came over to visit her German friends, Gretel and Barbara, shortly before Easter this year; and she was much surprised to find all the shop-windows filled with hares; hares made of chocolate, toy hares, hares with fine red coats on, hares trundling wheelbarrows or carrying baskets full of Easter eggs. Moreover there was no end to the picture post cards representing the hare in various costumes, and in some connection with Easter eggs. One of these post cards represented a hare crawling out of a large broken egg just like a chicken.

Patsie asked her little friends eagerly what this all meant.

"Who is the Hare?" she said. "I do so want to know all about him."

"Why, *of course*, it is the Easter Hare," they replied.

"Is it possible that you have not heard of him? O, you *poor* English children! Why, he brings us the eggs on Easter Sunday morning!" said Gretel.

"O don't you know," said Barbara, "he hides them in the garden, unless it rains or is very wet; then we have to stay in our bedrooms for fear of frightening him, and he lays them downstairs in the dining-room or drawing-room. However, this has only happened once since I was born, and I am nine years old; it *must* be always fine at Easter."

"We have to let all the blinds down before he will come into our garden, he is so dreadfully nervous," said Gretel. "Then he hides the eggs in the most unexpected places, we have to hunt and hunt a long time before we have found them all. Last year we discovered an egg some weeks afterwards; luckily it was a glass one filled with sweeties; for if it had been of chocolate, we could not have eaten it, after it had lain on the damp mould, where the snails and worms would have crawled over it. Some of the eggs are made of chocolate or marzipan or sugar, and some are real eggs coloured blue or red or brown, or even sometimes with pictures on them."

"We had two dear little baskets with dollies in them, and a big Easter Hare made of gingerbread, as well as the eggs this year," said Barbara. "We hunt and hunt in every corner of the garden, and then we divide our treasures afterwards on two plates, so that is quite fair."

"You are lucky children, why does not the Hare come to England?" said Patsie. "I am sure little English children would appreciate him too!"

"Well," said Gretel answering in verse:

"My dear mother says to me,
That he will not cross the sea;
That he fears his eggs would break
And his precious goods might shake.

He's a fairy you must know,
Little Barbara tells you so;
When he cocks his ears and blinks,
Then of Easter eggs he thinks."

"Yes," interrupted Barbara, "we really and truly saw him one Easter Sunday morning when we came back from church, just at the end of our street, where the gardens join the fields. He had a friend with him, or perhaps it was Mrs Easter Hare. They both looked very alarmed when they saw us, and tore off as fast as they could scuttle, and hid in the corn-fields. I can't remember if he had his red coat on, can you, Gretel?"

"No I don't think he had, he was quietly dressed in his brown fur suit, with a white tail to the coat," said Gretel.

Now mother had been puzzled for some time to think whatever connection there could be between Easter Day and the Hare, and she could not find out. But the other day a kind friend told her: she could never have been able to think of it herself, it is such a queer reason. The legend is that as the Hare always sleeps with its eyes open, it was the only living creature that witnessed the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord, and therefore for ever afterwards it has become associated with Easter.

The Easter egg is easier to account for; the idea there is, that as the little chicken breaks through the hard shell, and awakes to new life, so Christ broke the bars of death on the first glorious Easter morning. So the simple egg has become a symbol or sign of a great heavenly truth. Even little children can understand this if they think about it, and they will be able to find out other things too that are symbols in the same way.

"One year," said Barbara to Patsie, "we spent Easter Sunday at a farm in the country. We made beautiful nests of moss all ready for the Easter Hare. And just when father had called to us to come out and look for the eggs, we saw to our disgust that the great pigs with their dirty old snouts were already hunting for them, so we rushed down and had to drive them away first. The geese too seemed to want to join in the game; it was fine fun, I can tell you. We filled our pinafores with the eggs."

"When we got home again, we found the Easter Hare had been there too; so we were finely spoilt that year," said Gretel.

Several weeks before Easter this year, before Patsie came to stay with them, Gretel and Barbara went for an afternoon walk in the fields with their father and mother. It was getting late when they returned; white mists were rising over the River Nidda, until the trees in the distance looked like ghosts. There was a strange feeling in the air, as if something were going to happen; the children felt excited without knowing why. Then they suddenly saw a bright light not far off from them, along the path by the river. It seemed to revolve, then to change its position, then it went out altogether. They thought they saw the crouching form of a man beside the light; indeed father said that it was probably a labourer lighting his pipe; but, when they looked again, it was unmistakably a bush that had taken a human form in the twilight. The children instinctively fell back nearer the grown-ups. There was something creepy about that bush.

Suddenly a weird cry, shrill and piercing, broke the silence. It seemed to come from just in front of them, and sounded awful; as if a

baby were being murdered. The children clutched hold of father's hand. "It was all right as long as father and mother were there," they thought with the touching confidence of children.

No one could imagine what it was. The stretching, ploughed fields on one side could hide nothing, the little path along the river-bank was clearly visible. As they approached the spot whence the crying had seemed to proceed, all was silent again. Gretel had heard of the magic flower Moly which screamed when it was pulled up by the roots; could there be screaming bushes as well? But the cries had seemed to come from the ploughed field, not from the river.

The sun had gone down, the air became darker and chillier. Suddenly the cry began again; this time it seemed to proceed directly from an empty tin lying near them on the ploughed field, broken and upside down. The children stared with wide-open eyes at this mysterious old tin: they could not make head or tail of it, of the tin I mean.

Then mother stooped and picked up a piece of egg-shell coloured a beautiful red, that lay on the path, and held it up triumphantly. "What do you say to that?" she asked the children.

"Why, it is a piece of a broken Easter egg, how queer," said the children, "such a long time before Easter too."

"Do you know what I think?" said mother, almost in a whisper. "I think the Easter Hare has been along here, perhaps he lives here, and that tin hides the entrance to his house."

"Let's go and see," said the children. But at this moment the cries broke out again, coming just from their very feet it seemed. They sounded so uncanny that the children did not dare to move, or to investigate the tin.

"If you disturb him now, you certainly will not get any Easter eggs this year," said mother. "He's sure to be very busy painting them just now, I dare say he cries like that to frighten you away from his home."

"I don't think so," said father, "he can hide and hold his tongue if he wants to; it is the little baby hares who make that noise; but just as we pass by, the mother hare manages to keep them quiet for a few minutes by giving them something to put in their little mouths, I expect."

"I *would* like to see them," said Barbara.

"No, come along, Barbara," said Gretel, "leave them alone, it would be horrid to get no Easter eggs wouldn't it?"

For many nights Barbara dreamt of the Easter Hare, and at last she made up the following story about him, which she wrote out beautifully in flowing German handwriting in an exercise-book. I thought little English girls and boys would like to hear a story written by a little German girl of nine years. So I have translated it for them here. It will give them a good idea too of how the Easter Hare is regarded by German children.

THE EASTER HARE FAMILY

Story by Barbara Arndt

Two children, Paulchen and Luischen, were wandering about in the country on Easter Day, they said sorrowfully to one another. "Has the Easter Hare quite forgotten us this year?" For three hours they tramped about, and hunted for eggs in every corner of the fields near the big forest. Suddenly Paulchen found a huge egg; he called to Luischen to come at once to see it, and she trotted along towards him, carrying a pretty little nest filled with Easter eggs in her hands, which she had also found.

The children were very happy; it was such a lovely sunny day, and they were so delighted with their treasures. However they did not give up hunting, and soon each of them found an Easter Hare made of the most delicious chocolate. Then Luischen discovered an egg which she called an April-fool's egg; for when she tried to lick it to see what it tasted like, she found that it was made of soap.

"O, do come and see what a heap of eggs I've got," said Paulchen, in tones of ecstasy.

Then little Luischen jumped up, calling out: "Look, look—O do come here, quick, quick, and see those two beautiful big nests filled with Easter eggs, and two lovely silver baskets beside them! O how exquisite! The Easter Hare is too good, he is a darling, did you ever see such beautiful things as he has given us. I can hardly hold mine!"

"Neither can I," said Paul, "but look over there, Luischen, there are two large baskets. I expect they are meant for us, how very convenient! We can put all our things into them."

"Let's go and fetch them at once," said Luischen. "Do you see that pretty bush with silver palm-buds on it over there?" she continued, "we will go and pick a few twigs from it and tie them on to our baskets with

some grass; then they will look more 'Eastery.'"

"If only we knew where the Easter Hare lives," they said somewhat sadly, "we would go and call on him at once and thank him for all his kindness to us."

"O but just look, Paulchen," said Luischen excitedly, "there is something written on the rocks over there; perhaps the Easter Hare lives there. Paulchen, you can read a little, do see if you can make out what is written."

Paulchen read:

"I am the Master Easter Hare
Lay eggs, in plenty, everywhere."

"Come along, run, we will knock at the door," said Luischen joyfully. So they went up to the rock and knocked.

"Come in," said a clear voice.

They went in and turned to the door on the right from which the voice had come. They entered a comfortable room, and there on a cosy easy-chair, there sat father Easter Hare, who had just put on his spectacles to examine the eggs which his son, who was about seven years old, had painted.

"Good morning, dear Mr Easter Hare, we have come to thank you for the lovely eggs," said the children.

"*Dear, dear*," said Mr Easter Hare, "you found them of course in your garden, or——?"

"Alas, no, we have no home, we are orphans; the people in the orphanage did not treat us kindly, so we ran away, and meant to seek

our fortune in the wide world," said the children. "Then we were so lucky as to find these beautiful eggs in the fields over there!"

"Dear me, so you are orphans!—well then perhaps you would like to stay here with us and learn painting and housekeeping," said Mr Easter Hare.

"Oh yes indeed, we should simply love to!" answered the children, "but where is your wife? Perhaps she will be able to teach us to be of some use in the household."

"Well, well, my wife is in the kitchen cooking cabbage, and carrots, and making a famous salad."

"Oh!" said both the children, "may we help her dress the salad?"

"Certainly, my wife will be very pleased to find that you can be so useful; there, just opposite in the passage, is a door that leads into the kitchen where my wife is busy."

The children followed his directions and went into the kitchen, and there sat Mrs Easter Hare.

"Good morning, Mrs Easter Hare," said the children politely, curtsying and bowing, "we have come to help you in the household, and to stay with you till we are grown up; but now please let us make the salad."

"Well, that is very kind of you, I'm sure, to want to help me," said Mrs Easter Hare, and the children set to work at once.

After this the children helped her every day in the kitchen in the morning, and in the afternoon they learnt from father Easter Hare how to paint the eggs smoothly and prettily, and how to read and write; for the Easter Hare is educated, you must know, and far more intelligent

than ordinary hares. When they grew up and went out into the world again, Paulchen became a celebrated artist and lived in the artist colony at Cronberg, and little Luischen married, and became an exemplary housewife; but their best friends throughout their lives were always

MR AND MRS EASTER HARE.

THE NIXY LAKE

In one of the wildest and most romantic parts of Germany, there is a high mountain which is as renowned for the strange stories that are told about it, as for its many natural peculiarities. It is flat on the top, falling off precipitously on every side. In recent times a high tower has been built on the very edge of the rock. Curious to say, the ground on the summit of this mountain is a bog or morass; flat slabs of stone have been placed on it to enable bold tourists to reach the tower without sinking in unawares. There is a bronze ring on a balcony surrounding the tower, with darts pointing in different directions, showing where London, Paris, and St Petersburg, for instance, are situated. I need hardly say that these towns are not visible, but that if a straight line could be drawn from this spot, it would reach them.

Not far below the summit there is a mysterious-looking lake, which it is strange indeed to find at so high a level. A huge cliff formed of boulders of rock rises on the one side of the lake; it falls like a great wall straight into the water; only daring little ferns and plants have a foothold on it; the lake is inaccessible from this direction. A narrow pathway winding in and out edged with water-reeds leads by it on the other side. This lake is said to be so deep that it is unfathomable; it is dark brown in colour, bitter and brackish to the taste. No fish can live in it. Learned men, called geologists, who study the crust of the earth, have decided that this region is not volcanic in origin as it would appear at first sight, but that the lake is fed by water from the morass.

This mountain is constantly visited by sudden violent atmospheric disturbances, great winds and heavy thunderstorms, that spring up at a moment's notice, striking terror into the hearts of any travellers who

may be caught in them.

Now several centuries ago, before the time of railways and steamboats, a mighty king of the water-sprites lived in this lake with his three beautiful daughters, the famed nixies of the lake.

The King was a majestic old man with long white beard and hair; his eyes were black and sinister, and when he drew his eyebrows together in a straight line over his eyes, his frown was terrible to behold. The thunderstorms which devastated the country round, were attributed to him. In his fits of rage, the village folk declared, he would hurl stones and thunderbolts down from the mountain, heedless of what or whom he might destroy.

The day would be fine, the sky blue, and in a moment a storm wind would arise, clouds would cover the heavens, and lightning shoot forth; how could this be accounted for by natural agency?

The nixies were much to be pitied, if the truth were known, for their father was a stern old tyrant, and interfered constantly with their harmless amusements, also prohibiting their leaving the lake to frolic at midnight with the wood-spirits, whom he considered as beneath them in rank.

On a warm day in the lovely month of June (which is the favourite month of all the year for the water-nixies, for then the white and yellow water lilies are in flower, and the yellow irises shine among the water-reeds) the three sisters were swimming lazily to and fro, plunging under the water like seals, to reappear like seals on the look-out for something to happen. But nothing ever did happen but one of their father's tempers, and of these they were tired enough as you may imagine. They had not fishes' tails like their cousins the mermaids, but slender limbs of dazzling whiteness. Their hair resembled beautiful seaweed as they dived under the water, or when it spread

out like a fan on the surface.

The eldest, Clothilde, was dark; she was beautiful, but haughty, and looked as if she had inherited her father's temper.

The youngest was very fair; she had the golden hair of a fairy, her eyes were blue, but meaningless; there was little sense in their depths. Her name was Elfrida.

The second sister, Lenore, was of a different type, and might have been mistaken for a mortal maiden. Her hair was neither dark nor fair, neither red nor brown, it was of a pale hazel colour and fell in straight masses nearly to her feet. Her eyes were of a deep grey fringed with dark lashes; they had a mysterious and pathetic look—a look caused by longing after something indefinite and yet desired, or by a prescience perhaps of coming disaster.

Lenore rose to the surface of the water. "Sisters," she called, "sisters, listen to me," and she swam towards the shade of the rock, and seated herself on a stony seat, half in half out of the water. "I can bear the monotony of our existence no longer. I tire of this life of ceaseless dancing, swimming, drifting. I want to visit the homes of men who live in the village that lies below us at the foot of the mountain, to hear stories of the world from which we are shut out, to share as far as it is possible for us in the simple and homely amusements of mortals."

"I am willing to go with you," said Clothilde, frowning discontentedly. "I am tired too of this melancholy lake; the eternal nothingness of our life oppresses me too." She tore a water-lily to pieces as she spoke.

"O do not do that!" said Lenore, almost as if in pain, "the flowers can feel too!"

"What if they can!" said Clothilde scornfully; for the cruelty of the nixies coursed through her veins.

"And you Elfrida," said Lenore, turning to her fairer sister, "will you come with us?"

"Ah!" said Elfrida, "I prefer to stay here among the water-lilies. I have no aspirations, I could live here for ever sleeping through the winter months, dreaming through the summer ones, yet if you go, I will go too; for we three have never been separated, and I should be afraid if I were left alone with my father." As she spoke she placed a water-lily in her golden hair; the sunbeams struck through the fir-trees by the lake and fell on her, till she looked like some wonderful fairy princess, too exquisite to be real.

A young man happened to be passing the lake just at this moment; he caught the entrancing picture as if it were a vision from Heaven; his brain reeled, his breath failed him, he would have fallen in a swoon; but then he met Lenore's eyes, grave, calm, and searching. A wild longing and deep melancholy seized on him. He rushed towards the lake, and clutched hold of the branches of a young willow, only just in time to prevent himself from falling into those treacherous depths.

With a weird cry and their white arms raised over their heads, the nixies disappeared in the lake. The young man gazed as one bewitched; crossed himself in fear; and gazed again. All was silent: no living creature stirred; only the sunbeams fell athwart the lake, and little cascades of water fell over the surface of the rock.

"I have seen the nixies of the pool," thought the young man, who was the son of a rich peasant farmer in the village. "Surely that means that I shall die ere long. I should not fear death," he continued, "if I were to die in battle in honourable and open conflict; but to die young, stricken by some awful and unaccountable fate, that would be

terrible."

As he turned homewards, a wind arose that nearly hurled him into the lake; so violent was the gust, and a storm burst forth, the like of which he had never experienced before. Branches were torn from the trees, and hurled in his path; the lightning was continuous and nearly blinded him. Glancing fearfully back at the lake, the waters seemed to have arisen in great waves, and he thought he saw the nixy King himself raging and roaring like a wild creature, casting the storm winds forth from their fortresses in the rocks, holding the lightning like fireworks in his long fingers, and hurling it across the land. Terrified, half-stunned by the thunder, and stupefied by the hail and rain, he at last reached home, where his mother awaited him in great anxiety. However he soon had off his wet, torn clothes, and casting himself on his bed fell into a profound slumber. He slept for nearly a night and a day, and when he awoke his adventures seemed to him a wild dream, and like a dream were half-forgotten although they exerted a subtle influence on his waking thoughts that he was unaware of.

Meanwhile the nixies, and especially Lenore, had been anxious as to his fate. Not until she had sent their dwarf messenger into the village to make inquiries as to his welfare, could she be at rest. Her wish to visit the homes of men became a passion, a burning desire that could not be quenched. She called on her dread father; three times she cried out to him, and her sisters echoed the call. Then he arose from the depths, majestic and so terrible to behold that Lenore almost lost the courage to address him. But he listened to her request in silence, brooding, while great ravens whirled and swooped in the sky above their heads. Then he spoke:

"It is decreed that no one can alter the path of fate, or avoid the doom that is written in the stars. The hour has come: I have foreseen this day; go, my daughters, go. But remember there is one condition which you must strictly obey. One night in the week you may be

absent from the lake; but as the hour strikes twelve, you must be back again in these waters. I shall send a messenger to fetch you, the dwarf Hunold, beware lest you keep him waiting! If you disobey, destruction will overtake you, and your home will know you no more." He sank gloomily into the lake; the day was oppressive; no rain fell and the evening brought no relief. Strange and uneasy were the dreams of many that night in the little village.

Some young people returning late from a social gathering, reported that they had seen a bright, uncanny light in the sky, like a fire, or some said like a golden hand, at midnight over the ill-omened mountain.

In those days when it was so difficult to travel from place to place, the villagers were obliged to depend on themselves for amusement and entertainment. In the villages round about the mountain it was the custom for the young people to meet together at each other's houses on Saturday evenings. Those who had rooms large enough, took it in turns to invite all the rest; the girls brought their spinning-wheels, and the room where they met was called the spinning-room. The girls were busy and merry at the same time. Stories were told, and songs were sung, the young men smoked and drank wine, and not infrequently the spinning-wheels were cleared away and there was dancing. Strangers were welcome; for the peasants were renowned for their hospitality; but seldom did it happen that travellers passed that way; some young fellow perhaps might drop in who was wandering about for a year or so before settling down to the work of his life as the German custom is; but tourists were few when roads were bad and money scarce.

One lovely summer's evening at the end of June the full moon was shining in the sky, the latticed windows of the peasant's house where the young folk were assembled, were wide open; the air was laden with the scent of the white lilies and roses that grew in the garden at

the back of the cottage. There was no light as yet but that of the moon in the parlour; the spinning-wheels too were silent; for stories were being told; one more marvellous than the other, of ghosts and goblins, of dwarfs and mountain-spirits, and naturally enough awful tales of the neighbouring nixy King, and of his three daughters who lived in the enchanted lake.

Hermann, the young man who had been overtaken by the thunderstorm, was present this evening; he was silent and glum, though the most charming village maidens chaffed him and tried to captivate him, and the peasant girls in this part of Germany are renowned for their beauty and their grace. The melancholy which was not so much part of his natural disposition as due to the adventures of that evening, fell on him again like a dark cloud oppressing his brain. The girls who had been listening to the stories, were by this time worked up to a state of feeling which can only be described by the words creepy, or eerie. Most of them experienced that unaccountable sensation which Germans call Gänsehaut (goose-flesh). So that a sudden knock at the door caused them to cry out in fear and clutch hold of their sweethearts. The knock was repeated three times before anyone summoned up courage to open the door. Then the assembled company fell back in astonishment as three beautiful young girls entered the room, each holding a spinning-wheel under her arm. They walked erect like princesses, everyone was sure they must be of high rank. They wore dresses of some shimmering material such as the village folk had never seen before, and necklaces of pearls, silken hose and silver shoes.

Hermann's heart beat to bursting as he beheld them: where had he seen them before? Surely they were the nixies of the magic pool, and his doom had fallen upon him. Never, never, had he been able to forget Lenore's eyes. Their mournful beauty haunted his dreams. He met them now, as his breath came and went in great gasps; and there was a flash of recognition between them. "What heavenly beauty,

what a noble air she has," he thought, hardly regarding her sisters who were strictly speaking far more beautiful.

The three nixies, for of course it was they, put forth all their fascinating arts to ingratiate themselves with the young people assembled there.

"You are pleased to see us, are you not?" they said. "We have heard of the fame of your spinning-evenings, and have come from a far country to take part in them. You shall see how we can spin."

"Very gratifying for us, I am sure," murmured the officiating president of the club.

"Now do not let us disturb you, you were telling stories I believe as we entered," said Lenore, who, being the most human, took the lead in the conversation.

But no one dared to open his mouth, even those who had been the most eager to narrate wild tales before, seemed stricken with dumbness now.

"You could tell us a story, I believe," she said, turning to Hermann, who could only shake his head. "Then I must tell one myself," she said with a little sigh. She poured forth an extraordinary story to which the peasants listened open-mouthed, the tale of a terrible doom that overtook a faithless lover.

"A mortal man," she said, "had made love to a beautiful nixy, and won her affection in return. But because she was not human, he did not think of marrying her, but became engaged to a village maiden who was good and sweet, if not so beautiful as the nixy. But the nixy had her revenge. She swam under the bridge where the little river ran through the fields, and one day as the two were walking in the dewy

meadows, she caused the waters to rise suddenly in a great flood, and tore her lover away from his human bride down with her in the stream, choking him under the water till he was dead. Then she sat with his head on her lap, and stroked his beautiful dark curls, and wept until she dissolved in tears, and became part of the water, which has been slightly salt from that day. The village maiden was married to a rich old peasant not long afterwards; so much for human fidelity," said Lenore, fixing her sad eyes on Hermann.

"He well-deserved his fate," said Hermann, "who chose the lesser when he might have had the greater love."

"I think the nixy was a mean, wicked thing," said a young girl, almost a child, called Brigitte, with soft, dark eyes, and a sweet expression on her face. "She could not really have cared for her lover, or she would have wanted him to be happy with the village girl, as she knew she could not marry him herself."

"Never," said Hermann, excitedly, whose blood was coursing like fire in his veins, "better death in the arms of the beloved, than a contented life with lower aims!"

The men laughed.

"Now who would have thought that Hermann was so romantic!" they said. "And he has the fattest pigs and the biggest casks of wine in the village!"

Songs were proposed; everyone joined in; the voices of the nixies were heard above all, clear and beautiful as a bell. They began with one of the best-known songs in the German language which is always sung on especially jovial occasions, it begins:

"I cannot tell why or wherefore

A legend of olden times
Deep in my heart is singing,
In mournful rhythmic rhymes."

After several songs had been sung in unison, Hermann begged the young man who was the host that evening to ask the beautiful strangers to sing a song alone and of their own choosing, he longed to hear their voices, unspoilt by those of others.

The nixy maidens readily complied: was not singing their most natural mode of expressing themselves? They sang these verses to a weird, haunting melody:

"The wild-fowl are calling: come back to the lake!
O nixies come back, or your proud hearts must break;
The moonbeams are glancing, the fairies are dancing,
Come back.

The grey mists are rising! Beware, O beware!
For though you are slender and though you are fair,
Your treacherous waters, O nixy king's daughters,
Can slay.

Beware the king's anger—O tempt not your fate,
The white water-lilies your coming still wait;
Wide open each flower until the twelfth hour—
Beware!"

The old pendulum clock on the wall struck eleven. How fast the time had flown! The three beautiful maidens rose up hastily and departed, wishing a courteous "good night" and "good luck to you" to the company.

As Hermann opened the door for them, he saw a little dwarf with a lighted lantern waiting for them outside the door, and much as he wished to accompany them home, he did not dare to do so.

When they had left the room, a storm of conjecture burst forth; at last everyone agreed that they must be the nixies of the lake.

"We did not like the look of their eyes; they were so cold and treacherous," said some of the girls who were jealous of a beauty that they felt they could never attain to.

"You are ill-natured things, not fit to sweep the floor for such exquisite creatures," said Hermann angrily; and the whole company began to jeer and to laugh at him, saying:

"Hermann has fallen in love with the nixies. Many a wet kiss will he have from them—ha—ha!—but cold water will be his bridal bed, and death the groomsman—ha, ha!"

"Do not be so cruel," said kind little Brigitte, who had blamed the nixy in the story. "See how pale Hermann looks, he will faint in another minute; he has never been strong since he was out in that awful storm."

Hermann could bear the conversation no longer; hastily saying good night he went home with wild thoughts in his head, and, alas! wild, ungovernable love in his heart.

For the next few weeks on Saturday evenings the same thing happened. There was the usual social gathering, no one was absent; the little room could hardly hold the thronging guests. Then there was the eagerly looked for knock at the door, and the three lovely maidens entered and shared so naturally in what was going on that the young people gradually lost somewhat of their awe of them. Who could spin

so fast and so finely as the three strangers; who could sing such entrancing songs; who could tell more wonderful stories!

Hermann generally managed to sit by Lenore, and to hold her hand, and he knew his love was returned.

Naturally the exquisite Elfrida, and the stately Clothilde had their admirers as well.

"Soon they will have taken all our sweethearts away from us, the nasty creatures," whispered some of the village girls under their breath, "and they cannot marry all the lads in the country round. The men are bewitched, that is certain—no good can come of it. Most of the men realise it, however, and will come back to us in time; all except Hermann. He is so far gone that it is quite hopeless to try and influence him."

"I am sorry for Lenore," said little Brigitte, "I would do anything I could to help her; she looks so *very* unhappy!"

On the night of the 9th of September the spinning evening was to be at Hermann's house, which was a splendid building in its way, like a great wooden castle. He was feverish with excitement. He bought and gathered all the flowers he could get together, and decked the house as for a wedding-feast. His mother could not bake cakes that were fine enough to suit his taste; the furniture seemed to him clumsy and old-fashioned. He would gladly have strewn rose-leaves, instead of rushes, on the floor for his lady-love to tread on. All the time a voice was telling him to desist: that such love could never be hallowed; that his bride was but a myth, a dream that would vanish away. His mother was terribly troubled about him, and feared that the boy had lost his wits in the thunderstorm.

"You shall see my bride to-night, mother," he said. "Ah, there is no

one like her!"

But the old woman trembled and shook and crossed herself, she knew not why. She felt a presentiment of coming evil.

"She shall not escape from me so soon to-night," thought Hermann to himself. "I know what I will do: I shall put the clock an hour back, so that when it is really twelve o'clock, they will think it is only eleven. One hour, one blessed hour more in her company, snatched in defiance of fate!"

Never had Hermann been more charming as a host than he was to-night. He bade his guests heartily welcome and shook them warmly by the hand. True, he was somewhat distracted and gave strange answers to questions that were put to him. His eyes were constantly on the door. It opened at last, and the three entered; they looked lovelier than ever; they had on golden shoes and wore golden girdles. Their dresses were white edged with pale green like water-lilies with a green calyx. There was to be no spinning to-night. Hermann had provided for music and dancing; he became giddy and his senses failed him almost at the thought of dancing with the lovely Lenore.

Ah what light little feet! They hardly seemed to touch the ground as they flew round; but the time too sped by with great rushing wings, though Hermann had striven to check its headlong course. They paid no heed to the dwarf and his constant warning taps on the door; the three sisters were too engrossed in the delights of the dance. But suddenly Lenore glanced at the clock; it pointed to eleven.

"A few moments more, my belovèd," she said, "and then we must part. But why are you so pale?" she asked of Hermann, whose heart was beating fast enough to suffocate him; for he was afraid now of the consequences of his deed.

"Lenore," he said chokingly, "it is midnight; I hope I have not done wrong. I put back the clock. I wanted to keep you all longer at my house."

Lenore turned deadly pale, then she told her sisters of the fatal trick that Hermann had played on them, and they too turned white as the chalk on the walls; well they knew their father and what his revenge might be!

Murmuring a sad farewell Lenore gazed for the last time in Hermann's eyes, and then the dark night swallowed her up for ever.

The dwarf's lantern could be seen from time to time among the forest trees like a will-o'-the-wisp; then that too vanished.

The dancing and feasting went on for some time; but Hermann's heart was sick within him; he had no spirit left for the revelry. An indescribable feeling of terror and anxiety possessed him. The clock struck twelve; the guests dispersed. They had hardly left the house when a terrific storm broke forth, appalling in its awful violence; the house shook, trees were uprooted, lightning blazed continually. The tempest was nothing, however, compared to that in Hermann's breast; he could not rest or sleep; fearful visions assailed him: he seemed to hear his beloved Lenore calling him, or begging for mercy from her cruel father.

Towards morning the storm had somewhat abated though it was by no means over. Hermann rushed out of the house, taking a wild pleasure in battling with the fierce elements. Up and up with a certain step he went towards that lake where all his anguish had begun, and yet where all his hopes and desires were centred. As he approached the lake through the fir-wood, the sky over the great cliff was rosy in the early dawn, the birds were singing, the harebells raised their dew-drenched heads and looked at him. No motion—no sound—the lake

was cruel it seemed to him in its indifference to his grief. "Lenore," he cried, "Lenore!"

Then the waters of the lake stirred and three waves arose, each one greater than the last, and in the third was the nixy king with a cruel expression on his face.

"Ah, call for Lenore," he said mockingly, "but you will never see her again!—Behold, the doom of the disobedient daughters is fulfilled." As he spoke the lake stirred again, the waters whirled round, three exquisite rose-leaves rose from the depths of the lake and floated on the surface of the water. "Never again will you or any mortal man behold the nixies of the pool; they are changed into rose-leaves; this was their punishment," he said, "a poetical punishment—ha, ha!" and he vanished with a tremendous clap of thunder.

More than half-mad Hermann stumbled home; for weeks he lingered between life and death.

The kind little Brigitte would have liked to have taken care of him, and would have made him a good wife; but because of his consuming love for Lenore, he slowly pined away, until one day he was found lying dead beside the fatal lake.

KING REINHOLD

There are villages in the heart of the Taunus Mountains that are little altered by this progressive age; no railway, not even the post-chaise reaches them, and motor-cars are only to be seen as they whirr past occasionally on the high road.

Such a village is Elhalten; it lies in a green valley, rich with many flowers; a lovely little brook runs through it, disappearing suddenly under houses to reappear again triumphant farther down the road. This brook is called the Silber Bach or Silver Brook, on account of the clearness of its water. On either side of the valley rise up steep mountain-slopes with wild woods and rough pathways. One good road joins the village with Vockenhausen, and so with the well-known town of Eppstein.

On the farther side of the Küppel (the steep peak that rises behind Elhalten) is a forester's cottage, a lonely and deserted-looking dwelling in the middle of the forest. There I once nursed a huge friendly cat who was so delighted to see a stranger that she quite persecuted me with her affection.

On the top of the Küppel is an airy tower; anyone who wishes to try what flying is like, and cannot afford to go in the Zeppelin airship, can form an idea of it here. There is a most expansive view of the Taunus Range, and very little underneath the feet.

In the forester's hut lived a little boy named Hugo. He was the son of the forester, a fine little fellow of nearly six years. Hugo had few story-books; but he did not need them; for he lived in the forest, and the forest tells its own tales to the children who live there. The birds would

chatter to him, and tell him their family histories; the silent, sweet-eyed deer came to the forestry to be fed in the cold winter, and so he learnt to know their ways. The little flowers would whisper tales of the strange sights they had seen in the forest, when they had by chance forgotten to close their petals for the night.

Hugo had seen much for a five year's old boy; but he longed to see more. He had heard stories of wood-goblins, of fairies and nixies, and of the busy dwarfs who live underground. He thirsted for adventure.

Now I must tell you that just about this time the news had come from Elhalten that a child had been lost from the village, a dear little girl of four years. She had strayed by herself in the woods of the Küppel, and though her parents and Hugo's father, indeed all the villagers had sought for her, no trace could they find, save strips of her little blue pinafore, and a hair ribbon on the brambles in a remote spot near an old quarry. You can imagine what a stir this made in the quiet life of the neighbourhood.

Some people spoke of gipsies, some of deep holes or pools in the woods; others did not say much, but they thought of the wood-spirits and fairies and shook their heads. Hugo had many a time played with pretty baby Elsa; her father and the forester were friends, and she had spent the day sometimes in the forestry on the Küppel. You may imagine that the children were more strictly watched over than usual. Hugo's mother kept a sharp eye on him; for she knew that his little head was full of all sorts of queer notions.

It happened that, about a fortnight after these events, Hugo's father went out for a night's hunting. His mother had been busy all the afternoon; the weather was hot and sultry. At last drowsiness overcame her and she fell asleep with her head on the kitchen table. Now she was certainly not given to falling asleep in the afternoon, she

was generally much too busy for that; so I really think she must have been bewitched. The fairies sometimes put sleeping draughts into people's coffee; then it is all up with them.

Now was Hugo's opportunity. He hastily took up the brown (or grey as it is called in Germany) rye-bread and sausage that stood ready for his supper, packed it into a beautiful green case, with two May-bugs painted on it, snatched up his toy gun in case of accidents, and set out with a brave heart to look for little Elsa.

I must tell you that he had dreamt of her repeatedly since her disappearance. She seemed to look at him with her wistful blue eyes, and to implore his help. A rhyme rang constantly in his head that seemed to have reference to her; but he could not quite make out what it meant:

"King Reinhold found a little maid
Alone within the forest glade;
She wept and cried in sore distress,
All torn and tattered was her dress;
He set her on a golden throne,
He gave her playthings for her own.
But still she wept the livelong day,
She would not laugh, and would not play.
'This is most tiresome to behold;
What shall I do?' said King Reinhold."

The little maid was probably Elsa; but where was she? Who was King Reinhold? How could Hugo deliver her? He could not answer these questions. "I must trust to luck, and hope that the fairies will help me. Heigho for adventures!"

It was the twilight hour; the sky was of a delicate grey-green tint, the birds called to their roving mates to come home to bed, a few faint stars appeared in the sky; mystery hung in the air.

On Hugo went—following a circle of green and gold that was marked on the trees and seemed to show him the way. He sang and shouted merrily to keep up his spirits; it was supper-time, and the night air had made him hungry; so he unpacked his bread and sausage and made a good meal. The moon had risen, and threw a glimmer of light through the trees; the lingering shades of twilight vanished. On one side of the little path was the dark fir-wood, impenetrable in its gloom, on the other, beeches and oaks. Little harebells, and pink centaury bordered the pathway. There was a lovely woody smell in the late summer night, a smell of damp earth, and fungi and flowers, or rather a combined perfume still more subtle and indescribable.

The stillness and loneliness began to oppress our hero a little for the first time. If he had been a town child he would have been horribly frightened long before this; but he was as used to the silence of the woods, as you may be to the noise and bustle of the street.

Suddenly a muffled sound broke the silence: knock, knock, knock, like the blow of hammers when the workmen are busy at some distance. Hugo's brave little heart began to beat; for he knew that the noise must be made by the Kobolds at work on their anvils deep underground.

Then he was aware of footsteps behind him: tramp, tramp, tramp. Was it his father come to fetch him home? He rather hoped that it might be so; but when he plucked up courage to turn round, there was no one there! An owl screeched; a bush rustled near him; he turned round sharply, and there he saw a little old man with a huge key in his hand sitting on a felled tree-trunk. His bright blue eyes gleamed strangely in the moonshine, and his shaggy grey hair stood up on either side of his red-peaked cap. He wore a jacket of green, lined with scarlet, and had on heavy wooden shoes such as the peasants wear in some parts of Germany. He plucked a dandelion clock that grew by the way and held it up to the moon.

"One, two, three," up to nine the little man counted.

"Nine o'clock! Come along hurry up," said he, and he took Hugo by the hand.

Instantly the child was able to see many things in the forest which he had not observed before; strange fairy forms came floating by and gazed at him with sad, sweet eyes; then a stream of laughing elves passed him in wild frolic. Yes, once he thought that through the trees he saw the gigantic form of the Old King himself, throned on his mountain.

Down, down a narrow bypath they clambered, over stones and through brambles, and interlaced branches. Then they crossed a trout stream silver clear in the moonlight. The trout were asleep; but when the dwarf leant over the little stone bridge and whispered a few words —flash and they were off, far far down the stream; they hid under the rushes and tree-roots by the banks and quaked for fear. They dreaded the dwarfs and with reason.

"Boiled trout with a fine butter sauce, that is my favourite dish," said the little man to Hugo and smacked his lips greedily.

They walked along the beautifully overshadowed pathway by the trout stream, watching the moonlight on the rippling water, till they left the brook behind, and came to a green meadow in the centre of which stood a venerable oak-tree, which still bore green leaves though its trunk was completely hollow.

The tree was lit from within by a brilliant glow of rosy light. The dwarf approached on tiptoe, taking off his clumsy shoes, and beckoning to Hugo to follow him quietly. They peeped through the holes in the trunk of the tree, and O what a sight they saw!

Twenty or more of the tiniest children, scarcely bigger than my finger, sat or danced or rolled on the green mossy carpet of the tree-room. These were the fairy babies, and this was the fairies' nursery. Each little girl had a dolly made of the loveliest flowers, and a cradle of green oak leaves, sewed together by grass blades.

The tiny Fee babies lay on their backs and kicked and crowed for joy, and the biggest of all the fairies present gave them their bottles, filled with moonshine and honey-dew on which the babies thrive. The boy elves made the most noise; they had captured a field mouse, a huge creature it seemed in comparison with them, and they were all trying to ride on its back at once.

Hugo was so delighted with the lovely sight that he could not resist calling out "Oh!" in tones of ecstasy. In an instant, puff! the light went out; a cold fog arose; Hugo saw his dwarf companion change into a big black bear terrible to behold. Just as our hero thought he was going to be eaten up, the Kobold resumed his natural form.

"Be silent if you would be wise," he said, and that was all.

They followed the little pathway further through the meadow and into the woods again, until they came suddenly on a great pile of rocks, picturesquely heaped up amongst the trees, such as are so common in the Taunus Mountains. The dwarf went up to the rock, key in hand, and searched about until he had found a secret door. Then he fitted the key into the lock and turned it, then tugged and tugged to open the door. Suddenly it swung open, creaking noisily, and the dwarf lay on his back. Up he got grumbling and scolding. "They ought to have oiled the hinges, the lazy louts," he said.

As the door opened, Hugo saw a long corridor before him, lit by stars of light, and countless mirrors reflected the stars in every direction. The effect was rather too dazzling after the dark night, and Hugo's eyes blinked. Down, down, down, the corridor gradually descended and seemed never-ending. "However shall I get out again?" thought Hugo anxiously. He did not know you see that there are many ways out of magic land.

At last they came to another door, made of crystal glass, and entered a large hall with a sparkling roof of rock crystal. In the centre was a fountain, a more wonderful creation fairyland does not contain. Hugo held his breath for fear of saying "Oh!" again. Strange gnomes and fairies seemed to be alive in it, and the element it contained, was not water, but fire. The most marvellous display of fireworks that you have ever seen, would be nothing in comparison.

Sometimes it illustrated well-known fairy tales: Snowdrop in her glass coffin, Cinderella trying on the shoe and so on. Hugo could have watched it for ages, and left it reluctantly, looking back all the time. Then they passed through an arched doorway, and a new scene met their view.

Multitudes of little dwarf men dressed in Court attire stood round the room. Facing them, on a throne of gold, with a tiny crown of gold starred with bright-eyed diamonds on her head sat a real little human girl, with a shabby old dolly in her arms. She was a very pretty little girl, grandly dressed in a frock of blue silk embroidered with white daisies, little blue socks and shoes with diamond buckles. But her face was sad and pale, and her eyes red from crying, and her fair hair hung in tangled locks over her shoulders. She held her dolly clasped tight in her arms and repeated over and over again: "I want my mamma, I want to go home to my mamma."

As the dwarf, followed by Hugo, entered the room the dwarfs or Kobolds, as they are also called, bowed down with their heads to the ground, and sang in a gruff chorus:

"Hail, thrice hail, to King Reinhold,
We his subjects true and bold
Bow in homage to our king,
Each his cap on high must fling!"

With that each Kobold threw his peaked cap up to the roof and caught it again on his head, or his foot, or on his nose as the case might be. Then they all shouted "Hurrah!" and it was as if a mighty flock of ravens were to croak all together. The little girl put her hands up to her ears, and was about to cry again when she saw Hugo. Then she jumped up eagerly with a cry of joy and sprang down the golden steps.

"O you dear, good Hugo," she said, "have you come to fetch me home? I knew you would come," she continued, "for I have dreamt of you so often."

Hugo looked into the sweet little face before him and, in spite of her fine clothes and diamond crown, he recognised little Elsa, his lost playmate. He remembered his dreams, and all seemed to grow clear. He felt himself very big and strong and important all at once. Putting his arms protectingly round the little girl, he said facing the whole assembly: "I have come to take this little girl, Miss Elsa, home to her mamma."

King Reinhold (for it was the king of the dwarfs himself who had accompanied Hugo) took up a heavy crown that lay on a cushion beside him, put it on, and then took it off again, grumbling that it was too heavy and did not fit him properly.

Then he cleared his throat and addressed his courtiers in these words: "Hum! Hum! Hum! My esteemed subjects! I found this little girl some weeks ago in the woods, within the magic circle of my domain. She was crying bitterly, and seemed very frightened. I comforted her as best I could. I gave her strings of pretty beads and a tiny fan of blue jay's feathers. I promised to take her with me, and give her a crown of gold, to set her on a golden throne, and make her Queen of all the dwarfs. I even condescended to offer her a kiss; but I am sorry to say the ungrateful child smacked me in the face (cries of "shame.") There she sits, look at her! how has she repaid me for all my kindness and for all the honours I have conferred on her?" (Here Elsa began to cry again and to clutch tight hold of Hugo's hand.) "She does nothing but blubber all day, and cuddle her dolly, and say she wants to go home to her mamma! I appeal to you, my Kobolds, is such a baby worthy to be Queen of our realm, of a people more ancient than the mountains, older indeed than mankind; for we were the first inhabitants of the

earth, we are Primitive Man!"

A roar of applause met this speech and cries of "She is not worthy, let her be deposed," were heard. "She is really too young, she is but a baby still," said one kindly looking old grandpapa Kobold.

King Reinhold raised his hand to command silence, and continued in a loud, harsh voice: "When she is older, she will become too big for us; mortals have the strange habit of growing. No, I have thought the matter over. Young birds are after all safest in the nest. But this baby would never be able to find the way home, not even down her own street. So I have chosen this brave young man to take her home." Here he gave Hugo a slap on the back that nearly knocked him down, for dwarfs are very strong in spite of their smallness, you know.

Elsa's face began to beam, and she would have danced for joy; but the King's uncomplimentary remarks hurt her a little. *She* was quite sure that she could find her way home, a big girl of four years ought certainly to know her own house. She knew exactly where it stood. Near the rushing silver brook, a low, red-roofed house, and a barn with black beams, also cocks and hens and geese strutting about in the little yard. It was quite near the water-mill; she could hear the rushing of the water as she lay in her little bed under her big feather sack, with only her little nose and ears peeping out. A fir-tree with a very tall stem and a thick bushy head stood at the back of the house.

Yes, she was sure that she could find it.

Meanwhile some of the dwarfs were marshalled off to get the carriage ready for the children. Then Hugo summoned up courage to address the King.

"O King!" he said, "I have heard of the wonders of your kingdom and of the marvellous skill of you workmen"—here he stammered a

little and his oratory gave way—"I should so much like to see something of it," he said shyly.

"Certainly, certainly, with the greatest pleasure," said King Reinhold, and looked much gratified. "Intelligent child," he muttered. "Ho, Dickkopf, bring me a torch, and lead the way to the workshop," he said.

Off he marched with majestic tread, and Hugo followed with Elsa, her little warm hand clasped tight in his own; through dark passages and caves lit by a pale light; through store-rooms where masses of minerals were piled up gleaming in wonderful colours; through the treasure-houses containing gold and silver and precious stones in huge quantities.

The children's eyes grew round in their heads as they saw all this wealth; but they did not understand much about the value of these treasures; toys or sweeties would have been more to their taste.

At last they reached a long, narrow hall where thousands of little men, with leather aprons on, sat busy at work. Each was employed in adorning and completing some work of art: costly goblets, beautiful chain rings, and necklaces were there, such as were never seen in the finest shops of Paris, Berlin or London.

The "joy of the making" was written on every countenance; for the artist is always happy when at work.

One dwarf was illuminating a book, and a beautiful design of grasses and butterflies grew up under his clever fingers.

"Take the book," said King Reinhold to Hugo. "It is only a tiny chapter from the great book of Nature that has neither beginning nor end. But if you study it carefully and earnestly, it will always bring you

hope and happiness, whatever your learned men may say to the contrary. Hold the pages to the light, and you will see that they are transparent."

As Hugo did so with the deepest interest, behold! the pictures became alive; the butterflies changed into fairies and laughed, and nodded at him in a friendly way.

"Look *through* the book of Nature till you find the soul of things," said King Reinhold.

Although this sounded very deep and mysterious, Hugo seemed to understand. Do you, I wonder, little children, who read this story? Or are you like the boy in the kindergarten to whom I was telling a fairy story and who interrupted me contemptuously with the remark: "Fairies don't exist!"

"O don't they my little man!" said I. "Well *you* think so."

Presently we read of a ball that grew, and he spoke again with great energy: "Balls don't grow."

"Oh, Oh!" said I, "Have you ever seen a little green apple." Then I tried to show him what wonderful things are always happening in this world of ours, if only we have eyes to see them. I do not think I convinced him; for he was very pig-headed and had a great opinion of himself; and such people big or little are very difficult to argue with.

To Elsa, Reinhold gave a handful of exquisite roses. "In fairyland roses mean love and happiness," he said. "Little girls should be happy all the day long, and not wet the world with their tears. There are tears enough already"—he said ponderingly—"tears in the centre of the earth."

Opening out of the hall on either side were huge furnaces. Here the Kobolds were busy smelting the ore, and preparing the materials for the more skilled workmen. Here too were little cupboards with shelves into which the costly vases were put, in order to be burnt hard like china.

The heat was so intense that Hugo and Elsa could only just peep in. It seemed to them as if the little men must be roasted alive; but the Kobolds were used to it, and found it quite cool and pleasant. They swung their hammers and chattered away at the same time, the busier the merrier; they were never idle or tired of their work.

A young dwarf page entered the hall and announced that the carriage was ready. In another moment Hugo and Elsa found themselves standing in the forest in the moonlight. A carriage stood ready for them drawn by six stags. King Reinhold had dispensed with the ceremony of leave-taking; he hated fusses, and wanted to smoke his pipe in peace.

Hugo recognised the stags; he had fed them in the winter from the windows of the forestry; they knew him too, and nodded their gentle heads.

O what a ride that was home through the warm September night! They saw neither spirit nor goblin; no fairy marvel was revealed to them; only the strong, sweet scent of the firs, the dark, weird shape of the trees, and the stars that shone through the branches!

They held one another tight by the hand, and leaned back on the soft cushions; they said nothing, they felt as if they were in a dream.

Presently they heard the noise of a little brook that was hidden in the dark trees, and shortly afterwards they turned a corner and saw the little village of Elhalten before them, peaceful and still in the early

morning light.

Elsa recognised her home after all, and called to the stags to stop. Then she kissed Hugo and laid her little cheek against his and said: "Good-bye, darling," and then she slipped into her house, and it all seemed quite natural. You may imagine *how* delighted Elsa's mother was to have her baby girl in her arms again. There was such a kissing and hugging as never was before!

Meanwhile Hugo drove up the steep side of the Küppel in the rosy light of the early morning; luckily he met no one on that lonely way. Once he thought he saw a white form standing at the end of the path, like a tall woman who waved her arms and beckoned. But when he looked more closely, it was but the growing light of day through the trees, and not Mother Holle, or the Wood-woman, as he had imagined. The stags galloped along swiftly in spite of the rough road, and soon stopped before the door of the forestry. There everyone seemed still asleep; not a sound was to be heard. Hugo stroked the gentle heads of the stags and bade them good-bye, and they vanished suddenly in the thicket of the Küppel.

With the first rays of the sun Hugo's mother awoke, and was most astonished to find that she had slept all night in the kitchen.

"That's what happens, when one's husband is away," she said stretching herself and shaking her clothes. "What has become of Hugo?" she thought suddenly, and felt anxious. She went quickly upstairs to the bedroom, but there lay Hugo snugly curled up in bed with rosy cheeks and tumbled curls, his nose buried deeply in his pillow.

As she came in, he roused himself and said: "Mother, I have been to fetch little Elsa. She is home again"—then he turned round and fell fast asleep.

The next day the news reached them that little Elsa had really been found.

"Why, how curious, my boy dreamt it last night," said Mrs Forester.

"She was left at her parents' house at about four in the morning, so I heard," said her husband, who had just come home.

Elsa's parents always believed that she had been stolen by the gipsies; it was strange that they should have sent her back so soon, without asking for a reward. Moreover the child was richly dressed; that was also a queer thing; her clothes were the wonder and admiration of the whole village. A blue silk frock, and shoes with shining buckles; never had such a finely dressed child been seen in Elhalten before.

The simple folk never dreamt that the buckles were real diamonds and worth a large sum of money.

When Hugo and Elsa met again on the following Sunday, you may be sure that they had much to talk about, at least when they were left alone undisturbed by grown-ups!

Although the fairy gifts were invisible to all save the children themselves, it seems that they had an influence on them as they grew older.

Elsa became a sweet, loving little person, the sunshine of her home—so she was called—and very, very seldom did anyone see her crying.

Hugo was a quiet, shy boy; but he seemed to observe everything and people said of him: "Hugo has his eyes open; he will make his mark in the world some day." So the children grew up happy and

good, and what can you want to know more about them than that?

THE WITCH'S GRANDDAUGHTER

PART I

In a green valley between two mountain-slopes lay a little village crowned by the Castle of Eppenhain, that stood on the mountain-side, built on projecting slabs of rock.

The quaint old houses of the village with their red, slanting roofs, and black-beamed walls, made a pretty picture in the May sunshine as Count Karl of Eppenhain rode through the stone-paved highway, mounted on his white steed decked with scarlet fringes. The lilac bushes were in flower, the air was sweet with their scent, the laburnums hung out their "gold rain" between the houses, the cherry-trees in the little gardens shed their blossoms like snow.

At the farther end of the village was a house somewhat larger than the peasant's cottages, with many gables and corners. This house was surrounded on all sides by a thick briar hedge. The Count knew that it had belonged to an old woman who was said to be a witch. There she had lived all alone, save for her seven cats, her seven ravens, her poultry—famous for the remarkable size of the eggs—and her little granddaughter, Babette.

Count Karl had heard that the old woman was dead; for there had been a great fuss about her burial. The villagers had said that as she was a notorious witch, she ought not to be buried in consecrated ground; but as the old lady had left money to the church, her

tombstone was erected after all in the little churchyard. The village boys declared that they had seen her riding on a broomstick over the church spire; but the Count did not believe such tales. He wondered what had become of the child; she was the prettiest, as well as the most mischievous and ill-behaved child in the village.

As the Count came up to the house, he heard voices shouting and scolding. Then he saw a strange hunting scene. The hunters were not men, but women with sticks and brooms, and the creature pursued was neither a hare nor a fox, but just a little girl.

Yes, it was little Babette, the witch's granddaughter. She was leading the fat peasant women a fine dance. They were quite unused to running, and were obliged to stop every few minutes to pant; then Babette danced just before them, made naughty faces, and (oh, fie!) stuck out her little red tongue. Her hair blew over her head in the fresh breeze, till she looked like some tall flower with curling petals. Sometimes she stopped and shook her little fist at her pursuers; then off she flew again. She knew every nook and corner of the garden, and that was to her advantage.

The Count paused, laughed, then blew a blast from his horn.

Instantly everyone stood still as if they were living pictures.

"Hi! Ho! Come here, good folk!" he cried.

The women came at once, wiping their hot faces with the corner of their aprons, puffing and blowing like so many fat seals. Babette stood at a safe distance, but near enough to hear all that went on.

"Please sir," said one of the women with a curtsy, "as your Lordship knows, the child's granny is dead and buried. Four days has the child lived here all alone, never a bite or sup has she had; she will die of

starvation. (Here Babette laughed.) She hides in the bushes like the wild cat that she is!"

"Babette, little Babette, come here, child," he called, interrupting the old woman's narrative.

She came at once in obedience to his gentle command. She gave him one glance out of her deep brown eyes, lifting up her long black lashes, and his heart was captured at once. He was very fond of children, but he had none of his own. Here was a beautiful child that seemed ready made for him. Not one of the women before him really wished to keep her; for they feared her, and the supposed power of her dead grandmother.

Meanwhile the child stood by the Count, and began to stroke his fine embroidered sleeve; finally she slipped her little hand into his. This settled the matter.

"Well, well, we must see what is to be done for the child. Meanwhile I shall take her up with me to the Castle. She seems to have made you all rather hot," he remarked mischievously to the reddest and stoutest of the women.

"A devil's brat, I call her!" she muttered in return, between her teeth.

"Hush," said my Lord indignantly, "she looks more like a little angel," and, indeed, at his kind words her small face had become very sweet.

As he mounted his horse again and lifted Babette to place her before him, she began to cry bitterly.

"Why, little one, what ails you?" he said. "Are you frightened?"

"No-o-o-o-o-o," said Babette, "but I don't want to go away from my

beau-ti-ful home!"

"You shall have a far more beautiful home, and everything that you can want, shall be yours," he said. "Why, you would have starved there alone, you poor little thing!"

"Oh no!" said Babette, "for Lucky—she is my pet hen you know—always laid the biggest eggs for me; then I make a little hole and suck them so. (She tossed back her curly head.) Then I am never hungry or thirsty. O, who will feed Lucky, and all the baby chickens; and my cats?" she continued, and began to cry again.

"We will fetch them all up to the Castle," said his Lordship consolingly.

The road wound upwards and upwards, until they reached at length the gateway of the Castle. The heavy gates stood open to receive them. There was a pretty terraced garden in the front, where peacocks strutted up and down, who nodded their heads as if they knew Babette.

A dog sprang out barking to meet his master. Count Karl patted his head; then he lifted Babette from his horse, and led her by the hand into the Castle. "Welcome to Eppenhain, my little maid," he said, formally, but kindly.

Her little heart beat fast; for she was timid, like all wild, untamed creatures, and did not know what might happen to her next. The Count drew back the heavy curtain that hung before the entrance to a room; and there in a deep window niche sat a lady dressed in a rich green velvet dress with puffed sleeves, and a gold chain round her neck. She was working at embroidery on a frame. She sprang up at once, as her husband (for it was the Countess herself) entered the room, and uttered a cry of surprise as she saw the child.

"Why, what dirty little thing have you picked up? Send her away again at once," she said imperiously. "Don't touch me, child," as Babette attempted to stroke her grand dress.

Now the Count had not noticed that Babette was very dirty, that her red pinafore hung in rags, and her hair had not been combed for many a day. He was somewhat taken aback, and saw that he had been rash.

"She shall be washed and properly dressed, and *then* you will see," he said. He dared not tell her his plans at once. He sent for his old nurse, who had brought him up as a boy, and gave the child into her care.

The poor woman soon had her hands full, I can tell you! You might as well have tried to dress a hare as Babette! She *would* not stand still for a second, and as for a bath, she seemed to be quite afraid of it. However, several maids were called, and Babette was bathed in spite of kicks and screams. She was no sooner in the water than she began to splash about like a baby, and to enjoy herself finely. It was almost as difficult to get her out as to put her in! Some old clothes that had belonged to the Count's sister, were produced. Babette thought them very fine, and seemed quite pleased, she stroked the old nurse's cheek, chucked her under the chin, and sprang up and down violently on her knee, "nearly cracking my old bones," as nurse related afterwards. Her curls were the most trouble; it would take more than one day's brushing to set them in order.

Meanwhile Count Karl had been explaining to his wife that he meant to adopt Babette, and bring her up as his own daughter.

"A witch's offspring without a family pedigree," exclaimed his wife, "must I be mother to a witch's brat?"

Just then the "witch's brat" entered the room, making a funny bobbing curtsy, as nurse had taught her to do, just outside the door. Very pretty she looked in her low-necked, white-embroidered frock, with the cherry-coloured sash, her face flushed after the bath. Even her Ladyship was bound to acknowledge that she was quite a lovely child.

"What is your name, child?" she said condescendingly.

"I don't love you," said Babette, and stuck out her tongue.

"Babette," said the Count sternly, "if you are a *good* little girl, and do as you are told, you may stay here with us, and this lady will be your mother, and I your father. Then you will be brought up as a lady instead of becoming a little heathen and wild girl of the woods."

Babette stood still a moment, as if she were considering the matter; then she gravely kissed his Lordship's hand. The Countess extended her lily-white fingers, and Babette kissed them as well, but timidly; for she feared a rebuff.

Just at this moment a noise of scratching and miewing was heard at the window.

Babette flew to open it, and in walked—what do you think?—seven cats with their tails in the air rubbing themselves comfortably against the window-pane.

"O my dear Fotchen, dear Silverpaws, how glad I am to see you!" exclaimed Babette, and she kissed them all.

"*What next?*" said the poor Countess, holding up her hands in horror!

In a few minutes there came a rap at the window, seven times

repeated. These were the ravens. However, they did not venture into the room; they were afraid of the big gun that stood in the corner. They flew straight up into a tall fir-tree, and there they chattered away as usual, hidden by the dark branches.

The funniest sight of all was the arrival of the poultry. The cocks walked first with an air of importance and authority; the baby bantams sat on their mothers' backs; the whole procession toiled up the hill to the Castle and entered by the yard gate. The servants watched them with astonishment; they too said: "What next?" However, no one grumbled, not even the Countess when she heard of it; for such guests were welcome. The old witch's hens were renowned for the size of their eggs; they had often been bought for use at the Castle.

Now the clock struck seven.

"High time for little girls to have their supper and go to bed," said her Ladyship, and nurse was called, and carried Babette off again.

A beautiful wooden cot, painted white and gold, stood in the room where Babette was to sleep. It was still called the nursery; for the Count and his sister had slept there as children.

Nurse persuaded her to let five of the cats sleep outside in the barn; but she begged so hard to have Fotchen and Silverpaws that nurse sent for a bundle of hay, and the two pussies slept in a corner of the room to keep her from feeling homesick.

Babette stole out of her bed at six o'clock the next morning. She dressed herself in haste; she was so anxious to see her new surroundings. It seemed to her like a wonderful dream, or like one of the fairy stories that her old grandmother had so often narrated to her.

Yesterday, little, wild Babette, whom no one cared for, and

everyone scorned; to-day, the Count's own daughter. She would try and be *so* good, never naughty any more. She smoothed her hair a little with her fingers; washing she did not think necessary. Then she went down the big oak staircase followed by her two pussies. When the young servants saw her, they began to tease her unmercifully and to pull the cats' tails.

Then Babette grew very angry. "Leave my cats alone, will you?" she said. She stamped her little foot, made ugly faces, and used bad words. Finally she escaped from her persecutors into the garden. Here she was alone. She sat down and cried with rage and sorrow. She had meant to be so good; but it was very hard when people were so horrid!

However she heard a cock-a-doodle-do from the hen-house, and ran off there, forgetting her troubles. She was greeted by a chorus of melodious voices. They made such a noise that they woke my Lady out of her comfortable early-morning doze. Lucky had laid an immense egg. She rolled it with pride to the feet of her young mistress, who promptly began to suck its contents. The ravens flew down to greet her, and she stroked their glossy plumage.

The five cats were still shut up and miewed bitterly. Babette luckily met one of the gardeners who opened the door of the barn and freed the captives. They followed her into the big kitchen with the shining copper pans, purring and rubbing themselves against her legs. Babette coaxed the cook till he gave her seven saucers of milk; then there was a great smacking of lips.

When nurse awoke as usual at seven o'clock, she was frightened to find that her little charge had vanished. "What a child to look after in my old age!" she groaned. "And yet she is taking too! How sweet she looked curled up in the old cot." She soon found out from the servants what Babette had been doing; so the child was seized upon, washed

and brushed again, and dressed in a stiff frock with white frills.

Quite sober and respectable our little wild girl looked when she went downstairs after breakfast to see my Lord and Lady in the dining-room.

She sat on the high, straight-backed sofa, and played with the carved lions' heads, and had never a word to say for herself until the Count produced a doll that he had rummaged out from among some old treasures. It was yellow from age; but its frock was of satin, and it had on little gold shoes. To Babette, who had never had a doll of her own, it seemed very lovely indeed. "Is it *really* for me?" she asked in tones of ecstasy.

She was perfectly good all the morning, playing with it, washing its face, dressing and undressing it, and putting it to bed as little girls love to do.

At dinner she shocked the polite company by putting her food into her mouth with her fingers; forks and spoons she did not know how to manage. So she was sent to have dinner with the servants who made fine fun of her again, till she flew into a passion and declared with many tears that she would run away. Then they were frightened lest my Lord should hear the noise, and soothed and petted her till she was quiet again. They did not mean to be unkind; they were only stupid, and thought her tempers amusing.

Well, the days went on, and Babette became more gentle and docile, and gave up many of her wild ways. She saw but little of the Countess, but she grew to admire the grave, silent lady, and to long for some response to her affection. My Lord was Babette's best friend and protector in all her childish troubles. Everyone said that he was quite infatuated with the child. He would play ball with her in the garden, "regardless of his knightly dignity," as his wife remarked.

Babette knew all the animals about the Castle and ruled over them like a little queen.

She would go up to the proud peacocks and say imperiously: "Spread out your tails, or I will smack your silly heads!" and they obeyed her meekly at once.

She had a pet frog in the pond, and once when the gardener was scolding her for breaking some of his beautiful lilies, she popped it down his neck, to his horror and disgust! For this she was whipped and put to bed. I think she richly deserved it—don't you?

The garden at the back of the Castle led into the dense forest by which the mountains were covered. Babette would sit on the stone wall and gaze into the deep shades, as if she could see things there that were invisible to others. She knew how to call the deer. One day she enticed a fine stag into the garden. She made a garland of cornflowers and ox-eye daisies, and threw it over his antlers; then she sprang on his back, holding a red foxglove in her hand for a whip, and galloped round the garden, singing and shouting: "Look at me, look at me! I am the Queen of the fairies!"

The Countess herself owned that she had never seen a prettier sight; but then she sighed deeply, and said to her husband she feared all was not right with the child.

The Count shared her fears to some extent, and nurse had orders never to let her out of her sight.

Nurse had several times seen a strange man watching Babette from over the wall as she played alone in the garden. She too felt nervous and anxious about her little charge.

PART II

Years passed by, Babette grew into a tall and charming maiden. She learned to read and write, and to play on the harp. She could even speak a little French, which was the fashionable language of the Court in those days. So that with these accomplishments she was considered a fine lady, far above the village children, who had formerly despised her.

One fine evening (she was then about sixteen years of age) she was walking with her old nurse in the forest, not far from the Castle, picking bilberries, and singing to herself songs of her own composing. The wood was very still; not a leaf stirred. The setting sun shone out behind a beech-tree, making a brilliant star of iridescent colours that dazzled her eyes. She heard a sudden noise as of a cough: the bushes near her rustled. She felt frightened and called out: "Nurse, nurse," in trembling tones.

As she spoke, a man sprang out of the wood and seized her by the arm. Nurse began to scream; but the man raised the stick he had in his hand, and she stood as if turned to stone.

Babette's courage always rose to emergencies. She looked the man over from head to foot. He was dressed in green, with a red feather in his cap. His hair was dark and curly; his eyes were large and would have been beautiful, but that they had a wild and sinister look that Babette did not like, and squinted slightly. She seemed to remember his face; but where or when she had seen him before, she did not know. Her first thought was that he must be a wizard like one of those her grandmother had told her stories about.

"Who are you?" he said, shaking her slightly.

"I am Babette, daughter of Count Karl of Eppenhain," said Babette proudly.

"A Count's daughter—a fine tale—the witch's granddaughter you mean," he said with emphasis, and Babette shuddered. "Come along with me, child!" he continued, "you must follow me now, and serve me well and cook my dinners. I knew your old grandmother and have often seen you as a child; a little imp you were," he said. "Now it is high time you learnt to be useful; they will only turn your head, and teach you rubbish up there at the Castle; you must come along with me now." Then he turned to the poor nurse, and said, "In half an hour you will be free to return to the Castle. Adieu!" He fixed his strange eyes on the nurse, who swooned away, and thus she was found exactly half an hour afterwards by the housemaid, who had followed her to say that supper was ready.

You may imagine the consternation at the Castle. The poor Countess who had been so cold to Babette, seemed to feel it most. She sat and cried: "O Babette, come back, come back, my dear, and I will be a real mother to you, indeed I will."

The Count immediately took steps to recover her. The forests were searched through and through by his men; but not the slightest trace could they discover.

The seven ravens said: "Caw, caw," and set off at once in search of her.

The next day Fotchen and Silverpaws and the other cats disappeared. Lucky and several of the old witch's hens were also missed.

It was evident that they had all followed Babette, and that she must

be alive somewhere; but where, that was the question. Where there is magic at work, it is always a difficult matter.

One clever youth remarked that if one could find her pets, why, then one might find Babette.

But this brilliant idea was not of much use, as they were *all* lost.

Meanwhile Babette followed her strange guide with many misgivings and sad sinkings of the heart. They had not gone far when they came to a cottage in the forest, surrounded, like her granny's garden, by a briar hedge.

Now I must tell you that Babette had fallen into the power of a reputed wizard, and he had the power of making everything within this briar hedge invisible and intangible to those outside. So that poor Babette would be more safely imprisoned there than in an iron-barred fortress. She did not realise this at first; she grew to understand it later, when she became more acquainted with the wizard (or Mr Squint-eyes, as Babette called him) and his ways. The hedge was so thick and high, and the thorns were so huge, that it would have been impossible for Babette to think of squeezing herself through it, and running away.

The wizard parted this hedge with his wand; it closed up thick and close behind them as they entered.

The cottage garden was laid out in patches of vegetables. Not a flower was to be seen in it; but there were fruit-trees with ripe apples, and pears, plums and medlars; for it was the early autumn. They entered into the little parlour which seemed dark and gloomy to Babette. Mr Squint-eyes tossed off a mug of beer that stood on the table, and told her to be off to bed. The poor girl was hungry; for bilberries are not very satisfying and it was supper time; but she crept

up the narrow stairs, too much frightened to say a word. She found a tiny room with a white bed in it, a looking-glass, very dim and old and uncanny-looking, with candlesticks on either side, also a primitive washing-stand.

As she began to undress, a sense of fear and loneliness came over her. She thought of her happy home at Eppenhain, and of the Count, and hot tears began to fall. However, she was accustomed to look at the cheerful side of things. "They are sure to find me to-morrow," she said to herself; she knew she could not be far away.

The next morning she was awakened by a loud knocking at the door. The horrid man who had stolen her, poked his head in, "Get up, get up, you lazy bones," he said, "and see about my breakfast."

Babette hurried downstairs and found a small kitchen, with a door leading into the garden. There was a heap of dried wood just outside the door, and, after many attempts, she succeeded in making the fire.

She filled the heavy iron kettle from the pump in the yard, making her pretty frock quite black.

"That's right, that's the way that women should work," said the wizard coolly.

Babette felt indignant and thought that he might offer to help her, but not a bit of it. There he stood, leaning against the door, smoking his long pipe, the picture of laziness.

"Please where is the coffee?" said Babette.

"Use your eyes and you will find it," said her polite host.

Then she saw a jar on a shelf labelled "Coffee," and near it the coffee-mill.

Babette ground the beans till she was red in the face. Then she waited for the water to boil. Whilst she was attending to the coffee, rolls and butter appeared on the table and a blue and white china coffee service. The table seemed to have laid itself; for Babette was sure that the man had never moved from the door. Now breakfast was ready. They sat down together, the wizard saying never a word, but lifting one eyebrow at times in a peculiar way that made Babette feel very uncomfortable.

After breakfast he went out of the house saying: "Clean the house, make the beds, cook the dinner."

"But there is no dinner to cook," said poor Babette.

"Find it," was all the reply she could get out of him.

Now Babette had not been remarkable for obedience and docility, and if anyone had spoken to her like that at home, she would have rebelled at once; but she felt instinctively that her safety here lay in doing exactly as she was told. The man was half-mad she feared, and if she aroused his wrath, he might do her bodily harm.

The tears came into her eyes; she felt quite in despair; but she was a brave girl and determined to make the best of things.

The vegetables in the garden occurred to her. She would cook some carrots; that was easy. Stewed plums would do for pudding; but what about the soup and the joint?

At this point of her deliberations a hare was thrown over the hedge. This settled the question. Evidently the man did not wish to starve.

"But how shall I get its fur off?" thought Babette. "Bah! I shall never be able to skin the creature!"

Just then she heard to her joy a "caw caw," seven times repeated, and there she saw her dear ravens sitting on a tree just outside the garden.

Now the limit of invisibility did not exist for the witch's favourites. They flew at once to Babette; she told them her troubles, and showed them the hare.

"That is an easy matter," said the ravens, "the hare has seven skins; we are seven ravens, each of us will take off one skin, and may we have the pickings?" said the greedy fellows.

"Anything, anything you like! Please take it away and bring it back again all ready to pop in the pot!" said Babette.

"Potted or jugged hare famous!" said the ravens, and they laughed hoarsely.

"Be quiet, be quiet, or the wizard will catch you!" she said in a warning tone.

Now the dinner was all ready on the stove. Potatoes she had dug out of the garden. "Hare and carrots and stewed plums, what can anyone want more?" she thought, and felt very proud. But suddenly soup occurred to her. How could she make soup? She had heard that soup was made of bones and water; but she had no bones, and those nice little halfpenny packets for making soup out of nothing were not invented in those days.

She put on some hot water with a few carrots and a little chopped parsley in it and plenty of pepper and salt. She tasted it, as a good cook should, and said to herself: "Not bad, I have tasted worse."

She laid the table, and punctually at one o'clock the man came in.

Babette trembled. He proceeded at once to business; that is, he sat down to dinner.

Soup came first, which was unfortunate. "Bah!" he said, making a horribly wry face, "what stuff, child, do you want to make me sick?"

"No-o-o," said poor Babette.

"Never make such soup again, or I shall fetch my sister, and she will cook *you*," he said with a terrible look.

However the hare was tender, and when a pot of red-currant jelly produced itself, seemingly from nowhere, it was quite a fine dinner.

The carrots were hard, and "not scraped," as the wizard said severely. "Plums too much sugar."

But in spite of all this grumbling she felt immensely proud of her morning's work. The house was not cleaned; neither were the beds made; but this he did not seem to notice. He lay on the sofa by the window, covered himself up with a bear skin, and snored loudly with his mouth open.

Babette made up the fire, and put the kettle on to boil for tea. Then she strolled out into the garden. She climbed up into a pear-tree. From her perch in its branches she could see far into the woods. She wondered when her friends would come and rescue her.

Then she saw to her delight Lucky and some of her favourite cocks and hens wandering about in search of her. They came scuttling up at once. She held up one finger to enjoin silence. She feared that her capturer might take a fancy for roast fowl if he should see them. So they hid under the hedge.

"Now I can make scrambled eggs for supper," thought Babette

joyfully.

Fotchen and Silverpaws had likewise no rest when their mistress was gone, and they too set out in search of her. When they reached the briar hedge, Babette was indoors making tea. They began to miew and made a great noise.

"The old woman's cats, by Thor!" said the wizard. "They know a thing or two. I'll go and let them in." So saying he again parted the hedge with his wand, and let them through. Although Babette was very pleased to see them, she felt a little anxious as to their welfare.

However the wizard scratched their heads, and was quite affectionate to them. He had, it seemed, a partiality for cats.

Babette felt a little happier now that her pets were with her; yet her heart was sore. She thought of her lovely house, of her kind, good foster-father, and of all her friends, and the tears stood in her eyes.

Several weeks passed away, and Babette cooked and scrubbed every day in fear and trembling, like a regular little Cinderella. Being German, she was used to helping in the household, and was not so inexperienced as many English girls would have been. But never a word of praise did she get from her queer companion; but if anything were amiss, then he opened his mouth and scolded the poor girl roughly.

PART III

A young man was returning home after a day's hunting. He was the son of the knight of a neighbouring castle, and his name was Sir

Rudolf of Ruppertshain. It was a hot afternoon; the sunlight made a chequered pattern through the forest trees. His bag was heavy with game, and he whistled merrily as he strode between the oak-trees and bracken fern. He had a light heart and an easy conscience, few enemies and many friends, and added to these advantages was the exhilarating feeling of youth and perfect health.

Suddenly he stopped and looked around him, startled. He heard a sweet voice singing. The notes were clear and distinct as those of a bird, and yet it was no bird. Who could it be in this lonely spot? He could distinguish the words of the song as he held his breath to listen:

"A lonely maiden, I,
Sit here and sob and sigh;
No man my face can see,
Ah, who will rescue me?
O lack-a-daisy-me!

O wasted life of mine!
Here must I sadly pine;
My young life hid must be
From all humanity.
O lack-a-daisy me!

O were a knight so bold,
As in the time of old,
In days of chivalry,
He would deliver me!
O lack-a-daisy-me!"

Rudolf's eyes were trained by hunting. He searched the woods carefully round that place, and peered behind every bush and tree; but nothing was to be seen. His heart beat fast, this was a real adventure. Surely if a wood-nymph or fairy were to appear to him here in this lonely forest, it would hardly seem strange.

So he summoned up his courage and addressed the wood-spirit as he thought. "Who are you? Where are you?" he said. "Be you wood-sprite or fairy, I fear you not. I am ready to do your bidding; for your sweet voice and your distress have touched my heart: appear, O appear!"

Babette (for of course it was she) trembled with excitement. This was really a chance of escape. She had seen the young huntsman from her perch in the pear-tree, and had made up the impromptu

song. She thought it was even more original than her cooking. Now she answered eagerly:

"Alas it is impossible for me to appear unto you; for I am as invisible as if I had on Siegfried's cap of darkness. I was stolen by a horrid wizard when I was walking in the forest with my nurse. Surely you have heard of me?"

Now of course Sir Rudolf had heard of Babette,—the story of whose kidnapping was told all over the country, and became more wonderful with every telling. Some people said that the devil himself had carried her off; this was really unkind; for Babette, though lively, was not a bad girl, as we know.

"Are you Babette, the witch's granddaughter?" said the young man hesitatingly.

"O don't, don't say that, I want to forget that!" said Babette, and he heard a slight sob. "I am the adopted daughter of Count Karl of Eppenhain, and O, a wicked wizard holds me here invisible under a powerful spell. Just think," said Babette crying again, "I slave for him all day and cook and do all the house-work, and never a kind word or look do I get from him in return. It is a shame. O dear! O dear!"

"Please don't cry, I really cannot bear it, when I cannot even see you to comfort you," said Rudolf tenderly. "Tell me what to do! Shall I shoot the wizard?"

"No, of course not; besides, he is invisible, too. You might walk through us all, and notice no difference, so subtle is the spell," said Babette.

Rudolf was one of those specially gifted mortals in whom the sense of things unseen is as clearly developed as the senses of sight and

hearing. He never doubted Babette's reality, though I think a more up-to-date youth would certainly have done so, and have thought that his imagination was playing tricks with him. He felt much distressed and perplexed, but could think of no way out of this strange dilemma.

But an inspiration came to Babette.

"Go to Mother Holle," she said, "if you really wish to help me. She was an intimate friend of my grandmother's, and she is a powerful fairy and can perhaps help us. What is your name, brave youth?" she continued. "Sir Rudolf of Ruppertshain," he answered. "Why, then, I know your mother quite well; but you were away travelling with your father, when I visited your castle. But quick, we must not delay matters by conversation, though it is *dreadfully* nice to talk to a real human being again." Her voice sounded near and yet far away; "a curious kind of conversation," Rudolf thought it was.

"Where can I find Mother Holle?" said Rudolf. "And will she not drop pitch on my head? I should be no good at shaking feather beds, you see!"

"Nonsense, she won't expect you to do anything of the sort. She is very kind and friendly; she lives on the Rossert Mountain, quite near to your Castle. Hush, hush, go now! my tyrant is waking up; if he were to suspect us! Go!—go!"

A complete and somewhat unnatural silence followed, like one of those awkward pauses in the conversation when we entertain stiff callers for the first time.

Then Rudolf took the precaution of marking the position of the trees in that part of the woods.

Three tall fir-trees raised their heads among the beech and oaks.

He cut a cross  thus, on each one of them, because trees are so deceptive. This mark is the old symbol of the Mithras cult, two axes placed sideways signifying the striking of fire. It is an old sign known and respected by the fairies; so he hoped that the good folk would see it and further his quest.

On one of the firs the ravens were assembled. They caw-cawed seven times to indicate their willingness to lend Rudolf their aid.

The wizard looked at Babette closely that evening. The new-born hope, perhaps, too, the sight of the handsome stranger had given an extra colour to her cheeks. "I may have trouble with her yet!" he said to himself, and cleared his throat with a rumbling sound.

I must tell you that the cocks and hens had betrayed themselves. They were silent all through the night, but when the dawn broke, they could not resist one cock-a-doodle-doo! Then the wizard chuckled and brought them in; but nothing had happened to them as yet.

Babette lived during the next days in a state of suppressed excitement. She felt that something *must* happen for good or evil; but she did not know what. Patient waiting! a hard lesson for all of us to learn, but harder still for a maiden of seventeen years who had been kept so long in that dull hole. She had passed her birthday in that horrid place! just think of it, and not one birthday present did she get. She made up for it afterwards by having two birthdays at once; but it was not *quite* so nice.

Meanwhile Sir Rudolf had turned homewards pondering on his strange adventure, and fully determined to seek Mother Holle's aid. Should he go first to the Castle of Eppenhain and tell Babette's foster-parents that he had found out where Babette was imprisoned? He felt that, credulous though they were in those days, they would only laugh

at him, and consider the story as outside the range of possibility. They might even suggest that a cask of Rhine wine had clouded his intelligence; no, he would go home to Ruppertshain Castle and have supper, and think it over. So he returned home, and was so silent and dreamy, and his appetite, which was usually of heroic proportions, was so small that his mother felt quite anxious about him.

"You are not bewitched, Rudie dear?" she asked anxiously, just as we might inquire if he were a little upset.

"I am not sure, mother, maybe I am!" he answered to the good lady's dismay.

After sprinkling him with various herbs, she insisted on his drinking some nasty aromatic tea when he went to bed. As she had put some spider's legs in it and a few choice things of that sort, Rudolf asked to be allowed to take it upstairs with him. Then I regret to say he deceived the good lady by pouring it out of the window. I rather think that you or I might have done the same thing under the circumstances, though it was undoubtedly wrong.

The full moon was shining into the little window in the gable of the turret. He shook off the very natural sleepiness and fatigue consequent on his night's hunting, took off his soiled clothes, and dressed himself in his fine velvet Court suit with the beautiful lace on the collar.

He opened the little window, squeezed himself (it was lucky that he was slight for a German knight) through the iron bars, and climbed on to the roof with some difficulty, not to say danger. Then he crawled noiselessly along the Castle walls, fearing to be challenged by the warder of the Castle on his nightly rounds. But the warder was just enjoying his seventh glass of lager beer, and was not very keen on the look-out.

As he dropped outside the walls, his favourite dog began to bark and beg to go with him; but Rudolf did not dare to let him out for fear of creating a disturbance.

He soon gained the little path which led through Eppenhain, and then through fields to the woods that clothed the Rossert. Great clouds had obscured the moon; but he was not afraid; he was so used to the woods and could distinguish one creature from another simply by its movements.

In his hand he carried a dark lantern. A rough path covered with rocks and stones led to the summit of the mountain. As he walked cautiously along, a bat hit him in the face as it blundered along. "Hi, ho, steady there, old fellow!" said Rudolf. He now entered the part of the woods where the beeches and oaks grow so closely together that at midday the sky seems green, rather than blue. The moon shone out suddenly, and he saw by its light a gruesome-looking head without a body that seemed to grin at him from among the undergrowth. His heart stood still for a moment, and then he laughed at his fears; for he saw that it was only a grotesque old tree-stump, such as one so often sees in the woods.

Suddenly he saw a bright light through the trees, as if one of the bushes were on fire, or was it merely the brilliant moonbeams shining on a wet clearing?

For a moment all was still; then lightning played across his path, revealing a huge clumsy-looking giant who stood with club uplifted in the way, looking as if he would dash his brains out. Brave though Rudolf was, he did not wish to court danger; so he turned aside into the woods hoping to find another path before long that was not thus barricaded. Then voices seemed to mock him and to laugh at him, and he had the unpleasant sensation of dark shadows, moving as he

moved, shadows unaccompanied by substance.

The rain came down, pouring, drenching rain, such as the forests love. In a few minutes he was wet to the skin, as wet as if he had plunged into the river with his clothes on. Naturally his vanity was to blame for this; in his stout hunting clothes and thick leather boots even a deluge could not have wetted him through. To add to this, the air was close and stifling, and he had lost his way. All this for the sake of an unseen maiden. What if she were as old and ugly as Fräulein Kunigunde of whom Heinrich von Kleist has written? Somehow he felt that was impossible; but even if it had been so, his natural gallantry would not have deserted him, and we will hope that he would still have sought to deliver her.

A Christian knight is ready to help all women, be they young or old, rich or poor, plain or pretty.

The rain had ceased; but there was a sense of something oppressive in the atmosphere. An owl with eyes that looked like live coals glared at him from the branch of an oak-tree, vanishing as he approached. A fox? No, it was too large for a fox; it was a wolf (there were really wolves in the Taunus woods in those days!) came up to him snarling. Rudolf had his gun ready, but the creature moved away into the darkest shades, snarling and growling as it went.

Altogether I cannot say it was a pleasant walk. I do not think any one of us would have enjoyed it all alone at the dead of night, do you?

At this moment came a flash of lightning that struck down a tree just before Rudolf's eyes. He crossed himself involuntarily and muttered a paternoster.

A lull followed the storm; the heavens were clear again. Rudolf made out by the light of his lantern a triangular spot made by three

footpaths crossing. It was bare of all vegetation; black ashes were heaped up in the middle as if gipsies had lately lit a fire there.

An irresistible impulse made him enter this triangle, though he felt as if long ghostly arms were trying to hold him back.

No sooner had he stepped on to this spot than he fell into a deep sleep or faint. When he awoke, he saw a wonderful light near him, and in the midst of the light which seemed to radiate from her presence, was a beautiful lady, with long rippling fair hair.

"You are safe now in my kingdom," she said. "You have passed the boundary between the good and evil powers, and have left the dangers of the night behind you."

"O can you tell me where to find Mother Holle, beautiful fairy?" he said.

"Easily enough, for I *am* Mother Holle!" she answered. "I know why you have come here, and I am ready to help you." She took him by the hand, and he leapt to his feet, making a low bow to the lovely lady. All the evil dreams that had perplexed him, fled as the night before the day, and he could have shouted hurrah! for joy and gladness.

He had the unshaken confidence in the final victory of good over evil, that is so necessary to help us to any measure of success in this world with its chequered lights.

He walked with Mother Holle a little way, till they came to an arbour made of honeysuckle and wild roses, surrounded by banks of evening primroses, round which luminous moths were fluttering. Into this they entered, and she sat down and gazed at him, till he was quite overwhelmed with her beauty. He had expected to see an old witch hobbling along with a stick and to have feather beds to make!

Feather pillows, indeed, there were in the arbour, very cosy and soft. It was delightful to have a chat with such a woman in such a place, even if there were no Babette in the world.

Mother Holle began to speak, her voice sounded like the murmur of the fir-trees.

"I have heard that pretty little Babette has fallen into the power of a bad man. He stole the magic book from her grandmother's house at a time when the old lady was ill and feeble, shortly before her death. He has been only able to make out a few of the spells—that, for instance, for rendering things invisible. He is not a real wizard, so that if you obtain the book, the power will be yours. But I strongly advise you to have nothing to do with magic; it is very dangerous; but to return the book to me, to whom, in fact, it rightfully belongs."

"Have no fear of that," laughed Rudolf. "I don't want it, I would not touch it with the tongs if I could help it."

"Now listen carefully to my instructions! At the foot of one of the fir-trees, grows a red toadstool, spotted with white. On it sits an ugly old toad. Take this handkerchief (she gave him a lovely gauze scarf), wrap the toad in it, and cast it to the ground. Pull up the toadstool. Then the whole place will become visible, and you will be able to consult with Babette as to how to overcome old Squint-eyes, as she calls him.

"Hold this candle alight in your hand"—she gave him the young pointed top of a fir-tree—"it will keep off evil spells. When you have overcome the man, bind him with this grass." So saying, she gave him a bundle of silvery woodland grass. "Then tie him up to the tallest of the three fir-trees and leave him to us. We will punish him according to his deserts, and teach him to behave better in the future."

"Can you tell me anything about the fair young lady herself? Is she really the granddaughter of a witch? I could well believe it; for verily she has bewitched me; but who were her parents? I wish to know for her own sake," asked Rudolf anxiously.

"The old woman was really her nurse," said Mother Holle. "It is true that the woman had fairy blood in her veins and was learned in magic, but she never used her powers for any evil purposes, and as for riding on a broomstick, she abhorred such practices. Babette is the granddaughter of the great Baron of Siebenbergen. The Baron brought his children up strictly as became their rank; but his youngest son ran away from home, and married a village maiden much beneath him in rank.

"His father was exceedingly angry and refused to acknowledge her. The young wife died when Babette was born. The father went off in despair to the wars. He entrusted the tiny baby to the care of an old woman who had formerly been his own nurse. This old woman, who was spoken of later as Babette's grandmother, had been nurse to the children in Siebenbergen Castle for many years; but she had been dismissed suddenly in her old age, because evil tongues had denounced her as a witch. The Baron did not believe in the charge, but, nevertheless, he was obliged to send her away. He had his own reputation in the country to think of, and the charge of witchcraft was no light one in those days, and not so easy to disprove. He gave her a handsome pension, and a comfortable house and troubled himself no more about her.

"Babette's father lost interest in life on the death of his dearly beloved peasant wife. He fought recklessly in the front of the battle, and fell, covered with many wounds. His body was brought home for burial and there was a grand funeral in Siebenbergen. Everyone praised his heroism, and lamented his early death, but no one

inquired after his peasant wife, or knew of the existence of his baby daughter.

"The notice of the marriage and the certificate of Babette's birth are to be found in the church of Eppenhain, all duly registered and complete.

"The old nurse became very feeble and was hardly fitted to bring up such a wild, high-spirited child as Babette. That is all I can tell you; you must find the papers, and test the accuracy of the story for yourself."

Rudolf was deeply interested; his heart beat fast. Babette became more and more interesting, wrapped round in a web of romance. He wanted to ask more questions of Mother Holle; but she faded slowly away. As she vanished, a voice said: "Adieu, follow the light path, and nothing can molest you."

A long stream of light shone out from where she had stood and illumined the way through the woods. It shone on and on in one great bright path, like the moon shining over the sea. Rudolf reached home walking like one in a dream, his head full of strange and marvellous fancies.

PART IV

Rudolf awoke rather later than usual; for he was thoroughly tired out. His mother did not feel so concerned about him when she saw the amount of breakfast he consumed; but he was still silent and abstracted. His adventures seemed to him like a wild dream. It seemed almost absurd to seek for the three firs; but yet an irresistible longing led him thither.

On the stroke of twelve at midday he stood beneath them, and recognised his own sign, and O joy! saw the toadstool with the toad sitting on it.

Without a moment's hesitation he took the handkerchief ("which was in itself a proof of the reality of the story," he said to himself) and seized the horrid shiny toad (how it wriggled and squirmed like some evil thing!) and cast it to the ground where it sprang into a thousand pieces. These pieces took root in the earth, so to speak, and came up again as a multitude of toadstools quite wonderful to behold. Perhaps you may see them if you ever come across this spot in your excursions to the Taunus Mountains.

Then Rudolf took hold of the red and white toadstool on which the toad had sat. Surely never before had a fungus been so firmly planted in the earth! The whole ground seemed to shake and tremble as he tugged at it; trees were uprooted in the forest; the earth moved up and down like the waves of the sea. At last it was out, and bump down fell Rudolf. One of the great fir-trees fell as well, luckily in another direction, or he might have been crushed beneath it.

When he got up again, he saw to his joy a little red-roofed house and a pretty maiden sitting in a pear-tree.

Babette had been watching him all the time; but she could not make out what he was doing. She had nearly fallen off the tree as he pulled up the toadstool. Now she climbed carefully down and came to the hedge and their eyes met. Need I say that they fell in love, or, at any rate, Rudolf did, at first sight. The hedge parted to let him through. Perhaps this was caused by the fairy candle, or perhaps it was Mother Holle's doing—who knows?

"Hush, he is asleep, you have come just at the right moment," said

Babette.

"We must secure the magic book first of all," said Rudolf, holding the fir-branch firmly in his hand, "and would you kindly light this candle for me?"

Babette laughed. "A funny candle," she said.

"A *fairy* candle," he whispered, "to keep off evil spells. Mother Holle recommended it."

Babette felt inclined to dance for joy. "Can you really *see* me?" she whispered. "O how untidy and ragged I am, you must think me a perfect fright!"

"I think you are the most beautiful lady I have ever seen," said Rudolf sincerely, and Babette blushed at the compliment, and felt very grown-up and important.

"I will light the candle for you at the kitchen fire. Come, we will go together softly and try and get the magic book. I know where it is. It is under the sofa where Old Squint-eyes is asleep. Follow me. Throw all that grass away," she said in her old imperious way.

"Let me give it to you to hold," said Rudolf. "It is also a gift from Mother Holle, and may come in useful."

They walked together towards the house, Babette holding the bunch of silvery grass, and entered the kitchen. Here Babette lit the fir-branch.

"It smells just like Christmas; there must be good times coming for poor little me," she said.

Then they peeped into the parlour, and there was Mr Wizard fast

asleep in spite of the earthquake. Rudolf could hardly help laughing; he looked such a funny sight with his mouth wide open, his nose very red, and his hair hanging over his face.

Babette lifted up the bear-skin rug and pulled out the heavy book; but, as soon as she touched the book, the wizard awoke and seized her by the arm and sprang to his feet with many curses.

When he saw Rudolf, he let go of Babette's arm and tried to seize the young man. Rudolf was fully prepared and threw him off with all his force. A wrestling match began, and it might have ended badly for Rudolf; for his adversary was tremendously strong and agile, but that he had unexpected assistance. The ravens flew in at the window, and beat themselves against Rudolf's opponent, nearly blinding him. The cats stood on the cupboard, with their backs up and hair bristling ready to spring if necessary. The cocks and hens crowded on the window-sill in war-like attitudes.

Meanwhile the fumes of the fir-candle which Babette had lit, filled the room, and Mr Squint-eyes could not abide the smell of burning fir. He grew weaker and weaker, and more and more confused, and at last Rudolf threw him down with such force that he was partially stunned.

Rudolf then took the woodland grass from Babette, and as he touched it, it wound itself in his hands into strong cord. He bound the man up with Babette's assistance, and gagged him with Mother Holle's handkerchief.

The two of them then lugged him into the wood, and tied him up to the biggest of the fir-trees as Mother Holle had directed. Then they fetched the magic book and placed it under the uprooted fir-tree, which instantly stood up again as if nothing had happened, burying the book beneath its roots.

They looked at the man they had tied up, bound like a martyr to the tree. He could not curse and swear as his mouth was stopped up; but he rolled his eyes and squinted so violently that he was horrible to look at.

Then Rudolf and Babette ran off together. Breathlessly they ran and ran. Babette was afraid Old Squint-eyes might wriggle out after all; he was so thin and wiry, and she had no fancy for serving him any more. Not until they came to a main road through the woods leading to Eppenhain Castle, did they pause to look at one another.

Then impetuous Babette (she was half a child still, you must remember) flew at Sir Rudolf and gave him a kiss. She turned red and white when she realised, what she had done. "I couldn't help it," she said. "You are such a *dear*. I am so very, very grateful to you for all you have done for me, an unknown and even unseen maiden."

"Please, don't apologise, dearest lady," he said. "I liked it very, very much. Won't you give me another?"

"*Never*," said Babette firmly. Subsequent events however caused her to revoke this determination.

Rudolf did not answer, but offered her his arm, which she took shyly, glancing at him from time to time out of her deer-like eyes with the long-fringed lashes. Ragged and untidy as she was, she looked like a princess; and he in his fine clothes, soiled and torn as they were, looked nevertheless like a real fairy-tale prince!

He took her straight home to Eppenhain Castle, and you may imagine the excitement there! The Count clasped Babette in his arms and could hardly speak for emotion. Then he turned to Rudolf saying: "We shall never be able to reward you enough."

"I shall only want one reward, and that is the little maiden herself," said Rudolf.

The Countess wept and cried over her darling child, and said she would never scold her any more.

Nurse said: "Well, Miss Babette, you do look a fine sight to be sure—and to come home with such a pretty young man, too! Come upstairs with me, and let me make you clean and tidy." And this Babette was only too glad to do.

A great company of retainers were sent out by the Count to capture the so-called wizard; but they were unable to find either the fir-trees with the mark on them or the man, or the wood cottage. Neither Babette nor Rudolf set eyes on them since that day. I cannot say that they were altogether sorry.

The papers proving Babette's parentage were found to be in order, and her father's name and fortune became hers, so that she was not poor, despised Babette any more—the witch's granddaughter—but a maiden of good rank and birth with pin-money of her own.

A short time afterwards there was a grand wedding in Eppenhain, and two happier mortals never lived than Rudolf and Babette on that day, and, let us hope, for ever afterwards!

HOLIDAY ADVENTURES

PART I

O it was so hot, so hot; the earth was well-nigh parched up, and moreover the use of water was restricted in the town where the children lived. The flowers in the little garden were drooping for want of moisture, and the trees began to shed their leaves as if it were already autumn instead of July. The schools were obliged to close early; the children came home at eleven o'clock instead of at one, and announced that they had heat holidays. For there is a regulation in Germany, if the thermometer is over a certain degree in the shade, the school is closed for the rest of the day. The high schools do not have classes in the afternoon; the children have six hours lessons in the morning, with intervals of course for recreation and drilling. Some headmasters douche the walls of the school-building with cold water, and then examine the thermometer; but children as well as teachers think this a very mean thing to do.

The school holidays commence at the beginning of July, not in August, as is the case in England. This year the two little girls, Trudel and Lottchen, and their mother were going to stay at a farm, which was situated high up in the midst of the most lovely woods. Trudel, I must tell you, was ten years old, and Lottchen eight; they both went to the same school. This farm was an inn at the same time; but very few people visited it during the week, and by nine o'clock the house was empty of guests; for the woodways were hardly safe at night. It was easy to get lost in those vast forests where one path so closely resembles the other.

It was a long climb up from the station; the children began to flag, and mother was tired. Father had come with them to settle them in; but he could not stay longer than the first day or two; for his holidays did not begin till August. He invented all sorts of games for getting along quicker; he deposited chocolate on stones or tree-stumps by the wayside, which was discovered by the children with a shout of joy. Then just as Lottchen's legs were beginning to ache badly, and she was nearly crying, he helped them on by telling the story of the assassination of Julius Cæsar. Trudel had read about it in her history-book at school; but it was written in such dreadfully historical language that she had not understood the story; she found it thrillingly interesting as father told it. Lottchen said that she could never have treated her little friend Hansi so cruelly, and that she hated that man Brutus.

At last they reached the end of the woodpath, and there lay Waldheim—for so the farm was called—before them. A big dog sprang out to meet them. Mother and Lottchen shrank back from his rough welcome; but Trudel was soon ordering him about, and did not seem in the least surprised when he obeyed her. His name was Bruno. The farm consisted of a group of buildings; two houses, one for the farm labourers and the maids, the other for guests. There were also large barns which had been newly erected, and a pond.

Round the houses were fields belonging to the farm, and then everywhere woods, woods, woods. Blue mountain-crests were visible above and beyond the woods.

The children partly unpacked the boxes themselves; for mother was still so tired. They even took off her boots and put on her shoes for her, like kind little daughters, and Trudel put away their clothes neatly in the cupboard. Then they all went downstairs joyfully to a cosy tea, which, I need hardly say, they enjoyed very much after their long walk

and journey.

After tea all fatigue vanished, and the children flew out to inspect the premises for themselves. The farmer had two boys of about the same age as Trudel and Lottchen. Their names were Hermann and Fritz. Hermann was very shy; he hid himself at first and peeped out at the strange girls from corners of the yard or barns, rushing away when they caught sight of him. However Trudel soon coaxed him out, and they all played ball together.

Then Hermann and Fritz took the girls round the farm. They went first into the cow-shed; there were fourteen cows, seven calves and a bull. The cow-herd was a strange, uncanny-looking fellow with a great shock of red hair, and a very red face. He shouted at the children in a dreadful hoarse voice; they felt frightened of him at first, and thought he was mad; but they soon found out that the poor fellow was only deaf and dumb. The cows were his intimate friends. He had christened each one of them when they were born: Sophie, Emma, and so on. After they had gone home again, the children learnt to their pride that he had named two new calves after them, Trudel and Lotty.

There were four horses that were used for driving and ploughing. Lottchen was especially fond of horses. She liked to see them come home from the field by themselves and walk straight into the stable with a noble air, like a lord returning to his castle. Her favourite horse was called Hector. Lotty noticed one day that he was left alone in the stable, whilst the other horses were ploughing in the field. The stable-door was open, and after a while to her surprise he walked out. "What is he going to do? I hope he will not run away and get lost," thought Lotty anxiously. But no, he just walked leisurely up to the field where the other horses were hard at work and looked on! It was evidently dull in the stable and he wanted a little distraction. When he was tired of watching his friends, he returned to the stable, where he was found innocently munching hay as if nothing had happened.

Pigs of course were there too in plenty; they ran about everywhere, grunting and snorting; also geese and chickens. Trudel liked to drive the geese into the water; she was fond of commanding, as her little sister sometimes knew to her cost.

The maids were two peasant girls who wore very short full skirts and a great many petticoats. Their dress was a modification of the wonderful Hessen peasant costume. These girls were ready to do anything for the children. Gustel, who was chief waitress and chambermaid at the same time, said that she had never seen such pretty "kindersche" (little children) in all her life before!

The only other guest in the house at this time was a Herr Baron; he told wonderful stories of his adventures in South America.

"Drought," he said, "yes, that's very bad, but floods may be worse. I have known years of labour destroyed in one night by a flood. All the beautiful fields of grain, our sole wealth. I lived at that time with my married sister and her family, and we had only just time to rescue ourselves and the children. I was the last to leave the house which we were never to see again. I could not decide which of my possessions to take with me, so I seized up the skin of a puma that I had shot on another memorable occasion, and bore it off on my shoulder, like Jason carrying the golden fleece, and that was all that was left of my personal property. Ah! it needs patience to conquer the elements," he said.

Altogether the Herr Baron was a wonderful character; he seemed as if he were not real, but had stepped out of a book of romance. He delighted in reading English stories; he was especially fond of "She" and "King Solomon's Mines." The children believed that he smoked day and night; for they had never seen him without a cigarette, except at meal-times.

He told father and mother the story of how he had had a bullet extracted from his side that he had carried about with him for years. It had struck him during one of the revolutions that so frequently go on in South America. The bullet had recently set up inflammation, and a dangerous operation was necessary to remove it. "Chloroform! not if I know it," he said to the doctors. "Just you let me smoke my cigar, and I shall be all right. I won't say 'Oh!'"

The doctors were naturally very astonished and demurred at this new method of treatment; but he persisted in his determination, and the cigar never left his mouth till the painful business was successfully over!

The Herr Baron was a mysterious person; why he lived for months together in that lonely spot, no one knew. True, he was fond of hunting, and went out at nights with the landlord to hunt the stag.

There were hunting-boxes made of logs of wood, with steps that led up into them, placed in different positions in the woods near the inn.

The children loved to climb up into them. A hunting-box made such a nice airy room, they said; but mother was glad when they were down again without broken limbs.

Mother was surprised when she entered the inn-parlour to find the Herr Baron engaged in a game of quartette with Trudel and Lottchen and Fritz. Indeed he was so sociable and kind and fond of children that she thought it was a pity that he had none of his own.

On the pond near the house were two most remarkable-looking boats. These Hermann and Fritz had made themselves with the aid, I believe, of the Herr Baron. They had a long stick and punted about in them on the water, and they managed them quite cleverly. To Trudel and Lottchen they seemed to suggest Robinson Crusoe and all sorts

of fine adventures.

One day when mother was reading a book which absorbed her attention, and so was safe not to interfere with them, they thought, the children stole down to the pond. Hermann and Fritz were waiting for them. It was a pre-conceived plan. "Come along and get in," they shouted to the girls.

"I daren't," said Lottchen. "Mother would be so cross; she has forbidden us to go near the water."

"You are surely not going to spoil the fun," said Trudel. "Come along; I'm going to get in first. I can swim, you know!"

"But not in mud and water-weeds," said Lottchen wisely.

The boys began to laugh at them.

"Why, you're funky, I do believe; the pond isn't really deep anywhere," they said.

So with beating hearts the children got into the boats, Trudel with Fritz, and Hermann, who was the eldest of the party, with Lottchen. It was splendid, quite a real adventure.

"Sit still in the middle of the boat," said Fritz; "I think we had better keep near the bank."

"It's going down on my side; O dear, what shall I do?" said Trudel. "I don't like it! I want to get out."

"You're a bit too heavy and upset the balance," said Fritz. "Very well, then, get out!"

Trudel tried to do so; but the boat was very wobbly. It was not so

easy; her foot slipped, and in she stepped with one foot into the deep mud. She grasped convulsively hold of a willow bush that grew on the bank.

Meanwhile Hermann, seeing the predicament they were in, jumped out of his boat, leaving poor Lottchen quite alone. She began to scream with all her might and main, and she could make a fine noise when she chose.

Mother heard the cries though she was some way off and flew to the pond.

The maids who were bleaching the linen in the meadow, came running to the rescue as well, as fast as their legs could carry them.

Lotty was soon helped out of the boat. Trudel had rescued herself with Hermann's assistance, and she looked very red and ashamed of herself. She said she did not wish for any more Robinson Crusoe adventures of that sort. Mother naturally gave the children a good talking to; but she thought they had been punished enough this time for their disobedience, by the fright they had had.

PART II

The Tree Man

There was a tree in the garden that was ideal to climb, and mother allowed the children to do so, for she had been very fond of climbing herself when she was a child.

They wore old serge skirts and jerseys that they could not spoil.

This tree made a splendid arbour, or house with a suite of rooms. Lottchen sat up in the branches like a little bird, and like a little bird she sang all the songs she knew. From this tree you could see the mountain called the Stellerskuppe and the blue sky through the tree-stems on the summit. At sunset time, the sky behind the trees turned a golden colour, till it looked like a picture of fairyland.

It was a fine view, but still you could not see from here the famous oak-tree, where the little green tree man lived. This was ten minutes' walk from the farm.

Trudel and Lottchen saw him first on a wet day when they had set out for a walk in spite of the rain, with their green waterproof cloaks on with hoods over their heads, looking for all the world like wood-goblins themselves. They were walking down a narrow green path, and mother was some distance behind.

"Do just look, Trudel," said Lottchen. "I believe there is a little man in that hollow tree!"

"So there is, he is smiling and bowing to us, let's go and visit him," said Trudel, always enterprising.

Lottchen hung back, feeling a little afraid; she was always on the look-out for the unexpected, and yet was surprised when something really happened.

"Come along, darling," said Trudel, grasping her smaller sister by the hand.

They both distinctly saw the little man; they said they could have drawn him afterwards, and indeed they attempted to do so as well as they could. But as they approached the venerable oak, the little man

vanished, and all they saw was a strange green stain on the inside of the tree, resembling a dwarf with a peaked hood on.

"Just look at this Gothic window," said Lottchen, proud of her knowledge of the word "Gothic." "How nicely this tree-room is carved. I am sure *he* lives here; where are his little chairs and tables? I should love to see them."

They peeped through a window or hole in the old tree and saw their mother approaching.

"Mother, mother, here lives a real tree man; we saw him—didn't you?"

Mother smiled—what the children called her mysterious smile.

"You look like two little wood-men yourselves," she said. "Lottchen, stand up straight in the hole and look at me."

Lottchen stood up just fitting into the green mark on the tree behind her. She made a pretty picture, her laughing brown eyes with the long eyelashes, her rosy cheeks, and the wind-blown hair straying from under her hood.

"O look, Lottchen, here is a little basin of holy water, just like we saw in the cathedral," said Trudel.

"Wood water,
Nice and brown,
In a little cup.
Wood water,
Wood wine,
Won't you drink it up?"

said a tiny voice that sounded like that of a wood-bird.

"Mother! did *you* hear anything, mother?"

"Yes, darlings, the birds are singing so sweetly now the rain is over. I have brought my camp-stool. I shall sit here and sketch the tree," said mother.

"Do draw *him*," said Trudel, whose blue eyes were open wider than usual.

"Him! Whom do you mean?" said mother.

"Why, the tree man, of course."

"Hum," said mother mysteriously, "we'll see," and she settled herself down to sketch.

The children collected huge acorns, and laid them on a leaf in the hollow tree. Then they stirred up the brackish "holy" water and put their fingers in it.

"It smells like lavender and roses," said Lottchen.

"Well, you've got a funny nose; it smells to me like blackberry and apple-tart," said Trudel.

"Ha—ha—he!" said a little voice again. Somebody was laughing. Where could he be? Glancing round quickly the children saw a little man about three feet high, dressed in green, wearing a long peaked cap with a wreath of tiny oak-leaves around it. He looked very strong, although he was small, and he stuck his arms out akimbo in a curious angular way like the branches of an oak-tree.

"How did you know that trees were alive?" he asked the children.

They were embarrassed by the question.

"Why, of course we know they are not dead, unless they are cut down," they said.

The little man shuddered; then he began to wave his arms about wildly.

"*Let* them try to cut me down, I'll knock them down. I'll fall on them and crush their bones. I'll smash them like this stone!" Here he gave a stone that stood near by, such a tremendous whack that sparks flew out of it.

"Don't smash us, please, Mr Tree Man," said Lottchen trembling.

"No fear, little Miss Lottchen, no fear, you're a nice little thing, you are; one can see that to look at you. You would *never* cut me down, would you?"

"Why, of course not," said Lotty.

"*I* should not dream of such a thing either," said Trudel. "But may we ask who you are?" Trudel continued, "You are surely not a tree?"

"Well, it's like this," said the little man; "I'm a tree, and the tree's me!"

"*I*," said Trudel, correcting him, "would be more correct."

"Rubbish," said the little man, "Pedantic rot!—the tree's *me*, I repeat. Every tree has its gnome or elf; they used to call us dryads in old times; but nowadays people are getting so cock-sure of knowing everything, that they can't see what is going on right under their noses. Trees are never still," he continued; "they are always moving.

"'Where there is movement, there is life,
Where there is life, there is thought,
Where there is thought, there is individuality.'

"Do you follow me? That is logically expressed."

"You forget we are only children, Mr Tree Man; you are talking too grown-upy for us. Father talks like that sometimes; but then we don't listen," they replied.

"Well," continued the gnome, "in every tree there either lives a jolly fellow like me or a lovely lady fairy. Yes," he said in a sentimental tone, "I, too, old and tough though I am, I, too, have known love."

"Who is she?" asked Trudel eagerly.

"Alas! I can never reach her; my old bones are too stiff and unbendable. She is a graceful larch-tree in all the glory of her youth. You may see her yonder!" He sat down and sighed deeply.

The children looked in the direction that the gnome had indicated, and there they saw a larch-tree on which the sunlight had just fallen. It was exquisitely dressed in a robe of delicate green and—was it only fancy?—for one moment the children thought that they saw a lovely lady with flowing tresses that gleamed golden in the sunlight, and large starry eyes. As they gazed, she melted into the blue mist which shimmers always between the forest trees.

"Now we must go home, children," mother called out, "before it begins to rain again."

The children glanced round; their little friend had vanished, and no trace was to be seen of the lady of the larch-tree. So they turned reluctantly from the tree-house fully determined to come again very

soon to this enchanted spot.

"Mother, may we see your sketch?"

"Not now," said mother, "it's going to be a surprise."

"Did mother see him too?"

"Do you think so?" said Lottchen. "Mother's a fairy herself."

"I think," said Trudel, "she sees all sorts of queer things; but she won't tell us everything she sees."

"It spoils some things to tell about them," said Lottchen. "I shan't tell Hermann and Fritz about the tree man."

However, when she got home again, she could not contain herself. "Do you believe in fairies and tree men?" she said to the boys.

"Of course not, that's all rot," said Hermann. "Like Santa Claus and such things, just invented to stuff us up!"

"Santa Claus will never come to you any more if you talk like that; *he* is *quite true*, I know. Trudel saw him come in last year when she was in bed, and she heard him filling our stockings. Of course she did not dare to turn round and look at him," said Lottchen.

"I don't say it isn't nice to believe such things," said Hermann conscientiously, "but it isn't true; it's superstitious. You know quite well, Trudel, who Santa Claus really is."

Trudel was silent; she was ten years old, and she had her doubts.

"But I've seen a tree man to-day," said Lotty.

The boys laughed.

"Don't try to stuff us up with such nonsense; we're not so green as your tree man," they said.

Gustel, the maid, came in, and joined in the conversation. She supported the boys' view.

"I don't care," said Lottchen, now in a high state of excitement. "My mother knows a man—a very clever Irishman—a poet and a painter as well, and he has often seen the fairies."

"Yes," said Trudel, "it's true he draws them just as he sees them with rainbow-coloured wings."

"Well I never, you don't expect me to believe such things, do you?" said Gustel. "Why, that's all lies, and it is very wicked to tell a lie!"

Lotty flew into a perfect tantrum. "How dare you say we tell lies; I will tell my mother of you," she screamed, and threw herself on the floor crying violently.

Mother rushed in, not knowing what had happened. "Lotty, get up at once; tell me what's the matter, darling!"

"Booh!—booh—booh!—Gustel won't believe—booh, booh, booh—that you know a man who has seen the fairies!"

Mother could not help laughing. "Don't be so absurd, Lotty. Of course Gustel does not understand what you mean. Gustel," she said, "you are a Catholic and believe in the saints; they saw very queer things too, sometimes, didn't they?"

"O yes, you're right; of course, ma'am," said Gustel, feeling embarrassed; for she had no arguments to support her disbelief in

fairies.

"Some people can see more than others," continued mother. "Now if I were to tell you that I could see the old poacher or wild huntsman who used to live in this house, riding through the yard on a moonlight night, what would you say?"

"Lor, ma'am, if I saw him, I should die of fright," said Gustel, turning pale.

"But you know that there are no such things as ghosts and fairies!"

"Yes, ma'am, very true, ma'am, it's rather confusing what you say," said poor Gustel, feeling her head in a whirl.

It was a wonderful moonlight night. As father was still away, mother sat by herself in the big bedroom, whilst the children slept in the little room adjoining. There was a very high wind; the window-panes rattled; the wooden shutters blew to and fro; the branches of the trees made weird patterns on the ground. The moonlight was so white that the fields and paths looked almost as if they were covered with snow. The Stellerskuppe stood out black against the sky. As mother gazed, it seemed to her as if strange creatures were abroad that night, driven to and fro by that tireless hunter, the wind. Wild forms passed by and gazed at her with deathless eyes; for a while she remained there motionless, as under a spell. Then suddenly she remembered her joke about the old huntsman of evil repute, who had formerly lived in this farmhouse. Did his ghost haunt it still? Mother shivered; the nights were cold up in the mountains, though it was such a hot summer. She

opened the door of the children's room and peeped in. To tell the truth, she felt a little creepy, and longed for human companionship. There were her darlings, sleeping soundly; but as she entered the room Trudel turned round and flung herself on the other side of the bed, saying: "Go away, go away, do not come near me!"

"Whom do you mean, darling?" said mother anxiously.

Then Trudel groaned and spoke again in her sleep. She uttered the following deep and mystic words: "Gustel, bring in the shark, please; mother can't eat the thimble."

Now, wasn't that a funny thing for a little girl to say in her sleep. Mother was so amused that she wrote the words down on the spot, so as not to forget them, and she troubled her head no more with thoughts of the wild huntsman; indeed the spectres of the night vanished as they always do vanish at a joke!

Some days passed, before the children visited the oak-tree again. When they did so, they found that an enormous branch had been broken off, and lay across the green pathway.

"O dear me," said Lottchen, "our *poor* little man. I hope it hasn't hurt him!"

"It must have happened on that windy night," said Trudel.

"It was my own fault, it was entirely my own fault," said a queer little voice, and there was the oak-tree man sitting in his house smoking a reed pipe. His arm was bound up with green fern leaves. "Yes, it was my own fault; the wind excited me, and stirred my sap (that's my blood you know)—I stretched out my arms towards her—one embrace—one blessed moment in which to call her mine—and here you see me a cripple for ever!"

"O *poor* thing, we are so sorry for you," said the children.

"Never mind, it heals easily," said the oak man, "but, alas, my beauty and my symmetry are gone for ever!"

"Your leaves are so nice and fresh; and your house is so pretty; why, you have got furniture in it," said the children in astonishment.

"Such a pretty oak table and beautifully carved chairs; where did you get them from?" asked Lottchen.

"I made them myself out of my own wood; it cheered me up a bit," said the little man. "One must do something, you know; looks snug, doesn't it? Ah, well—I have known love, that is something to be proud of; I have experienced the most pleasing of human emotions. Have you ever been in love?" he said inquisitively, looking at Trudel, who looked big enough in his eyes.

"Why no, not exactly, we're only kiddies; but still we do love lots of people, of course," said she.

"Your day will come, your day will come. Do not desire the unattainable, but content yourself with the reachable," he said; "and yet 'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all,' as the dear old poem says."

"He's getting grand in his language again; he *is* a funny little man," said Trudel in a whisper to Lottchen.

"Stay," said the tree man, "I have a good idea; I will give you a card of introduction to *her*, my beloved Lady Larch-tree."

He gave them an oak leaf with the words: "Edle Eiche," printed on it, which is in English Noble Oak.

"You need not say anything; she will know it comes from me," he said, sighing sentimentally.

Full of curiosity, the children turned to go to the larch-tree, which was only a few steps further down the green pathway. The ardent lover watched the children from the window of his little house. They knocked three times on the bark of the larch-tree; and they were very pleased when a door opened in the tree, and a lovely lady was revealed to them. Her dress was of green, looped up with tiny pink flowers such as grow on the larches in early spring; her hair streamed down like a soft veil about her. She hardly seemed to see the children at first, when they presented their cards. She took the oak-leaf cards and pressed them to her heart.

"Heart of oak! King of the forest! for ever mine," she murmured, and her words were like the sound that a little brook makes when it trickles beneath dark forest trees.

"He sends you his love," said the children politely.

"You dear little things," said Lady Larch; "it was so kind of you to come and call on me. So you understand trees and their language, dear, dear, so young and so clever! *Would* you like some wood wine?"

"Not if it is dirty water with caterpillars in it," said Trudel.

"O dear no, it is purified and refined; it is most delicious." So saying, she handed each of them a large acorn cup full; and they drank the contents.

"It does taste nice, dear fairy," said the children, "like what we make ourselves at a doll's feast. May we ask you for some more?"

"No, no, it is very strong, and would get into your heads, and you would find out all about…. No, I'm sorry … but——"

"Children," said mother's voice, "where are you? I have been looking for you."

"We have only been to call on Lady Larch, mother; she has shut her door tight again or we would have introduced you to her," said Lotty.

PART III

They came home rather late that evening and found the farm in a great state of commotion. The red-haired cow-herd was shouting and crying in an unintelligible way; the house seemed to be deserted. They met the Herr Baron also preparing to set out in a hurry.

"What's the matter? Where is everybody?" said mother.

"The silly old cow-herd has lost one of the best cows; it has strayed off among the bushes, and may die if it is exposed all night. Who knows where the poor creature may have got to in these vast woods?"

The search went on till late at night; the men, including the Herr Baron, walked miles with their lanterns, but in vain. The deaf mute was in a dreadful state of mind and kept crying out in his harsh, disagreeable voice: "Not my fault—*Schimmel*'s fault." (Schimmel was the cow.)

It was difficult enough to sleep that night; but when mother had at last dropped into a light doze, it must have been about four o'clock in

the morning, she and the children were aroused by a great shouting and disturbance in the house. They looked out of the window and—what do you think?—there was the lost cow, who had returned after all of her own accord. And with her a dear little black and white calf, who frisked and bounded along as if it thought it was fine fun to be in the world on this lovely morning. Now wasn't that a queer thing, children, queerer than all the fairy stories you have read? for this story is quite true, you must know!

It was an exceptionally fine Sunday, and as father had come down to spend the week-end, mother and the children were in the seventh heaven of joy. It was not possible to go to church; for the nearest town was two hours' walk away, and would be partly over fields that were exposed to the heat of the midday sun. So father and mother and their two little daughters went to the great woodland cathedral.

The service was on the Stellerskuppe; surely no one could wish for a more beautiful place of worship. Mountain after mountain ranged in the distance, some with rounded or knolled heads, others rising to a peak. Lottchen called the most pointed one Mesuvius, because she always forgot the "V."

As the children sat there and sang hymns, with their white Sunday frocks on, mother fancied that eyes were peering at them from out the forest depths. If they were merely those of the gentle deer, or if stranger creatures still were watching them as if fascinated, she did not know: she felt there were lookers-on. There is the old story of the God Pan who played so divinely that all living things came to listen to him. Perhaps there may be a stirring at times in the souls of the

mysterious dwellers in the forest that makes them yearn for immortality and gives them a fuller sense of existence. So that all the woodland sang too at that Sunday service.

On Sunday afternoon, father and mother wanted to go for a longer walk than usual; but the lazy children petitioned to be left behind.

"You will promise not to go near the pond," said mother. "Remember it is Sunday, and you have your best frocks on; you must not romp or climb trees."

"O no, mother, of course not," said Trudel. "We'll stay in the garden and promise to be very good."

When father and mother returned from their walk, the first thing they saw was Lottchen staggering along with a stand of empty beer-bottles.

"Whatever are you doing, Lottchen?"

"Oh, mother, there are such heaps of people here this afternoon, and there are not enough waitresses to serve them; so Trudel and I are helping. Trudel has got such a lot of tips already; she has bought chocolate with the money. Do tell her to divide it fairly with me!"

Mother looked round. The whole place was covered with tables and benches; a number of gaily dressed people from the neighbouring town were drinking coffee and eating cake or waffeln, a kind of pancake for which the inn was celebrated.

"Mother, don't speak to me, I'm too busy," said Trudel. "I've been waiting on those gentlemen; the maids were shy of them, so I said I would go and ask what they wanted." She pointed out some young men in officers' uniform, who had come from a military school. "I've got 6d. in tips, and I spent it on chocolate."

"Well I never!" said mother, astonished at her daughter's prowess —"you have turned into a waitress, and on Sunday afternoon too. Whatever would your aunts say?"

"I think I had better tell you what the young men said to me," said Trudel seriously. "They said I was a sweet little thing, and that if I were older, they would fall in love with me. I laughed of course; I could see they were only silly old stupid heads. I told them they had not much taste; for their military school was the ugliest building in all the town. They quite agreed with me about this, however, and then they asked me who my father was, and when I said he was a professor, they laughed till I thought they would burst. But now you must excuse me, really, mother darling. I have promised to go into the kitchen and wash up cups and saucers!"

The landlady could not praise Trudel enough. Such a useful little girl, she does everything in a most orderly way and wipes down the table when she has finished! "If ever you want her to learn housekeeping, pray send her to me, I should be delighted to teach her," she said.

"Yes," thought mother, "and make a nice little slavey of her into the bargain. No, no, our Trudel is not going to turn into a housemaid!"

If Trudel had been some years older, father and mother might have objected to these experiences; but, as it was, they only laughed.

PART IV

As the world is full of fact and fancy, so is this story. Whether it is based mostly on fact or on fancy we will leave to the German

philosophers to decide, but I have heard that they are doubtful on this point, with regard to the world, I mean.

It was a magical evening. Trudel was so engrossed in a game of cards with the boys that she could not be induced to come out; moreover she had a slight cold and the evenings were chilly. A glorious sunset glow illumined the sky as mother and Lottchen set out for their never-to-be-forgotten walk.

"We will go up and see the fire on the heath; I love the smell of dry pine wood burning," said mother.

"I love to see the fire dancing and crackling," said Lottchen. "How still everything is."

"It is the calm of twilight. The wind usually drops in the evening," said mother.

"Look, look, over there by those dark woods there is something moving," said Lotty. "I think it is a white cat."

"A white cat! How queer that she should have strayed so far; she does not belong to the farm, I know."

"Hush! perhaps she is not a cat at all—then she will vanish." And lo and behold when they looked again, there was no cat there, though they had distinctly seen it a minute before on the field at the wood's edge.

"She is really a witch, I believe," said mother, with the curious expression on her face that Lotty knew so well.

Going further up the hill, they saw a wonderful sight. Twenty or more peasant girls were busy working, hacking the ground, their faces illuminated by the wonderful sunset glow. They wore short full peasant

skirts edged with bright-coloured ribbons, and each had a gaily coloured scarf pinned round the neck and bodice.

We learned afterwards that they were preparing the ground to plant young fir-trees on a clearing. Germans are so careful of their woods, they replant what has been cut down, so that they have a great wealth in wood that we cannot boast of in England. I believe that they would *like* to cut off all the dead branches in order to make the woods quite tidy! But this would be rather too big a job even for the German nation to accomplish!

A man dressed in green with a feather in his cap, and a gun over his shoulder stood by watching the girls at their work.

He was a forester and seemed to act as overseer. He gave the signal to stop work as the strangers (mother and Lotty) approached. The women hid their tools under the dry heather until the next day, and then strapped on the big baskets they carried on their backs, without which they hardly felt properly dressed. They then marched along together, singing a melodious song in unison. As they came to the cross-roads they parted company; some went this way, some that; all kept up the tune, which echoed farther and farther, fainter and fainter in the distance.

Before long Lottchen and her mother were alone; but they felt that the ground they stood on, was enchanted. Mother said it was like a scene from the opera. They watched the fire; how the flames leaped and crackled; yet they were dying down. The fire made a bright contrast to the dark fir-woods which formed the background to the picture. The glory died from the sky; but yet it was strangely light; darker and darker grew the woods near the fire. Suddenly Lotty espied bright sparks among the trees.

"I do believe they have set the wood on fire," said mother.

"O no, mother, don't you see; let us crouch down and hide; it is the fairies: they are coming to the fire."

The air was suddenly full of bright beings.

"There is a wood fire on the hill;
High on the heath it glimmers still.
Who are these beings in the air
With gauzy robes and flowing hair?
Is it the wreathing smoke I see
That forms itself so curiously?

Nay, they alight: they form a ring,
Around the flickering fire spring,
And from those embers burning low
They light their wands, they gleam, they glow,
Like firework stars of rainbow hue,
Green, yellow, orange, lilac, blue!

Ah what a scene, how wild, how strange!
The stars each moment break and change
In thousand colours; look on high:
Each slender wand points to the sky,
Then waves and trembles: lo afar
On lonely woods falls many a star!"

And all this Trudel had missed. It seemed too great a pity, with that silly old card playing.

Spellbound mother and Lotty watched the fairies at their revels, till Lottchen began to shiver.

"We really must go home," whispered mother. "Trudel will be anxious."

"Oh, but mother I want to dance round the fire with the fairies, and I want a fairy wand with shooting stars," said Lotty almost aloud.

Suddenly it seemed as if the fairies became aware that they were observed. They vanished away, and all became dark. Lottchen said she could hear the sound of little feet stamping out the fire.

"Fairies, dear fairies, come again, do," said Lotty.

No answer, perfect stillness, not even a leaf stirred.

"Well, you are not so polite as our tree man, not half," said Lotty, "though you are so pretty. Good night," she shouted.

There was a sound of suppressed laughter; then from hill and dale the word "good night" was echoed all around. Spellbound, as if in a trance, they moved toward the farm. Trudel was wild with herself when she heard what she had missed.

"*To-morrow*," she said, but to-morrow is sometimes a long, long way off, and the fairies did not show themselves again during these holidays.

One of Lottchen's favourite walks was the echo walk, but she usually came home quite hoarse after having been this way. The path wound below the fairy heath on the incline of the hill; further down still were the fir-woods through which the light shone.

"Angel-pet!" "Cherry-ripe!" "Cheeky fellow!" "You're another!" So Lotty shouted the whole time, and the echoes came back so surprisingly distinct that Lotty was sure it must be really the fairies answering her. When you turned the corner of the hill, the echoes

ceased. It was too queer.

The next day Trudel distinguished herself again. Two great cart-loads of swedes arrived that were to be stored up as fodder for the cattle in the winter. Now the joy was to throw these through a hole in the wall into the cellar. Hermann stood in the cart and Trudel threw the swedes to him as the bricklayers throw the bricks to one another. Fritz and Lottchen helped too; they had to take their turn and be very quick, as the hole was small. Hour after hour this went on, till the children were as black as chimney sweeps, and yet Trudel's energy did not fail. At last the carts were empty, and only then did the little workers leave off, dead tired.

Hermann could make curious heads out of the swedes, with eyes and nose and mouth. If you put an old candle-end inside, they looked ghastly, like some Chinese god. Lotty declared that they rolled about in the yard at night and grinned at her, and that she did not like "heads without people."

"But they *are* so funny, Lottchen," said mother, and then she laughed at them and was not frightened any more.

In the fields grew nice little buttony mushrooms. No one knew better than the Herr Baron where they were to be found and how to prepare them. Apparently he had lived on mushrooms in the wilds of South America. He was very kind in helping the children to fill their baskets to take home with them; for, alas, even the pleasantest of holidays must come to an end; and there was only one day left. He discovered a treasure in the field, a little mother-of-pearl knife, very old and rusty, and presented it to Trudel. He told her to soak it in petroleum to clean it. That knife was more trouble than all the rest of the luggage on the way back, for Trudel made such a fuss about it, and dissolved in tears several times when she thought that she had lost it.

To leave the beautiful cool woods, the fairies, the tree man and his sweetheart, the cows and the geese and all the marvels of the country, yes, it was hard; but home is home, and always turns a smiling face to us after a long absence. How nice to rediscover one's playthings and dolls. Trudel's first thought was always for her doll babies, and she would rush upstairs, and embrace each one tenderly.

As the children drove to the station from the farm, they passed the famous oak-tree, but no little man was to be seen.

"He's shy of the coachman, of course," said the children.

Looking back, they caught a glimpse of him in the distance, and shouted and waved their handkerchiefs.

Hermann and Fritz were very sorry to say "good-bye" to their little friends; but school began the next day, and they would not have so much time for play then.

The landlady told the children a great secret before they left. "The Herr Baron is going to be married next week," she said.

"Well, I am glad," said mother. "I hope she is very nice," and the children echoed the wish warmly.

"She has lots of money, and is a countess, I believe," continued the landlady.

"Well, I do hope she does not object to smoking," said Trudel, and they all laughed.

"Mother, you have never shown us your sketch," said Trudel during the unpacking.

Mother laughed. "Where's Lottchen? I suppose she wants to see it too?"

"Here I am," said Lotty. "Oh, do be quick and show it to us!"

Mother held up the sketch. There was the hollow oak-tree, and standing in it the little tree man himself just as the children had first seen him, with his green peaked hood on.

"So mother really did see him too!" said the children.

Now this story disproves the common fallacy that only children can see the fairies and forest folk; for how could mother have painted the tree gnome unless she had seen him?

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Transcriber's Note

In the tale "The Engineer and the Dwarfs", a line is missing in the original text; since this edition is apparently the only one in existence, it has sadly not been possible to discover what the missing section was. However, from the context it must be a greeting, perhaps from the dwarfs' Committee.

Otherwise, missing punctuation has been silently added, and the spelling of some names regularised. The following change has been made to the text and can be identified by a grey dotted underline:

Little harebells, and pink centuary bordered the pathway.	Little harebells, and pink *centaury* bordered the pathway.

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