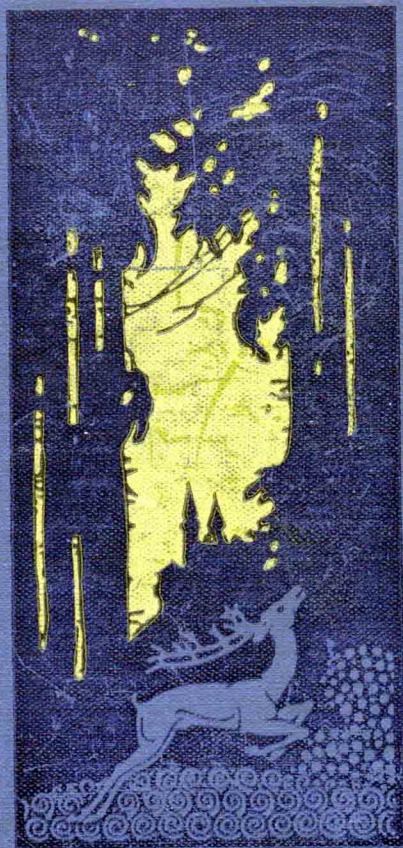


THE  
ENCHANTED  
FOREST



BOWEN

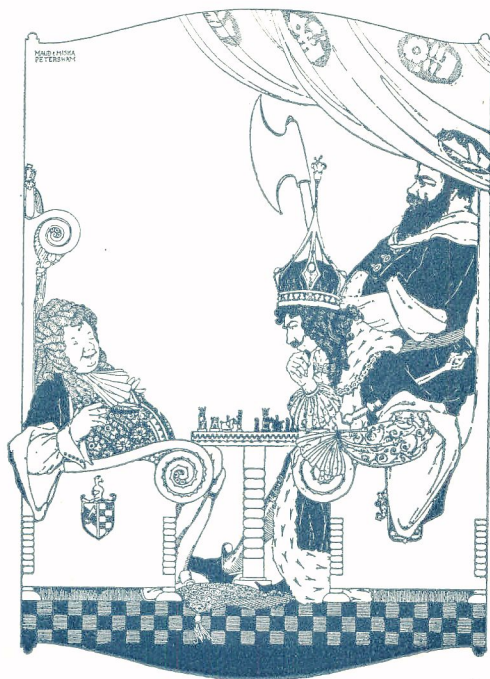
# THE ENCHANTED FOREST



WILLIAM BOWEN







## **THE ENCHANTED FOREST**





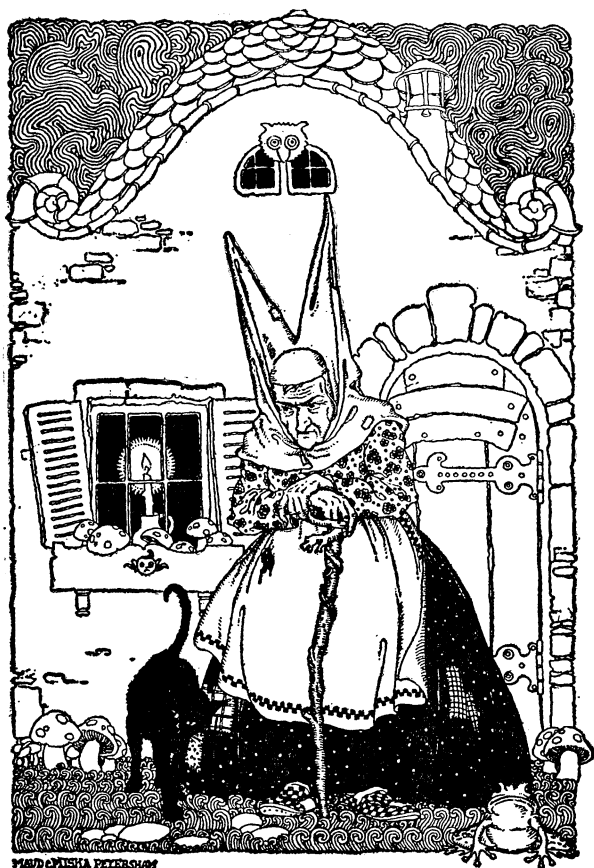
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PIRELLA GÖTTSCHE LOWE







# THE ENCHANTED FOREST

BY WILLIAM BOWEN

ILLUSTRATED BY  
MAUD and MISHA PETERSHAM



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New York 1920

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WRITTEN FOR  
DOROTHY, BILLY, JOHN, AND  
MARJORIE ANN  
BY THEIR FATHER  
WITH LOVE



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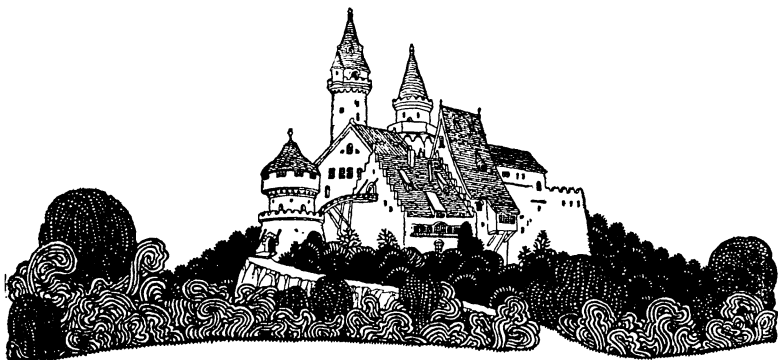
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## **THE ENCHANTED FOREST**





## THE ENCHANTED FOREST



IN a little hut in the midst of a Great Forest lived a poor Woodcutter. His name was Bodad; and he was very poor indeed. No woodcutter in the world, unless it were some other in the same forest, was so ragged, so hungry, so cold, and so thin as Bodad.

For this there was a strange and special cause. In other forests the wood-cutters at least had real wood to chop and sell; but in this forest there was no wood. And so he had no money, no goats, no cheese, no milk, not even wood to burn on his own hearth, nothing,—nothing indeed but his little boy Bilbo, who was eight years old, and a tall, straight lad with serious brown eyes and long dark hair. It may seem strange that although Bodad and Bilbo lived in

the midst of the Great Forest, there was no wood to chop and none to sell. The story of the woodless forest is this.

The Great Forest belonged to a King who lived in a splendid castle in its very center. When the King was not out on horseback with his ladies and gentlemen making a progress through his forest kingdom, or hunting the deer in the dark and leafy greenwood, which was then, some seven years before the time of which we first spoke, a true greenwood like any other, he loved best to sit all day in his castle playing chess with his gentlemen and winning nearly all the games, for few who knew his temper dared to out-play him; and when the Queen was not with him in the forest, she loved best to sit all day in the castle playing dominoes with her ladies and winning nearly all the games, for few who knew her sensitive disposition could bear to see her lose.

One day, at the very moment when the King was crying "checkmate!" rather rudely, and the Queen was saying "domino!" very sweetly, a beautiful spotted deer ran down and across the lawn past the window of the room in which the King and Queen were playing, and disappeared in the forest.

All the lords and ladies, and the musicians, and the trainbearers, and the page-boys (who followed everywhere, whether they were wanted or not), and the King and Queen too, ran pell-mell to the door, in time to see the deer vanish



between the trees. In a twinkling the whole company, King, Queen, and all, were mounted on their steeds in swift pursuit.

Alas, nothing could they see of the spotted deer save only his little tail afar off in the darkness of the woods; and not one ell nearer could they come, though they rode never so hard and so fast. When they paused for a moment, the deer paused too; when they trotted, the deer trotted too; when they increased their speed, the deer increased his also; and the distance between them never varied. At last, when the day was far spent, and all the riders were weary, the King checked his steed and looked about him; and the Queen, the lords, the ladies, the musicians, the trainbearers, and the page-boys checked their steeds and looked about them. No path could they see, and every tree looked like every other tree. It was very dark and very still, and they were lost.

"Now, by my halidom," cried the King, snatching off his crown and throwing it down in a fine fit of temper, "this is too much! Can't I ride in my own forest without getting lost? Plague take this forest, anyway!" And the Queen, and the lords and ladies, the trainbearers, the page-boys, and the musicians all said together, "Plague take this forest, anyway!"

The deer had now finally disappeared. They rode on a little farther, some insisting that their road lay this way,

some that it lay that way, some another, until the King, quite beside himself with rage, reached for his crown to throw it on the ground, but finding that he had already thrown it on the ground, reined in his steed and said, "Now by my halidom, to-morrow will I have this forest chopped down and burned up, if every woodchopper in my kingdom dies in the attempt! A plague upon this forest, anyway!" And the Queen, and all the lords and ladies, and the others, especially the page-boys, cried with a loud voice, "A plague upon this forest, anyway!"

Just as they had said this for the seventh time, they saw a tiny light not far away among the trees; and spurring their horses they came to a little hut, in the window of which burned a little candle, and in the doorway of which stood a little old woman, bent and lame, leaning with both hands on a little crooked stick, and looking up at them with little wicked eyes. Her nose hung down over her chin, her mouth was sunken in because she had no teeth, and she mumbled to herself words no one could understand.

"Plague take this forest," said the King, "come, beldame, direct us quickly how we may reach our castle. Come, you! be quick!" His manner was far from polite; it would have been better for him if he had spoken more kindly. And the lords and the page-boys, and the trainbearers and the musicians,—but not the Queen nor her ladies, of course,—cried

out at the old woman: "Come, ugly old beldame, tell us quickly the way back to the castle! A plague on your old forest, anyway!" They were all, except the Queen and her ladies, very rude to the old creature; but the page-boys were the worst. It is incredible the tricks these boys were always up to; they had already driven two cooks insane. It would have been better for them all, in this case, if they had been more polite; and undoubtedly they would have been, if they had known that the old woman was the Witch of the Wood.

For quite a long time she looked up at the proud company, while their horses pranced and their silver harness jingled, and she said nothing; but at last she raised her crooked stick and pointed with it, and in a cracked voice gave them their direction, so precisely that they could not fail of finding their way back; and away they rode without so much as thanking her. Indeed, so far from receiving any thanks, she received from one of the page-boys something very different. This boy was one who was quick to take his cue from his elders; if the King was rude, he became ten times more so; he loved to parade his impishness before the King, in the hope that he would grow to be thought a witty fellow and in course of time acquire a high place in the King's favor; and he lost no opportunity of attracting the King's notice. Observing the treatment accorded the old woman by his royal master, he thought he would improve

upon it, and provoke a laugh of pleasure from the King. Spurring his horse to a position near the old woman, in full view of the King, as he passed her he cut her smartly across the shoulders with his riding whip, laughing merrily as if it were a mighty jest; and indeed all the company, and the King too,—but not the Queen nor her ladies,—laughed as if it were in fact the best of jests. But the old Witch was very angry indeed. She was so angry that she trembled from head to foot; she raised her crooked stick and shook it after them, and as they disappeared in the darkness of the forest she screamed after them these words:

“A plague on you and your Forest!

Beware the Seventh Year!

Beware the Seventh Year!

A plague on you and your Forest!”

Not long after, there was born to the King and Queen, at the Great Castle, a beautiful daughter; and they called her Dorobel, and they were very happy, because she was so beautiful, and because she was their only child; and in time she grew to be a tall, straight girl with merry blue eyes and golden hair, and at last she was seven years old.

In all this time Bodad and Bilbo were living contentedly in their hut in the forest, and Bilbo was growing to be a tall,

straight lad with serious brown eyes and long dark hair; and at the time when Dorobel was seven years old he was eight. He had never seen the Princess Dorobel, and he knew nothing about her. Although Bodad his father was poor, like all woodchoppers, he was not at that time very very poor, for there was in those days plenty of wood in the forest for him to chop and sell, and wood to burn on his own hearth, and he had a goat, and cheese, and milk.

One morning, as the sun was rising, Bodad the Wood-chopper, taking with him Bilbo his son, went forth into the forest to chop wood. The birds were beginning to sing in the trees, the squirrels were scampering up and down the trunks, the little stream was rippling merrily over the stones, and Bilbo thought he had never seen so sweet a morning in the woods. But as they came to the little waterfall that drops so fast over the moss-covered stones beneath the great leafy trees, suddenly—Bilbo could hardly believe his eyes—the waterfall stopped! actually stopped before his very eyes, and hung there perfectly still, as if it had been ice, only not frozen; and its little voice fell utterly silent. At the same instant, the song of all the birds stopped too, as if a finger had suddenly been pressed on each little throat. The squirrels clung as they were to the trunks, unable to move; a bluejay hopping on a branch above Bilbo stopped as if stone-dead with his head cocked on one side; the leaves overhead which had been quietly rustling ceased to quiver;

and the breeze which had been gently blowing flew away and was gone.

Bilbo looked at his father in wonder; but Bodad could understand it no better than his son. "Well," said Bodad, "it is surely strange, but it can't be helped; what can't be cured must be endured, so let's to work." And so saying, he struck his axe into the nearest tree. He nearly fell over after the axe, for the tree crumpled under it like paper, and the axe came quite through on the other side! He did not know what to make of this, and truly he began to be alarmed. A tree trunk of brown paper! Could it be? He tried another, and another, and another, and each time his axe went quite through the tree at a blow, as if it had not been wood at all. He sat down and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand, while Bilbo looked at him in amazement. "Mercy on us all!" cried Bodad, "what is to become of us? Truly there must be some plague on this forest!"

There was indeed. In the Great Castle the seventh year of the Princess Dorobel had begun, and the forest was turned to paper—trunks, limbs, branches, leaves, and all; and the streams and waterfalls and winds and birds and squirrels were all fixed motionless. Certainly it would have been better if the King and his company, and particularly the cruel little page-boy, had been kinder to the Witch.

When the terrible news spread among the forest people, there was great consternation. To Bodad and to Bilbo it

was terrible news indeed. How should a woodchopper find wood to chop and sell, when all the wood was paper? Who would buy paper to burn for wood? The nights grew colder, and there was no wood to burn in all the forest kingdom. Besides, no one dared even light a candle, nor even a match, for fear of setting the whole forest on fire, for a single spark among those paper leaves would have made such a bonfire as had never been seen in the world. All lights and fires were strictly prohibited, under severe penalties. Cooking was of course out of the question; and all the fathers and mothers, as well as the children, were obliged to go to bed at sundown, for there was no light to see with after dark.

At the castle, the Queen spent her days weeping, and would not play dominoes; and the King would not play chess, and grew so cross there was no living with him. The page-boy who had caused it all was seen to go to bed one night, but in the morning he was not to be found; and it was many a long year before he was seen again.

When winter came, and no one had any wood with which to make a fire, neither the King in his castle nor the wood-chopper in his hut, and no one dared light even a match, the misery of the people passed all endurance; at night they shivered in their beds, and by day they shivered in their halls beside their empty grates. The children became ill, and many died. The beautiful Princess Dorobel grew paler



and paler, her cheeks grew thinner and thinner, her nose grew redder and redder, and her fingers stiffer and stiffer; so that it was plain she must soon be very ill unless something were done.

"Something must be done!" cried the King, who himself did nothing but grumble all day; "why does not somebody do something? By my halidom," he cried, working himself up into a great rage, "whoever shall rid my forest of the plague that binds it shall have the half of it, and shall marry the Princess Dorobel on her eighteenth birthday! This I vow on my royal honor!"

Many there were who sought by breaking the spell to win the Princess Dorobel and half the forest; but the paper forest remained paper, and the birds and streams and squirrels remained fixed and fast. Many a one at the King's court remembered with tears the old Witch and her stick, and the tiny candle burning in her window; but not one could ever find again the hut, or the candle, or the stick, or the Witch herself.

What grieved the little Princess most was not the eating of cold victuals, which she loathed, or going to bed in the dark, which was bad enough, but the silence of her little friends the birds, who stood perfectly motionless on the branches with never a twitter.

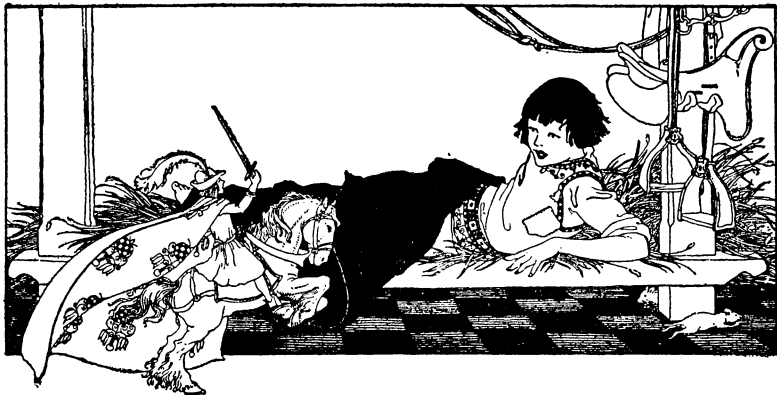
Now Bilbo, when he heard of the King's promise, desired greatly to see the Princess Dorobel, and persuaded Bodad

to take him to the castle. They arrived at the castle when summer had come again, and the green paper leaves on the brown paper trees, which of course had fallen off during the winter, had grown out again. Placing themselves where they could see the King and Queen and all the court as they went in to dinner, Bodad and Bilbo stood and watched for the Princess Dorobel. Beside her mother she walked, drooping a little, and very thin and pale; and as her blue eyes glanced about, they chanced to light on Bilbo, who, you may be sure, was looking at her with all his might; and he resolved in his heart, then and there, that he would break the enchantment if he could.

When the Princess Dorobel saw him standing there, so tall and straight, beside his father, her eyes lighted up, a pretty pink color came into her pale cheeks, and she smiled, for the first time in many months. It was noticed afterwards at dinner that she ate all her lettuce and radishes and water-cress, which she despised, without being scolded; and the Chief Almoner and the Lord Chamberlain and the Gentleman Usher spoke of it after dinner among themselves.

That night, as Bilbo lay asleep on his straw bed in the castle stables, something startled him so that he awoke, and listening intently he heard a sound as if tiny hoofs were stamping the stable floor; he arose on his elbow, and by the dim starlight shining in through the window he saw

on the floor a horse, smaller than any he had ever seen before—no bigger indeed than the stableboy's greyhound, but perfectly formed as any steed, and pure white; and on his back sat the tiniest knight he had ever seen, no bigger



than the court toymaker's largest doll, and dressed in white velvet, with a long white feather in his cap.

As Bilbo leaned on his elbow, astonished, the velvet knight flourished a tiny silver sword which he carried in his right hand, and in a tiny voice, sounding to Bilbo like the tinkling of little bells, he said these words:

"The Candle is in the Window."

Then his little horse pranced and turned about and about, and the little knight, waving his silver sword again, said these words:

"The Footsteps follow the Sun."

Then his little horse pranced about again, and he waved his sword again, and said:

"The Sword is touching the Head."

Then the little horse pranced once more, and the velvet knight said, waving his sword:

"The Candle is burning the Forest."

Then once more the little horse capered, and once more the fairy knight waved his little sword, and said:

"Come home! come home! come home!"

When this was done, he sat perfectly still on his horse, looking at Bilbo, who of course was too astonished to say anything, and as if to make sure that Bilbo should not forget his words, he repeated them all together:

"The Candle is in the Window.

The Footsteps follow the Sun.

The Sword is touching the Head.

The Candle is burning the Forest.

Come home! come home! come home!"

Having said these words, he threw the little sword onto Bilbo's bed, and vanished.

"Now what can that mean?" thought Bilbo. At first he could make nothing of the words he had heard. But he repeated them over and over, and soon had them by heart; and when he had done, he began to think that he saw some-

thing of what they meant. As it was nearly dawn, he arose quietly, dressed himself, took the little sword, and stole out into the forest, with never a word to Bodad or to anyone else. He remembered the words, "The footsteps follow the sun," and when the sun rose he followed its direction as it moved hour after hour across the sky, and after that manner threaded his way all day through the forest, looking neither to right nor to left, and holding always the little silver sword in his hand.

It was very lonely in the forest, and not a bird chirped to keep him company; it began to grow dark, and he did not know whether he should ever be able to find his way back again to the castle; but he thought of the smile of the Princess Dorobel, and kept right on. It grew so dark that he could scarcely see the trees, and he did not wish to bruise the poor paper trunks by knocking against them. The sun was gone, and his footsteps could no longer follow it. He was so tired that he could hardly lift his feet. How nice it would be, he thought, to lie snug in his bed at home, with his father's arms about him! Bilbo was a brave boy, but he was at a loss what to do, and the thought of his father made him wish to cry.

At that moment he saw, far off in the darkness, the glimmer of a little light. Holding his little sword firmly in his right hand, and fixing his eyes on the light, he went carefully forward, his heart beating fast in his breast, but

full of courage for all that. As he approached he saw, under the wide branches of the paper trees, a little hut; in the window of this hut burned a little candle; and in the doorway stood an old, old woman, leaning with both hands on a crooked stick; her nose hung down over her chin, her mouth was sunken in because she had no teeth, and she looked at Bilbo with little wicked bright eyes. Bilbo remembered the words that had been spoken to him, "The candle is in the window."

"Come in," said the old dame, mumbling with her toothless gums, as if she were chewing or getting ready to chew some fine dainty morsel.

Bilbo did not like her looks, but he knew he had arrived at the place he had set out to find, and in he went, and sat down on a bench by the wall. From a corner of the room a great black cat looked at him with shining eyes. In the window was the burning candle whose light he had seen afar off in the forest. He was so weary that he sighed as he sat down. "Poor lad, how tired you are," said the old woman, in a wheedling voice; "let me put up your sword for you while you rest!" and she made as if to take it from him. But Bilbo jumped up and held his sword tight in both hands, and she quickly moved away from him.

"Poor lad, how hungry you must be!" she said. "Here is a bowl of good hot broth for you. Come, eat your fill."

Now Bilbo was very hungry. He had had nothing to

eat all day, and it had been a very long time indeed since he, or indeed anyone in the forest, had tasted anything hot. But he said to himself: How comes it that this old woman has broth, steaming hot broth, when there is no wood and no fire in all the forest? He grasped his sword tighter, and pushed the bowl away.

At this the old woman lost all patience. She hobbled back and forth as if on springs, and, shaking her crooked stick over her head, cried out, four times, in a terrible cracked voice, something which sounded like "Catlacaltac tibabit!" Instantly from each of the four dark corners of the room sprang a great black cat with long sharp claws and long white teeth; and the four black cats jumped all together at poor little Bilbo, who was frightened nearly out of his wits. But he suddenly remembered the words that had been spoken to him, "The sword is touching the head," and as the cats came on he raised his little sword and quick as lightning before they could touch him struck each one of them in turn a good blow with it on the head. As he did so, each cat vanished, and Bilbo sank down on the bench again to get his breath.

Now the old Witch (for it was indeed the Witch) could not contain herself for fury. She leaped and she danced; she shook her crooked stick; she chattered and gibbered and squeaked and screamed; she spoke words no human being could understand; and at last she leaped straight at



Bilbo with her crooked stick raised in her bony hand. But Bilbo knew now what his little sword could do. He stood up on the bench, and as she reached him he was ready with a quick stroke to touch her on the head, when his foot slipped on the edge of the bench, and down he fell sprawling on the floor, nearly but not quite losing his grip of the sword, with the angry Witch over him; but before she could strike him with her crooked stick he seized her ankle with his left hand and tumbled her over on the floor with him. Over and over they rolled together, fighting like cats, each trying to strike the other's head; and all the while the little candle was burning steadily in the window.

Round and round and over and over they spun, now up, now down; now they neared the table on which still stood the bowl of steaming hot broth, which seemed never to grow any cooler; now they spun away from it, now they neared it again; and now they rolled under it together and knocked it over, table, boiling broth, and all; and as the old Witch was at that moment on top, the scalding broth fell directly on her back. With a howl of pain she leaped to her feet, and the instant he was released Bilbo leaped to his feet also; and swinging his little sword, down he came with it, before she was through trying to rub her scalded back, smack on the very top of her head.

A strange change began to come over her. Bigger and bigger grew her head, and around it grew out a great shaggy

mane of hair; a long tail appeared, with a tuft of hair on the end; four legs with ball feet grew out under her body; and there before him, to Bilbo's horror, crouched a mighty lion, slapping the ground with his tail, and making ready to spring. But Bilbo was ready. Before the lion could spring he sprang himself, and touched the great shaggy head with the tip of his sword. With a roar which shook the hut the lion vanished; and in his place at Bilbo's feet wriggled a long green snake, looking up at Bilbo with wicked little bright eyes, which seemed to him very like the eyes of the old woman herself. All this while, the little candle burned in the window. Outside it began to be brighter, and the day was near at hand.

Bilbo and the snake began a chase about the room, and Bilbo had to be quicker than he had ever been in his life before to keep away from those yellow fangs. And the snake had to be quick too, for Bilbo was after him whenever he saw his chance. Now Bilbo knew that if you can make a snake turn suddenly in his tracks he will break his back; and this he tried to make the ugly creature do. But the snake knew this too, and was careful. But he was not quite careful enough; for though he did not break his back, he turned so quickly once that he lost sight of Bilbo, and in that instant Bilbo touched him on the head with his sword. Immediately the snake vanished; and in his place there ran about the floor a wee white mouse, scurrying here

and there to escape the dreadful boy with the dreadful sword.

Now it was still rather dark, though it was getting lighter every moment. Bilbo could not see the mouse very well, and at length the wee creature disappeared from sight in some corner of the room, and would not come out. Bilbo could not find him; the light of the candle, still burning in the window, was too dim to reveal his hiding place. There was nothing for it but to wait for more daylight. This soon grew stronger, and as it grew Bilbo could see each corner of the room quite well; and there in one quivered the poor little mouse, who, finding he was discovered, tried to scamper up the wall; but it was no use; by this time Bilbo knew very well how to manage his little sword, and with a stroke quicker than any he had yet delivered he touched the wee white mouse on the head. He vanished and was gone; and nothing remained in his place.

Bilbo sat down on the floor, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, and so tired that he hardly knew where he was; but what he did know was that the Witch was gone forever, and would trouble no one any more. Outside the sun was shining on the paper leaves of the paper trees, and in the window the tiny candle was still burning. Bilbo thought it strange that it grew no shorter, though it had been burning all night.

What now remained to be done? The forest looked the

same as when he had first come to the Witch's hut. He thought and thought, and remembered the words that had been spoken to him, "The candle is burning the forest." At first he did not know what these words could mean. But as he looked a long time on the candle, where it glimmered in the window, he began to understand what he now had to do. Rising up from the floor, he went to the window, took the candle from its place, carried it carefully, burning as it was, through the door into the forest, and stopped there before a great brown paper trunk under its bower of green paper leaves. If he should set fire with the Witch's candle to this paper tree, all the forest would be destroyed in a twinkling, and perhaps many people with it; but he remembered again the words that had been spoken to him, and he knew they could mean nothing else. What would happen he did not know; but he knew he must go through with it, whatever might befall. So, taking his courage in both hands, he touched the Witch's candle to the paper tree.

Then was seen such a sight as never was seen in the world since it began; and if the Princess Dorobel was at that moment looking from her window in the high tower of the castle, she saw a sight which must have filled her first with fear, then wonder, then delight. Up the flame shot along the paper trunk into the paper leaves, and in a second the whole top was ablaze; from that tree the wild-

fire ran to all the others round about, and from them across and across the thick roof of paper leaves, far and far away in all directions; and in a moment more the Great Forest itself, from the castle in its center out and out to its farthest borders where it touched the sea on one side and the mountains on the other, was one billowy ocean of flame. But it was such a flame as no one in that forest had ever known before. In the first place, it gave no heat; no one beneath it was so much as scorched; even Bilbo, stupefied by what he had done, felt scarcely any fear of being burned. Its color was not red, like fire, but green, the color of leaves under the summer sun. As it raged among the paper tops of the trees, a gentle breeze began to blow, and soon the roof of green flame was swaying back and forth, and then it began to ripple, and then to break up into millions of tiny particles, all quivering quietly in the breeze together, and all green, like leaves under the summer sun. Down below, where the flame had hugged the paper trunks, it slowly ceased to surge and lick and run, and became creased and gnarled and knotted, like the bark of very trees indeed. Suddenly far up in the green quivering ceiling a bird began to sing. And then awoke the chorus of all the birds in all the forest, and all the little streams began to murmur over their stones, and all the little waterfalls began to drop merrily, and the squirrels chased each other around the creased and gnarled and knotted trunks, and the great

green leafy roof of the forest swayed and rippled in the new morning breeze.

Bilbo was beside himself with joy. He clapped his hands, and danced, and sang. "The forest is herself again!" he sang at the top of his voice. "The birds are singing! The leaves are dancing! The brooks are running! The squirrels are playing! The forest is herself again!" He looked about him; the Witch's hut was gone; her candle, which after all had served him only well, was nowhere to be seen; but his trusty sword was safe under his arm. He felt the nearest tree, and it was true bark; he climbed to the nearest branches, and the leaves were true leaves; a bluejay swept by him on fleet wing as he came down. "All is right," he said, "now I may go home."

You may imagine whether there was laughter at the castle that day. The Princess Dorobel ran out all alone into the forest, so old and yet so new, and when she returned her cheeks were blooming like roses in May, and she was singing like a thrush. For dinner that day they had hot soup, and hot meat, and hot potatoes, and hot gravy, and hot pudding; and it was years in that castle before anyone would touch lettuce or radishes or water-cress. As for the Queen, she looked at the forest through a window, smiled graciously upon it, seated herself among her ladies, and resumed her game of dominoes, with all her former success. As for the King, he grumbled a good deal, and said

a good many times that there never would have been any trouble but for that rascally page-boy; but in the end, seating himself among his gentlemen, he resumed his game of chess, in which he thereafter achieved the most notable victories of his career.

All, in short, were happy, except Bodad the Woodchopper, who mourned his little Bilbo as lost. No one at the castle could comfort him, though many tried. The Princess Dorobel herself slipped away from the Grand Tutor-ess and sought out the father of the tall good-looking boy who had looked at her so earnestly with his dark, serious eyes. She would not believe Bilbo lost, and she managed to instil a little of her confidence into his father.

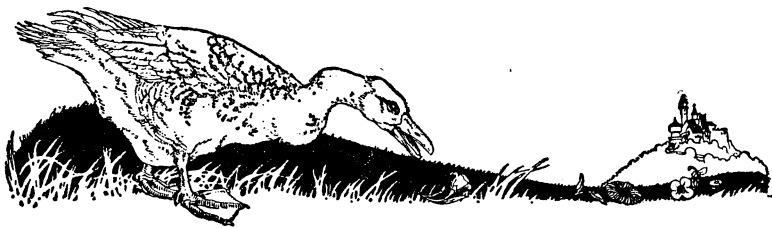
As we know, he was not lost, though he came near being; and in due time, with a great knocking at the castle door, and a tiny silver sword tucked under his arm, Bilbo came back, to feel his father's arms about him once more, to claim the half of the Great Forest, and to demand the hand of the Princess Dorobel in marriage on her eighteenth birthday. The King grumbled a good deal about this, and at first said that he had never thought of a woodcutter's son winning the prize, and therefore he thought his promise was not binding upon him; but the Princess, who really wound him around her thumb, persuaded him to keep his word; and besides, if the truth must be told, he was a



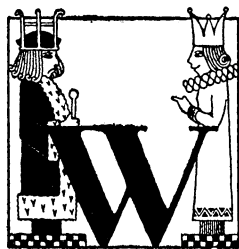
little afraid of the mysterious silver sword which had worked such wonders.

On the eighteenth birthday of the Princess, with such festivities as the Great Forest had never known, Prince Bilbo and the Princess Dorobel were married; and you need not doubt that they were happy in each other all their lives long. As for Bodad, the father of a Prince and almost brother of a King, he remained a woodcutter still; but from that time he never lacked for geese, or a goat, or cheese, or milk, nor for wood to burn on the hearth of his little hut.





## THE KING'S CURE



THAT we really need," said Prince Bilbo to the Princess Dorobel, "is an Interrupter."

"Why," she said, "we all speak the same language!"

"No, no, no," said Bilbo, "I did not say Interpreter. What we really need is an Interrupter."

Dorobel laughed and laughed and laughed.

"What on earth—" she began; but she had to laugh again, and again and again, and every time she began to say "what on earth—" she laughed again so that she could not speak.

"I do not see what there is to laugh about," said Bilbo, opening his eyes very wide, "have I said anything funny?"

For some reason which he could not understand, this made Dorobel laugh only the louder and longer. He never could tell when Dorobel was going to laugh, and he was not always certain what the joke was. He was becoming

a little annoyed. They were married now, and of course on that account he had to be uncommonly polite to her; so he only said, putting on a very high manner indeed:

"Princess, I beg your pardon; if you will have the goodness to excuse me, I will remove myself from your presence until you shall have recovered from your pleasant seizure, the cause of which I confess myself somewhat at a loss to understand."

"Oh bosh, Bilbo!" said Dorobel, "don't talk like a book. 'The cause of which!' Oh mercy! Don't make me laugh again! My sides are sore enough now. My darling boy, you will be the death of me yet, with your 'cause of which'—" and she went off into another peal of laughter, louder than before.

Bilbo turned quite red in the face, and the corners of his mouth began to turn down, as if he was going to cry, only of course he was too big to do that. Dorobel stopped laughing instantly, threw her arms around his neck, kissed him soundly, and ran her fingers through his hair, which he hated, and which made him look rather foolish.

"Now tell me again," she said, "what my darling boy was saying to his wicked Dorobel."

"What we really need," said Bilbo, very slowly, "is an Interrupter."

He looked at her rather sternly. She began to grow red,

and it was all she could do to keep from breaking out again; but she put on a long and solemn face, and said:

"Do we really need an Interrupter? And what *is* an Interrupter? And why do we need one? You know we already have rabbits, and pigeons, and goldfish, and—"

"Oh dear!" said Bilbo. "Will you never be sensible? An Interrupter is not a bird nor a fish, it is a man! or maybe a boy or a girl. How on earth could an Interrupter be an animal or a fowl?"

"How do I know," said Dorobel, "when I don't know what it is at all?"

"Well," said Bilbo, "if you would only listen, I could tell you all about it, and then you *would* know."

They were in the morning-room, next to the throne-room, in which the King was playing chess and the Queen was playing dominoes, and they could hear the King grumbling because the First Lord of the Bedchamber, with whom he was playing, had moved a Knight instead of a Bishop, as he was expected to do. "By my halidom!" cried the King, in a rage, "now you have spoiled my game!" and he kicked over the table, chessboard, chessmen and all, threw his crown on the floor, and stamped out of the room, banging the door after him.

Bilbo glanced at Dorobel, who fidgeted, and looked as if she were heartily ashamed of her father's fit of temper.

"Something must be done to cure him," said Bilbo.

"We cannot live here in this castle if the King is to go on in this way every day. I declare he grows *worse* as time passes. I cannot stand it any longer, and I will not permit you to stand it any longer. It would be far better to live in a poor woodchopper's hut in the Great Forest. Unless he is cured soon, and *very* soon, we must leave this castle together, forever."

"But," said Dorobel, "what can we do?"

"What we need," said Bilbo, "is an Interrupter."

Dorobel, in spite of her uneasiness, almost laughed again. But she managed to keep a solemn face.

"It is very simple," said Bilbo. "If we could only find an Interrupter brave enough, we could cure your father, I am sure. But the trouble will be to find an Interrupter brave enough."

"Bilbo," said Dorobel, planting herself squarely before him, and shaking him by the shoulders, "if you do not, this instant moment, tell me directly and at once, without another word, what this Interrupter is, I will scream, and pull your nose, and shake you until your teeth chatter! So there!"

"Why," said Bilbo, opening his eyes very wide, "I thought I had already told you!"

Dorobel dropped on a chair. "Well!" she said. That was all she could say. "Well!"

Bilbo, looking rather sheepish, sat down beside her.

"I thought," he said, "that anyone would know what an Interrupter was. An Interrupter is one who interrupts. Now if the King's fits of temper could only be interrupted before they were well begun, they would never really be full-grown fits of temper at all, but only little baby fits of temper, and after a while they would not even start to be fits of temper, and if they never even started, they would never commence, and if they never commenced they would never begin, and if they never began they would never start, and there you are. In a little while the King would be cured, and we should all be happy again."

Dorobel looked at him as if she thought he was crazy.

"Of course the King must be interrupted gently and pleasantly," said Bilbo, "for any other kind of interruption would probably make him worse than ever. The Interrupter would have to say something very pleasant indeed, to make the King think pleasant things instead of cross things; for instance, when he sees the fit of temper coming on, the Interrupter will say, 'What a wonderful game of chess your Majesty plays!' That will fetch him every time."

"The Interrupter would have to be a pretty brave man," said Dorobel.

"That is true," said Bilbo, "but I have thought of one who ought to be brave enough."

"I don't believe there is anyone brave enough at this court," said Dorobel.

"The Executioner ought to be brave enough," said Bilbo.

"The Executioner!" said Dorobel. "Why, he has never executed anybody in his whole life! How do we know whether he is brave or not?"

"An Executioner not brave? Who ever heard of an Executioner who was not brave? Of course he is brave. Could anyone cut off any one else's head without being brave? Besides, isn't he the fiercest looking man at court, and doesn't he always carry a great bright steel axe?"

"Well," said Dorobel, "let us go and ask him. But you know he never has cut off anybody's head."

So they went to the Executioner's room upstairs in the castle, and found him there sharpening his axe and polishing it up, so that it would be ready if ever anyone required to have his head chopped off. A fierce looking man he was indeed; he was all of seven feet tall, and so big about the middle that the King constantly grumbled about the expense of making his clothes. All over his face was a thick black bushy beard. When he spoke his voice rumbled up out of his chest as if he had an incurable cold. A little white kitten was playing with the lace of his boot, and a little white mouse sat perched on his shoulder.

"Mortimer," said Dorobel, "do you think you could be an Interrupter?"

HAUD & MISHKA  
PETROSTHAM







Mortimer the Executioner rose to his full height, with the white mouse on his shoulder, and made a low bow, which sent the white mouse scampering into his pocket.

"I can be whatever my lady Princess commands," said he. He was a very polite man.

"Yes, of course," said the Princess, who did not think much of fine speeches. "But can you be an Interrupter?"

Mortimer the Executioner placed his axe carefully on the bed, and scratched his great black beard.

"But, my dear," said Bilbo, "you have not even told him what an Interrupter is. How should the poor man know what you are talking about?"

"Oh!" said Dorobel. "I thought anybody would know what an Interrupter was. An Interrupter is one who interrupts. You see, if the King's fits of temper could only be interrupted before they were well begun, they would never really be more than little baby fits, and after a time they would not even start to be fits, and if they never even started, they would never commence, and if they never commenced they would never begin, and if they never began they would never—"

"Now isn't that just like a woman," said Bilbo, "always starting at the wrong end. How can he understand if you talk like that? Now Mortimer, *I* will tell you; you see, you must say something pleasant to the King, like this:

'Your Majesty, what a wonderful chess-player you are!' and then his Majesty will—"

"But you must be careful not to make him more angry still—" said Dorobel.

"And you must not be afraid of him—" said Bilbo.

"And whatever you do, be sure you interrupt at just the right time—" said Dorobel.

"And no matter how he acts at first, you must never run away—" said Bilbo.

"And above all things—" said Dorobel, but Mortimer the Executioner, looking as if he were losing his wits, cried out:

"Please! please! please! Wait a minute, please! One at a time, please! What *is* an Interrupter?"

"Well!" said the Princess, looking in despair at Bilbo. "After all this, he doesn't even know what an Interrupter is!"

"Well!" said Bilbo.

So they had to commence all over again, and in less than an hour they made the Executioner understand what it was they wanted him to do. At first he positively refused; it would be as much as his life was worth to interrupt the King; he would lose his position as Executioner, and he had waited thirty years for a chance to chop off somebody's head; and in short, he would not do it, he would not do it,

no indeed, no indeed, the very idea! But the Princess knew very well how to wind him around her little finger, as people say, and she coaxed him, and smiled at him, and pouted at him, and reminded him how brave and how big he was, and the upshot of it was that he consented; though I fear that the Princess's giving him the little pearl necklace which she wore had a good deal to do with it. The next day, if the King at chess should, as was pretty certain, fly into a temper, Mortimer the Executioner was to interrupt with flattering and soothing words, and thus his course of medicine was to commence.

The next day, the King, seated on his throne with his crown on his head, was playing at chess with the Lord Chamberlain: a fussy and foolish person, covered with lace and gold braid, who was so stupid that anyone could beat him at the game of chess; the King loved to play with him. But unfortunately, by some accident, the Lord Chamberlain, while thinking of other things, moved his Queen to the square called King's Knight five, and thereby checkmated the King and won the game. Such a thing had never been heard of at that castle before. Mortimer the Executioner stood leaning on his axe in his usual place beside the King's chair. The King sprang to his feet, dashed his crown upon the floor, upset the table, chessboard, chessmen and all, and bellowed in a terrible voice at the bewildered Chamberlain:

"You egregious, lavender water perfume bottle! How dare you—"

The Queen, playing dominoes in the next room, looked up, and slightly raised her eyebrows.

Mortimer the Executioner turned pale under his bushy black beard, his knees shook, and his hands trembled so that he dropped his axe. He knew that the time had come for him to interrupt with flattering and soothing words. In a voice which sounded like the squeak of a mouse, he stammered out:

"Your Majesty! your Majesty! I pray you pardon this interruption, but—but—what a wonderful chess-player your Majesty is, to be sure!"

Now these were about the worst words that anybody could have said to the King after he had just been beaten by the stupidest player in the castle. The King forgot all about the Chamberlain, and turned on the quaking Executioner in a towering rage.

"Here is another one!" he shouted. "Another mule-eared, owl-eyed, sheep-nosed sprig of a jackdaw! Out of my sight, you wild ass of the desert!" And he picked up his scepter, and laid it about the ears of the poor Executioner, chasing him around the room and beating him on the head whenever he could catch him, while the Executioner broke into tears and ran as hard as he could, with the King after him, and all the white mice in his pockets, of which there





must have been a dozen, jumped out and scuttled away across the floor, to the great delight of the page-boys, who tried to hide their laughter in their sleeves. The Executioner escaped through the door and ran up the stairs to his room, where he threw himself on the bed, buried his head under the pillows, and wept and wept and wept. As the King sank down again on his throne, out of breath and purple in the face, and the company tried to look as if they did not know he was there, the Queen's voice in the next room was heard to say "Domino!" very sweetly.

"Well!" said the Princess Dorobel to Prince Bilbo in their room, a little later, "now you *have* made a mess of everything, truly."

"I beg your pardon," said Bilbo, "I do not understand you."

But Dorobel only wept and blew her nose, and wept and blew her nose again. Bilbo thought a long while, without saying a word, and then spoke, very slowly and seriously.

"What we really need," said he, "is an Encourager of the Interrupter."

Dorobel looked at him for a moment, and then began to laugh, in spite of her tears; and she laughed, and cried together, for a long time. Bilbo looked at her rather sternly.

"I do not know what you are laughing about," he said severely. "Have I said anything funny?"



For some reason which he did not understand, this only made her laugh the more.

"What on earth—" she said, "what on earth—of, do tell me what on earth is an Encourager of the Interrupter?"

"I should think," said Bilbo, "that anyone would know what an Encourager is. An Encourager is one who encourages. Encouragement is what our Interrupter needs. I see now that he is really too timid. Who would have thought an Executioner could be so timid? We must find somebody to stand by him and encourage him; to tell him when to interrupt and what to say—"

"But he said," said Dorobel, "exactly what you told him to say."

"Never mind that," said Bilbo hastily. "Somebody to tell him how to soothe the King, and make him feel kind and gentle and gracious. If we could only find someone wise enough to be the Encourager of the Interrupter!"

"There is no one at this court," said Dorobel, "wise enough to be the Encourager of the Interrupter."

"Then I know what to do," said Bilbo. "Let us ask the Dryad."

"Oh, good!" cried Dorobel, clapping her hands. "Let us ask the Dryad!"

This was a Dryad of whom they had often heard, who was said to live in a great oak tree in the Great Forest, at a place where two brooks met under a tangle of ferns.

This Dryad had helped others, and they knew that if anyone could help them now, the Dryad could. At any rate, they could go on living at the castle no longer unless the King were cured, and it could do no harm to try the Dryad. Taking with them a luncheon of fried chicken and hard-boiled eggs and jelly sandwiches and layer cake and pickles, they set out on their journey through the forest. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, the forest was cool and shady, and they stopped so often to gather wild flowers that it was a long time before they came to the place where the two brooks met beneath the tangle of ferns. Dorobel had wished to eat their luncheon almost before they were well started, but Bilbo would not permit; so now they were desperately hungry, and they ate beside the brooks, drinking the brooks' water out of egg shells, before they even looked at the Dryad's tree. However, there the tree was, great and gnarled and leafy, with birds hopping in the branches, and they hoped the Dryad was waiting for them inside. Going up to the tree, hand in hand, they each kissed the trunk three times, and each knocked on the bark three times, as they had known others to do, and repeated these words together:

“Dryad, Dryad, tell us true  
What it is that we must do,  
Where is that which we must seek?  
Dryad, Dryad, hear and speak!”

They put their ears down close on the bark of the great tree, listening intently; and by and by they heard a faint voice from deep in the center of the tree, and it said these words:

“A great black beard, and a sharp steel axe,  
A dozen and one of paper sacks,  
A featherless goose on a feather fire,  
And you shall have your heart's desire.”

Bilbo and Dorobel repeated this over and over together, to be sure they had heard it alike; and having got it well by heart, they started home. They understood its meaning not at all; but Bilbo was good at this sort of thing; he had had experience in the ways of the fairy world, and he knew that sooner or later the meaning of these strange words would appear. Walking on slowly through the forest, with their arms full of wild flowers, they grew so absorbed in their talk about their adventure, that they let their wild flowers drop idly one by one, sprinkling a tiny trail behind them. After a while Dorobel had a feeling as if she were being followed; and when she mentioned it to Bilbo, he said he had a feeling as if *he* were being followed. They both turned round, and looked behind them; and in the distance, through the trees, following the trail they had sprinkled with wild flowers, they saw a great solemn fat goose waddling after them; and at every few steps the

goose was stopping to gobble up one of the wild flowers they had idly dropped. In this way, the goose, who evidently did not see them, was following their trail. It seemed very strange that a single goose should be here all alone in the Great Forest, following a trail of wild flowers; but they kept on, dropping a flower carefully from time to time, and making sure now and then that the goose was following. They understood now that the Dryad had charmed the flowers they had gathered, and the goose was under a spell to follow wherever the trail of magic flowers might lead. They came in sight of the castle as their store of flowers was growing very scant; when they entered the door, but very few remained; and as they went up the stairs to the room of Mortimer the Executioner, they dropped the last remaining ones from step to step until they reached his door. The goose waddled in through the open castle door, pausing to gobble each flower as she came; she reached the stairs, and by a wonderful effort managed to get up from step to step, never missing a single flower, and at last she waddled straight to the door of Mortimer the Executioner, and into the room. There the Prince and Princess had found the poor Executioner still lying on the bed with his head under the pillows. By the time the goose had waddled into the room, they were all three standing waiting for her to arrive. The goose looked around, walked over to the side of the room, and

settled herself down, as if she had come to stay, on the hearth before the open and empty fireplace.

"Quick, Mortimer!" said Bilbo. "Now you are to be a real Executioner at last. You have waited thirty years for a chance to chop off a head, and your chance has come. There is your victim, sitting on the hearth. Get your axe at once, and chop off the head of this strange goose! In that way we are to find the Encourager of the Interrupter. Come, hurry!"

But Mortimer did not seem to be in any hurry at all. In fact, he looked as if he would rather not. Running his hand through his great black beard, he said:

"Really you must excuse me. I have never in all my life chopped off a head, and now that it comes to the point of *really* chopping off a head, I cannot find it in my heart to do it. Really and truly, I cannot. It would make me ill, I know it would. I *could not stand* the sight of blood. I really could not, I know I could not. Please excuse me."

"O bosh!" said the Princess Dorobel, "you *are* a fine Executioner, afraid to chop off the head of a goose! If you don't do it this minute, I declare I will take your axe and do it myself!"

Thereupon she seized one of the Executioner's arms, while Bilbo seized his other arm; and together they dragged him to the fireplace.

"Now," said Dorobel, placing the axe in his hand, "strike!"

By this time he was a little ashamed to think that an Executioner should be afraid to cut off the head of a goose, and he laid the goose down on her back, raised the sharp steel axe with both hands, and at the same time closing both his eyes, brought the axe down swiftly on the goose's neck. Her head flew off, and, most wonderful of all, at the same time all her feathers flew off, and piled themselves in a heap beside her, leaving her lying there the most featherless goose that ever was in the world.

The poor Executioner turned his back on the terrible deed he had done. Bilbo and Dorobel looked at the naked goose and the pile of feathers, in wonder.

"What about the paper sacks?" said Bilbo.

"What sacks?" said Dorobel.

"A dozen and one of paper sacks," said Bilbo.

"Oh, yes!" said Dorobel; and turning to the Executioner she said to him:

"Now, Mortimer, pull yourself together, and run down to the kitchen, and tell Cook that I want thirteen paper sacks, big ones, no more and no less; do you understand? Thirteen big paper sacks, no more and no less!"

Mortimer the Executioner, glad to be gone from the hateful room, left it quickly, and soon returned. But he

brought with him no sacks, and his face showed disappointment.

"Well? Well?" said Bilbo and Dorobel together.

"I am very sorry," said Mortimer, shaking his head mournfully, "very sorry indeed; but when I told Cook that I must have thirteen paper sacks, no more and no less, she said she did not have them, and so I got none. I am very sorry, indeed."

"But how many sacks has she, then?" said Dorobel.

"Well, Princess," said Mortimer, scratching his bushy black head, "to tell the truth I forgot to ask her that."

"Then go back instantly," said Dorobel, "and ask her that."

Mortimer left, feeling that he had somehow not done everything that was expected of him, and soon returned. But he brought no sacks, and he still looked very much disappointed.

"Well? Well?" said Bilbo and Dorobel, together.

"I am very sorry," said Mortimer, shaking his head mournfully, "very sorry indeed; but Cook still says that she has not thirteen paper sacks, neither more nor less, and—"

"Yes," cried Dorobel, out of all patience, "but how many *has* she?"

"Fourteen," said the Executioner, shaking his head very sadly.

"Well!" cried Dorobel. "Well!" she said again; not another word could she say.

She tried to shake the poor Executioner, who did not know what was the matter.

"Now," she cried, "you run down to the kitchen this minute as fast as your legs will carry you, and bring back with you thirteen of those fourteen paper sacks, and don't you dare to come back without them!"

Mortimer the Executioner thought his life a very hard one, between the angry Princess and the horrible headless goose, and it seemed to him the harder he tried to please everybody the less he pleased anybody. But he went, and very soon returned with thirteen large paper sacks, big enough, each one, to hold a goose.

Bilbo put the goose into one of them, then put another sack over that one, and so on until the goose was enclosed within the thirteen sacks, one within another. He then placed the heap of feathers in the empty fireplace, and the paper-covered goose on top of the feathers. Remembering the words, "a feather fire," he touched a match to the feathers, and all three stood, holding their breath, to see what would happen.

"Puff!" went the feathers, in a cloud of black smoke. "Puff!" went the feathers, in another cloud of smoke. And "puff!" went the feathers, in a cloud of black smoke, thirteen times in all. When the smoke had gone away up



the chimney, they looked to see what remained, and what they saw was a little paper sack, no bigger than a goose's egg. Bilbo stooped and picked it up, and laid it on the table; and, before the wide-open eyes of Dorobel and the Executioner, tore it open. Inside lay a real and true goose's egg, as natural as life. As it lay there on the table, a little crack began to appear in it, and pretty soon the crack opened, and through it appeared what looked for all the world like the tip and silk and handle of a folded umbrella; but the tiniest umbrella ever seen in this world. The tiny umbrella moved back and forth, and in no time broke the goose's egg to bits; and there, holding the tiny umbrella in his little hand, stood the tiniest little man that ever was seen; and you know how tiny a man must be to fit comfortably into a goose's egg. To the Princess Dorobel he made a low bow, to Prince Bilbo he took off his little cap, and to the Executioner he waved his little umbrella, all with the gayest air in the world, and the brightest smile and the merriest little black shiny eyes like buttons. The Princess Dorobel was the first to speak.

"Now who on earth," said she, "are you?"

With another bow, and in a voice that was loud and sharp as a whistle, the tiny creature said:

"I am the Encourager of the Interrupter!"

When the Princess looked at the fierce black beard and the enormous size of the Interrupter, and then at the little

creature of almost no size at all, who was going to encourage him, she said "Well!" and then she said "Well!" again, and then she laughed and laughed and laughed.



The Encourager of the Interrupter evidently did not like to be laughed at. He opened his umbrella and held it over his head; and then they saw what it was meant to be used for. He sprang from the table into the air, and the umbrella floated him gently down onto the floor; and,

closing his umbrella, with an air of great dignity which looked very ridiculous in such a wee mite, he walked towards the door, as if he were about to leave them forever.

"Come back! come back!" cried Dorobel. "I am very sorry! Oh, do come back! Oh, please excuse me!"

When he heard this, he stopped, looked up with his head cocked on one side like a sparrow, doubtless thinking how pretty the Princess was, raised his umbrella again, gave a little leap into the air, and floated gently up under his umbrella to the shoulder of the Executioner, where, closing his umbrella, he stood smiling gaily, and made the Princess another low bow.

"Well!" said the Princess again; but she did not laugh.

"I am the Encourager of the Interrupter!" cried the tiny man, in a voice as shrill and high as a whistle.

They saw that he was dressed very correctly, like any member of the King's court, with blue satin knee breeches, and a long blue satin coat, and a great quantity of lace and gold braid.

"What can you do?" said the Princess.

"I can encourage the Interrupter," cried the little man.

"Then come with us, and we will see," said Dorobel, who always wished to do what had to be done instantly and on the spot.

Taking the Executioner's hand, she led him, with the Encourager on his shoulder, followed by Bilbo, down the

stairs and straight into the throne-room, where the King was sitting, surrounded by the chief members of the court, playing at chess with the Second Assistant Master of the Wardrobe.

Now the Second Assistant Master of the Wardrobe was a good player, and too proud of his playing to give in even to the King, and the match was a close one. Only a few chessmen remained on the board. The King was beginning to feel a little anxious. Nobody spoke a word, and nobody looked at Bilbo, or Dorobel, or the Interrupter, or the Encourager of the Interrupter, when they came in and placed themselves about the chessboard.

The Second Assistant Master of the Wardrobe moved his Queen's Knight, and the King looked worried. The King moved his own Queen's Knight, the Second Assistant Master of the Wardrobe smiled, and the King immediately saw that he had made a great mistake. He began to be very angry. The Second Assistant Master of the Wardrobe, smiling in the most maddening way, moved his King's Bishop's Pawn, and queened it. Everybody stopped breathing. The King's game was lost. He puffed out his cheeks, made the most alarming sounds in his throat, as if he were choking, looked at the smiling face of the Second Assistant Master of the Wardrobe, and began to splutter and storm.

The Encourager of the Interrupter, on the Interrupter's

shoulder, whispered in the latter's ear, and the Interrupter said to the King, in a trembling voice:

"Pardon, Sire, but if you would permit me to suggest—"

"What! what! what!" shouted the King, in a great rage, "are you here again? How dare you—"

"Pardon, Sire," said the Interrupter, spurred on with his interruption by the Encourager on his shoulder, "I only desired most humbly to suggest—"

"What! what! what!" cried the King.

"Move your Queen's Bishop to King's Bishop Four!" cried out a new voice, high and sharp as a whistle. "Move your Queen's Bishop to King's Bishop Four!"

No one knew where this new voice came from, and the King was so dumbfounded that without thinking what he was doing he moved his Queen's Bishop to King's Bishop Four.

"Checkmate! checkmate! checkmate!" cried again the new voice, sharp and shrill as a whistle, and sure enough, the last move had checkmated the Second Assistant Master of the Wardrobe, and the King had won the match.

The King looked at the mournful face of the Second Assistant Master of the Wardrobe, who was grievously disappointed, and the King could not help laughing. He laughed and laughed, loud and long.

"My dear Mortimer," he said, "I thank you for your

timely interruption. But the voice in which you made your apt and welcome suggestion did not sound to me much like your own. I would willingly learn from you the secret of—”

Just then the King's eyes, in looking up for the first time at the Interrupter, fell on the little Encourager of the Interrupter, perched on the latter's shoulder. The Encourager took off his cap, made a low bow, and waved his tiny umbrella.

“Bless my soul!” gasped the King.

“Sire,” said the Encourager, in the same voice they had all heard, shrill as a whistle, “it was I who made the little suggestion, and I trust your Majesty is pleased with the result.”

A great hubbub arose, as all the company gathered about; but the King bade them be still, and the Encourager went on.

“Your Majesty,” he piped, for all the world like a penny whistle, “I hold in my head, which as you see is no bigger than a cherry, all the secrets of all the games of chess that ever can be played in the world. I can win them all, for I know which is the best of all the possible moves in all the possible games. My knowledge is here at your Majesty's gracious disposal; but I belong to my master the Interrupter, and I cannot serve your Majesty without his permission; indeed, without his permission I must

serve against you. What his terms may be I do not know." And the Encourager whispered rapidly in the Interrupter's ear.

This speech amused the King mightily. The idea that a head no bigger than a cherry could hold the key of all the possible moves in all the possible games of chess was too preposterous; the King laughed loud and long.

"By my halidom!" he cried, "I would fain have my little master at my elbow to instruct me in these mysteries. Mortimer, my good fellow, what will you take for him?"

Mortimer, encouraged by the whispers of the Encourager, spoke out and said:

"Sire, nothing do I ask but one thing only: and that is your royal promise never to speak rudely to anyone so long as you live; and no condition do I make but one only: and that is, that if you ever shall speak rudely again, I may interrupt you with the word,—'Remember!'—and if you then still speak rudely, our little master here shall be mine once more forever."

"Why, Mortimer!" said the King, "I have seldom, very seldom, if ever, spoken rudely to anyone, so why should I not promise you? Certainly I give my promise; and you may interrupt as much as you please, and you may have this little gentleman again if ever I break my word. I must have him at any cost; I would not live without

him for all the kingdoms in the world. Sir," he said to the Encourager, "pray come down to me here on the chess-table."

The Encourager opened his tiny umbrella, which made the King laugh louder than ever; and, giving a little leap into the air, floated gently down under it onto the table at which the King was seated. At this the King was more delighted than ever, and he thought he had never had so amusing an adventure in all his life; and every minute he grew more determined to keep this wonderful creature for his own. Another game of chess was soon begun, to test the powers of the little man; and when the King called for the best player in the castle, it was found that the best player in the castle was the Third Assistant Scullion, who was at that moment scrubbing pans in the kitchen; but "no matter," said the King, in a state of high excitement, "bring him hither;" and the King and the Scullion sat down to their game of chess before the wondering eyes of the entire court.

"We will checkmate you in seven moves," piped up the Encourager, standing on the table at the King's right hand, after the Scullion's opening move. The Scullion smiled to himself, as if he knew better. But at the fourth move he frowned; at the fifth he scowled at the Encourager, who was directing every move made by the King; at the sixth he scratched his head and blinked his eyes; and at



the seventh—"checkmate!" cried the Encourager, and the game was won.

In fact and in deed, that tiny head, no bigger than a cherry, held the secret of all the possible games. No one outside the castle was permitted to know of the Encourager's presence, so that the King's fame as a master of that difficult science grew and grew; indeed he became the chief player of all the players in the kingdom; old men who had spent all their lives in searching the mysteries of that fathomless science came from every quarter of the kingdom; but none could stand against the King. The reason was, that somewhere out of sight the Encourager was always at hand, secretly directing the King's play; and the King thought it entirely unnecessary to mention to his opponent anything about a thing so utterly small as the Encourager.

Sometimes the Interrupter had to say "Remember!" but the King trembled for fear he should lose the Encourager, and he soon became from habit the politest man the castle had ever known. Bilbo and Dorobel hardly knew it for the same place, all was so peaceful and polite. When the King gradually began to say, "Excuse me," and "Thank you so much," and "Will you be so kind," and "I trust you are enjoying good health this morning," and "Don't you think the spring is rather late this year," Dorobel had a very hard time indeed to keep her face straight, and sometimes, until she grew used to it, she

had to run away with her handkerchief over her mouth; but Bilbo thought it far too serious to be laughed about, and after a while they all learned how to bear it better. Bodad the Woodcutter, Prince Bilbo's father, who had been away all this time at his hut in the forest, where he insisted upon living in spite of the King's entreaties, arrived at the castle after the King had grown polite, and when the King greeted him with a pleasant smile, and said, "Welcome home, my dear brother, I trust you have derived much benefit from your long sojourn in the beautiful forest," Bodad turned pale, looked frightened, leaned heavily on his son's arm, and in a tremor was supported by Prince Bilbo from the room.

As for the Queen, she observed, without complaining, that things had grown strangely dull about the castle of late.

## THE SEA-CHILD



PRINCE BOJOHN was five years old. Prince Bilbo was his father, and the Princess Dorobel was his mother. They were proud of him, for he was a fine boy, and the old King his grandfather nearly spoiled him to death; he would have been completely happy, except for one thing: he had no brothers nor sisters, and no companions; and for this reason he became at last so lonely that he would not play at all, but sat all day long without a word, looking out of the window with gloomy eyes. At meals he half forgot to eat his food; his cheeks grew hollow; no one could make him laugh. Prince Bilbo and the Princess Dorobel were at their wits' end. The stable boys would not do for him to play with, because they were rough, and used dreadful language; the page-boys were quite out of the question, for you know what sort they were; and the ladies and gentlemen of the court had no children at all.

"I will go to the Dryad," said the Princess Dorobel; "she will help us."

Stealing away while Prince Bilbo and the King were

playing chess together, she went into the forest and walked until she came to the tree where her Dryad lived; and knocking on the tree she told her trouble to the Dryad. When she had done, she put her ear against the tree, and a faint voice came to her, saying these words:

“The sea will take, the sea will give,  
The child is dead, the child will live,  
The hands are reaching from the bay,  
The fire will keep them all away,  
The young is weak, the old is brave,  
The old from harm the young will save,  
Of sorrow joy will be the end,  
And in the night will come a friend.”

Saying these words over and over to herself so that she might not forget them, the Princess hurried back to the castle, and told Prince Bilbo what the Dryad had said. Neither of them could understand, but they resolved to wait patiently, knowing that in due time the meaning of the strange words would be revealed to them.

If you should have gone a long long journey from the Great Castle through the forest, you would have come at last upon a tiny fishing village; behind it was the forest and at its front a blue and quiet bay of the Great Sea, whose little waves came gently up and down, day by day, on a white and sandy beach; and under the waters of the bay,

deep down on its sandy floor (but this of course the village people did not know) a little sea-child was lying dead, and his sea-mother was kneeling sorrowful beside him.

In the village beside the bay lived Finbod the Fisherman, with his wife Thalassa, and Bodkin their little boy. They were very happy together; because Bodkin was a fine sturdy boy, just five years old, and brown as sun and wind could make him; and he played all day long with the other fisher children on the beach, and sometimes his father Finbod took him with him in his boat on the bay, and let him hold a fishing line, or dip his fingers in the blue water, or put his hands on the oar beside his father's and pretend to row. Their house was tiny, but it was very cosy, and there were bright red blinds in the windows, and bright red geraniums in the little garden before the door. From their door they could look down the street to the bay, and in the summer evenings Finbod often sat there with Bodkin on his knee, telling him strange stories of the people who live down under the sea.

Nobody knew, neither Finbod and Thalassa in the village by the bay, nor Bilbo and Dorobel in the Great Castle in the forest, that out there under the waters so blue and smooth there was great sorrow among the sea-folk, because a little sea-child had died, and his mother was grieving for him night and day. From the sea-caves under the rocks where they lived all the sea-folk came and gathered

round the body of the little sea-child, and there they all knelt mournful and still, while the poor sea-mother knelt beside him in the midst of them all, with her head on her arms, and her long wet hair falling over her face down to the sandy floor. The great whales came swimming up and stopped; the sharks edged in sideways and rested quietly looking on; the long eels wavered amongst the ribbon-grass; the little sea-horses with their stiff necks stood upright and motionless; the shoals of tiny fish forgot to be afraid, and gazed with their round wondering eyes; all the creatures of the sea were sorry, for they had known the little sea-child well and had played with him, and they knew now that they would never play with him any more. Slowly and sadly they swam away; all the sea-men and sea-maids tried to draw the poor sea-mother away with them too, but she would not leave her child. At last they left her alone, and the sea-maids swam together to their largest cave, where they thought and thought what had best be done to make the poor sea-mother forget her grief; for they knew that if she were not soon comforted she would die too. One of them whispered in another's ear, then all of them whispered together, and their faces brightened, and it seemed as if they had thought of something they could do; and so they flitted away. But the poor mother hid herself from them, and thought only of her little boy.

One evening, as the sun was going down over the bay, making it pink and purple, Bodkin was sitting on his father's knee before the door. All the nets of all the fisher-folk were drying in the village yards, and all the folk were sitting before their doors, the men smoking their pipes, the women mending their clothes, and the children laughing and playing. Bodkin begged his father to take him for a row on the bay; so Bodkin and his father and his mother, all three, Finbod carrying the oars, went down the village street together towards the shore. They passed the house of their neighbor Shadro and his twelve children, all merrily playing before their door. All the children waved their hands to Bodkin and gaily shouted "Good-bye!" and Bodkin waved his hand and said "Good-bye." They passed the cottage of old Shellbag the miser, who was sitting before his door adding up figures in a book; he was sour enough, but even he smiled at Bodkin and said "Good-bye!" And Bodkin smiled back and waved his hand and said "Good-bye!" Everyone said good-bye to Bodkin, as if he were going on a long journey, instead of merely for a little row upon the bay.

At the end of the street, nearest the water, was the poor hut of old Marrowbones, who was sitting before her door like all the rest. People thought she was a witch, because she was old and poor, and lived alone, and had no teeth and little hair, and talked a good deal to herself; but the

children were not afraid of her. She said good-bye to Bodkin too; and he waved his hand to her and said "Good-bye!" But his mother tossed her head, and drew her skirts about her, and grasping Bodkin's hand hurried him past.

How sweet the bay was! how peaceful and still! how clear the water! Scarcely a ripple fell away from the dory's bow as it slipped smoothly onward. Finbod sat at the oars, his wife facing him in the stern; and as they sat thus, talking together, and giving no thought to Bodkin, he hung over the side, in the bow, dipping his fingers in the water and trying to see the fish gliding in the clear depths below. The sun was almost at the ocean's rim, changing its shape from moment to moment in a low bank of fog, looking now like a red lantern, now like a red bowl, and last of all like a red saucer; and as it went out in a point of red light, Bodkin, who noticed it not at all, saw something in the water which made him look very hard indeed. Just below the surface, looking up at him and smiling, was a face, surrounded by long dark hair; a pale face, with wide eyes and pearly white teeth.

Bodkin was at first too interested to speak; but in a moment, as he cried "Mother!" a long round white arm came up from the water, and long white fingers closed around his arm and drew him over the side of the boat, and down, down, down, under the water of the bay.

His mother and father looked in time to see him go



over the side. Instantly Finbod dived after him; far down he swam, and did not come up until he could stay under no longer; and again and again he dived, until his strength was wholly spent, and he knew it was no use to try again; Bodkin was gone.

Poor mother and father! Finbod had to carry the mother, all white and unconscious, up the village street. All the folk were now indoors, except old Marrowbones, who stood before her door and as they went by said, "What has happened? Where is Bodkin?" But Bodkin's father paid no attention to her. In Finbod's house, the mother lay on her bed, and for many days knew no one, and was very ill indeed. And after she was well again, she thought of nothing but her little boy, and would not be comforted. All the villagers wagged their heads together, and looked at Marrowbones; one to another they whispered that it was some witchery of hers that had caused it all; none would speak to her nor go near her; and as for her, she grew poorer and lonelier and more wretched every day.

But under the bay there was great joy. The sea-maidens swam with Bodkin to the dark cave where the dead sea-child's mother had hid herself. "See!" they said, "we have brought you a beautiful boy to take your little one's place and make your heart glad again." At first she would not look at him; but they kept whispering softly to her until she raised her eyes and looked long at Bodkin, as if





she wished to see whether he was indeed like the little one she had lost; then she rose and went to him and hugged him up tenderly in her arms. Bodkin wept bitterly at first, and cried out continually for his mother; but when a great whale came slowly lumbering up and looked at him, he was so astonished that he forgot to cry; and then his new mother fondled him and showed him all the wonders of the ocean world: the forests that wave in the tides like ribbons, the gold and orange and blue fish that hang motionless for hours among the feathery branches, the great ugly sharks whom all the sea-folk hate, the jolly porpoises, the palace where the sea-king lives, far down at the bottom of the deepest sea, its walls and gates and towers shining bright with mother-of-pearl, and the countless thousands of sea-children who dart like eels between all the shores. At first these sea-children were afraid to come near Bodkin, and gazed at him from afar off with big round eyes; but after awhile they grew to know and like him, and at last he became as if he had been born among them, and they taught him to swim faster than a fish, and to play their games with them; and merry were the races they ran together, on the backs of the good-natured dolphins and porpoises; and even the stupid old whales joined in their sport, and carried them on long journeys down to the darkest depths of the sea, where of all creatures that wear tails the whales alone are brave enough to go.

Bodkin was so happy that at times he forgot about his old home in the village, and his real mother whom he had loved so tenderly when he was a mere human boy. He did not know that his mother was thinking of him day by day and dreaming of him night by night, nor that his father had been gone many months, far away at sea all alone in his boat, fishing and trying to forget his grief among the storms and waves.

One day, however, Bodkin suddenly became tired of all the games, and would not play with any of his friends; he lay on a rock under the edge of deep water, and watched the sea-grass waving in the tide, and the little fishes slipping in between and out, and thought of the green grass and the bright sun and the yellow flowers and the sweet-smelling air, and the boys and girls he used to know, and his mother moving as she used to do so busily about the house, humming a tune; and a great longing came over him, and he thought his heart would break, and he wanted—oh, how bitterly he wanted—to go home and live with his own mother for ever and ever. He cried to himself a long time, and at last he cried himself to sleep. When he awoke the waters were so dark that he knew it must be night-time overhead. All the sea-folk were asleep; all the fish were hanging quietly, scarcely moving a fin. He swam to the cave where his sea-mother lay asleep; he bent over her and kissed her on the cheek, for she had been very

kind to him. Noiseless as an eel he swam away, with that long and easy stroke he had learned from his sea-friends, past the rocks where they lay in thousands on their sides, through the long streamers of sea-grass, between the ranks



of motionless fish, on and on until the water grew a little lighter, and he knew he was coming to the shore. Looking upwards, he could see that he was near the surface of the bay; and putting down his feet, he stood upright on the sandy bottom. As he walked, he felt himself going steadily uphill; a little farther on, he felt his head come up out of the water into the air, and a cool breeze blow upon his hair; in another moment, his eyes looked out upon a deep blue sky glittering with stars; as he walked on, first his white shoulders came out of the water, then his body, then his legs, and in one moment more he

stood, a pale and naked little body, in the starlight on the beach.

The night was chill, and he shivered a little. He could not get his breath; he panted like a fish thrown upon the shore; he thought he was going to drown in air. When at last he began to breathe easily, he looked across the bay; but the water was unruffled, and no sign appeared of his sea-friends. He turned towards the village. How heavy his feet were! It was as if they were weighted with lead. Scarcely could he drag himself along. Little by little, however, he found his legs, and by the time he had reached the village street he was walking very well. As he passed the cottage of old Marrowbones, he paused an instant, uncertain whether to knock and tell her he had come back again; but he hurried on to find his mother and throw himself into her arms.

His white figure looked very little and lonesome in the star-lit and empty street; he began to be afraid; he shivered more and more with cold. But when he thought how glad his mother would be to see him, and to know that he was not dead after all, he forgot his fears, and ran as fast as he could past all the houses, until he came to his mother's door. The geraniums were still growing in the little garden, and the red blinds were still in the windows. The house was dark and silent. What if his mother had gone away? He could just reach the knocker by standing

on tiptoe; he gave one timid knock, and waited; no sound from within; he knocked again and again, but no one answered. His mother must have gone away indeed; what should he do? He tried the handle of the door; it turned; oh, joy! the door was after all not locked at all; he pushed it open and went in.

All was dark inside; he knew his way about, however, with his eyes closed; the bed was in the corner by the wall; there his mother was lying fast asleep; he stood by her side; he laid his little cold hand on her shoulder and called her; she awoke, stared at him wildly for a moment, and sat up in bed.

"Mother!" said Bodkin, "it is I; it is Bodkin; I have come back to you; I am home again!"

But his mother, with a cry of fear, buried her head under the pillow and would not look at him nor listen to his voice. He plucked the covers, and tried to make her hear.

"Don't be afraid, mother!" he said, "don't be afraid! It is only your own Bodkin, come back from under the sea. Don't you see me here? Don't you hear my voice?"

She uncovered her head, and looked hard at him, as if trying to be sure she was really seeing something there in the darkness.

"No, no," she said, "it is only my dream again. And now they have sent an evil spirit to plague me, and make me think I see my little one here again, and hear his



voice! But I know he is drowned, and I shall never see him again!"

"But, mother," cried Bodkin, "it is I; it is no evil spirit, it is your little boy. I am not drowned, I am alive! Oh, mother, please take me in!"

"Away, cruel dream!" his mother said; "go away and leave me in peace! I shall be mad soon if you cheat me thus every night with this cruel dream of my boy! Go away and leave me in peace!"

"It is no dream, mother," said Bodkin, and began to cry. "I am cold, I am afraid; the sea-folk will soon come after me to take me back—be quick, mother, save me from them! be quick!"

Her eyes grew wilder with terror and grief; she sprang from the bed, and with a mad cry, as if she had lost her wits, she flew at him as though to drive him from the room. Bodkin went weeping before her, and thus she drove him to the door, little thinking that it was in truth her own beloved boy whom she was thrusting out of her house; through the door she drove him, and behind him closed the door and barred him out.

He leaned his head on his arm against the door and wept. What should he do now? The sea-folk would soon be after him. It was so cold and dark. Surely someone would take him in? He would try his old friends, if perchance some of them would take pity on him. He dried his tears,

and walked wearily back down the street, the way he had come, until he reached the house where Shadro lived with his twelve children. A cheerful light shone through the red blind at the window, and Bodkin, standing on tiptoe, looked under it and saw Shadro and all his twelve children playing a merry game together on the floor. Bodkin knocked, louder and louder; but they were making so much noise at their game that they could not hear him; and so he turned sorrowfully away.

Farther down the street he stopped at the house of Shell-bag the miser. Inside he was sitting at his table, alone, counting his silver money by the light of a penny candle, and laughing and chuckling to himself. Suddenly he heard a knock at the door. Sweeping his money quickly into a bag, and seizing an old gun that stood in the corner, trembling with fear the while, he shouted through the closed door, "Begone, you villains! My gun is loaded, and I will shoot every one of you that comes into this house! Begone, I say!" Poor little Bodkin fled.

At other doors he knocked, but all in vain. It was growing late now, and at any moment the sea-folk might be coming after him to take him back. He found himself before the hut of old Marrowbones, the last house in the village and the nearest to the beach. No use knocking there; she was deaf, and old, and ugly, and poor, and she was thought by every one to be a witch. And yet, better

try her door too before going back to the sea forever. He knocked, and in a moment the door opened and the old woman appeared. She was more bent and wrinkled than ever, and her clothes were simply rags. She looked down at Bodkin, raised her hands in wonder, and then, stooping down, gathered him up in her arms and carried him into the house.

"There! there! you poor cold baby! don't you cry, old Marrowbones will take care of you," she said, as she snatched the cover from her bed and wrapped him up in it.

"There! there!" she said again, "you shall sit here by the fire and tell me all about it. Don't cry, you are safe now. I know you, never fear; you can't fool old Marrowbones; her eyes are old but sharp; 'tis little Bodkin and no other, as I live!"

The coals on the hearth glowed brightly. Bodkin, warm and comfortable on the old woman's lap, after he had eaten a little broth she had heated for him on the fire, told her all his adventures from first to last; and he made her promise he should never never go back again to the sea-folk under the sea. So warm the fire was, and so weary was poor Bodkin, that he grew drowsy when the tale was done, and by and by the old woman and himself fell fast asleep together in their chair. All was still, except for the mice that scurried in the corners, and the coals of fire that crackled a little now and then. In the midst of

this silence came a sudden loud knock on the door. Bodkin and Marrowbones jumped up.

"It is they!" cried Bodkin, "they have come after me! Do not open the door!"

Again the knock came, louder than before.

"Nonsense, my child," said Marrowbones, "suppose I had not opened when *you* knocked?"

"Do not open the door! do not open the door!" cried Bodkin.

But Marrowbones lifted the bar and opened the door wide.

Instantly there streamed in a crowd of pale and ghostly figures—the people of the sea, come to fetch Bodkin back; and in the front of them the sea-mother whom he had kissed good-bye that same night in the depths of the sea.

"My child!" she cried. "Give me back my child! come back with me! come! come!"

The pale and ghostly figures circled about Bodkin and the old woman, and closed in nearer and nearer upon them.

"Save me!" cried Bodkin; "don't let them take me back! You promised me! Save me! save me!"

Old Marrowbones threw her arm about Bodkin and moved back towards the hearth as the sea-creatures advanced. "Stay close to me," she whispered to him; "I will do my best." Closer and closer the sea-folk edged in upon the old woman and the child, and farther and farther

back old Marrowbones, with one arm about Bodkin, retreated towards the hearth.

To those whose homes are under the water the one thing frightful and deadly is fire; and this old Marrowbones knew very well. In a moment she was near the hearth; in another moment she had seized the tongs and lifted a great red burning coal out of the fire; and still keeping one arm about Bodkin's shoulder, and just as one of the sea-men thrust forth his hand to grasp Bodkin, she swung the red-hot coal in front of her at the end of her tongs in the faces of the sea-folk. They cried out with terror and fell together like a crowd of bewildered sheep. "Come, Bodkin," she whispered, and brandished the burning coal before her and around her, making a path through the tumbling crowd straight towards the door. When she reached it she turned, and waving the coal in their faces she backed out with Bodkin and closed the door behind her.

Carrying Bodkin in one arm, and holding the fire-tipped tongs, she hobbled briskly up the street towards the Great Forest beyond the village. Behind her, at a distance, followed a shadowy mass of white figures. As Bodkin passed his mother's house he wept to think that he should be going away never to see her again. They reached the edge of the forest and passed in among the trees. If it had not been for the light of the burning coal they would

never have found their way. As they looked back from time to time they could see the faint white figures of the sea-folk following them; and they knew that if the coal burned out Bodkin would be lost. The coal began to grow dim; the shadowy white figures began to draw nearer; the old woman panted harder and harder; the coal was nearly out, and her strength was nearly spent. She stopped and set Bodkin down, and quickly gathered a handful of dry leaves and sticks, and lit them with the dying coal; then she piled on more and more sticks, until a lusty fire was crackling between the great gnarled trunks of the trees. You should have seen the dim white figures scurry off into the darkness.

"Now," said Marrowbones, "we may rest."

All night they fed the fire, Bodkin sleeping a little now and then. They could see the pale figures moving in the shadows, waiting at a safe distance for the fire to go out. But it did not go out. After long hours the sky grew light, a bird began to sing, and it was morning.

"Now," said Marrowbones, "we are safe."

The sea-folk had vanished before dawn, for they dared not be on land by daylight; the danger from them was over, so long as Bodkin kept away half a night's journey from the sea. The old woman was very weary with her night's adventure, and she and Bodkin slept nearly the whole of that day. Towards night they arose and went

their way through the Great Forest, away, you may be sure, from the sea. Darkness fell, but they kept on; sometimes the old woman carried Bodkin, and sometimes he walked; they were hungry, and it was painful going; but they kept on, stumbling and bumping, all night. Next day they slept until night-fall in a little meadow, where they found some berries; that night they went their way again; and so for many days and nights. Bodkin did not ask where they were going, for the old woman seemed certain of her route, as indeed she was. During the long nights he often wept silently to himself when he thought of his mother whom he had lost, and of his father whom he had not been able even to see.

One evening, as the sun was setting, and they were starting on their nightly journey, old Marrowbones patted him on the cheek, and asked him whether he had ever seen a princess, and whether he would like to see one. He never had, and he would. "Very well then," said the old woman, "look sharp to-night, and perhaps you may catch a glimpse of one." As they went through the dark forest, Bodkin looked sharply here and there, when he thought the old woman was not watching him, so that he might catch a glimpse of a princess if one should happen to be out in the forest at that time of night. As the hours passed and no princess appeared, he was disappointed and thought the old woman had made a mistake. Not long

before midnight, they saw lights afar off through the trees. "Hurry," said old Marrowbones, "our journey is nearly ended." As they approached, the lights grew brighter and more numerous, as if they shone from all the windows of a great house. It was the Great Castle itself.

They lost no time in coming to the door; old Marrowbones set her lips to the horn that hung beside it, and blew such a blast as no one would ever have dreamed such old lips could blow. The varlet who came looked with amazement at the bent and ugly creature and the half-naked boy, and would have closed the door in their faces; but the old woman held him by the arm and said, "Go, varlet, and tell the Princess Dorobel that two travellers are come to her from the sea, one young, one old." She fixed on him such a look out of her little piercing eyes that without more ado he went.

The castle was ablaze with candle-light; inside they could hear strains of music; little peals of laughter reached them; by all the sounds a ball was plainly in progress. When Bodkin heard the name of the Princess Dorobel he pricked up his ears: "ah!" he thought, "now I shall perhaps catch a glimpse of a princess." Suddenly the music stopped; the laughter stopped too; a silence fell over the castle; and in the next moment came running to the door the most beautiful lady Bodkin had ever seen. It was the Princess Dorobel herself, radiant as the stars, dressed all



in white, with a crescent of diamonds in her hair. When she looked at Bodkin and saw that although he was very ragged and dirty he was a charming little boy indeed, she gave a cry of delight.

"Was there fire and the sea?" she asked, remembering what the Dryad had said to her.

"Yes, dear lady," said old Marrowbones.

"Were there hands reaching out from the bay?"

"Yes, dear lady," said old Marrowbones.

"And did you save him from harm?"

"Yes, dear lady," said old Marrowbones.

"And did the sea take him and give him back?"

"Yes, dear lady," said old Marrowbones.

"Then come in, come in, come in!"

And in spite of all her diamonds and white dress she took the dirty little Bodkin up in her arms, and gave him a sounding kiss on his smeared cheek, and carried him, followed by the old woman, through the hall into the great ball-room, where the King and the Queen and Prince Bilbo and all the lords and ladies of the court were waiting.

"He has come!" cried the Princess Dorobel; "he has come!"

No one but Prince Bilbo knew what she was talking about; but she wasted no time on that. She drew old Marrowbones into the center of the company, and, holding the bewildered Bodkin on her lap, bade the old woman

tell her tale. And so she told it, from the beginning to the end. When she told how the sea-folk had stolen Bodkin and how he had returned, Dorobel smiled at Bilbo and said:

“The sea will take, the sea will give.”

When Marrowbones told how the sea-folk had tried to steal him back again, she said:

“The hands are reaching from the bay.”

When Marrowbones told how she had frightened them off with her fiery coal, she said:

“The fire will keep them all away.”

And when Marrowbones had finished her tale, she cried out:

“Of sorrow joy will be the end! From this night Bodkin shall be the brother of Prince Bojohn. To-morrow we shall send for Bodkin’s father and mother, and they shall dwell with us here in peace and plenty as long as they live.”

When Bodkin heard this last, he thought he had never been so happy in his life; he could not wait until to-morrow should come. But to-morrow came, and when he awoke in his own room in the castle, there was Bojohn standing beside his bed, looking at him fondly with a bright smile on his face. From that moment they were brothers.

The same day a mighty troop of horsemen, with lances and pennants, set off from the castle to the village by the

sea; and Bojohn and Bodkin, with their arms about each other, watched them off. Never had that village by the sea seen so glorious a company as that which came prancing and glittering and jingling down the little street. Bodkin's father Finbod had on that very morning returned from his long voyage, and he with Bodkin's mother stood in their doorway to see the cavalcade go by. Imagine their surprise when it stopped precisely at their door! Shadro and his twelve children, and all the other people of the village, even down to old Shellbag the miser, came running up to see.

"A message from the lady Dorobel!" shouted the herald; and descending from his horse, he handed Bodkin's mother a letter bearing the royal arms. When she had read it, she threw herself on Finbod's shoulder and wept tears of joy. A groom led up two horses, a white one for Bodkin's mother, and a brown one for his father. When they left, the village folk followed them into the forest, strewing flowers all the way, and bade them good-bye with a ringing cheer. It was then that Bodkin's mother remembered that she had not yet told Finbod what it was all about, and that he did not know where they were going nor why; so she told him, and he thanked her very heartily for letting him know about it. Bojohn and Bodkin stood waiting for them at the castle door, and what they all said, talking all at once, and how they hugged each other, and laughed

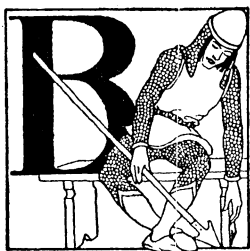
and cried all at the same time, and how Finbod would keep bowing to the little Prince Bojohn and taking off his cap to him and saying "yes, my lord," and "no, my lord," until Bojohn nearly died laughing, simply cannot be described.

As for Bojohn, he became rosy and sturdy like Bodkin, and loved him and fought with him, and taught him to steal green apples from the kitchen, and was happy as the day was long. Indeed, it was generally thought at the castle that he led Bodkin on to do a good many forbidden things. And between them they were the torment and the joy of the Princess Dorobel's heart.



## THE POOL IN THE FOREST

### I



UT it is night-time!" said Bodkin, turning over in bed.

"No matter if it is," said Prince Bojohn, "get up! Dress yourself in a hurry; we are going away!" and he prodded Bodkin smartly in the ribs.

Bodkin sprang out of bed. By this time he was used to Bojohn's ways, and nothing surprised him.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"First," said Bojohn, "we are going to the pantry."

The castle was dark and still; as they passed through the long halls they could hear heavy breathing behind the doors; not a single soul was awake; even the night watchman was sleeping sweetly on his bench in the great hall. As they tiptoed past him, Bojohn could not help but stop and tickle his nose a little with the feather of his cap; but the good man only slapped his nose with one hand, and went on sleeping as before. Bodkin was afraid they would be caught, and pulled Bojohn away; and in a few moments

they were in the pantry. They needed no light in that place. They knew well enough where the best jams and pies were kept; and Prince Bojohn loaded himself and Bodkin with a good supply. Bodkin was in truth a trifle frightened, but he could not very well go back to bed now, and the upshot was that the two of them stole out the castle door together, well laden with provisions for a journey.

"Now," said Bodkin, "where *are* we going?"

"Sh-h!" said Bojohn in a whisper, "we are going to seek adventure!"

Bodkin knew well enough there was no use asking this prince for any details, so he quietly submitted, and followed across the lawn and park. The stars were shining bright, but the east was growing a little pale.

"What will the lady Dorobel think of this?" said Bodkin.

"Why are you always saying unpleasant things?" said Bojohn.

The forest was so dark, they thought it well to spend a little time at breakfast before entering its gloomy depths; so they sat down by a stream at the forest's edge, and made a very good breakfast of strawberry jam and bread, while they listened to the cocks beginning to crow in the royal barnyard, and to the birds beginning to sing in the trees. By and by it was quite light, and Bojohn led the way into the forest.

"But *where* are we going?" said Bodkin again.

"Oh, goodness gracious me, but you do annoy me," cried the Prince, "can't you wait and see?"

"No, I can't," said Bodkin; "and what's more, I won't go another step unless you tell me this minute."

"Oh, you aggravating boy!" cried the Prince. "Then I *will* tell you, just to spite you; but I wanted to surprise you, and if I tell you how can I? You take away all the fun of the adventure; when we reach the place that we are bound for, you will already know all about it, and I won't be able to have a laugh at you after all—oh, no, not at all—not at all!" And the Prince began to laugh, so that Bodkin became quite exasperated.

"Now you tell me at once," said he, "or I will go straight home; I don't *want* to be surprised, and I don't *want* to be laughed at! I want to know where we are going, and what we are going to see, and I want to know it this minute!"

"Well, well, don't lose your wits," said the Prince, "and I will tell you. Do you like—danger?"

"Well,—pretty well,—yes,—as well as you do, I guess."

"Do you like—ogres?"

"No, I don't; but I'll tell you what—I can fight as many ogres as you can, and maybe a few more too."

"Oh, you can!"

"Yes, I can!"

"Well, just for that, I am going to give you the chance. I am going to take you *to* an ogre. That's where *we* are going."

"I don't care."

"You will when you see *him*. I bet you run so fast a rabbit couldn't catch you."

"I won't either."

"I bet you will."

"I won't; I won't."

"Not if it's night-time? and dark? and still? and woods all around? and creepy? and—"

"Oh you let me alone; I'll bet there isn't any old ogre anyway."

"Oh, *isn't* there? Well, you'll see. Because *I* know all about him, and where he lives, and all."

"Just the same, you're afraid to go there *alone*."

"What? *me*? afraid? *You're* afraid to go *with* me, that's what it is."

"Well, I'm *going*; that's enough, isn't it?"

"All right, that's enough. But *I'm* the one that *ought* to be afraid; for this ogre has a very special feeling towards me, and towards my father, and like enough he will make straight *for* me as soon as he sees me, and if he once gets hold of me—!"

"Then let's go home," said Bodkin; "I don't care about ogres anyway. I don't like this forest at night. Is he



horribly ugly? Does he eat boys? He is no business of ours anyway. Let's go home."

"No," said Bojohn, "*I* am going."

"Then," said Bodkin with a sigh, "I'll go too."

But Bodkin felt uneasy all day long, as they went on through the forest; and when it grew towards evening, and the darkness deepened, he became very uneasy indeed; and he reproached himself many times, when he thought of the Princess Dorobel, for allowing the Prince to undertake this dangerous adventure; though how he could have prevented it, he did not very well know. At noon, they sat on the moss and ate a frugal meal of raspberry jam and bread, with blackberry pie to help it down, and a draught of clear water from a spring; and talked meanwhile, as boys will, of many things.

"When I am a man," said Prince Bojohn, "I am going to be King of all this land; and I shan't be satisfied with that, either; for I am going to ride a fine white horse, at the head of a mighty army, with a sword in my hand, and fight glorious battles, and seize castles, and conquer kingdoms, and ride home again with kings in chains behind me, and make myself king over pretty much this whole earth!"

"And I'll go with you!" cried Bodkin; "and I shall save your life when the enemy surround you, and you shall give me a kingdom to govern for you, and all the

people of that kingdom shall come to me for justice, and everybody shall—”

“That’s all right,” said the Prince, “but let’s go find the ogre first.”

Bodkin’s face fell.

When darkness had fallen indeed, very black under the trees, Bojohn said that they were nearing the end of their journey, and that the ogre’s dwelling was not far off. “Watch for a light,” he said.

Bodkin wished himself well at home, but he said nothing. Not that he was exactly terrified, but it was very dark, and strange things rustled now and then among the dead leaves, and he wished—well, there was no turning back now, and he was not going to allow the Prince to be braver than himself. Suddenly both whispered together, “There it is!”

A dim light shone between the trees.

“That’s it,” said Bojohn, “hurry up.”

Bodkin was in no hurry; he went as cautiously as he could, stepping slowly so as to make no sound. Prince Bojohn pulled him along. The light seemed very far away. Before they came to it they had to go around a great pool of water, very black and very still, which seemed to Bodkin to make the forest more dismal than ever.

“Do you notice,” he said, “that there is no sound of frogs in that pool? What makes it so silent?”

Bojohn did not answer, but pushed on towards the light, and as they neared it they found there, in a clearing encircled by the forest, a tiny hut, in which burned a little lamp. Bodkin was too much disturbed to make a sound; but to his horror Bojohn, as he approached, gave a great shout, which made poor Bodkin jump nearly out of his skin. He stood fast, however, and waited, trembling a little, beside the Prince, who gave another shout, still louder than the first.

This time the door opened, and a great figure filled the opening; Bodkin could see that it had huge shoulders and was very tall, and around its head was a great mane of hair; it uttered what seemed to him the roar of a lion, and came slowly towards them; when it came nearer it stopped, threw up two great long arms, cried out, "What! you? at last!" and sprang upon the Prince.

All Bodkin's fears instantly left him; his friend was in deadly peril; he thought of nothing but that; and as the dreadful creature's arms closed around his friend, he rushed upon the ogre, threw an arm about his neck, struck him with might and main, and down they went all three into the dirt together. The ogre seemed too much surprised at this sudden attack to defend himself at first, and Bodkin had placed some very pretty blows before the great creature began to take notice; but when he did, he simply put one hand in the collar of Prince Bojohn's coat and one hand

in the collar of poor Bodkin's coat, and lifting them thus into the air carried them to his hut.

Bodkin was kicking and striking with all his might; but in the midst of it—he could scarcely believe his ears—he heard a peal of merry laughter, and looking at Bojohn he saw him laughing as if his red face would burst, and heard him shout, as well as he could for being half choked to death,—“You saved my life! you saved my life!”

Inside the hut, where the light was burning, the ogre set the two boys down, and standing over them, with his hands behind his back, and his feet very wide apart, he looked down on them, and said:

“Now, you precious young rascals, tell me what all this means.”

“Grandfather,” said Prince Bojohn, still laughing very hard, “this is my dear friend Bodkin. Bodkin, this is my grandfather.”

Bodkin, gasping and choking, could not speak. He could only stand with his mouth wide open, looking from one to the other. But Bojohn only laughed the louder.

“Oho! grandfather!” he cried, “oho! oho! he gave you a good one on the nose that time! oho!”

Bodkin began to think he understood.

“Are you—are you—” he said.

“Yes, you little wildcat,” said the old man, “I am. I am Bodad, the father of Prince Bilbo, and the grandfather

of Prince Bojohn. And I must say, of all the impudent, rascally grandchildren—”

“Oh, come now, grandfather,” said Bojohn, going to his grandfather and putting his arms about him, and giving him a kiss right on the end of his nose, “you *know* you are the dearest and kindest grandfather in the world, and you wouldn’t say anything to hurt your little boy’s feelings for all the gold in the kingdom, now would you?” And he laughed so merrily, and hugged the old man so tight, and pulled his beard and his long hair so impishly, that his grandfather commenced to laugh too; and they laughed so gaily together, that Bodkin could not help but join in too; and pretty soon the three of them were laughing until the tears ran down their cheeks.

“How now, Sir Fearless Bodkin,” said Bojohn, when they had recovered themselves a little, “I meant to give you a grand surprise by telling you nothing at all; and I have given you a grand surprise by telling you everything.”

“Well,” said Grandfather Bodad, “it seems to me you might tell me a little why one of you whacked me on the nose because I wanted to hug the other. A very funny joke” (rubbing his nose), “yes, a very funny joke, but I don’t quite see—”

“Why, it’s as plain as the no—” Bojohn did not like to finish that sentence—“anyway, it’s simply that you

are an ogre. And everybody knows what an old ogre you are, now—”

“I will explain it,” said Bodkin. And he did.

## II

Next morning, when the good Woodchopper awoke, he heard the boys chattering gaily outside. As soon as he had put the water on to boil, he went out to greet them—an astonishingly bright-eyed old man, with ruddy cheeks, a clear skin, a great mane of white hair, and a great bush of white whisker.

“Good morning, both!” he cried.

“Good morning, grandfather!” shouted Prince Bojohn.

“Good morning, sir,” said Bodkin, a little timidly.

It was plain that Bojohn and his grandfather were on the best of terms; but Bodkin looked somewhat sheepish, for he could not forget how he had pummeled the old man’s nose. Bodkin looked at him slyly, and at the same time raised his hand and slowly rubbed his nose with it. Bodkin was ready to sink through the earth with confusion; but the old man clapped him on the shoulder and laughed so heartily that Bodkin thought him a very friendly old ogre after all.

The little hut stood in a clearing surrounded by beautiful trees, in which the birds were now singing, and through which the early morning light fell soft and mild on the

grass. The great pool which they had passed in the night lay not far off among the trees, and a file of geese was waddling off in that direction. The old man and the boys, his hands on their shoulders, passed by the woodpile, paused to look at the goat giving her kids their breakfast, gazed at the pigeons wheeling in the air and alighting on the roof of the hut, and stopped finally at a little sty, where a fat mother and a fat father were keeping house with their little fat pink pigs.

Bodkin leaned against the sty and looked about him.

"Sir," said he to the old woodchopper, "do you like it here?"

Bodad looked at him and smiled.

"Young sir," he said, "I am what is called a contented man."

"All the same," said Prince Bojohn, "he ought to be at home with us at the castle. The King my grandfather has often enough tried to persuade him to live with us, and be a great lord, and wear jewels and silks, and have a dozen servants to fetch and carry for him, and help rule the kingdom. But he won't, he won't, he *won't*. He won't be anything but a horrid old ogre."

"That is true," said Bodad. "The King has offered me all this, and more. But I am contented; why should I change? I love the forest, and the birds, and the cool

morning air, and my geese and goats and pigs, and my little house where I have lived all my life. I don't know that I should be contented as a great lord at the castle; and I do know that I am contented here. I want nothing. I envy nobody. My little Bojohn and his father and mother come to see me sometimes, and sometimes I go to see them at the castle; and when I return I am all the better contented here for having had a glimpse of the great world there. I have lived a long time, and I have found that nothing is better than to be happy, and also that jewels and silks and servants are not the things to make me happy, but only birds and trees and sunshine and quiet thoughts."

And with these words he led them in to breakfast. They thought him very strange.

### III

When the sun grew warm in the afternoon, the boys strolled into the forest.

"Well," said Bojohn, "our adventure is over. We might as well go home."

"Yes," said Bodkin, "your mother will be worried."

"Oh, no, she won't," said Bojohn, "she knows we are here with grandfather."

Bodkin stared at him in surprise. Such a boy!

"Anyway," said Prince Bojohn, "I suppose we had



better go home to-morrow. There is no chance of adventure in this quiet place."

They were standing beside the pool they had passed the night before; a large pool, almost as large as the clearing in which Bodad's house stood, and almost round in shape. Moss and reeds grew on its banks, and leafy branches drooped down over it; the water was clear and cool, and away from the shore looked as if it might be very deep. The boys expected to find geese paddling in the muddy margin; and indeed, as they stood gazing at the water, Bodad's geese filed from under the trees, waddled down to the edge of the pool, stopped there, lowered their bills as if to drink, hesitated, apparently changed their minds, and with one accord turned their tails and filed solemnly away. The boys laughed. They noticed, after a while, that no bird sang nor fluttered in the leaves drooping down over the pool. The water was like green glass, unbroken, during all the time they watched it, by the nose of any fish. Prince Bojohn picked up a stone and threw it into the middle of the pool. He watched to see the ripples circle and widen away and break against the shore; he watched in vain; the stone sank without a ripple; the water remained as smooth and glassy as before.

"Did you see that?" said Bojohn, in a tone of wonder.

"Yes," said Bodkin, "I did;" and he too picked up a

stone and threw it in. Not a ripple fell away from it; the surface of the pool remained unruffled as before.

"Strange!" said Bojohn. "I have never thrown a stone in this pool before, and I never knew before—"

They took then to throwing stones in good earnest; and not once did any ripple disturb the glassy surface of the pool.

"I don't understand this," said Bodkin.

"I'll tell you what it is," said Bojohn in a whisper, "the water is—dead!"

"Dead!" said Bodkin.

They stood awhile, in a kind of pleasant terror, uncertain whether to look into this matter further or to flee back to the house. Prince Bojohn recovered his wits and spirits first.

"Dead water or not," said he, "it's cool water, and I am terribly warm, and I'm going to have a plunge in it. Are you with me?"

"Don't do it," said Bodkin.

"Oh, you're afraid," said Bojohn.

"Come on," said Bodkin, beginning to take off his clothes.

Bojohn was ready first, and with a shout dashed into the pool and struck out towards the center. Bodkin noticed that the water did not splash nor roll about him; it looked as if the water were dead indeed. Bodkin knew more than Bojohn about the terrors that lurk in water,

and he gazed after his friend with much anxiety. He saw him reach the middle of the pool; he heard him laugh, and shout "It's deep!" and then he saw Prince Bojohn throw both arms straight up into the air, and with a look of terror in his eyes sink like a stone beneath the surface.

In a twinkling Bodkin was out of his clothes and into the pool. Not for nothing had he lived among the sea-folk under the sea. Like a flash he was at the center of the pool, and swifter than thought he dived, and swam down, down, deeper and deeper, and in another moment saw the white body of Bojohn, going down, feet first, beneath him. Though he swam as fast as any fish, Bojohn kept always a little below him; there seemed to be no bottom to the pool; once he lost sight of Bojohn; again he nearly touched him; and suddenly, without any warning, he fell plump upon him, and found him standing on his feet on solid ground.

The weight of the mass of water above them pressed them down, and as they sank down on their knees they became aware of a flight of stone steps in the floor, at their feet. They felt themselves forced downward, and clinging together they crept on hands and knees down these steps; and as they came beneath the level of the floor it closed over them like a trapdoor. When it had closed, the darkness as well as the water of the pool was shut out, and at the bottom of the steps they found themselves in a field,

almost round in shape, and of a size exactly that of the pool's surface itself, enclosed in earthen walls, and dimly lit with a pale light which seemed to come from everywhere. As they lay exhausted on the ground, trying to get their breath, they observed that the field was covered with what appeared to be flowers. Prince Bojohn plucked one of them, and examined it closely.

"It is a lily," he said; "and it is dead."

Bodkin walked over the whole field, and examined all the flowers.

"They are all lilies," he said, "and they are all dead."

The roof of this strange apartment, above the stone steps, was closed fast, and though they pushed it with all their might they could not budge it. Still holding the dead lily in his hand, Bojohn examined the walls for an outlet. "Hurrah!" he cried; "come look at this!" He was standing before a tiny door which opened in the wall.

"Do we dare go through?" asked Bodkin.

"We have to," said Bojohn; "there is no other way out."

Crouching down, and keeping close together, they went through, and in a moment were in a dimly lit tunnel, which was just high enough for them to walk in if they stooped. To their alarm, the tiny door closed behind them, and they could not open it. There was nothing to do but go forward. The passage wound and turned and circled, and the

farther they followed it the greater became their alarm, and they walked so far, and the tunnel seemed so endless, that they finally sank down in despair, and gave themselves up for lost. But when they had rested a little, Bojohn proposed that they make one more turning in the tunnel, on the chance that it might be the last. It proved, indeed, to be the last. As they cleared it, they saw the end of the tunnel, and at its end a door.

"We can't go back," said Bojohn, "so we must go on."

As they crept through this door, hoping to find themselves on earth once more, the door closed behind them, and however hard they tried, they could not open it again.

"Truly," said Bojohn, "all these doors open only one way, and that way seems to be the wrong way for us."

They looked about them, and saw a stately room, high and wide, nearly as large as the great audience chamber at the castle, paved with blocks of black and white marble, and hung with draperies of black and white velvet. No furniture relieved the austerity of this chamber, except that in the center stood a wide ebony table, and on it a branching silver candelabrum, in which burned hundreds and hundreds of little candles, shedding abroad the same pale light the boys had seen in the field and tunnel. There appeared to be no open outlet from the room, but in each of the four walls were numerous doors, all closed. Hoping to find a passage out, Bojohn and Bodkin opened the first

door on their right. They shrank back in fright at the sight which met them.

Through the doorway they saw, sitting bolt upright in a straight chair against the rear wall of a tiny room not bigger than a closet, the figure of a man, his face and hands ghostly white, his eyes and lips closed, his whole form as motionless as stone, and dressed withal in old and faded finery of a fashion long since out of date.

Prince Bojohn, now become bold from having been lately so familiar with fear, gazed steadily at the pale and motionless figure in the chair, and after a moment drew close to Bodkin and whispered in his ear.

"Do you know what?" he said. "He is dead!"

"Dead!" said Bodkin.

"Shall we try the next door?" said Bojohn.

"No! no! we mustn't!" said Bodkin.

"We must," said Bojohn. "One of these doors may lead us out into the world again. Come on."

As he said this, he put his hand on the next door, and gently pushed it open. Inside, against the rear wall of a cubby no bigger than the last, sat a pale and still and waxen figure of a man, his eyes and lips closed, his clothing of a bygone fashion, and his whole form motionless as stone.

"Don't let's try any more," said Bodkin, who by this time was thoroughly terrified.

"We must," said Bojohn; and so saying, he opened the next door, and then the next, and after that the next, and every one in its turn until he came to the last; and behind each door, in a tiny room no bigger than a closet, sat, bolt upright, the pale, stiff, motionless figure of a man. Some of these figures were bearded, some were smooth; they varied in appearance from youth to very old age; their clothing touched all the fashions of a hundred years.

"All dead," said Bojohn in a whisper.

One door remained; the last at the immediate left of the entrance by which they had come in.

"Well," said Bodkin with a sigh, looking fearfully about him, "I suppose we might as well open this one too."

"Of course," said Bojohn; and so saying, he placed his hand upon the door, which gave easily, and disclosed a tiny room like all the rest. A white and motionless figure sat here too; but this was the figure of a boy, not much older than themselves, and his dress was fresher and more modern than the others; it was such as Bojohn's father might have worn in his boyhood, and of a good and even pretentious quality. His eyes were open, and they looked at the boys with intelligence; his lips moved in a wan smile, and it was evident he was trying to speak. The boys were almost petrified with wonder. A voice extremely faint and thin issued from his pale lips.

"I have waited for you for a long time," he said. "You

came by the pool. I know. If you had not plucked the lily you would not have found me. Do not lose it."

Bojohn started; he had forgotten all about the lily, but there it was, still gripped tight in his hand.

"Without it," went on the strange voice, "you will never leave here alive."

Bojohn fidgeted a little, and Bodkin stood as close beside him as he could.

"But who—" said Bojohn, trying hard to collect himself, "who are you?"

"I was once a page in the castle of the King your grandfather," said the voice. "I am the youngest and the latest of those assembled in this room. Though I have been here many years, I have not been here quite long enough to be dead altogether, but only from my shoulders down; I can still speak; but I should soon have been like all the others. You came in the nick of time. I served the King your grandfather, and I served him ill; and none may help me to be free again but one of his blood."

The boys looked at each other in amazement. A page-boy from the castle here!

"How did you—" said Bojohn, "how did you come here?"

"I will tell you," said the page-boy. "In the days of the old Witch, whom your father destroyed—"

"Oh, yes, we know," said Bojohn, nodding to Bodkin.



"She enchanted the forest, because she was angry at the King."

"I was the boy who caused it all. I struck her a wicked blow, and in revenge—"

"Yes, yes," said Bojohn, "my mother has told us all about it. So you are the page-boy who disappeared before we were born!"

"Yes, I am he," said the page. "The old Witch caught me in my bed at night and carried me here through the air; and all these years I have sat among these others as you see me now."

"And why are they here?" asked Bojohn.

"She brought them all. They were all here when I came. Only this much I know, that each of them had offended her, and had done so in some madness of desire or envy or ambition. It is in your power to help set us all free; will you?"

"If we can," said Bojohn, looking at Bodkin.

"Yes, if we can," said Bodkin.

"Then I will tell you how. It will not be easy. You must know that I, as well as these others, am here because it was in a certain madness of desire and envy and ambition that I offended the Witch; desire of admiration from others as wicked as myself; envy of those within the notice of the King; and ambition to attract his notice and so gain by degrees a place in his favor and prominence above my

fellows. Modesty would never get me forward; but noise and bluster would; and once the King should single me out as a lad of spirit, I would know how to gain upon him more and more until my fortune should be made. Well, well, this is where it has brought me; a fine fortune, indeed. Neither I nor these others can leave here until we are purified; and we can be purified only by a spark of the goodness of one who is absolutely pure of greed or malice or self-seeking. Do you think you can find such a one?"

"Perhaps Bodkin or myself would do," said Bojohn; "I don't think we are ambitious or—"

"Ah, no," said the page-boy; "have you forgotten your talk as you came through the wood? the armies you are to lead? the kingdoms you are to steal? the kings you are to put in chains? the blood you are to shed and the misery you are to let loose? No, you would never do."

"Then I don't know where to look," said Bojohn, hanging his head.

"Nor I," said Bodkin.

"You will never find him without the Silver Lamp," said the page-boy, "and even then it will be difficult. First you must acquire the lamp. The White Queen guards it in her palace; she is Queen of all the elves and sprites and fairies in this forest, and once in every hundred years she gives the lamp to one who will use it wisely, if he shall come in time to her palace and demand it of her there. The

lamp burns a hundred years exactly and no more; and the hundred years will end one week from this day. You see you have arrived just in the nick of time; I was afraid you would be too late. With this lamp, if you can obtain it, you will find the person whose heart is pure of greed and envy and ambition. You will know him by this: the flame of the lamp, which is blue, will turn a pure white if you chance to hold it before the person you are seeking; before all others it will turn a yellow green. Go, and obtain the lamp; and if its flame turns white before any person, that person will be the one who is worthy to rescue us. You must give the lamp to him, and he must bring it to the pool, and he must throw the lamp into the very center of the pool; it will be a true spark flung from his own pure heart to us here. Your task will then be done, and you will then see what will happen."

"But how are we to find the White Queen, and how are we to get out of here?" said Bojohn.

"The lily you hold in your hand will open all doors," said the page-boy. "The doors you came through open only one way; but they will open the other way to let you through again, if you hold up the lily and say:

"Blue is ours;  
Green we will not;  
White we will;  
Help us on.

"When you come to the Queen, you must hold up the lily and say these same words; and by that she will know that you are they that should have the lamp."

"But how shall we find her?" said Bojohn.

"To-night you will see in the sky a group of stars which look like the corner-points of a great dipper; have you ever seen it?"

"Oh, yes," they said together; "we know the Great Dipper."

"To-night it will be close down over the tops of the trees; you must follow it; and if you keep faithfully in that direction you will come by morning to a little hill in the forest, covered with trees, and in this hill you will find a little door; within is the palace of the Queen."

"What shall we do then?" said Bojohn.

But the page-boy's eyes were closed, and his lips were tight, and he spoke no more.

"We had better go," said Bodkin.

As they stood by the door by which they had entered, they gave a last look around. All the doors were open, and all the figures were sitting in their places, bolt upright, stiff and still. "Hurry," said Bodkin.

The door opened of itself, when they held up the lily and repeated the words the page-boy had taught them; and at the other end of the tunnel the door there opened for them in the same way.

Standing in the field of dead lilies, "Now," said Bodkin, "hold your nose and close your mouth."

They mounted the stone steps, and as soon as they had held up the lily and repeated the words, they found themselves in the water of the pool. It was well for them that Bodkin had once been a sea-child. Grasping Bojohn under the arm, he darted swiftly upwards with him, swimming as he had learned to swim among the sea-folk. It was not a difficult feat for Bodkin, and before Bojohn had quite lost all his breath they reached the surface of the pool, and in another moment they were on the bank and in their clothes.

"Whew!" said Bodkin.

"Whew!" said Bojohn.

#### IV

That night, when Bodad was fast asleep, they arose and dressed, and taking food from the kitchen, set forth on their journey.

It was a clear starry night, and the Great Dipper lay just above the tops of the trees. Turning their faces in that direction, and now and then climbing a tree in order to see better, they followed all night long in the direction in which it had first appeared; and just before dawn they saw, rising out of the forest before them, a grass-covered hill.

"This must be it," said Bodkin, greatly excited. "Where is the door?"

It was a long time before they found it; but at last, set into the hillside under a tangle of brambles, there indeed they saw a little door. Bodkin thumped it and shook it.

"It won't open," he said.

"Of course not, stupid," said Bojohn, and held up the lily and repeated the magic words. The door swung open, and as they entered closed again behind them. It was dark within, but a long way off they saw a dim spark of light. It did not take them long to grope their way to the place where the light was; it came from a tiny lamp, hung in a bracket against the wall; a shallow lamp, shaped like a boat, at one end of which was a little finger-hold, and from the other end of which issued a dull blue flame.

"This is it!" said Bodkin.

"Let's take it and go!" said Bojohn; and stretched out his hand to seize it.

A peal of laughter echoed out of the dark from all sides, and a voice cried, "Hold!"

Bojohn quickly withdrew his hand, and nearly dropped with fright. At the same time the place was suddenly flooded with light. Sitting around the walls of the vast room in which they found themselves were hundreds of little creatures, all laughing heartily at the two boys; and

on a throne at one side sat their Queen, a beautiful fairy taller than the rest, dressed in white, with a star of diamonds on her forehead, and a diamond-studded scepter in her hand. Her subjects were of all kinds: earth-elves, and water-sprites, and tree-dryads, and air-spirits, all sitting on the ground holding their sides with laughter at the fright of the boys.

"What!" said the Queen, with a frown on her beautiful face, "would you steal my Silver Lamp?"

"Now, now!" whispered Bodkin, pushing Bojohn forward. Down on his knees before the Queen went Bojohn, and Bodkin did the same.

"No, your Majesty," said Bojohn, in a rather faint voice, "indeed we do not wish to steal the Silver Lamp. We have come to claim it of you as a gift, to use it for the deliverance of the enchanted men beneath the forest pool." And lifting before her the wilted lily, he said:

"Blue is ours;  
Green we will not;  
White we will;  
Help us on."

The Queen's frown changed to a smile.

"Now I know," she said, "that you are they to whom I must give the Silver Lamp. Take it," she said, "and use it well."

The boys lost no time. Bojohn took the lamp; the little creatures sitting around the walls grinned at them; the door opened before the spell of the lily and the words; and as they went out into the cool fresh air of dawn, they were followed by a burst of laughter which seemed gradually to grow farther and farther away, until it was no more than the tinkling of little bells, and finally was gone altogether.

"I wish they had asked us to stay longer," said Bodkin. "They seemed a jolly lot. I wish we could go back and find out more about them. What a chance we have missed by being in too great a hurry!"

"I'm glad they didn't ask us," said Bojohn, "I am tired to death. Let us lie down and sleep a little."

## V

When they awoke the sun was well up. They looked about them; the hill was gone. The lamp and the lily were there beside them, however, and they knew their adventure was no dream. But what they did not know was the way back to Bodad's hut. There were no stars to guide them now. Bojohn proposed one direction, Bodkin another; and they finally concluded to take a route half way between the two. After an hour's journey in this direction, they sat down on a rock. "Bojohn," said Bodkin, "we are lost."



"We simply *can't* be lost," said Bojohn; "we haven't *time* to be lost. What shall we do?"

"I don't know," said Bodkin.

Just then Bojohn, who had been looking in every direction, pointed his finger and said, "Look there!"

Something was moving between the trees in the far distance. "Come on!" he said; and the two boys ran and stumbled and jumped as fast as they could, and at last made out horses and horsemen moving towards them. As they approached, Bojohn gave a great shout; "Grandfather!" he cried. There, sure enough, was the King his grandfather, mounted on his finest steed, at the head of all his court: ladies and gentlemen, knights, squires, pages and all, mounted likewise on richly caparisoned steeds. There were the Queen his grandmother, and Prince Bilbo and the Princess Dorobel, and Bodkin's mother also; and they were glad indeed to find the boys so unexpectedly; so glad that they forgot to scold them. The King and his court were on a progress through the kingdom; and that night they were to visit the largest town in all the forest.

The boys were soon mounted like the rest. "Now we shall have a chance to begin our search," said Bojohn.

That night, when they were comfortably settled in the town, the boys commenced their investigation. They started with the King. He was rather startled when Bojohn

held a little silver lamp up to his face, and he was more startled still when the blue flame of the lamp turned before his very eyes into a sickly yellow green. The boys were much disappointed; but they made trial of one person after another: the Queen, Prince Bilbo, the Princess Doro-bel, Bodkin's mother, and every lady and gentleman in the court, down to the very page-boys; but not once did the flame turn white; in every case it turned a yellow green. Not a word would the boys say of the secret of the lamp; and this increased the wonder all the more. The people of the town heard of it, and next morning flocked to see it; and before the day was over the boys had held the lamp before the face of every person in the town. Alas, no one either in the court or in the town was free of greed or envy or ambition in some form or other; every single one, from highest to lowest, held within him some secret discontent or grudge or jealousy. Every time the flame turned yellow green, however, the person who had caused it to change color was as pleased as punch, and thought himself a mighty fine fellow indeed.

"Try it on me, then," said Bojohn; but it was no better; and when he tried it on Bodkin, it was just as bad.

"Well, I'm stumped," said Bojohn; "who would have thought it of all these people? I never would have believed it."

Thoroughly discouraged, they went on to the next town

with the court, and here they tested all the people with the lamp, but with no success, except to delight them with its magic power; and thus for several days, in all the villages and hamlets visited by the King, they tried the lamp; but it seemed as if all the people in the world held some secret grudge, or envy, or discontent; for not once did the flame turn white.

"I don't know where else to look," said Bojohn, "and the time is growing short."

"Let us go back where we started," said Bodkin, "to your grandfather Bodad; he is a wise old man; let us tell him all about it and ask his advice; I like him very much, and I believe he can tell us where to look next."

"It's no use," said Bojohn, but he asked the King to return by way of Bodad's hut, and, the King consenting, the return commenced.

On the last day of the allotted week they came in sight of Bodad's house, and as they drew up before the door Bodad himself came out, his clear blue eyes smiling, his cheeks ruddy with health, his long hair and beard white and bushy as ever; a figure of green and hale old age which was a pleasant sight to look upon. The King, who was very fond of him, greeted him cordially, the Queen smiled upon him sweetly, Prince Bilbo threw his arm about him, the Princess Dorobel gave him her cheek to kiss, and the two boys dismounted and ran to him with joyful shouts.

"Here we are, grandfather!" cried Bojohn. "Did you miss us? What have you been doing? Where do you think we have been? Did you think we were lost? Were you worried about us? Did you think we were rude to run away? Are the pigs and geese all well? Will you give us some dinner? May we stay with you all night? Will you go home with us to-morrow?"

The old man was so taken aback by this torrent that he could only stand with his mouth open, and before he could say a word a cry from Bodkin startled everybody.

"The lamp!" he cried, dancing up and down. "Look! look! look at the lamp!"

Everybody looked at it, where Bojohn stood holding it in his hand, without knowing it, directly under the old man's nose. The flame was burning a *pure white!*

"We have found him! we have found him!" cried Bodkin. "Why didn't we start here?"

"Come on!" shouted Bojohn. "To the pool! to the pool!" And putting the lamp into Bodad's hand he pulled him along towards the pool, followed by Bodkin, by the King, and by the whole court.

In a few moments they were ranged around the pool, with all eyes fixed on Bojohn, Bodkin, Bodad, and the lamp.

"Toss it in!" cried Bojohn. "Toss the lamp straight into the middle of the pool! Throw it! Now!"

Bodad understood nothing of all this, but as all eyes were on him, there seemed nothing else for him to do, so with a quick look to measure the distance he held the lamp at arm's length and threw it, burning as it was with its pure white flame, straight into the very middle of the pool.

As they all watched they saw the lamp sink beneath the water, and a great ripple rise and circle and widen out from it; they saw a thin spire of white vapor rise from the point where the lamp had disappeared; they saw this vapor spread out over the surface of the pool until it exactly covered it, higher than a man; and then it gradually cleared away, and instead of the pool there was a field of white lilies, in perfect bloom, nodding in a gentle breeze; and walking in this field was a company of strange men, clothed in every fashion of the past hundred years, and among them, running about and shaking them by the hand, the page-boy himself, rosy of face and sparkling of eye.

Bojohn looked at the lilies blooming in the field, and then at the lily in his own hand; and that lily was blooming too, like all the rest. At the same moment a bird came and perched on a branch overhanging the field, and sang with all his might.

The King and all the others were simply dumbfounded by this sudden apparition. Bodad, who was in fact the immediate author of it all, was more amazed than any of

them. The page-boy, followed by all those who had now been restored to life with him, came forward, and all together they knelt, not before the King, as you might expect, but before the simple old Woodchopper; and the page-



boy in the name of them all gave him thanks for their deliverance.

Bojohn refused to explain anything until their return to the castle; and though this was pretty hard to bear, they knew that when he made up his mind there was no use talking; so with a last look at the field of lilies, and with

Bodad in their midst on a white palfrey, they set forth on their journey home.

In the great audience hall at the castle the whole court, with Bodad the Woodchopper sitting beside the King, assembled to hear the tale. When it was done, a great sigh of wonder went up, and then a great shout for Bodad. It is true that everybody, except Bodad, of course, felt a little relieved that the Silver Lamp was gone. The page-boy was forgiven by the King, who then turned to those others who had been restored with him.

"I knew it," said Bojohn to Bodkin, under his breath. "He is going to make a speech."

"Gentlemen," said the King, clearing his throat, "the white light of this old man's pure heart has communicated itself to you, and has kindled in you a spark by which henceforth you shall live gently as the lilies of the field. From this day I set you apart for an example to my people, and create you an order of knighthood, to be known as the Order of the Silver Lamp; and I appoint, as your superior and chief, to whom you shall owe all obedience, my well-beloved brother Bodad. Long live the Knights of the Silver Lamp!"

A great shout went up from the throng. Poor Bodad was so confused that he had thoughts of running away; but he could find no means of escape.

"But we are all anxious," went on the King, "to hear

your stories; they are, I am sure, of the greatest interest. You, sir," he said, addressing the oldest of the Knights of the Silver Lamp, who wore a faded spangled coat, of a period no one present could remember, "I beseech you to recount to us the story of your life, and in particular the adventure which brought you to so strange a pass."

"Willingly, Sire," responded the ancient man, so readily that it was apparent he had been waiting for this opportunity; and thereupon, with a considerable rustling and a good deal of whispering and nodding of heads, the assemblage composed itself to hear the story of the Old Man in the Spangled Coat.



## THE KNIGHT'S MOVE



IRE," piped up the Encourager of the Interrupter, "shall we teach him the King's Knight's Gambit?"

"I think it would be a good thing to do," replied the King.

They were in the morning-room at the castle. Prince Bojohn and the King his grandfather sat on opposite sides of a table, with a chessboard between them. Near their table, watching the lesson which Bojohn was receiving in the most difficult science known to man, stood Prince Bilbo his father and Bodkin his friend; Mortimer the Executioner leaned upon his axe behind the King; the lady Dorobel sat at a window with embroidery on her lap, glancing at times out upon the castle lawns; the Queen was playing dominoes, near another window, with the Second Lady in Waiting; and in various parts of the room numerous ladies and gentlemen of the court stood or sat, conversing idly.

The King and Bojohn had just finished a game. The Encourager of the Interpreter, with his tiny umbrella under his arm, stood in the center of the chessboard be-

tween them, and leaned an elbow on the top of a pawn; he was just able to do it by stretching his arm. As he said the word "Gambit," he walked briskly among the few chessmen which yet remained upon the board, and putting his arms about a Rook, he tugged it and dragged it to its proper square at one corner of the board, and stood it up there in place; he then ran to the remaining pieces, and puffing and panting with the heavy exertion tugged them and dragged them one by one to their proper places for a new game. His little umbrella was a good deal in his way in this work, but he was never known to let it out of his hands; he had especial difficulty with the Knight, who was considerably taller than himself.

"My dear," said the Queen sweetly to the Second Lady in Waiting, "if you had played your double six before, you would have made fifteen."

"Oh, dear," said the Second Lady in Waiting, "how stupid of me."

The King and Prince Bojohn arranged the rest of their pieces on the chessboard, and when the game was ready to begin, the Encourager, who was standing among the black pieces on the King's side, walked out into the open space between the two rows of pawns, and cocking his head up at Bojohn and pointing his umbrella up at him said to him, in his shrill voice:

"Will you play a Gambit?"

"I would," said Bojohn, "if I knew what it was."

"We will show you," cried the Encourager. "The point is, that you must let his Majesty capture one of your pawns in the beginning, for the sake of getting an advantage later. We will show you which one. Now then!"

So saying, he put his umbrella under his arm and stepped in between the white pawns on Bojohn's side, and then passed on between the Knight and the Rook, and sat himself down on the table just off the edge of the board. Bojohn did not dare to laugh, though he could hardly control himself, for he knew that if he laughed the Encourager would be mortally offended; so he gave his attention to the game, and on a sign from the Encourager moved his King's pawn two squares forward. His grandfather moved his own King's pawn two squares forward, and the two pawns thus stood nose to nose. On a sign from the Encourager, Bojohn moved his King's Bishop's pawn two squares forward, so that it stood beside his first pawn. "Oh, pshaw!" said Bojohn. "Now he will take it." The Encourager laughed gleefully. "Just what we want him to do!" he cried. His Majesty nodded, and the Encourager ran on to the chessboard and putting his shoulder against the pawn which Bojohn had just moved, pushed it aside, and in the same manner pushed into its place the pawn which the King had first moved. He then backed himself up against Bojohn's pawn, and with a tremendous

effort got it on his back and walked off the board with it; and dropping it on its side on the table sat himself calmly down with his back against it and folded his hands about his knees with his umbrella sticking up between them, as if his duty was done.

"My dear," said the Queen at her table, "I think you are playing unusually well this morning."

"Oh!" said the Second Lady in Waiting, in a twitter, "do you really think so?"

Prince Bilbo drew up a chair to Bojohn's side, and Bodkin leaned over the back of Bojohn's chair; they watched the play, as it went on deeper and deeper, with intense interest; no one but the Encourager spoke a word; no one but the Encourager moved, and he moved only because he gave himself the task of dragging off the captured pieces; Bojohn sometimes forgot his turn in his interest in the little creature's struggle with his load. His Majesty looked now and then from Bojohn to Prince Bilbo, and they exchanged a smile over Bojohn's earnestness; the boy was proving an apt scholar, and was showing himself quick to catch the points of the game; his father and his grandfather were much pleased, and Bodkin was absolutely perplexed.

At the fifth move the eyes of Mortimer the Executioner closed, his head nodded, and his great black beard sank slowly on his breast; and before the sixth move was complete, his hands, resting on the handle of his axe, relaxed

and slipped, and all at once the axe fell upon the floor with a clatter which startled everyone, and caused the King to jump almost out of his chair. The Queen looked up with a domino in her hand, and after smiling towards the Executioner, who was picking up his axe in confusion, put down her domino face up and said, "Three and two are five, my dear."

The King had turned on the poor Executioner in a fury, and was about to storm at him, when the Encourager cried "Ahem!" very sharp and loud, and the King resumed his game without a word.

Prince Bojohn, with the Encourager's help, had now laid open the King's ranks to good purpose, though it was impossible to say that there was yet any advantage on his side. In fact, he looked rather disconsolate.

"I don't see," he said, "how I am ever going to win this game. I don't think I ought to have lost that pawn."

As he said this, a cry from the Princess Dorobel drew everyone's attention. She was looking intently out of her window.

"Well!" she cried. "I never in my life! What on earth—!" And she broke into a peal of merry laughter. "Do come and look!" she cried. "Did you ever see such a thing in your life?"

The King and Bojohn, and Prince Bilbo and Bodkin, and all the ladies and gentlemen in the room went hur-

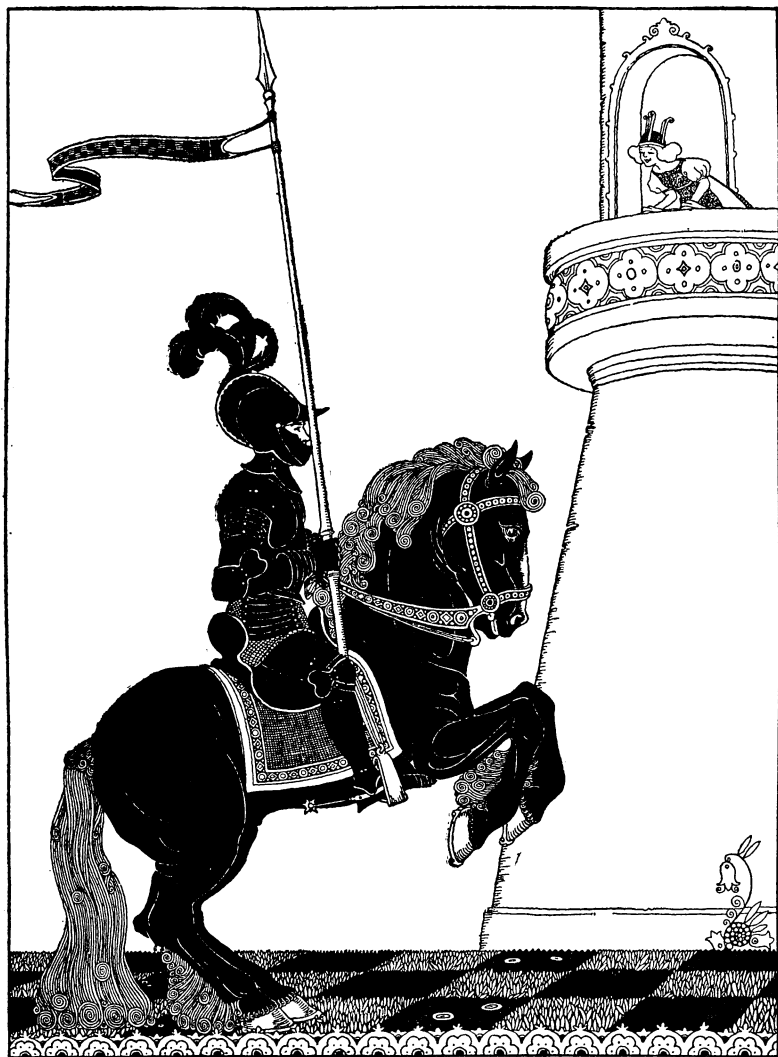
riedly to the window, and crowded there about the Princess Dorobel, looking out; the Executioner, behind them all, looking over their heads. The Encourager was not to be left behind; he raised his tiny umbrella, gave a little spring into the air, and floated gently to the Executioner's shoulder, where he perked his head about, trying to see whatever there was to see. The Queen remained in her seat, and looking out of her window raised her eyebrows in astonishment. The sight which they saw made all the others laugh, from the King down to Bodkin; but the Princess Dorobel most of all.

Far away across the lawn, coming towards the castle from the edge of the forest, was a Knight on horseback. His horse was black, his armor was black, and the plume on his helmet was black. A lance rested on his stirrup, held by a hand cased in a black gauntlet, and the pennant which fluttered at the top of his lance was black. His vizor was up, and they could see that his face was very pale. The thing which caused them all to laugh was this, that instead of coming directly forward to the castle, he came on in the most curious zigzag, at a pace jerky and halting in the extreme. His horse would give a single bound forward and stop; he would then wheel squarely to the right or left, and give precisely two bounds in that direction and stop; he would then wheel squarely again towards the castle and give a single bound forward and stop, and again

bound twice precisely to the right or left and stop; and repeating this procedure again and again, he worked himself gradually towards the castle door. Sometimes the horse would vary his zigzag by bounding forward toward the castle twice instead of once, in which case he would then bound only once to the right or left.

"Do you suppose," said the King, "that the poor Knight has had—er—a trifle too much wine?"

Whatever it was, the Knight succeeded at last in coming quite close to the front of the castle; and there he dismounted and leaving his horse grazing on the lawn, and his lance lying on the grass, came forward on foot. When the company about the window saw the manner in which he now came on, they laughed so loud that the Princess Dorobel held up a warning finger, in fear lest the Knight should hear them. Instead of walking straight to the door, as any sensible person would have done, he stood first for a moment looking towards it, as if measuring its distance and direction with his eye; he then gave one little hop towards it and stopped; he turned then squarely to his left and gave two little hops in that direction and stopped; he turned then towards the door again, and leaped in that direction twice and stopped; he faced about to his left and leaped once and stopped; and in that manner, following the method already pursued by his horse, he gradually brought himself nearer to the door.







A shrill voice suddenly piped up from the Executioner's shoulder.

"The Knight's move! the Knight's move!" cried the Encourager, dancing up and down and waving his umbrella.

"What on earth—!" began the Princess Dorobel; but she could say no more for laughing.

"The Knight's move!" shrieked out the Encourager, in a state of great excitement. "Don't you see? He is moving like the Knight in chess!"

"Bless my soul!" said the King.

"Dear me!" said the Queen.

They looked again, and saw that it was so; for as you know, the Knight in chess cannot move but in just that way, by three steps at a time, first one in one direction and then two to the right or left, or else two in one direction and then one to the right or left.

"Well!" cried the Princess Dorobel. "I never in my life! Let us go to the door and see this strange Knight!"

With one accord they rushed from the room, and in a moment they were standing outside the door; they were delayed a little by the Queen's stopping to turn her dominoes face down, and of course they were obliged to wait for her.

As they watched the Knight in a group around the entrance, they saw that he was going to miss the door. His

zigzag took him a little too far to the left. He stopped and studied the situation, and began a new course, which took him away again from the castle, and brought him to a point on the lawn some thirty yards distant from the door and on its right. From this point he commenced a series of hoppings which no one thought would ever bring him to the door; but he evidently knew what he was about; he tacked back and forth like a sailboat in a strong head wind; he hopped this way and that; and finally, after making a wide and careful zigzag, he brought up squarely before the King, and taking off his helmet swept the ground with its plume and made a low bow. Of course nobody was laughing now. The Knight's face was pale, and wet with perspiration; he was panting with weariness. He was a young man, with black hair and a pleasant smile.

"Your Majesty," he said, "I beseech you to grant me a few hours' rest in your castle. I am very weary."

"Come in, my good sir," said the King. "You shall rest as long as you wish. I pray you come in."

The young Knight appeared to hesitate. "Is the hall wide?" he said.

"The hall is wide, I assure you," said the King. "Have no fear; come in."

The company stood aside and allowed the Knight a clear passage. He bowed politely, and with two hops was within the door. He measured the hall with his eye, and

breathed a sigh of satisfaction. "I believe I can make it," he said, and gave a single hop to the right.

The Princess Dorobel was obliged to stuff her handkerchief over her mouth as she watched the course of the hopping Knight down the hall, and Bojohn had to run outside for a moment; but they all became so anxious to find out how the Knight would ever make the door of the morning-room that they soon forgot their merriment. They never knew how he did it; it was too complicated; but he reached the door at last, and when they were all in the room the King invited him to sit down, and Bodkin brought him a chair. He sank into it as if he were exhausted. The others sat before him, grouped around the King. The young man wiped the perspiration from his forehead with a pocket-handkerchief.

"Sir," said the King, "as soon as you find yourself sufficiently rested, we will be pleased to hear your story."

"It is soon told," said the Knight. "But before I begin, may I presume to make a request?"

"By all means," said the King.

"I see on that table," said the Knight, "a chessboard and a set of chessmen. The sight is—you will pardon me, but the sight is too terrible; I cannot bear it; I cannot relate my story while I see before me—"

"Remove the chessmen and the board," said the King;

and they were immediately put away and out of sight by the Lord Chamberlain.

"I thank your Majesty," said the pale young man. "I am sorry to make so much trouble, but you will understand my request better when you hear my tale. Perhaps you would rather wait until another time—?"

"No, no! Go on!" cried Bojohn and Bodkin together.

"Is it a long story?" said the King.

"It is very brief, your Majesty," said the Knight.

"Then we will hear it now," said the King.

"I must tell you, then," began the Knight, "that I am the only son of a poor charcoal burner who lives, even at this moment, in our village of Shaws, in the distant Kingdom of Wen. From my earliest boyhood, I longed to see the world, and I could never get out of my mind the thought that some day I should be a Knight, wandering far and wide in search of adventure; the dream of such a future possessed me altogether, so that I gradually became more and more useless to my father in his work, and more and more a burden upon him. When I reached the age of twenty-one years, I resolved that I would burden him no longer; I thanked him for all he had done for me, and declared my resolution to seek my fortune abroad in the world; and in spite of his entreaties and my mother's tears, I took my departure, carrying with me nothing but a single coin which my father had pressed into my hand,

and a tiny bundle containing hose and shirts which my mother had done up for me. I set out with a merry heart, for the sun was shining, and the whole world lay before me; and without a doubt I would find adventures enough whereby to win my spurs. I pictured to myself the astonishment of the village when I should some day ride up to my father's door in armor, sword in hand, and plume fluttering from my helmet.

"I found adventures in plenty. For two years I wandered far and wide; and at the end of that time, I must confess, I found myself more ragged than when I started, and as far from being a Knight as ever. It would take me a long time to tell you all that occurred upon my journey; and although many of my adventures were strange, I dare say it would be best to omit them at the present time."

"You are quite right," said the King.

"At the end of two years," continued the Knight, "I came to the borders of the Great Forest. I cannot say that my spirits had fallen, but neither can I say that my fortunes were rising. In fact, my sandals were worn to the thinness of paper, and my clothes were the merest rags; it was fortunate for me that the weather was mild; I was hungry, and I had not in my pockets a single coin. I pursued my way along a road which ran into the depths of the forest, and as I trudged on I wondered where my next

meal was to come from; but I had been hungry before, and I was not greatly disturbed.

"As the sun went down and left the forest in a deep twilight, I saw at a distance before me, beside the road, a little house. When I reached it, I saw that it was a very little house indeed, of one story only, and built of mud dried hard and held together with strips of wood fastened on in the most fantastic designs. Above the door I read this sign, scrawled apparently with charcoal: 'Forest Inn. Accommodations for Man and Beast.'

"I did not like the looks of this place, but it offered hope of food and rest, and I could not afford to be squeamish. I knocked at the door and waited. In a moment it was opened by the biggest man I have ever seen in my life—until to-day." Here the young Knight glanced at the Executioner, who gave a start and coughed, and turned red under his black beard. "The man was so big that he completely filled the doorway, and he had to stoop a little in order to see me. His face was red as if with the heat of a stove; there was in his eyes a somewhat humorous twinkle; he wore on his head a cook's cap, very soiled, and on the front of his body an apron, covered with grease, which hung from his neck to his ankles. He grinned at me.

"'Come in, traveller,' said he, and I followed him into the inn.

"I found myself in a small room, in which were a couple

of beds and chairs, and a table. The floor was of hard earth, without any covering. The Innkeeper's head almost touched the ceiling.

"What is your pleasure, good sir?" said he, making me a bow and rubbing his hands together.

"I desire food and a night's lodging," said I. 'But I must tell you, sir, that I have no money.'

"What!" he cried. 'No money? Then how do you expect to pay?'

"I don't know, indeed," said I.

"He grinned at me again. His eyes twinkled.

"Well," said he, 'it's worth something to me to have good company for a night. I'll tell you what I will do. I will feed you and lodge you for the sake of an evening's entertainment. I'm a great chess-player. Do you know the game?'

"Now I was very proud of my cleverness in that game; I had practised it since my childhood, and there was no one in our village who could outplay me.

"I play a little," said I.

"Will you play with me, in return for your dinner and a bed? I mean for stakes?'

"What stakes?" said I.

"For a big stake," said he. 'If you win, you shall have the dearest wish of your heart; if I win, you shall serve me here for seven years. Do you agree?'



“‘I don’t know about that,’ said I. The idea of serving this red-faced giant for seven years in this lonely place did not please me.

“‘You shall have your dinner first,’ he went on. ‘You shall have the finest dinner you have ever eaten in your life. There will be a thick soup first; then trout fresh from the forest brooks; a steak of venison, done to a turn; a brace of larks, unless you would prefer a pheasant; a salad of crisp lettuce and peas and cucumbers and asparagus, with my own dressing, the most delicate in the world; a bowl of wild strawberries with thick yellow cream; and other things besides; what do you say?’

“I quivered with ecstasy. For such a meal as that I would have sold my very eyes. I was desperately hungry; I did not know when I should eat again; the prospect of sitting down to such a feast was too much for me.

“‘If my little dinner is not all I promise,’ continued the Innkeeper, ‘you need not play.’

“‘I will do it!’ I cried. ‘Bring on the dinner!’

“He left me, and went into a back room, which from the sounds I now heard from that quarter was evidently the kitchen. I waited a long time. When my impatience had all but overcome me, the huge creature returned and spread the table; I was surprised to note the whiteness of the linen and the richness of the china. In another moment he brought in the soup, and my dinner began. It included

all that he had specified; I chose the larks, for they were new to me; I was a little disappointed in them, but altogether the dinner was even better than he had promised; I had in fact never tasted such a meal in my life. The man was such a cook as did not exist in the Kingdom of Wen."

"I wish we had him at this castle," interrupted the King. "I haven't had a respectable egg in my own house for over a year."

"My dear!" said the Queen.

"When I could positively eat no more," continued the Knight, "my host cleared the table, lit a couple of candles, and produced a chessboard and a set of men. I was feeling warm and comfortable; I looked forward to our evening's entertainment with delight; I absolutely began to love the author of that delicate and delectable repast; I cared nothing about the prize of victory, and indeed I did not believe for a moment that he could deliver the prize if I should win it; I should be perfectly happy merely to escape the penalty of losing; and I did not intend to lose.

"In fact, I played extremely well; better than I had ever played before. In the draw, the white chessmen fell to my host, and the black to me. As he was about to make his first move, he grinned at me and said:

"'Make your wish now, my friend. You need not tell me what it is, but if you win this game, you shall have your wish, no matter what it may be. If you lose—!'

“‘No fear!’ I cried, laughing. ‘I shall not lose! As for my wish, this is what I want!’ And I picked up one of my black Knights from the board, and waved it in my hand. ‘This is what I want to be! A Knight like that! If I win, I wish to be a Knight!’

“‘You wish to be a Knight like that? You shall! But you must win first!’ And the Innkeeper moved his Queen’s pawn two squares forward.

“The game lasted four hours. He was an excellent player, and I was myself no mean opponent; we had not made six moves before I saw that we were evenly matched. I will not trouble you with a description of the game, though it was in truth a contest the most beautiful I have ever heard or read of, and I can remember it now in detail from beginning to end.”

“Mortimer,” said the King, “bring the chessboard hither. The Knight shall play that game with me here and now exactly as he played it with the Innkeeper. I cannot rest until I see that beautiful contest with my own eyes.”

“Oh, your Majesty!” cried the Knight. “I beseech you! Spare me! The sight of a chessboard, after what I have suffered! It would be too much! I implore you, spare me!”

“Humph,” said the King. “Very well. I suppose we will have to leave out the one interesting thing in this story. Very well. Humph.”

"I thank your Majesty," said the Knight, with a sigh of relief. "Towards the end of the game, my host, in the eagerness of his attack, left his King somewhat uncovered. I was quick to take advantage of it, and soon forced him into an attitude of defense; he corrected his error, so far as he could, very skilfully, but it was impossible to correct it perfectly; the game from that moment began to go against him; he gave all his attention to shielding his King; his tactics were very ingenious, but it was no use; I broke down his defense at last, and the game was mine. 'Check-mate!' I cried, and jumped up from my chair with a shout of triumph.

"I must say that he took his defeat very well. He scratched his head for a moment, and then burst into a hearty laugh.

"'A fair contest,' he cried, 'and a fair defeat! The wish is yours. I congratulate you!'

"He then looked at the men on the chessboard with an air of desolation, and sighed.

"'Lost again,' he said. 'This time I thought I would surely get for myself a helper in my kitchen, and for a good long time. It's no use. If they come at all, they only stay for a week, and go without giving me any warning. They don't like the country. And now I've lost my chance of keeping you. I can grant you a wish, but I can't grant one for myself; if I could, I would wish myself well out

of here.' His face brightened, and he looked at me eagerly. 'Wouldn't you stay, if I paid you forty florins a month?'

"I shook my head. I felt sorry for him, but the prospect of kitchen work in that dismal place was repulsive to me. His face fell.

"'No, I suppose not,' he said. 'Let us go to bed.' "

"Poor fellow," interrupted the Queen. "I know what it is."

"In the morning," continued the young Knight, "after a breakfast which I helped my host prepare, I took my leave. He seemed reluctant to let me go; but when he saw that I was bent on going, 'Come along then,' he said, 'your horse is waiting;' and he led me to the door, stooping as he went through before me. When we were outside, I stopped in astonishment.

"Cropping the grass quietly by the roadside was a black horse, fully accoutered in black chain armor, and against him leaned a lance, from the end of which depended a black pennant. 'Your horse,' he said, and sighed. 'Mount him.' I looked at the splendid animal and then at my ragged clothes; but I could not resist the desire to feel my knees against such a steed. I leaped lightly into the saddle, and sat there heavily. I was conscious of a weight upon my head, and raised my hand to feel my cap. What I felt was hard metal; the helmet, in fact, which lies here at this moment on the floor. I looked at my hand, and

saw that it was encased in the gauntlet which you now behold; I looked down at my clothes, and in their place was the complete suit of armor in which I now appear; by my side hung a sword in its scabbard. I was to all appearances a Knight.

"'Farewell, Sir Knight,' said the Innkeeper, but I scarcely heard him. I fixed the lance upon the stirrup, and touched a spur to my horse's side, and made ready to canter away up the road into the forest.

"My steed gave a single bound, and stopped. I touched him with the spur again. He wheeled sharply to the left and gave two bounds and stopped. I urged him on. He swerved again, and gave a single bound; again, and bounded twice. I drew him in and dismounted, and started towards the inn, to question my host, who had now retired within. To my horror, I gave a hop in that direction, and turning to my right hopped twice and turned and hopped again. I could not control my movements. I could not walk in a straight line. I made up my mind that I would return to my horse; I assure you it was ten minutes before I reached him. I got into the saddle again and spurred him on. He bounded once, and stopped; he wheeled to the right and bounded twice, and stopped; he—"

"Yes, yes," said the King. "We know all about it. We have seen it."

"Then," said the young man, "you have seen the Knight's

move in chess, to the very life. The wretched Innkeeper had taken my wish literally; absolutely literally; could you believe that there existed a mind so precise?"

"And you came all the way here," said Prince Bilbo, "in that fashion?"

"I did indeed," said the young man, "and I must go on forever in the same way. I assure you it is terrible. I cannot tell you how exhausting that method of progressing is. I am a strong man, but I fear I cannot last much longer under the strain."

"You must have a long rest," said the Princess Dorobel, rising. "Come with me at once. I will show you your room, and it shall be on this very floor, so that you will not have to climb the stairs. Your horse will be looked after. Come with me, if you please."

The young Knight rose, and bowed to her gratefully; and as she preceded him to the door, he gave a hop in that direction and stopped; he turned to the left and gave two hops in that direction and stopped; he turned to the right and gave a hop. . . .

Late that night, when all the castle was asleep, Prince Bojohn, fully dressed, stole to Bodkin's room and roused him from his sleep. "Get up and dress," he said. "We are going away."

Bodkin said nothing, but dressed himself as quickly as he could. In a few minutes they were standing in the

starlight beside the stables. Two horses, each with a bulky bag behind his saddle, were tied there to a hitching-post. Prince Bojohn mounted one, and on a sign from him Bodkin mounted the other. Walking their horses slowly and noiselessly, they moved side by side towards the forest, and disappeared in its gloomy depths.

When day broke, they were far from the castle. They dismounted beside a brook, and opening one of the saddle-bags, sat down with the bread and jam they took from thence, to eat their breakfast.

"Don't I get anything?" cried a voice, sharp and shrill as a whistle.

Bodkin started so violently that he dropped his bread.

Prince Bojohn laughed loud and long. "Look here!" he said to Bodkin, and pointed to the breast pocket of his coat.

The Encourager of the Interrupter was hanging from within over the edge of the pocket by the pits of his arms, and waving his umbrella briskly here and there.

"Am I going to have any breakfast?" he sang out. "I'm going to have a little fresh air, anyway!" And he climbed up to the edge of the pocket and held himself there with his legs while he raised his umbrella. Thereupon he sprang into the air, and floated to the ground by Bodkin's knee.



"Crumb it up! crumb it up!" he cried, closing his umbrella and pointing it at Bodkin's bread.

Bodkin broke some of the bread into crumbs and placed it on the ground before the Encourager; and that little gentleman, seating himself comfortably, so that he was almost lost from sight behind a tuft of grass, ate up the crumbs with evident enjoyment. When he had eaten them all, he searched about until he found an acorn-cup; and with this he went to the brook and cautiously filled it with water; it was very heavy, but he raised it to his lips and drank the water in it, every drop. He then raised his umbrella once more, gave a little spring into the air, and floated up to Bojohn's shoulder, where he sat himself down contentedly.

"Bother that dark pocket, anyway," he said, and closed his umbrella.

"Now," said Bodkin, "perhaps you will tell me what all this means."

"Can't you guess?" said Bojohn.

"No, I can't," said Bodkin.

"We're going to find the Innkeeper at the Forest Inn," said Bojohn. "And when we find him, we are going to play chess with him; aren't we, Encourager?"

"Yes! yes! we are!" cried the Encourager.

"How do you know the way there?" said Bodkin.

"The Knight told me himself," said Bojohn. "I had a long talk with him yesterday afternoon, and I know the

way. He's a good chap, and he has promised to remain at the castle until we get back."

"Well!" said Bodkin. "I never in my life!"

"Maybe not," said Bojohn. "But you are going to now. We had better be off. Come along."

Prince Bojohn held open the breast pocket of his coat, and the Encourager dropped into it from his shoulder. In a moment the Encourager's head appeared from the opening, and he rested there, hanging over the edge by an arm, as the two travellers mounted their horses. "I must have air!" he cried. "I won't stay in that pocket all the time! I won't!"

The journey proved to be a long one. Sometimes they found a bed in a lonely woodchopper's hut, sometimes they stopped for the night in a forest hamlet; many times they slept on a bed of boughs, covered by the blankets which they carried on their horses; and this they liked best, for the stars were bright, the air was mild, and it was jolly, and a trifle fearsome, to sit by the campfire before they went to bed and imagine they saw eyes staring at them from the surrounding darkness. One evening, as they sat by the fire, they saw a deer, a beautiful doe with great soft eyes, standing quietly in the shadows between the trees, watching them. The Encourager saw her at the same moment. He was hanging in his favorite position half out of Bojohn's breast pocket.

"Hi, there!" he called out to the deer. "Come here!"

The doe looked startled and bounded away into the forest. The Encourager was very angry.

"What do you mean by that?" he cried. "I'll teach you manners!" And he raised his umbrella and flew off under it after the deer, faster than they had ever seen him fly before; and as he disappeared in the darkness they could hear his shrill voice piping away angrily. In a few moments he came floating back, and perched on Bojohn's shoulder.

"Now!" he cried. "Come here! What do you mean by it, eh?"

The deer appeared, as if in answer to his voice, at the same place she had just left, and stood looking at them timidly. The Encourager shook his folded umbrella at her.

"Well? well?" he cried. "What are you waiting for? Haven't you any manners at all?"

The deer came slowly forward and stood before the Encourager, looking at him and at the two boys.

"Now, then!" cried the Encourager. "Were you going to keep us waiting all night? I've a mind not to give you any sugar after all! It would serve you right!"

The deer came closer and put her nose down into Bojohn's hand, as if appealing to him.

"Oh," said Bojohn, "let us give her some sugar, anyway."

"I don't know about that!" said the Encourager. "You're an ill-mannered beast, and I don't think you ought to have any! Why didn't you come when I called you?"

But Bojohn reached over and took half a dozen lumps of sugar from the saddle-bag on the ground, and held them up in the palm of his hand.

"Only five!" cried the Encourager. "You shan't have more than five, you naughty creature!"

The deer put her mouth to the sugar, and one by one licked up five of the lumps of sugar.

"That's enough!" said the Encourager. "Not another one! Don't you dare take the last one!"

The deer looked at the last lump of sugar, and then at the Encourager, who held up his umbrella at her warningly; and she hung her head, as if much ashamed.

"Now you may go!" said the Encourager. "And the next time I call you, you'll *come!*"

The deer slowly turned away, with her head down, and walked off into the darkness; in a moment she was gone.

"Humph!" said the Encourager, still very indignant. "These creatures have to be taught their places. The idea! When *I* call—"

"I think you were rather hard on her," said Bodkin.

The Encourager appeared to be on somewhat familiar terms with all the creatures of the forest. He treated them in a very lordly way indeed, and it was astonishing

that they submitted to it, but they did, though not always without a protest. One day, when the travellers were resting at noon, the Encourager spied a goldfinch on a twig above them; he instantly raised his umbrella, leaped into the air, and floated up to the twig, where he sat down beside the bird, swinging his feet and talking earnestly into the bird's face. The bird and the Encourager sat there quite a while together. The boys could not hear what they were saying, but it soon became evident that they had fallen into a quarrel. The finch chattered at the Encourager and he scolded back; the finch fluttered her feathers and he shook his umbrella; and at last he stood up on the twig and began to beat the finch on the back with his umbrella; and the bird flew away, chattering loudly as she flew. The Encourager floated down to Bojohn's shoulder, in a state of fury.

"Impudence!" he cried. "The idea! Giving herself airs to *me!*" And he swelled out his chest.

"What's the matter?" said Bodkin.

"Matter?" cried the Encourager. "All I wanted was an egg out of her nest, and do you think she would let me have it? Not she! Oh no, indeed! Wouldn't hear of it! Maybe she doesn't know who I am! Anyway, what do I care about her wretched little eggs? It's all the same to me!" And he let himself down into Bojohn's pocket, and would not come out for more than an hour.

One evening Bojohn declared that they must be near the end of their journey.

"We ought to be coming to the road that leads to the inn," said he, "but I don't see it. We must have missed our way."

It was growing dark, and they saw no road; instead, the ground under their horses' feet was wet and soft, and pools of water lay here and there in their path. They were in a marsh. The forest was growing darker. They stopped to look about them. "We must have missed our way," said Bojohn again.

As they stood thus, uncertain whether to go on or to turn about, they saw in the distance between the trees three or four tiny glimmers of pale light.

"Perhaps those lights are in the Forest Inn," said Bodkin.

"No, no, no!" cried the Encourager. "I know what they are. They are the Marsh-light Fairies. Wait here a minute!"

He raised his umbrella and without stopping for an answer sailed away in the direction of the little lights. Bojohn and Bodkin dismounted, and stood in the soggy earth, waiting. They waited a long time. They were growing very restless and impatient, when a shrill voice piped up to them from the grass at their feet. It was the Encourager.

"Here we are!" he cried. "Here we are!"

They stooped down, and saw the Encourager marching towards them between the blades of grass, pulling along by the ear a strange mite no bigger than himself. This little creature was a very curious little creature indeed. He had the body, legs, and feet of a frog, and a head like a human head, with ears like the ears of a mouse, much too big for a head so small; and in his right hand he carried the tiniest lantern ever seen, no bigger, indeed, than a pea, in which glimmered a speck of pale light.

"I've got him!" sang out the Encourager. "Come along here, you!" And he gave the ear of the Marsh-light Fairy a smart twitch.

"Lead your horses," cried the Encourager, "and follow us. This fellow knows the way, and he'll show us, or else I'll know the reason why! Now walk ahead and hold your lantern up, you rascal. I've got my eye on you!"

The Marsh-light Fairy rubbed his ear with his left hand, as the Encourager let go of it, and held up his tiny lantern with his right, and walked ahead of the Encourager, looking back at him now and then. Bojohn and Bodkin walked behind, leading their horses, and keeping the glimmer of the lantern in sight. It was very slow going, for they were afraid of stepping on the two little creatures. The Marsh-light Fairy did not seem to mind the pools of water, but walked over them as if they had been solid ground; it was a different matter with the Encourager, however; he was

often obliged to fly over them with the aid of his umbrella. "You rascal," he cried out at the Marsh-light Fairy, "I believe you are doing this on purpose." And there is every reason to believe that he was. Nevertheless, after threading their way in many directions, they reached firmer ground at last; the woods became more open, and they saw a road before them.

"There it is!" shouted Bodkin.

"Well, you've led us a pretty chase," said the Encourager to the Marsh-light Fairy, puffing and blowing. "I believe you could have brought us here in half the time. I've a mind to pull your ear again."

But the Marsh-light Fairy did not stop to have his ear pulled again. He spread out his two arms, with the tiny lantern at the end of one of them, and made off as fast as his legs could carry him. They could see the glimmer of his light for a moment or two in the grass; then it disappeared. "Saucy little rascal," said the Encourager.

Bojohn and Bodkin now mounted their horses, the Encourager being safely hid in Bojohn's pocket, and sped on rapidly down the road in the direction of the inn. They had not gone half a mile when they saw it before them. They recognized it by the strips of wood which held its mud walls. A light was shining in a window. They rode up to the house, and after getting down and tying their



horses knocked at the door. The Encourager lay out of sight in the breast pocket of Bojohn's coat.

The door opened, and the Innkeeper himself appeared before them. He stooped so as to get his head through the doorway, and peered down at them.

"Good evening, young gentlemen," he said. "Come in."

Bodkin did not like the looks of the room in which they now found themselves, and he felt rather uneasy; but Bojohn was quite cheerful, and looked up at the Innkeeper with a smile. That enormous person stood over them, rubbing his hands together. His first remark astonished them.

"Can you cook?"

"No, sir," said Bojohn; "but we can wash dishes, and set the table, and make beds, and sweep, and all that."

"Do you object to the country?"

"We like the country."

The Innkeeper rubbed his hands together and stooped down towards the boys eagerly.

"How would you like to stay here and help me in the kitchen and housework, if I paid you well?"

Bojohn shook his head. "We shouldn't like it," he said.

The Innkeeper's face fell, and he looked very mournful.

"No," he said, "I suppose not. It's the same old story. Will you have something to eat?"

"We will," said Bojohn and Bodkin together.

The meal which the Innkeeper prepared for them was a very fine meal indeed, and they ate it every bit. Bojohn secretly broke up a piece of bread and dropped the crumbs into his breast pocket. When they had nearly finished their dinner, Bojohn said to the Innkeeper:

"Haven't you any larks?"

"We are just out of larks," said the Innkeeper, "but I hope you will like the pheasant instead. Larks are very difficult to catch."

When the table had been cleared, Bojohn, after paying for the meal, sat back with a sigh and said to Bodkin, so that the Innkeeper could hear:

"I wish we had our set of dominoes here."

The Innkeeper started.

"Do you play games?" he said.

"Oh, yes," said Bojohn carelessly.

"You don't—you don't happen to play chess?"

"Oh, yes," said Bojohn, yawning; "I play a little; just so so."

"Then will you play with me?"

"I don't mind," said Bojohn. "Anything to pass the time."

"Good! We will play for a little stake; it will make the game more interesting. What do you say?"

"What kind of a stake?" said Bojohn.

"Well, you see," said the Innkeeper, "I have been trying

for a long time to get someone to help me here with the cooking and the housework, and I haven't been able to get anybody. You see how untidy the place looks. Sometimes I feel like going and hanging myself rather than wash another dish. I'll tell you what I will do. If you win the game, I will grant you any wish you may choose to make; if I win the game, you shall both work for me here in my inn."

"For how long?" said Bojohn.

"Three and a half years for the two of you together," said the Innkeeper.

"Um . . . Um . . ." said Bojohn. "I don't know. What do you say, Bodkin?"

Bodkin looked alarmed. The thought of all that long time in this dismal place frightened him. "I don't know," he said. "It's a long time. I don't like the idea of it. Perhaps we had better not do it."

Bojohn looked at him in amazement.

"Nonsense," he said. "We will gain a wish! Isn't that worth trying for? Master Innkeeper, I think we will chance it. Where is the chessboard?"

The Innkeeper bustled about in great excitement.

"At last!" he cried. "Young gentlemen, I have got two fine servants! My troubles are over!"

"You had better wait and see," said Bojohn.

While the Innkeeper was bringing the chessboard and

the chessmen, Bojohn strolled over to a dark corner of the room, and taking the Encourager out of his pocket placed him on the collar of his coat, just behind his head, where the Encourager would be convenient to his left ear. He then sat down at the table opposite the Innkeeper, being careful to keep his back always away from his opponent's view.

"Aha!" cried the Innkeeper. "Now we are ready. Have you made your wish?"

Bojohn drew Bodkin towards him and whispered in his ear. "We have," he said.

The game was much shorter than the game which the poor Knight had played. It lasted scarcely more than half an hour. The Innkeeper was very confident; he played well, but he did not play so carefully as he would have done against an older opponent. The Encourager directed every move which Bojohn made. He clung tight to Bojohn's collar, and it was a wonder he did not fall off, for most of the time his little sides were shaking with laughter.

"You are a good player, young gentleman," said the Innkeeper uneasily, towards the end of the game. "It's just my luck."

At this the Encourager shook so violently with laughter that he nearly fell off; but he managed to hang on to the collar, and he was careful to make no sound. Bojohn shook his head to warn him, and the Innkeeper observed it.

"Why are you shaking your head?" said he.

"Just a little something on my collar that annoys me," said Bojohn. "That's all. I will now move this pawn, and queen it."

"Botheration," said the Innkeeper.

After that there was no hope for the poor man. He struggled as hard as he could, but it was all over. In five minutes Bojohn cried "Checkmate!" and rose from the table.

The Innkeeper sat looking sorrowfully at the pieces on the board.

"Never any luck," he said. "I can't understand it. I'm a good player, and here I'm beaten by a boy. Well, I won't wash the dinner dishes to-night, I won't, I won't! I don't care if they never get washed."

Bojohn strolled to a corner of the room, and quietly put the Encourager back in his pocket, while the Innkeeper sat with his head in his hands.

"I'm sorry," said Bojohn, "but I'm afraid you will have to grant us our wish."

The Innkeeper looked up gloomily. "What is your wish?" he said, and sighed.

"We wish," said Bojohn, "that you would give us a charm to release the black Knight whom you enchanted."

"What!" said the Innkeeper, "do you know him?"

"That's why we came here," said Bojohn. "We want him released."

"Then I suppose he will have to be released, if that is your wish. To-morrow morning I will give you the charm. Oh, well! What's the use? I might as well go to bed."

But Bojohn would not wait until morning. He demanded the charm instantly. He did not wish to keep the Knight in his misery one moment longer than was necessary.

"Very well," said the Innkeeper, "then you will have to wait while I cook it." And he left them and went into the kitchen.

"What did he mean by cooking a charm?" said Bodkin.

"I don't know," said Bojohn. "Wait and see."

They waited about an hour. At the end of that time, the Innkeeper returned. He carried in each hand a small platter, and set each platter down on the table before Bojohn and Bodkin. On one was a small gingerbread knight, perfectly shaped, with helmet, plume, armor and all. On the other was a small gingerbread horse, perfectly shaped, with saddle, reins, armor and all. The hot gingerbread smelled delicious, and the boys were delighted.

"I warn you not to eat it," said the Innkeeper. "Let the black Knight eat the gingerbread knight, and his black horse eat the gingerbread horse, and the enchantment will be over. If the gingerbread gets broken, the charm

will not work perfectly; be careful not to break it. I will do it up for you."

He thereupon wrapped each little figure up carefully in soft paper and put each in a separate little wooden salt box, and after packing the soft paper in carefully around the horse and the knight, tied up the boxes and handed them to Bojohn.

"Hurrah!" cried Bojohn. "We're off!"

They said good-bye to the Innkeeper at the door. He was very sad.

"You wouldn't stay," he said, "if I paid you forty-five florins a month?"

"No, no!" said Bojohn. "We couldn't think of it! We must hurry back."

"I suppose not," said the Innkeeper, with a sigh. "Well, anyway, I'm going to leave the dishes until morning! I won't wash a single dish to-night, if they never get washed!"

It was very dark when the boys rode through the swamp, but Bojohn would not consent to pause for an instant. The boxes of gingerbread were securely tied, one to each saddle in such a way as not to bump against the horse. They rode steadily, but only at a walk, so that the gingerbread might not be broken.

They were in the midst of the marsh, when Bojohn, happening to glance over his shoulder, saw behind him the same little pale lights which they had seen before. He

stopped his horse and pointed them out to Bodkin. The Encourager climbed up on Bojohn's shoulder and looked at the lights.

"The rascals!" he cried. "They are following us! I know what they want. They are after the gingerbread!"

The lights were in fact coming nearer. As they approached, there were more and more of them, until there must have been at least three dozen. They came to a stop in the grass a few feet from the horses, and rested there in a group, like little shining stars. The boys got down from their horses and kneeling in the soggy grass examined the curious company. Each of the tiny creatures had the body, legs and feet of a frog, and a head like a human head, with ears like the ears of a mouse, and each of them carried in his hand a lantern no bigger than a pea, in which glimmered a little pale light.

The Encourager jumped down from Bojohn's shoulder and made straight for them. They huddled together, as if in alarm. He stood before them with his feet wide apart, and shook his umbrella at them, and cried out at them angrily. A faint sound came from them, as if a pond-full of frogs were croaking gently in their sleep.

"What's that you say?" cried the Encourager.

The Marsh-light Fairies croaked away all together for a moment, and then all of them fell silent except one; and the boys could hear the Encourager's angry voice and



the gentle croak of the Fairy, back and forth, quite a minute or two. After that there was nothing to be heard, and Bojohn found the Encourager perched on his shoulder.

"Impudent rascals!" said the Encourager. "They are after the gingerbread. I ordered them away, but they won't go. I suppose they don't know who I am! Well, let them come along, then, if they want to; a lot of good it will do them; what do *we* care? But if they try to play any of their tricks on *me*—!"

Bojohn and Bodkin laughed, and mounted their horses.

The Marsh-light Fairies followed them all night. Each time the boys looked behind them they could see the glimmer of their little lanterns; there must have been by this time fifty of them. The Encourager came up out of his pocket at times, to shake his umbrella at them and call them names, but it made no difference; the Marsh-light Fairies followed after, just the same. By daylight they were not to be seen, and the boys thought they were rid of them; but so sure as night fell, there they were again, with their little lanterns in their hands, close behind. The Encourager was very angry indeed.

On the last day of their journey, they travelled all day long, without stopping, and in the evening, after dark, they came forth from the forest, and saw before them the lights of the castle. They proceeded across the lawn to the door; first Bojohn and Bodkin on their horses, side by

side, and behind them in the grass the Marsh-light Fairies, marching in a group, each with his little lantern glimmering in his hand. The Encourager sat on Bojohn's shoulder, keeping a watchful eye of the Fairies, and screeching orders at them from time to time, to which they paid very little attention.

At the castle door the boys dismounted and knocked loud and long. The Marsh-light Fairies sat themselves down in the grass before the door, in a wide half-circle, holding their lanterns between their knees. The Encourager, floating to the ground, strutted over to them, and, as the door opened and the boys rushed into the castle he remained standing before the Fairies, leaning on his umbrella, and watching that they did not make for the gingerbread on the saddles.

The King, the Queen, Prince Bilbo, the Princess Dorobel, and all the court, including the Knight himself, were seated at dinner in the Grand Refectory. "My dear," the Queen was saying, "I think the cook is improving, don't you?" And at that moment Bojohn and Bodkin burst into the room with a shout.

You may imagine the excitement. The Princess Dorobel sprang up and clasped Prince Bojohn in her arms, and wept a little with joy. All the others sprang up also, even the Knight; and the hubbub was bewildering, until the King commanded silence.

"Grandfather!" cried Prince Bojohn. "We have the charm! The charm to release the Knight from his enchantment! Come and see!"

"Bless my soul!" said the King.

"Dear me!" said the Queen.

"The Knight must get on his horse at once!" cried Prince Bojohn. "Come outdoors, and see us work the charm!"

"This is most extraordinary," said the King. "However, we will do as you say. I will ask the Knight to precede us to the door."

The Knight bowed to the King, and measured with his eye the distance to the door. He gave one hop in that direction, and stopped; he turned to the right and gave two hops in that direction, and stopped; and in that manner he gained the door, and hopped out into the hall.

The Queen delayed a little, while she folded her napkin neatly and laid it beside her plate; but when she was ready, the King took her hand and led her to the door, and all the others followed. In a few minutes they were standing about the Knight, before the entrance to the castle.

"What are those little lights in the grass?" said the King.

"Your Majesty!" piped up a shrill voice from the grass near the lights.

"Bless my soul!" said the King. "Is it the Encourager?"

"It is!" cried the Encourager. "It's me! And these are the Marsh-light Fairies, and they are after the gingerbread! But they shan't have it! They'll have to fight *me* first!"

"Gingerbread? What gingerbread?" said the King.

"You'll see!" said Bojohn. "Here comes the Knight's horse!"

A stableman was leading the black horse, fully harnessed and armored, and it was no easy task; for the horse gave first a bound in one direction, and then wheeled to the right or left and gave two bounds in that direction, and the stableman could never tell which way the horse was going next; but he finally arrived before the company, and stood still. A couple of page-boys came up bearing torches, and giggling to themselves.

Prince Bojohn went to his horse, and took from the saddle his box of gingerbread; and Bodkin went to his horse, and took from the saddle his box of gingerbread.

"Now," said Bojohn to the Knight, "will you please get on your horse?"

The Marsh-light Fairies all jumped up and began to run around in the grass excitedly; but the Encourager was very brisk, and he kept them back with his umbrella.

The Knight gave two hops towards his horse, and then a single hop to the right; he gave two hops again towards his horse, and a single hop to the left; and with a few

more hops he reached the horse, and climbed into the saddle.

"Now!" said Bojohn. "Open the boxes."

He opened his own first, and took out the gingerbread knight, and held it up for all to see. It was perfectly whole, and the cleverest figure in gingerbread that anyone there had ever seen.

"Bless my soul!" said the King.

Bodkin opened his box, and took out the gingerbread horse and held it up. Alas, and alas! The gingerbread horse was broken in half, just behind the shoulders, and all that remained was the front portion of him, from his head to his two front feet. The rest of him was in crumbs in the box.

Bodkin was ready to weep with disappointment.

"What a shame!" cried Bojohn. "Well, it can't be helped; he will have to eat what there is of it. Come on."

The two boys went to the Knight, where he was sitting in all his armor on the horse, and Bojohn gave him the gingerbread knight, and directed him to eat it; and as the Knight put it into his mouth, Bodkin put into the black horse's mouth what was left of the gingerbread horse.

At this all the Marsh-light Fairies set up a confused croaking, and ran about with their lanterns faster than ever, with the Encourager after them; and whenever one of them would manage to get near the black horse, the

Encourager would come down on his back with his umbrella and drive him away.

The company in front of the door watched the Knight and his horse in silence. In a moment the gingerbread was gone. In another moment a change began to come over the Knight. His helmet and its plume disappeared, and in their place was a common cap of cloth; the black armor faded away from his body, and he appeared clad in a suit of ordinary clothes, very ragged and soiled; and on his feet were a pair of sandals, worn thin as paper. The change in his face was the most remarkable. Instead of being pale, weary looking, and hollow-eyed, his face was now blooming with the roses of health, and his eyes were sparkling with life and happiness.

At the same moment the armor of his horse disappeared, and revealed a poor old bony nag, of a dirty white color; the Knight's seat gave way under him, and he found himself, in his thin sandals and ragged clothes, on his feet on the ground; and before him was the fore part of his bony nag, standing on two feet, with nothing behind his shoulders; nothing remained of him but the front portion of him, from the top of his head to the hoofs of his two front feet.

A shout went up from the company before the door. "Hurrah!" cried the young man who had once been a Knight, and was now a charcoal-burner's son once more; and he ran to Bojohn and Bodkin and laughing and crying

all at once threw his arms about them and hugged them to his breast.

The old white nag, or what remained of him, teetered for a moment on his two feet, as if to get his balance; and then with a loud neigh he ran, like a boy who is in a great hurry, throwing each of his two legs high, straight towards the forest, followed by shouts of laughter from the company about the door; in a moment he had vanished among the trees. All the little Marsh-light Fairies croaked louder than they had croaked before, and scampered off through the grass after the half a horse, each one with his arms stretched wide, and each holding out his little glimmering lantern; and in another moment they had vanished also into the forest, and their lights were seen no more.

"I think," said the King, "it would now be proper to give three cheers for the charcoal-burner's son."

The Queen thought this a little boisterous, but she smiled graciously upon the others as they cheered. The young man in his rags knelt before the King.

"It is the happiest day of my life," said he. "I have no wish any longer to be a Knight; I am contented now to be a charcoal-burner's son; and if your Majesty will permit me, I will return to my father's house, and try to be a comfort to him and to my mother during their declining years."

"Rise up, my son," said the King. "You shall do better

still. You shall return to your father's house, and bring your parents back here with you, where we will find employment and a life of peace and plenty for you all."

"And Bodkin and I will go with him!" cried out Bojohn.

"And me too!" piped up the Encourager, in a voice as sharp and shrill as a whistle.



## THE MOONLIGHT PEARL



OTHER," said Bojohn to the Princess Dorobel, "why are there no girls in this castle?"

"It would be very nice if there were," said the Princess Dorobel.

"Well," said Bojohn, "why aren't there?"

"Really, my dear, I do not know. It just happens so. Would you like it if there were?"

"Oh, it's all the same to me," said Bojohn.

He went to the Queen, and said to her:

"Grandmother, why are there no girls in this castle?"

"That would be very nice," said the Queen, "very nice indeed. I should love it."

"But why aren't there?"

"Dear me!" said the Queen. "Have you asked your mother?"

"Yes, I have. Why aren't there?"

"Really, my dear! Would you like it?"

"Oh, it's all the same to me," said Bojohn.

He went to Prince Bilbo, and said to him:

"Father, why are there no girls in this castle?"

"My son," said Prince Bilbo, "I hardly know how to answer you. Have you asked your mother?"

"Yes, sir, I have. Why aren't there?"

"Well, it just happens so; I don't know why else. Would you like it if there were?"

"Oh, it's all the same to me," said Bojohn.

He went to the King, and said to him:

"Grandfather, why aren't there any girls in this castle?"

"Bless my soul!" said the King. "The question you ask presents many difficulties; the principle on which girls and boys are distributed is quite inscrutable; there are times when I think there are too many of one or the other, and other times when—"

"But why aren't there?"

"Perhaps if you would consult your—"

"I have. Why aren't there?"

"Would it be a source of satisfaction to you, in case there should be—?"

"Oh, it's all the same to me," said Bojohn.

He went out into the forest alone, to think it over. He remembered the Dryad who had helped his mother once or twice, and he resolved to ask the Dryad. It was a long walk, but he came to the place where two brooks met under a tangle of ferns, and knocking three times on the tree in which the Dryad lived, and kissing it three times, he said:

"Why are there no girls at our castle?"

He put his ear against the bark, and in a moment he heard a faint voice from within the tree, and it said these words:

"Horses out of the Sea that seek a King."

"What do you say?" said Bojohn.

The voice within the tree, still very faint, went on:

"A Horse that walks like a Cock to be their King."

"But," said Bojohn, "I was asking about—"

The voice, growing fainter until it died away, said:

"If she shall bring the Moonlight Pearl, take her in."

The voice ceased, and Bojohn walked away. He could make neither head nor tail of this, and he thought the Dryad had been mocking him; he shrugged his shoulders as he turned homeward, and said, "Oh, well, it's all the same to me, anyway."

But he told the Princess Dorobel what he had heard, and she thought there must be some meaning in the words, though what it was she could not tell. "At any rate," she said, "if a girl ever arrives at the castle with such a thing as a Moonlight Pearl, we will take her in. I should love to have a little girl, and the pearl would do very well for her wedding ring, if she should some day happen to—Anyway," she said, "we will keep a lookout for her."

The days passed, and Bojohn knew no more about the matter than he did before. It cannot be said that the

Princess Dorobel thought much more about it, but Bojohn never ceased wondering, until that which was to happen did happen, and— But we had better speak now of something else.

There was in the Great Forest a dismal swamp. Just outside the edge of this swamp lived Grindel the Goat's-Milk Woman, and with her her little half-sister, Marjo. Grindel was old; she was more than twenty years old; but Marjo was only ten. Grindel was ugly and cross; but Marjo was sweet and gentle, and she had fair curling hair, and dark blue eyes, and rosy cheeks. They had no parents, and they lived all alone, with little company but their own herd of goats. It was very seldom indeed that Grindel spoke a kind word to Marjo, for she could not bear to see her little half-sister growing each day more beautiful, while she herself remained so ugly. All the drudgery in their house poor Marjo had to do, and nothing seemed to please Grindel more than to see Marjo's knuckles red with scrubbing and her eyes red with weeping.

When Grindel was angry, as she often was, she beat her little half-sister cruelly, until Marjo's eyes were red and her shoulders sore; when Grindel was merry, which did not often happen, she loved to torment Marjo by sending her on the most unlikely errands; once she sent her into the marsh to dig sugar for their tea; once she sent her to bring in the goats'-milk in a pail which was full of holes; once

she bade her comb the hair of all the goats with a little comb from which she had broken nearly all the teeth; once she sent her with a mop to clean up all the muddy places in the swamp; and each time she pretended to be surprised when Marjo came back without having done her task, and each time locked her up in a dark closet for many hours. You may imagine what a hard life Marjo led with such a half-sister.

One afternoon Grindel found herself in a state of high good humor, and accordingly cast about for some pleasant way of tormenting Marjo. She went into the spring-house where the milk was kept, and emptied the milk from one of the bottles. After she had cleaned the bottle with good hot water, she called Marjo from her work, and putting the bottle into her hand, said to her:

"Now then, you little minx, take this bottle and go into the swamp and fill it full of marsh-lights. We are burning too many candles; I have a mind to begin saving them this very night. You will find plenty of marsh-lights after dark; go, and if you return without them, I will lock you up in the closet all night. Off with you!"

Now Marjo did not like the swamp after dark; but she dreaded the closet even more, and besides, she always tried her best to do as she was told, no matter how hard it might be. She took the bottle and went off towards the marsh. How she was to capture the marsh-lights in a bottle

she did not know. She sat down on a bank under a tree to wait for night.

When the sun was gone and night had begun to fall she rose and went in towards the marsh. She had not walked far before the forest became so dark that she could see only a little way before her. She was trembling with fear, but she went forward nevertheless deeper and deeper into the swamp. The frogs began to croak in the pools, but there was no other sound. She longed to turn and run home as fast as her feet would carry her, but she could not endure the thought of spending the night in that pitch-black closet. She kept on, stepping carefully over the spongy ground, and watching for lights.

She was now far in the depths of the marsh, and the ground was very wet; pools of water, covered with scum, lay everywhere, and now and then she walked straight into one before she saw what it was. Her feet were soaking; the darkness was growing blacker and blacker; she could scarcely see a star overhead for the thick canopy of leaves; the silence was terrifying; her heart was beating so fast that she could hardly breathe.

As she stood by the trunk of a great tree, uncertain which way to turn, she saw before her, not far off, just above the ground, a faint pale light. In a moment other lights, also faint and pale, appeared close by the one she had seen at first. She knew that these were what she had come to

seek; but how to catch them in her bottle was another matter altogether. She walked on towards them as quietly as she could, on tiptoe. They did not seem to be very far away, but neither did they seem to grow any nearer, though she walked steadily towards them. She saw at her feet a bed of moss beside a scum-covered pool, and she paused there to see how best to get around it. She stooped to look at it more closely.

In the moss at her feet was a speck of pale light like those other lights she had been pursuing. She knelt on one knee quietly beside it. It did not move. She leaned down over it in order to see it closer.

Under her eyes, in the moss, lay a tiny creature, fast asleep. He was lying on his side; his eyes were closed; his body, legs, and feet were those of a frog, but his head was like a human head; his ear was like a mouse's ear, and much too big for a head so small; and by his side, on the moss, held by his little hand, lay a lantern no bigger than a pea, in which glimmered a faint pale light.

Marjo held her breath in astonishment. It was a second or two before she collected her wits; during that time the tiny creature did not move; he was truly fast asleep; he had no doubt forgotten to wake up with the others at sundown for his nightly frisk about the marsh; it was undoubtedly one of the Marsh-light Fairies. Poor little thing, he was all tired out; probably he had played too

hard the night before, and now he had overslept himself; none of the others had bothered to call him; Marjo thought him very cunning and rather pathetic as he lay there in his sleep on his bed of moss in the dark and silent marsh.

She did not know quite what to do. She was so taken with the sleeping mite that she forgot for the moment to be afraid. It seemed wicked to disturb him, and yet she could not go home with her bottle empty, for there was the dark closet waiting for her; and in truth she wished to take the little creature home with her to play with, if even for a few hours only. She decided that she would try to capture him; the mouth of her bottle was wide, and it would easily go over him; she would not hurt him, and she would let him go afterwards. She turned the bottle upside down and slowly brought its mouth down towards him. He went on sleeping peacefully. She scarcely dared to breathe; she made no sound; she brought the mouth of the bottle closer and closer to the sleeping Fairy, and when it was just above him she pounced the bottle down on the moss and over him so that he was covered completely; the poor little thing was a prisoner with his lantern under the bottle.

This action startled him; he awoke and rubbed his eyes with one hand and stared up and around; he jumped up with the lantern in his other hand, and found himself standing on the moss with a solid wall of glass all round



him; there was no way out; he leaped against the glass and kicked it and thumped it; there was no use; he could not get out, and he was in a terrible fright.

Marjo felt very sorry for him, and was on the point of letting him go; but she thought of the dark closet, and anyway she would treat him kindly, and let him go in the morning. She held the bottle down over him with one hand, and with the other she found a thin flat piece of wood, a little wider than the mouth of the bottle; this she slipped carefully under the bottle, so that as it went under, the Fairy was obliged to stand upon it; and when she had stopped the bottle in this manner, she raised it and stood up, turning it over at the same time and sliding the Fairy and his lantern to the bottom. The Fairy flung himself against the sides and leaped up and kicked and thumped; but the glass was too thick, the bottle was too tall, and the wood over the mouth was too firm; he could not get out.

Marjo now looked around for the lights she had already seen. Instead of three or four, there were now a dozen, and they were moving in the greatest agitation. She looked behind her; other lights appeared where she had seen none before. She moved slowly away from the pool. The lights she had first seen were certainly coming towards her; the others were certainly coming nearer too. On her right hand and on her left others appeared; a dozen, two dozen,—

she could not say how many. They were all coming nearer. She was surrounded.

She stood still and waited, hugging the bottle tight against her breast. The Fairy within was now sitting quietly at the bottom, holding his lantern between his knees, and evidently looking at the approaching lights.

Marjo stood with her back against a tree. She was thoroughly alarmed. The Marsh-light Fairies were tiny enough, but there were now hundreds of them, and she did not know what they might do to her. They crowded about her in the grass, and she could make out that they were all precisely like the one in the bottle, and that each carried a little lantern like his. They set up a croaking like the croaking of frogs, but much fainter. They were greatly excited. One of them ran straight at her foot, and tried to climb her ankle; the others swarmed after him. She jumped aside, and began to run. It was so dark that she could not run very fast, and many times she slipped in the mud and bumped against the trees. The Fairies followed close behind her, and their croaking became more excited than ever. The Fairy in the bottle was knocked about from side to side, and he was evidently busy keeping his lantern from being broken. Marjo did not know whether she was going towards her home or away from it, but she kept on just the same. She brought up suddenly against a rocky mound which rose up out of the marsh; the Fairies

were close behind her; there were certainly hundreds of those tiny lanterns, close upon her heels; she ran along the mound, feeling it with her hand; it was rough and solid; she turned back and ran along it in the opposite direction, and came in a moment to a wide opening, of which she could tell nothing but that it was very dark; and as she turned into it she heard the neigh of a horse.

She ran into the black opening, and the Marsh-light Fairies swarmed in after her. By the glimmer of their little lanterns she could see that she was in a little room, and at the rear of this room she could see the head of a white horse. The Fairies were now about her ankles, and were doing their best to get up at her. If she had only thought to drop the bottle and so release the captured Fairy, the others would probably have gone away and left her unharmed, though on this point we cannot be positively sure; at all events, she was so frightened that it actually never occurred to her to drop the bottle. She ran to the horse and throwing her arm about his neck tried to climb upon his back out of reach of the Fairies. She nearly fell upon the ground, for the horse had no back; he had nothing at all behind his shoulders; he was all head and neck and fore-legs. Marjo did not give up on that account; she threw her arm again about the horse's neck, and with a spring managed to clamber up on him, and sat there with her legs clasped tight around his neck, and





looked down at the Marsh-light Fairies who were swarming about his two feet.

The horse began to move. The Fairies croaked louder than ever. The Fairy within the bottle flung himself against its sides. The horse put out one foot and then the other, very carefully, as if afraid of losing his balance. His movements were very curious. As he put one foot out after the other, his head went back and forth, exactly like the head of a chicken when he walks; in fact, the manner of his stepping was exactly that of a proud old cock. This jerking back and forth of his head at every step made it very difficult for Marjo to cling to his neck; but she managed to hang on. As he stepped out, the Fairies scattered away and followed at a safe distance behind his feet; he got to the opening and went out into the forest, with Marjo clinging on for dear life.

He did not go faster than a walk, for the forest was dark, and he did not seem too certain of his steps; and this was fortunate for Marjo, who could not have held on if he had run. She was lost in astonishment at finding herself riding on half a horse; she was so astonished, indeed, that she forgot even to wonder where she was going. She looked behind at times, and all the little lanterns were there, following steadily; and all the little voices continued to croak excitedly. She clung tighter to the horse's neck.

When she had gone thus for some moments, and was

growing very tired with the exertion of hanging on, she saw before her in the darkness, through the trees, a wide low band which spread across the ground and seemed much lighter than the surrounding darkness. It was very wide; it stretched out to her right hand and her left as far as she could see. It appeared to be coming nearer, and as it came it grew lighter and lighter, and appeared to be tumbling and rolling, for all the world like the white crest of a breaking wave close up on a beach; only Marjo had never seen the ocean, and did not know what a breaking wave looked like; and she would certainly never have expected to see one tumbling along in the forest in the middle of the night.

Whatever it was, the half a horse whom Marjo was riding became greatly excited when he saw it. He gave a loud neigh, and another and another; one would almost have thought he was trying to call to another horse. He stepped out more briskly than before, and made straight for the tumbling white band which was coming on all the while; Marjo clung to him with all her might, and the Fairy in the bottle received a terrible shaking up; for the horse's head went back and forth faster than before, and his feet jerked up higher and higher, more than ever like a proud old cock in a hurry.

The low wide white band seemed to hasten also, as if it were anxious to get to the horse; and as it approached it

tumbled and rolled more violently than before; it seemed to be alive. In a moment it was so close that Marjo could see what it was. It was indeed precisely like a wave of the sea, breaking upon a beach, but it was composed of thousands and thousands of tiny white horses, all with flowing white manes and long flowing white tails, and all spread out in a wide rank, racing, tumbling, leaping and rolling over and over each other, in a white mass not more than eighteen inches high. It was as if the White Surf-Horses on some beach had broken away from the sea, and were tumbling and rolling on through the forest on some adventure of their own.

The excitement of the Horse who walked like a Cock passed all bounds; he pranced and danced on his two feet, and called again and again, with a shrill neigh, to the tiny white horses; the Marsh-light Fairies croaked as if in alarm, and scattered right and left; the horse to whom Marjo was clinging turned his back to the little white horses, as if to place himself at their head; their line paused for a moment behind him, though they did not cease tumbling over one another; they then started forward again, and the Horse who walked like a Cock stepped out proudly, jerking his head back and forth, at the head of their line, as if he were their captain in command. At the same instant, Marjo felt herself lifted by an arm from her seat on the horse's neck, and plumped down on the back of a whole



horse, behind a saddle. On this saddle sat a handsome sturdy boy, older than herself. It was Bojohn.

The girl and the boy looked after the strange procession which was moving into the darkness of the swamp: the line of tiny tumbling white horses with their flowing manes and tails, and in front of them their two-legged white captain, jerking his head back and forth as he strutted proudly away. They were gone, and Marjo and Bojohn looked at each other. She wondered who he was, and he thought her very pretty.

The Marsh-light Fairies came running back in the grass, close to the heels of Bojohn's horse. The Fairy in the bottle thumped on the glass, and then sat himself down at the bottom, with his lantern between his knees. Bojohn looked at the bottle in astonishment, but he did not ask Marjo about it yet; he showed her how to sit the horse so that she would not fall off, and turned his head homewards toward the Great Castle. With one hand she clung to Bojohn's coat, and with the other she held her bottle; and all the Marsh-light Fairies swarmed along behind.

"You haven't," said Bojohn, "you haven't got a pearl?"

"No," said Marjo.

"I wish you had. I don't suppose you have ever heard of the Moonlight Pearl?"

"No," said Marjo.

"I wish you had," said Bojohn. "I'm afraid it's all for nothing."

Marjo understood nothing of this, but she was glad to be under the protection of the handsome sturdy boy, and she thought of nothing else, not even of the Marsh-light Fairies who were following on behind. As for him, he had seen the Horse that walked like a Cock, and had recognized him at once; and it looked as if the horses out of the sea had found their King; only, he wished that the girl who sat behind him had brought the Moonlight Pearl— But it is time to speak of the little white horses with the flowing manes and tails.

When the moon is full at midnight on the third day of the week, the Surf-Horses come up out of the Great Sea and romp and roll back and forth up and down on the beach. If you should happen to be there at that time, you would see them plainly; at first you would think it was only the surf tumbling in and rolling back, but if you looked closely you would see that each line of surf as it came in was in fact a thousand thousand of tiny white horses with flowing white manes and flowing white tails, tumbling and leaping over and over each other, and turning back each time, as they touched the beach, with their white manes and tails floating on the water, and each time getting together again far out and coming in all at once in a beautiful wide line, tumbling and leaping and romping over each other in the

merriest game in the world. But they are not altogether free of care; there is one thing which disturbs them even in the midst of their play; they fear the sharks.

Because they feared the sharks, they kept their King safely hid away in a cave in the deep sea, where no shark would be apt to find him; and he never came up to romp with them at midnight on the beach. Their King was much bigger than themselves, and not a Surf-Horse at all; he was a Sea-Horse, which is a very different thing, and the largest Sea-Horse in all the sea. He had no feet like the Surf-Horses; he was all head and neck, with a tail beneath which curled up a little at the end; he stood upright, with his head and neck very stiff and proud, and his tail very stiff under his neck, in place of the two legs which are usually there in a horse. He was the proudest and stiffest-necked creature in the sea; he had very little to do with any of the sea-creatures, and the most that any of them could ever get out of him was a stiff bow; as a King he was perfect, though it cannot be said that he was good for very much else. Because he was a horse, and more solemn and proud than any of the other horses in the sea, the Surf-Horses, who were frisky and playful and had no dignity whatever, admired him tremendously, and worshipped the very water he walked on. He was perfectly satisfied to remain in the cave which was his palace, for he was himself afraid of the sharks, and as for

the rest of the sea-creatures, he cared not a fin for them. The Surf-Horses gave themselves airs at times over their proud and solemn King, which made the sharks more angry than ever; but they were careful to let no one know where their King lay hid.

One night, when the moon was full, a great gaunt shark came upon a school of little sardines; and turning upon his back he opened his wide wicked mouth and swallowed them all; that is, all but one; this one he held between his teeth, and finally let him go, but only after the little sardine had promised to do the shark a favor. The sardine swam away alone; it was the first time he had ever been away from his school, and he felt timid; but he swam until he came to the Surf-Horses, where they were prancing about at the bottom of the sea, and getting ready for their midnight frolic on the beach. The sardine was so tiny that he was almost invisible, and the Surf-Horses did not notice him. He waited where he could watch them, and as it came towards midnight he saw them prance away, and he followed. They went quietly and cautiously to the cave where their King was hid, to ask his leave for their midnight frolic. The sardine kept on behind them, out of sight, and thus he learned where the King of the Surf-Horses lay. With a flirt of his little tail, he darted away to the shark who had let him go, and told him all. Alas, it was a wicked thing for the little sardine to do, and it

was a dreadful thing for the proud and stiff-necked King and his merry subjects. The sardine led the way, just before the shark's nose, and in that order they went to the King's cave. There they found him, and all the little Surf-Horses round about. The Surf-Horses fled, and their King bobbed his head up and down in terrible agitation; there was no escape; the shark turned on his side, opened his great mouth, and with one snap of his teeth bit the poor King in two and swallowed him bit by bit. The sardine scurried away in the darkness. The shark was not content with what he had done; he dashed from the cave, and swam swiftly after the Surf-Horses. They saw him coming, and made off as fast as they could towards the beach. It was midnight.

Before the shark could reach them they were in shallow water where he could not follow; he stopped, and swam up and down waiting for them to come back. But they did not come back; they were afraid to do so. When the next wave rolled in from the sea, they mounted on its crest, and came tumbling and leaping over and over each other on to the beach. But they did not roll back again; they knew the shark was waiting. They tumbled up out of the water and stood all together in their wide line on the dry sand, under the moon, looking towards the forest.

At that moment they heard from afar off the neigh of a horse. It came from very far indeed; from far beyond

the Great Castle which stood in the center of the forest; from a swamp, indeed, many many days' journey away. It was a peculiar neigh; it was broken in the middle; it stopped each time when it was only half through; it was the kind of neigh which one would expect from a horse who was only half a horse. The Sea-Horse who had been their King could not neigh at all, but he was less than half a horse himself, for he had not even two fore-legs, but only a tail instead. The Surf-Horses listened, and as they listened they became greatly excited. They began to prance and leap once more; their snowy manes and tails began to float out in the moonlight; and in another moment they were off in their wide line, tumbling and rolling over each other towards the dark forest that loomed before them. The shark waited all night just beyond the shallow water, and in the morning shook his tail in disgust and went home.

Many days and nights the Surf-Horses rolled and tumbled onward through the forest, until there was no longer any moon at night. The broken neigh of the far-off horse came to them every now and then, and each time they heard it they hurried on a little faster in that direction.

Now it happened that one evening, just at twilight, Prince Bojohn was riding forth from the forest across the castle lawn. His horse gave a start, and sprang back as if in alarm. Bojohn reined him in, and looking across the

lawn saw what it was that had startled him. Sweeping out from the forest on the other side of the lawn was what seemed to him to be surf from the ocean; it was in fact the band of Surf-Horses, on their way to find the horse whose neigh they had first heard on the beach. As they came rolling and tumbling over each other across the lawn Bojohn saw what they were; he saw their flowing white manes and tails, and finally their little heads and bodies and legs; they looked precisely like surf from the ocean; he remembered what the Dryad had said about "Horses from the Sea."

"Aha!" said Bojohn to himself. "They are seeking the Horse who walks like a Cock! I will go with them!"

He let the Surf-Horses sweep by into the forest, and then he followed. They did not get on very fast, and he had no difficulty in keeping along with them at a safe distance behind. He followed for many days and nights, and he found that he was being led in much the same course he had pursued on his journey to the Forest Inn. He came at last to the same swamp where he had first seen the Marsh-light Fairies, but not the same part of it. When he arrived, it was dark. The Surf-Horses went on more briskly, and Bojohn followed them closer. All at once he saw in the darkness, beyond the Surf-Horses, many marsh-lights moving in a group, and near them the head and fore-legs of a white horse, with something clinging round his neck;

and at the same time a strange broken half-neigh from the horse startled the silence. In another moment he had thrown his arm about Marjo and pulled her over to a seat behind his saddle. This, he thought, must be she who was to bring the Moonlight Pearl. He was grievously disappointed when he found she did not have it.

"I suppose," said he to Marjo, as their horse threaded his way back through the dark forest towards the castle, "the Horses from the Sea have found their King. The idea of that old half a horse being a King! It's too ridiculous. Well, anyway, it's a good thing Bodkin broke the gingerbread."

"Who is Bodkin?" asked Marjo, who understood not a word of what he was saying.

"Oh, he's a fellow I know; he's a pretty good sort of chap; you'll see him when we get to the castle."

"What castle?" said Marjo.

"Oh, the castle where I live. You'll see my mother, too; I've got the most beautiful mother there is in this kingdom; you'll see. It's a pity you haven't got the Moonlight Pearl, but maybe she will take you in, anyway. You'll see the Encourager too."

"What's that?" said Marjo.

"Oh, he's a—well, he's a kind of a— Anyway, you'll see him; what is your name?"

"My name is Marjo," said she.



They looked at the bottle which she was holding tight in her hand; the poor little Marsh-light Fairy was sitting at the bottom with his head against the glass, sound asleep.

"Shan't we let him go?" said Marjo.

"I should say not," said Bojohn. "I want Bodkin to see him first."

One night, when dinner was over at the castle, Prince Bilbo and the Princess Dorobel were walking arm in arm, up and down on the lawn before the castle door. The Princess Dorobel was very anxious because Bojohn had been gone so long, and because she did not know where he was.

"Do not worry," said Prince Bilbo. "He knows how to take care of himself, and he will come home in good time, safe and sound, never fear."

As he said this the Princess Dorobel gave a little scream and pointed towards the forest.

"There he is!" she cried. "Do call out all the others, Bilbo. He is coming!"

Prince Bilbo did as he was asked, and by the time Prince Bojohn's horse had come to a halt before the door, the King, the Queen, the lords, the ladies, the musicians, the page-boys, with Bodkin and even the Executioner, were crowding about the Princess Dorobel, to welcome Bojohn home. The Encourager was not to be left behind; he was perched in his favorite seat on the Executioner's shoulder.

In the grass behind the horse the Marsh-light Fairies ran about excitedly; and as Bojohn helped Marjo down with the bottle in her hand, the Marsh-light Fairies made a dash for it; instantly the Encourager, who had had his eye on them, raised his umbrella and floated to the ground; and closing it again he rushed upon the Fairies and thumped them on their backs with it and sent them scurrying here and there away from the bottle. He then stood watch while Bojohn ran to his mother and hugged her joyously and drew up Marjo by the hand and presented her to his mother.

The Princess Dorobel kissed her on the cheek, and Marjo thought she had never seen so beautiful a lady; as for the Princess, she thought that Marjo was the prettiest little girl she had ever seen.

"But what have you in the bottle, my dear?" said the Princess, and took the bottle from Marjo and held it up so that all might see.

"Bless my soul!" said the King.

"Dear me!" said the Queen.

The Marsh-light Fairies in the grass ran about more excitedly than ever, and the Encourager was very busy with his umbrella; it was all he could do to keep them in order, and indeed he did not keep them in order very well; they raised such a croaking that everybody looked at them.

"They want him let out!" cried the Encourager, striking out right and left with his umbrella. "But don't you do it! The saucy—little—rascals!"

The Fairy in the bottle was throwing himself violently against the glass, in a state of terror. It was a wonder his lantern was not broken.

"Oh, the poor little thing," said the Princess Dorobel.

"Saucy little rascal!" cried the Encourager. "Serves him right!"

"I think," said the King, "it would be very interesting to hold this little creature under observation for a few days, in order to study his habits and acquaint ourselves—"

"Poor little thing," said the Princess Dorobel, "see how he is trying to get out; he is frightened nearly to death. We must let him go at once."

The croaking of the Marsh-light Fairies suddenly stopped, and one of them stood before the Encourager and began to croak away at him in a mournful halting tone. The Encourager listened to him and looked up at the Princess.

"He says," cried the Encourager, "that if the beautiful lady will let his brother go, she shall have a lovely gift! That's what he says, but I don't take any stock in it! Ho, you, stand back there!"

The Princess Dorobel took away the piece of wood which was tied over the mouth of the bottle.

"Of course I will let him go," said she. "The poor

little thing is nearly dead with fright. It would be wicked to keep him. There, now, run away to your brother."

She held the bottle down sidewise on the grass, and with one leap the Fairy sprang out and rushed away to his comrades, who crowded about him and set up such a croaking as had never been heard from them before.

The Princess stood up with the bottle in her hand.

"If you please," began Marjo, timidly, pointing to the bottle, "would you mind looking at the—"

"Look at the bottle! He has left his lantern!" cried Bojohn at the same time.

Everybody looked, and there indeed in the bottle was the Fairy's little lantern.

"But look at the lantern!" cried Bojohn again.

The Princess held the bottle up. Inside the lantern was a little round white pebble. The princess turned the bottle up, and rolled the lantern out into her hand.

"Why!" she cried. "There is a pearl in the lantern!"

It was a pearl indeed, as any one could see; a beautiful round pearl, almost as big as a pea.

"The Moonlight Pearl!" cried Bojohn, dancing up and down. "Now we have to take her in! Now we have to take her in! She has brought the Moonlight Pearl!"

It seemed indeed as if it were moonlight which the pearl was shedding round about. A soft and beautiful radiance, like the radiance of moonbeams on a summer night, spread

out in all directions from the pearl, and lit up all the faces of the company. It shone so far abroad that every line of every Fairy in the grass, and every button on the Encourager's coat, could be plainly seen. It was as if the Princess held in her hand a splinter of the moon itself.

The Marsh-light Fairies swung their little lanterns gaily, and all together they scampered off in the direction of the forest, and in a moment their little lights were lost to view. Even the Encourager was pleased. "Hurrah!" he cried, and opening his umbrella flew up to the Executioner's shoulder.

The Princess Dorobel turned to Marjo, who was standing shyly by Bojohn's side. Her face looked very charming indeed in the soft light of the pearl.

"My dear," said the Princess, "we shall take you in and keep you, and you shall make your home with us, if you will."

"Oh, yes!" said Marjo. "If I go back, my half-sister will lock me in the closet!"

"Then you shall not go back," said the Princess. "You shall stay with us. And the Moonlight Pearl, which you have brought us—we will keep it for your wedding, and you shall wear it in your wedding ring. Are we all agreed?"

A shout went up from the company, and the Princess folded the little Marjo in her arm.

And indeed, it came to pass, regarding the Moonlight

Pearl, that when Marjo was eighteen years old, and a beautiful shy girl with deep blue eyes and blooming cheeks and hair like yellow corn, and Bojohn was a tall and stalwart young man, with frank open eyes and a merry smile, that— But it is too soon to speak of that now.

