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LITTLE MISTRESS GOODHOPE

MARY IMLAY TAYLOR

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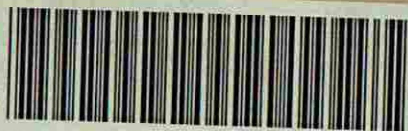
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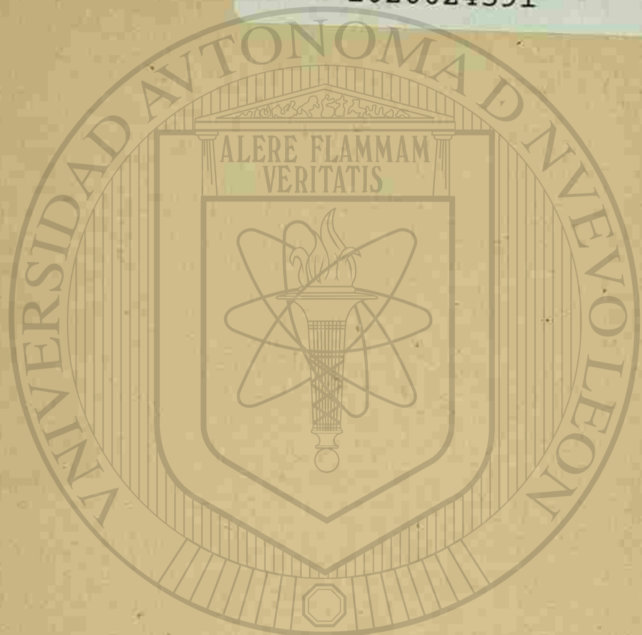

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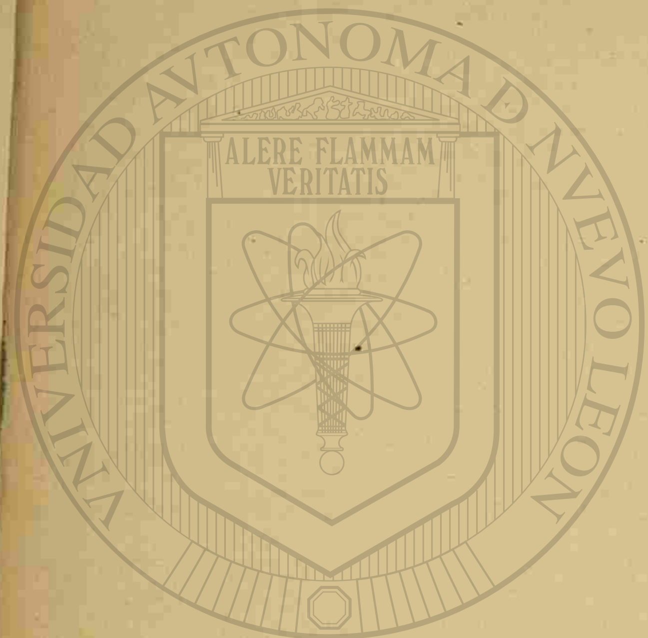
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LITTLE MISTRESS GOOD HOPE

LITTLE MISTRESS GOOD HOPE
and OTHER FAIRY TALES

By MARY IMLAY TAYLOR

WITH FRONTISPIECE IN COLOR AND ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT BY JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH

"Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And gray cock's feather."

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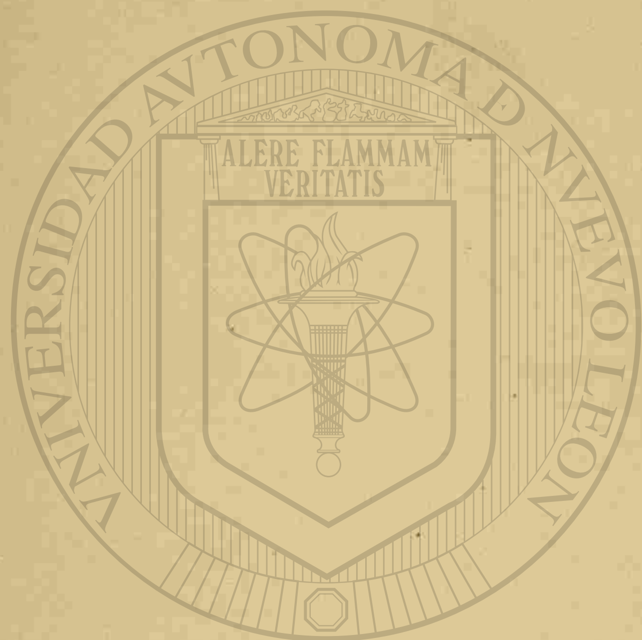
Dedicated to
LITTLE SUZANNE
by one of her admirers



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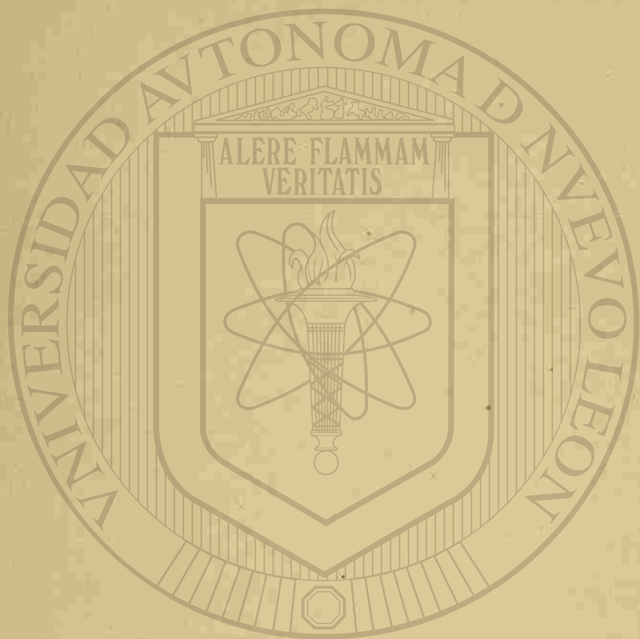

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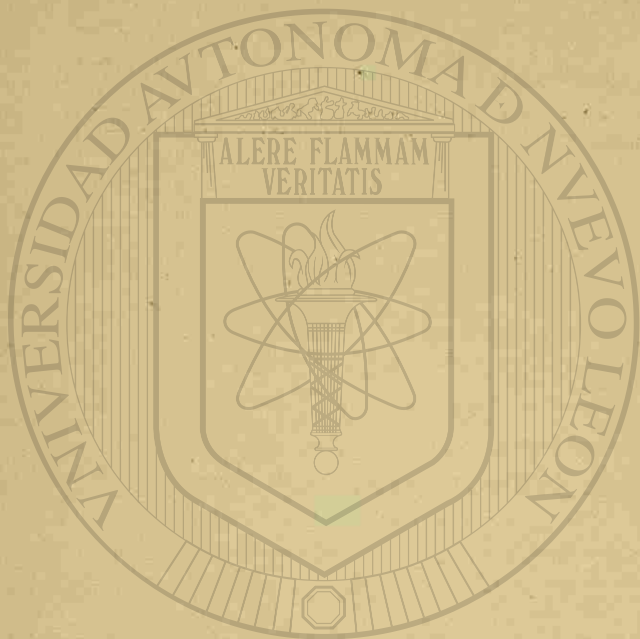

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ONG, long ago — let us try to remember exactly how long — two hundred and forty years at least, there lived a little girl in one of the loveliest of England's southern counties, that was called then, as now, Devon, or Devonshire. She was just like other little girls — in many ways just like the children of to-day, only, perhaps, her cheeks were even rosier and her large eyes brighter, for she was a stout little country lass, a farmer's daughter. Neither rich, nor great, nor very beautiful, and yet the heroine of a story, and quite a wonderful story, too, in its way, though, perhaps, it will lose a little in the telling; just as a very beautiful gem often loses a little in the setting, though it sparkles for more eyes than it did before the jeweller cut away

the outer portions of it, and polished it according to his fancy. This little Devonshire girl had lived ever since her birth in a long, low house, built of granite stones, rough hewn and roughly laid together, too, with a hipped roof and a mighty chimney in the middle of the house, with a fireplace in the kitchen so large that a whole tree trunk could be laid in it for the fire; and there were great iron hooks in the chimney-back, where the meat was spitted for roasting, and where the huge iron kettle boiled. The floors of the house were of stone — sometimes strewn with rushes — but never covered by a carpet or a rug; and it was a very cold place, too, and the wind blew in at the windows and doors, and howled down the chimneys, and, in winter, the snow came in, in little flurries; for they have fearful snow-storms in the valley of the Dart, and wayfarers have been frozen out on that great plain that was in sight of the house, and was called Dartmoor. There were no cushioned chairs or comfortable lounges in this stone house in Devon, two hundred and forty years ago, but instead, the main pieces of furniture were high-backed wooden settles that could be drawn near the fire, and the backs kept off the draughts. The plates, too, that

they ate from were of pewter, and the food was put on the table in great wooden platters called trenchers; and the table itself was only a long board, laid on trestles, with benches each side, instead of chairs. The chickens, too, and the dogs came in to pick up the crumbs that fell from the table; and the people did not eat the same food that we do; for all winter, from Martinmas, they had nothing but salted meat that had been stored away in their cellars with their cider; for there were a great many apple orchards in Devon, and in the spring they blossomed white and pink with apple-blooms, and the honey-bees had a festival.

This particular stone farmhouse had the letters T. T. cut in a long stone over the door, and the date 1525, which was to show that it had been built by one Thomas Tarkenwell, a franklin. It was when little Kathleen Tarkenwell was born already over a hundred years old, which we think very old, indeed, and was really old for England then. A great many Tarkenwells had lived in this house, but all were dead except our little lass, Kathleen, and her widowed mother, good Dame Agnes Tarkenwell. The family had once owned a large farm, a gift from the king to the first Tarken-

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well for some good deed that he had done, and there were wide fields, that had been sown with oats and barley, and there was an orchard; but after Kathleen's father died things did not go well with her mother. Crops failed — crops do very often — a blight fell on the orchard, and there was so much ill fortune that people wagged their heads, saying the "hill folk" had a grudge against the Tarkenwells. The hill folk, as you will presently learn, were the fairies of Devon, but the peasants called them pixies instead of fairies, and were afraid of them; for these little people were, by repute, very malicious, and played strange tricks on the sober folk, and often — so they said — stole into the houses and whipped babies out of their cradles, and left nothing behind but a gray goose quill. Then, there were derricks, too, the dwarfs, who were also mightily mischievous creatures, bobbing up quite unexpectedly, and doing harm enough for much larger people. Besides these elves, there were some fairy dogs, called "wishhounds," whole packs of them, that ran about on the moors and barked and howled in the twilight. So, Devon was as full as it could be of all sorts of strange creatures and stranger doings; yet it was lovely for all that, for

the banks of the river Dart were green, and feathery with ferns, and lovely with wild flowers, and the moors — rolling away, one softly rising slope behind another — were sometimes golden with the blossoming of the gorse; and away, in the distance, rose the twin peaks of Heytor, while, near at hand, those rolling uplands were skirted here and there with great cliffs of wonderful colored rocks, and the blue sea — like a sapphire — shimmered at their base.

It was a lovely country, and Kathleen had been happy until she began to understand why her mother was so sad and thoughtful. The truth is they were very poor, and Dame Agnes found it hard to live; and, in those times, there was a tax that was very hard upon the poor — it was called the chimney tax. People had to pay the government a certain sum of money for living in any house in England, and it was called "hearth money," or the "chimney tax," and, considering how large the chimneys really were, we will call it that. Now, the king appointed certain men — not always good men, I fear — to collect that money from every house and pay it into his treasury; but, because it was a hard tax on the poor, and not an easy one to gather,

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these officers of the king sold their places to very low, and often very wicked men, who made the people pay sometimes more than the law really required, and never gave any one a moment to collect the money, but, if they did not get it at once, seized all the household goods and left the families without a bed to lie on, no matter how poor and wretched they were. There were a great many poor people then, too, for there had been fearful wars in England, and a great deal of suffering and sorrow, as there always must be, in the train of war.

It was nearly time to gather this chimney tax in Devon, and poor Dame Tarkenwell had no money at all to pay it, only — out of all her labors — some food stored for herself and her child, and the clothing that she had made from cloth of her own weaving. Moreover, she had been very poor since her husband's death, and she had been foolish enough to borrow money from the tax-gatherer himself, promising if she did not pay the debt to give him her property. Such a promise is called a mortgage, and the tax-gatherer was a hard man. So Kathleen's mother knew that when he came, as he would in a few days, she and her little girl would be turned out of doors and have no roof to shelter them; and Dame Agnes

wept a great deal; and Kathleen saw it and came to understand — with a dull pain and horror — that something dreadful was going to happen, and the child was sad, too. These two, mother and little girl, went about as usual, and ate their simple meals; the woman worked her spinning-wheel and Kathleen fed the poultry; but they were very miserable, and the child thought that the sun did not shine so brightly on Dartmoor as it used to do, and she wondered at the roses for blooming in the garden.

One night, when they were eating their supper together, she saw her mother wipe away a tear, trying to hide it from her, and Kathleen began to feel as if she could not eat at all.

"Mother," she said sadly, "do other people have to pay chimney taxes, too?"

"Yes, child," her mother answered, trying to speak bravely, "we all do."

"And is it always hard?" asked the little girl; "will they turn out the people at the castle, if they do not pay?"

"At Berry-Pomeroy?" exclaimed Dame Agnes, smiling in spite of herself. "No, no, little lass; the people at the castle are great and rich, and they

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have never had to borrow money from the tax-gatherer."

"Then, why do they not help us, mother?" asked the child, wondering.

Dame Agnes shook her head. "Great folk forget the poor, Kathie," she said; "perhaps they can't help it. We must not judge our neighbors, the Bible says. Rich people very seldom help the poor in this world."

"I would, if I had riches," Kathie declared stoutly.

"Nay, child," replied her mother, "if you had the riches, you would lie on a soft bed and sleep so well that you would forget the poor man on his bed of straw."

And while she spoke, they heard — far off — the strangest, weirdest sound, like the baying of a thousand hounds at the full moon.

"Hark!" cried the good dame, turning pale, "'tis the wishhounds, Kathleen. The pixies are abroad and it means something will happen — good or ill — erelong."

Kathleen's eyes grew large, and she cast a strange look over her shoulder, and could not finish her bowl of bread and milk. The pixies, ah, why did

not the pixies help them? She wondered, too, what the wishhounds looked like, that every one heard, but hardly any one had ever seen. She was a brave little girl, and she was not so much frightened, after all, and she thought she would dearly love to see a pixy, or a derrick, or a wishhound, for they must be wonderful creatures — good or evil — and very strange to see. That night, when Kathleen went to her little room, she peeped cautiously out of the window in hopes of catching a glimpse of a wishhound; but no, she saw nothing — that is, nothing new. Really, she saw a beautiful scene: Dartmoor lay before her, rolling away in the moonlight, like the billows of the sea, and way off was the shadowy bracken at the edge of the forest, and behind all, those twin peaks. It was a country for fairies and happiness; and Kathleen sighed. She knew that her mother was weeping and praying in the next room, and the child began to wonder if there was nothing at all that she could do to pay the chimney tax and the mortgage; but she could think of nothing, and, at last, sobbed herself to sleep, a sad little girl, though there were so many happy ones in England who could have paid the whole sum twice over and never missed it. "Bear ye one another's

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burdens," says the Bible, but no one was willing to bear little Kathleen's.

She awoke next morning to begin all over again with the horror of it; and it was only three days now before the tax-gatherer would turn them out of the house in which she had been born. She would have to lose her home, which she loved so dearly, and it is a hard and bitter thing indeed to lose a home, though none know how hard and cruel it is, who do not feel the ache and the pain of homelessness way down in their hearts. Poor little Kathleen, she could hardly eat any breakfast because her mother's face was so sad. Dame Agnes had written for help to a rich uncle who lived in London; and that morning the post-boy came riding up to the door, with his mail-bags hanging across his saddle, and blowing his horn as he came. In those days, the postman came once a month and rode all the way from London on horseback, carrying his letters in great bags on the saddle; and sometimes the robbers that infested the lonely places caught him on the way and took all his letters and money from him. But this morning he came along, as blithe as a bird, and blew a blast at Dame Tarkenwell's gate; and she ran out — poor woman — betwixt hope and

fear, and got the answer to her letter; and Kathleen waited eagerly to hear it, for surely — thought the child — my uncle, being rich, will help us. But the uncle said no, and not kindly either, but with some abuse of poor dead Tom Tarkenwell, for leaving his niece so poor; and Dame Agnes had very red cheeks as she wiped away her tears, without telling little Kathleen of the cruel words about her father.

"Be a brave lass, Kathie," said the poor woman; "doubtless you and I can make a living some way, but the house — the dear, old house and all the furniture must go;" and she wept with all her heart.

As for Kathleen, she crept out, very softly and slowly, into the garden — into a corner of it that was full of tall, nodding hollyhocks, white and pink and red, and where a climbing rose bloomed all summer, hanging on the branches of a dead apple tree. Here the child sat down, and, being all alone, as she thought, hid her face in her hands and cried her heart out. What would they do? she thought; be beggars on the roadside, as she had seen others? She wondered if it could be those terrible wish-hounds that made all this trouble. And just at this moment she heard a voice close to her ear.

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"Kathleen, why do you cry when the roses are in bloom?" it asked.

Kathleen started, much frightened, and looked about her, but saw nothing save the hollyhocks and the roses; though she did notice that the hollyhocks were nodding in the strangest way, as if in a gale of wind, and there was no wind at all.

"Kathleen," said the voice again, "look this way, and you will see me under the rose-bush."

The child looked eagerly and saw — what do you think she saw? A great, gray goose standing solemnly under the rose-bush, and, what was more amazing still, on the goose's back sat a tiny figure, all in gray with a pointed cap, and there was a shimmering harness on the bird, and the pixy held the reins and a long whip in her hands. Kathleen was so much amazed that she forgot to be frightened, and rubbed her eyes and looked again; and this time she saw the face under the hood, a small face with sparkling eyes and a happy smile; not a face to fear or distrust; indeed, a face so charming that the little girl smiled back through her tears.

"Who are you?" she asked timidly, trying not to offend this strange creature.

The pixy laughed and seemed to be thinking.

"Well," she said, "I think you may call me Mistress Good Hope; and now tell me, little mortal, why do you weep?"

At this, poor Kathleen's tears flowed afresh.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "do you pixies have to pay mortgages and chimney taxes?"

The pixy laughed gayly. "Nay," she replied, "we slide down chimneys — when they 're not too sooty — but we do not pay a tax. Oh, no, but I have the special care of chimney taxes, and I stuck pins in some tax-gatherers only last week. So, you can't pay your tax?"

"No," answered Kathie sadly, "and we must lose our home, too."

Mistress Good Hope reflected. "This will never do," she said. "We must consult the King of the Pixies. Come, child, mount this other steed, and we 'll go at once."

And to Kathleen's great amazement, another goose, precisely like the fairy's, all saddled and bridled, too, came waddling placidly up to her.

"Dear me," cried the child. "I never rode a goose before, never!"

"Come — come!" cried the pixy, impatiently; "there is not a moment to lose, if you want to

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help your mother. The King of the Pixies is holding court, and if he chooses to help you, he can. But he never will if you dawdle under the hollyhocks and cry till your nose is red. That is not the way to succeed in this world, I can tell you, Mistress Tarkenwell; opportunity only comes once, and if you do not seize it — success is lost."

As Mistress Good Hope uttered these sage words, the wild goose bowed low to Kathleen and spread its wings for her to mount; and the little girl, anxious to help her mother, seated herself on the bird's back, and immediately the two gray geese rose upward — like two clouds — with scarcely a motion of their great wings, and swept off through the air, — over the moor, and away! At first, Kathleen was a bit frightened, but there was so little movement, and her companion was so composed, that she began to forget everything in the enjoyment of this new and wonderful expedition. It was delightful; have you not often dreamed of flying, and longed to fly? So had Kathleen, and here she was really and truly skimming through the air without the trouble of even using a pair of wings, but seated comfortably on the back of a wild goose, who was — by the way — uncommonly tame.

Upward and onward the great birds swept, like twin ships sailing in that upper deep, and the wondering little mortal, clasping her arms about the goose's neck, looked down, down, at the great moor where she had played so often. She saw the breeze rippling over the blooming gorse, and she passed right over the tops of the tallest trees, and the sheep and cattle looked the size of kittens and mice. Strange to say, too, no one seemed to notice Mistress Good Hope and her companion; they passed close over the farmhouse roofs and they dipped low beside the great castle, Berry-Pomeroy, but no one saw them, or even seemed to look in their direction; and presently they were travelling lower among the tree-tops of the forest, and they heard the birds singing close to them among the branches. Kathleen gave a cry of delight.

"'T is lovely!" she said, clasping her hands; "oh, thank you, Mistress Good Hope, for the pleasure."

The pixy smiled and nodded. "It is pleasant," she admitted, "but we think it finer to ride on a moonbeam; but that no mortal can do. Yonder, by the way, is the Abbot's Pool," she added, pointing downward, "where the wishhounds always drink.

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There are wonderfully fine trout there. This is why it was called the Abbot's Pool: the old fellow used to catch the fish — when we let him; but, dear me, there are such a number of stories about the times when we did not let him, and ran off with his bait, and the little brown jug he always took with him. That, to be sure, was full of horrible stuff that the derricks used to light the beacon fire with; it burned tremendously, and the smell of it made some of the derricks act very queerly, — so queerly, indeed, that the King of the Derricks had to have five of them nailed up in a keg for a week, as a punishment, you know."

"Dear me, were you alive as long ago as that?" asked Kathleen, quite forgetful of her manners. "I know the stories of the abbot and his pool are very old. How old are you?"

The pixy colored angrily. "My dear," she said, "you should never ask a woman's age — it's extremely ill bred."

Kathleen, overcome with embarrassment, begged her pardon a thousand times, and to change the subject, said she wished that her mother could have some of the fish.

"That is easily done," replied the pixy, quite

herself again; and she whistled three times, through a daffodil bud, and behold, there was another pixy clambering up on the top of a tall birch tree, all dressed in green, and so much like the leaves that Kathleen could scarcely believe her eyes.

"Catch some trout immediately, little Good Deeds, and take them to the door of Dame Tarkenwell," ordered Mistress Good Hope; and the little green elf bowed and slid down the tree trunk, like a spider down its web.

"How pleased mother will be," thought Kathleen, and then sighed; "poor mother, she is so sad!"

The thought made the child sad, too, and they were silent as they swept through the forest; only she could not help looking down with pleasure at the wonderful bracken of ferns that made every glade in the woods beautiful with their waving fronds, and she heard, too, the music of hundreds of songsters. What a ride it was! but at last it came to an end, and the wild geese flew down, down into a lovely dell, right in the heart of the greenwood, locked in by tall and beautiful trees, and the ground covered with moss and carpeted with primroses. Here the two travellers alighted, and the pixy looked gravely at her companion.

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"You certainly are not in court dress," she said, with a sigh; "but then, 'tis a case of necessity. Follow me, mortal, and do as I do."

While she was speaking, she had thrown aside her gray mantle, and now appeared in a wonderful court gown of rose leaves and petals, spangled with dew-drops, and looked so lovely that Kathleen glanced shyly down at her own homespun frock and her coarse pinner — in those days they called an apron a "pinner." But she was a sensible child and did not fret for better clothes than her mother could give her, and so she followed the pixy with wondering eyes, into the court of the "hill folk." They came first to a tall hedge of ferns, that nodded their beautiful plumes in the air, and here they were met by a row of pixies, walking two and two, dressed in the pink petals of roses and blowing little trumpets of mother-of-pearl; and these little creatures led the way through the ferns to a wide open space that was full of beautiful elves, all robed in the petals of flowers, and all standing in a semi-circle about a throne that was made entirely of congealed dew-drops. These were firm enough to hold the King of the Fairies, and yet as clear and sparkling as when they were first gathered in the morning by his

attendants. And on this marvellous throne, quite the most marvellous that monarch ever possessed, sat the charming little person who was called King of Pixyland, and he was robed — not in ermine or velvet, or jewels or lace — nay, in the petals of a lily of the field, more beautiful than the robes worn by Solomon in all his glory, and wearing on his head a crown of sunshine, while his sceptre was a ray of the full moon. He was receiving petitions from his subjects, and smiled graciously upon Mistress Good Hope and her companion, although Kathleen felt very big and very awkward, indeed, among these sprites, and it is certain that she would never have found her tongue at all; so it was well that Mistress Good Hope told the whole sad story for her, and told it well. His Majesty looked sympathetic, but, at first, shook his head.

"You know very well, Good Hope," he said, "that we never soil our fingers with anything so sordid and dirty as money, and she cannot pay the chimney tax with sunshine."

"Ah, do not turn me away," cried poor Kathleen, in distress after hoping so much. "Surely, your Majesty will help my poor mother, since her rich uncle will not!"

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"Ah, indeed," said the king, "will he not? And who, pray, is your mother's uncle, and where does he live?"

"He's an alderman in London, sire," replied Kathie, "and his name is Solomon Moneybags."

"Go you, quickly, Special Torment," said the king, to one of his attendants, "and give that rich uncle the gout in his toes; and do you, Mischief, paint his nose red and swell it, when he drinks his sack."

Having thus disposed of old Moneybags, his Majesty fell into deep thought and the whole court was silent, full of expectation. At last, the king spoke again.

"Go, Mistress Good Hope," he said, "and take this poor child to the King of the Derricks, he can settle it for her; and say to him, that I will help him next time he sends for me, if he will do this good turn. Take with you the golden precepts — wrapped in vapor — and, if all goes well, give them to this mortal. There's no time to lose, for my messengers report that the tax-collector is on the way now, and has only been delayed by the necessity of picking off the burs that my people keep sticking into him. Therefore, consider yourselves dismissed," and he waved his sceptre, adding in a stern tone, "shed no more tears, mortal, as you have already nearly drowned two infant pixies, and you can see that — if you continue to weep here — the whole court will have to take to boats; it's a perfect deluge! So please be off at once!"

Thus sternly dismissed, Good Hope and Kathleen mounted their wild geese in hot haste and rode and rode — over forest and moor — toward the sea.

"Whither do we go now?" cried Kathie, a little frightened, for they had left behind them the river Dart and Dartmoor and were speeding south southeast, at a terrible rate so that everything was blurred to her eyes.

"We are going to Berryhead," replied the pixy. "The derricks are there just now, keeping the Pirate Cave."

"Oh, surely you don't mean to go near the pirates?" cried Kathleen, breathless with fear, for the pirates were very wicked people and came only too often to Devon in those days.

"Pshaw, foolish child!" retorted Good Hope, "of course not; and if we did, they would not see us, for we are invisible."

Kathleen pinched herself hard. "How can we

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be?" she said, "when I'm just as much alive as I was."

The pixy laughed. "You are invisible because of me," said she; "but look, there is Berryhead, where many, many years ago a people called the Romans landed and took possession of this part of the country;" and as she spoke she pointed out a bold headland jutting out into the beautiful blue sea.

It was a wild spot; great crags of reddish stone loomed up, and the red sands stretched out where the tide was rising, wave after wave, crested with foam and dancing in the sunlight, and away from the shore the turf was as green as an emerald. Kathleen had never been so far from home before, and she was delighted when the geese flew lower and lower; but she did not feel so safe when they began to go out over the water itself and approached two wonderful rocks that loomed out of the sea.

"These are called the Parson and the Clerk," said the pixy, "and here I must blow the trumpet," and as she spoke, she alighted on the crag, and, picking up a sea-shell, blew three shrill blasts.

The signal was immediately answered from the cliffs of Berryhead, and the pixy directed the geese

to fly over and alight there, at the mouth of the cavern. A good deal frightened, but ashamed to confess it, Kathleen dismounted with her guide, and the two entered the cave which was lighted by sea-anemones, hung along the vaulted roof. They passed through a long winding gallery, beautiful with hanging pieces of rock of glorious colors, and in the centre of the cave they found a great room filled with queer little men, all dressed in red from top to toe, and each wearing a cock's feather in his cap. But what amazed Kathleen most was the cave itself, for all sides of it were lined with bags and bags of gold; broad gold pieces, Spanish pistoles, livres of Tours, and nuggets from the mines of Africa and Peru; and on top of the largest heap sat the King of the Derricks, cross-legged, tasting a dried tobacco leaf and making horrible faces.

"Dear me," he remarked, "why do these strange mortals load their ships with such fearful weeds? This, they tell me, comes from the Virginia Colony that they're all so wild over. 'T is not fit for a decent pirate; no wonder the ship went down! Listen to me, derricks: never bring another bit of that horrible weed into my caverns, on pain of being made mortals!"

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As he spoke, Mistress Good Hope and Kathleen were ushered in, and he listened to their petition with some impatience, all the while wiping his tongue with a piece of seaweed to take away the taste of tobacco.

"So," he said, when Good Hope had finished speaking, "so you want money to pay the tax and the mortgage! Look at this money; here is a lesson for mortals. They all want it; they work for it, they cheat for it, they steal for it, and they die for it — and a precious lot of good it does them. Now, this was all stolen; a lot of pirates brought it here and hid it — and what happened? Why, bless your hearts, after they had been stealing it and hiding it for twenty years, their ship went to the bottom, with all on board, out there by the Parson and Clerk, and here is the gold — collecting dirt and rust, and a perfect nuisance to us;" he waved his hand airily. "We derricks guard it — out of pure compassion — to keep these wretched mortals from cutting each other's throats for it, and yet the King of the Pixies is foolish enough to want to give some of it to a poor, stupid child like that one with you."

Poor Kathleen began to lose all hope of helping

her mother, on hearing this bitter speech, and she fell on her knees in the greatest distress.

"If it please your Majesty," she cried, "only pay the chimney tax for my mother, and I will bless you forever."

The king was really very good hearted — kings often are, when they take off their crowns — and at the sight of the child's grief, wiped his eyes hastily with a blade of grass.

"Dear, dear," he said, "that tobacco has given me the grippe;" then he looked sharply at a chest in the corner. "Jake and Jeffrey," he said, "go harness the wishhounds — six of them — and put that chest of gold on the sledge. Let them take it to this mortal's home and pay that creature the tax-gatherer, and see that he falls in a mud puddle afterwards."

Kathleen began to pour out her gratitude, for she was indeed transported with joy, but he held up his hand.

"No thanks," he said sharply; "I have given you a great fortune, but it is only the seed of discord to scatter in the world; for money, my dear child, is the current coin of the evil one, and I expect it will plunge you into misery."

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At this little Good Hope unrolled her bundle of vapor and placed three beautiful flowers on Kathie's bosom.

"Nay," she said gently, "the King of the Pixies has given her a talisman: if only she never allows these blossoms to fade, she will be ever happy and fortunate; for the white blossom is Honesty, the golden one Content, and the red one the Thankful Heart, and if she keeps these fresh upon her bosom, she will be safe and well to the end of her life."

Kathleen was so overcome with all these kindnesses that she could only thank the givers with tearful eyes, and she followed the pixy out to the open plain, at the other side of the cliffs, where she saw the wishhounds that she had feared so much; tall, graceful, beautiful creatures they were, too, harnessed to a wonderful sledge of sea-shells, on which was the chest of uncounted treasure. Swiftly she mounted her goose and away they flew — just off the ground so as to keep near the wishhounds, who sped fleetly as winged creatures, over the moors. So happy was the child that the journey seemed short indeed, and she was surprised to see her own dear home in front of her, before she knew she was so near it. And

there, sure enough, was the tax-collector; and her mother, with a white face and tearful eyes, had just told him that she could not pay, and that her little girl had vanished, when Kathleen came running up with her hands full of broad gold pieces to pay the debts. Oh, what thankfulness there was, and what wonder! The tax-gatherer was driven off by the derricks and the pixies, who managed to trip him up in a huge mud-puddle, so that he went on in a very ill humor, while Kathleen and her mother looked at the wonderful chest that now stood in the middle of the kitchen.

It was a fortune, so that there was never any more suffering or worry for money; nor was there any wrong-doing with the fairy gift, for Kathleen never allowed the three wonderful flowers to fade, but kept them fresh on her heart as long as she lived; and she lived to be a very old woman, and a very wise and good one.

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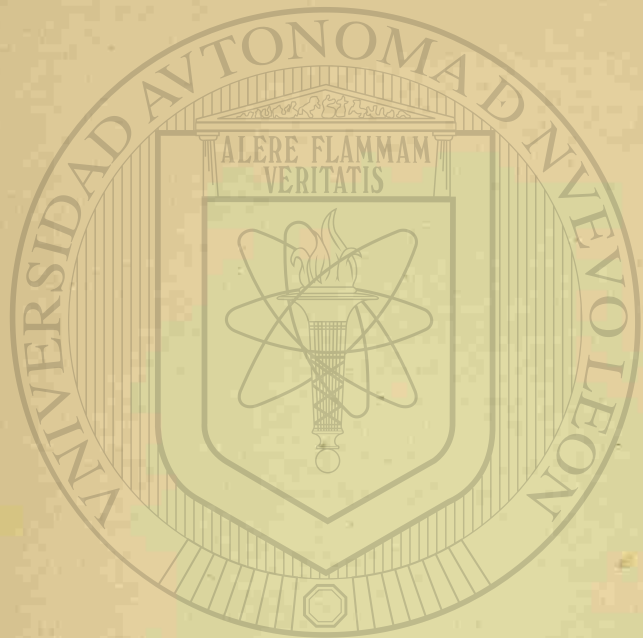

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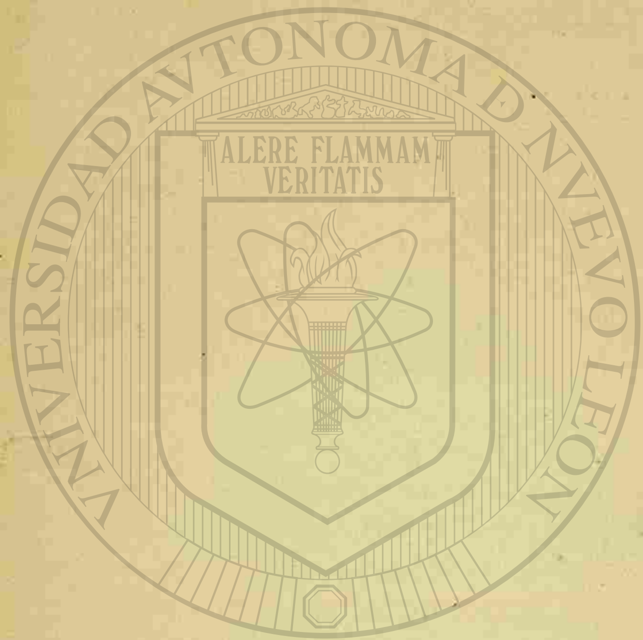
ROB, THE PEDDLER'S BOY



RARE indeed were the merry times when King Charles the Second ruled in England, even though he was called the Merry Monarch. There was, instead, a great deal of suffering and misery among the poorer classes in England, in those days, though some people are always saying that the old times everywhere were better than the new; but of that I, for one, am not so sure. Certainly, the old city of London, for its size, was quite as full of wickedness, and dirt, and misery, as London is to-day. But, dear me, what a different London! Now it is one of the greatest cities of the world and full of beautiful buildings, fine houses, great shops; but, in those old

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times, it was a small town with narrow, crooked, unpaved streets, thickly crowded with houses that leaned up against each other, and toppled over at each other, and thrust out their upper stories almost across the streets. There were no sidewalks, only posts driven into the mud on each side, and the foot passengers must keep within these, while the great emblazoned coaches, carts, sedan chairs, and wheel-barrows trundled and rumbled through the filth in the centre, splashing it freely upon the people. Thus it came to be considered so great a privilege to get on the inside, next the houses, that there were often street brawls about "taking the wall," as they called it; and sometimes people were pelted with vegetables from the wheel-barrows, and mud from the kennel, as they named the great gutter in the middle of the street. There were no street lamps then, either, and it was considered a great thing when a man, called Edward Heming, proposed to light London, on moonless nights, from Michaelmas to Lady Day, by hanging a lantern on every tenth door, from six o'clock until twelve. There were more pick-pockets and vagabonds, too, then than now, and it was very dangerous to walk in the streets, even after Mr. Heming hung up his

little lanterns on every tenth door, — a tiny yellow flicker of a candle in the darkness of the night. The town was full of beggars, too, and thieves, and evil-minded persons, and there were very few people to heed or care for the wretched little children who played, half naked, in the mud, while the king and the great people drove by in wonderful gilt coaches that were shaped vastly like apple-pies, — very broad and flat on top, and narrow at the bottom, with glass sides and wonderful colors, and gold and silver on the outside. They were drawn usually by gray Flanders mares, with outriders in the gayest of gay liveries.

There was only one bridge over the river Thames then, too; quite a strange bridge, with rows of houses on each side of it, and only a narrow road between for the coaches and people to pass over; and yonder was the great gloomy Tower of London, where prisoners of state were shut up.

In this strange old city of London, in a miserable old house on the Strand, there lived a little lad called Rob, the peddler's boy. He had no other name, and scarcely knew that it was odd for a little boy to have only one short name. He was about twelve years old, and small for his age; a thin, ill-

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used child, with a pinched little face and sad dark eyes; and his clothes — the few he had — were so faded and ragged that you could not possibly have told what they looked like when they were new. As for shoes and stockings, he remembered none, and he was so neglected that his hair — which was a pretty auburn color — was often tangled and uncombed, unless he remembered to comb it, which, I fear, was not very often, for poor Rob had a hard life — the life of a street beggar. He was beaten when he failed to bring money home, and beaten when he brought it, so that it made no difference, a beating and a crust were his daily portion. For Rob had for a master a terrible old man, a peddler by trade, a miser, and, I fear, a thief. The boy did not know how he came to be in this old man's clutches, or what relation he was to him. He thought he was his grandfather; but then it was only a dim idea, after all, for when he came to consider the matter, he did not know whether he was or not; no one ever told him so, least of all old Jacob Cheezer, who had few words for him and many blows. He was a little, thin, old man, with stooping shoulders and such a dark face that Rob thought it seemed to absorb all the light in the room and make it dingy, even at

noonday; and he had such cruel little eyes, keen and restless, and able to see — so the boy thought — as well out of the back of his head as out of the front; and his hands were thin and the fingers like the talons of a bird of prey, fierce, and strong, and keen-pointed; and though he was so small he had the strength of two men. Old Cheezer wore clothes almost as shabby as Rob's: a faded, weather-worn green coat, with full petticoated skirts — a fashion they had then — and the sleeves came only to the elbow, so as to show the ruffled shirt sleeve below; and old Jacob's full black trousers, tied at the knees with faded ribbons, were patched with almost as many colors as Joseph's coat, in the Bible, and his long waistcoat was flowered like an old calico spread.

This strange couple lived in the most rickety old shanty, two stories high; the upper story hanging out over the lower one, as they often did then. It stood with its back toward the Thames and its face toward the road, and was one of the many old rookeries. There were some nice houses there, too, with neat gardens on the river bank, but here and there were just such tumble-down shanties as that of old Jacob. It stood near to the great Maypole, set up

by the Duke of York, the king's brother, to celebrate the Restoration of the royal family to England.

There was a garden — or rather there had been one, now it was only a plot of ground — behind Cheezer's house, and it was walled in by a high brick wall; a strange thing, too, when the house was so wretched, but old Jacob kept that wall repaired, and you could not see into it, even from the river, while his own window shutters were all nailed up on that side — and he had a very good reason for that, as you shall hear. His house, too, was not near the others, and no one entered it but himself and the boy, Rob; indeed, if any one even came to the door, old Jacob drove him away with abuse. He had a slit in the floor of the room that overhung the door, and through this he could not only see who stopped there, but he could throw stones down upon them. So it was only a very bold person who came twice to Cheezer's door; in fact, the people in the neighborhood thought him crazy and left him alone.

Inside the house it was quite as dismal as it was outside. There was no furniture except in Cheezer's room; he had a bed, a chair, and an old chest, but

Rob lay upon straw on the kitchen floor and he ate his meals — what there was of them — with his fingers, off an old tin plate on the hearth, and was happiest when he could eat out of doors, beyond the old man's reach. Every morning — rain or shine — Rob went out to beg in London and was pushed and knocked about, occasionally getting a few coins in his cap but more often a kick or a blow, for no one was very mindful of a beggar lad. He begged here and he begged there; sometimes in busy Fleet Street, sometimes in front of the great Cathedral of St. Paul, and sometimes even at the gate of Whitehall, the king's palace; and when he came home empty handed he was beaten almost to death. That was the child's life, begging, and beating, and starving, day in and day out; it was not unlike the lives of many other little children in this great world of ours — not only in those days, but now.

But there was one thing in old Jacob's garden that interested Rob: every night, when he lay half starved and sore on his straw, he heard Cheezer creeping out into the garden, closing the door softly behind him, and once, when the boy stirred, the man heard him, and came back to beat him anew, and tell him, that if he dared so much as to

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peep into the garden at night, he would put out his eyes. As he was quite wicked enough to do it, poor Rob lay trembling all the rest of the night. But, after all, he was a boy, and we grow used to any danger that is familiar, and Rob grew used to this, and he grew also very curious. What did the old man do in that garden? He was gone a long, long time, and he went every night. Rob racked his active young brains for an answer, but he got none, unless — perhaps old Jacob was dealing with some witch or fairy! It must be a very wicked fairy, Rob reflected; but even then — a fairy! Well, it was more than flesh and blood could withstand, and next time old Jacob went out and shut the door, Rob crept softly off his straw and peeped through the keyhole, the only opening, because, as I have said, every window on the garden was boarded up. It was a moonlight night, and Rob saw the bare, dreary-looking garden, with its high brick wall, as clearly as at noonday. Nothing grew there but weeds and one old gnarled pear tree that had never borne even a blossom in Rob's remembrance. Breathless with fright and excitement, the boy peeped and peeped, and he saw a strange thing. Old Jacob walked all around the

garden three times, peering into every corner, and then he went to the old pear tree and knelt at its roots, as if he meant to say his prayers. This greatly surprised and frightened Rob, as he had never known Jacob to pray, and he made sure that the dreadful old man must be going to die. But Cheezer did not die; nor did he pray; he only — to all appearances — took up a lump of the solid earth, and reaching down into the hole beneath it, pulled up a bag and looked into it; then he put something into the bag, replaced it, put the lump of earth back again, went around the garden three times, and started for the door. You can imagine just how Rob scampered back to his straw and pretended to be asleep when the old man came in. Whether Jacob suspected him or not, Rob did not know, but he came to the spot where the boy lay, and peered at him sharply, and then hobbled off upstairs while the child trembled with fright.

But curiosity had got the better of Rob, and he only waited his opportunity now; it came the very next day, when he returned from a begging expedition with better luck than usual, and brought old Cheezer nearly a guinea in small coins. The peddler grabbed it greedily, searched the boy's

pockets, as usual, and finding no more, dismissed him with a kick, and immediately put on his shabby old hat and went out. This was so unusual that Rob could hardly believe it, but fastened the door after him, as he always did when he was to stay alone in the house, and then — and then! He flew through the house and out into the garden; now was his chance to fathom the mystery. Poor boy, poor little Rob, he had no idea of what it would lead to. He ran straight to the spot where he had seen Cheezer kneel, and dropped on his own knees; but having proceeded so far he was at a loss, for he saw no hole in the earth; no, nor any sign of one. But he was not a boy to be easily fooled, and he began to feel of the ground very carefully, all over the space at that side of the pear tree, but without success; and he was afraid, too, that old Jacob would return and, if he did not find him at the door to let him in, would suspect that he had been in the garden, and then what would happen? Rob shuddered, and was just on the point of giving up the search, when his busy fingers suddenly felt something hard in the soft earth, — hard and round. He had hold of it, in an instant: it was an iron ring, and it was fastened in the ground, for it would

not move, and when he pulled it, the earth began to move. Ah, now the boy understood, and with all his might and main he pulled and hauled at that ring, and lo, up came an iron lid covered with earth, and beneath was a square hole, large enough and deep enough to hold Rob himself, if it had not been already nearly half full of bags that bulged out, filled with something. Trembling with excitement and fear of Jacob's return, the boy thrust his hand into the topmost bag and drew forth a handful of money. Yes, money; some of it the money that he had begged himself, but much more of it money that old Cheezer had obtained in many, many ways. Rob knew that all the bags were full and bulging with gold, and that there must be a great deal there; but before he could look any farther he heard Jacob at the front door. In the greatest fright he put back the lid, scratched the earth over the crevices, and fled into the house, barring the back door before he opened the front. He was dreadfully afraid that Jacob would see the dirt on his hands and suspect, but for some reason the old man only noticed him by a kick, and went in and began to cook a fat chicken that he had bought with some of Rob's money. It smelled very nice while it was cooking,

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and the boy was very hungry; but he only got the bones, for old Cheezer ate enormously, and one chicken was nothing to him if he had fasted since breakfast. So Rob saw him eat it greedily, his little eyes glittering as he smacked his lips, and then he threw the bones to the boy with a piece of stale bread, bidding him eat and go to bed at once, as he was going to be busy and wanted no brats about. So, still very hungry, after his bones and dry bread, Rob crept into his straw and pretended to go to sleep, all the while watching the peddler as sharply as he dared. Jacob waited until he thought the child was asleep, and then he crept out into the garden, went three times around it, and solemnly approached his treasure; but there he stopped short and stared, for on top of the hidden lid he saw a cock's feather. A harmless thing, certainly, but how did it come there? Jacob could not imagine; he scratched his head and stared at it, and it was a long time before he lifted the lid and looked greedily at his money-bags; for Jacob was a miser, and he loved his money better than his life. He did not discover that Rob had been there before him, and after a while he went in and to bed, and dreamed that every coin in his bags had turned

into three coins, and that he was the richest man in London.

But Jacob was destined to trouble, and the next night he found a cock's feather, and then again the third night, a cock's feather. What did it mean? There were no cocks, or hens either, except in Jacob's stomach, and as he could not account for the feathers, he began to suspect Rob, though why Rob should put cocks' feathers there, he could not imagine. However, he resolved to know why; and so, the next day he hid himself to watch, and Rob thought he had gone out; indeed, the cunning old fellow did pretend to go out, and unluckily it came into the boy's head to have another peep at all that gold. Out he ran into the garden, a poor, little, ragged figure, enough to move any one to pity instead of anger, and he knelt down and felt for the ring and found it, and tugged and tugged until the lid came off; and he was just bending down to peep at the bags, when a hand grabbed him at the nape of the neck, and he looked up into the ugly face of old Cheezer, terrible in its anger, for the miser was beside himself with rage.

"So, so!" he said, "so, I have found my cock's feather, and now I will put out your eyes!"

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Poor Rob fell to entreating him to spare his eyes.

"Beat me, starve me!" cried the boy, trembling in an agony of fear, for he knew that Jacob was quite wicked enough to execute his threat; "do anything you please to me but that — oh, spare my eyes! Let me see still!"

"See to steal, you rogue!" cried old Cheezer, fiercely. "Not I — I'll either kill you, or put out your eyes. Which do you choose? you worthless, lazy, thieving rogue, you!"

Rob choked back his sobs; he knew that they were useless, and for one terrible moment he was in doubt. Life even to him was sweet; but eternal darkness — never to see the sky, or the earth, or other people!

"Kill me," said the boy, struggling to be quiet, to die like a brave child.

Old Cheezer chuckled fiercely, gloating over the child's misery, and he stood thinking, too; for, after all, killing was quite an awkward business. Some one might miss the child, might suspect. Then, all at once, he hit upon a plan.

"You were eager to get into this hole, you rogue," he cried, with wicked glee, "and stay in it you shall, until you die."

"You do not mean to bury me alive?" cried Rob, in horror; "you can't mean that!"

"You shall see, you thief, you shall see!" shrieked the wretched miser, dragging the boy to the house, where he bound him hand and foot. Then he took him and thrust him deep into the hole with his money bags and began to shovel the dirt in on top of him. Rob set his teeth and tried to bear it; he had chosen death and he was not a cowardly boy; he tried to be brave and resolute, but it was very horrible. The old wretch was gloating over his misery all the while, and piling in the cool, damp earth, until it was up to Rob's neck.

"Spare me, oh, spare me!" sobbed the boy, breaking down; "I do not want to die so."

"Will you have your eyes out?" jeered the wicked man.

"No," Rob replied, with quivering lips, "never!"

Jacob rested on his spade and stared at the boy maliciously.

"Do you feel like stealing now?" he asked tauntingly.

"I did not mean to steal," cried Rob, indignant.

"Oh, no!" mocked Jacob Cheezer, "of course not. Well, I'll leave you now for a bit to think

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about it. You 'll keep, I 'll wager, and slow dying will give you time to choose about your eyes," and with this the hateful old creature walked calmly off and, slamming the house door, left the poor boy tied hand and foot and buried to his neck.

The hours that followed were hours of torture to poor Rob. He could not move; the damp, heavy earth pressed down upon him like lead, growing heavier and tighter every moment, and the sun shone in his eyes while the ants began to crawl over his face, and he felt as if he would die. And the horror of it! for the boy knew how wicked the wretched miser was, and that he could hope for no mercy. Ah, how he wished that he had not been so curious, and so eager to meddle with another's business. Rob repented of his curiosity as deeply as a great many other people have repented of theirs, when it was too late. He winked back the tears, for was he not a boy, and he would not cry like a girl; but it was dreadful to die thus! The minutes seemed like hours, the hours like days, and still no help. The time passed, however, and the sun set, and once, only, old Cheezer looked out at him and jeered. Night was coming and Rob had not tasted a morsel since morning, not even a drop

of water had passed his lips. The boy was used to hunger, but thirst was terrible, and he began to ache all over, so that every second was torture: and oh, the chill of it! it was like a bed of ice; and how dark it grew! a cloudy night and black as pitch.

The child never knew how those hours passed; he tried to pray, but I am afraid no one had taught him how to say his prayers, and he was so frightened that he could scarcely have remembered, if he had been taught. So he stayed there all night long, and saw the dark sky brighten and brighten with the dawn, and grow light at last, and then pink and gold when the sun rose. At this time, old Cheezer came to the door and asked him if he wanted his eyes put out.

"No," said Rob, faintly, for he could not endure much more; "but only give me a cup of water."

"Thieves must thirst!" mocked the old man, and slammed the door, and Rob knew that he was going off for the day and there was no hope.

Poor child, the end of his misery was not far off, for he could not bear it. The scene — though it was a bright morning — began to darken and waver, in the strangest fashion, and then he knew nothing

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more, for he had fainted away, something he had never done in all his life before.

It must have been a long while afterwards that Rob came slowly to himself, and then he did not know what had happened, for he felt neither cold nor hunger, but was lying on a soft warm spot, with a warm breeze blowing gently in his face, and he heard voices, strange, squeaky little voices, all about him. Not knowing where he was, and remembering suddenly the horror of that burial alive, Rob began to think that he had died and come to life in another world; very cautiously he opened his eyes a little bit and peeped through the lashes and saw — well, he saw a marvellous sight. He seemed to be in the depths of a wooded dell, shadowed by great trees, and lying in a bracken of ferns, while around him were strange little men, all clad in green with pointed caps, each cap ornamented with a cock's feather; and one, evidently the most important of all, was seated on a huge toadstool. Rob knew that this one was a king, because he wore a crown and frowned prodigiously if any one even dared to contradict him. Rob did not know at first that these were the famous derricks, the dwarfs of Devon, but to his astonishment he heard one of them telling the

king all about himself in a very squeaky voice. The derrick described Rob's life from day to day so perfectly that the boy pinched himself to be sure that he was not dreaming, and the dwarf told how he and another derrick had put a cock's feather on old Jacob's money-hole every night to torment him; then came the description of Jacob beating Rob and burying him alive, and the boy listened to this eagerly, to find out how he had escaped.

"We dug him out, your Majesty," said the derrick. "It was very hard work, too, for he's an uncommonly heavy boy."

"I don't see how he can be," interrupted the king sharply. "He's a bag of bones and nothing more. You always make a fuss over your work, Dolittle."

"He weighs as much as ten cats!" retorted Dolittle, sullenly, "and his bones aren't pleasant to handle."

"I shall ask the prime minister how much ten cats weigh," remarked the king. "Go on, Dolittle, what next?"

"After we took the boy out, Retribution and I caught old Jacob and stuffed him into the same hole, sire."

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"Very good," said the king, "and you brought the boy here. But, by the way, which end of old Cheezer did you put in first?"

Another derrick piped up gayly:

"Head, your Majesty," he said, "and we punched the dirt down tight about it."

The king reflected. "I don't know," he said thoughtfully, "whether that will kill him or not. These mortals are queer; but so much earth in his mouth might be attended with serious results. Fizzle-Fizzle," he said to an attendant, who wore a green coat like the others, and lovely rose-colored tights encasing his fat little legs, "call the prime minister."

Rob could hardly keep still all this while, but he did not move, for fear the whole troop of elves would scamper off; and presently the prime minister, a very dignified derrick, with a long white beard and spectacles, came in and took his place at the king's right hand. His Majesty immediately laid the whole matter before him and asked if he thought that earth in the mouth, nose, and ears of a mortal, pounded in tight, would be likely to kill him. The prime minister assumed a very wise and thoughtful air and was silent for some time, the whole court

gazing breathlessly at him. At last, he frowned severely, adjusted his spectacles, and spoke.

"Please, your Majesty," he said, "it is my deliberate opinion that if this earth was pounded down hard it would kill a mortal."

The king coughed. "I suppose old Cheezer 's dead then," he remarked, glancing sternly at Dolittle and Retribution, who stood in open-mouthed amazement; "but probably the loss to the world is not great. What does my prime minister think?"

That worthy sighed deeply. "I 'm always in favor of mercy, sire," he said profoundly; "but if he 's dead, he 's probably dead."

"Exactly," said the king, lifting his crown to wipe the dew from his brow; "that disposes of him. And now about this boy?"

At this Rob pricked up his ears.

The prime minister looked at him intently.

"We are informed," said the king, "that this is the very boy who was stolen from his cradle in Mistress Deane's house, in Exeter. He has the scar on the left ear, and you know that the pixies and the derricks were always accused of doing it."

The prime minister wagged his head so hard that his spectacles dropped off, and half a dozen courtiers,

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in green coats and pink tights, had to crawl under the ferns and grasses to hunt for them.

"It turns out," continued the king, waving his hands airily, "that the sordid peddler, Jacob Cheezer, stole him and brought him up to beg for him in London. Now, it is my intention to return him to Mistress Deane, to show that the derricks and the pixies are much belied."

At this, Rob could remain silent no longer; he sat up and stared wildly at his Majesty, his sudden and clumsy movement upsetting two rows of courtiers, in pink tights, who started a terrible squealing like so many little pigs, on their backs in the ferns.

"If it please your Majesty," cried Rob, trying to speak politely, "I'm very much obliged to you for saving me from old Cheezer, but I don't want to be given to any one else; just let me loose in the woods and I'll do anything I can to serve you — anything — to be away from the people who beat me and ill use me."

The king put his fingers in his ears.

"Dear me!" he cried angrily, "let some one pick up my pages; he's upset them by scores, and their cries deafen me."

Poor Rob, covered with confusion at his awkwardness, tried to set the little creatures up; but at his touch they all fell over on their backs again, and screamed until they were purple in the face, and it was not until he kept quite still that the older derricks managed to get them all on their feet again, and the confusion subsided; then the king took his fingers out of his ears and replied to Rob:

"Mistress Deane is your mother," he said sharply, "and a very good woman, or the derricks would not befriend her to find her boy. Children of your age should be seen and not heard. The prime minister will take you home himself. Domuch, harness the wishhounds and whisk this mortal off to Exeter at once."

Poor Rob, he wanted to protest, but he did not like to give offence after they had saved his life; besides, the word "mother" sounded new, and strange, and attractive to him. He had seen other little boys with mothers who loved them, and, after all, he had a mother too! For Rob never thought of doubting what the King of the Derricks said, and in the end he permitted them to pack him off, with the prime minister, on a sledge of bark, cushioned with moss, and drawn by six beautiful light-footed hounds who

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seemed rather to skim over the earth than to touch it. Away they flew, through a beautiful stately forest, over wide moors and sloping hills, past villages, where Rob saw people, but no one seemed to see him; and at last the sledge stopped at a neat little cottage, on the outskirts of a town, and here, in a garden full of country flowers — such as Rob had longed to have all his weary life in the city slums — the sledge stopped, and the prime minister led his charge gravely up to a rustic bench where a woman sat, with a sweet, sad face and gray hair. Though she seemed to be much startled and amazed at the sight of the derrick and the boy, she said nothing, but fell to studying Rob's face with such troubled, seeking eyes, that the child's heart went out to her, and he waited eagerly for the explanation.

"Madam," said the dwarf, "I am the prime minister of the King of the Derricks. Many years ago, — ten, I think, — your baby boy was stolen from his cradle, and you were told that the pixies or the derricks took him;" the prime minister puffed himself up prodigiously. "Madam, we do that only in extreme cases, and for a reason. Your child was stolen by an old peddler named Jacob Cheezer."

"Ah!" cried the poor dame sobbing, "I always

thought so! Oh, little man, derrick, fairy — whatever you are — give me but news of my boy and I will bless you!"

The prime minister sneezed and wiped his eyes on a handkerchief of apple blossom.

"Madam, your boy was brought up a street beggar in London, by the wicked old miser, Cheezer, who was about to kill him, when we interfered and — and here he is!" and he pointed triumphantly at Rob.

The poor dame uttered a cry of joy and held out her arms. And Rob? He fell into them weeping, and the prime minister sneezed again.

Oh, what joy there was, and what a reunion! The derrick disappeared, and all the neighbors came in to rejoice, and the boy had such a supper as he could not remember having had in all his life before, and was put to bed in a clean, soft bed, instead of lying on straw.

But in London the neighbors of old Cheezer, finding that something was wrong, broke into the house on the Strand, and there, in the garden, they found the old miser buried head first in the hole with his ill-gotten gains, his feet sticking up in the air. The money that he had hoarded so greedily,

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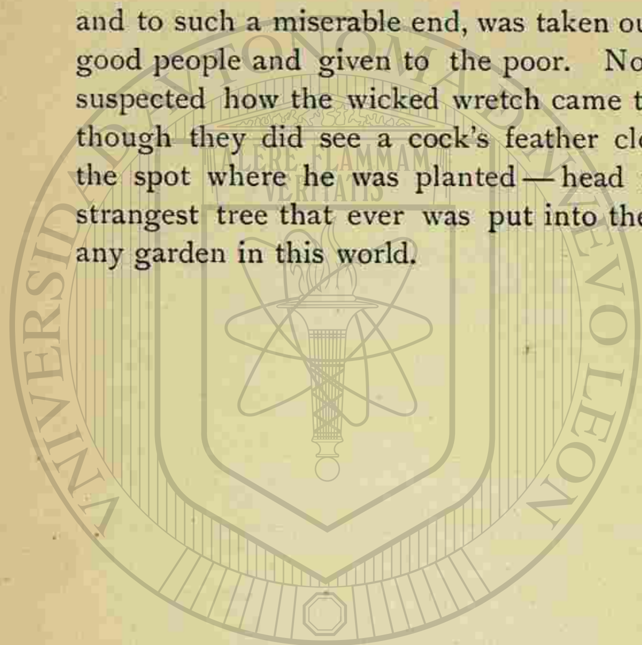
and to such a miserable end, was taken out by some good people and given to the poor. No one ever suspected how the wicked wretch came to his end, though they did see a cock's feather close beside the spot where he was planted — head first — the strangest tree that ever was put into the earth, in any garden in this world.



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THE ABBOT'S TROUT

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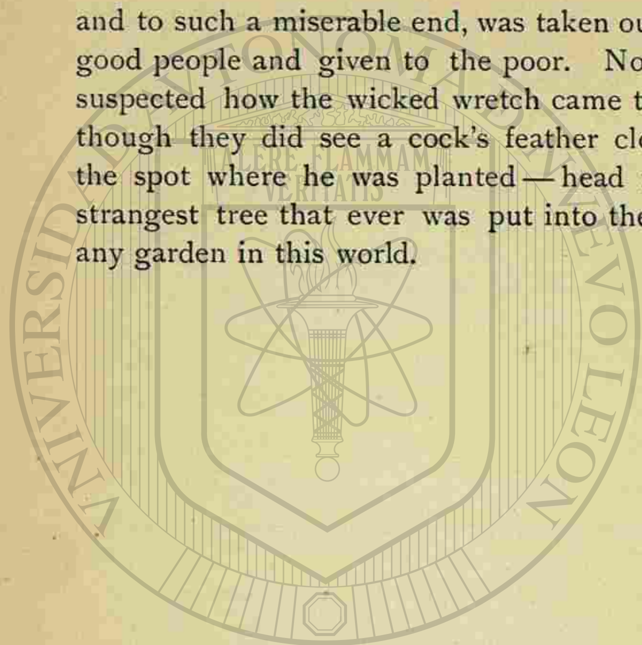

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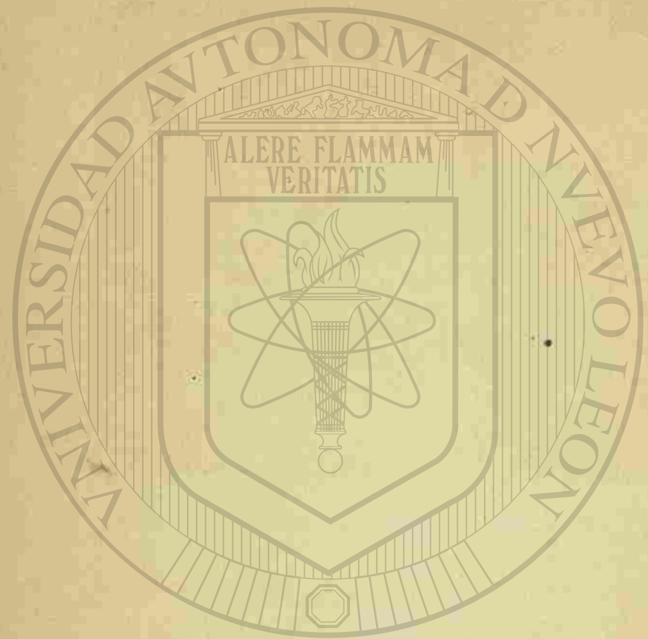

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WAS a fine summer day — many, many years ago — that the good Abbot of Buckfast went fishing. The waters of the river Dart ran close under the walls of the old Abbey of Buckfast, and then went winding through green meadows and beside fern-grown banks until they fed the Abbot's Pool, a black hollow in the river, famed for trout. And here, under the shadow of the trees, sat the abbot with his rod and line, a wicker basket for his fish, and a little brown jug, which he kept close at hand, quenching his

thirst with its contents — whatever that may have been — and there, too, was the fragment of a venison pasty which he had brought with him. The abbot was stout and comfortable-looking in his monk's frock, the cowl thrown back, and his bald pate shining in the midst of its fringe of hair; and the abbot's nose was red, and his little eyes had a merry twinkle as he cast his line into the still dark waters; for here, in this pool, the noisy river lay deep and placid, scarcely a ripple stirring its surface, and so smooth that the trees and the great ferns on the banks were mirrored in its bosom. Now, there were many, many trout in this quiet pool, and it was a rare thing to cast a line into it without catching one of the beautiful, silvery fishes; but this particular morning the good abbot fished in vain. He put the most tempting bait upon his hook and cast it enticingly into the water and waited patiently for a bite — but no, not a nibble. Once or twice, it is true, he certainly felt a most decided twitch at his line, but when he began to draw it in, there was nothing on the hook. He was very much surprised at his ill luck and changed his bait again and again, but all to no purpose; not a fish would bite, and the abbot began to be very

cross. It was warm, and he mopped his bald head and puffed and blew, and stared hard at the pool, for he could not imagine what had become of the fishes. Being so angry and so absorbed, too, he never noticed the astonishing thing that was happening right under his red nose; nothing less than the strangest gambols ever performed in so sober a place. All about the abbot grew the great fern of Devon, the Osmunda, its gigantic fronds waving gracefully down to the very water's edge, while behind him, the birches and the oaks towered together, making a deeply shadowed woodland; and out of this mass of foliage darted little figures, all dressed in green, matching the foliage so perfectly, indeed, that if the abbot had looked about, he would probably have thought that it was only a whirl of falling leaves instead of a troop of pixies scampering over the ferns and under them, dancing and leaping about in the most amazing fashion, and playing all manner of tricks with the abbot himself. They crept up behind him and tickled his ears and his bald head with blades of grass, and he, poor man, slapped the air frantically with his handkerchief, thinking that some kind of a gnat had got after him; then they jostled his elbow, two or three of

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them pushing it with all their might, and he fancied that there was a trout on his line and pulled it in eagerly, only to find his bait gone. Delighted with their success in tormenting the poor soul, the pixies laughed and danced in the wildest glee, and then one of them — bolder than his fellows — crept up to the abbot's little brown jug and tried to look in; but it was vastly taller than he, and he had to call two other fairies to help him, and they lifted him and bolstered him up against the jug until he could lean over the brim. No sooner was his head over the edge, however, than the fumes from within overcame him, and he lost his balance and fell in with a splash just as the abbot stretched out his hand and lifted the jug to his lips. The two pixies who had assisted the bold explorer to mount, stood aghast, gazing with horror as they saw their daring comrade vanish into the abbot's mouth. The last they saw was a little pair of green legs waving out of the abbot's throat. Then he set the little brown jug down empty, wiped his lips, and baiting his hook anew, cast his line. But, by this time, all the pixies had discovered the terrible fate of their venturesome comrade, and they ran shrieking into the covert of ferns, dreadfully frightened by such a fearful calamity.

But strange to relate, the abbot himself showed no sign of uneasiness, though he had just disposed of a live pixy at one gulp. He went on fishing with apparent satisfaction, and what was stranger still, he had no sooner swallowed the fairy than he began to feel a promising nibble at his bait, and, lo and behold, he jerked the line and drew in a beautiful fat trout, quite the largest that he had ever seen. The good man's eyes shone with pleasure as the lovely fish twisted and struggled on the hook, the sun shining on its beautiful silvery sides and making it appear doubly attractive. He caught it in his hand and weighed it carefully; certainly it was the largest fish, by a full pound, that had been caught that season, and a beauty, too, and he proceeded to unfasten the hook from its jaws. Then something amazing happened: the fish sat up on its tail, on the abbot's palm, and solemnly winked its left eye at him.

"Bless my soul!" cried the abbot, "how very extraordinary!" and he turned and reached for his jug for comfort; but his last drink had emptied it, and he set it down with a sigh and gazed long and earnestly at the fish.

The trout continued to sit bolt upright on its tail, and this time it winked its right eye.

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"Bottles and jugs!" exclaimed the abbot, forgetting himself altogether. "I must be bewitched!" and he dropped the fish into his basket, muttering a Latin phrase or two to scare off the witches.

Then he tried to think he had only imagined this strange behavior on the part of the trout, and he baited his hook anew, and tried to catch another such beauty. But the good man's luck was singular enough, and not another fish nibbled at his line that day. So, as the sun was setting in the valley of the Dart, the old abbot trudged home, through the green meadows, to Buckfast Abbey, with only one splendid trout in his basket, and his rod, and his empty brown jug. But all this while, he was secretly troubled at his extraordinary catch, for whenever he glanced into his basket that terrible fish sat there on its tail and winked! Yes, there was no doubt about it, it winked. The abbot tried not to notice it, for he thought he was bewitched, and it was very unbecoming in an abbot to be bewitched; but, in some way, he was quite fascinated by that fish, and he could not keep from looking at it, every minute or two, although its terribly knowing winks began to be really alarming, and if he had not been a fat old man as well as an abbot,

he would have thrown away both the basket and the fish, and run shrieking to the abbey. But at last the trying walk was at an end and he drew near his destination; but he did not feel equal to meeting the other monks just then, and he avoided the main entrance, where he saw several of his followers assembled, and actually sneaked off to the kitchen with his trout, only too anxious to get rid of it, and yet rather horrified at the notion of consigning such a creature to the frying-pan. He was met at the rear door by one of the poorer monks, who usually labored in the kitchen garden, and this good man — amazed at seeing the abbot so confused and out of breath, stumbling along to the kitchen — made a deep bow and offered to take the basket and rod.

"I see your reverence has been fishing," he said, "and I hope you 've had luck."

"Very poor luck indeed," replied the abbot crossly, thrusting the basket into the brother's hand with an eager haste that was quite unbecoming, "only one fish to-day."

"But certainly the finest fish of the year, my lord Abbot," exclaimed the monk, "a fish worthy to be cooked for your reverence's own supper."

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The abbot cast a horror-stricken look at the basket.

"I shall not eat fish tonight," he muttered, and positively ran toward the main entrance.

Much astonished at the abbot's curious behavior, and not heeding the fish, the good monk took the basket to the kitchen and handed it to the cook, that the trout might be prepared for the abbot's supper, for he had not understood his reverence's refusal to eat it.

The kitchen of the abbey was large and clean, the floor of stone, and the huge chimney filling all of one side of the room; and here there was a great roasting, and boiling, and baking, for supper was preparing for all the monks in Buckfast, as well as for the lord abbot. The cooks and the scullions were busy, and there was the clatter of dishes and the spitting and sizzling of frying fat, and a fragrant odor of venison, and roast duck, and fried chicken floated out of the windows; for the good monks of Buckfast loved to live well, and, in those days, abbeys were almost like hotels, so many travellers stopped there every day for food and rest, and it was the lord abbot's duty to shelter and entertain the stranger within his gates, whether he was poor

or rich. So in the hurry and bustle of preparation, the peculiarities of the trout were entirely overlooked, until the chief cook — a lay brother of great skill and judgment — whose duty it was to prepare the abbot's own meals, hastily picked up the fish with the intention of splitting it open to fry. The cook's broad red face glistened with heat, and his brawny arms were bare to the elbows, and as he brandished his knife he did not look like a man to be easily frightened; but when that strange trout calmly sat up on its tail in his hands, and began to wink one eye, the cook turned pale, and dropping the fish into the frying-pan, he threw away his knife and ran shrieking out of the kitchen. Then followed a great uproar, for it was thought that the chief cook had gone mad, and all the other cooks and scullions ran out after him, forgetting the meat on the spits and the half-baked pasties. All the cooks and scullions, I said, but I was wrong; not all; for a little boy, who played the part of scullion and errand boy and scrubber, stayed behind peering, in an amazed fashion, into the frying-pan. The abbot's trout — finding it uncomfortably hot — was dancing the wildest kind of a fandango on the very tip of his tail, all the while

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winking prodigiously at the frightened lad, who was alone to witness its antics. The boy caught his breath and gazed and gazed in the wildest astonishment.

"I be switched if I ever saw such a trout before!" cried little Joe, and, determined to save the fish from the fire, he snatched it out of the pan and flung it into a bowl of clear water.

Overjoyed to be in his own element, the trout went diving about the bowl, splashing and gurgling with delight; while the poor scullion boy looked on, in a fascinated way, too much amazed to move. At last the fish bobbed up above the surface and winked once more.

"Thank you, Joe, my dear," said this wonderful trout. "'T is astonishing how hot a frying-pan can be. You've done me a good turn, and I'll not forget it!"

Thoroughly frightened at being thus addressed by a fish, Joe did not know what to do, but he thought it best to be very polite.

"I'm glad I could help you, — Master Fish," he stammered; "pray tell me if I can do anything more."

At this the fish shut up both its eyes very tight

and laughed, which was so extraordinary that poor Joe began to think he was dreaming.

"Thank you, my dear lad," said the trout, in a superior way; "but really I can do more for you than you for me. At present, however, you may remove this bowl to that shady corner under the ivy, by the wall; I noticed it as I came in. The cooks will be back in a moment, and I don't care to be fried, — at least, not yet; besides, there will be a good deal of confusion to-night, for I rather think that the abbot is behaving oddly," and the fish laughed again.

Joe was far too much in awe of his singular acquaintance to think of disobedience, so he staggered out of the kitchen with the heavy bowl in his arms, and hid it away under the ivy before the cooks came trooping back again, drawn by the smell of burnt meat and pastry. The chief cook glanced timidly at the frying-pan, as if he expected something dreadful to appear in it, but finding it empty, and seeing no signs of the terrible fish, he set about his work again, scolding at the delay and the burnt meat as if he were not himself the cause of it all; but then, you know, some people are fond of laying their faults on the shoulders of other

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people. So the cook blustered, and ordered, and cuffed the scullions, especially poor little Joe, who always came in for a large share of abuse. He was a very poor boy, a little orphan, who had been picked up in the muddy streets of London by the abbot, on an occasion when the good man went up to visit the capital. It must have been for the king's coronation or a great religious festival, I think, for in those times it was quite a fearful journey from Buckfast to London, — it was so long, long ago, before King Henry the Eighth was crowned.

Poor little Joe! He knew neither father nor mother, he was found in the kennel, — a foundling, in fact, — and he would have had a terrible life if the abbot had not taken him back to Devonshire. But even at Buckfast, Joe had a hard life, all work and no play. From the first he had scrubbed the stone floors of the cloister house, and weeded the kitchen garden; he had carried wood for the fire when he was too small to split it, and he had washed the cook's dishes, and worked, day in and day out, until his hands were toilworn and his small face was old and sober. He had never had the sunshine and play of other children, never a loving word or a sweet caress, only blows, and hard discipline, and coarse fare, and his only joys had been to listen to the singing in the abbey, when the monks sang the masses, or to lean out of the windows and listen to the "cry" of the Dart as it swept past the walls, for in Devon the murmur and splash of the river was called the "cry." And Joe liked to look up at the sky and to count the stars, which he thought were holes in the sky, where the glory shone through. Not many joys certainly, for a little lad, but he did his best, and he was not wholly unhappy; but you may be sure that the night that he talked to the trout he never closed his eyes, but lay on his hard little bed staring out of the window opposite, and thinking of the strange fish, and longing for daybreak. And at the very first peep of dawn he jumped up, and throwing on his clothing, — very poor and coarse it was, — he ran softly down the narrow stone stair which led to the kitchen, and unfastened the door. It was so early that no one was stirring except the robins, and Joe heard them whistling sweetly in the trees as he crept out into the courtyard. He half expected to find that his wonderful trout had vanished — indeed, he was not quite sure that he had not been dreaming; but no, there was the fish sitting up in

the bowl, and waving its fins, as if they were arms. The strange creature spied Joe at once, and hailed him as an old friend.

"Dear me," he said, "how slow you are; it has been light nearly a week, I think, and you are just up."

"I'm sorry I kept your Worship waiting," stammered Joe; "but it's really early, for the fathers are not up for mass."

"Never mind," said the trout, good naturedly, "boys will be boys. Go get a basket and put some fresh ivy leaves in it and bring it here. Be quick now, for this bowl is really a fearfully stupid place."

Quite bewildered at these strange orders, but afraid to disobey, Joe hurried off and soon returned with a basket lined with fresh ivy leaves. And to his amazement, as he approached the bowl, the trout turned a somersault through the air and dropped into his basket. Joe could not help giving a little squeal of surprise, and then the fish laughed — a gurgling, fishy laugh, but still a laugh — and Joe felt his hair rising on top of his head, but he put a brave face on the matter, and held tight on to the handle of the basket. But it was almost too much even for his courage when, the next minute, the fish

began to mutter some strange charm, and Joe felt his feet lifted from the ground, and he began to float through the air — basket, and trout, and all. To tell the truth, the boy was dreadfully frightened, but he would not confess it — and least of all to a fish; so he set his teeth and held tight on to the basket, while he floated along, very rapidly, too, over the green fields by the river, through the wooded valley, and up, up over the tors, the gray craggy hills that cropped up everywhere. He was dizzy at first, but as he never went more than three or four feet up in the air, he got over that, but he could not imagine what was going to happen next; and when he looked at the fish it was placidly fanning itself with its tail amongst the ivy leaves. Joe began to wish that he had left it in the frying-pan or the bowl, at the abbey; but it was too late for regrets, so he only tried to keep up his courage and be ready for anything that might happen next; but it was really amazing to go floating through the air, without knowing how you did it, with a talking fish for a companion. What did happen next was that Joe suddenly came down very hard on his feet, so hard that he lost his balance and sat down, overturning the basket in his fall, and the fish began to scold very loudly.

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"You great, stupid boy," it shrieked, "you bumped me out on my nose. What do you mean by such awkwardness? I've a great mind to leave you alone to be cuffed and worked all your life!"

Poor Joe apologized very humbly, putting the indignant trout back into the basket, and arranging the ivy leaves with such care that the creature was finally restored to a good humor. Then the boy looked about him and did not recognize the place; it must have been a long distance from the abbey, though they had not been long in coming. Out here was a wide, smooth stretch of country, little broken by tors or wooded land, a beautiful green spot; and only a little way off was a great house of gray stone, mantled with ivy, and behind it were pasture lands, with cattle grazing, and an orchard, and some fields of grain. Joe rubbed his eyes and looked at it in amazement; where could he be? But the voice of the fish aroused him from his wonder.

"If you do as I tell you," said the trout, "you will be a fortunate boy. Take me in this basket and go to that house; on the south side is the rose garden, and there you will find Lady Gilbert; offer me for sale, and you will see what will happen."

A little doubtful after his last experience, but still

very curious, Joe obeyed; and sure enough, there in the rose garden he found a sweet-faced gentlewoman walking to and fro, looking at the flowers. At first, she did not see the boy, but presently she looked up and smiled.

"What do you want, my lad?" she asked, in the kindest voice that Joe had ever heard.

"If you please, madam," stammered Joe, "will you buy a fish?" and he gave an anxious look at his basket expecting to see the trout cutting a pigeon-wing; but the knowing creature lay as quietly as possible on the green leaves, quite the finest fish out of water.

"What a beautiful trout," said Lady Gilbert, looking at it in admiration. "Where did you catch it, my child?"

At this Joe turned very red and stared at the fish for help, and, to his amazement, he heard a voice like his own replying.

"It came out of the Abbot's Pool, my lady," the fish answered for him.

"Out of the Abbot's Pool," she cried, in surprise, quite unconscious of the trick that had just been played upon her; "you cannot mean the pool near Buckfast, child! Why, 't is very, very far off — two

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days' journey, at least — and this fish is just out of water."

"It did come out of the Abbot's Pool though," said Joe stubbornly, speaking for himself this time.

Lady Gilbert shook her head. "I fear you are not a truthful boy," she remarked sadly; "tell me faithfully, child, who are you?"

The lad looked up at the kind face — the sweetest he had ever seen — and spoke from his heart, for he greatly admired this lovely woman and he wanted her to believe in him.

"I am only Joe," he said; "'Joe the Foundling,' they call me at Buckfast Abbey, because the abbot found me in the street in London, when I was only a baby. I am the kitchen boy there, madam. I scrub the floors, and wash the pans, and turn the meat on the hempen cord, when it is roasting, and I weed the cook's garden, and carry the wood, and draw the water, and, sometimes, I help rub down the abbot's mules, and I run errands, too — I do all I can."

"Dear me, you do a good deal, poor child," said my lady, kindly, "and I see how toil-worn your hands are, and how tired you look; but child, child, how *could* you bring that fish from the Abbot's Pool to me?" and she shook her head in doubt.

Poor Joe did not know how to convince her, and again he regretted that he had ever seen the fish.

"I did bring it," he stammered; "but I came in the strangest way, — indeed, my lady, I do not think you would believe me if I told you how I really did come. And I want you to believe me," he added sadly, "because I never saw any one so good and so beautiful before — and no one ever spoke so kindly to me."

She smiled a little at this. "I'm afraid you are a flatterer, Joe," she said; "but, indeed, my child, I will believe you, if I can; but tell me how you came?"

And then, determined not to be balked by the fish, Joe set the basket on the ground and told the whole strange story, from the beginning, when he saw the fish in the frying-pan. Lady Gilbert listened very kindly and patiently, but I am afraid she did not believe the story, or thought that Joe had dreamed it; and I do not know quite what she would have done, if something had not happened which convinced her that the boy told the truth. He had scarcely finished his tale, when lo, the fish rose up in the basket and bowed to Lady Gilbert. She gave a little cry of surprise and stepped back,

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but the next minute she was more amazed still, for the shining, silvery, speckled skin of the trout began to shrivel and curl up, like burnt paper, and out of the remnants rose the most charming little pixy, all dressed in green, with a gray cock's feather in his cap — which was the green cup of a young acorn. Both Joe and Lady Gilbert were too much amazed to say anything, and stood looking at the dainty apparition in wide-eyed bewilderment. Seeing their dismay, the pixy gave way to the merriest of merry laughter, and bowed low to each, with his hand on his heart.

"You both seem a little surprised, dear Lady Gilbert and dear Joe," said the fairy; "yet I do not see why you should be. We pixies are so fond of a little fun, and the abbot is so easy to tease, that we often do fret the old gentleman for a day or two; and as it came in my way to do you both a service, I stayed in my fish skin to pay you a visit."

"You are kind, I am sure," Lady Gilbert replied, very much embarrassed; "but you are the first pixy I ever saw, and it is a surprise."

The fairy smiled kindly upon her. "You may not have seen us," he retorted, "but we have always liked you, and we know how you have grieved over

the loss of your children, and your lonely life here, while Sir Humphrey Gilbert is away at court and fighting those horrid battles; so for a long time we have been considering some plan of helping you, and, at last, I believe I 've hit on the very thing."

"I am grateful for your good-will," she replied; "all my life, I have heard of the pixies, or hill folk, and it is really a pleasure to see one. And such a charming one, too," she added, with her sweetest smile.

The pixy laid his hand on his heart. "Madam," he said, "the pleasure is more on my side than yours. My name is Good Deeds, dear Lady Gilbert, and when I saw how poor and — excuse me — how dirty and miserable little Joe was, I thought of you. Here is a page for my lady, I thought, and one she can teach, and take care of, and help." With these words the pixy suddenly touched little Joe with a wand of green willow wood, and the poor, coarse, patched clothing fell away, and there stood the boy, clad in the daintiest and richest of page's suits. A doublet of blue velvet, with ruffles of lace, and long silk hose, and velvet shoes with big gold buckles, and a cap of blue velvet with a white plume, and Joe's hair, that had been rough and tangled, fell

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now in glossy curls, and you would never have known him for the same boy who worked in the abbey kitchen. The little scullion looked like the son of a prince, and he was really handsome, though no one had ever seen it before — or looked for it. Lady Gilbert laughed and clapped her hands with pleasure.

"Well done, and well done, little Good Deeds!" she cried, "here is the finest page in all England, and I fear the queen will take him away from me, if ever she sees him."

But Joe — suddenly transformed from an awkward kitchen boy into a courtly lad — knelt on one knee at her feet.

"Nay, my dear lady," he said very earnestly, "if I may be your page, and grow up in your household, not even the queen shall ever get me away! For all my fine clothes, I am only little Joe the Foundling, and I will never forget the first kind words that were ever spoken to me."

"That 's right," put in the pixy; "fine feathers do *not* make fine birds, and if you don't behave you will be quite as hateful in velvet as you would be in serge."

"I will do my best," replied Joe, "and no one

can do more; but, perhaps, Lady Gilbert does not want a scullion boy for a page," he added, hanging his head, for he thought of the hard work and hard blows with a sinking heart, after this peep at something better; but Lady Gilbert set his mind at rest.

"Indeed you shall be my own little page," she said kindly, "and when you grow up you shall follow my husband, Sir Humphrey, to court. We will make a man of you yet, little Joe, and I will see the good abbot about it, so that no one will be displeased."

The little boy kissed her hand and then turned to thank the pixy, but Good Deeds had disappeared, as completely as if he had never existed, and they would have doubted that he ever had, if they had not heard the ripple of merry laughter off in the distance.

And this was the beginning of Joe's good fortune. He became Lady Gilbert's page, living in comfort in the great house, and learning to do many useful things; and when he was older, he went with Sir Humphrey, as she had said, and was trained for a soldier, as all boys were trained in those days; and he did his duty so well, and was so wise, and honest, and brave, that the Gilberts came to love him like a

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son, and after a while, they really did adopt him. So it was that from such a small thing, — a little kindness to a fish, — poor Joe, the neglected, sad, friendless foundling, won a home, and a fortune, and a great name, for Sir Humphrey gave him his own, and Joe was careful never to disgrace it.

But what happened after Joe left the Abbey of Buckfast, where the poor old abbot had swallowed a pixy alive? Ah, thereby hangs a tale; but it is such a long one that it must be told all by itself — the story of the Madness of the Abbot of Buckfast.

THE MADNESS OF THE ABBOT OF BUCKFAST

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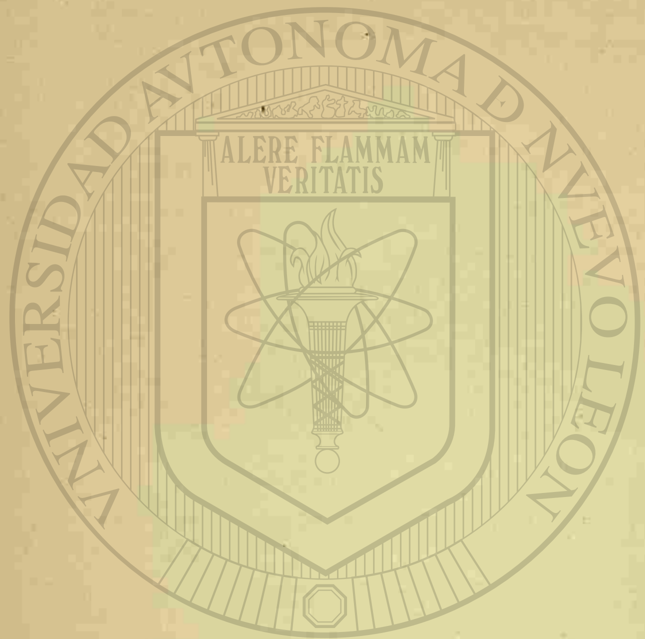

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HE fact has been related that the Abbot of Buckfast went fishing, and that — after a day of unsuccessful angling — while quenching his thirst from his little brown jug, he accidentally swallowed a live pixy. Quite unconscious of his horrible deed, the abbot, at first, felt no ill effects, and proceeded as usual to the abbey with the solitary trout that he had caught. It was a little before the hour for supper, when the good man arrived, somewhat tired and out of breath, but otherwise giving no signs of any change; but it was not long before his behavior created a great deal of

amazement. In the first place, he had been seen to run from the kitchen door to the main entrance, and it was very unusual for the abbot to do anything so undignified as running; and as he weighed something like two hundred and fifty pounds and was very short, he was not exactly made for an athlete. But this first little race was only the beginning of his queer doings. He went into the church, to assist at the vespers, and, lo and behold, when the services were over, the good fathers were amazed to see their superior gather up the skirts of his monkish frock, and, taking a hand-spring over the chancel rail, caper down the aisle in the most extraordinary fashion, his fat sides shaking and his cheeks quivering with the exercise. The monks did not know what to make of it, but they dared not remonstrate with the lord abbot, and they all flocked meekly out of church and stood gazing blankly at him, as he capered over the close-trimmed lawn, as gay as a lambkin, but presenting such a strange picture that the others began to smile a little, and one or two had to smother their laughter. Up and down bounced the fat little man, hither and yon, and he even stood on one toe and pirouetted in a marvellous manner, with the other foot describ-

ing a circle in the air. This was too much to bear; it was not only ridiculous but it was very unbecoming, and quite a crowd had gathered to look on, while every window in the abbey was full, and the cooks and the scullions came out to stare. It was too bad, and the subprior, a good old man who came next to the abbot in authority, felt that it was his duty to remonstrate.

"My lord Abbot," he whispered, approaching the dancer, "I prithee, remember who you are — and where you are! It is really unseemly — and your reverence knows how people will talk."

"Tra la!" sang the abbot, standing up on one toe and flinging the other foot high in the air, "tra la, Father Eustace, let's go to the moon!"

"Bless my soul!" cried the subprior, falling back aghast, "the abbot is certainly mad!"

And as he spoke, the fat abbot whirled around on his toe and kissed his hand to the bystanders with the most fascinating wink.

"Now you shall see me go to the moon!" he cried, and tucking up his gown, so that his very fat legs were quite plainly seen, the abbot capered over the grass and — to the horror and amazement of the monks — began to creep up the side of a tall oak.

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He clasped the tree firmly with his knees and started to ascend in a time-honored, but not very graceful fashion; but alas! the abbot was very, very fat, and it was long since he had clambered up a tree in that boyish style, and — well, he came down plump on his fat back, and sprawled on the grass, uttering a succession of sharp little squeals, that were not only undignified, but also very unnatural, for they sounded like the shrieks of an extremely young pig. But for all that, the good fathers were relieved to be able to pick him up and hustle him off into the cloister-house, out of sight, for they were in a terrible quandary. A dancing abbot in such a sober place! such a thing had never been heard of! And what in the world had he been doing to get into such a happy state? A committee of grave old gentlemen went and examined the little brown jug, for something seemed to tell them that this might be at the bottom of the whole mischief, but nothing ever looked more innocent than that same little empty brown jug, and the delicious odor that clung to it was far from displeasing to the reverend fathers, and so the jug was formally acquitted of all guilt in the premises. Beyond a doubt, the lord abbot was bewitched, and the best thing that could

be done was to try to cast out the demon. Meanwhile, the abbot himself had entirely recovered from the effects of his fall, and seemed a little sobered by the experience; so when they all met in the great hall, where the supper was spread, he appeared quite himself, and the brethren began to breathe more freely, though the subprior still kept a watchful eye upon him.

There were several tables spread; one on the dais, or platform, at the end of the refectory, was for the lord abbot, the subprior, and any guest of honor; another long table for the monks, and a third for the lay brothers — that means members of the community who were not in orders. In the centre of each table was a huge salt-cellar, and those who sat above it were of higher rank than those who sat below. Have you never heard the phrase, "Below the salt"? It used to be quite a common one, and it meant the humble places at a banquet.

Well, the lord abbot ate his supper soberly enough; I suspect that he was quite black and blue, for you know he was not used to falling about in the fashion that he had done on the lawn, and he must have been bruised. The monks were all so

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relieved at his return to quiet ways, that they ate heartily and talked pleasantly, and began to forget all about it, for we always do try to forget things that are unpleasant to remember. Matters were going on quite as usual, the meal was almost over, the tapers had been lighted, and the great refectory looked as cheerful and neat as heart could wish, and the brethren were smiling over a rather old story of the subprior's, when suddenly all their pleasure was spoiled. The abbot rose, with the wildest kind of a giggle, and took a hand-spring clear over the table, and began to cut a pigeon-wing in the centre of the hall. The monks laid down their knives — they had no forks in those days — and stared in consternation, while Father Eustace bustled down from the dais and tried to quiet the reverend dancer.

"My lord Abbot, my lord Abbot!" he cried, "this is most unseemly — I prithee, remember! If you are —"

"Fudge, Father Eustace!" cackled the abbot, winking his eye at the subprior, "what is the matter with you? Come, let us dance and be merry!

"'Tra la, and tra lore,
You stupid old bore!'"

he sang, pointing his finger at his friend, and performing another fandango.

Poor Father Eustace was decidedly hurt at this unkind remark, and he could not help hearing a sly titter from behind him; but the good man was too worried over the abbot to heed it. He wrung his hands in despair.

"He is certainly mad!" he cried, "my Lord of Buckfast is certainly raving mad! Woe is me!"

The poor soul's grief was so genuine that it would have touched a stone, and it really did sober the rest of the monks, who had hardly suppressed their mirth at the sight of their superior capering about on the light fantastic toe; but it had no effect on the hardened old abbot. No, indeed; what do you think he did? Well, he took the skirt of his long frock between a forefinger and thumb on either side, he held it out as far as he possibly could, and he whirled around and around on his toes. Every little girl knows just how to do it; around and around, as fast as you can spin, and then drop suddenly, with your skirts puffed up and widely extended about you. It is called making a cheese. That is exactly what the Abbot of Buckfast did, in the centre of his own refectory, and in the presence

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of all his community. Dear, dear, how shocking it was! The subprior staggered back and sank on a settle, almost in a dead faint, and the graver and older men stood up, horrified at the spectacle; but I am afraid a few of the younger ones laughed behind their hands, for it certainly was the most amusing sight, — the fat old abbot spinning around, and then suddenly dropping flat on the floor.

Whether this last wild feat was too much for the abbot, or whether there was really a terrible change in his feelings, will never be known, but certain it is, that his high spirits suddenly drooped, his eyes lost their twinkle, even his nose grew pale, and he clasped his hands to his stomach with a fearful squeal. The monks hurried to his assistance, for no one could mistake his evident anguish.

"What ails your reverence?" they anxiously inquired. "Is your lordship ill?"

But the abbot made no reply; he only rocked to and fro, squealing very much like a pig, and now and then doubling up with a spasm of pain.

"He is ill!" cried the subprior, recovering from his weakness, "that accounts for it all! Is your reverence in pain?"

"Oh, oh, oh!" squealed the abbot, shaking his fat

fists at Father Eustace. "You 've put something live in my food, you hoary old villain! I've swallowed a porcupine, I certainly have!" and he rocked himself in his misery and shrieked at the top of his lungs, his face growing redder and redder every moment, and his eyes bulging out of his head.

Old Father Squills, the physician of the abbey, now came to his aid, and declared that the abbot must be carried up to his bed, and be blistered and bled and dieted according to his directions; and, in spite of the patient's squeals, he was carried off by four stout brothers and put to bed. But alas, this was only the beginning: his case was far from yielding to the treatment of Father Squills, or any other father in the abbey, and he became so violent and so savage that the brethren began to tremble and believed that their superior had been bewitched. Whenever they approached him, he screamed and made grimaces at them and pelted them with his pillows, his sandals, his bottles of drugs, everything, indeed, that he could lay his hands on. At last, the affair waxed so alarming that it was decided to summon all the great doctors within reach, and messages were accordingly sent hither and thither, and every physician in the kingdom was called to see

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the wonderful case of the Abbot of Buckfast. But it took a long time to travel from place to place, and not all these grave personages could respond to the invitation, but five great doctors did come, three from London and two from places nearer Buckfast; and one fine morning they all arrived — these learned and important doctors — and with them a poor young physician, an assistant of the most famous of all, Dr. Killemsure. The older ones all came riding on horses or mules, richly clad in velvet or silk, with gold chains around their necks, and long cloaks of rich stuffs, and they were received with all due ceremony and respect, and ushered into the room where the reverend patient was sitting up in bed, making faces and pelting his attendants. As soon as the great physicians entered, that dreadful old abbot let fly a bolster — with such skill and exactness of aim that he hit Dr. Killemsure fairly on the nose — and then he squealed with delight. Quite naturally, the physicians decided at once that he was raving mad, and ordered him to be bound while they made their examination. Accordingly, the abbot was tied in bed, where he screamed and kicked while the sages gravely consulted, and poked and prodded him in

every tender part of his body. They looked at his tongue and the whites of his eyes; they felt his pulse and pounded his chest; but still it was evident that they could not agree. One thought it was this, and another swore it was that, and the dispute was hot and long. Only the young physician, Michael Twopenny, said nothing, but closely watched the patient, and it was thus that he, and he alone, saw the strange thing that happened. For, while the doctors argued and disputed, the abbot was quite unnoticed, and all of a sudden, the fat old gentleman sneezed — sneezed tremendously — raising the echoes, and out of his mouth hopped a little creature all dressed in green. Quick as a flash, young Dr. Twopenny pounced on this tiny thing, and thrusting it deep into a green bag he carried, drew up the strings and tied them securely.

And now a wonderful change took place. The abbot came to himself; in fact, he was completely restored in an instant, and wanted to know the meaning of it all, and the great doctors were as much at a loss to explain his recovery as they had been to understand his disease. There was a good deal of grumbling and growling among them at being called from such a distance for nothing;

and it took all the abbot's diplomacy, and a splendid dinner in the refectory, and plenty of good wine from the cellars of Buckfast, to put them in a pleasant humor again. But while the great men were being entertained, no one remembered the humble young leech — they called a doctor a leech then — Master Michael Twopenny. He had offered no opinion about the abbot's disease, and he made no comments on his recovery; but, being no longer needed, he quietly departed with his green bag under his cloak, and rode off to his own home at Dartmouth.

This same young Michael Twopenny, the son of poor but worthy people, was struggling hard to make his living, and was really a very good doctor; but I am afraid that most of his patients were extremely poor people — sailors and fishermen, and their families, living in the old seaport of Devon — and those that were not so poor were extremely forgetful about paying the doctor. Michael's purse was usually slim and his doublet threadbare; but, for all that, he was very popular, and he had few ill-wishers, for he had a kind heart and a cheerful way, and was always ready to do for others, no matter how little they did for him. But just at this

time he was very unhappy. He had set his heart on a charming young girl who lived in his neighborhood, but the charming young girl had a father that was anything but charming, — the wealthy brewer, Jacobius Duds. The brewer was not a bad man in his way; but he was enormously rich, and excessively proud of his wealth and his own importance. He had built himself a great house of stone on High Street, a house with oriel windows, supported by quaintly carved brackets which represented monstrous dolphins, and lighted by many diamond panes, which he had imported from France, for window-glass was rare in those days. The walls of his house were hung with rich tapestries, and he had many luxuries which made his poorer neighbors stare with envy; and Master Duds himself had grown to be very overbearing, and puffed up with his riches, and he looked down with contempt on the poor young surgeon across the street who had dared to lift his eyes to his daughter, the lovely Mistress Dolly Duds. His daughter, he said, should marry a prince or a duke, at the very least, and he'd see that threadbare young scamp of a saw-bones in the bottom of one of his hogsheads of beer before he gave him Dolly Duds. As for Mistress Dolly her-

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self, though I fear she was rather vain of her wealth, and wore the most marvellous lot of fine clothes, still she had smiled across the way at poor Michael, and she did sometimes loiter on her way home when the young doctor met her — quite by chance, of course — at the other end of the street. In fact, as the princes and dukes in the vicinity were rather scarce, Mistress Dolly grew very friendly, and smiled until all the dimples showed in her rosy cheeks. Once she even threw a rosebud out of the window to young Master Twopenny, and alas, that rosebud caused a great deal of woe; for the brewer chanced to be coming home just at that moment, and he flew into a terrible rage and vowed that he would shut Dolly up and feed her on bread and water, if she ever spoke to her poor admirer again. What was worse, he was as good as his word, and the lovely Dolly spent the next week in a little room high up in a turret at the back of the house, where she could not get even a peep at her neighbors across the street; and though I do not think she exactly lived on bread and water, yet I am afraid that her fare was unusually plain, and she passed a good deal of her time in crying with vexation, while poor young Twopenny raged and stormed

at the door in vain, and the hard-hearted brewer laughed him to scorn.

Matters had reached this state, when the abbot's illness caused such a sensation, and young Dr. Twopenny went with his friend and master, Dr. Killemsure, to the Abbey of Buckfast, and, as we know, it was Michael who bagged the pixy, and carried it safely home to his lodgings in Dartmouth. Before he proceeded any farther, however, he rushed over to the great house opposite to inquire for the lovely Dolly; but it was all to no purpose. The footman turned him away with a sneer and a stare at his threadbare suit, and old Duds shook his fist out of his window at him, and told him to hire himself out for a scarecrow, for he was certainly dressed like one and not like a suitor for the great and lovely Mistress Duds. Angry and mortified, Michael went back to his lodgings, and sat down to a frugal supper with such a sad heart that he entirely forgot the abbot and his illness, until his eyes suddenly alighted on the green bag lying in the corner, where he had tossed it. In a moment his interest revived, for, though they did not talk so much about microbes then, he probably imagined that he had something very like a microbe in that bag, or, per-

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haps, he would have called it a "porwiggle," for that is what they called tadpoles many, many years ago in England. Whatever his thoughts may have been, he straightway picked up the bag, and cautiously — very cautiously — untied the strings, intending to shake the creature out into a bowl that he had set on the table; but no sooner had he untied the string than — whiz! — out flew the pixy, and, whirling around on one leg, it flounced itself down on the table, very much as the abbot had done on the floor of the refectory. Michael jumped back in no little alarm, and stood staring at the tiny, green-clad figure in the greatest amazement. Seeing his dismay, the pixy laughed.

"Hello!" he said; "how do you do, Master Twopenny? And how's Mistress Dolly?" he added, with a tremendous wink.

"My stars!" cried the young physician; "and you came out of the abbot's mouth? Well, well, I'm not at all surprised that the poor old gentleman had the colic!"

"Te he!" laughed the pixy; "but did n't I have a fine time, though I know all my friends are in mourning, for I heard them shriek when I took a header down the abbot's throat. In fact, I've got

to hurry off now to reassure them; but, before I go, I will give you a little help and advice. It makes a fellow benevolent to get out of the inside of an abbot. I can tell you, it's not a pleasant place to be!"

"I am sure I shall be very grateful for your good offices," responded Michael, with a smile, for he did not believe the pixy could help him; "but I fear there is not much for you to do."

"Oh, is n't there?" cried the pixy, with a knowing look. "But how about Mistress Dolly?"

Master Twopenny turned very red. "I am certain that you cannot do anything for her," he replied stiffly.

"Can't I?" said the fairy. "Well, we shall see, young man, we shall see. Here is a phial with a precious ointment in it," he added, pointing to a tiny bottle of clear liquid that suddenly rose out of the table; "when you are called to cure Master Duds, use that, and your fortune is made, — that is, if you have any wit."

Michael rubbed his eyes and stared at the phial; where in the world did it come from? He took it up and felt of it, and, yes, sure enough, it was solid and real, and its contents exhaled a most delightful odor. But there was one thing past belief.

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"I never shall be called to attend old Duds!" he declared, "never! and more, he 's not even ill."

"Oh, yes, he is," cried the pixy, laughing, "and with a complaint that will puzzle the doctors, for my half-brother, Special Torment, has been pinching his nose all the day."

"He was well enough to insult me an hour ago!" said Michael, indignantly.

"Don't be a fool," replied the other; "he 's ill, I tell you; and, after all the other doctors have failed, he will send for you. Apply the ointment to the tip of his nose, and then demand Mistress Dolly to be your wife."

"Pshaw!" cried young Twopenny. "It would take ten bottles of magic to take the color out of that nose, — and ten thousand to make him give me Dolly!"

"Oh, very well!" retorted the pixy. "If you don't believe me, don't try; but if you 're not a goose, you will do what I say. Good-bye, Master Michael, and good luck!" And with this, before the young doctor could interfere, the little creature darted out of the window and vanished from sight.

What was more amazing, in half an hour, Michael

heard a great uproar across the street. Servants were running this way and that, the doctor was called and the parish priest, and in a short time, the whole town was astir over the fearful illness of the brewer, the great and wealthy Jacobius Duds. For Master Duds was ill with a very strange disease. Scarcely had he shaken his fist at poor young Dr. Twopenny, when his nose began to swell, and then his face and his head followed suit, and, if you will believe me, by evening Jacobius's head was quite as big as one of his own hogsheads, and his face was so swollen that his eyes had entirely disappeared, and he could only bellow a few words at a time. In fact, he was a most shocking and fearful sight, and no one could bear to look at him, and no one — not the greatest doctor of all — knew what to do, though he had summoned all those who went to Buckfast, and a great many more; and as he was so wealthy they all came, as fast as they could, and in a week the town of Dartmouth was as full of doctors as a beehive of bees, and yet poor old Jacobius sat there with a head like a hogshead, bellowing with pain and rage, and not one of them could help him the least bit in the world. Then it was that Dolly Duds, having escaped from her imprisonment, in-

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sisted upon smuggling in the young doctor from over the way; for like many other young women before and since, pretty Dolly had more faith in her lover than other people had, and she thought what a grand thing it would be if he — her own despised Dr. Twopenny — should be the one to cure her father, after all. So, strange to relate, the pixy's prophecy came true, and Michael was summoned to attend the brewer, and you may be sure that he came in a hurry, and that he had a certain wonderful phial down in his pocket. As Jacobius could not see, he made no objection to Michael's approach, and only bellowed with pain as usual, and the young doctor — without a word — quietly opened the phial and gently rubbed the tip of the brewer's nose with the delicately scented ointment. To tell the truth, Michael was himself a little doubtful of the result, so fancy his amazement when the swelling began to subside at once, and in ten minutes the patient was as well as ever, and sat staring in amazement at the physician who could achieve such a miracle. But when he discovered who it was — the despised and shabby young Twopenny — he began to growl in a most ungrateful way, for no sooner was he free of the pain, than he began to forget all he had suffered,

and was only anxious to be rid of this audacious neighbor of his.

"So!" he said, cross as a bear, "'t was you who cured me. 'Pon my word, these physicians must be very poor beggars indeed, to be beaten by a pin-feather boy like you; but here, — Dolly, you minx, give me my purse — now, what do you want, sir? Name your price and be off!"

This was Michael's opportunity, and remembering his friend the pixy, he bowed gravely to old Master Duds and waved back the purse.

"Money will not pay me," he said proudly, with a glance at the blushing Dolly, who stood behind her father's chair. "I have cured you of a dreadful complaint, Master Duds, and I will be paid only in one way."

"Pretzels and beer!" snapped the brewer, with a fearful frown. "Hear the young cub! But name your price, Sir Twopenny; no one shall say that I would n't pay."

"Your daughter, Mistress Dorothy Duds for my wife — that is the price, sir," said Michael firmly.

Dear me, you ought to have heard the fearful roar and bellow that came from old Duds! He jumped up from his chair and fairly danced with

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rage, shaking his fists and blowing out his cheeks, and stamping about like one possessed, while poor Dolly was so frightened that she nearly fainted away, and, if the truth be told, Michael felt rather shaky at the knees, but he kept a bold front.

"The impudent wretch! The saucy varlet!" screamed Jacobius, choking with rage and sputtering — like the end of a candle in the socket — "my daughter — my *daughter!* I'd drown her in beer first! Get out of my sight, you young beast, get out of my sight! I swear that I'd go with my head as big as a church before I'd give you Dolly Duds!"

And he danced and screamed, and picking up his great gold-headed staff that he carried to church, he chased Michael out of the room and down the stairs, screaming and bellowing all the way, while the servants looked on and laughed and sneered at the beggarly young doctor from over the way, and poor little Dolly cried until her nose was red, and gave up all hope of her lover's success. But there's an old adage, that pride comes before a fall, and the proud old brewer was destined to have one. Scarcely had Michael shut the door of his own humble lodgings, before Master Duds felt some fearful pangs in the tip of his nose, and, to his horror, it began to

swell and puff and the more he bellowed the larger it grew, and then his face and his head followed suit, at such an alarming rate that it really seemed as if he would have a head as big as a church. You see, he had rejoiced too soon, before the cure was complete, or else that wicked little pixy had been up to his tricks again. However it was, poor old Jacobius — for we cannot help pitying him, cross as he was, — found his last state worse than his first, and he raved, and bellowed, and used some very hard words, but all to no purpose, for he would not send for that impudent young wretch, not he! He sent, instead, for all the fine doctors who had failed before, and he sent for others besides, and he called them fools, and gumps, and drivelling idiots, because they could not cure him, but — horror of horrors — he kept on swelling! And now, he was such an awful sight that all the townspeople came to see, and fought at the doors for a peep at the brewer with the swelled head; for you must know that such a thing as a circus was unheard of in those old times, and poor Jacobius was almost as good as a side show to the town of Dartmouth. The news of his fearful affliction spread far and wide, and by the end of the week, people were coming from the whole country-side to

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see, and when they heard of his boast to the poor young doctor they wagged their heads. What would he do, if he did swell up as big as a church?

But the end was near; between swelling and burning old Jacobius was nearly broken down, and at last he sent to beg the despised Dr. Twopenny to come, and he offered him half his fortune if he would come and cure him. But no, Michael said, — Dolly Duds or nothing at all — and slammed his door on the nose of the servant who had sneered at him only a week ago. You can imagine how Master Duds raved at the answer, and declined to accept the terms; but that night he kept on swelling and — mercy! by morning his head was so big that it had to be propped up with posts a foot thick, to keep it from breaking his neck in two. Then he gave up and sent for Michael. He should marry Dolly and have the finest wedding in the world if he would come and come quick! Of course the young doctor went with his magical bottle and coolly anointed the tip of Jacobius's nose, and at once the swelling subsided, his head grew small, and he felt as well as ever. This time he was really grateful, so grateful that he grabbed Michael by both hands, and danced, and capered, and laughed for joy,

and sending for Dolly, he ordered a very fine dinner, and invited the town to meet his future son-in-law.

And the old man was true to his word. He gave Dolly the finest wedding that had ever taken place in Dartmouth. The streets were illuminated, flags were flying, bands played, and barrels of beer were opened before the brewer's door, that all the town might make merry. There was a beautiful ceremony in the church, and garlands of flowers, and a procession of boys and girls, all dressed in white, and a great banquet for rich and poor, and no end of rejoicings. A great many people thought they saw some strange little green figures dancing about in the wildest glee, but no one was sure.

As for Michael, he grew so famous from this wonderful cure that patients flocked to his door, and he and Dolly became great people, and did a great deal of good with the money the brewer gave her for her wedding portion; and old Jacobius was so fond and proud of his celebrated son-in-law, the wise physician, that he could not do enough to make amends for his past treatment of him. And they all lived happy ever after, thanks to the pixy that the abbot swallowed.

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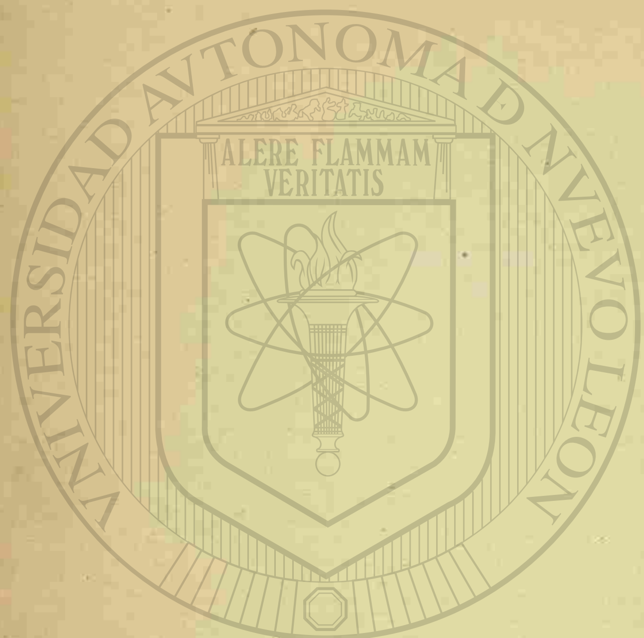

TOMMY THE BAD

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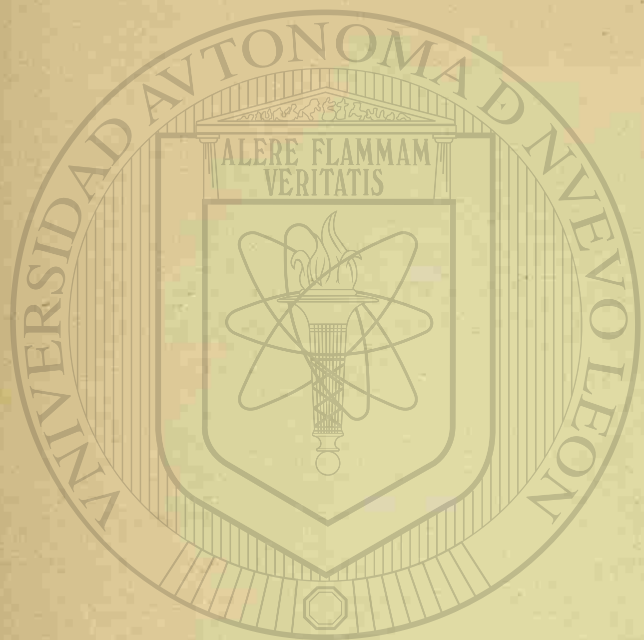

THERE lived in England, once upon a time, a little boy named Thomas Teazer, but that was not the name by which he was really known in the county where he lived. All those who knew him best, his old friends and his kindred and neighbors, called him "Tommy the Bad," and they had good reason to do so, for he was certainly a bad boy, and a great nuisance in the neighborhood. If there was any mischief going on Tommy was usually at the bottom of it, or the top, and he was quite as sure to be in any naughtiness. He was a perfect terror to all the old women, and as for the dogs, and the cats, and the chickens, they fled at the sight of him. Perhaps he was not born cruel, but certainly he had become so, either from thoughtlessness or evil example. He was always throwing stones or shooting arrows, and there was hardly a dog or a cat in the place that had not been at one time or another

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lamed by Tommy the Bad. As for the birds, he was always killing them — from pure love of doing unkind things — and he robbed every nest for miles around, so that the very robins must have hated him. He never lost an opportunity to do something mean — he thought it such fun to plague other people, though he would not have liked it so well if they had plagued him in the same fashion.

Thus it chanced that one fine morning Tommy was out in the meadows looking about for something to do; nothing useful, you may be sure, but something naughty, for there is an old proverb, that Satan always finds something for idle hands to do. It was a charming day: the sloping meadows were covered with short green turf, dotted thick with the little English daisies, pink and white, and directly in Tommy's path grew a tall, straight oak tree, a graceful, stately tree, with its dark, glossy leaves and its green acorns only half formed, its branches gently swayed by the breeze. Tommy looked at it in some surprise, for he could not recollect that he had ever seen it before, though he had crossed that field twenty times in the last month; and an oak, as we all know, does not grow in a day, or a year either, and this was a tall and finely shaped tree.

However, Tommy was not a speculative boy; his mind was too busy planning mischief and naughtiness to concern itself with more serious things, so he thought that, in some way, he must have overlooked that tree. But just as he came to this conclusion and was going on, in his idle way, a robin darted out of the foliage and flew off in the distance. A gleam came into Tommy's eye. "Ah, ha!" he thought, "there must be a nest up there, and I 'll have the eggs, or the young birds — whichever are there." In a trice, he pulled off his jacket, and started to climb the tree, intent on the fun of breaking up the poor robin's home; for — when you stop to think of it — every such nest in a tree or under the eaves of the house, is a home, a miniature of your home and mine, and the little birds are God's creatures, too, with their own affections, and griefs, and fears.

Tommy never thought about that, of course, but went on clambering up the straight trunk, no easy task, for the lowest limb was high over his head; but he was a very agile and daring boy and he had climbed all his life; so, on he went, higher and higher, all the while peering up through the foliage, looking for a nest, and it was not long before his

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sharp eyes spied one. It was there, but it was up very high, almost at the top of the tree, set securely in the fork of two branches, and woven in that wonderful fashion in which birds build their homes. It was a fine large nest, and Tommy's eyes twinkled with satisfaction, and on he went, among the branches now, stepping from one to another, swinging himself lightly along, at a dizzy height above the ground and still going higher. The breeze rustled the broad leaves around and above him, making a soft, delicious noise, which was, perhaps, the reason he did not notice a scratching and clambering in the tree below him, and never suspected that any trouble was in store for him, until he felt a sharp sting in one of his legs. Tommy gave a squeal of pain and tried to look down to see what kind of a wasp had stung him; but twist his head as he would, he could see nothing, and meanwhile, he felt another horrible jab in the other leg. He shrieked with pain and rage, and, forgetting the nest, began to let himself down, intent on either finding or escaping this unseen enemy. But no sooner had he fairly turned around and begun his descent, than he was stung in every direction, and, to his horror, discovered — not a wasp or anything of that sort, dear me, nothing of the

kind! — he discovered that the whole tree below him was simply swarming with little men, all clad in green. In fact, for a moment, he thought they were only large leaves, but a second glance showed him their eager little faces and sharp, twinkling eyes; and he saw the cause of his troubles, too, for each gnome was armed with a sharp-pointed reed which — to his sorrow — Tommy knew was as keen and hard as the blade of a knife. What made matters worse, too, was the fierce and angry expression of their upturned faces. They looked as if they hated him and intended to hurt him as much as they could; and Tommy, being, like all bullies, a great coward, screamed with fright and climbed frantically higher up to escape, but to no purpose. Up swarmed the derricks after him, prodding here and prodding there, with malicious fury, and uttering shrill little squeals of exultation whenever he winced or groaned with pain; and he was in great pain, for they were a good deal worse than a swarm of angry hornets, and directed their operations in a far more skilful and deadly way. Poor Tommy! He forgot the nest altogether, he forgot everything but these dreadful little creatures, and he clambered from branch to branch, trying to draw up his legs

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after him, as fast as he could, but he could not escape his enemies. They were as nimble as gadflies, and they seemed rather to enjoy the race. They swarmed all about him, and they laughed, and they jeered, and they thrust at him with their little spears, until he fairly howled with pain and fright.

"Up with you!" they shrieked. "Get the robin's nest."

"Oh, let me go down," sobbed Tommy, quite cowed with fear; "let me go down, and I'll never, never touch a robin's nest again!"

"Let you go down!" they cried. "Not a bit of it! Up with you, into the robin's nest, and we'll teach you a lesson, you little brute!" and they prodded him hard and fast.

With a groan of pain, Tommy started once more on his fearful ascent, pursued by the derricks from limb to limb. And now he began to discover another trouble; the harder and higher he climbed, the taller grew the tree; it seemed to shoot up in the air — in the most marvellous manner — and the nest was always just a little above his head, just out of reach; but the derricks were not out of reach; they were close behind, pricking, and mocking, and driving him on. When he looked down his head

swam, for the tree had grown so tall that the earth seemed at least a mile off, and other trees were little more than shrubs, by comparison; and here was Tommy, suspended in mid-air, surrounded by foes, and still the tree seemed to grow, and the nest was not yet within his grasp.

Thoroughly subdued, Tommy stopped, and clinging to a branch, implored the derricks to let him off.

"No, no," they replied; "you've never had mercy for others, and we have none for you! Up you must go — up, up!" and they stung him so fiercely that Tommy went. He saw, at last, that compassion was a better quality than he had thought it, and already he began to repent of his own cruel ways; but, alas for him, it was too late.

Up, up, he climbed, panting for breath, his eyes half out of his head with fright, and still the derricks swarmed after him, prodding him in the rear with increasing fury, and yelling with rage and triumph.

"You would rob all the nests, would you?" they screamed. "You kill all the young birds and leave only the old ones to mourn. Ugh, you rogue — we'll see to you now, we'll teach you a lesson."

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"Oh, pity me!" shrieked Tommy, in tears. "I can't climb any farther — I shall surely fall!"

But he was answered only by shouts of derisive laughter, and such fierce stabs that he clambered up again, and this time the nest really stood still; but it grew larger and larger as he drew near, until, as the exhausted boy reached it, it was as large as a bushel basket. Mad with fear and pain Tommy leaped into it, to escape the malicious little creatures behind; but, horror of horrors! the bottom dropped out, and he fell through, not into the open air, but apparently right into the trunk of the tree; for it was like falling down a dark, straight tunnel, and he kept on falling — down, down, down, inside the tree. You remember that the tree had grown enormously tall, so, of course, the fall from a nest in the top to the bottom would be a tremendous distance; and Tommy kept on falling, very much as we do sometimes in dreams, dropping swiftly through space, with a qualm of fear and giddiness, and landing with a jerk that makes us wake up with a start; but as Tommy was not dreaming, but wide awake, he landed with a most terrific bump, bump, and found himself in the strangest place he had ever seen. It looked like a cavern, all

lined with feathers, and twigs, and old women's ravellings, and bits of hair, and bundles of rags, but all these unsightly things were so interwoven with the daintiest straw and foliage that the effect of the whole was picturesque. Tommy rubbed his eyes and stared, too dazed by his fall and his fearful experience to move; and what was his amazement to behold a company of birds — robins and larks, nightingales and wrens, and gay little sparrows — all sitting solemnly about the place, and all staring gravely at him in the deepest displeasure. The slayer of birds, and the robber of nests, had lost his courage, and he sat there frightened half to death, for instinct warned him that more trouble was in store for him; therefore he was not surprised to hear these birds solemnly conversing together in a tongue that he could not understand, and finally one of them — a robin — stepped out of the circle and gravely addressed him.

"Thomas Teazer," squeaked the bird, "commonly called Tommy the Bad, you have been tried before the court of the birds, and found guilty of murder, and rapine, and assault, and you are sentenced to expiate your diabolical crimes by remaining — for one whole day — in the skin of a robin. This court

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agreeing, you are transformed." And the robin waved one claw.

Tommy opened his mouth to remonstrate, but stopped short, for his mouth and nose suddenly ceased to exist, and he had only a bill, and bills are always unpleasant; and then, to his horror, his arms began to prick and feel strangely, and feathers started out and grew into wings, and with a cry of horror he looked where his feet ought to have been, and there were claws; then he felt a tremendous burning and throbbing at the tip of his spinal column, and — agony of agonies — Tommy the Bad had a tail! He screamed with all his might, but it was only the cry of a bird now, no louder than the wail of many a bird that he had stoned to death, and just as unlikely to bring help or pity. What was worse, he began now to shrink, one of the most painful processes in the whole world — it is always so hard to be cut down, and made small, and of no importance. Tommy had always been a conceited boy, with a vastly better opinion of himself than others had of him, and now he was shrinking, not gradually and gently, but tremendously — all at once — from a big, well-grown lad of ten into a robin. Think of the dreadful shrivelling and shrinking that must have gone on. Meanwhile, the birds chattered among themselves, and twittered and fluttered about, apparently charmed with their work; and now and then one of them would give the victim a particularly vicious peck, and pull out a bunch of feathers, which hurt Tommy terribly and made him shriek with pain.

At last the transformation was over, and no sooner was Tommy an average-sized robin, than the other birds set upon him, with beak and claw, and drove him before them to an opening in the nest, where the daylight shone in, and through this they hustled him out into the world — and a very different world it looked to him through a pair of bird's eyes. The first thing he saw, when he got out, was a field of grain, and he thought the grain was at least a mile high, and a cow in the distance had taken on the dimensions of an elephant. Quite overcome by all he had gone through, Tommy crouched for a while on the ground, a very miserable-looking bird; and his first attempt to walk was certainly strange, for he did not know how to hop along like a robin, and he could not walk with bird's claws and legs, so he ended in a sort of a scramble, which made him extremely tired; and when he tried

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to fly, it was equally difficult, and he flopped about in a hopeless manner and was nearly upset by a large cricket that chanced to be in his way. It took him some time, therefore, to learn how to travel around, and he was getting very hungry and thirsty, and did not know where to get any food, and was just looking about for a pool of water, when he suddenly espied a huge, fierce, gray cat, with eyes of fire, crouched ready to spring. It gave Tommy a chill down his spine. He had never even imagined the horrors of being eaten alive, until he saw that awful gray tabby licking her lips and swinging her tail with a horribly ferocious waggle. Tommy was poor at flying, but I can tell you he stretched his wings and flopped into the nearest tree, and held tight to the branch, in an agony of terror, while the cat slowly and stealthily crept nearer and nearer, with her green eyes glaring and her terrible tail. She was going to climb the tree! Poor Tommy! He began to realize some of the terrors of a bird's existence as he flew off again, a little more lightly and swiftly, for he improved with practice; and this time he escaped the cat and landed safely in a grove of birches where there were other birds, and he hoped to find a friend in his hour of need. But,

either Tommy's transformation was publicly known to the whole feathered tribe, or it was not perfect enough to deceive their bright eyes, and they either avoided him, or fell upon him, and pecked and drove him out of their company; lonely, and sore, and faint with hunger, Tommy fled to a quiet tree and there determined to eat a bug — better a bug than starve, he thought. So, screwing up his courage, he snapped up just such a bug as he had seen another robin enjoy, but horrors! he spit it out. It kicked and buzzed in his very bill, and poor Tommy's human stomach refused to receive it. Remembering that food was thrown to the chickens in every barnyard, he determined to go over to a house he saw in the distance, and look for a crumb of comfort; and stretching his wings he started upon his journey. Scarcely had he left the shelter of the woods, however, before an arrow whizzed close to his head, frightening him almost out of his wits, and he flew so fast that when he at last arrived near the house, he was panting for breath, and could only cling to the branch of a tree and look about him. The tree was in the rear of the house, and some hens were feeding comfortably just below poor Tommy, and while he watched, the housewife came

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out with another pan of food and scattered the tempting crumbs in full view of the hungry one. Tommy could resist no longer, and never having been afraid of a woman, he flopped awkwardly down from the tree and commenced to peck greedily at the food; but he was destined to disappointment; no sooner did the housewife discover him than she raised an outcry.

"The saucy wretch!" she cried. "A robin as well as the sparrows to steal food from my hens! Away with you, you little thief!" and she flung a stone at Tommy.

It hit one of his feet and crushed three of his toes, and he flew away, screaming with pain, and hungry as ever; and now he could only use one foot to clutch at the branches, and, being an exceedingly awkward bird, he kept flopping over on one side and could scarcely hold on to a twig; and, dear me, how hungry he was, and how thirsty! He had been driven away from the water by a terrific cat, he had been unable to digest a bug, and he had been stoned by a heartless woman. Tommy thought it heartless now for others to do what he had done himself with such glee. He sat, in a lop-sided, hopeless way, on a friendly branch, hungry, thirsty

and listless, and would doubtless have rested a while if he had not been startled by a terrific whir of wings, and looked up to see a hawk making straight for him, with evil intent. The poor little bully and braggart of old days screamed with terror and flew — as he had certainly never flown before — with the breath of the hawk ruffling his tail, so close and keen was the chase. Tommy's heart thumped hard against his bosom, his breath came short, and he almost gave up, when an arrow darted past him, aimed at the hawk; and though it missed, it alarmed his pursuer and gave Tommy time to fly under the eaves of a barn and cling there, half dead with terror. What a wretched thing it was to be a bird, after all! Tommy hung there a long time; indeed, until his one claw could cling no longer, and then he flopped hopelessly down to the ground, intending to rest; but there is no rest for the wicked. Tommy the Bad had scarcely landed in the grass before he saw his own likeness, in the shape of an active boy, armed with a sling and a bag of stones, who saw him appear, with a hideous grin, and immediately flung a stone. Tommy, exhausted and broken hearted, rose in the air and began to fly for his life; but, alas! that boy could fling a stone as well

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as he could himself, and Tommy was fairly hit in the breast. Stunned and wild, he flew on, trying to reach a tree, but he was not destined to escape, and another stone struck his left wing, breaking it; and dizzy, and smarting, and bleeding, Tommy fell, his ears deafened by the jeers and cries of that terrible monster of a boy. Down, down, fell Tommy — and thump!

He found himself in the middle of that field of grass and daisies, where he had found the fateful oak in the morning. Now the sun was setting and Tommy was a boy again. He would, perhaps, have thought that he had been dreaming — that he had had a fearful nightmare; but just as this came into his mind, he saw some little green figures darting about in the grass, and he heard a squeaky chorus, off in the distance.

"How do you like being a bird, Master Tommy?" it said.

"I will never, never hurt one again!" he replied, with a sob. "I solemnly promise you that, and oh, I'm so sorry that I was ever so cruel!"

"Ha, ha!" they replied; "so we've found a way. Well, keep your word, be kind to birds, and dogs, and cats, and horses, and everything small and

weak, and all will be right, — but, if you break it again, you'll be a bird for life!"

You may be sure that he never broke it; indeed, so complete was his reform, that, after that eventful day, he was known as Tommy the Good.

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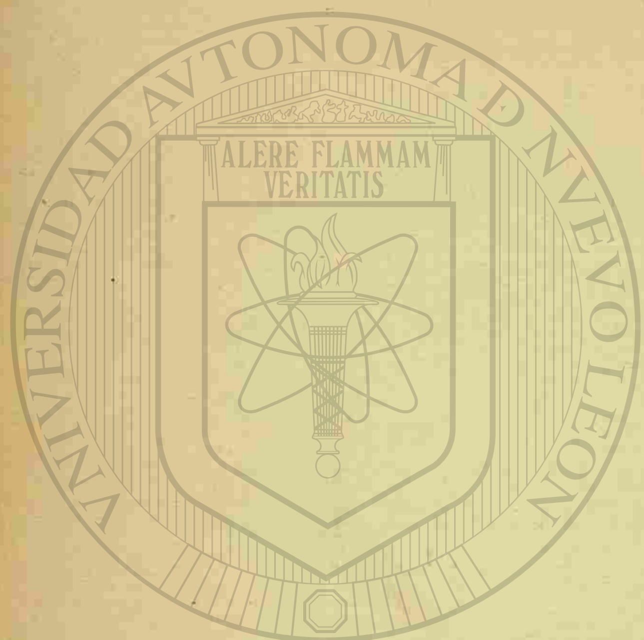

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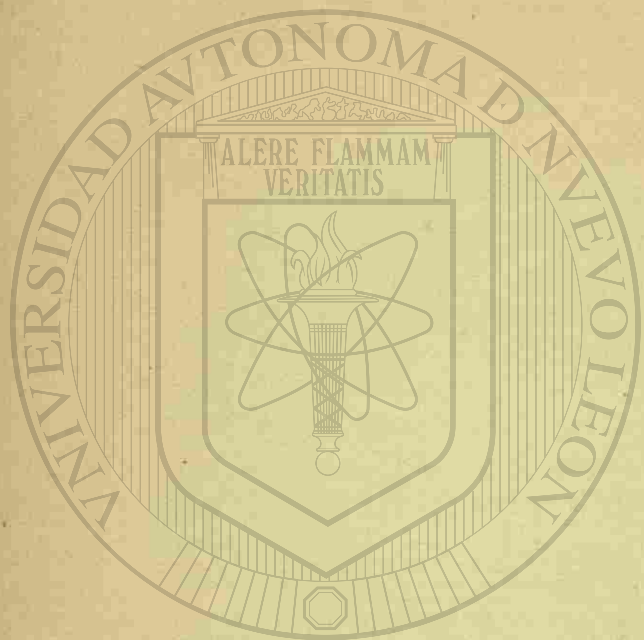
GOODY GREENEYE AND HER ASS



GOODY GREENEYE was an old woman in the old, old times, and she dwelt not very far from the old English town of Exeter. She was called Goody Greeneye, though she was not good at all, but in fact a very bad and malicious crone who lived all by herself in a little hut on the edge of a forest; and no one who was wise ever went near that house willingly, either by day or night, for the people for miles around were afraid of her and believed her to be a very wicked and powerful witch. Indeed, it was whispered that troops of naughty elves obeyed her lightest word, and that at dusk every evening they could be seen flocking all around her hut, creeping over the roof which was of thatched straw, or in at the unglazed window, or under the rickety old door; and sometimes at night flames shot out of the solitary

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chimney and filled the air with little fiery imps, sent up by Goody Greeneye's chants and charms. Indeed, it was commonly reported that the forest, on the edge of which stood her hut, was haunted, not only by pixies, and derricks, and wishhounds, but also by terrible old women riding on broom-sticks, who came from all parts of England and Wales, and even from Scotland and Ireland, to dance on the moor before Goody Greeneye's door. So it is not hard to imagine how afraid of her the good folk in the neighborhood were, and how they quaked when she threatened and scolded at them, which she did very often; for she had a bad temper, and it was probably made much worse by the life she led, and the dislike of her neighbors. Her house itself was certainly a poor little place; a hut with walls of clay and a roof of straw, with one chimney and one window that had neither a sash nor a pane of glass; and this hut had no floor but the earth, and no upper story, but just an attic at one end under the thatch of straw, and no stairs, but a post with notches cut for the feet. This was the only ladder she had to reach the corner under the roof where lay her straw bed; for a mattress or a couch she had not, nor did many of the

other peasants have them, for in those times there was poverty among the lower classes that we scarcely hear of now, at least, in our part of the world. Yet Goody Greeneye was no poorer than her neighbors, and many believed that she was much richer. She had quite a flock of hens, and she raised a few vegetables and herbs, and every market-day in Exeter, set out for town, clad in her rocket, a kind of large mantle of serge, or linsey-woolsey, with a deep fringe at the lower end, worn by the country women, and always red in winter and white in summer: West Country Rockets, they called them; certainly not much like the thing that we call a rocket now. Goody Greeneye, bundled up in this red rocket, would sally forth with her basket of eggs and her bunch of vegetables, and taking her seat in the market-place, she always succeeded in selling her stock, and always went home with the merry jingle of coins in her pocket; and though robbers were as thick on those moors as peas in a pod, no one ever ventured to rob the terrible witch. So it was that her pot often boiled when her neighbor's was empty, and she lacked neither fire nor food when others were starving and freezing; but for all that she had much to torment her. She was

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so well hated, and did so many mean and spiteful things, that the peasants never did her a kindness, and the children either ran from her or mocked her; no one had a pleasant word for her, and I am afraid she did not deserve one.

Now, very near Goody Greeneye there lived an honest farmer with a troop of noisy, merry, healthy children, six boys and six girls; these youngsters knew the old witch well, and hated and feared her quite as much as the other people did, and though they were generally wise enough and agile enough to keep out of her reach, I am afraid they took a delight in teasing her, and making fun of her long nose, and of her chin which nearly met it. Of all the boys and girls, the eldest, Osmund, was the greatest tease, and being a hardy, daring boy he went farther and did more to vex Goody Greeneye than any of the others, and perhaps, therefore, he really deserved some of the punishment he got, though not quite all of it, I am sure; for it really was a very horrible one, as you shall hear.

There was an old gnarled apple tree growing in the corner of the witch's garden plot, and its branches hung temptingly low over the hedge; and when the fruit was ripening she kept a sharp eye

on it to save it from the young marauders of the neighborhood, who, in their greed for a ripe apple suddenly forgot their terror of the old hag. Indeed, these apples, for some mysterious reason, were the largest and fairest in the county, and their red cheeks were quite too inviting to be resisted. No one knew why such apples hung on such a miserable old tree, and the peasants always declared that they were the work of the goody's enchantment. How that may be, I know not; but certain it is that they were far too good to escape Master Osmund, and though he knew well enough that it was wrong to steal at all, and both wrong and mean to steal an old woman's fruit, yet he persisted in coming after those apples. The others, his brothers and sisters, were a little afraid, when the pinch came, to climb the tree, lest Goody Greeneye should catch them aloft and have them at her mercy; but Osmund was never afraid, and he was up in that tree again and again, filling his pockets and tossing the fruit to the timid ones on the farther side of the hedge; and try as she would, the old woman never could catch him. Before she could hobble down to the tree he was over the hedge at a bound, shrieking defiance back at her, and laughing her threats to scorn. He

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deserved to be caught for stealing the apples, so we can hardly blame the old woman for her screams of rage, when she found herself robbed and mocked into the bargain. But, after all, she never lost very many apples, for she was keen enough to gather them herself, and the mischievous tricks of a boy were hardly enough to make her vow vengeance; but she did, and very cunning she was, too, about her way of getting it. Quite unexpectedly she changed her conduct toward the children, and especially toward Osmund, whom she now began to treat with great kindness. She smiled at him out of the window, and even laughed when she saw him trying to get the last apple that she had left to ripen on the tree. So kind did she become that they all began to be ashamed of their treatment of her and left off teasing her, and one by one ran off to play in other quarters, so that it seemed as if she had won by a little kindness the peace that she had never been able to get by threats or angry words. Matters went so smoothly that Osmund was heartily mortified at his own conduct, and now when he passed, he spoke to the dame as civilly as he could, although he still avoided her as a witch. Besides, he was growing to be a big boy, too big for such

tricks and trifles, and he was so tall, and straight, and strong, and handsome, that his parents were very proud of him, and all the boys in the neighborhood looked up to him as quite the champion of the place. But neither his size nor his strength saved him, for all the while old Goody Greeneye was planning and planning her revenge; and one fair morning her opportunity came, and she hailed it with delight.

It chanced that the old crone was sitting at the threshold of her miserable hut, trying, no doubt, to draw some of the aches and pains of old age out of her limbs in the warm sunshine of the beautiful summer day. But so dark and forbidding was her shrivelled face, with its hooked nose and fierce little eyes, that the sun seemed to forget to shine on her; and while every other object near was bright with noonday warmth, she looked dark, and shrunken, and ugly, and did not seem to get a bit of it. She had a beehive at her door and the bees were humming happily, and her hens were clucking not two yards from her feet, while in her hands was a little basket full of new-laid eggs; but she looked as brown and shrivelled as any old dried apple that had lain puckering on the shelf for a twelvemonth.

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But, dear me, how she grinned, and smirked, and tried to look kind when she saw Osmund coming down the path by her gate. A handsome young fellow enough and one that might well please an old woman's eye, and he looked at her pleasantly, for he was in a very good humor, and he smiled and lifted his cap.

"Good day to you, Goody Greeneye," he said, with never a thought of the hate she bore him, for he had forgotten all about those days of apple stealing and other tricks.

"A fair day to you, Master Osmund, and good luck, too," purred the wretched old hag. "'T is long since you 've passed this way, and the sight of a fine young fellow like you is good for old eyes. See here what a fine basket of eggs I have," she added, holding them out; "there are no such hens as mine — as I think you know!" and she gave him a meaning look, and laughed and chuckled to herself.

Osmund flushed red, for he knew well enough that he had stolen more than one egg out of those nests, just to torment Goody Greeneye.

"I was a bad boy, madam," he said, shamefaced.

"Tut, tut!" cackled the old witch, "never mind

that; I bore you no ill will for a boy's naughty tricks! Here, Master Osmund, take this egg and eat it at once, to let me see that you bear me no malice, either. Here 's the very finest egg in my basket, and I know you are hungry after the day in the fields."

"Indeed, I am," said Osmund, foolish enough to be pleased at her flattery and her coaxing tone; "but really I am on my way home to dinner, and I won't rob you of another egg, Goody Greeneye."

He said this as an excuse, for he really did not care to eat food given him by a witch, even though he had stolen apples from her tree; but the old woman was far too cunning to let him escape.

"Nay," she said, "you must take the egg or I 'll never forgive you, my master; and see what a fine white egg it is — nearly as big as a goose egg."

Ashamed to refuse again Osmund took the egg and slipped it into his pocket, but at this the old hag screamed and protested.

"No, no!" she cried, "eat it now, Osmund. Did I not save the best on purpose? and if you suck a raw egg it will make you as strong as a giant. Eat it, friend, for my hens lay famous eggs, and every one is better and wiser for eating them."

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Strange to say, Osmund had hardly got the egg into his pocket before he was possessed with a wild desire to eat it; for you see the egg was a very curious egg, indeed, and therefore it took but little of Goody Greeneye's urging to make him take it out again. Breaking the shell at one end he ate the contents, while the old woman watched him with such a wicked grin of delight that, if the foolish youth had looked at her, he would have taken warning and stopped before it was too late. But the egg was so delicate and so very fresh and nice that Osmund made short work of it, and throwing away the empty shell, he thanked Goody Greeneye for her kind thought of him, and, being in something of a hurry, he bade her a kind good day and set off again at a round pace thinking that, after all, she was very much belied and was a very good old woman. Oh, if he could only have seen the old wretch dancing with joy on her doorstep, and shaking her fists at him! But even then he would never have dreamed of the dreadful thing he had done. He thrust his hands into his pockets, and whistling a tune, he started off across the moor toward his home, where dinner was spread for all his brothers and sisters and for himself, and he whistled as

sweetly as any robin — he had always been famous for whistling — and he was already almost out of sight of Goody Greeneye's hut and then — and then —

All at once, he began to have the most curious feelings. His head felt twice its natural size, and his ears began to sprout up in the air, like growing plants, and he grew so dizzy that he could not stand upright, but toppled over on all fours. He had worn a new doublet that morning, quite a fine affair, and now it seemed to fall away, and instead, he was covered with a rough, shaggy coat of hair; and a long leathery tail, with a tassel on the end of it, began to switch his legs, and his hands and his feet turned into hoofs. "Horror of horrors!" he thought, "what has come over me?" and he tried to scream for help, but he made the most shocking noise, in fact, he brayed — for, in the twinkling of an eye, the tall, strong, handsome Osmund had been turned into an ass! Then, just in the midst of his horror and amazement, he heard a mocking laugh, and Goody Greeneye suddenly appeared beside him, dancing with joy.

"Oh, ho!" she cried gleefully, "oh, ho, my fine ass! Here is just what I 've needed so long, an ass

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to take me to the Exeter market. What are you braying so loud for, Master Ass? Do you want some thistles, my beauty?"

Poor Osmund! He understood her false kindness now! The wretched old hag had given him an enchanted egg, and here he was a helpless ass, quite at her mercy. Blind with rage, he bellowed away at the top of his lungs, and planting his forefeet, let fly his hind legs in a fruitless effort to kick his enemy; but Goody Greeneye danced away, as nimble as only a witch can be, and laughed and laughed — until she had to hold her sides — at his rage and his efforts to kick her to pieces.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she cackled, wiping the tears of laughter from her eyes; "if you could only see how awkward you are! A real, old-fashioned ass would have kicked me sky high in the time you have been raising nothing but dust. Chut! Master Ass, you 're only fit to take me on your back," and with this she gave a leap — as lightly as a child of ten — and landed on Osmund's back.

You can imagine his fury at finding the horrid old wretch seated on his back, and he straightway set about getting her off, in the way he had seen real horses and asses try to unseat their riders: he

planted his forefeet harder than ever, and he ducked down his head and flung his hind legs so high he nearly turned a somersault; but all to no purpose. That wretched old goody held on firmly by one of his long ears, and began to beat him soundly with a long, thorny branch that she had plucked from a bramble-bush near by. She beat him so hard and the thorns pricked him so sharply, that he could endure it no longer, and he started off at a run as fast as he could, making straight for his home, for there surely, he thought, he would get help. But though he ran as never an ass ran before, and jumped ditches and cleared stone walls, he could not unseat that dreadful old witch; she sat as firm as a rock, jeering and laughing, her shrill cackling nearly driving him mad. And as he neared his home, his younger brothers and sisters came running toward him, and Osmund thought they had seen his trouble and were coming to help, never dreaming that they would not know him until he heard them speaking to the witch.

"O Goody Greeneye," the first one cried, "why do you ride so fast?"

"And where is our brother?" demanded the second. "Have you seen Osmund?"

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"What a frightful, old, skinny ass, Goody!" exclaimed the third.

"A lean ass will run the faster to market, my dears," retorted Goody Greeneye, chuckling wickedly.

And at this Osmund brayed loudly, trying — oh, so hard, hard as we try in nightmare — to talk and tell his brothers and sisters of his fearful plight; but they only laughed at the noise, thrusting their fingers into their ears.

"Where is Osmund?" again demanded one of them. "He is late, so late to dinner. Hast seen him, Goody Greeneye?"

"Osmund is an ass!" declared the goody, more truthfully than they knew.

"The horrid old thing!" cried Osmund's brothers and sisters, "to speak so of our big, handsome brother. Away with you, you witch; away with that bag of bones you call an ass!" and they drove Osmund back from his own gate with sticks and stones, screaming and shouting in their anger, while Goody Greeneye, enjoying the whole scene as a huge joke, beat Osmund herself and turned his head toward her own hut.

"Trot!" she said, fiercely; "trot! You see what a welcome a man gets in his own home when he

comes back in a poor shape. Ah, ha! Master Osmund; you 're my ass now, and mine you shall be. Trot, trot, trot!"

And trot he did, cut to the heart by the treatment of his own family, and quite unable to resist the force of the witch's enchantment. He started off over the moor with Goody Greeneye perched on his back, and in less than no time he found himself in her garden, tied to that same old gnarled apple tree, with a handful of thistles for his dinner!

Poor Osmund! He was punished now for the apples he had stolen. There he stood under that old tree with a stout bit of rope around his thin neck, and the rope was just loose enough to permit him to chew his thistles; and I can tell you that thistles were anything but filling, and Osmund had the sharp appetite of a hungry, healthy boy. He tried hard to slip his head out of the noose, or to break the cord that bound him; but all to no purpose. Goody Greeneye knew very well how to make a halter, and she was far too cunning to use anything but the stoutest and newest rope, so all Osmund's efforts only ended in nearly choking himself; and to stand there and kick and bray was

not only tiresome, but it brought the old hag to her door to mock and laugh. So there he had to stand, the meanest, leanest-looking ass in England, and though the sun still shone and the bees hummed, Osmund thought the world was the blackest place in creation, and he hated the sight of the goody's hens, for he could think of nothing but that horrid egg; so, when one came near him, he kicked at it viciously. But he soon had cause to repent of even that, for, as you may have suspected, even Goody Greeneye's hens were quite different from others, and the moment he kicked at one she flew up on his back and began to scream and peck him so sharply that he bellowed with rage, and then the old witch ran out with her broomstick and fell to beating him over the head.

"Be still, you noisy ass!" she squealed, in a rage. "What! would you kick my hens? I'll teach you a lesson, Master Ass," and she whacked him so hard that poor Osmund saw stars, and was glad enough to be still when she and her hens departed toward the house, cackling and screaming in so much the same manner that he began to think that the witch must be a mixture of hen herself.

He understood now how the poor, dumb animals

had to suffer without redress, and he began to feel heartily sorry for every unkind word he had ever spoken to a horse, or a dog, or any other animal, and felt sure that he was smarting himself now for the thoughtless blows he had struck. It is neither brave, nor wise, nor kind to abuse dumb brutes, and I have no doubt that when we do, we get it all back at some time or another, though we may be so stupid that we do not know why we are punished. Osmund vowed in his heart that he would never be unkind to any dumb thing again, and then he tried to eat his thistles, but, dear me, they nearly choked him; indeed, they stuck hard and fast in his throat, and Goody Greeneye thought it very saving to feed him on them, for while they stayed in his throat he could not possibly eat anything else. You see, she was a horrid, mean, cold-blooded old monster of a witch, quite the worst I ever heard of. This is a really true story, as you must know, for the witch was truly tried for turning a man into an ass, and tried in an English court of law, so, of course, it must be every bit true.

Well, poor Osmund stayed all night under that tree, with the dew falling on his shaggy brown hide, and I can tell you he was cold and stiff the

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next morning and full of thistles, when old Goody Greeneye came out, clad in her rocket, and began to pack two baskets with eggs and vegetables, which she finally swung across his back; and then, in spite of his braying and kicking, she mounted behind her baskets and set off for Exeter, beating her ass all the way and laughing at his efforts to run away with her or to throw her into a ditch. He tried very hard indeed to get rid of her, cutting all sorts of capers, plunging, and rearing, and kicking, until they drew near the town, and then poor Osmund lost his spirit, for he heard people laughing at him and calling him "a kicking scarecrow," and "a bag of bones," and "a skeleton ass," and he did not like to be made a jest of when he was in such bitter trouble; so he stopped kicking and prancing, and walked soberly along, with a hanging head, through the streets of Exeter to the market-place, where he found a great crowd buying and selling, and singing and fighting; for market day, in those times, was not much like market day now. It was almost like going to a circus; there was a Merry Andrew, and a dancing bear, and gypsies telling fortunes; and there were live sheep and cattle to sell, as well as poultry and eggs, but very few vegetables, hardly

any of those we have every day in the year, for people did not know anything then about raising the things that are raised so easily now. Lettuce and salads of all sorts were luxuries that came only from Holland, for the Dutch were the market gardeners of the world. There were some turnips, potatoes, and oats, and not much else, except the bright-hued serges for which Exeter was famous, and ribbons and finery that the country girls came to town to buy. But it was a gay scene: there was ballad singing, and bargaining, and selling, and no one had enjoyed market day more than Osmund; but now he stood there, forlorn enough, tied to a post, while Goody Greeneye sold her eggs and her herbs, and laughed and scolded with her gossips, and all the time her wretched-looking ass was the butt of every jest in that quarter of the market.

"Where did you get that beautiful beast, Goody?" laughed an honest farmer, eying Osmund with scorn.

"It 's the goody's scarecrow come to life," explained a stout market woman, cackling with laughter.

"What does he eat? sawdust or nails, Goody Greeneye?" cried another bystander, joining in the jest.

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But the old woman made no reply, she only grinned and leered at the ass in a knowing way.

"Hoot, 't is an ass made out of one of the witch's broomsticks," cried one observer, giving Osmund a sharp poke with her staff.

This was too much; Osmund could not endure it; and he let fly his heels, upsetting a basket of eggs and smashing them all over the last speaker, an old woman, who flew into a fury and began to beat him and scream. And then Goody Greeneye interfered, for though she liked nothing better than beating Osmund herself, she hated this particular old woman: she went at her, and in less than a minute they were fighting each other over Osmund's back, hitting each other with sticks and stones, but more often hitting him, while the other people stood by and laughed and applauded. This went on until Goody Greeneye really began to beat the other old hag black and blue, and then there was a cry for the watch — that was what they called a policeman then — and the witch, afraid of being punished for her ill temper, leaped on Osmund's back and made him run out of town at the top of his speed. A rabble of men, and women, and children, and dogs ran shrieking, and screaming, and barking behind,

calling Goody Greeneye "a witch!" and a great many other bad names, while poor Osmund got hit with more than one stone in their mad flight; he reached the old hut at last, sober, and weary, and frightened almost to death. If this was market day for an ass, what in the world would become of him? Besides, the goody was in a frightful humor and tied him up so tight to the apple tree that she nearly choked him, and went to her own supper without giving him even a drop of water. Poor Osmund, how wretched he was! and worse than all, he heard his brothers and sisters go by clamoring for him, and hunting everywhere for him, and never once thinking of Goody Greeneye's ass. And no help came — no, not a bit; he lived so for a long time, for it takes a long time to starve to death, and the witch gave him just enough to keep the life in him; it was only when she brought him into the hut, as she sometimes did at night, that he got any chance of revenge. You must know that the peasants often kept their animals in the same hut with themselves, and once when Goody Greeneye brought Osmund in and tied him, as she thought, tightly enough, he managed to reach up and snatch her straw bed from the attic floor and eat it, although she beat him and

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screamed with rage. But after all, he could not punish her and he had to listen to her threats and her taunts.

"Ha, ha!" she would say; "how do you like being an ass, my fine gentleman? Mock old Goody Greeneye now, if you can — oh, ho!"

And then she would beat him with brambles until he bled. It was almost too much to bear, but Osmund had to bear it, until one market day something happened that made a great change for the poor lean ass.

Osmund had been mourned for lost by his family for twelve months and more, when it chanced that one fine day Goody Greeneye set out for market in a very good humor. She had on a fine new red rocket and carried a fine basket of new-laid eggs, and away she rode in high glee, though Osmund was so thin by this time that his bones were nearly through his skin. In fact, he cut such a miserable figure that he was an object of scorn and pity wherever he appeared; as soon as he got into the streets of Exeter, all the hard-hearted boys and girls began to laugh and make game of Goody Greeneye's ass, so that by the time he reached the market-place there was a whole string of children behind him, screaming, and laughing, and pointing their fingers, instead of being sorry for the poor lean animal. But you can imagine that Osmund and Goody Greeneye were a strange-looking pair; she in her red rocket, with a high, steeple-crowned hat, and a big yellow starched ruff about her neck, and a short, stuffed petticoat that showed her great feet, and above all, her wrinkled, hateful, old face with the nose and chin nearly meeting. In fact, when she was angry it seemed as if it would need a crowbar to pry the two apart, and her eyes were as sharp as gimlets and as green as green could be; yet she rode with an air, sitting quite jauntily, perched on the back of the worst-looking ass you ever dreamed of. His poor long legs were knock-kneed and shambled along under a miserable, bony body, with a coat of shaggy brown fur so rough that it looked motheaten, and his long neck stuck straight out in front of him, with a big bony head on it, and his ears were at least half a foot longer than the ears of any other ass in the world, while his tail was a mean, black leather string, with a tassel on the end. When Goody Greeneye made him into an ass she almost forgot about the tail; it was an after thought and it looked like one, and had the feeblest kind of a whisk to it.

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So, after all, it was certainly a strange sight, and it was scarcely a wonder that the children made such a fuss about it. Osmund himself was getting quite used to the ridicule, and walked along without any spirit, and stood in the same forlorn way in the market-place. But on this particular day the people soon had something else to do besides staring at him, for presently there was a great stir and racket, and the sound of galloping horses, and every one ran to see what was coming. And lo and behold, down a street that led to the market-place came a wonderful coach and four, with outriders and attendants on horseback, and the greatest jingling of chains and rumbling of wheels, and a cry went up: "The Princess — the Princess Beautiful!" and even poor Osmund turned to gaze.

On the procession came: first were six gay esquires, mounted on fine black horses, and dressed in blue and gold, with shining helmets on their heads and great swords at their sides; then came six more on bay horses, all dressed in green and silver, with helmets and swords; and then followed the great coach, a low, wide-topped coach, painted and gilded, with great glass windows, and it was drawn by four milk-white horses, with blue and

white plumes nodding on their heads, and on each horse was a rider, all dressed in silver and white, while in the coach sat the most beautiful princess in the world, — oh, yes, quite the most beautiful, — and she was wonderfully robed in white and rose color, and looked, Osmund thought, like a beautiful rose herself; and behind the coach were six more attendants in red and gold, mounted on beautiful gray horses. They all came on through the market-place, glittering in the sunshine, and the crowd fell back to make room for the Princess Beautiful, and bowed and applauded as crowds always do when they see any one very rich and very powerful. A whole lot of people are a great deal more foolish than just one, for they have the folly of all the crowd rolled up together, until it is the greatest lot of folly that can be put in one place; for it is very foolish to admire and praise any one for being merely beautiful and rich, and not because he is truly wise and good and great. However, this princess was good, as you shall hear, so she deserved the praise and admiration she received wherever she went. Now, as luck would have it, the peasants about Osmund were all so anxious to see this great personage that they began

to beat the poor ass from side to side, making him turn this way and that to make room, first on one side and then the other, and poor Osmund's sides were so sore that he could not help braying with pain. The princess heard it and turned her head in his direction; and as soon as she saw the wretched creature her heart was filled with compassion, and she lifted her hand, and in an instant the outriders shouted, the attendants galloped up, and the whole procession stood still, while the princess spoke in the sweetest of sweet voices.

"Pray tell me," she said, "whose ass is that?"

At this, Goody Greeneye came curtseying and smirking through the crowd, and tried to look sweet at the beautiful princess.

"Mine, please, your Highness," she cackled, bowing low. "I'm only a poor old woman, and I can't keep a better beast."

"She 's an old witch!" screamed some one in the crowd.

The princess shuddered, and tossed a purse into the old hag's hands.

"I will buy your ass, Goody," she said, and signed to one of her attendants to take Osmund by the halter and lead him away.

You may be sure that the fine gentleman was in no haste to do this, for all the others began to smile at the figure he cut, leading the skinny old ass, with his wretched old halter of rope. But the princess frowned at their mirth, and they dared not object to her wishes, so on they went, in a fine cavalcade, with Osmund struggling along in the rear, and trying so hard to keep up that his wisp of a tail stood out straight; and the crowd behind laughed and squealed at the sight, while the fine gentleman who was leading the ass was in such a rage at the laughter he caused that he jerked the poor fellow along at a rate that nearly pulled Osmund's head off his lean neck. Away and away they trotted, and galloped, and ran, over the moors, up hill and down dale, until at last, as the sun was setting, they came in sight of a great castle of gray stone, perched on a hill that overlooked the blue sea, and guarded on that side by fierce, steep rocks, so high and so straight up that only a wild bird could ascend them, while at the foot leaped the sea, roaring and tossing its mane of foam like a lion looking for his prey. All around the other three sides of the castle wall was a moat, wide, and deep, and full of water; and the whole cavalcade, Osmund and all, went over a draw-

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bridge into the castle yard; and then the bridge was drawn up with chains, and a great iron gate was closed behind them, so no one else might come in to harm the Princess Beautiful, or carry her off. And now the poor ass was sent off to the stables, while the princess and all her fine attendants were going into the castle to supper.

Osmund had hoped, when he got away from the horrid old witch, that he would find peace and comfort at last, even though he was an ass; but, dear me, it was out of the frying-pan into the fire. You see, the kind and beautiful princess could not see what all her servants were doing; and they were not as kind as she was; and her grooms and stable-boys at first roared with laughter at Osmund, and then were so angry to have this horrid, ugly old ass brought there, that he got only kicks and blows, and hardly any more food than Goody Greeneye had given him. As the princess entirely forgot him, he was very soon turned out into a field near the castle, and left to get food as he could. He stayed there, too, without any shelter either from the hot sun or the wind and rain, day in and day out, and no one remembered him any more, even to beat him. Poor Osmund! I think his

heart broke then, and, oh, how often he wished that he had never stolen Goody Greeneye's apples or mocked her; and he was very near dying of hunger and sorrow, when one day, while searching for food in this barren pasturage, he saw a new, fresh little green plant; and while he was smelling of it, rather suspicious lest it were Goody Greeneye's enchantment in a new form, — you see he had grown much wiser, — well, while he was sniffing at it, he heard a wee voice come from it.

"Eat me!" it said.

Osmund jumped as if a pin had been stuck in him.

"Oh, no," he thought; "not I, — 't is Goody Greeneye's egg in another shape;" but the little voice pleaded hard.

"Eat me," it said, "and your tongue will be untied, and you can tell your sorrows."

But Osmund could not be quite persuaded, and he was standing there looking at the plant, when lo and behold, there came the princess herself and a couple of damsels, her ladies-in-waiting, behind her. She tripped along as fair and sweet as the morning, and Osmund looked at her mournfully, wishing he could tell her all, and the tears ran down his face

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and fell in such torrents, — he was broken hearted, you see, — that there was very soon a little rivulet flowing through the field; and when the princess came to it she gave a cry of surprise.

"Where in the world did this stream come from?" she asked. And then, looking about, she saw the poor ass weeping bucketfuls of tears at the end of the field. In an instant, she saw how badly her servants had treated the poor animal, and she stamped her foot on the ground with anger.

"What means this?" she cried; "did I not order that this ass should be fed and groomed as my own?"

"Yes, indeed, your Highness!" replied the two maids, all of a tremble, for the princess could be very stern when she had just cause for anger.

"Some one has done wrong," continued her Highness, and she walked along the edge of the brook made by Osmund's tears until she came up to him. "My poor, poor fellow," she said very kindly, "you are surely starving to death!"

"Oh, if I could only tell her the truth!" thought Osmund, and then he heard again the wee voice pleading so hard, "Eat me," and what do you think Osmund did?

Why, he ate that green plant, and, wonder of wonders! he found he could speak; and with the tears still streaming — the rivulet was nearly a lake now — he began to tell the princess who he was. At first, she was very much startled at hearing an ass begin to talk, but she was a princess, and she would not let any one think her afraid. Her ladies, however, ran screaming away in such haste that one of them fell into the lake made by Osmund's tears, and was dragged out with great difficulty by some servants who heard her cries.

Meanwhile, the Princess Beautiful was listening to Osmund's whole doleful story, and very indignant she was.

"My poor fellow," she cried; "you shall be righted. I'll send for that wicked woman, and make her turn you back into a man. I am a princess," she added, proudly, "and I will be obeyed; and as for my servants, they shall be punished, too, for their treatment of you. Come, with me, sir, and you shall have a good dinner, while I send for the witch at once."

And off she went, stately and fair in her splendid gown, walking along with the poor, dirty, starved, old ass, and if they had dared, her people would

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have laughed at the sight, but they did not dare. I can tell you that there was an awful stir; the grooms and the stable boys were well punished for their neglect, and lived on dried apples and hot water for a week and a day, to make amends for their treatment of Osmund. Meanwhile, eighteen of the attendants of the princess rode off, with very long swords, and helmets, and suits stuffed with straw to protect them, and they carried a long stout bag, into which they popped Goody Greeneye, and brought her back to the castle in less than no time. Then the princess had her brought before her with Osmund, and she repeated the whole story to all her people, and commanded Goody Greeneye to make Osmund a man again.

At first, the old witch stoutly refused; indeed, she declared that Osmund deserved to be an ass, and should stay one forever.

"What did he do but mock me and steal my apples?" she cackled, strutting about like a hen with ruffled plumage. "He can stay as he is, for all I care, and eat thistles to the end of his days."

The princess gave her a terrible look, and signed to her attendants to bring a rope, which they suddenly threw over Goody Greeneye's head and, drawing the noose very tight around her neck, made her eyes almost pop out of her head. She set up an ear-splitting squeal, and could hardly be hushed long enough to listen to the princess.

"You forget," her highness remarked, "that my godfather is the King of the Derricks, and he will carry you down to the bottom of the sea, if you dare to insult me. Turn this ass back into a man, witch, or I 'll have you hung over the edge of the cliff until my godfather takes you away."

At the sound of this dreadful threat Goody Greeneye's knees shook under her, for she was fearfully afraid of the King of the Derricks, and she begged to be given only five minutes.

"Very well," said the princess; "five minutes, but not one second more!"

Goody Greeneye, with the rope still tight around her neck, fell on her knees and began to chant the strangest kind of a song, and she waved her hands and scratched the earth like a hen with her finger nails; and while she mumbled, and all the court of the princess looked on, the hide of the lean old ass began to fly off in fragments, and out of the litter of skin and hair rose Osmund, tall, and handsome, and strong as ever, — even in his dress of a

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farmer's son the finest-looking young man in the place. The princess was so pleased that she ordered her servants to release Goody Greeneye, and perhaps she intended to thank her, but — dear me! — there was no time; the old hag had been too frightened to stay there a minute, and the instant the rope was off her neck — whiz! phiz! — there was a sound as if they had taken the cork out of a champagne bottle, and Goody Greeneye rose in the air, mounted on a broomstick, and flew off over the great cliff above the sea. The very last they saw of her was the flutter of her red rocket as she vanished through the hazy air, evidently on her way to France, where I expect she did no end of mischief.

Meanwhile, Osmund, quite restored to himself, was very thankful and very devoted to the princess, and his parents and all his eleven brothers and sisters came to rejoice and embrace him after having mourned for him as dead. And his dreadful experience had done him so much good, and taught him to be so kind, and merciful, and honest, that he grew to be a wonderfully wise and brave man, and I have heard reports, and I believe they are true, that he married the Princess Beautiful and lived ever after in the great Castle of Success that towered over the wide blue sea.

LITTLE ELEANOR AND LITTLE PEPPER

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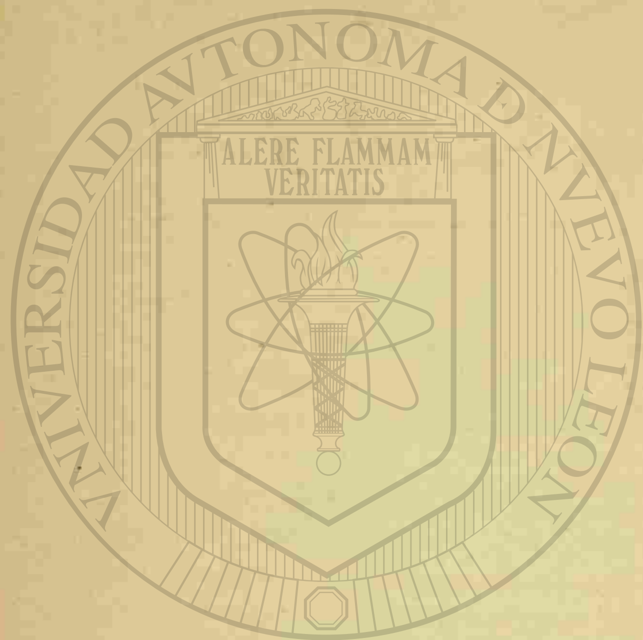

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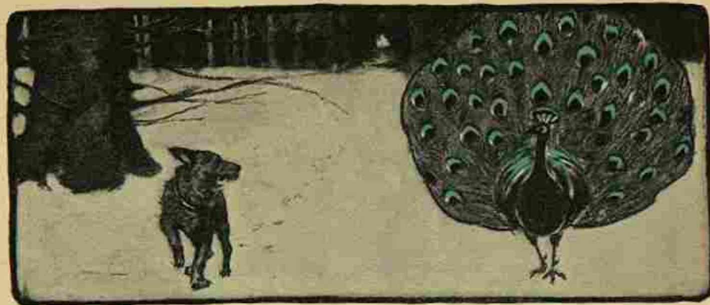

ONG years ago there lived a dear little red-haired girl called Eleanor, and she had a faithful little brown dog, who loved her very, very dearly, and the little brown dog was called Pepper.

It chanced one day that Eleanor's mother took Pepper out with her, though he could not bear to leave his dear mistress, and when they returned, — the mother and the dog, — little Eleanor had vanished and there was only a gray goose quill in her cradle. Her mother ran up and down, weeping and wailing, and asking all the neighbors what had become of her child. But little Pepper asked no one, for he knew at once that the pixies had stolen her, and he set off all alone to look for her, trudging along over moors and over hills and through great, dark forests, weary, and footsore, and hungry still.

He met a shepherd dog first and inquired of him whether he had seen little Eleanor pass that way. The shepherd dog did not know anything about her; but, as he was a kind dog, he gave poor Pepper a bone from his own dinner and a drink of water out of his bowl. Next, Pepper asked the cow, but she said she did not know, but would chew her cud and consider; and then Pepper asked the horse, and the horse stopped to pick an oat out of his double teeth, and finally said that he had not seen her, but had heard a whizzing sound such as the pixies made when flying. So Pepper travelled on and inquired of the cat, but she was a witch-cat and put up her back and spit; and of course, he had to go on and on, dear, faithful, little dog; and he asked the hen, but she cackled and ruffled her feathers and made a great fuss, driving her chicks away. And just then he saw a magpie, and he knew that it was very bad luck to meet one magpie by itself, so he at once spit over his right shoulder and repeated the good old Devonshire charm against a single magpie:

"'Clean birds by sevens,
Unclean by twos;
The dove, in heavens,
Is the one I choose.'"

And feeling sure that this would keep away the magpie, Pepper trudged on and met a fine white pigeon, who looked so gentle and wise that Pepper stopped.

"Dear, dear pigeon," he said, "where have the pixies taken my mistress?"

"Kourre, Kourre!" cried the pigeon, strutting off in the sun. "How should I know? I'm not her keeper!"

Then Pepper went farther and met a beautiful peacock.

"Tell me, dear sir, where is my mistress?" cried the little dog sadly.

"Ah, look at my tail," replied the peacock; "is it not lovely?" and he spread it wide in the sun.

"What do I care for your tail, you vain thing?" said Pepper angrily, as he went up to a little busy brown sparrow and asked him the old question.

"Your mistress?" cried the sparrow. "Peep, peep! I'm too busy to know; I've a family of six in the nest this minute, and their mother's gone to the club to play bridge-whist, and worms were never so scarce — peep, peep!"

And he hurried off, in a whirl of care, while Pepper walked wearily on, still asking his question;

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but all those he met were either too busy or too careless to tell him anything; so, after all, he had to go to the great gray goose.

"Where is dear little Eleanor, my mistress?" he asked, his eyes full of tears; and he had beautiful brown eyes.

"Ah, yes, I know," said the goose, stretching his neck and yawning; "the pixies have carried her off, because her hair is red, and they think it would do for a torch for their new cave."

"Tell me only where to find her," cried Pepper, "and I will go even to the end of the earth."

The goose scratched her head and tried to look wise, but the truth was, she did not really know, and so she hunched up her shoulders.

"Go to the King of the Derricks," she said.

And poor Pepper went trudging for miles and miles, half starved, and dusty, and tired, and at last he found the King of the Derricks in the Pirate Cave, and told him his errand.

"Oh, yes," said his Majesty, "pixies have her locked up in an oak tree, and they will not let her out unless the most faithful heart in the world goes after her."

"And mine is the most faithful!" cried little Pepper truthfully. "Pray, pray, Mr. King, tell me the way!"

The king looked puzzled, but after a while he said, "Well, you go straight ahead to the top of the hill, and then you turn to the left and go zigzag, and then to the right and go higglety-pigglety, and then straight ahead to the edge of the forest, and then to the left, and indirectly to the right, and there you are!"

The poor little dog was very much puzzled, but being the most faithful and loving heart in the whole world he set out, and by following the king's directions exactly, — I am sure I don't know how he did, — he found the great oak and heard little Eleanor crying inside of it. And what do you think he did? Why, for a whole year he gnawed away at the bark, and stopped only to eat a morsel a day to keep him alive, and meanwhile the squirrels fed little Eleanor on nuts, and brought her dew to drink out of acorn cups, and at the end of the year Pepper had gnawed a hole so big that she crept out and embraced him, crying for joy. As for the pixies, they were all so pleased at his devotion that they let her go home with him to her mother,

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only keeping one lock of her red hair to light a single torch in the cavern of the fairies.

When she returned, her mother nearly died of joy, and her faithful little dog had more bark after that than anything else, because, you see, he had scarcely eaten anything but bark for a whole year.

And this is a true story.

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